

City for all Londoners

Part 1: Accommodating growth

The report emphasises that London is growing rapidly as a world city its population is set to reach 10.5 million by 2041. Fundamentally therefore London must prepare a strategy to deal with growth in a sustainable way.

The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) held from 17 to 20 October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador, successfully concluded with the adoption of the New Urban Agenda. By 2050 the world's urban population is expected to nearly double, making urbanization one of the twenty first century's most transformative trends. The New Urban Agenda promotes sustainable urban development and design frameworks that foster compact cities.

In your report you say, **'During my Mayoralty, I want to encourage a more compact and connected city with more cycling, walking and public transport to reduce our dependency on cars'**. The UDG fully supports this approach, which is in line with the New Urban Agenda and good principles of urban designing cities.

'My ambition is to make roads and streets more reliable and better for pedestrians and cyclists, while also maintaining access for low-emission buses and freight to service the needs of the economy'.

The UDG supports action to promote London as a walking and cycle-friendly city.

One of the main barriers to reliability are street works by utilities, and maintenance operations. The surface beneath London's streets are home to an ever growing web of pipes, cables and conduits. Traffic congestion is mounting owing to utility company street works necessary to renew and service this infrastructure. In addition, street surfaces have to be replaced more often owing to the damage to road structures caused by this work, leading to further congestion.

We recommend that the Mayor initiates a review of the management of utilities in the London area, and potential innovations such as fully integrated street design and management, and multiple utility conduits.

There is the potential to get more out of the space beneath London's streets, and this is critical if London is to grow. Improvements could include

- Underground Waste Storage and collection systems that would obviate the need for bin and bag based collection systems that are unsightly, obstruct footways and may well be in breach of the duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Rain Gardens, SUDS and Surface Water Flood Management
- Tree planting
- New infrastructure including
 - o District heating and cooling
 - o Water recycling (Water Sensitive Urban Design)

- No dig techniques that would avoid the need for street surface road works and the disruption of traffic, and extend the life of street surfaces.

A designed approach would also help street workers who risk death or serious injury through encountering unexpected high-voltage cables.

Work is underway at the University of Birmingham in reviewing the possibilities, with support from the Urban Design Group, the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Trees in Design Action Group.

‘I want to see more development in town centres, which are hubs for retail and community activity - particularly those that would benefit from regeneration and where resources are available. Many town centres across the city have good links into central London, where many people work. As retail methods evolve and housing need increases, it makes sense to focus further development in these areas – particularly as they are popular places to live – and, in some cases, development could help high streets adapt. Intensifying development around well-connected transport nodes will form an important part of my vision for the city, and I will explore the potential of areas around a number of stations as locations for significant and much higher-density housing development’.

I will therefore develop the city according to the principles of ‘good growth’, with a target of 50 per cent of new housing built across the city being affordable.

The UDG suggests that a sustainable growth plan must take a holistic approach to integrating rail-airport connectivity with the development process.

Extending the London underground over little used branches of the overground rail network has been proposed over the last 50 years and the 1989 Central London Rail Study proposal to extend the Bakerloo Line along the Old Kent Road corridor seems now to be finally on track. This scheme is supported as a catalyst to regenerating this area of SE London. The UDG advocates that the quality and form of development should exhibit exemplary urban design principles.

As the Mayor’s Design Advisory Group (MDAG) says in its 2016 report; ‘The policy decisions made now will, collectively and cumulatively, have tangible and lasting consequences for the way London looks, feels and works in the future. They will affect how far the city grows up or out; whether densities are more concentrated or distributed; how the character of London is preserved or altered; and how much we build anew or work with what we’ve got’.

