

Appendix B Excerpts from Creative Lewisham Culture and Urban Development Commission 2001 full report

SETTING THE SCENE

The Mayor of Lewisham felt it was time to 'seize the moment' of change and opportunity and he asked me in November 2000 to chair the Culture and Urban Development Commission. The purpose of the Commission has been to explore and recommend to the Council the step changes needed to transform Lewisham into a stimulating environment so that it becomes recognised, locally and nationally, as a more visible and notable centre for creativity, cultural development, the arts and urban design. The purpose too has been to develop a strategic synthesis between arts, culture, economy, urban vitality, landscape and urban design and to provide suggestions for strategies, programmes and projects as well as how these filter down into mechanisms for delivery.

The guiding vision has been to see how Lewisham can be enlivened by encouraging sky high ambition mixed with realism. Although it is always easier to go with the tried and tested and be satisfied with second best, that is not good enough for Lewisham. It will not tap the underlying potential.

The main focus of the Commission's enquiry has been: what needs to happen so we can

- Create a climate to enable residents of Lewisham and visitors to experience and participate in a rich cultural life.
- Equip Lewisham residents with the skills and expertise to flourish in every field of creative endeavour so supporting their economic and social well-being.
- Provide an urban design framework that results in a physical environment that engages, inspires and enthral.
- Produce an overall ambience and public realm that triggers a sense of pride in residents and admiration in visitors.

We consulted as widely as possible within time and resource constraints so establishing an overview of the Lewisham situation in terms of cultural activities and built environment projects. In Phase One we undertook:

- interviews and conversations (about 60 in all) with people who have an overview of individual sectors, e.g., urban renewal projects, multi-cultural arts, the creative industries
- visits with key officers and other stakeholders across the Borough to look at initiatives spanning all fields of relevance to the Commission's work
- desk research

The formal launch of the Commission in January 2001 was followed by a series of themed Cluster meetings with key individuals within each sector. These meetings – 14 in all – included: Citizens' Panel, arts and education, lifelong learning, multi-cultural arts, urban renewal projects, the voluntary sector, urban design, young people, the commercial creative industries, health, and geographically-based clusters such as Downham. Over 300 people contributed to this consultation phase.

On the basis of this survey and research, an interim report called 'Lewisham: A Living Work of Art' was published on 1 March 2001 and put out to wide consultation. This survey of opinions, possibilities and problems has been integrated into this final report.

In the second phase of the Commission's work two panels of Commissioners – one on the Built Environment, one on the Arts and Creative Industries – were appointed by the Chair, to raise issues of substance and 'take evidence' from 30 'expert witnesses' of whom two thirds were directly connected to Lewisham, the rest being acknowledged leaders in their field. The purpose was to bring as many perspectives as possible to bear on the issues facing Lewisham, and receive help in making recommendations on how to move forward.

TWIN TRACKS SAME DESTINATION: NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE COMMISSION'S BRIEF

The Commission's brief has been difficult, because it deals with two of the most complicated words in the English language – culture and creativity. 'Creativity' is an overused concept difficult to define or grasp and often only associated with the arts. Briefly, genuine creativity involves the capacity to think problems afresh or from first principles; to discover common threads amidst the seemingly chaotic and disparate; to experiment; to dare to be original; to rewrite rules; to visualise future scenarios; and perhaps most importantly 'to work at the edge of one's competences rather than at the centre of them'. These ways of thinking encourage innovation and generate new possibilities. Differing types of creativity are needed to develop and address the complexities of a place which continuously needs to deal with conflicting interests and objectives. This might be the creativity of scientists to solve problems related to pollution or that of planners to generate new urban policy; that of engineers to solve technical problems concerned, say, with transport; that of artists to help reinforce the identity of a place or spur the imagination; that of business people to generate new products or services that enhance wealth creation possibilities; as well as those working in the social domain in order to develop social innovations that might help with issues such as social fragmentation. Creative solutions can come from any source whether from within the worlds of the public, private or voluntary sectors or from individuals operating on their own behalf. The key issue is to provide the conditions within which creativity can flourish.

The term 'culture' is even more elusive because it has multiple meanings. On the one hand the brief discusses 'culture and development' and on the other 'cultural development'. The first is about beliefs, traditions and ways of living and how they affect behaviour and the things people do. So when we talk of 'culture and urban development in Lewisham' we are discussing the relationship between cultural factors and Lewisham's development and how these influence each other. For example, if Lewisham were to have low self-esteem and little confidence this would be a cultural factor determining how it develops. Equally if being imaginative is not legitimised or, alternatively, if a technocratic mindset is allowed to dominate, these would be cultural factors shaping Lewisham's future. All development is cultural as it reflects the way people perceive their problems and opportunities. Culture is central, because it 'is the sum total of original solutions a group of human beings invent to adapt to their.....environment and circumstances.'

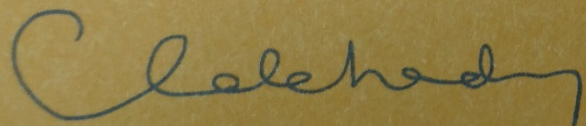
The focus of the Commission's report is to argue for a culture of creativity, high ambition, entrepreneurship and opportunity, beauty and acute sensitivity to high quality urban design, all of which shape the physical and social environment in Lewisham. The report highlights too the need to devolve power and for collaboration inside and outside the borough. It is about developing citizenship. The Commission's report seeks to affect the culture of Lewisham in general and its organisational culture in particular so that the borough becomes more resourceful and confident. This cultural capital represents the raw materials and scope within which the creativity of people in Lewisham can operate.

On the other hand, this report focuses on cultural development in its humanistic and artistic dimension including the arts as an empowering, self-expressive activity; the arts as helping provide meaning, purpose and direction; the arts as fostering aesthetic appreciation and the arts as creative industries. Yet in this particular instance these elements are intimately connected to the objectives above. Firstly, because the arts encourage a particular form of critical imagination which the Commission seeks to help embed more deeply into Lewisham's culture. Secondly, the arts are concerned with quality, attractiveness, performance and beauty and the design of our environment and how it is animated – again a key feature of the Commission's overall objective with its focus on urban design and a holistic, urbanistic approach to development. Thirdly, the Commission is concerned with the economic and social well-being of the borough, where the arts and creative industries play a role both as economic engines of growth as well as in terms of their social impacts. As a consequence, the arts and culture in this narrower sense affect as well as draw on the work of other fields from economic development to health and planning.

Therefore some recommendations are concerned with organisational culture and the broader culture of developing Lewisham in a more creative, resourceful and confident way, whilst others are concerned with strengthening the arts and urban design sectors.

AND FINALLY

Although I am the author of this report it would have been impossible to write without the ideas and help of numerous individuals, in particular: the members of the Commission's Steering Group - Aileen Buckton, Emma Peters, Hilary Renwick, Fiona Nicol; the Panel Members and Witnesses; the Cluster Members; everybody interviewed individually; Ryan McDade, the Commission's Co-ordinator; and Gin Dunscombe, the Head of the Commission.



