High street places: doing a lot with a little

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London might be one of the wealthiest cities in the world, but it also contains areas of intense deprivation. These are predominantly centred in east London around the docks and areas that had previously been centres of manufacturing. Unlike many other cities, London also has pockets of deprivation set in otherwise relatively wealthy districts. The planning system has recognised this problem and has formulated numerous plans to tackle it. These plans, however, are largely policy documents that have no real means of implementation.

When the Architecture and Urbanism Unit (A+UU) and Design for London (DfL) formulated their mission to nurture a compact, mixed-use, well-connected and well-designed London, the general consensus was that improvement strategies for London still required radical surgery. Vast swathes of development, usually on brownfield land, required considerable site preparation, infrastructure provision, financing and marketing. To date, the transformation of such sites had been slow through projects such as Canary Wharf, the Greenwich Peninsula and the London Olympics. For projects such as Barking Riverside, the scale of investment required has been a barrier to delivery for decades. Such large-scale regeneration can yield major change, but momentum and continuity can be hard to maintain and there is no certainty that the benefits will be spread across society. Furthermore, the resources available for regeneration were limited from the 1980s onwards and within the public sector they were almost non-existent. As a consequence, a number of districts, particularly in inner London, had been left behind. Where development was planned, it was largely piecemeal, rarely part of a wider strategy and often of very poor quality.
When Clive Dutton\textsuperscript{1} joined Newham Council as Regeneration Director in 2009, he considered possibilities for redeveloping the Royal Docks. Having reviewed the tortuous planning history of the area and counted 74 development proposals, plans and strategies, he concluded that the area did not need a 75th masterplan, but a totally new planning approach. His solution, as described by Peter Bishop, was to ‘throw away all the previous plans, write a short strategy, sign up the politicians and then broadcast it’.\textsuperscript{2}

Looking back, it feels as if Clive drew the curtain on a ‘Big Plan-making era’ for London. He recognised that London needed a different form of strategy – one that was incremental, nimble and nurturing. London, of course, had seen major regeneration projects such as King’s Cross, Bishopsgate and Paddington. These had to varying degrees been successful, but they were all driven by the private sector and were in areas traditionally considered commercially viable. There were no public-sector programmes to address the poorer neighbourhoods – interventions where success would be measured in social as well as financial returns. Previous attempts to regenerate these localities had been limited to superficial measures that had been inadequately funded. The structural reasons for an area’s demise had not been tackled.

The centre of a locality is often its high street. Many in inner London were in a state of decline but they remained the psychological centre of the community and represented a unique opportunity for intervention. Get these places right and wider regeneration could occur that might benefit everyone.

Chapters 1 and 2 looked at the emergence of DfL’s approach to promoting change through ‘incremental urbanism’. Incremental urbanism focuses on small-scale interventions that are allied with compelling and overarching strategies. These strategies set the broad direction of the mayor’s funding programmes and gave them clarity and coherence. Individual projects could then be devised and implemented as and when there were opportunities to do so (Figure 3.1). No single project would fundamentally change an area, but cumulatively and over time they could. This pragmatic form of urbanism proved to be especially effective for a team ‘without power or money’\textsuperscript{3} working within the complex institutional networks of London’s government. In this chapter we look at how incremental urbanism was applied to regenerate town centres in some of London’s poorest localities. In Mark Brearley’s words, ‘This was about how a sparky group of proposition-minded public planners was shaping ideas and initiatives, acting as entrepreneurial urban curators, making the case for care and flair, working in partnerships across London, all with the support of the mayor.’\textsuperscript{4}
London: a city of high streets

Matthew Carmona, who has written extensively about London's high streets, argues that London is distinct from cities such as Paris or Barcelona in that, while it has planned neighbourhoods (e.g. Bloomsbury), it is not a city of grand boulevards and civic set pieces. Instead, it is characterised by its continuous network of 'everyday streets', principal of which are its high streets. London's high streets have been at the centre of its economic, social and civic life since they were first established along Roman roads such as Watling Street, Ermine Street and Portway Street. By the sixteenth century, as London grew beyond its medieval walls, these roads formed the backbone of the urban region (Figure 3.2). They attracted commerce and public services and joined existing villages together. In time they became a part of the morphology of London – its connections and nodes.

These lively and varied streets came under pressure during the twentieth century, when planning started to respond to mass car ownership. Since many high streets formed major transport arteries, many were damaged by road building. Some town centres, such as Paddington, were more or less destroyed before schemes like the 1960s Motorway Box proposals were shelved in the 1970s. The damage was lasting and was compounded by the popularity of out-of-town shopping centres and retail sheds in the 1970s and 1980s and by the subsequent
withdrawal of major players like department stores. At the same time car-based policies saw the development of ring roads to bypass town centres and of large car parks to serve superstores that severed them from adjacent high streets. At the end of the 1980s it was clear that high streets across the UK were in decline and this had become a political problem. National planning policy responded by placing restrictions on the growth of out-of-town shopping. When considering superstores in urban areas, local councils were required to use a sequential test that put existing town centres first. Developers had to demonstrate that there were no available opportunities within existing town centres before they could create new out-of-town or edge-of-town complexes.

The turn of the century brought in new shopping trends. Apart from online shopping, inner urban shopping malls were developed, such as the Westfield developments in White City and Stratford. These catered for a younger clientele that had high disposable income and low car dependency. While arguably less damaging than out-of-town centres, these large retail

Figure 3.2  Map of London (1832) showing Roman roads (in crimson). Source: Fiona Scott/DfL/GLA.
malls still pulled yet more of the ‘high street brands’ off the high street. By 2005, many of London’s high streets were experiencing significant decline, with well-known chain stores like Woolworths or HMV going into administration. The aftershocks of the 2008 financial crash and the rise of internet shopping created a perfect storm.

In early 2020, London still has over 600 high streets and has fared well in comparison to the rest of the UK, with the vacancy rate on its high streets two thirds of the national average. High streets might be busy roads and they might be suffering from structural changes in shopping habits, but they are still diverse places and provide community hubs where activity of all types can prosper and grow. They still take advantage of flows of people and goods, opportunities for trade, and have easy access to the economy of the metropolis. The future of these areas, as with their past, cannot be defined by shopping alone. High streets provide pubs, restaurants, schools and colleges, town halls, stations, markets, libraries, doctors, dentists, banks, workshops and yards, cinemas, offices, parks, museums and of course shops (which typically account for only half of the activity along high streets). They are the places where the city’s community and its economy are at their most vibrant and obvious.
High streets define certain localities and their communities and they therefore define the spatial and social geography of London (Figure 3.3). They typify Alexander’s semilattice and Jacobs’ view that cities are complex systems of enormous heterogeneity, which maximise economic and social opportunities (Figure 3.4). Consequently, they provide an excellent framework for the incremental growth of the city.

