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# Unlocking the Potential: Evaluating Cultural Infrastructure and Policy Initiatives for Sustainable Urban Regeneration in Walthamstow

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**Prepared by: PLANNING EDGE**



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# Glossary

**Cultural Economy:** The term ‘cultural economy’ is indicative of a particular subsection of economic activity which is concerned with cultural products and activities (such as music, film, and fine art) as opposed to say transportation or mining.

**Regeneration:** For the purpose of this report, regeneration encompasses three dimensions, sometimes known as pillars, of sustainability: society, economics and environment; it is therefore an activity of considerable importance to achieving a more sustainable society.

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# Executive Summary

This research project explores the integration of cultural economy insights into the regeneration planning for Walthamstow's town centre, emphasising the pivotal role of cultural diversity in driving revitalisation efforts. Through strategic investment in cultural infrastructure and support for local artists and entrepreneurs, Walthamstow can harness its cultural assets to create a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous town centre.

Walthamstow current cultural economy initiatives and regeneration efforts are multifaceted. This report analyses and evaluates the existing efforts, identifying areas of success and potential improvements to minimise the risk of challenges such as the pressures of gentrification. Moreover, we provide actionable recommendations for further enhancing these initiatives, aiming to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous town center in Walthamstow, continuing the legacy of London Borough of Culture 2019.

## **Key Findings and Recommendations include:**

PLANNING EDGE recommends specific strategies to address gaps in Walthamstow's efforts, focusing on regulatory oversight and accountability, as well as long-term sustainability. These recommendations aim to foster holistic regeneration approaches that prioritise environmental stewardship, resilience, and community empowerment while mitigating the risks of gentrification:

1. **Promote, engage and support bottom up initiatives that cooperate and have strong relationships with the council.**
2. **Establish mechanisms to protect heritage sites from the adverse impacts of gentrification.**
3. **Invest in workforce development programs, mentorship opportunities, and entrepreneurship support to empower local talent and ensure that cultural initiatives benefit diverse communities.**
4. **Conduct regular assessments to identify potential gentrification pressures and hold developers accountable for meeting affordable housing targets and community benefit agreements.**
5. **Foster holistic regeneration approaches that prioritize environmental stewardship, resilience, and intergenerational equity**

## Introduction

The research project aims to explore how insights from cultural economy can inform future planning for the regeneration of Walthamstow's town centre. It underscores the significance of leveraging cultural diversity as a catalyst for regeneration in the area and how to address challenges such as gentrification.

The creative and cultural economy is an important economic contributor in the borough, and it is growing. Cultural, arts, entertainment and visitor attractions support the vitality and vibrancy of the borough's places. It is also an important part of the community and social infrastructure of the borough as it brings people together, encouraging community cohesion and building social capital. Nationally, Arts Council England has identified that arts and culture directly contributed £10.6 billion in 2016 to the national economy with the indirect (supply chain) with induced spending effects of this adding a further £12 billion of value. These figures increased year on year since the first report of its kind was published in 2013, as did employment in the sector which, by 2016, was over 360,000 (CEBR, 2019).

Cultural economy encompasses the interplay between cultural activities, creativity, and economic development within a community. In Walthamstow, a rich tapestry of cultural diversity exists, offering a wealth of resources for regeneration efforts, the council won London Borough of Culture 2019 and has since continued to run culture initiatives and expand their commitment to celebrating culture.

Key insights from cultural economy research suggest that embracing cultural diversity can lead to various benefits, including increased tourism, economic growth, and social cohesion. Leveraging the cultural assets of Walthamstow, such as its vibrant arts scene, multicultural festivals, and historical landmarks, can attract visitors, stimulate local businesses, and foster a sense of pride and belonging among residents. Moreover, cultural regeneration initiatives have the potential to address urban challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and spatial inequality. By investing in cultural infrastructure, supporting local artists and entrepreneurs, and promoting inclusive community engagement, an environment that nurtures creativity, innovation, and sustainable development exists.

## Methodology

Given Walthamstow Council's proactive stance in cultural initiatives, this report seeks to identify any existing gaps or areas for improvement within these initiatives, policies, and infrastructure. A primary focus is placed on anticipating and addressing forthcoming challenges, notably gentrification. Therefore, our research methodology is structured to evaluate current cultural infrastructure and policy initiatives while exploring the nuances of leveraging cultural diversity for sustainable urban regeneration, with a focus on implementing effective mitigation strategies against gentrification.

