

Making High Streets Work Engagement Process

April 2022

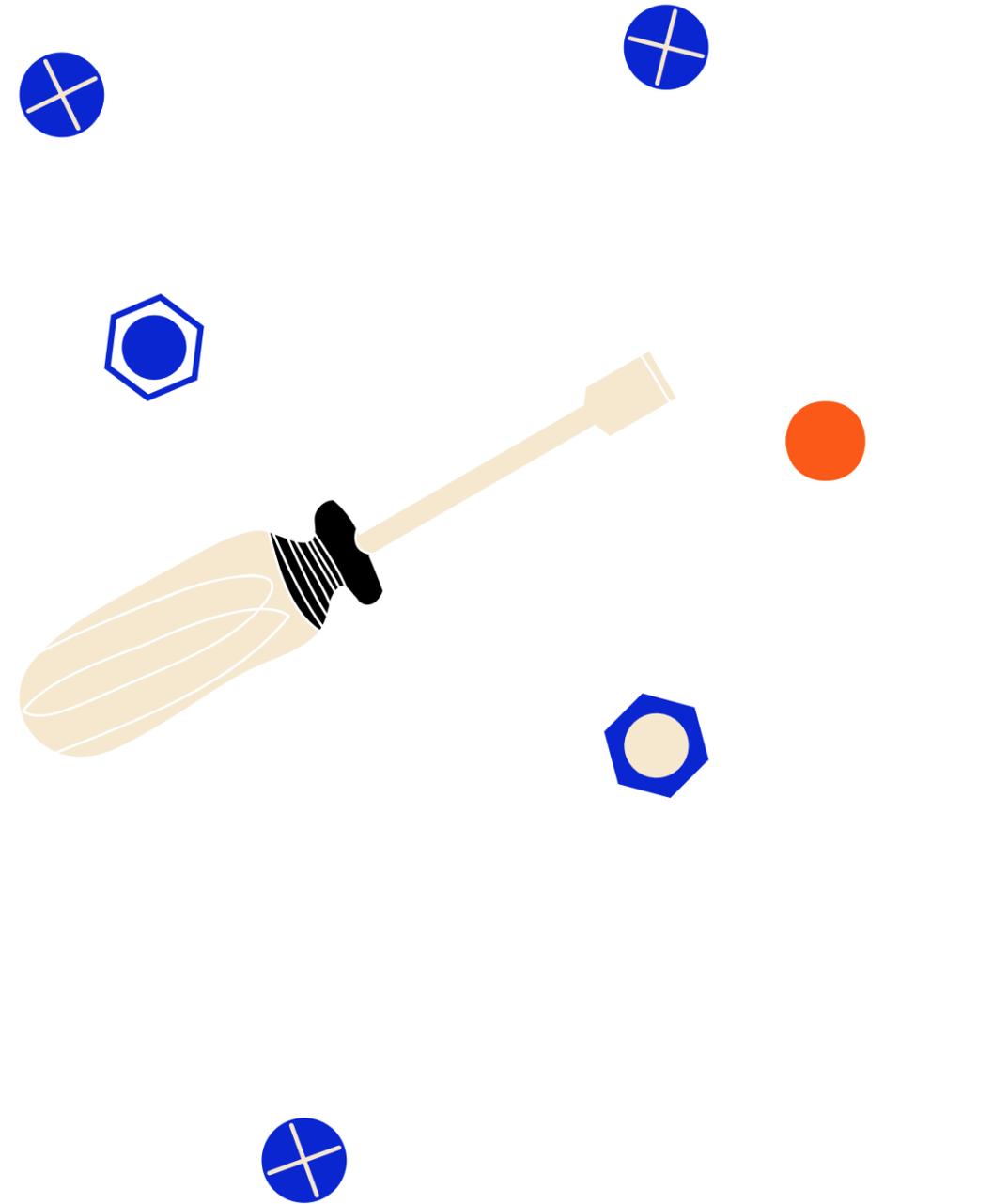


MAYOR OF LONDON



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Methodology

4 a collaboration between PRD and a small studio

WHAT

We have spoken to a minimum of 18 individuals or organisations from each of the four categories below:

