

Leveraging our potential:

The levers Camden Council has to create change in the borough

The Camden Renewal Commission

London Borough of Camden | UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose

September 2020



Institute for Innovation
and Public Purpose

Introduction

The challenges targeted by the Renewal Commission are by their nature big, bold, difficult, and complex. Tackling them effectively requires breaking the challenges down into pragmatic steps, or missions. Developed by the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP), a mission-oriented approach breaks a broader “grand” challenge down into ambitious but concrete targets that stimulate innovation and activity across a variety of actors and sectors.

As we develop Camden’s missions and the programme of activity to achieve them, we need to consider the tools and influence – referred to in this paper as “levers” – that the local authority has at its disposal that could be deployed to achieve these missions.

With this in mind, this paper:

- Provides an overview of the levers available to Camden as a local authority to create change in our place
- Offers practical examples and illustrations of how the Council currently uses its levers to deliver social value
- Suggests additional levers the Council may want to consider for the effective delivery of the Renewal Commission’s aims.

Local authorities are in a unique position to shape the geography of their borough, and the way in which residents live and work within it. Responsible for social care, neighbourhood services, and certain aspects of transport, housing, and education, local authorities have various levers at their disposal to influence life at the local scale.

One way of conceptualising the levers a local authority might use to create change is by categorising their ability to influence:

- **People**
- **Place**
- **Policy**
- **Partnerships**

In the following pages, we explore how local authorities in general, and Camden Council in particular, can influence each of these four areas.

Camden's Levers: An Overview



Local authorities can influence the lives of people as:

- **A provider of services:** Camden Council directly influences its residents' lives through the services it provides, ranging from child and adult social care services to employment support, waste collection, and environmental services.
- **A landlord:** Camden Council is landlord to over 22,000 tenants and 10,000 leaseholders. As a social landlord, the Council can ensure its residents live in high-quality housing, have access to amenities such as good quality communal space, and can develop activities that benefit resident wellbeing (e.g. through communal cooking and exercise classes).
- **An employer:** as a significant local employer, Camden Council can shape the work opportunities available to its residents through our own employment practices. The Council is a pioneering 'Good Work' employer, accredited by the London Mayor. We have also introduced cutting edge inclusion and diversity approaches, including blind recruitment methods, 'ban the box' approaches for those with previous offences, and targeting particular groups such as returning parents to work. Leading by example can set a standard for other employers in the borough.
- **Shapers of local public health:** Camden & Islington Public Health takes a population approach to health and wellbeing. They address health inequalities by: following community centred approaches that empower residents; drawing on the collective power of local institutions and employers to contribute more social value; focusing support for groups with the poorest outcomes within our communities; and advocating for resources to be targeted to address inequalities, through prevention and early intervention. The public health analytical team draw on a range of data and evidence to pinpoint need and enable targeted work to improve outcomes, through the ongoing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, bespoke analysis, and tailored evaluations. The service works with a range of partners across organisational boundaries, providing whole systems leadership for issues such as holistic support for homeless people during COVID-19, enhancing mental health & wellbeing for children and young people, and addressing food poverty and healthy weight. Public Health provides expert advice to NHS and other commissioners on prioritising spend, and has been a key partner in innovative bids that lever in funding to Camden.

Local authorities can influence the lives of people as:

- **A communicator:** the Council plays an important role in communicating key news and information to local residents, for example, about social distancing and public health messages during the Covid-19 pandemic. Camden has a vibrant local press, and the ability to share key messages through both formal (e.g. place based marketing and advertising, newsletters, social media) and informal mechanisms (e.g. trusted relationships, service provision).
- **A devolver of power:** Camden Council devolves power to residents to shape policymaking through Citizen's Assemblies, use assets such as Think & Do, a Neighbourhoods Makers Space, and a High Streets Programme to bring Council staff and residents together to solve problems collaboratively.
- **A strategic partner for the education system:** Camden Council works in partnership with all state schools in the borough through our school-led partnership, Camden Learning, providing primary and secondary education to Camden's young people. We influence the lives of our young residents through the high-quality education on offer, as well as our shaping of

the local curriculum. Our STEAM programme, for example, encourages the inclusion of STEM and arts project-based learning in schools, and brokers STEAM work experience opportunities and mentoring in the borough

