



London's Suburbs – Unlocking their Potential

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April 17th 2007

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Executive Summary

The State of the Suburbs

The future of London's suburbs holds the key to achieving many of the priorities and objectives in the London Plan. London's historic strengths have been its scale and diversity, made possible by a superb network of transport links which was once the envy of the world. The city grew in the 19th and early 20th century as a 'city of villages', which makes it quite different from other 'world cities,' or major European cities like Paris, Berlin or Madrid, with their rigid plans and higher density central areas. Indeed the semi-detached house with a front and rear garden is both an enduring symbol of Britain's suburb and an icon for the British way of life. Whilst, London's suburbs as a whole with their lower density housing continue to be popular, they suffer from neglect, and face many threats, which, if not addressed, could become serious.

Today the health of London's suburbs is threatened by rising congestion and travel times, unaffordable house prices, and growing areas of social exclusion. In addition, there seems to be a lack of political will at a regional or national level to take on these challenges. Whilst later alterations to the London Plan have brought welcome new sections on the suburbs and the environment, there are still concerns that the Mayor's focus is on a few grand projects, such as Crossrail, the Thames Gateway, and the expansion of Canary Wharf. The myriad of suburban centres have untapped potential for making London overall a more sustainable city by reducing energy consumption, saving waste, and generally improving the quality of life. These places have been neglected in the past and there is a danger that this will continue. Instead of relying excessively on centralization, it could bring wider benefits particularly in terms of the environment to think of London as a complex network of interconnected centres, and to put greater effort into improving those places where people spend most of their lives and bring up their families. It could also improve their quality of life by reducing the need to travel long distances to work.

This report synthesises a host of research reports, as well as conversations with a range of experts in different parts of London. It puts forward new ways to ensure London achieves its declared aims of being an exemplary sustainable World City. It aims to inform the imminent discussions around the alterations to the London Plan but, more importantly, is the start of a much more important conversation that needs to occupy key decision-makers in the capital over the coming years.

At present the London Plan and the Further Alterations offer little hope to suggest that a stronger network of sustainable suburban centres will emerge. The report calls for

Smarter Growth and some institutional changes in order to create such a stronger network – the key specific recommendations are now considered.

Key Recommendations

- 1. Economy: Encouraging growth poles in the four corners of the capital.** These would be substantial economic centres with good transport links to each other. The centres would contain much of the emerging economic activity that had no obvious reason for being in central London but which could still derive benefits from clustering together – examples, might include knowledge-based industries and environmental industries. Transport links need to be improved so that suburban workers can also access jobs in OMA growth areas (thereby lessening pressure on London's already stressed peak-hour transport system). More generally, efforts should be made to encourage local employment in other suburban areas by developing a network of enterprise hubs along the development corridors in many district centres and on business parks, to complement what is already happening in the rest of the South East and Central London and to make the most of London's entrepreneurial talent. These hubs would include provision for suburban workers to have an office and online connection to their offices but not have to commute into London – electronic commuting.
- 2. Housing: developing sustainable family housing through many more model schemes.** The GLA needs to encourage every borough to draw up proposals for 'eco neighbourhoods' that will apply the principles of sustainable suburbs and mixed communities on a significant scale. There should be internationally prestigious demonstration projects on how to provide model schemes for families. To tie in with this there will also need to be efforts to develop an environmental construction and maintenance sector that can offer jobs for lower-skilled workers in the suburbs, (for example in installing insulation or condensing boilers to cut energy consumption).
- 3. Liveability: reasserting the role of local district centres as the hub of neighbourhoods with improved management, the provision of new services, and a mix of uses.** Boosting biodiversity through extending 'green chains' and a network of residential streets where pedestrians and cyclists would have primacy over cars, and where the resultant improvements in public health would restore suburbs to their role as great places to bring up a family.
- 4. Transport: tackling congestion by reducing car use on short journeys and upgrading a hundred public transport interchanges to cut journey times and make them more pleasant and affordable.** A concerted effort should be made to promote the orbital outer-London rail link that has long been talked about – this

would travel rapidly between major centres at peak hours and then every half hour. There would also be slower stopping services to ensure that smaller centres between the growth poles did not suffer, with greatly reduced off-peak fares, measures to encourage cycling and walking, and a ‘smarter’ approach to parking controls.

- 5. Institutional Change: improving the profile and importance of the Inter-Regional Forum that aims to link developments in the three regions of the functional London region.** There is also need for some form of ‘Sustainable Suburbs Section’ within the GLA – to learn from best practice around the World, to monitor developments in the capital’s suburbs, and to ensure that best practice is applied (including the use of the GLA’s Tomorrow’s Suburbs toolkit). Such a unit could, for example, keep a close eye upon the extent to which social and racial segregation was occurring in the capital and seek to act upon this where it was deemed appropriate. It could also enable Boroughs to overcome resistance to new housing by being able to demonstrate the benefits. Lastly, the major financial infrastructure projects, notably around transport, point to the Mayor requiring greater finance-raising powers. At a smaller scale the neighbourhood and district realm improvements need funds – here Mayoral fund-raising powers are again relevant (particularly as it allows richer areas of the capital to subsidise poorer ones) but so too are local tax-raising powers. One system worth trialling would be using a charge on new housing (a little like the Milton Keynes Roof Tax) to generate revenue that would be ploughed back in local improvements, such as improving interchanges between different modes of transport.

Introduction

The London Suburbs

One way of defining the suburbs is to simply say that they are Outer London – an area that makes up about 90% of London in land mass and houses about 61% of its population. The definition of outer London used by the Office of National Statistics includes the London boroughs of: Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Bromley, Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Sutton, Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond upon Thames. Certainly, these areas are not central London but such a typology, whilst useful for looking at borough-wide socio-economic data is somewhat crude as there are many places in the inner London boroughs that have suburban characteristics. The recent (late 2006) amendments to the London Plan included a new draft policy specifically focused on ‘The Suburbs’. However, the definition of suburb is vague – a supporting paragraph suggests that it is all London outside the Central Activities Zone (CAZ).

The term suburb implies a type of development as well as simply being a non-central urban location. Suburbs are places where the predominant character is of low-rise, relatively low-density housing and industrial areas, laced with local centres. In London, as elsewhere, suburbs have emerged in stages: older pre-world war 1 suburbs driven by new railway and underground lines; inter-war suburbs with their post-war consolidations driven by motor transport and underground extensions including ‘metro-land’. The outward spread was contained by imposition of the green belt in the 1950s, but now extends beyond Greater London’s administrative boundary to places like Virginia Water in Surrey or High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire.

In its various work in this area URBED have suggested the suburbs can be narrowed to two basic typologies: older, often denser and mainly inner London suburbs (extending further along some railway corridors, e.g. up the Lea valley, in west London and along eastern Thameside), and largely lower density suburbs in outer London, some of which spread out from formerly free-standing townships with distinct centres, and characterised by lower densities and green spaces. An additional feature in both areas has been the development of large social housing estates, which in older areas often occurred through clearance of former slums. These locations vary from busy thriving centres to quiet backwaters, and from prosperous residential areas to those facing inner-city type problems. URBED also offer more nuanced typologies – including ones that introduce the industrial and business activity that occurs in suburbs. These are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table I – Differing Suburban Typologies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • historic inner • planned • social housing • suburban towns • public transport suburbs • car-based suburbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suburban centres • pedestrian catchments to those centres (termed “Ped Sheds” in the jargon) • suburban heartland (the residential areas more distant from centres) • suburban employment sites (strategic employment locations and other employment uses away from town centres). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • garden city • Victorian railway suburb • blue collar suburbs • commuter suburbs • public sector estates • affluent car based suburbs
URBED (2004)	URBED with TCPA (2002)	URBED with TCPA (2002)

The character and unique appeal of London is as a City of Villages. The capital contains nearly 200 district centres and 1300 neighbourhood centres, each with their own identity and character, which grew up around what at the time was an advanced suburban transit system of trams, underground and suburban railways¹.

The Key Issues for the London Suburbs

Suburbs are mainly residential areas, and the existing employment base has gone or is eroding. Many suburbs are thus not self-contained in terms of having housing near to employment opportunities. This is a logistical problem in terms of a transport network that may be over-stretched with commuters and, an environmental problem in terms of needless journeys. The solution is either to build housing near jobs (which would, most likely, mean large-scale house-building in central London) or for more of the capital’s jobs to be located in the suburbs. For some areas the problem is not travel to work but an inability to secure work at all – such places could be an obvious target for inward investment in sectors with low skill requirements from its workforce. The nature of local work is also important. The London Plan mentions increasing the quality and number of part-time employment opportunities for local people. This can also do much to support the ‘equalities’ agenda as women can dovetail various caring commitments with work.

The first ‘Business and Employment’ section of this report looks at the changing sectoral composition of the economy and the evidence on the generation, retention and attraction of business in the suburbs. Important here are the future of leisure and retail that have

¹ Nicholas Falk and David Rudlin (2002) City of Villages, GLA

been important aspects of the suburban economy in the past but which face increasingly uncertain futures in many areas. The extent to which certain development pressures, notably for housing, are consuming industrial land is also considered. Section two, 'Housing', looks at the capital's projected housing needs, the extent to which this need is felt in the suburbs and the extent to which the suburbs can accommodate this without their fundamental character being affected. Linked into this are concerns about the density, choice, quality, sustainability and affordability of homes. If residents are to be attracted to (and retained in) suburbs it is not just a question of giving them the type of units they want but also about urban design quality, protection of green space, the role that town centres can play as hubs and the quality of public services. The social fabric is also important – issues of deprivation, social capital, social inclusion and social cohesion between different classes and racial/ethnic groups. London suburbs are no longer the racially homogenous and prosperous places they were when built. All of these 'Liveability' factors are addressed in Section Three. The fourth section looks at transport, notably road and rail, and the projections for its use in the coming decade and beyond. A key aspect of transport debates, at least in so far as suburbs are concerned, is the possibility for better orbital links that link up suburban centres and therefore make them more attractive locations (as opposed to conventional radial routes that ferry commuters to and from the centre of London). In each section efforts are made to draw on international examples of innovative practice.

