

Urban rooms – The M&S decision – ('St Michael' versus St Michael) A city short of children – Ideas for planning reform from BL and LandSec

Account of Forum meeting on 21st September at NLA London Centre at Guildhall
Minute based on Twine recording on Zoom
also at planninginlondon.com > LP&DF

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1 Urban rooms – every city should have one Peter Murray founder of New London Architecture [NLA]

I'm Co-Founder of NLA, Chairman of the Temple Bar Trust and former Chairman of the London Society. So every town has to have one. The 'one' is an urban room.

I thought I'd go through various types of urban rooms and the way that I see NLA relating to them, because there are lots of different types of urban rooms. I guess the first one that I became aware of was at Bristol, where there was the Centre for the Advancement of Architecture. And to a certain extent what I've been doing really is the advancement of architecture.

But the problem is that actually architecture is less fashionable to talk about these days. What people want to talk about 'place' and less tangible things like that. I can remember when Richard Simmons took over at CABE and gave his first speech at the National Portrait Gallery. He got up and he could hardly get the word architecture out of his mouth when he explained CABE's name. The built environ-

ment bit was stronger and you will see that now at NLA where we are the 'home of the built environment community', so much wider than architecture, which is probably as it should be.

I started to get interested in the idea of making the wider public more interested and informed and engaged with discussions and debates around architecture.

I started Blueprint Magazine in 1983 with exactly that aim, having been editor of the RIBA Journal for five years but started to feel rather institutionalized there. We did actually get out to quite a lot of non architects but there were never quite as many as we'd have liked. But the key thing was it was read by other people in the media. And they picked up stories that we had in Blueprint, and they did the promulgation for us. That was the designer decade. So it really did work to spread the word about architecture to a wider public.

New Architecture, the work of Foster, Rogers, Stirling at the Royal Academy of 1986 which I organised with Deyan Sudjic was a very popular exhibition: Richard Rogers displayed his ideas for a bridge across the Thames near Charing Cross Station - a pedestrian bridge instead of the rail bridge that's there at the moment. Foster showed his proposals for the BBC Building and Stirling his National Gallery extension submission. Someone in the Foster office changed

rather the tone of the title of the show by suggesting that 'Rogers' could be read as a verb!

Then later I curated the Living Bridges exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1996. The idea was to have more regular exhibitions about architecture and built environment at the Royal Academy. But it was difficult to get artists to agree to give over space to architecture. There was a plan for an architecture show every two years and in the end it was every ten years. It is always very heartwarming to speak to architects now who say, "Oh, I went to that exhibition when I was at school and that's what got me into architecture." These are ways of advancing architecture to a wider public.

I'd always been a great fan of the Pavillon de l'Arsenal in Paris. That was really set up so that the Président could tell people what the next grands projets were going to be. It wasn't so much at that stage about engagement. It is much more about engagement today, but is a really good way of showing off what is happening in Paris, getting people to understand the City both for visitors and for locals. A place for debate and discussion. And a place for temporary exhibitions about issues of architecture and the built environment generally. It took quite a long time before London could catch up. There were lots of discussions about the idea of doing something like it. I worked with Ricky Burdett on a big exhibition in the



Highlights by Twine AI

"I really started off interested in the idea that we made a wider public more interested and informed and engaged with the discussions and debates around architecture." - Peter Murray

- 🏠 Urban Rooms and Architecture Centers
 - The importance of engaging the public in architecture and urban planning discussions was emphasized.
 - Various urban rooms and architecture centers around the world were discussed, with potential expansion in London mentioned.
- 🏛️ NLA and its Role
 - The NLA supports London's development and engages with wider communities, focusing on the wider London area.
- 🌆 Changing London Landscape
 - The NLA's "Changing Phase of London" exhibition showcases the city's development and radical changes in opportunity areas.
- 🏢 Tall Building Survey
 - The number of tall buildings in London has increased dramatically, with changing attitudes towards them.
- 🌐 Wider Engagement
 - The possibility of the NLA engaging with other architectural centers and groups for a strategic vision of education was discussed, with funding limitations mentioned.
- 🔧 M&S Building Retrofit
 - The project's challenges and opportunities in reducing embodied carbon in construction were discussed, with material reuse being a key factor.
- 🗨️ Building Discussion

- The conversation revolved around the demolition and reconstruction of a low-carbon, materially efficient building on Orchard Street.
- 📊 Demographic Trends
 - The discussion covered demographic trends in London, including decreasing numbers of families with school-aged children in certain areas, and factors such as housing costs, childcare, and income.
- 🏠 Housing and Rent
 - Rent and housing costs are the main concern for families in London, with potential impacts of new transport infrastructure like the Elizabeth Line discussed.
- 👶 Childcare
 - London's high childcare costs were highlighted, with the potential for businesses to provide childcare facilities to help retain talent in the city discussed.
- 🏗️ Planning and Development
 - The potential for London to become more segregated was explored, with the role of social housing and new transport infrastructure discussed.
- 📌 Key Highlights
 - The brownfield-first approach presents opportunities for urban development in the UK, with positive reactions from industry and politicians, and engagement with key stakeholders.
- 👥 Community Involvement
 - Involving communities in the planning process was emphasized, with suggestions for increasing participation through digital means and co-design workshops.
- 🔧 Planning System Challenges

Meeting held on 21st September at NLA London Centre at Guildhall *SEE Fred Pilbrow's sketch above*

<p>Moderators Brian Waters of BWCP Riette Oosthuizen of HTA Design</p> <p>Speakers Tom Dobson of Quod Michael Meadows of British Land Co Peter Murray of NLA Fred Pilbrow of Pilbrow and Partners Jon Tabbush of Centre for London</p>	<p>Attendees Peter Eversden of London Forum Lizzie Le Mare of Tibbalds Martin Thompson of CULS Daniel Leon of Square Feet architects Giulia Robba of Farrells Alexandra Bullen of Metropolitan Workshop Richard Coleman of City Designer John Walker of CT Group Nicholle Kingsley of Pinsent Masons</p>	<p>Michael Coupe of Coupe Planning Mark Willingdale of Willingdale Associates</p> <p>Apologies Chris Hogwood of Landsec Sarah Allan (DLUHC) Brian Whiteley of the RTPi Jonathan Manns of JLL James Mitchell of Axiom Architects</p>
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Royal exchange in 1992. I did an exhibition with Nick McKeogh, who is my co founder in NLA, called it New City Architecture which got a very good response.

New City Architecture was exhibited in a basement in Broadgate. It got 10,000 visitors in just in one month. So we thought there is basically an interest here. Something that would work. Over the page is the first sketch I did for a chap called Michael Rose, who at that stage was the chairman of the Building Centre. The Building Centre had recently had a very expensive revamp. They had a coffee machine and big open spaces. But there was nobody

there. The place was absolutely empty.

So Michael Rose took me out to lunch in Charlotte Street and said can you put on an exhibition that would get people coming to the Building Centre. I think at that stage he just wanted a single exhibition. Foster, Rogers, Stirling or something like that. Foster's partner Spencer De Grey was at the time the chairman of the Building Centre trust. My view was that actually what they wanted was something that would bring people back on a regular basis. And the answer was clearly something about London because everyone in London is interested in London, everyone working in London in the

built environment is interested in what's going on.

So it was temporary exhibitions that would bring people into the Building Centre on a regular basis. And it would fulfill the long term dream to create something which would compare with the Pavillon de l'Arsenal. As a place, as I saw it at that stage, promoting the advancement of architecture. This was the sort of sketch I did, which went with a little report which went to the Building Centre trustees. And I was told it is the only time that the Building Centre trustees had agreed to anything unanimously.

I did it together with Nick McKeogh. Luckily his >>>

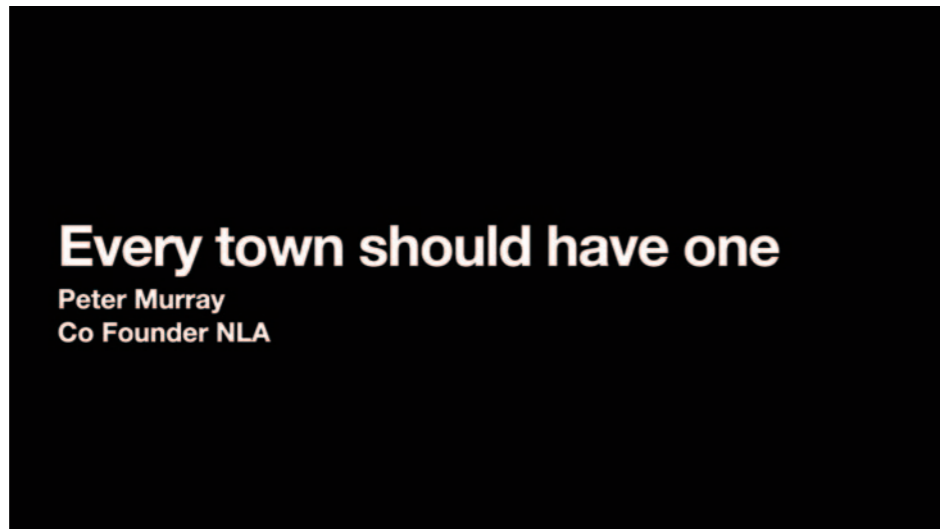
>>> father was then running Pipers the model makers, and the key thing we needed was a good model. And Pipers had the model. We got together and put it in the Building Centre. It started to work right from the word go. Well, not quite from the word go, because the day we were opening was the day of the bombs in the Tube. That wasn't a great start, but somehow it did strengthen one's resolve to look at the holistic idea of the city and what it was doing today. I went down to Trafalgar Square, where Ken Livingstone had that community meeting, which I thought was really, really important. It reinforced the idea of a resilient city, which has been through so much change over so many centuries. Layer upon layer upon layer and we were adding a sort of next layer of that history. And of course, on a more positive note, the night before that the Olympics had been announced. We then had five years of programming focused very much around what was happening to London more generally as a result of the Games as well as all the various developments and programmes that were taking place as a result of the first London Plan developed by Ken Livingstone but with Richard Rogers and Urban Task Force Ideas in the background.

