

# Social Infrastructure: The Regeneration of Somers Town

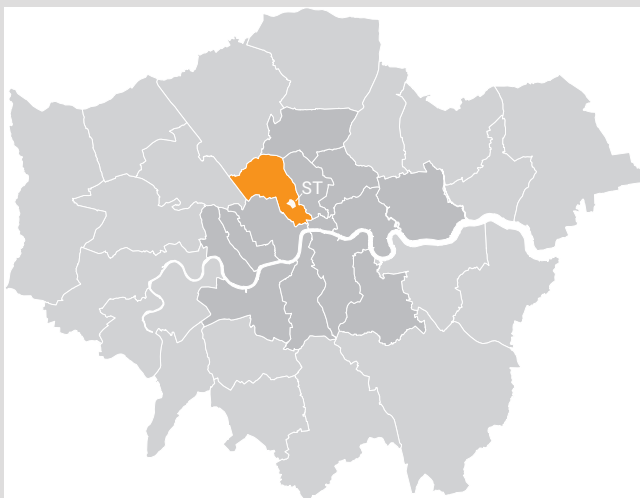
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## Introduction

At the heart of public discourses on social infrastructure numerous broad definitions prevail, one such example being the “glue that holds communities together”.<sup>2</sup> At the local level, however, this broad definition is narrowly applied, sometimes only iterating those assets related to education, healthcare, community facilities and affordable housing, while disregarding other services such as informal babysitting networks. This discrepancy of definitions exposes a structural problem for social infrastructure provisioning and maintenance. In the case of major urban developments, inadequate assessments of the social implications of a project can have substantial negative impacts on the social infrastructure in surrounding neighbourhoods, resulting in increased inequality and decreased social cohesion.

This report investigates Somers Town, a neighbourhood located in the highly polarised borough of Camden. Camden Council’s plan to redevelop the neighbourhood’s outdated primary school and nursery - financed by building new private-market homes - has brought to light the ambiguity inherent in social infrastructure provisioning. Thus, while the Greater London Authority describes social infrastructure as the “[...] uses and activities which contribute to making an area more than just a place to live”, Camden Council, in their redevelopment proposal for Somers Town, has only considered a handful of facilities: A school, a nursery, open space and affordable housing.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, a more robust definition of social infrastructure, which accounts for its multi-faceted features, is necessary. There is a strong case for adopting assessment tools such as the Social Infrastructure Assessment (SIaA) recommended in this paper; it is essentially a planning instrument for developers and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) that holds them accountable for the potential implications of developments on social infrastructure. The sections

1 | Location of Somers Town (ST) within Camden, London



2 | SGS Economics & Planning (n. d.) *The Role of Social Infrastructure in Local and Regional Economic Development*. Available online at <http://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/insights/Linda-Perrine-Social-Infrastructure-presentation-0.pdf> [accessed 10 February 2016].

3 | Greater London Authority (2016) *The London Plan*. London: Greater London Authority.

\*The authors would like to acknowledge and show their gratitude for the contributions of another team member, whose work was integral in making this project what it is today.

that follow, provide a working definition for social infrastructure, discussing in detail the context of Somers Town and Camden Council’s redevelopment plan. They also present the rationale and structure of a SInA and its possible application in the Somers Town context. The conclusion to this report summarises the possible challenges a SInA could encounter.

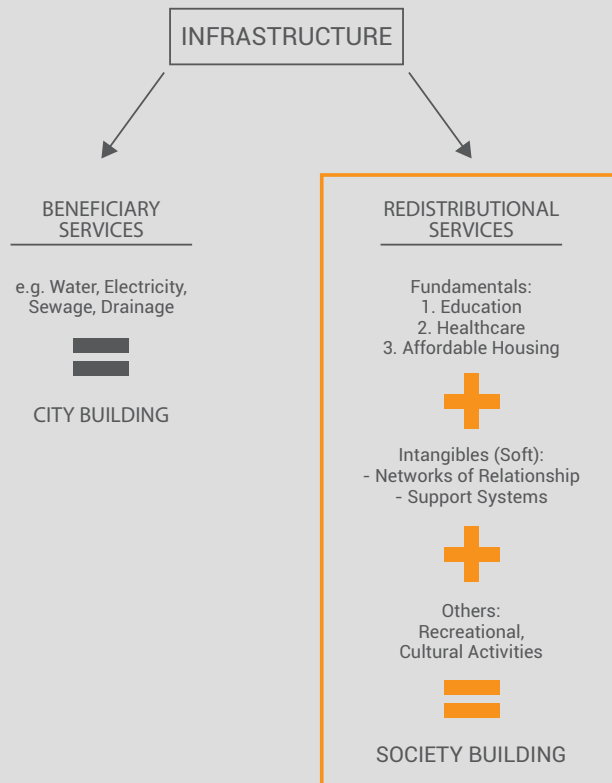
## Methodology

The data discussed in this publication comes from a variety of qualitative and quantitative sources, including site observations as well as informal and semi-structured interviews with local residents, charity workers, school officials, and members of residential and community associations. Besides these, census data and document analyses based on case studies and Council publications are also referenced.

## Social Infrastructure: Definition

‘Social infrastructure’ has been broadly defined by academics and public policy makers across the spectrum. This is, firstly, because of the subjectivity that is inherent in the understanding of the concept; each individual and agency has their own take on how it should be defined. 4 | Secondly, depending on whose purpose or agenda it serves,

### 5 | Definition of Social Infrastructure



4 | Wai, S. H., Yusof, A., Hai, T. and Ismail, S. (2012) *A Conceptual Review of Social Infrastructure Projects*. Available online at <http://www.ibimapublishing.com/journals/CIBIMA/2012/222039/222039.pdf> [accessed 5 May 2016].



the definition accordingly encompasses those elements of infrastructure or the ‘social’ that meet the requirements of that purpose.

For the objective of investigating ‘social infrastructure’ in the context of Somers Town, it can be aptly described as ‘redistributional’ services, which is a term that refers to all facilities that need to be generated and allocated to citizens for the purpose of bridging gaps in inequalities, be they income-related or access to education and healthcare. 7 | Hence, ‘redistributional’ services embody all those facilities or services in the absence whereof the community that is deprived of them is rendered at a significant socio-economic disadvantage, compared to communities that do have access to them. They are services that, if normatively characterised, all people should have access to regardless of their ability or willingness to pay for them.

The most fundamental and obvious components of ‘redistributional’ or ‘social’ infrastructure are education, healthcare, and affordable housing. Also integral to social infrastructure are intangible or ‘soft’ infrastructure such as support services, networks of relationships that provide social safety nets, and social security like insurance and services for the elderly and special needs groups. 8 | Recreational and cultural facilities also fall under the category of social infrastructure.

Social infrastructure, thus, sets the foundation for building communities and creating community cohesion, as distinct from other forms of infrastructure – ‘beneficiary services’ – such as sewage, power, water, roads, etc. This enables social infrastructure to function both as a platform as well as a tool for facilitating “democracy, equality, innovation, and freedom”. 9 | It also empowers its beneficiaries with bargaining capacities to debate and determine their needs and the terms by which they choose to live.

### Context: Somers Town

Somers Town is a neighbourhood of approximately 8000 people located in Central London. Flanked by St. Pancras and Euston Stations, its history has been intimately linked to the railways. During the 19th Century it was inhabited by large numbers of refugees and migrant industrial workers. As a result of the decrepit living conditions at the time, Somers Town developed a reputation for being a secluded and deprived neighbourhood, eventually becoming one of London’s most notorious slums. 10 | This reputation continues to inform current perceptions of Somers Town. As one of our informants put it: “I’m terribly afraid of it appearing to be completely cut-off”. Rather, she said, it is an area that “has been forced to look inwardly”. The perception

8 | Wai, S. H., Yusof, A., Hai, T. and Ismail, S. (2012) *A Conceptual Review of Social Infrastructure Projects*. Available online at <http://www.ibimapublishing.com/journals/CIBIMA/2012/222039/222039.pdf> [accessed 5 May 2016].

9 | Friesen, M. (2013) *Social Infrastructure: Underpinning the Success of Cities*. Available online at <http://events.tamarackcommunity.org/library/social-infrastructure-underpinning-the-success-of-cities> [accessed 5 May 2016].

7 | Lang, J. (1992) *Developing Cities: Who Pays?: Financing Social Infrastructure*. Surry Hills: New South Wales Council of Social Services.

Lang, J. (1992) *Developing Cities: Who Pays?: Financing Social Infrastructure*. Surry Hills: New South Wales Council of Social Services.

10 | Campkin, B. (2013) *Remaking London*. London: I.B. Tauris.



of Somers Town is one of complicated identities and of a diverse community living in a small area that is physically bounded by imposing infrastructural projects.

