

A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS

Transport Workshop
9th November 2016, 9.30 – 13.00

Strategic Priorities for a Growing City Regeneration & Housing Table 3 Session 1

Facilitator comments in bold
Respondents in regular text

These notes are a summary of the conversation

Session 1, Table 3

Facilitator, Mike Keegan, Policy Manager in Planning Department at TFL,
Paul, Hackney Council
Paul O'Neill, Manager of Office for Theresa Pearce MP Erith and Thamesmead
Rachel, Green Party group on London Assembly
Ian Henson, Network Rail
Giudia Andrews, LLDC
Roy, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Sally Crew, Southwark Council
Tim Reckler, GRL Regeneration Team

The first task is to go over the three priorities. We've got a couple of things on the hand-out – the green diagram is the population growth in London, which is skewed towards the east but also in areas such as Croydon. Significantly, 6 million more trips a day will be generated by population growth. In the other diagram, employment growth is concentrated towards the Docklands area. What this means for transportation in London is that people are more likely to be traveling by rail and underground. You can also see an increase in car use as the outer-city populations grow. This puts pressure on the rail and road networks. Also, note that the pie charts comparing 2014 and 2041 show how things will be if we continue doing what we are doing now, not what we are aiming for.

On the backside of the hand-out we can see that housing affordability is an issue. London is becoming increasingly less affordable to live in and costs of travel are a part of those essential costs in addition to housing. We want to make sure London remains an inclusive city. How does it remain a city where people with middle incomes can afford to live in? Regeneration: people are paying a premium to be close to transport links. Growth: 40% of London's growth will be in the east region and around the Thames.

What is really interesting is in the Thamesmead area, there was nothing much happening. Then where we put in the transport links, things start to happen. The question is, do you put it in after development or put it in to meet current development? We've seen a massive change in a short amount of time: massive concentration, and regeneration. They are not aiming for the conventional street layout but rather people-friendly design. There will be huge issues in getting to the Crossrail or Abbeywood, which has ignited these changes.

So what would you suggest, investing more in infrastructure?

Absolutely. TFL did a load of work, a road-crossing, and hidden in the reports was some clarity about job growth around that area. Theresa did a response to the consultation. There are a lot of people arguing for a road-crossing. The issue is that the road network south of the river is not that good. What you don't need is people coming across the M25 and getting stuck there on the Gallions Bridge.

So there's the threat of traffic generation?

Yes.

I would like to raise the issue of timing and certainty. There's pressure to deliver housing, and uncertainty about when that will happen. The housing market catches up with infrastructure. This is important for Boroughs because we are the ones who have to go through the planning stages and applications.

So the question is how can we have more certainty about housing?

Yes, there's a very structured process about approving infrastructure that dictates timing. There's a whole different timing around housing, and those two processes don't always relate to each other and create local issues and pressure to deliver housing when you are not certain if there will be transport in that area.

In terms of funding, generating it and capturing housing to invest in transport, is there an issue as well?

There's not enough money, and if there is, it competes with other facilities – educational, medical, and so forth.

Funding is an issue, because you need to be able to fund infrastructure. Land value funds infrastructure. We need to adjust the way we actually pay for these things. This is central.

What is the Abbeywood experience?

With Peabody and Thamesmead, they're putting in a lot of money -,

It's a bit different with Crossrail 2. Someone can build a lot of tower buildings around the station to raise land value and that can pay for the transport links.

Picking up on a couple of points: I moved from Brenton to Dalton. House prices over the past years have gone up about 30%. People can't afford houses in Brenton. Having these transport links I think will push people further and further out from the city.

Just to play the Devil's advocate, is that part of the journey of London? Part of a natural system of economics?

I think it's the local people who are being pushed further and further out, the ones who are the heart and soul of those communities.

So is this a threat to community cohesion?

Yes. I could see in twenty years' time, this being a real issue.

And this puts a further pressure on transport, because people from further out will be coming to London. This in turn has an effect on business. It won't be easy to find people close by who will work at minimum wage to do basic jobs.

