

Major London Development and the Importance of Plan Led Design



Charles Streeten
Francis Taylor Building

*‘Some housebuilders...
believe they can build
any old crap and still
sell it.’*

SENIOR EXECUTIVE IN HOUSING
AND DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY
SPEAKING TO THE BUILDING
BETTER BUILDING BEAUTIFUL
COMMISSION (2019)



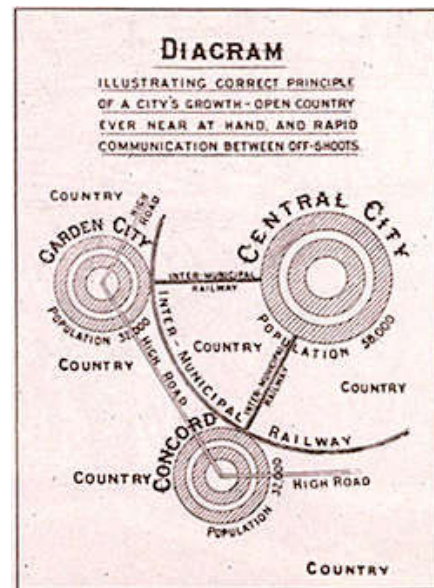
Design at the Heart of Planning

'to secure the home healthy, the house beautiful, the town pleasant, the city dignified and the suburb salubrious.'

AIMS OF THE PLANNING ACT (1909)

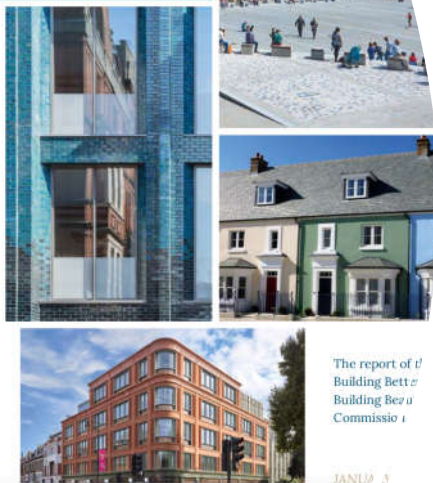
NPPF 124 "The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development."

NPPF 130 Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions



Living with Beauty

Promoting health, well-being and sustainable growth



Living with Beauty: The Report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (January 2020)

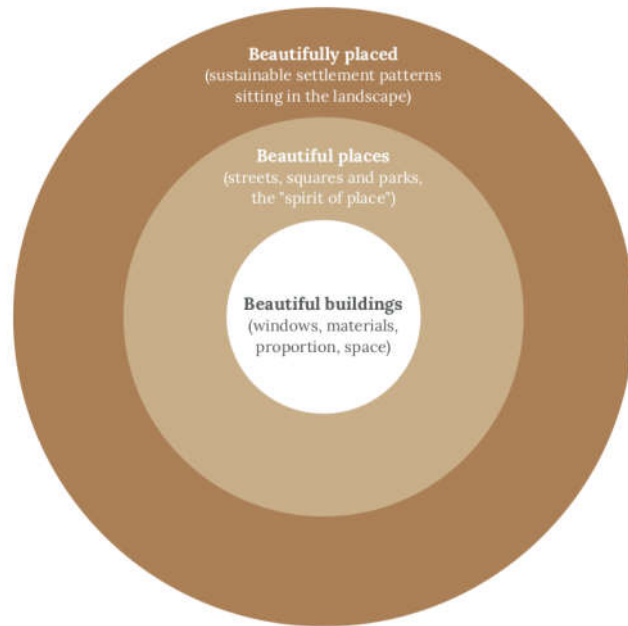
- Ask for Beauty
- Refuse Ugliness
- Promote Stewardship

"Those three aims must be embedded in the planning system and in the culture of development, in such a way as to incentivise beauty and deter ugliness at every point"

BEAUTY AT THREE SCALES

Ask for Beauty

- *Beauty includes... everything that makes a collection of buildings into a place, everything that turns anywhere into somewhere, and nowhere into home.*
- *Beauty should be an essential condition for planning permission.*



Refuse Ugliness

Ugliness means buildings that are unadaptable, unhealthy and unsightly and which violate the context in which they are placed.

Ugly buildings present a social cost that everyone is forced to bear. They destroy the sense of place, undermine the spirit of community, and ensure that we are not at home in our world.

Preventing ugliness should be a primary purpose of the planning system.



