

And now for the outer suburbs...

Regeneration is about 'inner cities', but it is also very much about 'outer cities' – and not just in London, but in every major UK city.



There is a telling note in the minutes of the June meeting of the London Planning & Development

Forum (page 16), a discreet body, but whose discussions are always revealing about the workings behind London.

'Recent work on the suburbs by the GLA has come too late for inclusion in the plan', they report. The meeting billed itself as a 'mock Examination in Public' of the proposed amendments to the London Plan. The draft plan, despite its further set of amendments, the minutes suggest, still offers no answer to how the inner Central Activities Zone and outer London town centre networks interact and support each other.

This is an issue PiL has commented on before when the draft amendments to the London Plan appeared last year and which was tackled as long ago as 2002 in a report titled *A City of Villages*, by URBED and the Town & Country Planning Association.

You would have thought that amid all the noise about sustainability, the focus would have been on precisely this issue. Sustainability turns on the efficient use of trans-

port. In a city approaching 10 million people, it doesn't make sense for everyone to try and work in the centre. Yet suburban employment growth continues to lag the centre, and that in the Home Counties, while blue collar employment has continued to decline in the suburbs – no surprises there. The reverse should be the case if we are to succeed on sustainability, or at least be seen to be succeeding – perception being a big part of the sustainability debate now that it has become political.

King Ken has surely missed a trick here. The further amendments to the London Plan are presumably founded on and target sustainability as the primary goal. How can they do this if they lack substance on such a key issue?

The suburbs are the key to London's future. They can provide all the new housing required, much of the retailing we desire, the workspace and nearly all the services. If they don't, London will not succeed as well as it could do. Perhaps most important among the readily observable problems is education, where there have been big improvements, but these take time to deliver results – but not that long in London terms.

One simply suburban rule is that

unless all sectors of society feel happy about the education their children receive in a borough, preferably from the state facilities, they will move elsewhere and that creates social imbalance. Social imbalance and lack of opportunity is the root of all suburban problems.

Transport is the other main issue. If the links aren't in place, not just between the centre and the suburb, but also between suburbs, then 'opportunity' doesn't come easy. Try travelling on the atrocious North London Line for example. And perhaps we need an outer 'S-Bahn' as well?

The existence of a London Plan is a wonderful thing. Even more wonderful, we should remember, is the opportunity to scrutinise and debate it. And here is an issue that we can go to town on. The Mayor and his helpers are still not thinking hard enough about how the suburbs can complement the centre and blossom themselves; encouraged by the new wave of expansion London is surfing London's eco-system appears to be flourishing it is flourishing, but it is also being constrained, and in places it continues to decline.

As Ben Kochan points out in his piece on page 40, the 'London

Paradox', whereby inner London continues to boom and outer London continues to decline, requires radical solutions. And even though we are not at the kind of crisis level that requires task forces and big cash injections, something must be done. We need to see some stronger initiatives being developed which provide new homes, services, renewed civic vitality, and most importantly new jobs, in the suburbs.

Better a slightly delayed plan than the wrong policies for the suburbs. That's the kind of thing that gets Planning a bad name – and politicians. Regeneration was about 'inner cities', but it is also very much about 'outer cities' – and not just in London, but in every major UK city. The thing is that other cities don't have 33 boroughs. London is much more fragmented, which is why we rely so much on the London Plan to tackle these issues. Don't let it let London down.

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Urbanisation 2.0 – the mother of all building booms

Dan Lewis asks 'Can you plan for efficient future cities?'



In a video conference lecture to the London Think! Conference in London in May,

Ex Vice- (& still wannabe) President Al Gore said "... in the next 40 years, there will be more building than in the previous 3,000 years". In this of course he saw great environmental risks. Global financiers on the other hand should see huge opportunities. When most of the world's 3.54 billion rural population decide to move into the cities, a massive shift in their expectations occurs. Think about it.

These ex-villagers will want clean, hot water on tap, not the stagnant kind from the well. They will require grid-tied electricity and air-conditioning, not a smoke-filled hut. And above all, they will demand a space to call their own, probably a car and plenty of good places to shop.

