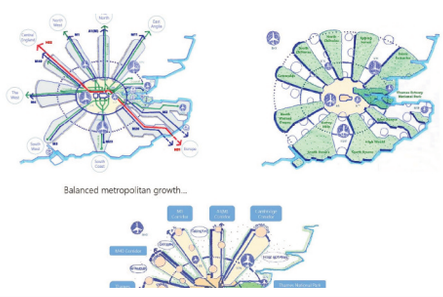
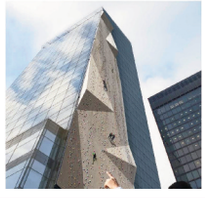
Ten Propositions for planning in London

In January 2017, Max Farrell was invited to present to the All Party Parliamentary Group for London's Planning and the Built Environment in Parliament, organised by the London Society and chaired by the MP Rupa Huq. Here's what he said to them

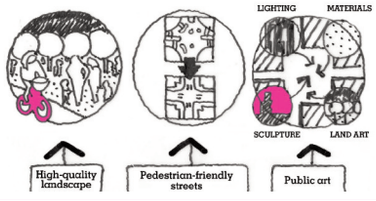


1. London doesn't need a green belt....it needs *green braces!*

2. Make London the world's first *National Park City*



Strengthen the role of public realm in making great places



3. Every placemaking project should have a *cultural strategy*

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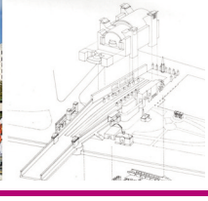
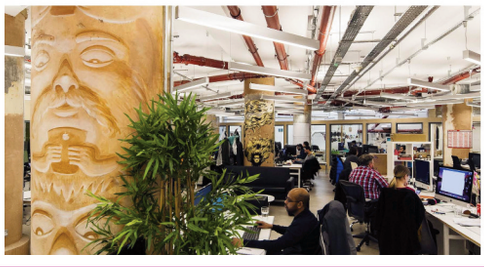


5. Connect East London with *low-level, lifting bridges*

6. Agree on where *tall buildings* are acceptable

7. Build *21st Century mansion blocks* as new affordable housing



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9. Design new kinds of *'urban factories'*

10. Prepare for *autonomous vehicles and humanise our roads*

Ten Propositions for planning in London

In January 2017, Max Farrell was invited to present to the All Party Parliamentary Group for London's Planning and the Built Environment in Parliament, organised by the London Society and chaired by the MP Rupa Huq

I thought this would be a good time to put together various propositions that Farrells have been working on into what turned out to be something of a manifesto. I then realised that it was ten years ago that Terry published a 'Manifesto for London' in the Architectural Review, with 20 propositions for London, and that this could be an opportunity to update the thinking. Given the age that we live in now, of information overload and social media driven attention spans, I thought I might stick to 10 propositions for this event, many of which have been covered in recent editions of Planning in London magazine. The only way to fill the gap left by the abolition of regional planning and the lack of 21st Century Ebenezeer Howards, perhaps after the opprobrium that followed Abercrombie's vision for London as a motorway city, is to put forward propositions and get back into the visioning business as has been convincingly argued by Lee Mallet in the last issue of *Planning in London,* page 97.

One of the key aims of the Farrell Review, published three years ago, was to reach out beyond the industry - to politicians, the media and the general public. In order to do this, we tried to simplify the language and the messages and to communicate visually through diagrams and illustrated narratives. The Review was non party-political and funded independently, primarily by Farrells, in order to maintain neutrality. So it was apt that this audience was made up of MPs from across the political spectrum and the presentation was based on a simple narrative, with key messages communicated visually. This time though, the focus was on big picture propositions for planning in London, through practical examples of research and projects either on the drawing board or under construction.

1 London doesn't need a green belt, it needs green braces

I recently heard Peter Murray, Chairman of the NLA and the London Society, describe the green belt as being 'like Kevin' – as in we need to talk about it. With politicians committed to preserving it and arguments for releasing it exhausted by the industry, is it time now to start thinking about a 'third way'? It is well known that the green belt is not really that 'green'. However, what is less well recognised and appreciated is that it's not much of a belt either.

Major roads and rail links radiate out from the capital connecting it with the rest of the UK and we are spoilt compared to other world cities like New York and Paris when it comes to infrastructure (existing and planned). These routes already punch through the so called green belt, and there is not much in terms of human population along them. One of the advantages of our centralised political system is that significant funds have been made available to London by our national government delivering projects like HS1 and Thameslink. We are about to complete Crossrail, whilst HS2 and Crossrail 2 are now certain enough to

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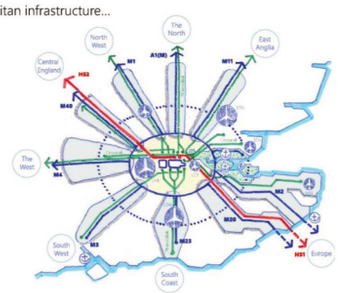
Max Farrell is a partner at Farrells

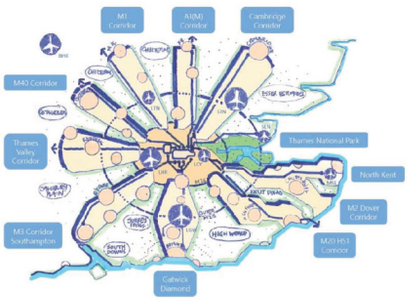
Metropolitan infrastructure...



Metropolitan landscapes...

1. London doesn't need a green belt....it needs *green braces!*

Balanced metropolitan growth...



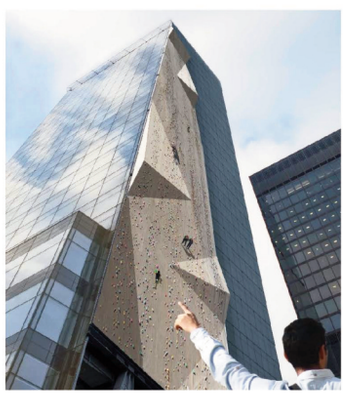
start planning for their city making potential. The argument has to be made for intensification along these transport corridors, now we have clean rail and will have cleaner roads in the not too distant future.

