

MAYOR OF LONDON

RECOVERY ROUNDTABLES

TEN CALLS TO ACTION

GOOD GROWTH BY DESIGN



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The Good Growth by Design Recovery Roundtables invited Mayor's Design Advocates and other external experts to discuss how to plan, design and manage London's built environment in response to the global health crisis and its ensuing social and economic impacts. These were conceived to run in parallel and inform the London Recovery programme. Over seven sessions, more than 100 experts from the public, private, community, and civic sectors examined the most pressing challenges facing London today. This document is a summary of the key insights and findings of these roundtables, seeking to provide a clear set of actionable steps for how London can build resilience for the future.

FOREWORD

The Covid pandemic and its complex social and economic fallout, has been London's greatest test in generations. Londoners have died, experienced serious illness and lost their jobs, while restrictions have put wellbeing and mental health under great strain. The weight of the pandemic has not been spread equally, with ethnicity, age and socio-economic status influencing transmission of the virus itself and the social and economic impacts. While the crisis is of a global scale, it has been felt most acutely at a local level.

But we have also appreciated the collective spirit of Londoners and the resilience of our city, the speed of response in a crisis and the care for our neighbours. For many, daily patterns and behaviours have changed considerably, creating both significant challenges and opportunities and shifting the economic centre of gravity within the city.

The pandemic has had huge repercussions on the built environment of London and the processes of city making. The last year has upended assumptions about the nature of London's growth, challenged our approach to delivery and accelerated trends of change. Whether the sharp focus on the inadequacies of too many of our homes or the increased emphasis on usable public and open space, the built environment has a huge role to play in our experience of the pandemic and on how we plan a recovery.

More than ever, the Mayor and I remain committed to our call for Good Growth. While the built environment sector will be central to the city's economic recovery, Londoners will not accept growth at any cost. As part of these roundtables Mayor's Design Advocates have sent a clear reminder that urban change should be a vehicle for progress towards social and economic inclusion, environmental sustainability, physical accessibility and growth that is appropriate and contextual. This is loud and clear and has helped inform the GLA's contribution to the wider recovery efforts led by London Recovery board.

The Mayor's Good Growth by Design programme has been the central mechanism for embedding quality and inclusion in the built environment. Using the varied tools of policy, investment, decision making, design review and advocacy, the Mayor has prioritised Londoners in London's growth and will continue to do so.

Throughout the summer and autumn, Philip Graham, Executive Director for Good Growth, and I chaired a series of Good Growth by Design Recovery Roundtables with Mayor's Design Advocates and a range of experts from across the built environment sectors, reviewing the impact of the pandemic on our city. We collectively assessed the work and policy developed to date through the programme, sought views on the validity of our established

principles and practices and collated best examples of projects, initiatives and policies.

This report summarises the findings and themes prevalent throughout these discussions. We welcome the challenge put to us by external and independent experts, with a breadth of experience and insight. It serves as both stimulus and compass to guide our next steps of recovery in the built environment. It will play an important role in informing the Mayor and London Council's London Recovery Board, shaping the emerging recovery missions and the grand challenge of restoring confidence, minimising impact on communities and building back better places.

Jules Pipe

Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

INTRODUCTION

Crisis

The past year has been a confluence of intersecting crises – Covid-19, Black Lives Matter, the climate emergency – each complex in their own ways, and not easily disentangled. These crises have tested London’s resilience, revealing the points of greatest weakness, and highlighting our collective capacity to adapt to change.

Recovery Roundtables

In the midst of this, the Mayor asked his Design Advocates and a wider cohort of experts to consider how these crises would impact the city and how best to respond. This was the idea behind the Recovery Roundtable series, seven sessions drawing together more than 100 experts from the public, private, civic and community sectors, the Mayor’s Design Advocates and City Hall staff. A series of roundtables have tracked the evolving nature of the pandemic, starting in the upheaval of lockdown in March,

through the summer and the awakening that followed the murder of George Floyd and the BLM insurgence and into the second wave of the virus and subsequent restrictions. Participants sought to understand the nature and impacts of the crises, and to look positively at how these crises could help us to shift into a new world.

Good Growth by Design

These sessions built upon the ongoing work of the Good Growth by Design programme, which has undertaken extensive policy development and research since 2017 examining how the design of the built environment can help London to become a more inviting, inclusive, supportive and sustainable place for all Londoners. This research focused on key issues facing the capital, including housing design, public realm, high streets, equality and diversity, social infrastructure, environmental sustainability, the role of industry, and the child-friendly city. Reflecting on this work, it became clear that many of the proposed prescriptions outlined in our reports remained relevant and the assertions made in policy were revealed as all the more necessary, even as events seemed to profoundly shift our understanding of the city. In reflecting upon this research, the roundtables crowd-sourced schemes, initiatives, projects and literature that could help to point the way forward.

A changed world

Participants of the roundtables described Covid-19 as an 'accelerator' of many of the trends already identified in the Good Growth by Design work. The pressures on high streets and town centres have been increased with the economic squeeze and the corresponding shift to online shopping, accelerating the need for adaptive strategies that support diversification and resilience. The importance of public parks and outdoor space has been affirmed, as these spaces emerged as critical to health and wellbeing. The sudden rise in home working and home schooling placed added

pressure on homes, exposing the inadequacy of some housing models. And further shifts in how we travel were encouraged by the rapid rollout of miles of new cycle lanes and low traffic neighbourhoods, in an effort to shift people from cars to cycling and walking. In addition, a number of new shifts have occurred, not anticipated in the research. The encouragement to eschew offices and work from home has radically, if perhaps only temporarily, reshaped the economic geography of the city. The corresponding drop in commuting offered a brief glimpse of a city with radically reduced car use – with people reporting bird song and clearer skies. This may be one trend we don't want to return to 'normal'.

