

Planning Update: The White Paper, beauty and planning – design codes, new Permitted Development rights, London Plan

Account of Forum Zoom Meeting on 2nd December 2020

Full minute by Andrew Rogers at planninginlondon.com > LP&DF

Following postponement of the meeting originally planned for March 2020, it was decided to hold a virtual conference on current planning issues, to include a series of presentations moderated by Brian Waters and Jonathan Manns.

Recorded 'provocations' by Paul Finch set the context for each topic, and an opportunity for discussion (questions and answers) followed each.

The subjects discussed were: The White Paper, Beauty and Design Codes, Permitted Development Rights and the Revised London Plan.

Joanna Averley, the government's new Chief Planner at MHCLG, opened the proceedings with a Keynote presentation.

The meeting was recorded and can be downloaded here: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

This report is a summary of the main topics.



Keynote address

Joanna Averley set out the government perspective on the planning system and an overview of the White Paper - which had received some

44,000 responses. She thanked all those that had responded, adding that it was acknowledged wide-ranging reform is required, partly to widen the system to involve fully all stakeholders and especially small and medium-scale developers and also to update it from the current out-dated analogue framework.

She summarised the main aims of the White Paper as improving process to make it fast and efficient, while improving sustainability and design quality. She noted that it did not cover everything and she was aware of gaps that had been identified: the headline 'pillars' were intended as a starting-point, without a great deal of detail at this stage.

First, plan-making would be quicker and clearer, with better land and housing allocations using set national parameters. Second, there would be new emphasis on design quality using codes, with spatial master-planning; the objective being active engage-

Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd December 2020 on Zoom Administered by the Cambridge University Land Society, 170 people signed up and there was a large attendance through the afternoon. Speakers were:

Brian Waters (Chairman - *pictured Right*)

Keynote

Joanna Averley new Chief Planner MHCLG (*pictured above*)

Provocations by Paul Finch [recorded]

The White paper

Moderator Jonathan Manns

Lord Kerslake is chairman of Peabody

Roy Pinnock is a partner in Dentons

Tom Dobson is a director of Quod

Catriona Riddell is a contributor to Planning - on the duty to cooperate

Beauty and planning – Design codes

Moderator BW

Andy von Bradsky is Government head of architecture

Nicholas Boys Smith is chairman of Create Streets

James Mitchell is partner in Axom Architects

New Permitted Development rights

Moderator BW

Stuart Baillie is head of planning at Knight Frank

Riette Oosthuizen is head of planning at HTA Design

London Plan

Moderator JM

Lisa Fairmainer is GLA Head of London Plan,

Duncan Bowie UCL

Gary Young, Place 54 Architects and former partner Farrells

With thanks from Ian Marcus OBE, President CULS



Cambridge University
Land Society

Annual Planning Update

Wednesday 2nd December 2020
on Zoom 1.30 for 2.00pm to 5.00pm
followed by virtual networking

- *The White Paper*
- *Beauty and planning*
- *New Permitted Development rights*
- *The London Plan*

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Annual Planning Update

Programme

- *The Government perspective*
Joanna Averley, Government Chief Planning Officer
- *The White Paper*
- *Beauty and planning – Design codes*
- *Changes to Permitted Development*
- *What now for the London Plan?*

Moderators: **Brian Waters**, chairman CULS APEC Forum and LP&DF and **Jonathan Manns** with 'Provocations' by **Paul Finch** [recorded] – *next page*

2.05 WELCOME

2.10 **KEYNOTE: The Government perspective**
Joanna Averley MHCLG new Chief Planner

2.30 Q&A

2.45 White Paper

Lord Kerslake is chairman of Peabody

Roy Pincock is a partner in Dentons

Tom Dobson is a Director of Quod

Catriona Riddell is a contributor to *Planning* and a consultant - on Duty to cooperate

3.20 Q&A

3.30 Beauty and planning – Design codes

Andy von Bradsky is Government head of architecture

3.50 Q&A

4.00 New Permitted Development rights

Stuart Baillie is head of planning at Knight Frank

Riette Oosthuizen is head of planning at HTA Design

4.20 Q&A

4.30 London Plan

Lisa Fairmainer is GLA acting Head of London Plan,

Duncan Bowie UCL

Gary Young, Place 54 Architects and former partner in Farrells

5.00 Free for all! Q&A/Panel/ networking!

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A record will be published in *January's Planning in London*



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ment with local communities. Third, a new payment system for infrastructure - properly integrated with development - would replace CIL but maintain the present level of investment; details of how this will work are under review. Fourth, a digital transformation currently being investigated through active working with a number of local authorities, which will set out how to capture the 'big data' that already exists so as to assist plan-making and involve communities in the widest sense - from a single person upwards.

Michael Bach asked about the proposed allocation of housing and, critically, other uses for London. Joanna said the answer to such questions is "watch this space" while the government researches how best to deal with this question. She added that the zones proposed would not be fixed rules-based zon-

ing as exists in many other countries, but a more general setting of parameters - this is still very open.

Peter Stewart said that spatial planning needs designers and asked where the new chief planners would come from. Joanna replied that a chief designer/planner for each authority will be very important to address the White Paper challenges and the government is very conscious of the resourcing issue. The aim is to reduce procedural time so as to create better overview planning - at all scales. She added that the recent £12 million allocation in the government's spending review is for one year and will be followed by more as resourcing is a priority area from number 10 down.

In summary, Joanna noted that the White Paper proposes a complicated reform to the system as a whole and the government will keep a close eye on outcomes while recognising the significance of change and adaptability in the long term. Legislation and implementation will inevitably take some time. Meanwhile she asked for everyone to please send her further comments and particularly examples of good practice.

