

# London for all !

*A handbook for community  
and small business groups  
fighting to retain workspace for  
London's diverse economies*

## Acknowledgements

This handbook draws on nearly two years of activities undertaken by the Just Space Economy and Planning group (JSEP). Just Space is an informal alliance of community groups, campaigns and concerned independent organisations which formed in 2007 to act as a voice for the grassroots in the formulation of the Mayor's London Plan. JSEP formed in July 2013 in order to build capacity within Just Space to participate in and influence the development of planning policy in London on economic issues. If you would like to join the JSEP email list and hear about future events and activities, please email [jseconomy@gmail.com](mailto:jseconomy@gmail.com).

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**Markets, high streets and industrial premises – the spaces where Londoners work – are under threat**

Drawings: Lucinda Rogers

# Foreword

What is our economy for? Too often we lose sight of this question, focussing on growth and profit as an end in itself. Instead, we need to remind ourselves always that the overall purpose of the economy is to deliver human wellbeing, within environmental limits.

This applies in our communities and neighbourhoods just as much as it does on the global stage. A strong local economy is resilient in its diversity of sectors and businesses; makes the most of the resources flowing through it, with money circulating effectively round local supply chains and residents; and above all provides the means for people to flourish within it. Those means include income and wealth — but also security, liveable environments, connections to a community, access to cultural and leisure activities, availability of good jobs, and ability to have a meaningful say in decisions

In a wider economic system that prioritises the nationally measured growth of a restricted range of sectors over these local economic attributes, communities face huge struggles in holding on to and developing new and established local economies. This handbook documents one of the challenges currently facing many communities in London: the threat to workspace that can support and nurture diverse and resilient local economies. It draws together the experience and knowledge gained by community and small business groups fighting to retain workspace for London's diverse economies, so that others can learn from it.

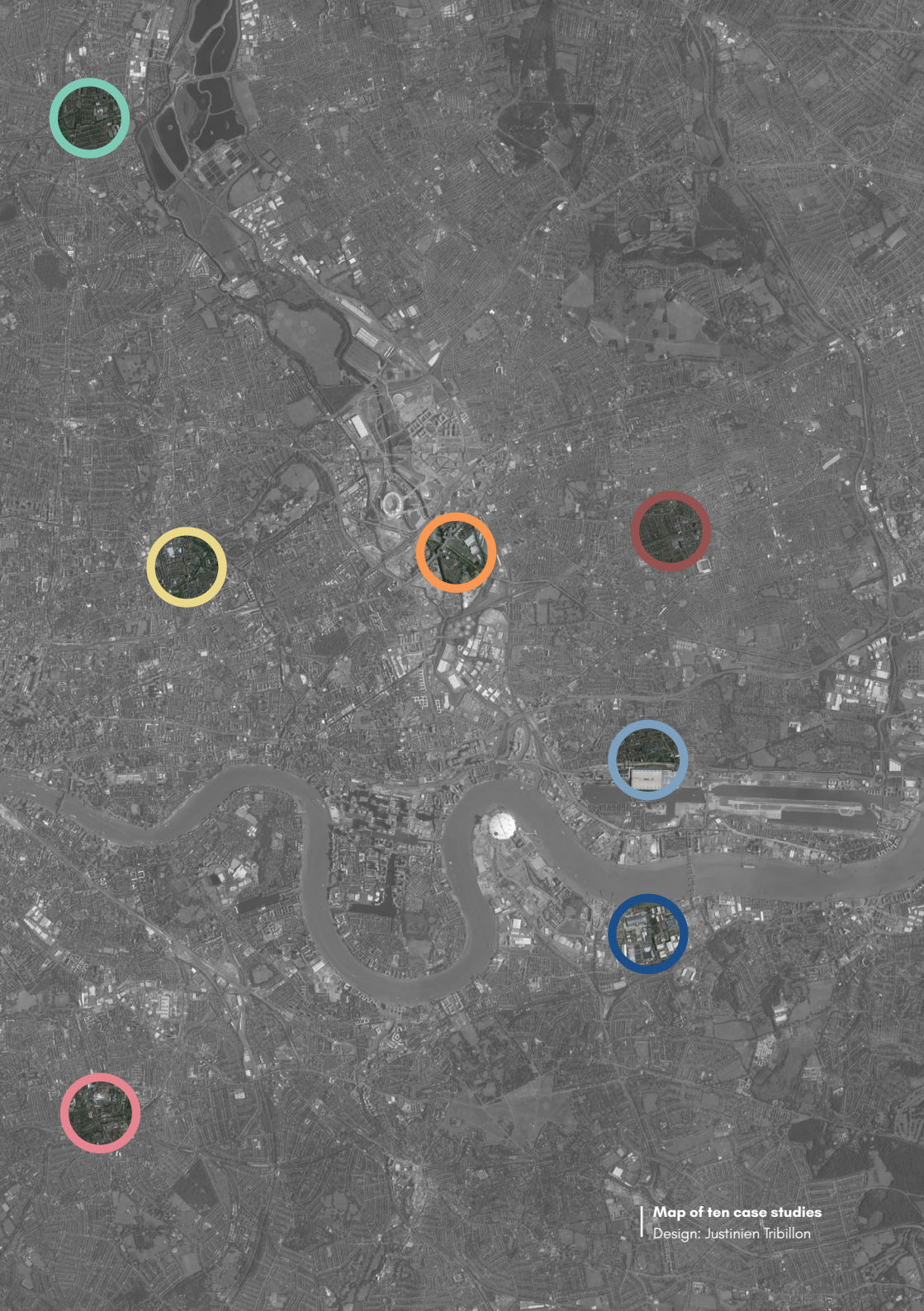
Local economies present an enormous resource of creativity and innovation. This handbook shows that an approach to planning that valued and prioritised strong local economies would generate huge opportunities for sustainable and resilient economic development in London. It provides community and small business groups with tools and tactics not only to resist the erosion of existing local economies but also to create opportunities, stimulate innovation and build new paths towards a London economy that works for people and planet.

Stewart Wallis  
Executive Director, New Economics Foundation

# Map of ten case studies

- 1** **Latin Elephant**  
*Safeguarding Latin American community businesses at the Elephant and Castle*
- 2** **Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum**  
*Industrial and residential estate in King's Cross taking action against threat from housing speculation*
- 3** **The Carpenters Estate**  
*Residential and business community in Stratford refusing to be treated like an empty area*
- 4** **Charlton Riverside**  
*Local groups contesting the removal of successful industrial areas through Greenwich Council's new masterplan*
- 5** **Community Planning in Waterloo**  
*Residents struggling to retain office, residential and local business uses and prevent a monoculture*
- 6** **Peckham Vision**  
*Developing local alliances and community plans for the high street, protecting studios, local businesses and historic buildings*
- 7** **PEACH**  
*Local residents, traders, schools and churches demanding to be recognised in the major regeneration of Custom House, Newham*
- 8** **East End Trades Guild**  
*Co-operative representing the interests of independent and proprietor-owned businesses in Spitalfields and beyond*
- 9** **Friends of Queen's Market**  
*Protecting the important, affordable 100-year-old market in Upton Park, Newham*
- 10** **West Green Road/Seven Sisters Development Trust**  
*Building a community development vehicle to pursue the community plan to retain and enhance historic buildings and diverse community and business uses at Wards Corner, Seven Sisters*





Map of ten case studies  
Design: Justinien Tribillon

# The threat to workspace in London, and why it matters

The central focus of this handbook is on threats to the spaces where Londoners work – the industrial buildings, workshops, local offices, retail and other premises where our goods and services are provided and the livelihoods of most Londoners are earned. Poor availability and the rising cost of workspace are being experienced across many sectors of the economy and across our city. Even high-value firms that can afford higher rents struggle to find new premises when they need to move or expand. While the pressures on workspace may be experienced locally, they are part of larger city-wide processes and have cumulative effects which are producing serious social, economic and environmental problems for London.



