

London's Housing Stock

POLICY 3.14 EXISTING HOUSING

Strategic

- A The Mayor will, and boroughs and other stakeholders should, support the maintenance and enhancement of the condition and quality of London's existing homes.

Planning decisions and LDF preparation

- B Loss of housing, including affordable housing, should be resisted unless the housing is replaced at existing or higher densities with at least equivalent floorspace.
- C This policy includes the loss of hostels, staff accommodation and shared accommodation that meet an identified housing need, unless the existing floorspace is satisfactorily re-provided to an equivalent or better standard. The loss of housing to short-term provision (lettings less than 90 days) should also be resisted.
- D Boroughs should promote efficient use of the existing stock by reducing the number of vacant, unfit and unsatisfactory dwellings, including through setting and monitoring targets for bringing properties back into use. In particular, boroughs should prioritise long term empty homes, derelict empty homes and listed buildings to be brought back into residential use.

- 3.79 Maintaining and improving the quality and condition of London's stock of 3.4 million homes is a continuing concern to individual Londoners and especially so for some groups. In 2011, 22 per cent of homes across all tenures failed to meet Government's broad Decent Homes Standard, a substantial fall from 36 per cent in 2003 and slightly less than in the country as a whole¹⁰¹. The planning system must support the largely managerial and investment based initiatives to target this issue set out in the London Housing Strategy.
- 3.80 Retrofitting of the existing stock to address climate change adaptation and mitigation will be particularly important in this (Policy 5.4). Account should also be taken of Policy 3.8 to provide good quality new accommodation to meet the needs of vulnerable groups for supported housing. In some circumstances this will in turn help support broader measures set out in the London Housing Strategy to reduce under-occupation and make larger homes available for families.
- 3.81 To address London's housing needs and sustain its neighbourhoods, existing housing should be retained where possible and appropriate, except where there are acceptable plans for its replacement. Short term lettings especially for holiday

¹⁰¹ Mayor of London. Homes for London, the London Housing Strategy. Draft for consultation November 2013 para 2.7

lets, can result in a serious loss of housing, and should be resisted. Such lettings require specific planning consent under the Greater London Council (General Powers) Acts 1973 and 1983.

- 3.82 Estate renewal should take into account the regeneration benefits to the local community, the proportion of affordable housing in the surrounding area (see Policy 3.9), and the amount of affordable housing intended to be provided elsewhere in the borough. Where redevelopment of affordable housing is proposed, it should not be permitted unless it is replaced by better quality accommodation, providing at least an equivalent floorspace of affordable housing.
- 3.83 Existing sites and premises providing either an element of care, or dedicated homes for employees such as nurses, police officers or hotel staff, are a finite resource and may be threatened by higher value uses. Where shortfalls of specialist housing needs have been identified (Policy 3.8), the possibility of other providers of specialist or supported needs accommodation using these existing sites and premises should be explored.
- 3.84 The number of empty homes in London has fallen in recent years to 72,100¹⁰² in 2012, the lowest number on record and as a proportion of the total stock well below the national average (2% in London compared to 3% in England as a whole). The number of long term empty homes has also fallen, to 23,870¹⁰³, below the Mayor's target level of 1% of the total stock. Given the scale of housing requirements in London the Mayor is seeking to reduce the level of long term empty homes still further, and the London Housing Strategy sets out measures to achieve this.

POLICY 3.15 CO-ORDINATION OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

Planning decisions and LDF preparation

- A Boroughs should ensure that implementation of this Plan's long term, strategic housing policies are informed by, and integrated with, the short to medium term horizon provided by their own programmes and those of other relevant agencies including those arising from the Mayor's Housing, Economic Development and Transport Strategies, the London Plan Implementation Plan and arrangements for partnership, cross border and sub-regional working.

- 3.85 Successful implementation of the housing policies of this Plan will be important to achievement of most of the Mayor's wider objectives for London and will require positive engagement and co-ordination with a very wide range of public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders working to varied timescales and sometimes

¹⁰²DCLG Live Table 615: vacant dwellings by local authority district: England, from 2004 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

¹⁰³Ibid