Re-inventing the London Plan:
A charrette on the capital’s future
New London Architecture is London’s independent forum for discussion, debate and information about architecture, planning, development and construction in the capital. Our core mission is to bring people together to shape a better city.
**Foreword**

**Peter Murray,** Chairman, New London Architecture

A charrette is “an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for future development.” When London is preparing for a mayoral election and work on the next iteration of the London Plan is underway, it seemed to the NLA that this was a good time to organise a charrette of expert citizens who could highlight the key issues London is facing and provide innovative ideas for their solution.

The NLA charrette involved 80 or so planners, architects and those involved in the built environment, working intensely over one day, looking in detail at a range of aspects of London’s future development. The day was facilitated by Malcolm Smith of Arup who has played a similar role in the creation of effective long-term strategic plans for many areas around the globe.

The first London Plan produced under an elected mayor has operated effectively for over a decade. It was revised in 2008 and again in 2011, but many of the key policies remained in place. Following the Further Alterations of the London Plan (FALP) which brought the plan into line with the National Planning Policy Framework, the government inspector decreed that the Plan was no longer fit for purpose because of the capital’s huge population growth. The results of this charrette address those issues and provide an invaluable source of inspiration for City Hall planners as well as mayoral candidates.

**Malcolm Smith, Global Masterplanning and Urban Design Leader, Arup**

A city is one of the greatest manifestations of human desires, fears, economics, politics, and ambition. As Patrick Geddes said, “a city is more than a place in space, it is a drama in time”. As London embarks on a re-evaluation of the guiding strategies for its future, as directed through the parameters of the London Plan, it is right to ask what the ‘dramas of our time’ are that should be included, and those that are no longer appropriate.

The charrette process is a powerful tool to make a meaningful contribution to revealing these issues. While the history of the charrette is in the physical design of places, the process can be expanded to address the physical and the non-physical, including the policy tools that need to work together in the London Plan. It also creates an environment where new ways of asking and thinking can be examined, like the digital platforms for gathering collective opinion that were used at this charrette. The contemporary charrette is a process being increasingly deployed around the world to enable a truly meaningful input into the making of plans that guide city growth. The London Plan charrette was an exciting and meaningful exploration of a future way of finding our future ‘dramas’ that will shape the London of tomorrow.
Contents

Overview 03

A. Living 04
B. Movement 05
C. Working 06
D. Form 07
E. Wellbeing 08
F. Digital 09
G. Delivery 10
H. Structure 11

List of charrette attendees 12
Overview

London is facing the challenge of unprecedented growth, with the city set to accommodate a million more people inside a decade. This is game-changing. It places unprecedented pressures and priorities on space, services and infrastructure. Responding to this requires us to take a fresh look at how we accommodate growth, go back to first principles and challenge long-held views including on the boundary of London and the role of the Green Belt.

It will be the job of the next, crucial, iteration of the London Plan to help steer a course for the city through this growth-inspired maze, capitalising on the positives of that steep rise, and minimising any negatives. So what might a future London look like? And what do we need to do to get there?

To get some answers and provoke debate, New London Architecture and Arup joined forces to stage a one-day charrette with invited guests from across the built environment sector. At the event, which forms the subject of this report, guests were charged with identifying ways to improve London’s future.

To do this, guests debated eight topics: Living, Movement, Working, Form, Wellbeing, Digital, Delivery and Structure. For each topic they were encouraged to identify potential ideas and recommendations, which might provide fuel for thought for the candidates in the upcoming mayoral contest for London, as well as for the review of the London Plan.

The recommendations which emerged are far ranging and in some cases extend beyond the scope of the London Plan. Crucially however, they all have a direct impact on our ability to ensure that, in the words of GLA Assistant Director for Planning Stewart Murray, London remains the ‘best capital city on the planet’ long into the future.

The most critical, reoccurring and cross-cutting recommendations are summarised overleaf. More detailed recommendations emerging from the topic sessions are summarised in the following sections.

What we think of as London now extends beyond its administrative boundary and therefore the remit of the London Plan. There was a call for the London Plan to consider its wider hinterland so that a lack of joined-up thinking with these neighbours does not constrain the city’s and wider region’s growth.

The structure of London needs to change. To mitigate against central London overheating and to accommodate demand for housing and employment space, growth nodes in outer London should be identified. Such growth should be facilitated through a strategic dual-review of transport infrastructure and development opportunities.

There is a need to overhaul the tools we use to guide density and determine the relationship between density and transport accessibility. New guidance should provide more flexibility and encourage the use of different building typologies which better respond to local context.

The time is right to take stock of the role of London’s Green Belt and how it supports the achievement of London’s growth strategy. Delegates considered that the strategic review needed to look at not if the Green Belt was released but where.

New bespoke products are required to tackle provision of affordable housing in the capital. Delegates supported a fixed affordable housing tariff and mechanisms which ensured affordable housing remained so in perpetuity.

The importance of engaging Londoners in the planning and delivery of London’s development was re-iterated as the benefits to wellbeing are increasingly evident. Delegates were keen that the latest technologies are used to engage with Londoners to ensure more people are encouraged to participate.

Further consideration should be given to the form of the London Plan. There were calls for a more streamlined and ‘live’ document which could be a way of communicating the story of London’s growth and is regularly updated in response to changing requirements. It should also provide more flexibility to enable the city to respond to change, perhaps through being outcome focussed.