

MDA No.: 1866

Title: Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave?

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Planning and Regeneration Committee meetings on 10 March and 10 June 2026, the Committee discussed whether London's homes are ready for a heatwave and resolved that:

Authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with the party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the discussion.

- 1.2 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee has agreed the Committee's report, *Hot Property: how planning can help Londoners beat the heat*, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

- 2.1 **That the Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, agrees the Committee's report, *Hot Property: how planning can help Londoners beat the heat*, as attached at Appendix 1.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Printed Name:

James Small-Edwards AM, Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee

Date:

25 August 2026

3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 The terms of reference for this investigation were agreed by the Chair, following consultation with party Group Lead Members, under the standing authority granted to Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. Officers confirm that the report and its recommendations fall within these terms of reference.
- 3.2 The exercise of delegated authority approving the Committee's report will be formally noted at the Planning and Regeneration Committee's next appropriate meeting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services): L J Harvey

Printed Name: Lauren Harvey

Date: 29 July 2026

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.

Signature (Finance): Not Required

Printed Name:

Date:

Legal Implications:

The Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal): 

Printed Name: Rory McKenna, Monitoring Officer

Date: 24 August 2026

Email: rory.mckenna@london.gov.uk

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Andrew Boff AM; and
- Benali Hamdache AM

4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.
- 4.3 **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, until what date:

Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

Lead Officer / Author

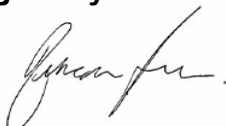
Signature: David Hirst

Printed Name: David Hirst

Job Title: Head of Policy Scrutiny

Date: 14 August 2026

Countersigned by Assistant Director:

Signature: 

Printed Name: Rebecca Arnold, Assistant Director, Committee and Member Services

Date: 24 August 2026

Hot property: how planning can help Londoners beat the heat

Planning and Regeneration Committee

August 2026



Planning and Regeneration Committee



The Planning and Regeneration Committee examines and reports on matters relating to spatial development, planning and regeneration in London and leads scrutiny of the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy (the London Plan). The Committee also has lead responsibility for scrutiny of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation.

Contact us

David Hirst
Head of Policy Scrutiny
David.Hirst@london.gov.uk

William Weihermüller
Policy Officer
William.weihermueller@london.gov.uk

Daniel Zikmund
External Communications Officer
Daniel.Zikmund@london.gov.uk

Lauren Harvey
Committee Services Officer
Lauren.Harvey@london.gov.uk

Contents

Planning and Regeneration Committee	2
Contact us	2
Contents	3
Foreword	4
Executive Summary	6
Recommendations	8
Introduction: Adapting to a hotter London	10
Why London's heat is different	10
Our investigation	11
Chapter 2: Impacts of heat on London's life and economy	13
Heat, health and wellbeing	13
Impact on the economy	15
Hot property	16
Retrofitting London's homes for heat	18
Chapter 3: Managing heat risk in new homes	21
Current standards for overheating in new homes	21
Designing in heat resilience	23
'Airconomics'	27
Assessing building performance	31
Technical Review of Approved Document O	35
Chapter 4: Engaging Londoners about overheating	37
It's BBQ weather!	37
Heatwave warnings	38
Catalysing action towards heat preparedness	40
Committee Activity	41
Other formats and languages	43
Connect with us	44

Foreword



James Small-Edwards AM **Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee**

In 2022 in London, we saw temperatures reach 40 degrees for the first time ever. So far this year, we have had five heatwaves in what is the hottest summer ever recorded. And yet, despite these soaring temperatures now being a permanent fixture of life in our city, homes are still being built with at best ignorance and at worst neglect of this fact.

In recent years, there has been a big push to better insulate existing and new homes to reduce the need to heat them via carbon-emitting boilers, and also to reduce energy bills for households. There has also been a big push in new builds to reduce bills via communal heating systems. This has all been necessary and welcome.

However, where there hasn't been enough of a focus is how we ensure these same homes remain cool in the summer. Tragically, there were 387 heat-related deaths in London in 2022, and Europe now has more heat-related deaths than the US has gun deaths.

This report is aimed squarely at dealing with this epidemic of overheating homes, which is more severe in London than in any other part of the country.

In this investigation, we heard much praise for the cooling hierarchy set out in the 2021 London Plan. But we also heard that new residential buildings were not adopting measures like shading or even including any design features at all that seek to curb overheating.

As a result of this, Londoners have understandably been taking matters into their own hands, with stocks of portable air-conditioning units being depleted this summer.

The recommendations in this report show how we can systematically help Londoners beat the heat, and crucially do so in a way that does not further exacerbate the root cause of this problem: climate change.

We call for the retrofitting of existing homes with passive cooling measures, the protecting of London's ability to set higher overheating standards than national requirements, and the appropriate use of efficient active cooling technologies, among much else.

The problem of overheating is one that unfortunately is not going away and is on track to get worse year on year.

It's a problem, however, for which tried and tested solutions exist. It is now of paramount importance that we are bold enough to adopt them.

Executive Summary

In 2022, London experienced 40-degree heat for the first time. This intense heat was once thought of as impossible in London. Yet, we have heard through this investigation that it could soon become the norm in summer. Indeed, during this investigation temperature records for both May and June were broken, and a three day long red heat warning was in place for parts of the UK.

The impacts of this kind of extreme heat can have wide ranging impacts across health, wellbeing and the economy. In the 2022 heatwave, 387 Londoners died heat-related deaths, the London Fire Brigade had its busiest day since the end of World War 2, and the heatwave is estimated to have cost the city £1.5 billion in lost productivity, health, and other impacts. Evidence through this investigation confirmed these impacts are not felt uniformly across society, with age, income, disability and ethnicity all a factor in someone's vulnerability to overheating.

The scale of this challenge demands a response that matches the risks London now faces. The GLA published its Heat Ready Plan in June 2026. This was described to us as "a call to action" to all partners across London. However, we believe that more radical action is needed to prepare the city for this challenge. As part of this, the GLA should consider what is necessary to eliminate the vast majority of preventable heat-related deaths by 2050 and set an objective for heat related deaths in London to not exceed current levels.

Protecting Londoners from heat risk requires a focus on their homes, which we have heard repeatedly through this investigation are ill-equipped to cope with the temperatures the capital is already experiencing, let alone those projected in future decades. Expert testimony highlighted reports of overheating have increased from around 20 per cent of households in 2011 to 80 per cent in 2022, while 86 per cent of London respondents experienced overheating during 2025, the hottest year on record. The survey evidence we received reinforced these findings, with many Londoners describing homes that no longer provide relief during periods of extreme heat.

Improving the resilience of London's housing will require greater attention at the earliest stages of design through to the management and retrofit of existing homes. We heard from many guests that external shading is an effective way to passively cool homes. This has been reflected in the 2021 London Plan's cooling hierarchy, which calls on developers to exhaust passive measures such as shading and ventilation, before adopting active cooling measures such as air conditioning. Despite this, we heard from many guests that not enough modern buildings in London adopt shading and even include design features that exacerbate overheating. Since the Committee concluded its investigation, the GLA has published a revised draft London Plan for consultation (July 2026). This would introduce a new approach to managing heat risk in Policy GHR4. We note the draft London Plan's greater emphasis on external shading, setting

the expectation that it will be used on windows receiving direct sunlight, and encourage the GLA to support designers by producing accompanying guidance on how to do this.

The growing risk posed by extreme heat in London has also prompted a live debate about the role of air conditioning. There was a broad consensus that a warmer future means that more air conditioning will be required as part of broader heat adaptation strategies. We explored how the planning system might be adapted to ensure that active cooling is adopted sensitively and are pleased to see the changes that are proposed in the draft London Plan. This brings more clarity to how the cooling hierarchy is meant to operate, and air conditioning's role in addressing overheating.

Changes to Building Regulations in 2022 have also introduced approaches that new developments should take to mitigate overheating. Whilst the Committee heard evidence welcoming these changes, there is still more work to be done. There are significant gaps in the document's coverage, a lack of incentivisation, and conflicts between parts of the regulations. We are aware that a technical review is underway and urge the government to expedite the review, to avoid trapping Londoners in unfit homes.

Reforms to the planning system and retrofit programmes, whilst necessary, will be slow to take effect. In the more immediate term, there is an opportunity for the GLA to reduce harm through better communication of the risks posed by extreme heat and the practical steps people can take to protect themselves. The GLA's Heat Ready Plan includes some encouraging commitments to strengthen links with community-led organisations and develop a coordinated public communication strategy for extreme heat. We want to see evidence of how this will work in practice, and how it will work with community groups to co-design messages on heatwave dangers in London.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should set a target to reduce heat-related deaths in London below current levels. This should be followed by a roadmap for achieving this goal.

Recommendation 2

In response to this report, we invite the Government to clarify whether the GLA will be able to continue to set appropriate overheating mitigation requirements in addition to the national Building Regulations, where this is necessary and justified to address local overheating risks.

Recommendation 3

The Government should review the levying of VAT on passive cooling and energy efficient active cooling measures, bringing it in line with the zero-rating of supply and installation of certain energy saving materials.

Recommendation 4

The GLA should produce accompanying guidance for Policy GHR4 of the new London Plan, demonstrating the appropriate use of external shading across different building typologies, including within conservation areas. This guidance should cover retrofitting existing homes as well as new developments.

Recommendation 5

The GLA should review its 'cooling hierarchy' to ensure it reflects the increasing role that active cooling will need to play as London's climate changes. Passive cooling should continue to be prioritised, but the hierarchy should also support the appropriate use of efficient active cooling technologies.

Recommendation 6

The GLA should support the adoption of energy efficient active cooling measures by Londoners as part of a wider cooling retrofit programme, where necessary. As part of this, the GLA should commission research to examine the potential role of reversible air-to-air heat pumps in helping Londoners adapt to increasing overheating risks, including how these could support both efficient cooling and decarbonised heating.

