

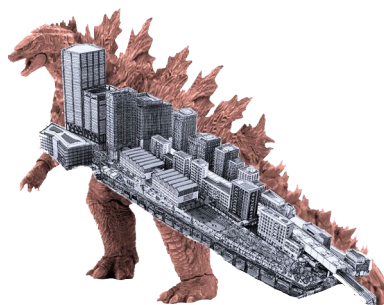
BISHOPSGATE GOODSYARD

THE PEOPLE'S HEARING

LIVE ONLINE MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER 6PM

Hosted by **Reclaim the Goodsyrd** Chair: **Owen Hatherley**

Speakers include: Phillip Rode LSE Cities, Adam Khan Architects, Frances Northrop New Economics Foundation, David Knight DK-CM, Dr Julie Fatcher, Eric Reynolds, Place Alliance, Centre for London
<http://www.goodsyard.org/hearing.html>



STOP THE MONSTER RECLAIM THE GOODSYARD

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Introduction

As Sadiq Khan decides on the Bishopsgate Goodsyards site at a live hearing on 3 December 2020 we brought together experts and urban thinkers to hear their thoughts, concerns and warnings about approving these retrograde plans - and how to create a better Goodsyards. This is a report documenting the event.

Lucy Rogers

Reclaim the Goodsyards

We have brought everyone together because all who live in this area and beyond are extremely worried about the plans for this site. The boroughs [Tower Hamlets and Hackney] have both objected and the Mayor of London will decide on Thursday 2pm December 3rd at a hearing. We are worried that his planning officers signal their willingness to approve the scheme. Our campaign is called Reclaim the Goodsyards, we came together quite recently and hope that we represent the many different objections to the scheme. We know that there is evidence to support our objections so we thought we would ask people here to talk about some of that evidence and those supporting opinions.

Owen Hatherley

Writer and journalist

Before we start it is worth talking about the importance of this site, in particular because of the fact that in many ways it can be seen as a test for local democracy and the degree to which boroughs and residents have any particular sway in the development process. The enormous scale of development on this site has been opposed by both of the local authorities involved, it's caused a great deal of hostility on the ground and architecturally it's of, I think I can fairly say, a very low quality indeed. So it begs the question, how bad does something have to be before you can stop it through the political process and how much can the opposition on the ground be ignored? One can add to that the question of whether we need in any way the things that are being proposed for the site. Does this particular area need a 150 room luxury hotel? Does it need 300 or so unaffordable flats? As well as the simple question of opposition, there is the question of whether we can propose anything better - campaigns frequently get criticised for this. Thankfully in this example there have been various proposals over the last 5 years.

Jonathan Moberly
Reclaim the Goodsyard

This is our mission statement:

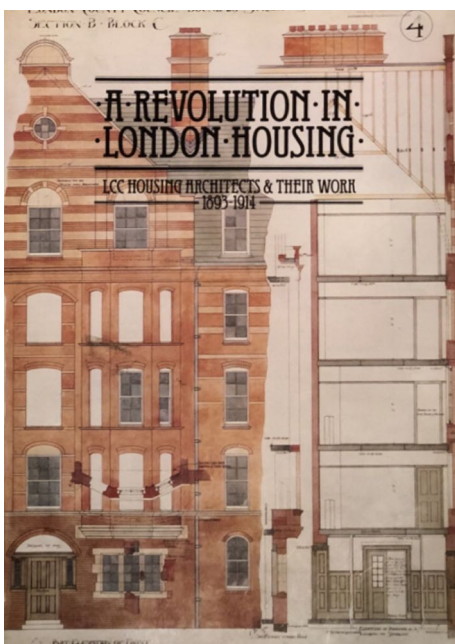
For London to thrive we need to house Londoners, keeping a diverse population at its centre. But over the past 20 years the City of London has grown upwards and outwards while East London residents and traders have been driven out by escalating rents and unaffordable homes.

The Bishopsgate Goodsyard is public land owned by Network Rail. Covering ten acres, it is the largest brownfield site in inner London, yet it has sat empty since a fire in 1964. We want it to be used for public good, through an exemplary development that addresses the housing crisis as well as the needs of small businesses and the local community. The Goodsyard should serve the East End, not just add to the number of City offices and luxury flats. It offers a unique opportunity to deliver a world-class solution, just as the neighbouring Boundary Estate started a revolution in public housing a century ago.

We demand public authorities rise to the challenge to create a visionary, lasting and environmentally responsible scheme for this site. Public land is increasingly rare: like an endangered habitat, it needs protection. Let the people develop a new urban ecosystem here, to revive the spirit of the East End.

One of the motivators here is that the developers always talk about the context being the City, but we rather think the context is the housing in Tower Hamlets and in particular the Boundary Estate which lies just to the north of it. I have this wonderful book called 'A Revolution in London Housing' published by the GLC, about the Boundary Estate and the coming together of the London County Council, its architecture department and its first housing projects. If you look at the Goodsyard scheme it looks like there's lots of housing but the problem is the kind of housing and the amount of housing we don't think is appropriate.

