

NextGen Panel

Session 1 report

Held on 13 March 2025



UNIBAIL-RODAMCO-WESTFIELD





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Introduction

Workshop 1

About the panel

On 13 March 2025, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield (URW) held the first session of its NextGen Panel. The NextGen Panel is a new youth-led initiative that brings together 25 young people, aged 16–25, who live, work, or study in Croydon. The panel aims to harness the insight, energy and ambition of local young people, creating a space for them to contribute directly to the regeneration plans.

How the panel was formed

The panel was formed following a borough-wide callout, supported by local youth organisations and schools. Following an application process, a selection panel made up of local experts chose a final group of 25 young people from 51 applications received, consisting of:

14
panellists
aged
16–18

11
panellists
aged
19–25

Setting the scene

The first NextGen Panel meeting introduced panel members to each other and the project team. The group heard presentations from URW, Allies & Morrison, and Portas, outlining the context and ambitions for the scheme as well as their roles in the project. This was followed by group discussions and activities based around:



Capturing what young people value in Croydon today



Identifying what they want to see improved



Creating collages to express their vision for the future



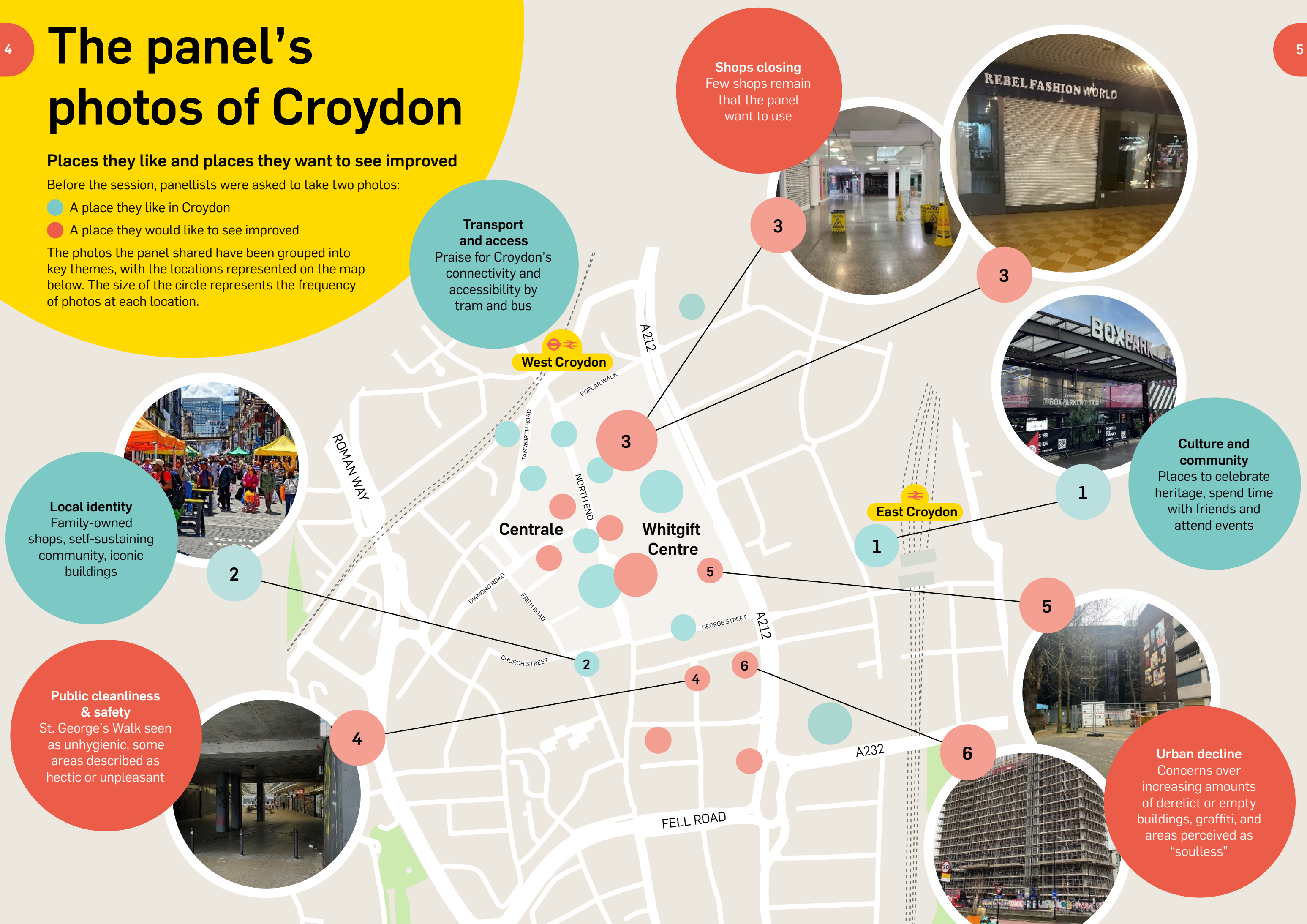
The panel's photos of Croydon

Places they like and places they want to see improved

Before the session, panellists were asked to take two photos:

- A place they like in Croydon
- A place they would like to see improved

The photos the panel shared have been grouped into key themes, with the locations represented on the map below. The size of the circle represents the frequency of photos at each location.



The panel's collages

The panel worked in groups to create collages that represent their vision of Croydon five years in the future. Panellists were encouraged to describe their dream neighbourhood, with no limits on what they came up with. Each individual collage is shown, with a description of what the artwork shows, and the how panel members described their work. There are also key themes taken from across all the collages, which are represented through collated clippings taken from each group's work.



The words and imagery capture a clear excitement for what Croydon could be in five years' time. A focus on successful Croydon exports, including Stormzy and Crystal Palace, demonstrate a long-standing pride in the area.

In their own words

Croydon needs more and **better green spaces**
The vegetables represent the importance of **Surrey Street Market**