Realising London's potential depends on a healthy relationship between the heart of London and its inner and outer areas. However, while the suburbs deserve greater attention, many in the suburbs do not see themselves as living in places that exist to serve central London or the greater good of the capital – they see them as places that should be developed independently (URBED 2006). The report attempts to look at what the needs of the suburbs are and at the extent to which the London Plan, in light of recent amendments, addresses these needs. At the end of each of the four sections there is an attempt briefly to summarise what has been discussed and, more importantly, to suggest some possible ideas worth considering to achieve a much better future for London's suburbs.

Strategic Issues

All of the above developments need to be set within several wider frameworks. Crucial here are the increased house-building and employment growth in the Outer Metropolitan Area (OMA) – beyond the Mayor's control. This OMA growth offers opportunities and threats for suburbs – the key for the London Plan is to maximise the former and minimise the latter. Recent work by the LSE has identified an employment trough in the suburbs – between a strong and growing central London economy and similar prosperity in towns such as Reading and Watford. The ideal would be for the suburbs to benefit

from the economic growth and, conceivably, see housing provision in the OMA taking some of the housing strain from London's suburbs. An improved inter-linking of the fates of London and the OMA could be achieved through the Inter-Regional Forum – a little-heard-of body that coordinates the work of the London Development Agency (LDA) with its South East and Eastern region counterparts (SEEDA and EEDA). Achieving all of the above is not within the gift of GLA planners or even the other functional bodies in the GLA Family (TfL, MPA, LDA and the Fire Emergency Planning Authority). There are also the London Skills Commission/Board, the North London Strategic Alliance, West London Alliance and the South London Partnership.

Section One – Business and Employment

Employment Growth

The Geography of Projected Growth

Central London is expected to see the vast majority of employment growth in the city. There are forecast to be some 636,000 new jobs across London: many of these will be in East London, including the City, Isle of Dogs, and Central London (LP 2004). Recent LSE work predicts that between 2001 and 2016 Inner London's employment will grow by 17.6% and London's periphery (such as Watford., Chelmsford and Reading) will grow by 12.7%. By contrast Outer London is a relative trough – just 3.9% growth predicted (Gordon 2006). The Further Alterations say that 70% of jobs in London are currently located outside the CAZ and predicts that 64% of the job growth will be outside the CAZ over the Plan period. It needs to be remembered however that the 'area outside the CAZ' includes Canary Wharf where 110,000 additional jobs (13% of London's total) are envisaged. 20 'outer London' boroughs, would only gain 10% of London's projected overall employment growth (for 2016-26 this would improve to a 29% share).

Outer borough growth is likely to be uneven – for the period 2003-26, GLA Economics' predict that: West London (with 5 boroughs of the 20 'outer London boroughs) is forecast to perform better, with 45% of the total, though still under 10% of London's overall growth (2003-26), whereas South London (with 6 boroughs of the 20 'outer London boroughs) fares particularly poorly, worse than outer East London (5 boroughs) and worse still than North London (4 boroughs). This amounts to only 3% of the London-wide total projected growth. The ten boroughs which contain elements of the CAZ are projected, in total, to contain 87% (2003-11) and 58% (2011-26) of London's projected growth. Ten outer boroughs are projected to lose jobs up to 2011, with figures unlikely to improve until 2016.

The Further Alterations state that 'most of London's Opportunity and Intensification Areas and Strategic Industrial Locations are in suburban London'. This is true for the SILs, but of the 28 Opportunity Areas, the main locations for growth and regeneration, 10 are in the CAZ, a further 10 in the Government's Thames Gateway Growth Area, leaving only 9 in the rest of London.

A report for the London Councils by Martin Simmons (2006) notes that the Mayor now recognises the need (see London Plan Further Alterations Policy 2A.6-24.) to revive the stagnant economy of much of outer London and, consequently, has identified five 'development corridors'. He claims that linking central London through outer parts of the capital to growth zones in the wider south east, presents the best opportunity to revive outer London through its centres and other development nodes, located on or

linked to key rail investment corridors. However, the 'corridors' are not continued across the London boundary. The wider corridors would take in: Thames Gateway; West London/Heathrow and the 'Polynet' arc further west; Wembley/Brent Cross, Watford and Luton; Stratford/Lea Valley to Stansted; Wandle/Croydon to Gatwick (Simmons 2006). This may not be too disastrous as long as there is co-ordination between the London Plan and those of its neighbouring two regions - currently not occurring.

Sectoral Shifts

Sectors and Areas of Decline

Many industrial suburbs have not yet recovered from the loss of their major employment source, particularly light and heavy industry, and have quite high levels of long term unemployment and people on disability benefit as a result. This is particularly the case in places like Wealdstone in Harrow (Kochan 2007), which grew up as industrial areas. Outer London has low unemployment levels relative to Inner London, but still has pockets of high unemployment – 4% of wards in Outer London had rates of 10% and over and 45% had rates above the national average². Employment in London is below the national average, especially for minority groups. Manufacturing jobs in London are expected to decline by 80,000 over the period to 2016.

The fortunes of retailing in the suburbs is important. London's suburbs contain more than 60% of its town centres. The larger of these have not suffered greatly by major out-of-town development, such as Brent Cross, Bluewater and Lakeside. The growth of out-of-town shopping generally has changed shopping patterns – larger centres have managed to survive or recreate themselves e.g. Bexleyheath, despite the impact of Bluewater, but many smaller district and neighbourhood centres are struggling. This struggle is partly the result of general decay and neglect but has undoubtedly been accelerated by the replacement of industrial estates with retail parks, for example along the Purley Way in Croydon, and through the impact of superstores. Local high streets in places within striking distance of big shopping centres, are struggling to fill empty shops and attract customers such as Sidcup and South Norwood (ES 06.03.01). Research by GLA Economics (ref) shows that smaller centres that have been losing out can then suffer from decay and anti-social behaviour, creating a vicious circle of decline.

Growth Sectors

The Further Alterations suggest that there will be some employment opportunities in wholesale distribution but the future of manufacturing in the capital will be largely restricted to high value-added and design-led manufacturing – of the sort being seen in the Thames Valley and around Cambridge. The Alterations offer the welcome suggestion

² DMAG Briefing 2003/26 November 2003 Unemployment in London: An analysis of 2001 Census data GLA 2003

that synergies between science parks and universities will be explored – the capital lacks a major science cluster – although there is no major effort to champion a role for the suburbs in the new technology, exporting, ‘knowledge economy’. For all the talk about cultural and creative industries, little is being done to provide seedbeds or incubators for enterprise in the suburbs.

In the Further Alterations the main sectors of growth in the suburbs are seen as essentially consumer (retail, leisure etc.) and public services. The London Plan sought to concentrate the supply of retail and leisure facilities and other services in the most accessible places and spread them between central London, town centres and development areas such as the Thames Gateway. The amendments urge stronger emphasis on the role of retailing and leisure development in rejuvenating town centres. If realised this will see more people shopping in towns rather than on retail strips and more residents and workers taking leisure locally rather than travelling into central London or elsewhere in London. This is happening in many centres but the challenge is still the smaller district centres, many of which are also transport nodes.

The Finance and Business services sector is projected to provide over half of the gross total growth in employment over the next fifteen years. Greater London Enterprise has noted the need for 7.7 million sq m more floor-space for half a million more office jobs. The Outer London office market is weak however and suburban office accommodation has suffered with rents of between £20 and £25 per sq ft making it uneconomic to develop new space. The suburbs are sandwiched between the Central Activities Zone which has some of the highest rental values in the world (greater than Tokyo and Manhattan) and the office market beyond the M25 and in the London fringe areas such as Weybridge and Reigate. The Further Alterations predict a continuing contraction in the demand for industrial and office space in suburban locations at least until 2016.

There is a need then to understand why locations such as Reading and Guildford are at such a major competitive advantage to outer London. The recent Polycentric Mega-City Regions project (see Hall and Pain 2006) found that leading edge professional business services (law, accountancy etc.) are mainly in OMA boom towns such as Reading and Cambridge to serve the local industrial strengths (such as IT in the Thames Valley and biotech in Cambridge). They are not often parts of central London business clusters that have decamped to towns in the OMA. They can serve local business and their workers can often be housed in cheaper housing. The need for suburbs is to look to generate some towns like Reading within their borders – for example, one in North London, one in the South (probably building on the existing strengths of Croydon) and so on. The key question is what activities could be generated/retained and attracted to the suburbs and what activities really have to be in central London – many environmental and knowledge-based industries do not. Hopefully, such growth can occur alongside OMA success and

not at its expense. Also, the areas in and around these new suburban employment hubs will hopefully be sufficiently attractive that the entrepreneurs and employees will also want to live locally.

Sources of Business

Business Retention

The Plan identifies Strategic Industrial Locations (SILs) to protect land for manufacturing, wholesale distribution and a number of other industrial activities that are seen as having growth potential (logistics, waste management etc.). Suburban land is however under pressure from housing development. While people need homes they also need jobs – a system that builds places for people to live but denies them places to work is unsustainable. The Further Alterations refer to the management, enhancement and ‘where necessary protection’ of London’s industrial capacity which ‘lies almost wholly in the suburbs’ but also restates the policy for a net total release of 39ha. p.a. mainly in North East and South East London. There may also be a similar issue for offices – the Plan proposes selective renewal of the office stock including mixed-use redevelopment of outmoded offices. There is a need to monitor land release (i.e. change of use) – a West London Alliance study in 2006 found that at least 37.16 hectares of employment land had already been released by March 2006 against a target set out in the West London Sub-regional Development Framework of 40 hectares to be released by 2016³. There may also be uncertainty in West London which, in contrast to North London, has no assurances that surplus (employment) sites released will be “outside the SIL framework”. Disposal of land for housing means that, to all intents and purposes, it is permanently lost for business despite projections which suggest that after about 2016, demand for business space could take off in the suburbs. Another danger is the loss of industrial sites to retail development away from town centres, which will neither add to the stock of jobs or create the kinds of jobs that are most needed locally.