The developers like to tell us that 50% of this housing is affordable but the actual number of units is 37% as they are counting habitable rooms not actual homes. Of the total homes on offer (385-500) a maximum 185 are 'affordable'. Of these, 60-90 are low cost rent homes and within that category there are two rental tiers, the higher of which is Tower Hamlets Living Rent, which the council themselves say is too high for those that need it most. So the only truly low cost rent homes come to about 30-45 units in this whole scheme. I live on the Dorset estate nearby and the council has managed to eke out a new council house development on a small piece of car park providing 20-25 truly low cost council homes, so on this vast development we have got a council housing offer not much larger than something on a small piece of car park. We really don't think that's good enough and we want to see proper effort being made to provide proper social housing.





Susanna Kow
Boundary Estate resident

Hi I am Susanna, and I am a Boundary resident. I am really privileged to be living on the Boundary Estate. As Jonathan said, it is a revolution in London housing. The ethos of this Grade II listed estate is 100% for the poor when it was built, today it remains largely a council estate. Every window has access to light and the estate has lovely courtyards. I am speaking not just on behalf of residents living on the estate but for everyone in the area who will suffer the loss of daylight, sunlight and who will be impacted by shadow overcast. We had to dig into the appendix of the developer's document to retrieve the list of streets and homes which will be affected by the loss of light. As we all know with loss of light there will be impact on mental and physical wellbeing. Why should we suffer physical and mental health issues as a result of this?



Think of the residents living on Brick Lane, Bethnal Green, Sclater Street, Wheeler Street and Commercial Street. Why should we support this especially if all we get in return is a paltry offer of 60-90 low rent homes? Why can't this piece of land be used fully for social housing. And to be built in a way which will not affect the light of existing residents living here. It is an opportunity to achieve another revolution in housing for the 21st century. This is my position and I ask the Mayor of London not to approve this.



Alec Forshaw
MA Dipl. Town Planning RTPI IHBC. Formerly Principal Conservation and Design Officer at the London Borough of Islington. Trustee of the Spitalfields Trust

Understanding this scheme is about what exactly is the site: is it an extension of the ever-expanding City of London or is it part of the East End, part of Spitalfields and Shoreditch? And that is actually the nub of the problem, where the developer is imagining it to be part of the City, whereas most of the objectors do not want that vision to take place.



In terms of the impact of this scheme it is a very widespread one and I think a very seriously harmful impact. A lot of legal debate often turns around the words substantial or less than substantial harm and in my view, whatever that sliding scale is, the impact here as you can see from these slides is extremely serious and the cumulative impact is even more serious. You are going to see particularly the taller buildings from all over the place. And in fact the importance of cumulative or aggregate harm has recently been endorsed by the Secretary of State on his decision on Norwich Anglia Square.

The GLA commissioned a heritage consultant, Nigel Barker, to do a supposedly independent evaluation of the scheme and to my mind he undervalues the amount of harm here almost as badly as the applicant's own heritage consultants. For example, he says the impact on Shoreditch High Street and St Leonards Church is modest. I query his judgement and indeed I have queried it before.



has actually been involved with the development of this scheme for several years alongside the applicant.

The real worry here is that the GLA officers who have really no expertise or interest in heritage how are they going to be swayed by the very serious objections that there are to this scheme and what can be done about it if the GLA are minded to approve it in the teeth of opposition.

Independent traders of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green

Qusai Jafferi – Newman's Stationers

Hi my name is Qusai, I'm the owner of Newman's Stationery on Bethnal Green road. We've been here for the last fifty years and our vision is to stay here for the next fifty years but we strongly feel that the development passed by the GLA won't allow us to stay here as an independent business.

We feel that the current plan for the Bishopsgate Goodsynd is very much catering to big organisations and big businesses and is just going to push us out of this area.

Mr Ahmed – Bashir & Sons

I'm the owner of Bashir & sons, my name's Mr Ahmed, I've lived in this area for fifty years and most of the people that used to live here have moved out

Why do you think that is?

Because the rents are too high, it's too expensive and the council isn't providing anything, no help. Top rent businesses will come over and swamp the small businesses over and there won't be any traditional and local businesses left, it will only be corporate businesses left in London and in this area. It's taken a long long time to build local businesses and small businesses up, like my business here.

Abdul – Rose DIY

My name is Abdul, I'm the owner of Rose Lux DIY, we've been here in Bethnal Green for fifteen years. Already what's going on in the world has seen our business has gone down quite a lot. We want to object to this development because we don't think it's right for this area, it's a huge development that's going to last fourteen years with construction, noise, pollution and parking issues, we don't believe that we are going to benefit as a business from this sort of construction. It's going to make this area completely different and local people are not going to benefit the way they keep saying. There's been a huge development already in this area and we don't really see the benefit of extra footfall or new customers. It's only going to benefit the rich people who invest their money. They are going to buy and leave, it will attract chains and chains aren't good for local trade or traders.

