



London Plan Inspectors Report: Urban Design London thoughts

Reading the Inspectors report into the London Plan it feels common sense has prevailed. The inspectors found that the small sites policy, assuming about 1/3 of new homes would come from this source, was basically undeliverable. This meant the plan was not able to show how the overall housing targets of around 66k a year would be delivered, which could have made it unsound. But instead of calling for the plan to be scrapped and new work done right now, leaving us all in planning limbo, the inspectors reduced the overall housing targets and borough targets to a level they felt would be achievable and have let the plan stand, providing new work looking at other growth options is undertaken for the next iteration.

The design, public realm and green space policies all got the thumbs up with the inspector recognising some policies were long and detailed, but that this was appropriate considering the overall suit of policies was introducing a novel and ambitious approach. There was an interesting note about the characterisation studies needed to deliver the design led approach – i.e. to set local, contextual requirements. The inspectors noted that although most boroughs did these studies few used them to inform policy. The GLAs new housing design SPG may provide some new advice on this, we will see, and at UDL we will look to bring together private sector consultants who tend to do the studies, and boroughs who commission them, to blow the cobwebs away from the methodology often used and discuss how to improve practice and make the studies more relevant and impactful.

Because the plan didn't show how it would meet housing targets derived from need studies, the inspectors have called for a review of Green Belt and more work with home county authorities on accommodating growth within the wider SE region.

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We will be looking at how our new national programme can support those facing these challenges, for example discussing appropriate methodologies for any Green Belt review and provide a neutral platform for conversations on growth options. At UDL we will be thinking carefully about how we might be able to help support those who will need to respond to the challenges the inspectors have posed.

As a start we have set up a general conversation event for 19 Nov for our borough members to talk through what they think about the EIP report and what it might mean for them. No agenda, just a roundtable conversation. Our members will be receiving a separate invite for this.

The UDL team would like to congratulate the GLA and in particular the London Plan team on creating a new Plan for us all. We have really enjoyed all the events and conversations we have held over the last couple of years on what the London Plan should say about design, considering the draft design policies, giving evidence at the EIP more recently starting to run training on how to apply policies. GLA officers have been immensely helpful in all of this, and it has been a privilege to have been involved in the debate.

Esther Kurland, UDL Director 2019