

LONDON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT FORUM

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Meeting on Thursday 26th March 2015 at University of Westminster, Room M419 - 4th floor of Marylebone block, from 2.30-5.30pm. Our host was Duncan Bowie.

Present:

Brian Waters: Chairman
Andrew Roger: Association of Consultant Planners
Calum McCulloch: London Forum
Colette Bowe: Banking Standards Board
Christian Woolmar: Journalist and Mayoral Candidate
Duncan Bowie: University of Westminster
Eric Sorensen
Judith Ryser: Isocarp/UDG/Cityscope Europe
Lucinda Turner: TfL
Michael Coupe: London Society and Coupe Planning
Peter Eversden: London Forum` 1
Rob Partridge: AKT II
Ron Heath: Living Architects
Drummond Robson: Honorary Secretary and Robson Planning

1. **Introductions and Apologies.**

The Chairman introduced the four speakers: Lucinda Turner, Christian Woolmar, Duncan Bowie and Eric Sorensen. Apologies were received from Bob Dolata, Brian Whiteley, Colin Rumsey, David Bradley, John Worthington, Jonathan Manns, Mark Southgate, Michael Edwards, Michael Chang, and Nikos Karadimitriou.

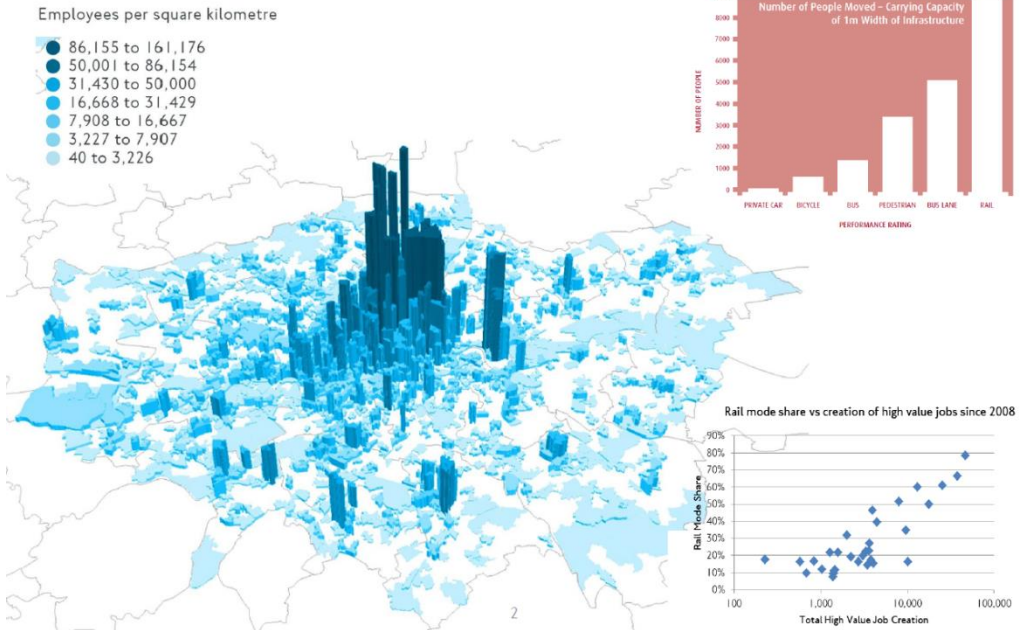
2. Discussion Topics

a. London's Transport/Growth – Lucinda Turner (Head of Policy & Strategy) Transport for London followed by Traffic in London Christian Wolmar, GLA Mayoral Labour Candidate for 2016.

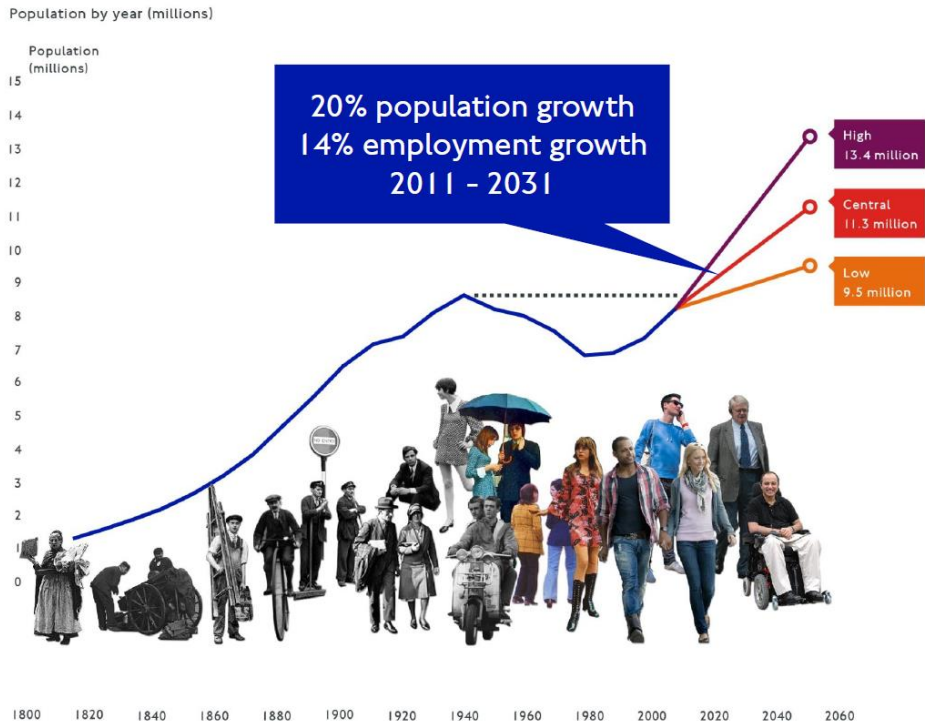
The Chairman welcomed Lucinda Turner to talk about the trends and issues of London's growth and transport growth. The intensity of activity is concentrated in the Central Activities Zone which has 2% of the land area but 1/3 of the economy. In public transport terms it is more concentrated (90% of trips are by the more sustainable mode of public transport). The strategy of dispersal needs a different model since it is more difficult to serve by public transport, although this is fundamentally based on radial movement.

The population of 8.6 million has just surpassed the 1939 peak and is predicted to rise to a new peak of 9 million by 2018. (These and other measures are covered more fully in TfL's publications including Travel in London, report 7, and the Transport Support Document to Infrastructure 2050).

Transport links in London have played a vital role in supporting high value employment in central London

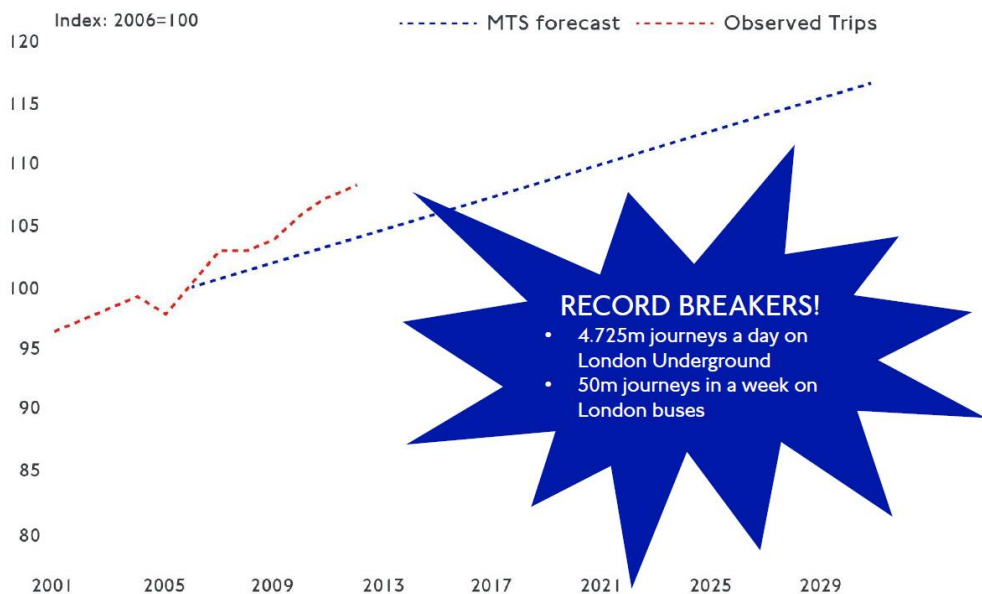


London's population continues to grow....

