

# Community Centred Knowledge, Mama D

## Chapter 1: Good Growth Principles: Changes proposed from CFGN context

For GG2: The existing text is:

To create high-density, mixed-use places that make the best use of land, those involved in planning and development must:

- A. prioritise the development of Opportunity Areas, brownfield land, surplus public sector land, sites which are well-connected by existing or planned Tube and rail stations, sites within and on the edge of town centres, and small sites.
- B. proactively explore the potential to intensify the use of land, including public land, to support additional homes and workspaces, promoting higher density development, particularly on sites that are well-connected by public transport, walking and cycling, applying a design-led approach.
- C. understand what is valued about existing places and use this as a catalyst for growth and place-making, strengthening London's distinct and varied character.
- D. protect London's open spaces, including the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, designated nature conservation sites and local spaces, and promote the creation of new green infrastructure and urban greening.
- E. plan for good local walking, cycling and public transport connections to support a strategic target of 80 per cent of all journeys using sustainable travel, enabling car-free lifestyles that allow an efficient use of land, as well as using new and enhanced public transport links to unlock growth.
- F. maximise opportunities to use infrastructure assets for more than one purpose, to make the best use of land and support efficient maintenance

My proposed edits are: GG2

**To create liveable-density, mixed-use places that make the best use of land, engaging those involved in planning and development, which should incorporate local community representation, and which must:**

- A. prioritise the environmentally and socially sustainable development of all London land with a view to optimising the use of Opportunity Areas, brownfield land, surplus public sector land, sites which are well-connected by existing or planned Tube and rail stations, sites within and on the edge of town centres, and small sites.
- B. proactively explore the potential to intensify the use of land, including public land, to support additional homes and workspaces, promoting higher density development, particularly on sites that are well-connected by public transport, walking and cycling, applying a design-led approach and prioritising the development of lifetime neighbourhoods with pro-active food supply hubs.
- C. understand what is valued about existing places and use this as a catalyst for growth and place-making, strengthening London's distinct and varied character.
- D. **Protect London's open spaces, including the green belt, metropolitan open land, designated nature conservation sites, allotments, public gardens and other local green spaces, and promote the creation of new green infrastructure and urban greening activities which value the**

**productive use of green space, such as integrated food growing hub development, which supports and enables health and well-being in the city.**

- E. plan for good local walking, cycling and public transport connections to support a strategic target of 80 per cent of all journeys using sustainable travel, enabling car-free lifestyles that allow an efficient use of land, as well as using new and enhanced public transport links to unlock **sustainable** growth.
- F. maximise opportunities to use infrastructure assets for more than one purpose, to make the best use of land and support efficient maintenance **as well as the well-being and livelihood of communities living in the area**
- G. **be mindful of the need to optimise the use of space, so that intensification planning at borough level incorporates sufficient social impact assessment to ensure changing land uses do not impact adversely those whose claims on the land have been hitherto less well represented. Furthermore no new land use should have the effect of displacing heritages and cultures that are part of what is widely recognised as giving London its special character as a 'world city'.**

The support narrative for changes to GG2 will need to read as follows:

1.2.2. The key to achieving this will be taking a rounded approach to the way neighbourhoods operate, making them work not only more space-efficiently, **but also better for the people who use them, creating lifetime neighbourhoods which recognises the need for developments to reflect the social and cultural impact of any proposed changes**. This will mean creating and rehabilitating places of higher, but still liveable, densities in appropriate locations to get more out of limited land, **encouraging a mix of land uses, including those associated with increasing London's food security in accordance with the good sense of the Sustainable Development Goals** and co-locating different uses to provide communities with a wider range of services and amenities.

