MAKING REGENERATION WORK FOR LONDON'S COMMUNITIES

How boroughs can support development that strengthens local places, protects community assets and builds wealth that stays locally

A briefing from Centre for London, Stour Trust, Latin Elephant and Trust for London

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ABOUT THIS BRIEFING

Centre for London, London's independent think tank, and Trust for London, one of the city's largest philanthropic funders, are working in partnership to convene voices from across London's civil society, public and private sectors to discuss the biggest issues facing London today.

In July 2026, Centre for London and Trust for London brought together councillors, officers and civil society partners to discuss how regeneration and development can support community wealth building, with a particular focus on London's Black and minoritised communities.

The discussion explored how boroughs can help deliver the homes, jobs and infrastructure London needs and ensure that existing residents, traders and community organisations are able to remain, shape change and share in the value created by development.

This briefing brings together insights from this discussion, and would not have been possible without the expertise of:

- Our partners Latin Elephant and Stour Trust, who shared practical examples of community organising, trader support, community ownership and asset stewardship in London.
- Participants in our workshop, including borough councillors, officers and representatives from London's voluntary and community sector, who contributed their experience of regeneration, planning, community engagement and local decision-making.

The briefing covers:

- The context for development and regeneration today, including the draft new London Plan, the pressures facing boroughs to support new homes and growth, and evidence on gentrification, displacement and changing neighbourhoods.
- What needs to be true for regeneration to build community wealth, recognising existing local value, understanding displacement in its full sense, and treating communities as partners in decision-making.
- Practical roles for boroughs, including community asset mapping, anti-displacement objectives, stronger use of Section 106 and CIL, support for community-led stewardship, and long-term accountability after planning permission is granted.
- Case studies from Latin Elephant and Stour Trust, showing how communities can organise to protect local businesses, secure affordable space and develop long-term models of community ownership.
- Practical questions and recommendations for councillors and officers to use when shaping, scrutinising or negotiating regeneration proposals.

This briefing reflects a range of perspectives shared at the workshop. It does not represent the official view of any individual organisation. Centre for London, as an independent charitable think tank, retains editorial control over conclusions and recommendations, and any errors are the author's responsibility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

London needs more homes, jobs, workspace and investment, but the development needed to deliver them can either strengthen existing communities or displace them. Regeneration should be judged by whether existing residents, traders and community organisations are able to remain in changing places, shape the decisions that affect them and share in the economic value created.

This issue is particularly important now because a new development cycle is beginning. Following historic council elections in May 2026, which saw significant change to London's electoral map and many new councillors freshly in post, the draft new London Plan places boroughs at the centre of a new phase of growth. It plans for 558,000 homes between 2027 and 2036, while also asking London to support economic growth, high streets, affordable workspace and new infrastructure.

For councillors and officers, the challenge is to make sure this next phase of development involves and strengthens existing communities, rather than displacing them or extracting value from the places they have helped to create.

London's past experience shows what can go wrong, where development and regeneration have too often determined who gets to stay in the city's regenerated neighbourhoods and who cannot afford to. Major regenerations have too often seen communities displaced, often occurring alongside wider gentrification of historically poorer and more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods that have historically under-invested in.

Displacement is not only about homes and households. When communities are displaced, what gets lost often also includes shops, markets, workshops and workspaces, customer bases and business networks, cultural spaces, informal community networks and local identity, along with the symbiotic relationship between these ecosystems that creates more than just financial wealth. It can also mean the loss of local ownership of land, buildings and future value.

In this context, the focus often ends up being about mitigating the harms of development on existing communities rather than asking how development can enrich them. From Elephant & Castle in Southwark to Wards Corner and Seven Sisters Indoor Market in Haringey, London's recent history includes major schemes where residents, traders and community organisations have had to mobilise to defend homes, workspace, local businesses, cultural infrastructure and the right to remain.

The challenge for policy therefore is to go from mitigating harm from development to ensuring it builds community wealth. Consultation is necessary, but not sufficient. Mitigation helps, but can be temporary. The real question is who owns, controls and benefits from assets over time.

Boroughs and councillors have vital roles to play in both mitigating harm and building community wealth through regeneration. This includes mapping residents, traders and community assets before plans are fixed; building anti-displacement objectives into regeneration briefs and development agreements; using Section 106 to secure genuinely useful affordable workspace and community assets; supporting community-led ownership through land, leases and long-term stewardship; and treating affected communities as partners in governance, not only consultees.

