

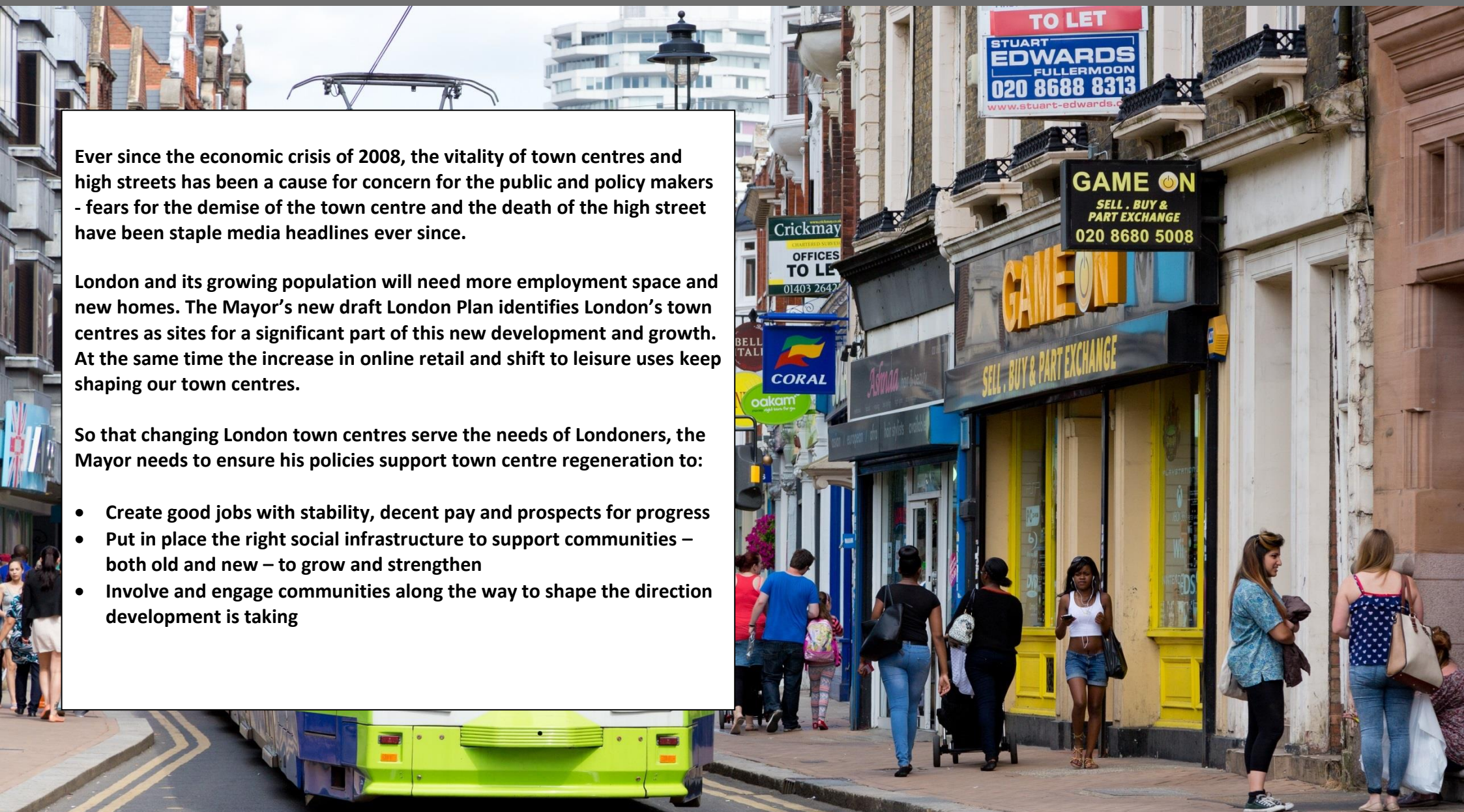
## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

Ever since the economic crisis of 2008, the vitality of town centres and high streets has been a cause for concern for the public and policy makers - fears for the demise of the town centre and the death of the high street have been staple media headlines ever since.

London and its growing population will need more employment space and new homes. The Mayor's new draft London Plan identifies London's town centres as sites for a significant part of this new development and growth. At the same time the increase in online retail and shift to leisure uses keep shaping our town centres.

