

A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS

Accommodating Growth Workshop

2nd November 2016, 9.30 – 13.00

What is Good Growth?

Facilitator in bold

Respondents in regular text

These notes are a summary of the conversation

Session 1, Table 1

Finn Williams (Facilitator)

We have had 200 years of consistent growth, only interrupted by the post-war period. Given the area London now covers if we were at Victorian densities we would have 35 million people living in London today, though clearly the living standards of then were not good.

We have more people now than ever before, but we are trying to accommodate this in an existing city and this creates obvious challenges. Development coming forwards today reflects this and is higher density than in the past.

What is good growth?

It depends who is defining this – what does it mean for people and how can we improve planning engagement to ensure that we bring people into the development conversation.

A good definition of density?

Currently we look at density delivered in terms of residential development. However, the experience of people is not driven by housing, it is driven by the mix of development. Density should therefore be defined by the mix of development, and how this mix should work should be carefully defined.

Public need?

Much development is residentially driven and does then not provide local people with the things they need, and often existing amenities are then replaced by residential development, with no replacement.

There are many people moving to London from Europe and elsewhere and having to live in poor conditions – we need to be talking about people's needs in our development more. Developers don't develop for families – we need diversity and identity in what is offered.

Using the Planning system better?

London needs to be built for Londoners and their children. In Europe planners tell developers what to do, here the planners are told. Planning needs to be stronger – we need to be more prescriptive – put in more resource, strengthen the tools we use and enforce and apply this better. There are successful examples of this, for example Silvertown’s design codes had very clear parameters and worked.

Planning doesn’t explicitly say that we should be looking at the net gain of development proposals. While government planning policy does say that sustainable development should consider economic, environmental and social factors it needs to consider the net gain across all of these, and include culture more strongly.

Planning obligations?

How do we use section 106 better for social infrastructure in a scenario of little government funding? At the moment we expect the private sector to do everything, but London Boroughs should take a more active role. This should be not about maximising housing, but about optimising the development in terms of the context – place, people and so on.

Use of planning to deliver affordable homes has fallen even though the ability is there. Even the use of the term “affordable” is inaccurate for most people. We need to do more to tie costs to income, for example the London Living Rent. It is crazy even that 1/3 of income for rent is an aspiration – it should be much lower. More young people now live in poverty than old people.

Masterplanning?

Development through the London Plan is often infrastructure led, for example through new public transport stations, which development then ripples out around. The Planning system needs to manage this better. It should make better use of Masterplanning around infrastructure, and in doing so assess and deliver around the true capacity of that area.

Social housing estates which are already quite dense are often touted as places of opportunity, using the green space that they have. Masterplanning should be used to identify how best new development can slot into existing.

Planning resource?

We now have half the planning enforcement officers we had, but twice the development coming through

Getting a long-term view?

The advantage of larger developers and development is that they need to take a longer-term view to ensure they return value. If a developer focuses on the short-term they can easily make London less attractive.

The number of small builders has dropped significantly because of testing economic times, but a quarter of housing supply is needed from them. There is a challenge to ensure that they develop with a longer-term view, but are also able to make it viable.

Examples of good growth?

We need to identify a number of examples of good growth from the UK and abroad and use those.

- Poplar Harbour estate regeneration: This included social housing, it was attractive, had good public spaces and maintained and built on the historical character of the area with a mix of modern interpretations.
- Derwenthorpe development in association with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Woolwich: many individual development sites, but drawn together by a developer with a long-term vision, to build and enhance the historic context.
- King's Cross area regeneration

Three points for feedback – We should be building for Londoners not developers – we should be taking a strategic approach, thinking about what we're trying to achieve and applying Masterplanning with the three tests of social, economic and environmental gain.

We need to have the right tools to measure success – not using just density of housing, but also mix of uses.

We need to take a long-term view and investment to ensure short-termism doesn't undermine success.

Session 2, Table 1

Mathieu Mazenod, Greater London Authority (Facilitator)

Adrian Roach, City of London

Donna Isaac, West Ken Gibbs Green County Homes

Robin Brown, Hayes Community Forum

Ron Hollis, Lambeth TRA, London Tenants Federation

Sem Meona, Hackney Council

Zoe Savory, West Ken Gibbs Green County Homes

City for All Londoners tries to define growth but it's a loose concept. Let's collectively discuss how we can define this in the next London Plan and other strategies, from a number of perspectives. Also what does it look and feel like? What sort of character does it mean? How does it relate to density? Tall buildings etc.

MDAG Report illustrations – part of the good growth agenda.

London's population growth over last 200 years - currently not too dissimilar to that of 19/20 centuries until WW2 and second half of 20 century when there was a drop. Up until 1947 that growth was accommodated in a London without a fixed border. Now the growth isn't the issue, but attempting to accommodate it within a fixed area, coupled with issues around finance, and need for infrastructure, housing etc.

How does this related to the new towns? This tried to kill off parts of London, and there was a lot of effort to try to push people out, and this didn't affect the rest of the time period.