While most of London’s high streets survive, they are struggling to recover from the planning mistakes of the late twentieth century. Changes in consumer shopping habits facilitated by online shopping have made the future of many of them precarious, and structural changes in the local retail economy have led to the loss of small local independent stores, especially in the food sector. Bread, meat and grocery shops are being squeezed out by the supermarkets and many of the UK’s high

Figure 3.4  Whitechapel Road and Market. Source: GLA/DfL.
streets have lost their local character, diversity and distinctiveness. Across London, many high streets are indistinguishable from one another and are dominated by clone retailers and chain stores. Many of the chain store owners have little interest in the future of the places in which they are located.

To compound matters, many high streets have lost their pride, spark and quality. The public realm often lacks investment in maintenance and many pavements are in a poor condition. Some boroughs reached crisis point in the 1990s when street maintenance budgets had been slashed to the point where a cycle of continuous decline was occurring. The Streetscape Design Manual (Chapter 1) was an early response by the A+UU to the problems of poor street maintenance. Lack of investment in high streets can set off a spiral of decline as busy street life ebbs away, people start to avoid them for fear of crime, and they become abandoned. This is more than the loss of local shopping; it is a cancer that eats away at community identity.

London’s high level of housing need (along with rising land values) has meant that surplus retail and office space is being converted into housing, often of poor quality. This has been supported by planning policy that sought to shrink core town centre retail areas. While shopping ‘core areas’ were generally protected, ‘fringe areas’ that extended out along the city’s arteries were released for other development. This was compounded by the relaxation of ‘permitted development’ rules (introduced in 2014), which relieved developers of the need to seek local planning consent for conversions from commercial to residential use. Paradoxically, planning policies to protect high streets often seek to restrict non-retail in the protected core areas – uses such as cafes and local businesses – and thus hinder their diversification.

The decline of high streets had become a popular concern. In 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron commissioned the TV presenter and entrepreneur Mary Portas to investigate and be the national face of the struggle of small towns to revitalise their high streets. Portas’s final report recognises the irreversible nature of the structural changes that have impacted on the British high street:

New benchmarks have been forged against which our high streets are now being judged. New expectations have been created in terms of value, service, entertainment and experience against which the average high street has in many cases simply failed to deliver. These reasons alone conspire to create a new shopper mind-set which cannot and should not be reversed.
She advocated a range of measures to revitalise high streets that were taken forward by the government. These included the setting up of 27 Portas Pilots across the country where Town Teams would take control of the operation and management of high streets. These were supported by a Future High Streets Fund that allocated up to £100,000 per high street. Such paltry funding could not have a lasting impact on struggling localities. It was a populist response to a deep-seated structural problem. The reasons for decline were far more complex.

A methodology for town centre and high street regeneration

The re-establishment of London government created a political and organisational opportunity to address the problem. Under Mayor Livingstone, Transport for London (TfL) funding was redirected from road building to public transport and then to schemes to promote a modal shift to walking and cycling. This presented the A+UU and DfL with an opportunity to generate new renewal strategies. If powerful narratives for high streets could be developed, then political influence could be used to access significant budgets within the transport authority. DfL set about refocusing its research and drew attention to both the plight of, and opportunities on, high streets. By doing this it was able to devise a wide range of new programmes and projects for the mayor.

High streets have always been at the centre of many Londoners’ everyday lives and vital to the spatial, economic and social structure of the city. A strategy that sought to nurture them back into healthy centres of community life was both strategic and local. It would also provide a relatively easy and popular set of projects that could be branded and communicated to a wider audience. A focus on town centres and high streets had other advantages for the design team. First, the programmes could focus on some of the most deprived communities and this was in line with Mayor Livingstone’s social objectives. Second, it addressed an issue of universal concern. Third, it allowed the A+UU, and later DfL, to build working relationships with a number of boroughs which were welcomed when the team could bring funding from the various mayoral agencies that the boroughs could not access alone. Fourth, the methodology of incremental urbanism coupled with intense community engagement provided an effective modus operandi. As Rowan Moore commented in The Observer in 2012: ‘The idea, therefore, is to do a lot with a little’. The little money available for regeneration needed to be
spent in those localities most ready and able to show tangible benefits quickly and efficiently to give the greatest ‘pops per pound’. High streets and town centres offered the opportunity to use all the talent within local communities to create multiple and overlapping benefits.

In a comprehensive study on high streets (commissioned by DfL), Jones, Roberts and Morris describe what makes high streets so critical to the growth of the city:

- They are key components in the strategic transport network.
- As transport interchanges they accommodate movement between different modes of transport in London, including tube and rail, as well as buses and walking.
- As pseudo-estuaries they channel movement from the surrounding catchment of, typically, residential streets.
- They contain a rich mix of uses – retail, services and residential and office uses above the ground floor.
- They are locations for a wide range of on-street facilities and services, from the infrastructure under the street to that on top, such as kiosks, cash points, telephone boxes, public art, parking, benches, bins, signage, CCTV, street lighting and so forth.
- They are identifiable public spaces (positively defined by continuous street walls and active frontages) for social encounter and exchange.
- They are centres of local identity, often peppered with landmark features that give them a distinctive/historic appearance.

Carmona also draws attention to the fact that high streets are a key driver of entrepreneurship. They are places where business space is generally more affordable and they offer local employment, space for innovation and sophisticated business networks. Businesses within high streets are generally small, lean and able to adapt (up to a point) to changing local circumstances.

