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NEW LONDON

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QUARTERLY



Profile: Sir Stuart Lipton
New Londoner: Carolyn Dwyer
Building review: Alphabeta
Top of their game: AKT II
Plus: New London Development Directory

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nla



image by dbox

1

Poultry
Planning decision 2016



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2

-3 Finsbury Avenue
Planning application 2016

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Q4

On site

5

Broadgate
Practical completion 2015



photo by John Madden and Make

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Front cover

Alphabeta

By Hufton + Crow



London, said Val Shawcross during a hustings for the Mayoral candidates and their representatives, is at a crossroads. It certainly is in terms of being on the cusp of a new direction following Boris Johnson's tenure of City Hall. But it is also in the run-up period to the next iteration of the London Plan. And this will be the most crucial yet, according to deputy planner Stewart Murray of the GLA, with the city grappling with the challenges a rapidly growing population throws up.

So this is why NLA and others have been attempting to prepare the groundwork for both the new Mayor as he or she takes up the role and as a new plan is put together. One of these initiatives is MDAG, the Mayor's Design Advisory Group, which has been preparing four key reports on fundamental concerns over the last couple of years, taking guidance, ideas and counsel from leading built environment thinkers and players. Growing London, Public London, Ageing London and Shaping London aim to stimulate new thinking and procedures. Another initiative was a day-long charrette held with Arup to try and garner more blue-sky thinking about what sort of London we want, or could have. Both figure in this issue in a 'Mayoral Matters' special, along with Robert Gordon Clark's take on the two main candidates for mayor.

Although housing will be the main topic under debate, transport will also be a key battleground, so this issue contains both a special feature on the Streets Ahead series of events, and coverage of housing initiatives including City Hall presentations from NLA's housing winners and, at a domestic scale, the Don't Move, Improve! competition.

There is also a focus on the City, with director of the built environment Carolyn Dwyer profiled, and a separate interview with Stuart Lipton, who has done so much to shape the Square Mile and will do so again with his firm's 22 Bishopsgate 'vertical village'. Our building review this time is Alphabeta, the new-wave office building, where the City meets Shoreditch, while Top of Their Game in this issue is engineer AKT II, which is set to move into the White Collar Factory not a stone's throw away.

With London's development fraternity set to descend on Cannes for MIPIM once more, it is a good time to take stock of what the UK capital has in store. With a fair wind, a favourable economic climate – and the kind of groundwork for the Mayor and London Plan being prepared – that crossroads can not just be negotiated, but passed with élan.

Enjoy the issue.

David Taylor, Editor

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AKT II talk expansion, moving to the White Collar Factory, and working with BIG. By David Taylor



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Our guide to the companies and properties in London, complete with agents' views on specific areas

WORKING WITH OUR MEMBERS TO BUILD A BETTER LONDON

"As LCCI President I am proud to lead the largest and most representative business membership body in the capital."

AW Pidgley CBE, LCCI President,
Berkeley Group Chairman

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) is the capital's biggest independent business support and networking organisation and represents the interests of thousands of member companies.

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1. House of Trace by Tsuruta Architects
2. Sanderson House by David Kohn Architects
3. Shepherd's Bush Extension by Studio 30 Architects
4. The Facet House by Platform 5 Architects
5. The Gables by Patalab Architecture
6. The Fitzrovia House by West Architecture
7. College Road by Russian For Fish
8. Extension One by Denizen Works
9. Nook House by Mustard Architects

Don't Move, Improve!

The House of Trace by Tsuruta Architects clinched top spot as overall winner of NLA's 'Don't Move, Improve!' 2016 awards.

The Lewisham house, which also scooped the Most Innovative award, showed a true understanding of the building's individual history while also creating a beautiful new series of spaces for the owners, said the judges. The innovative use of materials demonstrates how design on a budget can look luxurious – and how a considered use of space and light can 'make the heart race' even in a domestic interior. Taking its cues from the existing sloped profile of the building, Tsuruta Architects intelligently reworked the design of the house to create a stand-alone piece of contemporary architecture.

In second place, the Sanderson House by David Kohn Architects

was selected for its playful approach to the client's brief of extending and reorienting their home. Colourful bricks and witty details meant that this project stood out from the competition as an exemplary piece of design. The third-place winner of the awards was the Shepherd's Bush Extension by Studio 30 Architects, which was chosen for its modest yet refined attitude. The project's large and continuously folding doors and windows allow the garden and dining areas to blur into one.

Elsewhere, The Facet House by Platform 5 Architects won the Best Interior award for its elegant shifting internal walls that completely transform rooms. Best Use of Materials went to The Gables by Patalab Architecture, with its generous spaces defined by a continuous polished concrete floor and subtle timber screens. The Fitzrovia House by West

Architecture scooped the Best Historic Intervention prize, which sensitively inserted an entirely new structure within a bomb-damaged Georgian house dating back to 1766. The Most Cost Effective award was split between three exemplary projects: College Road by Russian For Fish, Extension One by Denizen Works and Nook House by Mustard Architects – each proving just how much quality can be achieved with a small budget.

NLA chairman Peter Murray said: 'The standard of 'Don't Move Improve!' continues to rise each year. Architects and clients are meeting the challenges presented by London's heritage with stylish and complementary designs. Land is London's most valuable resource and we must use it efficiently; modification through innovative design can deliver better and more sustainable living space.' ■

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The quarter

A quick compendium of the more important stories affecting London development over the last few months

Buildings

London mayor Boris Johnson approved the controversial £300m **Blossom Street** project, masterplanned by Allford Hall Monaghan Morris. The scheme, a 32,000 sqm redevelopment for British Land which had been initially turned down by Tower

Hamlets Borough Council, includes seven buildings consisting of office space, retail units and 40 flats. Sellar Property withdrew its proposal to build a new supertall tower in **Paddington** designed by Renzo Piano, saying it was having a rethink after public consultation. **The Serpentine** announced that the 2016 pavilion will



In full bloom - Boris Johnson approved the controversial £300m Blossom Street project



BGY's Yalding House, Fitzrovia

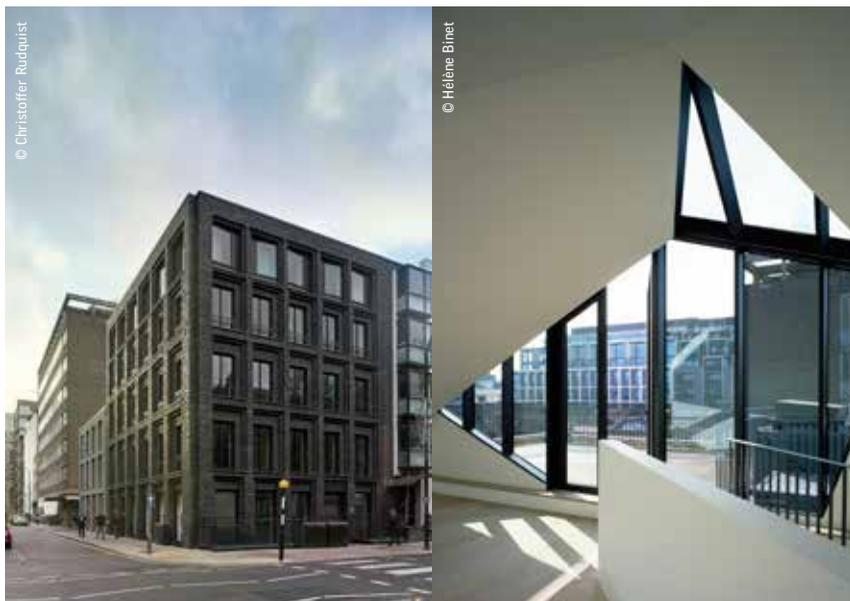
be designed by Bjarke Ingels Group. The project will also include four summer houses designed by Kunlé Adeyemi; Barkow Leibinger; Yona Friedman; and Asif Khan. Buckley Gray Yeoman completed the 2,510 sqm refurbishment of **Yalding House** in Fitzrovia for British Land. Farrells proposed six new low-level river crossings between Surrey Quays and Thamesmead. DSDHA completed **Corner House**, its new building on Charlotte Street for Derwent London.

Policy

Prime Minister David Cameron announced £140m funding to regenerate run-down housing estates.



BIG's new Serpentine pavilion – designed with AKT II, profiled on page 54



DSDHA's Corner House on Charlotte Street – private and affordable homes with commercial

Oxford Street breached legal limits for a year's worth of pollution – after just the first four days of January. *The Guardian* newspaper put its Midland Goods Shed plan on hold due to growing losses. Developers that fail to swiftly build properties after winning planning permission should face stiff penalties, the Local Government Association suggested. Some 475,000 homes with planning permission were not completed in 2014-15. The Housing and Planning Bill went through parliament, with some arguing it will increase inequality and solely benefit the private sector.

People

RIBA chief executive **Harry Rich** resigned from the Institute. Meanwhile RIBA president **Jane Duncan** weighed into the controversy over The Garden Bridge, suggesting that the National Audit Office should look into its procurement. Tributes were paid to leading Scottish architect **Gareth Hoskins**, who died aged 48. Pocket CEO **Marc Vlessing** met up with PM David Cameron and London Mayoral hopeful Zac Goldsmith to discuss housing policy for the capital. TfL pair **Isabel Dedring** and **Richard De Cani** joined Arup, the former as global transport leader, the latter after his involvement with The Garden Bridge. **Richard Wilson** was named as co-ordinator for the RA's Summer Exhibition this year. GVA Bilfinger appointed Gerry Hughes as its new chief executive.

Awards/Competitions

Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena won the **Pritzker Prize** for 2016. The **Museum of London** appointed Malcolm Reading Consultants to run a two-stage international design competition for the £150 million West Smithfield galleries project.

Viewpoint

As NLA and GL Hearn reveal new data showing an increasing number of tall buildings in the pipeline for London, which way now for tall buildings?

By David Taylor



Claire Graham

Strategy coordinator
– associate director,
GL Hearn



For the third year in a row, GL Hearn (now part of Capita Real Estate) has partnered with New London Architecture on the annual London Tall Buildings Survey. It is evident from our research that tall buildings play an important role in London, providing much-needed housing and commercial space in a city with limited available land.

When considering what is next for tall buildings in London, the key question is where they should be located to maximise development opportunities. We also need to understand what mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that future tall buildings are considered on a strategic scale.

To date inner London has largely been the main draw for tall buildings. Clusters in London are supported by policy and land values are at their highest, justifying the cost of going tall. However, as new transport infrastructure is built across London, it is important to consider how areas beyond inner London can maximise the opportunity of this new investment.

Harnessing transport investment means London could support economic hubs outside the centre, easing congestion on existing infrastructure and contributing towards overall housing targets – all while using less land. Such developments would need careful consideration to ensure that any additional height in the outer boroughs will provide much-needed housing and commercial space while also ensuring they respect the character of the area.

New developments must also be designed to serve the communities they are built for – which means good placemaking.

Karen Sullivan

Service director
– planning and
development,
LB Islington



The current mantra is that London must grow ever upwards to provide new homes and jobs. However, at a London-wide level, no one seems to be thinking about how this growth can benefit ordinary Londoners. The debate about whether London needs more tall buildings often focuses on the impact that these buildings will have on the London skyline, or on the places where they hit the ground. The current deficit of strategic thinking on these unarguably important issues is borne out by even the most casual glance at the London skyline or a visit to some parts of London where borough boundaries meet.

Equally importantly, a truly strategic approach must consider what tall buildings mean to the inner-city communities that live in their gleaming foothills. In a city in the grips of a spiralling housing crisis, tall buildings are often the repositories of uninhabited and unvisited buy-to-leave apartments. The buildings themselves are often designed to be appealing and recognisable to investors as they are hawked abroad. To a Londoner struggling to buy or rent a home these buildings must appear alien and unlikeable.

Perhaps we could learn from places like New York where developers are permitted to add extra storeys to new buildings if the local context allows, and they provide more affordable homes for local people?

Local communities will accept tall buildings if they are well designed, respect the local context, and provide substantial community benefits including affordable homes. I hope that the new Mayor of London will adopt a strategy for tall buildings that considers who they are for, as well as what they will look like.

Gwyn Richards

Head of design,
City of London
Corporation



The challenge of sustaining London's rapid growth means tall buildings will be one of the tools necessary to deliver essential commercial and residential floor space in the capital. In the Square Mile it is difficult to see how office space demands could be provided without a number of tall buildings in the City cluster absorbing the demand.

It is, however, essential to have a coherent clustering approach to tall buildings which respect protected views across London. In the City, new schemes are consolidating the City's tall building cluster as a single sculpted urban form which acts like a pressure valve, allowing the City to continue to develop while deflecting development pressures away from our historical areas, the City's soul.

Wider public acceptance of tall buildings is dependent on new tall buildings contributing to the wider public interest, to engage with all the communities rather than being inhospitable and inward-looking. Tall buildings have long been associated with exclusivity, be it corporate or luxury housing. This has to change.

New tall buildings should be approachable and inclusive with an engaging, vibrant interface of active uses at street level, new pedestrian routes and generous high-quality public realm. We are negotiating free public viewing galleries on many of our new schemes in the City, allowing all members of the public to access the elevated views.

In this way, the new generation of tall buildings in London should become assets valued by the wider community, rather than regarded as exclusive impositions on the skyline.

Barbara Weiss
 Director, Barbara Weiss Architects



Hopefully, it is a passing fad. An expensive, reckless, mindless one. But then, every era makes its own mistakes, stubbornly and blindly refusing to learn from the past. The 2010s legacy will no doubt be a clutch of incongruous, badly designed, and irresponsibly built, residential towers, either scattered across the capital, as if dropped there by accident, or uncomfortably clustered in tightly knit configurations, a jumble of shapes, huddling together for support. Shiny and new when first revealed, they soon become stale and battered, sad dark monuments to a moment of madness, their original aura of magnificence lost within a decade.

It is real ‘emperor’s new clothes’ stuff. London, the city of so many successful, creative evolutions, will, this time round, find it difficult to shed these clumsy monsters, as the private residential tenure limits demolition, and impedes corrections.

We are heading towards an urban disaster that has come about for no rhyme or reason, except financial greed.

London’s future towers must be in locations appropriately distant from much-loved conservation areas and the fine grain of our historic landscape with its unique landmarks. Part of detailed masterplans that thoughtfully designate hierarchies of spaces and buildings, they must contribute to placemaking, their height compatible with immediate and distant context; they must be green, not ‘green-wash’.

Most importantly, they must deliver obvious benefits for the whole of London, not just for the one per cent.

We know all these things well. We must now deliver.

Neven Sidor
 Partner, Grimshaw



Imagine Argent at King’s Cross telling every tenant to wait for all masterplan buildings to be completed before occupation. This is absurd, but in the world of tall buildings it is routine. Developers need very deep pockets or exceptional tenants. For these reasons one of our clients instructed us to proceed with a building a third of the height of our consented Minerva Tower on the same site. Why can’t you phase a tall building like Argent are phasing King’s Cross? Why can’t you build as much building as you need when you need it?

‘Why can’t you build as much building as you need when you need it?’

We believe the future of commercial developments is to do exactly this. We have proposed a scheme and tested it to destruction with help from Brookfield Multiplex, Thornton Tomasetti and Alinea. Is the first phase still viable with the structural costs of what it must one day carry? It is. Is there an equivalent lifting strategy? There is. Will first-phase occupiers be put off by construction work higher up? They would be less inconvenienced than by construction on a neighbouring plot, with clever use of internal shafts, a basement marshalling area and permanent phased crash decks.

We call this The Vertical Masterplan, a way for developers to minimise their exposure to risk while maximising returns from a single site, and for the skyline to grow more organically over time.

Rob Partridge
 Director, AKT II



The enduring typology of the tall building evokes debate across many agendas, not least striking a rather primordial chord with the engineering fraternity. However, we have come a long way since the 70s with high-rise becoming commonplace as the industry becomes more adept at this construction, thus finally escaping the banal arguments about how ‘special’ they are.

As is the subject of much commentary, this industry confidence needs careful control and if London is to keep its enduring identity, this building type needs to play a far more integral role in the social urban fabric. Outside the periphery of core London we are getting better at this, and it is perhaps in these new suburban cluster typologies where the tall building can work as part of a holistic neighbourhood, genuinely invigorating urban life.

Conversely, we need to address the inner city’s current density, where the notion of reinventing our existing fabric is now being put into practice at a high-rise scale. An 11-storey addition to Seifert’s 1972 King’s Reach Tower of 30 storeys has opened up a new spectrum of development potential, where the same technological advances that have paved the way for the international ‘super-tall’, are now releasing latent capacity of our city’s past.

The sustainable evolution of this ideal raises the question as to whether we will be able to extract a similar resilience out of today’s designs in 50 years? If future trends call for the upgrading of existing assets from residential to other functions, this challenge is significantly magnified.

Oliver Wainwright

Architecture
and design critic,
The Guardian



Tall buildings can lift the spirits and stir the soul, standing as soaring marvels of man's skyward ambition. So why does a stroll down the emerging gauntlet of City Road, or a wander up the canyon of Stratford High Street, or a jaunt to Nine Elms' riverside 'cluster' leave the visitor with a sense of such crushing despair?

Perhaps it's because we don't have enough towers. Might the lonely cigarette butt of Broadway Malyan's Vauxhall Tower begin to make more sense when it is joined by a thicket of other competing novelty silhouettes, its sickly green glass drowned out by a riot of other garish cladding systems? Might Stratford High Street provide a thrill when its plasticky totem poles stand shoulder to shoulder along the A11, providing an endless 'gateway' to the Olympic legacy-land?

Or is the problem that there are too many towers? Surely the power of The Shard comes from its stand-alone presence as a singular splintered talon, standing as south London's bolshie middle-finger riposte to the might of the City across the river. Adding yet more towers around London Bridge, forming a Shardy cluster, would kill it.

The truth is that the main issue with London's tall buildings is none of the above. The problem is what's spawning them. They are extruded diagrams of inflated land values, empty stacks of investors' safety deposit boxes, and the results of the Faustian pact of planning gain: priapic shafts often massaged ever taller by the planners themselves to maximise Section 106 payments. Until these wider forces are tackled, the future is tall and not very pretty.

Michael Walters

Managing director,
London, AHR



The current wave of new and planned tall buildings in London seem to be a reaction to a change of attitude and the call for greater densification. There is no doubt that the forecast growth in population over the next decade demands this. Tall buildings, in many ways, provide a better solution environmentally than large footprint mid-rise developments, although they still produce impacts that need to be carefully considered and addressed. With any densification the greatest challenge is to ensure that the transport, public services, health, education and infrastructure provision are embedded in the development masterplan and that there is a clear vision for how this will enhance neighbourhoods over the next 20-30 years.

The challenge for tall buildings is to ensure that they can provide an economic and sustainable solution that isn't predicated on inflated land and sales values. Tall residential buildings as a safe investment proposition for overseas money are not part of the long-term sustainable future for London.

In the research paper 'Effective & Sustainable Tall Buildings: A Blueprint for the Future', produced for the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, the principle of exploring the environmental, social and economic sustainability (planet/people/profit) of a tall building proposed a new methodology for quantifying design options in terms of capital and whole life costs, spatial efficiency, embodied and operational carbon and fit for purpose criteria such as comfort and adaptability.

Lukasz Platkowski

Principal, Gensler



As London predicts an increase of two million people over the next 15 years, the question is not 'IF', but 'HOW' it should grow tall, as a way to create sustainable, liveable density while avoiding sprawl into the green belt.

The discussion needs to expand from buildability and aesthetic matters such as shape, facade and materials to include the urban context, community integration and, most importantly, the requirements of the end user.

As a result of rapid changes in the nature of work and lifestyle – and the growing emphasis on health and wellbeing – the end user of tall buildings is no longer satisfied with a one-size-fits-all centre-core floor-plate. Benefits traditionally associated with low-rise developments are now expected in tall buildings: easy access, flexibility, external gardens, natural ventilation, proximity to public spaces and amenities, the choice between privacy and interaction.

Driven by the needs of communities, mixed-use towers are fast becoming the most innovative, responsible and sustainable designs, occupied 24 hours a day. Several typologies (residential, hospitality, commercial and headquarters) are stacked on top of one another and linked by shared amenities such as gyms, cafés, restaurants, meeting rooms, outdoor spaces, theatres, auditoria etc.

Controlled development of mixed-use high-rise clusters or 'vertical cities', located strategically along transport nodes, should become the new paradigm for tall buildings. These vertical cities use land intelligently, leverage transit networks, encourage walking and biking, and deliver urban authenticity.

What they said

Some of the best quotes and facts from NLA speakers and, opposite, across the twittersphere via hashtags

For more live tweets and quotes from NLA events, follow the hashtag #nlalondon. For write-ups, go to www.newlondonarchitecture.org/news

‘So much of consultation is just telling people what’s going to happen’

Yolande Barnes #growingLDN_MDAG

‘There’s nothing un-London about high densities’

Sunand Prasad, MDAG
#growingLDN_MDAG

‘Almost 1m sq ft of offices have been lost through permitted development rights in two years since 2013’

#growingLDN_MDAG

‘There is a danger that you do regeneration one cappuccino at a time’

Haringey councillor Alan Strickland
#NLATownCentres

‘The good news is that buildings are going to have to be a lot more interesting. We’re going to have a lot more fun.’

Jack Pringle on the future office.
Roundtable session on the workplace

‘Think about streets as you would about your own sitting room’

Social Research Associates director Kris Beuret, Streets Ahead Breakfast Talk

‘Women and children are who you need to keep in mind when designing cycling policies. We have to focus on those who do not cycle now’

International Transport’s Philippe Crist,
Streets Ahead Breakfast Talk

‘A road is not just for movement; it is about space in London’

TfL commissioner **Mike Brown** at the opening of the Streets Ahead exhibition

‘Yes, we can go out and build a building, but can we actually manage it and offer a great service provision as well?’

Argent partner **Richard Meier**. PRS

‘The clone high street is dead’

John Lewis property director **Jeremy Collins**. Regeneration of town centres #NLATownCentres

‘In the last three years, the use of white vans has gone up by 13% in London’

Deborah Saunt #goodgrowth

#NLA



Good to visit @nlalondon this morning and see the Future Streets exhibition – we need long-term solutions for roads

@MayorofLondon - Boris Johnson

‘Streets account for 80 per cent of public space in London’

#Streets_Ahead @nlalondon @TfL – @EdibleBusStop

Nice to hear @deborahsaunt raise the profile of #pedestrians at @nlalondon

#goodgrowth – @Jack Skillen

Victor Callister @nlalondon talk: a London vernacular has emerged that needs to be embraced. ‘Londonness’ is the city’s USP

#GoodGrowth – @EllaKilgallon

‘A city is much more than just its buildings. London is about neighbourhoods’

#growingLDN_MDAG – @thinkingcity - Yolande Barnes

Excellent #StreetsAhead lunchtime talk at @nlalondon on #cycling great exhibition too! Love the user surveys!

@LMcWells



Fit for purpose

Peter Murray muses on one of the big issues facing London and other major world cities – wellbeing

I was pleased that wellbeing came high on the agenda during NLA's charrette on the next London Plan – particularly at a time when London's pollution levels were hitting record highs.

Wellbeing is a vital topic moving up the political agenda, prompted in part by local authorities taking over public health responsibilities in 2013. It is also a key issue for built environment professionals and building occupiers. Speaking at NLA's annual City of London conference, former DEGW chair Despina Katsikakis, suggested it was the most important concern of businesses. She said 'the big game changer' will be WELL Building Certification. It is also an important subject for planners and transport engineers as the national bill for dealing with obesity and related illnesses skyrockets.

An excellent report by the World Green Building Council showed that absenteeism in the US is costing employers over \$2,000 per employee per year respectively. Mental health issues cost UK employers £30 billion a year through lost production, recruitment and absence.

In 2014, the BCO published its report on the business case for wellbeing. While the All-Party Parliamentary Design and Innovation Group studies the benefits of good design, there is overwhelming evidence that the design of an office impacts the health, wellbeing and productivity of its occupants. Research suggests that productivity improvements of 8-11 per cent are not uncommon as a result of improving air quality. Studies consistently show that even modest degrees of personal

control over thermal comfort can return single-digit improvements in productivity. A growing scientific understanding of biophilic design, and the positive impact of green space and nature on mental health, has implications for those involved in office design. In Wisconsin it was found that people in neighbourhoods with less than 10 per cent tree canopy were more likely to report symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety.

Exercise can be encouraged by active design within the building as well as outside: those who cycle to work have fewer sick days. The Mayor's Design Advisory Group, of which I am a member, has proposed that the next Mayor swaps the current Cycling Commissioner for an Active Travel Commissioner, in the belief that the coordination of walking, cycling and public transport is a key transport role in the future. Brompton bicycles are rolling out their own brand of active travel by providing docking stations for Brompton hire at suburban Tube stations.

In New York in 2010 the American Institute of Architects and the Bloomberg administration set up Active Design Guidelines which showed that exercise can be encouraged by a range of design solutions. The list includes visible stairs; office layouts designed to encourage

'Exercise can be encouraged by active design within the building as well as outside'

walking; stairs cut between floors to promote exercise and reduce lift dependency; and the planning of local environment to encourage active travel. Today the Center for Active Design promotes healthier environments and more than 7,000 professionals have been trained in the guidelines. More needs to be done in London to follow New York's example. ■

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Civilising the City

Carolyn Dwyer is director of the built environment, City of London. She talks to Peter Murray

The job spec for the director of the built environment for the City of London is rather different from most local authorities. The key role, on top of looking after transport, public realm, planning and the district surveyors, is to ‘maintain and enhance the Square Mile as a world-leading destination for businesses’. It is very different from Lambeth, where Carolyn Dwyer was working up until six months ago.

