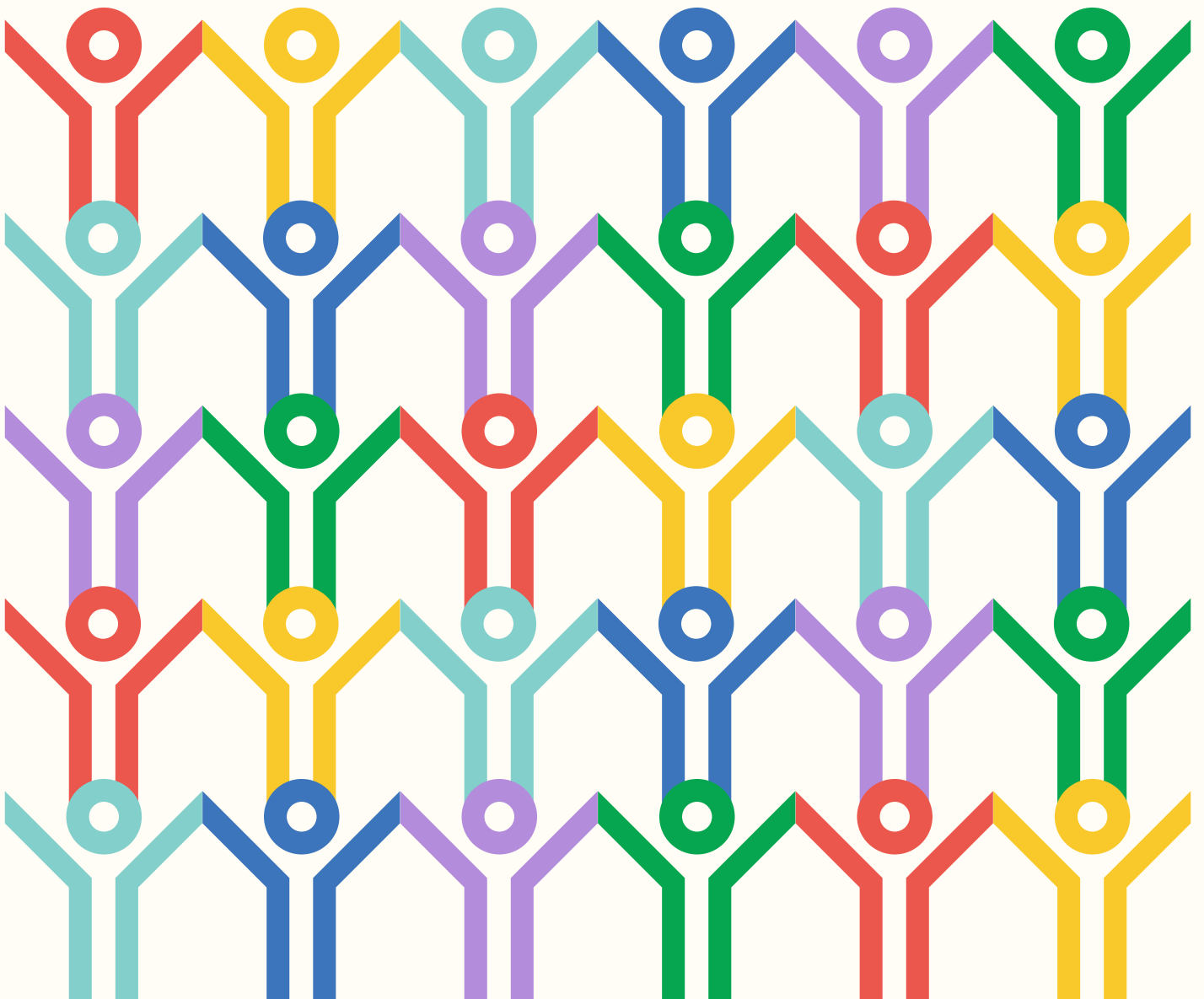


May 2025

Social Value in the Built Environment



This research was commissioned and published by the London Property Alliance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, alongside the City Property Association and Westminster Property Association NextGen committees.

London Property Alliance (LPA) brings together the Westminster Property Association (WPA) and the City Property Association (CPA). It is a not-for-profit membership body and advocacy group representing the leading owners, investors, professional advisors and developers of real estate operating in the City of London and Westminster. The Alliance provides a unified voice for the real estate sector across central London.

Our DEI Committee is committed to driving positive change through events, research and engagement. It promotes best practice, signposts to valuable resources and champions diverse voices through the LPA's workstreams.

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This report was written and produced by Future Places Studio.

Future Places Studio is an independent research, insight and content studio based in London, working across the built environment sector to deliver projects that prioritise inclusive growth, placemaking, sustainability and innovation. It uses a qualitative approach to research that engages with a broad range of stakeholders to learn about them and hear their perspectives.

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Foreword

One of the most rewarding moments during my time as Chair of the Westminster Property Association has been the landmark partnership between our members and the charities Young Westminster Foundation and 2-3 Degrees.

Through this collaboration, WPA and several of our member companies support an employability programme that is helping hundreds of local young people develop valuable skills and unlock meaningful career opportunities in the built environment.

Our industry has long delivered tangible, positive contributions to the communities we serve. From creating local jobs and training opportunities, to delivering affordable homes and vital facilities.

At Landsec, we're proud to have generated over £96m of social value and supported more than 14,000 people towards the world of work from a 2020 baseline. The partnerships we hold help those furthest from the job market gain the skills, experience and knowledge to move towards employment, and support young people by raising awareness of the real estate sector as a viable career option.

However, much of this 'social value' is both generated and obscured by the complexities of our planning system. The many benefits that come from investing in and developing property are often hidden from view — making it harder for local communities and elected officials to fully appreciate the positive case for change.

This report, led by the London Property Alliance's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, is a call to action from the capital's real estate sector: a rallying cry to better measure, communicate and build upon the social good we deliver. It offers practical case studies and valuable insights to help navigate the evolving social value landscape, and aims to both inform and inspire ever greater impactful work across our industry.

Marcus Geddes
Immediate Past Chair,
WPA & Managing Director, Workplace, Landsec



Graduates of the Mastering My Future programme attending the 2024 WPA Annual Lunch during Marcus Geddes' tenure as WPA Chair.

Executive summary

The physical environment has a profound effect on our lives – our wellbeing, prospects and happiness – and in a city as diverse and multicultural as London, there is a growing pressure on the capital’s real estate industry to build spaces that are inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Whilst it could be considered an act of altruism, there is a clear business case for embedding social value in commercial schemes:

- Enhancing perceptions of a place will make it more attractive to prospective occupiers;
- The communities who have been part of its co-creation are more likely to feel a greater sense of care and ownership, strengthening its longterm resilience and sustainability;
- Meaningful engagement can facilitate a more efficient planning process and reduce the costs of development.



A more diverse and equitable real estate industry in central London is vital if we are to make our sector more inclusive, reflective of London’s diversity and ultimately more successful: attracting new ideas, skills and perspectives into property and placemaking.”

– LPA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee

Whilst built environment professionals and new developments are already delivering significant positive impacts in their communities, including through developer contributions such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 payments, social value is a relatively new concept that is riddled with ambiguity. Despite commendable efforts to develop industry-wide guidance by organisations such as The Social Value Portal and UK Green Building Council (UKGBC), the built environment lacks a common language, code of practice and understanding of what ‘good’ looks like. Professionals are therefore left asking where to turn for advice and information. The myriad of available approaches and standards causes confusion, undermining the property sector’s ability to build consensus, collaborate and amplify the social benefits of development. As a result, there is a call for an industry standard, for simplification and regulation.

This report sets out how we can establish an industry-wide approach to social value delivery and evaluation that supports participatory, creative and contextualised solutions. It offers clarity on topics that are known to puzzle practitioners, including:

- The definition of social value and social impact.
- The business case for social value.
- What delivering ‘good’ social value looks like.
- How to best evaluate and report social impact.

A code of practice provides step-by-step guidance on how to plan, deliver and safeguard social value in the built environment. Intended as a toolkit for LPA members and the central London property industry, it identifies how to best embed social value in all stages of the development process and suggests approaches to evaluating and reporting achievements to diverse audiences, whether neighbouring communities, local authorities or investors. Throughout this report, we also make a series of recommendations that propose a way forward for London’s real estate industry with the intent to build consensus, support professionals and streamline social value processes. These recommendations are summarised below.

Summary of recommendations



National guidance

National planning policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), should more clearly define social value as one of the three objectives of sustainable development, alongside environmental and economic considerations. Further guidance on balancing all three objectives in areas of growth would offer much needed support to local authorities that are evaluating the overall benefits of planning applications. Policy should offer guidance without locking solutions into a regimented set of expectations, embedding sufficient flexibility to accommodate contextualised and creative solutions that respond to local needs.



Local governance

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is well-placed to articulate city-wide social value priorities and establish cross-borough consensus around key objectives and priorities based on the Mayor’s Good Growth agenda, which aims to build an inclusive, resilient and healthy city for everyone. The GLA, working alongside industry representatives and local authorities, should lead a comprehensive review into meaningful and effective methods of evaluation that can measure the broader, and sometimes intangible, societal benefits of development. The outputs of this should include best practice recommendations to inform social value policy, ensuring that it remains relevant to both the private and public sectors.

To address the current high failure rate of apprenticeships, local authorities should be mandated by the GLA to work across borough boundaries to support training and skills initiatives which are not always achievable on a single site or in a narrow geographical area.



Social value in procurement

There is a pressing need for a social value evaluation model in public procurement that veers away from schemes based on proxy values and monetisation, as this can lead to formulaic and prescriptive outcomes that divert attention away from what matters most to local communities.

Instead, the tender process should focus on real-life outcomes alongside affording greater weight to social value strategies and the underlying placemaking process, whilst ensuring that there is the flexibility for commitments made at the tender stage to be adapted in response to changing understandings of local needs, as the development process unfolds.



Evidence database

An open access evidence database should be established that collates datasets and best practice case studies to enable learning and knowledge sharing between projects. This could be used to identify commonalities between exemplar projects – their methods, processes and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – and showcase pragmatic approaches to inspire action.



Developer contributions

Local authorities should be mandated to spend money raised through developer contributions in ‘use it or lose it’ legislation, to prevent funds designed to improve local areas and support communities remaining unspent. Councils should be given greater flexibility on how they spend CIL funds to support local communities.



Brian was employed through Canada Water Connect, and works on one of the development with City Brickwork (UK).

A social value code of practice for the built environment

To guide the planning and implementation of impactful social value strategies, this code of practice for built environment professionals provides a practical, step-by-step guide that can be tailored to different contexts and projects.

The social value process will look different for each project, however, by following the best practice approach outlined in this section, we can deliver resilient and sustainable developments through a process of change that is inclusive, empowering and tailored to local needs.

Code of practice



1. Identify and involve stakeholders:

Engage stakeholders from the outset and across the lifespan of the project to listen, learn and collect feedback. Use mixed formats that suit different groups of people to make it fun and easy to partake.



2. Partner with local organisations:

Established community groups, charities and organisations can help build trust, expand reach and access underrepresented groups.