So the first exhibition we put on at NLA was The Changing Face of London, which took in 42 Opportunity Areas looking at masterplans. We had a lot of those, just either sketches or cgis – pretty rough ideas of what was going to happen such as Kings Cross at a very early stage. It gave a very optimistic picture of the growth of London, the amount of change that London was about to face. And it was all very exciting. It had the idea of Pavillon de l'Arsenal in the background.

As a long term friend of Terry Farrell we talked a lot about architecture centres and what one should be. And of course, it was the Farrell Report which then came up with the idea of the Urban Room.

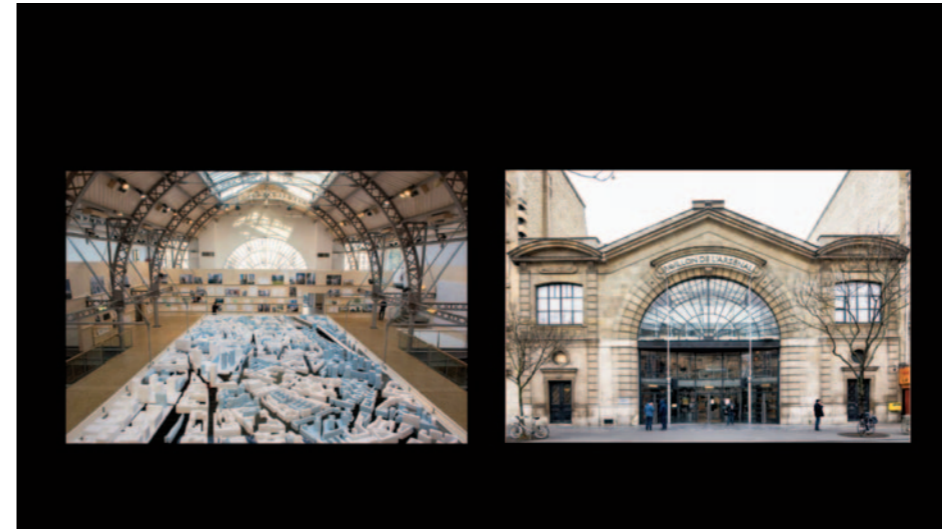
As an organisation we support London. We are pro development, but we want to engage with wider communities as well. And I have to thank Peter Eversden for always being in the front row and asking difficult questions. We do provide free community places for people who want to come in and get engaged in the debate. We are very disappointed in the current Mayor in the way that he fails to stand up for London more widely at a time when we are really under pressure. And I think back to those heady days when almost every day Ken Livingstone would tell the government how many billions it was that London actually donated to the rest of the economy to keep the country going. That sort of message needs to be repeated.

We are a little bit boosterish in that respect. And we also have lots of tourists who come and find out about London. We take a position which Ollie Wainwright doesn't like very much, but we are slightly different to some of those smaller, urban rooms that do have this close community engagement. We



ABOVE: Sterling Rogers Foster show at the Royal Academy 1986

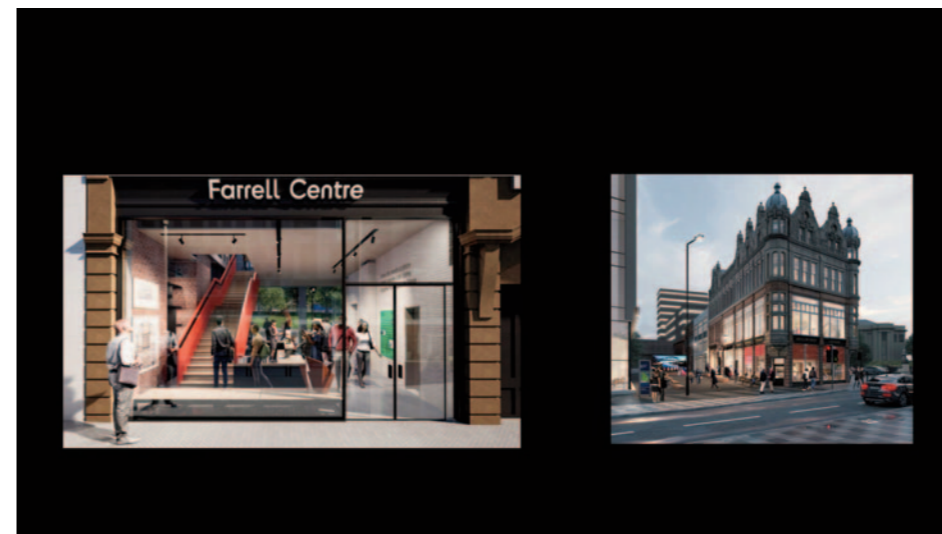
BELOW: Living Bridges exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1996



TOP: Pavillon de l'Arsenal in Paris

ABOVE: Peter's early sketch for NLA at the Building Centre

BELOW: The new Farrell Centre in Newcastle



look at the wider London, and I think more than ever now, actually. We need to see and discuss London as a whole. There's too much debate of individual boroughs having very different views about what happens and operating separately.

I was on the Earls Court site just the other day where the line between Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith runs straight down the middle of the site which of course provides quite interesting planning discussions there.

We are great supporters of positive change in London. So we started NLA with an exhibition called the Changing Face of London which was full of cgis. The exhibition that you see in the centre now around the walls, is almost all those opportunity areas now built out, not all of them, but most of them. They have created radical change to the city that you can see on our model (which is probably the best way to see this change in the shape and skyline of London) where the opportunity areas are denser, new places are close to good transport connections, with generally taller buildings. So you see these clusters of towers popping up right across London. That was one of the reasons why we started our annual Tall Buildings survey. Which probably as far as the newspapers are concerned put us on the map more than anything else.

In 2013 at a development down in Greenwich I went to a press conference where Boris Johnson announced that he had to build 42,000 homes a year. I remember that he said, "Well, it doesn't mean there are going to be tall buildings popping up all over London". Actually, we knew that it did, because you see them in the pipeline. And so we thought we would start counting them. And we started off. We didn't catch them all. But we started off with about 220, which astonished everybody.

By about 2016 there were 550. Then there was hardly a murmur from anybody about it. Somehow attitudes had changed dramatically.

I've spent too long and afterwards will be very happy to take a little tour around the space. But now happy to answer any questions.

Discussion

Brian – a Tour de Force. Thank you very much.

In the current issue of *Planning in London*, starting on page six find the summary of NLA's latest tall building survey.

Michael Coupe – I think Simon Allford has been trying to turn the RIBA, which he described as an oil tanker, around. Do you think in the future it could be more engaged with the NLA? In a way you've made them look rather rather pedestrian.

Peter – I ran the publishing arm at the RIBA and edited RIBA Journal. And then I got involved in the funding for the move of the Drawings Collection to the V&A. And that was when they changed. They used to run themselves rather like government so >>>



ABOVE: Copenhagen funded by a benevolent corporation

BELOW: One of NLA's models of London



ning department is very key to encourage buildings that will bring in new audiences to the City to maintain activity in the light of people coming to work in the City only on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. We were on their list. So they said to Schröders "You need to provide some decent s106 on this" and we were the chosen party. They redesigned the bottom four floors for us. That will happen probably in six or seven years' time.

Q: Do you have space for lectures or temporary exhibitions to expand your programme?

A: Yes we'll have a bigger space for lectures, larger area for the model. There will be also a public space where we can do sort of experiments. Meanwhile, get students to make the sort of stuff we do once a year in the annual festival.

There are a lot of different types of architectural Centre. Groups which are funded privately or they are funded by government.

We did have public funding through CABE which was then cut off overnight by Ed Vaizey, who then went on to set up the Farrell Review. It was all done very cynically. It's one of the reasons why I never wanted to rely on public money at all. A great friend of mine, Nick Barley, used to run the Lighthouse in Glasgow. They had £2 million a year from Glasgow Council and a million a year from Scottish government. They employed about 70 people and at just one Council meeting they cut the budget. Everyone lost their jobs.

When we started NLA everything was booming. If we wanted to put on an exhibition we could ring up Roger Madelin and ask for 25 Grand. It came the next day. In 2008 Tony Pidgely, who had given us £30,000 a year sent a cheque for £50 saying this was all they could afford. That's when we set up a membership scheme. I've spent a lot of time helping to raise money from various organizations. That is the best model, because nobody, not even the Mayor of London has more than 1% of our total income so you can offend people and not worry if they take their money out. It's very resilient. NLA's not going to disappear tomorrow.

The very best is found in Denmark where Realdania has a pot of about £3 billion or something just sitting there. And they hand out that money. If there was somewhere like that in the UK, great, but not many places have it. Internationally it's all very different.

If you look at the city of Paris the Pavillon de l'Arsenal is publicly funded. French public works have historically always been better funded than English ones. Local authorities in the UK like Croydon, when they're going through a period of great change, they find it quite difficult. They have a very broad range of residents and people and businesses who need to be consulted about what's going on. If you've got a shop front you can very easily do something relatively inexpensive. ■

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2 The M&S decision Fred Pilbrow of Pilbrow and Partners

Thank you for the invitation to talk about our proposals for M&S at 458 Oxford Street and the consequences of Goves' rejection of the scheme against his own planning inspector's advice.

Our proposals at Marble Arch created a new flagship M&S store, below offices on the upper floors and a transformation of the public realm at the base of the building. We were involved in pre-application discussions with Westminster City Council and the Mayor's office from early 2019. A detailed planning application for the scheme had been approved by both authorities by 2022. The Secretary of State then called in the application for his own determination, leading to an inquiry in the autumn and his rejection of the scheme earlier this year. M&S are currently challenging Michael Goves decision which contradicted the conclusion of the planning inspector supporting the scheme.

I will explain first how our Marble Arch proposals evolved and why we concluded a new building was the only viable solution for the site. Our opponents, SAVE, argued at the planning Inquiry for a retrofit, and I would then like to assess the Inspector's view of their scheme. I share his deep misgivings. Finally I would like to describe the work we have undertaken with Arup to further reduce the new building's embodied carbon; work that would deliver the new building for less embodied carbon than the SAVE retrofit.

The M&S proposals

With growing competition from the internet, physical retail today needs to deliver a high quality customer environment and support exacting standards of service. Older stores with confusing and chaotic layouts are being driven out of business.

This is part of a wider change observable right along Oxford Street with the decline in multilevel department stores – witness the closure of House of Fraser and Debenhams and John Lewis' proposal to remodel their Oxford Street flagship.