The White Paper

Paul Finch said that the proposed planning system changes represent the best chance in a gen-

eration for positive planning to transform and/or improve our building environment. **Headline: Bring Back Planning.** Replace unnecessary risk with certainty and concentrate on the quality of the proposed, not the principle of development.

Lord Kerslake, chairman of Peabody, in general supported the White Paper and was pleased that Joanna emphasised its tone as a discussion document. He agreed in particular with the aims of simplification and the use of digital technology, but had some serious concerns.

First, he disputed the White Paper's apparent underlying assumption that the planning system was to blame for poor and inadequate housing, for which there is little real evidence. He agreed that there is a need for reform but is concerned that a rules-based system would bring less flexibility - consistency needs to be provided by other means.

Second, the White Paper underweights the issue of genuinely affordable housing.

Third, a move away from local decision-making and local people's democratic control over individual sites was a recipe for conflict; although in favour of better guidance, he was against mandatory codes that could remove the opportunity for trade-off and local debate.

And fourth, cross-boundary issues were not >>>



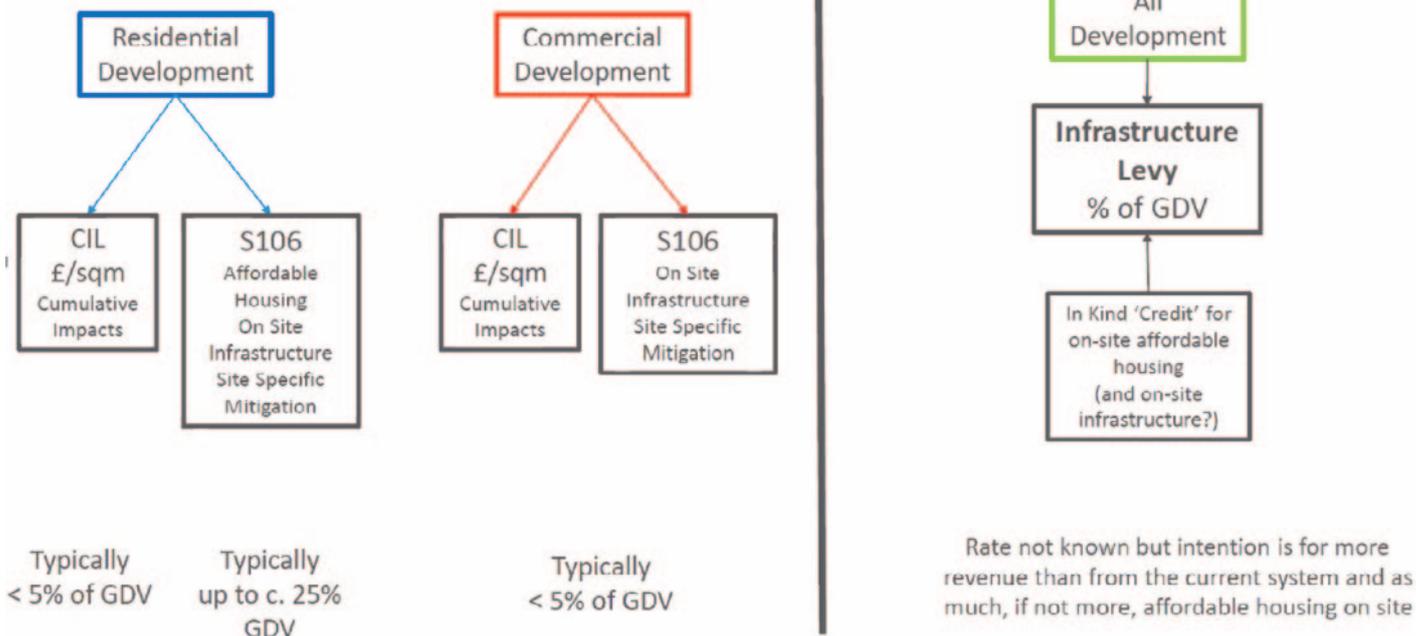
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Infrastructure Levy and In-Kind Delivery



addressed.

The problem of infrastructure funding needs detailed assessment (the devil will be in the detail) and he prefers revision of the current system over the invention of a new one - a theme that was repeated by other speakers. Finally, Lord Kerslake highlighted the extension of permitted development rights and how this can be reconciled with better quality.

Roy Pinnock, a partner at event sponsor (and usual host) Dentons, felt that it was in reality a Green, not White Paper. He believes the fundamental goal of planning is leadership and advocacy, but

is concerned that while reform is needed, we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater. He agreed completely with Lord Carnwath's representation of the planning system as "robust, over-cluttered and under-resourced", requiring targeted improvements and better funding.

For Local Plans there is an opportunity for positive dialogue in respect of engagement, efficiency and transparency. The current system is over-complex and it's necessary for this "rogue" process to be streamlined. Speed and a social licence to build are crucial to reform, but with caution.

Core issues are design coding (local legitimacy),

clarity and responsibility. The problem with design codes may be the same as with SPDs, which are over-important, wrongly used and generally a menace. Resourcing is crucial due to the scale of reform that is envisaged - we simply don't have the resources at present to operate the kind of system that is proposed. Transition by incremental change is key: piloting will be important for fundamental system revision.

