

R.I.P. UDP

Planning in London advises its readers of the sad passing, after a long illness, of the UDP on 27th September. Although in some areas the UDP has been replaced by its LDF offspring we understand that many London authorities are now mourning the demise of planning policies that will be sadly missed. Which parts of any individual UDPs are retained for embalming and which have been finally laid to rest is not yet clear. Beloved spouse to the SPG and father of numerous disparate children, the UDP had a long and venerable life if sadly lacking a sense of humour.

All enquiries to Government Office for London. No flowers, please.

Note by way of explanation

Our understanding is that local authorities had to apply to the Secretary of State under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for an assessment of whether "current" (ie reasonably up to date and relevant UDP policies) can be saved, based upon criteria set out in PPG12 and by DCLG, if their LDF documents are not yet in place or have been rejected by the Inspectorate. In Hounslow's case, for example, all policies except eight have been saved or extended and this was confirmed by copy of a letter dated 21.9.07 from the Government Office for London. Whether other authorities have followed the correct procedures and received confirmation that some UDP policies can continue to be relied upon is not at the time of writing known, but those who haven't, or who have unexpectedly had their replacement documents disallowed, apparently will have no valid policies in place from 27th September.

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London's changing face

Peter Murray sets the context for NLA's conference on 1st November.



There is already a certain reality about the future skyline of London. We see computer-generated images of the City complete with its towering cluster almost as frequently as we see the real thing. New London Architecture's model of London in NLA is dotted with buildings and sites whose white finish stands out from its grey background. The white blocks are the buildings and developments that have planning permission but have yet to be built, the grey is the rest.

The model city is a very different one to the city we live in today. In the model city Kings Cross is completed, Canary Wharf is merged with Wood Wharf into a high rise downtown area that dwarfs the Square Mile, Elephant and Castle is rebuilt to twice the density of 60s housing, the

Shard, Jumeirah building and Vauxhall Tower stake out the route of the River Thames, the Pinnacle lords it over the City cluster.

But will the capital of 2026 be as we imagine it; will the areas of intensity be intense? Will we grasp the areas of opportunity?

Camden Council and the Kings Cross Railway Lands Group gave us a bit of shock when the Argent masterplan, after an arduous consultation process, almost fell at the last hurdle, the white model for Battersea Power Station has to be exchanged for the question mark of Treasury's new masterplan.

The wobble on the financial markets put the brakes on the investment market and raises concerns over several projects. Commentators question the UK economy's reliance on the financial sector and they talk about the slowing down of the housing market as though it is bad news

rather than overdue correction.

As anyone over 35 knows only too well, economic cycles can have a disastrous effect on the best laid plans. I still have on my shelves reports prepared for the London Regeneration Consortium, the previous developers of Kings Cross led by Stuart Lipton and Godfrey Bradman. The reports state quite confidently that the first buildings would be ready for occupation in Q4 1993. Fourteen years later, we are still waiting for the first brick to be laid.

But an awful lot is happening – British Land are just finishing off the first of the current generation of towers at Broadgate, the demolition contractors are at work on the site of the Leadenhall Building, the Pinnacle, the Walkie Talkie and Heron tower. One New Change is a heap of rubble and provides a wonderful clear view of St Paul's that will not be seen for another generation or two. Elephant

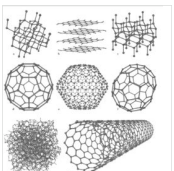
and Castle is on the move. Stratford and the Olympic site can't stop even if they wanted to.

But as major projects like Stratford, Kings Cross, Greenwich Peninsula and White City take shape they are changing more than just the face of London. These sites which have for many years been vacuums within the life of the city, reducing permeability and blighting surrounding areas, are now becoming foci of activity and vibrancy. Perhaps London is changing from a city of villages to a city of satellites where these dense, large scale mixed use estates, well served by public transport, create a new hierarchy of centres within the capital.

Peter Murray is exhibition director at NLA. For details see page 2.

Carbon confusion

World Architecture News tries to find reality in a world of carbon hype.



Have you turned the TV off or left it on standby? We are all increasingly badgered about being eco-responsible, but how real is this type of advice in the scale of saving the planet. It reminds me of the advice given by the UK government in the days of the cold war when, in the event of a nuclear

attack we were told to get under the nearest table. Will our individual efforts make any difference or are more radical measures needed?

While architects around the world strive to make their designs ever more efficient, so our politicians chase the headlines to claim their own eco Brownie points. However dig a little deeper and the real facts paint a very different story.

