

# Embodied carbon, levelling up, street votes and the Cambridge-MK-Oxford Arc

Account of Forum meeting on 6 June 2022 hosted by UCL  
Full minute by Riëtte Oosthuizen also at [planninginlondon.com](http://planninginlondon.com) > LP&DF

London Planning and Development Forum on 6 June 2022 was kindly hosted by Dr Jessica Ferm, Associate Professor in Planning and Urban Management, Director of Undergraduate Programmes, Bartlett School of Planning, University College London at 22 Gordon Street, London, WC1 0QB.

First discussion led by Alison Bembenek Lichfields and Fred Pilbrow from Pilbrow and Partners on Material Considerations: Climate change, Embodied Carbon and the Role of Planners (prompted by the Secretary of State's call in of the M&S Oxford Street Scheme)

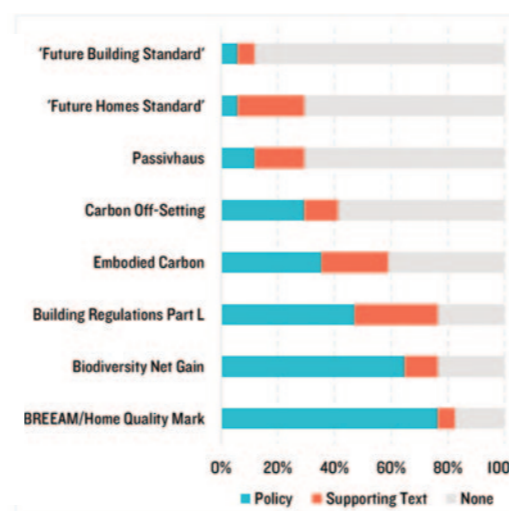
Alison's presentation gave an overview of that status of climate change and embodied carbon nationally in planning policy. The London Plan is leading the way on whole life carbon assessments. Research carried out by Lichfields in 2021 on planning and the climate emergency indicated that only 35 per cent of emerging local plans had policies that referenced the need to address embodied carbon.

Nationally, the majority of local authorities declared a climate emergency but these aspirations do not necessarily get translated into adopted planning policy. Only 59 per cent local authorities nationally have adopted local plans and of these only 2.7 per cent had specific targets to achieve net zero. The Government needs to do more to assist local authorities to bring forward their net zero carbon goals.

The Government is aware of this and last year a

## Planning and the climate emergency

- 35% of emerging plans policies reference a need for applicants to identify how they are addressing embodied carbon in bringing forward development.



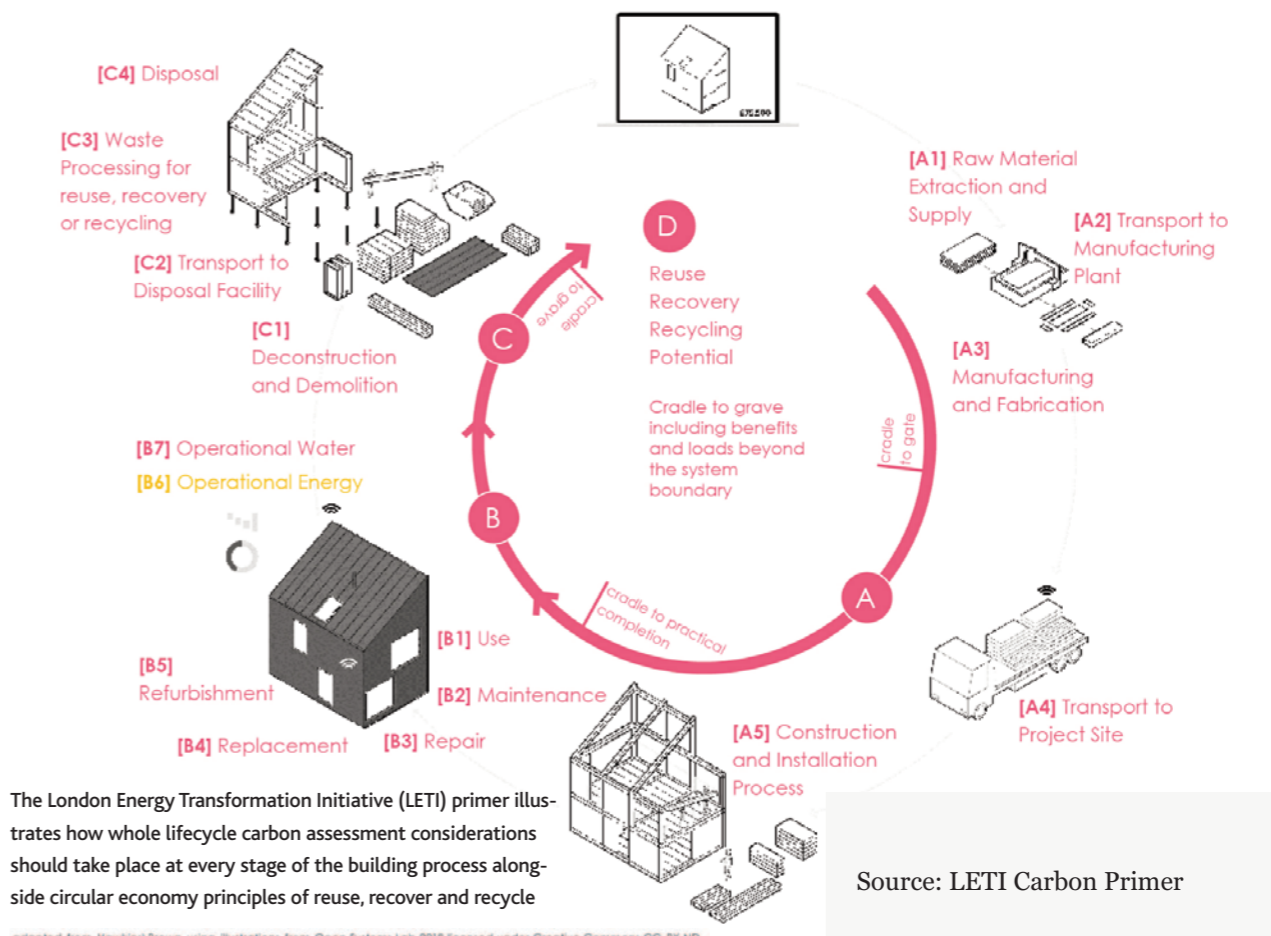
series of events took place led by the Environment Audit Committee taking evidence from sustainability experts and architects. The findings were published in May 2022 'Building to Net Zero: Costing Carbon in Construction'. It highlights the challenges ahead in terms of climate change. The UK's construction sector is responsible for 25 per cent of total net greenhouse emissions. The UK has a leading binding target to reach net zero by 2050. The carbon emissions associated with construction must be significantly reduced. The report highlights that the focus has been on operational emissions, i.e. how to make

buildings more efficient, rather than the embodied carbon costs of construction. The report concludes that if the construction sector in the UK keeps on dragging its feet, we will not meet net zero by 2050.

The Report recommends that whole life carbon assessments should become mandatory for buildings over 1,000 sqm or schemes larger than 10 homes. It should be introduced no later than by December 2023. This is to be done through Building Regulations and reflected in the planning system through amendments to national planning policy.

The Report recommends a ratcheted approach to

# Considerations for measuring whole life carbon impacts



The London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) primer illustrates how whole lifecycle carbon assessment considerations should take place at every stage of the building process alongside circular economy principles of reuse, recover and recycle

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carbon zero so that carbon reduction increases to match the pathway to net zero.

What do we mean by whole life carbon emissions? These are the emissions attributed to a building across its whole life time, split between operational and embodied carbon (building materials, transport, installation on site and disposal at end of life).