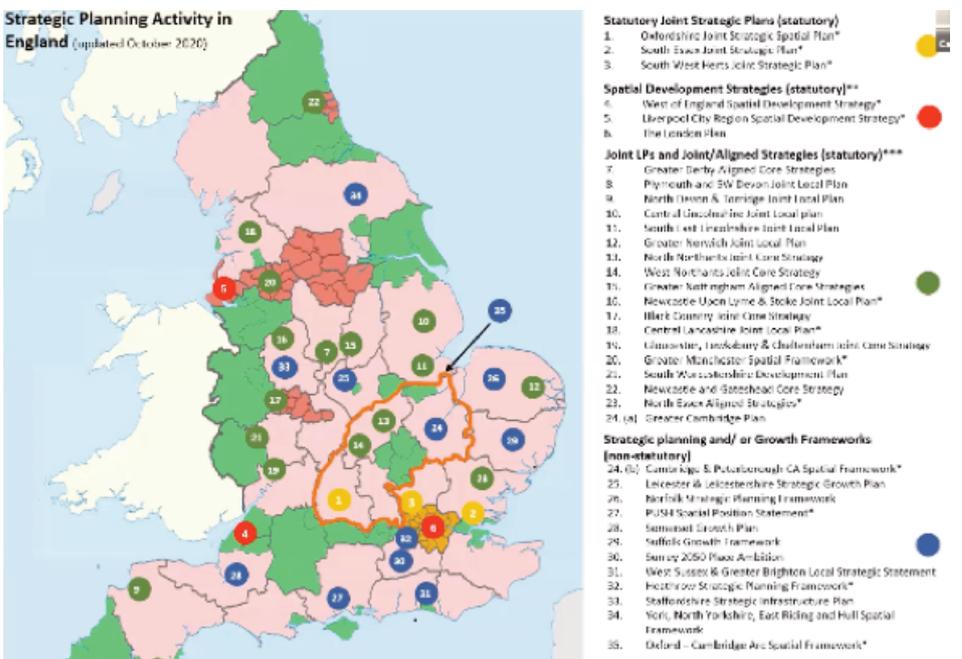
With regard to CIL, the proposed amalgamation with withdrawn section 106 agreements will be too complex (ie a low-level basic charge with additional payment for value capture) and ignores the importance of section 106 in mitigation discussions and problem-solving. Deregulation without creating barriers to investment will be difficult - it would be better (and achievable) to simplify what we've got and make sure it works properly.

Tom Dobson, Director of Quod, also spoke about planning for infrastructure and connected places, the 'third pillar' of the White Paper. Current systems are to be merged, but there is a difficulty in relating the present actual financial contribution levels to a new single system (see diagram above).

But is a single tariff the planning nirvana, as suggested by Liz Peace in her CIL review? There are several basic problems that Tom has identified. First, as noted by Roy Pinnock, section 106 agreements are not all about money and it's not clear how the many "in kind" issues now covered by section 106 will be dealt with in a new single system.

Second, averaging a tariff will be difficult especially when considering tricky or unusual sites.

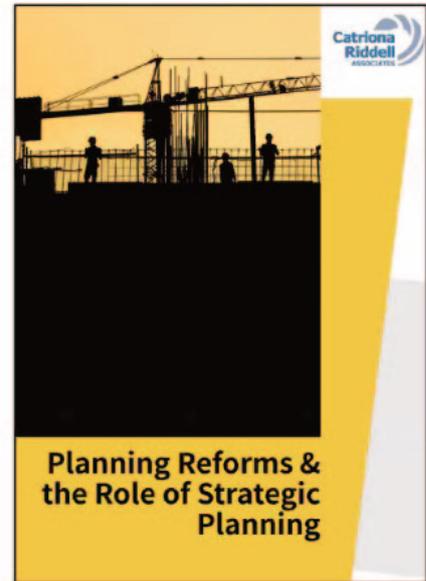
Third, it's not clear how a new system would



Effective strategic planning – the rules of engagement

- **Build on current practice and experience**, especially if we want to hit the ground running and address the economic recovery – we are not starting with a blank sheet of paper in many areas.
- **Use ‘building blocks’ to manage the different and complex strategic planning functions and relationships** which often change over time - spatial scale needs to be big enough to translate national policies and priorities but small enough to reflect local context and circumstances.
- **Strategic planning must be part of an integrated and systemic approach to sustainable growth** from the national level down – it is much more than just a mechanism to distribute housing and address cross boundary infrastructure.
- **Strategic planning frameworks must be vision-led and outcome-focused** with collective ownership from key partners for its delivery, especially where there is an ambition to transform an area over a long period of time.
- **Strategic planning is best managed outside the statutory planning system** so that it can be developed quickly and be flexible & responsive to external impacts over time (e.g. climate, technological and economic change).
- **All key partners with a responsibility for supporting sustainable growth should be part of the governance structure** - growth boards are proving to be a useful model.
- **Investment in strategic planning skills and capacity is essential**– strategic planners play a critical ‘ringmaster’ role in an increasingly complex system.

