

## Planning Committee – 22 January 2015

### Transcript of Item 6 – Options for Accommodating London's Growth

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** We are organising this into a number of sections. The first section is a very brief one that I will open with, which is looking at the extent of both brownfield and underdeveloped land. Then we are going to move on to a quite substantial section on the barriers to developing brownfield land and what the Mayor could do about it. Then we will be looking at suburban intensification and some of the opportunities or barriers, again, around that and at growth in the rest of the southeast and the possibilities there for accommodating some of London's growth. Finally, we will be looking at the Green Belt and making it fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and at what the different proposals are.

If I can kick off, probably starting first with the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and Paul, just looking at what you think. There are different estimates for how much brownfield land there is. Certainly we have been here 15 years as the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the 1997 Government really came in with a prioritisation of brownfield, which has now been relaxed. We have a situation where we have been prioritising brownfield and have been extremely successful at so doing, but do you think there are limits to that and how much brownfield do we have left?

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** Brownfield land is a renewable resource and in London, as in the rest of the country, its supply is far from drying up. In 2011, we commissioned Green Balance to do a report called *Building in a Small Island*, which was an analysis of Government figures provided in the Land Use Change Statistics and in the National Land Use Database between 2001 and 2009. What that found is that between those eight years, only 35% of the brownfield plots that have become available for housing development in London in the National Land Use Database were redeveloped. About 166,000 houses were built in London over that period; yet over this time brownfield sites capable of accommodating 469,000 homes became available.

More recently, with the report we published last year called *From Wasted Spaces to Spaces for Living*, with the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol, we also found that returns to the National Land Use Database which come from local planning authorities - so, in London, the boroughs - appear to be significantly underestimating the brownfield potential in London. The National Land Use Database returns, for example, found that there was enough brownfield land for about 146,000 houses currently, but the draft Further Alterations to the London Plan (Further Alterations) have identified a series of brownfield opportunity areas across London. The Further Alterations say that there is enough brownfield land in these areas for 300,000 new homes, plus 568,000 jobs, which is twice the capacity of brownfield that the boroughs had said was available to the National Land Use Database. Therefore, we would say that the supply of brownfield land in London is far from drying up.

There is another point to bear in mind as well that was discussed in the Further Alterations, which is what London's overall housing need is and what amount of housing is likely to be built. Some population projections have suggested that London needs 62,000 houses a year. The GLA, I believe, is currently planning on the basis of about 49,000 a year. People may wish to correct me on that.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** It is 42,000.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** Sorry, 42,000, but I know they are under different scenarios. However, what is important to remember is that in recent years only about 22,000 houses have been built in London per year on average. There is a question now about what is going to be realistically built and also whether what is going to be built is going to meet the need for affordable housing as opposed to just meeting a demand for housing in London. It is critically important in the London context and to be able to differentiate between demand and need, which the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not do adequately. Therefore, we have to consider how much we are actually going to realistically build in London in the coming years. Probably the GLA's approach at the moment is a realistic assessment of what is actually going to be built. However, if we are going to build more, we also need to consider what canvas we are looking at as well. What wider canvas we are looking at is not the greatest (Inaudible) as other regions and we will probably come on to that discussion later. In conclusion, we would say that there is still plenty of brownfield land available for development.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Thank you for that, Paul. What you are talking about is nine years' supply and, if we look further out, we need about 1.5 million by 2050. I just want to set that. I am going to come back to you and explore some more options. When you talk about brownfield, we know that a lot of the brownfield sites that are identified are those where there is infrastructure or the potential - or planned potential - for infrastructure. However, we also know that there are sites which could be unlocked - and I am just wondering whether they are in your calculations or not - if there were the infrastructure.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** The work that we did with UWE, again, which was based on the National Land Use Database, was always going to be a very conservative estimate of the amount of brownfield land that is available for development because it looked at only four of the five categories that were in the National Land Use Database and in which local authorities were making returns. These were sites primarily with planning permission or some kind of planning status. What the report did not look at was brownfield sites that a local authority felt had some scope for redevelopment in future but which was currently already in use or already had some kind of ownership of it. If you factor that in, it is likely to add a significant amount to the total. There is a problem with, again, current planning approaches across the country at the moment in that they are looking only at sites that developers say are available, which is the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment approach.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Let us just be clear. Your total is based on the National Land Use Database, which you believe to be very conservative and is what has been given to you by the developers themselves?

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** By local planning authorities, yes.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is usually quite a risk-averse group. Jonathan, you have done work, too, on how much brownfield there is. Could you tell us about that?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** I have not myself assessed the brownfield capacity of London at all, but I am quite keen that there is a discussion about it, which is fantastic because it is happening right now. Therefore, the only comments that I would have relate to the fact that we need to think about London's growth in a strategic manner. In terms of the viability of redeveloping brownfield sites, they become commercially attractive only at the point where the residential values outstrip the existing use value of the site. That in itself has implications to the extent that whilst a lot of the

brownfield capacity surveys that have been undertaken certainly identify various sites that could be redeveloped for housing, we invariably also need distribution centres to meet demand. We need employment bases and areas as well. There is an inherent conflict that is only going to intensify over the coming years when residential values do start outstripping commercial ones and people start eroding our employment stock to the same extent. Therefore, unless we are actually looking at the provision of housing, the brownfield capacity and the release of land elsewhere in a more joined-up manner, then I suspect that actually there are two competing issues at the heart of all the research that is being done at the moment.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Can I come back to you, Paul? Do the statistics you have come up with include the land needed for infrastructure to service the homes?

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** They do not include brownfield sites that local authorities believe are suitable for employment uses or offices or other types of development. They do not include infrastructure requirements in themselves. We have done some work in the past on this, *Compact Sustainable Communities*. That work references some work in the past which suggested that you need about 13 hectares of infrastructure for every 5,000 homes you build, I think. We can come back to the Assembly on this because there is some further work that has been done on this that we can supply information separately to you about. Therefore, on the one hand, it does not include infrastructure, but what it also deliberately excludes in brownfield. We do not include in the figures I gave you earlier brownfield sites which local authorities have identified as being suitable for employment, retail or non-housing uses. There is quite a bit more of this brownfield land available. Only 50% or so of all brownfield sites are identified as suitable for housing.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes. Alison?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** I just wanted to add something to the points that Jonathan [Manns] was making. From a practical perspective, obviously, as a local planning authority dealing with applications on a daily basis, we have had quite a few large industrial sites vacated as people outside or around the M25. What we find is that because of the abnormalities of developing those sites - the remediation costs, the costs of removing infrastructure and existing buildings - frequently the developer will come back and the applicant will say to us, "In that case, we have a very borderline viability case and so we wish to compromise on your standards for, say, affordability or on contributing to local infrastructure like education requirements". Therefore, you may be getting development and theoretically on paper it looks like there is land supply, which there is, but is it the right kind of development to go forward? Is it actually going to contribute to the growth of sustainable communities? Equally, often because they are constrained sites with dealing with infrastructure in and around them, you are often compromising on design quality as well. I am not suggesting that we do not use brownfield sites; we absolutely have to. However, they are brownfield and have been sitting there on the Land Registry for decades for very good reasons.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Interesting. Would anyone be able to come back on that?

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** I would, if that is OK. The first thing from a design point of view is you can turn any site, however bad it is, into something that is beautiful. We need to be aware of that. You can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. It has been done; the Olympic Park is a very good example and there are many others. That is the first point.

The second point just in answer to that question is that viability is an issue around time and urgency and it is around a whole set of pragmatic issues, it seems to me. When you have these large urban brownfield sites, it seems very clear that we cannot shirk our responsibilities of not looking to turn those sites around about their viability. I accept that there may be costs in relation to the fact that we are not going to be able to see the benefits that we would normally expect out of those sites through section 106, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and other contributions that we can make. But surely, in the larger picture from a London point of view, we have to look at ways of creating an environment where those sites can come forward rather than the far worse scenario of building on greenfield and green belt sites in the short-term. I have just mindfully done quite a bit of master planning work down at Thamesmead for the Peabody Trust and I have had a look at that. Thamesmead is in the urban environment. There is no question that you can put many thousands of homes on Thamesmead, but it is very difficult to do because of just the types of issues that you are absolutely talking about.

The other point that I was reminded of when John [Pearce] was speaking earlier which is important is that there is a geographical issue. I quite understand that some London boroughs will find this very difficult, whereas other London boroughs will have significantly greater potential. That necessary variation of need, which will come from the GLA and which is recognised in its targets, needs to be recognised as well so that the demands are appropriate.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I will maybe ask Jonathan first. Have you also looked at emerging sites? It was said by Paul [Miner] that sites are emerging. There are new sites. If Tesco vacates their sites, we know they are windfall sites, or with a hospital. We may not like the closure of hospitals and rationalisation, but it is leading to more sites becoming available. Have you factored that in?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Paul [Miner] is absolutely right. It is a renewable resource. Everything that is built already could be redeveloped for something else. That said, looking at actually how we do that is a slightly different issue. Where development happens in London and what infrastructure is required to support that are all considerations that have to be factored in.

To come back on the previous point around brownfield and how it comes forward, at the moment I am advising on a site that sits just outside the GLA's administrative area. It is one of three remaining brownfield sites in this local authority. It is very keen, understandably, to see it come forward because the rest of the borough is constrained by a tight green belt. Unfortunately, the remediation costs there are some £2 million. This is precisely the point Alison [Young] was making. There is a real issue about how that is delivered. You could deliver it and you could compromise on the plan objectives, but at the same time someone else could come in with a housing need argument and build on the greenfield adjacent to it in a far more cost-effective and deliverable way. The way that the planning system is structured at the moment is such that actually, unless we are compromising on certain elements to ensure the delivery of some sites, we are actually almost facilitating, supporting and encouragement in less sustainable locations. That would be my thoughts on that.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I wanted to also bring out underdeveloped land, but we can bring that out under another question. It might be a good moment now, Tom, to bring you in and to start talking about the barriers to brownfield because there have been mentions of remediation and the costs and so on and it is a good prelude for the kinds of things that initially Marcel [Steward] might focus on. Tom?

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes. As Nicky says, I would like to explore what the barriers are and, more crucially, how we can overcome those barriers. Marcel, I know you have done a lot of work on this and so perhaps you would like to kick off on this section.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** OK. Thank you very much. Part of the problem when we are dealing with contaminated land is that there is this empirical belief that there is a single solution. The whole issue of contaminated land is that it is multiple in terms of its solutions and also in terms of the vested interests of the various parties within it.

Because of that, we have this very siloed approach in terms of, "I am the local authority. This is my position. Do I enable this? Do I take responsibility for giving planning permission to go ahead with this? Do I have the resources to handle that?" If I am looking at the owner of the land or the entity that is actually selling the land, there is a situation whereby under the current legislation the attachment of liability is extremely unclear. There is provision under the legislation, the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990, with regard to the attachment of liability to land. First of all, there is the polluter-pays principle but, as we know, we were the heartland under the Industrial Revolution and so in many instances the polluters are no longer existent and therefore it attaches to the deed of title to the land or the right to charge rent on the land. If I am selling the land --

**Tom Copley AM:** The person who owns the land is responsible essentially for cleaning up or may be?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** He may be, if he is, yes. We still have adherence to the principle of caveat emptor in this country or 'buyer beware'. Under the legislation, there is the opportunity to transfer liability of the land with information, which goes against the adherence to the principle of caveat emptor. There is no definition as to what information constitutes full disclosure or transfer of information.

**Tom Copley AM:** If you are buying a piece of land, you can go to the landowner and say, "Tell me exactly how it is contaminated and what the costs associated might be", and the owner is under no obligation to tell you?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** He can say, "I do not know". He can say, "You have access to the records. You make your own investigations and find out".

There is also provision under the legislation to transfer the liability by discounting the market costs of the land via the cost of the remediation. There are two problems with that. One is that in terms of trying to quantify remediation of a site, it is extraordinarily difficult. It has been quoted that trying to provide a cost for a land remediation even on a fairly well-documented site is a bit like writing an open cheque. That is the case. I have investigated sites where under exceptional circumstances we had, for instance, sampling points at 25-metre centres and still there was information that came out during the actual remediation which blew the figures to hell.

