

Planning for small sites, the impact of Crossrail & of the draft NPPF

Minutes of the London Planning and Development Forum at London Councils on Monday 4th June 2018. Full minute by Andy Rogers and Drummond Robson at planninginlondon.com > LP&DF



Meeting at London Councils on Monday 4th June 2018

Our host: Serena Perry

Brian Waters (Chairman)
 Andrew Rogers (Acting secretary)
 Michael Bach
 Adrian Cole
 Michael Coupe
 Peter Eversden
 Jessica Fern
 Ron Heath
 Judith Ryser
 Riette Oosterhuizen
 Tim Wachter

Apologies:
 Drummond Robson, Tom Ball,
 Yasminah Beebeejaun, Duncan Bowie,
 David Bradley, Michael Edwards
 Nicky Gavron, Brian Whiteley

Discussion Topics:

1 Densification of the suburbs and infrastructure

In the absence of any GLA representatives RO introduced this very topical item by noting that there was a new emphasis on housing provision on small sites in both the new London Plan and the draft revised NPPF.

She tabled extract copies from both documents and suggested two immediate problems: paragraph 122.d) of the NPPF proposes the desirability of "maintaining an area's prevailing character (including residential gardens)" - HTA had recently had a refusal based on the fact that the open space provided was not in the form of traditional front and rear gardens; and the new London Plan's policy H2 Small Sites requires an increased rate of housing delivery from small housing sites although it is currently much more difficult to get planning approval for such infill schemes - even in HTA's experience sometimes more difficult than for tower block proposals.

RO felt that land identification and supply

agents were key to housing provision on small sites. Also the numbers of new dwellings in tall buildings was not sufficient (100,000 up to 2030 with annualised housing need at 65,000 homes) - the NLA should include the type of accommodation in their tall buildings survey as it is evident that these buildings probably do not address affordability and affordable housing delivery. There must be a more proactive role for LPAs to properly identify small (particularly windfall) sites: at present the brownfield sites register is simply a 'tick-box' exercise based on existing SHLAA documents. There is an expectation at national government level and within the new London Plan that small sites would be a formalized component of housing delivery. A number of outer London boroughs are very upset about the target set by the new London Plan for small sites delivery as it would imply the need for more resources.

The draft London Plan and the draft NPPF encourages the use of area wide design guidance/codes to encourage small sites delivery whilst the NPPF defines small as less than 0.5 hectare.

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RO then presented a short series of illustrations showing that intensification is already happening despite wide variations in the way existing character was interpreted from borough to borough and the reluctance of some LPAs to approve such schemes. A wide-ranging discussion followed.

BW said he shared the scepticism of how small sites were identified, currently as half/quarter of a hectare within the NPPF and 0.25 hectare and less than 25 units within the London Plan. There should surely be a definition for very small sites - one or two units - and for the provision of new units (or increased accommodation) by building upwards. The draft London Plan does refer to making provision for windfall sites, however. He gave the example of the Ham & Petersham Neighbourhood Plan that through local consultations had identified numerous very small infill housing sites, none of which appeared on the borough's brownfield sites register.

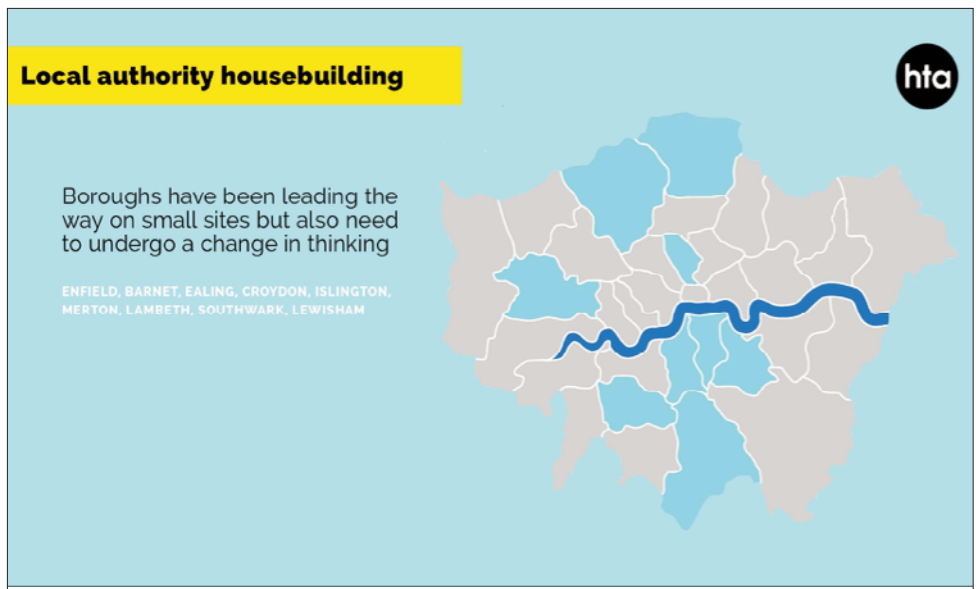
RO suggested that planning policy teams are not lined up with their development control colleagues, mostly due to a lack of local authority resources. Research conducted by HTA Design's Planning team for CPRE revealed that there are a lack of skills also in terms of determining capacity of sites.

