

A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS

Economy Workshop
23rd November 2016, 9.30 – 13.00

Support for SMEs, Start-ups and Growth Economy Table 4 Session 1

Facilitator in bold – facilitator comments in bold

Respondents in regular text

These notes are a summary of the conversation

Session 1, Table 4

Facilitator, Maria Diaz-Palomares, Greater London Authority

Lisa Taylor, Future of London

Gerard Burgess, Greater London Authority

Patrick Dubeck, Greater London Authority

Peter Eversden, London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies –

Tolu Faleti, London Borough of Bromley –

Michael Edwards, Barlett School, UCL

Rachael McMillan, Historic England –

Sue Terpilowski, FSE –

Jane Clossick, London Metropolitan University

Maria Diaz-Palomares: moderator – GLA working in economic business policy

Lisa Taylor: Future of London – looking at workspace environment and networks for public private sector practitioners

Gerard Burgess: GLA – planning team working on the London Plan, focussing on economic policies

Patrick Dubeck: GLA – regeneration unit, focusing on supporting SMEs and interventions to make workspace affordable and suitable for a range of economic sectors

Peter Eversden: London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies – chairman, supporting and representing community groups across the capital to strike a balance between jobs and homes

Tolu Faleti: London Borough of Bromley – experiencing under-utilisation of small space within the Borough, looking to reach out to SMEs and encourage growth for the benefit of businesses and communities themselves

Michael Edwards: Barlett School, UCL – working on negotiations with the GLA economics team regarding space networks and concerned that London planning has been bedevilled by assuming that the way to grow the economy is through large corporations

Rachael McMillan: Historic England – we have recently produced the “Heritage Counts” document and researched why people like to work and live in London

Sue Terpilowski: FSE – involved in micro and small business, particularly the self-employed and freelance sectors

Jane Clossick: London Metropolitan University – investigating the impact of the “Area Action Plan” on SMEs in the Old Kent Road area, particularly the provision of physical accommodation for small businesses

The Mayor, Sadiq, has said he is going to be very pro-business. SMEs are important and we need to raise their profile in light of Brexit. What can be done to support them? There are some questions on sheets on the table for discussion. We have to produce three bullet points by the end of the session to feedback. There are four challenges that Mark highlighted in his presentation. Most of you have mentioned affordable workspaces, so we can discuss that. Export is going to be important in light of Brexit. We currently have a programme being worked on for export. How do we increase export potential? Access to finance was a problem during the crisis and there has been a successful programme to combat that, but we would like to hear your views on how to do better? Business support. We developed a web page and it is the beginnings of what we are trying to do around business support. So those are some of the key areas we are currently working on. What do you think about the challenges SMEs are facing?

I think we need to start off by talking about support for SMEs in retaining workspace, let alone future provision of it. It worries me that we have seen massive eviction of SMEs and voluntary groups, so that offices become empty to meet the government criteria to be converted. What these premises are converted to is unsuitable. The Borough cannot control this issue because it is political. We have two great impacts on people we are trying to protect. Quite apart from supporting them, they are harmed every day. The Mayor has got to stop that loss. A lot of industries are related to each other and there has been talk of consolidation and moving businesses, but you can't say, “Let's put them in Bromley”. Who do they serve and who they are served by?

We recognise that this is a serious problem. They invite the Mayor to step in and central government to step back. People watch their workspace bleed away to become housing in prime locations. There is a real concern. What are the trends in your Boroughs?

We have those trends. We have seen designated industrial land erode over time because of the competing interest for housing. Major housing targets need to be met. That is a conflicting interest. We are also seeing the loss of smaller major town centres e.g. Beckenham. Shop fronts are gone and there is nothing.

The London Boroughs understand all of this, but the government aren't moving on it. Has it got to the point where we need a change in legislation? Instead of saying anybody can apply for Permitted Development Rights (PDR), it has to be less occupation. They can't automatically get rid of SMEs.

That is why they evict them.

