

# The future of hotels and speeding up planning

Minutes of the London Planning and Development Forum on Monday 23rd September 2019 at HTA Design with Riette Oosthuizen as host.

Full minute by Drummond Robson at [planninginlondon.com](http://planninginlondon.com) > LP&DF

## Introductions and Apologies

Brian Waters welcomed the group who introduced themselves, and noted apologies

## DISCUSSION TOPICS:

### 1 The Future of Hotels: Nomad City.

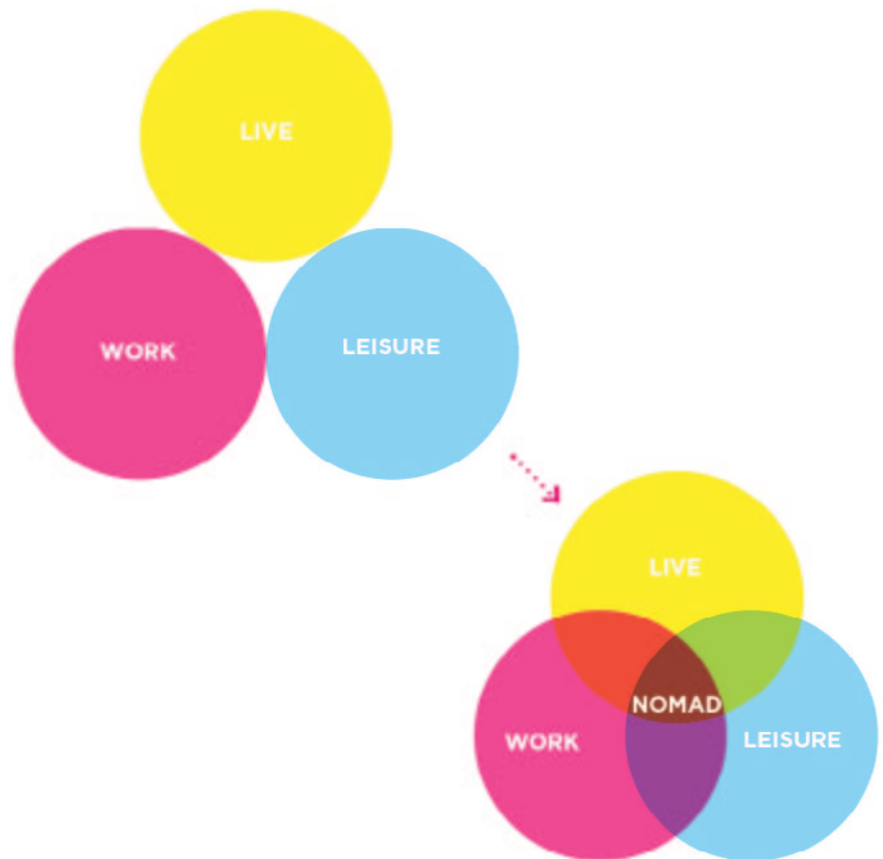
Jonathan Manns (Rockwell) and James Mitchell (Axiom Architects). Subtitle: flexibility, Connectivity, Transience.

Jonathan Manns introduced the topic and explained his interpretation of how hotels now operate for transient populations: He expressed this as 'nomads', (people who don't stay long in the same place) and therefore using accommodation which seeks to serve a combined living working and leisure population.

As individuals our expectations are personal and therefore differ. He sought – with supporting material from Axiom Architects – to open a discussion about the future of hotel and visitor accommodation as hotels in London grow from the current 2,500 rooms and 83 per cent occupancy to be found here. Cheap air travel is adding encouragement to the growth trends.

The nomad expresses a preference for different room sizes which Jonathan classified as compact, lifestyle/family and luxury. He said there are high expectations of technological connectivity (e.g. mobile and self check in). Compact provides some

## WHAT IS THE NOMADIC LIFESTYLE?



80 per cent of rooms, and 11 square metres. Examples are to be found in Hoxton. Space in Lifestyle rooms have typically 24 square metres and luxury take up 30 and also have a pool, gym and business space.

This could be encapsulated in his vision of the future content and distribution within a hotel complex as illustrated opposite.

Future hotel space may be labelled to include wellbeing, mental health and gymnasium space. Some key hotel statistics for London were projected in summary (*SEE table on following pages*).