**London's industrial areas are buzzing with new and older industries – like DW Wood Machinists at Tottenham High Road**

Drawing: Lucinda Rogers

Low-cost workspace plays a particularly important role in a high-cost city by providing decent local jobs close to home which people on low incomes, part-time workers and those with caring responsibilities can access, providing a buffer against inequality, while reducing commuting times and transport emissions. In many parts of London, however, housing developments are replacing workspace, bringing in more residents while removing jobs and businesses. Rather than a polycentric

London made up of many strong and diverse interconnected economies, we are moving towards a monocentric London, in which the central areas become increasingly dominant while other parts risk becoming dormitory towns.

High streets and town centres create a sense of identity and are also significant sources of local jobs close to home – more people are employed across London’s high streets than in the Central Activities Zone. High streets have proved to be resilient over the centuries, adapting to different uses as local economies have changed. While they may be invisible from the street, the workspaces above and behind high streets and around town centres are filled with people providing all kinds of goods and services. London’s town centres thrive on the range of different activities taking place there: businesses trade with one another and visitors benefit from choice. Local supply chains keep money circulating in the area, multiplying investment for the benefit of the local community.

While high street regeneration schemes are leading to investment in small shops, markets and workshops in some places, in others they are being earmarked for large-scale housing-led redevelopment (case studies 6, 7 and 10). Migrant and ethnic retailers and entrepreneurs are often particularly at risk from these redevelopment schemes, despite having made significant contributions to the vitality of town centres and high streets over many years (case studies 1, 9 and 10). Removing loved local shops, markets and workshops from high streets and town centres risks damaging the supply chains that support a healthy local economy, destroying local jobs and reducing quality of life for Londoners.

London’s industrial areas are other important reservoirs of low cost workspace for its diverse economies. From the outside they may seem run down and empty, but a quick look inside usually reveals the buzz of new and older industries (case studies 2, 3 and 4). For firms needing larger and accessible premises suited to machinery, manufacturing, repair and distribution, industrial estates provide the main source of flexible, low-cost workspace in what is otherwise a very expensive city. Firms operating from industrial land often provide important services that support other sectors of the London economy. These industries also tend to be a source of decent quality, stable employment. Artists and start-up firms are others who often base themselves in industrial areas, contributing to London’s creativity, innovation and dynamism.



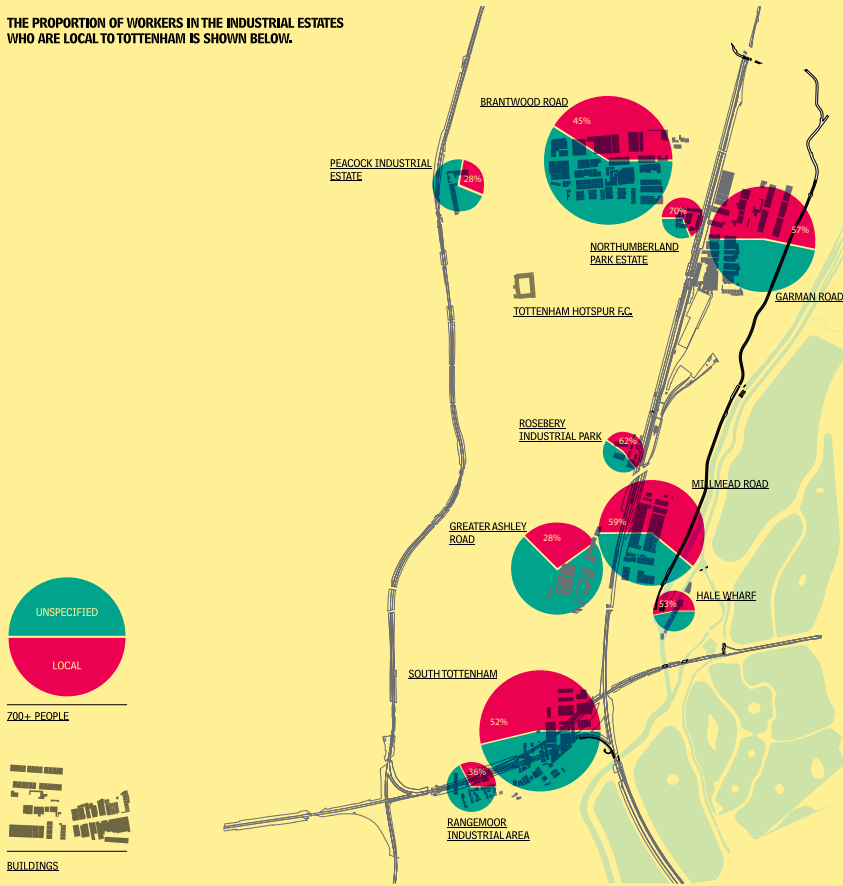
*Low-cost workspace plays a particularly important role in a high-cost city*



*Removing London’s industrial land will damage its economy and remove decent jobs accessible to local people*

# LOCAL TO AROUND HERE

THE PROPORTION OF WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATES WHO ARE LOCAL TO TOTTENHAM IS SHOWN BELOW.



OVER THE COURSE OF TWO MONTHS, GORT SCOTT ARCHITECTS SCoured THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATES OF TOTTENHAM, COMMISSIONED BY HARINGEY COUNCIL. THE AIM WAS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND TO TAKE A SNAPSHOT OF THE MANY DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES LOCATED THERE.

BUSINESSES RANGED FROM LARGE FOOD & DRINK WHOLESALERS TO SMALL INDEPENDENT CARPENTERS.

DURING THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH, CLOSE TO A 1,000 DIFFERENT UNITS WERE VISITED, OVER 5,000 JOBS WERE DISCOVERED AND MORE THAN 300 BUSINESSES WERE SPOKEN TO.

THE RESEARCH REVEALED A RESILIENT AND ACTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, OPERATING IN A CHALLENGING ECONOMIC CLIMATE.

London's industrial estates – like these in Tottenham – are often good sources of decent, stable employment for local people

Research: Gort Scott / Design: Abake



in **Tottenham**, a business **makes**  
**week**. imports **5,000 carpets** a  
week. **sells 10 tonnes of sausage**  
**aluminium** a year. **distributes 150**  
**set of 32 teeth** a week. produces  
**sells 20,000 litres of yoghurt** a w  
sells **20,000 litres of heating oil**  
**of hummus** a week. makes up to 5  
**20,000 shirts** a week. **services up**  
makes **1,000,000 rolls** a year. pro  
year. sells over **10,000 tubes of h**  
**bloomers** a year. prepares **120,00**  
a week. makes **480,000 baps** a  
a week. processes **1 tonne of dr**  
**20 mattresses** a month. serves f  
**1 kitchen** a week. **uses 1.5 ton**  
**pints of beer** a week. sells **6 ven**  
**£1,000,000 of alcohol** a week. **use**

Industry in London is not dead - firms operating from industrial areas provide important goods and services that serve other sectors of the London economy

