



Just Space Community-Led Recovery Plan



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Just Space

Just Space is a community-led network of grass-roots groups influencing plan making and planning policy in London. Our aim is to ensure public debate on crucial issues of social justice and economic and environmental sustainability. Operating mainly through the sharing of information, research and resources among community groups, we are active at neighbourhood, Borough and London-wide levels. We are now linking with groups outside London who are active in other cities. What brought us together at the start was a need at the city-wide level to challenge the domination of the planning process by developers and public bodies, the latter themselves heavily influenced by property development interests. Over the last fifteen years the Just Space network has brought together and nurtured a huge amount of experience and know-how from London's diverse community organisations.

Contributors

The following community and voluntary groups and campaigners have participated in developing the ideas that form this publication:

81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance
Alliance for Childhood
Anti Tribalism Movement
Bengali East End Heritage Society
Black Training and Enterprise Group
Brent Cross campaigns
Broadwater Farm Residents Association
Calthorpe Community Garden
Camden Federation of Private Tenants
Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum
Capital Transport Campaign
Community Centred Knowledge
Community Plan 4 Holloway
Deptford Neighbourhood Action
Dharat workspace provider
Ealing Forgotten Spaces
Ealing Matters
East End Trades Guild
Alison Fure, ecology campaigner, Kingston
Friends of the Earth
Future Transport London
Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum
Grove Park Youth Club
Hayes Community Forum
HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network
Islington Environmental Emergency Alliance
Islington Friends of Parks Forum
Kanlungan
Latin Elephant
London Federation of Housing Co-ops
London Friends of Green Spaces Network
London Gypsies and Travellers
London Living Streets
London Tenants Federation
Morning Lane People's Space MOPS
National Alliance of Women's Organisations
New Garden Cities Alliance
New Lucas Plan
Peckham Vision
People's World Carnival Band
Public and Commercial Services (PCS) trade union
Queen's Crescent Shops and Market
Radical Housing Network
Renters Rights London
ReSpace Projects (Hive, Dalston)
Rooms of Our Own
Runnymede Trust
Save Latin Village
Selby Trust
Soap Box, Dragon Hall
Southwark Group Tenants Organisation
Sustainable Hackney
Sustrans
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Seven Sisters Development Trust
West Hampstead Women's Centre
Women's Budget Group

Introduction

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Covid-19 exposed the stark differences in Londoners' health and living conditions and often showed the lack of the basic necessities of a decent city. The consequences of the virus have been shouldered disproportionately by people in low-paid jobs, by Black and minority ethnic communities and by those in overcrowded housing. Meanwhile, the long-established warnings about the accelerating climate and nature emergency have grown stronger, calling for fundamental changes in how we live.

This extraordinary background sparked the new ideas and policy proposals in our Plan, which were sourced directly through a series of online workshops and dialogues between about 60 community organisations, particularly the smaller grass-roots groups. The range of contributing voices makes this a genuinely co-produced document that is a reflection of pressing needs.

Well before the pandemic there was already a lot to recover from. London's worsening inequality and environmental standards had prompted Just Space to develop our own **Community-Led Plan for London (2016)**, which spelled out the planning vision and policies for a fairer, greener London and for the city's longer-term health. With planning in London causing the widespread demolition of homes and eradication of whole communities and their assets in pursuit of unfounded development targets in the name of 'regeneration', we aimed the Community-Led Plan at the next Mayor, demanding a new approach.

Tragically, Mayor Khan's new London Plan has followed the same damaging paths as its predecessors, despite our best attempts to improve it. We pointed out that its policies would harm the communities most in need of stability and care: the very opposite of the Mayor's vision of 'A City for All Londoners' and his principle of 'good growth'. Nor would the Plan contribute to reducing emissions, given its ongoing attachment to demolition-led development, the same irresponsible building methods and further growth in commuting. The London Plan is obsolete because it bets on a future that is no longer viable. It retains a 'business as usual' approach, yet the pandemic has revealed how vulnerable London is to the effects of crisis, whether a pandemic or climate change, and just how far it is from having health resilience.

The inequality exposed by Covid-19 was seen in overcrowded living conditions in which people are required to 'work from home', self-isolate,

6 do home-schooling. It revealed who is in which kinds of jobs and how tasks are allocated in the workplace. Access to green spaces is highly unequal as so many poorer households do not have homes with gardens or balconies, with parks and green space also highly skewed towards richer neighbourhoods. Many Londoners were reluctant to self-isolate or even get tested because they could not afford the risk of losing income or even their insecure job, while others were reluctant because of anxiety about their citizenship status.

On top of all those unfair impacts, the rich have got richer, such as through the escalation of house prices which has continued throughout the pandemic, while the low-paid on average have accumulated more debt, including rent arrears.

As one participant in our workshops commented: “Under Covid, it has been the low-paid workers, the cleaners, the carers, the delivery drivers who have been absolutely vital to us. A definition of lockdown: the middle classes stay at home and the working classes bring things to them. The Covid lockdown has made us value the care workers, and now is the time to reward them.”
Wendy Davis, Rooms of Our Own.

A positive feature of the pandemic has nonetheless been the networks of care that it revealed and generated. Londoners have looked after each other when it matters, through solidarity, co-operation, mutual aid groups, food banks and in countless other ways. People also discovered the value of green spaces and briefly experienced less pollution from road and air traffic.

These aspects should be fostered in a London that cares about people and nature. Planning and building can't continue as the servant of a small minority of financial interests at the expense of existing communities and the things they value.

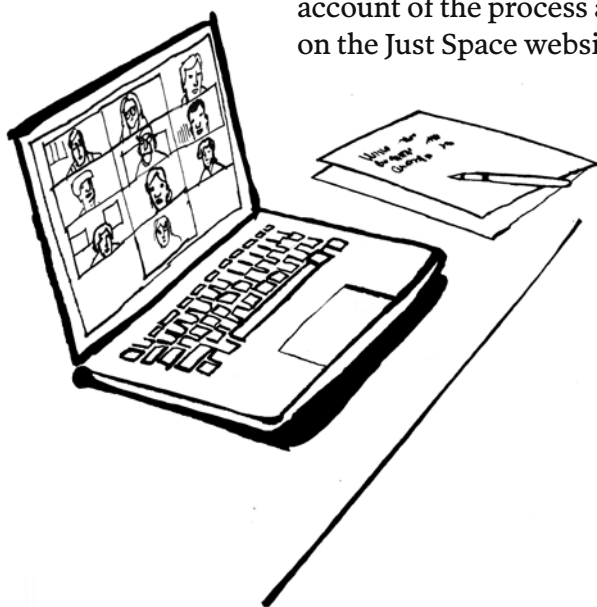
One thing is clear, it is now more important than ever to ensure all voices are included in the future planning of London. This is a vital part of recovery. The decisions made now must reverse the inequalities that the pandemic has brutally exposed.

The Plan: How We Did It

In 2020–21 the urgent imperative to change our city called for discussion, deliberation and debate, but those taking part did not have the possibility of face-to-face meetings and all were held online. The innovative approach adopted was designed to minimise any bias favouring fluent and experienced users of video conferencing. A large number of small workshops were held on themes arising from the experiences of the pandemic and known to be important to Just Space groups. Each was triggered by a briefing paper by a student volunteer based on recorded interviews with community members and researching community sources. Arising from these, a second set of workshops was devised, each looking at cross-cutting themes and potential ‘policies’ which were the subject of polling. Meetings of the Just Space network and an editorial group threaded the ‘policies’ together with a linking narrative written by several different authors.

Throughout the process, and in keeping with Just Space principles of seeking consensus, or at least not letting majorities overrule minorities, care was taken to facilitate debate and record diverse and divergent positions. One workshop participant named this approach ‘pluriversal’: by using an empathic understanding of each other’s different knowledge and lived experiences, a collective vision and coherent set of policies can be deduced.

The groups represented in the workshops are listed in this Plan. A detailed account of the process and reflections are in Annex 1 (a separate document on the Just Space website)



8 The Main Imperatives

This document ranges widely from the personal to the collective, from the neighbourhood to the city-wide. Despite coming from diverse positions, it's that range which gives authenticity to the document and converges on a number of strong demands, which will be evident as you read:

A Caring City We first focus on the Care economy, a sector which is under-paid and under-recognised but which contributes to and serves the wellbeing of the population. London must become a 'caring city' that takes care of people and nature, the spaces and places they occupy. This overarching concept embraces the overlapping themes of fairness and solidarity, co-production and co-operation, recognition and influence, resourcing, lifetime neighbourhoods, community hubs.

Visibility & Influence For All Coinciding with the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, the pandemic served to raise consciousness of systemic inequalities and the value of activism. We see this context as a link to the founding principles of Just Space, about justice in the planning of the city.

Many of the proposals are aimed at resourcing more diverse and bottom-up structures, so that community organisations can take part in genuinely democratic and participatory decision-making and become active of change.

A City Of Local Neighbourhoods Many of our workshop discussions converged on aspects of the 'local'—the disadvantage of living in a badly-served locality, the pleasures of local places instead of making long journeys, the importance of having the people you care for living nearby.

The local neighbourhood is also the scale at which a lot of self-help and mutual solidarity activities flourish and at which many valuable social interactions could take place. The pandemic experiences add meaning and urgency to our calls for a strong Lifetime Neighbourhood approach across London.

Priority For Climate And Nature The other important thread in these proposals is the urgency of the environmental crisis—not only climate change but our whole relationship with nature, buildings, food, transport.

A crucial issue in transforming the environment is ‘just transition’. Often policies which are introduced to meet an emergency have unintended consequences which hit working class people hardest. Decarbonisation of transport and of heating systems to achieve zero carbon housing are examples where we confront this issue.

Making It All Happen

This Recovery Plan is a call for action—calling on our members and supporters to work out how we can do it all. Some demands need action by community organisations while others depend on the Authorities. The way development takes place needs to change radically and these policy proposals are a starting-point.

What is needed is an emergency programme: something like post-war reconstruction. Special measures are called for and this is recognised by the many who say the future must be different from the past. It really must.

Caring City

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Listening to communities makes clear the underlying unity of voices calling for a post Covid-19 London that is positively different: one that is people-centred rather than development-centred; one that can foster well-being, cohesion, inclusion and dignity for all, as well as meeting people's needs.

This is not a new demand and concepts such as the 'Just City', 'Restorative City' or the 'Human Rights City' have been advanced. To these the 'Caring City' has been added: a city that takes care of people and nature, respecting and valuing those who are neglected or viewed as minorities, caring for its existing buildings and homes. With new imagination the city is repurposed with a humane framework to meet needs, correct disadvantages and support the flourishing of people, communities and the environment.

Clearly this requires significant changes to the way that London is organised and a rebalancing of the persistent obsession with London as a

'Global City'. The framework of a Caring City needs to be progressed to one that is sufficiently robust, given the entrenched harsh realities of societal governance and financial, planning and development interests. Further work will be needed to develop practical and measurable delivery mechanisms.

This Recovery Plan starts by looking at the needs of the under-valued and under-paid care sector that deserves better protection and rewards, now more pressing because society's debt is owed to those that battled so valiantly during the pandemic. The care sector spans the formally organised health, public health and social care services as well as the wide range of unpaid care work. Feminist researchers have highlighted the gender inequalities in this model of care, in which paid work in the caring industries and unpaid caring and domestic labour are precarious and predominantly done by women. Care work, like other forms of reproductive labour, has been fundamentally undervalued and exploited. It is

POLICY 1

Responses to the Climate Emergency can bring a care economy, a circular economy and the Green New Deal together. Social care jobs are low-carbon jobs and can contribute to the green economy. This can all be described as a care-led recovery.

The goals of the Green New Deal fall into 5 areas: decarbonisation of the economy; creation of green jobs and green infrastructure; transforming the economy through reducing social and economic inequalities; protecting and restoring environments and habitats; and achieving global justice with a worldwide reduction in the use of carbon.

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Social care jobs are an important feature of the Green New Deal, as they have a limited impact on the natural environment but a huge impact on improving the lives of many.

Green New Deal Rising (2021), What is the green new deal? available from [gndrising.org](https://www.gndrising.org)

“We should avoid ghettoising care in the caring sector and instead define care as the prime mode of the economy. If work cannot be defined as caring work, then why is it defined as valuable? What is care work? The Lucas workers decided to produce something socially useful, which we see as being about care.”