Business Generation

The cities are no longer the main source of new enterprises. The business formation rate in 2001 was highest in the South West according to Barclays Bank, with pleasant cities like Bath and Taunton leading the way. London suburbs did however get a look-in - Ilford coming in the top ten. In the post-industrial era, economic activities become increasingly compatible with housing. There are already signs of higher levels of self employment/live style businesses in parts of suburbia - often coupled to the higher skill levels and helped by broadband and other IT advances. The Further Alterations do include mention of encouraging home-working and live-work space.

³ Managing the release of employment land in West London for non employment uses by Phil Leask – May 2006

Measures to support new business can include: encouragement to make more of the links to Higher Education, many of whom are based in outer London, and to develop spinouts close at hand. West London already has the Brunel Science Park and there are interesting developments on the edge of London which might be replicated elsewhere in more suburban London. The London Science Park at Dartford on the edge of South East London is a good model. It forms an important part of The Bridge, a 264 acre mixed-use site that is being developed by ProLogis Developments Ltd and Dartford Borough Council as the first major regeneration project in the Thames Gateway. Located off junction 1a of the M25, just south of the Dartford crossing and close to the River Thames, The Bridge will provide a total of 1.5 million sq ft of business space, 1,500 new homes and a range of innovative facilities, such as a 'primary school of the future' and the new Fastrack public transport system to create a lively community where people will want to live, work and bring up their families. The first phase of The London Science Park is the Innovation Centre, The Nucleus, which will deliver a range of services for growing and established science and technology companies. The Nucleus, operated by START International will open in March 2007, while plots at the main Science Park will be available from summer 2007.

Encouraging the Suburban Economy - North West England Case Study

Bury Metropolitan District Council, a suburb of Manchester is seeking to secure a significant proportion of the 100,000 new jobs projected in Greater Manchester in the next ten years by promoting itself as a centre for the knowledge economy, which will support the growth of the city as a whole. 48% of its working population commutes into Manchester, which the council says is unsustainable. The council also fears that failure to diversify the local manufacturing base will leave the town over-exposed to declining sectors⁴. The council's action has seven strands which involve both encouraging and supporting knowledge based businesses, up-skilling local employees and retaining existing 'knowledge workers' by ensuring the provision of housing and other amenities The council is seeking to promote enterprises which serve businesses in Manchester city centre but cannot afford the rents there. It is also creating linkages between local higher education institutes, local businesses and business support services to support the development and attraction of knowledge based businesses.

More generally, measures to encourage business start-ups can include: developing more business incubators, starting with redundant public buildings, and encouraging the kinds of 'wire-free' cafes that would attract people working from home to make more use of their local centres. Efforts might also be made to create a culture of suburban

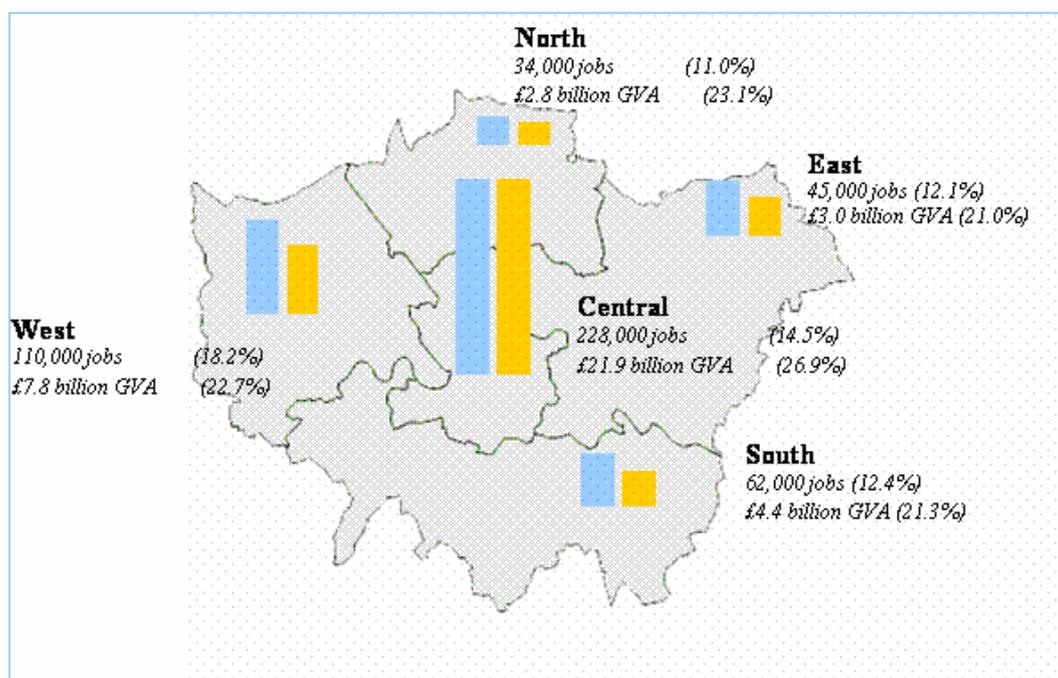
⁴ Bury Knowledge Economy Action Plan, Bury MBC Environment and Development Services, April 2005

⁵ Land Use Change in England: Residential Development to 2005 Update – July 2006, DCLG

entrepreneurship among women who work from home (Schopen 2006). There is also a question of what role creative industries might play now that areas like Clerkenwell and Hoxton have become trendy and expensive. A key factor in the development of this sector in London has been space at affordable rates and areas such as Ilford or Catford could well become the Covent Gardens of tomorrow, but only if they get some support. The Chocolate Factory in Wood Green is an excellent example of the role creative workspace schemes can play, and shows that not all creative activity has to be in the centre.

Business Attraction

Over the last three years, London accounted for 22.7% of all new foreign investment project assisted by UK-Invest. The capital’s performance was particularly strong with regards to non-manufacturing inward foreign investment, which accounted for almost 32% of all new foreign investment projects to the UK. This is unsurprising given the capital’s pre-eminence within Europe in terms of attracting high-end service sector FDI (Foreign direct investment) and for attracting service activities within manufacturing companies. Under the existing sub-regional partnership areas Central London accounts for just over half of all value added (53%) and nearly half of all workers (46%) associated with foreign-owned firms in London. The following figures (provided by THINK – formerly London First) show the regional perspective of FDI in London based on current sub-regional breakdown. What the investment is not doing is attracting the scale or type of FDI that directly creates employment or could address suburban unemployment on any great scale (Ian Gordon’s figures show that employment is not actually growing overall in London despite this growth in FDI activity – and the level of worklessness across London is generally unaffected!) However, this new activity could lead to a wider economic boost that will pull in those currently unemployed.



Although the figures here are crude net ones, the need is to think more carefully in future about the kinds of businesses moving to the suburbs. Sites near areas of high unemployment should be retained for employers who can use unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Similarly, such sites should try to avoid large warehouses that take up large sites but employ relatively few people – the alterations should have included mention of this.

Summary and Recommendations

The suburbs need some major drivers to reverse the job projections significantly. Protecting sites and developing corridors is pointless unless there is a clear view of possible new uses. However, equally problematic is the disposal of land for housing or out of town retail which means it is permanently lost for business. Proposals which the London Plan might promote include:

- a large business park for green industries
- a zone of cheap industrial space for the thousands leaving the capital's arts and design courses and looking for cheap premises, possibly in the Wandle Valley
- home-work centres in suburban district centres – places for people to have a cheap, flexible base and not have to commute for one or two days a week.

The need is to replicate some of the success of places like Cambridge, Reading and Weybridge within London's boundary. This will require a long process of regeneration involving environmental improvements, new transport infrastructure, and site assembly. But the aim is not just to create places of work but to ensure they are located in, linked with or near to attractive places and buildings – where people want to live and work - and hence make London more sustainable.

Big companies and planners also need to work together on creating stronger independent suburban centres, so that London functions as an effective polycentric network. Large central London employers might find it attractive to have a base in London but also offices in the suburbs near where their workers live and where they could work several days a week. Further work is required to see how London's suburban centres can identify new economic niches and attract the businesses that currently go to the outer metropolitan areas.

Section Two – Housing

The Geography of House-Building

Demographics and Need

The distribution of the new homes in the London Plan was determined by a housing capacity study, which was based on developing the available sites and securing higher densities. As Table 1 shows, Inner London is predicted to outstrip Outer London, both absolutely and relatively, in terms of both population and household growth.

Table 1 : Household and Population projections 2001-2016

	Households Change		Population	
	Actual	%	Actual	%
Inner London	236,934	19.16	438,422	15.33
Outer London	201,453	11.19	310,369	6.95
GREATER LONDON	438,387	14.44	748,790	10.23
Central	95,335	13.62	145,634	9.40
East	193,439	24.07	389,811	19.61
West	56,559	10.20	86,154	6.08
North	47,587	11.33	73,802	7.10
South	45,467	8.13	45,467	4.02

Source 2005 Projections of number of residents and households by London borough, Scenario 8.07 from 2001 to 2031.

In terms of targets the Table shows a relatively equal distribution between inner and outer London albeit with Inner London having a slightly higher target. The above tables reveal a considerable disparity between desired supply and predicted demand - the total household growth is some 438,000 whereas the targets are 305,000. Thankfully, the new targets to 2016, noted in the Further Alterations, do now show a significant increase on the previous targets in some outer London boroughs including Barnet and Ealing.

