



GLA Conservatives



Helping Our High Streets

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Executive Summary

High streets lie at the heart of our communities and local economies, providing jobs, developing small businesses and injecting billions of pounds into the economy. However, London's high streets have been struggling and, even though the economy has improved, empty units are still a common sight in our town centres. This situation also has an impact on employment opportunities for Londoners.

The scale of the challenge facing Britain's high streets was starkly underlined earlier this month by a slump in profits for key retailers.¹

Improving London's economy is a key priority for the Mayor of London. The Mayor's Economic Development Strategy has three main goals²:

- Opening up opportunities – everyone should be able to benefit from all our city offers;
- Growth – ensuring our economy continues to thrive and is open for business;
- Innovation – to make London a world leader in innovation, technology and a hub of new ideas and creativity³

This report sets out the problems facing London's high streets including squeezed incomes, growth of online shopping, parking, and the cost of business rates. This document contains proposals on how the Mayor can work in partnership with local authorities and business organisations to help London's high streets and deliver on his priority to be open for business.

This report makes 7 recommendations on how the Mayor can support London's high streets, which would make a positive impact on the lives of ordinary Londoners.

Listed below is a brief outline of the report's 7 key recommendations, all of which are directed to the Mayor:

- 1. Resurrect the High Street Fund.** The former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, delivered the High Street Fund⁴ dedicated to rejuvenating London's high streets. The programme awarded grants to local authorities, business organisations and community groups to deliver projects to boost high streets and town centres. We are proposing that the Mayor should re-establish the High Street Fund.

¹ <https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/big-slump-in-high-street-sales-at-next-as-shoppers-move-online-a4029656.html>

² <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/economic-development-strategy>

³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/economic-development-strategy>

⁴ <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/regeneration/what-weve-funded-so-far/high-street-fund>

2. **Bring back the Outer London Fund.** The former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, delivered a regeneration programme specifically for outer London boroughs. The programme awarded grants to local authorities and partners to improve high streets and the street scene. We are proposing that the Mayor should bring back the Outer London Fund to support outer London
3. **Future High Streets Fund from MHCLG.** The Mayor should offer strategic Officer support as part of any London borough's bid to the Government's Future High Streets Fund.
4. **Local themed events.** Events give extra reasons to visit high streets and town centres rather than just to shop. The Cultural Seeds programme budget should be reduced to provide funding for events to draw more visitors to London's high streets by creating an 'experience'.
5. **Parking.** The Mayor should make it policy that TfL need to take into account the views of business leaders in areas where transport projects are being delivered and make sure a blanket anti-car approach does not happen. TfL schemes that have town centres and high streets within them should not restrict parking as they need to be accessed by cars as well as public transport for thrive.

The Mayor carries weight with London Boroughs. He should convene a round table discussion with borough leaders to encourage them to consider the consequences of expensive parking charges on high streets and town centres.

6. **Housing.** The Mayor should promote housing initiatives to councils and developers that create greater footfall to our high streets and town centres. These initiatives would include:
 - Using existing tall shop unit facades for housing;
 - When shops are being redeveloped the ground floor retail unit should be retained with additional housing built above.

These policies would only occur where it would be appropriate to do so.

7. **Leadership role.** The Mayor is a powerful champion, communicating London's strengths, particularly to potential inward investors. He also serves as a prominent campaign promoter. The Mayor could deliver a #Shop Local – Shop London campaign, especially in support of Small Business Saturday.

Introduction

High streets and town centres play a significant role in London's economic prosperity. They are also central to life in the local community. However, there is no escaping the fact that London's high streets and town centres are currently facing several challenges, including but, not exclusively, squeezed incomes, online shopping, business rates, parking accessibility and charges.

The consequences of the challenges that high streets and town centres are experiencing are empty shops, job losses and the deterioration of once thriving areas. The diversity of the high street is one of its key attributes, but with increasing empty units, that choice is diminishing. The aesthetics of an area are reduced when there are several shop units vacant, therefore affecting footfall for those businesses that remain. High streets and town centres provide significant employment opportunities and any decline has an impact on jobs.

The Mayor is correct to make improving London's economic prosperity a key priority, but we believe a stronger partnership between the Mayor, local authorities and business groups could be beneficial in aiding high streets and town centres in London. This report investigates the background to struggling high streets and makes proposals for how the Mayor can play a role in boosting the economy of high streets in London.

