

London Plan Inspector's report

November 2019 with small later comments [in brackets].

Just Space Economy & Planning Group (Ilinca Diaconescu & Michael Parmar)

Summary of Panel report with regard to CAZ (Central Activity Zone)

Would policies SD4 and SD5 be effective in ensuring an appropriate mix of housing, offices, retail, leisure and other development in and around the Central Activities Zone including the Isle of Dogs (north)?

- For CAZ Panel finds further suggested changes to plan ensures “the objectives strike an appropriate balance between strategic functions and locally orientated uses including residential and retail.
- Sees Policy SD4M “sufficient capacity for industry and logistics to be identified and protected within and close to the CAZ” an important element supported by E4
- Supports view that Residential development is not appropriate in parts of the City of London and Isle of Dogs; however, the policy needs to be modified to provide flexibility in defining excluded area rather than use defined boundaries

Recommendation:

“... areas to be identified by boroughs in development plans.”

For SD5:

- Coordinated approach to introduction of Article 4 Directions to remove office to residential PDR set out in policy SD5F is justified in the interests of the economic wellbeing not only of the area but also of London and the UK.

Overall:

- Boroughs can develop locally specific policies for local adaptations and uses over strategic functions of CAZ

Summary of Panel report with regard to town centres

Is the town centre network defined in the Plan, and are policies SD6, SD7, SD8, SD9, E1, E9 and E10, justified and consistent with national policy? Would they provide an effective strategic framework for accommodating office, retail, leisure, visitor accommodation and other main town centre uses in appropriate locations?

- Panel satisfied that SD6 and SD7 conform with the NPPF
- Panel notes that of 200 town centres identified in London Plan, 46 are classified as major to international and future changes to these are subject to future changes in London Plan. Rest are the subject matter of local development plans
- Panel view is this allows boroughs “appropriate flexibility to develop policies for the centres that are of essentially local significance”
- Policies SD7A(4) and E9BA(8) encourage the comprehensive redevelopment of edge and out of centre retail and leisure uses for a diverse mix of uses to realise their potential to provide housing and encourage sustainable transport... based on sequential tests and impact assessments

- Policy E9BA(7) and paragraph 6.9.4 set out a positive strategic framework for London's markets in their full variety, and acknowledge their valuable economic, social and cultural roles.

Just Space has pressed hard for protection of high streets, parades of shops and other premises which meet local needs and provide local jobs. There are numerous welcome changes of wording which reflect our interventions.

Offices

- Between 4.7 million and 6.1 million square metres of additional office space likely to be needed over the Plan period
- With PDR affecting occupied office space, the Panel notes "there is a need to protect existing viable stock as well as to provide new offices"
- Panel notes that subsequent suggested changes to policy E1 supports the redevelopment, intensification and change of use of surplus office space to housing and other uses (part I), subject to there having been consideration of options to provide lower cost and affordable workspace in accordance with policies E2 and E3.

This policy in the Mayor's "suggested changes" was significantly modified and watered down from original

Hot food takeaways

Panel finds policies restricting overconcentration supportive and positive for health and well-being, not anti-competitive.

- Policy E9D states that any A5 developments that are permitted should be subject to planning conditions requiring compliance with the "Healthier Catering Commitment" This is a non-statutory scheme so policy needs to be amended to comply with NPPF
- Recommends [PR33] "Where development proposals involving A5 hot food takeaway uses are permitted, these should be conditioned. Boroughs should consider whether the imposition of a planning condition requiring the operator to achieve and operate in compliance with the Healthier Catering Commitment standard would be justified".

Summary of recommendations on industrial land and workspace policies

Are policies E4 to E7 and T7 justified and consistent with national policy, and would they provide an effective strategic framework for accommodating all types of industrial and related activities and the sustainable movement of freight?

Industrial land need and supply

- There is a higher need for industrial land to meet demand until 2041 than assumed in the Plan
- There will be requirements for new locations and specifications of industrial sites, including in and around the Central Activities Zone and accessible locations
- The approach to meeting industrial land needs in policies E4-E7 may not be realistic
- Several modifications are recommended to make the policies sound:
 - Strengthen E4: "... future demands for industrial and related functions should be provided and maintained ...
 - Modify the categorisations of boroughs in Table 6.2 in order to provide a more positive strategic framework for the provision of industrial capacity. [Mayor rejects.]

- In a future London-wide Green Belt review consideration should be given to industrial development if needs are not met in non-Green Belt locations
- E7 should be strengthened to protect non-designated industrial land: “Mixed-use or residential development proposals on non-designated industrial sites should only be supported where ...”
- E7B on co-location of residential and industrial is considered difficult to achieve in many areas and viability will be an issue

Freight, deliveries and servicing

- Policy T7 is considered consistent with policies SD1, SD4 and E4 regarding the supply of industrial land for storage and distribution including in Opportunity Areas and CAZ.
- Recommendations:
 - Add an additional sentence at the start of part A of policy T7 as follows: “Development plans and development proposals should facilitate sustainable freight movement by rail, waterways and road”.
 - Amend the second sentence of paragraph 10.7.1 as follows: “... sustainable freight movement by rail, river waterways and road ...”

Are policies E2 and E3 relating to low cost and affordable business space justified and would they be effective in helping to support sustainable economic growth?

E2 Low cost business space

- The further changes address most of the issues that would make the policy unsound— for example to include the whole range of B uses, not just B1; that the title should refer to ‘suitable business space’, rather than ‘low cost’; to clarify that the policy intends to ensure the provision and protection of a range of business spaces in terms of type, use and size
- Recommendations: the reference to “an appropriate range of rents” in part A should be deleted from the policy; seeking to control the rent levels of market properties is not justified or consistent with national policy. [Mayor has rejected this recommendation.]

E3 Affordable workspace

- The approach is justified by the affordability problems in London and it’s a proactive approach to support start-ups
- The further suggested changes are necessary to ensure the policy is sound
- It’s considered that the requirement for affordable workspace in mixed-use developments to be operational before residential property is occupied is not justified and can compromise viability in some schemes; this can be dealt with through the legal mechanisms of planning obligations
- Recommendation: delete the part of the policy which makes this requirement and add supporting text: ‘Planning obligations used to secure affordable workspace should include mechanisms to ensure its timely delivery including as part of mixed use schemes where it may be appropriate to require it in advance of some or all of the residential elements.’