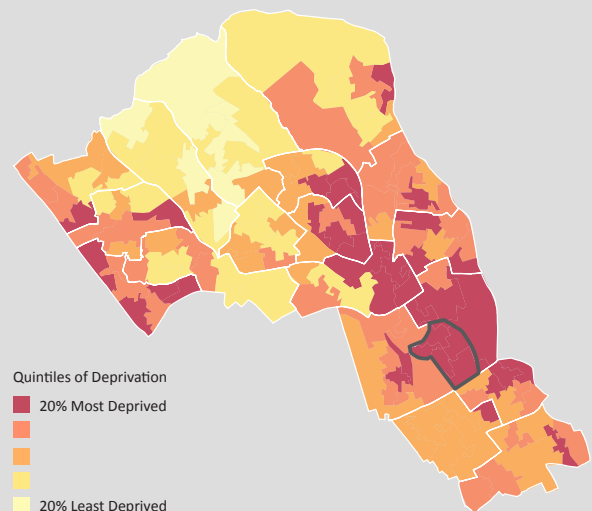
Differing images of the neighbourhood are invoked by different actors at different times, often in highly politicized contexts. It is sometimes presented as a fictional “integrated community” with a history of fighting “against the establishment”. 13 | At other times it is perceived as a safe-haven for the working-class and immigrant groups that are unable to integrate into mainstream London. Sometimes it is presented as a harmonious and attractive place for families, at other times it is portrayed as a place that is actively avoided by outsiders due to its “bad reputation” (personal interviews). The many histories of Somers Town tell us a lot about the complicated relationships and ongoing negotiations between residents, institutions and the State, complicated by Somers Town’s layout and its socio-economic character.

Located in one of the 20% most deprived wards nationally, Somers Town is home to a significant number of vulnerable groups. 14 | Compared to the rest of Camden

11 | Somers Town Map: Somers Town’s location in relation to surrounding landmarks



12 | 2015 IMD Map of Camden Distribution of deprivation in Camden (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (2015) *English Indices of Deprivation 2015 – LSOA Level*. Available online at <http://opendatacommunities.org/data/societal-wellbeing/imd/indices> [accessed 10 February 2016].)

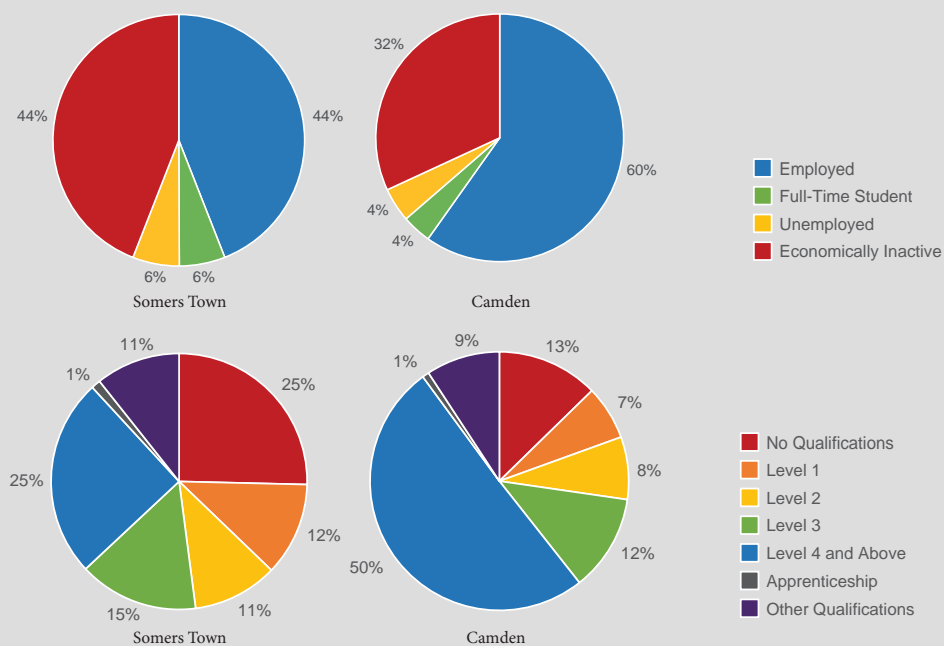


13 | Clarke, L., Costello, T., Mason, J. and Thomas, M. (1977) ‘SOMERS TOWN HISTORY WORKSHOP’, *History Workshop Journal* 4(1), pp. 249–250, on p. 250.

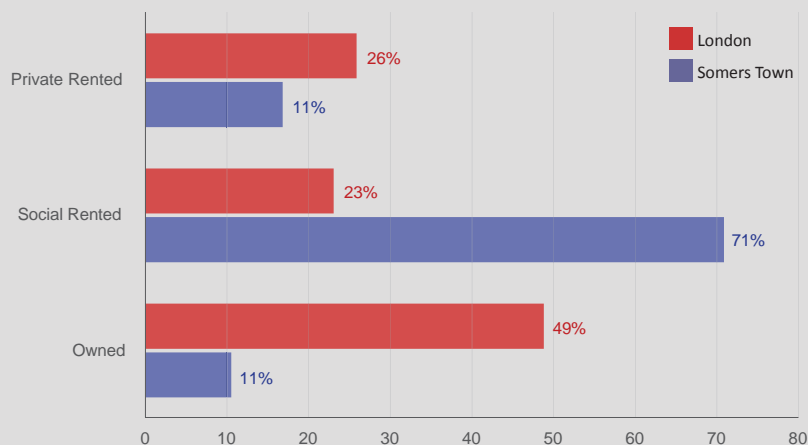
R. E. S. (1977) *SOMERS TOWN HISTORY WORKSHOP 29 January 1977*. Available online at <http://hwj.oxfordjournals.org/content/3/1/205.full.pdf> [accessed 5 May 2016].

14 | Hayhurst and Co. (2015). *Central Somers Town CIP: Design & Access Statement - Plot 3 Charrington Street Terrace Extension*. Available online at <http://camdocs.camden.gov.uk/webdrawer/webdrawer.dll/webdrawer/rec/5550902/view/> [accessed 5 May 2016].

15 | Socio-Demographics: Economic Activity (above) and Qualifications (below) comparison between Somers Town and Camden (Office for National Statistics (2011) *Census Data of Camden Lower Level Output 022A, 022B, 022C, 022D, 022E*. Available online at <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadHome> [accessed 12 May 2016].)



16 | Tenure Distribution: Tenure percentage comparison between London and Somers Town (Office for National Statistics (2011) *Census Data of Camden Lower Level Output 022A, 022B, 022C, 022D, 022E*. Available online at <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadHome> [accessed 12 May 2016].)



and London, it has low education and employment levels, a lower life expectancy, high numbers of ethnic and religious minorities (particularly Bangladeshi and Muslim groups) and a majority of its population (71%) living in Social Rented Housing. 18 | This means that a high proportion of its population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion, making any intervention in Somers Town a socially and politically charged event.

Consequently, a distinct landscape of social infrastructure has emerged in Somers Town. On first inspection, the area appears to have a high concentration of education, community and recreational facilities, to a lesser extent healthcare provision. Many of these services, however, are offering more services than what a simple overview of their purpose and activities indicates.

17 | Social Infrastructure in Somers Town:  
Distribution of institutional assets within  
Somers Town



- Medical, Dental, Healthcare Services
  - 1 Camden Eye Clinic
  - 2 Brook Sex Healthcare
  - 3 Somers Town Medical Centre
  - 4 Yuji Chinese Medicine
  - 5 Mornington Dental Clinic
  - 6 Crowndale Health Centre
- Schools, Nurseries, Learning Centres
  - 7 Regents High School
  - 8 Maria Fidelis Catholic School
  - 9 St Mary & St Pancras School
  - 10 Edith Neville Primary School
  - 11 Richard Cobden Primary School
  - 12 St Aloysius Junior School
  - 13 St Aloysius Infant School
  - 14 St Aloysius Nursery
  - 15 St Christophers Community Nursery
  - 16 Camden City Learning Centre
  - 17 Training Link
  - 18 The Speech, Language and Hearing Centre
  - 19 Kip McGrath Education Centre
  - 20 Working Men's College
- Sports facilities, Parks, Playgrounds
  - 21 Somers Town Community Sports Centre
  - 22 Plot 10 Community Play Project
  - 23 Brill Place
  - 24 Oakley Square Gardens
  - 25 Goldington Crescent Gardens
  - 26 Chalton Street Playground
- Youth Centres and Community Centres
  - 27 Somers Town Community Centre
  - 28 New Horizon Youth Centre
  - 29 Doreen Bazell Hall
- Religious Institutions
  - 30 St Aloysius RC Church
  - 31 Somers Town C&E Centre
  - 32 Al Rahman Mosque
  - 33 Joy Christian Centre
- Libraries, Arts and Cultural Centres
  - 34 British Library
  - 35 Catholic Central Library
  - 36 Camden Town Library
  - 37 P21 Gallery
  - 38 Chalton Gallery
  - 39 Theatre Technis (Scene & Heard)
  - 40 The Shaw Theatre

18 | Office for National Statistics (2011)  
*Census Data of Camden Lower Level Output*  
022A, 022B, 022C, 022D, 022E. Available  
online at <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>  
LeadHome [accessed 12 May 2016].