The second issue that is related there is in regard to the fact that liability can be transferred, as I say, if the cost of the land is discounted. There are no standard valuations for the valuation of contaminated assets. There is no process for the standard valuation of a contaminated or compromised asset. There is no, to the best of my knowledge, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) standard and in fact most valuation reports will

contain a caveat at the end that says, "This asset has been valued at open-market rates as it stands", or words to that effect, taking no account of the fact that the land is contaminated.

**Tom Copley AM:** The open market itself might surely take account of the fact that it is contaminated. Surely a piece of contaminated land would be lower in value than an equivalent piece of uncontaminated land?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** If we do not think about the contamination question at all and we would really quite like just to build, would we actually do that calculation?

If you look at very large contaminated sites, you will also have to address the situation that many of them were carried out by special-purpose vehicles (SPVs) and consortia of entities, many of which are debt-funded back to the parent. Therefore, in a situation where the contamination remediation exceeds, there is always the possibility to fold the SPV and to actually walk away and leave the site as it is. Again, it is this attachment of liability.

If that worked and if we had a standard means of valuation and we could show how we could discount the value on a standard basis against the cost of the asset, then that builds in some of the issues with regard to the extra cost of the development of contaminated land.

**Tom Copley AM:** I guess the question is, firstly, whether you would advocate that there was a legal requirement of full disclosure and, secondly, how you address that question of coming to this valuation.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Where we are at here is that there has to be a concerted effort, first, in the enforcement of the legislation that does exist and that has to happen at both local and national level. Currently, I would have said it is probably being fairly passive in terms of its implementation. There has to be a clear declaration of where responsibility lies. At the moment, it could lie either with the local authority or it could lie, in the case of special sites, with the Environment Agency.

**Tom Copley AM:** Does that require a change in the law or a clarification?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** It requires a clarification. However, also, it needs a more holistic approach. I said in the beginning that we are suffering from a lack of information and the fact that we have a siloed approach. The local says, "This is my area", the developer says, "This is what I am trying to achieve", the owner of the land says, "I am trying to achieve this", and we have this conflict of interests.

Because of the lack of ability to standardise valuations, it is difficult to show that the valuation discount is such that the liability has been transferred. That then replicates down the chain when we are looking at the viability of contaminated land. Before I go there, let me take you to another place. If I have discounted the land --

**Tom Copley AM:** As the owner of that land?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** -- as the owner of the land and we have sorted, somehow, the disclosure of information situation and I have sold it to you, you are maybe less financially robust or your calculations were wrong. Maybe it is a situation whereby you are a debt-funded SPV and you subsequently go out of business because this site has caused you problems. Even though I have taken

the hit in terms of the devaluation, it will still come back on me and that is a risk in perpetuity. Therefore, that is a disincentive in terms of --

**Tom Copley AM:** All right. Hang on. If you have sold it, surely, why does the risk not then lie with the owner who has gone bust?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** The original polluter --

**Tom Copley AM:** Under the legislation that you talked about earlier, the original polluter is still --

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** They are the primary party, but in most instances with contaminated land they are no longer extant. They are no longer around. It could be Victorian --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** The person who bought it off them in the first place and then sold it to you has the responsibility?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** That person could have, if they are existing. The problem we are dealing with, especially with many of our inner-city areas of brownfield land, is that we are dealing with Victorian - or older - pollution and contamination.

**Tom Copley AM:** If there was an old electricity company that no longer exists and the land has then been maybe sold twice to someone and to you and so you own it, you are legally responsible, are you?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Even if I was not the polluter.

**Tom Copley AM:** Even if you were not the polluter. Then, if you sell it to me at a discount, factoring that in, and I go bust, it comes back on you?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** The responsibility is back on me.

**Tom Copley AM:** It comes back on you?

**Andrew Boff AM:** I did not know that.

**Tom Copley AM:** I had no idea. It sounds quite remarkable.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Marcel, you have worked quite hard on solutions to all of this, have you not? It would be good to hear something of what you --

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes. It would be good to hear what the answers to the problem are. I am just quite shocked that that is the case.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** That is the disincentive in terms of, "I own a piece of land and I may sell it, even though it is no longer useful to me".

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** We have to be clear. Part of what we are trying to probe is why a lot of people do not want to go near brownfield. They are risk-averse and so on. Brownfield is harder to develop, etc. That is the perception. What is the answer?

**Tom Copley AM:** What is the answer to this problem?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Can I just take it one step further? If you have a brownfield site and you have developed it for housing to meet some of the housing need for London, how you sell that land does have an impact in terms of where the liability attaches going forward. If I am looking at this from the perspective of wanting to buy a house and I am a mortgage provider looking at providing a mortgage on that house, how do I value that asset? Which portion of that liability would attach to that house-owner? Therefore, how do I value that for the purpose of lending a mortgage?

**Tom Copley AM:** Once it has been decontaminated, presumably, or developed --

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** No. We have abandoned the concept in this country, as have most places, of remediation for multipurpose end use. We have remediation for various end uses subject to sensitivity of which the most sensitive is housing and gardens.

**Andrew Boff AM:** It is like the Olympic site. It was remediated only to the point of one metre below the surface and then there is a membrane. Under that, we still have contaminated land.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Exactly.

**Tom Copley AM:** OK. Then the problem when you have, say, individual freeholders perhaps is how you then --

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** (Inaudible) situation and then what is the viability of that (Overspeaking)

**Tom Copley AM:** How was that done on the Olympic Park, say?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** On the Olympic Park, I do not know. I was not involved in that. However, it is a legacy issue that will go forward. On remediation, you have brought up a very good point, which is that most people think that once it has been cleaned it is clean. It is not. If I am a developer and I have worked out the site, I have worked out how I am going to remediate it and I go to you as the planning entity in the authority and say, "That is what I am going to do. If I do that, is that OK?", the planning authority may say, "I do not see any reason why we should object", if I go to the Environment Agency and say, "That is what I am going to do. Is that sufficient to allow it to go ahead?". They will say, "We do not see any reason to object". However, under the EPA 1990, at any point in the future when further information is known and as our knowledge advances, there is the built-in ability to come back and say, "Do you know that remediation? You know the stuff we left there because we did not think it mattered? We now know it is harmful. Go back and do it again". That is why this is a risk in perpetuity.

**Tom Copley AM:** Mortgage providers do not know. Has there ever been any kind of legal challenge on this? In practice, how does it work or how can it work?



**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** In practice, there have been legal challenges and those are reasonably well documented, but nothing like as many as you would expect. There are certain cases you can look at and I am very happy to make those available from the public domain.

**Tom Copley AM:** OK. What are the answers, then? It is a difficult question.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Essentially, there are several aspects. Again, I said there is no silver bullet --

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes. What are the answers, plural?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** One aspect is that there is always the capacity to transfer risk in response by paying a cost such as insurance. Environmental insurance is a little complicated. It is a specialist market and it is, again, highly confused. If you look at a general policy like a fire protection policy, if you look at a public liability policy or if you look at a property policy, you will see in there that there is a clause that says that the insurer usually will insure for sudden and accidental pollution. Most people including statutory authorities take the position that if this person is not the polluter, in which case there is a clear attachment of liability, then in fact it would be sudden and accidental and that therefore, if they cannot bear it in the case of remediation, then the policy would pick it up. That is wrong. Environmental insurance started in [the United States of] America under a different legislative codicil and a different regime under the Superfund or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act 1980 (CERCLA) legislation. In fact, what happened when CERCLA was brought in was that an awful lot of insurers were burned because, under the general policies that existed in America at that time, pollution was not excluded. When the pollution cases were brought under joint and several liability in America on places like Love Canal and Times Square, the Government did not want to pick up the tab and it ruled that because it was not excluded it must be included. The position taken by the insurers, who were providers of insurance in this country and worldwide as well, was, "If we exclude all pollution, it is probably not going to be very commercial, and so we will create this identification of sudden and accident and unforeseen".

It would appear to be very apparent what that would be. From an insured's perspective, if I have an underground tank and it leaks, "I did not want my diesel to leak into the groundwater, there must have been a point in time when it did and, therefore, I must be insured". From the insurer's perspective, "It is a mild steel tank, it is underground, the water table is at one metre across, it was filled, it was going to leak and so, no, it is not insured". What happened there was that there grew up a specialist environmental insurance market, which is what I was a part of and which insures just pollution risk. It just insures pollution and so it does not differentiate between gradual and incremental and sudden and accidental. That would appear to be a very good solution to have. By the way, I am not part of this market anymore and so I do not have a bias.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Do we now have that market of specialist insurance?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** You still have it, but it is very underutilised --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Clearly.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** -- and there is not an incentive for insurers to develop that. Insurance markets are reactive. They will respond to a market need and a market

demand. The whole essence of insurance is sharing the risks of the few amongst the many. Therefore, until a market actually gets to a certain point in volume, they cannot actually go through that point in terms of bringing the premiums down to affordable levels or, indeed, adopting a much broader-scope model that allows that insurance to be put in place in a much more process-driven model. Environmental insurance is very technically underwritten, which means that it has a high cost.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** We have to get to the nub of this now. It is there?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** It is there and it can be used to take away some of that uncertainty.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** OK. Are there other answers?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** The other aspect is with regard to the things we are going to come on to in terms of the density of land usage, particularly with regard to brownfield where you are probably not going to be able to go down the route, for all sorts of reasons, of cleaning back to absolutely clean. There are very good arguments as to where land is remediated with an engineering solution - such as leaving some of it in place like at the Olympic site and putting an engineered layer over the top - where you might want to look at that in terms of putting perhaps high-density apartments or high-density without gardens such and then for those to be leased so that there is control over the land from the surface down.

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes, and presumably in that instance the freeholder would be the one who took out the insurance?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** It could be, but the thing about insurance as well in this market, quite unusually, is that I can pay one premium as either the seller of the land or the developer, I can put in place up to a ten-year policy and I can have negotiated into the placement that that policy can be transferred in the future to a future owner of the land. That then attaches to the land in perpetuity for that ten-year period and therefore that takes it away as to whether it is the developer, which is the financially robust entity, and what happens if it disappears. It takes it away in terms of the mortgager looking at the mortgage on the individual dwelling and as to whether that dwelling owner could do anything about it if that liability appeared. It is a very underutilised resource and if we started to bring together an integrated whole with regard to planning, liability attachment, the management of the actual remediation and the valuation standards of those assets, then we could start to come to a solution.

**Tom Copley AM:** Interesting. We have talked about this for quite a while now and I am keen to bring in other guests. Does anyone want to come in on this particular issue? No? Shall I open it up? Yes.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** One small point of information I would like to make on the wider issue of contamination is that towards the end of 2014 there was a study done by Durham University on the benefits to society of remediating contaminated land, particularly for people who live near a contaminated site. That is something that the Committee may wish to look up.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** It is unthinkable that we would not develop brownfield land first whenever that is possible.

**Tom Copley AM:** Obviously, we have had now this funding for housing zones, which is a recognition that some part of the public sector needs to put something in in order to get development going. I can see Jonathan nodding. Is this a good model?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Actually, it was just that passing comment that you made there. Do you mind?

**Tom Copley AM:** No, go for it, Andrew.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You said that it is unthinkable that we would not develop a brownfield site before --

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Yes, as a priority and where it makes sense to do so, rather than greenfield land. I do not think it is the --

**Andrew Boff AM:** You have just outlined all the reasons why you really would not want to touch brownfield sites.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** No, I outlined the reasons why development of brownfield sites has not gone ahead.

**Andrew Boff AM:** After what I have heard from you, if I own two sites, one green belt and one brownfield, I would go for the green belt, would I not?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Thank you. That has proven it. That is exactly why there has not been the take-up of brownfield land, but that does not mean to say it is an unresolvable situation.

**Male Speaker:** Absolutely.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Marcel is showing us how people are very risk-averse about this.

**Tom Copley AM:** No, it is fine, but it is the difference between the ideal world situation and the real world situation, I suppose, perhaps. I do not know.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I just do not see how you can marry that. Why would you not go for the greenfield?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** That is the position that everybody has taken.

