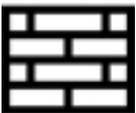


Community Visions for the next London Plan: key demands

Following the Just Space Conference on 10 - 11 July 2015, we have produced a short document which draws on key issues discussed at the conference as well as some other issues that Just Space has been consistently calling for over the years. The aim is to introduce community visions for the next London Plan to GLA staff and Assembly Members, to Mayoral and Assembly candidates and to the wider public of London.

The full material from the Conference - presentations, recordings, workshop notes - is available on the Just Space website JustSpace.org.uk

If you have any comments please contact Richard Lee, the coordinator of Just Space. Email: richardlee50@gmail.com

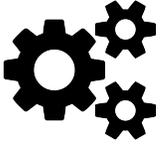


Some fundamentals

We need to challenge the assumptions that inform the present London Plan. These include the population predictions, the conventional economic growth model, bias towards selected sectors of the economy to the neglect of others, and the dominance of Central London.

We need to construct a Plan that is a strategy for London, reflecting its unique qualities, opportunities and issues, and not a Plan that is simply a rehearsal of national planning policy.

We need to ensure that the Plan is grounded and set up for implementation, providing appropriate guidance for other Mayoral strategies (for instance, the Transport Strategy and Economic Development Strategy) and Local and Neighbourhood Plans.



Process issues

The preparation of previous London Plans has been a process dominated by property development interests, with a reluctance to pay serious attention to community needs. The participation of voluntary sector and community groups has been a fraction of the contribution that could be made. The Mayor has not even produced a Statement of Community Involvement for the London Plan.

We want to be effectively involved in the creation of the next London Plan, not just “consulted” on a draft plan produced in detail in semi-secret.

Involvement has to be over a period of time to allow understanding, consideration, debate and the search for consensus. Therefore we seek agreement with the GLA on a programme of effective and continuous community engagement that includes:

1. Community groups involved in the early formative stages of the preparation of the London Plan, working together with planning officers and decision makers in a spirit of co-production. This includes reaching out to community groups who do not play an active part in most consultations.
2. The resourcing of community groups so they have access to plain language information, networking opportunities and research support. This includes community technical aid from architects, planners, engineers, and other specialists.
3. The evidence base studies and impact assessments underpinning the London Plan to be accessible, open for public deliberation and to reflect the real issues on the ground including impacts on health and well being, equity and on the social and cultural aspects of communities. Community groups to be supported to gather their own evidence through citizen science initiatives (use of technology, participatory mapping and online platforms).



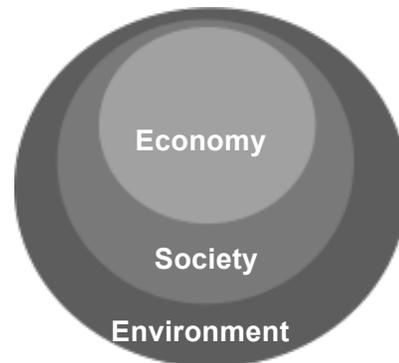
Sustainable development

The need to integrate environmental, social and economic goals (sustainable development) is the basis of government planning policy. However, while the concept of sustainable development is referred to in Chapter 1 of the current London Plan, it is not adequately explained or referenced – nor is it properly worked through into the objectives or policies that follow.

Overall London has not developed sustainably. The 5 guiding principles used by the government are that we “achieve our goals of **living within environmental limits** and a **just society**, and we will do it by means of a **sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science**”. However,

we are not “living within environmental limits” - for instance, London is not on track to meet targets to control climate changing emissions and is blighted by illegal levels of air pollution – and we have not built a “strong, healthy and just society”.

The existing Plan has overseen increasing inequalities in London, with major development and regeneration not benefitting communities. Low income communities are particularly vulnerable to being displaced.



Our vision for the next London Plan calls for:

1. The need to integrate and deliver on environmental, social and economic goals together (sustainable development). The 5 guiding principles used by the government must be properly referred to (and referenced) throughout the Plan, starting with Chapter 1, and adequate policies put in place to meet specific targets and goals for sustainable development.

