

Planning and Spatial Development Committee (30 November 2005)
Development in the Thames Gateway

Advance comments by CPRE London

The following comments refer to the issues raised in the Committee's letter dated 26 October.

1) 'Avoiding the mistakes of the past'

Poor quality housing

Should be addressed through:

- acknowledgement of the significance of sustainable construction techniques in the Thames Gateway in helping to deliver wider sustainable development objectives and long term environmental quality;
- companies that provide warranties and insurance for new housing take a more imaginative approach to, the scope for new materials, techniques and designs to provide a high quality product;
- creating a forum to facilitate the sharing of knowledge about the durability of new products, materials and construction techniques among housebuilders etc;
- ensuring that the Building Regulations and British Standards guarantee a satisfactory standard in the case of modern construction materials and techniques.

Poor design quality housing

Should be addressed through:

- strong policies in development plans, including adoption of design quality criteria in supplementary planning documents;
- use of tools such as Design coding; Development briefs; Concept Statements; Village or Town Design Statements; CABE's Design Quality Indicator (DQI) assessment; *Planning for Real* and *Enquiry by Design*
- the development of a design 'quality threshold';
- ensuring that public sector funding bodies (for example, the RDAs and UDCs) make their contribution conditional on the highest standards of design;

- ensuring that sufficient and adequate design skills are available among local authorities and establishing regional centres of excellence to address any shortcomings that are identified; and
- encouraging planning authorities – possibly in collaboration with each other – to create a ‘design advisory panel’ which would have statutory consultee status and which would be required to offer an opinion on the design quality of every significant development proposal, including at the early stages of plans being drawn up.

Loss of cultural heritage

Should be addressed through:

- including policies in development plans that recognise the value of cultural heritage and the need to protect it, and the need to take action to identify it; and
- ensuring that every local planning authority establishes links with English Heritage and has a system in place to ensure that English Heritage is consulted on all masterplans and other major planning applications.

Lack of access to amenities

Should be addressed through:

- Taking forward the Thames Gateway Delivery and Investment Framework initiative;
- establishing standards, which should be established in planning policies, for the proximity of all major housing developments to amenities; and
- masterplanning and design coding for all major developments, and better public consultation

Domination by provisions for car accessibility

Should be addressed through:

- prioritisation of urban sites close to public transport;
- providing additional public transport capacity and infrastructure to accompany new developments;
- higher density, mixed use development;
- strict control of provision for car-parking; and

- masterplanning and design coding for all major developments, and better public consultation.

Wasting land

Should be addressed through:

- policies to raise the density of residential development;
- policies to prioritise brownfield development close to public transport and avoid greenfield development;
- a strategic Thames-Gateway-wide transport infrastructure strategy.

Poor 'maintainancebility' of buildings in the public realm

Should be addressed through:

- careful attention to this issue at the design stage; and
- appropriate development plan policies and guidance.

Ghettoisation

Should be addressed through:

- masterplanning so as to avoid large areas of dwellings likely to be occupied by low income households.
- use of planning obligations to ensure that subsidised affordable housing is not concentrated in particular locations within a development area.
- careful attention to the quality of design and construction (as above).

2) Current targets for housing, employment and infrastructure

We very much welcome the Committee addressing the question of targets. There is a serious dearth of tangible targets against which to measure progress against the Mayor's - and the Government's - aspirations for the Thames Gateway, even in respect of the three issues identified above. At a national level, only three clear targets have been established in respect of the Thames Gateway specifically: the number of new dwellings, the number of new jobs; and the proportion of new dwellings built on previously developed urban land. This is far too crude a targetry framework to ensure compliance with the aspirations of the Sustainable Communities Plan, which addresses much wider issues such as the quality of development, accessibility to

public services, and public participation in planning. Targets should therefore be adopted for a wide range of issues and CPRE would be happy to provide a list of suggestions.

We feel that it would be highly desirable for the Mayor to publish - or at least to provide to the Committee - a full list of targets for the Thames Gateway *specifically* to which he is committed. It would be helpful for participants in the meeting on November 30th to have such a list in advance of the meeting.

In respect of housing, employment and infrastructure specifically, the Mayor should develop and adopt - or encourage boroughs to adopt - appropriate targets in respect of the following (some of which may already be at some stage of development by the Mayor):

Housing

1. Housing provision across a range of house sizes, types and tenures on a sub-regional and borough level.
2. Number of dwellings and masterplans complying with specified measures aimed at improving design quality (such as, for example, compliance with the Mayor's best practice guidance).
3. Accessibility of residential areas to public services and amenities.
4. Proportion of housing built on previously developed urban land.

Employment

5. Number of new jobs created.
6. Proportion of economic development built on previously developed urban land
7. Number of additional work-based training opportunities.

Infrastructure

8. Delivery dates by which additional infrastructure will be in service, including transport infrastructure and utilities. These dates should be explicitly linked to the development programme envisaged in the London Plan.

CPRE London
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