

Khan's mayoral election will be 'referendum on rent controls'

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The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is launching his re-election campaign with a challenge to Boris Johnson to allow rent controls to be introduced if he wins another term in office.

According to Khan, a victory on 7th May would mean Johnson could no longer ignore demands for the policy as he would be "ignoring the democratic will of millions of Londoners".

The incumbent mayor has promised to introduce rent controls but does not currently have the power to do so, but says that if re-elected, the government has a duty to change the law to make it possible.

The move would give renters the right to open-ended tenancies, so they cannot be evicted at will when their contract expires, and also protect them from annual rises in the amount they pay.

"The case for rent controls is now absolutely undeniable. But Tory ministers have blocked us from introducing our plans for rent controls in London and have simply said no", Khan said.

“That’s why today I am making the mayoral election on 7th May a referendum on rent controls – showing Londoners that I will stand up for renters.

“The prime minister will have to give us the powers we need, because if he refuses to do so he will be denying the express democratic will of millions of Londoners.

“And as we have all heard Boris Johnson repeatedly say himself, the democratic will of the people must be respected and it is not for politicians to frustrate it”, he added.

Khan’s call to government if elected perhaps comes as a written Commons question received a less than definitive response as to the Renters Reform Bill’s passage through Parliament.

As reported by *24housing*, Labour’s Rosie Cooper put a written Parliamentary question requesting a time frame for the related legislation.

MHCLG minister Luke Hall said the government was still committed to enhancing renters’ security and improving protections for short-term tenants.

“We will bring forward a Renters’ Reform Bill as soon as Parliamentary time allows,” he said.

There are currently said to be 2.4 million private tenants across the capital, spending on average 43% of their income on rent.

Between 2010 and 2020 rent costs rose by almost a third in London, and the average private rent for a one-bed home is now more than the average for a three-bed in every other region of England.

Khan said his rent control plan would establish a new London private rent commission, with renters on its board, to implement and enforce measures to control rents.

He is also considering ending “no fault” evictions and increasing minimum landlord-to-tenant notice periods to four months.

Main landlord organisations have said that Khan’s plans would be a “disaster for aspiring tenants.”

The warning is being made by the Residential Landlords Association and the National Landlords Association – referencing recent reports warning that the Mayor’s rent control proposals would result in landlords simply deciding that they were no longer going to rent their properties.

John Stewart, Policy Manager for the Residential Landlords Association, and Chris Norris, Policy Director for the National Landlords Association said: “Rent controls might appear attractive to those already renting but they would be a disaster for anyone looking for somewhere to rent.

“All they would achieve, as history and experience elsewhere tells us, is to drive landlords out of the market exacerbating an already serious shortage of homes available.

“Instead of putting out simplistic and superficially appealing proposals in attempt to win votes, the Mayor should focus on boosting the supply of available housing using the powers he already has.

“Only then will he make any discernible impact on improving the affordability of housing across the capital.”

Dean Clifford, co-founder at Great Marlborough Estates added: “At a time when Londoners are crying out for good quality rental accommodation, the Mayor is effectively looking to try and slam the brakes on the built to rent sector in the capital.

“If we want London to be fit for the 21st century, we need to encourage more home building.

“Rent controls will have the opposite effect and force large investors to think twice before committing to projects in the capital.”

David Cox, Chief Executive, ARLA Propertymark said: “Rent controls do not work; it hits hardest those its designed to help the most, and the Mayor of London has failed to learn the lessons of history.

“The last time rent controls existed in this country, the private rented sector (PRS) shrunk to the lowest levels ever recorded.

“At a time of demand for PRS homes massively outstripping supply, rent controls will cause the sector to shrink.

“In turn, this means professional landlords will only take the very best tenants, and the vulnerable and low-income people that rent controls are designed to help, will be forced into the hands of rogue and criminal operators, who may exploit them.”