The other major factor for thinking about these radial routes, or spokes, as the best way of growing London is the 360-degree nature of access to airports. Air travel is changing too, with greater capacity and lower carbon emissions trends that will increase as we use technology to fight climate change. What isn't diminishing is the demand to travel in the globalised world that we live in and London is surprisingly well served already if you take into account City, Stansted, Luton, Southend and Birmingham (soon to be rebranded 'London Birmingham') it has a total of seven runways which is more than any other metropolis.

I think it's inevitable that Gatwick will build a second runway, as they face ever increasing demand and reach out to ever more global destinations. The growth of low-cost, long-haul flights that require landing charges lower than those offered at Heathrow is increasing at an unprecedented rate, with British Airways entering the market and Norwegian Air already flying to the US from Gatwick. In fact, if I was a betting man I would put money on planes taking off from a second runway at Gatwick before they ever do from a third runway at Heathrow.

The key to intensifying these transport corridors with mixed use development and building support to do so will be the commitment to improve the quality and accessibility of the landscape corridors alternating in between - the green spokes if you like. London is well served by the Chilterns, the Cotswolds, South Downs and Terry Farrell continues to make the case for the Thames Gateway to be rebranded the Thames Estuary Park, providing a green and productive corridor along the great river, as Chair of the Thames Estuary Local Nature Partnership. We tried to overlay all of these big picture planning propositions into simple and easy to understand diagrams along with a simple, easy to understand and dare I say it 'headline grabbing' strapline. So rather than talking about the green belt, and to use another sartorial reference, could we talk about 'green >>>

2. Make London the world's first *National Park City*



>>> braces'?

The notion of 'green braces' might appear to be headline grabbing. Behind it though, lies a conviction that the way forward for London is to create a truly integrated network with all of the different elements thought of and planned in connection to one another rather than in isolation (which is so often the way thanks to our uniquely British love of 'silos'!)

2 Make London the world's first National Park City

One excellent way of celebrating and reinforcing London's most prized asset, tapestry of green spaces and rich biodiversity, is to support the campaign to make London the world's first National Park City. London is used to 'firsts'. As the world's first industrialised city over 150 years ago it paved the way for industrial revolutions which are continuing to this day throughout the world. As a member of the Advisory Group for the Greater London National Park City campaign, I strongly believe in its aims and the very logical reasons behind them and we are lucky enough to have a truly great campaigner in the 'guerrilla geographer' Dan Raven-Ellison who is leading the charge.

When we first came up with the idea of the landscape-led regeneration of the Thames Estuary over ten years ago, the idea was to transform perceptions from a post-industrial wasteland blighted by power stations and electricity pylons to one of the world's most stunning and ecologically diverse estuary landscapes with wetlands, marshlands, historical buildings and riverside walks. We secured £80 million in national and local government funding which led to over fifteen major projects which are cumulatively making a difference.

This has been turbocharged by the Olympic Park, the regeneration of the Royal Docks, ambitious plans to cut and cover the A13 in Barking and Dagenham and our planning application for London Paramount on the Swanscombe peninsula to be submitted at the end of this year. London Paramount alone will provide 27,000 jobs to ensure that Ebbsfleet Garden City doesn't become a dormitory for London whilst our new business district under construction at Royal Albert Dock will provide another 20,000 jobs and act as a gateway to the East, which will be vital for our post-Brexit economy.

I think the National Park City campaign can have the same transformative impact over time. These projects are always slow burners but they capture the imagination and are all about the soft power of good ideas. The basic premise is that London's USP is landscape yet it does a poor job of connecting it up, making it accessible and using it to educate the younger generation about the natural world around them. When Dan Raven-Ellison went on a walk with his young son from one end of the city to the other using only wild and green spaces they saw kingfishers, foxes, otters, every type of tree and plant you can imagine and yet not one single child, and this was during the school holidays!

With 47 per cent of the capital green space, whether that's parks, squares, woodlands or back gardens, why don't we celebrate and map out this extraordinary patchwork and signpost it for everyone to use and enjoy? I am certain that other world cities would fall over themselves to have even a fraction of the natural environment we have cultivated over centuries, most of which has come about as a direct result of the manmade built environment. When you think about the previously inaccessible industrial areas like Canary Wharf, Potters Field, the South Bank, Kings Cross you realise what we have claimed back in terms of new riverside walks, new parks, new streets and squares in areas we couldn't even get to before.

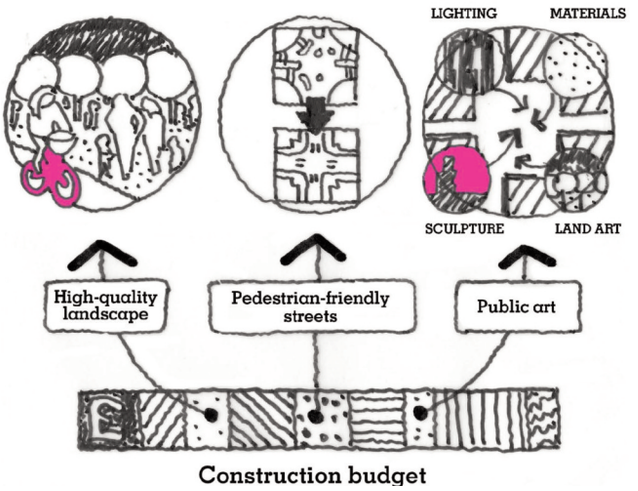
We measured the amount of new public realm created by recent developments along the river and these alone have provided 16 km of new riverside walks, 11 km of new dock & canalside walks, 40 new parks with a total area equivalent to 2 Green Parks and 44 new squares with a total area equivalent to 5 Trafalgar Squares. That's pretty extraordinary and transformative change, that is largely unreported and certainly not given the recognition it deserves. Something that the property industry should quite rightly be very proud of and shout about more in my view.

When people complain about the privatisation of public space, the starting point should be whether those public spaces were accessible at all, as many of the spaces we currently enjoy were literally behind closed gates. The end goal should surely be to manage our public realm as well as the traditional great

Find out more at
www.FarrellReview.co.uk

THE FARRELL REVIEW
of Architecture + the Built Environment

Strengthen the role of public realm in making great places



estates like Grosvenor in Mayfair and the contemporary great estates like CapCo in Covent Garden.