Firstly, we undertake a thorough analysis of demographic and cultural diversity, contextualising it within the broader urban regeneration framework. This involves examining demographic data and cultural dynamics within the community to understand the composition and interactions of diverse populations, while also identifying potential indicators of gentrification.

Secondly, we conduct a thorough literature review. Exploring existing research and theoretical frameworks relevant to cultural diversity, the cultural economy and urban regeneration. By synthesizing a wide range of scholarly sources, we aim to gain insights into best practices, emerging trends, and innovative approaches in leveraging cultural diversity for sustainable regeneration, with a focus on strategies to address gentrification.

Furthermore, we conduct an in-depth analysis of Walthamstow's existing cultural infrastructure and policy landscape, with a specific focus on assessing how current initiatives, programs, and policies may impact gentrification dynamics. By evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives, we aim to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in addressing both cultural diversity and gentrification challenges.

Overall, our methodology is designed to provide a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities in leveraging cultural diversity for sustainable urban regeneration in Walthamstow, focusing on gentrification. By combining policy analysis, demographic analysis, literature review, and case study analysis, we aim to generate actionable insights and recommendations to support the council in creating long-term, culturally vibrant, and inclusive communities within the borough.

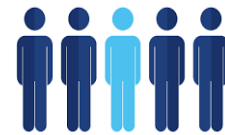
## Results and Discussion

### Analysis of Walthamstow Demographic and Cultural Diversity

This is a selection of the key and most relevant statistics for the purpose of this report. Waltham Forest is home to an estimated 278,400 residents with a median age of 35.6 years. An estimated 47% of residents are from a minority ethnic background.

#### Languages

- **Top 5 languages** other than English are:
  1. Romanian (4%)
  2. Urdu (1.80%)
  3. Bulgarian (1.70%)
  4. Polish (1.60%)
  5. Turkish (1.30%)



1 in 5 people aged three and over (22%) does not speak English as their main language. Compared to 7% nationally.

The average house price in the borough as of March 2022 was **£500,000, an increase of 51% since 2015** (ONS, 2022).

The diverse demographic makeup and multilingual landscape of Waltham Forest present opportunities for a vibrant cultural economy and sustainable regeneration. With nearly half of its residents from minority ethnic backgrounds and a range of languages spoken, there's potential to leverage cultural diversity for economic growth and community development. **However, the significant increase in housing prices poses challenges to maintaining affordability and inclusivity in the regeneration process**, requiring careful planning to ensure that economic growth benefits all residents and fosters a thriving, cohesive community.

### Cultural Profile of Waltham Forest Residents (Audience Agency, 2019)

Audience spectrum data, provides useful insights into cultural classifications, of which Waltham Forest is most strongly comprised of two:

1. Kaleidoscope Creativity (46% of Waltham Forest residents, compared with only 32% of London residents overall). The profile for this grouping suggests these residents are “urban and culturally diverse, their arts and cultural activity happens in their community and outside the mainstream (Lower engagement)”; and
2. Experience Seekers (31% of Waltham Forest residents, compared with only 15% of London residents overall). The profile for this grouping suggests these residents are “diverse urban audiences, students and recent graduates into a variety of cultural events (Higher engagement)”

Overall, these profiles suggest that Walthamstow Forest residents, compared to the wider London population, exhibit a higher propensity for diverse cultural engagement, with a significant portion actively seeking out cultural experiences (31%). While most (46%) prefer community-based cultural activities over mainstream options.

In addition, creative businesses have grown faster in Waltham Forest than London as a whole, achieving 85% growth over the five-year period from 2014 to 2019. This highlights a growing industry and interest in the cultural economy, which the Council could leverage to boost community engagement, economic development and enhance the overall cultural vibrancy of the borough. By aligning initiatives with residents' preferences, especially



those identified as "Kaleidoscope Creativity" and "Experience Seekers," the Council can create a more inclusive and dynamic cultural scene for all to enjoy.