‘Lambeth was fascinating because of the cooperative council where we were working really closely with communities to shape their place’, she says. Dwyer oversaw two major projects at the south London borough. One was a programme working with communities and developing cooperative spaces, where very often the community actually looked after the space once it was developed; the other was as chair of the public realm group for Vauxhall Nine Elms.

‘We developed a really ambitious programme of place making because we were converting an under-used semi-industrial space into a new embassy quarter with residential areas and a wide range of businesses. We put together cultural programmes and a really high level of aspiration about the public realm. So I was involved in very different ends of the spectrum in Lambeth, from the community-driven design schemes to designing something for new communities who are not yet there.’

Dwyer was attracted to the Square Mile by the opportunity to work somewhere with important historic

fabric, yet at the cutting edge of providing space for future business.

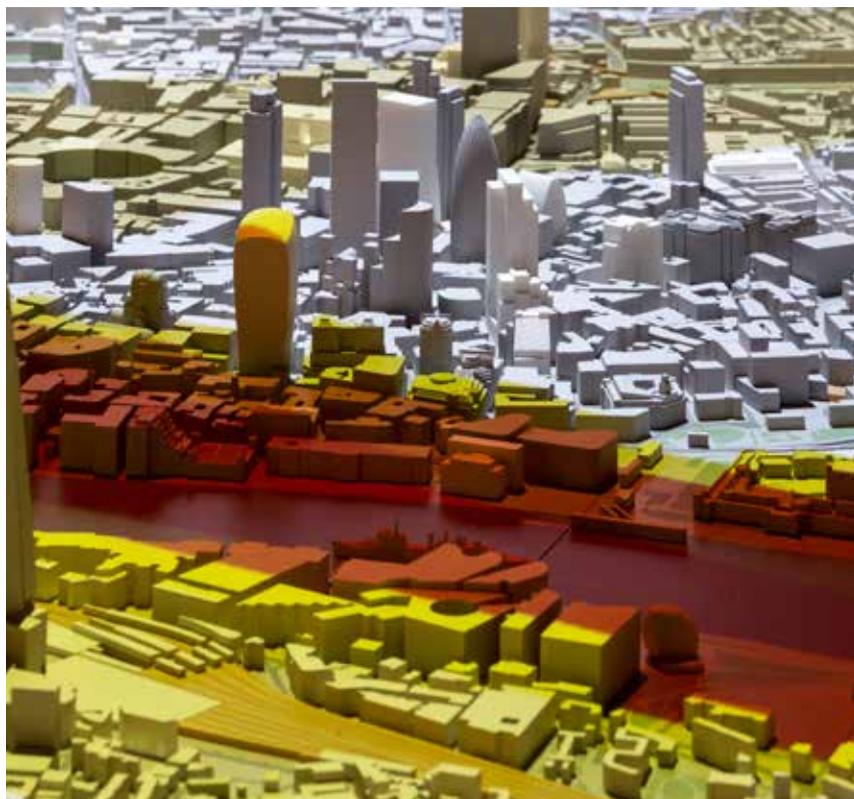
‘You simply could not ask for more in one job. I have always been interested in the City as a member of the Livery [she is a member of the Paviers’ Company]. I had small glimpses as to how the City works through that.’

To maintain the City’s role as a global business capital, the Corporation acts as a development agency and enables development as well as owning a substantial amount of property within the City and beyond.

‘We do have residents, of course’, says Dwyer, ‘and protecting their community is very important, but the vast majority of people are coming here for business. We also have an increasing number coming here for our cultural facilities or for leisure. So we have to balance these factors in a very proper way. We are a planning authority but we pride ourselves on working with developers so that by the time applications come in to the planning process we hope that they will have taken on board our advice.’

The most prominent developments in the City are located in the eastern cluster of towers where the planned ‘Helter Skelter’ has been replaced by proposals for 22 Bishopsgate and the Aviva building is potentially to be demolished to make way for a new tower designed by Eric Parry.

‘We are now looking for a much calmer sort of building. We want buildings that are elegant in their own right and help to complete the cluster. The quality still has to be immensely



The NLA model - the City is developing a 3D model of the eastern cluster

high but we are not going for the ‘end of the pier’ look with lots of different shapes and sizes. We are looking now for a cluster that can be consolidated into a coherent whole, with proper, identified book-ends. The most important change is that our focus is increasingly on how those buildings work at ground level. It is important how they fit together and how the cluster looks as a whole and its impact on the skyline and views, but what really matters to us is the ground level where people most closely interact with those buildings. We are really pushing developers to create spaces underneath their buildings and connections through the buildings.’

The Planning Department has developed a 3D computer model of the City in order to assess the impact of new buildings, particularly in the eastern cluster of towers.

‘The purpose of the model is to show that there are constraints and that there are natural boundaries and edges to the cluster, rather than saying, “what we want is developers to come and fill all this space”. The modelling shows us that there is an end to the cluster. Some people are worried that it will creep and continue to grow. We are sure that there is a proper end and a proper shape and scale to the cluster. That work will be published during the course of this year.

We do know that the cluster will bring more people into the City, so, as well as controlling the skyline, we need to provide support at ground floor level – shops, restaurants, cafés and public spaces. We know from our research that people want open spaces where they can sit and have a coffee, connect to Wi-Fi and actually do some work and transactions in the open

air. We have over 350 open spaces, including church yards, in the City and we are really keen to make the most of them.’

Dwyer sees space as probably the City’s biggest single issue. She is looking at how to provide for the needs of the City of the future – with up to 100,000 more people coming into the Square Mile every day – by creating and managing spaces in a creative way.

‘For a while there was a policy of securing high-level public space and that has started to come through as the buildings are developed. Now we are really clear that we want ground floor space provided as well.’

She is keen to have a discussion with key stakeholders about how space in the City is allocated. Opening in 2018, Crossrail will bring a lot of people who will continue their journey on foot; more and more people are cycling.

‘What we need to do is look at how much space we can reallocate so that people’s experience of the City is safe and enjoyable and they have a good memory of the place whether they are working here, living here or just visiting for business purposes.’

As part of that process, the Aldgate gyratory has been removed and a new public space created. Now major changes are planned at Bank junction.

‘We are doing a huge amount to support and promote cycling right across the City. We are currently enabling TfL and supporting them in the delivery of cycle superhighways, but there are so many cyclists in the City already, with more projected, the next thing for us to do is say that the whole of the City needs to be cycle-friendly. We are beyond saying that we need networks and routes, we need the whole City to be somewhere you can cycle to your destination, feel safe and enjoy the experience.

The number of people cycling is phenomenal. We think in current developments we have around 30,000 cycle parking spaces; the 22 Bishopsgate tower will have 2,300

cycle parking spaces just on its own! We allow two-way cycling on one-way streets in 80 streets already. We are supporting the cycling super-highways, we have introduced 20mph along our streets and we are hosting a conference this year in London to support wider 20mph strategies. And of course when we develop schemes like Aldgate and Bank we are making those junctions safer for cycling.’

One of the key moves by the Corporation is to remove most through traffic from Bank for much of the day.

‘We are hugely ambitious for Bank junction. We would like it to be a square, providing a really world-class setting for the Royal Exchange, Bank of England and Mansion House. You can stand around there now and observe the chaos, the noise and you can taste the pollution; it looks crazy and unsafe; with just people and cyclists, it could be an incredible place. We are implementing the change step by step: working really closely with TfL and looking at how much traffic we can reduce. We want to do an interim scheme for two reasons. One is to do something quickly, because to design a functioning scheme and to test it would take us several years. The second reason is that if we do something quickly we can start to prove how it works and we can build on the findings. Initially it may not look very nice, it will be all Lego, plastic blocks and temporary barriers, but it should give us evidence of how much traffic we can reduce and how much we can change the junction.’

Our overall vision is that we would have something in place by the end of 2016, although at that stage we would still have to allow buses to continue to go through Bank.’

Another major Corporation project is the City Cultural Hub, which will draw together the existing Barbican Centre, Museum of London and Guildhall School of Music to create a coherent

arts offer in response to the impact of the opening of the Crossrail stations at Farringdon and Moorgate. The Cultural Hub project includes a concert hall for London and the Museum’s proposed move to the General Market building.

‘We want to enhance the way that the area looks and feels, to provide a proper setting for a world-class cultural offering, yet the way you approach it is confusing and not very attractive or appealing. One of our biggest challenges and greatest opportunities will be the Beech Street Tunnel. We are looking to change the way it looks and feels. Could there even be shop and restaurant frontages inside that space? Could we reduce the amount of traffic that goes through there?’

The Corporation is currently revising the local plan up to 2036. As well as planning for taller buildings, Dwyer is keen to ensure that the lower-scale buildings receive the same architectural attention and historic buildings are re-purposed in order to be useful in the future, while public spaces are designed to create a coherent whole.

‘We are aiming for a City focused on the pedestrian experience, a safe

city for cyclists with improved air quality. A greener City, cleaner air, more enjoyable experience. The hours of operation might extend. We are already looking at businesses working an 18-hour day in order to achieve servicing, consolidation and all the things that businesses need. We might have to look at 24-hour deliveries.’

‘We are really trying to understand what a smart City means for us; not just smart in terms of technology but smart in terms of design’

‘We are really trying to understand what a smart City means for us; not just smart in terms of technology but smart in terms of design. If we are going to have driverless vehicles, or any other future technologies, how do we design our streets for those to work?’

Our ambition is to fit more into our small space but to make sure it is all of the highest possible standard so that the experience for people coming here is always going to be a good one.’ NL



Dwyer is ‘hugely ambitious’ to transform Bank junction into a square

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Housing London

G15 chair and L&Q chief executive David Montague argues that land holds the key to beginning a volume-housebuilding production line



2015 proved to be a pivotal year for housing associations. The General Election led to big policy changes that some felt could impact on our ability to deliver homes. However, as chair of the g15 group I believe that our role in addressing the housing crisis, from supporting vulnerable Londoners, to helping first-time buyers, can be bigger than ever. But we will need the support of our partners.

Why? It has been said many times before but is worth repeating: London has built far too few homes, for far too long. So it is very welcome to see political consensus that we need to do something about it. Yes, this means that housing evokes strong feelings. Rightly so. Good homes are the foundations of strong communities; they improve life chances and raise aspiration. That is worth investing in, by any measure.

So, to help meet those aspirations and deliver on the priorities of the government, Mayor and our local authority partners, the g15 is making an offer. We are ready to build many more homes if the right conditions can be put in place.

Collectively, we are responsible for building a quarter of London's new homes and have committed to delivering 93,000 in London and the south by 2025. But with additional support we can do much more, perhaps doubling production – an investment worth £50 billion. This would require a new partnership between the Mayor, government and our partners to plan the long-term supply of housing, aligning this welfare policy.

Together we need to create a volume-housing production line

starting with land. If, using their planning and compulsory purchase powers, our partners can guarantee a long-term supply of clean, serviced and consented land, we will guarantee jobs, apprenticeships, economic growth and homes.

However, no one working in the property sector is under any illusions about the scale of the challenge. Recent policy changes for housing associations have led us to look carefully at our businesses. We have changed our development programmes and introduced more housing for sale and rent to subsidise the affordable homes that are so important. And we will be delivering more shared ownership properties and the extended Right to Buy.

'We are ready to build many more homes if the right conditions can be put in place'

Despite these challenges, we are driven to do more. Each housing association is a charitable organisation, committed to helping people in housing need. Finding new ways to deliver the homes London needs is at the heart of our businesses – indeed, we recycle all our business surpluses back into building and managing homes. But we know that we cannot do this alone, which is why we are talking to our partners.

In recent months we have been meeting with London local authorities, MPs, the Mayor's team and the government. We need to explain why we supported the voluntary Right to Buy, but also to understand local housing needs and find ways to address them. Many of our discussions have been positive, because there is a will between partners to get more homes built and to work together.

So, there is an appetite to do more. We want to get on with the job. ■



Small is beautiful

The NLA's 'Don't Move, Improve!' competition unveiled some fresh new names to the London architectural firmament. David Taylor caught up with the top three winners

A competition win is often a defining moment for an architectural practice. It can open doors to new clients through the sudden, bright glow of exposure it brings. It can form the launching pad into a new scale of work. And it can lead to a new phase in a firm's orbit, attracting new talent, followers, and clients.

For the winners of this year's 'Don't Move, Improve!' competition at the NLA, it is perhaps still too early to chart such progress, but for Tsuruta Architects, David Kohn Architects and Studio 30 Architects – first, second and third placed in this year's contest respectively – each can hope to achieve at least one of the above.

Japan-born Taro Tsuruta, who won for his House of Trace (opposite) scheme in Lewisham, was 'honoured' by the 'fantastic' win, ambitious for a future that might involve office projects as well as residential, but at the same time cautious that size must not be the goal for his practice at the expense of quality.

'I have an ambition to be bigger but don't want to push for the sake of getting a bigger job, kind of copy-and-pasting somebody's drawings', he says. 'That's why I'm more focused on hands-on site execution; more delivering quality on site, rather than spending time at the drawing table'. Tsuruta describes how much of his work involves taking control of projects even down to the fabrication of components, to furniture or small metalworks, and how he feels the media's search for 'wow factor' projects ultimately leads to them feeling more disposable. 'In this way I want to balance it, rather than just getting bigger jobs...'

Forty-seven year old Tsuruta trained at the AA and had spells at practices including Michael Hopkins and Partners, Eric Parry Architects, Foster + Partners, EPR and Allies and Morrison, before setting up nine years ago to concentrate mainly on domestic residential projects for private clients. The House of Trace deals in 'memory'

of a previous extension on the same site, and is the second project for the same client, the other being a scheme in Clapham. Today the firm is Tsuruta and two other assistants, but having secured some interest – and email enquiries – at the 'Don't Move, Improve!' opening night, he hopes the next step might be one up in scale. Might it be a turning point? 'Hopefully', Tsuruta smiles. 'I want to get into larger development. I've been doing renovations and extensions in residential and want to do something new. Something a bit more complex.'

David Kohn Architects, which came second with its Sanderson House project, is a different animal, a little further down the line on the 'breakthrough practices' scale. The multi-award winning London-based outfit specialises mainly in arts and education projects, having completed spaces for five leading galleries in the capital. Perhaps its best-known work to date is 'A Room for London', the boat-shaped installation of the roof



DMI winner for his House of Trace, Taro Tsuruta



Stepping up in scale – second placed David Kohn



Keeping it manageable – Studio 30's Henri Bredenkamp

of the Southbank Centre that was created in collaboration with artist Fiona Banner and which won awards from numerous quarters including the RIBA and NLA. But it has also recently made a significant step up in scale terms, winning a competition to design a new quad for New College Oxford with a combination of buildings and landscape that starts on site later this year. And then, says David Kohn, there are the projects at an urban scale, such as Harrow High Street and projects to come in urban strategies, area plans and architecture from being selected for the GLA's framework for architecture, ADUP – the Architecture, Design and Urbanism Panel. 'We set up in 2007 and up until recently have worked on small projects often for culture clients – art galleries and also private residential', he says. 'That's probably what people know us for, but we're doing things which are probably less prominent for the media. We're doing high streets and public spaces and strategic urban designs including a strategic plan for Deptford. I think what we've been working towards are projects where we might be able to effectively make bits of the city by combining these different skillsets.'

One of the watershed moments came with winning that competition for the Oxford Quad last year, which is effectively a piece of city that is about making sense of the wider urban context and landscape as equal partners, he says. And even its interiors work on the Room for London and a scheme in Barcelona were about much wider contexts, Kohn argues. 'They were about the city.'

The firm moved offices last year from its previous home in Kentish Town down the road to Camden Town in search of new space for its 14 staff. 'That's been very, very positive. We'd like to grow the team that we have over the next three years'. Former Caruso St John associate Kohn (where he was project architect on the Gagosian)



David Kohn Architects' Sanderson House

has taught for the last decade and is currently a visiting professor in Belgium, and feels this provides a research basis that then informs projects and offers clients 'fresh thinking'. The firm has other work including a 15-year plan for Rosemead Preparatory School in Dulwich, a house in Devon for a furniture designer and another competition win to refurbish the ICA via Arts Council money. Kohn's artistic bent in projects comes partly from his own background, having completed a compressed foundation course at the Slade in between his architecture training, but also because of the patronage of Stuart Shave, DKA working on his own house and galleries. This background and expertise stands the firm in good stead with developers and boroughs seeking to differentiate their schemes from others, Kohn believes. 'We feel a lot of clients will benefit from our arts involvement. I'd rather we appealed because of our breadth of interests rather than because we were, say, a commercial development specialist.' The future, Kohn hopes, is more work with universities, perhaps on arts facilities, as well as larger residential schemes for borough councils through the ADUP framework.

Finally, third-placed Studio 30 Architects is the practice started seven years ago by the then 30-year-old (hence the name) Henri Bredenkamp.



Studio 30's Shepherd's Bush Extension

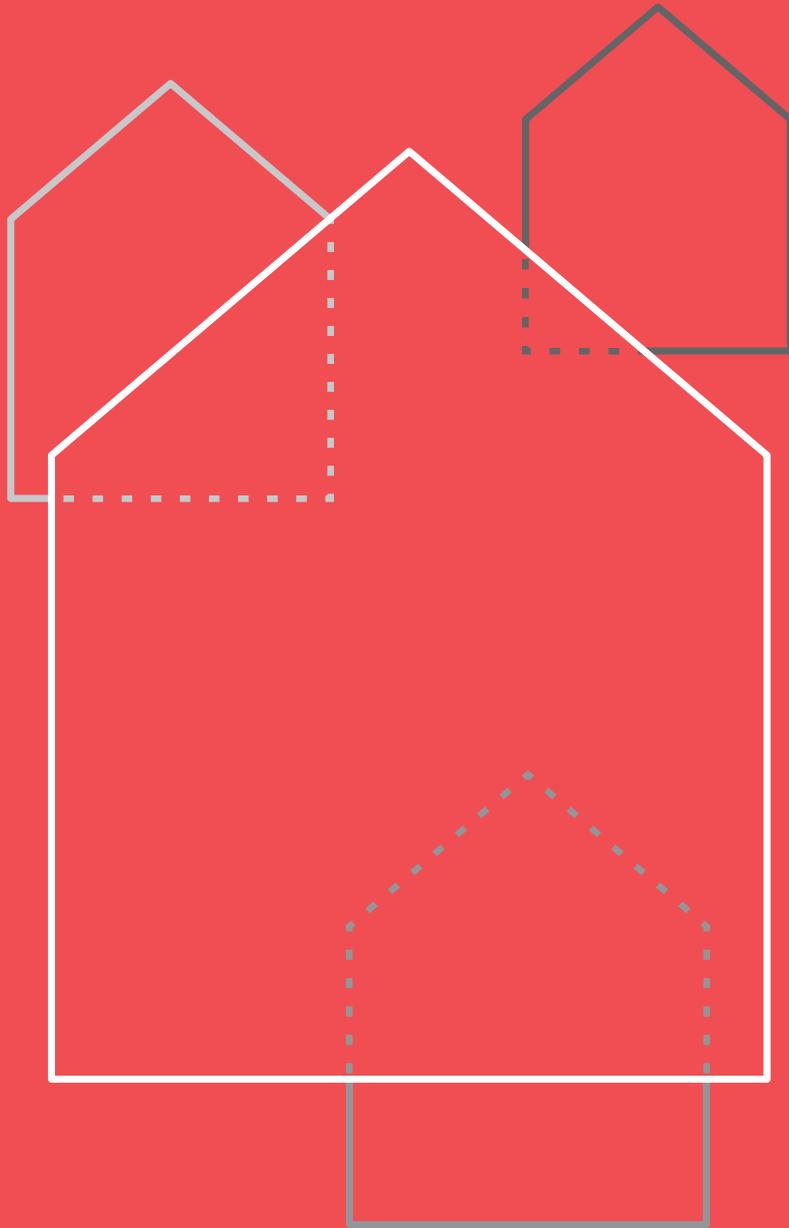
The DMI scheme, entered on the last day of the competition, is a light-filled Shepherd's Bush Extension at ground floor and loft level for some discerning clients – head of interior design at Tom Dixon Helen Arvanitakis and her engineer husband Tom Steel of Heyne Tillett Steel. They were excellent, 'progressive', even 'dream' clients, says 37-year old Bredenkamp. He also pays tribute to 'forward-looking' planners at Hammersmith Borough Council who took on board his rationale based on documenting 'the absolutely terrible' permitted development loft schemes in the area.

'What we've been working towards is projects where we might be able to effectively make bits of the city'

Bredenkamp did his early training in his native South Africa, before working at practices including Van der Merwe Miszewki Architects in Cape Town on beach houses and the like. Then, 14 years ago, he did 'the done thing', travelling to England, continuing his training with a Part III at the Bartlett and moving on to work at small firm Dive Architects before settling at the then David Mikhail Architects. 'That's probably the place where I've learned the most', he says. 'David is

an exceptionally good architect and we had a lot of responsibility. His knowledge of detailing and so on was something that rubbed off on me.' Bredenkamp worked on three RIBA award-winning projects while he was there, including Richmond House, and enjoys the control and bespoke nature of smaller projects. 'You get time to think about doing something nicely and doing something differently. And the best thing you do is you actually learn how to build.'

It was a natural progression to set up on his own, with work for a big 'multinational church group' that allowed him to look for work he wanted to do elsewhere, such as at Shepherd's Bush. The future will likely be about more residential work, with projects on the go including basement projects in Chelsea and Clapham for Bredenkamp and his two 'part-time but actually full-time' staff. Then there is a rebrand for his practice as 'Fabricate London', on the cards, along with more development work. But as a parent to a three-year old, growing the firm isn't the number one concern. 'I quite like keeping things small', he says. 'I like the flexibility of hanging round with my kids. I work around them, which is nice, and if I grew my practice too much I'd get too much into management. I enjoy detailing and working up projects, so I don't want to grow too big.' ■



New Ideas for Housing

Might the new ideas for housing competition winners see their schemes make it into reality? Each passed a significant milestone along the way as their pros and cons were discussed at the GLA. By David Taylor

The winners of NLA's New Ideas for Housing competition enjoyed an audience with key decision-makers at the GLA to examine how their proposals – to improve the speed and scale of delivery in the capital – could make it into reality.

Three sessions were held covering the 10 main winners, intended to encourage more collaborative and innovative housing solutions as well as help inform policy-makers in the run up to the London Mayoral election. The GLA's standpoint is that while there is no one silver bullet as an answer to the housing crisis, as many of these types of ideas should be considered as possible.

The first session featured three different proposals – The Urban Darning Project presented by Patrick JA Massey, architect at CZWG; Housing over Public Assets presented by Bill Price, director, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff, and Supurbia, presented by Scott Adams, head of urbanism and Riëtte Oosthuizen, partner, planning at HTA Design.

The Urban Darning Project aims to encourage small developers to fill in the holes or gaps in urban fabric with new homes. The idea is to better utilise the significant amount of unused and under-utilised sites we have in London, said Massey, the kind of infill, end condition extension sites with the potential to be developed into extra residential units often missed by site allocation reports. Massey suggested that the local authority could appoint a team headed by an architect or planner to scour the borough, identifying small sites and outlying what they suggest could be applicable. Benefits could include more homes and congruous development attracted to SMEs along with a rise in site value.

The GLA team said while it was clear that the potential of small architects, builders and developers should be unlocked, resourcing for this scheme could be difficult and necessary public consultation time-consuming. But one idea could be to batch or group some of the sites up, offering a portfolio for

SMEs that might ease their viability concerns and even public consultation issues if they are in close proximity.

The Housing over Public Assets proposal suggests that some 630,000 homes could be built on top of hospitals, schools, libraries and fire and police stations, said Bill Price, based on six to 12 storeys of overbuild. Our existing social infrastructure is frequently not fit for purpose or suitable for today's needs, so why not remove 'dysfunctional' infrastructure and exploit air rights with new space? There seems to be no problem with such ideas in the US, France or Canada, with mixes of schools and floors of healthcare with residential, but the key, said the GLA, is ownership and to ensure that neither party's use has to compromise its layout too much. It is also critical that the public sector retains an interest to cross subsidise the public facility, and that it retains the same civic quality.

Finally, Supurbia represents a way of transforming the suburbs without the need for wide-scale changes in planning,



The GLA's Colin Wilson at the first housing ideas session with winning teams at City Hall

said the HTA team, while still staying true to the values of Metroland and 'tapping in to success'. Some 400,000 new homes could be provided in outer London as part of its intensification approach of properties within 800m of railway or Tube stations through local development orders. The beauty of the proposal is that it could represent a shift from the NIMBY to homeowners being able to benefit financially. The GLA team commended the proposal's approach to attending to suburbia – 'the new front line for development', which is half as dense as it should be. Key, though, to the success of the project would be deciding on an appropriate location for the pilot study and a brave council at the helm, with the political challenge perhaps being trickier than that of design.

The second day session involved a further three ideas: Intimate Infrastructures presented by Natasha Reid, founder and principal designer – Natasha Reid Design; Buoyant Starts presented by Richard Coutts, director – Baca Architects; and Mark Junak, Floating Homes Ltd; and ATAL Opportunity Areas presented by Brendan Cuddihy, senior scientist, environmental consulting – Arup; and Rupesh Varsani, development director – Craigewan.