BW added that LPAs don't deliver houses and the realism of housing supply is difficult, especially with regard to large sites. The emerging small sites emphasis has an air of desperation and the problems of infrastructure (not just transport but also pedestrian routes, community services, etc) have not been properly defined or considered. B Whiteley adds that we do not want to repeat the Docklands / Tower Hamlets experience of accelerating residential provision only to find water supply, sewage disposal, electricity and gas provision, etc cannot keep up in parallel.

RO reiterated that the huge potential of intensification could be very exciting. It could actually allow planners to plan and not be administrators. There is a fear of uncertainty, but floor area ratio's and design codes are very successfully used elsewhere as one example. PE pointed out that infrastructure and servicing problems were not restricted to town centre or suburban sites because the 800-metre range from a station includes 800 metres beyond the edge of existing developments.

AC added that PTAL scores are not always the best measure of appropriate new housing as often thought - design and the provision of support services are also key.

MB noted that it is always better to plug into existing services if possible rather than having to provide new ones and PE said that this can be problem if developing out-of-town sites (redundant B&Qs, etc) for housing because they are usually designed for private car access. B Whiteley



wants to know how already overloaded existing bus, train and Tube links into central London will cope with accelerated suburban residential development: and how to counterbalance the provision of work opportunities in central London with more dispersed employment across London if are to be >>>

>>> able to exploit small sites and promote denser residential development.

BW pointed out that car-sharing and similar initiatives could become more important in the future - the character of residential areas will change so that it's difficult to understand why there is always emphasis on retaining the existing character. RO added that we should think about how streets will function in the future when changes such as communal recycling/refuse and car clubs using driverless vehicles are considered. Front and back gardens may well be less important than other private/accessible open spaces.

MC noted that opportunities need to be identified along with existing character and quality: borough-wide character assessments generally don't exist as yet. BW added that even when they do, if they are more than five years old they will be considered out of date. He noted that high densities are already achievable and indeed are often part of the character, as in the Hampstead Garden Suburb.