CHARLES LANDRY
JUNE 2001

SUMMARY

CREATIVE LEWISHAM

Lewisham aspires to be the best place in London to live, work and learn. In November 2000 the Council set up the Culture & Urban Development Commission to help achieve the vision of the borough as a visually exciting, creative and imaginative hub within London. The commission's report recommends the step changes needed to transform Lewisham into an inspiring physical and social environment through a more coherent synthesis between urban design, arts, culture and the economy.

The time is right for Lewisham to grasp its distinctive opportunities. To harness its potential requires a shift away from responding reactively to proactive agenda setting, to seeking opportunity and connecting with the wider pan-London agenda. It requires an entrepreneurial way of thinking and acting whereby Lewisham seeks out the partners it wishes to work with; those who can help achieve the vision.

To maximise potential means encouraging a culture of creativity and imagination and embedding it throughout Lewisham's organisational landscape. It requires an uplift in ambition and boldness, and the need to elevate urban design as well as to understand the varied impacts of involvement in the arts and creative industries.

To create a critical mass for this vision, we propose a series of catalytic projects which express and embody Lewisham's heightened ambition. We suggest making the often invisible talent and interesting projects, especially those in education, more visible, and building on Lewisham's remarkable cluster of educational institutions. This we believe will maximise the potential of the diversity of skills, knowledge and experience which already exist and can be further nurtured. This is best achieved by providing an operating environment which is more open, is willing to take accountable risks and which devolves more power. This means whenever possible thinking outside boxes, hierarchies and structures.

A MASS OF POSSIBILITIES

There are innumerable possibilities to make a more creative Lewisham. They include: Using schools, further and higher education to spread the word about creating a vibrant cultural and visual environment; seeking to work with the best of the architectural profession and when appropriate getting artists involved from the outset: this may involve creating competitions for new buildings; creating more artists' residency schemes, some in unusual settings from hospitals to social care facilities to commercial businesses; developing more niche festivals around special interests or children's projects along the lines of Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre; attracting larger creative businesses to the borough of, say, 10-50 employees so that an emerging pool of talent can readily find employment and ensuring that the newly designated Creative Enterprise Zone becomes a lived reality; encouraging more work/live spaces and providing more creative business incubator units or artists' studio premises; explaining through the careers advisory service the potential of careers in the arts and creative industries; doing more audits of potential such as of the rivers, topography and heritage; creating beacons or landmarks out of railway stations or borough entry points to enhance the sense of identity and arrival: an example would be to develop an artistic trail from the Horniman to Forest Hill station; working on a stronger design consciousness by cleaning up the street scene of unsightly advertising hoardings, traffic signs, railings and damaged paving as well as designing out crime and anti-social behaviour; this might involve taking a leaf out of Southwark's approach to involving artists in designing the public realm; enhancing the image of libraries as venues and centres for social interaction; having more information about what is going on in the borough by creating guides, maps and web-sites for Lewisham; finding ways of putting Lewisham on the music and theatre circuit by attracting a venue like Ocean to come to the borough; creating more international links with similar boroughs from places as different as New York or Mozambique and connecting these to a diaspora programme perhaps by hosting Diaspora's Music Village in Lewisham; drawing on the potential of the third sector as a gateway to excluded communities; involving young people wherever possible in decision-making and seeing the borough's rich mix as an opportunity not a threat. With projects like these and the many more that would develop naturally, Lewisham will over time

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

To create a self-sustaining momentum for change Lewisham's key stakeholders need to be engaged in an advocacy process so that the vision of a creative Lewisham becomes more deeply embedded and is expressed in the projects each party independently undertakes.

The Council as instigator of the Commission should initially lead this process, yet share decision making and responsibilities as soon as possible. We highlight over 30 catalytic projects ranging from the development of the Creative Enterprise Zone to a new Downham Library/Leisure Complex, which demonstrate the rich possibility of partnerships.

We propose a Creative Lewisham Agency as the vehicle through which that partnership is expressed. Its initial purposes are to kickstart and support the recommended strategies; to help maximise opportunities especially those in North Lewisham and audit those in the South; to communicate the Creative Lewisham agenda and to develop a fundraising strategy to help initiatives get off the ground. The agency should have an Advisory Board made up of external experts. Within Lewisham Council a steering group on Creative Lewisham should be set up with an appointed co-ordinator.

Only with a set of focused structures can the opportunities be harnessed arising from, amongst many, Goldsmiths, Lewisham College, the new Laban, the re-opened Horniman Museum, the Blackheath entertainments cluster, the Thames Gateway initiative, the plans of the Learning and Skills Council, the Art of Regeneration SRB, the Stephen Lawrence Techno Centre and Cockpit Arts' proposed move.

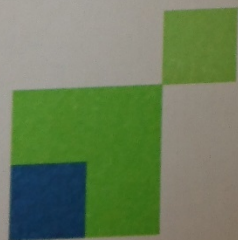
Any project that impacts on the physical environment should be assessed from an urban design perspective and to increase design standards the plethora of tools from design guides to competitions should be used. Lewisham Council can play an important role in this by enlarging the resources and realigning the urban design function within the Regeneration Directorate; by increasing the emphasis on visual arts, design, public art and architecture by developing an Urbanism and Urban Design strategy including a Landmarking Strategy and a Lewisham Design Guide. It can also use world-renowned architects to assess Lewisham's major built environment projects and adopt initiatives ranging from Placecheck and Architectural Foundation approaches to involvement in creating better environments as standard practice. Embedding this consciousness more widely means that organisations such as the Lewisham Strategic Partnership should include people with urban design and cultural understanding.

The Regeneration Directorate can use assets to even greater regenerative effect, such as by making sites and buildings available at reduced rates or using capital receipts creatively to support arts led regeneration projects. A primary example is to maximise the £52million schools PFI where urban design and arts objectives can combine imaginatively.

The Cultural Department equally needs an uplift in resources, personnel, skills and vision. With partners, it needs to map opportunities from arts and the curriculum to cultural animation, the evening economy, heritage and the creative industries to take the Commission's proposals further. In so doing it should connect more regionally, nationally and internationally as a means of accessing greater resources as well as raising Lewisham's profile.

THE WAY FORWARD

Lewisham Council while key, is not the only actor. Everyone can play a part in contributing to a creative Lewisham. It requires energy, will and ambition. Success depends on the active involvement of everyone associated with Lewisham, and on those who, inspired by this vision, want to get involved. If done well, Lewisham will be positively transformed in the next decade and become a model for integrated urban development from which others can learn.



OVERVIEW

CREATIVE LEWISHAM: TOWARDS A LIVING WORK OF ART?

THE TIME IS RIPE

Lewisham stands at the cusp of a rare but complex opportunity that cannot be grasped by a 'business as usual' approach. The stakes are high and cannot be harnessed solely by traditional means. It requires a shift in aspiration and expectation and a desire to continuously improve on previous best. It calls for an understanding that a culture that fosters imagination, that sees the benefits of using the arts and that encourages high quality urban design can tangibly help define and implement the 'Lewisham vision'. It cannot happen overnight. It will take time to unfold in its fullness. Done well the whole can become much more than the sum of the parts.