Recommendation 7

The GLA should establish a London-wide overheating monitoring programme by bringing together temperature data and Post Occupancy Evaluation findings from GLA-funded developments, local authorities and housing associations. This evidence should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of Approved Document O and to guide future overheating policy and regulations in London.

Recommendation 8

The Government should use its review of Approved Document O to ensure that overheating requirements apply to all new homes in London, including current gaps relating to Permitted Development Rights and to major retrofit works.

Recommendation 9

The GLA should explore how it could name heatwaves in London, and the impact this would have on public awareness.

Recommendation 10

The GLA should set out, in response to this report, how it is working with community groups to co-design messages on heatwave dangers in London.

Introduction: Adapting to a hotter London

UK temperature records are being broken with increasing frequency. In 2026 alone, temperature records for both May and June were smashed – with only the second ever red heat alert issued in England on 24–26 June. This comes hot on the heels of the heatwaves in 2022, which saw temperatures breach the 40-degree mark for the first time on record, something only made possible by climate change. Current trends suggest that heatwaves exceeding 40 degrees are now 20 times more likely than they were in the 1960s, and that temperatures exceeding 45 degrees may be possible.¹

Why London's heat is different

Londoners often remark that heat in the capital feels different. Visitors from hotter parts of the world can find it surprising that temperatures in the low to mid-30s can have such a profound impact on daily life in London.² However, the Committee heard compelling evidence that London's climate and built environment create distinctive challenges that make periods of extreme heat particularly difficult to manage.

Unlike many warmer countries, the UK has a temperate 'maritime' climate characterised by relatively cool summers punctuated by increasingly frequent periods of intense heat. As Joel Callow (Founding Director, Beyond Carbon) explained:

"We do not have a hot climate. We have a difficult, spiky, maritime climate that requires well-insulated buildings for the winter and well-protected buildings for the summer. We have to form our own route through this problem. There is no direct parallel with others because there is no climate exactly like ours in the world. There are good precedents elsewhere, but there are no precise parallels."³

This challenge is particularly acute in London. The Committee heard that south-east England has experienced some of the most significant increases in hot weather as a result of climate change. In evidence to the Committee, the Met Office highlighted that warm spells have increased from around six days a year in the period of 1961 to 1990, to over 18 days a year between 2008 and 2017.⁴ If this trend continues, the Committee is concerned that within a generation, 40-degree heatwaves could become the norm in summer.

What distinguishes London most, however, is the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect.⁵ Dense concentrations of buildings, roads and other hard surfaces absorb heat during the day and

¹ Climate Change Committee, [A Well-Adapted UK](#) (2026)

² LondonCentric, [Does London heat really feel different](#), page accessed 6 July 2026

³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 6

⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW013](#)

⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

release it slowly overnight, resulting in significantly higher temperatures than in surrounding rural areas.⁶ The Committee heard that this prevents homes from cooling overnight, particularly during periods of so-called tropical nights when temperatures remain above 20°C.

The interaction between London's climate and its urban form means that overheating is a much greater challenge than in many other parts of the country. Survey work undertaken by Dr Mehri Khosravi (Senior Research Fellow, University of East London), for example, found that overheating in homes is at least twice as prevalent in Greater London as in other regions of England.⁷ For millions of Londoners, this means the consequences are not simply confined to the hottest days of summer, with an increasing number of homes struggling to stay cool even outside of heatwaves.

Our investigation

It is against this backdrop that we launched our investigation, *Are London's homes ready for a heatwave?* In doing so, we set out to examine how overheating will affect London's housing stock – and how Londoners experience that – in the short and long term, as a result of climate change. We explored whether new homes being built today will be able to withstand the temperatures forecast for the second half of this century and how planning policy should respond. We also considered if (and how) air conditioning could be utilised to adapt homes. We also wanted to understand how Londoners are being impacted by the heat. So, following the unprecedented spring heatwave, we launched a survey to hear about how Londoners were coping with the heat in their homes. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the survey.

In this investigation, we received 21 written submissions following the call for evidence, which closed on 1 May 2026. We held two formal meetings with a wide range of stakeholders from across the built environment sector, concluding with a session with the Deputy Mayor for Planning and the Fire Service, Jules Pipe CBE and GLA officers from the planning and environment teams. The report also draws on an informal briefing with the Met Office on 1 June and a site visit to the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) where we heard about its work to retrofit the Chobham Manor development to address overheating.

We have found that the scale of the risk from overheating is already significant and growing. Throughout this investigation we heard compelling evidence of the impacts extreme heat is already having on Londoners' health, homes and wellbeing, as well as the wider consequences for London's economy and infrastructure ([chapter 2](#)). We also heard that these impacts are not inevitable. The evidence suggests that much of the harm caused by overheating can be reduced through better building design, targeted retrofit, more effective planning policy and improved public awareness ([chapter 3](#)). The challenge today is not simply about making buildings more resilient. It also requires improving public understanding of heat risk and ensuring Londoners have the information they need to protect themselves, their families and their homes during periods of extreme heat ([chapter 4](#)).

⁶ UKGBC, [How the urban heat island effect makes cities vulnerable to climate change](#) (2022)

⁷ Fatemeh Khosravi et al, [A nation unprepared: extreme heat and the need for adaptation in the United Kingdom](#) (2025)

This report seeks to contribute to the next stage of heat adaptation in London. It sets out how the Committee believes London's response can be strengthened, with recommendations to improve the design of new homes, accelerate the retrofit of existing housing, modernise planning policy, make better use of active cooling where appropriate, and improve public understanding of heat risk. Together, these measures can help ensure London remains a safe, healthy and resilient city as its climate continues to change.

Chapter 2: Impacts of heat on London's life and economy

Extreme heat (heat which creates elevated risks for health, infrastructure and livelihoods) is a significant climate risk for London, with far-reaching consequences for public health, wellbeing, economic productivity and the built environment. In this chapter we examine the impacts of extreme heat on Londoners, why the capital is uniquely vulnerable to overheating, and the evidence that much of London's housing stock is ill-equipped for a warming climate.

Heat, health and wellbeing

Excess deaths

It is not always obvious how heat above 30 degrees in a modern city with access to water and services can result in significant excess deaths. However, during the record breaking 2022 summer heatwaves, 3,271 people died from heat-related deaths in England, roughly twice the number of people who died in road collisions that year.⁸ 387 of these deaths occurred in London.⁹ It is estimated that during the May and June 2026 heatwaves, which occurred during this investigation, more than 2,700 excess deaths occurred.¹⁰

In recent years annual heat-related deaths in England have ranged from around 1,400 to 3,000 people. This range means that it often exceeds annual road accident deaths across the whole of Great Britain (see graph below). The Climate Change Committee (the Government's independent advisors on adapting to climate change) predicts that, without adaptation, this number could rise to as many as 3,000 to 10,000 people each year.¹¹ This would make extreme heat one of the most significant climate-related causes of death in the UK.

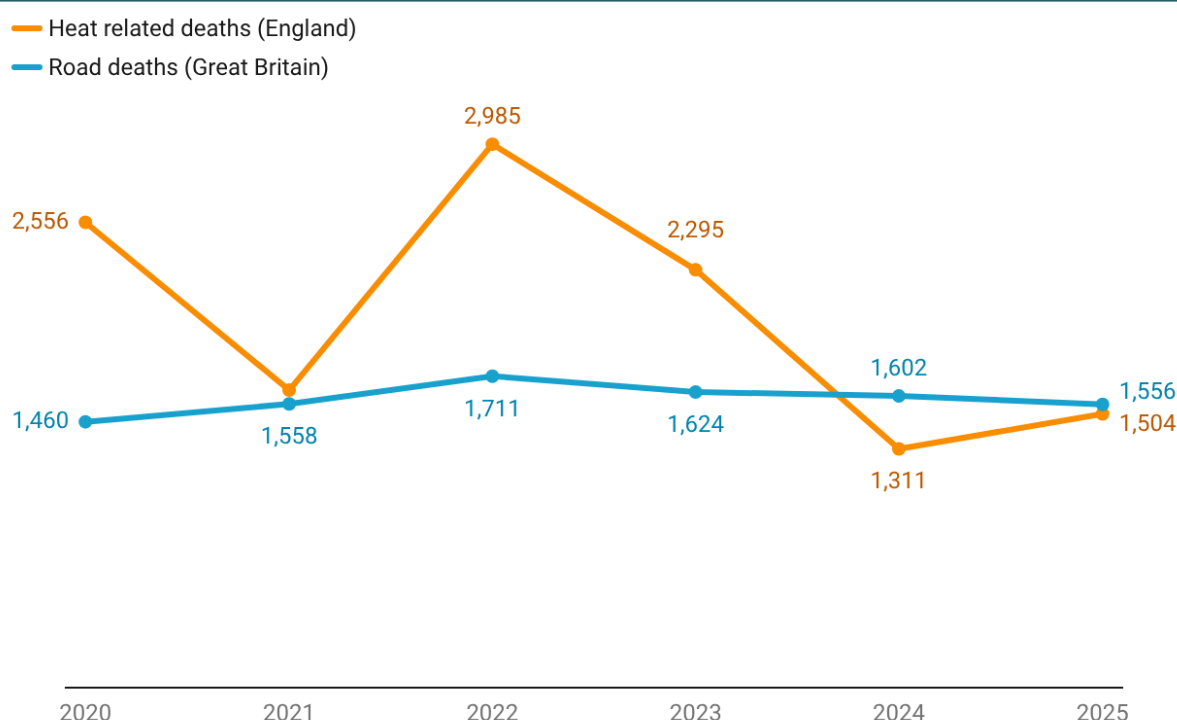
Chart 1: Heat-related deaths (England) compared to road accident deaths (Great Britain)

