

The London Plan 2021 and tall buildings in London and the City

Account of Forum meeting on Monday 14th June 2021 on Zoom
Full minute by James Mitchell at planninginlondon.com > LP&DF

Following welcome and Introductions and agreement to minutes of meeting on 1st March 2021 as published in PiL 117:

DISCUSSION TOPICS

London Plan

Update by Lisa Fairmanier, Head of the London Plan and Growth Strategies, GLA

Introduction to the NLA tall buildings survey Peter Murray, Curator-in-Chief, NLA

Tall Buildings Policy - discussion led by; Michael Bach, London Forum of Civic and Amenity Societies

Tall Buildings - City of London Perspective Gwyn Richards - Planning and Development Director, City Of London Corporation

Update on the London Plan – Lisa Fairmanier

• LF Lisa was happy with the launch of the London Plan from the 2nd march. Lisa acknowledged it was a protracted process. 14 directions from secretary of state. It now has full statutory weight, and

gives welcome certainty to boroughs who will adopt the London plan.

• Lisa outlined the presentation would start with the contents page, starting with Good Growth objectives. These started as objectives, then to policy and now back to objectives. All of the policies lead back to the Good growth objectives.

• Lisa outlined the expansion and change in 'Opportunity Areas'. Originally starting out as expanded brownfield and industrial areas, such as Paddington, Royal Docks. This is now more about intensification within existing urban frameworks, having a bigger impact on outer London boroughs.

• Funding context around transport infrastructure is going to be interesting, particularly with Crossrail 2 being shelved

• Looking at wider South East. This is challenging due to the fragmented nature, considering there are over a 100 different authorities. The GLA are working closely with MHCLG to help address this.

• Any opportunities that arise outside of London, making sure partnerships are in place to collaborate with neighbouring counties such as Hampshire. London will still look to meet its own housing targets

Meeting held on Monday 14th June 2021 on Zoom

Moderators

Brian Waters – Chairman
Jonathan Manns – Vice chairman
James Mitchell – Hon Sec

Speakers

Lisa Fairmanier
Peter Murray
Michael Bach
Gwyn Richards

Participants:

Michael Bach
Tim Wacher
Sarah Jackson
David Scourfield
Duncan Bowie
Peter Eversden
Kelly Davis
Nic Kingsley
Jessica XR?
Peter Stewart
Philip Pryke
Andy Drummond

Joh Harte
Shannon
Shani AB
Lewis ZR
Sophie Bowerman
Conrad Cherniavsky
Rupert Bickham
Darren
Amy Williams
Judith Ryser
Brian Whitely
Ian T Davidson

• It's good to see Local plans have produced local character assessments which have informed the plan. Designation for tall buildings for example

• There's a role for national and local design codes of which the GLA have reservations over having one blanket code

• Fire safety is another key factor being adopted by local authorities, but also explicit that roles and responsibilities are clear as they don't have the expertise to evaluate

• Agent of change coming into play. New developments coming into new sensitive areas need to mitigate noise.

• Housing targets don't add up to intended to provided. But they are a significant uplift in delivery.

• Large scale purpose built shared living. Pressure for schemes, and guidance being developed so it doesn't become low grade housing and shared living shouldn't replace good quality housing

