

Town Centre Futures: Evidence and ideas for recovery

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CENTRE FOR LONDON



**CROSS RIVER
PARTNERSHIP**

Delivering London's Future Together

Town Centre Futures: Evidence and ideas for recovery

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We would like to thank the [CRP Board](#) and [Central London Sub-Regional Transport Partnership \(CLS RTP\)](#) for their invaluable contributions, support and guidance and for making this report possible. We look forward to implementing the recommendations laid out in this report with you.

All of CRP's partners are represented on its Board. CRP is proud to be working collaboratively with all of these public, private and community partners across central London and beyond. CRP is an alliance of :

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If you would like to find out any further information from Cross River Partnership (CRP) and how it may be able to support your Town Centre Futures, please get in touch at crossriverpartnership.org

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Summary



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Town Centre Futures: Introduction

London's town centres shape our daily lives and the success of our city in many ways – they provide for our day to day needs, affect our enjoyment of the city, and offer a wide range of job opportunities. In doing so they also impact our health and wellbeing, economic outcomes and identities.

The coronavirus crisis has dealt London a particularly harsh blow and has piled pressure on our town centres. The capital has always been a place of rapid change, but our town centres now need to respond and adapt to the lasting shock of the pandemic, and the long-term challenges of the climate crisis, of the growth of online retail, of Brexit, of automation, of inequality and of an ageing population.

Whilst the longer term impact of the pandemic is still uncertain, there are now opportunities for rethinking how London functions, and how people work, live and travel around the city, and to respond to the city's longstanding challenges.

Town Centre Futures: Report content

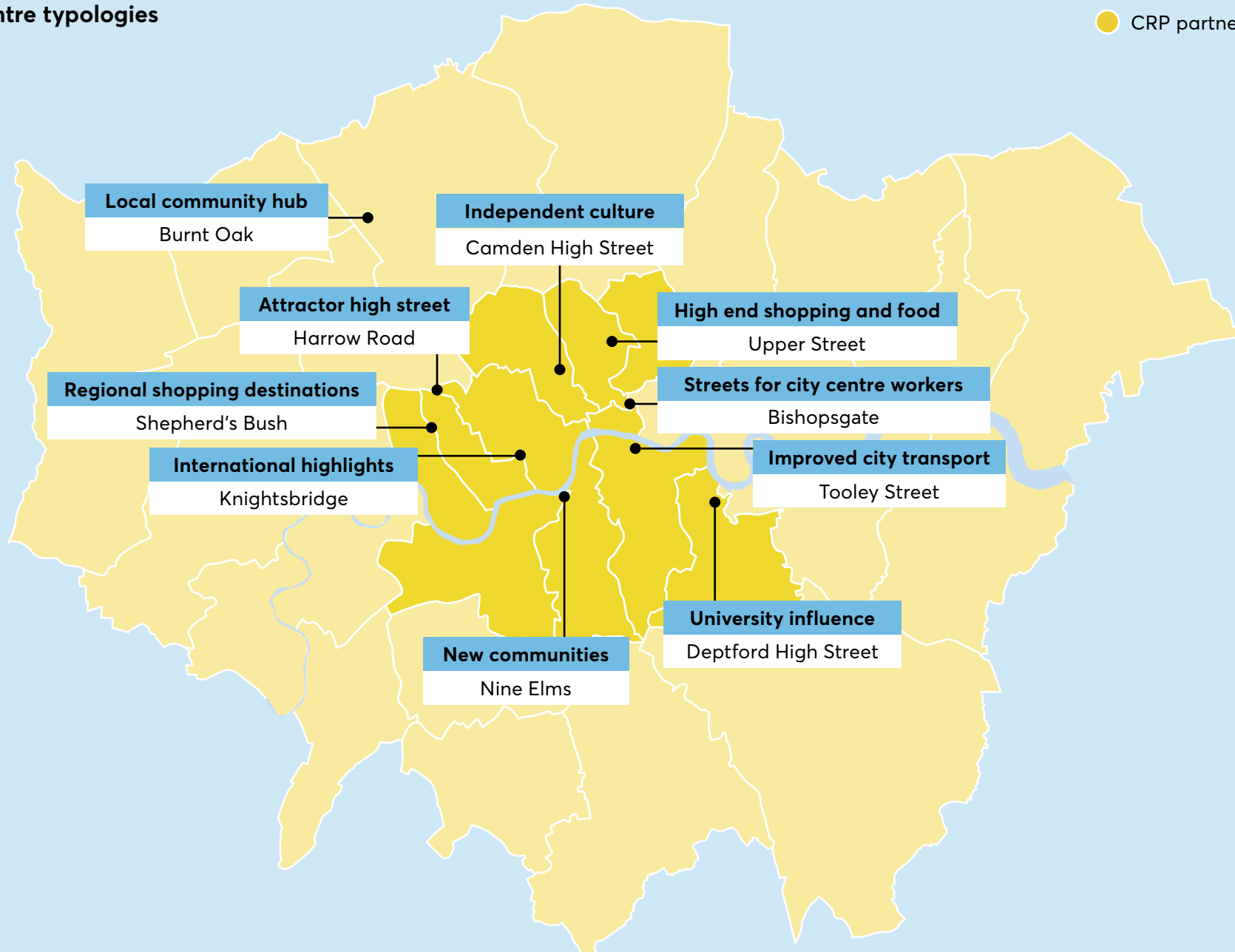
This report has been commissioned by Cross River Partnership (CRP) to enable its members and partners to think through and respond to the potential impact of the pandemic on London. The report consists of three sections, each offering different resources:

- The **thematic evidence** reviews offer a summary of the changes and challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, to inform recovery responses. This section reviews how to plan for healthy and adaptable town centres in a context of change, and the impact of the pandemic on the city with a specific focus on mobility, workforce and employment trends, and on the Central Activity Zone.
- The **case studies** showcase some of the key challenges and opportunities for London's medium and large centres, illustrating where these differ across places, and offer possible future directions for its town centres.
- Our **recommendations** offer practical steps that local authorities, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and their partners could take to improve London's town centres in 2021 and 2022. These build on the evidence collated through the thematic reviews and the case studies.

[How we chose the case study areas](#)

Town centre typologies

● CRP partner boroughs



Town centre typologies

| Type | Illustrative case study | London borough | New London Plan classification |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Improved city transport | Tooley Street | Southwark | Unclassified/CAZ |
| Regional shopping destinations | Shepherd's Bush | Hammersmith & Fulham | International centre |
| Local community hub | Burnt Oak | Barnet and Brent | District centre |
| New communities | Nine Elms | Wandsworth | Unclassified/Future CAZ |
| University influence | Deptford High Street | Lewisham and Greenwich | District Centre |
| Independent culture | Camden High Street | Camden | Metropolitan centre |
| International highlights | Knightsbridge | Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea | International centre |
| Streets for city centre workers | Bishopsgate | City of London, Tower Hamlets and Hackney | CAZ |
| High end shopping and food | Upper Street | Islington | District Centre (Church Street) |
| Attractor high street | Harrow Road | Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Brent | District centre |

NB. A table with detailed characteristics on each typology is provided in appendix.

Recommendations

The recommendations suggest practical steps that local authorities, local businesses, Business Improvement Districts, the Greater London Authority and their partners could take to improve London's town centres in 2021 and 2022. Of course, not all ideas will work in all places, and some places will already be using some of the recommendations but we hope most areas will find some ideas which are useful to them. Different areas may choose to use one recommendation or several in combination, depending on what has already happened locally and what local priorities are. BIDs can play an important role in guiding this decision making.

These recommendations also build on a rich set of sources and ideas for ways to support London's recovery – which are featured in the [Recovery programme](#) and work with Arup on the [economic future of the Central Activities Zone](#), the West End Partnership's [Future vision for the West End](#), and the [High Street Taskforce](#).

Headline recommendations

1. **Support London's creatives** and build sense of place with outdoor performances (subject to social distancing) and visual art displays – murals and beyond - during pandemic recovery.
2. **Boost outdoor eating and drinking options** for restaurants, cafes, bars and street food sellers. Even if social distancing is no longer required, some people may still prefer to be outside, or there may not be enough inside space for everyone.
3. **Create new ways for local people to be involved** in decisions about their high streets – building on the community spirit and increased attachment to local areas during lockdowns. Public involvement can help keep high streets lively and vital when some businesses close.
4. **Optimise freight and delivery** vehicle movement on the high street, to reduce air pollution and create more space for active transport and outdoor leisure.
5. **Create new workspaces** that suit the needs of remote workers, such as focus and social interaction spaces – to increase activity in town centres.
6. **Redesign roads and streets to make them child-friendly and healthier**, and to decarbonise transport journeys. This can be done by introducing designs that facilitate active travel, and reduce access for vehicle uses that contribute to air pollution. CRP's Healthy Streets Everyday programme offers guidance on how to do these interventions well.
7. **Improve amenities for visitors and workers** – for example ensuring that visitors have easy access to clean toilets, comfortable waiting areas and (covid safe) water fountains.
8. **Future-proof community assets** by transferring ownership to community groups, to deliver bottom-up change.
9. **Introduce better lighting** to make the public realm feel safe and secure after dark, and value local heritage by lighting landmarks.
10. **Increase meanwhile and temporary use of vacant spaces** to add footfall and vibrancy to the town centre, and experiment with future uses.
11. **Increase access to health services** and promote reuse of vacant commercial facilities by opening health facilities on the high street.

1. Thematic evidence reviews



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We have carried out high level thematic reviews of the evidence on 'what works' to create prosperous town centres, to support people who work for Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and local authorities. We also review the changes and challenges brought about by the crisis to support recovery responses. These reviews cover issues raised as particularly important by Cross River Partnership members.

Planning for healthy and adaptable centres

This section considers how we can plan our town centres to improve our health and wellbeing, and to make them adaptable in periods of rapid economic and social change.

Planning for future prosperity in a period of intense change

The future prosperity of town centres will depend on other uses than retail. The Portas Review (2011), a government-commissioned review of the future of high streets and town centres, argued that the retail-dominated model of high-streets had become outdated. High streets are now understood and championed as places of meaning and connection, where people live, play and work as well as shop.¹ A recurring theme within the literature is that the future success of the high street will depend on its ability to be dynamic and reflect the needs of its local community.

Strong partnerships and shared visions will be essential to secure future economic success. A localised vision of high streets suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. The Portas Review emphasised that particular areas must connect with the aspirations, strengths, creativity, energy, needs and drive of local people.² Indeed, a report by Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) found that the resilience of high streets will depend on partnerships between different groups and stakeholders across private, public and third sector organisations.³ These partnerships should set out an inclusive vision of prosperity, people, and place: three core themes under the Mayor's Good Growth Policy.⁴

Community-owned spaces will strengthen town centres in periods of change and crisis, together with the empowerment of communities in driving the direction of their high streets. According to Power to Change, community owned spaces contribute £220 million to the UK economy, with 56p of every £1 spent staying in the local economy.⁵ Community Asset Transfers (CATs) by local councils to local people can provide community businesses with an income stream and a secure place to deliver services.⁶ The Mayor of London's adaptative strategies for town centres and high streets highlight the benefits of CATs in generating and retaining long-term social value in areas such as South Norwood and Tottenham.⁷ Elsewhere in the UK, the success of Hebden Bridge town centre in West Yorkshire, is frequently attributed to the important role of its community businesses, which anchor the town and have made it resilient to previous periods of difficulties such as floods in 2012, 2015 and 2020. Hebden Bridge's community infrastructure, secured by CATs, have played a significant role in its recovery from COVID-19.⁸

How well planned town centres can improve our health

Spatial planning and design have direct and indirect impacts on health and wellbeing outcomes.

The ability of high streets to promote active lifestyles and improve physical health is well-documented. 63 per cent of Londoners surveyed in a report commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) walk to a high street.⁹ Walkable high streets enable Londoners to stay active while going about their daily life- e.g. shopping or meeting with friends. According to research by Public Health England, walking briskly for 10 minutes a day, for seven days is associated with better physical health and improved quality of life.¹⁰ Active travel when moving to and around the high street may be particularly important for groups who do not take much 'formal' exercise, including some older people and time-poor new parents.

Town centres also have potential to improve access to health services. Beyond encouraging active modes of travel, high streets play a role in providing additional capacity for health service delivery. They make services and information available, accessible and more effective. Through being at the centre of public transport networks, high streets have the potential to alleviate the financial pressures of struggling families by reducing travel time for tests and consultations and the need to take time off work.¹¹

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of digital health technologies.¹² While a report led by researchers from Imperial College London highlights the ability of digital technology to tackle health inequalities and the challenges facing the NHS, it also notes that the uptake of digital services was lowest in the most deprived communities. This suggests that for a lot of people, having direct and face-to-face healthcare will still be very important. Shifting care, information and services closer to people's homes by embedding 'Community Diagnostic Hubs' into local town centres and high streets, can complement digital innovations.¹³

Town centres also support local and diverse economies, which can have indirect impacts on health and wellbeing outcomes by providing access to employment and improving financial circumstances, thus reducing the likelihood of stress and related health issues. High streets with a lack of diversity in their retail offer may contribute to ill health: higher densities of fast food chains and loan and gambling outlets can increase the risk of obesity, diabetes and depression.¹⁴

Additionally, high streets help address the growing challenge of social isolation. When high streets are well-designed and inclusive they can improve social isolation and loneliness - a major public health issue associated with high risks of mortality and morbidity.¹⁵ Wider streets, greener areas and public spaces with more benches can foster intergenerational connection and allow high streets to become places that attracts different groups of people.¹⁶

How meanwhile use can revitalise and future-proof our town centres

Meanwhile uses are temporary interventions to vacancy issues with the potential to have sustainable and long-term impacts. Through the temporary use of sites project managers are able to test ideas that can inform longer-term strategies and influence decision-making processes in local councils.¹⁷ In South East London, the early success of the conversion of a multistorey carpark into Peckham Levels, a cultural and creative hub and workspace, led to the extension of its lease by 20 years.

We know that there are many untapped opportunities to introduce meanwhile uses across London's town centres. Centre for London's research on meanwhile use found that in 2018, at least 20,000 commercial units in London had been empty for at least six months – and that one third of all vacant units were located within 500 metres of a town centre.¹⁸ As covered in our section on the impact of coronavirus, we expect commercial vacancy to be higher in the short to medium term.

The meanwhile use of empty spaces can also future-proof town centres by strengthening local networks and existing activities, and nurturing new ones. Connecting with local artists is often regarded as an effective way of reaching wider communities.¹⁹ Projects such as Platform Southwark and South Kilburn Studios have offered affordable spaces for artists to connect and engage with communities. 82 per cent of local councils surveyed by Social Enterprise believed that social value drives higher levels of growth.²⁰ By centring communities and nurturing civic pride, meanwhile spaces can drive economic growth and inclusive, sustainable developments.²¹ Meanwhile spaces can also be used as a tool to represent diverse communities on the high street. Indeed, meanwhile spaces generally offer discounted rents since they are only available for a limited time period, and therefore can offer opportunities for uses or groups that would otherwise be priced out of an area.

