

Mayor of London's City for All Londoners

Consultation response by Sowing the Seeds London, December 2016

yourviews@london.gov.uk

Summary

Sowing the Seeds is London's grassroots network championing children's access to nature and natural play; our vision is that every London child can play in nature on their doorstep. We are pleased to submit our comments and suggestions on the Mayor's *City for All Londoners* consultation.¹ We welcome the Mayor's direction and intent and recognise the need for the kind of integrated approach that is sought.

Missing from the stated integrated approach is children's access to open space and nature for play, recreation, development, health and social interaction. Research shows that physical activity in early years increases the brain size of children with subsequent impact on physical and mental/educational attainment. Access to nature and open space should serve as a thread to improving London spaces, housing and development, their design, planning and maintenance.

The lack of this essential thread linking health, wellbeing, places and quality of development means that *City For All Londoners* misses the essential opportunity to address and improve its approach to housing, to neighbourhoods, to health, equalities and citizen involvement.

Just as making London's transport, streets and spaces truly accessible for people with disabilities benefits everyone else, improving London children's daily contact with nature and access to quality green space will benefit adults, neighbourhoods and the capital as a whole including the Mayor's objectives on access, skills, equalities, social integration and community engagement. Using provision for children as a baseline ensures quality of provision for everyone.

The time to do this is now as the intended integration will not succeed if, for example, a focus on housing results in people having a decent home but without quality local breathing spaces. Development will, instead, take place in the sub-standard ways that have become the norm with amenity grass and street trees encased in concrete which provide little if any value for biodiversity and certainly no benefit to children, parents, their neighbourhoods and city as a whole.

The Mayor committed to some important and enlightening policies in his election manifesto from action to address persistent chronic air pollution and improve walking as a basic means of travel for most Londoners to protecting green spaces and raising standards of development design. Children's access to nature and natural play and socialisation threads these together precisely as the stated integration in the document intends.

¹ A City for All Londoners <https://www.london.gov.uk/get-involved/have-your-say/all-consultations/city-all-londoners>

Introduction

In this response, we have identified how such an approach can improve the intended integration, illustrating different content from the document to highlight potential to integrate even better. We also draw on findings and recommendations from authoritative sources.

Key elements in this response include:

- Access: Creating 'local destinations' in every neighbourhood of quality green spaces;
- Quality design: Applying decent home standards to access to outdoor spaces, not just to building design while also helping to address deprivation and crime;
- Green infrastructure: Making children's play and physical and mental health key criteria in the planning and design of 'green infrastructure';
- Play space: Ensuring application of the Mayor's SPG on play space and recreation;
- Green space: Addressing threats to all green spaces, not just designated areas;
- Multi-functional space: A focus on the unique role quality local green space can and should provide in any area of the capital; and,
- Equalities, integration and culture: How social and cultural aims can be underpinned by proper treatment of children's access to the outdoors.

We should be pleased to meet to discuss this response and how making children's access to nature and natural play can make the rest of the Mayor's plans work; please contact us via: sowingtheseeds london@gmail.com

Access to nature and the outdoors – the missing thread for true integration

Mayor Khan made some important election manifesto pledges on London's natural environment including to:

- Protect London's green belt, green spaces + play spaces
- Strengthen protection for open spaces, playing fields and nature reserves
- Protect wildlife and biodiversity by creating green corridors through the city
- Improve walking and safety through the appointment of a pedestrian champion to lead on measures to make walking safer and easier
- Creating more walking routes around London
- Also creating more safe walking routes providing London children with cleaner and safer journeys to school, avoiding busy and polluted roads
- Setting targets to make more than 50 per cent of London is green
- Ensure that all children in London have access to nature

These appear to be largely missing from the Mayor's *City For All Londoners* document and so the opportunity is currently being missed to draw on these and the kind of approaches we suggest in this response to provide a unique driving force for change at street, neighbourhood, borough and city wide levels in ways no other measures can achieve addressing mental, physical and social development, public health and development, equalities and community interaction in a truly integrated way.