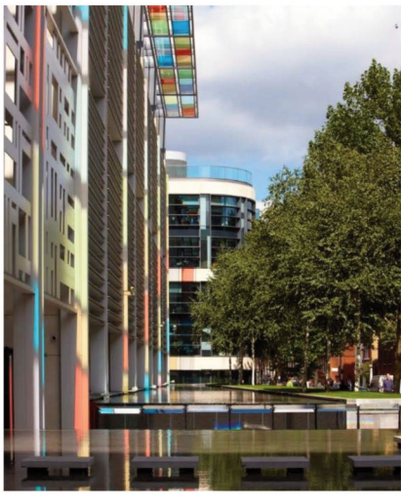
3 Every placemaking project should have a cultural strategy

One of the most significant outcomes of the Farrell Review was the formation of the Place Alliance as an industry-led body which has become a movement for place quality. It is founded on the idea that collaboration and communication can establish a culture where quality of place becomes a national and local priority. The Place Alliance has working groups dedicated to many of the themes and recommendations from the Farrell Review, like the Urban Room Network and another group that was formed to promote placemaking and the arts. Led by Review Panel Member Robert Powell, the Arts and Place group has met on several occasions and created a manifesto which can be downloaded here https://placealliance.org.uk /working-groups/arts-place/

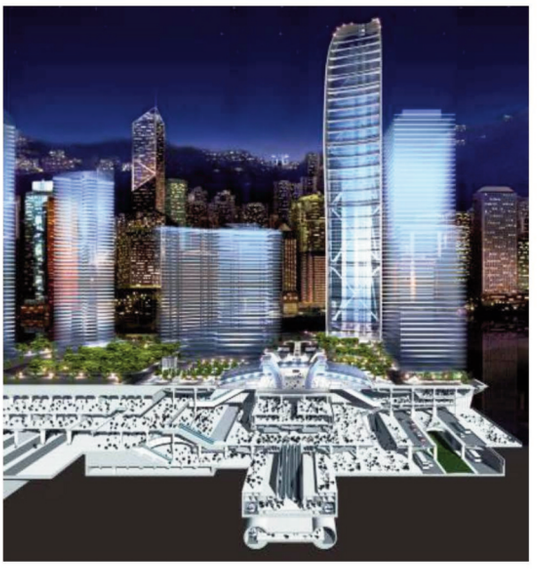
The manifesto calls for "a complete change in the way public art is taught, planned, commissioned, delivered and built, making it a key part of place-making in every urban development". We know from our own experience that projects can have significantly better outcomes when there is a cultural strategy, whether that's at the masterplanning stage or with the integration of art and architecture through collaborative building design. Our masterplan for Newcastle Quayside included a number of commissions for local artists to reflect the maritime history within the public realm. Our architectural approach to the Home Office headquarters was to collaborate with several artists led by Liam Gillick who performed the role of 'Master Artist' curating and coordinating these efforts.

At the Home Office, we managed to incorporate art within the building features without increasing the overall construction cost. A concrete canopy became coloured glass blocks with >>>

3. Every placemaking project should have a *cultural strategy*

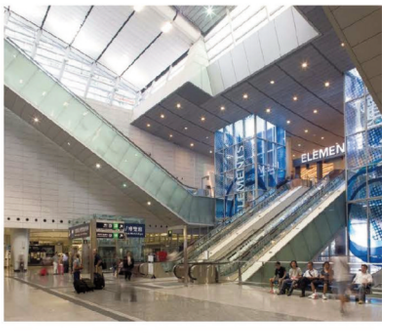


Kowloon Station development – Hong Kong

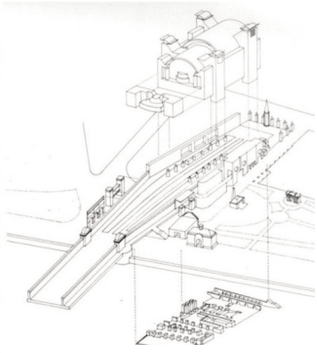


Concept design - 1995

Completed - 2012



4. Make railway stations the *new town centres*



Transport-Oriented Development – Charing Cross Station & One Embankment Place

>>> created a dramatic multi-coloured lighting display on the streetscape (now affectionately known as 'Rainbow Street' by the locals) and other artists reinterpreted the frit glass and bris soleil using patterns and a more graphic expression. All of this was achieved within the budget we had, which dispels the myth that artworks are an unaffordable luxury or additional cost. I suspect the real reason most architects don't collaborate with artists is that they inevitably alter the buildings appearance which for many means 'tampering with their brand', particularly those architects that are wedded to a particular style of architecture. At Farrells we embrace this approach to every building being a place based artwork expressing it's own unique character, meaning and identity.

4 Make railway stations the new town centres

First covered in *PiL99*, October 2016 by Laura Mazzeo, Managing Partner at Farrells, this proposition is one that is very close to our heart as a practice. The first air-rights building in the UK was Embankment Place, a commercial office building designed by Farrells and constructed above Charing Cross station, completed in 1991. Other than Broadgate and Cannon Place in the City of London there have not been many since and yet there is such a strong economic and environmental case for this kind of high-density, urban living and working above stations.

If you search for Transport Oriented Development in Wikipedia, you will see Farrells built out masterplan for West

Old Oak Common – more than a transport hub, a new piece of London

Closing the funding gap for infrastructure

Enabling over station and tracks development

Kowloon in Hong Kong used as the exemplar. This international experience has taught us that high density urban planning and design are changing the model of sustainable development, with public transport and transport infrastructure as the enabler. Kowloon Station, the largest station on the line connecting Hong Kong with the new airport at Chek Lap Kok, created more than just a point of access to an efficient transport link. It was the first of its kind to bring development of homes, offices, shops, public spaces, hotels together and on top of a major station. The station itself resembles an airport terminal more than a railway station, with in-town check-in, baggage handling and screening systems as well as interchange facilities. Above the station, a high-density, three-dimensional urban quarter was developed comprising one million square metres of hotel, office, retail and residential accommodation arranged around a central square with easy access to the station below.

More than a station, it is a new piece of city offering all the amenities an urban dweller might need, from gardens and alfresco dining to jobs and shops on your doorstep whilst also being extremely well connected to its surroundings and the rest of the city. With 90 per cent of all trips to and from this new district made by public transport, the project has become a model for transport oriented development throughout the world.