As of 1st January this year, you could retro-act it. That will save a lot, but what we need to do is to get together. We all have little voices and major concerns, but we are not going with one central, big voice to government to say, “This is an issue.” It is not provision of affordable workspace. It is about the protection of it. The cost of doing business in London now is a major issue.

We are seeing 200% increases in business rate. The John Lewis on Oxford Street is looking at £5 million extra business rate deal next year for one building. That is not sustainable. Business

rates in London are now paying for the whole country. The whole system needs looking at. The point is that this impacts Londoners. Businesses are leaving the centre and will continue to be forced to. Tier 4, 5 and 6 providers are being thrown out of the city. If you take out the bottom of the system, the whole thing collapses.

But you couldn't always refer back to January 2017? How would the PDR conversion for 60% occupancy play out over time?

I think we need a retainer in there. Looking at it smartly, this is a sensible change. We need to go collectively and say, "98% of business in London want this." That needs to be done because the conversions that have happened caused soaring rents.

Certainly in Southwark the Borough is not protecting that.

It depends on what level you are talking about.

The GLA report on the loss of industrial land doesn't take into account permitted development or large commissions discussed or in view of opportunity areas coming into being. Already permissions are being granted.

It is not in the plan that has been released, but it is in the pipeline. There are 600 hectares that have been flagged up in local plans. So it is in the report, but not factored into the original equation. The problem is likely to continue unless there is a policy change in the plan.

Permissions granted have put housing next to light industrial workspaces and homeowners now want them shut down, but some business have been there for generations.

Crossrail 2 was shelved because we needed to reconsider industrial land. Can it exist alongside housing? If residents don't like it, where do businesses go? Do you have to co-exist?

I think if industrial land is there first that should be protected, which is what we have not done. Look at Brick Lane. They have to shut curry houses at 11.30am, whereas their old business model made the most lucrative incomes post midnight. They are now going bust. The same is happening in Enfield. We need protection for businesses that were there first.

Local businesses do not have a vote or political voice.

But what if they have a bid?

There are some bids that do not support small business. It depends on the bid.

There is enough land for the homes we need. Intensification of outer London rather than easy use of industrial land could ease the situation. However, no elected councillor wants to allow anything that would upset the voters by 2018. There is political resistance against intensification. We should put a pressure on those Boroughs.

We have been proposing a block until proper evaluation. Before doing displacements of industrial and work offices, there should be studies to see what their connections to other things are. Studies do not pay attention to the interconnections of business with each other and communities. Sue described it as an ecosystem. It is. The Mayor has the power to insist that certain kinds of studies are done before decisions are sanctioned.

Soho is an example. The West End Partnership suggested moving businesses to Paddington. They don't want to go there. The attitude to that response was "tough". That is the problem. There is no financial incentive to keep the businesses there, but housing targets give incentive to Boroughs.

How can the Mayor say there has to be a study? How can that happen?

We do currently ask for research and conduct tests as part of the supplementary planning guidance, but it may not be comprehensive assessment.

A lot of businesses are not visited by planning officers, for example Old Kent Road.

It is the same in Tottenham.

There are two aspects to this: what is right ethically and what is London's future if we face a second accommodation crisis? We are shooting towards an accommodation crisis for businesses.

FSB did a report. It was done for the London Plan.

Should we collectively try and speak positively about what *should* happen rather than what *should not* be happening?

Yes. Do you get behind this idea of potential retro-active occupancy? We have suggested intensification of Greater London and more research on SMEs, but I think we need a piece of work that is quick and leads to tangible results.

The evidence is often already there.

So collate it.

In Old Street, I had an office for 10 years. We helped build up the area. After 10 years I got a 400% increase on business rents and had to move out. Rates go up and rents go up.

Another thing happening now is that TfL and Network Rail are upgrading arches. Evictions are happening by TfL. That is essential workspace. We need to retain the people who are there and who have built up their businesses in specific locations.

Network rail have to get market values for properties and that is the problem.

Another vital type of study that is what are the different sizes of accommodation that are needed? Often the same numbers of jobs are supposedly replicated elsewhere in proposals, but different businesses take up different spaces, such as industrial type accommodation, warehouses, repair and maintenance facilities or builders' merchants.