The UDG supports the idea of growth in town centres as advocated in the report, particularly where they link to Central London. An award winning research study, ‘London’s local high streets: The problems, potential and complexities of mixed street corridors’- (Carmona 2015) examined this area of economic growth notably in

relation to employment. It found that outside the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), in excess of half of employees are employed on or within 200 metres of a high street, amounting to some 1.45 million employees, and exceeding the 1.39 million employed in the CAZ illustrating the importance of mixed use streets. Yet planning policies only look at defining and protecting primary and secondary shopping parades, with the emphasis on A1 retail use. Outside of the primary and secondary retail frontages there is a policy vacuum. Here retail and small-medium enterprises are being lost, not necessarily because they are not profitable, but that residential value is greater, albeit on the ground floor and on a busy road frontage, particularly following the recent GPDO changes. The UDG suggests that many of these premises provide low rental business accommodation suitable for growing the business economy and that local planning authorities in London boroughs should focus more on the qualities of place that these enterprises bring than merely dogmatically following the rather dated land use zoning principles of defining retail in isolation of the variety and vibrancy of other uses that contribute to the character of London's mixed use streets, particularly the arterial routes into Central London.

Other global cities show that it is possible to increase the density of our suburbs without sacrificing the 'feel' of these areas. So as well as developing stations in town centres in Outer London, I want to see more smaller-scale housing development in appropriate suburban locations, which will also create opportunities for small local construction firms to build homes.

The UDG is aware that there are several schemes that illustrate these laudable principles, such as by HRA in superbia (below).

The UDG would like to see more encouragement given to self-build housing. London local authorities could identify land and subdivide it into plots with outline planning permission and then offer for sale individual plots.

Green growth: My ambition is of actively improving the environment as we build more, and of working towards a zero carbon London by 2050.

I will also encourage Londoners to take more trips on foot or by bike - as part of my plan for 'Healthy Streets'.

I will protect and improve London's environment in a number of ways – including by planning 'green' roofs and walls into new developments to mitigate flood risk, and maintaining and enhancing the extensive green spaces that set London apart from many comparable cities.

In order to encourage walking and cycling and improve the safety for all, and especially children, blind and partially sighted people and older people, the default speed limit for London's streets should be 20mph. Where necessary this should be backed up by latest generation traffic calming, including emerging electronic systems. There is extensive evidence of the safety benefits, reduction in noise, and the potential to reduce air pollution (ref draft NICE Guidelines).

The UDG welcomes the Mayor's ambition to include green roofs in developments. To many people green roofs are merely sedum roofs but truly green roofs can offer the following:

- Areas for hydroponic crop production, particularly on large footprint buildings, such as supermarkets, industrial buildings, schools and even above residential perimeter blocks. Small scale entrepreneurial businesses such as Gotham Greens (<http://gothamgreens.com>) shows the way forward.
- Areas for communal gardens and play space.

Vertical farming is the practice of producing food in vertically stacked layers, vertically inclined surfaces and/or integrated in other structures. It makes more efficient year-round crop production.

- Eliminates agricultural runoff.
- Significantly reduces use of fossil fuels (farm machines and transport of crops)
- Makes use of abandoned or unused properties.
- No weather related crop failures.
- Offers the possibility of sustainability for urban centres.

Urban crop production, albeit on a small scale introduces to urban schoolchildren a sustainable and healthy lifestyle, whereby they can grow, cook and eat food.

Part 2: Housing

The industry is currently dominated by a small number of large developers – their contribution is vital and must be supported.

But I also want to support smaller house builders and new development models such as build-to-rent, for example by using City Hall's procurement power and introducing planning policies that promote smaller sites, particularly in suburban areas.

Much work has been undertaken by HTA architects working with others to understand the housing market and the report entitled Superbia provides a useful and commendable approach to densifying the suburbs.

The UDG supports the Mayor in promoting smaller sites. All too often local authorities dispose of single large sites rather than proactively designing the frameworks for site development. Often the disaggregation of a large plot into a number of smaller plots will bring about a completely different result. Take for example the development of Hausvogteiplatz in Berlin (see photo below) illustrating contemporary urbanism.