Anna Serreno – Pellicci's

My name's Anna Serreno, I'm part of the Pellicci family, the Pellicci family have been here for over 120 years, we are proud and happy to have been serving our local community these many years. We object against the

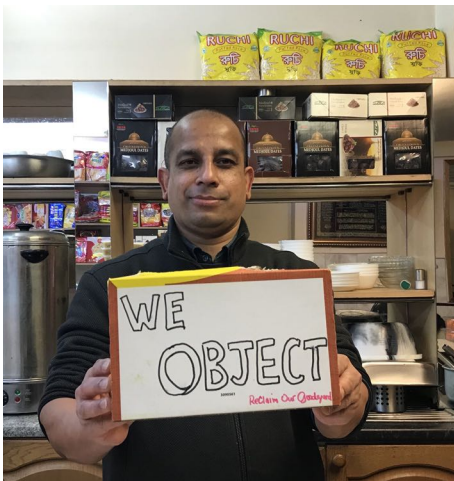




Bishopsgate Goodsyrd development for one major reason, we've always been part of the community, Bethnal Green really is a community, and I fear, we fear as a family, if it goes ahead, the community will be destroyed that heart will be destroyed, already so much of the heart of the east end is being ripped out, this will be the final nail in the coffin.

Leila McAlister – Leila's shop and cafe

Hi my name's Leila McAlister, this is my shop, Leila's shop, it's a grocer and I have a café next door, I've been here since 2002, that 18 years. I'm strongly opposed to this development of the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd, I think it's going to have a devastating effect on the neighbourhood and on small businesses. There's a lack of diversity in this scheme, this neighbourhood is famous for markets and workshop units, studio spaces and these are the things that make it appealing to live and work here



Reclaim the Goodsyrd

Frances Northrup
New Economics Foundation

I am Frances Northrup, an Associate fellow at the New Economics Foundation with a specialism in local generative economies, community led development and high streets, working directly with the East End Trades Guild, Guardians of the Arches and the campaign to Save Latin Village. I am also the Director of a community development company which has undertaken extensive pre development investigation works to bring forward a 7.5 acre heavily constrained ex brownfield site for a mixed use development, which now has planning permission. It's good to be here.

To start off I just wanted to situate this hearing in the moment we are in. Nearing the end of 2020 our economy, and people, have been under extreme duress. The terrible effects of Covid19 are still playing out, our climate and ecological systems are in crisis and the inequities of the world are being laid bare. But to counteract this we have mobilised responses which can give us hope - councils, the cultural sector and architects declaring climate emergencies; local authorities and other anchor institutions actively taking a community wealth building approach to their operations and an increased emphasis on a green new deal - with all the accompanying job and supply chain opportunities this would provide, alongside sustainable building techniques and the increased call for retrofit first, led by the Architects Journal. A Green New Deal is one of the 9 missions of the London Recovery Board, which also include strong communities, young people, good work for Londoners and mental health and wellbeing. The High Street mission incorporates all of these and focuses on the Paris Mayor - Anne Hidalgo's idea of a 15 minute city - something local high streets and independent businesses have been providing across London since March 23rd.



It is in this context that we are now considering this proposal for the Goodsyard. A proposal which originally tried to overdevelop this highly constrained site with high value residential property and far less in the way of local employment and amenity. Now it has been forced to come back to the table with a more considered approach, it still has the misfortune of looking like a scheme from a different era - much like many other schemes across London. Tiny, high rise flats, office blocks, chain retail and restaurant space - none of which pays any attention to the current context or the immediate area which is still, despite rapidly rising rents, home to many thriving small family businesses which give that area its character and attract people from all over the world. All this development would do is accelerate the gentrification of that area, push up rents and sound a death knell for those remaining small businesses - which are the very reason it was an attractive site to develop in the first place, despite the quite serious constraints.

None of this is now fit for purpose or increasingly looking viable, either environmentally, socially or financially - and that lack of financial viability is something the developer will inevitably argue when they start to row back on the commitments to affordability they have been forced to include

through the planning process, so that they can meet their shareholder's profit expectations.

This is not to say that this site shouldn't be regenerated, in fact it's a crime it has stood inaccessible for so long. The question is who by and who for? TfL have been working with their arches (and other) small business tenants to ensure that their social value is championed, that they have security of tenure and that they are not crippled by rising rents. If this had been now, the story with Network Rail could have been very different. Working with the local Boroughs, like Hackney where their approach to public land is to ensure it is used for public good, including social housing, affordable workspace and accessible green space, with TfL and with the GLA as part of their adaptive strategies approach to High Streets - the story for the Goodsynd could have been one of hope for the future.

It could have reflected the vibrancy and diversity of the surrounding area and brought the green outdoor space and truly affordable housing that people in London desperately need. It could have championed and offered opportunities to add to the amazing ecosystem of small family, community and social businesses that provide livelihoods and opportunities for women, young people and others often denied access to business premises through lack of start up funds or track records.