Urbanisation 1.0 which accompanied the West's industrial revolution in the 19th Century was trivial compared to the scale and speed of what is happening today. Even by 1900, just 220 m of the world's people – 13 per cent – were living urban lives. That's why Urbanisation 2.0 – the

21st Century version – is a megatrend that can't possibly be ignored and is one that investors must embrace. For sure, the infrastructural challenges are enormous; bringing transport, housing energy and water to a few billion people for the first time. Naturally, there are those who would say this can't or it shouldn't be done. They should be ignored. Progress, ultimately, is unstoppable. The pertinent question to ask though, is how can it be done, financially?

At the micro level, these new – but poor – urban slum dwellers, will eventually want loans, credit and insurance. On housing at least, you can forget them taking out 25 year mortgages. In 2001, prize-winning Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto argued very persuasively in his book "The Mystery of Capital" that what was lacking in developing nations were legally enforceable property rights and that's what kept them poor. In other words, because most of the world's poor have no formal ownership deeds, they are unable mobilise those assets – be they businesses, property or livestock – to use as collateral against debt. Microfinance then, has the potential

to go a very long way from here.

Transport is another area fraught with huge difficulty. In China, cities with a few million people are being erected in mere years and national vehicle ownership is forecast to rise from 30 million to 140 million by 2020. Already they have 16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities, principally due to exhaust fumes. To their credit, the Chinese are working on this furiously, no doubt motivated by the possible embarrassment of choking athletes at next year's Olympic Games in Beijing. It is however a universal problem and there can only be three solutions; cleaning up personal transport, increasing public transport and reducing urban density. My guess is that the most likely outcome is that as oil prices drift upwards, markets will deliver the first and politicians will talk up the second while quietly endorsing the third, by expanding the suburbs.

But can you plan for efficient future cities? The West unfortunately does not have a great deal to teach the developing world in planning. Urban design as a profession is at least 2,000 years old. Today's municipal planners dream wistfully of Timgad, a perfectly symmetrical, self-

contained grid-laid Roman town in Algeria built in 100 AD. Instead they have given us the likes of Milton Keynes in the UK, one of the world's first "New Towns" and by common consent, a soulless failure. Looking back, it would have been far better to expand London. So the lesson for planners is this; urbanisation works at its best where scaleable infrastructure is put in place, first and citizens are given maximum choice to expand from the existing hub, second. The future city of the West in 2040 will have resolved many of those issues that currently elude us; clean air, reliable public transport and effective municipal government.

Between now and then in developing world cities, all of these will probably get worse before they get better. But catch up they will. Competing in the global economy is like a race without a finish. And only those cities which offer both good economic prospects and a high quality of life will stay ahead. So take a long bet on cement, bricks and mortar. Urbanisation 2.0 has only just begun.

*Dan Lewis is Research Director of the Economic Research Council
www.ercouncil.org*

The coming of age of the 'bully' state

Ranald Macdonald says a good cigar is a beautiful thing requiring time, space, comfort and respect.



Like it or not tobacco has been an integral aspect of our social and economic development over the

last four centuries. As swift and silent, in relative terms, as an executioner's axe that is all set to change. The July first smoking ban in England is an historic occasion which, when we have cause to think about it in a few years time, might well also poignantly

reflect the coming of age of the "bully" (supper nanny) state.

I believe very strongly that a significant majority of the English population whilst not wanting to lift the forthcoming ban in totality would favour sensible exemptions to allow

those who wished to smoke to do so indoors in dignity without affecting others (an equivalent recent poll result in Scotland was 74 per cent in favour of exemptions). I have been following the debate on the smoking issue very closely since a smoking ban

was instituted in New York in 2002. Around the world smoking bans have been implemented in many different ways, for example, in Spain 30 per cent of any given restaurant/bar can be separated and designated for smoking (operations under 100 square metres in size can decide their own policy) and in New York cigar clubs are exempt. There are no exemptions in the UK smoking legislation and clearly there should be. Post ban Ireland has interestingly shown an 8 per cent drop in Guinness sales, a sharp increase in spirit off

sales and a 2.4 per cent increase in cigarette sales as people move to drinking and smoking at home. I don't think prohibition has ever worked. Government should educate not legislate.

Finally, a thought for the 40,000 hand-rolled cigar smokers in the UK who employ over 600,000 people in the third world. You can not smoke a cigar in a few minutes on a pavement and many prefer not to smoke at home. A good cigar is a beautiful thing requiring time, space, comfort and respect. Cigar smokers unlike a

majority of cigarette smokers do not wish to give up. The health issues for cigar smokers are very different to cigarette smokers. If these 40,000 people were an oppressed minority their interests would be considered and protected. The fact that they are relatively rich and significant tax providers should not in a reasonable democracy work against their interests.

