

# EC1 New Deal for Communities 2001-2011 Final Evaluation



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# Introduction

**EC1 New Deal for Communities (NDC) is an unincorporated, community-led partnership of residents, public sector service providers, and voluntary and community organisations. It is one of thirty-nine NDC partnerships across England that has received government funding over a ten-year period to kick-start the ‘turn around’ of multiply-deprived neighbourhoods.**

EC1 NDC was awarded £52.9m for the period 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2011. It covers an area of around 4,800 households in the south of the London Borough of Islington, comprising most of the residential areas of Bunhill ward and a smaller part of Clerkenwell ward, (see figure 1). Although it sits within London’s central activities zone, it is mainly characterised by people living on low income in medium-sized social housing estates.

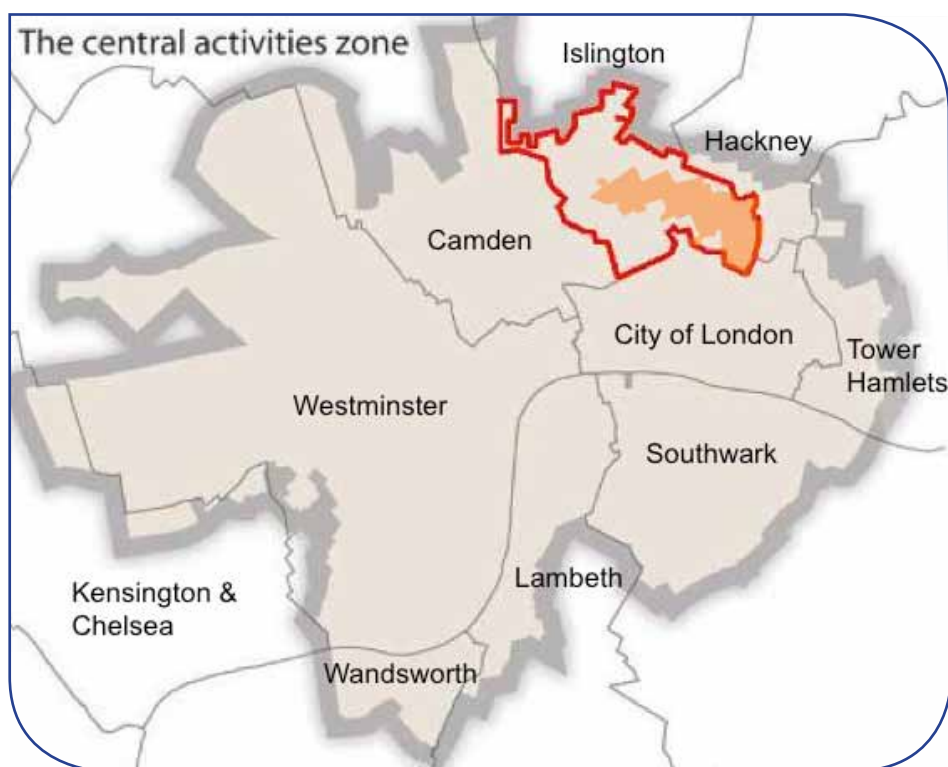


Figure 1 - EC1 within London’s central activities zone

This report draws together the key findings from the evaluation of the EC1 NDC programme, presenting a summary of change, achievements and lessons learnt. The evidence mainly comes from four separate studies which were commissioned in late 2009 to both inform this evaluation and the succession planning of the programme. A range of other sources of information have been used to inform this report, both local and those from the national evaluation of the NDC programme. All these documents are publicly available.

# Ten years of change

**In many ways, the EC1 neighbourhood of 2010 is a very different place to the EC1 of 2000. The changes to the neighbourhood have been quite profound in terms of the physical appearance of the area, the views of its residents and the services provided in the area, and many of these changes have been very positive. As one stakeholder commented:**

*“...if I were setting something like this up now in Islington, I certainly wouldn't make EC1 the priority – though I might have done 10 years ago”.*

This is a good place to start in considering what has happened to bring this change about.