The life and death of British cities

Promote Stewardship

We should end the scandal of abandoned places, where derelict buildings and vandalised public spaces drive people away. New developments should enhance the environment in which they occur, adding to the health, sustainability and biodiversity of their context.



National Design Guide (January 2021)

- **Context** – enhances the surroundings.
- **Identity** – attractive and distinctive.
- **Built form** – a coherent pattern of development.
- **Movement** – accessible and easy to move around.
- **Nature** – enhanced and optimised.
- **Public spaces** – safe, social and inclusive.
- **Uses** – mixed and integrated.
- **Homes and buildings** – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- **Resources** – efficient and resilient.
- **Lifespan** – made to last.

New London Plan
Adopted 2nd March 2021



The Importance Context

- NPPF 125 “Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics.”
- NPPF 127 “decisions should ensure that developments...are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”



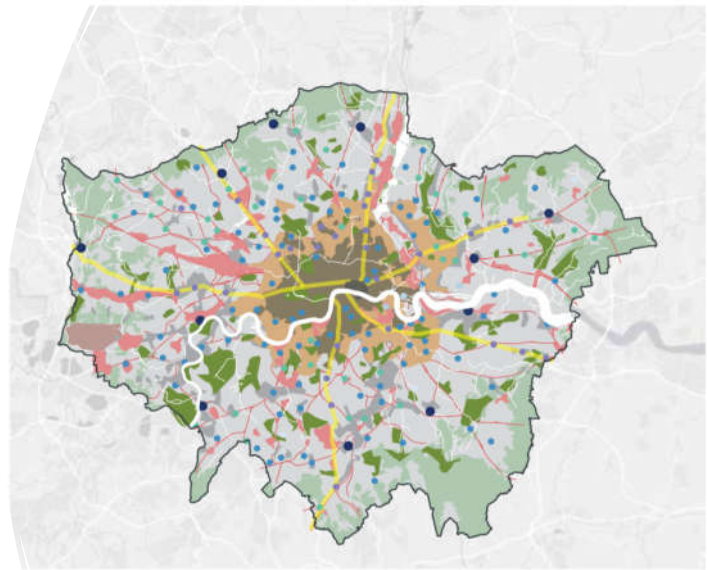
Context: NLP DI

DI: London's form, character, and capacity for growth

- **Defining an area's character to understand its capacity for growth**
- **Planning for growth**

"change is a fundamental characteristic of London, **respecting character and accommodating change** should not be seen as mutually exclusive."

- Outline Character Map of London



Character Map of London

20th century suburbs

Town Centres

Victorian suburbs

20th century

Copyright, Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners, 2016. Mapping and research for Historic England: London's Local Character and Density.

NLP D13: The Agent of Change

The Agent of Change principle places the responsibility for mitigating impacts from existing noise and other nuisance-generating activities or uses on the proposed new noise-sensitive development.

Good Design?

NLP D3

- Design Lead Approach
- Form and layout
- Experience
- Quality and character

Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach

All development must make the best use of land by following a design-led approach that optimises the capacity of sites, including site allocations. Optimising site capacity means ensuring that development is of the most appropriate form and land use for the site. The design-led approach requires consideration of design options to determine the most appropriate form of development that responds to a site's context and capacity for growth"



Design Excellence/ Innovation

NPPF 131.

"In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings"



Delivering Good Design – NLP D4

Exploring Options

- Stakeholder engagement
- Design Analysis and Appropriate Tools

Design scrutiny

- Design Review



NLP D5-D8: Detailed Design

Policy D5 Inclusive design

Policy D6 Housing quality and standards

- Private internal space
- Private outside space

Policy D7 Accessible housing

Policy D8 Public realm





NLP D9: Tall Buildings

What is a Tall Building?

Development Plans should define what is considered a tall building for specific localities, the height of which will vary between and within different parts of London but should not be less than 6 storeys or 18 metres measured from ground to the floor level of the uppermost storey.

Locations

Tall buildings should only be developed in locations that are identified as suitable in Development Plans.

Impacts

Visual, Functional, Environmental, Cumulative



Case Study: Guildford Quadrant

- No Pre-App
- No Design Review
- No Townscape Analysis
- No assessment of key views
- Flawed internal and external layout
- Height determined solely to maximise unit numbers

Guildford Quadrant: Take 2

- Design review conducted but not disclosed
- Height to maximise number of units
- Inappropriate contextual references
- Form divorced from function



Summary

- Shift in emphasis towards design excellence
- Beauty is no longer a dirty word
- Design should be 'plan led' from the start
- Active stakeholder engagement, contextual analysis, and careful scrutiny are critical

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