

Tall Buildings

Hackney Tall Buildings Strategy

BACKGROUND REPORT

Phase 1 Report - BASELINE STUDIES

Phase 2 Report - URBAN ANALYSIS

Phase 3 Report - DETAILED AREA STUDIES

Phase 4 Report - DESIGN GUIDANCE AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

FINAL - Issue C

February 2005

London Borough of Hackney

Strategy



This document forms a background report to the tall buildings strategy for the London Borough of Hackney and is an assemblage of technical studies that have been undertaken in preparing the wider strategy. For ease of navigation the main aspects of the study have been broken into the following components;

<p>Phase 1: Baseline Studies</p> <p>The first phase of the study explores a variety of issues that currently affect tall buildings including design quality, sustainability, and conservation as well as reviewing the planning policy framework in which the overall strategy will eventually operate.</p>	<p>Phase 2: Urban Analysis & Consultation</p> <p>The second phase report undertakes a sieve based analysis that identifies areas of opportunity for tall buildings in the borough.</p>
<p>Phase 3: Detailed Area Studies</p> <p>The penultimate phase of the study tests and refines the areas of tall building opportunity identified in the previous phase and concludes with the tall buildings strategy plan. This plan provides the locational guidance for tall</p>	<p>Phase 4: Design Guidance & Policy Recommendations</p> <p>The final phase sets out design guidance and application checklists that are aimed at raising the standard of tall buildings applications in the borough. This phase is concluded by a number of policy recommendations for the emerging Hackney Local Development Framework.</p>

The findings set out in this series of documents are more succinctly presented within the Hackney Tall Buildings Strategy report.

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Tall Buildings

Hackney Tall Buildings Strategy

Phase 1 Report
BASELINE STUDIES

ISSUE C - Final

February 2005

London Borough of Hackney

Strategy



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“Love them or hate them, one thing
we cannot do is ignore them”

(Abel, 2003, p13)

Aurora Place, Sydney
by architect Renzo Piano is a fine example of the exciting tall building forms that are emerging in other parts of the world. This scheme is particularly important as it delivers a high quality of design as well as successfully integrating a mix of uses.

1.0





London Borough of Hackney

Aerial photograph taken from the council website at www.hackney.gov.uk

1.0 Introduction

This report aims to provide a baseline review that sets the context for the preparation of a tall buildings strategy for the London Borough of Hackney (LBH). When complete, the overall strategy is intended to give a robust and cohesive view about tall development within the borough and will form a key piece of supporting evidence in preparing policies for the new Local Development Framework (LDF).

Following this report a number of other strands of work will be undertaken and iteratively integrated to form the full strategy. These include;

- Review and finalisation of this baseline review.
- An urban analysis process aimed at identifying those areas of the borough that are able to absorb tall development.
- More detailed area studies that broadly explore the tall building potential of each of the identified zones.
- Recommendations in relation to the tall buildings policies to be included in the emerging LDF.
- Tall building Design Guidance in support of the main strategy and aimed at improving the design quality of applications.

1.1 Appointment

In recognition of the need to establish a clear borough wide approach to the issue of tall development, and in the interests of ensuring a high standard of architectural and design quality, the London Borough of Hackney appointed urban design consultants Gillespies, with planning and property specialists Donaldson's and transport specialists ARUP, to prepare an integrated Tall Buildings Strategy for the borough.

1.2 Document Structure

This report has been structured in following way:

- **A Review of the Tall Building Debate**
The first section of this report provides a brief overview of the current debate surrounding the issue of tall buildings and crystallises the core issues in relation to this.
- **Planning and Design Framework**
The second main part of the report reviews relevant national, London-wide, and local planning policy and guidance as a way of providing the context for the wider study.
- **Tall Buildings: Urban Design and Sustainability**
This section provides a view on design and architectural issues as they relate to tall buildings as well as the role of tall buildings in delivering sustainable development. This section also sets out a high level view on the relationship of tall buildings to conservation settings.
- **Defining Tall Buildings**
This section provides working definitions for tall buildings within the borough. An early priority will be to advance and agree these definitions.

- **Demand and Market Issues**
The final main part of this report sets out the market reviews that have been undertaken as way of identifying current and likely demand for tall buildings within the borough and surrounding areas.
- **Baseline Review: Summary Points**
The penultimate section of the report sets out conclusions in relation to the work contained within this report.
- **Next Steps**
The final portion of the document describes the next steps in the process of working toward a tall buildings strategy for the borough.