Croydon's community represented by **Crystal Palace Football Club and Stormzy**

We're excited about the future and where Croydon can go



Key themes

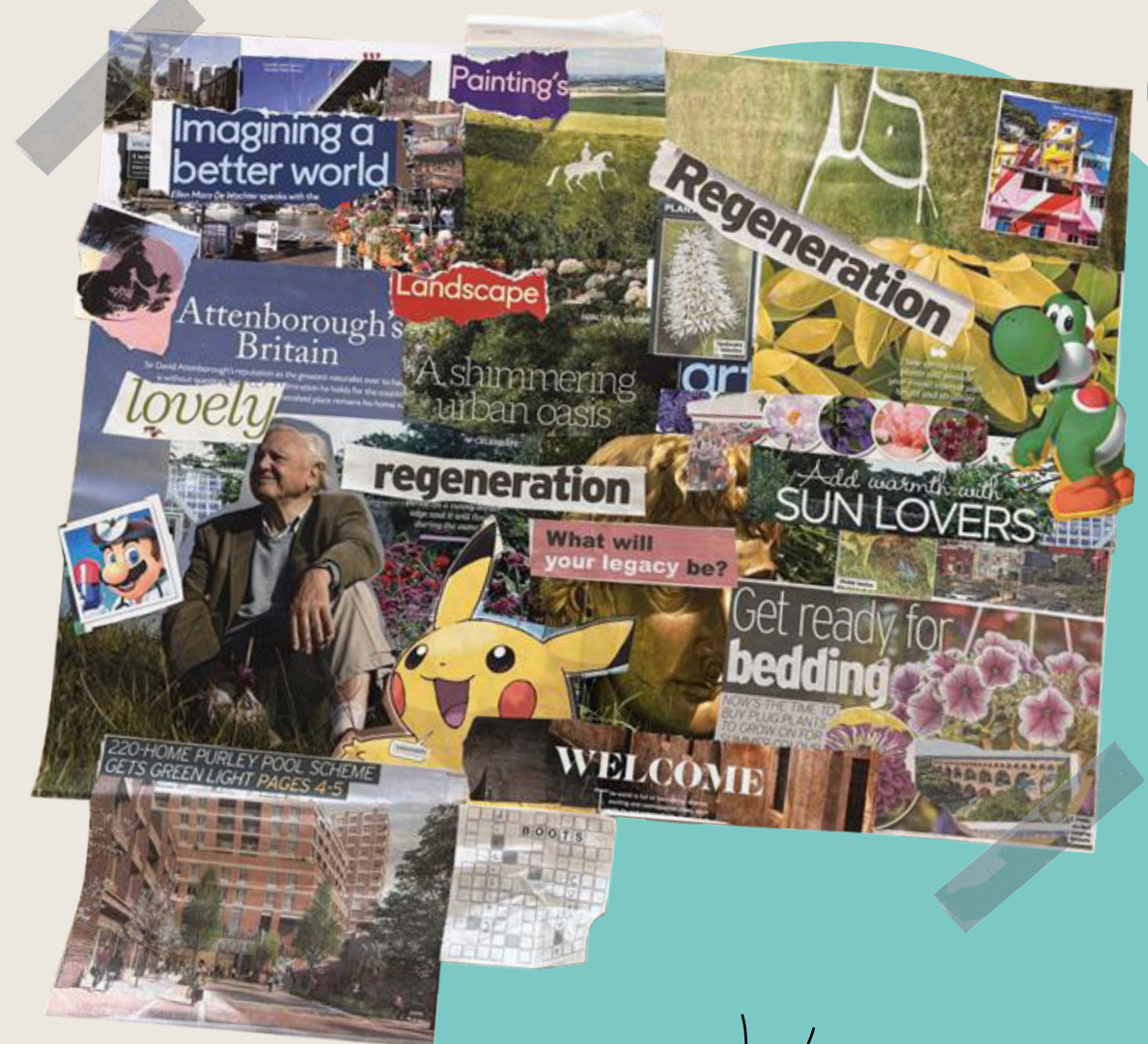
Green spaces and nature

All the groups featured green spaces and access to nature prominently, with pictures of a wide range of greenery used throughout.



Culture and local identity

Local identity and pride in the community was a frequent theme, manifested through the inclusion of photos of the local football club and artists from the area.



This collage focuses on nature, with green, blue and pink featured. "Imagining a better world" and "regeneration" capture the desire for a new start. The playful tone with video game imagery demonstrates a desire for all spaces to be fun and welcoming to all.

In their own words

There should be more **greenery and green spaces**

More playful social clubs and places for young people to have fun

Luxury buildings included to have aspirational homes for local people

Need spaces for people to **play sports and be active**

We want to see an open, **welcoming and diverse** Croydon

Croydon needs **enough accommodation** for all who need it



A collage which features brand placement heavily but reflects on the negative sides of luxury and money. The “First Home” reference reflects the group’s desire to help everyone get onto the housing ladder.

In their own words

The development shouldn’t pollute the area with **too many luxury brands**, but we understand brands are needed to bring people in

Sustainability needs to be central to any plans

Homes are important – not everyone has access to housing and it’s important to help people get on the housing ladder

It’s important to speak out as a **community**

Crystal Palace and sports more generally are important places for young people to blow off energy



Key themes

Housing and homelessness

The need for more housing was understood and supported. The groups supported a mix of housing, including accommodation for those currently homeless, houses and flats, and luxury homes.