## Changing people

The population of the area has grown significantly, reversing decades of de-population. The total population was estimated to be 10,371 in 2007 (up by 19% since 1999). The area is increasingly dominated by those of working age, which has reduced the previous trend of an increasing and isolated elderly population. Working age people accounted for 63% of the NDC area in 1999; by 2007 this had risen to 71%.

The population is also becoming more diverse, and this trend is likely to continue in the future. In terms of ethnicity, two-fifths (40%) of individuals are from black and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, up from 29% in 2002. Combined with this, 39% of people do not have English as a first language. In addition, there has been a growing, if still small, professional and student community.

The demographics of the people of the area have changed, and so have their opinions. They feel a part of their community to a greater extent than they did in 2002, feel safer and are more satisfied with the area as a place to live and the quality of their housing. People are less likely to want to leave the area, and have a more positive outlook about recent and future changes.

## Changing environment

The area is one that is defined by tower blocks, social housing estates and small warehouses left over from the decline of manufacturing at the end of the twentieth century. The vast majority (92%) of the housing stock in the area is flats, much higher than the Islington and London averages. It is part of the City Fringe: close to the City but not in it, part of Islington, but also distinct.

Much of this environment remains, but there has been some significant changes over the last decade:

- A vastly enhanced and improved public realm of parks, streets and estate grounds.
- The combination of decent homes funding and improvements to estate security has meant that although the housing of the area remains the same, it is more secure and of a higher quality.
- New centres have been built in the area, from the Three Corners Centre in Clerkenwell to the Golden Lane Campus on Whitecross Street. The Ironmonger Row Baths are undergoing major refurbishment.
- Existing community facilities have been improved, such as the library and a range of community halls.
- Whitecross Street itself is now home to a thriving street market, and destination within central London.
- The cultural landscape has changed, with LSO moving into St Luke's church, the Islington Museum being built at Finsbury Library and the Urdang Dance academy has moved into Finsbury Town Hall.

## Changing services

The provision of services in the area has increased in quality and quantity. This includes new or expanded services for children and young people such as the EC1 Music Project and the community sports coach, enhanced family support and childcare services through Children's Centres, a new adult learning service at Three Corners, and innovative outreach services.

The quality of existing services in the area has improved in several ways. There is an established and successful Safer Neighbourhoods Team, people find it easier to see their doctors and a much broader community offer at the St Luke's Centre as it begins to work with the full range of communities in the area, and establish itself as a neighbourhood anchor organisation. The attainment performance of local schools has also increased:

*“Generally, EC1 schools have improved at broadly the same rate or better than the borough's schools as a whole; however, not all EC1 school age residents go to EC1 schools; and not all those attending EC1 schools are EC1 residents.”*

This highlights that many populations use the services and facilities of the area, and do so in different ways. There is no neat overlap in a neighbourhood between any grouping of residents, services, visitors or facilities.

In terms of the economy of the area (which does include the business district around Finsbury Square) EC1 has grown over the last 10 years, broadly in line with wider economic changes. This growth is concentrated in services, most of which have a relationship to the financial services and housing growth seen throughout London and the UK. The local economy is strongly influenced, and will continue to be influenced, by wider forces. Growth has brought with it more shops, restaurants and bars which serve the growing City.

## Changing programme

Some of this change has been driven by the NDC, some of it has involved NDC time and money in different ways, and some of it is completely independent from the programme.

A defining feature of the NDC programme, compared to other area based programmes, was that it had a ten year timeframe. This recognised that a long period of time is needed to turn their areas around, and this longer lifespan would allow for longer term planning, engagement, capacity-building and delivery.

It is clear that the programme, whilst being a single programme, has also changed with the area, sometimes as a response to broader changes, but sometimes as a function of the programme maturing. There have been four key phases to the delivery of the programme, which have had different priorities as the programme has developed and these are outlined in table 1.