So that changing London town centres serve the needs of Londoners, the Mayor needs to ensure his policies support town centre regeneration to:

- Create good jobs with stability, decent pay and prospects for progress
- Put in place the right social infrastructure to support communities – both old and new – to grow and strengthen
- Involve and engage communities along the way to shape the direction development is taking



## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

### Introduction – London's Town Centres

“London's town centres are central to the lives of Londoners. They provide a focus for the local community, both geographically and in relation to the sense of identity and broad mix of uses they provide. The spaces within and around town centres have an important public function, with high streets, public squares, markets, parks, gardens and other open spaces providing opportunities for people to gather, meet, socialise, and be entertained.”<sup>1</sup>

This almost idyllic vision of town centres<sup>2</sup> in the Mayor's draft London Plan is one that many Londoners would support. Who would not want a local centre for carrying out everyday business, running errands and doing some shopping, a place for social interaction and leisure, that addresses the needs of its local communities? Town centres give a sense of place, an economic, social and cultural anchor in a fast-changing global city with a population of close to 9 million people.

With London's population projected to grow towards 11 million by the 2040s, there is significant pressure on land, with a need for more employment space and new homes. The Mayors' new draft London Plan identifies London's town centres as sites for a significant part of this new development and growth. Town centres are already clusters of economic activity, often with good transport links. With more efficient use of land, through increasing density and mixed-use development, town centres could indeed open up opportunities for more housing as

well as employment space. But under the pressures of new developments can they retain their individual character and continue to serve the diverse needs of the local community to create inclusive neighbourhoods?

### The pressures to change

Ever since the economic crisis of 2008, the vitality of town centres and high streets has been a cause for concern for members of the public and policy makers alike – fears for the demise of the town centre and the death of the high street have been staple media headlines ever since.<sup>3</sup> Concerns for high street performance have further been amplified by drastic change in the retail sector over the past few years, including:

- The changing patterns in consumer retail and the rise of online shopping
- A loss of variety in the local retail offer
- Hikes in business rates following revaluation
- Local parking measures and restrictions
- More demanding customers in search of a retail experience as much as purely buying products
- Economic uncertainty, particularly the fall in real wage growth

These factors have led to a number of public led interventions at local, regional and national level. There have been significant changes in both the form and function of town centres<sup>4</sup> with a pronounced shift towards

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

more leisure-oriented offerings, particularly cafes and restaurants, and the expansion of the night-time economy, alongside the more traditional uses for retailing, offices, housing and civic and community functions.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the societal and economic pressures bringing change to their make-up, London's town centres have proved relatively resilient, broadly speaking, and with some centres attracting large-scale commercial investment.

With London's population projected to grow towards 11 million by the 2040s, there is significant pressure on land, with a need for more employment space and new homes. The Mayors' new draft London Plan identifies London's town centres as sites for a significant part of this new development and growth.

### How can we get good growth in redeveloped town centres?

Over the past decade, the London Assembly has looked at different aspects of the way London's town centres and high streets are changing and heard the concerns and aspirations of councils, residents and businesses.<sup>6</sup> In the past year, we have visited three regeneration sites focused around large-scale retail and leisure development: Brent Cross Cricklewood, Wembley and Croydon.<sup>7</sup> These large-scale regeneration

programmes involve very significant levels of public and commercial investment. By exploiting existing transport links they aim to draw in increased footfall to support new businesses and jobs, and in so doing redefine the town centre as a vibrant, dynamic place to shop and socialise.

Our review has sought to assess whether large-scale retail and leisure-led developments set within a town centre can deliver more than just an enhanced retail experience and to create what the Mayor has called "Good Growth", a type of growth that benefits all Londoners. This vision is fundamental to the Mayor's approach to shaping how London ought to grow and develop, and he has set out an expectation that those involved in the spatial planning and development of London must "promote the crucial role town centres have in the social, civic, cultural and economic lives of Londoners."<sup>8</sup>

Our view has long been that the Mayor must use his planning powers and the London Plan to ensure that regeneration schemes have a social dimension; so not just aiming for economic growth but inclusive economic growth, and that he use his regeneration funds to support new, innovative ways of achieving this. GLA investment in regeneration may not change the fortunes of a town centre at once, but it can act as an important catalyst to create confidence in a place to attract further investment and set a benchmark as to what success should look like.



## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

We have long argued that the Mayor's ambitions for regeneration must be judged not just on purely economic metrics but on a broader definition of growth that benefits all Londoners; locals, newcomers, young and old and those in between, big and small businesses, the third sector and volunteers.

According to GLA commissioned evaluations, previous Mayoral regeneration funds, such as the Mayor's Regeneration Fund and Outer London Fund, have been successful in changing the direction of town centres and high streets.<sup>9</sup> The interventions of these programmes have sought to transform town centres into safe, vibrant and economically successful places to live, work and invest by improving the public realm, transport links and business support.