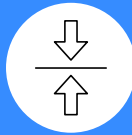
3. Establish engagement vehicles:

Community forums or advisory groups with diverse representation can grant local people a greater influence in the decision-making process, with a presence at key meetings and review sessions. Existing groups should be engaged where possible.



4. Produce a needs analysis:

Undertake a needs exercise upfront, prior to any change, to identify what is valuable locally and convert this into KPIs against which to measure impact.



5. Establish a baseline:

Combine the findings from the needs analysis and the engagement process into a baseline assessment that captures the situation in the area before change happens.



6. Producing a place-based social value strategy:

Create a social value strategy in close dialogue with the community, key stakeholders, the local council and key delivery partners. This will function as a roadmap for implementing social value that articulates priorities, objectives and delivery mechanisms for everyone involved.



7. Undertake ongoing monitoring:

Facilitate ongoing data collection and analysis throughout the design, planning and development process to enable continued learning, fine-tune social value strategies and inform future decision-making. Longitudinal studies, enabled by innovative approaches, can measure impact over time.



8. Work in partnership:

Coordinate approaches between development projects to streamline processes, avoid duplication and amplify impact. Working with local organisations can extend the lifespan of initiatives beyond the build programme.



9. Secure stewardship vehicles and mechanisms:

Ensure that sustainable vehicles, mechanisms and funding are in place to deliver long term positive impacts to local communities. Community forums that involve people in decision-making from the outset can be important forerunners to more formal stewardship vehicles, supported by innovative financing models.



10. Measure impact:

Employ a mixed method approach to measure social value and social impact, providing a robust methodology around data, assumptions and KPIs. KPIs should be based on engagement outcomes and a baseline assessment, focused on what matters locally. Findings should be verified through independent review.



11. Communicate achievements:

Report on outcomes in a format and language that is appropriate to the receiving audiences.

Introduction

Commissioned by the London Property Alliance (LPA), this report is intended to help London’s built environment practitioners navigate the social value terrain. Central London is the most diverse and economically productive region in the UK, yet also experiences higher than average poverty rates.¹

With the physical environment having a profound effect on wellbeing, prospects and happiness, it is the sector’s collective duty to create inclusive developments that reflect London’s multicultural communities.

Whilst built environment professionals have long been delivering social benefits through development and regeneration, social value as a concept emerged just over a decade ago with the launch of the Social Value Act. Designed to embed social value in public procurement contracts, the Act extended social value into the mainstream, shaping companies’ internal Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) and DEI agendas, urging the industry to deliver more inclusive, equitable, sustainable, resilient and vibrant places that actively support local communities now and into the future.

With several nation-wide policies and frameworks in place, the UK is considered to be at the forefront of the social value debate, yet the concept is riddled with ambiguity. Harder to pin down than economic and environmental benefits, many professionals are struggling to navigate the ever-evolving social value landscape. This is reflected in a 2024 Demos poll, which found that only 12% of SMEs rated their understanding of social value as strong.²

Despite multiple, commendable efforts to develop industry-wide guidance by organisations such as The Social Value Portal

and UKGBC, the built environment lacks a common language, code of practice and understanding of what ‘good’ social value looks like. Professionals are left asking where to turn for advice and information, and the myriad of available approaches and standards causes confusion, undermining the property sector’s ability to build consensus, collaborate and amplify the societal benefits of development. As a result, there is a call for an industry standard, for simplification and regulation.

But the social value process is complex because it is highly contextualised and time-sensitive, changing over time and in tune with the community. Standardisation and simplification, aimed at raising the bar for social value delivery, risks producing formulaic and prescriptive outcomes that divert attention away from what matters most to communities. This begs the question of how we can establish an industry-wide approach to social value delivery and evaluation without stifling creative, responsive and localised solutions. By broadening our perspectives, we can look beyond red line site boundaries, development timeframes and monetisation to favour long-term, adaptable and holistic strategies that consider not just the outcomes, but the underlying placemaking process.

“
We will fail if we see social value as a goal in itself. It is a delivery mechanism and a process.”
– Barney Cringle, Director of Inclusive Economy at PRD

This report draws on findings from conversations with thought-leaders and practitioners at the forefront of the social value debate. Part 1 delves into governance, inclusive and collaborative processes, and the importance of stewardship to ensure a lasting legacy. Part 2 explores methods of social value reporting and impact evaluation, as well as key considerations for the procurement process.

The report includes a pragmatic step-by-step guide – a code of practice – to help built environment professionals drive inclusive decision-making processes and optimise meaningful ‘value adds’ in the communities where they work. A set of recommendations stakes out a way forward for the industry and identifies the support systems and tools needed to steer the built environment towards best practices. Exemplar case studies are integrated throughout the report to showcase what ‘good’ looks like and to stimulate ideas around practical solutions.



Grosvenor Property UK’s Forest School in Belgrave Square, Westminster.

What is social value?

Defining social value and social impact

Social value and social impact have many, sometimes conflicting, definitions. The terms are often used interchangeably, although they have different meanings. This adds complexity and confusion to the debate, and can make collaboration more complicated.

Based on the general consensus amongst our contributing practitioners, this report defines **social value as the value adding processes, interventions and outcomes that a development or a place delivers to communities above and beyond financial gains**. This can include a wide range of deliverables, such as meaningful local engagement, new jobs and work experiences, business support, training and upskilling, green spaces, affordable homes, and community facilities. These 'value adds' are direct and represent additionality – benefits that would not be delivered had change not taken place.

They can often be quantified and sometimes monetised, for example as hours of training or the economic benefit to a community from new jobs created.

Social impact is defined as the real-world effects that the social value generating processes, interventions and outcomes have on people's lives. For example, a local resident that completes a construction apprenticeship and is supported through skills development into a permanent job can benefit from lasting, positive impacts that enhance their quality of life and life chances. Social impact is indirect and can be difficult to quantify as it relates to personal experiences and benefits, such as increased employability and self-esteem, and can extend beyond the beneficiary, manifesting as enhanced wellbeing for their family for example.

Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106

Whilst social value is a relatively new concept that has emerged in the past decade, new developments have been delivering social benefits through the financial contributions made by developers as part of the planning process.

Both Section 106 payments, introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and the Community Infrastructure Levy, which came into force in 2010, are important tools to help alleviate pressure on local services, ensuring the benefits of new development are felt by residents through the provision of new public realm, transport connections and community facilities.



Paddington Art Festival at British Land's Paddington Central Campus.

In 2023/24 alone, Westminster City Council collected more than £80m of funding from CIL and Section 106 contributions. These funds were spent on a variety of infrastructure and other needs across Westminster, including public realm improvements to neighbourhoods such as the historic Shepherd Market, new sporting facilities in Regents Park and £10m of Section 106 funding allocated to Westminster's Community Hubs programme.

The City of London Corporation collected a total of £25m in CIL receipts in 2023/24 and spent £48m, contributing to the funding of major cultural projects such as the relocation of the Museum of London, reinstating Finsbury Circus Gardens and supporting local charities and community organisations.



Abbey Centre Tea Party delivered as part of BGO's 105 Victoria Street development.

The emergence of social value

Beyond CIL and Section 106 contributions, the Social Value Act, which came into force in January 2013, made it a legal obligation for public bodies in England and Wales to consider the social, economic and environmental benefits of procurement decisions. The Act signalled a shift for the built environment industry, and a growing pressure to deliver social value as part of public contracts has extended its concept into the mainstream. Social Value UK, a cross-industry membership organisation, has since been working to promote the Social Value Act, improve social impact measurement and create a network of knowledge sharing.

In parallel, ESG and DEI commitments are actively shaping how property businesses operate and deliver social value in the UK, accelerating ambitions to go above and beyond planning obligations. However, outside of Section 106 and CIL agreements, social value remains voluntary for many real estate projects.

Much of what is considered social value already aligns with various planning policy aspirations on the national, regional and local level. For example, the Mayor of London's Good Growth by Design programme, which is integral to the London Plan, calls upon built environment professionals to create a city that is inclusive, sustainable and beneficial for all residents. In recent years, several London boroughs have also been working to integrate social value obligations into their local plans, albeit with little national guidance. On an international level, the United Nations' 21 Sustainable Development Goals have long been a guiding light for conscientious companies and practitioners.

Alongside planning policy, different organisations have taken up the social value cause and developed a plethora of different standards to capture the meaning of social value in a development context. The guiding documents of note are:

- **Framework for defining social value:**
A framework for defining and delivering social value on built environment projects (UKGBC, 2021)
- **The principles of social value**
(Social Value International, 2021)
- **Delivering social value through development and regeneration:**
An Approach for London (London Sustainable Development Commission, 2022)
- **Embedding social value into the London plan:**
Enhancing community wellbeing and sustainable growth through planning policy (London Sustainable Development Commission, 2024)
- **Social value:**
How to be a good ancestor (Future of London, 2024)

In addition to these guidance documents, different value transfer frameworks have been developed to provide standardised methods for measuring and reporting social value outcomes based on proxy values to monetise impacts, such as the Social Value Portal's National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) Framework, the Thrive Social Value Toolkit, and HACT's Social Value Bank. Social Value UK's Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework helps organisations measure how much social, environmental and economic value is created for every pound invested. Monetisation is intended to make schemes comparable, and the evaluation frameworks are therefore a common feature of the public procurement process. For more information on evaluation frameworks, see Part 2: Social Value Reporting on page 42.

The case for social value in development

Whilst it might be considered an act of altruism, there is a clear business case for delivering social value in commercial schemes. Exemplar development projects have demonstrated that positive social and environmental impacts can drive long-term financial success, and companies are starting to recognise the benefits to developers, investors and shareholders.