It is also a question of appetite. I saw a Twitter post recently that celebrated all Travis Perkins Central London spaces are shutting down. That shouldn't be seen as a good thing. This is a problem. It is the market. Often it is too expensive to park in London. There are all these logistical factors.

The centre of London is unattractive for certain businesses. If anybody talks about access to finance, they are mad. There is more and more money being thrown at business. Alternative

finance is out there. Access to working capital is more the issue, but that is politically dangerous. It is simply the cost of doing business in London, with business rates, commercial property and wages.

Furniture making has now gone, as well as instrument making, in businesses we spoke to on Old Kent Road. There are problems finding people who could drive a forklift truck. We have a bizarre situation where educational system biases our economy to particular sectors and now there are shortages of labour.

Those jobs aren't attractive. We run forklift truck courses, but people don't sign up. We have to educate parents about where the job values are in London.

Number 3 on this list, the Growth Hub, does it involve face-to-face support? Our study on Old Kent road shows zero face-to-face support for actual businesses. What positive additional things could the growth hub do?

That is coming on our new web page, but small business do not know about it or do not think it will be useful. How can we talk about apprenticeships too? They are often troublesome for SMEs.

They also have no space, even simple desk space, to offer internships. Businesses are downsizing and stopping interns and apprenticeships because they are stripped down with the commercial cost of space and business rates. We are going to have a major problem, a job crisis, with high skilled jobs and disappearing medium to low scale jobs. They are going to be pushed out.

Linkages are important in that, because of transportation logistics. It is also a cultural issue, with little pride in non-university jobs. In other countries building is considered a good job, but the situation is embarrassing regarding how low on the scale it is considered here. There is great crossover between sectors and more focussed, collaborative discussion is required.

The people on the ground are recognising the accommodation crisis.

What future support will SMEs need? You say we haven't got an access to finance problem but what should the Mayor do for future support?

Support in the social skills of running a business. Most people have a passion to create, but lack skills of how to budget, plan and do tax returns. Business Link filled that gap. Now it has disappeared and there is nothing left. The Growth Hub isn't anywhere near what Business Link was. We are ticking a box to do the bare minimum. If you look at the Manchester Growth Hub, they do face-to-face visits every week. There are programmes and businesses pay for the support and it is a vibrant community.

So it is about the branding of the Growth Hub, offering a standard set of services.

We want to start doing that now. Skills employment gets funding and promotion. SMEs don't get support on that level.

These people need to be told how to do things. We have lost the technical qualities that enabled people to come and say, "I am starting up a business, how do you export? How does a payroll work?"

That is what is missing. Another neglected community is that of freelance workers. Their average salary is £11,000 in London, way below the national living wage and the London living wage. They get no sick pay, holiday pay, no pension support and 90% of our employees have been forced into this category.

This affects their ability to rent and links to the housing problem.

With regard to that, I stress intensifying the outer London Boroughs. One issue is transport. How do you get there? There are possible opportunity sites, but transport infrastructure is not there.

It is not just local infrastructure, it is the linking up and connection points, no outer London connectivity. The TfL transport strategy doesn't deal with this and focuses on getting people into central London.

There needs to be a strategy that looks at land use. The greenbelt is heavily protected, politically. If a proposal for a train station is set up, local groups lobby and the plans fall through because of constant conflicts of interest. Land use needs to be reviewed. The current model is outdated. There are pressures on society for housing and business. We can't protect the greenbelt as we did before.

The big problem seems to me that in the competing pressures, the residential and greenbelt voice is loud and the business voice is quiet.

It is not quiet; rather, it is not heard.

We are looking at Biggin Hill as a possible use for SMEs. A particular issue is heritage buildings. It is also an isolated area. It is a bus journey to get there without driving. We do not have the space to allow car parking, so you cut out people that are going to commute. Does a small business rely on commuters? If you need a car, there are additional transport costs. We ought to throw in the digital upgrade required there. The proposals become expensive and look unfeasible.

Is that not just a bad spot to grow businesses?

We don't have funds to make the transport strategy realistic.

