



Cultural Strategy and the Transformation of Nine Elms & Battersea



Introduction

Nine Elms and Battersea provides a fascinating case study of the role of culture in regeneration. Since 2014, the Nine Elms Vauxhall & Battersea Partnership has pursued a vision to establish this new residential and business district as a cultural destination, inspired by its riverside location and the redevelopment of Battersea Power Station and New Covent Garden Market.

The culture-led regeneration of Nine Elms & Battersea

To realise this ambition, Wandsworth Council has embedded cultural obligations within the planning framework and two culture-specialist roles in the economic development team. The Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms & Battersea (2017) reads as a classic example of 'culture-led regeneration' centred around three cultural quarters with the aim of attracting 'at least two world-class institutions'. In delivery, however, a more diverse cultural offer and evolutionary infrastructure is emerging.

Culturally-enhanced mixed use developments such as the Power Station, Market and new linear Nine Elms Park combine with investment in home grown artists and cultural organisations in a model of cultural regeneration, in which culture is fully integrated into the wider area strategy. A collaborative approach to cultural programming and commitments to affordable tenancies have brought together developers, community organisations, artists and cultural partners.

Our Impact Assessment confirms the value of cultural activity in the context of a major transformation programme:



- creating spaces for people to meet, share experiences and feel a sense of community;
- making the area feel safer, more welcoming and inclusive;
- facilitating dialogue and capturing the lived experiences of residents and workers;
- encouraging exploration and discovery;
- bringing together existing residents and new visitors;
- creating imagery and experiences that challenge preconceptions and contribute to a sense of the place to come.

The emerging model in Nine Elms and Battersea has the potential to build community engagement, sustain meaningful partnerships and support organic growth of social capital. It will also require long-term facilitation and support. The Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms and Battersea is entering a new phase, with the opening of Battersea Power Station, new cultural anchor tenants on site and thousands new residents due to arrive in the next 5 years. This phase will be critical in determining whether the investment in culture secured to date leads to sustained, long-term benefits for local residents and the borough of Wandsworth.

SETTING THE SCENE

Comprising 227 hectares within walking distance of the Houses of Parliament, Nine Elms is the largest regeneration zone of its time in central London, transforming the last remaining industrial stretch of the South Bank.

Nine Elms and Battersea in Wandsworth with Vauxhall and Albert Embankment in Lambeth form one of 10 Opportunity Areas identified in the 2004 London Plan. The Nine Elms Vauxhall Partnership (NEVP) was formed in 2011 to oversee a long-term regeneration programme, due to complete in 2031 and including over 42 building and infrastructure projects. The ambition is to create a new residential and business district with 20,000 new homes and 25,000 jobs (post construction).

Major components of the transformation of Nine Elms & Battersea include

- Redevelopment of Battersea Power Station as a new town centre including residential, retail, office, hospitality and public spaces
- Redevelopment of New Covent Garden Market, including a Food Exchange as home to up-and-coming food businesses
- Relocation of the US Embassy from Mayfair to new purpose-built premises
- Nine Elms Park, a public linear park opening-up pedestrian and cycle routes through the district
- Extension of the Northern Line to Nine Elms and Battersea Power Station Underground Stations which opened in 2021



Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms & Battersea

The [Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms and Battersea 2017-2020](#) sets out a vision for a 'vibrant cultural agenda' that 'will have secured Nine Elms and Battersea's place firmly on the Capital's arts map.

The Strategy is centred around the creation of cultural quarters that reflect the heritage and creative strengths of the area.

- **BATTERSEA DESIGN & TECH QUARTER** Reflecting a history of pioneering innovation and iconic architecture, epitomized by Battersea Power Station
- **FOOD & HORTICULTURE QUARTER** Inspired by a history of market gardens, food and flower growing
- **VISUAL ARTS QUARTER** Complementing a cluster of galleries in Vauxhall and connecting to central London via new riverside walking routes

Culture has an important role to play in contributing to placemaking and social cohesion in Nine Elms. Amongst the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK¹, with three existing social housing estates, the area will see an influx of new residents over the next 5 - 10 years in homes with a range of tenures including on-site affordable housing.