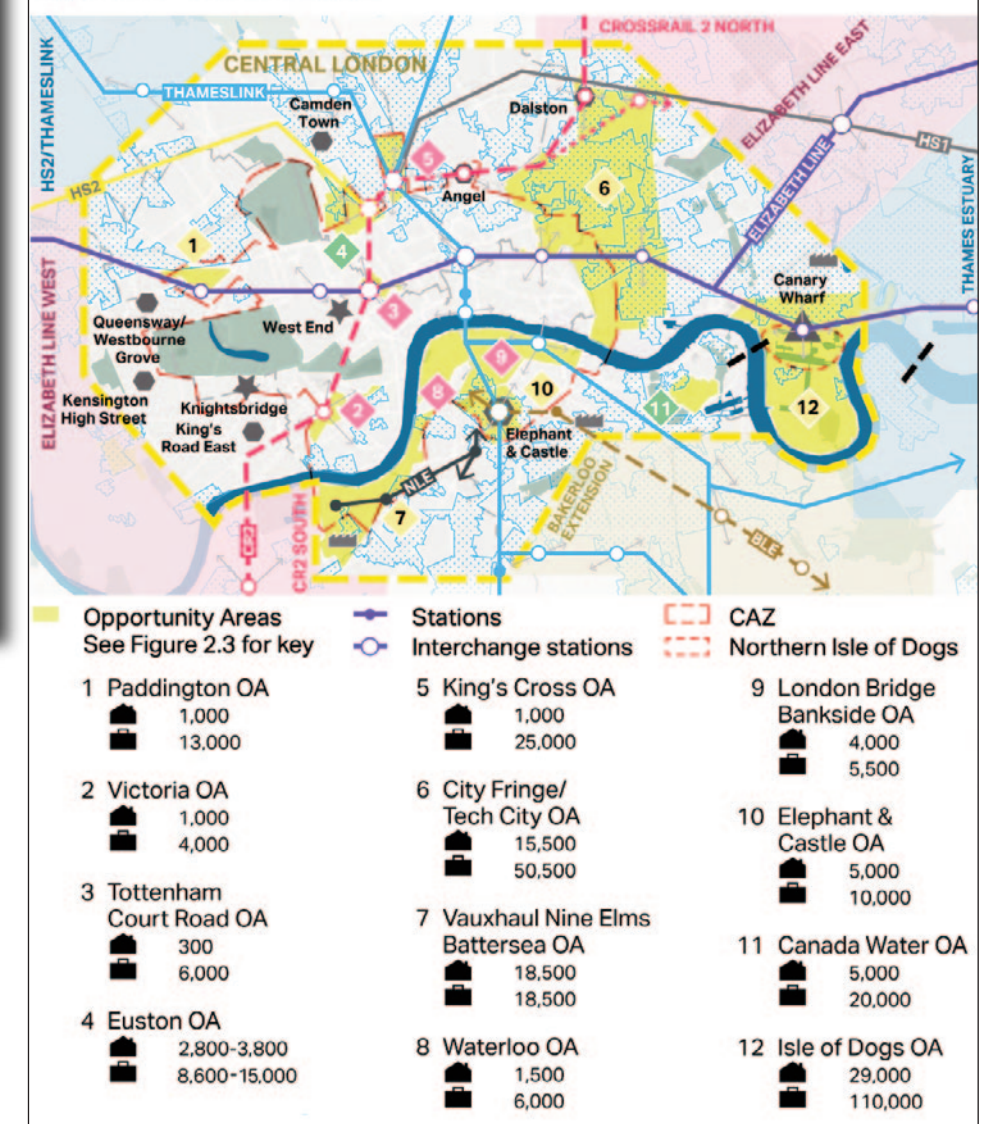
• Commercial areas shouldn't erode the quality of high streets. Lasse faire market approach shouldn't be applied to PD

• Use class E will be dealt with in the London plan

• High streets recovery mission will dovetail with



Figure 2.11 - Central London



the London plan.

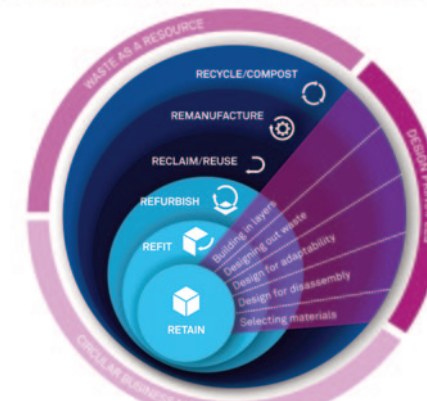
• Disappointed with the erosion of the secretary of states direction for the protection of industrial uses. It's important to see the protection for light industrial such as logistics.

• Green Infrastructure. Heartened to see the select committee gave the same protections such as the green belt.

• More technical details will need to be provided at planning stage to meet the challenges of climate change. Air quality, Circular Economy, Whole life carbon, and Urban Greening.

• Digital – making provision for full fibre or full fibre equivalent. Critical for all schemes

Figure 3.2 - Circular economy hierarchy for building approaches



Source: Building Revolutions (2016), David Cheshire, RIBA Publishing ©

- 3.3.17 New developments should be designed and managed so that deliveries can be received outside of peak hours and if necessary in the evening or night-time without causing unacceptable nuisance to residents. Appropriate facilities will be required to minimise additional freight trips arising from missed deliveries.
- 3.3.18 Shared and easily accessible storage space supporting separate collection of dry recyclables, food waste and other waste should be considered in the early design stages to help improve recycling rates, reduce smell, odour and vehicle movements, and improve street scene and community safety.
- 3.3.19 Buildings and spaces should be designed so that they can adapt to changing uses and demands now and in the future. Their lifespan and potential uses or requirements should be carefully considered, creating buildings and spaces

Figure 10.2 - The Ten Healthy Streets Indicators



Source: Lucy Saunders

10.2.8 The Mayor has a long-term vision to reduce road danger so that no deaths or serious injuries occur on London's streets. This Vision Zero will be achieved by designing and managing a street system that accommodates human error and ensures impact levels are not sufficient to cause fatal or serious injury. This will require reducing the dominance of motor vehicles and targeting danger at source.