Some successes against this general decline are instructive. Selfridges remains buoyant and it is, in my view, no accident that the quality of the physical environment at Selfridges is of the highest calibre. I took the Inspector around David Chipperfield's superb refurbishment of the eastern end of Selfridges. Five and a half metre ground floor heights, big, regular open structural grids, great daylight, all the stuff that we proposed in the new building for M&S (and all the stuff that's precluded by their existing buildings). The Inspector didn't make comment about our proposals on the site visit, but he did make



the observation that Selfridges was very busy on the day we visited (M&S by contrast had been nearly empty.)

Over the last decade there had been a slow decline in trading levels at M&S' existing Marble Arch flagship. The existing store is arranged over five levels, has nine cores, eleven separate storage areas, and is as chaotic to visit as a customer as it is challenging to operate for M&S. We know that from M&S' own data that their trading rates have declined most steeply on the upper floors, with few customers making it to the top-most levels. So what M&S are looking for is large, efficient floors, conveniently accessible from ground level (and you see similar ambitions at neighbouring Oxford Street developments.)

In consequence, we're planning the new store over only three levels, none of which is more than a storey from Oxford Street. It is all configured to be accessible and pleasant for the customer and efficient for M&S to operate.

The Kensington Building

Could these ambitions be delivered in the context of a refurbishment to the existing buildings? We think not.

We carefully tested refurbishments at the outset and over 16 such schemes were described in the Design and Access Statement which accompanied the planning application. We found the level of compromise in a retrofit to be very high and the carbon savings illusory. Perhaps such severe compromises would have been acceptable if the heritage value of Orchard House had been high, but by any objective assessment, this simply wasn't the case.

As architects we like retrofitting existing buildings and, hopefully, we are good at it. Our Kensington Building has just been recognised by the BCO retrofit of the year in the London region (and was a runner up nationally.) It is a retrofit of a former department store which now delivers great contemporary retail

and office space. The quality of the public realm is also transformed, with new permeability, landscaping and high quality design.

The 1970s brutalist Kensington building was ugly and hostile, but it had many qualities that we could exploit in the retrofit. It benefited from a regular open structural grid, great floor to ceiling heights, and high retail live loadings. These factors allowed us to remodel the building to deliver the right end result. We added three stories and brought the building elevation out to the historic line on Wrights Lane. We took full advantage of the four and a half metre floor to ceiling heights, which deliver big, open, clear and flexible floors. The new plant and facades deliver excellent operational carbon performance, the new terraces address tenant desire for external amenity and wellbeing. That this building meets contemporary occupier demand is evidenced by successful lettings to an Italian eyewear manufacturer, a private equity group and Manchester United Football Club at rents that set new benchmarks in Kensington.

Marble Arch Existing Situation

The context at Kensington could hardly be more different to the context at Marble Arch.

At Marble Arch we start with three buildings not one. Each is compromised in its structural grids with dense and irregular columns spaced as tight as 2m apart. Each has constrained floor to floor heights and each has multiple cores – many of which are located at the façade. The interiors are, in consequence, dark.

And so you have three buildings, each with its own problems. The difficulties get exacerbated when you consider the buildings as a group, because the floors don't line up necessitating ramps to connect you between buildings. The column grids misalign so you get a dense weave of columns blocking internal views. Cores offer redundant services and make navigating through the building very challenging.

Pre-Internet perhaps you could get away with this >>>

>>> they had a civil service. Then they decided, no, we need a chief executive. We've got to be thrusting and modern. So they created a chief executive, while also having a new President, who, like most architects, wants to change things and build their own stuff. Now they don't engage and it's too competitive.

When we went to the Building Centre you suddenly realized actually it was a benefit of it not being an architectural place because anyone would come in, whether quantity surveyors or engineers, they actually felt quite relaxed. We got a much wider audience there.

I think the RIBA's role is to be an umbrella organization. You used to have a whole series of groups par-

ticularly when there were more architect in the public sector. There was SCALA, for chief architects in local authorities. There were county architects. There was the Salaried Architects Group. There was then also a private practice group, the ACA, because there were so many people in public practice, still going strong. And all those people would engage with the RIBA.

Now there isn't that interest. I would say that is partly down to the fact that having a chief executive and becoming corporate creates a whole lot of silos within the organisation.

The NLA's next move will be to the base of 55 Bishopsgate, which received planning permission about three weeks ago. The City Corporation plan-

>>> calibre of dire space but unfortunately today's customers are too discerning and they basically won't patronise a space that's confusing, stressful and cramped.

If the customer journey is bad, the M&S servicing challenge is worse because they're trying to serve the retail across those nine cores. Staff and goods follow tortuous routes from the loading to the points of sale in a manner that is labyrinthine. This adds to cost and reduces quality of service.

Two of the buildings -Neale House and 23 Orchard Street- are of abject quality and detract from the setting of the Grade II* Selfridges next door. Orchard House was rejected for listed (SAVE applied) and has been excluded from the conservation areas that surround the site. These facts are objective measures of the building's heritage significance. Certainly, Pevsner was underwhelmed stating 'the pilastered Marks and Spencer 1929-1932 shows clearly what a convinced single minded design Selfridges was'.

Mr. Gove is very exercised by the relationship between these two buildings – Orchard House and Selfridges. For me, I see the Selfridges building as an incredible piece of confident Chicago architecture. By contrast, Orchard House appears to be a rather thin papery kind of imitation of it. I'm not sure that means they're great neighbours. (Interestingly Mr. Gove saw little merit in our proposed removal of the dire 60's bridge over Portland Mews. Beauty must be in the eye of the beholder.)

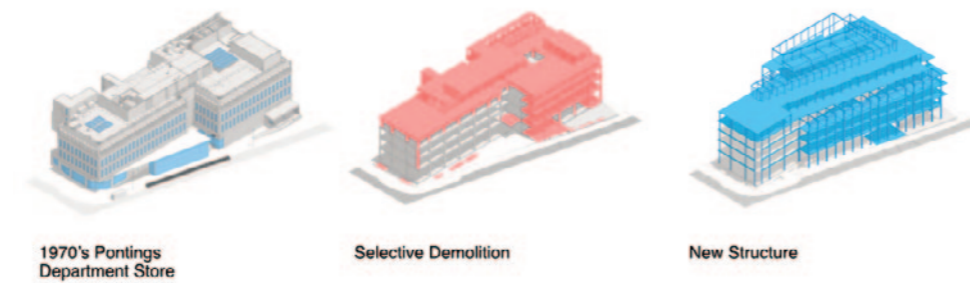
Orchard House's significance is further reduced by the fact that the ornament at the top of the building has been removed and the ground floor disfigured by road widening in the 1970s. As a result, pedestrians today walk in a dark undercroft against a solid brown granite wall. The public realm is bad here and it gets worse round the back, where Granville Place is a diesel-soaked, vehicle dominated service yard. This at the centre of Westminster.

The New Building Proposal

The new building allows all this to be properly addressed. Replacing the three compromised structures allows the creation of generous open and flexible floorplates that suit both the needs of M&S as well as office tenants for the upper floors. We can set consistent and taller floor to floors giving handsome and well lit spaces. We can plan the core to the centre of the floorplate maximising the quality and flexibility of both retail and office.

The new building allows the servicing to be discretely relocated to Portman Mews – no reversing, everything safely off street. Clearing the trucks out of Granville Place allows the creation of a garden here which links to St Christopher's Place on the other side of Selfridges through a new top lit galleria across our site. I think it's quite important to create these oasis spaces off Oxford Street because you can't sit and have a coffee on Oxford Street itself because

The 'Cut and Carve' Refurbishment



you would knocked down by all the pedestrians.

Oddly, SAVE acknowledged these design moves delivered by the new building were the right thing to do. They argued that the same things could be delivered by a retrofit and Simon Sturgis tabled a retrofit scheme on the final day of the Inquiry. I confess I was quite shocked by its poor quality.

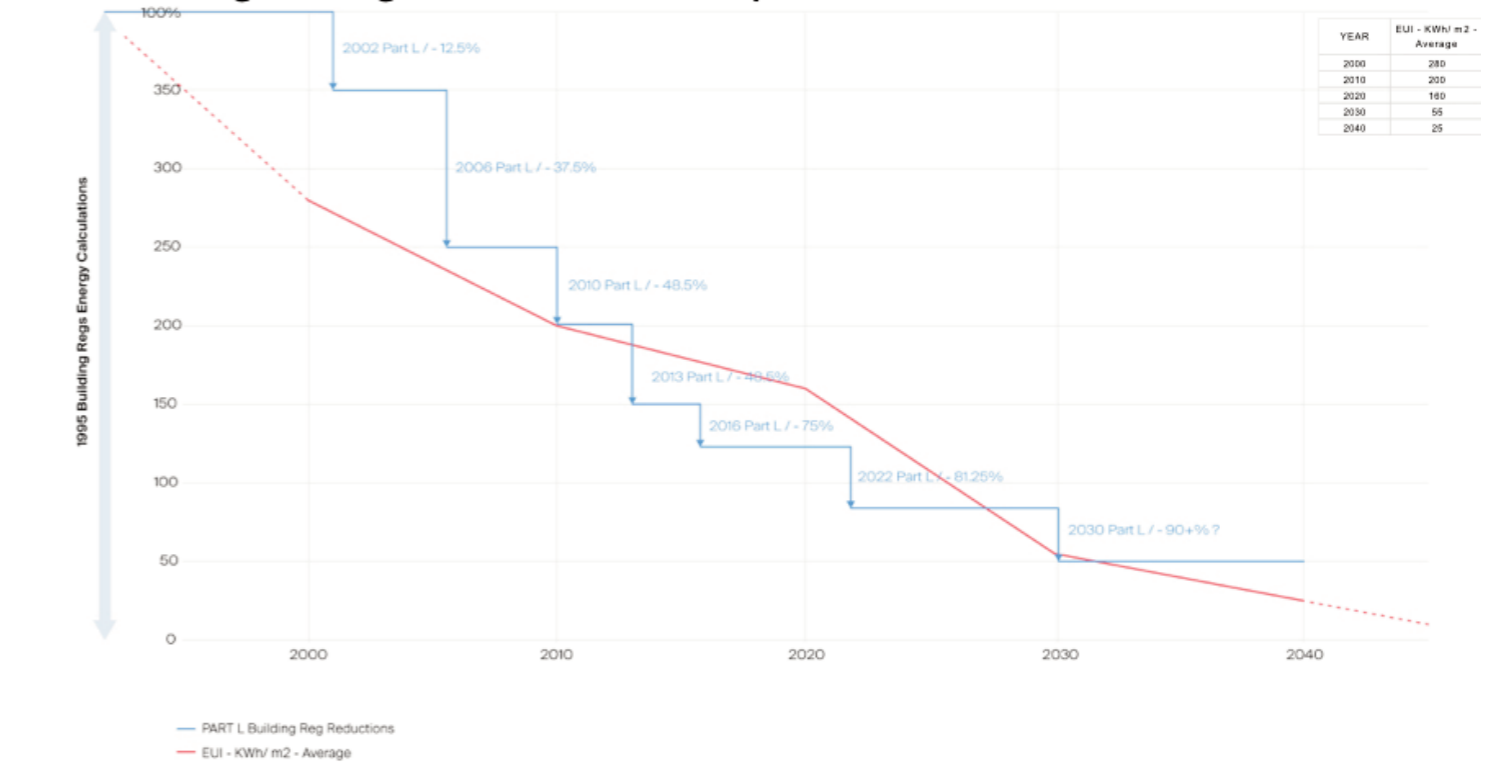
Firstly, Sturgis proposed very extensive demolitions -taking down ALL the existing nine cores and then constructing a new core in the same location we proposed for the new build (which obviously required further demolition). These moves alone demolish more than a quarter of the existing building including heritage elements like the Orchard House stair that other SAVE witnesses said had heritage

