



MAYOR OF LONDON

London Housing Strategy

May 2018

5. High quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods

- 5.1 As London develops, it is vital that it remains a great place to live and work – and so new homes and neighbourhoods need to be well-designed, good quality, safe, environmentally sustainable, accessible, inclusive of Londoners' diverse housing needs, and built in partnership with local communities. Delivering high quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods is key to achieving social integration and supporting Londoners to actively participate in their city and the decisions that affect them. This chapter contains the Mayor's policies and proposals that aim to achieve these objectives.

CONTEXT

- 5.2 Over half of London's homes were built before the Second World War¹⁰⁷. We need to work on the assumption that the homes we build today need to be fit to last for well over a century. Given that most of the homes that London will have in 2050 are already built, we also need to do more to improve the existing stock so it meets our current and future needs.
- 5.3 London's homes are increasingly of a good size and a decent quality. Those built in the last four years have an average floor area of 78 square metres – smaller than surviving pre-war homes but larger than those built between the 1940s and 1980s¹⁰⁸. The number of social rented homes in London that do not meet the Decent Homes standard has fallen from 260,300 in 2005 to 48,600 in 2017¹⁰⁹. New homes are far more likely to be accessible to Londoners with mobility issues than older homes¹¹⁰ and per capita greenhouse emissions from London's housing sector have reduced by around a third since 2000¹¹¹.

107 GLA analysis of VOA Council Tax: Stock of Properties, 2017

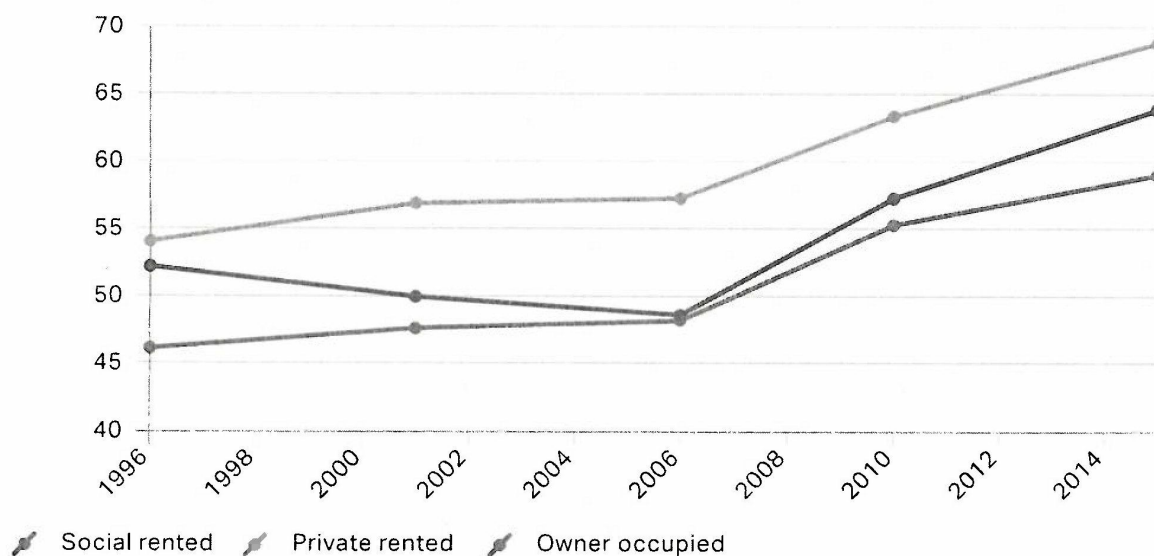
108 GLA analysis of MHCLG, Energy Performance Certificate statistics and English Housing Survey data

109 MHCLG, Local Authority Housing Statistics data returns, 2016/17

110 GLA, 'Housing in London', 2017. Building Regulations set out optional requirements for accessibility to homes for people with mobility problems, including level access, flush thresholds, sufficiently wide doors and circulation space, and WCs at entrance level. Homes with all these 'visitability' features comprise just 9% of London's housing stock, but 49% of those homes built after 1990. Source: MHCLG, English Housing Survey.

111 GLA analysis of London Energy and Greenhouse Gas Inventory statistics

Figure 5.1: Trend in median energy efficiency rating by tenure, London 1996 to 2014¹¹²



5.4 However, in some cases, poor design and quality persist. The total estimated cost of meeting the basic repair needs of London's existing housing stock is around £5.4 billion, with significant investment needed in older homes in the private rented sector¹¹³. Following the recent tragedy at Grenfell Tower, it is essential that existing high-rise buildings – particularly those built in the 1960s and 1970s that have subsequently been refurbished – are made safe. Where buildings are not safe, significant investment may be needed to improve them, and where they cannot be made safe or be otherwise improved while guaranteeing their safety, funding may be required to demolish and replace any social housing they provide.

5.5 Despite an improvement in the energy efficiency of London's homes (figure 5.1), one in 10 London households still live in fuel poverty¹¹⁴, and there has been limited take-up of energy efficiency measures in the wider housing stock too. In terms of new homes, there are growing reports of defects and poor build quality, as well as reports that design standards and building controls are sometimes poorly implemented at the local level due to a lack of resources, expertise, and oversight, and lack of clarity about how regulations are being applied.

¹¹² GLA analysis of English Housing Condition Survey and English Housing Survey data, 1996-2014

¹¹³ GLA analysis of English Housing Survey data, 2015/16

¹¹⁴ BEIS, Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics, 2017

- 5.6 The quality of the environment in which homes are built is as important to our health as the buildings themselves, which is why the Mayor has adopted the Healthy Streets Approach. Our health is affected by how housing blends with the spaces around it, how it enables us to feel part of a community, and how it allows us to easily access the services we need. Neighbourhoods that are inclusive and welcoming, in which all people can get around and meet people on foot or by cycle, help to protect their residents from a range of avoidable health issues including physical inactivity, social isolation, obesity and depression. These built environments support children in their healthy development, and adults through life challenges and ageing¹¹⁵.
- 5.7 London's homes also need to meet the specific needs of the capital's diverse population. This includes an increasing number of older people (more than one in 10 Londoners is aged 65 or over, with the number projected to rise by 24 per cent over the next decade¹¹⁶), as well as disabled people (who account for around 14 per cent of the population¹¹⁷). Families, particularly those with young children, also have distinct housing needs – not least for larger homes. People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT+) may also have specific housing needs and experiences, given that they are more likely to experience homelessness (particularly if they are young), and may face discrimination in accessing housing¹¹⁸. There are also groups of Londoners who may need particular types of housing provision, such as Gypsies and Travellers¹¹⁹, as well as groups who wish to live together as part of a specific self-defined community, such as older women¹²⁰.
- 5.8 It is important that London's housing enables older and disabled Londoners to lead independent and fulfilling lives. There needs to be a range of options available, particularly as more older people are choosing to remain in their own homes rather than move into residential institutions¹²¹. These include adaptations to existing homes, the provision of new homes built to meet people's changing circumstances over a lifetime, and a more attractive offer to older Londoners who owner occupy and wish to downsize (over half of older

115 Barton, Grant and Guise, 'Shaping neighbourhoods for local and global sustainability (2nd edition), 2010

116 GLA, Interim 2015-based population projections

117 DWP, Family Resources Survey, 2015/16

118 Human City Institute, 'Rainbow Rising', 2014; Albert Kennedy Trust, 'LGBT Youth Homelessness: A UK National Scoping of Cause, Prevalence, Response and Outcome', 2015

119 GLA, 'Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Topic Paper', 2017

120 A recent example of a specific scheme for older women is Older Women's Co-Housing - <http://www.owch.org.uk/>

121 Mayor of London, London Plan, 2015. See evidence supporting policy 38

home owners in London are under-occupying by two or more bedrooms¹²²). There is also an urgent need to support an increase in the number of foster carers, many of whom will require homes with additional bedrooms.

