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Comment on the Draft New London Plan by

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Good Growth by Design

The impact of London's growing population will create immense economic as well as social challenges and pressures. Creative, innovative thinking will be required to ensure that the opportunities presented by population growth are seized.

Underpinned by the principle of 'Good Growth', the draft London Plan supports a range of cross-cutting objectives to ensure the sustainable and inclusive growth of the capital, covering wide-ranging themes from strong and inclusive communities, creating a healthy city to growing a good economy and increasing resilience.

Light is fundamental to humanity from securing safety and resilience, enabling inclusiveness and equality to creating/facilitating social interaction and achieving prosperity. It is vital for day- and night-time lighting to be included in all built environment planning and design to foster a truly inclusive and healthy 24-hour London.

Daylight

Embracing daylight is critical to sustainable urban development. In our increasingly urbanised world, planning regulations and tools should be reviewed to put daylight back at the heart of our cities.

Daylight is vital to our health and well-being. And making more use of daylight instead of artificial lighting can also help reduce energy consumption. These are just two reasons why developers, architects, politicians and society as a whole should be prioritising daylight in cities.

Designers and engineers have a range of tools at their disposal to help them with daylighting design. Advanced 3D computer simulations and rendering tools incorporate statistical weather data and allow the designers and engineers to predict and visualise daylight at an early stage in their designs. Taking high dynamic range (HDR) photos of existing projects showing the luminance distribution in a space, enables designers to give clients an impression of what daylight quality they can expect to experience inside their space once completed.

Whilst architects and planners might intrinsically understand the value of daylight for well-being, the bigger challenge is convincing developers. Ensuring homes, indoor and outdoor spaces have access to adequate daylight should be enshrined in city planning regulations.

In recognition of the challenges surrounding London's housing growth, the draft Plan suggests a new approach to residential density. It is important to point out that even in densely developed cities like Hong Kong and Singapore, daylight has long held a commercial value. Offices and apartments that receive a lot of daylight have a higher value and are easier to sell. As a result, Hong Kong and Singapore have very detailed planning guidelines that stipulate requirements such as the distance between buildings. Daylight planning will also impact the successful delivery of green infrastructure and liveability in cities. The removal of the density matrix will provide a good opportunity to modernise the planning regulations, ensuring that daylight is considered in the earliest design phases of any building development and enshrined in the regulations that shape our cities.

Night-time Lighting

Night-time presents challenges to any city. While the urban renaissance of the last 20 years has seen an increasing number of people living in London, this has not necessarily translated into the notion of a truly 24-hour city. The capital has not fully taken advantage of the night time economy, which could be a crucial contributor to London's ongoing success and competitive advantage.

The night tube is a key focus for the Night Czar, and London has a transformational opportunity to reframe the night and support a growing night-time economy. For the night tube to transform London into a truly 24-hour city, London's future planning and design practices must fully examine the hours of darkness.

Light is fundamental to all social life. Lighting is a means by which we can activate and deliver community and economic outcomes. When properly considered, urban lighting can positively impact the 'total architecture' of our cities, reinforcing urban design principles, enhancing cultural experiences and encouraging social interaction.

We should not simply aim to recreate the day at night through compliance of prescriptive street lighting standard, but instead, carefully consider the role off night-time lighting.

For example, the right night-time lighting can make shift workers feel safe on after-dark commutes. It can make you more likely to walk, or take public transport. And it can encourage you to socialise outdoors at night, which can invigorate London's night life.

By understanding the distinctiveness of the different shades of night – from dusk till dawn – we shift away from seeing light as a purely functional element but focus on a people-centric lighting approach that will empower outdoor spaces to be truly social.

Technologies can enable adaptive lighting that responds to the changing nightscape, depending on the time and activity patterns of the public realm after dark.

Demand-responsive lighting can also promote local innovation – enabling places that are well used during daytime and early evening, but underutilised at night, to become more accessible.

But it's not all about business. Creating vibrant night-time community places could be possible with localised programmes based around the extensive and catalytic network of existing tube stations, e.g. markets, exhibitions, performances, pop up restaurants.

In summary, if we want to create an urban environment that will truly foster an inclusive 24hr London, it is vital for the subject of day- and night-time lighting to be addressed in the planning and design of the city.