19 | Social Infrastructure in Somers Town

1. Somers Town Community Centre, 2. Chalton Street, 3. Cock Tavern, 4. St Mary and St Pancras Primary School, 5. Brill Place, 6. Edith Neville Primary School



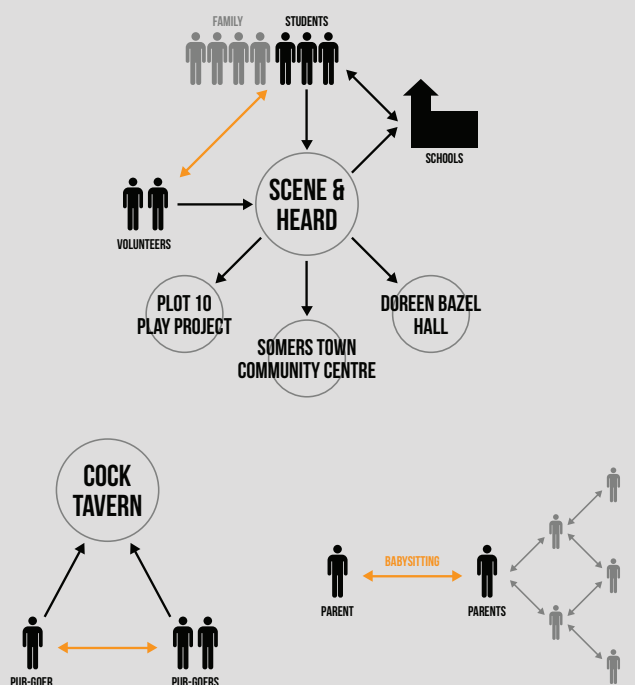


For example, Scene and Heard (S&H) is a charity that works directly with schools and local community organisations to offer mentorship to at-risk children. It does so by pairing them with professional actors and getting them involved in acting and play-writing. But it does more than that. It often fetches and feeds the children and also offers guidance to parents on various issues. As a member of S&H said: many families distrust social institutions and can be hard to reach and have to rely on S&H. Much of its effectiveness comes from the ‘soft’ or intangible support networks it fosters between children, volunteers and family members. These support networks exist between individuals and amongst institutions and all play an important role in the life of Somers Towners.

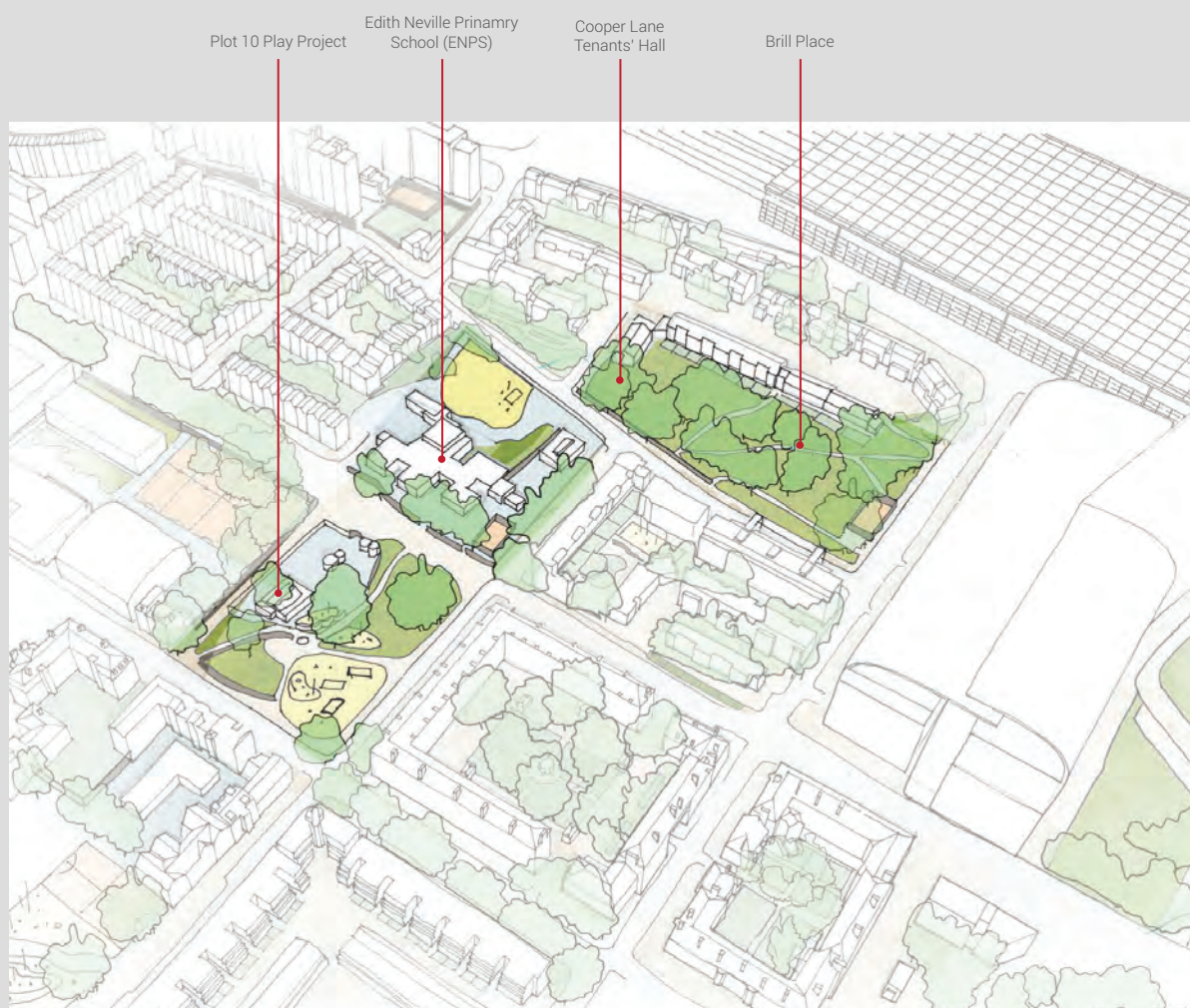
## Central Somers Town Community Investment Programme