It could have been part of a growing movement of examples that show what can be done when public authorities reject public private in favour of public-commons partnerships like the Wards Corner community plan to give the Latin Village market a permanent home and provide space for other services that meet local need in Tottenham. Or like the approach being taken in Liverpool City Region with the Mayor establishing a Land Commission to champion and practically execute this approach, with the Baltic Triangle their starting point - not precluding private developer involvement but making sure they are secondary stakeholders.

The future for sites across London, and other cities, is supporting schemes that work socially, economically and environmentally for everyone, but particularly those who kept them functioning during 2020, often at terrible personal cost. **The future is for local authorities to lead by example, rebalancing the power and enabling a sustainable and generative recovery through these developments. In 2021 and beyond this is going to be the hallmark of a 21st century city and, should it choose to be, London could be the frontrunner.**



Plan for Latin Village <https://www.wardscornerplan.org/>
 Architect for the Wards Corner Plan <https://unit38.org/>
 Liverpool Land Commission
<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/steve-rotheram-launches-englands-first-land-commission-focused-on-community-wealth-building/>
 Public Commons Partnerships
<https://www.common-wealth.co.uk/reports/public-common-partnerships-building-new-circuits-of-collective-ownership>
 London Recovery Board Missions
<https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis/recovery-context>
 GLA Good Growth by Design adaptive strategies
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ggbd_high_streets_adaptive_strategies_web_compressed_0.pdf

Richard Brown Centre for London

Our Recovery Manifesto, a bit like this scheme, is something that comes from a slightly different period and even when we're writing it's a period of great uncertainty. This site has a very long history but the difficult transition between what's part of the City of London and what's part of the communities around it has been a bone of contention on Norton Folgate, on the Spitalfields schemes, and it feels like it's an issue that has never been quite resolved. This part of London has undergone a dramatic change itself. Left over from the early 90s recession, the resurgence of Spitalfields, the reinvention of Hoxton as creative quarters came out of a property recession and crash, when surplus commercial space became available on the edge of the City of London. So it would be interesting to see what has been learnt from those other schemes as they try to make that transition.

What we tried to do in our recovery manifesto is **take a snapshot and give some early thoughts about some of the ways London needs to change**, in circumstances of huge uncertainty. We know that there's a huge blow to central London's economy, lower paid workers who rely on face-to-face interaction with tourists and with commuters. We can see a hit to the property market and some see that as a healthy thing, if rents could be brought down, both residential and commercial. We are also seeing a change in working patterns, we don't really know where it's going to end up. **The big challenge here is we don't quite know the future nature of the Central Activities Zone. Will we see a rebirth of the CAZ as before?** Will we see more spread and a more mixed activities zone which has more residential in it, more like central Paris? We're already seeing that happening in Central London.

Or do we see a shift to a more polycentric form of city growth. I suspect that central London will in some form continue to be a focal point for London's economy, **I think there is an opportunity now to make space for new uses, some of the things that will bring back diversity in Central London. We need to look again at property taxes which fall very heavily on small businesses and fall very lightly on wealthy residential property owners** and we need to look at support for the visitor economy.

One of the things that surprised me is the extent to which central London's retail and hospitality industries are much more dependent on visitors to central London than commuters. And what will the tourists domestic and international be looking for through 2021-2? What will the mix of use they want to see be, that brings them in and shows off the culture London has? I think this will be really important. **What's the future nature of central London and what part can a place like Bishopsgate Goodsynd play in it?**

Dr Julie Fletcher

Architect and built environment consultant

I am concerned with climate responsive urbanism and my research focuses on the dynamic and interdependent influence of built form (particularly tall buildings) on the urban setting, and how these can be optimised to promote comfortable healthy environments.

A number of projects in and around the City of London include both field measurements and simulated data. This research, started in 2013, draws attention to many of the interdependent built form outcomes which fall outside the discussion on sustainable urban development including health and wellbeing, green infrastructure and air quality.

Published case studies include the Heron Tower, 20 Fenchurch Street and the original BGY proposal (2015).

These studies have shown us the growing importance of built form in increasingly dense urban environments and lead us to ask where the energy boundary of the building ends. It no longer lies at the building envelope but extends into the wider environment.

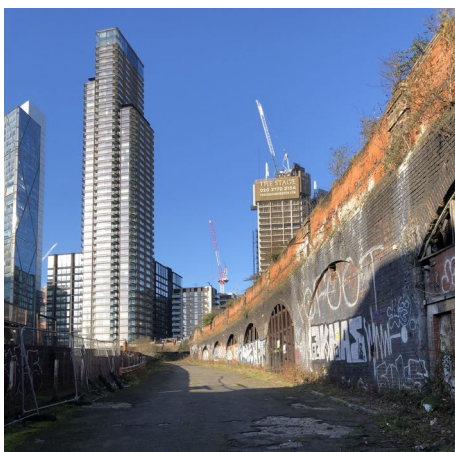
Buildings are not energy-islands but have a dynamic relationship with their wider environment that we don't fully understand. The effects are both positive and negative.