In July 2026, Centre for London, Trust for London, Latin Elephant and Stour Trust convened councillors, officers and civil society partners to discuss how these ideas can be applied in practice, particularly for London's Black and minoritised communities.

This briefing draws on that discussion, alongside published evidence and case studies from Latin Elephant and Stour Trust. It sets out principles and practical questions for councillors and officers involved in regeneration, planning, housing, economic development and community partnership work.

Regeneration should start from the value already present in a place. Existing residents, traders, community organisations, cultural spaces, social rented homes, markets, high streets and informal networks all contribute to local wealth. Too often, regeneration captures this value without doing enough to protect the people, businesses and organisations that created it.

For boroughs, this means asking different questions earlier in the process. Which communities, businesses and organisations are already creating value locally? What could be lost if development focuses only on new homes, commercial space or land value? Which forms of displacement are easiest to measure, and which are most likely to be missed? Who is least likely to be heard through standard consultation routes and how can this be remedied? How can planning, land and asset powers secure long-term local benefit? What governance is needed to make sure commitments are delivered after planning permission is granted?

To help inform councillors and officers, this briefing sets out five principles to guide development as well as practical questions councillors and officers can use when regeneration proposals come forward:

- **Centre the value that already exists in communities from the outset**
- **Map the risk of displacement in all forms: residential, commercial, cultural, social and civic**
- **Treat communities as foundational partners in decision-making.**
- **Use planning, land and asset powers to secure long-term local benefit.**
- **Make accountability to communities last beyond planning approval.**

INTRODUCTION: REGENERATION, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY WEALTH

Regeneration has repeatedly remade London: from Docklands and Canary Wharf turning former docks into a major financial district, to King's Cross transforming railway lands into new homes, offices, public spaces and cultural uses, and the Olympic Park bringing new housing, institutions, workspaces and public space to east London.

These projects show how regeneration can bring investment, housebuilding and infrastructure development together to reshape large parts of the city.

But London's recent development history also shows why regeneration is often contested: in places like Elephant & Castle, redevelopment has brought to the surface fundamental questions about who benefits from development, who decides what happens and where, what is protected and what isn't, and whether existing residents, traders and community organisations will actually get to stay in their communities.

Recent analysis by Trust for London identified 53 neighbourhoods that were among London's lowest-income areas in 2012 and saw above-average income growth by 2020. In those places, average incomes rose by 11 per cent in real terms and average house prices increased 2.5 times. Over the same period, these neighbourhoods saw a fall in the Black population, fewer families with children, fewer social housing tenants and more residents in managerial and professional occupations. [1]This aligns with wider evidence that regeneration predominantly takes place in parts of London where there are higher proportions of Black, migrant and racialised communities. [2]

This evidence shows that a neighbourhood becoming wealthier does not necessarily mean that the people already living there have become wealthier. Changes in average neighbourhood income can instead reflect changes in who is able to live there. While this evidence doesn't show that regeneration projects were not the sole cause of these changes, it does illustrates the pattern that makes regeneration so contested: as lower-income neighbourhoods become more expensive, poorer residents and Black and minoritised communities often bear the costs of change without sharing in the wealth created.

Many of these areas have experienced substantial regeneration and development in recent decades. The former Heygate Estate, now Elephant Park, and the more recent Woodberry Down and Manor House developments are often cited as major regeneration schemes where demolished social homes have been replaced largely by private market housing.

[1] Trust for London. (2025). *Gentrification across London and how this is changing populations*. London's Poverty Profile. Available at: Trust for London, Gentrification across London [accessed 10 August 2026].

[2] Roman-Velazquez, P. and Hill, N. (2016). *The case for London's Latin Quarter: retention, growth, sustainability*. London: Latin Elephant. Available at: https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/report/The_case_for_London_s_Latin_Quarter_retention_growth_sustainability/9466349?file=17090084 [accessed 8 September 2026].

While this does not mean regeneration projects were the sole cause of the change that has happened in gentrifying parts of London, it does show the pattern that makes regeneration so contested: when lower-income neighbourhoods become more expensive, poorer residents and Black and minoritised communities are at greater risk of being displaced, and are disproportionately likely to bear the cost of urban change in London.[3]

These questions are especially important for London's Black and minoritised communities. London's diverse communities are fundamental to the city's social, cultural and economic life, visible through its hundreds of markets, high streets, faith spaces, cultural venues, independent businesses, community organisations and the social networks these generate. Many of these assets are insecure. They often depend on affordable rents, informal networks, fragile leases, voluntary labour or discretionary funding, which mean that traders are more vulnerable when market pressures rise.