Sowing the Seeds

The *Sowing the Seeds* report² commissioned by the Mayor of London's Sustainable Development Commission, found that:

- Children and their parents value chances to have contact with nature and would like to get outdoors more but that children's experiences of natural places in London are in long-term decline, with the decline being steeper for children in poorer families and some BAME groups;
- A third of London families visits natural places only every 2 months or less often. 1 in 7 families had not made a single visit to a natural place in a year;
- Children in London face extra barriers to accessing nature because of high population densities, pressure on and deficiencies in local green spaces, and poorer access to private gardens;
- Legitimate fears for children's safety plus pressures on their time such as from schooling and the use of technology places competing demands on children's time despite evidence that contact with nature can aid learning, health and well-being;
- Some London children depend on their experiences of nature on schools and organisations such as play clubs, city farms and nature reserves, but these excellent schemes reach only a small proportion (4%) of London's children.

The report makes 12 recommendations focused on how London's children can obtain a 'balanced diet of everyday nature experiences'. Each recommendation would support and promote children's healthy development, well-being, health, confidence, self-reliance and attitudes to risks. The findings are borne out in other studies such as the Monitor of Engagement within the Natural Environment (MENE)³ and with the Marmot Review's recommendations for access to nature as part of healthy childhood development and the overcoming of inequalities.⁴

Natural benefits

When proper provision is made for children, we are in fact providing for families and the essential interaction between families outdoors is a fundamental building block for social integration. A growing number of studies show that children gain a range of benefits from spending time in nature, directly affecting their mental, physical and social development, their formal and informal learning, their ability to assess and deal with risk, and their basic physical and mental health and well-being.⁵ Studies include the Institute of Health Equality's report which found that children living close to green spaces have also higher levels of physical activity and are less likely to experience an increase in Body Mass Index (BMI). In the report Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England said: "Having access to high quality, local

² Sowing the Seeds, 2011, London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC)

<http://www.londonsdc.org/news/4/Sowing-the-Seeds--Reconnecting-Londons-Children-with-Nature>

³ Monitor of Engagement within the Natural Environment (MENE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-pilot-study-visits-to-the-natural-environment-by-children>

⁴ Marmot Review, 2010, Fair society, healthy lives: strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

⁵ A summary of some evidence of the benefits of children's access to nature

<https://sowingtheseedsblog.wordpress.com/losing-out/>

natural environments is critically important to promoting physical health and wellbeing in children and adults.”⁶

In terms of forming life-long habits for physical activity in the early years, the cost-effectiveness of provision and investment in green and blue space cannot be underestimated. Ofsted has also identified that contact with nature improves how children learn, formally and informally and outdoor learning gives them direct experience of the subject, making it more interesting and enhancing understanding.⁷

A 2007 study found that children who were exposed to nature scored higher on concentration and self-discipline, reasoning and observational skills, reading, writing, maths, science + social studies and working in teams and showed improved behaviour overall.⁸ These and other studies (see note 4) underline the benefits of allowing children far more and better contact with nature on a daily basis and how those benefits will be discarded and our children done a gross disservice unless leaders adopt and drive the kind of child centric policies advocated in this submission.

What is more, in mixed and diverse communities, children and services for them – such as parks and outdoor play spaces - provide a key focus for building cohesive, socially inclusive neighbourhoods. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has stated: “Studies of mixed income communities show that most mixing across social groups takes place between children. It is these contacts – in nurseries, playgroups, schools and in public spaces – that provide opportunities for adults to meet and form relationships. Children provide a common ground and shared interest between people in different tenures. People with children have a high stake in the success of a neighbourhood and the quality of its services.”⁹

All green and blue space

In this response we address both green and blue space for more and better contact with nature in London as both play an equally stimulating and crucial role. London has significant rivers, river banks, waterways and ponds that provide varied opportunities for tranquillity and activities for all of its population. We also address the full range of green spaces that play different roles at different times: from designated nature reserves to undesignated, often overlooked, green spaces; from parks and pocket parks to streets, school grounds and sport fields; and from woodlands to waste lands. Green and blue elements can also play a significant role from street trees that link spaces to better planting in city squares, spaces within development and rivers, canals and towpaths which Londoners can use more as playgrounds to link to the wider countryside.

