

# Older People's Housing Debate

The Mayor's Draft Revised Housing Strategy

23 February 2012 | City Hall, London



## Debating London's Homes Are they fit for our lifetime?



Consultation response to  
the Mayor's Draft Revised London Housing Strategy  
from the Older People's Debate 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012

## **FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON**

*I was honoured to have the opportunity to chair this debate and be part of such a lively and wide ranging discussion about the Mayor's latest Housing Strategy.*

*This Housing Strategy is leading the way for England in setting good design standards for all, through its continuing commitment to Lifetime Homes Standards for all new homes and its pledge to offer older people genuine housing choice. The pledge to enable older people to adapt and maintain their homes to meet their changing needs is also to be applauded.*

*Delegates at this debate made it clear that older people have a positive contribution to make in shaping plans for housing in London that will better meet needs at all stages of life. They deserve to be listened to and I hope that what they have said will make a difference to the Draft Housing Strategy and to making London a great place to live whatever our age.*



**Sue Adams OBE, Chief Executive, Care & Repair England and Chair of the Housing and Ageing Alliance.**



## **SUMMARY AND KEY MESSAGES**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February an event was held for older people across London, many representing groups and forums, who came together to find out about the Mayor's latest Housing Strategy and to put forward their ideas about the future of housing in London. The focus was on giving older people the opportunity to debate and comment, rather than staff representatives of organisations.

Six key organisations, mainly operating in London, worked in partnership to plan and deliver the event with the help of the Greater London Authority.

### **What we support in the Draft Revised Housing Strategy**

Delegates acknowledge and welcome the new commitment giving greater attention to the housing needs of older people, offering more choice and adopting good design standards that will deliver lifetime homes and wheelchair accessible housing.

People support the delivery of more affordable housing (so long as this is genuinely affordable), including measures to bring empty homes back in to use.

The pan-London mobility scheme "housing moves" is welcome along with the Seaside and Country Homes scheme.

There is strong support for comprehensively improving arrangements for home adaptations, across all housing tenures.

### **What changes we would like to see**

People want to believe they are listened too and have more influence on Housing Strategies, planning, housing and neighbourhood design:

**"Don't tell them [older people] what they think. Be responsive to what we want, we know best."** - delegate

Housing Strategies should be tenure neutral and should tailor services to inform and respond to the needs of all, regardless of their housing circumstances.

There is very strong support for change and innovation in the approach to new homes, improved housing options and more inspirational design. This should also be linked to the design of lifetime neighbourhoods.

Access to good quality, impartial information and advice that is comprehensive across London, well known and locally available is seen as an essential requirement to help people plan for the future and find out about housing options. Ideally, this would be supported by trained mentors, specialist advisors and independent advocates.

### **Making a difference**

People believe having a London wide Housing Strategy is important and welcome the Mayor's new powers and responsibilities related to this. However, they question whether it can be successfully delivered. With a Mayoral election and possible political change, financial constraints, the challenges of ensuring borough support and ambitious targets, people doubt that

the draft Housing Strategy is achievable.

### **Other key messages**

Clear links with health: delegates want to have clearer evidence in the Strategy of measures to effectively co-ordinate housing, health and social care.

Smaller housing alternatives: there is a mix of views about measures to enable people to move from larger homes to smaller alternatives. Some strongly advocate this should always be a personal choice; others are in favour of promoting a shift in our expectations and enforcement of change through legal requirements (tenancy conditions or other regulations) and restrictions in benefit entitlements for people under-occupying.

Quality of care: serious concerns exist about the regulation of private retirement schemes and care homes. This includes the quality of care available in both institutional settings and by care agencies to people in their own homes.

Promoting housing mobility: the launch of “housing moves”, the pan-London mobility scheme is awaited with considerable interest and people support a comprehensive register of accessible housing. People want to see more flexibility between boroughs and this includes arrangements for the transfer of social care services when people move.

Underpinning all these messages is the need to make a major culture shift in:

- our attitudes and perceptions about older people and later life
- our views about the home we live in and how we are enabled to plan ahead
- the policy and delivery of housing, neighbourhoods and services that promote well-being and enable independence.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

London is, quite rightly, regarded as a City with a population that is younger than the national average. While there are major housing pressures in London, it is important that the needs of older people are also given fair consideration.

