

Draft London Plan
LGBTQI+ Community Response¹
Submission to the Greater London Authority

2 March 2018

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This response brings together a number of networks with expertise on LGBTQI+ communities, their needs and spaces, principally Queer Spaces Network, The Raze Collective, Planning Out and University College London (UCL) Urban Laboratory. As well as the longer-term engagements of these groups and the research they have produced, the comments on the draft *London Plan* that follow are based on an Urban Lab and Queer Spaces Network meeting held on Friday 23 February at Thought Works, Soho for which 70 people registered including representatives from LGBTQI+ organisations including Gay Men's Health Collective, Planet Nation, and The Outside Project. In this document, we use 'LGBTQI+' to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex. The +/plus sign refers to further minority identities relating to gender, sex and sexuality, including, for example, asexual people. 'Queer community' is sometimes used as shorthand to refer to LGBTQI+ communities.

The Queer Spaces Network was established to bring together individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, including venue owners, campaigners, planning and policy specialists, performers, audience members, with an interest in protecting and supporting queer spaces in the UK through sharing experiences and knowledge. This includes an email distribution of 75 members and a Facebook community page of 87 members. QSN has a track record of working productively with the GLA and produced a Vision for Queer Spaces (appendix 1), in response to a GLA request, in order to inform the writing of the Mayor's *Cultural Infrastructure Strategy*. QSN advocates for London to be a world class queer city in which queer spaces are both preserved and supported. It notes the importance of the London Plan in achieving this vision, in particular given the lack of a dedicated LGBTQI+ community centre - which contrasts with other global cities, such as New York, which has had such a centre since the early 1980s.

Planning Out, is an LGBT network that seeks to bring together professionals to influence planning policy in London and the wider UK. Planning Out recognises that even though London has one of the largest, most vibrant LGBTQI+ communities in the world, it lags behind other major world cities such as New York, Chicago and San Francisco in catering for the needs of this demographic. Planning Out would

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like to see a greater strategic focus in placemaking for queer heritage spaces such as Soho, to protect them from being diluted and losing their special significance in the face of commercial pressures. This could be achieved through the installation of permanent LGBT commemorations, rent control for LGBT families, LGBT carehomes and special provision for the protection and creation of LGBT venues. Planning Out believes these initiatives would not only protect the special character of places like Soho from losing its queer character and heritage, but it would also create a central cultural hub for the LGBT community to come together. This would have a positive impact in improving the physical and mental wellbeing of the community.

QSN, together with The Raze Collective (a charity established to support and develop LGBTQI+ performers and performance, with a membership of more than 190 participants), co-designed a research project with UCL Urban Laboratory in 2016 in order to produce an evidence base for what was happening to LGBTQI+ nightlife spaces in London. This was subsequently developed with funding support by the GLA with a report from a second phase of work being published in 2017. This report presented evidence that 58% of venues had closed since 2006, with a fall from 121 to 51 venues. The report makes 12 recommendations for how planning policy and practice, the GLA and local authorities, can work together to better protect LGBTQI+ night-spaces and to encourage new spaces to open (appendix 2, pp. 53-57). It emphasises that measures to support the retention, re-provision and promotion of LGBTQI+ spaces should be included within Mayor's London Plan, and the Mayor's Draft Culture and the Night-time Economy Supplementary Planning Guide. This would include a requirement for local authorities to recognise the importance of LGBTQI+ venues in their borough plans; encouragement, support and guidance for LA's to undertake a Equality Impact Assessment when an LGBTQI+ venue, or one which regularly hosts LGBTQI+ events, is proposed for development; and the fostering of a more consistent city-wide practice of supporting LGBTQI+ venues to stay in operation or be re-provided when they are closed through development.

