



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing & Communities

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

2 Marsham Street

London

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Rt Hon Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
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E16 1ZE

12 February 2024

Dear Sadiq,

LONDON PLAN REVIEW

In December, I commissioned a review of the London Plan to examine whether there were any specific changes to policies that could potentially facilitate urban brownfield regeneration in London to boost housing delivery in the capital. I am now pleased to enclose the London Plan Review Report of Expert Advisers which will be published tomorrow. I believe that the report is well considered and constructive and I am grateful to the expert advisers for their work in delivering the review.

The report sets out significant issues – housing delivery in London has failed to meet the London Plan target and is well short of the assessed housing need. In 2022 only 13 of 32 boroughs scored higher than 95% on the Housing Delivery Test. The remaining 19 were entered into consequences for poor performance. The results have been consistently poor since the HDT was introduced. In addition to the growing shortfall in delivery of new homes, the report also highlights the reduction in residential units being approved from 89,000 in 2018/19 to just 40,200 in 2022/23. The figures illustrate how critical it is that action is taken as soon as possible to address this.

The primary recommendation and conclusion to the report is a proposal to introduce an overarching planning presumption in favour of development which would bring together all the relevant issues on an application for residential development on a brownfield site. I agree with the conclusions of the review: that an overarching presumption in favour of housebuilding on brownfield land is the most effective means of cutting through some of the complexity of the existing London Plan which may currently be serving to thwart housing delivery.

I have given the report and its recommendation careful consideration. In light of the importance of delivering homes in our country's great cities – where there also remains some persistent under delivery – I believe there would be benefit to applying the recommendations more broadly across England. Therefore, I intend to consult on changing two policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, following which my intention is to introduce these changes as soon as possible.

The first will seek to empower decision-makers to take a more proportionate approach to applying policies or guidance in relation to internal layout of development, giving more weight to the benefits of delivering as many homes as possible. The second is a change to the Housing Delivery Test

(HDT), whereby all authorities subject to the housing need urban uplift will be subject to a presumption in favour of sustainable development on brownfield land should they not deliver at least 95% of their assessed need. We will not use the qualifying methodology set out in the report, which was designed with only London in mind. I want to note that neither proposed change affects the definition of previously developed land in national policy, and so will not alter existing protections, including for residential gardens and the character of suburban neighbourhoods.

The consultation will launch on 13 February and run until 26 March. Subject to the responses, I will look to implement changes as soon as possible.

On the 2022 HDT results, fewer than half of the London Boroughs and Development Corporations delivered more than 95% of their appropriate housing requirement for the test over the three-year monitoring period. Therefore, 17 London boroughs would be required to apply the presumption if it were based on the 2022 HDT results.

There is one further proposal I am consulting on and which I wanted to bring to your attention. I am aware of concerns from the sector that in some instances housebuilding is being delayed by unnecessary duplication of the planning process by the Greater London Authority. Therefore, I am seeking views on whether changes are required to the threshold at which a residential planning application is referable to you as the Mayor of London, which is currently set at 150 homes or more.

The Government will not hesitate to go further, making sure that our capital city has the housing it needs. Alongside consulting on these changes, I want to inform you that I am also announcing £50 million of new investment in London to unlock new homes through estate regeneration. We will continue to work with you to deliver this and explore further measures to drive forward estate regeneration across London.

As you have already started work on the next London Plan, I have asked my officials to work with you to ensure it goes further to unlock housebuilding in London. Officials are considering further measures that stakeholders raised were holding back delivery and will be in touch with your team in due course on how we can work together to drive housing delivery.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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