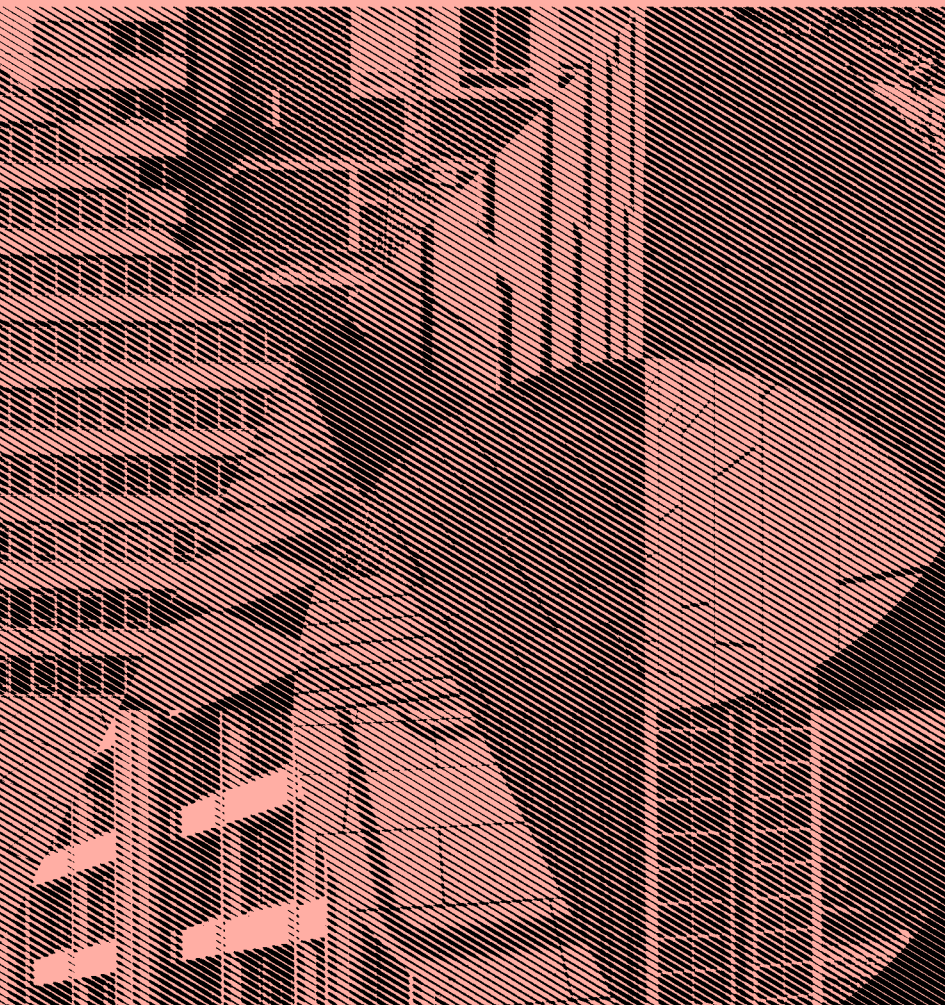
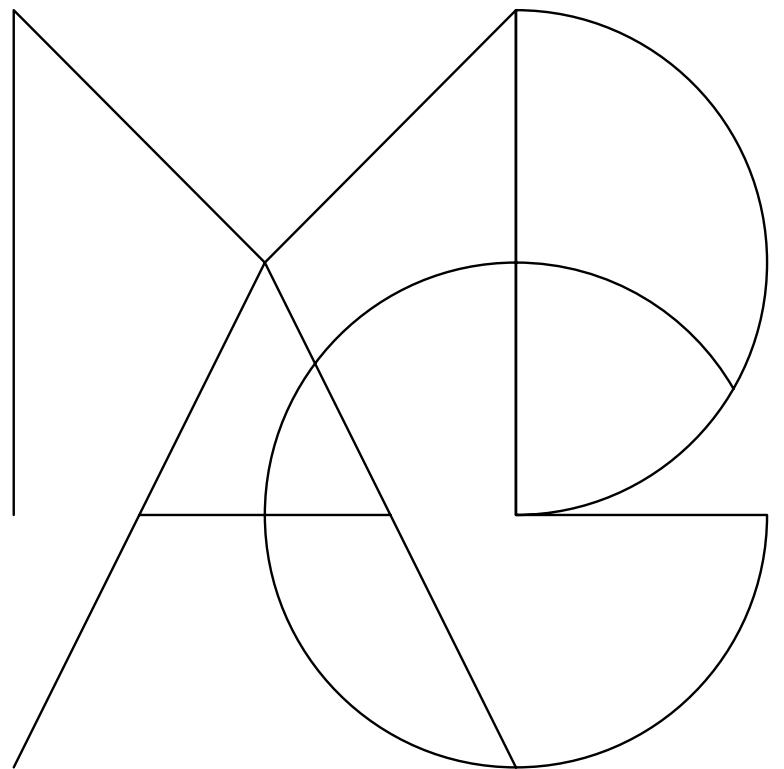


Mayor's Design
Advisory Group

Shaping London





*Shaping London:
How can London deliver good growth?*

Joyce Bridges
Roger Hawkins
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Colin Haylock
Esther Kurland

A great city's future

Foreword by Daniel Moylan, chairman, the Mayor's Design Advisory Group (MDAG)

By 2030 one and a half million people – almost as many as currently live in Birmingham – will be added to the 8.5 million living here in London. Accommodating that growth in a way that allows the city and its people to thrive and prosper will be extraordinarily challenging. Only if we think long term and plan ahead will we make a success of it.

Parliament has placed the Mayor of London squarely at the heart of getting this right, through the Mayor's statutory strategic responsibilities for the city's spatial development and its transport and environmental planning. With a new Mayor due to be elected in May 2016 and a new London Plan and other strategies to be produced, this is the moment to build on the work of the past and to shape this great city for its future.

Over the last year, members of the Mayor's Design Advisory Group, representing a range and diversity of views, have been working on four topics identified as crucial to getting the strategy right. They are Growing London, Public London, Ageing London and Shaping London. Together these reports form the Good Growth Agenda.

This publication is on Shaping London. The city needs to grow rapidly to accommodate its rising population; but it also needs to grow well. The planning system has to be an engine for shaping that growth, not an obstacle to its achievement.

But that requires people with the right skills and they have rarely been under such pressure.

Planning officers work for all London boroughs, for the City of London and for the Greater London Authority, with skills not always matched to the need in a particular locality. And outside the public sector there are many people with relevant planning skills that are not always well used.

Can we find a better model for harnessing the skills and talents of planners in London to ensure that we can promote and shape a city we all want to live in and enjoy? And how can we have processes in place to ensure a growing London is well designed? This paper offers a model intended to answer those questions.

The Good Growth Agenda

Essay by Peter Murray, MDAG member, and Patricia Brown, MDAG Deputy Chair

London is growing. Birth rates are on the up, Londoners are living longer and are requiring places in which to live that match their active lifestyles. At the same time, more people want to come here, work here, and stay here.