One-size-fits-all solutions to the decline of London’s high streets were unlikely to be appropriate. Neither would purely physical (cosmetic) interventions work. Regeneration programmes had tried cosmetic ‘improvements’ in the 1980s and 1990s and it was clear that painted lamp posts and hanging baskets would not impact on the structural problems that these places were facing. A far more considered methodology was required, one that understood the reasons for decline and would find new carefully crafted responses. Incremental urbanism is such a methodology. It requires a detailed understanding of the politics of the city – its governance, its organisation and its institutions. It is based on
deep research and community dialogue and works within the system to positively distort its outcomes. It is patient and subtle, and in many cases the design outcome is a product of the process – the art of the possible. At heart it is subversive. Barcelona first inspired DfL’s incremental approach: ‘the scale of action does not need to be immense; rather, a cumulative effect should be sought’. This, of course, is also echoed in North American urban thinking, going back to the work of Jane Jacobs, the ‘tactical urbanism’ of Stephen Marshall and the ‘deliberative planning’ of John Forester.

DfL coordinated delivery agencies within deliberately loose but long-term urban strategies, each tailored to the needs of the particular locality. It commissioned design teams and acted as the ‘intelligent client’. It identified the gaps and invented small-scale projects to work on the ground in these often very deprived communities. Peter Bishop described the work of DfL as ‘urban curation’ and provocatively referred to the architects in the team as planners, but ones who understood how cities worked, could visualise and draw better future scenarios and work the system to get physical things built. This is a far cry from how the planning system sees its role today.

In July 2014 the Greater London Authority regeneration team, the successor body to DfL, produced the internal report Learning from London’s High Streets, which identified a number of different ways to stimulate and facilitate a growing and prosperous high street. These measures start on a micro-level with improvements to pedestrian and cyclist priorities. They also include the redesign of shop fronts with new colour, materials, imagery, improved signage and enhanced architectural features. Empty shops, disused buildings and vacant land can be revived through temporary ‘pop-up’ uses and exemplar projects. These present essential opportunities to experiment, test and celebrate the variety of uses along high streets. Public events – regular, seasonal or one-off – can bring liveliness, public interest, consumer confidence and media attention. In the long term, such small interventions help to strengthen community cohesion and the unique identity of a place, be it through food, arts or local history. The sustained organisation of local stakeholders and authorities into town teams or trader associations, or in Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), can strengthen local networks and facilitate long-term improvement. Such groups can help to engage local businesses, especially start-ups, through providing access to business advice or low-cost workspace. The physical activation of high streets can be achieved through simple, qualitative and durable pavement improvements, good lighting and places to sit and rest. Works to buildings, traffic-calming
measures and adjustments to parking layouts can all create a better experience for the pedestrian. These are all straightforward measures but they do need to be combined into a coherent strategy, and having the appropriate design quality governance in place is essential.

First projects

The first project, focusing on ‘opportunity centres’, was developed in 2002. The A+UU introduced area-focused working with team members looking after particular places and borough relationships on a long-term basis. The aim was to bring together all the opportunities – spatial planning, physical regeneration, and skill and employment initiatives – into a single conversation. Part of the Mayor’s 100 Public Spaces programme (Chapter 5) sought to tackle the problems of major thoroughfares through town centres. It chose Coulsdon High Street, Lewisham town centre and Brixton as early schemes that would demonstrate both the value of public space and ways to carve it out from existing highways. The A+UU was also involved in two comprehensive town centre studies. The report TEN: Town Centre Enhancement in North London in 2006 was followed in 2009 by SEVEN: Housing Intensification in Seven South London Town Centres. These two reports proposed strategies for suburban town centre improvements under themes that were tailored to the particular conditions in each locality. They were well researched and grounded in the particularities of each place. They included strategies for landscaping, pedestrianisation, connectivity, diversity and growth. These documents did not seek to address the problems on the ground through the creation of another raft of planning policy. Instead, they were design-led studies that included practical projects that could be implemented quickly.

The association of many of these projects with transport gave them a common theme but also opened up the process of implementation. TfL controlled the largest available source of funding in London and the mayor had radically shifted its priorities towards pedestrians, cycling and the public realm. Follow the money, develop an idea that could capture the public imagination, find a sympathetic champion in TfL and a project could be realised. Better still, DfL did not need to manage the tedious public procurement processes but could remain strategic, agile and inventive.

This work started a set of experiments in design-led planning in Barking town centre and Dalston, described by Long as ‘a feedback loop
of thinking and doing that resulted in a range of carefully crafted public realm projects that were diverse in their nature but rooted in a deep understanding of the area.' This was incremental urbanism by retrofit and by constant refinement. By engaging the communities in the design process, this work was overtly democratic and well founded.

Barking town centre: an east London phoenix

Since the early 2000s Barking town centre had been the focus of public-sector-led regeneration. The trigger was the council’s commitment to counter social and economic decline caused by loss of traditional industries, including the scaling down of the Ford Motor plant at Dagenham. The resulting deprivation had encouraged the emergence of the far-right British National Party. There was a particular need to respond with regeneration programmes that would achieve visible change on the ground. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBB&D) was eager to experiment with new ideas and saw DfL as an ally and agent for change. Through this emerging partnership, an opportunity came up to rethink the town centre.

Barking town centre was blighted by disjointed public spaces, poor-quality social housing blocks and the decline of local business. It lacked any sense of urban coherence and was not an obviously attractive area, but it had a rich historic and cultural heritage that could be used as a basis for regeneration. Overall it had real potential to be so much better. In early 2006 the LBB&D initially commissioned DfL to help prepare and implement a town centre strategy to support a major housing development that was being sponsored by the London Development Agency (LDA). From this a series of projects ensued and DfL commissioned the architectural practices muf architecture/art, AHMM and Witherford Watson Mann. These projects included a new town square, estate improvements, and housing and cultural developments.

The projects started with a series of street theatre events that were designed to engage the population in a debate. One of these involved a group of polar explorers on an expedition to ‘search for Barking town centre’. A design-led masterplan was then developed in consultation with the local community to provide the context to turn around the fortunes of this once vibrant hub of civic life in east London. Barking had always suffered from poor-quality public realm so DfL’s approach deliberately incorporated crisp well-finished contemporary design and sought to use striking and innovative design to raise local aspirations.
This made it an exemplary case study of design-led regeneration. Design-led regeneration continues in Barking 14 years later and is still based on close collaboration between the local council and the Greater London Authority (GLA). The reworking of the Town Hall car park was part-funded through a mixed-use high-density development. New public realm was laid out in line with a coherent design palette that included locally made street furniture – the ‘Barking bench’. Multi-award-winning interventions led by muf architecture/art included a folly (Figure 3.5), an urban arcade lit by 13 chandeliers designed in collaboration with Tom Dixon, and an arboretum (Figures 3.6 and 3.7). Thoughtful masterplanning along the River Roding and elsewhere is beginning to deliver high-quality new housing (including council social rented housing) and is continuing the spirit of proactive planning, now driven by the council-owned regeneration company BeFirst.