1.3 Study Area

The study area for the Tall Buildings Strategy is the whole of the London Borough of Hackney as well as its border interfaces with surrounding local authorities. In addition consideration will be given to the aspiration of the London Plan in managing and siting tall development.

1.4 Parallel Study

In parallel to the tall buildings strategy a number of other key evidence studies are being prepared in support of the emerging LDF. These are running on similar timescales and where available and appropriate key findings will be integrated into the final tall buildings strategy and vice versa. The key studies are as follows;

- Open Space Study
- Employment and Growth Options Study
- Retail Study
- Housing Capacity Study
- Night Time Economy Study
- Transportation Strategy and Local Implementation Plan

Menara UMNO
by architect Ken Yeang
provides an excellent
example of a tall building
that maximises its potential
as a fine vista terminus and
that adds to the townscape
quality of an historic quarter
of Georgetown, Penang.

2.0



2.0 Contested Territory: The Tall Building Debate

2.1 The Tall Building Legacy

Tall buildings are generally associated with the morphology of new world cities such as New York and Sydney where they first emerged as statements of affluence and progressiveness, and where they exist in a less historic and Euro-centric context. Tall buildings exist within UK and Europe as well but have generally emerged as a different typology.

The generally poor reputation that tall buildings have in the eyes of many people is the direct result of the residential towers of the late modernist era. These buildings were dotted across the urban landscape of Britain in an attempt to achieve a utopian ideal achieved through the mix of architecture and social programming. The results of such generally un-concentrated and poorly designed schemes have been well documented and resulted in the demolition of many such buildings.

"While the current debate about "tall" buildings predominantly centres on a small number of landmark buildings, we are also faced with considering the possibility of high residential buildings, and must be aware of the "mistakes" of the past." (Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2001). However some tall buildings from this era have been recognised to have architectural merit. This is referenced by the recent conservation listing of Trellick Tower and Centrepoint Tower, amongst others, in London.

In general it is widely accepted that a new generation of tall buildings that are sensitively sited within cities, respecting views and local characteristics, have a potentially strong contribution to make to the vitality, economic health, and attractiveness of towns and cities across the UK. To ensure that the latest generation of tall buildings achieves these aims it is also widely accepted that a *"sceptical approach and rigorous analysis are needed."* (Civic Trust 2001)

2.2 The World Trade Centre Attack

The events of 11th September 2001 have dramatically changed global perceptions about the appropriateness and need for very tall buildings within cities. In particular issues of safety and structural robustness within these structures have become of the highest priority.

Post 9/11 a significant number of high profile built environment commentators suggested that the era of the tall building was over. James Howard Kunstler, a widely recognised critic of the contemporary urban environment suggests, *"that the age of skyscrapers is at an end. It must now be considered an experimental building typology that has failed...We predict that no new mega towers will be built, and existing ones are destined to be dismantled."* (Kunstler, 2001).

Conversely, and significantly, CABI and English Heritage's recently published guidance on tall buildings (2003) takes a more positive stance suggesting, *"Cities and their skylines evolve. In the right place, tall buildings can make positive contributions to city life...they can serve as beacons of regeneration, and stimulate further investment. The design and construction of innovative tall buildings can also serve to extend the frontiers of buildings and environmental technology."*

Several technical studies on tall buildings within the UK recognise that an approach to the design of tall buildings that effectively assesses such risks, together with the robustness of the structure and adequacy of means of escape can provide many answers in terms of dealing with such extreme events.

2.3 Forces Driving Buildings Upward

There are a variety of very real pressures forcing buildings upwards within Britain and abroad. Most of these pressures relate to the buoyant property market and the climate of investor confidence generally associated with the late 1990's. Interlinked with these issues of value and market demand is the current urban renaissance agenda that aspires to an increase in urban densities in many centres.

London Pressures

In particular the Mayor of London's policy, which focuses on the intensification of capital is providing additional pressure to build denser, and in some cases, taller buildings. Linked to this is the 50% affordable housing policy outlined in the London Plan, which places additional commercial pressures on developers to maximise value through intensification of sites.

Commercial Demand

It is mostly large companies who desire the prestige associated with an immediately recognisable building, and tall or architecturally unique buildings are able to provide this identity. In relation to this the RTPI (2001) recognises "*the desire to occupy a landmark building exists for many companies, but we do not believe that this factor alone should be used as justification for allowing more new high buildings.*" Also, the escalating demand for inner city living, key worker accommodation and the need to maximise the quantum of development on scarce inner city sites provides additional impetus to build taller mixed-use towers.

Residential Demand

The majority of tall building applications submitted in the southeast in recent years have been for primarily residential towers which suggests greater demand for this type of tall development.