There are over 1 million people over retirement age in London and by 2031 there is projected to be a 40% rise in those aged over 80 (a total of 352,000 people)<sup>1</sup> The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) has undertaken a series of projects to build the information and evidence base about ageing in London. One report states:

“London faces a series of unique challenges in adequately supporting an ageing population. Poor mental health is more prevalent in the capital, compared with the national average, and there are a range of other factors – such as deprivation, the needs of diverse minority ethnic groups and social isolation – that can complicate service provision. The concentration of many local authorities in a relatively small area also makes commissioning and planning more complex, as people can easily move to neighbouring authorities to draw on different services.”<sup>2</sup>

This Debate was the latest in a series involving older people in the Housing Strategy for London and the London Plan. The first event considered the Draft Housing Strategy in August 2009. This was followed by an event on three aspects of the London Plan including ‘Homes, neighbourhoods and local centres for the future’. Housing and neighbourhood related questions issued by the Inspectors responsible for the consultation on the Draft London Plan, were the subject of two smaller workshop sessions. This enabled a series of written submissions to be made on the Draft London Plan and evidence to be given to the Examination in Public in 2010.

### **Who attended?**

This Debate was attended by 80 older people, representing 41 groups, forums and organisations across London. A full list of those represented is attached at Appendix 1. Two thirds of people attending completed a monitoring form giving more information about who attended. At least half the delegates were women. Of those completing the monitoring form, 22% had caring responsibilities, 40% were social housing tenants and 60% were owner-occupiers. Most people were between 60 and 89 years of age, with 2 people under 50, 38% were not of white British ethnic origin and 10% considered themselves lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered.

This submission has been compiled with the agreement of all those who attended the event. Three volunteers from the meeting have checked and approved the draft submission on behalf of all those present.

This submission has the support of all the partner agencies involved in the event but is independent of them (i.e. this is not formally endorsed as the views of these agencies).

---

<sup>1</sup> Greater London Authority. 2009

<sup>2</sup> Dementia Care in London March. IPPR, 2011

## **OVERVIEW**

There are creditable measures in the Mayor's latest Housing Strategy that are warmly welcomed, provided they can help to drive a major change in London's housing. There needs to be more investment made to tackle these issues and respond to an ageing population. The Mayor's new powers and responsibilities offer a unique opportunity to make a difference. We hope that this submission will have influence and encourage the change we are seeking.

## **PROPOSALS IN THE HOUSING STRATEGY THAT HAVE SUPPORT**

Recognition of the needs of older people: the commitment to give more attention to the needs of older people is very warmly welcomed. Greater focus on planning for housing for older people and a higher priority given to addressing housing needs in later life are seen as important elements of a comprehensive approach to housing in London. This needs to be better understood and developed at borough level, where innovative plans can be blocked.

Quality and standard of new homes: there is strong support for innovation and change in housing design combined with higher quality of design and construction. This includes new models for intergenerational households, more options between general housing and residential care, more flexible design of living space and community led projects. The Mayor received praise for championing homes fit for our lifetime in the London Housing Design Guide and for requiring 10% wheelchair accessible housing on new developments.

Affordable housing: there is serious and growing unmet housing need in London. An Institute of Public Policy Research report, in Dec 2011 stated:

“The UK house building sector has a long record of under delivery. The number of households in England is projected to grow by 232,000 a year until 2033, yet we are currently building less than half this number of new homes annually (HM Government 2011).”<sup>3</sup>

People question whether the term “affordable” housing is being applied appropriately and do not believe these homes are necessarily genuinely affordable. Measures within boroughs to adopt a policy that will limit the cost ceiling for new social tenancies is welcomed but does not go far enough to address the concerns there are about affordability.

The lack of affordable housing is also making it particularly difficult for adult children to remain near their families and for effective family support networks to be maintained.

Adaptations and improving existing homes: the Mayor's commitment to “explore how the adaptations and extensions on offer to older people in London can be improved” is very welcome.