Empty Shops

Londoners have seen shop units empty over the last few years. In the year to August 2018, 28 retail companies with multiple stores have ceased trading, affecting 2,085 stores and 39,000 jobs across the country according to the Centre for Retail Research.⁵ This is a high number of affected stores compared with recent years, but not compared with 2012 or the years immediately following the financial crisis and recession of 2008 and 2009.⁶

Since 2007, the retail sector with the most stores affected by company failures has been clothing, accounting for 25 per cent of all stores affected. Off-licences accounted for 16 per cent of stores affected and footwear stores accounted for 13 per cent.⁷

⁵ Centre for Retail Research, Who's gone bust? August 2018. Note that some of the business that went into receivership may have recovered, been sold as going concerns but changed their name, or ceased to exist. Therefore, these figures should be used cautiously.

⁶ Retail sector in the UK, 2018, Page 8

⁷ Centre for Retail Research, Who's gone bust? – Further information, August 2018



The vacancy rate varies by type of retail premises and region, compared to the national average of 11.2 per cent in the second half of 2017:

- The vacancy rate in shopping centres was 13.2 per cent, and the vacancy rate in retail parks was only 4.9 per cent⁸
- Of all the regions, the North East has the highest vacancy rate: 14.1 per cent. Greater London has the lowest: 7.9 per cent.⁹

Vacancy Rate Examples

Redbridge - primary shopping area

2016/2017: 32
2017/2018: 78
2018: 44

Richmond upon Thames – town centre

2017: 19
2018: 16
2018/2019: Not available

Lambeth – primary shopping area

2016/2017: 31
2017/2018: 28
2018/2019: 34

City of London

2016/2017: 95
2017/2018: 116
2018 to date: 137

Brent – for all town centres

2016: 151
2017: 131
2018: 142

The data above highlights the tough times high streets have had over the last couple of years. The Capital has not had the vacancy rate of other regions, but empty shops have not gone unnoticed by Londoners. The examples in recent years from London Boroughs proves that the incidence empty shops have fluctuated.

⁸ Local Data Company, Retail and leisure trends report H2 2017, May 2018, p18

⁹ Ibid, p24

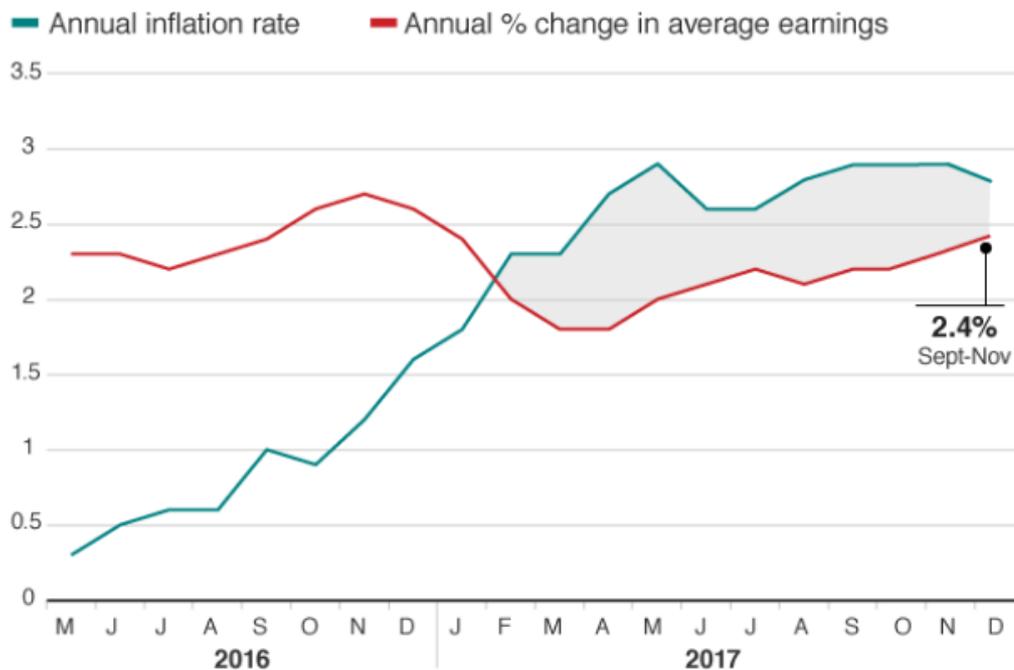
Pressures On High Streets & Town Centres