MICHAEL REINSBOROUGH, NEW LUCAS PLAN

vital that policies to promote gender equality recognise care as foundational to the economy and society and involve women’s organisations and groups in addressing the changes needed.

Just Space started looking at how health services and structures could be organised differently (something not usually attributed to planning) when we drew up a new health policy chapter for the **Community-Led Plan** in 2018. We were informed by the approach that community development is a key part of a healthy city and we called for real collaboration between statutory and community sectors on the future development of London’s Health and Care services, with an emphasis on neighbourhoods, so that all sections of the population can become fully involved.

The focus in this plan to better support care workers fits very well with the imperatives to end discriminations of gender, race and class and to promote low-carbon work.

POLICY 2

Widen the social care movement by building partnerships and alliances between anchor institutions (such as universities, Local Authorities, healthcare centres) and local community organisations using the approach of community wealth building. Neighbourhood plans could play a useful role, if they deal not just with the built environment but with the care economy.

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At a local level, social care work will be better supported and valued by building partnerships and alliances with local groups and organisations. For example, when local communities prepare their own plans, these can include health and care services with innovative forms of provision. When Green New Deal campaigns are rethinking what work counts as part of a just and sustainable society, they can promote the value of social carework. Such a social care movement is needed to raise awareness and lobby for the new model of provision outlined in these policies.

“Really like the idea of care-led recovery, which encourages new types of thinking. At the moment we have a construction economy, and need a care economy as well. Need local people’s neighbourhood plan, dealing not just with the built environment but including issues like this so people living in an area can get the care they need when they need it and in a bottom-up way.”

EILEEN CONN, PECKHAM VISION

“We’re arguing you don’t just need a funding solution, which is what the government’s talking about, but we actually need a complete overhaul of the system, with local publicly accountable care provision, a national care service.”

SUSAN HIMMELWEIT, WOMEN’S BUDGET GROUP

POLICY 3

Implement place-based community wealth building by creating ‘care hubs’ on the high street, where a whole range of care services are organised in an integrated way within the locality. These should be seen as a part of social infrastructure, acting as a place for unpaid carers and residential care workers to go to for support.

A local care hub is a place where people in need of care and doing care work can access the support and resources they need—such as training, directories of who to contact, advice services. There would be links with Healthwatch, Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Local Authority, but within a space that was community-led. Community based health initiatives would be encouraged and local people involved in assessments of health and care provision.

“Community wealth building as an approach shows the social value of care work that wouldn’t be seen otherwise and could be a way of convincing local authorities to reconceive their local areas in ways to make care work visible. Like a community hub for unpaid carers which allows a great deal of social value creation. My interest is in more participatory and less technocratic modes, reconceiving local spaces around sites of care work through a community wealth building social value approach.”

JON TABBUSH, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

“I like the policy on care hubs and communities and connecting this with the high streets for all challenge, which funds local partnerships to facilitate recovery, would be a really good idea.”

ANDREJ MECAVA, COMMUNITY PLAN 4 HOLLOWAY



WHAT IS COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING?

Community Wealth Building is a new approach to economic development and regeneration, based around five pillars:

- *Ownership in common of the local economy*
- *Making financial power work for local places and people, adding 'social value'*
- *Fair employment and just labour markets*
- *Progressive procurement of goods and services*
- *Socially productive use of land and building*

In practice, Community Wealth Building means directing local spending through local businesses, non-profit organisations and social enterprises. Local authorities and 'anchor institutions' (large employers and buyers like schools, hospitals, universities and housing associations) work together to hire, spend, and save locally. At its best, Community Wealth Building aims to create a democratic economy, in which local people have more control over the capital, institutions, and jobs that are vital to their lives.

POLICY 4

Introduce a system of social licensing for all care providers, to create a workforce model that challenges gender stereotyping and requires a real Living Wage for all care workers, driving down zero hours contracts and enforcing appropriate forms of continuous training (called Skills for Care) with significant resources allocated.

Social licensing is a form of regulation, imposing certain social, employment and environmental standards on care providers as a condition of being considered for public contracts. For example, providers would need to demonstrate commitment to learning and development as a process that runs throughout a care worker's career, just as it does for nurses and other medical professions.

"The Filipino community has been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 we are the third largest nationality working within the NHS, second only to British citizens and Indian citizens, we represent one in four deaths within NHS. So, it's really dramatic but because the data isn't collected in a way that really identifies Filipinos as a separate ethnicity or as group at all, then it hasn't really been spoken about a lot and in general the Filipino community is one of the more invisible ethnic minority communities in the UK."

FRANCESCA HUMI, KANLUNGAN

"We need to get set up in a way that people can see it as a career and you can progress and do all sorts of things and I think it needs to come back to be part of the NHS service and be paid for on the same basis by paying a bit more tax."

BARBARA CLEARY, NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Caring City Voices

The New Lucas Plan is a project to promote a new economy that serves genuine social and individual needs and respects environmental limits. The Lucas Plan was a pioneering effort by workers at the arms-related company Lucas Aerospace in the 1970s, to defend their jobs by proposing socially-useful applications of the company's technology and their own skills. It was bottom-up rather than technocratic or market-focused and became internationally famous and sparked a movement for socially useful production. The New Lucas Plan aims to reinvigorate those principles for the present environmental, economic, and political crises. The network includes trade unionists, contributors to the original Lucas Plan, radical scientists, environmentalists and peace organisations. There are working groups on Arms Conversion, Robotics and Automation, Just Transition and Democratic Local Planning that together create a model for a new economy.

The National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) acts as a bridge between women's organisations and decision-makers nationally and internationally to guarantee that women's voices are heard in decision-making processes and that gender is mainstreamed throughout domestic government policies and in their implementation. NAWO has a diverse membership, from single issue to specialist organisations, faith groups, health centres, arts-based organisations and others offering services and campaigning across a range of women's concerns. NAWO's mission is to promote the human rights of all women and girls, with a special focus on gender equality and their participation in decision-making that impacts their lives.

Women's Budget Group An independent, not-for-profit membership network of academics and policy experts with the aim to promote a gender-equal economy, analysing the impact of policy on women, to influence local and national policy debates. They are currently working on a project to build support for an intersectional Feminist Green Deal in the UK, to ensure gender equality is prominent in the strategies to tackle climate change. They evaluate governmental White Papers, like the Government's Social Care White Paper—'a good vision without a meaningful strategy for delivery'—highlighting that the plans fail to improve pay to social care workers, expand the workforce or improve access to services and levels of service for the 1.5 million older people with unmet needs. wbg.org.uk and for the Feminist Green New Deal wbg.org.uk/fgnd/

Participation



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Participation remains the building block of what Just Space asks of London's governance, which includes such foundational demands as fairness, justice, recognition, inclusion and sustainability. Our Community-Led Plan for London (2016) explained that the participation of local communities in any planning activity is a widely held expectation and a right, but that it was often undertaken too late, was actually notification in the guise of consultation, and often side-lined community inputs.

To remedy this, we put forward a number of principles for effective and meaningful engagement together with detailed proposals for recognition and resourcing, involvement from the very beginning, and being treated as equal co-producers, through new Mayoral mechanisms of a Social Compact with communities and a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to set out the Mayor's responsibility to consult. Others have since joined the call for a Mayoral SCI, but it has gone unheard.

In the recent community workshops these points have been amplified and augmented.

Co-production from the very beginning of a planning process, which values community knowledge, ideas and solutions, has been re-emphasised as a necessary and fundamental demand. This is tied to the need for recognition and respect and that involvement should have beneficial consequences which help empower communities and counter failures to listen and respond. To be authentic and productive, co-production has to be enabled, such as through the provision of affordable community spaces for interaction; the active promotion of inclusion and engagement, including community review panels and citizens' assemblies; paying particular attention to smaller grass-roots organisations and disadvantaged, often seldom-heard, and under-represented communities.

These proposals require a commitment to resourcing and funding to enable people to participate in ways they benefit from. Part of this funding needs to recognise the adverse impacts of austerity and Covid-19 on small organisations. Generally, a concerted programme should tackle digital exclusion, whilst still recognising the value of traditional forms of communication.

CO-PRODUCTION

Co-production is so much more than consultation and engagement. It is a way of working together in partnerships based on key principles of equality, diversity, access, reciprocity and recognising the importance of experience that participants bring to the table.

What makes for good, authentic, co-production:

- *Treating local people /communities as partners, central to any process of change, involved in joint decision-making from the very beginning of a project to its fulfilment.*
- *A commitment to sharing power*
- *Giving practical support, resourcing and up-skilling to enable communities to participate effectively.*
- *Employing good communication techniques to encourage those not usually participating.*
- *Capturing the different experiences, knowledge, needs and aspirations and finding common ground, whilst respecting and recording any minority views, all to inform the joint decision-making.*
- *Transparency when evaluating the engagement, to check for missing or quiet voices, recognising that those previously marginalised and the most affected by a planning project should play a more significant role.*
- *Ensuring that participation results in improved processes and outcomes to the benefit of communities, to encourage further involvement.*

Some useful pointers to good co-production can be found from the following organisations: ‘What Works Wellbeing’ emphasises the importance of communities having equal involvement in clearly-agreed joint decision-making, especially for the final, crucial decision on a project or plan. ‘Coproduction Collective’ highlights the histories of

those disadvantaged through unequal or non-existent relationships with decision-makers and provides case studies, toolkits and other resources. ‘Involve’ argues that those affected by a project/plan should play a much larger role.

Eileen Conn of Peckham Vision has developed ‘The 2 Systems Approach’ which compares the grass-roots community sector’s horizontal and fluid organising with the institutional Voluntary Sector’s vertical and managerial structures. <https://bit.ly/2yIoS7b>



GRASS-ROOTS COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Grass-roots community organisations are self-defining, normally having only small funds (if any), with participants who volunteer to take collective action for or on behalf of their community or for an issue or cause held in common. Especially significant in the more marginalised communities, they are vulnerable to a general lack of regard by government and established power structures. Nevertheless, their value and strength lies in shared lived experiences and often unrivalled knowledge of their area or interest. They would rather speak directly than be spoken for by NGOs, charities or the ‘voluntary sector’.



POLICY 5

Communities need to be given access to multi-purpose and affordable, ideally rent-free community spaces which provide people with a space to meet, to encourage cultural dialogue and make people want to get involved in community action.

“Inequalities have heightened due to the disappearance of libraries, youth clubs, community spaces, parks, playing fields. Reframing planning in a way that provides spaces that care for people—for people to come together, share their experiences, do positive things—will be crucial.”

ROBERT CLAYTON, GROVE PARK YOUTH CLUB

“I do think there needs to be some kind of minimum amount of space that communities can access so that you can't have local authorities just take over everything and not leave any space for communities—which does happen in some places. And empty shops and using those for incubators and for young people or others, to try business ideas and things like that.”

ANDREA CAREY, DEPTFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION

“Fundamentally a lot of things come out when you give people places to meet, you give communities spaces to do stuff.”

CLAUDIA FIRTH, RADICAL HOUSING NETWORK

POLICY 6

The Mayor should create community review panels and citizens' assemblies made up of community members, who are sufficiently compensated by the GLA for their time and labour. For selection, use criteria designed to give priority to smaller grass-roots organisations and members of communities that have been historically disadvantaged by the planning system and/or tend to be invisible in official policy discussions.

“Where if you're a migrant you get a seat on this panel and you're adequately paid for that time and it's not like a fellowship, but one of those things where you actually have a seat and you're like a chair or something like that.”

FRANCESCA HUMI, KANLUNGAN

“With Community review panels who picks them ... It's always people who are friends of the councillor or friends of a Mayor or the leader or whatever, and they haven't really worked with people. The difficult people or the people who've got something to say, they are never chosen.”

LIBBY KEMP, EALING MATTERS

POLICY 7

Austerity has a significant impact on the small organisations that often do not meet the criteria for funding applications. A structural change in how funding is allocated needs to be reviewed, to ensure a level of priority for small organisations in obtaining funding.

“We're all attempting to make positive improvements, suggestions, policy proposals, but we cannot shy away collectively from stating the structural problem that we are facing from the lack of funding and the general lack of political priority for these items”

ROBERT CLAYTON, GROVE PARK YOUTH CLUB

POLICY 8

The Mayor should require councils—as well as the GLA’s own staff including the Deputy Mayor for Planning to embed co-production as their core value in planning practice and policy making.