- 5.9 A range of supported housing is required to ensure that people with specific needs can continue to live independently within their communities. There is a strong financial case for investing in specialist housing¹²³, which on average saves £940 per person per year in net terms. It is estimated that the shortfall in supported housing for working age adults alone amounts to around 17,000 homes across England¹²⁴. With the outcome of Government's recent consultation on the housing-related costs of supported housing still awaited, and significant issues arising from the proposals, there is considerable uncertainty and concern around the funding for both existing and future provision¹²⁵.
- 5.10 While public support for new housebuilding in London is growing fast¹²⁶, we also know that Londoners have a range of concerns about the development of new homes that need to be addressed. For example, when asked about what was needed from new development, the most popular answers Londoners gave were new social infrastructure and local facilities, and a mix of homes for different types of people¹²⁷. The Mayor believes that these concerns are best addressed by delivering the homes that meet the current and future needs of Londoners, in ways that include and engage existing communities.

122 GLA, 'Older Londoners and the London Plan: looking to 2050', 2016

123 Frontier Economics, 'Financial benefits of investment in specialist housing for vulnerable and older people', 2010

124 Sitra, 'Strengthening the case: the cost consequences', 2017

125 MHCLG/ DWP, 'Funding supported housing – policy statement and consultation', 2017

126 There has been a dramatic increase in support for house building in London since 2010. When asked if they would support or oppose more homes being built in their local area, 67% of Londoners said in 2016 they would support or strongly support it, up from 34% in 2010 and compared to only 18% who said they would oppose it. Support for housebuilding is substantially higher in London than in the country as a whole. Source: NatCen, British Social Attitudes Survey, 2010-2016.

127 GLA opinion polling on attitudes to growth and development, March 2015

POLICY 5.1: WELL-DESIGNED, SAFE, AND GOOD QUALITY HOMES

London's new and existing homes and neighbourhoods should be well-designed, safe, good quality, and environmentally sustainable.

Proposals

A

The Mayor will work with councils and the industry to support well-designed, safe, good quality and environmentally sustainable new homes and neighbourhoods. This will include:

- i. calling on Government to ensure the Building Regulations system has an uncompromising focus on quality and safety;
- ii. updating and consolidating London's housing design standards into a single new planning document, including examples of well-designed high density development, and maintaining London's space standards;
- iii. working closely with the Mayor's Design Advocates, exploring options for a new housing design Expo, and supporting councils through the Public Practice initiative; and
- iv. delivering the Mayor's London Environment Strategy, including a commitment to zero carbon new development.

B

The Mayor will work with councils, Government, and others to improve the quality and standards of London's existing homes. This will include:

- i. working to strengthen fire safety in existing homes, including calling on Government to make sufficient resources available to make homes safe; and
- ii. improving the energy efficiency of existing homes and addressing fuel poverty as part of the Mayor's Energy for Londoners (EfL) programme, through a world-class domestic energy efficiency programme, a Fuel Poverty Action Plan, and making it easier for homeowners and landlords to invest in their homes.

- 5.11 The Mayor believes that increased levels of homebuilding and a greater focus on the quality, safety, and sustainability of homes and neighbourhoods go hand in hand. Only with strict standards in place, properly enforced, can we be certain that our new and existing homes will meet the needs of those Londoners for whom they are built.
- 5.12 This includes a focus on ensuring that homes and neighbourhoods are environmentally sustainable, and that they are designed to meet the challenges posed by climate change. Homes are currently responsible for 36 per cent of London's total CO₂ emissions¹²⁸, but by 2050 all homes will need to have an emissions footprint close to zero. London's homes will have to become better insulated, and obtain more of their heat and power from renewable sources in order to meet this target. At the same time, energy efficiency strategies will need to be combined with strategies to reduce the risks of overheating and water shortages, in order to make homes resilient to future climate change. Many of the proposals in this section are outlined in more detail in the Mayor's London Environment Strategy and the draft London Plan.

IMPROVING QUALITY AND SAFETY OF NEW HOMES

- 5.13 The Mayor plays an important role in ensuring new homes and neighbourhoods are well-designed and inclusive by setting out pan-London requirements and expectations for all new developments. To support this, and to make the standards as straightforward as possible for the industry to understand, the Mayor will update and consolidate London's housing design standards into a single planning document. This will include examples of the kinds of development we need to support – in particular, high density schemes and those that co-locate different uses. Design standards, through a mixture of prescribed standards and more flexible guidelines, will continue to ensure that London's homes set the benchmark for design quality and support delivery of the range of new homes that London needs.
- 5.14 Good minimum space standards are important to maintain, given that new homes, particularly high density homes and affordable homes, tend to be intensively occupied. The draft London Plan strengthens the policy on London's housing space standards and, for the first time, includes minimum room sizes within policy. These standards will be applied to all self-contained housing, with clear guidance also provided for large scale non-self-contained

128 GLA analysis of The London Energy and Greenhouse Gas Inventory (LEGGI)

shared living schemes. The Mayor will work to ensure that any further national reviews of standards take London's circumstances into account.

- 5.15 The Building Regulations system is supposed to ensure that new buildings are safe and good quality, yet there continues to be concern about how regulations are written, interpreted, applied, and enforced. The Mayor supports the ongoing Government review of the system of Building Regulations and fire safety and he believes that this should not shy away from radical reform of regulations and building control if that is what is required. In addition, the Mayor has brought forward new requirements around fire safety within the draft London Plan to ensure that new buildings, particularly tall buildings, are fit for purpose and safe for Londoners to live in. These proposals are closely linked with those designed to empower social housing residents (see policy 5.3).
- 5.16 The Mayor wants to ensure that new homes maximise water efficiency, support London's green infrastructure, and contribute to improving London's preparedness and resilience to risks associated with extreme weather events, such as heat and flooding. The Mayor's policies and proposals to support these objectives are set out in his London Environment Strategy and his draft London Plan. In particular, the Mayor will use his planning powers to ensure that new homes contribute to the necessary shift towards a zero carbon future, and he has included his zero carbon target for new housing developments within his draft London Plan. The Mayor will continue to monitor how the zero carbon policy (including offsetting funds) is being implemented to ensure it is working efficiently.
- 5.17 To date combustion-based Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems, predominantly gas-engine CHP, have been used in new development in London as a cost-effective way of producing low carbon heat. However, the carbon savings from gas engine CHP are now declining as a result of the national grid electricity decarbonising, and there is increasing evidence of adverse air quality impacts. As a result, we must now consider alternative approaches. The draft London Plan introduces a heating hierarchy that will promote cleaner heating solutions, such as those based on secondary heat. The Mayor will encourage a similar approach when existing or new plant is being replaced or installed outside the planning system. To better understand the pollution impact of existing CHP systems in London the Mayor will also develop a new CHP register, which will be reflected in future versions of the London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory.

