

## Call for Evidence: Can London's energy grid support new housing and economic growth?

The London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee has launched an investigation into London's energy grid and its ability to support new housing delivery and economic growth.

This investigation will consider the current constraints on London's energy infrastructure and how this will impact industrial and housebuilding goals. It will examine:

- The impact that energy constraints are having on the development of West London.
- The steps that have been taken to resolve these issues, and what more can be done.
- The Mayor's housebuilding and economic aspirations in London and how this can be squared with energy constraints.
- What policies the next London Plan should include to resolve existing energy issues and to futureproof the grid.
- How planners can better respond to capacity constraints.

Below is information about the investigation and Call for Evidence, as well as key questions the Committee is interested in hearing about.

### Who can submit evidence?

This Call for Evidence is open to all who would like to respond. We particularly welcome responses from data centres / the tech industry, businesses experiencing energy constraints, developers who have to factor these constraints into their plans, and stakeholders who have interacted with the GLA Infrastructure Coordination Service (ICS) on this topic.

### Why is the Committee exploring this topic?

In July 2022, the GLA wrote to developers warning that the grid was running out of capacity for new homes in the West London boroughs of Hillingdon, Ealing, and Hounslow.

These three boroughs form part of the Scottish and Southern Electricity Network (SSEN) license area, which extends west outside of London. SSEN own and operate the electricity distribution network that transports electricity via wires and cables to homes, businesses, and communities.

The constraints to the region's energy capacity have been caused, in large part, by the development of data centres in the region.

Data centre operators have flocked to the area due to the existing supply of fibre optic cable connections along the M4 corridor. Large data centres use significant quantities of electricity, sometimes the equivalent of a town or small city. In 2023 there were 22 known data centres across Brent, Ealing, Hillingdon, and Hounslow, with a further seven data centres in OPDC. In total, these data centres accounted for 273 megawatts (MW) of load and 18 per cent of West London's total demand.<sup>1</sup>

Representatives from the data centre sector challenge the claim that data centres have contributed to capacity constraints. In 2022, a sector representative stated

---

<sup>1</sup> ARUP, [West London Local Area Energy Plan-Phase 1](#) (2023)

## Call for Evidence: Can London's energy grid support new housing and economic growth?

that the grid constraints were caused by “under-investment by successive governments”.<sup>2</sup>

Other demands placed on the network in recent years include electric vehicle (EV) charging, electrified heating, the construction of 20,000 new homes between 2017 and 2022, and new small-scale generation (solar and batteries) which needs to be connected to the network.<sup>3</sup>

These large connections, along with the 443MW of confirmed electricity demand connecting to the transmission system, meant that major upgrades to the local power network were needed.<sup>4</sup>

Current regulations require connections to be made on a first come, first served basis. In West London this has resulted in large developments with significant energy demands waiting for reinforcement work to be completed. This has impacted major housing developments, commercial premises, and industrial activity in West London. Small-scale connections are still able to proceed, including developments with fewer than 25 residential units.<sup>5</sup>

The London Growth Plan and Towards a new London Plan consultation put housing and data centres at the core of London's growth.<sup>6</sup> The Government says

the city needs 880,000 new homes in the next decade, alongside more industrial land and data centres.<sup>7</sup>

There are concerns the grid can't support these goals, as West London's system is already strained. In written evidence to the Spending Review, West London Alliance (WLA) said: "Urgent, targeted investment in transmission and distribution capacity – including looking at options outside the regulator-driven planning and funding cycle – is now critical."<sup>8</sup>

There are also concerns that the energy allocation system may result in unused capacity, as applicants often overestimate their needs. As a result, their allocations can remain under-utilised.<sup>9</sup> There are also reports of grid capacity reservations not being taken up.<sup>10</sup>

This investigation will aim to understand the scale of the problem in west London, the solutions which have been implemented and how electricity capacity will impact the Mayor's London Growth Plan and housebuilding targets.

### Will responses be published?

Yes, in the large majority of circumstances we will publish written submissions and the name of the individual or organisation that submitted it online. This is so that there is transparency about what evidence the Committee has received.

