

BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP – RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT LONDON PLAN

Mr Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
London, SE1 2AA

March 2018

Dear Mr Mayor,

BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP – RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT LONDON PLAN

On behalf of Bexley Labour Group's (the group), I am responding to your draft London Plan.

The group recognises the desire to and agrees with your determination to get London building the affordable homes it desperately needs. We believe that this will only be possible by calling on homebuilders – private and public – to develop sites at higher densities to substantially increase capacity across our great capital city. The scale of the housing crisis across London is unparalleled and like nothing we have seen since the second world war.

In responding to this consultation, the group notes your manifesto 'A City for all Londoners' that you published in December 2016. The London Borough of Bexley formally responded to that document, and the group agreed that whilst there was cross party support for the document, the following three points were of direct interest to Bexley, they were:

- The importance of being able to redevelop large, inefficiently used employment sites in accessible areas to contribute to meeting London's housing need, although fundamentally predicated on securing a major uplift in transport infrastructure and the provision of other infrastructure;
- The recognition that suburban infill residential developments will have cumulative impacts on neighbourhoods; solutions must be offered that ensure sufficient infrastructure is provided and that the existing character and context of areas is respected, in line with the concepts of Good Growth;
- The importance of the Thames Gateway as a strategic infrastructure investment corridor, with the Crossrail extension to Ebbsfleet key to opening up the full potential of this area.

Planning across London dramatically changes from borough to borough and we agree with the overarching theme of the draft plan in its attempt to uniform an approach to building homes for Londoners. However, there are some areas where the group believe there needs be more freedom for individual boroughs. Namely: car parking; small sites (development) and Strategic Industrial Land (SIL).

The Group also believe that the draft plan needs to put London boroughs on notice that as the strategic planning authority, you will intervene when things are going badly. For too long now boroughs have run roughshod over the current London Plan and as such have delivered homes that are not in the best interest of Londoners.

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Bexley Labour group are committed to delivering the homes Londoners needs. We will continue to work with you and your team, the administration in Bexley, developers – big and small – and the residents of Bexley to ensure we create city for all Londoners.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Danny Hackett
Shadow Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth
London Borough of Bexley

On behalf of Bexley Labour Group

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GENERAL COMMENTS

- i. The group overwhelmingly welcomes the draft plan and its approach to the delivery of house building across London.
- ii. The group welcomes and agrees with the need for the draft plan to be more prescriptive than previous versions and the Mayor's wider important focus on making good planning decisions across London.
- iii. The group agrees with the Mayor that new homes should be built on sites near town centres and/or good public transport links, reducing the need for car parking spaces within developments.
- iv. The group agrees with the Mayor that proposed development on sites that do not clearly maximise housing density should be refused. – There are too many examples across London of strategic housing sites not being developed to their full potential.
- v. The group welcomes the decision to accommodate all of London's housing growth requirement within its boundaries by the identification and promotion of small site developments.
- vi. The group agrees with the Mayor's key strategic housing commitment for 50 per cent of all new homes built to be genuinely affordable – to be achieved through planning, investment and building on public land. We strongly support measures to return social rent products at a rate that local people can afford.
- vii. The group agrees with the premise of offering private developers a "fast-track route" to planning permission if they reach a minimum of 35 per cent affordable.
- viii. The group agree with scrapping the density matrix approach.
- ix. The group agree with a degree of encouragement for 'shared living' developments. Ensuring that we create and build truly mixed tenure communities.
- x. The group welcomes the confirmation and strengthening of Green Belt protection. We would welcome the opportunity to strengthen powers over developments on parks and open spaces, following the decision of the London Borough of Bexley to build homes on the borough's parks and open spaces.

HOUSING

- i. A housing crisis is engulfing London, the greatest since the second world war. The group believe that the plan, in its draft form puts the delivery of truly affordable housing first and foremost.
- ii. The group believes the housing targets for the London Borough of Bexley (10 year – 12,450, Annual 1,245) are an ambitious, but achievable. Bexley needs to play its part in the delivery of housing for London.

BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP – RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT LONDON PLAN

- iii. The delivery of housing and the housing targets, as outlined in the draft plan are in line with the 'Bexley Growth Strategy' that was adopted by the London Borough of Bexley in 2017. The Growth Strategy received cross party support throughout its consultation and adoption and continues to as the borough enact the ambitious targets.
- iv. Delivery of housing on smaller sites has caused some concern amongst residents in Bexley. Whilst the group agree and accept that smaller sites will play a big part in the delivery of housing across London, we would urge the Mayor to be less prescriptive.
- v. The group accept the policy of 'suburban intensification' but believe individual boroughs should be given more freedom through Local Plans to protect the character and amenity of existing communities.

TRANSPORT

- i. As London grows it is vitally important to encourage the reduction of car usage. This needs to be done through the delivery of transport infrastructure and planning policy. However, the group believe it is important to note the difference between inner and outer London.
- ii. Bexley, for instance, as an outer London borough, suffers from a lack of connectivity. Bexley is not on the underground network, there is no river crossing and the borough is served by three railway lines into central London. Consideration needs to be given the distinct lack of infrastructure.
- iii. Whilst the group welcome the desire to reduce car usage across London, the draft plan should note and allow for the delivery of infrastructure before the enforcement of car free developments and the reduction in car parking.
- iv. The group believe the promotion of cycling clubs and car clubs is needed, and suitable new developments, close to transportation hubs should include provision for both. We need fewer cars on our streets, but we need to offer an alternative to Londoners.