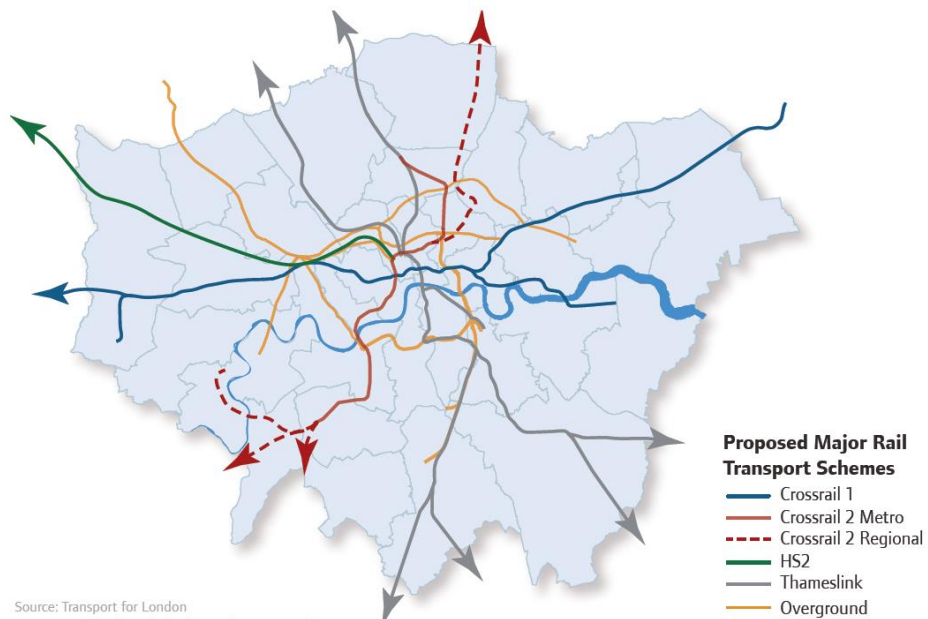


...Which is leading to more trips

Observed trips in London compared with MTS forecasts

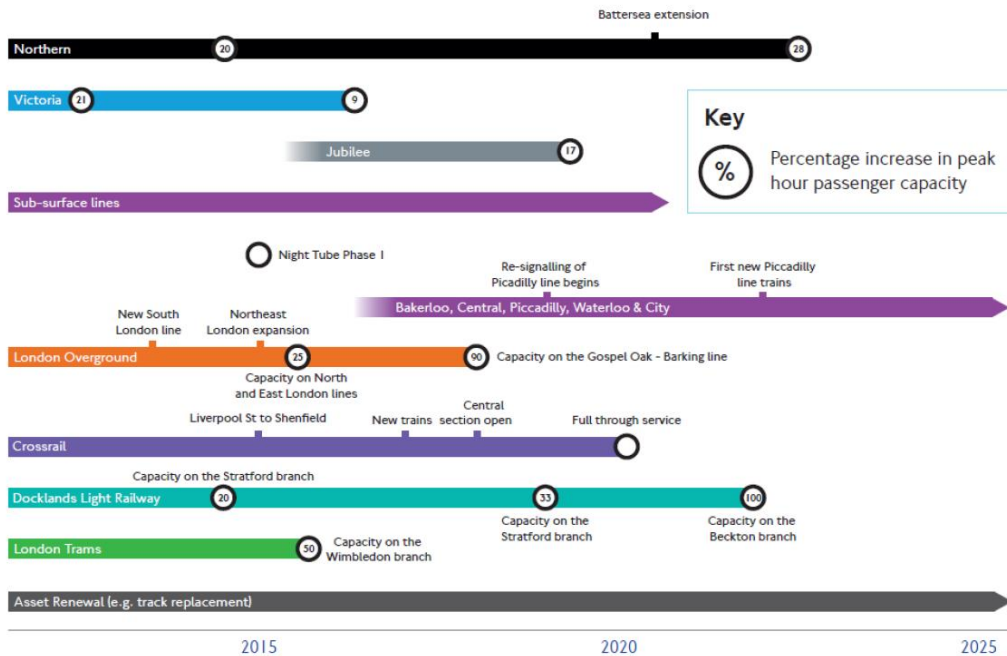


On 28th November 2014 4.725 million journeys were recorded in London – the highest ever. It was also the busiest for cycle journeys.



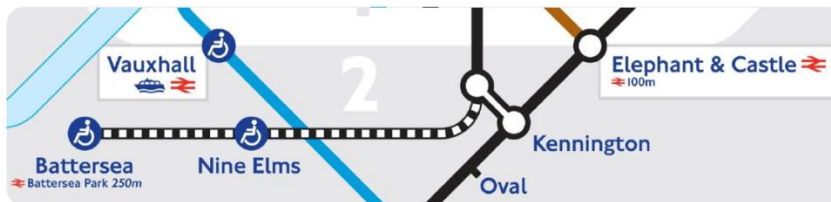
A key requirement for London's growth is infrastructure – with its long lead times – although this is constrained by cost. Upgrade to the tube system, Crossrail, Northern Line Extension to Battersea etc. will increase the area of London served within 45 minutes.

The upgrade programme is the biggest investment in the Tube system in its history...



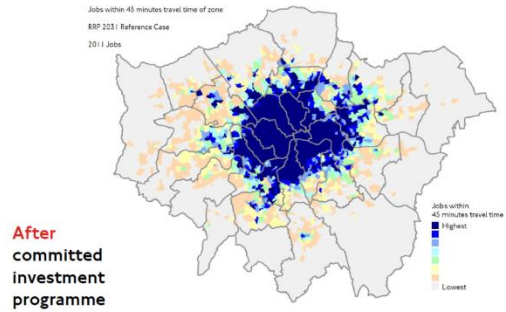
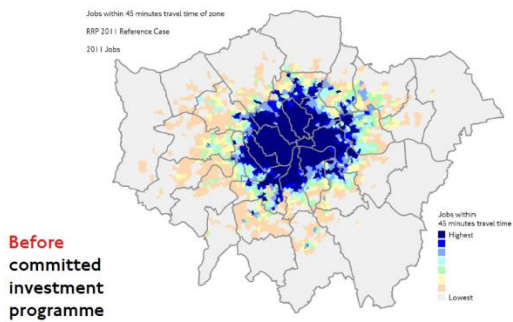
The Northern Line extension will unlock thousands of jobs and homes

- The NLE will cut up to 50% from travel times between Battersea and central London
- The Vauxhall, Battersea and Nine Elms OA has potential for 25,000 jobs and 20,000 homes
- It will bring up to an additional 920,000 jobs and 610,000 people with 45 minutes travel time of the Opportunity Area



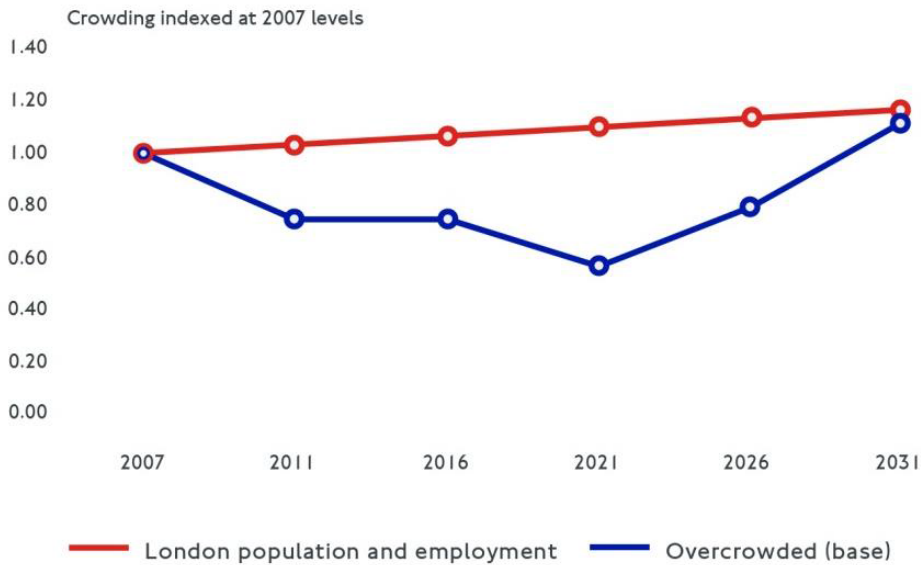
Taking all committed schemes in to account, access to employment will be significantly improved across London

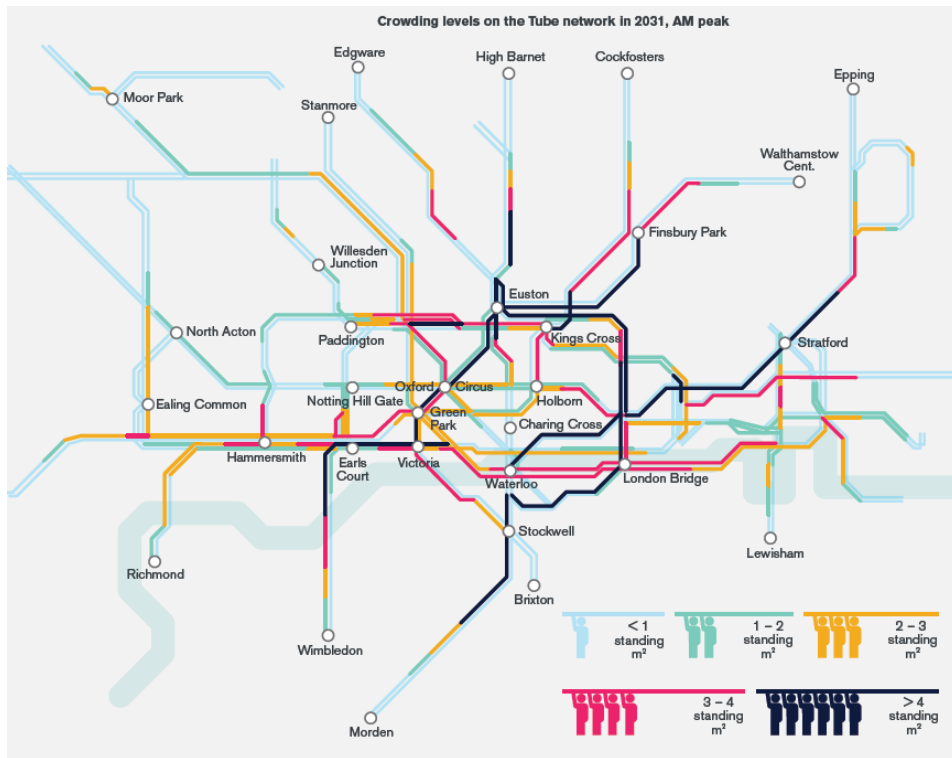
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Crowding is expected to reduce as the result of the various current transport initiatives until 2020 when it is predicted to rise. However growth in population has been faster than expected so we are running only to stand still.

Crowding levels on rail-based public transport in AM peak





30m trips each day by 2031 (although $\frac{1}{3}$ of trips themselves are becoming shorter).