'Creative Lewisham', the Commission's report, seeks to be the catalyst that helps spell out potential so providing a compass to help move from good ideas to practical actions on the ground. A degree of urgency is required as opportunities do not last forever and passivity is not a solution. The trick is to identify when the public sector should intervene, when it should influence and when it is right to leave things to the market. The time is ripe to catch the conjunction of special circumstances. What are these special circumstances?

The Age of Creativity

For people and places in the 21st century, it will be their creativity, in all facets, in responding to their challenges that will largely determine their success or failure. Today places like Lewisham have one crucial resource – their people: their cleverness, ingenuity, aspirations, motivations, imagination and creativity. Crucially, regeneration and renewal is a much more subtle and over-arching process than previously appreciated. It is essentially holistic and embraces economic, social, political, environmental and cultural factors. It is more than simply technological innovation. It is more than physical improvements on their own and involves innovation at every level of decision making. Organisational capacity appropriately structured has been acknowledged as a tool for urban competitive advantage which needs to be creatively developed. Physical changes assist; they can help build confidence and provide visible markers of progress. Yet, if renewal is to be self-sustaining, people need to feel involved and to have the opportunity to give of their best. And this needs to start right at the beginning by adapting the curriculum and by re-assessing the ways people are taught thereby maximising opportunities for employment. This means nurturing a place's ability to mobilize its ideas, talents and creative organisations.

Dynamics of London

More specifically in the context of Lewisham, the dynamics of London have changed dramatically over the last decade fermenting the emergence of the South East London phenomenon. Its catalyst is a combination of factors including the extension of the underground and development of the DLR; the establishment of a series of landmark projects such as Tate Modern; the relative price advantage of housing in South London and the growth of Canary Wharf, where employment is set to rise by 60,000 over the next 5 years. This overall dynamic connects Lewisham more firmly to London's destiny and to that of the wider world as part of London's role as a world city. All South East London boroughs are feeling these impacts which are generally positive but not by definition so. Lewisham needs to direct the dynamic so its own goals are met and strengthened. And importantly Lewisham cannot see itself as a self-contained island.

Home grown potential

Lewisham's opportunity is also self-generated. For example, the educational institutions and projects of national and international significance from large to small; the buoyant creative industries cluster and a motivated and experienced voluntary sector, especially in the north of the borough. These have not come out of nowhere. They have been fermenting for 15 years. They are rooted. They have done their time, so to speak. They are now coming to the boil and their networks have reached critical mass.

A spin-off is that many artists – perhaps 2000 – have stayed on after education and, as a consequence, there is a boom in creative businesses – over 550 at the last count. This is impacting well beyond Lewisham in terms of perceptions people have of Lewisham and in developing connections, synergy, networking and joint projects within and outside the borough. In sum this represents a remarkable cluster of institutions and activities which with some fine-tuning and recognition of potential can do even more. To talk of Lewisham becoming a more creative place is not simply hype but has a sound basis in reality. The discussion as to whether the arts regenerate areas is academic in Lewisham as they have already done so.

Pushing at an open door

Additional factors shaping Lewisham's increased potential and its aim of harnessing creativity and fostering good urban design include the increased recognition of creativity and the arts as drivers of the emerging economy, and, in urban regeneration, the increased understanding of the role of the creative industries. Of special note is the use of new information technology within creative industries businesses and in turn their role in education. The recognition too that the arts can have a central role in building social capital and so contribute to helping the social inclusion agenda has had an impact. Witness, therefore, the policies of the DCMS, DFEE, DTI, GLA and London Development Agency from which, if Lewisham is focused, a high level of resources could be exploited. In addition government has clearly set the agenda for urban design issues to be addressed with vigour and confidence as a number of key policies and legislative documents exist to aid the promotion of good design. The Urban White Paper agenda is one and is likely to have knock-on effects in terms of Planning Policy Guidelines. All in all the incentives and regulatory regime is shaping up in a way that feeds well into Lewisham's emerging objectives, yet Lewisham's development potential depends on its own balanced repertoire of encouragement and safeguards.

TURNING PROBLEMS INTO OPPORTUNITIES

But it is not all a blessing. Lewisham operates in a competitive environment and other places have also thought of culture and creativity to revitalize themselves so Lewisham cannot take its opportunities for granted. In addition some tangible problems exist. When the DLR opened, footfall in Lewisham Town Centre increased by 24%, only to decline rapidly when the overall experience was found wanting. Lewisham's visual environment needs a significant uplift to mark a change in attitude, ambition and offer. It is not enough to transform people's sense of themselves and their possibilities, say through the arts, if they are then dropped into a mundane and at times degrading urban setting. A litmus question to ask is simply: **Does the urban environment in Lewisham uplift or deflate?**

Another problem is that it is not only creatives who find parts of Lewisham attractive but property developers seeking to satisfy the demand for executive housing. The pressure to gentrify is

enormous. Starting in the North its tentacles are already spreading elsewhere in the borough. These external pressures for change are threatening to overwhelm that which has taken so long to nurture – yet at the same time within that regeneration and gentrification nexus there is also some good in terms of innovation and development.

The strategic question for Lewisham is whether it wants to be more of a dormitory or a mixed-used community. The answer is obvious – it is the latter. Can Lewisham twist the development dynamic to that goal? The Council has already taken some hard decisions. For example, to maintain diversity of interesting uses it has sold sites at below market rates to arts groups, creative businesses and community organisations arguing that the non-financial benefits will in the long run pay off in innumerable ways. This is courageous.

A complex issue is that the North Lewisham mix which is at the core of Lewisham's current opportunities is difficult to seamlessly translate into Bellingham or Downham. The North and South of the borough are different and there is a psychological distance. So the South will have its own solutions and opportunities. Yet there are lessons to take from Deptford. One focus might be to develop capacity building thereby encouraging a critical mass of new style, entrepreneurial voluntary organisations to develop, and not only in the arts. Another is to develop some inspirational landmarks that engender civic pride and motivation such as the new library/leisure complex.

In spite of everything Lewisham can regard itself as extremely fortunate. It has a diversity of assets that would be mightily expensive, if not impossible, to reinvent from scratch. To build on the potential and overcome problems, it is time to grasp possibilities with foresight and in the spirit of the Commission's perspective. In a decade Lewisham could be transformed in its sense of self and how it projects to the wider world. This in turn will generate further opportunities and funding, creating possibly a virtuous, reinforcing cycle of positive developments.