The capital has experienced periods of rapid growth before. The population grew from 1 million in 1800 to 6.5 million a century later - an increase of around 140 people a day. The result was a city of great grandeur but also one of squalor, overcrowding and poor health. In the first three decades of the 20th century, the population continued to increase to a peak in 1939 of 8.61 million. This growth was largely accommodated by the development of the suburbs, supported by the expanding transport infrastructure. The resultant sprawl of 'Metro-land' spread out into the Home Counties and hugely increased the capital's footprint.

London's population has now surpassed 1939 levels, and is continuing to rise. For the first time, the majority of this growth is planned to be absorbed within London's boundaries, constrained as it is by an extensive Green Belt.

As a result, we have to make better use of the land we have available. We have to develop more densely, and we need to do so within the context of the existing urban fabric and communities. To absorb this growth in population within the fixed area of London will be no mean task. The physical

impacts will be highly evident and ubiquitous – on the ground, underground and on the skyline.

The impact on London of building homes for nearly 70,000 more people and of accommodating 34,000 new jobs each year is huge. It will affect its built form, its infrastructure, its streets and transport systems, as well as its health and education services.

We have to build around 50,000 new homes per annum over 20 years – even more if we are to make up for the historic shortfall – and space for more than eight Canary Wharfs' worth of jobs, as well as schools, health facilities, shops and cultural centres.

So, how do we create a London of the future that we will still want to live in? How do we make sure that growth delivers a high quality environment that does not feel alien to London, or to Londoners? What are the key design issues that must be addressed if we are not to emulate the rookeries of the Victorians, the sprawl of the 1930s or the monocultural estates of the post war era? How, indeed, do we get what we are calling 'good growth'?

We believe that 'good growth' results in an inclusive city that is a pleasant place to work, visit or stay. It delivers a balanced mix of young and old, of housing tenures, of jobs. It enriches the city's great public and civic spaces both internal and external. It allows for vitality and change, building on the 'London-ness' that is a crucial part of the capital's character and enduring appeal. Finally, 'good growth' provides the kind of integrated infrastructure and services that enable Londoners to lead fulfilled lives.

Through this series of reports – the Good Growth Agenda – we set out the key challenges

and opportunities that result from London's dramatic growth. We promote a vision and a series of recommendations - to help support and shape the physical growth that is planned for London to continue to be a thriving and great capital city. We hope this opens up an inclusive debate about how we best achieve good growth.

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Introduction

With London set for its greatest levels of development for a generation, the challenge is not only to deliver growth on the scale required, but also to create successful places. This agenda report highlights the importance of London's capacity to shape places well – and proposes steps a mayor could take to make this happen.

Placeshaping is about designing the conditions for 'good growth'. It is the inconspicuous but indispensable background work of coordinating investment, shaping development, galvanising communities and strengthening the character of a place.

London's growth demands a proportionate strengthening of London's placeshaping capability to ensure the city makes the most of opportunities to build great projects and great places.

London's capacity to shape places underpins every strand of the Mayor's Design Advisory Group's work. Without the capacity to proactively plan, and to coordinate and deliver development, the quality and liveability of London's built environment risks being compromised. London's growth demands a proportionate strengthening of London's placeshaping capability to ensure the city makes

the most of opportunities to build great projects and great places.

The responsibility for good placeshaping does not fall on any one sector or discipline. It involves individuals and organisations across the development industry, from housebuilders to housing associations, architects to highway engineers. This agenda report acknowledges that successful placeshaping relies on cross-sector collaboration. Its focus, though, is on areas where the Mayor has direct influence, and in particular on the capacity of the public sector, where there is the greatest potential to effect change.

The Mayor's Design Advisory Group (MDAG) has identified the key barriers to placeshaping capacity as both the resourcing and capabilities of the public sector. Local authorities can show leadership and vision to facilitate good growth, but beyond this, we need to make sure we have enough of the right people in place, with sufficient training, and access to the right tools to manage growth and uphold quality. For some boroughs, this is not an issue. But 91 per cent of London boroughs say they require more placeshaping skills in their planning departments.¹ There is also great variance in capacity, which does not necessarily mirror where the pressure for growth is greatest. The skills gap can be expected to widen, and become more acute, with the twin pressures of increasing need for housing at a time of decreasing resources.

The public expects that places are implicitly well designed and that they work effectively. Placeshaping and proactive planning is the way to achieve this, enabling good growth, allowing better engagement and public support, providing greater certainty and a more efficient process

for developers, and allowing for coordination of investment. Together, these benefits are likely to result in a more productive use of limited resources.

From MDAG's survey of borough placeshaping capacity and a roundtable workshop with borough officers, four agreed priorities emerged, which are the focus of this paper: recruiting and training in-house staff; procuring external designers; reviewing design quality; and retaining the quality of planning consents through to delivery.

Issues and recommendations

1. Recruitment

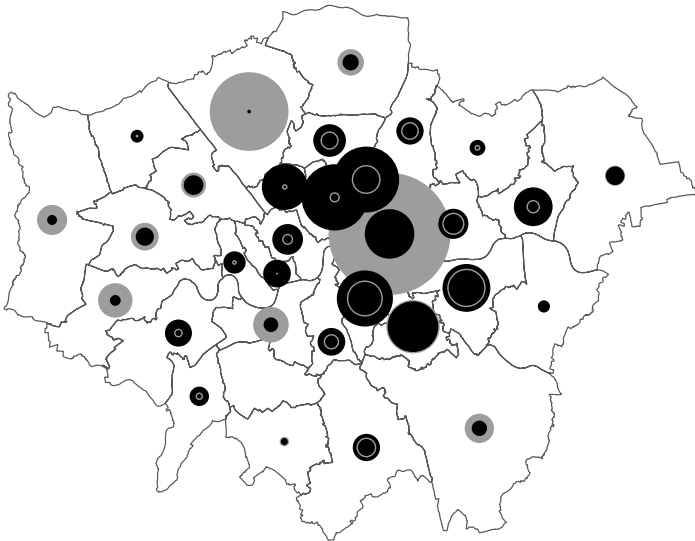
Attracting and retaining placeshaping practitioners to work in the public sector, and developing in-house skills

London has one of the greatest concentrations of talented placeshaping practitioners – architects, urbanists, planners, landscape architects, surveyors, conservation specialists, engineers and regeneration professionals – in the world. Yet a longstanding and widening skills gap between the public and private sectors is limiting the placeshaping capacity of London boroughs, and in turn constraining the delivery of homes and growth.

London has a range of programmes to support existing staff, which continue to nurture skills successfully within boroughs. However, it is clear from feedback from boroughs that training is not sufficient on its own. Alternative, cost-effective models are needed to access and share talent across the public sector, and build skills to support growth in a more targeted and strategic way.

