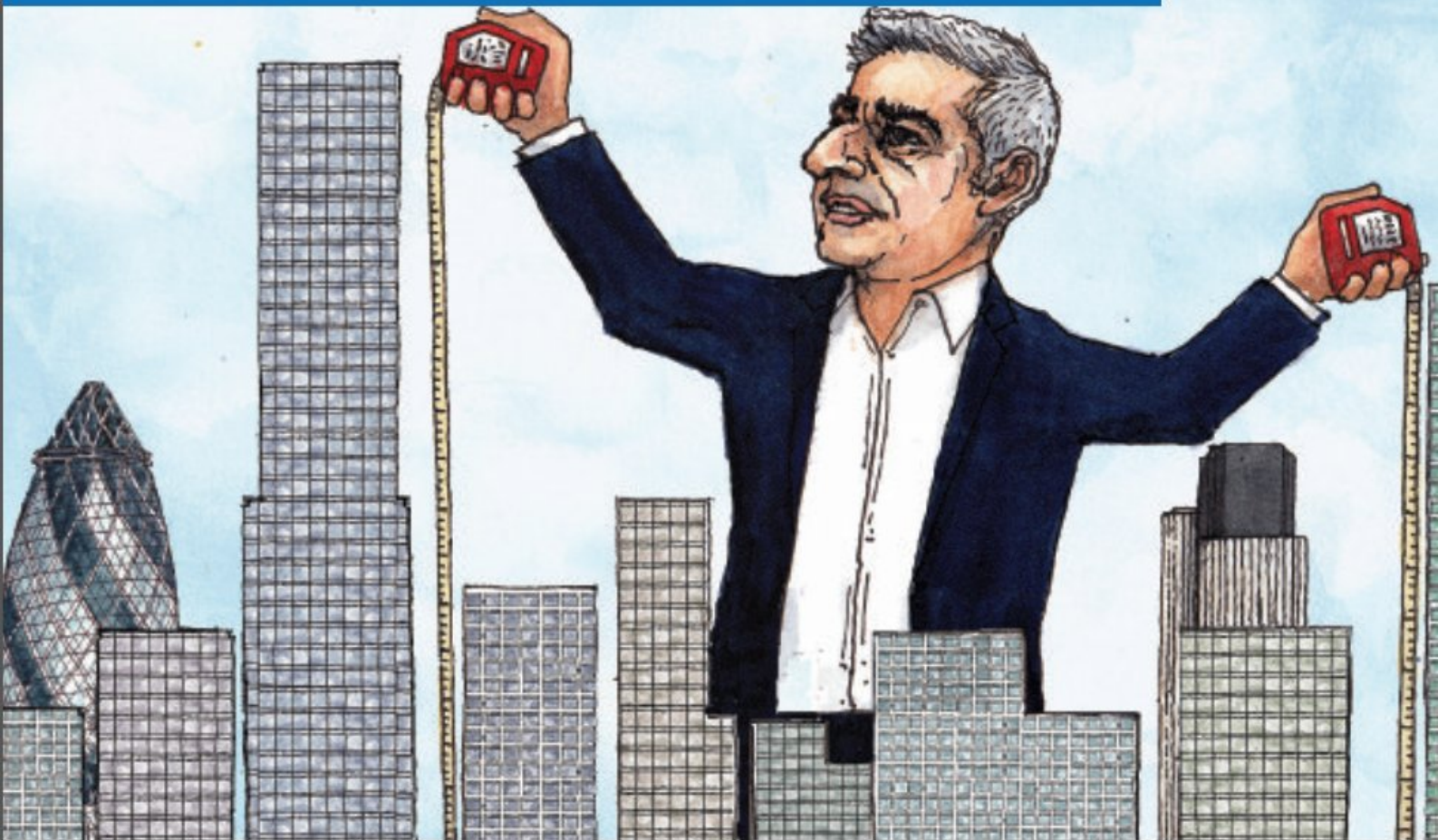


## COMMENT 20.08.16



## Khan can curb these towering follies

It is hard to believe that the Skyline Campaign has already been going for two-and-a-half years: a flash, and also a really long time.

With the Brexit tornado still to be dealt with – or even understood – London in summer 2016 feels like a very different city than at our launch in February 2014.

Then, tall residential buildings were feted as the panacea to all the capital's woes: new foreign investment, jobs, cash for the boroughs, hundreds of new homes. Today, however, the tall building bubble in central London has all but burst, revealing unsustainable wealthy ghettos in the sky, greatly undermining London's character and identity while making nil contribution to dealing with the housing crisis.

### ON PLANNING

#### Barbara Weiss

Director, Barbara Weiss Architects;  
Co-founder, Skyline Campaign



**Mayor Khan has a genuine interest in housing that delivers density without excessive height**

But despite all the mediocre and detrimental over-development consented under mayor Johnson and now surfacing around town, I am cautiously optimistic that a new trend is taking hold.

Friday 24 June saw several – mostly facetious – calls for London to become a city-state. Unlikely as this may be, there is no denying that many Londoners want to have a greater say in the future of the capital. With lack of transparency unacceptable, and developers scrambling to “consult” with everybody and anybody, corporate communications agencies have never had it so good.

So much for appearances. As for the substance, we now have a new mayor who, from day one, has been saying the right things and prioritising solving London's enormous challenges over the fizzy and narcissistic excitement of pandering to developers' interests.

At a mayoral Q&A at City Hall in July, Khan confirmed he

believes, in line with our manifesto, that there is a place for towers in the capital, but location and quality need to be appropriate, and commensurate with their long-range impact.

Most welcome is his focus on preserving London's character while engaging local communities, and improving the public realm. This, along with promises of an urgent London Plan policy review for the tall buildings section, promises of better consultation, and a genuine interest in alternative housing types that deliver density without excessive height, seems a convincing path to follow.

The current reading of the situation is that Khan, firm in his resolve to provide greater affordability and a “liveable” London, is open to discussion