



**FROM
REFLECTION
TO ACTION**

A Thought Guide for the
Next Generation of Education

Education Expert Panel



FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION

A Thought Guide for the Next Generation of Education

The NLA Education Expert Panel has explored the pressing challenges and opportunities shaping the future of education. Our ambition is to spark new ways of thinking – to inspire the right questions at the start of every project and to blend practical guidance with reflection and provocation.

We have built on the principles of the New London Agenda which is our framework for best practice in city-making – Focus on Health, Plan for Future Generations, Think Beyond Boundaries, Value Diversity, Leverage Innovation and Work in Partnership – as well as environmental, social and economic sustainability.

We invite everyone involved in designing, delivering, and experiencing education to engage with the ideas and case studies that follow – and together, to co-create a new narrative for learning that is bold, inclusive, and future-focused.



Future purpose of education and considering a shift in educational focus

What can education institutions give back to London?

In the future world of work, what is the value of education space and how can we make education relevant?

How can education prepare students for the fragmentation of the work market?

How can education become system-based not project-based, and how can spaces support this?

Consider shift in educational focus

- Move away from rigid schooling toward nurturing creativity, values, behaviours;
- Education should equip students for the future, focusing on transferable skills;
- Education should be at the heart of how the building is designed;
- Flexibility and adaptability in space and function to allow for future curriculum changes, new pedagogical methods, and blended and informal learning environments;
- Consider flexible lifelong learning facilities for all ages;
- Make education buildings multi-purpose and interdisciplinary;
- Consider mental health and wellbeing as well as pastoral care requirements;
- Include design for neurodiversity in the workspace and learning environments;
- Encourage the design of facilities to accommodate interdisciplinary learning and acknowledge that the traditional 'silos' of learning are starting to become eclipsed by subjects that cross boundaries like maths, computer science, biology, and chemistry;
- Get community support and integrate lifelong learning opportunities.



Create a place for imagination, creativity and exploration

- Encourage debate, humanity, and creativity;
- Use facilities to give space for both learning and self-expression.

How can we teach transferable skills?

How to make life-long education more accessible?

Students are changing – how can education spaces change?

Youth-centred approaches

- Embrace co-design – strategic and space development – with young people, students and stakeholders; youth culture should be the starting point;
- Create safe, inclusive, accessible spaces for all learners;
- Designing for diversity – consider mix of people using the education spaces and their different perspectives and needs.

Dreaming Allowed, University of Westminster Stride Treglown

Dreaming Allowed brought together staff, students, researchers and our architects and interior designers to co-produce a reimagined classroom at University of Westminster (UoW)'s Regent Street Campus, with the goal to address a critical alignment gap between university learning spaces and student learning experiences.

[Dreaming Allowed](#)



London Institute for Healthcare and Engineering (LIHE) for King's College London | **HLM Architects**

Transforming Higher Education & Research

The London Institute for Healthcare Engineering (LIHE) is a transformative research and education hub accelerating life-changing medical technologies. Embedded within Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital and surrounded by listed buildings, it balances innovation with heritage. Its flexible "research ecosystem" places education and interdisciplinary collaboration at the centre, with adaptable floorplates, demountable partitions, and reconfigurable learning spaces enabling teams to reshape their environment within days.

A transparent façade and double-helix staircase promote openness, wellbeing, and spontaneous exchange between clinicians, engineers, academics, and industry specialists, breaking down traditional silos.

[London Institute for Healthcare and Engineering](#)

Photography: David Barbour



How can we future-proof education?

How can we cater for the invisible in a physical world?

Future technology

- Consider the role of AI, technology, emerging trends and stay agile as it develops;
- Forward looking flexible design to cater for education for jobs currently undefined
- Do not just adopt tech – understand how it supports educational values.



Planning and funding

Are we spending enough time designing spaces? Is today's education development too fast or too slow?

Who will need to be consulted?

Whom and what are the spaces serving?

Wider strategic thinking

- Plan first strategically before jumping to solutions;
- Build systems that link education, housing, employment, and regeneration;
- Use masterplanning to integrate industry, learning, and community infrastructure holistically;
- Consider unusual/commercial funding models used in other sectors; cross-funding through disposal of assets or renting out space (see also 'Surplus Space');
- Use site constraints to drive innovation and creative problem solving.

