

**London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee –
Wednesday 7 September 2022**

Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – The Future of Planning in London – Panel One

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): We now come to the main part of our business; the first part of our two-part investigation into the future of planning. In this session we will have representatives from community and civic groups and to assist the discussion we have split our panellists into two panels. Before we begin our questions to the panellists, we have two short presentations, one from the Greater London Authority (GLA) and one from Just Space to set out the context of the discussion. The first will be from Luke Bruce, Programme Director for the London Recovery Board, GLA. We know that the London Plan was agreed in 2021, but the pandemic and the need to recover from the pandemic is a pertinent conversation that needs to be had in the context of how a new London Plan should evolve to adapt our governance in order to meet the new demands from Londoners. Luke, I am going to pass over to you for a five-minute presentation. We look forward to hearing you help set context to the discussions for the meeting.

Luke Bruce (Programme Director, Recovery, Greater London Authority): Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you very much for inviting me today. You have asked me to introduce the session with a short presentation on London's recovery and what that might mean for the upcoming London Plan and that work. I should say this is exactly the right time to be having this discussion. We are at a pivot point within London's recovery. We are starting to think beyond COVID-19 and some of the other challenges facing the city. It is great to see that you are starting in this manner with this panel. One of the key lessons from the pandemic is that engagement with communities is so successful to public policy and to the response within the city.

For today I would like to do two things, firstly briefly set out London's recovery and where I think we are, and then focus on three areas where I think there are big implications for the London Plan and how colleagues might go about that work. I have a couple of slides but mostly I will just be talking. I will just start with the first item, which is how London's recovery is doing. In many ways, London's recovery has been going very well in the sense that we have experienced a very swift V-shaped recovery. We are pretty much back to pre-pandemic levels of output by 2021. That is reflected in a very buoyant labour market; unemployment has not been a feature of recovery and indeed in some cases labour shortages have held back sectors.

There is an issue of a sharp increase in economic activity with some Londoners just exiting the labour market and that is again reflected in some of the labour shortages we see. Tourism is returning, in some cases over the summer it was back to pre-pandemic levels. Spending in retail is broadly back. We have also seen - and this I am sure will be a feature of the conversation today - rising house prices and very sharp increases in rental costs, really very sharp increases. That definitely is something we know, which is a shortage of supply.

But whereas the pandemic drove discussion on London's economy up to the start of last year, high inflation and increased cost of living dominate the current situation for Londoners. It is probably going to get significantly worse over the coming months and I would expect growth to stall in 2023. We do not know what that means for London's long-term position in the context of this discussion. But it certainly suggests, at least in the medium term, recovery could turn negative. The economic picture will undoubtedly frame the way the London Plan is developed and the work of pulling it together.

The second big issue is mobility. Essentially, working from home has fundamentally changed the way that many - although by no means all - Londoners interact with the city. There is a band around zone 2 and 3,

where people are working from home and spending money on their local high streets in greater numbers than before. That is less true of the outer boroughs and it is certainly a big challenge for the Central Activity Zone. The question is how permanent is this change in mobility and how important is it to the way that the city works?

Then finally, the final big issue I wanted to highlight coming out of the pandemic is inequality. The pandemic shows acutely the impacts of structural inequalities that underpin the city. We know that those with protected characteristics, Black Londoners, disabled Londoners, older Londoners and so forth, had worse outcomes from the pandemic and are likely to fare worse in recovery, particularly in the context of cost of living increases. The pandemic highlighted the fact that Londoners are not equal in terms of wealth, access to housing, employment, safety, clean air, green spaces, and services; all issues that are fundamental to the London Plan.

Therefore, Chair, with those three issues coming out of the pandemic, I just wanted to point briefly to some opportunities and areas which we think need to be considered in terms of developing the Plan. Firstly, making places safe and welcoming. A key feature of our work so far has been supporting high streets to succeed. It means focusing on security, ensuring streets are safe, more green spaces, better air quality, and ensuring planning regulations protect the diversity of use on high streets and ensure that shops and buildings are not left empty. Protecting local community assets is particularly important to the night-time economy.

The second area is improving the experience of living in the city and making it an attractive place to visit. It is important to get tourism back, particularly overseas tourism. It is important to get office workers back and to make London an attractive place to invest. People come and live and invest in London because it is a great place to live, and we need to protect that. We also need investment in infrastructure, transport - we know Transport for London (TfL) has some very long-term financial challenges as a result of the pandemic.

Then the third area I just wanted to focus on was making the city fit for the future. Resilience is going to be a big issue, as the summer has shown. We are not going to avoid extreme weather occurrences and we need to reflect this in the way that we build and plan the city. We need resilience in our city's infrastructure and public services. We also need to support a change in London's economy with investment in the green sector, life sciences, education, and other growth areas, while protecting the everyday economy that makes the city tick and which got us through COVID-19. Finally, we also need to support Londoners to adapt and change their skills and help them evolve as the economy changes.

Finally, some issues to consider for the future. The Recovery Programme is not focused on housing. That is not one of our missions because of the way we established the programme. But there can be no doubt that the shortage, and the lack of good affordable housing in the city, create both short and long-term challenges which are big issues for London's recovery and its future development.

Chair, just in conclusion, I hope this is helpful. We are already working with the London Plan team on how to get the learning across, both in terms of the policy-setting, but also on how big issues from the pandemic will inform the future of the city's planning structures.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much, Luke, really appreciate you setting that out for us, and I have no doubt that we will be making reference to the Recovery Plan throughout the discussion today. Thank you for your time.

I am going to pass over to Robin Brown from Just Space who will be giving us a short overview of the Just Space *Community-Led Recovery Plan*. Welcome to you, Robin. I am just going to say to all the guests, please

introduce yourself by name before you start speaking, so you are accessible to all of our guests who are participating today.

Robin Brown (Just Space): Thank you. I am Robin Brown. I retired from local government planning and I have been supporting community groups in Hayes, west London, and in 2007 I came across others wanting to collaborate, to address certain issues around planning, with the assistance of the London Civic Forum. That was a body set up to promote the engagement of Londoners in the governance of the new London system of a mayoralty and the GLA.

The point I want to make is that active and deep participation, civic participation, requires proactive support and resourcing to achieve effective and meaningful engagement. We have a considerable section in our document on participation that set out some useful ways or mechanisms of achieving that effective and meaningful engagement. It is a longstanding ask of Just Space that the voices of grassroots community groups be recognised, heard, and acted on. The Just Space network itself typically draws on a variety of some 60 to 80 community groups to come together to make policy propositions, basically at the strategic level by linking their local lived experiences, issues and ideas, for remedying situations and linking those to the pan-London planning policy.

Before I continue with further referencing of the Recovery Plan, given that the Committee report (The Future of Planning in London Part One - Agenda Item 6) informs us that the object of the Committee's investigation concerns the future review of the London Plan from May 2024 onwards, I want to say that we cannot wait. Much more needs to be done now, particularly given that the consultation draft of the current London Plan was published nearly five years ago, in December 2017. That was a London pre-COVID-19, pre-declarations of climate and biodiversity crises, and now we are faced with a cost of living crisis. It was a plan that was, substantially, a continuance of the business-as-usual model of the previous decade.