- 5.18 The draft London Plan also sets out policy to minimise the risk of new developments overheating, and to reduce their contribution to the urban heat island effect through a 'cooling hierarchy' that prioritises design, orientation, shading and ventilation over mechanical cooling. It also requires planning assessments that consider overheating as well as energy efficiency.
- 5.19 The Mayor wants to see all new housing developments provide a mix of homes of different tenures for Londoners on different incomes, with priority for onsite provision of affordable homes rather than a cash in lieu payment or offsite provision. Onsite affordable homes not only help to build mixed communities, but can be important in gathering support for developments among local residents and in councils. Housing developments should also be designed to be tenure-blind by ensuring the external appearances and entrances for private and affordable housing are well integrated and indistinguishable from each other. Policies to ensure this is implemented are included in the draft London Plan.

GOOD GROWTH BY DESIGN¹²⁹

- 5.20 The Mayor wants to involve London's world-renowned talent in designing the future of the capital and has appointed 50 Mayor's Design Advocates to support his Good Growth by Design programme. Advocates will support City Hall to deliver the programme and to uphold the quality, inclusiveness, and sustainability of development across London. They have been appointed to support good design and add value to existing efforts, rather than creating an additional hurdle for new developments. This is part of a new approach to designing London's new buildings, which is set out in more detail within the draft London Plan.
- 5.21 The Mayor will bring forward supplementary planning guidance on housing design to support councils to implement relevant new policies in the draft London Plan. This will include guidance on optimising density, design codes for more homes on small sites, and practical guidance on how different typologies can successfully achieve high density in a range of settings.
- 5.22 The development industry also needs to show that it has potentially attractive solutions to meet the challenges of building homes in new ways, such as building sustainably at higher densities and with a mix of different uses.

129 GLA, 'Good Growth by Design: A built environment for all Londoners', 2017

The Mayor wants to support this process through highlighting solutions, potentially through a new housing Expo in London. This could harness the creativity of the architectural and construction sectors by showcasing good design – including housing that uses precision manufacturing – across a range of high density typologies, in a range of locations. These should be the typologies that are needed to support an increase in housing delivery – such as mid-rise residential, intensification of areas around town centres and tube and rail stations, and co-location of different uses (e.g. logistics and residential). Typologies that incorporate additional green infrastructure and help to tackle London's environmental challenges will be of particular interest.

- 5.23 The Mayor believes that design and quality review is an important tool to ensure quality is achieved in an ever-denser London, and the draft London Plan places increased emphasis on its role in the planning and decision-making processes. In particular, the draft London Plan calls for all referable schemes to have undergone at least one design review if they exceed a defined height or density.
- 5.24 Alongside the Mayor and industry developing responses to the design challenges we face, councils also need to take a leading role in facilitating the delivery of well-designed and good quality homes and neighbourhoods. In many cases, however, financially pressed councils may lack the capacity and resources to do so. To address this, the Mayor is working with councils and the industry to deliver Public Practice, a new initiative to support councils' capacity to deliver homes and growth by placing outstanding planning, design and regeneration practitioners into councils for one year placements at affordable rates (see box 13). The Mayor will also consider other ways in which he can assist councils, and he supports Government's proposals to increase planning fees – though along with most organisations in the housing industry, he believes these proposals should go much further.

BOX 13: PUBLIC PRACTICE

Public Practice is a new social enterprise that brokers one-year placements at affordable rates for outstanding planners and place-making practitioners, cross-subsidised through public and private sector support.

This initiative, developed in conjunction with the Local Government Association, Future Cities Catapult, British Land, Berkeley Group and Peabody will:

- build the public sector's capacity to deliver homes and growth;
- support collaborative planning and sharing of knowledge and research across councils; and
- develop a new generation of planning professionals committed to shaping places for the public good.

Public Practice will address the need for better resourced planning departments, a need recognised by housebuilders and evidenced by surveys of London's councils. It will improve the speed, quality, and certainty of the planning process, and offer councils a cost-effective alternative to employing agency staff to meet temporary demand.

QUALITY AND SAFETY OF EXISTING HOMES

- 5.25 While the Mayor lacks formal powers over London's existing homes, he recognises the urgent need to improve quality and standards – both to ensure that homes better meet the needs of Londoners, and to help reduce the environmental footprint of housing. This issue has taken on new prominence following the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent reports of large numbers of existing high-rise buildings containing unsafe materials.
- 5.26 The London Fire Commissioner (LFC) is the lead agency for fire safety in the capital, and will be reviewing its own approaches to fire safety, particularly in tall buildings, in light of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the recommendations which are likely to arise from the subsequent Public Inquiry. The Mayor is clear that it is the responsibility of Government to set fire safety regulations.



- 5.27 It is also clear that urgent action is needed to ensure residents in some high-rise blocks are not at increased risk from fire where their blocks have been fitted with inappropriate materials, have been poorly constructed, or are compromised through inadequate management and disrepair. The Mayor will continue to work with councils and housing associations to understand what they need to do to meet their responsibilities around the safety of their homes. He welcomes the commitment made by Government to fully fund the removal and replacement of dangerous cladding by councils and housing associations. Ultimately, if it is not possible to safely retrofit existing buildings, the Mayor believes Government should ensure resources are made available to demolish them and replace the social housing at least like for like.
- 5.28 Action is also required to address safety issues in privately owned blocks, including to ensure councils have the enforcement powers they need. Recent tribunal decisions have suggested leaseholders may be legally liable for remediation work to make buildings safe, despite the widely-held view that this cost should lie with building owners. Whatever the legal position, the Mayor believes it is morally wrong that the leaseholders of individual flats should be forced to pay substantial costs where safety issues have arisen through no fault of their own. Where there are disputes over who should pay, the Mayor has called on Government to provide immediate funding to ensure works can be carried out without delay, and to decide how ultimately to fund this once legal cases have been heard.



IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- 5.29 Through his flagship Energy for Londoners (EfL) programme, the Mayor will develop and deliver a world-class domestic energy efficiency programme. This will provide support to Londoners and organisations to increase the energy efficiency of their homes, create awareness to encourage action, and accelerate the next generation of retrofitting through testing new methods of construction and technology. Further details are set out in the Mayor's London Environment Strategy.
- 5.30 While fuel poverty rates in the rest of England have reduced in recent years, in London they have marginally increased¹³⁰, due to a combination of high energy costs, low incomes, and existing homes that are not energy efficient. The Mayor has published his Fuel Poverty Action Plan to identify the scale of the problem and the roles of key stakeholders, and to focus efforts on improving the energy efficiency of existing homes.
- 5.31 Nearly half of London's homes are owner occupied¹³¹, and it is important to ensure that homeowners are motivated and able to undertake home improvements, particularly to improve energy efficiency. Although there is a

¹³⁰ GLA analysis of BEIS, Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics, 2017

¹³¹ GLA analysis of English Housing Survey data, 2015/16

large number of barriers to retrofitting homes, two straightforward ways to incentivise these kinds of improvements would be to reform the way that VAT is charged on home improvements, and to reduce the planning requirements to which they are subject.