However, despite the apparent economic successes, the evaluations have not really assessed what other kinds of benefits regeneration has brought and to whom. With the current Mayor's focus on Good Growth to benefit all Londoners, the evaluation of future regeneration programmes must go beyond quantitative outputs and look at the social impact these initiatives make, and this includes the mega-retail-led investments.

The Mayor's rhetoric is well intended, but we found that to achieve Good Growth outcomes local people, the developers, the local authorities – and where possible the Mayor too – must more actively participate and shape the development process. There are three key

things that need to happen to generate good growth in retail-led regenerations schemes and for which the Mayor needs to develop new metrics to be able to measure success:

- To create not just jobs, but good jobs
- To establish quality social infrastructure to support community wellbeing
- To ensure active engagement, acknowledging the growing desire for co-design and delivering development aspired for by local communities.

### Retail-led investment as a catalyst for regeneration

The Town Centre Health Check 2017, a survey of town centre health indicators, looks at different aspects of London's town centres' performance. According to the Health Check, the overall London-wide vacancy rate in 2016 of 6.1 per cent is broadly similar to that recorded in 2007 (5.9 per cent) – a rate which is considered to be healthy, allowing as it does for the efficient functioning of the market. There is of course variance between centres: centres in inner London have slightly lower vacancy rates than those in outer London, and some difference between smaller centres and larger centres, but the more noticeable difference is between centres in affluent and deprived areas, with larger centres in Areas for Regeneration in particular having higher vacancy rates. This is a long-term issue; the proportions are similar for 2007 and 2016.<sup>10</sup>

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

The retail sector is a vital part of the make-up of London's town centres and a powerful driver for activity across the local and London-wide economy. The latest available data indicates that, if offices are excluded, retail takes up over a half (somewhere between 55 per cent and 75 per cent depending on place) of a town centres' floorspace.<sup>11</sup> The sector employs some 400,000 people and accounts for £26 billion of London's GVA (in 2012) or about 8 per cent of the total. London's shopping opportunities are a big draw for visitors as well as locals.<sup>12</sup>

The Health Check found increased polarisation between town centres, with the larger centres becoming stronger with a diverse retail offering, especially in higher end goods, and smaller centres serving a more local catchment, focusing on lower value daily needs.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, there is also some evidence in the Town Centre Health Check that some smaller town centres are adapting to this polarising context by diversifying to more leisure-based uses such as restaurants, pubs, nightclubs and cafes in order to sustain footfall and spending levels. This also came up in one of the committee's meetings:

"If you look at our smaller high streets or the smaller high streets around London, the nature of those high streets is completely changing. There is a huge push everywhere you go now as food and drink is really pushing economies in those smaller town centres. In terms of our strategy around that, it is leasing at peppercorn [rents] our smaller units in those town centres to small arts organisations and cultural organisations. You can see that happening all over London."

**Jo Negrini, Croydon Council, Regeneration Committee meeting  
November 2017**

### ***Diversity***

There is also some evidence, according to the Town Centre Health Check, that London's town centres are diversifying their uses (as indicated by use classes) which is considered desirable as the diversity in uses is likely to make centres more resilient to change. However, looking at the breakdown of different types of town centre uses shows that different types of centres are diversifying in different ways: there has been a slight decline in the proportion of retail to other uses, and in

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

particular the proportion of restaurants, pubs, nightclubs and takeaways has grown over this time, particularly in smaller centres as well as in central London.

More concerningly, certain uses take up higher amounts of floorspace in town centres in Strategic Areas for Regeneration – which are in some of the most deprived areas in England<sup>14</sup> – notably hot food takeaways, charity shops, payday loan shops, betting shops, bingo and amusement premises.<sup>15</sup> For example, to tackle the undesirable impact of hot food takeaways, the draft New London Plan proposes policies to prevent the overconcentration of hot food takeaways in specific areas like town centres but also around schools.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Cultural diversity***

However the Health Check does not look at other types of diversity, such as cultural diversity in town centres – the kind which is the very essence of London and its vibrancy as a world city. The mega, mainstream retail developments do not of course provide for all needs and there will be need for more specialised provision. Some centres, such as Wembley, have specialised retail in Asian fashion and jewellery as well as food, around Ealing Road, in the west end of the town centre. In Brent's plans for Wembley, Ealing Road is recognised for its market specialism and strengthened further around this core function.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, the committee heard how in Newham's experience a specific location with a strong provision for specialised market segments can be more immune to the changes affecting high streets more broadly:

***“There are some quite interesting examples there and it is about how you make high streets a little bit different. The one thing we do have, particularly in Newham and London – and it is a very diverse area in Newham and of course London is – and the sorts of things you probably will not buy online are ethnic foodstuffs and ethnic fashions.[...] Those are the sorts of things you probably would not buy online. We need to capitalise on the population that we have and that diversity because a lot of those purchases would not be made online”***

**Robin Cooper, Newham Council, Regeneration Committee meeting  
November 2017**

Finally, town centres and their regeneration cannot be viewed in isolation but need to be considered as part of a local town centre network and its 'ecology'. Considering the town centre network in its entirety is all the more important with so-called mega projects, as their impact on surrounding centres can be significant but, with proactive steps, the change can be harnessed for wider benefit:

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

“Our Regeneration Strategy has been very much about looking to see how we use, if you like, the dynamic nature of the regeneration in the centre of Croydon to benefit those smaller town centres that encircle it. [...] We capture the business rates from central Croydon, but we use that money to ensure that we invest in infrastructure both in the centre of Croydon and also in our other town centres.”

**Jo Negrini, Croydon Council, Regeneration Committee meeting  
November 2017**

This can also necessitate rethinking how these projects are resourced: Croydon for example has resorted to creating two separate regeneration teams – one for the centre of Croydon Regeneration and one for other regeneration projects in the borough. This is so that a mega project, like the one in Croydon, does not take up all of the resource, and other, smaller scale regeneration projects can run in parallel and in connection to a ‘flagship’ project.

### Good Jobs

As natural hubs for local economic activity, town centres are important sites for jobs – according to some estimates 1.45 million employees in London work within 200 metres of a town centre or a high street.<sup>18</sup> The number of jobs has increased in town centres in central and inner London, but the number of jobs created in Outer London has been more modest, with a significant loss after the 2008 financial crisis only now being made up.<sup>19</sup> One of the key selling points put forward by mega developments like those in Croydon and Brent Cross, is the number of jobs – particularly in construction and retail – they hope to create.

While new jobs are always needed, it is also important to look past the big numbers and ask what kind of jobs are being created. Traditionally employment has been the route to higher living standards, however, this is no longer universally the case, as the rise of in-work poverty in London attests.<sup>20</sup> It is crucial that retail-led regeneration projects create good jobs – jobs that are stable, well paid and have prospects for progression – that are available to local people.<sup>21</sup>

Newham Council has set a precedent with their job brokerage which helps around 4,000-5,000 people into jobs annually.<sup>22</sup>

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

“In essence, we put a tax on development. If someone is coming in with a planning application, they will pay a charge to the council. That runs our job brokerage service called Workplace. That is involved in intervening in the market, getting people trained and getting them job-ready and it has been a stunning success. We now have 35,000 Newham residents in jobs in Newham through that job brokerage service.”

**Robin Cooper, Newham Council, Regeneration Committee meeting  
November 2017**

And so the physical build of a regeneration programme needs to go together with a comprehensive jobs and skills strategy that looks further ahead than the opening of a mega shopping mall. For example, jobs in the retail sector are often seen as of low productivity and hence low pay and are considered to be at significant risk from automation<sup>23</sup>, so any claims that regeneration will create hundreds or even thousands of new jobs need to be future proofed.

Croydon recognises skills and employment as two key components of its regeneration strategy. It has set up a jobs brokerage, similar to the one

that was set up in Newham, to make sure the construction and retail jobs will be filled once the Westfield development moves forward. But it also looks beyond retail and construction jobs to consider how to support the creation of jobs in the logistics, engineering and tech sector, where more workers are needed.<sup>24</sup>

### Key finding

When reviewing large scale regeneration programmes, the Mayor should seek a public commitment from developers and local authorities to deliver good jobs, as well as employment and skills strategies that recognise the local context and make links with the local Further Education sector. For example, the London Plan Good Growth Policy 1 should make an explicit reference to good jobs, as should the policies around Opportunity Areas and Local and Strategic Regeneration.



## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

### Social infrastructure

The draft London Plan defines social infrastructure uses as health provision, education, community, play, youth recreation, sports, faith and emergency facilities, noting social infrastructure's importance in developing strong and inclusive communities.<sup>25</sup> But crucially, having the right infrastructure in place is a key mechanism to make sure that more

“To me, part of the prevention and early intervention on health [...] is about building strong communities, from working with communities on their local clean-ups right through to transferring assets to them. The future has to be about co-production and working with local communities to take more responsibility for what is happening in their areas and becoming much more resilient as the city changes. [...] Health and social care is not over there and placemaking is here. It is all part of the same discussion.”

**Jo Negrini, Croydon Council, Regeneration Committee meeting  
November 2017**

people can both contribute to and benefit from growth— so the Mayor needs to make sure his policies are strong enough on this.

