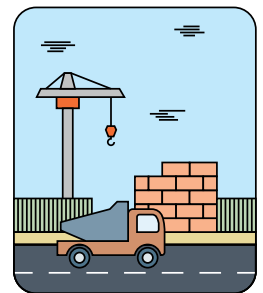


NLA Expert Panel Whitepaper:

Planning



Theme 1: The proper functioning of the planning system

An effective, workable, funded and inclusive planning system is critical to unlocking good growth. However, recent Government proposals have failed to make meaningful improvements to the planning system, with real concerns that they would not function well in complex urban centres such as London. Meanwhile local authority planning departments continue to suffer from critical funding and skills shortages, despite them being essential for the implementation of technological, design and policy improvements alongside the continued delivery of their core functions.

- ① Council planning departments require proper funding and investment into skills and training that recognises the significant additional demands being placed upon them, which cannot be met by continually higher fees from applicants.
- ② The Mayor must lobby to ensure that any National Government planning reform meets the specific needs of London, the UK's economic engine, and support the continued primacy of the London Plan and regional and local decision making.
- ③ The next London Plan should be shorter to be more focussed on the key strategic issues facing the City to be addressed, with a clearer narrative, leaving more flexibility to the Local Authorities and not unnecessarily repeating any future national development management policies.

Theme 2: Embedding social value through all phases of planning and development

Although planning authorities have long sought to ensure positive community benefit from development, the broader concept of social value does cover a much more robust spectrum across environmental, economic and social wellbeing and requires a proper understanding of the needs of the area and its communities, with measurable objectives in place for the long term. Whilst there should not be a one size fits all approach and there must be considerable flexibility to meet the specific circumstances of the area and development in question, both Local Authorities and developers require assistance.

- ④ Embed more formal policies on social value into the London Plan, with a single adopted definition focussed on long term outcomes, and a Policy Framework to allow for flexibility (similar to the affordable workspace policy).
- ⑤ The Mayor should produce good practice guidance, building on the work of the London Sustainable Development Commission. This should include a tool box with some minimum requirements, possible timelines, approved processes and methodologies, suggested KPIs and best practise examples, to enable both local authorities and developers to more easily adopt a successful approach and bring about greater consistency in how social value is measured.
- ⑥ Establish a London Social Value Steering Group made up of key practitioners in the field to develop the guidance, provide advice for developers and authorities and to promote best practice.

Theme 3: Effective community engagement in planning

Successful community involvement in planning—both at plan making stage and when development proposals are being developed—is essential to improving outcomes for local communities. The reality is that such engagement is hard to achieve and requires considerable effort.

- ⑦ Include a paragraph into the London Plan which makes it a requirement for all proposed developments to undertake pre-application community engagement, as there is currently no statutory requirement for this (it was dropped from the Localism Bill for most schemes).
- ⑧ Local Authorities should define their minimum levels of expected engagement for developers within their own Statements of Community Involvement, including the channels that should be used and appropriate engagement tools, as currently those documents are too inward focussed.
- ⑨ Publish a list of approved technologies and their purpose, following the Government's digital pilots (which can be reviewed periodically) to ensure consistency across local authorities. As part of this, include a city-wide, digital model to help the public understand and visualise what is happening and what is proposed.
- ⑩ Bring London's young people and disadvantaged communities into discussions about place & planning and invest in the long-term through schools' engagement and education programmes.
- Best practice social value: Earls Court Development Company / Canada Water / examples from the Local Sustainable Development Commission / LBHF policy / The Silver Building meanwhile uses.
- Best practice educational initiatives: GLA's Minecraft London initiative / Merton & Clarion's regeneration week schools programme.

About the Planning Expert Panel

This Panel focuses on best practice in the planning system to support London's development, including new approaches to community consultation through the use of digital innovations. The Panel also seeks to improve trust in the development process; accessibility and transparency of data; the role of local and regional plans; and how the planning system can better support London's economic recovery. Alongside the pre-mentioned themes the Panel also discusses these in relation to the skills-gap, particularly within local authorities and assesses the ongoing national and regional planning policy updates.

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