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AFFORDABLE HOUSING & BUILDING HEIGHT

To start, affordable housing is desperately needed in London, especially in my local borough of Southwark. But the unique culture and environment of neighbourhoods must not be sacrificed on the alter of delivery of houses at 'any cost'.

The current plan, in my local area, includes a number of significant issues:

Lack of Amenities

Lack of schools

Lack of health centres

Pressure on parking

Removal of 100% affordable housing replaced by 35% affordable housing without any plan to secure that the housing remains affordable.

The economics are not clear that affordable housing will be delivered and maintained.

How will local people benefit, if affordable high-quality housing is not available?

Better access to jobs, via the Bakerloo Line extension - currently Southwark council sees the only way to pay for the extension is to give planning permission to ghost towers much higher and not in keeping with the current neighbourhoods. Health care? Where? A vibrant high-street? By pushing out independent shop keepers.

I would suggest that affordable housing is secured and maintained in planning permissions. All planning applications for affordable housing is capped at £425 per sqft. These costs could step up aligned with the level of inflation every 2 years. This price is in line with the cost for affordable housing in London [Report by Molior, based on interviews with 685 developers across London]. This would ensure that affordable housing is developed and developers are pushed to be innovative in the delivery of the assets. One would conclude that Southwark Council with the support of property developers are building flats not for families, but for investment. Leading to 'ghost towers' or 'dead zones' where residential towers are only partly occupied; further reducing the culture and destroying the vibrancy of my neighbourhood.

Building height should also be in line with current building assets in the area. As stated, there is a need for housing in the area, but just building high-rise buildings is not the way to deliver the number of houses.

In particular to Southwark, there is a danger of securing 'ghost - towers' [www.southwarkgreenparty.org.uk/high_rise_surprise]. The Southwark Labour council in its 'infinite' wisdom has already included language that would give them flexibility to grant planning permission to high-rise buildings in any place within the council. In principle, residents and constituents ZERO legal grounds to oppose ANY high rise building in future in Camberwell and Peckham, no matter what the height or location. Not good enough!

As it is well known, Labour controlled Southwark has not demanded that property developers keep their promises to deliver affordable housing. The council should demand that developers must deliver assets which are capped at £425 per sqft, effectively pushing the supply to deliver what has been promised.

Innovation is expected to deliver the number of homes in the area. But high-rises will give rise to 'ghost towers' and 'dead zones'. Indeed, the greatest demand for London is for more affordable housing, at 58%. Unfortunately, only 25% [in the OKR plan 35%] of homes being built are at the price level which defines affordable housing. We would be better served with decent quality but low-spec homes built for actually Londoners.

What is the demography that these developments are looking to support? Ruby Triangle, by Avanton - is a case in point. There are a number of developments going up with the same specs. But Ruby Triangle wants to build 2 towers, 37 stories and 47 stories, with no amenities, lack of parking and no social supports. These towers are 3 to 4 times higher than anything in the nearby area. The London plan demands that tall buildings [higher than 30 metres, or 25 metres in the Thames Policy area] which significantly change the skyline are seriously contentious. In areas with low scale character, property developers should be expected to deliver houses in an innovative manner without seriously impacting the skyline.

Currently there are 420 residential towers currently in the pipeline, according to New London Architecture and GL Hearn. Southwark Council wants to add to that list, ergo, there are going to have a number of empty and part-build posh ghost towers - which all look the same. The London Plan should use basic economics: where SUPPLY equals DEMAND, to deliver affordable housing that does not ruin neighbourhoods and add to the diversity of London.