- 5.32 First, VAT on home improvements is charged at the standard 20 per cent rate, compared with a lower rate of five per cent on building a new home. Lowering the rate for home improvements would incentivise homeowners to undertake building work that would improve the environmental performance of their homes, lowering energy usage and CO2 emissions. Evidence suggests this measure would also add to employment, economic activity and tax revenues, offsetting losses from a lowered rate¹³². The Mayor will work with the industry to make the case to Government for the VAT rate on repairs, improvements, and adaptations of homes to be reduced to five per cent.
- 5.33 Second, homeowners are required to secure planning permission for many relatively simple home improvements, creating additional cost, delay, and risk, while diverting council planning department resources away from other, more strategic, considerations. In order to streamline the process for homeowners and reduce the burden on planning departments, the Mayor will seek to work with Government and councils to explore how planning requirements for home improvements and extensions could be streamlined. Where homes are owner occupied, investment in measures such as insulation, double glazing or new boilers will usually see a direct financial return to the homeowner in the form of lower energy bills. However, this is not the case for properties in the private rented sector, where the least energy efficient homes are often found. The financial benefits of investments in energy efficiency measures will generally accrue to tenants rather than landlords, and this split incentive reduces the willingness of landlords to make often expensive long-term investments in energy efficiency improvements. While some improvements might be covered by existing tax relief on repairs in properties, many will fall outside its scope.

132 Experian, 'The Opportunities and Costs of Cutting VAT: The effects of selected reductions in the rate of VAT on the labour element of housing repair, maintenance and improvement', 2010; Experian/ Federation of Master Builders, 'An estimate of the effects of a reduction in the rate of VAT on housing renovation and repair work: 2015 to 2020', 2014

- 5.34 To address this, the Mayor will seek to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the private rented sector by lobbying for tax relief on expenditure by landlords that improves the environmental performance of their tenanted properties, as is currently the case for expenditure on repairs. The Mayor supports the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard for the private rented sector to ensure these regulations deliver meaningful benefits for renters.

POLICY 5.2: MEETING LONDON'S DIVERSE HOUSING NEEDS

New and existing homes should meet Londoners' diverse housing needs.

Proposals

A

The Mayor will work with councils, housing associations, Government and others to ensure that London's homes and neighbourhoods support London's diverse housing needs. This will include:

- i. ensuring more of London's new and existing homes are accessible and appropriate for disabled Londoners, older Londoners, and families with children, including requiring councils to provide guidance on the size mix of low cost rented homes;
- ii. increasing opportunities for older homeowners to move to accommodation more suitable for their needs, including benchmarks for older people's housing requirements in the draft London Plan;
- iii. working with the Gypsy and Traveller community to ensure their housing needs are met;
- iv. making housing provision a key part of the Mayor's strategy to support the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the capital, and improving the integration support provided for all newly recognised refugees; and
- v. expecting all social landlords to ensure their services are LGBT+ inclusive.

B

The Mayor will work with councils, housing associations, Government and others to ensure that Londoners who need it are provided with support so that they can live independently. This will include:

- i. investing at least £100 million in supported housing for older and disabled Londoners; and
- ii. making the case to Government that the new funding arrangements should meet the support and housing costs of supported housing in London.

- 5.35 The Mayor's vision is for London to be a city for all Londoners. That means that new homes need to be developed with the needs of all Londoners in mind, and our existing housing stock needs to be improved to support demographic change and improved accessibility. Housing options should be available to meet the full range of Londoners' housing needs, ensuring that our neighbourhoods remain diverse, inclusive and socially integrated.

FAMILY- SIZED AND ACCESSIBLE HOMES

- 5.36 London needs homes of a broad range of sizes and the Mayor recognises the particular challenge of high levels of overcrowding in the capital. He is committed to addressing this challenge, and his measures for doing so run throughout this strategy and his draft London Plan (see box 14).

BOX 14: ENDING OVERCROWDING IN LONDON

The Mayor is clear that overcrowding, which adversely affects hundreds of thousands of Londoners, must be tackled as we address London's housing crisis.

Lack of room to play or study inhibits children's development and educational achievement. Adult children living with parents may delay starting their own families. Overcrowding increases the risk of accidents in the home, and there is evidence it is associated with physical ill health, as well as contributing to stress and anxiety¹³³. All of these effects can exert huge pressure on families and make overcrowded conditions still harder to cope with.

The proportion of London's households living in overcrowded conditions fell continuously until 1991, but in recent decades rates have risen – particularly in outer London, which had historically seen much less overcrowding. Around seven per cent of households in London are overcrowded¹³⁴, and 22 per cent of children in the capital are growing up in overcrowded homes¹³⁵.

133 Shelter, 'Full house? How Overcrowded Housing Affects Families', 2005; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 'The impact of overcrowding on health and education', 2004

134 GLA analysis of English Housing Survey, 2013/14 to 2015/16

135 GLA analysis of English Housing Survey, 2012/13 to 2014/15. Data is not yet available on the number of children in each overcrowded household in 2015/16.

Rates of overcrowding are higher among those on low incomes¹³⁶, those who rent their homes, and those from BAME communities (even after allowing for variations in household size)¹³⁷. Overcrowding is therefore a key health inequalities issue, as highlighted in the Mayor's draft Health Inequalities Strategy. Around 80 per cent of overcrowded households are renters, split roughly equally between the private and social rented sectors¹³⁸. In social housing, the shortage of suitable homes for overcrowded households is exacerbated by the Government's Benefit Cap, which means families may struggle to cover the rent of larger homes, particularly of those that are newly-built.

In total, the 250,000 homes in London that are overcrowded contain around 380,000 distinct 'family units'. This suggests overcrowded homes are a mix of those with a single family who need a bigger home, and those in which overcrowding is caused by there being more than one family - for example, a grown-up child and their partner who need a home of their own¹³⁹. Homes of a range of different sizes are therefore needed to help tackle overcrowding.

Family-sized housing in the social housing sector helps those households who need a larger home – and where overcrowded families move into a bigger home, they free their existing home for another household to move into, potentially creating a beneficial chain of moves. Family-sized housing can be made available directly by building larger homes, and indirectly by building attractive one- and two-bedroom homes for those currently under-occupying family-sized homes to downsize into. One and two-bedroom homes are also what most concealed households need¹⁴⁰, and so can help tackle overcrowding in up to 30 per cent of cases¹⁴¹.

136 GLA analysis of 2013/14 to 2015/16 English Housing Survey finds that overcrowding rates among households in the lowest fifth of the national income distribution are several times higher than those for households in the highest fifth, regardless of household size.

137 ONS, 2011 Census

138 GLA analysis of English Housing Survey, 2013/14 to 2015/16

139 GLA analysis of 2012/13 to 2014/15 English Housing Survey. The estimate of family units in overcrowded households is distinct from the estimate of 'concealed households' given in paragraph 2.17, which was calculated for the 2017 London Strategic Housing Market Assessment and includes family units living in both overcrowded and non-overcrowded households

140 GLA, 'The 2017 London Strategic Housing Market Assessment', 2017

141 GLA analysis of 2012/13 to 2014/15 English Housing Survey data indicates that 32 per cent of overcrowded households contain two or more family units

Market family-sized housing often fails to help those who are overcrowded. With monthly rents for three-bedroom homes in London averaging £1,800¹⁴², they are clearly beyond the reach of the city's lower income households, who suffer most from overcrowding. Only around a third of family-sized market homes are actually occupied by families with children¹⁴³, partly because many larger market homes are bought by landlords and rented to sharers.