Care and Repair England has identified that:

---

<sup>3</sup> We must fix it. Delivering Reform of the building sector to meet the UK's housing and economic crisis. IPPR, Dec 2011

“The main factors impacting on home adaptation demand are:

- **Demography** – *increasing life expectancy and the particularly large rise in the number of people aged over 80 years.*
- **Health and disability** – *growth in the number of people living with a long term health condition and/or disability.*
- **Housing tenure, condition and suitability** – *the condition and unsuitability of the housing stock, rising low income owner occupation (particularly during retirement) and growth in the number of older households.*
- **Income** – *the links between low income, age, disability and low levels of savings.”<sup>4</sup>*

People want the Mayor to examine this issue comprehensively and consider changes that would benefit people regardless of their housing tenure. This includes the particular challenges that older people in private rented accommodation can face to get their landlords consent for adaptations.

There were reports about how slow, unsatisfactory and in need of reform, the current system is.

More housing options for intergenerational households are needed including support for extensions.

## **THE CHANGES WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE DRAFT STRATEGY**

Real influence: people actively engaged with the day’s Debate and gave extensive feedback. However, they do not feel they have an influential voice that has a demonstrable impact on housing strategies, planning policy and decisions, housing and neighbourhood design, service planning, service standards and delivery for an ageing population.

They would like to see more commitment to this in the Strategy and evidence of real influence in the future.

Information, advice and guidance: people consider good quality, impartial information and advice is an essential service to enable people to understand their housing options, try to have suitable housing and to plan ahead. This is supported by the APPG ‘Living Well at Home’ Inquiry:

“comprehensive information and advice on housing choices for older people needs to be freely available to both support informed decision-making and galvanise the development of new products that respond to their demands and aspirations”<sup>5</sup>

This should be included in the Mayor’s Housing Strategy and this service should be attractive to everyone including owner-occupiers. Housing options should include opportunities to move between tenure types. While people want to see an integrated pan-London service, they also want to be able to get information from easily accessible local venues and do not want to have an internet –only based service.

---

<sup>4</sup> Time to Adapt. Home adaptations for older people: the increase in need and future of state provision. Care and Repair England, Sept 2009

<sup>5</sup> Living Well at Home Inquiry July 2011. All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People.

Ideally people believe this service should be supported by specialist advisors and independent advocates who can support people. Development of the use of mentors is also proposed to offer one-to-one support.

When asked where they would go for advice people offer a wide range of responses, the most common given in their feedback are: the council (this includes a councillor or MP), a local Age UK, CAB, a registered social landlord or an advice centre. Some report that they do not know and some that they do not have confidence in the quality or impartiality of the advice they can get.

Inclusive approach: the Draft Housing Strategy could do more to demonstrate a comprehensive and inclusive approach regardless of people's housing tenure.

It is not the case that the open market alone can, or will, meet the needs of owner occupiers and many are living in unsuitable housing.<sup>6</sup> Older people in the private rented sector, although a minority, also need to be considered.

**“Too much emphasis on social housing rather than owner occupiers”** - delegate

Suitable housing and neighbourhoods: when asked about the most important things to maintain independent living when we get older, people talk about their personal circumstances (keeping active and healthy and with adequate income), social networks, services and homes. But in addition, they also feel their neighbourhoods play a vital role. This includes having good local shopping, health, leisure and other facilities, having green spaces, access to transport, a vibrant community and feeling safe.

There is support for intergenerational communities and for homes to be well located.

**“build where people require them [homes] not where planners want to build them”**

- delegate

As reported by the ILC-UK:

“Adapting older people's homes without also adapting their neighbourhoods may only have a minimal effect on improving quality of life-older people need age friendly homes and neighbourhoods to stay independent”<sup>7</sup>

While the Strategy states that the Mayor will “explore the role of Lifetime Neighbourhoods in regeneration initiatives”, this sounds like a limited commitment to an important issue.

Practical help and support: access to reliable and trustworthy sources of affordable practical help are highly valued. This can include for example, domestic cleaning, gardening, small DIY jobs, home repairs and improvements. Assistive technology also offers a valuable service. For some, this and the use of I.T. has a much wider role to play, providing reassurance and a direct link with family, friends, services and medical advice including the monitoring of medical conditions.

---

<sup>6</sup> Time to Adapt. Home adaptations for older people: the increase in need and future of state provision. Care and Repair England, Sept 2009

<sup>7</sup> Localism and Neighbourhoods for all ages. International Longevity Centre-UK, 2011



## **A STRATEGY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

People want to see this Strategy changing thinking and having a direct impact on how older people live in London.