Forgive me, I am a planner, but I must draw attention to the underlying planning methodology for the London Plan is one of plan, monitor, and manage. There is a promise in the current London Plan that implementation should be kept under review with Key Performance Indicators and an Annual Monitoring Report.

Just Space, in its contribution to the 2019 draft London Plan Examination in Public (EiP) proposed much more community involvement in monitoring. One that was more qualitative, more about fairness, diversity, equalities, measuring good growth while capturing the reality of what goes on. I recognise that, earlier in this year, the Planning and Regeneration Committee asked for better reporting on housing tenure statistics for Opportunity Areas. That is part of the story. We also asserted at the EiP that community consultation had not been sufficiently sustained or systematic, and detailed proposals were made for improvements. Again, at the EiP, Just Space was critical about the adequacy and clarity of assessing the impacts on the equalities of the London Plan. Much of this has been reiterated in the Recovery Plan.

I do recognise the establishment of the Planning for London Programme earlier in the year, but believe that the process of inviting organisations to submit evidence to the programme has been too passive. As I understand it, the invitation to submit responses to the Planning London's Future survey on Talk London was open from 1 March 2022 to 20 March 2022, and received 235 comments. That is simply a snapshot; what we are looking for is a dialogue. The point I am making is that we should start now to be more open, free-ranging, supportive and innovative in community engagement. Generally, on implementing the London Plan, and the call-in guidance was a good start, and specifically on the monitoring and managing or reviewing the London Plan. One that explores the devising of a Plan that can respond to rapidly changing contexts, more directed at remedying structural inequality. Here the Recovery Plan in the participation chapter endorses the use of Citizens Assemblies and coproduction and sets out what makes a good, authentic, coproduction.

Turning to the Recovery Plan, really I cannot do justice to the scale and depth of the 44 policy proposals in the Recovery Plan in five minutes. But I do not think I really have to because we are going to have eight panellists who will explore aspects of it and the publication has been intentionally designed to graphically display in the written form text and quotations that originated from the voices of grassroots community groups.

Perhaps I could at least draw attention to the main imperatives that permeate the Recovery Plan. Taking them in reverse order to those set out in the document, starting with priority for climate and nature on page nine, this recognises the urgency of the environmental crises and the need for a just transition, particularly avoiding the unintended consequences of achieving net zero.

Another imperative is the city of local neighbourhoods. Many of the workshops emphasised the high relevance of local facilities and the neighbourhood scale where many valuable economic and social activities take place. Hence our call for a strong lifetime neighbourhood approach, something that has been dropped from the current London Plan.

A third imperative is visibility and influence for all. Increasingly recognised, particularly with the revelation of the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19, are the persistent entrenched inequalities in London. Many proposals for participatory mechanisms that aim to sustain an influential presence of diverse grassroots organisations are advanced in the document.

Finally, the fourth imperative is a caring city. This imperative includes the key sector of the real economy that is the 'care' economy. This is greatly under-resourced despite many promises over time to transform the situation. Just Space proposals are situated within a broader chapter, Caring City, which proposes an overarching concept or framework for the city within which London can become a city where the key driver is the taking care of people, nature, places and spaces. I am sure that would set a very interesting agenda for a new London Plan.

Finally, Just Space, having made this call for action, is now working out how our members can secure its implementation. That something actually happens to improve our lives. Therefore we appreciate this opportunity extended by the Committee to hear more about the Recovery Plan.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much, Robin. I want to reiterate my thanks to both of you, Robin and Luke. Robin, I could not agree more with you, the idea of being innovative for community engagement is something the Committee is very invested in. It needs to be more about dialogue, less about consultation, more about coproduction. We see this meeting as part of that wider dialogue, that wider discussion of how we incorporate the pandemic and the things that we have learned in terms of London's needs into our governance and what role planning can play in that.

I also think we can be ambitious for today's meeting and our further dialogue in saying that, sometimes when we consider planning applications or planning more broadly it can be through a very legalistic framework, and, actually, as the needs for Londoners have evolved the consequences of planning go beyond this and become political. We need to be ambitious in how we present the need to expand the way we think about planning, especially in the context of reforms going through Parliament right now.

Luke and Robin, I am going to invite you to join the gallery so that you can hear from our guests. Welcome to our panel, thank you so much for joining us here today. We are really excited to hear from you. I know for some of you, you are returning guests, because we found your contributions to be so fruitful the last time we had you. I also want to highlight that we have representatives from the Planning for London Programme

watching and listening in on today's Committee meeting so that they can hear the contributions from our guests and hopefully begin to incorporate that into what a new London Plan needs to encompass.

To our panel - feel free to give one to two-minute introduction about yourself and your work and when you speak, please introduce yourself by your full name.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): Thank you very much. My name is Saif Osmani, I live in Newham and I have been brought up in East London most of my life. I am an architectural designer and artist. I am also a carer, therefore what is great about seeing the *Just Space Community-led Recovery Plan* is that it takes its position from a positioning of caring, because that is essentially what is happening in London at the moment. We have something like 24,000 carers in Newham alone, and I just came back from an appointment with the parent whom I am caring for and what I find is that living on something like £70 for 40 hours of work is equivalent to £2 an hour, which I do not think most of the people here would want to live on. But unfortunately, that is the reality that some Londoners find themselves in, especially if you come from communities of multiple social inequalities, which in my case we do.

The organisation I am part of is called the Bengali East End Heritage Society. It was set up in 2016, partly in response to the changes in the built environment, which have not considered the ethnic minorities and the impacts on their growing culture and heritage in London, which prides itself as a global international city, and yet it is very easily eroding the culture and heritage of the ethnic minorities and ethnic majority areas around London. That is absolutely disgraceful. Therefore we came up with the Bengali East End Heritage Society in response to the East End Preservation Society and the Jewish East End Celebration Society and we said, "Where is our agency in the planning system itself?" Presently we have not had that, and the Just Space network does allow us to do that.

Some of our key learnings or the key milestones we have had is the 'Save Brick Lane' campaign, which was started two years ago, which is looking at the large-scale expansion of the City of London towards the East End, which could absolutely decimate one of the important cultural areas and heritage areas of London, and East London in particular, where we have 2 million visitors. The landowners there, with the developers and the decision-makers, want to turn it into a corporate place, because suddenly the land is worth more than the people who are living there, which is again extremely disgraceful.

Next year [2023] in Upton Park we mark 20 years of 'Friends of Queen's Market' where we have had to fight continuously for 20 years to protect the market. Every month we meet with 15 people and we have to fight for our main food source for our community. Most of our community cook for themselves, they cook for large families, they even make their own clothes, and yet that very resource that we really value is under threat. Today, if there is one thing that I would like to push forward with, it is to encourage organisations to think outside of the financial value system and to think of all the value systems that we live by, which includes social values, cultural value, heritage value, community value. All of those things matter because London is not just purely made by numbers on an Excel sheet, it is made up by the people who are here. That is my main concern here today.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much, Saif. I will move on to Natalia.

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): Thank you for this opportunity. I am here on behalf of Latin Elephant, and am Co-Director with Santiago Peluffo Soneyra. Latin Elephant is a charity, which has served since 2014, and was set up in response to the massive change that the Elephant and Castle area was facing with the whole regeneration. The Elephant and Castle area is known for some of the communities as a Latino neighbourhood in London. It is important to say that as an organisation we not only support Latin

Americans, but we also support other migrant ethnic business owners, traders, start-ups, that serve that part of the Elephant and Castle.

