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Comments regarding the London Plan.

Thanks,

Mr Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London
The Greater London Council
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Dear Mr Khan

I am writing to object to the Draft New London Plan.

Living as I do in Hampstead, I firmly believe that the plan will significantly weaken the planning protection given to this area, which has historic conservation areas, valuable open spaces such as Hampstead Heath, and unique character.

I wish to object to three policies in particular, because they are inconsistent with national planning policy.

Policy H2. This imposes a new 'presumption in favour' of small-scale development of between one and 25 homes, including demolition and rebuild schemes, as well as the upwards extension of flats and residential extensions.

This policy should not apply to Conservation Areas. My area has suffered greatly from numerous planning applications in recent years where developers have tried to demolish existing properties and rebuild them with completely inappropriate new housing within our conservation area. I can think of several examples in my own street, Maresfield Gardens. Mourn House, a small block of flats, has had two applications to build an extra storey, and barely a week goes by without further applications coming in for upwards or side extensions, or basements. Other examples include 29 New End, 192 Haverstock Hill, 28 Redington Road, and 266-270 Finchley Road.

Weakening the protection given to our conservation areas will led to more of these applications being approved, in time inevitably destroying the special character of the area.

Policy D8. This weakens existing policies on tall buildings. Tall buildings are completely inappropriate in Hampstead and the surrounding area. Planning permission has recently been granted for a 24 storey tower at 100 Avenue Road, and I know I am not alone in having serious concerns about this. The development is completely out of keeping with the area, will loom over the conservation areas, and of course result in an increase in construction traffic. The London Plan should not be supporting more tall towers and all the problems they entail, such as loss of light, wind tunnels, and adverse effects on the streetscape. Research shows that mid-rise development can deliver the same housing density as high-rise development, so the London Plan should not be supporting tall buildings.

Policy G3. This applies to Hampstead Heath. It enables the boundaries of Metropolitan Open Land to be amended through “land swap” deals. Hampstead Heath is not just iconic. As a living breathing space, it is vital for health. As a family doctor, I appreciate how important this is. I know from my previous communication to you before your election as Mayor that you take seriously the issue of cleaning up London’s air, so I hope you too will see the value of Hampstead Heath as a ‘green lung’. It is also a vital open space for sport and recreation. The London Plan should not allow Hampstead Heath’s boundaries to be amended.

Overall, the London Plan is inconsistent with national planning policy and should therefore not be approved.

I do not agree that the scale of a Mayor’s election victory enables him to depart from national policy. Just as important as the Mayor’s mandate is the role that local communities have been given to shape their own communities (for example, through Neighbourhood Plans). This must be respected. Not only this, but the London Plan lasts until 2041, and should not be shaped by the events of one election.

With kind regards

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