

An outward-looking place

The Mayor has a wider vision for London

Our new Mayor Sadiq Khan has shown no hesitation in making decisions and getting into the fray of promoting London and engaging with all the issues coming before him.

“London’s place as the world’s greatest city – our economic, social and cultural success – were all built on being an outward-looking place, fully engaged with the rest of the world.

“And Britain will continue to be one of the biggest growing economies in the world. Our city and our country will continue to be the best place in the world to do business. And we will, of course, continue to look outwards and trade and engage with the entire world – including the European Union.”

So said the Mayor on the day the referendum result was known. With this positive spirit London will continue to prosper, though maybe at a modified pace (*see below*). We Londoners should focus now on a wider horizon and seek out the opportunities waiting for us farther abroad, less constrained than we have been.

At the same time we should continue to enjoy and share the familiar culture of our nearest neighbours, for several of whom London is one of their major cities – and continue to enjoy the mutual rewards of trade with them as a matter of course.

We wish the new Mayor the best and support his open, cosmopolitan vision which will benefit all Londoners, our visitors and investors.

Londexit might be good for us

London is bursting at the seams. The pressure of redevelopment whether it's commercial, housing or infrastructure is evident wherever you look. And the pressure *for* development, the same.

For those familiar with central and southern Europe this is all the more remarkable given the abandoned building sites, empty shops and rundown centres which are evident in many of those parts. The financial crisis which is blamed started eight years ago and affected the UK as well.

But for London its success may have been a bit too much of a good thing. The Brexit/Londexit will have ramifications at all levels but the overall calming of the frenzy of new development, new infrastructure and new housing might benefit from calming down a bit so that we may review and refresh the planning system and its political context.

And we could use the time to recharge the resources needed to manage things for a better long-term outcome as well as to plan for long-term infrastructure and bring a cooler perspective to London's development.

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Mayor calls for polices to nurture 'culture'

Carrots not sticks will yield a cultural infrastructure plan for London

The Mayor's ideas for a cultural infrastructure plan announced at the opening of Tate Modern's extension refer to 'creative enterprise zones' that will provide subsidised artists studios and a 'package of incentives that will make living and working in London affordable'. Sadiq talks about making 'culture...integral to the city's development and future'.

The new political establishment seeks to bolster its cultural credentials with populist built environment policies. And why not? If Tate is the most powerful example of how taxpayers' money can be spent to encourage social renewal and physical regeneration, why not spend more taxpayers' money to achieve the goal of improving people's life chances in subsidised artists studios and maker places, which we enjoy the product of?

But the reality of making desirable land uses 'affordable' like housing or cultural activities requires much more curatorial nous and input, not to mention subsidy, than is evident in London's failed 'affordable' housing policies. Sadiq needs to beware of falling into the same protectionist trap that has failed to produce the housing London needs.

Who will create new 'affordable' creative space? Is it likely, do we think, that developers will be asked to create and retain these spaces in their developments, and to cross- subsidise them with other more profitable uses, if they are to be affordable for 'creatives'? You can bet your 'Hoxton Fin'* on it.

Ask developers if they are up for this and the more enlightened will say they are, but only up to a point, Lord Copper. Beyond that point extra taxation will discourage creation of creative space. This is because money gets discouraged and seeks other easier places in which to multiply. 'Why should I invest money in this business, if that one over there offers better returns?'

Everybody wants affordable houses. So policies that seek this are the order of play everywhere, but they haven't delivered because they deploy too much stick and not enough carrot. Sadiq needs to be very clever to ensure new 'affordable' planning polices designed to nurture and encourage 'culture' – whatever that is – don't have the opposite effect of that intended. First rule of planning Mr Mayor. ■

*a local hairstyle from the early '00s (copied by David Beckham)

RIGHT:
New extension to Tate
Modern, just open
Architect: Herzog de
Meuron
IMAGE: © Macegroup