¹ All three Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Nine Elms and Battersea were in Decile 3 of the UK Multiple Index of Deprivation 2019.

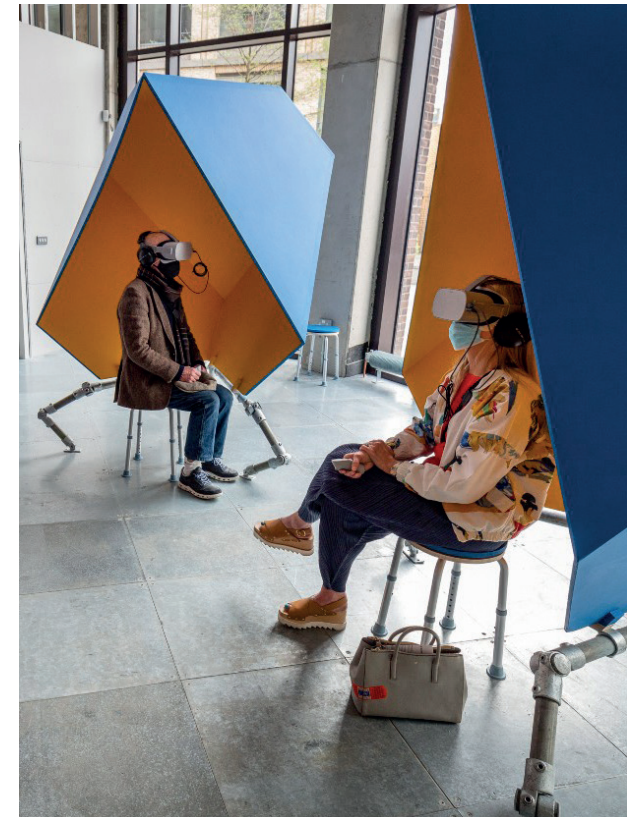


Impact Assessment

This report summarises learning from an assessment of the Cultural Strategy and a review of what is needed next. The assessment has focussed on progress towards the goals and vision of the Strategy as much of the Nine Elms remains under construction.

The work was undertaken between March 2021 and June 2022 and looked at social and economic data sources and administrative data, 28 interviews with key stakeholders and staff within the council, 2 bespoke surveys, 6 focus groups and 3 case studies.

Evidence was shared and discussed with partners at a Professional Learning Forum in April 2022.



HEADLINE IMPACTS



Cultural Infrastructure

28 commissions for permanent or long-term works of art in the public realm produced, 7 more in the pipeline

7 temporary public realm art commissions and 4 meanwhile spaces for cultural use to animate sites during construction

5 cultural anchor tenancies secured, with 4 tenants appointed and soon to move in

Space reserved for cultural or creative industries use in 11 developments

126,682m² of dedicated space for creative and tech sector identified in plans for the Battersea Design and Tech Quarter

70% of cultural activity in Nine Elms reported by Wandsworth Council and partners in 2021-22 was **produced by, employed or showcased the work of local creatives**



Cultural Activity

Audiences of 10-15,000+ per year for cultural activity produced and supported by Wandsworth Council

5 festivals/seasonal highlight programmes per year including connections to pan-London and national partnerships

Around **40% of audiences live in Wandsworth, 60% are visitors from other parts of London** and beyond



Investment

Estimated £13.4m+ total investment in cultural activity, infrastructure and support (see Figure 1)

40% of this investment has been secured via planning obligations (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy)



