

THE NEW LONDON AGENDA

2025



NLA

NLA is London's built environment community, a cross-sector membership organisation for everyone committed to shaping a better city.

Our 30,000+ members work across all aspects of city governance, planning, design, development and management, spanning public and private sectors.

Guided by the New London Agenda—our best practice framework for city-making—we come together year-round to develop new collective solutions for London: forming new ideas and partnerships, enhancing lifelong skills, and empowering a more diverse workforce. Our work has global relevance and is shared with cities worldwide.

Our home—The London Centre—is a public meeting space that houses our London-wide scale models and public galleries. Together with our extensive events programmes, annual Festival, and communications channels, we engage hundreds of thousands of people annually in the future of our city, from school children and community groups to political leaders and international investors.

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*See the full New London Agenda: nla.london
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FOREWORDS



*PROF SADIE MORGAN OBE,
CHAIR, NLA SOUNDING BOARD*

It's been a year since we launched the New London Agenda, a framework for best practice in city-making, generated by some of the best urban thinkers in the capital. Aside from its dedicated cohort of advisors, the Agenda also builds on the wider experience of NLA as an organisation. NLA has been working in and for London for decades and defines itself by a commitment to "shaping a better city". And that is exactly what this Agenda is about. But what does it mean in practice? Once you agree on an agenda, how do you go about meeting it through actionable, impact-driven implementation?

It starts with collective thinking. Work towards the New London Agenda has produced a staggering amount of research, discussion, and strategic content. All of it

has been gathered through an impressive programme of knowledge sharing and thought-generating events. In one year, the Agenda has been fuelled by the debate and deliberation of over 250 Expert Panel members, based around key city-making themes—all with robust follow-up reporting that has been made publicly accessible.

At the start of this process, our Sounding Board worked to define three pillars that would underpin the global task of ensuring London maintains its status as a world-leading metropolis. These were: Taking Responsibility; Providing Clarity; and Building Trust. With these principles in place, the tone of the entire exercise was set, and, overwhelmingly, it emerged as one of service. Whatever the fuller substance of the Agenda would eventually become, its universal aim was always to work for Londoners and the city itself.

I am so in awe of the work that has been amassed in only one year. I am impressed by the detail of content that has been published as a result of all the Agenda's gatherings; the amount of guidance that has been laid out; and the diversity of voices that have been brought to the table to make it happen. I hope that in reading this summary report, one year on from its inception, the Agenda highlights the legitimacy, value and gravitas of fighting for London—its integrity, standing and longevity as a global capital.

*CATHERINE STANILAND,
DIRECTOR, NLA*

2025 marks one year since we launched the New London Agenda, and twenty years since the foundation of NLA—London's built environment community.

In those twenty years, London's built environment sector has become cemented as truly world-leading in terms of its scale and ability—shaping buildings and neighbourhoods here and in cities all around the world: a major contributor to UK GDP, and one of the largest employers within the capital that is set to continue to grow.

The sector is complex and diverse, spanning public and private sectors, and with multiple training paths and industry bodies—at NLA we come together to focus on how we utilise and hone our skills to shape better places for the future, whilst engaging the communities we serve.

The New London Agenda sets out our shared values as we work in London and across the world—brought together over a period of 18 months with the direct involvement of hundreds of stakeholders. It sets a common framework we can use to help shape our physical fabric in a way that actively supports fairer, greener and more productive cities, with London as our focus and testbed.

Over this last year, we have embedded the New London Agenda across all that we do—celebrating excellence and best practice, placing it at the heart of London's mission to attract investment into inclusive growth, developing new thought-leadership to support upskilling across sectors, and working together to break down barriers on key sites and projects.

We too have tested ourselves around how we genuinely take responsibility, provide clarity and build trust, an ongoing charge that we do not take lightly.

In a year of political and economic change, the financing and delivery of new projects and places has seen extremely challenging times—coming together across public and private sectors is going to be crucial if we are to unlock new pathways forward that will improve the places Londoners need to continue to thrive.

THE NEW LONDON AGENDA

The New London Agenda is our best practice framework for city-making.