We would love to see more zones 3 and 4 transport.

This is a design problem on a number of different scales. How do you design a city to take advantage of the space you have? Intensification should have uses that are linked together, to intensify for other sorts of business use. It makes no sense to use opportunity areas to squash in housing next to industrial.

It is not just housing, but also commercial shops. Retail is eroding industrial workspaces. Land value for retail is much higher. Developers don't want to know because they can get more value for their money if they build a retail trade park. This takes away from developing land for industrial use. It is about getting a balance. How do we get hold of the land to intensify it? We tried to bid a number of sites, including large ones that will not come up as opportunities again, but the council lost out because it can't afford it against private developers. Those are the pressures we face.

I live in Hounslow and there are blobs of greenbelt that are fenced off and dangerous. But we are not allowed to reconsider the greenbelt.

We haven't covered exports. We have serious issues because SMEs are not geared up to export. Their remit is trading among people within 12 miles of their office. The export mode is not going to work. Bringing opportunities to businesses to understand what they are is critical.

That sounds like something the Growth Hub could advise on.

Yes, and promoting working with businesses instead of dictating to them.

That is the new approach. Can we agree three points? 1) Retroactive 60% occupancy before PDR would be allowed. 2) The cost of being a business in commercial spaces, so no just focus on provision of new space but protect what we've got already.

I think the word "protect" gets people's backs up. Retain what exists? It is less negative.

Intensification of outer London to get over the politics before you look at greenbelts.

More funding for London Growth Hub to realise its potential.

Better understanding of interactions of sectors and businesses.

Do not just force businesses to move. Utilise housing opportunities in outer London to prevent industrial space being lost.

Connecting all the elements, including transportation.

Low-level jobs are going to be disappearing so we need entry-level jobs with progression and training built into them. These are disappearing purely because of costs of doing business. Businesses don't want automation, but they are forced into it in the current climate.

Data and surveys that local authorities can conduct.

Support for SMEs, Start-ups and Growth Economy

Table 4 Session 2

Facilitator in bold – facilitator comments in bold

Respondents in regular text

These notes are a summary of the conversation

Session 2, Table 4

Maria Diaz-Palomares: Facilitator

Helen Smith: London Borough of Bexley

Kate Cowan: London Borough of Waltham Forest

Mike Brook: Capital Enterprise

Carol Joy: Harrow and Barnet joint public health team

Bridget Knapper: Spanner in the Works

Jonathan Slater: London Voluntary Service Council

Ken Bean: London Borough of Barnet

Thomas Hoepfner

Patrick Dubeck: Greater London Authority

Maria Diaz-Palomares: Moderator, GLA – working in economic business policy

Helen Smith: London Borough of Bexley – planning policy team looking at local reviews and growth strategy for the London Plan, what kind of employment land and what kind of businesses do we want to attract over the next 20 to 30 years, potential for SMEs

Kate Cowan: London Borough of Waltham Forest – business growth and investment team, background in business start up

Mike Brook: Capital Enterprise – membership organisation of those providing support for start-ups

Carol Joy: Harrow and Barnet joint public health team – planning interests in public health planning

Bridget Knapper: Spanner in the Works – self-employed and I have two hats: representing theatre, drama and multimedia projects; also joint coordinator for economy for the Common Good in the UK, which is an economic movement and model that looks at companies in terms of their stakeholder governance and effects of the organisation on people and the environment

Jonathan Slater: London Voluntary Service Council – employment, schools officer, represent London charities and community groups, social enterprises, representing voices on commission of employment and skills

Ken Bean: London Borough of Barnet – planning policy team, local plan, SMEs critically important in Barnett, reinventing town centres viability and vitality

Thomas Hoepfner: want to bring back capture land values for the common good for infrastructure, start up company for importing sustainable timber

Patrick Dubeck: GLA – regeneration unit, focusing on supporting SMEs and interventions to make workspace affordable and suitable for a range of economic sectors, digital provision and broadband support