The Intimate Infrastructures idea, said Natasha Reid, concerns a toolkit of strategies and typologies applied as a framework, viewing densification as a 'positive, desirable thing'. How can it be done at a human scale? One idea is creating the 'missing typology'

of purpose-built, modular 'shared houses' as standardised components to meet the demand of private renters in the immediate term, in east London. The GLA team commented that an innovative PRS investor was needed to look at the whole idea as a package and there is perhaps scope for local development orders to allow parameters on certain plots to get automatic planning consents.

Buoyant Starts represents a decade's work on water, said Richard Coutts of Baca Architects. There are 'acres and acres' of waterspace in central London, he said, with the project proposing high quality prefabricated homes at an affordable price – starting at around £150,000 for a two-bed 65m², 4.5m wide property. 'This is a realistic proposition to get people onto the property ladder', he added. 'There's an appetite for this.' But there is no clear plan or map on available sites, guidance on what is permissible, or building regulations. The GLA team had queries on servicing and infrastructure as well as the costs relating to mooring, which can range from £1,000 to £50,000 a year. But a fundamental point of principle, they added, is that it must be demonstrated for each scheme that they are appropriate for – and add value to – their locations.

ATAL Opportunity Areas, said Rupesh Varsani of Craigewan, aims to add to the PTAL with a new measure, moving from public transport to active transport, thereby enabling higher yet moderate housing densities and unlocking supply. Achieving a high 'Active Transport Accessibility Level' will allow for a doubling of development density in over half of London, subject to the provision of high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, it was claimed. A policy impacts review would be necessary, with the crucial thing being the 'quid pro quo', balancing incentives with constraints, with benefits. It could create new transport corridors with low infrastructure costs and a lens in which development is

perceived as more acceptable by the public, since the benefits are more pronounced. The GLA said it is already criticised for allowing schemes in low PTAL areas which are over the density matrix level, but that this will need a reassessment which has scope to be widened out to look at using an ATAL-like approach. Further qualifications could be applied to areas where 'superdensity' applies.

Finally, the third session at City Hall involved the last four winning schemes. This began with Investing in London's Future by Learning from its Past presented by Dr David Kroll; Mega Planning, Beyond 2050 – MegaPlan for a MegaCity presented by Roland Brass, senior planner and Claire Graham, planning associate director – GL Hearn part of Capita Ltd; Making More with Less: Unlocking Leftover Land for Generation Rent presented by Luke Tozer, Pitman Tozer; Nick Fletcher, LB Enfield; and Neil Double, Naked House; and Wood Blocks presented by Alex de Rijke, co-founding director and Sara Muzio, creative strategist – dRMM.

'The beauty of the proposal is that it could represent a shift from the NIMBY to homeowners being able to benefit financially'

David Kroll's winning idea – Investing in London's Future by Learning from its Past – draws from the leasehold system and involves separating the cost of housing as a physical product from land costs to make it more affordable to build and buy houses, with suitable public land released for housing but held in public ownership. What is being privately contracted out is only the planning and construction of the buildings, with the leasehold for the flats and houses sold for the amount it actually costs to develop and build them. The council has an interest in making housing affordable, said Kroll, and

ground rents could be set at levels which are beneficial to those renting the land and the landowners. The GLA team said councils are under enormous pressures to realise the values of their assets and there are technical constraints and issues over returns for the landowner, but it could be an opportunity if it could be structured in the right way to receive long-term revenue.

Mega Planning, Beyond 2050 – MegaPlan for a MegaCity looks to maximise land supply on 86,000 hectares of ‘Edge Land’ on the inner belt running from the inner London green belt to the M25. Roland Brass of GL Hearn said the proposal aims to get the city ahead of the curve with a radical step change in delivery, supporting the London Plan and

proposing a consistent, long-term vision for the capital as a city region. The GLA team questioned whether it really is a land issue, with so many unbuilt permissions, and it may be better to point such an idea towards Ebbsfleet, or indeed to transfer industrial uses – which require little extra infrastructure to support them – out to green belt land and build housing to replace it in inner London.

Making More with Less: Unlocking Lefover Land for Generation Rent is an idea about unlocking the potential of small infill sites across London to provide up to 110,000 affordable, customisable homes by 2025, ‘joining the dots’ between under-used public land, good design, and people on intermediate incomes wanting to adopt a group custom-build model. The GLA team commended the idea but flagged up issues of scalability and how much could be replicated in other boroughs beyond the 15-20 sites identified to the east of Enfield.

Finally, Wood Blocks, said dRMM’s Alex de Rijke, builds on the growing appetite for self-build, adapting shell and core practice from the office sector to residential, with plug-in modules aimed at speeding up delivery (30 per cent less construction time) and making new homes more affordable and sustainable. The idea uses engineered timber as used by dRMM in projects for Lend Lease at Elephant and Castle, and Norway for example, although the technology for the idea lags behind that found in Europe.

The GLA team admired the idea and said although there were encouraging moves afoot in companies investing in off-site fabrication towards greater sustainability and time-saving, there was proven demand but still little product. But, as engineered timber becomes more popular, said dRMM, the costs will come down and perhaps a forward-thinking authority could invest in a factory to not only provide housing but also boost the local economy. **NL**



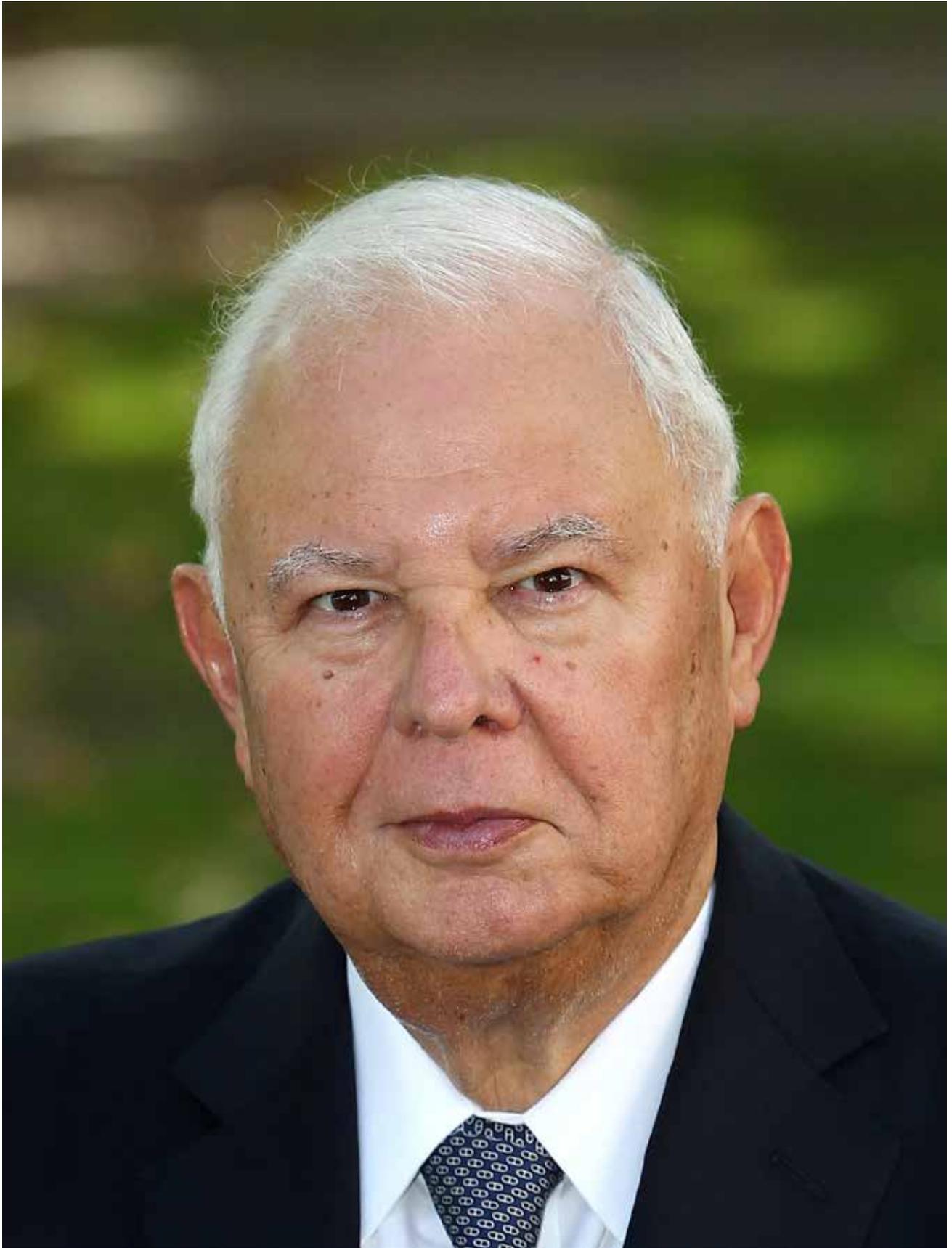
Natasha Reid Design's Intimate infrastructures winning scheme



HTA Design's winning Supurbia proposal



Making more with less – Pitman Tozer, LB Enfield and Naked House



Grasping the fundamentals

Sir Stuart Lipton wants to put the fun back into office buildings. He tells David Taylor about his plans for 22 Bishopsgate and beyond

Fun.

Sir Stuart Lipton wants us to have more fun in our office buildings, and believes that this is the missing component in the war for talent that developers have sadly neglected ... until now.

The veteran developer, who is opening the London stand at this year's MIPIM, is talking through his plans for 22 Bishopsgate, the 62-storey tower on the formerly stalled Pinnacle site in the City that he is hoping will rewrite the rulebook in the way he has done his entire career. And, unlike most other sectors of the built environment, Lipton believes the office is one where the spirit does anything but soar.

'Wouldn't you want it to be safe, convenient, and, dare I say it, fun?' he asks. 'Is the word 'fun' immoral? If I picked up *The Times*, or the

Evening Standard, or anything else, I'd be hard put to find the word fun, but fun is one of our characteristics. Being serious, being academic, being professional – being fun.'

We are talking in Lipton's airy office on Cavendish Square, classical music on in the background, and some interesting artworks attached to the wall – a stunningly lifelike coat, hat and broly fashioned from wood, by Venetian artist Livio De Marchi. We're sat in classic Eames office chairs, and the walls are lined with hundreds of books – on art and architecture, including tomes on Mecanoo, Chillida, KPF, Geoffrey Bawa; public space including Sarah Gaventa's *New Public Spaces*; even Charles Moore's biography of Margaret Thatcher.

But today is a different world from Thatcher's Britain, and even from four years ago, when the Pinnacle stalled.

People's expectations have risen about our workspaces. Standards are higher, and we care more about where we work and with whom. The new scheme developed by Lipton Rogers and AXA Real Estate and designed by PLP is an answer, providing some 1.4m sq ft of net usable space and including a public viewing gallery at its peak. But there will also be shops and services for tenants, including restaurants, street food, doctors, dry cleaners, grocers and more, not to mention a huge space for bike storage. It is, says Lipton, a vertical city, replicating in a tower all the benefits of a village green.

Lipton has built more than 30 projects in the City, but perhaps is best known for Broadgate, Ludgate and Paternoster Square, all of which have public space to the fore. Far from slowing down in his seventies,

he is adding projects as diverse as Commonwealth Institute housing and Silvertown to the portfolio, evidence for former CABA chair Paul Finch that the 'outstanding property figure of his generation' is still firing on all his considerable cylinders, even after five decades of proving that amenity equals value.

Lipton started life as an estate agent, becoming 'enthralled' with what he saw as a 'fascinating' business. But witnessing what the industry then produced, which was essentially investment- rather than consumer-driven, he saw the opportunity to do it differently. 'It's a very interesting business where you have the diversity of art, public space, architecture, construction – but for me, always consumer need. What does the customer want?' By customer, Lipton means occupiers, and this has changed dramatically over his career. 'Customers now understand buildings in a way they never did. We've always had a business where people worried about all sorts of other specification scenarios, but anticipating the customer need is to me what life as a developer should be.' What will the occupier want in five years' time? What will really be the trend? 'If you do your homework it is fascinating.' What trends is he seeing at the moment? 'For me it is all about people. Absolutely clearly about giving people the right business experience they want.'

Most people want to be treated as an individual, he says. People don't want to work in a box. 'We don't like to put animals in pens; we think they should be free-range. But it is OK to put people in pens. Why not allow everybody to be free-range? Most people want variety and they want amenity. They want to feel that somebody is paying attention because it is a war for talent. The endgame of occupiers is to have efficient people in the main to make profit.'

It is no longer really about the building, Lipton suggests; the office

building hasn't really changed since 1908. What has changed, though, is the social. Take entrances for example. When you go to the cinema, do you wait, Lipton asks? No – you booked your ticket online, so why do we wait in an office building? Wouldn't you want to give tenants a good experience?

Fun is not the absolute essence of 22 Bishopsgate; people are. But part of people's lives is about having variety and choice, uplifting the spirits, emotionally feeling well-regarded, Lipton goes on. Office buildings are functional and fit for purpose; they should not put you in a line.

'Anticipating the customer need is to me what life as a developer should be'

Health is another thing. 'It's up to us to provide what we'd define as a well building. It's bizarre that government has insisted on standards for buildings, and not people.' Again, Lipton draws on an example. The building we are in is an old one, but it is filled with light. 'People like light', says Lipton, simply. 'If you look at the code it is very difficult. But going back, Broadgate – good public space; about people. Chiswick Park – good public space, about people. So lots of rules being broken all the time.' Chief among these at Broadgate was to rule out cars in favour of people walking, ushering in public art too in the face of the doubters. 'They're all going to art galleries. They're all going to theatres and why is it in office buildings we think they have suddenly become aliens? They're all regular people. At Broadgate one of the first experiences was complaints from the chief execs about noise at lunchtime. Who was in the space, having fun? Their employees.' This, it turned out, was good for business – employers want their staff to be mentally and physically in good shape. 'When

government talks about productivity it does nothing about it – it just sends you more forms, more red tape. It's got nothing about fun. It's almost immoral. And it has nothing about your personal conditions. To me they are all the same – how can you produce interesting spaces, interesting buildings, interesting amenities.'

Some tenants say they will take the building but not the art, to which Lipton et al reply that they should sleep on it – see how they feel in a year. If they still didn't like it, they'd take it away. 'We've never taken it away', says Lipton. 'People like contrast. So we have to try and foresee what they will need and most of the time they themselves they want change.'

Of Lipton's oeuvre, Chiswick Park, he says, has been copied all around the world, but his favourite scheme is the now-listed 1 Finsbury Avenue. Why? Because it was a good piece of architecture, very efficient in construction, appropriate, and very well designed, by the 'quite extraordinary Peter Foggo'. It has also stood the test of time.

Fortunately, looking ahead in time, the developer does not have to be the crystal ball-gazer on trends, instead drawing on the talents of the 'wonderful people' who are doing the R&D themselves. 'It's always out there; it's a question of finding out who they are.' At the moment, Australian buildings are the most advanced in terms of their functionality, says Lipton. The Australian Property Council rates their buildings, and Lipton is bemused why we don't here. 'Everybody wants transparency. They want to know. We need to provide buildings that work, make them enjoyable and have a huge range of amenity, so in 22 we will have a library. It's a big building. Wouldn't you like to be able to go somewhere occasionally and just sit down? People are working longer hours and it's a live/work world.'



A vertical village for the City – the PLP-designed 22 Bishopgate



Lipton's Broadgate – a people place

Warming to this theme, Lipton says the modern condition is to consult the mobile phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night. 'It's a different world and we have got to respond to that world. And most buildings don't respond to that world. They are just going on being buildings. So we should be trying to anticipate those technical, emotional, academic and scientific changes and putting them into buildings as standard.'

Within 10 minutes' walk of 22 Bishopsgate there are 45 Pret a Mangers, says Lipton, and there are also plenty of food trucks. But people want something different and

many can't afford a pricey lunch. So another offer at the building will be a decent environment where they feel comfortable, quite beyond the basics of whether the building has lifts, air conditioning and performs technically. 'We should all be able to do that. But the social aspects are interesting. You come into a lobby and you should feel it is interesting and feel welcomed. So that's what 22 will be about.'

It will also be about a big trend of the moment – cycling, with major provision in the new scheme. 'But let's do it properly', says Lipton. 'Let's have a cycle shop and a cycle repair, and a club for all those chaps who are

passionate about their £5,000 bike, and a cycle spin class, and cycle safety. We want to do it properly, not just have bikes in the basement. It's also about a climbing wall and a library, changing food, yoga, doctor, dentist. It's what we call a vertical piece of city, but another description is just what you would have on a village green. Most people like village greens.'

Government appears to be a thorny issue, especially since Lipton's involvement as a prime mover of CABE. At its instigation Lipton said he hoped that architecture would be injected into the bloodstream of the nation. Yes, that happened. 'But

government didn't like it because we started trying to persuade them to do better hospitals and schools. They didn't really understand it. The health minister told me they had to save £3.5 million and now people are talking about environment, design, all the time. Open a newspaper and architecture is something that interests people, but if you want to build more of it you want it to be decent and a lot of it is not up to scratch.'

So CABE was the easy cull, despite its attempts to chart a right course. How did we manage to build millions of housing units between the First and Second World Wars – classic semis that have lasted the course? asks Lipton. And then we build sink estates – is it any surprise there are people in poor situations predominantly on welfare? No aspiration, no love. And then they behave badly. Well, they have nothing else to do. 'The other side of it is that architects are their own worst enemies sometimes.' Honest clients would talk about fitness for purpose, design quality, interior, cost, public space. 'But if I open one of the mags, I don't read that.' So Gove says schools

should be proxies, and now they are onto prisons, says Lipton. If you want to stop people offending you give them education and aspiration. 'So CABE, yes. What else have you got?'

Does residential development appeal? The concept of doing large numbers is something that needs to be addressed, particularly as real returns are three to five per cent, unavailable elsewhere. People need new homes, and many are commuting more to get them. 'All the trains are full everywhere. The suburbs have changed. Demographics have changed. It used to be that virtually everywhere there was a station there was an office building, there was employment. Now, high streets have declined, no investment. Is it any surprise that people go elsewhere?' What is it that government wants us to be? We're a growth nation without housing,' says Lipton, and very limited infrastructure expansion.

Is there a power shift in terms of people having more of a say today in what facilities they require from their buildings? 'Oh yes. It is not only a war for talent, it's an awareness. You

wouldn't know that the Googles and all those companies are very aware of amenities, lifestyle. They are trying to motivate their people.' Tech is a growth business, as we all know, but other companies are beginning to think the same way, with accountants, even lawyers moving in this direction. But although the government is showing similar signs on its own workforce, it isn't in terms of Joe Public. 'When did anybody invest a bean in the high street? They don't see that as important.' Neither does government see a connection between the welfare state and the environment, despite studies showing that safer housing equals fewer visits to the GP, better-quality hospital environments equals reduced stays. 'It's not rocket science', says Lipton. 'It's just that nobody cares about it in government.' There are ever-changing rules, bureaucracy, and nobody is in charge of the environment, Lipton suggests. 'Mr Cameron has never talked about it. When did he ever mention the 'a' word? Architecture. And Mr Corbyn? Does he understand it? None of them has any interest because much better not to disturb the status quo.' This is in stark contrast to France, Germany, Holland.

Lipton loves London's vibrancy, its art and its culture, as well as its friendliness. But he believes the planning system has let people down on town centres, particularly on the two p's – parking and peeing. Places like Barnes High Street are in trouble because there, like on Oxford Street, there is little or no way to do either. But we have a planning system based on the 1940s, in a world of home working, Amazon deliveries, even at night-time to the Lipton household, Airbnb, every kind of taxi reducing car use, and Starbucks being an office and an academic institution at the same time. 'All the rules have changed. But in practice none of them have changed and life hasn't changed. So we've got to change it, haven't we?' NL



Chiswick Park – 'copied all over the world'



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Keeping history alive

Jestico + Whiles director Heinz Richardson says London must beware of killing its golden goose and enhance its wealth of heritage assets for the future

With over 17 million visitors annually, London is the second most visited city in the world, behind Hong Kong. The two cities, however, could not be more different – London has a history dating back over 2,000 years while Hong Kong’s growth exploded in the 1970s and 80s. Hong Kong, a centre of unashamed commerce, cheek by jowl with humanity and a key stopping-over point for global travel shares little with London. So why is London so popular?

‘Destruction of London’s heritage would kill the chief constituent that makes it special and unique’

Nowhere is there such a rich and varied history contained within one world city – a city where the relentless march of time is evidenced on a short stroll through its medieval streets, each honed by centuries of human endeavour and enterprise. Today London is undergoing unprecedented change, yet there is little doubt the role of its unique heritage is central to its popularity as a visitor destination.

However, there is a disturbing dichotomy abroad at the moment. Is London a heritage city or a city of opportunity and investment – a ‘safe haven’ for the foreign investor looking for security or a place to see over 2,000 years of history? The pressure of the former on the latter is creating a cauldron of tension that has the protectors set against the dragons of commerce. The passage of time

inevitably creates yet more heritages with buildings of the 20th century, valuable as a record of social change, now providing a source of fresh debate on the merits of preservation. London has a delicate line to tread – destruction of its heritage would kill the chief constituent that makes it special and unique. Yet among the many worthy examples of historic places and buildings in this great city are architectural gems in desperate need of love and nurture to prevent their irretrievable decline.

George Orwell is quoted as saying: ‘the most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of history’. Nowhere is this more evident than in our environment. Historic England has identified more than 70 structures in London alone that are at serious risk unless action is taken to preserve them. Our most important buildings

are given listed status yet this alone does not necessarily guarantee their protection. The establishment of the Heritage Lottery Fund in 1994 and subsequent investment of over £34 billion in nationally important projects has gone a long way to address the task of preservation of our heritage. Yet preservation in itself is not enough. Our historic buildings need to be given new purpose and importantly new governance to ensure their long-term survival.

Pitzhanger Manor, the work of one of our most important and influential architects, Sir John Soane, is a prime example of an architectural gem that is being given a new lease of life through an HLF grant and the establishment of a trust to ensure it survives the commercial pressures facing all such projects. In tandem with Julian Harrap Architects’ conservation expertise, we have been working with the London borough of Ealing and the board of trustees on the transition of Pitzhanger from decaying historic liability to restored educational and heritage asset, ensuring its survival for generations to come. It is through the bold and considered protection of our heritage that our great city will retain its allure and interest for those not lucky enough to live or work within its historic confines. ■



Given the kiss of life – Pitzhanger Manor in Ealing

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Mat-buildings

By Matthew Ward, associate, development sector lead, HLM

Are Mat-buildings the answer to London's housing crisis? A building typology first conceptualised by Alison Smithson in the seventies, Mat-buildings are low-rise, high density urban blocks, characterised by interconnecting spaces and courtyards, where the links are as important as the nodes they connect.

The debate around achieving high density to meet housing demand is often centred on piercing London's skyline with tall buildings. Tall buildings divide neighbourhoods into individual floorplates, stacked high in the sky like islands detached from the communities that activate the ground floor plane.

HLM has developed a porous, interconnected housing typology comprising courtyards and connections where communities are able to thrive. The network of spaces provides

intimacy and gives residents a sense of ownership and community pride.

The urban-Mat sits within a five-storey ceiling but provides density levels appropriate to a central London location, achieving in excess of 1,000 habitable rooms per hectare; density at a human scale. The Mat typology provides an alternative approach to delivering significant site value in areas of London otherwise compromised by contextual sensitivities, enhancing viability and the opportunity to deliver much-needed housing.

The Mat is a dense neighbourhood which balances the enormity of the city with intimate, liveable neighbourhoods, where narrow passages connect courtyards and pocket parks, creating a hierarchy of expanding and contracting space. The composition of diverse uses allows people to work, live and play, reducing transport need and offering

animation to the fluid ground plane.

This critical mass of people supports local services through the week, day and night, and provides the opportunity for 24-hour natural surveillance.

The approach challenges the traditional perception of object and ground, outdoor and indoor, creating enclosed outdoor spaces or 'rooms' which enhance environmental performance through improvements to thermal comfort, air quality, noise and visual impact. Integrated community energy schemes for renewable generation and general resource management for water and waste provide opportunities for further environmental efficiencies.