**Tom Copley AM:** Then you would never develop brownfield and you would end up with all these undeveloped contaminated sites, which is a waste of land.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Exactly, and do you really think that a greenfield site that is next to a brownfield site is going to achieve its maximum asset value for anyone? You cannot just leave these as islands.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am keen to bring in Jonathan on the issue of housing zones - and anyone else who wants to come in on this - and the idea of the public sector coming in and kick-starting development and how that can work.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** There is a gap and we have to try to address the gap in the funding that exists. In terms of the costs associated with the mediation, Marcel [Steward] is probably better placed but, from my clients' perspectives, it is not only the financial cost of cleaning the site but also the cost of the delay in delivering it and the perceived risk of the site as an asset.

If you can meet some of that very relaxed planning legislation - and housing zones are a good example - with the provision of infrastructure, then it is obviously a fantastic thing. Without that, to an extent, you are waiting for the market to spread in your direction to the point where the value change is such that you can make it viable.

**Tom Copley AM:** Extending the Overground to Barking Riverside, for example?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Yes. If you put the infrastructure there, you are already going part of the way to unlocking the value of the site that makes it feasible to develop. Otherwise, it is --

**Tom Copley AM:** We have kind of moved into the last question, which is about the role of the Mayor and what the Mayor can do. There is the obvious one about infrastructure and putting money in to deal with contamination. Is there anything else that anyone would like to add on the role of the Mayor?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Just on Jonathan's point, I am sorry, Jonathan, but if the asset is valued to take account of the remediation of contamination, even if that asset is zero, maybe that is the true valuation. If the liability situation is such that it was clear that having taken zero valuation of that asset my liability is transferred, there would still be a mechanism behind this --

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Yes.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** In terms of what we are trying to achieve and with regard to what the Mayor can do, it is to bring together all of these entities and to work out a cohesive plan because these things are resolvable. It just needs the local authority planner to talk to the Environment Agency and to be aware of where the finances do lie and do not lie and where the liability attaches. That can be worked out and it has been successfully worked out on a number of sites.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You are going to give us case studies, are you?

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** I can.

**Tom Copley AM:** That would be very, very helpful.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That would be very good. All right.

**Tom Copley AM:** Catriona wanted to add something.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes. Did Alison [Young], too?

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** It is just a very small point and Alison probably will know more from a London borough perspective. However, you have to look at this within how local authorities deliver through the local plan system. We are supposed to have a plan-led system and, in theory, we have a plan-led system. Yes, local authorities tend to be risk-averse. However, they also have to have a plan that is viable. Whole-plan viability is absolutely key. It is a really big test for local authorities when they go through examination. They have to have a flexible supply of land and they have to demonstrate to inspectors that they are not putting all their eggs in one basket, that they have enough to deliver a five-year land supply and that they have this trajectory. They cannot focus on just one massive brownfield site. They have to have that flexible supply to show that they can deliver other sites. They have to have that flexibility to say, "If this site further down the road because it is contaminated does not come forward, we have a whole load of other options to deliver the housing and other land that we need". We have the NPPF, which is almost saying, "Brownfields first", but is not providing local authorities with a planning system that helps to deliver that. That applies to London as the rest of the country.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** That is fine in principle, but for local authorities with the increased targets they have, it is a luxury they do not have anyway. It is a nice principle, but they are struggling to meet it even with what they have.

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** Absolutely. That is the point I am making. They have to look at the plan-led system that they are required to deliver through and to have a plan in place that delivers the housing that they need in a viable way. I am saying things like, "Brownfield first", and what they are trying to do often runs against that. Therefore, it is local authorities. Yes, they tend to be risk-averse for obvious reasons, but there is a whole load of other reasons why they are actually using greenfield sites instead of brownfield sites or not trying their hardest to deliver the brownfield sites that are the most difficult and will take the longest time to deliver at the end of the day.

**Tom Copley AM:** Alison?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** I was just going to say that that is absolutely right, but also obviously local authorities work in a context of being facilitators. I understand the 'risk-averse' comment, but recently local authorities have been much more focused on delivery. Therefore, they work hand-in-glove between a local plan that sets the parameters for accommodating growth and population growth generally, but also being able to partner and use their own assets creatively to make things happen at a micro-level, almost.

One of the things I was going to say is that you only have to drive around the North Circular or the South Circular to view what is technically the Green Belt. It is indistinguishable, often, from brownfield sites. I can name countless sites that you just would not believe were in the Green Belt. That is --

**Tom Copley AM:** That is coming into a question that we are going to have later and so it is probably best if you think that up on the last question.

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Fine.

**Tom Copley AM:** Does anyone else have anything they want to say on this very quickly? We have been on this for a while.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** I would just like to say that what Dr Steward is trying to do, it seems to me, is to show that what seems to be grey and very complex legal area actually can be interrogated. There are answers. By understanding the answers and having clarity, it reduces risk. The notion here is that whatever the complexity in terms of the message - and I found that very intriguing - the reality is that by getting to the bottom of that, the Mayor's role is about providing advice and informing local authorities about just exactly how they can be better informed about understanding what these problems are and passing that on. That must help the release, the confidence and therefore the increased desirability of those sites for development.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Thank you, Noel. That was exactly that the comment I was going to make. Surely there is a role for the London Mayor here to provide a central resource for that expertise and knowledge and to take it away from the already pressed resources of the local authorities.

**Tom Copley AM:** Thank you all very much. I found that very interesting.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It was very helpful. One of the things to hang on to is that the environmental insurance market could be a larger and more proactive market.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Very much so.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes. We need to talk to the Mayor about that and the City.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** That could be a win for London as well because these are very rare resources and most of the world is actually written out of London.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes. There was another point that may have not quite been highlighted. What happens to the communities around contaminated sites and what risks are there to them that can be dealt with by dealing with the contaminated sites? It does say in our briefing - and I am going to ask Paul this - that London compared with the rest of the country does not have very many, fortunately, what are called 'hard-core' brownfield sites. I suppose 'hard-core' means very contaminated?

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** The definition that we used, which is generally accepted, is that hard-core sites have been on the National Land Use Database for an extended period of time, five years or more. It is in the report. We can come back to the Committee on that. They are long-term sites that have not been redeveloped. As the Chair was pointing out, it is probably less of a problem in London than elsewhere because the picture here is more encouraging than in many other parts of the country because we have the GLA and we had the London Development Agency (LDA) before that, which have been able to get to grips with these sites. In some of the northern regions, they have not had this wider co-ordination and pooling of expertise that has enabled these sites to be dealt with.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That was helpful. Also, what you are pointing out is that hard-core does not necessarily mean contaminated at all. It could just be that there has not been any infrastructure or they have been land-banked or God knows what.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** Exactly.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It could be anything. On the LDA point, it is worth telling everyone - although I cannot list the sites and I should be able to - that when it was first set up in 2000, the LDA initially set out to buy land that was contaminated and remediated. It came under quite a lot of flak as a policy because people said, "Why do you not take the easier brownfield sites? Why take the most difficult?" However, a lot of the land has already been remediated that we are now building on or are going to build on.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** A lot of that remediation is out of date.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** They are out of date? OK.

**Dr Marcel Steward (Environmental Risk and Insurance Consultant):** Nicky, there is another point there in terms of the issue of the capacity of brownfield land. There are none so blind as those who will not see. There is a belief throughout, I would say, both local authorities and people who want to develop land that, "It is in the middle of a city. It is not contaminated. Why do we even want to open that can of worms?" However, in actual fact it may well have been contaminated from past uses going back beyond Victorian times and that contamination is still present. It may have, indeed, been landfill by waste from industrial purposes, which is quite a common practice. There has to be a much more open assessment of what is contaminated or brownfield land, whichever way you choose to combine that.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** OK. Thank you for that. It may be true of aspects of the Green Belt, too, I suppose.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** Can I just say one thing? I was in the House of Commons yesterday talking to the Housing Minister as part of the new design panel. This came up talking about Ebbsfleet. One of the issues around Ebbsfleet is of course that it is a hugely contaminated site and there is no question that some of the largest entities - and I will keep names out of it - and the owners of those sites have gone in there with an aspiration and having planning to build - one of them has over 6,500 homes - on that site. Yet they are stymied. They have reached a point where they realise that the value of the land they have is actually zero and that they have expended an enormous amount of money on it. They realise that they are simply not going to get a return and so it has ground entirely to a halt. One of the solutions was that the site should be bought by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for £1 and then the HCA would perhaps be in a position to realise the value of that site over 15 or 20 years, working very carefully on that site.

Therefore, there needs to be a mechanic in some way of being able to get some of that value back to the seller to help them go to their board and to help them go to their shareholders and say, "We are prepared to do this". Until that point comes, the thing is stuck solid. There are huge issues around these types of sites, exactly around what Dr Steward is talking about, which are about unlocking those sites. There is no question about that. Ebbsfleet is being stymied by that.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Thank you. We could go on in this area and it might come up later, but we should move on to our third area of questioning, which is around suburban intensification.

**Navin Shah AM:** In the context of outer London covering some 80% of the land area and indeed accommodating 61% of London's housing stock, there is a broad question I would like to put the panel. Maybe, Alison, you might want to start with the responses. What is, in that context, the potential for suburban intensification? We will come to some of the detailed aspects and the nitty-gritty of it.

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Perhaps I can introduce John to answer some of that. However, one broad issue just to head it up is obviously the local political views on what a typical suburban landscape is and how one introduces dense development - maybe flatted development - within that and how it is going to be viewed generally by people who have issues with character areas, traditional streetscapes, etc. That is one issue that we deal with on a daily basis. John, did you want to say something about that?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes. Across Redbridge, there is a variety of character. Ilford South, for example, is a very dense urban area in the west of the borough. Wanstead and Woodford are fairly suburban, quite leafy and very highly cherished.

As part of the local planning process quite recently, just before Christmas we put out a consultation to see whether there were alternatives to the preferred option that we were pursuing, which included the Green Belt release, which we will come to later. We did a consultation cross-borough and we have received 2,500 objections from people objecting a north-south corridor essentially trying to intensify the western side of the borough. It was focused around Central line stations particularly and was a corridor where the densities would be increased considerably in order to get the kinds of numbers we were looking for. It attracted such a violent public reaction because these areas are very highly valued in terms of character and the conservation areas. Density is fairly moderate.

There was a point that we put to the Further Alterations to the London Plan inspector that there is an issue in filling the gap that the Mayor faces - the 42,000 to 49,000 gap - because he has advocated that one of the solutions would be intensification. We have pretty much exhausted that avenue. We have identified 200 brownfield sites. We cannot get the numbers. The consequence of intensification in a leafy outer London suburb is very severe. The inspector actually picked that up and said that that option was going to be very difficult. Therefore, this is something we have to reconsider again shortly, but it would be very, very difficult to pursue that.

There are other problems linked with it, particularly trying to assemble land and build up areas to create reasonable development sites on a holistic basis. We have had examples where we have not had policies that could defend the removal of, say, Victorian housing in a Victorian street piecemeal and gradually getting erosion of character with flats replacing Victorian villas, say. These are things which are just not received very well either politically or by local residents.

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Just as an adjunct to that, obviously that type of infill development happens and we consent it. However, in terms of growing sustainable communities it is really difficult because you are intensifying but the ensuing infrastructure that you need around it is quite fixed. Your schools are there. There are not an awful lot of places you can go to. Can you expand on existing school sites? We have literally hundreds of school extensions planned because we have massive population growth anyway and our schools are very good and very popular and they are an attractor in themselves. People come into Redbridge because they want to access the educational opportunities. It is a beast that is almost out of control.



Those types of intensification areas where they are multiple but on a smallish scale do impact very, very severely on social infrastructure. It is difficult to actually lever in the amount of resource that you need to support that population, as anyone who has ever tried to get a doctor's appointment in London will probably verify. You cannot even get someone to answer the phone, let alone see someone. It is that kind of practical problem. That experience is fuelling getting 2,000 objections. People are really worried about whether they are going to have a life at all. With what they have to deal with at the moment, they perceive that we are loading more and more in on them in suburbia.

**Navin Shah AM:** Is the perception from the community's viewpoint also linked with high-density intensification meaning tall buildings and therefore an adverse impact on character, congestion and all of that? Does that play a major part as well, losing the suburban character and so on?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes, it does. Our tall buildings are largely restricted to particular town centre areas such as Ilford. We are pursuing a housing zone within Ilford and that has a good opportunity to have a different type of offer for people: high-density living, very high public transport accessibility level (PTAL) ratings, very sustainable. That will work.