Squeezed Income

A big factor has been a fall in discretionary spending, spurred by rising shop prices and weak wage growth. A near 15 per cent fall in the pound pushed inflation over 3 per cent - above the Bank of England's 2 per cent target.¹⁰ This has made imported goods more expensive, with those costs passed on to consumers. When coupled with the fact that wages have been rising at a slower pace than inflation for a lengthy period, the result is that shoppers have less disposable income to spend in stores and restaurants¹¹.

Pay squeeze continues

How inflation compares to wage growth



Source: ONS. Earnings figures are three month averages, excluding bonuses



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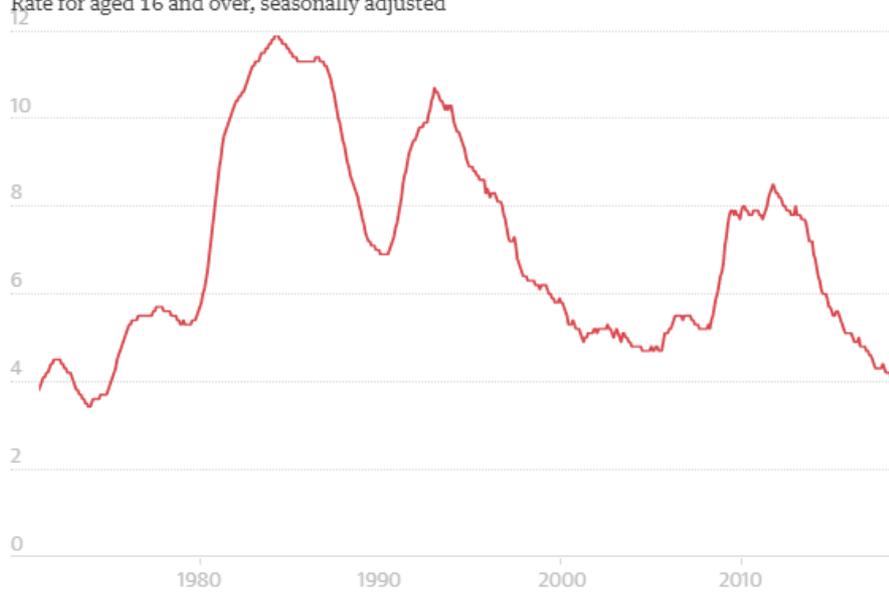
¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43240996>

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43240996>

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43240996>

Unemployment stays at 4% - a 43-year low

Rate for aged 16 and over, seasonally adjusted



Guardian Graphic | Source: ONS

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Employment is at record levels with unemployment so low that it has dropped to levels last seen in the 1970s. It was expected that there would be more consumer spending because of high employment levels. This level of employment usually sends wage rates up; however, for many years, people have maintained their standard of living and consumers ramped up their borrowing, especially to buy cars and other big-ticket items, whilst reducing their savings.

However, there are signs that wages are now rising. Last year, the ONS Head of Labour Market Statistics, David Freeman, said: "People's regular monthly wage packets grew at their strongest rate in almost a decade last year but, allowing for inflation, the growth was much more subdued." ¹⁴ This is encouraging news but that does not mean that any disposable income from wage growth is large. Nevertheless, people are in a slightly better position financially for the first time since the 2008 fiscal crisis.

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/oct/16/uk-pay-growth-unemployment>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/oct/16/uk-pay-growth-unemployment>

Online Competition

Online giants such as Amazon and ASOS have had a huge impact on the high street as more consumers see online shopping as cheaper and easier than going to the shops. And while overall retail sales growth is weak, online sales continue to rise.¹⁵

Online shopping has become more popular than it was a decade ago. Between 2007 and 2018 online sales increased six-fold while growth of in-store sales has lagged behind. According to the Office for National Statistics, in 2000 online retailing accounted for less than 1 per cent of retail sales while in August 2018 almost a fifth of all retail sales took place online¹⁶.