The GLA has identified public sector speed and delivery as one of the main 'Barriers to Housing Delivery', noting that 'some planning departments are considered understaffed. Interviewees also commented on a perceived skills gap in some planning departments.'² This is backed up by an MDAG survey of London's placeshaping capacity carried out in 2014, which revealed an uneven landscape of resources across boroughs, where

Borough capacity is decreasing at the same time as the need to deliver growth is increasing.³



■ Investment in planning per head 2010–2011
 ■ Housing completions 2010–2011



■ Investment in planning per head 2015–2016
 ■ Housing targets (London Plan) 2015–2016

The average number of full time placeshaping posts per borough tends to be greater for functions associated with capital budgets and revenue incomes. Non-statutory qualitative functions have the lowest levels of resourcing.⁴

18

Regeneration /
Economic

7

Transport /
Highways

3

Urban Design /
Architecture

13

Capital
Delivery

3

Parks &
Open Spaces

6

Planning
Policy

6

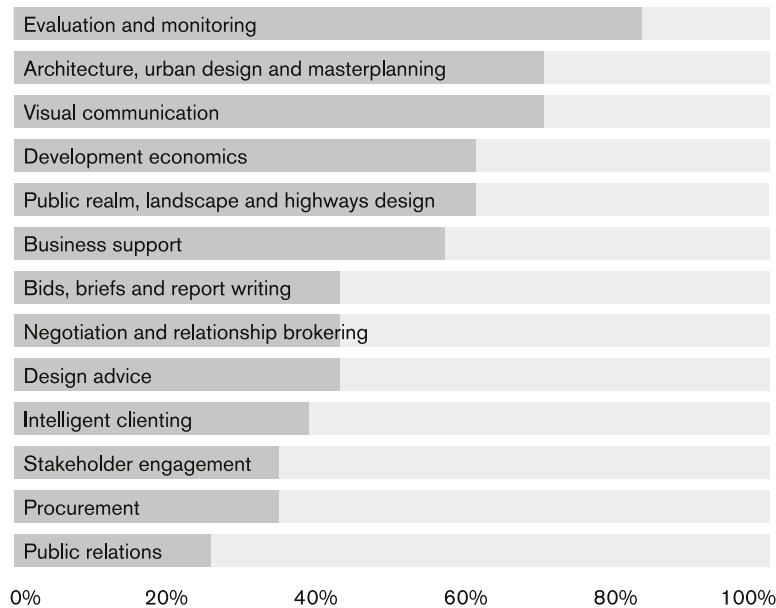
Public
Realm

2

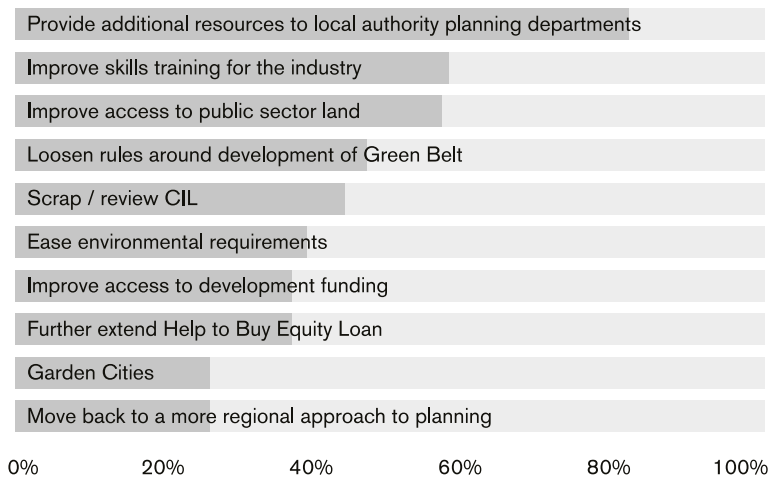
Conservation /
Heritage

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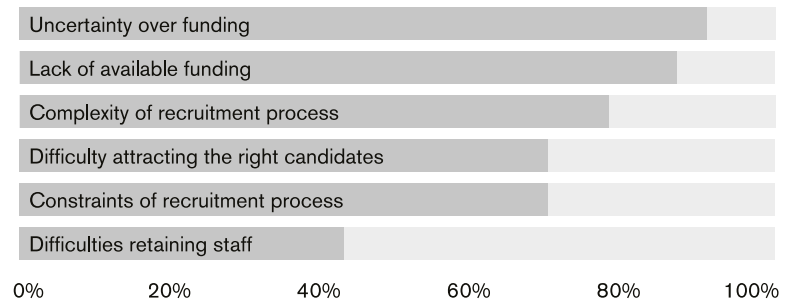
Development
Management



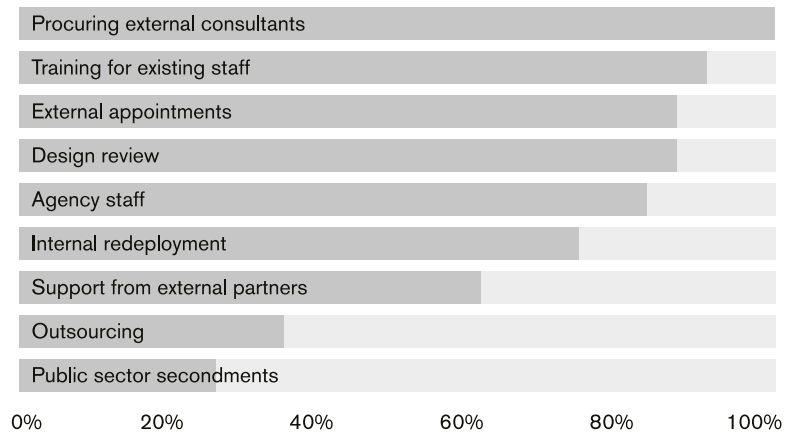
The need for placeshaping skills in London boroughs⁵



Housebuilders' priorities for policymakers to help boost housing supply⁶



Barriers to boroughs meeting their placeshaping capacity needs⁷



How London boroughs meet the need for placeshaping skills⁸

capacity does not always correlate with areas of planned growth. Expertise in non-statutory disciplines such as architecture and urban design has suffered as a result of financial constraints. Some 70 per cent of boroughs said they require or strongly require more skills to carry out architectural design, urban design and masterplanning in house.⁹ London First and the London Enterprise Panel have also called for ‘beefing up borough-level planning resources to speed up planning and pre-commencement processes.’¹⁰

These concerns are shared by private sector developers who, in a separate study, ‘expressed the view that in the current climate of fiscal austerity, there was a risk that planning departments would become under-resourced and that this could delay and undermine the planning process.’¹¹ There is strong evidence that developers or investors are willing to subsidise additional local authority capacity if it helps to de-risk the planning process and timescales.¹² One survey of housebuilders identified providing additional resources to local authority planning departments as the single most important policy measure to boost housing supply.¹³

There are many examples of excellent practice within planning departments, but in the context of economic constraints, London boroughs are finding it more difficult to attract the most talented placeshaping professionals, and harder to keep those with the ambition and capabilities to find jobs elsewhere. 70 per cent of London boroughs have difficulty in attracting appropriately qualified or skilled placeshaping practitioners.¹⁴ ‘Even where resources are available, it has proved difficult to attract good professional staff, especially with design skills, to work in the public sector. The

present pressures on local authority budgets are only likely to exacerbate this problem.’¹⁵

If the public sector is to provide the right conditions and opportunities for good growth, we need to find new and sustainable solutions to build in-house placeshaping capacity.