⁶ Institute of Health Equality (2008) Natural Solutions to Tackling Health Inequalities

<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/natural-solutions-to-tackling-health-inequalities>

⁷ Ofsted (2008) Learning outside the classroom. www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/learning-outside-classroom

⁸ Sigman, A. (2007) Agricultural Literacy: Giving concrete children food for thought. www.face-online.org.uk/resources/news/Agricultural%20Literacy.pdf

⁹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2006) Mixed communities: success and sustainability

Sowing the Seeds London's specific comments and recommendations

Recommendation 1: Access

The Mayor's *City For All Londoners* should properly address access, especially walking, by creating 'local destinations' in every neighbourhood of quality green and blue spaces which people can access within 6 minutes of home, deriving benefits for cohesion, integration, health and sense of valued place and linking the quality of all neighbourhoods to the most basic forms of local access for most people – walking.¹⁰

The Mayor should ensure buy-in to this by the boroughs via healthy travel plans for schools including safe walking and cycling routes and by an updated London's natural environment / biodiversity strategy with a strong emphasis on public engagement, access, use for different activities and sense of ownership.

The Mayor should help make the links between walking, cycling and children's health and social development for example by using the Healthy Streets model promoted by the GLA and mentioned in part on pages 62 and 64 of the consultation document.

One way to promote healthy residential streets and show their potential as social spaces is the *Play Streets* model of resident-led short-term road closures. These are spreading in some parts of the capital, with over 40 in Hackney.¹¹ Yet in others they face bureaucratic obstacles. The Mayor should give strategic support to this initiative, including working with Boroughs to remove unnecessary barriers.

The intention to develop *Inclusive neighbourhood* policies and standards sounds like a good detailed area-based policy. Space making and how different people can be given permission to use them for all manner of activities, individually and collectively, to relax, play, learn and even improve conditions of spaces for nature as part of their own and sense of ownership. *Sowing the Seeds London* should be pleased to help with the development of this work.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

On page 11, introducing Part 4 of the document, the Mayor states: "...In addition, for the city to be green, healthy and more attractive, I will look to reduce traffic and encourage cycling and walking on 'Healthy Streets'. And I will do everything in my power to protect the city's heritage and culture and promote good design in public spaces to improve everyone's quality of life."

On page 55, Part 4 on *Environment, transport and public space*, the Mayor states, "...but it is equally important to remember that - if it is not well managed - growth has consequences, not least environmental. Protecting and improving our environment is a major consideration in everything I do – to improve the health of Londoners, to make sure our city remains attractive to people and businesses from around the world and to encourage social integration..."

On page 62, Part 4 on *Healthy Streets* the Mayor states: "This is just one part of my vision to create 'Healthy Streets' – which aims to reduce traffic, pollution and noise, create more attractive, accessible and people-friendly streets where everybody can enjoy spending time and being physically active, and ultimately to improve people's health. The delivery of 'Healthy Streets' will be different depending

¹⁰ Natural England research finds optimum use of green space if it is <6 minutes' walking distance

¹¹ Hackney Play Streets <http://hackney.gov.uk/play-streets>

on the location, but it will have a significant impact across London, because streets and roads make up around 80 per cent of all public space.”

In Part 5 on page 71, on *A Fairer More Equal City*, the Mayor states, “...Social integration relies on an affordable, accessible transport system, measures to improve health and reduce health inequality, and ensuring that the city’s amazing culture continues to thrive and unite us.”

In considering *Determinants of health inequalities* in Part 5 on page 75, the Mayor states, “My ultimate vision is for a healthier, fairer city for all Londoners, where nobody’s health suffers because of who they are or where they live. Achieving this means getting to grips with the wider social inequalities and differences in people’s living conditions, social support and environments that can profoundly affect their health. Many of the policies I am implementing in areas including housing, the environment, transport and active travel, planning and the economy will make an important difference to health inequalities.”