2 The impact of Crossrail

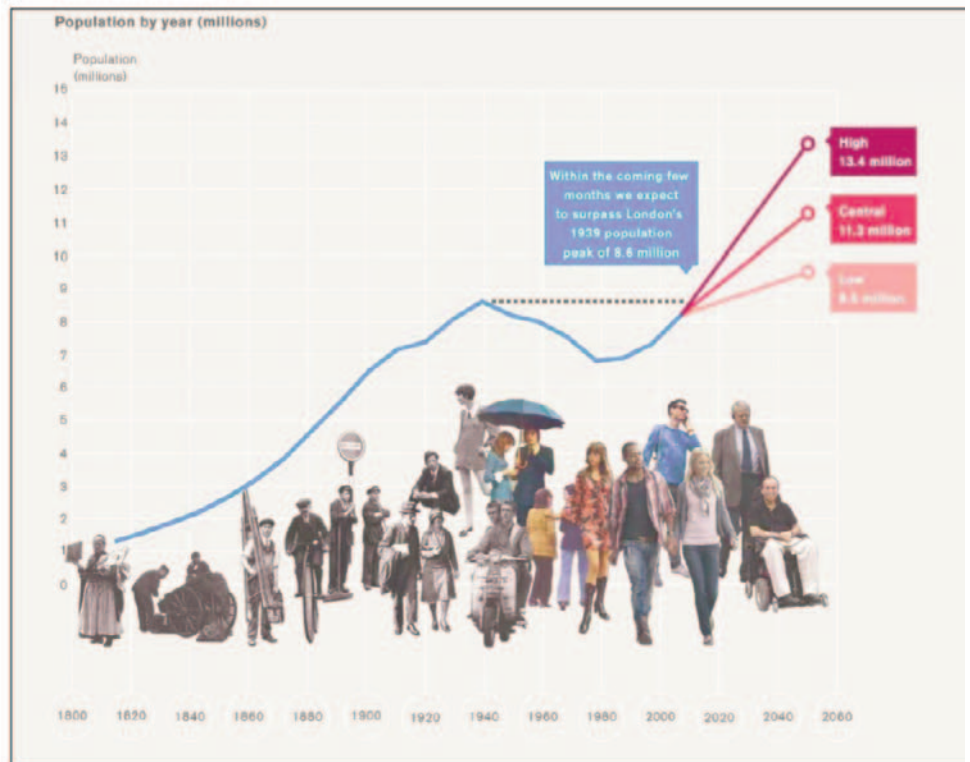
AC presented a series of diagrams and maps relating to Crossrail developments, based on the premise that London will continue to grow, with an emphasis on clustering and agglomeration. New housing developments need to be in line with emerging new infrastructure.

AC said that expansion of housing at/near Crossrail stations was not always a transport problem but usually a utilities difficulty. PE asked what had happened to the 'declarations of deficiency' (eg water provision in north-east London). And B Whiteley wants to know whether there are lessons to be had from the development of sites along the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail 1) for Crossrail 2: how does the planning system make developments happen which provide a wide range of community needs alongside commercial and residential development, in the face of increased land values – and therefore development costs - along the proposed Crossrail 2 route?

TW noted that patterns of employment and public transport are changing, with reverse-flow commuting on the increase. BW added that large numbers of VAT-registered businesses are now located in private houses. PE said that parking in the workplace is a key consideration and Crossrail developments will unlock ever more housing sites. TW suggested that Transport Infrastructure Funding (related to future business rates income) works well at Battersea, although PE pointed out that as a result the permitted towers are half as high again as is allowed for in the local policies.

AC conceded that there are challenges and some unforeseen consequences caused by Crossrail developments, such as pressure on low-quality Green Belt land in Chessington and the

London is Growing



And what about Brexit?

- ONS Study Household growth
 - Approx. 1/3 of increase due to increase in one person households
 - Approx. 1/3 of increase due to net migration
- London effect
 - Further increase in jobs gravitating to the centre
 - Reduced levels of people moving out when they retire
 - More longer-distance commuting
 - Still biggest economic centre in Europe



potential reconstruction of town centres like Wimbledon. BW suggested that in fact future long-term trends are for a reduction in growth in central London, which AC agreed was likely due to the reorganisation of working practices.

PE was concerned about the imbalance of housing for key workers, which AC suggested would inevitably mean more development beyond the

M25. BW said that there is always a trade-off between the costs of (a) travel and (b) a mortgage, meaning that the population of London will gradually reduce. He added that the main problem is that the land market is broken, rather than difficulties with the planning system or housing developers.

AC noted that LPAs can and should take a

longer view, but BW doubted that they will - reference current emphasis on private rental sector and new systems of housing investment - as well as recent trends for local authorities to provide housing. House-owning remains a political issue.

TW and JR queried how increased land values with planning permission are captured. AC said there are widely varying mechanisms which are complex (and not encouraged by the Treasury). PE said that one problem was the requirement for public land to achieve best value, but BW suggested this has now been softened to allow best consideration, not necessarily dependent on financial return. PE noted that this has not produced significant output yet - one major problem being the Right to Buy that works against local authority housing provision. BW noted that according to a recent NPF report many local authorities are now building social housing. TW proposed that the government should make clear that release of public land can be done without achieving maximum monetary value.

Some discussion took place regarding the ultimate destination of Crossrail 2 (ie why is it not being taken to Stansted?) but this was inconclusive.

Finally AC and BW agreed that the problem of housing with regard to Crossrail developments is how to deal with the spatial planning of London now that spatial planning is back on the agenda.