Many of these messages are not new. They are supported by other reports or research and by submissions made from debates by older people on the previous Housing Strategy and on the London Plan.

We would like to see progress on previous and new targets including those for individual boroughs.

Extract from the consultation response to the Housing Strategy in 2009:

“Housing was seen as central to quality of life and especially so as we get older. We spend more time at home, so our housing conditions can have a direct bearing on our well-being and ability to maintain our independence.

Better involvement in thinking about our needs in later life is needed, plus new approaches in order to combat isolation, develop accessible suitable homes and neighbourhoods, to improve quality of life and support people with dementia.”

**“would have liked summaries of previous strategies to see what worked.... including a summary of progress on previous plans as an appendix to the Strategy”**

- delegate

## **OTHER KEY MESSAGES**

Co-ordination of housing, health and social care: people want to see more co-ordination between health, housing and social care. There was discussion about whether Health and Well-Being Boards could be a valuable means to promote better co-ordination. People have concerns about the limited representation of housing interests among Board members and whether Board recommendations will filter down.

**“Link up social care and health care as cuts to social care means more money spent on NHS and health care”**- delegate

Under-occupation and suitable smaller housing alternatives: a major challenge is that this is more of an issue in the private sector and the Draft Housing Strategy does not propose measures to encourage or promote change comprehensively. People also have different views about how significant an issue this is in the social rented sector or how much change can be achieved because, for many, the thought of moving is so challenging. This like a range of other topical and emotive current issues could cause resentment and conflict between the generations.

For some, extra space may be needed for health reasons, a carer, grandchildren, family visits or for grown up children who may revolve in and out of independent living.

There is a lack of well designed alternative smaller homes that are well located to encourage

people to choose to move out of a larger family home. For some, to continue to have a garden is also important.

Measures that people feel could enable them to move include:

- information and advice about housing options
- being able to move locally and maintain existing social networks
- cash incentives or compensation
- support to arrange moving. This can include packing and unpacking, transferring key services, help with redecoration, helping to decide what to keep and get rid of possessions, counselling for emotional needs or concerns
- good local amenities
- information and advice about the locality, if it is somewhere new
- a follow up service to find out how you are doing.

There is a difference of view with some feeling strongly that this should always be an individual choice and people should not be penalised for under-occupying. Others feel that firmer action is needed to promote change, including the use of tenancy conditions and restrictions in benefit entitlement for those with unused rooms.

Quality of care: people have serious concerns about the quality of care offered in all residential settings and about the risk of abuse. Effective measures are necessary to ensure that service standards are maintained and that care workers have empathy with the people they are caring for. Improved training and conditions of service for people delivering care are felt to be essential to ensure a quality service that is more widely regarded to have a valued, specialist role.

“The Commission's inquiry into the home care system in England reveals disturbing evidence that the poor treatment of many older people is breaching their human rights and too many are struggling to voice their concerns about their care or be listened to about what kind of support they want.”<sup>8</sup>

Promoting housing mobility: The Mayor's plan to introduce a pan-London mobility scheme called “housing moves” has strong support, along with other measures including the Accessible Housing Register and responsibility for the Seaside and Country Homes scheme.

**“huge sums are spent on adaptations and then ripping them out”**- delegate

People also support developing a more comprehensive England-wide mobility model.

Specialist schemes for vulnerable people: people feel that a wider range of housing choices is also needed for more vulnerable older people who are unable to cope with independent living, including owner-occupiers.

**“need nuances between independence and care”** – delegate

**“all residential landlords should provide semi-sheltered support”** - delegate

---

<sup>8</sup> Inquiry into the Home Care of Older People. Extract from the Equality and Human Rights Commission Website Nov 2011

People also consider access to 24 hour care is essential to ensure people's safety and security and is a particularly important service for very frail people.

Sheltered housing continues to be highly valued especially if there is an on-site staff member:

**“sheltered housing only works well with trained and dedicated staff”** - delegate

**“preference for on site and not non-residential floating support”** – delegate

Homeless older people: there is concern, supported by anecdotal reports, about a rising number of older people who are rough sleepers. More research on this would be welcomed, although people who commented were not convinced that the proposal to end rough sleeping during 2012 could realistically be achieved.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Mayor's new responsibilities and powers offer a great opportunity to influence, improve and lead national innovation to deliver greater housing options in London and enable more homes (existing and new) to be fit for our lifetimes.