On page 67 on *Inclusive neighbourhoods* the Mayor states, “The built environment is an important determinant of people’s health and quality of life, and of how well a society integrates. Effective planning and good design can help to bring people of different ages, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds together, and it can support a wide range of civic activities. I am going to include an Inclusive Neighbourhoods principle in the London Plan which will ensure that places are accessible to all, both young and old and from all backgrounds, something crucial for social integration. Alongside the environmental and transport measures I have set out above, this will improve the city for all Londoners.”

Recommendation 2: Design

Decent home standards should be applied to access to outdoor spaces, not just to the design and construction of buildings and the ‘built environment’.

Strategic assessment should be carried out into what already exists and is needed in an area, rather than simply looking at an individual development when and if it is proposed. That should be the role both of the Mayor’s SDS, with the Mayor taking a lead role in assessing what green space / access / social assets exist and what their role can and should be, and of borough Local Plans, which should ensure that access to green open space as well as the design, layout and architecture is part of enhancing their area’s distinctiveness.

In her paper on housing and sustainability, the LSE’s Professor Anne Power states, “It is crucial that green spaces, play areas and outdoor recreation are protected in these dense neighbourhoods. Therefore, while arguing that infill capacity, which is currently ignored in official plans and targets, should be explored and prioritised, more careful environmental planning and social planning will be vital to the success of this approach.”¹²

Local access to green, blue and open spaces also needs proper attention, planning and maintenance if they are to provide children and families with the safe, pleasant routes to and from where they live for regular and daily use. Badly designed and maintained development, streets and housing is likely to exacerbate crime, an area’s

¹² Housing and sustainability: demolition or refurbishment? Power, Anne (2010) *Housing and sustainability: demolition or refurbishment?* Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers: Urban Design and Planning, 163 (4). pp. 205-216. ISSN 1755-0793 <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33697/>

decent into decay and further add to deprivation, people's sense of despair as well as the eventual costs of renewal.

This is illustrated well in the findings of the Lambeth Early Action Partnership's spring 2016 listening exercise into local views about housing and local environment in which respondents stated that, "Much of the housing is on large estates where parents reported feeling trapped and isolated. They were fearful of leaving their flats because the external environment did not make them feel safe..."¹³

Building in enterprise opportunities and access to nature helps avoid this descent saving money both in the short and long run. The potential is considerable because London is not short of poorly designed housing and other development which often over-uses land, taking space which could be used for other purposes and imposes often identical amenity landscaping of low natural value and of no benefit for health, learning, play, social interaction or distinctiveness. London's countless examples of poor development and where too much land is taken effectively closes down opportunities to use space in and around development for essential multi-functional purposes important to the Mayor's agenda.

While green space is often swallowed up in the name of housing provision, ironically, within existing and new developments, there are extensive areas of spaces with potential for the presence of nature that are simply concrete or hard surface, or uninspiring areas of mown grass. Attention to detail in terms of design is crucial.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

On page 23, column 2, the Mayor states, "We will build desirable places to live where environmental and social infrastructure, enterprise and leisure space are integrated into new zero-emission, resilient developments ('housing-led, mixed-use development'), and where more trains and low-emission buses run in areas where more people are living..." and "Other global cities show that it is possible to increase the density of our suburbs without sacrificing the 'feel' of these areas..."

In the section on *Good architecture and design* on page 65, the Mayor states that, "The London Plan has an important role to play in keeping standards high in the built environment - and I will use it to embed good architectural and design quality principles in new buildings and neighbourhoods. Of course, the nature of development will differ depending on the place, and it is vital that we respect the distinct character of different parts of the city. Its various 'villages' and urban quarters have developed along their own lines over the centuries and have come to form a hallmark of London's character..."

In the section on crime, deprivation and *Safer and More Secure Communities* on page 80, the Mayor states: "There are too many areas in London where people's life chances are being held back by a toxic mix of vulnerability, deprivation and criminality."