Part 3: Economy

In line with calls from businesses, I want to see the aviation question resolved once and for all. I believe the answer is additional runway capacity at Gatwick, which can be built quicker, cheaper and without the years of legal and political battles that Heathrow clearly faces.

Notwithstanding the Government's decision to promote Heathrow as the location for runway expansion the UDG acknowledges the Mayor's position that there is a clear business case for Gatwick. The growth corridor of Central London-Croydon-Gatwick is increasingly being seen as an attractive place to invest for businesses. It is therefore surprising that London's growth strategy does not emphasise the need for better rail connections on this growth corridor. The business case for Gatwick would be stronger if it were part of Crossrail 2 linking it with Stansted via Victoria and appearing on the London rail map. The movement of passengers between Heathrow and Gatwick should be almost entirely by rail rather than the current coach service. This inter-airport connection could be facilitated by Crossrail 2-Crossrail 1 connections, which could be enhanced if Crossrail 1 was extended over existing lines and a short link at Feltham through to the former International terminal at Waterloo. This would serve people living in south London travelling to Heathrow without clogging up rail capacity in Central London (Victoria Line and Crossrail 1 west of King's Cross).

The London Infrastructure Plan 2050 (published by the Mayor 2016) refers to the desirability of additional Channel rail crossings for passengers and freight. If Gatwick Airport is to expand in future should it not be linked to any additional Channel Tunnel rail crossing as well as Central London and to the north of the UK?

Part 4: Environment, transport and public space

During my Mayoralty, I will set out a detailed roadmap for reducing carbon, with the ultimate ambition of London becoming a zero-carbon city by 2050.

I have already explained how I want to drastically reduce dangerous emissions in London to improve its air quality. This is just one part of my vision to create ‘Healthy Streets’ – which aims to reduce traffic, pollution and noise, create more attractive, accessible and people-friendly streets where everybody can enjoy spending time and being physically active, and ultimately to improve people’s health.

‘Healthy Streets’ will include a clear emphasis on making cycling easier and safer in London.

PUBLIC SPACE London’s public space - its streets, squares, parks, green spaces and waterways - are where the public life of the city is played out.

Fostering an open and accessible network of wonderful, well designed and functional spaces should be at the heart of planning for a healthy, inclusive and prosperous city. ‘Healthy Streets’ are just one way I will make the city clean, green, resilient and attractive.

The UDG supports the Mayor’s initiatives to improve the quality of public spaces in London, make them safer, more pedestrian friendly, and encouraging more activities within spaces. The UDG has campaigned since its formation for better quality public spaces to meet the needs of peoples’ activities. The UDG established Urban Design Week which each year focuses around World car free day on 22 September. Urban Design Week in 2017 is 16-24 September. We would encourage the Mayor to facilitate the weekends of Urban Design Week to be car free in central London. This would support Open House Weekend on 16-17 September 2017, which is its 25th Anniversary. It could be a great tourist attraction as businesses would be encouraged set up pop-up activities. It would encourage visitors from overseas and benefit London’s business economy.

The UDG would wish to work with the Mayor to celebrate Urban Design Week by promoting traffic free areas during this period to promote walking cycling and al fresco eating and drinking. This will harness the objectives of:

- A healthy city
- Promoting public transport
- Promoting walking and cycling
- Reducing car dependency
- Promoting cultural activities in public spaces, such as Open House weekend, which normally takes place across one of the weekends, art and dance initiatives.
- Promoting London to visitors.

The UDG supports the Mayor's initiatives on tree planting and we encourage more planting on streets, those maintained by Transport for London and encourage London boroughs to prepare Tree Strategies setting out a vision for tree planting.

The London Plan has an important role to play in keeping standards high in the built environment - and I will use it to embed good architectural and design quality principles in new buildings and neighbourhoods.

The UDG is surprised that there is no mention of design review in your report. The principles of design review are now well established and we feel that all London Boroughs should have access to design review panels in evaluating major new development and public realm works.