These questions apply across London. As development pressures extend to town centres, estates, transport hubs and industrial areas in outer London, boroughs will need to work alongside local representative stakeholders and communities to ensure that local businesses, cultural infrastructure and community organisations are identified before plans are fixed.

When regeneration focuses mainly on housing delivery, land value capture, or commercial floorspace, these assets can end up being treated as secondary. But they are central to how neighbourhoods function. Existing residents and businesses are sources of real value, not just consultees or potential beneficiaries. Independent businesses, community spaces, green spaces, local food shops, everyday amenities, informal local networks and cultural identity are forms of community wealth that regeneration should protect and strengthen.

Regeneration should start by recognising the value of these assets. Instead of starting solely with the question 'What can be built?', councils and developers should also ask what already exists, who relies on it, what might be lost, and how new development can strengthen local ownership, affordability and community capacity.

Community wealth building is often used to describe approaches that keep economic value rooted locally. In regeneration, this means more than local employment or procurement. It includes who owns land and buildings, who controls community spaces, who benefits from rising land values, whether traders can remain, whether affordable space is genuinely affordable over time, and whether communities have a role in governance after planning permission has been granted.

[3] Latin Elephant and Protect Our Places coalition. (2026). *Protect Our Places: Coming together to demand more racially-just urban planning in London*. Available at: https://latinelephant.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/POP-Report-%E2%80%93-Online.pdf [accessed 8 September 2026].

PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY WEALTH THROUGH REGENERATION

In July 2026, Centre for London and Trust for London brought together councillors, officers and civil society partners to discuss how regeneration and development can support community wealth building, with a particular focus on London's Black and minoritised communities.

The discussion explored how boroughs can help deliver the homes, jobs and infrastructure London needs and ensure that existing residents, traders and community organisations are able to remain, shape change and share in the value created by development.

Drawing on the experience and expertise brought to this discussion, the following section puts forward five key principles to help boroughs build community wealth through regeneration.

Principle 1: From the outset, regeneration should centre the value that already exists in communities

Regeneration should begin with a clear account of the assets, networks and institutions already present in a neighbourhood. Workshop participants consistently described existing communities as the foundation of local value. They pointed to residents, traders, social rented homes, independent businesses, community organisations, cultural spaces, green and blue infrastructure, local food shops, leisure facilities, bus routes, walking routes and informal networks of care. They also argued that social value frameworks should be developed with communities, rather than imposed on them. Participants noted that there is sometimes a misconception that councils must use a particular social value framework such as the national social value TOMs (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) rather than working to use alternative or co-created framework that are more suited to their local communities.

This is important because regeneration can affect some communities more than others, particularly when markets, high streets, affordable workspaces, community spaces or local businesses are at risk of displacement. As part of mapping existing community assets, councils should also consider who uses and relies on these spaces and whether their loss could disproportionately affect people with protected characteristics. This could also link to Equality Impact Assessments and councils' wider equality duties. This help inform the local authority's consideration of its Public Sector Equality Duty and any equality impact assessment undertaken as part of the regeneration.

This should include a clear map of land and property ownership, including publicly owned land, leasehold interests, major private landowners and sites subject to future disposal or redevelopment. Understanding who controls land and buildings is essential to identifying where boroughs and communities have leverage, and where assets may be at risk.

This matters because many forms of local value do not appear in conventional development appraisals. The value of a local market may sit in its customer base, languages spoken, informal advice, affordable food, cultural familiarity and long-standing relationships. The value of a community organisation may sit in trust built with local people over years or decades. The value of a high street may sit in the mix of services, social spaces and everyday interactions it supports. These forms of value can be hard to measure, but they are often central to the assets communities care about most.

The goal should be to understand how these assets are used in everyday life, where people meet, obtain affordable food, exchange information, find informal support, build customer relationships or maintain family and cultural connections. The value of these activities may not appear in property or economic data, but can be central to how a neighbourhood functions.

If these assets are not identified early, they can be put at risk (e.g. through lower footfall or displacement) or lost entirely before councils have properly understood their role. Participants described this as a recurring problem: regeneration can capture value created by existing communities while failing to protect the people, organisations and businesses that created it.

Boroughs should therefore treat community asset mapping as a core part of regeneration. This should include formal assets, such as publicly owned buildings, Assets of Community Value, social housing and markets. It should also include less visible assets, such as affordable commercial space, informal business networks, cultural spaces, mutual aid, local knowledge and community trust.