Absolutely, and it does coincide with more active planning. But, at the same time density of London has decreased. Currently 73 people per hectare. If we populated to the same level of 1930 our pop would be 130 million. Of course this is only one measure. We also have a lot less land as so much of London is already developed

John talked through some measures of good growth. But we're not checking that, we're trying to define it ourselves.

Density is interesting, because it's different depending on what you measure. I.e. is the boundary the building or the area? Developers can manipulate that, and whether that represents what people generally think of density remains to be seen. We recognise the need for density, but politics seems to demonstrate a significant misunderstanding.

Infrastructure is the same exact same card.

Back to the existential question of good growth – one of the things we're struggling with – we have a new Mayor – our housing brief has been split three ways: temporary, private and social/HA. Part of the reason for that is because in housing terms we have distinct constituencies. In the London Plan this is missed – it only thinks about social tenants and owner occupation, and then there's a bit of an aside on the growth of the private rented sector. This is due to overtake social housing tenants, so we need more focus on this. People stay in this tenure, so we need to think about these different ways people live.

These different people and different places – do they have different types of good growth? Should we have different types of good growth?

I would say people do have different ideas of what good growth is. It relates to your tenure, your life stage. Issues around density for example, relate to whether you're a private renter for example definitely.

Michelle's team did a really interesting piece of work on what good growth is. People have different priorities depending on situation and state of their life. So someone who is in their early 20s is looking at jobs, early 30s childcare and housing, 60s and 70s is healthcare and social infrastructure. SO it's really associated with life stage. So, of course, there's no one definition and that's healthy, but can we come up with a concept that works for all Londoners?

London is a rapidly ageing city, so we need to also make sure that London grows well, but also ages well. A person should be able to move into a place and live there and age there

Yes, like life time neighbourhoods. Good growth is hard to pin down. So if you want good growth, to define it, maybe we should think about what we don't want. Maybe we can then identify what adds to the life the experience of the City, then we can also see what detracts from this, and places additional costs on people, and maybe this can be identified as bad growth.

What about separated outcome and process? How does the growth happen? Is it equal? Equality of the way things happen, who gets say is really important.

Everybody individually is affected by housing, but inequality is felt relatively. So depending on your neighbours, you can feel rich or poor or about okay, so that might explain the disparity around the difference of priorities between housing and inequality. We should look closely at how we measure inequality?

So what about the ways we measure good growth?

Do no harm. Enhance them. Yes we're going to be denser, but we'll have another school and an improved park etc.

That's not the same as do no harm – who's defining harm? Viability and s106 is the only way we can do this

So we need more involvement in the community – how things are decided, what kinds of development, who gets to choose how S106 is spent. The involvement of the community in the decision making process – not the classical consultation

You can do positive things with infrastructure that's got a negative reputation by positively place making and improving what's around it. We've got a lot of challenges in parts of Clapton coming up and demands from the local plan which requires 500 homes. ½ will be shared ownership and the rest social rent. But to do all of this work, we have tower blocks being built to fund them. The same with shops. All of this is happening in one small little area but we don't have a plan for it. This organic growth is proving to be a little bit of disaster. But this do no harm assertion doesn't work. People who come to you tend to be opposed to things, and sometimes we just need to make a decision. So maybe we need a smaller version of a plan that is penetrable by local people and residents. Something at ward level, so we can figure out

within the limits of a small boundary what works for people. All of the people who live there, under this development, what happens then when new people arrive in the area. There will be lots of pressure. So for me good growth would be something, which provides a framework and guidelines but starts with a blank page and lets people decide what they want to see. We need to educate people to like and understand the value of things they don't want to see also.

We have a problem where development ignores concerns. The process is a problem.

But the principle also needs to be different.

But there's always going to be this tension isn't there – between individual perspectives which is to do with life stage, and then the collective need and the collective good. We can't do one or the other. Could the London plan set up this debate?

Good growth needs to operate at all scales, and the principles needs to permeate throughout. And then there needs to be arenas for resolving issues that different groups have. Principles must be set out, appropriate at all levels geographically and spatially, but also have the mechanisms for debating how their applied. Management of areas as well as predetermining their futures

The diversity of London also needs to be recognised. There's the difference between how this applied. For me, I look at Nine Elms and I don't think that's what growth is. Posing a master plan that isn't with the grain of the area is problematic

Seeking out the right people and consulting them is important. Getting a mix and giving everyone a voice. There must be effective ways to involve people who aren't involved like private tenants to stop superimposing master plans, but its yet to be nailed. Also on the TD/BU there was a demolition, and 80% of people didn't want it, but clearly the decision had already been made. So they expanded the catchment until they got to 52% for the support of the demolition. There's cynicism and an issue of trust because it's lip service. But if things need to go ahead that's okay, but you need to carefully and sensitively explain why.

That's a different type of engagement – you're talking about a reactive method, whereas the ward level thing is proactive, and you're on the front foot, engaging with people positively.