The freedom to choose how we live our lives is being eroded by the insidious tyranny of the Super Nanny State. She not only assumes repug-

nant, morally insufferable political correctness as the strict etiquette by which her children must abide, but will also not allow them to play for fear of their being hurt. She would rather see her charges in straightjackets being fed intravenously to avoid any risk at all to their precious lives. This is not the correct way to bring up children, let alone a great nation.

Ronald Macdonald runs the Boisdale Jazz and Cigar club and restaurant in Belgravia.

An unacceptable non-standard standard form

Why plough on with an unworkable change? asks Andrew Rogers



Speak to any practising architects, especially in London, about planning

and you will find that they are not worried about the white paper, concerned about a commission for infrastructure projects, hung up over the householder consents proposals (if they understand them), or even agitated about appeal reforms. The more idealistic among them may even believe that sharply raised planning fees will translate into improved resources for the system. What concerns those at the coalface most is the problem of getting a planning application validated – and in a reasonable time.

Now this is about to change with the implementation from October of the mandatory standard national planning application form. Applications will be considered valid only if they are accompanied by the information specified both on a short national list of statutory requirements and on the local planning authority's own published list (note

that the word "short" is omitted from the description of this local list).

Perceptive readers will know that, under regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Applications) Regulations 1988, this is theoretically at least the position at present. If an application is made on the authority's standard form, includes all the information specified and a proper fee, and has the requisite number of drawings, it must be validated immediately upon receipt. But this does not happen – and there is no remedy for non-validation short of an appeal when eight weeks has elapsed. So now, on receipt of an application the LPA will write back (within a month if you're lucky) with a list of additional information required to be forwarded before the application will be validated. (My own favourite is insistence on a plan showing where the builder will store materials and place site huts, required by Elmbridge Council to validate an outline application.)

So in October this foolery will cease. Instead of completing a simple

two-page form and sending in whatever your own local authority deems necessary, you will have to complete the national ten-page form and send whatever this specifies, together with the supplemental information from a local list published by your authority. So much for simplification.

And here's the killer – the planning white paper acknowledges that this is unacceptable and will not achieve the Government's aim of streamlining information requirements for all applications. Later in 2007 there will be a further review with the objective of reducing information requirements. So, having introduced a system designed to simplify the planning application procedure that will do the opposite, a study is proposed to discover how to simplify the planning application procedure.

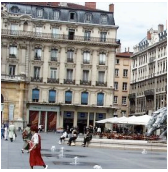
The white paper goes on to say that part of the review will be a study of the information demands for applications made in 2006. So extract unreasonable demands from your files and send them in! Meanwhile the Association of

Consultant Architects is calling for introduction of the non-standard standard form to be deferred again – it was originally due to be introduced at the beginning of the year – so that when it comes it really will do what it says on the package.

Andrew Rogers is a planning consultant and architect.

“Create problems in the centre of your city, build something nice. Then you will be re-elected”

Global City, the annual convention for urban decision-makers held in Lyons, concentrated this year on sustainable development and energy conservation. Jeremy Melvin reports for *Planning in London*.



One might be forgiven for asking why it has taken until 2007 to alight on this theme, but that would overlook some serious points that came out of the myriad keynotes, workshops and discussions. Ranging across governance, economics, demographics and transportation as well as development proper, these themes and the fields they opened up, could only have come from such an inter-disciplinary gathering.

Two keynote addresses shared a similar underlying message but differed piquantly in style. Sir David King, the British Government's chief scientific advisor, and Nicolas Hulot, a popular French ecologist and broadcaster who resembles a cross between the Bartlett's Colin Fournier and Johnny Halliday more than he does Jacques Tati, both argued that any chance of surviving global warming depends on a response across the social and cultural spectrum, rather than lying purely within the realm of science.

King tersely synthesised complex scientific data. Twelve millennia of climate stability is coming to an end, and it is too late to prevent some global warming though there is still time to “manage its dangerous impact and to avoid catastrophe”, if politicians and most importantly public opinion move quickly. Given the degree of choice which can be exercised in creating and managing the built environment and transport, urban designers, developers and managers have key role, especially

the proportion of the global population passes 50 per cent and will keep rising. With 80 per cent of the population living on or near enough a coast to suffer from relatively small sea level rise, their tasks have an increased urgency. Climate change, he concluded, is the “greatest challenge civilisation has ever had to face”.