18 **“[Co-production] is really what is distinctive about Just Space and the way it’s making demands... We don’t just want to be consulted... what’s necessary is, from the beginning, being side-by-side, as equals in the production of ideas and policies and research and so on. That’s very foundational. Very fundamental.”**

MICHAEL EDWARDS, UCL

“The instruments are just not there to empower communities to actually really affect decision making, there’s plenty of consultation processes, but when it comes to actually shared decision-making and involvement in actually making change... councils and developers don’t actually really want to, in most cases, have participatory, shared decision making.”

BARBARA BRAYSHAY, ISLINGTON FRIENDS OF PARKS FORUM / ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY ALLIANCE

POLICY 9

Rather than consulting communities after the plan is created, the content of the plan must be discussed with local communities from the beginning, using inclusive methods, times and locations that cater to all community members.

“I think we’ve got to get to a stage where planning is not something that’s always done to communities for communities, but it’s done with communities from the start, and there’s processes for people to understand and be more involved—it’s got to be simplified as well, the process and the whole planning speak and everything else. It’s very technical.”

ANDREA CAREY, DEPTFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION

“A lot of the decision making actually should be happening [within communities], instead of decisions kind of being made by the Council and then community groups, having to come in later and object to them. And then even that process is quite fraught and confusing and definitely not accessible or transparent.”

SOPHIE WALL, LATIN ELEPHANT

POLICY 10

The Mayor should provide support to London Boroughs to enable community leadership in local planning, providing funding and training on co-design, design codes and inclusive planning to both local authorities and communities and especially their marginalised members.

A **design code** is a set of illustrated rules and requirements that provide guidance for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components are detailed and precise. Local planning authorities are required to prepare design guides or codes tailored to their own context and reflect the views of the local community whilst being consistent with the new National Model Design Code (NMDC).

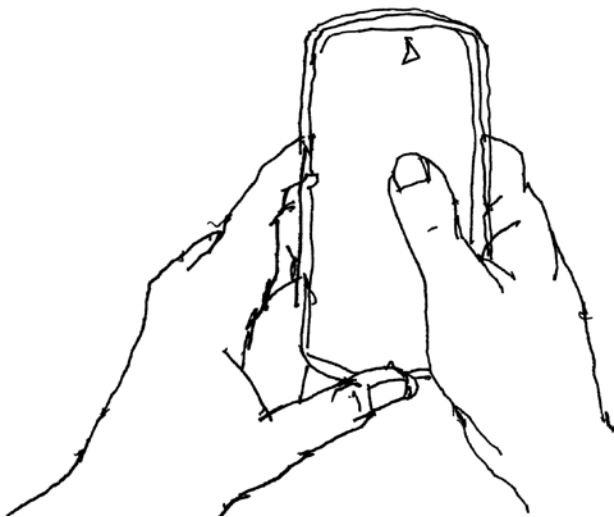
A general criticism of design codes is that they tend to emanate from wealthier neighbourhoods whose residents have the knowledge, time and resources to draft the level of detail required.

“We’re being cut out of almost everything to do with design codes, inclusive planning, the whole thing and if the Mayor could hold the Local Authority to account to bring in communities, it would be of great help.”

LIBBY KEMP, EALING MATTERS

“By increasing their [community groups’] knowledge of where their power actually lies, working collectively they are able to bargain more effectively with those developers and say, ‘look we want this to change or we want that to change in your planning process’ ”

FAIZA ALI, ANTI-TRIBALISM MOVEMENT



Digital Inclusion

A smart city approach for London should put the people, not the technology, first. This approach looks at what people need and how they interact with the tech to their best advantage. London does not have anywhere near full fibre optic connections and there are large discrepancies across Boroughs for broadband access. The Digital Divide also includes the skills and confidence required to effectively use digital infrastructure. A huge amount needs to be done to achieve fairness, and strong planning policy is needed.

In April 2020, Just Space co-wrote a document *Safeguarding the public voice in planning under Covid-19* to inform the then Secretary of State Robert Jenrick that local councils' rapid switch to online meetings was shutting out people who would normally be seen and heard. Speaking rights for the public and voting by elected councillors were in some cases replaced by the use of 'delegated powers'. Developers benefitted, with planning decisions fast-tracked, often with less scrutiny. Online meetings are now technically more reliable and have been successful in attracting new audiences, but there is no substitute for being in the same room as the people making major decisions.

POLICY 11

Create a long-term Mayoral programme for tackling digital exclusion: training, equipment, London-wide free internet coverage, the provision of accessible materials, the use of accessible software and communication platforms, access to community facilities. This should include informing people how to safely navigate the digital realm, so they have this access with-out having to reveal personal data. The Mayor should tackle the immediate challenges by distributing equipment and free data packages to those in need.

"We exist in a digital world now. And if we're not providing these sorts of opportunities for the Communities that we're a part of, that we are part of and working with, then we are relegating them to almost a position of guaranteed digital and therefore social exclusion."

JAMES DELLOW, SOAPBOX, DRAGON HALL

"When we talk about digital exclusion, we often think about things like skills which are important—people not having the skills and not having devices and so on, but there are much wider issues around it too. Being able to have access to data and broadband connections at home, and the cost of that..."

CHRISTINE, HEAR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

POLICY 12

It is crucial to provide people with choices when it comes to online or in-person participation. It is important to include hybrid meetings or separate meetings in different modes.

20 During the pandemic, most interaction in both the community and statutory sectors had by necessity to move online. This has had both negative and positive impacts.

Many people find platforms such as Zoom and Teams inaccessible to varying degrees. Reasons include: sensory impairments, disability or illness that makes using devices and screens for a long time very tiring; lack of digital skills; lack of appropriate devices; limited or no access to data or broadband, either because of cost or because places that used to provide access, such as libraries and community centres, have been closed. Also very relevant are the homes with no private space for making video calls.

However, for some people virtual meetings have been very helpful, such as for some disabled people and others who find travelling difficult, for people with caring responsibilities in the home and for people who have many commitments such as work or study.

It is important to retain the best aspects of all these ways of working. Hybrid meetings can be inclusive by providing everyone with the opportunity to participate, however, the physical and online participants will experience the meeting differently and the meeting should be designed and facilitated with regard to both. Both groups should be able to hear and see the other participants, have access to slides and charts and receive equal attention from the facilitator. If possible, there should be two facilitators, one paying attention to the physical participants and the other to the online participants, monitoring what is happening in chat, the raising of hands and unmuting.

“It seems like there is a danger that people will use post lockdown as an excuse for everything to go online, and not think about how that happens or how online/offline can really work effectively together.”

HEATHER MENDICK, MORNING LANE PEOPLE'S SPACE
MOPS, HACKNEY

POLICY 13

The Mayor of London should exercise a strategic role to ensure publicly accessible WIFI connection in all transportation hubs and along transportation corridors. This includes underground, bus, clipper boats, national rail, Santander bikes docking stations, taxis and private hire vehicles.

Participation Voices

Deptford Neighbourhood Action (DNA) is a community group started by local residents who were concerned about the planned removal of Tidemill Garden, an important community space. DNA aims to encourage and empower local residents to have a greater say in planned developments. It has been designated a neighbourhood forum by Lewisham Council and is now focussed on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. The main topics in the plan include housing, local economy, green and open spaces, health and wellbeing and heritage. DNA encourages resident participation in council matters, spreads word about funding opportunities for local initiatives and scrutinises development proposals.

Ealing Matters is an alliance of residents' associations and community groups formed in response to planning developments in the borough of Ealing that negatively affected local heritage, public assets and the general fabric of local communities, and did not provide social housing for Ealing families. Ealing Matters provides a platform for people and associations to air views and concerns about proposed development in the borough, access resources to influence these changes, give mutual support for campaigns and activities and generally create awareness across a wider base. Ealing Matters has held Ealing council to account for its non-production of their Local Plan and their non-production of statutory planning reports including the 5-year Housing Land Supply since 2014.

Latin Elephant was founded in response to the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. The regeneration greatly impacted, displaced and relocated Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) residents, particularly the large Latin American community, so Latin Elephant was created to advocate for their views to be properly represented and to increase participation in the processes of urban change in London. Among its activities, Latin Elephant has engaged with Southwark Council and with the Mayor of London in advocating for the retention of migrant and ethnic economies.

During the Covid pandemic, Latin Elephant has provided services to support BAME traders facing significant hardships, including advice on financial support, translating and disseminating government publications and offering business transformation support, such as online shopping. Latin Elephant documents the impacts of Covid on ethnic and migrant traders.

Morning Lane People's Space (MOPS) is a community group started by local residents with shared concerns about the planned development of 55 Morning Lane in Hackney. Through a self-organised consultation reaching nearly 1400 people, MOPS has identified that residents want social-rented council housing, affordable and accessible shopping, with public and community spaces. They aim for a development that meets local needs and is based on meaningful consultation. These needs were not reflected in the developer Hackney Walk's preliminary plans, which included buildings of up to nineteen stories and limited affordable housing. MOPS is campaigning to ensure the Council hears local residents' demands.

Fairness

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Racial Justice

Prior to Covid-19, the inequality facing Black and minoritised communities, embedded by austerity, had gone substantially unchallenged by public policy initiatives for decades. So when it was confirmed that Black and minoritised communities have been impacted disproportionately by the Covid-19 pandemic, it was inevitable that the lockdowns would expose inequalities in the access to social infrastructures and services.

Black-led community organisations were forced to meet the increasing demand for their services with limited resources. The impossible challenge for many Black and minoritised community organisations has been to manage both the emergency response and simultaneously build enough capacity to plan ahead. All this with historically limited access to partnerships and resources. In addition, the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement has opened traumatic wounds, refocused our attention on the injustices Black communities face, highlighting

the urgent need for a path to recovery that works to eradicate racial inequalities in London.

How we respond must give attention to intersectional oppressions and make visible the specific experiences of Black and minoritised groups in all their diversity and complexity, including for example Travellers and migrant communities. Filipino nationals are the third largest group among NHS workers and represented 1 in 4 deaths of NHS staff, yet their experience remains invisible because data collection does not categorise Filipino nationals as a separate ethnic group.

It is crucial to have policies and practices that explicitly tackle racial inequality and address the reasons why deprivation occurs, with root causes in systemic discriminations which actively produce and reproduce deprivation. Local Authorities must take seriously the Public Sector Equality Duty, assess in a collaborative way the impact of policies on specific equality groups,



and where discriminatory and adverse effects are found the policy must be changed.

All communities are not treated equally and their access to resources is not equal. A lot of funding is given to larger voluntary organisations that lack the channels of communication to smaller groups in communities that need the resources. There needs to be a structural shift towards properly resourcing grassroots groups, with an explicit commitment to growing the infrastructure that supports the racially minoritised and migrant communities.

The voices of Black and minoritised communities need to be assigned a more central role in the process of identifying issues and resolving them. This means increasing their representation at all governance levels, and community organisations to work together in networks and alliances to really raise and pursue the true needs of Black and minoritised communities.

BLACK COMMUNITIES— APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

Many people and organisations are increasingly uncomfortable with the use of the term “BAME” (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), which has been in widespread use for some years. It is considered a too generalised ‘catch all’ expression which carries the implication that everyone from a non-white British background or heritage shares common experiences, oppressions, discrimination or marginalisation and that tackling these can be done in a generalised way. It also denies a person’s unique identity. Although there is widespread rejection of the term, there is no current consensus as to an alternative; it is wise to consult and discuss preferences with groups led by those with lived experience. “*Black and minoritised communities*” is used by a number of organisations, and we use this term here. Other terms being adopted include “*Black and People of Colour (BPOC)*” and “*racialised communities*”.

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INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a way of understanding how the category of race is not uniform but is shaped by other oppressions such as class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and age, which interact to create mostly hidden forms of disadvantage and further oppression. From an intersectional lens, social identities and systems of oppression are structurally interlinked. For example, black women’s experience of the healthcare system is likely to be very different from that of white women, as the experience of sexism is compounded and informed by that of racism.