- An increase of 35-40% in the number of trips by 2050

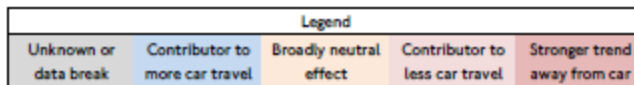
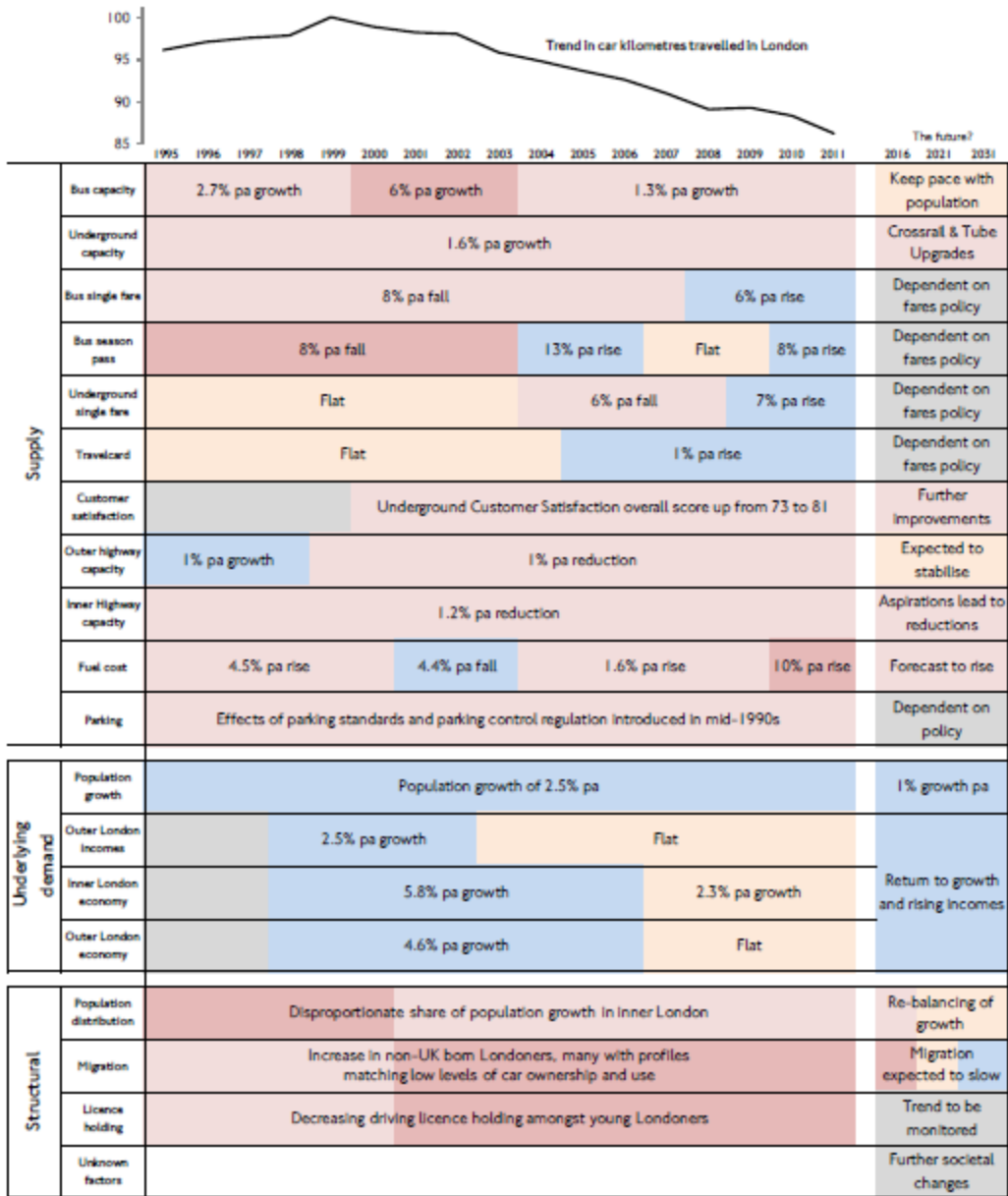
45-50% increase in rail boards to 2031

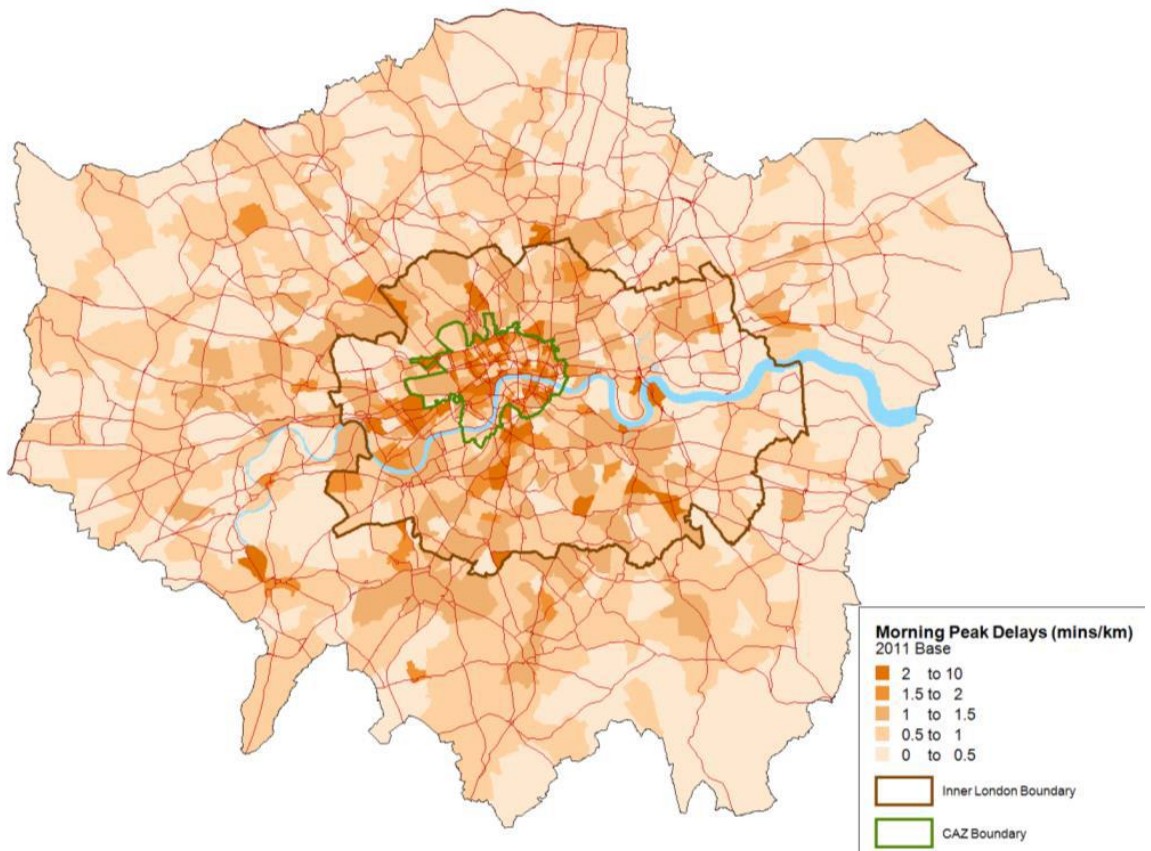
- 15-20% increase in bus travel

- Seek to focus growth in areas with spare network capacity and existing transport connections (e.g. Barking Riverside, Bakerloo Line Extension and Crossrail 2)
- Package of investment to maximise potential of Opportunity Areas
- Extensions to the existing network to connect to areas with major development potential
- Embed strategies to unlock growth and development in major transport schemes

London's Roads need to respond to many challenges: moving, living, unlocking, functioning, protecting and sustaining. Roads account for 80% of journeys every day. However travel trends show a decline in car travel since 1999 and a modal shift of 10% to 2011 which is unprecedented world wide. These trends are reviewed in the TfL report "Drivers of Demand for Travel in London: A Review of trends in travel demand and their causes." The analysis is summarised in a table below as supply, underlying demand and structural factors with their effects both positive and negative in reducing car travel.

Figure 43: Major factors contributing to mode shift away from car travel over time





Despite falling traffic volumes, average traffic speeds have got progressively slower & congestion (delay) has increased across London. There are increasing challenges – without mitigations congestion is set to increase by up to 60% in central London. We need to use all the tools at our disposal...

