
PLACE-MAKING, PLACE-SHAPING, **PLACE-KEEPING?**

Is London leading the way?

ACROSS THE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY WE FREQUENTLY CHALLENGE OURSELVES WITH THE QUESTION OF 'WHAT MAKES GOOD PLACE?' PLANNING AS A DISCIPLINE WAS DEVELOPED TO 'DRIVE' IT, WHILE DESIGN DISCIPLINES HAVE DEVELOPED TO 'MAKE' IT, AND YET AS AN INDUSTRY WE SO OFTEN DECRY FAILURE. AS THE NEED FOR HOUSING GROWS ACROSS THE UK, WE ALL MUST ENSURE THAT WHAT WE ARE PRODUCING IS DELIVERING GOOD PLACE.



In London more specifically the pressure of need and therefore affordability continues to grow by the day, but how can this city lead the way in ensuring that our response to these pressures sets the bar in terms of urban delivery and creates strong, resilient places for the future?

In February we convened a roundtable of top developers, investors and thinkers to muse over this very point and contribute their thoughts on the problems and solutions. This by no means offers all the answers but the discussion enabled us to identify some key elements of place that we all need to consider.



1 PLACE NEEDS LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Government compartmentalisation remains a key issue when seeking to deliver real mixed use communities. National and Local Authority bodies work in silos, which removes cause and effect, and prevents us from really understanding needs and opportunities. What is clear from the UK's more successful projects is that partnership between the public and private sector is imperative to large scale place-making success, but so is political leadership at the right level.

“As a community we don't accept the role of the State anymore, we don't accept land assembly or large projects that are for the 'good of the State', because previously it hasn't worked well. The Mayor has these powers but is afraid to use them but we need them to change opinion, be creative and challenge this mistrust.” **Iain Painting**

2 PLACE NEEDS INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure and connectivity are central to success for place making and is a factor that it seems Government is beginning to understand. Infrastructure projects in London have delivered a serious step-change in opportunities in many areas, but we must capitalise upon their benefits. We must focus our efforts on nodal points in the outer London Boroughs, at the major confluences of infrastructure.

“We are seeing rental values 12% above what we expected because of pent up PRS demand. We need to be responding to this through delivering the right schemes in the right places and nodes are perfect. The people interested in this tenure tend to want more freedom of mobility and access to all the experiences, London-wide and beyond. These locations are therefore ideal for them and higher densities in these areas work.” **Duncan Sutherland**



We must avoid clone towns and instead deliver culture and opportunity in our centres.

3 PLACE IS ABOUT EXPERIENCES

In the 80s, 90s and 00s retail has been at the forefront of place, but in the 10s we have begun to see the value of experiences emerge, as 'shopping' has become less about buying. We need to look carefully at the experiences we are providing local people, in particular, with. What are they looking for in the place, what can we enhance?

"To create better places it's critical we understand the stories that people tell about them. Stories bake a place into the social memory. So how can we create 'story rich' places that generate, capture and enable sharing of narratives? How can we better uncover the powerful but all too often invisible stories of a place and bring them into our ideas and proposals?" **Tim Jones**

4 PLACE NEEDS MANAGEMENT

To deliver truly successful place takes time but also management to secure ongoing quality and resilience. Our landed estates in London deliver strong consistency and continually seek to enhance place, looking at 100 year success. We need to manage public realm and have invested interest in the long term future of development.

"The Government not allowing Rail Operators to hold leases beyond six years undermines their long term interests in their station sites, and therefore the long term success of place. This undermines our ability to make the most of these nodes. Look at Paris Rive Gauche for example." **Max Farrell**

"We need to be creating places where people and communities want to interact and connect, where things happen and we give them the opportunity to live. But this is as much about place keeping as making. People join the process and have a say in what happens, but someone needs to drive this while the community establishes itself and its structures." **Robert Elegba**

5 PLACE NEEDS DENSITY

An ebb and flow of people throughout the day creates vibrancy and occupation builds events and stories. Considering how we combine living and working is imperative if we are to reduce the burden on infrastructure and deliver these vibrant places day and night. Density can be very helpful in generating people, intensifying the experience and layering the opportunities. Density however, continues to have negative connotations in the UK. We are not suggesting that we need density everywhere by any means, but around key centres and nodes, we can intensify accommodation and provide the infrastructure to support it.