2.4 The Key Issues

Tall buildings are, as one would expect, the subject of polarised opinion within the wider community, as well as in the architectural and planning professions. One side of the argument suggests that tall buildings do not respond to the human scale of streets in cities such as London and have difficulty integrating with the established urban pattern. Conversely others argue that such reference to the nostalgia of cities is inappropriate and that tall buildings offer the opportunity to continue the evolution of the urban form in new and exciting ways whilst contributing to denser and livelier cities.

Towers of one kind or another have been part of the townscape of European cities for hundreds of years, providing a visual focus and an aid to way finding in the city. The difference between such towers and spires and the modern tall buildings is largely their use, with contemporary tall buildings generally having a more commercial or utilitarian function rather than ecclesiastical or civic roles.

The visual impact of tall buildings, particularly on the historic centres of British towns, is one of the most common objections to tall buildings proposals in the UK. The bulk and height of such proposals often sits uncomfortably on the skyline and intrudes on strategic historic and open space view corridors.

Tall buildings can also have significant environmental impacts on their surrounding and wider contexts. The quantum of floor space associated with some schemes can place considerable strain on local transport infrastructure, test the capacity of schools and health services, lead to an oversupply of commercial premises in an area, and dramatically alter the intrinsic character of an area.

Tall buildings also suffer from a lack of flexibility brought about by limited variety of floor plate configurations, which reduces the ability of the structure to accommodate a variety of uses over time. This issue is of particular importance to tall buildings as their design life almost always exceeds the lifespan of their initial uses. Linked to this is the generally less efficient utilisation of floor space in

comparison to lower forms of development, which often have more flexible internal spaces. Conversely, when appropriately integrated into the local environment tall buildings are able to assist in achieving the economic aspirations of an area by attracting the investment of large companies and organisations. Similarly, in already tightly packed areas of the city the tall building model provides opportunities to insert a large quantum of development using a relatively small footprint, contributing to the intensification of the area.

Tall buildings, when incorporated into major redevelopments, can help to alter perceptions of an area in terms of land values and long-term investment potential. In this way tall buildings are able to act as catalysts for regeneration, particularly when they are used to subsidise the improvement of transport infrastructure, community facilities and public spaces. In relation to this regenerative capacity tall buildings can also play a role in improving legibility, providing visual cues as to the economic core of an area.

2.5 Perceptions of Density in Hackney

A study investigating the perceptions of the residents of Hackney in relation to high-density living is being undertaken in parallel to this report. This will form another key evidence study in support of the LDF and its emerging conclusions will be iteratively integrated into the final tall buildings strategy.

2.6 Summary Points

The following broad conclusions have been drawn from a review of the tall buildings debate.

2.6.1 Learning from Past Mistakes

The built legacy of the modernist era, particularly housing estates defined by a sparse pattern of single use towers, should be used as a reminder of the potentially damaging effects of poorly designed tall buildings.

2.6.2 A Growing Body of Knowledge

Recent years have seen significant advancements in architectural methods and construction technologies in relation to tall buildings. This has been instrumental in improving the tall building typology and the manner in which it relates to its surrounding urban environment.

2.6.3 Tall Buildings Are Not Necessarily Appropriate

A variety of urban patterns are able to achieve increased urban densities that are so important to the sustainability and vitality of our cities. Tall buildings, largely because of issues of visual intrusion and public realm quality, are often the least appropriate development type.

2.6.4 Very Real Pressure

Very real pressure exists, particularly in geographically constrained boroughs such as Hackney, and in the context of the London Plan, to maximise the density and value of every site.

2.6.5 Tall Buildings Need to be Designed Well in Detail

Tall buildings can offer exciting alternatives to more traditional development patterns, but more than any other typology require excellence in design to heighten their contribution to the skyline, attract investment, and to mitigate their negative impacts at street level.

Friedensreich Hundertwasser's residential building in the city of Vienna which provides a variety of green spaces integral to the building

3.0



3.0 Planning Context

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the general principles and main points of the planning framework in which the development of tall buildings, and the emerging strategy for Hackney, must operate. For ease of interpretation this section has been broken into three main sections as follows;

- A National Policy and Guidance
- B Regional Guidance
- C Local Policy and Guidance

A National Policy and Guidance

The National context provides a variety of broad principles that will be utilised to guide the contents of this study.

3.2 The New Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill

The Government published its proposals for reform of the planning system in a Green Paper *Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change*. The aim of the '*Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill*' is to simplify the way decisions are made in relation to planning in an attempt to make the process more accessible to the public and less drawn out. The Bill received Royal Assent on 13 May 2004 and the Act came into force, via a commencement order in September 2004.