Local authorities identified the top three barriers to meeting their capacity needs as: uncertainty over funding (91 per cent), lack of available funding (87 per cent), and complexity of the recruitment process (78 per cent). As a result, authorities are increasingly turning to external consultants and private agencies as a short-term measure to fill the gap. All London boroughs cover their capacity needs by procuring external consultants, and 83 per cent by recruiting agency staff.¹⁶ While this approach offers more flexibility, over the longer term it can erode local knowledge and capacity, and result in unnecessary costs. This point is picked up in *Good Growth Agenda 2 – Public London*.

If the public sector is to provide the right conditions and opportunities for good growth, we need to find new and sustainable solutions to build in-house placeshaping capacity. The Farrell Review found that ‘attracting and retaining the best individuals for local authority planning departments was seen as key to enabling a culture change from reactive to proactive planning.’¹⁷ The challenge is

how to direct and distribute London's existing pool of placeshaping talent more effectively through the public sector.

A London Place Agency

MDAG proposes that the solution is to establish a London Place Agency: a new social enterprise to put exceptional placeshaping practitioners at the service of everyday places, through placements in local authorities. The initiative would be to the built environment what Teach First is to education, and Frontline is to social services.

A London Place Agency would offer local authorities hand-picked, highly motivated and specially trained placeshaping practitioners for flexible placements at affordable rates, subsidised through private sector support. It would build a pool of skills and expertise to grow the public sector's capacity to deliver homes; support collaborative planning and sharing of resources across authorities; and develop a new generation of placeshaping professionals committed to working with communities to shape better places.

The proposal has the support of organisations including London Councils, the Local Government Association, Nesta, Future Cities Catapult, Planning Officers Society, Future of London, Urban Design London, New London Architecture, and University College London. 86 per cent of boroughs have said that a secondment pool of highly skilled officers would be a useful way of supporting their placeshaping capacity.¹⁸ Sixteen boroughs have already expressed an interest in offering placements, and there is a strong pipeline of

How a London Place Agency would work



placeshaping practitioners who have expressed an interest in applying.

MDAG proposes that the Mayor supports the establishment of the organisation by appointing dedicated resources to develop a 12-month pilot starting in 2016, with an initial cohort of approximately 8-12 placements in London boroughs.

Supporting learning and development

In addition to attracting a new generation of placeshaping practitioners, we need to make the most of the considerable existing expertise within London boroughs, and continue to support officers' learning and development.

London is lucky to have a number of established and successful support programmes. For example, New London Architecture and Urban Design London have both been providing support for about ten years, the former generally attracting more private sector, the latter more public sector practitioners. Between them they provide around 150 training, networking and debating events every year, including many informative site visits.

London practitioners also benefit from support from Future of London, which focuses on housing and regeneration practitioners and in particular provides a Future London Leaders programme, with a growing list of alumni based throughout London. The Architecture Foundation, Open London, Design Council CABE, the Academy of Urbanism, RIBA, RTPI, PAS and others also provide events and support.

Feedback from the MDAG Placeshaping Capacity survey, and from existing training

programmes, demonstrates the value of training and networking for boroughs.¹⁹ Every single borough said that additional training for existing staff would help support their placeshaping capacity in the future, while 95 per cent said they would find more peer-to-peer networking and best-practice sharing useful.

100 per cent of boroughs would find training for existing staff useful or very useful to support placeshaping capacity.

There is a strong case for the Mayor continuing to support the provision of training and networking programmes, for example through Urban Design London, to strengthen London's overall offer. Key areas for increased skills have been identified as managing a design process, assessing viability, negotiating effectively with private sector partners, and delivering better, timelier public engagement.

Whilst there is an extensive programme of support available from myriad providers, it could benefit from greater coordination to make the best use of resources, and to ensure that pressing issues (such as the introduction of new policy) are being adequately covered. It would be helpful to public and private sector placeshaping practitioners, as well as the providers themselves, to have London's full offer of support listed in one, accessible place. Greater use could also be made of learning from other places, whether nationally or internationally.

Recommendations:

To build the public sector's capacity for proactive placeshaping, the Mayor should:

- 1a **Dedicate resources to launching a pilot of a London Place Agency, a programme to embed talented placeshaping professionals in place-based roles within local authorities to create the conditions for good growth.**
- 1b **Create a London-wide online hub for placeshaping training, coordinating and promoting the programmes of the constellation of training providers (i.e. Urban Design London, New London Architecture, Future of London) which offer training and peer-to-peer learning for existing staff.**

2. Procurement

Selecting the best placeshaping consultants

The procurement of design services is an intrinsic part of the way the public sector shapes the quality of London's built environment, and can sometimes be overlooked as a 'technicality'. Yet poor procurement can prove to be a false economy, and result in misconceived projects that do not achieve what was intended. Good procurement, by contrast, is essential to achieve good quality growth, and value-for-money over the longer term.

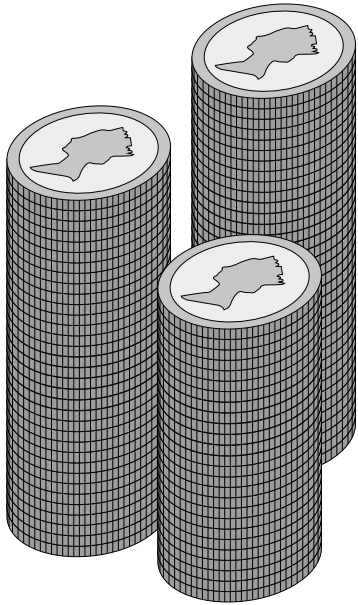
The Mayor invests a significant amount of money in physical placeshaping projects, from transport and public realm to housing, colleges and parks, as well as on strategic work aimed at coordinating wider change.

The use of consultants, such as architects and designers, has a massive impact on the long-term success of projects and places. Yet the cost of this has been estimated as representing on average only ten per cent of a project's construction costs, and a mere 0.66 per cent of a building's whole life cost.²⁰ So the value added by selecting the best consultants can reap considerable reward, for little cost.

Removing barriers

London has a wealth of design talent and innovation in placeshaping which could be contributing to public sector projects.²¹ Due to barriers in our procurement practices, larger

The upfront costs of design are outweighed many times by the savings good design can achieve over the longer-term.



Lifetime Costs



Construction Costs



Design Costs

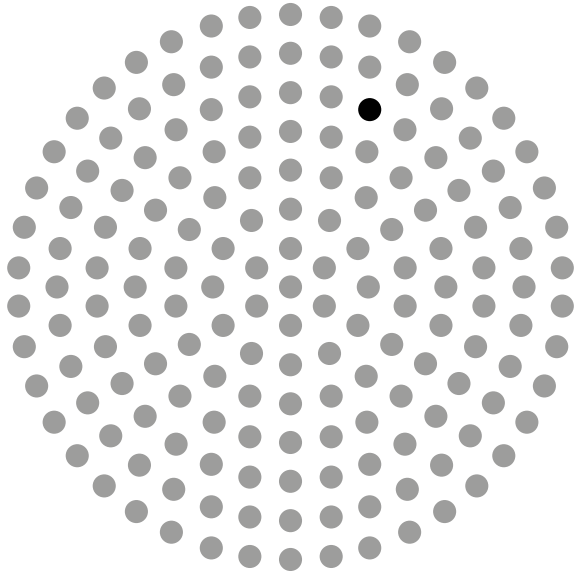
consultancies tend to win a larger proportion of projects, while smaller and younger practices can be excluded from public sector projects.²² This is partly due to risk-averse approaches to procurement, which can prioritise experience over innovation and creativity.²³ Larger consultancies with higher overheads can also prove poor value for money for smaller scale projects.