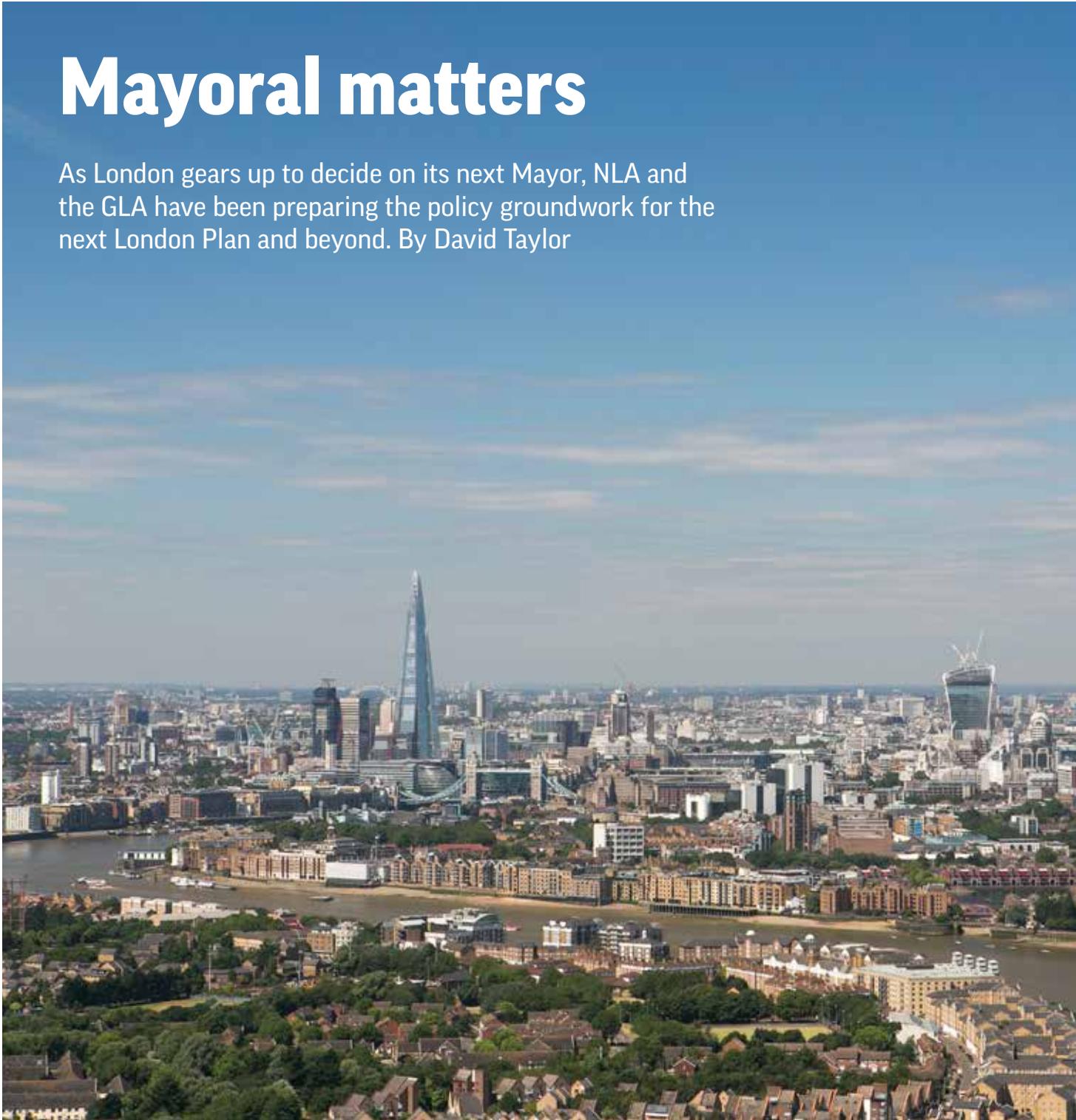
Driven by integrated community and the creation of quality place, this form of development provides a dense alternative to a cluttered skyline and a banal, soulless public realm. ■



HLM's Mat concept: 'a porous, interconnected housing typology comprising courtyards and connections'

Mayoral matters

As London gears up to decide on its next Mayor, NLA and the GLA have been preparing the policy groundwork for the next London Plan and beyond. By David Taylor





Two big-ticket items – the next iteration of the London Plan and the next incumbent of City Hall – will do much to shape the way the capital looks and works over the coming decades. And NLA has been integral in providing the groundwork for both with its collaboration with the GLA and the Mayor’s Design Advisory Group (MDAG) on its Good Growth series, supported by Grosvenor, and with Arup on the staging of a design charrette aimed at getting some ‘blue-sky thinking’ into future policy.

So how is it looking? And what recommendations might make it into the final cut?

The Good Growth work for MDAG has been the long process of staging a series of roundtable discussions with invited senior built-environment professionals on a wide range of subjects. They are headlined as Growing London on the form a new capital might take; Ageing London on how we can best create a city to grow old in; Public London on the capital’s streets and places; and Shaping London – about the tools that need to be at local authorities’ disposal to create good places. Key people took charge of each report, working for MDAG’s Pat Brown and NLA chairman Peter Murray, and ultimately reporting to MDAG chair Daniel Moylan.

The background, of course, is the pressures and opportunities thrown up by a population that is set to rise to 10 million by 2030. Where might we live, and at what kinds of densities? How will we create enough infrastructure to support this many people? And how can we ensure that the streets and public spaces provide an adequate safety valve?

Each report made a series of recommendations on what could or should be done, with Growing London including over 50 such pointers to be taken on board by a new Mayor. The results can be downloaded via NLA’s website

(www.newlondonarchitecture.org) but, some of the highlights from the first two breakfast talks are below.

Growing London, sponsored by Grosvenor and GL Hearn

Much of the debate about London’s growth has been to do with numbers, said ‘Growing London’ report author Sunand Prasad, ‘our concern is actually about quality – where things will be, what they will look like, what sort of neighbourhoods they will make, who will build them and who will live there’. Unlike ever before, London has to contain its growth within its existing boundary, but Prasad said MDAG did not ‘buy’ that the shortfall in providing housing was all to do with the planning system. ‘That’s one of the myths we’d like to clear away’, he said. Last year just 26,000 units were built in the capital, and the ‘woeful’ imbalance between supply and demand remained a puzzle. ‘But we think local authorities must be part of a solution that needs to be fixed. Let’s make it glamorous again for councils to build.’

Jobs too, are important, especially in the light of a loss of around 1m sq ft of space through permitted development in two years since May 2013, so MDAG recommends resisting PD rights where possible. But growth in housing should be a group effort, with new accommodation built in town centres, opportunity areas, suburbs, and estate redevelopment, along with ‘bits’ of the green belt, but with better understanding of the tools used. ‘The knottiest problem is actually not the green belt but the suburbs’, said Prasad. Running through the reports like words through a stick of rock is this issue of density, and, said Prasad, there is nothing ‘un-London about high densities’.

Tall buildings guidance tends to be about what cannot be built, rather than what can, so a 3D model is required to assist, with a return to being more plan-led, rather than reacting to tall buildings on a case-by-case basis.



Enabling Good Growth – MDAG's suite of reports

But one of the key issues in the report leapt on by *Guardian* architecture critic Oliver Wainwright was the need to improve how the development process is communicated to the public. 'The first impression you get is the crumpled sheet of paper at the bottom of a lamppost', he said. 'How about an image of that development? How about a 3D model? I'm shocked boroughs don't have them in-house.'

'The knottiest problem is actually not the green belt but the suburbs'

Savills' head of world research Yolande Barnes said the focus had been about buildings rather than neighbourhoods. 'None of us lives in just a building. We live in a place.' But the politics of developing in suburbia at higher densities were, said Barnes, 'enormous'. We also do not realise how 'absurdly reliant' we are on a very few methods of delivery when it comes to housing, she said, in comparison with other countries enjoying many more long term players, including custom-build.

Other points raised at the event included the possibility of a land tax, diversity in the way we release land, and that from executive director at Grosvenor Richard Powell, who stressed a need for an alternative economic

model to funding public infrastructure through private development, a system that he felt is 'really broken'.

MDAG deputy chair Pat Brown said the report was a process rather than a static document. 'We're only going to do this in partnership ... The communication, the consultation and the long, patient approach to developing these neighbourhoods and communities is what we have to move onto next', she said. 'For me that is the most fundamental part of building a great capital.'

Public London, sponsored by Grosvenor

Introduced by MDAG member Pam Alexander as the crucial DNA of the city, the public realm is that which makes London so attractive, liveable and a joy to live in. 'It is the glue that binds places together', she said.

The MDAG 'Public London' report's joint author Peter Murray said it was essential that the next Mayor continues to champion public space as a key part of the city, but that our understanding of the public realm had broadened since the time of the World Squares for All project. There are great economic paybacks to be had by creating good public realm, alongside environmental outcomes such as reducing pollution and increasing biodiversity, not to mention broader social and cultural benefits. 'What's not to like?' said Murray.

But against a backdrop of reduced budgets and a greater involvement from the private sector, the Mayor must ensure access to privately owned public space is 'as unambiguous as possible'. There should be a public



MDAG's Sunand Prasad at the 'Growing London' presentation

Selected recommendations from the Good Growth reports

- Improve the tools through which planners and the general public can assess the visual impact of taller buildings by commissioning a three-dimensional virtual planning model for London that can be accessed online and easily updated. (Growing London)
- Set up a Public Realm Task Force for London including leaders from the boroughs, businesses, the welfare sector, cultural organisations, amenity groups and design practitioners to inform future policy and investment and provide advocacy at the highest level. (Public London)
- Establish a pilot programme with select London boroughs or Business Improvement Districts to expand the Freedom Pass to include access to toilet facilities or places to rest. (Ageing London)
- Dedicate resources to launching a 12-month pilot of the London Place Agency, a programme to embed talented placemaking professionals in place-based roles within local authorities to create the conditions for good growth. (Shaping London)

realm task force for London, with better support for placemaking skills and more support for meanwhile uses. With mounting health problems, and higher levels of obesity, there also needs to be a clear understanding of the vital role walking and cycling play in good health, reinforced by a new role of active transport commissioner. And finally, said Murray, a single system for road charging should be considered, with more investment in high streets and in public realm around infrastructure.

‘Our remarkable city’s housing, infrastructure and quality of life are under pressure from a rapidly growing population. These recommendations offer the city’s next Mayor a credible policy framework to take on the responsibility of good growth’ – Richard Powell, executive director at Grosvenor Britain & Ireland and member of MDAG

Discussion of the points raised ranged from Victor Callister, deputy director of Architecture and the Built Environment, Design Council CABE, who praised that ‘London-ness’ and the emergence of a London vernacular was being expressed, to the Bartlett’s

Matthew Carmona, who said the report was an ‘excellent blueprint’ to remind the next Mayor of the vital importance of public spaces, albeit with too ‘clunky’ advice that bylaws are the most effective method for managing public spaces. Carmona added that there was a problem with a certain kind of public space – people’s front gardens – being rapidly tarmacked over and that this was in need of protection, while the problem of high streets was not physical but one of ‘curation’. And yet good public realm was often not difficult and sometimes we perhaps try a bit too hard. ‘Keep it simple’, said Carmona. ‘A little bit of grass, some benches and a café is hard to beat.’ DSDHA director Deborah Saunt praised the emphasis paid to ‘movement’ in the report but said brief writing needed an inversion to attend to tensions between cyclists and pedestrians. Saunt believed a missing component in the report was enough guidance on logistics and goods delivery, especially with a 13 per cent rise in the number of white vans in London over the last three years. Finally, Landscape Institute president Noel Farrer said the report starts to recognise the complexities behind public realm provision which ‘determines London as a great city’. But there were missed opportunities with items like the cycle superhighways – why had tree planting not been an associated feature?

Re-inventing the London Plan: A charrette on the capital’s future

The Arup Charrette was a more intensive exercise, involving a day of moderated discussions on similar themes, taking in issues such as the green belt, transport and digital.

Over 70 of London’s great and good in the architectural, development and planning worlds gathered at Arup’s headquarters to debate what sort of future the capital could or should create.

This was a day-long NLA charrette, facilitated by Arup, designed to bring together leading thinkers to debate issues as they relate to the next iteration of the London Plan.

The day involved separating into groups, which roved around tables discussing topics comprising Movement, Wellbeing, Living, Working, Form, Digital, Governance and Delivery, and Structure. Moderated by Arup facilitators in



The charrette in full flow

each area, the debates threw up issues as diverse as a review of the green belt – over 70 per cent voted in favour of this in a final poll – a review of the density matrix, and where the borders of the city could or should be drawn. Other conclusions included that London should not sacrifice employment capacity for housing; the Plan needs to encourage small-scale intensification of the suburbs; there should be a more flexible approach to use classes and buildings, a fixed tariff for and better definition of affordable housing and the very Plan itself could be more digital and ‘live’.

‘We have to be creative, we have to be radical, we have to be innovative’ – Stewart Murray

Assistant director of planning at the GLA Stewart Murray said it had been an ‘immensely helpful’ day, especially given the onset of the ‘thinking mode’ period down to the new Mayor taking power next May. As such this is the ‘most important next iteration of the London Plan’ since its first, and probably since the Abercrombie Plan, he added. ‘We have to be creative, we have to be radical, we have to be innovative’, said Murray. ‘We have a chance here to produce something quite creative that is befitting of a successful growing, sustainable metropolis, and a successful London. So let’s capture those thoughts and put them into the machinery.’ NL



Stewart Murray makes a point

Mayoral candidates battle it out at the RIBA

NLA joined forces with the RIBA and other institutions to stage a hustings event for Mayoral candidates – or their stand-ins. By David Taylor

Housing, the green belt and infrastructure were the hot topics at the RIBA last night as Mayoral candidates – or their representatives – gathered to present their views and take questions on built environment issues. Housing was generally agreed to be at crisis point with normal Londoners being increasingly priced out of the capital, but neither building on the green belt nor creating more tall buildings was the answer, and, against a backdrop of the RIBA wading into the story, the Garden Bridge was never far away.

‘As a Mayor I wouldn’t settle for anything less than world class’

The event, staged at the Institute’s Jarvis Auditorium in association with leading built environment bodies, including the NLA, featured Sian Berry, Green Party London Mayoral candidate, Andrew Boff, representing the Conservative Mayoral team, Caroline Pidgeon, Liberal Democrat London Mayoral candidate, Val Shawcross, representing the Labour Mayoral team and Peter Whittle, UKIP London Mayoral candidate.

Berry kicked off by saying she had ‘never met an architect or town planner she didn’t like’, adding that it was crucial Londoners had housing they can afford and that the city needed to be designed more for an

ageing population. Boff said that Zac Goldsmith represented someone who could encourage investment in the capital and keep that in Londoners’ pockets, while Caroline Pidgeon’s opening remarks included that we desperately needed to increase the supply of all housing but especially ‘genuinely affordable homes’. ‘As a Mayor I wouldn’t settle for anything less than world class’, she said. Shawcross branded London the greatest city in the world but one that is ‘at a crossroads’, with Londoners ‘priced out of the city altogether by a terrible ‘Tory housing crisis’. Finally, Whittle said that the debate should also focus on the ‘demand’ side of the population growth equation, with a need to look at immigration policy generally and how it affects London.

All candidates agreed that building on green-belt land was a no-no – Boff suggested that we should build more New Towns, Pidgeon more Garden Cities, with a construction academy and apprenticeships to help set up a skilled workforce. Perhaps a new use class for public sector housing was also needed, she suggested. Shawcross said more brownfield development and higher densities would help, with climate change another important issue to be grasped including dealing with flooding through more SUDS schemes. For Whittle, London needs a proper brownfield register, more family housing and to retain its ‘soul’, while Berry suggested as many as 70,000 homes could be built on small sites and infill.

Infrastructure issues raised included reducing the need to travel (Berry), and the call to link housing developments to infrastructure to unlock potential but, in a reference to Sadiq Khan, avoid the ‘tax’ represented by keeping travel fares ‘artificially low’ (Boff). Tall buildings were not the answer to the housing crisis, said Shawcross, Pidgeon claiming that there were too many boring, below-average designs, and Berry finding two in particular – Lexicon and Canaletto on City Road – ‘upsetting’.

Perhaps a more strategic approach to housing and growth in London, looking more to the wider south east, was necessary. Pidgeon and Berry agreed that the Olympic precept should be retained, while Boff said that we shouldn’t be constrained by

the ‘artificial boundary’ which was the travel-to-work area of the 1950s. Meetings that used to take place with surrounding boroughs had lapsed, said Shawcross, but how could we plan if we didn’t know how many we were planning for? asked Whittle. London needs more funds, and to raise its own, said Boff, with more done on stamp duty around the Crossrail 2 route, suggested Pidgeon. There was a very strong cross-party agenda on this, said Shawcross, with the work Tony Travers has done with the London Finance Commission, with Berry reminding the audience that London deserves some of the now-hypothecated money going to Highways England to aid improvements.

There hadn’t been time to, as Whittle put it, ‘slag off the Garden Bridge’, although Pidgeon managed

to squeeze in that she felt it should be ‘dead in the water by now’. But in their final send-offs, Shawcross emphasised that London needed a Mayor who could use strategic powers positively and provide ‘huge energy’ to ensuring more affordable housing is built. ‘London is becoming an unaffordable city for the people who live here’, she said. Pidgeon wanted a city that works for everyone, Boff one where everyone can benefit, in a city that he reminded Whittle was ‘made by immigrants’. And finally, Berry said she had run out of time to say more about her plans to close City Airport and turn it into a new quarter for London, set up an energy company, offer free insulation instead of the ‘useless Green Deal’ and also help Londoners who are being ‘buffeted by market forces’. NL



RIBA roll-call: (left to right) Boff, moderator Rosamund Urwin, Pidgeon, Shawcross, Berry, Whittle

A new Mayor for London – but who?

Robert Gordon Clark, executive chairman of London Communications Agency, trails the impending election for Mayor of London

Four years ago, in these very pages, we compared the battle between Boris and Ken as being ‘like some kind of *Rocky* movie franchise’. We were of course referring to the fact that the 2012 Mayoral election was a re-run of 2008 (and that Mr Livingstone had contested all four to date). This year though, it’s different. We’ve got fresh blood and the guarantee of a brand new Mayor of London. To continue our film analogy, perhaps we’re in ‘New Hope’ territory – the plot is familiar but there’s a fresh, young cast to carry it.

As NLQ goes to press for MIPIM there are seven main declared candidates but, barring a significant late upset, the real contest is between Labour candidate and Tooting MP Sadiq Khan and Conservative candidate, Richmond Park and North Kingston MP, Zac Goldsmith.

In January, Khan was seven points ahead of Goldsmith in the polls and seemed to be getting better press coverage and more positive feedback from key interest groups. The Labour MP is an experienced politician and campaigner – he led his party’s successful local election campaign in the capital in 2014 and the same again for the general election last year – and he is mobilising Labour’s activist base now. However, the same early polling showed that almost a third of respondents were so far undecided, a fact that could favour Zac Goldsmith, a popular constituency MP who may well benefit from his party being in power nationally with control of the fiscal levers.

It’s easy to see how Khan’s lead could be eaten away. He got his campaign off to an early start and for a fair few weeks Goldsmith was notable only for his apparent absence on the trail; however, it would not be the first time that a late, smartly targeted Tory campaign has bested an all-hands-to-the-pump Labour effort. Indeed, this is the *modus operandi* of Lynton Crosby, the Australian strategist that masterminded the Conservatives 2015 general election victory and whose company is now advising Goldsmith’s team.

‘Sadiq Khan has called this election “a referendum on housing” and it is certainly the number one issue in play’

The ground game is important though. Boris won narrowly in 2012 by getting out the vote in huge numbers in places like Bexley and Bromley and doing well in south west and west central London. Without the brand recognition of the incumbent Zac is working the Conservative Association base hard, as the 2014 and 2015 election results tell the story of an increasingly left-leaning London.

Politicking aside, the battle will be fought over a handful of key issues. For NLQ readers these are likely familiar territory – housing, transport, police, business – but the challenge for the candidates is to find elements of these that cut through with the public. This might explain Goldsmith’s emphasis on gaining ‘community

consent’ for development, and Khan’s support for the extending the London Living Wage to all businesses.

Khan would have been fairly confident he was onto a winner with his big set piece on transport – a four year fare freeze – but that somewhat hit the buffers when Transport for London pointed out that his ‘fully costed’ plan included a £1.9bn black-hole. Goldsmith is arguably lighter on transport policy to date and his bid for the popular vote is his pledge to prevent future industrial action by making TfL a public service. On aviation, both are opposed to a third runway at Heathrow, a position that has given the Prime Minister a headache as Goldsmith has threatened to resign as MP if the government backs expansion at the west London airport. Khan supports a second runway at Gatwick.

Sadiq Khan has called this election ‘a referendum on housing’ and it is certainly the number one issue in play. Indeed, LCA’s polling of London councillors shows that housing has leapfrogged education as the top priority for the capital’s local politicians over the last four years.

Goldsmith’s focus is on delivering at volume by unlocking the potential in the outer boroughs through transport infrastructure. Meanwhile, Khan has been strong on the fact that his priority is to reinstate Livingstone’s 50 per cent affordable target for new developments but with the definition of ‘genuinely affordable’ homes broadened from social rent to include homes charging a London living rent (a third of average local earnings)



It's all to play for for the two main candidates Sadiq Khan and Zac Goldsmith

and shared ownership homes with a deposit required of £5,200.

The two candidates also have some things in common; they have floated a 'first dibs for Londoners' scheme for new homes, emphasised the importance of releasing publicly owned brownfield land, ruled out development on the green belt and both want money raised by the sale of social housing ring-fenced for the capital, though Khan wants a guarantee that replacement homes will be in the same area as those sold.

This leads us to what are perhaps the biggest differences between the two. Goldsmith can say that he has the ear of government while Khan has to spend time making sure there is just the right amount of distance between him and his party leader, Jeremy

Corbyn. And Goldsmith is of course the son of a billionaire and Khan the son of a bus driver, as he tells everyone at every hustings.

Our two Mayors of London so far have also had to navigate tricky relationships with Whitehall and their own parties but both Ken and Boris were (and still are) masters of personality politics with enough individual clout to secure votes despite these challenges; it remains to be seen whether the same can be said of their potential successors.

In a post-*Rocky* world, this is perhaps the key point. We at LCA predict that the turnout will be down from the 38 per cent in 2012 and the spread of vote share will be less concentrated on the two main characters. This means the contest could easily be

decided on where Lib Dems, Greens and, crucially in the lead-up to the EU referendum, Ukipers, put their second vote.

Lacking the blockbuster appeal of Stallone, Boris or Ken, the 'New Hope' players need a good ground game, policies that speak to the voters despite the limited remit of the Mayoralty, a carefully managed relationship with their national team and a strategy that secures them second preference votes from across the political spectrum. You can see why, for the moment at least, we're saying this one is too close to call!

And if you want to keep abreast of the developments do register for our free copy of *LDN – London In Short* via our website and follow us on Twitter @LDNComms. NL



1 Undershaft

Eric Parry explains the public realm and other opportunities presented by its 1 Undershaft project, which will be the tallest tower in the City



The site for 1 Undershaft lies at the heart of the City of London's Eastern Cluster. The topography that the 'Cluster' implies was developed as a vision for the future city over the decade of the 1990s, reflecting the phenomenal demand created by the expansion of financial services with the lifting of the Exchange rules in 1986. Competition to retain institutions and the grouping of associated skills in urban proximity between the City of London and Canary Wharf has continued from the inception of the latter and its opening four years after the Act of Parliament creating it in 1982. Both the City of London and Canary Wharf vie with other international centres of financial expertise, notably in Europe Frankfurt, whose urban grain shares some similarities with the City of London, and with Paris, where the modernity of La Défense stands in stark contrast to the historic City.

The site for 1 Undershaft is bounded by Leadenhall to the south, St Mary Axe to the east, by St Helen's church to the north and by 122 Leadenhall Street (aka the 'Cheesegrater') and the recently consented 22 Bishopgate to the west. It is a large, irregular site with a two-storey basement given over to parking and services provision to the existing 23-storey tower.

The proposal now submitted for planning permission consists of a new 73-storey tower with reception space, office space, amenity floors, a public restaurant and a viewing gallery that includes an education centre. At street level and lower ground level, a new and very significant public space is created at the epicentre of the surrounding buildings of the Eastern Cluster.

The obvious negative impacts of tall buildings on public space are their long shadows, their tendency to exacerbate wind turbulence, and with relatively tight footprints the percentage of their limited perimeter given over to servicing. As an urbanist, my first thoughts were the opportunity

that the redevelopment would offer for this increasingly hard-pressed city district. By moving the core from the centre to the western side of the building and elevating the lobby 12m above the ground plane, a relatively uninterrupted public space across the site from north to south is created. This will provide much greater permeability and visual linkages across the site and set the listed churches of St Helen's Bishopsgate and St Andrew Undershaft in dialogue. Importantly, the constraining service ramp to the south of St Helen's would be removed. As well as opening up the ground plane, the proposal creates a retail centre at lower ground level with sufficient critical mass to serve the increasing working population. The form of the sunken open space, which acts as a public focus, is scaled to create convivial meeting spaces around its perimeter as well as exhibiting the lobby that serves to connect the public spaces at the top of the building to those at the ground and lower ground.

'As an urbanist, my first thoughts were the opportunity that the redevelopment would offer for this increasingly hard-pressed city district'

There is provision for 1,600 cyclists on the site at the level below the sunken forum. Their descent and ascent will form an animated edge to the south east of the new public space. While the side core arrangement creates a stiff spine, the stability of the relatively slim tower necessitated bracing. Rather than concealing or over-cladding the bracing it is expressed and constructed of weathering steel, which does not require surface treatment. There are seven sections, each spanning 12 floors to the lower three and 10 floors



The tower is intended to 'balance the homogeneity and difference' of the rest of the cluster

to the upper four. The braces are connected to the internal perimeter piers at nodes that correspond to the floor zones. Rather than an expressed glass skin, solar and glare protection is formed in the horizontal banding of white vitreous enamel brise-soleil. This will give the tower a simple and significant differentiating character to other buildings of the cluster, important to balance the homogeneity and difference of the whole ensemble.

The sides of the tower taper slightly, a result of decreasing structural need and to reinforce the mediation between earth and sky. If extended, the sides would meet at a point 10 times the height of the building. Two lifts connect directly to the public spaces at the top of the building, which will have a unique educational and cultural focus. As part of the viewing gallery, a centre is envisaged that will have the capacity to accommodate two groups of schoolchildren at one time to learn about the history of London's development – classrooms in the sky. The view will be augmented by time-lapse graphic and audio descriptions of the City's metamorphosis.