The legislation is designed to pave the way for a more flexible and responsive plan making system at regional and local level for England and Wales. The Act reviews the existing development plan system, and improves the development control process by introducing powers for standard application forms and new provisions, which change the duration of planning permissions and consents. It also makes the compulsory purchase regime simpler, fairer and quicker to support policies on investment in major infrastructure and on regeneration.

3.3 Sustainable Communities Plan

The Deputy Prime Minister launched the Communities Plan (Sustainable Communities: Building for the future) on 5 February 2003. The Plan sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. It aims to tackle housing supply issues in the South East, low demand in other parts of the country, and the quality of our public spaces. The Plan includes not just a significant increase in resources and major reforms of housing and planning, but a new approach to how we build and what we build. The Plan consists of several key elements:

3.3.1 Addressing the housing shortage.

Accelerating the provision of housing which includes ensuring that housing numbers set out in planning guidance for the South East (RPG 9) are delivered and by accelerating growth in the four "growth areas" to provide approximately 200,000 new homes by 2026 in the Thames Gateway, London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor (of which the eastern area of LB Hackney forms part of), Ashford, and Milton Keynes-South Midlands areas. This has relevance to this study in considering the role that tall buildings may have in helping to deliver this quantum of new homes.

The plan also targets significant funding for affordable housing and to tackle homelessness.

3.3.2 Addressing low demand and abandonment.

The plan seeks to address around one million homes particularly in parts of the North and Midlands are suffering from low demand and abandonment.

3.3.3 Decent homes.

The Plan sets out an action programme to ensure that all social housing is brought up to a 'decent' standard by 2010.

3.3.4 Liveability

The Plan sets out how the Government intends to intensify efforts to improve the local environment of all communities. This includes cleaner streets, improved parks and better public spaces. The guidance points to the Holly Street estate redevelopment, which has transformed a whole community through the creation of small streets, small blocks of flats and brick built houses and other community facilities. Alongside the aim of redeveloping the housing on the estate, the project has sought to remove the fear of crime, improve security and improve the mental and physical health of residents, thus reducing the call on health services.

3.3.5 Protecting the Green Belt and Open Space.

The Plan outlines how land will be used more effectively. The majority of new housing will be on previously developed land, rather than on greenfield. Developments of low density will be called in by the Secretary of State as part of the Government's Density Direction.

3.4 Central Government Objectives

The Central Government has placed increasing emphasis on urban design and the regeneration of towns and cities across the UK in recent years. This is evidenced through the government's subscription to documents such as *'The urban white paper'*, *'Towards an Urban Renaissance' (Rogers 1999)*, and *'Bringing Britain Together: A national strategy for neighbourhood renewal' (Social Exclusion Unit 1998)*. These documents provide the basis for a legislative framework that aspires to achieve the sustainable, vibrant and urbane regeneration of urban areas across the country. Key objectives that relate to the increase in urban densities and tall buildings include the following major points:

- Improving the physical and environmental quality of the urban environment through high standards in urban design, architecture and planning.
- Employing the principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability to create places that are vibrant, safe and enduring.
- Utilising brownfield land to aid in the intensification of cities and to reduce pressure on greenfield sites on city fringes.
- Encouraging mixed use development, instead of a zoned approach to city planning, to create active, balanced and walkable communities.
- Involving local communities in the shaping of their environment.

3.5 CABE/ English Heritage Guidance on Tall Buildings

In response to the emerging issues in relation to tall buildings across the country the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and English Heritage have jointly produced 'Guidance on Tall Buildings' (2003). This document sets the scene for many of the issues associated with building tall and outlines the following major points.

- CABE and EH strongly endorse a strategic and planned approach to tall buildings that is based on initially identifying areas of the city where tall buildings are, are not, and might be appropriate. This should be followed by

detailed urban design explorations within the various zones identified through the plan based analysis.

- The preparation of design statements, in line with PPG1, for all major developments and the need to evaluate the impact of tall building proposals on the skyline using visualisations and photomontages.
- The need for all tall building applications to thoroughly consider their impact on the surrounding natural and built environment.
- The overriding importance of design quality in achieving safe, positive, attractive additions to the city.

In transport terms this document highlights the importance of transport in relation to tall buildings because of the intensity of use, as well as density, that they represent. It recommends the following criteria are addressed for tall building applications: 'The relationship to transport infrastructure, aviation constraints, and, in particular, the capacity of public transport, the quality of links between transport and the site, and the feasibility of making improvements, where appropriate.'