Whole life carbon is operational and embodied

carbon assessed together. Embodied carbon emissions should be tackled alongside operational carbon. This has implications for design, materials selection with lower carbon impact and resourcing. Materials with the best performance should be chosen for their lowest whole life impact. Materials with higher embodied carbon if reduction in operational carbon over the lifetime of the building can be achieved.

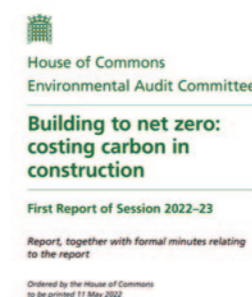
There is no national policy on embodied carbon at present. The London Plan has Policy SI 2 is a hook that requires the reduction of Green Gas Emissions. It requires all schemes referable to Mayor to calculate Whole Life Cycle Carbon Emissions through a nationally recognized assessment. It also encourages other major developments to assess how the whole life cycle circular economy has been taken into account. Earlier this year the Mayor also published guidance on Circular Economy and Whole Lifecycle Assessments. Noticeably, at the Environment Audit Committee events, the London Plan approach has been described as exemplary by those who gave evidence to MP's.

Being discussed early makes it possible for key decisions on carbon to be incorporated into the whole development of buildings. The GLA approach requires whole carbon to be looked at during pre-app, planning and post-construction phase. Assessments are based on benchmarks evaluated during the appraisal, whole building design, construction and disposal process.

Alison referred to the appeal decision on The Tulip – 20 Bury Street. Foster + Partners had ambi-

## Building to net zero: costing carbon in construction

- UK built environment is responsible for approximately 25% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions.
- The UK has a legally binding target to reach net zero by 2050
- Policy to date focused on operational emissions rather than embodied carbon cost of the construction.
- MPs call for whole life cycle carbon assessments to be mandated.



>>> tious plans for a 305 meter high tourist attraction, but it was rejected, deemed not to be of the highest architectural quality due to heritage impact on the Tower of London and its poor perceived lifetime sustainability. The Inspector remarked that although considerable effort has been made to adopt all available techniques to make the construction and operation of the scheme as sustainable as possible, fulfilling the brief of a tall reinforced concrete lift shaft, however the result is a very unsustainable whole life cycle. The Secretary of State agreed. Very little thought went into how the building would function over its life cycle. There were no plans for its re-use; it could not readily be adapted for anything else. The conclusion: it has very little overall benefit to Londoners.

In summary the implications for planning are the following:

- Climate change considerations are increasingly central to planning and decision making
- Revisions to national policy?
- Emphasis on retrofit and reuse over new build
- More use of vacant buildings essentially through Permitted Development Rights although ongoing concern over quality of spaces created through permitted development
- A balance needs to be struck regarding the material considerations and weighing up decisions when buildings are retained as you are constrained by the structure
- Embodied carbon vs operational savings via more efficient buildings is a constant battleground that needs to be watched.

**Whole life carbon: Is refurbishment always the right approach?**

Fred Pilbrow of architects, Pilbrow and Partners, presented two current projects that he hoped might shed light on the current debate about the merits of refurbishment against that of new build.

Mr Pilbrow maintained that the decision to refurbish or replace existing buildings must be informed by context: in the majority of cases refurbishment is the right approach but there are circumstances where the quality of the existing buildings constrain their reuse to an unacceptable degree – here replacement is appropriate.

The two projects : 127 Kensington High Street recently completed for Ashby Capital, and 458 Oxford Street, designed for M&S, have similarities – both provide excellent retail below highly performing and flexible workspace. They share an elevational palette of white Roman brick and Portland stone which make reference to historic departments store neighbours – at Kensington the Grade II\* Derry and Toms , at Oxford Street the Grade II\* Selfridges. Both make ambitious contributions to enhancing the quality of the public realm through new permeability, active frontages, and landscaped

## Whole Life Carbon

### Embodied carbon

Embodied carbon emissions are those associated with all the non-operational aspects of a building (such as those from the original extraction, manufacture and assembly of a building's materials and components, it's repair, maintenance and refurbishment during its operational lifetime, and all end of life activities, including demolition and removal of waste).

### Operational carbon

Operational carbon emissions are those associated with the energy required to run a building (such as the energy used to provide lighting, power, heating, cooling, ventilation, and water services).

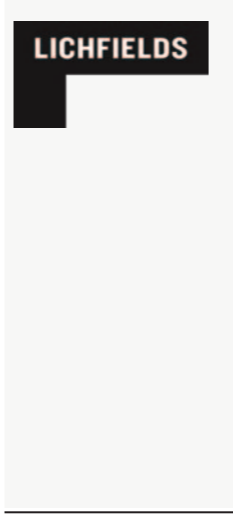
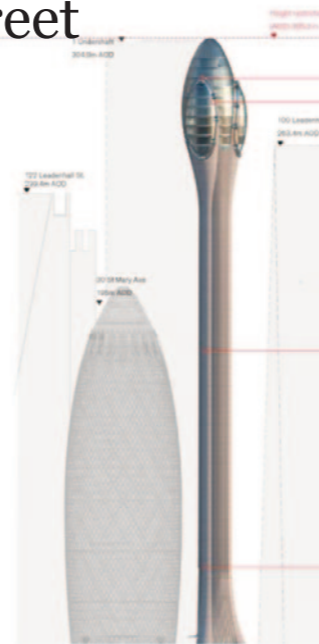
## The London Plan

- Policy SI 2 Minimising greenhouse gas emissions
  - Developments referable to the Mayor should “*calculate whole lifecycle carbon emissions through a nationally recognised assessment and demonstrate actions taken to reduce life-carbon emissions*” (Policy SI 2, Part F).
- London Plan Guidance: Whole Life-Cycle Carbon Assessments and on the Circular Economy.



## ‘The Tulip’ – 20 Bury Street

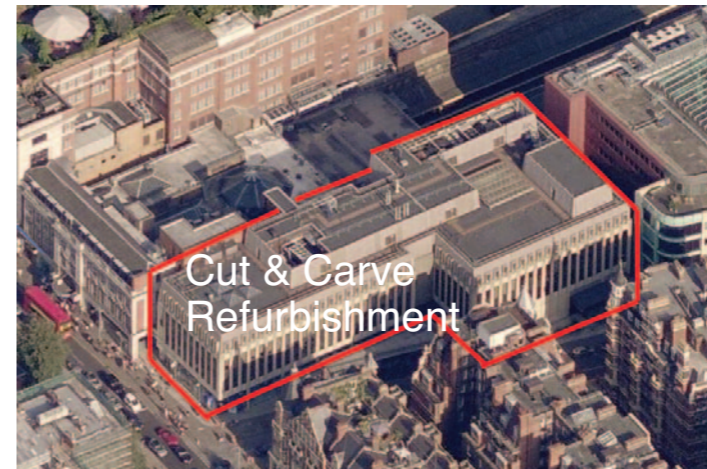
- “*Although considerable efforts have been made to adopt all available sustainability techniques to make the construction and operation of the scheme as sustainable as possible fulfilling the brief with a tall, reinforced concrete lift shaft, would result in a scheme with very high embodied energy and an unsustainable whole life-cycle.*”



## Implications for planning

1. Climate change considerations increasingly central to decision making.
2. Revisions to national policy?
3. Emphasis on retrofit and reuse over new build.
4. More use of vacant buildings through PD?
5. Material considerations and weighing up decisions.
6. Embodied carbon vs operational savings via more efficient buildings a constant battleground?