ABOVE: Selfridges in the foreground with the existing M&S store beyond

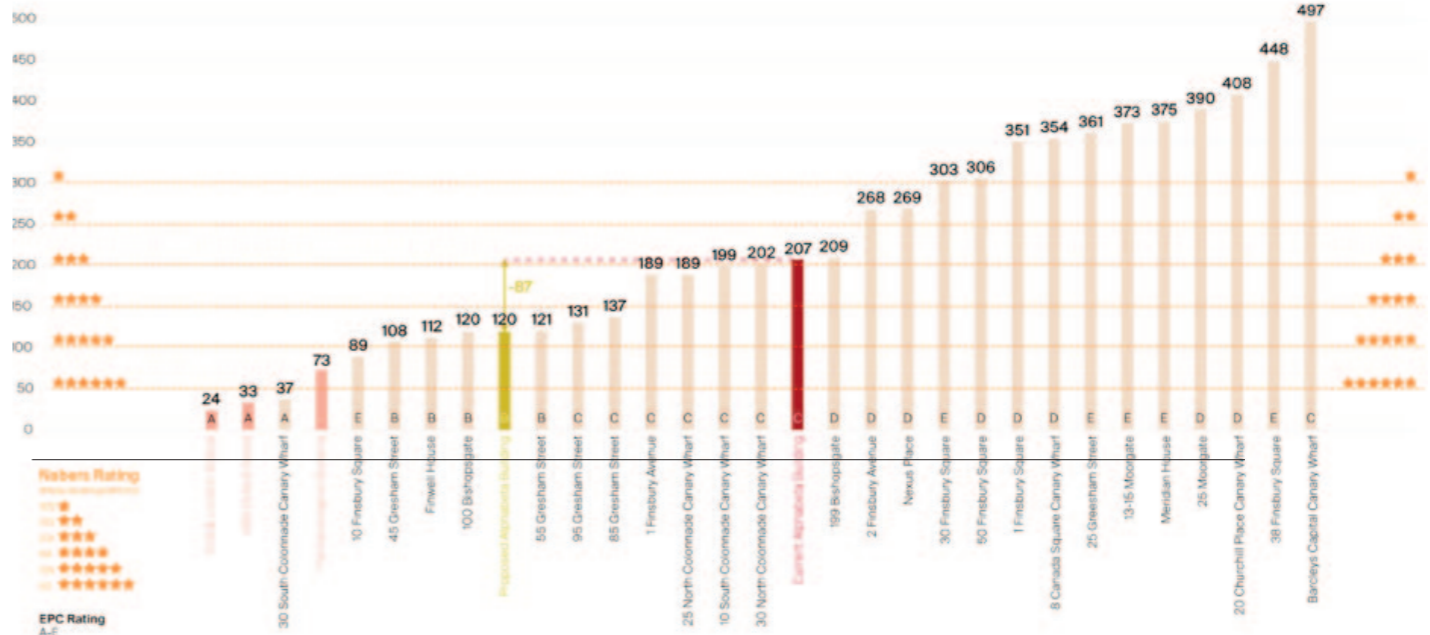
BELOW: The internal retail quality of the existing M&S store



More stringent regulation reduces operational carbon



Environmental Sustainability Operational Carbon



value. Odd.

Secondly, Sturgis suggested our servicing on Portman Place was also correct and proposed to copy it. However this is very challenging to deliver in a refurbishment – the ground floor height is too low and you need to transfer eight columns to create the space for the service vehicles. Nothing is impossible - but the move would require extensive and carbon intensive structural gymnastics.

Thirdly, the permeability delivered by the new build was acknowledged as valuable however Sturgis

concluded the structure of the refurb precluded it. Perhaps a tunnel to Oxford Street could be offered in lieu? This might be OK, but it failed to link to Selfridges and failed to restore the historic permeability across the site.

Fourthly, SAVE acknowledged that there was a good sustainability case to intensify uses at this site which benefits from the highest levels of public transport accessibility. So vertical extensions (in carbon intensive steel) were proposed to the maximum allowed by the existing foundations and superstruc-

ture. Fine again, the problem here is that the scheme delivers 1400 fewer jobs than the new build (whose scale had been set by Westminster City Council) because the limits of existing structure curtailed the site's full development potential. I am concerned that delivering the 1400 job shortfall in a less connected location (and no site in London is better connected than 458 Oxford Street) will associate this employment with more private car usage, more pollution, and substantially more carbon.

But what was the end result of Sturgis' scheme? >>>

>>> Even after all this carbon expenditure, the profound drawbacks of the internal floorplates remained unaddressed and the quality of the public realm remained seriously substandard. The inspector's evidence on these points is worth quoting in at detail:

The Inspector asked Sturgis about whether he could 'cite an example of three comparable separate structures being successfully refurbished?' In response the Inspector noted: However, I was not directed to any development which suffered from ALL these shortcomings. [Inspector's report 13.68]

At paragraph 13.70, the inspector stated: On the evidence before the Inquiry, I consider that the only remaining refurbishment scheme for the site [the SAVE scheme] is so deeply problematic, even for Oxford Street, that no-one would be likely to pursue it or fund it.

At paragraph 13.70, the inspector stated I find that there is no viable and deliverable alternative and that refusing the application would probably lead to the closure of the store, the loss of M&S from the Marble Arch end of Oxford Street and substantial harm to the vitality and viability of the area. This is a material consideration of substantial weight.

Further Reductions of Embodied Carbon.

Embodied Carbon has become a core aspect of the debate around the M&S proposals, and the Inspector acknowledged that in his report, saying he thought it was perhaps the first inquiry to have had to consider embodied carbon.

The GLA's London Plan policy is quite advanced here, requiring whole life carbon assessments and circular economy statements, UK national planning policy is still some way behind where we are in London. The Mayor's support for the proposals (re-

confirmed even after lobbying by SAVE) provides important context to understand whether the proposal are complaint with policy in relation to embodied carbon and good circular economy principles.

The importance of the carbon associated with the construction, alteration and maintenance of buildings – their embodied carbon – has grown as buildings have become more operationally efficient and the primary energy used to power them – electricity- has itself decarbonised.

We've been seeing this decarbonisation of the grid progress year on year with an expectation it will reach net zero by 2030. Now that trajectory, as you'll be aware, has stalled a little with recent bidding for offshore wind farm licenses failing to secure a successful bid but the direction of travel is clear. Its also fair to say that the decarbonisation of the grid is reducing embodied carbon in materials and assembly but it's doing so more slowly. In conclusion, the carbon going into construction and maintenance is becoming proportionality becomes more important.

There is a very simplistic assumption that retrofit must result in lower embodied carbon emissions because you are retaining more fabric (and doesn't this fabric have embodied carbon in it?) Actual project data for the schemes submitted to the GLA since whole life carbon and circular economy statements became mandatory contradicts this. Average embodied carbon is higher for new buildings but there are many examples of new build being delivered for lower embodied carbon than the sort of cut and carve retrofits advocated by SAVE at Marble Arch.

The reasons for this are varied and include the

constraints of working within existing structural limits (often driving the use of carbon intensive steel) and the complexity of temporary works to reconfigure existing structures. Moreover, limited design lives for remodelled buildings may be associated with more frequent and more extensive ongoing maintenance adding to the whole life embodied carbon.

Material reuse studies

I wanted to also talk about some work that we've done over the last nine months with structural engineers ARUPs to deliver the new building at embodied carbon levels below the SAVE retrofit (520kgCo2e/m2 a1-a5).

At the public inquiry, I said to the Inspector, that we have carefully calculated the embodied carbon figures associated with the new build proposals. To construct the building, we will require 651kgCo2E/m2 (a1-a5). This compares to the GLA business as usual figure of 900kgCo2E/m2 (a1-a5). I went on to state our, and M&S', ambition to drive that figure down by 20% during detailed design.

We've done that on our Edge building at London Bridge. Here we're currently on site for Edge Technology and Goldman Sachs with a tall building that sets benchmark standards for operational environmental performance. The building is BREEAM Outstanding, Wired Platinum and WELL Platinum. Operational energy use intensity, inclusive of tenant loads, will be around 57kwh/m2/annum.

Working with main and trade contractors and our engineering colleagues on the project, we have succeed in reducing the embodied carbon on this project by 20% and this reduction has been captured in the construction contract with MACE – the first time this has been done to our knowledge in the UK.

In the months between the inquiry and Mr. Gove's decision, we have worked with ARUP to see how we would do that at Marble Arch. One strand of our work about which I am particularly excited in looking at material reuse of concrete.