Phase	Description
<b>1. Pre-bid, bid &amp; approval</b>  Pre 2001 – 2003/4	A ten year delivery plan is developed with an emphasis on resident involvement, leading to resident elections to the board. The key strategic issue became how to govern the partnership.
<b>2. Post-approval &amp; early years</b>  2003/4 – 2005/6	There is a strong emphasis on safety, cleanliness and more environmental issues and concerns. The Public Space strategy was developed, following on from a scheme of estate security improvements. There was, however, uncertainty in terms of 'formal' structures of governance, combined with concerns about spend performance, resulting in a review of the programme in January 2006.
<b>3. Mid-years</b>  2005/6 – 2008/9	In September 2006 board members work together to improve the strategic approach and relationship with the Council. Islington Council seconds a senior officer to act as Chief Executive. A three-year delivery plan is developed, with 20+ strategic priorities, reflecting the driving focus across the programme. This is matched by streamlined formal governance structures and a programme developed around a more typical neighbourhood renewal model.
<b>4. Legacy and lasting impact</b>  2008/9 – 2011 & beyond	The succession plan is developed and approved, and governance sub structures reflect this focus on the end of the programme. Increasing numbers of residents who have been involved in governance of the NDC, becoming involved in the governance (as Trustees etc) of local organisations that are part of the succession strategy.

Table 1 - Key phases of the EC1 NDC programme

The decisions made in the early phases of the partnership have influenced the broad issues on which the money was invested. Compared to other NDC areas, EC1 NDC has spent much more of its money on housing and the physical environment over the life of the programme. This is shown in figure 2 below.