POLICY 14

Local Authorities should investigate and identify specific racial inequalities and patterns of deprivation that exist in their locality to understand the root causes of issues. Resourceful compensation and support must be made to historically disadvantaged communities and organisations that support these groups.

24 **“Roadside families, families on the move, had no place to go and there was no help at all for those families in every Borough that they were in, the police just kept moving them on, so that didn’t help with the spread of Covid-19, where there’s not a lot of stopping places... criminalising Travellers’ way of life, confiscating caravans and cars and impounding them and big hefty fines...”**

MENA MONGAN, LONDON GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

“I mean there’s also the fact that local planning authorities should do equality impact assessments and evaluate the impact of their policies in terms of looking at how it reduces things like poverty and inequality and looking at then the racial impacts as well, which is reflected in some of your policies.”

ANDREA CAREY, DEPTFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION

“We were absolutely reminded of just how poor the air quality is, which is going to always impact worse on low-income groups, those of us, and it always impacts worse on black people, not only green-space-deprived but actually oxygen-deprived.”

PORTIA MSIMANG, RENTERS’ RIGHTS LONDON

POLICY 15

In the decision-making and policy-making process, the national government should make visible the existence of Black and minoritised communities, prior to investigating, reviewing and consulting them to collect equalities data.

When collecting equalities data it is important to look at commonly accepted best practice models and to consult with the relevant people. Generalised categories do not give useful data and can also put people off from responding because they do not want their identity reduced to a ‘tick box’ which they don’t consider relevant to them. Offering respondents the opportunity to describe themselves in their own words through a free text option (in addition to categories with tick boxes) is much more inclusive.

“We are made invisible by the census category ‘Asian other’ so we just don’t exist on the census. [...] Funding that might be community-specific or maybe ethnicity-specific won’t get targeted towards the Filipino community. [...] It means that we have to first go through the process of actually justifying our humanity, which is an extremely demeaning thing to do because you have to first prove that you exist.”

FRANCESCA HUMI, KANLUNGAN

“Although there is a category for Gypsy and Traveller people in the census, and this year is the first time for Roma people, a separate category, the real effect that prejudices and discrimination and oppression have on people is making them not want to tick that box, which is still so enduring. And just the whole system we’re working in where you need that data to get funding for something, and politicians not really acknowledging that difficulty.”

ILINCA DIACONESCU, LONDON GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

POLICY 16

It is important that community organisations do not continue to go along with the systemic invisibility of certain groups, but instead push for their visibility in partnerships and alliances, which can translate into increased visibility in public life and policy making and practice.

“I think the Black Lives Matter made a lot of people more aware of the injustice inequality that has been happening, not to say that they weren’t aware before, but it’s made a lot more people aware of the problem, and to the fact that it’s made those organisations really have to rethink, regroup, reimagine and reevaluate themselves... but the reality is what has changed?”

TONY CEALY, 81 ACTS OF EXUBERANT DEFIANCE

**[In the context of community organisations]
“There’s often either intentional or unintentional gate-keeping or not sharing opportunities to get into the right rooms and meetings where you could have voice or influence or other connections—so making sure that those who might have opportunities or connections can share them.”**

CHRISTINE GOODALL, HEAR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK





Children and Young People

Austerity has had a significant impact on libraries, youth clubs and the youth work sector; spaces for children are being taken away in the name of development and Covid-19 has drawn attention to mental health issues for children and young people.

The structural problem that we are facing from the lack of public funding and the general lack of political priority for children’s needs leads us in these tough times to embrace some of the experimental solutions that are coming through, as well as resist the loss of public libraries and a publicly-funded youth service. The responsibility of adults or community organisations that support youth is to provide a safe space for such initiatives to take place, enable young people to actually act for themselves, providing them with opportunities for their own agency. Then there is the importance of incorporating free play in every aspect of engaging with children — engaging with children and their mental health effectively through play — in an outdoor setting and in particular in nature.

The digital space is something that children and young people are living through, and where they have a natural enthusiasm. Digital hubs would be aiming to tap into that energy. Even so, lots

of children are not fully aware of the long-term impacts of the things that they do online, while many children and their families lack access to digital technology.

Community groups can establish digital hubs for young people where they can borrow devices, do schoolwork in their own space and access digital skill training and support. These spaces would also provide homework clubs, create dedicated times or spaces for children’s play and fill a gap outside the normal education system, where you can bring together young people and adult volunteers across the generations.

The process can start by establishing a few innovation hubs in areas of digital exclusion, with community groups taking the initiative in shaping them, but funded by the Mayor, as part of infrastructure provision. At the second stage of the process, the initiative can be scaled up to cover a wider area of London through the sharing of knowledge by community groups.

POLICY 17

Introduce a variety of activities dedicated to children and young people at the community level. Free play is essential to enable children to work through the situations they face and the impacts these might have on the children's mental health, with support, not interference, from adults. It will be important to encourage and facilitate children and young people to take the initiative in shaping these activities, to ensure effective and long term engagement.

"I think we do need to have a youth focus. It's a real issue that young people aren't finding their way in participating in decision-making."

BARBARA LIPIETZ, UCL

"I feel like we haven't seen a massive difference, despite there being a lot of initiatives for young people, and from the Mayor of London as well. So, I think there needs to be something more structural and something that kind of works to fight the system, rather than I guess workshops and stuff."

YASMIN MOALIN, ANTI-TRIBALISM MOVEMENT

"It's actually entrusting young people and believing in their potentiality and believing in them, to be able to make positive change for them and their peers. And it's about how do we facilitate a process through which that can take place."

JAMES DELLOW, SOAPBOX, DRAGON HALL

"In a youth leadership programme that we have running... people are trained to become community leaders and they do a social action campaign on an issue that is affecting young people."

YASMIN MOALIN, ANTI-TRIBALISM MOVEMENT

POLICY 18

Establish digital hubs for young people, so they can access both basic and high-level digital skills, with lessons and support, have a space to do their homework, develop social bonds and interact inter-generationally. Community groups should take the initiative in the shaping of these digital hubs, while being funded by the Mayor as a project of infrastructure provision.

"We also need to be providing young people with access to specialist and high-level digital skills. The skills aspect of it is largely overlooked in conversations around digital exclusion and the digital divide. So I think it requires a huge amount of investment not just on behalf of young people, but on behalf of the social care / youth work / voluntary sectors, because if we're not feeling empowered and confident to be able to engage with it, how on earth are the people that we work with going to do that themselves."

JAMES DELLOW, SOAPBOX, DRAGON HALL

"Digital hub, I think that's a good idea. Providing a place or places where children can do their work. And I think it would be good if these places also encourage children to go and play in between, so they were spending not more than say an hour at a time, then having a break where they could go off and play."

MARION BRIGGS, ALLIANCE FOR CHILDHOOD



Fairness / Racial Justice Voices

Kanlungan Filipino Consortium *Kanlungan in Filipino means ‘shelter’ and that’s what it tries to do for Filipino and Southeast and East Asian migrants and their 12 member organisations focusing on self-help groups within the Filipino community, such as domestic workers, vulnerable women and migrants with limited immigration status. Kanlungan provide a variety of services including education and training for professional skills, advice on employment, housing, social rights and cultural programmes, mental health support. They also campaign for migrant workers’ rights across the UK.*

28 *In June 2020, Kanlungan published a report on the impact of Covid-19 on precarious migrants — including those without legal status or with no right to work or recourse to public funds—finding that the ‘hostile environment’ meant many migrants working in the informal and exploitative domestic and care sector were forced to work during Covid-19, because “No work no pay”.*

The Anti-Tribalism Movement (ATM), is a non-profit organisation based in Shepherd’s Bush, West London. ATM was founded by Somali young people who were trying to combat tribal discrimination within their ethnic community and its goal is to uplift the Somali community in the UK as well as abroad. They pay special attention to the engagement of Somali youth.

In April 2020, ATM funded by Trust for London published a report titled Covid-19 Impact on the Somali Community to highlight the racial disparity that was heightened during the pandemic.

Beyond all the negativity surrounding Covid-19, ATM introduced collaborative engagements and partnerships between organisations. The Covid-19 Resilience Grant launched in partnership with Comic Relief is a fine example of this and sees ATM provide financial support to hundreds of BAME non-profit organisations.

81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance is a collective of Brixton and Lambeth-based organisations, artists, businesses, community members. Their shared ambition is to honour the Brixton Uprising of April 1981 and create programmes of activity.

The 81 Acts, as a self-organising platform, allows people to explore race, poverty and policing and a radical reclaiming of heritage. The core group of ‘Builders’ all have different lived experience of Brixton’s community ecology past and present, and different areas of expertise — including service design, participatory placemaking, youth engagement, social justice activism, politics, documentary film making, creative producing and public art. 81 Acts co-creator Tony Cealy has used creative drama to really engage and allow people to participate to their fullest, to bring about social and behavioural change in many communities.

Children and Young People Voices

Grove Park Youth Club & Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum

In 2011, developers applied to demolish the historic Baring Hall Pub in the centre of Lewisham's Grove Park neighbourhood and replace it with luxury apartments. Successful local opposition saved the pub and also catalysed community-led planning, resulting in the formation of Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum and later submitting a Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan.

As the Neighbourhood Plan came together, the need to support youth services emerged as one key concern, leading to a new campaign and Trust to save Grove Park Youth Club from demolition and to reimagine a vibrant youth-focussed community centre. They successfully saved the Youth Club and have overseen its renovation and reopening in Summer 2021, against difficult odds and even a pandemic.

Grove Park Youth Club Building Preservation Trust Chair Rob Clayton says: "What we're really fighting for here is a democratic space for people without voices to retain their community rights". For more information, see groveparkyouthclub.co.uk

Alliance for Childhood is an international network of people and organisations promoting a healthy childhood for children everywhere. It advocates Children's rights under the UNCRC and advances policies and practices for children's healthy development, love of learning and joy in living. Free play is imperative to a child's social skills, physical and mental wellness, as argued in *Power of Play: an evidence base*.

The Alliance supports play days, open streets and connects people and organisations who are passionate about promoting the quality of childhood and working with young people, including hosting the Alliance's London Forum at City Hall. During Covid-19 restrictions, the Alliance continues advocacy work on its website allianceforchildhood.org.uk

SoapBox, Dragon Hall is an Open-Access Youth Centre in Islington for young people aged 13–25, providing activities for developing social, personal and professional skills with a focus on creative, digital, media and technology to 'bridge the digital divide'. During the pandemic, SoapBox has been supporting socially excluded young people to get the same opportunities as their peers through youth worker drop-ins, advice sessions and digital, media & tech programmes.

SoapBox is run by registered charity Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust, organising social, educational and recreational activities by and for diverse communities, with a focus on people at risk from social exclusion and isolation. Other initiatives include after school clubs, activities for over-55s and a food bank.

Housing Crisis— Learning From Covid-19

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Longstanding structural barriers and the failure to address underlying causes of the housing crisis have all been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Overcrowding was identified early on as a contributing factor to the spread of Covid-19, one of the reasons why Black and minoritised communities were disproportionately impacted by the virus. Members of overcrowded households have little space to self-isolate if they are sick or in quarantine, while overcrowded homes typically house families of multiple generations, putting elderly household members at even greater risk. Educational inequalities have been amplified by overcrowding, especially during periods of online schooling. Students in disadvantaged homes are less likely to have access to digital devices or spaces conducive to learning. Furthermore, people are confined to inadequate homes to try to get exercise, often without balconies, gardens or nearby green space.

More people are vulnerable to housing insecurity as a result of Covid-19. Many have been unable to make rent or mortgage payments throughout the pandemic, putting them at greater risk of eviction and homelessness.

Despite clear demand for more (and better) housing, there is a considerable amount of unused housing stock, including empty homes and spaces above shops. As of November 2020, Action on Empty Homes was reporting 30,616 empty homes in London, and both inner and outer London saw the 2019 number increase by 27% and 21% respectively. The Affordable Housing Commission found that many 'second homes' sit unused and some 'buy-to-leave' properties are used specifically for wealth storage and/or tax avoidance. Despite this unused housing stock, thousands of London households are living in temporary accommodation.

In fact, over 30% of these households are living outside of the council area in which they first became homeless: they've been distanced from their communities during this especially trying time. Covid-19 has significantly impacted these numbers.