127 Kensington High Street



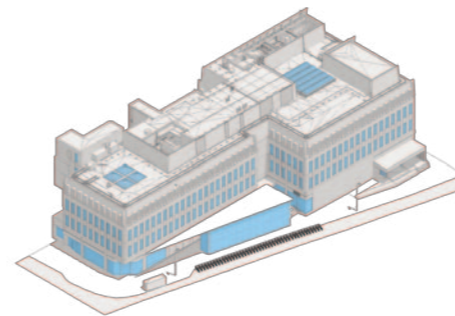
Pilbrow & Partners 2015-2022

458 Oxford Street

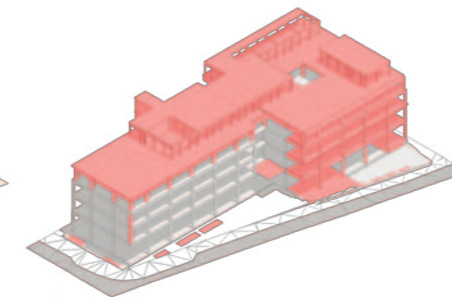


Pilbrow & Partners 2018-

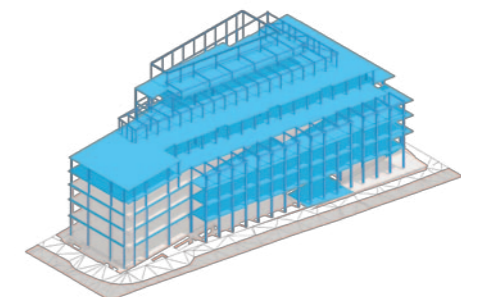
### The ‘Cut and Carve’ Refurbishment



1970's Pontings Department Store



Selective Demolition



New Structure

>>> public space.

Yet the building in Kensington is a refurbishment and the Oxford Street a new build. Why?

Mr Pilbrow explained that the principal difference was the quality and layout of the existing buildings. At Kensington, the refurbishment remodelled and extended a 1970's department

store. This was a single robust structure, with regular and open structural grids, generous floor loading and ample ceiling heights. It could be stripped back to the frame, extended and new facades and cores added to deliver really high quality retail and office space.

By contrast at 458 Oxford Street, M&S had

grown though organic expansion to occupy three entirely separate buildings, none of which had been designed for their present retail function. They were characterised by dense and irregular structural grids, low floor to ceiling heights, poor interconnectivity and configured with inefficient servicing arrangements that severely compro- >>>

# Floorspace delivered in location of highest public transport accessibility: Refurbishment? New Build?



45,500m2 GIA

60,590m2 GIA

>>> missed the quality of the public realm.  
**127 Kensington High Street**  
 The existing building was constructed by Pontings in the 1970s to serve as a department store. The building was later converted to office. The refurbishment addresses the shortcomings of this brutalist building. New elevations to Kensington High Street and Wrights Lane restore the historic street alignment infilling awkward residual spaces left by

the original building's orthogonal plan. The new elevations of brick and stone enhance the building's contribution to its historic context.  
 The building was extended vertically with three new floors of accommodation which are set back behind a sequence of richly landscaped garden terraces. The building addresses both sustainability and wellbeing considerations through new facades which passively moderate the external environ-

ment and are designed to allow natural ventilation. A displacement ventilation system delivering generous air volumes is allied to tall ceilings and exposed thermal mass. Operational energy use is anticipated to be 105kwh/m2/annum. Embodied carbon was 700kgCO2e/m2 GIA. Floorspace was increased by 50%. The offices are designed to achieve BREEAM excellent certification.  
 The building's recent construction date and

excellent archival information on its structure and construction assisted its reuse. We were able to exploit the high live loadings originally required for retail to support the additional accommodation.  
**458 Oxford Street**  
 Visitors to M&S' Marble Arch store will recall it provides a confusing and awkward environment. M&S initially leased a ground floor retail unit at Orchard House, a speculative office building by Treharne and Norman, expanding over time to occupy its upper floors. In the mid-70s M&S constructed a retail and hotel wing to the north at 23 Orchard Street. At the time of this extension

Westminster widened Orchard Street driving the pavement into the ground floor of Orchard House. The legacy for pedestrians is unfortunate, a low dark tunnel set between the street and the long blank frontage of the building's core.  
 The store then expanded west on Oxford Street into the upper floors of Neale House. Neale House is a 1980s speculative development without architectural merit.  
 Of the three buildings, Orchard House is the only one of any interest (although Pevsner was dismissive of its quality). It has however been exten- >>>



sively altered externally and internally and a recent application to have the building listed was rejected by Historic England and the Secretary of State. All three of the buildings are excluded from the conservation areas that surround the site.

Our initial design research explored whether a refurbishment could deliver an appropriate quality of retail environment to allow M&S to continue to trade successfully at Marble Arch. Oxford Street, in common with other high streets, has faced significant challenge from the rise of internet shopping, compounded by the pandemic. Debenhams and House of Fraser have closed, John Lewis is down-sizing and many smaller shops are vacant. M&S

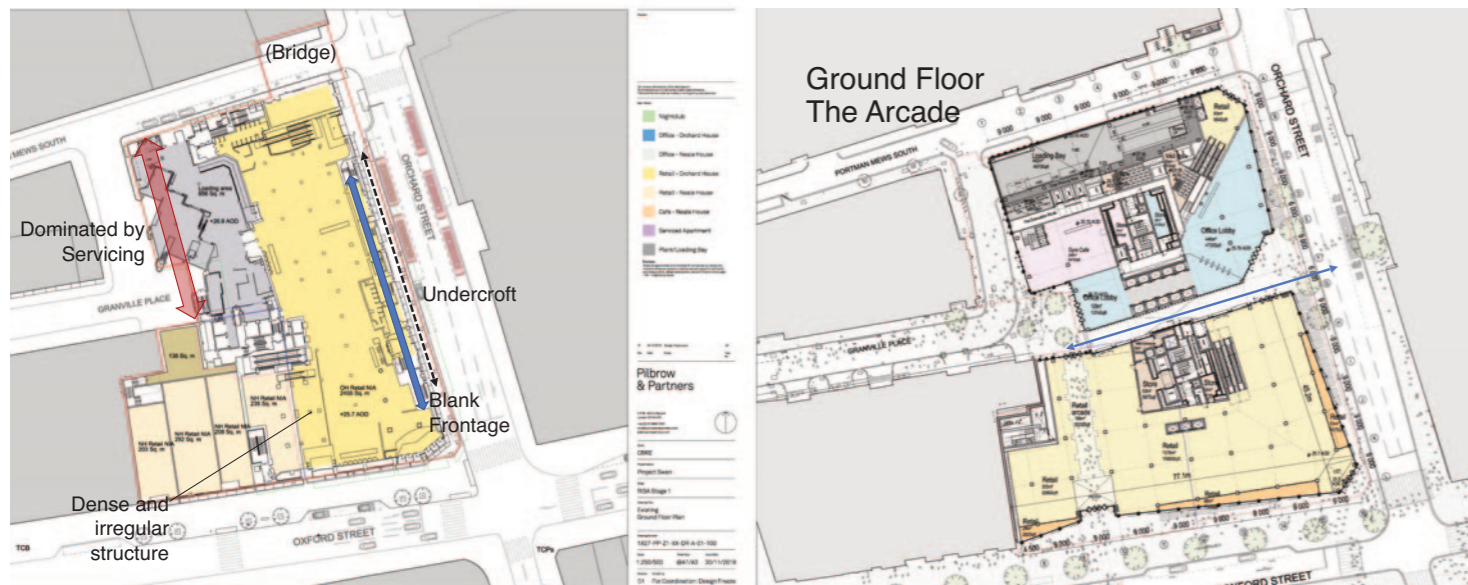
believe that a step change in the quality of customer experience, allied to improvements in operational efficiency and flexibility, is critical for long-term success.

