

An amazing and informative look to the future for London's growth

London's Transport and Growth: discussion led by Lucinda Turner and Christian Wolmar; the Challenges of London's Growth led by Duncan Bowie; and Blockbusters led by Eric Sorensen. Hon. Sec. Drummond Robson minuted the December Forum. Full minutes at planninginlondon.com > LP&DF

The Chairman introduced the four speakers: Lucinda Turner, Christian Woolmar, Duncan Bowie and Eric Sorensen.

DISCUSSION TOPIC 1

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.

London has been very successful at creating a role as one of the main centres of the global economy. The focus for the high value employment is the Central Activities Zone which represents c2 per cent of London's land area but accounts for around 30 per cent of its jobs.

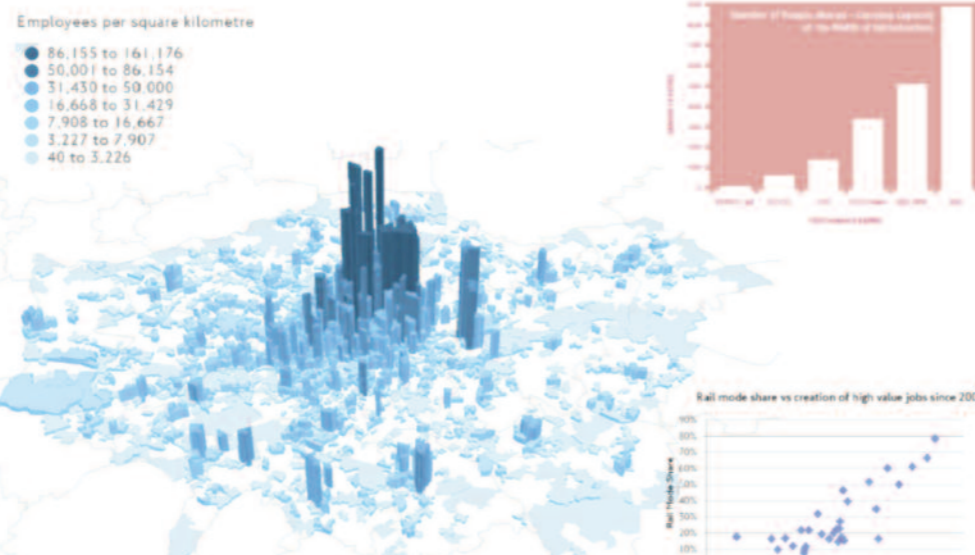
Over 90 per cent of trips into the centre each morning are by public transport or active modes.

The indicators suggest that the importance of this agglomeration model of employment in central London will continue, with the radial rail network particularly important to enabling this. As part of the development of the Mayor's Transport Strategy and London Plan, a more dispersed model was tested but it was more difficult to serve by public transport, given the more dispersed trip patterns etc.

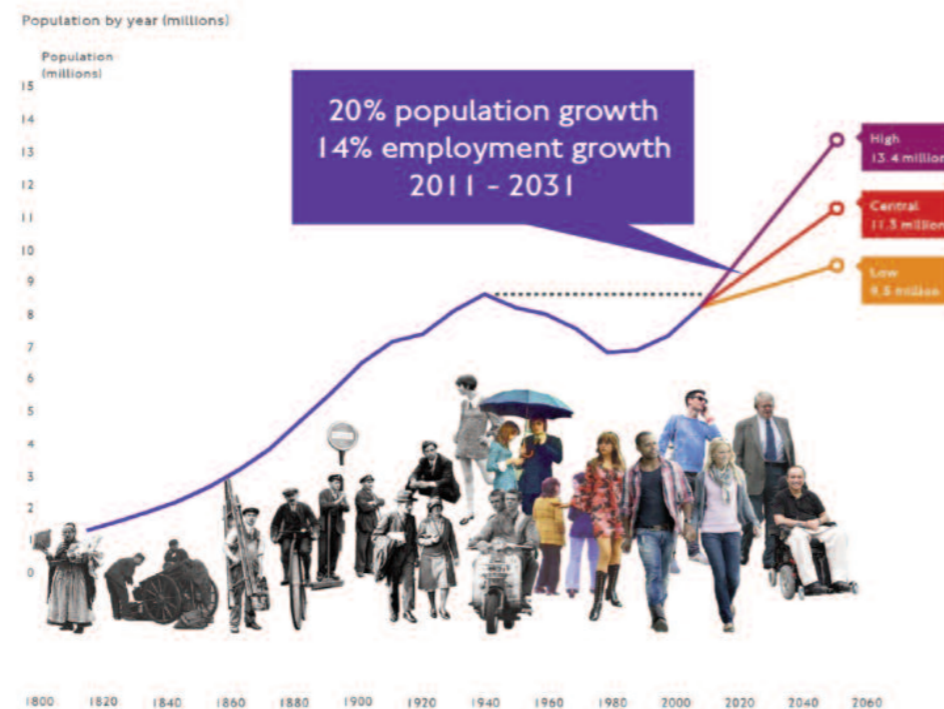
The current population of 8.6 million has just surpassed the 1939 peak and is predicted to rise to a new peak of 9 million by 2018 and 10 million by the early 2030s. That's growth equivalent to one full Tube train arriving in London every three days or two buses each day.