Whilst microclimate evaluation is a planning consideration, more often than not the needs of the larger building trump those of its low-lying neighbours in terms of access to light, sun and wind. It is often a case of one green strategy (e.g. energy efficient buildings) counteracting another (e.g. on-site harvesting of renewable energy, through both passive and active systems).

The consequences of these actions typically result in a net-energy penalty, as there is no requirement or framework for the systematic evaluation of a city's emerging morphology on the wider environment: instead, **each building is evaluated on its own stand-alone merits, often achieving impressive sustainable credentials, while neglecting its dynamic effect on neighbouring buildings.**

These outcomes at a range of scales are of interest for cities where increasing urban density, particularly in terms of increased height, is changing the urban landscape in such a way that the emerging urban morphology will have significant long-term impacts on the outdoor climate and the ambient environment of other buildings. **Yet these remarkable changes are proceeding without any overall guidance or assessment of the aggregate effects.**

By obstructing a neighbour's access to a passive resource we are obstructing its low-energy potential. This stand-alone approach has left a legacy of buildings that not only have limited potential for mitigation and adaption strategies, but also leaves a legacy of buildings that both sit within and form the urban setting, which further exacerbates the possibilities of



low-energy climate responsive urbanism.

Understanding the spatial and temporal nature of the relationships between built form and energy, both in its natural expression (i.e., temperature; wind and sunshine), and those of building needs (i.e., cooling; heating; ventilation and lighting) is both underestimated and critical.

We need to better understand the long term implications of increased urban density as we move towards a low energy and warming future. It is not just about buildings, it is also about the importance of open space and the provision of clean comfortable air for all urban citizens.

David Knight
Urban Strategist, DK-CM

I'm going to describe myself as a designer and author and I have a PhD in the politics of planning knowledge, which is what I'd like to talk about tonight. The point I'd like to make is there should be more events like this. They should be earlier in the process. They need more power in the development process and they must maximize what Communities on the ground can gain and contribute.



I'd like to try and learn some lessons from the story of the Goodsyrd that can help us the next time a large piece of London is re-planned. Enormous energy has gone into this place most consistently from the Communities around it, a lot of whom are here tonight, and I'd like to imagine how planning processes might change to better serve and benefit from that energy. If London continues to develop sites along similar lines to the Goodsyrd it's urgent that we explore ways of speaking in public about the future of these places from day one in a way that has real impact. We need to be demanding that these conversations have a real statutory impact on proposals and can therefore become propositional rather than forced into opposition.

The Goodsyrd closed in the late 60s and the current scheme if it's approved won't be finished until 2032 so will have been a contested and often totally private site in the heart of our city for a minimum of 68 years, many of which have been characterised by deadlock and antagonism. Soon after it closed participation became law in the UK so that communities have to be engaged in the development process but before that participation was very much the practice in places like Spitalfields where Tenants Associations, activist groups, Cooperatives and so on all played direct active roles in making and maintaining the City.

This time period has also seen extraordinary local activity. How many children have been educated in nature and how many tons of food have been grown at City Farm in Spitalfields since it opened in the late 70s? How many buildings and environments have been preserved and enhanced for future generations by organisations like the Spitalfields Small Business Association? How many homes built and refurbished by local housing associations, especially one with strong roots in our Bangladeshi Communities? and what have we learned in that time? We've learnt that planning gets better when it works with people earlier and it gets better

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when an informed engaged public are protagonists. Public voices are not impediment to development or a statutory ticking the box, they are fundamental to making a place worth building.

We know that public engagement at the plan making stage is often low and unrepresentative and that most people's built environment activism, if it does start, starts when a planning application is lodged when the big principles are all already set in stone. Our National Government is trying to speed up the making of local plans without saying much about how representative or egalitarian they are. This is in a context where 89% of British young adults have never been asked about the future of their neighbourhood. We also learned in counterpoint that the public on occasion are a sophisticated player in the planning system usually working late nights and with no budget and relying when it's available on pro bono professional support. Tonight is a result of this kind of activism without a budget and often in extremely challenging circumstances the public can be incredibly agile and focused in these contexts. Imagine if the creativity and creative effort that we see in counter development proposals could be focused from day one on benefitting the place in documenting its present, imagining its future and informing organisations that can build as well as speak.



Part Three The Goodsyard site

Eric Reynolds

Founder, Urban Space Management / Container City



The terrible tension between what we all would like to see - which is something that relates to local needs and encourages local business and decent housing, and so on - is in tension of course with the terrible drive that the developer has to maximise everything, to make everything as large as possible. Because as we know, there's an addition of 20% to their cost, so they will make a profit whatever happens - that's exactly why we have overdevelopment.