The tower is intended to 'balance the homogeneity and difference' of the rest of the cluster

The seventh braces connecting at the corners at the top of the building have no horizontal structural members and the vitreous brise-soleil below are transformed into dichroic glass blades. This will create an iridescence and lightness to the public levels of the building. The animated ground plane, pragmatic body and skyward top of the building are intended to reflect the civic qualities of this building which by consent would be the highest structure of the City of London's Eastern Cluster. ■



INSPIRA

A NEW DESIGN DNA FROM ROCA.

Roca's new Inspira collection presents a unique, flexible concept designed using FINECERAMIC®, Roca's exclusive, slim ceramic material. At 40% lighter and 30% stronger than conventional ceramic, more sophisticated design details and shapes can be incorporated into a bathroom project. Reflecting the trend for modern bathroom designs, Inspira is available in three shapes, Round, Soft and Square, and can be combined accordingly, allowing for greater versatility in the contemporary bathroom.

Roca



Nunhead Infinity Pool (and other ideas)

By Philip Breese, senior partner, Weston Williamson + Partners

There lies an incredible opportunity in Nunhead, SE15. Sometimes technical constraints should be put to one side to let blue-sky thinking take hold. This idea does just that.

Constructed in 1855 by the Southwark and Vauxhall Water Company, the Nunhead underground reservoir provides a plateau to the most striking panoramic views of the London skyline from the south. But unfortunately these views are not accessible – the reservoir is surrounded by impenetrable robust security fencing topped with barbed wire.

Just four miles from London's historic centre at Charing Cross, and with open space at such a premium, it cannot be acceptable that we are deprived of this stunning aspect of the world's greatest city.

'The Nunhead underground reservoir provides a plateau to the most striking panoramic views of the London skyline'

About nine acres in area, the reservoir is already covered with grass that forms a gently inclined plateau – a perfect observation plane. The idea is this: the surface can be configured for any number of installations or uses that are intended to change each year and run from late spring to early autumn. Four suggestions are:

Wheat Field – the planting of a wheat field would bring a piece of the Sussex Downs to Nunhead with its birds, butterflies and flowers. At harvest, the wheat would be used by the local baker.

Cow Meadow – a livestock field would bring a new take on the 'city farm'.



Wheat field – bringing a piece of the Sussex Downs to Nunhead



Cow Meadow – a new take on the 'city farm' idea



Sculpture Park – a place in which to meander and picnic among the art

Sculpture Park – visitors would be able to meander and picnic among the art installations and sculptures, enjoying striking sunsets over the city.

Infinity Pool – an experience that no other outdoor pool in London is currently able to offer.

By generating season-long sponsorship (a review of the summer Serpentine Pavilion model wouldn't go amiss), the plateau could be activated by different uses and enjoyed by everybody. It would draw in visitors and plug back into the local economy.

All that's needed is a campaign to persuade Thames Water this is the right thing to do! NL



Infinity Pool – an experience like no other outdoor pool in London



Edge of greatness

AKT II is set to move to the White Collar Factory, help design the new Serpentine Gallery with Bjarke Ingels and celebrate 20 years in the engineering business. The firm's Hanif Kara and Paul Scott tell David Taylor how it wants to stay 'edgy'

AKT II likes living life on the edge.

Now getting into its stride after a buyback and relaunch five years ago (the name came from two new equity partners added to the originals), the engineer is on the cusp of a new start at the White Collar Factory it helped design. It is also deep into collaborations with names like Bjarke Ingels, at the next Serpentine Pavilion, and with Thomas Heatherwick on Google. But joint founder Hanif Kara says it should do anything but rest on its laurels: 'We have to stay on the edge of conversation and part of that comes from not egotistically promoting ourselves but being part of the bigger discourse', he says. 'We want to be involved in not only what the answer was, but how to set the question in the first place. You've got to keep pushing the edge forwards.'

Peter Rogers once called AKT II 'weird', and the practice in 2016

is keen to stay 'out there'; nimble, fleet of foot and adaptive to changes in the market and the practice of doing a little more than ensuring the building of their architect collaborators stand up. To do so it publishes books, its partners lecture and talk about designing on a wider scale, former CABE Commissioner and current Harvard lecturer Kara is on the HS2 design panel, and AKT II staff regularly appear on industry forums or help write the BCO specs. Although they contest it is nothing so unscientific as a game implies, they are clearly intent on remaining at the top of it.

Our meeting is at the firm's St John Street home, which it has outgrown, some of its 250 staff spreading across the road, with all of the internal communications issues that has entailed. But later this year AKT II will be putting its moneymakers where

their mouths are, setting up home for the next phase of its onward march at the White Collar Factory on Old Street. This seems fitting too, not least since it is in a scheme it has helped create with its long-term collaborators Allford Hall Monaghan Morris and one of Kara's best mates, Simon Allford. But it is also, says Kara characteristically, 'a big leap' and a risk.

'When I signed for White Collar I know there were a lot of eyebrows raised', he says. 'People were saying: "you must be mad". You're committing to a 10-year lease on a 20,000 sq ft property. How can you be so sure it is all going to be all right? You can't. But you have to do something. And so we did it in the hope that it would set up another challenge that, having done that, we can't fail.'

This is in essence a lot of what AKT II is about. It has a clear-

sightedness and a logic, married to flair and the appreciation that what is risky might also be beneficial in more ways than one. But although AKT II prides itself on its edginess, it is also keen on another important 'e': empathy. To its clients, to its architectural collaborators, to the other members of the development team.

The firm is also mindful to present its true democratic nature; the interview is with just two of the firm's partners – Kara and Paul Scott – for the sake of ease rather than ego. But what of its aims? No company has failed through its management system, says Scott, but plenty have through their lack of vision, hence AKT II's push for innovation, more working overseas, generally aiming to drive and challenge themselves to avoid complacency.

The portfolio is interesting and varied. But the lower profile, less 'shapely' projects on the books are often

just as complicated as those for their 'engineer to the stars' clients. By that, Kara means people like Zaha Hadid, who is a friend and who he considers a little misunderstood in London, if not abroad. Or, indeed, Thomas Heatherwick, with whom AKT II is working in San Francisco on Google and on the on-hold King's Cross scheme. Why does this scheme pique the interest? asks Paul Scott. Why not the less high-profile projects for developers like British Land? Mainly it is because of the high-profile nature of Google, but then AKT II is also doing a great deal of important work for similar clients like Facebook and Yahoo too – the former through its Rathbone Place scheme with Make and the latter the GPE tower in Blackfriars, at which Yahoo is a part-tenant.

The firm was born exactly 20 years ago this year when YRM was running out of legs, as Kara puts it. At the time, all the engineers were

running to banks, he recalls, amid a general questioning of design's place in a recessionary world. 'What we decided to do then was basically come back to the roots and reform a practice that had core values which were making things stand up. We felt there was a big gap there, and have been proven right.' Paul Scott joined a year later, joining Kara, Albert Williamson-Taylor and Robin Adams, and recalls it as an interesting time for practices setting up, including their first port of call, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, then at Morelands in Clerkenwell. They began above a jewellery shop in Hatton Garden, doing all their business in local coffee shops. 'Then we were above a wine bar in Clerkenwell Road and had so little space we used to interview people in the wine bar', laughs Scott. 'The effect of those new staff arriving to be interviewed in a completely different space threw them so much I think they thought: "well, I've got to find out more about this company, and join".'

Technology was changing quickly – email was kicking in, along with design software, CAD and other tools that went with the way the firm thought. The majority of those first three years' work was directly with contractors, partially for cash flow reasons. 'But the end game was always design', says Kara. 'Getting back to the core of design, getting back to architects.' At year 10, they were too good for themselves and everyone kept offering to buy them, until one offer was too good to refuse. But it didn't work out with White Young Green (now WYG), and their cultures couldn't quite fit. So what is that culture? 'The essence, the core of it, is knowledge', says Kara. 'The knowledge we possess and try to build on construction.' Technical competence for an engineer is key, engineering is precise and technical, so the idea of being top of their game does not work, because the ethos is measurable and the firm feels it is always at that point.



Moving in – AKT II's new home, the White Collar Factory

‘Our ethos is technical competence first; people, product, profit. The profit just falls out if you get the first two right.’

But implying there is a ‘game’ at play anyway for a scientist is a no-no. ‘There is no game. It is precise. We know exactly what the profits should be, what value is and how you convert knowledge to value. We know that. For us it is more about being at the cutting edge all of the time and then understanding the condition.’

Back in 1996 this condition was generally about recession, with people moving to very big practices, as is happening today, the 30,000-plus firms. Anyone between 200 and 10,000 today is in trouble, suggests Kara. Which puts 250-strong AKT II right in the mire, no? ‘You could say we’re in trouble but we stuck to a single discipline.’ Generally at this size, practices veer off into multidisciplinary to feed the machine, when it starts to get hazy. AKT II has reached the point where it will selectively add facades because that is integral but does not want to do M&E. ‘We’re at the cusp of what we should do next, right now. I think we’re right there.’

‘There is no game. It is precise. We know exactly what the profits should be, what value is and how you convert knowledge to value’

Kara believes the future is in remaining at the cutting edge but analysing the condition out there, growing more globally. Or rather, what he calls being ‘glocal’, as the biggest structural engineering office in London, if one takes pure structures. Glocal is about ‘world class structural and civil engineering, made in London’. And one of the biggest ‘world class’ projects here is the Francis Crick Institute at King’s Cross, a laboratory scheme for 4,000



The complex 100,000 sq ft Bloomberg HQ, designed by Foster + Partners

people that completes later this year. ‘I think it is recognised globally that if you want to do a decent well-designed lab we’re one of the people you talk to’, says Kara. Bloomberg is another, Wood Wharf another still, with the cylindrical tower AKT II is working on with Herzog & de Meuron.

Is their perception as a creative engineer something that chimes? And does it irritate them or flatter them? There are several types of engineers – many who want to be architects, many who claim to be architects and many who want to run countries, smiles Kara. But AKT II is ‘heavily contingent’ on architecture, its portfolio full of form makers like Zaha Hadid but also ranging to AHMM, often with Derwent. ‘Therefore I would like to think that the perception should be corrected. The reason why we do well with, say, a building that is not overly complicated on the face of it, is because we do the ones that nobody else can make stand up. So what happens is,

you’re so sharp with that very big knife that when someone throws you this little one you know it is actually not that difficult’.

A quick look at the client list bears this out – AKT II is working with all the big estates – Cadogan, Grosvenor, Great Portland, and with Land Securities and British Land. Scott agrees that there is indeed this misconception that a lot of the projects that get published are those with complex roof systems and in ‘exotic locations’, but often there might be difficult political or economic challenges, or those relating to materials, even structural or buildability issues with the less showy schemes. ‘We don’t quite see the projects like everybody else sees the projects’, says Scott. ‘To us it’s engineering. But the biggest difference is we’re not just problem-solvers, which is a kind of traditional engineer, we’re contributors to design as well. We immerse ourselves in the design conversation with the architect and developer.’

Good clients see that, and those who see good architecture also recognise that it can't stop there suddenly, says Kara, yielding what he calls a 2+2=5 approach. And that has been particularly marked through the recession. The Angel building designed by AHMM was an example. It was not an easy project in some ways, but in many it was a pretty normal corner-block scheme. And yet the outcome required a great patron of architecture, and the technical solutions of expanding the site relied on new ways of thinking about materials. 'The perceptions are wrong about what constitutes complexity.'

'Bjarke Ingels for us is a success. The Serpentine is a success. And bringing him to London is a good idea'

In some ways, the firm addresses this through publishing its own books. But engineers in society more generally are misunderstood, says Kara, particularly in the UK. The firm's profile abroad is more revered and valued intellectually. The danger of that is when you start to want to be stars, he adds, but there is a job to be done in persuading the country and politicians that there is a value to what can be achieved through infrastructure and redoing cities in a way no one else can. King's Cross is a big one here, where AKT II has completed six projects. Or there is the 'phenomenal achievement' of Bloomberg, which sits on 8,000 piles. To find a footprint on the site lasted many years and resulted in a 1 million sq ft scheme with an incremental effect – of bringing other projects people perceive to be 'impossible'.

This contribution to design and not just problem solving is also key in a world of myriad consultants. 'All of our projects have a spark in them, but that doesn't happen by accident', says Scott. 'That happens by a very active

contribution with the architect, with the rest of the team, with the client towards the design of the project.'

Aside from technical competence there is an empathetic approach to everything the city has to deal with, including contractors, adds Kara.

And yet the next phase of AKT II's collaborations with the edgier end of the design universe is just as exciting and headline-grabbing. The Serpentine work is a telling chapter for AKT, says Kara, not least because the firm did the first pavilion and a bit on the second, designed by Zaha. Then the big boys came in – Arup and AECOM – for the following 14 years. 'For us it is fantastic because it is a good moment to be able to say we must have grown up to have been given a shot at the Serpentine. It must be accepted that we are good enough.' And yet most people in London don't like Ingels and many architects hate his guts, says Kara; there is a certain kind of Englishness that attacks success. 'Bjarke Ingels for us is a success. The Serpentine is a success. And bringing him to London is a good idea.' Go anywhere and Ingels is engaged with the public, not just the mayors and the presidents, but the public, adds Kara. 'That's what makes him exciting and a city like London can't afford not to have things like that as a conversation.'

The firm deals in work ranging from £1 million to £600m deliberately to avoid being too dependent on offices to feed the machine. 'Provided you show first in class you can work across scales profitably and even add value at all of these levels', he says. It is working on all five of the Grosvenor Square projects with five different clients, even Regent's Park Crescent. 'You wouldn't imagine AKT to be working on a John Nash building', smiles Kara. Again, that perception that this firm is doing sexy, bright parametric design with sexy imagery rather than enjoying the pure engineering, pulling out value by extending that Nash building by



Tall storeys – the Wood Wharf Herzog & de Meuron tower

a storey for its Saudi clients. They don't mind the architectural press's tag of AKT II as 'engineer to the stars' through its work with the Chipperfields, the Fosters and the Zahas. 'But what we're careful about is we're not the stars.' What does wind them up, though, is when people perceive them to be the designer to the extent of being an architect. Some architects will give a blank sheet and ask them to draw first. Some developers say with AKT II on board they do not need a great architect. 'That kind of thing I have to be frank winds us up. What have we done to be perceived as this thing we are fighting not to be?'

Recruitment is important, with 40 languages spoken across the 250 staff. Diversity is key both internally and externally, allowing the firm to work abroad but also to think differently. 'It has always been a very open and collaborative way of working again both internally and externally', says Scott, with an informal structure meaning a young design engineer is able to get access to the directors or design review. 'It's a very purposeful culture to include everyone within that.' The staff are engaged and engaging and good communicators, adds Kara, flying in the face of the

wider picture, with engineers not great at getting their messages across on value, social, ethical or moral agendas. Their staff love being in London, and the practice is a microcosm of the capital, he adds, although one team photo with too many men in it reminds them that they have in fact got a relatively good gender split of 35:65, and recently promoted two women to director level – Sabina de Jesus and Marta Galiñanes-Garcia.

But women don't stay in engineering, says Kara. 'It's a dirty world. They see it as not only male dominated but are actually pushed out fairly early. The minute they want to have kids they have lost the career path quite quickly, a bit like law.' It is a major issue across the profession and AKT II has tried to be proactive and pushy in recruiting, especially as papers prove that if you have females at high level, profitability and value changes for the better.

The five-year business plan is now gone, so the firm ensures it looks to have a strategic plan every year that responds to how it communicates what it is doing. It refuses to work in China for ethical but also 'reality' reasons. 'They can do everything we can do faster, quicker, cheaper and with fewer morals, killing more people than we would', says Kara. 'So for us it is not a good position to be in.' It does work in Doha, however, with a stadium project.

Technically, it tries to stay ahead by taking software, dismantling it, and rewriting it. Otherwise the competitor can offer the package.

What does the future hold for AKT II? The firm wants to stay at roughly the same size, perhaps slightly smaller, adapting to the market, whose peak has gone for AKT II in terms of the many residential towers it is working on in London. 'The future holds change, and that is the only

thing you can guarantee about it', says Scott. 'So being adaptable and dealing with change which we have always done is truly a strength of ours. You can't suddenly make that up. It has to be a cultural thing and you have to be used to not only be dealing with change in an engineering sense but in the market sense, in the business sense, in the practice sense. If that is part of your culture that happens a lot easier.'

So, finally, that name. Did they toy with anything else before plumping for AKT II? 'Oh yeah', laughs Kara. 'PURA. The reverse of Arups. We actually patented it and still pay for it. It would have been an irony because they are still the practice that everybody looks up to. They're pretty good ... our challenge is to keep just behind them, because you should never be first. You should always be second because there is always somewhere to go.' NL



Diversity matters: the AKT II senior team



End of the road for PTAL?

Hawkins\Brown director Roger Hawkins asks if London's growth can be helped by revisiting the Public Transport Accessibility Level system

Since its introduction as a planning tool, the PTAL – or the Public Transport Accessibility Level – score has become a factor with considerable weight when considering the density of new development in London.

Despite the benefits of recognising transport provision within the planning process, it is becoming increasingly apparent that PTAL is a crude tool that lacks the nuance required when dealing with the uniquely dynamic and changing growth forecasts for London, particularly in the outer boroughs, and the complex urbanism that results.

Around half of outer London has a PTAL of 0-2. If this could be increased to 4-6 it would allow housing density to double. There are also examples of circumstances where the quality of urbanism, particularly on large residential regeneration sites, would be improved by a relaxation of the rules to allow appropriate density to be considered in terms outside the slavish application of what many consider a flawed metric.

PTAL was originally based on walking distance from a site to the nearest 'service access points' (SAPs) – a bus stop, station or the like. Under PTAL a location is graded between 0 and 6, where a low score indicates poor access to public transport and 6 is considered to have excellent connections.

London Plan policies now link density levels to the PTAL rating of an area, which has had the effect of promoting dense urban living close to SAPs and discouraging car usage. The threshold for developments is

relatively steep, such that in urban areas a low PTAL of 0-1 results in densities of up to 250 habitable rooms per hectare (hr/ha), a PTAL of 4-6 allows 700 hr/ha, and in central London, where PTALs are generally higher, this increases from 300 hr/ha to 1,100 hr/ha.

On large projects, it is common for PTAL to vary across a site. This can result in random density contours which do not make the most effective use of land and, if applied mechanically, do not respect the urban character of an area.

Another commonly cited glitch in the PTAL calculation is that it takes frequency of service, but not destination into account, resulting in a situation where a bus every 12 minutes going to the city centre scores less than a bus every 10 minutes that terminates at the end of the street.

While it doesn't provide a solution for all users, cycle hire has huge latent

potential in London: in 2014 there was a 25 per cent increase in London cycle-hire journeys and this trend is set to continue. With a cycle, each rider has the freedom to travel where they want, provided they can find an empty docking station at the end of their journey.

There are constant calls to expand the cycle hire scheme into Islington, Hackney and south London. Such expansion is currently thwarted because a portion of the expense of providing additional bikes and docking stations falls on cash-strapped local authorities. With recognition of cycle hire through PTAL, and the consequent increase in development density, these areas could easily fund the cycling infrastructure. Outer London use could be further enhanced with mini-hubs serving local communities around rail stations.

In 2011 Hawkins\Brown obtained planning permission for 'The Wharves' in Deptford, a mixed-use scheme delivering 905 homes, retail and workspace. The site was sold to Lend Lease in 2013 and Hawkins\Brown was re-appointed to take a fresh look at our earlier design. As is common on larger regeneration projects, the PTAL rating ranges from 1a to 3 across the site, creating an artificial constraint along one side of the development. Our revised design, which obtained planning approval at the end of 2015, challenged some of the preconceived density limits and responded to local context which varies considerably around the site: from busy main roads, to quieter streets and postwar housing estates. By successfully arguing for a relaxation of the PTAL requirements, density has been optimised from 200 dwellings per hectare to around 240, giving a new total of 1,130 homes.

The above example has increased density by around 20 per cent, demonstrating the benefit of looking beyond PTAL. Other sites throughout London could also benefit significantly if PTAL itself is reviewed. **ML**



Denser Deptford – Hawkins\Brown's reworked scheme

Image: Alphabet, London, designed by Studio RHE. Photography by Hufton + Crow



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Open for business

Lambeth's assistant director for neighbourhoods and investment Sandra Roebuck says the borough is primed for further investment and partnership working



The Black Cultural Archives centre opened in Brixton in 2014

For a riverfront borough only three miles wide and seven miles long, with 300,000 residents, Lambeth is playing a major role in London's economy. Some 40,000 new jobs and 32,000 new homes over the next 20 years are being planned for. The population is expected to grow by 50,000 by 2026.

The borough has a rich cultural DNA, from the internationally renowned theatres and galleries of the South Bank, to the nightlife of Vauxhall and the eateries of Brixton, including at Pop Brixton, one of London's newest meanwhile spaces. Its treasured green spaces include Clapham and Streatham Commons, as well as Brockwell Park, host to a Country Show attracting 160,000 visitors. Lambeth is proud

of its heritage and is home to the Black Cultural Archives and one of London's magnificent seven cemeteries in West Norwood.

We have been adding to Lambeth's many attractions. Mixed-use developments include Clapham One's award-winning library, health centre and leisure centre; the Streatham Ice and Leisure Centre; and the West Norwood Health and Leisure Centre. Public realm and road improvements are making the borough an even more attractive place to be, with award-winning projects like Clapham Old Town and Van Gogh Walk. Jubilee Gardens now provides an appealing setting for the iconic London Eye.

Harnessing this growth to provide benefits means understanding the

opportunity for intervention and taking it; clarity around ownership – what needs to be done and by whom; engagement to encourage views to be heard; and a robust approach to financial management so that what is being delivered can be looked after.

A recently adopted Local Plan, setting out our commitment to growth, has given certainty. Our track record for delivery is evidence that we have the skills and commitment to make a difference.

Of course, there remain challenges to address:

- Our strategy for financial resilience shows that even in this very strong economy there are still people who need help with daily life. Housing



Pop culture – one of London's newest meanwhile spaces, Pop Brixton

has replaced crime as the top of the list of residents' concerns. There are 21,000 people on the borough's housing list, and this is likely to grow. The council is building 1,000 new homes at target rent and has embarked on the biggest regeneration programme in the borough's history, complemented with £490m of investment in the existing housing stock.

- Faced with cuts to budgets, maintaining the quality of the environment will only be possible through partnership working. We supported the creation of six Business Improvement Districts to underpin the vitality and viability of our town centres, including South

Bank and We Are Waterloo. Working with these organisations and others has enabled innovation and creativity to thrive around management of public realm and open space; meanwhile activity and events; crime and community safety; community support and outreach; promotion and marketing of the borough.

- A lack of infrastructure threatens our ability to support communities in a sustainable way. To try to respond we welcome partnership ventures to ensure infrastructure like the Northern Line extension can come forward. We remain committed to engaging in the debate about accessibility, including programmes like Crossrail 2 and significant

enhancements to Waterloo Station. Following the successful creation of Windrush Square in Brixton, we are committed to the removal of the borough's gyratories. TfL recently concluded its second stage consultation on the removal of the Vauxhall gyratory, where the aspiration is to develop a brand new bus station and traffic-free public space.

Working with partners to make sure growth benefits local people through jobs, homes and opportunities is fundamental to our success. Good progress has been made but there remain untapped possibilities and opportunities. Lambeth is open for business. **ML**

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Streets special

Streets Ahead: London's streets and roads are changing, fast. NLA joined forces with TfL on an exhibition and event series on the issue



Making London 'streets ahead'

London is facing up to the challenge of reconciling the place and movement aspects of its streets, armed with investment and a new map TfL has devised to characterise every road in the capital. But it must strive to make cycling as 'supernormal' as it is in other European cities, with a 'safe system' approach to appeal more to women and children.

Those were just two of many views to emerge from a wide-ranging breakfast talk at NLA on January 29 as part of its Streets Ahead season.

Social Research Associates director Kris Beuret said things had moved rapidly in the last eight years since a mixed priority routes study was published. Today there are more people on the streets, more scooters and cyclists and declining car use, albeit more light vans. But designers of public realm could take lessons from other industries including retail, applying more 'psychology of movement' principles. 'Think about streets as you would about your own sitting room', said Beuret. 'We're all living in exciting days – go for it!'

TfL director, surface strategy and planning, Ben Plowden said that the demand side is growing sharply largely because of population growth, but there is little political interest in increasing the supply of roads. So if congestion is not dealt with it could rise by 60 per cent in central London and 15 per cent in outer by 2031. But the other main challenge lies in the trade-off between different users on the road network, said Plowden, and between the movement and place or 'living' function of London's roads. To this end TfL has now completed its work in designating every London street according to its credentials, resulting in a matrix of nine different grades. 'That



TfL commissioner Mike Brown and NLA's Peter Murray show Boris Johnson around the exhibition

allows you to start to have a different conversation about what those streets are for', said Plowden.

London Councils corporate director, services, Nick Lester said roads are a critical issue for the capital's boroughs, which control 95 per cent of the network, including most of the busiest bus routes. Traffic levels, though, have stabilised and are declining, reported Lester, with the number of households with no cars increasing. Some 50 per cent of households in the capital do not have access to a car, and younger Londoners have half the car ownership of their older counterparts. But Lester felt that projects like the Hammersmith 'dive-under' had become 'frayed at the edges' and although it has 80-90 per cent local support, if this can't get going it will be difficult to get other tunnel projects built elsewhere.