"London is actually very low density in comparison to Paris and New York. Islington and Chelsea are very high density places and yet loved. The mistrust lay people feel when this word is used needs to be tackled as does their perception that high density means tall buildings." **Max Farrell**

"The same people objecting to housing are also complaining about a shortage of schools, healthcare and infrastructure, without appreciating the contribution new development can make to all these areas. Development has beneficial effects as well as 'impacts' and we must tackle this mind set." **Iain Painting**



We must accept a place's role in the hierarchy of our towns and cities

6 PLACE IS SOCIAL FABRIC

Physical fabric allows social fabric to build, but of the two, social fabric is the element which will allow a place to endure. Social fabric makes an area tick, with people living and working in and evolving in the space around them. Stories and experiences must be woven into the physical fabric so we avoid clone towns and instead deliver culture and opportunity. We need to seed places that have life all year round and which target local people as their primary audience.

“Too often we place retail and tourism at the heart of a place, but actually these aren’t necessarily servicing the core community. We need to be looking to that core community – existing and new – to ensure their needs are met and then they will populate that space every day, throughout the year.” **Jim Roberts**

“New and growing companies really want really want a strong sense of place and community. They want to be able to see, engage with and feed off their neighbours as they thrive on the creative buzz this can generate. Coffee shops and collaborative work spaces create hubs of specialisms which then gain traction and appeal, but they reject anything false.” **Ian Dubber**

7 PLACE IS ABOUT PRIDE

Place is sometimes perceived as the preserve of the wealthy – it’s easier to deliver here than somewhere with lower values after all. But if we engage in the stories and build on the diverse social fabric of a place it doesn’t need to be. By building pride in an existing and new community they will protect and enhance place. They will feed it and nurture it. They will evolve it and in time make it resilient. To make people proud we also need to give them spaces and places that are sufficiently flexible, so they have an opportunity to make it their own. The estates of the 1960s were insufficiently flexible, inward facing, segregated from the suburbs that surrounded them and filled with a mono-culture of occupants. This eroded pride and place management fell by the wayside. We need to learn from these mistakes if we are to make residents and communities proud of their places, and ensure their financial and emotional investment in them.

“We aim to build this kind of pride through neighbourhood forums, avoiding a top down approach, and instead talking to the existing communities. By walking around the estate and answering individual needs, we have found people do start to identify with the people this will provide a home for and the opportunity it presents to enrich what they have already.” **Chris Brown**



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8 PLACE TAKES TIME

The risk is that because people need homes and places to live, we will rush things. Places take time. Places evolve. At Kings Cross, Argent have seeded a successful place, kick starting community and social interaction rather than hoping a well-designed place will do this automatically. But this has taken around 30 years to deliver and that was with development margins being funded by semi-public ownership. We cannot buy time which is why we should never be clearing existing 'sense of place' and stories away. We must not be delivering mono-cultural communities and we must not be drawing a red line and isolating proposals within it. Seeding communities and cultural activity, supporting interaction and discussion

from the earliest stages of a proposal informs it but also begins to knit the place together. Don't wait until you have the plans in hand, understand the place, the challenges and the opportunities and embrace them from the outset.

"Shiny CGIs all too often depict schemes as a beautiful island, populated by euphoric cappuccino people, with a sea of grey disinterest beyond the site boundary. This is a clear psychological disconnect in our industry that constantly puts us at risk of parachuting in development in disconnected, dysfunctional ways. We have to quickly get better at drawing the 'outside in' and move away from arrogant, self-absorption" **Tim Jones**

9 NOT EVERYWHERE IS PLACE

Finally, we must all remember that not everywhere can be a 'Place' and not everywhere needs to be. We must seek to enrich and build upon what exists, building opportunities for intensity where it is most likely to succeed while also accepting a place's role in the hierarchy of our towns and cities. □





CALLS TO THE FUTURE MAYOR OF LONDON



“ Stop the loss of creative workspaces. It’s an emergency. Use London’s suburbs to strategically plan for creative industry hubs and maintain sustainable careers for people in London’s booming creative economy.”