Research: Gort Scott / Design: Justinien Tribillon



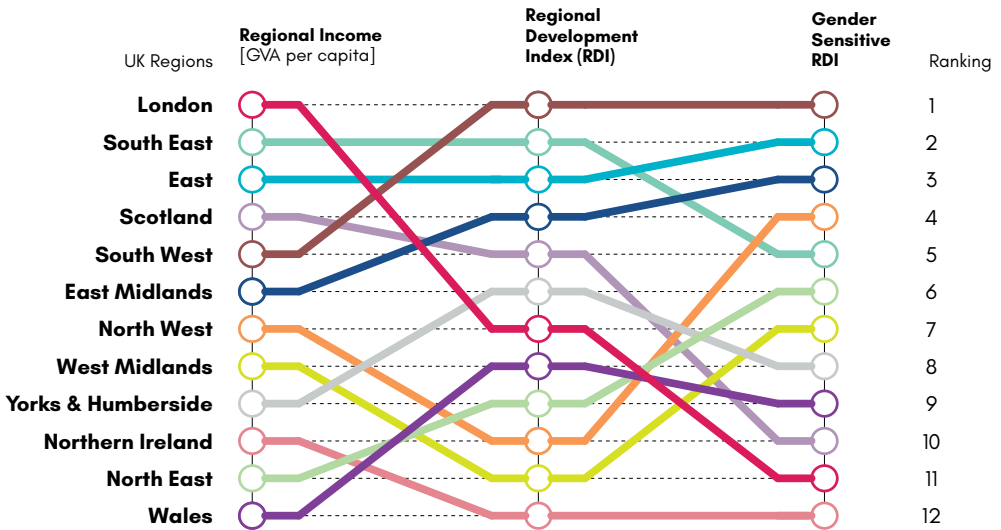
# What's planning got to do with it?



*London's workspace is under particular pressure now*

We are losing workspace because planning in London is trapped in a model of economic development that prioritises growth in GDP above broader social, economic and environmental well-being. High-value sectors like finance and business services are seen as the sole driver of international success, neglecting the rest of the economy. This growth model is damaging the diversity of London's economy which is the key source of its long-term resilience and which services the needs of its different communities. It is increasing poverty and inequality, creating a city for the few not for all. And environmental goals have been forgotten as the delivery of unaffordable housing for private profit trumps all other considerations.

London's workspace is under particular pressure as the housing crisis is used as a reason to secure housing development at any cost. The long-term undersupply of housing, combined with rapid population growth and London's attraction for international property investment, mean that



**London is the UK's top performing region on the basis of GVA per person – but slips to 7th and 11th place when broader measures of economic and social development are taken into account**

Research: Diane Perrons / Design: Justinien Tribillon



**Unaffordable housing development is pushing out affordable workspaces across London**

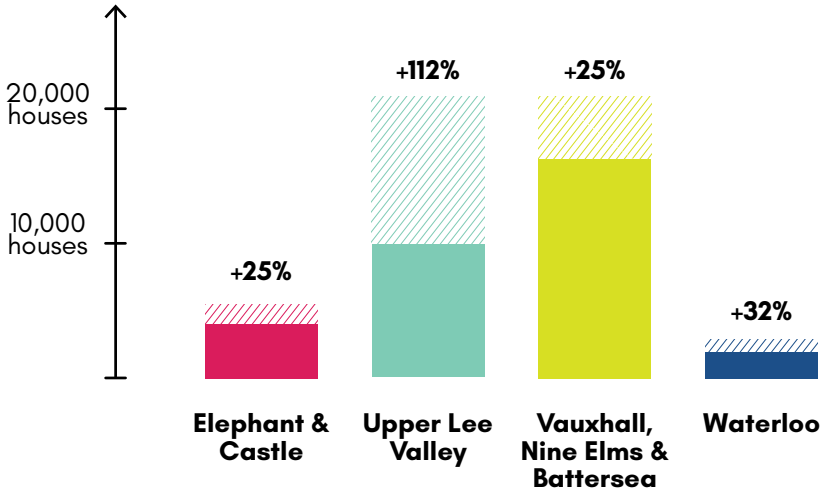
Photo: Lucinda Rogers

land is increasingly expensive. Owners of employment land can make substantial financial gains if the land is converted to housing use and for developers such sites are particularly attractive because the change in value means higher profits and few other sites may be available or as easy to develop. Together, these factors create enormous pressure on local authorities to remove or relax the planning policies that protect employment land, in order to release sites that will be attractive to landowners and developers to deliver new housing.

The UK Government and the Mayor of London also require local authorities to identify sites for housing. Housing targets have been increased at the same time as public funding has been withdrawn, leaving housing delivery overwhelmingly in the hands of private developers. Areas of London that have been earmarked for the most housing growth – like Elephant and Castle (case study [1](#)), Stratford (case study [3](#)), Waterloo and Vauxhall / Nine Elms / Battersea (case study [5](#)), and Tottenham (case study [10](#)) – are under the greatest pressure. Cuts to local authority budgets mean councils are tempted to sell the land they own in town centres, industrial estates and council estates in order to balance their books and deliver new housing at the same time.



*The tools planners have previously relied upon to protect workspace are being removed*



**In March 2015 the Mayor of London finalised further increases to The London Plan's already high housing targets in many of the 'Opportunity Areas'**

Data: Greater London Authority / Design: Justinien Tribillon

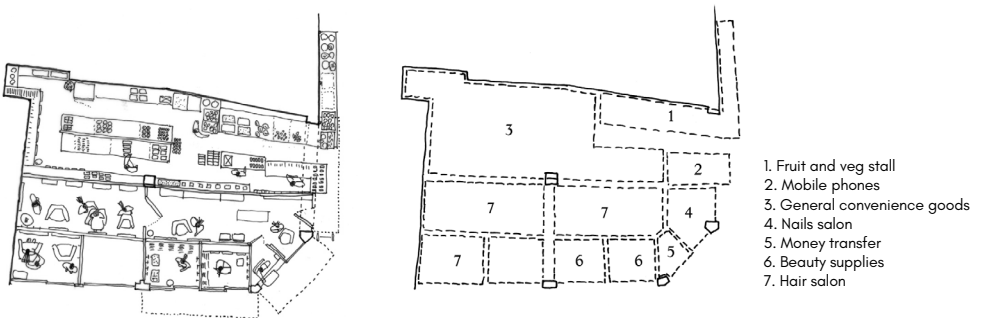
The tools planners have relied upon to protect workspace are being removed. Changes to national legislation in 2013 extended so-called Permitted Development Rights, enabling land owners to change office buildings to residential use without the need for planning permission. The government is considering extending such deregulation to allow shops and industrial spaces to be converted to housing.

The Mayor of London has also pushed through changes to the London Plan to encourage high-density housing development in high streets and town centres and in some industrial areas with good public transport connections. This policy change further weakens planners' tools to protect employment land and risks displacing or destroying well functioning businesses. Migrant and ethnic retailers and entrepreneurs who occupy low-value but well-located workspace in high streets and town centres may be particularly at risk from these changes, as local authorities tend not to recognise their contribution to local economies and to sense of place (case studies 1, 9 and 10). Some local authorities are introducing affordable workspace policies in order to re-supply low-cost workspace in new developments, but such schemes do not effectively offset the overall loss, nor do they provide like-for-like replacement of workspace.

