

LIVINGSTONE

Affordable housing is vital for London

THE cost of housing is a big issue for many Yellow Advertiser readers. Until now, although I have had powers over issues like transport or the police budget, I have not had much say over housing. But this is changing.

The government has passed to the office of Mayor of London, new powers to direct how London's affordable housing budget of over one billion pounds is spent. This week I pledged to deliver 50,000 more affordable homes over the next three years.

This represents a fifty per cent increase over my previous target and means we will make big inroads into tackling the desperate need for affordable housing across the capital.

We are determined that this will result in a huge increase in the availability of family-sized homes for rent – with three bedrooms – for the hard-pressed families who have been overlooked in the rush to build smaller flats.

New responsibilities for London's affordable housing budget, coupled with new housing and planning powers that will be given to me by the Government early next year, mean I will be able to put more focus on tackling London's affordable housing shortage and address all of the housing challenges in London.

This is an important step forward for Londoners because it means for the first time I can make sure London's housing policy lines up with planning, transport and economic development.



More than 28,000 homes were completed last year – far higher than the seventeen thousand new homes built in 1999 – the year before the London mayoralty was set up.

My new London Plan target is 30,500 each year – a target that is now within our grasp. This year we expect over ten thousand new affordable homes to be completed, the best performance for a quarter of a century, but we still have some way to go.

Some councils have worked creatively and successfully to deliver

new homes and have achieved exceptional levels of affordable and social rented housing, sometimes well above their targets. Others, like Havering and Redbridge, however, have failed to do so – in Havering only 17 per cent of housing being built is affordable compared to 54 per cent in both Barking and Dagenham and Waltham Forest.

The targets set for each borough are based on a thorough investigation of need, and are practical and achievable. Councils that fail to meet their affordable housing targets do so at the expense of poorer Londoners suffering in temporary, poor quality and overcrowded accommodation year after year.

If we are serious about providing all Londoners with a decent home, we need to act now

*Ken Livingstone
Mayor of London*