Further consideration must also be given to what the new town centre schemes can bring in terms of social infrastructure, and how this could be done in a way that supports the wellbeing of local residents and meets their needs and aspirations, particularly as they will be seeing growing numbers of newcomers and visitors alike. The new draft London Plan has a renewed focus on delivering social infrastructure to ensure that as intensification creates more populous town centres, the necessary social infrastructure is not an after-thought.

With the proposed housing densification in town centres, and the new communities that are to grow with it, social infrastructure becomes particularly important, not least as this provision may not have been there before. There is a real opportunity for the Mayor to support innovation in the delivery of social infrastructure and public services through his planning powers. The draft policies state that “the provision of social infrastructure should be enhanced, and facilities should be located in places that maximise footfall to surrounding town centre uses.”<sup>26</sup> and this creates an opportunity to really bring public services to where services users are. However, the committee is concerned that the Mayor's policies are not necessarily strong enough in this respect, given the primacy of national policies, and will not be able to safeguard the role of social infrastructure in the newly intensified town centres. The large-scale commercial retail-led regeneration programmes the

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

committee has visited would be ideally placed to incorporate service provision alongside with their commercial offering. This could help deliver the Mayor's vision for inclusive and accessible town centres for all Londoners.

There are outstanding examples of what can be done in other cities. For example, the city of Espoo, neighbouring Helsinki in Finland, has successfully trialled a public services hub ("Iso Omena") in a dedicated area on the top floor of a large shopping centre. The floor space was provided to the city as part of the planning authority's negotiations with the developer. The hub brings together services like baby, maternity and health clinics, council customer points and a library and reading room. Crucially, the hub also includes services for more marginalised groups, such as those needing substance abuse services and mental health care. The public service providers rent the spaces from the local authority and offer extended hours more in line with those seen in the retail sector, including Sunday opening.

Residents from across the city are able to drop in to use the services at the same time as doing their shopping, bringing the benefits of increased footfall to both commercial and public sector providers. This mix of private and public makes for an open and inclusive city space<sup>27</sup> and is proving highly popular - since opening in August 2016, the hub has seen approximately 4,000-5,000 visitors per day (around 1.3 million visitors in 2017).

### Key finding

At a strategic level the Mayor needs to ensure that the London Plan supports the investment of social infrastructure in town centres<sup>1</sup>. The Mayor should also be looking to use his regeneration funds to pilot innovative service delivery models to incorporate social and civic functions in the new town centres.

### Engagement

The scale of change in town centres proposed in the draft London Plan is significant, and meaningful engagement is vital if a regeneration scheme is to command the confidence of local people and politicians and ensure that town centres successfully serve the needs of local communities; both newcomers, and those already living there.

When meeting with residents and stakeholders affected by large scale regeneration, we heard how engagement in urban development can often fall short of expectations: at worst, with ready-made plans for future development just being presented to residents for rubber stamping, or even when there appears to be genuine dialogue, leaving residents feeling they have not actually been able to influence the plans in any meaningful way.

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

Understanding the planning and development process requires time, expertise and technical knowledge which most resident groups do not have, and this therefore limits their ability to influence the process. The process can feel non-transparent, top down and arbitrary. Developers and local authorities might also fear that extensive public consultations will raise unrealistic expectations of what they can change while keeping the project financially viable and avoiding time delays. With several London town centres identified as Strategic Areas for Regeneration, a more defined understanding of what “meaningful engagement” is seems even more important.

During our review, issues of engagement were particularly prominent in our visit to Brent Cross Cricklewood, perhaps reflecting the very specific nature of the programme where a new town centre is being created

“How do you enable a community to analyse reams and reams of data for a massive planning application like Brent Cross and understand where they can have a say in that development. [...] However, it is a system issue. How do we shift the way planning happens so that communities better understand and better engage with it?”

**Paulette Singer, resident in Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration area, Regeneration Committee meeting November 2017**

within an area of existing residential communities. The challenge of meaningful engagement is universal, however, and applies to any regeneration initiative.

The nature and weight given to engagement exercises is always challenging because of the need to balance the needs of existing communities with those of future communities – in other words, those who would benefit from new housing but cannot be “actively” engaged with:

***“I agree that it is certainly a hugely important factor: the views of the existing resident community. As you say, it is only one factor alongside designing a scheme that is actually deliverable and, of course, having regard to the needs of the people who do not live there yet and are going to be in the new community, who also will have a view that is important, although obviously difficult to get hold of because they are not there yet. [...] I am sure that there is always room for improvement. I am sure that we can always learn from each scheme and do the next one better, yes.”***

**Cath Shaw, Barnet Council, Regeneration Committee March 2016**

Meaningful engagement should be more than consultation as part of the formal planning process. It could more creatively encompass a co-design approach in order to incorporate the community’s lived experience in place making, as in this example from Peckham:

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

“The Peckham Station Square project [...] has been designed through a co-design process. We listened together with the local authority there and delayed the delivery of that project [...] and listened to the local people because they asked us to slow down. They wanted to spend more time working on the design together with the architect and that is what we did. There is a co-design process that has taken place and that is going in for planning shortly.”