Table 2: House-building targets 2007/2008-2016/17

		Share of new house-building
Inner London	162,000	53.1%
Outer London	143,000	46.9%
Total	305,000	100%

Source: Table 3a alterations to the London Plan GLA December 2006

East London has particularly high levels of new homes projected - while about 25% of new households are predicted there, 45% of new homes are targeted for the area. This is because of the extent of the available sites. This raises questions as to whether households will move to the East and, if they do so, whether there will be the jobs, schools and environment to keep them there, and avoid conflicts between those in work and the workless.

Table 3 : House-building Targets 2007/2008-2016/17by Sub-Region

Sub region	Total Capacity	Share of Total %
Central	62,600	21
East	137,950	45
North	37,950	12
South	29,550	10
West	36,950	12
London Total	305,000	

Source: Table 3A.1 Alterations to the London Plan December 2006

Density

Recent housing developments have been at a much higher density. In London, the average density of new development has doubled between 2000 and 2005 – from 56 dwellings per hectare to 112 (compared to respective England-wide figures of 25 to 41)⁵. The London Plan wants density to be directly related to public transport accessibility – which seems to open up the possibility for urban densities in those (hitherto) suburban locations that are within 10 minutes walking distance of a district centre or that are along major arterial routes. The Further Alterations suggest that in suburban areas new housing could be as high as 65 homes to the hectare⁶. Even the lowest densities in the proposed new matrix (35 – 55 units per hectare) are still higher than the density of the existing dwelling stock in some local areas, and so granting permissions in line with the matrix could harm the existing local character.

The danger is that wealthier suburbanites seeking more space – may be lost to other towns and cities outside the capital. This can create social polarisation in the suburbs they vacate and, if many move to OMA towns, increased commuting. It's not just the wealthy however - in Rotherhithe local people have been fighting to defend a new lower density suburb against the Mayor's policy of securing much higher densities in areas that benefit from high public transport accessibility.

⁶ Table 3A.2 Density matrix (habitable rooms and dwellings per hectare) London Plan further alterations appendix 1

English Heritage, in a recent report, 2007, believes that the policy drive towards high-density development, demographic changes and rising property prices are all putting increasing pressure on the identity of many suburbs. The character of many suburban areas is being jeopardised or eroded by the insensitive redevelopment of former factories, the conversion or redevelopment of large homes into flats, the concreting over of front gardens for car parks, and increasing levels of traffic and congestion. English Heritage is calling on local authorities to undertake an analysis of local suburbs to identify what makes individual areas special in terms of architectural and historical significance and local community value. This information should be then used to inform future planning and management.

But they should not necessarily reject the idea of higher density. The high value terrace homes in Kensington and Chelsea and in many urban areas are high density terrace houses which are popular and could probably meet the aspirations of suburban dwellers. There have been many reports by CABI and others such as architect Sir Richard MacCormac, highlighting the potential to achieve family homes in high density housing developments through different approaches to layout (Kochan 2007). London's density is much lower than Paris and New York (Travers 2002) and, as the likes of Bayswater and Earl's Court show, higher densities can mean attractive city districts with good shops and public services.

Already the suburbs have seen some successful high density housing schemes – including the sorts of apartment and loft development schemes generally seen in central London. Examples include Crown Lodge, Ealing, where there is a daytime concierge, a 460sq ft gym and underground parking. The building is an example of Modernist style-architecture, designed in the Sixties by Richard Seifert (of Centre Point fame). More generally, Barratt Homes was one of the first developers to spot the potential of outer-London locations and has undertaken a string of town-centre office-to-home conversions that would not look out of place in central London (Spittles 2001a, 2001b).

There is some debate about whether the higher suburban densities will produce larger family homes, which have been traditionally provided in suburban areas. The London Plan recognises that provision has to meet the full range of housing needs, particularly larger family accommodation. However densities are, after all, primarily determined not by the London Plan density matrix but by the schemes submitted by developers and the decisions by local authorities.

A key aspect of being able to deliver housing at lower densities is the availability of sites. A recent report (LDA 2007) found that slow progress was being made in the preparation of brownfield land yet there are however various brownfield sites in the suburbs or areas that could offer traditional suburban style housing – London's docklands, Stratford, the

Thames Gateway, Wembley, Cricklewood, Barnet, Southall Gasworks and close to the Dome. In many suburbs the scale of development is far smaller with incremental growth from a large number of smaller opportunistic infill developments and conversions (Kochan 2007). Certainly, there are good examples of redevelopment of former industrial land. Dutch cities like Rotterdam and Groningen, and the Swedish cities of Gothenburg and Malmo, have all turned former industrial areas into sustainable urban neighbourhoods with a mix of uses, attractive public realms, and good public transport systems.

If the right kind of housing at appropriate densities cannot be accommodated in the suburbs there need to be fall-back plans. Sir Peter Hall (2006), dismisses high density suburban building as unsuitable for families with children and argues for extending existing settlements in the Green Belt where it helps to support services and the viability of public transport and to cluster town expansions along strong lines of public transport (see also Christine Whitehead 2006 for a similar view⁷). But Peter Hall has also argued for intensification around transport nodes, such as along the proposed Orbirail network (see ahead). The box below outlines how a project in Portland has managed to combine high-density and rapid transit to stimulate sub-urban renewal. More generally, the housing targets for London ought to be set in conjunction with surrounding regions – so, for example, there is little point worrying about suburban building if there is high provision forecast for areas twenty or thirty miles away in areas that have good transport links into the capital.

High Density Building Along Transport Corridors in Portland, US

In the US suburban sprawl and the resultant demise of some existing centres has prompted a whole new movement of New Urbanism aimed at rebalancing the relation between town and country. The Congress for New Urbanism advocates developing at higher densities along transit corridors as a means of reversing urban sprawl. The principles of Transit-Oriented Development have been adopted by a number of local authorities, such as Portland Oregon, which has shown how to revive a downtown area and combat sprawl, through MAX, the Metropolitan Area Express. The approach centred upon investing in high quality urban transit, and in building at higher densities in town, using Metropolitan government and an approach based on sustainable development principles. The finance comes from issuing municipal bonds, and Tax Increment Financing on the basis of the expected yield from higher density development around transport nodes.

⁷ London - bigger and better LSE London September 2006

The Nature of Housing

Affordability

Affordable housing comprises social housing and intermediate housing such as shared ownership and low-cost market housing. The Plan sets a strategic target that 50% of housing provision should be affordable (35% to be social and 15% intermediate) and that this should be bound up with the promotion of mixed and balanced communities. Lack of affordable housing is one of the main reasons for net outward migration of key workers and families from London (Value of Cities 2004) and almost half of businesses in the London Business Survey report that lack of good quality affordable housing in the capital has increased business costs through higher wages (CBI London 2006). Several minority groups, including most BME communities, children and the elderly, are disproportionately affected by the current shortfall of affordable housing.

The Alterations are seeking to achieve more affordable housing by reducing the threshold above which affordable housing requirements will apply from 15 units to no greater than 10 net additional units. But the Mayor is not in a strong position to ensure that the targets are achieved. Individual Boroughs set their own targets for affordable housing and are, in any case, largely dependent on the private sector contributions and registered social landlords as delivery agents with support from the Housing Corporation to meet their targets. Several boroughs are achieving the Mayor's 50% target yet the last monitoring report of the London Plan showed that, overall, the capital is only just exceeding half of this figure.

So which boroughs should be doing the most? Housing affordability problems are concentrated in the outer western and southern suburbs whilst new supply is in the east and central areas – in late 2001 the average price of a semi to the west of London was 50 per cent more than a comparable semi to the east of London (ES 14.11.01). This raises the difficult question as to where to build. It is a difficult balance – the poor can suffer in areas that are economically successful (but where they might have work) or they can find homes that are more affordable in areas that have yet to develop as successful places and/or thriving local economies (but where work is scarce). The Hills review of social housing (Hills 2007) makes it clear that the priority should be to secure more affordable housing, including social housing, in the areas that are wealthiest, as well as introducing a wider range of tenures into existing Council estates.

Quality

The Housing Need issue is about more than household growth. The Plan touches upon the fact that some less affluent privately-developed suburban areas are fragile and changing and also require renewal measures as the housing stock deteriorates. Across London 11,000 additional dwellings a year in order to achieve the government's objective

of eliminating sub-standard housing within 10 years (Mayor's Housing Commission). Currently, more than 100,000 homes lie empty. Where suburban homes are empty consideration might be given to converting some to live-work spaces – part of the much-needed boost to the suburban economy.

The Further Alterations focus heavily on environmental issues. The proposals include greater energy efficiency in buildings and 20% target for on-site energy generation. Developments must double carbon emission reductions from 10% to 20% per cent by 2016. Suburban homes tend to be environmentally wasteful because they are 'leakier' than terraced or flatted homes. Currently 56% of London's energy use and 54% of its waste is attributable to the suburbs - the interwar suburban housing stock is amongst the least thermally efficient. Probably the best-known environmental housing scheme is in the suburbs – the BedZed (Beddington Zero Energy Development) on an old sewage works near Hackbridge in the south west London borough of Sutton. The need is to replicate something like this, with combined heat and power (CHP) schemes that work, and on a larger scale across the capital. The costs of building environmentally efficient homes are set to be an additional burden on developers, who are already contributing to affordable housing and local infrastructure, but could also add to the marketability of new housing schemes. Whether this is viable has yet to be seen, and more demonstration projects are required.

The increasing density seen in the capital has been accompanied by a reduction in the size of the dwellings that has led to a surplus of some 12,000 one-bedroom properties, but a shortfall of over 28,000 two, three and four bedroom dwellings for which there is the greatest need⁸⁹. Further Alterations put greater emphasis on achieving a better mix of housing including a greater supply of family-sized homes¹⁰. There are ways to dovetail the reinvigoration of suburban town centres with the need for family housing. Developing blocks of apartments on the edge of suburban town centres, for example on under-used car parks, could attract 'empty nesters' to downsize and give up their under-occupied family houses, a policy that Barnet is starting to apply. This allows people to find a better house and stay local.

⁸ Size Matters The need for more family homes in London Planning and Spatial Development Committee London Assembly June 2006.

