

Localism – how did a good idea go so wrong? questions Paul Dimoldenberg



I am supporter of localism. It must make sense to give local communities a bigger say on new developments in their area. At its best it can contribute new ideas that can be incorporated into new buildings and environments and make them better places to live and work. At the very least, it can help to build an understanding of the development process and how it works. And, if the new localism can also include a financial incentive through contributions to facilities or infrastructure needed locally, then that builds in real local benefits and helps make the area work better for everyone. Sadly, however, the Government has sold localism more as a means of stopping development rather than as a means of encouraging better development. Coupled with a streamlined NPPF, the Government

appears to be saying that it wants to give local communities a bigger say (to say no), but at the same time appearing to be making it easier for developers to win planning permission for developments that local people don't want.

Politicians need to make localism work. This means central and local government, together with developers, doing more to involve local communities in planning issues. Local benefits need to be at the heart of the discussion. "What's in it for us?" is a legitimate question for communities to ask. Responding effectively to this question is the key. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' process. Councils, companies and communities need to work out what suits them best and then get on with it. ■

Paul Dimoldenberg is leader of Westminster's Labour Group

Neighbourhood plans to take off or will LDFs take the strain? asks Seema Manchandra



2012 has the potential to host a series of changes to the planning system and planners will continue to work in interesting times. The National Planning Policy Framework is expected in spring 2012. I hope that the recommendations of the Select Committee are taken up as these were helpful. Planners can then expect more information on the test of conformity against which our own Core Strategies will be assessed. Also it will be interesting to see whether government seeks stakeholders to come forward to draft streamlined guidance, who comes forward and why?

I follow the progress of the Bermondsey Neighbourhood Plan and am fascinated how the local community living under the shadow of The Shard will take things forward. Local partnerships haven't emerged yet in Wandsworth. I suspect that most residents are not keen to push for more development than already in our Local Development Framework Documents.

Boroughs will be taking forward their own Community Infrastructure Levies as they need to progress these by 2014. Redbridge and the GLA

have already forged forward with this work and Wandsworth expects to be at the Examination Stage during the first half of 2012, leader of Westminster's Labour Group (see Nick Cuff interview p. 10)

The Planning Inspectorate will take over from the Infrastructure Planning Commission in April 2012. In due course the Thames Tunnel, a major proposal for infrastructure in London, is likely to be submitted for consideration. This is more complex than existing major infrastructure applications as it impacts all boroughs along the Thames. Can a speeded up process work well with so many planning authorities to engage?

Most London Boroughs were hoping that the Government would bring forward legislation that would enable locally set charges for planning applications. A clear response on this would be welcome and from an officers' perspective it would be beneficial if this legislation were passed as it would bring in income to cover the costs of the development management. That can only help us to address all of the challenges ahead! ■

Seema Manchandra is Wandsworth's assistant director of planning

It's about attitudes and relationships argues Rob Perrins



Planning is all about localism in 2012. This is partly about a change in policy. It's also about a shift in culture. Just as local people should now consider their responsibility to back good schemes for the homes and jobs they bring, we as developers need to think through our response. Take the statutory requirement for pre-application consultation. This new regulation is common sense. In fact, it often makes sense for schemes half the size of the new threshold. Berkeley has been doing it for a while and our experience last year at sites like Atkinson Morley in Wimbledon reinforced two things for me.

The first is that attitude matters. On this scheme, our process didn't break new ground. It was a simple case of early engagement, public consultation, then feedback and promotion of final proposals. What made the difference was a very open-handed approach. There was a visible commitment to deal with local people on their own terms.

The second is about relationships. The Localism Act has abolished the concept of predetermination. The Standards Board regime



Berkeley's Atkinson Morley scheme in Wimbledon

will soon disappear. At Atkinson Morley, ward councillors and cabinet member were actively involved in shaping the scheme before it came to committee. The positive consensus at the end of the process was the result of a healthy dialogue over the previous 18 months.