Businesses on high street in Brenton are feeling this effect already. They are really struggling.

My perspective is a bit different. People are very vocalized about extending transport where I live. You have to concentrate on the areas that don't have that much housing and getting transport links to those areas. Pricing people out is kind of inevitable. The issue in a bullet point is delivering transport links, then delivering housing.

There are parts of London that could do more to help house the population, so it's important to develop the transport systems to make sure everything plays its part.

We're now seeing people move increasingly into outer London. We're trying to get Crossrail Two to Essex. What we need to think about is not only planning for London, but also the whole sub-region because there will be people forced out of London but working there who have to get into the city.

So for people commuting over distances, that makes it even more important for Network Rail. Clearly you're a major deliverer. What would your perspective be, Ian?

There are some corridors now which are not credible or fundable solutions. Anything that can put attention into those corridors would be good. Funding is very tight, particularly getting private contributions.

So from a railway development perspective, you're saying it's essential for external funding to come in?

Yes.

From the GRL's perspective, I feel like there's something around integration of different transport modes. People will want to switch from one to another. We could target broader areas, not just those concentrated around the stations, and increase the encasement areas of stations. There's evidence of how we can start to tackle that with the urban integration project. It's not just developing rail and network stations.

There's very much a focus here about the journey into work. What Tim is saying is that there's a much broader transport journey outside of that, and that should be recognized. So how do we design for that? This is where the discussions about walking and cycling fit in, since those are not represented in a strong way.

That's a good point – making sure infrastructure is integrated with walking, cycling, and so on. To what extent should we cater for car use, freight, deliveries, that sort of thing? In terms of regeneration and making better places to live, what can we do with car use?

People have given up their cars because the transport links are so good, and parking becomes pretty scarce.

My son recently gave up his car because it didn't make any sense to keep it since he could use transport and he only needs it for trips to IKEA.

90% of the issue is about service. A very small part of what we talk about is cycling, walking. How do you manage servicing and create a great public space, how do you create a good community?

So we've talked about new housing developments. Do we have any thoughts about regeneration in existing communities?

You haven't got the option of flattening and restarting so you have to live with the situation you have. So it's about getting people out of their cars.

How far should the transport development go? Should we show a lot of leadership or let it be a local decision?

We are making changes and bringing greater transport links to areas, and people are going to complain about not being able to park their car.

Is public transport attractive, providing affordability, security, ease of use?

I've come from a Northern town, so down here the system seems simple, affordable that people up North would dream of. I think certainly in London I couldn't complement it enough.

TFL's got a lead role for taking this, and not the least because of the air quality issue. Discouraging car movement. Transport strategy should have a key role and should take the lead in improving air quality.

Transport in London is good but unpleasant. From 45 minutes to an hour you're squashed on a train with a million other people.

I think in certain areas that happens, and pinch pots of time when that happens.

In summary, the issues we've identified are traffic generation, certainty, the question of funding, development, gentrification and pushing people out, access for low paid employees, focusing on areas where there could be more housing, issues about London and access to neighbouring areas, the need for development and housing to contribute to the case for rail improvements, the need to put walking aside so there isn't so much a cliff around those areas, the need to improve the quality of public transport (recognising it's quite good but can be better), and the role of leadership in reducing car use.

Strategic Priorities

Table 4 Session 1

Facilitator comments in bold
Respondents in regular text

These notes are a summary of the conversation

Session 1, Table 4

Gareth Fairweather, Moderator

Daniel Jackson, Skanska
Murray Woodburn, London Borough of Newham
Paul Harper, GLA
John Cox, Brent Court
Jude Freeman
Kevin Towmey, OPDC

The theme for this table will be Regeneration and Housing. I will kick off discussion with general points of discussion and go around the table for your comments. I do have some material here that we can use and it shows where growth is at. We also want to think about challenges. It's perhaps best for us to start off with the fundamental question about what we feel transport's role is being in regenerating London and delivering housing as needed. The first point is in delivering housing that we need. Please give your general thoughts.