The impact of this is already being seen across the transport network. Friday 28 November 2014 was the busiest day ever for London Underground, with 4.725 million journeys and we saw all five busiest days in LU's history that month. Meanwhile, the week of 22 September saw a record 50 million journeys on the bus network and that week also saw a combined record of 76.1 million journeys across all of TfL's services. 2014 was

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



London's population continues to grow....



the busiest year for cycling in London since the monitoring started in 2000, with a further increase of 10 per cent. It's likely that we're going to get quite used to these records being broken now...

(The latest travel trends are covered more fully in TfL's publication Travel in London, report 7, and also the Transport Support Document to Infrastructure 2050).

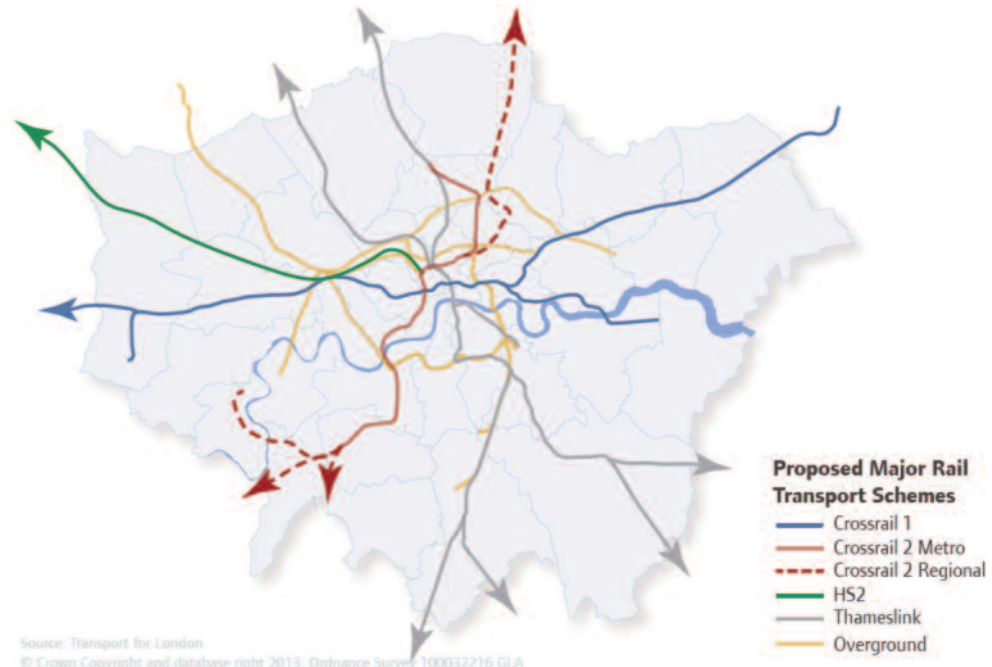
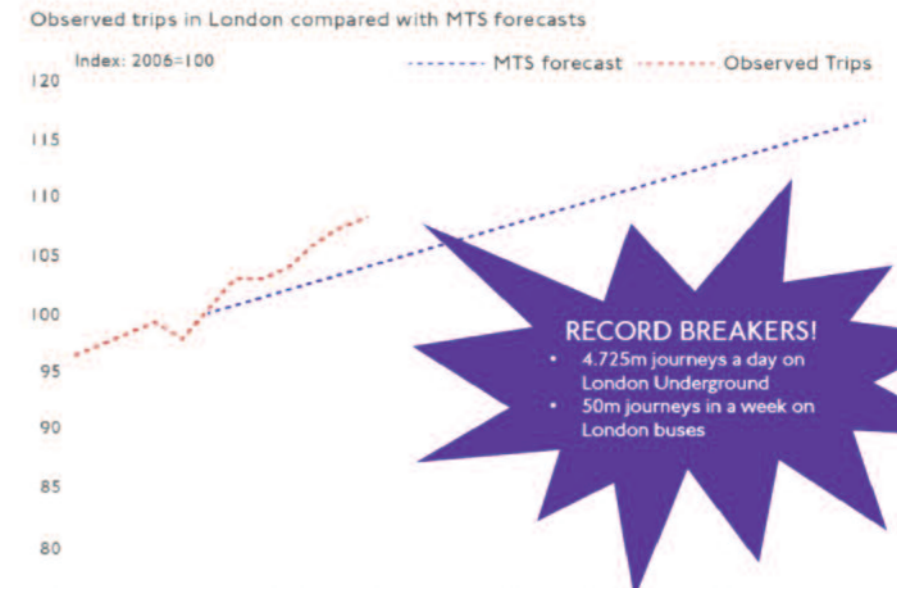
A key requirement for London's growth is infrastructure – with its long lead times – although this is constrained by funding. But significant improvements are already being delivered, for example the upgrade to the tube system, Crossrail, and the Northern Line Extension to Battersea etc. These will increase accessibility. The maps below show how many people currently can access each zone within 45 minutes by public transport. The two darkest shades of blue represent zones in which over 1.5m people are within the 45 minute catchment - by 2031, there will be an expansion in the number of areas in the most accessible zones.