Consequences have not been borne equally

But the consequences of these shifts are not borne equally. The 50% of workers who were not able to work from home – including delivery drivers, many teachers, and frontline health workers – have had to continue working through the pandemic, placing them at increased risk of infection. While these jobs are critical to keeping London going, they are typically low-paid and disproportionately done by people of African and Caribbean heritage, people of South, East and South East Asian diaspora and other ethnic minorities, adding a further layer of racial inequality to the pandemic. The quality and space of housing, access to open space and fresh air, has placed a disproportionate burden on those already living in poverty. The closure of schools, youth centres and play spaces for a period left many children and young people disconnected from their networks, impacting physical and social development and mental health. And many businesses have been forced to close, unable to survive in the depressed economic climate. The UK unemployment rates have risen to 5.1% as of December 2020, the highest rate for five years, and economists are predicting it will continue to rise as the recession bites. These job losses have fallen disproportionately on the young, particularly the self-employed, many of whom make up the creative industries that are so critical to London's future. How

can we ensure the city can retain the culture and varied uses that makes it so unique? It is the diversity and rich life of the city that is at the core of the Mayor's vision for Good Growth.

Ten calls to action

This document draws together key insights from each of the Recovery Roundtable sessions, organising them into ten calls to action. From its inception, the Mayor has framed the programme as a 'call to action', asking the sector to endorse and enact his vision for Good Growth. It is fitting to return to this term as we look to London's recovery, recognising that while the Mayor and City Hall have a strong role to play, we need to work collectively across the wider sector of local authorities, planners, developers, designers, community groups, local activists and citizens, and property and commercial interest holders to recover. This reflects the London Recovery Board's approach, requiring institutions and actors to work together like never before. The calls to action seek to provide concrete steps for how London can recover in the medium- to long-term.

1. Embrace the Local.
2. The social high street.
3. Build back greener.
4. Plan the recovery.
5. Enable active travel.
6. Make the city for children.
7. "Promote people of colour".
8. Work with communities.
9. Make homes for living.
10. Build resilience.

These actions range from the pragmatic to the inspirational, from spatial prescriptions to policy proposals. They cut across all aspects of city-making, requiring a combined and collaborative

effort in order to be fully realised. This recasts the role of urban professionals as enablers, breaking down silos of knowledge and expertise. What ties them together is their forward-looking perspective, seeking to use these current crises as a lever to help us to shift into a new world. They are intended to inform the reorientation of the Good Growth by Design programme as it responds to and seeks to support the delivery of the recovery objectives set out by the London Recovery Board. It is a roadmap for a good recovery.

1

EMBRACE THE LOCAL

Almost overnight, Covid-19 caused a radical re-structuring of the economic geography of London. With people encouraged to work from home and to avoid public transport, many instead stayed within their local neighbourhoods. While the city centre became practically deserted, it is London's hundreds of high streets and town centres dispersed throughout the city which have proven surprisingly resilient to the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Contrary to the many breathless newspaper columns declaring the 'end of the city', we are instead seeing a rebalancing within the city's bounds. While this has impacted commercial landlords, businesses that depend on commuter trade and transport agencies who depend on these fares, it may be advantageous to

those businesses and activities outside the centre. It amounts to a re-localisation, where the economic benefits of the city are spread more evenly throughout London's boroughs, creating new opportunities in suburban high streets and town centres, and potential environmental benefits associated with more localised living. The city's local authorities have been challenged to consider a new vision for the Central Activity Zone beyond what may become outmoded commuter models.

An estimated 40% of jobs can be done from home, reshaping the daily pattern of the city. For those in shared accommodation and juggling childcare this will mean overcrowding, as offices move into the domestic realm, for others it will mean further isolation, particularly the 15% of working households who live alone. There is an opportunity here to use the built environment to stitch together new networks of work, care and leisure centred on the neighbourhood.

But in this move to decentralise, we mustn't sacrifice the centre. What makes London unique is its size and global standing, as a centre for visual arts, performance and creativity. Occupying only 0.03% of the UK's footprint, central London produces 13% of the UK's economic output. It is a major draw of talent and driver of innovation, and the city would be immeasurably poorer culturally and economically if it were to be neglected.

“The redistribution of London’s central business district is going to happen, and I think it’s going to be one of the biggest risks that we’re facing – as well as opportunities. I think we have to look at different zones emerging: zones of uncertainty, zones of tipping points of positive change, and those at deep risk of scarring. And we have to look at high streets from that perspective and proactively work on the long term spatial segregation effects between neighbourhoods.”

Indy Johar

Dark Matter Labs, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“Is it actually suburban centres which are going to be the new focus? People don’t want to travel, they want local life, and they want local work. There’s a huge opportunity here to rethink these places.”

Claire Bennie

Municipal, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“London’s heritage is such a fundamental part of the capital’s recovery because of its importance to our wellbeing and the economy. Lockdown shifted the focus onto the local, giving people much more time to appreciate their own particular historic environment, perhaps getting to know it for the first time, and establishing links with local businesses.”

Emily Gee

Historic England

“There are real opportunities for community businesses and for the social economy more widely, partly because they tend to thrive in areas of decline. They’ve got a good track record of taking on empty space, bringing it back into use, and growing smaller micro businesses.”

Vidhya Alakseson

Power to Change

“I think the big effect of the pandemic on housing is not lockdowns, but working from home. We need to plan rentable workspaces on estates and in neighbourhoods to tackle these challenges.”

