

Londonplan

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To: Londonplan
Subject: Draft New London Plan

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As a resident of one of the estates already earmarked for "regeneration" against the residents' wishes, I was horrified when I saw that the Draft New London Plan now includes even more aggressive regeneration targets for individual boroughs.

The estate where I live (Benhill Estate, Sutton Central) is a wonderful local community based around mid-rise (6 storey builds) flats and maisonettes built c. 1970, with a children's and elderly residents' garden in the centre. Importantly the existing estate is mostly home to families, who require 3 bed flats (if they have children of both genders or elderly parents to look after). It is fairly high density (I believe 330 families in one small square) but the estate is well designed, and although there are some repairs required to keep the flats in good condition, the estate is very well looked after and residents love their homes. The residents are deeply opposed to the plans to regenerate the estate which were announced last year, when the previous London Plan required Sutton to submit plans to redevelop existing estates and build higher rise blocks in much closer density/without green space, in order to accommodate twice the number of families. However, the previous plan discussed with residents included a promise that families that needed a 3 bed flat (either leaseholders or council tenants) would be able to get a replacement 3 bed flat if those previous regeneration proposals were to go ahead.

Now we see that the New plan requires Sutton to build almost 3 times as many new homes, primarily in one-bed flats. This completely fails to meet the needs of existing residents, most of whom are families. The borough has a very high number of families with young children, who already struggle to find accommodation. Forcing these families out of the borough (though who knows where they could go – Bolton?) will be hugely disruptive to their children's education. If all regeneration is to take the form of 1 bed flats, it will mean a very different demographic using local facilities (which in itself is problematic, as putting adult shops and nightclubs/bars right next to schools/health centres already creates quite a bit of tension), and nowhere for local families to entertain children and socialise. Child related services and shops are already a significant local employer, so if families with children are forced to leave the area because there is nowhere for them to live, local employment would suffer. Forcing high rise blocks into areas that were not designed to accommodate them is also problematic - a number of high rise blocks of flats have recently been erected in Sutton town centre and have created a terrible wind tunnel effect, due to poor planning – there are parts of the high street area that are now not safe on foot with children because of the high winds. Please don't make this worse. Finally, I assume that the plans to build only 1 bed flats would make Sutton a cheap dormitory town for single workers commuting into central London to do minimum wage jobs – however, Sutton's transport network is already completely failing to cope with the existing commuter burden (one or two Thameslink trains per hour, almost always half cancelled and always bursting and unsafe with the high number of passengers trying to cram themselves in), so more single people needing to commute into London would completely overwhelm the train services. You can't just increase housing density without considering the knock on impact on local services. Already most local services are squeezed beyond bursting point, so where would all these new residents find healthcare etc.??

The residents of the Benhill estate have raised their concerns with Sutton Council, but it appears that there is nothing the local council can do by itself, and so we are asking you, as London Mayor's office, to reconsider the housing targets for Sutton, and in particular the emphasis on 1 bed flats to meet those targets for numbers of new homes. Those of us with children need 3 bed homes, and that is not an unreasonable requirement.

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