Intelligent systems and management



More efficient / flexible use of space



Infrastructure and assets fit for the future



Changing behaviour & managing demand

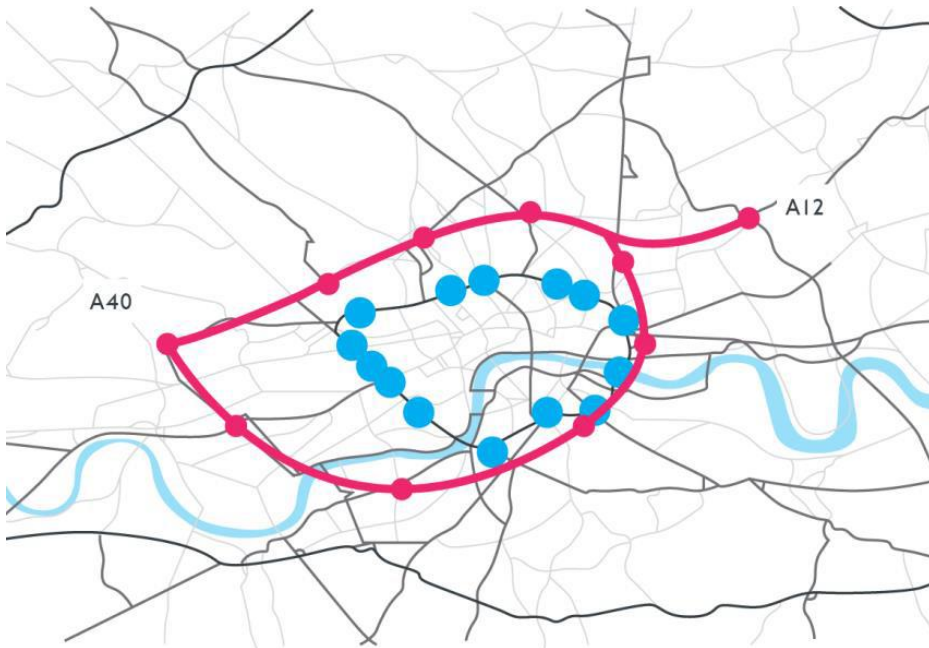


Substitute/re-located/enhanced capacity



...We want to make London a better place, while also tackling congestion

Fly-unders/mini-tunnels? Roofing-over A new orbital road tunnel? New river crossings Freight & servicing management Place improvements



...while new technologies such as the self driving car and shared ownership could transform the network

- Future change & innovation in transport will be shaped by a complex web of social, economic, technological, cultural and environmental factors
- More use of advanced technology eg customer interaction, ‘big data,’ 3D visualisation techniques, traffic signalling, traffic management technology and parking sensor technology
- And beyond this...?

Summary

- Challenges of growth continue unabated
- Need to plan for the longer-term
- Lots of investment being made
- But more still needed
- Need to think creatively
- And also look at innovative ways to fund the strategy

“The past is a foreign country – they do things differently there. L.P. Hartley, *The Go Between*”.

Lucinda Turner's talk was followed by **Christian Wolmar's case for a London no longer designed around the car**. He began by recalling the use of streets as playspaces (They – as highways - now account for 80% of London's public space).



He recalled the evolution of the car from a rarity which succeeded the tram and trolleybus, to the invasive form of traffic it became. By the 1960's the car was dominant, in the era of *Traffic in Towns*. However it brought with it a growing accident rate. 8,000 were killed on the roads in 1938 compared with 1,700 now. There was also the impact roads have on the fabric of cities – brought to a head with the proposal and abandonment of the Motorway Box with its associated induced demand, and Archway Road widening to alleviate traffic. There are no significant traffic jams on Archway Road now. Ken Livingstone was instrumental in returning the prominence of public transport (with the public policy of low fares: *Fares Fair*). This has been followed by Boris Johnson (“who wants more of everything”).

Today proposals continue for the East London River Crossing, tunnels under London and flyovers and flyunders. Road traffic has been reducing in recent years in London although there has been an upswing in the last couple of years in parallel with improved bus and cycle provision. Christian Woolmart was however also critical of excessive impractical road space allocated for cycling.



He advocated a stronger return to pedestrianised streets, citing Oxford Street as a key proposed example, following Copenhagen's Strøget of the early 1960s and the more recent Times Square example in New York.



Associated levers of change include extending congestion charging, lorry bans, restrictions on workplace parking, 20 mph zones, transforming key road corridors by tunnelling and decking (although at high cost,

subsidised by tolls), further increasing the image of cycling to help improve environments and calm/slow things down.

Brief Discussion following the first two presentations:

Peter Eversden raised the question of movement in Outer London, considered by the Outer London Commission. This found that the PTAL assessment of journeys varied every step of the way with much depending on the ease of movement on feeder routes to transport nodes.

Lucinda Turner responded first to Christian Wolmar's advocacy of lorry bans saying freight management potential is not sustainable. The private sector will not control this and public sector control is limited by costs of enforcement. She considered bus accessibility to be a fundamental issue in Outer London where in particular restrictions by parking on available roads made movement difficult. The principal of effective bus usage is the availability of "turn up and go".

Brian Waters said that Victoria was very much pleasanter during a bus strike and that developers did not like buses intruding into their sites.

Christian Wolmar said that Crossrail in Oxford Street will be helped greatly by freeing up roads for pedestrians.

Ron Heath mentioned his experience of Loughton where bus lay-bys assisted in slowing traffic down but also providing adequate parking space was a challenge given that car movement was the dominant mode.

In response to a query by Drummond Robson asking how TfL was tackling threats of terrorism Lucinda Turner said that more is needed to respond to the wider question of resilience in terms of terrorism, climate change, business recovery etc.

Brian Waters said that different attitudes were needed in response to growth. The restriction to unload scaffolding in social hours only was made more difficult because of constant day time traffic for example. In response Lucinda Turner said that more flexible use of road space (e.g. playing field roofs over roads) and the introduction of overnight tube working.

Mike Coupe reminded us that small interventions like rearranging traffic lights could reduce road accidents. He also spoke of the effects of planning in a regional policy vacuum, citing Croydon as an example of a town centre intended to offer a place for counter commuting which has ended up as a ghastly mess. London should think about not growing further and making better use of interactive transport flows between nodal centres.

Brian Waters commented on the impact of real time devices such as apple maps, Tom Tom and mobile technology which make movement easier.

b. Duncan Bowie considered The Challenges of London's Growth. Strategic Planning and the Failures of Governance in London and the Greater South East.

The London Plan Review and the Future of London: The Challenge to the Compact City Approach.

The present housing shortage from a planning standpoint derives from certain presumptions and tenets:

Assumption since 2004 London Plan that London can meet all its future needs within existing London boundary

London needs at least 50,000 more homes a year over next 20 years; South East region needs at least 40,000 homes a year

For next 10 years, London capacity target leaves a deficit of 20,000 homes a year relative to projected demand

Compact City assumption no longer tenable

Resistance to increased housing provision in Greater South East – the metropolitan city region

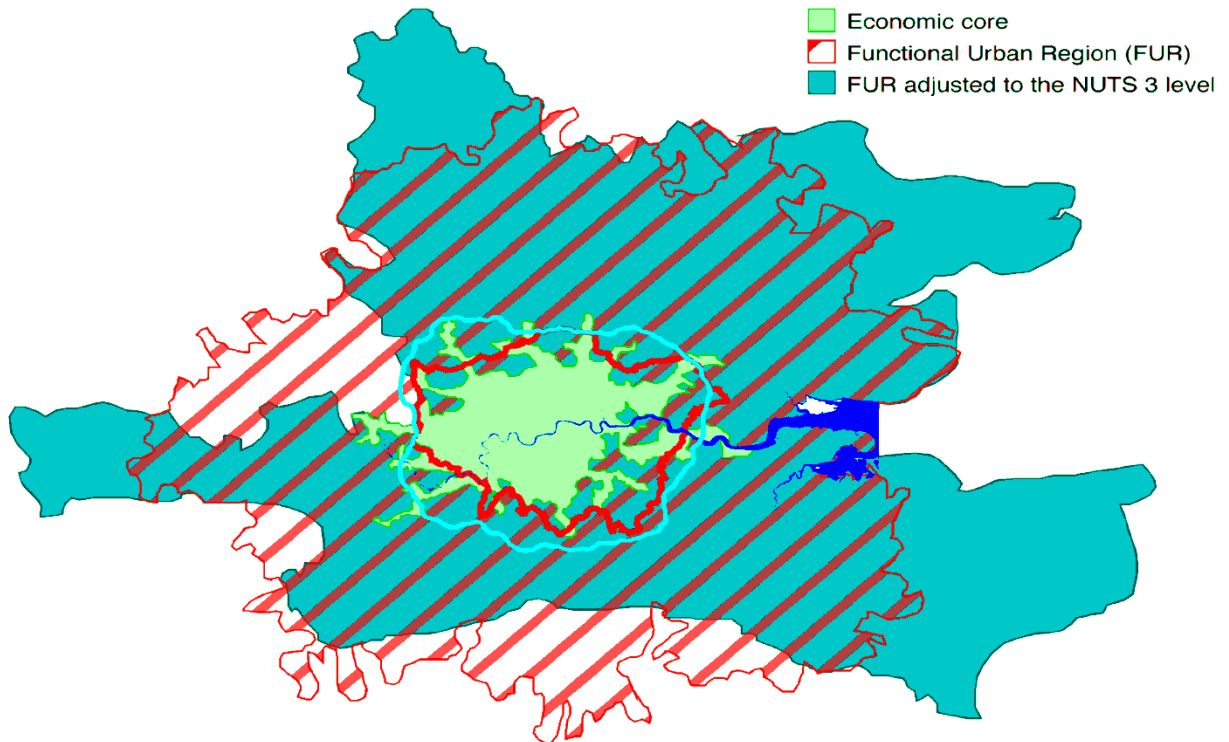
These tensions, which were expressed London Plan Examination in Public, have now resulted in the The new London Plan which was published by the Mayor on 10th March 2015. The Plan sets a new housing target for London of 42,000 homes a year, up from the previous target of 32,210 homes a year. This however falls short of all the estimates of London's housing requirements. The Mayor's own Strategic Housing Market Assessment gave a figure of 62,000 homes a year for 10 years, the plan period, if the existing backlog was to be met within that timescale (the assumption in the previous plan). London Councils, representing the London boroughs, have put the 10 year requirement at 80,000 a year. The London Plan uses a lower figure of 49,000 a year, but this assumes that the housing need backlog would only be met over 20 years.