Nevertheless, meanwhile use must overcome certain hurdles to be successful and scaled up. It is time intensive to reach out to landowners to convince them of the benefits of meanwhile occupation. One of the key challenges in the delivery of temporary projects at Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation are (ODPC) was working with large landowner organisations to gain approvals and agree on delivery.²² Other challenges include the inflexibility of the use-class system and the difficulty in getting planning permission for new temporary buildings.²³ Assessing claims of value and measuring the impact of meanwhile use on economic or social outcomes can be difficult, although recording benefits and impact as spaces operate helps. A key area that needs to be explored further is how to effectively monitor and evaluate temporary use against agreed outcomes.

Central London in crisis

This section looks at London's economic, social and cultural core – and how the coronavirus crisis has redrawn the challenges it will face, and its relationships with London's other town centres.

The coronavirus pandemic has recast the relationship between central London and London's other town centres. London's Central Activities Zone (CAZ) is home to a large cluster of offices, theatres, shops, restaurants, and bars. It is London's global business, commercial and cultural hub. The number of people visiting London's CAZ was increasing in the decade preceding the pandemic, as commuters, residents, tourists, and revellers flocked to London's city centre.

The pandemic has caused footfall to shift from London's core to its suburbs.²⁴ Unlike the capital's other town centres, central London has too few residents to sustain business activity without the help of visitors and workers. There are just 330,000 people living in the CAZ and its satellite, the Northern Isle of Dogs (NIoD).²⁵ In comparison, the area is home to 2,100,000 jobs – equivalent to 40 per cent of London's total employment – and 25 per cent of the capital's businesses.²⁶ Research conducted by the Greater London Authority estimates that the CAZ has lost £10.9 billion in tourism expenditure and £1.9 billion in commuter expenditure in 2020.²⁷

While it is too early to say what the long-term implications will be, the role that central London plays in a post-pandemic capital will be very different to that which it played before.

Global travel restrictions and international traveller quarantines could remain in place for the foreseeable future. This would mean that visitor numbers to central London remain low, though early predictions expect international tourism to recover to reach 2019 levels by 2024, and domestic tourism by 2023.²⁸ International visitors are an essential group in central London's economy. For example, data from Savills suggests that pre-pandemic, people from mainland China and Hong Kong contributed 25 per cent of all tax-free spend on Bond Street.²⁹ The size of this group was increasing before the pandemic, growing 23 per cent year-on-year in 2018.³⁰ London retail sales performance has shown historical resilience to declining overseas arrivals and global economic slowdowns, but will this be the case for the coronavirus pandemic?

Central London's cultural industries are world-renowned yet under threat. In the worst-case scenario, with continued, repeated lockdowns, recent forecasts suggest the economic output of the West End's theatres, museums, galleries, and clubs could decline by 97 per cent. In the best-case scenario, 10 per cent of its economic activity could be lost.³¹ To help the sector recover from the pandemic, the City of London's Culture and Commerce Taskforce recommend the commercial and arts sector work together on a programme of urban renewal, repurposing empty commercial spaces to attract workers, visitors, and residents alike.³² A brokerage scheme could help make these spaces available to creative business, creating new roles for different places, and enhanced collaboration across sectors in central London.

There are opportunities for central London to play a different role in London's economy. If people continue to work remotely, the daily swell of commuters to central

London could be replaced by an overall increase in the number of workers visiting the CAZ for in-person meetings, reinforcing its position as a social, as well economic, cultural and commercial core.³³ This might increase the demand for hospitality, cultural industries, and entertainment in central London.

Most central London office workers are largely now working remotely, many from their homes in London's suburbs. People who have worked remotely for a long time may want to continue doing so even after official restrictions have been lifted. At the end of January 2021, trips to workplaces in the City of London were down 76 per cent, and Underground stations down 82 per cent when compared to the previous year: well below the London-wide average of -55 per cent and -68 per cent respectively.³⁴ In contrast, trips in residential areas were up 13 per cent across London over the same period, with positive effects on footfall and spending in some outer London town centres.³⁵

Impacts from COVID-19

This section summarises what we know about the impact of the coronavirus crisis on London's town centres so far, how it varies across areas, and implications for the future.

How the function of London's town centres has changed during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated transformations that were already happening to the high street. Changes in consumer behaviour, cuts to public sector budgets and the impact of new technologies, have been joined by pandemic-induced changes such as the evolving nature of work and requirements for social distancing. However, these new transformations have not had the same effect for all activities and all town centres:

- Town centres dependent on visitors and sectors that have shut down have seen the greatest loss in trading and activity.
- Local town centres are faring better as people stay put in their neighbourhoods, though these gains have been uneven. Businesses such as local restaurants and cafes have been able to benefit from an increase in remote working – some of which is likely to continue after the pandemic.
- The closure of non-essential shops in periods of restriction has accelerated the shift to online retail, which is expected to remain at a higher level than before.
- The hospitality, nightlife and cultural sectors that had been growing before the pandemic, have taken a particular hit and are at risk of not coming back.

Some areas have suffered more than others

Lockdown measures, consumer anxiety and restrictions to stem the spread of the virus have meant that generally, town centres have seen a decline in visitors. Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that in November 2020, footfall across high streets, retail parks and shopping centres was at 45 per cent of the level seen at the same time the year before.³⁶

Lockdowns have led to a steep increase in online shopping: in May 2020, internet sales rose to nearly 33 per cent of all retail sales, compared to 21 per cent in 2019. The decline in footfall paired with the rise of online shopping has challenged the dominant model of town centres as retail destinations.

Some areas have been impacted more than others, and in different ways. The pandemic has significantly eroded the vitality of town centres in the CAZ where commuting and tourism has fallen drastically. At the height of the pandemic last spring, workplace journeys to central London were 70 per cent lower than normal, while trips to non-essential shops, restaurants and museums were down by 80 per cent.³⁷ Analysis of data by Centre for London showed that retail transactions in central London in mid-July 2020 (usually a peak season) was down 60 per cent compared to January 2020, despite the relaxation of lockdown restrictions in this period.³⁸

By contrast, smaller town centres such as Southall and East Ham saw an increase in transactions as spending on apparel and eating out surpassed their pre-crisis level in July. Additionally, in October, the CAZ only recovered around 40 per cent of its usual visitor footfall, whereas outer London saw 105 per cent of normal footfall.³⁹ When it comes to the function of town centres, coronavirus has turned London into a "doughnut city"- one with an empty centre but with well-performing suburban and smaller town centres.⁴⁰ Increased levels of remote working are likely to continue after the pandemic, creating new opportunities for town centres with a higher proportion of local visitors, such as Burnt Oak, Harrow Road or Deptford in our case studies.

Whilst in the medium to long term, visitor numbers are expected to return to pre-crisis levels, the ability of businesses and industries to bounce back will largely depend on domestic footfall in the meantime. Research by London & Partners found that people feel less comfortable shopping in person, and some prefer shopping online.⁴¹ Workers and visitors who have adapted to remote working and remain loyal to their local areas will therefore have to be encouraged back to the centre.

The rise of the hyper-local

Successive shutdowns and a sharp decrease in travel to offices and non-essential places, has given a boost to local town centres. High streets have become focal areas for food shopping and other essential services even more so than before. Independent food businesses have been able to take advantage of an increase in deliveries and takeaways, and local outdoor markets have thrived as people are more likely to stay in their areas and are forced to be or prefer to be outdoors. The social role of high streets has become even more important in periods of greater social isolation, and local town centres have promoted and valued active travel. High streets, and surrounding parks

and green areas have become destination points for people to exercise outdoors. As online shopping increases, and retail giants such as Debenhams disappear from town centres, the pandemic has encouraged reflection on whether cheaper rents from vacant units can offer the opportunity for reuses such as affordable studios and maker spaces. Bigger retail units are being adapted into a broader mix that includes smaller and more independent sites that bring retail alongside other civic, social and cultural uses.⁴² Town centres and local high streets are already experiencing the increasing presence of mutual aid centres and foodbanks, as communities come together to support one another.⁴³

Measures introduced during COVID-19

Regulations have become more flexible

In order to give a boost to local high streets and town centres while keeping them safe, businesses have been granted more freedom in the way they function. The Business and Planning Act 2020 enabled temporary changes to planning procedures and alcohol licensing and introduced a new fast-track Pavement Licensing scheme. The Act has made it easier for premises serving food and drinks such as bars, cafes, pubs and restaurants to seat and serve customers outdoors. Al fresco dining and "streateries" - car free outdoor dining spaces - were introduced in a comprehensive way in many London boroughs including Westminster⁴⁴ and Lambeth. We saw this in the summer as well as in the autumn months as many London boroughs allowed more premises to install heaters in open-air areas. While the recent lockdown has permitted only takeaway services, the provisions in the Act mean that the temporary measure will be extended until at least September 2021.

Streets have been redesigned for active travel

The Streetspace for London scheme by Transport for London (TfL) has supported London's boroughs to create more space for people to safely walk, cycle, scoot or wheel. The investment in infrastructure such as temporary cycle lanes and wider pavements have provided easier and convenient ways of getting around. This has been important as the pandemic has changed the journeys people make, as many have avoided public transport and either spent more time in their local areas, or switched to using cars.

The scheme has led to an increase in the number of Londoners living within 400 metres of the London-wide cycle network, from 11.5 per cent to 17.9 per cent.⁴⁵ Beyond its positive impact on the health and wellbeing of communities, the Streetspace scheme is anticipated to lead to economic benefits. Evidence prior to the pandemic showed that people who walk to a high street spend 40 per cent more than those who drive.⁴⁶ Research by the University of Westminster shows that Business Improvement Districts in London believe that a good environment for walking, cycling and where people can spend time is important for business performance.⁴⁷

For some Londoners however, low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) have not been popular. In boroughs like Lewisham, the initial implementation of LTNs have therefore been scaled back.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, a majority of Londoners see LTNs as a positive initiative that help to tackle the rise of vehicle journeys since the start of the pandemic, reduces air pollution and makes streets safer. Polling by Redfield and Wilton shows that among those who live in a LTN, 63 per cent agree that living there has improved their life as a Londoner, compared to only 14 per cent who disagree.⁴⁹

Changes to travel and transport

People have been living and moving in very different ways than they were before the pandemic, some of which are expected to lead to medium-term changes or may become permanent.

Londoners are travelling less and staying closer to home. Commuting has stopped for all but essential jobs and key workers, as have the discretionary trips made during the working day. Some of these discretionary trips shifted to town centres with a high proportion of residents working remotely,⁵⁰ and this will likely increase demand for transport into local town centres at the expense of travel into central London.

But the reduction in travel has not been evenly spread across transport modes. Trips by London Underground and bus fell significantly early in the pandemic, bottoming out at 97 per cent and 86 per cent of pre-pandemic levels respectively. Trips by public transport remain well below normal and it's not clear whether they will ever return to pre-pandemic levels, especially if fewer people commute into the city centre overall. Central London's road network saw much smaller declines in usage, with a 65 per cent reduction in traffic at the height of the pandemic. Reductions in road traffic were also much shorter lived, with many fearing increased car use and the negative impacts this could have on the air quality, carbon emissions and the public realm.⁵¹

Trips for wellbeing and leisure have increased. Cycling has been one of the most resilient modes of travel throughout the pandemic — though as always it varies with weather conditions — and while pedestrian trips have declined, they declined the least in residential areas.⁵²

More Londoners are shopping online, and although retail spending had begun to return to pre-pandemic levels before the second wave in London, this was not matched by a return of retail footfall in shops. The proportion of retail spend which is online is about 10 percentage points higher than in 2019 and continues to increase⁵³ — the large and growing number of parcel deliveries has led to an increase in vehicle traffic and air pollution. Managing these parcel deliveries, together with takeaway deliveries will be a growing policy challenge in the next few years, especially if online shopping remains at higher levels than before the pandemic.⁵⁴

Facilitating sustainable travel

We must accelerate changes to London's transport system if we are to achieve decarbonisation and air pollution objectives, tackle congestion, facilitate healthier ways of travelling and respond to demands for better and greener public realm.

The main ambition is to convert petrol vehicle trips to other modes that use less energy, carbon and road space. There are several ways to do this, depending on the type of journey. For cross-city journeys, offering fast, reliable and affordable public transport options is the best alternative to car travel.⁵⁵ Shorter journeys, often to or from a local town centre, represent the bulk of car journeys across London yet could be done by walking or cycling.⁵⁶ In some parts of outer London, driving to stations has been a fairly common way to commute: these journeys may also be candidates for modal shift. Changes in battery technology have unlocked the potential for micromobility; journeys using ebikes and e-scooters.

But increasing the take up of walking and cycling has proved relatively slow, for a range of reasons to do with the lack of safe infrastructure dedicated to active travel, such as wide unobstructed pavements, continuous segregated cycle lanes, safe junctions, space to park or hire bikes and scooters.⁵⁷ Though there have been notable improvements to active travel infrastructure, it is still the case that priority is given to car travel and parking, which means that car travel remains the most convenient mode of transport in many instances.

The increase in local journeys will make decarbonising trips to and from town centres even more important. Designing new developments to shape travel behaviour early is ideal⁵⁸ but road retrofit schemes such as the Mini-Hollands in Waltham Forest have led to significant increases in active travel between residential areas and high streets, though increases depended on scheme design and local densities.⁵⁹ Transport for London has collated strong evidence on what works to boost active journeys.⁶⁰

Improving freight journeys will also be essential to decarbonise travel and reduce traffic across London: these make up for a disproportionate amount of road deaths and injuries and air pollution. Greater coordination and consolidation of freight journeys into local hubs could do much to reduce last mile delivery journeys,^{61,62} while making more of river and rail infrastructure, and shifting deliveries onto zero emissions vehicles could help reduce vehicle traffic and air pollution on the city's main roads.

Workforce and employment trends

The UK is facing an unprecedented economic shock. London has taken the greatest economic hit of any UK region, though much of that impact has been concentrated in central London and its fringes, while town centres in London's suburbs have seen smaller falls in activity.⁶³ Beyond the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit and London's future relationship with the European Union has increased uncertainty for London's economy and labour market in the short-term. A decline in migration is likely to slow the recovery of London's labour market – particularly in the creative industries and hospitality – which currently rely on many European workers.

Impacts of Brexit on future access to talent

London relies more on the contribution of workers from the European Economic Area (EEA) than the rest of the UK: the share of jobs filled by EEA workers in London is almost twice as high as in any other region or country within the UK. These jobs are concentrated in the accommodation and food services and construction sectors, as well as in financial and insurance activities and IT,⁶⁴ so these sectors are more at risk of recruitment shortages in the future.