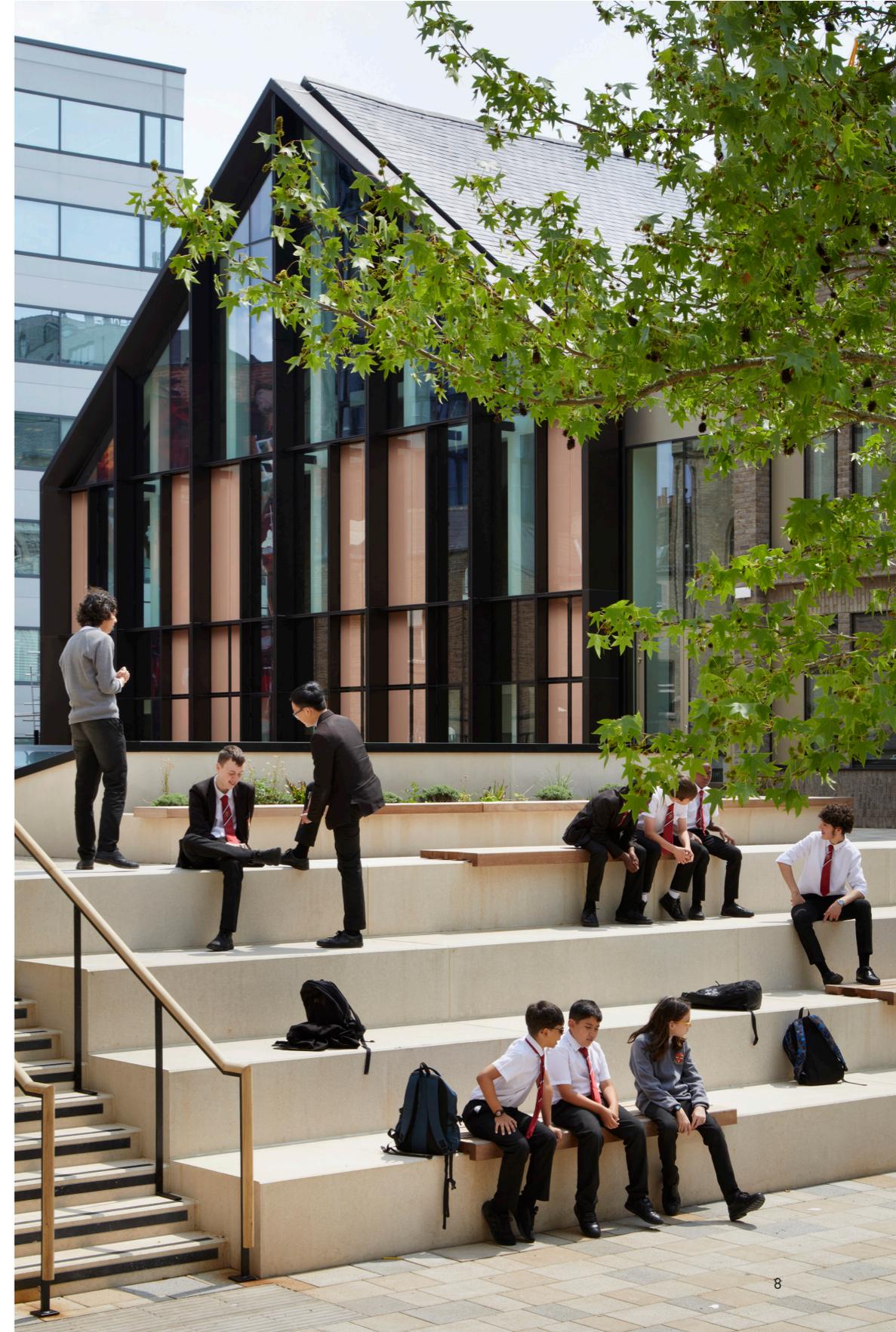
Central Foundation Boys' School Hawkins\Brown

This project brings together a previously fragmented group of seven buildings into a coherent, contemporary school environment centred on a revitalised courtyard. The ambition is to modernise teaching and social spaces while creating a more efficient, connected and inspiring place for learning. Featuring a subterranean Sports hall and an Arts Centre in a Chapel, the project successfully creates state-of-the-art educational facilities in a heritage context.