Whilst an efficient building design

can make a real contribution to reducing carbon emissions much noise is made about reducing a country's carbon emissions by offsetting, however often this is not "real" reduction but a token gesture that does not result in a measurable change.

This week saw headlines blazing: "Norway aims for zero-carbon status by 2050". Good for Norway the readers will be thinking but look a bit

deeper and a sorry tale emerges. How much of this green rhetoric is achieved through more efficient buildings and measurable savings... well none actually. Norway, like many other rich countries is simply buying its clean conscience by offsetting its emissions through the international markets. This is a very expensive process and is being funded by, wait for it, the sale of oil and gas. As the fifth largest exporter,

Norway has amassed some \$300 billion in savings, so money is not a problem. It gets worse, Norwegian emissions per capita are about 11 tonnes, almost three times the world average.....

The carbon swap scheme had its heart in the right place, funding countries with lower efficiency should have been able to produce a higher reduction in emissions per dollar invested. However the "free" market will always find a way to exploit schemes with good intentions such as this. Take for example the Indian company SRF, one of the lucky few to have been approved by the United Nations as part the carbon exchange programme. Due to

quirks in the scheme, SRF, which produces refrigeration gases at a sprawling chemical plant in Rajasthan, India received so much investment from companies such as Shell and Barclays that it is expanding its production of another greenhouse gas, 1000 times more damaging than CO2.

But it gets worse. We still don't even really know how to measure the damage. The big dragon China is a terrible polluter - fact. Chinese people should do better – well it's not that simple. The emissions per capita for the average Chinaman is 3.2 (tonnes) whereas deep in the heart of the EU, Luxembourg, it is 23.6! Already you are screaming that this is not fair, that China has vast areas

of rural communities which negate the pollution of the cities. Well this leads nicely onto the next layer of confusion.

Picture an idyllic English country village, quiet leafy lanes, rose covered cottages and then compare this to the grinding, noisy, smelly city of London. The average person in the street would probably expect the village to be "greener" but a report by Tim Harford for the London Financial Times shows that the villagers are likely to produce 25 per cent more carbon than the national average whereas the Londoners (and other city dwellers) produce some 40 per cent less. This is a huge and real difference. Not a 10 per cent reduction

over ten years but 65 per cent now. Tim further suggests that rather than turn the TV off the villagers should bulldoze their community and move to the city. Whilst initially that idea may seem a bit radical it may just point to a more effective strategy which will make real inroads into carbon reductions, that of focusing new development in the cities and reducing development in rural areas and suburbs.

*Your comments to
feedback@worldarchitecturenews.com*

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Sustainability and the green belt: a contradiction in terms?

There is an inevitable conflict between greenbelt and wider sustainability principles. Inevitably greenbelt must lose



The Government's recent reaffirmation of its commitment to the principles of

green belt in its response to the Barker Report belies a stark reality: the green belt will almost inevitably see further – possibly major – encroachment from development, if local authorities are to meet the housing numbers that the Government is also requiring them to provide.

In truth, the commitment to sustaining the green belt should be read alongside another part of the response to Barker, which entreats local authorities to look hard at their green belt designations "to ensure that they remain relevant and appro-

priate, given the need to ensure that any planned development takes place in the most sustainable location."

This is an interesting point for the Government to make. It suggests that sustainable locations do not exclude green belt sites, which might surprise a large proportion of the residents of communities who assume that their local or surrounding green belt land is protected by the principles of 'sustainable' development.

But, as all planners but too few property professionals, let alone the general public, are aware, greenbelt land is not synonymous with green fields. In reality, of course, greenbelt land can be any area of land that a local authority has decided should not be developed on. Greenbelt can be anything from brown field land, waste land or derelict land to previ-

ously developed land and indeed green, open fields.

When the Government talks about 'sustainability,' it means the principles that dictate that new development is best located adjacent to existing urban areas so as to benefit from the pre-existing infrastructure of schools, hospitals and roads. When it talks about greenbelt, it means protecting against sprawl, against neighbouring conurbations meeting in the middle. In neither case is it talking about protecting green field land, and this is often misunderstood.

A look at some bare facts at this point throws light on to the issue. Green belt amounts to about 13 per cent of the land area of England, and according to the most recently available statistics, the percentage of residential developments permitted

within greenbelt land has remained fairly constant at around six per cent over the past decade. In 2005, the same proportion of all land changing to residential use in England was within 'flood risk' areas, and about nine per cent of new dwellings were built within 'flood risk' areas.