What this tells you about planning in 2012 is that residential development in sensitive locations and urban areas can be delivered with active community support. Localism is about engaging and having a debate. I think this year should be about working together. ■

Rob Perrins is managing director of the Berkeley Group



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The possibility of change might encourage new thinking hopes Roger Hepher



No one knows quite where the planning system is heading. We don't know how neighbourhood planning will work; we don't know what the final version of the NPPF will contain; we don't know how the Local Enterprise Partnership is going to operate; we don't have a clear indication of ministerial priorities (and thus we find it difficult to anticipate appeal and call-in decisions); we don't know whether/how the Use Classes Order might be changed; and we don't know how priorities will be re-ordered by under-resourced borough planning departments.

You might ask which developer would launch any new project when there is so much uncertainty and potential for delay? Not to forget two levels of CIL charge, withdrawal of funding for affordable housing, and rising design and sustainability expectations. It would be easy to get quite despondent. Personally, however, I'm not. Partly because London's unique property market has proved reas-

surprisingly buoyant in recent times, and – as economic and political turmoil continues to grip much of the rest of the world – is likely to continue to do so. And partly because out of change, opportunities often arise.

When Planning is charged with serving multiple agendas – as it increasingly has in recent times – it can become possible to justify proposals that would in the past have been unjustifiable. That site might be land everyone has always assumed would be kept open, but, if a new scheme would generate jobs, and be a model of sustainability and inspired design, and make a substantial contribution towards affordable housing and CrossRail, developing it may now be acceptable whereas previously it would not.

Planning evolves constantly, as conditions shift in the world around us, being at the leading edge of that process is an exciting place to be. ■

Roger Hepher is Savills' Head of Planning

We should be wary of the cuts eroding civic values argues Sarah Gaventa



2012 My biggest fear is a growing lack of generosity and civic-mindedness in planning approaches and attitudes, combined with short-termism (recession shouldn't be an excuse for abandoning the vision), which combined could result in planning disaster.

Local authorities may become more inward looking, as beleaguered professionals trying to do two or three people's jobs (being more "efficient") might not have time to look up and think about the impact of their local planning decisions on the wider area, across other boroughs and boundaries. Forgetting that the public view London from neighbourhood and city perspectives but rarely by borough, (I'm proud to be a Wandsworthite is not something I hear anyone cry...).

The public want a city that is joined up and works from east to west, north to south as well as from the end of their street to their nearest transport hub or school. I fear LAs will not have the time, capacity or even the opportunities for discussion, advice sharing, training and support that

is necessary to ensure that planning mistakes aren't replicated, and that best practice is shared and learnt from.

The other fear is that the impact of the protest outside St Paul's will mean other LAs, fearful of further civil unrest as cuts start to really bite, will become increasingly nervous about planning civic space for gatherings and legitimate protest.

The knock on effect is evident in barricaded Paternoster where the signage informed you that no it isn't a public space actually (despite the fact that it behaved like one) and entry without a pass is prohibited forthwith (or evidence of a restaurant reservation one presumes...) – a sad reminder that our public spaces are becoming increasingly less so.

Let's hope that LAs will not become timid, insular and nervous just at a time when the public needs them to be exactly the reverse. Imaginative, ambitious, open and planning for the longer term needs of Londoners. ■

Sarah Gaventa is former director of public space at CABI

Bermondsey's new Localism has not been without hitches says John Corey



When the Localism Bill was first discussed publicly, a "group" of local residents and business owners on or near Bermondsey Street, SE1 were actively engaged with Southwark Council concerning the proposed Supplementary Planning Document. One key to the SPD was the identification of a tall building zone. The draft document caused alarm as many residents had not realized that being so central to the City might mean that the London Bridge area could become a "third financial centre".

When some members of the neighbourhood spotted an opportunity to be awarded Front Runners status under the Localism Bill, the Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum was formed.

Lessons learned include how people are more inclined to engage when there is a current, immediate, and a specific threat. Collectively we have been less able to focus on the area wide

planning agenda.

Other lessons followed Bruce Tuckman's* model for the lifecycle of new groups: "storming, norming, forming and then performing".

The most surprising issue have been conflicts over the process. Traditionally trained professionals from the planning profession expected a formal exercise lead by consultants who were fully independent of the local community.