Potential for a more polycentric city

The majority of the capital's jobs are concentrated in central London. The CAZ is home to 86 per cent of London's total finance and insurance jobs, 61 per cent of its professional, scientific and technical employment, and over half of its information and communication jobs.⁶⁵ Employment in the CAZ grew by an average of two per cent annually in the years leading up to the pandemic, between 2011 and 2018. The area also plays a leading role as a hub for head offices of multinational corporations.⁶⁶ Many are now rethinking their space requirements in central London locations, and early evidence suggests interest in a so-called local hub model is increasing, which would provide workers with flexible office space in towns and neighbourhoods on the fringes of London.⁶⁷ As London builds back, people are likely to spend more time in their local town centres as they split their week between home and office working. Urbanists and economists have argued that this could increase central London's position as the site of face-to-face activities in the office.⁶⁸ If more people worked from home for part of the week this would allow an increased number of workers to use the extra space available to them in central London.⁶⁹ Indeed, office or retail spaces that are surplus to businesses' requirements could be sublet or converted. This could allow in new start ups or other uses to settle in the Central Activity Zone, and would help build back activity levels.

Where future job growth is likely to come from

Changes in past employment trends are good predictors of the future growth. In the 10 years preceding the coronavirus crisis, the fastest growing sectors were professional services (43 per cent), health and social work (37 per cent) and IT (34 per cent).⁷⁰ Though not a sector in itself, the creative industries were among the fastest growing areas. Employment in the creative industries was growing four times the rate of other areas of the economy: for every job created in the sector, another 0.75 were created elsewhere in its supply chain network.⁷¹

According to estimates published in December 2020, London's workforce jobs fell by 1.1 per cent in 2020 and this decline is projected to decline to a 4.6 per cent fall in 2021 before there is some recovery in 2022 (three per cent).⁷² Across London's sectors, job growth is projected to recover at different speeds after the pandemic, with the strongest annual recovery in London's cultural industries (20.1 per cent), accommodation and food service (15.3 per cent) and construction (10.8 per cent)

in 2022.⁷³ Workforce increases in London's knowledge economy are projected to be more modest, all be it from a larger base. Education (2 per cent) financial service (1.6 per cent), IT (5.1 per cent) and professional service (6.2 per cent) sectors are expected see a more subdued return to growth.⁷⁴

Future potential for automation

Compared to other UK regions, London and the South East are at a low risk of automation, largely due to the high proportion of employees in high-skilled occupations such as computer programming, architecture, and education.⁷⁵ However, according to Centre for London estimates, one third of jobs in London have the potential to be automated in the next 20 years. Health and social care are among the jobs with the lowest potential of automation, due to the high levels of social intelligence and dexterity required to fulfil these roles.

2. Case studies



© Cross River Partnership

How we chose the case study areas

London has many town centres. The most recent London Plan includes 241, ranging from Oxford Street to small local shopping areas.⁷⁶ Each of them is unique. The examples that follow are intended to showcase some of the key challenges and opportunities which affect London's medium and large centres.

In selecting them, we have looked for places which differ in how they work now: their size and the area from which they draw visitors, the types of businesses they contain, whether they are largely used by residents, students, visitors from outside the area or office workers, and how people usually get to them. We have also thought about how they might change and develop in future – either because regeneration is already taking place or because it is being considered.

Our chosen areas are largely but not exclusively within the Cross River Partnership member boroughs, because of their particular interest in this project. We have not chosen the major shopping and entertainment areas of the West End, including Oxford Street and Covent Garden, because they are being considered in more detail in specific pieces of work.⁷⁷

We hope that people who work on London's many other town centres will be able to see commonalities with their own areas and find recommendations which are helpful to them.

Space and time constraints for this report mean we have not been able to include full details on the town centres we mention, and in particular on their plans for regeneration and renewal. Local authorities and other key organisations – as well as local people and businesses – have far more knowledge than we are able to cover in this report.

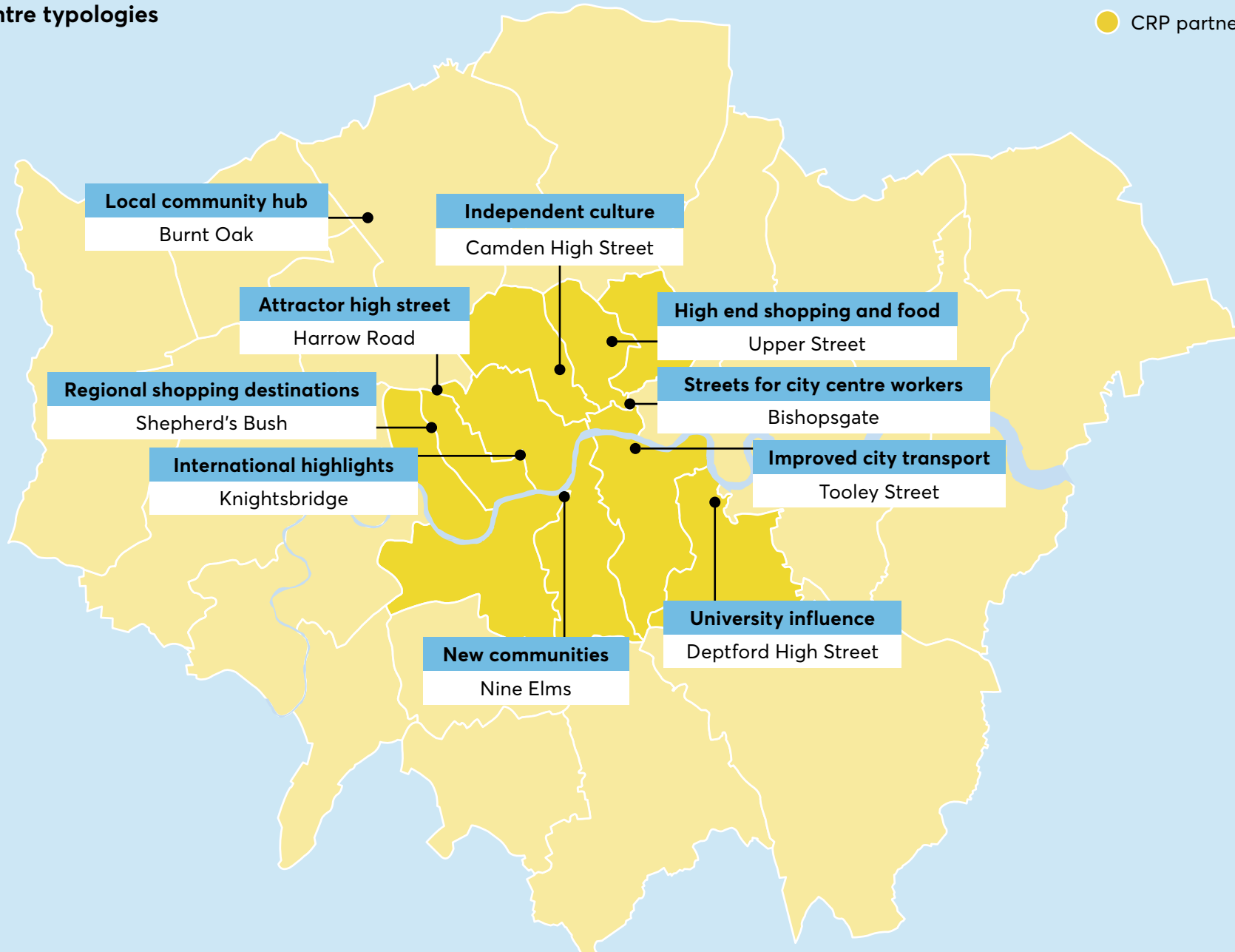
Table 1: Town centre typologies

| Type | Illustrative case study | London borough | New London Plan classification |
|--|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Improved city transport | Tooley Street | Southwark | Unclassified/CAZ |
| Regional shopping destinations | Shepherd's Bush | Hammersmith & Fulham | International centre |
| Local community hub | Burnt Oak | Barnet and Brent | District centre |
| New communities | Nine Elms | Wandsworth | Unclassified/Future CAZ |
| University influence | Deptford High Street | Lewisham and Greenwich | District Centre |
| Independent culture | Camden High Street | Camden | Metropolitan centre |
| International highlights | Knightsbridge | Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea | International centre |
| Streets for city centre workers | Bishopsgate | City of London, Tower Hamlets and Hackney | CAZ |
| High end shopping and food | Upper Street | Islington | District Centre (Church Street) |
| Attractor high street | Harrow Road | Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Brent | District centre |

NB. A table with detailed characteristics on each typology is provided in appendix.

Town centre typologies

● CRP partner boroughs



Improved city transport

Case study area: Tooley Street

Local authority: Southwark

Business Improvement District: Team London Bridge

Similar examples: Vauxhall, Euston

What it's like now

London plan classification:

Unclassified/CAZ

Location in relation to the CAZ: Located within the CAZ, connecting London Bridge to St Saviour's Dock and running adjacent to the River Thames.

Key local institutions: Southwark Council, King's College London's Guy's Campus and the Guy's Hospital site of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust a short distance away. City Hall are planning to move out.

Current transport mix in the local area:

Two major stations: London Bridge Station, with trains operated by Thameslink, Southern Trains and South East Trains, and London Bridge Underground Station which is served by Northern and Jubilee lines. Four bus routes during the day and two at night. Recently added segregated cycle lanes. Cycle Hire stations available and connections to Riverboat services. It lies within the Congestion Charge Zone and Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).

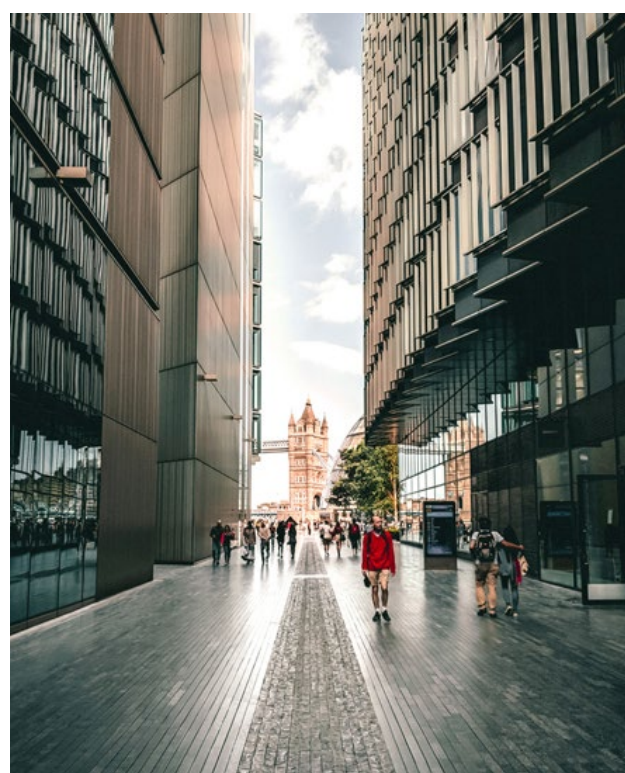
Recent changes: Redevelopment of London Bridge Station as part of the Thameslink Programme.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors:

Surrounding area has a mix of ages - the largest group being between 20 and 39 but many older people also live nearby and use the town centre, based on a survey conducted by the BID. 60 per cent of the residents are White Londoners, and the largest ethnic minority group being Black British.

Visitors include office workers from More London development, the Shard and other institutions mentioned above. Proximity to Tower Bridge and Borough Market also attracts tourists and Londoners from across the city.

↓ Riverside



© WikiCommons

Current retail mix: Current retail offer is food based, dominated by restaurants, cafes, bars and pubs. The famous Borough Market is nearby and hosts stalls, shops and restaurants.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- A well designed and maintained streetscape reinforce historic and iconic landmarks and gives the area a distinctive quality.
- The upgraded station and the well-connected riverfront brings more visitors to the area.
- The extension of pavements and the creation of better cycling and pedestrian infrastructure increase footfall.

- Food vans and stalls offer additional attractions and improve the visitor experience.

Risks:

- As the area becomes busier as a result of upgraded rail capacity, and business and office use expands, the high street is regarded as a place of transit rather than an destination.
- Increased remote working means some office space becomes underused and retail offer targeting workers' footfall suffers.

COVID-19 recovery vision

A culturally rich high street that acts as a pathway to attractions and cultural venues such as Borough Market, Southwark Playhouse and Tate Modern. High quality public realm and open spaces that are integrated with stations allow the high street to become a place where people don't just travel to and from but enjoy and gather. Wayfinding from both Underground and railway stations is made easier and accommodates increased pedestrian traffic. New opportunities for leisure are developed and the retail offer is diversified to encourage one-off independent stores, new concepts by existing operators and to address the changing needs of workers, residents and visitors.

Recommendations

2.

Boost outdoor eating and drinking options for restaurants, cafes, bars and street food sellers.





10.

Grow the number of temporary/ meanwhile uses on empty commercial spaces to add footfall and vibrancy to the town centre, and experiment with future uses.

[Full list of recommendations](#)



Tooley Street

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|-------------|
|  | Anchor institutions |  | Roads |
|  | Businesses |  | Green space |

Regional shopping destinations

Case study area: Shepherd's Bush

Local authority: Hammersmith & Fulham

Business Improvement District: Hammersmith BID

Similar examples: Bromley

What it's like now

London plan classification: A globally renowned retail and leisure destination with specialist shopping, potential for regeneration.

Location in relation to the CAZ:

Shepherd's Bush is located two miles west of the CAZ.

Key local institutions: Shepherd's Bush is walking distance of Westfield London shopping centre comprised of large retailers, drawing local residents, people from across London, and international visitors. Across the other side of Shepherd's Bush Green is West 12 shopping centre, home to smaller retailers and local supermarkets. The London College of Fashion is located nearby, alongside entertainment venues such as Bush Theatre and the O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire. The area is renowned for Shepherd's Bush Market, which sits right outside Shepherd's Bush Market Station. Also home to QPR football club.

Current transport mix in the local area:

Very well served by five Underground stations and a railway station, all within walking distance from local institutions. Also on many bus routes. Cycle hire docking stations are available around the area. Main car routes include Uxbridge Road, Goldhawk Road Shepherd's Bush

Road and West Cross Route. Sits outside the Congestion Charge Zone but will be in the extended ULEZ.

Recent changes: Conversion of some retail space into office use, expansion of Westfield shopping centre, new ownership of Shepherd's Bush Market.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors:

Shepherd's Bush has a relatively young population, with most people in the area between the ages of roughly 25-39 years.⁷⁸ One-fifth of the population hold an EU passport, and the number of foreign born residents make up roughly half of the population. The area draws visitors from west London in particular, with some international visitors to nearby Westfield.