Two panels on reducing carbon footprints and on the low carbon city showed how some of King's necessarily general points might apply in specific circumstances, and through inter-disciplinary collaboration. In the first, representatives from Lyons, Breda – “the Netherlands' most sustainable city”, Milan, San Sebastian and CABA discussed how to face various challenges. The Spanish city is implementing awareness training, but that does not overcome the dilemma of how to deal with a cement works right in the city centre, and which provides jobs along with a fearsome carbon output. Jonathan Davis, CABA's director of knowledge and skills outlined a similar balancing act between density and open space.

These are the sorts of quandary that many urban managers will recognise, but Breda has gone further than most in finding a way beyond them. Hans Thoolen, the city council's head of project management, explained that the disadvantage of receiving pollution from London, the Ruhr and Antwerp has acted as a spur to this small city's overall strategy.

The council leads by example, having stakes and often initiating

developments, but also at the micro level of installing low energy light bulbs. Its bike tracks – *de rigeur* in the Netherlands – are a generous 5m wide, while the search is on for alternative energy sources, from geothermal to photovoltaics. Fat extracted by liposuction could drive cars, a point made all the more piquant when Davis pointed out the 40 per cent of London's carbon footprint comes from food consumption. Above all the aim is to develop a new language for sustainability so different agencies, companies, interest groups and individuals can communicate directly, and reach the ultimate goal for sustainable development of “social and business profit going together”.

The second panel revealed broadened the discussion beyond western Europe to Hungary and North America. Budapest's mayor Gabor Demszky joined Toronto's deputy mayor Joe “Trousers” Pantalone and Santa Monica's former mayor Pam O'Connor. The underlying conclusion was that being a low carbon city means making use of existing advantages, be they infrastructure or natural. Toronto, which leads the way in urban sustainability for north America, uses the low, stable temperature of water in Lake Ontario to cool about 150 downtown buildings simply by heat exchange: the water remains pure. O'Connor explained how Santa Monica was encouraging its pool of 90,000 residents within the overall Los Angeles conurbation which comprises 88 separate cities, to make use of its abundant sunlight and install solar power, the panels

procured through a series of partnering arrangements compared by the council.

The communist era dealt Budapest two advantages on top of the natural geothermal energy, as Demszky related. One was a compact city of 2 million living in 800,000 apartments, the other a functioning public transport system used by 60 per cent of the population. While increasing affluence is causing the population to disperse, the transport system can be improved with a programme of replacement with greener equipment. Though the city has devolved many of its powers to local district levels, Demszky retains the authority to close roads in the centre to cars: “I love to make problems for my people”, he confessed, “they suffer and they suffer and they suffer. But then they see how they work”.

Any politician who wants to implement serious policies to address global warming could do worse than follow his advice. He has been elected continuously almost since the fall of the Communist regime in 1989. “Create problems in the centre of your city”, he says, “and build something nice. Then you will be re-elected”.

Jeremy Melvin writes on architecture

Housing growth in London

Ten years ago high density private sector housing was almost unknown in the UK. Since then there has been a major shift, says Rory Brooke.



Achieving housing growth targets for London is a major challenge for planning policy. I

consider here some of the ways in which planning and development is responding to this context, including emerging practice and possible future trends. My thoughts draw upon work URS has been doing for both the Greater London Authority (GLA) family and for private developers.

The London Plan, associated GLA policies and documents are some of the key mechanisms helping achieve housing growth. It is increasingly clear that the London Plan is creating a significant positive shift in the approach to development in London, particularly with respect to housing. One of the key policies is the housing density matrix (Policy 4B.3). This policy sets out expected maximum and minimum housing densities associated with the public transport accessibility of sites and the character of the surrounding areas. Since the adoption of the London Plan the average density of housing development in London has gone up significantly (average density for housing planning permissions in London was 125 units per hectare in 2004/05 according to GLA data). URS, together with Patel Taylor architects, were commissioned to review the London Plan's Housing Density Matrix. Our work included looking at 50 case studies and reviewing the GLA's database of planning permissions. We concluded that the policy generally worked well and suggested a number of refinements to make it clearer. These are covered in the London Plan Alterations.