3.6 Planning Policy Guidance Notes

A number of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's) have been produced by the Central Government, some of which have relevance to tall building issues. The following PPG's have informed the content of this study.

3.6.1 PPG1: General Policy and Principles

PPG1 provides general guidance on planning policy. This document also sets out the Government's aspirations to achieve high design quality and sustainable development.

In Annex A, Handling Of Design Issues, the guidance states that development plans should set out design policies against which development proposals are to be considered. Policies should be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built and natural environment, and should take account of the defining characteristics of each local area, for example local or regional building traditions and materials. The fact that a design or layout is appropriate for one area does not mean it is appropriate everywhere. Plan policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.

3.6.2 Draft PPS1: Creating Sustainable Communities

Planning Policy Statement 1 will replace PPG 1 and has been out to consultation until 21st May 2004. Draft PPS1 supports the Government's reform programme for the planning system. PPS1 particularly supports the Government's objectives for planning culture change, the key policy messages are:

- The need for planning authorities to take an approach based on integrating the four aims of sustainable development: economic development; social inclusion; environmental protection and prudent use of resources.
- The need for positive planning to achieve sustainable development objectives and proactive management of development, rather than simply regulation and control.
- The need for plans to set clear visions for communities and help to integrate the wide range of activities relating to development and regeneration.
- The need for the planning system to be transparent, accessible and accountable, and to actively promote participation and involvement.

Specifically with regard to design, the policies should encourage developments which:

- Are appropriate to their context in respect of scale and compatibility with their surroundings.
- Secure positive improvement to the streetscape or place where they are located.
- Create safe environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.
- Make efficient and prudent use of natural resources.
- Address the needs of all in society, including people with disabilities.

Included in Annex C is a note specifically on design matters. This states that planning should encourage good design and that Local Planning Authorities should not attempt to impose a particular architectural taste or style arbitrarily. It also goes on to state that development plan policies should be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built environment and should take account of defining characteristics of each local area. Development plans should also contain clear, comprehensive and inclusive access policies. Lastly, Local Planning Authorities should ensure that they have sufficient information on which to make an informed decision on the design; information is likely to include:

- The key design principles.
- Density.
- The mix and distribution of uses.
- The timescale for the development.
- How access needs have been considered in developing the scheme, including any steps taken to meet the requirements of the Disabled Discrimination Act 1995.

3.6.3 PPG3: Housing

This land use specific guidance note will apply to all residential elements of tall buildings and sets out a variety of principles in the design and development of residential schemes. The guidance encourages the production of urban capacity studies to determine the potential supply of housing across an administrative area. It promotes the creation of sustainable residential environments by linking development to public transport, creating a mixture of uses, designing for quality, and making the best use of land.

3.6.4 PPG13: Transport

The impact that increased densities and tall buildings have on transport infrastructure outlined in the guidance in this PPG is of particular relevance to tall buildings. It notes that Greater London has its own arrangements for integrating planning and transport, reflected in the production of the Spatial Development Strategy and the Transport Strategy.

PPG 13: Transport encourages improved links between housing and public transport and in particular for high-density developments such as tall buildings, to concentrate them near public transport centres or alongside corridors well served (or with the potential to be) by public transport. It also encourages reduced parking standards. However, recently there has been discussion as to the overflow impact of this on residential streets, and this needs to be addressed.

For employment, a concentration in urban centres can increase the potential for use of public transport, and as with housing is recommended to be in locations already well served or with the potential to be well served by public transport. It is recommended that locations not well served by public transport are avoided.

3.6.5 PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment

The potential impact of tall buildings on the visual quality of historic townscapes is potentially one of the biggest issues facing the development of tall buildings. PPG15 sets out best practice in dealing with such issues.

B Regional Guidance

At a regional and London wide level a number of key policies and guidance are to be taken into account. The following reviews provide a broad overview of this level of policy;

3.7 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9)

The Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) is provided by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. It covers the period up to 2016 setting the framework for the longer-term future. It supersedes the *Regional Planning Guidance for the South East* issued in March 1994, which covered the period up to 2011.

The primary purpose of the guidance is to provide a regional framework for the preparation of local authority development plans. The guidance has a vision of encouraging economic success throughout the region.

RPG9 focuses on enabling an urban renaissance, promoting regeneration and renewal, concentrating development in urban areas and faster social inclusion and economic success, thereby reducing the reliance on the private car. The document outlines a number of main principles of relevance:

- Urban areas should become the main focus for development through making them more attractive, accessible and better able to attract investment.
- The development of housing should be more sustainable, providing a better mix of sizes, types and tenures, having regard to the structure of households and people's ability to access homes and jobs.
- Transport investment should support the spatial strategy, maintaining the existing network, enhancing access as part of more concentrated forms of development.