The Mayor is committed to doing all he can to end overcrowding as a critical strand of London's wide ranging work to address its housing crisis. We need a step change in investment and powers from Government to be able to build all the affordable homes Londoners need, and thereby be able to end overcrowding. In the meantime, the Mayor is using his existing resources to their fullest extent, as set out in a number of policies from across this strategy and the draft London Plan, including:

- **Housing targets and the level of affordable housing:** Tackling overcrowding is integral to the draft London Plan, since the principal evidence base for its housing targets, the SHMA, assumes that London needs to build enough of the right sort of homes to eradicate overcrowding. The Plan includes ambitious housing targets and strong policies to increase levels of affordable housing in new developments.
- **Low cost rented homes for overcrowded households:** As Policy 5.2 highlights, the Mayor's draft London Plan also includes – for the first time – a requirement that boroughs' planning policies set out guidance on the size mix of homes for low cost rent to be delivered in their area. Boroughs should determine local guidance by using evidence of local housing needs, including the numbers and types of overcrowded and under-occupying households. This guidance applies to all new low cost rented homes in a borough, irrespective of how they are funded or delivered, and should be used to help ensure the supply of new low cost rented homes is well-suited to helping tackle overcrowding in a borough.
- **More homes in outer London:** Both the London Housing Strategy (policies 3.1 and 3.3) and the draft London Plan encourage a shift in development towards outer London. Market homes delivered in these areas are likely to be cheaper than those delivered on larger sites in inner London, and so building family-sized homes that families can afford will be more viable.

142 Valuation Office Agency, Private Rental Market Statistics, September 2016.

143 GLA analysis of English Housing Survey, 2013/14 to 2015/16

- **Helping people to downsize:** Enabling would-be downsizers to move out of larger homes is also important, as it frees up these homes for families who are currently in homes too small for their needs. Delivering high quality specialist homes for older people (Policy 5.2) will help here, along with local authorities' and housing associations' transfer policies and the Mayor's schemes that create opportunities for social housing tenants to move (Policy 4.3).
- **A welfare benefits system that helps to eradicate overcrowding:** By heeding the Mayor's call to review its welfare reform measures (Policies 6.2 and 7.1), Government could ease the affordability pressures that are preventing many overcrowded Londoners from moving. The Benefit Cap, in particular, can leave families with just two or three children where nobody is able to work with very little money to cover housing costs.

5.37 Ensuring a supply of appropriate homes to meet need in London is a vital part of making the city liveable for families, helping to support mixed and balanced communities. Larger new market homes with three or more bedrooms are often bought as investment properties and rented to sharers, whereas new family-sized low cost rent homes clearly meet need as they are allocated according to household size. The draft London Plan includes the Mayor's planning policies relating to the mix of homes by number of bedrooms. For the first time, it requires councils to provide guidance on the size mix of low cost rented homes needed in their area, including family-sized housing, based on local factors such as the rate of overcrowding. In addition, the Mayor welcomes bids for funding from his Affordable Homes Programme to support the development of family-sized affordable homes, expecting providers to build homes that match local and pan-London needs, in terms of both size and typology.

5.38 Ensuring that new homes are accessible is essential to improving the proportion of London's housing stock that can be lived in, or visited by, disabled people, older people, and families with young children. The draft London Plan includes requirements for 10 per cent of all new build housing in London to be wheelchair user dwellings (wheelchair accessible or adaptable), and the remaining 90 per cent to be accessible and adaptable dwellings. The Mayor will also enhance the London Development Database¹⁴⁴, so that Londoners can identify homes being developed that are wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable, or designated for older people.

144 A database of major planning permissions across London held by the Greater London Authority

- 5.39 Many of London's existing homes need to be adapted and improved so that they are more accessible to Londoners. Government investment in Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) – the main funding stream available for councils to support these improvements – has increased in recent years. However, the cap on individual grants (of £30,000) has not changed since 2008. In addition, there is scope for some housing associations to invest more of their own funds in adaptations and improvements, so that more funding for DFGs is available for other homes. The Mayor will work with councils and housing associations to agree a protocol to ensure that housing associations contribute to the cost of adaptations, and he will urge Government to increase the maximum individual grant to £45,000. The Mayor expects social landlords to be well-informed about the accessibility of their stock, including through tools such as the London Accessible Housing Register¹⁴⁵. There is also scope to consider how loans and equity release could be used more effectively to fund adaptations, as well as repairs, to enable more older owner occupiers to continue to live independently in their own homes.

HOUSING THAT MEETS SPECIFIC NEEDS

- 5.40 While for many older people staying in their own homes is the best option, others need to move to accommodation more suited to their needs and we need to increase opportunities for them to do so. This will partly be achieved through increasing the supply of affordable homes in the capital. It will also involve planning for new homes that meet the distinct and varied housing needs of older Londoners. To support this, the draft London Plan sets out benchmarks for older people's housing requirements, and – through both the Plan and his capital funding – the Mayor will promote a range of different types of housing for older people.
- 5.41 There is also a need to increase opportunities to downsize, for those choosing to do so. Details of the Mayor's schemes enabling social tenants to downsize are set out in Policy 4.3. The Mayor is also using the draft London Plan to require councils, when assessing the unit mix of new build developments, to consider how well-designed one- and two- bedroom homes in suitable locations can attract those wanting to downsize from their existing homes, and the potential of this to free up existing family-sized homes. In addition, the Mayor will encourage Government to consider how incentives could be used to assist older under-occupiers wanting to downsize.

145 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/renting/london-accessible-housing-register>

- 5.42 Councils should actively plan for the accommodation requirements of London's Gypsies and Travellers. This should include the development of permanent sites, as well as improvements to and protections for existing capacity. The Mayor's planning policies to support this are set out in his draft London Plan. These include requirements for councils to: meet identified need for permanent pitches; carry out needs assessments based on a new definition of Gypsies and Travellers which, unlike the Government's planning definition, includes people who are currently living in bricks and mortar accommodation; and actively plan to protect existing capacity, including taking this into account when considering new residential developments. The Mayor will work with Gypsy and Traveller communities, and with councils, to provide funding for new sites and improvements for existing sites through his Affordable Homes Programme.
- 5.43 The Mayor also invites funding proposals for other types of housing that meets specific housing needs. This could include housing for specific BAME communities, for young people, for people experiencing mental ill health or substance misuse, for those with learning disabilities, for those leaving care or for foster carers, or LGBT+ majority extra care schemes along the lines of that currently being developed in Manchester¹⁴⁶. The Mayor expects social landlords to ensure that their services are inclusive of LGBT+ Londoners, by, for example, making full use of Stonewall's Service Delivery Toolkit¹⁴⁷ and signing up to the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme¹⁴⁸.
- 5.44 The Mayor is making housing a key part of his new city-wide scheme to support Syrian refugees to rebuild their lives in London and thrive in their local community¹⁴⁹. This will be achieved by bringing together offers of accommodation from private landlords, with rents set at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, as well as offers of sponsorship to help cover the costs of privately rented accommodation. In addition, the Mayor will lobby Government to extend the move-on period and to improve the integration support provided for all newly recognised refugees, to prevent homelessness and support social integration.