• Waterways – ongoing

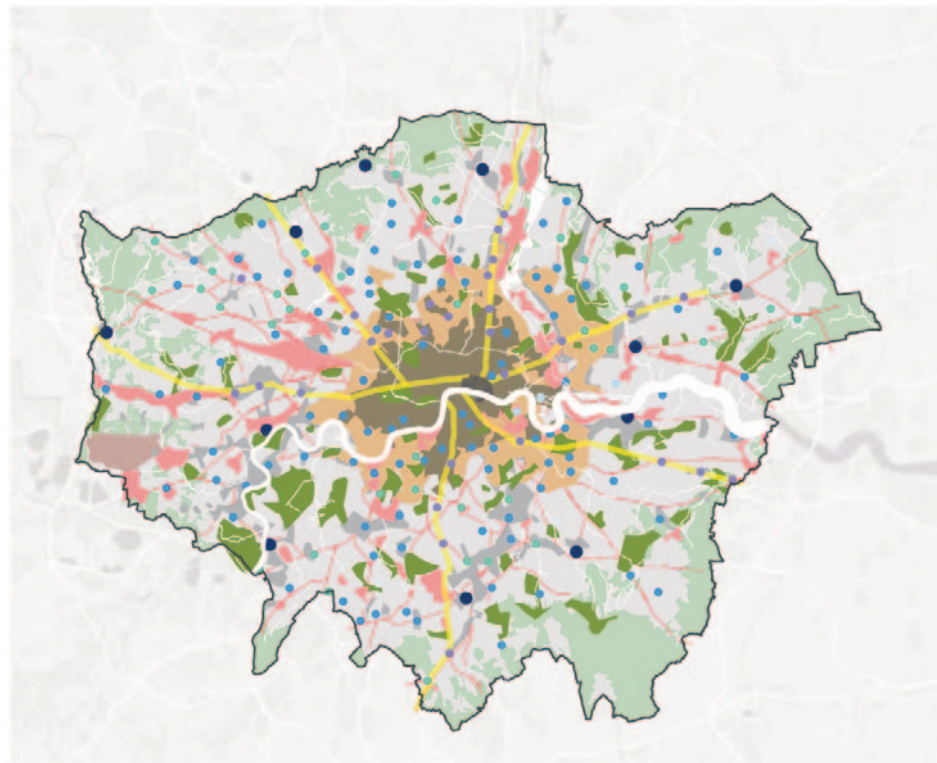
• Transport – A real focus on Healthy Streets. Compromise on car parking numbers, but new schemes should champion sustainable travel

• When local plans come forward, there is a positive contribution to travel, incorporating inclusive cycling requirements

Discussion

• Dr Nigel Moor. Are we not repeating the same mistake which we have always made as planners, which is the plan is already out of date, the moment it is adopted? Need to build in virtual monitoring, to reflect cur- >>>

Figure 3.1 - Outline Character Map of London



Character Map of London

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 20th century suburbs ● Victorian suburbs ● Victorian entrepreneurship ● Georgian planning and growth ● The Square Mile ● Green spaces ● Green belt ● Heathrow | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Town Centres ● 20th century ● Industrial ● Railway town centre ● Historic ● Former medieval market town ● High road centre ● High roads | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 19th Century Industry ● Industry ● Infrastructure ● Waterways |
|--|--|--|

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>>> rent scale of change

- LF – The London plan is about implementation, consolidation and monitoring. The Planning data hub has been launched, and real-time planning will be viewed. Does it represent a policy failure? We're just at the start of this progress.
- There is recognition a global pandemic has shifted trends, and the London plan couldn't have predicted this. However the plan is still fit for purpose. Such as climate change, healthy streets
- Not a good time to look at housing numbers and demographics right now, which is transitional

- Peter Eversden – The annual monitoring reports are publicised two years after. The local plan struggle to get through any plans for 5 years. How does local design codes such as Croydon work with this?

- LF - There is a range of options to implement design codes through the SPD. The guidance gives a step by step guide

- Duncan Bowie on the South East. London South east . Q - What extent undertake additional capacity- Green belt etc?

- LF – GLA role is one of a number of partners which holds a strategic responsibility to maintain partnerships, alongside outside London boroughs. EG Cambridge Arc