The difficulty we have is with places, as John [Pearce] said, along the Central line - Woodford, South Woodford, Wanstead - where you have turn-of-the-century housing typologies and open space and then you get flatted development within that. People are quite hostile to that. They are not particularly tall buildings and they are medium-rise, but they are quite different to the normal pattern of the streetscape. Obviously, we have a very articulate bunch of residents.

**Navin Shah AM:** Yes. Broadly speaking, is there a political will to intensify and achieve this sort of growth in terms of housing as well as economic, etc, regeneration that is required?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Definitely, that is why we are pursuing the housing zone in Ilford. The reality is that it will probably be a mixture of different solutions. We are looking at de-designation of some significant Green Belt sites that are - the point is - not fulfilling the proper purpose of the Green Belt. We are not advocating necessarily going into the Green Belt proper, as I would call it, but there are lots of sites where their role is compromised because of development around them or they are contaminated and they are bits and pieces that have been left over. Therefore, looking forward, we would definitely welcome a London-wide review of the Green Belt. John can tell you a little bit more about what we have done to review our Green Belt issues.

**Navin Shah AM:** Is there strong opposition from the local community to developing on Green Belt sites? Is that also a major factor?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** There is opposition, but we have offered a variety of options. Intensification along the Central line was one of them and de-designation of some major Green Belt sites was another. People can see the pros and cons of both of those. Although there is opposition from people who live very near to the proposed de-designation sites, broadly, borough-wide, I would say people think that that is a better and more sustainable solution because you can grow a community over time and provide the social infrastructure. We are talking about places that are near to Tube stations and so there are Green Belt sites that --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Can you say which Tube stations?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Fairlop, which is highly underused, actually.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I think so.

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes, given you have not heard of it! It is a good one if you are ever playing Mornington Crescent.

Yes, they are sustainable. In a way, you could say they are perfect in that they are near good transport infrastructure but no longer fulfil the requirements of the Green Belt. This has been a microcosm, if you like, of the London-wide debate. Do you hang things in small intensive developments off a Tube line or do you try to develop something that is maybe more planned and is able to introduce open space, sporting facilities, schools and housing together as one integrated development? We have the opportunity to do that.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Navin [Shah AM], can I just come in? Alison, your borough is an example because now you are talking about practicalities. The Green Belt, as I say from a political point of view, is inviolable. From a political point of view, I am here locally and also here to protect the Green Belt and at any given time I am part of the problem because as a local councillor at any given time I am going to be objecting to something in my ward. I am a typical example of the political guys that you are up against. You can take the view that the Green Belt is not to be touched and you can have an issue with suburbs where there is strong local opposition. I have seen suburbs that have been outside London, actually - places like Caterham in Surrey - that have been changed completely by a rather weak council. The whole character of that area has been changed and there has been no suitable infrastructure investment. You talked about schools, hospitals and doctors, big urban sprawl, over-intensification and no doctor. It causes a problem.

If you take the view that you are not going to build on the Green Belt and you are not going to build on back gardens in the suburbs, then you turn to your town centres. That is what Croydon has done, largely. Croydon is going to build with the Mayor's consent - and it is a housing growth zone - higher density in the centre of town and to build up. It has that luxury. If you do not have that luxury, you have a problem. You have to squeeze. That is the issue that you have. I would be interested in some colleagues' thoughts about that. If you have a housing target and you are looking at the suburbs and looking at the Green Belt and then looking at brownfield that may have an issue, it is a hard choice. Where are those boroughs going to go? Catriona [Riddell], do you have any thoughts on that?

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Also, we might park --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** We have gone to the local example, but you can see the real issues that somewhere like Redbridge and many other boroughs have.

**Andrew Boff AM:** There is no reason why we cannot adjust the order.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes. It is good if we open this up, but Alison [Young] said something about those bits of the Green Belt that are not fit to be Green Belt. I would like us to look at that under the Green Belt section at the end.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Good. That is fine, yes. I just wanted to make the point. We have a really good practical example. I am sure Redbridge do not wake up in the morning and say they want to be in the Green Belt and the council of Redbridge probably woke up one morning and said, "We do not want to be in the Green Belt", but they feel it has been squeezed. Your options are squeezed such that you are having to consider Green Belt build, which is politically high-risk.

**Navin Shah AM:** Yes, Steve and Chair. Before we open this up to the rest of the expert panel members, I just want to ask you a couple of questions related to your experience and your work. You are not part of any new designated intensification or opportunity area, are you?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Ilford is, yes.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** Ilford Town Centre.

**Navin Shah AM:** OK, yes. How are you dealing with the whole typology in terms of the various range of housing accommodation, particularly family dwellings? Obviously, people have views about that as well and I guess what we as politicians or the local authority might want to pursue.

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes. We are keen to explore different typologies. In previous areas that I have worked in, we have looked at having a different type of model for flatted development that maybe has different configurations of rooms that forms a bit more privacy for people if they want to study or whatever and large, flat footprints. We have explored those. However, the thing there is that you have more flexibility to do that when you are working in partnership and, again, it is probably more the regeneration arm or utilising our own assets. We are fortunate in that we as a Council have more than 40 major sites in our ownership and we are seeking to develop those in partnership and to make sure that we obviously deliver against our housing targets but also regenerate the borough and get sustainable income for the Council. It is in those areas where we have more flexibility and we can push the boundaries a bit more in terms of roof gardens and suchlike. We could get maybe a more family-friendly dwelling profile, if you like, in taller buildings, for instance.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I want to bring in Philipp Rode on the housing typology and on suburban intensification but, Alison, you have just said and we have just heard how pressured you are and you are now telling us you have 40 regeneration sites. Are these on the Green Belt or separate from it?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** They include the sites we are proposing.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** They are designated?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** They are included in those 40 sites, but we have already taken those into account in terms of what we can achieve through our housing target. They are taken already, if you like, in terms of account.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** How many hectares do you have in regeneration sites?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** That is a very good question. I am not sure. I cannot remember the number.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** All right. Just quickly, what proportion is Green Belt and what proportion is not?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** There are three major Green Belt sites, are there not?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes. For the Green Belt, the proposal for release is 187 hectares. That is not necessarily all to be developed. Some of it is already developed. I cannot tell you what the total brownfield area is in addition to that.

**Navin Shah AM:** Chair, it will be useful if we can have those figures both in terms of land area, allocation, both Green Belt and brownfield, as well as what is being proposed in terms of number of units and typology as well. If we can have that, we can follow up and so it will be very helpful.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It would be good to know your heights. Can you just say? You say some are quite tall. How tall?

**Navin Shah AM:** How tall, yes?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** I previously worked in Lambeth and that was tall. The units we are considering in the town centre are 13 or 14 storeys. They are not major towers, but they are tall by Redbridge standards, believe me.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is pretty tall by any standard. On your regeneration sites, how tall are they there?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** They are influenced by where they are. Some of them are going to be low-rise or medium-rise because of the surrounding townscape.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** What is medium-rise for you?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** Ten storeys.

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes, ten storeys.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Ten? OK. Navin, could we bring in Philipp Rode?

**Navin Shah AM:** Yes, sure. Just one very, very last question. Do you have within your design guidance any particular height indication or any restriction on heights, given what you have just mentioned?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** It is guidance that we have in the area action plan for Ilford --

**Navin Shah AM:** It does actually specify the acceptable heights?

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** It is thirty-storey plus at Ilford Town Centre.

**Navin Shah AM:** Thank you. Philipp, sorry, would you like to come in?

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** Thank you very much. My comments are going to be somewhat from the perspective of an observer. I am going to also provide a few international comparisons. I have not worked in detail under the British planning system.

For me, a lot of the discussion I witness about housing location is often code for 'housing typology' and it is important to appreciate that a bit more. What I mean by this is that we make certain assumptions of what is possible when we are talking about brownfield, greenfield and intensification and we make assumptions about the need for that type of housing and to what extent it is desirable or not. Overall, while that code exists, I am always left with the impression that the actual qualitative dimension of this big housing demand, which we are able to very much quantify with an absolute number, is not very well understood. One point was already made about the level of affordability that is actually needed. What is often not understood is therefore the typological consequence of affordability - square metres, how you produce it, more cost-efficient or less cost-efficient - something that is often entirely disregarded. Of course, specifically for London, demographic change, the aging society, the needs of modern families - and I stress 'modern' - I rarely see. There is international migration and cultural size change. There have been dramatic changes over the last 20 or 30 years in the composition of households.

Then there is always this question about the real preference of the current Londoners and the future Londoners. On the one hand, we hear that everyone wants a house plus a garden. There is a big question mark. I know these surveys and how they work. They work in isolation. They do not ask about the trade-offs. We have just recently finished some work on a comparative study across the metropolitan region where almost half of people want to live within the city. However that is defined for them. However, this is something where they accept the certain trade-offs you have. Let me use the example of family housing, where I think the point I am going to make is maybe most clear. Families need houses. That is the very basic assumption in this country. It is very much rooted, maybe, in its particular histories, but it does miss out a few important points. Let us just think about the wider housing qualities families need.

There is generous internal living space. That comes back to the affordability. How can you actually produce square metres at cost efficiency, thinking not only about the cost to the individual but the cost to the community? Then there are quality schools, kindergartens and related amenities, easy access to healthcare, childcare, retail, leisure and nature, and safe streets. Then there is something which is never discussed: short commuting for parents. They want to spend time with their children. How about a dual-income household where both work? They want to have other families close by, access to parks, good air quality and access to nature. Then there comes the private garden. I would argue it is only the last that shifts the debate in favour of the house with a garden. Everything else is either debateable or actually swings the pendulum very much towards far more compact urban characteristics. Other countries have been amazingly successful with different types of urban family housing. Take the Berlin blocks, if you know Berlin. Their high-density, inner-

city neighbourhoods exceed the maximum density we have here in London in terms of housing. That is where the families live with generous public space and low-volume traffic because people do not need to use their cars. The streets are actually safer than many suburban streets. They have semi-public internal courtyards where parents can overlook what their children are doing, not by themselves locked in a private garden with a private swing, no, but with 20 other kids. It is very enjoyable.

It is also possible in new build. Copenhagen's Ørestad combines the logic of high-density living at the edge of the city. It combines urban living with access to nature. Yes, that is the trade-off that we may have if we are building in the inner city for families. Where do we see these hard edges in London where we have really high density, compact development and the cows behind it? It is an incredibly attractive offer for families. Have a look at the Ørestad development.

In the long run, Greater London and the southeast may actually have a different type of challenge, which is the housing stock that is no longer fit for the market and the demand. It is the housing stock that is related to the house typology. In Greater London, 50% is houses. In the southeast, 70% is houses. These are ratios far greater than many European countries as a total have for these house typologies. There is more I want to share maybe at a later stage, but let us just remind ourselves. What is the problem with the house typology? Either we are not going to go beyond a floor area ratio of one and so have a severe limitation on density, or we accept overcrowding, which we do not want. We are just not able to introduce mixed-use at the building level. Yes, we can have high streets, but not mixed-use at the building level. Both are very serious limitations to what certainly internationally modern families are increasingly demanding.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Can I just ask a question on that? What is your evidence for modern families demanding that?

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** We have one example in the Continental European context where Germany has --

**Andrew Boff AM:** What about United Kingdom (UK) families demanding that? This is about what people want, not what planners hypothecate. Surely this is about what people aspire to and want, not what people plan for.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** OK. Let me make my point again. It is a trade-off of multiple dimensions. If you only ask the question whether you want to live in a house with a garden, yes, ideally, in the centre of London --

**Andrew Boff AM:** As many do.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** As many do, yes.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Many, many do live in central London in a house with a garden.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** Yes, but there is a trade-off. That is what I am trying to tell you. At the same time, we do appreciate going to Tesco at 11.00pm with a five-minute walk. In a way, it is the 'five-minute walk' question. How many families do appreciate a five-minute reaching all the things they need? We all live in the topology I outlined, a house-based typology. It is impossible to cater for that need.

**Navin Shah AM:** Do you not also agree --

**Andrew Boff AM:** It is not impossible; it happens.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** No, the five-minute walking distance, if you build suburban - we have done endless studies on London - but if you --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** That is suburbs.