146 Manchester City Council, 'UK's first LGBT older person's community planned for Manchester' (press release), 2017

147 <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/service-delivery-toolkit>

148 <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/dc>

149 This is funded through the national Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement and Community Sponsorship Scheme

INVESTING IN SUPPORTED HOUSING

- 5.45 Many Londoners need support in order to continue living independently in their communities. These include people who have developed support needs as they have grown older, disabled people requiring ongoing support to remain independent (including the increasing numbers with dementia), and people with a learning disability or autism. Support may also be required for those Londoners who become homeless, including as a result of domestic abuse (policies in relation to homelessness are set out in chapter seven).
- 5.46 Supported housing schemes, including extra care housing, are designed to provide this support. For these schemes to be financially viable they tend to require two types of public subsidy: capital funding to develop the buildings and ongoing revenue funding to provide support services and cover housing costs.
- 5.47 The Mayor will continue to play a major role in providing capital funding for new homes specifically aimed at meeting London's diverse housing needs, both through his specialised programmes and his mainstream Affordable Homes Programme. The Care and Support Specialised Housing programme is a Government fund, administered by the Mayor in London, that supports the development of specialised housing for older people and younger disabled adults. The Mayor has recently secured an additional £36m for London for this programme. Through this and his wider programmes, the Mayor will invest at least £100 million in supported housing for older and disabled Londoners.
- 5.48 The Mayor will explore ways in which his capital funding for supported and specialist accommodation can facilitate innovations in mixed housing, for example multi-generational housing. In addition, given Government's proposed new approach to the local assessment of need for supported accommodation, there is increased scope for health services, councils, and other housing providers to work more closely to jointly commission supported housing. The Mayor is keen to consider funding bids arising from this approach, for example, for schemes to prevent delayed hospital discharge or discharge from hospital to no or inappropriate accommodation.
- 5.49 A key challenge to this much-needed increase in supply, as well as to the maintenance of current provision, is continuing uncertainty over, and lack of revenue funding for, support and housing costs. This is significantly reducing housing providers' appetite for investment in new and existing supported housing schemes.

- 5.50 The Mayor will continue to make the case to Government that the new revenue funding arrangements should meet the support and housing costs of supported housing in London. This should include ensuring that these arrangements:
- do not impede the delivery of new supported and specialist housing or the maintenance of current provision;
 - are fit for purpose for accommodation in which people may stay short term;
 - meet pan-London needs for accommodation, now and in the future; and
 - provide a sufficient level of financial support to match London's needs.
- 5.51 In particular, the levels of the new Sheltered Rent proposed by Government need to reflect the actual costs of development and ongoing provision (including regional differences). The proposed localised allocations of housing cost funding for short-term accommodation need to fully reflect both current and future need (and be flexible to changes), and where needs clearly cross local authority boundaries, such as for refuge provision, a strategic, pan-London approach should be taken (see Policy 7.1).

POLICY 5.3: COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR HOMEBUILDING

The Mayor will work with partners to encourage new housing delivery that involves communities and earns Londoners' support.

Proposals

A

Working with councils and others, the Mayor will support Londoners to be involved in planning and delivering new homes. This will include:

- i. setting a target to identify a pipeline of community-led housing schemes by 2021, with capacity to deliver at least 1,000 homes;
 - ii. supporting the expansion of community-led housing schemes through a new Community-Led Housing Hub for London; and
 - iii. investing in community-led housing schemes and lobbying Government for a share of the national Community Housing Fund.
-

B

The Mayor will work with developers, councils, TfL and other public sector service providers to ensure that new housing development is matched with the provision of new infrastructure. This will include:

- i. ensuring new development is supported by adequate social infrastructure through policies in his draft London Plan; and
 - ii. calling on Government to increase social infrastructure funding in high growth areas.
-

C

The Mayor will work to make the delivery of housing in London a more transparent and open process. This will include:

- i. reserving the right to publish viability assessments that the Mayor receives and strongly encouraging councils to do the same;

- ii. ensuring councils who take cash payments in lieu of onsite affordable housing make public these amounts and how they intend to spend them; and
 - iii. lobbying for land options agreements to be recorded with the Land Registry.
-

D

The Mayor will address public concerns about empty homes and the impact of housing being bought for investment, particularly by overseas buyers, on the availability of homes for Londoners. This will include:

- i. helping to ensure that Londoners have first dibs for more new homes, particularly those that are affordable to more first time buyers;
 - ii. addressing empty homes by encouraging all councils to levy the empty homes Council Tax premium and lobbying Government for changes to make it more effective; and
 - iii. continuing to urge Government to set new standards of transparency in the property industry and particularly for properties owned by companies registered overseas.
-

E

The Mayor will improve protections for Londoners living in social housing, including those affected by estate regeneration projects, and ensure their views are properly heard and acted upon. This will include:

- i. promoting resident ballots where demolition of affordable housing is proposed as part of significant estate regeneration schemes;
- ii. calling on Government to implement a package of reforms to support better regulation and rights for those living in social housing, including appointing an independent Commissioner for Social Housing Residents; and
- iii. implementing Better Homes for Local People - the Mayor's Good Practice Guide to estate regeneration.

- 5.52 Londoners increasingly recognise that the need for new housing means homes need to be built in every part of the capital. Over two thirds of Londoners surveyed in 2016 supported or strongly supported more homes being built in their local area – double the proportion in 2010¹⁵⁰.
- 5.53 Such support may be maintained through new developments including more homes that are genuinely affordable (see chapter four), and that are well-designed (see Proposal 5.1A). It can also be boosted by making sure that Londoners have an opportunity to shape housing delivery themselves, and that their concerns about the perceived negative impacts of new homes are addressed.
- 5.54 The Mayor considers public engagement to be vital in the process of building more new homes in London. There has been extensive public consultation on a number of Mayoral documents since his election in 2016. In particular, public consultation to support A City for All Londoners and the Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration has been significantly more thorough than was the practice under previous administrations, with workshops for key stakeholders, online and social media campaigns, and specialist consultation experts engaged by the Mayor to widen the range of responses and depth of engagement by Londoners in policy-making. This kind of approach should be extended to how we deliver new homes.

COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

- 5.55 Communities should always be consulted about new development, and in some cases communities want to take their involvement in development one step further by delivering homes themselves. Community-led housing can include co-housing, cooperative housing, and community land trusts. Schemes might be developed by Londoners who wish to live together as part of a specific self-defined community (e.g. an older people's co-housing scheme), for another purpose such as to have more control over how homes are managed (e.g. a social tenant cooperative), or to ensure that the community retains a financial stake in the homes and land (e.g. a community land trust). The Mayor will work with community-led housing organisations to identify a pipeline of schemes by 2021 that have the capacity to deliver at least 1,000 homes.

