

## **PLANNING FOR A BETTER LONDON: COMMENTS BY THE LONDON FORUM OF CIVIC AND AMENITY SOCIETIES: NOVEMBER 2008**

### **The Mayor's Approach**

**The London Forum strongly supports the Mayor's more consensual approach to planning, with less intervention on non-strategic matters** – limiting intervention, especially taking over cases from the Boroughs, to genuinely strategic issues. This will require a much better definition of what is "genuinely strategic".

**The London Forum would welcome the Mayor producing and publishing:**

- a Statement of Community Involvement
- a propriety statement for his involvement in planning casework
- a statement of how third parties can present objections in the event of the Mayor taking over cases

The London Forum notes the new approach will depend less on targets and depend more on "rigorous monitoring of implementation and assertive management of obstacles". We consider that he will need better mechanisms for picking up early warnings that there are problems with certain policies.

### **The Key Challenges**

**The London Forum is particularly concerned about:**

- the need to factor in some of the likely effects of the current recession
- the misuse of the London Plan density policy to produce poor development, poor townscape and poor living conditions.
- the pressure for tall buildings generated by the London Plan
- new housing with low space standards and inadequate amenity and play space
- the adequacy of provision for new schools and that land and buildings in educational use are not lost to housing
- the number of inappropriate tall buildings that have been encouraged and the priority the Mayor gives to supporting tall buildings
- the ability to maintain and increase the supply of affordable housing
- the proportion of new comparison shopping floorspace going to major developments outside the existing network of town centres and the impact this will have on existing centres

**The London Forum supports:**

- higher space standards, adequate amenity space and planned provision for new schools, leisure and health facilities
- sensitivity testing of alternative growth assumptions, especially for employment and retail developments
- the greater emphasis given to the needs of small and medium-sized firms
- the conservation of London's built heritage, townscape and views
- promoting walkable neighbourhoods
- improving the ease of access to people's day-to-day needs
- revitalising town centres
- reducing the need to travel, especially by car
- encouraging uses which attract a lot of people being located where it will be well served by public transport
- improving the supply of premises for small and medium-sized enterprises

**The London Forum is particularly concerned that the Mayor considers supporting tall buildings should be an economic priority:**

- while there are advantages from clustering development in a particular location, there are no specific economic advantages that can be attributed specifically to tall buildings
- tall buildings are not in themselves a strategic issue on which the Mayor needs to take a strong policy stance, except where they impinge upon strategic views

**The London Forum considers that:**

- all partners must "own" the responsibility for housing delivery
- more work is needed to define appropriate density ranges for mixed-use development around town centres
- more affordable homes need to be suitable for families
- more consideration needs to be given to the space standards for affordable housing

**The London Forum considers that the London Plan needs:**

- a stronger set of waterways policies, particularly for the Thames
- to improve tree awareness, planting and maintenance in boroughs
- to ensure that large new buildings that impinge upon views are not assessed in terms of how much harm they would do, but whether and how they would enhance the view

- to incorporate a more integrated approach to land-use and transport planning
- to maintain the key element of a long-term strategy to make London a world-class city for walking
- to extend protection to wharves and other infrastructure to include the main canals and avoid conflict between uses
- to ensure that new communities are not just commuter suburbs but sustainable places with their own identity
- a better understanding of the thresholds for producing viable social and commercial infrastructure for new communities and the land required

**The London Forum considers that there is a need to review the London Plan to:**

- change the emphasis of some policies to produce better outcomes;
- reflect new and emerging priorities;
- remove or relieve policy stress; and
- move faster in the direction of more sustainable urban development – harnessing change to retrofit existing areas and create a more sustainable pattern of development.

**Some specific changes that we seek are:**

- to reduce the pressure on “**maximising** “ densities and “**promoting**” tall buildings; while there should be higher densities, these need to be appropriate to their context;
- **to reduce the need to travel**, especially by car, as a guiding principle; and
- **to promote more sustainable suburbs based on a stronger network of centres** which are the focus for social and commercial infrastructure development.

**The London Forum hopes that the Mayor will take the opportunity presented by a review of the London Plan to address the issues raised above and that the review will be completed by December 2011.**