

London Tenants Federation

London Mayoral Elections 2016

London Tenants Federation (LTF) is an umbrella organisation bringing together borough- and London-wide federations and organisations of tenants of social housing providers. LTF has had representation on the Mayor's Housing Forum since 2005 (although the Forum rarely meets now). Its delegates are often invited panel members of the London Assembly housing and planning committee meetings. Its members have attended, by invitation, almost all the Examinations in Public, relating to the London Plan, since 2007.

LTF's key concern is that regional housing and planning policy continues to meet the needs of high-income households and the profit margins of private developers, at the expense of ordinary, mostly working class, households with less than average household income levels. There have been decades of failures to deliver the number of not-for-profit rented homes needed. London Plan net social-rented housing targets have never been more than half-met and unnecessary demolition of perfectly good social-rented homes continues. London has unacceptably high levels of households suffering for years on housing waiting lists, homelessness, overcrowding or being forced out of the capital.

Below are key policy proposals that LTF is asking Mayoral and London Assembly candidates to commit to. We would be grateful if you let us know which of these you would support.

- 1. End the use of the generic term 'affordable housing' in Mayoral strategic documents.** The term is, at the very least, misleading. Most of the housing types deemed to be 'affordable' in the London Plan and London Housing Strategy are simply not affordable to households that have below average income levels in London.
- 2. Make the case for Londoners in instances where national policy has detrimental impact in London.** Recent examples of where this should have occurred are: relating to housing benefit caps, introduction of up to 80% market rents and delivery of starter homes at the expense of housing for which there is much evidence of need.
- 3. Refer to social-rented homes as 'not-for-profit rented homes' challenging the too often used suggestion that social-rents are 'subsidised'.** Social housing tenants' rents are less than private tenants' rents because they don't include a landlord 'profit'.
- 4. Set a separate target in the London Plan for not-for-profit rented homes that genuinely reflects evidence of need.**
- 5. Prioritise support – through funding and strategic policy - for retaining existing not-for-profit rented homes in London.** As government grant is no longer available to build new social-rented homes the Mayor should prioritise protection of existing social-rented homes. Strategic policy should require (i) a full analysis of economic, social and environmental issues and costs of refurbishment v demolition, (ii) the inclusion of a refurbishment option in all proposed demolition schemes and (iii) a ballot of existing tenants, which must show majority support, before any demolition occurs.

6. **Ensure that regeneration schemes (small or large) empower existing communities through training and building bottom-up democratic and accountable community organisations to ensure cost-effective and sustainable improvements.** All proposals should have clarity of process, provide transparency around available funding and enable communities to identify solutions to their perceived problems within available budgets, before any plans are draw up. Social impact assessments should be carried out to ensure specific benefit to, and no displacement of, existing residents.
7. **Ensure that good internal and external spaces and storage spaces are provided in all housing developments and that all new buildings are environmentally and socially respectful of existing neighbours.**
8. **Remove the existing 'mixed and balanced communities' policy from the London Plan** as it is used to justify social housing land-grabbing and gentrification. There is no proven evidence that the policy benefits to less well-off working class communities, but rather the contrary. Recent government analysis deemed the policy to be 'faith-based, rather than evidence-based'.
9. **Refer only to net figures of housing delivery in London.** The Mayor's office tends to mislead by referring in press statements to gross delivery rather than to the number of new homes that are additional to existing supply.
10. **Provide targets in the London Plan for family sized homes** to address levels of overcrowding in both the not-for profit and for-profit rented sectors.
11. **Argue consistently that (i) each home sold via right-to-buy is replaced by a not-for-profit rented home of the same size and level of security in the same borough and that (ii) the extension of RTB housing association tenants should not be facilitated by the forced sell-off of council homes.**
12. **Support older people being offered one room additional to their needs when moving from under-occupied homes in strategic policy.** It is essential that older residents have space for a family member or a carer to stay at times when required.
13. **Support and promote community forms of housing including co-operatives, TMOs, Community Land Trusts and self-build.** The Mayor should set aside a proportion of the public land he has responsibility for, to build for new community-based housing.
14. **Support development of a 'Social Infrastructure Accessibility Level' matrix, setting out what services and amenities should be within (i) walking distance from homes, (b) a short bus or cycle ride from homes, and (c) a train, tram or tube journey from homes.** This should relate to housing density levels to ensure that all sizes of homes are developed in all part of London and that high density developments have higher levels of social and community infrastructure, green and play spaces.
15. **Protect existing social and community infrastructure.** Where existing uses are no longer appropriate, community organisations should be prioritised (through strategic policy) as potential new occupants.
16. **Ensure that existing communities in and around opportunity areas are fully and effectively involved in determining the kinds of developments that take place at**

an early stage. Plans should facilitate growth that meets existing need, protects and enhances existing neighbourhoods and develops Lifetime neighbourhoods.

- 17. Protect existing green and garden spaces to provide beneficial impact on health and the environment.** Current protection of suburban private back gardens should apply equally to the green, garden and play spaces on social housing estates.
- 18. Ensure that existing play and youth provision is protected and that additional is provided, both in places where there are gaps and where new housing is delivered.** There is much evidence that this is a deterrent to anti-social behaviour.
- 19. Provide support for the development of a Mayoral community engagement forum of groups who have a focus on regional housing policy.**
- 20. Obtain an appropriate amount of the national tenant empowerment programme for London,** which the Mayor might determine priorities for in consultation with London and borough-wide tenants groups.

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