



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

23 September 2016

Dear Mayor Khan

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and neighbourhood planning in London

There are now 97 areas in London engaged in neighbourhood planning and 59 neighbourhood forums formally designated by their respective local authority. While the pace of neighbourhood planning has been slower in London than in other parts of the country, these community led plans are becoming a reality for London with five successful referendums held to date.

As the new network for neighbourhood planners across London, we are writing to draw your attention to one aspect of this part of the national planning framework which London Boroughs are proving slow (or reluctant) to publicise and to implement in their own areas. This is the neighbourhood element of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Concerns on this issue have been a consistent theme as we have established Neighbourhood Planners.London and communities are now showing signs of real frustration with Boroughs as neighbourhood planning matures in the capital. We have researched the position in each Borough and the results are set out in the enclosed report.

We draw a number of conclusions from this work:

- As a policy for incentivising local communities to become more involved in prioritising infrastructure spend, the 15% Neighbourhood element of CIL has to date had an impact in only a minority of London Boroughs.
- The potential for neighbourhood plans to set priorities for 25% of CIL spend, without an upper limit, has barely featured in terms of London Borough publicity and awareness-raising on



neighbourhood planning or on CIL. Any incentivising effect, as envisaged by Government Ministers in 2013, has been negligible. The message has been lost in transmission at London-wide and Borough level.

- It is not clear whether this has been by accident or design. London Boroughs have shown greater reluctance than planning authorities outside London to raise awareness of the potential of neighbourhood planning. When it comes to decisions on CIL spend, it is perhaps unsurprising that many local authorities are choosing to retain maximum control to themselves, while minimising their efforts to publicise Neighbourhood CIL.
- Such an approach is not how public confidence and support for the national planning system will be strengthened. Nor is it compatible with Government policy on the Community Infrastructure Levy and on neighbourhood planning. Local communities are very aware of the mismatch between what is being said nationally and how it is being delivered locally.

As a network of London neighbourhood planners, we feel that there is now an opportunity for you as our new Mayor to take a more active leadership role on this issue. The involvement of London Councils, in raising awareness of good practice on Neighbourhood CIL would also be welcome.

In the four years since the neighbourhood planning regime was put in place, neither the Mayor, London Assembly, nor London Councils has shown significant interest in this form of community involvement in planning. It has been left to national government to run awareness-raising and publicity campaigns and to provide support. As our research shows, the majority of London Boroughs have done little to provide information on Neighbourhood CIL and in particular on the scope for neighbourhood plans to set priorities for 25% of CIL spend (uncapped) on neighbourhood projects. A number of Boroughs even think it acceptable to provide no information on neighbourhood planning on their websites at all.

We think that this situation could now be changed by your personal involvement and that of your Deputy Mayors for Housing and for Planning and Regeneration. Our suggested way forward is as follows:

- Publish Mayoral best practice guidance for Boroughs on consultation and engagement on Neighbourhood CIL, to achieve greater consistency across Boroughs
- Commit to review annual monitoring reports on Borough CIL spend, and publish an assessment of the extent to which neighbourhood level priorities (including those set out in made neighbourhood plans) have been realised. This could be done alongside the annual report on the use of Mayoral CIL
- Support strengthening of the current Neighbourhood Planning Bill to align more closely the position of neighbourhood forums with that of parish and town councils in controlling and allocating the 25% element of Neighbourhood CIL
- Run an awareness raising program for the importance of neighbourhood planning and CIL across the capital
- Recognise the role of neighbourhood planning and CIL in delivering on your London-wide priorities, such as improvements in air quality

We would welcome a response, and would be happy to meet with you or your Deputy Mayors to discuss the attached paper and the issues it raises. We are also writing to Claire Kober, Chair of London Councils and Gavin Barwell MP, Minister for Housing, Planning and London.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Burton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping underline.

Tony Burton
Convenor
Neighbourhood Planners.London

cc Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor, Planning and Regeneration
James Murray, Deputy Mayor, Housing