CATALYSTS

There are many catalysts to trigger the process. They include: promoting the emergence of the new Laban; confirming the status of the Creative Enterprise Zone in Deptford; building on the potential of the creative industries through a considered business development initiative; projecting the activities of the remarkable cluster of educational institutions – Goldsmiths, Lewisham College, Laban and Trinity College; harnessing the re-opening of Horniman's Museum in 2002 to reflect the diversity of what Lewisham offers; generating a truly ambitious development at Convoys Wharf; maximising the opportunities of the Meridian Gateway; using the borough's schools and hospital PFIs as innovative test cases to show the scheme can generate quality and innovation especially outside the North; developing a transformatory flagship through the New Deal for Communities at New Cross Gate; using the Sundermead Estate redevelopment to set the standard for Lewisham town centre; confirming the building of a new Downham library/leisure complex; ensuring the new Goldsmiths Gateway Building reflects strong imagination; finding ways of supporting Lewisham College's new Centre for the Performing and Creative Arts; using the Art of Regeneration SRB to measure evidence of arts impact in schools so unleashing later resourcing for arts in schools initiatives; considering whether to apply for 'curriculum derogation' so as to highlight creativity across all subjects thereby bending the curriculum; developing the 24-hour school concept involving creativity and community learning as well as parent involvement and cross-generational work; achieving the Artsmark gold standard for a number of schools and specialist arts status for a borough school; establishing enduring relationships and agreed longer term programmes within the Creative Partnerships initiative; ensuring that the Lewisham Arts and Education Network has greater profile; drawing in new partners to the borough such as the Architectural Foundation, Urban Space Management and Cultural Co-operation; re-using empty estate shops for creative uses; instigating some visionary design work around Catford Square, Forest Hill, Sydenham, Honor Oak and the other Lewisham neighbourhoods.

GOING WITH THE GRAIN OF TRENDS

In developing strategies and pursuing catalyst projects a number of issues need addressing. They include: understanding such trends as the inter-cultural agenda and dealing with diversity and difference – perhaps the key urban issue of the beginning of the 21st century. This can be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. London, of course, has only become a world city over the centuries because of the influx of people, ideas and connections. Overall, Lewisham reflects London's developing cosmopolitan mix, but its population diversity is clustered more in the North with parts of the South largely being white.

A second issue is the revolution in the economy with the creative industries playing a more central role and Lewisham does not want to miss out. The consequent need to equip the population with new skills for 21st century puts creative education, at all levels, in a completely new light. Here information technology will play a crucial role.

Thirdly, Lewisham cannot ignore the so-called 'experience economy', a rapprochement between everyday living, consumption and spectacle which shapes what cities look and feel like. It will affect planning, land use and use orders. This process is turning retailing into a part of the entertainment industry, often blurring the boundaries between shopping, learning and the experience of culture. Here design, multimedia applications, theatrics and soundscapes move centre stage.

Lastly, there is a recognition that the concept of development and regeneration has broadened and that physical and economic renewal cannot be detached from social renewal – and as a further twist from cultural renewal.

DEVELOPING AUDIENCES BY RETHINKING PROVISION

In order to develop audiences, Lewisham needs to assess new trends and review from scratch its current venue infrastructure. It might ask: What is a venue? What kind of buildings do we need? What is the level of quality we expect as normal? What happens in an arts centre? What is the role of a library, a theatre, a park, a museum, a play area? What is an appropriate future-oriented festival for Lewisham? A station could become an art gallery, or an arts centre a healthy living centre linking sports, arts and dance, a doctors' or physios' surgery could be incorporated into a venue, again widening potential audiences. A venue is a dedicated building, but it can also be the street. Art exhibitions could be on the streets. How we see venues has implications for what planners, licensing authorities and the police can do to create an environment within which cultural expression can flourish.

IMPLEMENTING WITH A SENSE OF BALANCE

At the heart of strategy-making certain considerations are crucial. They include: balancing large projects with small, fostering the glitzy and the less glamorous, ensuring that the wealth of ideas and talent in Lewisham becomes more visible and that this is reflected in the physical environment or activity programming. This is especially important for less high profile projects of wider significance like Second Wave, MIDI, Entelechy, Lewisham Young Peoples Theatre, IRIE dance, the Get Set for Citizenship programme. Important, too, is focusing on ladders of opportunity so linking education to business training; spreading opportunities that exist in the North of the borough into the South; ensuring that, whenever appropriate, inter-borough projects and strategy-making is fostered throughout South East London to create coherence of approach, access to resources, effectiveness and impact; encouraging development without creating too many negative side-effects of gentrification; creating a mixed-use environment which balances the local production of culture with possibilities to consume it; finding ways to use heritage assets combining innovation and tradition imaginatively; making certain there is a mix of large flagship projects whilst paying attention to smaller projects that replenish the creative base; combining, for example, incremental

improvements to the streetscape with big ideas such as re-creating Lewisham Interchange; attracting stimulators from outside whilst building on home-grown community projects; leveraging in commitment from the private sector and its desire 'to get on with it' within a more equitable public interest vision. And finally, when necessary, stretching the incentives and regulatory framework and being a pioneer in order to fulfil Lewisham's aspirations.

THE PHYSICAL FEEL

The clarion call of Creative Lewisham will increase expectations citizens have for themselves by fostering their aspirations through inspiring them – and much of that inspiration will need to come from the physical feel of Lewisham. It can develop a sense of place, identity and distinctiveness as well as engender a feeling of engagement and loyalty that gives citizens a stake by working with its culturally distinctive features. New buildings in Lewisham feel less new than they should and the architecture is less bold and innovative than it could be. For most, first impressions of Lewisham disappoint and first impressions are also our last. Lewisham's offer is both seamless and rather samey and for outsiders can feel disorienting as there are insufficient landmarks or moments of surprise to guide the visitor, to seduce and encourage them to stay on. The key issue in competitive terms is: 'Is this enough?'

In short, the urban picture has potential to improve dramatically. One route is for artists working with architects to infuse the totality of Lewisham by transforming offices, the shopping centre itself, bus shelters, buses, seating, waymarkings, lighting, entry points and portals which, if seen through the eyes of the artistic imagination, could create a sense of drama and expectation. It therefore makes sense to reconceive Lewisham as 'A Living Work of Art' and overcomes the culture of: 'Up to a standard, down to a cost!' As Lewisham operates in a competitive environment regionally and nationally it will need to lift its game.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Grasping potential will mean overcoming obstacles. Some of these are to do with awareness, others with political will or lack of resources, organisational structures and skills sets. Ideas are easy. Implementing them is quite another matter because it challenges existing ways of operating. Inevitably large organisations have aspects of institutional lethargy and the operating environment often cannot be bent to new purposes. To create the energy to make change feel worthwhile means providing and seeing the evidence of its impact, whether that be locally as with Peckham Library, or nationally with Glasgow or Huddersfield or internationally with Bilbao. The most powerful awareness-raising tool is 'seeing is believing' which will show that investing in quality and culture adds value and is not a fad, that it is to be seen as an investment and not a grant.

Implementing Creative Lewisham will require rethinking at a number of levels and developing new partnerships within the Council itself, between the Council and other actors in the borough, making links between significant players in the borough but not connected to the Council and crucially with new outsiders. By definition Creative Lewisham is a cross-departmental activity. Only when this occurs can synergies be created, new ideas, perspectives and opportunities be generated and consequently new resources drawn in. New resources will be required and not all of these are to do with money.

