

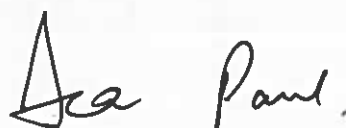
# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Paul Watling**

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## **Re: Up or Out report – Options for London's Growth**

Thank you for asking for my comments on the London Assembly Planning Committee's report on options for London's growth. The report usefully sets out a number of the key issues and challenges I will be examining in detail as part of the review of the London Plan and makes an important contribution to the debate on how London should grow. As requested, I would like to take the opportunity to briefly comment on the report's overall conclusions and the questions posed and look forward to more detailed engagement with the London Assembly Planning Committee through the preparation of the new London Plan.

Tackling London's housing crisis by building more homes and providing increased numbers of genuinely affordable homes is my first priority as Mayor of London. But as your report recognises, increasing housebuilding on its own is not enough. We also need to ensure that the types of homes being provided actually meet the needs of communities in London in terms of affordability, tenure, size and by ensuring new homes are occupied.

Overall, I agree that compact city principles continue to provide an appropriate and sustainable framework for guiding growth in London, particularly as this helps to support the protection of the green belt by focusing development on brownfield sites with good public transport access and builds on London's existing urban structure of town centres.

Your report correctly points out that London's population is growing at a substantial rate and, if we are to seek to accommodate this growth whilst also safeguarding the capital's protected open spaces, we will need to accommodate higher residential densities in appropriate locations. Through the preparation of the new London Plan I will review the current Plan's approach to density. This will also take into account wider policy implications which your report highlights in terms of infrastructure provision, design and housing type.

Research shows that half of approved development is above the current ranges in the density matrix, with around twenty five percent of development approved at double the maximum range. So clearly, depending on the particular local circumstances, it is possible for schemes to exceed the matrix and this can be considered appropriate where there will be sufficient infrastructure capacity and where proposed development achieves high quality design.

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Higher residential densities can be successfully achieved by including a range of housing typologies, but typologies can be constrained by the size and type of site. I share the Committee's concern to ensure that family housing is accommodated successfully in higher density developments, particularly where units are provided above the ground floor. As set out in your report, this will require appropriate provision of private and communal open space, play space and good design and management.

Whilst as a general rule I am not against tall buildings, I do think their location, design and impact needs to be rigorously examined through the planning process. Tall buildings must respect the character of local neighbourhoods and make a positive contribution to London's public realm, streetscape and skyline. There are certain locations that can be appropriate for tall buildings and, where they are well-designed, tall buildings can make a positive contribution to meeting London's housing need. Although I share the Committee's concerns about the affordability and occupancy of units, I believe these are issues which can be addressed. I will be reviewing current London Plan policies on tall buildings and their implementation and look forward to further discussion with the London Assembly and other stakeholders on this issue.

Accommodating the substantial levels of housing growth will be challenging in terms of infrastructure provision, but it is important to recognise that large-scale mixed use redevelopment provides significant opportunities to deliver and help finance new or improved local facilities, social, utilities and public transport infrastructure and public open space. As part of the next London Plan, and in developing any future housing targets, my officers will be working closely with boroughs and operators to ensure that new infrastructure can be provided alongside housing and other land uses. I share the Committee's desire to speed up approved development in opportunity areas by securing essential infrastructure needed to unlock growth and for local communities to be effectively involved in the planning of these areas.

Where there is no net loss of social housing, and where tenants and leaseholders are effectively engaged in the process and offered suitable re-housing and compensation, estate regeneration can make an important contribution to increasing the supply and quality of homes in London. As your report highlights, smaller scale infill development can be an appropriate alternative to wholesale demolition and redevelopment, depending on the particular local circumstances. My officers are currently developing principles for estate regeneration which will be worked up with relevant stakeholders and will set out how these issues should be considered where boroughs or housing associations are bringing forwards schemes.

In addition to large-scale brownfield development sites, there is scope for some of London's suburbs to accommodate additional housing either on small infill sites or through redevelopment at higher densities in appropriate locations. This will be explored as part of the preparation of the London Plan.

I note the report calls for the strategic functions of the Green Belt to be rethought. There is, however, limited scope to do this through the London Plan, since it must have regard to the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in the NPPF<sup>1</sup> which are unlikely to be updated by Government during the London Plan timescales.

Dialogue with authorities in the wider South East will be important to ensure that there is effective joint working and collaboration on strategic cross-boundary issues such as housing, economic growth and infrastructure provision. I intend to continue to draw on the political and officer level

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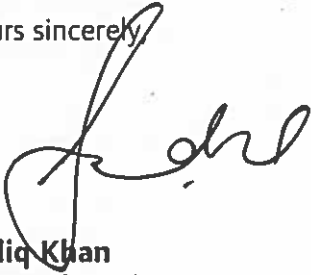
<sup>1</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 80

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structures for partnership working that were recently put in place. Whilst your report suggests the need to direct growth away from London through a joint strategic plan, this would clearly not be politically or technically feasible in the present context. However, there may be opportunities to develop more effective cross-boundary planning approaches for accommodating growth building on voluntary partnerships, for example, where new transport infrastructure is being delivered along growth corridors.

I hope that this provides a clear summary of my position on these matters and I look forward to engaging further with the London Assembly Planning Committee during the preparation of the new London Plan.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London