Figure 3.5 Barking town centre folly. The folly wall was designed as a ruin to recapture Barking’s sense of its past. The wall references Barking Abbey and nearby Eastbury Manor House. Source: muf/Dfl/GLA.

Figure 3.6 Barking town centre arcade beneath affordable housing by AHMM. Source: muf/Dfl/GLA.
Making Space in Dalston

The project that best illustrates incremental urbanism as applied to town centre regeneration is the multiple-award-winning Making Space in Dalston programme that was carried out between 2007 and 2012. It established the mantra: ‘Value what’s there, nurture the possible, define what’s missing’ (Figure 3.8).

The project started in Gillett Square, one of the first of the Mayor’s 100 Spaces (see Chapter 5 and Figure 2.2). This was opened in 2006 and included new public space, affordable workspace and a new home for the Vortex Jazz Club. As with many DfL projects, it acted as a ‘foot in the door’. Once local contacts had been established and networks formed, other projects invariably followed. Incremental urbanism was as much about the incremental development of client relationships as about projects on the ground.

The impetus to return to Dalston was provided by the revamp of the East London line (as part of London Overground), which involved a

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**Figure 3.7**  Barking town centre arboretum. Source: DfL Archive.
new station at Dalston Junction. The station was built on a deck that also provided housing, public space and a library. Development of the transport hub was driven by public bodies – TfL, the LDA, and Hackney Council – with the publicly procured development partner Barratt London. The development provided the catalyst for local regeneration. A case for £1.5 million funding for new public realm had to be made to a sceptical LDA. The argument was that if £250 million had been spent on transport infrastructure, not to complete the public realm would be the equivalent of buying an expensive house and then economising by not fitting any carpets. The money was agreed without dissent.

The project addressed local concerns within a broad strategic framework and an evolving process of communication and action research (Figure 3.9) that helped develop a shared vision with the residents, businesses and organisations. The project focused on achieving a higher-quality and more extensive public realm without losing the place’s
existing assets. The active public involvement helped a once struggling locality to turn the corner and find new momentum and civic pride. The public space network, framed by the new development, was at the centre of proposals. Muf architecture/art and J & L Gibbons – teams that DfL had worked with on previous community collaborations – were appointed as designers. The initial brief sought to identify 10 costed projects and an action plan for cultural programming and management. In fact, over 70 projects were identified in 10 themes, based on discussions with almost 200 individuals and groups. Frequent steering group and stakeholder meetings were held in local venues, and numerous presentations were made to the community and other stakeholders. The initial mapping work secured funding for 10 demonstration projects that ranged from small-scale interventions in collaboration with local artists to larger phased engineering projects. Bird-boxes, a green wall, new lights for

**Figure 3.9** Mapping community assets in Dalston. Source: J & L Gibbons and muf/DfL/GLA, Making Space in Dalston.
the local cinema and the Eastern Curve Community Garden were all completed. Improvements to Ridley Road Market and public realm along the High Street attracted further resources in later funding rounds.

Making Space in Dalston is an example of design-led, incremental masterplanning. This is a process based on constant feedback between thinking and doing. Partners need to ‘get their hands dirty’ in collaboration with local people, rather than spending money on reports or following the conventional top-down approaches typical of traditional masterplanning processes. The grassroots-based methodology of ‘valuing what’s there, nurturing the possible and defining what’s missing’ allows for a shift in the balance of power to local residents. Involving local people in decision-making meant that local partners were able to take ownership of the projects (Figures 3.10 and 3.11) and from this evolved the mechanisms for future partnership working.

Figure 3.10  (Continued overleaf)
Kieran Long\textsuperscript{32} provides a good summary of the outcomes. He argues that the projects are a ‘test case for how the idea of the Big Society will play out at the point of delivery of new urban plans’.\textsuperscript{33} The brief for the projects was cowritten by the local community and developed gradually in response to conversations. Long says: ‘[i]t demonstrates that the results of engaging meaningfully […] are not predictable, and the outcomes are sometimes born out of conflict as much as consensus.’ Interestingly, the foreword by Mayor Boris Johnson celebrated the success of the project by quoting Horace’s phrase \textit{concordia discors} (‘harmony in discord’).
Early in 2009, in response to the election of a new Mayor of London, DfL started to focus on high streets as a core part of its programme. The argument was that London was fortunate in having 600 or more high streets that could provide an excellent basis for future growth. They were vital, if neglected, elements in the city’s structure. Such high streets were ideal locations for new regeneration programmes that would spread investment outside central London. This had been part of the mayor’s electoral pledge, and programmes that centred on high streets and town centres would strike a chord with the new mayor and his team. Nearly 70 per cent of London’s high streets did not fall within a designated town centre boundary and this meant that the majority of high streets lacked policy designation and consequently were potentially vulnerable to development pressures. At the same time, high streets were also some of the most congested, polluted, complex but neglected spaces in the city. For this reason, they often languished on the ‘too difficult to handle’ register.
The High Street 2012 project (beginning in 2008 with London’s Great Outdoors; see Chapter 5) aimed to inject new life into one of London’s most famous arterial high streets: the A13, or Whitechapel Road. By examining the condition of the road from Aldgate to Stratford, and the places that it connected (Figures 3.12 and 3.13), the aim was to demonstrate that incremental rather than comprehensive change was the most effective way to realise the potential of such vital urban arteries. This approach was in stark contrast to that which prevailed for most transport projects at the time. These saw such roads as corridors where single funded programmes would implement linear improvements along the length of the carriageway. Consequently, the places that these roads ran through and connected were either ignored or were considered to be expedient. The choice of name was a piece of DfL opportunism – using the ‘2012’ from the Olympics logo to create a ‘project brand’ and applying this to lever out the funding.

Whitechapel Road was the archetypal DfL project. The area had a rich history and cultural diversity. It was damaged and poor, yet the road had historic buildings, institutions and street markets. It was a series of town centres, each with its local identity. Although it was a busy and congested transport corridor, it still had sufficient space to accommodate

Figure 3.12  High Street 2012: conceptual design strategy. Source: DfL.
interventions to widen pavements and to improve the public realm. The remarkable historic buildings along its length provided a framework to create distinctive places (Figure 3.14).