Honesty is missing in a lot of the debates about growth and change. And that's linked to a lack of education around what's what, for example brownfield sites – no one knows what they are. If we're talking about growth we need to be honest about what our capabilities are

We've talked about a structure of overall principles of good growth, and testing them through more proactive neighbourhood engagement. What are those principles? An obvious way of looking at it would be social, environmental and economic, as in the NPPF. How do we make it happen?

Its currently a way that people can have things done to them, but there needs to be a way that people can define what people want. This should be in the London Plan – what can people do? What can people request? How can people act? Residents want a cohesive plan for their neighbourhoods, but they want to be involved in it.

We need evidence to show how officers have consulted with their communities

It's not always the council though, it's to do with the developers.

That is a requirement of major applications that they consult properly.

It's not early enough.

We need to capture these new mechanisms and get feedback loops from communities.

More support on consultation from experts from boroughs or the GLA etc. would be so helpful in enabling communities to do it themselves. Resources have been around for our estate regeneration issue, and it's a shame this is unusual but it's been important in mobilising opinion and action here. Professional resources are really important.

What about neighbourhood involvement in CIL? That could be really helpful.

So these frameworks could link to CIL.

The Mayor is asking a lot from communities, and what can he offer them? Even the most basic resources are problematic. We're scared of photocopying a document.

But remember local authorities are under that same pressure themselves. Spend per resident has more than halved over the last 5 years, and we need to deliver many more homes.

What about social interests in land disposal? And doing this in a way that brings money into the community over a long period of time. Also we need to give social impact and social outcomes into evaluation.

We still need to test all of this about what good growth is. How about defining it then beyond numeric terms.

Character of the area? Community or aesthetic?

When we get a new bank of people moving into a new block, what about taking a mini-census of them.

Key points

- 1. Tangible examples of what we mean by good growth.**
 - 2. Having a holistic measure of what is success when we're creating places and creating good growth – social impact, environmental impact, and the local economy – but we need some sort of test that we can apply to new development from this. Maybe at multi-scales.**
 - 3. How might we deliver good growth at a ward level, and since it's about what works for Londoners, the mechanisms for engagement need to change and develop to be more proactive, taking into account a longer term change.**
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Session 2, Table 2

Alex Marsh, Greater London Authority (Facilitator)

Olivia Tusinski, Greater London Authority (Facilitator)

Alison Bailey, South Bucks DC

Brendon Harper, Cross River Partnership

Fiona Wright, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham/GLA

Joe Coyne, Lambeth Council

Kay Gibbon, RSA

Cllr Linda Haysey, East Herts DC

Lucy Rogers, Just Space/East End Trades Guild

Paul Chadwick, London Borough of Richmond/Wandsworth

Martin Laheen, Northumberland Park Residents Association, Tottenham

Nadia Dickinson, Environment Agency

What is bad growth?

Important that the GLA recognises what has gone wrong in the past. What have we delivered and is it what we wanted?

Different in different places – depends on the setting/location.

Something that only benefits one or two small groups. Need to look at it holistically to help everyone. Piecemeal development often results in bad growth.

Growth that is only delivered by the market without a sense of vision or how it fits into a place. And thinking about who is going to live in the houses you are building.

Not listening to what the people say.

Very short term approaches – not thinking about what people want longer term and also the longer term impact on the environment.

Lack of adaptability.

Where market is overly dominant and Council struggles to influence the process.

Issue when you get high density and it still isn't affordable.

Opportunity areas are problematic – it's untrue that they are mostly brownfield sites. There are things there and need to consider what it being planned to be displaced. Model for OAs is wrong.

What mechanisms do the GLA and Boroughs have to help to shape and deliver good growth?

Development is very planning and process led – community engagement is often side lined, just to help get a development through the planning process.

Current developer process is very short term – don't think about the long term implications of creating a place.

Not right to say that residents don't want growth – people just want good growth and something that will help to improve the place in which they live.

Need to think about what residents are talking and what they want, versus what the wider community wants/needs, who may not be so well engaged.

How can we get more control over what happens and reduce the control that developers have?

Difference between local and regional priorities – GLA may prioritise affordable housing, whereas local Council may see the need for a new school.

Just looking at housing numbers alone and focussing on delivering housing, isn't going to deliver good growth.

Issue with money and how much things cost – foreign owners always willing to spend more and are artificially inflating the market, at the expense of others.

How do you ensure that local people get the jobs from new development? How do you measure the outcomes?

Could the Mayor incentivise development in certain Boroughs? Offer to financially support development in their Boroughs, and whichever Boroughs want it can have that support.

Encourage Boroughs to do a social impact assessment – work out what is of value to the community and ensure that what is important to the community is not displaced. Helps to keep the community on board.

Why can't all the London Boroughs work in more similar ways and all work in one way under the Mayor's office? Because at the local level there are different views between Boroughs and within Boroughs – need to be able to deliver what they need to fit the local needs.

Should the Opportunity Areas be the places where good growth is being delivered? Need economic growth too, including affordable workspace.