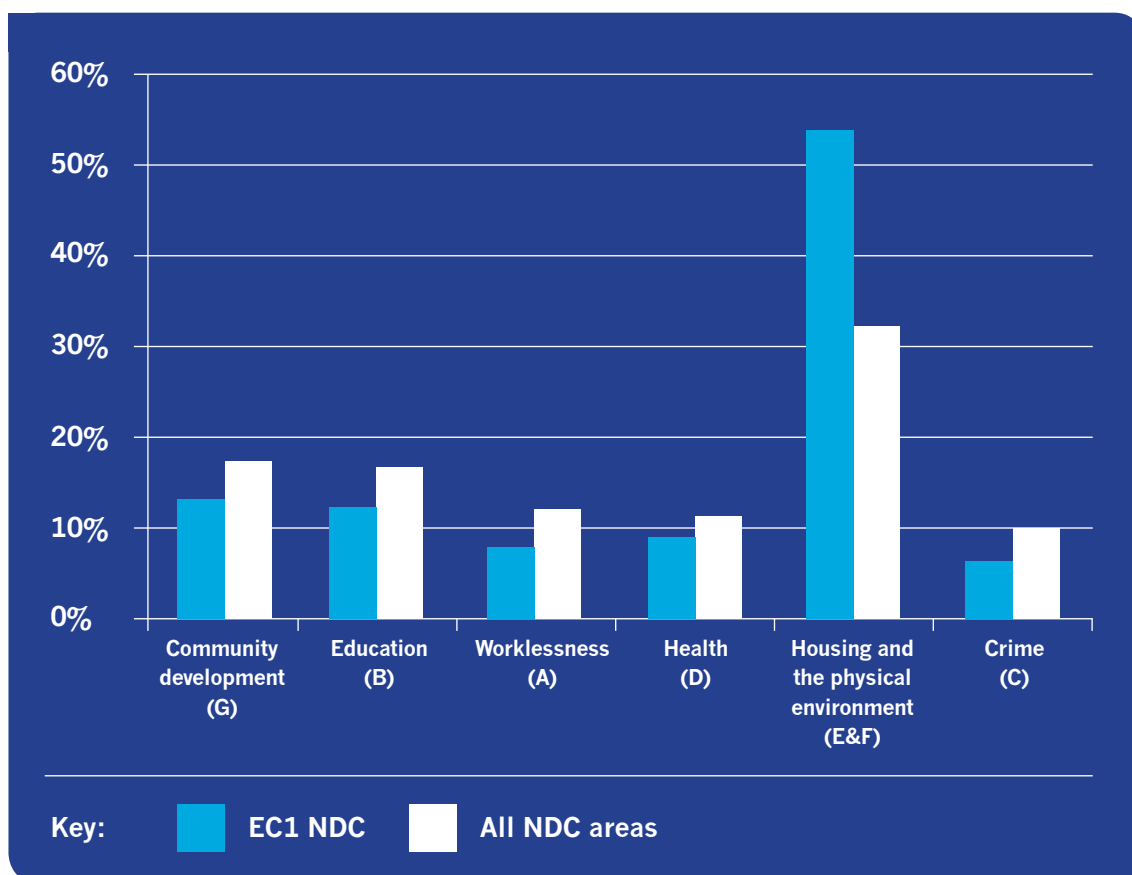


Figure 2 - The focus of investment by the EC1 NDC partnership

Most of the ambitious ten-year outcome targets for the area have been met but it is difficult to be precise about the NDC contribution to these, given the wider factors that influence them. We do know that 69% of residents believe that the NDC has improved the area as a place to live.

There are, however, ongoing concerns for the area and the people that live in EC1. As with many areas that received NDC funding, the worklessness rate of those in social housing has not changed significantly over the life of the programme.

*“Access to work that pays, childcare costs, high level of work limiting illness and debt remain significant barriers to employment in the EC1 NDC area”.*

There is also a lack of clear evidence for changes to the low income rate and the health of residents, and a mixed picture of improvements to skills levels and perceptions about influencing local decisions. Given the broadly stable structure of housing mix, some of this is likely to be explained by characteristics of people moving into the area, but it will also be affected by the limitations of services and underlying levels of social capital. The question remains, therefore, of how best to describe the achievements of the programme.

# Achievements

**There are a number of ways to evaluate a programme as long and complex as an NDC. The background documents look in more detail at specific areas of work and the direct outputs of funding, but this section attempts to draw together the overarching achievements of the area based approach of EC1 NDC.**

## Quality services for the whole neighbourhood

One of the most famous buildings of the old Borough of Finsbury is the Finsbury Health Centre, built by Berthold Lubetkin. It was inspired by the idea that ‘nothing is too good for ordinary people’, and this principle can be seen to run through many of the achievements of the programme. The quality of the services and facilities within the area are within the control of a neighbourhood partnership, and the NDC used much of its resource in raising that quality.

For example, improvement to housing estates, particularly through enhanced estate security and the public realm has largely been based on the idea that high quality design should be at the heart of the approach.

As well as the physical improvements to the area, quality has been raised through innovative projects such as EC1 Connect. This model has worked with a great range of providers to focus them on the needs of individuals in the area, on providing a high quality service to the residents of the area, and connecting that service offer to people and their lives.

*“There is qualitative evidence from client and partner interviews that the EC1 Connect service is a very effective way of engaging with hard to reach clients. Providers in particular considered that the service has increased their reach into the community”.*

In terms of the offer for children and young people, quality has been raised through a combination of capital and revenue support to the area to meet the needs of young people and address the concerns of residents around anti-social behaviour:

*“Historically, low levels of service provision had a negative effect on crime and anti-social behaviour in the area, and as such the need for additional youth facilities has been highlighted as a priority”.*

*“Thanks to EC1...the NDC area is the only one in the borough where youth provision is adequate”.*

## Building local partnerships

The improvement to partnership working across a range of services is a clear legacy of the area focus generated by the NDC.