Debbie Jackson, GLA, Regeneration Committee meeting March 2016

### Space for community – not just commerce

Going beyond the public realm, there are also other, broader mechanisms that are needed to support communities to grow for the better – as in Croydon where regeneration was given a particular push by the riots in August 2011. Here regeneration is understood in a broader sense of connecting with the locality, building and improving neighbourhoods for the benefit of their communities:

*“You have a look at the things that really regenerate neighbourhoods – our investment in schools, our investment in parks, our library strategy, creating new hubs within those town centres – there is a huge armoury that local authorities have to really prioritise regeneration funding in those town centres.”*

*However, the key principle that we are looking at within Croydon is how we get local community to take control over their own neighbourhoods, whether that is their local park, whether that is the local town centre, whether it is the local shops. There is a corresponding engagement strategy that needs to go alongside that investment.”*

Jo Negrini, Croydon Council, Regeneration Committee meeting November 2017

As much as anything, a community needs space – and not just commercial space – to keep rooted even in the face of large-scale change. While tenants’ and residents’ halls were a mainstay on newly built estates in the past, space has become far too valuable a commodity for developers to routinely consider leaving space purely for this kind of community use.

Those communities who take things into their own hands, seeking change and create their own space, can feel overwhelmed in the face of the planning process and development machinery. In Brent Cross



## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

Cricklewood, a community organisation had fought for their space at the Clitterhouse Farm, and in this instance were successful in finally getting recognition for their efforts:

“Despite the fact we had to fight to stop the buildings from being demolished in the first place, [this] has now been given a letter of comfort from the council and developers to say that if we manage to draw down the funds to rebuild this site we will actually be given [...] a long lease. [...] It [the council] could not take a building like the Farm and invest loads of money into it because it does not have the funds to regenerate those types of buildings. There has to be a collaboration. Communities can draw down those funds, developers will invest certain amounts and councils should be invested in protecting those types of buildings. It has to be a joined-up approach.”

**Paulette Singer, resident in Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration area, Regeneration Committee meeting November**

### Key finding

The Mayor needs to develop a consensus view on what “meaningful engagement” should look like and this should be integral throughout the policies in the London Plan, specifically policies on Town Centres and Local and Strategic Regeneration. There should also be recognition of the importance of the provision of community spaces in these policies.

The Mayor also needs to set out how he intends to empower local communities and help build their capacity for a meaningful engagement and input whilst upholding Londoners’ interest in negotiations with local authorities and developers.

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

### About the Regeneration Committee



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### About the London Assembly

The London Assembly holds the Mayor and Mayoral advisers to account by publicly examining policies and programmes through committee meetings, plenary sessions, site visits and investigations.

As well as examining the Mayor's actions and decisions, Assembly Members act as champions for Londoners by investigating issues that are important to the capital.

Assembly investigations are carried out by cross-party committees which cover vital areas like transport, policing, housing and planning, the economy, health and the environment. The Assembly can press for changes to national, Mayoral or local policy.

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

### Appendix 1 – site visits

#### *Brent Cross Cricklewood*

Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration is a major regeneration programme in Barnet, doubling the size of the current shopping centre and creating a new metropolitan town centre with 10,000 homes and capacity for 20,000 jobs.<sup>28</sup> The planning process has been long running, beginning in 2006, and there has been significant opposition from the community on various aspects of the development. Both the housing provision and the increase in commercial/ office floor space represent a significant intensification in an area that currently has a mix of light industrial and residential uses and has no town centre designation at all.

During the investigation, the committee heard from the communities from and around the regeneration area. Many concerns were raised, ranging from the increase in traffic, replacing homes that will be demolished, loss of social housing, and the general impact of intensification on green space, community facilities and public services. The committee also heard about concerns about the impact of the regeneration across borough boundaries, including on the surrounding town centre network.

Residents and other stakeholders said they felt engagement and consultation had not been meaningful, particularly early on in the process, but instead a top down exercise of telling what the plan will be.

There was recognition that things had changed somewhat, especially with the new agency tasked with engagement following the split of the regeneration area and appointment of new developer in Brent Cross South.