Current retail mix: The area has a mix of small shops with the majority run by ethnic minority communities. These are located on popular roads such as Uxbridge Road and Goldhawk Road. There are also larger retail units at Westfield and West 12 Shepherds Bush shopping centre (the latter has chain stores, Odeon Cinema, restaurant chains and supermarkets). Shepherd's Bush market is permanently housed next to Shepherd's Bush Market station. New Shepherd's Bush Market – a separate entity – is within a short walking distance.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- Improved pavements and new micromobility lanes help commuters socially distance and increase share of sustainable journeys.
- A growing cluster of creative businesses (a range of television production companies are settling alongside the Television Centre) and a new Youth Centre increase access to the creative industries for local people.
- New networks of support between local businesses and residents – e.g. Ho-ja restaurant on Goldhawk Road⁷⁹ offering free meals offer opportunities for longer term community uses.
- Outdoor business operation and revised licensing offer opportunities to grow night-time economy.

Risks:

- Increased remote working and online shopping reduces retail footfall.
- The White City Opportunity Area includes regeneration plans for Shepherds Bush Market and Goldhawk Road, historical landmark areas that house businesses run by local ethnic minority communities. These plans could help the services in the area to meet local needs but could lead to some long-established, locally-owned businesses being displaced.
- The closure of large retail shops in the area poses a threat to the vitality of the retail sector. Hammersmith & Fulham approved an application last summer to convert House of Fraser, located in Westfield Shopping Centre, into office space.

↓ Westfield shopping centre



© Hammersmith & Fulham Council

COVID-19 recovery vision

A mix of local independent retail and 'destination' retail and entertainment continue to draw visitors and serve local communities. Improvements to the public realm such as widened pavements, segregated cycling lanes on Uxbridge Road and Shepherds Bush Green improve air quality and offer safer travel options post-coronavirus. Road space is reallocated to help small businesses thrive, such as introducing additional space for outdoor dining, market stalls and outdoor arts.

Recommendations

6.

Redesign roads and streets to make them child-friendly and healthier, and to decarbonise transport journeys.

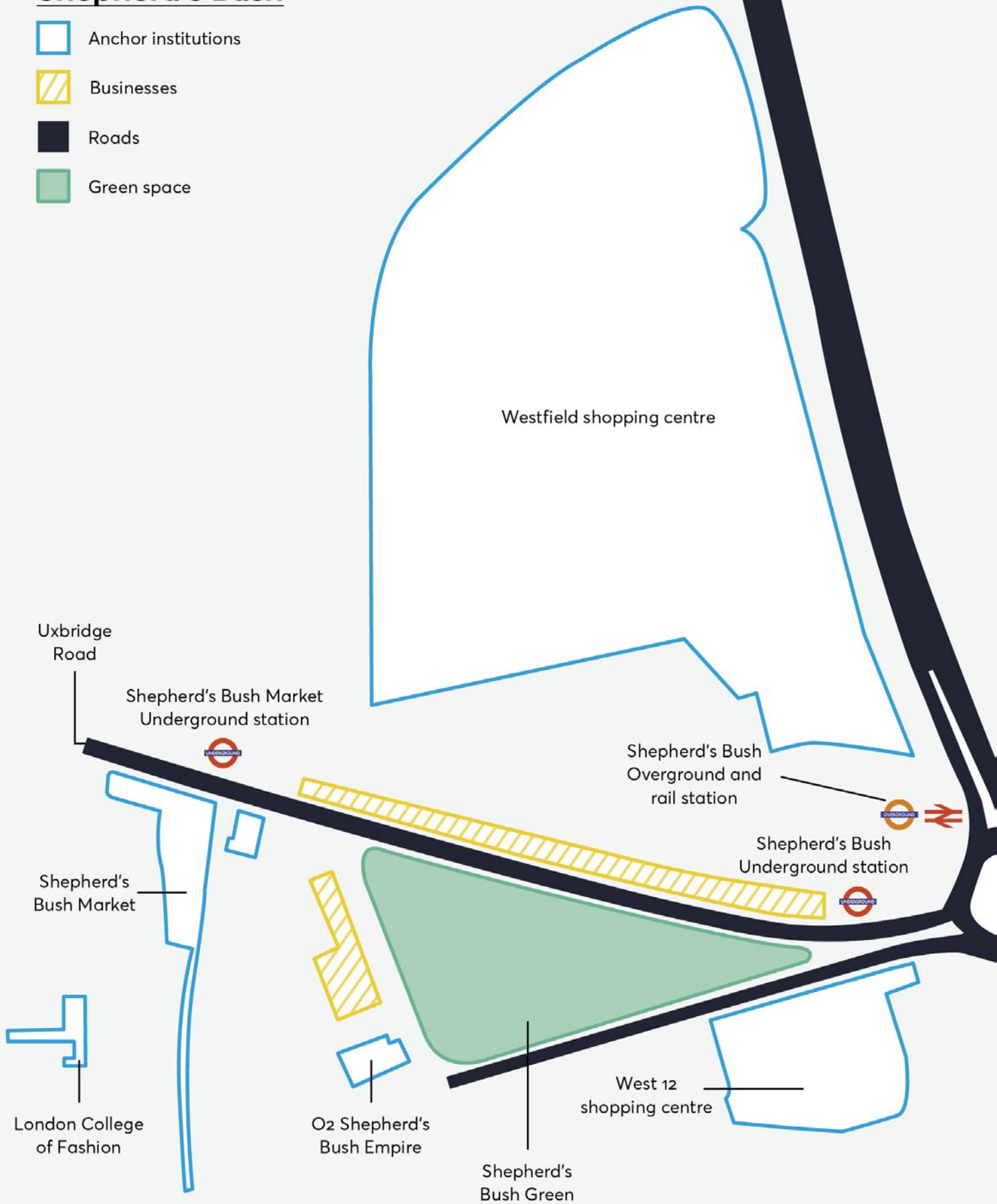
8.

Future-proof community assets by transferring ownership to community groups, to deliver bottom-up change.

[Full list of recommendations](#)

Shepherd's Bush

-  Anchor institutions
-  Businesses
-  Roads
-  Green space



Local community hub

Case study area: Burnt Oak

Local authorities: Barnet and Brent

Similar examples: Woolwich

What it's like now

London plan classification: A district local centre with high residential growth potential and categorised as a strategic area for regeneration. Also designated as an Opportunity Area.

Location in relation to the CAZ: Located in the outer London Borough of Barnet, it is about 11 miles from Westminster, with the Northern Line offering access to central London in under 30 minutes.

Key local institutions: Community assets such as Burnt Oak Library, Love Burnt Oak and the International Gospel Church.

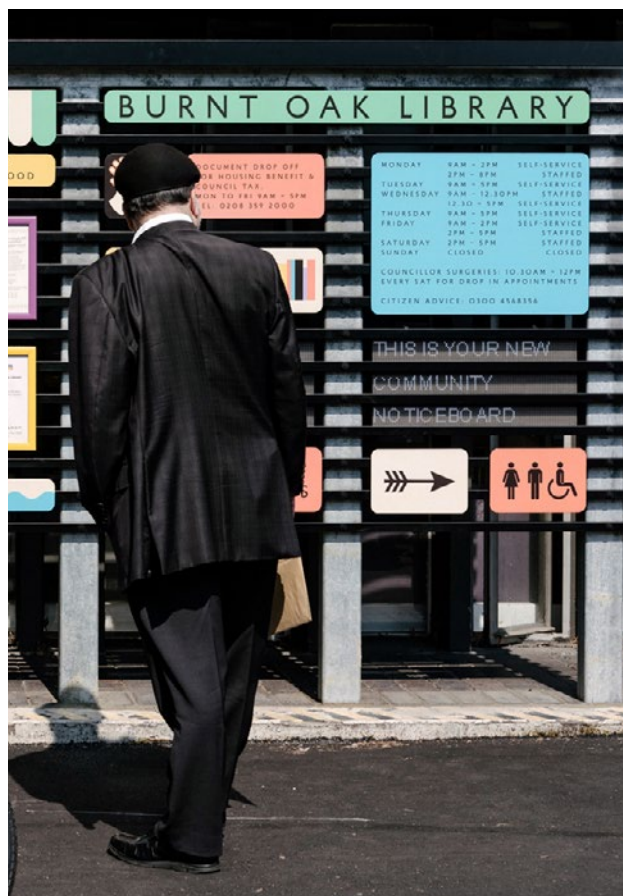
Current transport mix in the local area: Served by bus routes and an Underground station. Proximity of M1, with quick access to Brent Cross interchange. Not well served by cycling routes. Outside of the Congestion Charge Zone and ULEZ.

Recent changes: Burnt Oak Underground has been improved with step-free access, green spaces have been given an upgrade with new facilities added.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors: A predominately young population with about 70 per cent of residents under the age of 44 compared with 58 per cent nationally.

The ward has one the largest population of young people under 19 within Barnet. Burnt Oak is home to a diverse population: Black, Asian and Minority residents make up over half of the population, which is higher than the borough wide average of 39 per cent. Between 2001 and 2011 there was an increase in populations originating from India and the Philippines, and both the Romanian and Polish populations have also seen a significant increase.

↓ Burnt Oak Library



Current retail mix: A large portion of businesses are independent and are micro in size, employing five or fewer full-time employees. The area is well known for its multicultural retail offer that reflects the diversity of its population.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- An increase in remote working boosts local demand.
- Renovating shopfronts could enhance both the look and feel of the area, and attract more customers.
- There are a number of heritage assets that, when repaired and put back into use, could transform the built environment.

- Small independent businesses tailor their offer to cater to new residents, and changing needs from remote working.

Risks: Micro-businesses like those found in Burnt Oak may be less likely to comply with rules about health and safety, pavement display, customer parking etc. which can lead to a perception of neglect and mismanagement.

COVID-19 recovery vision

A town centre with a distinct identity that celebrates both its heritage and diversity. Enhancement to streets make the area desirable to spend time in, and a range of entertainment and cultural facilities encourages inclusive participation. Community organisations build a stronger network and profile that highlight the wealth of existing assets. Local and independent businesses are supported to serve a greater variety of needs and coordinate around a strategic vision for the town centre. Streets and junctions are redesigned to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians.

Recommendations

6.

Redesign roads and streets to make them child-friendly and healthier, and to decarbonise transport journeys.

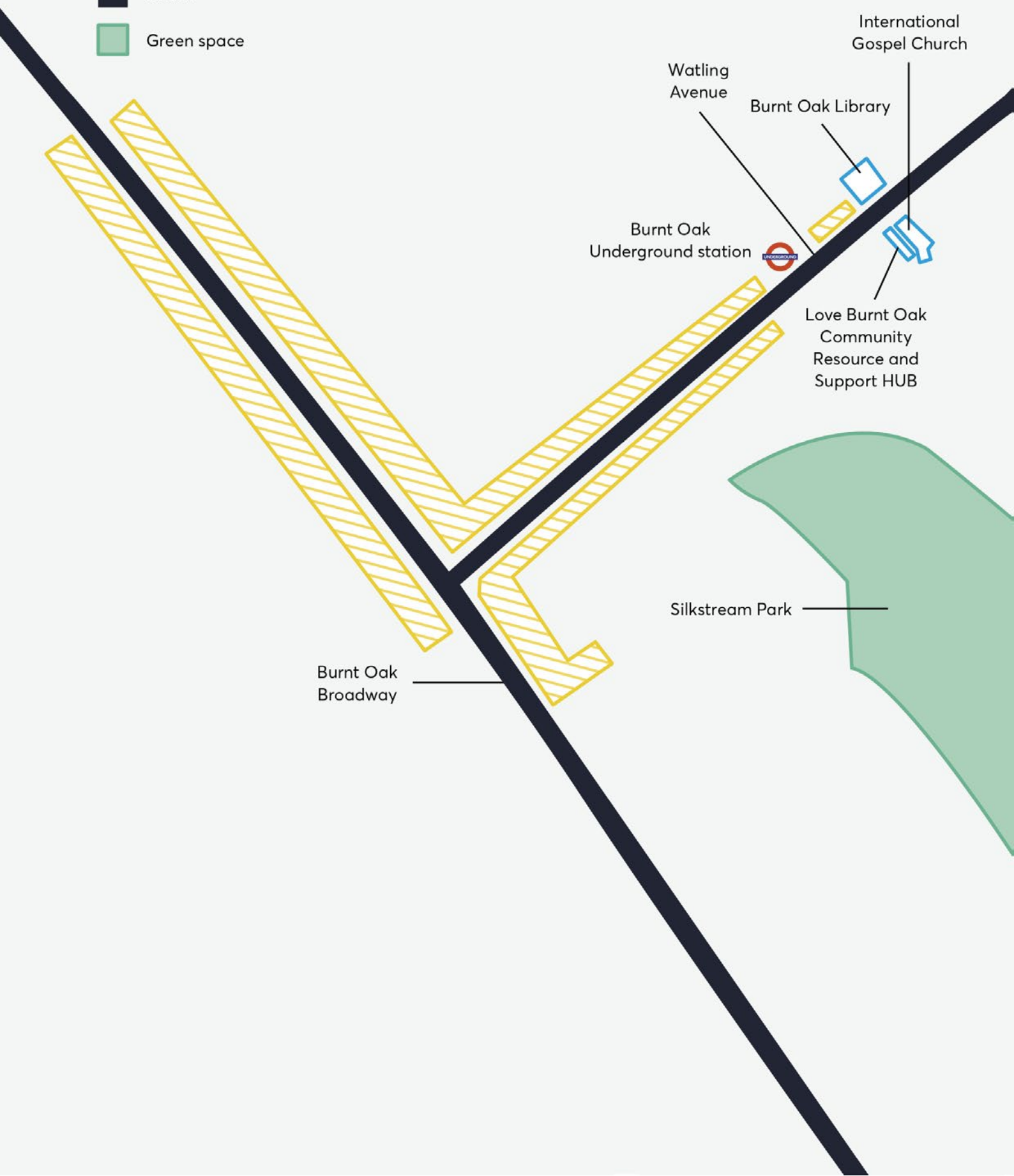
7.

Improve amenities for visitors and workers – for example ensuring that visitors have easy access to clean toilets, comfortable waiting areas and water fountains.

[Full list of recommendations](#)

Burnt Oak

-  Anchor institutions
-  Businesses
-  Roads
-  Green space



New communities

Case study area: Nine Elms

Local authority: Wandsworth

Similar examples: Canada Water

What it's like now

London plan classification: Unclassified/
Future CAZ retail cluster with high commercial and residential growth potential. One of central London's largest designated regeneration areas and part of the Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Battersea Opportunity Area.