Recommendation 3: Infrastructure

The closest that the section on infrastructure comes to addressing the detail on quality of the urban environment is a few brief references to community spaces, social infrastructure and health issues.

Quality natural spaces, green and blue, can address and support social integration and all of the other benefits covered in this response but unless this is placed firmly

¹³ Listening to our Communities by the Stockwell Partnership, St Michael's Fellowship and Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP) 2016

in the Mayor's plans those will go to waste. The social development, learning, health and integration contribution of natural spaces is often not in the forefront of the mind as it needs to be.

This is another section of the document where the potential for the Mayor to address green, open space and its quality, use and access is missed. As a result, the unique contribution that green space and the presence of nature makes to this agenda is overlooked. This also requires proper recognition of all types of spaces, not just green belt and designated areas.

Although the Mayor does not have direct control over schools, the Mayor could champion ways to improve children's experiences and development, not simply focus on education. As part of this the Mayor should acknowledge, as part of children's development and education and green infrastructure, the role of nature and green spaces within schools and the importance of nature and green space close to where schools are when there is inadequate provision within school grounds. The importance of green space in relation to its delivery of outcomes in other sectors should make provision of green space rise up the agenda.

The focus on providing school places needs careful consideration as there is a trend for schools to expand by building on their school grounds when imaginative approaches, design can avoid the loss of space. The Mayor should champion the opening up of school grounds for community use and could trial this in pilot boroughs.

When planning new housing developments consideration should be given at consultation stage regarding how the resultant need for school places will be served and what impact that will have on existing school grounds.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

On page 28 the Mayor states, "London's culture embodies its amazing diversity – and people with different perspectives and life experiences, of different ages and backgrounds, make London what it is. London's social fabric is just as important as its physical fabric, and we must make sure that we plan for social infrastructure just as we plan for physical infrastructure. That means taking a strategic overview of the childcare facilities, community spaces, healthcare facilities and services to support the ageing population that the city needs now and will need in the future – alongside and within housing development. In particular, I want to make sure we have enough school places in London – by 2025, we will need an additional 105,000 secondary-school places and 60,000 new primary places. I also want to improve community-based healthcare facilities to support those with enduring physical and mental health issues and the needs of our aging population. As well as planning for the services that Londoners need, we also need to make sure that our city is designed to support and encourage social integration – by prioritising places and spaces where people can come together in communities. That means that we must base our planning for social infrastructure on the individual needs and priorities of communities and neighbourhoods across the city."

On page 48 the Mayor also states, "Keeping London competitive also means keeping London attractive. People want to live in a green and healthy city which is affordable and welcoming, and in communities that are diverse and inclusive..." and "In addition, our quality of life in London will increasingly be defined by the environment and the way that we as a city - and the businesses that operate here - respond to climate change. The Paris agreement of 2015 was a turning point in the world's approach to climate change and emphasised the importance of the low-carbon economy – to which London businesses will have to adapt in the coming years and decades. Viewed in this way, all my initiatives on the environment, culture and quality of life also improve business competitiveness."

In the section on *Children and young people* on page 50, the Mayor states, “At City Hall, I am not directly responsible for delivering early-years education or schooling – but it is my view that every child in London should have the best possible chances for health, happiness and success, and I want to take on a leadership role bringing together the organisations that shape our young people’s education. In Part 1, I set out my plans to take a more strategic approach to social infrastructure, to ensure there are enough childcare facilities and school places in the city. I will also work to ensure that London’s schools remain the best, and to improve the quality of early-years and post-16 education. I believe the city’s future prosperity depends on every child being able to attend a good or outstanding local school, not through a return of grammar schools. I want to do what I can to assist raising performance in schools by creating more opportunities for staff to learn from the best and celebrate excellence.”

Recommendation 4: Green infrastructure

Green infrastructure is now in wide use but is often poorly defined. The term must be clearly defined in terms of the required quality standards. Page 45 should set out more clearly what this means. Indeed, the section could be expanded and more detailed and there is space to do so as the section goes over to page 47.