Introduction to the NLA tall buildings survey – Peter Murray

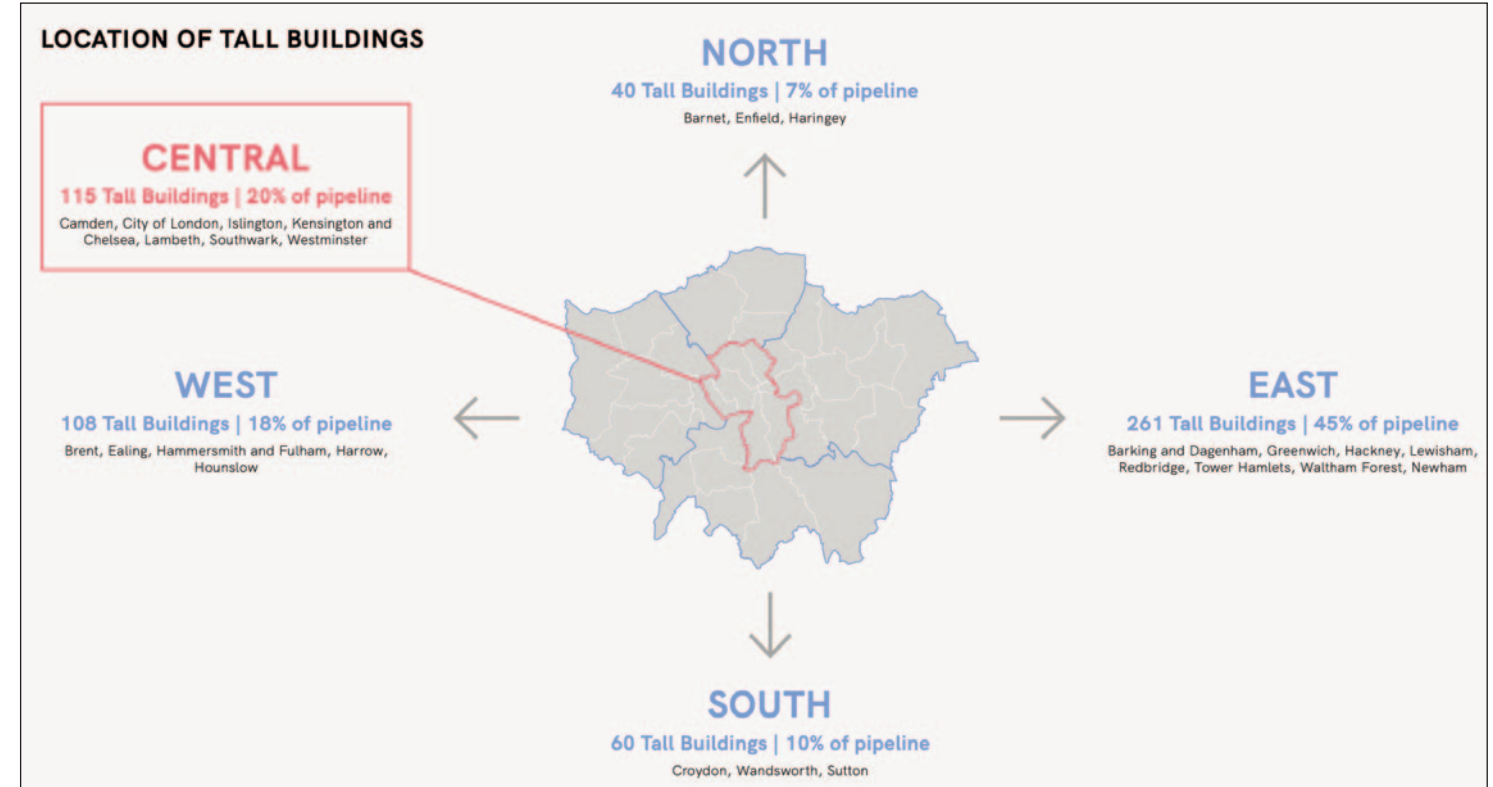
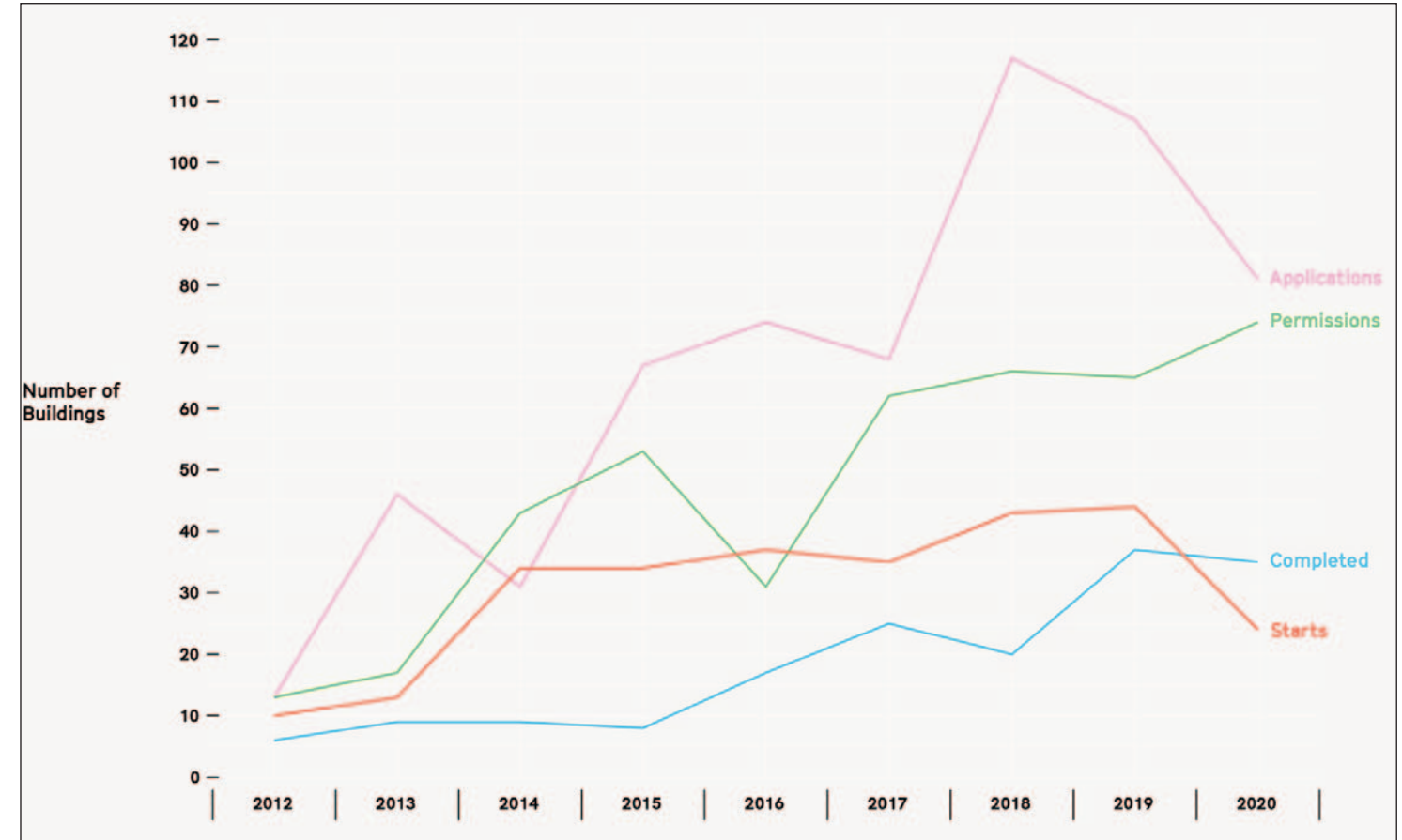
- Peter recalled an invitation to a press conference in November 2013 with Boris Johnson opening a housing scheme in Greenwich. Designed by Make.
- Boris announced his new 'Homes for London Policy' 42,000 new homes, an ambitious target at the time. Famously Boris said 'this doesn't mean we'll end up with towers all over the place'
- If you look back at tall buildings over 30-40