We concluded that a refurbishment of the three buildings would be compromised to an unacceptable degree and M&S concurred that a new building was essential to meet their objectives.

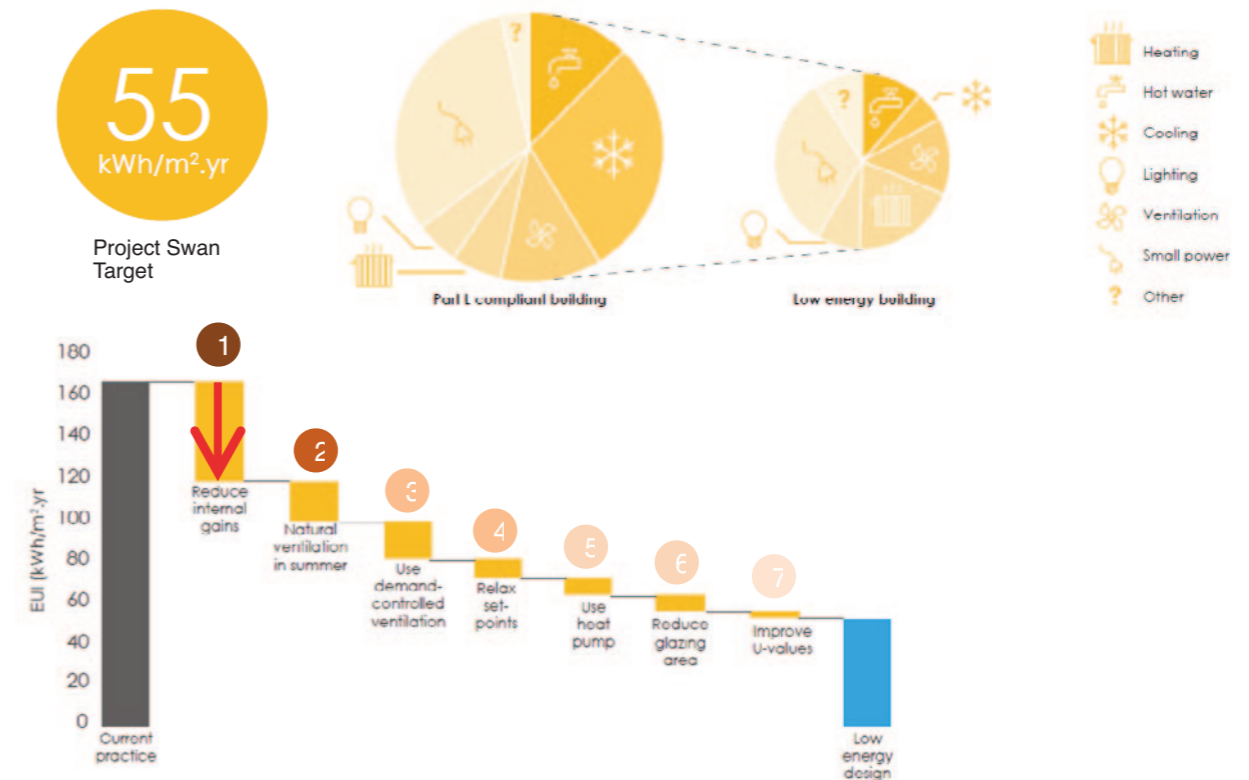
This new building delivers a transformed retail environment for M&S set below new workspace designed to the highest sustainability and wellbeing standards. The building will achieve BREEAM Outstanding and WELL Platinum certifications – a level of performance matched by less than 10% of

new offices. The new building underpins significant public realm enhancement. Today, Granville Place is a desolate, service dominated environment, hostile to pedestrians. We were struck by the example of St Christopher's Place on the opposite side of Selfridges which is an attractive oasis space where shoppers go for lunch or a coffee in an attractive landscaped setting. The new building allows servicing to be discreetly but efficiently planned away from Granville Place and a new arcade will connect Orchard Street through to a landscaped garden animated by ground floor retail and cafes. Inflected elevations draw the building line back from Oxford Street and Orchard Street, replacing the low dark tunnel with high-quality

BELOW: Before and after



### Reducing internal gains reduces the Energy Use by 40kWh/m2.yr 458 Oxford Street Base Building Target Energy Use is 55kWh/m2.yr



public space.

M&S are committed to environmental sustainability and tasked the team to minimise embodied and operational carbon in the new development. Working closely with environmental consultants Arup, we achieve embodied energy levels of 651kg/cO2e m2 GIA and operational carbon, inclusive of tenant allowances of 88kwh/m2/annum. Embodied energy levels are reduced through the use of post-tensioned concrete with high GGBS content, integrated with zones of structural timber. Pilbrow & Partners worked with Arup to extensive-

ly reduce solar gain through bespoke brise soleil. On this basis, Arup predict an embodied energy pay back of 16 years, after which time the overall carbon impact will be lower for the new build than a refurbishment. The building is designed with a 120-year life span so these benefits will accrue long into the future.

Circular economy principles inform every aspect of the design including how the existing structures will be recycled. 95 percent of the existing buildings will be reused including the Portland Stone façade of Orchard House which will be inte-

grated into the new building elevations.

#### Discussion:

Brian Waters remarked it might be useful to give the presentation to Michael Gove. Fred said the scheme was judged by Westminster Council and the Mayor. Everyone who has looked at the scheme carefully is on board with its approach. Mr Gove issued a holding decision to Westminster so there is optimism that it would be given proper consideration.

Peter Eversden asked if a public enquiry could be called. Fred felt the issues at stake has not been communicated appropriately so a chance to present would be good but a public inquiry would take another 18 months which would jeopardize the continued presence of M&S on Oxford Street. 400 jobs would be at stake.

Jim Monahan enquired whether M&S was the sole financier of the development. Fred explained that they have a lease interest on the site. Ultimately it is a Portland Estate freehold. Part of the site – Neale House – is a sub-lease to Royal London Asset Management who was engaged with in the development of the scheme. M&S won't fund the scheme; they will find a developer partner. They are confident there would be demand for it; what is developed is market facing.

Jim Monahan wanted to clarify the lifespan of the building. Fred mentioned that Simon Sturges did a >>>





# Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

## What does it mean?

Tony Mulhall

London Planning & Development Forum  
06 June 2022



>>> critique of the scheme and some confusion came in that the façade cladding has only been allowed a design life of 30 years. The RICS has an embodied carbon measuring methodology requires you to assume certain life spans. It is not the case in the M&S building where it has been designed for 120 years.

The M&S store is located in the International Centre in Westminster. Pilbrow and Partners talked to Westminster about a mixed use scheme at the outset but the response was that residential was inappropriate here. It was important to create big and generous spaces. Scale is the right thing for buildings to survive a long time. Optimised 1960s buildings where everything is squeezed to the optimum do not tend to have long lifespans.

There was a discussion that followed on light touch refurbishment with very good embodied carbon vs deep refurbishment – deep cut and carve with even more embodied carbon than new build. Different design teams might come up with different answers.

Riette Oosthuizen remarked there might something interesting happening on considerations of the future of buildings and whether the technical justification of this sits within the Building Regulations regime and/or planning policy. A recent court case in Lambeth where residents – through JR – questioned whether a building could take extra stories on top was dismissed by the Court who found that matters of structural integrity reside with Building Regulations and therefore whether a project is deliverable because of its structural deliverability is not a matter for a planning officer to consider as it does not fall under planning policy. As such, whether it is a better approach to refurbish or not, must become more aligned with planning policy as otherwise there are cases which might slip through and buildings might get demolished without being given adequate consideration. Fred remarked that a lot of the knowledge with how to reduce embodied carbon lies in the construction sector.