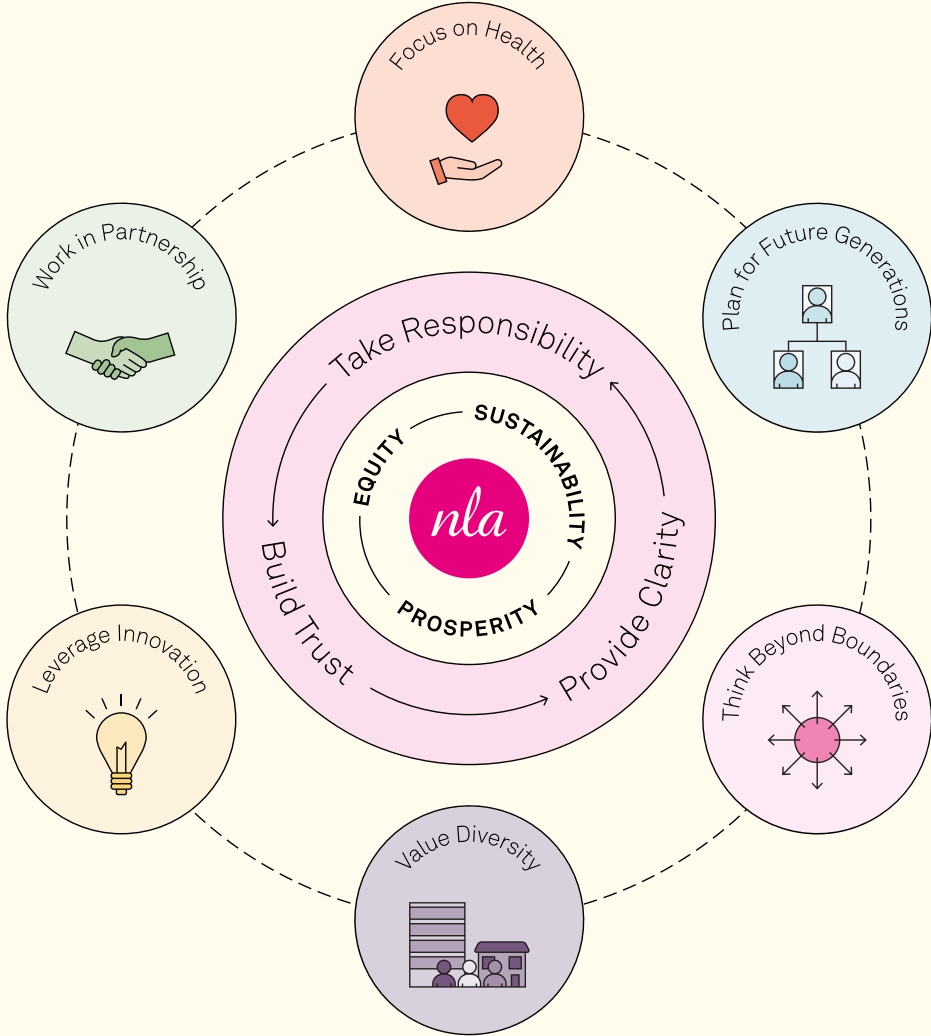
Developed by NLA—London’s built environment community, the New London Agenda sets out our shared values as the city moves into a new 30-year development cycle.

The Agenda launched in January 2024, and informs everything that we do. Since this time we have been testing it and putting it into practice across all our work.

WHY
Everything we do must contribute to a city of Equity, Sustainability and Prosperity

HOW
Our approach is underpinned by Taking Responsibility, Providing Clarity and Building Trust

WHAT
We will action this through the ‘Six Pillars of Placemaking’, applicable to places of all scales and sizes across the city



WHY WE NEED A NEW AGENDA: LONDON'S NEXT 30-YEAR CYCLE

BY PROF GREG CLARK CBE

London finds itself at an extraordinary moment in time.

Global urbanist Greg Clark explains why we need a New London Agenda as the city enters its next 30-year development cycle.

As London cements its place as the global innovation hub for the built environment, this sector has an ever more critical role to play as an active agent in addressing planetary, social and spatial justice.



No city has a right to perpetual success. Baghdad, Athens, Rome, and Istanbul attest to the impermanent nature of even centuries-long metropolitan glory. Mumbai, Milan, Moscow, Hong Kong, and San Francisco have all recently felt the shudder of a sudden loss of status.

London could also decline if we fail to resolve its risks and address its imperatives. That's why we need a New London Agenda.

London is a negotiated city. It proceeds not through constitutions and masterplans, but through innovations that can be tested and scaled. London has negotiated its place in the realm since at least 1067 when the new Norman King, William I, agreed a 'mutual recognition' charter with the City of London. This enshrined our 'Live and Let Live' orientation.