Principle 2: Understand displacement in its full sense

Displacement is often measured through homes lost, households moved or businesses relocated. These measures are important, but they do not capture the full impact of regeneration. Workshop participants identified several forms of displacement that are easier to miss. These included the loss of cultural identity, informal economic activity, neighbourhood character, sense of belonging, community confidence, social participation, local knowledge and relationships of care.

These impacts also occur over time, extending to future generations. When culturally important places, businesses and community spaces are lost, the impact can extend beyond the people who currently use them. Second and future generations may lose places where they connect with their culture, heritage and community. Over time, this can affect their sense of identity and belonging and weaken the connection between generations and place. They also highlighted that some communities may be pushed out of a local system before physical displacement becomes visible in the data.

This wider view is important for councillors and officers. A regeneration scheme may meet formal requirements but still weaken the social and economic ecosystem of a place. For example, a business could be offered a new location, but lose footfall, or a community organisation may be offered replacement space that does not work for its users. Residents may remain in their current or new homes, but lose the shops, services, spaces and relationships that made the neighbourhood liveable.

Impacts will differ within and between communities. Councils should pay particular attention to people whose age, disability, income, caring responsibilities, housing tenure, language or immigration status may make it harder to influence plans or remain in a changing area.

Boroughs need better ways to identify these risks before planning decisions are made. For example, Latin Elephant's work in Elephant & Castle mapped how commercial displacement can affect migrant and ethnic businesses and its Relocation Impact Assessment is designed to improve understanding of the challenges facing relocated traders four years into the relocation process, using interviews and survey evidence.[4] Participants in the session noted that these challenges continue to persist today, six years after relocation.

This means looking beyond lines on maps, understanding how businesses and communities use surrounding streets and spaces, and giving greater weight to qualitative evidence from affected groups.

[4] Latin Elephant. (2025). Relocation Impact Assessment: Current state of play for Elephant & Castle traders. Latin Elephant. Available at: https://latinelephant.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Relocation-Impact-Assessment-Current-State-of-Play-for-Elephant-Castle-Traders-by-Latin-Elephant.pdf [accessed 6 August 2026].

Case Study: Latin Elephant and Elephant & Castle

Latin Elephant works to promote the participation and social inclusion of migrant and racialised communities in processes of urban change. Its work includes business support, capacity building, community engagement, research and advocacy.

Elephant & Castle has experienced more than a decade of large-scale regeneration and redevelopment, with residential and commercial displacement occurring alongside new development. More than 130 small businesses operated from the former shopping centre and surrounding market space. 80% of traders were from Black, Latin American or other racially or ethnically marginalised backgrounds, 26 languages were spoken, 40 per cent of businesses were women-led or women-owned, and half of traders had operated from the shopping centre for more than 15 years.

Latin Elephant's experience shows how sustained community organising can improve the terms of regeneration. Its work with traders contributed to the creation of a trader panel, trader involvement in planning discussions, an Equalities Impact Assessment, a £634,000 relocation fund and three relocation sites. Other commitments included reduced rents at relocation sites, 10% affordable retail space, first refusal for displaced traders and a cap on rents between years six and 15.

Latin Elephant has built on this experience by convening the Protect Our Places coalition in 2023. The coalition brings together 11 organisations and campaigns from nine London boroughs, each responding to regeneration plans and the displacement of traders and affordable retail in their area. Members share knowledge, skills and practical support, while working collectively to draw attention to how planning decisions affect Black and minoritised communities.

Protect Our Places also helps members build the knowledge and capacity needed to participate in planning. Its programme has included training on consultation law and commercial leases, traders' and community members' planning rights, social value, Assets of Community Value and Community Asset Transfer. Funding from Trust for London's Racial Justice Fund enables members to be paid for their time, addressing one of the practical barriers that can prevent community organisations and working people from participating. The coalition is also developing tools to support a more equal approach to development and increase the economic power of communities affected by regeneration.

This case points to three lessons for boroughs:

- Trader and community evidence needs to be gathered early and taken seriously. Businesses and community organisations should not have to prove their value only after a development proposal has advanced.
- Communities need resources and practical knowledge to participate on more equal terms. This can include payment for their time, access to legal and technical expertise, and opportunities to learn from communities facing similar pressures elsewhere.
- Community voice should lead to material outcomes. Community organising can improve the terms of development and mitigate harm, but councils should not depend on communities having to organise defensively to secure basic protections. The lesson is that meaningful participation, anti-displacement measures and long-term security should be built into regeneration from the outset.

Crucially, these outcomes went beyond traders gaining voice in the development process. They changed the economic terms of redevelopment through relocation funding, reduced rents, affordable retail space, first refusal and longer-term limits on rent increases.

