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The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP.,  
The Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London. SW1

8 June 1981

Dear Margaret.

Now that the transfer of the GLC's housing estates to the London Borough Councils and authorities outside London is close to total implementation, the opportunity presents itself for the introduction of a Bill or clauses in a Bill to remove the GLC's housing powers.

As you know, I spent much of the past four years negotiating the detailed terms of the transfer of estates and the first phase took effect on 1 April last year when 112,000 properties were transferred to authorities outside and inside Greater London. A further phase took effect on 1 April this year and now, although Labour are making some noises against it and I understand there is a possibility of a Parliamentary Debate, the third and final phase is due to take effect on 1 April next, with special interim arrangements continuing for Tower Hamlets, although there too there is a final vesting date. This will leave the GLC with responsibility for some 3,000 seaside and country homes on various sites mainly on the south coast together with Thamesmead where it has been suggested that this mini-new town should be transferred to Greenwich once the Parliamentary and borough boundaries have been resolved. However, the GLC is left with all the housing powers to resume its past functions if another Administration is so minded. I attach as Appendix A a schedule of those powers prepared for me before we lost control.

The new Labour Administration at County Hall would dearly love to unscramble the omelette; they are discussing the possibility of the GLC acting on an agency basis for the eight boroughs that resisted transfer and are now in the process of establishing a new direct labour organisation, London Community Builders, which they hope will set the GLC back on its old course of building in the outer London boroughs against those boroughs' wishes.

Against that background this is possibly the most opportune moment for a statement suggesting that those GLC housing powers listed in the Appendix should be removed and the introduction of a Bill for that purpose. If this is not done, I foresee the conflict that has arisen over the years between the outer boroughs and the GLC reviving itself and am well aware that many Conservatives in the outer boroughs will feel that an opportunity has been lost to trim the GLC down to size.

Cont...

I am writing to you on this matter rather than to Michael Heseltine because my understanding is that proposals for legislation involve both you as Prime Minister and also the Leader of the House and this particular proposal is clearly a political one in which you might wish to take an interest.

Yours ever,  
George

## HOUSING POWERS

The Council's permanent powers (i.e. those remaining with the GLC unless removed by primary legislation) include:-

Housing Act 1957, Part V To provide, manage and dispose of housing accommodation having regard to Greater London's needs. This is subject to the consent of a borough, district council, or Minister in certain aspects of its application.

Housing Act 1957, s 91 and London Government Act 1963, s 21(6) A duty to review London's housing conditions and needs in consultation with boroughs and to submit proposals to the Minister (latter duty repealed by Housing Bill). The City and boroughs must keep GLC informed as to their assessments of their areas' needs, any action proposed by or between them, to meet those needs and such other information relevant to GLC's review duty as GLC may require.

Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1958, s 43 To make home loans. Not exercisable in the City and presently subject to such conditions as may be approved by the Secretary of State; the latter constraint is repealed by Housing Bill, but cl. 98 contains statutory control over interest rate on loans made after enactment.

1958 Act, s 45 To guarantee building society advances. Not exercisable in the City and subject to Ministerial approval.

Housing Act 1969, s 40(1) To declare general improvement areas (GIA) subject to borough agreement. In such a GIA, the GLC becomes the local authority for the purposes of 'individual houses in disrepair', 'house renovation grants' and 'compulsory improvement of dwellings', and the borough must consult GLC before exercising its powers relating to overcrowding and houses in multiple occupation.

Housing Act 1974, s 49(2) To declare housing action areas (HAA) subject to borough agreement. In such a HAA, the GLC becomes the local authority (to the exclusion of the borough) for the purposes of house renovation grants and compulsory improvement of dwellings.

Housing Act 1974, s 55(2) To declare priority neighbourhoods subject to borough agreement.

London Government Act 1963, s 22 Duties to maintain records of London's housing needs; to maintain facilities for London residents to exchange accommodation among themselves or with those living elsewhere and to receive applications for municipal housing from non-London residents. For the purpose of the first duty the City and boroughs must furnish GLC with such particulars as it may require of any application to them for housing and of the steps taken by them to satisfy the needs of people requiring their accommodation.

London Government Act 1963, s 21(11) To make arrangements with the City or any district adjacent to or in the vicinity of London for the GLC to provide accommodation outside the boroughs to meet the needs of the City or the district, and similarly for the City/district to do so to meet the GLC's needs.

Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, s 9 Duty on request to co-operate with a borough in giving reasonable assistance to it to perform its functions under the Act, but must have regard to Ministerial guidance.