150 NatCen, British Social Attitudes Survey, 2010-2016.

- 5.56 Although the legal form and activities of each community-led housing scheme differ, schemes that are genuinely community-led all share three common principles:
- meaningful community engagement and consent occurs throughout the development process. Communities do not necessarily have to initiate the conversation, or build homes themselves;
 - there is a presumption that the community group or organisation will take a long-term formal role in the ownership, stewardship, or management of the homes; and
 - the benefits of the scheme to the local area and/or specified community group are clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.
- 5.57 Groups who wish to develop community-led housing schemes face a range of challenges. In particular, they may struggle to access suitable and affordable land, finance, and people with the necessary skills and experience to take a proposal through from conception to delivery. To help address this, the Mayor is funding a new Community-Led Housing Hub for London to provide learning, sharing and partnership brokering opportunities for communities wishing to develop their own homes (see box 15). The Mayor will enhance this by seeking additional funding from councils and others, and by linking the Hub with initiatives to make more small sites available for small scale housing developments through his Small Sites, Small Builders initiative (see chapter three).
- 5.58 Where they provide genuinely affordable homes for Londoners, the Mayor is also willing to fund community-led housing projects, as well as self-build and custom-build projects. The Mayor will use his Innovation Fund, and lobby Government to allocate a share of the Community Housing Fund, to fund community-led housing projects in London.

BOX 15: A NEW COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING HUB FOR LONDON

The Mayor has worked with the community-led housing sector to identify barriers and opportunities that prevent more community-led housing schemes happening in the capital. This work has identified the need for a Community-Led Housing Hub to unlock and support the sector to grow and deliver genuinely affordable homes that serve local needs. The Hub will:

- be a first point of contact, with an online and physical presence, for Londoners interested in getting involved in community-led housing, including signposting and information sharing;
- provide capacity-building for communities and those with a role in delivery. This could include peer- to-peer learning, site visits, and technical skills training;
- provide technical support for projects, including through surgeries, workshops, and access to technical experts; and
- broker partnerships with funders, landowners, technical service providers, mortgage lenders and others.

The GLA will provide start-up funding for the Hub and will work with councils and Government to secure further funding. In the longer term, the Hub is intended to be a sustainable support mechanism for community-led housing groups in London with a business model that does not rely on public funding.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING

5.59 The Mayor's policies in relation to transport infrastructure and housing are set out in chapter three. In addition to transport, new housing development needs investment in a wide range of services and facilities providing social infrastructure such as:

- health facilities;
- education and childcare;
- community space;
- cultural facilities;
- faith spaces;
- recreation and sports facilities;
- outdoor spaces, including children's playgrounds;
- facilities for emergency services; and
- public toilets.

- 5.60 In order to ensure that new development does not result in increased car dependency, with existing streets becoming more congested, it is also important that growth is planned around active and sustainable travel, rather than car use. The Healthy Streets Approach detailed in the Mayor's Transport Strategy will be used to ensure that public space, including streets, is improved as a part of all new development plans.
- 5.61 New housing development plays an important role in funding the delivery of new social infrastructure through mechanisms such as CIL. Where the population grows without a corresponding increase in housing supply, less money is raised to fund social infrastructure. Where homes are planned and built to meet housing demand, funds can be captured through the planning system to support a sustainable increase in local populations. New development can also increase footfall in an area, making some types of social infrastructure (such as leisure centres) more commercially viable.

ENHANCING LONDON'S CULTURAL FACILITIES AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- 5.62 The Mayor has a clear role to ensure that new development is properly planned for and he has set out plans in his draft London Plan to ensure that new development is supported by adequate social infrastructure. The draft London Plan also includes policies relating to the protection of existing social infrastructure. These policies will need to be supported by stronger working relationships between councils and service commissioners and providers, in particular NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and schools providers.
- 5.63 The Mayor recognises the particular importance of cultural facilities in bringing together new and existing communities, and in creating places where people want to live. In light of this, he will be publishing a Cultural Infrastructure Plan to identify what is needed to sustain London's future as a cultural capital, as well as supporting the delivery of diverse and vibrant new neighbourhoods alongside new housing. The evidence in the Cultural Infrastructure Plan will provide councils with the information they need to identify and map cultural infrastructure priorities and align them with their housing delivery plans. The Mayor has published his draft Culture Strategy for consultation.

- 5.64 The Mayor recognises that many Londoners are unhappy with the additional pressures placed on existing social infrastructure as the local population increases. Despite the importance of social infrastructure in supporting housing growth, it is clear that many public sector bodies with responsibilities for providing it lack the funds required to do so, especially to provide new services in a planned way alongside new homes. The Mayor is calling on Government to review and increase funding for social infrastructure and to ensure that areas experiencing high levels of housing development receive a larger share of available funds.

PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY

- 5.65 When developers apply for planning permission for housing schemes, one of the most important negotiations is over the number of genuinely affordable homes that will be provided as part of the scheme. Much of the information relevant to local communities is included in viability assessments which have not been routinely published, often on the basis of commercial sensitivity. Building on the measures set out in his Affordable Housing and Viability SPG, the Mayor reserves the right to publish these in future, allowing Londoners to scrutinise the performance of developers and councils.
- 5.66 The Mayor favours onsite provision of affordable homes. However, in some cases councils negotiate a cash payment in lieu of onsite affordable housing. These funds must be used to support the delivery of affordable homes, and currently some councils are not spending the funding quickly enough or on genuinely affordable homes. To further promote transparency in the planning system, councils should make public the amount they receive as cash in lieu of onsite affordable housing, and how these funds are spent. The Mayor will seek to ensure this happens by introducing policy in the draft London Plan and will monitor and publish this information through the London Plan Annual Monitoring Report.
- 5.67 Given the importance of land to supporting an increase in housebuilding, this approach to transparency should also be applied to land and property ownership. The Land Registry records details of prices paid in property transactions, but it does not keep a record of options agreements, whereby developers and landowners agree a future price for a piece of land. These agreements reduce the availability of land and greater transparency about them would increase public confidence in the operation of the land market. The Mayor will continue to lobby for options agreements and similar

contractual arrangements to be recorded with the Land Registry. The Mayor will also continue to oppose attempts to privatise the Land Registry.

ENSURING LONDONERS CAN ACCESS NEW HOMES

- 5.68 The Mayor recognises the role that investment from domestic and international sources plays in getting development underway in London, and is clear that London is open to people and investment from around the world. He also recognises that many Londoners are concerned about the impact of investors, particularly from overseas, on the availability of new homes for Londoners, and there have been concerns about some new homes being left intentionally empty. To ensure that any policies to address these issues are evidence-based, the Mayor commissioned in 2016 the most thorough research ever undertaken on the role of overseas investors in London's housing market.
- 5.69 The research was published in June 2017 alongside recommendations from a subgroup of the Mayor's Homes for Londoners Board asked to consider its findings and other evidence¹⁵¹. Having considered the research findings, the analysis of his sub-group, and the wider policy context, the Mayor has decided to focus his response on the following three actions.
- 5.70 First, the Mayor wants to ensure that Londoners have an opportunity to purchase more new homes before they are marketed overseas – particularly those homes that ordinary Londoners are more likely to be able to afford. He was concerned by findings in the research he commissioned that more than half of sales to overseas buyers were for properties costing between £200,000 and £500,000. The Mayor has welcomed a proposal from major homebuilders and housing associations to make more new homes available to Londoners before anyone else, through a voluntary 'first dibs' approach. This proposal ringfences new homes for market sale at up to £350,000 for UK-based buyers for three months before they are marketed overseas, with those living or working in London getting an additional period of exclusivity of up to a month at the beginning of this window. The Mayor will work with the industry to put this offer into practice, and consider how it can be expanded or strengthened.
- 5.71 Second, the research found that while the number of recorded long-term empty homes in London is at a historically low level, at 0.6 per cent of total housing

151 LSE, 'The role of overseas investors in the London new-build residential market', 2017; University of York 'Overseas Investors in London's New Build Housing Market', 2017

stock¹⁵², cases of suspected empty homes seem to be concentrated in higher-value areas such as in prime central London. Councils can levy an empty homes Council Tax premium on properties that have been empty for two years or more, set at an additional 50 per cent of the Council Tax payable for a property. Twenty-nine councils in London currently levy this. In 2017, Government announced its intention to double the premium. However, given the relatively low level of Council Tax in relation to property values, especially in central London, the Mayor does not consider that this is a strong enough incentive to ensure that homes are occupied. The Mayor will urge all London's councils to levy the empty homes premium and will work with councils to lobby Government for changes to make it more effective. In his draft London Plan, the Mayor has also set out his support for councils who choose to address 'buy to leave' properties through appropriate planning measures based on local evidence.

