

Attn Mayor Sadiq Khan,
c/o LondonPlan@london.gov.uk

Ref: The London Plan Consultation,
Housing

1st March 2018

Dear Sadiq Khan,

Whilst we welcome a plan for housing in London, **we have concerns around the language used in the London Plan**, which we feel gives a misleading impression and is likely to lead to confusion or worse still, the alienation of those living on low incomes.

We acknowledge that the term 'affordable' is a Government coined legal term, but **as our Labour Mayor you should lead the way in rejecting Conservative rhetoric, which stops us looking at the reality of high cost living in a low wage economy**. What is affordable is subjective. We think you appreciate that 80% of market rate, defined by the Government as affordable, is quite clearly UNaffordable for many in need of a home, particularly in Hackney, where the average wage is 33k.

It is heartening to see that within your draft plan some homes will be provided at a reduced (from market rent) rate. This has been referred to as a **'Living Rent' within your 'Genuinely Affordable' campaign**, where you state that the average cost of a two bedroom flat is around £1,000 a month, as opposed to around £1,800 on the private market in Hackney.

We applaud this as a step in the right direction, **but would urge you to avoid referring to this as a 'living rent'**. It is still incredibly expensive for many people, and most importantly, **it sounds like the Living Wage, something we in Hackney campaign for**.

Please take into account that if a Living Wage in London is £10.20 an hour (approx. £1,401.00 a month based on a 37.5 hour week with tax deductions) then it cannot follow that a Living Rent is £1,000. This would leave only £401.00 a month for food, bills, travel, clothes, phone, internet and any form of entertainment.

There is nothing affordable about spending two thirds of your income on rent and it is certainly not living, or not in a civilised way. Shelter suggests that to be affordable, an individual's rent should take up a maximum of 35% of their income, and clearly the poorer you are and the more dependants you have, the smaller the percentage you can afford give up without suffering.

The terms 'living' and 'affordable', whether utilised by you or by the Conservatives, inevitably become tainted because they are subjective. Arguably names have to be coined to distinguish between the various schemes, but isn't it better just to say what things cost? To describe them as 'living' or 'affordable' will alienate the (many) people who still simply cannot afford them, particularly if a 'Living' rent does not align with a 'Living' wage. **Please take the lead and simply state the price of homes, allowing Londoners to judge affordability for themselves.** The Labour Party doesn't have to participate in Tory Newspeak.

We are working hard to promote Labour and to change the current government so progressive Labour housing policies can be introduced. Like you, we want to see decent housing for everyone, but we need to speak clearly about our vision when we meet people on the doorstep. That means avoiding ambiguous jargon which is tainted by a failing housing market. Please revise these terms in your document, so we can engage in a plain-speaking discourse which will do far more to persuade the public to buy into our vision.

Yours sincerely,

For and on behalf of the Victoria Labour Party Branch, Hackney.