Due to barriers in our procurement practices, larger consultancies tend to win a larger proportion of projects, while smaller and younger practices can be excluded from public sector projects.

Great design does not have to cost more, and neither does working with smaller practices need to be riskier. Indeed, as the placeshaping capabilities of public sector officers improve, intelligent clienting can employ great design to reduce costs, and a portfolio of smaller commissions to reduce risks.

A range of procurement routes for design services is available to the public sector. Each of these processes has various advantages and disadvantages. However, the choice of procurement route alone can act as a major inhibitor to the selection of the best team for the job. Different procurement processes for designers include, in order of openness:

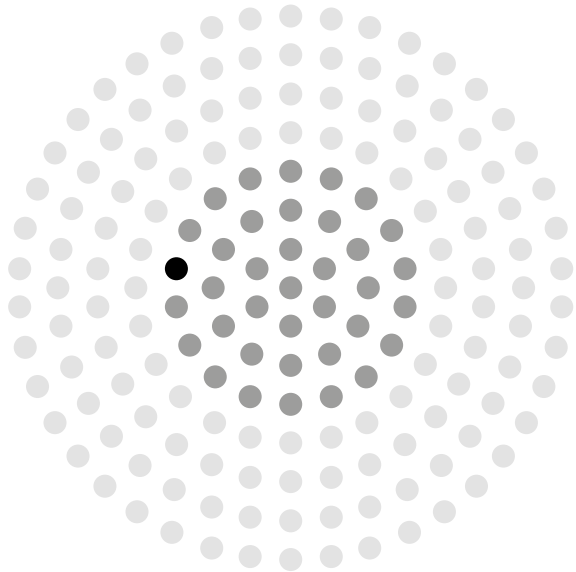
More open procurement routes offer a wider field to select the best possible consultant.



Open Design Competition



OJEU Compliant Framework



Open Competitive Tender with Shortlisting



Invited Competitive Tender



Indirect Appointment as Sub-contractor

- Open design competitions
- Open competitive tender processes (with possible shortlisting stages)
- Mini-competitions within an OJEU compliant Framework Panel
- Invited/closed competitive tender processes (e.g. 'three quotes')
- Indirect appointment as sub-contractors or within large multidisciplinary practices

Good procurement requires skilled placeshaping and design officers, both in setting up procurement policies and processes, and in being involved in evaluating quality and value for money. Skilled in-house designers can advise procurement and project officers on where risk does and does not lie, and which procurement method is most appropriate to a particular project. Procurement requires judgement to ensure it is in proportion to the size and significance of the project.

The Mayor has already led the way with the procurement of an internationally recognised OJEU compliant framework panel of consultants, the Architecture Design and Urbanism Panel. However, this panel is not the answer for all procurement situations, and the Mayor has a role to champion high quality beyond the panel's operation.

Developing good procurement of design services

The following principles were encountered repeatedly in a review of literature and in our roundtable discussions with project managers and procurement officers from several London boroughs, and should be developed to form a

Quality Procurement Charter for all design and construction projects receiving Mayoral funding.

Adaptable procurement policies

Centralised procurement teams (or 'processes') tend to set risk-averse, one-size-fits-all policies and processes. Indemnity insurance levels and financial turnover and history are often unrelated to the scale of the project at hand, but can disqualify a large part of the market before procurement begins.

- Skilled designers should work with procurement teams to ensure prerequisites and processes are adaptable enough to acknowledge the scale and risk of projects, and can be applied proportionately and with discretion.

Better briefs

Getting the brief right and being able to be an effective client for the work is clearly very important in order to make the project attractive to the highest calibre designers.

- Project managers should give enough time and thought to set out the objectives of the project clearly, with as much background information as possible.
- Briefs should focus on outcomes rather than outputs, and their scope should remain flexible enough to allow for innovative proposals and new ideas.

Valuing quality

The weighting of selection criteria assessing cost and quality can vary considerably, sometimes with an overemphasis on 'cost' resulting in decisions that are not good value over the long term.

- The majority of marks should be awarded for quality or technical competence, rather than cost. There should typically be a 70:30 split between technical quality and project cost scores respectively. This may be adjusted to 80:20 for particularly complex projects, or 60:40 for relatively straightforward repeat projects.
- The selection panel should include design expertise in order to assess design quality.
- Design competition formats should be used on higher-profile commissions where a fixed budget is set, and designers are selected purely on the basis of quality of outline work or ideas. These routes are far more common in France and Germany, and are specifically recognised in European regulations.
- When appropriate, an honorarium should be paid to shortlisted teams to develop their proposals. This is more likely to get the best out of designers, and avoid poor quality work that needs to be abandoned later.

Valuing new ideas as well as past experience

A heavy emphasis on past experience is often not required on straightforward projects. Most design practices thrive on new kinds of projects, whilst an emphasis on past experience may entrench the same ideas, and stifle creativity and innovation.

- Selection criteria should consider past experience in accordance with the scale of the project and the scale of risk, and take into account the transferability of skills and knowledge.
- There should be a range of practices from large to small, established to young as part of procurement exercises.

Seeking fresh talent

An overemphasis on track record and disproportionate minimum financial criteria can mean it is easier for larger practices to win work, but the quality can drop after they are commissioned. Awarding contracts that stretch practices to work at a new scale, or in a new field, tends to bring more hunger, dynamism and creativity to a project.

- Project officers should seek fresh talent for invited tender processes. The GLA could, for example, commission a series of touring CPD sessions with short presentations to broaden awareness of, and introduce new talent to, boroughs. This will help boroughs invite a greater range of practices to tender for projects below the OJEU threshold.

Use open processes to select the best in field

There can be an over-reliance on inviting a small list of practices to tender for work, sometimes even at fairly high budgets. Above the OJEU threshold, the use of Framework Panels can also act as a 'closed shop' for those who are not on the panel. Frameworks tend to be four-year commitments, which is long enough for the field to change.

Closed processes are usually justified on the basis of making the work involved in both bidding and evaluation more proportionate. However, they risk not adequately testing the market and allowing for new talent to showcase their potential, or engaging the best quality consultants.

- There should be a presumption to use openly advertised processes, and a two-stage, qualitative shortlisting process to reduce the work involved in both submitting and evaluating bids.

As open procurement processes become more commonplace, the number of tenders for each project is likely to decrease.

- Where required, invited processes should include at least six practices, rather than three as is typical.

Promote openness within Framework Panels

Although Framework Panels are openly procured, their continued use can create 'closed shops'. The 'lots' defined within Framework Panels can be confusing, as some practices appear on several lots, and often only one lot can be used at a time.