Central Foundation Boys' School

Photography: Jack Hobhouse
and Hawkins\Brown

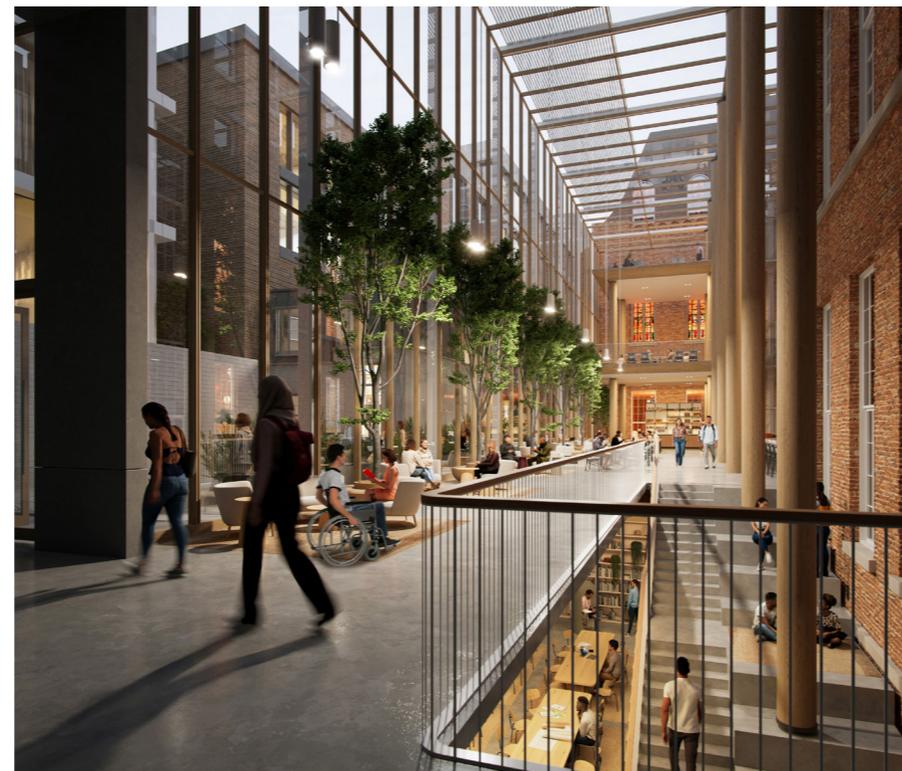
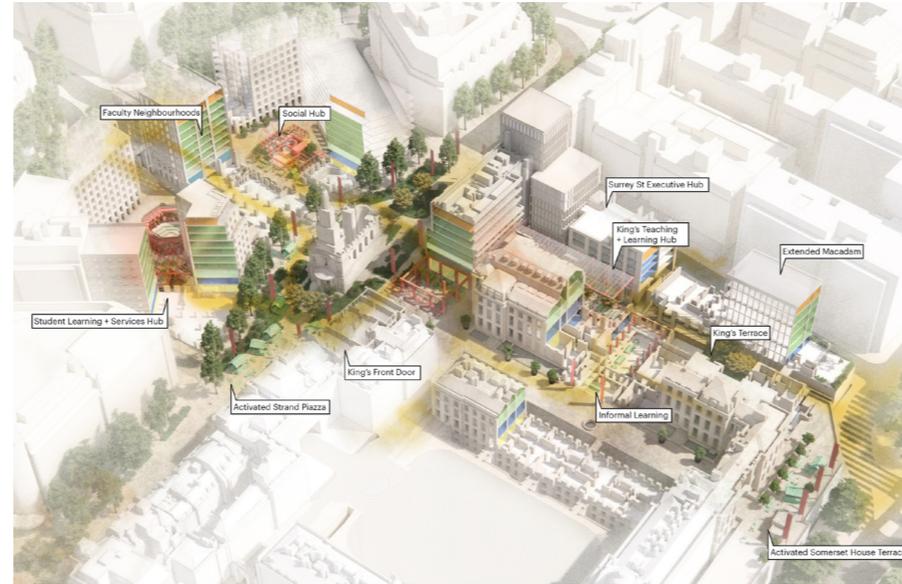


King's College London masterplan framework

The multi-campus masterplan for King's College London provides a visionary, strategy-led framework focused on innovation, efficiency, and growth. Centred on King's values of accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability, it celebrates the university's multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural legacy. The plan supports new teaching and working modalities for students, researchers, and staff, while enhancing efficiency and well-being. It highlights opportunities to reimagine existing buildings, as seen in the deep retrofit and extension of [Bush House South West Wing](#). Ahead of the university's bicentennial in 2029, the framework identifies essential upgrades to the King's estate, accommodating diverse programming and future growth through a cohesive, experience-centric approach.