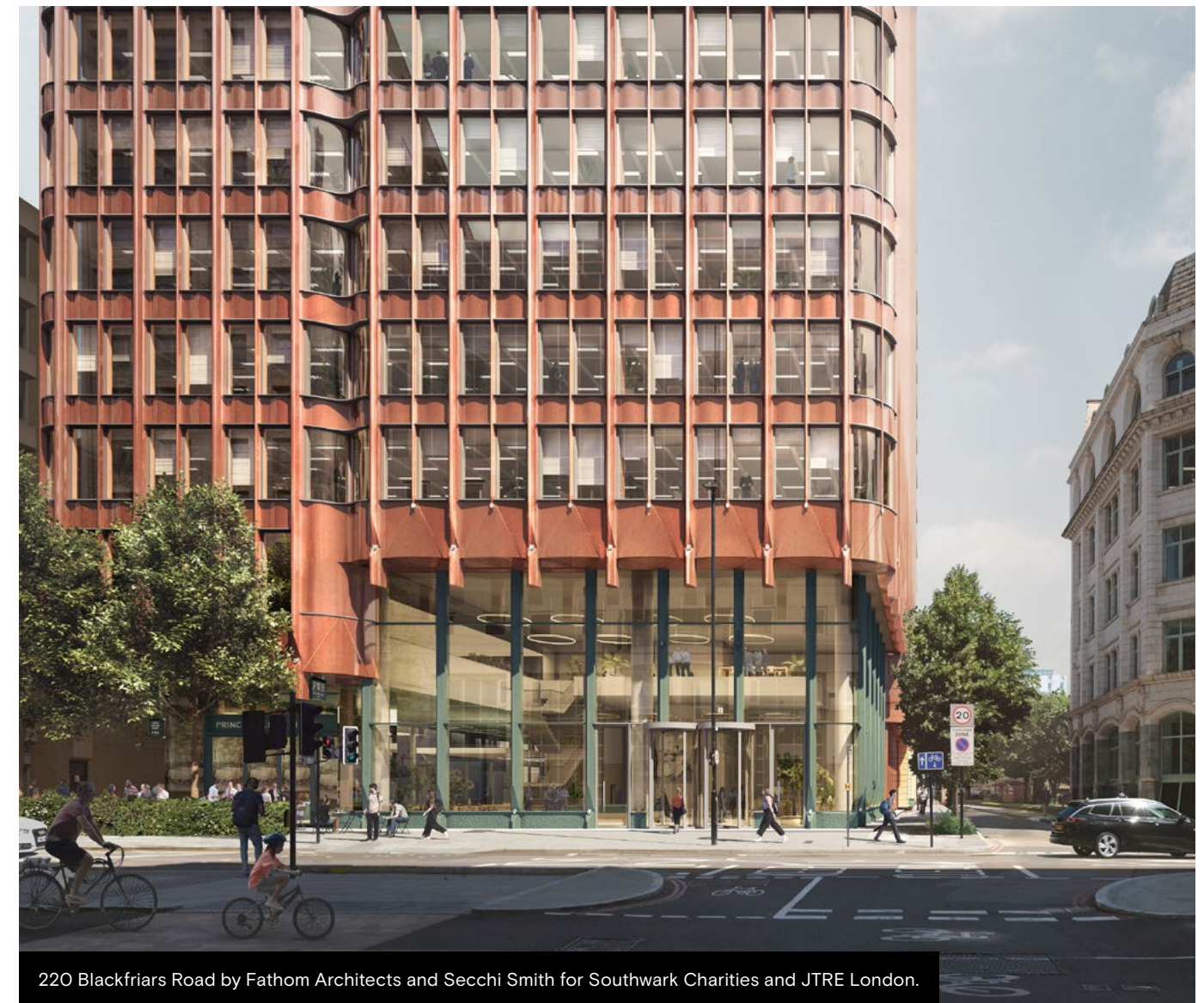


Employers must evidence their social and environmental contributions to attract and retain the best talent and customers.”

– Anna Devlet, Head of Social Sustainability at British Land

A genuine social value agenda matters to a company’s reputational advantage and competitive edge, particularly in a fierce bidding landscape where there is a need to be aspirational with social value obligations to secure major contracts. Equally, consumers and clients are starting to favour companies and developments with a demonstrable commitment to social value. If a building doesn’t have the desired environmental credentials, it will be hard to lease, and social value is catching up with the emphasis on environmental commitments. A scheme that delivers genuine social value is likely to attract occupiers more quickly and at a better leasing rate, yielding a higher return.

Wesley Ankrah, Director – Social Value at Savills, highlights an example from 220 Blackfriars Road, a mixed-use development in south London. Here, Southwark Charities, a non-profit organisation that delivers charitable services to older people, has partnered with developer JTRE London to deliver 224,000 sq ft of office space, 62 new almshouses, a charity hub and community hall on the charity’s land. The site has been in continuous occupation as an almshouse since 1752 and the partnership has enabled Southwark Charities to continue providing affordable homes in this key location. A percentage of the income from the new development will be used to generate a more secure income stream for the charity. Wesley



220 Blackfriars Road by Fathom Architects and Secchi Smith for Southwark Charities and JTRE London.

says that this is setting a precedent for a great building to lease. “Occupiers know that part of their rent will go to charity. These are the sort of measures that are becoming best in class, and I would expect this to become quite commonplace.”

Tom Nancollas, Assistant Design Director at the City of London Corporation, says that we are now seeing much more social and cultural value driving the development of schemes which developers recognise as adding immense overall commercial value to their proposals. “Our message to developers is that a strong social value commitment will benefit them and enhance the perceptions of their scheme. It enables both developers and occupiers to deliver on their company ESG agenda.”

Talent, especially from younger generations, is increasingly prioritising purpose-driven work over pay, and favouring working for companies with strong social value commitments. Research has found that employees are more motivated and engaged when they feel like their work makes a difference, which plays a part in talent attraction and retention.³

Places that are co-designed through a participatory approach also provide quality assurance and are more likely to become successful, resilient and sustainable neighbourhoods. It can facilitate a more efficient planning process and reduce the cost of development; data shows that 68% of planning applications that engage the community are more likely to receive approval without significant objections.⁴

Towards an industry approach

1.



Although social value is being mainstreamed in the planning and development process, the industry lacks a common language and approach towards delivering impactful benefits to communities. To help align objectives and bring clarity to the conversation, this section outlines the role of local and national policy to guide processes and outcomes on the ground, as well as offering guidance to practitioners around inclusive co-creation, impact monitoring, partnership working and long-term stewardship.

Policy and governance

Several local authorities in London and across the country are integrating social value obligations in their local plans, but the lack of clear wording in the NPPF leaves councils without guidance around their role as governors of social value delivery through the planning process. As a result, local planning policy on social value is highly variable across different London boroughs, resulting in missed opportunities and a lack of clarity on what is expected from developments. Today, much of social value delivery outside of Section 106 and CIL agreements remains voluntary and reliant on companies' internal ESG, DEI and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agendas.

National guidance

The LPA's 2024 report, *Retrofit First, Not Retrofit Only: Future-proofing national policy to support sustainable development*, highlighted the lack of national guidance on how local authorities should assess or strike a balance between the three objectives of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.⁵ It recommends that the NPPF clearly defines social value in development alongside environmental and economic considerations and identifies how it can be captured in the planning process.

Consensus on a national level is essential to aid the development of social value policy on a local level, including guidance around how to approach social value when determining major applications.⁶ This is particularly pertinent following the Government's new definitions for development on green and grey belt land to allow sustainable development, which will likely require significant benefits to society to receive planning consent. Additionally, the Government should consider updating CIL regulations to

give councils greater flexibility on how they spend CIL funds to benefit local communities. Whilst a proportion of CIL should continue to be allocated to deliver the local infrastructure required to support new development, where there is a surplus and critical housing need, allocating a proportion of unspent CIL funds to enable a greater number of residents to benefit from new development.

Moreover, 'use it or lose it'-style legislation should be introduced for CIL and Section 106 funds. Based on research from the Home Builders Federation, as of July 2024, £8 billion in Section 106 and CIL funds remained unspent across councils in England and Wales.⁷ To prevent these development contributions—intended to enhance local areas and support communities—from sitting idle, local authorities should be mandated to allocate these funds effectively.

Local governance

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is the obvious governing body to articulate city-wide social value priorities and establish cross-borough consensus around key objectives and priorities beyond Section 106 and CIL agreements. Headline priorities for social value delivery in London boroughs could expand on the Mayor's Good Growth agenda which aims to build an inclusive, resilient and healthy city for everyone.

Solutions will inevitably differ between and within boroughs, and policy must therefore offer guidance without locking solutions into a regimented set of expectations, embedding sufficient flexibility to accommodate contextualised and creative solutions that respond to local needs.



There needs to be a standard approach, but there shouldn't be a standard solution. The challenge of policy is balancing consistency with flexibility. It should provide a shared framework without dictating rigid, uniform outcomes."

– Emma Baker, Director – Business Development at Gardiner & Theobald

The GLA recommends that social value obligations are embedded in local plans to allow local authorities to request a Social Value Statement as part of major planning applications and make these material considerations in planning decisions. The London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC), an independent advisory body to the Mayor of London, has suggested that the GLA assists local authorities by providing guidance on social value, hosting training opportunities for planning officers, and supporting the development and assessment of Social Value Statements.⁸

Social Value Statements would ideally include a local needs analysis, an engagement methodology and outcomes, as well as evidence of how the strategy would support 'good growth'.⁹ Practitioners have raised concerns around Social Value Statements being watered down in planning applications, losing the intricacies that have been developed during the masterplanning stage. Local authorities, with guidance from the GLA, should therefore ensure that the format of Social Value Statements enables applicants to capture all aspects of the process, the implementation and the necessary delivery mechanisms.

At the planning stage, everything is a forecast and, as a development progresses through the implementation stages, things change. It is therefore essential that Social Value Statements are sufficiently flexible to respond to baseline findings and community feedback during the subsequent stages of the development process.

With the GLA as a governing body for social value across London, its remit could extend to reviewing social value delivery in major development projects. The GLA has a strong history of championing quality design through design review panels, and there could be a case for establishing a social value panel of experienced professionals to review and test ideas as projects develop. A panel of this kind would ideally function as a facilitating



body in the same way that the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) did in its heyday, leading large-scale developments towards better outcomes. In parallel, community review panels with local representatives should be a regular consultee as part of a comprehensive engagement process. For a deeper exploration of meaningful engagement, see the section on co-creating place-based social value strategies on page 31.

A greater focus on social value in local policy requires dedicated resource in the public sector outside of procurement. Local authorities can have a comprehensive understanding of local communities and are well-placed to draft initial social value strategies and convey these to development teams, who often work in the area for a relatively short period of time yet leave a lasting legacy. Jasmine Ceccarelli-Drewry, Strategic Advisory Associate and Social Impact Lead at Montagu Evans led the development

of the Hackney Central Town Centre Strategy in her previous role as Hackney Council Area Regeneration Officer. She says that it can take years to fully understand local perception and challenges in a place. "A developer who comes in for a few months cannot be expected to develop that same level of understanding, and I think the public sector has a role in handing over local resource and knowledge for efficient strategy and delivery of social impact."

A local authority liaison officer with a deep understanding of the local area could provide an invaluable link between the professional team and the local community and help advocate for place-based solutions. This would be particularly beneficial for small and medium sized projects that are often less equipped to develop a comprehensive social value strategy.

For the Euston Tower project in Camden, British Land's social value strategy was guided by the London Borough of Camden's Good



Euston Tower CGI by 3XN on behalf of British Land.

Life Camden Framework. The borough-wide policy was adapted to the local context through a deep co-design process with the Regent's Park and Somerstown communities, and through workshops with officers from the London Borough of Camden and other local representatives. Saul Collyns, Senior Social Impact & Public Affairs Lead at British Land, says that "it was important to be honest about the priorities in these wards and identify the hyper-local indicators that we can measure outcomes against. This will help us understand our social impact beyond numbers, so that we can review what is working and what we might need to change."

A key challenge for local authorities is that it can be difficult to track what policies are most effective. The GLA, working alongside industry representatives and local authorities, should therefore lead a comprehensive review into meaningful and effective methods of evaluation that can measure the broader, and sometimes intangible, societal benefits of development. The outputs of this should include best practice recommendations to inform social value policy, ensuring that it remains relevant to both the private and public sectors.

Delivering positive social value in development

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to successful social value delivery, and as such we should avoid standardising and prescribing outcomes and KPI's.

To achieve tangible and measurable social value requires development and management teams to commit time and resource to creating a place-based strategy – informed by local voices, data and policy. The strategy should identify the processes, interventions and outcomes that optimise meaningful social impact in their area of influence.