***What does this mean for urban regeneration initiatives?***

- Extensive research has shown how different demographic groups experience and engage with urban spaces (Zignani, M., Quadri, C., Gaito, S. *et al*, 2019), for example, safety concerns are important to woman and people with low incomes and cultural barriers with ethnic minority residents citing concerns about dogs and issues with visibility and prejudice (Ward, C *et al.*, 2023). The above data highlights the diverse demographic makeup of Walthamstow. Therefore, in the context of urban regeneration, it is key to acknowledge the diverse perspectives and needs that shape community engagement and the implications this has on sustainable cultural regeneration initiatives. For instance, certain demographic groups may frequent the Walthamstow town centre market more than others. By understanding these patterns, regeneration efforts can be tailored to enhance inclusivity and accessibility for all residents.
- Creative businesses, Cultural institutions and events play a significant role in shaping the identity of Walthamstow, offering opportunities to cultivate a sense of belonging and pride among residents. However, it's crucial that these resources are accessible to all residents, not just a select few. Barriers such as language differences or accessibility issues can alienate certain members of the community, undermining efforts towards inclusive engagement and potentially exacerbating issues like gentrification. By locating more in the town centre could break down some of the transport related barriers for some residents.
- Moreover, Walthamstow's rich cultural diversity presents a unique opportunity for inclusive and sustainable regeneration efforts. To leverage this asset effectively, the council must proactively monitor and address any concerns that may arise, ensuring a truly inclusive and community-driven approach to cultural regeneration.

One way the council can address these concerns is through local policies and strategies in urban planning and community development to break down any barriers and create a sustainable long-term cultural economy (this will be explored in the next sections).

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## Literature Review

The literature review will delve into various urban regeneration models, including 'Culture-led regeneration,' to uncover insights into the challenges and opportunities posed by cultural diversity. It will also examine the social and economic impacts of cultural initiatives and the policy implications for urban development. With a particular focus on addressing gentrification, the review aims to offer best practices for promoting sustainable and inclusive urban regeneration in Walthamstow.

### Key Themes and Topics

#### 1. Different Models of Urban Regeneration

According to Evans (2004), one can rationalise this evolution in the planning approach in terms of three different variants (see appendix 1):

- Culture-led regeneration, where culture is seen as the **main catalyst and engine of the regeneration.**
- Cultural regeneration, where **culture is fully integrated into a wider strategy** alongside with other activities in the environmental, social and economic spheres;
- Culture and regeneration, where **culture plays a specific but circumscribed role** and is not fully integrated at the strategic planning and development stage

Waltham Forest has elements of both culture-led regeneration and cultural regeneration in the councils initiatives. Culture-led is dependent on the extent to which the process manages to create a shared and inclusive social representation where local constituencies learn to expand their capacity of interaction, to create and share information and ideas, to cooperate and to compete while maintain a pro-social spirit (Knox & Pinch, 2014). To achieve this, there has to be a firm intention and an equally firm determination to go through until the end despite momentary difficulties. As Silver, Scott and Kazepov (2010) note, bottom up initiatives need to be accompanied by top down actions. This also reduces the pressures of gentrification if there is an inclusive approach to cultural initiatives, that reach and include the wider community.

#### 2. Cultural Catalysts in Urban Regeneration and Gentrification Dynamics

A cultural economy is shaped by diverse interpretations and policy approaches, which influence the roles of culture, production, consumption, and spatial patterns. Cameron and Coaffee (2004) distinguish between two types of gentrification: one driven by commercial capital and another termed 'positive gentrification', which is led by public authorities. They argue that the latter is more prevalent in the North East of England where public sector initiatives play a crucial role in attracting private investment to areas that are underdeveloped. This suggests that strategic interventions by public authorities can play a vital role in shaping the trajectory of urban development, potentially mitigating the negative impacts of gentrification.

Furthermore, the interpretation of cultural phenomena, such as the presence of coffee shops, varies widely. While some view them as integral components of a creative ecosystem, others see them as symbols of gentrification (Tjora & Scambler, 2013; Zukin, 2009). This highlights the importance of considering diverse perspectives and potential implications when implementing cultural initiatives as part of urban regeneration efforts in Walthamstow.

Moreover, Markusen and Gadwa (2010) suggest that while commercial cultural industries may contribute to gentrification, arts organisations—especially non-profits and publicly funded entities—can play a positive role in urban regeneration without the negative effects of gentrification. This aligns with the concept of the 'artistic dividend' (Markusen, 2006), which posits that the arts can generate broader social and economic benefits beyond gentrification.

### 3. Social and Economic Impacts

Susan Siefert and Mark Stern's research at the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) sheds light on the potential of arts organizations in community development, particularly in the context of preventing gentrification in areas like Walthamstow. Their findings suggest that small-scale cultural investments and creative placemaking initiatives have the capacity to enhance neighborhood well-being without exacerbating gentrification.

By mapping cultural assets, Stern and Siefert identify two distinct types of districts: 'market' districts, which are supported by affluent populations and have thriving cultural offerings, and 'civic' districts, where community arts facilities are located but face precarious conditions. They argue that poorer neighborhoods, such as those in Walthamstow, require public support to sustain cultural hubs due to factors like transportation issues, distance from city centers, and lower income levels.

