

HACKNEY DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT LOCAL PLAN FURTHER WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Personal details

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Policy Number DM16

In response to Question 3.11.

Further argumentation supporting my submission and proposed changes

Evidence from Tech City shows how difficult it is for small firms to start, grow and continue to exist. This is why it is vital to maintain affordable workspace without increasing rents on a sliding scale basis according to length of time.

My evidence comes from an article by Steve Ranger entitled *First came the artists, then came the hackers: The strange history of London's own silicon valley* in *Tech Republic*, January 2014.

The existing Tech City started as a small cluster of tech and design companies working around the Old Street roundabout. Now, however, large companies like Intel, Google and Facebook have a strong presence there. Steve Ranger adds: 'Anecdotal evidence suggests that rents are increasing as demand for office space in the area increases...'

Jennette Arnold, Greater London Authority member for the part of London which includes Hackney, has also raised this as a problem, disadvantaging the small companies and start ups that Tech City is supposed to be fostering.

Steve Ranger outlines other potential problems, as raised by Guy Nicholson of Hackney Council: 'For Hackney's Nicholson one pressure is to make sure that the sudden success of Tech City doesn't overwhelm the area, as larger investors – rather than just small businesses – start to eye the neighbourhood... One of the standard criticisms of Tech City is the existence of a glass ceiling – that it's (now) easy to start a business but much harder to find the funding that can turn a company with a team of two or three into a company of hundreds or even thousands.'

This process of start ups which do not last, and of large companies entering the scene and forcing out small ones at the same time as forcing up rents for workspaces is extending into Hackney, and will be exacerbated if the Mayor of London's proposal to make Dalston and Hackney Central into extensions of the Tech City Opportunity Area becomes reality.

Hence the necessity for Hackney Council to do its utmost to maintain affordable work spaces, without increasing the rents in the manner proposed for the small businesses occupying them.

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Policy Number DM17

In response to Question 3.12.

Further argumentation supporting my submission and proposed changes

My points below relate particularly to my criticism of the proposed policy: ‘As currently worded, it risks undermining local jobs and displacing existing industries contrary to sustainable development’; and my proposed change: ‘The policy is to be based on a collaborative approach with existing businesses in the PEAs’.

The dangers in the Mayor of London’s proposed extension of Tech City to Dalston and Hackney Central are applicable here. In the existing Tech City, interviewees who work there were 81% male, highly educated, half in their 30s, a third in their 20s, almost three quarters British born; this is an unbalanced profile for employees, and not reflective of the current local population of Hackney Central and Dalston. There is a likelihood that there will be a displacement of jobs for local people.

There are already problems in the Hackney Central area with the maintenance of services and workplaces used by the people who currently live in Hackney. Most of them are not wealthy enough to be able to start a business and need waged or salaried work.

However, in recent years even those with small businesses that serve the local community have come under threat. Mr Mautsi, who ran a car repair centre under a railway arch for 18 years, was forced out because a change of use was envisaged for his railway arch – to a fashion business of some kind. Mr Mautsi had refurbished his premises and employed six people, taking on two apprentices per year. The same fashion hub development forced out Morning Bedz, a discount bed store also serving local people.

Centerprise, a community bookshop and café which had operated for many years and was particularly frequented by the local West Indian community, was forced to close when the council increased its rent from a peppercorn rent to one far beyond its ability to pay.

Local shopkeepers in the Narrow Way, Hackney Central’s main shopping street, which serves many local people, feel their businesses are threatened. The Narrow Way has been changed from a thoroughfare where buses drove and stopped to a pedestrian street. Traders on the Narrow Way protested and presented a petition to the council, saying this was affecting their trade. The council allowed a new café to open rent free on the Narrow Way; some saw this as an attempt to infiltrate a more up-market atmosphere into the area. This, too, caused much controversy.

I fear that if Hackney does not adopt a more supportive policy to existing industries, workplaces and facilities, these experiences will be repeated all over Hackney and they will be forced out of Hackney to the detriment of the current residents.

The risk of residential development replacing workplaces is exemplified by the housing development by Aitch Group at the premises of the former Burberry Factory in Hackney Central. Incongruously, this development has advertised itself with the logo of a sheep and the name 'The Textile Building made in Hackney Village, London UK'. This does not sound as if it is aiming for a local audience.

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Policy Number DM21

In response to Question 4.3: What does Policy DM21 (affordable housing delivery) add to Core Strategy Policy 20? Is it justified and effective?

Further argumentation supporting my submission and proposed changes

These examples show the type of housing that is being built in Hackney and how little of it is actually available to local people:

TfL/Taylor Wimpey 'Western Curve' consented scheme for 106 flats (9 for affordable social rent and 6 intermediate. Only 20 are 3 bed family homes of which only 5 are for social rent.

67a – 71 Dalston Lane consented scheme for 121 flats (15 for affordable rent + 9 intermediate).

51 – 57 Kingsland Rd consented scheme for 111 private flats in the 19-storey tower and 14 affordable flats in the frontage building.

48 – 76 Dalston Lane consented scheme for 44 private flats.

Pembury Circus (Hackney Central) – currently under construction - this will provide 268 homes by April 2015 with prices starting at £279,995 for a studio and going up to £849,995 for a three-bedroom flat.

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Policy Number DM31

In response to Question 5.3.

As an example of threatened public open space I would like to cite the Eastern Curve Garden. It is Dalston's only public green space. Since June 2010 it has been managed as a temporary community garden with facilities for holding local events. There are fewer and fewer places in Hackney that local people can afford to hire to meet in.

Approximately 100,000 people visited the Garden in the last 12 months. It was selected as the Winner of the President's Award in the 2011 Landscape Institute Awards which commented that 'The eco-garden with new barn to host community events ... has provided a much-needed green oasis'. It is identified by Hackney Council as a temporary use and for future development as a shopping circuit.

The development of public railway land in the Western Curve presently proposes to entirely enclose for private use all open and green space within Transport for London's site.