One in every five pounds spent in UK shops is now online. For the first time in August 2018, the data showed that online sales rose by 15.3 per cent over the past year and now make up a record high of 18.2 per cent of all retail sales.¹⁷

This is up from 2013 when one pound in every ten was spent online. In particular, shoppers are avoiding department stores and shopping on their computers and phones. Instead, experts said, as they saw online sales rise by over a third (35 per cent) in the year to July 2018. (reference?)

Previously, online shopping was seen as an activity undertaken by younger consumers as they were most likely to be using the latest technology. However, the proportion of older people buying items via websites from the comfort of their own homes has trebled over the past decade from 16 per cent to 48 per cent, according to the Office for National Statistics.¹⁸

Parking

When investigating the current problems facing high streets and town centres it is appropriate to look at the provision and cost of parking. There are many sensible environmental reasons as to why we should use alternative forms of transport. High streets and town centres need to be accessible and not just by car. Londoners need to have choice when selecting what mode of transport, they use to visit their local high street and town centre. There needs to be good public transport availability so that those who do not own a car or are unable to drive or cycle can easily visit high streets and town centres.

However, the reality is that Londoners, and especially those living in the suburbs, use their cars. Expensive parking charges put local high streets and town centres at a massive disadvantage in comparison to retail parks and out of London shopping areas which offer longer free parking periods.

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/may/26/six-reasons-why-british-retailers-are-struggling>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-high-streets-fund/future-high-street-fund>

¹⁷ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/16/one-every-five-pounds-spent-uk-retailers-now-online-figures/>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-high-streets-fund/future-high-street-fund>

This report recognises that, for many areas, it is not logical to offer free parking all day as this could be open to abuse by local workers¹⁹ and those who commute via a train or tube station located close to a town centre. However, this does not mean that flexibility cannot be delivered to make it more affordable to park when visiting local high streets and town centres. Councils should take into consideration the consequences of expensive parking fees and how likely it is to affect people's choices on whether to visit certain high streets or not, especially as there are alternative shopping solutions which require no vehicle at all.

Business Rates

Business rates across the UK increased by 3 per cent last April, in line with inflation. This has had an impact on high street shops and town centres that are already suffering from lower consumer confidence²⁰.

Retailers say that without urgent reform, the higher rates could kill the high street. A number of retail stalwarts, including Maplin, Toys 'R' Us and Poundworld, went into administration in 2018, while others — including Carpetright and Waitrose — closed stores.²¹ According to the Office for National Statistics, while total retail sales grew 1.4 per cent in 2017, online sales were up 12.1 per cent.²²

Business rates changed in 2017 after the government revalued property for the first time in seven years. The revaluation led to higher rates in busy city centres and reduced them in rural areas and poorer towns, where online retailers tend to have their warehouses.

Steve Rowe, Chief Executive of Marks and Spencer, said the company opted to close its Covent Garden store after it faced a rate rise of almost £500,000 in a year. He described rates as “an unfair burden of taxation directly contributing to the challenges the high street is facing”. M&S is closing 100 stores and paid £184m in rates in 2017/18.²³

“These challenges will continue until the system is reformed to create a level playing field between high street and online retailers,” Rowe said.²⁴

¹⁹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf Page 27

²⁰ <https://www.ft.com/content/d314443c-6ff7-11e8-92d3-6c13e5c92914>

²¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/d314443c-6ff7-11e8-92d3-6c13e5c92914>

²² <https://www.ft.com/content/d314443c-6ff7-11e8-92d3-6c13e5c92914>

²³ <https://www.ft.com/content/d314443c-6ff7-11e8-92d3-6c13e5c92914>

²⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/d314443c-6ff7-11e8-92d3-6c13e5c92914>

The Government has promised to reform the levy and says that it is prioritising this issue. The 2018 Budget included help for high streets.²⁵ A £1.5 billion plan was announced that includes a cut to the business rates bills for small retailers worth almost £900 million over 2 years, funding to transform town centres and a relaxation of planning rules has been announced as part of the Budget to support the country's high streets.²⁶

This includes:

- The launch of a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to transform local high streets so that they can remain firmly at the heart of communities. This will be used to improve infrastructure and transport and also support areas to redevelop under-used retail space into homes and offices, helping to restore high street properties and put historic buildings back into use;²⁷
- Business rates relief targeted at small retailers to cut their bills by a third and a new mandatory relief for public lavatories, building on over £10 billion of business rates support since 2016;²⁸
- Relaxing planning rules to support new mixed-use businesses on the high street and the conversion of under-used retail units into offices and homes.²⁹

This is accompanied by additional support for local leadership to prepare and implement new strategies for their high streets, including a new High Streets Taskforce to offer support and advice to help revitalise these areas.³⁰ We welcome these pro-active measures to revitalise our country's high streets. In comparison, the Mayor does not have any funding pot dedicated solely to improve high streets.