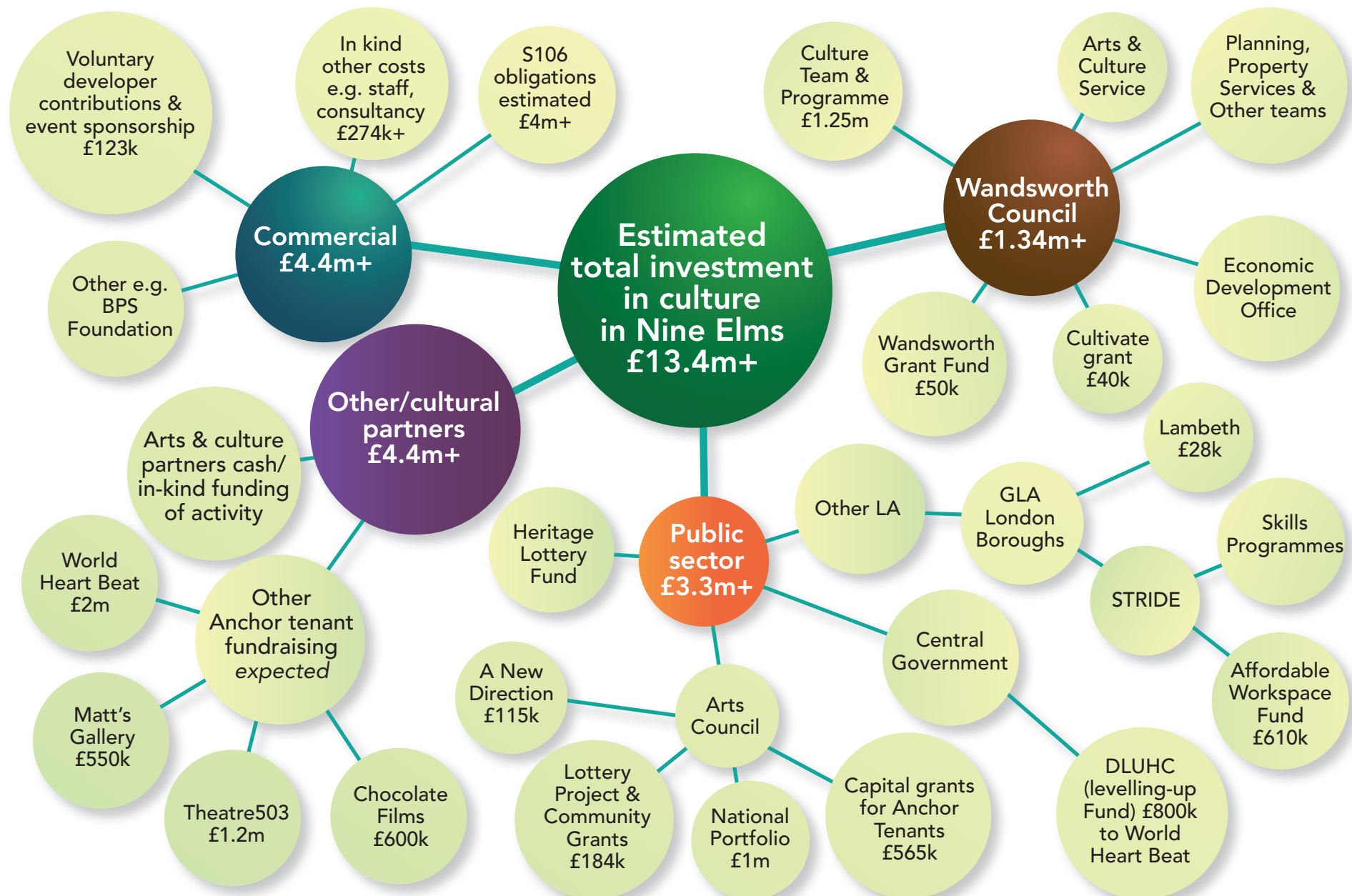
Delivery

98 partners involved in delivery of cultural activity in 2021-22 including cultural organisations, community groups, local businesses, developers and landowners

Members of Cultural the Programming Group acknowledge the **direct influence of the Strategy** on their work and decision making

There have been new partnerships and **increased engagement with Nine Elms residents** amongst cultural partners

Figure 1
Investment supporting the Cultural Strategy 2017 - 2022



PLACEMAKING & SOCIAL COHESION

A set of principles relating to the role of culture has emerged (Fig 2) through the programming choices by the council and cultural partners made under the auspices of the Cultural Strategy. While the impacts of this approach are, as yet, unclear, audience research for this Impact Assessment found consistent messages.

