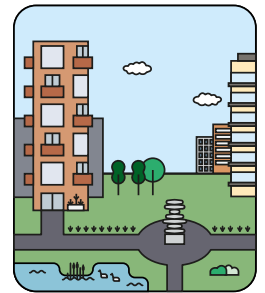


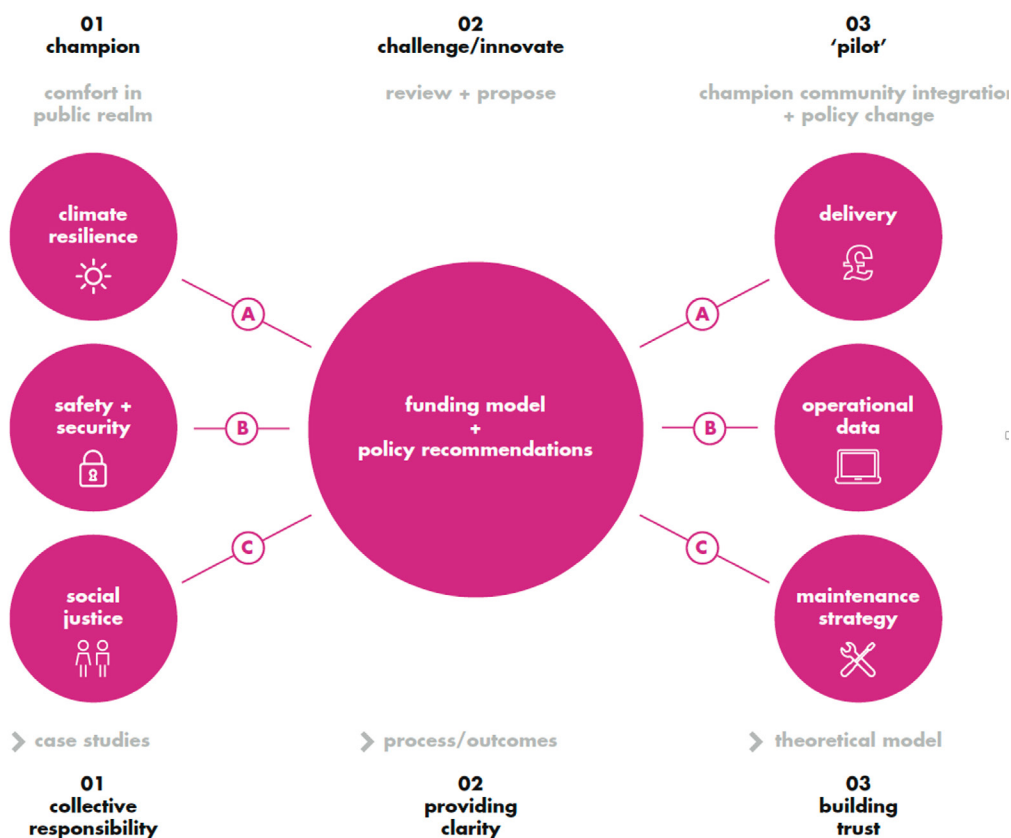
# NLA Expert Panel Whitepaper: Public Realm



The Expert Panel in Public Realm was established to hear the voices of many diverse industry experts, with backgrounds from designers to implementors, to collectively review the importance of the public realm and its future role in the success of London as a place to travel through, reach a destination and indeed dwell in a setting.

## Overall Challenges

Over two cycles, the group shared many views of the experience of the public realm and gained momentum in a common thread of the inclusivity and comfort of users, with the collective aim of how do we raise the inclusivity + quality of the public realm for the benefit of all?



The Panel unpacked this question via the overall challenges and subsequent championing needs identified by three sub-groups.

**Climate Resilience** – exploring biodiversity gains, “green not grey” + (lack of) climate justice

**Safety + Security** – analysing pedestrian priority, gender comfort + “a proportionate response”

**Social Justice** – questioning inclusivity, “identity + pride”, comfort + accountability

## Policy Aims (what does good look like?)

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The Panel visited Hoxton to Haggerston as a pilot scheme and resultant policy aims were agreed as:

- Long term investment in PLACE to work with communities + listen to voices
- Prevention of a piecemeal approach to public realm + in-between spaces
- Improved co-ordination during design + planning stages
- Mechanisms for delivery + long-term maintenance

The Panel formed a list of key acceptable standards of inclusivity with health + well-being benefits for the end-user.