Claire Bennie

Municipal, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“Neighbourhood co-working hubs have been discussed, bringing these into the ground floors of developments across the borough, to move from the dependence on the city centre. This can be a mechanism to build a more robust and resilient local economy.”

Selasi Setufe

LB Barking and Dagenham

“Local authorities are thinking much more boldly and creatively about flexible use responses, particularly in terms of streets and outdoor spaces. If all of those super-local initiatives were connected with communal space, public space, and a network of safe routes, we would have achieved a child-friendly city.”

Lucy Musgrave

Publica, Mayor’s Design Advocate

2

THE SOCIAL HIGH STREET

With people now spending more time in their local neighbourhoods, local high streets and town centres have become increasingly important. These places are not only important for retail – providing essential food, goods, and medicine during the pandemic – but have also emerged as critical spaces of health and wellbeing.

For those who have been working from home, high streets have provided much of the social connection that has otherwise been limited during lockdown and the months of social distancing. For many others, high streets have become places of support, offering health and social services; places of help and guidance, with charities playing critical roles in supporting communities, as places of education and learning.

Londoners have maintained a close relationship with their nearest high streets. They provide the platform for the proximity and the seeding of new uses that underpins global calls for a post pandemic '15-Minute City', within which all Londoners daily needs could be met within a short walk or cycle ride.

It is the varied quality of the high street that the pandemic has revealed most clearly, a place defined not merely by transactions, but as a critical social link to the community. How might we encourage and enhance these qualities? To create space for social, community and civic functions to emerge, alongside the usual mix of retail?

This was the subject of the Good Growth by Design High Streets: Adaptive Strategies report published just before the pandemic hit (January 2020). As the report's authors argue, many of the findings remain relevant even in the face of the pandemic, if anything they have become ever more pressing. The challenge now is to bring these changes about, with many of our participants encouraging experimentation and support for new businesses and organisations.

"The fact that 90% of Londoners live within a 10 minute walk of their local high street is more important than we realised in the current crisis. The social role of high streets becomes even more important in periods of social isolation. If you set out to design a network of shared infrastructure from scratch, which all Londoners could get to, it would look more or less like our high streets do now."

Holly Lewis

We Made That, Mayor's Design Advocate

"All of the things we wrote about in the Adaptive Strategies Report, from before the pandemic – physical-digital retrofit; massively reduced car traffic; new forms of engagement, participation and ownership new types of workspace; a far more diverse balance of ownership and activity; fewer retail spaces, but those that remain with a stronger sense of local provenance and identity; more active mobility, more civic spaces – the door is now open to them in a way that is possibly even greater than they were before."

Dan Hill

Vinnova, Mayor's Design Advocate

"Nationwide, retailers are looking for an average of a 50% rent cut. Now that sounds scary for landlords, and it can sound scary for councils because of rates, but it can also create an enormous opportunity. I'm looking at this as a time when exciting new ideas can come to market."

Wayne Hemingway

Hemingway Design, Mayor's Design Advocate

"Small business entrepreneurs have always been good at innovating up to a point, but then they hit all these other barriers. They have to become building managers, lease-holders, accountants. We should try to help unlock these barriers in order to help these areas. Experimentation is everything."

Simon Pitkeathley

Camden Town Unlimited, LEAP

“We need to think about governance, which for me is about mini smart Business Innovation Districts, local high street partnerships and building the right micro governance infrastructure that involves citizens.”

Indy Johar

Dark Matter Labs, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“High streets are really complex, especially when licensed premises are put into the mix. We need a pan-London approach to repurpose and manage outside space, if we plan this now, we will reduce the risk of things going wrong.”

Amy Lamé

Night Czar

“There are key differences between formal social infrastructure, things like schools, parks, play spaces, which we understand we can’t do without, and the less formal social infrastructure, like pubs, cafes or street corners. Even a well designed street corner can make a big difference, and play a really important role as social glue.”

Hilary Satchwell

Tibbalds, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“The situation with the pandemic has really highlighted just how much communities were reliant on libraries for all kinds of purposes: internet access, classes, activities, meeting rooms for the voluntary sector, and so on.”

Christine Goodall

HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network

3

BUILD BACK GREENER

The Covid-19 crisis has been described as a dry run for the climate crisis. The pandemic has exposed the fragility of the systems and governance that underpins our societies, acting as a wake up call to prepare for a future where such challenges are increasingly common. But rather than see these as distinct challenges, could we use this pandemic to set in motion broader changes to reduce carbon in our cities?

A more ecological approach to urbanism will be key. It is an approach to city-making that reduces emissions and energy use, through the reuse of buildings, the reduction of waste, reducing car dependence, and by adding biodiversity. It can help cities to become more resilient, improving the capacity to recover from the shocks that the climate crisis brings, such as heatwaves, floods,

and extreme weather, as well as those second-order effects, such as food insecurity.

Roundtable participants advocated stricter regulation and the repurposing of buildings, with the possibility of financial incentives for those who eschew demolition. They proposed experimentation zones, where new forms of design and ways of living could be demonstrated to the public, bringing these ideas into wider currency. And they urged local authorities to draw upon the expertise of environmental experts at every stage of a project. All of these strategies are key to a sustainable recovery, helping London to build back greener.

“The Covid-19 crisis shows that we can no longer justify tackling social environmental issues indirectly. We can’t just hope that general economic success is going to bring prosperity for all or reverse environmental damage. The only way that we can do that is with ambitious policies.”