High Street 2012 followed the approach of incremental urbanism. It celebrated the everyday, built on local identity and creativity, and brought about effective, durable and lasting change. The project was divided into eight sections, each of which had a punchy theme:

- Aldgate: A fitting gateway to High Street 2012
- Whitechapel: A historic area of immense diversity and intense activity
- Mile End Waste: A welcome green oasis
- Ocean Green: A place where people can pause, rest and play
- Mile End Intersection: Landscaped access to the park and canal
- Bow Flyover: Improved pedestrian environment and links to the waterways
- Greenway: Reveal and celebrate the Lea Valley
- Stratford High Street: New crossings to connect to the station.

Alongside these area-based design-led projects were themed interventions to improve lighting, landscape and pavements, to remove street clutter and to reinforce wayfinding. The entire initiative was built around an intense community involvement programme.
In Aldgate, a new park – Braham Street Park – was created through unravelling a one-way traffic system (Figure 3.15). This project was funded by a private developer who recognised that offices next to a park would be much more attractive than offices next to an urban gyratory. Since the park’s construction a new food and drink outlet has occupied part of the ground floor of a building fronting the space. This has helped to activate one edge and draw people into and through the park. The park

Figure 3.14  High Street 2012: refurbished terrace on Whitechapel Road, illustrating heritage as a key design anchor. Source: Peter Bishop.

Figure 3.15  High Street 2012: Aldgate to Whitechapel Road. Source: High Street 2012, Vision document (2009), DfL/GLA.
itself was designed to be a flexible and programmable space. The design (EDCO Design with WilkinsonEyre, 2010) was a simple creation of ‘space out of nothing’ and provides a moment of reprieve in a busy and congested area. One of the greatest challenges was to find a public body to maintain the park. The decision was taken that without a long-term management regime, the project would fail and it was consequently put on hold, but after lengthy negotiations the space was adopted by the City of London.

At Altab Ali Park, the team worked with the local community to map its historical and cultural significance (Figure 3.16). A community-based archaeological dig excavated the site (the White Chapel) while an Alpana street painting event revealed the rich culture of the local Bangladeshi community (Figure 3.17). These events opened up a meaningful dialogue between those using the park and those living, working and studying nearby. This helped the design team to produce a sophisticated and layered design that provided space for sitting, chatting, playing, and for social and political gatherings, as well as being a space to learn about the local history. A similar process of engagement helped to produce a new multilayered landscape at Mile End Waste. Whitechapel Market was the most complex project and the most difficult to deliver. The improvements led by East Architects were subtle and designed to make the market work better. They incorporated improved lighting, drainage and servicing (anticipating the arrival of the new Crossrail services nearby). English Heritage was involved as a significant partner and provided funding to restore historic buildings along the route.

Figure 3.16  High Street 2012: Altab Ali Park provides room to breathe just off Whitechapel Road. Source: Peter Bishop.
At Ocean Green (Figure 3.18), plans were already well advanced and were incorporated into the High Street 2012 project. The resulting design uses landscape at the edge of the estate to reconnect it to the high street while maintaining privacy and protection for residents. Access to Mile End Park was also improved and the Green Bridge was replanted. A new floating towpath was constructed on the canal and the cycle superhighway now snakes down part of the street. At the end of the route, paving, lighting and carriageway changes have started to make Stratford High Street a little more like a street than an urban motorway.

Getting good designers on board was crucial to the success of this project, as was coordinating an expanded client team for them to work with. This team included highway authorities, local authorities, heritage organisations, private developers, parks departments, artists, market traders, schools, museums, women’s groups, religious organisations and many more. The scope of this partnership allowed the project to tap into shared visions of the future and plan the appropriate physical changes to improve everyday life.

A key lesson from this and other projects was that the design process is not limited to the architect and the drawing board. Perhaps the most creative aspect of DfL’s work was in brokering common interests and managing creative inputs. High Street 2012 was a lesson in collaboration and partnership building. Not only were there many funding partners, but some of the improvements were done in partnership with private
landowners and developers. This involved harnessing disparate funding pots, levering in further investment and ensuring that the execution of works was of a consistently high quality across the statutory authorities. All of this required time and negotiation. Finally, more mundane issues such as management and maintenance (and securing the long-term funding for this) had to be addressed.

**High Street London: understanding the problem and developing responses**

Over the past 30 years, the capacity of public bodies to undertake research has been cut significantly. At its peak, DfL had 23 staff, but it never employed dedicated researchers.\(^{41}\) The team had to rely on other institutions of London government for facts and data to support its work and recognised this as a weakness. An attempt to address this was the Urban Design Scholarships programme.\(^{42}\) This was sponsored by the planning consultancy RPS and launched in 2008. It created funded secondments for talented practitioners to work with the team on applied research. One of these was Fiona Scott.\(^{43}\)

There was very little systematic spatial analysis or quantitative data on London’s high streets and in order to make a case for investment in London’s high streets, DfL needed statistical, economic, planning and
cultural research. Working as a sponsored ‘scholar’ in the DfL team, Fiona Scott set about creating a new interpretation of London’s polycentric urbanism – one that focused not on the point (the town centre), but on the line (the high street; Figure 3.19). This is not to deny the importance of the town centre, which has both historical and cultural precedents, but it takes into account another history – that of the city which grows along linear space (in this case its Roman roads). The urban artery has its own significance and value; it is both ‘place’ and ‘connector’ at the same time. Initially, the study focused on a stretch of road between Ilford and Chadwell Heath – part of the old Roman road running from the City of London to Colchester in Essex. Its scope soon expanded to investigate the full 51-kilometre length of the ‘high street’ connecting Uxbridge to Romford through central London, with Oxford Street at its centre (Figure 3.20).

The research, and its meticulous drawings (Figure 3.21), revealed a wealth of new facts about the hidden economy of this stretch of road, such as it being home to 80,000 jobs and 6,500 businesses – more than Canary Wharf. The initial research was followed by a commission for research into London’s entire high street network, identifying the role of high streets in supporting London’s sustainable growth and development. This became the High Street London project.
Figure 3.20  Uxbridge to Romford: non-residential land uses. Enlarged section shows Aldgate to Oxford Street. Source: Fiona Scott/GLA.
Much of the previous discussion about failing high streets had focused on their very obvious problems rather than their potential. Underpinning the city-wide study was the proposition that London’s high streets represented an important element in the city’s urban fabric and could play a vital strategic and local role across the capital. High streets had great potential to accommodate much of London’s predicted future growth, through the provision of new jobs and housing.