MAKING THE MOST OF POSSIBILITIES

To prepare the Council and other stakeholders for the Creative Lewisham agenda requires an uplift in resources, personnel and skills, for example in the Cultural Department and, similarly, for some aspects of the Regeneration Directorate's work. It requires providing the capacity to shift away from reactively responding to proactive agenda setting, to opportunity seeking and connecting. Equally the space should be created to be proactive in identifying and targeting people of talent from developers to festival organisers or anyone else they wish to attract. This will have additional spin-offs in terms of new ideas generated, profile and word-of-mouth reputation. It demands an entrepreneurial way of thinking. It means connecting the arts and urban design agenda to the objectives of other departments from Economic Development to Social Care & Health, Health, Safety and the Police. The policies of many departments therefore need to mesh and new policy handshakes initiated.

It means recognising, too, the complexity of the task and the need to work with partners, and wherever possible devolving power and trading it for creative influence. It implies recognising new skills and jobs to help bring out the most of Lewisham, both from outsiders and insiders: the cluster of skills concerned with being an amateur, an urbanist or an urban designer. It implies too that decision makers in Lewisham become a community of learners – such as recognising good ideas elsewhere or valuing what urbanism is about – essentially the dynamics of how cities work and their aesthetics. This requires awareness raising and training. Indeed the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has begun to lobby for councillors to have some form of urban design training as a requirement.

The cultural and urban design agenda will move centre stage in regeneration when the planning toolkit is used imaginatively, which would also get across an understanding that the nature of planning has changed. When orchestrated effectively it can create dramatic change, especially when guidelines and incentives are rethought, when development briefs incorporate a sharp vision and when design guides leave room for innovation within a structure, so balancing looser controls and over-prescription. Such ingenuity is crucial bearing in mind that the planning of Lewisham's urban environment is dependent on regulations and powers often well beyond its control; leaving aside accountability issues which inevitably slow things down and the capacity of the private sector to operate at times more flexibly.

PROJECTING LEWISHAM

Over-riding everything should be a concern with Lewisham's projection and image, which should operate at a number of levels - internally and externally, to niche markets and broader audiences. This should not be seen as a simple PR exercise, but as a long term policy objective based on a deep sense of what Lewisham is and could be.

Done well it will increase the sense Lewisham residents have of themselves and their resulting self-esteem. If Lewisham people feel ashamed that they come from Lewisham how can they aspire? If Lewisham's image feels rich and multi-textured, outsiders will consider Lewisham as a place to be, to invest and enjoy, thereby becoming unconscious ambassadors for the borough.

Focusing on Lewisham as a collection of villages or neighbourhoods is probably the way forward. But before embarking on the major image rethink, a subtle Lewisham asset audit should be undertaken to include under-recognised assets such as history or discovering and exploiting current stars, and assets such as the dog track or Rivoli Ballroom. Only with this stock of material can an image be built that goes beyond the well-worn cliché. This image should be internationally oriented yet locally derived. Inevitably the arts and urban design will play a central part in creating images for Lewisham.

In benchmarking itself, Lewisham should not compare itself to Bromley, Southwark or Greenwich but to the best in Europe and this requires a best practice observatory function within the borough and proactive approach to culture and urban development. Through comparisons with the best, Lewisham's expectations are raised.

RECOMMENDING A WAY FORWARD

EMBEDDING THE AGENDA

We conclude that there are various ways in which the Council and other stakeholders - from education to business to community organisations - can maximise their potential by tapping into the Creative Lewisham agenda. We propose how the agenda should be championed and co-ordinated within the Council and how it should be embedded well beyond those most closely involved in the Commission process. One important recommendation we make is that a dedicated external entity, perhaps called the Creative Lewisham Agency, be set up to assist the Council and other stakeholders pursue the Creative Lewisham agenda. With a clear brief and shared vision it will, it is hoped, be a kind of inward investment agency for ideas and resources. In an ideal world it would not be necessary to set up a dedicated entity as each organisation of its own accord would identify, unleash and harness its creative resources and maximise synergies. Creative Lewisham would be the acknowledged corporate agenda and the new ethos driven from the top.

CLA is proposed as a small, flexible, helpful, supportive device to the stakeholders of Lewisham. This light-footed organisation should be reviewed after three years. Its style should not be to seek to accrue power, but rather like an impresario to generate ideas, to assess feasibility, to trigger and help launch initiatives, to seek synergies and in doing so to devolve and sub-contract whenever possible. If it works well, it will devolve itself out of existence.

A series of embedding initiatives should be put in place as soon as possible given that the Commission process, although already useful in triggering change and momentum, by its nature only worked in depth with a limited number of people. Awareness raising meetings say with tier 3 and 4 Council staff, with housing groups, with local amenity campaigns, the higher and further education sector, schools, arts organisations or employers are crucial to seedbed the ideas and perspectives more deeply. Communications tools from a Creative Lewisham information pack or newsletter and a dedicated web-site would all be part of this process.

BENDING BUDGETS AND RE-BADGING

Resources can be re-ordered to get more out of them. Lewisham Council alone has a budget of over £750million. If only a tiny percentage were bent towards Creative Lewisham objectives, the effect could be enormous. Its impact could make any investment seem cheap. The housing capital programme alone is £50million and a small percentage could be spent on better architects, urban design briefs or incentives to improve design quality.

Furthermore 15% of the housing related capital programme can be spent on non-housing issues – again an opportunity. This focus on quality can allow housing associations or registered social landlords to think of themselves as not just landlords but social investment agencies.

Re-badging existing initiatives is another effective way of generating critical mass and momentum. The catalytic projects outlined above already have the seeds of Creative Lewisham within them and if projected as part of a more seamless whole would create synergy and profile.

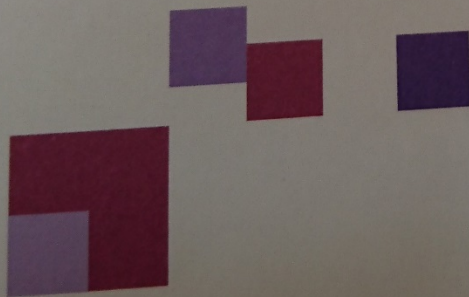


ORDERING RECOMMENDATIONS

There have been a mass of suggestions and the task ahead may seem awesome, overwhelming and complex. Yet the key point is that much can be achieved by thinking differently about opportunities and problems – a changed mindset is worth a hundred worthy reports. It was astonishing to note how many problems in Lewisham just seem to disappear when people took 'the glass half-full' approach and rather than stressing barriers focused on 'what if...' as a solution to problems.

To simplify matters we have clustered the ideas to move forward as recommendations formed into strategies. By doing so it is possible to bundle together a set of proposals making a coherent framework and highlighting where the key interventions should take place. This also makes it easier for people to connect and relate strategies to each other.