Maria Smith

Buro Happold, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“Retain and refurbish is in the guidance and the policy now, but I think we need to somehow make it harder to demolish. And when we are demolishing, we need to buy more time in the programme to reuse and reclaim things. It’s great we are getting people to write deconstruction plans, but where’s the financial incentive? We need to somehow link the end of life to the design concept and bring that together.”

David Cheshire

Aecom

“What you need sometimes is to bring action to a scale where people can see it and live it, where it is embodied as a way of experimenting. Covid has given us a massive opportunity to do that, because people have already got used to not going into their offices, and have realised how dependent they are on their locality.”

Farhana Yamin

Chatham House

“The prioritisation of measures such as reduced car parking and a move away from inactive transport can create co-benefits of safe pedestrian areas, improved air quality, reduced flood risk, enhancement of biodiversity, and all the attached benefits of health and wellbeing.”

Amber Fahey

BDP

“We need to empower people that are already in place. The GLA could host an action group to share best practice and information to boost progress [on ecological urbanism]. Could a similar model be used to parachute natural environment experts into key positions [in local authorities], in a way that Public Practice has made such progress with architectural skills.”

Ciara Hanson

LB Croydon, Brick by Brick

“In Tokyo citizens are working with urban designers to ‘greenify’ their neighbourhoods to improve health, and they’re being empowered by the local government to do so. These are small actions, but they could be transformed into a bigger movement.”

Irene Djao-Rakitiné

Djao-Rakitiné, Mayor’s Design Advocate

4

PLAN THE RECOVERY

Covid-19 has had an almost immediate impact on the social and economic geography of Londoners, and yet the longer-term trends are not yet apparent. To keep pace with these shifts will require a robust, pro-active planning system that encourages good outcomes, and seeks to control the bad.

Prompted by a shifting economic geography, many existing buildings, such as vacant office space or shop tenancies, will need to be reimagined for new uses. The crisis hitting the economy has also pushed many retailers to close their doors, leaving vacant spaces in high streets. How might planning be used as a tool to encourage different uses of these spaces? How might it give confidence to entrepreneurs and small businesses to invest?

Planning has a key role to play here, by being pro-active at the plan making stage, while needing to be reactive in a crisis. It can also support the wider economy in boosting investment and restarting the construction industry. The experts in our roundtable sessions proposed ideas such as new planning use classes, to allow multiple activities to take place concurrently and proposed neglected high streets as places to showcase innovation.

However, a key barrier to these kinds of transformations is the government's proposed changes to the planning system, which include a further extension of permitted development rights allowing shops to be converted into housing. While this may be an appealing solution to declining tenancy rates and a balm for the housing crisis, it is a short-term fix that risks losing capacity for businesses' growth, at the very moment when low threshold entry space may offer a foothold for recovery.

In times of crisis, the planning system is a critical tool to chart the way forward.

"There is a growing acceptance that successful high streets are built on varied activity not just retail, all of these uses and activities are threatened. We will quickly need more flexibility in planning and policy to allow movement between different non-residential uses."

Fiona Scott

Gort Scott, Mayor's Design Advocate

“The primary planning use classes are far too narrow. They make for not nearly enough of the highly flexible spaces that are needed. We’ve got to get used to the idea that the same piece of urban space can be and should be used for a whole variety of things over time.”

Yolande Barnes

Bartlett Real Estate Institute

“We are going to have an awful lot of redundant office space in London. Lots of companies are cutting down on office space, or even closing them altogether. Do we have a risk that this space will be converted to [unsatisfactory] homes using permitted development rights?”

Claire Bennie

Municipal, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“One thing I would like to see is high streets looking at spaces as ways to showcase innovation and invention to younger people. There’s a role for government here to create flexible regulation, fast-tracking permits, and possibly using public procurement a bit more imaginatively to support innovative small businesses.”

Christopher Hayley

Nesta

“The recently-published National Design Guide is the first step for many years that the government has taken to define what quality means in the national planning system. It’s not about aesthetics, it’s about the quality of place, home, and the spaces between buildings.”

Andy von Bradsky

MHCLG

“The planning white paper is obsessed with beauty almost at the exclusion of everything else. It’s just eye-wateringly repetitive for something that is completely subjective. Research done by CABE showed that beauty is quite far down the list of people’s priorities for their home, they’re much more worried about it’s fitness for purpose.”

Julia Park

Levitt Bernstein, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“With schools closed, children have learned to self-educate, coming up with ideas that have nothing to do with the curriculum. It’s a reminder of how much energy, imagination, and creativity they have, and why we should ensure they are involved in conversations around city production and planning.”

Daisy Froud

Mayor’s Design Advocate

5

ENABLE ACTIVE TRAVEL

With fewer people commuting or driving for work during lockdown, Londoners were given a brief glimpse of what the city could be like with less cars. But as London emerged from its first lockdown over the summer, motor traffic returned much more quickly than demand for public transport. The relatively rapid return of car traffic compared to public transport is concerning in terms of potential long-term impacts on congestion, road danger, air pollution and public health. How might we work towards a permanent state of a city less dominated by cars when the pandemic is over? How can we realise the benefits it would bring to health, to safety, to wellbeing?

Enabling Londoners to walk and cycle has been a goal of governments and urbanists for some time now, to which the

pandemic has given added urgency. With commuters discouraged from using public transport due to the threat of Covid, cycling and walking have emerged as the safest way to get around. Cycling has bucked the transport trends since March, and has increased, substantially in some locations, with growth of over 300%. Since March, almost 90km of new & upgraded bike lanes have been built, 500km of streets are being made quieter through low-traffic neighbourhoods and 300 school streets are enabling children and young people to walk, cycle or scoot to school safely. Will Norman, London's walking and cycling commissioner, sees these efforts as critical to keeping London moving whilst capacity is reduced on buses and tubes by social distancing, claiming "This is not ideological opportunism, this is a necessity."