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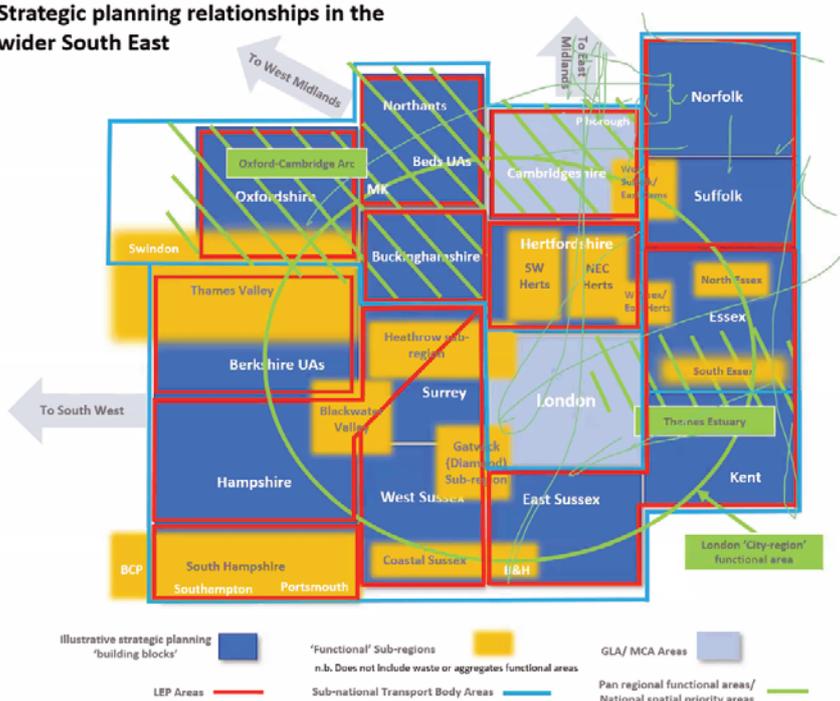


“With the government planning to scrap the duty to cooperate and Coronavirus forcing us to think about the recovery and future for our local economies, there has never been a better time to consider a reinvigorated strategic spatial planning system and this report provides much food for thought.”

Councillor David Williams
Chairman of the County Councils Network

[New report argues for stronger collaboration between councils to fill the strategic planning void - County Councils Network](#)

Strategic planning relationships in the wider South East



impact on commercial developments. Fourth, affordable housing, often currently dealt with by section 106, may not be controlled. Fifth, the mechanics of a new system and its implementation will be hard in practice. Finally, there will be a real tension between simplicity (or clarity) and universality (allowance for all circumstances).

The present system is unique to this country. We should not lose sight of the most important factor: delivery of infrastructure and homes. This must not be threatened by the new system.

Catriona Riddell spoke on strategic planning, which she noted is a large and wide-ranging issue. She is concerned that the new system should build on existing good practice, which is very diverse.

Strategic planning has to be managed at the right scale - not too big or too small; it must make sense locally. Vision-led planning should be outcome-focused, not just part of an inflexible statutory system. And huge investment, of money and skills, will be needed to make it work.

Jonathan Manns picked up a few questions that had come in, several regarding affordable housing and how that is to be provided.

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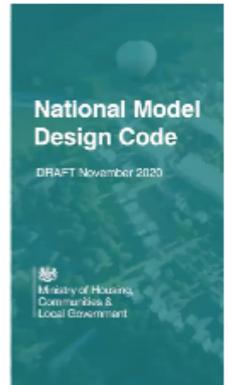
Document structure

Introduction – what is a design code, why have one and how is the NMDC to be applied.

Part 1 – step by step process for developing a local design code, using examples and model community engagement process

Part 2 – guidance notes and illustrations to support design parameters and design standards related to 10 characteristics set out in NDG.

Glossary, references and credits



>>> Lord Kerslake said that (perhaps obviously) the key is to build many more homes and ensure that there is better land capacity. There must be greater public investment and the ability to free up sites for affordable housing. But is there the necessary political will for government intervention?

Tom Dobson added that more borrowing needs to be a balance between central and local government funding, which may well be a double-edged sword. The trickiest element is fairness across all types of site.

In reply to query about whether there should be a national spatial plan, as for Wales, Scotland, etc, Catriona Riddell said no, England is too diverse and it would be best to build up a strategist picture from the bottom, ie local to larger units within an overall national framework. She was concerned about how democracy works at a strategic level to take account of the multiple layers in our society.

In summing up this section of the debate, Jonathan asked Roy Pinnock what single sweeping change he would recommend to improve the planning system. Roy said that to deliver a better planning system, local plans would need to focus on dialogue and leadership – a real adoption of political responsibility to enable change.

Beauty and Planning - Design Codes

Paul Finch said that the idea of self-appointed community representatives defining beauty for planning purposes is undesirable in principle and impossible in practice. There is no satisfactory

definition of beauty capable of being written into planning law. The beneficiaries of such an approach will be planning lawyers and prejudice will be legitimised as acceptable taste.

Andy von Bradsky, Government Head of Architecture, had hoped to unveil and speak about the National Model Design Code, currently nearing publication. Instead he described the process and production of the Code, emphasising that design quality is now a significant part of government thinking and decision-making. This is illustrated by the Building Better Building Beautiful initiative and the National Design Guide that sets out ten characteristics for good design - not all related to appearance.

Design codes, which the White Paper expects all local planning authorities to produce, should be seen as a kit of parts tailored to the locality, not a fixed pattern. The National Model Design Code will be a toolkit that follows the ten principles for good place-making and sets out the parameters that a local code should incorporate, with extensive guidance to inform what will be expected in local design codes.

The document will be guidance, not policy. It covers suitable forms of code, from city centres to the countryside, at all levels from the whole local authority right down to individual sites. Behind the document are various government publications including the Manual for Streets (currently being revised), Green Infrastructure Standards, etc. It will include advice on the best methods for achieving good community involvement.

[Chat comment: "There is an increasing trend for developers to use PR consultants to undertake what they describe as community engagement. It very often isn't this at all, but a sales exercise. It brings planning into disrepute." – Graeme Bell]

A fast track for beauty will mean compliance with design policies set out in model codes. It is encouraging to note that the White Paper calls for an improved digital basis, simplified and visual local plans, and aims to build back the lost chief design officer role for all planning authorities.