Despite the challenges faced by 'civic' districts, Stern and Siefert's research suggests that investing in cultural facilities in these areas can lead to improvements in social indicators and contribute to community development. This implies that strategic public support for cultural initiatives in underprivileged areas within Walthamstow can foster inclusive regeneration and mitigate the risks of displacement associated with gentrification.

### 4. Policy Implications

Stark et al. (2013) highlight a concerning trend in the UK where residents' wealth correlates with the availability of cultural facilities. This finding underscores the need for careful consideration of cultural initiatives in regeneration efforts, particularly in areas like Walthamstow. While smaller-scale, community-focused cultural investments may mitigate polarization, they may not align with public policy's economic objectives alone. To truly achieve cultural regeneration in poorer neighbourhoods, there must be a shift in the understanding of 'regeneration' to prioritize social and cultural benefits over purely economic gains (Oakley, 2015).

Moreover, Lysgård (2012) raises an important concern regarding the treatment of cultural and creative dimensions by policymakers in urban regeneration schemes. There is often a conflation of these concepts, leading to an instrumental use of both notions to attract globally mobile, highly paid professionals. However, this approach can result in rapid and relentless gentrification, leading to social sustainability problems.

For example, Shoreditch has undergone significant regeneration in recent years, with the development of trendy cafes, art galleries, and tech startups. While these developments have contributed to Shoreditch's reputation as a cultural hotspot, they have also led to rising property prices, gentrification, and the displacement of long-standing residents and businesses. In the context of Walthamstow, this implies that cultural initiatives must be implemented thoughtfully to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities and displacement pressures.

## Existing Cultural Infrastructure, Initiatives and Policy Landscape

This next section explores the existing culture infrastructure and initiatives and the potential implications of the newly adopted policies. The objective is to utilise this information, in conjunction with the preceding sections, to pinpoint the challenges and opportunities confronting Walthamstow in terms of cultural regeneration. As previously mentioned, gentrification is the key challenge this report aims to explore and address.

### Existing infrastructure and initiatives

Key Initiative	Positives
<p><b>Creative Hub Development:</b> Walthamstow has seen the establishment of creative hubs, such as the Blackhorse Workshop and the Gnome House,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides affordable workspace</li> <li>▪ Support for artists, designers, and makers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural Events and Festivals:</b> The town hosts a variety of cultural events and festivals throughout the year, including the Walthamstow Garden Party, Walthamstow Folk Festival, and Walthamstow International Film Festival, attracting visitors and fostering community engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracts tourists to the area, boosting local economy</li> <li>• Potential to foster community engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Creative Placemaking Projects:</b> Walthamstow Council has undertaken creative placemaking projects to enhance public spaces and celebrate local culture, such as street art installations, community murals, and the E17 Art Trail. Below is a map portray all the art installations and initiatives that were involved in the E17 Art Trail.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves aesthetic appeal and functionality of public spaces</li> <li>• Celebrates the diversity and heritage of Walthamstow, fostering a sense of pride.</li> </ul>



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## Policy landscape

This section aims to do a short analysis of the newly adopted Policy 35 in the Local Plan Part 1 (2024) related to Culture and Regeneration. However, please refer to the Appendix 2 for the full list and analysis of the policies.

The recently implemented local plan includes a specific policy dedicated to culture initiatives, a marked improvement from the Core Strategy (2012) which only mentioned culture without a dedicated policy. Policy 35 (Promoting Culture and Creativity), aims to support arts, culture, creativity, and entertainment to boost the local economy and enhance the quality of life. Key directives include protecting existing cultural venues and encouraging new ones, particularly in accessible locations like Walthamstow Town Centre. The policy supports both major and smaller-scale cultural projects, emphasising accessibility via public transport, walking, and cycling. Temporary cultural uses in vacant spaces and the use of outdoor public areas for cultural activities are also promoted. Additionally, the policy advocates for early integration of public art in development projects and securing financial contributions through Section 106 agreements to support cultural initiatives.

Strengths of the policy include comprehensive support for cultural activities, strategic placement of venues, flexibility for smaller projects, and dedicated funding streams. However, its success is heavily reliant on new developments and balancing commercial and cultural interests. Viability considerations may limit available funds, and ensuring accessibility and effective impact mitigation presents challenges:

Firstly, making sure cultural venues and activities are accessible by modes of transport requires substantial investment in transportation networks and careful planning to connect diverse neighbourhoods with cultural hubs. Secondly, the policy's emphasis on inclusivity means the cultural activities must cater to a wide range of demographics, therefore careful consideration is required to create venues that are physically accessible and financially affordable for all residents.

