

LONDON CALLING

The Journal of the London Region of the RTPI

April 2008



An interview with Peter Rees

In the third of our series of interviews with leading figures in planning in London, Richard Lemon talks to Peter Rees, City Planning Officer at the City of London.

As I am ushered into the office of Peter Rees, I can't help but notice the striking view from his office window. In the foreground sit the Swiss Re tower, Tower 42 and the Lloyds Buildings, a reminder of the immense scale of commercial development over which the long-serving

'Controversy is a good thing. It allows for a meaningful debate'

Chief Planning Officer has presided. Yet in the background lies Canary Wharf, with the Barclays and Citigroup towers standing proudly alongside the blinking light of One Canada Square. Surely the rapid growth of London's second financial centre must ring alarm bells for Rees and for the City?

In fact, Rees seems relaxed about Canary Wharf, even embracing the role it plays. 'Canary Wharf is as much a part of London as the West End. But it has a different character from the City. It's a short term phenomenon and a temporary solution to satisfy the demand for very significant large scale floorplates,' he says. On a personal level he clearly has no complaints about the Wharf: 'I do my shopping there every weekend,' he laughs.

We turn to discuss the system of the Local Development Framework, and although he suggests on the one hand that the Planning Inspectorate has been left to make the system work, he warns against further changes, stressing that the real problem is not the system but the people in it. 'There's an obsession with "process" throughout the civil service, producing too many strategies and not actually getting on and doing things,' he says. 'The system needs to settle down rather than being continuously tinkered with.'

But his real concern is excessive political involvement in the British planning system, and he warns that there is too much involvement of elected representatives – taking away decisions from professionals. He cites examples abroad where he feels professional expertise is valued more in other countries. Rees, however, has few such problems, working in an environment in which the Aldermen and



Peter Rees, City Planning Officer

elected representatives who lead the Corporation are focussed on a common goal – ensuring that the City remains the financial and business heart of the London and the UK economy. He praises the members of the 30-strong planning committee: 'They see themselves as the board of a company – to oversee the work of professionals.' Most schemes, he says, have around six months' worth of pre-application discussion to ensure that they are of a high quality. As a result, the planning committee has confidence in the advice of the officers, and the City can operate largely free of NIMBY-ism.

As we talk, it becomes quite clear

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that Rees rarely shies away from voicing an opinion, and he urges other planners to be more upfront, particularly in the media. 'I don't think the media gives a fair representation of planning,' he says. They find it difficult to understand. Planning is the art of compromise – a balancing of interests – and so the media will always find someone who felt aggrieved in some way.' But, he says, lots of planners are too scared to voice an opinion, when they should be standing up for themselves. 'Controversy is a good thing. It allows for a meaningful debate,' Rees insists.

So how does a man who embraces controversy get on with the Mayor of London and planners at the Greater London Authority? 'The GLA produces lots of paper,' he says pointedly. 'But it's a good continuation of LPAC. The Mayor and GLA recognised the importance of the City and the need for it to be a growth node [and] the cluster of tall buildings from the start.' His criticism is reserved for the GLA's sister organisation, Transport for London: 'There are 5,000 people looking for a job to do. It makes me weep when TfL advertise for even more staff, especially planners.'

Rees is encouraged by the changes

to the Mayor's planning powers, but stresses that there is a need to ensure that strategic planning deals with strategic issues. 'There is a job to be done at strategic level, but [the Mayor and GLA] find it difficult not to dabble in non-strategic issues. There needs to be a clear role about what is local. The 32 boroughs and the City are all very different and it is this diversity that makes London a World Class City.'

CAREER DETAILS

Age: Withheld for reasons of vanity

Family: Single

Education: Bartlett School of Architecture (University College London), the Welsh School of Architecture (University of Wales), Polytechnic of the South Bank
Career: Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London Council (1971-72); private practice with Gordon Cullen, Townscape and Planning Consultant (1973-75); Department of the Environment (1975-79); Assistant Chief Planning Officer, London Borough of Lambeth (1979-85); Controller of Planning, City of London Corporation (1985-86); City Planning Officer, City of London Corporation (1987-present)