One resident made a comment about “a town centre approach being attempted on what is essentially a neighbourhood regeneration”, reflecting the distance between perception of the development on the ground and the objectives as set out by the council and presented in the draft London Plan of creating a new town centre.

On the other hand, in a Regeneration Committee meeting in March 2016, Cath Shaw, representing Barnet Council, raised the challenge in balancing engagement with existing communities while bearing in mind the needs of future communities – a challenge that arises from the critical need for new housing delivered by densification.

There was a recognition on the council’s part that engagement had not always worked as well as it could have done and a new consultancy had been brought on board to improve this, particularly in relation to the Brent Cross South development. Residents and stakeholders from the area appeared to cautiously welcome this change in recent engagement as a step in the right direction.

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

### **Croydon**

An existing town centre where a new retail and leisure development with over 300 shops, providing 5,000 jobs and up to 600 new homes is to be delivered by Westfield and Hammerson.<sup>29</sup> The development will also provide some community facilities, including a creche and a skills centre for training and employment.<sup>30</sup> The new shopping centre development will occupy a prime location in the pedestrianised part of the town centre. Croydon, together with Westminster and Kensington, is one of the boroughs with most retail floorspace.<sup>31</sup>

Croydon town centre was one of the centres worst affected by the civil unrest in London in August 2011. In the aftermath of the riots Croydon was allocated £23 million<sup>32</sup> through the Mayor's Regeneration Fund, which was set up to support those areas that had been affected and were felt to be unable to recover on their own. While the area still suffers from deprivation, the picture couldn't be more different today – with the opening of Boxpark and the renovation of Fairfield's Halls cultural centre there is a sense of change being afoot in Croydon. But the biggest change, on scale if nothing else, is the £4.5 billion Westfield development approved in November 2017, with completion expected in 2021.

Change is also happening across Croydon town centre. In an old, previously disused office block a company set up with the help of Mayoral funding offers co-working spaces for tech start-ups. This co-working space has been hugely successful and, among other providers,

has helped cement the tech sector in the economic fabric of Croydon – the council has ambitions to become a tech hub, the Silicon Valley of South London.

Just down a side street from the co-working space is Surrey Street market, a traditional street market. Many of the market traders have been doing business here for years, even decades. They paint a more downcast picture of Croydon's fortunes – the market isn't as busy as it used to be, changes in the town centre, including transport connections, mean that the market is slightly out of the way and does not get footfall. Accessing the market isn't helped by a lack of convenient parking. However, some traders the committee spoke to were also cautiously hopeful for what future the new shopping centre development might bring – it was recognised the town centre isn't doing as well as it could be and something needs to be done.

### **Wembley**

Wembley has been at the centre of Brent's regeneration strategy since 2004. Wembley is set to become the 'economic engine for Brent', building on the area's high density, transport links and the stadium. Wembley (an 'Opportunity Area') has been designated as a Growth Area and is expected to deliver around 11,500 new homes, 10,000 new jobs and 30,000 sq. m. of new retail floor space by 2025. The area has the potential to deliver up to 40% of Brent's housing targets, with around 45 per cent of this being met in the 85-acre Wembley Park development.



## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

Wembley, one of the largest of the Growth Areas, is promoted as a national sports and regional entertainment and leisure destination. Undoubtedly Wembley will play a big role in Brent council's year as the London Borough of Culture in 2020.

Socio-economically, there are disparities within the centre of Wembley, which has two separate town centre designations in the draft London Plan. In the east is Wembley, a Major centre with high residential development potential, and home to the stadium, hotels, conference centres, civic centre and designer outlet shopping centre – a retail, leisure and entertainment hub. The Designer Outlet combines shopping with eating and entertainment and has changed the footfall to Wembley from events based to more everyday based attracting visitors on its own right.

The other centre is around Wembley Central<sup>33</sup> in the west, a District centre identified to be within an Area for Regeneration. To the west of the regeneration area are some more traditional high streets, such as Ealing Road – a specialist marketplace for Asian food, jewellery and textiles.<sup>34</sup> In its vision for Wembley, the council recognises Ealing for its diversity, specialist value and as a distinct district within the town centre and its plans seeks to strengthen this.

There have been a number of GLA backed initiatives in Wembley throughout its regeneration, including improvements to shopfronts, building of public squares and other improvements to the public realm.

