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Department: Planning

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By email: planningpolicy@camden.gov.uk

**Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended);
Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town and Country Planning (Local
Development) (England) Regulations 2012**

Re: Camden Local Plan (Regulation 19) consultation

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for consulting the Mayor of London on the London Borough of Camden's (LBC's) proposed Draft Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19). As you are aware, all Development Plan Documents in London must be in general conformity with the London Plan under section 24(1)(b) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Mayor has afforded me delegated authority to make detailed comments which are set out below.

The Mayor provided comments on the earlier LBC Local Plan (Regulation 18) consultation on 13th March 2024 (LDF06/LDD25/LP02/JB01). This letter follows on from that earlier advice and sets out where you should make further amendments so that the draft Plan is in general conformity and more closely aligned within the London Plan 2021 (LP2021). These comments should be read alongside the Mayor's previous response.

General

The draft Local Plan is underpinned by a series of strategic objectives to help deliver the vision and ambitions of 'We Make Camden', which is a document that sets out the vision for the future of Camden. The strategic objectives of the draft Local Plan are broadly supported.

However, it is the Mayor's opinion that as currently written the draft Plan is not in general conformity with the London Plan due to the proposed housing targets over the Plan period. Further detail on this is provided in the subsequent section of this letter.

Opportunity Areas

LBC contains three Opportunity Areas (OAs) identified within LP2021 – Tottenham Court Road, Kings Cross and Euston. The draft Plan states that limited development is expecting in the Tottenham Court Road OA as development there is largely complete, with development in the King's Cross Area mainly delivered through two site allocations.

Table 2.1 of LP2021 sets out an indicative capacity for 2,800-3,800 homes in Euston OA along with 8,600-15,000 jobs. As set out in paragraph 2.1.1 of the LP2021, these figures should be used as a starting point to be tested through the assessment process. The draft Plan identifies that Euston is expected to deliver between 1,500 and 2,500 new homes. Noting that the indicative capacity is below that identified within Table 2.1, clarity on the capacity assumptions made for the Euston area by LBC would be welcomed.

Draft Policy S2 seeks to ensure that development within this area is in line with the vision and objectives set out within the Euston Area Plan (EAP). Consultation (Regulation 18) on the draft Euston Area Plan was undertaken in March 2023. It is understood LBC is working towards consulting on the Regulation 19 version of the updated Plan in Winter 2025.

Housing

LBC's housing target as set out in Table 4.1 of the LP2021 is for the delivery of 10,380 new homes between 2019 and 2029 and incorporates a small site housing target of 3,280 new homes. This is equivalent to an annualised target of 1,038 homes a year.

For LBC's entire Plan period, 2026-2041, it is the intention to deliver 11,550 new dwellings. This is equivalent to a total of 770 homes being delivered a year. The proposed drop in the housing target is considered significant and is not consistent with paragraph 0.0.21 of the LP2021 which is clear that boroughs should only alter their housing targets where they have evidence demonstrating that they can exceed them.

The draft Plan states that this figure has been derived from the period of 2026 to 2029 of the London Plan, the housing capacity from large sites as set out in 2017 SHLAA, and the small sites target of 328 new homes per year set out within LP2021. The draft Plan indicates that cumulative backlog from under-delivery of completed homes from 2019/20 has also been taken into account, which has been identified as a little over 1,700 homes by April 2026.

As noted in the Regulation 18 consultation response, the current London Plan does not meet London's identified need and therefore the overall amount of housing required annually should not be expected to reduce. Whilst the above approach is in line with London Plan paragraph 4.1.11, in the context of working towards delivering 88,000 homes per annum as calculated at a national level through the standard method, this approach (specifically the text in 4.1.11) is now considered to be out of date. Boroughs who are currently working on their Local Plan, such as LBC, should seek, as a minimum, to roll over the current London Plan target beyond 2028/29, including any shortfall accrued to date, and to continue to take proactive measures to increase housing supply.

