



# Making London's infrastructure and communities more inclusive

Recommendations for infrastructure  
and built environment business  
leaders, designers and the  
Greater London Authority

# Foreword

London remains one of the greatest cities in the world. In its long history it has often led the way setting the benchmark for new infrastructure and transport innovation. In recent decades it has welcomed major investment in its built environment, ranging from new railways such as the Elizabeth Line to the renewal of urban centres in places like Stratford, following the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games. London continues to grow, but have all Londoners been able to benefit from the transformation of the city's fabric? And will they be able to in the future?

This welcome report from Mott MacDonald and Transport for London, also supported by the Mayor's Infrastructure Advisory Panel, looks in detail at this question, addressing issues of inclusivity when it comes to the built environment and its associated infrastructure. It sets out ways in which development can be people-centred, affordable and accessible for all. Its recommendations are a hugely valuable contribution for all of those making decisions and forming policies in this area. The complex uncertain future we face together is truly a trilemma; we must simultaneously maintain

the path to Net Zero, accommodate growth and make sure the most vulnerable in society are not excluded and disadvantaged. I would draw particular attention to the recommendations in the report for business leaders to shift mindsets, focusing not just on creating and delivering effective projects and programmes but also on the outcomes enabled by them. Outcomes for everyone in society. Inclusive infrastructure and development can provide the civic catalyst for both economic growth and making sure everyone in society shares in the benefits.

I would urge everyone with an interest in maintaining and growing the built environment, not just of London, but also of every other urban area, to reflect on the lessons of this report. And we should be grateful to Mott MacDonald and Transport for London for facilitating such a thoughtful contribution to the debate.

**Mark Wild OBE FREng**  
Chief Executive, SGN  
Member of the Mayor's London Infrastructure Group  
Former CEO, Crossrail Ltd  
CEO Elect HS2



# The Challenge

## How can we influence more inclusive outcomes for built environment projects for London?

This is the question Mott MacDonald and Transport for London (TfL) set out to consider through a round table discussion in January 2024 with fellow members of the Mayor of London's Infrastructure Advisory Panel (IAP), participants from the Greater London Authority (GLA) and representatives of the Mayor's Young Professionals Panel (YPP).

London is grappling with, among other challenges, the need to address the acute social challenges presented by the cost-of-living crisis, socio-economic and health inequality, the affordability of housing and commercial space, and more. Participants in the discussion were acutely aware that while built environment and infrastructure interventions – in both policy and practice – can help to alleviate many of these issues, the need to address them directly is not embedded in standard decision-making processes.

The GLA and TfL are providing the leadership and supporting frameworks, and the industry knows what can be done. However, this isn't leading to consistent action.

Participants agreed that there is considerable expert information and knowledge in the

sector around how social inclusion and equity can be introduced into built environment and infrastructure projects. Their frustration was that all-too-often, the imperative is too low to change the approaches and mindsets that have built up over decades. Visibility is lacking on the connection between long-term prosperity and social inclusion activity in the built environment and infrastructure industry.

Without clarity on how investment of time and money will pay back in increasing the proportion of Londoners that are economically and socially active, these investments are given low priority when decisions are made; small, short term capital gains are sometimes inadvertently traded off against less visible, longer term social, health and economic benefits.

There is however a groundswell of industry practitioners who want to make a bigger positive social impact – to make London a better place for everyone who visits, works and lives in it. These practitioners recognise that there is a wide spectrum of potential responses to the challenge; at one end being standards compliance, the middle range covering many sensible positive interventions, and the north star being doing what's right for the community.

They are driven by the latter, and want to deliver homes, economic growth, place-making, and place-shaping in a socially sustainable way.

The challenge is therefore twofold. Firstly, to help these advocates reflect inclusive outcomes in their own decision-making; and secondly to highlight good practice to inspire others. Championing success stories, where positive interventions have led to improved outcomes for communities and individuals, is therefore key. An output of the discussion, this document provides the industry with recommendations on what more we could be doing to work toward better outcomes for people in our shared built environment:

- as business leaders in infrastructure and buildings
- as project managers and designers on the ground delivering projects

The conversation has also generated ideas about how the GLA, through the London Plan, could support an increased focus on social inclusion and inclusive design. This includes emerging suggestions that the IAP aims to contribute into the GLA's review of the Plan.

