



Summary of the third meeting in the fourth series of TEN Design for London, Palestra, 19th July 2007

Produced by

URBED
26 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8HP
t. 020 7831 9986
f. 020 7831 2466
e-mail: n.falk@urbed.com
website: www.urbed.co.uk

July 2007

Contents

Present	1
Apologies	1
1. How can Design for London engage with the Boroughs?	2
2. How can we improve the quality of design for high density housing schemes?	2
3. How can we better fund our public spaces?	3
4. What makes London, London?	
Future meetings	3



Summary of the third meeting in the fourth series of TEN Design for London, Palestra, 19th July 2007

Present

Peter Bishop, Director of Design for London

Marc Dorfman, Chief Planning Officer, LB Redbridge

Pat Hayes, Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, Ealing Council

Seema Manchanda, Head of Physical Regeneration and Development, Newham Council

Shifa Mustafa, Assistant Director of Planning and Environmental Control, Haringey Council

Brendan Walsh, Director of Regeneration and Community Development, Ealing Council

Nicholas Falk, Founding Director, URBED

Anne Wyatt, Administration Manager, URBED

Apologies

Andrew Armes, Head of Development and Design, Milton Keynes Council

Chris Donovan, Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning & Regeneration), Bexley Council

Paul Evans, Strategic Director of Regeneration, Southwark Council

David Hennings, Director of Strategic Planning, Haringey Council

Tom Jeffrey, Director of Environment and Leisure, LB Sutton

Ms Emma Peter, Corporate Director, Development & Renewal, LB of Tower Hamlets

Camilla Ween, Interim Head of Land Use Planning, Transport for London

Owen Whalley, Head of Major Project Development, Development & Renewal, LB of Tower Hamlets

The third TEN group meeting of the fourth series started with visit to the Global Cities exhibition at the Tate Modern. The exhibition looks at the changing faces of ten dynamic international cities: Cairo, Istanbul, Johannesburg, London, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Mumbai, São Paulo, Shanghai and Tokyo. It explored each city through five thematic lenses; speed, size, density, diversity and form. The overall impression is that London is quite unique because of the extent of its greenery and open space.

Peter Bishop, Director of Design for London and former TEN Group member kindly hosted our meeting, which was held at their offices in Palestra which is just opposite Southwark Underground Station. The meeting kicked off with a tour of the building, home to the LDA, Design for London and shortly TfL, led by Architects Tarek Merlin and Uwe Frohmader from Alsop. The novel looking building is in fact quite conventional in its design, and its high BREAM rating comes from its location, and redevelopment of old offices.

Briefing was circulated in advance including a list of Design for London projects and a copy of their brochure. Design for London distributed a further description of their work at the meeting. Marc Dorfman handed out copies of a PowerPoint presentation he has produced on the Planning White Paper (he also e-mailed copies to the TEN Group).

TEN is grateful to Tarek and Uwe from Alsop Architects for giving up their time to show the group around Palestra and to Debbie Mathieson and Peter for hosting the meeting.

Peter explained how Design for London is working with major designers on a number of strategic projects, such as Acton Square, Potters Field and the Victoria Embankment, as well as dealing with major plans, such as the East London Green Grid, Woolwich as an area of opportunity, and streetscape guidance. This work has raised a series of issues, which formed the structure of the meeting: engaging with the boroughs; improving housing design; valuing the public realm; and what makes London unique?

1. How can Design for London engage with the Boroughs?

Peter Bishop emphasised that Design for London (DfL) is a resource. They have '*an hour for everyone policy*' when any borough, regeneration organisation, developer etc can come in and speak to someone for an hour to get informal advice DfL can also provide proofs of evidence. There is an informal relationship between CABE and DfL. Discussion points included:

- DfL could be involved in the masterplanning process by offering a critique at an early stage before the masterplan gets to the point of no return
- They could also produce a list of good designers, architects etc and a list of those to avoid
- There is the potential for London to act collectively on the elements that make London different, and that shape impressions, such as transport corridors and nodes
- The big problem is the limited design skills to tackle such huge amounts of development.

Marc Dorfman suggested a new initiative whereby planning staff would be given time out to work with DfL at their offices on design projects. This secondment would develop design skills and the ability to judge what is good design, and give them the confidence to sit down with developers and speak with real authority.

2. How can we improve the quality of design for high density housing schemes?

In his first six months working for DfL Peter has been shocked at the large number of awful high density housing schemes he has seen.

- The pressure to produce as much affordable housing as possible is threatening quality

- Planning needs to move from being judgement based to being standard based?
- Planners need to develop negotiation skills if they are to provide leadership (for example by making trade-offs)
- Major problems where more guidance is needed is on how waste should be tackled and the design of public and play space.

3. How can we better fund our public spaces?

There is a real problem of justifying putting public funds into the improvement of the public realm. Where it has been done successfully, as with the Shaftesbury Estate, it has involved packaging contributions from the landowners and the local authority. Peter is therefore seeking a budget of £15 – 30 million aim for public realm investment.

- If the public realm is right, everything else should follow (which may mean relaxing some of the other requirements)
- The basic problem is that as there is so much demand in London, you do not need to bother about the quality of the public realm
- There is a need for guidance on the public realm and high density housing around transport hubs.

4. What makes London, London?

The final issue was how to enhance what makes London distinctive, which is not just the main central features, but includes the suburbs where most people live.

- There is a possibility for sharing experience, for example in dealing with ‘growth points’
- Design panels with DfL and local architects could help
- It may be possible to work up a training programme that would get support from the Academy for Sustainable Communities, for example as a Learning Laboratory, through which the TEN Group could help advance the cause of designing a better London.

Future meetings

The next meeting will be the study tour to Berlin which will be held on the 27th and 28th of September (PUT THE DATES IN YOUR DIARIES). The thinking is to start with an introduction to the planning system and projects possibly at the City Models exhibition and then visit Kreuzberg and Mitte, providing contrasting views of how to deal with high density housing. Pat Hayes recommended Prenzlauerberg in the evening and as a great place to stay, and has suggested places to visit, eat and sleep. On the second day we will head out of Berlin to Kirchsteigfeld, Potsdam a new suburb and one of the first examples of new mixed-use residential and working areas in East Germany after the large-scale high-rise housing areas built in the former GDR. Bob West has given us contact details from a previous trip organised by Camden Council, and URBED has a former colleague (an urban designer) who lives in Berlin, who has offered to help. Anne will be sending out further details of the trip including flights, trains and hotel in the next couple of weeks.

The fifth meeting of the series will be held on the 25th of October in Harlow and will be hosted by Andrew Bramidge, Chief Executive at Harlow Renaissance, and will include a visit to the award winning scheme of New Hall, and a discussion on how Harlow is to grow in the context of the M11 Stansted to London corridor.