

Further Alterations to the London Plan FALP 2014

Submission from Michael Edwards, Bartlett School of Planning in a personal capacity

London's spatial economy

I am an economist and planner and an academic at UCL. I am also part of the Just Space network and its associated Just Space Economy and Planning Group JSEP. I have contributed to both the Just Space and the JSEP submissions to this consultation. In this personal submission I wish to focus on what I judge to be the biggest single non-housing problem posed by the FALP.

There is much media emphasis on the signs of recovery in the UK economy following the post 2007 recession, and even more coverage of the signs of strength in the London economy, including job growth, inward investment and "recovery" in the housing market, or at least house prices. These optimistic views are strongly expressed in the Mayor's 2020 Vision and in the London Plan as amended by FALP.

However the crisis continues to have damaging effects on very many Londoners: persistent long-term unemployment and youth unemployment, falling real wages (especially after housing costs) for many, increased use of zero-hours contracts, unpaid work-experience, agency working and other forms of income-insecurity. As London's "success" manifests itself in escalating housing costs, renters are further impoverished and those who manage to start in owner-occupation risk impoverishment as and when interest rates return to normal levels.

In these circumstances London should be able to look to the Mayor and the London Plan to lead the defence of civilised living standards for low-income through to median-income Londoners. This would give substance to the Mayor's aspiration to ensure that the benefits of "growth" are enjoyed by all Londoners - and that substance is lacking at the moment.

While many of the necessary actions would fall outside the scope of Town and Country Planning, the SDS is the over-arching spatial strategy with which the Mayor's other policies and action have to align and it is right that the SDS should embody a robust approach to these issues.

Furthermore, many of the steps which need to be taken to raise living standards for low-to-median income Londoners are town and country planning matters and have a strongly spatial dimension. I would emphasise the following:

1. Successive London Plans since work started in 2000 have prioritised Financial and Business Service as the main source of employment and GDP growth, with Business Services gaining more emphasis in recent years than purely Financial services. Prioritising sectors with high GVA per worker was seen as the best way of raising total GVA. What has always been missing, and remains missing, is the importance of sustaining employment in lower-GVA-per worker sectors, especially those in which a lot of at-risk Londoners earn their living, and raising productivity and pay in those sectors: jobs ranging from care homes to car repairs, high street services to builders

merchants. An additional £m output in low-pay firms is just as valuable as an additional £m in high-pay firms—and in terms of equality much more valuable.

2. The spatial dimension of this challenge stems partly from the **way in which redevelopment takes place**: almost all on "brownfield" land in line with environmental policy, but brownfield land is so often created by the extinguishing of small and medium enterprises. In recent decades this process has been concentrated mainly in major Opportunity and similar areas like King's Cross, Paddington, Bankside and so on. Now, however, FALP proposes to roll out this intensification to a larger number of even-denser OAs and to Town Centres in most of inner and outer London. With the possible exception of Old Oak Common where displaced activity is envisaged as moving into the adjoining Park Royal, there are bound to be serious losses of the spaces in which these sectors can viably operate, with consequent loss of jobs (often jobs disproportionately held by at-risk sections of the population) and loss of start-up opportunities.

3. A second spatial dimension flows from the **location** of these losses of premises, firms and jobs: now largely away from the CAZ and from major Metropolitan Centres. These are jobs close to homes and the jobs which replace them tend disproportionately to be in the CAZ, Canary Wharf or a few exceptional suburban centres. For most Londoners, jobs near home are a dwindling commodity. This is bad because it increases the need to travel and bad because longer-haul travel in London is expensive. It also impacts especially badly on women and people seeking part-time work whose search areas and travel-to-work patterns tend to be more localised.

Detailed evidence on these processes is sparse. The GLA itself does little monitoring or research on these topics and there is no impact analysis on them. However, the submissions to this consultation from Just Space, the Just Space Economy and Planning Group, from academic researchers and many local resident and business groups is beginning to fill the gaps.

If the Inspector agrees that this set of issues represents an important perspective which should be explored in the EiP I shall do all I can to help orchestrate and plug gaps in the evidence to assist in identifying ways in which the Plan could better be Altered, even at this late stage.

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