and changes to 1.2.6

As London develops, the Mayor's Good Growth by Design programme - which seeks to promote and deliver a better, more inclusive form of growth on behalf of all Londoners - will ensure that homes and other developments are of high quality. Existing green space designations will remain strong to protect the environment, **to recognise the critical importance of the food system of London as being central to the maintenance of London's food security, as it has been since London's inception as well as improvements to green infrastructure, which centres the productive use of green space for food growing, biodiversity and other environmental factors, delivering 50 per cent productive green cover across London, will be important to help London become a National Park City which is also attentive to the need to provide for food security and the provision of a way for Londoners to have an accessible way to support and promote health and well being.**

and to 1.2.7

London's distinctive character and heritage is why many people want to come to the city. As new developments are designed, the special features that Londoners value about a place, **and contribute to shaping**, such as cultural, historic or natural elements, can be used positively to guide and

stimulate **further growth, mutual respect and cohesion**, and create distinctive, attractive and cherished places

The changes here can be supported by wording in GG1 to the effect of anchoring the proposals in a discussion about Lifetime Neighbourhoods, social cohesion through respect of diversity and supporting accessibility in a broad way. It also needs to embellish the idea that a home is place from which the occupants can easily accessible productive opportunities, which contribute to growth of the local economy and accord with the other aspirations of the plan with regards to sustainability, walking, cycling and use of public transport and supporting the local heritage and culture of communities.

## Policy GG3 Creating a healthy city

### 1.3.1

The health of Londoners is, to a large extent, determined by the environment in which they live. **Londoners also shape that environment by how they are able to live.** Transport, housing, education, income, working conditions, unemployment, air quality, green space provision and access, climate change and social and community networks can have a greater influence on health than healthcare provision or genetics. Many of these determinants of health can be shaped by **an inclusive** planning system, and local authorities are accordingly responsible for planning and public health.

### 1.3.2

The scale of London's health inequalities is great, and the need to reduce them is urgent. Healthy life expectancy is lower in more deprived areas, and the differences between parts of London is stark – more than 15 years for men and almost 19 years for women. London's ongoing growth provides an opportunity to reduce these inequalities, and delivering Good Growth will involve prioritising health in all London's planning decisions.

### 1.3.3

The causes of London's health problems are wide-ranging. Many of London's major health problems are related to inactivity. Currently only 34 per cent of Londoners report doing the 20 minutes of active travel each day that can help them to stay healthy, but good planning can help them to build this into their daily routine. Access to green and open spaces, including waterways, can improve health, but access varies widely across the city, **so this will need to be regulated and improved by the creation of green opportunities as a part of all housing development and rehabilitation.** Excessive housing costs or living in a home that is damp, too hot or too cold can have serious health impacts. A healthy food environment and access to healthy food is vital for good health. Good, **inclusive**, planning can help address all of these issues. **Such planning means councils having to work alongside food sector expertise and communities and work across sectors in a joined up way.**

### 1.3.4

The Healthy Streets Approach outlined in this plan puts improving health and reducing health inequalities at the heart of planning London's public space. It will tackle London's inactivity crisis, improve air quality and reduce the other health impacts of living in a car-dominated city by planning street networks that work well for people on foot and on bikes, and providing public transport networks that are attractive alternatives to car use. **It will ensure that green spaces are more widely distributed across London and that their use can be productive, providing Londoners with the opportunity to grow food and be environmental stewards, providing for good mental health activity.** It will also ensure that streets become more social spaces **for all Londoners.**

### 1.3.5

The social and environmental causes of ill-health are numerous and complex, and the people who are most affected by London's health inequalities tend also to be affected by other forms of inequality. Creating a healthy city with reduced health inequalities will make London fairer for everyone. The Mayor plays a pivotal role in bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders from service providers, boroughs, communities and the private sector in order to provide a more integrated approach to promoting a healthy city and reducing health inequalities. The Mayor will co-ordinate investment and

focus regeneration initiatives in those parts of London most affected by inequalities, including health inequalities.

