DES RES

LONDON’S HOUSING CHALLENGE

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Since the 17th Century, development in London has taken place in what John Summerson described as "distinct waves of activity at intervals of about 50 years." The London of George III created a capital for the burgeoning British Empire with the creation of new roads, bridges and a model of city housing that has yet to be bettered. The London of the Prince Regent left us the grand stuccoed terraces of Belgravia, Pimlico and Baywater. The massive suburban expansion of the 1930s gave us sprawl, low density and the semi-detached house. The development of local authority housing in the post war period left a mixed legacy, the worst of which have already been, or are in the process of being, replaced.

These are the legacies of their generation. We are currently on the crest of the latest wave of development. How will the housing heritage of the London of Livingstone compare to that of George III?

This exhibition shows a wide range of recently completed and planned projects which provides a picture of the London of tomorrow and highlights the issues faced by the providers of new housing.

London's population is growing faster than any other European city. More homes at higher densities are needed to meet the increased demand and changing demographics of London's residents. This creates new problems for designers.

The initiative of the group of architectural practices - HTA, PRP, Levitt Bernstein and PTEa - who cooperated to produce the report Recommendations for Living at Superdensity is to be commended. By pooling experience and the lessons of work on their drawing boards they have provided valuable advice for a type of building with which the British are very unfamiliar. They provide a series of guidelines for planners and developers that, if followed,
Can contemporary housing match the quality and longevity of the Georgian model?
will maintain architectural quality. But how do we assess quality?

Building for Life - a consortium led by CABE and the Home Builders Federation - has set out criteria which provides a useful list by which to assess housing schemes: Does it feel like a place with a distinctive character? Do buildings exhibit architectural quality? Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly? Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe? Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology? Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaptation? And so on.

There are positive signs designers and providers are taking design more seriously: the impact of CABE and Design for London has been positive and productive, as has the promotion of design by boroughs like Southwark and Newham; companies like First Base and BioRegional Quintain are setting the pace for others; Lend Lease’s initiative at Stratford City to bring together innovative architecture with hardnosed construction to build the athlete’s village will break new ground.

It is telling that in the report on Superdensity there is a picture of Sir Howard Bernstein of Manchester with the caption: “Civic leadership is the key to new housebuilding.” In the light of London’s sclerotic planning system, the transformation of Manchester – with proactive planners working with innovative developers like Urban Splash and Ask – displays a vitality and quality that London would do well to emulate.

This wave of development must aim to be truly sustainable. Let us hope that unlike many of the developments of the 60s they will not require demolition or major rehabilitation within a couple of decades and that the schemes proposed here will remain an integral part of this city well into the future.
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CONFERENCE SERIES

To fully reflect the complex and enormous range of issues relating to the capital's housing supply NLA is hosting a seven part conference series. Consisting of two full day and five half day conferences, the series will tackle the major challenges and issues facing residential development in London: planning, public realm, density, space standards, design, the market, sustainability, mixed use development, affordability and ownership.

Each conference is designed to encourage discussion and debate about the future of London's housing amongst policy makers, planners, developers, designers and home builders.

ONE DAY CONFERENCES
8.30am-4.30pm, including breakfast, lunch and refreshments. Followed by a drinks reception.

ECO-HOUSING & SUSTAINABILITY
Thursday 15 May
Almost 40% of London's carbon emissions are produced by its housing. As the industry strives to address the important issue of climate change this conference gives you the opportunity to discover the policies, regulations and solutions from the people at the forefront of sustainable research, policy and development.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE
• Andy von Bradsky, Chairman, PRP
• Andy Deacon, Air Quality, Energy and Climate Change Strategy Manager, Greater London Authority
• Pooran Desai, Director, BioRegional Quintain
• Bill Dunster, Architect, Zed Factory
• Dr Jennifer Schooling, Research Business Manager, Arup
• Jeremy Sumeray, Director of Strategy, Green Building Council
• Andrew Tucker, London Climate Change Partnership Manager, GLA

GAIN INSIGHT INTO
• The scale of the sustainability challenge for London
• Technical advances from experts
• Retrofitting solutions
• Pioneering projects through case studies
• The cost benefits of sustainable best practice
• Raising design standards through sustainable homes
• International developments

AFFORDABILITY & OWNERSHIP
Thursday 12 June
London's house prices now average more than £300,000. First-time buyers require an annual income in excess of £100,000 to buy an average priced home in a quarter of London boroughs. The availability of affordable homes in London is creating 'nothing short of a social crisis'. Debate this fundamental issue with the policy and decision makers trying to find a solution.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE
• Nick Johnson, Deputy Chief Executive, Urban Splash
• David Levitt, Founder, Levitt Bernstein
• Sir Duncan Michael, Chair of the investment committee, Housing Corporation
• Stephen Oakes, Regional Director, English Partnerships
• Adam Sampson, Chief Executive, SHELTER
• David Ubaka, Assistant Director, Design for London
• Christine Whitehead, Professor of Housing Economics, LSE

GAIN INSIGHT INTO
• The challenges set by policy
• The role of the London HCA Board
• How affordable housing in London is funded
• New financial models for funding affordable homes
• Designing quality affordable homes
• How to create balanced communities
• Using affordable housing to drive regeneration