The ensuing discussion – taken up by **John Walker** (former Chief Planner of Westminster, and now Director in the CT Group of campaign strategists - centred on the potential conflict between the transient worlds of the visitor (as well as their

## Meeting held on Monday 23rd September 2019.at HTA 78 Chamber Street, E1 8BL with Riette Oosthuizen as host

Brian Waters (Chairman)

Jonathan Manns: Rockwell Properties (Vice-Chairman)

Andrew Rogers: ACA

Duncan Bowie: UCL

Gerry Ansell: LB Brent

James Mitchell: Axiom Architects

John Walker: CT Group

Judith Ryser: Ugb/Cityscope Europe

Max Farrell: London Collective

Peter Eversden: London Forum

Rachel Hearn: LB Havering (Urban Design)

Riette Oosthuizen & Sarah Eley: HTA

Sophie Bowerman: Axiom Architects

Drummond Robson: Honorary Secretary

Apologies from Jessica Fern, Michael Edwards,

Mike Coupe, Ron Heath, Brian Whiteley, Tim

Wacher. Speaker David Birkbeck (Chief

Executive at Design for Homes) also gave

apologies at relatively short notice. The article

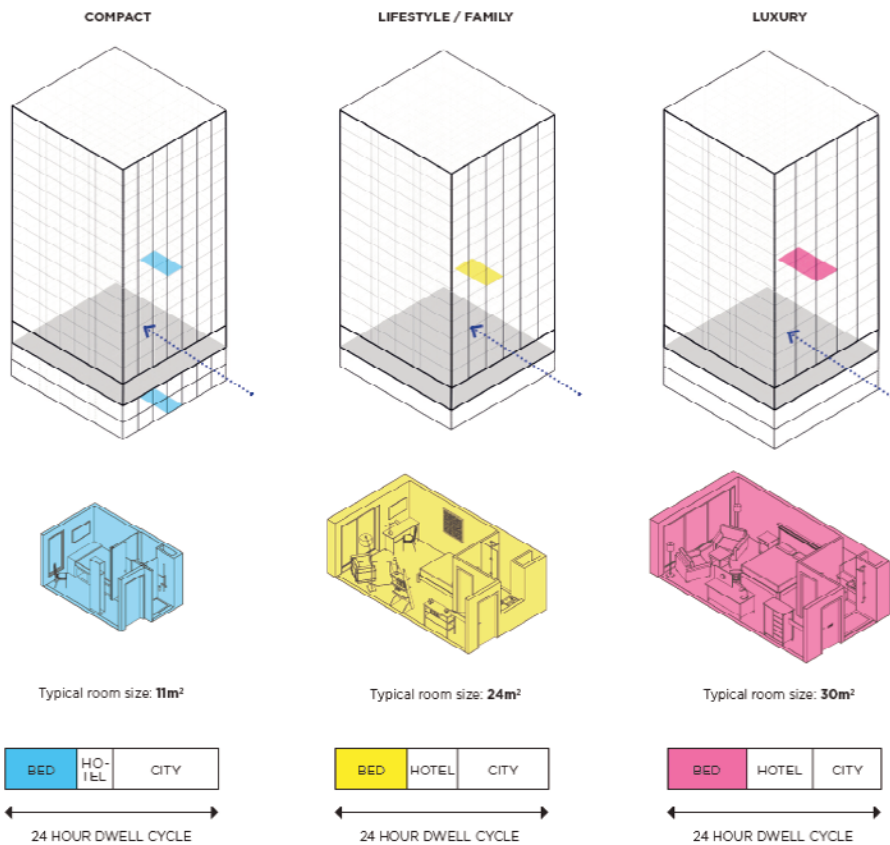
by him and a colleague was circulated to

members before the meeting. Jennifer Thomas

(MHCLG, Design Quality and Guidance)

although expected did not attend.

## WE'RE PREFERRING DIFFERENT ROOMS

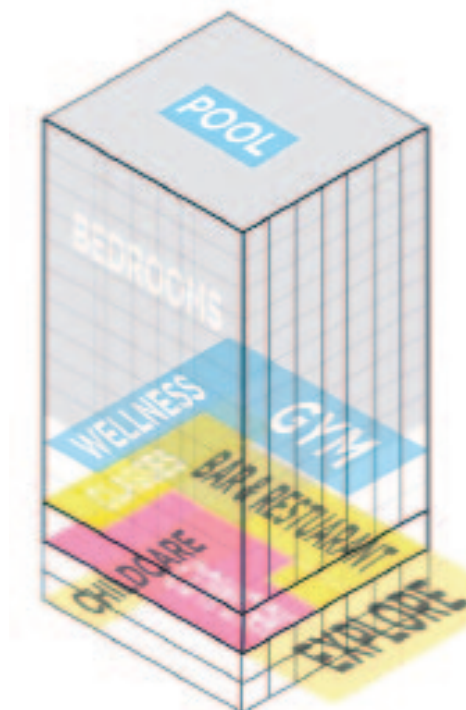


remote and distant business owners) and the home and daily life of the local resident. Places may become dependent solely on transient populations with few concerns for the quality of life of those who live there permanently (becoming solely holiday resorts formed of soulless clones for example as in many towns in Greece). There is also a risk that - dependent on their size - new hotels can usurp the distinctive and idiosyncratic nature of in particular the food and beverage character of small towns or definite city quarters.

