

Foreign investment in our 'World City' – and how we can now build tall

Yolande Barnes of Savills gave the Forum a penetrating presentation on London's role as a 'world city' and dispelled myths about 'dark flats' with a penetrating explanation of how new engineering techniques allow a proliferation of tall buildings to sprout over London by Jane Richards of WSP. Acting Hon. Sec. Andrew Rogers minuted the June Forum.

Full minutes and speakers' slides at planninginlondon.com > LP&DF

London as a Global City

Yolande Barnes (Director, Savills World Research) provided a comprehensive review accompanied by a series of projected slides (as attached). She summarised this as "dispelling myths [and explaining] how London operates internationally". Discussion took place during and immediately after the talk.

PE suggested that large-scale investment was coming from the Middle East (not only to London but throughout the world) because the oil is running out. YB confirmed that the second slide shows direct investments, not sovereign wealth funds. London scores very badly on air pollution and the cost of travel, but these are overwhelmed

Everyone comes to London



favourably by the other diverse factors: but PE suggested London is not that bad on air pollution when compared with other cities – especially in historical terms – but now there is a real threat to its economic performance because of its inability to provide sufficient new housing.

PE noted that from about 1936 central London has been depopulating and currently outer London has the greater population, with the Green Belt forming a collar that makes property values immediately beyond it similar to those of outer London within. YB emphasized that high city densities have very different urban forms – compare London with Hong Kong or Singapore.

Global purchasers are not a new phenomenon

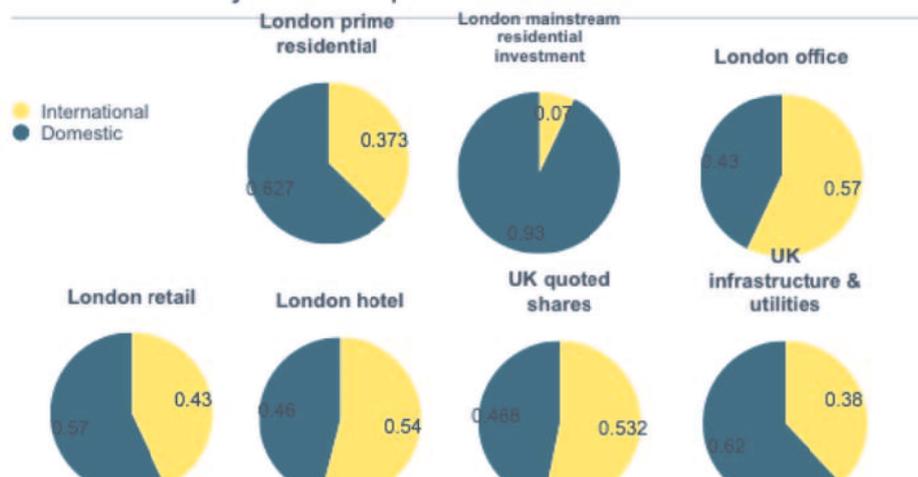


Tall Buildings in London

A visual presentation (source for illustrations) from Jane Richards of WSP Group summarised her presentation to the Institution of Civil Engineers on the technical challenges of building tall with an emphasis on the practical and engineering problems in London compared to other cities. As before, discussion took place during and immedi-

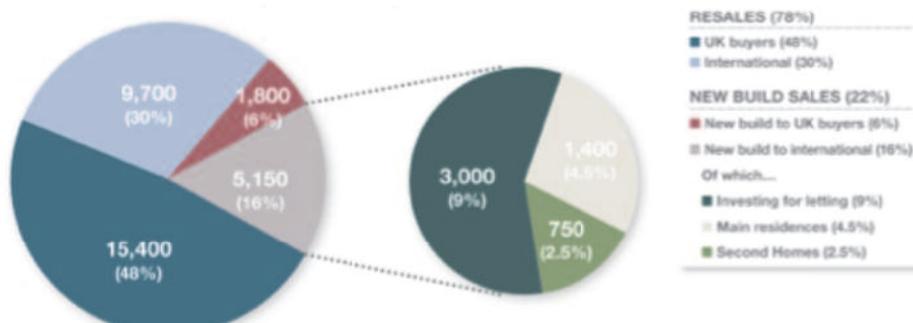
... but this isn't just about posh houses

savills



So is 'lights out London' real?

savills



... so expect more of this

savills

19% of developments over 200 units in inner London currently under construction were funded by overseas entities



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ately after the talk.

It was clear that prefabrication, whether dry or wet construction, is not as universally accepted to be right as previously thought. It results in dull standard designs, which BW suggested are not part of our culture. JaR noted that research has showed modular construction is not really acceptable. JaR added that engineering assisted the continuing change of design solutions for tall buildings, with structures that are ever more complex and designed to be taller "because we can". Cost and extreme technical development become increasingly critical to new buildings, with economic viability losing out to innovation – see 107 W 57th Street tower, which is 231m tall on a site only 13m wide enclosed by an external structural "core".