## GG3

To improve Londoners' health and reduce health inequalities, **all those** involved in planning and development, **which includes community representation**, must:

- A. ensure that the wider determinants of health are addressed in an integrated and co-ordinated way, taking a systematic approach to improving the mental and physical health of all Londoners and reducing health inequalities.
- B. promote more active and healthy lifestyles for all Londoners and enable them to make healthy choices. **Developing Food Hubs which are centred on local food growing and development of integrated food trading places, provides a range of healthy and local economic and social activities across London**
- C. use the Healthy Streets Approach to prioritise health in all planning decisions.
- D. assess the potential impacts of development proposals on the health and wellbeing of communities, in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts and help reduce health inequalities, for example through the use of **Social and Health Impact Assessments**.
- E. plan for improved access to green spaces and the provision of new green infrastructure **integrated into all new and rehabilitated developments**.
- F. ensure that new buildings are well-insulated and sufficiently ventilated to avoid the health problems associated with damp, heat and cold.
- G. seek to create a healthy food environment, increasing the availability of healthy food and restricting unhealthy options **by working closely with the food sector and communities to allow for more widespread awareness of the importance of creating a more food secure city in terms of quality and quantity**.

Narrative support for GG3, G:

### 1.3.6.

**A healthy food environment is underpinned by a London wide integration of the sub-systems which enable people of all classes, ages, genders and ethnicities to eat a diversity of healthy foods. This includes the knowledge systems which educate everyone on healthy eating practice.**

**Whilst this cannot be centrally controlled for, the Spatial Development Strategy (The London Plan) calls for a good understanding of London's food history and a systemic understanding of how people access food in way that supports their sovereignty, dignity, social cohesion and health. This should strongly inform how policies across the different sectors can support not only every Londoner's health, but also contribute to a thriving London economy and support a decentralised social infrastructure that embraces the other Good Growth policies in each sector.**

**This calls for a greater degree of inter-sectoral working on behalf of the different elements of the plan; housing, transport, heritage and culture, etc as well as by recognising the distinct nature of how each Londoner accesses opportunities for health and ensuring each sector supports this diversity.**

# Community Modalities, London's Good Growth and a Plan to go forward with

*The written submission below, is by Mama D and Marina Chang as participants of the Just Space network.*

Mama D is a food and social justice activist and a social and community justice facilitator and trainer and also a curator of immersive experiences: The Food Journey, The London Journey and others which support citizen access to agency and voice. She researches, informally, on what it means to operate collectively and on a community basis in terms of social and cultural modalities of community experience and shared cosmo-visions of justice and balance in a changing world. She is a champion of community based research and action. Dr Marina Chang is a university researcher at Coventry University as well as a board member Calthorpe Project – a community garden/centre located around King's Cross, Central London. Her research is focused on developing new modes of self-organisation, co-operation and innovation between universities and communities. The two have been in discussion with Just Space members about the various elements of the London plan - a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) – produced under the mayoral leadership of Sadiq Khan.

Our discussions have mainly focussed on the health, environmental and social infrastructural elements of the SDS, but not exclusively, because we understand that all elements of the SDS interweave to produce a discourse of what it will mean to **be a part of** London, or, given our concerns about its future impact, **apart from** London.

We first present our ideas overall concerning where we see there to be key flaws in the current draft SDS and where we feel a Just Space approach can address such shortcomings. We then we go on to point out particular policies which exemplify how such an approach could be put into practice to support the core focus of Just Space – the idea that the community perspectives that Just Space and all of its affiliate organisations gather around is that in spatial terms, what we are looking to realise is a London as an area of composite lifetime neighbourhoods. What are these? In the document '**Towards** a community-led London Plan: policy directions and proposals, produced in August 2016' this is defined as:

**'...places that meet the needs of a local community at all stages in its life, recognising health and well-being, social networks, a thriving local economy and a sustainable environment.'**

Although the term 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' was introduced in the London Plan in 2011, the current (and previous) emphasis in the plan on the economic dimensions of what London means to its inhabitants, appears to not clearly support the strengthening of the socio-cultural dimensions and the necessary environmental issues in a linked way, one which communities can understand so as to be able to implement them. It also does not present a defined understanding, at a micro level, of how a complex history of place, when shared, gives rise to a working understanding of a neighbourhood that then has the possibility of being self-supporting, sustainable and a desirable place for all Londoners to live in a socially cohesive and inclusive way.

A Lifetime neighbourhood is therefore a place which reflects best practice ways of integrating economic, social, environmental and cultural concerns expressed by people living and working in London that reflect the history of each locality **as well as** the way in which the configuration of its spatial qualities defines it. In this way we have a container to hold the all the narratives and all the histories and, most importantly offers a sense of agency to each Londoner, as member of a community of place and interest.