- Audiences experience a sense of community when participating in cultural activities, festivals and events
- Cultural activities consistently attract audiences of residents and visitors to Nine Elms. Local residents invite friends and family from elsewhere to experience them
- Festivals and celebrations are a welcome opportunity for local people to share space, experience something new or different and positive. This is particularly important while access to shared public space and facilities is limited during construction.
- Celebrating the local community, its diversity, heritage and artists is as important, and sometimes more important, to local people than celebrating milestones in the development process.
- Residents of new developments describe Nine Elms as 'lovely', 'vibrant', 'exciting', 'hidden' and 'misunderstood'. Some local people fear it will become the preserve of a young, affluent business community. Cultural activity can create alternative narratives to marketing messages and media critiques that focus on exclusive developments.
- Residents of new developments find it difficult to get to know people from other buildings. COVID-19 has brought about new online connections and micro-communities that might create opportunities to bring people together
- There is a demand for regular (e.g. weekly) cultural participation opportunities, in order to establish relationships between residents and develop skills. Regularity of programming e.g. seasonal cycles or monthly music nights, are also important in supporting individuals and communities to develop social rituals around cultural participation



Figure 2
Principles for the role of culture in
placemaking and social cohesion



Culture as quality of life

Bringing people together

Connecting residents of different
buildings or estates

Sharing space, feeling a sense
of community

Promoting wellbeing and learning

Building confidence and participation

Having fun

Contributing to sense of place

Sharing voices and stories

Showcasing what's here

Challenging pre-conceptions



Culture & the economy

Promoting Nine Elms as a place to live & work

Creating stories and imagery

Promoting Nine Elms as a place to visit

Creating reasons to be here and
find out more

Participating in pan-London Festivals

Supporting creative & cultural businesses

Employing local people

Stimulating custom for hospitality &
other businesses



Culture in the process of transformation

Community engagement

Consulting & communicating

Celebrating milestones

Encouraging exploration

Tours and trails

Animating sites in transition

KEY FINDINGS

“The way that culture has been embedded into regeneration sets Nine Elms apart from other London programmes. Wandsworth Council set its stall out to make it a place for cultural tenants, and the development should act as a benchmark for others.”

Landowner

The Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms & Battersea and its delivery has, to date, been successful in

- Securing significant investment in cultural infrastructure and art in the public realm, and creative space for new anchor tenants
- Bringing about a collaborative approach to cultural programming and infrastructure between the council, developers, cultural organisations and other partners
- Animating and encouraging exploration of the emerging district by residents and attracting visitors
- Capturing, expressing and responding to the experiences of local residents and fostering a sense of community and place
- Generating benefits for the rest of the borough as a cultural destination and via learning transferred to other wards



KEY FINDINGS

The Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms & Battersea has been successful, as a result of

- Close working relationships between the Arts and Culture Service, Planning and the Nine Elms Delivery Team within Wandsworth Council
- Securing a central role for culture in the masterplan, planning framework and vision for the Vauxhall, Nine Elms and Battersea Opportunity Area
- Advocating for, negotiating and facilitating cultural projects, programmes and investments by others
- Producing and commissioning meanwhile and community engagement activities that target diverse audiences, including existing residents

The Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms & Battersea has resulted in

- The area feeling safer, more cared for and more welcoming during the construction phase
- Foundations laid for a dynamic cultural eco-system that includes creative businesses, residential developments, publicly funded cultural organisations, public spaces, the retail and hospitality industries
- Models for collaborative programming including large multi-site events, participation in pan-London festivals and seasonal programmes, underpinned by a network of partners and strong relationships

Challenges encountered in delivery include

- Breaking down social barriers between residents of different areas, estates and buildings
- Maintaining a strategic role for governance and partnership groups as the Strategy moved into delivery
- Attracting larger, more well-known cultural institutions to Nine Elms due to the nature of spaces available
- A pro-active approach over an extended period has been required to develop the three cultural quarters. However, a focus on two quarters and facilitating connections with the neighboring borough for the third is likely to be a more feasible approach in future given capacity.
- Disruption to programming cycles and construction caused by COVID-19
- Limitations in the capacity and experience of cultural anchor tenants in planning and negotiating the detailed fit out and transition to new premises
- Identifying, recording and sharing measures of success before new developments open and new residential and cultural tenants arrive



LESSONS LEARNED

The Impact Assessment has surfaced lessons for the council that may also be broadly applicable for other regeneration schemes.