Principle 3: Treat communities as foundational partners in decision-making.

Consultation is essential, but it is often too late, too narrow or too hard to navigate. Participants repeatedly argued that communities need earlier, better-resourced and more meaningful influence over regeneration, and communities should be recognised as experts in their local areas.

Treating communities as meaningful partners in regeneration means sharing real influence over substantive decisions. This means communities have to be involved before regeneration briefs are fixed, help identify the homes, businesses, spaces and networks that need protection, shape affordable workspace and relocation arrangements, influence the governance of community assets, and participate in monitoring whether commitments are delivered. Their role should extend through the life of a regeneration scheme rather than ending when consultation closes.

The session highlighted several problems with how engagement around developments is often carried out. Residents often do not know how to navigate complex, technical and drawn-out planning processes, while traders and community organisations generally lack the time, money and technical support to engage effectively.

A recurring theme in discussion was that consultation can feel performative when key decisions have already been made by the time of consultation, which some participants argued was often the case. Participants also highlighted that the communities most affected by regeneration may be the least likely to engage in consultation or engagement activities like public meetings. Participants called for councils to go to where people are, engage before decisions are fixed, fund local participation (e.g. supporting community organisations), and invest in engagement as ongoing dialogue rather than a series of one-off exercises.

Participants pointed to numerous positive examples of ways councils could engage more effectively through mechanisms like citizens' assemblies, neighbourhood forums, community panels, youth councils and community advisory groups. These approaches differ in approach and purpose, but the strongest models share common features. These include ensuring that consultation and engagement activities are centered around a clear question, prioritise early involvement, active outreach to ensure engagement beyond the usual participants, support for people to take part, transparent decision-making, and a clear account of how community input has influenced the final proposal.[5] Participants that highlighted that involving local stakeholders in consultation early and consistently provides the foundation for true co-production.

Discussion also focussed on how better engagement processes are particularly important for Black and minoritised communities. Standard consultation processes can miss people who have expertise and deep knowledge of their communities but face language barriers, work insecure or irregular hours, have caring responsibilities, or lack trust in public institutions.

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[5] See, for example, Local Government Association. (2024). *A councillor's workbook on neighbourhood and community engagement*. Available at: Local Government Association, A councillor's workbook on neighbourhood and community engagement [accessed 10 August 2026].

These barriers cut across London's population, but some are experienced disproportionately by particular Black and minoritised communities, especially recent migrants and groups more likely to be in insecure or low-paid work. Engagement should therefore be designed around and with the communities affected, rather than expecting those communities to fit the council's usual process.

Support should extend beyond participation in consultation. Community-led organisations may also need development funding, governance support, legal and property expertise, and patient finance to become credible long-term partners, owners or stewards of local assets. If well-supported, community-led organisations can also provide continuity across long development periods, retaining local knowledge and accountability as developers, officers and political leadership change.

Participants agreed that it is important that there are clear feedback loops demonstrating how community evidence has shaped decisions. Councils should be able to explain what they heard, what changed as a result, and why some proposals were not taken forward. Without this, engagement risks reducing trust.

Finally, participants were clear that meaningful engagement is a starting point, rather than the full extent of community wealth building. Effective community wealth building means going through the process of being heard through consultation, to influencing the terms of development, participating in governance, stewarding local assets and, where appropriate, owning land or buildings. Each step gives communities more of a stake in the decisions and economic value generated by regeneration.

Principle 4: Use planning, land and asset powers to secure long-term local benefit

Community wealth building goes beyond participation to ask who holds economic power, who owns and controls assets, and where the value created through regeneration ultimately goes. London's boroughs do face material constraints in their funding and powers - but they also hold powerful levers through planning policy, regeneration briefs, development agreements, Section 106 agreements, CIL, public land, leases, community asset transfer, procurement and convening power.

Discussion repeatedly returned to questions of ownership, control and stewardship. Community participants highlighted that, to benefit and support existing communities, regeneration should enable communities to retain land where possible, share uplift more fairly, secure affordable space, protect community assets, and support community-led organisations to steward land, buildings, workspace and cultural infrastructure.

Participants argued that communities should share more directly in increases in land value created through planning decisions and public investment. This could include securing land, buildings, long leases or a direct stake in assets for community stewardship, so that some of the value generated by development remains in the neighbourhood over the long term.