Roundtable participants supported this shift, placing emphasis on ensuring that new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is equitably distributed throughout the city, and not just focused on the centre. They saw productive overlaps with other agendas, such as the child-friendly city, and social high streets, where slowing down and increasing safety can have great benefits.

“Waltham Forest is a bike-friendly borough. This includes new cycle lanes, point closures, and street greening. It was driven by a desire to make active travel more attractive and reduce air pollution, but another benefit has been making streets safer for children too.”

Alpa Depan

LB Waltham Forest

“Anne Hidalgo’s success in Paris recently is a reminder for us to be more confident in these ideas. While these kind of transformations generate a lot of negative noise, we should focus less on that, as there is a silent majority that seem to like what we’re talking about.”

John Dales

Urban Movement, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“An example in Newport, on the Isle of Wight, where local businesses on the historic high street have been convinced to move all the on-street parking to empty lots, and invited artists to create wonderful interventions to allow social distancing. It shows that moving cars out is not necessarily a disincentive for businesses, and could indeed be the opposite.”

Emily Gee

Historic England

“In Milan, they are building 35km of cycle paths in response to Covid; in San Francisco, they are converting streets into ‘slow streets’; in Melbourne, they are building climbing walls in underpasses; in Brighton they have ‘park and stride’, where you walk the final leg to school; in Boulder, Colorado they have the first child-friendly city maps; and in Singapore they have bus stops with swings, designed to make children feel welcome and independent.”

Sowmya Parthasarathy

Arup, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“There’s a strategic opportunity to focus more on outer London cycle and walking capabilities. We’ve seen most of the cycle restructuring of streets happen in the centre. We need to reimagine it for a different economic geography.”

Indy Johar

Dark Matter Labs, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“I feel like we’re getting a bit bogged down in details here. Nobody’s talked about climate change yet. A sustainable neighbourhood – more compact, more liveable, more equitable – is a child-friendly neighbourhood. We don’t need to worry about the details.”

Tim Gill

Rethinking Childhood

6

MAKE THE CITY FOR CHILDREN

Covid-19 has revealed the constrained horizons of children in London today. With schools and playgrounds closed, and restrictions on meeting friends, many children were largely confined within their homes, missing out on learning, play and activity that is critical to their development, health and wellbeing. Many parents too have been stretched by the pandemic, as working from home conflicted with the extra responsibilities of looking after children and the household.

This has highlighted the need for generous public spaces and public realm, protected from cars, providing extra space for children to use in safety. Many London boroughs responded quickly to these challenges by introducing 'Play Streets', where streets are closed to car traffic, and by accelerating the

implementation of low-traffic neighbourhoods.

In addition to these ideas, roundtable participants highlighted the role schools can play in this transformation, forming hubs for increased pedestrianisation and active travel, and presented best practice examples such as King's Crescent in Hackney, which features a public realm that places children and their needs at the centre.

All of this is building toward a city where children are able to travel independently in safety, boosting health and wellbeing.

“Much of the interventions being made around the world – new pavements and cycling infrastructure – are employing the key child-friendly principle of removing danger from the public realm, rather than removing people from a dangerous public realm.”

Lucy Musgrave

Publica, Mayor's Design Advocate

“We pioneered play streets back in 2009, and we've seen how you can change attitudes on a street level quite convincingly once you get the confidence of the children and the adults. And I think that's what's needed now [as part of the recovery], to give people a sense that it's okay for their children to travel independently.”

Paul Hocker

London Play

“We see schools becoming the heart of the neighbourhood, and then we can build out low-traffic neighbourhoods from there.”

Gabrielle Abadi

LB Hackney

“King’s Crescent really articulates the value of making spaces as a playable public realm rather than dedicated playgrounds, because all playgrounds are locked.”

Liza Fior

muf, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“The last few months have shown that it’s not just about high cost infrastructure. One of the lessons we’re taking is that schemes can be delivered fairly cheaply, which means that the benefits of healthy streets and low traffic neighbourhoods can spread to many more communities.”

James Austin

Sustrans

“One of the challenges is to set out the economic benefits for an improved public realm, in addition to the health benefits. This needs to be clearly researched and communicated, to create new value models that account for health and social returns on investment.”

Anisha Jogani

LB Croydon

“The value of these kinds of spaces is strong, but I don’t think anybody is shouting loudly enough. We have to make it clear to central government and people working at local level that this is infrastructure, and it’s just as important as these major schemes.”

Liza Fior

muf, Mayor’s Design Advocate

7

"PROMOTE PEOPLE OF COLOUR"

In disproportionately impacting people of African and Caribbean heritage, people of South, East and South East Asian diaspora and other ethnic minorities, Covid-19 has further highlighted London's underlying racial inequalities. A report by Public Health England confirmed that "BAME communities are likely to be at increased risk of infection because they are more likely to live in urban areas, in overcrowded households, in deprived areas and have jobs that expose them to higher risk." In other words, Covid-19 is not only a health crisis, it is also an economic, environmental, and racial one, exposing inequity in access to space, exposure to pollution, and the kind of work that is available, when compared to white ethnic groups.

It is the promise of the Green New Deal, which forms a key action in the Mayor's recovery planning, to address these intersecting

crises in a unified manner. The Green New Deal would see a major investment in the green infrastructure, creating new jobs and opportunities to speed the transition to a new economy. It could also help to address stubbornly persisting inequalities in terms of opportunity for people of African and South, East and South East Asian diaspora.