Location in relation to the CAZ: CAZ

Key local institutions: Home to Battersea Power Station, a former key industrial site that once powered a large proportion of the capital. Though not within the area, Tate Britain and Westminster are nearby - approximately one and two miles away respectively. The area is also home to the new US Embassy and New Covent Garden Market.

Current transport mix in the local area:

Despite its relatively central location, the area has not been well connected to the rest of the city. It is served by bus routes and stations such as Battersea Park Overground Station whose services are also operated by Southern Railway. Queenstown Road Station is a short distance away and is served by South Western Railway. It is just outside of the Congestion Charge Zone and will be in the extended ULEZ.

Recent changes: Around 5,000 homes completed in the last five years. The transformation of Battersea Power Station into a mixed-use development will include homes, shops cafes and restaurants, and the construction of additional buildings. Part of the fourth phase of the Battersea Power Station development will include a health centre. The Northern Line Extension is expected to open in 2021 and will provide two new Tube stations at Battersea Power Station and Nine Elms. This will expand the CAZ and is anticipated to provide capacity for thousands of new homes in the area. The Electric Boulevard, a new high street on the Battersea Power Station site, is also expected to be completed in 2021.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors:

A relatively young population though over the years there has been an increase in the number of children and those living in the area into their 40s and beyond. Compared to the London average, a large proportion are White, though this includes residents born outside of the UK. Visitors are likely to be those associated with the US Embassy, and international investment in residential properties, land and construction will also draw international visitors.

Current retail mix: A mixture of convenience shopping and restaurants,



© James Kenny

cafes and pubs however currently little retail. Battersea Power Station will include a mix of luxury and international brands as well as food and leisure brands.

- Closer partnership working across the borough boundary could strengthen strategic planning across the area.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- The opening of the two new Tube stations increases connectivity to the rest of London, and reduces road traffic.
- The revival of the Power Station and the future redevelopment of New Covent Garden Market attract residents, businesses and visitors to the area.
- The Mayor of London funds a Business Low Emission Neighbourhood to reduce air pollution. This includes new walking and cycling infrastructure, and engaging with businesses to implement schemes to reduce the impact of freight.

Risks:

- Increased remote working reduces retail footfall from commuters though this may be counterbalanced by higher spending from local residents.
- The high proportion of luxury homes and office spaces risks pricing out those already living in the area. Master planning and building design increase risk of segregation within the area, as the few affordable homes built on sites where land values are the lowest.
- The large number of residential and commercial parking spaces slows progress in decarbonising journeys if people use these rather than public transport.

COVID-19 recovery vision

A new town centre that Londoners can call home and that also reinforces London's attractiveness as a leading global city. Innovative uses of key sites such as the Battersea Power Station, mix of uses and inclusive community facilities create a '15-minute city'. Excellent transport links increase the share of sustainable journeys.

Recommendations

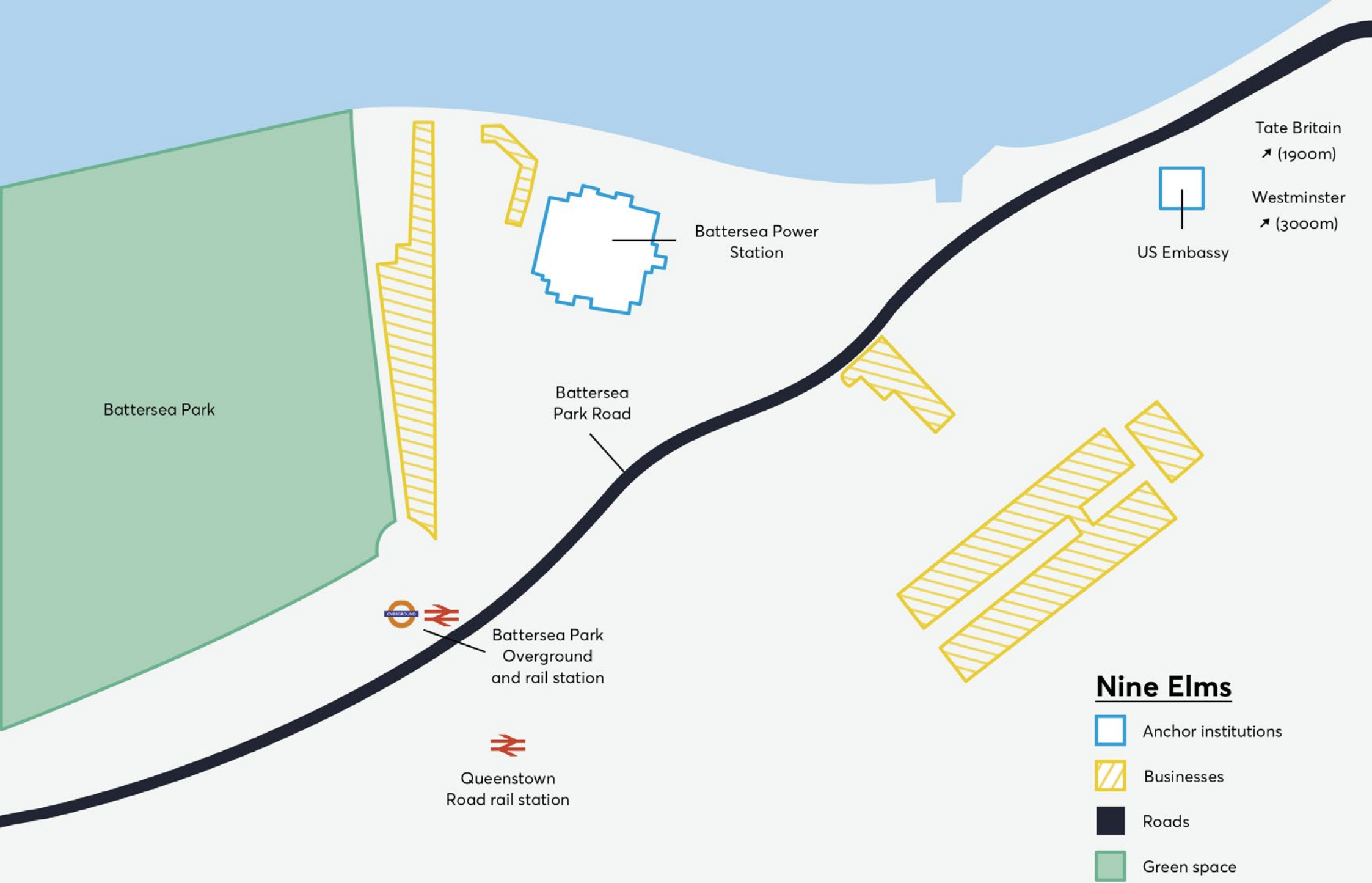
3.

Create new ways for local people to be involved in decisions about their high streets.





5.

Create new workspaces that suit the needs of remote workers, such as focus and social interaction spaces – to increase activity in town centres.

[Full list of recommendations](#)



Nine Elms

-  Anchor institutions
-  Businesses
-  Roads
-  Green space

University influence

Case study area: Deptford High Street

Local authority: Greenwich and Lewisham

Similar examples: Roehampton

What it's like now

London plan classification: District centre with regeneration potential and specialist night-time economy.

Location in relation to the CAZ: Deptford High Street is outside the CAZ – the nearest part to travel to is London Bridge, which is about three miles away. It is geographically closer to Canary Wharf, but not well connected to it.

Key local institutions: Proximity to Goldsmiths University, with some students living in student accommodation and others commuting. Associated cultural and nightlife venues, including the Albany Theatre.

Current transport mix in the local area: Served by national rail and buses, fairly close to Overground. Well served by bike routes, but no docking stations for Transport for London bikes. Not in Congestion Charge Zone but will be in ULEZ.

Recent changes: Redevelopment of the station and its Victorian carriage drive has created new flats and retail space. Some regeneration at south end of high street. 200+ new homes expected on the Tidemill Site.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors

Very diverse population with no majority group - largest groups are White British/European and Black/Black British. High proportion of residents born overseas. Fewer children and more young adults than in the surrounding area: this reflects the high student population, and popularity of the area with young workers. Visitors are likely to be associated with Goldsmiths University or cultural venues.

Current retail mix: Independent food businesses, including health food stores and halal butchers. Art and design shops, some temporary. Range of takeaway, pubs and cafes, some in pedestrian area in front of station. Chains include Poundland, Tesco and Greggs. Small market.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- Residents of new homes and more remote working increase total spending power in the local area, leading to the creation of new retail and food businesses.
- Trend towards home working supports daytime food trade. Proximity to River Thames creates new opportunities for activities.
- Use of active travel, already high in the area, continues to increase as e-bike and e-scooter options expand.

Risks: Reduced numbers of resident university students affect arts and cultural life. Rising house and commercial property prices force out local food businesses (particularly those serving the Asian and Black communities) and smaller cultural venues, so the areas loses its distinctiveness.

Other factors: If the Bakerloo Line extension goes ahead, New Cross Gate will have Underground access - about a mile from Deptford High Street. This might change house prices or residential mix in the medium term.

↓ Deptford High Street



© Joao Souza

COVID-19 recovery vision

A buzzy, vibrant town centre serving a diverse community of residents and students, with a largely independent food and retail mix and some small supermarkets. Pedestrian spaces are attractive places to spend time. Cultural attractions draw in visitors from other parts of South East London, particularly at night time. Shared studio space for early career artists and makers increases this cultural draw. Even more journeys are made by active transport, making use of a well-developed cycling infrastructure and adding e-bike, docked bike and e-scooter options.

Recommendations

3.

Create new ways for local people to be involved in decisions about their high streets.

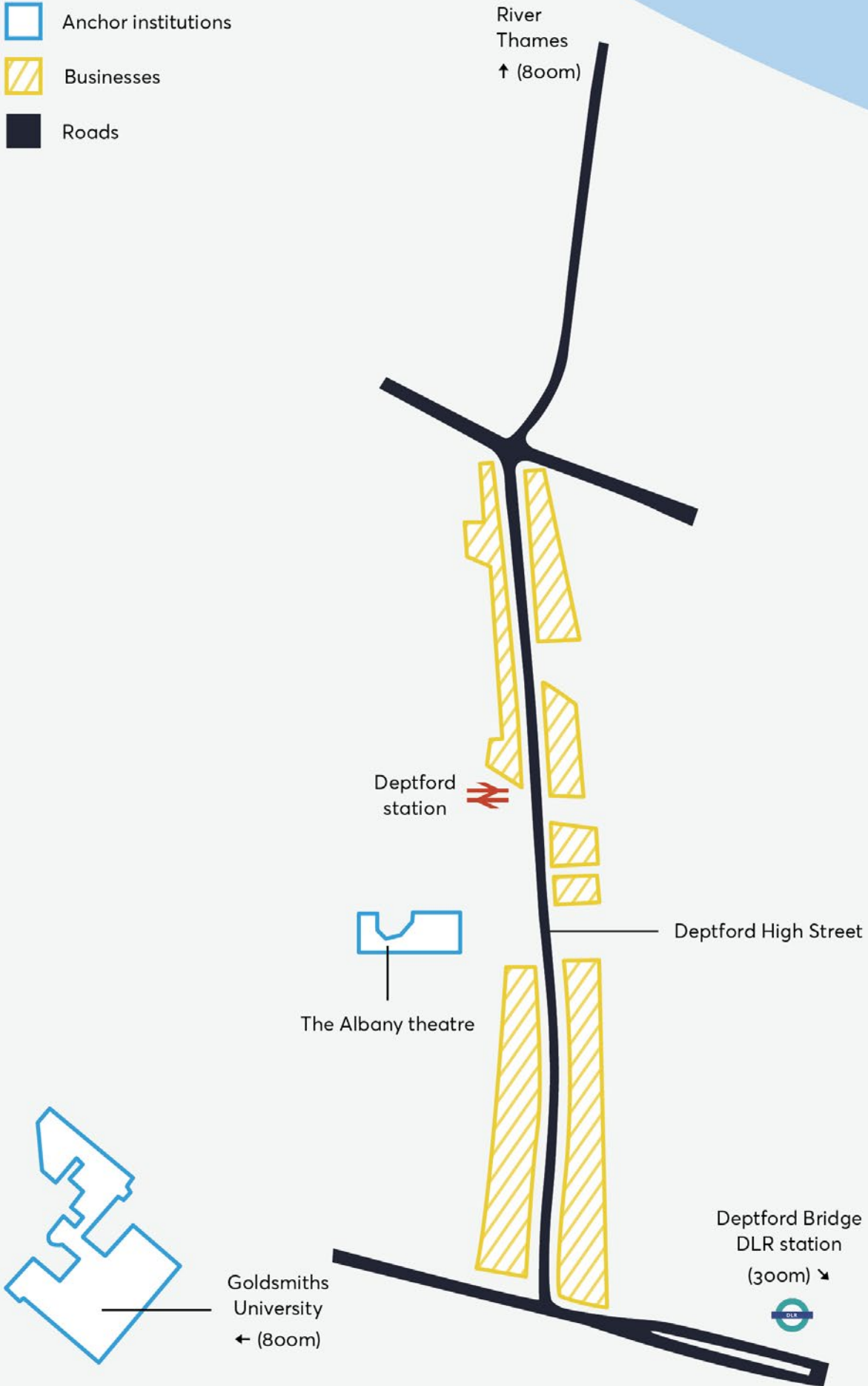
11.

Increase access to health services and promote reuse of vacant commercial facilities by opening health facilities on the high street.

[Full list of recommendations](#)

Deptford High Street

-  Anchor institutions
-  Businesses
-  Roads



Independent culture

Case study area: Camden High Street

Local authority: Camden

Business Improvement District: Camden Town Unlimited, Euston Town BID

Similar examples: Dalston

What it's like now

London plan classification: A major centre and cultural/tourist destination with potential for regeneration.

Location in relation to the CAZ: Camden High Street is just outside the CAZ, with close proximity to King's Cross and Euston stations which are about 1.5 miles away.

Key local institutions: The high street lies within Camden Town's Conservation Area. Proximity to renowned entertainment and music venues such as Roundhouse and the Electric Ballroom that draw local residents as well as visitors.

Current transport mix in the local area:

It is well served by numerous bus routes and Underground and Overground services with Camden Town and Mornington Crescent tube stations acting as bookends, and Camden Road Overground Station nearby. There are good cycling routes nearby, but the high street is dominated by car through-traffic. It is outside the Congestion Charge Zone. Near King's Cross St Pancras International Station. It is outside the Congestion Charge Zone but will be in ULEZ.

↓ Roundhouse arts venue



Recent changes:

- Redevelopment of former Camden Lock Village site into Hawley Wharf (mixed-used development). Camden Goods Yard is proposed to take 1,200 new homes.
- London Borough of Camden has recently implemented a low-emission neighbourhood.
- Camden Town Unlimited will soon be introducing 'Roam.Camden' – a network of green infrastructure, open spaces and other destinations within a walkable distance of one another.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors: An ethnically diverse population, with 34 per cent of people from the surrounding area belonging to Black or minority ethnic groups. A high proportion of people are born overseas, and multiple languages are spoken in the area. There are relatively few children and older people, and the majority of people are aged under 45. A large proportion of visitors are likely to be tourists or cultural venue-goers.