- Community groups
- Businesses (includes local creatives)
- Landlords (includes local providers)
- Key people (includes other influencing parties)

HOW

Engagement was held throughout September and October 2021 using a variety of methods:

- 30-60 minute group sessions
- Online surveys (large stakeholder groups and high street staff)
- Individual sessions with key stakeholders

WHY

Aims of the engagement included:

- Understanding where there is opportunity to unlock local assets for workspace
- Building relationships and connections to work with landlords / businesses, supporting additional workspace provision
- Understanding what demand exists within a variety of typologies
- Understanding where space should be provided across the area

Engagement Questions

1. Overview

History / background of the area?

Does the group have a need for workspace (Y/N) or meeting space (Y/N)?

Times / days / level of flexibility etc.?

2. Challenges

Challenges to staying / being in the area? Please rank these in order of most important with top priority first.

Space cost / lack of flexibility / uncertainty around long term security / lack of certain amenity?

Ability to access space re leasing / legal requirement?

Funding appropriate space?

3. Need

Ideal space requirement (size, typology etc.)?

Space cost / budget?

Supporting infrastructure?

Workspace protections? Length of lease / guarantor scheme?

Access to tools / machinery etc needed?

4. Aspiration

Ideal scenario?

Do you have any wishes or ideas for the future of the area?

What needs to happen to protect the work of community groups?

5. Supporting activity

In creating a vibrant working area, are there any other amenities / opportunities that would support this?

What role would you like to see Lambeth Council and Station to Station play over and above the provision of workspace?

6. Consequences of 'do nothing'

What will happen if no action is taken?

8 groups approached
4 participated

"We have a need for meeting spaces once a month for 3 hours." (Q. 1)

"We need to find a meeting space that is free and flexible." (Q. 1)

"We need a space that would ideally be open 24/7 and fully accessible." (Q. 1)

"We need a place to meet - something like what exists in the library, but it is always booked up and not very accessible. A pub room would be ideal... all existing spaces have some level of constraint." (Q. 1)

"As a community group, we could benefit from more support from the local authority to host events for the community." (Q. 2)

"We need a community hub because moving away from digital is a big ambition for us and other community group - not just to reach people that aren't digitally savvy - but as people come together again after Covid, we want to foster the spirit of together and sense of place." (Q. 3)

"We need to create a collaborative network service that will enable other amenities and opportunities." (Q. 3)

"An idea for the future of the area is to have a networking hub where self-employed locals can work." (Q. 4)

"What we are advocating for is a physical presence in a popular place, somewhere in the neighbourhood. Something that can become a community hub available during the day and in the evening. Somewhere we can have surgeries run by councillors, workshops, where link workers [people that handle social prescribing across Lambeth] can hold 1-1 engagement, and where the district nurse can operate from." (Q. 4)

"We can make a community hub a reality by working as a partnership - Lambeth can pull strings and leverage funding and S2S has the business connections. I see this very much as a partnership project where we can bring in staffing for free and host community activities with engagement from the local community but we certainly can't do it on our own and we need a partnership." (Q. 5)

"Having a community space is key - It is really about fostering local community involvement and unity between community groups and organisations." (Q. 4)

"If we don't do anything we risk not being as accessible and inclusive as we would like to be" (Q. 6)

Community

Engagement Questions

1. Overview

History / background of the area?

Does the group have a need for workspace (Y/N) or meeting space (Y/N)?

Times / days / level of flexibility etc.?

2. Challenges

Challenges to staying / being in the area? Please rank these in order of most important with top priority first.

Space cost / lack of flexibility / uncertainty around long term security / lack of certain amenity?

Ability to access space re leasing / legal requirement?