These inequalities are reflected in the built environment professions, the makeup of which remains predominantly white, male, and able-bodied, and not representative of the wider UK population. With such a strategic role in shaping people's lives, it is critical that the professions are representative of those they are designing for. Experts in our roundtable sessions expressed frustration at how resistant the professions were to change, showing little meaningful shift in the decades that this has been discussed. They proposed many practical measures, including apprenticeships for young architects who are graduating into a crisis; professional mentorship schemes to guide architects of diverse backgrounds through their careers; and a revision of procurement processes, which demand such a high level of experience as to be exclusionary.

But one idea cut through for its simplicity, from architect Jayden Ali, who simply implored 'Promote people of colour'. Addressed to private clients and public sector procurement panels, it is a reminder of the self-fulfilling power of opportunity.

"We've got how many young people coming out of college, from BAME and other underrepresented groups – where are they going to find work? We've seen what the government can do if it considers there is an emergency, it gets money out to people quick. But I don't see people acting with urgency."

Elsie Owusu

Elsie Owusu Architects, Mayor's Design Advocate

"Mentoring is what we do in Celebrating Architecture. We say to young people 'you can become architects, you can become engineers, you can become creative, you can make that step.' But unfortunately, the pandemic has disproportionately affected certain groups [which makes this harder]."

Neil Pinder

Celebrating Architecture, Graveney School

"As we begin to recover from Covid, there will be a lower number of students from economically-challenged backgrounds that will choose architecture due to the cost of study. Practices can do much more to offer apprenticeships for young people, to give them the experience of what it feels like to be an architect."

Femi Oressanya

HOK, RIBA Architects for Change

"I am asking people, 'What do you think it looks like if we get this right?' I'm very passionate that it needs to be inclusive. It's needs to be about a place that allows everybody to contribute. But the systems actively mitigate against that, and people who say they want that in one meeting, will then actively act against that."

David Ogunmuyiwa

Architecture Doing Place, Mayor's Design Advocate

"One of the things we are starting to see with Covid, is that it could make people more risk-averse, and nepotism could bubble up again, particularly within public sector procurement and recruitment. What are the mechanisms we could put in place to address this?"

Nikki Linsell

Public Practice

“A number of practices are part of an HR network who should discuss and apply change for positive steps forward. At my practice, we have set up an internal group which is a safe space to discuss changing policies, and how we are recruiting people. We are looking at three things: ‘measuring, monitoring, and mentoring’. We have begun the measuring process, refined our job advert wording and unconscious bias training will be offered to all staff.”

Dipa Joshi

Fletcher Priest, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“We need to review competition framework processes. At present, they favour big practices with sustained experience in particular sectors. We need to support different forms of practice, such as collectives and collaborations – alternative groups coming together to offer design knowledge.”

Zoë Berman

Studio Berman architecture + design, Part W

“The simplest thing is just to promote people of colour. We can talk about data, we can assess it all we like, we can put together policies, but I think the message can get lost in institutional speak. Just promote people of colour, and they will provide your institutions with a valuable, additional, lens, which will be self-fulfilling.”

Jayden Ali

JA Projects, Central Saint Martins

8

WORK WITH COMMUNITIES

During the pandemic, many of us came to know our neighbours better, as we were confined to our neighbourhoods, and sought to look out for each other. Mass volunteering, a rise in mutual aid, and informal networks of care have emerged as vital lifelines for many people. These connections became a key source of resilience, helping people through the crisis in small and large ways, from a conversation over the fence, to helping deliver critical medical supplies.

But many of the more formal spaces and community networks have been frayed by the pandemic, with local libraries closed, and classes and clubs unable to continue under restrictions. This has revealed the fragile state of many of these public services, their absence only highlighting the key role they had played in

promoting social integration, creating spaces for conversation, shared experiences, and participation.

As we look ahead to the months to come and beyond the pandemic, it is critical that we place these community networks at the centre of future plans. All of our participants emphasised the importance of co-design and co-production processes, going beyond tokenistic consultation to offer a meaningful platform for community voices in shaping their places.

These voices and perspectives should be seen as a valuable asset in design and planning processes, ensuring that all perspectives are accounted for – children, the elderly, people of colour, people with disabilities – leading to places that are equitable and inclusive for all.

“How do we bake in co-production to our design and management processes? Co-production is not just a way of designing or producing something, but it can also be a way of managing [a place] in the long term.”

Akil Scafe-Smith

Resolve

“Working with youth centres and play workers through this in the short to medium term would be really helpful, because they are seeing the issues that young people are facing in their daily lives, and they are also a gateway to speaking to them.”

Dinah Bornat

ZCD Architects, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“Moving forward, we have to focus on young people’s engagement at the level of city or neighbourhood governance. The setting up of genuine youth design review panels, or genuine youth parliaments, to support young people to have a meaningful voice.”

Daisy Froud

Mayor’s Design Advocate

“We don’t need to ask children and young people what the basic principles of child-friendly design are. We know what they are. I’m worried that an over-focus on the details of children’s formal engagement with decision-making actually undermines delivery, and takes energy away.”

Tim Gill

Rethinking Childhood

“It’s imperative that this work reduces rather than exacerbates inequality. Improvements in walking and cycling infrastructure should be of great benefit, so long as that good practice is applied across London equitably, and we engage seldom-heard voices in design and refinement.”

James Austin

Sustrans

“More investment needs to be given to local authorities to hire engagement specialists, to upskill those officers who aren’t engagement specialists – in things like co-design, participatory planning and other methods of engagement. This investment also needs to be given to neighbourhood groups, to support residents to become design champions.”