- Any new GLA Framework Panels should contain fewer lots, with more practices on each. This would increase open competition within framework panels, and include a greater range of large and small practices.

Adopt principles that value quality and openness within large consortia

The procurement of multidisciplinary firms with in-house design teams, and the procurement of contractors who subcontract design services, are both commonly used to save time in procurement process. However, there is a risk these options do not give enough control to ensure the desired quality outcomes, and end up taking longer.

- Large procurement exercises should, wherever possible, be broken down into smaller packages to allow for more direct engagement and control.
- The skilled client with placeshaping and design skills should be involved in the selection of subcontractors.
- Where contractors are asked to tender for 'design and build' contracts, a large degree of

influence should be maintained to champion novated designers or retain designers as client advisors.

Recommendations

To ensure effective procurement of high quality placeshaping consultants to support the public sector, the Mayor should:

2a Lead by example by drawing up a Quality Procurement Charter to procure the best people and the best outcomes for all design and construction projects receiving Mayoral funding, and encouraging boroughs to adopt the Charter. The charter should:

- **Be developed and implemented through a borough working group, including placeshaping and procurement officers, to identify the detailed barriers to delivering quality results in London, highlight best practice, share experience and deliver innovative solutions.**
- **Ensure quality, new ideas, and fresh talent are highlighted and valued, within the context of existing procurement policies.**
- **Promote adaptable and open processes, which correspond to the nature and scale of the work being procured.**

3. Design

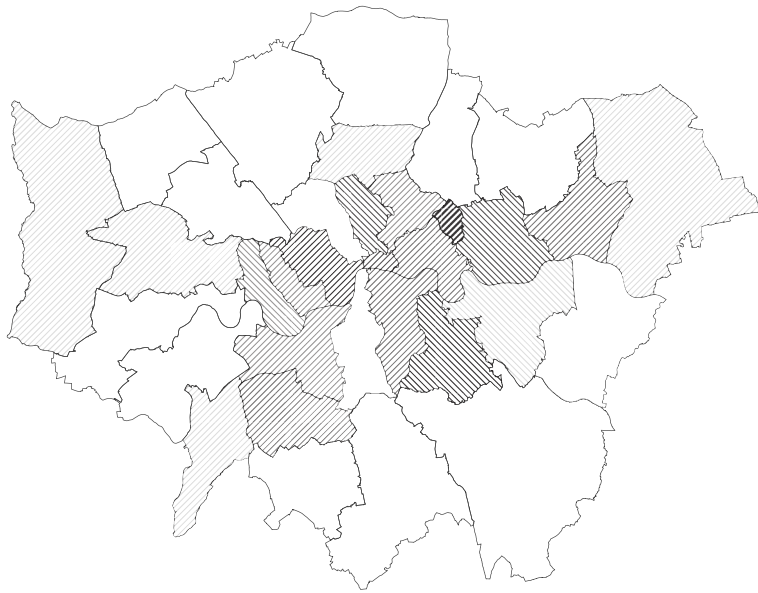
Reviewing designs as they are developed, and through the planning process

Although no substitute for in-house capacity, design review has become increasingly relied upon to determine quality in the planning process.

Design Review is enshrined as one of the only specific 'checks' on achieving quality projects, as cited in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF says 'local planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design. They should also, when appropriate, refer major projects for a national design review. In general, early engagement on design produces the greatest benefits. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the recommendations from the design review panel'.²⁴

In the past years, design review has shifted from statutory provision through CABE towards a market of different providers. A survey of design review provision in London carried out for MDAG revealed that there are a number of potential issues with this emerging market that would benefit from mayoral coordination. These can be summarised as: coverage (less than 28 per cent of major planning applications are reviewed); consistency (gaps and overlaps between panels); costs (and therefore accessibility); and confusion over what types of schemes should be subject to review.

There is considerable variation in the coverage and cost of design reviews undertaken in London.²⁵



Challenges for design review in London

A number of issues were uncovered by the GLA 2015 survey carried out for MDAG²⁶:

The first is that there is uneven coverage. Although there is a national review service available, many boroughs do not use it because it is a paid-for service. Less than a third of London boroughs report having access to a full review process for schemes at planning, with some boroughs offering considerable access to design review, and others with no reviews taking place at all.

The survey results indicate that approximately 350 schemes receive a design review in London, per year. In the same period, there were over 1500 planning decisions taken on major applications in London,²⁷ and over 24,000 other planning decisions, indicating (at best) only 28 per cent of major planning applications are seen at a design review process.

The growing variety of providers and area-specific panels makes coordination and access more difficult.

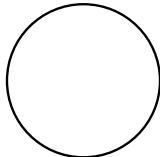
In recent years in London, the picture has become complex, with different methods for carrying out reviews. The growing variety of providers and area-specific panels makes coordination and access more difficult, and a number of issues become apparent.

Despite being integrated in national planning policy, the proportion of planning applications that undergo design review in London is relatively small.²⁸

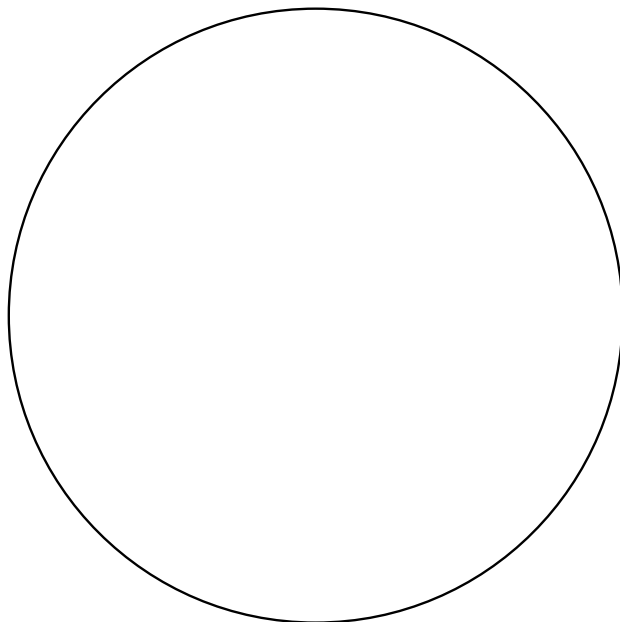
Total Annual
Design Reviews



Total Annual
Major Applications



Total Annual
Planning Applications



Closing the gaps

Firstly, there are overlaps and gaps, where there is either no coverage, the same scheme is seen by more than one panel, or the recommendations of panels are not given due regard by decision makers, as is expressly required by the national guidance.

Feedback from boroughs indicates a wide range of processes operate, with varying requirements and adoption of advice. Less than half of panels in London have a direct relationship to the planning committee. This indicates that the intention of the role of design review to ensure design quality in the planning system – as described in the NPPF – is far from being delivered.