*The social, environmental and economic consequences of the loss of London's reservoir of workspace are not being considered*

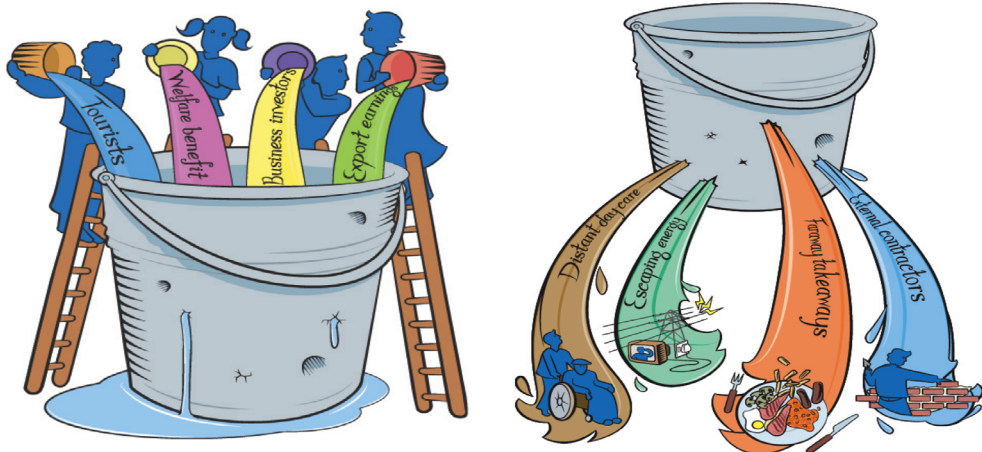
Traders, businesses and community groups often find that planners do not have an understanding of how the local economy works, how it is related to a whole range of important social and environmental issues nor why it might matter to local communities. When local authorities produce studies of their retail, office and industrial land these tend to represent developers and estate agents' views of the potential for new commercial development rather than an assessment of the existing diverse economic activities already taking place. This is leading to perverse situations where local authorities want to grow particular sectors of the economy (e.g. the high tech industry and social enterprise) while at the same time their own planning policies are leading to the displacement of firms in those same sectors.

Different sectors of London's economy are not represented equally in the planning process. The strongest voices are the big business and developer interests represented by lobby group London First and the Mayor's London Enterprise Panel, which takes decisions on spending on regeneration, skills and training and plays an increasingly important role in strategic policy making. At a local level, major landowners, developers and employers are often represented on stakeholder groups that play a role in shaping plans at a much earlier stage and enjoy regular meetings with local councillors and senior council officers. By comparison,



**Planners often misunderstand the local economy – such as how shops are sometimes subdivided into mutually-linked activities shown here in Peckham Rye Lane**

Diagram: Nicholas Palominos (Ordinary Streets, LSE Cities, 2012)



**While new development may bring external investment, it will quickly leak out of a local area if it does not generate the local supply chains that keep money circulating and multiplying for the benefit of the local economy**

Drawing: New Economics Foundation

tenants of retail, office and industrial workspace are often unaware of redevelopment plans until very late in the process and are rarely involved in strategic forums. In a few places, local traders and businesses have organised themselves into groups that can liaise with the local authority (case studies [2](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#) and [10](#)), while in other areas it is much harder for affected traders and businesses to gain information and negotiate.

*Everyone has knowledge about their local economy*

Community groups find it difficult to challenge the economic aspects of plans and tend to be more actively involved in planning matters such as housing, regeneration, green space and public services. People often feel that the economy is something that only economists can understand, when in fact everyone has knowledge about their local economy, its strengths and weaknesses, and ideas about how it could develop. In some places, business groups and community groups are well connected and support each other (case studies [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [6](#), [7](#), [9](#) and [10](#)), whereas in other places these connections may still need to be made.

Driven by the growth agenda, planners increasingly start from the position of trying to deliver what major business and developers want. The resources at their disposal have allowed these actors to dominate

the agenda and ensure their desires are put before the arguably more important needs of small business and communities. Now is the time to start challenging London's decision makers to think differently about the economy, asking what London's economy is for and putting social and environmental goals back on the agenda. The planning process now needs the public more than ever, to demand that planners protect and provide workspaces that support a diverse, inclusive and sustainable London economy, not simply the growth of major corporate earnings (case study 5). Unless we open up the debate, how many of these diverse economic sectors will survive the current phase of development of London?



**In places like Peckham, local people are challenging councils to consider how local economies can be nurtured, not pushed out**

Photo: Nicholas Palominos (Ordinary Streets, LSE Cities, 2012)

# Ten Case Studies

The following ten case studies tell the stories of local community and small business groups that have collectively sought to resist plans and developments that threatened workspace in their areas, as well as developing their own proposals and plans.

If you are facing plans or development proposals that threaten workspace in your area, you may find some of the tools, tactics and strategies developed by the ten case studies useful:

**Organise yourselves** — in informal groups or more formally as a business association or neighbourhood forum. Talk to others and find the common ground.

**Make contacts, find allies** — this could include local groups and individuals: local councillors, residents, Enterprise Agencies, other community groups with similar concerns, interested academics and students. Also, national or regional organisations with local representation such as the Federation of Small Businesses, New Economics Forum, Just Space or the Chamber of Commerce.

**Spread the word** — establish a broader base of support in order to lobby, through the use of personal contacts, social media, leafleting, representation at local events and festivals.

**Get the evidence** — planning needs to be 'evidence-based', but the evidence on an area's economy prepared by local authorities does not always represent local concerns, or it interprets the evidence in questionable ways. Research can be undertaken locally by collating anecdotal evidence, or through the use of volunteers and students or collaborations with academic researchers. Alternatively you can draw on existing academic or think tank reports that might not have been considered in the Council's evidence base.

**Get involved in the Council's evidence-based studies** — an alternative to marshalling your own evidence would be to get involved in the preparation of evidence-based studies, ideally as early as possible. This can be more effective than commenting on plans.

**Influence your borough's Local Plan** — in addition to responding to formal consultations and representing your views at public examinations, this might involve meeting with your local councillors as well as with council officers responsible for strategic planning, regeneration, employment and monitoring.



**Businesses threatened by development plans are forming alliances in areas like the Peacock Estate in Tottenham**

Drawing: Lucinda Rogers

**Comment on council plans and planning applications** — this includes commenting during the statutory consultation period after the local authority has drafted a plan or received a planning application, and then following through to appeal, if necessary.

**Prepare your own neighbourhood plan** — there are now precedents for residents and businesses to come together to set up a neighbourhood forum, and prepare a plan reflecting common concerns.

**Promote alternative models** — which retain existing businesses in situ or secure affordable workspace. Set up Urban Community Land Trusts.

**Get advice** — there might be a need to get professional advice on planning or legal matters. Draw on local people's skills and contacts, apply for planning aid or legal aid, or consider representing yourselves.

**Why?** Elephant and Castle is one of the Opportunity Areas designated in the London Plan and targeted for redevelopment. In recent years the area has seen the demolition of over a thousand council homes and the dispersal of its communities. The proposed redevelopment of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre is threatening the existing traders in the centre and surrounding areas, many of which are migrant and ethnic businesses, with displacement and a lack of security about returning or being able to afford renting premises in the redeveloped centre.

Although the Elephant is home to one of the largest and most long-standing Latin American business communities in London, many businesses have been threatened by redevelopment proposals, insecure leases and increasing rents and they weren't recognised by the local authority as a valuable part of the local economy.

**How?** Latin Elephant's work started in January 2012 by a group of volunteers to support the needs of Latin American retailers in Elephant and Castle given the regeneration of the area. Latin Elephant acquired Charity status in September 2014 with the aim of promoting the inclusion of migrant and ethnic groups and in particular Latin Americans in regeneration initiatives in London, through alternative and innovative ways of engaging in research, influencing infrastructure, promoting business readiness and strengthening communities.