Much of the discussion at the London Plan Examination in Public last September revolved around the relationship of the Mayor, as strategic planning authority for the Greater London authority area, with the local planning authorities in the Greater South East, with the debate focusing on whether any of London's housing deficit could or should be met by authorities in the wider metropolitan region. In the months leading up to the Examination in Public there had been considerable controversy over whether or not the Mayor was putting pressure on Home Counties districts to make provision within their own plans for additional housing to take the pressure off London. In this context it is not surprising that the Mayor in responding to consultation by Home Counties districts on their plans, initially in the case of Bedford and Elmbridge, requested those districts to acknowledge the projected London supply deficit. This led to a group of 51 Home Counties planning authorities, known as the Bedford 51, writing a joint letter to the Mayor to argue that London should meet its housing requirements within the existing GLA boundary. At the EiP, the group argued that the Mayor should increase the London Plan target to at least 49,000 homes a year- some suggested that the target should be increased to 62,000. It was put forward that the Mayor should identify development sites within the Green Belt within the London boundary.¹

¹ The Bedford 51 EiP submission

[:https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/151_HertfordshireCCon_behalf_of_Bedford51_Session2.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/151_HertfordshireCCon_behalf_of_Bedford51_Session2.pdf)

The Functional Urban Region



Prepared by GLA DMAG
Maps based on OS boundaries © Crown Copyright (GLA)(LA100032379)(2004)
Les Cahiers No. 135, 4th quarter 2002: GEMACA

Much of the debate at the EiP centred on whether or not the London Plan target should be increased. The Mayor's team brought forward new evidence that a further 7,000 homes a year could be delivered through intensification of suburban town centres, using capacity released by underused retail premises in suburban high streets. The GLA planners considered such locations as suitable for flats for elderly persons, students and young professionals. The deputy Mayor, Sir Eddie Lister, sought in his opening speech to reassure the Home Counties districts that that 49,000 was deliverable and that they did not need to be concerned about overspill from London.²

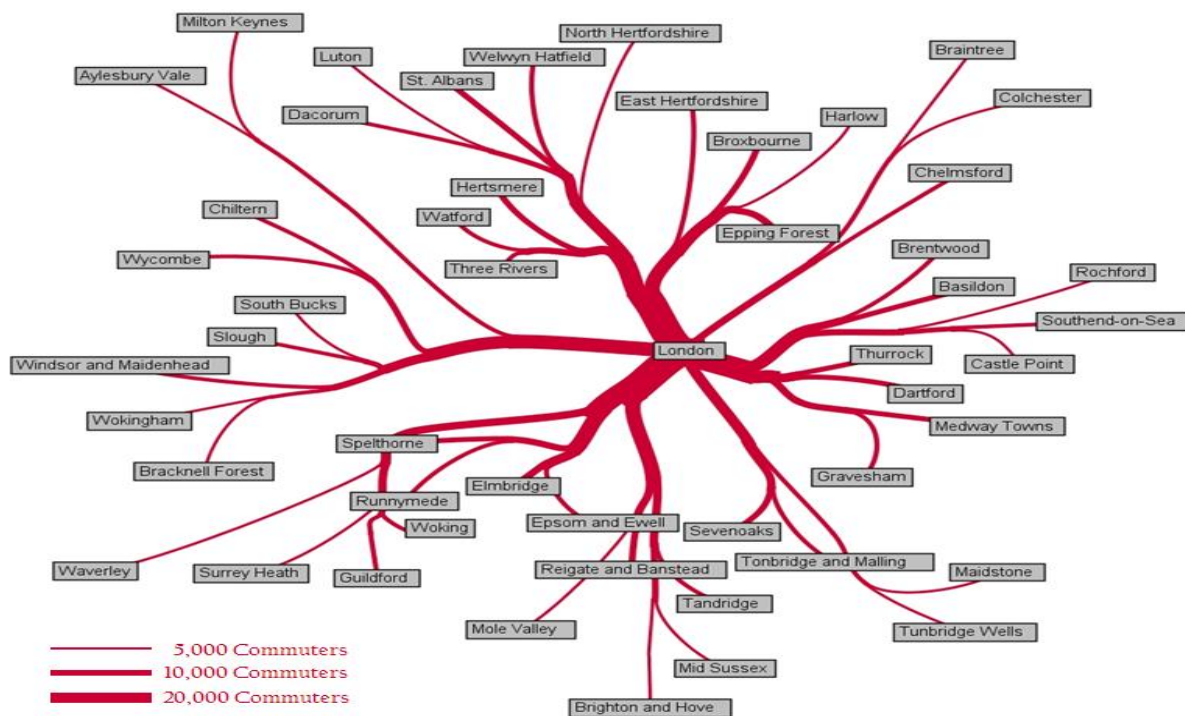
The EiP inspector commented that “the impact of increasing densities on townscapes, existing communities and on social and physical infrastructure also needs to be considered” and that “it cannot be assumed, in my view, that it will be appropriate to increase densities over the existing Density Matrix guidelines in all cases.”³ The inspector went on to say that “I am concerned that the strategy of accommodating the development necessary for London's growth within its existing built confines will place unacceptable pressures on the city's communities and environment.... In my view, the Mayor needs to explore options beyond the existing philosophy of the London Plan. That may, in the absence of a wider regional strategy to assess the options for growth and to plan and co-ordinate that growth, include

² Deputy Mayor's opening speech 1st September 2014

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/FALP%20EiP%20Ed%20Lister%27s%20opening%20speech%201%20Sept%202014.pdf>

³ Report on the EiP into the Further Alterations to the London Plan. Paras 41 and 42.

engaging local planning authorities beyond the GLA’s boundaries in discussions regarding the evolution of our capital city.”⁴



The Mayor has already initiated the process for reviewing longer term development options, including options for meeting London’s housing deficit through planned development beyond the London boundary. The form this has taken is a draft infrastructure plan to 2050. This was in fact published by the Mayor in August 2014 before the EiP commenced.⁵ The Plan was supported by a number of research documents including a costing report by Arup⁶ and a transport paper by Transport for London⁷, together with population and employment projections, a paper on improving infrastructure delivery, a report on broadband connectivity and a report on green, energy, water and waste infrastructure.

Both the main report and the transport paper examine alternative options for meeting the challenges of London’s population growth. The main report includes a section on ‘Spatial patterns of growth’, which focuses on the case for the intensification of suburban town centres and for increasing densities in areas with good transport links, commenting that ‘the impact on London’s overall major infrastructure requirements of further densification would be minimal’, which rather discounts the requirements of an

⁴ Inspector’s report. Paras 54 and 57

⁵ Mayor of London. London Infrastructure Plan. A Consultation

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/London%20Infrastructure%20Plan%202050%20E2%80%9320consultation%20document.pdf>

⁶ The Cost of London’s Long Term Infrastructure ARUP

<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/The%20cost%20of%20London%27s%20long-term%20infrastructure%20by%20Arup.pdf>

⁷ London Infrastructure Plan: Transport Supporting Paper

http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/transport_supporting_paper.pdf

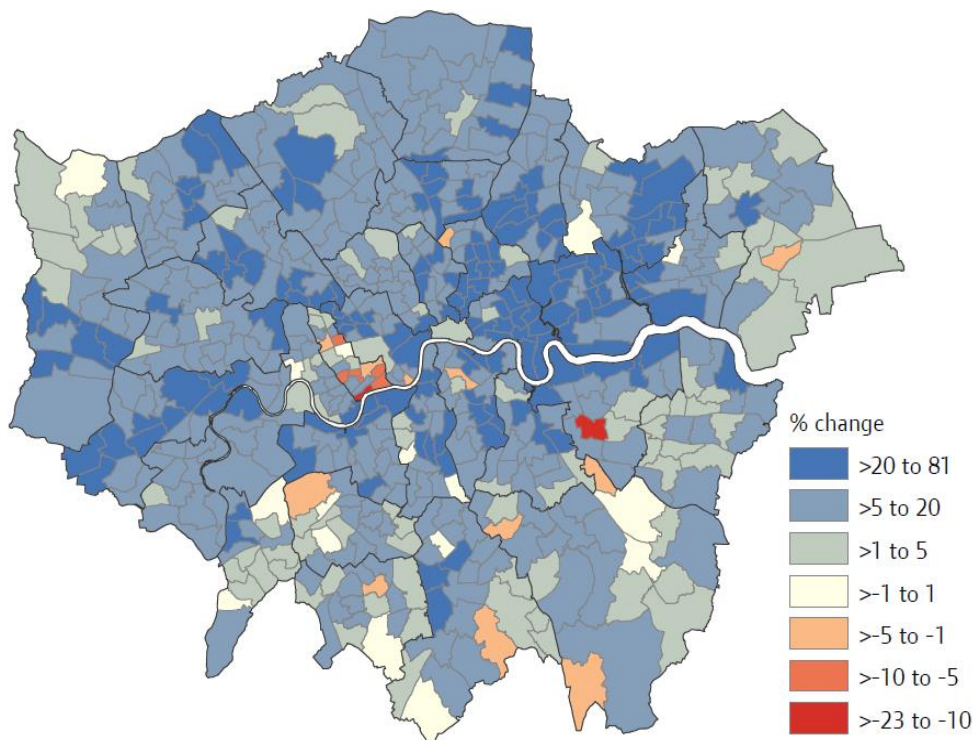
increased population for social infrastructure such as schools, health and leisure facilities. The report suggests the redevelopment of 10% of existing suburban housing at double the existing low density could provide some 400,000 more homes while keeping density within existing planning policy ranges. There is no proposal for how this could be achieved – compulsory acquisition of suburban homes for clearance and redevelopment would be expensive as well as highly controversial.

The report then considers the role of the Greater South East beyond the GLA administrative boundary, focusing on the potential for ‘increased densities in urban areas in the South East where current residential densities are low, even near public transport or established town centres’, before stating that the GLA have also considered ‘the role that new towns and urban extensions can play in areas beyond the Green Belt, particularly in areas where there is scope to increase rail commuting.’