The alternative view was the work could be adequately performed by local volunteers who have direct connections to the Bermondsey neighbourhood. Spats, including the blocking of the website when people did not like the majority's decisions, took place. Not always a positive reflection on the professionalism one would expect from one's neighbours. ■

* Bruce Tuckman, the US psychologist and group dynamics theorist, published this theory in 1965

John Corey is chair of the Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum

Funding infrastructure remains a major challenge thinks Robert Evans



I am optimistic about Enterprise Zones. Not so much because of the proposed business rates discounts, simplified planning or superfast broadband, but because local enterprise partnerships will be able to keep, for 25 years, the uplift in business rates revenue from 2013-14. That means Enterprise Zones offer the certainty of revenue necessary for Tax Increment Finance ("TIF")-style borrowing. For example, public sector loans through the Public Loans Works Board; borrowing against an authority's general fund; the use of municipal bonds; or entering into "pay as you go" arrangements with developers. The recent (19 December 2011) Local Government Finance Bill refers to such arrangements as "Option Two" TIFs and, within Enterprise Zones, they will not need

any further approvals or consents from Government.

I am less optimistic about the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). I fear some authorities will be tempted to propose unrealistic charges that then survive limited scrutiny, for example about the impact on viability and assumptions around affordable housing. Once a CIL charging schedule is adopted, it offers precious little discretion or flexibility, for example to respond to changes in economic circumstances or even to credit on-site provision of social infrastructure. We will see developers paying twice even if, as hoped, the Government addresses the particular problem of Section 73 applications triggering CIL. And major question marks remain over infrastructure delivery. ■

Robert Evans is a director of Argent

Don't let reforms stymie the economic benefits argues Baroness Jo Valentine



The year ahead for London will be an interesting one – national planning policy is still in a state of flux, with the final publication of the NPPF and amendments to the CIL regulations still outstanding. It is vital the reforms proposed recognise the need to balance environmental and social aspects of development with economic benefits. Quicker and clearer decision-making processes by having clear up-to-date local plans and a presumption in favour of sustainable development in its absence should breathe confidence into an industry which has far from recovered.

For East London in particular the future is bright – the transfer of LDA

and HCA land assets to the Mayor could lead to significant regeneration, with tendering for proposals to come forward in the Royal Docks and Silvertown Quays and plans for a major residential development and commercial development scheme all in process.

But across the capital there are other areas of concern. The cumulative burden on development to pay the Mayoral CIL, borough CILs and s106 planning obligations, will place a strain on the viability for development. In a difficult economic climate where lending conditions are tough this will be a real and present threat to growth in London." ■

Baroness Jo Valentine is chief executive of London First



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From policy to action Angela Brady welcomes the opportunity localism provides



In a year when localism will move from the desks of Whitehall to the local community centre, there are still big questions about how it will work in practice. Ministers have pinned their hopes on localism as a means of delivering their ambitions. Bringing people into the design and planning processes should, they argue, make it more difficult for poor development to slip through. Regardless of whether you subscribe to the theory, there is no doubt the desire to give communities a stronger voice means local people will be able to demand more from professionals. This will be a challenge, but I see it as an opportunity for architects to use their skills and expertise and to help communities create exciting and bold visions for their future.

Localism will mean professionals have to adapt – the quality of the places created in the future will be increasingly dependent on our ability to appropriately engage with local people and local issues, right from the start. But it also provides an opportunity to break down barriers, change attitudes and demonstrate the value of what we do, in a less remote way, so that communities get a better understanding of the difficult decisions and trade-offs that have to be made along the way.

Localism doesn't mean we have to surrender the design or planning processes, but will increasingly mean we share the responsibility – this can only be a good thing. ■

Angela Brady is RIBA President

The draft NPPF is a welcome provocation writes Julian Barwick



2012 brings opportunities tinged with uncertainty for the property industry. The Government introduced reforms to the planning system to boost economic growth and this year will see some significant changes: the Localism; the new Community Infrastructure Levy; transferring greater development powers to the London Mayor.

And then there is the National Planning Policy Framework. The Government has – rightly – taken an axe to the one-thousand-plus pages of planning guidelines and given precedence to the much contested 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The thrust of the draft NPPF is a step in the right direction and the inclusion of such statements as "the default answer should be yes" to be necessarily provocative.