We feel that it is a key mayoral responsibility to ensure that social cohesion and inclusiveness is accessible to and made possible by and for all Londoners – of all and any estate and also that, as representatives of a wide swathe of community interests, community organisations be enabled to represent the voice of London and be given equal status and regard as is offered to any corporate voice or other interest which is consulted as to London's future. Not only this, but there should be sufficient understanding that in order to effectively factor in wide ranging community voices, there is a corresponding requirement that sufficient leverage is given by creating spaces for these voices to express themselves and that such spaces are well enough resourced to occupy them effectively.

A failure to ensure these things tends to mean a diminution in effective consultation, in terms of both quality and quantity and therefore a failure to factor in both the creativity and concerns of everyday London in a culturally comprehensive way.

Key to our reading of the London plan is that all Londoners matter and this affirmation is particularly poignant given the pattern of migration of people into and out of London the historical, economic narrative that supports this reality.

In terms of London being the capital city of London, the pattern of movement of people to far flung parts of the UK and the pattern of in-migration to London from the home-counties has been popularly referred to as a form of ethnic or social cleansing, or more popularly, 'gentrification'. Much of this appears to arise from the wave of corporate designed, local government supported 'regeneration' of many of London's inner city areas, an activity which has created a lot of disaffection and grief for Londoners who have been separated from family and other social connections and which has culminated, in 2017, with the outpouring of anger and grief following what appears to be corporate-local government collusion around the withholding of community rights which culminated in the Grenfell tragedy.

The term 'Home' and 'Housing' appears to be used interchangeably throughout the document. We define a home as a place from which each occupant is able to realise, within her locality, a reasonable access to all of those things which support 'Good Living', such as: access to affordable foodstuffs, educational and child care facilities, health maintenance and well-being facilities, spaces to socialise, exercise and experience leisure and creativity. If places where productive occupation which yields an income can be accessible from the home then this is also considered desirable.

The kinds of housing that are on offer, apart from the confusion of the many terms for price accessibility (affordable, genuinely affordable, social etc) appear to simultaneously refer to either a structure of a place that can become a home: the building/buildings or refer to a partial fulfilment of what we have described above. We feel this creates a confusion which is not helpful and mis-directs the reader of the plan. It is not the kind of use of language that we feel is supportive of a clear consultation process with London communities.

There are four areas which we particularly feel unaddressed by the way the SDS/London Plan is structured and presented.

We welcome the idea of overarching Good Growth principles which can act to provide a framework for London developments because it is good to have a framework which speaks to the underlying principles of all policy making. However, do these principles enshrine what it means to be a *de facto* Londoner in the sense of responding to what the key concerns are from local community perspectives?

The term 'Londoner' arises frequently within the pages of the London Plan, but we question the extent to which it has any consistency which can be helpful to implementing the plan meaningfully at either London or Borough Council level. So we feel we have to raise the question:

Who is a *de facto* Londoner?

- a. Londoners who have been living in London for generations and who have most of their connections in London
- b. Londoners who have lived in London for generations but who have found themselves displaced in the most recent generations out of London, but who still have social, familial or economic links to London
- c. Those who spend more than half their day for more than half the week in London because of work or other social/cultural/relationship reasons but who have their primary habitation outside of London
- d. Those transient who live in London temporarily because of either being a **student** or who are here for **business** or **tourism**
- e. Those who have not been here for generations, but are relatively recent arrivals, maybe in the last 20 years and who are from other parts of the UK, or from Europe, America or other parts of the globe.

Is there any other category of Londoner that we should be considering if we are to plan for London more realistically or appropriately? What is the impact of each of these groups upon how London is being shaped?

We feel that these categories help bring focus on who really are functional Londoners. Do we need to look more carefully at the relative influence different categories really make in a 'City for all Londoners'? Who really has the most agency or voice is the most powerful in this respect. How does this arise and why?