Also, the variation in how the cost of design review is handled has an impact on the uptake of services. Since Design Council CABE (the only fully national panel) introduced charging for reviews in 2011, there have been a number of other providers who have developed consultancy services to provide reviews that are funded by fees charged to those proposing the schemes, with payment either to a borough or directly to a review provider. These new types of panels sit alongside more traditional, borough-managed panels, although some of these have also started charging to see schemes either within, or on top of, their pre-application planning fees.

The effect of payment for review not only risks confusing the influence of the review, but also means that only certain types of schemes are being seen. The survey indicates that these are the larger, higher-value developments, where incidentally there may be frequent crossover with the GLAs Planning Decisions Unit pre-application process. The pay-

for-review situation can also omit schemes that are not being promoted by the private sector, such as estate renewal programmes, of which there are currently dozens in London.

Distinct from projects at planning stage, there are also a number of 'project review' processes for the publicly funded, non planning schemes that take place, which includes the review programmes of the GLA family delivered by Urban Design London and MDAG. These see approximately 50 schemes a year.

The process of carrying out design review and place reviews has been well set out and described in detail, by CABI, the RTPI, RIBA and others, and the Mayor need not duplicate this.

However, it is clear that, given London's complex landscape of providers and gaps, the Mayor is uniquely placed to aid access to the design review process, coordinate resources, and help promote consistency. By doing so, the Mayor can reduce the number of schemes that 'fall through the net' due to a lack of design review coverage or high fees, and support boroughs who do not see the throughput of large schemes to warrant setting up a panel.

Recommendations

To improve design review provision across London, the Mayor should:

- 3a Act to coordinate access to, and quality of, design review across London, by:**
 - **Maintaining a directory of existing services; their coverage and their workload, and lead in developing a more comprehensive and coordinated system that ensures more equitable access to design review;**
 - **Confirming and agreeing guidance on appropriate design review practice, and developing a London Design Review Best Practice Guide that sets this out.**

- 3b Encourage boroughs to use design review where appropriate, and explore the feasibility of including a requirement in the next iteration of the London Plan for schemes above a certain threshold (e.g. number of units, height, sqm) to be subject to design review funded by the applicant, as also recommended in *Good Growth Agenda 1 – Growing London*.**

- 3c Commit to the continued and widened use of design review to secure design quality in Mayorally funded projects, and projects that do not require planning consent (such as highway works, and open space improvements).**

4. Delivery

Retaining design quality through to delivery

What happens to a design *after* planning consent can be instrumental to the success of a project and quality of a place, yet this stage is often subject to less scrutiny and control.

The Mayor is in a unique position to champion quality at this post-permission stage, and to support boroughs to see quality through to delivery.

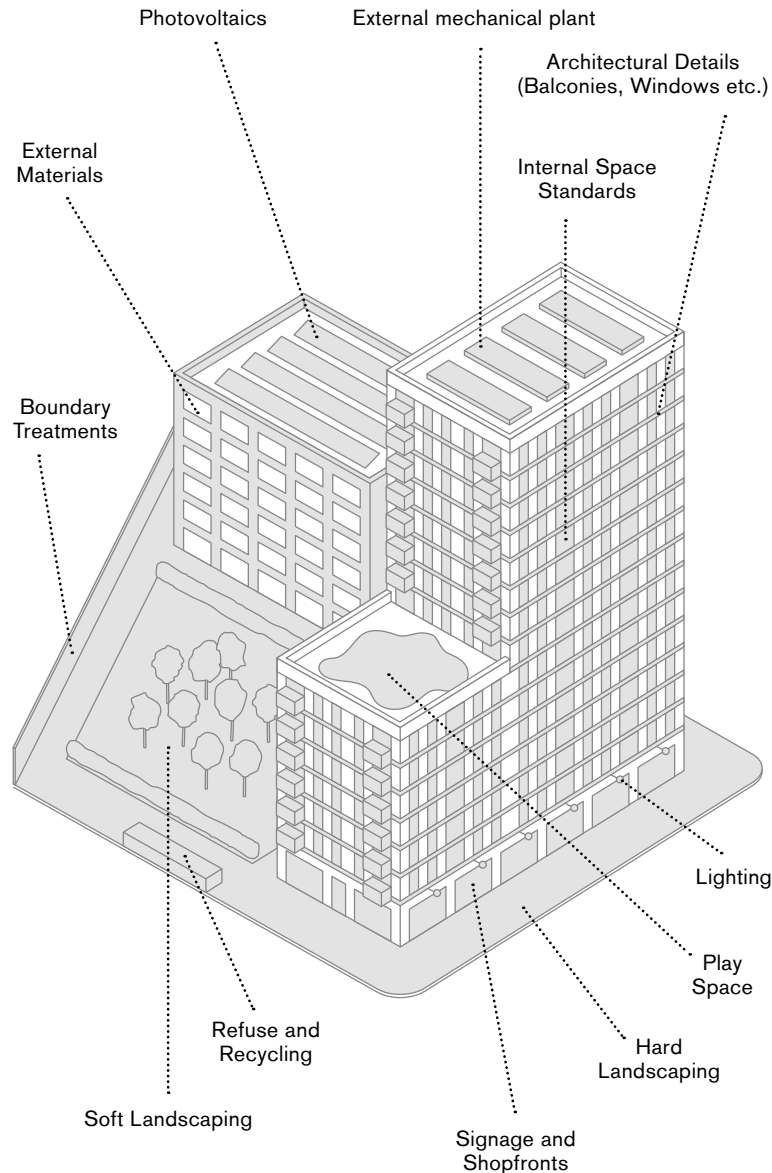
Experience from MDAG's involvement in publicly funded capital delivery projects, as well as development management, demonstrates that good results are more often achieved if a design team is involved from start to finish. However, there is no consistent approach to securing the continuity of design teams, or ensuring that the quality of tender documentation or planning approvals is carried through to delivery.

A planning authority is required to assess the design quality of a proposed building or public space during a planning application process. However, what happens after consent is achieved can be crucial in the final built result of that approval.

Changes to designs, post-planning consent are often allowable as 'minor amendments'. However, even minor changes can have a substantial effect on design quality and visual impact. The cumulative effect of amendments can often be significant and should be reviewed holistically when considering such circumstances.

It is widely recognised that there are often more changes after the granting of planning permission,

Many aspects of a planning application that are critical for design quality can be conditioned, and subject to change at a future date.



which are not always fully considered by the planning authority. Sometimes these changes are to save costs, such as reducing landscape, omitting special features and substituting-in lower quality materials. Such design changes may be allowable because a lack of design detail within the consented scheme provides 'loopholes' for a developer or builder to dilute design quality.

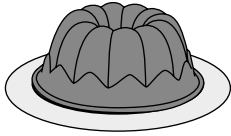
Other designs are altered to make schemes commercially viable. These can be the result of a tactical development approach sometimes dubbed 'dumbing down', where a high quality design is presented to achieve permission, only to substitute an inferior scheme using another designer. This can be exacerbated when sites are traded with approval, leaving the delivery responsible to others who have not been involved in the process. There are concerns that poor quality drawings and a lack of supporting visual information can result in little understanding by the planning authority as to what is being approved.

