

National Alliance of Women's Organisations comments

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London Plan Consultation Team

National Alliance of Women's Organisations Feedback

At the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) we welcome the opportunity to be involved in the development of the draft plan. It was also helpful to hear first-hand from representatives at the GLA the thinking behind the plan at a recent meeting organised by Just Space for civil society organisations

NAWO is an alliance of diverse membership organisations and individuals that champions women's empowerment, underpinned by the values of UN gender equality principles. NAWO's membership varies from very large to very small; from service level and grass roots to international campaigning organisations. It is this membership that gives NAWO its unique and respected position in both UK civil society and policy-making circles, and ensures that NAWO is well-qualified to contribute in a meaningful way to the policy-making process, and to represent the needs and interests of women in a robust and practised manner.

In the forward to the plan Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, reiterates his vision "to build a city that works for all Londoners where everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential (and) lead fulfilling lives within their communities". The aim is ambitious, as indeed it should be, and not without its challenges; this resonates well with NAWO. We also welcome the commitment to take a holistic approach to shape our city around the needs, health and well-being of everyone living in the London communities which together make up the rich tapestry London is.

There are many individual points that we could make on all the subject areas, and are happy to do so. In particular, the principles of town centre development need to take into account issues which disproportionately affect women - public transport, employment, education, child care. The location of child care facilities need to be taken into account when assessing new employment opportunities, e.g. on site crèche facilities. There is nothing in the Plan as far as we can see about public transport and safety issues. We are pleased to see the inclusion of women hostel/safe house policy H14 page 185 but more needs to be said about the property being secure and in a safe location with good security.

In an ideal world these issues should not apply primarily to women, but it is a fact that, at the moment, they do, disproportionately.

We believe the overriding consideration for gender equality in the plan rests on implementation. Any plan is only as good as the impact it has in delivering its aims and objectives. We are pleased to see that the Equality Impact Assessment is an integrated assessment at a high level across the plan, which makes sense and is consistent with a holistic approach. However, it is disappointing that individual assessments have not been undertaken to draw out equality and diversity issues, recognising that individuals are unique and more than one of the protected characteristics are likely to be relevant - for example, a woman who is also black and disabled. This information is essential if the plan is to meet the needs of all Londoners. We believe more work needs to be undertaken to identify particular needs; and how this will be done needs to be referenced in the Plan to ensure it is a non-negotiable standard.

The inequalities for gender are as prevalent in London as they are elsewhere in the UK. They tend to be more extreme in poorer communities. Building communities must address inequalities that exist for women and girls through accessible services such as health care, transport, education, employment, child care, and IT, to enable women to achieve their full potential and for communities to be sustainable. If health care services for women are easily accessible women are more likely to look after their health. The reverse is likely if they not accessible. Enabling women to be equal participants in building communities and bringing all their talents to the table has to be in the best interest of everyone.

We were pleased also to be involved in the Mayor's consultation on the GLA Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The GLA recognises the need to improve representation of women in Government and business, close the gender pay and pension gaps, open up opportunities for young women to study STEM subjects for careers in IT and science, stop domestic violence and online harassment and misogyny. The built environment can have a huge impact on the work that needs to be done for gender equality – 50:50 by 2030.

Crucially, the Plan needs to address the issue of process, considering proposals and policies from a gender equality/female perspective. Every proposal/policy initiative as a matter of course must include an assessment from a gender equality/female perspective, and the opportunities presented to address gender equality issues. All design panels and teams must have a female input and perspective. We all want to avoid this becoming a tick box exercise so ways need to be developed to ensure gender equality happens effectively in practice and forms an integral part of the development/approval process. Homes, work places, leisure must be designed to be reflective of all needs of the community.

Finally gender equality will not be achieved without gender budgeting. It will be essential to provide resources within the budget for implementation of the Plan targeted at achieving those initiatives that progress gender equality.

We think there should also be reference in the Plan to the national and international instruments which set the context and standards we are all looking to achieve for gender equality – CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs, which are very relevant to building sustainable communities.

I appreciate this is an overview of our thoughts around the Plan in respect of the issues which relate to women's equality, and for communities to be women and girl friendly. I would be very happy to discuss further.

Barbara Cleary

Vice Chair NAWO

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