Can someone clarify the number of homes we need a year. Given that we build only half of 50,000 homes. Does this number take into account of the backlog.

At the moment, the target in the London plan is to develop 42,000-43,000 a year. The London plan presently acknowledges that population is 49,000 and that we really need to be delivering around 60,000 a year to meet the backlog. We expect that the new plan would address this.

I think we all accept that poor transport being directly connected to unemployment.

In East London we have the land and the developers. We just don't have the transport. We need a big ticket transport item to facilitate the development of existing networks. In terms of unlocking the huge number of houses that we have to deliver, big ticket items will support that. Crossrail 1 has been around for us in East London for around for 2 years. We will continue to lobby for Crossrail 2. Once we get that then we can to deliver to the dark blue areas in London that is in the map given here.

What do you all think these big ticket items need to do? When you mention employment, is that a key factor?

Productivity. If you want to live there, your expectation would be that you can get to be able to work, live and play. The problem with a big ticket item is that if you have a big and bleak housing estate at the end of the rail line, it would be unappealing for residents.

Mixed use. There's an issue about everyone living in the central activity zone. We need a multi-centric model like Croydon and Stratford where we have reverse commuting to increase employment. We can't sustain present demand in Central London if people cannot work close to where they live.

I think the transport network now, being radial, does lead to what you are describing.

Orbital connections are obviously quite important. We need a better connected circuit. People are commuting across and around London on their daily journeys rather than simply going to the centre and back.

I remember the by-setup of the Outer London Commission. In 2009, there was a discussion about having a few centres of concentration like Heathrow, Stratford, and Croydon but it got killed off by George Osborne because other boroughs didn't like this idea. In terms of market requirements, if you are a significant company you must have your office in Central London.

I think there are some improvement with HQ companies seeing they don't have a need to be in Central London but we need to achieve the public realm quality of Central London. It's the reason why Stratford is succeeding in getting funds to pursue this idea. We need to focus on that sort of experiential design and environment.

Yes, you also need that appetite for that type of growth. You need the local investment and the major connections.

We need to consider road pricing that isn't mentioned in the plan. I think there's a huge gap in your planners to leave out pricing in the agenda when we talk about regeneration. This needs to be on the agenda.

(general consensus)

I think our challenge is so great that carrots are of limited value and there are not enough sticks.

I think there's an issue around tenure and varied identity especially in the East London projects. There is a difference between family units and where their successive generation would like to live in the next 5 years. We found that the intermediate family unit typically end up in a shared occupiers situation. We need to address family accommodation. Do they live elsewhere and why? What are the granular transport provisions for these people? Maybe we can address the housing issue that way. There is too much focus on the opportunity areas, the big major and high density projects. We need to look at medium density solutions and how it impacts people because these are poorly addressed.

Yes, we need to address that quality of housing and its impact. We also need to be aware and avoid gentrification such as high value schemes that has an impact on pricing schemes.

Already in Stratford, £6500 for a 2-bedroom flat is laughable. In Edinburgh where the price of living is high, you can get a semi-detached Victorian villa for a fraction of that price. We clearly have a supply problem in that sense. It doesn't help that developments are bought off-plan by people who don't live in those homes, let alone see them. We have had 2 developments on Stratford that was not marketed at all in the UK and they were sold out. That is creating a kind of tension in the housing market.

Is that something that can be regulated?

If there were primary legislation- yes, it could be fixed.

You get your CIL and Legislation 106 for benefits but it stipulates how they are sold. There is also the integrated transport strategy to consider an overall view about how transport should move around green space and residential areas. We need to figure out why they can't sell half of 50,000 new homes that are built every year.

Profitability is controlled by the speed of production. Small house builders have been wiped out of the London market. There's always an affordability issue that has not made that viable.

We are looking at developing our own private rental vehicle model. And that supplies housing to people who are socially in need of housing. However, in the longer term, this initiative also insulates us from what the government can choose to give us money wise. Because we are becoming landlords, it has a multi-pronged outcome.

Some boroughs can build housing themselves, but they are limited. There is a cap on how much borrowing you can accrue.