This section outlines the necessary steps to produce a place-based social value strategy, which hinges on:

- Inclusive co-creation with communities, stakeholders and partner organisations;
- A baseline assessment and ongoing monitoring;
- Collaborative working;
- Identifying stewardship models that leave a lasting legacy.

Case studies are used to exemplify best practices and showcase pragmatic approaches to inspire action.

Co-creating place-based social value strategies

Local people are experts of their area and should be considered a key partner in the placemaking process. Often, people can feel sidelined in development projects, as if change is happening to them, not with them. This disconnect is reflected in a recent survey by Transport for London, which found that only 51% of young people and 28% of adults felt that the built environment impacts their lives a fair or large amount.^{10 11}

Communities can understandably become dis incentivised and fatigued by recurring engagement if they can't see results. Built environment professionals are pressured on many fronts, and that can reduce enthusiasm and the ability to think innovatively about

how to engage. Azzees Minott is the Co-founder, Director, and Chief Operating Officer at 2-3 Degrees, a social enterprise that aims to inspire and equip young people with the personal development skills needed to fulfil their potential. She says that we can't always deploy the same tactics, because it would be inefficient and not generate results. "When we engage with people, we should build a programme that works for them. Works for who they are, where they live, how they can engage and the opportunities available to them. Using a range of ways of engaging is important, because there is no single method that will suit everyone in a community."



Canada Dock Dipping Pond CGI by Cityscape on behalf of British Land.



There isn't always the budget or motivation to engage early on, which is critical for social value planning, and we sometimes rely on the general public consultation for insights. But at that stage, we may have missed the opportunity to build in social value properly."

– Elizabeth Bamford, Associate at Volterra

There is a risk that genuine engagement is seen as a 'nice to have' that is value engineered out of the process, but social value strategies are reliant on an upfront needs exercise and therefore undermined if engagement starts too late. This can result in tokenistic engagement and delivery; if the social value strategy is not relevant to local people, it won't have a positive impact. Elizabeth Bamford, Associate at Volterra, says that "there isn't always the budget or motivation to engage early on, which is critical for social value planning, and we sometimes rely on the general public consultation for insights. But at that stage, we may have missed the opportunity to build in social value properly."

Engagement done well is valuable and worthwhile, as it can help mitigate planning risks, such as objections, assent and the need for redesigns, in addition to inspiring people to become stewards of their local area. This in turn supports community-led care, safety and long-term sustainability of place – valuable outcomes for the community, the developer and the investor.

The LSDC suggests that the 'neighbourhood portion' of borough CIL, which must be used in consultation with communities in places of

change, could be directed towards funding mechanisms for community participation and stewardship. Some London boroughs have put in place a participatory budgeting model, which empowers local people to directly influence spending decisions and social value measures.¹² Examples include the London Borough of Newham's People Powered Places scheme, which is funded by CIL payments and run by the council in partnership with residents to help them shape local priorities, and London Borough of Tower Hamlet's You Decide scheme, a participatory budgeting project where residents voted interactively on how to spend a portion of the council's budget.

Engagement should be ongoing, starting at concept stage and continuing through the design and planning process, the construction stages, and through to completion. An upfront needs exercise will give all affected citizens the agency to articulate their priorities and aspirations. Working with well-established local organisations, charities and community groups can help the project team build trust, expand their reach and access underrepresented groups.



Ark Academy engagement session by Places for London.

Formal community groups with diverse members from the local area, including minority groups and people with disabilities, can be established as a key stakeholder in the decision-making process, with representation at key meetings and review sessions. In many areas, community groups already exist. At Canada Water, British Land invested a significant amount of time to engage with the local community through their established community forums and residents' associations, which offered valuable opportunities to learn about local needs and establish British Land as a trusted partner.

A baseline assessment should be produced at the start of the process to capture the situation prior to change, against which the success of the scheme can be evaluated over time. The baseline should synthesise quantitative data, qualitative data and insights from the community needs analysis to create a rounded picture of how well the existing area is performing.

The engagement and baseline findings set the foundation for the social value strategy. Co-created by the professional team in close dialogue with the community, key stakeholders,

the local council and key delivery partners, the social value strategy is a powerful guide for social value delivery in developments of all scales that helps articulate key priorities, objectives and delivery mechanisms. Learning from exemplary projects outside of the capital, PRD designed a social value charter for the Bristol Temple Quarter development to articulate the long-term vision for community prosperity to everyone working in the area – developers, investors, businesses and community organisations. Barney Cringle, Director of Inclusive Economy at PRD, explains that this is encouraging everyone to think more proactively about how their actions, investments and resources can make a positive contribution and affect change.

A 'theory of change' can be established to support the social value strategy, outlining the processes, activities and assumptions that will lead to the desired social outcomes. The theory of change helps track whether social value objectives are met in the development.

The key actions of a theory of change include:

01.

Defining the desired outcomes in the short, medium and long term (example: reducing long-term unemployment).

02.

Understanding local needs (example: young people lack access to training opportunities).

03.

Identifying the resources, activities and investments required to deliver the strategy (example: partnering with local providers to deliver training programmes).

04.

Mapping the activities and interventions that will lead to the desired outcomes (example: employability workshops to enhance job opportunities).

05.

Tracking the results and outputs of the activities and interventions (example: 50 people enrolled in employability workshops).

06.

Considering any underlying assumptions and conditions (example: programmes must be free and delivered locally).

07.

Defining the success metrics (example: reduction in unemployment).

Code of practice for co-creating place-based social value strategies:



1. Identify and involve stakeholders:

Engage stakeholders from the outset and across the lifespan of the project to listen, learn and collect feedback. Use mixed formats that suit different groups of people to make it fun and easy to partake.



2. Partner with local organisations:

Established community groups, charities and organisations can help build trust, expand reach and access underrepresented groups.



3. Establish engagement vehicles

Community forums or advisory groups with diverse representation can grant local people a greater influence in the decision-making process, with representation at key meetings and review sessions. Where possible, engage with existing groups.



4. Produce a needs analysis:

Undertake a needs exercise upfront, prior to any change, to identify what is valuable locally and convert this into KPIs against which to measure impact.



5. Establish a baseline:

Combine the findings from the needs analysis and engagement process into a baseline assessment that captures the situation in the area before change happens.



6. Produce a place-based social value strategy:

Create a social value strategy in close dialogue with the community, key stakeholders, the local council and key delivery partners. This will function as a roadmap for implementing social value that articulates priorities, objectives and delivery mechanisms for everyone involved.

Monitoring impact

A key aspect of the social value process is to manage and measure impact. Impact will accrue over time, and to understand the true societal benefits, data needs to be collected beyond project completion. Often, little effort is dedicated to ongoing monitoring – post-completion surveys can provide some insights but have limited scope and often lack a longitudinal approach. The big challenge around long-term monitoring is that it can be resource intense and continue post-disposal. However, novel methods of data collection and evaluation are being trialled to enable longitudinal studies of social impact.

The Prosperity Index is a citizen science project that is being piloted in east London to evaluate the long-term impacts of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park development on residents. The 10-year study is currently underway and due for completion in 2031. It measures the indicators that matter to local communities and aims to better understand present-day pathways to prosperity, with the ambition to share insights about citizen-led research and metrics to inform planning, policy and

action.¹³ The Index was developed by the UCL Institute for Global Prosperity, which trained local residents to undertake the research, with the competencies that the residents acquired being acknowledged through a UCL Citizen Science Certificate.¹⁴ As such, the trial has generated additional social value by amplifying diverse voices, teaching research skills to enhance employability and giving young people insights into career opportunities in the built environment.

The Flourishing Index is a long-term study into individual and collective wellbeing in and around the Brent Cross masterplan area in north London. It measures a set of literal and proxy flourishing indicators that go beyond typical measures of wellbeing and delves deeper into cause-and-effect relationships. Using mixed methods of data collection, the team routinely collects data to create snapshots in time and build a body of evidence that will guide decision-making over a 10-year period. The findings are reviewed together with the community and local stakeholders to overlay their interpretations with those of the



Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford (Tom Wheatley/Unsplash).

professional team. As such, the Flourishing Index provides a valuable feedback loop that allows the professional team to adapt and fine-tune strategies in response to real-time insights.

Grosvenor Property UK commissions community wellbeing baselines for each of its neighbourhoods and uses the Commonplace online platform and interviews to collect self-reported data. This is combined with data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to regularly evaluate outcomes against the baseline assessments. Focus group sessions with residents drill into the findings and what they mean for the community. Kate Nottidge, Social Impact Director at Grosvenor Property UK, explains that this approach provides an objective view of needs in particular neighbourhoods, and the data makes it easier to galvanise contractors, local authorities and investment partners around common issues and objectives, whether that is loneliness, sense of safety or access to green spaces.

From a corporate perspective, it's important to understand the impact of actions and interventions to make a case for more

investment, and to inform decision-making. Ongoing monitoring, using real-time data, creates a feedback loop that can be absorbed by the project team as they reflect on outcomes and opportunities for improvements.

Code of practice for monitoring impact:



7. Ongoing monitoring:

Facilitate ongoing data collection and analysis throughout the design, planning and development process to enable continued learning, fine-tune social value strategies and inform future decision-making. Longitudinal studies, enabled by innovative approaches, can measure impact over time.



London Wall Place by Make Architects for Brookfield Properties.