Simplifying the process and returning decisions to a local level are to be welcomed. However, the NPPF relies on the agreed vision for development outlined in a local plan. To date, only 30% of local authorities have these in place. Without an agreed roadmap for development and an enforceable obligation on local authorities to produce and maintain Local Plans, there is a danger that projects will be caught up in the cycle of rejections, approvals and appeals that has plagued the planning system. Especially in difficult economic times, the process needs to become less of an obstacle course.

We have faith enlightened local authorities will grasp the nettle. Our



Development Securities' Hammersmith Grove development

fear remains that in the absence of robust local plans, under-resourced authorities risk being excluded from economic growth as projects are blighted by indecision.

Giving communities a greater say in local development is a positive change. Streamlining the planning system equally so. But how those two objectives work in harmony is the question the Government must answer convincingly in 2012. ■

Julian Barwick is director of Development Securities

O tempora, o mores! Giles Dolphin predicts London's fate this memorable year...



The summer will be the wettest ever. A Frenchman will win the 100m. The Aquatics Centre roof will leak and flood the pool. Jacques Rogge will declare it the best Games ever. He will also declare it the worse-designed ever, following international scorn over the logo, mascot, stadium exterior, Orbit, etc.

Plans to reconfigure the Olympic Stadium will fail. West Ham United will ground-share with Dagenham & Redbridge, having sold Upton Park for a supermarket. The Orbit will be sold off to whichever Gulf state wins in 2020 Olympics. The undeveloped bits of the Olympic Park will remain undeveloped until 2040, when London will become the first city to stage the

Olympics four times. Plans will be made to replace the Jubilee Line with a cable car. Parking will be outlawed in Westminster. The Thames will be decked over. Some Green Belt will be built over. Nothing will happen in the Royal Docks. With luck, Battersea Power Station will fall down, and the Irish economy will be saved. Parliament will decree HS2 will terminate at Ruislip. Unesco will de-designate the Tower and Westminster World Heritage Sites.

Boris will win the Mayoral election. Or Ken. Either way, strategic planning will be the winner. More opportunity area planning frameworks will appear, and not a single neighbourhood plan will see the light of day. And the NPPF won't make an ounce of difference. ■

Giles Dolphin is retiring as head of Planning Decisions, GLA

A new CILver lining for every London borough . . .

From April boroughs will be able to charge the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Wandsworth is a Government frontrunner. Councillor Nick Cuff, chair of planning, explains how it will work to Lee Mallett

Perhaps property developers in Wandsworth are fortunate the youthful Chair of Planning is a surveyor, town planner and is employed by residential developer Essential Land.

He is a Conservative Party member and learnt his trade in the House of Commons as a communications aide. He's been a Wandsworth councillor since 2006 – the youngest in the borough at the time. He understands the interface between politics, policy and the property market and if CIL is going to be made to work anywhere, it should work in Wandsworth – the Government's showcase Tory borough.

"We took the decision early on as a Cabinet that we wanted to take on CIL," says Cuff. "We decided not to become one of the frontrunners on neighbourhood planning. It was imperative to get organised with CIL, so we hired BNP Paribas as consultants to help us sort the technical side so we can adopt CIL in April."



"We took the decision early on as a Cabinet that we wanted to take on CIL" Councillor Nick Cuff

"Change is always scary. Councillors were fine with CIL, but developers were concerned. We got a number of very good consultation responses to the proposed CIL from developers and these were very helpful." They were generally along the lines 'is the Council going to use CIL to raise money and through Section 106 agreements at the same time?'"

Cuff is confident that the way Wandsworth has structured its CIL, and presented the facts about the infrastructure projects it wants to spend the money on, will create a clear framework for developers and voters. He also made clear at a recent British Property Federation seminar why Wandsworth is a supporter of CIL – the borough believes it will offer "transparency" and "certainty". It will be "a more efficient means of capturing planning gain, and will help the borough deliver the series of ambitious infrastructure projects it has planned."