We applaud the principle of integration across sectors. Green infrastructure will necessarily be pushed up the agenda as it is recognised that increased investment in high quality nature spaces addresses the most urgent social, equality and health issues of our time. Currently, the approach taken still regards infrastructure as shiny bright or grey concrete ‘stuff’. London is already poorly served by developers, architects, planners who prescribe and approve identikit amenity grass and concrete landscaped public spaces which provide little or no space for play, time to linger other than to eat a rushed lunch and discard litter, and certainly no engagement with or benefits for and from nature.

Children’s play, social development, and physical and mental health should be key criteria in the planning and design of any ‘green infrastructure’ as well as new housing – also see our recommendation 7 on *Good Growth*. When we provide for children, we are in fact providing for families and the essential interaction between families outdoors is a fundamental building block for social integration.

Well planned green infrastructure within school grounds can be used for the benefit of the whole community when access is free and unrestricted outside school hours. The potential of street planting should also be noted for its value in the linking up and therefore the provision of the sense of connection to green spaces in children’s and community life. A particular focus would be green routes to schools.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

On Page 45, Part 3 on *Infrastructure* the Mayor states, “...will work with infrastructure providers, large and small, to try to develop a common strategic investment programme for the capital covering transport (both Network Rail and TfL), water, energy, waste, green infrastructure and digital.”

Recommendation 5: Green space designation

Communities treasure their local green, blue and open spaces. Not all of these are ‘designated’ nature reserves or major parks but many are increasingly under threat from development and from the lowering of standards in maintenance of the urban domain. We applaud the Mayor’s protection of London’s green belt and its

designated green and open spaces, but ‘intensification’ should not mean the loss of green and open spaces which are not designated.

London has more than enough low quality development with low grade amenity grass and landscaping of dubious benefit. We advocate minimum standards for all spaces as part of the design brief and planning requirements in the London Plan.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

In the section on *Growth locations*, the Mayor states, “In the first instance, I want to protect the Green Belt and other designated green spaces. That means taking bold measures to meet as much of the city’s growth demands within London as possible. There is a need to intensify development across the city - and significantly in well-connected locations in the city that are well served by existing or planned transport capacity. I will use a number of methods, including well-designed higher-density development. TfL is, of course, one of my main areas of direct control, and I will fully join up my plans for transport with those for housing and other kinds of land use to make the best possible use of space and get the right things built.”

Recommendation 6: Multi-functional space

In its section on *Competing and interrelated land use*, *City for All Londoners* does not actually address how apparently competing demands of land will be resolved. The environmental focus tends to be on climate change, which is important but which should not be the only lens through which the strategy is conceived. Green and open spaces can be seen as one of the solutions / mitigations to climate change and at the same time has a significant role in and of itself for cultural, health, cohesion and other reasons.

A focus on the unique role quality local green spaces can provide in all neighbourhoods as a means of engagement and recreation which cannot be provided in other ways in the area – in the school, in local housing, etc. Left subject to cuts and declines in basic services, spaces will decay, become run down and the opportunity to involve community is a sense of place will be lost.

For example, in Lambeth Myatts Fields provides spaces, experiences and means of engagement and recreation which cannot be provided in other ways in the area – whether in local school, in local streets or in housing. But the park is subject to cuts and an expectation that community effort will automatically act as a complete safety net of what is currently provided.

This is an irreplaceable yet under-regarded asset by those in power, providing multi-functional space and benefits to a diverse range of people – from infants and parents to nursery age children, older local school children and people with learning needs and more. It is doubtful that the local authority and local community would be willing to pay for all of these benefits if they were charged at proper commercial going rate. Nor would they be able to obtain the full benefits in one place in a single visit.

Integrated thinking means that we must provide best value in our strategic thinking. Taking away green space and green space supported activities means increased spending in areas of mental and physical health, equalities, and social cohesion. Re-thinking re green space cuts is much needed to prevent siloed thinking that result in

waste of money overall. Taking away from one area while having to increase spend in another does not make sense.

While what is local is a priority, at the same time, the cost of access to the outstanding green and blue space of our city for poor and disadvantaged communities is an issue.