It is suggested that with densities of 100 dwellings per hectare, homes for around one million people could be provided, with better rail connections increasing the potential for longer distance commuting.

The transport supporting paper takes the spatial analysis of development options a stage further by mapping the locations in the Rest of the South East (ROSE) for potential new homes based on the assumption of developing at 100 dwellings per hectare in existing urban areas with low density and good commuting access to London. In order to concentrate economic and regeneration benefits on areas with relatively high levels of deprivation, only areas within the 25% most deprived areas in ROSE were considered the Rest of the South East. But this is perhaps not the best approach to ensuring the most sustainable development, in economic, social or environmental terms.

Population Growth 2001-2011



The government response to these concerns is unlikely to increase housing growth either. The Minister responded: No need to re-establish a metropolitan region planning body, Green Belt protection is reinforced and Home Counties districts back off from undertaking Green Belt reviews

There has also been a spatial polarisation of housing tenure: social housing and private renting dominant within central and inner London and owner occupation in outer London together with low levels of affordable housing in outer London. There has also been polarisation of house prices.

Overcrowding has increased in West and Northeast London. West Central London has also experienced growth of household spaces where up to 30% of the usual residents are not present: a hollowing out of the area.

The spatial criticisms of these trends are

Abandonment of growth areas with development depending on local consent. Strong resistance to new housing development in most suburban boroughs and Home Counties.

Neighbourhood Planning generally not helping.

Duty to Cooperate between local authorities not working.

No central government funding for social rented housing so collapse of social rented housing programme, especially in higher cost/value areas

Planning policy changes make it very difficult for boroughs to use planning gain agreements to fund social rented homes – though some off site deals in central London.

Housing benefit cuts forcing lower income households out of higher value areas and increasing spatial social polarisation

The affordability crisis may be summarised as:

House prices now climbing again – average London houseprice is £544,000 – above the January 2008 peak

Average deposit for first time buyer was £59,221 – with Help to Buy, 5% mortgage requirement = £26,000

Household income of £146,000 needed to borrow £518,000

This in turn means that increasing areas of London are unaffordable for private tenants.

Much land is constrained from new housing development: e.g. Flood Plain, Open Space, Poor Accessibility, protecting employment sites and the Green Belt.

Different development Options include:

Hyperdense development in city centre and city fringes

Hyperdense development in Opportunity Areas

Higher densities in suburban town centres

Suburban intensification

Planned Urban extensions

A new programme of garden cities within the green belt

A new programme of garden cities or garden towns beyond the green belt

Residential dispersal to other parts of UK (without employment dispersal)

Residential dispersal to other parts of UK supported by a regional economic policy and planned relocation of employment

The “Wrong” Options include:

Hyperdense development in all opportunity areas and town centres – outputs won’t match needs (and many units will go to international property investment market)

Dispersal to rest of UK without employment growth/relocation

New ‘ garden cities’ of private houses with no local jobs and poor public transport : only fit for well off commuters.

Preconditions for new settlements are

Jobs

Public transport

Affordable homes for a range of income groups

Social infrastructure

Is this deliverable in current funding context ?

Is the concept of self-financing garden cities still realisable ?

Dispersal across the South East offers

Potential for medium densities, mix of built forms, mix of tenures and mix of levels of affordability but

A need to ensure access to jobs in London (travel cost issues) and in Home Counties centres

Dilemma 1: land is cheap in areas which are economically weak/ and or isolated, while more expensive in economically strong centres

Dilemma 2: within or beyond the Green Belt ? The further away from London, the greater the travel costs to central London.

Suburban Intensification Option offers

Incremental intensification – from 20 dwellings per hectare to 50-75

Mix of houses and low rise flats

Mix of tenures

Using existing transport and social infrastructure

Infill development and grabbing the larger gardens

Can we achieve significant increased housing output without destroying suburbia ?

The consequences of this intensification are

Infill development in larger gardens in London could produce 423,000-1,057,000 homes at densities of 30-75 dwellings per hectare

Developing ‘excess’ suburban open space would provide 2.5 to 6.4 million new homes at densities of 30-75 dwellings per hectare

Even greater potential from intensification/urban extensions to home counties urban areas ?

From these options Duncan Bowie concluded that the best option is

Urban extensions in the London fringe and around Home Counties centres

Use browner sites within green belt

Considering all components of sustainability

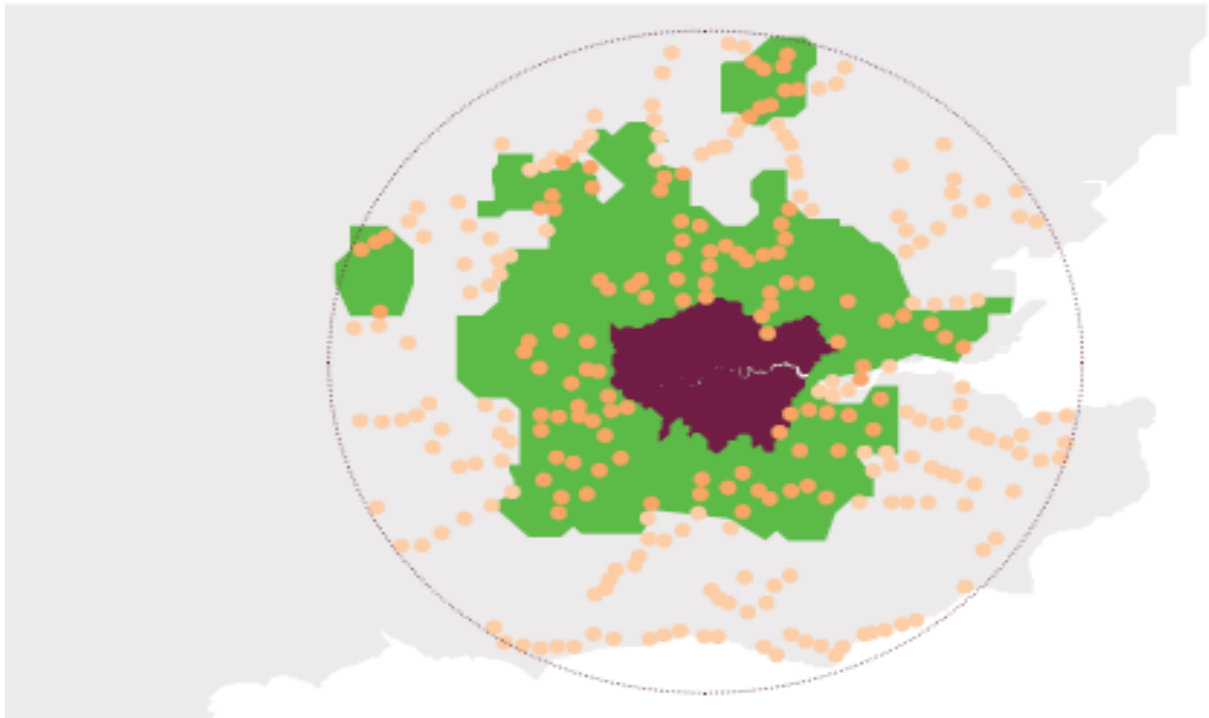
Land is relatively cheap making low density family size affordable housing possible

Possibility of houses as well as flats

Access to jobs and social infrastructure is critical – so link development to transport corridors

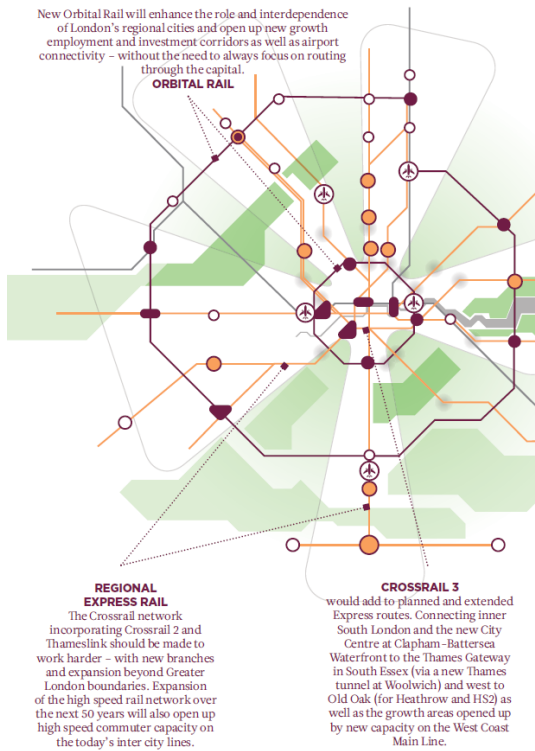
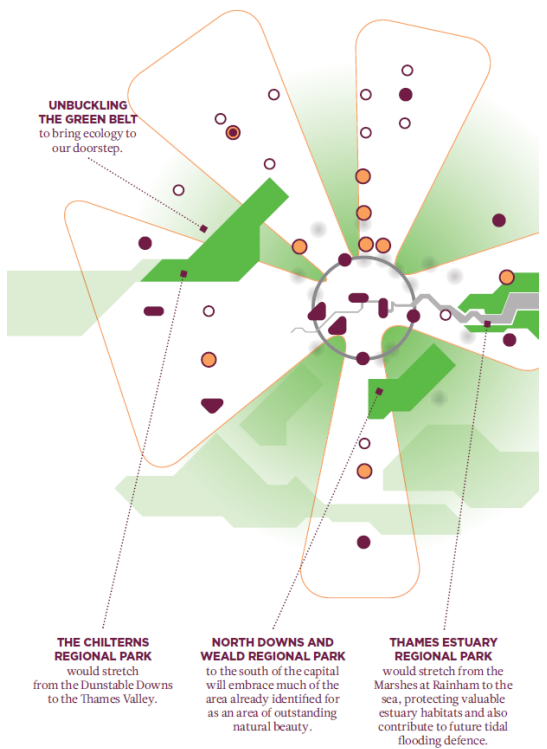
London Infrastructure Plans offer alternative options within the GLA area such as growth near transport nodes, and densification of town centres. Nat Lichfield and Partners have put forward ideas for growth within or outside the Green Belt.

