

smaller households, it is important local policies and decisions are based on robust evidence and take account of strategic housing requirements. As a general principle, locally restrictive policies, including those based on 'conversion quotas', should not be applied without robust justification. When monitoring net supply from conversions, account needs to be taken of the net loss of dwellings from de-conversions⁵⁷.

- 1.2.35 While the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies a net need for family-sized market housing, this is a pan-London figure that assumes the continuation of existing patterns of under-occupation.⁵⁸ GLA projections show nearly 70% of household growth between 2011 and 2035 will be for households without children⁵⁹. Continuing high housing costs and demand for urban locations may also encourage households to economise further on living space. Consequently, there is likely to be continued demand for conversions of larger homes into smaller units at local and neighbourhood levels. This is often a response to market signals such as a lack of provision of new build flats in an area, growth in smaller households or increasing demand in the private rented sector.
- 1.2.36 A balance has to be struck between realising the potential of conversions to address housing need, especially those of smaller households, and sustaining the residential quality and amenity of neighbourhoods where pressure for conversions is particularly intense. Local planning guidance should ensure that garden parking and waste and recycling facilities typically associated with conversions do not detract from the streetscape or have negative impacts in terms of flood risk, biodiversity or climate change. Where possible, secure and convenient cycle parking provision should be provided in appropriate locations where homes are converted into flats, which should be well integrated with the street scene.
- 1.2.37 Boroughs should manage conversions in light of local, sub-regional and strategic housing needs assessments (Policy 3.8), taking into account particular local circumstances. For example, conversions of flats into a larger home may be necessary to respond to overcrowding and address the need for larger family sized properties in an area.

De-conversions and amalgamations

- 1.2.38 In some neighbourhoods, especially in parts of central London, de-conversion of a number of smaller units into larger dwellings can reduce capacity to meet the requirements of small households. Where there is local evidence that the amalgamation of separate flats into larger units is leading to the sustained loss of homes, boroughs are encouraged to resist this process in line with London Plan Policy 3.14. Further guidance on housing loss and conversions is provided in Part 5 of this SPG.

⁵⁷ The re-conversion or amalgamation of smaller private units into larger dwellings.

⁵⁸ Mayor of London, The 2013 London SHMA, GLA, 2014, refer to Table 1 and paragraph 0.21

⁵⁹ Mayor of London, The 2013 London SHMA, GLA, 2014, page 74, Table 11

1.2.39 Guidance in part 2 of this SPG makes clear that LP Policy 3.5 on the quality of residential development applies to residential conversions. The Mayor supports boroughs and other agencies in taking local action and enforcing against illegal conversions/ developments, including 'beds in sheds'⁶⁰.

Housing from surplus offices

1.2.40 The London Plan encourages the planned redevelopment of surplus or unviable office space for housing and other uses (Policy 4.2). Research shows that prior to the Government's permitted development right changes in May 2013, the planning system in London was already delivering substantial numbers of housing completions and planning approvals for the redevelopment and change of use of surplus office land and stock - approximately 11,400 housing completions were delivered from this source between 2009 and 2012, together with a further planning pipeline of 27,600 units⁶¹. Conversions from office to residential floorspace provided on average 1,180 homes a year in London during the seven years leading up to the Government's changes in 2013⁶². This demonstrates that London had a successful and pragmatic approach to enable the redevelopment and conversion of surplus office stock through the formal planning application process.

1.2.41 Research also shows the residential unit gains arising from planned redevelopment of surplus offices has been around three times greater than for conversions of offices to residential through change of use⁶³. Planned redevelopment can also deliver a higher standard of new accommodation, improved residential amenity and design quality, together with affordable housing provision. Boroughs and other partners are encouraged to take this into account when considering potential housing capacity from this source.

1.2.42 Monitoring of approvals and completions since the introduction of permitted development rights for change of use from office to residential in May 2013 shows much higher rates of approvals in terms of the number of consented housing units and the potential reduction in office floorspace. Initial pan-London monitoring shows housing completions from this source have not substantially increased compared to long term trends, this will need to be monitored closely, taking into account overall impacts on office floorspace provision. Further guidance on London Plan mixed use policies and residential-led, mixed use redevelopment of surplus office is provided in Part 7 of this SPG.

1.2.43 The Government has made office to residential permitted development rights permanent outside exempted areas and has stated that boroughs with current

⁶⁰ The Mayor is working with Boroughs, Government, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and other agencies to administer resources addressing the issue of 'beds in sheds'.

⁶¹ The London Office Policy Review 2012, page 131, Table 8.2

⁶² London Development Database, statistics for financial years 2006 to 2012

⁶³ The London Office Policy Review 2012, page 131, Table 8.2