My approach when I started at Spitalfields, when I started at Camden Lock, was lighter, quicker, cheaper, get on with it, other speakers have mentioned that this scheme is no longer really relevant to today because it was invented a long time ago and they continued with it. The larger the scheme, the more likely it is it will be longer in time and really be irrelevant to current needs.

Philipp Rode

Executive Director, LSE Cities

'If I had a moment with the developers and half a minute with the mayor, what would I stress to say how this is such an important decision, and how can you make a better decision than the one you may be taking this week ?

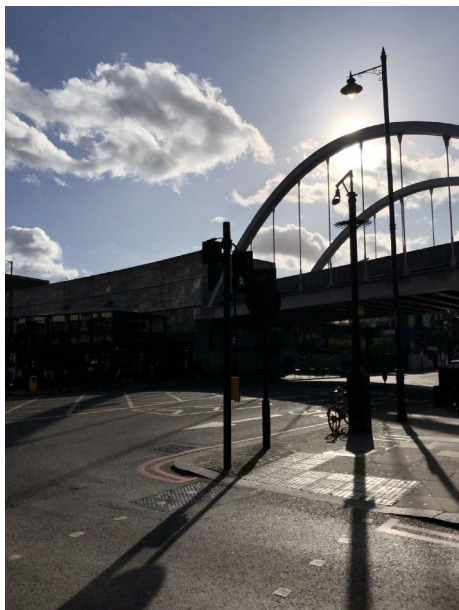
Before discussing these two points, I'd also like to emphasise that this is a huge site in London but has also raised a lot of international interest and that just re-emphasises that there is something incredibly special here. When I first met and discussed this whole thing with Jonathan, To illustrate this I mentioned to him a book by London-based Architect David Chipperfield along with a Swiss Architect called Simon Kretz, which is called 'On Planning - a thought experiment'. Available online.

It just reminds everyone that this raises much more fundamental questions than just say, how tall is the building, where is the over shadowing and so on and that there is something deeply frustrating about how planning is done, it's unsatisfactory and also how the market forces our working on the site. There is this question: are we getting the right things for a good social outcome and I sometimes wonder if even the developers would agree that this is a model which is running out of steam, and that we need something that is very very new...

But coming back to the site, this is more than a site, is this a site for a new process or even a site for a new urban economy?

But, to go back to that minute with the developer. I don't think it's fully understood. We have such great uncertainty and it's an overused term, but we have evidence now - and this is not just in London, not just the UK but a worldwide thing - about the future of the urban economy and in particular the future of urban knowledge work. And this scheme is more or less entirely designed around the current and pre-2019 thinking around

how knowledge work operates in cities, with its offices, with its business travel assumption and then a bit of conventional retail and also some assumptions on urban living. One needs to be incredibly careful that we are just using the past extrapolating into a future which may look quite different.



Maybe the claim that this needs to be more Shoreditch than the City is something that has already been said many times - maybe a new and innovative mix of Brick Lane meets Barbican. But we don't know.

Of course, the developer will immediately say it's good for them to get immediate planning permission and they can still do a lot of things but they want the green light, But the pressure these guys get on going ahead and maybe regretting it, is considerable.

Now I hope the Mayor is listening.. he will hardly deny we are in a triple crisis, of Covid, a social justice crisis and a climate emergency which was declared formally by the mayor himself. And what we are entirely ignoring with the development of this site is not just the climate impact in terms of operating the site, but in constructing it.. and that brings me to the beautiful term of carbon off- setting, which is always used if you can't avoid the emissions through the processes and you just plant trees or subsidise solar plants somewhere else. This is not what London should do. London needs to lead the way on sustainable construction, on ideally zero carbon construction, and we're not there yet, we need probably 5-10 years before we can really start at scale on low carbon construction. If you give the OK at this point to the site, it's the 'good old concrete and steel and glass'. Off-setting is just not good enough.

The Mayor may say that the pressure on the economy and jobs is so immense, there is no alternative, but I would say create jobs in the construction industry, in retro-fitting, but not in new build using an outdated model. The big question London and the developer are facing is this:

Is this the last development of a past decade of London growth, or is this among the first developments of a new era of London sustainability? It's a very clear choice.

If it's the latter, and this is where I probably disagree a bit with Eric, I think we need more time. Even if we sat together, the reality is none of us has a great idea because otherwise that would have taken off already. We need more time. It's difficult to come up with answers, a lot of innovation is required across the board, and the expansion of interim use is maybe the most sustainable thing one can do at this great moment of uncertainty.

Adam Khan
Architect

This has been excellent, and such an emblematic project. The missing piece is the brief and a vision. This has not been successful for anyone, including the developers. It is a process of a laissez-faire planning system in which developers are incentivized to just come in, shoot for the moon, stack it up high and wait for the scheme to be knocked down, or chipped away at.