years, apart from Canary Wharf, much of tall buildings has become an accident. No one knew where they would pop up, or how many

- Canary wharf was supposed to be sheds, until Michael von Clemm came along, and took advantage of lax planning controls and made a financial centre
- City of London, Eastern cluster imagery. A perception bankers wanted space and landscapers. Instead Swiss Re ended up as a tower, which

became the Gherkin

- Peter Murray interviewed City Planning Officer Peter Rees for *Estates Times* in 1997. Rees said that tall buildings had no place in the Square Mile. Six months later the Corporation changed its policy after Frankfurt published a tall buildings plan.
- No tall-building policy, but a few key individuals shaped tall building policy. Gerald Ronson once developed Heron tower, designed by KPF spending £10m on an enquiry to make it happen. 202



meters tall, fiercely oppose by English heritage

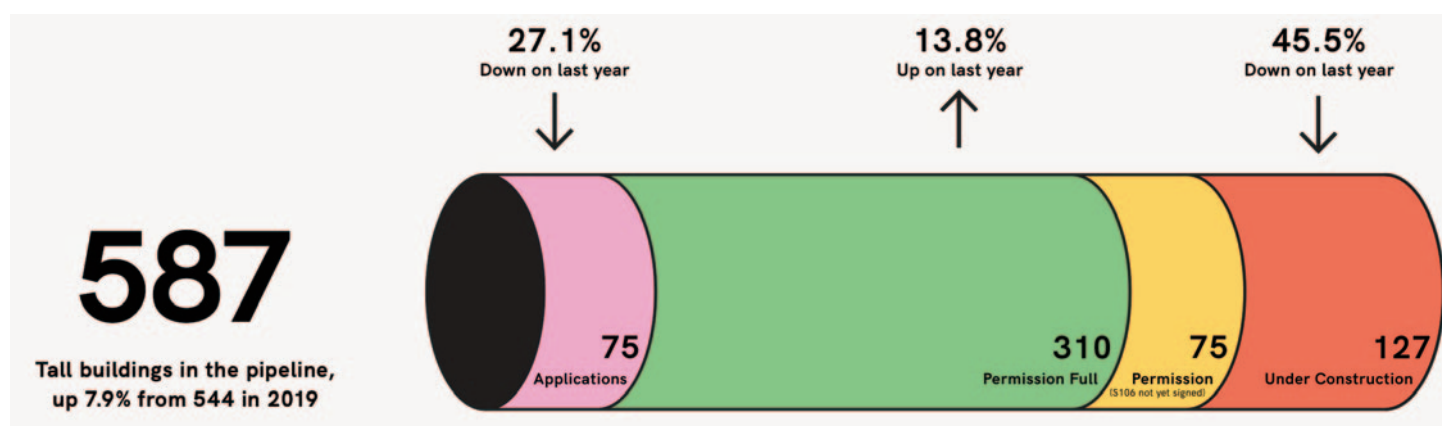
- Irvine sellar another key individual to drive tall buildings. In 2007 a 37 storey cylindrical tower designed by Broadway Malyan was strongly opposed on design.
- Irvine then brought in Renzo Piano to design a

spire / ships mast. English Heritage and Caba opposed it on the basis of its impact from Hampstead to St Pauls. Off the back of Heron Tower, EH were way over budget, and caved in. This obviously became the Shard.