⁸ Department for Transport, [Reported road casualties Great Britain, annual report: 2022](#) (2023)

⁹ Mayor of London, [The London Climate Resilience Review](#) (2024)

¹⁰ Met Office, [More than 2,700 excess deaths estimated in England and Wales during May and June heatwaves](#), page accessed 27 July 2026

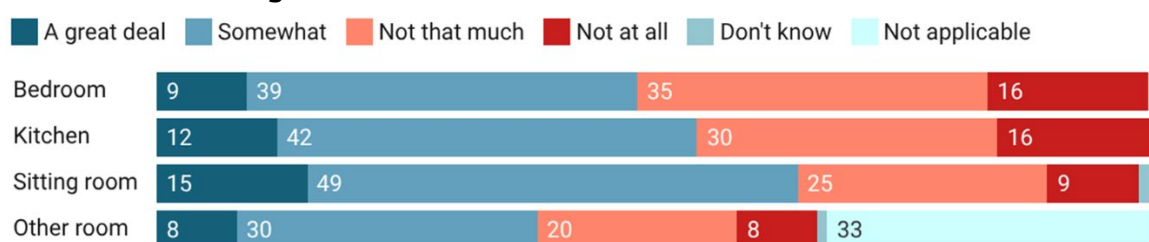
¹¹ Climate Change Committee, [A Well-Adapted UK](#) (2026)



Health & wellbeing

The impacts of heat upon health extend beyond mortality. Extreme heat can cause heat exhaustion or heatstroke. It can also contribute to complications during pregnancy, including increasing the risk of preterm births, and can worsen mental health symptoms, with some evidence suggesting a link to increases in suicides.¹² Extreme heat can exacerbate existing physical and mental health issues. We also heard about the impact of overheating on sleep and mental health, with many Londoners experiencing the worst impacts of heat in their homes and specifically their bedrooms.¹³

Chart 2: Response to the question “To what extent, if at all, are you able to cope with heat in the following locations?”¹⁴



Following the unprecedented late spring heatwave, we launched a survey to hear about how Londoners were coping with the heat in their homes and the impact this was having on their

¹² Climate Change Committee, [Risks to health, wellbeing and productivity from overheating in buildings](#) (2022)

¹³ TalkLondon, [London's risk from rising temperatures](#), page accessed 25 June 2026

¹⁴ TalkLondon, [London's risk from rising temperatures](#), page accessed 25 June 2026

wellbeing. In response, we heard countless examples of Londoners unable to sleep, alongside reports of negative impacts on their mental and, in some cases, physical health.

Evidence through this investigation confirmed these impacts are not felt uniformly across society. As Polly Turton (Head of Climate Action and Public Health, Shade the UK) put it: “[heat is] an overlay on existing inequalities and inequity”,¹⁵ with age, income, disability and ethnicity all a factor in someone’s vulnerability to overheating.

Impact on the economy

Matthew Scott (Policy Manager, Chartered Institute of Housing) told the Committee that “People need a safe space to go home if they are to contribute to the economy and to society”.¹⁶ Without this, Mr Scott told us there can be knock-on effects on the economy.

“Our flat is too hot to sleep in. This is making me feel exhausted, anxious and depressed. My partner and I are trying to have a baby but I’m scared of what it will be like to be pregnant in such an overheated flat.”
Survey response

In a 2 degrees warming scenario, reductions in productivity due to heat could cost London around 0.4 per cent of its economic output during warm years.¹⁷ The Met Office told us that the UK may see an average of 15 million days of outdoor work lost to heat-stress, resulting in more than £1.5 billion in economic losses in a 2 degree warmer world.¹⁸ Extreme heat can also have direct impacts on infrastructure and revenues. For example, during the July 2022 heatwave TfL lost £8.4 million in revenue across its operations in just one week.¹⁹

Chart 3: Baseline and future baseline heat-related productivity loss result for an extreme year (£m)²⁰

¹⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 17

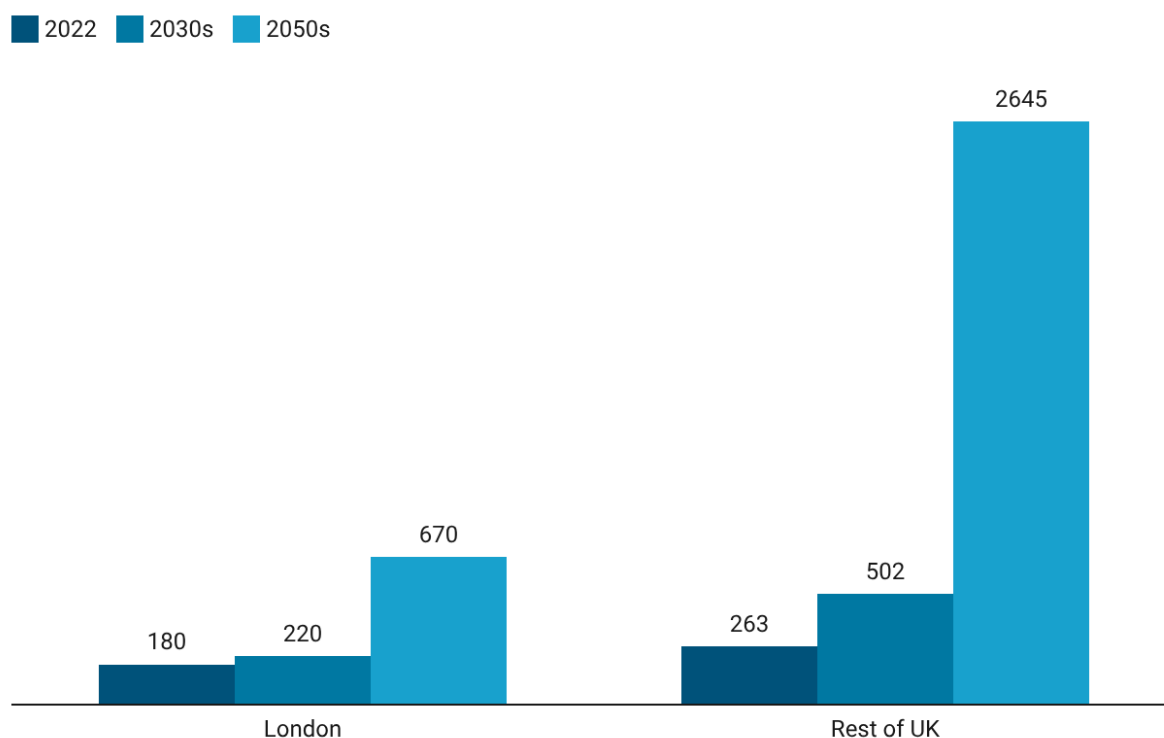
¹⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 1

¹⁷ Climate Change Committee, [Risks to health, wellbeing and productivity from overheating in buildings](#) (2022)

¹⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW013](#)

¹⁹ Mayor of London, [The London Climate Resilience Review](#) (2024)

²⁰ ARUP, [Heat risk and adaptation in the urban built environment](#) (2026)



Heat in London has wide ranging impacts across health, wellbeing and the economy. However, our investigation has revealed that London's homes may be exacerbating these impacts.

Hot property

For many Londoners, the impacts of extreme heat are experienced primarily at home. The average person spends about 80 to 90 per cent of their time indoors, and a significant amount of this time is spent at home.²¹

During the summer, home should be a shelter from the worst impacts of heat, allowing Londoners to recover in a cool, shaded environment. However, we heard throughout this investigation that for many, this is not the case.

²¹ UK Parliament POST, [Indoor Air Quality](#) (2023)

“During the recent May heatwave, my flat became uncomfortably and, at times, worryingly hot. I live in a new-build flat in Walthamstow, and the internal temperature was often approaching 30°C. This made the flat very difficult to live in during the day and very difficult to sleep in at night [...] The flat does not seem designed to stay safe or comfortable during periods of extreme heat. I found the experience physically uncomfortable and stressful.”
Survey response

Guests consistently told the Committee that much of London's housing stock is ill-equipped to cope with the temperatures the capital is already experiencing, let alone those projected in future decades. In its evidence, Be First, Barking and Dagenham's regeneration company, stated:

“London's housing stock is not yet adequately prepared for current overheating risks, or the risk of future projected intense and frequent heat events. While recent policy improvements have strengthened standards for new homes, homes resilient to current and future heat risk form a minority of the current stock of homes.”²²

This assessment is reflected in survey evidence. Research by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the University of East London found that the proportion of UK households reporting overheating increased from around 20 per cent in 2011 to 80 per cent in 2022. During 2025, the hottest year on record, 86 per cent of London respondents reported experiencing overheating in their homes.²³

The Committee heard that overheating affects both older and newer homes, although often for different reasons. Older homes may struggle because of poor insulation, limited shading or a lack of previous investment. By contrast, **guests expressed particular concern about the overheating risk posed by many modern developments.**

Several guests argued that contemporary design trends are inadvertently increasing overheating risk. Large areas of glazing, limited opportunities for natural ventilation and communal heating systems can all contribute to higher indoor temperatures.^{24 25} Survey data collected by Dr Mehri Khosravi (Senior Research Fellow, University of East London) found that 46 per cent of respondents living in homes built before 1900 reported overheating, compared with 81 per cent of those living in homes built after 1990.²⁶ Similarly, analysis by Peabody identified new-build flats on the middle and upper floors of developments in central and inner London as among the

²² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW002](#)

²³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

²⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW004](#)

²⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW010](#)

²⁶ Fatemeh Khosravi et al, [A nation unprepared: Extreme heat and the need for adaptation in the United Kingdom](#) (2025)

homes at greatest risk because of limited ventilation and high internal heat gains.²⁷ The overheating risks facing new homes are considered in greater detail in Chapter 3.