Other roles: British delegate on Council

of Europe Working Parties studying "Suitable New Uses for Historic Buildings" and "The Economics of Building Conservation" (1976-1979); member of the European Commission 'ROME' Network studying effects of technology on the future of European cities (1989-1992); trustee of the Building Conservation Trust (1985-1991); member of the Steering Group for the 'London World City' study (1990-1991); member of the Steering Group for the London Pride Partnership (1994-98); member of the London Office Review Panel since 1996; member of the Editorial Advisory Board of "Property Week" magazine in 1998 and 2002; founder member and Director of the British Council for Offices since 1990

Awards: British Council for Offices President's Award 2003 for "presiding over one of the most extensive periods of redevelopment in the City's long history"; Barbara Miller Award 2004 from the Faculty of Building for "outstanding work in the field of construction"

Peter Rees was co-interviewed by Rachael Rooney

London Planning Awards

Winners at the 2007 Awards Ceremony



LONDON
PLANNING
AWARDS
2007

The 2007 London Planning Awards, jointly organised by the RTPI, London First and the Mayor of London were held on 15 January 2008 at City Hall, when the Deputy Mayor presented the awards

The Mayor's Award for Excellence in Planning

- Kings Cross Central, Argent (King's Cross) Ltd

This scheme to redevelop King's Cross includes 7,960,000 sq ft of mixed use development across 67 acres, with the best public transport accessibility in London.

The Mayor said 'The winner of my personal award is a project which will transform an area that has suffered for years from uncertainty, blight and decay . . . I very much look forward to the continued transformation of Kings Cross, and to its becoming a vibrant and thriving destination for Londoners and visitors for generations to come.'

Best Conceptual Project sponsored by Berwin Leighton Paisner

- Winner: Brent Cross Cricklewood - a New Town Centre, The Brent Cross

Cricklewood Development Partners

- Highly commended: Tottenham Hale Urban Centre Masterplan submitted by LB Haringey

Excellence in Affordable Housing Delivery

sponsored by The Housing Corporation

- Winner: Rubicon, London & Quadrant Housing Trust
- Highly commended: Crossways, Tower Hamlets, Swan Housing Group

Best Community-based Planning Initiative sponsored by Land Securities

- Winner: Somerset Court, St Mary & St Pancras School, Unite Group Plc & London Diocesan Bd.
- Highly commended: Spa Fields, London Borough of Islington and EC1 New Deal for Communities

Best Built Project sponsored by CB Richard Ellis

- Winner: New Street Square EC4, Land Securities
- Highly commended: Cardinal Place, EPR Architects Ltd

Best New Public Space sponsored by Lovells

- Winner: Bishops Square, Hammerson PLC
- Highly commended: Queen Street Central Plaza, City of London Corporation

Best Personal Contribution to London sponsored by GVA Grimley

- Winner: Bob West entered by CB Richard Ellis
- Highly commended: Brian Waters entered by Andrew Rogers Planning

The Mayor, London First and the Royal Town Planning Institute jointly manage the Awards and extend their appreciation to the event's sponsors.

London Young Planners group 2008

Laura Smith is the new Young Planners Representative for London. She took on the role when she moved from the RTPI East of England Regional Advisory Committee last year. Laura is a Senior Planner at The Landscape Partnership. Further information about Laura and the RTPI Young Planners Network can be found at <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/1026>.

Laura would like to make 2008 an active year for the young planners group in London, through social events, seminars and site tours.

If anyone has any ideas for events (locations, topics or sponsorship) or would like to be actively involved in the young planners group then please get in touch with Laura by email laura.smith@london.tlp.uk.com or telephone 020 7252 0002. She is waiting to hear from you!

The first event of 2008 will take place at the end of March, further details will be provided soon, so watch this space!

President's Olympic site visit

For one of his final commitments of his tenure, RTPI President Jim Claydon made an official visit to the RTPI London Region in early January.

The focus of Jim's visit was to see the progress being made on the London 2012 Olympics and to meet town planners involved in ensuring that this mammoth project is implemented on time. The day started in a windswept and rain soaked temporary cabin located 22 storeys above the London 2012 main site in Stratford where Jim was given a briefing on the project and a site orientation by the Olympic Delivery Authority's Head of Town Planning, Niall McNevin and his colleague Ben Olney from the Town Planning Promoter Team, who are leading the programming, co-ordination and submission of planning applications.