- John Prescott intervened and signed it off on the

basis Architecture had to have a 'wow' factor

- Tony Pidgley behind Vauxhall developments, John Prescott
- EH published report on tall buildings off the back of this, which a lot of the content is now in the London Plan



>>> • Ken Livingstone like tall buildings, which was connected to Section 106. London Plan 2001 are flagship developments which enable developments and provide good transport

- KL didn't appreciate the quantity of tall buildings, and expected 10-15 in the City of London and fringes and Isle of Dogs
- Boris Johnson understood tall buildings enhances London's reputation and investment
- Greenwich Peninsula has HK investors which expect to build tall buildings
- In 2014 NLA reported that there was a total of 236 towers across London with 19% under construction
- Anything over 20 x storeys was deemed a tall building, the same size as a local authority building.
- Peter showed images of Canary Wharf, Vauxhall and the City of London
- There is a stark difference in skyline of the City and Vauxhall in just 7 years
- In the current NLA report there are 587 x tall buildings in the pipeline. These are spread over the four boroughs
- In 2014 NLA proposed that a skyline commission be set up and the Mayor used a 3D model to view developments. Some London boroughs use 3D computer modelling with the City leading the field. The new London Plan includes a proposal for a Mayoral model.

Tall Buildings Policy - discussion led by; Michael Bach, London Forum of Civic and Amenity Societies

- Noted that the tall buildings permitted by London's Mayors since 2000 have not come about through the development plan process.
- By the end of Ken Livingstone's Mayoralty in 2008, some 27 towers had been completed
- Boris Johnson's 2011 and 2016 London Plans sought to steer tall buildings towards the Central Activities Zone, Opportunity Areas, Intensification Areas and town centres with good public transport connectivity, but in practice tall buildings

were supported much more widely. Sadiq Khan's first five years continued this spread. Like Boris Johnson he continued to promote tall buildings by calling in cases that London boroughs wanted to refuse. In 2021 we now have some 587 towers in the planning pipeline

Sadiq Khan's new London Plan, first drafted in 2017 and finally adopted in March 2021, has, however, totally devolved the identification of suitable sites to London boroughs. This proposes a plan-led approach by bringing forward sites through the Local Plan. This approach was strongly endorsed by the Secretary of State's Direction in December 2020.

Tall Buildings - City of London Perspective
Gwyn Richards - Planning and Development Director, City Of London Corporation

- The city have for the last 5-10 years been undertaking a holistic view of tall buildings and micro level in terms of transport, ground plain, air quality, and pedestrian flows – SEE IMAGES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES
- Started by stressing the Corporation has not lost confidence in the future of tall buildings – recent major completions and schemes under way have emphasised this – e.g.:
 - o 6-8 Bishopsgate
 - o 22 Bishopsgate
 - o Heron (now "Salesforce") Tower, 110 Bishopsgate
 - o 1 Leadenhall Court
 - o 48 Leadenhall Street
 - o 50 Fenchurch Street
 - o 55 Gracechurch Street
 - o 2-3 Finsbury Avenue – he pointed out this last scheme is outside the City's main cluster but links in with an emerging cluster to the north in an area linking with bordering parts of LB Hackney and LB Tower Hamlets
- Generally, the market for tower building space has reawakened this year – with a shortage of "grade A" space now anticipated in three years.

- Tower schemes are not looked to now for providing traditional large, open floor offices but rather, more easily re-configured "work spaces" aimed:
 - (a) at encouraging an easier exchange of ideas and multi-group working but also
 - (b) partly with a view to making the commute to work and working environment more attractive again - as the opportunity to work from home has proved to be very popular amongst so many office workers during the Pandemic.
- The Corporation is targeting two key regeneration areas for tall tower schemes in its City Plan upto 2036: Bishopsgate and Leadenhall Market.
- In an area bounded in the south by the Walkie Talkie building (20 Fenchurch Street) running north to Bevis Marks / London Wall and running across from the west side of Bishopsgate to Aldgate, they have modelled what Gwyn Richards called a 3D "blancmange"-shape or "virtual tent" stretching across it - where they see tall towers locating in future years – and which dictates the maximum heights they could reach across its various parts.
- The impact of towers here would be "relatively minimal" on the various sensitive viewing cones which cross the area (for St.Paul's and Parliament Hill / Hampstead Heath) in his opinion. By way of example, he showed how towers were already being angled back in shape to avoid impinging on the background to St.Paul's when viewed from the Processional Route along Fleet Street and up Ludgate Hill.
- The area also has the highest levels of public transport accessibility in the City, making it a particularly sustainable location for a concentration of tall buildings.
- What the Corporation is partly looking to achieve through this cluster area's development is to make more space available at ground level for pedestrians – both to increase permeability there for peak hour pedestrian flows and also to offer fresh opportunities for open air seating areas.
- They also want to achieve more publicly accessi-

ble open space on roofs of new buildings (termed "parks in the sky") such as at One New Change beside St.Paul's – as much to get public buy in and support for these new tower schemes as for any other reason. More retail space at lower levels and night time economy uses are to be encouraged as well, to bring back visitor numbers.