The research conducted by Urban Lab made clear that Equalities Impact Assessments in some key large-scale urban developments have failed to adequately protect clusters of LGBTQI+ venues and argues that this cannot be allowed to happen in future. For the purposes of such evaluation, in order to fulfil the duties set out in the Equality Act (2010), the report recommended that the Mayor should encourage and support local authorities to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment for any development which affects an existing LGBTQI+ venue or a venue that regularly hosts events designated for the LGBTQI+ community. In performing Equality Impact Assessments, recognising intersectionality within the LGBTQI+ community is vital. For example, if a space predominantly serves LGBTQI+ women, this clientele embody at least two protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (sex, sexual orientation and/or gender reassignment) and potentially more (race, disability, age).

The research report also welcomed the Mayor and GLA's development of an *LGBT Venues Charter* and recommended that this be widely publicised, with the aim of informing built environment professionals and others involved in developments that risk reducing the number of LGBTQI+ venues, and with a view to replacing venues that are lost during development. We see the *Draft London Plan* as an important venue to share this charter and enforce reference to it in development situations. Local authorities should consider provision of LGBTQI+ spaces as potential cultural and social infrastructure within new developments as they arise, working with LGBTQI+ community organisations to identify potential venue operators to work with developers; and actively working with community organisations provide new LGBTQI+ spaces within existing social and cultural venues when opportunities arise.

In presenting our comments on the draft London Plan we note the important historical precedent of the Greater London Council's proactive support for gay and lesbian communities in the 1980s. In the mid-1980s the GLC published its charter *Changing the World: the London Charter for Lesbian and Gay Rights* (1985) and supported the establishment of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre in Clerkenwell with capital funding and grants. The Charter very much outlined a vision for addressing the needs of the time, but nonetheless as a visioning exercise where local municipal gay and lesbian politics were attuned to the international context of human rights, it remains an inspirational document.

The question of what role urban policy and practitioners can have in supporting LGBTQI+ communities arose last year in the finalization of the United Nations New Urban Agenda – a key international policy framework, endorsed in December 2016, designed to promote 'a new model of urban development that is able to integrate all facets of sustainable development to promote equity, welfare, and shared prosperity.' In the final discussions about the content and expression of this influential document, there was great controversy when LGBTQI+ people were erased from the list of vulnerable groups that had been included in the draft version, which had specifically condemned violence against and intimidation towards these communities. The deletion resulted from lobbying by a group of 17 countries, led by Belarus, with some of the worst records of violence and intimidation towards those communities. The move is perhaps unsurprising, given that legal recognitions vary so greatly, and that there are still 73 countries with laws criminalising homosexuality.

The inclusion of LGBTQI+ minorities as a vulnerable group would have widened the New Urban Agenda's attention to inequality and inclusivity out to more broadly consider vulnerabilities through the spectrum of sexual and gender diversity. But this was not to be. We take the view that there is an opportunity for London as a queer capital to explicitly redress this exclusion and provide international leadership – building on the New Urban Agenda's important focus on 'cities for all', civic

engagement, cultural diversity and on the leveraging of the benefits of urbanisation to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups more broadly.

We welcome the Draft London Plan's principles of sustainability and inclusivity – a word mentioned over 100 times although not defined explicitly – and its emphases on building strong and sustainable communities, creating a healthy city, delivering homes for Londoners and growing a good economy. Given the scale of the document we have concentrated our comments on the following sections which we deem to be most relevant to the development of a plan that is a model of LGBTQI+ inclusivity: Good Growth; Housing; Social Infrastructure; and Heritage and Culture. We note that in the draft plan it is only in the latter chapter that LGBT+ community is explicitly mentioned, and it is notable that these four mentions are in supporting texts rather than specific policies. Although we understand the argument that by not specifically mentioning vulnerable groups the wording of the plan can in some cases be read as maximising inclusivity, in our view the particular needs of London's LGBTQI+ communities are such that specific advice will be beneficial to local authorities and others using the plan in their decision-making processes. Our recommendation is that the London Plan should name the specific vulnerable groups mentioned in the UN New Urban Agenda but also make specific mention of LGBTQI+ communities. Based on Urban Lab's research we would argue that failure to name these specific groups in the last London Plan has contributed to a lack of attention to their needs and spaces, resulting in the loss of 58% of venues over a 10-year period. We believe the London Plan marks a unique opportunity for the Mayor and GLA to set a world-leading benchmark in the use of the planning system to address the needs, and protect the spaces and heritage, of LGBTQI+ communities.