Partnership working

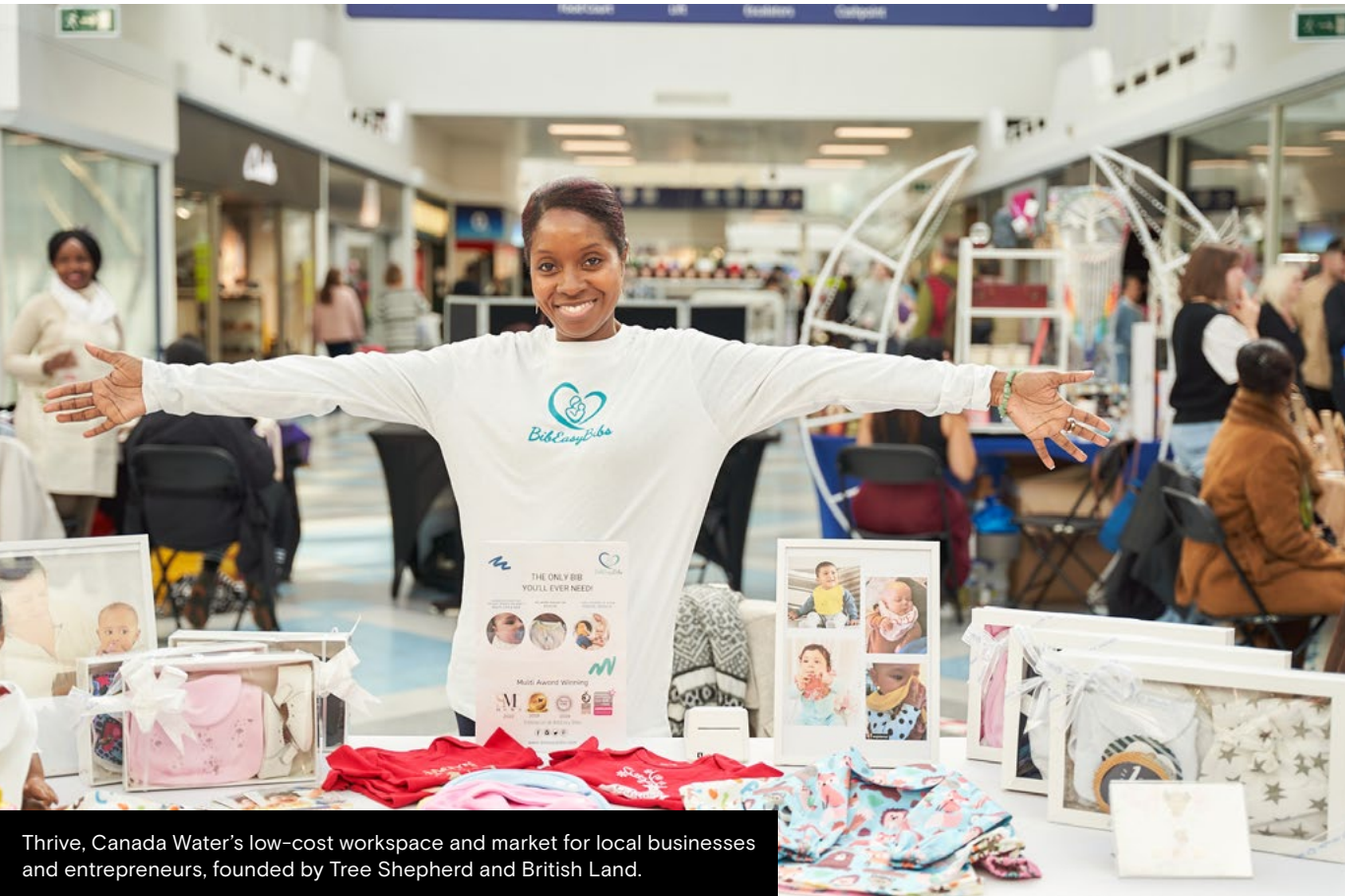
Seamless social value delivery hinges on close collaboration between all partners to embed meaningful benefits across the many life stages of a scheme – from design and planning to construction and lived-in place. At each hand-over, there should be a certain level of moral coding or social licensing where each partner buys into the social objectives set out in the social value strategy.

By leveraging the positive impacts of the supply chain, the reach and benefits of the development can be amplified. British Land established a Consultants’ Social Value Charter for the Canada Water masterplan and all delivery partners made a pledge to work towards achieving the key social value priorities, helping to optimise benefits across all phases of the build.

Partnership working with local community groups, charities and organisations is necessary to build trust, extend reach and establish

appropriate pathways. It can be challenging to locate the right partners, and the local authority could have an important role to play in mediating between opportunities arising from development and needs in the local area. Much partnership work builds on personal relationships and every company would benefit from having a social value champion that is motivated and can dedicate time to reach out and build connections.

Grosvenor Property UK’s Greener Futures Community Investment Programme was initiated to support training and jobs in the green economy, enable community-led climate action and improve young people’s access to nature. The programme is delivered in partnership with organisations such as Groundwork and the London Community Foundation and has supported over 70 unemployed Westminster residents through a six-month employment programme where they gain skills and build their confidence. At



Thrive, Canada Water’s low-cost workspace and market for local businesses and entrepreneurs, founded by Tree Shepherd and British Land.

the end of the programme, they are supported into a permanent job. Kate Nottidge, Grosvenor Property UK, says that it’s been really powerful to observe how sustainability and environmental action can be a vehicle for social benefit and change at an individual level. Development projects are opportune vehicles for testing initiatives and refining proposals with community partners, and if successful they can be integrated into the final scheme. As part of the British Library extension, Stanhope worked with Global Generation to establish Story Garden – a sustainable community garden – on a derelict piece of land. The garden has become a positive space where local residents can get involved in the future of the place whilst gaining new green skills. The meanwhile project was used to test the appetite for a growing space in this location and, because of its success, a permanent community gardening plot will be created, potentially run by a third sector organisation.

Across the built environment sector, we should not be averse to working together to create something of greater magnitude. With a myriad of projects coming forward in close proximity in central London, there is scope to collaborate across red line boundaries to streamline processes, avoid duplication and amplify impact. Anne Parkes, Associate Director at Arup, suggests that different developments might take ownership of different social value processes and outcomes: “Rather than separate developments delivering similar programmes, we should collaborate on initiatives to create something that is bigger than the sum of its parts.” With a dedicated social value liaison officer in the local authority, projects with overlapping spheres of influence could be coordinated to bring the best possible outcomes to an area.

There also needs to be greater cross-borough relationships regarding apprenticeships, as training and skills initiatives are not always achievable on a single site or in a narrow geographic area. The Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce, a City of London Corporation initiative focused on bridging the green skills gaps in the built environment sector, believes that overly localised approaches confined to a single site or within the boundaries of one

specific borough are insufficient as they limit the available training resources, making it difficult to find suitable opportunities and failing to tap into a wider and more diverse network of opportunities and expertise. This contributes to a high percentage of apprenticeships going uncompleted. For example, in 2019, only 40% of apprenticeships in England completed the End Point Assessments.¹⁵ To address this high rate of failure, local authorities should be mandated by the GLA to work across borough boundaries to support training and skills initiatives.

Code of practice for partnership working:



8. Partnership working:

Coordinate approaches between development projects to streamline processes, avoid duplication and amplify impact. Working with local organisations can extend the lifespan of initiatives beyond the build programme.



Legacy and stewardship

A common pitfall for development projects is to focus social value on the construction stage, particularly around delivering skills and jobs, which means that communities can feel they have been left without sufficient guardianship, funding or support after a scheme has reached completion. To ensure a lasting legacy, a stewardship model should be established from the outset, which maps out the longevity of involvement of the different partners and stakeholders – the developer, the local authority, partner organisations and community groups.

The stewardship opportunities are elevated when the developer stays involved as the asset manager but, in lieu of a developer steward, how can social value be safeguarded over time? At 105 Victoria Street, BGO is committed to delivering social value across the development's lifetime. To that end, it established a social value group comprising representatives from the development team, the contractors and consultants. When construction completes and the occupiers arrive, they will join the social value group

alongside the facilities management team, who will operate the buildings. The group will ensure that the social value strategy, which was created at the start of the project, will continue to deliver benefits and evolve with the needs of residents and the local community. Alexander Morris, Managing Director at BGO, explains that occupiers sign a responsible lease which includes an obligation to join the social value team. "This is setting up a platform within the lease, very similar to sustainable green leases, to guarantee the continued delivery of social support. This will naturally keep the work going."

The British Library extension offers a social value programme to tenants, which attracts likeminded businesses and organisations that want to provide for the local community. Anne Parkes, Arup, says that "commercial occupiers see the value of having a ready-made programme that is based on community need, that's been piloted and implemented, developed and refined during the construction phases. This will help them deliver on their ESG commitments." A social value lead will be appointed to manage the social value aspects

of the development, and the team is currently contemplating how this role can be secured in perpetuity, for example, by transferring the responsibility to the tenants through a social lease.

There are a lot of existing models to transfer responsibility of place into community hands, such as Community Land Trusts and Community Development Trusts. This requires a belief in the abilities of local people and, if this is established from the outset through meaningful working relationships, it's a gentler leap from participation to operational models because the foundation has already been put in place. Thus, that initial work to establish community forums, build trust and involve people in decision-making is essential as a forerunner to a more formal vehicle.

The Thamesmead Community Benefit Society (TCBS) is a governance vehicle made up of local residents, established in collaboration with the Peabody Housing Association to support local needs and neighbourhood regeneration. The purpose of the society is to empower local people to shape their area and develop community ownership plans, projects and businesses.¹⁶ Many TCBS members were involved in the Community Design Collective – a group of specially recruited, trained and paid residents that shared their experiences and insights to influence the design of the Thamesmead masterplan.

Long-term management plans could support communities through Right to Transfer and Right to Manage, which empower tenants to take control over the management of their community assets. Could we install Community Improvement Districts that expand the Business Improvement District model to empower local residents to act as custodians of place, safeguarding social infrastructure and driving decision-making, supported by innovative financial models?¹⁷

Another option would be to extend the responsibility for social value delivery to the existing ecosystem of community organisations, supported by social financing such as social or responsible leases. Existing organisations are well-embedded in their communities and

have a track record of providing support and benefits to local people. Anne Parkes, Arup, suggests that this could be a more efficient way to work: "Instead of recruiting social value managers, could the work be delivered through established organisations, and in doing so help the sustainability of the voluntary sector?"

Code of practice for legacy and stewardship:



9. Secure stewardship vehicles and mechanisms:

Ensure that sustainable vehicles, mechanisms and funding are in place to deliver positive impacts to local communities in the long-term. Community forums that involve people in decision-making from the outset can be important forerunners to more formal stewardship vehicles, supported by innovative financing models.

Social value reporting

2.



Social value reporting and impact evaluation are used for different purposes. Naturally, companies want to celebrate their achievements and communicate the societal benefits of their schemes to communities, partners, decision-makers, investors and shareholders. Companies also compete for work based in part on their social value commitments, and awarding bodies need to be able to evaluate and compare contributions and the assumed impact at tender stage. And, in boroughs where social value obligations are embedded in planning policy, planning applications must demonstrate compliance through the appropriate reporting methods.

When reporting on value adds and impacts, it's essential to consider the audience. Different narratives will be required to speak to different groups. For example, monetisation is primarily used to speak to an investor audience, who prefer pound values, but the wider public is more interested in understanding tangible outcomes.

Currently, there is no industry-wide approach to social value and social impact reporting. The lack of consistency and regulation has eroded confidence in the system, making practitioners question bold claims and big numbers. This section explores how the industry can move towards a standard of reporting that enhances accuracy, transparency and accountability.

Measuring social value and social impact

The baseline assessment, undertaken at the start of a project, will determine what is valuable to a community and help identify the KPIs that the success of the scheme should be evaluated against. It is important that the development is assessed based on what matters to the community, rather than using generic indicators. The value or impact that is measured should be additional, for example created by the development and not resulting from change in the community or society at large.

Some KPIs will be quantifiable, others won't. For qualitative value adds and impacts, the value transfer frameworks have embedded proxy values that convert qualitative outcomes, such as 'positive emotions' or 'participation', into a monetary value. The assumptions behind the proxy values vary between the frameworks, meaning that different frameworks generate different values for the same scheme, and as such they are incompatible. This creates an issue around comparability which erodes the purpose of the frameworks and muddles our understanding of how different developments stand up against each other.

Wesley Ankrah, Savills, says that the frameworks are useful and that it shouldn't matter which one we use, as long as we can convert outputs to compare like for like. "Currently, it's not possible to switch or compare between frameworks, because of the commercial IP around each company's methodologies. This needs to change. We need transparency around methodologies and assumptions, and a form of exchange rate to translate between frameworks to enable comparison."

Many companies find that no single standard framework suits them and take a 'framework agnostic' approach that blends metrics from different frameworks. Others are developing their own bespoke approaches that blend quantitative and qualitative assessments. As a result, it becomes near impossible to grasp what the numbers mean, even to the well-versed practitioner. This research revealed that whilst many practitioners understand that value transfer frameworks are useful in certain circumstances, they have great concerns around evaluating schemes based on proxy values, and favour reporting that focuses on real-life outcomes over monetisation.