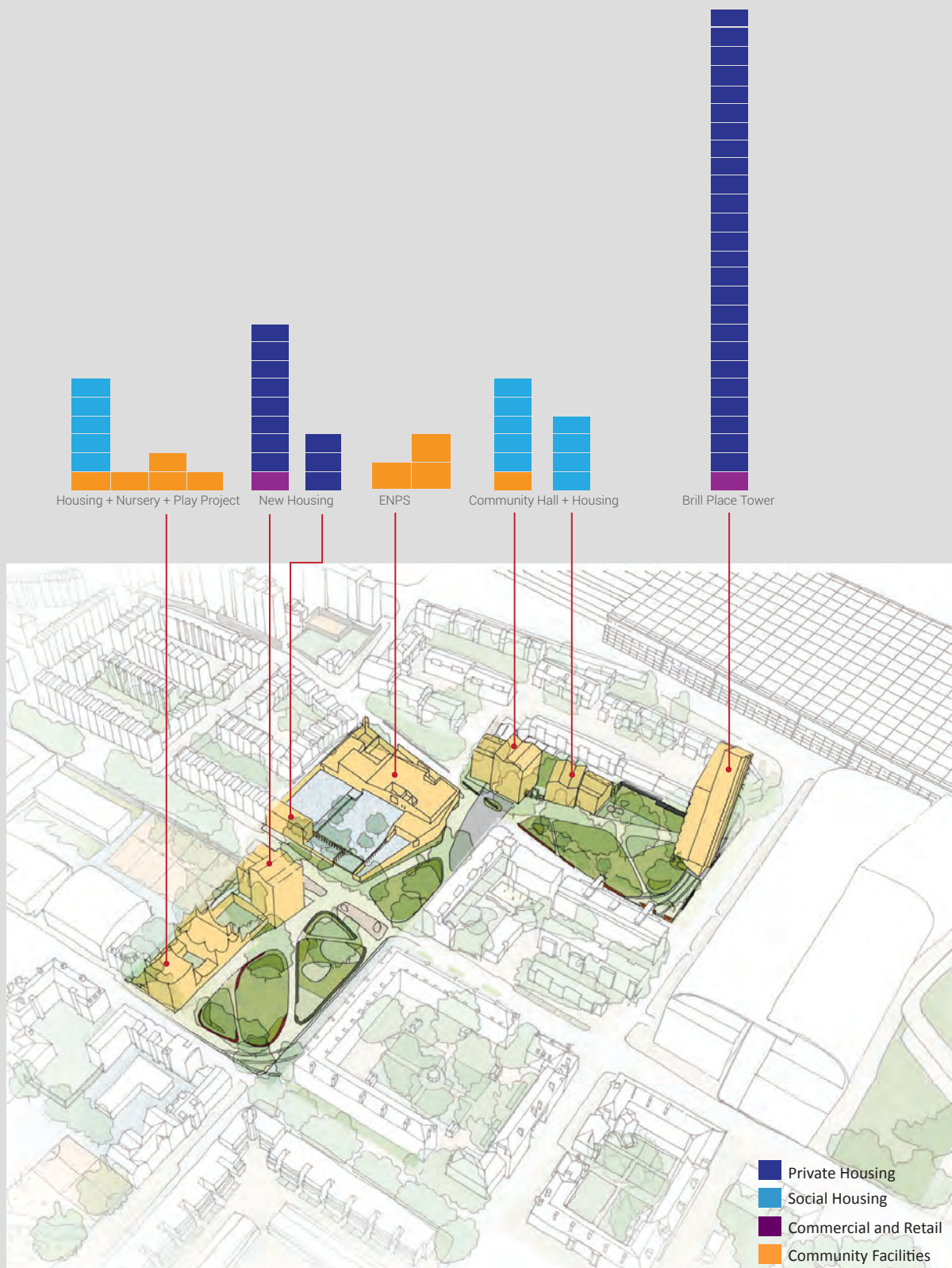
Somers Town’s situation, however, is bound to change dramatically in the near future. This traditionally ‘inwardly looking’ area is now experiencing increased pressures to ‘open up’ and become better integrated to its surroundings. As another informant told us: “Anything you see coming here is the result of King’s Cross. It has turned Somers Town into Central London”. Somers Town’s increasingly desirable location has many local residents wondering what Somers Town will look like 10 years from now (personal communication). At the time of our research tensions were running high as Camden Council was preparing to submit a planning application for the redevelopment of Central Somers Town (CST).

20 | Soft Infrastructure Diagrams  
Intangible and soft support networks depicted in orange



21 | Somers Town before (left) and after (right) redevelopment: spatial distribution of facilities based on land use and height of building by storeys. (DSDHA (2015) *Central Somers Town CIP Masterplan Design and Access Statement*. Available online at <http://camdocs.camden.gov.uk/webdrawer/webdrawer.dll/webdrawer/rec/5460242/view/> [accessed 5 February 2016]; modified by authors)







The CST-proposal is part of Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP). Due to Central Government cuts, Camden has lost over £200 million in capital funding and is forced to find self-financing solutions to reinvest in its aging infrastructure. Their solution is the CIP, a 15-year plan that aims to raise funds by selling or redeveloping "properties that are out of date, expensive to maintain, or underused and difficult to access". 22 | The money, thus raised, is then reinvested into improving the Council's facilities and services.

In the case of CST, the Council is proposing to rebuild Edith Neville Primary School (ENPS), St. Aloysius' Nursery and Plot 10 Community Play Project, all of which are in indisputable need of rebuilding. The proposal also includes the improvement of open public spaces and the creation of 44 new units of affordable housing. These redevelopments will be funded through the construction of 92 private-market homes, the majority of which will be located in a 26-storey tower that will later be sold to a developer. This tower would be located in what is now a public park known as Brill Place, next to St. Pancras Station. For many residents, particularly those living in Coopers Lane, an adjacent council estate, the tower has become a symbol of unwelcome changes in the neighbourhood.

In their evaluation of the proposed redevelopment, the Council has only focused on the positive impacts of the proposal: those related to the school, the nursery, the public space, and the new affordable housing. By focusing on these, however, they have not addressed other concerns of the community such as the increased pressures on health centres, the long-term impacts that the new market-price housing will have on the community or the sustainability and long-term implications of the funding model.

23 | Central Somers Town Context Map: Site of development proposal depicted in orange



22 | Camden Council (2016) *Camden Council: Community investment programme*. Available online at <http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/planning-and-built-environment/two/placeshaping/twocolumn/community-investment-programme/> [accessed 7 February 2016].

While no-one disputes the need for reinvestment in the school, some question the unspecified costs the redevelopment could have on the fabric of Somers Town's existing social infrastructure (from personal interviews). Although the Council is providing much needed investment for some social infrastructure assets, this may affect the ways in which softer kinds of social infrastructure operate. The Council needs, and is currently lacking, an instrument that will help it account for the possible impacts that new developments could have on existing communities. In the sections that follow we discuss what such an instrument might be.

### **Intervention: Social Infrastructure Assessment (SInA)**

The lack of a right instrument to assess various social impacts means that elements of social infrastructure are being overlooked and ignored by the Council when considering a development project. The potential social change and its implications on all relevant social infrastructure, including the soft and informal ones, should be formally considered and addressed by the developers and the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) within the planning process in the form of a Social Infrastructure Assessment (SInA). The SInA allows to study, analyse, project, and address the implications and impacts any developments could potentially have on the social infrastructure in the neighbourhood. Projecting such impacts is difficult and possesses a significant degree of imponderability, but this should not prevent the developers and councils from assessing and considering implications of development projects. The aim is not to prevent any and all social change and development, but to make sure that the proposed developments will not result in the corrosion of social infrastructure in the long run. The key goals and objectives for establishing an SInA are as follow:

1. To raise awareness and transparency of the various social implications of urban development projects, and to prompt the councils and developers to consider and to address them formally in the planning process.
2. To give more responsibility and accountability to the council and LPAs by providing them with an appropriate instrument to help make planning and development decisions.
3. To safeguard the long-term future of local communities by ensuring that any negative implications on social infrastructure are mitigated, and that any voids or needs in the existing social infrastructure are addressed.

### **Existing Impact Assessments**

In order to create a robust and viable Social Infrastructure Assessment, it is a useful exercise to study and analyse existing conceptual frameworks and structures of a typical Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that is being used in the UK planning system, the Equality impact Assessment (EQIA) that Camden Council implements in some of its projects including the CST redevelopment proposal (though it is technically not required in the planning application), and a set of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) principles developed by the International Association for Impact Assessment.

## **Guiding Principles for SInA**

Based on an examination of the preceding assessments, some guiding principles can be conceptualised in the formulation of the SInA, specifically that it should:

1. Consider all relevant social infrastructure in the affected neighbourhood.
2. Be context-specific and not a universal checklist that can be applied to every project.
3. Be conducted by independent professional specialists or consultants, and paid for by the developers.
4. Be incorporated from the early stages of the development, and it should inform and aid design and planning decisions.
5. Facilitate negotiations between the Council and community throughout the entire process, to ensure a constant and barrier-free dialogue among various stakeholders.
6. Ensure that LPAs make a decision after carefully deliberating and considering all alternatives and mitigation measures, as well as taking various stakeholders' opinions and concerns into account.
7. Implement a long-term follow-up plan after the completion of the project.
8. Be done conjointly with other existing planning instruments like the Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); the SInA can help to better identify the need gap of social infrastructure.

## **Key Stages of SInA**

Every proposed development project should go through a screening process for SInA. Projects that meet certain standard criteria can be exempted from the assessment. Some of these criteria can be formulated based on:

- Overall development area or number of units.
- Sale or rental price in relation to existing average.
- Percentage of affordable housing, retail or office spaces.