Furthermore, maintaining a balance between fostering vibrant cultural scenes and preventing gentrification is complex. While cultural investments can enhance neighbourhood appeal, they can also drive up property values and living costs, potentially displacing long-term residents.

Therefore robust monitoring and enforcement are essential for this policy's effectiveness.

Policy Improvements:

- **Community engagement** – The policy could benefit from stronger provisions for community involvement in decision-making processes related to cultural development.
- **Long term sustainability** – While temporary and interim cultural uses are encouraged, the policy could emphasise the importance of long-term sustainability for cultural venues and activities.

Additionally, the strategic objective to 'Grow a creative, diverse and resilient economy in Waltham Forest' states: ***“Waltham Forest will become a leader in the capital's cultural, creative and digital economy, cementing its economic stability and resilience, extending its economic offer and helping residents to achieve their full potential.”***

While this objective acknowledges the importance of fostering creativity and diversity, the primary focus appears to be on economic outcomes rather than broader social or environmental considerations. By prioritizing economic stability and resilience, there is a risk that other vital aspects of sustainability, such as social inclusivity,

environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation, may be overshadowed or overlooked. While economic prosperity is undoubtedly essential for the well-being of the community, it should not come at the expense of other equally important factors. Furthermore, the language used in the objective, such as "extending its economic offer" and "helping residents to achieve their full potential," suggests a narrow focus on individual economic success rather than collective well-being or community empowerment. This individualistic approach may inadvertently exacerbate inequalities within the community, particularly if economic benefits are not distributed equitably across diverse groups.

Finally, the absence of a clear definition of "regeneration" in Walthamstow Council's Local Plan raises concerns about conceptual clarity and coherence. Without a precise definition, stakeholders may interpret the term differently, leading to confusion and ambiguity in decision-making. This could hinder the effectiveness and inclusivity of regeneration initiatives. The lack of clarity reflects broader issues of insufficient specificity in the Local Plan. To ensure transparency and accountability, the plan should provide clear definitions of key terms, including regeneration. Therefore, it is critical for the council to address this gap by incorporating a comprehensive definition of regeneration into the glossary of the Local Plan. This definition should encompass its economic, social, and cultural dimensions, enhancing the effectiveness and legitimacy of regeneration strategies.

**Drawing insights from the above, the following challenges and opportunities have been identified**

Challenges	Opportunities
Limited funding for cultural projects	Access to grants and funding for creative ventures
Gentrification pressures	Preservation of local identity and heritage
Competition with neighbouring areas	Conversion of unused spaces into cultural hubs
Accessibility issues for diverse communities	Collaboration with local businesses and institutions
	Integration of inclusive programming and events

The urban regeneration efforts in Walthamstow face several challenges and opportunities, reflecting the complex interplay of cultural diversity, economic development, and community empowerment. Among these challenges, one prominent issue that requires careful consideration is the phenomenon of gentrification. Gentrification poses significant risks to the socio-economic fabric of the community, potentially leading to displacement, cultural homogenisation, and social exclusion.

However, Walthamstow is progressive in its commitments to diversity and community empowerment. The council has demonstrated a proactive approach to embracing cultural diversity and fostering inclusivity in its urban regeneration initiatives. Yet, the next step is to ensure that cultural initiatives and the utilisation of culture and diversity do not inadvertently contribute to gentrification.

**Addressing Gentrification Pressures**

Ensuring that cultural economy and regeneration efforts do not lead to gentrification requires a nuanced approach that prioritises community engagement, social equity, and sustainable development.

**1. Community-Centred Development:**

- **Challenge:** Gentrification often occurs when regeneration projects prioritise profit-driven development over the needs of existing communities.

- **Strategy:** Engage local residents, cultural practitioners, and businesses in the planning process from the outset. Incorporate their input into decision-making to ensure that regeneration efforts reflect the community's values and aspirations.

Walthamstow has a history of community activism and engagement, which can serve as a strong foundation for inclusive regeneration efforts. Initiatives like the Waltham Forest Citizens' Assembly demonstrate a commitment to involving residents in decision-making processes regarding local development.

## 2. Cultural Preservation and Identity:

- **Challenge:** Gentrification may result in the loss of the area's cultural heritage and character as new developments cater to affluent newcomers.
- **Strategy:** Preserve and celebrate Walthamstow's cultural identity through initiatives that support local artists, artisans, and cultural organizations. Invest in cultural infrastructure and public art that reflects the area's history and diversity. Establish mechanisms to protect heritage sites and prevent cultural displacement.