This is our London; a city where the social contract, and the license to operate for business, can be renewed, revised, or revoked, as cycles turn. The edge is reflected in how we use our land and buildings. Our built environment is renegotiated and reinvented frequently. We re-design our city from time to time, and place to place.

London's leadership amongst world cities is not just a function of strategic location, beneficial time zones, common language, historic influence on laws or codes, or a globally open mindset. Confidence comes also from a long history, distributed geography, and social mixity.

These enable multiplicities of activity in different places within the same city, at the same time. Sheer size and scale give London powerful internal markets which are also compelling for mobile creatives, academics, innovators, investors, or elite sports talent. 'Play, perform, or compete with the best in London'. Arts and Business mirror the same dynamic. London's soft power is its magnetism and connectedness, its reach and experience, the venture and scale-up capability.

In the last cycle (c 1990 to c 2020) London gained vast new opportunity from accelerating globalisation in media, education, information, finance, services, IT and creative industries. The 'contract' then was that a 'world city' would serve the nation with opportunity, high-value jobs, tax revenues, connections, and foreign investment, through that specialisation in globally traded knowledge and services.

"The inequality and affordability within London got markedly worse. That deal is now dead."

The 'deal' was to let London grow, and to see that all would benefit. This led to massive reinvestment in London's transport infrastructure, its built environment at waterfronts, markets, stations, and stadia; the densification and diversification of successful business districts, and widespread regeneration of the period housing stock. We reinvented our place.

It took time for the full implications of this 'world city model' to be revealed. Whilst London prospered overall, and attracted new talent and massive investment, the gaps between London and the rest of the UK in fact grew wider, and the inequality and affordability within London got markedly worse. That deal is now dead.

Our new cycle is beginning. The COVID-19 pandemic closed the constrained mini-cycle that had meandered through the Global Financial Crisis, the Brexit vote, and associated anti-London, anti-metropolitan, sentiment. The pandemic revealed in great detail the extremes of the national divide, and the depth of inequality and vulnerability.

Important shifts have occurred since that last contract. They provide the context for new tactic and settlement.

First, global geo-politics have changed. Incumbent Governments have been punished for the costs of COVID; the established Western Alliance is diluted; fragile, multiple conflicts are growing; and faster growing nations are exerting new power and alliances.

Second, the spatial economies of our cities have been transformed. The combinations of metropolitan population growth, with new trends and technology, are changing the ways we consume and work. Combined with the growing business clusters in the frontiers of innovation, our cities are being reformed with a new locational logic. City centres are reinventing themselves as sources of habitat, innovation, and experience. New districts and clusters are rising in a more distributed metropolis.

“London’s scale and reach, negotiated character and reinventive capacity, mean that this city is the global innovation hub for the built environment”

Third, new place dynamics are emerging. The pandemic accelerated and widened the depth of choice about how we use our built environment. Offices, shops, venues, restaurants, and more have experienced a massive switch in demand away from large, aggregated, blocks of use, and towards more nuanced, bespoke, contested or agile requirements. The result has been a major process of reinvention of the modalities of property, place-making, and investment.

These different shifts foster a quest for a new agenda for London.

The unlocking of the established geo-political consensus creates opportunities as well as threats. London is better placed to navigate these than many other world cities,

because its reach is diversified, and its links are well established with India, Middle East, Far East, Africa, and Latin America.

With a new proactive and conciliatory agenda between London and the UK Government, there are more opportunities to work together to help position the UK in a changing world, and to drive for a new global cycle that is better for the planet, people, and shared prosperity.

The changed nature of spatial economies plays to London’s strength as a geographically large city within a dynamic prosperous region. London’s spatial economy now has multiple types of growth clusters. Some, like finance and professional services, prefer tight clustering in high experience business districts. Others such as digital and screen industries prefer larger spaces with affordable borderlands where smaller firms can thrive. Life sciences and medical industries require proximities with research and clinical practice, and controlled campus environments. Whereas our maker economies need compelling destinations to drive demand and feed design.

This means that London’s rich sector mix is now driving a more distributed business landscape, with greater scope for local hubs to thrive.

The big cycle changes to property and the built environment are a catalyst for London too. More than any other city, London has the largest global cluster of world-leading firms and practices in Architecture and Urban Design, Planning & Civil Engineering, Property Development & Investment, Construction & Infrastructure.