Funding appropriate space?

3. Need

Ideal space requirement (size, typology etc.)?

Space cost / budget?

Supporting infrastructure?

Workspace protections? Length of lease / guarantor scheme?

Access to tools / machinery etc needed?

4. Aspiration

Ideal scenario?

Do you have any wishes or ideas for the future of the area?

What needs to happen to protect the work of community groups?

5. Supporting activity

In creating a vibrant working area, are there any other amenities / opportunities that would support this?

What role would you like to see Lambeth Council and Station to Station play over and above the provision of workspace?

6. Consequences of 'do nothing'

What will happen if no action is taken?

8 businesses approached

3 participated

"I am a fine artist / sculptor working in an ACME building but make a living as a lecturer, teacher and curator. Having access to affordable workspace is key for the survival of my work as an artist." (Q. 1)

"As a local furniture-maker, I need around 1,000 sq ft, double height, ground floor space with access for trucks and three-face electricity." (Q. 3)

"I need space that is open 24 hours and very flexible." (Q. 3)

"The fact that light industrial business rates are almost on the same rate as other businesses means we have a huge amount of business rates, but our business simply needs more space. It isn't calculated very fairly." (Q. 2)

"Promoting artist's workspace is a real double-edged sword because artists need cheap space and they act as vanguards for an area and then the developers come and land becomes expensive, so artists get pushed out." (Q. 2)

"We want to link with the other trades and businesses nearby to expand on the apprenticeships available for young people and begin an apprenticeship programme locally." (Q. 4)

"In order of priority: space cost; lack of flexibility; uncertainty around long term security; lack of certain amenity." (Q. 2)

"An ideal scenario would be to have small business space and workspace in perpetuity within the KIBA." (Q. 4)

"First we worked in Camden and then in Deptford, but in both places we were forced out due to gentrification. So, a challenge is how to create an area full of creatives but not force pre-existing tenants to move away. Whilst we want to promote creative enterprises in the area, I am wary at the same time." (Q. 2)

"The cultural value is definitely in the creative industries, but in order to prevent gentrification, we need to support all of the existing trades such as the mechanics and upholsters to ensure they remain in the area." (Q. 4)

"My main aspiration for the area is to support more light industrial business, because they are always the first to be pushed out once the 'clean creatives' move in". (Q. 4)

"Without intervention from organisations like ACME, support from groups such as S2S and the understanding of local authorities, businesses are inevitably priced out of the local area. Retaining SMEs, freelancers and self-employed local jobs is fundamental to the strength, resilience and long term nature of any area. There are routes to ensuring this through planning obligations and brokering conversations between landlords, developers and workspace providers." (Q. 2)

"We do fear that we will soon be moved / forced out of the area. We just signed another 3-year lease so we have workspace security until then." (Q. 6)

Businesses

Engagement Questions

1. Overview

Type of space available?

Desire to be involved in the project?

2. Aspirations

What is your ideal use of the land, as landlord?

What is the importance of the creative community to the area?

How does promoting West Norwood and Tulse Hill as a creative workspace hub align with your business plan?

What are the benefits this would bring to your land / site / building?

3. Challenges

What are the challenges you face in unlocking your unused / underused space? Legal / licensing / statutory / financial?

To unlock your unused / underused space would you want to have greater support in place?

Leasing framework to agree terms / guarantor scheme etc?

4. Supporting activity

What role can the Lambeth Council and Station to Station play to support you to unlock your unused / underused space for workspace?

In creating a vibrant working area, are there any other amenities / opportunities that would support this?

5. Business plan

What is the business plan for the unused / underused space / land?

What is your intended revenue?

6. Consequences of 'do nothing'

What will happen if no action is taken?