Combining the long-term big picture with specific, fixed term goals

The Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms and Battersea set out a vision for a vibrant cultural destination. This has been successful in ensuring that culture is integral to the regeneration programme. Earlier adoption of the strategy would have been useful to inform developments from the outset, rather than adapting existing plans.

There is a risk of trying to do too much. Specific goals relating to e.g. skills, audience development and visitor destination, are needed to allocate resources and maximise impact. The Strategy's broad vision and goals have been open to interpretation and more difficult to coordinate without the benefit of more detailed sub strategies and delivery plans. These should set realistic expectations with opportunities to evaluate and communicate what works. An ambitious vision has brought partners to the table in Nine Elms, but a sense of shared achievement with tangible outcomes will be important to future collaboration.

An interdisciplinary approach

The location of Strategic Lead for Culture and Arts & Events Manager roles within a dedicated Nine Elms Programme Team is widely regarded as a successful model of interdisciplinary working. This has led to close relationships between specialist staff, an appreciation of a range of factors that contribute to place making, connections with infrastructure and the ability to troubleshoot and find solutions.

Cultural Anchor Tenants

Initially there was a focus on attracting a high profile cultural anchor, however smaller, often locally-based, organisations have become Anchor Tenants and this has offered significant potential value in fostering social cohesion and engaging existing communities. Anchor tenants have made an important contribution to programming and collaboration during the construction phase. Their selection has been received positively as valuing diversity and the existing strengths of the borough. However, support has been needed for these smaller cultural organisations to navigate the complex process of agreeing terms and fit out. Anchor Tenants have highlighted the importance of affordable service charges, as well as rent controls, to ensure their long-term sustainability. The process of anchor tenants successfully navigating the stages from appointment to moving in, requires investment from the council to support this process, broker relationships and spread best practice.

Embedding culture in key infrastructure

Public realm improvements, such as Thessaly Road Bridge and Arch 42, have become symbols of the change that is taking place in Nine Elms. Embedding culture in these projects makes a clear statement that culture is valued. The distribution of such improvements outside of the curtilage of new developments is significant in connecting existing and new communities, both practically and as beneficiaries of the transformation process.

Shared space

Encouraging people out of doors to explore and share space is important in the context of a large-scale regeneration programme. Cultural activity and art in the public realm support this by making the area feel more safe, welcoming and attractive, bringing light, colour and creating shared experiences that foster a sense of community. The willingness of developers to create permeable borders, shared public space and facilitate meanwhile use of their sites in order to build connections with the wider community is of particular importance where developments offer private facilities, exclusive to residents.

Long-term sustainability

There is a role for the Cultural Strategy and planning process in ensuring that cultural value and use is sustainable, including for cultural infrastructure secured through planning obligations within private developments. This will be critical to whether investments are perceived as a short-term PR exercise or a real commitment to culture and community.

CASE STUDY:

Chocolate Films

Chocolate Films is one of four Cultural Anchor Tenants awarded premises within new developments. It will open its doors at Lexington Gardens in 2022 in space leased by Bellway Homes under planning obligations.

“Our vision is to grow talent and provide opportunities in the film industry... Having our own venue will enable us to do that in a different way...”

Rachel Wang,
Co-Founder and
Director Chocolate Films

About Chocolate Films

Chocolate Films is a video production company and social enterprise specialising in documentaries and video content. It works with museums, galleries, businesses, charities and public bodies, with profits supporting a workshop programme engaging more than 2,000 children and young people each year. Based in Battersea since 2001, Chocolate Films brings local knowledge of Nine Elms and its communities.

Cultural anchor tenancy

The Cultural Strategy aims to “attract and support key cultural anchors to the area for the long-term, thereby underpinning a broader, thriving ecology of artists and creative organisations.” The Anchor Tenancy offered to Chocolate Films by Bellway includes:

- A 310m2 dedicated media hub space (with condition for D1/D2 uses)
- A 99-year lease in order to ‘ensure that the Cultural Occupier is able to occupy the community space for the life of the development’
- Financial support of £10,000 per annum for audience development and community engagement activity during the construction period

For Chocolate Films the tenancy is an opportunity to establish a more suitable and sustainable base close to the communities they work with, as their current premises were too small to run workshops on-site. In addition to fundraising

for fit out costs - estimated at £600k - Chocolate Films will sign a Social Value Agreement with Wandsworth Council to ensure compliance with Bellway’s Cultural Strategy and S106 obligations

Learning so far

Already, the tenancy has led to new creative activities and partnerships supported by Bellway. Chocolate Films has become integrated into a partnership approach to cultural programming in Nine Elms. However, the complexities of construction, exacerbated by COVID-19, and the time taken to negotiate Heads of Terms have resulted in a delay in moving in of 3 years, with consequences for Chocolate Films’ work, finances and business plan.