Whole-home AirBnB listings collapsed during Covid-19 lockdown, returning tens of thousands of homes to the normal rental stock. However, temporary lets are now rebounding while we still lack policies in place to limit its scale.

The success (while it lasted) of ‘Everyone In’, with the housing of street homeless people in vacant hotel rooms, has demonstrated how much can be achieved quickly with money and political will.

For London, some housing needs remain the priorities which Just Space groups have been calling for since we began 15 years ago and wrote about in the 2016 **Towards a Community-Led plan for London**, just now with added urgency:

- London’s backlog of unmet housing need is steadily worsening as annual output of new homes overshoots the targets for market and intermediate homes, and under-achieves for social rented homes, which is where the need exists.
- Housing is considered ‘affordable’ even if those living in it are paying 60–80 percent of market rents, which may make up a significant portion of household income. This so-called affordable housing is often inaccessible to London’s working class.
- The ‘London system’ of securing social housing & infrastructure out of developer profits was never an adequate method and is now seriously broken.
- Exclusion of tenants and community from decision-making within housing provider organisations and in public policy making and planning; developers given priority in pre-application discussions.
- The violence of the ‘regeneration’ of housing estates through demolition and the displacement and social cleansing of residents.

Demolition is undesirable on social, economic and environmental grounds. Research has shown that the refurbishment of council estates can deliver significant improvements in housing quality, leading to cost savings and improved living standards for residents. Refurbishment has lower overall lifetime costs than demolition and construction and causes less disruption to communities. Refurbishment also makes sense because of the substantial embodied carbon savings made when compared with the emissions embodied in the construction materials, the building process and the demolition.

POLICY 19

Ensure well-maintained, social rented homes of suitable and adequate size for all. Homes should be of high quality and of adequate size — both in terms of usable floor area and number of good sized rooms — to meet each household’s needs. Family-sized housing must be prioritised in all new public housing developments.

“About 40% of the Black Africans in London live in crowded housing and Somali housing in the UK has long been characterised by crowding in terms of poor physical conditions and hidden homelessness. Two or three generations of Black Africans, like Somalis, come and live together in a small space. Self-isolation was impossible.”

ABDIRASHID FIDOW, ANTI-TRIBALISM MOVEMENT

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POLICY 20

Simply housing people is not enough. Social housing must be culturally-aware so that people can remain with or further build their community. By culturally-aware, we mean that there should be desired community resources, intentional efforts to keep communities together during refurbishment (and regeneration) projects and that housing for multiple generations is made available to communities that value multi-generational living. Integrated, wrap-around services, which help to build such communities, must be accessible to all those in social housing.

The current London Plan fails to acknowledge the contemporary heritage of London, shaped by the unique culture and lived experiences of many diverse communities in the city. These communities have cultures of trade, music, arts and food that are unique to them and that shape the way in which they understand and live in their communities.

Policies 20 and 23 seek to preserve the heritage and social capital accumulated by communities in London, including protection against displacement and active efforts to foster diverse communities, e.g. housing for multi-generational living.

“We have a housing project that we run with Somali residents that live on the White City housing estate in West London and also the South Acton housing estate. They feel powerless when it comes to their housing situation because, they think that when it comes to regeneration and everything else similar, they have no say, and they can’t change anything in that process.”

FAIZA ALI, ANTI-TRIBALISM MOVEMENT

POLICY 21

The affordability crisis in the private rented sector should be addressed. It is widely accepted that in order to be affordable, once housing costs are paid, tenants will still have sufficient money to meet all other material needs. The Government must act to bring rents down so that everyone has a home they can afford to rent where they can live and flourish.

“The key issue, if you’re a private renter, is just the sheer unaffordability of living in the private rented sector in London compared to the salaries and wages we earn. I would say that affordability and private rents isn’t anything particularly new, although, like most things, each has been exacerbated by Covid-19 because obviously people have taken a hit on incomes.”

RHIANNON HUGHES, SOUTHWARK GROUP TENANTS ORGANISATION

POLICY 22

Tenancy reform to support greater rights for private tenants in the shape of open-ended tenancies with few grounds for eviction, which can then lead to rent control, with limited capacity to increase rents, to bring a measure of rent stabilisation. At the same time develop housing alternatives, including Community Land Trusts and Co-operatives, giving residents more control of their housing at a neighbourhood level.

“There are various places where we’re talking about policies which would make certain things available to all social housing tenants, council tenants, and housing association tenants. And I found myself saying why the hell not to private tenants as well? Their needs are often as great or greater for a lot of the things we’re talking about.”

MICHAEL EDWARDS, UCL

“Eviction suspension and rent control are both short-term and long-term housing issues which are really important for people to feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods.”

CLAUDIA FIRTH, RADICAL HOUSING NETWORK

POLICY 23

Improve existing housing via refurbishment and repair not demolition and redevelopment, to ensure community integrity and that neighbourhoods with high concentrations of working-class and ethnic minority communities are protected from displacement, gentrification and social cleansing.

“A general problem that we find in all regeneration schemes, is that communities, long standing communities going back decades, often, are broken up and people are sent all over the place. The priority of allowing communities to stay together on a long-term basis is very urgent. So, I think that should be a very large point against regeneration schemes and in favour of refurbishment rather than demolition.”

PAT TURNBULL, LONDON TENANTS FEDERATION

“Neighbourhood-level changes applied undue pressures on working-class families, forcing them either to remain in the area in increasingly overcrowded conditions among their established kinship networks, or to move further outwards into unfamiliar territory on the peripheries of the city, where they were more isolated from their communities and extended families.”

ADAM ALMEIDA, RUNNYMEDE TRUST

POLICY 24

Requisition all empty homes and offices—commercial properties above shops, unused office spaces in office buildings, Airbnbs and private homes—that have been empty for over X amount of time (to be established) for social housing or community-run cooperatives. Pending new legislation, make extensive use of Empty Dwellings Orders and existing legislation.

“What really surprised me was the amount of vacant property around. And some of these developments, one fifth of all these new developments are empty... The amount of empty property in London is absolutely phenomenal. It’s huge.”

MICK O’SULLIVAN, LONDON FEDERATION OF HOUSING COOPERATIVES

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Housing Voices

Radical Housing Network (London) is a London alliance of 30+ groups campaigning for housing justice and addressing a range of issues including homelessness and housing affordability in the context of climate emergency. Feeling underrepresented by mainstream politics, they rally support from the grassroots and across tenures through a diversity of tactics, especially protests.

In June 2020, RHN published a statement on Covid and housing, calling attention to the threat of eviction for those who become unemployed and are unable to pay rent during the pandemic. Their *People's Housing Charter 2021* demands a moratorium on evictions, increase in public housing, stop estate demolition and repossess empty housing for public use. A moratorium was implemented but expired in May 2021 and RHN urged an extension of the ban.

The London Federation of Housing Co-ops (LFHC) provides a forum for about 300 co-operatively owned or managed housing organisations to meet and exchange their experiences, access training and gain other assistance. It campaigns to raise the profile of housing co-ops in the London region. The member co-ops vary in size, from under twelve homes to thousands, and together house about 150,000 people. Since the start of the pandemic, many housing co-ops have rallied round to support those in need, whether of company, food, financial help or just a watchful eye.

Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation (SGTO) promotes the rights of over 100 Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) in Southwark, people who have come together to take action on issues that they feel strongly about. Services include independent advice, support for capacity building and free audits of accounts. As a borough-wide group, SGTO can cover issues affecting the whole of the borough, link people up and share experience. It campaigns through public meetings, protests and open letters or motions to Southwark Council. SGTO's briefing paper for the Council describes the financial impacts of Covid-19 on tenants and the consequences of fluctuating levels of government and council support.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods

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The term Lifetime Neighbourhoods appeared in the previous London Plan and made good sense, we thought, suggesting that a neighbourhood should be planned to accommodate people at all stages of life, for families to grow and older people to have the facilities they need, with the benefits of enabling families to stay together in the same area. An area designed around Lifetime Neighbourhood principles would not be full of single-bedroom apartments for commuters and would be more self-sufficient in terms of community provision, walkability and employment.

For some reason the term was dropped in the current London Plan and the term '15 minute city' has gained strong political traction. The Mayor of Paris used it to emphasise the liveable city in the Climate Change Paris Agreement. Melbourne City has been planning around a similar notion of the 20-minute neighbourhood. The concept focuses on quality of life and imagines places where people can truly live locally, with everything that they need available by walking, biking or public transport.

The terms Lifetime Neighbourhood and '15 minute city' resonate with groups in different ways. To some extent, the '15 minute city' is a more technocratic approach, whereas Lifetime Neighbourhoods has an emphasis on people, with the neighbourhood a place where people get together — addressing inequalities, through the distribution of amenities, healthcare and schooling, tackling air pollution and other issues of spatial justice. Matt Scott from Thames Ward Community Project said: "Lifetime Neighbourhood has more of a sense of inclusivity. It is more local, it is a space you can contest, and you can create space for solidarity, which is important."



The '15 minute city' or Lifetime Neighbourhood has taken shape under Covid-19. People have been shopping locally, walking more, using the green spaces and finding new uses for places. As Marina Chang from Calthorpe Community Garden said: "People responded well, with the community café manager thinking about how we could turn the café into a foodbank, giving out food parcels and using produce from community garden, including fresh leaves and veg, and including cooked food too."

Lifetime Neighbourhoods would contain many of the community elements in the Recovery Plan, linking together digital hubs, community centres, local food hubs, care hubs and community improvement districts. All of these provide co-operative infrastructure at a neighbourhood scale.

POLICY 26

An important tool for Lifetime Neighbourhoods is a fact-based local audit. Walkabouts and mapping exercises build an understanding of a neighbourhood's community assets, local economy and social infrastructure, and consider gaps in the distribution of amenities. Residents taking part in the audit gain skills and an interest in planning their neighbourhood.

"From my own experience, a lot of the network or resources that already exist are invisible and the connection are much more diverse and complicated than the superficial level. So, I would think in order to have a Lifetime Neighbourhood we need to understand our locality, and the spaces and people and place are fundamental to have a better planning proposal."

MARINA CHANG, CALTHORPE COMMUNITY GARDEN

"In Hackney there is a high turnover of people, mainly because of private rental sector and people can't afford to stay as rents go up; so the idea that people could have a Lifetime Neighbourhood is quite compelling and it goes against the idea that people have to be displaced, they get moved out of areas—very different emphasis than the 15 minute city."

HEATHER MENDICK, MORNING LANE PEOPLE'S SPACE
MOPS -HACKNEY

POLICY 27

Support the development of co-operative infrastructures, from the use of local contracting and supporting local business, through to housing co-operatives and platform co-operatives developed at the neighbourhood scale to build community resilience.

"We need to be committed firmly to the devolution of power to the lowest possible level—the commune—in the best tradition of co-operators"

PORTIA MSIMANG, RENTERS' RIGHTS LONDON

Emerging from Covid-19 has been the power of mutual aid groups. In the tech community these take the form of Platform co-ops. How can these be supported and developed into longer lasting co-operative infrastructures? What makes co-operatives different is to think of people before programme, somewhere to check in to see how people are coping and to be able to talk, a structure which insists on the sharing of resources and decision-making in a co-operative kind of way.

In co-operative forms of development, instead of having large contractors providing services across a Borough, residents in different areas manage their own housing services, land, gardens, green spaces. This brings local jobs for local people, linked to training and apprenticeships for young people, linked to housing needs. This brings the economy down to the local level, to what the 15 minute city and to what liveable or Lifetime Neighbourhoods are attempting to do.



Lifetime Neighbourhoods Voices

Calthorpe Community Garden is located on Gray's Inn Road, a ten-minute walk from Kings Cross station. Established in 1984, it serves a diverse inner-London community offering a range of activities aimed at improving physical and emotional well-being.

Activities include a horticultural training programme designed for people with special educational needs or mental health issues, sustainable food growing linked to a vegetarian cafe and waste recycling, supervised activities for children, sports development for young people, community classes and activities.

38 The Calthorpe Community Garden re-orientated a number of its activities towards supporting a community-centred response to the pandemic. For example, the Calthorpe Garden Cafe was transformed into a community food bank distribution point with fresh produce from the gardens supplementing donations from local residents and businesses.