For example, in the study of the work of the NDC with children and young people, a number of interviewees commented on the fragmented nature of service provision in the area before the NDC arrived. As a result of NDC funding and activity, joint-working between local schools, youth providers and family support services is much more firmly established.

*“There’s been a significant effect – which is not always clear from individual funding – through working with other partners. It may not be directly obvious in the attainment figures, but through the Youth Service and PAYP (positive activities for young people) – more kids have skills and confidence”.*

The NDC has played a ‘neighbourhood management’ role in addition to being a funder. This has not only helped create a high degree of co-ordination and networking amongst service providers, but also allowed it to operate as a neutral broker where problems arise.

## Community leadership

The national NDC programme was designed with a specific requirement to be ‘community led’, though this was not defined in detail. This has led to discussions and disputes throughout the lifetime of the EC1 programme as to how this requirement is delivered in practice. It is clear that community leadership means more than solely deciding how money is spent.

There are three ways in which community leadership has been achieved in EC1, and has helped facilitate the success of the programme:

**i. Leadership in governance:** The governance structure of the NDC has included majority resident representation on the board throughout the life of the programme. The board has set direction for the design of the programme and provided momentum; it has delivered stewardship for the programme and quality of life for NDC residents, and has encouraged development of a broader strategic network in the area which is linked to the other achievements of the partnership. It has also developed a succession strategy, and supported that strategy through being involved in the governance of organisations that will remain in the area.

There has been some difficulties however. Electing resident members in the early stages of the programme posed problems, including their legitimacy compared to local councillors and the balance of skills and perspectives on the board. It was recommended to move to an appointment model but that was subsequently challenged by some as not being representative or ‘community led’. The evaluation of governance and strategy highlights the growing effectiveness of the board, but accepts that the NDC as a whole never defined what ‘community led’ should mean in the context of the programme.

In addition to the formal and informal governance role of the NDC, new community groups and charities have been established in the area, and there is improved capacity of local individuals and groups, supported through work with Voluntary Action Islington.

**ii. Leadership in delivery:** The programme has been important in encouraging resident participation in project delivery, from a spectrum of consultation to a partnership of delivery. In some areas, projects have been completely professionally designed and delivered – direct funding for GPs in the area, for example, had little direct involvement with the community in terms of delivery. In other areas, the local community took a much firmer involvement in how a service was designed and delivered. An example of this is the public space strategy of the NDC, where steering groups of residents and professionals were set up for each of the projects, and were involved throughout the whole process of consultation, design and delivery.

The evaluation of the public space strategy, completed in May 2010, highlights the success of this approach:

*“Community involvement has been central to the real successes. Where the local residents and community were actively involved in the design solutions for their public spaces, the local impact of change was optimised. Cumulatively, the improvement in how people feel about their local area and their sense of pride is a significant and highly positive outcome of the public space enhancements”.*

In other areas, the project aim has been to support residents in delivery, for example community gardening work. This has created a network of volunteers and built the capacity of 13 groups to improve the local environment.



**iii. Leadership in focus:** The advantage and consequence of the ‘area-based’ rather than ‘service-based’ approach is more attention has been given to an area that was not previously on the radar of some central Islington services. This achievement can be seen in a range of ways across the life of the programme and the NDC is an example of leadership through the championing of a neighbourhood.

The EC1 area has become a much clearer and more identifiable brand over the lifetime of the programme. An emphasis on the high quality of communications and events has resulted in the NDC’s resident focussed magazine having a high penetration in the local area, and the area itself being defined as EC1 by local shops, newspapers and residents. Events such as the EC1 Summer Festival and the EC1 Pride in Our People Awards have highlighted the strengths and positives of the area, and done so in a way that involves large and diverse sections of the community.

## Lessons learnt

The successes of the programme have, therefore, been around developing and building upon the local **neighbourhood infrastructure**. The programme has not, however, been all successes; NDCs were designed to try new approaches, and there have been a number of important lessons learnt from the ten years of the programme.