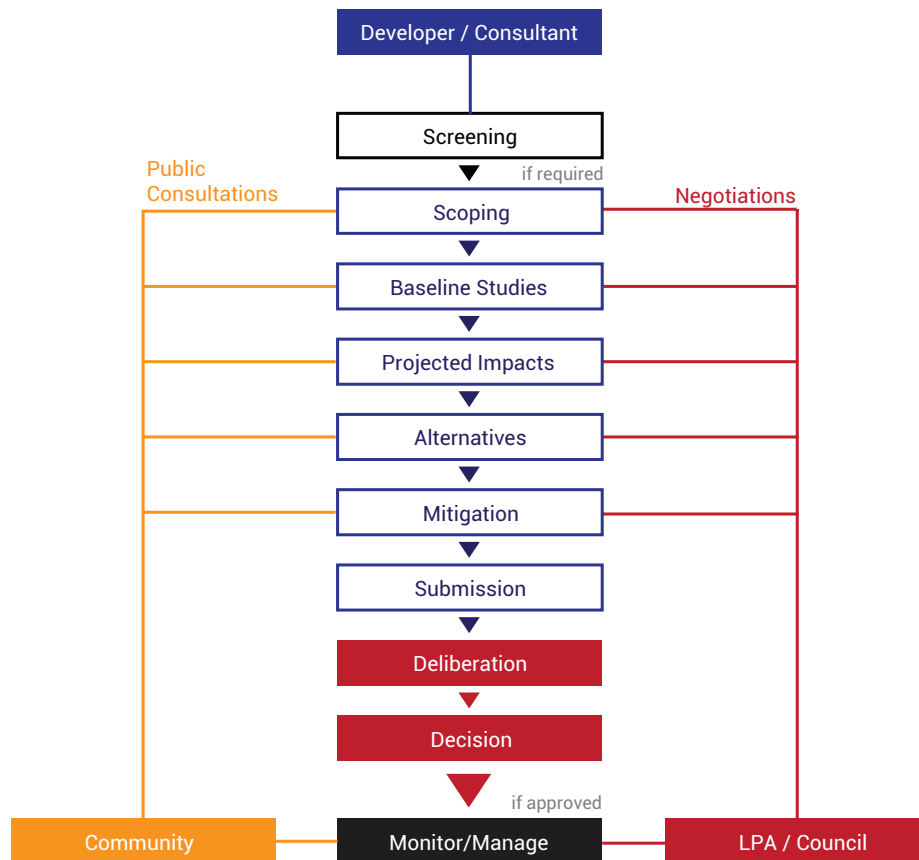
This will not only eliminate any unnecessary workload of the LPAs, but it will also incentivise the developers and councils to provide more socially responsible and sustainable developments. Projects that adhere to the SInA will go through the following process:

1. Scoping: Deciding what, who, and where need to be assessed, identifying the key issues to focus on. This should be determined by the developer and its consultant under the guidance of the council.



	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)	Social Impact Assessment (SIA)
What is it?	"The evaluation of effects likely to arise from a major project (or other action) significantly affecting the environment" (Jay et al., 2007: 287)	A way for "working out the effect our policies, practices or activities might have on different groups" (Camden Council, 2015: 1)	"SIA is analysing monitoring and managing the social consequences of development" (Vanclay, 2003: 6)
Objective	"The aim of Environmental Impact Assessment is to protect the environment" (DCLG, 2014)	To ensure that "services are as effective as they can be for every-one Camden serves" (Ibid.)	To "bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment" (Ibid.)
Things Assessed	The physical environment	Equality (as per Equality Act 2010)	Social consequences
Indicators	CO2, NOx levels, number of trees, noise levels, etc.	Mainly census data	Social change processes
Use	Required for specific projects for planning application in the UK	Submitted by Camden Council as a supplementary planning document	Mainly for high level policy making e.g. EU
Shortcomings	Lack of a strong monitor and management process after the project is approved.	Lack of a structured process.  Only assesses quantifiable data, long-term impacts not assessed.	Resource and time-intensive.  Can be limited if the process is done with little public participation

24 | Existing Impact Assessments  
Analysis and comparison of various existing  
impact assessments



25 | SInA Flow Chart: Diagram outlining the key stages and processes of SInA

2. Baseline Studies: Background study on the existing conditions of the identified relevant social infrastructure in the neighbourhood through both qualitative and quantitative research such as socio-demographic analyses, surveys and interviews with key stakeholders.

3. Projected impacts: These should include positive and negative, direct and indirect, intended and unintended, short term and long term effects. The projections should be done based on both empirical figures as well as qualitative research including case studies and past experience.

4. Alternatives: Consider different possible alternatives before proceeding to one final proposal for further study.

5. Consideration and recommendation of mitigation measures on the unavoidable, adverse impacts and who (council, developer or 3rd party, e.g. NGOs and charity) should be responsible for what. They should include both spatial and socio-political mitigations.

6. Submission of the final Social Infrastructure Statement for deliberation and approval by the Local Planning Authority.

7. Finally, a plan for monitoring and managing, including continued data and information collection, consultation, and assessment, should be developed to ensure that the mitigation measures are done to the desired effects, and that the projected impacts are managed and administered well beyond the completion of the project. This is particularly important for future developments and plans.

The entire process should be done in public consultation with the local community as well as in negotiations with the LPA and Council. This is crucial for encouraging communication among all the stakeholders and for ensuring that everyone's voice is heard from the very outset of the project.

## **SInA For Somers Town**

The following section outlines a possible application of the SInA to the Somers Town case.

### **1. Scoping**

This includes defining the boundaries of Somers Town, the stakeholders involved and, crucially, the issues for SInA to address; the latter two points are briefly elaborated below:

26 | “Rich people don’t want to look at run-down council houses. 10, 15 years down the line, our houses will be torn down.”  
(Brill Place resident)

27 | “Plot 10 is happy to get a renovation, but it misses the point: its future funding isn’t secured at all.”  
(Member of Somers Town Community Association)



### *Defining stakeholders*

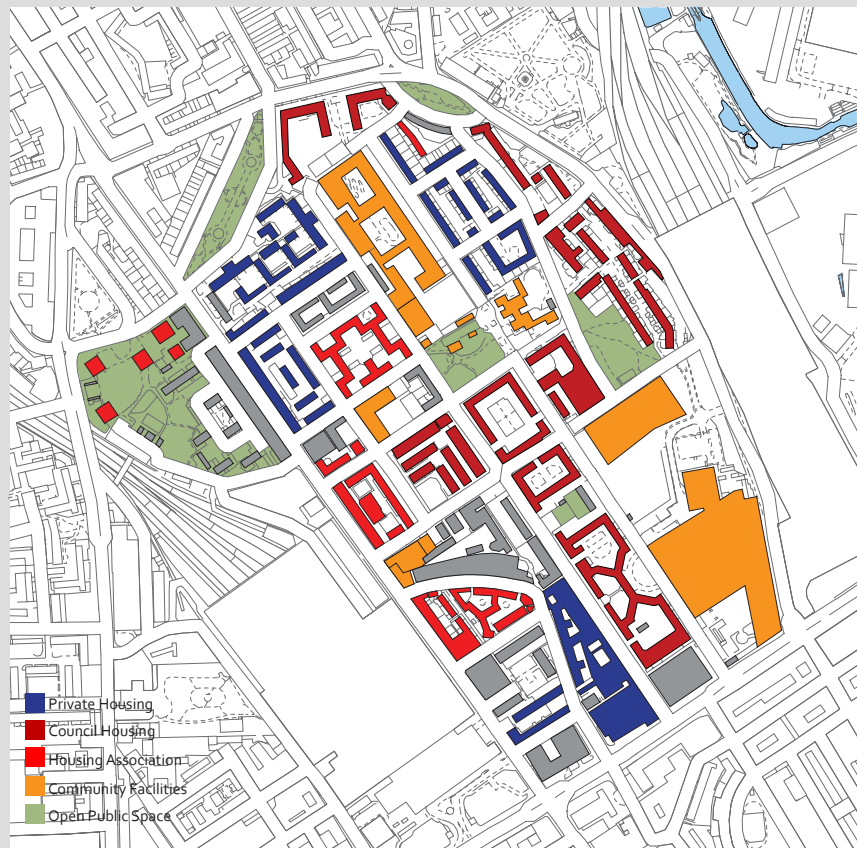
Special attention should be brought to groups which are particularly vulnerable and heavily rely on social infrastructure given its redistributive character. In the case of Somers Town, while children are major stakeholders and have an imperative need for the school in order to improve literacy and capacity-building for employment, in the sections that follow, we address the concerns of one group of stakeholders - specifically, the tenants of social housing.

### *Key issues*

In Somers Town, many concerns pertained to the change of living conditions due to the arrival of new people who were perceived as 'others', more specifically the possibility of:

- Displacement of residents, businesses, and services, thus depriving them of their regular social infrastructure.
- Segregation among existing and new residents with respect to using separate types of social infrastructure, precluding social infrastructure from being a platform where people meet as equals.
- Overwhelming healthcare facilities without providing additional GP capacity.