This forces local groups and communities into a position of opposition, a war of attrition that doesn't produce good results. It also takes a long time so when it does come in, like now, it is incredibly out of date so it is not adapting to today's needs because it was drafted 6 years ago. It is doubly a shame because not only do we have new urgent requirements, including recent COVID but we have grown in our capacity and skills, so we know we can actually do large-scale neighbourhood planning as a collective endeavour, through co-production, through a large-scale visioning exercise. There are good examples of that and it can be done. There is a will to support that in the mayor's office. The idea has a lot of traction and there are a lot of people capable of doing it. It is absolutely an opportune moment to RESET, to Make and Gather that brief.

At the moment, the planning is hands-off, so who is stating the vision for what this piece of city should be, both morphologically and in terms of urban design, socially and who is it for? That is a piece of work which needs to be generated before any designs are done. That needs to have a consensus about what anyone is aiming for in this piece of the city. It can be done. It will take time.

Here we are talking about a huge significant piece of city, a stitching in of several neighborhood quarters, so the process of dealing with one application; whether you like the colour of it or not, is not up to that kind of scale. Another issue of scale that impedes development is other cities break schemes down into smaller plots, which allows a more organic testing. There is no reason why the scheme could not be broken into smaller plots but with a strong overall vision that has been authored by all stakeholders.

I think ultimately that does lead to value on all sides, both for communities and developers. This can't have been very good for the developers. What we need is for developers to be developers, not high stakes gamblers. We need them to come with capacity, resources, mobilisation, abilities to build stuff. What would emerge from that is a brief that can be given to developers and architects.



Part Four Discussion

Owen Hatherley

We have a letter from David Chipperfield that was received a few hours ago which I think it is worth reading out because this is a gigantic site of enormous complexity, a huge chunk of city partly on top of a railway line, an air rights scheme involving housing and retail and offices and a hotel. To be careless with something ambitious in terms of planning is quite depressing.

David Chipperfield Architect

Thank you very much for reaching out to me regarding the People's Hearing event you are organising around the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd development.

The painfully drawn out decision-making around the site and its conflict-ridden development were the very reason Simon Kretz and I selected it to be a case study back in 2017. It very starkly revealed several critical issues within the planning process and its resources. It is painful to see – and I cannot imagine for those living around it – that three years after that work the situation remains unchanged and that the voice of the local community has little option but to resort to a form of protest rather than being more fully integrated into the earliest processes to determine the future of the site.

Our study of the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd was a theoretical project that raised questions about the value of commercial development, the power of planning departments, the ambitions of architects and representation of public interests. Based on personal experience, I know that the dominant narratives around such large-scale urban development tend towards caricatures of the various parties rather than analysis of the processes that mediate their interests. Together, Simon and I hoped that by highlighting the fundamental planning conditions under which an ideal urban development project might come to life, things might change.

The alternative proposals developed by students and staff of the Institute of Urban Design ETH Zurich clearly demonstrated how more complex issues could be better dealt with on the site if they were included as part of the planning context and prove that one can simultaneously address the commercial and logistic concerns of the investors as well as engage wider urban and social concerns. Crucially, these two areas of concern – commercial viability and socio-cultural concerns – were not mutually exclusive. Planning is critical in holding things in balance, not just a facilitation process. It cannot deal with the problems that are raised by urgency, investment and logistics alone, but must give presence to those issues that have no other representation. If we believe in the future of our cities we must protect and foster the qualities for which we value them, we must invest in our planning departments and, as citizens, insist on working with them further upstream. We must urgently open up the conversation about the role of planning in urban developments, encouraging an approach that takes account of the complexities and collective interests that form a city long before a design is developed.

It would be inappropriate of me to comment on the design of this revised scheme, but I maintain strong concerns about the foundations of the scheme itself and I stand by the conclusions made in the book that an alternative way is possible, a way that would better meet the interests of all involved. That a development has reached this critical point after more than a decade of huge emotional and financial burden is unacceptable.

While I am unable to join you, I very much admire your ambitions with the People's Hearing and hope that the views and ideas collected through your campaign will be considered by the Mayor of London. I hope that the work conducted for On Planning and the conclusions we made might reinforce the discussion. Ultimately, I hope we can see this moment as a turning point for the shaping of our city.

With kind regards,

David Chipperfield

Owen Hatherley

There is lots there about the role of planning in all of this. One thing that strikes me is the degree to which the site is at least partly in public ownership so that Network Rail have a very important role and also the role of the Mayor of London's ability to call things in and why this is a negative rather than a positive. We can stop a thing but we are not necessarily sure if we as a public authority would be able to do it ourselves. Which, given that the GLA's precursor the Greater London Council used to do this routinely, seems questionable in my view.

There are these two councils, there is the Mayor and there is Network Rail and why these public bodies can't develop a public site for the public good for the people that live in that area who have various needs that would not be met by the current proposal, seems to be an interesting thing to talk about.

