



CIH in London response to Mayor's document: City for all Londoners

December 2016

Introducing CIH in London

CIH in London is the regional board for CIH in the capital. CIH is the professional body for people working in or with an interest in housing, and our London region has over 1600 members. These are housing professionals across all functions and all officer levels, and we draw on their first hand experience and expertise to shape our work to respond to consultations such as this, and to shape our work to support housing professionals in the capital, in sharing good practice and new solutions for our housing challenges.

A city for all Londoners

We welcome the Mayor's statement of intent to ensure that London is a city that works for all its population. We are pleased that London's housing crisis is a clear priority for the Mayor and his team, and we welcome many of the commitments made and the direction of travel set out in the City for all Londoners statement.

CIH in London, in response to previous housing strategies, London Plan and infrastructure plans, has been very clear about the impact of the housing shortage, the critical issue of affordability, and the huge impact of rising homelessness in the city. We are pleased to see these as priorities within the Mayor's statement. We have previously made many recommendations that reflect the proposals the Mayor has incorporated in the City for all Londoners document, including:

- increasing density connected with transport development e.g Crossrail, and tube line extensions
- the use of smaller/ brownfield sites to support more involvement of small and medium developers and potentially for more specialised housing development as well e.g housing for older people
- increasing the range of affordable homes, particularly for low and middle income households, through strategic use of public land.

Affordability

Section 106 is currently delivering approximately 37 percent of affordable housing delivery and has historically delivered more. We appreciate the Mayor's intention to speed up delivery of homes in London through his latest proposal to waive viability assessments if developers commit to delivering 35 percent affordable homes, but we are concerned that this may lead to a reduction in the numbers of affordable homes to rent. We would encourage the Mayor to continue to look at ways to increase the development of affordable homes, particularly to rent, through planning gain as well as strategic use of public land.

Strategic use of public land

CIH London believes that the Mayor, through GLA landholdings and as a broker with other public agencies, has a key role to lead on the strategic and effective use of public sector land to provide more affordable homes, including homes to rent at affordable and social rent levels. We therefore welcome the proposals to use Transport for London land, and look forward to it providing a template for other public bodies, such as the NHS.

There is the potential for such use of land not only to address the critical housing and affordability issues facing London, including many public sector workers on low incomes, but also wider strategic objectives, such as improving the health and wellbeing of Londoners and tackling health inequalities. Examples of innovative use of public land to achieve this already exist, such as the work of One Housing Group and Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, where a [supported housing scheme](#) for people with mental health needs has been developed on NHS land, delivering better outcomes for individuals, plus savings to the NHS of £443,000 per year. This is a small example but if replicated demonstrates what more could be delivered both in terms of much needed housing of all types plus savings for other hard pressed local public services, where housing is part of a bigger strategic vision for the city. Partnerships like this are likely to be more critical if specialist housing required in the capital is to be developed, given the current uncertainty arising from the government's extension of local housing allowance rates to social and supported housing.

Delivering homes more quickly

There are significant challenges to tackle to deliver the homes London needs more quickly. The skills shortage in the construction industry is one, and the Mayor and team could usefully work with boroughs and the construction industry to look at how this could be addressed through employment and training schemes in the capital.

In many cases, housing providers and councils have been considering other routes to speed up delivery, including use of modular construction for example. It could be beneficial if the Mayor and the housing team look at how to support and extend these approaches, and how these could be managed to ensure they still maintain the quality and standards required for new housing in London to meet needs (e.g. around energy efficiency and accessibility/adaptability).

Increasing affordable housing options

We recognise the Mayor's commitment to increasing options for affordable homes, including the initiative of the London Living Rent. Below we include some comments on other measures that may support that approach:

- It will help to have clarity on how the London Living Rent will operate in terms of viability, and complementarity to other low cost home ownership schemes. The Mayor and his team will need to work with boroughs and providers to ensure that the range of products will operate to provide a continuum of affordable housing products across a range of price points for low and middle income households
- Build to Rent schemes in London have so far had quite high rent levels. It would be beneficial if ways could be devised to incentivise developers to provide a wider range of prices to enable more income groups to afford rents in the future.
- We need to look at how to assist in making best use of existing stock, including making it easier to downsize or 'right size'. For example; the strategic use of small infill sites located with good existing transport links might be best suited to specialist housing development for older people to increase the available options. A strategic vision for London's housing should look at how best to incorporate a strategic approach to and connection between new and existing stock.
- There are many office blocks in London which are now obsolete as they no longer meet the standards for today's working practices and environmental and accessibility regulations. We suggest that the Mayor could carry out an audit of difficult to let office blocks and to devise a strategy for using this resource for housing development.
- As well as luxury homes targeted at foreign buyers for investment, the Mayor also consider a policy position on high price accommodation designed for students mostly from overseas? This type of development appears to have been a significant recent trend among developers and does not assist London households in housing need. We acknowledge the benefit of London offering a world class educational and living experience, but believe that this needs to be balanced with how it can level in funding and investment that supports a broader housing offer to meet local housing needs as well.

Homelessness

We recognise that there are limitations on the Mayor's powers specifically to tackle homelessness, but we welcome the Mayor's commitment to working with London boroughs to identify ways in which a pan-London approach will lead to better outcomes; tackling the pressure for temporary accommodation would make a valuable contribution.

The Mayor might encourage this pan-London approach to develop measures being proposed under the Homelessness reduction Bill, for example:

- Duty to provide advice – auditing and monitoring the provision of advice services across London, particularly for the groups named under the Homelessness Reduction Bill (care leavers, people leaving prison, people leaving hospital, people with learning disabilities, people receiving treatment for mental health needs, and people leaving the armed forces)
- Securing/ helping to secure the provision of accommodation for non-priority applicants - through shared development of schemes including, for example:
 - Mediation schemes
 - Payments by way of grant or loan
 - Guarantees for rent/ deposits payments
 - Support in managing debt, mortgage arrears or rent arrears.
 - Security measures for applicants at risk of abuse.
 - Advocacy or other representation.
 - Accommodation
 - Information and advice
 - A private rented sector access scheme
- Duty to persons with nowhere safe to stay – auditing and monitoring the level and causes of demand for this service and supporting cross boundary solutions.

Contact details:

[CIH London](#) would be happy to discuss the issues in the paper. We look forward to the development of a new London Housing strategy and London Plan, and the opportunity to comment further then.

For contact with the board and any questions on the paper, please email sarah.davis@cih.org / sharon.hackett@cih.org.