- Justice + Fairness as policy criteria.
- Creation of a Social Justice Factor (similar to Urban Greening Factor) requiring developers to meet criteria to gain consent? De-risk for developers with a clear framework
- Clear identity of people who live + work locally within spaces, rather than gentrification.
- Climate Resilience inclusion via a Natural Capital concept + promoted behavior change?
- Disproportionate impact of climate change on deprived communities (green infrastructure)
- Safety + Security via a promotion of collective responsibility to gender/sex/ability?
- Recommendation for decision-makers to direct investment into deprived communities (CIL, S106) + pre-app stage assessment?
- Securing ongoing quality of management + maintenance? How is this achieved + monitored?  
Can policy allow revenue funding to be used to develop over time rather than capital injections?

## Justice In The Public Realm

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Uniting all of our findings is the requirement for Justice; climatically, proportionally and socially.

The pressing need for justice is manifesting in distinct inequalities suffered by communities and marginalised groups. The built environment industry must fully integrate the culture and framework to empower community 'ownership' of the public spaces.

Ownership is created when local people are given the genuine opportunity to engage and shape the development and design of public spaces to suit their needs; increasing equity, soft power, self-esteem and belonging.

Currently the developer tends to hold and shape the engagement narrative for communities to respond to. The intersection of local and global pressures on communities from climate crisis, racial inequality and poverty, means the industry must make a contribution to delivering justice through the process of good design and placemaking to transform the lived experience, health and life chances of those most marginalised in society.

This is a moment to positively change perception of an industry that struggles to be trusted by communities through concrete and transparent action. There is potential to support the transformation of industry culture with both a call to action and frameworks that lock in community involvement and incentivises best practice to shift the dial from obligation to value driven.

The quality of engagement must also improve with the upskilling of communities as part of the process. Methodologies like the sortition process and appreciative enquiry deliver both equity and higher quality of insight in the process.

These methodologies also require commitment from participants (renumerated) which leads to sustained engagement and a deeper dive—more like participatory research, levelling the power dynamic between developer, community and local authority to something more collaborative, increasing the potential for designing with positive impact for people.

Good involving engagement that upskills and develops trust and respect, as experienced by local

communities, should be seen as an essential component to good design places.

## Precedent case studies (where can we find good examples of this approach?)

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The panel workshopped many examples of what good examples there are in places both within and beyond London:

### **London:**

[Lambeths Kerbside Strategy](#)

[Lambeths Your Streets Your Way](#)

### **UK:**

[Super Bloom, London](#)

[Barbican Public Realm, London](#)

[Grey to Green, Sheffield](#)

[The Queen's Green Canopy Initiative](#)

### **Denmark:**

[JAJA Carpark , Copenhagen](#)

[Nordhavn, Copenhagen](#)

### **Netherlands:**

[Amsterdam Green Infrastructure Vision](#)

[Pavement Gardens Den Haag](#)

### **USA:**

[The Highline , New York](#)