During the visit Jim also met Vivienne Ramsey, Head of the Olympic Delivery Authority's Planning Decisions Team and her colleagues, both ODA staff members and planners seconded from the Host Boroughs of Newham,

Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich and Waltham Forest. As Viv explained, the ODA PDT is an arms length body of the ODA, located in separate offices, charged with determining planning applications related to the Olympic works, along with any applications for major non Olympic development within the designated boundary. However, one important difference is that the PDT has a statutory material consideration that ensures that the PDT considers the programme required to meet the Games opening date of 27th July 2012 when determining applications. The workload in the next 12 months will be considerable for the dedicated team of planners ensuring that the Games are as sustainable as possible. The PDT will also be ensuring that the Legacy of the Games in east London will be lasting and beneficial. Viv also made the point that the ODA staff members will have



Niall McNevin explains the Olympic Park development to Jim Claydon (right)

to queue up to get tickets to the games with everyone else!

Finally, Jim was met at the ODA headquarters building in Canary Wharf by Niall McNevin, members of the Town Planning Promoter Team and representatives of the consultants working on the project including EDAW, Arup and Atkins to discuss the challenges of implementing such a large project to such a demanding deadline.

The President's visit to the London Region was completed by Jim's attendance at the London Planning Awards held at City Hall.



The ODA Planning Decisions Team with members of the London Region RAC and Jim Claydon

The site of the Olympic stadium



Sustainable Development & Design: Lessons for Local Planning Authorities

Jules Hart of Lancefield Consulting Ltd. gave a seminar at the Bartlett School of UCL on 22nd January 2008 as part of its London Planning programme this winter. Amongst his previous work Jules has helped write Barnet's SPD on Sustainable Development and has also been part of the Urban Buzz project giving design training to planners.

What is a Sustainable Development?

JH noted that local planning policy development is still hampered by the lack of a clear definition of what sustainable development is. It is difficult to carry out sustainability appraisals of a LDF's Local Development Documents for that reason (all planners really have to go on is the EIA Directive requirement that they should be assessing the impact of a proposal on their local population). A notable result of this to date has been that Inspectors at the first round of DPD EIPs have not really focussed on sustainability appraisals as key determinants in their appraisals.

There are some clues...

PPS 1 offers a general starting point when faced with a development proposal, in that it is clear that designs which are not appropriate to the context of their location should be refused. The PPS 1 supplement on climate change made clear that several sustainability objectives should be addressed in design statements:

- The prudent use of natural resources
- Sustainable economic growth
- Social cohesion and inclusion
- Protection & enhancement of the environment

Concern about how a building performs

– i.e. its contribution towards sustainable objectives - is now part of the planning process. However, this can cover a wider range of issues than planners are used to dealing with. Things which currently seem to fall through the net here include the materials used in a



building's construction and what happens to building waste taken from a site. Often sustainability will still come second in consideration when negotiation trade offs take place vis-a-vis numbers of affordable housing units, etc..

Design follows Context

Where design statements are submitted there should be a clear follow through from the analysis of a site's context to the design solution put forward. This is something which ATLAS feel is often not the case with major development schemes at present.

The Government puts economic development first?

Part of the underlying problem here has been the reluctance of central Government to take concerted action on sustainability. It would have been far more effective if the Building Regulations had been changed to introduce sustainability issues firmly into developers' frames of reference - rather than relying on (negotiable) planning requirements instead. Planning is probably too blunt an instrument to use – it was not designed for this kind of role. This has left local planning authorities trying to apply the Merton Rule in their areas to make a real contribution on

sustainable energy use.

When faced with new housing developments planners may think they can rely on the Building Regulations (re double glazing, insulation, etc.) to cover the key energy issues in buildings. In fact, these only cover systems for:

- boilers, heating & hot water
- cooling systems
- building services ; fans, pumps, etc.
- fixed lighting

They have to rely the Merton Rule for other major energy uses related to lifestyle, viz:

- other lighting systems and alarms kitchen equipment (washing machines, etc.)
- cleaning equipment
- IT equipment
- gardening or other do-it-yourself equipment

Retrofitting the existing building stock – which would make a major contribution to sustainability objectives – has not been addressed so far. The emphasis from Government has been the easier one of first applying sustainability requirements to new build construction.

Brian Whiteley (L.B Waltham Forest)

Have you tried the RTPI Networks?