Crowding is expected to reduce as the result of the various current transport initiatives until 2020 when it is predicted to start rising again. With the rate of growth in we are - in effect - running only to stand still.

We're forecasting that by 2031, there will be 30 million trips on an average day – 4 million higher than the record levels we're seeing now. And we're expecting strong growth in public transport demand in particular, with a forecast increase of about 45-50 per cent in rail boards, about 40-45 per cent in Underground boards, and a 15-20 per cent increase in bus demand.

- So we need to do more...
- Seek to focus growth in areas with spare network capacity and existing transport connections

...Which is leading to more trips



Source: Transport for London © Crown Copyright and database right 2013. Ordnance Survey 100032216 GLA

- Seek to embed more sustainable travel choices from the outset in development
- Develop and promote a package of investment to maximise potential of Opportunity Areas often require significant public transport investment in order to facilitate sustainable development (e.g. Barking Riverside GOB extension)
- Look at extensions to the existing network to >>>

Meeting on Thursday 26th March 2015 at University of Westminster. Our host was Duncan Bowie

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 '11
 Rob Partridge: AKT II
 Ron Heath: Living Architects
 Drummond Robson: Honorary Secretary and Robson Planning

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.

connect to areas with major development potential (eg Bakerloo Line Extension)

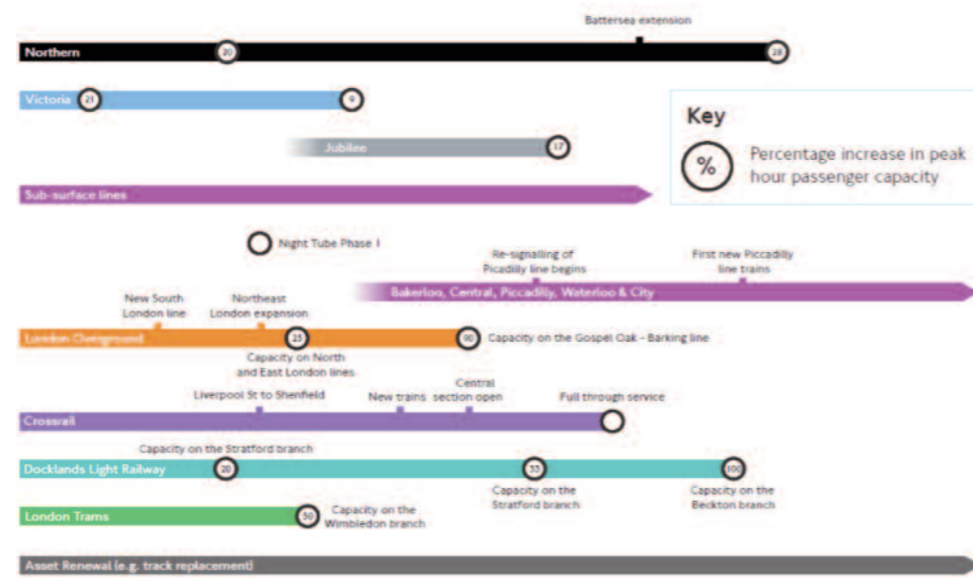
- Embed strategies to unlock growth and development in major transport schemes (eg Crossrail 2)