Current retail mix: Camden High Street has a vast retail catchment area with a mix of chain stores, independent retailers and markets containing independent stands and street food traders. The high street also hosts a large number of restaurants, bars, pubs clubs and concert venues.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- Public realm improvements could invite visitors to spend more time on the high street.
- Increase in remote working could grow demand for local workspace in refurbished buildings, and encourage the use of vacant and neglected spaces, boosting footfall.
- New public spaces such as the Camden High Line could attract visitors and improve walking routes for residents.

Risks:

- A focus on attracting tourists risks alienating local residents. Though Camden Town's key asset is the diversity of its food, drink and entertainment services that attract people day and night, they can lead to impacts such as noise, crime and anti-social behaviour, litter and traffic congestion. High demand and market management risks pushing out local traders further.
- Particularly crowded pavements can create a difficult environment for pedestrians.
- Some residents have pushed back on measures such as pedestrianising Camden High Street, due to fear of traffic displacement.

Other factors: Camden Town Station has been due an upgrade to increase capacity and provide step-free access for over a decade but has faced several financial challenges. These challenges have been made worse by the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 recovery vision

An eclectic and 'alternative' town centre with a variety of cultural attractions, entertainment venues and a good retail mix that draws visitors from across London and internationally, while still retaining a community feel. The go-to destination day and night for locals as well as tourists. Opportunities for small local businesses and community cooperatives to flourish. Continuous events and pop-up shops, and cultural activities that are accessible and beneficial to all communities. Clean, well-kept and attractive streets increase a sense of place and make it welcoming to all. The revival of disused infrastructure introduces urban greenery and encourages active forms of travel.

Recommendations

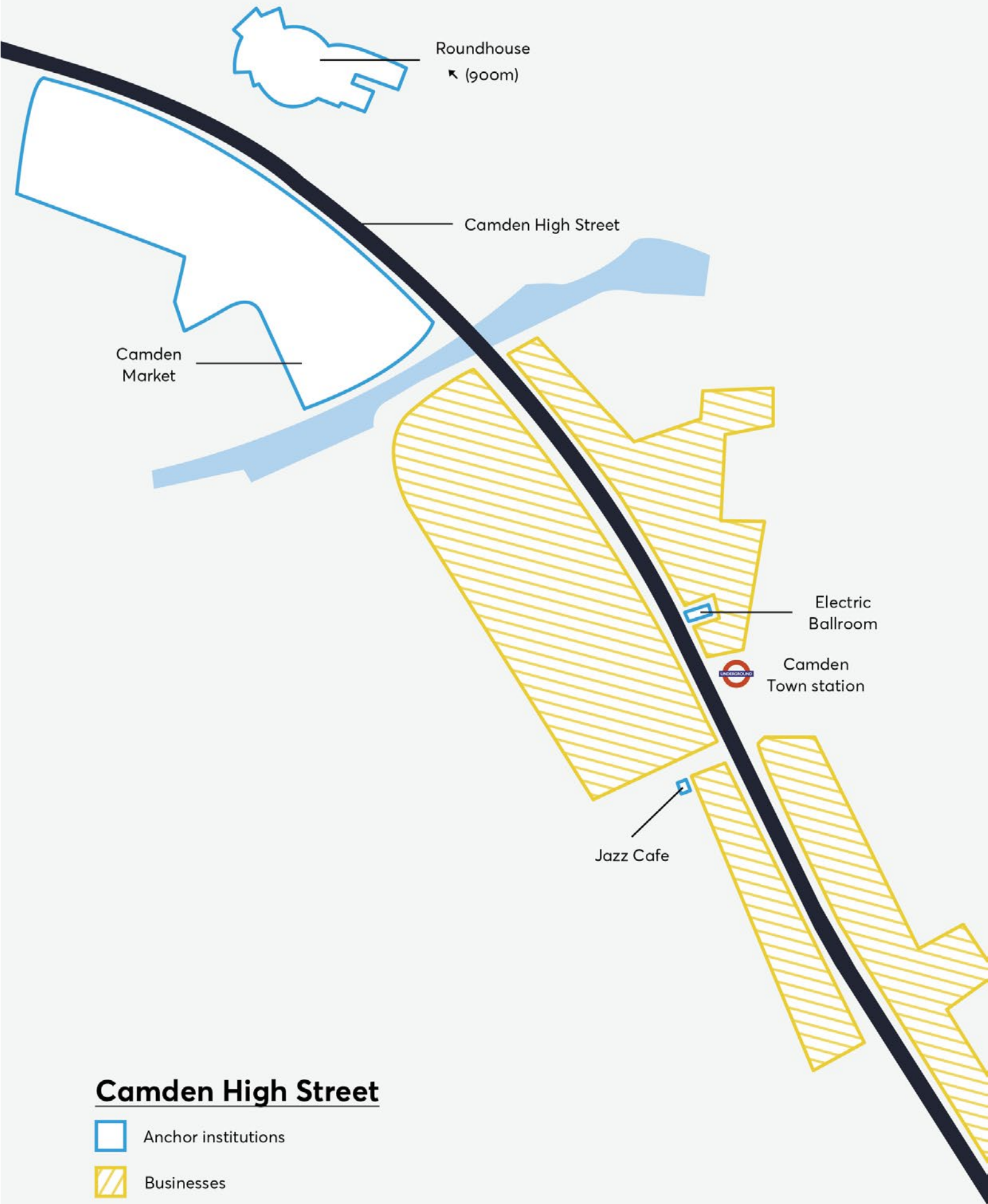
1.

Support London's creatives and build sense of place with outdoor performances (subject to social distancing) and visual art displays – murals and beyond - during pandemic recovery.

9.

Introduce better lighting to make the public realm feel safe and secure after dark, and value local heritage by lighting landmarks.

[Full list of recommendations](#)



Roundhouse
 ↖ (900m)

Camden High Street

Camden Market

Electric Ballroom

Camden Town station

Jazz Cafe

Camden High Street

- Anchor institutions
- Businesses
- Roads

International highlights

Case study area: Knightsbridge

Local authority: Kensington & Chelsea and City of Westminster

Similar examples: Regent Street

What it's like now

London plan classification: An international renowned retail and leisure destination with high commercial growth potential, and incremental residential growth potential.

Location in relation to the CAZ:

Knightsbridge is located just outside the CAZ.

Key local institutions: Two famous department stores Harrods on Brompton Road and Harvey Nichols in Belgravia. Bonhams, a privately owned international auction house located on Montpelier Street, is one of the largest in the world. The Victoria and Albert Museum, Science Museum and Imperial College London are within walking distance, as well as religious venues and diplomatic institutions.

Current transport mix in the local area:

Knightsbridge is very well served by the Underground. The A4 arterial road runs through Brompton Road and bus services run through either side from Kensington and Central London. Cycleway 3 runs nearby in Hyde Park. Cycle hire docking stations are located in the area.

Recent changes: Brompton Road and Sloane Street. Phase one completed in 2016, Phase two due to be completed in April 2021.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors:

Residents have the highest median income in the country and some of the world's wealthiest people live in Knightsbridge. The highest proportion of residents are White. Visitors are drawn from across UK and the rest of the world, including many wealthy tourists attracted by the retail offer.

Current retail mix: The area is known for its high-end international fashion houses. All are frequented by international visitors and regular commuters to the area. Additionally, boutique stores and temporary pop-up shops line along Brompton Road and Sloane Square.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- Redevelopment and retrofits creates office and retail space for new tenants.
- Widened pavement and cycling/micro mobility infrastructure improve connectivity with Hyde Park and the rest of the central London, reduce air pollution and enhance the visitor experience.
- There's an opportunity to build on the success of Knightsbridge, Kensington, and Portobello road as iconic places for local and international visitors to shop. Promoting a new entertainment quarter to diversify the offer beyond retail would also attract new audiences.

COVID-19 recovery vision

An international destination which is also attractive to local residents and office workers, with a mix of large high end department and fashion stores and small independent businesses. Walking and cycling routes are safe and popular, and the public realm encourages informal outdoor interaction.

Recommendations

2.

Boost outdoor eating and drinking options for restaurants, cafes, bars and street food sellers.

4.

Optimise freight and delivery vehicle movement on the high street, to reduce air pollution and create more space for active transport and outdoor leisure.

[Full list of recommendations](#)

Risks: Reliance on international visitors means this area has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic in the country and could be further impacted by retail or hospitality closures.

↓ Brompton Road



© Clare Alim

Hyde Park

Hyde Park Corner Underground station



Harvey Nichols

Knightsbridge Underground station



Bonhams auction house



Harrods

Brompton Road

Imperial College London

Victoria and Albert Museum

Science Museum

Natural History Musuem

South Kensington Underground station



Knightsbridge

-  Anchor institutions
-  Businesses
-  Roads
-  Green space

Streets for city centre workers

Case study area: Bishopsgate

Local authority: City of London Corporation, Tower Hamlets and Hackney

Similar examples: Victoria Street

What it's like now

London plan classification: CAZ

Key local institutions: Notable skyscraper buildings in the area include Tower 42, Broadgate and Heron Tower, 22, 99, and 100 Bishopsgate. Major banks National Westminster Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development are located here. Cultural building Bishopsgate Institute as well as local heritage pubs. Old Spitalfields Market is located East of Liverpool street. St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Church lies to the west of Bishopsgate.

Current transport mix in the local area:

Liverpool Street Station consists of the Underground network and the central London railway terminus for trains coming in from the East of England. The Stanstead express service also runs here. Bus routes and cycle hire docking stations located along the A10. The new London Bridge Station and the Crossrail station provide enhanced gateways into the City.

Recent changes: The Mayor of London recently approved the redevelopment of Bishopsgate Goodsyards, located north of Liverpool street station. It will comprise of a cultural space and 1.4 million square feet of workspace, alongside 500 affordable homes.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors:

According to the 2011 census, the Bishopsgate ward area has a resident population of just over 200. The majority of visitors are daily commuters to the area for work.

Current retail mix: Besides the retail and hospitality mix on offer on Bishopsgate and in Leadenhall market, the area is surrounded by popular destinations for retail and food. Brick Lane, located less than one mile away is made up of

↓ Brushfield Street, Spitalfields



© Toa Heftiba

commercial and independent retailers. Old Spitalfields Market and the surrounding area also house retailers, clothing stalls, restaurants and food courts that cater to city workers and dwellers in the area. The area is near the Shoreditch Triangle and there are close links to the south bank, with Borough Market a key attractor.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- Redevelopment of the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd to include more retail space, new public realm, and homes to the area.
- Lower commercial rents post covid could allow other types of business in the area, creating a more diverse retail offer.
- Potential to develop more activity at night and weekends.

Risks:

- Footfall into the area may be slow to recover from the pandemic. Office rents may be too expensive for new start-up businesses.
- A High Court judgement in January 2021 declared change road closure to vehicle access restrictions on Bishopsgate was 'not necessary' and 'impacted so adversely on certain sections of the public'. This judgement could limit future road closure schemes and reallocation of space to other uses.⁸⁰

↓ Bishopsgate



© Frans Ruiter

COVID-19 recovery vision

A home away from home for workers that commute to the area in the weekday, pedestrianising popular walkways will ease the commuting experience whilst also encouraging social distancing. New and subsidised office space could encourage new start-ups to settle in with cheap rents. Bishopsgate tends to be quieter on the weekends, creating possibilities to diversify the area and promote the public realm as a place for visitors and dwellers to use for socialising and entertainment.

Recommendations

1.

Support London's creatives and build sense of place with outdoor performances (subject to social distancing) and visual art displays – murals and beyond - during pandemic recovery.

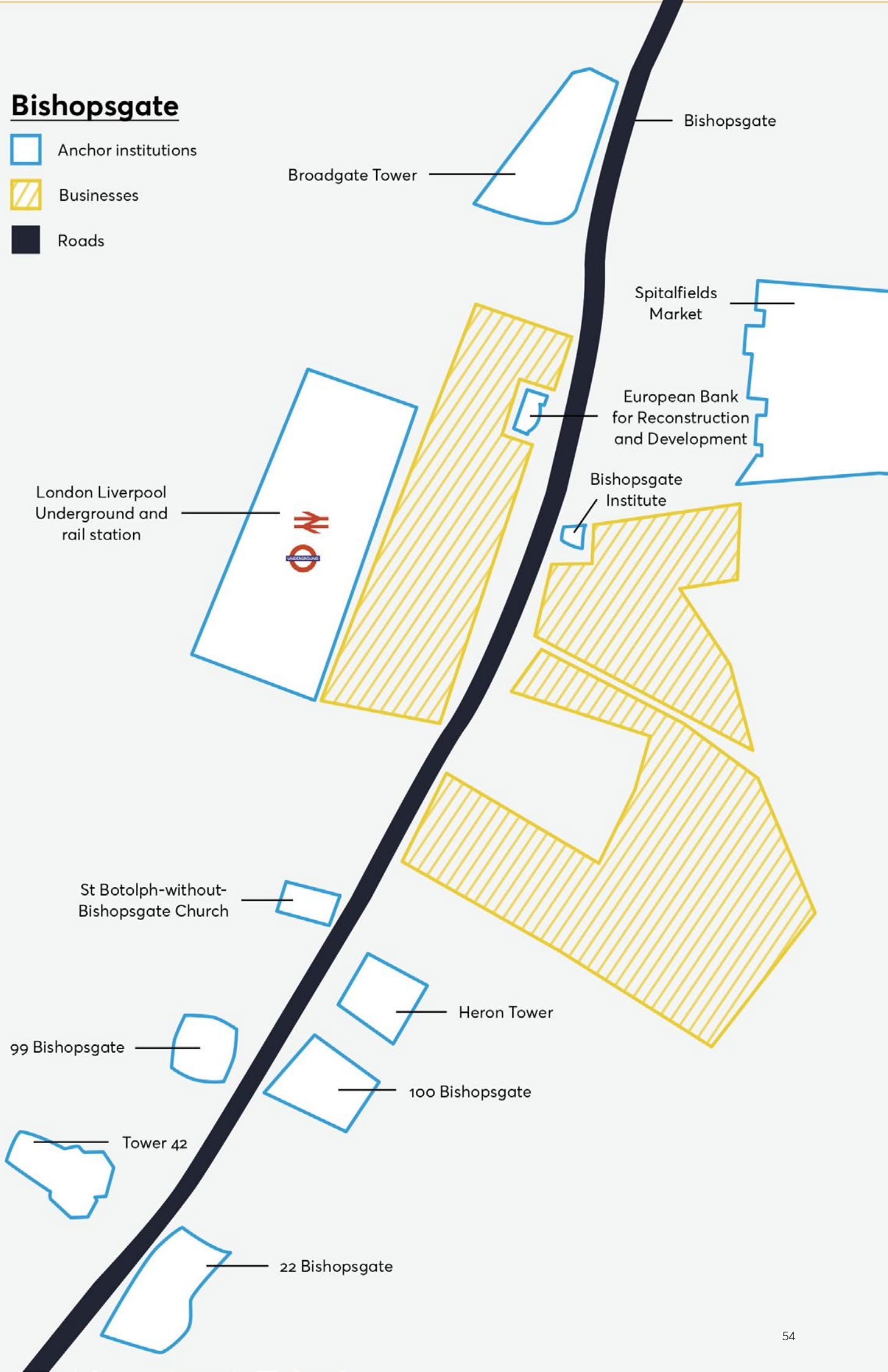
7.