Brent and Wembley were allocated £655,000 to 'celebrate the local area and to attract new activities' through projects such as *Making Wembley Wonderful*, turning disused high-street spaces into spaces for community, commercial and educational services.<sup>35</sup> In 2015, the GLA allocated £8m to Wembley for the construction of 2840 homes of which 1121 would be affordable.<sup>36</sup>

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

### References

<sup>1</sup> Mayor of London (2017) Draft London Plan, p. 80

<sup>2</sup> In the draft London Plan town centres are designated as International, Metropolitan, Major or District centres, indicating their size, catchment and function in the citywide town centre network.

<sup>3</sup> For example: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/feb/17/uk-retail-industry--gloom-high-street-shift-consumers>

<sup>4</sup> London Assembly Economy Committee (2013) The Future of Town Centres, p 9.

<sup>5</sup> GLA (2014) 2013 London Town Centre Health Check Analysis Report

<sup>6</sup> The Regeneration Committee carried out site visits as part of this review. Past reports by the Assembly include: London Assembly Economy Committee (2013) Open for Business - Empty Shops on London's High Streets, London Assembly Planning Committee (2013) The future of London's town centres on Town Centres, Planning Committee work, and Regen visits

<sup>7</sup> Croydon and Wembley are currently designated town centres. Brent Cross is currently not a designated town centre but anticipated to become a Metropolitan centre subject to development – this step up in designation indicates the scale of change happening in Brent Cross.

<sup>8</sup> Mayor of London (2017) Draft London Plan, Policy GG1D

<sup>9</sup> Evaluations on previous Mayoralty's regeneration programmes: <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/regeneration/what-we-ve-funded-so-far/completed-funds>, Regeneris (2017) The Mayor's Regeneration Fund Evaluation Interim Review of Progress

<sup>10</sup> GLA (2018) 2017 London Town Centre Health Check Analysis Report

<sup>11</sup> GLA (2018) 2017 London Town Centre Health Check Analysis Report

<sup>12</sup> GLA Economics (2015) Retail in London: Looking Forward

<sup>13</sup> GLA (2018) 2017 London Town Centre Health Check Analysis Report

<sup>14</sup> Mayor of London (2017) Draft London Plan

<sup>15</sup> GLA (2018) 2017 London Town Centre Health Check Analysis Report, GLA (2018) London Plan topic paper: Hot food takeaways

<sup>16</sup> Mayor of London (2017) Draft London Plan, GLA (2018) London Plan topic paper: Hot food takeaways

<sup>17</sup> Brent Council (2015) Wembley Calling <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/13023448/Wembley%20Calling%20vision%20document.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> GLA (2017) High Streets for All

<sup>19</sup> GLA (2017) 2017 London Town Centre Health Check Analysis Report

<sup>20</sup> Trust for London (2017) London Poverty Profile 2017

<sup>21</sup> London Assembly Health Committee (2018) Work and Health

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/Services/About-Newham-Workplace.aspx?l1=100008&l2=500115#NewhamWorkplaceinnumbers>

<sup>23</sup> Centre for Cities (2018) Cities Outlook 2017, London Assembly Health Committee (2018) Work and Health

<sup>24</sup> Regeneration Committee meeting 6 November 2017

<sup>25</sup> Mayor of London (2017) Draft London Plan, paragraph 5.1.1.

<sup>26</sup> Mayor of London (2017) Draft London Plan, Policy SD1 - Spatial Patterns

<sup>27</sup> Iso Omena service hub: <http://www.isoomena.fi/stores/-/shops/Palvelut-ja-toimistot/1005252/Ison-Omenan-palvelutori>

<sup>28</sup> Mayor of London (2017) Draft London Plan, <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/opportunity-areas/opportunity-areas/cricklewoodbrent>

<sup>29</sup> <http://thecroydonpartnership.com/our-plans/project-summary>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/planningandregeneration/regeneration/westfield-hammerson/whitgift>

<sup>31</sup> GLA Economics (2015) Retail in London: Looking Forward, p.9

<sup>32</sup> Regeneris (2017) The Mayor's Regeneration Fund Evaluation. Case Study: Area Change in Croydon, p.1

<sup>33</sup> The town centre designation is for 'Wembley Park' in the London Plan

<sup>34</sup> Brent Council (2015) Wembley Calling

## Centres for Excellence? Good growth through town centre regeneration

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<sup>35</sup> In 2014-15, the Mayor's Regeneration team used £9m to establish a new High Street Fund to improve high streets across the capital. The first two pilot rounds of the Mayor's Civic Crowdfunding programme were part of the High Street Fund. See the High Street Fund [page](#) on the GLA website.

<sup>36</sup> As part of his housing strategy, the Mayor has £400m to accelerate housing development by lending to developers, housing associations and public/private partnerships for land acquisition, new infrastructure or homebuilding. See the Housing Zones [page](#) on the GLA website.