Policy and legislative developments have strengthened some of the routes available to communities. Local authorities are required to maintain lists of Assets of Community Value, and the government has legislated to strengthen the previous Community Right to Bid into a Community Right to Buy. This gives eligible community groups a stronger opportunity to buy listed assets when an owner wishes to dispose of them, including a first-refusal-style process for a preferred community buyer.

However, current legislation still has limits. It does not generally force an owner to sell, it depends on communities having the capacity and funding to act within the process, and assets need to be identified and protected before they are at risk.

Case Study: Stour Trust

Stour Trust works to democratise access to land, buildings and spaces so that they deliver social, economic and cultural value for under-represented and minoritised communities. It does this by helping community-led organisations secure assets, leases and space, including through planning, Section 106 agreements, community rights to bid and lease negotiations.

In Hackney Wick, Stour Trust negotiated a Section 106 agreement at the Piano Works redevelopment, securing half of the commercial space and a 999-year lease of 10,000 square feet at peppercorn rent. Stour Trust describes the aim of the space as increasing the economic resilience of under-represented communities and providing infrastructure for community, creativity and culture to thrive. Planning papers for the scheme state that the commercial space would provide low-cost affordable business space for small businesses and incubator workspace for students, secured through a Section 106 legal agreement. Stour Trust's other work demonstrates a range of different routes into community stewardship.

- At the John Denham Building in Mile End, Ricardo Community Foundation is leading a campaign to turn a historic building on the St Clements site into a community-owned space for workshops, cultural events, affordable housing advocacy and grassroots initiatives. The site also has wider significance as part of the UK's first urban Community Land Trust, which secured 23 permanently affordable homes.
- At Colvestone Corner in Dalston, Stour Trust is part of a community-led proposal to bring the former Colvestone Primary School back into public use as a place for learning, creativity, care and connection, with profits reinvested into the building or local projects.
- In Brixton, Stour Trust lodged the successful Asset of Community Value application for Brixton Village and Market Row, giving the community more time to prepare a bid if the markets come up for sale.

These examples take community participation further. Long leases, peppercorn rents, community asset powers and collective governance can give communities an enduring stake in the economic value created through development. Used well, these mechanisms can protect affordable space, support local enterprise and keep assets under community stewardship after individual regeneration programmes and planning agreements have ended.

While community-led routes are available, they work best when they sit within complementary borough strategies for land, assets, planning and community partnership and when identifying potential community stewardship opportunities takes place before assets are at risk - rather than responding only after a campaign has begun

These levers are strongest where councils own land or can shape proposals early. Their influence is more limited where land is privately owned and key parameters have already been settled, which makes early intervention and clear local policy especially important.

Even with stronger rights, community ownership remains difficult in practice. Communities still need time, technical support, legal advice, a credible business case and access to funding.

Recent efforts in Brixton show both the challenge and the opportunity. The Buy Back Brixton campaign, launched in response to the proposed sale of Brixton Village and Market Row, attracted tens of thousands of petition signatures, raised more than £550,000 through crowdfunding and submitted what organisers described as a competitive bid with support from funders. This shows how community organising can attract significant support, but also underlines the importance of borough backing - through the approval of an Asset of Community Value nomination of Brixton Village & Market Row by Stour Trust - patient finance and early asset planning. Community ownership should not be treated as equitable by definition: representation, governance, accountability and the distribution of benefits within community-led models also matter.

Principle 5: Make accountability last beyond planning approval

Regeneration takes years, and often spans several political administrations, council teams and development partners. Participants repeatedly raised concerns that commitments made at planning stage can lose force or deliverability as market conditions, political leadership, developers and responsible officers change. Long-term accountability should therefore be built into the governance of regeneration schemes, rather than depending on the continued involvement of particular individuals.

This is particularly important for Section 106 agreements, affordable workspace, trader relocation, social value obligations and other community benefits. These commitments may be delivered many years after planning permission is granted, and can sometimes be renegotiated as schemes or viability conditions change. Councils need permanent mechanisms to record what was agreed, track delivery, scrutinise proposed changes and explain clearly where commitments have been revised or not delivered.

Responsibility for this scrutiny should not rest primarily with local residents, charities and campaign groups. Community organisations often provide valuable continuity, local knowledge and challenge across long development periods, but may have limited resources to monitor complex schemes for many years. Councils should retain institutional responsibility for holding developers and delivery partners to account, while giving communities a formal role in reviewing progress and raising concerns.

Accountability should therefore continue throughout construction, occupation and the later phases of a regeneration programme. This could include named officer responsibility, publicly accessible registers or dashboards of commitments, regular reporting to councillors, community review panels and clear escalation routes where obligations are delayed, weakened or not delivered. Any proposal to renegotiate a significant community benefit should be transparent, supported by evidence and subject to appropriate councillor and community scrutiny.

