

The London Plan ...what does it mean for design?

Briefing Note

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Introduction

On the 29th November the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, published his draft London Plan for consultation (Regulation 19). The consultation period started on the 4th December 2017 and will run until 2nd March 2018.

The draft London Plan sets out the Mayor's vision for London and provides the overarching strategic planning framework for the city for the next 20-25 years. This document introduces a number of new design requirements and considerations, creating wider implications for the scheme design, assessment and implementation. A summary of these proposed changes is provided below:

Design Scrutiny

As part of Policy D2, the draft London Plan, introduces a new regime of design scrutiny, whereby all applications are encouraged to undergo independent expert review, prior to the submission of a planning application; additional to the assessment undertaken by Borough and design officers.

Where an application is referable to the Mayor and exceeds the density levels stated in Policy D6 (See below); or is considered a tall building by the Borough (or exceeds 30m in height - if no definition prescribed by the Borough), applicants are advised to undergo at least one design review prior to submission. Such reviews should have consideration for a schemes layout, scale, height, density, land-uses, materials, treatment, detailing and landscaping.

Recommendations made through this review process are to be recorded and built upon overtime (if more than one review), with schemes demonstrating how they have evolved to consider and address the recommendations made.

It is anticipated that the Mayor's Design Advocates will play a primary role in the delivery of good design across Greater London, involved in design reviews and capacity building.

The draft London Plan also highlights the need to ensure high quality design is maintained from permission through to construction. As part of this process the draft policy seeks to ensure sufficient design information is provided at the application submission stage; additionally proposing the use of architect retention clauses and the use of conditions and legal agreements to provide clarity over design expectations.

Space Standards

Policy D4 of the draft London Plan establishes a slightly more prescriptive approach to the internal and private open space standards than the current Plan. The proposed standards are however largely reflective of the current London Plan and Housing SPG; including Table 3.3, which now forms Table 3.1 (Maximum space standards for new dwellings) which remains unchanged (albeit new standards for 6 bedroom (8 space) dwellings).

The private internal space standards are below:

	Minimum Area (sqm)	Minimum Width (m)
1 Bedspace (Single Room)	7.5	2.15
2 Bedspace (Double or Twin room)	11.5	2.75
Each additional 2 Bedspace (Double or Twin room)	11.5	2.55
Private Outside Space (Does not count towards GIA)		
1-2 person dwellings	5	1.5
Each additional occupant	+1	1.5

In addition to the above, this draft policy states that ceiling height must be 2.5m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area (GIA), with any area of headroom less than 1.5m not to be counted in GIA; unless used solely for storage, in which case it can only be counted as up to 50% of the floor area. In areas where headroom is less than 0.9m, this area does not count towards GIA.

Housing Density and Management Plans

Draft Policy D6 expands upon elements previously identified in the current Plan (consideration of infrastructure, optimization of land and capacity etc.)

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but no longer sets out a prescribed density matrix; instead this policy establishes that proposed sites must be developed at the optimum density, making the most efficient use of land.

Draft Policy D6 also sets out the thresholds whereby an application is referable to the Mayor and is subject to a design review (as highlighted above). These thresholds, identified below, are based on the Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of the site:

- 110 units per hectare in areas of PTAL 0 to 1; or
- 240 units per hectare in areas of PTAL 2 to 3; or
- 405 units per hectare in areas of PTAL 4 to 6.

Proposals above these thresholds are also required to submit a Management Plan identifying the day-to-day servicing and delivery details and long term maintenance implications of the application.

Urban Greening

The concept of urban greening is substantially advanced from that in the current Plan, with draft Policy G5 introducing a new Urban Greening Factor (UGF) methodology to identify the appropriate level of urban greening required within new development.

Boroughs are expected to develop a locally specific UGF to identify the amount of greening required. In the interim however, the Mayor recommends a target score of 0.4 for predominantly residential developments and 0.3 for predominantly commercial developments.

Tall Buildings

Draft Policy D8 of the draft London Plan, builds off the current Plan to provide greater clarity as to the role of the Boroughs in identifying and assessing tall buildings. In particular, this draft policy sets out that Development Plans should establish a definition for 'tall buildings' and identify locations where they may be considered appropriate forms of development. The draft policy also identifies the visual, functional, environmental and cumulative impacts that must be considered by Boroughs in assessing proposals for tall buildings.

Basement Development

Boroughs are urged to establish policies relevant to Basement Development in draft Policy D9, which identifies the need for local level control of proposals to minimise the potential negative impacts of large scale

development beneath existing buildings. The supporting text of this draft policy goes as far as to promote Boroughs using Article 4 directions to require smaller-scale proposals to obtain planning permission.

Fire safety

In response to the events at Greenfield Tower, the draft London Plan establishes a new policy to directly respond to fire safety – draft Policy D11.

The draft policy identifies that development proposals must be of the highest standards in fire safety and evacuation. All major developments should submit a Fire Statement, assessed by an independent qualified assessor, to ensure the development is designed and constructed to minimise the risk of fire, whilst also allowing access for fire service personnel and equipment. This statement should also detail the means of escape for all building users.

Agents of Change Principle

Draft Policy D12 is a new addition to the London Plan, responding directly to recent case law regarding the responsibility for mitigation of existing or proposed noise-generating activities.

This draft policy establishes that the onus is on new development proposals to manage and mitigate noise and other potential nuisances from existing development (whether noise-generating or noise-sensitive). Where the existing use is a noise-generating activity new development should be designed to ensure established venues remain viable and can continue to grow without unreasonable restrictions being placed on them.

3D Digital Modelling

The draft London Plan encourages the use of 3D virtual reality and interactive digital modeling by both Boroughs and Applicants to engage the community and better inform planning assessments and decisions.

To discuss the effect these changes may have on your projects and services, or if you would like us to prepare and submit a representation on your behalf during the consultation period, please contact DLP London or your local DLP office.