Monetisation can produce unintentional consequences if it is driving organisations to prioritise high value items rather than what's valuable locally. There could be plenty of initiatives that create value for communities that don't score highly in the frameworks. The value transfer frameworks are overly focused on easily quantifiable metrics as opposed to measures that focus on enhancing the wellbeing of people and planet that are not as easily monetised.

Does social value need to be priced to be valuable? A scheme might deliver a set number of apprentices and it's possible to put a pound sign against that. But that value doesn't say anything about the experience of the apprentices, or how the incentive impacted their long-term job prospects. The risk with proxy-based frameworks is that we inflate values and exaggerate the impact – so-called 'social washing' – creating competition about who is delivering the biggest social value number, when we should focus on what matters to communities. The value transfer frameworks can also create an illusion that the value and impact are more static and quantifiable than they are in reality; often, the impacts are only apparent years after a project is completed.¹⁸



The challenge is that business decisions have historically been made based on financial, quantitative metrics, yet social impacts are often better described through qualitative means. If there was better understanding on this point, it could pave the way for decision-making which included both quantitative and qualitative considerations.”

– Elizabeth Bamford, Volterra



London Wall Place by Make Architects for Brookfield Properties.



Abbey Centre Tea Party delivered as part of BGO's 105 Victoria Street development.

Anna Devlet, British Land, says that we have to be careful about how we report on social value as an industry, because the risk is that we get too hung up on the numbers. “We need to be more transparent around data and include a methodology statement so that developments can be held accountable. As an industry, we should have an honest and open conversation about how to communicate the value of what we are doing, because none of us have nailed this and we are continually learning.”

Grosvenor Property UK hasn't monetised social outcomes to date, because the company considers it to be an overly reductive approach to something inherently complex. Kate Nottidge, Grosvenor Property UK, understands the appeal of monetisation but says the mix of methodologies and input data being used makes it hard to draw useful conclusions and that ultimately, to local stakeholders especially, it can feel relatively meaningless: “When you probe in the financial proxies and the assumptions behind them, it doesn't capture the real-life outcome that we should focus on and that our stakeholders care most about.

As the industry's perspective of social value matures and confidence grows, I think we will see developers, investors and decision-makers talking more about real-life outcomes instead of pound values.” Anne Parkes, Arup, says that when it is possible to input economics or a gross value added figure through jobs created and skills acquired, they will monetise, however, they also feed in information that can't be monetised yet strengthens the case to investors or the local authority.

The challenge for the sector is that there are many different methods of evaluating social value and its impact. And with a significant amount of resource required to collect robust data and produce meaningful, verifiable social value and impact assessments, many small and medium sized companies without a dedicated social value team struggle to keep up. It can become a choice between doing the good work or evaluating the work. To create a level playing field, there are calls to agree on an industry-wide approach to measuring social value and social impact, and a common language to communicate our efforts and achievements.

A built environment approach

The industry is some distance away from agreeing a common approach to social value and impact evaluation. At present, multiple different methods are being used, combining monetised, quantitative and qualitative measurements, acknowledging that reporting needs to be tailored to different audiences and include a variety of KPIs, some of which can only be captured through storytelling.

London’s built environment sector could benefit from an established long-list of KPIs that are informed by the Mayor’s Good Growth agenda and can guide local authority priorities and influence place-based social value strategies.¹⁹ This would introduce some level of consistency; however, it is important that top-down frameworks are used for guidance only and that they are sufficiently flexible to accommodate contextualised and creative solutions that respond to local needs.

Kate Nottidge, Grosvenor Property UK, suggests that it would be helpful to identify commonalities between best practice case studies, and look at how to capture those principles in a framework that can be tailored to the specific need and the local context in question. “For example, if jobs are the KPI, we should consider what about jobs are important in that instance – is it the number of jobs created, the groups of people who access the jobs, or how the jobs impact wellbeing and life chances? This would give companies options for evidencing their impact in relation to what matters to communities, not just reporting on big numbers.”

When it comes to measuring social value and impact, we are all on a steep learning curve and shouldn’t shy away from admitting that it is challenging. As an industry, we must embrace honest conversations and work collaboratively to learn from each other’s experiences and identify best practices. Working alongside industry representatives and local authorities, the GLA should lead a comprehensive review into meaningful and effective methods of

evaluation that can measure the broader, and sometimes intangible, social benefits of development. This will likely involve mixed formats of measuring and reporting and should be backed up by a robust methodology to promote consistency and inspire confidence in the evaluation process. An open access evidence base could be established, that collates datasets and best practice case studies to enable learning and shared knowledge between projects.

Chartership and accreditation is important to identify what ‘good’ and ‘excellent’ looks like, as well as evidencing best practice with the underwriting of an independent, institutional body. Currently, accreditation for social value measurement and impact management practices is provided for individuals and organisations in the UK by Social Value UK, and the Social Value Quality Mark provides certification that verifies social impact efforts, awarded in Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum levels. Anne Parkes, Arup, says that this is a good start, but the evaluation methods promoted by Social Value UK and Social Value Quality Mark are not necessarily right for all practitioners. It would therefore be pertinent for the taskforce of industry experts to consider an industry-based accreditation in consultation with practitioners from different sectors with the aim to arrive at a fully endorsed scheme that can be applied across the board. An industry accreditation is important to recognise the companies and practitioners that meet a certain standard of competence and experience of delivering positive social value in development, and to help incentivise upskilling and best practice amongst built environment professionals.

Code of practice for measuring impact:



10. Measuring impact:

Employ a mixed method approach to measure social value and social impact, providing a robust methodology around data, assumptions and KPIs. KPIs should be based on engagement outcomes and baseline assessment and focused on what matters locally. Findings should be verified through independent review.



11. Communicate achievements:

Report on outcomes in a format and language that is appropriate to the receiving audiences.



Angela was employed through British Land’s Canada Water Connect scheme, and now works on the Estate management team.

Social value in procurement

A key strand of public procurement is understanding how the bidder will embed social value in the development process. On the local authority level, the National TOMs framework dominates as the standard form of evaluation, offering convenience and comparability between tender submissions. However, this approach asks bidders to identify outcomes before they have the opportunity to undertake a local needs analysis and co-create a social value strategy.

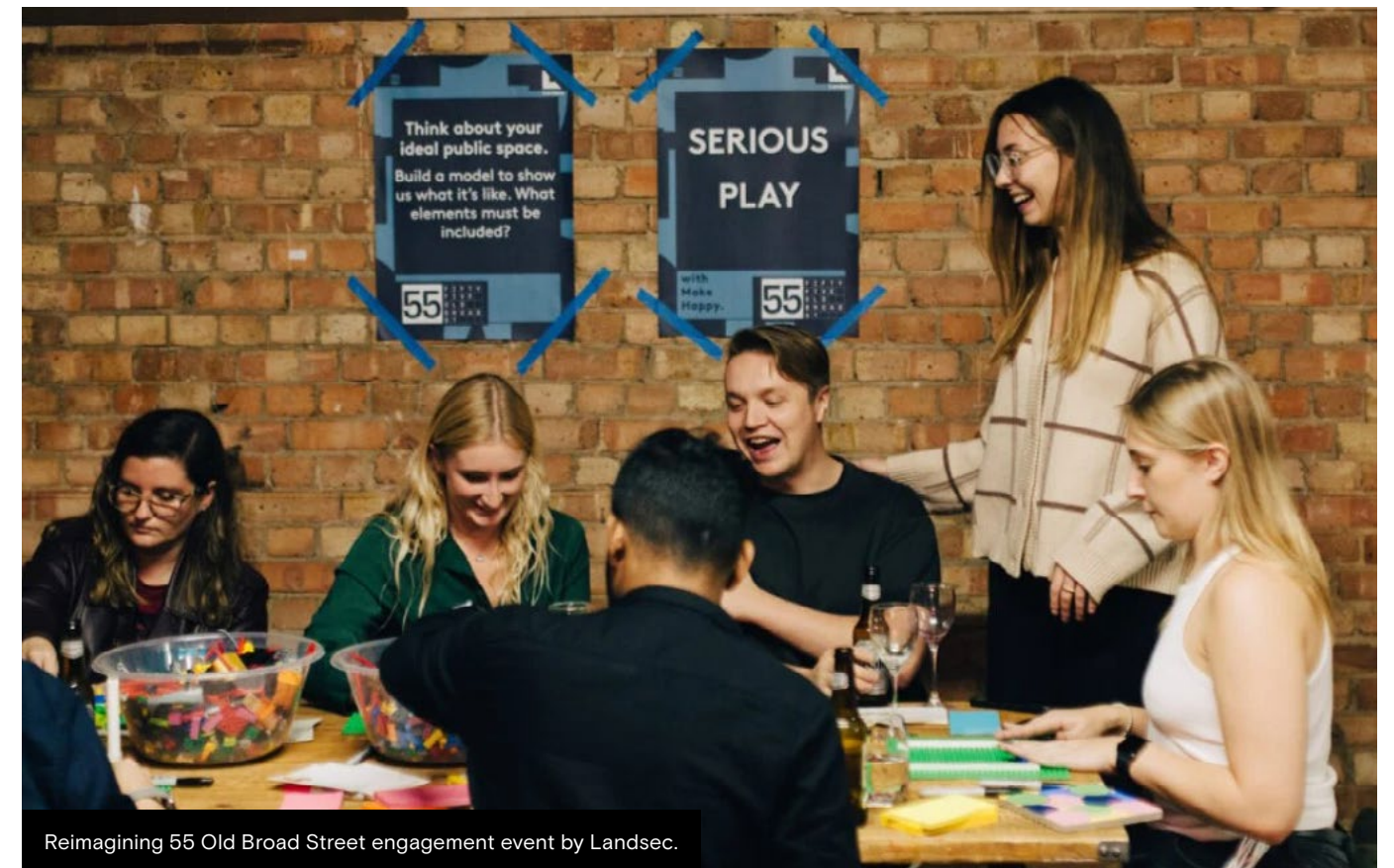
This somewhat backwards process comes with a risk of conflating social value with economic value, for example high value interventions might be favoured to achieve a higher score and win the contract, when in reality, the community might value other measures that are harder to monetise.

Because of the competitive nature of the tender process, bidders are inclined to report higher figures than they can deliver. Wesley Ankrah, Savills, says that the proposed measures might not be well understood by the bid evaluator and there is a significant risk of non-delivery further down the line. In this process, bidders with a genuine social value agenda risk losing out on opportunities because their strategies and priorities do not fit within the standardised value-transfer measurement systems.

There is a pressing need for a social value evaluation model in public procurement that veers away from commercial marketing purchasing and towards stewardship approaches. Yimika Koya, Urban Strategy Consultant and Social Value Advisor at Arup, says that rather than comparing the output of

the social value metric – the GVA – could we instead go back to the social value strategy and ask that bidders demonstrate how they plan to deliver positive impacts: “It would be helpful to compare the process and not the output, which would also overcome the issue of scale, as major businesses inevitably overshadow the impact of SMEs.” If the principles of the social value strategy are agreed at the bid stage, could there be scope to evolve them with the community and key stakeholders later on, when the project is up and running? This, of course, would require more work and resource on behalf of the awarding body, as the tender evaluation process becomes more complex.