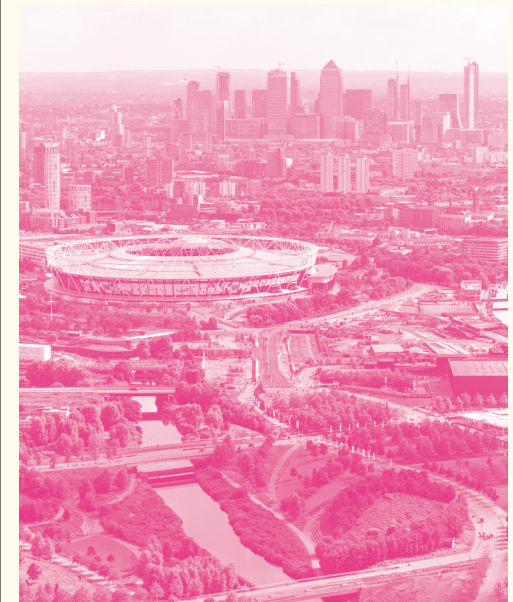
London’s scale and reach, negotiated character and reinventive capacity, mean that this city is the global innovation district of the built environment, and the world capital of urban design; a place where leaders in the built economy and urban fabric cluster together to compete and collaborate for edge.

The quest is now focused on how the built environment leads on beauty, climate, innovation, agility, inclusion and experience. A greater design challenge there is none.

London’s New Agenda is about how to lead the world to build a new social contract that addresses planetary, social, and spatial justice.

This new contract will be intolerant of high carbon living, and much more focused on access to clean air, healthy lifestyles, and affordable housing. It requires a city that works for all its citizens, not simply the high skilled or well paid. No city can succeed without optimising its physical shape and built form to meet the needs of its people and the planet. If we don’t learn, and show, how to do this now, we face a long cycle of uncertainty, and perhaps an unmanaged decline.

“This new contract will be intolerant of high carbon living, and much more focused on access to clean air, healthy lifestyles, and affordable housing.”



OUR SHARED VALUES: THE SIX PILLARS OF PLACEMAKING

The New London Agenda was developed over a period of 18 months, with hundreds of stakeholders—politicians, professionals and the public—coming together to discuss our shared values as a built environment community as we enter this new development cycle.

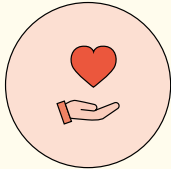
At its heart, the built environment has the ability to be a major contributor to a city of Equity, Sustainability and Prosperity, three fundamental, and interwoven principles which sit at the heart of the Mayor's London Plan.

Our approach must be underpinned by three core values: Taking Responsibility, Providing Clarity and Building Trust.

To action this, we developed the 'Six Pillars of Placemaking', six cross-cutting actions that can be applied to places of all scales and sizes across the city.

Over the summer of 2024, members of NLA's 15 Expert Panels came together in a series of interdisciplinary Charrettes to examine the barriers and solutions to implementing each of the pillars across our work.

See the full summary of actions at nla.london

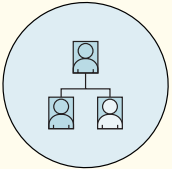


FOCUS ON HEALTH

We will centre everything we do around the experience of people and their needs, the imperative for our built environment to improve human health and via this our relationship with planetary health.

“We can enable people’s health not only to be protected, but to actively maximise opportunities for people to flourish and thrive whilst supporting the growth of cities.”

Natasha Reid,
Founder, MATTER SPACE SOUL

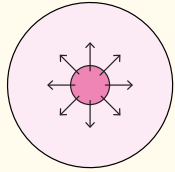


PLAN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

We will take a longer-term view of how value can be created, stewarded and fostered over time, and draw on our ability to affect long-term change through our adjacency— what we can change now that will benefit the next stage.

“The planning framework must sit above electoral cycles, and green financing models alongside community infrastructure levy payments focusing on sustainability are essential to drive longevity thinking.”

Zelie Batchelor,
Senior Planner, Montagu Evans



THINK BEYOND BOUNDARIES

We will think beyond the 'red line' of development plots, administrative borders and industry silos.

"We need to look beyond the red line administrative boundaries so we can design systems that serve everyone. This shift allows us to create more connected, human-centred spaces that operate as whole systems rather than isolated parts."