Another major way in which the GLA and the London boroughs are encouraging housing growth is by

developing a better framework for the management of industrial land. Historically, planning policy has lagged behind rates of deindustrialisation with the consequence that much industrial land has remained under-used and inappropriately protected while provision of land for housing has been inadequate. The GLA's approach to release of industrial land has become increasingly sophisticated and well informed. A series of strategic studies have looked at industrial land trends and frameworks and the most recent is our research for the GLA looking at benchmarks for the release of industrial land around London. Our research found that a substantial amount of industrial land has been released over the past five years and that, with appropriate follow-through, particularly by London boroughs on the additional release of surplus land, the market should be in a much better equilibrium by 2016.

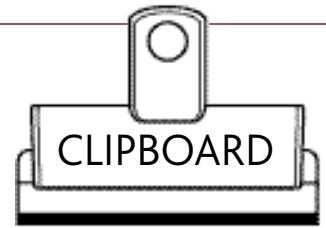
The Thames Gateway is one of the most significant opportunities for accommodating London's housing growth. We have looked at scenarios for accommodating housing growth in the sub-region for the London Development Agency (LDA) and GLA and have found that there is the opportunity to go well beyond current housing targets while still keeping to densities and forms of development consistent with good quality planning and design. This will depend on significant support and partnership between the public and private sectors. One of the current issues is that while the inner London boroughs are in a buoyant market and are exceeding their housing growth targets, the outer boroughs are struggling to attract sufficient private sector interest. The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation is in the middle of grappling with this challenge and is focusing on bringing

forward catalytic development that demonstrate the potential of the area.

The planning system is getting increasingly complex and demanding, as a result there is growing cost and effort involved in obtaining planning permissions. New requirements include increasing expectations and sophistication around assessing requirements for items such as affordable housing, social infrastructure and reduced carbon emission design. While some of these additional costs should be reflected in changes to land value (rather than developers' profit and unit prices) this can only happen if there is a clear and reasonable planning framework. The challenge for planning authorities is to make sure developers and land owners understand what is expected and can factor this in to their approach. It is also important that the public sector takes a firm but positive, realistic and well-resourced approach to negotiations over schemes.

Ten years ago high density private sector housing was almost unknown in the UK, particularly when associated with mixed-use development. There has been a major shift since then in Britain's main cities. This is exciting and welcome but is probably not enough on its own to ensure longer-term success in meeting housing growth and balanced communities objectives. I suspect our next major challenge is building a culture of embracing high density development for families, both with residents and among developers. This is a well established lifestyle in other European countries but needs to evolve in a form tailored to the UK context and in a way that creates choice and quality rather than responding to necessity.

Rory Brooke is managing principal of the URS Group, engineers



Spurious design

In a concession to the City, the Mayor's anticipated new powers of 'call-in' will now apply only to schemes over 150m high or larger than 1m sq ft.

Michael Snyder, chairman of the City's policy and resources committee, revealed his architectural sensibility commenting: "The Mayor can now only interfere in such schemes for 'sound planning reasons' rather than spurious reasons such as design".

ICOMOS scorches the earth

The flying visit to the UK by UNESCO's committee set up as guardians of World Heritage Sites has brought forth a variety of responses.

In appeasement mode the Government promised to strengthen their protection in its Heritage white paper. The idea is to introduce buffer zones around them.

An English Heritage spokesman is quoted in *Property Week*: "The first steps are to decide if the buffer zone is feasible and then decide what form it would take".

EH's **Christopher Young** said the buffer zones would be operated by the local authorities: "The zone is not a sterilisation or a scorched-earth policy".

Even so, **Ken Livingstone** believes the new owner of Battersea power station has already been told that a tall building on the site would prejudice the Westminster WHS (the Palace of Westminster) and wonders whether ICOMOS is now a planning authority for Central London. "The Government was at pains to keep me away from them", he told your editor, "in justifiable fear that I might tell them where to go!".

This follows the comment of City Planning officer *Peter Rees* regarding their concerns about City development affecting the context of the Tower of London: "The Tower was built by the Normans to protect the City, not the other way around.", he said.

ICOMOS at its annual planning committee (in New Zealand last month) resolved not to declare these two sites 'at risk' but to review matters again next year.

Time to consider a mechanism for 'undesignating' World Heritage Sites perhaps?