What we aim to do is somehow demystify the planning process because it's not an accessible process when it comes to huge, massive planning applications that bring lots of challenges to the communities affected. Therefore what we have done is worked with the business owners and the traders in the area to respond to the planning application and to voice their concerns in terms of the challenges that they saw this was going to have. We have highlighted some of the learning process in various reports and maybe I could draw your attention to some of the reports that we have done in terms of the case for the Latin Quarter. Also the social value of the Elephant and Castle where we look at - as our colleague has just raised - that social aspect of the community of traders that we serve and that we support. Also, the planning responses that we have made on numerous occasions.

As an organisation, we are now a bit concerned because, even though through the campaign and the collaboration with other grassroots organisations at local level, such as 35% [Campaign], and with support from Just Space as well as other grassroots initiatives, we have managed to get some relocation offers for some of the traders affected and relocation funds. However, if we think about what the area was five or ten years ago it is not the same. Half of the traders have not been relocated, some of them are still waiting for a relocation space and some of them are insufficiently relocated as well.

As we speak right now, there is a meeting to support La Bodeguita. I do not know if you have ever had the opportunity to go to La Bodeguita, but it is one of the most lively restaurants in the Elephant and Castle inside the shopping centre. It has been around for over 25 years and the owner has worked really hard to serve the community and she was a magnet to attract other businesses in the area and a big cluster of independent business owners. It has been two years, close to three years, since the Elephant and Castle shopping centre closed and to date she has not been able to relocate. This is one of the biggest restaurants that we have had to serve the community, one that is important in terms of the night-time economy, that generated employment, that served the local area, served Latinos, but also Londoners, and right now the negotiations are still happening and the relocation has not materialised. Why? There are lots of challenges. It is important to monitor the process going forward.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Natalia. We will be looping back around to speak specifically about the communities you work with and the impact of the pandemic, therefore I am sure we will hear more about that specific case. Thank you for drawing our attention to it.

Florence, moving on to yourself.

Florence Nazziwa (Founding Member, Equal Care Co-op): Good afternoon. My name is Florence Nazziwa from southeast London. I am a Community Devolvement practitioner and a carer. I have been a carer for over 25 years. I am attached to a group called Equal Care Co-operative. Equal Care Co-operative is a multi-stakeholder digital platform cooperative providing home care and support in Yorkshire. I am one of the founding members of the Equal Care in London. In order to provide regulated care in London that meets quality of life needs, we need to engage in community development work. In Equal Care we say, if people are plants, relationship would be the roots. This means that a person's wellbeing depends on the quality of their relationship to the people, places, and things, that make up the community.

Our recommendation and what we want out of this meeting, is for local authorities to change their time and task model of commissioning. You will not see innovation in care provisions without innovation in care

commissioning. No provider will be able to provide the care workers a decent job or decent salary, even training and development, without making these changes from the top.

Number two, build partnerships that create local hubs in neighbourhoods that connect care workers to local resources, gives them more visible presence in the community and increase their sense of belonging. I am a care worker and on my day-to-day business I care for 21 clients a day; that means seven calls in the morning, seven calls lunch time, and seven calls at bedtime. How can you be a carer with that kind of life? Without passion. Where I come from, there is a word “*ubuntu*”, meaning the inner person. You connect with that inner person to provide the care. My inner *ubuntu* is disconnected from this. What we want to bring is a change in social care and it can only be achieved by change from the top, from the commissioning, to the bottom. Thank you.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much, Florence. I am very grateful to the guests for their introduction. I always think it is important to be able to give you the space to say things specifically that you might want to make sure that the Committee hears rather than it just being off the back of our questions. Just to emphasise that what we are trying to do is take different layers of governance, streams of work, whether that is care work or whether that is to do with local businesses, and begin to weave it into how it should inform our future approach to planning so that planning can really make sure it benefits the communities in London.

To steer us towards that exact combination of ideas, I wanted to ask the panel, how, during the pandemic, did social and economic inequalities relating to planning change for the communities that you work with.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): We have a very disengaged community in East London at various forums and it is very difficult to sometimes engage them because of their distrust with the existing structures, including the political systems that exist there, which they do not particularly think work in their favour. That is partly because they have seen so many physical changes happening, which have not necessarily reflected what they need in their community. For example, they have seen tall tower strategies come through whereby the movement of a new incoming international class, well-heeled class with lots of readily available finance, are able to move around. Yet they themselves have been pushed out of particular areas, what were once public areas have been privatised.

Therefore, what has happened is, during the pandemic, a lot of the nurses had come from areas like East London, a lot of the Black, Afro-Caribbean, African, Asian, South American, groups have come from there. But their needs have not really been considered or met. Let us take the case of Queen’s Market, for example, during the pandemic. There was an over-policing of the area despite the market itself being an open-aired, covered but well-ventilated, traditional London street market. Whereas we made a comparison with the local Tesco, for example, and although people were lining in separate queues, once they were in there they were spreading COVID-19 left, right and centre. We were being mistreated. In fact, the small traders felt very mistreated and felt that it was unfair. This has continued right the way from how policies just see land as speculative financial valuation rather than what it really is, which is this multiple ecosystem of other value systems, which presently the London Plan does not consider.

What we also found is that during COVID-19, that the market was really crucial because at one end of Green Street where Queen’s Market exists we found that there were food banks whereby Indian students had arrived on full-time courses and they were so embarrassed to tell their parents that they had arrived in lovely England, into London, and they were starving to death really. Therefore people and charities were giving out bags of oil and rice. Luckily for us, at the other end, we had Queen’s Market where for £5 you can buy a week’s food for the family. Because that is the reality by which people live in parts of East London. Now, why is that seen as

lower than any other retail experience, I do not know. It is a vital thing that was really important for our community and thankfully we are still here.

What we also found was that, during the lockdown, in, for example, Tower Hamlets, that the planning system had decided, or the planners, that certain things could be pushed during the pandemic, like a complete lack of engagement or meaningful engagement with how corporatisation of Brick Lane and the impact of that on existing businesses and communities. There were huge misconceptions and lies being told about the communities, such as the community are moving out, which is not true. From our own data collection, which we had to do in our spare time, we found that the community were very much there except the new generation did not have so much access to Brick Lane. That is a different thing.

But what we found was that certain national pandemics, like the COVID-19 one, do serve certain groups as well and we need to be aware of that. Because we are living in communities with multiple social inequalities, there is plenty of research to say that, if one thing goes wrong, there will be huge sorts of impacts in our communities. In a lot of cases our communities have been very hard hit. The Bangladeshi community have been very hard hit, for example, because socialising is part of what they do quite a lot.

Those things have not really been assessed. This recovery, I have put a big question mark on, because I do not think we can continue as normal, continue as we have previously done, therefore it would be wrong - in my opinion - if the London Plan continues to be what it is, which is a business and building development plan and does not consider the needs of Londoners in its future trajectory.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Saif. Natalia?