So why are we so slow to learn these lessons here in the UK and what can be done to prevent the mistakes that have already been made at Old Oak Common from happening again at Euston? Both of these projects, where HS2 will arrive in London, represent once in a lifetime opportunities to use stations as catalysts for city making, yet we are in danger of letting our silo thinking compromise them.

You can't do transport oriented development without design issues being addressed at the outset. At Kowloon we established nine plots that might be built on above the station, with different options for building cores that were then fully enabled by the infrastructure. HS2 appears to be going ahead with phase 1 at Euston without having an idea of what the complete scheme might look like, which means they aren't taking into account the problems of redeveloping over a live station as we did at Embankment Place almost thirty years ago. If you don't address these issues early on, then the opportunities for scale and quantum of development go down and if you try and retrofit at a later stage, as now appears to be the only option at Old Oak Common, then the costs and risks go up and the return to the public purse goes down. We argued for over five years, to local, regional and national politicians and all of >>>

>>> the transport bodies, that they had to allow space between the tracks for piling to enable development above the Crossrail depot at Old Oak which under Boris Johnson's tenure became a game of political 'pass the parcel'.

The imperatives of delivering Crossrail and HS2 on time still appear to be dominating everything despite the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation and the new Mayor trying to think comprehensively about integrated development there. Meanwhile, TfL's five-year-old commitment to start 10,000 homes on 300 acres of TfL land by 2020 is looking less and less achievable. The long list of developers lined up to JV are backing off these complicated sites where there are seemingly unreasonable expectations for affordable housing and where TfL will retain the freeholds.

Whether or not leaving the EU will speed up the procurement systems imposed by OJEU remains to be seen, but there is a prevailing view that bureaucracy is the biggest obstacle to the redevelopment of these sites. It's no coincidence that the largest property developer in Hong Kong is their transport body, MTR, who are world leaders at delivering mixed use, transport oriented development.

We should look long and hard at the opportunities we have to intensify around transport hubs to create more homes as well as easier access to jobs, services and green spaces. Euston, Clapham Junction, Earls Court, Waterloo and Old Oak Common should all be high on our politicians' agenda along with planning ahead for integrated developments along the entire Crossrail 2 line, before it is too late.

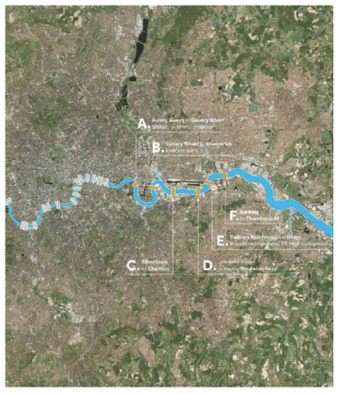
5 Connect East London with low-level, lifting bridges

East London holds the city's greatest potential for regeneration and growth, with over 40 per cent of its opportunity areas. This potential remains blocked, however, and is severely constrained by low connectivity on both sides of the river with the absence of river crossings being the main factor. The need to better link communities across the Thames is undeniable - but which kind of links do we need?

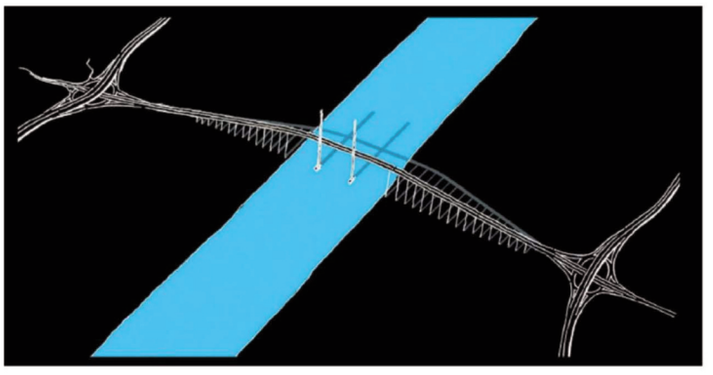
Conventional high-level bridges and tunnels create connections to the national and regional grid, but they come with long approach ramps that sterilize the river banks. They operate as motorway infrastructure, creating environments that are friendly to car traffic only as opposed to walking, cycling and public transport. They offer few, if any, benefits for connectivity at the local level. Still, the prevailing view continues to be that these are the only viable options for crossing the Thames east of Tower Bridge, as the Port of London Authority which manages the river is focused on the operational needs of river traffic rather than the placemaking needs of London as a whole.

With the Docklands now acquiring a fundamentally different role as urban places housing mixed use communities, another model is needed.. Terry Farrell argued for multiple low-level bridges which lift at certain times of day to allow tall ships to pass in the AR Manifesto 10 years ago, and the scheme has since been developed in more detail led by Farrells Partner Neil Bennett in collaboration with Buro Happold, winning Best Conceptual Project at the 2016 London Planning Awards. The big

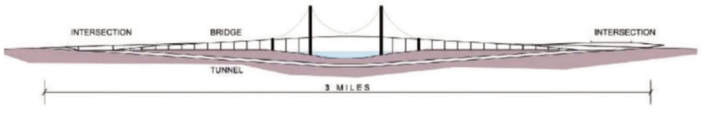
5. Connect East London with *low-level lifting bridges*

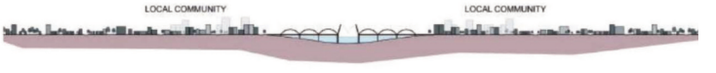


High-level bridge



Low-level bridge





difference between now and when the proposals were first made 10 years ago is the extraordinary pressure facing London with it's population growth and the housing crisis for which East London has to provide the answer.

Low-level, lifting bridges are easily accessible to pedestrians and cyclists and better integrated into the public transport network, so they encourage more sustainable forms of commuting and spontaneous crossings while still allowing river traffic to pass. The footfall and spending generated in the bridge surroundings alone would be a significant boost to local economies, creating jobs and adding value. More than that, it's the enhanced connectivity that low-level bridges create that is the key for East London's urban potential. Every crossing would open up access to thousands more jobs, as well as to cultural, educational and social amenities that have to date been inaccessible.