Brian Waters remarked that the ACA have always lobbied that all measurable things should be in the Building Regs. We are in a world now where some of

the measurable things are fundamental to whether you can do it or not. It is not unique that planning permission is given for something that is unbuildable under the Building Regulations. However, would you not want to say that what you propose at pre-application stage is buildable? We would not expect building regulation skills in planning departments but there are questions about what planners need to deal with: safety and embodied carbon may require more technical knowledge. Fred remarked that daylight and sunlight have become highly technical and planners need to deal with this.

In terms of tracking environmental performance, the London Plan publishes a rich data set of environmental performance of schemes assessed. ESG certification is now so important many developers would like to publish their credentials.

John Monahan remarked there is a climate emergency but that is not at the forefront of the discussion. It will take a long time before knowledge on environmental performance will be to such an extent that it becomes a tick in the box.

**Tony Mulhall MRICS, Associate Director Land Professional Group at the RICS led the next discussion on how the Queen’s speech sets out planning reform in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill**

Tony explained that the RICS is developing their thinking on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and their response to it. The levelling up agenda has such a wide scope that it means so many things to so many people. It is a relief to have a Bill to narrow the scope somewhat.

A lot of what we read about on planning reform; the residue has turned up in the Bill. The measures are very detailed so it is to be expected the details are already prepared.

What do we mean by levelling up at a high level? It is more what we would like to see as the basis for making changes in terms of the way resources are allocated. It is about opportunity evenly spread across the country.

It is not just about a north/south divide. There is lots of prosperity in the north and lots of depriva-

## Even distribution of opportunity

### Broadly employment opportunity

- ▶ Many benefits flow from good quality employment opportunity
- ▶ ‘Even’ does not mean just addressing a ‘north-south’ divide.
- ▶ Much deprivation in the south and much prosperity in the north
- ▶ But there are spatial characteristics

## How do we want the system to work?

### With Greater Certainty

- ▶ Certainty for the community about what will actually be developed
- ▶ Certainty for the developer about what they can develop
- ▶ Certainty for everyone that what is planned will be implemented in a timely
- ▶ Not just housing land; employment land too

## What have we got in the LU Agenda?

### The Levelling Up Portfolio

- ▶ Levelling Up White Paper - Missions
- ▶ Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill + Explanatory Statement – More devolution
- ▶ Regulations (Forthcoming)
- ▶ Series of Consultations (Forthcoming)
- ▶ National Development Management Policies (Forthcoming)
- ▶ National Planning Policy Framework (Revision forthcoming)
- ▶ PLUS
- ▶ Diverse measures from: DEFRA, Transport, Education, Health, Treasury, BEIS etc.

## Should we expect immediate change?

### Time Frames for Implementation

Introducing the measures into law

Incorporating the measures in reformed plans/procedures

Real impact on the ground

New quality jobs – New quality places and services

tion in the south. It is about place opportunity across the board.

Decisions about how places grow and where are made in the planning system. Very often within the measurable metrics there are choices to be made and these are often made by decision makers in local authorities. Planners produce lots of technical information for politicians and politicians make decisions on options.

That is where we are with choice making to be done but what are we looking for operationally in the system?

Greater certainty is needed. Communities want certainty about what will happen and developers want certainty about what will happen. How do you get to this certainty? And, that it will happen as agreed upon?

It is implementation we are talking about; of agreeable plans.

People in our regions are not talking about housing numbers; they want to know about employment land. Where are the jobs coming from?

We have a Levelling Up Bill with lots of missions. These are all very interesting and demanding and cross departmental missions. Who will corale all the different interest groups that will come from these missions?

There is a sense that these are measures with electoral appeal. There is much forthcoming, including:

- The Levelling Up and Regen Bill plus explanatory statement – more devolution

## Still to come through DLUHC

### What to look out for?

- ▶ Infrastructure Levy
- ▶ National Development Management Policies
- ▶ Environmental Outcomes Reports
- ▶ Digital Transformation

### Infrastructure - its role



#### Battersea

30 years vacant site



Gross Development Value

£8 billion

Transport Infrastructure

£1 billion

#### Ebbsfleet (Garden City)

Current plans



15,000 new homes

London 17 min Ebbs 2 hrs Paris

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation

£400 million plus HS1 rail

- Regulations (forthcoming)
- Series of consultations (forthcoming)
- National Development Policies (forthcoming)
- NPPF (revision forthcoming)
- PLUS diverse measures from DEFRA, education, etc with Levelling Up implications.

The RICS looks out for viability and the Infrastructure Levy is the latest in the series of attempts to capture land value uplift (there have been measures since 1947). I have a feeling it is better to do taxation through the tax system and do planning through the planning system.

The RICS will play attention to National Development Management policies. Members complain about the length of time to negotiate applications through the planning system. SME’s can’t afford to buy sites with the possibility that it will be in the planning system for years. We need a much more efficiently functioning administration of planning. Whatever is there in policy terms should be possible to progress through the procedures of planning much better than we can do at the moment.

Another interesting point: environmental outcomes report. Where will we go with that? Condensed Environmental Impact Assessments? It is a technical minefield. There are no skills in local authorities

How soon will we get results from this? It is about delivering things: houses, employment land and infrastructure. Here is the time frame for getting any completion from this: one year for the Bill to pass will take us to May 2023; one year for

Regulations take us to May 2024. It takes us to 2026 for the first plans to pass. As such, more than five years from now to have a system functioning to deliver housing and jobs urgently needed today. There are no transitional arrangements so a planner in a local authority would possibly be running two systems at the same time.

None of this will work without infrastructure and where is the infrastructure going to come from? Battersea was vacant for 30 years. Only when a developer put in £1 billion of infrastructure it happened. Ebbsfleet - £400 million had to be spent on infrastructure before it started moving. Where is the money going to come from to make it move in Newcastle, Preston, etc?

None of these measures are going to produce something in the foreseeable time frame.

#### Discussion:

Peter Eversden remarked on the point of creating jobs. The March 2021 London Plan has thirty guidance documents (1), half of them related still to the 2016 London Plan, plus four practice notes.

One guidance document is to be for the economy but it is not yet available. The Mayor has not updated the 2018 Economic Strategy. The major growth of London is to take place in 48 Opportunity Areas (2). Without an economic strategy and associated guidance, how do we know what to deliver in those areas?

The policies for industrial land were altered for the March 2021 London Plan by the then >>>

>>> Secretary of State Robert Jenrick in his directions for change (3). Those amended policies need guidance for use and management of such land.

Michael Edwards remarked that the lack of an up to date Economic Strategy and guidance is a serious problem and that there is no agency/organization to do this. There is a group called GLA Economics doing roundtables periodically.

Tony Mulhall said that it was commented on that London was a less resilient city during COVID than other cities as fewer people lived in the centre.

Fred Pilbrow remarked it is absolutely shocking that there is no economic strategy. Employment use classes not up to date with new economic activities. We need a supporting and sophisticated planning environment that life sciences, music studios etc. can go in empty employment floorspace – it can't all be industrial activity.

Peter Eversden said that the content of the Bill and comments by Government Ministers suggest that all borough Local Plans are to be rewritten in next 17 months whereas RICS and others have indicated that the new planning regime, guidance and policies, including a new NPPF will not be in place until 2024. We know new Local Plan versions take on average 40 weeks to go through to adoption, starting then, so it will be many years before boroughs' local policies will conform to the latest national and London Plan policies. So, the timescales for local planning are completely unrealistic and the RTP1 points out the resources and skills are not available for the work.

