



March 2013

PRACTICE BRIEFING

The Supplementary Planning Guidance for London, November 2012

Implications for older people's housing

Introduction

The Mayor of London's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) provides detail about how the Housing elements of the London Plan 2011 should be implemented. To see the housing section of the London Plan click on the link below and go to Chapter Three.

www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/londonplan

The SPG treats the housing market in London as a whole and stresses the importance of inter-borough planning and cooperation as well as between London and the areas that surround it.

Supply and demand

Part 1 of the SPG relates to **housing supply**. The London Plan has a target for 32,200 new homes per year between 2011 and 2021. The SPG sets out the minimum numbers of new homes required per year in each local authority area (SPG page 14, Table 3.1). There is some flexibility in meeting annual targets in the short term as long as the ten year total is met.

Whilst national policy will no longer require housing targets to be set at regional level the SPG makes clear that Mayor considers London to require these targets but will work with boroughs and other stakeholders to develop a more effective methodology. By 2015/16 it is expected that the targets will be revised.

The targets for new homes are unevenly spread across London with areas in East London and Thames Gateway with potential for a large share of the total. The guidance describes 'Opportunity Areas' each with capacity for 2,550 new homes and/or 5000 jobs, supported by new infrastructure and 'Intensification Areas', which have good transport access and a location that allows for higher density development.

The market

Key factors about the London market are set out including:

- The surplus of large market houses but shortage of these in social/affordable sector. (60% of private owned/rented homes in London have 3 or more bedrooms.)

- Falling demand for small retail units especially in secondary frontage/small shopping centres, which could offer space for housing.
- Unused space above low density commercial units (airspace) that may be suitable for housing.
- Expectation that by 2025 37% of households will be privately renting (up from 25% in 2010/11). In England, the 2010/11 figure is 17%.

To help local authority planners, commissioners and developers predict the demand for specialist accommodation and care over the next 20 years, the Housing LIN – in partnership with Elderly Accommodation Counsel - has released a free online Strategic Housing for Older People Analysis Tool (SHOP@). SHOP@ is available at www.housinglin.org.uk/SHOPAT

Planning

The emphasis is on the planning process being used to enhance and improve places and not only about scrutiny of proposals. Planners are encouraged to work flexibly to enable the meeting of housing need.

The aim is to 'optimise' housing output per site and this is contrasted with 'maximising'. Suggests that requirements related to density may have been misinterpreted in the past and recognises that high density developments are not always the most financially viable. The guidance encourages planners to 'understand the financial drivers behind partners' positions and focus on trying to find workable solutions'

The Density Matrix in Table 3.2 page 32 of the SPG 'should be used as a guide rather than an absolute rule so as to also take proper account of other objectives'.

General housing design

Part 2 of the SPG covers the quality of housing design and brings together London Plan policy and other relevant guidance on neighbourhood and dwelling design into a set of standards. These standards are set out alongside text that describes how they should be applied, starting in section 2.2 on page 51.

The importance of inclusive design is set out: 'Housing should be designed so that people can use it regardless of their age, disability, gender or ethnicity. It should be designed to accommodate and easily adapt to a diverse range of needs, for example for people who are frail, older, visually or hearing impaired, have learning difficulties or who are wheelchair users.'

The standards incorporate 'Lifetime Homes' criteria and Annex 2 of the SPG summarises the Mayor's best practice guidance on wheelchair accessible housing. The section on access from street to front door encourages developers and boroughs to provide charging facilities for mobility scooters.

Standards set out from pages 65-79 are relevant to the needs of older people as they include space on ground floor for bed, space for twin or double beds, potential for stair or through the floor lift, adaptability for hoists, handrails. Access to natural light, privacy and sound insulation are also covered. Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) should also include plans for telecare and home improvement. For more on Lifetime Home standards and other design considerations, visit the Housing LIN's designhub at:

www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design_building

Specialist housing for older people

Part 3 of the SPG (and particularly from page 91) contains much of the guidance that is relevant to new specialist housing for older people. It says that in preparing LDFs 'account is taken of the changing age structure of London's population and in particular the varied needs of older Londoners, including supported and affordable provision'. The thrust of the SPG is that Boroughs must shape their own policies for delivering Older Person Housing, and it directs them to the Housing LIN/Tetlow King Planning Housing in Later Life Toolkit (see below).

The SPG draws on a review that highlights 'the need for many boroughs to take a particularly pro-active approach to increase provision of 'sheltered' and 'extra care' accommodation, especially in the private sector. With over 60% of older people in London being home owners the shortage of specialist housing for sale in comparison to demand in London is highlighted.

Projections of specialist housing requirements need to take into account a number of factors driving demand including the ageing population, closure of existing stock that is no longer viable, changes in tenure patterns and preferences and affordability of the range of possible products. Table 3.1 in Annex 5 of the SPG summarises estimated potential annual demand for specialist older persons housing in each London borough. This reflects requirement in Paragraph 159 of the NPPF that local authorities should have a clear understanding of the housing needs of older people in their area. This data should be seen as a starting point for boroughs develop their own more detailed requirements. The data covers homes for sale, shared ownership (SO) and for rent.