**Andrew Boff AM:** On suburbs? Sorry, suburbs.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** -- live in a house with a garden and you scale that --

**Andrew Boff AM:** Sorry, I thought you were talking about inner London.

**Navin Shah AM:** Do you agree that there is enough historical as well as contemporary evidence that you can have a high-density development without going high and still achieve what local communities aspire for, which is a low-rise unit with a garden of your own, and still have high densities? I would quite like to know what density levels are in those cities that you mention, for example, Berlin and Copenhagen.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** They have 300 or 400 dwellings per hectare.

**Navin Shah AM:** Yes, but it is a question of how do we actually fulfil the growth requirement without diminishing entirely the values that communities hold, which are very vital. You do not want to destroy --

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** Can I respond to that question? It is very important to clarify this is not an advocacy for high rise. We are talking about medium rise, high density, five-storey, but what I am talking about --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is five-storey? What you are talking about?

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** For example, the Berlin block is five-storey. What I am talking about is apartments, generous, big apartments, high ceilings, high quality with a rooftop, with large balconies. Yes, the one compromise you have to make in these typologies is your personal and private garden. My argument is and the future will show that maybe the growth of the kind of modern families London is growing at the moment may no longer have exactly the same sort of trade-off attitudes for desiring this garden so much that they are not willing to look into other high-quality housing typologies where you get the benefits of the commuting, the benefit of accessibility, the benefit of proximity to other families and a more semi-public environment for your children to be brought up.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Are we designing them?

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** We have a few examples. They are probably not yet again, in an international comparison, up to the standard of what we are seeing in the Netherlands, Scandinavia and other parts of Continental Europe, but if you go to new family developments in Hackney along the canal, you can see the perimeter block developments there. Some of them have been granted awards for that design approach. Take the development just on Queensbridge Road and the canal. There is one famous --

**Andrew Boff AM:** Yes, the one that is completely socially exclusive and has no social housing.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** No, it has 50% social housing units.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Which one?

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** I can give you the name.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Yes, I would like to see that.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** There are a few more. There is the whole redevelopment of the former estate housing in Haggerston, the perimeter block, with more than 50% social housing. This also relates back to the costing point I made. I just cannot believe that affordability is higher per square metre interior space in these low-density formations.

What I wanted to say is that the Olympic Village, which came up before, is probably a very high-density, high-end interpretation of it. Its design quality unfortunately is probably not up to that standard, but the logic of creating big public space threshold densities is certainly there and it will be interesting to watch how attractive it is going to become.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I get what you are saying. I am trying to think which development you are thinking about because there have been a few down Queensbridge Road, but the one you are talking about, also as a part of that development, the reason it is so good is that it actually does include some low-rise family houses with gardens --

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** There are different examples and some of them do it.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Yes, there are a number of developments down that road.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** Of course typological mix has an advantage to a degree, but this insistence and also this idea that we lack in London housing typology with a garden to me, quite frankly, is absurd. If I am flying into London and I look outside at what is already there in the city, it feels like there is more than enough of this stuff. Maybe we are not using it for the right people, that might well be, and this could be something which I have not seen studies on and a more detailed understanding is lacking. However, it puzzles me that we are still saying we do not have enough of this garden house arrangement. That is just my --

**Tom Copley AM:** One of the problems is that you have these houses with gardens and a lot of the time there will be an elderly couple there living in a four-bedroom house - and actually this is a different issue - but what we need is more properties for those people to move into to free up the stock and make it more efficient.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Not making it compulsory.

**Tom Copley AM:** Not compulsory.

**Andrew Boff AM:** No.



**Tom Copley AM:** No, more optional --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Can I just put into the pot that one of the - it is in the Mayor's Infrastructure Plan, which goes to 2050 - ideas put forward and it came out of a report from, no, I do not think a representative on this Committee actually, though there are reports from representatives of organisations on this Committee. It was a report saying that 10% - this is not rubbing out suburbs in any way - of suburban homes which are semidetached, looking at parts of roads, I guess, in some areas, but if they were just doubled in density - and these are places, semidetached with big gardens - then you would create nearly 500,000 homes.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Not to cut in, that was the *Superbia* study, which the GLA and HTA designed together. It is a great idea, but invariably the collection of land ownerships would be one issue there and then perceptions and people throwing in their own little properties. If you can deliver it, it is great.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Sure. I just want to throw it out to our international expert and ask what you would do because of course there is massive controversy if you try to do that.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** Thanks very much. The Committee has made a number of very good points and I just want to start off with a few points of information to them. In terms of good practice, I am sure Members of the Committee will also be aware of the Beddington Zero Energy Development (BedZED) in Beddington, for example --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** My constituency.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** -- and also Coin Street near Waterloo as well, which I believe have a good mix of social housing and corporate housing as well as housing for the market. We would commend those as examples of how you can do high-density work.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Can I just say, they have gardens. Those properties have gardens, on the roof, but they have gardens.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** Yes, it can be done.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Can we ask Philipp though how he would deal with that 10% of the densification? You just heard from Jonathan [Manns].

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** OK. Again, as the outside observer, I completely recognise all the difficulties you must be facing. It comes close potentially to political suicide, proposing that under the current arrangements. Since we are talking about a very long-term perspective here and where we are heading in the long run, the first thing that I guess needs to really change is a narrative and an understanding: are we having housing stock in London which is not fit for purpose and fit for the future? If one establishes a political narrative around this and then one is serious about providing the incentives that is needed for people to accept change in their communities, we might have a different conversation.

I am always struck with regards to the change that seems to be possible in some inner London boroughs, Hackney being a good example, where the opposition to densification exists but is somehow mitigated and maybe there is an attitude which also respects the advantages of the additional neighbour next door, the buses running more frequently, there is another health centre and schools massively upgraded. There need to be these trade-offs. As long as it is only seen as a loss, it is never going to work.

The question is at what point in suburbia will there be a moment where urbanity is again more appreciated? Maybe it is to do with ageing populations where, yes, you are being more reliant on what you can reach just simply by walking, having access to friends and families, having access to those who care for you and having simple care at home. Maybe that is going to change the dynamics.

**Alison Young (Chief Planning and Regeneration Officer, London Borough of Redbridge):** Just to note, it is fascinating, what you are saying, having worked in another London borough where we were pursuing a growth agenda but frankly the decision-makers were of a generation where they could not conceive of people wanting to live in that way. They could not believe that we want to provide zero car parking and they were wedded to their car and so the two worlds were colliding and this is really generational change. We have obviously the land use and the patterns that we have in London which no one can dig up and remove; eventually over time, they will be renewed, but particularly if you are looking at a standard planning committee, those decision-makers are going to be looking at some of these proposals and thinking, "I do not recognise this lifestyle. I do not recognise these cultural values. Why you want to be boxed in? Why would you not want your car in your carport?"

We have to go so far in describing different ways of living and getting better examples coming forward, because some of the examples are valid, but they are either experimental or award-winning, which usually in this country means, "Oh, my God". I am not wishing to be facetious, but there is usually a liability attached to some of that. They need to be mainstreamed much more and recognisable to what are normal, if you like, cultural values.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Aspiration, what people aspire to. Just quickly on affordable housing, nothing irritates me more than the assumption that affordable housing people do not have cars and would quite happily be boxed up with no car and no garden. That is the socialist in me coming out. It irritates me immensely that there is, "We will put that high, that high, with no garden and it will not have a car and that is fine". That is a wrong point of principle. OK, if it is right next to East Croydon Station, then that might be kind of fine because you have perfect transport and things.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I feel, panel, a site visit coming on. What we should do is we should go and look perhaps at this block that Philipp [Rode] is talking about in Hackney and maybe we can look at --

**Andrew Boff AM:** I want to know which one it is.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** -- what regeneration means in Hackney because we are going to be looking at estate regeneration from the planning point of view later in the year and the Housing Committee has looked at from their point of view. I would like us to look at from the design point of view.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Chair, we have not talked about this. We have just talked about parking in suburbia and the intensification. I moved on to Barking Riverside and what is the big issue? They did not put in enough parking places. That is the most modern of the regeneration areas and we get it wrong.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** This is not new. London has been absolutely the vanguard of a transformation if you go back 30 years of reinventing inner-city living. Gone are the days where quite so many people are steaming in from Surrey to come into the city. Clerkenwell, all of these places in the middle of London, is now a perfectly good example of highly-desirable properties at the right levels of density desirable to families and to anyone who wants to live there. The whole notion that this urban identity --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** No one can afford to live there. That is the problem.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** No, I accept that, but it shows that the typology is not wrong and that those places can work for the people, who are also people having real choices. They are choosing to live there more and more.

The other thing I want to say is the other example that is not new. There are people who are very, very happy to live in high density in Peabody Flats in the middle of London built in 1880. As affordable housing, I have worked on many on those estates and have known that there are four generations of families who have lived in those apartments without a private garden, working around a courtyard space and have been perfectly happy. They are completely compelling ways of living and I would recommend you go and visit those.

**Tom Copley AM:** London County Council blocks, the old 1920s, 1930s, yes, are lovely.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** There is no question for me that this is the direction. We will probably be touching on this later, but we will look at the green spaces that we have which are perhaps being talked about as redundant or low-value green belt or green belt, particularly in low-density areas, look to seem to be doing nothing.

I was asked to provide a feasibility study which got the Mayor's grant some years ago looking at Burgess Park, which was dead and dangerous metropolitan open land that seemed pretty redundant until not very long ago. What has happened is as the densification of that area has increased and all of those properties over the last few years, the reality is the turning around of that space and that space starting to function effectively, ie starting to recognise that these redundant spaces have a critical role in our future city.

They are not necessary working in lower-density areas now and the odd person might walk their dog across them and everyone is wondering why they are just sitting there empty, but the reality is that is not how they should be. In the future, those are the places that will be where people play, people meet, people socialise and provide the amenity that is going to be necessary. If you take and start building on those, the opportunity for you to then be able to think about intensification on the other sites is lost because you will not be able to service them, because you have built on the thing that gives you the potential for the future for densifying the housing areas.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You are overlapping with the last question on the Green Belt --

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** I am overlapping with the last piece.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** -- but that is well said. Thank you. Now we are getting on to the Green Belt but just before that, Andrew had a short bit of questioning on the rest of the southeast. We are coming back to this later and so we cannot do a lot on it.

**Andrew Boff AM:** We always seem to talk in London about the boundary of the GLA. I am just wondering what the experts here think about the role must be played by the rest of the southeast in meeting housing need that is not just London's housing need but is their housing need as well. What do you think should be the way in which we address that? Who was nodding? Catriona?

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** I will kick off. I think it was Marcel [Steward] who said there is not one answer to London's needs in terms of brownfield and greenfield. It has to be different packages and that applies to where you do it as well, as you say, and a lot of the evidence very strongly supported the very real relationship with - and I do not know what you call it - the London city region, the Greater South East, London and the 'rose', as we used to call it in the London and South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN) days. I am not sure what the terminology is now but basically --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** London's Functional Urban Region or the Greater South East.

**Andrew Boff AM:** A good name is Thames City.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Thames City, yes.

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** Thames City. Whatever way you look at it, the Home Counties particularly, but beyond that, have a very integral relationship with London. As well as exploring all the brownfield options and all the greenfield options and green belt options in the suburbs, it is inevitable that you have to look outside. We have seen over the last few decades that every 20 years or so there needs to be a step change and there needs to be something fairly fundamental.

Just before the regional system was abolished, we had reached that point where we knew that this was coming in terms of London's population, as well as the southeast just growing generally, and that there needed to be a step change and that the incremental approach was not going to work. There has never been a plan that proposes new towns, garden cities, whatever way you want to call it, without national intervention. I just want to put that aside because 'right to grow', proposed by the Labour Party, garden cities, the three garden cities which have already been in the pipeline for years that this Government are very keen on are tiny and they were already there as part of the previous system. We have never had a system where it has delivered that fundamental step change without national government intervention in the southeast generally and so I put that to one side.