It seems that planning decisions are to be strictly nationally policy-led, with local discretion limited. Local Plans are to focus on "locally specific matters", and will be complemented by a suite of National Development Management Policies dealing with "issues that apply in most areas". That interference with local decision making is unacceptable. Local Plans are intended to be reduced in content as a result of having an extended NPPF

and more NPGs for development.

However, Local Plans will have to contain design codes as the Government described in the NMDC publications for each allocated site (over a hundred in some London boroughs) and for development and regeneration areas. That will extend Local Plans' current content which in future must have new local policies also to achieve each of the 2021 London Plan Good Growth objectives and include policies required by the thirty London Plan Guidance documents.

London Plan policies and standards often enable local authorities to go further. Let's take London's housing space standards or energy, would these be dumbed down by a one-size-fits-all National Policy? And London has policies, which alas are not national policies, such as play and recreational space in estates for children and young people. What happens to these?

The London Plan is an overarching development strategy tying together the spatial dimensions of all the strategies and policies such as housing, economy, transport and environment, which have to be produced now by law. The Government sees the London Plan as a collection of policies to achieve objectives that "relate to the particular characteristics or circumstances of Greater London." That is encouraging but we will see.

Peter Eversden also included further detailed comment on the Bill from the point of view of the London Forum which welcomed the dropping of proposals in the Planning White Paper for housing targets and the use of growth, renewal and protection zoning, in some of which permission would be automatically granted.

The Bill makes changes to compulsory purchase powers to give local authorities powers to assemble sites for regeneration and make better use of brownfield land. New provisions will allow local authorities to serve completion notices where work has started on site but has not been

finished.

A new Infrastructure Levy will largely replace S106 obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The rate will be set by each LPA, underpinned by "infrastructure delivery strategies". Further details are required as the Government fails to recognise the need for London Living Wage homes and London Affordable Rent homes in London, as defined by the GLA, and DLUHC is still promoting a mandatory percentage of 'First Homes' in every local authority to be sold at 80 per cent of the local market homes' sale price which will reduce quantities of truly affordable homes delivered.

It is not yet clear what is meant by the Secretary of State requiring developers for specific categories of development to consult the local community before submitting a planning application.

FOOTNOTES: (1) <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/london-plan-guidance#acc-i-63687>  
(2) <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/opportunity-areas>  
(3) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/943244/Annex\\_A\\_Changes\\_to\\_fulfill\\_Directions\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/943244/Annex_A_Changes_to_fulfill_Directions_.pdf)

**John Myers from London YIMBY gave an overview of the 'Street Votes' proposals encapsulated in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.**

The London YIMBY housing campaign is a grassroots and volunteer led campaign. Volunteers range from students to the over eighties. What is a YIMBY? Yimby stands for Yes in My Back Yard, perhaps a slightly quirky name for the opposite of a NIMBY.

The goal of street votes is to learn from the lessons of neighbourhood planning. What has worked well, and what could be improved. Can we turn NIMBYs into YIMBYs? Can we get more and better housing and places by empowering local communities to add more housing with a supplementary lighter-touch, smaller scale regime. To Tony's point, could we do that while delivering more certainty for communities and for development?

Street votes were collectively invented by a broad and cross-party coalition of people. Huge thanks to Riette Oosthuizen and HTA for coming up with the foundational idea of Supurbia for suburban gentle densification. Huge thanks to Michael Edwards and Peter Eversden, and of course many others, in providing so much help and advice on the importance of empowering communities.

I would encourage you not to pay too much attention to images or sketches that may have been pushed out to appeal to one political party or another, and focus on the breadth of the number of people far more intelligent and experienced than I who have supported pilots, and on the legal text of the propos-

al. If you rely on the images and the press reports, you will misunderstand the proposal, as a number of people have.

Street votes are a supplementary measure, not designed to replace the existing means of getting permission. Their intention is to provide an additional pathway for getting more homes with community support. The goal is that some run-down streets of mid-20th century low-density housing near to public transport, perhaps some of them currently HMOs, might, if the residents want, be revitalised with additional environmentally friendly development containing more homes, which in some cases may help fund or facilitate the retrofitting of the existing buildings.

Street votes are to some extent an experiment; the suggestion is that they should be piloted to see their effect. If they are implemented as suggested, because they are purely an additional means of getting permission, it is hard to see how they reduce housing supply. And because they are subject to very rigorous rules in terms of overall scale and effect on neighbours, and because they will require a 2/3rds majority of residents to pass a street plan, it seems hard to see how they could do much damage to the places where they are passed.

How are they proposed to work? It does not mean that you get to vote on your neighbours' application for planning permission for an extension. We will have to wait to see exactly what the government proposes in detail, but the idea is that a sufficient number of residents, say at least 10 per cent on the street may propose a street plan, setting out additional development that they wish to permit on the street. We would expect them to do that often in alliance with a local architect, or a small builder who is keen to find more sites. That street plan may propose to allow additional development, but strictly limited in terms of height, mass, and effect on light of neighbours, with requirements for car-free development. The intent of all of these rules is to ensure almost no spillover effects on residents on other streets. If the proposed plan meets all the requirements, it then goes to a vote. To pass the vote, at least two thirds of the residents must vote in favour, including a positive vote from a majority of the homes on the street. If the vote passes, the street plan then takes effect to authorize development according to the street plan. That authorization only applies to existing buildings built after 1918, and completely excludes listed buildings. For those, you must go through the standard planning procedure. The idea of that is to minimize controversy and eliminate the chances of ill effects. Street votes just grant a permission; there is no obligation to use it. Each homeowner decides in their own time what to do, perhaps in conjunction with a group of other homeowners.

The advantage of this idea is that, insofar as it

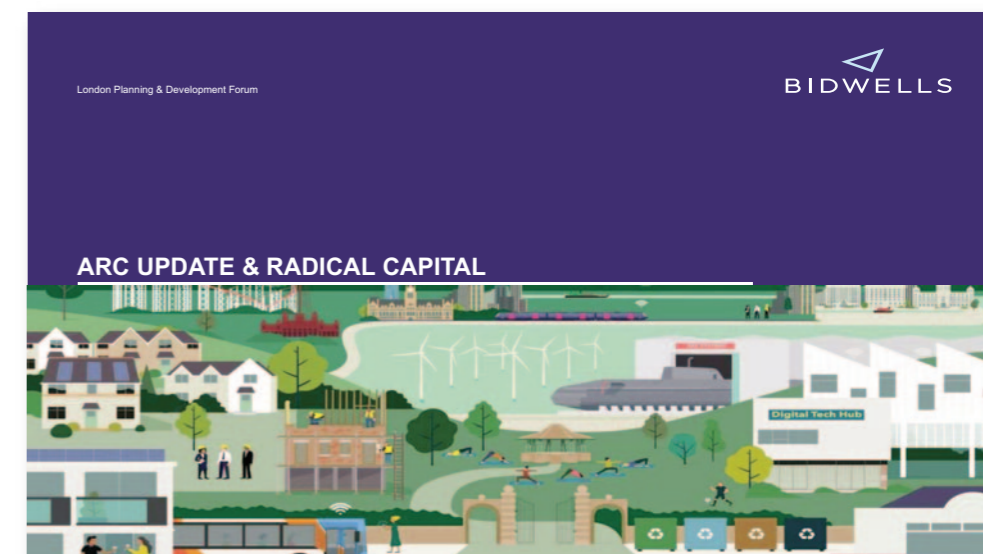
does bring forward more development, it will have done so with the support of a strong majority of the local residents. And there is some reason, based on experience in places such as Tel Aviv, Seoul in South Korea, and Vancouver, that such ideas can have a significant effect to create more housing. What are some concerns? Will it just create additional bedrooms? Well, even if initially it did only generate additional bedrooms, I suggest that would not be a disaster, at least in much of London. Some of those bedrooms would be used by someone to sleep in – except perhaps in a few parts of central London. But in those central parts, street votes in any case will not be applicable because the housing stock is pre-1918. And some other houses that are extended with more bedrooms will later be split into maisonettes creating more homes, as has often happened in the past. Complaining about more bedrooms is, I suggest, mainly a concern of those who already have plentiful bedrooms of their own. I can introduce you to plenty of young people who are extremely keen for London

authorities to pay for more planning staff and new infrastructure.