10 landlords approached

9 participated

"4,400 sq ft commercial premises on two floors; originally light industrial unit so building is structurally sound but lacking in contemporary Building Control requirements." (Q. 1)

"My building has been vacant for over 10 years, only the rear building was used as a nightclub. The current use of the land is a scaffold yard." (Q. 1)

"Planning consent has not been possible even though the building has been vacant for many years." (Q. 3)

"I own two commercial units but one is currently underused. We want to bring one of the units into use as a workspace because this will help the area, the cashflow of the pub and improve footfall." (Q. 2)

"We would be interested in using our empty unit as workspace, but we just don't know where to start. We could open the restaurant before 3pm to make it available as a workspace but we would need the high street to be quieter so people can have a better headspace to work there." (Q. 3)

"Building in a sustainable financial model that locks in affordable rates is the main challenge, as well as quantifying social value." (Q. 3)

"We are interested specifically in freehold acquisitions in order to become financially independent and draw more investors into our business." (Q. 3)

"The BID could help promote a more active night-time economy because it is important for people to use the area at night." (Q. 4)

"We would be charging studio providers £5-£8 per ft per annum, providing studio space at affordable rate at £12-18 per ft per annum. This is sufficient to ensure we can service/manage our own operations. The returns are to service finance interests and investment returns." (Q. 5)

"The KIBA won't be viable as it is- it needs to allow for an element of mixed use or live-work to make the area come to life." (Q. 5)

"If nothing is done, we would simply carry on as we are, looking at how we can raise the profile of the community forums and not necessarily aspire to have a lovely space on the high street. We could repurpose a high street shop front window that can be turned into a neighbourhood board." (Q. 6)

"We will lose more artists from London. There are real examples in West Norwood of studios closing and artists leaving London. We'll look at other parts of Lambeth but it would be a real shame to miss out on the opportunity for pent up demand in the space." (Q. 6)

Landlords

Engagement Questions

1. Overview

Why is there a need for London to act now?

What is your role in delivering workspace / supporting others to deliver?

2. Need

What type of space is important / needed?

What are the key lessons learnt from other projects?

What are your thoughts on the changing landscape post COVID?

3. Challenges

What are the main barriers / constraints to provision of affordable workspace?

What are the main barriers / constraints to converting abandoned / underused spaces in the area?

4. Consequences of 'do nothing'

Without intervention / provision would you be in a position to bring forward space for workspace

2 members
approached

2
participated

"The Norwood Planning Assembly is really about fostering local community involvement and unity between community groups and organisations." (Q. 1)

"The KIBA should have more of a reason for the community to go there." (Q. 2)

"This engagement should include residents. The local residents shouldn't be ignored because the high street is there to serve the needs of local residents and its current amenity offer is very poor" (Q. 2)

"ACME, the artists studio workspace provider, had a 400-500 person waiting list for their building. There is a lot of need for dirty, messy, smelly spaces to make, bake and fix things." (Q. 2)

"I am the BID manager for this area that has all of the amenities that people need to support a 15-minute city, except for the right type of workspace. Climate change is also urging us to act because we should all be aiming to live in a 15-minute neighbourhood that supports being able to eat, sleep and work within 15-minutes and avoid commuting long distances" (Q. 1)

"In terms of space, we need something like what exists in the library, but it is always booked up and not very accessible. A pub room would be ideal...however all local spaces have some level of constraint." (Q. 3)

"I see that there are spaces in the area, but what is frustrating is that owners have sites that are either underused or being left empty intentionally waiting to be turned into housing." (Q. 3)

"Planning constraints (such as those at 82 Norwood High Street) are a barrier because although it hasn't been used as a 'Sui Generis' Use Class (a nightclub) for over a decade, when the plumbers merchant wanted to convert the Use Class, the local authority doesn't seem flexible enough to understand the nuances of the local offer. It would be good for planners to talk to the BID to get local context when an application like this is being assessed." (Q. 3)

"Doing nothing means market forces will take over and in the case of the industrial estate, poor quality housing in an unsuitable area would take over." (Q. 4)

Key People



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prd

**a small
studio**