3 Implications of the draft revised NPPF for London

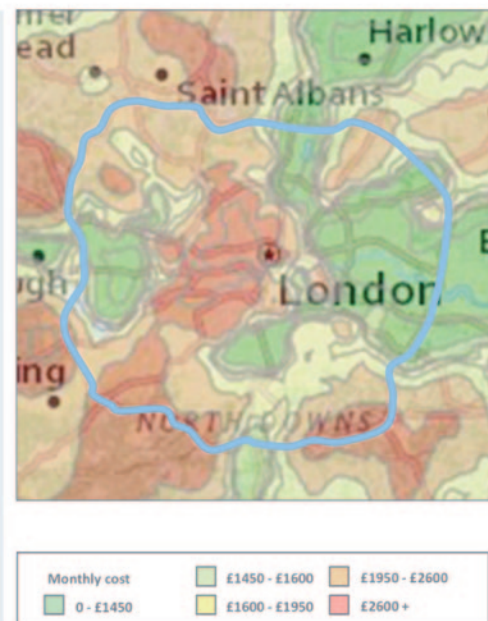
This topic was comprehensively covered by the London Forum's response to the government consultation. PE and MB were both concerned that the revised draft does not properly recognise London and its problems, so is effectively irrelevant to it. BW suggested that the NPPF should relate to England excluding London. MB agreed that the NPPF is not needed for London policies because we have the London Plan - which in many respects contradicts the NPPF (for example with regard to parking standards). He added that the spatial planning of London and how to do it is key to planning policy.

B Whitely wants to know if it's really possible for LPAs to leave the micro-level planning of their areas to neighbourhood plan groups - given the problems of forming and keeping Forums in place, potential conflicts between different residential groups and between commercial and residential interests in an area - e.g. the problems the Bankside area had in pulling the two sides together. And how representative individual Forums are of their areas - unlike LPA Councillors their members do not have to stand for election or be democratically accountable.

JF suggested that pictures are needed but the

Affordability of Housing?

- Indicator reflects combined cost of living/commuting in South East England
- Based on Land Registry house price data and average deposits
- Combined cost falls significantly in pockets:
 - NE/SE London
 - Heathrow
 - 60 to 90 minutes commute from London termini
- The gap is getting wider



What does this all mean?