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): In response to your question, during the pandemic many of the business owners that were still waiting to be relocated were suddenly hit by of course the impact of the pandemic. People had to isolate. But if they were business owners waiting for their relocation to happen, and very eager to start their business again, that got delayed even further. There was the challenge of the uncertainty of the relocation, and then the challenge of, OK, the pandemic has hit, when is the business going to open. On top of that, for some business owners there were different schemes in terms of support during that period, but if they did not have their business up and running then they would not be able to qualify for certain grants and any support that was available. That added an extra layer of stress to a group that was already very challenged through the whole process.

Bearing in mind as well that many of the business owners, many of them are women, are breadwinners, this had a knock-on effect on their dependence, this had a knock-on effect on the families that they were supporting. This generated a lot of anxiety and a lot of uncertainty as to how can they feed their families. We had some business owners that wanted to support people that did not know where to go for food and some of them, when they were able to open, they did that. They opened their doors and they distributed food, they filled a very big gap at local level in terms of the food provision for people who had nowhere to go or also had no means to do it. Bearing in mind that there were additional challenges within communities to the ones that we all faced: there were language barriers, there were challenges around overcrowding in homes. These brought an extra layer of stress and some of these business owners responded to that by providing food, by providing support, and by providing information.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much for that, Natalia. Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff AM: I am interested in what you said, Mr Osmani, about how we incorporate those social objectives within the London Plan. As somebody who was involved in the campaign to save Queen's Market, I

can absolutely say it is somewhere that all Assembly Members should visit, to visit a market that really is producing budget food for people who just cannot afford to pay things like supermarket costs. How do you incorporate that into a plan in a way that is not suffocating for future development?

Just to add to the point. Ironically, when we saved Queen's Market under the previous Mayor (The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP), I would love to say it is because the previous Mayor recognised the value, the social value of that market. But it was other planning reasons that resulted in that big plan being rejected. However, with Queen's Market, because of this lack of certainty of its function, there is a lack of investment by the local authority, who do not want to spend money. I was down at Queen's Market about three or four weeks ago and it is just getting tattier and tattier because it looks like the local council does not have the incentive to invest in it because, as far as they are concerned, it has no long-term future. That is a lot to squeeze in a question. Not my best question, Chair, but I hope you understand where I am going.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): Yes. There is quite a lot there. Essentially, the Plan, like all plans, has gone through many revisions. The current Plan is probably - if I am honest with you - not fit in terms of reflecting what is London itself at the moment. If it is a future business plan, then the London Plan should be saying that very specifically. It currently does not fully say that it is a future expansion plan, business and building plan. At core, what you are asking is what is development itself. A lot of people will say that development is not just building development. You are looking at human development and all sorts of other things. People on the ground do not understand what development means really because they think, yes, it is a good thing, and yet there is something very different going through their heads. Whereas for developers it just means often luxury flats.

In the case of Queen's Market, in 2009 and 2010, then Mayor Boris Johnson did throw it out on the grounds of towers in inappropriate places. What we are finding is a threat again coming through, largely pushed unfortunately by the Good Growth Fund, which we think is tinged slightly with the idea of sprucing it up and changing the mix of people who might use something, and thus changing the responses that they might get from the public. Therefore Queen's Market, if it right now looks tatty, it is because there has not been the good investment, because we know that it is one of London's most successful street markets. It turns over a profit and that has not been invested properly into it. It is largely racialised as well because, if you look at ethnic minority spaces, that is an area where there are a lot of ethnic minorities that rely on it, it is a vital street market for families, people bringing up families in parts of London. We meet people from across London and we are taking petitions at the moment. We are meeting people across London who come to Queen's Market to shop. It is not just Newham itself.

What we are finding is that the Good Growth amount of £5 million has been given because there has been long-term managed neglect and decline, which is usually a precursor to privatisation, which is what is unfortunately often considered for strategic sites like Queen's Market. We do not think it is good enough to just look at the future expansion of everything with the promise of luxury flats you cannot afford. Because ultimately, if you look at housing and street markets, often a richer class of people would not want to see poorer people shopping and shouting out, "Fruit and veg" and "Have a banana" any day soon. Usually they want them out. The reason we know that is, if you look at the historic markets of Brick Lane and Sclater Street, Cheshire Street, the incoming classes of people are saying that is a lot of noise and there is a lot of unsavoury people, they think, in those areas. We see it as part of the local culture and street markets as giving back to Londoners in their diversity of backgrounds.

Do I think it is suffocating for future development? No, I do not. We need to be more intelligent as a city. We need to take on the sociological and the geography and the people-centric studies, which have been done, and which we go around the globe and tell people who great London is, but at the moment just purely seeing

London as a financial pinning on every aspect of our community is having the opposite effect. The very thing that you love and value is suddenly under threat simply because you are calculating how much something costs. I do not mean to be rude, but London has always been about lots of people living together, often side by side, and good economies are able to be able to cushion that and understand that proximity.

Therefore we are going to continue fighting. We do not think it is tatty.

Andrew Boff AM: The market itself is not tatty, but the facilities are and the access to.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): The facilities need to be improved. If the council can put in a community hub within two weeks, it can surely put a toilet in, in two weeks. Newham Council does need to look at its priorities. But Queen's Market is also a backdrop for films on Netflix. We do not want it to be over-sanitised, whereby it becomes a place where it turns into a market hall or a shopping centre. People do not necessarily shop like that. There is a complexity to world shopping culture, it is not just shopping malls in Dubai or Westfield. I am quite happy to be shopping at Queen's Market. I have to shop there because of my challenging circumstances.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Saif. Assembly Member Berry.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much. My first question is about the social and economic inequalities that we have been discussing. We wanted to ask, in terms of planning policy, and also planning process, specifically how can changes to the way planning is done in London be used to address those social and economic inequalities? I know the Committee before made some recommendations about involving people in the processes and also asked for a gentrification impact assessment, some proper assessment of plans, in its recommendations in March. But in this investigation we are looking for further recommendations. Starting with Florence, because I think your issues are some of the hardest to translate into planning policy, can you give us some of your thoughts on what we might do to address the social and economic inequalities you were so clearly talking about?

Florence Nazziwa (Founding Member, Equal Care Co-op): Just like I mentioned, the pandemic disengaged communities. As a community development practitioner and a carer, I did witness all this. I would really like Members to take this point across and build in care from a community point of view whereby carers are engaged in decision making. For instance, the recent pandemic affected ethnic minorities who are the major carers in communities today. Of which many of them are women. Therefore it disengaged, because there are still long hours doing care work, they disengage with the community, they disengage with their families. That also brought another issue of children not being cared for and they are out there in the community.

Therefore, if there is a way that a carer can be given a salary, for instance, working from 8.00 until 5.00, leaving them with a chance of looking after their family. As well, working for about three or four days a week, leaving the opportunity for family orientation and supporting those families. Because in the end they go back to us, they go back to the panel, they go back to the communities as another problem of children who are not looked after, husbands who are not looked after, communities not engaging. In this way I would request for community hubs for carers so that they have somewhere. Because some of them, they lost their families, they lost their children, and they need counselling themselves. If we could have somewhere like community hubs where they can go, and get counselled, get encouraged, that will also help.