28 | Tenure Map: Tenure type distribution within Somers Town

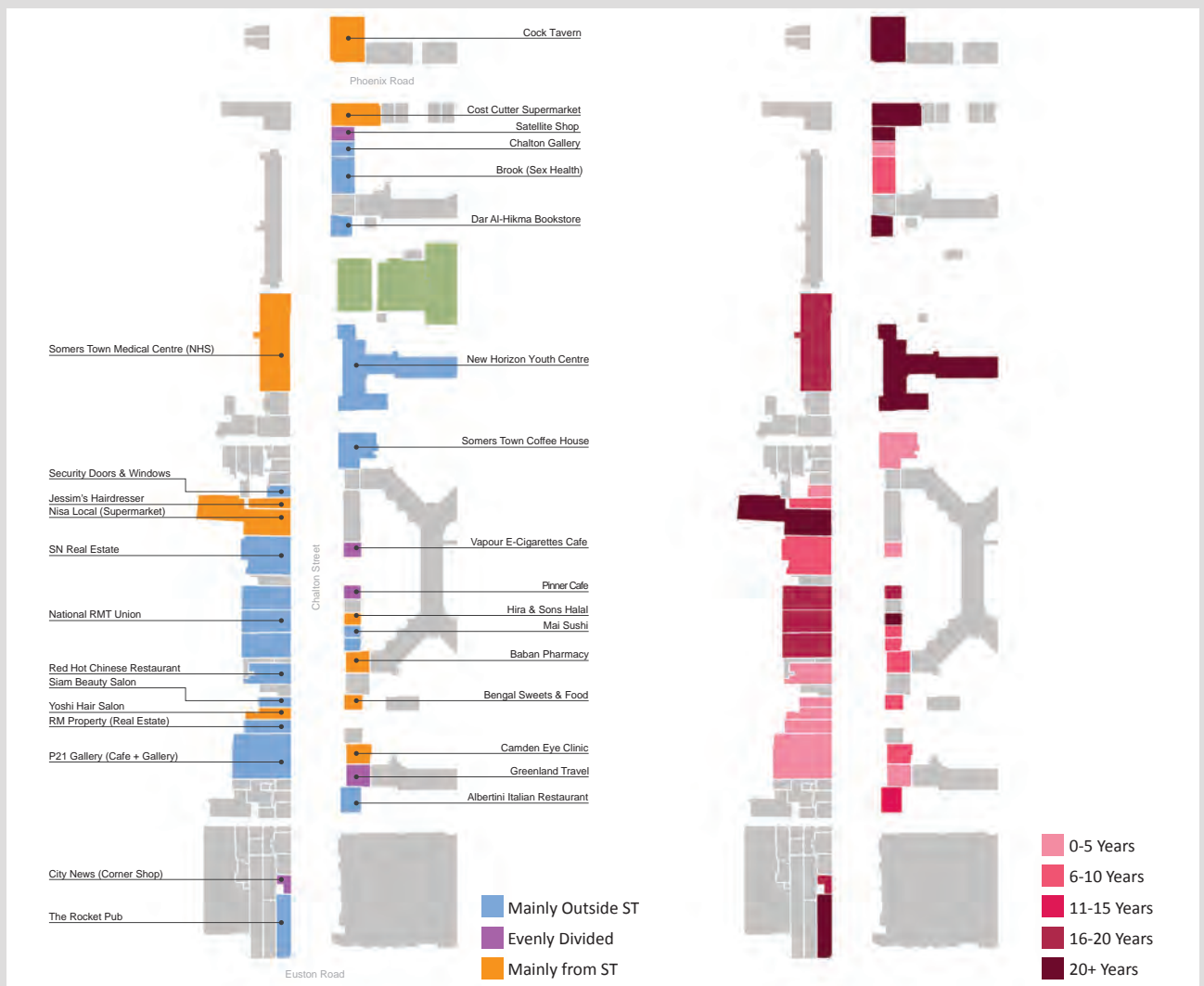


- Confined to select funding options for existing and future financing of social infrastructure in Somers Town.

## 2. Baseline Studies

Besides gathering socio-demographic and socio-economic data, for a comprehensive picture of the social infrastructure in place, Institutional Social Infrastructure can be

29 | Chalton Street Shops: Maps showing the distribution of shops, their user base (left) and how long they have been on Chalton Street (right)



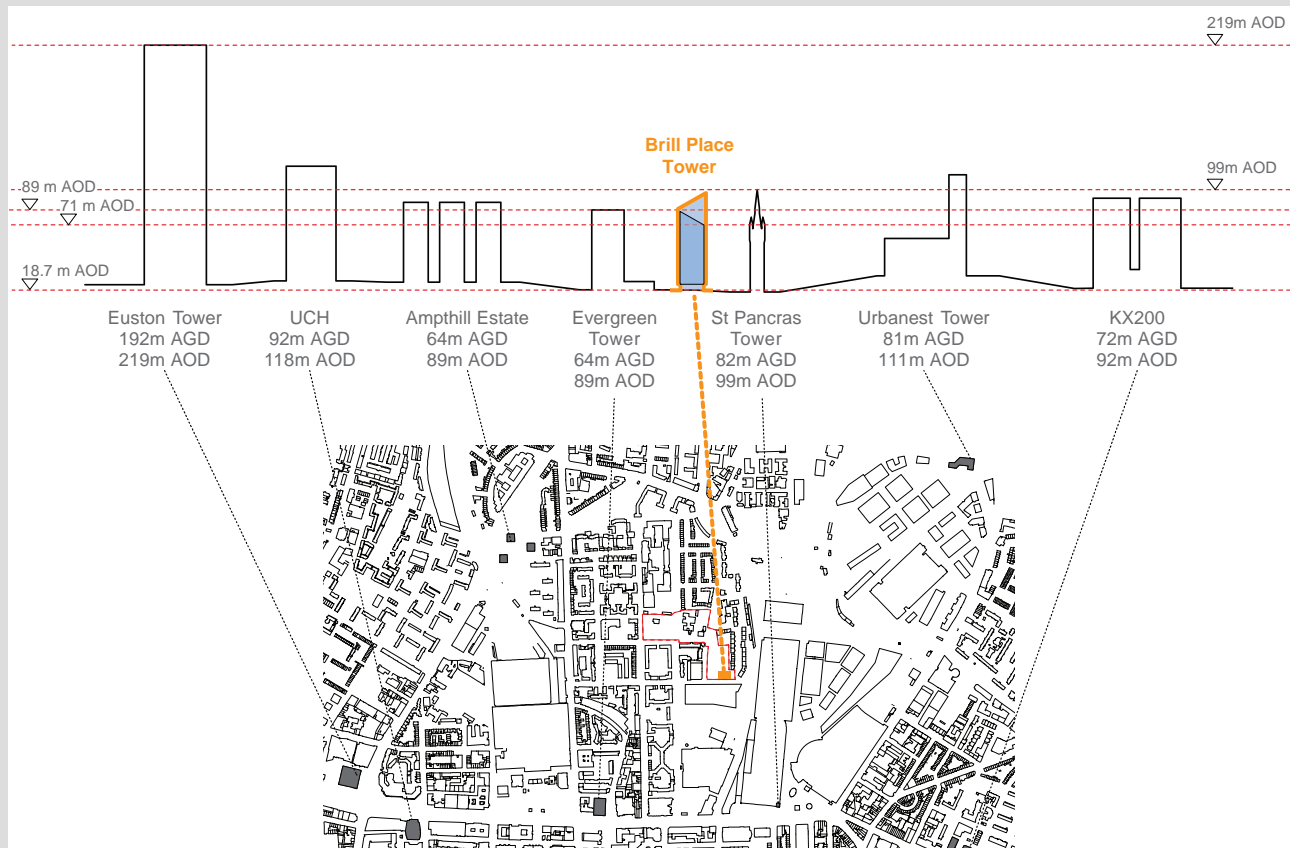
30 | Simone, A. (2004) 'People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg', *Public Culture* 16(3), pp. 407–429.

mapped, and less visible forms can be identified if not quantified; for instance, places of encounter, and informal support networks amongst people. This task is complex and based on ethnographic observation and consultations with stakeholders, which gives people the ability to discuss what Social Infrastructure is important to them. 30 |

### 3. Projected Impacts

Projecting the impacts of a development vis-a-vis displacement and segregation, for instance, could be done in an assessment that includes the following two components:

31 | Skyline Diagram: Height of Brill Place Tower in relation to surrounding high-rises  
(dRMM Architects (2015) *Design & Access Statement – Brill Place Tower*. London: dRMM Architects; modified by Authors)



32 | Newman, K. and Wyly, E. (2006) 'The right to stay put, revisited: Gentrification and resistance to displacement in New York city', *Urban Studies* 43(1), pp. 23–57.

Atkinson, R. (2000) 'Measuring Gentrification and Displacement in Greater London', *Urban Studies* 37(1), pp. 149–165.

33 | Atkinson, R. (2004) 'The evidence on the impact of gentrification: new lessons for the urban renaissance?', *European Journal of Housing Policy* 4(1), pp. 107–131.

Watt, P. (2009) 'Housing Stock Transfers, Regeneration and State-Led Gentrification in London', *Urban Policy and Research* 27(3), pp. 229–242.

34 | "[...] the proposed scale of the building should relate strongly with the urban character of Euston Road and the Kings Cross area rather than attempting to fit into the smaller scale context of Central Somers Town." (dRMM Architects (2015) *Design & Access Statement – Brill Place Tower*. London: dRMM Architects, on p. 26.)