There are different options and that is where the Mayor has proposed a summit in March, which is the beginning of a discussion with all the authorities outside the southeast. Everybody will be expected to do their bit, but it does need to move on to look at some real step change and differential spatial options around. That could be anything. It could be around Crossrail 1 and Crossrail 2, in particular Crossrail 2, I suspect, going down to Surrey and Hertfordshire and beyond. It could be a series of new towns or it could be every single part of the southeast has to do 20% more. However, there is a discussion that has to be had. That also leads into issues around governance and how the rest of the southeast relates to London and how they work together to actually consider these options, bearing in mind what I said about how it needs some national accountability here as well.

I know you cannot have a discussion about how much the southeast does without having a discussion around what the Green Belt means in the rest of the southeast. I consistently say to the local authorities around the

southeast that I work with, "This is the Metropolitan Green Belt. You should not be a position where you are looking at incremental releases of the Metropolitan Green Belt. It is a green belt there functionally to support the growth of London in a sustainable way and the rest of the southeast in a sustainable way". That has not happened and it is still the most successful planning policy we have had in this country, frankly.

Again, what Alison [Young] was saying about the political support for the Green Belt, and you may be aware of this, is just a really good measure of how important that is. In Guildford, not a million miles away from here and probably one of the areas that has the potential to really support London's growth in a sustainable way - it is a good business centre, it has a good university, very good links into London and it already has a very strong relationship with London - you have a situation there now where you have a new political party called the Guildford Green Belt Group which has been launched. It is now challenging every single seat in the local council, it is now challenging the MP in terms of this coming election and it is now challenging Mole Valley, its neighbour, right next to London, in terms of their seat.

This has arisen because Guildford took a brave decision to move forward with a local plan. They do not have a local plan - theirs is 2003 - and so they took a brave decision to start looking at big brownfield sites and some green belt. The reaction there was from a very articulate, very wealthy population, and when people say to me they do not really understand the difference between green belt and greenfield, yes, they do. They know exactly the difference. They are very well-informed around this and they know how to play the game. They first of all then challenged Guildford to change the whole system that they operate back from a cabinet system to a committee system because they did not like the fact that the cabinet was proposing this route. They now, as I said, are standing against the current councillors. This is just a tiny example of how this may filter out in terms of the debate around London's growth and the role of green belt.

There was a study a couple of weeks ago by Paul Cheshire [Professor, London School of Economics] and others around the Green Belt and one option is just to scrap it. On a very practical level they need to understand how much this valued by residents in the southeast and in London and in the suburbs. Somebody said it is political suicide. It absolutely is. If a council gets elected to stand against any development of any sort but particularly green belt, they will fight tooth and nail, and the more we have of those councillors, the harder it will be to have that dialogue with London around how the southeast supports this very serious growth. I explain it to --

**Tom Copley AM:** I bet they all live in massive houses with gardens and those are those who cannot get the (Overspeaking)

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** Actually, no, that is absolutely not true.

**Tom Copley AM:** Sorry, it just sort of sounds a bit not in my back yard (NIMBY) ish.

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** You describe it as NIMBY-ish, but I worked for Surrey County Council on the structure plan for 16 years and we did extensive consultation. Yes, there were communities within the towns that said, "We would rather you went for greenfield sites on the edge of town so that we can get more infrastructure and more affordable housing, but do not touch the Green Belt", because the Green Belt is as valuable to whether you live in a affordable house or a mansion in Surrey. It is so precious, and just the name 'Green Belt' raises all sorts of alarm bells and so you have to deal with before you decide how much the southeast is going to engage in this conversation.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Can I just say I am pleased you say that the Green Belt is the most successful planning policy that there is, and I cannot believe what Tom [Copley] said. For me, it is the people who campaign for high rise are the ones who live in a nice Georgian terrace, curiously enough, and it is not people who live in high rise who campaign for high rise.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** I live in high rise.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You do? You are the first one. It is a very small club. I am assuming you do not have a country house.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** I campaigned for it as well.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I assume you do not have a country house at the weekend. Can we just --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** You can slide into the Green Belt discussion.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Before we go on to the Green Belt, really what we were talking about was the southeast and the southeast itself has its own housing problems. Take out London. There are still housing problems there and intense housing problems. Surely those authorities that are bordering London have their own policies in order to develop housing. How would they be assisted by coming in with London for a broader view of the challenge in the southeast?

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** Can I just comment on that again? What we have asked local authorities around the southeast is a significant cultural shift. Under the previous system five years ago, the areas around London, largely because of the Green Belt but because we had growth areas in Milton Keynes and Ashford, were never expected to meet their own needs and have never been expected to meet their own needs. It was done very much on a London basis and it has been done on a capacity basis. Local authorities in Hampshire, Surrey, Buckinghamshire and Kent have done their assessments of housing needs on how much they can deliver without breaching major constraints like the Green Belt and other national designations.

What we have asked them to do in the last five years is have a totally different approach to development, where you have to start with what your needs are and you work backwards. That is where the contention has come, because that is why local authorities surrounding London or neighbouring London have then suddenly thought, "We are going to have to release quite big chunks of green belt to address this". Brandon Lewis [Minister for Housing and Planning] then comes in and responds to United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) saying, "No, actually, that is not what we meant. Protect your green belt, keep your green belt. It will go somewhere else".

It is always the housing is going to go somewhere else. It has not been dealt with. It is just getting further and further and it is sitting up there, this excess need in the southeast that you quite rightly say has to be delivered. Partly that is to deal with the migration of London that has already been calculated into their figures. It is not just what London cannot meet now. Local authorities around the southeast have always had to take into account a certain amount of migration from London. That is just sitting there and nobody is dealing with that, because they do not have to. We have had a huge expectation around cultural shift and how we plan the rest of the southeast that has not actually happened.

We have this huge housing need that all these local authorities have assessed, as they objectively assess housing needs, which they are either not moving with local plans to do it, and that is another really big issue because now you have got a situation - again, it comes to green belt - where you have local authorities who are sitting on the Green Belt. Mole Valley, for example, have withdrawn their local plan and said, "We are not going to do anything", and others have said, "You are going to end up planning by appeal", and they said, "No, we are not because every time we go to appeal, our sites are in the Green Belt and they lose". The housing just does not happen. They are not planning proactively, they do not have local plans in place and there is absolutely no political incentive for them to do that.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I was on the SERPLAN. I was a London rep on SERPLAN in the 1990s. I must say it was really hard to get towns in the rest of the southeast to really look at the kind of things we have been talking about today: intensification, infill sites, brownfield sites, estate regeneration. That was just not on at the time.

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** At the structure plan level and SERPLAN days, at least we did quite extensive brownfield sites in Surrey, which then forced the districts' hands in effect to do that. You are right that there were not the same incentives around brownfield development as there are now, but there was quite a lot of work done through SERPLAN, through the counties and their structure plans to do that.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes, I am not saying SERPLAN was ineffective because it is a great deal better than what we have now, but I am just saying that there was quite a lot of resistance. This was before we had the notion of brownfield first.

**Catriona Riddell (Director, Catriona Riddell Associates):** Also, there was not the same pressure on brownfield sites as well in the rest of the southeast because you had a Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) 9 growth strategy, which was around, "You do not have to build everywhere. We will focus a lot of growth in Ashford, in Milton Keynes and in other parts", and so the incentives in terms of everybody meeting their own needs and the pressure on brownfield sites was not in the same in these days as it is now.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** As a Committee, we are going to look again in much more detail at London's relationship with the rest of the southeast and look at this issue and drill down on it because it is really important and it is well overdue and so we should be doing that. Thank you very much for that contribution and of course come in on the Green Belt, too.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** We have obviously covered some of the points and we have already explored the fact that building on the Green Belt can be politically toxic. It will partly depend on the makeup of the council and its vulnerabilities whether it actually even considers it and that is a point to be made. I will declare my interest as a councillor and someone who is dead against building on the Green Belt, not just for people in big houses, but I have people in flats nearby who enjoy getting out, getting in their car and going to the North Downs and Surrey Hills nearby green belt and enjoy their Sundays. This is about a facility or an amenity for people generally, which is the point we need to make. If you start building on those, those good people will not have that amenity.

The issue is the one that you said, there is demand on housing in Redbridge and other boroughs and if you say you are not, for example, going to be building on green belt, then Redbridge are being more fluid on that, and you have an issue around gardens and you have an issue about brownfield that it is expensive to build on,

where are you going to put that housing? That is the problem that you are talking about and so they will just cut that out entirely and put it out in the ether, which you talked about, and just hope it will go away, which of course it will not.

Going back to the Green Belt, you have to revisit the Green Belt in itself and so I will ask in an academic way because I am on record as being against building on green belt. Does the green belt policy need reviewing by this Mayor or the following Mayor or by Government? Is a review due of the Green Belt? Noel [Farrer] is nodding in a quiet way and Paul [Miner] no doubt will weigh in for the rural communities. Jonathan?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** That slightly misses the more fundamental question as to where and how we deliver growth, which overlaps with the point about housing need in the southeast, because the Green Belt I suppose became most popular as part of a strategy to depopulate London and to deliver new towns outside of it. I suspect that actually we cannot look at the Green Belt in isolation, and in that context, I would quite like to quickly just run through the history of the Green Belt because it is a concept which has become something to everyone.

It has actually been around for the best part of 150 years as an idea and from 1860 to the early 1920s really it was seen as a barrier of a quarter of a mile to two miles wide at the edge of London of an essentially boulevard-like connection of streets and parks to provide a finite limit to the edge of the city. It was driven forward in the 1920s by the Ministry of Health, which then had somewhat responsibility for town planning, and in the context of agricultural collapse, where people were leaving their land to just go waste, we were not meeting our food-growing potential and requirements, and it bubbled under the surface with relatively little support at a political level through the 1920s and early 1930s.

The idea of a green belt was, however, supported by town planners, including Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker [British architects], who delivered the new towns at Letchworth, for example, and similarly Patrick Abercrombie [British town planner], who founded the Campaign to Protect Rural England. They reached a broad sense of agreement that a green belt somewhere probably between four and six miles wide should be established around London, beyond which new development would occur. That was then incorporated into the Greater London Plan, which was the first strategic plan for London in 1944, and Patrick Abercrombie at that point again went for the slightly more ambitious target of six miles from London.

The statutory ability at that point was essentially you had to purchase the land yourself following the Green Belt Act of 1938, and after the first Planning Act in 1947, you had the opportunity to designate it. The Housing Minister at that point was immensely concerned that the idea would not catch on with the general public and was quite desperately - from what I have read at least - trying to encourage people to designate their own green belt of, to his mind, some seven to ten miles deep. We are now in a position where the idea has been so incredibly popular that London's Green Belt in places extends about 35 miles out and covers an area of over 500,000 hectares.

The Green Belt, although we are talking about it in a sense where we are looking at individual sites as they may or may not cling on to the edge of London, some more sustainable or brownfields, it is actually kind of missing the bigger picture, which I believe has to come down to the question of what do we need a green belt for today, what should it look like, and if we were going to start again, would we design and designate the Green Belt as it currently exists? Everyone has their own idea of what is and is not green belt land, what its purpose is and is not.



**Andrew Boff AM:** That is going to be one of my questions to you: what will the Green Belt look like in the 21st century? What would a 21st century green belt look like --

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Paul [Miner] might disagree with me, but I do not think we have a cohesive answer at this point because the defining characteristic of London's Green Belt today is simply that it has no defining characteristic. It is an area full of infrastructure, some Victorian, some more modern. There are informal uses; there is commercial agriculture; there are obviously towns and settlements that have been enveloped, including some of the new towns which we built beyond the Green Belt in the 1950s and 1960s. There is a whole menagerie of different uses, including leisure and recreation and amenity that obviously most commonly starts --

**Andrew Boff AM:** I will leap in. It is a conceptual thing to people?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** It is, yes.

**Andrew Boff AM:** There will be a planning application somewhere and it will be nearby or on a bit of green and people kind of say, "Is it green belt?" That is the first question, and it normally is not. People do not have an understanding of the history of what the Green Belt was designed for.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Exactly, yes.

**Andrew Boff AM:** It has become almost something to say, "It is green. We do not want you building on it and so it is likely to be green belt".

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** That is what makes it such an emotive topic. To an extent that is why people perceive a sense that it is being eroded and nibbled away and there is a genuine sense of loss. The fact that we are not planning for the Green Belt, to my mind, and indeed, planning for the growth of London in the context of the southeast at a more strategic level, is part of the reason for that.