It was acknowledged that these functions could compete for space but there were no suggestions for how these could be separated by a spatial constructive strategy. (A clue could come from Bloc Hotels, which Jonathan cited "en passant"). Bloc Hotels (SEE image) have a fully insulated outlet over Gatwick Airport Terminus which relies on the terminal's diverse facilities including catering rather than incorporating them within the bedroom complex. This location clearly would be less suitable for long term residential use.

Brian Waters widened the discussion to consider other hotel types. Other models range widely from IBIS to Selsdon Park, boutique hotels, renting out space in own property (AirBNB), aparthotels with short term lettings (3 months). Westminster is concerned at the risk of losing permanent housing stock.

Judith Ryser reminded the meeting of the differ-



ent requirements of UK residents using London and those visiting from abroad. Riette Oosthuizen added the oriental market, co-living and co-working.

Summing up Brian Waters derived the themes of competition for land and the blurred area between living and working, notably in Central London. [SEE more graphics on this item overpage].



## 2 The upcoming Green Paper on speeding planning

This item was broadened into a general discussion in the absence of introducing speakers, with John Walker offering an impromptu but worthwhile introduction:

1. Appeals should aim at three months to inquiry to remove ransom decisions. He suggested that it would be wrong to take longer.
2. There should be a standard cost per application fee for applications with a distinction drawn between those by individuals and those by house-builders who should subsidise them.
3. Each planning department should have a budget comprising central grant and fees.
4. Too much meddling takes place with applications. Applications should be proportional: for example providing a design and access statement for a garden shed is excessive. The validation requirements for most applications (established through guidance and an Arup study in 2008 followed by SIs) are excessive and cause unnecessary delay. Biodiversity for example should be a building control matter.

The basis for an application should be to cover land use, design, amenity and traffic. Interdependent targets would help.

There is little prospect of removing green belt as a control but urban containment should be redefined, especially for London.

CIL is an extra tax. It should be abolished leaving reliance solely on section 106 costs such as tariff based contributions for affordable housing. This would avoid the need for viability statements.

Gerry Ansell Head of Planning and Development London Borough of Brent said that whilst it can always be said more resources are needed using existing resources more wisely and effectively as part of the ambition to speed up the process can be beneficial. The process of consultation is too slow and expensive, for example, continued reliance on press notices which are not very effective.

New technology can also play its part such as in improvements in 3D mapping which may also save some site visits and assist in scheme evaluation. Assessment work on planning applications could be more front ended getting decisions out earlier rather than working to statutory deadlines.

Alternative and accelerated dispute resolution was also suggested (cf RTPI Mediation in 2011 and >>>

>>> *Mediation in Planning* by Leonora Rozee OBE and Kay Powell (June 2010); prepared for the National Planning Forum and The Planning Inspectorate).

**Max Farrell** (London Collective and formerly Farrells), thought that the public sector could benefit more from creative skills rather than 2-dimensional considerations alone and that a cultural shift towards more collaborative effort is needed.

[*Note by Drummond: Cultural shift alone by "development managers" is not enough. Case workers will require a change to their highly codified statutory obligations so they are driven by more than just safeguarding process and will need greater awareness through education and training.*]

One survey shows that just two per cent trust

developers and seven per cent trust local Councils

**Duncan Bowie** stressed that while the Government focused on speeding up the planning process, what was much more important was ensuring that development output delivered policy compliant projects and met assessed needs.

**Rachel Hearn** (for London Borough of Havering Urban Design) was concerned about both officers' and Committee's skill base to assess schemes and invited people to ask how to demonstrate policy working in terms of quality. She also thought that design should form part of planning qualifications.

**Peter Eversden** thought that local authorities don't define what they do want (as opposed to what they don't).

Rachel Hearn asked what good quality means. More attention needs to be paid to character. Riette Oosthuizen added there should be a principle of useful activity.

Gerry Ansell said that planners are having to accommodate growth in population and a need for business space and so are looking to increased intensification and height. This places more emphasis on securing higher standards of design. He added that very often architectural designs are submitted in isolation of their context

There was criticism of the permission in principle consent route as an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for small-scale housing-led development which separates the consideration of

**80% OCCUPATION**  
sets London & Dublin as the leaders in the world

**41% OF HOTEL BOOKINGS ARE BUSINESS TRIPS**

**c.11,600** new hotel rooms are expected by 2020

**SERVICED APARTMENTS** have been gaining popularity in London

**609** further serviced apartments have been built across Europe properties. The largest opening so far is the **Avon Apartments** with 220 rooms in Glasgow

**1/3** + of the expected pipeline for 2020 is expected in the upscale segment

The Upper Midscale segment has also seen a substantial increase in new openings, with nine properties (1,516 rooms) entering the market in the last 18 months.