There are strategies for education and social well-being; opportunity scanning; urban design, animation and vibrancy; the creative industries; fundraising and resource procurement; communications, image and public awareness. And, finally, we outline a series of large and small catalyst projects that will provide winners and more sustained high impact projects to make Creative Lewisham feel tangible and real.



TRAVELLING THROUGH LEWISHAM - WHAT IS IT LIKE?

The Commission hopes that Lewisham will have been transformed with each arrival point offering a sense of occasion and expectation. With difficulty Catford will have persuaded Transport for London to shift the road so making space for a Catford Piazza, where Lewisham Theatre visitors will spill out seamlessly into the civic square after an invigorating performance. The Theatre's reputation will stretch across London, its programme both familiar and challenging. The square's main café will be a central meeting point and the library will put on events, often outside, which give a sense that libraries are innovative. The Council's offices, as a consequence, will become for citizens 'our place' and the interactions between ordinary people and officials will happen often by chance encounter. St. Modwen's shopping centre will have had a dramatic overhaul having decided that, with these new developments, it can no longer hang back. The market will wend itself round into the square putting on niche markets to appeal to varied tastes. The route down from the station will feel processional and engender a sense of expectation of what is to come. The setting of the Catford stations will be vastly improved so making arrival a joyful experience and the open spaces will not feel cut off by fencing, and will at special moments become an entertainments venue relating well to what is going on in the square. At night the lighting of major civic buildings will create a feeling of drama.

That lighting theme will be carried through Rushey Green towards Lewisham town centre and people will refer to it as 'our boulevard', especially after the carnival parade. Over time people will re-acquaint themselves with our promenading traditions and this increased footfall of people from near and far will generate streetlife and economic vitality. Many opportunities to eat at different price levels, have fun and watch the world go by will emerge. The refurbished Lewisham Hospital will not feel institutional, but remarkable and welcoming and the uninitiated passer-by will be startled to find out it is indeed a hospital. Moving through down Molesworth Street, its physical

environment will be transformed and feel less like a funnel and more like a cosseted greened enclosed space, and the back of the shopping centre will look less like a closed off backyard and engender more a feeling of permeability and activity. In the distance, Lewisham Interchange will have been made a people's place. Inventively the traffic needs will have been met whilst at the same time drawing the station network closer to the town centre. Residents and visitors will amble from one to the other without feeling they have gone through an obstacle course. They will get a sense that there are rivers in Lewisham and seeing the water will have a calming influence on the built up urban surrounds. Transport for London will, after great difficulty, have been persuaded that the Interchange should be a pilot project to show that in the modern competitive city it is people that matter, and that the beauty of engineering can be harnessed to their needs.

Moving on towards New Cross through a circuitous route there will be small moments of delight – a side street with exceptional planting, another where artists with residents have transformed a rat run and its look and feel, a housing association development with startling architecture and an open atmosphere achieving high quality at a reasonable cost, a PFI funded school which overcame that logic of 'up to a standard and down to a cost'. The kids will feel this is my place: 'I contributed to its making' in many ways – the railings, tiles and landscaping. Further along one heritage building will have been brought back to its former sense of pride sticking to its original features, but nearby another will have been transformed to new uses combining imaginatively the old and the new. But the choices made for each will feel right, because now Lewisham is good at judgement – judging when to keep things as they are and when to innovate.

SECTION THREE: THE URBAN PICTURE

3

What is the physical experience of Lewisham? Does the urban environment uplift or deflate? For those who live and work there the experience is different from that of the casual observer. The former can point out the quiet beauty of serried ranks of suburban terraced housing sweeping across the landscape; they can spot the hidden gem down a little known side street or the historic buildings and monuments; they even see a calming, yet perhaps claustrophobic, order in the Downham estates or detect the original vision behind the social housing in the North; they can see the subdued grandeur in the Forest Hill villas.

Yet Lewisham's offer is both seamless and rather samey and for outsiders can feel disorienting as there are insufficient landmarks or moments of surprise to both guide the visitor, to seduce and encourage them to stay on. The key issue in competitive terms is: 'Is this enough?' We know that Lewisham loses income to other centres such as Croydon or Greenwich which offer more complex experiences. People seem go to the Lewisham centres for specific work needs, shopping or leisure purposes and there is little to detain and divert them or to encourage meandering. **The overall experience has insufficient depth.**

What does depth of experience mean? Essentially it is about the range of stimulus each component in the urban fabric provides. For example: layers of shopping, culture or leisure, from the branded to the unbranded, from the cheap to the alternative to the expensively exquisite; levels of activity and interaction at different times of the day contributing to the diversity of streetlife; buildings that might have an overall style yet within range from the pristine to the grotty; layers of living possibilities from owner occupied to the rented at different price levels. It involves too providing ladders of opportunity from learning opportunities to starting up and then developing local businesses. It means being in a place where the city itself becomes a stage that is animated either by structured programming or a commercial offer and incidental and free animation that inspires the passer-by.

For most, first impressions of Lewisham disappoint and, crucially, **first impressions are also last impressions.** Arrival points are poor. Take the stations. Arriving at **Lewisham DLR**, the primary entry point, the resident or visitor is faced by an obstacle course while trying to cross the road in order to go through the back entrance of the shopping centre which is framed by the Citibank building with blue glass reflecting back at you. In the near distance a glimpse of a river and park, but cut into pieces with little coherence. Molesworth Road runs like a broad funnel into the yonder. What is the mindset that put this together? and what is the cost of repairing this piece of urban fabric, only recently built, as SRB 6 proposes?

The station itself could be better; as someone noted: 'we settled too easily for second best for fear of losing it, we accepted a middle ground solution and were not thinking about the long term; that quick fix won't do as the DLR obviously has catalyst potential'.

Take the Catford stations, the entry point to Lewisham's civic heart. Catford Bridge has merit, its circular entrance an element of delight, but the overall environment of the two stations feels degraded. **The walk down to the Town Hall is not worthy of the Council's ambitions.** The space between the Town Hall and Laurence House cries out for a 'Catford Piazza', with a circular glass café at its centre from which to view civic life unfolding, as many over the years have noted. Think of Crofton Park station – a shrine to graffiti, or Honor Oak, and even Forest Hill, now up for redevelopment. The list could go on. Blackheath feels different; the only problem is that people think it belongs to Greenwich, rather like Nokia which people still think is Japanese rather than Finnish. To enhance Lewisham's image perhaps now is the time to 'recapture' Blackheath as part of Lewisham.

Take the roads. The A2 is the entrance to and public face of Lewisham. Coming from the East through Blackheath - not associated with Lewisham - and down the hill the environment suddenly degrades perceptively and clogs up. Coming from the West it is part of an endless stop and go. Yet the section of the A2 in Lewisham is barely a mile and there are enough examples, especially in Europe, of humanising, softening and beautifying road environments. In an ideal world people in cars would notice the difference when they travel through the Lewisham bit. As someone noted: 'Had Lewisham been Kensington, something would have happened, it probably would have been tunnelled under'.