London's road network is also critical and it needs to respond to many challenges – roads need to help people move across the city to access jobs and opportunities. 80 per cent of journeys made every day are by road, by bus, foot, bike, car, taxi and they carry around 90 per cent of freight. But they're not just about movement. Our streets are also where we live and spend time, making up 80 per cent of our city's public space. Roads and streets are needed to unlock regeneration and support new city quarters. They help our city function, whether by enabling goods to be delivered or in terms of the water or electricity that flow beneath them. We need to protect users, particularly those most vulnerable and our streets also need to contribute to a more sustainable, greener city.

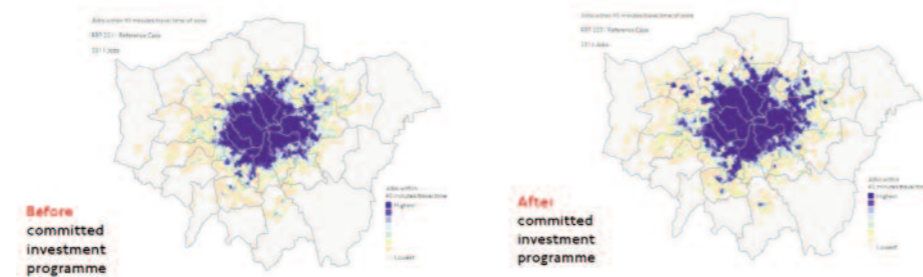
We've had a decade of falling motorised traffic levels particularly in central and inner London with 20 and 10 per cent reductions respectively. In this period, London's achieved an unprecedented 10 percentage point shift in mode share towards public transport, walking and cycling. This is due to a range of supply, demand and structural factors summarised in a table below, with their effects both positive and negative in reducing car travel. 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." If people travelled now as they did in 1991 there would be around 1.7 million more car trips a day in London.

Despite falling traffic volumes, average traffic speeds have got progressively slower & congestion (delay) has increased across London. There are increasing challenges – for example, after a fall during the recession, van traffic is expected to rise

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



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



by over 20 per cent and some of the factors that have helped reduce car traffic levels in recent years may not continue to hold eg recessionary impacts are reducing and policies of parking restraint are being challenged.

Over the past couple of years we've seen

increases in traffic in outer London – a change (and perhaps a break) from the trend. Meanwhile, London also needs to continue to respond to increasing aspirations to deliver better places and transform conditions for walking and cycling.

Without mitigations congestion could increase

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



by up to 60 per cent in central London, c 15 per cent in outer London and c25 per cent in inner London. We need to use all the tools at our disposal...

For example:

- TfL is investing an unprecedented £4 billion in roads and streets across London
- We're implementing state of the art traffic management techniques and technologies to help get the most out of the system
- Range of place-making and junction schemes
- And considering how much more of a role travel demand management measures and more effective freight management could play

But, while all these measures are worthwhile they're not sufficient to fully tackle the issues. So we're also exploring more strategic measures – both the provision of new space and more radical demand management eg fly-unders/mini-tunnels? Roofing-over? A new orbital road tunnel? The focus of this is whether creating substitute roadspace underground could help support walking, cycling and road-based public transport, transform places in London and free up space for development, while still keeping London moving.