Founded in 1972, the **Waterloo Community Development Group (WCDG)** campaigns with and for Waterloo residents to support the development of a healthy and sustainable community, more homes, amenities and open space, for the benefit of present and future generations. They advise individuals and organisations on planning applications, and host public meetings every 6 weeks to consider development proposals, with feedback provided to local authorities

Since 2020, WCDG has worked with other local community groups to campaign against four proposed towers for historic Lambeth village that wrecks local amenity and undermines the local character. The campaign culminated in the refusal of planning permission by the Secretary of State following a public inquiry.

Renters' Rights London The organisation was created because so many people are facing real hardship, including debt, insecurity and poor living conditions in the private rented sector. Renters' Rights London [RRL] equips renters with the tools and knowledge needed to challenge unfair treatment from landlords and to campaign locally for fairer renting. RRL also works with London councils to improve their offer to people who rent from a private landlord and supports campaigns by other organisations at the local, city-wide and national level. Renters' Rights London is a project of Camden Federation of Private Tenants and a member of the Renters' Reform Coalition; 20 organisations committed to ensuring that promised legislative reforms deliver a just housing system.



Nature and Climate Emergency

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There is a growing awareness that we face a nature emergency, not just a climate emergency. Biodiversity, or nature, must be seen as essential green infrastructure that has resources and funding directed to it as part of a holistic vision for London's environment, which includes housing and health, air quality and transport.

Too often, policy makers on the climate emergency are just not taking people with them. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN's) are one example: trying to reduce motor vehicle traffic and encourage pedestrians and cyclists, yet provoking much local opposition because of poor consultation and ignoring social issues.

This is a crucial thread within the debate on how to transform the environment — the issue of 'just transition'. Often policies which are introduced to meet an emergency have unintended consequences which hit working class people hardest. For example, with the need to reduce car traffic, cars are disproportionately owned and used by richer people. But it's easy to forget that many people have to use cars or vans for their work (carers, builders, delivery & security staff, taxi drivers) and may be severely affected by such measures. Road pricing schemes, such as the Ultra Low Emissions Zone and the congestion charge, charge a flat fee but could use a progressive charge instead, based on a driver's income.

Public deliberation in the process is essential to a just transition, and all policies must combat social inequalities and the climate and nature emergency together.

Biodiversity and Green Spaces

The world has failed to halt the decline of nature and we are now in the sixth mass extinction, as reported to UN Biodiversity Summit 30th September 2020.

Yet UK public sector spending on biodiversity is a tiny proportion of the UK's GDP: 0.02% (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) 2020 report "A Lost Decade for Nature").

In response, the Natural Capital Committee Annual Report 2020 calls for a new era of ecological data-gathering and management, to measure the extent and condition of all natural assets across England, incorporating a substantial citizen science component. Multiple mechanisms need to be introduced so that community understanding of local green space contributes to decision-making in a meaningful way.

A More Natural Capital (2021) is a manifesto prepared by a coalition of environmental organisations in London.

POLICY 28

To achieve a positive gain in biodiversity:

- Habitats need to be properly protected in their own right and must not be traded as part of a system of off-sets in planning applications.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies should be allocated to biodiversity recognising it as an essential part of infrastructure.
- Promote ecological corridors (routes for nature) so that species are able to move around.
- Encourage varied planting—flower meadows, hedgerows, fruit trees, nut trees and orchards—in the Council parks, green space and street management policies.
- Eliminate the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides.

“A lot of green spaces we have now are poorly maintained and in low quality. There is a need for proper ongoing management of streetscapes, parks and green spaces based on sensitive biodiverse practices and renewal investment in the skills and practices this involves, rather than harmful quick fixes such as dependence on pesticides and herbicides.”

PAUL DE ZYLVA, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

POLICY 29

Implement a Biodiversity Review Panel in each Local Authority to facilitate knowledge-sharing and to support dedicated Ecology Officers. It should bring together active citizens and specialists to:

- Oversee the implementation and monitoring of the Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Identify locations for ecological corridors
- Award grants to a citizen science programme of monitoring through audio and photographic equipment.
- Share knowledge about what resources are available and make connections.

“I think the key is to connect everyone who is concerned about the green space issues together. People are desperate to engage in practical ways to solve the problems. I think there are many things that we can do from the bottom-up level.”

SARAH VAUGHAN, TREES FOR BERMONDSEY

“I was on the biodiversity action group for Kingston in 1998. We had another one in 2006 and again in 2015. But we’ve never enacted a Biodiversity Action Plan. All the recommendations on priority habitats should’ve been implemented but Kingston has never done that. So every time we have a planning application, there’s biodiversity loss.”

ALISON FURE, ECOLOGIST / CAMPAIGNER KINGSTON



POLICY 30

For practical, immediate campaigning, encourage Natural Capital Accounting as an evidence base and important policy instrument, to assess impact and claim compensation for planning and biodiversity decision-making, to protect and increase the amount of green space in the Borough or local neighbourhood.

“What is the governance structure which allows local communities to properly engage, because they are an under-utilised resource? Whether it is explicit localism or whether it is finding a mechanism for the groups to be the go-to place for auditing green spaces, bringing people to account, a formal structure with some control.”

PETER TREADGOLD, EALING MATTERS /
EALING FORGOTTEN SPACES

NATURAL CAPITAL

Natural Capital is defined as our stock of natural assets: water, soil, air and all living things. Poorly managed natural capital, through overexploiting and polluting, can be catastrophic not only in terms of biodiversity loss but also for human life, as the productivity and resilience of the environment declines over time. The Natural Capital Committee, an independent body tasked with assessing the state of natural environment in the UK, warned in its State of Natural Capital Annual Report 2020 that the UK is not on track to meet any key biodiversity targets.

Natural Capital Accounting is a powerful tool to translate environmental loss into financial figures and impose them on those responsible for the damage, i.e. the ‘Polluter Pays’ principle.



CITIZEN SCIENCE

Citizen Science programmes aim to spread awareness to the public of the importance of nature. iSpot is a great tool for recording basic biological information. People can provide ad hoc sightings of wildlife by simply submitting a photo and its location, then getting identification help from experts. The biological information recorded locally can contribute to a natural environment database.

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POLICY 31

Campaign to reduce inequalities in access to green space as raised by Public Health England in their report Improving Access to Green Space by:

- **Ensuring all London Boroughs rigorously enforce the London Plan open space access/deficiency criteria.**
- **Use the ONS data assembled by Friends of the Earth on gardens and public green space to target those London Boroughs that rank as the most deprived Local Authority areas in the UK for access to green space.**

The most deprived London Boroughs include Islington, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Brent, Haringey.

“A key demand is that green space should have the range of quality, well-managed facilities serving all sections and needs of the community, eg play and youth facilities, cafes and toilets, onsite staffing and staff depots, sports facilities, community-managed buildings and centres.”

DAVE MORRIS, LONDON FRIENDS OF GREEN SPACES NETWORK

POLICY 32

Community Groups should sign the Charter for Parks and call for the Mayor of London, the GLA and the London Green Spaces Commission to also sign the Charter for Parks.

The Charter for Parks sets out to:

- **Celebrate the central role well-run parks play in our neighbourhoods for all sections of our communities.**
- **Recognise the right of every citizen to have access within walking distance to a good quality public green space.**
- **Endorse a legal duty for all public green space to be managed to a good standard.**
- **Embed effective protection from inappropriate development or use, or loss of any part of our parks.**
- **Ensure adequate long-term resources for ongoing maintenance, management, and improvements.**
- **Encourage and enable community involvement and empowerment of local people and park users.**

Alongside the Charter for Parks, there should be a simple and accessible ‘Charter for Wildlife’, produced by communities, which links both to everyday lives and to Council and other policies.

A strong focus needs to be given to the use of parks and green spaces for exercise, recreation, social interaction which link strongly to health and wellbeing. The demand for good quality water in the streams and rivers, ponds and lakes that we find in parks is also important, without which we won't get the improved biodiversity being sought.



“The big issue with public green space and Covid is that there’s been a huge increase in the amount of people using green space... but no money’s been allocated to deal with the additional usage and wear and tear. With increasingly underfunded and understaffed local park services ... there must be a call for adequate funding, a good simple mechanism for raising all this is to get everyone to sign the Charter for Parks.”

DAVE MORRIS, LONDON FRIENDS OF GREEN SPACES NETWORK

“The Local Authority delivery organisation is always subject to repeated cuts, or at least financial pressure on the budget and they don’t have any spare capacity for liaising to a greater degree with local community groups. The only way, I think, to identify suitable mechanisms for increasing or empowering communities is simply to persist ... starting local and then London wide, creating networks which become part of a national system of organisations that represent friends’ groups and local green spaces.”

ROBIN BROWN, HAYES COMMUNITY FORUM

Decarbonisation of Heating Systems

The programme to overhaul the entire fossil fuel-dependent energy system must in the short, medium and long term protect those experiencing fuel poverty, so that everyone can insulate and warm their home in a way that is affordable, safe and sustainable.

POLICY 33

In too many cases, district heating is badly designed, maintained and administered. Rather than a cycle of temporary repairs until the next breakdown, district heating should be transitioning to a decarbonised heating system, using the model of community-run energy schemes. This should be integrated with the insulation of homes and a mass programme of whole house retrofitting that addresses fuel poverty and has tenants on board first.

Options for decarbonised heating include solar panels, hydrogen heating and air source or ground source heat pumps. Solar panels are a reliable source of energy, which can be used at varying scales. Although they cannot generate enough hot water for the average family all year round, they can be combined with a boiler or heat pump. Hydrogen is very expensive, whether green or blue. It takes five times more electricity to heat a home with hydrogen than with an efficient heat pump. Air-source heat pumps will be more energy efficient and cost effective than hydrogen boilers. Whilst heat pumps are a very low carbon option, they are currently expensive to install and require good insulation to be most effective.

“There are a number of energy co-ops in London. Some of the Councils use the energy obligation levy to allow community organisations to bid for energy saving schemes. The communal heating systems are inefficient, the Councils only replace the equipment and people have to wait, because you have to send off to Germany or Eastern Europe somewhere and wait six weeks to fix the system again, which is totally inadequate. One of the organisations I am working with is Harry Weston Tenants Cooperative in Islington and they want to put in heat pumps so that they can actually cut out and alleviate the old fashioned boiler system.”

MICK O’SULLIVAN, LONDON FEDERATION HOUSING CO-OPS

“We advocate for public ownership of the entire energy system, generation and supply as well, and including requisitioning fossil fuel assets. The cheapest energy is the energy we don’t use. There needs to be a mass retrofit programme run out on public ownership through local authorities on a street by street basis and obviously prioritising those in greatest need.”

SAM MASON, PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES (PCS) TRADE UNION

POLICY 34

A strategy is needed that looks at fuel poverty and energy in a comprehensive and long-term way. There should be a London-wide public energy company.

“We need to work out one energy plan on the London-wide basis. You know, we need to connect this up and I think it is one of the crazy things we have right now that every Local Authority is looking at this in an individual way.”

SAM MASON, PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES (PCS) TRADE UNION

Circular Economy

The circular economy is the process of extending the life-cycle of products and materials through repairing, refurbishing, recycling, and so on. A circular economy keeps materials circulating at their highest value for as long as possible. Waste and pollution are reduced, meaning less cost to the environment. By contrast, the current linear economy involves making, using and then throwing away parts and materials, and this uses large amounts of energy.