2. GOOD GROWTH

Inclusion of LGBTQI+ in the narrative of the plan

There are insufficient mentions of LGBTQI+ in both the policies and the narrative of the plan in order to effectively address the needs of these communities and ensure London has a world-leading plan for LGBTQI+ communities. In order to adequately increase attention to these groups alongside other vulnerable, minority and community groups, the language of the policies in the Good Growth chapter must be broadened to be less restrictive.

GG1 Build strong and inclusive communities

GG1 F

Support the creation of a London where all Londoners, including older people, disabled people, and people with young children, as well as people from other groups with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, can move around with ease and enjoy the opportunities the city provides, creating a welcoming

environment that everyone can use confidently, independently, safely and securely without discrimination, and with choice and dignity, avoiding separation or segregation.

It is critical there be more mentions in the broader narrative, for stronger callouts in the supporting text around the policy, in line with mention of other minority communities. For example, the vibrancy of LGBTQI+ communities and their importance to the vitality of London can be emphasised as follows, alongside BAME communities:

Paragraph 1.1.2

London is one of the most diverse cities in the world, a place where everyone is welcome. 40 per cent of Londoners were born outside of the UK, and over 300 languages are spoken here. 40 per cent of Londoners are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, and the city is home to a million EU citizens, 1.2 million disabled people, and the highest percentage of the UK population who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.² The success of London's communities relies upon this diversity. To keep them strong, London must remain open and inclusive, allowing everyone to share in and contribute towards the city's success.

Inclusion and nuanced understanding of community

GG2 Making the best use of land

This policy talks about having a clear understanding about what is valued about existing places (GG2 C) but there is no elaboration about how an assessment of what a community actually values will be undertaken. There needs to be an evaluation framework or metric around the assessment of such values to gain a more nuanced understanding of a community's needs.

GG1 C & E mention the importance of community, but do not go into details about how to include communities, community spaces, and community participation.

Value and community could be tied together to these two paragraphs:

Paragraph 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, such as cultural, historic, community or natural elements, can be used positively to guide and stimulate growth, and create distinctive, attractive and cherished places.*

² Source: Office for National Statistics:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/se xualidentityuk/2016>

Paragraph 1.2.8 *Making the best use of land will allow the city to grow in a way that works for everyone. It will allow more high-quality homes, [community spaces](#), and workspaces to be developed as London grows, while supporting local communities and creating new ones that can flourish in the future.*

GG2 D emphasises protecting London's open spaces, but there must also be explicit mention of the protection of London's community spaces.

Intersectional understanding of LGBTQI+ needs; greater LGBTQI inclusion across policies

The draft plan's tendency is to contain policies relevant to LGBTQI+ communities around discussions of pubs, and policies around alcohol. LGBTQI+ needs must be mentioned in other relevant sections of the plan, rather than just associating these communities with pubs, nightlife and/or the night-time economy, where there is a danger they are presented as a spectacle for the city, rather than actually integral to the life of the city itself.

There is a need to associate community spaces, including LGBTQI+ spaces, with health and wellbeing. There is a strong emphasis in community discussions on spaces which are not oriented solely towards alcohol consumption, but are rather places where communities can gather, where they do not necessarily have to pay or drink.

The Plan could in general make stronger connections between community spaces, social infrastructure, economics, a healthy city, and good growth.

3. HOUSING

Identity-responsive housing provision and services for LGBTQI+ people in London

There are a number of housing related issues covered by the London Plan that are particularly salient to LGBTQI+ Londoners (H4, H5, H14, H15), who for a range of reasons linked to historic and on-going social oppression and discrimination, find themselves to be at a high risk of being precariously housed, homeless and often lacking the social and familial networks that meet support needs.