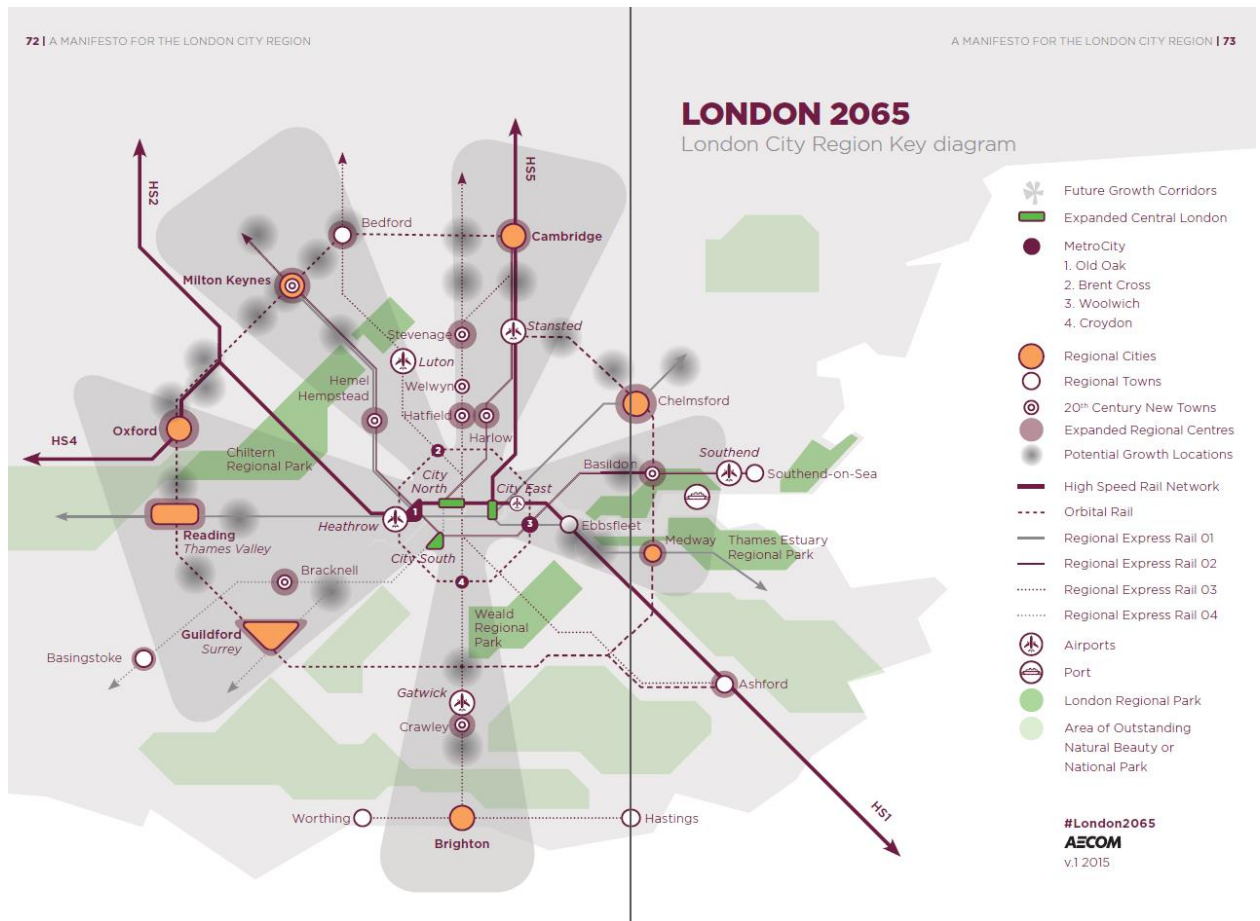
Undeveloped station catchments outside Greater London



Duncan Bowie drew attention to AECOM’s ambitious “Big Bold Global Connected London 2065 “Manifesto for Long Term Growth of the London City Region which encapsulates many of the ideas he has been advocating, including a complete high speed rail network for the UK, modernising the Green Belt, linking up the region with new infrastructure such as a new orbital rail linking Cambridge, Bedford, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Reading, Guildford, Medway and Chelmsford, Regional Express Rail and Crossrail 3 connecting Old Oak for HS2 and the West Coast Main Line, Clapham with Thames Gateway. These ideas are synthesised into a London City Region Key Diagram London 2065 and are reproduced here.

Connecting the UK:
A future 'complete' UK high-speed rail network





There needs to be a mechanism for assign the future needs of the projected population of the Greater South East as a whole, and as the TCPA suggested at the EiP, a mechanism for a consistent Strategic Housing Market assessment and assessment of development capacity through a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment across the metropolitan region as a whole. While the focus has been largely on meeting London’s projected housing deficit, the population of ROSE is also growing and the requirements of this population growth cannot be disregarded. Moreover, the issues of employment generation, transport connectivity, waste, energy, power and water supply, sewerage and green infrastructure are all matters that need to be considered at a metropolitan regional level.

The current mechanisms for strategic planning at a metropolitan level are grossly inadequate. The Mayor is seeking to formalise his pre-existing informal liaison arrangements, but these will not be adequate to resolve a range of issues where there is no agreement between the Mayor and the ROSE local planning authorities. It is for national government not just to take a view on appropriate development options but to establish governance arrangements to ensure that the challenges of the growth of our capital city are met in a way which is sustainable in the long term in environmental, economic and social terms. We need a statutory strategic planning system for the London metropolitan region and the sooner we have the debate about the most appropriate strategic planning and governance arrangements the better. The Minister, Brandon Lewis, in approving the revised London Plan for publication, stated that he did think that a formal arrangement for planning the London metropolitan region was necessary. He is wrong. This is a

matter of urgency and cannot be delayed in favour of continued adhocery and political opportunism. Future generations deserve better than that.

Duncan Bowie concluded that there has been a significant failure in metropolitan region planning. There is a need for agreement on spatial planning across metropolitan city region including criteria for selection of locations for major new developments and a need for new governance structures.

c. Blockbusters 26 March 2015

Eric Sorensen gave a personal account of large schemes in London and London's development dynamics.

“In 1962 or thereabouts when the world was embroiled in the Cuban missile crisis, whether the UK could join the EU, the winds of change and decolonization, the Prime Minister Harold MacMillan and his Ministerial colleagues were embroiled in two key London development issues. Whether to demolish the Euston Arch, and what to do about Mr Conrad Hilton's proposal to expand his hotel empire and build a 28 storey hotel at the southern end of Park Lane with wonderful views over Hyde Park.

One of my civil service friends who briefed Ministers on these issues at the time told me that it took an enormous number of meetings before Ministers decided to demolish the grand arch-, together with a series of fierce arguments about the spoliation by this visible hotel tower of the arcadian vistas within Hyde Park, as against badly needed foreign investment, promotion of tourism and growing the London economy. It is of course a relief to us all that Ministers concentrate on the issues that really matter. And how London looks and feels and how tall are hardy perennials.

I offer a brief discussion about building scale, height, intensification and I refer to a limited number of developments — Canary Wharf, Isle of Dogs, Canning Town, Nine Elms/Battersea, Mount Pleasant — to illustrate the interaction between developers and planners and public policy, and the wider dynamics of this city. Much useful analysis has been provided by the NLA and their work on London's tall buildings, and I draw on this.

This view of Canary Wharf shows South Quay and the Isle of Dogs Millennium Quarter which we will come to in a moment.