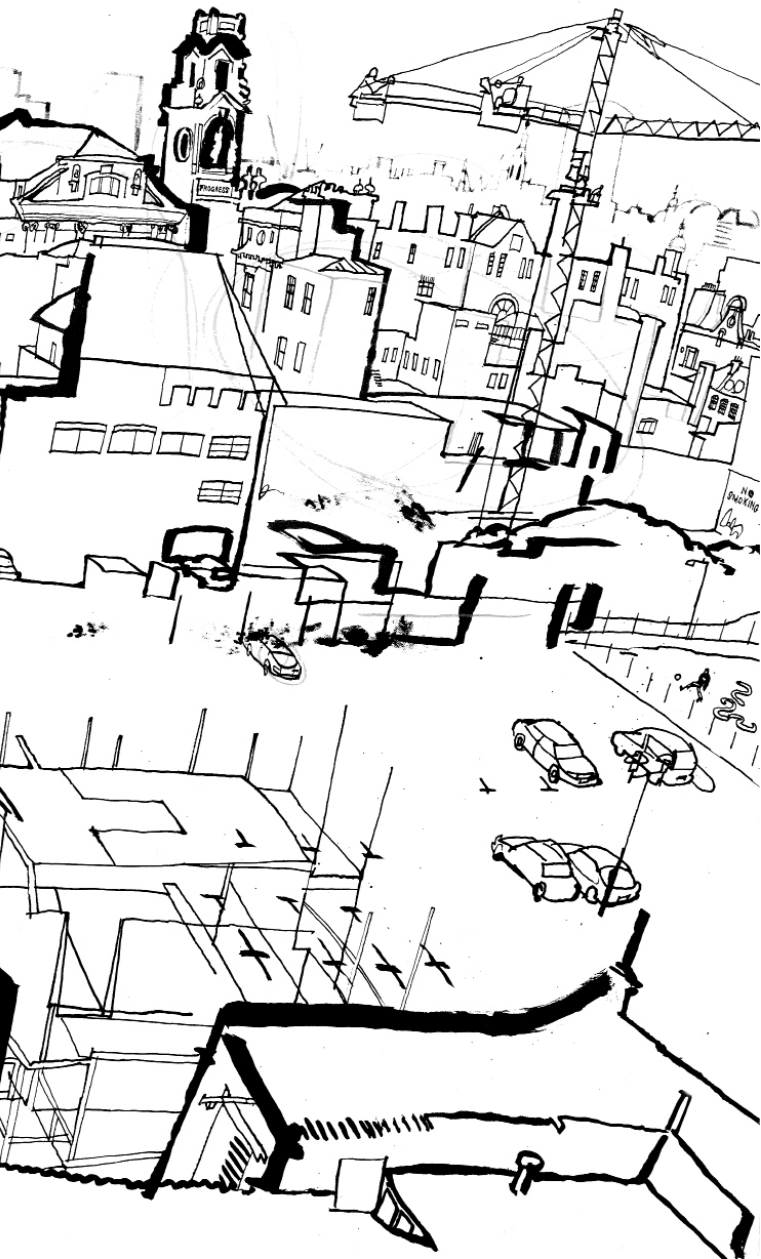
If implemented, the circular economy approach would significantly reduce vehicle movements, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Community groups should promote the circular economy, so that there is a real shift towards reuse, refurbishment and repair first; discard and demolition second.

POLICY 35

Prioritise retention and refurbishment of existing buildings over demolition. As part of a planning application, a pre-demolition audit should be required, which must include engagement with local communities, to identify the existing social value of the site and explore repurposing buildings as community spaces.

“This approach to regeneration fails to recognise the socio-economic arrangement of existing neighbourhoods, and is socially, economically and environmentally unsustainable... From our experience in Peckham town centre, much more significant self-regeneration could be achieved through reuse, refurbishment and repair... Great merit to bring the care economy and circular economy together, the paid and unpaid economy, all are bits of the jigsaw of the local economy and how to think about it at local level from the perspective of local people.”

EILEEN CONN, PECKHAM VISION



Decarbonisation of Transport

POLICY 36

The Mayor of London should produce a shared decarbonisation vision for transport:

- **Work collaboratively with residents, schools, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders to present an inspiring vision of what zero-carbon streets and neighbourhoods could look like, highlighting the benefits to different groups of people.**
- **Encourage Friends of Streets groups, to give the community a role in street management and make the ‘healthy streets’ approach real and tangible, with targets for healthy streets in each Borough. This could be a responsibility for neighbourhood forums.**
- **Give greater attention to buses: recognise their importance for visits to shops, libraries, health centres and hospitals. Make the case for government funding to enable a zero-emission bus fleet before 2030.**
- **Adopt road pricing much earlier than the deadline in the London Plan, but only if it is equitable and proportionate.**
- **Provide docking stations for bikes at high street locations and expanded across Outer London.**
- **Recognise the right of every citizen to have access within walking distance to a good quality public green space.**

“In Lambeth, 30% of people have a car, 70% don’t. So, there’s an extraordinarily massive inequity about this whole issue, the health impacts, the accident rates, etc. The idea of inequity really needs to be got across... I do think that removing or cutting the car parking capacity from town centres is absolutely essential. One of the ways you get the behavioural change to get people out of their cars is by making it impossible for them to park where they want to go.”

MICHAEL BALL, WATERLOO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

“You’re not going to get people out of their cars if there isn’t a public transport alternative. The further out you go, the more dependent you are on the bus. Even if the rail is the largest part of the journey, you still need a bus to get to the station from many places.”

ANDREW BOSI, FUTURE TRANSPORT LONDON / CAPITAL TRANSPORT CAMPAIGN

“Need a plan to achieve a zero-emissions transport network by 2030, including a zero-emission bus fleet. Workings need to be shown for achieving 2030 net zero and for achieving 80% active travel target. Decarbonisation needs smarter charging, so that it is equitable (e.g. you don’t pay road user charges if your annual income is under £30,000). Equity is a key issue.”

OLLIE MORE, SUSTRANS

HEALTHY STREETS

The **Healthy Streets Approach** was developed to put public health at the centre of planning for transport and the public realm. It is designed to promote street designs that reduce car dominance and make walking and cycling safer, healthier and easier. At the foundation of the approach are ten evidence-based ‘Healthy Streets Indicators’ of what makes streets attractive and healthy places for all. Following the London Plan 2021, all planners and developers must use the Healthy Streets Approach in the design and assessment of streets and public spaces.

Environment Voices

London Friends of Green Spaces Network *London Friends of Green Spaces is the network for over 600 local Friends Groups and borough-wide Friends Forums for public green spaces across London. The network shares information and good practices to ensure parks and green spaces are adequately resourced. The principle of community partnership-working has become very well established in this sector over the last 20 years. Every green space should be encouraged to have a Friends Group and every borough a Friends Forum. The London Friends are part of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces which has over 6,000 groups in the UK. lfgn.org.uk*

Trees for Bermondsey *is an environmental charity based in Bermondsey in the Borough of Southwark. Its aim is to plant more trees and to protect, restore and increase tree canopy in the borough, particularly on the streets, estates and public areas of Bermondsey. The group carries out projects to raise awareness of the benefits of trees and green infrastructure in the urban environment and build connections between residents, workers, schools, businesses and Southwark Council. treesforbermondsey.org.uk*

Redbridge and Greenspace Information for Greater London *Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) is the records centre that stores biodiversity data on wildlife species, habitats, designated sites and green spaces in each borough. GiGL collects data from the local level upwards and makes it available for active use, providing data collection tools and advising on the use of data to inform policies. It is the official custodian of information on London's more than 1,500 sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs).*

In 2014 the London Borough of Redbridge and GiGL modelled green corridors by dividing the borough into a grid of 100m sq squares and investigating green and ecological data within them. The totals for each square produced a hotspot map showing areas of high environmental importance and from this, new green and ecological corridors were created.

Transport Voices

Sustrans is a charity whose mission is to make it easier for people to walk and cycle. Founded in 1977, it has had a significant role in the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure. Sustrans is custodian of the National Cycle Network, which provides segregated cycle routes across the UK. In London, Sustrans works in nearly every London borough, engaging hundreds of thousands of residents every year across hundreds of walking and cycling projects, and enables thousands of people with the skills and equipment every year to walk and cycle. We coordinate the National Cycle Network, which has 153 miles running through London. sustrans.org.uk

Future Transport London is a think-tank concerned with how to keep London moving in a safe, cost-effective and green way. The group hosts monthly meetings open to members and guests, and out of these develop campaigns in support of transport improvements to improve walking, cycling and public transport. Future Transport London responds to public consultations about proposals affecting transport and spreads awareness of transport issues and innovative solutions via its regular Newsletter.

Friends of Capital Transport Campaign was a pressure group for public transport exclusively concerned with London. Formed when the GLC was under threat, it was funded by several trades unions and London Boroughs and by individual members. When the major funding dried up in 2005 the Friends of Capital Transport Campaign was formed of the individual members. The main activity is a newsletter produced every two months, now approaching its hundredth edition.

Community Approach to the Local Economy

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Covid-19 reintroduced many people to their local area; many made use of businesses and services that they had not used before or even been aware of. Small shops often carried goods that the large supermarkets ran out of, with these neighbourhood businesses being far better placed to provide extra services for vulnerable people or look out for them: an important aspect of local trading. The value of local networks became clearer and something to be continued.

Yet when we examine current planning policy for the economy, we see that there is no real acknowledgment of the small, local independent business sector and no protection for it. Despite a now growing need for services and jobs near home, including the need for less carbon-heavy commuting, such businesses are being squeezed out because of the way land use is prioritised. In places where there are concentrations of small, often culturally-specific, businesses (such as Brick Lane, Peckham, Elephant and Castle, Ridley Road), community campaigns have

exposed the complete absence of Local, London and national policy to secure their continued existence against the impact of large-scale commercial development. The other main threat to high street businesses lies in the unchecked permission for the conversion of these premises to residential use.

It is a key policy gap that must be filled, first by councils making long overdue efforts to understand the significance of the part played by the local economy. 'The high street' is always more than just the 'prime' strip which houses big chain retailers: it is a complex organism needing careful attention. But when major development comes in, often encouraged by Local Authorities, the existing viable businesses, services, jobs and networks are put at risk, or obliterated.

High Street and Town Centre designations in a Local Plan should be used to encourage and retain the existing local economy, instead of being used to bring in large developers.

POLICY 37

Councils should conduct a complete audit of their high streets by assessing the contribution of retail, office, commercial and industrial activities, shops selling fresh food, supermarkets, street markets and covered markets, independent shops and specialist ethnic shops and services. The audit should examine the high street as a public space for congregation and cultural exchange and provider of social infrastructure. The audit will be a baseline for the formal protective designation of high streets, in order to prevent the displacement of existing businesses, traders and valued uses. Boroughs should use the audit as evidence to seek Directions suspending the operation of Permitted Development.

Permitted Development is the government's policy which enables many premises to be switched to residential use without planning permission. As an example of a way to counter this, Hillingdon Council has made an inventory of all its centres, including all the local shopping parades, and made what are called 'Article 4 directions' which could prevent the conversion to residential use which threatens many of them.

"For some years, we have sent students to do audits and surveys of what is on the high street. We have qualitative and quantitative evidence to support the idea of the high street as being local, a place of work for a wide range of communities, and the diversity of ethnic businesses. We started to pull it together and the material is there to use."

ELENA BESUSSI, UCL

"The markets and traders all rely on their unique supply chain, which is never mentioned. There is zero discussion on this when discussing the revival of the high street. Zero discussion on the loss over 25 years of workplaces, and zero understanding, actually, of the free pass given to property developers who remove the affordable workspace."

TOM YOUNG, TOM YOUNG ARCHITECTS / QUEEN'S CRESCENT SHOPS AND MARKET

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HIGH STREETS?

We use high street as a shorthand for all kinds of shops and local services in different locations. A local economy is made up of local high streets, town centres of all scales, shopping parades, shopping centres and markets. From a user's perspective, small parades and even scattered individual shops and services can be just as important as a trip to the high street or town centre. High streets also contain 'industrial' space, which adds to the varied nature of this economy and contributes to the beneficial networks that exist between businesses, such as where a retailer sources a product from a manufacturer located close by. 47% of London businesses outside Central London are on a high street and 1.45 million employees work on a high street or within 200 metres of one, and this number was growing, at least before the pandemic.

"Would like an audit of who uses the high street. The idea of a high street more controlled by the community as a cultural space, not just 'let's get some jazz musicians that will bring down the people who will buy expensive wine'. A cultural centre, or the corner of the market, could have some pillars or monument that says—here's the history of this neighbourhood and some of the many things that have happened in it over the years."

MICHAEL REINSBOROUGH, NEW LUCAS PLAN GROUP

POLICY 38

Restructure Business Rates. Post-Covid, the cost of workspaces needs to be reduced in order to make renting, and not closing down, appealing to businesses. Alongside downward rent reviews there must also be a restructuring of the business rates model, so that small businesses can compete with the online businesses that don't pay high street levels of business rates.

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"I think it's right to focus on business rates, it's not something the Mayor of London or GLA can do anything about, but the whole business rate system is part of the complete breakdown of local government finance. This needs to be tackled."