The success of the Housing Strategy will be in demonstrating that the voice of Londoners does have influence, implementing change effectively and delivering more affordable housing choice.

## **DRAFTING AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

This submission was drafted by Peabody using information gathering at the “Older People's Housing Debate” on 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

For further details please contact Peabody, 45 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB.  
Tel: 020 7021 4444 E-Mail: [peabody.direct@peabody.org.uk](mailto:peabody.direct@peabody.org.uk) [www.peabody.org.uk](http://www.peabody.org.uk)

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1. List of participant organisations.

Appendix 2. Older People's Housing Debate-Agenda

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

To Martin McNelis, Sally-de-Sousa and Sylvia Wachuku-King, the volunteers who checked, submitted comments and approved the draft submission in order to prepare a final version.

Also to London Older People's Strategies Group, Greater London Forum for Older People, Age UK London for supporting this event and to the Greater London Authority for the help given that made it possible.

Finally to our volunteer photographer Cliff Chester

Drafted by: Pat Strachan, Older People's Services Manager, Peabody.

**Older People's Housing Debate**  
**The Mayor's Draft Revised Housing Strategy**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012. City Hall, London**

**LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS**

Advocacy Plus  
Age UK London  
Age UK London Campaigns Alliance  
BedZED Pavillion  
Bexley Borough Pensioners' Forum  
Breathe Easy  
Brent Pensioners Forum  
Care & Repair England  
Clapham Hall Community Centre  
Croydon Older People's Forum  
Croyden Retired Peoples Campaign  
Foundations  
GLAMIS TRA  
Grandparents Plus  
Greater London Forum for Older People  
Greenwich Pensioners Forum  
Hammersmith & Fulham Neighbourhood Watch  
Hammersmith & Fulham Older Peoples Project  
Hanover  
Haringey Forum for Older People  
Kensington and Chelsea Forum for Older Residents  
Lambeth Forum for Older People  
Lewisham Pensioners Forum  
London Irish Elders Forum  
London Minority Ethnic Elders  
London Older Feminist Network  
Merton Seniors Forum  
New Horizon Group – Epicentre Leytonstone  
Older Womens Co-Housing Project  
OpeN  
Peabody Diversity Forum  
Peabody Sheltered Tenant Forum  
Peabody, Sundial Centre Forum  
Peabody Tenants Liaison Committee  
Redbridge Pensioners Forum  
Rotary Club of Kingsbury & Kenton  
The Building Exploratory  
The Senior BEEs (Building Exploratory)  
Tottenham & Woodgreen Pensioners Action Group  
Wandsworth Older Peoples' Forum  
Westminster Senior Citizens Forum

**Older People's Housing Debate**  
**The Mayor's Draft Revised Housing Strategy**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012. City Hall, London**  
**Agenda**

- 10.15am Arrival and refreshments
- 10.45am **Chair's welcome**  
Sue Adams, OBE Chief Executive, Care & Repair England and Chair of the Housing and Ageing Alliance
- 10.50am **Introduction**  
Richard Blakeway, Mayoral Advisor on Housing, GLA (Greater London Authority)
- 11.00am **About the Draft Revised Housing Strategy**  
Shahi Islam, Policy Officer, GLA
- 11.15am **Background and key GLA research findings**  
Pat Strachan, Older People's Services Manager, Peabody, and Cath Stubbings, Independent Consultant
- 11.30am **Questions to our panel of speakers**
- 12.00pm **Discussions in small groups**
- 12.30 -  
1.15pm **Buffet lunch and refreshments**
- 1.15pm **Thoughts on the Mayor's Draft Housing Strategy**  
Ben Donovan, Research and Policy Officer, Age UK London
- 1.30pm **Discussion in small groups**
- 2.15pm **Report back**  
Please choose one key message from each table
- 2.30pm **What next? Followed by quiz answers**  
Pat Strachan, Older Person's Services Manager, Peabody
- 2.45pm **Closing remarks from the Chair**
- 3.00pm **Finish**

**Thank you for taking part.**

Please don't forget to fill in the evaluation and monitoring forms – your feedback is important to us.