Based on the supply available in 2011 Table 3.1 shows the shortfall or surplus (indicated with a minus sign) each year between 2011 and 2021 between supply and potential demand. There are two scenarios set out – 'high' and 'low' supply of affordable housing, which affect the estimates of demand for rent/affordable housing.

The 'high supply' scenario assumes that all affordable specialist housing is fit for purpose and occupied by frail older people. However it is estimated that as much as 50% of sheltered affordable stock is currently unsuitable for frail older people and that shortages of general needs social housing mean that some places are occupied by people without additional support needs. The 'low supply' scenario recognises that if 50% of specialist affordable stock is unsuitable for frail older people (and/or occupied by other groups) then the useable supply is much lower than the number of homes designated for this group. The actual position may be somewhere between the two.

The implication of this data is that there is a shortfall of owner occupied and shared ownership/shared equity specialist housing for older people in all London boroughs. For affordable housing where the low supply scenario operates in a borough then there may also be shortfall of these types of accommodation. Use our SHOP@ to predict the shortfall of supply in the rental and leasehold market up to 2030.

The value of town centre or edge of centre locations for specialist housing for older people is included and the statement that 'Boroughs should plan positively for specialist provision for older people including through local plan allocation. Individual proposals should be considered in the light of LDF policies which are required by the NPPF (National Planning policy Framework) and London Plan to address local identified needs for specialist provision.'

Specialist housing such as extra care can be viewed by planners as falling between Use Class C2 (institutional) and C3 (general housing). The SPG indicates that planners should avoid applying standard obligations linked to Use Class without considering the impact on viability: 'Providing the proposal is justified by identified need and addresses wider policy considerations, the planning system should not be used to restrict development of either (Use

Class) – this is an evolving market and provisions should not be constrained by what, in need terms, might appear to be an arbitrary and perhaps dated planning distinction.’

The SPG recognises that specialist housing may require bespoke viability assessment for both CIL charge setting and when determining the level of Section 106 contributions for a scheme. *“The Mayor seeks to encourage rather than restrain development of specialist housing and, in line with NPPF requirements, this requires a thorough appreciation of viability.”* Paragraphs 3.1.45 - 3.1.49 provide more details about criteria in reaching planning decisions.

Affordable housing

Part 4 of the SPG relates to affordable housing and much of this is about family housing and helping people get a foot on the property ladder through intermediate housing. There is reference (para 4.3.14) to obligations under the Health and Social Care Act to work with Health and Wellbeing boards to prepare Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to identify requirements for specialist and supported housing.

The emphasis is on mixed tenure developments including affordable housing. Funding sources for affordable housing are set out on page 127, para 4.4.23. Part 5 of the SPG deals with housing stock and includes the need to develop new affordable housing units for ‘under-occupiers’ to free up at least 8000 affordable family homes.

Social infrastructure and mixed use development

Some questions are set out on page 151 to assess whether housing proposals promote health and wellbeing. Part 7 of the SPG covers the potential for mixed residential and other uses. It also mentions the value of town centre locations for older people’s housing.

Useful links

A toolkit to support local planners and commissioners in planning for specialist housing for older people has been published through a partnership of agencies, to see a copy of ‘**Housing in Later Life: planning ahead for specialist housing for older people**’ see link below

www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design_building/Planning/?parent=8582&child=8654

The Mayor’s Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund of up to £60m was launched in October 2012 in two phases, one for developments needing grant funding and the second (that closes on 15th March 2013) for expressions of interest on developing homes in the private market. More information on GLA website:

www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing/mayors-care-and-supported-housing-fund

In addition, the GLA website contains a copy of a study, ‘**The role of the planning system in delivering housing choice for older Londoners**’. This was commissioned to investigate the role of planning in meeting the housing needs of older Londoners.

This study was commissioned to investigate the role of planning in meeting the housing needs of older Londoners and includes original research on the scale of need for specialist housing at local level.

The findings of the study was used to inform the Housing SPG and it is expected that the study will both be of use to Boroughs in the development of policies related to older persons’

housing and inform the Mayor's Housing and Investment Teams, when updating the Housing

Strategy and making funding decisions. For more, go to:

www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/outputs/detail.asp?OutputID=288

An interactive database of GLA owned land and assets available for development can be viewed on the GLA website:

www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing/land-and-assets

The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation was dissolved in February 2013. Planning powers were transferred either to a new agency the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) or to the GLA or relevant local authorities, for more detail see GLA website:

www.london.gov.uk/london-thames-gateway-development-corporation

In London as elsewhere there are older sheltered housing schemes that no longer meet the needs and aspirations of older people and are likely to have void rates that make them unviable. There are examples of remodelling of such schemes on the Housing Lin website:

www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingExtraCare/Commissioning/Remodelling/

About the Housing LIN

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

For further information about the Housing LIN's comprehensive list of online resources and shared learning and service improvement networking opportunities, including site visits and network meetings in London, visit: www.housinglin.org.uk

The Housing LIN welcomes contributions on a range of issues pertinent to housing with care for older and vulnerable adults. If there is a subject that you feel should be addressed, please contact us.

Published by

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