For example, many in east London may never have seen Richmond Park or many of London's wonderful woodlands or riverside destinations. Fortunately, Epping Forest has been protected by visionary approach over the long term and relatively recent plans to destroy much of Rainham Marsh in the east were defeated meaning that a major natural asset in east London have been saved and improved for all.

The experience of small local green spaces championed in this response can never fully replace the experience of nature at large. London's coming generation of children can be both city-dwellers and have the opportunity to know, enjoy and love nature, to perhaps be the next generation of defenders of nature, and part of truly sustainable urban living contributing to not undermining our very survival.

As proposed in recommendation 3 above, school grounds can and should also be opened up for communal use connecting schools and grounds to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

On page 19 *City for All Londoners* deals with *Competing and interrelated land use* stating that, "Land is in high demand for many other competing priorities, such as green space and infrastructure of all kinds. And we must be sure that the decisions we take do not undermine the environment or inhibit efforts to tackle climate change."

On page 22 on *Housing and mixed use land*, the Mayor states, "We need to be creative in how we think about space and promote mixed-use activity."

On Page 65 on *Public space*, the Mayor states, "London's public space - its streets, squares, parks, green spaces and waterways - are where the public life of the city is played out. It is vitally important to the character of the city. Fostering an open and accessible network of wonderful, well-designed and functional spaces should be at the heart of planning for a healthy, inclusive and prosperous city. 'Healthy Streets' are just one way I will make the city clean, green, resilient and attractive. As the city grows, it is also important that new developments are designed well and look good, that unique things about the city are not lost, and that we create a pleasant and interesting urban environment. The aim is a virtuous circle of improving the city's attractiveness to people from around the world, as well as providing a high quality of life, and promoting social integration for existing residents."

Recommendation 7: Good growth

The approach to 'Good growth' is incomplete as it currently overlooks the places London's children need to play for their physical, mental and social development, learning, health and contact with nature, and how addressing this would provide a unifying approach to physical design of place and space and outcomes of health, equalities, learning, access and community cohesion. The first years of life shape the future contribution of our next generation.

Page 33, Part 2 on *Housing* does not address the spaces around the housing that does / will get built. The Mayor should require a decent home standard that

incorporates both social and green infrastructure and the Housing for London Board should be examining both housing quantity and quality including local amenity.

The Children's Play Policy Forum seeks space and means to support appropriate play in public space, while reducing neighbourhood conflict and the resulting pressure on police time, and staffing for play provision to test innovative community-based health and well-being initiatives.¹⁴

Relevant sections requiring revision:

On page 23, column 2 the Mayor states, "We will build desirable places to live where environmental and social infrastructure, enterprise and leisure space are integrated into new zero-emission, resilient developments ('housing-led, mixed-use development'), and where more trains and low-emission buses run in areas where more people are living..."

"Other global cities show that it is possible to increase the density of our suburbs without sacrificing the 'feel' of these areas..."

Also, on page 25, the Mayor states that, "Accommodating the rising population, economic growth and other activities in London will change our experience of the city. This is why it is crucial that proper planning takes place at an early stage to address the challenges. For example, access to green space can affect people's mental and physical health. And some people have concerns about development and growth leading to pressure on local services, changes in the community and the character of an area, and potential damage to the local environment. Mistakes have been made in the past when planning development in big cities, in cases where governments have myopically focused on one amenity without seeing the bigger picture. Examples include huge, mono-tenure housing estates that did not account for people's broader needs, and big transport schemes built without housing developments around them. It is important that history does not repeat itself – which is why 'good growth' is so important."

Recommendation 8: Green growth

A very brief mention of "access to green spaces" here is all too brief and vague about how that space will be protected, improved and accessed.

The approach to green growth is also too narrowly focussed on design measures which are largely about addressing how the built environment mitigates climate change and flood risk. These are important areas in themselves but they are not the whole story and, crucially, they are measures that are usually done to areas and to communities whereas the creation of proper places for children to engage with nature can be a community owned and designed process, if done well.