The higher than average socio-economic vulnerabilities and related precarious circumstances concerning housing and homelessness faced by members of London's LGBTQI+ communities commonly relate to discrimination driven by prejudice towards sexual and gender minorities whose identities and experiences

challenge social norms. For instance, research by Stonewall (2018a) shows that 25% of trans people have experienced homelessness.

It is vital to recognise that LGBTQI+ people are also members of other vulnerable groups. For example LGBTQI+ older people who often feel forced back ‘in the closet’ in older age, LGBTQI+ young people who face higher than average instances of homelessness and LGBTQI+ people of colour who face intersecting forms of discrimination. Thus, an identity-responsive approach to housing needs, attentive to these intersecting characteristics, must be facilitated through specification in the London Plan.

Examples of identity-responsive service provision for members of the LGBTQI+ community with housing and related social needs include the Outside Project, Opening Doors London, Stonewall Housing, the Albert Kennedy Trust and For Viva (Manchester).

In addition to supporting the new services addressing the housing needs of LGBTQI+ Londoners, the GLA must support *existing* community infrastructure and networks that are well placed to understand and address LGBTQI+ community needs.

LGBTQI+ communities as an ‘at risk’ group

LGBTQI+ communities should be specifically referenced as constituting an ‘at risk’ group with higher than average vulnerability to homelessness and specific needs regarding the housing service and provision in H5, H14, H15 and H18.

Evidence supporting this is well documented in research (see reference list), which suggests that despite gains in terms of rights for LGBTQI+ people, there is reason for growing concern regarding prejudice, poverty, safety and homelessness.

For example, it is common that LGBTQI+ people experience identity-related challenges to finding secure employment, have lower than average incomes and experience workplace discrimination, contributing towards higher than average risk of eviction and homelessness (Giray Aksoy et al. 2017; Stonewall 2018a; 2013; Bachmann and Gooch 2017). London, and the UK have seen an increase in the reporting of hate crimes against LGBTQI+ people (Stonewall 2017; Mayor of London 2017), who also commonly experience violence and abuse within domestic settings by partners and family members (AKT 2015; Browne 2007; Bachmann and Gooch 2017; Stonewall 2018b).

As per policy H4, the London Plan should require London boroughs to facilitate the provision of meanwhile spaces, temporary buildings, property guardianships and

empty buildings to provide space for identity-responsive services to address housing needs for LGBTQI+ communities.

In addition to reflecting the evidence of specific vulnerabilities of LGBTQI+ communities in the London Plan's policies on Housing, Good Growth, Social Infrastructure and Heritage and Culture, further preventative measures by the GLA would prove instrumental in addressing existing and intensifying housing and related socio-economic needs within LGBTQI+ communities. For example, establishing and financially supporting the provision of LGBTQI+ sanctuary spaces and supported housing for LGBTQI+ people facing difficult circumstances (see For Viva housing scheme for LGBT people in Salford); supporting the establishment of a LGBTQI+ community centre that hosts organisations providing identity-responsive housing services and advice.

4. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Queer spaces as hugely beneficial to London's social infrastructure

Many LGBTQI+ Londoners are among the city's most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents. Notwithstanding certain recent developments in legal recognition and media representation, many LGBTQI+ people face serious and ongoing challenges across numerous aspects of their lives, including vulnerability to hate crime, violence, discrimination and bullying and lack of equitable access to good education, physical and mental health services, housing, employment and police protection. These needs are complex and dynamic and experienced in multiple ways by different LGBTQI+ people. To understand and constructively address their relation to one another and wider issues in London requires sustained engagement and action. Yet these needs remain insufficiently understood or addressed at either strategic citywide level or local level. This partly explained though in no way excused by the fact that London's LGBTQI+ population is a minority group, dispersed throughout every borough, and comprises multiple intersecting communities with their own distinctive characteristics and needs. We broadly define queer spaces as spaces created and operated by and for LGBTQI+ people to address their distinctive wants and needs, and note queer spaces as being hugely beneficial to London's social infrastructure, supporting the complex and changing needs of a vulnerable dispersed minority community, and creating platforms for innovative forms of community, culture and enterprise that benefit all Londoners and support the capital's global identity as a uniquely open, innovative and progressive city.