Finally, International Transport's Philippe Crist said the key challenge was to make cycling 'supernormal', no longer recognised as a separate discipline for – particularly – male, lycra-clad people going to 'war' in the city. 'Women and children are who you need to keep in mind when designing cycling policies', he said. 'We have to focus on those who do not cycle now.' Speed management is key, with the aim

being to reduce streets to 30km/hour and even 20km/hour in some areas, as the most effective safety management that can be deployed. Cycle tracks should be built where it is necessary and often difficult and controversial, Crist added, avoiding the temptation to put in speed-managed zones only where people don't travel. But the outputs are sometimes surprising. In New York, where temporary cycle lanes became permanent, cycling numbers went up and injuries down, but vehicular speeds also went up. 'Good planning can benefit everyone', said Crist.

TfL boss backs cycling growth and streets as places

TfL commissioner Mike Brown made an impassioned plea for Londoners to keep faith with its measures to improve cycling in the city and vowed to continue its plans to develop streets as places as much as for movement.

Commissioner Brown was speaking last night as he opened NLA's new



Mike Brown opening the show

show on streets and roads in the capital, 'Streets Ahead', during what he branded 'an extraordinary time for our great city'. London's roads are the arteries of the city, with more than 80 per cent of all journeys made by people and 90 per cent of all goods transported on the road network, said Brown. But it was important to move on from the findings of the Mayor's Roads Task Force, said Brown, building on its recognition that they should accommodate both place and movement. 'It's both – a road is not just for movement; it is about space in London.' TfL has developed streetscape design guidance to this end, while other pressures include a growth in development, online shopping, minicabs and cycling. 'By 2030, we forecast that there will be something like five million extra trips on London's road networks by public transport', said Brown, 'aside from the 30 million we see right now.' Investment to keep pace includes £4bn to spend on the roads network, maintained through budget cuts. But on the cycle superhighway scheme, Brown was forthright. 'I am unapologetic – I am a huge defender of our cycle superhighways. Although they may reduce some road space for motorised vehicles I have to tell you, to

avoid a single death or serious injury for cyclists makes all that investment worthwhile. Those who are critical of it, I have to tell you, I think you're wrong. Cycling will continue to grow.'

The background to the show is how to accommodate London's growth, with the city growing by two busloads of people every day and a whole Tube train full every week, said NLA chairman Peter Murray.

Congestion has not been helped by construction schemes, but this is easing off, claimed Brown, while on the Tubes, a record 36 trains will soon be running per hour on the Victoria line, and further work will be done on new river crossings to the east.

Ultimately, said Brown, the scale of London's growth represents a 'once in a lifetime opportunity to make the changes to the road network that are needed'.

Who should pay for London's roads?

London needs to grasp the nettle of road charging to avoid a gridlocked capital city in future decades. But to get there it must develop a narrative with 'carrots' as well as 'sticks' to convince all road 'users' of its worth.

That was one of the overriding messages to emerge from a wide-ranging NLA Think Tank co-hosted by Transport for London called 'Who should pay for London's Roads?'

Providing the context first was Tony Travers, director of LSE London, running through the hierarchy of the capital's roads and whose responsibility they are, from motorways down to local streets. The advantage of both fuel duty and vehicle excise tax is that they exist, said Travers, but revenue is declining from both and they are easily perceived and therefore 'terribly unpopular' in contrast to the more

complex income tax for example. Road user charging would have a very large potential yield in Greater London, potentially of billions. 'But it seems to me', said Travers, 'that it does beg the question that if there is to be an argument for revenues linked to roads or vehicle use it would prompt a debate about what the roads are for.' There are implied changes already in this, given a reduction in roads being used for private travel and more for freight.

For a long time, road user charging has been the silver bullet, said Lucinda Turner, head of strategic planning, Transport for London. 'But no one has been able to fire the gun fully.' And yet the debate is as much about psychology and communication as it is about anything else, she felt.

Somehow, the roads lobby has captured the idea of the attractiveness, freedom and flexibility of the car and those who support charging need to come up with a compelling narrative to counter it. That narrative will have to be different in outer London where the public will expect something in return in terms of their service levels. We also need to think about different models including car clubs, Uber and so on, and build on the modal shift of some 11 per cent that has happened in recent years. There would be some 1.7 million more car journeys made daily if nothing had been done. If we did nothing else some level of integration is necessary between the low emissions zone, the ultra low emissions zone, tolls, and congestion charging zone.

One survey for a future mayor, said Nick Lester, corporate director – services, London Councils, asked how transport expenditure should be funded in future. Over 40 per cent said their first preference was for the payer to be the road user. But if there was to be a push on road user charging – and this was almost 'inevitable' – are we doing it to reduce congestion, or to raise revenue? There may be a publicly acceptable case to be made for saying it is to raise funds, Lester suggested.

The movement of freight is a big part of the equation, said Natalie Chapman, head of policy, Freight Transport Association, but a lot of consolidation already takes place; the creation of 'Consolidation Centres' tend to require public subsidy, as Camden and other authorities are proving. But if road pricing is going to be introduced, where are the improvements – the carrots after all the sticks – going to come from? asked London First's Richard Dilks, programme director – transport. With little in the way of extra road space on offer, this will be no easy task, but the status quo is not sustainable, he said. The improvement of London's air quality will, however, be a useful benefit, said Jack Skillen, London director, Living Streets, and this is the issue that will have most draw for a Mayor in terms of headlines. But the 'negative externalities' are often invisible, said Travers, and an implied hierarchy of removal from our roads was starting to emerge, with emergency vehicles likely to be last on the list after freight. Even they were starting to use cycle superhighways in certain situations, however. 'The only way you can really do anything is to have systemic solutions', Travers said.

Other cities were worth noting, said Scott Wilson, principal consultant, D'Artagnan Consulting PLP. Oslo funded its network of tunnels through tolls, and there was a degree of

acceptability in that because people could see the trade-off. 'One of the key factors of acceptability of road charging is that those using the roads see something for it.' California is piloting the use of charging by distance, while Australia is getting rid of vehicle tax in favour of distance charging. Perhaps London could follow suit with a distance charging pilot?

'Road user charging has long been the silver bullet, but no one has been able to fire the gun fully'

Maybe a missing piece in the jigsaw is technology shaped. Rachel Skinner, director, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff raised the issue of autonomous vehicles, saying we need to make decisions now as they are on the horizon but still an unknown quantity for much of the public. BAM Nuttall's Matt Banks agreed, saying we need to consider how funding mechanisms need to be put in place today. But Carlton Reid, author of *Roads were not built for cars*, was sceptical. Reid could see a future where cyclists or pedestrians toy with autonomous vehicles by jumping in front of them, safe in the belief that they will always stop. This would lead to yet more channelisation. But more seriously, the narrative that is created needs to be one in which the Nick

Ferraris of this world (LBC presenter) can be convinced out of their cars. Do you start charging cyclists? Perhaps this could be at the almost nominal charge of pre-car Britain from 1891. Bridget Fox, sustainable transport campaigner, Better Transport suggested a variable charge according to the kind of vehicle one drives, or a kind of 'passport' idea to cover a variety of motoring-associated costs, perhaps linked to incentives. A workplace parking levy would also be a useful tool, she added.

The way forward was through forming a coalition to provide reasons to support road charging rather than debates about how it can be done or whether it is a good idea from the transport perspective, said Vincent Stops, policy officer, London TravelWatch. Travers suggested that instigating a new pricing regime would likely come through 'force majeure' items such as oil price hikes, new infrastructure, or stealth – 'the first cousin of nudge'. But the other necessary key component was political direction and will – it was hard to believe any initiative such as the congestion charge, Boris bikes or superhighways would have happened without a Mayor fully behind them.

As to recommendations, the case needs to be made for London-wide congestion charging, and part of that is not just a transport debate but how the city sees itself and the 'place' value of London's streets. There is great potential to shift congestion and freight traffic, smoothing out the peaks and troughs. There is a need for clarity and a firm plan comparable to that in place for rail; there is an opportunity to now shift to something that more closely resembles a pay-as-you-go system; but what happens in London needs to not happen in isolation. The service people get back for such a system needs to include items from pothole repair, to congestion, to safety. Ultimately, perhaps the way to go is for one very specific suggestion from the group – for the Mayor to instigate a feasibility study on road user pricing within six months of taking office. **ML**



A roadmap for the future – the Streets Ahead exhibition at the NLA



Building software, version 2.0

By Mike Bedford, principal of intelligent buildings, Hoare Lea

Building technology design is, and will carry on, influencing the way we design and use buildings. With advances in technology, the way we perceive work, shopping, universities, banks, travel, media and leisure has shifted. More activities are required to be carried out within buildings and with greater expectations of efficiency, elegance and responsiveness from all user groups.

Gone are the days of the traditional linear form building design and construction project process: brief, concept to commissioning, perhaps with a token post-occupancy check-in. Now, user requirements, sustainability, technology and optimisation from data analytics are some of the powerful drivers behind the software model for building design.

Building experience and operation can be extensively programmed and

developed in a very similar way to how software is released.

For example, from briefing stage, a user-centred cyclical framework is set in place with the specific intent of formalised growth in functionality and efficiency optimisation, based upon the way the building is being used and incorporating ever-faster developments in technology. This is a step beyond basic futureproofing, rather an intentional and coordinated development of controlled building optimisation process and an acceptance that perhaps only 50 per cent of the designed technology potential functionality will be delivered to users on 'day one'.

Consultants, architects and integrators then work on building versions to be released in six months, one year, two years from first occupancy, to reflect the dynamic use of the building. The

optimisations are supported by the outcomes of data analytics.

A single device agnostic software 'front-end' to the building provides a coherent and consistent method, relating people to the often complex building technology systems in a simple and relevant way. User profiles provide the user relevant functionalities and information. For example, the facilities manager receives notifications for pre-emptive maintenance with live and future systems reporting on faults, energy, occupancies, utilisations and work orders.

'Gone are the days of the traditional linear form building design'

An analytics server system uses sets of carefully selected algorithms, identifying correlations in the trends of the recorded data and suggesting decisions for building optimisations to consultants, facilities and organisation managers for consideration as an inclusion within the next building version update. Data sources will become richer and richer as the Internet of Things (IoT) gathers momentum, in addition to pervasive multi-sensors and camera recognition systems, basic devices such as hand dryers and coffee machines can now provide detailed data and be remotely updated.

We are now familiar with the concepts of software and even advanced intelligent app interactions through our day-to-day use of tablets and smart phones. We as designers must begin to consider the benefits of an iterative software model for building design and the vast opportunities for software integration within buildings. ■



Building digital tablets – the data-driven future for design



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The boroughs at 50

LSE director and author of a new book on the subject, Tony Travers traces the impact on the capital of half a century of London's still 'robust' local authorities

London's boroughs shape the city's services, streetscape and skyline. Virtually every planning decision, from permission to re-paint a listed building to a 1,000-foot high tower, starts life in a town hall. The governance system of which they are a part, with the Mayor/Greater London Authority as its city-wide element, is unique. The city's success in recent years raises the question of how far the boroughs, which are both collaborative and competitive, affect its economic and demographic development.

The City of London, which has its origins in Anglo-Saxon England, was for hundreds of years the government of London. But as the capital sprawled beyond the City's boundaries, parishes, shires and ad hoc boards provided services such as street cleaning, lighting and paving. By the

late 19th century, big cities elsewhere in the UK had their own municipal corporations, while in London the indirectly elected Metropolitan Board of Works built sewers, roads and the Embankment.

In 1888, Parliament legislated to create the elected London County Council. Soon after, 28 'metropolitan boroughs' were formed to provide local government within the LCC area. The City lived on. But the capital continued to sprawl outwards, particularly between 1918 and 1939. 'Greater London' evolved, covering an area three times the 'London' of the LCC. Proposals for a new government to cover this wider metropolis eventually led, in 1965, to the creation of the Greater London Council and, within its boundaries, 32 powerful boroughs. The City again survived.

These boroughs are now just over 50 years old. The GLC was abolished and, eventually, replaced by the Mayor and Assembly. In the early years of the boroughs, from 1965 till the early 1980s, major programmes of housing renewal took place, particularly in inner boroughs. Borough architects, often pursuing Utopian socialist objectives, replaced slums with Corbusian towers and large new estates. Tower blocks became far less popular following the collapse in 1968 of Ronan Point in Newham. System-building also lost its appeal as problems appeared with many of the new buildings. Camden, under architect Sydney Cook, built better modern housing, often at great cost, such as that designed by Neave Brown at Alexandra Road (Swiss Cottage) and Fleet Road (Hampstead).



All change – London's boroughs have shaped the city's services, streetscape and skyline

'London has a unique, bottom-heavy two-tier system of government'

It would be wrong to say all social housing built by the boroughs in the 1960s and 1970s failed. Architecture changed, producing developments such as Westminster's red-brick Lillington Road scheme by Darbourne & Darke. Also in the 1970s, Hillingdon built its suburban chateau-style civic centre in Uxbridge, while Kensington & Chelsea knocked down an old town hall to build a new one designed by Sir Basil Spence.

But the long-term consequences of the failings of much of the social housing built during the 1960s



Camden unlocked - Neave Brown's Alexandra Road estate

and 1970s have been a challenge for London's councils (and many residents) ever since. The boroughs, housing associations and architects are still struggling with such problems.

In their early years, the 32 new authorities were often involved in struggles with the GLC and Whitehall over massive road schemes. Elements of the so-called 'Motorway Box' can be seen in locations such as the Bow Flyover and the West Cross Route at White City. The M25 was eventually built, as was the M11 link through parts of Waltham Forest and Redbridge. But many other parts of the Robert Moses-style motorway system were killed off.

The 1980s saw a political struggle between Mrs Thatcher's government and a number of Labour boroughs. The administration of a number of councils all but failed. Nevertheless, the 'Big Bang' deregulation of financial services and the creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation, also in the 1980s, coincided with a sudden increase in

the city's population and a new kind of economic success. By the 1990s, the boroughs found themselves coping with sharp demands for new housing and expanded public services.

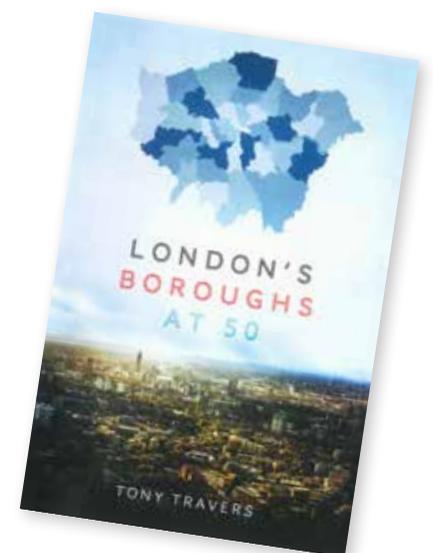
A rapid increase in international immigration from 1997 onwards appears to have produced changes both to London's economy and to its global image. The boroughs, many of which experienced sharp economic growth, were able to undertake major regeneration and housing schemes. King's Cross and Battersea, which had proved impossible to re-develop through four decades, were eventually able to get under way. London in 2016, now with a sharply rising population, is a remarkably different place than in 1965 when the boroughs started work.

The 32 London authorities have surprisingly different policies and politics. Some, such as Bromley and Richmond, reflect suburban sensibilities and are less pro-growth than, say, Southwark, Newham or Tower Hamlets. Tall buildings policy

has seen a number of boroughs allowing massive new structures and others none. For developers and architects, the system may seem fractured and complex, but it is locally sensitive. Moreover boroughs, in effect, compete for new development and their different policies mean that if one says 'no' to something, another will probably say 'yes'.

London has a unique, bottom-heavy two-tier system of government. This arrangement contributes to the varying shape and 'feel' of the city from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Borough boundaries (including the river) are particularly interesting places: consider how many contemporary development schemes are at or near the edges of London councils. After 50 years, the 32 boroughs and the City are in robust condition. They continue to impact on the planning and aesthetics of a metropolis which has become, for Britain, an admired global success story. **ML**

'London's Boroughs at 50'
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Special mansion

Consultant Rosemarie MacQueen argues that reinvented mansion blocks could deliver a strong coherent urban form that could reinforce and even mend the quintessential urban London street pattern

Mansion flats and industrial dwellings together provided a new solution to increased housing demand in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many have survived in use and modern versions can be benchmarked alongside other responses to the current housing crisis.

Some of the typologies or criteria that can be shared between past and present are: height and scale of between five and nine storeys; semi-continuous street frontage; shared access/front door; shared services; other shared facilities; capacity for mixed tenure.

When first built, mansion and industrial dwellings provided for and were populated by strictly separate social groups. Today, due to many differing factors such as subletting,

short-term lets and right-to-buy, the mix of residents and tenure in the surviving blocks can be quite variable. However, in the privately owned blocks which are tightly managed, the high cost of tenancy will exclude all but the wealthy.

The dramatic mid-Victorian growth of the economy fuelled an expansion of the population and the growth of the middle class. The need for more housing was largely met by building terraced houses in the suburbs, and railways to enable commuting. The lower upper classes found increasing difficulty in maintaining houses in Town and, in any event, there were too few properties available. However, for some, especially young single men of certain rank, the mansion flat was an ideal innovation.

Also, for the business-man with a long commute, a mansion flat could be coupled with a weekend family home beyond the suburbs.

It appears that the first recognisable mansion flat block was Albert Mansions, built in 1867-70 on vacant land alongside the newly laid-out Victoria Street. This speculative development by Philip Fowler was designed by the architect James Knowle. It set a template for such development that continued until the First World War and mansion blocks were built in many parts of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth and further afield, even out to the then suburbs of Ealing and Hammersmith.

Flats or apartments had their own front doors off the staircase,

but shared a common entrance at street level. Often they had central heating and other shared services and sometimes they had lifts. Where there was the opportunity for more extensive development e.g. Maida Vale, the blocks were built around communal gardens to the rear.

Some, such as Artillery Mansions, were specifically designed for bachelors, but a few, e.g. York House, were built for single ladies. Many flats had no kitchens, but a direct meal service was available to residents from basement kitchens via dumb-waiters. They often offered a library, pool-room and recreation rooms for the residents.

‘This type of development would provide the optimum density for housing, including social housing, particularly when there is a contextual host environment’

Other blocks were designed with a Queen Anne front and Mary-Ann back: grander rooms for entertainment and family at the front, but utilitarian kitchens and bleak servant quarters to the rear.

Typically, mansion blocks were basement, ground and four upper storeys. However, some, such as Albert Hall Mansions by Richard Norman Shaw, 1876, were basement, ground and five or six upper storeys. Queen Anne’s Mansions, 1873-90, the first real high-rise of 10 storeys (116’ high), eventually reached 12 storeys and was the catalyst for height restrictions in the London Building Acts.

The working classes also had a need for improved accommodation in London, which began to be met in the mid-Victorian period by philanthropy. Thus, Peabody (1860), the Guinness Trusts, the Settled Estates and

the Improved Industrial Dwelling Company (1875). Their equivalent to the mansion block was the four- and five-storey tenement block.

By the end of the 19th century, social democracy was a dominant force in politics. Housing the working class was recognised as a legitimate responsibility of the state, leading to the erection of similar tenement blocks by London County Council and local councils, including the boroughs of Westminster and Paddington. Eventually, public service employers, such as the fire service and the police, built employee housing redolent of mansion blocks in scale and architecture.

In terms of sustainability, examples of both types of buildings remain in use today, including in the City of Westminster, but they present particular refurbishment issues.

M & E systems were often built-in to the fabric of the buildings and are no longer fit for purpose; centralised systems cannot rely on historic distribution pipework. Refurbishment can cost in the order of £20-40,000 per unit, but reaching consensus is challenging with tenants of differing means or with different lease lengths for re-mortgaging. Many blocks continue to prosper where there are good managing agents and company directors. The roll-call of desirable apartments ranges from Carlisle Place, the oldest surviving purpose-built block of flats, through the cluster of Morpeth Mansions and Ashley Gardens around Westminster Cathedral, through to Orchard Court on Portman Square, York Mansions in Marylebone and the Art Deco blocks of Dorset Court on Marylebone Road.

The City of Westminster has a large historic core, including a World Heritage Site, 56 Conservation Areas and 11,000 Listed Buildings. However, it also has areas of housing similar to large areas of London and other cities. Thus, in addition to mansion blocks, it has extensive streets

of terraced and semi-detached houses of varied date, size and condition, 1960s estates of high and medium-rise blocks and some innovative housing projects, such as Powell & Moya’s Churchill Gardens and Darbourne & Darke’s Lillington Gardens Estate.

Westminster is home to 235,000 residents in 115,000 households. It is predicted that in 15 years there will be another 25,000 residents in 26,000 households. A third of housing in Westminster is owner-occupied, a third is private rented and a third is social housing provided by the council and 40 registered providers controlling 15,000 properties.

There are 4,500 families awaiting the availability of social housing units.

So, how suitable is the model of mansion blocks for central London? Government legislation and policy requires the London Plan and council plans to set targets for and facilitate and optimise the delivery of private housing. Each local authority also pursues housing strategies for its own delivery via commercial partners. Westminster has a five-year housing strategy and a Futures Plan for 15-20 years. It is pursuing housing renewal on four major estates.

I no longer speak for Westminster City Council, so my concluding comments regarding the potential role of the new mansion block model are my opinion only.

In-depth critical analysis by HTA Design LLP / PRP / Pollard Thomas Edwards & Levitt Bernstein compared and contrasted hyperdensity housing models of 350 dwellings per hectare (dph) with superdensity models of 200dph. This established that across the board performance, including sustainability, promotion of street life and delivery of mixed communities, was more effectively delivered by the latter model. Thus, their second report on this work, ‘Superdensity: the Sequel’, recommends adopting a mid-rise development typology of apartment

© Julian Osley



Bangs for the buck - the 1895 Artillery Mansions on Victoria Street by architect John Calder



Ground-breaking composition – Richard Norman Shaw’s Albert Hall Mansions

blocks of five to eight storeys, set in traditional London streets. They suggest that this type of development would provide the optimum density for housing, including social housing, particularly when there is a contextual host environment.

The urban scale of both the historic types, mansion and social housing blocks, provides housing models which resonate with this, as the recommended 200dph is the density achieved by typical Edwardian mansion blocks. This compares favourably with the poor delivery of just 100dph achieved by typical post

Second World War housing estates of slab blocks and towers set in unsupervised ‘left-over space’.

European urban housing and Scottish tenements are close relations of the London mansion block and what all of them have is urban scale at street level combined with an attractive and sustainable density.

New mansion blocks for mixed communities could deliver a strong coherent urban form that would reinforce and in some places mend the quintessential urban London street pattern. Such apartment blocks would have human scale, allow decent

sun- and daylight to the lower floors on normal width streets and provide a legible townscape.

For developments of over 10 units, planning policies generally require a mixed tenure development. Westminster’s housing renewal programme expects mixed tenure on housing estates: market housing and affordable housing, including intermediate products of shared equity and affordable rent. Exemplar schemes should illustrate ways that developments can meld the design of these tenures, including shared rather than separate ‘poor door’ entrances. NL

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Arup has been shaping London's built environment since 1946. Our building engineers and technical consultants play a central role in the design of many of London's most exciting new and refurbished buildings. From a building's structure, façade and services to its environmental impact, vertical transportation systems, acoustic performance and lighting, our teams develop efficient solutions that enhance architectural vision – rather than undermine it. Our work on WRBC Development's The Scalpel, 52 Lime St, EC3 is a prime example. We worked closely with WRBC Development and KPF to deliver a high-performance design that will offer exemplary occupant comfort and efficiency – and a BREEAM Excellent rating once construction is complete.

ARUP



Our regular round-up of
conferences and events at NLA

BRIEFING NOTES

REGENERATION

Going public – capitalising on land for regeneration

Sponsored by GL Hearn

Public bodies are working hard to maximise the development potential of their land as the quest for housing and regeneration intensifies, spearheaded by moves made by central government and its own estate.

This was the NLA’s latest event, sponsored by GL Hearn, held as

part of its season-long examination of housing intended to consider how the city can take a more long-term approach to creating places in which to live.

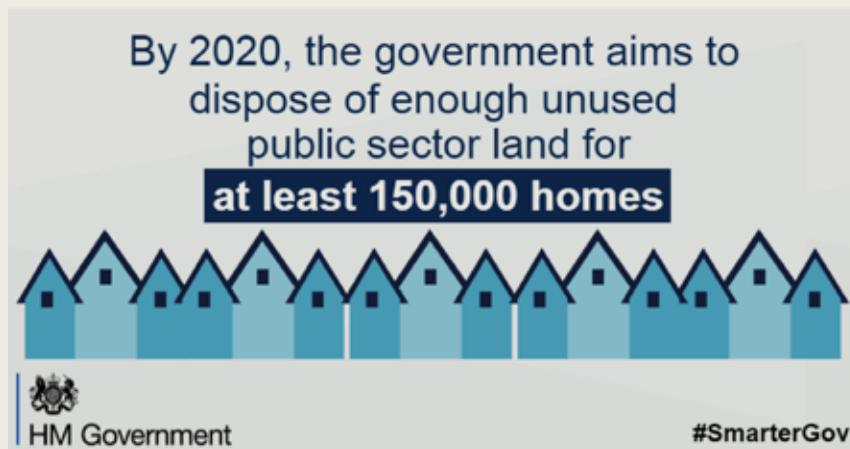
Claire Bennie introduced the conference by noting that it was difficult to find good data on ‘the mysterious portfolio’ of what London’s public land holdings are.