Walthamstow boasts a rich cultural heritage, including landmarks like the William Morris Gallery and the annual Walthamstow Garden Party.

## 1. Equitable Access to Opportunities:

- **Challenge:** Gentrification can exacerbate inequalities by excluding marginalized communities from the benefits of economic growth and cultural revitalization.
- **Strategy:** Prioritize initiatives that promote equitable access to education, employment, and cultural amenities for all residents. Invest in workforce development programs, mentorship opportunities, and entrepreneurship support to empower local talent. Ensure that public spaces and programming are inclusive and accessible to diverse audiences.

Initiatives like the Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service and the Waltham Forest Youth Hubs are examples of programs aimed at providing educational and employment opportunities for residents of all ages. Ensuring that cultural amenities and job opportunities are accessible to all residents is essential for fostering inclusivity.

**PLANNING EDGE has identified the following two points as gaps in Walthamstow's efforts and areas requiring focus:**

## 1. Regulatory Oversight and Accountability:

- **Challenge:** Without proper oversight, regeneration projects may inadvertently contribute to gentrification by displacing vulnerable populations.
- **Strategy:** Walthamstow should establish clear regulatory frameworks and monitoring mechanisms to track the social and economic impacts of regeneration initiatives. Regular assessments should be conducted to identify potential gentrification pressures, allowing for adjustments in strategies accordingly. Developers should be held accountable for meeting affordable housing targets and community benefit agreements.

## 2. Long-Term Sustainability:

- **Challenge:** Gentrification-driven development can lead to short-term gains at the expense of long-term social and environmental sustainability.
- **Strategy:** Walthamstow should foster holistic regeneration approaches that prioritise environmental stewardship, resilience, and intergenerational equity. This entails promoting

green infrastructure, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation options to create a healthier and more liveable community for current and future residents. By focusing on long-term sustainability, Walthamstow can ensure that its regeneration efforts benefit both present and future generations while mitigating the risks of gentrification.



# Recommendations and Conclusion

The research findings underscore the critical role of cultural diversity in shaping sustainable urban regeneration in Walthamstow. Leveraging cultural assets and fostering inclusive community engagement are key strategies for promoting economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. However, the challenges posed by gentrification necessitate a nuanced and proactive approach to regeneration and Walthamstow town centre.

Drawing from the insights gleaned through demographic analysis, literature review, and policy evaluation, PLANNING EDGE offers the following recommendations to guide future urban regeneration efforts in Walthamstow:

**Community-Centred Development:** Prioritise community engagement in all stages of urban regeneration projects. Ensure that residents, cultural practitioners, and local businesses have a meaningful voice in decision-making processes to align initiatives with community needs and aspirations. **Promote, engage and support bottom up initiatives that cooperate and have strong relationships with the council.**

**Cultural Preservation and Identity:** Implement initiatives to safeguard Walthamstow's cultural heritage and identity. Continue to support local artists, artisans, and cultural organisations, invest in cultural infrastructure, and **establish mechanisms to protect heritage sites from the adverse impacts of gentrification.**

**Equitable Access to Opportunities:** Promote inclusive economic development by prioritizing equitable access to education, employment, and cultural amenities for all residents. **Invest in workforce development programs, mentorship opportunities, and entrepreneurship support to empower local talent and ensure that cultural initiatives benefit diverse communities.**

**Regulatory Oversight and Accountability:** Establish clear regulatory frameworks and monitoring mechanisms to track the social and economic impacts of regeneration initiatives. **Conduct regular assessments to identify potential gentrification pressures and hold developers accountable for meeting affordable housing targets and community benefit agreements.**

**Long-Term Sustainability:** **Foster holistic regeneration approaches that prioritize environmental stewardship, resilience, and intergenerational equity.** Promote green infrastructure, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation options to create a healthier and more liveable community for current and future residents.

In conclusion, while Walthamstow's cultural diversity presents significant opportunities for sustainable urban regeneration, addressing the challenges of gentrification requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. By embracing community-centred development, preserving cultural identity, promoting equitable access to opportunities, ensuring regulatory oversight and accountability, and prioritizing long-term sustainability, Walthamstow can create a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community for generations to come. As we move forward, it is imperative to remain vigilant and adaptive, continuously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of regeneration initiatives to ensure their social cohesion and accessibility to all residents.