“ I live in a new building block of flats which is designed to be energy efficient and it does a great job in the winter as I rarely have to put my heating on. In the spring and summer my flat is regularly 26C minimum and often at 30C plus. It's always much warmer in my flat than outside. The building has been so poorly designed its untrue. There is no facility to let out the heat that gathers in the building. We have floor to ceiling windows with massive solar gain in all flats and in some common areas in the building. I have had to buy an air con unit to cope. ”

Survey response

Finally, the Committee heard that overheating is experienced across every housing tenure, but that some groups face greater barriers to adapting their homes. Overcrowded households were identified as being at high risk by the National Housing Federation.²⁸ Polly Turton (Head of Climate Action and Public Health, Shade the UK) told the Committee that an estimated 75 per cent of London's social housing stock is at high risk of overheating, placing more than one million children at increased risk during periods of extreme heat.²⁹

Taken together, the evidence presented to the Committee suggests that overheating is not confined to a small number of poorly performing buildings. Rather, it is a systemic challenge affecting homes across London's housing stock. While the causes vary between older and newer homes, the Committee heard consistently that improving the resilience of London's housing will require greater attention at the earliest stages of design through to the management and retrofit of existing homes.

Retrofitting London's homes for heat

The vast majority of homes that will provide Londoners shelter from the increasing heat of the 2030s and beyond have already been built. Ensuring that existing homes can cope with rising temperatures is therefore essential to reducing future heat risk. The UK's Climate Change Committee recommends that investments of £11 billion per year until 2050 are needed from the public and private sectors to prepare the UK for climate change. 35 per cent of this investment is required for active and passive cooling retrofit.³⁰

The Committee heard that tenants in social and private rented housing can face particular barriers to adapting their homes. Organisations including Shade the UK and the Chartered

²⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW016](#)

²⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW014](#)

²⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 6

³⁰ Climate Change Committee, [A Well Adapted UK](#) (2026)

Institute of Housing highlighted that many renters lack the financial ability or authority to install measures such as external shading or improve ventilation.³¹ This is particularly challenging where landlords have limited incentives to invest in measures that primarily benefit tenants.

Historically, retrofit funding has focused on reducing energy demand and carbon emissions, with limited support available for overheating adaptation. David Stronge (Design Director, Peabody) argued that the siloed nature of grant funding creates incentives to only focus on particular issues and advocated for funding streams to be brought together to encourage owners to look at the overall performance of a building.³² The Chartered Institute of Housing similarly advocated for more “inclusive finance” to support adaptation, integrating overheating adaptation into existing retrofit funding schemes.³³

It is therefore welcome to see the Government’s Warm Homes Plan (2026) refers to “year-round thermal comfort”.³⁴ So too, that the GLA and London Councils will be piloting shutters and awnings as part of their retrofit programme of 12,000 social, private rented and low-income owner occupied homes under the Warmer Homes London Plan.³⁵ The Committee encourages the GLA to embed overheating adaptation within wider retrofit activity, ensuring that measures designed to improve energy efficiency also support Londoners to remain safe and comfortable during periods of extreme heat.

How the GLA is responding to heat

Following the 2022 heatwaves, the GLA commissioned a series of studies examining overheating, cooling roofs³⁶, vulnerable properties³⁷, London’s resilience³⁸, and emergency preparedness.³⁹

One of the core recommendations of the GLA’s London Climate Resilience Review was to develop a strategic, London-wide, action plan on heat risk.⁴⁰ The GLA began work on the Plan in December 2024, consulting with stakeholders and Londoners between March and September 2025.⁴¹ In evidence to the Committee, the Plan was described by Dan Bicknell (GLA Climate Adaptation Manager) as “a call to action”.⁴²

³¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, LHW003 and [LHW018](#)

³² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 19

³³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

³⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 8

³⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW007](#)

³⁶ Mayor of London, [Roofs Designed to Cool Report](#) (2023)

³⁷ Mayor of London, [Properties Vulnerable to Heat Impact Report](#) (2024)

³⁸ Mayor of London, [The London Climate Resilience Review](#) (2024)

³⁹ Mayor of London, [Exercise Helios: An Extreme Heat Exercise for London Post Exercise Report](#) (2025)

⁴⁰ Mayor of London, [The London Climate Resilience Review](#) (2024)

⁴¹ TalkLondon, [London’s risk from rising temperatures](#), page accessed 8 July 2026

⁴² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 2](#), page 7

The GLA published the Plan in the middle of the record-breaking June 2026 heatwave. We can see the Plan sets out 37 priority areas for action, covering six key sectors, including the built environment. The Plan's seven actions targeted at partners in the built environment include retrofitting the highest-risk homes and non-residential buildings with shutters, insulation and air conditioning, installing outdoor shading, ensuring new buildings are designed for heat resilience, and protecting heritage buildings from heat-induced damage.⁴³

The plan calls on delivery partners to deliver these actions and states that the GLA will work with them to secure commitments, scale actions that are already working and improve coordination.⁴⁴

We welcome the intent of the plan but would like to see the GLA go further in stating its ambitions on overheating. Given the severity of the impacts of extreme heat on London's economy, productivity and the health of its citizens, we believe that radical action is needed to prepare the city's built environment. The GLA should consider what is necessary to eliminate the vast majority of preventable heat-related deaths by 2050. At a minimum, the GLA should set an objective that heat-related deaths in London do not exceed current levels.

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should set a target to reduce heat-related deaths in London below current levels. This should be followed by a roadmap for achieving this goal.

⁴³ Mayor of London, [Heat Ready London](#) (2026)

⁴⁴ Mayor of London, [Heat Ready London](#) (2026)

Chapter 3: Managing heat risk in new homes

The actions needed to protect Londoners from overheating at home are already known and widely publicised. Buildings that integrate shading, are well orientated, allow for ventilation, and, when necessary, active cooling, are often more comfortable for residents than buildings without those features.⁴⁵ Natural shading such as trees, green spaces, and “blue infrastructure” such as rivers, can also lessen the impact of the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, creating a cooler environment. Polly Turton told the Committee that one tree can lead to as much as an eight degree reduction in temperature in the surrounding area.⁴⁶

“ [My experience during the May heatwave was] Not too bad, but my house has excellent through ventilation, plantation shutters for sun protection and is shaded by street trees. ”

Survey response

Yet, we have heard throughout this investigation that there are too many examples in London of new developments not incorporating these tried and tested design adaptations. As Dr Tom Dollard (Partner – Sustainability and Innovation at Pollard Thomas Edwards) observed, “In the last ten, 20 years, the homes built, especially flats [...] are nearly all overheating.”⁴⁷ In this chapter, we examine whether the current planning and building standards are sufficient to manage overheating risk in new homes, the evidence on where these measures are falling short, and the changes needed to ensure new housing is resilient to extreme heat.

Current standards for overheating in new homes

In London, a combination of local borough plans, the London Plan, Building Regulations (specifically Part O), and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guide decisions over what is granted permission to be built. Within these documents there are specific requirements intended to mitigate the risks of overheating:

- The **London Plan** sets the economic, environmental, transport and social framework for development in London. Policy SI 4 ‘Managing Heat Risk’ sets out the Plan’s approach to mitigating overheating in the city.⁴⁸ Part A of the policy states that development proposals should minimise adverse impacts on the urban heat island through design, layout, orientation, materials, and the incorporation of green infrastructure. Part B

⁴⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW015](#),

⁴⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 4

⁴⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 2](#), page 9

⁴⁸ Mayor of London, [The London Plan](#) (2021)

establishes the cooling hierarchy, which developers should follow to demonstrate that designs limit overheating through passive first approaches.

- Approved Document O (ADO) came into effect in June 2022. This sets out the requirements designers should meet to mitigate overheating in new residential buildings, in compliance with Part O of the Government's **Building Regulations**.⁴⁹
- The Government's **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** addresses overheating in new homes by requiring the planning system to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts (paragraph 161).⁵⁰

The London Plan was one of the first planning frameworks in England to address overheating comprehensively, and many of its principles have since been adopted in national policy. Since 2008, it has included policies on overheating, and modelling of overheating was introduced to the London Plan in 2016 – six years before it came into force for the rest of the UK via Part O of Building Regulations.⁵¹ This has meant London took a leading role in testing and establishing the TM59 methodology for assessing a building's risk of overheating, which has since been incorporated into national Building Regulations.⁵²

Yet, in 2025 the Government proposed changes to the NPPF that would remove the ability of the London Plan to set its own overheating policy.⁵³ Policy PM13: Setting Standards of the revised NPPF would block local development plans from setting standards that are already addressed by Building Regulations except in the case of accessibility and water efficiency.⁵⁴ Since overheating is covered by Part O of the Building Regulations, the London Plan would be prevented from including policies intended to address overheating.

This change was highlighted as a point of concern across much of the evidence we received. Given the scale of the climate risks London faces, specifically the urban heat island effect and London's position in the warmer Southeast, we heard that London required tighter overheating standards than other parts of the UK.⁵⁵ Accordingly, Matthew Scott (Policy Manager, Chartered Institute of Housing) argued that overheating should be added to the list of exemptions to PM13, allowing the GLA to set London's own overheating standards.⁵⁶

In its response to the Government's consultation on changes to the NPPF, the GLA stated that "London must go further than might be appropriate in areas that do not have the same scale of

⁴⁹ HM Government, [Overheating: Approved Document O](#) (2021)

⁵⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2024)

⁵¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#) and London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW020](#)

⁵² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW020](#)

⁵³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system](#), page accessed 26 June 2026

⁵⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system](#), page accessed 26 June 2026

⁵⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

⁵⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 6

challenges” when it comes to overheating.⁵⁷ When we questioned the Deputy Mayor, Jules Pipe CBE, on the then proposed changes to the NPPF, he reiterated the GLA’s position, stating that if the new NPPF is published before the next London Plan, this would be an area where the GLA would continue to push for different policies.⁵⁸

In August 2026 the revised NPPF was published with PM13 still in place. The government response to the consultation stated that a majority of respondents had expressed concern about the impact of the policy on a range of areas, including overheating.⁵⁹ In response to these concerns energy efficiency was added to the list of exemptions where local authorities could continue to set local standards.⁶⁰

The fear we have is that by removing the ability to set these standards locally will put Londoners at greater risk of overheating. It is not yet clear that the revisions to PM13 would provide London with the capacity to address the increased risk of homes overheating. The Government could have listed overheating as a specific ‘matter’ alongside the other exemptions, which would have made it unambiguous that enhanced overheating standards could be set locally. But it hasn’t. We therefore continue to share the GLA’s concerns about the limits that PM13 would impose on its ability to develop policies that could protect Londoners from the worst of the effects of overheating. The challenges facing London in regard to overheating are of a different scale to much of the rest of the country. As such, our homes require bespoke policies to enhance their heat resilience.