(i) *Evidence Base*

The evidence base should be informed by research on inward-migration of high-income households into poorer neighbourhoods that has been conducted since the 1960s. 32 | It prognosticates that a substantial risk of displacement and segregation has been specified for regeneration processes in London, and reveals that renewal can have adverse effects, especially on the most vulnerable people of an area. 33 |

The crucial factors for displacement can be direct, if homes are being demolished for redevelopment, or if rents become too expensive. They can also be indirect, if taxes increase, and the area's shops, facilities and employment opportunities adjust to the inward migrants, becoming unaffordable for certain residents.

Displacement can be a vicious cycle, where displacement leads to deterioration of social support networks, and then results in more displacement. 36 | As Bahar Sakizlioğlu illustrates in a case study from Istanbul: “Displacement casts a long shadow and deeply and increasingly affects residents as the actual displacement approaches, removing sources of social support in the area”. 37 | It has been shown that an increase in the mere risk of being displaced can be associated with a 52% to 72% decrease in community benefit expenditure per capita, or a 17% to 13% decrease in the number of organisations active in an area. 38 |

(ii) *Factors at work in Somers Town*

When reviewing the CST-proposal in isolation, the challenge for Somers Town is to accommodate around 136 additional households, most of them being significantly more affluent than the Somers Town average. This could lead to price increases in the shops and facilities of the area. The main shopping street in Central Somers Town, Chalton Street, is already undergoing transformation; only one out of ten shops that came to the area in the past five years is catering predominantly to local residents. Moreover, an “us and them” is the dominant discussion in Somers Town, created not least by the design of the development (from personal interviews). The aesthetics of Brill Place Tower in particular, are more in line with those of the redeveloped King's Cross area, prompting the question of whether or not the tower residents might use King's Cross facilities for their Social Infrastructure demands; sending their children to other schools, for instance could exacerbate the potential of segregation. 39 |

An important question is in how far the CST-proposal would engender further development. There is a significant rent gap in Somers Town since the rent yield of social housing is low compared to the valuable land it sits on. The future strategy for

32 | “I am very concerned that the high level of housing proposed for sale will result in social polarisation contrary to Camden's policy ‘to minimise social polarisation’...”

(Tomlinson, P. (2016) *Consultation Response*. Available online at <http://camdocs.camden.gov.uk/webdrawer/webdrawer.dll/webdrawer/rec/5523551/view/> [accessed 11 February 2016].)

36 | Beardon, G. (2015) *Gentrification: Demolishing a Sense of Community?* Available online at <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/miscellaneous/gentrification-demolishing-a-sense-of-community/> [accessed 5 February 2016].

37 | Sakizlioğlu, B. (2014) ‘Inserting Temporality into the Analysis of Displacement: Living Under the Threat of Displacement’, *Tijdschr Econ Soc Geogr* 105(2), pp. 206–220.

38 | Sheppard, S. (2012) *Why is Gentrification a Problem?* Available online at <http://www.c-3-d.org> [accessed 5 February 2016].

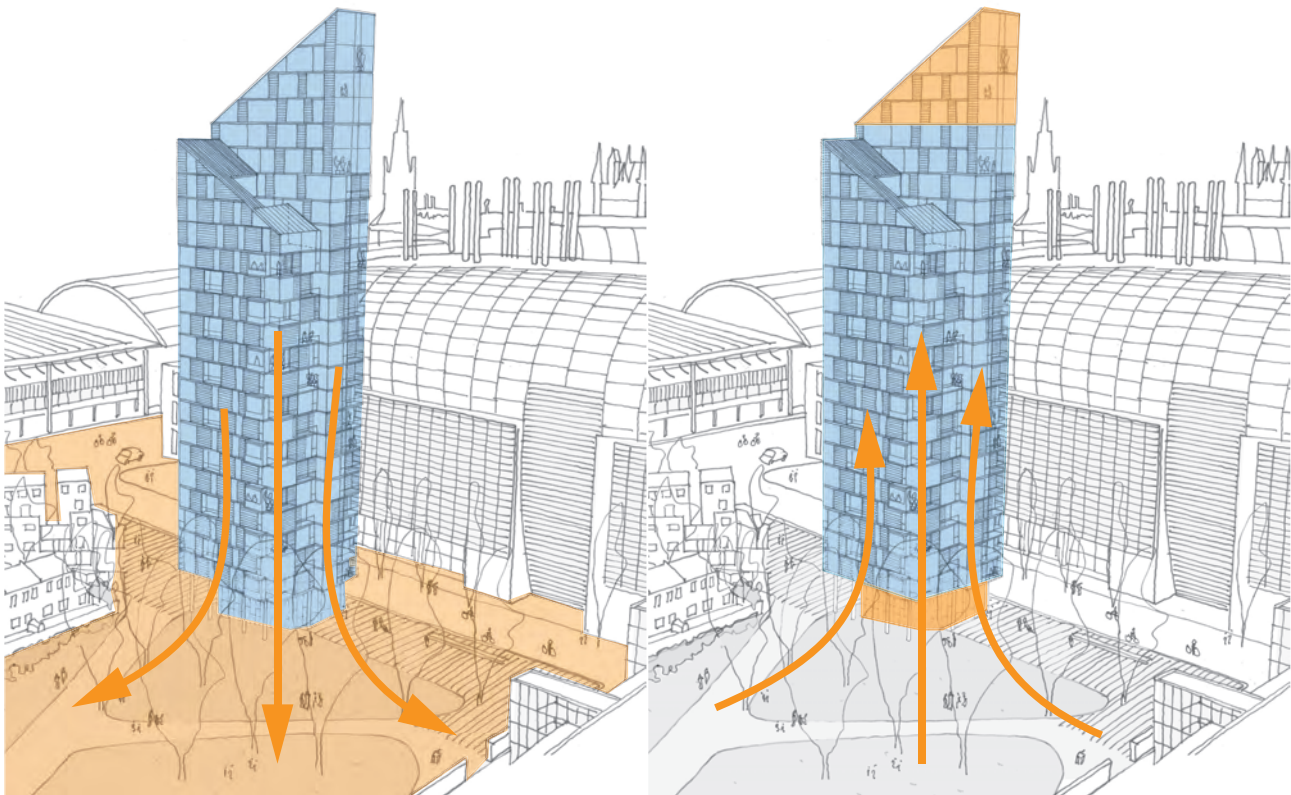
39 | dRMM Architects (2015) *Design & Access Statement – Brill Place Tower*. London: dRMM Architects.

the social housing stock is unknown, and it could be subject to further regeneration or to stock transfer plans. The tower at Brill Place could set a precedent for attracting more tall and luxurious buildings to Somers Town.

#### 4. Tradeoffs and Mitigation Efforts

The SInA also has to assess the positive impacts of the development and weigh them against the negative ones. More importantly, it needs to conceptualise mitigation efforts for the projected negative impacts. These can include, but may also go beyond, Section 106 agreements and payments towards the Community Infrastructure Levy, besides involving local government commitments. To counter the fear of displacement and segregation, the following measures could be adopted for mitigating negative impacts that the CST-proposal could have:

- Requiring a commitment by the Camden Council to maintain the quality and quantity of the existing social housing stock.



40 | Mitigation Strategy: Possible inward and outward strategies for integrating Brill Tower into Somers Town's context. (dRMM Architects (2015) *Design & Access Statement – Brill Place Tower*. London: dRMM Architects; modified by Authors)

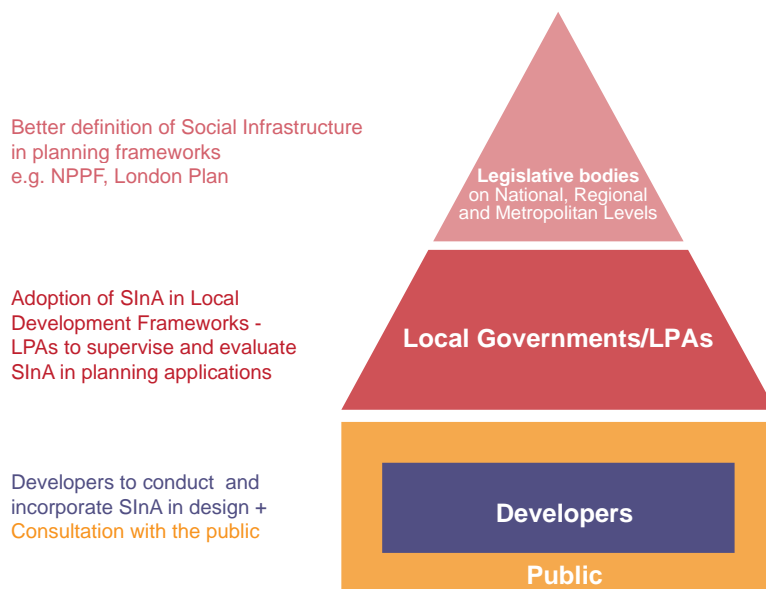
- Developing a social infrastructure management strategy that seeks to integrate the tower with its surroundings. This would require bringing people into the interior of the tower by housing a community facility in it (such as a nursery) or by promoting mixed-income households within the tower. Tower residents can also be encouraged to venture out into the centre of Somers Town by promoting, through community building initiatives, activities on Chalton Street (reviving the street market, for example).