What does this show? It shows that, whilst authorities would certainly rather not build on either green belt or flood risk areas – for different reasons and under different pressures – they are nonetheless forced to a significant amount of the time.

At present, in England, there is a "sustainable housing hierarchy" developing, along the lines of the well-known waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle. But top of the waste hierarchy is the imperative to "reduce", whereas, of course, no-one

is talking about reducing demand for new housing.

On a predict-and-provide basis, the sustainable housing hierarchy is, firstly, to reuse existing housing stock. Secondly, authorities and developers are urged to redevelop or regenerate previously developed land – and this may include green belt land. This is particularly so where development is trying to steer clear of flood plain problems – which in historic settlements, constructed alongside rivers, tends to be in the centre of town.

If these are not viable options

then authorities will opt to develop on green field sites close enough for the use of existing infrastructure to be viable. This is likely to include green belt land. Lastly, there will be the option to develop on green field land away from existing infrastructure, located beyond the green belt. This element only works if the proposal has sufficient critical mass to warrant its own infrastructure being developed - in other words; a whole a new town.

In theory local authorities don't want greenfields to be slowly nibbled

away, however, under pressure from developers, the need to meet housing demands and build sustainable developments in safe areas away from flood plains, local authorities are increasingly being left with no option but to use green fields on the edge of town.

The radical solution to this problem would, of course, to manage housing demand. Easier said than done. Greater density is happening, and will help. It will soon be a matter not of choice but of necessity because, at present, a set of compet-

ing pressures means there is an inevitable conflict between greenbelt and wider sustainability principles. Inevitably greenbelt must lose out, or move out.

Anne Harrison is an associate at Beachcroft LLP

Validation of planning applications

Brian Waters thinks we are heading for disaster in the processing of planning applications.



As promised in the planning white paper, the dog-days of August saw the publication of guidance on validating planning applications* which will have a dramatic effect on our work in preparing them and on their cost to clients.

The 'draft' guidance for Local Planning Authorities shows how the

information required to process an application has ballooned over recent years and the concomitant need for a host of specialist inputs.

It introduces another delay in the introduction of the national application form which will be obligatory for online and written applications from 6 April 2008 (delayed this time from 1st October 2007). The new form is to be used for any of the following

- Householder consents
- Outline and full planning permission and approval of reserved matters
- Listed Building consent
- Conservation Area consent
- Advertisement consent
- Consent under Tree Preservation Orders
- Lawful Development Certificates
- Applications for Prior Notification under the General Permitted

- Development Order 1995
 - Removal or variation of conditions.
- The new guidance follows reports of inconsistencies in the way in which authorities have been validating applications and particularly their demands for additional information intended to delay validation and to make meeting targets for their processing easier. The governing regulations [T&CP (Applications) Regulations 1988] will remain in

Local authorities may call for any or all of these before validating a planning application from April 6th next year!

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing statement • Air quality • Biodiversity survey and report • Conservation Area appraisal • Daylight/sunlight assessment • Environmental Impact Assessment • Evidence to accompany applications for town centre uses • Existing and proposed car parking and access arrangements • Flood risk assessment • Foul sewerage assessment • Heritage Statement (including historical, archaeological features and • Scheduled Ancient Monuments) • Impact assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land contamination assessment • Landfill statement • Lighting assessment • Noise impact assessment • Open space assessment • Other plans (3 copies to be supplied unless the application is submitted electronically. All plans and drawings should include: paper size, key • dimensions and scale bar indicating a minimum of 0-10 metres) • Photographs/photomontages • Planning obligations/draft Head(s) of Terms • Planning Statement • Regeneration statement • Statement of Community Involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural Survey • Transport assessment • (Draft) travel plan • Tree survey/Arboricultural implications • Utilities statement • Ventilation/extraction statement • Site waste management plan (including relevant refuse disposal details). <p>A footnote adds: Other local requirements may be included by local planning authorities if there are clear references and linkages made to relevant national/local policy requirements. Local lists should be subject to consultation and adoption and applicants should check the relevant LPA website for specific requirements and/or discuss with their planning authority.</p> |
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force. Regulation 3 sets out the bare minimum required to make an application valid and regulation 4 provides that LPAs can request further information following validation so as to enable it to determine an application.

Presently authorities simply demand more information before they will validate, and threaten a quick refusal otherwise, saying they won't have the time to wait and meet their target. Under the new regime they will be able to demand up to 41 items to make an application valid, provided these items have been included on an adopted list which is published by the authority.

The temptation will be for authorities to throw everything into their local lists on the precautionary principle, so putting applicants at the mercy of their discretion when arguing about what is appropriate or proportionate in the particular case.