But Sherin Aminossehe, chief operating officer, Government Property Unit said her department is looking to change all that by recreating what was effectively the first register of land – the Domesday Book – in terms of the public sector asset base today. ‘Without decent data, you can’t have decent strategies’, she said. ‘You can’t really know what you’re trying to get rid of.’ The whole of public property is

worth around £360 billion but that also includes housing estates and nuclear bunkers as well as much of what one sees in Whitehall. The office portfolio alone costs some £1.3 million to run every year and government owns two per cent of land in this country, said Aminossehe. ‘We have, however, generated nearly £2 billion by releasing a lot of public land and buildings and assets and have released over 2 million square metres.’ Government has looked at where it is likely to be over the next five, 10 and 15 years and is working with departments about where they will need to be located, rethinking ‘Whitehall-centricity’. Today’s 63 offices in its Whitehall estate will be down to 25 in five years’ time, said Aminossehe. And it is looking at its courts and prison portfolio too,



Docklands – classic brownfield regeneration



A slide from the presentation by the Government Property Unit's Sherin Aminossehe

especially since housing one prisoner per year costs around £50,000 – more than sending a child to Eton. Property and the built environment has been a bit of a ‘Cinderella profession, waiting in the wings’, she said, but the subject got over 50 mentions in the Autumn Statement. ‘That means we have actually arrived as a profession.’

In London in 2012, the Mayor

‘Property and the built environment has been a bit of a Cinderella profession waiting in the wings’

inherited 670ha of land including from the Homes and Communities Agency and LDA, but 99 per cent of that land is now in the development pipeline, said Simon Powell, assistant director, strategic projects and property, GLA. In total, the land and interests in joint ventures has the capacity for 50,000 homes, 60,000 direct jobs and 120,000 construction jobs. The Royal Docks is the Mayor's largest landholding at 275ha, with a scale of opportunity that is ‘vast’ and a core part of the Mayor's City in the East project, with an emphasis on Silvertown Quays and Royal Albert Dock. There are also 113 schemes

across the 20 Housing Zones in London too, said Powell, with 10 more Housing Zones to be announced early next year.

The conference also heard from ‘landowners unlocking land’ including Transport for London's commercial development director Graeme Craig, who said that it has a programme that will generate £3.4 billion over the next 10 years, of which a third will come from property activity – now seen as a core part of what TfL does. And Stuart Kirkwood, development director, Network Rail said it had been given a target of 19,000 homes to create from released land, with a thrust toward regeneration of the sort seen at King's Cross.

Before a final element looking at European exemplars, a second session on regeneration heard from speakers including Argent partner Robert Evans on King's Cross and other direct partnerships with local authorities. The extensive work at King's Cross put in ‘to get the outline planning right’ is paying off, as is a ‘giant’ Section 106 agreement that they tried to view as a positive aspect of development, said Evans. The big challenge, though, for any public land is how you keep paying for it beyond the development phase, said Evans. Argent has put in place a long-term

regime around estate management with a common charging system for all land uses across all plots. But private and public sectors will have to be more innovative in working together to keep delivering enough affordable homes, and retain the confidence of the industry and the public, added Evans. ‘This is the biggest issue we all face’, he said, although the hardest area had been working with the NHS.

REGENERATION AND RETAIL

Regeneration of town centres

Sponsored by GL Hearn

London's town centres should concentrate more on intensification, residential and becoming mixed-use areas focused on ‘experience’ rather than retail alone.

That was one of the key themes to emerge from an NLA conference on the regeneration of town centres.

The keynote speaker was William McKee, chair of the Outer London Commission, which is preparing its final report for London Mayor Boris Johnson, who said that the key issues were how suburban London could help to meet projected population growth in terms of housing supply, responding to the loss of employment space and to ‘profound’ changes in retailing. But in talking to outer



GL Hearn on town centres

London politicians McKee said he believed they would rather go out into the green belt than intensify their areas. 'The number of local authorities looking at green belt for housing supply is exponentially increasing', he said. New permitted development rights are eroding office space by as much as 40 per cent in some town centres, he said, while the move to online and fall in retail floorspace is 'quite profound'. One of the answers was for town centres to look to diversification and the creation of more purpose-built residential properties, along with effective management of leisure, culture and hotels provision. But public services such as libraries and other facilities need to be brought back in too.

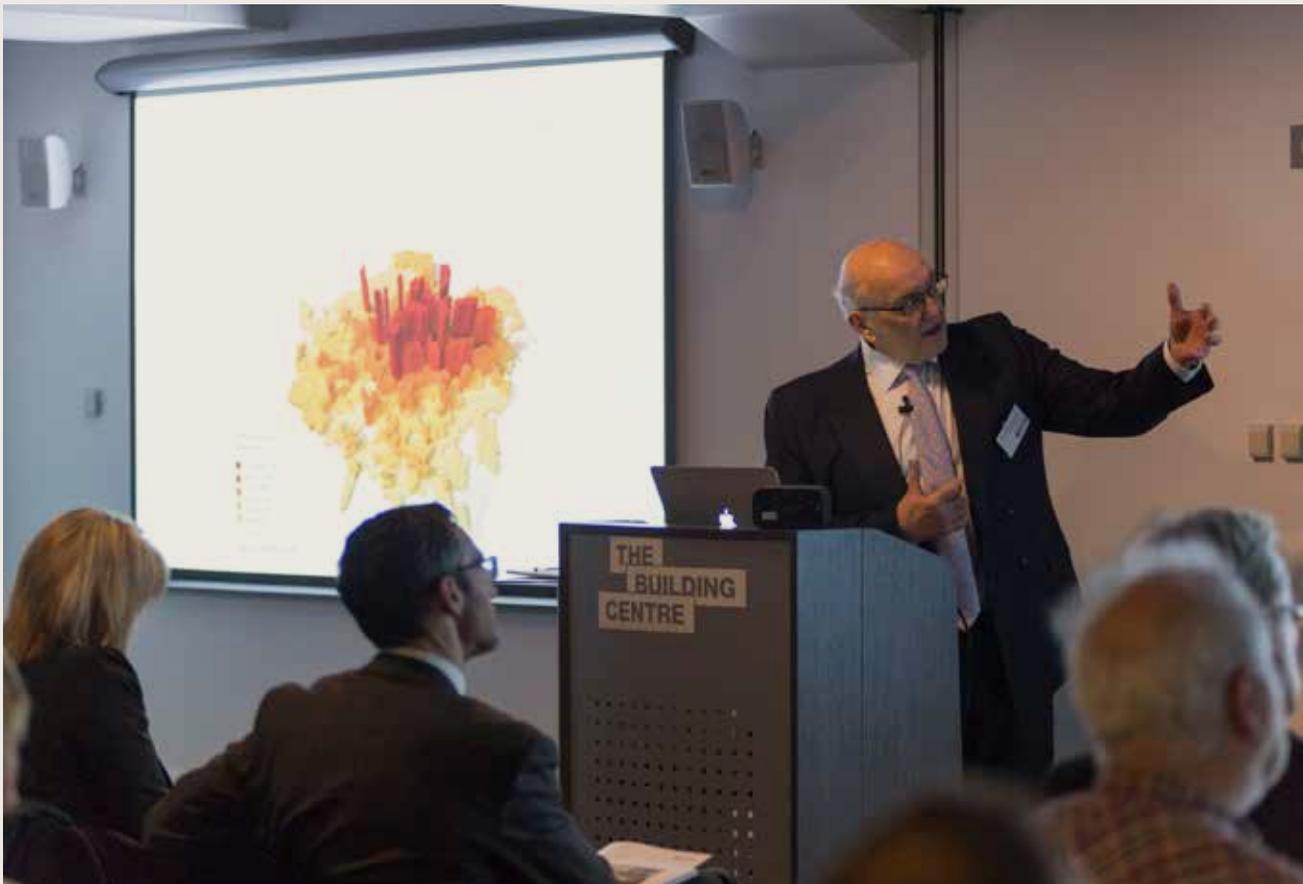
John Lewis property director Jeremy Collins said that the days when his firm was all about shops are long gone, although it has doubled the size of its retail estate since 2001. The retailer is 'going back to the future' by

'The number of local authorities looking at green belt for housing supply is exponentially increasing'

including extra services in its shops such as beauty spas and opticians, mirroring the hairdressers it had in store 70 years ago. 'Fundamentally my belief is all about people and places', he said. 'The quality of the

environment has to be top notch. It's how you curate the space and mix of uses – the clone high street is dead.'

Allies and Morrison director Steve Walker said that online has taken away the 'drudgery' from the high street, leaving town centres to concentrate more on the 'experiential thing'. The architect is working in Kingston on a flexible masterplan that focuses on the importance of the public realm, drawing on the 'palimpsest' of the past. Perhaps the future of the retail park could aid London's quest for more housing, suggested GL Hearn director Ben Wrighton, especially since many of them sit in areas well connected by public transport. Merton, moreover, said Future Merton manager Paul McGarry is



The Outer London Commission's William McKee: town centres must diversify



Pro partnership – U+I’s Martyn Evans responds during panel question time

focused on town centre projects and the public space and experience of places, with key schemes in south Wimbledon and elsewhere.

‘Partnership – super important, responsibility – super important, long-term – super-important’

Croydon, meanwhile, will shortly be getting a Boxpark, which aims to echo the success of its Shoreditch site, but centred on the food and beverage offer and events, said the company’s development director Matthew McMillan. But London’s stations also have a role to play in town centre regeneration, with TfL head of property management Chris Townend saying they have the capacity to become community hubs on some of the 5700 acres of land TfL owns in London. Or there is the approach taken in Haringey to rethinking the high street, said Cllr Alan Strickland.

In Tottenham and Wood Green, for example, the council is delivering some 10,000 new homes, 9,000 new jobs, and capitalizing on ‘a transport revolution’ including Crossrail 2.

In Clapham, meanwhile, a public/private approach bore fruit for developer U+I, said its creative director Martyn Evans, but also for the local authority, which was able to benefit from a new library, doctor’s surgery and sports centre, paid for by selling ‘poncey flats’. Elsewhere in Lambeth, said its programme director Sandra Roebuck, in places like West Norwood the emphasis is on improving high streets and driving investment. Evans said it was adopting a similar public/private approach in Deptford, albeit through adding a curated temporary space in an old train carriage which had brought footfall and interest – even from Jamie Oliver. The scheme under construction now is by architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, who met regularly at the train carriage to develop the

project with the local community, over tea and buns. ‘I leave you with three words’, said Evans, in summary of much of the conference’s main themes. ‘Partnership – super important’, he said, ‘responsibility – super important; long-term – super-important.’

HOUSING

Management the key for growing build-to-rent sector

Sponsored by AECOM, Argent, Barratt London, Carter Jonas, Conran + Partners, GL Hearn, L&Q, Pinnacle, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

Build to rent – at scale – is a sphere of PRS whose time has come for London, with ‘pivotal shifts’ in customer demand and policy leading to record numbers of projects having been started during 2015. But more attention should be paid to design, maintenance and ‘holistic’ management if it is to flourish and become more of an answer to the capital’s housing crisis.

‘Rental is “taking up the slack” in London with more people facing problems in getting mortgages and changes in stamp duty’

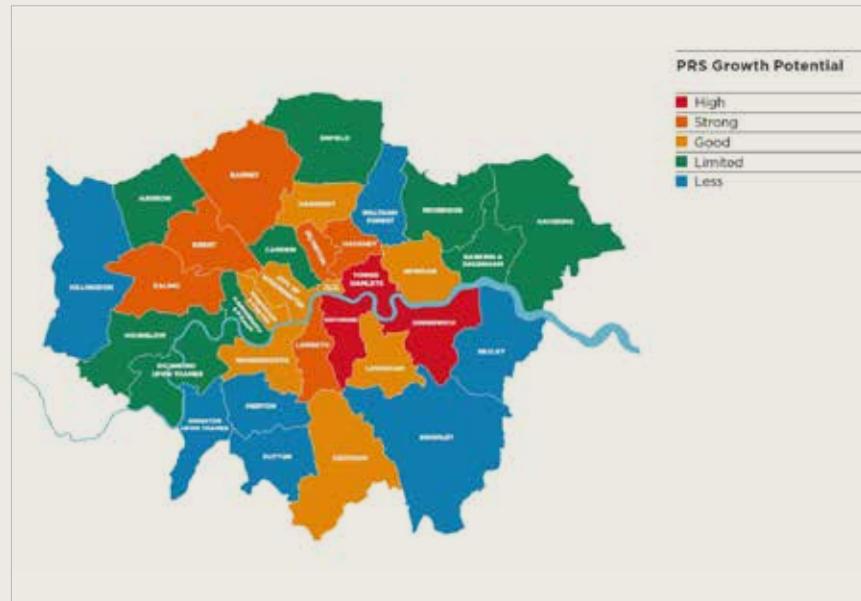
Those were some of the key messages to arise from an NLA breakfast talk kicked off by Argent partner Richard Meier, who said that although England has always been a nation of homeowners, the world was changing. Rental is ‘taking up the slack’ in



Build-to-rent developments by Assael

London with more people facing problems in getting mortgages and changes in stamp duty, said Meier, but also through a growth in more opting to rent for ‘lifestyle’ reasons or a quest for ‘freedom’. Argent is looking to include more build-to-rent schemes in its projects at Brent Cross and Tottenham, as a ‘chassis’, that is flexible and meets local demand. But families and those in the squeezed middle represent the challenge in London, said Meier, along with making the vast majority of schemes so far – office to resi conversions – look more like people’s homes. ‘Yes, we can go out and build a building, but can we actually manage it and offer a great service provision as well’, asked Meier.

For Félicie Krikler, director, Assael designing for sale and rent are two different animals, the first



London for rent – PRS Opportunity Areas

concentrating on capital values on the completion of the development and the second on net operating income. But there are many typologies of building and development in the rental sector, not just ‘glitzy towers’. The focus should be towards creating schemes which are efficient and sustainable to reduce the cost of operation, with schemes more akin to the hospitality sector, and fostering ‘a sense of community’. This can include shared spaces and clubrooms or roof amenities as at the practice’s project at Creekside Wharf in Greenwich.

But it is in management that major advances can be made, said Pinnacle group director of places Lesley Roberts. Traditional models have led to ‘fragmented objectives and disconnected visions’, she said, leading to poor rates of return and limited investment in large-scale residential. ‘By contrast we see successful long-term management being about joined-up thinking and alignment of interests’, she said. The firm looks at the area more ‘holistically’, managing tenure blind, utilising IT and brand loyalty but concentrating on ‘lifestyle, convenience, ease’. This leads to better placemaking, higher occupancy, lower churn, and ultimately happy customers and more investment into the large-scale, build-to-rent sector, she said.

Finally, Carter Jonas head of research Darren Yates said last year was a record one for PRS in starts and completions, accounting for 60 per cent of all starts in the last five years, half of it in office to residential. Hotspots include Newham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark, with Croydon a big player in outer London – albeit expressing concerns about how much office space is being lost. Yates concluded that financing must subsidise supply rather than demand, on planning a new tenure class must be considered, and on engaging the potential of housing associations must be maximised, design guidelines promoted and landlord licensing encouraged.

SURFACE DESIGN SHOW

‘Architecture is more than skin deep’

A group of select architects – and one engineer – gathered at Islington’s Business Design Centre to debate whether architecture is ‘more than skin deep’.

The event, organised by NLA as part of the Surface Design Show, pitched Mae Architects’ Alex Ely against Roz Barr of Roz Barr Architects, Rab Bennetts of Bennetts Associates, AKT II’s Hanif Kara, Lynch Architects’ Patrick Lynch and Clare Wright of Wright & Wright.

Each contributor was asked to justify or expand on selected words and phrases chosen from their own websites. Ely chose to turn the main thesis on its head and speculate on what an architecture which was only skin deep might look like. Ely referred to what he branded as the ‘risible’ Starter Home Design guide, with its ‘banal’ elevations that reveal how short government’s vision is of good architecture, or how it can add value. Successful architecture by contrast included elements like good levels of light, flexibility, robustness, environmental efficiency and private amenity. It was ‘architecture that was easy to live in’, and which ‘enhances culture and society’ – much more than skin deep.

Roz Barr said her practice’s role was more than just architectural designers, doing more than just facades, but acting as ‘detectives’ in exploring and digging back into the history of sites in a bid to ‘start the narrative’.

For Rab Bennetts his ‘light-bulb moment’ occurred when the practice realised it could design to achieve good natural light, with high thermal mass, natural ventilation, solar control

and so on but with the realisation that mechanical services were not needed at all. The structure of the envelope was doing the job, with the pursuit of sustainability about design excellence. But he warned against a growth in ‘globalised buildings’ that look the same all across the world, rather than those designed to respond to their contexts.

Hanif Kara reacted to the quote chosen: ‘a nebulous yet visible centre, but edges which constantly expand, contract and adapt: we swarm around change’, saying it resonated with what the engineer does. Patrick Lynch showed images from the practice’s Victoria Street residential project, whose stone ‘skin’ acts as a clothes-like moderation to the physical environment and ‘psychological buffer’. ‘The skin of a building isn’t just a surface’, said Lynch. ‘It’s a territory in its own right.’ But one problem is a split between architects who can do facades, and those who can do what lies behind them; make a plan work. Kara added that ‘thin slicing’ had left many architects simply as image directors, to which the industry must respond, while Bennetts said the split was between the stylists and those who can deliver.

‘We like the idea that it is like an old coat. When it’s 20 years old it feels right and smells right and we just love it to bits’

Clare Wright said her buildings are ‘skin deep’, but that the DNA of a building is in the skin and that is on both the inside and the outside. ‘We like the idea that it is like an old coat’, she said. ‘When it’s 20 years old it feels right and smells right and we just love it to bits. We make buildings in a way we hope will pass down from generation to generation. We get real joy out of that tactile quality, which is about the skin and defines everything else about the building, including the structure.’

THINK TANKS

Around once a month, NLA holds Think Tank sessions with 15-20 invited experts, to discuss emerging issues affecting the capital

THINK TANK

Housing crisis needs cocktail of solutions

Sponsored by AECOM, Argent, Barratt London, Carter Jonas, Conran + Partners, GL Hearn, L&Q, Pinnacle, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

London needs to mix up a cocktail of innovative long-term measures if it is to solve its housing crisis, rather than concentrate too heavily on single-issue ideas such as building on green-belt land or creating high-density tower blocks in the centre.

That was the broad consensus of a think tank, hosted at Conran + Partners, called to chew over some of the recommendations emerging from NLA's insight study, *New Ideas for Housing*.

That study and accompanying competition came up with some winning housing ideas, which are being discussed with the Greater London Authority (GLA) in a bid to help double the scale of housing delivery. There is an emphasis now on

big numbers – with some 49,000 new units needed every year in London. But there isn't the public will to do what we did in the 1930s or the 1950s and 1960s now, said Alan Benson of the GLA, either in building on the green belt or in a massive amount of public sector housebuilding – there

'We do not want to be sat around this table having the same discussion in five, 10 or 20 years so now is the time to be big, bold and brave about solving the London housing crisis'

isn't the support for big tax-and-spend policies. So the answers have to be lots of smaller things. But government likes big numbers, and Mayor Boris Johnson is especially keen to get more from initiatives like Housing Zones.

Yet, said Dr Noble Francis, economics director, Construction Products Association, there is no foreseeable structural change that might facilitate this. Off-site manufacturing, for example, is unlikely to occur at mass and is no panacea, especially since it struggles to deal with volatility. From first quarters 2007-2009 private housing starts fell by some 71 per cent, said Francis, and there is no business model around manufacturing that could cope with a fall like that. It also explains why so many SMEs fell in the last two recessions, and the only business model that could cope is the one that the major housebuilders have. There is also little in the way of interest from the consumer market owing to the negative connotation. We have a 'homeowner-obsessed nation but a government that appears to be under the delusion that we have a home ownership problem rather than a housing

supply problem', he added. The result is price inflation to a point where it is £551,000 on average for a home in Greater London, at 9.6 times average earnings.

The policies announced in the Autumn Statement will only exacerbate this, and, said Duncan Bowie, senior lecturer in spatial planning, University of Westminster, the general consensus is that they will have 'fairly negative consequences in the London and SE context.' The issue of control over land is far more important than planning, he said, and compulsory purchase at close to existing use value – which was in the Lyons Housing Review but is not being pursued – 'has to be the starting point'. But perhaps a further measure could be that the GLA and local authorities could be allowed to designate certain sites against criteria and then go into compulsory purchase on that package, either developing directly or selling on with tight covenants. That way, the public sector could lead, rather than respond to developers. 'That's a fundamental shift in politics but I don't think this needs to be a party political issue', said Bowie. 'Unless we have those kind of interventions, even smaller ones will be unworkable and won't produce the issues we need.'

Further problems include that the Mayoral candidates don't have backgrounds in housing or planning and that we are heading for a 'no public investment' agenda in a number of areas, but the key is to get the mechanisms to deliver the numbers of homes envisaged.

The big number the government does not like is regarding homelessness, said John East, director for place commissioning (housing and community infrastructure), London Borough of Newham. There are some 3000 households in Newham in temporary accommodation, a figure that is growing on a weekly basis. Could industry come in here with prefab and modular solutions of the kind the best architectural brains offered after the First World War? The authority is working with the East London Housing Partnership on researching modular housing products to this end.

Offsite could be a part of a solution especially in trying to counter sharp falls in the provision of affordable housing, said Francis, but it has to be a diverse housing market. Pocket is one provider looking to the modular approach, and has signed up to deliver 100 units across three sites in Lambeth next year, said its head of regeneration Michael Holland. More boroughs want to see what the finished product looks like, which could perhaps dispel myths about what the consumer feels

the product is like, against a background where traditional building costs have ‘gone berserk’.

Within the world of housebuilders, though, there is little appetite for risk and therefore little for innovation, said Rob Partridge, director, AKT II. Consultants need to be more proactive in approaching boroughs and housebuilders. The land is available, said Iain Painting, partner, Barton Willmore, but it is infrastructure that makes the step change in the market’s view, with Crossrail 1 and 2 being important markers, as well as the airport debate. But there is also an education job to do in altering embedded attitudes in suburban centres.

One of the biggest land banks is the public sector, said Greg Tillotson, regional development director, Barratt London, which continues to be slow in bringing sites forward. A longer-term strategy is required, said Duncan Bowie, perhaps where the GLA has the power to take an equity stake in private development so the long-term value uplift feeds back to the public sector. ‘We’ve got to change the whole nature of the debate about public sector investment and using private sector investment for public policy objectives.’

GL Hearn planning associate director Roland Brass suggested that now is the time for the GLA to take a lead role in preparing a long-term strategic plan to achieve a radical step-change in housing delivery to cover London and adjoining LPAs. We plan for infrastructure to 2050, so why not for housing until 2050, he asked. ‘We do not want to be sat around this table having the same discussion in five, 10 or 20 years so now is the time to be big, bold and brave about solving the London housing crisis’, said Brass. Indeed, what would someone in 2080 say about this period, looking back, asked Bill Price, director of WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff. Maybe that there were all those clever people, who still made a ‘shocking mess of it’. Where were

the pragmatic solutions? And how are things done differently abroad? Architect and housing development specialist Claire Bennie said London is a ‘different planet’ regarded as a tragic case by people in the 30 cities she visited in Europe. ‘They think we’re bonkers, genuinely.’ What was needed was a thorough look at the green belt, a cost-benefit assessment of estate regeneration and a look at ex-industrial, badly located land, as well as a deep analysis of small sites, with a high-profile leader appointed to look at them within the GLA.

Perhaps lessons could come from community activism, said Paul Lincoln, Landscape Institute, certainly with its emphasis on creating decent places rather than simply building lots of new tower blocks without thinking of the kinds of places created, as well as the impact landscape can have. Housing should be seen as infrastructure, said Arita Morris, director, Child Graddon Lewis, but perhaps divorced from the parliamentary term if possible. And how devolution will shape up will also prove to be important, said John East, with north east London and north London councils preparing to form a combined model along the Northern Powerhouse model, as well as other county authorities further afield. There needs to be something between the GLA and the boroughs, said East – ‘as boroughs’ resources become more and more diminished there is no option than to work more collaboratively together’.

Ultimately, said Iain Painting, we are failing to get anywhere near the 49,000 homes needed per year, but, said Bowie, the answer is not an either-or situation. ‘Garden cities on their own won’t solve the problem. Suburban intensification on its own won’t solve the problem. We need all of these things, need all these initiatives, concurrently, now. It’s all of these components, now, in a planned and sustained way.’



House proud – housing at Barking Riverside

THINK TANK

WORK Roundtable

London's future workplaces will need to be designed to win the race for younger talent, with higher densities allowing for other 'workstyle' facilities aimed at increasing staff wellbeing – but also their productivity. And although permitted development rights and economic conditions are hitting office provision hard in favour of residential, the right balance must be struck between protecting and encouraging, and the system of use classes is holding the world of workplace back.

Those were some of the key sentiments to arise from a wide-ranging working group discussion at NLA aimed at informing the themes for its next Insight Study, which launches in the autumn.

