

Tom Copley AM | LONDONASSEMBLYLABOUR
Working hard for Londoners

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Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

10 April 2018

Dear Sadiq,

Re: Response to the consultation on estate regeneration ballots

In our Labour Group response to the Mayor's Draft Good Practice Guide to estate regeneration I noted that when it comes to Estate Regeneration, the voices and support of residents were vital to the success of any scheme, and that ballots offer the most effective way to assess a scheme's legitimacy. Nothing can establish the popular legitimacy of such a scheme in any competing way so I very much welcome the inclusion of ballots in the final version of the Draft Good Practice Guide.

In our response I highlighted the difficulty in establishing firm guidance on the issue, and urged the Mayor not to abandon ballots but further develop potential protocols for their implementation in the longer term. I also asked the Mayor to work with London's community groups and other partners over the coming years, developing a protocol that could be respected and observed by all stakeholders.

I very much welcome the fact that the Mayor has listened to my concerns, those of the London Assembly as a whole and the concerns of so many Londoners and community groups in issuing this Guidance.

Question 1: Do you agree that the GLA should make resident ballots a funding condition for estate regeneration schemes?

Yes

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposed criteria that would trigger the requirement for a resident ballot? Why/why not?

Yes

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed scope of resident ballots? Why/why not?

Yes, however, we feel the guidance should encourage landlords and developers to provide independent capacity building and advocacy support, including independent tenant and leaseholder advisors (ITLAs) to residents well in advance of the ballot as set out in *Better Homes for Local People – The Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration*.

Question 4: Do you agree with the proposed stage in an estate regeneration process at which ballots should happen? Why/why not?

As noted in my response to the consultation on the Draft Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration, determining the right moment to ballot residents is fraught with difficulty. From

hearing evidence there does not seem to be one clear point across all schemes where all the information available was fully dependable. However, I believe the proposed stage in this guidance is the best possible solution. The point in paragraph 3.12 that the ballot should be a milestone in a process of resident consultation, engagement and negotiation and not the end of it is well made. We are particularly pleased to see the proposition in paragraph 3.13 that the GLA would claw-back funding if it considers the landlord's offer to have materially deviated from the agreement in the ballot. However, I would like to see some outline of the mechanism by which the GLA would monitor the landlord's adherence to or deviation from the ballot.

Question 5: Do you have any other comments on the threshold, scope and timing of resident ballots?

No.

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposed eligibility criteria for resident ballots? Why/why not?

It is my strong view that those balloted should be the actual residents who live in the homes that are proposed for demolition. I therefore welcome the fact that the proposed eligibility criteria is restricted to residents only. However, we know that more and more Londoners are becoming private tenants as the cost of home-ownership continues to grow. Some private tenants will only have lived on an estate for a few months but many will have lived there for a number of years, may be raising their families there, and be totally embedded in the community. Therefore I believe all private tenants who have been resident in their home for more than 12 months should have a right to vote on what becomes of their homes and neighbourhood.

Although your consultation document correctly notes the "limited statutory obligations towards private tenants affected by estate regeneration", I believe local authorities should be encouraged to do more than the statutory minimum. For example, this could include providing homes through your London Living Rent scheme for private tenants who are existing residents on the regenerated estate.

Question 7: Do you agree that eligibility criteria should be the same for all schemes? Why/why not?

Yes.

Question 8: Do you agree with the Mayor's proposed requirements for implementing ballots? Why/why not?

Yes, but please see my response to question 4.

Question 9: Do you have proposals for other potential Mayoral requirements for implementing ballots?

No.

Question 10: Do you agree with the proposed exemption where the demolitions are required to deliver an infrastructure scheme? Why/why not?

Yes, however, the guidance here must be strict and we are concerned regarding the interpretation of the wording in paragraph 3.29 “or on a case-by-case basis where the landlord can demonstrate the demolitions are required to facilitate a scheme linked to a major infrastructure project” In my view the demolitions must be an actual requirement of the ability of the infrastructure scheme to proceed, not exempted on a tenuous ‘linking’ to a major infrastructure project.

Question 11: Do you agree with the proposed exemption where the demolitions are required to address safety issues? Why/why not?

Yes, however, guidance must be provided as to what is meant by a ‘safety issue’ and what the threshold is. I believe exemptions should be very limited, for example where there is structural damage to housing stock which is an urgent threat to residents’ safety.

Question 12: Do you agree with the proposed exemption where a specialist or supported housing scheme is being decommissioned by a local authority? Why/why not?

Yes.

Question 13: Do you have proposals for other potential exemptions to the proposed funding condition?

No.

Question 14: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements? Why/why not?

Yes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Copley', written in a cursive style.

Tom Copley AM
LONDONWIDE ASSEMBLY MEMBER