NextGen Panel

Sustainability Workshop

July 2026

Introduction

About this session

The NextGen Panel took part in a workshop led by Arup exploring how Croydon town centre can become a more sustainable, resilient and attractive place for the future. Through group discussions and activities, participants shared their perspectives on Croydon and considered how the town centre can respond to climate change, support healthier and greener lifestyles, while strengthening the unique character and identity that makes Croydon unique.



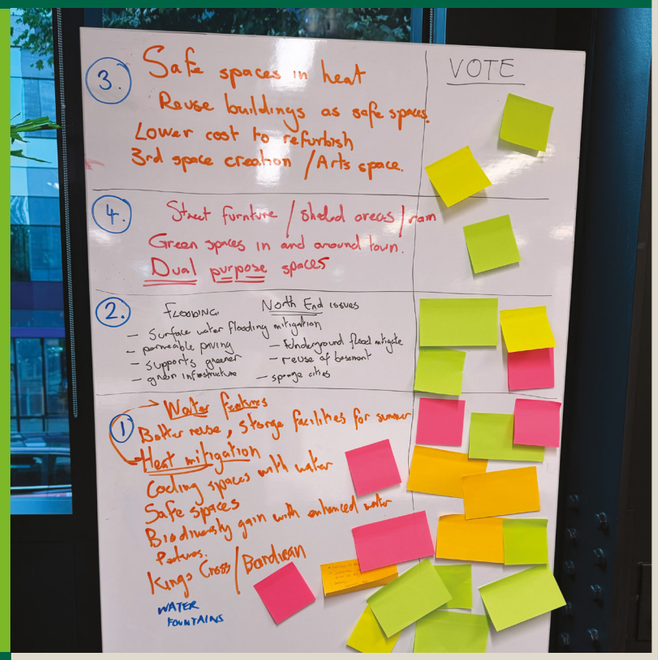
Task 1: Climate resilience

How can Croydon become greener, cooler and more resilient?

Participants explored how Croydon can better respond to climate change by sharing their experiences of the town centre.

They were asked to:

- Brainstorm climate resilience ideas.
- Consider impact, cost, longevity and wider benefits.
- Vote for the measures they most wanted to see delivered.



Ranked list of climate measures

1. **Water-led cooling and biodiversity**
   Integrate water features, cooling interventions and biodiversity enhancements.

2. **Better flood protection**
   Reduce flood risk through sustainable drainage, permeable surfaces, green infrastructure and water reuse.

3. **Welcoming community spaces**
   Create accessible indoor and outdoor spaces that provide relief from the elements.

4. **Improving public streets and spaces**
   Protect Street furniture from rain and heat with canopies providing flexible public spaces that encourage year-round use and wellbeing.

What we heard

North End is already starting to flood, which will likely get worse.

I avoid central when it's hot because it's unbearable, and everywhere costs money.

North End needs more shade, but the trees keep dying from the heat.

Key takeaway

Participants wanted Croydon to become a place that feels greener, cooler and more comfortable, with practical measures that also improve the experience of moving through and spending time in the town centre.

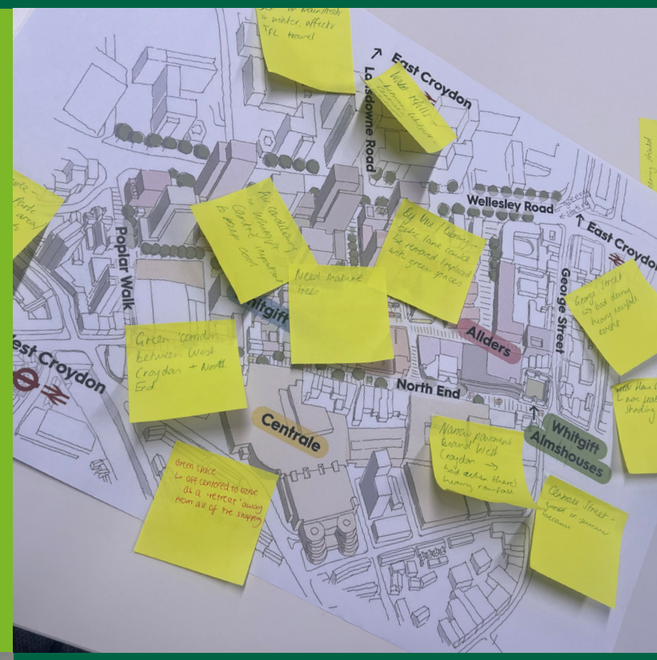
Task 2: Placemaking

What gives Croydon its identity – and how should the town centre evolve?

For the second task, participants explored the places, spaces and experiences that define Croydon's identity today.

This task was designed to:

- Explore what gives Croydon its character.
- Identify the places and assets people feel are worth keeping.
- Build on what makes Croydon feel like Croydon.
- Capture ideas for a town centre that feels distinctive.





Key takeaway

Future development should build on what Croydon already has. Participants welcomed change but wanted investment that celebrates Croydon's heritage, strengthens local character and creates more reasons for people to spend time in the town centre.

What the panel said

1. **Respect local heritage**
   Celebrate historic buildings, landmarks and architectural features that contribute to Croydon's character.

2. **Create places to spend time**
   Provide more cultural, leisure and community destinations so the town centre offers more than shopping alone.

3. **Improve streets and connections**
   Create greener, safer and more welcoming walking routes and public spaces that encourage people to explore.

4. **Grow without losing identity**
   Ensure future development reflects Croydon's unique character, creating places that are rooted in local identity.

Key themes and next steps

The workshop highlighted a clear message from the NextGen: **Croydon should become a greener, cooler and more comfortable place, with climate resilience and placemaking working together to support everyday life and regular use in the town centre.**

What the panel told us

Make Croydon feel greener and more resilient through water-led cooling, biodiversity, flood resilience and more shaded, flexible public spaces

Recognise and respond to Croydon's heritage, using existing landmarks and local character as foundations for future growth and change

Create a thriving and sustainable town centre, with spaces that support local businesses, community activity and cultural experiences

Looking ahead

This workshop will help the project team shape a place that works better for more people and lasts into the future for Croydon.

These conversations are helping to build a clearer picture of what young people think the town centre should look and feel like in the future.