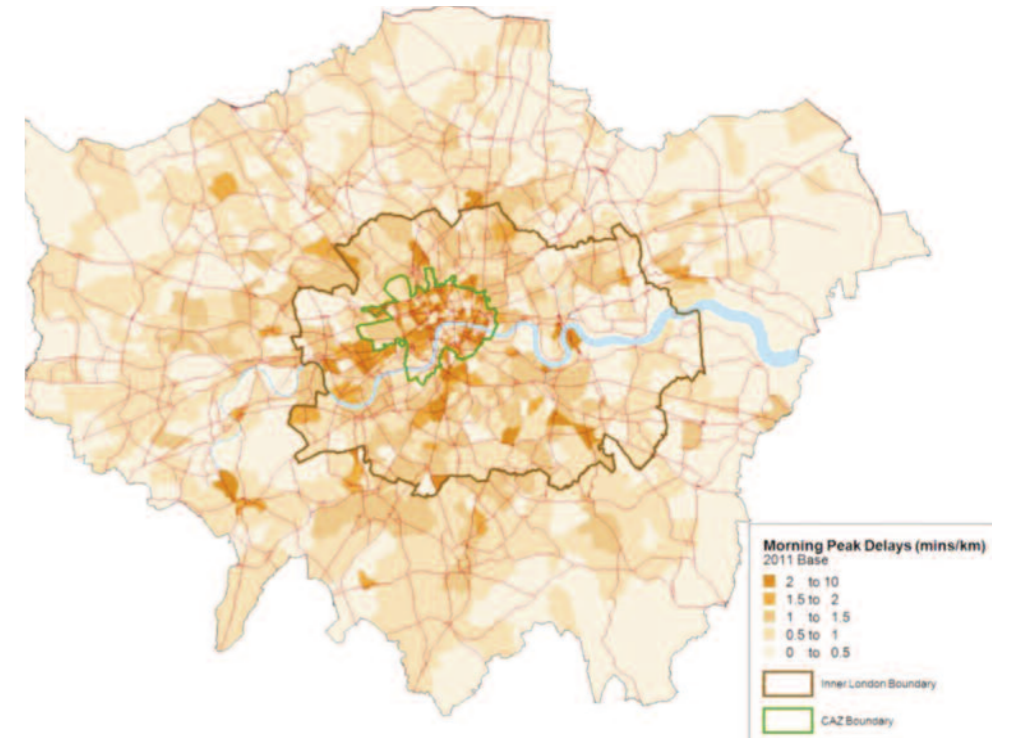
New technologies are likely to play a significant role but it's incredibly difficult to try to predict the future. Future change & innovation in transport will be shaped by a complex web of social, economic, technological, cultural and environmental factors.

We will certainly need to make much more widespread use of advanced technology including ICT, 'big data,' 3D visualisation techniques, new traffic signal and management technologies and parking sensor technology.

But there could also be far more significant changes, for example autonomous vehicles could transform the network / the way we use it / how we manage it.

Summary

- Challenges of growth continue unabated
- Need to plan for the longer-term – despite the uncertainties
- 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 per cent 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 Wolmar 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 accessibility in Outer London, considered by the Outer London Commission. He also asked about bus feeder routes to transport nodes which 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 TfL was looking at the potential of freight management. Most of the changes in behaviour seen during the Olympics had not been sustained and there were clearly challenges but TfL was working closely with the industry. She considered bus accessibility to be fundamental for Outer London and it would be important to continue to make the case for revenue expenditure to central government and others. Turn up and go frequencies had been important in making bus use more attractive. In the context of Crossrail 1 TfL was looking at associated bus services and the potential for linking into



(new/enhanced) transport nodes etc.

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 road-space 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 whether London and the agglomeration of activities in the centre was vulnerable to threats of terrorism Lucinda Turner said that central government and London organisations carried out extensive planning in the context of terrorism, climate change, business recovery etc. But the wider question of resilience was an important one, both for the transport system and more widely.

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 by time/day (e.g. play streets) was part of the Roads Task Force focus <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/roads-task-force> and more widely TfL was increasingly looking at how to support a 24/7 city eg the introduction of night-time tube running.

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.

DISCUSSION TOPIC 2

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:

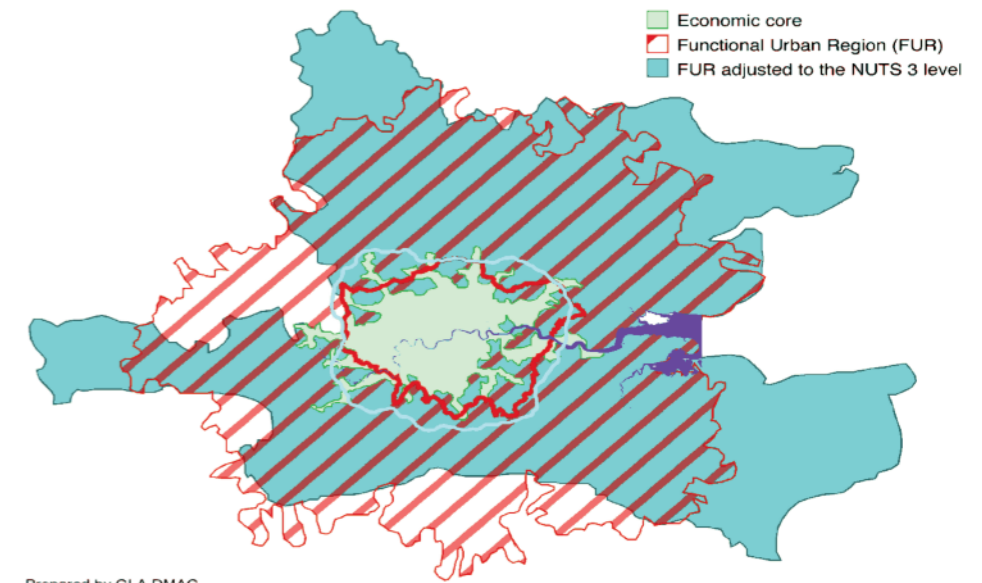
- Assumption since 2004 London Plan that London can meet all its future needs within existing London boundary
- London needs at least 50,000 more homes a year over next 20 years; South East region needs at least 40,000 homes a year
- For next 10 years, London capacity target leaves a deficit of 20,000 homes a year relative to projected demand
- The Compact City assumption is no longer tenable.

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

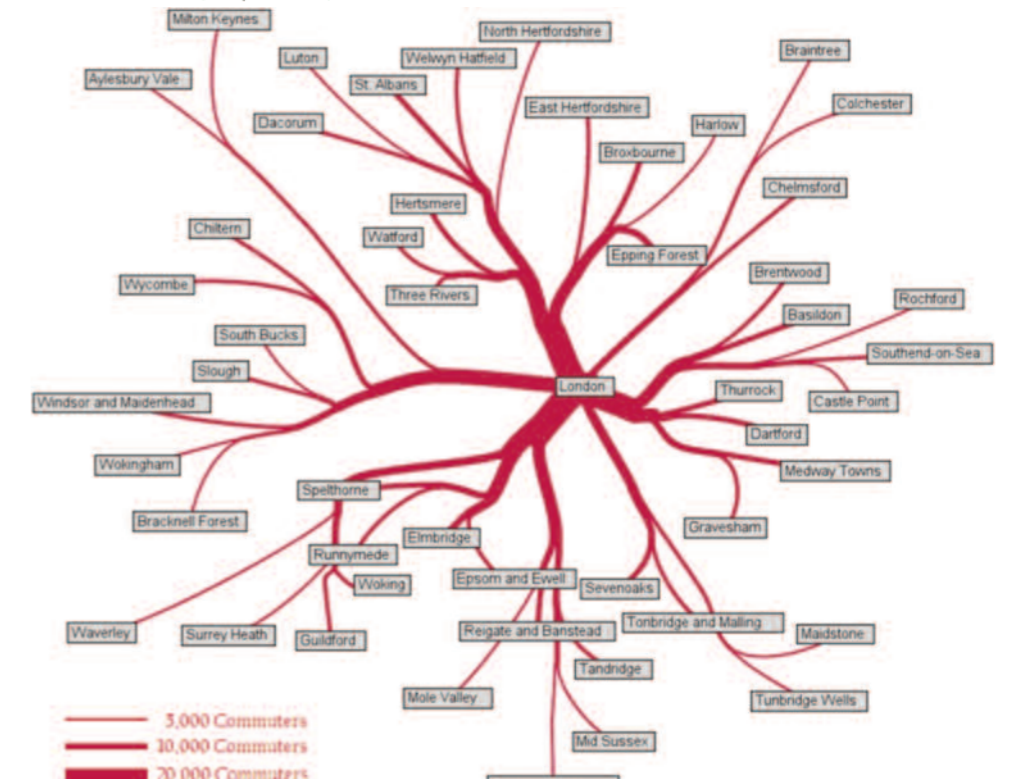
These tensions, which were expressed London Plan Examination in Public, have now resulted in the The new London Plan which was published by the Mayor on 10th March 2015. The Plan sets a new housing target for London of 42,000 homes a year, up from the previous target of 32,210 homes a year. This however 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