Stephen O'Malley,
Founding Director,
Civic Engineers

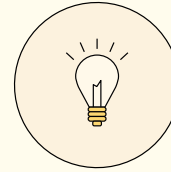


VALUE DIVERSITY

We will embrace London's diversity as its greatest strength—supporting and reflecting the diverse needs of London's citizens through our teams, buildings and neighbourhoods.

"Educational equity and a diverse built environment workforce must begin at school level, and extend into professional environments. Mentoring is a reflexive process, and it's crucial to train mentors to establish and sustain a robust diversity support network and attract a broader talent pool."

Dipa Joshi,
Policy Lead,
New Homes Accelerator, MHCLG

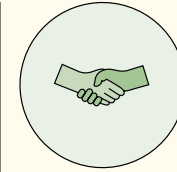


LEVERAGE INNOVATION

We will leverage new technologies and tools that empower London's citizens and support the creation of places that foster that innovation.

"Innovation flourishes at the intersection of diverse perspectives. We must foster environments that promote interactions among individuals with varied experiences and backgrounds."

Camilla Siggaard Andersen,
Founder & CEO, Occasio Insights



WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

We will embrace the power of collective and coordinated action.

"Effective partnership-building requires framing the right questions. Instead of asking 'How can we maximise economic development?', we should ask, 'How can we repurpose development to serve the needs of the community?'"

Richard Meier,
Co-Founder & CEO, Stories

TAKING ACTION: ONE YEAR ON

Since launching the Agenda in January 2024, the NLA community have been testing it and putting it into practice across all our work, engaging all these key stakeholder groups who have a say in the future of the city.

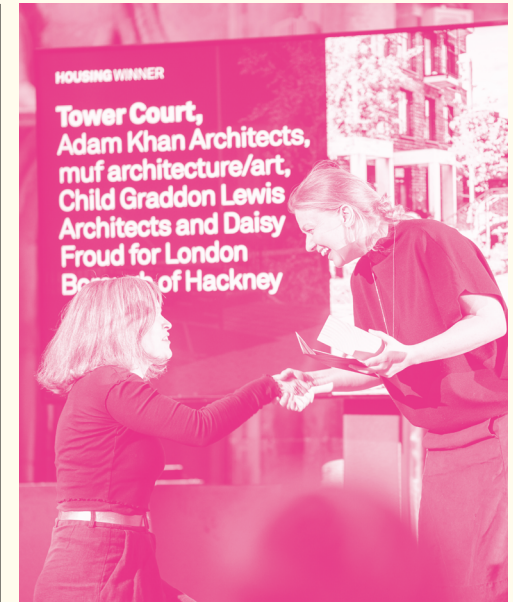
Here we set out actions from its first year.



PROFESSIONALS

We said that we would invest in skills for the future by supporting the development of lifelong skills across the industry, focusing on those critical collaborative and cross-sector skills needed to deliver on this Agenda.

- The NLA Awards showcased the New London Agenda in action, with all projects evaluated against the 'Six Pillars of Placemaking', bringing a new definition of excellence to awarded schemes that centres on their social and environmental impact.
- 12,500 people came together over the year through the NLA annual programme to upskill and share best practice, using the New London Agenda as the lens to frame our conversations.
- Over 200 NLA Expert Panel members produced thought-leadership and guidance that responded to the Agenda. Our series of cross-cutting Charrettes brought Panel members together to examine the barriers and solutions to implementing its six pillars.
- New research *Great Estates: Models for modern placemaking* demonstrated long-term stewardship models, while *RePower London: Infrastructure for growth* highlighted the need for cross-boundary collaboration in infrastructure to support city-wide resilience and growth. Coming up, research will look innovations in Adaptive Reuse and Estate Regeneration.



POLICY MAKERS

We said that we would seek fresh new ideas for London that respond to this Agenda, starting with the launch of a major ideas competition. Bringing together local authority leaders with leaders across the industry, we said we would explore how we can unlock barriers to key sites across the capital.

→ Reimagine London, our international ideas competition, challenged our community to come up with new ideas for London that responded to the Agenda. With over 100 ideas submitted from multi-disciplinary teams, the Overall Winner presented their idea to policy-makers and leading developers across the capital. Over 4,000 members of the public voted for their favourite shortlisted idea to become the People's Choice.

→ Our London Leaders network came together throughout the year to explore how we unlock the barriers to the Agenda across key neighbourhoods and districts in London, taking a 'black box' approach to their discussions. Both Earls Court and Canary Wharf joined our programme of 'demonstrator districts'—testing the Agenda across their work.