High Street London found that London’s high streets are an economic system made up of some 175,000 businesses, employing almost 1.5 million people (or 35 per cent of London’s total jobs), and home to a significant portion of London’s micro and small businesses. The analysis also showed that half of London’s brownfield land is on or within 200 metres of a high street. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment at the time identified over 3,369 large sites (within a 300-metre buffer around the newly defined high street) with a capacity to deliver 155,137 dwellings over a 10-year period. This was 54 per cent of the overall capacity of large sites in London for this period. Furthermore, two thirds of Londoners (5 million people) lived within a five-minute walk of a local high street and many did not venture beyond it in their day-to-day lives.

Two publications stemming from this research, *High Street London* and the mayor’s *Action for High Streets*, focused hearts and minds on
these social, economic and structural assets and formed the foundation of work over the years to come. They built the business case to support and strengthen the resilience of high streets strategically and pointed out the huge potential in them.

Crossrail: a new impetus for town centre regeneration

High Street London set the basis for a serious rethink by policy-makers at a time when almost all investment was being focused on big regeneration projects in the Thames Gateway and east London, particularly around the Olympic area. Outer London suburbia, where a large proportion of London’s population lives, had been largely ignored (a point emphasised by Boris Johnson’s campaign team during the 2008 mayoral elections). The fact that suburbia is rather ‘ordinary’ should not make it uninteresting to policy-makers. Indeed, designing in lower-density locations presents unique challenges. The interest in suburbia culminated in the 2016 London Plan’s suggestion for increased intensification targets for suburban areas.

Once again transport investment, this time for Crossrail, presented the opportunity for the team to become involved at the local level. The Crossrail Atlas, commissioned from the architects’ practice 5th Studio, explored the opportunities for change that might be opened up by the new railway line, particularly in some of the outer London town centres. The business case for the Crossrail infrastructure project had been based on economic growth, and, while the railway line was undoubtedly encouraging speculation in places like Ilford, a key growth centre along the new line, there were no specific local studies to ascertain where growth might occur or the form that it might take. There was a real risk that the scale and quality of regeneration activity would actually be damaging to the local area.

The case for local growth linked to Crossrail was examined by 5th Studio, Regeneris and Cyril Sweett. Their study aimed to establish the points where regeneration activity might be focused to create opportunities for local benefits, and a series of maps visualising the opportunities were brought together in the Crossrail Atlas. This provided a comprehensive description of the regeneration potential and possible geography of urban change that might be triggered by the Crossrail project. Each station was first ranked by indicators of deprivation and economic performance. Second, each station locality was ranked according to its development opportunity. This took into account deprivation
indicators, market opportunities and those areas where investment could have the greatest proportionate impact. Six stations where GLA/LDA investment could bring the furthest-reaching benefits were shortlisted for further study. These were then split into two priority groups: one where the current opportunity related to existing town centres and would be driven by residential development, the other where the opportunity was for commercial or mixed-use development. The project built a strong case for town centre renewal by gathering detailed data that identified where modest investment would have the biggest impact.

A change of political priorities: the Outer London Commission

Following his election in 2008, Mayor Boris Johnson set up the Outer London Commission to investigate actions which could help areas that had not seen much regeneration investment. These were also areas where many Conservative voters lived.

Chapter 5 considers the tactics that DfL used to rebrand existing programmes to adapt to a change in political leadership. In the case of town centres, the team successfully pitched a new idea that was really a rebranding of existing work: programmes of comprehensive change focused on high streets across all of London. High-street-based regeneration was well suited to suburban London and an initial £50 million was pledged over three years, with local authorities and organisations bidding for funds. The ‘new’ programme targeted high streets in London’s outer areas. The political programme continued after the election in 2010 of a Conservative-led coalition central government that severely reduced public spending. In order to survive, DfL had to change its focus from town centres like Barking, with brownfield sites and high levels of deprivation, to a more opportunistic approach that was geared towards economic growth opportunities.

Town centre programmes repackaged: ‘good to grow and ready to go’

In 2012, central government abolished the LDA and brought together, under one roof at the GLA, what was left of DfL, the London region of the Homes and Communities Agency and the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. The GLA now had a broad remit for public space projects, town centre and high street schemes, housing renewal and
development, public transportation, place-shaping, and growth corridor and Opportunity Area planning. Although it was significantly reduced in size, DfL saw this as an opportunity to create a new methodology for investing in localities that were ‘good to grow and ready to go’. This term best described decisions made in a time of declining public funding and based on both need and opportunity.

The repackaged town centre programme reflected how political decisions on funding allocation had changed and where there might be support for new interventions – in particular, where there might be a measurable opportunity for growth arising from small-scale public subsidies. Inspired by the diagram ‘London: Social and Functional Analysis’, which elegantly described London as a series of places with distinct identities, the team (with the property firm GVA) collated pan-London data to identify and evaluate all of London’s 600-plus high street localities. This provided an evidence base for better-informed regeneration and investment strategies. Analysis of the data identified places that were ‘good to grow’ (had the capability to support housing and job growth, and were ‘good’ as in virtuous or right) and ‘ready to go’ (had all the ingredients in place to grow: willing and proactive people, space in the right ownership and supportive planning policy). Adding these layers of analysis to the localities map enabled a detailed and complex picture of the city to be drawn up. From this, multiple approaches to investment and regeneration could be derived. The study corroborated the places in which the GLA Regeneration Team (and previously DfL) had been investing over the last few years. It also strengthened the case for investment in overlooked (at the time) places like Southall, Sidcup, Erith and Blackhorse Lane.