The founder and coordinator was an academic at City University who has been studying the Latin business cluster at the Elephant for over 20 years, during which she built relationships with the traders and gathered evidence relating to their business practices.

Through the Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum and their collaboration with Just Space and UCL, the group accessed support from student volunteers to collect and present this evidence. A planning student created a map of the Latin American business clusters and, based on interviews and meetings with the traders, developed a design proposal with ideas to improve public space and emphasise the Latin presence in the area.

In 2014 Latin Elephant was granted funding through the Southwark High Street Challenge programme to undertake additional research, including a feasibility report on creating a Latin Quarter. A workshop with



# Camley Street

## 2

**How?** Camley Street is one of the many small industrial estates in the fringes of central London. It's an area of two hectares with about 17-20 companies employing over 500 people (more including drivers based there) in many sectors: wholefood, fish and meat processing and distribution, car repairs, architectural model building, industrial laundry, commercial photo studio. There is some synergy among them: the laundry supports meat and fish processing; vans are maintained by the garages. Every firm has strong links to the central London economy, serving clients in hospitality, architecture and built environment, fashion and advertising. The freehold for the Cedar Way part of the estate is owned by the London Borough of Camden who are also the direct landlord. Empty units have recently been offered only on short-term licenses with no security of tenure, and the longest recent lease has a two year break-clause. Enterprises can't confidently invest on such a short time-horizon and could see extinction looming – though all are successful enterprises.

Camley Street adjoins Central London where displacement pressures are strongest, yet the site has no protection as “strategic” or other employment space either in the London Plan or Camden's plan, though a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is now being prepared. The site is within a stone's throw of the Argent King's Cross Central development and very close to (but not adjoining) the Regent's canal, along which upmarket housing development has been expanding in recent years, mostly through changes from industrial use which have not been resisted by Camden.

The firms and residents in the area got together to defend themselves against the threat of redevelopment —probably for open-market and/or student housing— and in the context of Camden Council's plans to realise the money value of many of their “assets”, proposals embodied in their “Community Investment Programme”.

**Why?** The industries and residents of an adjoining housing area together formed a Neighbourhood Forum in 2013 to seek to influence decisions about the area (a normal NF, rather than one of the “business” forums envisaged by the Localism Act and both parties seem happy with that). The Forum was registered by Camden in March 2014 and is unusual for the diversity of businesses – small and large – involved, and for their alliance with residents.




The forum recognised that there was no way, under the planning system alone, to stop the type of development along the canal from engulfing their area, judging by the tone of debate surrounding recent Council decisions. It is now busy working on a Neighbourhood Plan, central to which is an ambitious new model with a Community Land Trust (CLT) to negotiate to purchase the land from Camden and do a development to meet Camden’s social and market housing targets by developing a mixed-use scheme, specifically retaining the existing light-industrial and “smelly” enterprises within the scheme. As such, the Forum is not only pursuing an active, positive and unique development project, but is also aiming to secure long-term community ownership of this valuable land. Work is under way.

**The firms and residents of Camley Street formed a neighbourhood forum in order to defend themselves against the encroaching luxury housing development**

Photo: Christian Spencer-Davies

The employers have enjoyed a great deal of pro-bono support from the CLT Network, architects, engineers, solicitors and so on and inputs from UCL student groups mobilised through Just Space.

# 3 The Carpenters Estate

 [greater-carpenters.co.uk](http://greater-carpenters.co.uk)

 [bit.ly/Carpenters2013](http://bit.ly/Carpenters2013)

**Why?** In 2011, University College London (UCL) and Newham Council announced their intention to explore the scope for a new UCL campus on the site of the 23 hectare Carpenters Estate, Stratford, adjacent to the Olympic Park. While both UCL and Newham treated the Carpenters Estate as if it was already empty, in fact around 300 families were living there alongside at least 13 actively trading businesses .

The threat of redevelopment spurred local residents, businesses and others to form a community planning group with the support of Just Space, London Tenants Federation and a number of UCL staff and students. Developing a community plan enabled local actors to assert their existence, legitimacy and capacity to play a role in the future development of the area, articulating its strengths and weaknesses from their own experiences and perspectives.

While UCL withdrew their interest in the Carpenters Estate in May 2013, the Carpenters community planning group continued to develop their proposals and ultimately decided to work towards forming the Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum and turning their community plan into a neighbourhood plan. In parallel, the group has worked with others in the broader London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) area with the support of Just Space, London Tenants Federation and a number of UCL staff and students to respond to the consultation and participate in the Examination in Public on the LLDC's draft local plan.

**How?** Businesses on the Carpenters Estate were identified through a walkabout with local residents and UCL students. A UCL PhD student then worked with the community planning group to survey local businesses about the local area, develop local economy proposals for the community plan and engage local businesses in the community planning process. As a result, the views and experiences of businesses were reflected in the local economy proposals, including building links with local training, education and jobs; stronger local procurement policies; and support for the area's existing strengths in construction, refurbishment and artists studios. The directors of two local construction and refurbishment firms became regular participants in community planning meetings and joined residents in key meetings with LLDC planning officers. Since then, local businesses have joined the Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum and attended meetings and consultation events.



**The logo for the Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum was drawn by a local school child and depicts how close the area is to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park**

Logo: Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Forum

The LLDC local plan provided a further opportunity to draw local businesses into the neighbourhood forum. The same UCL PhD student worked with another Just Space volunteer to organise a meeting on the Carpenters Estate for businesses in the LLDC area, identified through previous work and other local contacts. This resulted in strong connections being made with the 40 artists based at the two ACME studios in the Carpenters development area, artists studio providers in Hackney Wick, community planning groups in Hackney Wick and Fish Island, the East End Trades Guild and local community centres delivering skills, training and support to social enterprise, the Bromley by Bow Centre, Community Links and the Carpenters and Docklands Centre. As a result, these businesses, artists and community centres were able to represent themselves in the Examination in Public on the draft LLDC local plan, highlighting their concerns about loss of workspace, in particular the low-cost workspace used by small businesses, industry and artists, and the disconnection between the plans for economic development and the needs and wishes of local residents and businesses. These were some of the strongest and most diverse representations made in a planning enquiry in London on economic issues to date. While they did not ultimately convince the Planning Inspector, the diverse range of groups, economic interests and evidence provides a basis for further mobilisations in the future.

# 4 Charlton Riverside

## 4

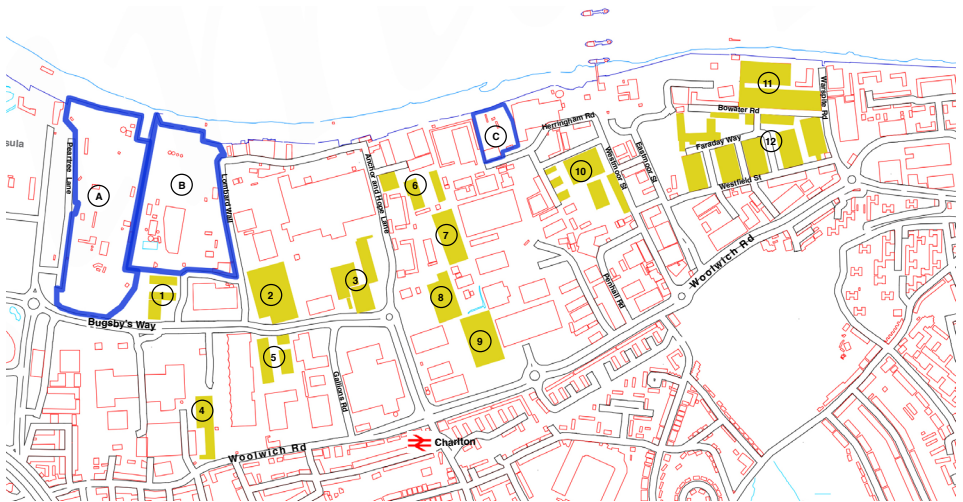
**Why?** Charlton Riverside is one of the last remaining protected industrial sites on the Thames and it's home to a large number of thriving businesses. However in recent years the local authority has started developing a masterplan for the area, aiming to redevelop most of these estates into luxury housing, despite the protection given to the area in the London Plan. This has been done without any consultation with local businesses or concerned local organisations. Even more worryingly, some of the businesses have been given insecure leases for their units and some of the buildings have been left vacant by the local authority and landowners to become derelict. This has helped the local authority and developers to argue that there is very little activity on some of the estates and the best approach is to replace them with housing.