MICHAEL EDWARDS, UCL

POLICY 39

Enable the start-up of community food hubs, usually located in high streets, to work in partnership with schools and colleges. They will encourage food-based businesses by offering training and skills in food growing, marketing and distribution as well as environmental management, managing food waste and addressing food poverty. They will provide a variety of skills to encourage localised, self-reliant developments.

Such community food hubs are needed in every Borough and particularly in poorer neighbourhoods. Boroughs and communities need to collaboratively produce food poverty action plans and good food retail plans, investing in a broad sustainable model where invited external partners learn and work together with local community interests. Local street markets will play a key role.

"The idea is of forming relationships between the disparate voices and interests that exist in a locality around food and community, to bring together traditional street market sellers, growers and citizens."

MAMA D, COMMUNITY CENTRED KNOWLEDGE

POLICY 40

Set up Community Improvement Districts to manage community spaces, local services, street markets and shops on the high street in the interest of local communities and small businesses. The audit of high streets recommended in policy 37 above would feed into the areas chosen for Community Improvement Districts.

"We need to think about what's actually happening because, whilst the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) sound like good ideas, the way they are actually implemented in many areas is deplorable because new businesses that come in, and who tend to be over-represented on these BIDs, often have no real interest in the older existing economy or the wellbeing of the wider diversity of people that live in a locality. This may hasten a gentrification agenda."

MAMA D, COMMUNITY CENTRED KNOWLEDGE

"Spend money on forums for every high street, rather than on projects. Navigate the boundary between social and workplace. The high street provides a way into the world of work and the world of contributing generally. Pay much more attention to the setting and rely on the health of the neighbourhood's social dynamics to deliver possibilities for people."

TOM YOUNG, TOM YOUNG ARCHITECTS / QUEEN'S CRESCENT SHOPS AND MARKET



Low Cost Workspace

POLICY 41

Covid-19 has been devastating for small businesses but now the closures on the high street and a surplus of commercial and office space provide opportunities for repurposing space as low cost workspace with ‘social leases’. Workspaces that produce social value for their surrounding local communities should be recognised as social infrastructure. As a method of increasing community space, the community and voluntary sectors should be eligible to be workspace providers.

Social leases would ensure access to local working space hubs that are free or affordable for local residents. The engagement with local authorities and their active role in the delivery of working spaces as social infrastructure is crucial. In Milan, the municipality uses vouchers to give free/cheap access to those needing the space. The municipality of Rome gives low rent to the developer in return for free workspace.

Rather than viewing workspaces as only a commercial experience, we want to go back instead to the initial principles that moved the first independent co-working experience across Europe: affordability, sharing necessities (or networking) and social inclusion.

“Do we use the term ‘affordable workspace’ (which suggests products to be delivered by developers who make money from them) or low cost workspace? Start-up co-working space is easy to argue about, but there is a bigger question about how we value different economic activities in London and how some produce social value.”

MYFANWY TAYLOR, UCL AND WEST GREEN ROAD / SEVEN SISTERS DEVELOPMENT TRUST



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POLICY 42

Existing low cost workspace should be protected. Boroughs should protect the supply of older spaces which so often house important concentrations of jobs in long-established public and private services: bus garages, council depots, railway arches, railway workshops.

There has been an increasing assault on low cost workspace from landowners wanting to make more profit, emptying out existing established traders and sometimes replacing them with different businesses that can pay higher rents (often only possible by using start-up funds) or forcing businesses to take on new, smaller units at higher prices. These losses impact local employment and skills, as well as the provision of services, moving the things that people need further and further from where they live and requiring more travel, emissions and cost.

POLICY 43

Low cost workspace hubs should cater to a mix of businesses across a wide range of sectors from micro to small businesses, start-ups, tech spin-offs, artists and creatives and reserve a proportion of space for charities, community groups and social enterprises with a direct role in addressing inequality. These will provide training and jobs for young people, apprenticeships, business mentoring, employment opportunities for local residents especially Black and minoritised and low income communities.

“Local Authority programmes to provide education, networking opportunities, introductions to finance and acceleration services for small firms are also more productively given when their recipients are in clusters and ecosystems located in workspace hubs.”

MICHAEL PARMAR, DHARAT WORKSPACE PROVIDER, LONDON AND BRISTOL

“We want inclusive spaces, for those without capital to get started. I like the voucher scheme that goes with social leases and initial capital is also good and not to lock in with a 6 month or longer lease. There are lots of tools to let in those who cannot survive in the market. If you have s106 requirement, developer can come back afterwards and say not economically viable and have the s106 over-turned.”

MICHAEL PARMAR, DHARAT WORKSPACE PROVIDER, LONDON AND BRISTOL.

POLICY 44

Local Authorities’ role:

- Local authorities should recognise the social as well as economic value of low cost workspaces, and include social value within the criteria for their audit and monitoring.
- Local authorities should produce low cost workspace strategies as part of a larger economic development agenda, that connect with rent control and create secure and long-term tenancy where they have ownership or influence.
- Local authorities should provide support for the preparation of business plans for local workspace hubs.
- There should be the production of a toolkit with model lease terms, and training for Local Authority officers and councillors.

“Local authorities should own the role of social landlord and not put things under planning, which is about spatial needs not economic needs, but under economic development. Look at markets like Queen’s Market, Seven Sisters, Church Street, which sell products at sub-economic rates with rent at sub-market rates, and sustain local communities which are very diverse. Need social landlords that recognise the need to support these.”

SEEMA MANCHANDA, BLACK TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE GROUP (BTEG)

“Councils still seem to be hypnotised by big developers and their projects—the planners should be fighting for their local traders, when there is competition for land. There is no protection for them right now, and that’s got to change.”

LUCY ROGERS, EAST END TRADES GUILD

Community Approach to the Local Economy Voices

Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) is a national charity that began in 1991 delivering skills and training programmes for young BAME individuals aged 11-30. The Group conducts action research, national policy development and provides innovative solutions to long-standing racial inequalities, particularly the higher unemployment rates suffered by young Black men and the lower levels of public funding for Black and Asian organisations and communities.

Throughout the Covid pandemic, BTEG has lobbied for resilience grants for BAME-led organisations. Another recent campaign calls on London employers to reflect London's ethnic diversity and implement an ethnicity pay gap monitor. BTEG also have a project called Routes2Success, a role model mentoring programme in schools.

Dharart Ltd & Foundry Asset Management Ltd Two companies working together to provide serviced, flexible and independent work-space for 70 start-ups and small businesses in Print Village, Peckham, ranging from bakeries and breweries to artist space and music studios. They recently opened a site with similar aims in Bristol called Meriton Foundry.

The mission is to empower small businesses by providing them with adaptable spaces and flexible terms that enable them to grow, with a particular interest in companies reliant on industrial and commercial spaces.

Covid-19 made communications time-consuming and supporting each business was hard, due to constantly changing regulations. A lot of small businesses did not receive any kind of business support from their workspace providers during this period.

East End Trades Guild was formed so small independent businesses, constantly challenged by rising rents caused by the City's moves into the East End, can get mutual support. The alliance of 400 trader members asserts their distinctiveness, social role and importance to the economy. Members have shown that the biggest issue small business owners struggle with is the lack of affordable rents in London, so the EETG launched an Affordable Rent Manifesto and has developed Rentcheck, a tool to help members examine the rents being paid in any one area, so that landlords can't raise rents to random levels to suit themselves.

Workshop participants

Racial inequality

Ilinca Diaconescu, London Gypsies and Travellers
Mena Mongan, London Gypsies and Travellers
Mama D, Community Centred Knowledge
Portia Msimang, Renters Rights London
Francesca Humi, Kanlungan
Sophie Wall, Latin Elephant
Saif Osmani, Bengali East End Heritage Society
Milena Weurth, Covid and Care research group LSE
Sion Lee, Just Space volunteer support

Children and Young People

Yasmin Moalin, Anti Tribalism Movement
James Dellow Soap Box, Dragon Hall
Marion Briggs, Alliance for Childhood
Rob Clayton, Grove Park Youth Club
Stephen Kenny, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum
Sion Lee, Just Space volunteer support

Participation

Azja, ReSpace Projects (Hive, Dalston)
Michael Reinsborough, New Lucas Plan
Christine Goodall, HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network
Tony Cealy, 81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance
Shirley Hanazawa, Wards Corner Community Coalition
Libby Kemp, Ealing Matters
Michael Ball, Waterloo Community Development Group
Robin Brown, Hayes Community Forum
Purva Tavri, Selby Trust
Milena Weurth, Covid and Care research group LSE
Barbara Tanska, Just Space volunteer support

Local Economy High Street

Michael Edwards, UCL BSP
Elena Besussi, UCL BSP
Michael Reinsborough, New Lucas Plan
Pat Turnbull, London Tenants Federation
Mama D, Community Centred Knowledge
Kathryn Johnson, Sustainable Hackney
Tom Young, Tom Young Architects/
 Queen's Crescent Shops & Market
Christian Spencer-Davies, Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum
Donya Lotfipour, Just Space volunteer support

Post Covid Neighbourhoods

Marina Chang, Calthorpe Community Garden
Libby Kemp, Ealing Matters
Heather Mendick, Morning Lane People's Space MOPS (Hackney)
Daniel Fitzpatrick, UCL BSP
Barbara Lipietz, UCL DPU
Claudia Firth, Radical Housing Network
Chris Setz, Broadwater Farm Residents Association
Matt Scott, Thames Ward Community Project
Alex Anthony, Thames Ward Community Project
Andrea Carey, Deptford Neighbourhood Action
Portia Msimang, Renters Rights London

Green Space and Biodiversity

Barbara Brayshay, Islington Environmental Emergency Alliance
Dave Morris, London Friends of Green Spaces
Alison Fure, Ecologist / campaigner Kingston
Peter Thredgood, Ealing Matters
Sarah Vaughan, Trees for Bermondsey
Liz Wrigley, New Garden Cities Alliance
Robin Brown, Hayes Community Forum
Sarah Xu, Just Space volunteer support
Ellie Healy, Just Space volunteer support

Housing Rights and Energy Rights

Pat Turnbull, London Tenants Federation
Mick O'Sullivan, London Federation of Housing Co-ops
Robert Taylor, Camden Federation of Private Tenants
Rhiannon Hughes, Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations
Sam Mason, Public and Commercial Services (PCS) trade union
Gianluca Cavallaro-Ng, Just Space volunteer support /
 Fuel Poverty Action
Sarah Goldzweig, Just Space volunteer support

Transport

Jeremy Leach, London Living Streets
Robin Brown, Hayes Community Forum
Andrew Bosi, Future Transport London /
 Capital Transport Campaign
Michael Ball, Waterloo Community Development Group
John Cox, Brent Cross campaigns /
 member Future Transport London
Ollie More, Sustrans
Bryan Goh, Just Space volunteer support

Local Economy Affordable Workspace

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Myfanwy Taylor, Leeds University and Wards Corner
 Community Coalition
Seema Manchanda, Black Training and Enterprise Group
Michael Parmar, Dharat workspace provider
Lucy Rogers, East End Trades Guild
Christian Spencer-Davies, Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum
Donya Lotfipour, Just Space volunteer support

Caring Economy

Eileen Conn, Peckham Vision
Corinne Turner, Peckham Vision
Michael Reinsborough, New Lucas Plan
Dave King, New Lucas Plan
Marian Larragy, West Hampstead Women's Centre
Wendy Davis, Rooms of Our Own
Barbara Cleary, National Alliance of Women's Organisations
Andrej Mecava, Community Plan 4 Holloway
Susan Himmelweit, Women's Budget Group
Jon Tabbush, Cambridge University
Sarah Xu, Just Space volunteer support
Alexandra Lima Dimitrijevic, Just Space volunteer support

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We would like to pay tribute to the memories of Victor Adegbuyi and Del Brenner, long-time members of Just Space, who both passed away in January 2021.

Victor was a veteran housing campaigner for the Newham Tenants Union. Del campaigned tirelessly for London's waterways and was a key member of the Regents Network. They are much missed, and would have made strong contributions to this Recovery Plan.

More information is available on the Just Space website:

justspace.org.uk

If you would like to get involved in the next stages of the Community-Led Recovery Plan or have any comments please contact Richard Lee, the co-ordinator of Just Space: contact@justspace.org.uk

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