Nicholas Boys Smith, chairman of Create Streets, started by suggesting that Paul Finch is completely wrong to say that beauty is undesirable in principle and impossible in practice [BUT this is not what he said - he said that defining beauty for planning purposes is undesirable...] by quoting Ebenezer Howard, Octavia Hill and the 1909 Planning Act. He thinks we have lost the confidence to talk about beauty as something to achieve.

History shows that the management of our cities by state control is by no means new and indeed dates back to Rome and even earlier. Planning is a problem in the UK, which has an extremely complex and uncertain system for development with very high barriers.

Living with Beauty, the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission report was wide-ranging and based on extensive research, workshops, etc. It defined beauty at three scales: buildings, places and setting. We do create beautiful buildings and places but they are far too rare. People see the planning process as a shield rather than a sword, but there is in





the public's view an overwhelming lack of confidence that we can do better. We can now build incredibly large incredibly ugly buildings very cheaply.

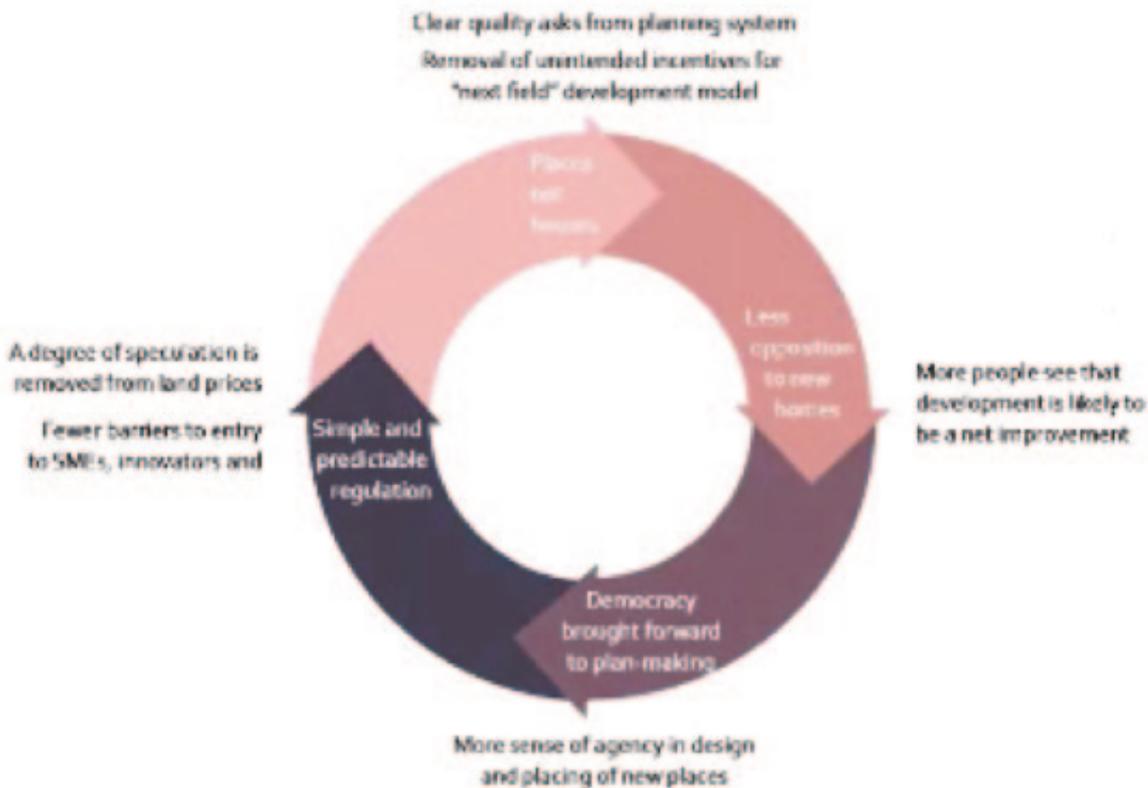
The idea that design is subjective is a myth that needs to be axed: where we live has a fundamental effect on our health and

well-being. There is a strong case for "gentle density", more walking and mixed-use.

The BBBBC recommends eight key interactions, some of which are picked up in the White Paper, all largely achievable within the NPPF.

>>>

Virtuous Circle of Regenerative Development



>>> The exceptions are the need for "stewardship" to create a level tax playing field, along with the poor quality of current matrices that decision-makers use to assess new developments and the well-being of people overall. We must move from a vicious circle of parasitic development to a virtuous circle of regenerative development.

James Mitchell, partner in Axiom Architects (a small/medium practice), summarised the current designer's role as a tightrope walk balanced between planning/buildings and the clients brief; using a wide range of advice from the National Design Guide to local SPDs. He explained by reference to examples how a design evolves, particularly using the *Living with Beauty* report. Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder - there is very often a distinction between what is good and bad usually depending on the detailed components that are used.

Beauty can be found in all sorts of very varied elements and relationships. Design codes need to be based on fundamental rules and characteristics that define a place - and that is what we look for in our own designs. Local people know their vernacular: identikit or pattern-book houses are not always suitable. Using existing proportions, materials, textures, layers, etc, can be very interesting and this does not always mean traditional design.

If new Model Design Codes are used to bridge the adversarial relationships between planning and the developer they may well streamline the system: so that the architect will still be leading the team, using relevant codes and guidance to tease out good and beautiful designs - as long as they don't restrict innovation. Architecture will still have the power to raise the spirits and enhance places. "Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort. There must be the will to produce a superior thing" - *Ruskin*.