The draft Plan acknowledges that the emerging London Plan will result in a new housing target for Camden once adopted, and as such the housing target contained within the Local Plan may only be in place for a short period of time. Whilst this is welcomed, it is recommended that there is flexibility in the draft Plan to safeguard for this eventuality. Consideration may need to be given to committing to an early Local Plan review following the publication of LBC's new housing targets within the emerging London Plan. The difficult current delivery environment is also noted, including LBC's difficulties in bringing sites forward.

Affordable Housing

It is noted that the draft Plan identifies a borough wide delivery target of 3,000 additional affordable homes from 2026/27 to 2040/41.

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

The draft Plan sets a capacity-based approach to affordable housing, with this being detailed in draft Policy H4. The threshold for this Policy starts at 100sqm and the creation of at least one additional unit, with each additional 100sqm equating to the creation of one home. For smaller developments, a sliding scale target will apply, which is discussed in detailed below.

For major developments, which have been defined within the draft Plan as being 16 units or more, draft Policy H4B5 states that the London Plan's strategic affordable housing target of 50 per cent will apply, but will be subject to the London Plan's viability threshold approach. Policy H4 of LP2021 refers to the strategic target of 50 per cent of all new homes delivered across London to be genuinely affordable. To achieve this aim, specific measures are identified, which include, but are not limited to, the requirement for major developments which trigger affordable housing requirements to provide affordable housing through the threshold approach, using grant funding to increase affordable housing delivery, and for public sector land and industrial land resulting in a net loss of industrial capacity to deliver at least 50 per cent affordable housing.

Noting this, seeking to apply the strategic target in a site-specific way is an incorrect interpretation of Policy H4. It is also unclear how this would work: for example, how would the 'benefit' or incentive of meeting the 35 per cent threshold as set out in Policy H5 of the LP2021 be realised if negotiations continue past this point up to 50 per cent? It is recommended that the draft Policy H4B5 is amended to remove the reference to the strategic housing target.

A sliding scale for affordable housing contributions for smaller developments is also proposed, starting at 2 per cent for developments with capacity for one additional home, increasing by 2 per cent for each home, reaching an affordable housing target of 30 per cent affordable housing for 15 units. The Mayor raises significant concerns that seeking affordable housing below 10 units is unlikely to support small builders and diversify the housing market. Overall, this is likely to be counter-productive in terms of both housing delivery and affordable housing delivery.

In terms of seeking affordable housing contributions for development schemes delivering 10 to 15 units, whilst the approach set out in the draft Policy differs from LP2021, given it is likely to promote small builders and reduce the 'cliff edge' impacts, it is considered to be an appropriate flexibility.

It is noted that there are references to tenure split being applied flexibly within the supporting text of the policy. Tenure mix is a policy criterion for viability assessments; therefore, it is recommended that this wording is removed.

Draft Policy H4B(8) sets out that 'for the largest developments involving housing (typically those providing 100 homes or more), the Council may seek affordable housing for older people or other people with care or support requirements as a proportion of the additional affordable housing provision'. This policy should be supported by evidence to ensure deliverability.

Draft Policy H4(E7) states that the LBC will take into account the economics and financial viability of the development when considering whether affordable housing provision should be made on-site. This policy should be tested at plan making stage and viability assessments should not generally be expected at application stage unless a scheme proposed a non-compliant level of planning obligations i.e. lower level of affordable housing, which is already covered in Part B of the same policy.

It is recommended that the policy wording within draft Policy H4(F) is clearer on what the triggers are for viability reviews. If the triggers are in line with the London Plan, then it is questioned whether it is necessary to replicate this policy within the draft Plan as the same London Plan policy already applies to all relevant development proposals.