Jasmine Ceccarelli-Drewry, Montagu Evans, says that the public sector is becoming much better at articulating expectations for social value and how it relates to the contract that’s being procured. “The social value questions, or ‘ask’ in a procurement exercise can be very ambiguous, too focused on short term output, and too detached from the concept of legacy and the built environment itself. I work with developers to tackle the social value question in procurement exercises, as well as across investment strategies and planning



Reimagining 55 Old Broad Street engagement event by Landsec.



It would be helpful to compare the process and not the output, which would also overcome the issue of scale, as major businesses inevitably overshadow the impact of SMEs.”

– Yimika Koya, Urban Strategy Consultant and Social Value Advisor at Arup

applications. We work to really understand the scheme and how it can support social impact and productivity in a multi-disciplinary way. As a result, there is often a lot of consideration around stewardship, placemaking, community partnerships and experience.”

Westminster City Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of its procurement process, working with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies to identify how the local authority can improve current practices. In the new system, suppliers will be offered clearer guidance, greater flexibility and more support when they’re in contract to help them deliver their obligations and celebrate their achievements. In a points-based system, suppliers will be offered a menu of projects based on identified community needs, with values ascribed to incentives that meet the greatest needs. If circumstances change, they won’t be hamstrung by the commitments made during the tender process. Thomas Harding, Westminster City Council, says that this approach is designed to drive local benefit and impact, and to prevent inflated values in the tender process.

Case study: BGO – 105 Victoria Street

The social value strategy for 105 Victoria Street is about creating meaningful, long-term connections between tenants and the local community. The developer, BGO, is committed to building self-sustaining structures in partnership with local schools and community programmes to address local needs, support social ambitions and work towards shared goals.

Together with Westminster Wheels, BGO provides mechanical training for unemployed Westminster residents, which is followed by a six-month placement to support people into work. Employment support for rough sleepers is provided through the Cardinal Hume Centre with the ambition is to help one rough sleeper every year into permanent housing and a job – and BGO has now hired its first team member from the homeless community.

A partnership with the charity Mind and the community interest company Wondering Minds operates mental health film projects where participants create films about their mental health journeys as a route to personal and collective healing. The founder of Wondering Minds, Matt Somerville, produces a portfolio of social strategy films to document the achievements of each cohort. They also organise psychoeducational workshops to support contractors on-site, with optional one-on-one sessions.

A partnership with The Abbey Centre delivers a hot meals service for the homeless, a monthly tea party for residents facing loneliness and a garden transformation project to turn a disused outdoor area into a thriving community garden

for growing food and hosting outdoor classes. In 2025, BGO will deliver planning workshops with The Built Environment Trust, language classes with the Cardinal Hume Centre and hands-on training with The Makers Course which is hosted by Westminster City Council to support local people into employment. One or two new charities will be brought into the fold each year.

The 105 Victoria Street partnership network will continue to deliver benefits to community long after construction has completed, supported by the development's social value group and responsible leases.



The 105 Victoria Street development by BGO.

Case study: British Land – Canada Water Masterplan

As part of the Canada Water masterplan, British Land co-produced a Social Regeneration Charter with Southwark Council. Submitted with the planning application, it articulated a legacy framework for the masterplan developed through in-depth local engagement, genuine partnerships and an active and ongoing presence in the area.

Key to the Social Value Legacy Strategy is the relationships with local organisations and programmes delivered by local experts, which are designed with a lifespan beyond the scheme's 15-year build programme.

To realise the full potential of this, British Land established Canada Water Connect in partnership with the East London Business Alliance (ELBA), with the purpose of connecting local people to new opportunities created by the development, including the potential for local residents to access employment and grow their careers, whilst unlocking a local talent pool that businesses can tap into. To date, over 125 residents have been supported. A project manager from ELBA is embedded within the British Land team to provide support for aspiring talent and employers.

A long-term legacy involves tackling multi-generational unemployment, which requires a comprehensive programme of support. Alongside Canada Water Connect, British Land partnered with Big Local Works Bermondsey, a local employability charity, to offer one-on-one benefits and welfare clinics, employability courses and next steps support. The partnership ensures that the necessary aftercare is available, so that people who upskill or reskill can be supported through each stage of their career. An affordable workspace hub, Thrive, offers local

entrepreneurs and businesses access to low-cost workspaces, start-up business training and mentoring.

A partnership with the Construction Youth Trust has provided over 1,900 local young people that face barriers to employment with support to kickstart careers in the built environment, and at The Paper Garden, Global Generation operates an education programme that has supported over 5,500 local young people to shape public spaces.

British Land also teamed up with National Literacy Trust to engage and encourage school children to read, as research demonstrates a link between reading for pleasure, educational attainment and life chances. Other partnerships include that with London Bubble Theatre Company to deliver confidence-building and interview preparation workshops for at-risk students, and with the Southwark Black Parents Forum who empower under-represented groups to access employment in the built environment sector.



The Canada Water masterplan by British Land.

Case study:

Charles Russell Speechlys – Embedding social value into legal documents

Collaboration and flexibility are key components in addressing social value in the built environment. And, where it is appropriate to do so, making social value obligations legally binding helps to ensure enforceability and accountability.

ESG in a leasing context has rapidly gathered pace over recent years. ‘Green lease’ clauses focusing on environmental impact are now commonplace and there is growing demand for leases to go further in addressing social issues. Having advised many clients on embedding green lease clauses into their portfolios, law firm Charles Russell Speechlys is now seeing an increased focus on social issues. When it comes to considering how to incorporate social value into leases, Charles Russell Speechlys says that a ‘one size fits all’ approach isn’t possible. The extent to which social obligations can be addressed will depend upon a number of factors.

Location is key. Is the building in an urban or rural setting? What community is the building serving? Does the property form part of a wider estate owned by the landlord or is it a standalone asset? How aligned is the tenant with the landlord’s social and broader impact-related objectives – does it have an ESG policy or strategy for example? The intended use of the property will also be a material consideration; the types of social initiatives that a retail or F&B user can commit to will be very different to an office or logistics tenant. Being too prescriptive risks alienating tenants and ending up with obligations that quickly become outdated. To allow goals to evolve over time, social obligations could be recorded in Memorandums of Understanding rather than the lease.

Examples could include commitments such as:

- Advertising job opportunities and apprenticeships locally, e.g. with local residents being offered the position where they meet the criteria.
- Working with local schools or other educational establishments, e.g. offering work experience, career support or talks.
- Engaging with local supply chains and supporting local businesses.
- Making commitments to certain ethical standards regarding the use of customer or client data.
- Partnering with local community groups or charities.
- Participating in community-wide events, e.g. summer fairs or local fundraising initiatives.
- Registering for London Living Wage accreditation.
- Offering mental health support and resources to employees, clients and customers.
- Donating old furniture to a suitable charity when fitting out or refurbishing a space.

Charles Russell Speechlys has also been advising clients on how to incorporate social value into their developments, from preparing their RFPs to including contractual provisions requiring the selected contractors to pay their employees the London Living Wage. Practical checks and balances, such as ensuring that developers are entitled to see evidence that payments are being made, are key to ensuring that these obligations are met and are not merely window dressing.



Charles Russell Speechlys advises clients on how to incorporate social value into their developments and legal documents.

Case study: Gardiner & Theobold – Ebury Bridge

The regeneration of the Ebury Bridge Estate in Westminster is delivering the largest number of new council homes in the area in decades. More than a physical transformation, the project seeks to redefine how estate regeneration is carried out by placing long term social and economic sustainability at its core. Central to this approach is a commitment to strengthening the local community and ensuring residents feel included and supported throughout the process.

This project demonstrates that social value is not an add on, but a vital component of successful regeneration. Events such as Edge Fest and the Winter Warmer gatherings have created opportunities for connection between residents experiencing significant change and the people delivering the regeneration. These activities help preserve a sense of identity and belonging, while fostering dialogue between the community and project teams. Supporting such initiatives contributes to the resilience of the area and ensures the benefits of regeneration extend well beyond the new buildings themselves.

Encouraging social mobility is also a key part of delivering meaningful benefits through regeneration. Providing local people with access to work experience in the built environment can open doors to careers that may have previously felt out of reach. Placements support the development of confidence, practical skills and awareness of opportunities in the sector, while helping to address the industry’s wider skills gap.



Fabiola Umar on site at the Ebury Bridge Estate in Westminster.

In 2022, Gardiner & Theobold contributed to Construction Youth Trust’s Building Future Skills event for Ebury, which aimed to inspire young people to explore careers in the built environment. This led to Fabiola Umar undertaking a work placement and, in 2023, joining the company as a project manager apprentice. Fabiola continues to thrive in

her role, demonstrating the lasting impact of community focused initiatives.

Case study: Grosvenor Property UK – Community Engagement Charter

Grosvenor Property UK developed a Community Engagement Charter – Positive Space – for its approach to engaging with the residents, businesses and workers of its estate in Westminster.

The Charter set a new standard for co-creation in development projects and property management, acknowledging that positive social value hinges on a two-way exchange between the developer and the community. Its creation was facilitated by stakeholder focus groups and peer reviewed by the community.

The Charter laid the foundation for the company's social impact and community strategy – People Positive – which outlines how the organisation drives positive outcomes for people through their core business, with a focus on improving wellbeing, supporting business growth, increasing diversity in the property sector and delivering targeted philanthropy.

Understanding and responding to community need is at the heart of the People Positive approach. A comprehensive approach to community engagement, including a commitment to being an active member of existing neighbourhood forums and community groups rather than setting up separate vehicles, is one way to stay in touch with local needs. Tracking wellbeing over time ensures that community voices are triangulated by an objective data-led understanding of need.

Because of a general lack of youth representation in conversations about neighbourhood change, Grosvenor Property UK set up the Mayfair Youth Forum in collaboration with 2-3 Degrees to create a platform for young people to share their

views and input. Out of this work, the Voice. Opportunity.Power Toolkit was created, designed with a number of partners including the Town and Country Planning Association, ZCD Architects and Sport England, as a pragmatic aid to facilitate youth engagement in the built environment.



The Mayfair Youth Forum exploring South Molton Street in Mayfair.

Case study: Landsec – 55 Old Broad Street

As part of the longer-term redevelopment of 55 Old Broad Street, Landsec sought to activate the vacant ground floor units, enhance footfall and create meaningful social impact within the local area.

A Local Needs Analysis, conducted by Social Value Portal, identified key issues, opportunities and constraints, culminating in a focus on supporting mental health through accessible creative interventions.

With guidance from Landsec’s Community Charter and Sustainable Development Toolkit, community engagement played a pivotal role in shaping the project. A series of ‘Reimagining 55 Old Broad Street’ events ensured that local workers, residents and community organisations were actively involved in the design of both the temporary space and the wider redevelopment plans. Insights gathered from these sessions informed a brief for potential operators, with strict criteria for delivering social value.