Recommendation 2

In response to this report, we invite the Government to clarify whether the GLA will be able to continue to set appropriate overheating mitigation requirements in addition to the national Building Regulations, where this is necessary and justified to address local overheating risks.

Designing in heat resilience

The ‘cooling hierarchy’ and passive cooling

The London Plan sets out a “cooling hierarchy” to encourage new developments to adopt passive cooling measures, as opposed to active measures such as air conditioning.⁶¹ The hierarchy encourages applicants to follow a process of prioritisation for cooling measures, with passive cooling being at the top of the hierarchy. Passive measures are approaches to cooling

⁵⁷ Mayor of London, [Mayoral responses to government consultations](#), page accessed 28 June 2026

⁵⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 2](#), page 5

⁵⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation](#) (2026)

⁶⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation](#) (2026)

⁶¹ Mayor of London, [The London Plan](#) (2021)

which do not require mechanical or electrical input. These include urban trees, green roofs, shading and permeable paving.⁶² The GLA told the Committee the purpose of the cooling hierarchy is to:

“[M]itigate overheating risk using passive measures first, before considering any active measures. This is the same approach taken to reduce energy consumption for heating, where homes are designed to reduce heat loss first, reducing heating and ultimately the cost of energy bills to the consumer for winter comfort.”⁶³

The Committee heard strong evidence in support of the passive first approach. Polly Turton told the Committee that, “there is a tried-and-tested way of ensuring thermal comfort for the majority of homes and flats in London: external shade. I cannot stress enough how effective it is at blocking unwanted heat and solar gain.”⁶⁴ In this context, external shade includes shutters, outdoor blinds and awnings. Even with more active cooling, well designed passive cooling would continue to play a significant role in protecting Londoners from the worst impacts of heat. Particularly when active cooling fails, or as seen in recent cases, is made unavailable to some residents.⁶⁵

Yet, despite its effectiveness, external shading remains the exception rather than the norm in London. As Polly Turton said, “We should be seeing external shading much more often on our new build flats and homes in London.”⁶⁶ We explored the reasons for this with guests. However, since the Committee concluded its investigation, the GLA has published a revised draft London Plan for consultation (July 2026).⁶⁷ This would introduce a new approach to managing heat risk in Policy GHR4. The Committee has not had the opportunity to test our guests’ views on that proposed policy. What follows therefore is an assessment of the cooling hierarchy and the principles behind this as it pertains to the GLA’s proposed new approach.

The cost of passive cooling for developers

We heard many buildings are still being developed without adequate passive cooling due to a lack of enforcement of the GLA’s ‘cooling hierarchy’. Dr Tom Dollard told the Committee that designers often jump straight to ventilation with only a “notional nod to the more passive measures such as reducing window elevations and shading”.⁶⁸ Similarly, Islington Council highlighted that at planning stage, it often sees applicants “claim that passive measures have been exhausted but provide limited evidence to demonstrate this.”⁶⁹

⁶² LSE Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, [Resilient net zero: Exploring low-emission cooling solutions to extreme heat](#) (2025)

⁶³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW007](#)

⁶⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 11

⁶⁵ The Standard, [Homeless families moved out of block where air con was switched off during heatwave](#), page accessed 11 August 2026

⁶⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 11

⁶⁷ Mayor of London, [Draft London Plan \(2026\)](#), page accessed 21 July 2026

⁶⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 2

⁶⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW010](#)

We also heard that the incentives to address overheating do not currently align across the housing sector, with developers' commercial interests varying according to whether they retain ownership and management of homes over the long term. Passive cooling systems can have higher upfront costs as they create design complexities and can be expensive to install.⁷⁰

For developers like Peabody, which maintain control of developments, investing in passive cooling can make financial sense. Homes that frequently overheat are harder to let, more likely to generate complaints and maintenance costs, and risk losing value as long-term assets. David Stronge told the Committee that his team at Peabody is making the argument internally that the upfront cost of integrating better cooling more than offsets the future cost of retrofitting a property in ten to thirty years' time.⁷¹

By contrast, developers that do not expect to retain long-term responsibility for homes face weaker incentives to invest in passive cooling. In written evidence, L&Q argued that passive measures are costly, particularly when balanced against other requirements in the Building Regulations, and warned that without additional funding, social and affordable housing providers will be unable to mitigate overheating through passive design while continuing to meet building safety requirements.⁷² L&Q called for any increased requirements to assess or mitigate overheating to be matched by increased funding commitments to ensure that schemes remain viable.⁷³

Passive cooling measures and design

Even where designers want to incorporate passive measures such as external shading, they can face barriers beyond cost and technical considerations. We heard that one reason shading is often omitted from initial designs is the perception that it is not in keeping with London's architectural character. Joel Callow (Founding Director, Beyond Carbon) told the Committee that it is difficult to convince planners to allow external shading on buildings in London as "it does not look like a British building".⁷⁴

Since 2022, designers have also had to comply with Approved Document O of the Government's Building Regulations. This document sets out the requirements designers should meet to mitigate overheating in new residential buildings. However, the Committee heard evidence that compliance with Approved Document O does not necessarily result in homes that remain comfortable during extreme heat. Guests suggested that buildings designed to meet the minimum requirements may still overheat as temperatures continue to rise.⁷⁵

Overheating standards for the future

⁷⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW012](#)

⁷¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 6

⁷² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW012](#)

⁷³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW012](#)

⁷⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 3

⁷⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#) and [LHW014](#)

Our guests expressed a broader concern that current approaches to overheating by designers focus too heavily on achieving compliance with existing standards, rather than designing buildings that will remain resilient over their full lifespan. As Antonietta Canta (Associate, Buildings Decarbonisation and Climate Adaptation Team, Arup London) told the Committee, buildings are designed “for compliance rather than for performance”.⁷⁶

Many of the homes being built today will still be occupied in 100 years' time. As London's climate changes, homes designed only to meet today's minimum standards may require costly retrofitting or risk becoming unsuitable for occupation. The North Atlantic Urban Climate Action Group's evidence warned that this could leave parts of London's housing stock as stranded assets.⁷⁷

To begin to tackle this overheating should be treated as “an early design parameter, not a late-stage compliance check.”⁷⁸ Whilst planning and building regulations can set standards for the industry to meet, there needs to be a sea change in the way that designers consider overheating. In this context, the Committee also welcomes the work of the Good Homes Alliance, a partner organisation across the built environment industry, including setting the example of considering overheating early on in the design process.⁷⁹

The evidence presented to the Committee through this investigation suggests that overheating is not simply an unavoidable consequence of climate change, but is often influenced by design decisions. Designers, developers and planning authorities should therefore give greater priority to passive cooling measures from the outset.

The current London Plan's encouragement of passive cooling was correct but has not resulted in nearly enough change. We therefore welcome the draft London Plan's greater emphasis on external shading, setting the expectation that it will be used on windows receiving direct sunlight.

However, for this expectation to be met, there needs to be more guidance on how shading can be integrated into designs. The GLA should support designers by producing guidance demonstrating how external shading and other passive cooling measures can be sensitively integrated, including into historic and listed buildings, as well as conservation areas. As Elliot Kemp (Policy Team Leader, London Plan, GLA) told the Committee, an industry shift is needed in terms of design standards in order for passive measures to more effectively and cheaply be included in designs.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 12-13

⁷⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW019](#)

⁷⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW019](#)

⁷⁹ Good Homes Alliance, [Overheating in New Homes](#), page accessed 6 July 2026

⁸⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 2](#), page 5-6

Financial support may also be necessary to encourage installation of these measures. As we heard on the Committee's site visit to Chobham Manor in the Olympic Park, financial conditions may be impacting the viability of retrofit and new builds.

One route to reducing these costs is by looking at VAT. Presently, VAT can be zero-rated for the supply and installation of certain energy saving materials, including on air-to-air heat pumps, which we look at it in the next section.⁸¹ Yet, shading and other passive design measures are not included on this list. In 2024, our predecessor Committee called on the Government to look at whether VAT could be exempted on retrofit projects to make projects more viable.⁸² Given the challenging economic conditions and slim financial margins many developers are operating under, we feel there would be merit in looking at how VAT relief could be applied to the supply and installation of passive design measures.

Recommendation 3

The Government should review the levying of VAT on passive cooling and energy efficient active cooling measures, bringing it in line with the zero-rating of supply and installation of certain energy saving materials.

Recommendation 4

The GLA should produce accompanying guidance for Policy GHR4 of the new London Plan, demonstrating the appropriate use of external shading across different building typologies, including within conservation areas. This guidance should cover retrofitting existing homes as well as new developments.

'Airconomics'

In this investigation, we wanted to understand why fewer British homes have air conditioning than in other northern European countries. And whether that will need to change in the future. In so doing, we heard a range of views on what role such 'active cooling' ought to play within London's wider approach to managing overheating.