2. The need to be **living within environmental limits** must be clearer in the next London Plan, starting with the objectives. Key environmental targets such as on climate change, air pollution, protecting nature and sustainable use of resources must be reviewed to make sure they are up to date and based on the latest science and requirements. The policies and proposals of the Plan must together ensure that the environmental targets are actually met by the dates required.

3. The need for a **just society** compels the Plan to address the fundamental issues of equity and inequality. Policies must avoid displacement and ensure existing communities contribute to, and derive benefit from, regeneration.

4. The need for a **sustainable economy** requires the Plan to support a diverse range of economic activity. For example, recognising the contribution of local shops, businesses and markets to London’s economy and protecting industrial land and the local employment that goes with it. Economic policies must contribute to social and environmental goals – and support dynamic local economies - and not be at the expense of them.



Environment

Policies have not proved adequate to address the deficiency of green space, the erosion of habitat and the protection of existing green space from commercialisation and development. Green spaces from Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, to pocket parks are under threat. The Plan has not adequately addressed how the food we consume can be healthy, affordable and sustainable.

We have seen serious exploitation of London's waterways, with a proliferation of waterside offices, restaurants/bars and tall buildings, and the absence of sustainable solutions for London's water –related environmental problems.

The next London Plan must:

1. Have policies, proposals and minimum standards which will effectively protect and enhance the amenity, recreational and nature value of green space and remedy deficiencies in quantity, quality and accessibility.
2. Ensure every community has access to healthy, affordable and sustainable food and opportunities for community food growing activity. New land for community food production should be identified in the London Plan and Local Plans.
3. Counter any decline in species and habitat, with strengthened policies requiring the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including the making of improvements to designated habitat areas and appropriate adaptations to the built environment.
4. Increase river and canal transport of passengers and freight, including waste and construction materials, and implement integrated water resource management for the Thames River Basin.



Social inclusion

For many Londoners, the day-to-day reality is feeling insecure about their future, isolated, not heard, their needs overlooked and marginalised. The current London Plan oversees the break up of communities, despite having a policy “ensuring equal life chances for all”.

From our experience, there is a serious lack of commitment to this policy coupled with a failure to implement. To decision makers, social inclusion and justice is a vague concept which is treated as a tick-box exercise. There is very little serious evidence being gathered about the circumstances of people from different communities, with their different needs and experiences.

There is no adequate assessment of the impacts that the plan has on Londoners, sufficient to judge whether this policy approach has ever worked or whether it has contributed to the exact opposite of the stated goal.

Key issues are:

1. The London Plan to be based on evidence and impact assessments which take into full account the diversity of needs across London's communities, particularly those usually marginalised and excluded. Through this approach, social justice will be at the heart of the London Plan and communities in London will contribute to its making.

2. Progressive standards for community consultation and involvement must be set through the London Plan, to be implemented by the GLA, development corporations, boroughs and developers. Making planning policy documents more accessible and relevant for communities is also essential to create meaningful and effective participation. To achieve true diversity in these processes, a variety of resources should be targeted at young and older people, disabled people, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people and indeed everyone.

3. To protect the spaces in the city which are available to Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups - whether this be community space (for example, the Ubele Initiative), residential space (as argued by London Gypsy and Traveller Unit) or business space (such as Latin Elephant).



Economy

Just Space (including the Economy and Planning Group) considers that the next London Plan should support a more egalitarian and more sustainable economic trajectory for the city.

London Plans and the strategy documents emerging from the London Enterprise Panel (LEP) and London First have hitherto focused on fostering growth of high profile global sectors of the economy and growth of property related interests. This approach has given London an economy with growing in-work poverty, poor prospects for businesses and workers in low- wage, small-firm and BME sectors, lengthening work trips for many people and thus increasing hardship.

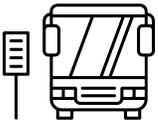
Just Space and its member groups are keen to contribute to an economic evidence base, which enables these issues to be addressed in the next round of planning and economic policies. In particular:

1. The further development of economic strategies for London should be based on early-stage consultations with a much wider range of interests including small- business, ethnic minority and social enterprises and trades unions. Policy should be guided by analysis of jobs lost as well as jobs gained in new development, by studies of proximity of jobs to homes and by much better understanding of the functional interdependence of production, maintenance, distribution and service activities locally and city-wide.