# Summary of recommendations

## Business Leaders

### **Create an outcomes-driven mindset within organisations**

Lead a shift in focus from simply the creation of effective projects and programmes to also considering the outcomes that are enabled by them.

### **Consider mechanisms to encourage holistic thinking**

Provide the organisation with tools to understand the concepts, targets and actions needed to shift the dial.

### **Commit to cross-sector data extraction and sharing**

Work together with peers to agree what data is needed to make the 'business case' for improving the inclusivity of London's infrastructure and built environment.

### **Share personal stories**

Recognise that metrics don't show the full picture and use their agency to bring different social experiences of infrastructure and the built environment to life.

## Designers and Project Managers

### **Embed social inclusion into projects**

Embed social inclusion by setting social priorities from the outset, creating diverse teams and embedding an integrated inclusion capability.

### **Take a long-term approach to community engagement**

Recognise that public trust will not come from one-off engagement approaches and lock in plans for long-term community involvement and ownership.

## The GLA and London Plan

### **Embed genuine valuation of social inclusion**

Use the London Plan to articulate the measurable benefits that come from positive consideration of social inclusion in planning.

### **Drive inclusive design**

Support the Boroughs in the implementation and monitoring of inclusive design.

### **Increase the focus on income inequality**

Strengthen the lens on income inequality by putting socio-economic considerations on equal footing to other inequality factors.



# Recommendations for business leaders

Everywhere we look, we can draw out examples of the positive impacts of good design and the negative impacts of poor design in infrastructure and the built environment.

## Create an outcomes-driven mindset

To secure industry wide buy-in to the potential benefits, there needs to be a mindset shift at the organisational level. This means augmenting the focus on effective creation of projects and programmes with a recognition of the outcomes they enable, and the impacts these can have on communities far into the future.

Business leaders who champion the need for better societal outcomes can be the catalyst for cultural change in the wider organisation. As an example, in 2020 Mott MacDonald's Executive Chair, Mike Haigh, introduced a company statement of purpose which included the intent to "improve society by considering social outcomes in everything we do...". This, alongside concerted effort to focus on changing mindsets, is prompting positive shifts in behaviour across the global organisation, with staff at all levels doing more to better understand the social benefits of infrastructure and building delivery and to actively deliver more inclusive projects for people and society.

## Consider mechanisms to encourage holistic thinking

Taking a long-term focus on social outcomes will help organisations that are less mature in this space to embed new ways of working.

To support this, there is merit in business leaders encouraging their organisations to consider what strategies, tools or frameworks might be required to communicate this new way of thinking to their staff and other organisations that work with them. This does not require having to start from scratch – there are examples of good practice which can be adapted for use across the industry, including TfL's Property Development Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) and Equity in Motion plan (see case studies).

## Case study: TfL Equity in Motion Plan

TfL's newly published Equity in Motion plan covers key areas for social improvements to the network around accessible travel, keeping customers safe, understanding customers, affordable travel, inclusive information and connecting Londoners. It commits to more than 80 new and ambitious actions to further build on TfL and the Mayor's ongoing efforts to create a fairer and safer London. Alongside considerations such as accessibility, connectivity, and affordability, it also includes tackling crime and safety on the network, building on wider work to safeguard customers, including women and girls, and people who may be victims of discrimination, harassment or crime due to their personal characteristics.

### Commit to cross sector data extraction and sharing

The industry requires more evidence of the value of embedding inclusive outcomes within individual projects. This will help to combat current reticence to invest. Among other things, improved clarity on who is providing the resource versus where the benefits accrue would enable more informed collaboration on approaches to investment. We need better mechanisms to both generate and capture the data and information we need on inclusive infrastructure and built environment in London. This will allow us to dig into the big questions of:

- What are the gaps in inclusive infrastructure and built environment delivery?
- How can data be used intelligently to prevent further social exclusion and inequality among Londoners?
- How can we communicate the quantitative and qualitative impacts of inclusive infrastructure and built environment in the city to help accelerate future investment?

At present, however, it isn't clear what metrics are appropriate, what data would need to be captured in relation to these, and what forms of

monitoring (from initial surveys to longitudinal studies) would be of most value. As a first step, London business leaders could set up a cross sector working group to explore these questions.