# Appendix 1

**Table 1.** Culture and urban regeneration models.

	Culture and regeneration	Cultural regeneration	Culture-led regeneration
Role of culture in the planning approach	Not integrated	Fully integrated	Catalyst
Purpose of cultural initiative	Tactical policy tool	Key strategic lever	Main transformational driver
Main impacts	Image/branding, economic	Sense of place, environmental, economic	Sense of belonging, environmental, economic, social
Policy	Punctual top-down	Systematic top-down	Top-down + bottom-up
Shared governance	No	Limited to operation	Part of the strategy
Legacy	Little, short-term No long-term	Substantial short-term Little long-term	Fair short-term Substantial long-term

Source: Our elaboration from Evans (2004).

# Appendix 2

Policy/Objective	Description	Comments
Strategic Objective	Ensure that the borough’s cultural legacy and creative economy flourish and grow and investment is secured to improve life chances, quality of life and well-being for all	
Policy 35: Promoting Culture and Creativity	Arts, culture, creativity and entertainment will be supported by the Council, especially where this boosts the economy and enhances quality of life in the borough. Development proposals should:  A. Protect and enhance cultural venues. Development proposals involving the loss of arts, culture and/or entertainment facilities will be resisted where a continuing demonstrable need exists, unless the facility is re-provided in accordance with other policy requirements in the Plan (see Policy 46 'Social and Community Infrastructure');	Aims to prevent the loss of existing arts, culture and entertainment facilities unless there is a demonstrated need or if such facilities are re-provided elsewhere. Ensures the preservation of cultural assets and community spaces.

	<p>B. Encourage and direct new cultural venues in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Major development of arts, culture, entertainment and visitor facilities should be directed to Walthamstow Town Centre, other designated Town Centres and other locations accessible by public transport (See Policy 39 'New Retail, Office and Leisure Developments');</li> <li>▪ Smaller scale proposals will be supported in areas that are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling routes and in locations that are accessible to those who are likely to use the facility;</li> <li>▪ Where appropriate (in accordance with other policies of the Plan), new and existing social and community infrastructure will be encouraged to include space for art and cultural events;</li> </ul> <p>C. Support temporary, meanwhile cultural uses in vacant buildings, parks and open spaces in highly accessible locations and in designated Centres, particularly where these meet community requirements, including for performance and creative work;</p>	<p>Directs major cultural developments to the town centre and locations accessible by public transport. This strategic approach aims to concentrate cultural activities in areas where they can have the most significant impact. Smaller-scale proposals are encouraged in areas accessible by various modes of transportation, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.</p> <p>Utilising vacant buildings, parks, and open spaces for temporary cultural activities can activate underutilized spaces and foster community engagement. This approach aligns with placemaking principles and can contribute to the vibrancy of neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Hammersmith and Fulham are the only other review borough which has a policy that explicitly refers to</p>
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	<p>D. Encourage the use of outdoor spaces and the public realm for art, culture, sports and entertainment uses in designated centres;</p> <p>E. Mitigate impacts from noise and other nuisance-generating activities in line with the Agent of Change principle;</p> <p>F. Promote the early integration of public art within development proposals, particularly in the Strategic Locations; and</p> <p>G. Secure Section 106 contributions, as set out in the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), towards the provision of public art and cultural activity including the funding, management, development, implementation and maintenance of public art projects which are part of major</p>	<p>cultural uses in parks. This could be more refined/detailed to provide clarify on whether permanent uses and temporary events are equally appropriate in all parks and at what scale.</p> <p>Utilising outdoor spaces for cultural activities enhances the accessibility of cultural experiences and can contribute to placemaking efforts. However, careful consideration is needed to mitigate potential conflicts with other uses and ensure inclusivity. Could see more realm art in the town centre.</p> <p>Early integration ensures that public art is considered from the outset of development proposals, potentially leading to more cohesive and meaningful integration.</p> <p>This funding mechanism can support the development, implementation, and maintenance of cultural projects, reducing the burden on public budgets.</p>
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	<p>development sites.</p> <p>All major development proposals involving mixed use/commercial space should contribute to cultural enhancement projects in the local area, subject to viability considerations.</p>	
Strategic objective – Distinctive town centres and high streets	<p>Support Waltham Forest's thriving, safe and attractive town centres by maintaining their distinctive roles and making them accessible to all. Ensure that residents are able to meet their day to day needs within a 15 minute walk, wheel or cycle of their home. Conserve and enhance the borough's network of culturally diverse, inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods and celebrate their locally distinctive character and heritage.</p>	
Policy 38 – Hierarchy of Centres	<p>Major Centre - Walthamstow Town Centre. This is the borough's principal and economic hub. The role of Walthamstow Town Centre will be reinforced by focusing investment in major comparison retailing activities, leisure, cultural and tourist and other main town centre uses including offices, workspace and complementary evening and night-time uses.</p>	<p>Identifies Walthamstow Town Centre as a major centre and as the borough's economic hub, focusing investment in various aspects including Cultural uses.</p>
Policy 40 - Revitalisations, adaptation and regeneration in Designated Centres and Parades	<p>Development proposals involving the revitalisation, adaptation and regeneration of the borough's designated centres/retail parades and other non-designated areas will be encouraged where they seek to achieve the following planning objectives:</p> <p>A. Consolidation of retail activities within compact retail core areas of the borough's designated centres;</p> <p>B. Safeguard the provision of town centre services and facilities in sustainable locations to ensure that residents can meet most of their needs within short walking distance (10 minutes or 800 metres) or a bicycle ride (up to 15 minutes) from homes;</p> <p>C. In locations where retail or commercial demand no longer exists (as evidenced by</p>	