The borough has massive brownfield areas to regenerate in the north east at Nine Elms and Battersea. It needs to improve its constricted town centre there are plans for rethinking the town centre's soul-destroying gyratory system and the former industrial areas of the Wandle valley. Its plans are transport-led, as you might expect, and include the extension of the Northern Line from Kennington to Nine Elms and Battersea

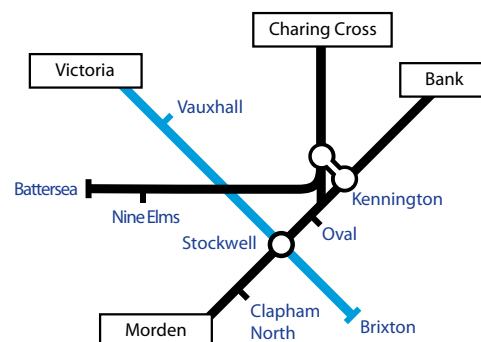


Five major schemes; from top left, clockwise: the new US Embassy; Battersea Power Station, plus new tube station; Riverlight by Berkeley Homes; and Embassy Gardens by Ballymore

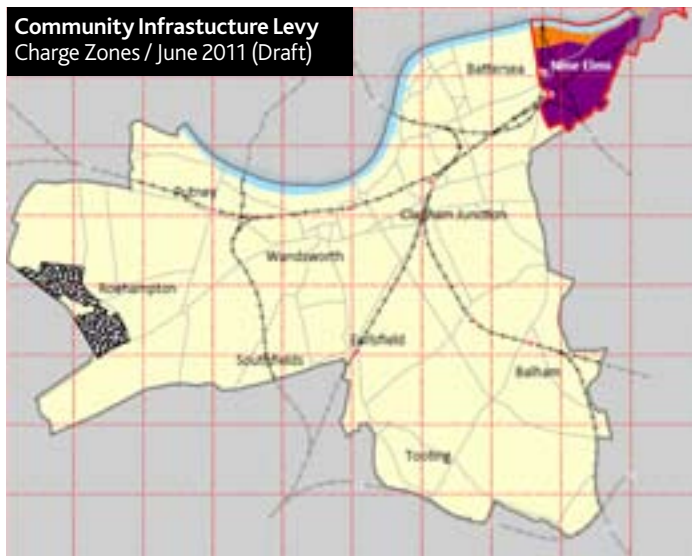
and a new river boat service from Putney to Blackfriars. This will help the opening up of the riverfront. Tenders will be sought from new operators.

All the information about what Wandsworth intends to spend its CIL on is presented on the council's website* and in addition to transport, this includes health, community, education and open space improvements. CIL is expected to contribute £186million.

All of the major sites in the borough have been tested for viability in relation to CIL, says Cuff. Affordable housing is specifically excluded, and remains to be negotiated as part of the on-site provisions that will include



Proposed Northern line extension to Nine Elms and Battersea

**Community Infrastructure Levy
Charge Zones / June 2011 (Draft)**


- Nine Elms Charging Area
- Nine Elms Residential Area A
- Nine Elms Residential Area B
- Wider Wandsworth Charging Area
- Roehampton Exemption Area

	Nine Elms Area A	Nine Elms Area B	Borough	Roehampton
Residential	£575	£265	£250	£0
Office/ retail	£100	£100	£100	£0
All other	£0	£0	£0	£0

local highway works and employment training. CIL will cover the provision of infrastructure of benefit to the wider community.

The key – for Wandsworth and other boroughs is to set CIL at rates which do not make development unviable and disadvantage Wandsworth in relation to the patchwork quilt of different CIL rates that London's boroughs will present to developers after 2012.

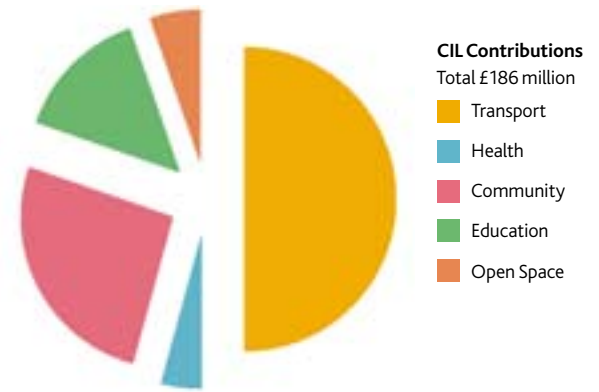
Already a variegated picture in London is beginning to emerge that is likely to make the overall development market more complex, but perhaps with the certainty that CIL is claimed to offer, also more clear.