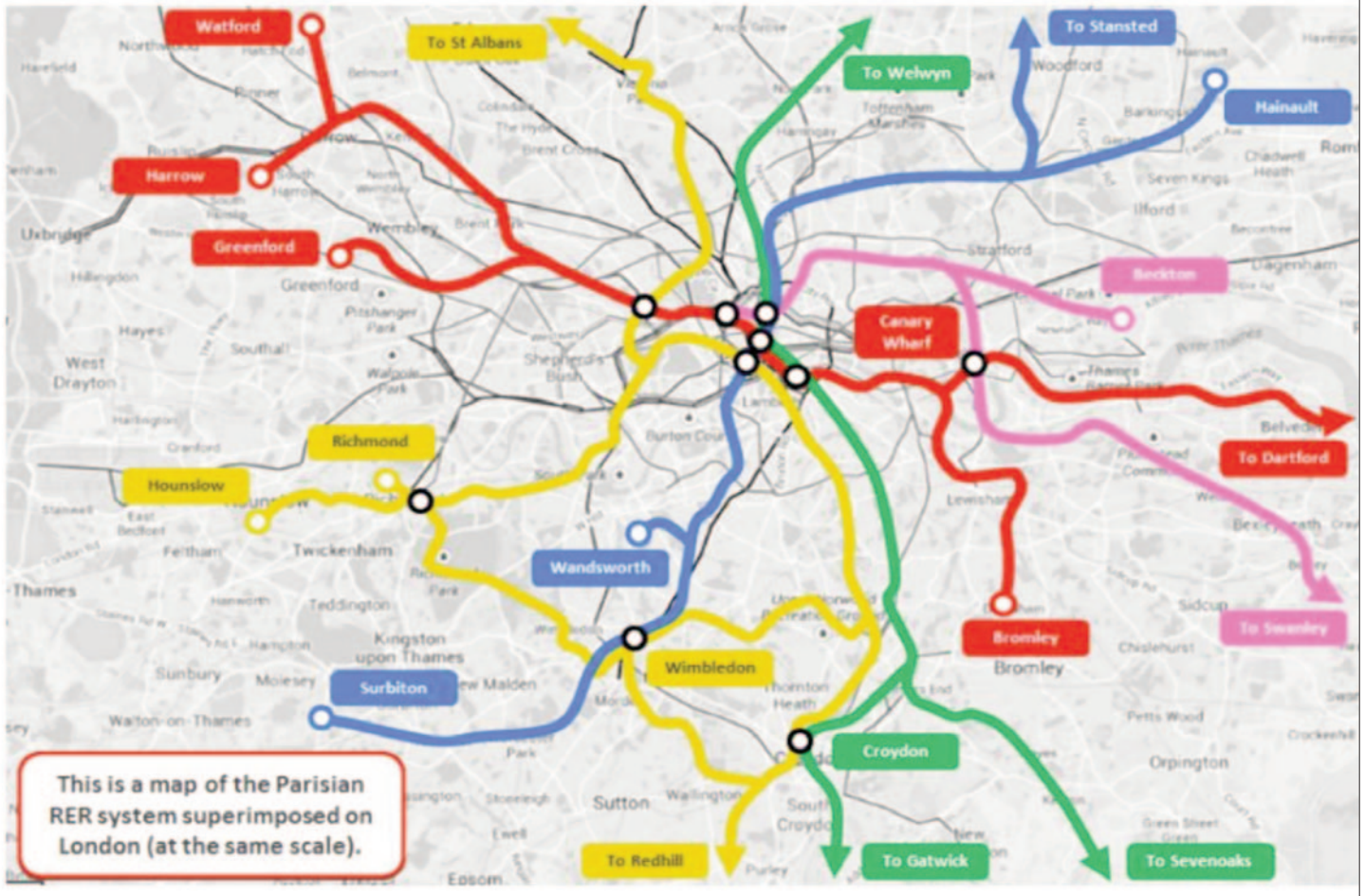
- 1-2million new residents in next 20 years
- 65,000 new homes needed per year in London
 - completions running at 40,000 per year
- 1.5m new jobs = 10 Canary Wharfs
- MTS target of 80% using sustainable modes by 2041 (vs 64% in 2015)
- Increased demand for public transport - better use of existing infrastructure plus selected new lines
- Better use of land, target growth to more accessible locations
- More social infrastructure + utilities
- Prospect of significant overspill, e.g. Luton, Oxford - Cambridge corridor

existing words don't even paint any pictures. JE added that housing delivery and its associated problems are often distorted by point-scoring and emphasised that local authorities don't normally deliver housing, they only plan.

TW concluded that the loss of logistical skills in all related disciplines is still a critical problem. ■

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The Parisian approach



Elizabeth Line – a brief history

Elizabeth line (Central Line) updates to official plan of July 2017



- First mooted in 1974 London Rail Study
- 1991 Bill rejected in 1994 as rail demand was expected to decline in Central London!
- Construction started in 2009
- First sections open in 2018:
 - Paddington to Abbey Wood
 - Paddington to Heathrow
 - Liverpool Street to Shenfield
- Fully operational in 2019

Key benefits

- 10% increase in rail capacity through Central London (additional 72,000 passengers per hour)
- 25% increase in rail capacity at Canary Wharf (although employment expected to double over next 20 years)
- Reduced congestion on Central Line, also on other lines and highways
- Reduced need to interchange at termini
- Improved access to Heathrow
- Shorter journey times through Central London
- More interchange opportunities
- Increased rail revenue
- Stimulating growth in Outer suburbs and beyond



Some of the funding challenges

- Justifying the scheme against other priorities
- Transport benefits alone gives BCR of at around 1.8
- Wider economic benefits initially ignored but increased BCR to at least 3
 - Agglomeration from more jobs in CAZ
 - Stimulates housing development
- How do beneficiaries of scheme contribute fairly?
 - Crossrail levy
 - MCIL
 - Air rights at stations