The 2011 riots provided an unexpected catalyst for this new work. Civil unrest erupted first in Tottenham and later spread to other centres, including Croydon and Clapham Junction. Urban riots form a subline through English history from the twelfth century (religious riots and gang warfare between guild apprentices) to the eighteenth century (the 1780 Gordon riots, against Catholics) and the nineteenth century (a series of riots over electoral reform). More recently London had seen civil unrest in the Brixton riots of 1981 and the poll tax riots of 1990. As always, the riots caught the authorities by surprise, and with the Olympics scheduled to open in less than a year, an instant response was demanded. The riots had of course focused on high streets as these are the natural places for community congregations, and these seemed to be the places to start rebuilding community confidence. Additional funding was made available as part of the £70 million Mayor’s Regeneration Fund, with a focus on Tottenham and Croydon, which had been the worst-affected areas.
The ‘good to grow and ready to go’ high street strategy (Figure 3.22) was able to secure a significant proportion of the £221 million total\textsuperscript{52} that had been allocated since 2011 by the mayor and others to help boost high streets, strengthen local trade, create new jobs and shape better-quality places. These schemes had been carefully researched and well designed – sadly, an unusual occurrence for short-term politically driven initiatives. More important projects were based on a clear rationale and could be implemented quickly.

The ensuing regeneration programmes acknowledged the importance of combining analysis and place-based mapping to identify the opportunities for each locality. Practical action was accompanied with strategic research on a London-wide level to understand the implications of change in the economy, including impacts on retailing, commerce, civic activities and housing demand. Projects were both practical and at a stage where implementation could occur as soon as the funding was made available and the green light given. The partnerships were already in place with partners ready to provide support.
The impact of the high street and town centre work

One question is whether the high street is uniquely British and whether the work of DfL was a response to a unique London problem. High streets may have different names in Paris, Milan, Amsterdam or Hamburg but in essence their structure, use and socio-economic importance are very similar. Some of DfL’s ideas have proved transferable to other cities and the team has worked with a group of German academic researchers called Think Berli!, led by Dr Cordelia Polinna, to apply London’s tried and tested approaches. This work has ranged from articles to political workshops on Design for Berlin.\textsuperscript{53} It was recently commissioned to prepare a proposal for an International Building Exhibition (IBA) based on Berlin’s high streets (the Radialen) and called Radikal Radial (Figure 3.23).

On the dissolution of DfL, many of its team members secured new jobs in different cities and took with them their networks, methodologies and approaches to urban regeneration. A number of the programmes have been adapted to new circumstances. The London Borough of Harrow, for example, took on Tobias Goevert, Adam Towle and other ex-members of DfL who shaped the Building a Better Harrow regeneration programme, which owed much to the Barking and Dalston town centre projects. Fenna Haakma Wagenaar is now Design Lead (Hoofdontwerper) in Amsterdam, where a variation of the high street strategy, Stadtstraten, ‘is the most used (and abused) strategy for combining improved pedestrian links and public space with the general demand for densification’.\textsuperscript{54} Another team member, Eva Herr, works in the planning department in Hamburg on improving and

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure3.23.png}
\caption{Schematic representation of a Berlin radial road that runs from the city centre to the outer city through various types of neighbourhoods (2011). Source: Thomas Hauck.}
\end{figure}
densifying the city's arteries in outer areas, called the Magistralen. The city commissioned a major design workshop, Bauforum, in 2019, using 200 experts and audiences of 8,000 to inform a programme of high street demonstration projects. Peter Bishop has just completed new masterplans for Barking town centre.

The UK government has launched a national Future High Streets grant programme, with the first round of bids in 2019. This has picked up on the approach applied in DfL’s original high street funds and is looking at opportunities beyond high street improvements, including major housing-led town centre restructuring.

Conclusions

DfL’s high street work is not without parallels, but it is hard to find a comparable initiative that rode successive political changes and funding fluctuations and delivered such a range of projects. Opportunism is important in times of uncertainty. This is not to say that a number of the town centres would not anyway have seen changes or indeed improvement. But that change would have been piecemeal without the team’s active involvement.

The work on town centres and high streets was a response to economic and social forces that were manifest in radical shifts in consumer behaviour. It was also a response to the volatile and turbulent politics of the period. Simple programmes for town centre and high street regeneration had to be constantly repackaged and adapted to new sources of funding and new political priorities. Agility, invention and opportunism are central elements of survival, and incremental urbanism is possibly the only approach that is able to withstand the stresses and uncertainties of local government.

High street and town centre regeneration projects show the importance of carefully designed small-scale interventions that emphasise sensitive urban design. London is under constant development pressure and this growth is taking place through infill and brownfield site development as well as through the reuse and reactivation of empty buildings. Strengthening retail functions is an important first step, but the future of the high street lies in the diversification of use through developing the whole ecosystem – small firms on upper floors and production in backyards. Structural changes in the UK and London economies are heralding the return of small businesses and customised manufacturing. This ‘creative milieu’ is essential to the future development
of cities. These jobs are more resilient in the face of financial crisis, create a local economy and are able to react flexibly to new circumstances and changes in demand. The high street is a perfect seedbed for such activities.

The projects illustrated in this chapter show that robust relationships with (and within) local authorities, business and resident groups are the key to developing, implementing and maintaining good urban change. Local charrettes (workshops carried out over a number of weeks involving the architects and the local community) and design reviews with all stakeholders are a key element in this process. They helped to create a climate supportive of design quality which was hard for private investors, local planning departments and engineers to disregard. Targeted public-sector investment is just the starting point of a regeneration process, but it does set the agenda for longer-term programmes and further investment from local authorities, developers and businesses. Coordination between the various bodies involved in high-street-related activities is essential. The projects with the most impact were those that involved communities from the outset, took local needs into account, fostered uniqueness and diversity, nurtured individual assets and developed strong partnerships between all stakeholders.

However, not all lessons from the last decade of high street interventions are positive. Shopfront improvements, popular as ‘quick fix’ local programmes, are often ephemeral due to short retail leases and lack of understanding by shopkeepers of their ‘design value’. The problems of high streets are deeper than the quality of shopfronts. Physical improvements that fail to address the root causes of decline lose any regenerative impact quickly. Long-term improvements in the quality of high streets cannot be achieved by politically driven quick fixes. High streets and town centres are complex places that are built on a web of social and economic relationships. Long-lasting improvements are driven by meticulous research, skilful design-led interventions and programmes that build capacity and resilience. Most of all they require long-term commitment and agency. The projects that DfL brokered in Dalston and Barking demonstrate a methodology for renewal that has an enduring legacy.