Viability

LP2021 Policy DF1 identifies that affordable housing and necessary public transport improvements should be prioritised by decision makers when seeking planning obligations. There are a number of references within the policies and supporting text in the housing section of the local plan that refer to financial viability as a matter of consideration for development schemes. Whilst it is acknowledged that financial viability could be a material consideration, there is a concern that the references to such within the policy and supporting text could run counter and/or result in securing a lower level of planning obligations with applicants seeking to submit non-policy compliant schemes to justify the submission of viability information.

With this in mind, it is recommended that consideration is given to removing such references with the view of ensuring that viability testing is only used in a limited way as part of the decision-making process and that most applications would not be subject to protracted viability discussions in relation to a wide range of policy matters.

Specialist Older Persons Housing

Draft Policy H8 supports the development of, and resists the net loss of, specialised housing for older people, people experiencing homelessness and other people with care or support requirements. Whilst this is welcomed, the draft Plan should establish what the need is for specialist older persons housing. In the absence of a figure of need, LBC should rely on the Mayor's indicative benchmark figure which is set out in Table 4.3 of LP2021. For LBC, this is for the delivery of 105 units a year. In accordance with Policy H13 of the LP2021 LBC should work in collaboration with providers to identify sites which may be suitable for specialist older persons housing.

Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

Draft Policy H11 states LBC will aim to secure a sufficient supply of pitches/plots to meet the accommodation needs of Camden's established Traveller community over the Plan period to 2041. This is welcomed. The draft Plan identifies a need for 19 additional pitches over the Plan period. Two sites have been allocated within the draft Plan to provide the additional pitches required: S20 – York Way Depot and adjacent land at Freight Lane, and C27 Land adjacent to Constable House, Adelaide Road. It is anticipated that these sites could deliver a maximum of six pitches, and as such LBC is currently unable to meet their identified need over the Plan period.

Policy H14 of LP2021 states that a ten-year pitch target should be included within development plan documents. To be consistent with Policy H14 of the LP2021, LBC should clearly set out their ten-year pitch target and how they plan to meet those needs in full. The draft Plan should be updated to include this target and set out whether the two sites identified are able to fulfil the ten-year target or not. It is understood that LBC have written to other LPAs to ask whether they are able to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. If LBC cannot meet their ten-year pitch requirement this would be a general conformity issue.

Tall Buildings

There are a number of viewing corridors which run through LBC that should be taken into consideration when planning for tall buildings. These are Primrose Hill summit to St Paul's Cathedral; Parliament Hill oak tree to Palace of Westminster; Parliament Hill summit to Palace of Westminster; Parliament Hill summit to St Paul's Cathedral; and Kenwood viewing gazebo to St Paul's Cathedral. Extensions of the Blackheath Point to St Paul's Cathedral and Greenwich Park Wolfe statue to Tower Bridge also fall within the borough. It is recommended that the LVMF view corridors are included within the Policies Map and local plan.

When considering tall buildings in the locations affected by the views, the guidance in the London View Management Framework and Policy HC3 of LP2021 should be taken into consideration.

Draft Policy D2 sets out LBC's approach to tall building development within the borough. The draft Plan defines tall buildings as 40m within the CAZ and 30m elsewhere. This is in line with Policy D9 of the LP2021. Table 12 of the draft Plan details a number of sites in which tall buildings may be an appropriate form of development. It is recommended that appropriate heights are included within Figure 22 or Table 12 of the Plan, to provide clarity on what heights may be acceptable in the identified locations.

Industrial land and Waste

Camden is located within the Central Services Area (CSA) that supports the Central Activity Zone. There are no SIL sites located within LBC. The draft Plan identifies an 'Industry Area' within the borough, which is equivalent to LSIS. The LSIS site is subject to a site allocation (C3 – Murphy Site), identified to deliver 750 additional self-contained homes. The site allocation states that development at this site should be 'employment-led' and seek to 'intensify industrial provision to increase, or at least maintain, industrial storage and warehousing capacity'. The site allocation needs to be clearer in terms of the amount of industrial space that is envisaged at this site.

