

**The
London
Plan 2011**

DLP BRIEFING NOTE 70

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The London Plan 2011

In July 2010, the government sought to withdraw regional spatial strategies to widespread criticism and confusion. However, given the special place of London, the London Plan escaped these abolitions and remains in place.

The updated strategic development plan for London was adopted on 22 July 2011 and sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2031.

The policies take immediate effect and consolidates the 'direction of travel' for planning policy within London, replacing the earlier draft and The London Plan (Consolidated with alterations since 2004) (February 2008). It forms part of the development plan for Greater London. London boroughs' local development frameworks need to be in general conformity with the London Plan.

The London Plan 2011 is **more focused** than the previous London Plan. It is **much clearer, shorter and contains fewer policies**, which are at a more strategic level. It is more **user friendly** in the arrangement and presentation of its topics and policies. As such the GLA's aim is for the Plan to be a much more **useable document**, and not one just for the shelf!

Each policy is now subdivided to show what it is aimed at and who it is for – with sections (where appropriate) on strategic, London-wide policy; policy to inform planning decisions (by London boroughs, or in the case of planning applications of strategic importance, the boroughs and the Mayor); and policy to help with the preparation of the boroughs' local development frameworks (LDFs).

The new London Plan sets out to:

- Meet the needs of a growing population with policy on new homes, including affordable housing, housing design and quality, and social infrastructure, which will promote diverse, happy and safe local communities.
- Support an increase in London's development and employment with policy on: outer London, inner and central London; finding the best locations for development and regeneration, and protecting town centres; encouraging a connected economy and improving job opportunities for everyone, so that London maintains its success and competitiveness.
- Improve the environment and tackle climate change by: reducing CO2 emissions and heat loss from new developments; increasing renewable energy; managing flood risk, ensuring water supply and quality; improving sewerage systems; improving London's recycling performance and waste management; and protecting our open spaces making London a green and more pleasant place to live and visit.
- Ensure that London's transport is easy, safe and convenient for everyone and encourage cycling, walking and electric vehicles.

The new Plan retains some of the key principals of the old plan including - Opportunity Areas, Central Activities Zone, the Housing Density Matrix, Strategic Industrial Locations and a commitment to Renewable Energy provision. There are, however, a number of significant policy changes which are highlighted below.

London's Places

- The Central Activities Zone (CAZ) is dissected into appropriate pockets bringing forward relevant development, including a focus to deliver office development on a more flexible basis.
- The West End Special Retail Policy Area (SPRA) makes a commitment to deliver specific detailed policy to support retail development in London's international centres, with an additional focus on Town Centres across London to deliver development intensification.
- Similarly, new policy deals with inner and outer London.
- Strategic Industrial Locations are generally afforded greater protection from loss, however additional clarity regarding acceptable alternative (employment-generating) uses is given.

London's People (Housing & Infrastructure)

- Delivery of additional housing is supported through an annual target of 32,210 – 34,900 total additional dwellings per annum required; the figure is disaggregated by Borough, using updated annual targets accordingly. Policy sets the lower figure as a minimum target.
- The Housing Density Matrix remains unaltered, however an annex 2 provides a list of town centres which are planned for re-designation, thus potentially advocating increased housing densities in certain areas.
- Minimum dwelling space standards are introduced, as originally appeared in the Housing Design Guide, with a requirement for Boroughs to promote development which are in general conformity.
- The strategic target for affordable housing has morphed into a numerical minimum target of 13,200 additional dwellings per annum – converted as circa 35-40% of the total dwellings required.
- The Tenure Split has altered to a target of 60% social and 40% intermediate dwellings on all qualifying development. Boroughs are encouraged to set targets for affordable housing based upon local need, promotion of mixed and balanced communities and site circumstances. Priority should be given to the provision of family housing.
- Student Housing (non self-contained accommodation) is encouraged where this does not prejudice delivery of conventional dwellings. A forum for stakeholders is to be initiated.
- Loss of Community Facilities now subject to a 'suitability' test to determine local need requirements.

London's Economy

- Employment Growth predicted at circa 4 million sq.ft of offices;
- Requirements for the release of Industrial Land are briefly detailed with a focus upon management and release where this meets other objectives in the plan.
- Small Shops are a focus for provision, particularly where these are affordable, independent units, thus adding to the vitality and viability of retail centres.

London's Response to Climate Change

- Greater emphasis on reaching zero carbon residential and commercial buildings is made, however generally energy policies are more flexible.
- Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 is now a requirement by virtue of the need to meet a 25% improvement on 2010 Building Regulations. Similar requirement for commercial buildings.
- Target for on-site renewable energy provision remains at 20%, although this appears in the policy sub-text, rather than the policy itself. Strategic target for 25% of heat and power requirements to be met through decentralised energy networks, with development proposals required to take account of this.

Planning Obligations/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- Emphasis upon the promotion of Crossrail through contributions generated by the S106 SPD (Adopted) and additional monies through the Community Infrastructure Levy (additional regulation and 'Charging Schedule' to follow).
- CIL will subsequently be used to fund other strategically important infrastructure.
- Affordable Housing and Transport consolidated as the two fundamental priorities for planning gain across London.

Flexibility

At the London Plan official launch event on 29 September 2011 at City Hall, officials from the GLA compared the Plan with the painting of the Forth Bridge, in that they are already looking at revisions to make to the document. Despite the plan being designed to last for 20 years it is the GLA's aspiration for the document to be dynamic and updated when and where necessary.

Implications

The new London Plan policies form part of the strategic development plan with immediate effect and therefore planning applications will be determined in accordance with these. In addition, emerging planning policy documents across London will require to conform with the policies in the London Plan.

It is therefore essential that developers, landowners, investors and others with an interest in land and development to take account of the new plan. Whilst it is encouraging that the Mayor has sought to produce a more prosaic approach to planning policy across London, the desire to introduce flexibility means some key requirements will be subject to a degree of interpretation by Local Planning Authorities. This places a greater emphasis on negotiation with Boroughs.

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