**How?** To challenge the plans and Greenwich Council's decisions a group of local activists started doing the work on the ground which had been overlooked by the local authority, by reaching out to the businesses in the affected area to see what their struggles and needs are. Through building relationships with local business owners and traders they discovered extremely well-functioning clusters of activity which provide services and products essential to sustain London's wider economy.

Just Space, which facilitates a pool of UCL planning students to help community groups with research, mapping, design, recruited two student volunteers to survey, interview and map the businesses in the area. The group also took photos during their walkabouts around the industrial estates to capture the diversity of the buildings and their occupiers. The evidence gathered was useful in challenging the Council's planning approach and the studies produced by consultants in support of the Greenwich Core Strategy. Members of the Creekside Forum and Thames Gateway Forum took part in the local examination in public, opening up a debate on the lack of consultation with businesses and traders on plans which affected their ability to remain in the area, and challenging the false picture painted of the industrial estates as under-occupied and blighted.

The Forum have been a strong voice in advocating increased protection of London's industrial land and raising awareness of the threats facing small businesses, manufacturers and service providers in sectors seen as 'dirty industry'. Through collaborating with Just Space they invited Jenny Jones, the chair of the London Assembly Economy Committee

to visit Stone Foundries, a manufacturer of parts for the aerospace and defence industries which have been in the area historically since the 1800s and have managed to adapt and keep relevant to the times. This has been featured in her report to the Mayor of London which demanded a sound industrial strategy for London.



**London Thames Gateway Forum used the information gathered by UCL students to challenge the proposed plans for Charlton Riverside by highlighting the diversity and strength of local industrial areas**

Research and design: Ilinca Diaconescu and Alexandra Milne

# Community Planning in Waterloo

## 5

**Why?** The south shore of the River Thames between Tate Modern and Battersea Power Station was once the industrial powerhouse of Central London, with the workforce living cheek by jowl. Following bomb damage, the post-war plan was to remove the residents and rebuild as offices for government and headquarters for international companies, as well as distribution centres in Vauxhall, such as the New Covent Garden Market.

Since the 1970s, the Waterloo Community Development Group (WCDG) amongst others have used the planning system to campaign for a strong residential presence as part of a healthy balance between different land uses. What was once a radical idea – the benefits of mixing residential and employment land – later became mainstream in London’s planning.

Today, however, the area is undergoing a radical transformation. Two ‘Opportunity Areas’ have been designated in the London Plan, at Waterloo and Vauxhall / Nine Elms / Battersea, creating a developers’ paradise. Although targeted for 40,000 jobs and 22,500 homes, businesses have been moved out as employment land is cleared to make way for new riverside luxury homes. In ten years, Lambeth has lost 167,000 square metres of office space from these two Opportunity Areas.

WCDG’s focus has therefore shifted to opposing schemes that seek to introduce more luxury housing at the expense of employment land. The community understands that turning the South Bank into a monoculture of exclusive high rise residential towers will be devastating to the vibrancy of the area.

**How?** Campaigning to protect employment land is not so readily attractive to mass mobilisation. WCDG have therefore had to make use of a range of tactics to progress their aims for a mixed community. The group works tirelessly to persuade local councillors to respond to the concerns of residents, and then marshal the community’s detailed local knowledge for effective participation at the inevitable appeals and public inquiries. WCDG also supported a pilot for one of the first Business Improvement Districts in the country, which focuses on a traditional high street whose success is dependent upon serving both residents and local employees.





The latest battle has been over the future of the Shell Centre, Europe's largest corporate headquarters of the Shell International Petroleum Company at the time of construction. For many years it was left to rot. Shell argue that the only viable alternative is to build new luxury housing. In a joint venture with Canary Wharf Group the company plans to build around 800 luxury homes on the site.

The battle ended in the Court of Appeal with a lone resident taking on the combined might of Shell, Canary Wharf Group, the Qatari Royal Family, the Mayor, Lambeth and the Secretary of State. This was possible because in planning cases, the European Union has stepped in to give every citizen the right to a hearing before a court to challenge a decision. This means that anyone bringing a case can apply to be protected from paying the costs of the other side if they lose. Local resident George Turner, who brought the case had his liability capped at £5,000 in the event that he lost. Without the funds needed to hire a legal team he represented himself in court. Although in the end the case was lost, it demonstrated what can be done by an individual armed with the protection of European law and the rules of the court and is already inspiring further action.

**WCDG has fought to retain workspace – like the market stalls and small businesses at Lower Marsh, shown here in the 1980s and in 2014 – as part of a mixed community, instead of luxury office and housing development**

Photos: Michael Ball

# 6 Peckham Vision

6

**Why?** Peckham, in southeast London, has a vibrant multicultural high street with diverse independent traders, as well as a cluster of creative and cultural industries, which has grown organically around Peckham Rye station, accommodated in the area's former industrial warehouses and railway arches. The intersection of multiple 'parallel economies' in the town centre is a source of strength, highly valued by businesses and residents alike. However, in 2005, the emerging local plan proposed the redevelopment of a five-acre area adjacent to the railway, which would have seen the loss of over 60 artist studios, small industrial businesses, churches and historic buildings to make way for a tram depot and mixed-use redevelopment. The local campaign initiated to fight these proposals led to the creation of Peckham Vision: a community association of individuals who live, work or run a business in Peckham, which promotes informed discussion and joint working on the future of the town centre. The work is done by a small team of committed residents and supported by a larger network of volunteers.

**How?** Rather than merely objecting to the plans, the group presented an alternative vision for part of the site they dubbed 'Copeland Cultural Quarter'. This included a self-produced land-use ideas 'masterplan', and a 'hotspot' map of the clusters of creative enterprises. Over several years, by developing its own local community information and communications system and through local campaigning, Peckham Vision has directly informed the Council's policies in the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan. But work is ongoing to resist further sites being unnecessarily redeveloped, and to promote an understanding of the intricate economic, social and physical ecology of the town centre, where the old and varied buildings provide ideal conditions for the working of small enterprises, including creative ones, developing self-sustaining micro economies.

Much of the economic activity around Rye Lane is 'below the radar' of the public agencies. Substantial evidence supporting the local case for retaining the diversity of commerce and intricacy of the street's built fabric, has been provided more recently by researchers from the London School of Economics led by Dr Suzanne Hall. In contrast to the 'retail capacity' studies typically commissioned by local authorities, this research documented the value of, and interdependencies between, the diverse trading activities on Rye Lane. It helped to directly challenge the evidence produced by the Council, which might have led to the promotion



of larger format retail suitable for chain stores. In 2012, supported by Peckham Vision, the Rye Lane Traders Association formed, which is further helping to increase the voice and visibility of traders.