With multiple bridges, significant amounts of land would be unlocked for development along the waterfront, enabling the delivery of at least 50,000 new homes. A conservative estimate suggests a 10 per cent value uplift above market trend for properties located within 10 and 15 minutes walking distance from a pedestrian bridge, with higher uplifts from bridges with public transport connections. Increased land value attracts higher densities, so the potential is there for a set of new developments along the Thames with high-quality, high-density housing and reanimated public spaces on the waterfront, link- >>>

6. Agree on where *tall buildings* are acceptable

>>> ing existing town centres to the river and acting as growth drivers for the wider area.

We have looked at six potential crossings east of Tower Bridge in three areas of the Thames: The Isle of Dogs & Greenwich peninsula, North to South Woolwich and Barking to Thamesmead. Each location has different growth and transport benefits, and where appropriate low-level bridges are planned as complementary to high-level or tunnel crossings planned by TfL (such as Gallions Reach. The new bridges would work together with the Elizabeth line to increase the catchment area of stations from Canary Wharf eastwards.

While fully respecting the importance of river traffic and preserving the ability to navigate the waters on the Thames, these low-level, lifting bridges can still be delivered quickly with manageable construction risk and less than half the cost of high-level bridges or tunnels. The value uplift for mixed use development on the river banks means that a large portion, if not all, of this cost can be paid for by the private sector. This is a sensible, cost-effective initiative that will contribute more to the transformation of housing delivery in London than any other, reinvigorating not only the communities on both sides of the river but the city as a whole. To put it in perspective, you could have two of these low level, lifting bridges in East London where they are desperately needed for the price of one Garden Bridge in central London, which is pretty well served by bridges already.

6 Agree where tall buildings are acceptable

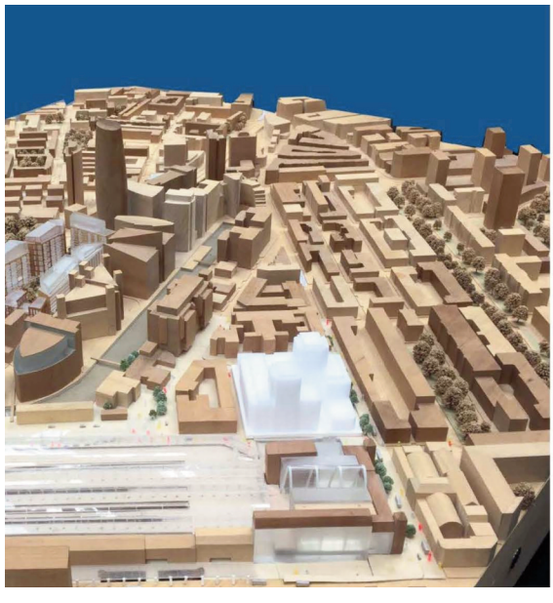
Tall building proposals raise broader issues and need to be considered within the context of urban density patterns, ground-level interaction with the surroundings and impact on wider regeneration processes. In other words, the debate should not be 'tall buildings vs. heritage' – both should be regarded as pieces of the city and approached from the point of view of urban planning.

It seems like an obvious statement that we should have tall buildings in the right places and this has been argued by all sides in the debates around London's debates skyline. It's a good starting point, but the right place cannot be left entirely open to interpretation. More than just 'outside of conservation areas' or 'where the economic benefits will be the highest', it should be based on urban design principles that justify the location of high-rises under a coherent spatial development strategy for the city as a whole.

Guidelines and policies have already been produced, in the London Plan and Local Plans, which outline the main criteria that tall building proposals need to satisfy in order to be accepted. A lot of those points are not contested, in theory at least. It would be difficult to disagree that tall buildings belong in close proximity to railway stations, or that they are better placed in clusters rather than in isolation. However, the reality is that our reactive planning system means anyone can propose a tall building for just about anywhere, and that is exactly what happened with the 72 storey 'Paddington Pole' proposed within the heart of Westminster's low rise, residential conservation area adjacent to Paddington station and a stone's throw from Hyde Park. To say it

LEFT:
Farrells mid rise, high density scheme for Paddington

TOP & RIGHT:
Piano's high rise scheme, same density as Farrells



7. Build *21st Century mansion blocks* as new affordable housing

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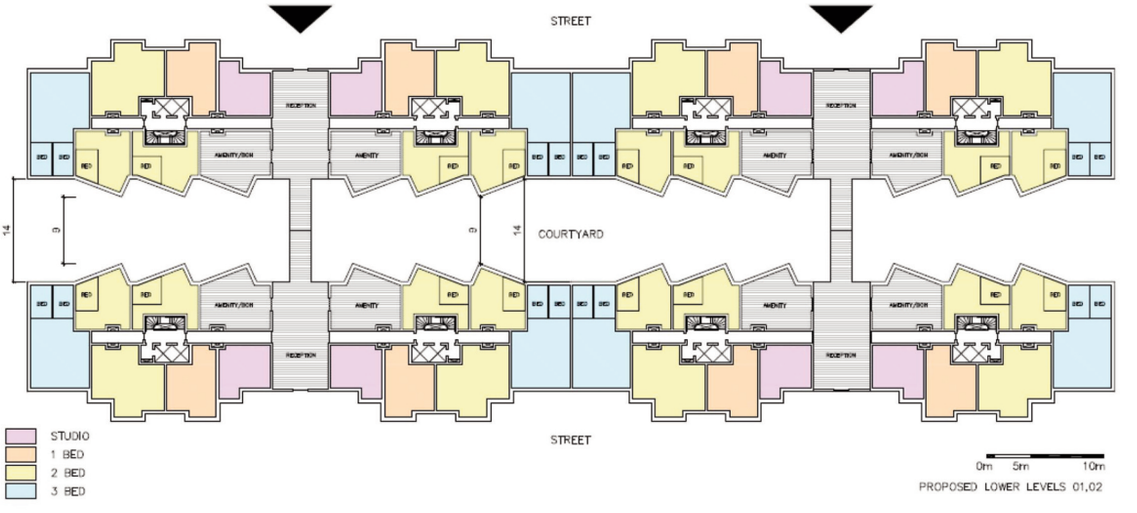
TYPICAL GROUND FLOOR



>>> was entirely out of context is an understatement; to say it was absurdly inappropriate is a fairer depiction of what became a case study for how not to do high rise.