Some guests told us that air conditioning should be avoided, given that it risks locking homeowners and buildings into an expensive and inflexible solution. Instead, we heard that the emphasis needed to be on encouraging passive cooling measures in the cooling hierarchy. Dr Anastasia Mylona (Technical Director, Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers) neatly summarised these views in her response to the Committee's questions on whether we should make installing air conditioning easier. She told us:

⁸¹ HM Revenue and Customs, [Energy-saving materials and heating equipment \(VAT Notice 708/6\)](#), page accessed 19 August 2026

⁸² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Retrofit vs Rebuild – reducing the impact of London's built environment](#) (2024)

“No, passive measures first, but what we should be also looking at is alternatives to air conditioning because, once you have put air conditioning everywhere, then you make the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect much worse. You make it much more difficult for those without air conditioning to survive the city, to walk in the city, and to reduce any energy for cooling.”⁸³

In contrast, other guests urged the Committee to consider the role that air conditioning could play in mitigating serious health risks in heatwave conditions, where passive and active measures are doing different jobs.⁸⁴ Some passive measures such as ventilation do not work when outdoor temperatures are higher than indoor temperatures. This was the case during the heatwaves in May and June 2026 when London experienced a run of so-called ‘tropical nights’ where temperatures did not fall below 20 degrees.⁸⁵ In such circumstances, only active cooling can reduce temperatures in people’s homes, and the associated risks.

We also heard that active cooling is being adopted in London, often in the form of cheap, energy inefficient, portable systems – and at pace. In evidence to the Committee, the Chartered Institute of Housing cited figures on ownership of air conditioning nationally, which have risen from around three per cent in 2011 to 23 per cent in 2023. In London, it put the figure as high as 32 per cent of households, roughly three times higher than in many other areas of the UK.⁸⁶ As of July 2026, stocks of portable air conditioning units nationwide were depleted⁸⁷, with air con demand more broadly reaching ‘unprecedented’ levels⁸⁸. The reality is households are taking matters into their own hands, and doing so often in the most energy inefficient ways.

Given these developments, Dr Anna Mavrogianni (Professor of Sustainable, Healthy and Equitable Built Environment, Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources, UCL) argued that the debate should be reframed around “how we intervene in the system and integrate active cooling in a way that protects those most vulnerable people and, at the same time, reduces carbon emissions.”⁸⁹ This was reflected in the findings of the Climate Change Committee’s May 2026 report, *A Well Adapted UK*. In this report, it said the intensity of future heatwaves means that it is now necessary to plan for more active cooling, highlighting that rolling out active cooling to the most vulnerable households could avoid significant increases in heat-related mortality.⁹⁰

These questions are reflected in the London Plan’s cooling hierarchy, which sets out the Mayor’s approach to managing overheating.⁹¹ The cooling hierarchy encourages the use of

⁸³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 1

⁸⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 8

⁸⁵ Met Office, [June 2026 heatwave: A recap of the temperature records](#)

⁸⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#),

⁸⁷ The I Paper, [Portable air con units sell out in UK stores – but are they worth the money?](#) (2025)

⁸⁸ BBC News, [Air con demand ‘unprecedented’ as stocks run low](#) (2026)

⁸⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 8

⁹⁰ Climate Change Committee, [A Well-Adapted UK](#) (2026)

⁹¹ Mayor of London, [The London Plan](#) (2021)

passive and low-energy strategies to minimise the risk of internal overheating and reduce dependence on active cooling systems, such as air conditioning. However, it makes no explicit reference to vulnerability or to the role active cooling may play in protecting those most at risk during extreme heat.

In practice, there is relatively limited use of active cooling in new residential developments. The GLA's 2024 energy monitoring report notes that of the 125 developments reviewed, "active cooling was proposed in only 8 out of 82 cases". Meaning 90 per cent of residential developments did not include cooling.⁹²

Guests disagreed on whether this reflects the hierarchy working as intended or whether it risks discouraging the use of active cooling where it may be appropriate. Ed Hezlet (Head of Energy, Centre for British Progress) argued that the concept of a hierarchy is unhelpful and called for the removal of any "explicitly anti-active cooling language" whilst maintaining a certain level of prioritisation for passive cooling strategies.⁹³ Dr Mavrogianni stated that better integrating active cooling in the London Plan, whilst still prioritising passive cooling solutions, would send a "strong message that a more holistic approach is required towards climate resilience and design."⁹⁴

The GLA's evidence to the Committee maintained that the current stance on active cooling "does not limit its use; it aims to reduce the amount required to be used through good design."⁹⁵ While this may be the intention, the Committee's visit to Chobham Manor illustrated that where homes overheat, residents will seek ways to cool them regardless of planning policy through installing active and passive cooling systems.

This raises an important question about whether the London Plan should do more to standardise the adoption of passive cooling measures and shape how active cooling is adopted. One of the principal concerns raised during the investigation was that an unplanned expansion of air conditioning could widen inequalities in who is able to stay cool. The growing use of inexpensive, energy-inefficient portable air conditioning units is likely to exacerbate this, both because of their high running costs and because they expel heat into the public realm, contributing to higher outdoor temperatures.

The Mayor should be driving the adoption of passive cooling measures in both new builds and existing stock, while also shaping the growing role active cooling will inevitably play as London's climate changes.

A number of written submissions to this investigation suggested exploring how active cooling could be deployed to protect vulnerable households. The GLA's own Heat Plan similarly

⁹² GLA, [2024 Energy Monitoring Report, 10 March 2026](#), page 8

⁹³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 12

⁹⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready For a Heatwave? – Panel 2](#), 10 March 2026, page 12

⁹⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW007](#)

suggests that air conditioning should be considered in high-risk homes occupied by vulnerable residents.⁹⁶

The Committee supports the principle of protecting those most at risk from extreme heat. However, it is concerned that a policy focused solely on vulnerable households may prove difficult to implement and does not address the widespread uptake of inefficient portable air conditioning already taking place. We therefore welcome the draft London Plan's updated approach, which better reflects the circumstances in which active cooling is appropriate and does not target air conditioning solely to vulnerable Londoners.⁹⁷

Throughout the investigation, a number of guests identified reversible air-to-air heat pumps as an option that should be further explored. Many guests at the Committee's first meeting spoke positively about air-to-air heat pumps' ability to provide both heating and energy-efficient cooling. Matthew Scott told the Committee that recent evidence suggests that this type of cooling is particularly suitable for flats, making them a good option for many Londoners.⁹⁸ Joel Callow similarly highlighted their energy efficiency, stating that "if you can connect and you can power your kettle, you can definitely power your exhaust air heat pump for heating and cooling in winter and summer."⁹⁹

The Committee recognises, however, that further evidence is needed to understand how these systems perform in practice, including their costs to residents. Jules Pipe CBE told the Committee that there remains an active debate about the effectiveness of reversible air-to-air heat pumps, particularly in relation to affordability.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the Government's decision in November 2025 to include air-to-air heat pumps within the Boiler Upgrade Scheme was welcomed by a number of guests, including Ed Hezlet and Dr Anna Mavrogianni, as well as by the National Housing Federation in its written submission to the Committee.¹⁰¹ As temperatures continue to rise, we believe that this provides an important opportunity to accelerate the deployment of technologies that can deliver both low-carbon heating and efficient cooling.

Recommendation 5

The GLA should review its 'cooling hierarchy' to ensure it reflects the increasing role that active cooling will need to play as London's climate changes. Passive cooling

⁹⁶ Mayor of London, [Heat Ready London](#) (2026)

⁹⁷ Mayor of London, [Draft London Plan \(2026\)](#), page accessed 21 July 2026

⁹⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 14

⁹⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 14

¹⁰⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 2](#), page 6

¹⁰¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 16, London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW014](#)

should continue to be prioritised, but the hierarchy should also support the appropriate use of efficient active cooling technologies.¹⁰²

Recommendation 6

The GLA should support the adoption of energy efficient active cooling measures by Londoners as part of a wider cooling retrofit programme. As part of this, the GLA should commission research to examine the potential role of reversible air-to-air heat pumps in helping Londoners adapt to increasing overheating risks, including how these could support both efficient cooling and decarbonised heating.

Assessing building performance

There was broad support from our guests for the Government's introduction of Approved Document O (ADO) of the Building Regulations.¹⁰³ Yet, we also heard that there is uncertainty across the industry about how buildings constructed to meet these new standards are performing in the real world.

Part of this is explained by the fact that ADO only came into force in summer 2022. Many of the buildings that would have been completed since then would likely have been designed before the new regulations came into effect. In evidence to the Committee, L&Q wrote that more time is required to see how ADO is working in practice.¹⁰⁴

Even so, we heard the industry already has specific concerns regarding both the modelling and data collection on building performance.

TM59 modelling

A key component of ADO is the TM59 assessment. This is a methodology used to model and assess the overheating risk of a building, which is managed by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). Dr Anastasia Mylona (Technical Director at CIBSE) described to us how this methodology works:

“TM59 is a calculation methodology using dynamic simulation models. By definition, there are a lot of assumptions going into that, including how the building is going to be occupied, what weather file you are going to use, weather profile, systems, etc, all of it. When you are running that model, you cannot predict overheating, because none of your assumptions are going to be accurate.

What you can do is assess which of the design options you are considering are more effective. You are testing three different types of shading, which one is more effective.

¹⁰² Benali Hamdache AM does not agree with the basis of this recommendation. Benali believes the cooling hierarchy is sound, but is poorly understood and applied by local authorities and developers. Addressing this should be the focus of the Mayor's efforts.