### Share personal stories

While there is much value in gathering and showcasing quantified evidence, there is also power in storytelling to change behaviour. Everywhere we look we can draw out examples of the positive impacts of good design and the negative impacts of poor design in infrastructure and the built environment. From a wheelchair user able to use the same building entrance as everyone else to the older person who has places to stop and rest on their trip to the shops; from the student whose safe access to education is enhanced by a network of dedicated cycleways to the night shift worker who has the option of a well-lit and lively route to work. The built environment and its associated infrastructure can make or break our connections to our neighbourhood and impact the sense of 'belonging' to a place or community.

Business leaders can use their agency to seek out and share personal stories related to their sector, to demonstrate how important this issue is to them.

This will also help address the barriers that can be inadvertently caused by the lack of a shared language between social scientists, designers, and engineers.

### Case study: Places for London's Sustainable Development Framework (SDF)

Places for London is TfL's wholly owned property company. Places for London set up the Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) as an open-source tool for delivering best-in-class sustainable developments. With 100 sustainability indicators on environmental sustainability, social impact, and economic development, the SDF represents one of the most comprehensive and results-focused frameworks of its kind in the world. This includes assessing performance against TfL's Healthy Streets Approach by applying a 'checklist' to help designers and planners to put health and wellbeing at the forefront of their approach.

The SDF brings the 'social' strand of sustainability into sharp focus in property development, providing guidance on how to address social issues, drive better practice in alignment with policy, and to raise social ambition in the private sector through strong partnership working.



# Recommendations for designers and project managers

We need to be more ambitious and challenge ourselves to step beyond 'what we need to do' to think about 'what is right, and what we should do'.

## Embed social inclusion into projects

When it comes to social inclusion, it is often 'too little too late' on built environment and infrastructure projects. By leaving thinking to the last minute, we miss out on the opportunity to make a bigger impact, which is gained from embedding an outcomes-focused mindset from the beginning, so that these priorities filter through every aspect of our work.

We need to be more ambitious and challenge ourselves to step beyond 'what we need to do' to think about 'what is right, and what we should do' to create truly transformative change for people and communities across London.

Examples of actions that would promote more impactful inclusive outcomes are outlined as follows:

## Seek agreement on social priorities from the outset

- Instil stronger partnership working between authorities and developers to agree on and embed social priorities from the outset. Unless this is in place from the start, it is difficult to advocate for later, particularly where there are implications on time and cost.
- This also helps if there is a need to make trade-offs in later project stages, as establishing a shared understanding will save time and effort on going back and forth on design revisions.

## Bring diverse lived experience into teams

- Diverse teams make better decisions, bringing their own lived experiences and better reflecting London's diverse communities.
- Designers and project managers can influence the make-up of their teams; both by thinking about how they set these up to be more diverse and representative of communities they're working in, and how to reduce barriers when it comes to recruitment into our industry. Best practice in this area extends to bringing local people or local Micro, Small or Medium Enterprises, diverse-owned businesses or Voluntary and Social Enterprises (including Community Interest Companies) on board.
- Diversity also needs to be addressed at the business level, through championing EDI internally among the workforce, promoting more equitable access to opportunities through inclusive talent acquisition and support for under-represented groups among staff.



### Procure 'inclusion' as an integrated capability from an early stage

- Often on projects we see social practitioners such as social value specialists, engagement specialists, access consultants and social impact assessment specialists involved. However, these social practitioners are often brought on at a later stage in a project, where there is sometimes less opportunity to have a larger impact on outcomes. It is important to think about bringing social specialists in at a much earlier stage.
- Identifying one person who has oversight over all of these different elements as they intersect and overlap in projects will add immense value. This improves opportunities to minimise risk and enhance opportunities for communities on the long term.
- The RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay provides a good example of how to embed inclusion in built environment projects. It establishes a process from beginning to end to demonstrate how the objectives and inclusive design project strategy or social inclusion strategy have been delivered.

### Use immersive techniques to deepen our understanding of the experience of others

- Advanced digital tools can be used to help designers and future communities visualise how our infrastructure and built environment can affect people in both positive and negative ways. Immersive data visualisation approaches such as Virtual and Augmented Reality could be used more extensively in design and engagement to bring in a wider range of perspectives and better illustrate differing needs and experiences. Both Virtual and Augmented reality use digital approaches to improve user interaction and visualisation.
- With these tools, we could look at how accessible the design of a future building would be to a wheelchair user or at the safety of a public space from the perspective of women and girls and how this might change from day to night time.