Where CIL is set too high, and renders development unviable, it will dry up. A lack of pragmatism, however, has not prevented some boroughs from continuing to pursue unrealistic regeneration policies and this has increased the disadvantages evident in those boroughs over the last 30 years or so. Wandsworth's neighbour Lambeth could have taken more advantage of market conditions in that period, for example.

In Wandsworth there will be three main charging areas (see map). First is in the Nine Elms charging sector, at the north eastern tip of the borough. This area is expected to deliver 25,000 jobs and 16,000 homes when completed. Within Nine Elms there will be two subsidiary areas with two separate rates – Area A and Area B (see table for rates). Developers providing residential in Area A, on the more valuable river side, will be expected to contribute £575 per sq m, and in Area B, further south, £265 per sq m. The affordable housing requirement in these areas will be set at 15%.

Outside these, will be the Wider Wandsworth Charging Area covering the bulk of the borough – where the rate for residential will be £250 per sq m. The rate for new commercial space across the borough, including the Nine Elms area, will be £100 per sq m.

Finally there is the Roehampton Exemption Area where no CIL will be levied to encourage new development as much as possible. All the charges exclude the Mayoral CIL.



- CIL Contributions**
Total £186 million
- Transport
 - Health
 - Community
 - Education
 - Open Space

Nick Cuff is confident that Wandsworth has done its homework and produced a viable package for developers and voters alike. "Those boroughs that ask for too much will get looked over for investment," he thinks. What about London's shortage of housing? Surely CIL, like affordable housing but it is just another tax restricting its provision?

"It seems to me that planning in London is delivering housing. The Wandsworth supply pipeline for example is three times what's actually getting built. The problem for London as a whole is getting it built. It's the availability of finance and mortgages that is the issue," says Cuff.

"Speaking as a developer though," says Cuff switching hats, "where planning can do better is to provide greater clarity to investors about what is an acceptable quantum of development. The try-it-and-see-what-happens approach is no use to anyone."

"A key reason for introducing CIL in Wandsworth is that we aspire to be as open as possible to provide a degree of certainty and encourage investors. Wandsworth benefitted from the previous economic cycle and was able to regenerate its riverside. Across the river, Hammersmith and Fulham missed out under the previous regime. Lambeth has also missed out on many opportunities. Southwark by contrast has done some good things. There is, however, generally not enough certainty for investors and a lack of political leadership.'

He is optimistic that neighbourhood planning and CIL will encourage more engagement between all parties. "We can price in CIL at the start of the process and we won't have the problem of flex which we have with S106 negotiations. S106 will be de minimus and planning obligations will be very tight."

He is also confident that the investment Wandsworth is planning will continue to improve the value of property in the borough, helping to reduce crime and improve retailing. "Most of the overall tax take is revenue based and used to keep services running. If we have an expanding population then it is right to use CIL for capital projects." CIL will amount to between 2% and 5% of gross development value for most developers.

"Section 106 is such an arcane way of doing things. Only in Britain would we have a system as complicated and time-wasting as S106. Of course some boroughs will set CIL too high or too low and it will take time to bed in. But we are committed to our infrastructure priorities. It's all written down as part of our CIL charging structure," says Cuff.

It will inspire a more functional land planning system. It may even inspire a visionary approach that is less about development control and more about planning. Is 2012 going to be the most significant year for planning in London since 1947? ■

**http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/info/200074/planning/1138/community_infrastructure_levy_cil*



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Investment continues to pour into London property development as economic uncertainty affects the rest of Europe and beyond. Residential schemes are being sold off plan to global investors. London is part of a world market and continues bucking the trend for the rest of the UK. The capital's population continues to rise and investment in transport infrastructure struggles to keep up with increasing demands. The 2012 Olympiad promises to be a defining moment, providing the capital with a unique opportunity to showcase its cultural offer in combination with a practical demonstration of how investment in sporting facilities can be used to stimulate massive regeneration; an objective already paying dividends with the announcement that London will host the World Athletics Championships in 2017 and the better than predicted trading conditions at the newly opened Westfield Centre in Stratford.

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