“Establishing a cultural anchor tenant is as much about consensus building as it is bricks and mortar - it sounds like a linear process but in reality will always be complicated.” Alex Rinsler, Strategic Lead for Culture

“Having someone from the council with property expertise to answer specific property questions would be helpful – there’s only so much the developer can do as they can’t act for the tenant or advise them.” Alex Cunningham, Land Manager, Bellway Homes.

CASE STUDY:

Battersea Design & Tech Quarter

The planning framework

A 2018-2020 study, led by architects We Made That, defined the scale of the opportunity and recommended how the council could shape the Quarter. Proposals included:

- A masterplan defining three sub areas.
- Allocation of 55% of employment workspace, in total 126,682 sqm, for creative and tech sectors resulting in 3,000 creative, design and tech jobs.
- A network of attractive and accessible open spaces as amenity for those working in and visiting the Quarter.
- Three multi-functional cultural 'hub' spaces as a visible public face for collaboration, public engagement and support for early-stage start-up businesses.
- A set of guiding principles and checklist to help planning case officers steer emerging proposals.

Palmerston Court

The first new development, Palmerston Court, is planned to open in 2024. Sited approximately 300 metres from Battersea Power Station, it is a gateway to the BDTQ. The public realm, colour scheme, signage and building design have taken on a special significance as result and act as a catalyst and benchmark for a next wave of development.

Urbanest brought forward a mixed-use scheme for the site, that comprises student accommodation, commercial offices, an Enterprise Business Unit at affordable rents, retail and café space surrounded by 2,000 sqm of new public realm. The development includes re-provision of Flanagan's pub, sustaining a community asset with capacity for live music events.

Learning so far

The Strategic Lead for Culture acts as champion and advocate for the BDTQ, coordinating delivery and programming. This role is proving vital and will continue to be needed to bring a coherent vision to delivery and completion. The commissioning of an economic appraisal and strategic direction for the BDTQ, was a valuable step. Whilst this has informed planning, non-planning aspects have received less attention, for example raising the profile and articulating the vision of the BDTQ within the Opportunity Area. A recent commission to PRD will work with local businesses, cultural partners and other stakeholders to forge partnerships and networks that will be key to the success of the quarter.

To the west of the Opportunity Area, the Battersea Design and Tech Quarter (BDTQ) is set to become a
 “creative and technology hub”



CASE STUDY:

Line of Light Festival

- Visual projections illuminated 8 buildings accompanied by soundscapes available as downloadable podcasts, created with local groups and students from the Royal College of Art. Soundscapes at three Tube stations comprised an 'album' of the area.
- Two Festival Hubs with community groups and local businesses providing food and entertainment
- Local people living and working along the route were involved in the festival planning and identification of local priorities

Line of Light was funded by Wandsworth and Lambeth Councils with financial and in-kind contributions from developers, and supported by a partnership of organisations established through the Cultural Strategy.

Audience feedback

"I've got the train through the area before but not walked around it. It was great to learn more about the area" Survey response

Around 5,000 people attended Line of Light Festival over two nights and more than 250 participated in content creation and performances. An audience survey revealed that 48% were visitors of to the area, 85% found out about things to do in Nine Elms, 70% found out more about people and communities and 81% felt it made a good impression of the area. In a focus group of Resident's Associations, Line of Light was described as 'fun' and 'uplifting', creating "the kind of buzziness we want for the future of Nine Elms" and "allowing visitors to see what it's really like here".