To tackle these issues, a number of approaches to this could be implemented:

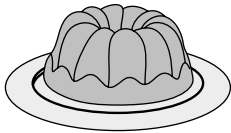
- A system of granting 'personal planning consent' for particular types of application could be considered further. This would encourage development of the site according to the consent, and seek to disincentivise profit being generated by a 'piece of paper' that is traded by speculators - a scenario that often results in the final delivery of the project being divorced from the planning process. If planning consent were granted for the benefit of the applicant only, it would generate a clear understanding of design quality and delivery.

Many projects don't resemble the consented scheme when constructed.

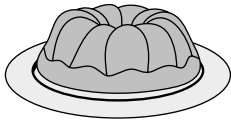
Planning consent



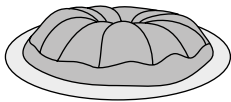
Site sold on



New design team



Amendments to details

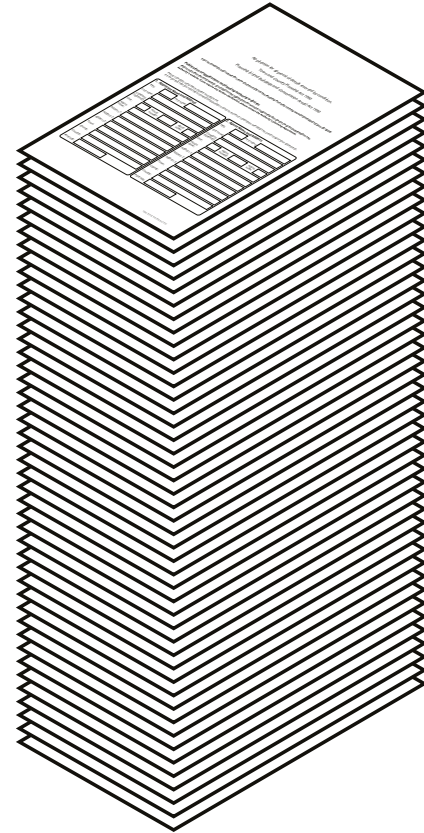


Constructed project



Major applications in London are subject to an average of 45 planning conditions*

* GLA analysis based on a sample of planning applications referred to the Mayor 2012-14.



- Building in incentives to retain the same design team beyond planning would help carry through the design intent established at planning stage. It is generally accepted that planning conditions or Section 106 Agreements should not be unduly used to protect the continued involvement of a particular architectural practice for final delivery in a way that is uncompetitive. However, consideration should be given to securing their ongoing involvement as a condition of consent, at the very least as 'design reviewer'.
- Improving the clarity and strength in the wording of planning permissions and associated conditions would lessen the opportunity to 'dumb down' a consented design. Routinely, visuals provided at planning stage, for example, are indicative, yet form the public face of the planning consent – particularly for outline and hybrid applications. Encouraging greater levels of design information to be provided as part of the consent, and fewer, more strongly enforced planning conditions should be considered. This could be supported by a shared resource to assist boroughs with the precise drafting of planning conditions so that they clearly encapsulate design quality.
- Improving the robustness when discharging planning conditions and improving enforcement are also of key importance. There are cases where the local planning authority is under pressure to discharge conditions in order to get returning approvals 'off the desk'. Conditions should only be discharged when the same scrutiny is applied as to the main application.

Local planning authorities should be encouraged to find the courage and determination to make more active use of enforcement powers to protect design quality. This would send a message to the development and construction industry that design quality needs to be defined at planning application stage, and adhered to.

To carry out the above, good quality design advice needs to be available within the borough, to maintain the design intentions when the original planning permission was granted.

Recommendations

To retain design quality through to delivery, the Mayor should:

- 4a Include in the next iteration of the London Plan a policy to encourage the use of fewer, more strongly enforced planning conditions, so that design quality is built into the planning consent and is not subject to revision.**
- 4b Champion the sharing of robust planning conditions and S106 clauses to secure quality, and explore the feasibility of establishing an online Conditions Wiki for use by local planning authorities.**
- 4c Promote the use of S106 clauses to ring-fence resource for design input into the project, should the original design team not be retained, or the site is sold on.**

Acknowledgements

This Agenda – and its three sister publications Growing London, Public London and Ageing London - has been prepared by the Mayor's Design Advisory Group (MDAG), working in conjunction with GLA staff and New London Architecture.

MDAG provides a combination of external expertise to the Mayor and GLA Group, engaging in thematic reviews, topic exploration, and place-based design reviews – including longer-term involvements in places like Old Oak Common or with programmes such as 'Mini Hollands'. It also provides an advocacy role with regard to London and its significant design community.

New London Architecture (NLA) is an independent forum for discussion, debate and information about architecture, planning, development and construction in the capital. Over a series of months, NLA invited representatives from across the built environment to take part in a series of expert roundtables, which helped to shape the agenda for each paper.

We are grateful to Grosvenor for supporting these events.

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Notes

- 1 *London's Placeshaping Capacity Survey*, London, Mayor of London, 2014.
- 2 Molior. *Barriers to Housing Delivery*, London, U.K., Greater London Authority, 2012.
- 3 *Running on Fumes?*, London, Centre for London, 2015. *The London Plan*, Greater London Authority, 2015. *London Development Database 2004/5 to 2014/15*, London, Greater London Authority, 2015.
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- 15 *Bishop, The Bishop Review*, London, Design Council CABE, 2011.
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- 17 *The Farrell Review*, London, Farrells, 2014, p. 75.
- 18 *London's Placeshaping Capacity Survey*, London, Mayor of London, 2014.
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- 20 'Time, Quality and Cost', CABE Website, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/buildings/time-quality-cost>, (accessed 20 December 2015).
- 21 Research produced by GLA Economics has shown that London accounts for 35 per cent of all architectural and urban design jobs in the UK, with 21,500 people employed in this sector, and 21 per cent of the UK's architectural companies are based in London.
- 22 MDAG held roundtable discussions with project managers and procurement officers from several London boroughs, and reviewed recent research into procurement. 'How Not To Spend It: 6 ways procurement blocks innovation' Nesta website, <http://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/how-not-spend-it-6-ways-procurement-blocks-innovation#sthash.YWbDwHKO.dpuf>, (accessed 20 December 2015).
- 23 Research has indicated that procurement processes often provide disincentives for innovation and creativity - Johnson, 'Procurement Impact Spotlight', Code for America Summit 2013 (accessed 20 Dec 2015).
- 24 *National Planning Policy Framework*, London, DCLG, 2012.
- 25 MDAG surveyed the provision and reach of Design Review in London during the summer of 2015. Responses were received from 37 organisations, including 31 of the 33 London boroughs. The remaining responses were from other organisations that run design and project review processes in London, such as UDL, Crossrail, and Design Council CABE. Note on the data: some responses were incomplete, or partial, and so the data set out here reflects this.
- 26 *Survey of Design Review in London*, Greater London Authority, 2015.
- 27 *Live tables on planning applications*, U.K., Department for Communities and Local Government, January 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-planning-application-statistics> (accessed 8 January 2015).
- 28 *Survey of Design Review in London*, Greater London Authority, 2015. *London Development Database 2004/5 to 2014/15*, London, Greater London Authority, 2015.

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