Future development in London should support and develop London's role as a world business and commercial centre and as a centre of international and national importance for retailing, tourism, education, heritage culture and the arts. Development should support the regeneration of areas of deprivation having regard to the need to encourage sustainable development, including mixed use development and maintaining high levels of environmental quality.

3.8 Regional Transport Strategy (SEERA)

The South East England Regional Assembly issued its draft Regional Transport Strategy in January 2003, which will replace the current Regional Transport Strategy set out in Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9). The Strategy develops the proposals and policies, which will provide the basis for linking transport planning to the economic development, social and other goals of the region.

Of particular relevance to this study, the Regional Transport Strategy sets out 19 policies that aim to improve the transport network in the region by focusing on more sustainable solutions to transport that can be used to improve connectivity

within the region, assist in maintaining existing levels of investment, attract new investment, and support intensified development within cities.

3.9 Regional Economic Strategy (SEEDA)

The Regional Economic Strategy, produced by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), is a document that aims to provide a cohesive approach to improving the economic competitiveness of the South East Region. As a strategy it encompasses action at the regional, sub-regional, local and sectoral levels. The following core points relate most strongly to the development of tall buildings in Hackney:

- Promoting World Class Businesses by attracting and retaining high added value companies.
- Encourage a World Class Environment by raising the quality threshold associated with new development.

C Local Policy and Guidance

Several strategies, including the adopted UDP, have been reviewed in order to extract key information and policies that will have a bearing on the development of tall buildings within the Borough. We have also considered the most relevant policies of other London Boroughs.

3.10 The London Plan: Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (February 2004)

London Boroughs are encouraged to review their high buildings policy by the Mayor in the London Plan. Policy 4B.8, Tall Buildings Locations, states:

“The Mayor will promote the development of tall buildings where they create attractive landmarks enhancing London’s character, help to provide a coherent location for economic clusters of related activities and/or act as a catalyst for regeneration and where they are also acceptable in terms of design and impact on their surroundings”.

Furthermore, the Mayor will, and boroughs should, consider all applications for tall buildings against criteria set out in the Plan’s Policies 4B.1, 4B.3 and 4B.9. It is stated that the Mayor will work with boroughs and the strategic partnerships to help identify suitable locations for tall buildings, for example some Opportunity Areas.

Boroughs are also encouraged to identify defined areas of specific character that could be sensitive to tall buildings. In doing so, they should clearly explain what aspects of local character could be affected and why.

In addition, Boroughs should take into account the reasons why the Mayor may support tall buildings when assessing planning applications that are referable to the Mayor. For example, the Mayor will take into account the potential benefit of public access to the upper floors and may require such access.

The London Plan contains a number of other policies (see Appendix) relating to large-scale buildings and the development of compact cities. These include:

- Policy 4B.1 Design for a compact city
- Policy 4B.3 Maximising the potential of sites
- Policy 4B.6 Sustainable design and construction
- Policy 4B.9 Large-scale buildings – design and impact
- Policy 4B.15 London view Protection Framework

- Policy 4B.12 View management plans
- Policy 4B.12 Assessing development impact on designated views.

In terms of transport, The London Plan provides the following guidance relevant to tall buildings:

- Locate high trip generating developments only where there are high levels of public transport accessibility (i.e. high PTAL levels), and capacity to cater for the development;
- Ensure parking provision needs reflect levels of public transport accessibility;
- Consider the need for improved public transport to support Opportunity Areas and Areas for Intensification, particularly in East London;
- Encourage tall buildings where they will enhance character, provide a coherent location for economic activity and/or act as a catalyst for regeneration;
- Review that they are appropriate to the transport capacity of the area ensuring adequate, attractive, inclusive and safe pedestrian and public transport access.
- The London Plan highlights Shoreditch as an Opportunity Area for development and Dalston as a Major Centre.

3.11 The Mayor's Transport Strategy

The Mayor's Transport Strategy reflects national policy for locating high-density development where there are high levels of public transport accessibility. Three areas are identified with high PTALs. These are around Hackney Central, in the southwest corner of the Borough, and in the northeast near Finsbury Park.

It encourages the provision of development contributions for transport measures, the need for transport assessment and travel plans and enabling patterns of land use that support sustainable patterns of travel as well as highlighting the future consideration of the Hackney-southwest line to improve access to the inner north east London.