As the previous masterplanners for the same developer, we had a scheme that provided exactly the same amount of floor space within a street-based complex of urban blocks and 15 storey shoulder towers. What most people outside the industry aren't aware of, is the fundamental differences between these two approaches when it comes to cost, risk and the implications for urban planning. Sellars argument was that they had to build that tall, to provide that level of density in order to make the improvements to the ground level and integrate with the station properly. With the mid-rise scheme, it was much lower cost and also easier to build in phases which meant you could have a mix of tenures and significant amounts of affordable housing rather than just a super tall, super expensive tower for the super rich. What was lacking was any kind of coherent vision for the future redevelopment of Paddington within which these proposals could have been assessed. As a result, a huge amount of time, money and energy was spent trying to counter these proposals which were eventually withdrawn in the face of unprecedented opposition, not least from Westminster's own councillors.

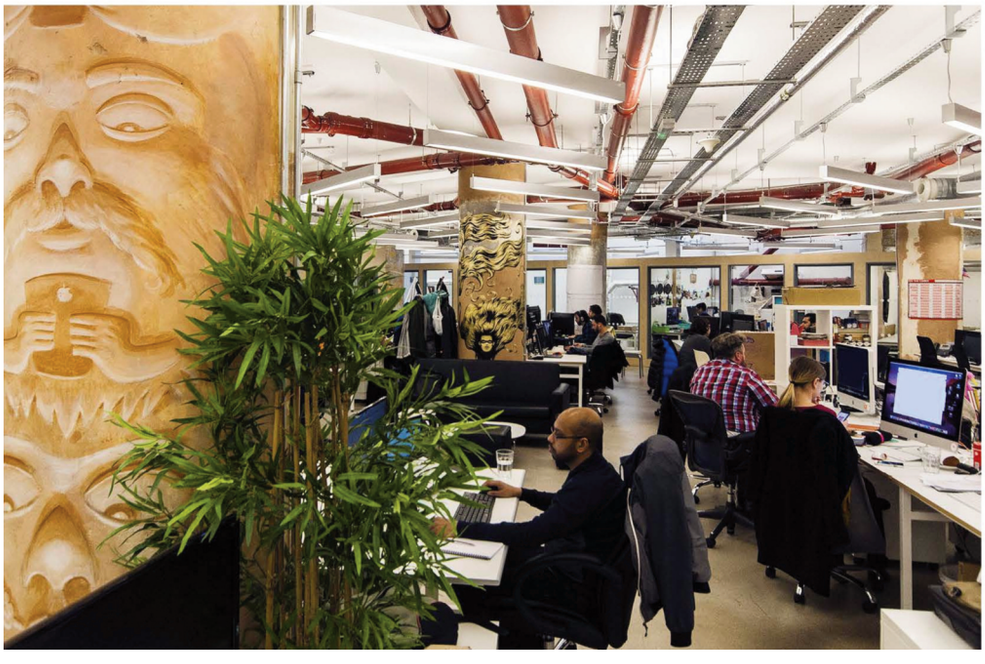
A better way of using that energy and those resources would be to draw up a spatial vision for London, ideally using a digital platform like VuCity, that could adapt to socio-economic changes and political cycles. This could quite clearly set out the best locations for tall building clusters like Canary Wharf and the City, or at major road junctions, transport nodes and river banks where they aren't damaging the existing urban fabric. We could move closer to the zoning system they have in New York or the land use provisions accompanied by carefully constructed site-specific regulating plans they have in Germany, which establish the morphological framework within which development occurs.

Arguably this kind of proactive planning approach guarantees design quality by establishing a unifying urban framework through which subsequent developments (large and small) coalesce to form coherent and connected bits of the city, rather than the free for all we have at the moment which is entirely open to negotiation and more often than not, acrimony.

7 Build 21st Century mansion blocks as new affordable housing

First outlined in *PiL96,* Jan-March 2016, our proposals for 21st Century Mansion Blocks went on to be shortlisted for the London Planning Awards presented at City Hall in February 2017. Our starting point was to ask why it is that the current rules around daylight, sunlight and distances between buildings would all have to be broken if we wanted to build Marylebone or Covent Garden today.

Farrells proposals, in collaboration with Savills and GIA, question the rules upon which residential development in London is currently planned. At a time when the housing crisis requires us to double our current efforts, mid-rise and high density blocks provide an alternative to building upwards or the need for urban



8. Build affordable, adaptable and *flexible workspace*

sprawl. Modern day mansion blocks put quality of accommodation first with smaller units to suit contemporary needs and dual aspect around small courtyards, maximising the use of land - our most precious resource. We propose a carefully considered face-to-face relationship for housing with streets that dispense with 18m rules and that deliver higher density without compromising on quality of design. We have improved daylight levels by working with angles and bay windows to ensure the face-to-face relationship between buildings have a positive impact on the end user whilst maintaining privacy.

Mid-rise, high density blocks are an alternative to tall buildings to combat the London housing crisis because they support high density living but also because they are cheaper than building tall, with the opportunity for prefabrication and efficiency in repetition. Farrells have tested this theory by configuring different apartment types that appear uniform but with an individuality the end user would recognise as distinctive. The mansion blocks can then be built in phases which result in much improved funding and delivery options whilst targeting several different markets to spread the risk.

Balcony space is incorporated into the interior space, giving the end user a higher quality living experience through function, energy efficiency and better daylight levels with the focus for outdoor space in communal areas. With their increased footprint mansion blocks occupy more of the site, and their layout has been optimised to reduce tarmac for roads and maximise public open space, delivered in sequential, phaseable pieces. It may seem ironic that in looking for ideas for the future, we are starting with the solutions of the past. But it is the long standing popularity, flexibility and ultimately value of these buildings that may hold all the clues.

8 Build affordable, adaptable and flexible workspace

In the previous edition of our Shaping London column (PiL 100), Farrells partner Peter Barbalov argued that London's commercial space market is increasingly being handled under a new 'rent economy', informed by deeper socio-economic shifts which have produced smaller, non-traditional business models and brought on the emergence and continuous evolution of co-working strategies. All this does not fit well with the typical CAT A commercial space production that has been the standard in the past decades. The increased variety and flexibility of work models is demanding equally rich in variety and adaptable spaces – planned, designed and occupied as places rather than machines to work in, with a sense of 'internal placemaking'.