¹⁰³ Hm Government, [Overheating: Approved Document O](#) (2021)

¹⁰⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW012](#)

You are testing three different types of systems, which one, or opening windows. You compare between options and you choose the one that is more effective.”¹⁰⁵

However, we heard through this investigation that the current TM59 assessment may be underestimating some real world factors that can contribute to overheating. Joel Callow commented that the ‘weather files’ (models representing future climate scenarios) used to make the assessments only require designers to “test it against what is quite a mild climate. It does not test future climates. It does not test heatwaves.”¹⁰⁶ The North Atlantic Urban Climate Action Group also raised concerns that a focus on building-scale compliance through TM59 does not sufficiently account for the surrounding environment, as well as the cumulative impacts of factors such as air flow, vegetation, water, and a changing urban form. This can lead to homes becoming increasingly vulnerable to heat over time.¹⁰⁷

Since the Committee concluded its evidence sessions, CIBSE has published the revised TM59 methodology.¹⁰⁸ The Committee welcomes this update and considers it an important step towards ensuring overheating assessments more accurately reflect the risks faced by residents. However, as climate change continues to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme heat, the effectiveness of the revised methodology should be kept under review to ensure it continues to provide an appropriate basis for designing resilient homes.

Data collection

Many of our guests welcomed the introduction of the new building regulation ADO and the ongoing refinement of the TM59 methodology. However, several argued that there is currently insufficient evidence to assess whether these measures are delivering more heat-resilient homes in practice. Dr Mehri Khosravi stated:

“[T]he fact is [that] there is no data and evidence to show whether this revision and Part O have been effective or not, and therefore we do not know whether new buildings are going to be more resilient based on the revision or not. There is no data to prove that even compliance can provide some comfort in terms of overheating.”¹⁰⁹

Dr Anastasia Mylona echoed these concerns, arguing that better monitoring of building performance is needed to understand whether existing policies are delivering the intended outcomes.¹¹⁰ We heard ideas for how this could be achieved.

¹⁰⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), pages 19-20

¹⁰⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 10

¹⁰⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW019](#)

¹⁰⁸ CIBSE, [TM59 guidance to help tackle overheating risk in homes launched](#), 6 Jul 2026

¹⁰⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 8

¹¹⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 8

One proposal was to make greater use of low-cost environmental sensors in new homes. Polly Turton (Head of Climate Action and Public Health, Shade the UK) told the Committee that it is “very cheap these days to install a sensor that collects a range of data”, pointing to the widespread use of air quality sensors across London.¹¹¹ Installing temperature and humidity sensors in new developments could provide valuable evidence on how homes perform during periods of hot weather.

The Committee also heard that similar approaches are already being adopted by some social housing providers. In its response to the call for evidence, Hammersmith & Fulham Council highlighted a trial with Octopus Energy in which sensors are installed in homes to collect a range of data, including temperature.¹¹² Westminster City Council similarly began installing sensors in residents' homes in 2023 as part of its response to reports of damp and mould.¹¹³

With around 780,000 social rented households in London, the Committee considers there is significant potential to build a much stronger evidence base on how different housing types experience overheating and how effective different interventions prove to be in practice. Matthew Scott (Policy Manager, Chartered Institute of Housing) suggested that the GLA should play a convening role in bringing together this data to improve understanding of overheating across London.¹¹⁴

Guests also highlighted a greater role for Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE), a system of obtaining data on homes once they have been occupied. At present, POEs are not mandatory and are undertaken only infrequently by developers, meaning there is limited evidence on whether buildings perform as intended once occupied or on the extent of any performance gap between design expectations and real-world outcomes.¹¹⁵

Even where POEs are carried out, the findings are not routinely shared. Tom Dollard suggested that the GLA could help address this by requiring more POEs on developments delivered through the Affordable Homes Programme and on GLA Land and Property (GLAP) and Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) sites, including the Royal Docks, Old Oak and Park Royal, and the London Legacy Development Corporation.¹¹⁶

The Committee believes that more data needs to be collected to aid the industry's understanding of how ADO and other regulations including those in the London Plan are performing in practice. As such, we call on the GLA to make use of its convening powers to bring together data and insights from across the housing sector. The GLA should also mandate

¹¹¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 9

¹¹² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW009](#)

¹¹³ City of Westminster, [Smart Homes – air quality sensors](#), page accessed 23 June 2026

¹¹⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 20

¹¹⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

¹¹⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 9

the collection of overheating insights in Post Occupancy Evaluations performed on GLA funded developments.

Recommendation 7

The GLA should establish a London-wide overheating monitoring programme by bringing together temperature data and Post Occupancy Evaluation findings from GLA-funded developments, local authorities and housing associations. This evidence should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of Approved Document O and to guide future overheating policy and regulations in London.

Technical Review of Approved Document O

In 2025, the Government announced a fundamental review of Building Regulations.¹¹⁷ During this investigation, the Minister wrote to the Committee explaining that this review would focus on improving how the regulations are presented and applied in practice, while confirming a separate technical review of Part O of the Building Regulations would be undertaken.¹¹⁸ Through our investigation, we explored the areas of the regulations that could be looked at as part of this.

A recurring theme in the evidence we received was that Part O and Approved Document O cannot be considered in isolation. Guests argued that designers are often required to balance overheating requirements against competing requirements relating to daylight, acoustics, ventilation, fire safety and security. David Stronge (Design Director, Peabody) described a scenario where treating the criteria in isolation requires designers to develop solutions to issues that have been introduced by other criteria.¹¹⁹

“Our most common problem as designers in London is that the acoustic surveys tell us that windows cannot be opened because it is too noisy. Therefore, in effect, at that point, the building has to have cooling because you cannot mechanically keep the building cool without an active cooling system in most circumstances. There are occasional exceptions. Acoustics and daylight are the actual physics issues that affect real designers who are trying to do the job right, as they clash with Part O.”¹²⁰

*Joel Callow, Founding Director,
Beyond Carbon*

The Committee notes that these concerns are not new. Respondents to the Government's 2023–24 consultation on the Future Homes Standard similarly highlighted conflicts between Part O and other Approved Documents, including those relating to security, fire safety and protection from falling.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ GOV.UK, [Fundamental Review of Building Regulations Guidance](#), page accessed 22 July 2026

¹¹⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Letter to the Committee from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy](#) (2026)

¹¹⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 1](#), page 18

¹²⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 17

¹²¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, [The Future Homes and Buildings Standards: Summary of responses received and Government response](#) (2026)

The Committee also heard concerns that Part O does not apply to some of the homes most vulnerable to overheating, particularly homes created through Permitted Development Rights and those undergoing retrofit.

Since 2006, almost 66,000 homes have been created through Permitted Development Rights (PDR), often through converting offices into flats.¹²² Guests argued that many of these homes are particularly vulnerable to overheating because they are frequently single-aspect dwellings with limited opportunities for natural ventilation.¹²³ Despite this, they are not covered by Part O. As Dan Bicknell (Climate Adaptation Manager, GLA) told the Committee a lot of these conversions are “problematic” in terms of dealing with overheating.¹²⁴

Guests also questioned why Part O does not apply to major retrofit projects. This was raised by both the Chartered Institute of Housing and Peabody,¹²⁵ who argued that improving the resilience of London's existing housing stock is essential given that most homes occupied in 2050 have already been built.

Standards do exist for retrofits, however these are not mandatory for schemes undertaken outside of government funded capital programmes. The Chartered Institute of Housing suggested the best solution would be to extend ADO to retrofit works, citing the example of Part L of the Building Regulations, which was first introduced in 1995 and was revised in 2005 to include existing dwellings.¹²⁶ Similarly, Peabody's evidence called for major retrofit programmes to trigger a formal overheating assessment.¹²⁷

The Committee heard that the challenge is no longer simply to improve Part O, but to ensure that it forms part of a coherent regulatory framework that reflects how buildings are actually designed, constructed and adapted. The Government's review provides an opportunity to address these omissions. Extending the scope of Part O would help ensure that homes created through conversion and major refurbishment are designed to remain safe and comfortable as London's climate continues to warm.

Recommendation 8

The Government should use its review of Approved Document O to ensure that overheating requirements apply to all new homes in London, including current gaps relating to Permitted Development Rights and to major retrofit works.

¹²² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

¹²³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel Two](#), page 11

¹²⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's homes Ready for a Heatwave? Part Two – Panel 2](#), page 7

¹²⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#) and [LHW016](#)

¹²⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

¹²⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW016](#)

Chapter 4: Engaging Londoners about overheating

Reforms to the planning system and retrofit programmes, whilst necessary, will be slow to take effect. In the more immediate term, there is an opportunity for the GLA to reduce harm through better communication of the risks posed by extreme heat and the practical steps people can take to protect themselves. This chapter considers the role of public awareness and behaviour in improving London's resilience to heat.

It's BBQ weather!

Culturally, hot weather is still widely viewed as something to be enjoyed rather than a serious public health risk. The 'Melting Metropolis' research programme (a joint programme of research by the University of Liverpool, Queens College CUNY) found that extreme heat was a rare occurrence throughout the twentieth century and, as a result, was seldom taken seriously. It said this was reflected in the reporting on heatwaves, with TV and newspaper coverage focused on the more enjoyable aspects of hot weather rather than the associated risks.¹²⁸

Guests told the Committee that these perceptions influence how Londoners respond during periods of extreme heat. Dr Mehri Khosravi (Senior Research Fellow, University of East London) explained that risk perception remains low in the UK because there is little established culture of living with heat.¹²⁹ As a result, people are less likely to take steps to protect themselves or to check on vulnerable friends, neighbours and relatives during heatwaves.