3.12 London Borough of Hackney – Adopted Local Plan (June 1995)

3.12.1 Development and Environment

Policy ST7 generally seeks to resist 'excessively' tall buildings, and will protect strategically important views / backdrops. 'Excessive' is not defined as part of the policy context. The policy seeks to protect the local environment, and ensure that badly sited and unsympathetically scaled office buildings do not over dominate the Borough. It is also noted that residential tower blocks have been historically unpopular with residents.

Policy EQ2 seeks to protect the strategic view and setting / skyline of St Paul's Cathedral. Developments' height, location, and materials that would have adverse effect on this setting would be resisted. In assessing this, the Council would consult other relevant local authorities and other appropriate bodies where relevant. Furthermore, the improvement of the views affected by existing buildings will be sought. Likewise, proposals that would be obscured by such existing buildings will not be permitted under this Policy.

Policy EQ3 deals specifically with tall buildings. It uses the definition of:

"buildings which are significantly higher than their surroundings"

Exceptions to this may be acceptable to the Council subject to the satisfaction of four design-based criteria.

Because a potentially wide area can be affected, the Council will consider consultation with neighbouring boroughs when appropriate as part of this policy. Moreover, “an extremely high standard of design and materials will be expected”; considering existing adjacent building lines, wind turbulence and overshadowing; avoiding horizontal domination of the local street block pattern, and; not affecting the development potential of adjacent sites.

The supporting text to this policy also promotes the use of planning agreements in securing improvements to infrastructure such as sewerage and on public transport, where such developments require.

3.12.2 Transport

The UDP highlights the need to ensure development is appropriately related to transport infrastructure which will serve its needs and suggests three key areas which have major opportunities for development:

- South Shoreditch – a regeneration area for office/business development;
- Dalston Town Centre – a major retail development and office development area;
- Hackney Wick – a major development opportunity given the improvements to access which the Hackney to M11 link road offers.

3.12.3 Transport: London Borough of Hackney Action Plan 20/20

The action plan highlights support for potential public transport proposals that indicate where the location of tall buildings could be considered. These are the East London Line Extension, the Stratford International Passenger Station, and the Hackney-Chelsea Line.

3.13 Neighbouring Authority Policies

This section of the review outlines the key policies of neighbouring boroughs that are likely to have an impact on the formulation of the Hackney tall buildings strategy. This section will be iteratively developed as information comes to hand.

3.13.1 London Borough of Islington UDP (Adopted June 2002)

LB Islington seeks to oppose high buildings (any structure higher than 30 metres above ground level) across the Borough in Policy D9. The Greater London Development Plan identified almost the whole of Islington as an area particularly sensitive to the impact of high buildings and identified smaller areas, including Smithfield, Clerkenwell, Amwell, King’s Cross and the Highgate/Crouch Hill ridge, as areas in which high buildings are inappropriate. LB Islington note that even in the main roads of the Borough, the majority of buildings do not exceed five storeys - high buildings in Islington are the exception.

LB Islington considers that policies to control high buildings need to be strengthened and more vigorously implemented in order to avoid the mistakes of the past.

LB Islington considers that none of Islington’s existing high buildings, which include the Nat West Towers in Pentonville Road, the BT building in Old Street, the Harvist Estate, the Archway Tower, the University of North London in Holloway Road, Peregrine, Turnpike, Michael Cliffe and Patrick Coman Houses, Finsbury, and Dixon Clarke Court, Highbury Corner, form a cluster of high buildings which it is desirable to reinforce. Indeed LB Islington considers that the majority of these buildings are now regarded as unfortunate mistakes, which detract from Islington’s character and that the opportunities for creating new landmarks are also limited.

LB Islington consider that high buildings usually require space around them in order to comply with daylighting and other standards, and are likely to create high levels of demand for transport and other services, putting pressure on existing services.

Conservation Area design policy guidelines generally stipulate far more restrictive maximum building heights to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of these areas. However, the character of conservation areas is likely to be adversely affected by high buildings outside the area, even by high buildings outside the borough.

LB Islington consider that consultation with neighbouring boroughs is therefore essential on high buildings policy, and on any specific development proposal which has cross-boundary implications.

According to the recent consultation draft SPG on tall buildings, this policy has been very successful in that very few buildings over 30m have been granted permission since 1994, when the previous UDP was adopted.

3.13.2 London Borough of Tower Hamlets UDP (Adopted December 1998)

Policy DEV5, High Buildings and Views, considers that high building development (exceeding 20 metres) is only suitable in central area zones. This is subject to meeting a number of criteria related to building design, environmental, transport and infrastructure, views and urban design matters. Outside of these areas, where transport systems are unable to accommodate additional pressure or areas of special environmental character, high buildings would be acceptable subject to considerations of design, siting, the character of the locality and their effect on views.