- **Custodians of data:** the Council's access to a large amount of data can help inform effective decision making and improve our services. For example, the Resident Needs Analysis dashboard aims to develop a single view of the citizen, linking data points about individuals and highlighting patterns of need across the borough. The Council has also used its data to develop a track and trace programme in response to the Covid pandemic. Camden is working hard to ensure that we use our data safely and responsibly; the Council is developing a Data Charter through a deliberative process with residents, to be published in Spring 2021. .

Local authorities can influence a place through:

- **Planning:** Our planning powers allow us to set the vision for the future of Camden's places, to deliver Camden 2025 priorities, help guide public and private sector investment in infrastructure, and to regulate how this is delivered through property development. By setting planning policy and guidance at both borough-wide level and for specific local areas and assessing planning applications, the Council has significant influence over how development within the borough contributes to Camden's places and the communities they support. Camden also has several active neighbourhood forums and adopted neighbourhood plans (the most in London), prepared by the community for specific areas in the borough. It is important to note that the planning system is currently undergoing a period of significant change with new legislation coming into effect and a white paper, currently out for consultation, proposing radical reform to the system.
- **Funds raised through planning:** the Council can use planning obligations (section 106 agreements) to secure on-site provision, infrastructure and financial contributions that are directly related to the impacts of a particular development scheme. The Council also raises funds through from a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is a rate charged per sqm depending on the use / area collected from developers after their planning permissions have been implemented. The funds raised are spent on infrastructure or to support the development of an area. In Camden, 25% of CIL is devolved to individual wards and spend is agreed through an elected member led system on local community priorities. However, the current planning white paper, whilst only at consultation stage, proposes the abolition of section 106 and replacement of both this and the current CIL regime with a nationally set flat rate charge based on a small proportion of the value of the development in question.
- **Regeneration and development:** the Council can be directly responsible for regeneration and development in an area of the borough, through the Community Investment Programme (CIP) and the Small Sites Programme. CIP is investing £1billion into schools, homes and community facilities in Camden. This is being done by building homes for sale, as well as selling and redeveloping properties that are expensive to maintain or underused and difficult to access.
- **Strategic management of assets:** the Council can use its physical assets to create and support local opportunity or to enable social action. For example, Camden's Neighbourhood programme is making space available within our physical assets in order to support SMEs and the VCS. This approach is currently being piloted in a former Day Centre Building, giving space to local VCS groups and SMEs to work on pressing local issues including youth safety and food poverty. The Council can also

influence place through its property and assets strategy and as a landlord, by deciding who occupies Council-owned buildings and at what rate (subject to best-value considerations). These controls can have a major influence on place. In the Covid context, which has changed how office and commercial space is being used, there are new opportunities for thinking creatively about how we use vacant spaces in the borough.

- **Capital expenditure** such as building affordable homes, refurbishing existing assets and building and maintaining local transport and community infrastructure.

Place levers in practice:

The Community Investment Programme

Camden is building new affordable homes through its Community Investment Programme (CIP) which is also building new community facilities and school buildings. Overall CIP aims to build 3,050 new homes including 1,100 council homes (650 replacing poor quality homes and 450 additional) and 300 intermediate affordable homes. On housing schemes, we aim to build 50% affordable homes but where we are building a new school or community facility a higher proportion of homes for sale is needed to pay for this.

To date we've built 880 new homes of the following tenure through CIP:

- 361 Council homes (198 additional / 163 replacement) – over 1,000 people are living in new build council homes including 135 previously overcrowded families.
- 78 intermediate affordable homes (65 Camden Living rented homes and 13 for shared ownership)
- 441 homes for sale (including 70 units at Netley bought by the Department of Transport and returned back to the Council as replacement housing for residents displaced by HS2).

