

Mayor offers to trade affordability for ecology

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, London mayor prepares to adopt a more flexible approach to housing criteria

by David Blackman

LONDON mayor Ken Livingstone has told developers that he will be prepared to water down demands for affordable homes if they make their schemes more eco-friendly.

In a speech at last week's Thames Gateway Forum, Livingstone outlined the Greater London Authority's plans to encourage renewable energy and other eco-friendly features.

He said elements from the GLA's climate change strategy would be included in its revision of the London plan. This will set ecological standards for developments in the capital, including elements such as sustainable drainage systems.

Livingstone acknowledged that placing greater emphasis on green homes would have an impact on the amount of affordable housing built.

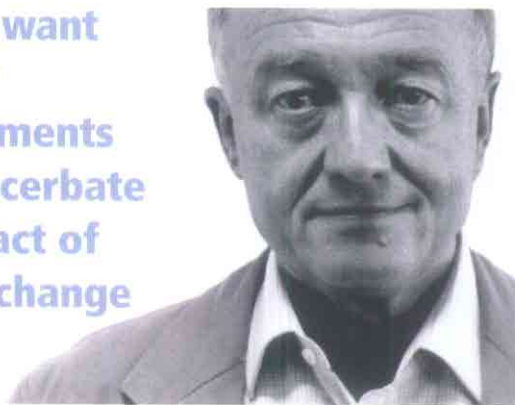
However, the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans had brought home the danger of developing in flood-prone areas, and Livingstone said he did not want to be

I do not want to allow developments that exacerbate the impact of climate change

Ken Livingstone

remembered as the mayor who had allowed development that had exacerbated the impact of climate change.

Stephen Joseph, London Thames Gateway Partnership deputy director, welcomed the mayor willingness to strike a balance between affordable housing and the environment. He said: "This is a very significant statement from the mayor."



Dino Patel, London Housing Federation manager, said those in charge of the public funding of social housing, including the GLA, needed to do more to combat the effects of climate change.

He said: "Although the housing sector and housing associations will do all they can to improve the design of homes, regional and central government need to ensure

that public subsidy is provided up-front so that homes built today are environment friendly."

This week the GLA also published supplementary planning guidance that responds to concerns about the oversupply of new small apartments in the capital by demanding more family housing.

The guidance says that, in the overall housing mix of all tenures, four-bedroom homes account for 30% of projected household growth, two and three-bedroom homes account for 38%, and one-bedroom homes should account for 32%.

The guidance brings together two consultation documents, one on affordable housing and one on housing provision. It outlines how to develop sites for housing and how to determine housing mix and density and takes on board Livingstone's concerns about lack of provision of family housing.

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