### Case study: Mott MacDonald driving business change to deliver social outcomes

Following launch of a renewed company purpose in 2020, Mott MacDonald has taken bold steps to bring to life its commitment to deliver more socially inclusive infrastructure and buildings. The company has an established global network of social inclusion specialists and staff champions, who work across the operational business to drive social considerations through infrastructure planning, design, and delivery. Bespoke tools have also been developed to help staff explore social issues and opportunities at play in their work. This includes a Social Outcomes Framework which defines the possible outcomes that infrastructure projects can achieve against 'accessibility', 'inclusion', 'empowerment', 'resilience and wellbeing'. Meanwhile, its digital Social Transformation Model drives better practice in the built environment by identifying appropriate actions to embed social considerations through each stage of the project lifecycle, providing advice on implementation and tracking outcomes.



### Take a long-term approach to community engagement

The community lens is critical to the long-term success of infrastructure and built environment projects. We must develop strong and effective relationships to build trust from an early stage, but also ensure that this is maintained throughout delivery.

We need to recognise that stakeholders and members of the community have different needs, which means that interests and priorities cannot be met by a one size fits all approach.

When it comes to engagement, there are lots of examples of great practice across the industry, with many toolkits and case studies on how we should best approach the task of involving communities in the work that we do.

However, there is less of an understanding of exactly what we could or should be doing at each stage of a project. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Engagement Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work provides a helpful approach to what and who we should be thinking about at different stages. Importantly, the RIBA Engagement Overlay also articulates how we should continue to engage with

communities during construction, as this is critical in maintaining trust and to help ensure that we hear from the widest range of voices.

Those organisations responsible for delivering built environment and infrastructure schemes could enhance their ambitions on engaging with existing and future communities, as part of their intent to create long term legacy through their investment.

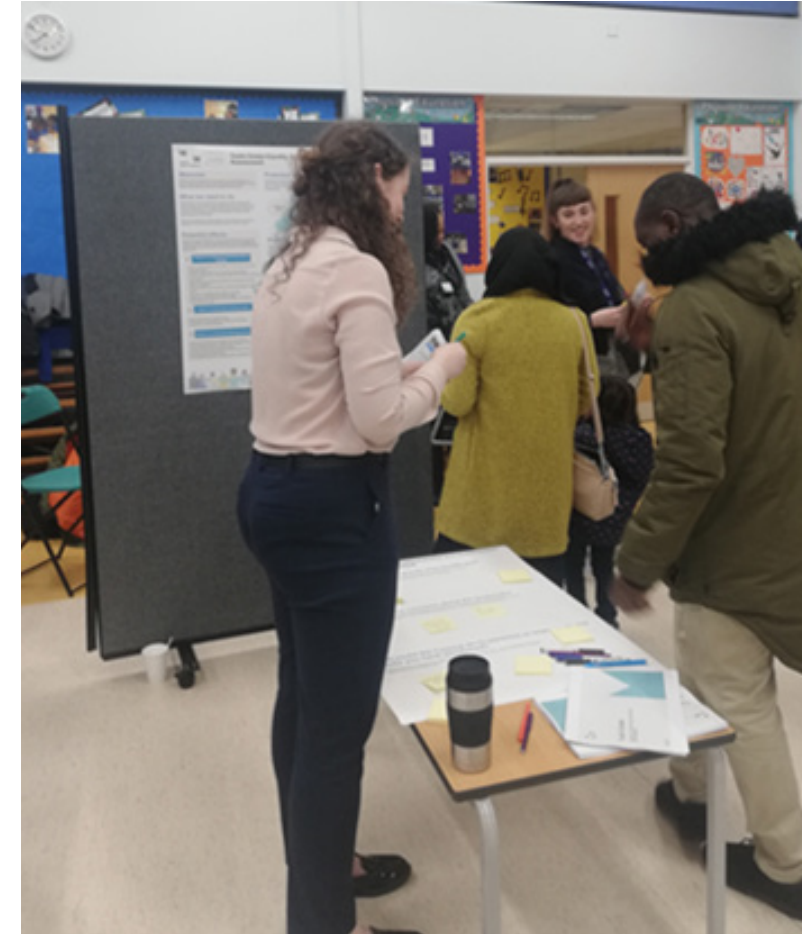
---

We need to recognise that stakeholders and members of the community have different needs, which means that interests and priorities cannot be met by a one size fits all approach.