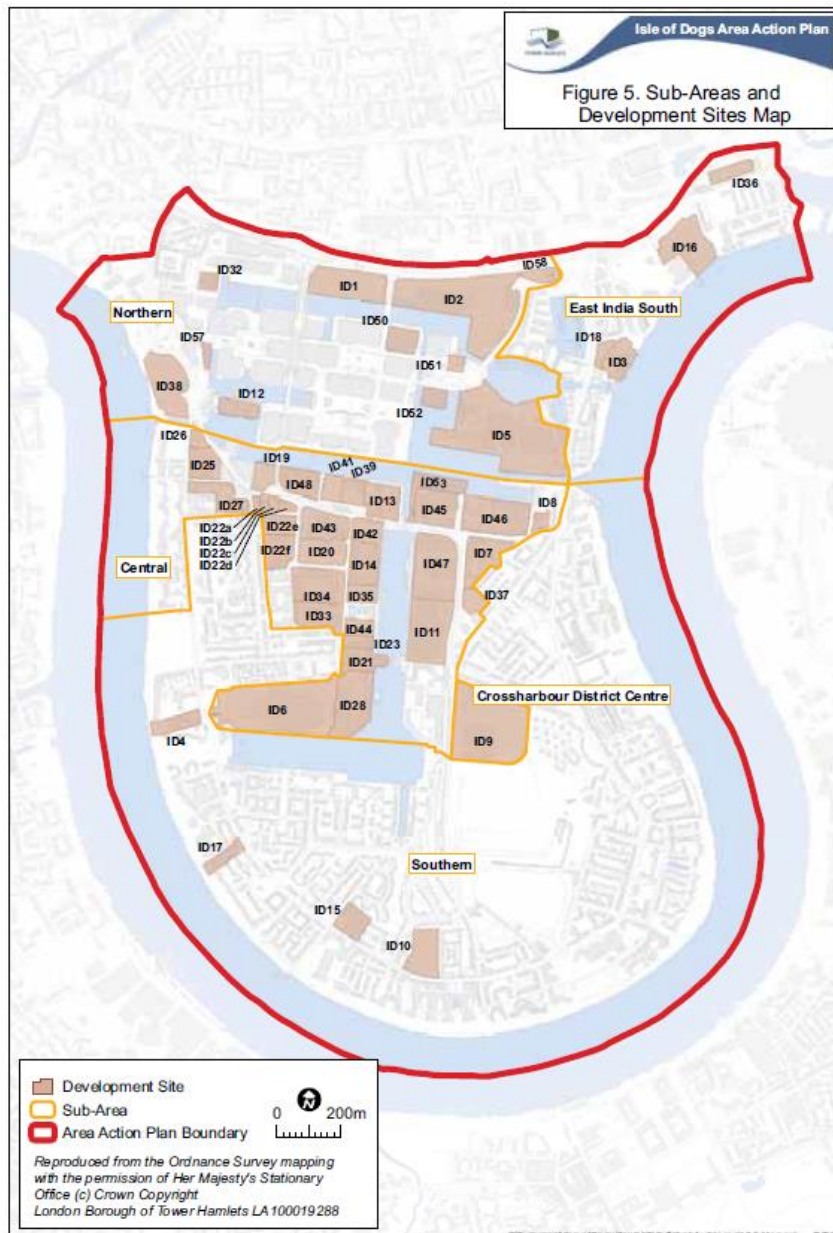


Canary Wharf descended on this city in a place which could accommodate it with relatively little disruption. But little disruption was associated with little transport infrastructure. So CW was a very risky project, building a bit of city from scratch but with much Government support. It was, and is, an international global project begun by a highly successful North American developer and funded by international banks. In the 1980s no serious British commercial developer would invest east of Tower Bridge.

It is a very carefully planned project. It is based on two east west central streets with colonnades anchored by the original Cesar Pelli tower. The colonnades provide clear and distinctive entrances for the corporate occupiers. There is some ground level retail but retail is mainly in below ground malls. The quality and increasing scale of retail has made Canary Wharf not just a commercial but also a major retail centre, helping to round it out as a piece of city and not simply a monocultural office centre. Development is grouped around squares and small parks, used also for outdoor cinema and skating rink to add to the offer. Connections are legible, the place relates well to the docks and to the Thames. The standard of finish and maintenance is remarkable for London, only matched by parts of the City of London. The project is unfinished with major expansion at Wood Wharf just to the area's south east, and with a further development explosion when the Crossrail station opens in 3 years' time.

Immediately to the south of CW is South Quay and the Millennium Quarter. This was an area of cheap B1 development and use stimulated by the 1980s Enterprise Zone (which also included CW and incentivized that development as well). The dramatic shift between commercial and residential values in London has led to the progressive demolition of these B1 buildings and their replacement by dense and tall residential development. There is no ownership here, compare the largely single controlling

hand in Canary Wharf, so developers compete within loose planning guidance to get their developments away. There is no master plan, no zoning to guide scale and massing. This is as near as you get to a free for all within the British planning system.



I am not arguing that the Tower Hamlets planners have abandoned their responsibilities, far from it, and they do think about the future of this locality. But I suggest that there are a number of dynamics coming together here:

- residential development values
- the pull of Canary Wharf

- a series of individual site owners not really brought together by the local planning authority
- sites with small footprints but a willingness to allow very high densities
- a tall buildings cluster rationale
- the value of S106 deals for the local authority, and the value of New Homes Bonus (Tower Hamlets has benefitted enormously from this)
- and of course this place is the western anchor of the Thames Gateway where the London Plan says a lot of building should happen.

This may also say something about the culture and operation of the British planning system. We have a plan led system but these plans are written in relatively general terms. We have no culture of zoning to guide massing and scale. We don't do much masterplanning to guide individual developers and to interpose decisions on how developments should relate to each other. We engage in development control transactions, development by development, within a loose planning policy envelope. With the developer trying to maximize outcomes, the planners regulating, and the public sector trying to extract value to maximize S106, Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus, and affordable housing. So within limits both the developer and the public sector regulator have a direct financial interest in maximising scale and value.



As we go immediately east of Canary Wharf the pattern of development breaks down. Here is a legacy of the London Docklands Development Corporation where the history of the pattern of the docks themselves, the creation of effective transport corridors, road and DLR, the meandering of the Thames, has so far led to disjointed development with no obvious community hubs. But it will be pulled together

by developments still to come.



Canning Town, infamous for the collapse of a system built 22 storey tower block in 1968, Ronan Point, and which signalled the end of the post World War 2 lust for that form of council estate-, finally finished off when the IMF came in and controlled the Treasury in 1976 and forced the British Government to impose strict controls on local authorities' borrowing for housing development. One of the better changes in the last decade or so is the intensification of town centres. This helps to revitalize them, to bring in spending power, and to contribute to our chronic requirement for new homes. So here in Canning Town intensification is proceeding apace, achieving these outcomes, certainly blockbuster compared with the status quo but not on the scale of South Quay/Millennium Quarter. Here though, major additions are underway with City Island just across the River Lee from Canning Town. 1700 homes over the next five years or so, nothing over 23 storeys, together with other important uses to help make the neighbourhood work. This could well be successful, building on excellent transport links. A blockbuster in total but not bad.



I don't want to say much about Battersea/Nine Elms except to offer a couple of points. The western end is becoming a series of large towers seemingly exploiting the Vauxhall transport hub and its capacity to handle such ringing big projects. The area doesn't work very well at present given the conjunction of towers and proposed towers with a sea of tarmac on one side and squeezed to the river's edge on the other. It will be rescued by radical changes to the Vauxhall gyratory, and the humanizing of the tarmac.

The second point here is the bringing together of major individual developers into a structured partnership which organizes development, particularly infrastructure, utilities, public space, and construction management. This is a voluntary private sector partnership which recognizes the importance of cooperation for mutual benefit, to radically improve the overall offer, and to provide a good channel for discussion with all the parties involved, both public and private.



Mount Pleasant, halfway between Kings Cross and Farringdon is work in progress and shouldn't be taken too seriously even though this has outline planning permission. I'll give you all a fiver if anything like this actually gets built. This is an exercise in maximizing mass and scale. This green space is not what it seems, a canopy roof. There is no respecting of topography and the river Fleet valley which ought to be the local linear park and change the orientation of the project from east west to north south. The massing in the south west corner is odd to put it mildly, far too cramped. The conservation area to the north of the site is not respected. And can't we do better in relating to Farringdon Rd than just building a wall of development. Those of you familiar with the scheme will recognize this critique from the MPA, and which seems spot on.

However let's end on a positive note with City Rd Basin and San Giminagno coming to Islington. A cluster of four roughly 36 storey towers, two under construction and with clearance and groundworks beginning on the two on the other side of City Road. They relate well to the scale of the canal basin itself, and the ones on the southern side replace a poor B1 low rise development. Public parks and piazzas, walkways, retail, hotel add to the mix and offer a very worthwhile scheme, though challenged by the busy City Rd running down the middle. Some softening still required there.

As we know London is a world city which happens to be attached to England. The wall for global money seeking investment comes here and indeed we encourage that, bringing their styles of development. Our safe haven status, time zone the English language, stable government, legal system, lack of corruption are all drivers. It seems to me that the lessons we can learn about how best to manage this investment and maximize benefit for all are not that complicated.”

Discussion following b. and c.

Peter Eversden asked where the infrastructure was coming from for the new housing sought by Duncan Bowie. Already it is difficult to access many town centres and questions of permeability and capacity will not ease this. There are also social and cultural concerns stemming from the emerging distributions by tenure.

Duncan Bowie said that there has been no discussion of who will live in the places that are being created.

Eric Sorensen suggested that this would be resolved by building sufficient new accommodation from which the free market will decide. At present the problem is that money spent by people from Hong Kong on London property will earn 3% whereas it will earn only 1% in Hong Kong itself. The solution to leaving property empty is to impose punitive taxes on vacant property. Part of the challenge is in expanding the nature of London and what it means to be part of a dynamic modern city. Large property companies are now muscling in on housing development attracted by the returns. Planning is too adversarial in its structure. It works better by co-operation as his being shown in Battersea/Vauxhall.

Brian Waters said that whether you are a large scale or small developer you are unlikely to build more than 3 properties until 30% have been presold to establish that the market is there. He agreed with Eric Sorensen that too much planning is wholly reactive such that it is very difficult to promote a vision of Nine Elms in a forceful way. King's Cross is an example of greater collaboration, Bishopsgate Goods Yard is not.

Mike coupe referred to Canary Wharf where no-one thought the infrastructure could follow the development but that is what happened. It has also had the consequence of latching on development to the east of the City where great damage is being created by inappropriate tall buildings such as Walkie Talkie. The City has responded to the movement east by allowing too much within the City itself.

Duncan Bowie asked where was Planning in all of this? The profit motive in high density site values is eclipsing the urgent need for coherent planning – especially at the regional level. Interventionism in the market place is needed.

Lucinda Turner said that to achieve this a seismic change in politics is needed.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday Monday 8th September at RICS HQ 12 Great George Street (Parliament Square) London SW1P and matters arising. Our host was Abdul Choudhury.

These were accepted with no matters arising.

4. Treasurer's report.

None

5. Next Meeting.

Rob Partridge of AKT II 100 Saint John Street, London EC1M 4EH offered to host the next meeting on 1st-2nd June subject to room availability.

6. Review of standing items.

None

7. AOB

Andy Rogers drew attention to the consolidation of the General Permitted Development Order on 15th April. The most notable update is to extend the period for PD for house extensions from 2016 to 30th May 2019.

DR/dbm 2.4.15