One of the existing buildings -Orchard House- is steel framed and we were already planning to recycle the Portland Stone for our cladding and the steel for our column reinforcement. The other two buildings, Neale House and 23 Orchard Street are concrete framed, and this is a material which as traditionally been difficult to effectively recycle. In most cases, the concrete is crushed and used as aggregate okay, but most of its material value is lost.

With Arup, we have been exploring vaulted structures which employ, very efficiently, concrete's considerable compressive strength. We propose to precision cut the slabs as we dismantle the existing buildings. This disassembly severs the reinforcement and reduces the concrete's tensile strength, however it remains strong in compression. The precision cut segments are reassembled into arched or vaulted

structures which allow a radical reduction in embodied carbon. For a typical 9m x 9m post-tensioned concrete bay we need around 300mm of thickness of concrete and 180kg CO2e/m2. A vaulted shell structure on the same 9m x 9m span requires only 100mm of concrete, and if this concrete is recycled the structure is associated with less than 40kg CO2e/m2.

The approach works well with our displacement ventilation approach, where for reasons of energy efficiency and wellbeing, generous air volumes are introduced at floor level. The upper surface of the shell vaults provide the plenum for air distribution.

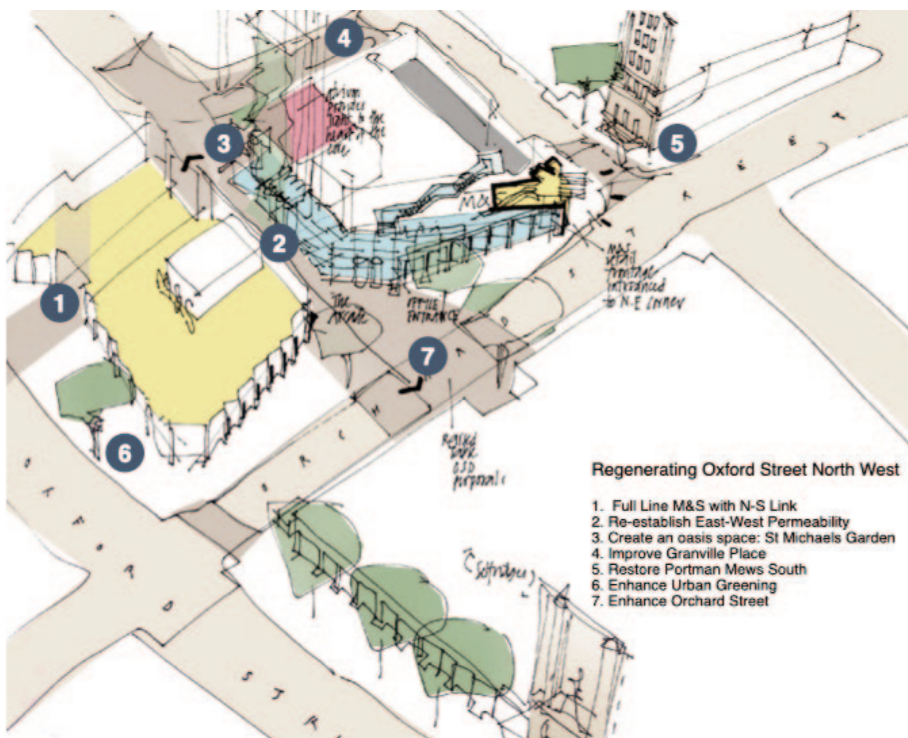
As well as being embodied carbon efficient, the vaults themselves are very beautiful. We calculate that the new building, utilising this construction methodology could be realised for 475 kg CO2e/m2 – a figure well below that associated with the SAVE retrofit.

DISCUSSION

Q: Your client is presumably paying for this continuing work despite the Secretary of State's decision.

Fred: Pilbrow & Partners and Arup are exploring concrete material re-use as part of our ongoing research collaboration. M&S are committed to the very highest environmental standards and its noteworthy in this context that the BREEAM Outstanding scheme reviewed at Inquiry would have been in the top 1% of the UK office buildings for environmental efficiency.

Following further discussion the chairman thanked Fred for his illuminating presentation..



In conclusion the inspector stated: [13.70] On the evidence before the Inquiry, I consider that the only remaining refurbishment scheme for the site [the SAVE scheme] is so deeply problematic, even for Oxford Street, that no-one would be likely to pursue it or fund it.

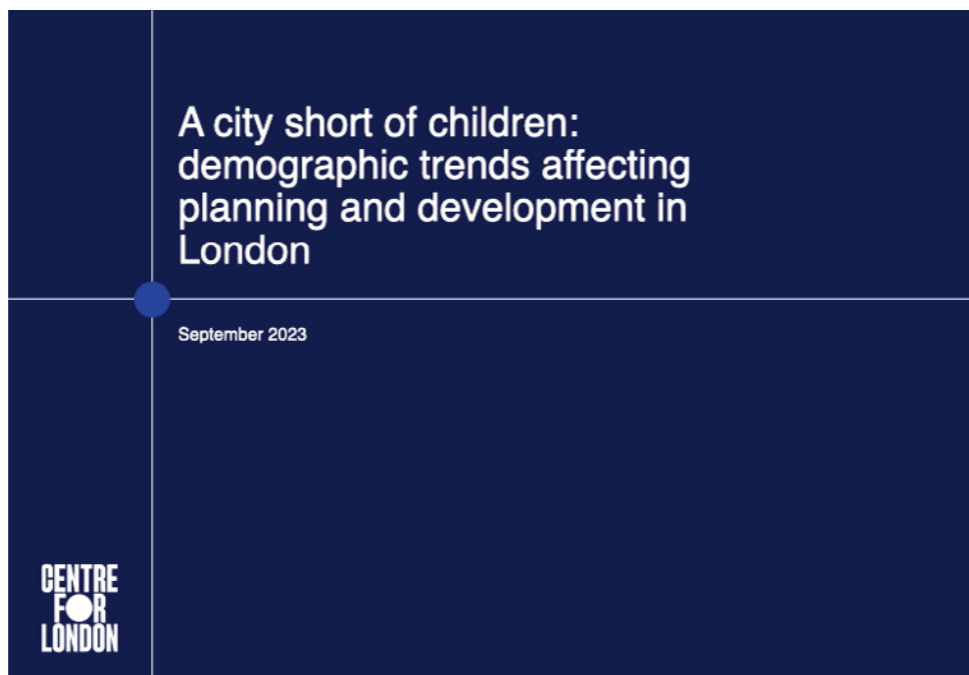
Sturgis proposed demolitions, First Floor. (P&P drawing following SS02) Core removal represents 16% of the floor area. New core proposed covers an additional 11% of the floor area (total 27%)

LEFT: First floor plan for the heavy refurbishment with roof extensions which the opposition would advocate as the right way forward for the site

>>> DISCUSSION TOPICS

3 A city short of children: demographic trends affecting planning and development in London

Jon Tabbush of Centre for London



I should probably start with a few disclaimers. I'm neither a planner nor a developer. I also don't have any children.

But demographics have become a special topic of interest in the media - the FT, the Standard, and a few other publications have begun publishing articles around the issue, because of the closure, threat of closure, or the threat of merger of several historic schools around London.

The schools pictured (RIGHT) are threatened with closure or merger. Many of the parents have special reason to be concerned if they have children with SEN issues. It's also fairly traumatic for children to have to move school en masse to other facilities. So this has provoked the underlying question of why this is happening.

Last November, when this story was beginning to emerge, the first census release on household characteristics came out, (SEE MAPS) and I had a look at the proportion of households that have at least one school-aged child across London.

So that's 2001 and you can see there's the City, there's Westminster, with relatively low proportions of families with children, kind of what you'd expect. Going back to 2011, the trend is beginning to intensify in London, but it's still fairly concentrated. And then by 2021, you've got this distinct inner core of low child boroughs.

There are some strange, exceptional boroughs. Westminster, for example, bizarrely shows an increase in that proportion, but that's not a real phenomenon. It's just because the census was taken in May 2021 during the pandemic, when lots of highly mobile, young migrants would have been back in their home countries, as well as due to Brexit. Camden is seeing the same phenomenon as the rest of inner London, but it's not reflected in this data for the same reason as Westminster.

On the other hand, you see Lambeth getting about a 10% fall over that period, while Barking and Dagenham, on the other side, sees a 34% increase, which is a truly shocking demographic transition. To have a 34% increase in the proportion of households with school age children is monumental, and there's clearly movement of households happening, as well as decreases in childbearing.

This chart is what's called the 'total fertility rate', which shows the average number of children that a woman would bear if she matched the average of her



Inner London schools threatened with closure or merger



age group. Since 2012 you have decreases everywhere, across basically the entire world. But far less than in London. And you can see that transition point, where, around 2008, Newham's TFR collapses, and Barking and Dagenham's stays steadily high. And the same phenomenon is reflected in the live birth rate, where you can see inner and outer London diverge quite distinctly over the 2010s.