The Mayor, Sadiq, has said he is going to be very pro business. SMEs are important and we need to raise their profile in light of Brexit. What can be done to support them? There are some questions on the sheets on the table for discussion. We have to produce three bullet points by the end of the session to feed back. SMEs make up the majority of businesses in London. In the previous session we used these topics as the starting point, but the discussion went in all sorts of directions. There are four key areas where the Mayor is active: (1) challenges of affordable workspace; (2) supporting SMEs to export; (3) access to finance – London Co-investment Fund; and (4) coordination of business support and business services through London’s Growth Hub. We launched that last week, because Business Link disappeared a few years ago, leaving a big gap in support for SMEs in London. We need to coordinate and provide business support to SMEs, so a web portal has been created. We are also thinking about doing face-to-face support. What do you think we could do in light of your experiences? Are we going in the right direction with these initiatives?

I think first we need to ask, what does the Mayor consider the role of businesses to be in London? What is the goal of business?

The Mayor has appointed a deputy for business to work around the issues, particularly the challenges raised by Brexit. He has a background in SMEs and understands the difficulties. Businesses of all sizes are going to be pressured by Brexit, particularly with regard to skills, migration, apprenticeships, transport and housing. What do you think about that?

But what should the goal of business be? In the presentation there was talk about quality of life in London and companies only setting up here if there is a quality of life. Businesses should be there to support a human need, so their products or services should be about serving actual demand. If the Mayor’s view is to just support the economy to grow GDP, that is different to increasing the quality of life for people who live here. We have to go back to basics. What is his view of London businesses?

I think the presentation did address those issues, while importantly identifying that real wages have begun to fall away. This administration has a big focus on economic inclusion and participation for all. I think that came through. The economy is not just about providing meta growth; it is about even-handed growth across a variety of sectors.

The point you raise is important. We only talk about SMEs, but what about social enterprises such as charities and those who make a profit for the public good? What is their voice in the London economy? They are vulnerable and excluded, but deliver services in their own right. It is about being careful with the language used here.

This conceptualisation of a partnership between public and private sectors is important. The design of today’s workshop shows how the economy is conceptualised. There is greater scope for the co-creation of an economy that is more balanced, ensuring the common good.

Certainly connecting all the elements of the economy was a key issue in the last discussion. We want to promote that.

By bringing things together you create a better economy and community. The Mayor has that leadership role, which people recognise. He set out that he is a pro-business Mayor. He wants to bring people together.

He has an opportunity to link everything together. The way he talked about it might need nuancing: yes, pro business, but also pro people.

As well as representing the self-employed sector.

Yes. I was at the affordable workspace table before. I reported on my experiences in Germany, particularly on how to address spaces, the possibility of short tenancies and not long leases, as well as increasing business space and the capacity to move fairly quickly through these processes. Hamburg had a joint venture between the city, which owned the land, and charity. It involved having a workspace group, but not based on a profit margin. The goal is to keep the land in common ownership, so the city belongs to the citizen. You can give the land to businesses for free. These things should be included in the London Plan strategy somehow, to learn from the past.

It would be good to hear from local authorities here who face conflicts between housing and supporting businesses. Loss of industrial land for housing to meet targets is a huge problem.

It is, but there are opportunities that are underutilised. For example, use disused shops as pop-ups and allow SMEs to go in for a period of time, reducing business rates.

From a planning policy perspective, we need to create sustainable growth and have a mechanism to protect existing SMEs. A lot are tucked away, for example in archways underneath railway lines, and are not particularly fit for purpose for enticing customers into their spaces. We need to provide good-quality, affordable workspace. Where SMEs want to grow, they need the resources locally to move on, rather than being pushed out by property developers. Balancing those tensions can help to reinvent town centres and move away from a retail focus.

The idea of suburban intensification to relieve pressure on strategic industrial land and encourage outer London Boroughs to protect industrial spaces was previously raised. Pressure to build homes outweighs providing employment spaces. Politically that is challenging, particularly with regard to the green belt.