---

### This would include:

- Recognition that public engagement is not a one-off exercise but an ongoing mechanism which should guide the lasting legacy of a project. This requires us to think beyond planning and beyond construction to the whole life of the asset.
- The need to build capability and skills in engagement by working directly with groups that face greater barriers to participation. This involves supporting them in how to respond effectively to engagement opportunities, where positive relationships can be fast tracked by helping individuals to understand the process and giving them the confidence to share their views and needs in an effective way.
- The potential to introduce community wealth-building approaches as part of infrastructure or building delivery, for example, community-owned investment models or community funds. This should ensure that there are lasting resources and governance in place to maintain community initiatives and infrastructure for long term use.





### Case study: SDF Playspace for teenagers

Teenage girls are often not considered or consulted on play facilities. As a result, girls retreat from public spaces and many girls stop participating in sport.

TfL worked with Make Space for Girls on a gender mainstreaming approach to workshop their play space design indicator. This included hosting co-design workshops in secondary schools, with teenagers and in particular teenage girls.

This indicator was further refined by using the Mayor's Design Advocates, teaching girls how to be a design reviewer. This has a dual function – it ensures play space is fit for their needs, but also helps girls to think about built environment careers and have the confidence to get involved in engaging in their community or responding to local consultations as a harder-to-reach group.

This approach is beginning to be taken up by built environment organisations.



### Case study: Great Men in the Making

This programme is a good example of how we can engage young people and build their capacity to become stewards of their community over the long term.

The Great Men in the Making programme nurtures the potential of young men aged 11-17 from diverse backgrounds and areas of London, fostering personal growth, leadership skills and a strong sense of community engagement.

All participants are given a suit, shirt, tie and pair of shoes and, in return, need to commit to attending a minimum of eight of the 10 workshops.

# Recommendations for the GLA and London Plan

Using its agency, the GLA can improve appreciation of the economic benefits of getting it right, and the social costs of getting it wrong.

## Embed genuine valuation of social inclusion

The GLA is very much a leader in this space, introducing progressive London Plan policies that centre people in planning the built environment, as well as initiatives that drive better practice such as the Mayor's Good Work Standard.

Using its agency, the GLA can improve appreciation of the economic benefits of getting it right, and the social costs of getting it wrong. Through the London Plan and other mechanisms, it can encourage public and private sector organisations across Greater London to consider how taking positive action now can deliver greater social impact in the long run, inspiring a shift away from the current tendency for short-term approaches. It could provide improved articulation of the social costs and benefits, and highlight the opportunity cost of not embedding an outcomes-focused approach in infrastructure and built environment delivery from the outset.

In the same way that the emerging requirement for natural capital assessment now responds to the problem of not accounting

for the services our natural environment provides, we need to address the problem of not properly valuing social resources, outcomes, networks and so forth.

As the GLA works towards the next update of the London Plan, to build upon Policy D5 and the Social Infrastructure SPG, the following seven mechanisms could be considered:

1. Require boroughs, in developing Development Plans (DPs), to consider social capital/ social net gain, in a similar way to natural capital and Biodiversity Net Gain.
2. Signpost the existing tools available to help with the monetisation of social benefits. However, acknowledge the complexities and limitations in trying to monetise everything, plus encourage the use of qualitative insights and case studies on inclusive buildings and infrastructure.

3. In preparation for this focus in the London Plan update, identify where existing tools contain gaps or where assumptions fall down. Or perhaps go a step further and create a shared framework for measuring social value on London's infrastructure and built environment projects.
4. Require boroughs to signpost where the biggest social value gains are perceived for their borough and provide greater education and learning for developers on how to better focus their social value efforts in these areas. This is in anticipation of the Procurement Bill coming into force later this year. The Bill is a positive step change, signalling a move away from scrutinising tenders on their economic benefit alone and valuing those that promote 'public benefit'. However, with 'social value' absent from the wording, locally specific guidance will be needed to ensure the industry continues to prioritise social value through procurement.