For now, we are running several community hubs for carers in Hackney and in South London where I live. To engage them in the community so that they are also accepted in the community. In that way, communities will work together with the carers and then bring up social issues in a better way.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much. Saif, you also might have some views on these issues around assessing the impacts.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): A typical situation is you can look at my situation, working full time in a reasonable job, but suddenly something goes wrong and you suddenly have to become a carer and suddenly your income has gone down quite significantly. Then you are reliant on the community infrastructure much more. What we have found is across East London the community infrastructure is slowly eroding. What you find is community centres are not being resourced properly and properly understood. What you often find is that they are not open. During lockdown a lot of the ones in and around Brick Lane, for example, were not open. Therefore we could not use it and so we did not use it. As a result, you are relying on the community itself and on the networks that you have.

In terms of involving people, the bigger concern here is engagement itself. The key question you have to ask yourself is, why are these communities disengaged from the decision-makers? Firstly, what does that disengagement serve, and it could be serving certain things, and in other cases it is just you are disengaging wrongly. It is not how people engage. If you have multiple social inequalities, your priorities are not going to be to sit around in a room for a couple of hours with a bunch of people who are writing documents, which end up as a PDF. It is not how people live; you need to look at it holistically. You need to see where resourcing is and whether you are accurately reflecting the things that people are talking about and their lived experiences, which Robin Brown was saying earlier.

What we have found is that we have to engage our own communities now. Quite simply, the planning system is so skewed towards one way of developing that we have to engage our own communities to counter some of the misinformation, in a way, which is starting to come up. For example, the developer might say, "We are providing this many jobs." What we have found, for example, in the case of Queen's Market, it provides over 1,000 jobs, not 500 part-time, but 1,000 jobs, which are full-time, to heads of families, often women as well, and with an international reach. That is saying something. Why do we have to find that information out to present it?

Siân Berry AM: That is really useful, thank you. Yes, we are getting the point there that there is value in these community hubs in their own right in terms of supporting communities, but also as a hub for accessible engagement. Just Space, in their Recovery Plan, suggests there should be paid community review panels so that people are paid for their engagement time. Is that something you would want to reiterate?

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): That is a good idea. So far we have found with various campaigns across East London, including the 'Save Brick Lane' one, we have to come up with our own manifesto now. We are writing our own policies to then present to the council themselves, because there is not the impetus, because quite simply the council officers do not value what we value. I take university students from around the world to areas like Brick Lane because it is a genuine part of where you see community, culture, arts, heritage, and intermixing of history and this layering. All of that could easily be under threat just by this corporate takeover. You need to have much more a nuanced conversation and a lot of the documents that come out of the GLA has to reflect that much more. Also, on the ground, there has to be a two-way reciprocal means, and maybe the community hubs can do that as suggested, and through them, opportunities where people can have more of an open and honest say.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much. Natalia, you wanted to come in.

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): Yes, I just wanted to add it is important to demystify the planning process. The planning process is very technical, the language that is used is very technical. You are trying to engage communities that may not have had any experience whatsoever of planning, of urban change. That is not accessible. How do we make it accessible? It is about maybe supporting a third-sector charity. With Latin Elephant, for example, we have worked in collaboration with the centre where we delivered some workshops about how to engage in the planning at local level and it was done in a community language and it was interactive. It had results because at the end of that workshop people submitted their response to a consultation that was happening. It is about demystifying that process and thinking about supporting the third sector and the role of the third sector with the community hubs as well. Making it simple.

Also, the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIAs). Sometimes the EqIAs can be led by one of the parties who may have a conflict of interest. Is there a possibility of having an EqIAs that is neutral; that is independent? Also, how representative is it? That is just a question that I am putting out there. The monitoring as well, how do huge planning applications that have been agreed monitored? Today I give you an example of what has been happening at Elephant and Castle. We have some planning conditions and we have some compensation for the traders, but two years down the line we are still not seeing some of the changes that were promised, so is that monitoring happening?

Siân Berry AM: Thank you. That is a really useful contribution. I have been looking recently at a different kind of impact assessment, a privacy impact assessment, and those assessments, when they have significant impacts, have to be sent to the independent Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for checking. But I do not think anyone does that currently for EqIAs. Maybe we can look at that.

I want to introduce Portia Msimang from the Renters' Rights London group. Thank you for coming today. The question I have for you is specifically about the disenfranchisement question, the taking part in planning. Do you want to tackle that and introduce yourself?

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters' Rights London): Yes. We are talking about communities a lot, but private renters are particularly ill-served in this regard, and that is partly to do with the short-term nature of the assured short-hold tenancy. We are told that, across England, the average length of tenancy is four years, but in London it is much shorter. There is real churn. Nearly one third of Londoners live in the private rented sector but they are not in any one place for long enough to really feel like part of that community anyway and are the least likely - I believe - to be engaged with any of these processes.

But even those of us who do feel quite attached to place, we very often feel that we are presented with a fait accompli, yes or no, to this. The way to engage people is to involve them sooner really. We do not feel as if we have much say over anything and, even if we say, "We do not want this, we do not like this," it still happens very often. I do not think there is any genuine sense of coproduction.

But, yes, I do think that private renters are particularly disadvantaged in this regard when we are talking about community hubs because, generally, they do not feel that sense of attachment to a place because it takes a long time. Yesterday I was at a reception at the House of Commons, which was because Renter's Rights London is a part of the Renters Reform Coalition and, as we know, the Renters Reform Bill is supposed to put an end to Section 21 notices and should create greater security of tenure. Whether that will be the case while we have unfettered market rents is another question. But that is a completely different question.

But the way to engage people is to give them more say in what is happening. Even if we are talking about Section 106 funds, quite often it is "OK, we have this much money, and what we are going to do is spend it on your park. Do you like architect's drawing (a), (b) or (c)?" Well everything has happened. That is the level at which communities are invited to contribute. If we are talking about development, there is a definition of it, which has development as a human process. I would like to see, as a co-operator, more genuine coproduction of ideas as to what is to be done, even within the limited funds we have, which might be saying the same thing in a different way. But if people have more say, such as, "We have this amount of money, would you like (a), (b), (c), or something else?" is a very different question.

Then where we have those conversations is the next thing. Because I do not know of any community hub where I live, except the office of the Tenant Management Co-op where I live. We have lost our community centres and the like. But to me it happens too late in the process to be genuinely engaging. Because what engages people, quite honestly, is, "What is in it for me?" There has to be something in it for people other than just a tick-box exercise. If the big decisions have been taken, very often I feel that those with the power, they have not shared it, and what is in it is a tick-box exercise, "Thank you, we've satisfied our consultation requirements". It is not happening in the right way at all and I would like to see more coproduction of the process from an earlier stage.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you very much. Can I ask one final question about planning policy, specifically to Natalia and Saif, because it is about the things that you have raised about communities and their heritage and cultural value of being in clusters? This is something that I asked the Mayor to put into the last London Plan, the concept of our emerging heritage. A lot of planning policy depends on age, it depends on something being old, it depends on architectural aesthetic qualities, and the cultural and social value of an emerging cluster of a particular culture's businesses does not get recognised in planning policy itself. Is there any progress you have noticed towards people recognising that more, Saif, in your work around Brick Lane? You have been very clear in defining what that value is.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): Brick Lane is quite unique in that way. That layering is very much there of the different minorities and ethnic minorities and you can see that walking through Brick Lane. It is almost like a lived experience in itself and everyone who wants to do a project there always wants to recreate this lived experience, which is ridiculous, but we allow students to do what they want and luckily it stays in academia.