If the high street is to have a future, there must be more innovation to diversify and grow the high street ecosystem. It is probably true that the high street is no longer the centre for a neighbourhood’s shopping needs. Some, especially where they have the benefit of an attractive historical environment and a wealthy residential hinterland, will continue to thrive. Many other high streets will have to reinvent themselves. In a time when local shopping is declining in importance,
high streets are still centres of their communities and can diversify to become local economic, service, leisure and transport hubs. They still need to have a welcoming and well-maintained public realm and a distinctive local identity. The London high street of the twenty-first century will need to become more resilient and capable of ongoing reinvention. This might include the use of buildings and space for local markets, digital manufacturing and fabrication, community enterprises, leisure and recreation, or food production. High streets must also improve their capacity for walking and cycling in order to reduce vehicular flows on London’s already congested medieval street pattern.

London’s future development challenges can only be addressed through sensitive place-based strategies and plans. In some places that may mean incremental change and adjustment; in others it might mean more comprehensive redevelopment. Town centres and high streets will continue to play a key role in supporting urban change, but this requires a recognition of their important physical, social and economic attributes and continued support.

Notes

1 Clive Dutton, OBE, 1953–2015. Clive Dutton was an unconventional and inspiring figure in a world that is too often viewed as dull and regimented. His career spanned Birmingham, Newham and Belfast. His affable nature hid a polished operator who had the panache to generate ideas. Critically, he had the energy and political acumen to navigate the political mazes to make them happen. DfL welcomed his arrival in London as a chance to work with an ally and sympathiser.

2 Bishop 2015, and see Chapter 6.

3 Interview with Mark Brearley (DfL), January 2020.

4 Interview with Mark Brearley (DfL), January 2020.

5 Carmona 2015. Carmona contributed a huge amount to the High Street London report.

6 Local Data Company 2020.

7 Alexander 1965.


9 Simms, Kjell and Potts 2005.

10 Indeed, in some inner London boroughs the compensation payments made to pedestrians injured through tripping over uneven pavements exceeded the pavement maintenance budget.

11 Portas 2011.

12 Moore 2012.

13 A phrase used by Mark Brearley in an attempt to anglicise the American idiom ‘bang for your buck’. A regular slide in Mark’s presentations read, ‘telling stories and minting phrases, from “catch and steer” to “good to grow, ready to go”’. Minting phrases was a common and important feature of DfL’s communication.

14 Jones, Roberts and Morris 2007.

15 Carmona 2015.

16 This was part of the reasoning for the GLA’s expansion of the high street agenda to include street and covered markets and ‘places of work’ in 2014/15.


24. The folly was designed by muf and finished in 2010. It has already acquired its own folklore, with local schoolchildren relating that it is a haunted ruined castle. In a current scheme by Bishop & Williams and DaeWha Kang design, the leader of the council has insisted that the folly be retained or moved to another nearby location.
26. Winner, Hackney Design Award 2010: Eastern Curve (Making Space in Dalston); Winner, Communications and Presentation Category, Landscape Institute Awards 2010; Finalist, Urban Intervention Award Berlin 2010; Winner, President’s Award, Landscape Institute Awards 2011; Winner, Urban Design and Masterplanning Category, Landscape Institute Awards 2011; Commended, Place Making Category, NLA Awards 2011; Finalist, Rosa Barba World Landscape Prize 2014.
27. London Overground was a highly successful amalgamation of various rail lines, mainly in north London. The lines were transferred to TfL and train frequencies were increased to make services similar to those of the underground. It was opened in 2007.
28. Interview with Peter Bishop.
30. This is now in its 10th year and has become an exemplar of best practice of community-managed public space.
33. The Big Society was an initiative by the Conservative government under David Cameron; see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Society
34. A focus on town centres as they are commonly considered, namely as foci of high-end retail and office space, is retrograde. The DfL view was that a broader conception of a town centre was needed: one that encompassed a wider area of relatively inter-accessible streets that enable the co-location of the full gamut of non-residential activity, including primary schools, workshops and so on. This creates extensive and varied activity which needs daily, weekly and periodic movement as well as engagement of individuals with their locality.
35. Carmona 2015.
36. Like many of London's major roads, Whitechapel Road was part of the Roman link between London and Colchester.
37. Originally, the project was called Olympic High Street, but this was blocked by the London Olympic Organising Committee as misuse of their brand (which corporates like McDonald’s and Coca-Cola had paid to use). Originally it was planned that the marathon would go along Whitechapel Road, and DfL argued successfully for funding to improve the route. The fact that the Olympic Committee decided to reroute the marathon on the grounds that Whitechapel Road did not present a picturesque enough route illustrates the shortsightedness of some institutions of London government. The project went ahead regardless. A number of other key routes were eventually tidied up, in particular those that would take participants and press between the different venues.
38. An offer by the Royal Bank of Scotland to adopt it was rejected as inappropriate for a new piece of public space.
39. The park is actually in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
40. By muf architects.
41. The extensive research that was used to support its work was carried out by the team members themselves as part of its design methodology.
42. The Urban Design Scholarships programme was sponsored by the planning consultancy RPS with a launch at London Met and publicised by the Architects’ Journal. The programme ran for two years. Based on a public call for submissions, it placed talented practitioners in the DfL team to develop a specific research programme under close mentoring from DfL leads (see Chapter 7).
43. Fiona Scott now runs the London-based architecture practice Gort Scott with Jay Gort.
44. The commission was awarded to the young practice Gort Scott, assisted by The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment at UCL.
Now renamed the Elizabeth line, this new high-speed railway line under central London will connect Heathrow Airport to the east of London, radically altering transport accessibility and land values.

The Crossrail Atlas attempts to provide a comprehensive description of the regeneration potential of the Crossrail project. The atlas was prepared by 5th Studio on behalf of DfL/LDA, and was undertaken in parallel with an economic study by Regeneris Consulting and Cyril Sweett. See http://www.5thstudio.co.uk/projects/crossrail-atlas-london/

5th Studio, 2011.

51 Drawn by Arthur Ling and D. K. Johnson and first produced in the County of London Plan 1943 by Patrick Abercrombie and others. Variously described as the ‘Abercrombie Plan’, ‘Potato Plan’ or ‘blob map’ (see Chapter 1).

52 This sum was made up of the Outer London Fund (£50 million), the Mayor’s Regeneration Fund (£70 million), and other TfL and GLA funds and injections from Central London funds.


54 Interview, Fenna Haakma Wagenaar.

55 https://www.hamburg.de/bauforum/

The budget for the fund was increased significantly in August 2019 after Boris Johnson became prime minister; see https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-billion-future-high-streets-fund-expanded-to-50-more-areas

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