5. Encourage boroughs to protect and promote community spaces, which offer so much to so many people, by building on the work of land commissions, or similar, which have identified buildings, sites and open spaces vital to community uses. Protect such uses with planning policies and highlight how these intersect with other policies on healthy streets, wellbeing and planning for health. Focus on how these community uses and assets can provide long term benefits and can be invested in and held in perpetuity using planning obligations.
6. Encourage boroughs to make creative use of their procurement powers to incentivise good supplier behaviour. International examples of where development incentives are used to encourage enhanced sustainable outcomes include the Heritage Floor Space (HFS) scheme in Sydney and green building permit incentives in North American cities. The former incentivises protection of heritage buildings through a trading scheme where developers can increase their maximum floor area allowance by purchasing HFS credits

that have been created elsewhere through certified conservation works, thus offsetting the cost of that conservation. In the latter instance, projects in cities like Seattle can gain additional height, floor area, or a faster building permit in exchange for meeting specific green building targets.

7. Encourage use of the x29 clause in New Engineering Contracts (NEC contracts) to ensure sustainability requirements are embedded in contractual requirements, including rewards for good performance and penalties for poor performance.



### Drive inclusive design

The London Plan requires boroughs, in preparing DPs, to support the creation of inclusive neighbourhoods by embedding inclusive design, and collaborating with local communities in the development of planning policies that affect them, and at the earliest possible stage in the development process. It includes the following statement in paragraph 3.5.2:

*'Inclusive design is indivisible from good design. It is therefore essential to consider inclusive design and the development's contribution to the creation of inclusive neighbourhoods at the earliest possible stage in the development process – from initial conception through to completion and, where relevant, the occupation and on-going management and maintenance of the development.'*

However, the boroughs need more support in the practical implementation of an inclusive design approach that spans a project lifecycle. This includes how to address what isn't covered in standards (such as BS8300 – 'Design of an inclusive and accessible built environment'), including the unique experiences and inclusive design needs of women, children, older and disabled people.

Child friendly design is an example of focusing on the needs of a specific group, and there is good practice guidance in London to draw from, including the Hackney Child Friendly Design Supplementary Planning Guidance and GLA's Good Growth by Design guidance.

Child-friendly design is covered in the London Plan through recommendations on the design

of play spaces, but the recommendations could go further. For example, developers and designers should also think about play space for teenagers, age-friendly design in public realm and housing design and the importance of safety and security in its effect on women, ethnic minority, religious minority, and LGBTQ+ groups.

The way that Environmental Impact Assessments are undertaken continue to change shape, and there is the risk that there are gaps in social topics and considerations that will likely need to be filled by local policy. The London Plan could encourage the use of Health Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment as active tools that drive better practice and design early on in projects, to move away from their use purely as a check box exercise at planning submission stage.