One of the key things when you are looking at policy is that innovation itself is misunderstood, and culture and heritage is. When you talk to artists, the reason they do not talk back to people often is because often they are hearing somebody who does not understand what culture is and they start trying to define what art is and culture is. Often it is this emergent thing that has not been defined yet and you have to allow the space for things to emerge. In Brick Lane, for example, the owners of the Truman Brewery have largely benefited from that expansion of artists being there, because what we are finding now in the last two years is that the occupancy of the artists, which is often on very low rents -- initially they come in on very low rents, they are struggling, they make the area cool, they allow for a cultural attraction to start to emerge that then can be somehow quantified. That then is cashed in on at a later date, which is what we are finding at the moment. Suddenly the land is worth a lot more and sadly culture is taking a much lower position in that hierarchy.

We found that all of these things need to be considered. As an artist I am quite annoyed sometimes when I see artists' hubs and creative quarters because often you find there are not many artists there. It is pretty grey and dismal and closed-shutter shops and nobody wants to do anything particularly creative. There are lots of posters saying something is going on, but nothing is. In that situation, as someone said earlier, we have to bring in those people in much earlier into the process and make people's involvement a key part of the

planning process itself in order to understand the long-term impacts of some of these things. The short term is the financial, which I am pretty sure lots of developers have been happy to receive over the last couple of decades, especially with the backing of the GLA and local councils, but we are the community and we consider the long term. We have to consider the long term because we do not necessarily have the means to move out of the area or to financially do other things and have other means.

Those things are all interconnected in that way, that culture and heritage place and the long term, which ultimately leads to the heritage question, which is whose heritage is it anyway? In fact, it belongs to all of us and most of London's heritage is quite borrowed if you look at it. If you look at Brick Lane, it is pretty borrowed from Huguenots and all the rest of it. However, what you find is that it tells a story of Londoners. Are we creating a pastiche idea of the past as if we all wanted to walk through Hampstead, which does not really work because that area has not been Hampstead for a while and never has, as far as I know? But often heritage is underpinned by these ideas that somehow the past is more important or more valuable, but post-war is more telling. Do we want to walk through a space that essentially is a false idea of what Britain is today?

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much for those contributions, over to Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff AM: I lived on Brick Lane for a year. It was absolutely fantastic. I had to move out because occasionally you need to sleep, and I was eating far too many bagels. I will go on to my first question, which should be quite straightforward with nice, quick answers, what kind of engagement have you had with the GLA planning team on the London Plan, either in the past or looking forward to the future review? Have you yourselves been involved with the London Plan?

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters' Rights London): I have in a different guise as a member of something called the London Co-operative Housing Advisory Group - snappily entitled - which put together a proposal but was not successful in the final round of the bidding and lost out to London Community Land Trust (CLT). It was an interesting experience. Generally, other than that, no. It would be nice to have more of those opportunities because that learning and that effort that we put into two years -- one of the things I learned is that it is hard to succeed with that kind of thing unless you bring in a housing association, which is absolutely counter to the objectives. Therefore, there needs to be perhaps some investment in consultancy as well as making land available for people to do that kind of work. I have been involved on that level but mostly, no, most people have not done that.

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): Latin Elephant as an organisation has engaged through different stages. Back in 2015 there was some consultation and there was some engagement from Latin Elephant requesting that the migrant and ethnic economy be recognised and the value of small independent business owners as well and the role that they had to be recognised. More recently as well, in November last year, we submitted a response. If I can draw your attention to that response; it is quite detailed.

Andrew Boff AM: You have had that engagement, that is the important thing.

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): Yes, we have, yes.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Osmani?

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): We have probably had more engagement with the GLA than we have had with Newham Council, even Tower Hamlets Council in the 'Save Brick Lane' campaign, for example. What we find is that community groups are often up against this wall

where you are suddenly seen as a campaigner or as too left or, god knows, even siding with Putin or something and there is this polarisation that for some reason council officers cannot understand.

We have had good engagement right the way from the Queen's Market one in the early stages where the Green member, Jenny Jones, was helping us, and various other people, right the way down to having representation to be able to voice something outside of the remit of our own boroughs where sometimes you feel captive. That is what happens, unfortunately, in the planning system. You can sometimes feel like the entire system that is supposed to be helping you is doing the opposite to your community. That is why we have to fight. We do not fight because we enjoy it, we have to fight because that is my food source, my cultural and heritage source, that is where I do exhibitions on Brick Lane. Where I eat is Queen's Market because we cook for ourselves. Why do we have to fight for that? Why can we not be on the same positioning as everyone else?

In that way it has been good, and just having a seat on the panel of the London Plan is a good thing. Obviously it is frustrating because usually you are just moving a comma or something like that in the policy itself. There are a few contradictions there if you are looking at Queen's Market as a strategic site or a street market. We do not know. Then there is the Market's Board, which meets maybe three times a year and they probably talk about a different kind of market. There are contradictions.

Andrew Boff AM: I do not want to put words in your mouth, but are you saying that you find it easier to feed into the London Plan than you do into your local authorities?

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): I do not know about feeding.

Andrew Boff AM: Engage with, sorry.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): To engage with, at least they are more willing to pick up the phone and you can do that. For example, when there was a two-year delay on the Queen's Market as a community value, we had pressure from the GLA, which scared Newham Council. This is what we are up against. Why do we have to do that? There should not be a two-year delay, there should be better engagement. Newham has started its Citizens Assemblies, to Rokhsana Fiaz's (Mayor of Newham) credit, but unfortunately it has created a huge area of digital disengagement. People are not going to log in and start talking in fluent, lovely planning terms, telling them what you really love about an area and how diverse and vibrant it is. We do not talk about our own community in terms of vibrancy, we just accept that that is what it is. Why do we have to do that?

Andrew Boff AM: Ms Nazziwa, what about you? Have you had any engagement with the London Plan process or the GLA with regard to the London Plan or GLA planning team?

Florence Nazziwa (Founding Member, Equal Care Co-op): This is the first one of its kind and I give thanks and credit to Just Space, which I have enjoyed very much and I would like to be part of it so that I can bring the care needs to the panel. However, I have been engaged in several communities or organisations, like the regeneration of Gillett Square and the contextual safeguarding audit, so I am familiar to this kind of thing. However, I thank the Just Space for the opportunity brought to me to attend this panel and I would like to come more so that I can work across this, yes.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you for that. As a matter of interest, was the outcome in Gillett Square a good one as far as you are concerned?

Florence Nazziwa (Founding Member, Equal Care Co-op): It was a good one.

Andrew Boff AM: OK. That was one I was involved in. Ms Msimang, in *the Building a Fairer City* report by the London Recovery Board, action five is to “Implement the spirit of the socioeconomic duty of section 1 of the Equality Act”. In your view, how can this action be incorporated into how planning is done in London?

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters’ Rights London): I think I am going to repeat myself. I have not said much but I have said the same thing over and over again. I do believe it is through genuine coproduction, and that means sharing knowledge and power and money with existing communities of interest or in community development where those communities of interest seem weakly linked, which is in some places especially where there is high churn.

Andrew Boff AM: In terms of the planning process, though. I understand the point of view about coproduction of the building process almost, that you have reached a point within a particular planning application and you always need it to be earlier. However, when we talk about the London Plan, we are talking about the model with which developers can build in within the limits. From the London Plan, not individual applications, how can we get those socioeconomic aims incorporated? Do you see the point I am making?