The RTPI Networks and Associations provide a voice for everyone with an interest in the planning profession. They help to raise the profile of the planning profession and play a key role in our engagement and communication with members and other professionals working in planning and related fields.

The networks and associations have a strong track record of generating, demonstrating and disseminating knowledge and good practice. Network members help each other by responding rapidly to requests for information and advice on their specialist topics.

The RTPI are committed to representing and supporting all those who work in planning. Members of the networks and associations come from all sectors, including government, consultancies, academia, and not-for-profit organisations, and cover all levels of experience.

The networks and associations are virtual communities, but members also meet face-to-face at events and conferences as well as receiving regular email bulletins with all the latest news and information.

The list of networks is broad and allows you to choose to be involved in the ones best suited to your interests and specialisms.



Development Management Network: a network for communication, support and information sharing in the field of development management (development control).

Development Planning Network: a virtual community of planners with an interest or involvement in development planning.

Environmental Planning and Protection Network: provides a clear and effective voice for environmental planners and allied professionals.

Independent Consultants' Network: provides a national voice and focus for independent planning consultants.

International Development Network: a networking and information resource for planners with an interest in planning and international development.

National Association for Planning Enforcement (NAPE): aims to promote and enhance the role of planning enforcement within the planning profession.

Planning with Communities Network: aims to share good practice and influence community planning policies.

Politicians in Planning Network (PIPA): aims to influence planning policies and to press decision-makers to address current planning issues effectively.

Regeneration Network: promotes the interests of planners and planning in regeneration.

Room for All – the Housing Network: aims to influence planning policies in the area of housing.

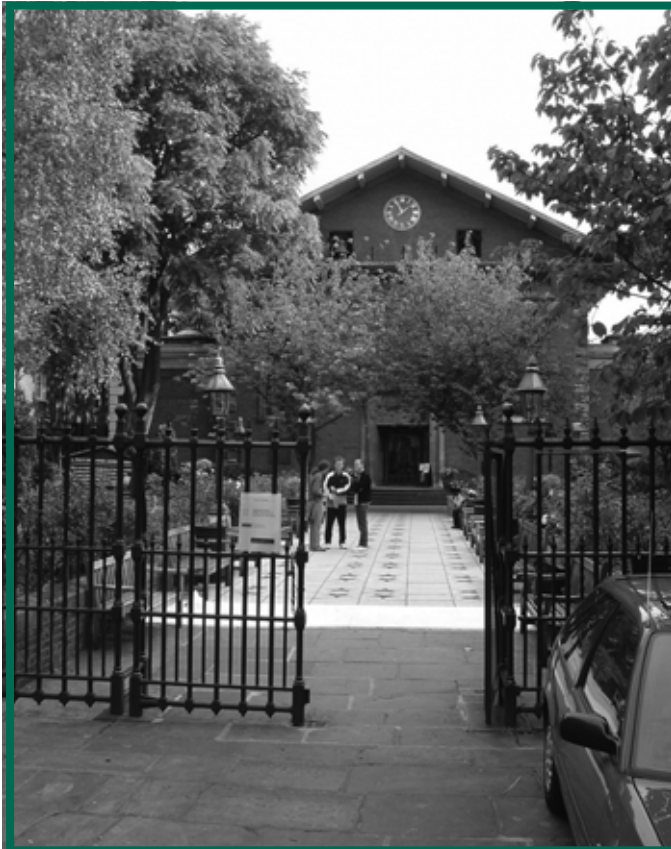
Rural Planning Network: for those with an interest in rural issues; enables members to share advice, information and examples of good practice.

Transport Planning Network: a forum for transport planners and those with an interest in transport planning issues.

Urban Design Network: promotes the importance of urban design and the interests of planners and planning in urban design.

Young Planners' Network: acts as a voice for planners under the age of 35.

For more information go to the RTPI website at www.rtpi.org.uk



Spot the Building!

The winner of the "Spot the Building Competition" in the last London Calling was Su Randall of Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames who spotted the picture as being of the northern entrance shaft to the Thames Foot Tunnel. Congratulations to Su who wins a £10 gift voucher. Thanks to all those who entered. Another pic for this issue, as ever there is a £10 voucher on offer to the first name pulled out of the hat! Answers please, by 30th April 2008, to: jon.barker@atkinsglobal.com.

Good luck!