⁹ A study of 56 recent Thames Gateway development reported that 82% of all new properties being built are either one or two bedroom units. The report was sponsored by the solicitors Davies Arnold Cooper who published a press release on 28 September 2006 entitled "Thames Gateway – No families allowed - Industry criticises government's Thames Gateway policy".

¹⁰ Affordable family housing would be further assisted if the 50% affordable housing target could also be based on the number of habitable rooms, as opposed to units alone.

Summary and Recommendations

The new-build target shortfall is considerable – this raises the question of why targets are not in line with household growth and why even the existing targets are not quite being met. The boroughs are, collectively, approving enough homes but the need is to focus on why this is not occurring and what the geography of this problem is. More housing in the suburbs, may ease the accommodation problem, but it will not help reduce the commuting problem and might prove inimical to suburbanites' design ideals. More housing in the east will not necessarily help with the affordability problems in the wealthier areas. Even if poorer people did move across the capital it would not be ideal from the perspective of fostering community or, if they are in work in the West, reducing commuting.

Possible solutions include:

- Schemes to attract empty-nesters to 'downsize' into readily available and easy to manage homes with fewer bedrooms;
- Increased recycling of empty homes and commercial buildings;
- Better designed houses at higher densities which appeal to families;
- Larger units for families and for 'live-workers'

As with the economic picture in the suburbs, developments need to take place in conjunction with OMA developments – in this case housing growth. The GLA should be liaising formally with the South East and Eastern Region RDAs and Regional Assemblies, so that developers and house builders will have a clear picture of what is required from them, and where there is capacity, possibly through some kind of 'charter for smarter growth'(Falk 2004, URBED 2005).

Section Three – Liveable Environments

Design

Past Glories

The suburbs have in the past pioneered new standards of urban and housing design – Hampstead Garden Suburb and New Ash Green in Kent are just two examples of model suburbs that are still highly valued. These sought to balance town and country, with civic spaces and terraced streets that brought out the best in people, rather than semi-detached houses that reinforced isolation. They used an average of 12 homes to the acre, which is now the Government minimum standard. The most successful examples achieve their appeal through the careful insertion of high-density blocks of flats. Hampstead gets its character not just from the curving, tree-lined roads that create continually changing vistas, but also from the use of stepped short terraces, and the way blocks of courtyard flats are incorporated in closes. The density continually varies. The suburbs have also been the sight of architectural innovation – for example, Britain’s first modernist house was built in Amersham in 1929¹¹.

These high quality early suburbs contrast starkly with the boring streets of two-storey semis built after the First World War which have faced environmental decline. Instead of the leafy streets which made a walk to the station so pleasant, we now have front gardens concreted over to accommodate ever more cars. The suburbs still generally cling to what Geoff Marsh of London Residential Research called the “Middle England design school of pastel-shade mediocrity” (in Spittles 2001) and, more recently, has seen widespread introduction of uniform neo-Georgian and American colonial styles.

Contemporary Solutions

The Alterations refer to ‘maintaining and improving the features that make London’s suburbs attractive’, albeit with no discussion about how housing targets might affect this. There are no recommendations on urban design that relate specifically to the suburbs. However, the Mayor’s design proposals, such as ensuring that new blocks have balconies or to create new kinds of public spaces, could play a key role in overcoming objections to living at higher densities. Similarly, the proposal to improve the public realm around interchanges can also help facilitate the all-important reduction of suburban traffic by encouraging people into public transport hubs. Amidst the talk of neighbourhood empowerment that surrounded the recent Local Government White Paper there also needs to be design that fosters a sense of neighbourhood – the places where so many people live. Many of the locations identified in the Mayor’s 100 Public Spaces project are in the suburbs but the attention needs to focus on whether they are being taken forward.

¹¹ There is still some innovative contemporary architecture in the London suburbs – for example, work by Hudson and Featherstone in Potters Bar and Cheam (Moore 2001).

Good Design in the Dutch Suburbs

There are examples in other countries where an approach to designing new suburbs is evolving that avoids the bland and monotonous. In Holland, in the last 10 years 90 new suburbs have been built involving about 285,000 new homes. Whilst they were part of a central government programme, considerable freedom was given to local and regional authorities to manage the development process. The minimum density was to be 30 dwellings per hectare. With the use of design and development competitions a variety of designs – from traditional housing to overtly modern - has been produced. Each neighbourhood was given an identity based on their physical features such as water or forests. A recent analysis of this exercise by Han Lörzing, from the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Planning in the Hague has dubbed this style ‘new suburbia’. He suggests that giving “the suburbs identities can be a powerful tool in fighting the dreaded monotony of new residential areas”¹². The Dutch also aim to design places that make the car subservient to people, not vice-versa. This includes making people pay for the value of the parking spaces they occupy – often located away from homes to discourage the use of cars for short journeys. The Dutch also originated the Home Zone principle - the ‘shared surfaces’ principle of this helps cut down on the cost of large areas of tarmac, but also looks and lasts much better.

Good Design in the German Suburbs

In Freiburg in Southern Germany (near Basle), the new suburbs of Vauban on the old barracks and Rieselfeld on an old sewage works show how environmentally friendly buildings can be made really sustainable in neighbourhoods that encourage cycling and walking rather than depending on the car. Suburban, medium density housing developments have been built which achieve quite high environmental performances. By building apartments around large courtyards featuring sustainable urban drainage schemes, where children can grow up in a natural environment which is seen as good for their socialization. Vauban features the largest collection of solar panels in Europe; apartment blocks are softened by large balconies, which are covered in greenery. Cycles and trams are used instead of cars, which are parked on the edge in a multi-storey car park powered by the sun. Wind turbines and solar panels create memorable landmarks. As in Holland the multi-storey and underground car parks help explain the high proportion of people cycling to work, as it is generally more convenient than getting the car out (Falk 2006)¹³.

¹² In Towards Sustainable Suburbs edited by Nicholas Falk Urban Design Journal September 2006

¹³ Built Environment Autumn 2006

Environment

Green Space

Between 1990 and 2004 London has lost 1,000 hectares of green space - an area more than seven times the size of Hyde Park (ES 2004). The Further Alterations do stress safeguarding and enhancing the green environment of suburbs. Specifically this entails: protecting land of strategic importance for biodiversity; wherever appropriate, new development should include new or enhanced nature habitats, or design and landscaping that promotes biodiversity and provision for its management; ambitious proposals for providing play space on new developments; new policies to ensure that all children have safe access to good quality, secure and stimulating play facilities; greater emphasis on the 'Green Network' such as East London Green Grid and on developing the 'Green Arc' partnership; support for the London Tree and Woodland Framework and government policy on protecting geological sites. The London Plan does not however specify how much open space new developments (particularly large-scale developments) should provide. A new strategic park strategy is proposed to increase "access to nature". Two areas are proposed: centred on Barnet and Merton and Sutton. North London contains both the Lee Valley Regional Park and Green Belt land. Moves to improve their accessibility to neighbouring communities are desirable.

Protecting Green Space in Holland

In Breda, judged the most sustainable of Dutch towns, they are pursuing a policy of 'give and take'. This means allowing green spaces to be taken over, or in some cases even built on, provided the receipts are ploughed back into park improvements. The over-riding principle is access to usable green space, not simply preserving a sterile green belt. The Dutch attitude to open space also extends to requiring that every flat has to have some outdoor space – this idea of open space is clearly important in encouraging families with young children (Falk 2006).

General Environmental Quality

The high level of reliance on the car, has brought increased traffic congestion in suburban areas and contributed to the dangerous levels of air pollution recorded in London in recent years - as high in apparently leafy suburbs such as Enfield, Bexley and Bromley as anywhere in the capital. The pollution consists of tiny particles in vehicle exhausts and light industry emissions. In 2002 Government guidelines to limit such pollution were exceeded on 89 days in Bexley, 42 days in Enfield and 30 days in Bromley. In areas like Bexley, there are lots of breakers' yards and metal working plants that have added to pollution (Fletcher 2002). Whilst the measurements note this it is not clear whether residents and workers notice the pollution or whether industrial emissions are contravening laws.

Town Centres

Changing Fortunes

The decline of many of the local and district centres is due to changes in shopping and working patterns and general neglect by local agencies. This has brought an increase in short term lets, pound shops, and in general a lack of investment by landlords in commercial property. These centres are not poor enough to attract ‘regeneration’ type funding that could encourage a partnership with retailers e.g to provide a loan scheme to improve shop frontages etc and develop ‘neighbourhood management’ responsive to local issues. The centres may also not be big enough to develop as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) – having to settle instead for a local business forum that lacks a permanent secretariat but which can still encourage collective investments.

The age of some of the town centres does not help. The rigid infrastructure of some of the 1930’s settings is out-dated e.g. Kingsbury, Queensbury and Belmont Circle in Harrow, or Streatham in South London. Policies are needed to identify and develop new roles for district and local centres. These policies would look at making use of the antiquated infrastructure, helping it to transform itself into new attractions/community uses, increasing the amount of local spend and reducing the number and length of journeys by local residents to centres elsewhere in the capital.

The success of national chains is changing the face of suburban high streets. Places that pride themselves on individual local shops such as Blackheath and Notting Hill are struggling against high rents and the superior buying power of coffee and sandwich chains and gastro-pubs. Rich areas will usually maintain their specialist shops but in poor areas the residents are less able to support independent shops – financial necessity makes it cheaper to travel to superstores.

Planning for Sustainable Town Centres

The Further Alterations seek to support intensification – targeting higher density development (housing, offices, retail and community services) to existing local centres, curtailing out-of-centre commercial development and, where practical, redeveloping such areas primarily for family housing. This is in line with PPS6 (Town Centres and Retail) which prioritises retail development in town centres for new retail development. Support for town centres relates to ‘metropolitan’ and ‘major’ centres - rejuvenation of ‘district and smaller centres’ is mainly to occur through convenience retailing.