Arman Nouri

LB Enfield

“Social infrastructure is the space where we recognise ourselves as a society and where we continue to produce space in society together. It is the space where democracy happens and it should be the absolute priority, particularly in these recovery times.”

Daisy Froud

Mayor’s Design Advocate

“In our projects we assumed that moving this participation to the digital would reach more youth, and actually it doesn’t. We realised that reaching out to young people heavily relied on the casual being there physically in space.”

Adam Khan

Adam Khan Architects, Mayor’s Design Advocate

9

MAKE HOMES FOR LIVING

Our homes have never been more important than during this pandemic year. With government advice insisting that we stay home and work from home where possible, our homes have become refuges, schools, workplaces, and much else. The pandemic has also been a catalyst for transforming the way we live, redrawing the boundaries of our daily lives to be focused on the local, and producing new arrangements, such as home schooling or multi-generational living.

This increased pressure on the home has also highlighted the inadequacy of many housing types, which are inflexible and lack sufficient access to daylight, air, or shared social spaces, and can lead to issues including mental health and loneliness. As Shamiso Oneka of LB Haringey notes, these impacts have fallen

“disproportionately on those disadvantaged people, BAME people, the unemployed, young people, and the people at the intersection of these groups.”

As we plan for the recovery, it is critical that our housing be designed for this new reality, prioritising flexibility of use, generosity of space, access to amenity, and shared social spaces. These considerations apply both at the scale of the individual dwelling, but also at the scale of the development, to create public spaces that are generous, safe and welcoming.

As Jonny Anstead, property developer at Town, notes this will require a rethink in how we design places, to consider quality of life as a continuum “, layered up through dwelling, street, communal space, neighbourhood, and beyond”. When working in this way, it is no longer possible to design buildings or urban space in isolation.

“My quality of life and wellbeing has completely changed. In some ways it’s positive, I have more time to focus on exercise or to spend on myself, but I also feel quite constricted. I’m from a big family, and I feel like I don’t have any space.”

Precious Azubuiké

Peer Outreach Worker*

“During the crisis, public space has had the ability to mitigate some of the inequalities that people have, such as a lack of outdoor space. This has really brought to the fore the importance of public space.”

Richard Lavington

Maccreeanor Lavington, Mayor’s Design Advocate

* Peer Outreach Workers are a group of young people from across the capital that helps influence the Mayor’s policies.

“Access to green space in Haringey – both private and public – was already unequal, which has made staying at home a lot more challenging for disadvantaged people, namely BAME people, the unemployed, young people, and the people at the intersection of these groups.”

Shamiso Oneka

LB Haringey

“It’s important that we remember, in the ethos of healthy streets, that it’s not just about what’s defined as ‘essential’, but that a true healthy street includes some ingredients of joy. It’s both bread and roses.”

Liza Fior

muf architecture/art, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“The last few months have shown that housing policy needs to be more flexible and responsive, in particular to deal with the rise of home-working and home-schooling, provisions for inter-generational living to deal with loneliness and isolation, and access to communal public realm.”

David Ogunmuyiwa

Architecture Doing Place, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“From a housing design perspective, access to amenity, flexibility, adaptability, are all critical to provide a level of independence and mental health. It’s also about the neighbourhood, the social infrastructure that supports housing, and a good quality public realm.”

Neil Smith

HS2, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“We need to move away from the idea of just housing design and more towards the idea of place design, to think about people’s needs in a holistic way, layered up through dwelling, street, communal space, neighbourhood, and beyond, and actually think about people’s quality of life as being a composite of all those different things. I think developers find that very difficult.”

Jonny Anstead

Town

“As a housing association, we are really aware that many of our residents are on low incomes and don’t have a choice of where they live, or of physically not going to work. So we really need to recognise the resident’s life as a whole – work, home, family, recreation, commute, amenities – and how we might bring those closer together.”

Fayann Simpson

L+Q

“What does social infrastructure mean? One of the most resounding things to come through my research is that the home is the nexus of resilience. It is the absolute generator of equality, the home of opportunity and housing has to be included here somehow.”

Flora Samuel

University of Reading

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BUILD RESILIENCE

A key word which applies to both the pandemic and the climate crisis is resilience, the capacity to recover from shocks. While there has been an appalling loss of life, which should not be glossed over, it is nevertheless true that London has proven itself to be resilient. Neighbours came together to support each other, setting up informal networks of care; people quickly adapted to the new rules around social distancing; and looked out for one another, offering conversation during the long and lonely weeks of lockdown. This is a firm foundation on which to build a new sustainable infrastructure.

But will the memory of Covid-19 be enough? As we look ahead through this pandemic and beyond, we must keep hold of these informal networks and support them to be less provisional

and more tangible. There is a key role for local authorities to play here, to provide the spaces for conversation, exchange, and participation.

In this way, resilience is both a social and a spatial project. The built environment can be a powerful tool of creating resilience, both by providing the social spaces for conversation, exchange, and participation, and by ensuring that our infrastructures of energy, food, water, and other critical infrastructures are designed to weather the next crisis.

Because while we may not be able to anticipate what shape the next crisis may take, we are stronger standing together.

“We’ve been doing interviews with people about how they feel their homes and neighbourhoods work during lockdown, and a lot have said they’ve started to meet their neighbours more, and enjoyed being in the street. It’s where you see the same faces and can build up connections.”

Esther Kurland

Urban Design London

“There is some good news from lockdown. Things like the Thursday night ‘clap for carers’ has brought some neighbours closer together, being able to chat over the front fence, and forge new relationships.”

