While leading Urban Initiatives, Kelvin acted as Project Director, creating an area action plan based on Massive Small principles for one of the largest deprived neighbourhoods in Southwark, established in the 1960s.

15 metre lot subdivisions were used for new housing. These were small enough to allow for a wider range of investors, enabling the resident community and small developers to become part of the area’s regeneration.

A key part of the process was helping facilitating understanding and buy-in from the community for the project’s main aim: to double the density of the site, while retaining the same number of social and affordable, and matching this with the same number of private units.

Kelvin ran ongoing participatory processes with the stakeholders throughout this process. This process emphasized concrete and creative experience, for example, taking community members to seeing density in action in visits to new housing projects in Paris, Glasgow and Dublin.

UI also developed a neighbourhood game to help residents understand the trade-offs between density, location, open space and value by working through these issues themselves. This experiential engagement succeeded in creating a core group of committed citizen leaders. Instead of fearing change, they became champions of change. Post-engagement surveys showed very high levels of satisfaction.

UI brought seven different architects on board — Maccreanor Lavington, AHMM, Glenn Howells, Hawkins Brown, Burrell Foley Fischer, DRMM and Patel Taylor — and created an architects panel. Working according to Massive Small principles, this diversity brought variety and particular skills to challenge and refine fine-grain aspects of the masterplan.

This project was fundamental to developing the Massive Small method of working.

Today, we look to translate the lessons garnered from working in such environments into other urban environments across the world.