This collage presents a blend of urban and natural environments, male and female football icons, holidays versus staying local, a mixture of houses versus flats.

In their own words

Green spaces should be central to the future of Croydon

Nature and **new urban landscape** coming together

Crystal Palace F.C. is a big part of the community

Football is central to Croydon and its identity

A place of **innovation and hope**

We want a **mix of houses and flats** to allow people to live in the accommodation they want



This aspirational collage has captured a softer, friendly tone that places an emphasis on community, greenery and water. References to 'Changing Face' show a desire to see a new start for Croydon, with images of landmark buildings, green spaces and tourist attractions to demonstrate desires to see the town as a destination.

In their own words

The collage incorporates **blues, pinks, greens**

Friendliness should be at the heart of any future developments

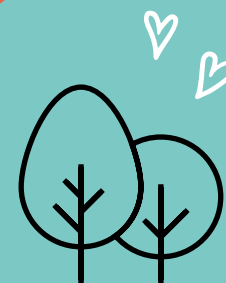
We focused on the mix of **urban and green space**



First session takeaways

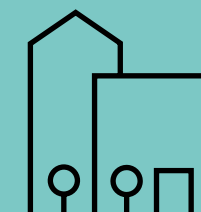
Green spaces

Central to every vision shared



Local decline

Concerns around the increasing number of derelict buildings and graffiti



Community pride

was consistent
Croydon is loved and valued



Want to retain Croydon's urban character

An appreciation that taller buildings suit the town centre



A range of youth spaces matters

Not just large civic spaces but places to hang out, clubs, gaming centres



Support for housing

Want to see the local shortage of housing addressed

What's next

We will be harnessing the energy and enthusiasm showed by the panel by following up with additional sessions throughout the year.

Future meetings will see the panel taken on a tour of the site, share their experiences of Croydon and attend co-design sessions on the masterplan as it develops throughout the year.

Contact details

 URWCroydon.com

 info@URWCroydon.com

 0800 307 7984