Alex Ely

Mae Architects, Mayor’s Design Advocate

“We didn’t know Covid existed a year ago, and tomorrow’s Covid might not be Covid at all, it might be something totally different. So I think the much bigger question is how we build resilience into our policies and practices, so that we can respond to the unknown unknowns. And that fundamentally relies on the community links and the sociability we have with our neighbours.”

Jonny Anstead

Town

“Covid has challenged our assumptions about the underlying resilience of our communities, with residents really stepping up to support one another. Supporting their neighbours in terms of food deliveries, medicine, and setting up community facilities.”

Fayann Simpson

L+Q

“When we look at quarantine or social distancing, it is a form of privilege – you have to have the technology, the ability to connect to the internet. Not everyone has that, so it can be quite difficult.”

Precious Azubuiké

Peer Outreach Worker

“One of the biggest things I’ve been pushing for during this period is to keep young people engaged, to keep their mind on something else. We are taking in so much information through social media, through general media, rather than actually going out to do something.”

Javaun Bance

Peer Outreach Worker

“In terms of the latest experiences with Covid, we’ve seen the huge importance of mutual aid groups. [These need to be further encouraged], and we need to avoid the bear hug of bureaucracy, in terms of making them come into line with all the requirements the charity commissioners or other regulators may require.”

Bharat Mehta CBE

Trust for London

“People tell us ‘I’ve lived on my street for the last ten years and I’ve never met my neighbours’, or ‘I really want to learn to create a new future for my kids’. So this need for people to reimagine their localities is at a high level. And these kinds of projects allow these motives to become practical.”

AJ Hastrup

Every One Every Day

GOOD GROWTH BY DESIGN

The Mayor's Good Growth by Design programme seeks to enhance the design of the built environment to create a city that works for all Londoners. This means development and growth should benefit everyone who lives here. As such, it should be sensitive to the local context, environmentally sustainable, economically and socially inclusive, and physically accessible. The programme calls on all involved in London's architectural, design and built environment professions to help realise the Mayor's vision. Good Growth by Design uses the skills of both the Mayor's Design Advocates and the wider sector. This includes teams at City Hall, the London boroughs and other public bodies.

The Mayor's Design Advocates

The Mayor's Design Advocates are 50 built environment professionals. They were chosen for their skills and experience to help the Mayor support London's growth through the Good Growth by Design programme. They are independent and impartial, and provide support, advice, critique and expertise on London's built environment. The group includes practitioners, academics, policy makers and those from community-led schemes. Fifty per cent of the advocates are women, and one in four are from a BAME background.

The six pillars of Good Growth by Design

Setting Standards

Using design inquiries to investigate key issues for architecture, urban design and place-shaping, to set clear policies and standards.

Applying the Standards

Ensuring effective design review across London, including a London Design Review Panel.

Building Capacity

Enhancing the GLA Group's and boroughs' ability to shape new development to deliver good growth.

Supporting Diversity

Working towards a more representative sector and striving for best practice while designing for diversity.

Commissioning Quality

Ensuring excellence in how the Mayor and other public sector clients appoint and manage architects and other built environment professionals.

Championing Good Growth by Design

Advocating best practice to support success across the sector.

LONDON RECOVERY PROGRAMME

London's recovery from COVID-19 is a challenge and opportunity to reimagine our city as a place with a better long-term future for Londoners. One which is fairer, greener and more resilient than ever before.

The challenge facing London requires the institutions of this city to work together like never before. The Mayor has worked with London Councils to convene the London Recovery Board. This Board is co-chaired by the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and the Chair of London Councils, Cllr Georgia Gould, and co-ordinates the planning for London's future post- COVID. It is supported by a Recovery Taskforce, which coordinates actions to meet these challenges, working in partnership with local authorities, health and care bodies, business groups, trade unions, the voluntary sector, academia, national Government and other bodies.

The London Recovery Board has identified one grand challenge for the Recovery Programme – to restore confidence in the city, minimise the impact on communities and build back better the city's economy and society. To meet this challenge, a set of nine missions have so far been agreed as follows:

1. A robust safety net

By 2025, every Londoner is able to access the support they need to prevent financial hardship.

2. A new deal for young people

By 2024 all young people in need are entitled to a personal mentor and all young Londoners have access to quality local youth activities.

3. Building strong communities

By 2025 all Londoners will have access to a community hub ensuring they can volunteer, get support and build strong networks.

4. Mental health and wellbeing

By 2025 London will have a quarter of a million wellbeing ambassadors, supporting Londoners where they live, work and play.

5. Healthy food, healthy weight

By 2025 every Londoner lives in a healthy food neighbourhood.

6. A green new deal

Tackle the climate and ecological emergencies and improve air quality by doubling the size of London's green economy by 2030 to accelerate job creation for all.

7. High streets for all

Deliver enhanced public spaces and exciting new uses for underused high street buildings in every Borough by 2025, working with London's diverse communities.

8. Digital access for all

Every Londoner to have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025.

9. Helping Londoners into good work

Support Londoners into good jobs with a focus on sectors key to London's recovery.

It is crucial that all Londoners and organisations can influence, shape and participate in our city's recovery from COVID-19. To this end, the Recovery Programme has so far included public engagement on the Talk London online platform community engagement, surveys of the business community, borough-led engagement and other sector specific stakeholder engagement.

For more information about the Recovery Programme please see [the overview document](#).

To get involved in the conversation about London's recovery please go to [Talk London's website](#).

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GOOD GROWTH BY DESIGN