



RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR'S DRAFT LONDON PLAN DECEMBER 2017

INTRODUCTION:

Stonewall Housing has existed since 1983 to provide housing advice, advocacy and support, and to influence housing policy and practice, in order to secure safe accommodation for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

While there is a lot to admire in the London Plan (for instance, the drive to increase the supply of affordable housing and the aim to protect LGBT community assets, even if these are restricted to commercial venues), Stonewall Housing is disappointed that another London Plan has been produced with no mention of the specific housing needs of LGBT communities.

Stonewall Housing will comment on specific policies within the housing section of the London Plan to encourage the Mayor to address the needs of LGBT communities strategically, increase the evidence base and support community groups to develop new housing solutions for the communities we serve.

Stonewall Housing believes housing is key to meeting a range of needs for our communities (such as health, safety, social engagement) therefore many of our comments cross-reference other policies in the London Plan.

HOUSING:

POLICY H1: If the Mayor is serious about making the best use of land and coordinating good growth that leaves no one excluded, then the London Plan should address the specific housing needs of LGBT people. The Plan states that London is able to plan strategically and **POLICY H14** recognises that the provision of supported and specialised accommodation will need to address the needs of some groups on a multi-borough or pan-London level. However, this has not been the case under the previous London Plans, despite assurances at previous Examinations in Public. This London Plan should specifically mention the housing, care and support needs of LGBT people.

London Councils continues to commission Stonewall Housing's pan-London advice services. However, there is a need to strategically provide housing for our communities in all parts of the capital. We need more emergency housing, short and long term supported housing and move-on accommodation - including shared spaces for those who wish to live in LGBT-affirmative housing which is not available for many LGBT people, especially for older members of our communities.

Four local authorities have continued to commission our supported housing services (though at a significantly reduced rate) but many local plans in London do not address LGBT people's needs, creating a postcode lottery for LGBT people who require supported housing since local connection criteria restricts access to our services in the capital. If no local plans are required then the Mayor should encourage local authorities to strategically address the needs of certain groups that are not being addressed strategically.

Stonewall Housing welcomes the London Plan's directive that local authorities should undertake or update needs assessments for Gypsies and Travellers (**POLICY H16**), and we request that the London Plan should make similar directives for LGBT communities since our communities have very poor access to emergency accommodation, supported housing and sheltered accommodation.

Similarly, for student accommodation (**POLICY H17**): to achieve the aim of mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods the London Plan should address the specific needs of LGBT

communities. New student accommodation is being developed in Stockton for trans students and similar initiatives should be on offer in London. LGBT people surveyed in the Still Out There report, funded by Trust for London in 2016, expressed concern that there were no LGBT-specific services in their local area, which is now more troubling since 2 more London-based LGBT charities have closed since the survey was carried out.

Therefore, the London Plan should address the loss of these assets just as much as the loss of commercial venues (POLICY HC5) by supporting the London LGBT voluntary sector to attract more investment to meet its communities' needs.

In 2016, Stonewall Housing opened two more supported housing schemes for LGBT people over the age of 25 years old with partners using intensive housing management to fund part of the support offered. These have proved vital for people who do not have the support networks of family and friends and they have developed their own peer support network as well as received specialist support from Stonewall Housing to support their access to employment and more permanent accommodation. However, for such schemes to be replicated across the city, especially in the light of potential changes to the funding of supported housing, the London Plan should support voluntary and community groups to develop new innovative solutions to ensure their communities' housing and health needs are addressed.

POLICY H2: Stonewall Housing is encouraged to read that the London Plan will support community-led housing projects (also mentioned in POLICY H12). Stonewall Housing carried out a feasibility study about the development of housing schemes specifically for older LGBT people (www.buildingsafechoices.org.uk) which incorporated learning from LGBT-friendly schemes in the United States, which catered specifically for LGBT communities but at the same time created mixed, inclusive communities and offered low-cost housing for other marginalised groups. The delivery of the London Plan will require closer engagement with organisations such as Stonewall Housing to support their entry into the world of housing development. This will also address other aspects of the London Plan, for example, the development of different heritage sites for our communities rather than the narrowly-defined commercial aspects of our communities' heritage (see POLICY HC5).

Stonewall Housing's services deliver support and advice about a range of issues as well as housing, for example, mental health, work-ready and financial hardship. We welcome that the London Plan seeks to protect the community assets for communities in the shape of commercial venues, such as public houses (POLICY HC5 and POLICY HC7), however we believe that London needs community spaces for our communities that do not centre on the intake of alcohol or night-time time economy. Rather, more day-time, community spaces are needed for our communities to meet and support each other, especially since many do not have the support of family. The London Plan should recommend the strategic engagement with LGBT communities to develop the spaces that are needed by them and the organisations that support them (especially since we, like women's groups and BAME people, face the pressures of high cost office and meeting space in the city (POLICY E2 and POLICY E8). In POLICY S2, the London Plan explains the importance of social infrastructure and Stonewall Housing recommends that this should include the development of services for our communities since they may not access mainstream services or may prefer services delivered by and for their own communities.

POLICY H5/POLICY H8: Stonewall Housing welcomes the London Plan's ambitions to deliver more supply of more affordable housing which includes specific targets for local authorities. However, to ensure that these targets reach all communities it should also include targets for groups that share protected characteristics and not simply the supply numbers. For this to take place the Mayor should encourage all developers and local

authorities to collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity to ensure their developments and plans are addressing the needs of our communities.

POLICY M1: Stonewall Housing also recommends that the Mayor follows the example of Homes England and resurrect the Housing Equalities Standing Group to act as an equalities advisory board to advise and review the impact of the London Plan and the Mayor's strategies. This may also support boroughs as they seek to monitor housing and population growth with Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS England to identify the investment required to meet their priority needs (**POLICY DF1**).

POLICY H6 and **POLICY H9** suggest that public sector land and vacant building incentives could be used to address strategic needs, for example for essential workers, however this could also be an opportunity to address the needs of groups that it may be more cost effective to address on a multi-borough or pan-London level.

POLICY H15: As well as developing the first UK housing scheme for older LGBT people as part of a range of housing choices through our Building Safe Choices study, Stonewall Housing has been involved, as part of the National LGB&T Partnership, in the development of guidance to improve services for LGBT people with dementia (<https://nationalgbtpartnership.org/the-dementia-challenge-for-lgbt-communities/>). Stonewall Housing welcomes the Plan's ambition to deliver a range of services for older Londoners and for people with dementia. However, such services need to address the needs of all Londoners because older people and those with dementia may have other characteristics that impact on the services they receive and the services they want to access.

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Stonewall Housing welcomes the comments made in the complementary impact assessment about ensuring the feeling of safety of LGBT people and the need for LGBT cultural activities through the delivery of the London Plan. However, as mentioned above, failure to address LGBT people's housing aspirations and the need for non-commercial community spaces will mean that our communities will continue to be negatively impacted by the delivery of another London Plan.