In terms of the systems and structures which define our thinking about the city, we feel the following four points are critical to understand better how the contexts for our thinking about London and its planning is organised: Each of these systemic relationships are invoked when various of the policies are spoken of, but as underlying concepts they are not mentioned directly and do not seem to factor in the way in which statements are articulated within the Plan. In order to make this clearer, mention will be made of Chapter 1's policies on Good Growth (GG); these state the underlying principles governing all the other policies in the chapters of the plan. So it is important that it gets things right. We can look at GG1-6 and see how the systemic and structural factors below are relevant to the fundamental thinking behind this spatial development strategy.

1. Intersectionality: the measure of diversity for Londoners which recognises that any one person is a composite of many identities (read vulnerabilities and opportunities) and how this complex nature is made invisible by the monolithic nature of institutions that plan, implement and monitor London's

development. This might apply to economic, political and social structures and systems whose policies and programmes impact upon how everyday lives are lived.

In GG1 which begins: '***To build on the city's tradition of openness, diversity and equality, and help deliver strong and inclusive communities, those involved in planning and development must...***'

Does not acknowledge that the planning and development structures are founded upon systems which in themselves are colonial, predominantly white, patriarchal, male and cis heterosexual by heritage and so do not convey an idea of 'openness', which has largely been brought about by London's informal structures and the diversity of traditions that have co-existed in London.

Intersectionality, therefore, would be a function of enabling these diverse communities to have adequate say in the planning and development process.

2. Formal and informal divide (formal planning has a very rigid framework and inherent incompatible attitude that fails to recognise/appreciate let alone to incorporate 'informal' inputs into the current planning system). Informal in this sense connotes the sectors which are not considered as part of the mainstream institutions which are responsible for policies, legislature or governance. The Informal might be community organisations (of place or of interest/identity) but they might also be constituted by commercially shared interests/activity without having the 'clout' to influence in the mainstream.

Again in the Good Growth Policies a part of the narrative states:

***'London's growth and development is shaped by the decisions that are made every day by planners, planning applicants and decision-makers across the city...'***

Which excludes the reality that also the everyday decisions of ordinary Londoners also shapes London's growth and development. It does not acknowledge the ways in which both private, commercial as well as public are interdependent in the way in which London develops and how it grows – or shrinks and is diminished – as the result of the interplay of the roles of its different inhabitants as well as the public sector. At the very least the use of '***decision makers***' in the sentence could be broadened to include every day Londoners.

3. A lack of historical and temporal depth - how there seems to be an insufficient factoring in of how London has been evolving over centuries and how this evolution has been shaped by everyday London as well as by institutions and the corporate sector. The SDS is a Spatial Strategy, but meaning and interpretation can only be derived by understanding **place** in the context of **time** and these are multiple and micro interpretations and are of a complex nature. However, to fail to be able to incorporate those resistances and arguments based upon the logic of time **x** place means that the strategy fails to be responsive to its citizens own understanding of how their own contributions have shaped London.

It would seem that the Good Growth Policies are couched in the language of a passive Londoner who responds only to a shaping idea: in 1.0.8 it states:

***'A city that is planned well can improve as it grows. Planning for the right number of homes and higher levels of affordable housing will take advantage of London's growth to re-balance the housing market. Planning for mixed-use developments in all parts of London will spread the success of London's economy and create stronger communities where everyone feels welcome. Planning new developments to reduce car dependency will improve Londoners' health and make the city a better place to live. Planning for a 'smarter' city, with world-class digital connectivity will enable secure data to be better used to improve the lives of Londoners.'***

Where in this does it incorporate the idea of an active citizenry who make decisions proactively, who have been, over time, considering the options and making decisions on the basis of this? Citizens who protest, plan, organise and communicate amongst themselves to determine what they want out of their London which may be different to what *loftier* planners and developers are considering whilst taking the city in a direction arrived at without sufficient consultation with such communities.

4. Inter-sectoral ways of working at the level of the main institutions, particularly the GLA internal structure, but also at borough council levels which still make recourse to archaic procedures which might not suit the objectives of facilitating a much more modern and inclusive city. Such procedures rely on reducing the city to concepts which are monolithic and do not incorporate the lived reality of communities on the ground.