2. There is an urgent need for evidence and analysis of the supply and demand for premises to accommodate a diverse and sustainable London economy. The availability and affordability of space has been squeezed by an out-of-control housing market and by policies designed to maximise housing output. These issues should be a primary consideration in evaluating plans to redevelop industrial areas, high streets and town centres to increase housing supply. We now have a lot of powerful evidence on this.

3. The tendency of current practice to expel production and logistics activity towards and beyond the edge of Greater London increases the mileage of (mostly diesel) vehicles delivering goods between firms and to households. This is a cost to the economy and a serious threat to the health of Londoners which needs to be fully reflected in policy and the evidence on which it is based.

Transport



London's population is expected to increase considerably, but the London Plan has not been doing enough to reduce the need for people to travel and to maximise uptake of walking and cycling before bringing forward mega transport projects. It is even pursuing new roads and river crossings for vehicles, which would add to the problems of traffic congestion and pollution, without non-road alternatives being properly considered. Poor attention is being given to social and environmental factors, such as carbon emission targets, air quality, public transport fares and local employment.

The London Plan needs binding policies to bring essential changes in our transport habits.

1. Reduce the need for people to have to travel by providing key amenities and job opportunities locally and more balanced economic development between the Central Area and the rest of London.

2. More investment in walking and cycling, and public transport services in Outer London, particularly bus services and Orbital Light Rail

3. Strong road traffic reduction targets, implementing road pricing, strengthening Low Emission requirements and avoiding traffic generating transport schemes.

4. Shift road freight to rivers and canals by implementing the Blue Ribbon Network



Housing that is genuinely affordable

London Plan targets for social-rented homes have always been set at a lower level than GLA evidence suggests is required. At the same time, targets for both market and intermediate housing have been at higher levels than needed. Annual monitoring reports of the London Plan show that social housing targets have, since 2004, only been half-met. The result has been that housing waiting lists and overcrowding continue to rise.

The official definition of affordable housing suggests that anything other than market housing is 'affordable'. This definition is inaccurate and misleading. This "affordable housing con" has risen to a new level with the introduction of 'affordable rent' homes.

Delivery failures of social-rented homes are exacerbated by continued unnecessary demolition of council estates.

Increasing evidence shows that lower income households are being forced out of London.

Key issues

1. To meet London's housing need, a majority of all homes built should be social rented

2. An accurate description of affordable housing should be developed. Having paid housing costs, a household should still have sufficient left to meet all other needs without having to claim housing benefit.

3. Public land should be prioritised for social rented homes.

4. Demolition of council estates should not occur without a full analysis of the benefits and impacts (social, economic and environmental) compared to refurbishment and a ballot of tenants and leaseholders.



Alternative forms of housing delivery, ownership and management

The attention given to alternative forms of housing provision and delivery should be strengthened. In particular:

1. Research and studies should further explore the contributions which could be made by the expansion of alternative forms of housing delivery, ownership and management to meeting the needs of low- and middle-income households in London and to making best use of the available land and the building stock.
2. The London Plan (and other Mayoral strategies) should focus especially on cooperative, co-housing, community self-build and Community Land Trust approaches which could ensure the permanent affordability of existing and newly-developed housing and potentially meet the needs of an ageing population and of groups needing community support as well as distinct expressed needs such as those of BAME groups and Gypsies and Travellers.
3. Plans for the new London Land Commission should prioritise the use of some of London's publicly-owned land for this purpose and ensure that large development sites always include some alternative forms of housing.

Just Space is a community-led network of voluntary and action groups influencing plan making and planning policy to ensure public debate on crucial issues of social justice and economic and environmental sustainability.

Operating mainly through mutual support among member-groups but also through sharing of information, research and resources, we are now active across spatial scales – at neighbourhood, borough and London-wide levels. What brought us together was a need at the city-wide level to challenge the domination of the planning process by developers and public bodies, the latter themselves heavily influenced by property development interests.



We see little to indicate that the planning system's formal commitment to community participation is more than lip service: the gap between policy and practice is immense where democratic engagement is concerned.