---

<sup>2</sup> ComputreWeekly.com, [Datacentre sector hits back at claims that West London electricity grid capacity crunch is its fault](#) (2022)

<sup>3</sup> London.Gov, [West London electricity capacity constraints](#), accessed 28 May 2025

<sup>4</sup> London.Gov, [West London electricity capacity constraints](#), accessed 28 May 2025

<sup>5</sup> London.Gov, [West London electricity capacity constraints](#), accessed 28 May 2025

<sup>6</sup> London.Gov, [London Growth Plan](#), accessed 25 June 2025

---

<sup>7</sup> London.Gov, [Towards a new London Plan](#), accessed 25 June 2025

<sup>8</sup> West London Alliance, [Submission to Spending Review 2025](#) (2025)

<sup>9</sup> National Grid, [Capacity Allocation and Reservation](#) (2018) p6

<sup>10</sup> Ridge, [Q&A: Why is grid capacity holding back development, and what can we do about it?](#) (2024)

## Call for Evidence: Can London's energy grid support new housing and economic growth?

Exceptions to this are usually applied where there is a legal reason for non-publication or if there is a safeguarding or welfare issue. If there is a reason that you would like your evidence not to be published with your name (submitted anonymously) or to not be published (submitted confidentially), please let us know and the Committee will consider it. However, this cannot be guaranteed, and the Assembly may be required to release non-personally identifiable information if requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

### What will the evidence I provide be used for?

The responses to this Call for Evidence may be used to inform recommendations to the Mayor, which will likely be in a report. These will be held as open meetings, and anyone is welcome to attend as an audience member to watch the discussion on the [Assembly webcasts page](#).

If information and/or quotations from submissions to this call for evidence are used in this output, we will cite you. We inform those who have submitted evidence about the outcome of the investigation in the form of a link to a report or output when it is published.

### Where can I find your privacy notice?

The London Assembly and the GLA are committed to protecting your privacy and personal data when you contact us or submit evidence. You can find the GLA's privacy notice [here](#).

### Do I need to answer all the questions?

No, you are welcome to answer the questions that are most relevant to you or your organisations and for which you have the most expertise or experience.

### How do I submit evidence?

Please send evidence in a Word document format (not PDF) by email to: [scrutiny@london.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@london.gov.uk)

The deadline for submission is Friday 22 August 2025.

### Key questions

1. How have electricity capacity constraints impacted you? In particular:
  - a. Have the grid capacity constraints impacted investment in West London?
  - b. Have the grid constraints impacted your ability to bring forward new industrial and residential developments?
  - c. If applicable, are you able to estimate how many homes or industrial units have been delayed or affected as a result?  
*Please note: you do not need to provide precise figures to respond. Any information, even approximate or anecdotal, is welcome.*
  - d. What activities are you undertaking to reduce the demand for energy?
2. Can electricity demand meet the Mayor's ambitions for London over the next ten years? In particular:

## Call for Evidence: Can London's energy grid support new housing and economic growth?

- a. How can the construction of new data centres be planned to align with available grid capacity and ensure timely grid connection?
  - b. Can London's new housing targets be achieved given London's grid capacity now and into the future?
  - c. Are capacity constraints limited to West London, or are they experienced more widely?
  - d. Is the GLA doing enough to factor in energy constraints when considering economic and housing strategy?
  - e. How can the GLA improve its coordination of infrastructure reinforcement via the ICS?
3. How can planning best respond to the challenges of factoring energy demands into planning processes?
  4. How are energy capacity constraints affecting the delivery of different types of housing and wider economic growth? For example:
    - a. Are certain types of developments, such as those in areas of high housing need, more likely to face delays or constraints due to limited grid capacity?
    - b. Are current models of grid investment and connection—such as first-come, first-served—effective in supporting London's housing delivery and economic growth?
    - c. Are London boroughs adequately empowered and resourced to engage with energy providers and shape energy infrastructure planning?

**Please select those most relevant to your organisation – you do not need to answer all questions.**

**Please feel free to share any other information on this topic you feel would be useful to the Committee.**

### About the Committee

The Planning and Regeneration Committee holds main responsibility for examining the London Plan, the **London Legacy Development Corporation** (LLDC) and the **Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation** (OPDC). Read more about our [previous work](#).

### Committee Members

- **James Small-Edwards (Chairman) (Labour)**
- **Andrew Boff (Deputy Chair) (Conservative)**
- Sem Moema (Labour)
- Elly Baker (Labour)
- Zoë Garbett (Green)
- Shaun Bailey (Conservative)

### Contact

Submissions	<a href="mailto:Scrutiny@london.gov.uk">Scrutiny@london.gov.uk</a> Please send your submissions in a Word document format (not PDF) by 22 August 2025.
-------------	---