Peckham Vision has been developing for the last 10-15 years a list of local people interested in the town centre. This now numbers around 9,000 local people, and continues to grow. There are around 3,000 on email, some 2,000 followers on Facebook and over 5,000 on Twitter. Contacts in this large neighbourhood communication system are nurtured through regular information on local planning and development matters, as well as events and activities of interest to the community. The group has learned that many individual responses to emerging plans and live planning applications are more effective than collective petitions. Instead of newsletters, email and online communication is through 'bite-size chunks' of easily digestible information, which can be acted upon easily. If people are to respond to planning consultations on live applications and planning policy matters, they need all the information in one place: the planning application case number, the policy reference and document name, the correct weblinks or email addresses to make a response, and clear deadline dates. Eileen Conn, founder and coordinator argues: "If any one key piece of information is missing, the opportunity is lost".

**Peckham Vision holds regular events and meetings to involve the local community in considering proposed plans and developing their own ideas**

Photo: Peckham Vision

# PEACH

## 7

**Why?** Custom House in Newham was earmarked for regeneration by the council in 2000, being one of the most deprived wards in the borough. Its proximity to the Excel Centre and Canary Wharf has made it desirable for a commercial-led mixed use scheme, which proposes to demolish approximately 2,000 homes together with the shopping parade in Freemasons Road and replace these with up to 10,000 residential units and an enhanced high street. At the moment Freemasons Road provides all the services needed by the local community: a butcher, baker, convenience store, take-away, café and they are all independent businesses.

The current proposals are likely to displace not only the council estates' residents but also the businesses on Freemasons Road which would be given very little compensation for their relocation and priced out of the area by the future development's unaffordable rents.

**How?** People's Empowerment Alliance for Custom House (PEACH) was formally launched in 2013 bringing together local residents, traders, schools and churches. Work to set up the group had started two years before when a £1m grant was allocated through the National Lottery Big Local Fund. The local steering group appointed a community organiser to support PEACH with training, outreach, negotiations, action and delivering programmes to achieve their vision in four key areas: jobs and education, housing and regeneration, safety and health.

PEACH sought to be involved from the very early stages in the regeneration process in order to be recognised as an important stakeholder and to prevent the negative impacts of redevelopment on the local community. By establishing a relationship with Newham Council's head of regeneration, they were able to start these discussions even before any developers had been shortlisted.

Shopkeepers on Freemasons Road play an essential role in PEACH and they have been very active in getting organised, raising awareness of the issues in the wider community and starting negotiations with the Council, as their businesses would be the first to be affected by the proposed redevelopment. The traders are a key point of contact, sharing information about PEACH's activities and campaigns, displaying newsletters in their shops and contributing to research projects by distributing survey questionnaires.

A shopkeepers group is currently being formalised and they have developed a traders' charter setting out their demands and principles which they want to be incorporated in the developers' brief. This includes the right of all traders to stay in the area during and after redevelopment and to be given fair treatment such as low rents and realistic compensation.



The group has been successful in securing a good deal for the first shop set to be demolished at the end of this year. PEACH has mobilised the wider community to support the shopkeeper who has been in the area for 40 years. Their campaign collected over 300 messages from local residents and traders which were taken to a meeting with the council to show how valuable the business is to the community.

**The Freemasons Road shopkeepers threatened by redevelopment of Custom House play a key role in PEACH**

Photo: PEACH

PEACH has developed relationships with other groups across Newham and further afield, which share similar struggles. They have received research support from Just Space and UCL and are talking to progressive planners and developers to look at alternative regeneration models. They are looking to join the Federation of Small Businesses to access resources and legal advice.

**Why?** The East End Trades Guild (EETG) is a co-operative of small, independent traders launched in 2012 with 200 members. The impetus came in 2010 when the proprietor of Gardner’s Market Sundriesmen, one of the oldest family businesses in Spitalfields, faced a potentially crippling rent rise. Public awareness of the case through the blog Spitalfields Life spurred the idea for traders to band together and the EETG was formed. The Guild’s slogan “Together we are stronger” underpins its collective approach.


One reader of the blog was a Hackney resident and Masters Student in Community Organising. Drawing on Community Organising principles, she built support across East End businesses and their allies through one-to-one and group meetings, listening to individual concerns, following up personal recommendations from traders and drinking lots of cups of tea!

Local traders face a variety of issues but some areas of common concern strongly emerged during meetings, such as the need to demonstrate their importance to the character and success of the East End, and to raise awareness of their vulnerability in the face of rising rents imposed by commercial landlords and large scale redevelopment, such as Spitalfields market and Bishopsgate Goodsyard. It was clear that a strong local power base would be required to match the powerful institutions that shape London’s urban development.

**How?** The initial strategy, with mandate from members, was to work towards a high-profile public launch in 2012, held in Christ Church Spitalfields, to which local and national press were invited. During its short life, the EETG has been working to secure commitment from Tower Hamlets Council to adopt a leasing code for business premises, which would create a more level playing field for lease negotiations.

The EETG held a Mayoral hustings where members held the candidates to account, while documenting their commitments to work with the EETG on film. Commitments made by the new mayor of Tower Hamlets included working on a joint proposal for an affordable rent strategy and discretionary business rate relief in the manufacturing sector.



 *EastEndTradesGuild*

 *@EastEndTrades*

Another important action was a members' survey to demonstrate and quantify the value that small businesses add to the economy. This was achieved through establishing links with a researcher at the New Economics Foundation who had a special interest in this topic and worked closely with EETG members to decide what to measure. The research provided figures on the number of local people employed, collective turnover and contributions in business rates, as well as their contribution to local civic life, the history of the East End, and its connections with customers. The results of the survey have been hugely valuable in negotiating with large institutions who tend to argue in terms of numbers, providing evidence to feed into planning inquiries and examinations, and giving the organisation credibility at Council meetings.



**The EETG logo  
reflects the group's  
collective approach**

Design: James Brown



**Why?** Queen's Market is one of the oldest and most diverse of London's markets, located in Newham in an area of high deprivation often referred to as a food desert. The market supplies good value, affordable products and caters to a wide range of ethnic minorities with food and produce which are not usually found in supermarkets. It also provides an essential public space for people from different cultures to meet and engage with each other.

However, in 2003 Newham Council put forward proposals to sell the site on a long-lease to a developer to turn it into a new shopping centre with a 31-storey residential tower. This would have displaced the traders and business adjacent to the market through a lack of adequate premises, higher rents and competition from chain stores. The proposed development would have had a huge impact on the livelihood of these local businesses as well as limiting the community's access to fresh and affordable food.

**How?** Friends of Queen's Market (FOQM) was formed in reaction to Newham Council's proposals and quickly attracted a lot of support from the local community, as they started having regular meetings and raising awareness of the threats to the market. The group also took on the role of supporting market traders with day-to-day management issues and creating a forum for locals to express their views and ideas.

To stop the development, the group created a petition which reached 12000 signatures. This also mobilised a very high rate of response to the developer's planning application, with over 2500 objections submitted over the consultation period. Despite the strong public opposition Newham Council approved the scheme. With support from London Assembly Members, FOQM persuaded the Mayor of London to intervene and stop the planning permission from being granted. The developer finally withdrew in 2010, but the Council's intention remained to redevelop the site.

In addition to local community and political support, the group benefitted from building relationships with academics, researchers, solicitors and other community organisations and activists.