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-to-support-new-housing-high-streets-and-local-services>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-to-support-new-housing-high-streets-and-local-services>

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-to-support-new-housing-high-streets-and-local-services>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-to-support-new-housing-high-streets-and-local-services>

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-to-support-new-housing-high-streets-and-local-services>

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-to-support-new-housing-high-streets-and-local-services>

A Better Way Forward

Why should the Mayor get involved in this issue?

Helping London's high streets through mayoral policy is paramount to delivering strategic growth to the Capital and addressing corporate objectives such as boosting the economy, social integration, culture and healthy streets.³¹

Shops, cafés, restaurants, hairdressers, and other high street businesses, provide employment opportunities for Londoners. More people are employed on London's high streets and within 200m of them than the whole of the Central Activities Zone.³²

High streets provide much more than just jobs; for example:

- Social and cultural exchange;
- Gathering spaces for marginalised and under-represented groups;
- Social infrastructure;
- Contribution to public life.

The Mayor acknowledges in his Economic Development Strategy that he can play a leading role in improving high streets and town centres. Thriving high streets contribute to the overall growth in London's economy. This area of the report sets out proposals on how the Mayor can help bring London's much loved high streets back to life.

Outer London Fund

The Outer London Fund (OLF) was launched by the former Mayor in June 2011. It was a three-year initiative dedicated to strengthening the vibrancy and growth of London's high streets and town centres located in outer London boroughs.

The OLF offer was made up of £50 million of funding, supported by specialist advice on how to improve the character, quality and economic vitality of selected high streets and town centres. This advice included access to a pre-procured team with specialisms in economic development, event planning, community engagement and marketing. The GLA also provided support with project scoping, design and delivery.

The fund was allocated in two rounds. The first round provided support to 30 places across 20 boroughs, with access to nearly £10 million of funds. The second round made £34 million available to 25 places in 18 boroughs.³³

³¹ High Streets for all, LEAP. Page 40

³² High Streets for all, LEAP. Page 20

³³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/regeneration/what-weve-funded-so-far/completed-funds>

Case Study

Bromley town centre received £275,000 from Round One, and £2m from Round Two of the Mayor's Outer London Fund, matched by £1.5m from the borough and £1.5 from TfL, to help maintain its position as a great destination in south London. A series of events were organised to attract people onto the high street and a new 'Are You Bromley?' brand. These were followed by improvements to public spaces. Shop fronts were also being upgraded to promote the vast range of small traders in the town.³⁴ When an analysis was undertaken of the project, it was deemed successful in increasing footfall to Bromley North Village.

For example, the Bromley North Village footfall camera registered over 2.5 million pedestrians in Q3 2016. The first three quarters of 2016 saw footfall consistently higher than in 2015, with over half a million more visitors in total over that period.

Longer term footfall counts undertaken by Bromley Council also suggest that footfall has increased by 18 per cent in the area since 2011³⁵.

The current Mayor already provides the Good Growth Fund which is not just awarded for high street improvements. The Mayor has not yet created a fund dedicated to outer London, which has different economic circumstances to inner London boroughs. Outer London's high streets and town centres not only face the competition of online businesses but also retail and leisure parks. In some cases, they offer significantly cheaper parking, making them economically more attractive to visit, especially for those on lower incomes. £15 million should be removed from the Good Growth Fund to finance outer London projects to make local high streets and town centres attractive to visit.

High Street Fund

During the previous mayoral administration in 2014-15, the Regeneration team used £9 million to establish a High Street Fund. The team consulted London boroughs and many other organisations involved in the management and improvement of London's high streets.