The UDG would also suggest that as part of the Local Plan evidence base London boroughs should be encouraged to carry out Place Reviews to fully understand the development process, the character of places and the context for intervention. Boroughs should operate collaboratively with their stakeholders (residents, businesses, and local organisations) to develop a vision for their area in accordance with the overall strategic vision set by the new London Plan.

Higher Density: Higher density does not necessarily mean high rise; greater densities can be achieved through a range of designs, including mid-rise buildings where appropriate. I do, however, see tall buildings continuing to play a role in the future of London. But tall buildings will only be permitted if they can add value to the existing community – in line with the principles of 'good growth'. That means they must make a positive contribution to the streetscape and skyline and that careful account must be taken of the way the building relates to activities at ground floor level, as well as the effect they have on local daylight, wind turbulence, glare and noise.

Some of the highest density development in London is also the most sustainable particularly the Grosvenor Estate typology, yet is not associated with tall buildings. The layouts offer good choices in moving around the city, can be retro-fitted for greater thermal efficiency, are adaptable for different types of accommodation and present a compact urban design based on perimeter blocks. The Mayor's examination of density shows that even in Central London at 108 dph London is still behind Barcelona with 173 dph; yet Barcelona is not noted for tall buildings. https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/project_2_3_lessons_from_higher_density_development.pdf Barcelona's pattern of urban growth and the urbanism that has been created through the Cerda plan has much to commend it.

Whilst the UDG subscribes to the values and principles embodied in this form of city development we also support the case for taller buildings to be sited around public transport hubs and city/town centres. Some of the tools we use to evaluate the impacts of tall buildings do need refreshed.

Where tall buildings are proposed it is essential that these are in the right place, of exemplary architectural quality, sustainable in terms of energy efficiency, create an active ground floor and contribute benefits to the local area. All tall buildings should

be subject to design review process. The UDG also calls for all tall building applications over 20 storeys to be evaluated through a 3D virtual model whereby development teams would input data to enable a scheme to be assessed from a number of viewpoints. Clearly the strategic views (LVMF) would be built into the methodology. The developer would pay a fee to cover the cost of evaluating the data, which would be available to Design Review Panels at pre-application.

The UDG calls upon the Mayor to collaborate with organisations to commission work on a new piazza, Parliament Square to celebrate and enhance the Westminster World Heritage Site. The space should be a place for celebrating governmental, political and monastic customs and cultural traditions as well as a space that is welcoming for tourists, residents and business people, the clergy and politicians. We suggest that this could involve a major international competition.

The UDG also calls upon the Mayor to work with organisations to bring about the transformation of Oxford Street into a high quality public space befitting for a World Class shopping street.

Part 5: A city for all Londoners

Health inequalities

My ultimate vision is for a healthier, fairer city for all Londoners, where nobody's health suffers because of who they are or where they live. Achieving this means getting to grips with the wider social inequalities and differences in people's living conditions, social support and environments that can profoundly affect their health. Many of the policies I am implementing in areas including housing, the environment, transport and active travel, planning and the economy will make an important difference to health inequalities.

The UDG supports the Mayor in his vision for improving the health for all Londoners. We suggest one objective should be better collaboration between health authorities and planning and transport authorities. We have been campaigning over the last two years to promote healthy places and collaborated with the Place Alliance to prepare a manifesto for healthy places.

<http://placealliance.org.uk/working-groups/healthy-places/>

The UDG is firmly of the view that by focusing on designing healthy cities it is possible to:

- Help improve people's fitness by encouraging walking, cycling and public transport and reducing car dependency.
- Reduce obesity.
- Redress health inequalities.
- Reduce pressure on NHS services.
- Improve people's mental and psychological well-being through access to public spaces, bringing nature into the city.
- Improve air quality.

The London Plan should prepare guidance along the lines that New York has done on Active Design Guidance <https://centerforactivedesign.org/dl/guidelines.pdf> and set a framework for London Boroughs to co-ordinate decision-making and financial budgeting across Local Plans/Transport Plans.