This can be seen both in wider behaviours during heatwaves and in the way people manage heat within their homes. Research by the Grantham Institute at the London School of Economics found that behaviours such as lighting barbecues, travelling to crowded outdoor spaces, underusing cooling measures and working unnecessarily in high temperatures can contribute to wider impacts including wildfires, transport disruption and heat-related illness.¹³⁰

The Committee also heard that many people are unaware of simple measures that can reduce overheating in their own homes. **For example, the NHS and UK Health Security Agency advise people to keep their windows and curtains closed during the warmest part of the day, and to open them again in the evening.**¹³¹ **This practice is common in Mediterranean countries, but less widely understood in the UK.**¹³²

¹²⁸ Melting Metropolis, [Living with Extreme Heat in London: A Compendium of Stories](#) (2026)

¹²⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 5

¹³⁰ Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, [Enhancing heatwave resilience in the UK: insights and strategies from stakeholders](#) (2024)

¹³¹ NHS, [Heatwave: how to cope in hot weather](#), page accessed 2 July 2026

¹³² BBC, [How to holiday safely this summer under the Mediterranean sun](#) (2025)

The Committee heard consistent evidence that improving public understanding represents one of the quickest and most cost-effective ways to reduce harm during periods of extreme heat. As the Chartered Institute of Housing put it in its evidence:

“Alongside structural and financial support, strengthening heat risk communication is one of the most immediate ways to reduce overheating-related harm. Evidence shows that a significant proportion of heat-related mortality occurs not only due to exposure, but also due to gaps in awareness, risk perception, and protective behaviour.”¹³³

Heatwave warnings

One of the main mechanisms by which heat risk is communicated to the public is via the Heat Health Alert system (HHA) and the Met Office’s Extreme Heat National Severe Weather Warnings. The HHA is a warning issued by the UK Health Security Agency that is aimed at professionals within the health and social care sector, alerting them to periods of hot weather that may result in harm. The warnings are split into four groups depending on anticipated impacts, green, yellow, amber and red.¹³⁴ The Extreme Heat National Severe Weather Warning was introduced by the Met Office in 2021. These warnings are issued depending on the expected impact of heat on important infrastructure such as transport and the power grid, as well as the health of the general public.¹³⁵

We heard this system is not reaching vulnerable Londoners effectively enough. The Chartered Institute for Housing reported that around 25 per cent of London’s population is not effectively reached by these alerts (2.2-2.3 million people), including those most vulnerable to the worst impacts of heat, such as older people and lower-income groups.¹³⁶ It also suggested that the warnings are not having the desired effect with more heat-related deaths occurring during yellow alerts, than those higher risk red or amber heat events, indicating that the public is not sure how to interpret the warning.¹³⁷

Guests therefore argued that heat risk communication should extend beyond weather warnings and make greater use of trusted local networks.¹³⁸ The Committee heard that people are more likely to respond to advice delivered by organisations they already know, including community and voluntary groups, housing providers and adult social care services.¹³⁹ Given its existing relationships with London’s boroughs and community organisations, guests suggested that the GLA is well placed to coordinate communication that reflects London’s particular overheating challenges.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

¹³⁴ UK Health Security Agency, [Heat-Health Alerting system](#), page accessed 24 June 2026

¹³⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW013](#)

¹³⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

¹³⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW003](#)

¹³⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 19

¹³⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW010](#)

¹⁴⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London’s Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 19

The Committee also heard that the success of any communication strategy will depend on how it is delivered. Guests cautioned against messaging that is overly alarmist or patronising. Dr Mehri Khosravi argued that the primary objective should be to educate rather than frighten people¹⁴¹, while Dr Jon Winder emphasised that communications should recognise that many Londoners already have practical ways of managing heat.¹⁴² Similarly, Islington Council noted that many people who are vulnerable to heat do not identify themselves as vulnerable, meaning narrowly targeted campaigns may fail to reach those most at risk.¹⁴³ Instead, guests consistently advocated co-designing communications with Londoners from the outset to ensure they are trusted, relevant and accessible.¹⁴⁴

The Committee also considered whether additional approaches to communicating heat risk could improve public awareness. One proposal was the naming and ranking of heatwaves. Emma Howard Boyd highlighted evidence from Seville suggesting that naming heatwaves has helped raise public awareness and improve preparedness.¹⁴⁵ She also pointed to California's CalHeatScore, which ranks heat events according to their expected health impacts at neighbourhood level.¹⁴⁶

However, the Committee also heard that the evidence for naming heatwaves remains mixed. In its briefing, the Met Office argued that forecasting heatwaves is subject to greater uncertainty than forecasting storms.¹⁴⁷ Research from the University of Leeds likewise found little evidence that simply assigning names to heatwaves increases people's intention to adopt protective behaviours, with the impact appearing to depend on wider cultural attitudes towards heat.¹⁴⁸

The Committee believe that the GLA needs to do more to innovatively communicate heat risk to Londoners. Heat poses a considerable risk to Londoners and there is not enough understanding of how its impacts can be mitigated. The GLA should do more to communicate these risks and inform Londoners of steps they can take to protect themselves. We would particularly like to see the GLA explore the experience of cities like Seville in naming heatwaves and to pilot similar programmes here.

Recommendation 9

The GLA should explore how it could name heatwaves in London, and the impact this would have on public awareness.

¹⁴¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 20

¹⁴² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW006](#)

¹⁴³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [LHW010](#)

¹⁴⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 20

¹⁴⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Are London's Homes Ready for a Heatwave? – Panel One](#), page 20

¹⁴⁶ CalEPA, [CalHeatScore](#), page accessed 10 July 2026

¹⁴⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Agenda 10 June 2026](#) (2026)

¹⁴⁸ University of Leeds, [Should the UK name heatwaves like storms? It won't make people take them more seriously](#) (2025)

Catalysing action towards heat preparedness

The Committee acknowledges the publication in June 2026 of the GLA's *Heat Ready London Plan*, which recognises that improving public awareness and community resilience must form part of London's response to extreme heat.¹⁴⁹

The Plan includes commitments to strengthen links with community-led organisations and develop a coordinated public communication strategy for extreme heat.¹⁵⁰ These actions have the potential to improve public understanding of heat risk, strengthen relationships between communities and emergency responders, and ensure Londoners receive clearer and more consistent advice during heat events.

The Committee notes this direction of travel. The success of these initiatives will depend on how they are implemented. Throughout this investigation, the Committee heard that effective communication should be developed with Londoners rather than for them. Working with communities from the outset will help ensure messages are trusted, reach those most at risk, and encourage practical action without creating unnecessary alarm.

Recommendation 10

The GLA should set out, in response to this report, how it is working with community groups to co-design messages on heatwave dangers in London.

¹⁴⁹ Mayor of London, [Heat Ready London](#) (2026)

¹⁵⁰ Mayor of London, [Heat Ready London](#) (2026)

Committee Activity

This investigation sought to examine:

- Are London's homes able to cope with current and projected future overheating risks (in 20–30 years' time)?
- What measures (e.g. shading, dual aspect, air conditioning, retrofit) should new and existing homes in London incorporate to be "heat-proofed" against current and projected future overheating risks? What barriers exist to implementing these measures?
- Are existing planning and building regulations sufficient to ensure these measures are consistently delivered in practice? What else is needed?
- Does a focus on making homes warm in winter risk homes that are too hot in summer?
- Is the London Plan's current stance on air conditioning [Policy SI 4] still appropriate?
- What is the impact of building typology on London's urban heat island effect, and how should this be addressed in future?

Evidence collected:

Committee meeting 1 (10 March 2026)

[Panel 1]

- **Polly Turton**, Head of Climate Action and Public Health, Shade the UK
- **Dr Mehri Khosravi**, Senior Research Fellow, University of East London
- **Emma Howard Boyd CBE**, former Chair of the London Resilience Review

[Panel 2]

- **Dr Anna Mavrogianni**, Professor of Sustainable, Healthy and Equitable Built Environment, Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources, University College London
- **Ed Hezlet**, Head of Energy, Centre for British Progress
- **Matthew Scott**, Policy Manager, Chartered Institute of Housing
- **Joel Callow**, Founding Director, Beyond Carbon

Committee meeting 2 (10 June 2026)

[Panel 1]

- **David Stronge**, Design Director, Peabody
- **Dr Anastasia Mylona**, Technical Director, Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
- **Antonietta Canta**, Associate, Buildings Decarbonisation and Climate Adaptation Team, Arup London
- **Dr Tom Dollard**, Partner – Sustainability and Innovation, Pollard Thomas Edwards, and Chair of the Good Homes Alliance CIC

[Panel 2]

- **Jules Pipe CBE**, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service
- **Elliot Kemp**, Policy Team Leader, London Plan, Greater London Authority (GLA)
- **Dan Bicknell**, Climate Adaptation Manager, GLA

Call for evidence submissions:

- Age UK London
- Be First
- Chartered Institute of Housing and Sustainability Research Institute, University of East London
- Citizens Advice
- Cyprun Edmunds
- Dr Jon Winder
- Greater London Authority
- G15 Residents Group
- Hammersmith and Fulham Council
- Islington Council
- London Legacy Development Corporation
- L&Q
- Met Office
- National Housing Federation
- Passivhaus Trust
- Peabody
- Professor Kevin Lomas
- Shade the UK
- The North Atlantic Urban Climate Action Group
- University College London, Oxford Brookes University, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of Leeds and Oxfordshire County Council
- Westminster City Council

The Committee also received a briefing from the Met Office on 1 June and conducted a site visit to Chobham Manor on 29 June 2026.

Other formats and languages

If you, or someone you know needs this report in large print or braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on: 020 7983 4100 or email assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Chinese

如您需要这份文件的简介的翻译本，
请电话联系或按上面所提供的邮寄地址或
Email 与我们联系。

Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটি সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

إذا كنت أنت أو أحد معارفك بحاجة إلى هذا التقرير مطبوعاً بخط كبير أو بطريقة برايل، أو ترغب في الحصول على الملخص والنتائج الرئيسية بلغة أخرى، فيرجى التواصل معنا على: 020 7983 4100 أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني

assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Connect with us

The London Assembly

City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London E16 1ZE

Website: <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does>

Phone: 020 7983 4000

Follow us on social media



Cover Photo Credit

Front cover image created using Copilot – 21/08/2026

LONDONASSEMBLY