Every authority is now invited to consult on their proposed list before adopting it (it will then be subject to 3-yearly review). It is therefore imperative that architects and their clients should scrutinise these proposed lists and demand that each

item should be clearly delimited in the circumstances where it can be demanded, and that the wording be specific rather than 'catch-all'. Authorities will need reminding that they continue to have Regulation 4 to fall back on.

The Guidance is clear: "the combined use of the national and local list will afford the authority more certainty when submitting applications and ensure that the information requested is proportionate to the type and scale of application being made." Simply for an authority to trot out most or all of the list given in the Guidance will not achieve this. It specifically says: "it is recommended that local planning authorities adopt specific local lists that are linked to the standard application form and tailored to their own context and requirements and include indicative thresholds and criteria for the submission of particular types of information."

The Guidance provides a different selection of items for each type of application covered by the national form. For a planning application this is listed in the box on the previous page.

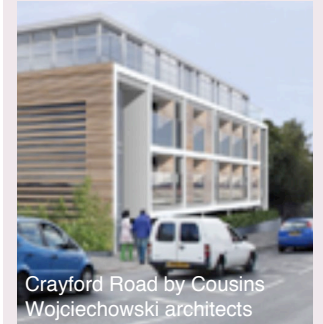
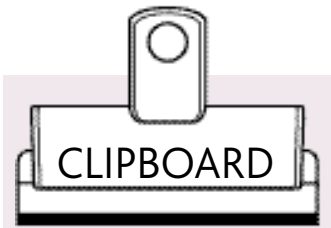
The need for vigilance should now be clear!

The Association of Consultant Architects (ACA) has written to all member practices suggesting they monitor the authorities where they are active and respond as suggested here. Architects might similarly involve and encourage their clients.

To add a note of irony, or is it just confusion, May's Planning White Paper says: "Later in 2007 we will start a further review with the objective of reducing information requirements [for validating planning applications]". The ACA is campaigning for the review to precede the new arrangements – the further delay in introducing the 'standard' national application form allows just such an opportunity.

**The Validation of Planning Applications - Draft guidance for local planning authorities from: www.communities.gov.uk*

Brian Waters is director of planning at HTA and president of the ACA.



Exodus

A recent report has shown quite how many Londoners are leaving the city. The Office for National Statistics says that between June 2005 and June 2006, about 243,700 Londoners went to live in other parts of Britain. Some 28 of London's 33 boroughs suffered a net loss of residents to the shires.

The cost of housing is cited as the main reason, either because younger Londoners cannot afford to buy in the capital, or because property-owners have decided that this is a good time to sell. However, immigration from abroad combined with births to ensure the city's population grew, to slightly over 7.5m. – *The Economist City Report.*

Crunch

The summer's financial crunch will hit London house prices, reckons **Anatoly Kaletsky** writing in *The Times*. "London, which in the past few years has become the world's richest city largely through its dominance in international finance, is about to suffer a big knock. "... I now believe that house prices are likely to fall, especially in the highest priced areas in the centre of London."

Poor jet-set

The stories of our wealth, she claimed, were exaggerated: "Jim and I didn't live that well", she said. "People said we had a mansion, but it was no mansion. It was just a little house on a lake. We did have drivers and decent cars and various people to help us, but we couldn't have survived without that kind of thing. We were so busy every day. And we didn't ever use the jet that much." – American televangelist **Faye Bakker Messner**. *Times* obituary.

Pressure for housing unsustainable

CPRE South East has expressed great concern over a recommended increase from 28,900 to 32,000 houses to be built in the SE every year for the next 20.

The South East Plan Independent Panel has proposed this figure.

Six Strategic Development Areas are proposed to accommodate up to 5,000 new homes each. There are two in Hampshire at Fareham and Hedge End; two in Milton Keynes to the south west and south east; and the final two are in south Oxford and

south Reading. CPRE has major concerns about the Panel's call for selective Green Belt reviews around Guildford, Oxford and possibly Woking. These could undermine the integrity of the Green Belt.

CPRE South East welcomes the importance attached by the Panel to the sustainable development of the South East and to the quality of life of its inhabitants. But the pressure for new housing in the South East is more intense than in any other

region of the country. This poses a serious challenge to the character, beauty and tranquillity of the region's countryside. CPRE South East believes that it is therefore essential that a challenging target of 75 per cent or more new housing on brownfield sites is set. "We are disappointed that the Panel has recommended only a 60 per cent target. We urge the Government not to accept the proposed increase in numbers."