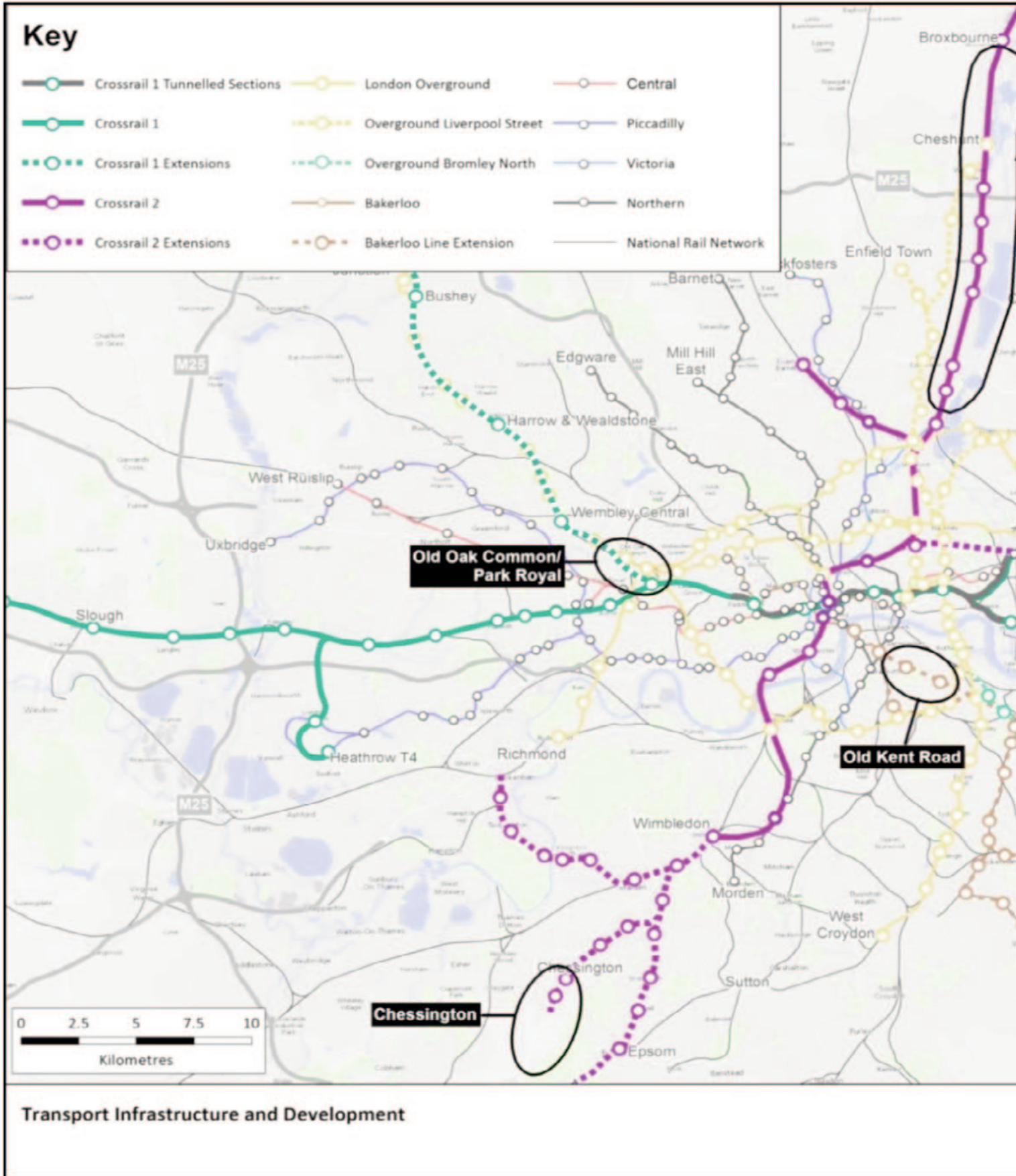
How future rail schemes can help unlock further housing

Scheme	Cost £bn	Homes Delivered by Scheme	Cost £k per home	Jobs Delivered by Scheme
Northern Line Extension	1.0	16,500	60	25,000
Crossrail 2	30.0	200,000	150	200,000
Bakerloo Line Extension to Lewisham	2.5	25,000	100	5,000
Barking Riverside Extension	0.3	6,800	40	100
Elizabeth Line	14.8	180,000	80	362,000

Benefit: Cost Ratio	Value for Money	Guidance
<1.0	Poor	Do not fund
1.0 to 1.5	Low	Fund by exception
1.5 to 2.0	Medium	Fund some
>2.0	High	Fund most, if not all

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Major rail interventions and key regeneration areas



eneration areas

