



Living Roofs

Promoting green roofs
roof terraces and
roof gardens across London

Cover Left Museum Park, Amsterdam; Andersson Architects
Cover Right Clearwater Yard, Camden; AHMM Architects
1 No. One Centaur Street; dRMM Architects/ Solid Space developments
2 Roof terrace, West London



London's most underused a

Sustainable growth within the capital implies far-reaching changes in the way we live and plan our cities.

One of the central aims of the London Plan is to make London more liveable for its residents as its population grows over the next decades. To do this we need to create a higher quality environment, both inside and outside our homes. Inner-city living must be made attractive to a range of different people – families with children, young couples, older residents, disabled people, people from ethnic minorities as well as single person households. This is why we must make more of our existing and future assets with imaginative solutions that respond to everyday needs of space, sunlight and access to open space. As the city becomes denser, with more people living closer together in well connected urban neighbourhoods, access to the outdoors will be at a premium.

Having direct access to open space makes a substantial difference to the quality of everyday life. It provides a sense of visual and physical relief, allowing people to expand their living experience and enjoy the benefits of city living. Well designed, attractive roofs, balconies and terraces provide 'gardens' for homes and add to the social, environmental and economic value of the typical residential unit by providing a space where people can carry out some of their favourite activities –

gardening, growing vegetables, outdoor eating, or simply relaxing and playing in the fresh air – and a place where wildlife can flourish.

Well cared for, attractive and lively external 'private' spaces add to the beauty of the street and the sense of community and local civic pride in an area, promoting social cohesion through visual contact and communication. Many of London's typical urban neighbourhoods – including Georgian and Victorian terraced housing – have the potential for roof gardens and terraces that would make them more attractive to a wider range of potential residents. Similarly, modern, well designed blocks of flats need to include the sort of high quality outdoor spaces that compensate for the lack of a private garden, thereby adding substantially to the quality of life of their residents.

London's most underused asset is just above our heads.

'Living Roofs' – green roofs, roof terraces and roof gardens – can deliver benefits throughout the city for individuals and for society as a whole, by creating new outdoor spaces, enhancing biodiversity, reducing flood risk (by absorbing heavy rainfall), providing insulation and improving the appearance of our cityscape. New construction techniques allow for many different types of Living Roofs, from natural meadows and other

3 BedZed, Beddington, Sedum roof and accessible Sky Gardens; Bill Dunster Architects
4 Green roof, Offord Street N1; Marie Clarke Studio
5&6 Springbok Works, Dalston; Cullinan and Buck Architects
7 The Gap, Golden Lane EC1; USE Architects



Asset is just above our heads

wildlife habitats, to allotments, formal gardens arranged with planters and seating space and even golf courses. But why, when such roofs can provide so many benefits, are they not as common a feature in London as they are in other European cities, such as Paris, Venice, Berlin and Basel?

One reason is that the benefits and types of green roofing are not widely understood within the construction industry. There are no specific standards for green roofing in the UK, so architects and house builders who wish to provide green roofs often have to start from scratch, thereby increasing short-term costs.

More importantly, some assumptions in the UK planning system actively work against providing Living Roofs. Even within our cities, the planning system assumes that privacy for existing residents is the paramount consideration. Roof gardens or terraces, it is often judged, might enable residents to overlook their neighbours or create noise, thereby blighting their lives. Apart from the practical absurdity of this argument – one can overlook from internal windows and from balconies, and excessive party noise can escape from an open window – it misunderstands the nature of cities.

Cities are places of change; we cannot and should not arbitrarily freeze the urban form and layout of the existing city, letting it develop in a piecemeal and dysfunctional manner. Instead, the emphasis should

be on planning the city so that it can adapt to provide liveable communities for all its citizens, while placing an appropriate value on preserving local character and heritage in all its forms.

To make our city better for everyone, it is time to make our roofs places for life.



Liane Harris

Ken Livingstone

Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London



Richard Rogers

Richard Rogers, Chief Advisor to the Mayor of London on Architecture and Urbanism



Next steps

The Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, and his Chief Advisor on Architecture and Urbanism, Richard Rogers, are promoting access to roof space as part of London's urban renaissance. The GLA Environment Team has been promoting green roofs to enhance London's biodiversity and improve building performance. Policies within the London Plan also promote Living Roofs. The GLA will continue to campaign for Living Roofs, particularly through:

- The delivery of relevant mayoral policies and strategies especially; The London Plan; The Mayor's Biodiversity and Energy Strategies; Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan on sustainable design and construction, and on urban design
- Partnership working to promote the benefits of Living Roofs, undertaking demonstration projects, seeking improvements to building regulations and raising awareness
- Encouraging the Government to establish practical ways of supporting Living Roofs across the UK

Further information

GLA information on Living Roofs

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/auu/

Website promoting green roofs and advice on their installation

www.livingroofs.org

London Biodiversity Partnership. Multi-sector partnership working for wildlife

www.lbp.org.uk

Green roofs research advice note

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/living_environment/open_spaces

Building Green, A Guide to Using Plants on Roofs, Walls and Pavements

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/biodiversity/documents.jsp

Planting Green Roofs and Living Walls

Nigel Dunnett & Noel Kingsbury, 2004, Timber Press

'Green roofs: their existing status and potential for conserving biodiversity in urban areas'

English Nature research report 498

www.englishnature.org.uk

Design for Biodiversity LDA, GLA and English Nature publication

www.lda.gov.uk

The GLA Architecture and Urbanism Unit is working with London boroughs and others to:

- Promote high quality architecture and urban design in order to create socially balanced and sustainable communities
- Optimise the potential of London's available sites by linking transport and development opportunities
- Improve London's public realm