Hive Curates, an arts collective, was the successful organisation, launching ‘Broadworks’ in late 2023. Over the past two years, Broadworks has provided 10 artist and maker studios, alongside artistic workshops, events and a thriving café. The initiative has created a space where those who work and live in the City of London can engage in creative activities that support mental wellbeing. With the support of the Eastern City Business Improvement District BID, the success of Broadworks has led to its approval as a permanent feature within the development, allowing it to continue to offer genuinely affordable studio spaces and provide a

platform for underrepresented creative talent. Through Broadworks and its approach to community engagement, alongside initiatives such as the plans to host outreach programmes by the Guildhall School of Music at The Victorian Bath House, Landsec has ensured that social value is embedded throughout the lifecycle of 55 Old Broad Street.



Reimagining 55 Old Broad Street engagement event by Landsec.

Case study:

Make Architects – London Wall Place for Brookfield Property

In the City of London, high development pressures have led to much public space being elevated above ground, typically at the upper levels of tall buildings, to give the public a stake in the sky. Through Section 106 agreements, the City of London Corporation pushes for new developments to include gardens, classrooms and community spaces that are free to use seven days a week.

These spaces welcome school children from across London to come and connect with this historic area, enabled by partnerships with local charities and social enterprises. The City Corporation's planning department works with applicants to draw up frameworks for how the spaces are managed, maintained and financed to ensure their longevity. The intention is to break down perceived barriers to entry and ensure that the Square Mile is an inclusive place for everyone.

London Wall Place is a commercial scheme that delivered the largest public garden in the City of London since the Barbican Estate. Local engagement was essential because of the scheme's close proximity to existing homes. The team undertook an ambitious co-design process with the local residents through their existing associations, sculpting the scheme from the views of people's windows and balconies. Make Architects says that it was about winning hearts and minds, and making sure that everyone was heard, which resulted in a stronger design.



London Wall Place by Make Architects for Brookfield Properties.

The development was delivered in 2009-2010, prior to the social value conversation taking off. Even so, the social benefits of the proposal were a core consideration. Graham Longman, Architect at Make Architects, says that this was important because “people don’t want to be dictated to by professionals who think they know better. The residents are the experts

on the ground, and they took on the role of a specialist consultant that we could bounce ideas with and learn from. This enabled us to create a place that adds something positive to their lives. Now the process of creating social value and impact has become more formalised, which is great, but it is something that we have always strived to achieve.”

Case study:

Mitsubishi Estate London and CO-RE – 72 Upper Ground

Located on London's Southbank with its extensive cultural offer spanning the National Theatre, Royal Festival Hall, BFI, Old Vic and more, Mitsubishi Estate London and CO-RE's proposals for 72 Upper Ground aim to preserve and build upon the site's legacy as the former home of ITV.

Designed into the scheme from day one was The London Studios, a 40,000 sq ft arts and culture space comprising production and exhibition space, workspace, studios and a 150-seat auditorium. Once completed, this new cultural hub will be accessible to local organisations and creatives through the London Borough of Lambeth's ELEVATE programme, which seeks to open up the creative and cultural sector for all young people. Mitsubishi Estate London has also partnered with the National Theatre to support its outreach programme, which opens doors for young people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience the arts.

Additionally, Mitsubishi Estate London and CO-RE have sought to ensure that the site played a role in promoting Lambeth's creative scene whilst vacant. Shortly after acquiring the site, ITV's former offices were reopened and made available to local, grassroots organisations, including Young Creators UK, Iconic Steps and the Black Cultural Archive. These groups have been able to leverage the international renown of the Southbank to broaden their reach and impact in ways that would not otherwise have been possible, in addition to inputting into the design of The London Studios through the 'Preview' engagement programme.

The vacant studios were also used by director Danny Boyle for his biopic of the Sex Pistols, a nod to the location's association with the band's notorious interview with Bill Grundy.



Placemaking Happy Hour with Young Creators UK, hosted by Futurecity at 72 Upper Ground.

Case study: Places for London

Places for London, the property-owning arm of Transport for London, has developed a Sustainable Development Framework to ensure that social value is embedded across its developments.

The framework includes nine dimensions that will ensure wellbeing, inclusivity and sustainability: vibrant places, social cohesion, liveable communities, health and wellbeing, climate and ecological resilience, high performance buildings, financial sustainability local prosperity and neighbourhood investment.

The framework is accompanied by a Community Engagement Handbook, developed in collaboration with a steering group of industry experts on social, environmental and economic sustainability. These two documents help align action amongst all delivery partners in the supply chain.

One of the most impactful social value incentives delivered by Places for London is its skills and educational engagement programme, an initiative that extends to its development partners. Working with the Construction Youth Trust, Places for London raises awareness about career opportunities in schools and offers apprenticeships and work experience for young people with the intent to get them involved in local developments and the future of their neighbourhood.

In Kidbrooke, Places for London worked with students from Thomas Tallis school to involve them in the design of the teenage playspace. The students were taught how to be a design critic by the Mayor of London's

Design Advocates and were subsequently invited to comment on the landscape design with renewed confidence. The programme was set up to promote social mobility and support young people into a career in the built environment. An engagement programme with resources support from Make Space for Girls puts young women in focus when designing

the public realm, considering issues such as safety and gender diversity. These kinds of initiatives are being integrated into all of Places for London's schemes, feeding valuable insights into the designs and highlighting that professionals are not the experts on what a community needs, the community is.



Ark Academy engagement session by Places for London.

Case study: The Pollen Estate – Championing the next generation of apprentice tailoring talent

As custodians of Savile Row, which has remained the world's premier street for tailoring since the 19th century, The Pollen Estate is proud to support the heritage and traditions of the area. This commitment is demonstrated through its long-standing sponsorship of the Golden Shears Awards, a prestigious competition regarded as the "Oscars of the Tailoring World" which champions the next generation of tailoring talent and this important skill of British tailoring.

Founded in 1974 by Robert Bright MBE, the Golden Shears Awards offers a national platform for apprentice tailors and fashion students to showcase their creative vision and technical skill. Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025, the most recent ceremony took place at Merchant Taylors' Hall, where 25 finalists, selected from nearly 90 entries, competed in a live catwalk judged by leading industry figures.

The Pollen Estate's support of the awards reflects its belief in the importance of respecting the heritage of the area and nurturing the emerging talent, who will drive the continued evolution of Savile Row to remain a global centre for excellence.

The Pollen Estate recognises the broader long-term value of encouraging careers in creative industries and the positive impact this has on the local community.

The Golden Shears is more than a competition, it is a platform for professional growth, creativity and connection, enabling talented individuals to gain exposure and recognition at a national level. For The Pollen Estate, supporting such initiatives is an important part of its role as a responsible and forward-thinking custodian of one of London's most iconic destinations.



Conclusion

Social value is a relatively new concept that is ever evolving and, with multiple frameworks and guidance documents available, professionals are left wondering where to turn for comprehensive advice on best practice.

At a time when London’s property sector is increasingly pressured to adopt a people-centric approach that meets the needs of diverse communities, it is essential that the industry galvanises behind a common language and code of practice to build consensus, collaborate more effectively and amplify the societal benefits of development.

This report distils five key recommendations to amplify and support the industry’s social value achievements:

- **National guidance:**
It is imperative that national policy clearly defines social value in a development context and sets out how it can be balanced alongside environmental and economic considerations without stifling local creativity and contextualised solutions.
- **Local governance:**
The GLA, working alongside industry representatives and local authorities, should lead a comprehensive review to articulate city-wide priorities, outline appropriate methods of evaluation and provide best practice recommendations. Local authorities should be mandated by the GLA to work across borough boundaries to support apprenticeships.

- **Procurement:**
The method of evaluating social value contributions in public procurement should move away from a focus on proxy values and monetisation, giving greater weight to real-life outcomes and place-making strategies. Contractual agreements should remain flexible to respond to local needs.
- **Evidence database:**
A central database should be created as a resource for professionals, containing best practice case studies to enable learning and knowledge sharing around methods, outcomes and KPIs.
- **Developer contributions:**
Local authorities should be mandated to spend CIL and Section 106 funds to ensure that money designed to improve local areas is not going unused, alongside being given greater flexibility on how they use CIL funds to enable a greater number of residents to benefit from new development.

We also offer a code of practice for LPA members and central London property professionals, designed as a toolkit for embedding social value at all stages of the development process. Functioning as a step-by-step guide, it can be adapted to suit different types and scales of projects as well as different contexts. Drawing upon best practices, this code of practice sets out the following 11 steps:



1. Identify and involve stakeholders



7. Undertake ongoing monitoring



2. Partner with local organisations



8. Work in partnership



3. Establish engagement vehicles



9. Secure stewardship vehicles and mechanisms



4. Produce a needs analysis



10. Measure impact



5. Establish a baseline



11. Communicate achievements



6. Produce a place-based social value strategy

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the contribution of the thought-leaders and practitioners who are at the forefront of the social value debate. We thank you for your time and invaluable insights.

Pragya Adukia, Design Director, Brookfield Properties	Jasmine Ceccarelli-Drewry, Strategic Advisory Associate & Social Impact Lead, Montagu Evans
Wesley Ankrah, Director of Social Value, Savills	Henrietta Cohen, Corporate Social Responsibility Coordinator, The Portman Estate
Tom Atkinson, Customer Performance Manager, Places for London	Saul Collyns, Senior Social Impact & Public Affairs Lead, British Land
Lucy Atlee, Senior Quality and Design Manager, Places for London	Jennie Colville, Head of Sustainability, Landsec
Emma Baker, Director – Business Development, Gardiner & Theobald	Barney Cringle, Director of Inclusive Economy, PRD
Katie Balderson, Corporate Director, The Portman Estate	Molly Davies, Content Marketing Specialist, Gardiner & Theobald
Elizabeth Bamford, Associate, Volterra	Anna Devlet, Head of Social Sustainability, British Land
Giovanni Basile-Garcia, Programme Manager, Westminster City Council	Fiona Edmond, Partner, Construction, Charles Russell Speechlys
Stephen Black, Director, Development Management, CO-RE	Thomas Glover, Construction Skills Manager, Places for London
Jenny Casebourne, Head of Portfolio, The Pollen Estate	

Rehma Hakizimana, Construction Skills Project Coordinator, Places for London	Azzees Minott, Co-founder, Director and Chief Operating Officer, 2-3 Degrees
Rosa Han, Associate Director and Programme Management, The Portman Estate	Alexander Morris, Managing Director, BGO
Thomas Harding, Head of Responsible Economy and Development, Westminster City Council	Beth Nagle, Social Value Manager, Mace
Emma Herman, Partner, Gardiner & Theobald	Tom Nancollas, Assistant Design Director, City of London Corporation
Cara Imbrailo, Partner, Real Estate, Charles Russell Speechlys	Ashley Nixon, Community Investment Manager, The Howard de Walden Estate
Chris Jones, Architect, Make Architects	Kate Nottidge, Social Impact Director, Grosvenor Property UK
Yimika Koya, Urban Strategy Consultant and Social Value Advisor, Arup	Anne Parkes, Associate Director, Arup
Ollie Leggett, Junior Project Manager – Social Impact, Landsec	Jenny Rydon, Partner, Head of Strategic Advisory, Montagu Evans
Graham Longman, Architect, Make Architects	Clara Sibaud, Sustainability & ESG Consultant, Arup
	Kerry Stares, Partner, Responsible Business and Pro Bono, Charles Russell Speechlys

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