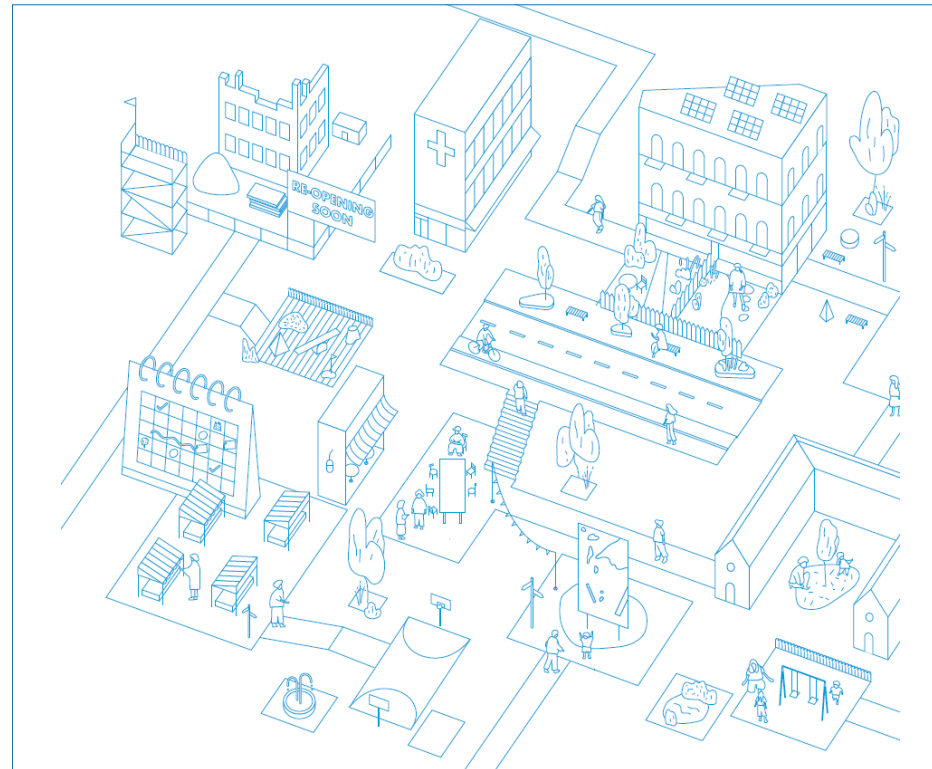


### Provide an increased lens on income inequality

A topic that received attention during the discussion was how much the issue of affordability is influencing decisions made by Londoners. Income inequality isn't classified as a protected characteristic, meaning that considering how those in low-income brackets are impacted by certain types of infrastructure can sometimes be missed.

The GLA could provide guidance on this issue, encouraging uptake of socio-economic considerations as part of 'local Protected Characteristics', including homelessness, socio-economic status or carers – which many local authorities in London have already taken forward.

Or perhaps the GLA could encourage the application of insights from the transport's sector use of distributional analysis, set out in Transport Appraisal Guidance. This approach considers the potential impacts, including benefits to users, across different geographies and levels of deprivation.



### Case study: Sustainable Development Framework Access and Inclusion

The TfL SDF Inclusive Design indicator provides a helpful example on how to embed inclusive and accessible design in projects. The aim of this indicator is for the public realm and buildings to be secure, accessible, inclusive, and easy to navigate and maintain. The main mechanism for doing this is through embedding a process that delivers consistency and knowledge all the way through a project, to maximise opportunity and remove barriers. This is achieved through the appointment of an access consultant at the preparation and briefing stage, maintaining their involvement until the asset is in use, the last point being due to the end result not always matching the design intent. It also highlights the importance of engagement with diverse groups throughout.

# Conclusion

To get to where we want to go, it will take both individual and collective drive to build on the existing initiatives of key London stakeholders and encourage more organisations and practitioners to do more.

As experts who are involved in different sectors and many different aspects of built environment and infrastructure delivery in London, all who participated agreed that there is more that we could be doing to achieve better outcomes for people. To get to where we want to go, it will take both individual and collective drive to build on the existing initiatives of key London stakeholders and encourage more organisations and practitioners to do more than the minimum standards set by policy. For development and infrastructure to generate truly transformative change for communities in London, we will need wider leadership, cross-sector cooperation and requirements that incentivise us all to go further.

It is the intention of this group to take these recommendations to London's built environment and infrastructure leaders as a call to build on the momentum already created by a few London entities. It will be the first step in a longer-term ambition for the IAP to explore these issues with the GLA and the London Infrastructure Group, as action will require commitment and dedicated resources.

There is also the potential to test the validity of the recommendations beyond London. Although generated from a conversation about Londoners, the recommendations for infrastructure and built environment leaders and practitioners are not location-specific. We also anticipate that there will be plenty of good practice from other cities and more case studies to share. Furthermore, with the expectation of increased devolution powers in city regions, the suggestions for the London Plan could be applicable to local and regional government elsewhere.

We hope that these insights and recommendations are useful for cities and city stakeholders nation-wide that are seeking to constantly improve the inclusivity of towns, cities and rural areas.



# Contributors and authors

## Contributors

This project was led by Mott MacDonald and Transport for London.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the following organisations represented on the Mayor's Infrastructure Advisory Panel and the Mayor's Young Professionals Panel for their contributions to the workshop:

- Clarion Housing Group
- Coreus Group
- Costain
- Deloitte
- Gleeds
- Publica
- Turner & Townsend

## Report authors

### **Sarah Marshall**

Principal social outcomes consultant  
Mott MacDonald

### **Clare Wildfire**

Global city lead  
Mott MacDonald

### **Simone West**

Principal inclusive designer  
Transport for London

### **Lucy Atlee**

Senior quality and design manager  
Places for London









**Talk to us.**

**Clare Wildfire**

Global city lead

[clare.wildfire@mottmac.com](mailto:clare.wildfire@mottmac.com)

**Sarah Marshall**

Principal social outcomes Consultant

[sarah.marshall@mottmac.com](mailto:sarah.marshall@mottmac.com)

[mottmac.com](http://mottmac.com)