- The Corporation want to "green" buildings as much as possible to help absorb levels of CO2 – he cited the recently negotiated Citiscape House scheme at Holborn as a current example.
- A key message he wanted to put across was that the Corporation have put a lot of research effort into where they want to see tall buildings located in future – and that they are giving much thought to alleviating their potential adverse environmental impacts at street level – e.g. the "Foehn" / downdraught effect, thermal warming and cooling, noise, reduction of natural light/sunlight reaching the street (and penetrating within commercial buildings - which are often located within 4-6 metres of each other, given London's underlying mediaeval street pattern).
- The Corporation has already produced: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Services-Environment/thermal-comfort-guidelines-for-developments-in-the-city-of-london.pdf>, (see comfort maps, RIGHT) issued last December, and are now looking at scoping a masterplan to develop wind microclimate guidance for developments in the City.
- In finishing, Gwyn Richards noted that amongst other things they are also investigating (Victorian period) ideas for installing heliostats on the outside of commercial buildings to reflect sun and daylight into their lower levels where they are tightly massed.
- They are modelling heat stress areas across the City, which is highlighting the need for action particularly around major road junctions (with new tree planting, greening environmental initiatives for surrounding buildings, etc.), and they have also nearly completed 3D virtual modelling of the City so as to allow virtual visual assessment of new building scheme proposals in future. ■