**LONDON'S TOP 10 VISITOR ATTRACTIONS 2017**

1	THE BRITISH MUSEUM	5.91m
2	TATE	5.66m
3	THE NATIONAL GALLERY	5.23m
4	NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM	4.43m
5	V&A	3.79m
6	SCIENCE MUSEUM	3.25m
7	SOUTHBANK CENTRE	3.23m
8	SOMERSET HOUSE	3.22m
9	British Royal Palace Tower of London	2.84m
10	ROYAL MUSEUMS GREENWICH	2.61m

Source: TripAdvisor

**LONDON HOTEL PIPELINE**



Legend: Luxury, Upper Upscale, Upscale, Midscale, Economy

Source: CIP

**ANNUAL VISITS TO LONDON FROM CHINA ARE PROJECTED TO REACH 334,000 BY 2025**

The expansion of **economy** class hotels continues to be strong, taking up 26% of total future supply, followed by upper upscale hotels (22%).

# Key Questions

Thinking about the modern nomad is vital not only for designing and delivering hotels of the future, but also the towns and cities of the future. At a time when the hotel and visitor accommodation sector is changing so quickly, designers, planners, developers and operators each need to respond to ensure that these changes are handled appropriately. Ultimately, as with all good design and development, the recipe for success is based on the human experience.

## For the Designer

It is clear that the visitor economy, aligned with wider shifts in society, is increasingly reliant on technological connectivity. Seamless and reliable platforms for delivering this will become the norm, influencing the way that hotels operate and the space that's required within them. Aligned with this, changing guest preferences and the move towards smaller rooms, both for hotels and serviced apartments, creates greater flexibility for operators to consider city centre locations and for rooms to be provided in non-traditional locations, such as below ground.

## For the Planner

Planning policies are not changing as quickly as the hotel industry may require. New types of asset class may require revisions to the Use Classes Order. A willingness will be needed to consider non-traditional hotel designs, including new sectors such as serviced apartments. This will require flexibility on everything from parking standards to protection for retail frontages and units. In prompting this transition, there is a need to recognise the important and positive contribution which visitor accommodation makes to our town centres and the extent to which it can mitigate pressure on other public spaces such as libraries.

## For the Developer & Operator

In a rapidly evolving sector where operators have clear and specific requirements for space from the outset it becomes more important than ever that speculative schemes are well-designed. There is a clear scope to think more creatively about the way that uses are arranged on sites and, particularly, the role that ancillary uses such as co-working, retail and leisure uses might operate within hotels. The size, layout, location and technology of rooms should be revisited and approached more flexibly but remain easy and convenient to use. As new uses such as serviced apartments or sub-tenanted ancillary spaces such as bars or co-working expand, there is scope for each to become more appealing to the investment and funding market, in turn establishing new asset classes and improving deliverability.

matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development.

The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed.

Prior Notification approval for a PD conversion in Ilford was cited of a scheme for a scheme showing no windows. This will have resulted in a reduced developer risk by establishing the change of the use.

John Walker offered the remedy of a Certificate of Development Principle to establish a change of use of land or a building to underwrite the developer's risk before embarking on a full scheme proposal.

Brian Waters thought we were drowning in information demands. He added that the imposition of space standards for PD developments would be hard to change through building regulations and more easily achieved through the Prior Notification route.

Duncan Bowie was critical of self-certification in building regulations without independent enforce-

ment and that someone was needed in this role.

Brian countered this by suggesting the introduction of the need to a certify that a scheme is compliant – in Spain signed by the planning officer and the architect before electricity can be supplied. However John Walker said this would put a lot of extra costs on the local authority tasked with this obligation. He added his support to Rachel Hearn that design is specialized and needs qualified people to consider it. It is false to consider that one size fits all.

Max Farrell noted that he wanted to pick up on two key points he considered potentially very significant initiatives, which would be worth pursuing / campaigning for inspired by John Walker's list of issues and possible solutions:

1. Redefine areas governed by building control and areas covered by planning
2. Introduce a 'development in principle' agreement in the early stages.

In the absence of Jennifer Thomas (MHCLG, Design Quality and Guidance) guidance on design in planning was not distinctly considered. But see also

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.36 per cent20Speeding per cent20Up per cent20delivery\\_v03.1.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.36%20per%20cent20Speeding%20per%20cent20Up%20per%20cent20delivery_v03.1.pdf) ■



London Planning & Development Forum

Next meeting  
Early December. See  
[www.planninginlondon.com](http://www.planninginlondon.com)  
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for details