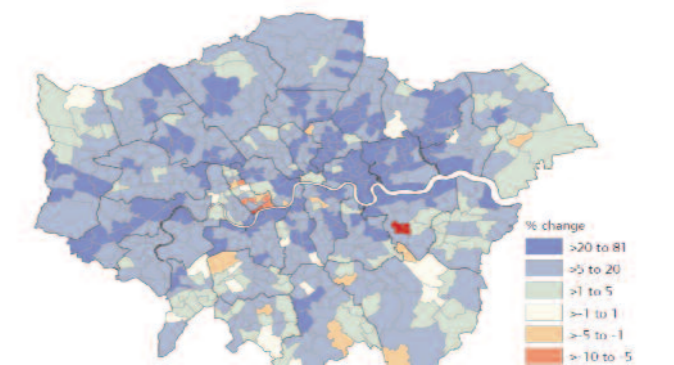
The Functional Urban Region



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



Population Growth 2001-2011

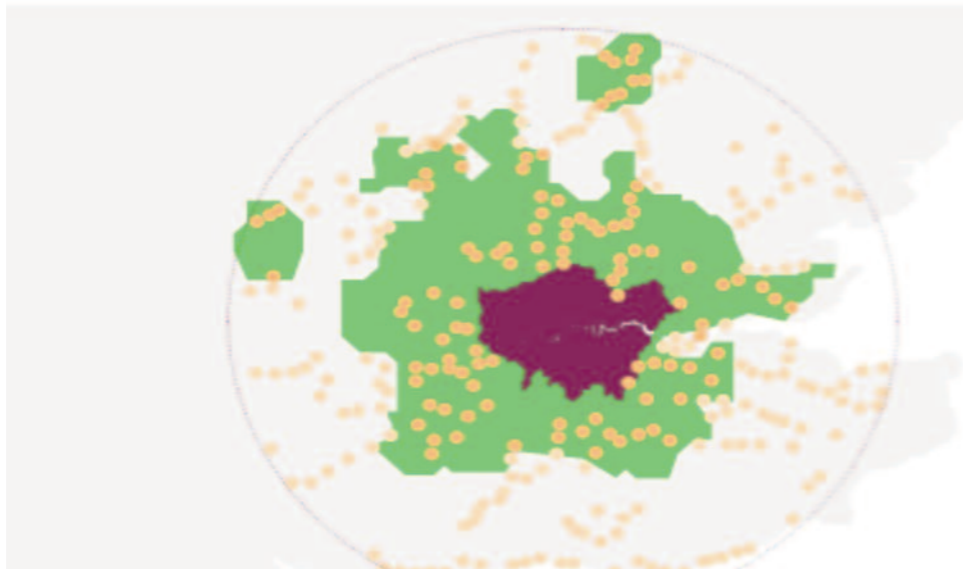


Mayor should increase the London Plan target to at least 49,000 homes a year- some suggested that the target should be increased to 62,000. It was put forward that the Mayor should identify development sites within the Green Belt within the London boundary.

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 under-used 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.

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." The inspec-

Undeveloped station catchments outside Greater London



tor 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 coordinate that growth, include engaging local plan-



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



ning authorities beyond the GLA's boundaries in discussions regarding the evolution of our capital city."

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. The Plan was supported by a number of research documents including a costing report by Arup and a transport paper by Transport for London, 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 increased population for social infrastructure such as schools, health and leisure facilities. The report suggests

the redevelopment of 10 per cent 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 per cent 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 per cent 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 resist- >>>

ance 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 per cent 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.

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.

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.

DISCUSSION TOPIC 3: Blockbusters

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.

The view of **Canary Wharf (LEFT)** 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 resi-



dential 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 develop-

ments should relate to each other. We engage in development control transactions, development by development, within a loose planning policy envelope. With the developer trying maximize outcomes, the planners regulating, and the public sector trying to extract value to maximize 5106, 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 (see RIGHT).

I don't want to say much about **Battersea/Nine Elms** (image NEXT PAGE) 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 ring-ing 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, particu-



larly 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 Road Basin and San Gimignano 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 the last two topics

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 per cent whereas it will earn only 1 per cent 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 per cent 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. ■



LP&DF
NEXT MEETING

1st or 2nd June at
AKTII,
100 St John Street
London EC1M 4EH
Host: Rob Partridge
(provisional – check
planninginlondon.com)