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters’ Rights London): In a way, the same applies. I am not sure where you see that break as being, because these principles have to be applied all the time. If you mean like a recipe for it -- do you mean like a recipe?

Andrew Boff AM: When people come to put in a planning application, one of the reference points is the London Plan. The local plan and the London Plan. Within that Plan, how do we ensure that those aims in the Equality Act are met rather than individual applications that might come along in the future, so that we do not have to keep running past every single planning application to say whether or not there is any coproduction taking place, as you have cited? Should there be, within the London Plan, a requirement that planning applications incorporate coproduction at an early stage?

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters’ Rights London): Yes, I think so. I do not see why not. Some elements of it.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Can I add to your questions, Assembly Member Boff? For me this question speaks to what we heard from Saif, and from the last investigation. For instance, one of the recommendations in the last investigation that this Committee did was, could you, as part of a planning application, make the requirement that you have to assess the future harms of gentrification on an area and should that be a consideration in planning? As it exists, you cannot do that, it is not a legal consideration, but it should be because the effects of planning are political even if they are legal when you consider them in application form. The aspiration for today’s discussion is to begin to move the conversation to that area of saying “let’s be more expansive about how we think about planning”. That is what this question speaks to, which is the socioeconomic duty under section one of the Equality Act if we are looking for how we can use current existing legal frameworks and begin to bring them into the wider planning system so that you do take into consideration the impact on class, race, displacement of communities and displacement of existing businesses.

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters’ Rights London): That is exactly it. Taking into consideration displacement of communities. Why should we be -- because most of us, and especially people who do not have long roots in this country, do not own land in this country, freehold property, so we are quite easily dispossessed of our housing rights, and it has happened over and over again and the right to return is not sufficient, because where are you going to go in the meantime? If people have been able to establish

themselves in a locale -- one of the things is to favour refurbishment over demolition, obviously, which sits well with all the environment objectives we must meet. However, people are too easily displaced and should not be. Even that would be contrary to section one, because the people who are most frequently or most easily displaced are those who have least, if you will. Very often those are racialised groups or they are people who have had to leave whatever home town because they are trying to escape homophobia or transphobia or whatever it is.

How do you embed that? It is being mindful. We bandy around the word gentrification as if it is something that is not quite what we are talking about, because gentrification, as Ruth Glass (founder of the Centre for Urban Studies at University College London) talked about it, was willing seller, willing buyer. However, if you are talking about redevelopment on sites where people are already living, to pretend you can do that, displace the people and also embed section one, it cannot be both things.

Andrew Boff AM: I must say I liked what you said in your earlier contribution about the fact that we need to get the community in there early. It is something that has been echoed in a number of initiatives by Government. Our job is to try to get that into the London Plan so that somehow within the London Plan we can get that engagement at an earlier level. Thank you very much, I appreciate that.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Assembly Member Boff. Assembly Member Baker.

Elly Baker AM: I am going to combine the next couple of questions. All of you have touched in your previous answers about how the people you represent and the communities you represent are not fully engaged and their views are not accurately represented in the process of the overall London Plan about planning who London is for and what it does. In terms of the GLA engaging with people when it does go out and look at the London Plan again, what are the challenges and how can the GLA learn from your organisations and what you do in terms of engaging both smaller grassroots groups and people who do not normally have their say more effectively?

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): What I mentioned before in terms of they must define that planning process and those consultations. How do you engage if the language is too technical? How do you make it accessible, how do you make it simple? Is there a possibility of also incorporating community languages? What is the role of the third sector, what is the role of grassroots organisations that know the community best that they are representing, that have the lived experience and can foresee the challenges ahead? Are you having those conversations with those grassroots and representatives as well?

Also there is a digital divide right now and COVID-19 has showed that to everyone. Everything is going online at the moment and the assumption that everybody has access to smart phones, computers, internet; it is not the case. How are you breaking those barriers to make it more accessible? That is important to consider.

Elly Baker AM: Are there specific ways that you find that you get more engagement when talking to the people that you represent that you think the GLA should think about instead of doing the same things that you are outlining?

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): We work with a community of traders and business owners in the Elephant and Castle area. Many of them are sole traders and they have working hours. In terms of our engagement or when we have had consultation with them, we will adapt to when they are available. In the majority of cases it is after 5.00pm or 6.00pm once they have closed their business. We have made it local as well. We have accommodated to their availability, we have made it local, we have used community interpreters, we have worked in partnership, as I mentioned before, to demystify the planning

process with a workshop in Spanish, for example, which was very, very useful and got people engaged. Yes, it is making those adjustments to make it accessible to the communities that we represent.

Elly Baker AM: Thank you.

Florence Nazziwa (Founding Member, Equal Care Co-op): Yes, policy 26 of the Just Space *Community-led Recovery Plan* talks about asset mapping or community mapping, neighbourhood mapping. In so doing, it brings communities together, different communities together. For instance, one week you may have a different group of people and then you take them to do something. In so doing, you explain to them about the official plan of recovery. Next month you have another group of them, for instance, parents or children or the elderly or carers or any group you have. The more you engage with them, the more you take them into places and space and all that, the more they come to accept and the more they come to know. In so doing, when you speak to them, they are able to understand what you are talking about.

Elly Baker AM: Thank you. Saif?

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): There is something that is happening right now that is slightly problematic, which is, yes, we are talking about coproduction and this is a very idealised thing because, as you know, the power structures do not necessarily coproduce very much and usually it happens behind closed doors and planning itself relies on that because that is how you get things done in terms of developer language. However, we are in a situation where gentrification means social cleansing in a lot of cases and we need to put those two words together or find a new word for that. I often use the term gentrification/social cleansing. What you find is coproduction has unfortunately been turned into co-option to the developer's plans.

We are finding this in the case of Queen's Market and through the Good Growth Fund. In the last two years during lockdown, there were seven consultations, including a viability study. This is a community constantly being consulted to death until they get the answer that they want and we do not think that that is fair. Therefore, we can see why communities do not want to engage. As a result, if councils are going to be serious, they do need to have a much more open roundtable with their community groups and campaign groups and women's groups and all the minority groups, because they know they are going to disengage that. They cannot play this card anymore that somehow there is going to be a trickledown impact of a richer class and bigger businesses coming in, because it has not happened.

Can you tell us where it has happened? Every time we ask where is the empirical evidence to say that, they have not shown us any. Where is the empirical evidence to say that artists' studios can sit side by side with a traditional London street market? Show us it. They have not been able to show us that. In fact, it makes space and our understanding of what is involved in a place, it makes it stupid. If people are not engaging in that space, then it is not working, that place is not working. Therefore, you need to bring people in much earlier and you need to look at all of those complexities, which is being spoken about in certain circles, for example the ethics of how to engage with communities in art circles. Artists are starting to say, "Hang on a minute, we've had enough of this". We are constantly told to engage Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups to point their heritage pattern or something. It is like telling an English person to work with tweed. It is stupid. You cannot keep doing that to people. We need to have much more mature conversations about that in order to create a framework that works for these individual communities, which might be very different.

Elly Baker AM: What you are saying is it is not necessarily about the exact methods of engagement, it is about the willingness behind the engagement to engage.

