

Roundtable on Planning and Housing in London with Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development

Wednesday 6th March 2024

Introduction

This meeting sought to delve into the successes and challenges experienced by the GLA with regards to planning and meeting the ever-growing demand for affordable housing in London. Tom Copley credited the successes of City Hall to its delivery partnership programmes, collaboration with London's Councils and a productive London Plan. Tom Copley cited regulatory uncertainty from the Government, a lack of funding for local authority planning departments and potential reduction of the scope of Mayoral powers as growing concerns for housing in London. Discussions also placed focus on Permitted Development Rights, the London Plan and building safety regulations.



Key takeaways

- Tom Copley reflected on the successes of the GLA in recent years, particularly with regards to affordable housing. He credited the Mayor's delivery partnerships and working relationships with London's borough councils for City Hall's achievement of hitting the ambitious target of 116,000 affordable home starts, including 25,000 within the last year.
- The Deputy Mayor also cited the GLA's stage 1 and 2 referral powers as a factor behind its success in housing, discussions referenced the Aberfeldy Village Scheme in Tower Hamlets as an example of City Hall's ability to push through suitable developments.
- Tom Copley welcomed the funding pledge introduced in the Spring Budget this week, which outlined a £242m allocation to Barking Riverside and Canary Wharf. However, the Deputy Mayor argued that the GLA needs circa £450m funding in order to properly address London's housing shortage. Furthermore, the GLA has demonstrated its ability to effectively allocate funds provided by central Government into affordable homes.

Issues raised

- The discussion placed focus on continuous uncertainty from the Government with regards to planning policy, especially surrounding regulations affecting second staircases. Tom Copley noted that 38,000 homes in London alone are being held up due to this uncertainty.
- Participants also raised the issue of Permitted Development Rights, and their benefits of providing a method for developers to create new affordable homes without burdening the planning system. Tom Copley noted that in London, the resulting PDR units are often too small and lack the quality that is expected by City Hall with regards to suitable living standards.

Outcomes and future actions

- Tom Copley conveyed the GLA's willingness to engage with the industry regarding the London Plan and other related policy issues. Those interested can do so through the Planning for London programme.

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