This matters because many problems become apparent only after the formal planning process. A relocation package for local traders may look adequate on paper but fail commercially. Affordable workspace may be delivered but not meet local needs. Community space may be built but remain unaffordable, poorly managed or disconnected from local organisations. Public realm improvements may not address the needs identified by residents.

Permanent scrutiny mechanisms would help councils maintain a clear institutional memory of what was promised, why it was agreed and who it was intended to benefit. They would also allow boroughs to intervene earlier where delivery is falling short, and apply lessons from one phase of regeneration to the next

WHAT COUNCILS CAN DO

Councils cannot control every aspect of regeneration. They face housing need, fiscal pressure, viability constraints, fragmented land ownership and changing market conditions. But councillors and officers can still shape the outcomes of development

Regeneration also requires coordination across the council. Housing, planning, economic development, public health, culture, transport, property and community teams each hold part of the evidence and levers needed to understand how a place functions. Boroughs should bring these perspectives together when setting regeneration briefs and monitoring their delivery.

The following steps are designed to support boroughs to act within existing powers, while also pointing to areas where wider reform would help.

1. Map community assets and displacement risks before plans are fixed

Major regeneration should begin with a clear picture of what already exists. This should include residents, traders, community organisations, cultural spaces, social infrastructure, public assets, local services, informal networks and patterns of land ownership.

This mapping should be developed with local communities, rather than carried out only as a technical exercise. It should identify which assets are secure, which are vulnerable, and which communities may be most affected by change, including:

- Existing businesses and markets, including lease terms, rent pressures, customer bases and relocation risks.
- Community buildings, cultural spaces, faith spaces, youth spaces, advice services and voluntary sector organisations.
- Social rented homes, affordable homes, temporary accommodation pressures and risks to lower-income families.
- Everyday infrastructure, including food shops, green space, blue infrastructure, leisure facilities, bus routes, walking routes and public spaces.
- Publicly owned land and buildings, Assets of Community Value, meanwhile spaces and potential community stewardship opportunities.
- Local knowledge about how people use a place, including people who may be missing from formal engagement.

2. Build anti-displacement objectives into regeneration briefs

Regeneration briefs should set out how existing communities will be protected, involved and supported to benefit. These objectives should be in place before planning applications are developed and include:

- Protect social rented and genuinely affordable homes.
- Support existing traders and independent businesses.
- Secure affordable workspace and affordable retail that meet identified local need.
- Protect cultural infrastructure and community space.
- Provide credible relocation plans where relocation is unavoidable.
- Ensure there is a long-term vision with a political mandate for the regeneration
- Monitor impacts on Black and minoritised communities and other groups likely to face systemicbarriers.
- Keep affected communities involved from early planning through to delivery and post-completion review.

Anti-displacement objectives should be specific enough to shape development agreements, planning obligations and delivery monitoring.

3. Use Section 106 and CIL to support long-term community benefit

Section 106 and CIL should be used to support the social and economic infrastructure of places, not only to mitigate immediate development impacts.

Workshop participants called for stronger scrutiny of Section 106 agreements, more site-specific obligations, affordable retail policies, long-term affordability, community assets, trader relocation and monitoring after planning permission has been granted.

These benefits might include:

- Affordable workspace and affordable retail.
- Relocation funds and relocation plans for affected traders.
- Community spaces that are affordable, accessible and well governed.
- Long leases, peppercorn rents or asset transfer where appropriate.
- Community stewardship models, including community land trusts.
- Public reporting on whether commitments have been delivered.
- Community involvement in defining and reviewing obligations.

4. Resource participation, community expertise and capacity

Communities need capacity to engage on more equal terms. This is especially important where people face language barriers, insecure work, caring responsibilities, disability, low income, digital exclusion or distrust of institutions.

To achieve this councils could look to provide or enable:

- Funding for community organisations to support engagement, outreach and interpretation.
- Commissioning of local organisations as expert
- Independent planning advice for affected traders, residents and community groups.
- Engagement in trusted community settings.
- Practical support such as childcare, translation, food, travel support and flexible timing.
- Early involvement before key decisions are made.
- Clear explanations of how community evidence has shaped decisions.
- Dedicated officer capacity to support voluntary and community sector engagement.

Resourcing participation should be treated as part of the cost of good regeneration, rather than an optional extra.