Businesses feedback

"It was great to feel part of the local community and meet some really interesting people. We're keen to be part of more events like this and hope this will become part of life and doing business in Nine Elms" Shaosheen Jewel-Quirk, The Alchemist Bar & Restaurant, Embassy Gardens

39% of surveyed audience members bought food, drink or other goods/services on their way to or at the Festival and 11 local businesses took part by providing pop up stalls and activities. The Alchemist substantially increased their takings for two nights and the festival provided a morale boost for staff, in the context of a hospitality industry hit hard by COVID-19.

Line of Light
(October 29-30, 2021)

was a two-night festival celebrating the opening of the Northern Line London Underground extension.

A 3 km Line of Light painted the route of the Northern Line in the sky, with high-density light beams.



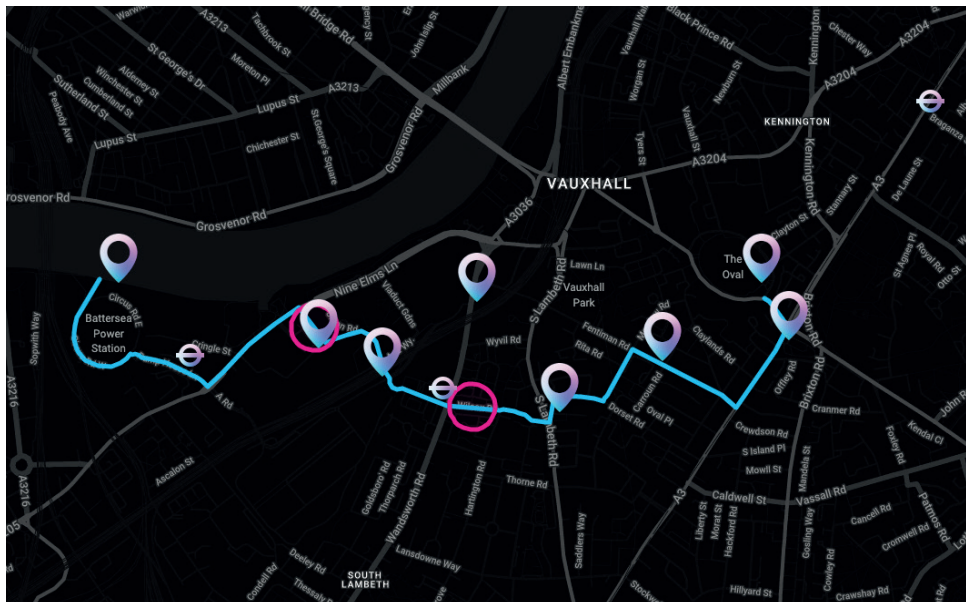
CASE STUDY: Line of Light Festival

Lessons learned

The Line of Light Festival illustrates how events and celebrations contribute to placemaking by creating shared experiences and a positive impression for visitors and by celebrating heritage and diversity. Attracting visitors and fostering a sense of community amongst residents creates important counter-narratives to media and marketing messages that focus on new residential developments. Landowners, local businesses and cultural partners also value such events as a focus for collaboration and connecting with wider communities.

Signage and navigation were a challenge arising from staging an event over a long route in a transformation area under construction.

A short communications lead time, due to changing COVID-19 regulations and pressure of fundraising, limited local awareness and audience size. As such, Line of Light might be considered a successful approach to placemaking whose impact could be enhanced if repeated in different circumstances.