The paper that I prepared for the London Society earlier this year or the back end of last year, which set out some of the history, was intended to kick off a discussion about what London's future Green Belt and indeed the growth of London should look like. At our first event, we had people speaking for and against and dealing with some of the more typical polarised opinions that people have to express. Through the discussion, a number of comments were made from people who had come along, some of whom sit on the Green Belt Council and suchlike and have fought against the loss of green belt in their local authority areas. The comment that kept coming back was, "I would not have a problem with this if someone could tell me exactly how the city is going to grow, because if someone could say, 'This is where we are going to put another 1 million new homes in Milton Keynes, we are going to have garden cities, we are going to densify here, but in order to do this we need to lose some green belt land' then I would not have a problem with it at all. The simple fact is that it is un-coordinated and unplanned, and as a consequence, I am going to push back".

As a planning consultant, that is exactly what people say to me when we go to engage with them for some of our applications, they are saying, "You know what? It is not your scheme per se; it is what is happening in general and the way that growth and development is being delivered". That is the sort of narrative, and Philipp was talking about new narratives of typology. We need to talk about a new narrative of growth and the Green Belt and it needs to be much more joined-up and frank.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Paul [Miner] will have a view on that, no doubt, because that is one version of the truth.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Yes, of course.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I am not sure what that means. Does that mean redefining it? I am not quite sure what you mean.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Yes, what is your subtext there --

**Tom Copley AM:** With these sort of things, you seem to be dancing around the core issue. Do you we redefine it or do we not?

**Andrew Boff AM:** The bit that you have said that sounds implausible to me is that, "It is not this application that we are concerned about; it is all the others". That is completely the reverse of what I hear when people appeal against planning, which is, "It is not about the general principle; it is the fact that you are building in my backyard".

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes, exactly, "We do not want it here".

**Andrew Boff AM:** You have just said the opposite is true.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Obviously people are going to say different things in different situations but to come back to what, Tom, you were saying --

**Tom Copley AM:** I have never heard of someone object to a planning objection over there; it is always a planning objection over here.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** We are having those discussions in different contexts, though, because those responses were coming out of, "Actually, when dealing with this in a non-partisan, broad, non-specific term about how London should grow, then I am happy to talk about general principles and maybe we should let some greenfield go away. Maybe it is outdated and maybe we do need to revisit".

**Andrew Boff AM:** The Green Belt, not greenfield.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Sorry, Green Belt. I am confusing it myself. Maybe we do need to have a discussion. When you say, "It is on your back garden and where you walk the dogs and where you have watched your kids play for the last 20 years and where it is going to impact on the value of your house", then it becomes a totally different kettle of fish.

**Tom Copley AM:** I hate a cosy consensus and it is good to have the two sides of the argument.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Could we hear from Philipp? You wanted to come in before.

**Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities):** Just a very quick one. Jonathan, I was trying to interpret what you are saying and I was wondering if it is along the lines of, as long as there is not some serious regional

planning effort, venturing into the space of the unknown without a green belt is a very uncomfortable feeling. Like many other metropolitan regions, there needs to be a more concerted effort of metropolitan scale planning, where people have simple diagrams that explain 2020, 2030 and 2050 and in the absence of that kind of conversation, it is --

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** You have hit the nail on the head. That is, to my eyes, absolutely right. The Green Belt has been an immensely successful policy.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Why, Jonathan?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** It has been successful in terms of its purpose because it is designed to prevent development, essentially, and --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Stop urban sprawl.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Yes, but it stops it by preventing new development happening. As a consequence, it is very cosy because until we have discussions about exactly where that growth is going, it restricts the ability for people to randomly sprawl in an uncontrolled, undirected way.

**Andrew Boff AM:** What you seem to be saying is what we do need is a review of it as part of a wider debate about --

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** As part of a Greater London Plan or --

**Andrew Boff AM:** You are saying we do need a review?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Yes, absolutely.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Paul, I know you are going to comment on it, but any leader of any council who declares on his manifesto he will review the Green Belt will not become leader of the council.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** I do not deny that.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** We are talking heads around here, but let us get practical --

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** Yes, you are right.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** -- which was Catriona's [Riddell] point. Paul, what about your organisation's view on it? There is quite a strong case further up the end of this table about how perhaps we should be reviewing the Green Belt and potentially building on some Green Belt as long as it is not at the bottom of my garden. Paul, tell me what your thoughts are.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** First, in terms of the green belt policy, there are a lot of misconceptions about what it does and one of them in particular is that constrains all development, which it does not. There are a wide number of categories of development that are allowed in

the Green Belt, particularly in relation to infrastructure. The best illustration of that is that the M25 motorway runs entirely through the Green Belt pretty much and that is not seen inappropriate in green belt policy terms.

We have seen a number of recent studies that have called for a wholesale review of the Green Belt or major changes to the Green Belt to accommodate development. There are two points, the latter of which follows from the former. The first is that they significantly underestimate the value of the Green Belt to society, and following on from that, they overestimate - quite considerably, in our view - the benefits of de-designating Green Belt land. In terms of the significant underestimate, what is not understood is that the Green Belt around London is more accessible to the public than the countryside as a whole. It has a higher density of public footpaths than the countryside overall. It also has a lot of nature reserves which have been allowed to emerge because there has been that certainty that they are not going to be developed in the long run. Also, the Metropolitan Green Belt is relatively high in terms of England's proportion of tree cover; about 18% of the Green Belt is woodland, which is again much higher than the overall picture for England. Also, an interesting point in relation to the Metropolitan Green Belt is that it has 10% of the nation's listed parks and gardens, even though the Metropolitan Green Belt itself only covers about 3.5% of England's land area.

The Adam Smith Institute, with Catriona [Riddell] mentioned earlier, published a report which used the figure which suggested that the value of the Green Belt to society was about £889 per hectare per year and was therefore 54 times less valuable than an open park. What they did not mention was that the study they quoted on the value of the Green Belt was actually a study of a single field in Chester in 1992. Also, the Centre for Cities did a recent report which looked again at the environmental constraints of the Green Belt, but there is nowhere in the Centre for Cities report which shows an appreciation of the fact that large areas of the Metropolitan Green Belt are country or regional parks. One element of Jonathan's [Manns] report which I would commend is the fact that he has made very clearly the point that you have about the Lee Valley Regional Park in the Green Belt and the very significant assets which have been allowed to grow over time because they have benefited from green belt policy.

Similarly, on de-designation, because these various voices like the Adam Smith Institute have underestimated the environmental value of the Green Belt, again they overestimate what is going to be gained from de-designating it in terms of new housing. We hear them screaming these figures that you can get 1 million new homes on the Metropolitan Green Belt if you relax controls on it around train stations, but that would assume they were going to build to a density of at least 40 or 50 dwellings per hectare, which is the average kind of Victorian street or something like that, a quite high-density suburb. It has to be questioned: is that really going to be realistic in Green Belt areas? Some of the Green Belt areas which have stations - for example, we say Iver, Brentwood, Shenfield, Brentwood, also Amersham and Chesham on the Metropolitan line - are already big places in their own right. They are already taken up for housing growth in their own right, and if you are saying that you are going to build a million homes in the Green Belt, you are talking about actually doubling or tripling the size of some of these places.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** What is your view on green belt swaps? I have never really completely understood that.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** It is a suggestion that if you do designate the Green Belt to accommodate housing development, you would then --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Re-designate somewhere else.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** Yes. You would add new green belt elsewhere to replace it, and in our view that would completely defeat the purpose of designation. If you were to designate new green belt, it would have to be much further from the urban area of London. That would actually be self-defeating, in our view, and it is not necessarily guaranteed to be allowed in planning policy because, as Catriona [Riddell] may remember, in some of the regional plans they did actually try green belt swaps.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Has that been tried? Is there a history of it?

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** It has been. Somewhere in the southwest, for example, they tried designating green belt land further out on the edges of the Bristol and Bath Green Belt to replace land that was going to be accommodating further extensions to Bristol, but planning inspectors actually prevented them from doing that on grounds that the new green belt was not justified in green belt policy.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** It does seem bonkers. Does anyone disagree with the fact that green belt swaps are bonkers? Jonathan?

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** It does seem contradictory.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** We need just to go back to Redbridge because at the beginning of the discussion you said, reluctantly or not reluctantly, your leadership there has to consider green belt. With the pressures that you have - you have this squeeze to build; you have your targets, they have to go somewhere and you are thinking about the Green Belt - tell me about that process and challenges, some of the things we have today and how are you going to address those?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** If I could just turn the clock back a bit to the adopted plan, which was 2008, it went to examination and we were unable at that time to demonstrate that we could deliver a ten-year supply in accordance with the Mayor's target.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** On existing brownfield site?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** On any site at that time within constraints of national and local policy being advanced at that time. We undertook to do a review to try to make up the gap that we had then, but it still went through. We started that review. In the meantime we got the population figures out of the census, which showed that Redbridge had grown by about 40,000, population, during that ten-year period, and the projections were that it would grow by another 70,000 over the forthcoming planned period.

We did the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), all those things, and there was still a gap. We could only demonstrate at best a need of about 2,000 homes a year. We could not demonstrate that we could achieve half that. Parallel to that as part of the input into the local plan, we decided to do a Green Belt review because the Green Belt at Redbridge had not really been altered since it was first designed in 1957 through the initial development plan for Essex. It had hardly changed, not a square inch has been lost since then, and in any case the boundary of the Green Belt was quite irrational. It was simply froze life as it existed in 1957.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** They often are, are they not, historic and irrational boundaries?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** I suspect if we had the words 'sustainable development' in those days, we might have ended up with a different boundary, but that is at the side.

We embarked on the Green Belt review. The purpose of the review was not to identify land for housing as such. It was to review whether all the parcels of the borough continued to meet one of the Green Belt purposes, taking each site in the Green Belt, dissecting it parcel by parcel, and seeing whether it met one of the five purposes: whether it contributed to avoid urban sprawl, whether it helped to separate communities, whether it protected historic towns and so on. The result of that review was that a number of sites did not continue to meet the Green Belt purpose, and I gave you a figure earlier. It was about 187 hectares that were identified as potentially not continuing to meet the Green Belt purpose. The question was not: should it be developed? It was just whether it met the Green Belt purposes. The next question: if it was not Green Belt, how would you use it? That was a different question.

Parallel to this, we were attempting to find sites. We decided to try to focus development around certain criteria. It had to be near public transport. It had to be near a town centre to assist the vitality of the town centre and to be served by it. There had to be sites which were significant sites that could be developed comprehensively, rather than piecemeal in infill sites all over the borough, that could offer an opportunity for holistic, comprehensive development of a range of uses, different house types and so on. The members were quite taken with the idea of a contemporary garden suburb type of approach.

In the preferred option to the local plan which went forward for consultation, we identified five investment areas, three of which include substantial areas of Green Belt. Within that, we identified sites for infrastructure, schools and housing, and in total we put forward about 2,000 homes within those five investment areas within the Green Belt.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** When are you talking about again? When was this published?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** It was published in 2013. It went through a public consultation exercise. Initially it was fairly quiet. The objections started to come forward, not necessarily on the grounds of Green Belt loss, but on the grounds that some of the uses within that area were existing playing fields. The concept here was to try to develop areas of playing fields, but before they were developed we would find sites, very often within a stone's throw but within the Green Belt proposed to be --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** You are introducing another toxic issue, are you not?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** It is toxic. It is all toxic, but it is an attempt to --

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is contaminated. We just talked about it.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Toxic playing fields under there.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** It is all an attempt to try to get a balanced approach to growth. We try to throw all the balls up in the air.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** It is a difficult position.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** As a result of this, it was before the last election and so the cabinet member at the time decided to put a brake on the process and announced that we would look at all other options to growth to try to make up for the loss of the key growth area in the Green Belt. We did a consultation exercise, which I described earlier. One of them was a north-south access through the existing built-up area, increasing densities, intensifying uses and densities in those areas. We proposed to release the Green Belt proper, as I can put it, the Green Belt that still served a Green Belt purpose, and we proposed the option that was being considered, and we suggested the intensification of some other key development sites. We put them forward. The first one, the existing preferred option, received objections only from either the users of the sports ground that was concerned, sports organisations and the people immediately around.

