

Dr B Heath comments

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It is difficult to comment under each heading as many of these issues are interrelated. My main comment about the London plan is that it maintains the previous plan's ethos of relying on the private sector, ie private developers, to deliver what is needed for Londoners. This has consequences for all areas. The transfer of land and/or power to private developers means that we are not able to create the kind of London that most people want. Those who are motivated by profit are not interested in what the various communities want but only in what those with money want. This has many consequences.

1. The plan wants to increase greatly the number of homes built. But the advice, and it is only advice to councils, is that between 35%- 50% will be 'affordable'. This does not mean social or targeted rents. Figures show that the majority of Londoners will not be able to afford even so-called affordable rents. That means that at least 50% of all new homes will be for those who have very high incomes. Most of the housing built in recent years has been for these high income groups, including investors. We do not need more of this type of housing. Much of this is often empty or rented out to tourists, visiting business people or those who can afford very high rents.
2. Having to build a lot of extra homes in order to obtain the finance for the ones that may be 'affordable' means that we need to increase density and height. This has led to creating a London of steel and glass, blocking out the sun and completely changing the character of London. No one voted to have a London like this; it is determined by property developers and the well-off.
3. Another consequence is the gentrification of London. By having developments that are dominated by the high-end market, means that most Londoners are having to move elsewhere, further and further out of London. This affects all social groups and cultures who are increasingly excluded. Community centres, traditional markets, local pubs etc are not protected and cannot afford to be in these increasingly well-off areas.
4. The environment is also affected. Despite car-free developments, those who can afford it will still bring their cars to London and just pay for parking or take the on-street parking. The plan's call for 0 carbon by 2050 is not at all adequate. We need to have a much shorter time-scale. If the plan was serious about such a target, then there would be a reduction in air traffic not an expansion.

5. By focusing on growth- that is growth for the well-off, hoping some of this wealth will trickle down- means that we are making it impossible to not only increase the income of those at the bottom, but also to really address environmental problems. We need to redistribute what is there as a first step, eg making sure all empty homes are occupied, stopping buy-to-leave investors, controlling rents, protecting and expanding green spaces (not just planting a few trees with small patches of green in the high-rise developments), and then see what homes we have to build. If so any of the new homes are for investors and the well-off, we are wasting resources and using up valuable space to satisfy the desires of a tiny minority.

In conclusion, the Plan needs to have a different focus. It should be aiming to keep and expand the land that is in public ownership, for example not sell-off Transport for London land. This land should then be put in the hands of people in the community, eg co-operatives, community land trusts etc so that regeneration can be led by the people who need it most- the local communities and ordinary people of London. An example of this happening is the St Anne's hospital redevelopment in Haringey. What little public housing remains must be kept in public hands and housing associations must be carefully controlled as many are becoming more like commercial companies. If the plan continues to rely on private interests as the main vehicle, the new London plan will only succeed in destroying the diversity and attractiveness of community- based London, turning it into an international capital for the rich.