Co-working spaces have started to appear more and more alongside the rise of the creative industries, and are increasingly more popular with freelancers and entrepreneurs as they bridge the gap between the flexibility of working from home and the benefits of an office environment – space, infrastructure, and the opportunities for collaboration or inspiration from others. Elements of this co-working philosophy though are emerging within more traditional office structures as well; one the one hand, smart phones, tablets, cloud-based computing services and many more technological advancements have eliminated the need for employers to work from one spot. On the other hand, the benefits of collaboration, in person and in ways much more informal than staff meetings, are becoming more and more clear. 'Coffee machine conversations', informal interactions in other words, create a sense of community and improve the engagement and productivity of employees. For this collaborative spirit to be fostered however, it is the quality of the interior design that plays the most important role – from the overall layout (the 'internal urbanism') to the treatment of materials, colours and natural light.

It has long been recognised that the design of the spaces we work in affects not only our productivity but our overall health and wellbeing. The negative impact is easy to understand and has been more thoroughly researched: the wrong kind of environment can actively produce negative impacts on the performance and experience of both visitors and occupiers. We believe the reverse is naturally also true: successful internal placemaking results in both intangible and tangible benefits, for the employees but also the company as a whole. In the more commercial sense, workplace design becomes a brand statement on its own, conveying the company's ethos.

More importantly however, it is the planned adaptability of workspaces that has the greater impact, in the everyday routine as well as in the long run. For the daily office life, flexible design means an array of spaces that encourage different types of interaction, and can be easily altered to accommodate specific purposes. At the building scale, it can mean more fluid and inclusive work environments that have a reciprocal relationship with the city around them: spaces open to the public, amenities in the lobby, in-between third spaces between the corporate and the public. Within a wider timeframe though, the most successful buildings are those that, from the outset, consider the changing nature of the workplace and can accommodate retrofitting for completely different uses. Our own office is a good example, initially a furniture factory that has since hosted many different occupiers and is currently a mix of residential and office space, the latter including a 'creative hub' available to small, design-based businesses. The same mixing principles were applied in the planning and design of the Eagle, a mixed-use scheme covering an entire block and consisting of housing, retail and workspace, part of which specifically designed with co-working in mind.

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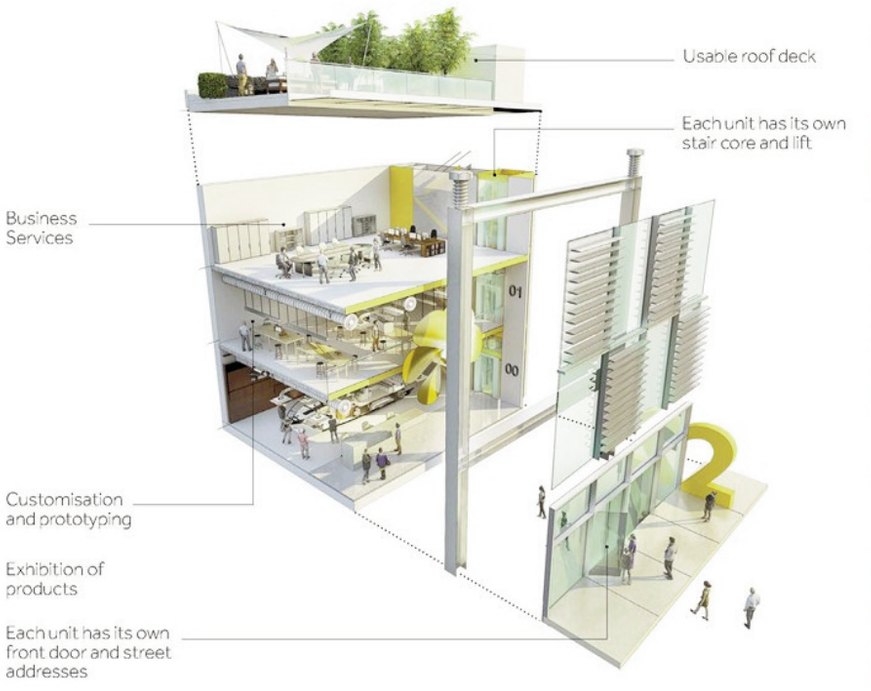
9. Design new kinds of *'urban factories'*




Business Services


Customisation


Product Exhibition

>>> **9 Design new kinds of 'urban factories'**

London's rapid growth has put a lot of sectors and parts of the city under huge pressure, but industrial areas are one of the primary concerns. Outside of the central core, large areas are occupied by various industrial estates, laid out in very low density on land that is becoming prime target for higher value uses. The first step towards this inevitable process of land use change is usually full 'eviction' and relocation, a strategy meant to prevent land use conflicts such as housing in close proximity to heavy industry. Industrial uses are completely eradicated from (previously) peripheral areas and their built infrastructure, with few exceptions, demolished before new uses are brought in.

This is, however, a lengthy and costly process, not to mention blindly destructive to a range of industrial activity forms that could co-exist with other uses like artisan uses, supporting the existing local economy and enhancing the mix and integration of new developments, so neither housing nor employment areas are planned in isolation. The need to intensify industrial land and to take every opportunity to address the housing crisis is undeniable. However, the relationship of the industry to the city does not need to be 'either / or'. Not all types of industrial activity need to be separated from residential uses and certain categories may actually be better placed within mixed-use clusters, particularly modern forms of craftsmanship and making things which are less noisy and more neighbourly.