Improve amenities for visitors and workers – for example ensuring that visitors have easy access to clean toilets, comfortable waiting areas and water fountains.

[Full list of recommendations](#)

Bishopsgate

-  Anchor institutions
-  Businesses
-  Roads



High end shopping and food

Case study area: Upper Street

Local authority: Islington

Business Improvement District: Angel, London

Similar examples: Sloane Street

What it's like now

London plan classification: Falls within a major town centre.

Location in relation to the CAZ: The southern half of Upper Street is in the CAZ.

Key local institutions: The area is home to theatre venues such as Almeida, and Sadler's Wells is a short distance away. Other institutions include Islington Town Hall, Islington Assembly Hall, a music and events space, and the Business Design Centre, a conference and exhibition venue.

Current transport mix in the local area: Extensive bus links that operate both day and night, as well as rail links: the Angel Underground Station and Highbury & Islington Underground and Overground stations are at opposite ends of the mile-long road. The high street lies outside of the Congestion Charge Zone and the ULEZ. It is not well-served by cycling routes though there are a few cycling docks in side streets.

Recent changes: The recent redevelopment of the former Edwardian Royal Mail sorting office created 'Islington Square'- a mixed-development. This led to the creation of 263 homes that sit alongside retail and leisure facilities, bars and restaurants, a theatre rehearsal space, a health club and cinema.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors: The majority of residents in the area are of working age (75 per cent), with a lower percentage of young people under the age of 19 compared to the London average (approximately 16 per cent and 24 per cent respectively). Nearly 50 per cent of people are White British and 25 per cent of people live in mixed ethnicity households. Visitors to the area will be coming for the variety of dance, music and theatre performances, and some sports fans pass through to get to the Emirates Stadium a short distance away.

Current retail mix: As the main shopping street in central Islington, it is well known for its variety of restaurants, cafes and bars. The high street hosts specialist shops such as the antique stalls in Camden

↓ Sadler's Wells



© Joas Souza

Passage, and independent boutiques. There is also a selection of convenience shopping such as local pharmacies and supermarkets and high street retail chains. Islington Square also hosts retail outlets, restaurants and an outdoor market.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- Increased remote working could boost footfall.
- New pedestrian- and cycle friendly areas and boulevards are attractive for both residents and visitors making the high street comparable to places in the West End like Covent Garden.
- The mix of one-off, independent boutiques with family favourite stores continues to offer a unique and enjoyable shopping experience.

- The vast array of cultural venues and activities means residents have more reasons to stay in their area, while also attracting visitors and boosting night-time activity.

Risks: The area's cultural and hospitality venues are dealt a heavy blow by social distancing and the lack of visitors – spending by residents would be unlikely to be enough to support this retail mix.

Other factors: The initial opening of Islington Square, and activities to attract visitors, raised noise complaints by residents. Efforts to reopen, and social distancing rules that will make outdoor activities more common, will have to consider the impact for residents.

COVID-19 recovery vision

A buzzing high street where you can spend the entire day: eating and drinking at some of London's finest cafés, restaurants and pubs, meeting friends at street parks, and passing through the outdoor markets and a rich array of cultural venues. An established and experimental creative community allows for an exciting programme of events. Family-friendly place-making events and activities lead to a strong community spirit that is also welcoming to new visitors.

Recommendations

5.

Create new workspaces that suit the needs of remote workers, such as focus and social interaction spaces – to increase activity in town centres.

9.

Introduce better lighting to make the public realm feel safe and secure after dark, and value local heritage by lighting landmarks.

[Full list of recommendations](#)

Highbury & Islington
Underground, Overground
and rail stations



Laycock Green



Upper Street

Upper Street

-  Anchor institutions
-  Businesses
-  Roads
-  Green space

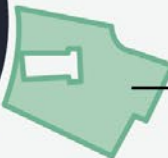
Islington Town
Hall and Islington
Assembly Hall



Almeida Theatre



St. Mary's Church
and Garden



Islington Green



Business
Design Centre



Angel
Underground
station



Sadler's Wells
↓ (500m)



Attractor high street

Case study area: Harrow Road

Local authority: City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Brent

Business Improvement District: Marble Arch BID, Baker Street Quarter, Paddington Now

Similar examples: Peckham

What it's like now

London plan classification: District centre

Location in relation to the CAZ: Harrow Road is located just outside the CAZ in close proximity to Paddington.

Key local institutions: There are few major institutions in the immediate area, but Harrow Road is located to other nearby town centres such as Harrow Road East, Fernhead Road and Shirland Road/Chippenham Road. Notting Hill Carnival takes place nearby and draws millions of visitors.

Current transport mix in the local area: Harrow Road is served by Queens Park Overground Station in the north, and Westbourne Grove Underground Station to the east. The road itself stretches along the A404 from Paddington to Harrow. There are no cycle hire docking stations in the area. The Regent's Canal offers a pedestrian green link to Paddington.

Recent changes: Westminster City Council have recently approved a mixed-use development consisting of 112 new homes and community facilities at 300 Harrow Road. The council have also been working with a housing association to transform Elgin Estate into a new public space.

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors

Demographics of local residents and potential visitors: Harrow Road ward is among the top 20 per cent most deprived wards in the UK. The local residents of Harrow Road are very diverse in terms of age, nationality and ethnicity. The area is home to Arabic, Bengali, Albanian and Kurdish communities. Harrow Road mainly serves the local community.

Current retail mix: Harrow Road is made up of a mix of chain supermarkets and independent food stores and market stalls, as well as charity shops, and betting shops. Maida Hill street market runs from Monday to Saturday, contributing to the character of the town centre.

Future possibilities

Opportunities:

- Increased remote working boosts footfall.
- Improving the streetscape particularly around Maida Hill market place will help to enhance its identity and functionality.
- The development at 300 Harrow Road brings opportunity to provide affordable homes and improved public spaces for locals to use as well as new flexible office workspace..

Risks: Improvements to the high streets are likely to increase land prices further and could price out some community focused or convenience retail.

COVID-19 recovery vision

An attractive town centre that serves the needs of a diverse community. Improvements to public realm and a diverse retail, hospitality and public service offer increases visitor numbers and spend, which benefits existing and new businesses. The council works with residents and businesses to secure a shift to increase the take up of active travel, thereby reducing air pollution and making the high street and safe and welcoming environment.

Recommendations

6.

Redesign roads and streets to make them child-friendly and healthier, and to decarbonise transport journeys.

11.

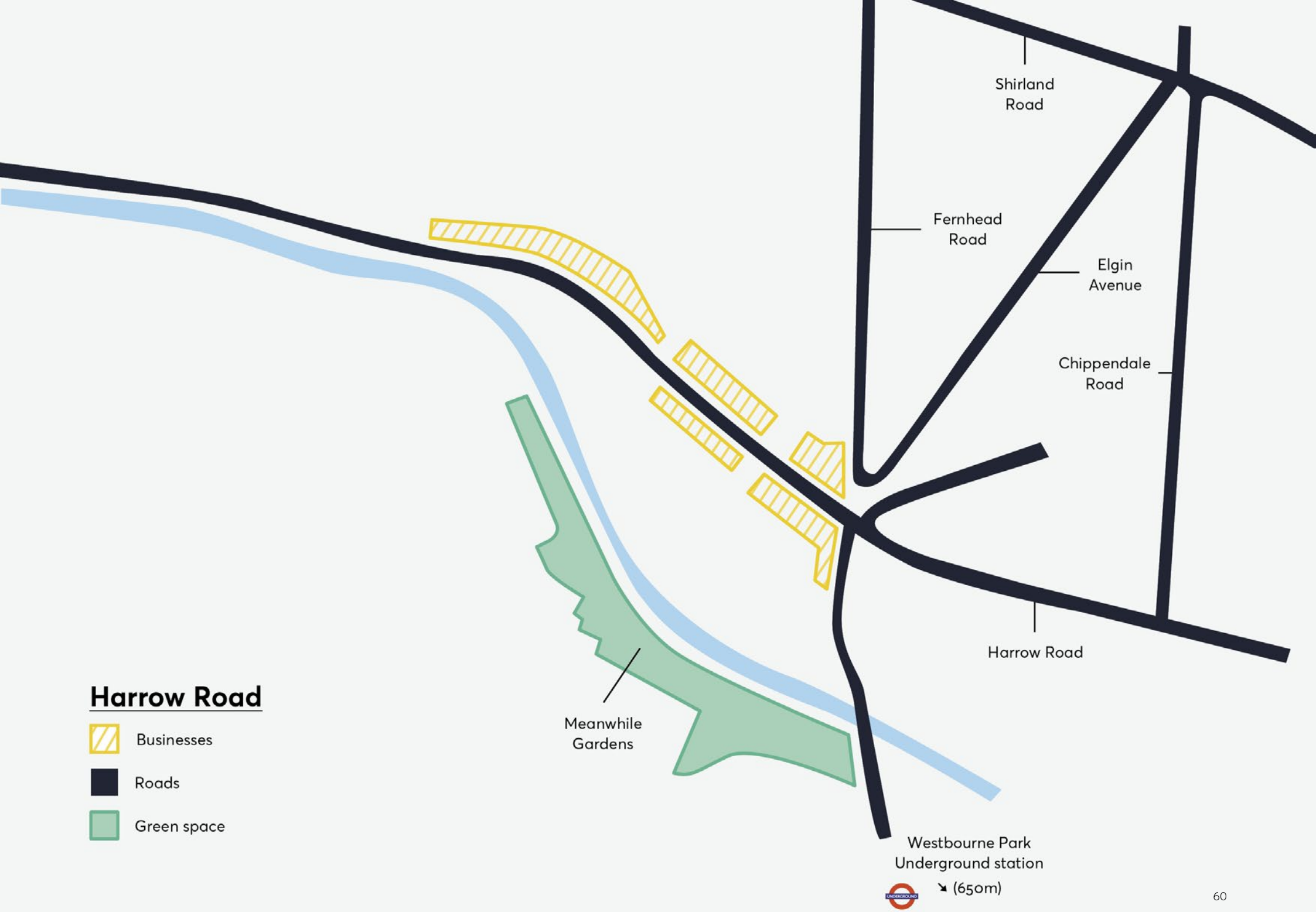
Increase access to health services and promote reuse of vacant commercial facilities by opening health facilities on the high street.

[Full list of recommendations](#)

↓ Harrow Road market



© Johnathan Lister



Harrow Road

-  Businesses
-  Roads
-  Green space

Meanwhile Gardens

Shirland Road

Fernhead Road

Elgin Avenue

Chippendale Road

Harrow Road

Westbourne Park Underground station



▼ (650m)

3. Recommendations



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The previous sections have reviewed the changes affecting London's town centres, and the challenges and opportunities they face as they emerge from the coronavirus crisis. Through the typologies and case studies, we have shown how these changes differ across types of town centres and how they can be harnessed to draw a local vision for the future.

This section suggests practical steps that local authorities, local businesses, Business Improvement Districts, the Greater London Authority and their partners could take to improve London's town centres in 2021 and 2022. Of course, not all ideas will work in all places, and some places will already be using some of the recommendations but we hope most areas will find some ideas which are useful to them. Different areas may choose to use one recommendation or several in combination. Depending on what has already happened locally and what local priorities are BIDs can play an important role in guiding this decision making.

These recommendations also build on a rich set of sources and ideas for ways to support London's recovery – which are featured in the Mayor of London's [recovery programme](#) and work with Arup on the [economic future of the Central Activities Zone](#), the West End Partnership's [Future vision for the West End](#), and the [High Street Taskforce](#).

Collaboration between groups – and in particular between the public and private sectors – is essential for these recommendations to have the most impact. CRP has a vital role in coordinating the implementation of these recommendations and in sharing learning between areas.

To have the most impact on town centres, some of these recommendations need to be supported by changes at a national and regional level. These could include (but not be limited to):

- Business rates and other local business and property taxation, including for empty properties.
- How commercial landlords are monitored and regulated.
- Road user charging as an alternative to the Congestion Charge and the ULEZ.
- The creation of new public transport routes or stops which can bring people to town centres, or increased frequency on existing routes, to town centres, including bus, tram and rail connections.
- Improving suburban rail services, including devolving rail franchises to Transport for London.
- Public transport fare structures, particularly for travel outside the city centre and/or outside of regular commute patterns.
- Regulation of and facilities for micromobility (e-bikes and e-scooters).

The recommendations are presented as a set of 11 key interventions, spanning the transport, economic, environmental and community aspects of Town Centres. Further details on each of these 11 recommendations are given on the following pages.

Recommendations

Support London's creatives and build sense of place with outdoor performances (subject to social distancing) and visual art displays – murals and beyond - during pandemic recovery.

Boost outdoor eating and drinking options for restaurants, cafes, bars and street food sellers. Even if social distancing is no longer required, some people may still prefer to be outside, or there may not be enough inside space for everyone.

Create new ways for local people to be involved in decisions about their high streets – building on the community spirit and increased attachment to local areas during lockdowns. Public involvement can help keep high streets lively and vital when some businesses close.

Optimise freight and delivery vehicle movement on the high street, to reduce air pollution and create more space for active transport and outdoor leisure.

Create new workspaces that suit the needs of remote workers, such as focus and social interaction spaces – to increase activity in town centres.

Redesign roads and streets to make them child-friendly and healthier, and to decarbonise transport journeys. This can be done by introducing designs that facilitate active travel, and reduce access for vehicle uses that contribute to air pollution. CRP's Healthy Streets Everyday programme offers guidance on how to do these interventions well.

Improve amenities for visitors and workers – for example ensuring that visitors have easy access to clean toilets, comfortable waiting areas and (ovid safe) water fountains.

Future-proof community assets by transferring ownership to community groups, to deliver bottom-up change.

Introduce better lighting to make the public realm feel safe and secure after dark, and value local heritage by lighting landmarks.