We have 105 homes currently under construction and planning permission and Cabinet approval for a further 1,250 homes. We're also undertaking feasibility on sites with potential for another 2,000+ homes including two estates where we are working with residents on options one of which held a successful ballot in March where residents strongly backed redevelopment proposals.

Challenges:

Government/GLA funding to build new affordable homes represents roughly a quarter of the development cost in Camden (including supporting social infrastructure and place improvements). This means that the Council must fund the remaining cost. In Camden we are building homes for sale to help fund the affordable homes but this requires significant up-front borrowing. Pressure on revenue budgets may limit our ability to borrow further and constrain how quickly we can build new homes. In addition to this a significant fall in house prices and/or increase in construction costs will impact on programme viability.

Multiple levers in action: Kentish Town & Gospel Oak

Gospel Oak area is a major strategic focus for Camden's Community Investment Programme. A number of schemes have been completed already, providing new mixed tenure homes, amenities and public realm improvements in some of the most deprived parts of the borough. Completed schemes include the award winning Bacton Estate Phase 1 ("Cherry Court"), which created 67 homes on the site of a disused Council office building. Phase 2 is due to start construction in 2021 and will provide 247 new homes. Infill schemes at Barrington and Lamble Street, and Kiln Place Estate have provided new homes. Just to the West construction is underway at Maitland Park estate of 121 new homes.

Two major pipeline schemes are also underway: at West Kentish Town Estate in Haverstock Ward to the south, redevelopment proposals for the existing estate of 316 homes were recently balloted with residents, and received overwhelming support with a 93% Yes vote. Wendling Estate redevelopment proposals are expected go to resident ballot in 2021. Together these two pipelines schemes will produce circa 1500 new homes in the area.

The Council is working with local residents to develop a Community Vision that will directly influence changes made in the area. The Community Vision will focus on improvements to streets and access to open spaces but will also provide a longer-term vision for the neighbourhood that brings together various strands of Council work such as community safety, energy efficiency, transport and initiatives to reduce inequalities. It also builds on existing Council projects such as the Gospel Oak Job Hub which is supporting local people on their journey into work and planned public realm works in the neighbourhood centre at Queen's Crescent.

To support this process, a Neighbourhood Assembly has been set up to bring together a cross-section of people who broadly represent their community to explore the potential for the future of the area, alongside wider public engagement.



Multiple levers in action: Kentish Town & Gospel Oak

Between Gospel Oak and Kentish Town Centre sits a large area of low-density industrial land, dissected by railways. This has been identified in Camden's Local Plan as an area for comprehensive employment-led mixed-use growth and intensification. The Kentish Town Planning Framework, produced by the Council, sets out the vision for the area as a characterful place that is an exemplar for mixed-use, with intensive industrial, commercial and creative activity, harmoniously provided alongside 2,000 high-quality homes. Development objectives include an ambitious employment and skills strategy that delivers opportunities for local people, a zero-emissions neighbourhood and connections with surrounding communities including a green link between Kentish Town Centre and Hampstead Heath.

There are two active Neighbourhood Forums in the Area- the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum and the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum both of which have adopted neighbourhood Plans.

The Council is also working with a private landowner in the northern part of the area, who is seeking to develop a site and is working with the GLA to explore the options and develop a delivery strategy for comprehensive redevelopment of the Regis Road area.. The Council is also undertaking a detailed feasibility study to investigate the options for a decentralised heat network, which could contribute to lower carbon ambitions.

Kentish Town is an area of focus for the Council's new Camden Future Highstreets Programme. This programme is testing on the ground delivery of pilot interventions to respond to the immediate pressures Covid has put on our highstreets and test interventions that could support transformation of our high streets in the mid-term.

Example projects include the Kentish Town resident-led 'Think & Do Space' a pop-up space for climate and eco-action that offers residents the chance to lead, develop, and take part in various activities, a new Neighbourhoods Makers space and plans for a Kentish Town Library of Things to support the development of a circular economy. These initiatives build on a strong foundation of community participation.