- 5.72 Third, in order to address public concerns about the potential for London property to be used for criminal purposes, the Mayor believes estate agents should be under a duty to ascertain the identity and legality of the purchaser, and not just the vendor, of a home. Where the purchaser is a foreign-registered company, the beneficial ownership of that company should be in the public domain, as is the case with UK-registered companies. The Mayor will continue to urge Government to set new standards of transparency in the property industry and particularly for properties owned by companies registered overseas.
- 5.73 The Mayor has limited powers over foreign buyers and empty homes, and so will look at how effective the voluntary offer on 'first dibs', and any action taken by Government to implement his suggestions around empty homes, are in practice. The Mayor will consider other options if required, including calling on Government for further change.

152 GLA, 'Housing in London', 2017

LISTENING TO THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL HOUSING TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

- 5.74 Although the full lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire will not be known for some time yet, the Mayor is clear that resident safety is of the utmost priority, and that residents' voices must be at the heart of decision-making by councils and housing associations. This needs to happen at three levels:
- individual tenants, leaseholders, and freeholders need to have effective recourse for their complaints and concerns that are not dealt with by their landlords;
 - broader issues with specific landlords or estates need to be dealt with far more quickly and effectively; and
 - the views, concerns and interests of social housing residents need a much stronger voice at a national level, so that their interests are taken into account in policy-making.
- 5.75 The Mayor believes it is essential that, as a minimum, we ensure the system for regulating social housing is genuinely responsive to the concerns of tenants, leaseholders, and freeholders on social housing estates. He is proposing an immediate package of reform to strengthen the voices of social housing residents, including the three core elements below. He will work with Government on the detail of any reforms to ensure that, where multiple issues arise on one estate, there is a mechanism for the regulator or another appropriate body to step in to protect residents' interests; the system must not allow widespread concerns on a particular estate to go unchecked.
- 5.76 First, the Mayor considers that it is currently unnecessarily complicated for residents to access the Ombudsman, as they must first make complaints through their landlord, and if they are not resolved they must take their complaints to the Ombudsman via a 'designated person' (an MP, local councillor, or tenant panel) or wait eight weeks after the end of the complaints procedure to refer their complaint directly. The Mayor will urge Government to streamline the process for individual complaints, so that residents can take their complaint direct to the Housing Ombudsman more quickly and without having to go through a 'designated person', once they have exhausted their landlord's internal complaints procedure. A complainant could still use a 'designated person' if they wished.

- 5.77 Second, the wider regulation of standards in the social housing sector is carried out by the Social Housing Regulator. This body is responsible for regulating 'economic' standards, such as Value for Money, and 'consumer' standards, such as Tenant Involvement and Empowerment.
- 5.78 The Social Housing Regulator will only take regulatory action in relation to consumer issues if the test of 'serious detriment' is met. The Mayor is concerned this sets the bar too high to effectively consider consumer standard complaints from tenants or their representatives, meaning that vital issues such as tenant involvement get insufficient attention. Of the 1,050 consumer standard complaints received by the HCA in the two financial years to 2016, only 10 resulted in findings of 'serious detriment'¹⁵³. The Mayor is calling on Government to review the test of 'serious detriment' to ensure increased investigation by the Social Housing Regulator of resident complaints, and to ensure it increases its work on enforcing consumer regulation in the social housing sector.
- 5.79 Third, to ensure that tenants', leaseholders', and freeholders' views are heard and acted upon, the Mayor is calling on Government to introduce a Commissioner for Social Housing Residents, an individual independent of Government with a statutory remit to act as a watchdog for social housing tenants, leaseholders, and freeholders. Modelled on the Children's Commissioner for England, the key role of the Commissioner would be to champion the views and interests of social housing residents, including by making recommendations for future Government policy. The Mayor believes this individual should be a social housing resident and Government should work with communities across the country to develop the Commissioner's purpose and remit.

INVOLVING RESIDENTS IN ESTATE REGENERATION

- 5.80 Although most estates are well-built and well-maintained, regeneration may be proposed where estates need to be physically improved in order to maintain or improve the quality of the homes, and in some cases there is potential to significantly increase the number of homes. Wherever works are being undertaken to improve or regenerate an estate, the affected residents must be closely involved in proposals from the very start. While the record of estate regeneration is, in general, a positive one, and schemes usually deliver high quality new homes, an improved public realm, and new or improved facilities such as schools or community centres, the Mayor recognises the public concerns over some examples of estate regeneration and wants to use his position to help address them.
- 5.81 In particular, the Mayor is aware that while estate regeneration schemes have generally led to an overall increase in housing supply across both private and affordable tenures, affordable homes have not always been replaced on a like for like basis¹⁵⁴. This issue is addressed in chapter four. Furthermore, the Mayor believes it is essential that tenants, leaseholders, freeholders, and other residents and users of estates be reassured that, where regeneration is being considered, they will be fully involved in the process, and that councils, landlords and others will abide by a common minimum set of standards.
- 5.82 Estate regeneration schemes will be led by the landlord, who will almost always be a council or housing association. The Mayor's direct involvement in such schemes will be through the application of any Mayoral funding, through any relevant planning decisions, and through his wider influence. The Mayor has therefore consulted on a Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration, the final version of which was published in February 2018 (box 16). As well as setting out the Mayor's 'Better Homes for Local People' good practice principles, the Guide also sets out the Mayor's intention to promote the use of resident ballots as a condition of his funding.

154 London Assembly, 'Knock it Down or Do it Up?', 2015

BOX 16: BETTER HOMES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE: THE MAYOR'S GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE TO ESTATE REGENERATION

The Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration sets out the Mayor's expectations for the way in which estate regeneration schemes should be delivered, focusing on full and transparent consultation and the involvement of those affected.

In particular, where significant regeneration is planned that involves the demolition of existing homes, the Mayor wants to see his three Better Homes for Local People principles apply. They require:

- an increase in affordable housing;
- full rights to return or remain for social tenants; and
- a fair deal for leaseholders and freeholders.

In addition to using his planning powers to ensure affordable housing is replaced like for like and wherever possible increased, the Mayor has consulted on his intention to introduce a new funding condition that requires a positive vote in a resident ballot for significant estate regeneration schemes that involve the demolition of homes and require GLA funding.

The Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration was developed following extensive consultation during 2017.