In Bexley we are working on a growth strategy. We seek to deliver three times the housing allocation of the London Plan. We have industrial land along the Thames and will lose that land for housing, but we are trying to get mixed use developments. A problem we face is connectivity. We are on the outskirts of London. There is no tube line. We need more river crossings. I grew up in Bexley and considered it to be Kent. Perhaps it is also about rebranding Bexley in order to attract SME start-ups to this outer London hub. Land value is cheap by London standards. We have the space. How do we attract people out?

Connectivity is one of the main issues. Car dominance seems problematic for SME workspaces.

In that way, it may be important to combine SMEs with affordable living spaces in a localised response. Housing and workspace will always compete, so how do we do both at the same time?

There is a danger with the idea that we can get rid of industrial space for houses. How is the economy going to look in 20 years' time? The textile industry is coming back from India and China. We won't be able to manufacture in that sector without space. It is a difficult balance to

strike. What businesses don't mind being located further away from a tube station? What do you want to have in your Borough?

You need to have other transport access. Buses, cycle paths and good walking routes have to be incorporated.

Improving accessibility will improve viable uses.

Town centres are ideal locations to intensify and get people living and working there. There could be more accessible nodes within the suburbs, but don't underestimate the complexity. Demand is huge. Wandsworth grew its housing and commercial space in the 2000s but lost industrial space. The balance was skewed towards housing. How do we get it right? Mixed use developments give space to projects they think they will get the most value for, but SMEs have a ceiling in terms of what they are prepared to pay for occupational costs, and if they can't afford it they will move somewhere else.

Outside of my day job I am a councillor in Lewisham. Finding land is crucial. The Ladywell pop-up has been successful in creating space for temporary accommodation, but also in providing a hub for local businesses. Although it is temporary, it is positive for SMEs. It is also located near central Lewisham and has links to the DLR. The importance of transport cannot be overestimated.

Many buildings are empty before they are redeveloped, so why not expand pop-ups and use meanwhile sites?

Councils still hope that developers will come in and pay them lots of cash for those sites, though. Waiting for a premium on land is a problem.

But while the space is sat there for five years being discussed, waiting to be developed, why not give it to pop-ups and SMEs?

I think businesses want to know where they are going to be. Pop-ups are difficult. Where do they move on to? We could rely too much on meanwhile spaces.

It is about making use of what is there at the moment. It represents a good opportunity to test ideas.

There needs to be discussion with housing associations, providers, charities and social enterprises when building new developments to look at spaces you can offer to SMEs.

The Mayor also has options within opportunity area frameworks. Leading developers are housing led. They do not know how to manage commercial space. The Mayor could promote an offer to people who can manage spaces to provide for start-ups and make money out of it. Accelerators in central London pay money to be involved in that. It does not have to be really cheap commercial space. Leading developers do not know how to do that as successfully.

You need a line in the London Plan hinting towards that, to show opportunities to utilise within the London Plan, so that when it comes to local plans we can actually implement that.

There are also opportunities within housing zones.

On housing zones, last year when I wrote to the GLA about self-builds I got only two replies. Nobody is in charge of dealing with these kinds of issues. How can we combine self-builds with delivering places for business? There is the self-build register, and councils have a duty to deliver the land, so how can we combine those interests?

The obligation is not to provide the land, just to offer the register.

Yes, but the point is that mixed use developments offer an opportunity. What challenges will SMEs face in the next few years?

Change. Within the four headlines, I am not sure where they would get support to deal with change. It could be technology and all sorts of things.

The Growth Hub could address this.

What will it now be?

A search tool for businesses; courses; maps of workspaces; co-working accelerators; prices; a calendar of events to network with other businesses or to access one-off events about marketing businesses; private and public sector linkages; a forum for SMEs to post questions, topics and issues; a free telephone line for businesses to call. For example, somebody could phone and say, "I am looking for new premises but I'm a bit lost. What can I do?" We want to expand the Growth Hub, possibly with face-to-face business support.

The information I looked up for Waltham Forest shows nothing.

You may have been looking at an earlier version. I made a point to the website designers that there was little Borough information.

We did contact all the local authorities. We often don't have the contact details of the correct staff to give us the information. We are aware that not everyone is there. Schemes may also be private sector initiatives.

