

Tall Storeys

The first of a series of irreverent reflections on planning by Neil Parkyn

Scene: a meeting room on the 5th floor of a rented office block within sight of the Thames, East of the City, one Friday afternoon.

Dramatis Personae:

RICSman - a well presented chartered surveyor with strong kerb appeal;

Clientman – a slightly threatening and classless presence with rather detailed personal knowledge of current Elected Members;

Templanperson – agency staff member thinking of next weekend in Prague;

Oztemp – as above, but with 'No Worries!

Permplan – permanent staff member counting the days;

Prologue

RICSman enters with his Team of 14. There aren't enough chairs. Others are fetched.... He opens his Black n'Red hard bound notebook and folds back the page.

The Architect couldn't make it, he explains.."some business in Court defending his allotment-thingy."

RICSman: Well first I just want to say on behalf of my client (turns and smiles) how pleased we are to be given this opportunity of presenting, informally of course, our very latest ideas for what the Borough must agree is a unique opportunity for an Iconic, landmark and game-changing development which will speak clearly to the Investment Community, as evidence that this Council is Open for Business.

Permplan: Don't want to cut you short, but we've got a union reps meeting in an hour. Can we get straight to your Option 27, as I understand it.

Neil Parkyn is a retired architect-planner living in

France. A former member of RTP1 Council, he was a director of Colin Buchanan and Partners. He is also a watercolour artist and technical writer



Is this model to any known scale?

Oztemp: Looks a proper dinkum piece of Urban Fabric to me. Great for hosting a Friday bevy.....

Templanperson: Am I to understand that the gross floorspace you propose has almost doubled..? It looks as if we're now talking of about 40 storeys?

RICSman: Ah yes, but we felt that this was the only way to do justice to the acknowledged potential for this particular site to deliver a Beacon of Regeneration, a physical embodiment of your Council's totally legitimate requirement for a World-Class development, as our client is pleased to confirm.

Clientman: Nigel, I think that's a little fruity. I just want the Borough to have its New Swimming Pool paid for by my development, where all the little children can swim their hearts out.... I remember when I was a minnow at Stowe...

Templanperson: Am I right that the living rooms of, I would say, about 40 per cent of the flats would actually never receive any daylight? They look (takes out 1:500 scale) to be about nine metres face-to-face?

Ozplan: Well it does seem a wee bit too hugger mugger even for the All Blacks.....

RICSman: Certainly we're talking dense urban fabric. That's what our Cities are all about...surely...the chance meetings of talented, well dressed young people. They tend to be out all day, anyway.

Clientman: Look, I've got another meeting uptown in an hour. Where have we got to, Nigel?

RICSman: I hope that there is a consensus emerging around the table that our very early proposals are a sound basis for further development, so I would suggest we diarize the next 10 meetings...perhaps in our offices just across from Harrods, followed by a spot of lunch

Templanperson: Hold the model still, please... (Takes out Xacto modelling knife and slices off 20 storeys of each of the Styrofoam towers.)

Now, don't we all feel BETTER? ■



RIGHT:
Styrofoam tower before the cuts