[King's College London masterplan framework](#)

Images: Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates



Unlocking potential in existing spaces first

- **Consider the value in Reuse/Retrofit**

Take time to recognise the character and continuity of existing buildings. Reuse offers more than funding profit – it holds cultural and community value through the history of the place, reflecting local identity and story;

- **Create unusual/unexpected spaces**

Making use of unconventional areas can help creating space for diverse needs which are appropriate to a wider audience and foster creativity. Use and enhance existing units and spaces to still improve efficiency;

- Include surplus spaces in **strategic area planning** – do not treat them as afterthoughts.



Department of Engineering, King's College London | **Hall McKnight**

This scheme reimagines a semi-subterranean building beneath the historic Quadrangle as a flexible, high-quality home for engineering. The design creates new lightwells adjacent to the Grade 1 Listed King's Building whilst integrating workshops, laboratories and shared spaces within a sensitive heritage context. providing a modern, adaptable environment that supports contemporary engineering education.

[Redevelopment of the Strand Quadrangle](#)

[21st century engineering](#)



Waltham Forest College

Re-purposing the pool

Transforming a disused swimming pool into a sustainable, multi-functional learning facility, the project focuses on retaining embodied carbon while delivering adaptable new spaces. It supports curriculum growth, improves environmental performance and demonstrates how existing buildings can be imaginatively reused to meet evolving educational needs.

[Walton Forest college - Re-purposing the pool](#)

Quick wins and how to make a strategic impact

- **Demonstrate success early**

Show quick progress to build momentum, get people excited and justify investment;

- Recognise and navigate planning system limitations;

- **Carbon Impact Awareness**

Take carbon savings and environmental benefits into account when making retrofit choices;

- **Condition and maintenance**

Regular building maintenance influences long-term impact and functionality.



Create strong inclusive communities and linking with industry

How can we link global talent to local talent?

How can we link employers up with universities, colleges and schools, creating true outreach and inclusivity?

How can we create spaces where people want to work and connect?

Should education be exclusive or inclusive?

Should education facilities be inward or outward looking?

Genuine local engagement and place-based relevance

- Understand and embrace the micro and macro context – overarching aims for the whole of London vs local areas;
- Define the “community”- schools/ education institutions, residents, businesses etc;
- Connect with local identity and priorities – do not impose top-down models;
- Build upon existing and established communities and strengthen their identity;
- Involve local communities in decision-making and design processes;
- Co-create a vision through engagement in the early planning stages through authentic collaboration;
- Use Education Institutions as a community anchor – engaging parents, students, alumni, neighbours and local community; make university campuses accessible to the community;
- Create ‘special’ spaces with strong identity;
- Focus on building trust and shared ownership;
- Ensure developments are multi-use and socially valuable – ensuring wider inclusion;
- Buy-in is Crucial: Win hearts and minds through compelling narratives and visualisations from an early stage;
- Activate spaces with visible activity and active frontages to enhance social value, creating spaces for all.



London College of Fashion

Allies & Morrison

Community engagement

Bringing all departments into a single purpose-built home at East Bank, this project creates a flexible and robust “21st-century workshop” that celebrates the college’s creative and technical identity. The new building strengthens connections with local communities and provides modern, industry-aligned spaces for teaching, collaboration and public engagement.

[London College of Fashion community engagement](#)

UCL Student Centre | Nicholas Hare Architects

Create space for connection

Designed as a vibrant hub for student life, the centre offers a diverse mix of study, social and wellbeing spaces that encourage connection and collaboration.

The project enhances the heart of UCL’s Bloomsbury campus, supports varying learning styles and achieves exemplary sustainability standards.

[UCL Student Centre](#)

Education and industry alignment

- Link curriculum to real industry needs and future skills;
- Build simple, visible pathways for young people to engage with industry in the curriculum;
- Get industry involved in career days/talks about future careers; create opportunities for students to experience workplaces early and often;
- Create mentorships, apprenticeships, and scholarships that are clear and achievable.



Point Blank Music School | LOM

A real world music industry focus

Point Blank teaches the creative process of making music at the highest level, with expert lecturers from the music industry and state-of-the-art facilities, focussing on the student experience. The brief was to make their new facility feel like a recording studio not a typical education environment, creating spaces that allowed students to be actively engaged and that providing a stepping stone into the music industry. The result is a range of facilities that allow practice & performance, supports wellbeing and mentoring, and even includes their own record label, to create an environment that both mirrors and acts as a gateway to the real world with the Student Hub being the heart of the campus.