	<p>vacancies), the conversion of retail and other commercial premises to appropriate alternative uses such as housing, business, leisure, entertainment uses and community uses, subject to other policies of this Plan;</p> <p>D. Conversion of vacant upper floors of ground floor commercial buildings for housing purposes, where a high quality living environment offering good levels of residential amenity, low noise levels, safe streets and personal security can be created without impeding the development of primary town centre uses such as retail, office and leisure;</p> <p>E. Conversion or subdivision of vacant commercial floor space to provide flexible adaptive units for occupation by smaller business units with adequate servicing;</p> <p><b>F. The development of meanwhile and temporary uses with space provision for small business, art, performance and exhibition as well as for educational and vocational projects and activities;</b></p> <p>G. Alignment with town centre strategies and Area Frameworks to deliver positive change, improve business confidence and encourage investment from private and public sectors;</p> <p><b>H. Promotion of local distinctiveness with regard to the 'offer' of individual centres, their place setting and the development of differentiated niche roles;</b> and</p> <p>I. Ensuring that replacement uses are well integrated (in function and design) with the remaining frontage to manage the impact of change on townscape character and neighbouring amenity.</p>	
<p>Policy 41 – Managing Changes of Use in and Outside Primary Shopping Areas</p>	<p>Outside Primary Shopping Areas</p> <p>B. Outside the Primary Shopping Areas of Walthamstow Town Centre and the District Centres, a diverse range and mix of town centre uses will be encouraged at ground floor level where:</p>	

	<p>ii. They provide non-retail services and other town centre uses (such as cinemas, restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, health and fitness centres, offices, banks, estate agents, arts/culture facilities, hotels, health/community uses, etc) of appropriate scale to the particular centre; and</p>	
<p>Policy 10 – Central Walthamstow Forest</p>	<p>C. Promote Walthamstow Town Centre as a major creative and economic hub of the borough, in accordance with its status as a Major Centre in the London Plan by; i. Supporting proposals that seek to expand the current town centre offer, particularly the retail mix and quality, flexible workspace, cultural infrastructure and supporting the developing evening economy and associated hospitality sector; ii. Supporting proposals that seek to establish and consolidate the development of a cultural quarter and evening economy at the eastern end of the High Street and a residential neighbourhood, with retail, leisure, evening economy and community and health infrastructure as part of the emerging St James Quarter at the western end of the High Street, whilst preserving or enhancing the St James Conservation Area and recent heritage shopfront and public realm investment; and iii. Encouraging proposals that seek to consolidate the role and function of Walthamstow Central transport hub as a key transport interchange in outer north London, whilst supporting its potential for development and enhancement;</p> <p>D. Enable investment and the regeneration of the Wood Street District Centre and Blackhorse Lane Neighbourhood Centre;</p> <p>E. Support the Blackhorse Lane Creative Enterprise Zone in line with Policy 37 'Blackhorse Lane Creative Enterprise Zone';</p>	

	<p>G. Support proposals for new visitor attractions and related developments in the Walthamstow Town Centre Strategic Location, to complement existing cultural assets and emerging opportunities that the launch of Soho Theatre Walthamstow and Central Waltham Forest investment in Hatherley Mews, Vestry House Museum and Chestnuts House in Hoe Street will generate in the local economy from 2024 onwards, increasing dwell time for residents, tourists and visitors to the borough and building on the legacy of being London's first 'Borough of Culture' in 2019;</p>	
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