

The Alliance for Childhood London Forum

Notes from the Meeting held on 8th December 2017

We held our third meeting of the London Forum at City Hall on 8th December 2017. It was attended by 11 people including members of the Greater London Council, London Borough Council, people involved in play organisations and members of community groups.

Introduction

Marion Briggs and Susan Crisp introduced the session

The London Plan

Holly Weir, who was involved in the writing of the plan while she was at the GLA, introduced the Plan and specifically 4 areas most likely to affect children. They were:

1. GG1 'Building strong and inclusive communities' and GG3 'Creating a healthy city'
2. Design - policy D1 'London's form and characteristics'; D4 Housing quality and standards - do these say enough and how do they link to other policies?
3. Play and Informal Recreation - policy S4: focus on play facilities and neighbourhoods/streets for play
4. Healthy Streets - policy T2 - think about child mobility and how children can get around the city

1. Hot Food Policy. Katie Hunter drew our attention to the Hot Food Policy which puts the emphasis on healthy food and recommends not having fast food outlets near schools. She asked that if we agree with it we should say so when filling out the consultation form. There is likely to be opposition from members of the fast food industry.

Policy E9 Retail, markets and hot food takeaways

C. Development proposals containing A5 hot food takeaway uses should not be permitted where these are within 400 metres walking distance of an existing or proposed primary or secondary school. Boroughs that wish to set a locally-determined boundary from schools must ensure this is sufficiently justified. Boroughs should also consider whether it is appropriate to manage an over-concentration of A5 hot food takeaway uses within Local, District and other town centres through the use of locally-defined thresholds in Development Plans.

D. Where development proposals involving A5 hot food takeaway uses are permitted, these should be conditioned to require the operator to achieve, and operate in compliance with, the Healthier Catering Commitment standard.

2. Interior space. We spent time discussing the interior space of homes and family bedroom sizes which tends to be missed out of consideration of children's space. Dinah Bornat, who is one of the Mayor's new Design Advocates, has done work on this. Consideration should be given to size of bedrooms for children, with space to play and for privacy, ease of movement between inside and outside spaces, the need to be near the ground and in visual contact with the living space when outside.

Developers need to make it as easy as possible for children to get from their homes to suitable play space (and back again). So spatial planning, housing design and building security measures all need to take this into account.

3. Smaller development sites. The meeting supported the policy of presumption in favour of smaller development sites and quality design. There is a lot of overcrowding and not just under occupation. The need for larger family homes with 5 bedroom family units rather than 1 bedroom. Not many people want to live with 1 bedroom, including elderly. Calculations of housing need are based on 'predict and provide'. Developers make more profit on 1 bedroom units. Authorities who disregard developers claims to not being able to make a profit usually find they can make a profit when they include larger units, perhaps not such a big one. There is the danger of conversion of large houses into smaller units. A better way of calculating need is by counting bed spaces.

Policy H2 Small sites

A. Small sites should play a much greater role in housing delivery and boroughs should pro-actively support well-designed new homes on small sites through both planning decisions and plan-making in order to:

- 1. significantly increase the contribution of small sites to meeting London's housing needs**
- 2. diversify the sources, locations, type and mix of housing supply**
- 3. support small and medium-sized house builders**
- 4. support those wishing to bring forward custom, self-build and community-led housing.**

4. Children in high rise buildings. The plan does not include the problems for children in high rise developments. There are few rigorous studies into the effects on children of living in high rise buildings. It is believed by some that the research for the harm caused to children living in high rise buildings is inconclusive. However, evidence from experience and observation shows that children in high rise flats tend not to go out so much and therefore are less sociable, more isolated and aggressive and more prone to depression. There is a tendency to build high rise will flat roof play space as a way of meeting the requirement of 10 sq. m. play area per child. It is necessary to have good informal oversight by parents and this is not usually possible. The benefit of podium space is also questionable.

Action: Marion will send Holly links to research into effects of living in high rise flats She will be looking into this as part of her PhD thesis.

5. The phrase 'including older people, disabled people and people with young children' appears in a number of policies and should include children and young people. For example in Chapter 1 Policy GG1:

F support the creation of a London where all Londoners, including older people, disabled people, *children and young people* and people with young children can move around with ease and enjoy the opportunities the city provides ...

Next London Forum

We have a provisional date for our next meeting Monday 26th February 2018 at 3 pm in City Hall. The Mayor is producing a Vision for Young People in London which brings together the various strategies involving children and young people. It will be published for consultation sometime in February 2018. Caroline Boswell and Susan Crisp will be at our meeting to take us through the document. We'll confirm the date nearer the time, once the date of publication has been announced.