Research conducted in 2006 by the new economics foundation (“The world on a plate”) showed the significant positive impacts of the market on the local economy and the value it brought to different communities. FOQM also received legal support from Friends of the Earth to apply for a Judicial Review of the planning application on grounds of an inadequate Equality Impact Assessment, which failed to consider the effects of the proposed scheme on ethnic minorities and other groups protected under equalities legislation.



FOQM took part in the public examination of the Newham Core Strategy in 2011, receiving support from Just Space in their preparations. While the Planning Inspector was sympathetic and recognised the value of the market, the allocation of the site as mixed-use including residential development did not change.

**Queen’s Market provides affordable produce to a wide range of different ethnic minority communities**

Photo: Saif Osmani

FOQM have looked at alternative ways to protect the market. In 2013 they submitted a request to Newham Council to list the market as an Asset of Community Value but they haven’t received a response so far.

The group is also currently opposing the planning application to redevelop Boleyn Grounds (West Ham Football pitch) into luxury housing and have been building relationships with other community groups to campaign for 100% social housing on this site.

**Why?** Wards Corner, a city block at Seven Sisters, Tottenham, has been threatened with wholesale demolition and redevelopment since 2004. For Haringey Council, Seven Sisters is the gateway to Tottenham, in need of investment in the form of a landmark building to replace the existing market and shops which it sees as run down and low-value. The Council has therefore supported and facilitated plans from developer Grainger Plc. After the riots in the summer of 2011, existing homes, businesses, community facilities and public spaces throughout Tottenham have come under increasing pressure from both Haringey Council and the Mayor of London, who look to redevelopment and inward investment to solve Tottenham's problems, rather than to support and nurture its existing communities, businesses and assets. For Wards Corner Community Coalition (WCC), a broad collective of local market traders, small businesses and residents, and the Seven Sisters market traders' association, El Pueblito Paisa Ltd, Wards Corner is already home to a vibrant local economy with heritage buildings that could be restored and brought back into use to create a really unique place for the diverse communities it serves.

WCC and Pueblito Paisa Ltd have pursued a variety of strategies and tactics over the years to resist Grainger's plans to develop an alternative community-led proposal for Wards Corner. They have fought and won a Judicial Review over Haringey Council's decision to approve Grainger's plans without considering the equalities impacts, which are considerable given Wards Corner is home to one of two main shopping and social destinations for Latin Americans in London, as well as traders and small businesses from many other migrant and ethnic groups. While Grainger re-submitted their plans, WCC effectively lobbied Mayor of London Boris Johnson, resulting in a commitment to ensure that the market is reprovided as part of their development plans. While WCC's second legal challenge was ultimately unsuccessful, giving Grainger an unencumbered planning permission in autumn 2013, WCC and Pueblito Paisa have continued to work on an alternative community plan to restore and bring back into use the Wards building. In spring 2014, the community plan was granted planning permission and the market was registered as an Asset of Community Value. Since then, WCC and Pueblito Paisa have been working to put the West Green Road/Seven Sisters Development Trust (the Trust) into action to deliver the community plan as its first project.



n15developmenttrust



@n15devtrust

**How?**

In 2008, four members of WCC and Pueblito Paisa formally registered the Trust as a non-profit Company Limited by Guarantee. The Trustees have been involved in discussions about the community plan since the beginning, both in relation to the first plan submitted by Pueblito Paisa and the second plan submitted jointly with WCC. In setting up the Trust, these business and community leaders foresaw that there would come a time when local market traders, small businesses and residents would need a vehicle to pursue their own long-held ambitions for self-management and community-led development.



Since securing planning permission, the Trustees have worked with WCC and Pueblito Paisa, with the support of broader local networks such as Our Tottenham and London-wide Latin American organisations, to build a community development vehicle from a campaigning group. Early priorities have included defining how the Trust will work and its relationship to WCC and Pueblito Paisa, developing a vision for the Trust, building positive and professional relationships with key local stakeholders such as Transport for London (TfL) who own the Wards building and Haringey Council, holding local meetings with local traders, small businesses and residents and applying for funding.

**The Trust and WCC have secured planning permission for a community plan to restore the Wards building, retain and expand the market providing space for small businesses and social enterprise, as well as arts and community uses**

Artist's impression:  
Abigail Stevenson

## Further resources

**Plans and policies** — The London Plan: <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/london-plan> • The Economic Evidence Base: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/evidence-base-2010-final-low.pdf> • The Mayor's statutory Economic Development Strategy: <https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/business-economy/publications/economic-development-strategy> • The London Enterprise Panel's Economic Development Plan, London 2036: <https://lep.london/our-work-and-priorities/strategies-and-plans>

**Just Space Economy and Planning** — Blog: <http://justspace.org.uk/category/economy-and-planning/> • Working paper on industrial land: <http://justspace.org.uk/2015/02/24/jsep-and-cass-cities-event-londons-industrial-land-cause-for-concern/> • JSEP's response to the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP): <http://justspace.org.uk/2014-plan/consultation-responses/>

**Just Space** — Website: <http://justspace.org.uk> • Just Space work on the FALP: <http://justspace.org.uk/2014-plan/> • Just Space work on the 2011 London Plan: <https://justspace2010.wordpress.com/> • Articles about Just Space: <https://justspacelondon.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/edw-brown-lee-20140308.pdf> ; <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13604813.2014.896654#.VaZ5dEXYKHk>

**New Economics Foundation** — Plugging the Leaks: <http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org/> ; [http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/files/Plugging\\_the\\_Leaks.pdf](http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/files/Plugging_the_Leaks.pdf) • Haringey Carbon Commission: [http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/files/HaringeyCCReport\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/files/HaringeyCCReport_WEB.pdf) • Re-imagining the High Street: [http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/publications/Reimagining\\_the\\_high\\_street\\_4.pdf](http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/publications/Reimagining_the_high_street_4.pdf) • Clone Town Britain: [http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/files/Clone\\_Town\\_Britain.pdf](http://www.neweconomics.org/page/-/files/Clone_Town_Britain.pdf)

**Diversity and resilience of high streets and town centres** — Peckham parallel economies workshop: [http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/images/d/df/Parallel\\_economies\\_8\\_July\\_2013\\_Peckham\\_Vision\\_workshop\\_F.pdf](http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/images/d/df/Parallel_economies_8_July_2013_Peckham_Vision_workshop_F.pdf) • Latin Elephant: <http://latinelephant.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Latin-American-Businesses-EC-map.pdf> • Ordinary Streets: <https://lsecities.net/objects/research-projects/ordinary-streets> • Adaptable Suburbs: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/adaptablesuburbs>

**Maps and surveys of industrial estates** — Charlton Riverside: <http://cicdl.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/charlton-riverside-an-alternative-plan-Jan-2013.pdf> • Gort Scott survey of Tottenham industrial estates: <http://www.gortscott.com/news/99/> • Park Royal Atlas: <https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/regeneration/publications-guidance/park-royal-atlas> • London Legacy Development Corporation local economy studies: <http://queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/our-story/transforming-east-london/local-plan/examination-of-the-legacy-corporation-local-plan>

**Popular articles** — Rowan Moore in the Observer, 28 June 2015, on ‘London: the city that ate itself’: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jun/28/london-the-city-that-ate-itself-rowan-moore>

**Other relevant research** — Diane Perrons’ study of social and economic development in UK regions: <http://cjres.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/12/24/cjres.rsr033.short>

**This handbook sets out the threat to local shops, markets, workshops and industrial areas in London, why it matters and why it is happening.**

**Ten case studies describe the strategies used by community and small business groups fighting to retain workspace for London's diverse economies and developing their own alternative plans and proposals.**