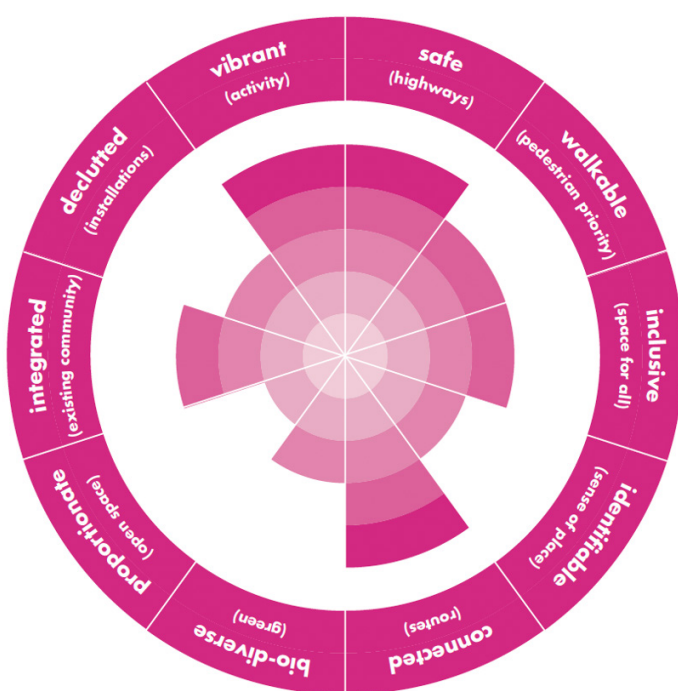
[Seattle, P-Patch Gardening](#)

[Brooklyn Grange Farm, New York](#)

## Recommendations (how do we demonstrate value and measure this over time?):

### ① *The Panel calls on the industry to initiate a “Healthy Londoner” user experience – well-being wheel*

With 10 KPI's, scoring at all 4 stages of the project (design, delivery, use, maintenance) from impact of community (via access to the team at the design stage) to justice for the people that the public realm is ultimately intended for! see diagram 02 attached.



01 INCLUSIVE    02 IDENTIFIABLE    03 CONNECTED    04 BIO-DIVERSE    05  
PROPORTIONATE    06 INTEGRATED    07 DECLUTTERED    08 VIBRANT  
09 SAFE    10 WALKABLE

The Panel notes that there are other initiatives similar to this, ie the City of London Climate Resilience Wheel so it is important to collaborate and share data.

### ② *The Panel calls on the sector to develop an initial new policy for “Greening London”*

The Panel notes the need for the GLA to be engaged in developing a London wide (borough by borough) initiative for wilding of public areas, nurturing a perception shift whereby the public can be encouraged to claim ownership through greening and reclaiming of infrastructure.

This is an opportunity and moment in history with the decline of the car, where public/private collaboration can facilitate the regreening of our cities with limited investment of expertise to facilitate and a ‘community gardener’ to support public maintenance.

An Infrastructure Delivery Plan is suggested whereby S106 highways expenditure could be rebalanced with a similar contribution to streets as there is for developer contribution to art.

A percentage of all existing car parks should also be re-greened under policy.

A link to law should be investigated to lever change in order to meet 2030 climate change obligations.

### ③ **The Panel calls on the NLA to continue to evolve Expert Panel input**

With a continued interest in the “healthy Londoner” there is a need to ensure ongoing relevance to an ever-changing environment and development of the group-by-group work to date by weaving of the more holistic Public Realm, Transport + Infrastructure and Wellbeing representations across the arguably more silo-ed typology related panels.

## About the Public Realm Expert Panel

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There is an evidenced need for providing streets, parks and pedestrian-friendly public spaces to improve people’s health and quality of life. Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion have contested the democratic role of public spaces, demanding for a city that truly responds to the climate crisis, reconsiders representation in the public realm, and ensures equal access to all Londoners.

In 2023, this panel focuses on safety, diversity and wellbeing in the public realm; accessibility to and management of green and blue open spaces; and best practice in placemaking through new and existing public places that support London’s resilience and growth.

**Chair:** *Hazel Rounding, Shedkm*

*Frank Anatole, Network Rail*

*Philip Askew, Peabody*

*Henrietta Atkinson, Ballymore*

*Anjna Farmah, Transport for London*

*Julia Finlayson, Argent*

*Katherine Fleming, The Northbank BID*

*Simon Glynn, City of London Corporation*

*Mark Gordon, Price&Myers*

*Sara Grohmann, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios*

*Peter Heath, AtkinsRéalis*

*Cannon Ivers, LDA Design*

*James Lord, HTA Design*

*Sam Parry, LB Hackney*

*Elizabeth Randall, Grosvenor*

*Binki Taylor, Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm*

*Kathryn Timmins, Greater London Authority*

*Ruth Lin Wong Holmes, LLDC*