Brian Waters asked who is going to be the judge? Better quality is required but at the moment local authority resources

and skills have been dissipated. NBS replied that in his view the role of the state is to set the framework for development and for local people to fill in the detail - subject to reasonable constraints. Design codes should be used to define what is appropriate and good locally to provide a clear and easy route to approval (unlike the current "pressure cooker" system) not to prevent other types of development - ie the weird and the wonderful.

AvB emphasised that design codes will have to be produced by skilled people as manuals or kits of parts for good design - allowing much wider use of architects generally.

New Permitted Development Rights

Paul Finch spoke about the continuing expansion of permitted development, noting that the complaint that it has produced rabbit hutches not suitable for living in has been addressed by government through the introduction of space and daylight standards. Permitted development is a minor but very positive element in the drive to create new housing and it also encourages desirable retrofit, prolonging the active life of redundant buildings.

Stuart Baillie, head of planning at Knight Frank, started with a whirlwind tour through current permitted development rights, in particular the recent pd changes that allow upward extensions to a wide range of buildings and the simplification of the Use Classes Order. Despite the "Permitted development WRONGS" headline there are examples of both good and bad housing through pd.

The new Use Class E amalgamates many uses previously in separate classes, meaning that changes of use between them no longer requires planning permission. This effectively moves changes of use to a market-led system.

Stuart then showed a series of slides that pictured buildings in his local area that can now be extended upwards by two storeys, from residential and mixed-use blocks or terraces of three or more

floors to detached homes. There are many limitations and controls under the prior approval process that apply, which means that these pd right procedures are moving close to full planning permissions. An additional pd right allows demolition of vacant buildings to provide housing using the same footprint, also with limitations.

Knight Frank's research shows that most cities have huge potential numbers of new homes under these rights, in London specifically for around 137,000 new units (5.5 million square metres) in 13,500 eligible buildings. This has produced a lot of interest from the housing market, particularly landlords, but is limited by factors that have to be taken into account when considering viability such as servicing and access, building ownerships, development economics, local authority resources for obtaining permissions despite a fairly high level of application fees, etc.

At present in addition affordable housing is not captured by pd rights but this is likely to be changed by government - although a number of blocks that currently provide such housing can also be extended. Finally, local authorities can consider the implementation of Article 4 directions to limit the rights in specific areas if that can be justified.

BW pointed out what he considered to be drafting error in the pd rights legislation which excludes two-storey blocks of flats from the right to extend.

Riette Oosterhuizen described some projects that HTA has been concerned with, particularly with respect to long-term value. Many roof-top schemes already completed were tricky and involved extensive negotiation with the local authority. Quality can be delivered if consistency and careful attention to design are kept in mind. There is indeed, according to 2016 HTA research, a great potential for upwards extension; and this was extrapolated across London to provide (conservatively) 180,000 new homes. The new permitted development rights have extended this potential.



The way that such proposals are delivered needs very careful consideration in respect of building regulations, cost and type of construction. How extensions are provided is critical and should be determined from the beginning, especially for (lightweight) off-site manufacture: you must decide how it will be built and what it will look like before deciding to proceed. There will also be a great deal of controversy in the locality when rooftop extensions are concerned.

BW asked about additional floorspace which originally was proposed to be only for extra housing units but now is allowed as extra space added to existing homes. RO confirmed that is so, but questioned the scale of pd rights and how they will be overlaid with design codes and local plans, which may in future be set at single-street levels; and their impact on social infrastructures.

Revised London Plan

Paul Finch proposed that Green Belt, or Metropolitan Open Land, in London should be reviewed and classified where Grade I cannot be built on at all, Grade II could take buildings in exceptional circumstances, and Grade III could be

built on subject to very high environmental and design standards. Why do we treat Metropolitan Open Land as a sacred cow instead of a system which needs regular review?

Lisa Fairmainer, GLA Head of The London Plan, began by reviewing the timeline for the revised London Plan. This started in October 2016 and a draft revised London Plan was published in December 2017 with a consultation that ran through into March 2018. An Examination in Public was held early in 2019, ending in May; and following some changes the Mayor sent the Plan to the Secretary of State in December 2019, leaving six weeks for a response.

But the SoS has applied for two extensions and on 30th March 2020 issued 11 modification directions, followed by discussions on a number of minor changes during April and early May. A proper response from the SoS is still awaited. [Post-meeting note: on 9th December the Mayor wrote to the SoS stating that he intended in any event to publish the Plan for adoption before Christmas.]

The lack of a new published London Plan has resulted in uncertainty and additional work for those determining planning applications as well as

authorities that are drafting local plans, making support for the development industry at this unprecedented time very difficult.