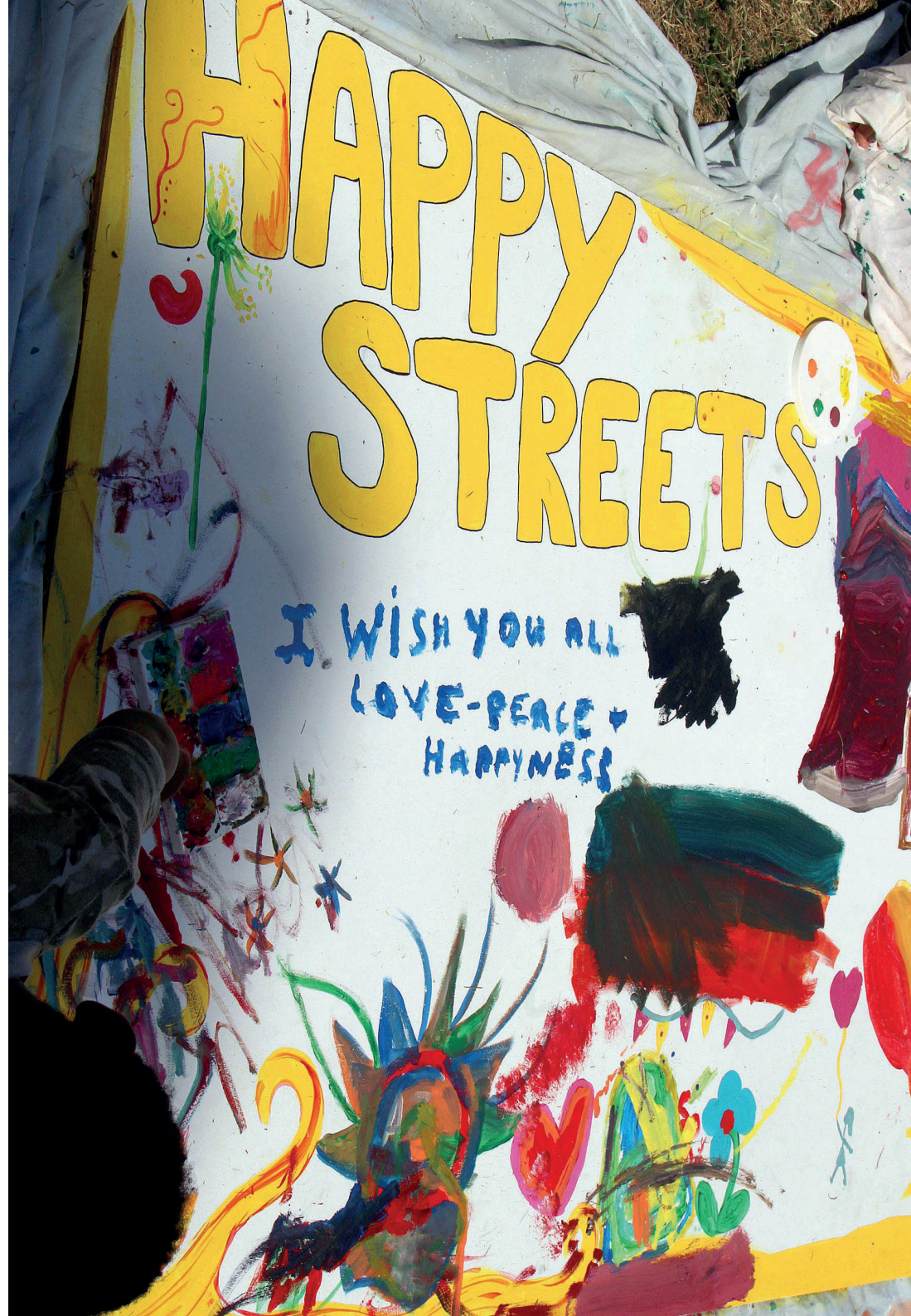
LOOKING FORWARD

This Impact Assessment has identified support needs for Nine Elms as an emerging cultural district that are set to grow, rather than diminish, in the next five years.

While Battersea Power Station promises to act as a beacon of recreational activity and creative enterprise, support will be needed for neighbouring micro-organisations to connect with and benefit from the opportunities this presents and the expected increase in visitors and footfall.

Investment from developers has been substantial but finite and a future sustainable financing model will be needed to meet infrastructure requirements, the maintenance responsibilities of developers and cultural programming investments. The creation of a legacy fund or the attraction of social finance investment would require a clear business case and evidence of the value created by cultural infrastructure and activity.

With finite resources available, it will be important for the council to focus on a limited set of achievable goals with clear targets, refining its own role while empowering supporting commercial and cultural partners to take collective action more autonomously.



Cultural Strategy and the Transformation of Nine Elms & Battersea

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Andrea Lee is a former government economist and was Deputy Director and Lead Analyst for Children, Families and Disadvantage and Deputy Chief Economist, Department for Work and Pensions 2016-18 where she oversaw and quality-assured research and National Statistics publications on race equality. Her experience in the cultural sector includes acting as Project Manager to the Lord Mayor of the City of London's Cultural and Commerce Taskforce (2021).

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