Policy S1 should emphasise the importance of this in the following ways:

S1 Boroughs, in their Development Plans, must undertake a needs assessment of social infrastructure to meet the needs of London's diverse communities, with

particular attention to the needs of underserved or dispersed communities and people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act.

S1C Development proposals that provide high quality, inclusive social infrastructure that addresses a local or strategic need, with particular attention to the needs of underserved or dispersed communities and people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, and that support service delivery strategies should be supported.

S1F Development proposals that would result in a loss of social infrastructure in an area of defined need, with particular attention to the needs of underserved or dispersed communities and people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, should be refused unless:

1) There are realistic proposals for re-provision that continues to serve the needs of the neighbourhood or communities affected, or (etc)

S1G Redundant social infrastructure must be considered for full or partial use as other forms of social infrastructure, with particular attention to the needs of underserved or dispersed communities and people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, before alternative developments are considered.

GLA support for boroughs' needs assessments

We welcome the expectation in Policy S1 that boroughs should undertake a needs assessment of social infrastructure to meet the needs of London's diverse communities. Given the relatively small and dispersed nature of London's LGBTQI+ population and the consequent lack of apparently substantial need perceived at borough level, the GLA has an obligation to support boroughs by undertaking needs assessment of vulnerable, dispersed communities at a citywide level.

GLA support for compilation of evidence base related to need for dedicated space for vulnerable, dispersed communities

Policy S1 is especially relevant to planning proposals that would incur the loss of spaces used by minority communities including the LGBTQI+ community. Evidence exists that daytime and nighttime queer spaces are beneficial to the wellbeing of London's LGBTQI+ community, that the loss of such space undermines the needs of this vulnerable community and increasing such space helps meet those needs (Campkin and Marshall, 2016; 2017). Having such evidence easily to hand would help to meet the social infrastructure needs of London's diverse communities at both strategic and local planning levels. As part of its obligation to undertake citywide assessment, the GLA should support through funding and officer time the compilation of a comprehensive integrated evidence base demonstrating the value of dedicated spaces to vulnerable, dispersed communities. This evidence base will

compile research suggesting, for instance, that access to queer space is beneficial to the health (S2), education (S3) and overall wellbeing (S4) of LGBTQI+ people. Such evidence will inform decisions under S1F and S1G.

5. HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The queer community is inclusive of many different people who often express complex sexuality, sex and/or gender identities, but are united by the experience of social ‘othering’, where expression of these identities at home, at work, or in public can result in shaming, bullying, physical exclusion or harassment and violence. In response to these experiences, the queer community has developed a unique culture, expressed and nurtured in specific spaces which often act as sanctuaries, allowing freer expression of individuality and the sharing of common experience. The dynamic and fruitful experience of queer spaces is often difficult to replicate in other venues not designated for the purpose: it depends on an organic and fragile combination of social, cultural and urban factors.

London falls behind many of its global peers when protecting and supporting the queer community, including in failing to provide a dedicated community space, unlike New York, Berlin, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Thus, spaces for the LGBTQI+ community serve multiple, important functions, including: acting as spaces to keep people safe from violence in public or at home; to provide social support and develop social networks; to allow a free expression of often repressed identities; to enable the delivery of essential health and advice services; and to provide space for civil rights organisation and activism. Overall, the silo headings in the London plan make it difficult to cover the cross-cutting importance of these spaces as sites of heritage, culture, social infrastructure and good growth. London boroughs should recognise that they all contain unique and irreplaceable LGBTQI+ heritage and this should always be part of thinking around preservation and celebration of cultural heritage.