Opportunities for collaboration

- Encourage public-private partnerships;
- Promote co-investment and shared accountability;
- Take opportunities to unlock funding and industry sponsorship e.g. naming of rooms, labs and lecture theatres.

[Point Blank Music School](#)

Photography: Robin Clewley





GLA School Superzones London City Hall

The Superzones initiative establishes a 400-metre improvement area around selected schools to tackle environmental and health challenges affecting children’s daily lives. Focused on quick, tangible gains in air quality, food access, noise and active travel, it provides a framework for longer-term neighbourhood change and improved wellbeing.

[GLA School Superzones](#)

Tiger Way | Hawkins\Brown Mixed-use school and residential



Combining a new primary school with residential development on a single urban site, Tiger Way demonstrates how education-led mixed use can unlock both high-quality learning environments and viable housing.

The project delivers generous teaching and play spaces while using residential funding to support broader social value.

[Tiger Way mixed-use school and residential](#)

Link to innovation districts

In the university sector there is increasingly a focus on innovation alongside teaching and research, and there is a strong correlation between research power and potential for innovation.

anchor institutions and have strong interaction with industry. Their impact is significant because of their workforce, its size and permanence. Innovation coming out of those institutions might reduce health inequalities and help people back into work.

Universities and hospitals tend to be the drivers of innovation districts; universities and teaching hospitals are



Creative use of surplus space

How can schools become real public assets?

Surplus spaces could serve the wider community, learning, and enterprise needs.

The panel also considered this topic in 2024.

[Creative use of surplus space](#)

Identifying and unlocking the provision

- Who owns the surplus space?
- What is its current use or state?
- How do we ensure space is not accidentally lost (e.g. under-utilized or under-claimed public buildings)?
- How can the space be shared?
What challenges need to be overcome for out of hours use e.g. security, safeguarding, inclusive access?
- Ensure surplus use does not override original community functions
- How can we safeguard the space to allow future growth when required?

Dulwich College Sports Club

Operating as a community asset outside school hours, the Dulwich College Sports Club offers extensive indoor and outdoor facilities, from swimming and athletics to multi-use courts and pitches. The model broadens public access, increases utilisation of the estate and contributes to the long-term sustainability of the college's sports provision.

[Dulwich College Sports Club](#)

Acland Burghley School in Tufnell Park

The centre is partnered with Schools Plus to provide access to its various facilities for evening, weekend, and holiday use.

These include indoor and outdoor sports venues, as well as over thirty different classrooms and meeting rooms.

[Acland Burghley School](#)

Community and education integration

Consider Different Uses

- Higher education;
- Local businesses – local service hubs;
- Start-ups – shared enterprise zones;
- Co-working spaces;
- Community programs;
- Temporary student housing/hostels;
- Family/community/youth hubs/nurseries;
- Shared venues for cultural or health activities;
- Hot desking, pop-ups, and micro-retail;
- Nurseries.



Summary

To meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, we must reimagine how and where learning happens. We call for a new approach that blends creates learning environments that are flexible, inclusive, and future-focused, moving from rigid systems toward spaces that nurture creativity, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

Education must align with industry and community, turning institutions into civic anchors in London that inspire students, empower people and are inclusive for all.

NLA Education Expert Panel

Focusing on the future needs of the education, healthcare and knowledge economy sector, The Panel will explore how we make sure we plan and design the right spaces for high tech, life sciences and innovation that will lead the UK economic recovery in the future years.

Chair: Cora Kwiatkowski, Stride Treglown

Kathryn Topham, Harris Federation
Jennifer Singer, Department for Education
Negar Mihanyar, Hawkins\Brown
Peter Ward, King's College London
Melissa Jogie, University of Roehampton
Leif Lomo, Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates

Polly Persechino, South London Partnership

Tom Morgan, Bell Phillips
Daniel Walder, BDP
Anthony Mellalieu, Urbanest
Minesh Varia, Hoare Lea
Joyce Yazbeck, HLM Architects
Julie Désormiers, Jestico + Whiles

Kindly note that the **Tiger Way** and **Central Foundation Boys' School** images are being supplied for one-off use by the NLA in the NLA Education Expert Panel Guide and may not be reproduced in any other publication or exhibition, or on any website without prior permission from Hawkins\Brown. As a condition of copyright, the images must not be passed to any third party and the architect Hawkins\Brown, and the photographer Jack Hobhouse must be credited.