→ The London Real Estate Forum (LREF) brought together over 1,800 leaders in the industry at the Guildhall, in the heart of the City of London. The event was marked by an ambitious and optimistic atmosphere, reflecting a shared belief that, despite the complexities of the UK real estate landscape, collaboration between the public and private sectors remains key to driving growth and innovation in London.



INVESTORS

We said that we would redefine and reshape the type of investment London seeks by aligning it with the values of the Agenda, and work together to support the aggregation of sites and investment opportunities across the capital for the good of London.

→ The first Opportunity London Investment Prospectus, with London & Partners, launched in March 2024, setting out how new investment that we seek for London needs to align with the values of the New London Agenda.

→ Opportunity London showcased the capital from Cannes to Copenhagen, New York to APAC and beyond. The Global Investment Summit, co-located with LREF, welcomed 300 industry leaders, including over 100 international investors, unveiling the 'London Dozen'—twelve schemes ready for investment.

→ Working groups examined how we can drive institutional capital at scale into affordable housing in London, with a new working group looking at how we accelerate investment into retrofit at scale.



PEER CITIES

We said that we would take greater responsibility for London's relationship with other regions and towns, creating good neighbour policies and programmes and collaboration for mutual advantage across the nation.

→ City Dialogues brought London together with leaders and practitioners from across the UK—including Liverpool and Manchester; Europe—including Barcelona and Oslo; and the Americas—including Toronto and New York, to share best practice approaches on the future of affordable housing delivery, tall buildings and public spaces.

→ The London Centre played host to over 15 international delegations, from Riyadh to Amsterdam, looking to learn from the capital and the approach our community is taking to its future development.



FUTURE CITY MAKERS

We said that we would create new points of access to the built environment industry, supporting young people to understand the various pathways they have to shape places of the future, endeavouring to make the built environment sector more accessible.

→ The NLA Future City Makers programme engaged 1,500 young people at The London Centre. Primary, secondary, and sixth-form students explored London models, uncovering pathways to careers in the built environment. Expanding globally, the programme welcomed 300 university students from India to Ireland, inspiring the next generation of city-makers.

→ We are now working towards the publication of a new research report called Skills for PLACES, which highlights the many career pathways into the built environment, and sets the stage for us to present the uniting purpose of a career in the built environment to help shape places of equity, sustainability and prosperity.



LONDONERS

We said that we would communicate with greater transparency the role that the built environment has to play in the city and commit to understanding what good looks like to London's citizens, aiming to double our engagement over the next four years.

→ In 2024, The London Centre hosted 204 events and welcomed over 96,500 visitors, bringing industry professionals, school children, families and the public together. With our three London models on display and a dynamic programme of exhibitions, education, and cultural activities, the Centre celebrates the people, places, and ideas that shape London.

→ We marked 20 years of the London Festival of Architecture with over 500 events, projects, and interventions exploring the theme 'Reimagine'. With more than 250 event organisers, the programme engaged over 1 million people, making it one of our most impactful years yet. Looking ahead, we are preparing for LFA2025 where the theme 'Voices' will take centre stage.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The New London Agenda is led by the NLA Sounding Board, with oversight from NLA's Senior Advisors: Prof Sadie Morgan OBE, Peter Murray OBE, Prof Greg Clark CBE and Robert Gordon Clark.

Activity is guided by the following NLA Committees and Panels, encompassing some 400+ individuals.

NLA Expert Panel on Built Environment Technology

NLA Expert Panel on Culture

NLA Expert Panel on Education

NLA Expert Panel on Healthcare

NLA Expert Panel on High Streets

NLA Expert Panel on Housing

NLA Expert Panel on Industrial & Logistics

NLA Expert Panel on Innovation Districts

NLA Expert Panel on Net Zero

NLA Expert Panel on Planning

NLA Expert Panel on Retrofit & Conservation

NLA Expert Panel on Tall Buildings

NLA Expert Panel on Technical Competency

NLA Expert Panel on Transport & Infrastructure

NLA Expert Panel on Work

NLA Cities Forum

NLA Diverse Leaders Committee

NLA NextGen Committee

NLA / London & Partners Opportunity London Steering Group

For a list of all members, see nla.london

See the full New London Agenda:
nla.london

Twitter & Instagram:
[@nla.london](https://twitter.com/nla.london)



**London's
built environment
community**