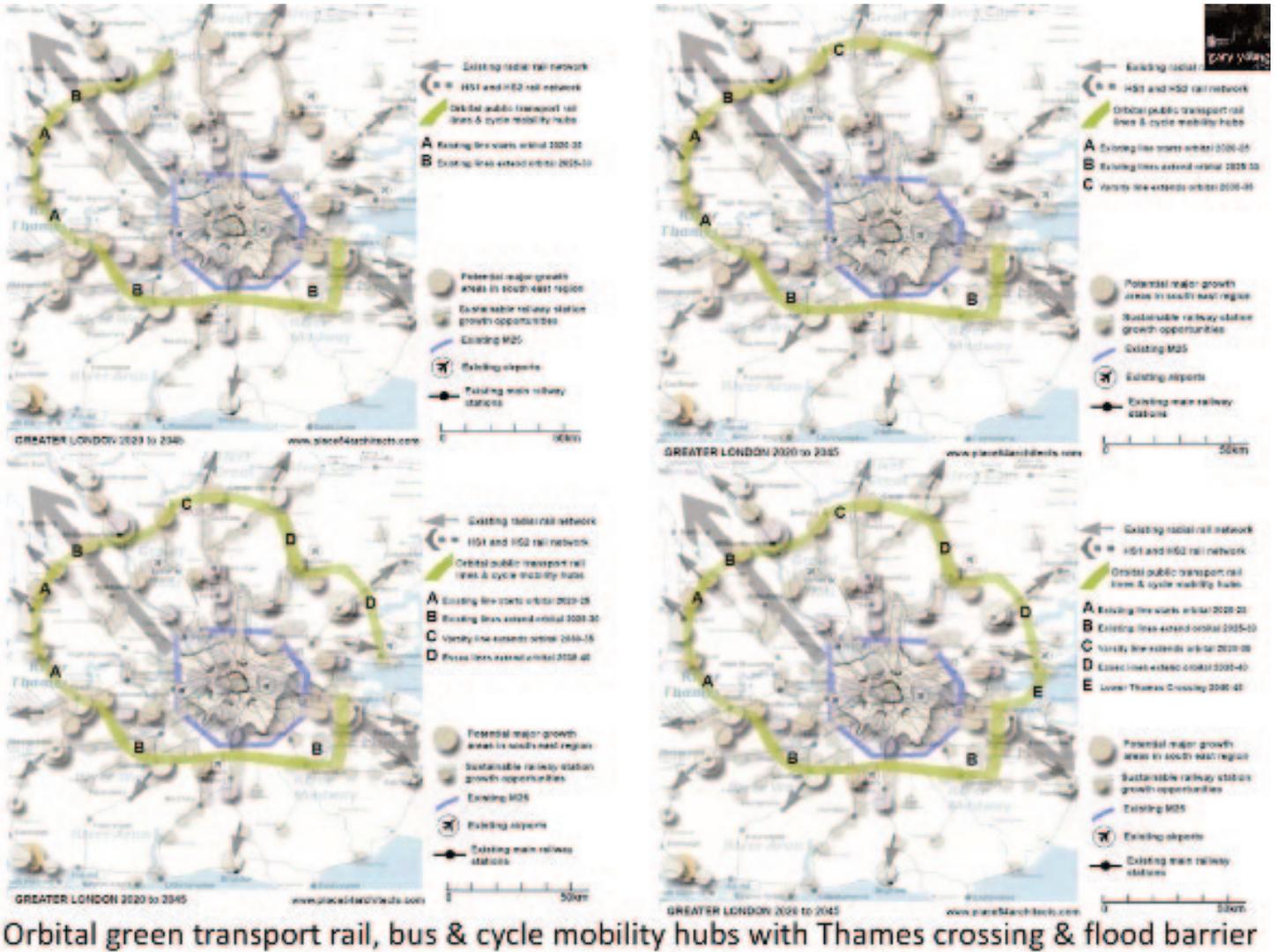
The Plan was drafted to cope with a range of changes and remains fit for purpose, with a flexible framework, despite the pandemic and Brexit. New sets of data and trends, such as the impact of Use Classes Order changes, will continue to be monitored. Research continues on housing numbers, etc, and the digitisation of the London Plan so that it becomes an interactive bespoke document that can be tailored to individual proposals.

There are currently five supplementary consultations in hand including housing design, privately-owned open spaces, carbon assessments, etc. There is also work being done on opportunity area planning frameworks and growth strategies, infrastructure coordination, etc. But The White Paper ignores city-regions with devolved and directly-elected representatives, which account for a third of the population (London currently being a prime example that achieves high marks in design audits), which is a significant omission.

In addition the digital planning application hub has recently been activated as a live database, with an interactive SHLAA shortly to be introduced. But the increasing divergence between centrally-directed housing numbers and the reality of achievable planning (22 per cent of London is effectively designated Green Belt) is not helpful to communities. Discretionary planning is right and there is a role for optimal solution planning rather than a tick-box approach.

Duncan Bowie drew together many of the issues raised by previous speakers. London Plans since 2004 have been based on the compact city approach. The main issue remains an undersupply of housing (and critically an undersupply of affordable housing). The supply of social housing has been cut by half in London and the South East over the last 30 years, while (unregulated) private rented housing stock has doubled.

There is an increasing gap between housing requirements and capacity and DB agrees with LF that the use of algorithms for housing supply in London is extremely unhelpful. The rigid policy of Green Belt protection has limited consideration of alternative spatial development options. There has been a failure to plan London in the context of wider South East housing and employment markets. London Plans have not dealt adequately with the



Orbital green transport rail, bus & cycle mobility hubs with Thames crossing & flood barrier