BW asked about the foundations for tall buildings in London (where there is no solid rock to build on). JaR said that these now often go down beyond 54m, with structural frames often diverted at ground level to open up the site. RH asked about the problem of the water table: JaR explained that in London the first 4m is built-up ground, followed by levels of Thames gravel, clay, Thanet sand and then chalk at about 100m – only the last two have any extensive water content so the water table is not a problem when finding a foundation base.

BW then opened up the discussion more generally following these presentations.

DB referred to the London Plan (specifically Policy 7.7), which has generally been ignored with respect to tall buildings. The planning principles in this regard rely on protection of views, which is simply a negative consideration: a strategic policy is needed, ignoring land use. PE agreed that a proper policy on clusters that follows the Policy 7.7 instruction that "Boroughs should work with

Attendance on Monday 9th June 2014 at Colliers International hosted by Jonathan Manns

Brian Waters: Chairman

Andrew Rogers: ACA (Acting secretary)

Brian Whiteley: Planning Aid for London

Abdul Choudbury, RICS

Jane Richards, WSP Group

Brian Gatenby, architect

Judith Ryser: Isocarp/Ugb/Cityscope Europe

Yolande Barnes, Savills

Duncan Bowie, U of Westminster

Tom Wachter, RICS London

Ron Heath, RIBA London

Peter Eversden: London Forum (Ch)

Apologies were received from Jonathan Mann: Colliers International and RTPi London, Bob Dolata, Michael Coupe: London Society, Drummond Robson: Honorary Secretary and Robson Planning, Michael Bach: London Forum of Amenity Societies, Alastair Gaskin, Hon Treasurer and Nikolaos Karadimitriou

the Mayor to consider which areas are appropriate, sensitive or inappropriate for tall and large buildings and identify them in their Local Development Frameworks” is required. JuR added that the effect on neighbouring sites and the ground level environment is often ignored, but JaR suggested that such concerns may be exaggerated – although life is made more difficult because of what can be done.

TB complained that committees have allowed too many ugly tall buildings. BW suggested this is a subjective view and JaR repeated that we need to find a way to balance what can be done against what should be done.

BW noted that outer London opportunity areas should be linked but there is no proper planning structure to locate/co-ordinate them. BG agreed that 'blue-sky' thinking is needed: the challenge is to harness the affluence we experience sensibly in tackling affordable housing, etc – there is plenty of policy but it isn't properly implemented. BW thought that infrastructure investment should be protected by CIL, but this has not yet proved itself sufficiently.

DB considered that investors are producing icons – but for prestige or for profit? He wanted to ask what a building contributes to the broader benefit of the community, not to brand or ego, and one that doesn't measure up should be rejected, whether economically viable or not.

As a new Forum member, AC was impressed by the wide-ranging discussion, which was very pertinent to current problems, for example by comparison to the Policy Exchange paper on density showing that high-rise is not necessary to provide high density. The GLA's Community Land Trust, zoning and green belt, etc, all come into the mix, but infrastructure and new transportation are the critical factors (eg Crossrail).

Next Meeting.

Will be at RICS on 8th September. Our host: Abdul Choudbury.

Topics of discussion to include the Infrastructure Bill (currently before Parliament), a CIL update, and the Character and Context SPG just published by the GLA after a long gestation.

IMAGES: RIGHT Jane Richards WSP Group
PREVIOUS PAGE: Yolande Barnes Savills

Extreme Engineering – Al Burj, Dubai



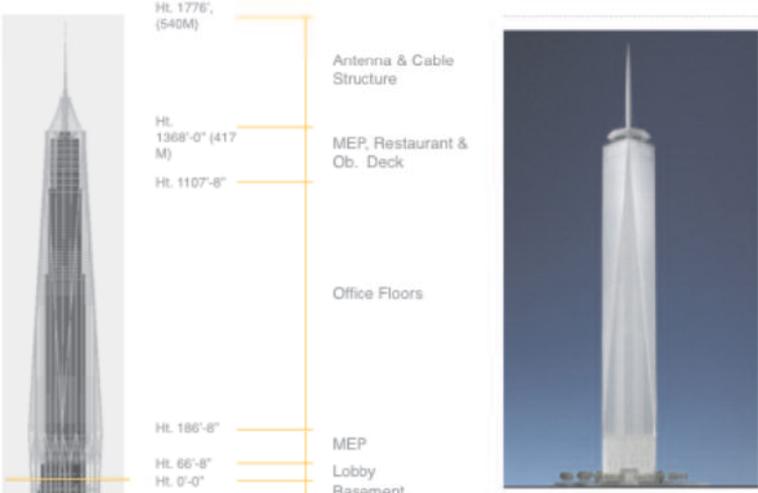


Extreme Engineering – Beekman Tower, NY





Extreme Engineering – One World Trade Center, NY



Ht. 1776' (540M)		Antenna & Cable Structure
Ht. 1368'-0" (417 M)		MEP, Restaurant & Ob. Deck
Ht. 1107'-8"		Office Floors
Ht. 186'-8"		MEP
Ht. 66'-8"		Lobby
Ht. 0'-0"		Basement
Ht. -70'-0"		Basement