Struggling independent shops, where they still exist, could be helped with regeneration funding and anti-crime measures so ensuring a more level playing-field with similar shops in wealthier areas. Some local authorities are already applying the idea of local proximity – such as 400m or five minutes walk – to protect, for example, the last food shop in a parade from change of use in order to meet people’s need for access to healthy food.

This is not a guarantee that a shop will stay open or be opened but at least it is enshrining the principle that such activity is highly desirable (see Potts 2007). Green Street in Newham has benefited from such money. The ‘Town Centre Enhancement (TEN) consultants’ study of ten centres in the Lea Valley (the London part of the London-Stansted-Cambridge Growth Area) (LDA, 2006) indicates ways in which mixed-use higher density well planned and integrated development could enhance the quality of centres. Other reports have also argued that the poor state of many smaller town centres make them the best places on which to focus efforts.

One example of what might be achieved in terms of cultural provision is in the London Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames which has built the new town-centre based Rose Theatre under the directorship of Sir Peter Hall. The theatre, subsidised by the Charter Quay leisure and accommodation development, is turning the corner after an uncertain first few years. More generally, there is no reason why suburbs should not become centres for fringe (innovative) theatre. By redeveloping run-down edge of town centre sites at higher densities, value could be generated in many cases which could be ploughed back in local improvements. Further research into the possibilities for this would be valuable.

Where suburban districts are planning major redevelopments, the provision of infrastructure clearly requires considerable attention. For example, in the Colindale area of Barnet, where there several very large schemes involving about 5,000 homes, the local authority is developing a framework to provide guidance on assessing infrastructure requirements – ranging from health facilities and services through to community facilities and highways¹⁴. The Further Alterations recognise that housing developments need to take the increased pressure on services into account and state that boroughs should prepare planning frameworks for all large residential sites of 5 hectares or more (reduced from 10 hectares), as this should ensure that more affordable housing, community facilities and infrastructure can be negotiated for smaller scale developments.

Table 4 : Case Studies of Suburban Town Centre Redevelopment Initiatives

Suburb	Key Aspects
Barnet	Council’s strategy is to protect areas with a high quality environment, enhance some areas to meet the needs of the local communities and to promote growth on some major development sites. The borough’s Unitary Development Plan identifies several centres for intensification and on others (such as Mill Hill East and Colindale), a wide range of uses including new employment and housing is proposed to make them more sustainable. The major developments are housing-led but include other services.

¹⁴ The Three Strands Approach, London Borough of Barnet June 2005

Redbridge	<p>The strategy being adopted in Ilford is to develop new housing within the town centre itself. The Borough expects to achieve about 6,000 new homes by 2016 through the redevelopment of underused office blocks. The council is to encourage a mix of uses, with business and leisure uses on the ground floor and housing above which could be as high as 15 storeys in the new schemes. The current policy is for one and two-bedroom flats in the developments. Around the town centre, the council hopes to secure a further 8,000 homes in local and district centres. The council is hoping that high design quality will persuade local communities to accept the new scheme (Kochan 2007).</p>
Croydon	<p>The borough is a classic candidate for suburban regeneration. It is the 13th-largest business centre in England, yet the town centre is characterised by Sixties office buildings that have seen better days. Much of the commercial space remains unlet and could be transformed into apartments. The local council has prepared a 2020 Vision and hopes to transform the fortunes of the town by attracting new businesses and improving the centre's image as a shopping destination. Transport connections are excellent with the tram system up and running for several years now and the Fairfield concert centre provides a cultural anchor. Two schemes are under way that will add a touch of glamour. Cityscape is a 14-storey building of 95 apartments. Its developer, Barratt Homes, has come up with an appropriately contemporary design. It has a glazed, three-storey foyer and the building is topped by a swooping silver roof. Here, too, there will be a concierge, fitness suite and underground parking. One-, two- and three- bedroom apartments are available, all with a balcony or terrace. Central C is another Croydon scheme: it has a smart image, contemporary architecture and is close to the business district. Berkeley Homes is the developer (Spittles 2001).</p>
Harrow	<p>In Wealdstone, the Council has redeveloped an old supermarket site to provide: a healthy living centre, library, health centre, youth centre and training café for special needs students. Library membership has increased by nearly 100% in the two years it has been running. However even this improvement and the increasing housing density has done little to improve the retail mix and performance of the shopping centre, except bring in another betting shop to a vacant bank site. For many residents things have changed but not improved.</p>
Sutton	<p>Sutton Council has adopted a policy for Sustainable Suburbs, and is applying a number of the possible tools. It is working with TfL on a major scheme to change travel behaviour through individual travel plans. It is also working on an Action Plan for Hackbridge as a sustainable suburb, with the idea of extending what has been achieved at BedZed, and testing out the application of the One Planet Living principles to a relatively disadvantaged suburb.</p>

Town Centre Management

The success of suburban centres is by no means all about the built form. Since the early 1990s, there has been growing recognition of the importance of town centre management. Most town and city centres have a manager, and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) can levy a supplementary business rate to improve the environment. BIDs are being set up in the larger suburban centres, including Kingston, Croydon, Ealing and Camden Town. In smaller suburban district centres, a BID is not generally practical, particularly if they do not have several large multiples. Even developing town centre management is problematic. Bromley council employs a manager for the eight smaller centres in the London Borough although the manager does not have the same level of resources. The work mainly involves enabling local traders' groups to help themselves (Kochan 2007). In Redbridge the Council has brought together business people and residents from Gants Hill in a taskforce to chart a way forward. Improvements are in hand to update lighting, provide better paving, plant more trees, and give the subway below the old roundabout a makeover (Hetherington 2005).

There have been concerns that the night-time economy is proving problematic for public order on some suburbs. A 2005 London Assembly study claims a rise in late-night yobbish behaviour is destroying the atmosphere in otherwise desirable locations such as Croydon, Kingston, Redbridge and Richmond and others. Such behaviour makes many suburban town centres virtual no-go areas for families (Lydall and Harris 2005). There is clear potential for conflict in mixed use developments between A3 café/bar uses and residential. According to the Civic Trust, the experiences at Charter Quay in Kingston have increased the awareness of the Council and other agencies, including the Police, of this potential. To minimise problems, careful co-ordination and management is required between planning, licensing, policing, transport, town centre management, crime reduction partnership, street management and operators. The Council is currently considering an initiative on planning and managing the evening economy (Kochan 2007).

The Social Fabric

Social Inclusion

On all indicators, deprivation in outer London is far lower than in inner London. Even so, the levels of deprivation in outer London, using most indicators are higher than the national average and on some indicators are as high as some of the deprived regions of the north – mainly because of London's high housing costs. For example after housing costs, 24% of the population of outer London are living in income poverty compared to a national average of 21%, which is also the level for the North West and North East of England¹⁵. Whilst a third of Super Output Areas (SOAs) in inner London are within the

¹⁵ Income Poverty is defined as individuals living in households with incomes below 60 per cent of the national median

10% most deprived according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation only 10% of outer London SOAs fall into that category. Half of all outer London SOAs in the top 30 % of deprived SOAs are within the 20-30% of deprived SOAs compared to 25% for inner London¹⁶. Poverty is increasingly concentrated in social housing. The key for the London Plan is that efforts are made to encourage economic and leisure opportunities within easy reach.

The pockets of poverty in outer London are in danger of being overlooked in terms of funding for regeneration initiatives, because of the overall prosperity in the borough, particularly compared to Inner London boroughs. The deprived outer areas share many of the characteristics of inner London, with significant pockets of social deprivation, environmental degradation and poor access to employment, social infrastructure, community facilities, housing and transport services

With Government funds being distributed predominantly on the basis of overall need in districts, many outer London councils have argued that their allocations fail to reflect the nature of deprivation within their boroughs and thus do not have the resources to address the pockets of deprivation within their areas. They have qualified only for small amounts of regeneration funding where there are pockets of severe levels of need. Regeneration schemes are having to be self-funding without any contribution from central government. Many suburban areas require neighbourhood management and signs to the residents that the local authorities care for their area. (Kochan 2007)

The redevelopment of the council housing estates in West Hendon and Colindale, like many redevelopments of social housing suburbs, is introducing a mix of private housing for sale and social rented housing. The mix is intended to help create more sustainable communities by breaking up concentrations of poverty and avoiding the stigma associated with many of the mono-tenure estates (Kochan 2007). In Haringey the Council is attempting to address this by promoting more private sector homes on the east, and more social housing to the west. The London Plan should encourage this mixing of housing tenures to create balanced communities.

¹⁶ Analysis of figures in DMAG Briefing 2005/5 Indices of Deprivation 2004 An analysis of London wards based on SOA ranks GLA February 2005

Mixed-Income Housing in Holland

Dutch cities are characterised by a high proportion of people living in apartments rented from not-for-profit housing associations. These are open to all, with a rent proportionate to household income, enabling a mix of people to live in close proximity. There is a frequent public transport service that runs until late (to enable those doing poorly paying jobs to get home from work). Rentals in housing owned by housing associations are related to income levels, and there is often a broad social mix, as there is no stigma in renting from a housing association. Also it is not possible to identify tenure from the outside, unlike British council estates.

Social Capital

Population flux clearly mitigates against the formation of social ties. Since the late 1980s both inner and outer London have been gaining population – more so in inner London and particularly in east London as a whole. This has been due to immigration and to a high birth rate - an annual 38,000 surplus of births over deaths. The greatest growth in population 1991-2003 in the suburbs has been in Brent, Barnet and Newham (although overall the outer east boroughs saw the lowest growth). For the period 2006-20021 only Newham is a significant suburban grower (with the outer west boroughs, Harrow and Sutton being the least likely to grow).