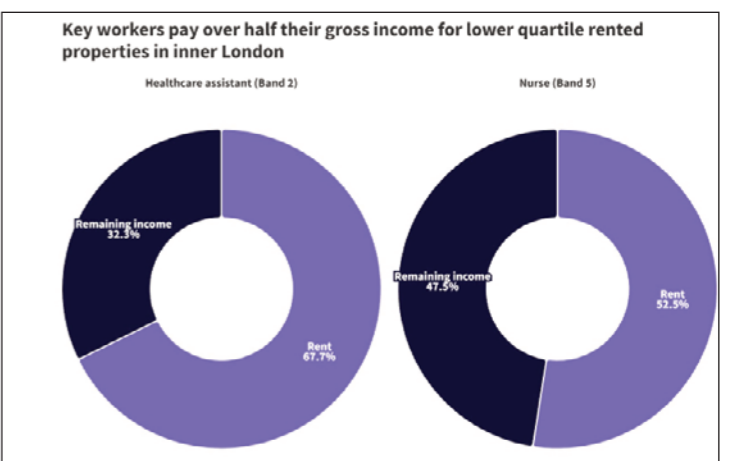
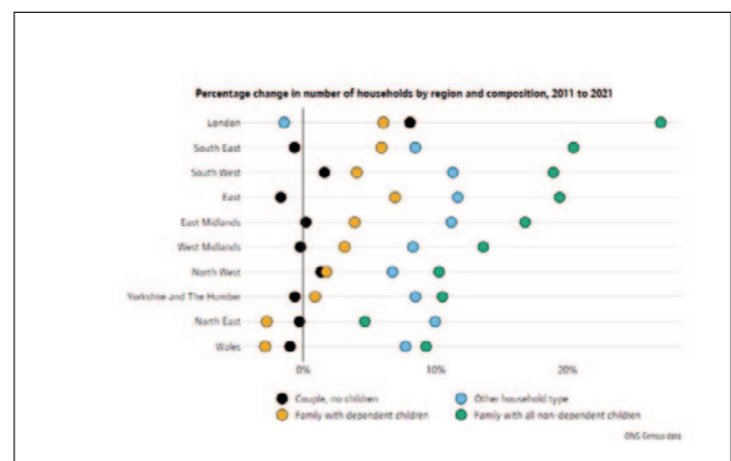
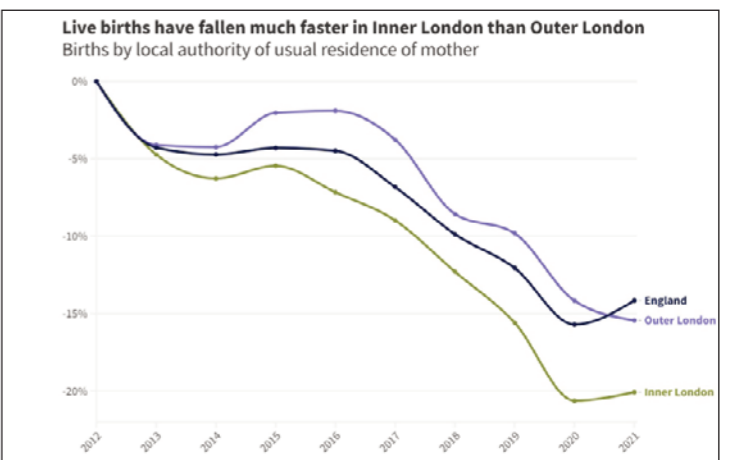
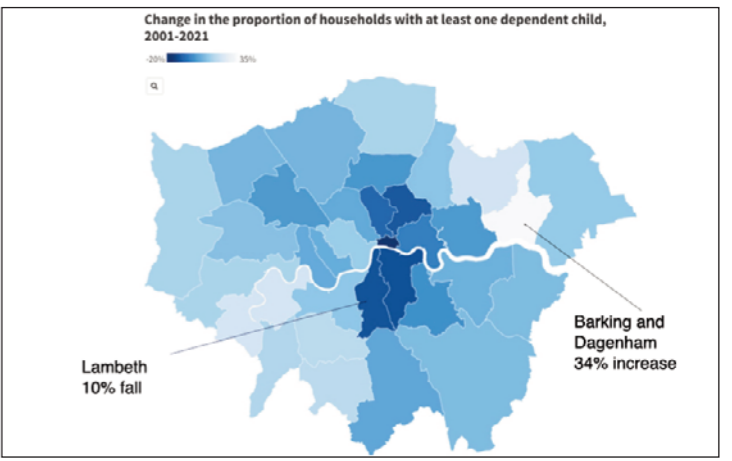
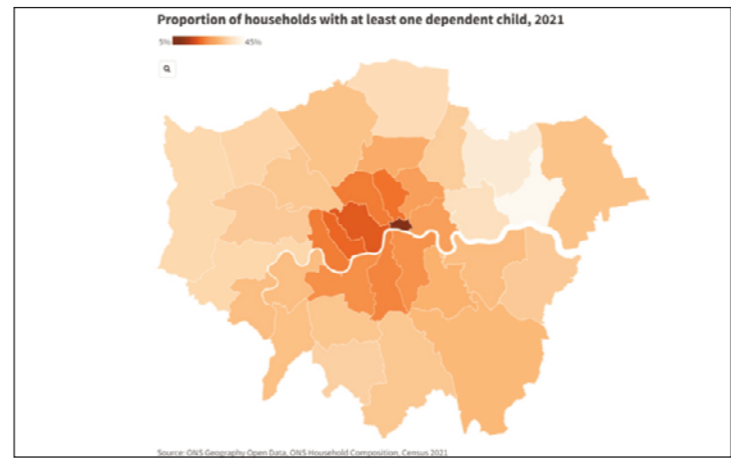
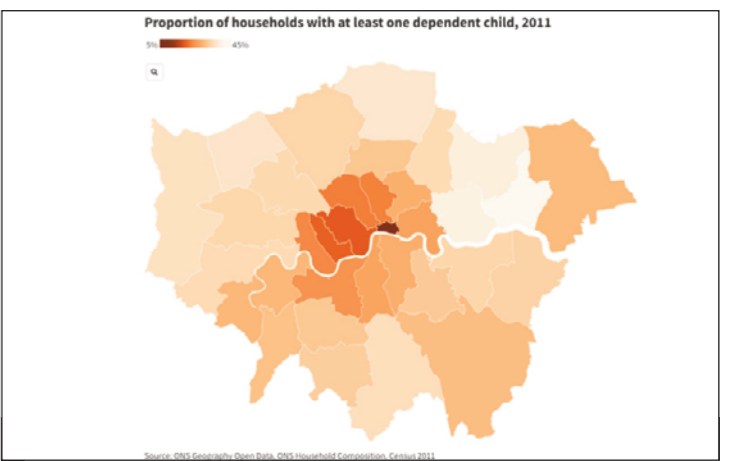
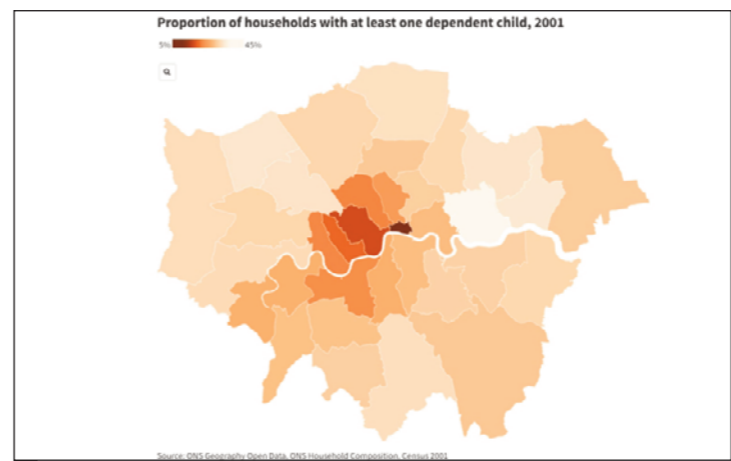
We have a few ways of thinking about why that might be. You could say that it's people choosing to move out at a greater rate when they want to have children or expand their family. There are people choosing not to have them at all. There are people not being able to. And that's where the next graph comes in, because London saw by far the largest increase in the proportion of families with non-dependent children still living at home. That is, peo-

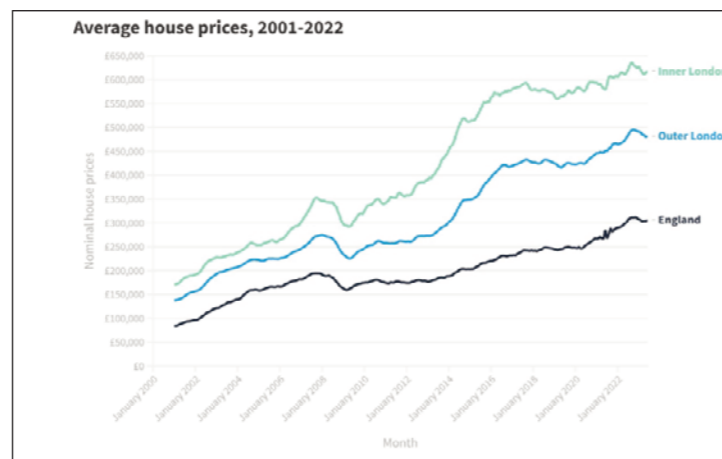
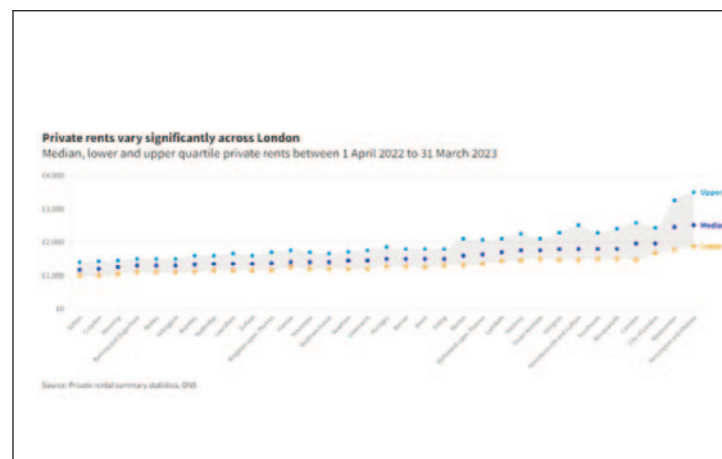
ple who are above the age of school, independent, economically active and still living at home. I'm sure there are quite a few of you here who either have either experienced that phenomenon or have seen it among your peers.

As you would imagine, it's fairly difficult to decide to expand your family and have a child when still living at home, though it does happen. And that should be another factor here.

But the obvious fact is we have long term, midterm and short-term factors. The longest term are the global transition towards female participation in the labour force and education, which is all to the good and nothing at all to be concerned about there - the concerning factors are to do with housing, childcare and income.

Childcare. Some of you might know that London





>>> is the most expensive place to raise a child in the UK, I believe one of the most expensive across Europe. Although some working parents receive 30 hours a week of free childcare, it's paid at far too low a rate for providers to cover their costs, so they often have to reduce places.

But rent and housing costs are the heaviest burden for individuals. If you look at a healthcare assistant for example. If they were living in inner London, receiving the inner London weighting allowance, they'd be spending at least 70% of their gross, not net but gross, salary on rent, even if they rent at the lower quartile level. And a qualified nurse will be spending again more than half of their gross salary.