In contrast to this, the immediacy of the grassroots, of communities, of lived experience is able to better capture the living, dynamic complexity of society. How can academics, policy makers, planners, activists develop methods, tools, indicators and reporting which draw upon a multi-disciplinary mode to bridge meaning and impact shared across sectors?

The Good Growth policies need an overarching narrative to speak to the need for each of the GG policies to make sense **between** them. Where is the overarching idea that **combines** each GG policy so that it makes sense to an everyday Londoners life?

There is an idea of 'a historical commitment to change' which 'a Londoner' has which may be different to that held by GLA bureaucrats, especially in those cases in which they are not Londoners themselves.

However committed each sector within the GLA machinery may be committed to growth and development across London it cannot replace an authentic consultation with the considered voices of a wide ranging London Community so as to get a necessary 'value added' and to capture the complexity of the everyday.

The community level is inter-sectoral through and by experience. Where it lacks the capacity to express this, it is expected that the best - inter-sectoral - practice of the GLA can offer guidance and support to optimise communication and cohesion between community sectors and to show how open and lifelong learning between the people of London is the most powerful tool for the way we move ahead.

Beyond identity- the inter-sectorality of systems and structures and incorporating the ecology of place and beings in relationship, we need to engage with both natural/biological and social systems simultaneously. What has London in terms of its own **cosmovision** which reflects the unique plural nature of how it has come to be and where it can go to next?

We consider the case of the Calthorpe Project a green community oasis in Kings Cross and of the diverse communities of Vassall and Coldharbour Wards in Brixton, vying for leadership and recognition and most importantly an acknowledgement that they are **continuously contributing to the economic, cultural and tourism capital that Brixton has become.**

The London Plan is subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. A Just Space vision asserts that any impact assessment, if not closely co-ordinated with community organisations on the ground sets itself to fail, or at least be **significantly unrepresentative** of the experienced realities of complex community.

How is it possible to explain the relevance and implications of an externally conducted Integrated Impact Assessment to the different community members at the Calthorpe Project or Brixton communities?

We recommend that ways are found, through working with the already formed strategic networks within Just Space, ways to encourage and support them community participation in their own self-assessment? This has multiple benefits:

1. The GLA will have a ready-made inter-sectoral body with an intersectional perspective: the community!
2. It is inevitably less expensive to run a series of community led activities which result in harvesting more direct feedback, insight and understanding of impact
3. The process of community involvement and engagement in Impact assessment and in the monitoring of the Plan has the added benefit of forming stronger relationships, not only between GLA sectors and communities, but also between community elements themselves as they work to understand themselves and how they operate in situ.
4. Just Space has already been innovating in this respect by producing local and London-wide mapping tools and other interactive experiences, such as learning journeys, which capture community behavioural patterns and relationships and help with social integration at the grassroots, improving shared understanding and cohesion

This 'everyday' relevance surely must be preferable to an imposed, isolated and possibly marginalising official procedure.

In relation to this must be raised the issue of resourcing. Just Space and many affiliated community organisations have already been digging deep into their pockets to do the kind of work to build, strengthen, share and educate, but with increasing austerities, this has been compromised. We feel that it already understood that this kind of work needs resourcing and ways can be found for the GLA to support community organisations, either directly or through offering leverage for other London Based resources to be brought into play, to ensure this vital input continues.

We all wish for this new plan to build an integrated London, sensitive as the plan and Impact assessment to issues of gender, ethnicity, class and race as lived everyday realities of Londoners? If the plan is made for 'economic man' or to a lesser extent 'economic woman', then in what ways will it choose to work to strengthen and deepen an appreciation of the complexity of 'everyday person' who lives, works and breathes the capital city?

How we go about co-evolving an idea of London which is responsive to all the many diverse impulses which makes up its being is up to all of us. How we capture a sense of London beyond the formal, named edifices of space and to a lesser extent time, and move into a palpable vision of London as a living being, which we are collectively moved to protect for the future of all Londoners will, in the end, be the result of not just a paper Spatial Development Strategy, but a London Plan which decisively works **with all** Londoners.