Beyond the roads and stations and leaving aside some of the monotonous public housing so often facing inwards, there are the new developments by the mass house builders drawn into the borough because of rising prices. Too few have imagination, relying on the tried and tested, quickly in and quickly out, claiming always this is what the public want. It is in response to this that the Lord Rogers Urban Renaissance Task Force was set up resulting in the Urban White Paper and the setting up of the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment with its focus on encouraging greater acceptance of aesthetics and urban design. Much of the environment described says 'no' rather than 'yes, I want to be part of this'. It does not reach outwards towards a public realm that encourages street life.

The general public has little knowledge of how urban environments are put together and often feel these problems are all the Council's responsibility, but many are well beyond even their control: problems caused by a recalcitrant absentee landlord or the Highway Authority, or, for instance, a public enquiry that goes against the Council's wishes as was the case with the new Lewisham police station. The plans for Kender estate, for example, sought to address the issues raised above, and address the A2, but Council authority was curtailed. The Council becomes a sitting target, because people believe it is omnipotent and do not know on whom else to vent their frustrations. The Council is in a double bind; it has insufficient power and needs to find ways of generating creative influence. The design briefs and masterplanning of key areas are ways forward, but with the limited current budget not much can be done.

The Council's UDP or Supplementary Guidance Notes begin to address some of the major questions, but could perhaps be more explicit in spelling out the kind of quality it expects as the basis for discussion with developers and housing associations. Birmingham's 'Places for Living' policy might provide a useful template. This attempts to fundamentally rethink the planning process by introducing a holistic approach to planning which integrates land use, architecture and urban design with a sense of how this affects mental geography and people's sense of place.

The five principles of quality introduced into the development control process, inspired by international best practice, are solid:

- 1 **Places not Estates** - housing should be integrated with employment, shops and leisure
- 2 **Moving Around Easily** - places must be linked up by direct, simple, safe and attractive routeways
- 3 **Safe Places, Private Spaces** - public spaces should maximise their use and foster community, whilst private space should be secure
- 4 **Building for the Future** - places should be environmentally and economically sustainable and buildings adaptable for long term viability
- 5 **Build on Local Character** - design should reinforce and evolve positive aspects of local character but ignore those that are negative, i.e. which do not accord with the four preceding principles.

These principles have begun to be used as a basis for dialogue with developers, and not as a set of hard and fast rules; indeed they provide a structure but also scope for innovation as the example of the recent Mailbox development shows, so enabling the extraordinary to live side by side with the ordinary.

DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS

RAISING EXPECTATIONS

If Lewisham's vision is to be the 'best place to live, work and learn' it cannot afford to accept second best and should set its sights at a European level rather than compare itself with Bromley or Southwark. If the borough is 'on the turn' it needs to develop the self-belief that it is not a supplicant and lucky to be approached for development opportunities. An increasing number of developers are themselves changing attitudes and recognising the value of urbanism from their own point of view – the combination of urban design, the wider streetscape and the social life of the city. It is not in their interest to create environments that foster crime or lack of respect.

Lewisham needs to provide the opportunities to inspire its politicians and officers with the best that exists, to understand how this 'best' came about, the constellation of forces that made it possible, the costs and the stretching of rules that opened potential. Research has shown that the experience of seeing innovative examples elsewhere has the greatest effect on developing the imagination and changing minds. This effect is maximised if done in a group.

Equally Lewisham should be proactive in identifying and targeting developers it wishes to attract. This will have additional spin-offs in terms of new ideas generated, profile and word-of-mouth reputation. It can only happen if more resources are made available.

TRADING POWER FOR CREATIVE INFLUENCE

There are a series of obstacles within the existing incentives and regulatory structure mitigating against the Council delivering its aspirational ideas on urban design. There is insufficient vision of what the ideas could be to provide the basis for discussions with prospective developers. Therefore discussions tend to remain at a general level referring back to documents like Supplementary Guidance or the UDP. In quality terms the Council can often only cajole or persuade without visible templates. It would be helpful to draw on imagery. Is the housing image that of the

Netherlands with its more open, airy constructions like Java Island in Amsterdam? Or is it the image of Finnish developments like in Vuosaari in Helsinki? Or is it the housing estate designed by women for women in Hamm in the Ruhr that has already had impacts on other new developments? What are the Lewisham equivalents? Who are you benchmarking yourself against?

It is clear that in order to become more proactive the Regeneration Directorate needs more resources to engage with developers, to explore new partners, to develop the master planning function, to strengthen the planning and urban design section, to develop multi-disciplinary teams with a balanced and mixed viewpoint on the planning and development process that is also aesthetically minded and sensitive to local area and development needs. This could include artists as is happening in Milton Keynes where the rising star Thomas Heatherwick is collaborating on the new Central Milton Keynes masterplan. In short to be able to be more strategic and to be able to put across the message that your regeneration is proactive and not only about control and reaction.

That would convey an understanding that the nature of planning has changed, that it is a more creative process, is more urban-design led and capable of negotiating on more equal terms with outsiders, with implications for status and resources.

There is the issue of balancing looser controls and over-prescription. The complication is that by reducing strict legislation in order to advance there are consequences. For example, if there are problems or fallouts because, say, a law on signage was loosely interpreted, e.g. not being at the correct place at the correct height, the local authority as a political body is liable to litigation. The implications for the Council are more severe and need to be thought through clearly. As someone noted: 'The Council has statutory duties on signs, if there's a problem we'll get the backlash. We need to re-educate the public, press, coroners, if you want to vary anything, because if there's an accident, 'heads will roll'

MAPPING THE POSSIBILITIES

Lewisham can develop a sense of place, identity and distinctiveness as well as engender a feeling of engagement and loyalty that gives citizens a stake by working with its culturally distinctive features. But any visioning process needs to start with a firm notion of what new trends in living, lifestyle and aspirations are, and by asking where people want to be; otherwise once structures are built they will be dealing with yesterday's problems. The need for live/work developments is one example. Furthermore with corporate buildings or high buildings which often blandify their surrounding footprints, the question should be asked: 'What is the street life of the skyscraper?' Equally the edge of the borough needs careful attention as borough competitiveness can leave these areas unattended. The approach highlighted has a significant impact on what the indicators for success and failure are and clearly the community should be involved in setting them. Within the indicators set, some should be concerned with innovation.

Lewisham operates in a competitive environment regionally and nationally. For it to become a sub-regional powerhouse it needs the elements of national significance that distinguish it from others: Laban Centre London, Goldsmiths' new Arts Building, the Horniman Museum. Equally the deep water liner terminal at Convoys could create a whole waterfront feel and draw the Deptford riverfront back into the High Street, as has happened at Cape Town's Victoria & Alfred Waterfront.