In many densely populated parts of London, school grounds could make a big difference to the play and informal leisure opportunities on offer. Yet concerns about liability, litigation and maintenance create insurmountable barriers. While the Mayor does not have direct powers over schools, he is in a position to kickstart pilot initiatives to expand community access to school grounds and release a huge resource and vast benefits to the quality of life of local communities.

School grounds have a valuable role to play in mitigating flood risk, school grounds should be exemplars of sustainable urban drainage systems. School grounds should also be benefitting their immediate residential communities by planting trees and

¹⁴ Children's Play Policy Forum <https://childrensplaypolicyforum.wordpress.com/publications/>

allowing green growth and canopy in order to cool the surrounding environment. Use of planted green roofs in new school buildings would do much to reduce the super-heating effect of more traditional roofing surfaces.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

Pages 23 and 24 the Mayor states, "...With growth of this scale, it is important that current residents feel comfortable with local changes and that new developments are desirable places to be. I will therefore develop the city according to the principles of 'good growth'... We will build desirable places to live where environmental and social infrastructure, enterprise and leisure space are integrated into new zero-emission, resilient developments ('housing-led, mixed-use development'), and where more trains and low-emission buses run in areas where more people are living."

On page 27 the Mayor states, "As the city grows, it must remain green and healthy – for example with clean air and easy access to green space and cleaner energy. It must also be resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as rising temperatures and more intense rainfall. I will protect and improve London's environment in a number of ways – including by planning 'green' roofs and walls into new developments to mitigate flood risk, and maintaining and enhancing the extensive green spaces that set London apart from many comparable cities. My ambition is of actively improving the environment as we build more, and of working towards a zero carbon London by 2050."

Recommendation 8: Inclusion and equalities

The health and inclusivity sections of the document's Part 5 (pages 69-85) are all ripe for using the thread of access to quality green space for health, leisure, learning, social contact and more, as a unifying factor in the Mayor's health inequalities strategy breaking out of siloes of physical and mental health, green infrastructure, streets and neighbourhoods and so on.

The *Sowing the Seeds* report shows that it is the poorest children that have least access yet tend to experience the most stress and other factors affecting their health and development and access and inclusion.

Quality green open spaces are one of if not *the* cheapest way of providing services and healthy conditions for the capital, and are the natural meeting point for people of all circumstances and backgrounds to interact in ways which are richer than experienced shopping centres, transport interchanges and other built settings which tend to be prioritised in the document. They are a focal point for active citizenship, for learning, even for food growing; they should be made more of as 'local destinations' and 'community centres' on people's doorsteps.

Lots of communities gravitate to their local spaces for cultural activities from festival and fairs to sports events and self organised events although cuts to local council budgets is a growing concern and possible threat to the basic availability of spaces and their maintenance and people's willingness to use them if poorly maintained let alone being improved in ways that would expand opportunities and increase biodiversity.

The important references to sports in the document should be complemented by expanding choice for people who are not overly competitive or seeking to play team games. The Strategic Planning Guidance on play endorsed by previous London Mayors should be utilised in linking across formal sports and recreation and less formal forms of activity outdoors and ways of using existing and new spaces.

Currently, the sections of the document on the capital's culture misses the opportunity to regard green, blue and open spaces as part of that culture. The section regards culture as spaces for leisure and interaction but does not consider how these spaces can be improved and used more as green, blue, and open space to support community activity, exchange and the many other benefits set out in this response.

Traditionally, being outdoors is part of national family life, and this way of life, of access to tranquillity, has always been a strong part of British culture. The setting for this way of life is being eroded in our cities other than for more privileged members of the community who can escape the urban setting to head for 'the countryside'. This should be addressed by planning for full access and engagement with green, blue and open spaces by all.

Relevant sections requiring revision:

On page 83, the Mayor addresses *Participation in culture* and states, "...But for all London's amazing cultural assets, it is a real shame that, at the moment, only one third of Londoners feel that they make the most of the culture on their doorstep... still too many Londoners are not fully making the most of what the city has to offer."