5. Create long-term governance and accountability

Major regeneration schemes should have governance arrangements that last beyond planning approval. These could include:

- Community panels linked to major schemes.
- Annual public reporting on Section 106, CIL, affordable workspace, relocation and social value commitments.
- Named officer responsibility for community assets and regeneration accountability.
- Regular review of Assets of Community Value and community stewardship opportunities.
- Scrutiny by councillors after permission has been granted.

- Escalation routes when legal obligations or community commitments are not being delivered.
- Ongoing evidence collection on lived experience, local business viability and community use of new assets.

This would help boroughs track whether regeneration is delivering the intended benefits and respond where delivery falls short.

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS FOR COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

These questions are intended to help councillors and officers scrutinise regeneration proposals early and constructively.

First, a simple test for regeneration schemes. Councillors and officers can begin by asking four questions:

1. **Who stays?** Will existing residents, traders, community organisations and cultural institutions be able to remain in the area and benefit from change?
2. **Who decides?** Do affected communities have meaningful influence before key decisions are fixed, throughout delivery and when commitments are reviewed?
3. **Who owns?** Who will own or steward the land, buildings, workspace and community assets created or affected by development?
4. **Who benefits?** Who will receive the homes, jobs, commercial opportunities and increases in land and property value created through regeneration, and how much of that value will remain locally?

The more detailed questions below help councillors and officers apply this test at each stage of a regeneration scheme.

Before a regeneration brief is agreed

- What existing residents, businesses, community organisations and cultural spaces make this place work?
- Which communities live, work, trade, organise or spend time here, ensuring that Black and minoritised communities are included in this mapping?
- Which assets are formally recognised, and which are informal but still important?
- What evidence has been gathered from affected traders, residents and community organisations?
- Has qualitative evidence been given weight alongside quantitative evidence?
- Which groups are least likely to be reached through standard consultation?
- What risks of residential, commercial, cultural, social and civic displacement have been identified?
- What needs to be protected, strengthened or replaced well before development is supported?
- How will the scheme balance affordability and community continuity against aspirations for land value and economic growth?

Before planning applications are approved

- How has community evidence changed the proposal?
- What will happen to existing traders, community organisations and cultural spaces during construction and after completion?
- If relocation is proposed, will businesses remain affordable, visible, accessible and commercially viable?
- What affordable workspace or retail is being secured, for whom, at what rent, for how long and under what management arrangements?
- What commitments are being made through Section 106 or other legal agreements?
- How will increases in land value created through planning decisions and public investment be shared with the existing community?

- Are those commitments specific enough to monitor and enforce and how will monitoring and enforcement be carried out?
- Has the borough considered whether land, buildings or workspace could be stewarded by a community-led organisation?
- Is there a clear plan for communication and accountability after planning permission?

During delivery

- Are residents, traders and community organisations receiving clear, accessible and timely information about timelines, disruption, relocation and support?
- Are legal commitments being delivered as agreed?
- Are any groups being affected differently from what was expected?
- Is there an active community governance structure that can identify and resolve problems?
- Is the council collecting evidence on social, cultural and economic impacts, as well as build-out and financial contributions?

After completion

- Can existing communities still afford to live, trade, organise and spend time in the area?
- Have promised affordable homes, affordable workspace, community spaces and public realm improvements been delivered? If not, why not, and has this been clearly explained to local communities, particularly those most affected?
- Are new assets being used by the communities they were intended to benefit?
- Has the borough published a clear account of which commitments were delivered, which weren't, and why?
- What lessons gathered from a wide range of stakeholders including community panels and groups should shape future regeneration briefs, planning policy and Section 106 negotiations?

CONCLUSION

London needs to build more homes, workspaces and infrastructure. Regeneration will remain an important part of how the city responds to housing need, economic change and pressure on local services. Development should also strengthen the places it changes and create opportunities for local businesses and residents, instead of displacement.

The workshop that informed this briefing showed strong agreement on the conditions needed for regeneration to build community wealth. Participants argued that regeneration should recognise the value already present in neighbourhoods, understand displacement beyond physical relocation, involve communities before decisions are fixed, and use planning, land and asset powers to secure long-term local benefit.[3]

For councillors and officers, this means asking sharper questions earlier in the process. It means treating traders, residents and community organisations as partners in shaping change. It also means monitoring whether commitments are delivered after planning permission has been granted.

Regeneration should enable existing communities to remain, shape change and share in the value it creates. Achieving this requires practical changes to how boroughs gather evidence, set regeneration briefs, negotiate planning obligations, share decision-making, support community stewardship and hold schemes to account.