The new buildings in Lewisham feel less new and innovative than they should do. Java Island in Amsterdam and the Rotterdam approach to design quality could be models. Parts of Java Island were given over to 40 architects aged under 40 to experiment with new forms of housing and overall 97 different architects were used. The result is an artistic and challenging patchwork of buildings interspersing different styles, from the wildly post-modern to the minimalist, within an overall concept targeted at different price ranges and audience profiles. In market terms it has been a success. In Rotterdam's Kop van Zuid, the Development Corporation has created a bi-annually changing international panel to select rosters of innovative, often world-wide renowned architects whom developers choose from as a pre-condition of getting building permission. The intention is to create a quarter that becomes an international flagship. Equally their approach to animating underpasses and healing the ravages

of the 60s is worth learning from, such as John Jerde's intervention at Bleursplein, which turned a gloomy path into a vibrant curved walkway with lively shops. A further example is the IBA approach in Emscher Park in the Ruhr which effectively acted as a gatekeeper to government funds by specifying high design standards especially for industrial buildings as well as environmental innovation.

Innovative architecture could equally be used in cheap temporary facilities which might be constructed in re-used carparks or difficult left-over spaces where start-up business might operate or alternative shopping offered. Here Urban Space Management's imaginative approach to developing Gabriel's Wharf on the Southbank might be a model: in 1994 some units only cost £2000 each; perhaps £5000 would be realistic today. Unsightly major roads can be improved as has happened in Melbourne where the highway pillars were concreted into artistic collared shapes as the road was being built.

To make Lewisham more of a leader in urban design, the use of public art could be taken much further. Artists working with architects could infuse the totality of Lewisham by transforming offices, the shopping centre, bus shelters, buses, seating, waymarkings, lighting, entry points and portals which, if seen through the eyes of the artistic imagination, could create a sense of drama and expectation. This might be reinforced by temporary installations. When seen as part of a longer-term process the sum of the parts becomes greater than each element. This occurred in Stockholm's world famous 30 year 101 station metro programme, and in St. Petersburg and Moscow, where stations became a daily artwork experience – and major tourist attractions. By increasing quality Lewisham increases its competitive edge and generates civic pride and identity. Interestingly Lewisham could play the new with the old by incorporating heritage components into the new structures – Bologna's micro-galleries are one model. Cheap often transitional solutions should be investigated to show that a new mindset is in operation. This might mean floodlighting of local icons, or having local competitions for signage or use of dispiriting open spaces. Of course, competitions are not everything but they can be useful in raising standards.

THE GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

In terms of central government guidance, Lewisham is pushing at an open door and should be in a position to extend the boundaries of what has been achieved so far. Government has clearly set the agenda for urban design issues to be addressed with vigour and confidence as a number of key policies and legislative documents exist to aid the promotion of good design. Specific paragraphs in PPGs (Planning Policy Guidelines) 1, 3, and 6 relate to the layout of urban environments, the vitality and viability of town centres, their attractiveness as well as the need to focus on opportunities for urban design strategies for large and small sites including individual buildings. The most important of these is the PPG1 (annexe A) advice highlighting the issue of design as a material consideration in determining planning applications. There is now clear government guidance in PPG1 to elevate urban design in the planning process.

Paragraphs 13–20 state that: 'the appearance of any proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are material considerations', and that such considerations relate to the design of buildings and to urban design of the built environment. Paragraph 14 defines urban design as 'the relationship between different buildings and the streets, squares, parks, waterways and other spaces which make up the public domain; the nature and quality of public domain itself; the relationship of one part of a village, town or city with other parts; and the pattern of movement and activity which are thereby established; in short the complex relationship between all the various aspects affecting the use of space between and around buildings as with buildings themselves'.

Paragraph 15 states 'good design should be the aim of all those involved and should be encouraged everywhere. It can promote sustainable development; improve the quality of the existing environment; attract business and investment; and reinforce civic pride and a sense of place. It can help to secure continued public acceptance of necessary new development'.



Other points raised in the above-mentioned PPGs include:

- Town and local centres must provide a high quality environment if they are to continue to be places which people wish to visit.
- Government wishes to promote greater consideration of design, particularly urban design.
- Designs that add interest and variety and which reflect local context should be encouraged.
- Design of proposals should have proper regard to their relationship with their surroundings and should develop and enhance local character.
- Designs should avoid presenting blank frontages or being inward looking.
- Car parks should be designed to fit into the existing townscape and be placed away from the street frontage and wherever possible maintain existing building lines.

In addition around 100 recommendations of the Urban Task Force's report 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' have found their way into the Urban White Paper which helps our thinking of how areas should begin to develop in the 21st century, including:

- A new vision for urban regeneration founded on the principles of urban design excellence, social wellbeing and environmental responsibility within a viable economic and legislative framework.
- Creating a quality of life and vitality that makes urban living desirable.
- Design issues emphasise the importance of the quality of the built environment. Well-designed buildings, streets, neighbourhoods and districts are essential for successful social, economic and environmental regeneration.
- New urban developments must therefore be designed to higher standards. They should be integrated with their surroundings, optimise access to public transport and maximise their potential by increasing density. They should seek diversity, encouraging a mix of activities, services, incomes, and tenures within neighbourhoods. Priority must be given to high architectural standards and to the design of public spaces between developments where people meet and move about.

In addition, further government publications such as 'By Design' provide key principles for good urban design forming a basis for assessment and should be included in the set of tools planners currently use to determine planning applications. This can be done by reviewing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to include a checklist which would also aid applicants in improving the quality of both outline and detailed applications. Particularly on key strategic sites and where pre-application discussion is sought, applicants should be encouraged to submit more than the standard requirement of site, elevation and plan. It should include site and street context and 3D information/images and urban design rationale. SPGs might, for example, include design guidelines for shop fronts and residential layouts

USING THE PLANNING TOOLKIT IMAGINATIVELY

The Council has a range of tools which can kick in at different levels and can in principle be orchestrated effectively to achieve objectives if political understanding and will is present. The UDP provides the overarching urban design framework, yet as a strategic document it has an overall life span of approximately 10 years. It is not the ideal tool with which to address site-specific good quality urban design on a day-to-day basis. There are other tools available to ensure and improve quality as projects go through the planning process. They include: Supplementary Planning Guidance, development briefs, site specific planning briefs, design guides, local distinctiveness studies (similar to conservation area appraisals) and masterplans.

For example, a Lewisham Design Guide could lay down key objectives and principles against which all development will be judged. It should provide a clear starting point for developer innovation and local interpretation such as:

- Innovation: to seek environmentally sustainable solutions through innovative design.
- Movement: to promote the movement of people by walking, cycling and public transport to reduce dependency on the car, and air pollution.
- Locality: to embrace local distinctiveness, promote quality and protect existing features of cultural, visual and historic importance.
- Landscape and ecology: to conserve, create and integrate open space, townscape, landscape and natural habitats to mitigate the impact of development.

The above will affect the nature of performance indicators used to assess success or failure.

In addition Lewisham could develop its own specific practice, for example by applying a team approach to address complex applications. Co-ordinated by someone with urban design knowledge the following kinds of skills should be around the