Tim Jones, Future City

“ Take Ken’s 100 places and times it by 10. Give the people the power to deliver 1,000 spaces. Not big but distinctive places will emerge.”

John Haxworth, Barton Willmore

“ Review the impact of Permitted Development Rights on the ability to make place. Currently it is eroding our stock of smaller business premises and these premises are unrecoverable! ”

Ian Dubber, Workspace

“ Support the establishment of public/private partnerships needed to drive real change.”

Paul Newton, Barton Willmore

“ Use our fantastic rail infrastructure now and emerging, to drive creative, big and bold proposals around key nodes.”

Duncan Sutherland, Sigma Capital

“ Price the car out of London and re-cast the housing design guide space standards to allow PRS to flourish.”

Chris Brown, Igloo regeneration

“ Spend your first year reflecting on what is needed, engage in a meaningful debate about the areas bounding London and then drive change through radical political and fiscal programmes.”

Prof. Peter Bishop, Bartlett

“ Drive a bottom-up approach to development that places importance upon the existing community and their infrastructure, needs, stories, etc.”

Jim Roberts, Fourth Street

“ Break down the silos in London’s administration so we can join the policies up, and embrace the education, healthcare, community infrastructure that development can deliver.”

Ian Millard, London & Quadrant

“ Sell the idea of densification driving the delivery of jobs and homes in localities to reduce pressure on infrastructure where possible.”

Graham Randles, New Economics Foundation

“ Introduce more proactive strategic policy to allow top-down and bottom-up processes to work and understand the opportunity low level lifting bridges offer in terms of river bank integration and cost.”

Max Farrell, Farrells

“ Think holistically about how, by providing alternatives to a 9-5 culture, we can relieve pressure on our infrastructure. Also think carefully about how we integrate our ageing population. This is as big a concern in London as anywhere! ”

Prof. Lorraine Farrelly, University of Reading

“ Think beyond the ‘build, sell, occupy’ process, to how we may lead on place management and maintenance, driving pride and a sense of ownership.”

Iain Painting, Barton Willmore

“ Explore densification as well as the current London boundary, by a comprehensive Green Belt Review.”

Morgan Reece, Barton Willmore

“ Enhance the £140m Sink estate fund to properly support public/private partnerships seeking to transform these areas of London.”

Robert Elegba, Berkeley Homes

“ More proactive and strategic planning in terms of shaping London particularly in relation to tall buildings and be more embracing of active transport to encourage a modal shift.”

Peter Murray, NLA Peter Murray, NLA

So how do we respond, as an industry to this?

Last week the GLA announced they were commissioning research to inform a review of the density policy in the London Plan. This is a critical piece of research which will inform their approach going forwards and therefore that of our Borough's.

Over the next 12 months, our Planners and Designers will be working with many across the development industry, within the arts & culture sector, local communities and politicians to broaden our understanding of the emerging Urban Agenda. What does Urbanism and potential densification of our suburban towns need to offer its current and potential communities and how do we build the right networks to assist the successful delivery of this?

In particular we will be looking at precedence, driving research and encouraging debate around;

- **Setting the Urban agenda** – How do we build a greater understanding through research of the existing population, habitation patterns, etc, to understand what is needed in a number of the strongest opportunity locations across Greater London?
- **Understanding the role of arts & culture** – What key relationships and initiatives can assist developers and investors in forging the right connections from an early stage, that will strengthen a developments integration, individuality and opportunity for success in the longer term?
- **Understanding the existing community structures** – What approaches can be used to drive a greater understanding of the wider location and its inherent stories and personality? How can this then support development delivery and success?
- **Securing a diverse community** – How can a strong diversity of tenure and target occupant be delivered successfully? How can these be integrated successfully?
- **Exploring land ownership models** – How can we look to drive small scale land owners to consider and invest their properties into a wider drive for growth and development?

Our aim will be to report back on each of these initiatives and their findings at MIPIIM 2017, but in the meantime should you wish to be part of these discussions please do

Tweet us **@bartonwillmore** with the hashtag **#placeshaping**

or

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