Numbers may be growing but, according to figures in the latest census, as many as 150,000 people a year are leaving London – the main flight is adults aged 25 to 44 and children under 15 (presumably the children of the adults moving!) according to ONS figures derived from GP figures. The problem of turnover is particularly acute in central London however. Other factors that do not help include: the fact that 1 in 7 pupils cross borough boundaries to attend school; people who are passing through, for example, students and those working for international companies. The high levels of commuting in suburbs are likely to mitigate against the formation of social ties. Planners need to be very conscious of such trends when making provision for community facilities that can help foster local ties. Despite evidence of the Internet pulling users' attention away from their neighbourhoods there are also possibilities for harnessing it to increase ties at this same local scale – as the box below reveals.

Virtual Neighbours in North American Suburbs

2004 saw the creation by academics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) of a free online service called I-Neighbors that allowed any North American neighbourhood to have its own private neighbourhood site and email network. It provides community groups with a system to organise local events and share information on local services, and connects neighbours with similar interests. Services include a local directory, a shared photo album, messaging, opinion polling, and a carpool system. Research to pilot the work found measurable increases in the number of local social ties and the sense of community in two of the three areas where I-Neighbors web sites and messaging were introduced. The e-mail list provided a forum for residents to exchange everything from information on home repairs to opinions about local elections. Elected officials used the e-mail list to report back to their constituents, and residents used the list to organise face-to-face community meetings with officials, as well as the occasional barbeque and house party (see also Hampton and Wellman 2000).

The considerable demand from investors in Buy to Let (who have bought 2/3rds of the new homes in London) does not help the formation of stable communities. An M.Phil. Barlett study five years ago identified a 500% increase in 'Buy to Let' in and around public transport hubs in West London. Reports have emerged recently of bad behaviour in privately-rented (buy-to-let) property in Thames Gateway in Thamesmead – such schemes must not become the slums of the future¹⁷. One possible antidote is a good selection of family homes since people are most likely to put down roots in an area when they have children. Good on-site concierge-style management or super caretakers are required together with agreed rules for good behaviour.

The Plan Alterations widened the definitions of community facilities and infrastructure but without setting targets or without any suburban dimension. It is important that all areas have adequate space for voluntary and community sector – including those that cannot necessarily afford rents. Section 106 money might be partly used for providing such premises – perhaps in the hands of Community Land Trusts. Some of the vacant properties in outer London district centres could be used for this purpose, and would enable trusts to generate an ongoing revenue that could then be used to support efforts to build better neighbourhoods, for example, through providing adequate places for young people to hang out.

Diversity

The population growth has been largely due to migration from abroad: arrivals come in at two different social levels: poor refugees and rich professionals. Both possess the potential to strain community relations although it is the poorest ones, where tension is

¹⁷ David Blackman, January 2007 Living the Dream, Regenerate

most likely to occur. Ethnic minorities are as likely to be found in the suburbs as the inner city (Newham, Brent and Harrow are particularly diverse) and tensions are seen there – albeit on nothing like the scale seen in the French suburbs. The unemployment rate for black and minority ethnic Londoners (11.7%) is twice the rate for whites and is a further potential factor in opening up social division. Poor white people struggling to make work pay or to find a home living alongside immigrant/non-white groups that have a job or get resources from the state can also be a recipe for conflict. The election of 11 BNP councillors in Barking and Dagenham has shown that the realities and myths of which groups gets public resources and private sector opportunities can cause resentment.

Far from all ethnic groups are asylum-seekers or unemployed however. Different waves of ethnic groups have populated suburban centres like Gants Hill (Pakistani) and Golders Green (Jewish) and Southall (Indian). In many cases they have brought new life to old centres, and are responsible for running many of the local businesses. Here the Plan's promise to provide space for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is important.

Summary and Recommendations

Suburbs, once the symbol of social mobility and aspiration realised, now have something of a reputation for being uninspiring in design terms – yet there is no reason why design should not be both cheap and innovative. Certainly, the GLA is taking design seriously with its Architecture and Urbanism Unit. But the suburbs pose a difficult challenge. The designs and plans need to have some provision for linking homes and workspace – for example, small offices alongside developments to encourage home working and help foster community amongst residents of the development. Design in the suburbs also needs to pay particular attention to weaning people off their cars. The laudable efforts to protect greenery and biodiversity might in some way be located in and around non-industrial employment sites – thereby further attracting dynamic businesses into the suburbs. Town centres can hopefully grow on the back of household growth rather than hoping that customers from out-of-town centres like Bluewater will just come wandering back. Effective management of suburban centres is key to improving the shopping offer and experience. There are opportunities in larger centres to set up Business Improvement Districts but in the smaller centres, alternative funding vehicles are required.

Lastly, there need to be large-scale imaginative efforts to strengthen the social fabric. This latter can involve: ensuring that BME and white working groups do not miss out unduly (riots/disorder would derail all other efforts); offering Internet-based

neighbourhood communities and exploring mechanisms to protect/provide for premises used by the voluntary and community sectors.

Section Four – Transport

Commuting

Overview

In London, a third of residents work in the borough where they live (Kochan 2007). In autumn 2000, 80% of people working in central London travelled to work by public transport, compared with 42% in the rest of Inner London, and only 18% in Outer London. This is not likely to be helped by the fact that most of the new housing is planned to be concentrated in the East, while most of the new jobs are expected to be much nearer the centre (Gordon 2006). TfL analysis predicts that “employment and population growth in London will result in a 30% increase in public transport passenger km travelled in the morning peak, by 2025. The increase will be particularly high for travel into central London, where there will be an additional 240,000 trips each day”¹⁸. Places to the east of London have already developed largely as commuter satellites of the City of London¹⁹.

Commuting is not all into London. A burgeoning poly-centricity saw out-commuting to the South East increase at a faster rate than in-commuting between 1991 and 2001 although demands for travel increased in both directions. That there is slack in reverse commuting makes transport infrastructure use efficiency sub-optimal²⁰ – if people are to commute it is best if the load works evenly in both directions.

Strategy

The Mayor’s Transport Strategy sets out the main public transport improvements proposed over the next 15 years, covering rail (e.g. Crossrail, Thameslink 2000), the Underground and Docklands Light Railway, bus and tram schemes and river crossing schemes. Most of the schemes likely to be put in place by TfL are aimed at reducing overcrowding on services in central and inner London or reversing a backlog of under-investment.

The problem with transport infrastructure in London is that demand is out-stripping supply. Between 1996 and 2026, demand is expected to grow by about 60 per cent while capacity is set to rise by just 30% (Glaister 2006). Several existing projects are clouded by uncertainty – notably Crossrail. Fares have already risen considerably to pay for improvements to the underground system. An extension of the congestion charge could offer another source of funds. The Plan perhaps cannot escape the need for devolution of tax raising powers to the GLA. A 1% additional levy on the business rate placed in an

¹⁸ Transport for London Transport 2025 Transport challenges for a growing city

¹⁹ Is the Greater South East a Mega-City Region? Paper to IPPR seminar December 2004

²⁰ Intra-Urban Polycentric Development: Suburban Trajectories Suzanne Maguire The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL ODPM New Horizons Research Programme Series 2003-04

infrastructure fund could raise up to £6bn. French cities have a local employment tax, which is hypothecated to transport, while New York has more than 20 local charges and taxes which support a range of public services.

Road

Cars and Suburbs

Recent research by the Independent Transport Commission points out that suburban households tend to have higher car ownership, with about 65 per cent of journeys being made by car (Kochan in Axis 2005). An estimated 8% of journeys in suburban areas are by public transport compared to 17% in urban areas²¹. Urban residents travel only 5,493 miles per year compared to 6,351 miles for suburban residents.

Transport 2025 projects that traffic in outer London is set to grow by 14% over the next decade. Currently the London Plan seeks to reduce the rate of growth of traffic in outer London by one third (other than in town centres where it is seeking zero growth). The pressure group Transport 2000 suggests that with a set of proactive measures it would be feasible to amend the outer London target to stabilization by 2015, returning to 2000 levels by 2025 and a 17 per cent reduction by 2050²²²³.

Road-Pricing

The congestion zone and other measures in inner London have made a significant difference to congestion levels achieving the Mayor's target reduction in traffic by 15% in central London between 2001 and 2011 four years early. Evidence from the company Traffic-master has revealed that the big cuts in radial journey times have been from points north and east, generally the poorer suburbs. Times from the rich south-west, along the M4, M3 and A3 corridors, actually rose compared with half-term last year (Jenkins 2003).

The Further Alterations imply that TfL will become the only authority able to implement charging schemes on London's roads. The Boroughs want the ability to introduce local congestion charging schemes should they wish. The concept could be extended to hotspots in the suburbs ranging from Bromley to Brent Cross and could take in notorious congestion hotspots such as the North and South Circulars paying premium rates at peak hours. London Travel-watch (the London Transport Users Group) is supportive, in principle of a workplace parking levy and parking charges at out-of-town-

²¹ Report for The Independent Transport Commission The Future of Suburbs and Exurbs Marcial Echenique & Rob Homewood 2003 p30

²² Low carbon transport for outer London Transport 2000 January 2007

²³ Making way for better transport in outer London Transport 2000 January 2006

centre retail parks to further help wean people off car use. It is important that revenue raised benefit other forms of transport.

Walking and Cycling to Reduce Car Use

Controlled Parking Zones now cover London's suburbs as well as its centre - some local authorities operate much narrower restricted hours, designed to deter commuters from parking their cars near railway and Tube stations in the morning (Williams 2001) but what is being done to get people to walk and cycle in suburbs in general and to these places in particular? There are various ways that such trips might be increased in London suburbs - for example through better lighting, cleaner over-looked streets, and priority for pedestrians on secondary routes, and this includes children getting to school. The London Plan does suggest that residential and business development should be encouraged in places accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. Boroughs, not necessarily suburban ones, are urged to promote more effective use of road space for public transport, cycling and walking²⁴.

²⁴ There are numerous documents that elaborate on walking and cycling in the capital. From TfL there is Guidance on Improving Walkability, Guidance on Streetscape Guidance, the Walking Plan for London, the Cycling Action Plan and Cycle Parking Standards. There is also already a London Cycle Network.

