

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government
2nd floor NW, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our ref: MGLA

Date: 22nd August 2018

Dear James,

London's 2.4 million private renters are amongst those worst-affected by the UK's housing crisis. They face rents that have far outstripped incomes, poor-quality housing in too many cases, and, according to the English Housing Survey, they are six times more likely to have moved home in the last year compared to people living in other tenures.

The current state of the private rented sector can make life particularly difficult for older and more vulnerable renters, and for the 36 per cent of London's renting households who now have dependent children. The Mayor welcomes any willingness by the Government to tackle this complex issue; annex one to this letter sets out detailed comments on your Ministry's proposals for longer tenancies, and annex two sets out an overview of the Mayor's own proposals for how tenancy rights could be strengthened further through a 'London Model' of tenure reform.

Building more social rented homes and affordable homes to buy is key to helping private renters, but that does not negate the urgent need to improve the security, quality, and affordability of the private rented sector itself. Many renters aspire to home ownership or a social tenancy because they want a secure, long-term home they can make their own, and where they can raise a family. With the right package of reforms, the private rented sector could provide many of these benefits for Londoners, as is the case in many other countries with more balanced private rental markets.

The Mayor considers the Government's preferred model for increasing security of tenure – three-year fixed-term tenancies – as better than the status quo. However, he is keen to stress that non-legislative solutions, as suggested by the consultation, will be ineffectual and should not be considered. The problems in the sector are due to fundamental structural weaknesses in the legislative framework governing tenancies. They are not simply a result of individual landlord behaviour, or lack of tenant education.

More fundamentally, the Mayor urges the Government to use this chance to truly reform the private rented sector by introducing open-ended tenancies. Such an approach to tenancies could be based on work the Mayor is doing by developing a 'London Model' – a package of reforms, of which the most important elements are:

- open-ended tenancies, that allow renters to leave whenever they want or need to, providing they give the landlord sufficient notice;

- an end to 'no fault' evictions to prevent tenancies in normal circumstances ending at short notice and for spurious reasons; and
- new provisions, with appropriate safeguards, to allow landlords to reclaim properties more easily where they do have a legitimate reason.

The GLA plans to engage widely with stakeholders to refine the set of headline proposals set out above and laid out in more detail in annex two. The Mayor invites the Government to take an active part in this process, and to consider how they can use legislation to implement the London Model once the work is complete.

For too long renters have been told private renting is simply a stop-gap tenure, where they must put up with poor and variable standards, before they can find a more secure home. The Mayor is calling on the Government to work with him to transform private renting from a tenure of last resort, to one that is fit for the 21st century.

If you or your officials would like to set up a meeting to discuss this issue further, please contact Rhona Brown in the Private Rented Sector team on rhona.brown@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Murray', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James Murray
Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development