Are there some opportunities for a funding model for an individual borough which has borrowing benefits from say, pensions. Or a long term partnership? Does this get considered?

Funding models are something we are looking at for the Royal Docks. The potential is in the huge amount of land, but of course there's no infrastructure and connectivity and the former industrial sites need to be converted to look and feel like a city. The people who live there should get a decent experience. We are looking at a model which is borrowing in advance of our developmental receipts. We've got an enterprise there which is ready for its development. We are waiting to draw down the money and deliver the infrastructure which will in turn generate money to accumulate receipts. It's a way to get around spending £300 million on transport on public ground.

Is there a cash benefit in delivering housing there?

But if you build a house there, will it be empty for long?

With the infrastructure there, you could build a car free block for 3 blocks of houses. That would be the benefit.

The consequence isn't really that there will be nobody living there. The real danger is that in time you don't have a mixed population, and that it becomes the last resort for most people. The area might deteriorate over a period of time if the transport and network system doesn't progress. It needs to be future proof and be as desirable as when it is first built.

In that case why did TfL put Barking station on the viaduct and have no possibility of extending on the Thames?

There are drawings that suggest the extension via DLR.

I think it's worthwhile thinking about the role of public agencies. TfL wants to maximise use of parcels of land which were once worksites or lands removed from their current use. Or it could be that there are policy change to certain industrial areas that aid in this.

Isn't it the case that TfL will only sell to the highest bidder although it is used for housing? TfL is never going to meet demand, let alone for social housing if they work this way.

I don't think there's a straight answer for that but there's a role for growth towards paying for transport investment, and balancing that to provide transport affordably to the public.

Just a quick note, that when I'm talking about transport I'm talking about bus and cycle/walk, whereas he's talking about Crossrail 3.

I talk about transport typically about using the car, because I live in a village in Northamptonshire where it's necessary. But actually, I'm largely impressed by the potential Canary Wharf cycle bridge that does not have a road on it. It has great vision for being greener and better connected. I think it's fantastic.

We need an end-to-end solution like cycle hubs and walking routes from there to stations to ensure a sustainable trip. It's very challenging to justify that expenditure for pedestrian and cycle facility because the density of movement isn't there. However in Stratford, there's a type of buyer emerging in the house market who have their access to car clubs. This is a crucial option.

There is 0.2% of parking space per house and that includes disabled parking.

In outer London, this is going to sway the market to 20-year-old professionals, rather than families.

We are doing a lot of work to see how that would affect the family unit.

I think there is also a lot of talk about East London and Stratford, where there is strong appetite from growth for a car-free area. There are other parts of London without this desire and appetite. Should we shy away from those areas? Should we invest in other areas for transport investment or for interventions?

Socially, the way Woodford is 20 minutes to Liverpool Street helps people to choose to work on the Central line so they can operate normally for food, send their children to school or attend social meetings.

Out of London Boroughs, there is a relaxation of car parking. Barking is the king of the car economy. Brent Cross is supplying many cars every day.

In Waltham Forest for example, there is a push back from the community to those proposals for a sustainable approach. Undoubtedly we face opposition and issues in our greener areas.

We haven't mentioned technology or what the future is. In terms of transport planning for 2050, we have the vision of trams. Because it is a long term vision, we're not given any access to planning or announcements. For private finance guys, if we are in the first 10 years out of the 50 year investment stream, and then sell it to a pension fund then we've got an idea of certainty and commitment. These long drawn out plans are ineffective.

Waltham forest was able to design the experience because they got the big investment. They've been able to describe the feeling you get walking down the high street or existing town centres. We want to replicate successes and recalibrate mind-sets.

Yes, and also the perceived impact of introducing cyclists to traders is terrible. A lot of it is about education on what works better. A lot of developers actually want to free up car dependency. If there were monetary schemes to support this, it would have better development.

Is there anything else anyone would like to say?

I just think that the single important thing is congestion and we aren't going to solve it without roads pricing.

Orbital connections was in the mayor's manifesto.