Rob Harris, principal of Ramidus Consulting Limited said things in this area are changing rapidly, with key themes emerging around agility – at an individual and corporate level; choice – people expressing choice in ways they were not able to before; connectivity – in technology and supply chain activities; and finally, experience – with staff demanding more from their workplaces. Permitted development rights changes represented an enormous threat, said Harris, with commercial activities virtually disappearing in boroughs like Islington.

Diversity and innovation were also important drivers, said head of office development at Lendlease Kevin Chapman,

with the goal being to create environments where people can innovate. 'Without that, a lot of businesses just won't keep up', he said.

But although a lot has been said about affordability, said Digby Flower, chair (UK & Ireland) and head of London markets at Cushman & Wakefield, in fact rents have barely doubled over the last 30 years, in comparison with graduate salaries, which have risen tenfold, and housing costs, which have also steeply climbed. Bankers are reducing their space take, with only the client-facing elements remaining, while lawyers moving 10-15 years ago would take a third more space and are now taking a third less. But the war for talent is most keen in the tech sector, with staff preferring the locational draw of a Shoreditch or a Spitalfields rather than a Swindon. To continue to attract the digital generation, developers need to build much more flexible space going forward, said Flower.

For Derwent's development manager Benjamin Lesser the goal is to find the next vibrant spot, but the war for talent can be applied to all sectors, not just tech. Enterprises such as Olly Olsen's The Office Group have found a niche, providing well-designed flexible space for small companies which are keen to collaborate, with communal areas and a co-working strategy that allows them to sell desk space 2.5 times over.



Hawkins\Brown's Here East – a new world of work?

But where once smaller companies wanted to be near big ones that situation has ‘flipped on its head’, with bigger firms seeing value in proximity to smaller.

‘Industrial space is a worry’, said Levent Kerimol, principal regeneration officer at Greater London Authority. ‘We are losing industrial land at almost three times the sustainable rate set out in the London Plan’, he said, ‘without their vital role, we risk stifling the wider London economy’.

And yet, said strategic planning manager at Greater London Authority, Colin Wilson, the GLA is aiming to move away from drawing ‘red lines’ around areas in favour of knocking on doors to get a sense of what people are making and doing in industrial places. ‘It can do a lot of harm by defaulting to “ooh, we’re going to protect things”. In a city that is going to 10-11 million we need to be better at looking at what we’re protecting and why. We’re trying to get away from the big statistics thing.’

Small industrial outfits do need some kind of intervention, though, said Carl Welham, interim head of regeneration delivery, LB Hackney, or they will leave for Brighton or

‘We’re seeing lifts failing all across London. The old stock just can’t cope’

radars but is now accepted as part of the West End. The company’s project in Canada Water is a similar idea, based on a ‘campus’ model of placemaking. The Shoreditch and Clerkenwell success has actually been to do with the urban grain, suggested Danby. The cluster is also important, said Lisa Sharp, manager, regeneration, economic development & environment, London Borough of Hounslow, with the Golden Mile from Gillett Corner to Chiswick attracting a lot of activity from tech and emerging creative industries. And Anette Simpson, head of planning, Capco said in Earl’s Court the developer is subsidising small businesses in order to create a more ‘vibrant’ place, that ultimately adds value.

But the Use Classes system, set out in 1948, is ‘stymying’ developers who wish to respond to changes in the way we work, live and travel, said Benjamin Lesser. ‘We’re being held back’, he said. ‘Let’s mix it up. And we need partnership with local authorities to curate this.’

A confidential client of Jack Pringle is adopting this mixed-use approach focused on the making culture, with their desire to produce a site with offices, research, prototype making, some manufacturing and residential for its staff, a little like a latter-day Rowntree. But more broadly, said Pringle, there has been a sea-change since the recession in how buildings are built, partly because of the ‘agile agenda’ that is now completely accepted by everybody apart from lawyers. Owners want to use their space more intensively, with one major consequence being twice as

Lisbon, not just outer London. Locations can change, however. Head of office leasing at British Land, James Danby said that Regent’s Place was a good example, having not been on agents’

many people in them than a generation ago. ‘We’re seeing lifts failing all across London’, said Pringle. ‘The old stock just can’t cope’. Big businesses realise that they are all digital companies fighting to attract people who don’t want to work in their large corporate offices. Many are having offshore separate offices in response. The urban realm is also becoming more important with the city ‘becoming’ the office, but in this respect the City of London in particular lags behind Continental cities.

Make partner, John Pevc, said that work has become more a place of research than production, and that biophilia is another important aspect in the workplace of today. In Hungary in particular, where Make is designing a project, Pevc said there was a great deal of interest in being associated with ‘green’. In the States, moreover, he reported interest in the stripped back nature of the practice’s new former-car-park home. The Google Facebook generation are here, and developers are aware, said Pevc. ‘The suspended ceiling is dead.’

Location is one of the ingredients in making a workplace development socially and economically successful, said Hawkins Brown partner Darryl Chen, particularly with smart clients such as Here East partnering with educational institutions to form an ecosystem where their presence forms a pipeline of talent. In design terms, we are seeing knowledge campuses trading on both their urban and natural characteristics regardless of whether they are located inside or outside the city, he said.

But the idea of a ‘desk’, somewhere, where you go and work, has not changed, said Oliver Bayliss, associate director at Buckley GrayYeoman. The difference is that today it is also more about reinforcing company brands, and the employees’ working lifestyle that fuses work with retail and hospitality. ‘It’s no longer an office with a big reception any more’, said Bayliss. ‘It’s a hotel, a café, a gym’. It’s everything that people want to be around.’

Leasing is another issue, with a trend towards 5-10 year leases rather than 25, said Iain Roberts, chairman at Buro Four. And yet you still need those long leases, said Flower, to allow for rent-free periods to pay for fit-outs. Crossrail is already having an effect on rents, and buildings in areas like Shaftesbury Avenue are also changing their orientation to face Charing Cross. It is a similar story at Farringdon and Moorgate. But densities are also up – from around 1:14 or 1:12 30 years ago to 1:8 now, making spaces for extra facilities. Neither does the tax situation help, said Ion Fletcher, director of policy (finance), British Property Federation, with its skew towards residential.

What has not materialised, however, is those projections that meetings would all be done online. What employers are trying to do is not chain their staff to their desks or keep them on site unduly through providing staff restaurants, said Pringle. They are simply trying to figure out how to get the best from their employees. ‘The good news is that buildings are going to have to be a lot more interesting’, he said. ‘We’re going to have a lot more fun.’



Perkins+Will is an interdisciplinary, research-based architecture and design firm established in 1935 and founded on the belief that design has the power to transform lives and enhance communities. Each of the firm's 24 offices focuses on local, regional and global work in a variety of practice areas. Perkins+Will is recognised as one of the industry's preeminent sustainable design firms due to its innovative research, design tools, and expertise. The firm's 1,800 professionals are thought leaders developing 21st century solutions to inspire the creation of spaces in which clients and their communities work, heal, live, and learn.



Coffee break with Michael Lowndes

Executive director, Turley

What is your proudest achievement and why?

Other than helping launch three brilliant children into the world, being at Wembley to see Ipswich Town win the FA Cup in 1978: the latter allowing me to reconcile lifelong commitment with absolutely no expectation = much joy!

What would you have been if you hadn't chosen the path you did?

Geography teacher (with PE!).

What is your favourite film?

Withnail and I – one of the finest films available to humanity.

What is your favourite restaurant?

Lecture Room & Library at Sketch. Neatly rolls up everything that is great about London: contemporary decoration in a wonderful historic space; brilliant food and classy service – the whole experience is brilliant.

Which is the worst building in London?

Strata.

Which is the best?

Modern: LSE Saw Swee Hock Student Centre – an intelligent, crafted, accessible and living building, go see it now / Ancient: Kenwood House – the austere beauty of the building along with its landscape setting and its art and interiors – all together sublime.

What or who has been the biggest influence on your career thus far?

Gordon Chard, former director of planning at Westminster City Council – he equipped me for professional life

outside City Hall. Before that Pete Smeltzer my geography (and PE) teacher who directed me towards an appreciation of the form and beauty of towns and cities.

What would your advice be to those starting out in your profession?

Find your own Gordon Chard!

Following the Housing and Planning Bill debate, what state is planning in?

Dazed and confused but up for the challenge; as David Lunts recently said: 'with all this additional complexity it's a good time to be a planning consultant'.

Where do you stand on the green belt debate?

On a field holding a shovel just west of Uxbridge. The green belt should not be sacrosanct – unattractive sites at accessible locations should be allowed to come forward for development.

What single thing would improve the development process?

Better resourced planning departments paid for by locally set application fees.

What are your hopes from the Mayoral election, specifically for the built environment in London?

Endorsement for the current intensification and densification agenda including mid-rise and taller built forms where appropriate.

What would you do if you were Mayor for the day?

Introduce a pan-London approach to affordable housing including standardised viability assessments; a more direct route to commuted payments and allowing beyond borough delivery (with nomination rights) to drive early delivery and increased numbers.

How optimistic are you for the year ahead (and why)?

Cautiously optimistic – as the market softens and sites are recycled we will see continuing investment along with the emergence of smart, well designed and brilliantly negotiated placemaking schemes!



BUILDING REVIEW

Developer:
Resolution Property

Architect:
Studio RHE

Agent:
Allsop LLP

Occupier:
Huckletree

Alphabeta

We take a look at the cycling super-friendly Alphabeta building in the City

Photos: Hufton + Crow



The developer's account

By Jacob Loftus, head of UK investment, Resolution Property



When we bought the old Triton Court building back in 2012, we knew we were onto something special. Granted, it was a distressed, redundant City office asset from a bygone era, with not much to offer in its present condition. But it was also a magnificent and grandiose building standing at the gateway

from London's financial heartland into the emerging and edgy world of Shoreditch's hipster entrepreneurs.

Shoreditch at the time was a world of repurposed, run-down space whose appeal was cheap rents and the opportunity to inject cool into the workplace through makeshift style. It had independent bars, eateries and clubs and offered a buzzy alternative to the staid tradition of the City core. And its occupier market was maturing fast, as London's burgeoning Tech City scene gathered pace.

Our hunch was that before long, the more mature creative and digital businesses would want larger, corporate space which retained the vibe of their start-up neighbours. They would also need to connect with the worlds of finance and creativity, on the boundary of which Triton Court proudly stood. We worked with brand guru Simon Turnbull and our architects Studio RHE to develop a brand concept dubbed 'The two tribes' – the City slickers and the hip creatives. We encapsulated that brand in the name Alphabet.

Our scheme needed a fresh and novel approach to design and architecture. We would be competing with a crop of classic City offices, with the steel and glass aesthetic of the established architects. Conversely, we went for a small and lesser known Shoreditch practice, whose experience was rooted more in lifestyle than commerce. Richard Hywel Evans and his team from Studio RHE understood the Alphabet vision. They brought new thinking from a broad range of projects and impressed us with their inventive and optimistic solutions to the challenges of this wonderful but complicated old building.

In close collaboration with our branding consultant and our agents



The magnificent and grandiose former Triton Court building exterior



A home for 'the City slickers and the hip creatives'

Allsop, Savills and CF Commercial, we worked closely with Studio RHE to express the Alphabeta vision in built form.

A key first move was to re-orientate the building's frontage, creating a main entrance on Worship Street and thus direct access from the Shoreditch side. Another key requirement was to design in the opportunity to attract the latest independent food, beverage and leisure operators into the ground-floor space. We wanted to set the right tone from street level up.

'The architectural, branding and marketing solutions worked and we feel we can be justifiably proud of Alphabeta'

The building offered a host of opportunities which Richard and his team set to work on, devising innovative new uses for existing features with the potential for reinvention – like the old squash courts, the massive basement, the vast roof space with its panoramic views to north and south, the structural steel and the hidden brickwork. Our aim was to repurpose the building to create a cutting-edge, 21st-century workspace for the creative and digital economy, with ride-in cycle ramp, yoga studios, roof terraces, amazing independent retail and above all inspiring media-style loft office space.

The architectural, branding and marketing solutions worked and we feel we can be justifiably proud of Alphabeta. It was 96 per cent let before completion to high-quality office tenants like Maxus Global, Open Table, We Are Social, SEI and Silicon Valley Bank. Thanks to the project team, Alphabeta sits comfortably within Resolution Property's established asset management strategy: asset reconfiguration; extension; rebranding and re-engineering the tenant line-up to create a market-leading property investment. ■

The architect's account

By Richard Hywel Evans, director, Studio RHE



The project grew in scope substantially from the original commission for a quick fit-out to attract short-term tenants, to a fully comprehensive reworking of the entire building, that was over two years in construction. After re-evaluating the evolution of the city's occupier base, we took the existing empty, dated and difficult-to-use Triton Court and transformed it into a contemporary space that would appeal to a new, more fluid and more adept workforce.

Located at the intersection between Shoreditch and the City, our design objective was to reflect the merging creative and tech communities with the financial sector shaping London's new economy.

'The project was also about celebrating the existing fabric and idiosyncrasies of the building'

Triton Court, originally three separate buildings, built between 1904 and 1929, was combined in the 1980s in a style very much of its time – marble, water features, narrow corridors and wall-climber lifts.

With a budget of £48 million we removed previous fit-outs and reworked the floorplates to create open, naturally lit workspaces around a central active atrium light well.

However, the project was also about celebrating the existing fabric and

idiosyncrasies of the building, turning its lack of uniformity into an asset.

With this in mind we retained the character and detailing of the original architecture, exposing the steel columns, cornices and brickwork and embracing the different ceiling and floor heights. The reconfiguration and additions created an entire building of 240,000 sq ft – a 17 per cent increase – accommodating 2,200 occupants.

Central to the project is a nine-storey, 8,070 sq ft glazed atrium, animated throughout its height by significantly cantilevered meeting rooms, giving a dynamic, social heart to the building.

We used a limited palette of charred timber and oil-stained steel sheets to add warmth and tactility to this glass-filled space.

A new large Worship Street-facing entrance was created into the facade

which literally re-orientates the building towards Shoreditch/Tech City and reflects the mixed tenancy profile.

At the top of the building, we converted previously inaccessible towers in the building into meeting spaces, and reorganised historic roof extensions into modern penthouse offices, and a shared rooftop terrace with stunning views of London's skyline.

We populated the ground floor with a library, café, meeting and social spaces, a co-working area and designed the multi-purpose central reception desk to morph into a touchdown working area.

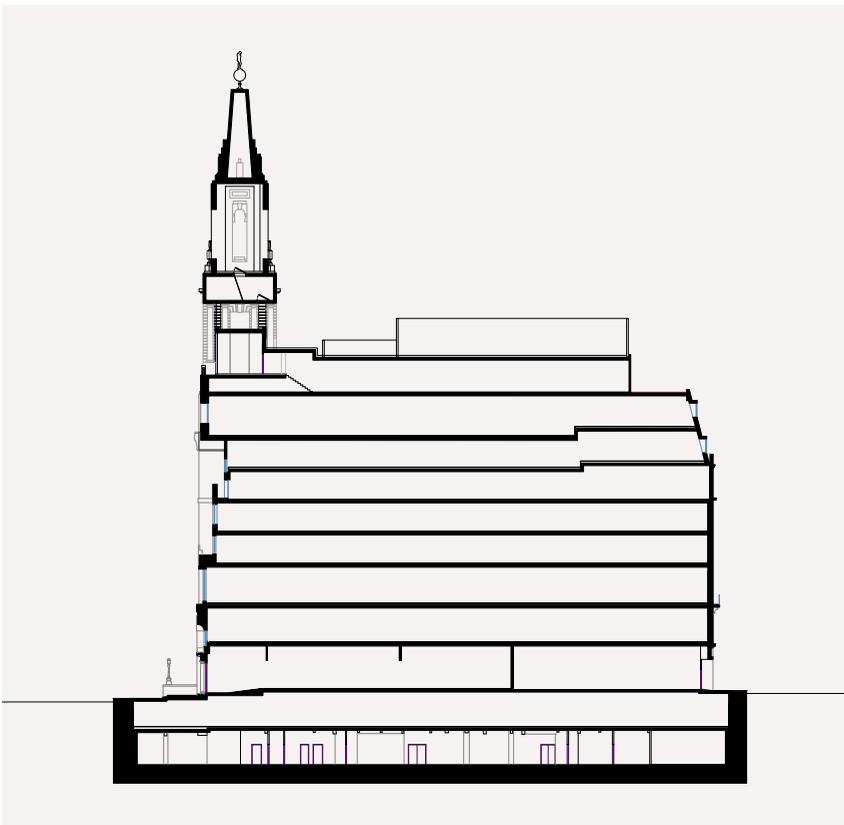
Cycling provision is embraced as a central component of Alphabet's shared facilities with the inclusion of a cycle ramp which runs literally inside the central atrium from street level down to the lower ground floor, where there is cycling storage for 250 bikes,



Cycling provision is a central component with a ramp from atrium to 250 spaces in the basement



Work/life balance – the ground floor includes a library, café, meeting and social spaces



Section showing basement which includes changing rooms and lockers

plus changing rooms and lockers. The ramp is clearly visible from the atrium through a glazed screen, and clearly animates this key central space.

Conventional wisdom was against the idea of losing significant lettable space, but employee-centric activities such as this have clearly helped to attract the desired mix of occupants, and the building which was fully let prior to completion brings together workers from the finance, digital, and media sectors, while the street-facing ancillary units have been taken up by exciting individual retailers including Flight Club and the newest branch of the Modern Pantry.

We have a wide portfolio of work which includes hotels, gyms, interactive retail and resorts and so we approached the design of Alphabeta as we would any design commission; from the point of view of the building users' experience.

From the varied arrival sequences through to the potential desk and table layouts and journeys inside the building we considered how it would 'feel' – and how it could be simply be better for someone using it every day. NL

The agent's account

By James Neville, partner, city leasing, Allsop LLP



The vision for transforming Alphabeta from a traditional City office building to a new way of working for the modern occupier was born out of the development team living and working in Shoreditch and having a true understanding of what occupiers are now looking for.

Triton Court, as Alphabeta was formerly known, was historically a difficult City building to work with, created from three separate buildings in the 1920s and 1930s and comprehensively redeveloped during the late 1980s. The buildings were compromised with small floorplates, changing levels and a particularly unfriendly layout. Traditional occupiers such as Toronto-Dominion Bank and HSBC found the building difficult to use, which led to the demise of the site and the need for a radical transformation!

Working with Resolution, Studio RHE Architects, Simon Turnbull and Village Green, we wanted to push the boundaries of Shoreditch further south and attract the new wave of tech creatives focussing on Silicon Roundabout, as well as appealing to the highly desirable financial technology businesses. Our vision was to create a scheme where essentially 'The two tribes' could meet. Opening the reception to Worship Street and creating a regular floorplate with amenities that went beyond the realms of tenant expectation and design norms of old (not just a small



The team aimed to attract a new wave of tech creatives and financial tech businesses



The building features roof spaces with City views

terrace, standard coffee bar and table football), would encourage the Shoreditch tech and media occupiers to share with the modern City tech businesses. The inclusion of the cycle ramp, basketball court and communal roof terrace has gone beyond what many occupiers have experienced in traditional buildings, and to go one step further we encouraged occupiers to interact between their own floors with open spiral staircases, auditorium spaces and balcony walkways.

The initially controversial and bold rebranding from Triton Court to Alphabeta involved a calculated marketing campaign with an entirely fresh approach. We used experienced designers involved in the music industry to help us ensure the marketing appealed to the end user rather than the typical City agent. We incorporated a full mock up marketing suite on the first floor of

the building and encouraged tech City forums and art exhibitions and increased the awareness of the scheme through social media. The initial campaign celebrated the demolition of the building through a series of commissioned photographs detailing the 'deconstruction' of the old with the replacement of the new.

'The inclusion of the cycle ramp, basketball court and communal roof terrace has gone beyond what many occupiers have experienced in traditional buildings'

The key to the leasing campaign was to secure a major pre-let early on in the construction phase and to drive the rental profile towards completion. Securing SEI Wealth

Management from the West End was key to underpinning the investment and fundamental to the momentum for future pre-lets. Whilst, SEI was a financial-based tenant, the internal creative designs proposed in their fit-out enabled us to continue targeting the creative sectors and encouraged Maxus Global, Reed Elsevier, OpenTable, Silicon Valley Bank and social media business, We Are Social, to the building.

Testament to the design of the building is that interest not only came from the tech, media world, but also from the City's financial businesses and even lawyers wanting to experience a new way of working.

The building has been a great success with initial rents starting out at £45.50 per sq ft per annum and the remaining 8,000 sq ft recently signing at £67.50 per sq ft for the third floor in the building. ■



Interest not only came from the tech, media world, but also from the City's financial businesses and even lawyers wanting to experience a new way of working

The occupier's account

By Andrew Lynch, COO, Huckletree



Creating the right working environment for our members is absolutely essential. This is something at the very core of our business and our brand. As a provider of innovative, community-focused workspace for the

start-up ecosystem, the physical space is at the heart of our thinking. We use this as a tool to promote innovation, stimulate ideas and keep talented people engaged and motivated.

We started looking for our second workspace in Shoreditch last year, but it had to be inspirational and definitely not mainstream. We wanted to match the successful launch of our first space in Clerkenwell the previous year. When we were first introduced to Alphabeta, we immediately saw the building's potential, from the perspective of our own unique requirements.

Alphabeta was clearly designed to enable communities to flourish. The iconic central atrium is an amazing space for collaborative working, which will allow our community to collide with some of the other, more established businesses that call the building home. These creative collisions are an important part of start-up culture and, increasingly, are relied upon by mature businesses to find new solutions to existing problems.

The team at Resolution had already secured an incredible roster of occupiers for the majority of the



Communal working – the design of Alphabeta has allowed different work 'communities' to flourish



'Plain vanilla office space under the glare of the strip lights doesn't cut it in our world'

building's office space. There were tech businesses, social media experts, innovative banks and researchers. It was clear at this early stage that a great community was already emerging. We saw the opportunity for Huckletree to fill a gap in the Alphabet jigsaw – the start-up community to complement its established stablemates.

The fabric and character of the building itself was also a decisive factor for us. Our model of workspace thrives in places that themselves stimulate those that work in them. Plain vanilla office space under the glare of the strip lights doesn't cut it in our world – the day of the cubicle is long gone. For us, the Alphabet's mix of old and new, the structural steel and brick contrasting with the

striking glazed atrium, all combined to create an environment which went way beyond the norm. We very soon started to see how we could integrate with such an environment, complementing it without it dominating our brand.

'Our model of workspace thrives in places that themselves stimulate those that work in them'

And there were other stand-out features. The ride-in cycle ramp was an entirely new idea and one we knew would enhance our appeal to our community of creative Millennials. And Resolution's insistence on

leasing the ground-floor restaurant and leisure space to exciting new independents was reassuring. We didn't relish the prospect of our members entering their workspace flanked by the same old omnipresent coffee and sandwich brands.

The space Resolution offered us was large, light and flexible and their approach was very different to other landlords we have encountered. They really understood the Huckletree concept and worked with us to provide the space to match it. As a result, we took 17,000 sq ft of the ground and lower ground floors, which we were confident would allow us to create a vibrant workspace to inspire our members to do great things and make a difference. ■



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Stepney

By Charles Saumarez Smith, secretary and chief executive of the Royal Academy of Arts

We moved to Stepney at the turn of the millennium from Limehouse nearer the river. It was a move downmarket from the increasingly yuppified area in the vicinity of Canary Wharf to the chicken shops down the Mile End Road, to a house which we converted from an old exhaust pipe garage. The area did not have a great deal to recommend it: fewer parks; no sense of the river; only the Whitechapel market straggling along the street outside the nearby Tube station.

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What it does have, however, is a sense of the old 18th-century outskirts of the city of London. An old parish church, Anglo-Saxon in origin, St Dunstan's, which I walk past on my way to my Sunday morning run; the remains of the village green, with a late 17th-century manor house, built with the profits from the East India Company; our house and our next-door neighbour's, which were built on the side of the main road into London by speculative builders; the London hospital not so far away which is an eighteenth-century foundation; and the nearby run of houses restored by the Spitalfields Trust, one of which now houses a bed-and-breakfast called Forty Winks.

On top of this 18th-century history is a layer of its much tougher and

poorer 19th-century development with the slum tenements which were built by philanthropists to house the Russian and eastern European immigrants, the Jewish cemetery off Alderney Street and another one in the grounds of Queen Mary University of London. The local retail park occupies the site of Charrington Brewery which would have been a big source of local employment. The People's Palace was built up the road to provide local entertainment.

In the 20th century came Wickham's department store, the Selfridges of the East End, and the next-door cinema. After the war, there was slum clearance and the post-war Utopian idealism which led to Corbusian blocks of social housing,

now themselves legacies of a period of optimism and social conscience.

The character of Stepney reveals itself slowly and by wandering, discovering the unexpected residues of older patterns of living like Bellevue Place – once known as Bunghole Alley, tucked behind Wickham's – or Mile End Place which backs on to the cemetery off the Mile End Road.

London is built out of such neighbourhoods, unplanned accretions with separate and distinctive histories. As big development moves eastwards and Crossrail is about to open in Whitechapel, it is in our interest to be attentive to what makes London special: its variety; the history which makes up the character of its different neighbourhoods; the accidents of its development; the ability for its history to poke through.

There is a risk that such an attitude looks like sentimentalism or is viewed as hostility to new development. It is only a plea for attentiveness to the history of London and for variety in plans for change. **nl**



The Selfridges of the East End – the former Wickham's department store building, Stepney



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