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): To engage and what that means. Does it mean -- words have a completely different meaning down the line. It turns into a Chinese whisper. You say that you want change, you want improvement and suddenly it is a full-scale development down the line and that is not what communities are saying. That is why they engaged in the first place. You are misrepresenting them.

Elly Baker AM: I was stuck by the phrase coproduction being turned into co-option. Would you like to expand on that? You talked about use of multiple consultations, but any examples of co-opting communities in order to get the outcome that they want?

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): It causes problems in communities because communities are quite fragile anywhere. In the case of Queen's Market, for example, the Friends of Queen's Market have not been brought in. We have often been told there are other voices in the community, and the other voices seem to be affiliates of the existing structure as well. They have a Labour Party affiliation or something like that. It becomes ridiculous. It has almost become farcical at the moment.

We are saying that often communities are not asking for very much, if you look at it. They are asking for small-scale improvements and so forth. They are asking for housing in a lot of cases. They want housing for their communities, because if there is all this money coming into London from abroad, why are people not talking about that? What is created is the financial class. Again, the London Plan does not address class, which is a massive issue. Ethnic minorities are working constantly. They have become a racialised underclass in London, yet if you have tons of money and multiple properties you can swan around the globe and you suddenly have much more say and you can have a champagne session with the developers as well.

The thing is the community is not going to have that leeway. Where do you create that space for that to happen if you want that to happen? It seems to me there is a big contradiction here that we are witnessing, which is development and community appear to be very different things. I am not sure if developers are willing to unshackle their pockets at the moment to allow for any trickledown to happen, because I have not seen it.

Elly Baker AM: Thanks.

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters' Rights London): Every time I hear "trickledown", I go back to Econ 101 where we were told the official name of trickledown is "piss on the one beneath you". Obviously we do not forget those kinds of things. Why would you? It has been mentioned several times that the surplus in London is of so-called luxury developments. We know that these are not the homes that Londoners need. There is a real shortfall in intermediate and affordable housing, which is what we desperately need. Everybody knows that. It is not a secret.

That is one of the answers, but you asked how we engage with the people we work with. Unfortunately, things are so desperate in the private rented sector, all I need is a phone number and a website. If there is a mobile, I have to switch it off at the weekends because people come to me in numbers. When I do try to do the other strand, what I have always said, bearing in mind -- for exactly the reasons that Florence said earlier, which is that people are tired. People are working three jobs, they are exhausted. Therefore, I do not set up meetings, generally, to come to me. I go to the places people go at the times they will normally be there. For example, I did a piece of work in the canteen of a building site. There were 400 builders there and a lot of them live in the private rented sector but they were in and out of the canteen. The only reason I was able to do that was because I know the woman who had the contract in the canteen. That kind of thing is good to do.

Otherwise, quite often -- they have lost funding now, which breaks my heart. There was a young mothers' group in Kensington and Chelsea who met regularly. The eldest of them was over 18 but most of them were under 18, and their adorable children. They were coming to anyway for food and to exchange experiences and learn new skills, so I went and did a bit of a chat about housing there. It is a basic thing, isn't it? It's a basic need. It is one thing nobody needs more or less of. Where people are not very secure in their housing, which is most of us -- there are freeholders who have the land, then there are various degrees of insecurity, weak, weaker and weakest in terms of our security. Yes, I go to spaces, I do not expect people to take on more. People are doing enough already.

Elly Baker AM: It sounds that because you are offering something that people need, they may then talk to you about what they want as well.

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters' Rights London): Absolutely. Those are the people I reach out to, but about 300 a year come to me. It is quite a frightening situation in the London private rented sector, it really is.

Elly Baker AM: It certainly is.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff AM: I want to say that I think you have been a brilliant panel this morning because you have answered all our questions before we ask them, which is great. Therefore, I am going to slightly modify this question. This goes back to when I was talking to Ms Msimang about involvement. Would you like to see the London Plan include a Statement of Community Involvement, as many local authorities do, to ensure a good standard of consultation both before and after a planning application has been made? Would that be something that you would support?

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters' Rights London): Yes.

Andrew Boff AM: That is good. We like nice, quick answers. Ms Perez?

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): Yes.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes. Mr Osmani?

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): Yes, with some addendums, I think.

Andrew Boff AM: OK, perhaps we will do the addendums at another time. Ms Nazziwa?

Florence Nazziwa (Founding Member, Equal Care Co-op): Absolutely.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you very much.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): At the moment in Parliament we do have planning reforms going through. That is a big part of why we wanted to instigate expanding our ambition with what you would put to the Government if you could have national planning reforms. Although we have a set of reforms that we are considering, we want to ask the panellists in a different way. If you had a blank piece of paper and a pen, what would a planning system - nationally and specifically how it would affect communities that you work with in

London - look like? That can be something you follow up in writing afterwards or it can be a nice way to conclude this part of the panel. I would also welcome you to stay and observe the second part to see how these ideas synthesise. Shall I start, as I have done before, this way and go along? We will also use this as an opportunity for any wrap-up remarks you would like to make to the Committee. Saif?

Saif Osmani (Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society): Planning is a huge area. It dictates how people live, it dictates whether your children, sometimes, even get murdered down the street, unfortunately, because you might be in a wrong postcode. We have to look at the full-scale impact of what planning is on our lives, not just the buildings that are being produced. That needs to be looked at much more holistically. People and human beings have to be at the centre of it because essentially we are planning for that, so civic life has to return into planning itself.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Excellently put, thank you.

Natalia Perez (Programme Co-Director, Latin Elephant): One last point I wanted to make. Ideally there would be financial viability assessments by the communities affected, communities that are maybe objecting to applications or asking for conditions or that have reservations about what is coming forward. That should be ideally to allow those communities to do the financial viability assessments that the applications put forward. In terms of your final question, I think a planning process that is accessible and inclusive but that is done in a genuine way. Accessible and inclusive.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Brilliant, thank you.

Portia Msimang (Project Co-ordinator, Renters' Rights London): One thing that is worth mentioning is the Healthy Homes Bill, which was introduced into the Lords by Lord Crisp and the TCPA, formally known as the Town and Country Planning Association. That is an excellent piece of legislation that is entirely congruent with the ambitions of Just Space and the community-led alternative. I would say all of those could be put into planning codes now. We do not need it to pass into law. Local authorities can introduce those and they could go into the London Plan. That is to do with lifetime neighbourhoods and a number of other wonderful things. The Healthy Homes Bill is a wonderful thing. It is to do with minimising the environmental harms that our human activity entails, which is something that we have to think of as well. That is what I would add.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Portia.

Florence Nazziwa (Founding Member, Equal Care Co-op): My recommendation is I would like councils to provide space and places in their local neighbourhood that can give care workers a more visible, meaningful presence in their community.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): That's brilliant, thank you so much. You have been fantastic, whether that has been discussing heritage, managed decline, gentrification, land rights, how planners should be thinking about sharing power rather than tick-box exercising, looking at the Equality Impact Assessment or our relationships and how they are the roots of how we build community. That has been an incredibly rich discussion that we will be synthesising and looking at how the Committee can use that in outputs. Please stick around for the second part of the panel, who hopefully might pick up some of those themes and continue developing them as well as bringing their own expertise to the table. Thank you very much again for your time.