Local authorities can influence policy through:

- **Procurement:** Local authorities have an obligation under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to consider how a proposed procurement might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local area. As a major local buyer of services and goods – the Council spends about £430 million on procuring from third party suppliers – Camden can leverage its procurement processes to achieve positive outcomes for its residents, businesses, and communities. This is achieved by paying close attention to how good, services, or works will be delivered, who is delivering it, and attaching conditions to contracts to deliver social value for the borough. Camden's updated social value approach – which integrates social, economic, and environmental criteria – has been in place since January 2020 and aims to help the Council achieve its key strategic aims (e.g. Camden 2025) and support its priority areas.
- **Leading by example:** local authorities often must deliver within the policy parameters prescribed by central government. However, when they excel in the quality of the service they deliver, they can influence the way in which national policy evolves. For example, Camden's Resilient Families programme set the benchmark for early intervention and prevention nationally. The Council also leads by example through our social work model, which is defined by a shared set of values and principles informed by the experiences of children and parents which are reflected in our systems, ways of working and structure of our teams ensuring that we prioritise the child's journey through everything we do. Recent work through the Good Work Camden programme on piloting approaches to Universal Basic Services is another example of where the Council can

Camden's Procurement Policies - example

The Council contracted Wates Construction to develop a housing and commercial development on Abbey Road in Kilburn. The development comprised 141 new homes (66 new council homes and 75 private sale units). Camden's procurement process meant that Wates delivered the following social value outcomes, among a number of impacts not listed here:

- *Provided 13 apprenticeships through the apprenticeship scheme for the Abbey Area;*
- *Provided 23 work placements for young people aged 16+;*
- *Assisted 14 NEETs aged 19+ to gain valuable practical experience and employability coaching;*
- *Employed 97 local people;*
- *Used 78% local materials;*
- *Delivered employment of disadvantaged BAME residents;*
- *Spent more than 80% of the contract value with SMEs;*
- *Provided 484 hours of volunteer time to the local community;*
- *Sourced 35% of employees for the project from the local community;*
- *Invested 3,041 hours in supporting people through employment and training initiatives*

Local authorities can influence policy through:

make the case for policy change, in this instance showing how free transport and digital connectivity can bolster household income and support economic resilience. Meanwhile, our Sustainers Programme incentivises schools to accelerate their work to improve the environment

- **Lobbying:** We stand up for our communities and lobby government in their interests. One recent example is our lobbying efforts around High Speed 2 (HS2), which secured nearly 150 commitments from the government to reduce the impact of the development on Camden's residents, as well as government funding secured to build 90 replacement homes for council tenants and resident leaseholders ahead of the demolition of their homes by HS2, responding to residents' requests to stay in their local area. Camden can also leverage its tendency to lead by example (being the first Council to declare a net zero carbon emissions ambition, making a strong case for early intervention approaches, and delivering a strong Test and Trace response to Covid), alongside its convening role across Central London and London Councils, to achieve key policy aims for the borough and other local authorities.

Local authorities can shape a place through their partnerships by:

- **Acting as a convener:** Camden Council is in a unique position to bring together actors in the borough to consider shared issues and create a shared path. The Council's role in chairing the Health and Wellbeing Board is an example of how it acts as a system leader, bringing together a range of partners including primary and secondary care to improve services for residents and link up sometimes disparate areas of local public services.

For example, we convene an Employment and Skills Network that brings together the organisations supporting people into work in the borough. Through this convening power, the council has been able to influence the quality of employment support provided, share referrals to better meet resident needs, and is building a single shared identity by all those in the network to help make it easier for residents to find support. We also supported the community to create Think & Do, a climate action pop up brand that has brought together residents from across the borough to take part in over 200 events so far. By doing so, we've allowed residents and organisations alike to channel their energy and resource into achieving action to tackle the climate crisis.

Camden's Inclusive Business Programme

In order to achieve our ambitions around good work for all Camden residents, and all those working in Camden, we know that we need to create good work opportunities as well as preparing people to be ready for work.