- In working in partnership with a range of stakeholders and institutions, there have been some clear local benefits and improved services. This approach meant that the NDC did not invest in locally owned **assets** like other programmes and therefore, in the absence of public funding, local groups are less able to use such assets to fund projects and services.
- **Revenue funding** has posed serious questions for a time limited programme. As highlighted above, some of the great successes of the programme have been in terms of investing in the infrastructure of the area. This can be in terms of the capital of the area (as one of the studies highlights below) but it can also be in terms of other kinds of infrastructure. Revenue funding, therefore, should have been more tightly focussed on supporting infrastructure investment or on piloting innovative or different solutions to local problems.

*“A theory of change needs to take into account the essentially temporary nature of the NDC programme: even where there is a successor body, programme expenditure is (largely) limited to 10 years... it could be argued that capital investment has a greater chance of affecting educational provision in the long term than revenue-based interventions”.*

- These points are strongly connected to the need to consider the end of the programme from as soon as the programme starts. **Succession planning** should have started sooner, and should have been a stronger factor in deciding what to fund.
- The programme could have widened **participation** by connecting more closely with a layer of active community members beyond those on the board. This would have helped communicate the role and funded activities of the NDC, and ensured more resident voices were fed back into the decision-making process.

# The next ten years

**NDC programmes were designed to be about the first ten years of transformational change, but also that the momentum of change would continue after the end of funding. Each programme developed a succession strategy, and in EC1 that strategy was designed to build on the key investments of the programme and tackle the remaining problems.**

The independent evaluation studies have each highlighted areas for greater focus: some of these are new challenges, and some are issues the NDC programme was not able to solve during its ten years. However, the funding climate is much more challenging than anticipated and this has been compounded by the lack of an independent income stream from NDC assets. The following key priorities emerge from our review of the evidence and experience.

- Getting the model of neighbourhood working right: To protect the EC1 NDC legacy, it is important for there to remain a recognisable area-based structure but this could take a number of different forms. Whichever form is chosen, it is important that all sections of the community are involved in setting priorities, and for civic and cultural organisations to play an equal role to the statutory partners. It could also be possible to create more cost-effective, joined-up and visible services on an area basis, using the improved local facilities as hubs for activity.
- A focus on skills development: Poor skills are the missing link in tackling many of the remaining issues – such as child poverty, youth unemployment and worklessness. A more personalised approach has been started by EC1 Connect and the Support Fund, and the adult learning centre at Three Corners is an important resource. There are a number of avenues with further potential, including: better careers advice; a more targeted early years service; re-focusing youth work on basic skills; and clearer pathways to intermediate skills.
- Continuing the physical regeneration of the area: Although there has been a marked improvement in the quality of the public realm, some of the more structural problems of the area were not addressed in the lifetime of the NDC programme (such as area around Finsbury Leisure Centre). Over the coming years, the Bunhill and Clerkenwell Area Action Plan (AAP) will provide a framework for tackling these, and should create ways for the local area to better benefit from commercial development. A map of proposed development frameworks for the area is shown in figure 3.
- Maximising the benefits of location: The EC1 area has a number of key assets, including street markets, an open townscape, and a range of local and national organisations. It also benefits from its location close to the City of London and Central London. More concerted attempts to link these assets to the challenges of the future will be important, whether encouraging Corporate Social Responsibility, accessing employment opportunities, or even releasing value from land.

The EC1 area is unlikely to benefit from equivalent levels of additional public sector resources in the foreseeable future. However, with care and attention and some local resource it has a bright future - it could become an exemplar of equitable and diverse inner London living.