## Challenges and Limitations of SInA

### 1. For Whom? By Whom?

Who a SInA benefits may not necessarily be who it is intended to benefit; vested interests of projects, such as private developers, can potentially influence the outcomes of SInAs to suit their own agendas especially if they are funding the SInA itself. This raises the ethical concern of the need for neutrality and impartiality.

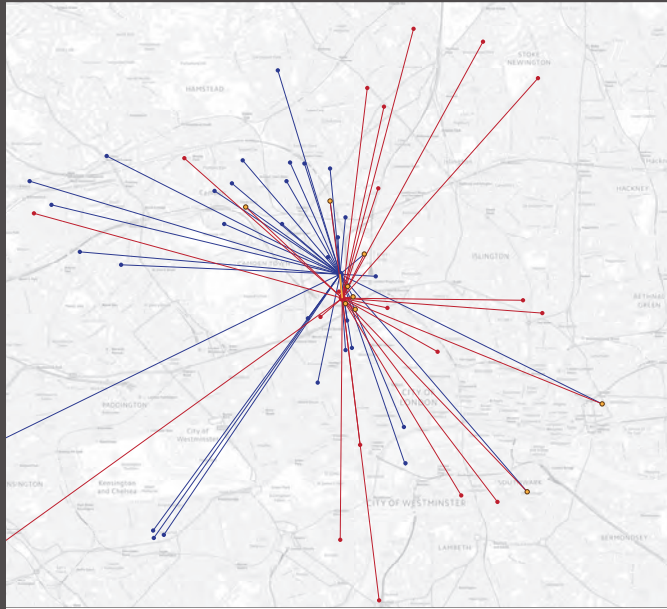
For this reason, it is critical that all parties and stakeholders participate in discussing social infrastructure and its significance in creating community cohesion. Yet, while it is important to avoid a paternalistic approach to the SInA, it is crucial to be cognisant of the fact that what one community decides (whether democratically or otherwise) to include and exclude in the scope of a SInA or even the definition of ‘social infrastructure’ (for example, religious spaces but not abortion clinics) may not align with the principles of choice and freedom.



41 | Policy and Practical Implications: Diagram illustrating SInA's implications on other policies and practices

## Cut Across: Diverse Infrastructures

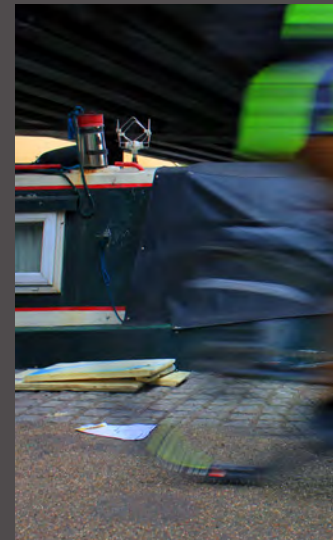
Social Infrastructure: Social Media in Somers Town



Street & Pavement Infrastructure:  
Space between buildings, Mare Street



Canal and Waterway  
Infrastructure: Cyclist  
Along the Towpath



### 2. What Methods? Case in Point: Camden's EQIA

A technical issue for SInAs is that of the tools used for conducting them. Qualitative assessments are harder to conduct than quantitative ones. A case in point to illustrate this is the 'Equalities Impact Assessment' conducted by Camden Council for the Somers Town CIP. The EQIA's concluding statement is that "No potential unlawful discrimination and no negative or disproportionate impacts on protected groups have been identified as a result of the proposed activity". Furthermore, it states "No information gaps have been identified".

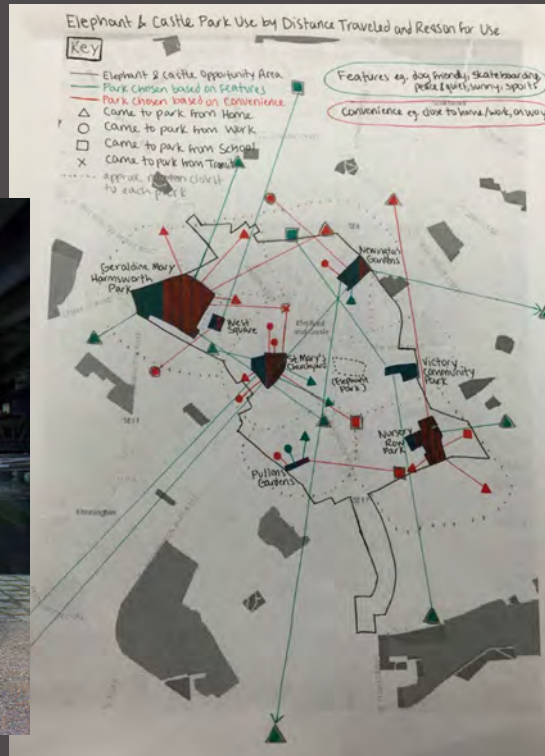
These statements are problematic because:

- (i) The EQIA does not elaborate on what qualitative methods (if any) were used for basing their conclusions.
- (ii) Based on case studies and historical data, there is ample evidence to refute the conclusions since displacement and segregation are real and potential threats.
- (iii) The EQIA measures the success of the school on literacy and employment rates but these parameters are not necessarily comparable or commensurable with parameters used for gauging other well-being indicators such as health, community cohesion, and safety.

### 3. Buy-In at a National Level

While the CIP intends to generously address the need-gaps in education and housing, it does not even touch upon the impact that an additional 136 households in the neighbourhood will have on the neighbourhood's existing health facilities.





## Green Infrastructure: On-site Observations

An alternative or ‘worst-case scenario’ (assuming that the NHS cannot expand its facilities) that a SiNA could propose is that Camden Council incentivise private healthcare providers to establish clinics in Somers Town and cater to those residents who can afford to pay the premium for private services, thereby taking off some of the pressure imposed on the NHS clinic.

Major social infrastructure exigencies, such as health-care gaps, need to be addressed urgently at the national level so that neighbourhoods like Somers Town, which are microcosms reflecting the dire state of nationwide healthcare, are not further deprived.



## Conclusion

Social infrastructure is everywhere and it is the basis of every community building effort. Its various manifestations surely require further exploration, but this cannot be a reason to turn a blind eye on questions regarding social infrastructure. 42 | Instead, our research in Somers Town has shown that the discussion of social infrastructure can be a starting point for debating key urban issues. In proposing SInA, we offer an instrument that helps grappling with social infrastructure implications of urban developments that go beyond counting school places and GP capacities. Adopting a SInA in the planning process will not only contribute to the exploration of social infrastructure, but will also improve on the situation of those affected by new developments today.

It is evident that the implementation of SInA is more complicated and nuanced than its conceptualisation. We have discussed the danger of arbitrariness, the challenge of finding consensus over qualitative assessments, and SInA's limitations when it touches social infrastructure provision which lies in the competence of higher political levels. In addition, it will need to be figured out in how far SInA shall have binding legal force. SInA which is not aiming at preventing developments but at mitigating their social impacts is the right way to reconcile these issues for now. However, above all, the greatest challenge is the concern that SInA becomes a bureaucratic procedure conducted as a mere formality, rendering the entire SInA a futile exercise. It lies within the responsibility of all stakeholders and all political groups to avoid this outcome. Social infrastructure as a conduit of social citizenship can thus become an arena of public debate and negotiation.

We encourage every developer and every LPA to adopt SInA-principles immediately. In the long run, it is important that the SInA is formally embedded in the planning process and framework to ensure that it is organised and conducted to the required level of detail, consistency as well as professionalism. We propose that public policy at all levels should clarify the definition of social infrastructure used in the various planning frameworks. In addition, it should be emphasised (like Policy 3.16 of the London Plan already does) that a loss of social infrastructure should be prevented. SInAs should then be conceptualised on local government level and find their way into the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs).

Finally, we want to come back to Somers Town. Many Somers Towners are excited about the proposed beautification of the neighbourhood's centre, the new community facilities and, overall, more activity in Somers Town. However, no one wants to lose their home one day because of this regeneration project. Our exemplary SInA has shown that this concern is not unfounded, and should be addressed.