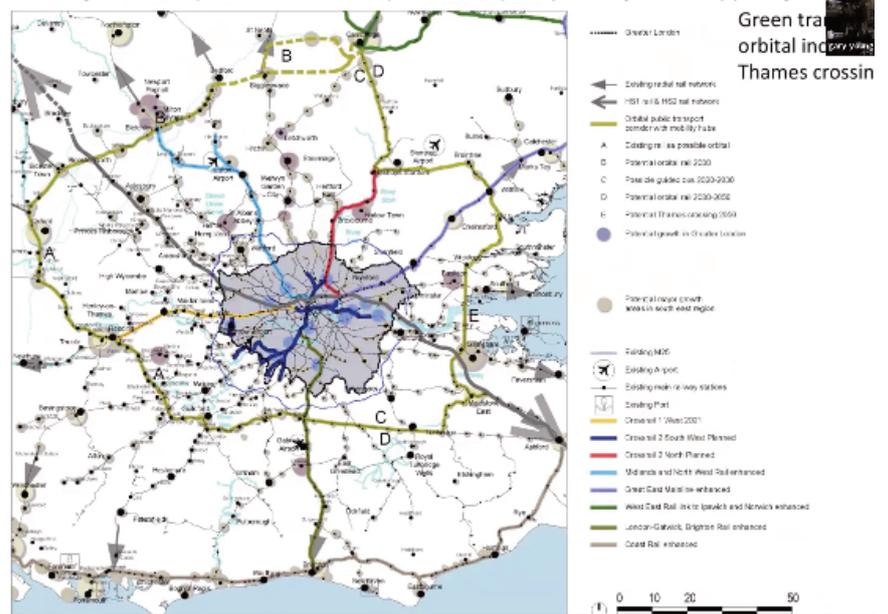
>>> unresolved competition between competing development requirements for the use of land.

We've not been building enough family size homes and density policies have a negative impact on affordability: higher density means higher land prices and higher prices of new homes. We have increasingly been building flats not houses, leading to high service charges and more recently the issue of poor cladding. There is now a collapsing market for flats.

The pandemic has underlined the importance of both internal space and external spaces and parks. Changes in working, living and commuting patterns make a return to previous normality unlikely. With reduced revenue, London's public transport network is no longer financially viable without massive subsidy. Changes in working practices may lead to the death of central London in the short or long term. The closure of leisure attractions in central London will have an economic impact.

There are major implications for London's spatial planning, including flights to the suburbs, and the growth of local and internet shopping. There is a strong argument for self contained "5-minute"

Potential new green transport infrastructure provides capacity for region to support growth



neighbourhoods and a case for incremental suburban intensification and the expansion of county towns, leading to a more polycentric approach to regional planning. We must also consider the issue of the reuse of office capacity which is no longer required in central London.

The City Hall theory of aggregation economics - the concentration of all the services in one location - in a digital and post COVID age is somewhat questionable: a compact city approach for London is no longer tenable. A complete rethink of our approach to London and city regional planning is required. We need some kind of national spatial planning framework to assist the wider city region as a whole.

Gary Young, Place 54 Architects and a former design director in Farrells, presented concept diagrams that have been created over the years for the evolving area of the Greater London region up to 2050. These use the existing radial grid with a wider, speculative orbital ring.

This proposes a railway orbital (green line) beyond the existing M25 ring (blue) to create a sustainable zero-carbon network transport system, expanded to an area well beyond to encompass the wider South East, mainly using existing radial rail services, to create a market garden city.

This is a work in progress. It challenges the role of the existing Green Belt, which inhibits opportuni-

ty without having a properly curated function. It neither respects statutory designations of landscape quality nor does it consider easy access for recreation or for local food production. In our proposal the Green Belt is not a single rigid requirement but locally led with more dynamic guidance. This local approach to green space was advocated by Ebenezer Howard.

The four stages to developing the orbital (see diagrams opposite) have varying degrees of challenge. Sustainable development opportunities would be focused around areas of best connectivity - existing radial rail lines are based on existing patterns of commuting. This Plan promotes investment along an extended orbital approach and the work already in progress along the north-west Ox-Cam arc demonstrates what can be done. The orbital rail could be completed with an east Thames crossing.

The Greater London Plan we are proposing shows a more meaningful relationship between cities, towns and villages and local landscapes.

Jonathan Manns picked up on questions that arose from the presentations.

John Wachter from the GLA, in response to housing numbers uncertainty, said that there are many more homes already being built - 41,000 units last year. But there are problems converting permissions into delivery and how brownfield land comes forward. The key thing is to adopt the new London Plan as soon as possible to provide certainty. The functional economic area of London means that authorities outside of the GLA should be helping to meet the figures, although the Mayor believes that London can meet its own housing need.

Duncan Bowie replied to questions about how the vision of Gary Young's wider London Plan can be

delivered by pointing out that the work being done on the issue of wider London influence has been going on for many decades. The difficulty is that there is still a perception, among leading politicians and successive mayors, that all the Metropolitan Green Belt is actually green, which is nonsense. And also that we have not discussed what could be produced by releasing specific sites from Metropolitan Open Land or Green Belt adjacent to London - critically what kind of housing are we building on such land and what is accessible. We must find a middle way between those who say that every piece of GB land, whether derelict or not, is sacrosanct and those who feel we can solve all our housing problems by releasing selected GB sites.

[Chat: Whilst MOL and MGB have very similar policy protections, they are very different. MOL protects important open space that is within London and serves its needs. MGB is an urban containment zone stopping the metropolis from sprawling and is not an environmental policy. So the quality of the land is not an issue. - Mike Kiely.]

Ian Marcus, President of CULS, thanked the speakers, the sponsors Dentons and Bath Publishing and everyone who attended in their search for the holy grail of consistency, simplicity and efficiency in the planning system. ■



A special word of thanks...

to Drummond Robson who has just stepped down as Hon Sec of the London Planning & Development Forum after many years. His extensive write-ups of Forum meetings provide us with an invaluable record - see www.planninginlondon.com > LP&DF. Thanks too for his help in formulating agendas and suggesting topics as well as for memorable insights into the character of High Barnet!
-BW



NEXT MEETING of the London Planning & Development Forum

Monday 1st March on Zoom
email planninginlondon@mac.com
if you would like to 'attend' and receive the link