Increase meanwhile and temporary use of vacant spaces to add footfall and vibrancy to the town centre, and experiment with future uses.

Increase access to health services and promote reuse of vacant commercial facilities by opening health facilities on the high street.

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| 1. Support London's creatives | | | | | | | |
| Support London's creatives and build sense of place with outdoor performances (subject to social distancing) and visual art displays such as murals during pandemic recovery. | Build connections between local businesses and charities who could put on events. Consider using their funds to support arts projects, or bid for these funds when they are available. ⁸¹ | Local business could offer staff volunteering time and temporary use of commercial spaces – especially shop fronts. Landlords could allow vacant spaces or the shutters of vacant shops to be used for art. | Support road closures, and allow for use of local authority owned spaces like parks. Use their communication channels to promote events to residents. ⁸² | Rapidly set up a specific summer outdoor arts fund for creatives and for boroughs with a simple bidding process. | Direct delivery costs may be low. GLA funding could be targeted to this area, and businesses may be able to offer in-kind support or sponsorship. It may be appropriate for BIDs to fund initiatives in some cases. | Priority for spring and summer 2021, potential for action beyond this. | Assess how many events have been held, use audience figures where available, compare footfall and sales when outdoor performance are taking place and when they aren't, and before and after displays, for example using footfall counters and card spending data. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| 2. Boost outdoor eating and drinking options | | | | | | | |
| <p>Boost outdoor eating and drinking options for restaurants, cafes, bars and street food sellers.</p> <p>Even if social distancing is no longer required, some people may still prefer to be outside, or there may not be enough inside space for everyone.</p> | <p>Collate business opinions and interests to negotiate with local authorities over street closures and parking place conversions.</p> <p>Coordinate the hire or purchase of outdoor seats and other street furniture for businesses to use.</p> | <p>Lobby for temporary access to outside space, showing how they will make sure people with disabilities are not disadvantaged by any changes, or that the effect can be mitigated.</p> | <p>Take a flexible, rapid approach to licensing including short term temporary arrangements. Allow for temporary road closures⁸³ and the conversion of parking spaces into other uses such as public realm.⁸⁴</p> | <p>GLA and TfL can showcase the benefits of street closures and parking space conversions, lead on learning from schemes across London for summer 2022 onwards.</p> | <p>Direct costs of change of use will be low. Businesses may be able to access government finance to make better use of outside space. There will be some costs to removing parking, but these are likely to be defrayed by higher business revenues.</p> | <p>Priority for spring and summer 2021, potential for action beyond this (which may depend on national licensing legislation).</p> | <p>Ask hospitality businesses to share information on customer numbers and revenue before and after changes, and in areas where changes have and have not been made.</p> |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| 3. Create new ways to involve local people | | | | | | | |
| Create new ways for local people to be involved in decisions about their high streets – building on the community spirit and increased attachment to local areas during lockdowns. Public involvement can help keep high streets lively and vital when some businesses close. | Consider ways to increase community representation on their BID, either through existing structures or through connecting with and supporting people who are active in their local area. Think particularly about engaging with young people. Coordinate grant applications. | Speak to local people they know well about whether and how they would be interested in being more involved in decisions about their high street, and share this information with BIDs – this could be through formal surveys or less formal chats. | Work with BIDs and other partners to consider mechanisms for involving local people in decision making, and later use their channels to communicate about new engagement opportunities. | GLA can showcase good examples of what has worked in community involvement. Consider making funding available for new models of local involvement, with evaluation included. | Costs will vary depending on the right model for the local area – the most important costs are often around ensuring equal access to influence, like paying for travel and childcare costs or paying for outreach. The GLA and grant funders may be able to provide funds for this. | 2021 and into the future – public involvement is an ongoing challenge. | Assessing the benefits of involvement and engagement is difficult to do with data, but surveys and interviews with stakeholders, including community leaders, can give an idea of what is working. Diversity monitoring is vital to check whether involvement is working for everyone in the area. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| 4. Optimise freight and deliveries | | | | | | | |
| Optimise freight and delivery vehicle movement on the high street, to reduce air pollution and create more space for active transport and outdoor leisure. | Explore options for coordinating deliveries or delivery times between businesses, particularly around road closure periods. | Support the creation of local delivery hubs ⁸⁵ and accessible and convivial parcel drop off and pick up hubs, as these can increase footfall and reduce air pollution and carbon emissions. Support businesses to use cargo bike and electric vehicles for deliveries. ⁸⁶ | Work with each other and with BIDs to coordinate deliveries to their premises, seek to reduce the total number of deliveries where possible (including using hubs for smaller deliveries). | GLA and TfL can work at a London level to improve the management of freight vehicles and encourage the use of delivery and collection hubs and low or zero carbon delivery vehicles. Investigate and advocate for tax incentives to encourage better delivery practice. | Largest costs will be person time for coordination and advocacy. BIDs may be able to allocate their teams to this, or there can be opportunities to bid for government and mayoral grant funding for environmental initiatives. | 2021, and likely to continue to be an issue beyond this. | Use local traffic monitoring and air pollution systems to measure overall traffic flow, use regional and local data to investigate overall delivery vehicle volumes. Measure impacts on business costs and revenues. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 5. Create new workspaces for remote workers | | | | | | | |
| Create new workspaces that suit the needs of remote workers, such as focus and social interaction spaces – to increase activity in town centres.v | Engage potential users to understand their needs, identify suitable spaces, explore economic models and consider operating workspaces or looking for suitable operators. | Consider forming partnerships where a number of business work together to supply remote workers, for example food trucks setting up outside meeting spaces. | Support the creation and operation of affordable workspaces, look for suitable spaces in their commercial portfolio. See for example Lambeth's Future Workspace Fund. ⁸⁷ | GLA can share good practice on viable economic models for affordable workspaces, research the needs of remote workers. Continue to focus on building and service standards for remote workplaces. | BID and local authorities could conduct some of this work as part of their regeneration projects. They could look to impact investment for set up costs, as well as regeneration grant funding. | 2021 and beyond, depending upon ongoing workspace trends – these are still emerging. | Find out how the spaces are used, whether this leads to additional footfall in town centre, survey user satisfaction. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| 6. Make roads healthier and more child friendly | | | | | | | |
| Redesign roads and streets to make them child-friendly and healthier, and to decarbonise transport journeys. This can be done by introducing designs that facilitate active travel, and reduce access for vehicle uses that contribute to air pollution. CRP's Healthy Streets Everyday programme offers guidance on how to do these interventions well. ⁸⁸ | Consult with businesses to identify how their customers reach them and what their freight and delivery needs are, identify opportunities for improving pedestrian and micromobility infrastructure. BIDs could also monitor air pollution at key locations. | Support customers to leave their car behind by offering fast delivery services for heavy or bulky items. | Consult with residents on how they travel to their town centre and how to increase take up of active travel, public transport and micromobility options, explore alternative designs that facilitate these journeys, for example on the model of Waltham Forest's 'mini holland' scheme. ⁸⁹ Offering cycling skills training to residents and employees as a complementary initiative. | GLA can contribute funding to public realm improvements schemes. TfL can redesign their routes and major intersections within town centres, consider supporting micromobility hubs where people can safely leave their bike or scooter to spend time in the town centre or before further travel into central London. | Funding from the Government's £2 billion walking and cycling programme, TfL's emergency cycling and walking funds, and school streets programmes. ⁹⁰ Installing movement sensors on the high street offer opportunities to monetise anonymous data on town centre users. | 2021 and beyond – likely to be a priority throughout the next decade. | Survey customer and business satisfaction with changes over time as well as changes in visitor numbers. ⁹¹ |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| 7. Improve amenities for visitors and workers | | | | | | | |
| Improve amenities for visitors and workers – for example ensuring that visitors have easy access to clean toilets, comfortable waiting areas and (covid safe) water fountains. | Conduct place audits to analyse visitor profile and experiences, and how their use of the town centre and their needs vary. Work with local authorities and businesses to provide (or provide access to) some of these amenities, such as toilets. | Provide some of the amenities that could improve the visitor experience – such as clean, accessible toilets, or a warm waiting area. | Provide amenities where BIDs and local businesses cannot offer these, and include in maintenance schedule. Emphasise that public toilet and seating provision is a disability, maternity and age equality issue. | GLA can offer joint procurement and maintenance for some of these amenities, and contribute funding. GLA could also offer good design and management practice. | Costs could be split between BID budgets for placemaking, willing businesses, GLA and government funds for high street regeneration. | Priority for spring and summer 2021, potential for action beyond this. | Conduct amenities surveys on time spend by visitors in town centres. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| 8. Transfer assets to community groups | | | | | | | |
| Future-proof community assets by transferring ownership to community groups, to deliver bottom-up change. | Work with communities operating spaces to help them develop long-term sustainable financial models, asset development and renewal plans, facilities management arrangements and marketing strategies. Support and promote crowdfunding initiatives. | Offer business expertise to community groups, provide cheap or loaned equipment where possible, support and promote crowdfunding initiatives. | Evaluate asset portfolio to find out which spaces could suit the needs of community uses. Consider the long term social and economic value that would arise from transferring ownership and work with community groups to secure that transfer. Making sure that buildings handed over to communities have manageable maintenance responsibilities attached or provide sustainable sources of grant funding and capital reserves to cover those costs. | GLA can showcase examples of community asset transfer and support purchase by offering small loans to community groups. | Costs will vary for public building transfers – larger costs may be from future lost revenue, but this is often offset by social and wellbeing gains. BIDs could resource support work from their team or local business volunteers. | 2021 and beyond – likely to require long term strategic and collaborative planning. | Measure footfall from community uses, and assess wider economic and social benefits over time. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| 9. Improve lighting of the public realm | | | | | | | |
| Introduce better lighting to make the public realm feel safe and secure after dark, and value local heritage by lighting landmarks. ⁹² | Coordinate improvements to outdoor lighting by commissioning user research and lighting designers to identify the need for upgrades, and liaising with landowners and businesses. Work with residents to identify lighting schemes that would improve legibility or showcase heritage. | Consider impacts of their lighting on the public realm and how these could be improved, for instance by avoiding excessive glare from shopfronts, providing additional lighting where street lighting is insufficient or experimenting with more creative uses of light. | Develop lighting strategies to guide how they will use, regulate and coordinate lighting. Support lighting improvement schemes, adjust or upgrade street lights based on local surveys conducted by BIDs. | GLA can create an overarching framework for lighting to support local authorities in setting out good and consistent lighting strategies, create a hub of good lighting practice available to guide use of lights by all parties. | Upgrades could lead to savings in energy or maintenance costs. Infrastructure upgrades (e.g. to install electric vehicle charging points or sensors) could contribute to investment costs and raise income for maintenance of street lighting. Stakeholders could use grant funding from the £95 million Government-funded High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme. | Likely to be a public policy priority especially in autumn/winter 2021 with new government funding announcements, but will continue to be significant beyond this. | Monitor changes in perceptions and use of the town centre at night, through user surveys and footfall data. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|
| 10. Increase meanwhile and temporary use of vacant spaces | | | | | | | |
| Grow the number of temporary/ meanwhile uses on empty commercial spaces to add footfall and vibrancy to the town centre, and experiment with future uses. | <p>Identify long term empty spaces and liaise with landlords to warm them to potential benefits of meanwhile uses.</p> <p>Explore local giving and impact investment schemes to fund projects.</p> | Identify opportunities for business growth on empty commercial spaces. | <p>Engage residents on what uses they would like in their town centre and encourage groups to put forward proposals for meanwhile uses of indoor and outdoor spaces that create social value.</p> <p>Consider which local authority owned spaces could be given over to meanwhile use.</p> | <p>GLA can support tenants in their negotiation with landlords.</p> <p>GLA and London & Partners can lobby for government to introduce an allowance for retrofit of commercial space for other commercial or office use.</p> | Spaces operated by community volunteers can require modest funding, especially outdoor spaces. Indoor spaces with building works requirement could be supported by local authority and mayoral regeneration budgets, impact investment and crowdfunding. | 2021 and beyond – likely to require long term strategic and collaborative planning. | Monitor the increase in the number of meanwhile spaces, impact of local footfall. |

| Headline recommendation | What BIDs and their partners can do | What businesses can do | What local authorities can do | How the GLA family can support | How this could be funded | Potential timescale | Finding out whether it's worked |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| 11. Increase access to health services on the high street | | | | | | | |
| Increase access to health services and promote reuse of vacant commercial facilities by opening health facilities on the high street. | Identify a portfolio of suitable spaces from a list of long term empty commercial units. | Publicise the availability of new local health services, particularly to lower-income communities. | Support local NHS bodies in identifying gaps in health service provision that require limited infrastructure investment (like physiotherapy, podiatry or speech therapy) and communicate these gaps to BIDs. | TfL can facilitate local journeys towards town centres by identifying gaps in public transport and managing well micromobility and ride hailing offers. | Most of the space matching work could be funded by NHS providers from costs savings achieved by using vacant commercial spaces. | 2021 and beyond – likely to require long term strategic and collaborative planning. | Monitor the number of health facilities re-using empty commercial spaces, research whether increased provision in town centres increases take up of health services by low-income communities. |

Appendix

| Name | Type of area | Main users | Major transport | What type of service | Illustrative case study | New London Plan classification | Other examples |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Improved city transport | City Centre | Londoners and office workers | Public transport | Still being developed | Tooley Street | Unclassified/CAZ | Vauxhall, Euston |
| Regional shopping destinations | Inner or outer London | Londoners and people from wider SE | Car | Large retail chains with some smaller local shops | Shepherds Bush | International centre | Bromley |
| Local community hub | Outer London | Local Londoners | Active transport | Smaller chain and independent retail, community facilities | Burnt Oak | District centre | Woolwich |
| New communities | Varies | New communities of local Londoners | Active transport | Still being developed | Nine Elms | Unclassified/ Future CAZ | Canada Water |
| University influence | Inner London | Students, local Londoners | Active transport | Cultural venues, independent food and coffee shops, some food chains | Deptford High Street | District Centre | Bethnal Green Road |
| Independent culture | Inner London | Londoners, some tourists | Public transport | Independent retail, entertainment venues | Camden High Street | Metropolitan centre | Dalston |
| International highlights | City Centre | UK and international shoppers | International and public transport | Large retail chains, range of food offerings | Knightsbridge | International centre | Regent Street |
| Streets for city centre workers | City Centre | Office workers | Public transport | Smaller chain retail, takeaway food | Bishopsgate | CAZ | Victoria Street |
| High end shopping and food | Inner London | Londoners, some tourists | Public transport | Established high end retail and food | Upper Street | District Centre (Church Street) | Church Street, Bermondsey Street |
| Attractor high street | Inner or outer London | Local Londoners, hub for several communities | Active transport | Retail led, mix of local shops and services, independent and chains | Harrow Road | District centre | Peckham |

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