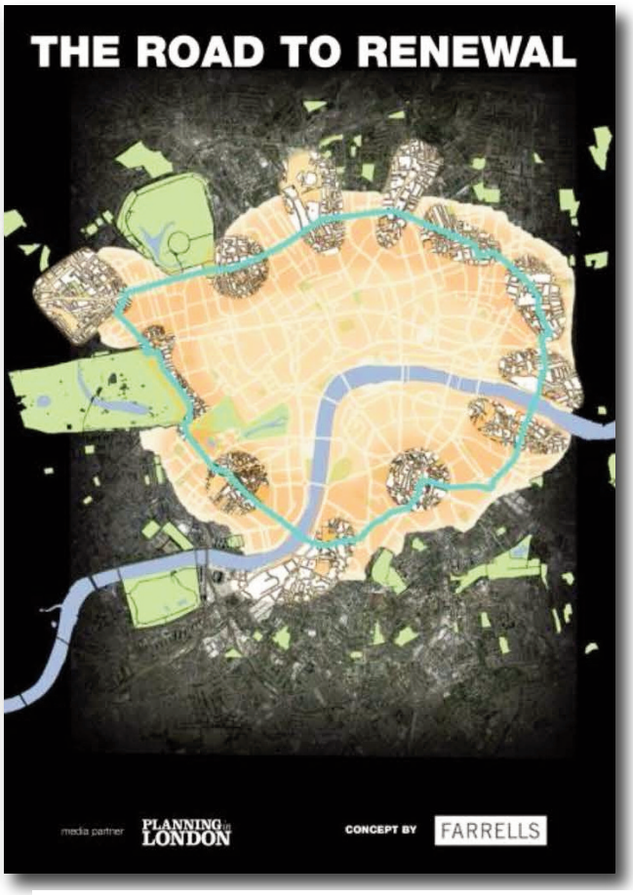
The value of the existing building stock also need to be assessed for potential retention, for reasons of sustainability, economics but often also for quality alone; large industrial sheds with ample, flexible, open interior space are great candidates for retrofitting. Savills have been undertaking research into a framework to provide better quality, better integrated employment space as part of mixed-use schemes. Starting with a more detailed categorisation of industrial activities by their potential for co-existence with more sensitive uses, this initiative examines possibilities of integration at three levels; neighbourhood, urban block and building.

Such frameworks would allow for industrial areas as a whole to be created as (or transformed into) multi-functional urban places, with inviting open spaces at street level and a good degree of diversity. Even in the case of activities that would not work well in close proximity to housing, provisions can be made for retail and leisure functions and lively public spaces. The overall masterplanning strategy should aim at providing a range of flexible premises to attract companies of different sizes and sectors, avoiding monocultural arrangements.

The same principles can be applied to the design of block and building typologies. Innovative design solutions can allow for successful vertical or horizontal use mixing, with residential units above or alongside employment space. In the right circumstances, employment spaces themselves can be redesigned into vertical, higher-density models that interact more with their surroundings at ground level (with, for example, exhibition spaces open to the public). At Farrells we have been developing these typologies for a potential new trade hub at Albert Island in the Royal Docks, learning lessons from similar schemes in Asia.

All solutions would need to be developed in context-specific ways but it is clear that creative planning and design can produce a toolbox of typologies for new kinds of 'urban factories', typologies that not only cover the current needs for intensification and mixing, but also open up space for opportunities not necessarily covered by the market, including co-working spaces and tech companies who want to work in close proximity to more established parts of the industry.

10. Prepare for *autonomous vehicles* and humanise our roads



10 Prepare for autonomous vehicles and humanise our roads

Driverless cars, better known as autonomous vehicles or AVs were first covered by Farrells Partner Nigel Bidwell, in *PiL* 94 and they are no longer a far-fetched idea or 'Back to the Future' like prospect. Vehicles that can complete journeys without a driver, move while empty and interact with other vehicles and road users in a safe and efficient way are being tested in various parts of the world and we can expect AVs to soon be introduced into daily commuting. While there are still many uncertainties surrounding their use, the potential benefits are enormous and extend well beyond increased road safety and lower carbon emissions. At this moment, there is a unique window of opportunity to put in place creative strategies and plans, with this emerging technology as the catalyst, to create a new generation of living streets reinvigorating our town and city centres.

At Farrells, we have collaborated with engineers WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff to explore autonomous vehicles as they relate to placemaking, in a piece of research discussed in the 98th issue of PiL last year. This work explored future visions of how different UK places might look and function after the introduction of AVs, as well as what kinds of new places might be possible. We have approached the potential benefits and impact of AVs against the backdrop of today's reality, aiming for realistic and feasible propositions rather than a futuristic vision, and focused more on >>>

>>> those aspects of the technology that can offer the most interesting possibilities for placemaking.

AVs will prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over other vehicles and after a necessary period of adjustment they will create much safer streets by removing human error, the principal cause of road accidents. AVs can offer door-to-door journeys without requiring a parking space at either end, a feature that opens up incredible possibilities for travelling between transport interchanges and sharing cars. With such models, the typical use pattern of vehicles remaining parked for the majority of the day would be reversed, with each AV being in use for much longer and far fewer vehicles needed in total to maintain current levels of use. The benefits will be transformational, not just in terms of efficiency but also environmental quality and the public realm. With proper planning, AVs will dramatically ease congestion and pollution, particularly within Zones 1 & 2, and an significantly reduction carbon emissions.

Within existing neighbourhoods, AV use can be planned as complementary to the public transport network, covering gaps and enhancing access to healthcare, schools and community centres. Opportunities are opened up by the possibility of 'AV zones', areas designed for these new kinds of vehicles from the outset. Within these zones, parking spaces can be confined to the absolute minimum and the street design simplified into a more efficient thoroughfare, saving between 15 and 20 per cent more space compared with a typical urban layout – space that can be used to create higher density communities enhanced by more open and green space. Street clutter can be virtually eliminated as AVs will not need to gather information from the roadside, making directional and speed limit signs redundant.

Initially an AV zone would operate as a self-contained system within a defined area, with the potential to be gradually integrated into the current network as AV use increases throughout the city. Given the relative long-term nature of most spatial plans for opportunity zones, housing zones and other growth areas, local authorities and development companies can begin planning for AV zones now incorporating smaller scale, 'pilot areas' to be designed for driverless vehicles within growth plans.

With the right planning, autonomous vehicles will be transformational for London, across multiple scales. On the street level, they can provide the basis for a new generation of living streets, where people and public spaces have priority over car traffic – without reducing the overall efficiency of the road network. Existing neighbourhood and inner-city routes would be greatly improved, while gradually future ones can be planned with significantly less constraints in terms of both road design and parking space. Finally, with extended planning for AV use in highways and as alternative, shared-use transport mode between major interchanges, there is potential to enhance connectivity between peripheral town centres, rural areas and the central core – making for a more efficiently inter-linked metropolitan region.

Reprints of this feature may be downloaded from www.farrells.com or www.planninginlondon.com

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