

Boris Johnson's regeneration record by numbers

263

The number of high rise tower blocks in the pipeline, most of which will be luxury flats.

260k

The number of properties developers have planning permission for - but many of these aren't actually being built.

The number of new homes London needs to build each year to meet demand

49,000

The number of homes built in London last year

18,260

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THE COST OF BORIS

Regeneration:
Almost a dirty word

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Regeneration: Almost a dirty word

In Boris Johnson's London, regeneration has become synonymous with redevelopment.

Long-standing communities are being bulldozed to make way for luxury developments that most Londoners could never dream of affording. Popping up in their place are residential skyscrapers with no regard for the character of the local area or the needs of local people. Londoners are concerned that the capital will become unrecognisable.

It does not need to be like this. Regeneration should be about making an area better for the people who live there. It is about offering the chance for a better life by producing more diverse communities with improved public transport, a good range of local shops and other amenities, places to meet and congregate, good schools and health facilities, a range of jobs and the skills training and education people need to access them. It should be about turning areas which don't work well into areas which do.

A plan for the future: scrapped

When he came to office in 2008 Boris Johnson was dealt a great hand. He had the London Development Agency. He had £5 million for affordable housing. He had swathes of land. Most importantly, the vision was there; the previous Mayor had set out the route to accommodating a rapidly growing population within the boundary of Greater London by co-locating denser mixed-use development with a vastly improved and expanded public transport system. One of the big ideas was to direct development to the east of London to redress the huge disparities in wealth and opportunity between east and west.

It was a vision of London being an exemplary sustainable world city economically, socially, and environmentally. But Boris brushed it aside, replaced only by the grand but meaningless ambition of becoming the "best big city in the world."



The Mayor of course continued with the Olympics, which has been a great boost to the inner east, but what has he done for outer east London? Cancelled the DLR and East London Transit Scheme. Cancelled the river crossing. Some of these proposals have been belatedly resurrected, but in the meantime we've lost years when we could have been moving forward.

The £12 billion Earls Court redevelopment will have 7,600 luxury flats with not a single additional affordable rent home.

The Olympics themselves did not achieve their full regeneration potential under Boris Johnson. There has undoubtedly been a striking transformation of this part of east London, turning a former industrial wasteland into a diverse cluster of shopping, culture, and sport. The park achieves high visitor numbers and there are exciting plans to move academic and arts institutions and new tech firms to Stratford.



Affordable homes sacrificed

However the ambition to make this a mixed income residential area is being undermined by a Mayor unwilling to commit to maximising affordable housing. In the former Athletes Village, now the East Village, 49% of homes are affordable, albeit only half of them at social rented levels. The targets for the later neighbourhoods are slipping; Johnson has compromised from 35% down to 31% affordable housing on the west side, and the split means less than ten out of every hundred will be at genuinely affordable rents. The next Mayor will need to negotiate the final totals for the southern neighbourhoods.

There is no better example of regeneration under the Johnson mayoralty than Earls Court, the £12 billion development of 7,600 primarily luxury flats with not even one additional affordable rented home. This was not some derelict and dilapidated site; Earls Court opportunity area was a vibrant area with established communities and thriving businesses. Yet the plans, which Johnson pushed through, will result in the destruction of an iconic exhibition centre supporting an ecosystem of local businesses and contributing £1bn to London's economy. It will also mean the demolition of the West Kensington and Gibbs Green housing estates and the potential loss of 550 high-skilled manufacturing jobs at the Lillie Bridge tube depot. Earls Court is not about regenerating an area for the people who live and work there, but about making big money for developers and providing luxury properties to international investors.

Opportunities missed

Earls Court is one of the 38 Opportunity Areas identified as sources for new housing and jobs. There had been existing Opportunity Areas for which Johnson was very slow to create planning frameworks, but he created one for Earls Court in order to drive through his enormously destructive plan for the area. Meanwhile, other Opportunity Areas with far more brownfield land remain untouched.

Earls Court is particularly outrageous because it is on land owned by TfL. The Mayor, as chair of TfL, is the owner of the largest portfolio of developable land in London, much of it around transport hubs and in town centres. That presents the next Mayor with an opportunity to lead on a model of true regeneration across the capital. That land should be developed to provide affordable homes and affordable workspace in walkable, well-connected, mixed-use and diverse neighbourhoods. That is the bare minimum we should demand of the next Mayor.

