

Examination in Public – Written Evidence Submission

MATTER 2 – Equality of Opportunity

M2. Does the Integrated Impact Assessment and Addendum Report (NLP/CD/04 & 05) indicate that the Plan will help to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a “protected characteristic” as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and those that do not share it and further the other two aims of the Act? In particular, which policies of the Plan will achieve this?

Trust for London (1296)

Trust for London is an independent charitable foundation, founded in 1891. Our mission is to tackle poverty and inequality in the capital. We achieve this by funding a wide range of charitable activity including groups working on the ground, advocacy and policy work and research. Annually we make grants of over £8m per annum. Our response draws on the work we have funded and our commitment to a fairer and more equal London.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of the new London Plan and support its ‘Good Growth’ approach. The planning system was designed to help provide a good home, for everyone, in a healthy, thriving place. But in the last few decades the planning system has too often put maximising short-term economic growth above the specific needs of communities. Our particular focus is on low income households, who we feel have been marginalised and their voices too often dismissed. There is a pressing imperative, given the decline in public trust, to ensure the planning system listens, is responsive to and delivers for all of London's communities, including those with protected characteristics facing disadvantage.

Prior concern about the accessibility of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to those with protected characteristics

Before responding to the question posed, we wish to state a prior concern about the process and accessibility of the IIA itself. The goal of the IIA as it relates to equalities is to assess whether the Mayor’s Plan advances equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don’t have that characteristic. It creates an expectation of taking steps to meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic where those differ from those of others who don’t have that characteristic, as well as encouraging people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life. Implicit in this is the expectation that the IIA itself should contribute to these goals.

We respectfully contend that the IIA as presented creates barriers for those with protected characteristics in being able to understand the impact of the London Plan on them, and in so doing created barriers to their participation in the public consultation of the London Plan. In particular:

- the IIA and supplementary documents (including the Scoping Report and Addendum) are very long and confusing and use a technical objectives framework, which is not accessible for the majority of people. In particular the

documents are less likely to be accessible to BAMER groups and Disabled people. No easy read version of the IIA documents was provided.

- The IIA does not set out the impact of policies on individual groups with protected characteristics. This is surprising: policies can have differential impacts on different groups. For example a policy of densification on council estates could benefit potential new residents at the expense of existing residents, who may be more likely to have protected characteristics. The effect is to reduce protected groups' ability to understand what the likely impact of policies might be.

We are aware of serious concerns from community groups working with those with protected characteristics as to the adequacy of the IIA, as laid out for example by Just Space. We also note the point made by HEAR under Matter 6 that there were barriers to access for Disabled people in participating in community hearings around the Plan. We respectfully request that these concerns are given the necessary consideration to ensure that the needs of protected groups are taken into account. We would, at a minimum, like the GLA to produce a plain English assessment of the impact of London Plan policies on different groups with protected characteristics.

Soundness of the London Plan in relation to Equalities and its likely impact on groups with protected characteristics.

Strengths of the Plan in relation to Equalities

It is apparent in reading the framework for the Integrated Impact Assessment that there was an intention from plan-makers to promote equality of opportunity and ensure that equalities are one of the metrics by which the success of the Plan should be judged. There are equalities questions threaded throughout the assessment framework. The IIA then judges each of the Good Growth policies according to whether they deliver positive equalities impacts, as compared with the alternative approaches considered. Overall the assessment of the impact of the policies is almost universally positive.

We broadly agree with this positive assessment – the London Plan as published should advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, when compared with the current policy framework. In particular we welcome the following policies as likely to have a beneficial impact:

- 1) Policy GG4.C ('Delivering the homes Londoners need: Create mixed and inclusive communities, with good quality homes that meet high standards of design and provide for identified needs...'), as elaborated in the Plan in policy D4 (Housing quality and standards) and the associated guidance about integration of housing tenures and adaptability of homes over the life course. We note that this is assessed in the amended IIA as having a strongly positive impact on equalities over the long-term and would broadly agree.
- 2) The draft policy on Gypsy and Traveller housing (H16), also under the umbrella of Policy GG4.C. We welcome the updated definition of 'Gypsies and Travellers' within the policy and the requirement for local authorities to conduct an audit of need in their area in line with the new definition.

Concerns and risks in relation to equalities

- 1) The primary risk we perceive in relation to equalities, which has not been sufficiently reflected in the IIA, is that the Plan does not go far enough in promoting the building of genuinely affordable housing (Policy H7: Affordable tenure). Poverty in London has a significant equalities dimension: certain protected groups (especially certain racial and ethnic groups and Disabled people) are much more likely to struggle to afford housing in London or to be homeless or lacking housing that meets their needs than others. As a result, these protected groups are more likely to need social rented housing. At present the mix of tenures proposed does not go far enough in advancing equality of opportunity through requiring a high proportion of low-cost rented homes as opposed to homes for intermediate rental or shared ownership. The impact of this could potentially be negative to the extent that social housing is being lost or redeveloped to build new homes.

We note that the Mayor has amended the Plan at Paragraph 4.7.3 to make clear his preference for Social Rented homes. However, given this may apply to as little as 30% of the affordable housing that is built, there is still a need to do more. Without this, given recent trends, there is a risk of negative impacts on protected groups, contrasting with the 'positive' / 'very positive' assessment in the IIA.

- 2) Our stakeholders have also made us aware of concerns in relation to the housing size mix (Table 4.3. of SHMA 2017 data, now in Policy H12 Housing Size Mix). They note that certain ethnic groups are more likely to have larger families and therefore need family-sized homes. Their experience to date has been that, during regeneration, they are being asked to move from e.g. three bedroom properties to new-build properties with one or two bedrooms. This concern was also raised by the Labour Group of the London Assembly and we note the changes to the draft Plan that have resulted, recognising the importance of local needs assessment. Again while we understand this data has been discussed in some depth, we wish to register the concern about the potential negative impact of the limited provision of family homes on certain protected groups if delivery proceeds in line with the Plan. Again this has not been sufficiently reflected in the IIA.
- 3) The equalities impact of Policy H10 Redeveloping existing housing and estate regeneration has not been sufficiently taken into account. It encourages the intensification of London's housing stock, promoting estate regeneration as an opportunity. This is assessed as having a positive impact on equalities in the short, medium and long-term. However, housing estates' existing residents are of below-average incomes and more likely to be Disabled. Some BAME groups are over-represented in social housing in London compared to their share of the population (e.g. Black Caribbean and Black African made up 26.4% of new London social housing lettings in London in 2016/7 combined, compared with 10.9% of the population)¹. These existing residents' lives are

¹ Ethnicity Facts and Figures <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/social-housing/new-social-housing-lettings/latest>

likely to be disrupted by estate regeneration in the short term, and potentially (if they are displaced) medium- and longer term as well. They are also likely to be affected by short-term impacts on access, as well as reductions in open space, reduced light and potentially greater congestion through increased density. This negative equalities impact is not currently reflected in the assessment.