The idea has support from Nicky Gavron, Ben Derbyshire, and of course Peter Eversden of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies, not to mention two former heads of policy at Shelter, many architects and planners, the two professional associations of small builders, and a range of housing associations. It is London YIMBY's hope that the idea will be treated with an open mind.

#### Discussion:

Peter Eversden remarked that street votes presented the opportunity that the nimby's take the initiative even before others. Street votes could become a LDO. It offers the opportunity to downsize. It becomes a necessity if you look at the large amount of rundown stock we have. If people don't want to leave their areas, getting a flat in a mansion block – local authorities are looking at policies to get people to downsize. John remarked that the



to have more bedrooms. But most importantly, although I can't rule out that there will only be additional bedrooms, although based on the experience in other countries I am very happy to bet that some streets, faced with the enormous benefits of adding more homes, will choose to add more homes.

That is the whole point of these proposals and why such a broad alliance has endorsed trials of the idea. Overall because much 20th century development was so inefficient in use of land, if only one or two percent of streets were to decide to do that, it could have a significant effect on improving the supply of new homes.

Of course, we can't know unless we try. Will it unfairly burden local authorities? Well the proposal is that developments that are authorized under street plans, as opposed to normal permission, will be subject to a levy on the land value uplift. And so if this works, far from burdening local authorities, it should in fact give generous additional resources to local

proposals really need to keep being amended until there is broad support.

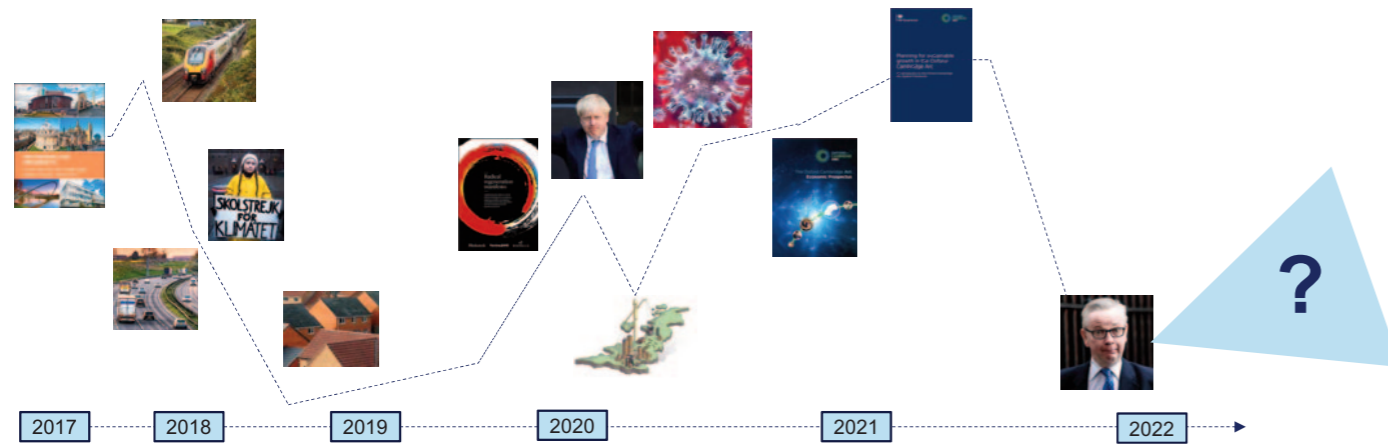
Jessica Fern wanted to know if the international examples are also low density as our suburban areas. John remarked they are all different. Seoul is mid 1990's neighbourhood redevelopment of very low density housing. In Tel Aviv retrofitting was allowed for earthquake safety measures. Apartment buildings could vote to extend or redevelop. Neither schemes were without issues. They probably did not take enough measures to ensure little impact on surrounding neighbours. In Vancouver there is native American tribal owned land where more than 2,000 homes were developed.

Peter Eversden remarked that if local authorities took a suburban intensification approach they could get so much more social housing than current. In certain areas there are substantial gardens – existing homes could be protected. It is waiting to happen.

Riette Oosthuizen remarked that there is a great >>>



## STORY OF THE ARC



opportunity. On some major schemes in Croydon city centre it was negotiated that family homes could be bought to add to the social housing stock (this was by an RSL) (as the town centre was not ideal for family housing). This type of stock could also be intensified across the borough, increasing supply.

Brian Waters asked how the idea of Street Votes relate to suburban intensification – Supurbia by HTA. Riette Oosthuizen remarked that the idea of 'Supurbia' focused on certain typologies of homes that could be intensified in the back garden which is very sustainable as existing home owners can stay intact. However, the idea of losing back gardens is not politically palatable. Permitted development of course allows two storeys additional to be added to homes. This may have a negative design impact on street appearance as this type of development could be ad hoc.

The advantage of street votes is that design codes could control the appearance of an entire street. Communities coming together could have a really positive effect. Brian remarked that Fitzroy Road (HTA Planning were planning consultants and BWCP the architects) – where two terraces in a conservation area – managed to get planning permission for an upwards extension to be built as a single contract – came about because of the tenacity of one resident steering the process. The proposal was against Camden's Conservation Area policy, which was introduced without consulting residents. This proposal is now built (as one building contract as per the S106). The whole shell was built as one.

Michael Edwards asked what do you do about car parking; the one limiting measure to these intensification proposals? He thought that until you get rid of cars it will make suburban intensification challenging. What do you do about private landlords owning lots of suburban properties? They might behave differently from owner occupiers. The pro-

posals might go faster in areas with PRS and slower in areas embedded with owner occupiers.

Peter Eversden remarked that PDR is being constrained. Barnet have applied additional policies on the negative impact of PDR. Local authorities have won control back over a particular area the government did not want them to have control over. The idea of permitted development rights being a freedom is slightly confounded. Martin Goodall's guide to permitted development rights runs to 460 pages.

Brian Waters remarked that neighbourhood plans could play a useful role in identifying locations for 'street votes'.

### Matt Allen from Bidwells lead a discussion on the Cambridge Oxford Development Arc in terms of the latest proposals.

In 2017 the NIC report on the CaMKoX Arc which was very positive. It talked about opportunities for partnership and the East West rail linking two great university cities Oxford and Cambridge.

Climate Challenge became a much more serious issue so proposals for the road was dropped. There are already 1 million new homes in local plans up until 2041.

Bidwells want to encourage the Oxford Cambridge Arc to happen. They wrote a Radical Regeneration manifesto which was taken to party conferences where it struck a chord with politicians.

Covid was quite beneficial to the idea for the Arc. The Government came out with its spatial framework and the Arc looked favourable but when the Cabinet shuffle came about it was dropped. The idea was not well pitched within Government due to the reshuffle.

There is a huge supply/demand issue in the Arc. There is approximately 1 million square foot demand for lab space compared to 24,000 sqft available. There is about £5 billion amongst global investors wanting to invest; 15 plus investors chas-

ing each opportunity.

We perform poorly against international opportunity, particularly compared to cities like Boston or San Diego. There is the opportunity to become a scientific superpower. Local plans are not helpful.

Local examples: Cambridge North – government funded station which is now open. This is a huge opportunity where local politicians are kicking the can down the road by not supporting proposals. They are raising objections. It will go to appeal by the end of next year.