RTPI LONDON & INDIGO ARE PROUD TO PRESENT

THE RTPI LONDON FIVE-A-SIDE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT 2008

Sponsored by **indigo**

www.indigoplanning.com

ABOUT THE EVENT

- o The RTPI London Five-A-Side Football Tournament 2008 will be played at 'Goals' Wimbledon, one of London's premier five-a-side football venues
- o The tournament will bring together planners and other built environment professionals from across London

WHO CAN ENTER THE TOURNAMENT?

- o To enter the tournament you'll need one squad of seven players per organisation, who work in planning or a related built environment profession, such as architecture, surveying, GIS or development economics.
- o At least three players in each squad should be members of the RTPI London. Each squad should also include at least two female players.

FRIDAY 16 MAY 2008
STARTS AT 6PM
KICK OFF AT 6.30PM
'Goals' Wimbledon
Beverley Way
New Malden,
near Wimbledon
KT3 4PH

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

- o This is a free event but a deposit of £70 will be payable by each squad in order to register. The deposit will be returned to participating teams on the evening of the tournament.

HOW TO ENTER

- o To enter, complete the booking form and post it along with the deposit cheque to:

Regional Co-ordinator

RTPI London
 Planning Aid Resource Centre
 Unit 3.01, Whitechapel Technology Centre
 65-75 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1DU
 Telephone: 02074260680
 Fax: 02072478005



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RTPI London Events

- **Introduction to Crossrail – Thursday 3rd April 2008, 6.15pm**

David Anderson, Director of Planning and Engineering – Crossrail
 Professor Sir Peter Hall, Bartlett Professor of Planning and Regeneration
 Claire Jenkins, Senior Project Manager – London First
 Cost: FREE Venue: SJ Berwin, 10 Queen Street Place, London, EC4R 1BE
 Contact: Region Coordinator

- **Young Planners Quiznight – Wednesday 9th April 2008, 6.30 for a 7.00pm start – sponsored by Judd Farris**

Cost: FREE Venue: Glassblower, Glasshouse Street, W1. To book a place for your team of four please contact the Region Co-ordinator

- **The RTPI London Five-A-Side Football Tournament 2008 – Friday 16th May 2008, 6.00pm, kick-off 6.30pm – Sponsored by indigo**

Cost: FREE (but £70 deposit required to secure your team place, squads of 7 inc. 3 RTPI London members and two females)
 Venue: 'Goals' Wimbledon, Beverley Way, New Malden Contact: Region Coordinator

To book any of the above events, or to find out more information contact the Region Coordinator at london@rtpi.org.uk

London Region Contacts

Regional Management Board:

Chair
 Meeta Kaur, SJ Berwin

Senior Vice-Chair
 James Bompas, Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation

Junior Vice-Chair and Representative on Planning Aid for London Management Board
 Rachael Rooney, Corporation of London

Hon Secretary and Region Web Page Editor -
 Richard Lemon, Roger Tym & Partners

Hon Treasurer
 Stuart Walburn, ESA Ltd

Representative on General Assembly
 Ian Anderson, Icen Projects Limited

Deputy Representative on General Assembly
 Joanna Chambers, EDAW

Immediate Past Chair
 not available to serve

Regional Activities Committee:

Joint Representatives on RIBA London Urbanism & Planning Group
 Joanna Chambers, EDAW and Maria Primarolo, Urban Initiatives

Representative on Construction Industry Council London Committee
 Nancy Astley, Planning Aid for London

Events Co-ordinator
 Hannah Baker, Indigo Planning

Newsletter Editor
 Jon Barker, Atkins

International Officer and Deputy Newsletter Editor
 Tom Venables, EDAW

Consultations Secretary
 Michael Fearn, Shire Consulting

Young Planners Representative
 Laura Smith, The Landscape Partnership

University Planning Schools Liaison Officer
 Duncan Bowie, London Metropolitan University

Deputy University Planning Schools Liaison Officer and Deputy Young Planners Representative
 Paul Miner, Campaign to Protect Rural England

Representative on Planning Aid for London Management Board
 Myles Joyce, London Borough of Southwark

Representative on RTPI English Planning Policy Forum and London Planning & Development Forum
 Brian Whiteley, London Borough of Waltham Forest

Other RAC members
 Carol Ryall, Planning Aid for London;
 Alex Lessware, Communities & Local Government

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