There are several significant policies missing from the draft London Plan, namely:

In liaison with the GLA who have committed to maintaining a database of LGBTQI+ venues to monitor openings and closures into the future, the London Plan must stipulate that local authorities be responsible for developing and maintaining their own list of LGBTQI+ venues and resources in their locality, in collaboration with the local community, and ensure no net loss of venues from year-to-year.

All LGBTQI+ spaces predating 1986, and others as determined through a process of research and community engagement, should be specified in the London Plan as legacy heritage venues with protection against redevelopment.

Asset of Community Value status should be redefined to not require only a geographic community (i.e. by postcode of residence) to generate the response, so

that alternative communities, such as those with Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010) could also apply as a community.

In terms of the specific policies, it is disappointing not to see the protection of LGBTQI+ venues named in any of the policies currently provided. Further to this, we have the following comments on these policies:

HC5 Supporting culture and creative industries

There must be recognition that many cultural spaces have a dual purpose: particularly licensed venues (bars and pubs) that also have a performance and that these are vitally important cultural sites. LGBTQI+ culture is especially important in this regard as it is often developed in safe spaces away from the public and cannot be transferred easily into other venues. This cultural expression can often then move into the mainstream for the benefit of a wider audience, but the unique environment, away from the risk of social othering, is vitally important to the work's development.

HC5A

This policy was strongly supported by the participants in our consultation. LGBTQI+ venues and other spaces tend to cluster together, often for reasons of security. Consulting the LGBTQI+ community to identify and support identification and development of clusters is essential. London Boroughs must recognise and protect existing queer spaces, as well as support and promote pop-up and meanwhile uses, including new spaces in new developments, using the GLA's *LGBT Venues Charter* which should be specifically referred to in the London Plan.

The London Plan should itself identify and protect larger-scale or longer-lasting clusters of special significance and require boroughs to identify and protect smaller-scale or more recent clusters. Supported by the evidence base mentioned above, these should be recognised as cultural, community and heritage assets. Such clusters benefit social infrastructure, have significance to heritage conservation and growth, and help grow the nighttime and daytime economies.

HC7 Protecting public houses

This is a vitally important policy for the LGBTQI+ community. It must be recognised and prioritised that public houses are uniquely significant to many LGBTQI+ communities in terms of historic/heritage value as civic institutions and past and present use as sites of community and culture. All long-standing pubs (especially those that predate 1986) have significant 'heritage, cultural, economic or social value' to the LGBTQI+ community, and the wider public in London.

HC7C

Participants in our consultation were supportive of this policy specifically, as the closure or threat of closure for redevelopment of pubs with performance spaces has had a huge negative impact on the LGBTQI+ community in the last 10 years.

6. SUPPORT FOR RECLAIM OUR SPACES MANIFESTO

The Queer Spaces Network is a signatory to the Reclaim Our Spaces manifesto and in this response to the draft London Plan we align with the following points:

1. That the London Plan should help produce a shift in thinking so that access to and the value of community spaces is not based on business plans and income generation but on the social value of the community space and its contribution to health and wellbeing, inclusion, integration, empowerment and poverty reduction.
2. That the London Plan should recognise the irreplaceability and uniqueness of many community spaces and looking after them for future generations as being part of a continuing legacy.
3. That the London Plan should value and resource community-centred knowledge and creativity for the contribution this can make to policy discussions and a whole system approach to community engagement across the GLA.
4. That community spaces are not just physical buildings, but social spaces where cultural expression takes place. These social spaces provide movement and interaction between different cultures and it is important they are integrated as well as truly accessible to all.
5. That community spaces are essential to the achievement of lifetime neighbourhoods in which housing, health and education facilities, shops and other local amenities are affordable and accessible to everyone, now and for future generations, and where there is support for community networks based on social co-operation and mutual aid.
6. That housing estates provide a wide range of community spaces – community halls, open spaces, playgrounds and other facilities – which must be protected and their use encouraged.

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Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

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