Overall, the draft Plan identifies that there is just under 35ha of industrial land within LBC. The draft Plan does not identify the amount of industrial capacity that is required to be delivered over the Plan period. This should be provided and broken down so that is clear what the need is for Class B uses. It is noted that draft Policy IE3 sets out a 'manage and protect' approach to the supply of industrial and warehousing land within the borough, but this should be strengthened to ensure that sufficient supply is planned for to meet demand.

Within LBC's industrial land there is one waste management site, and one aggregates site. The waste management site is identified within the North Waste London Plan, with the aggregates site safeguarded through draft Policy S1(Q). The Regis Road site allocation includes LBC's waste management site. The site allocation is clear that the development must retain or re-provide the Regis Road Recycling Centre, unless suitable compensatory sites are provided elsewhere that replace the existing provision. It should be noted that if the waste site is identified as surplus capacity, it should in the first instance be offered to other LPAs within London who are unable to meet their apportionment requirements.

It should be ensured that LSIS, waste sites and aggregate sites are clearly identified on the Policies Map.

Office Development

The draft Plan sets out an estimate that circa 400,000sqm of floorspace will be provided for office and research development uses over the Plan period. Draft Policy IE2 seeks to manage and protect the stock of offices within the borough. The draft Plan contains site allocations seeking to provide office floorspace. Office floorspace should be directed towards the CAZ, town centres and Opportunity Areas.

Town Centres/CAZ

The south of Camden forms part of the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), as defined in Policy SD4 of the LP2021. Part N of Policy SD4 sets out that Development Plans should look to define the boundary in detail and include on policy maps. Policy SD5 states that new residential development should not compromise the strategic functions of the CAZ.

Transport

The draft Plan sets out a number of policies that support shifting journeys to sustainable modes, adopt the Healthy Streets Approach and exceeding London Plan requirements for car parking and cycle parking, which is supported. We particularly commend LBC for retaining the requirement for car-free development across the borough.

The Camden Town station capacity upgrade remains a project of strategic importance given it is an essential enabling component of a future Northern line upgrade, which would allow more than the current 24 trains per hour. We therefore encourage LBC to carefully consider how the policies and site allocations in the plan could make the most efficient use of land to help deliver this upgrade alongside step-free access.

LBC is encouraged to make clear in the draft Plan where and how bus infrastructure, including priority measures, will be enhanced to support the efficient operation of the bus network and improved journey times. Relevant site allocations should be more specific with infrastructure requirements to protect access to the bus network and enhance infrastructure as part of development and design principles, linked to achieving sustainable mode share targets. LBC should make the safeguarding limits, including sites of surface interest, clear within the draft Plan. This includes within site allocations which are subject to Crossrail 2 safeguarding directions. Policy should clearly set out the process for safeguarded sites and how this might impact development within the relevant site allocations.

Further comments on Transport elements can be found within TfL's detailed comments, which are provided in a separate response.

Green Spaces

There are four areas of MOL within Camden: Hampstead Heath and adjoining areas, Regent's Park, Primrose Hill/Barrow Hill Reservoir, and Highgate Cemetery/Waterlow Park/Fairseat. Draft Policy NE1 seeks to give strong protection to maintaining the openness and character of MOL. It is noted that the supporting text for this policy states that LBC will 'protect the openness and character of these spaces in accordance with London Plan Policy and Policy guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on Green Belts'. For clarity, the GLA do not consider the changes to the NPPF in December 2024 to apply to MOL and will be seeking to address this through the new London Plan.

Next Steps

I hope these comments positively inform the ongoing preparation of LBC's Local Plan. GLA officers are keen to continue working with you to address the issues identified in this letter and to ensure it aligns more closely with the LP2021 as well as delivering LBC's objectives. If you have any specific questions regarding the comments in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Amy Tempest at

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Fairmaner

Head of the London Plan and Strategic Planning

Cc: Anne Clarke, London Assembly Constituency Member
Andrew Boff, Chair of London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee
National Planning Casework Unit, MHCLG