In Cambridge East: this is a global investment opportunity but the local council have only allocated 500 jobs in the local plan.

Mr Sunak is the right person to target. You can get £400 billion contribution to the UK economy by 2050 from the Arc. A letter was written to Messrs Sunak, Johnson and Gove. Bidwells highlighted the opportunity and the fact that the investment will go elsewhere. A lot of large companies and investors and international scientific companies were signatories. Radical Capital was a paper also published: how can the Oxford Cambridge Arc region to be a success. Sir John Bell wrote the foreword. We need to make sure we capitalize on knowledge capital, connective capital, human capital, natural capital, future focused and global capital.

What impact has this had? A lot of lobbying is taking place. The campaign was picked up by the Times, BBC, etc. It is understood that the Arc has been discussed at Cabinet. It will be a missed opportunity to not support this region. Housing is important but not the key issue here; it is the economic opportunity that is fundamental. Levelling up is very much focused on the north. Mr Gove wants to see something happening in the north of the country. DfT has a challenge.

The budget given to them for the Arc's East West Rail is not enough. The business case is weakened; they are trying to get private sector support. DIT

## INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

### Boston Biopharma Cluster



- 37.9 million sq ft of lab and R&D space
- 6 million sq ft of lab space under construction in 2021

### Cambridge Cluster



- 5.9 million sq ft of lab and R&D space
- 300,000 sq ft per annum in Cambridge & Oxford combined



## CAMBRIDGE NORTH

- Local council kicking the can down the road
- Delayed by 2-3 years already
- Once objections are resolved new objections raised
- Possible appeal 2023?



have been working on an international branding programme for the Arc. They are still ploughing this furrow. A Pan Leadership Partnership is currently being put together. Central government needs to show its support. East West Rail will allow sustainable locations to be created outside of Oxford and Cambridge. There is lot of potential around Bedford.

The Arc will not be the original envisioned programme so it is difficult to see how it will pan out. Bidwells want to ensure Oxford and Cambridge are supported. Key groups will be brought together by Bidwells to see how the proposal for a scientific superpower can be supported.

**Discussion:**

Brian Waters noted in the last issue of *Planning in London* an editorial about the Arc suggests that in a planning sense it offers the opportunity to dust off the extant New Towns Act of 1946 to create a new 'Strategic' Development Corporation. The 17 local authorities would be represented on the Corporation. Homes England have millions of profits inherited from New Towns which can be used to fund infrastructure, land acquisition, devolution, and levelling up. The old Development Corporations lacked democratic powers but a tier of planning needs to be created akin that of a Mayor. A strategic authority would make a plan and have power to call in any application having an

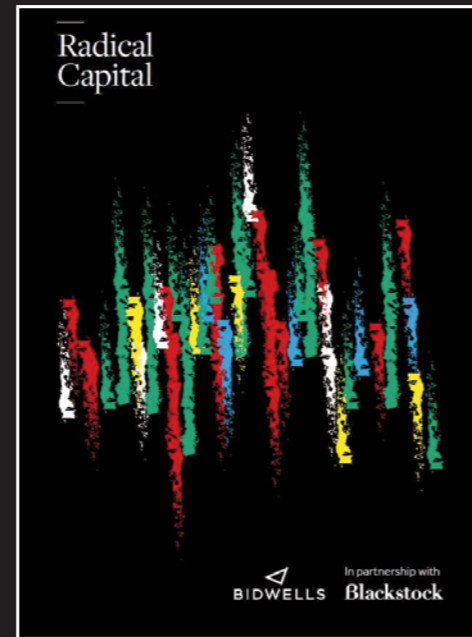
impact on the plan.

Dough McNab remarked that you could market the Arc as having a really high quality natural environment. A more regionalized focus does seem necessary. A globally significant science cluster needs government intervention – local politicians won't be able to do that or have the focus necessary.

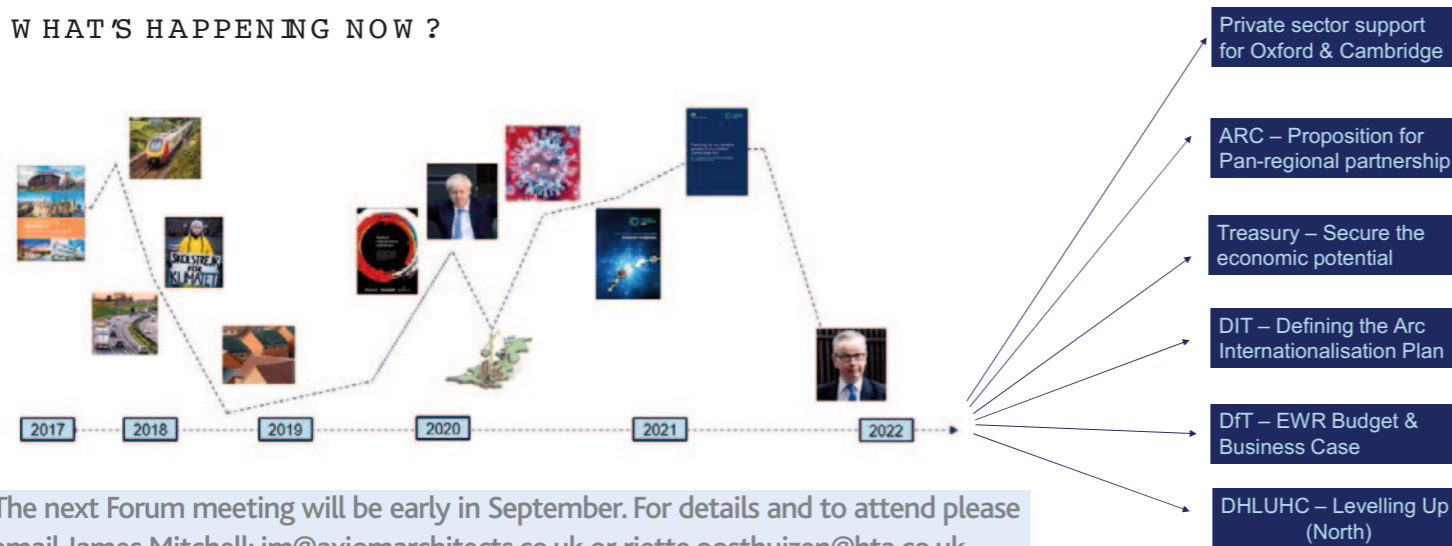
Michael Edwards questioned whether it would be a disaster if the current government implemented this policy. Would it simply create lots of opportunities for volume housebuilders? Matt remarked that we don't have the time to wait – we missed out on Silicon Valley. The original ambition by government was brilliant. We kicked it off right. We need to try to piece back the broken initiative. ■

# Recommendations

1. Establish a Science and Tech Growth Board to ensure central co-ordination of activities which affect the Arc ambition
2. Establish a new 'innovation' use class in planning terms, comprising of principal laboratory and space for knowledge-intensive R&D. Using that Use Class Order definition, define any development over 50,000 sq m as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) covered by the NSIP process.
3. Set up an Arc-wide Skills Task Force with further and higher education bodies working alongside business and industry leaders.
4. Establish a branch of government which acts as a clearing house facilitating introductions between S&T enterprises and education institutions
5. Agree an Arc-wide policy that allows for cross boundary delivery of biodiversity net gain outcomes
6. Create an Arc-wide promotion agency to continue telling the story



WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW ?



The next Forum meeting will be early in September. For details and to attend please email James Mitchell: [jm@axiomarchitects.co.uk](mailto:jm@axiomarchitects.co.uk) or [riette.oosthuizen@hta.co.uk](mailto:riette.oosthuizen@hta.co.uk)