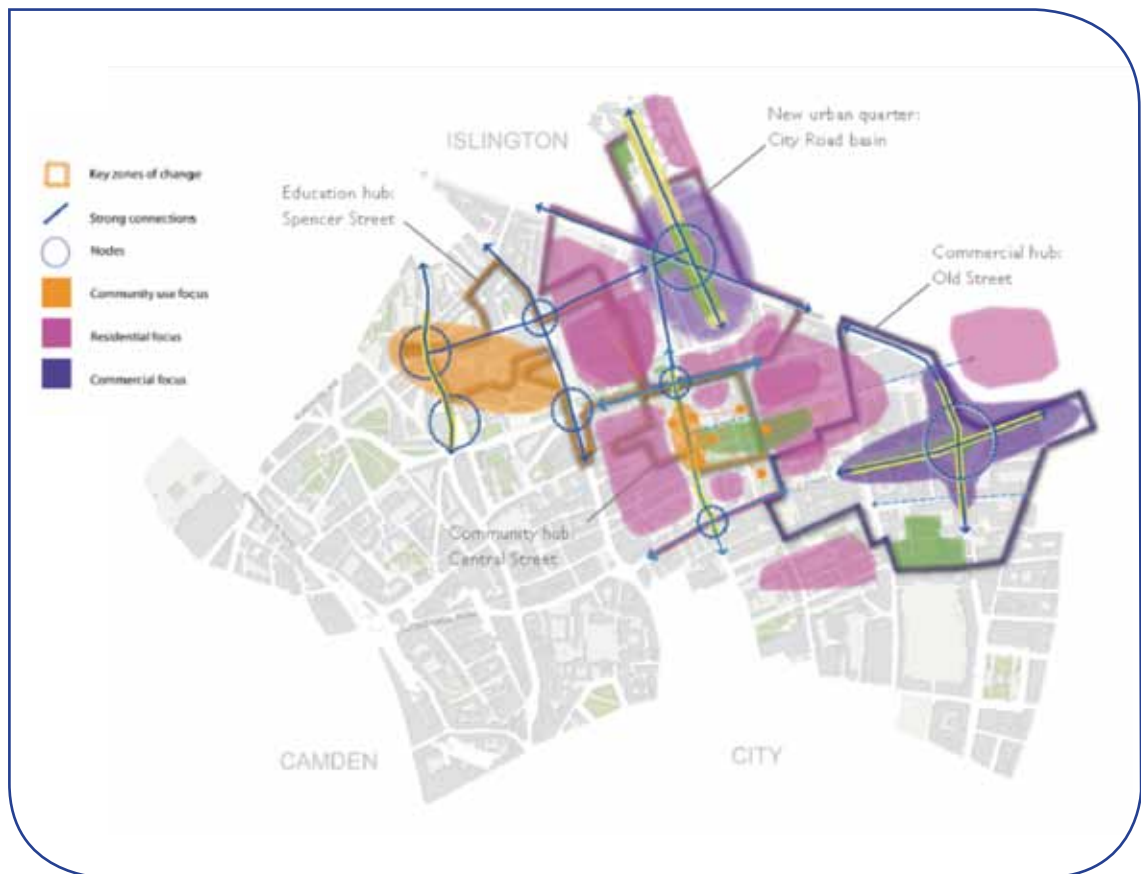


Figure 3 - Map of proposed future development framework for the EC1 area

## References

### Internal data and resources

- EC1 Objectives and Key Performance Indicators
- Narrative of change and the impact of EC1 NDC (Annex 1A to Succession Strategy)
- EC1 History Project [www.ec1history.co.uk](http://www.ec1history.co.uk)
- Ipsos MORI, EC1 NDC Household Survey, 2002-2008
- NDC Administrative Data

### Independent evaluations

- EC1 Public Space Strategy Evaluation, *Urban Practitioners*, May 2010
- Evaluation of the impact of EC1 New Deal for Communities on children and young people in the EC1 area, *GFA Consulting*, June 2010
- Evaluation of the impact of EC1 New Deal for Communities on worklessness and adult skills, *Cambridge Policy Consultants*, June 2010
- Review of strategy and governance for EC1 New Deal for Communities, *GFA Consulting*, August 2010



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