

GRIMLEYS HUB CRITIQUE

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John,

Good to see you yesterday.

I would be grateful if you can keep me abreast of any papers (I am particularly thinking here of the summary of the London Plan timetable/Borough strategies etc that you have been asked to prepare and future meeting venues/times) issued in association with the above as the future planning strategy for the suburbs is of great interest to me.

From recollection, you were asked by the commission to put forward a number of hypotheses for debate at the next meeting. The chair suggested that contributions from individuals would be welcomed.

Listening to the debate yesterday, a couple of points struck me, and putting the two statements above into one, I wondered if I might volunteer some hopefully thought-provoking hypotheses for your consideration/evolution which might find their way to the debating table.

I have identified 6 which I set out below, in long form (for sense) and **emboldened** in short form. You will no doubt take a view on how these might best be presented to your members.

1. 'That in identifying a series of superhubs rather than promoting the balanced regeneration of all suburban growth points, development will be stifled across the wider suburban realm to the detriment of the mayor's stated policy objective of a suburban renaissance'.

Discuss: 'Superhubs will suck investment away from a wider regeneration of the suburbs'

2. 'That in prescribing 'superhubs', other growth points will be artificially constrained by an inflexible policy hierarchy, in conflict with the existing and tested principles relating to the hierarchy of town centres'.

Discuss: 'Hubs and other growth points should be able to rise and fall in the hierarchy's

3. 'That in identifying the most probable drivers for future growth and by planning for an expected market out-turn, any plan created will be insufficiently flexible to extract and promote suburban growth from an unexpected market out-turn in a market that, arguably, no-one can predict'.

Perhaps I can explain this further for clarity - for example, a plan based on 'evidence' that Green Industry might flourish in the hubs and which therefore specifically encouraged this might flounder if in actuality Creative Industries grew and wanted to locate instead alongside the Crossrail line - rather than promote growth and regeneration the policy could become an unintentional hurdle. The more prescriptive the policy, the less useful it might become.

Discuss: 'A prescriptive strategic policy that strives to achieve a pre-determined ideal/single solution will frustrate market led opportunities as they arise'

4. 'That, firstly, the identification of a singular 'West London Opportunity Area' superhub will fail to capture the diverse investment that might be associated with a 'composite hub' given the geographical diversity of offer of a series of nodal points in this London quadrant; and secondly, that a similar failure could result from the identification of singular hubs in the other London quadrants.'

Discuss: 'Hubs formed of a series of geographical growth nodes each with different specialisms are likely to be better able to respond to market forces'

5. 'That significant 'single use' zones (whether currently retail [e.g. Westfield] or employment led [e.g. Park Royal]) are only appropriate for designation as hubs where the supporting planning policy context envisages diversification to generate sustainable patterns of landuse into the future'

Discuss: 'Existing single use zones should be identified as hubs and promoted for diversification'

6. 'That in anticipation of the absence of an ability to fund major infrastructure delivery (and in the face of competing objectives for cash towards other priority objectives even when funding becomes more readily available) any growth strategy should be based on existing and committed infrastructure projects, whether through intensification at existing nodes or through the introduction of new nodal growth points on existing and committed routes in places where, but for the absence of that infrastructure, business would otherwise choose to locate.'

Discuss: 'Given funding constraints, hubs should not be promoted in areas that do not benefit from existing or committed infrastructure'

I trust that you find these of some use and look forward to attending the next meeting and understanding the committees emerging thought process.

No doubt you will call if you wish to discuss/clarify any of the points I have advanced!

Kind Regards

Julian