The consultation that took place with key stakeholders helped to define the criteria for grant applications to the High Street Fund. The former administration published a prospectus inviting bids for funding and defining eligible activities for investment and support. It invited project proposals under 4 key themes³⁶:

- Proactive stewardship – to establish local partnerships (including Business Improvement Districts) that encourage change, and to develop high street strategies;
- Stimulating activity – to improve the look and feel of places, making them more welcoming;

³⁴ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/regeneration-project-bromley-town-centre>

³⁵

³⁶ <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/regeneration/what-weve-funded-so-far/high-street-fund>

- Occupying empty space – to help bring back a high street bustle and ensure a diverse and desirable range of uses;
- Accommodating growth – to boost the high street’s role in supporting and shaping development and manage town centre intensification³⁷.

The successful applicants to this fund delivered projects with positive impacts, including new jobs, apprenticeships and high-quality public and green space. All projects used match funding from other sources. The projects that were funded strengthened the vibrancy and economic activity on London’s high streets and in nearby areas. We are proposing that this fund is brought back and made available for every borough, not just those located in outer boroughs.

Case Study

The Camden Town Unlimited Business Improvement District was awarded funding from the High Street Fund. The Camden Collective project, led by the BID, aimed to support the development of the local creative industries sector, whilst building on local character and providing new opportunities for young people in the area. Mayoral funding aided in providing space for new start-up businesses, as well as for critical skills training. The money was used to stimulate new jobs and create a more mixed range of shops on the high street.

Recipient: Camden / Camden Town Unlimited Award: £150,000³⁸

City Hall convened regular network meetings, showcasing BIDs’ work, to support businesses and encourage them to bid for resources from the likes of Transport for London and the Mayor’s High Street Fund. The Mayor should form a new High Street Fund which could be used to provide this support again. This could be delivered by diverting £5 million from the next round of the Good Growth Fund to re-establish the High Street Fund.

MHCLG Future High Streets Fund

The Government announced funding in the 2018 Budget to boost high streets and town centres. The Future High Streets Fund opened on 26 December 2018. The money is aimed at local leaders to implement bold new visions to transform their town centres and make them fit for the future with co-funding to consolidate properties on the high street, improve transport and access into town centres and converting retail units into new homes.

The Mayor should support London boroughs that choose to submit a bid for the Future High Streets Fund. The GLA could provide strategic advice within existing budgets on projects including planning, transport, and environmental matters. The Future High Streets Fund is available to unitary authorities, metropolitan districts,

³⁷ <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/regeneration/what-weve-funded-so-far/high-street-fund>

³⁸ <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/regeneration/what-weve-funded-so-far/high-street-fund#acc-i-43337>

London boroughs and, where there is a two-tier system, from district councils, in England. The number of authorities that can apply to this fund means that there is only likely to be a few winning bids from London

Parking

Transport for London

The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets the direction for transport in London. The strategy states that London must become a place where walking, cycling and public transport are the most appealing and practical choices for many more journeys. Funding packages, such as Liveable Neighbourhoods and Mini Holland, have in the past been viewed as anti-car.

This report asks that when schemes are being assessed for funding, the effect on the local economy must be considered thoroughly rather than solely focusing on a vision of reducing cars, particularly because high streets and town centres rely on people coming by car as well as by public transport. Projects in the past, such as Mini Holland which proposed road space reallocations, triggered strong negative responses high street businesses and residents. A pressure group, Save Our Green Lanes (SOGL) fought furiously against Enfield's segregation scheme, including (unsuccessfully) through the courts. The SOGL, alleges that its concerns were ignored by a council intent on pushing its programme through, regardless of the findings of its own consultations.³⁹ This has created distrust within the community and difficulties for businesses during and after construction.

High streets and town centres need to be accessed by cars as well as public transport for them to thrive. TfL should provide parking in all its schemes that have high streets and town centres within them. Londoners need to have parking availability and good public transport links to enable people to visit and shop.

Parking Charges

London Boroughs oversee much of the on street and off-street parking provision that services local high streets and town centres and set the price of parking for the car parks and on street parking areas that they own. Occasionally, the price that local authorities charge for parking puts them in conflict with retailers. The Mayor should use his prominent role to demonstrate his commitment to our high streets by holding a round table discussion with borough leaders to encourage local authorities to consider the consequences of high parking charges. In particular, analysis should be undertaken focussing on the impact parking policy is likely to have on people's choices regarding whether or not to visit local high streets, especially those competing with out of town shopping parks that either charge lower fees or none at all.

³⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/davehillblog/2017/jan/17/the-long-war-of-mini-holland-in-enfield>

Local Themed Events

Our high streets should be welcoming and encourage community cohesion. Town centre festivals and events, including specialist themed markets can celebrate local culture and provide benefits for the local community and economy. According to the Local Government Association's new report on Christmas markets,⁴⁰ evidence of wider benefits includes additional purchases and raising the profile of places by attracting new visitors. The report also highlights that customers expect authenticity in events and often more could be done to systematically measure impacts. The joint LGA and Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association publication on the role of culture in placemaking puts a strong emphasis on the community benefits. By creating vibrant events and experiences in town centre locations, areas can boost wellbeing, improve mental health and tackle isolation.

Community events run by the local groups and business organisations close to high streets and town centres should be supported. Events provide a reason other than shopping to visit an area and increase footfall. The Mayor should provide match funding to those organisations who apply to hold events to promote their town. The Mayor could do this by reducing the £1 million Culture Seeds funding pot to £100,000 and dedicating that money to aid groups to deliver events to attract high footfall to their high streets/town centres. The amounts of money that could be applied for should follow the Cultural Seeds programme and be set at between £1000 - £5,000. The money should be for local themed events in high streets and town centres to encourage footfall by creating an experience that many now want from a visit to their local area.

Planning and housing

The high street requires more footfall if it is to prosper, and creating more homes close to the high street would help this. There is potential where appropriate to use existing tall facades to infill with apartments to provide extra housing. When shop units are being redeveloped due to regeneration schemes, the ground floor retail unit should be retained, with additional housing above.

The housing policies mentioned above would bring more people to the high street and give the proximity to shops Londoners would enjoy. It would enable local retailers to compete with the convenience factor that shopping online offers. The Mayor should promote these initiatives to councils and developers.

⁴⁰ Driving growth through local government investment in the arts, <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/driving-growth-through-lo-334.pdf>

Leadership role

The Mayor holds a prominent role not just in London but across the UK. He can use his leadership role to promote high streets across London and not just for the most famous, such as Oxford Street, the Kings Road and Regent Street. A shop local campaign from City Hall along the lines of the Mayor's #LondonIsOpen campaign would help encourage Londoners to think positively about using local high streets and town centres. The Mayor has many media channels at his disposal to promote such a campaign with extra activity to coincide with Small Business Saturday this December. A total budget of up to £150,000 was allocated to the #LondonIsOpen campaign⁴¹ and there is potential to deliver a similarly funded 'shop local' campaign within the existing marketing budgets. The #LondonIsOpen campaign was widely covered in traditional print and online media with #LondonIsOpen being tweeted by more than a quarter of a million people worldwide and almost 15,000 articles published in a wide variety of publications in over 100 countries⁴². If this could be replicated for a 'shop local' campaign, it would greatly boost the recognition of local high streets and town centres.

Conclusion

The high street is the heartbeat of London's business community. It symbolises the distinct ethos and character of our city to visitors from across the world. High streets and town centres are important to Londoners too, as the centre of local community life. High streets are worth fighting for and will continue to play an important part in London's changing economy.

This report highlights the scale of the problem and shows that there is a case for supporting the high street. The report puts forward proposals on how the Mayor can work in partnership to boost London's high streets and town centres by re-introducing the High Street and Outer London Funds and taking a fresh perspective on parking.

The 7 recommendations below indicate what the Mayor should consider going forward to deliver policies, in partnership with local authorities and business groups, that will aid in improving the quality our high streets and town centres.

⁴¹ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mgla100816-1864_.pdf

⁴² <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/0581>

Recommendations

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 - Using existing tall shop unit facades for housing;
 - When shops are being redeveloped the ground floor retail unit should be retained with additional housing built above.

These policies would only occur where it would be appropriate to do so.

- 7. Leadership role.** The Mayor is a powerful champion, communicating London's strengths, particularly to potential inward investors. He also serves as a prominent campaign promoter. The Mayor could deliver a #Shop Local – Shop London campaign, especially in support of Small Business Saturday.

⁴³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/regeneration/what-weve-funded-so-far/high-street-fund>



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