Then the question of need. The Chipperfield proposals bring this out, that there are various things that the site could offer for the local community which is almost ostentatiously ignored within this site, based on this idea that this is an expansion of the City. Obvious examples would be Council housing, a park in an area that is lacking in green space, commercial uses that would be less corporate. And there is the question of what use a site like this would be in the current context.

One of those is the context of planning and of housing. **The Mayor's own investigations recently on affordable housing, on resident consultation, have shown that the kind of model that the GLA has worked on for the last twenty years, a sort of gigantist trickle-down model, has not worked, has not delivered a significant amount of affordable housing.** It has not delivered council housing, has not delivered any particular community benefits for existing residents. So we know this now, we have the research, we know for a fact that this stuff does not work.



building had been built, it would have been a black hole for the last nine months. Very little of it would have served any useful purpose for that community. The hotel would have been empty, much of the commercial housing would probably have been vacated. The retail units that would have been corporate would be full of functions that are currently going out of business - lots of the large chain retail and chain restaurants are currently going out of businesses en masse. **So we could see within that a preview of what this thing might be like in twenty years, a kind of gigantic useless hulk in the centre of this area.**

There's something quite surreal about seeing the debate that's been happening about cities for the last few years and then seeing this thing still being proposed that lends a sort of undead vampyric quality to it.

Michael Edwards

Honorary Professor, The Bartlett UCL

The view widely felt is that the future has got to be different from the past, that we learned from Covid that the nature of our societies have got to change. If things are different then this site we should be holding onto to try out community plans, new ideas for urbanisation. Which people here in the meeting have been talking about.

We are not just thinking about office work and housing, we are thinking about office work in the city of London which is a global financial centre, this is also a month before the end of Brexit transition, we have Brexit about to hit us. It is not clear how much of the financial sector we will lose from central London, it might be quite a lot; certainly the owners of the central London real estate are very anxious.. Therefore it is an extremely odd time to be going ahead with a decision we need to keep open.

It would be extremely wise for the Mayor of London to just say this is an out-of-date kind of plan, **let's stop this and use this as an opportunity to mobilise local people, community opinion, scientists etc to think about the future in a new way.**

Frances Northrup

New Economics Foundation

On the community wealth building question and also how public authorities aren't talking to each other about public goods, public value. There is something really practical here where it feels like people are locked into a situation that they don't know how to get out of.

Adam was saying even the developer is probably thinking, God how have we got ourselves involved in such a ridiculous situation, how do we get back out of that? There's a really key thing I think that elected politicians and Councils can do and that's where the community wealth building is so interesting.

Since Phil Glanville's been Mayor of Hackney they have repurposed their thinking around making a real statement about the fact that they are there for the people of Hackney to support those who need them, that's what

they were elected to do, that's what the resources are for. It's getting local authorities to be brave enough to take that role and see that they can do that without compromising relationships with developers.

It's the conversation we've been having with Haringey about the Grainger development with Latin Village. You know they just won't quite go that extra mile to say, yes we could be the people who said to Grainger we're not going to impose a CPO, because they're so worried about the developer suing them. But there's a real vision and a bravery to this that we need people to step up and do.

Joe Giddings Architects Climate Action Network

Most architects want to be bold and to do things in different ways. But a lot of times, architects' hands are tied by the regulatory framework that we work within.

It is important to note that we are in a climate emergency and it was good to hear Phillip Rode talk about it earlier and to link that to the conversation. It is a tool that the local community could use in the argument that development must always respond to the fact that we are in a climate emergency. We know a couple years ago the UN set out exactly the limits. If we want to limit global warming to 1.5, we need to look at how it spreads out.

We need to half our emission globally by 2030 and that was the commitment two years ago. The emissions have since gone up which means we have even less time to meet this limit. How this relates to the proposed scheme, if approved, this would be built between now and 2030, it is really important the emissions during these years are brought down dramatically and immediately. **Looking at this scheme, it is clear that the developer has not set out how they will do that, as it is not their priority.**

It is the Mayor who has the responsibility here: the Mayor has the responsibility to demand that this scheme, which is referred to him, needs to set out the response to the carbon emissions. It is not that all developments have to be stopped, but as **Phillip beautifully said, the most sustainable thing we can do now this week is to take more time** and focus on the benefits that using low carbon materials can bring. Communities need to focus on this point.

Rupon Miah Boundary Estate resident

I am from the Boundary Estate; I grew up here. There is a community here and we have green spaces we can play in. We also have courtyards and play areas. As an Asian community we always had asian games, different ball games, we can go out and do things. If they are developing the site, there should be more community areas.

The East End is all about community vibe, it still is. Looking at the whole



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structure and housing in the developer's plans, it shows segregation and not integration of communities. I grew up here and still living here, it would be nice to be thoughtful about what goes into the development. The whole character of the Boundary is marvellous, obviously for visitors and for those living here know what the Boundary estate feels like. Lucy said that all the children's play areas in the development are on top of roofs so they will be losing a lot of balls! That will be a sad situation if so.