**Tom Copley AM:** Were you going to replace the sports facilities that were lost?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** That would be embraced in the local planning policy that before the development could take place there would have to be a replacement. The biggest opposition was to the intensification of the existing built-up suburban area. Massive objection, for the reasons I explained earlier, big objections to the loss of Green Belt proper, very, very strong attachment to the Green Belt in our borough, and not much objection to the intensification of the other strategic development sites. We are left now to progress this forward, going back to our cabinet in April, with the advice of a panel, the --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** That is, lead with the shortfall. Logically, the narrative you have just gone through, there have been certain options that you are not going to do, and limited options that you are going to do. Ultimately, Redbridge is still going to have a challenge and a struggle around the targets.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes. We still have a target. We have a gap.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** Yes, as does the Mayor.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** There is a gap. We believe, if every London borough did what we have done, we would probably help the Mayor close the gap that he has faced. We advanced that at the alterations inquiry. Yes. There would still be a gap, but if we take out these Green Belt sites there would be an even bigger gap. I forget the result of the examination, but I suspect the chance it would be found unsound would be increased.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** What are certain sites of greenfield that have gone through the process and you are likely to take forward to development?

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** This is the next stage. I had better not pre-empt what happens, but most --

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** No, they are still in play.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** Yes. At the moment we have a preferred option. We have gone out on other options, gotten bigger opposition, and it is quite good involvement. A lot of interest in the issues, which has been very positive, and we are now having to report those back to members to say, "This was your preferred option. We put out some alternative options, as you asked us to do. This is the response. How do you want to progress the local plan?"

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** I should know this, Chair, and John Lett (GLA Planning Officer) is somewhere in the audience. If they go through the process and then release a level of greenfield site and go for consent, does that have to go come up to this building even though the number units are less than typical?

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Yes, because it would be a departure from the plan.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** From the London Plan, and then that adds a whole new political context to it, does it not?

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is all very interesting. Can I just say? If we want to end at 12.30 pm, I am very keen that Noel [Farrer] comes in because we are hearing about the tradition or the original purposes of the Green Belt and there are other purposes that are 21st century purposes. We are looking at building, but there are others as well. Do not let me interrupt you.

**Tom Copley AM:** Sorry. I just wanted to say that it sounded rather like - and you said this garden city idea - the early conception of the Green Belt that Jonathan was talking about of the streets with gardens.

**Paul Miner (Senior Planning Officer, Campaign to Protect Rural England):** Ebenezer Howard [British initiator of the garden city movement], correct me if I am wrong, originally developed his concepts on the basis of urban villages, the first one being in Ilford, and so we have a tradition. 1840.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** Maybe I start with Ebenezer Howard? The garden city movement is an interesting one. Is it not interesting that here we are today - I have been very interested to hear what Philipp [Rode] has had to say - grappling with the idea of housing growth, and the garden city is a political expression that we are using a lot, and it is an idea that is well over 100 years old? It is almost irrelevant conceptually to meeting the needs of a modern city. It just happens to sound good. We have not been able to think utopically in this country since the complete failure of Modernism in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, which we have then had to dismantle in the 1970s, and which we have subsequently dismantled. Thinking big, which is what this meeting is all about and which the Mayor needs to be thinking about, is absolutely valid, and it is interesting. Because we have not thought big in the context of modern living and modern lives for so long, we are grappling right the way back to Ebenezer Howard.

If you were to interrogate the garden city even slightly, the amounts of equations that he came together with and the amounts of food that he was going to grow in his time, on average everyone eats between four and six times more food than was in his calculation. It is nonsense to look at that model. We have to look at what the needs - a good question for Jonathan [Manns] - of the modern Green Belt are going to be today.

Someone touched on forestry. The Green Belt has much higher forestry, but there is a European Union (EU) target that our country consistently fails to hit, which is about the fact that we are supposed to be getting



above 25% afforestation across the whole of Europe. Sweden does it; Finland does it. Some countries do it. Even Germany manages to get there. We are way down. We are way down. We only have about 16% forested in this country. We actually have a commitment to Europe that we are supposed to be upping that. The green belt form is one of the only areas of the country that actually meets that afforestation requirement.

It touches on the fact that the Green Belt has some much larger strategic things that are forgotten about. Local government are not thinking about that EU afforestation target they need to be thinking about in terms of Green Belt. It all has to contribute. There is a bigger picture that needs to percolate down that is important first.

Then if you start thinking about it, the Green Belt is part of - and I like the idea that is part of it - Metropolitan London. Of course it is. It has a major contribution to the city. One of the reasons why London's growth has occurred, the idea that the Green Belt should stifle that growth, is that it has had the opposite effect because it increases the desirability of the whole piece. The Green Belt is a fundamental chunk of the reason why we love London. What needs to happen is that once we have people living in town, in these desirable places, in hubs - and I am very mindful of Philipp's [Rode] conversations - we have to say, "OK. What is the role of the Green Belt in that conversation?" It is huge. If you add 3 million more people to London, the Green Belt has a bigger job to do. What we have to do is flex the muscle to make sure that the Green Belt is doing that job, and that job is twofold. There is a human side and there is a natural, environmental side. I am quite interested in the human side. It is about leisure. It is about amenity. It is about access. There are a lot of people that live in green belts, in big, fat houses, have private properties and do not allow anyone in, and it is actually quite exclusive. I know that there is also a lot of access. It is a little bit like a national park sort of thinking. It does not have the focus of thinking. It is vulnerable to all of the different local authorities that work around it.

Maybe one - thinking about the Mayor - is about saying: how do we ensure that we have integrated cycle routes that we can show very positively for the people that are living in London, in a very short journey, you can be at this point here, and then you are at the beginning of a healthy living agenda and all the different types and aspects of leisure and recreation that you could possibly want, from the elderly to the young, to children, to play? You should be getting off a train in the Green Belt, and what should open up in front of you? I want to see someone renting bikes. I want to see someone with a fantastic woodland play area, so you can go off into the distance and you can do that. I want to see things that are going to mean that the Green Belt is absolutely contributing to the quality of lives, of the future of the people of London. It is not about taking chunks out of it and dealing with your housing needs bit, because you need the Green Belt in your city to do its job.

On the natural systems side, we know, in relation to climate change and climate resilience, the Green Belt has to perform a job. If you understand the issues, which you all will, around East London Green Grid, Lea Valley National Park, that finger of the national park leads out to the Green Belt. The connectivities of nature coming into London: air, oxygen, quality of air. All absolutely essential. Biodiversity in relation to species, habitats and ecology, as well as the animals, the fauna, that are supported by it. Absolutely fundamental for the enjoyment of the countryside.

The biggest thing: inner city housing, for me, the change, when we do the landscape improvement works in housing estates in inner city areas. One of the biggest changes for me is when I turn around to a resident, which we did the other day, an old boy, and he turned and said, "It used to be horrible here when there were just cars in all of that courtyard. Now you have completely greened up that courtyard, I see seasonable change." This morning I woke up and I listened to the birdsong. Life is all about that. The human, intrinsic

relationship between people and nature is absolutely fundamental. The Green Belt is a critical part of that, and getting people there to do it is fundamental.

Back to the climate side. We need to be thinking about natural aquifers, the lakes and flood resilience for London. How are we going to manage with our water? How are we going to ensure that we have ground absorption in those areas to make sure that it does not actually come into London as well, so that maybe things are going out to those sorts of areas? The landscape is now a very technical thing in relation to green infrastructure (GI) and all of the things it needs to provide, but those technical things will always double up as being opportunities. If we create reservoirs for water, if we create natural aquifers, then guess what? We can still use them and they are leisure opportunities as well. They are not inappropriate.

I do think it is right that we do need to relook at the Green Belt so that the question, "What does it do? What do we need it for?", is answered, but let us be answering that. I agree; therefore, we are not in the business of setting it in aspic. The Green Belt is not something that is just a red line on a plan and you do nothing. The idea that there are chunks of Green Belt that you are looking at where nothing happens anymore and it is just sat there, that makes it vulnerable. That is actually an abuse of how we should be thinking about how we use our Green Belt effectively. By using our Green Belt - and, frankly, from my point of view I have to say greenfield as well - sites effectively for what they need to do, then you are in a position to be able to evolve a city that is a modern city, a sustainable city in the future, with many, many more people in it.

I can go into detail - there are all sorts of issues on biodiversity - but the point is well made. I am happy to take questions.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** On the woodland point there is this report, Natural Capital, which is saying that London is as dry as Istanbul - it is not saying this, but just as an aside - and apparently we need this afforestation, the amount of woodland that we need in the country, and we are well short. The Green Belt, as we heard earlier from CPRE, 18% of it is woodland, and there is an argument, and it is not just for this country, that cities which are developing very rapidly and concreting over, of course, so much of their surfaces need to be ringed with woodland in order to give them an aquifer and to give them water.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** That is exactly right. The loss of trees, particularly in large areas of trees like the Green Belt, is absolutely reducing cities' resilience and reducing resilience to climate change and flooding and, therefore, absorption of water, and it is significantly reducing the aquifer that we need for water supply.

That also applies, for me, in terms of bringing far more trees into the city as well. There is no question that high density does not mean not green. People have talked about roof gardens. People have talked about green walls, green roofs and green streets. You can do all of these things creatively through design and create, in significantly more dense areas, a lot greener areas as well. Increased densification does not necessarily mean that it becomes sterile in terms of its green environment.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** Are there reactions to that? We have a few moments and then we must wrap up.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I fully hear what you say about modern living but, as far as I know, people getting a pram up the stairs has been with us for centuries.

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** You get a lift.

**Andrew Boff AM:** They work so well, do they not?

**Noel Farrer (President, Landscape Institute):** They should. I do think the debate is on the quality, is it not? The quality means that the lift works, I hope.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Yes. Long-term maintenance costs.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** If there are no closing points from the panel.

**John Pearce (Head of Planning Policy and Environment, London Borough of Redbridge):** I could just make a short point just to clarify. When we were looking at whether the sites within the Green Belt in Redbridge met the Green Belt purpose, it was not in terms of use. Because the land was vacant, we were not suggesting that did not serve a purpose. It was being assessed against the criteria for the Green Belt, ie was it built upon? One of the sites used to be a mental asylum within hundreds of acres of open land. It is now a general hospital. Is very heavily built up. Hospitals used to be an acceptable Green Belt use. They are not now. It is only in terms of whether these areas were built upon and whether they contributed in terms of the purposes of containing the spread of London.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** I understand.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Surely everyone here understands that what the public sees - we just represent the public; that is all we are - is every time you give a little on the Green Belt, a mile is taken. An absolute mile. The arguments for clarifying bits of Green Belt in Redbridge are the same arguments of saying, "Hyde Park is really big and could do with being a bit smaller and having a housing estate on it".

**Tom Copley AM:** That is ridiculous. That is ridiculous.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Those bits of the Green Belt in outer London are as important to those residents as Hyde Park is to the residents in inner London.

**Tom Copley AM:** Not every single bit of Green Belt is equally important as every other piece of Green Belt. Surely it is not possible for that to be the case, Andrew. You are being elitist.

**Andrew Boff AM:** What I am saying is that residents see those arguments as used for opening the door --

**Tom Copley AM:** A piece of scrubland in Barnet is not as important as Hyde Park. That is just ridiculous.

**Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chair):** You are being elitist, Mr Copley. You are being elitist.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I am sorry. You are being elitist.

**Jonathan Manns (Director of Planning, Colliers International):** This is why you need to take a comprehensive view -

**Andrew Boff AM:** A piece of scrubland in Barnet, which people use to walk their dogs on, is less important than Hyde Park?

**Tom Copley AM:** It is not necessarily the case that every single piece of Green Belt is of exactly the same importance as every other. It is a ludicrous thing to say.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Hyde Park is really big.

**Tom Copley AM:** It is like saying that every piece of land is as important as every other or every piece of housing is as important as every other. It is absolute rubbish.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Hyde Park is very big. You would not miss it. We could get a lot of housing land by filling the canals.

**Nicky Gavron AM (Chair):** It is time to bring the meeting to a close. Can I thank all the guests for their attendance. The discussion has been very useful, and we need to review and take on board all the issues that have been raised today, which we will do.