Our flagship piece of work to achieve this ambition is called 'Inclusive Business'. We are building a network of businesses who encourage, promote and share learnings around good work standards. Establishing a local business network will allow both the Council and employers to collaborate, engage and learn from each other. Whilst we are initially focusing on a small number of employers, our longer-term vision is to grow the network into a large hub of cross sector Camden businesses varying from SMEs to larger commercial organisations.

Local authorities can shape a place through their partnerships by:

- **Creating platforms around common causes:** The Council creates new infrastructure and communication channels to improve the coordination of efforts to tackle big social challenges. For example, we incubated Camden Giving, now an independent organisation to mobilise communities and organisations to give their time and money to common causes in Camden, while also empowering residents to shape future funding and enable funding from local institutions & businesses to better reach grassroots groups.

We developed a platform called Beacon to provide a federated response across services within and beyond the Council during the pandemic to match resident needs and offers of support to those who required it.

We supported the development of pan-London platforms such as the London Office of Technology & Innovation to better improve the capability of public services to take advantages of digital technologies.

Stretching our thinking

Using new and existing levers to deliver on the Renewal Commission's objectives



Stretching our thinking

As we think about how we can achieve the Renewal Commission's ambitious missions within a resource-constrained environment, we need to think creatively about how we can make most effective use of our existing levers as well as consider where we need to create new levers for change.

These additional levers might include:

Considering alternative ways to raise funds such as:

- **Leveraging Council pension funds:** According to [the Sheffield Political Economy Institute](#), policymakers are looking to better leverage pension funds to boost economic growth and rebalance the economy. As a whole, UK pension funds hold assets worth more than 120 per cent of GDP, while local authority funds have assets worth over £200 billion.
- **Community Wealth Funds:** these collectively-owned funds aim to ensure that the value of economic development is captured and shared equally by local residents, with the local community empowered to decide how returns from the fund are spent. Potential sources of funding for a local wealth fund include unclaimed and dormant assets and wealth taxation.
- **New forms of land value capture:** land value capture refers to the mechanisms used to monetise a rise in land values that occur as a result of public infrastructure investments. While local authorities currently use CIP and s106 (as outlined above) to capture value from land development, more can be done to creatively use land value capture to capitalise on the private gains that arise from public investments. As discussed in this TfL [report](#), land value capture has been used is to fund public transport projects in multiple cities around the world.
- **Council tax voluntary contribution schemes:** under voluntary council tax contribution schemes, councils ask their wealthier residents to pay additional council tax to fund local services. This could help to raise additional funding for particular priority areas for a local authority, such as homelessness.

Going further than being a local employer, to influence wider employment practice through interventions such as:

- **Intermediate Labour Markets (ILM):** ILMs aim to support the unemployed back into work through temporary paid contracts, training and development that builds their employability. The Council might consider using public funds to employ people and develop their skills, or partner with other organisations to part fund roles for those who might otherwise be locked out of employment opportunities.

Stretching our thinking

Considering alternative forms of ownership such as:

- **Co-operatives:** the co-operative business model gives local communities ownership of local activity and benefit from the wealth it generates. Councils could provide assistance and guidance to businesses that wish to convert to a co-operative model or support local people to establish co-operatives.
- **Public-commons-partnerships:** an alternative to “public-private-partnerships,” these are partnerships between cooperatives and councils. In Wolfhagen, Germany, for example, a partnership between the municipality and the energy cooperative BEG Wolfhagen made them joint stakeholders in the town’s energy utility and ensured residents co-own and co-earn from the utility, and have decision making authority in shaping its future.
- **Civic capital:** civic assets are the shared resources from which collective benefits are drawn, regardless of ownership e.g. health-care, air, and public transport infrastructure . The civic capital movement argues that to tackle modern challenges, we should steer financial capital towards these assets in order to achieve better societal outcomes for all. Further detail in this handbook by Civic Capital.
- **Property assets:** Strategic acquisition and repurposing of land and property assets for the common good.
- **Alternative development models:** Municipal development vehicles and community land trusts.