That's actually a massive underestimate of how this would actually look, because if they were moving to inner London, they would be paying the average rent for new lets, which is much higher than for the total stock of rents.

So, in Barking and Dagenham and Tower Hamlets if you look at housing delivery per person on a yearly basis since 2004, these two boroughs have seen the most change anywhere in London.

But one of them has experienced a demographic explosion – a massive expansion in the number and proportion of families with young children - while the other has seen a demographic collapse in children. While Barking and Dagenham is becoming more and more hospitable in some ways to young families, Tower Hamlets is moving in the other direction. And it shows that the trajectory of change is what matters here – where you started from, and where you're going. Barking and Dagenham was a classically ex-industrial region, not especially integrated into London, with extremely low-density housing, and lots of land dedicated to employment. Tower Hamlets, before the creation of Canary Wharf, was overwhelmingly council homes, housing families.

So although both have delivered very large amounts of housing, their trajectories have been entirely different.

Housing delivery is a key part of this process. It shows that the question is not just: have you been delivering enough homes or even have you been delivering enough social homes, because those social

homes are one of the main ways that the healthcare assistant and nurse we were talking about would be living in London in the first place. It doesn't appear to be the only factor. Barking and Dagenham hasn't had that much of an expansion of social homes, but just has had very low land prices and a huge expansion of stock. While Tower Hamlets has built a lot of housing specifically not designed for young families, but designed for young professionals on high-incomes. And that will likely have supported holding down housing prices elsewhere in London by expanding supply, but it has taken the borough on an entirely different demographic trajectory

This kind of leaves us with the question of where is this process going. If this is driven by economics, if it's driven by housing, incomes and childcare costs, we're going to become a significantly more segregated city. We're going to be looking at a city a lot more like Paris, a lot less like London. The reason why international workers come here is both labour markets and culture. London has punched massively above its weight culturally, if you look at film, art and music for many decades. And it's generally the less affluent people living in London who have been the driving forces there. So will that vibrancy that attracts people continue to survive?

The big normative question is: should planning and development even be trying to stop this? You could say this is the consequence of the return to the inner city of the affluent, usually white, middle class, after the 1960s and the decades of urban decline. You could say this is a natural process, that this is how it used to be. But is this something we want? I would argue no, at least not the exclusion of other sectors of society.

I would argue we probably do want to reverse it or at least want to stem its flow. Because spatial segregation acts very differently to deprivation. There is a significant difference to the life chances of a young person growing up in deprivation if they have a social network that includes wealthier people. You

can see this in boroughs like Islington where despite very little estate demolition and much of their deprived population basically staying put, by comparison with other boroughs, their schooling out-

comes and educational outcomes are through the roof, even among people with high levels of deprivation. So they're clearly, in effect, keeping people together.

But the interesting question is the question of housing delivery and what kind of housing we're looking to be delivering in the first place, because you could say there's a conflict between providing housing for young workers and providing for families with young children. It's an argument that could be made. They obviously interrelated but they are sometimes competing. And this comes out in the bedroom data and debates about how many bedrooms should be delivered in different kinds of developments.

Most people I know of my age, young professionals, are living in what would have been family homes, but have either made into HMOs, flat-shares, or flat-ted houses. But, being a little self-centred, if more housing existed for me and people like me, then I wouldn't be living there, and people like me would not be moving out of London either. So, there isn't necessarily a conflict between building new one- and two-bedroom units and freeing up stock for families.

The other question that's very interesting here is about student housing. Purpose built student housing, PBSA, is often framed as a kind of unpleasant alternative to providing long term homes. In some cases, obviously, it interplays with the Section 106 system and with the affordable housing system in quite strange and unpredictable ways that don't necessarily produce outcomes we agree with, but the alternative is just living in HMOs. That's the alternative for student housing. And I don't know necessarily how that helps people looking to bring back single-family homes into single family use.

So those are a few questions that come up here. But this is only really scratching the very surface of it. The trajectory doesn't look good if you are looking to preserve a city which has a large proportion of young families, but also a large proportion of people with different income mixes, and I would say probably racial mixes as well.

We start from a position where housing delivery is clearly key. And there are low hanging changes like just paying childcare providers at a higher rate, so

they can cover their costs in Inner London. But we don't actually have an exact answer here. So, it would be fascinating to hear your thoughts and your questions.

And we at Centre for London are thinking about doing more work on this, so if that's something you're interested in, do come and talk to me afterwards.

DISCUSSION

Q: You can't get the quality teachers. Parents are making a decision to move to where it's a lot better. In some schools, you don't have parking anymore, so some teachers move out. I think there are many reasons why this is happening.

A: I'd say the point isn't that people moving out to the suburbs around London when they have children is the problem. It's not. It's the historic trend, which happens in all major cities to a degree, aside from cities like Hong Kong and exceptions like that. The problem is, if there is one, is acceleration, it's getting faster and faster and changing fundamentally the quality and character of the city left behind.

On the interesting point about schools - London schools are getting much, much better, probably better than the schools outside of the city, in the places that people are choosing to move to, but doesn't seem to make a difference. That suggests there are economic incentives that aren't to do with parental choice over school quality.

Q: Does the Elizabeth Line change things? Or is it too soon show up? Because what it's done is to expand the ability of people in a much wider area to commute into London very easily.

A: The lag is enormous – if you're looking at demographic or schooling data, we'll be waiting the very long period for a child to reach the age they'll need to go to school. So if you were to move to a Crossrail suburb today, that will show up many years later.

Q: People on lower incomes are the ones generally being priced out. There's no affordable housing being delivered across the city. So we're going to end up with a kind of economic apartheid. How has it gone so terribly wrong?

A: It is definitely bound up with incomes. The lower income you are, generally speaking, the more children you have. But also, people who can afford to live in the inner city may not want to stay there when they do have children, because again, there's a kind of cyclical effect, where if there are no schools in the area, you don't continue to have your children there, if other families who have children don't live there anymore.

The question is whether or not people are able to come back eventually. This new model is not necessarily wrong. It's just a different model. One with an extremely segregated inner city, with almost uniformly high incomes. It's extremely ethnically segregated, with very little social housing. And has a poor band around the outside, like the Parisian banlieues.

That is a model. Like a lot of other cities. It's not an impossible one to run. You can run a successful city that way. But it's not at all how London worked, really, at any point. And if we're choosing to transition in that direction, we should be aware that it will be a culturally very different city.

Economically too, in London we have the highest backlog in terms of nurse recruitment of anywhere in the whole country. It's impossible to hire new nurses in much of inner London. Either we're saying people have to live extremely far out or out of the city entirely and commute, in or we develop a closer, denser, more city centre-focused approach. So, it's not necessarily that it's gone terribly wrong. It's just a different model.

RO: Jon, you raised many questions and deal with very complex issues. Who are the final audience for the research? For example, Barking and Dagenham has an interesting demographic due to a significant number of the population being under 24 (that was the case about 5 years ago – I was struck by it) but also the fact that the majority of the population were dependent on the private rented sector (I have not checked recently). Despite more homes being built, we are not building the right homes at the right cost/affordability point.

Areas like Islington are interesting as the Council has a good affordable housing building programme. They have been one of my clients for many years and they have been super committed to increasing social rented affordable housing in particular family sized housing.

At present, there is a bit of a crisis as many boroughs do not see many applications for C3 housing coming forward at all. It has become too complex. Applications for Build to Rent and Co-living are increasing. These type of housing tenures fill a gap in the market of 'lifestyle rented housing' but it comes at a price – it is impossible to save to buy your own home at the same time!

With student accommodation we have seen some London boroughs fiercely resisting purpose-built student accommodation despite the fact they

have no purpose built schemes in the borough at all. The London Plan requires all London boroughs to address the need for student accommodation. The majority of purpose-built student schemes are concentrated in Zone 1, creating further affordability issues.

Your point about HM's are key – the majority of developers resist building three bedroom or larger homes. The three-bedroom flats built are not affordable at the right price point, so it is important to stop more HMO's being created.

All the best for the rest of the research.

A: The research originally just came out of a blog I wrote last November, that has been followed up with a few pieces I helped with in the Guardian and FT. We work on a project-funded model, so frustratingly I can't justify too much more data work without finding a source of funding for the project. If one presents itself, I have plans to write up a longer report on London's demographic transitions, use more granular LSOA-level data and do a few regressions to work out what has played the biggest role in the shift. I think it could be of some use to the GLA and the boroughs.

On your latter points, I agree completely – Barking and Dagenham is probably the most interesting borough in London for someone interested in demographics and the future of the city, it's such an extreme example of an industrial area becoming part of London proper, and has the largest proportion of 0-15 year olds of any local authority in the country, as you say.

It's very true that BtR and co-living fulfil a purpose, the former working perfectly well across most of the developed world, but it would be interesting to see if they're making any serious efforts to expand beyond young professionals. PBSA is a very interesting market and has a definite social purpose in freeing up family homes for families, but their quality often seems fairly poor in person!

The chairman thanked Jon for his insights into a topic which will need more exploration as time goes on. ■

Final thoughts

- If the trend is driven by housing costs, London will see segregation by class and income grow.
- Can the cultural vibrancy that attracts people to the city survive?
- How can planning and development work to reverse it? Should it try to?
- Is there a conflict between fulfilling demand for workers' housing (especially professional workers) and housing for families?
- Where does student housing and HMOs come into this debate?

>>> DISCUSSION TOPICS

4 Ideas for planning reform from BL & LandSec

Mike Meadows Head of Planning and Public Affairs at The British Land Company and Tom Dobson Managing Director of Quod

I'm going to say a little bit about me and some of the other people who are involved with the report. I'm Head of Planning and Public Affairs at British Land and writing our recommendations for planning policy for government is absolutely the apex of my brief. We co-wrote this with Landsec with my counterpart there, Chris Hogwood who is MD of Corporate Affairs and Sustainability and I'm very grateful to Tom Dobson of Quod. He was one of the very first people to review this report, for his insights and for being here today. And to Simon Ricketts of Town Legal.

We were very deliberate about calling this a discussion paper because we want to have a discussion. This is the right and the only way to reform the planning system. But we wanted to stimulate a debate. And we've done that in person, largely with political stakeholders and with people across the industry and a lot on social media. We haven't done very much of this in person with the industry. So I'm grateful for you having me here today. And really would welcome your feedback on the recommendations.