If I were a local business I would say, "What is going on in my area?"

There are many routes to find out the same thing.

Other issues SMEs face are fairness throughout companies, and getting sustainability – in terms of environment but also surrounding community – on to company agendas as they are starting up. So both change and ethics are important here.

In your experience, do business rates often mean that SMEs are priced out?

That is one of the top issues. Business rates and parking charges are top of SMEs' concerns in relation to local authorities. What is the public sector doing about that?

This comes back to role of the Mayor of London. When local authorities lose their revenue support grant, money is raised through business tax. That has to be properly devolved. Other Boroughs are going to go bust if they don't have business areas like Canary Wharf. Understanding this concern is important so they don't just tax local businesses. We need a fair funding formula for local businesses.

Some Boroughs are wealthier than others and have more businesses. Perhaps we need help for Boroughs that don't have lots of businesses providing the levy. In Boroughs that have small businesses, reduced rates for SMEs or pop-ups could help them flourish.

In terms of all businesses, business rates will increase. There was a John Lewis example earlier. This is hitting the whole sector. Are your local businesses being spoken to?

A lot of people have questions.

Are you all familiar with business improvement districts joining forces to raise problems that are common to Boroughs? We have launched research on markets.

Do you mean street markets?

Yes. We have identified more than 280 markets, counting night markets as well, and they are a good place to start up and try new ideas. Have you come across that? We are planning to set up the London Markets Board next year to drive ideas forward.

There is a huge opportunity there, and you can help enliven town centres with new services, goods and people. That can help create lively town centres where people want to be. One idea could be access to specialist markets for books, antiques or music. Markets have lots of legislation from the middle ages. If you want to open another street market within something like 13 miles of Covent Garden, you have got to get the City of London Corporation's approval, and they will say no.

It also comes back to the powers the Mayor has got with the London Plan. Local businesses who want to base themselves in the street or markets should be supported, because space is important. When developers are looking to build homes, they should be looking at not only affordable housing but spaces for SMEs and social enterprises. Using the levers in the London Plan to support the operation of charities in the areas they serve could bring money and opportunities to local areas.

And celebrating multi-generational businesses that are already there. Sometimes they can be stuck in their ways and need support. It is also about understanding that some people might go on the market for three or four months to test their products and then move somewhere else. We need to provide support to do that.

Cultural diversity could be encouraged. How do we open up to new communities those markets that have traditionally been owned by the same families?

We have to feed back three points. Common issues with the previous table include: connecting all elements that influence business, such as transport, skills, apprenticeships and fairness; intensification of housing in the outer London area; and the idea with regard to PDRs. This was the suggestion for legislation – applying retroactively to January 2016 – stating that buildings that are 60 percent occupied by businesses cannot be converted into housing. Are you happy to support that?

It is quite an arbitrary figure and doesn't respond to local needs. I think that's the wrong end to look at it. How can each support the other?

Mixed use developments.

It is an issue for inner city London Boroughs that have no control over conversion of commercial space to residential space. Land is being grabbed for residential developments, but it doesn't affect all of London.

Discussion of housing built next to industrial areas. Residents complain and areas are often lost

There are modern technologies to reduce noise and leakage, though. We need to think more creatively about how that can happen.

We have not talked about SME finance. We are associated with the London Co-investment Fund. It has gone well, and there is clearly scope for doing more along those lines. It was focused on tech businesses, but other sectors could benefit from the approach. There is a continuing need where people find it difficult to get working capital.

Yes. Okay, so we have come to four main points. The challenges and ways of addressing them are:

- 1) Connecting all the dots with issues that affect SMEs eg transport, skills, apprenticeships.**
- 2) Make the most of the Growth Hub, identify more resources for it and link with local authorities and business support organisations**
- 3) Have a joint voice with the Mayor and organisations to look at issues such as PDRs. The first table mentioned how buildings with 60 percent business occupancy should not be converted into housing, so we could introduce some kind of legislation retroactive to 2016 to stop buildings being converted.**
- 4) Intensification in outer London, but taking into account issues of connectivity.**