The City is investigating (Victorian period) ideas for installing heliostats

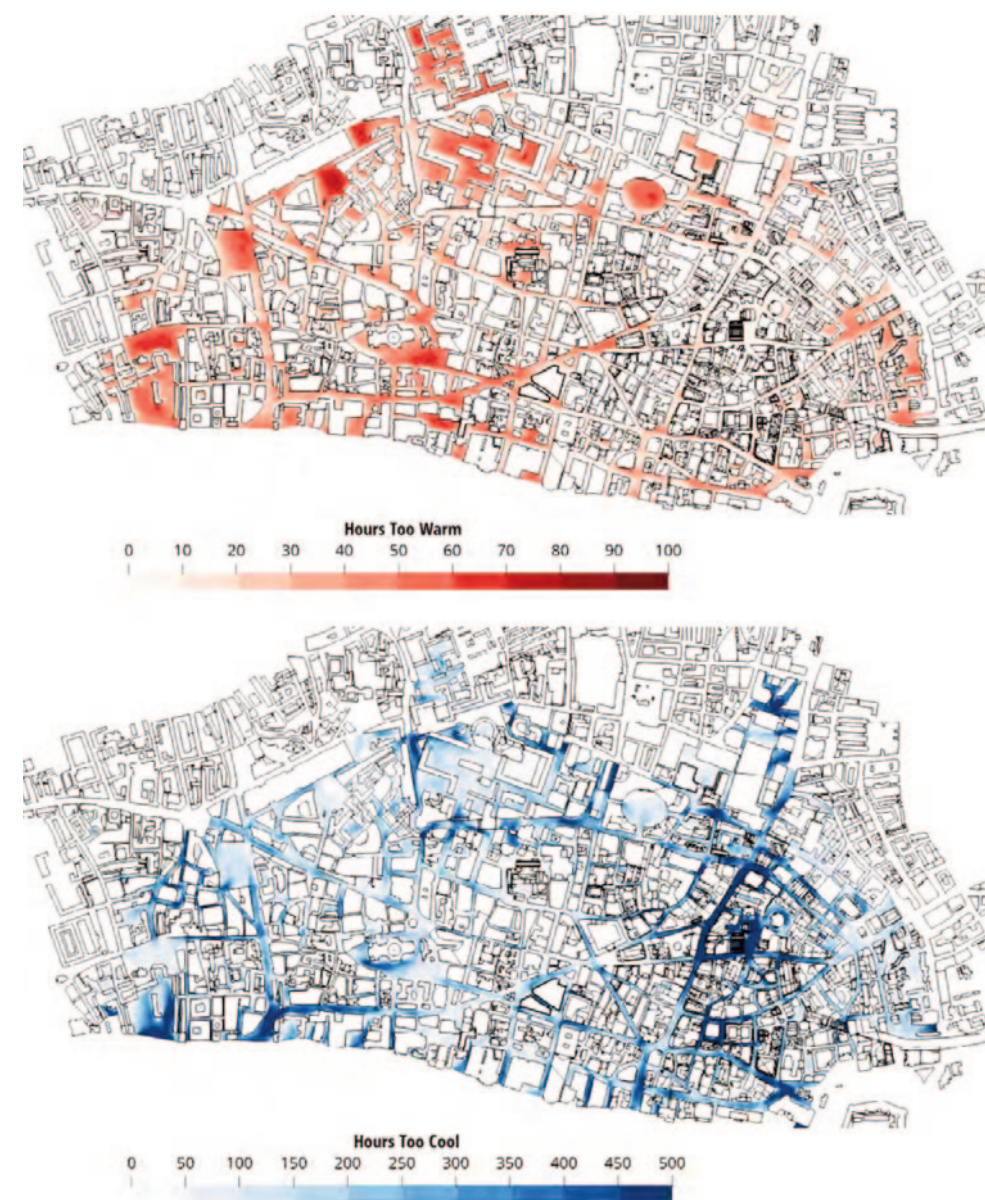


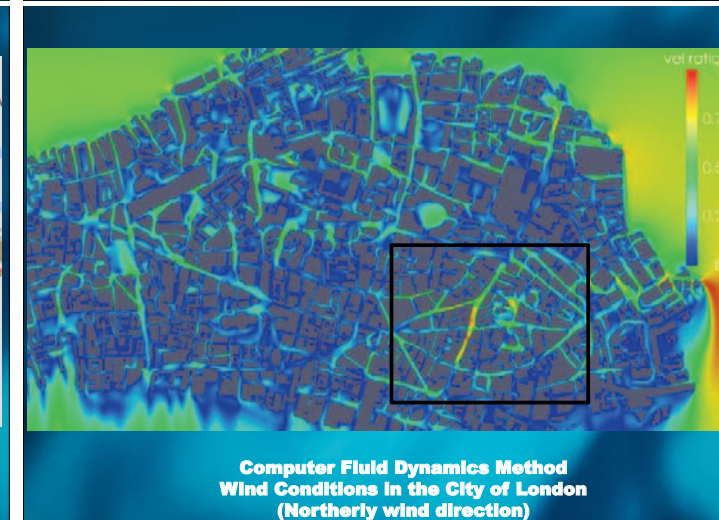
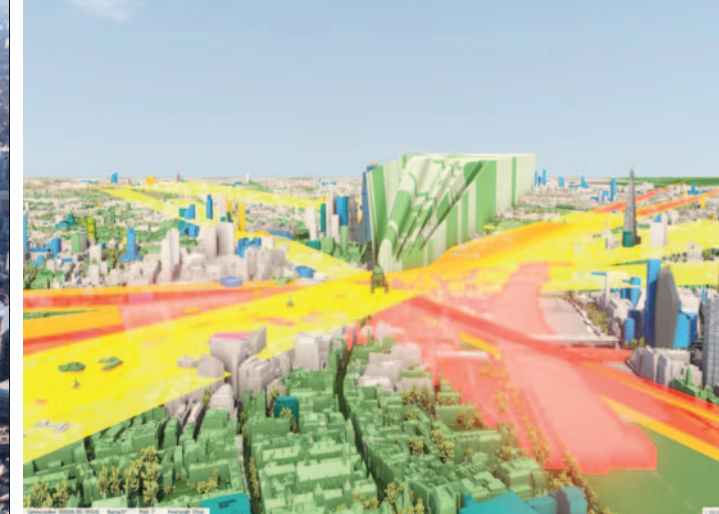
Figure 4: Plots of Average Summer Hours Too Warm (top) and Winter Hours Too Cool (bottom)



London Planning & Development Forum

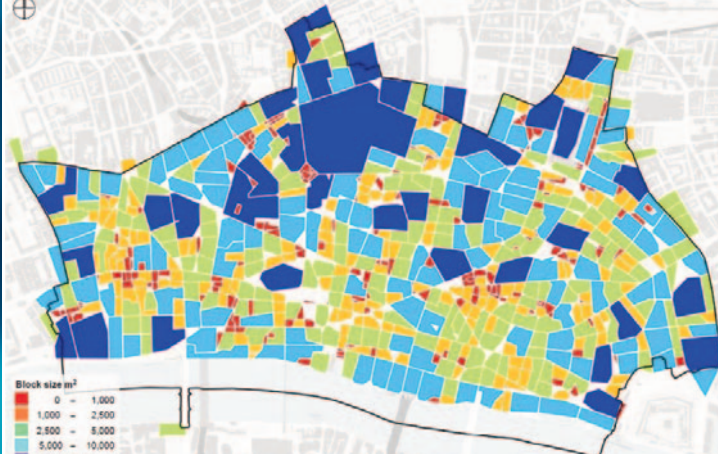
NEXT MEETING
Monday 13th September on Zoom
 email jm@axiomarchitects.co.uk if you would like to join the discussion and receive the link

The City has for the last 5 to 10 years been undertaking a holistic view of tall buildings and micro level in terms of transport, ground plain, air quality, and pedestrian flows. Gwyn Richards shared these and more images with the Forum





Sunlight to ground modelling



Pedestrian movement : Permeability mapping

55 Gracechurch Street



Vehicle lifts - similar system