So just a bit of background. The first question that we get asked: Why did you write it? And I think there are two parts to that question: Why did you say what you said? And why with Landsec? Going back a couple of years during the pandemic, coming out of moratorium we wrote something together then on what we thought was the way out of the moratorium and that seemed to have an impact with government.


The two businesses and the two CEOs thought maybe we could approach planning reform in a similar way. It reflects our shared experiences. If you look at the portfolios of the two businesses there's a lot we have in common. So what we wrote was about reforming the planning system but focused particularly on brownfield and urban regeneration. So it draws on our experience of developing Canada Water and LandSec's experience of developing Mayfield in Manchester and the O2 Centre in Camden.

We thought it was important to highlight solutions as well as challenges. We're sort of agnostic on political party. This is for the next government whoever may form it so we wanted to be honest about what we thought didn't work about the planning system but offer some solutions. And we were very clear that these are reforms which can be delivered quickly

LONDON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT FORUM

HOW TO REFORM THE PLANNING SYSTEM TO UNLOCK URBAN REGENERATION

- Reflecting our shared experiences
- Highlighting solutions as well as challenges
- Reforms which can be delivered quickly without significant public funding or primary legislation
- Brownfield first approach
- Understanding the scale of the opportunity in urban areas
- Reaction and political engagement
- Next steps
 - Short-term changes
 - Longer-term challenges

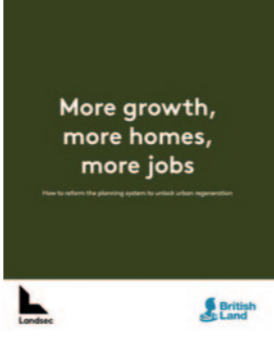


LONDON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT FORUM

HOW TO REFORM THE PLANNING SYSTEM TO UNLOCK URBAN REGENERATION

Our recommendations:

- Define and focus on brownfield urban regeneration
- Secure quick wins and pilot new ways of working in progressive authorities
- Resource the system effectively and reduce complexity and duplication to improve performance
- Encourage proportionate decision-making to ensure that planning decisions are taken at the level at which their impacts are felt and with an appropriate level of expertise
- Enable development on brownfield land through national planning policy
- Create better tax incentives to encourage investment in infrastructure and remediation
- Put communities at the heart of development



7. Put communities at the heart of development

Through our work in urban regeneration, we know that community engagement, which is inclusive and responds to local priorities, is vital in shaping successful places that are supported and championed by local people.

The complexity of the current planning system can deter people from engaging in development. However, we believe that broadening this engagement is critical to making development work for local communities and in turn unlocking economic growth and housing delivery.

We also believe that widening involvement in planning is critical to building public trust and securing more representative public participation. This can be achieved by creating real, measurable opportunities for people and communities to engage in the planning and design process, with scope for influence, so that local people can help shape future spaces and feel connected to the opportunities and benefits of development.

Recommendation:

- All developers create community consultation method statements at the pre-application stage, committing to a specific plan to engage and involve the local community. Where developers commit to and deliver an inclusive programme of community consultation, the local authority should create a fast-track determination stream that prioritises these applications over those who fail to involve the community. This could result in more applications being determined within the statutory determination period or being moved up the priority list for forthcoming planning committees. This would not only speed up the planning process, unlocking growth, but also incentivise all participants in our sector to deliver growth in the public interest and with community consent.



without significant public funding. And I think in most cases without primary legislation as well.

And if you look at the planning reform agenda over probably the last 13 years, you could say, but certainly over the last three or four has got really bogged down in a kind of fundamental reform. So we wanted to focus on stuff that we thought could be delivered relatively quickly. And actually without a huge deal of controversy.

Unashamedly we took a brownfield first approach. I think the genesis of this was a conversation between our two CEOs about how we focus planning reform on delivering on Brownfield development, where there is some political consensus. If we are going to increase housing targets by 35% in towns and cities how would you deliver that? And what kind of planning system would you need? The next step for us is research on the scale of the opportunities in the urban areas. When we wrote this we didn't have time to do a lot of economic analysis, but we've since gone back and done that. We have looked at 16 of the largest urban areas in the UK and how much housing and economic development could be delivered on them with the right planning system.

In terms of the reaction – it has been pretty positive. There have been discussions across the industry and with politicians. We had a roundtable with Labour in Parliament with their policy team.

We've taken it to Homes England, and to Jack Airey, the Housing and Planning olicy lead in No.10. So we've had engagement across the political spectrum. And as I say, this was always intended to be politically agnostic. So what are the next steps? One of our recommendations is about how you could define urban regeneration in the NPPF as well as some other shorter term proposals to increase capacity and capability in local authority planning departments.

And in the longer term, Where is the talent pipeline? What's the status of planners? Something we're really interested in and talk a lot about is policy layering which is code for complexity. Often the planning system seems to add more layers and with it complexity and contradiction. There are some longer term things that frankly will need a new government.

The government has already committed to providing surge capacity for strategic growth areas. Really look forward to seeing that delivered. We've got a revised NPPF probably coming in the autumn once the LURB is enacted, then longer term a new government.

I am happy to run through the recommendations one by one or if you've read the report for people to just pick things out and ask me questions. But I am really interested in your feedback. On what works. What should we prioritise? What are the barriers to delivery? What could be most effective? What's missing?



4. Encourage proportionate decision-making to ensure that planning decisions are taken at the level at which their impacts are felt and with an appropriate level of expertise

We believe that decisions should be made at the level at which their impacts and benefits are realised and with an appropriate level of expertise.

One of the failings of the current system is that too often decisions are taken at one level, only to be appealed (or called in) at a higher level later. This is in part driven by the system asking local authorities to determine matters that are of greater significance than to their local area alone.

We want to see greater consistency in decision making based on which issues are local and which are genuinely strategic – while still maintaining the critical link with the local community.

In practice, the vast majority of decisions would still be made at the local authority level, with the largest and most complex decisions made at the strategic or combined authority level and, in exceptional circumstances, at the national level.

Recommendations:

- All local authority planning committee members involved in determining large, complex urban regeneration applications should be provided with rigorous and up-to-date training that equips them to do so.
- Harmonising devolution deals across the UK to require all city regions and combined authorities to have a spatial strategy to provide strategic planning oversight.
- Above a nationally set threshold, the applicant should have the choice of referring any brownfield urban regeneration application to the strategic or combined authority, from pre-application stage, for determination. We suggest a threshold of 500 homes or 50,000 sq m of commercial development, subject to consultation. Where this route is engaged, the applicant must commit to delivering a community consultation method statement (see below) that reflects best practice and maintains the critical link between development and the community.
- In major regeneration and renewal areas planning committees should include independent members with relevant technical and industry expertise.
- Delegating more smaller applications to planning officers where they are of an appropriate scale, in the context of the local authority, and in general conformity with the Development Plan.
- This approach should be underpinned by monitoring the performance of planning committees (at all levels), both in terms of the proportion of decisions taken within set time limits and the proportion of decisions overturned on appeal.



5. Enable development on brownfield land through national planning policy

Developing previously developed land is a national policy priority. However, the approach to 'gentle densification' proposed in current national planning policy will make brownfield development more challenging and limit the potential of brownfield urban regeneration. If sustainable development opportunities are to be maximised, there needs to be a step change in density on sites in accessible locations, secured through innovative planning, design and placemaking.

The prioritisation of brownfield land (over greenfield development) needs to be balanced with growing expectations of what development and developer contributions can deliver. The social value created by bringing unproductive land back into use, or through the thoughtful redevelopment of a heritage building, simply cannot be matched by greenfield development.

However, the layering of planning costs, combined with future buildings and homes standards and additional taxes on residential development are making schemes more challenging to deliver and increasingly unviable. This also limits the funding available to local communities to ensure they realise the benefits of development.

It is also increasingly difficult to draw a direct link between development and the benefits delivered to the local community, when developer contributions are dominated by the Community Infrastructure Levy. These contributions often remain unspent even after the development is completed and/or can be spent in areas away from where the development occurs. We believe that this is a significant factor in the default opposition most developments experience across the UK and is likely to be compounded by the proposed Infrastructure Levy.



Recommendations:

- Encouragement in policy for brownfield urban regeneration explicitly not just previously developed land
- Options are explored to connect communities more directly with the benefits of developments, including through the retention of Section 106 for brownfield urban regeneration schemes.
- A more open dialogue is encouraged between developers, in partnership with the local authority, and communities about the potential benefits development and densification can deliver. This would form an explicit part of our proposed community consultation method statement (see below).

DISCUSSION:

Tom Dobson: If we're honest everything is just a mess at the moment. And there tends to be two kind of responses to that: what got us into this mess? The other is what should be the practical response? We've got some practical solutions that we can all work around. Let's focus on those and do some very specific things.

The other thing that really comes out, that this is about better regulation, not deregulation. One of the things that always riles us is that authority has been saying this is about deregulation, et cetera. And actually it's about putting community at the heart which I think is really important. If you go down to Canada Water, where Mike's colleague Miles Price has spent half his life, there is that commitment to engagement.

Pick the thing you're going to take communities with you. I think communities are at the heart of the process. However, it does seem to me that we get more opposition. Even if you think about Canada Water, which was challenged but wasn't successful. Kings Cross was challenged and that wasn't successful, but actually the disproportionate amount of money, time and cost that goes into it despite all of the consultation with communities is unjustifiable.

Now I am fundamentally of the view that everybody has the right to make sure that the law is enforced and carried out. And you shouldn't be pivoted from doing that because we seem to be getting into a position where just objections for objections sake have the ability to delay and constantly delay. Development resistance is really disproportionate at the moment in terms of cost. Developers want to

deliver, and the few that want to object can really delay development at great cost.

Q: Applicants are required to produce many technical reports to get an application validated on topics which are technical and should be dealt with following permission under their Building Regulations. Planning officers are not qualified to deal with these topics. Not surprising they are overloaded and the system is gummed up. The NPPF should eliminate this.

Discussion continued...

The chairman thanked Mike and Tom and said the Forum would pursue the topic of planning reform as we approach the general election.

From Zoomers: Andrew Rogers: Very good. Tim Wachter: Very interesting discussion. ■

SEE also Mike Hood's article on page 15.