Copenhagen – City for Suburban Cycling

In Copenhagen 30% of people cycle to work in Summer, compared with 3% in London. Like London most people commute in from suburbs, but they instead take their bikes on the train or leave them at stations. The cycle route from the suburbs in the north to the centre of the city is one of the most used cycle lanes in Europe. It has not always been like this. In the fifteen years after the Second World War car use grew due to migration of inhabitants from the central parts of Copenhagen to suburbs and, in consequence, travelling distances increased. Although a new suburban train system was built, a growing number of people made themselves dependent on a car. Cycling in Copenhagen was at an all time low in the 1970s. After huge demonstrations organised by cyclist groups and pressure from citizens, bicycles were again on the agenda. Gradually, building cycle tracks on main roads was taken up again in the 1980s. Since then the main objective has been to strengthen the commitment to issues of cycling in municipal transport planning. The policy to offer free city bikes was included in the local transport policy in the mid-1990s. The Government makes sure that there is parking for bikes at regular intervals and at convenient distances, or ensuring cycle users priority at points where they meet cars. There is also a network of 'green' cycle routes being created – these are as independent of other traffic as possible, also offering cyclists going long distances a more quiet environment. The green routes will supplement, but in no way replace, cycle tracks along roads. At the same time the government was not afraid to introduce heavy taxes on road users which made cycling a much cheaper option or to say 'No' to extensive increases in parking spaces therefore making it harder to find a space in the centre. Total investment might be regarded as a lot of money, but compared to the costs of a few kilometres of motorway, a ring road or a tunnel, it is only moderate.

Rail

Orbital Travel – Enhancing Potential for Poly-centricity

London Plan and T2025 have little to say on orbital rail despite the fact that the number of orbital journeys continues to rise, both for transportation of goods and people. Orbirail is a name for a suggested orbital overland railway route around London. It would involve connecting the East London, North London, West London, South London Lines and (possibly) the Gospel Oak to Barking Line to form a route that would orbit London. Orbirail has no official status as a planned project. However, TfL's plan for integrating the North London Line, West London Line and Gospel Oak to Barking Line) with the extended East London Line (Phase 1) allows for a route most of the way round London, with only the southern section remaining to be connected to allow a full orbital route. The proposed Phase 2 of the East London Line extension project would link the East London Line to the South London line and complete the loop. The most likely route would be almost entirely within Zone 2 thereby complementing the current Underground Circle Line that is in Zone 1. Orbirail's proponents believe that it would be

a relatively low-cost project, involving only a small amount of new track, some improvement to existing lines and an increase in train frequency. In return, the route would allow many people to make journeys without passing through Zone 1, thus relieving congestion on central London's railways. There are complications which could prevent these lines running as a single fully orbital route. Orbital railways have an intrinsic timetabling problem in that the trains are constantly "in orbit" so there is little scope for "recovery time" if they are delayed. A single delay can have long lasting knock-on effects and be much more disruptive than on a non-orbital railway.

An alternative to a single fully orbital route would be two or more semi-orbital routes that join to entirely encircle London. TfL's current London Overground plans seem to point in this direction. An additional problem is poor interchange with many of the radial routes and many Underground lines.

The Alterations include selective improvements to public transport accessibility (which relate to the aims for a more polycentric strategy). Certainly, town centre policies need to prioritise transport investment in town centres and opportunity areas in the suburbs, especially regarding interchanges and orbital services in outer London. There is a real need to improve interchanges between different modes of transport, (with the bus station at Golders Green representing a classic example of the contrast between private affluence and public squalor, at least as far as waiting for the buses is concerned!).

Sir Peter Hall has proposed a suburban Orbinet multi-modal public transport system to connect Outer Metropolitan Centres. He examined the practicality of achieving an a Middle/Outer Orbital network for London based on the Paris Orbitale model and similarly combining - in South London: rail, light rail, bus and - in North London: rail, DLR, guided bus/tram. It connects with the emerging Orbirail of the adopted plan and combines heavy rail lines notably the North and East London Lines and Wimbledon and Richmond extensions using existing tracks, with local modifications, existing Croydon tram network, and extensions, and guided bus and bus routes. It connects to the proposed DLR extension. Outside Orbirail it proposes reallocation of North Circular Road road space by a tram route.

Summary and Recommendations

Car dependency is a major issue in the suburbs. Suburbanites need to be weaned from their cars through various deterrents to their use as well as the provision of alternative public transport opportunities. Housing should be designed so that car parking is some way from homes or be located close to town centres where car use is not necessary. Increased road pricing (and concomitant investment in public transport) would reduce car use. Effective measures to support and encourage cycling and walking (perhaps also

paid for by money raised from various charging schemes) would also help with short journeys, which often constitute the bulk of movements. Improved orbital public transport would also help to stimulate the economy by creating a network of mutually supporting suburban centres. There has been some progress with the development of orbital travel services but there remains the opportunity to realise an orbital rail link and to find new ways to fund stalled schemes. Another major innovation might be genuinely high-speed trains to take commuters from Central London or OMA stations into several major suburban employment zones with no stops in between – space would shrink and people would feel like the journey was very local.

Conclusions

In the shadow of the booming city economy, London's suburbs are in danger of getting forgotten, or at least taken for granted. As the place where the vast majority of Londoners live, they are central to creating a sustainable world class city. Suburbs need some new drivers to increase their sustainability and for them to become more self-sufficient centres, which make a greater contribution to the polycentric London region.

The London Plan might create a large park for green industries in the suburbs there might be a zone of low cost industrial space that could become a haven for the thousands leaving the capital's arts and design courses and looking for cheap premises, possibly located in the Wandle Valley. Some of these might then form the innovative large scale businesses of the future.

There could be home-work centres in the suburbs – places for people to have a cheap base and not have to commute for one or two days a week. Much more could also be done to promote leisure facilities in town centres, possibly using some of the empty space in industrial sites for uses such as night clubs that generate noise, but that attract young people and have wider positive local economic multiplier effects (taxis, restaurants, bars etc.).

The need is to see some of the success of places such as Cambridge and Reading being repeated in the London suburbs - which should be a long term objective. The outer suburbs have more in common and closer links with those towns surrounding London than central London. Councils need to consider how to attract employers who might have located to those towns and develop appropriate strategies, including ensuring they provide an attractive enough environment for existing businesses to stay.

New work areas need to be created that are linked with or near to attractive places and buildings so that more people will want to live and work in the same places. Big companies and planners need to work together at a sub-regional level that crosses the London boundary on promoting a polycentric network of centres that reinforce each other. For example, some large London employers might be attracted to having smaller units in central London and several places in the suburbs closer to where most of their staff live and where many could work for part of the week.

In response to population projections, the Mayor has set ambitious new housing targets for London boroughs. To achieve these targets, the new higher density housing developments will have to be built to a high design quality to prove acceptable to existing mobile suburbanites (those who could decamp from the suburbs and from the city) and

to meet the demand for family housing. If this is not possible, it may be necessary to look at sites outside London to meet the growing needs.

The suburbs have traditionally been about moving up in the World – in addition to intrinsic benefits they are also enjoyed because others (such as poorer people) don't enjoy them! The need then is for all groups to think that they are enjoying some form of privilege (or pride of place). If more people are living near them it should be seen as improving their own material and physical environments. Environmentalism might become the 'new status symbol' – with City figures and pop stars vying to buy into the model suburban eco villages. The BedZed housing development in south London has proved an icon for low carbon housing. Each outer London borough needs to look at how it can attract one similar development. Different models are developing for low carbon housing. It could be a high density development in a district centre or lower density on the edge.

More needs to be done to encourage movement of empty-nesters into the (more common) smaller units; increased recycling of empty homes and brown-field; high quality design at higher densities; larger units for families and for 'live-workers' and increased ability for planning authorities to require and/or support developers to provide more housing for families – including stock that is affordable.

Town and district centres can hopefully grow on the back of household growth. Effective management will be required to achieve this – from neighbourhood wardens through to town centre managers and BIDs.

There also need to be large-scale imaginative efforts to strengthen the social fabric. Greater priority needs to be given to the pockets of deprivation in many outer London boroughs which have yet to get the resources they deserve because the districts are overall reasonably affluent. They also need to ensure that BME and white working groups do not miss out unduly (riots/major disorder could derail all other efforts); offering Internet-based neighbourhood communities and exploring mechanisms to protect/provide for premises used by the voluntary and community sectors.

Car dependency is a major issue in the suburbs. Suburbanites need to be weaned from their cars through various deterrents to their use as well as the provision of alternative public transport opportunities. Improved orbital public transport would also help to stimulate the economy by creating a network of suburban centres which support each other. Housing should be designed so that car parking is some way from homes or they should be located close to town centres where car use is not necessary. Increased road pricing (and concomitant investment in public transport) would deter car use. Effective measures to support and encourage cycling and walking (perhaps also paid for by money

raised from various charging schemes). There has been some progress with the development of orbital travel services but there remains the opportunity to realise an orbital rail link and to find new ways to fund stalled schemes. Another major innovation might be genuinely high-speed trains that took commuters from Central London or OMA stations into several major suburban employment zones with no stops in between – space would shrink and people would feel like the journey was very local.

Finally, none of the above can occur without some form of institutional change. Economic and housing developments in the suburbs cannot be considered in isolation of developments in the centre of the capital or in the towns of the OMA. Here there is a case for improving the profile and importance of the Inter-Regional Forum that aims to link developments in the three regions of the functional London region which takes in the South East and the East of England as well as London itself. There is also need for some form of 'Suburbs Unit' within the GLA – to look at best practice around the World and to monitor developments in the capital's suburbs. Lastly, the major financial infrastructure projects, notably around transport, point to greater consideration being given to a Mayor with greater finance-raising powers. At a smaller scale the neighbourhood and district realm improvements need funds – here Mayoral fund-raising powers are again relevant (particularly as it allows richer areas of the capital to subsidise poorer ones) but so too are local tax-raising powers.

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