

## The Future of Urban Living

### A St George's House Consultation in partnership with Future iQ

#### Context

The future of urban living is an increasingly critical issue given population trends which show more and more people becoming urban dwellers. Cities and their inhabitants are becoming one of the most influential factors shaping the future of the planet. On the current trajectory, by 2050 the urban population is estimated to be 6.3 billion (66% of the world's projected population).<sup>1</sup> Currently 54% of the global population already live in cities. With a further three million people per week moving to urban centres, the future of urban living is an issue we need to explore in depth and prepare for creatively and pragmatically.<sup>2</sup>

The trend towards urbanisation is the result of a number of factors. However, deeper analysis is required to determine the causality and direct correlation between urbanisation drivers and population projections. These drivers differ due to the unique geographic and cultural nuances across the globe, including levels of development and economic maturity. However, the global trend towards urbanisation is not disputed.

Managed correctly, urbanisation and city living could have many benefits. A balanced approach comprising economic, social and ecological perspectives is needed to adapt and transform cities if the necessary infrastructures are to be developed to meet the needs of city inhabitants. It is pertinent and timely to examine thoroughly how the future of urban living will impact on the global population and planet.

Among the significant questions relevant to the future of urban living are:

- What are the implications of climate change for the urban environment? How might these challenges be met? Coastal cities face the threat of rising sea levels, all cities are faced with rapidly changing weather patterns. What steps need to be taken to address the impact of climate change?
- With the majority of the global population living in cities how will the practical needs of the individual be met with regards to housing, transportation and work? How will the urban environment be redesigned so that it is a 'liveable' space? What does this mean for urban planning and architecture?



<sup>1</sup> World Urbanization Prospects Report 2014: United Nations (UN)

<sup>2</sup> World Migration Report 2015: International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- From a sociological perspective, how will a predominantly urban environment impact on social inclusion, cohesion and social order? What will be the impact on the rural environments and aging populations who have been left behind? How will urban living feed the soul?

These are some of the crucial issues cities need to address in light of seemingly irreversible urbanisation.

If the future of cities cannot be one of unsustainable expansion, it should rather be one of tireless innovation. Innovative solutions need to be scalable, replicable and capable of being adapted in a variety of specific urban environments. Some solutions will only be possible due to new technologies while other solutions will apply technology to ideas that are as old as the city itself.

The consultation will offer an opportunity to explore these topics.

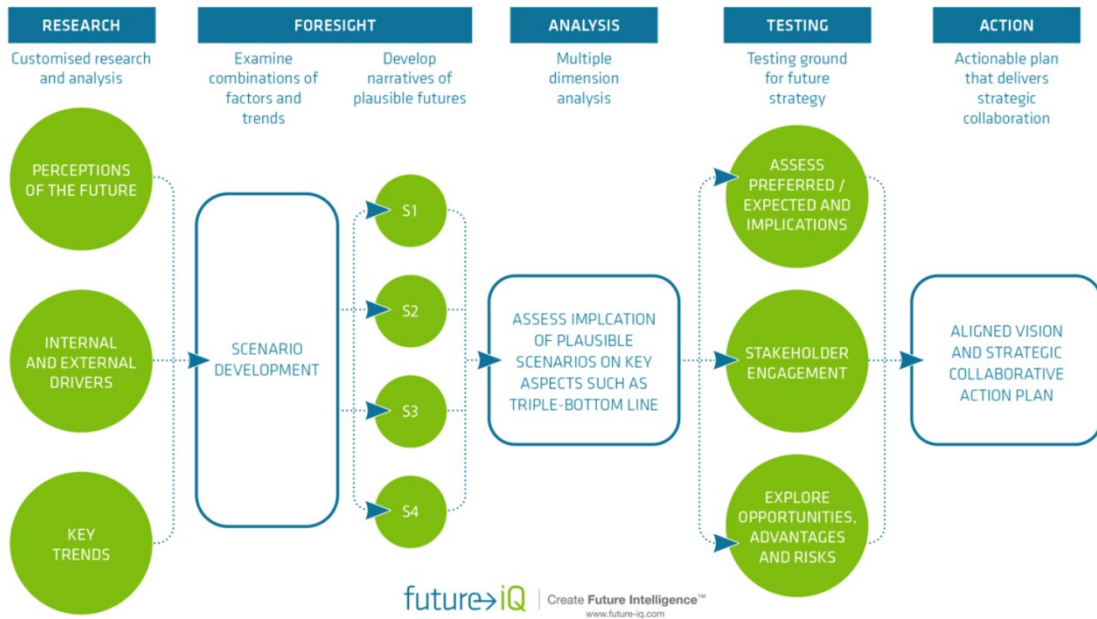
### **Organisation and Expected Outcomes from Consultation**

The consultation will bring together 25 - 30 invited global experts from key areas such as climate change, energy, food, agriculture, urban planning, architecture, transportation, sociology and work. These individuals will bring recognised expertise to the discussion but, equally importantly, a clear sense of the relationship between their expertise and the future of urban living.

The consultation will take the form of a practical scenario driven and foresight orientated process. The key features of the consultation will include a deep exploration into future trends and emergent issues. Key drivers will be identified, clustered and ranked in order to develop plausible scenarios for the future of urban living in 2050. The scenarios will be tested with regards to shocks, opportunities and unexpected events. Plausibility mapping will further test the scenarios.

This process will help participants understand and assimilate the complex and interrelated forces that are combining to shape the future of urban living in 2050. The scenario development throughout the consultation will enable the production of four plausible scenarios of the future of urban living.

The results from the consultation will form The Future of Urban Living foresight paper, which will be published by Future iQ. It is our expectation that this publication will contribute to the larger public dialogue about the Future of Urban Living.



### St George' House

St George's House was founded in 1966 by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh and the then Dean of Windsor, Robin Woods, as a place where people of influence and responsibility from across society can come together to grapple with topics of national and/or international significance.

A St George's House consultation is underpinned by a vigorous exchange of views, open discussion, intellectual rigour, new thinking and, crucially, a willingness to listen. A consultation at St George's House focuses on how to effect change for the better in our society by nurturing wisdom through dialogue.

### Future iQ

Future iQ is an international consulting and research company that works across cultures, sectors and languages in order to provide unique and effective long-term solutions. Future iQ has a global presence across three continents and offers data driven and practical solutions in order to impact and benefit local environments. With a client base that encompasses regions, communities, industry, corporations and organisations, Future iQ helps structure processes that allow for long term systemic and sustainable change. The organisation produces global foresight publications which assist in building understanding about the critical future trends impacting humanity.