DEV5 in the central area zones permission may be given for high building development provided:

- The proposal satisfies policies DEV1 and DEV2;
- The proposal is accompanied by predictions carried out by competent organisations of the effect of the proposal on the micro climate, wind turbulence, overshadowing and telecommunication interference;
- Transport and infrastructure can accommodate the level of activity generated by the proposal;
- The proposal will not harm the essential character of the area or important views; and,
- The building would identify and emphasise a point of civic and visual significance, both locally and in relation to the urban scene, over the whole area from which it would be visible.

DEV6 outside central area zones, high buildings may be acceptable subject to considerations of design, siting, the character of the locality and their effect on views.

It is acknowledged by LB Tower Hamlets that there are already many residential tower blocks in the Borough, and that these are considered by occupants and adjacent residents as offering undesirable accommodation and poor living environments. LB Tower Hamlets also suggest that such developments also have an adverse effect on the skyline and can interrupt views.

3.13.3 London Borough of Haringey UDP (March 1998)

Policy UD11, Locations for Tall Buildings, states that the preferred locations for tall buildings (buildings which are significantly higher than neighbouring buildings) are Haringey Heartlands and Tottenham International.

The Council considers that these are the most suitable areas in the Borough for tall buildings in that such buildings can create attractive landmarks enhancing London's character, help to provide a coherent location for economic clusters of related activities or act as a catalyst for regeneration.

3.13.4 Corporation of London UDP (Adopted April 2002)

Policy ENV 1, New Development, seeks to encourage development which visually enhances the City, and avoids harm to the townscape, by ensuring that:

- The bulk and massing of schemes are appropriate in relation to the surroundings;
- Development has due regard to the general scale, height, character and materials of the locality; and
- All development is of a high standard of design and architectural detail.

Policy ENV 23, St Paul's Heights, seeks to require all new development to comply with the "St Paul's Heights" limitations including those in areas where views are obstructed by existing buildings which infringe the limits and to ensure that proposed development does not have an adverse effect upon the background of the views.

3.13.5 City of Westminster UDP (Adopted July 1997)

Policy STRA 26 seeks to protect important views across and within Westminster and resist inappropriately high buildings.

In Policy DES 4, Controlling high buildings, the Council aims to resist the development of inappropriately high buildings because of the problems caused by design and location. The Council suggests that high buildings are not generally in keeping with the established scale and character of Westminster. Furthermore, their impact may not only be disruptive to the local street scene, but also detrimental to the City as a whole, and to views of the London skyline from the strategic viewpoints and elsewhere.

The City Council do not expect that existing high buildings or groups of high buildings, should set a pattern for further high buildings on adjacent sites. Where high buildings may be acceptable the silhouette, crown and bulk of the building, visual impact and interest at street level are considered as important considerations.

In addition, the City Council will take into account the likely effect on the surrounding area, including the additional illumination from the proposed building at night, the effects of wind turbulence and overshadowing.

Policy DES 4, High buildings throughout Westminster, states that proposals for buildings or structures that are significantly higher than their surroundings, or will have an adverse visual impact on the settings of listed buildings, on the character or appearance of conservation areas, squares and the Royal Parks, will normally be refused.

In addition, where groups of high buildings already exist, any increase in their numbers will be resisted by the Council where they would have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality or on strategic or local views. Furthermore, the Council will seek opportunities to replace high buildings with lower ones, which respond more sympathetically to their urban context in any redevelopment opportunities.

Where high buildings may contribute towards overshadowing or micro-climatic problems at street level, the Council requires information to be submitted that will demonstrate that such problems will not result from the proposed high building. High buildings will also be assessed with reference to local views and with particular reference to the sight lines of strategic views.

3.14 Planning Applications

As part of the on-going planning appraisal of issues relating to tall buildings, we will consider a number of recent and current planning applications within the Borough. This will include consideration of the Planning Inspectorate's appeal notices and the Mayor's decision notices where appropriate.

Major applications will include:

- Northgate site (both existing consent, current proposals, and recent refusals)
- Norton Folgate (existing consent)
- Eagle House, 161 City Road (both existing consent and current proposals)
- 151-157 City Road (existing consent)
- Arbutus Street
- Kings Crescent (outline consent)
- Thames House, Tyssen Passage (current application)
- Site north of Dalston Lane
- Ramsgate Street (current application)
- Mare Street / Richmond Road (Barratts scheme – existing consent)
- 138 Kingsland Road (refusal)
- Latham's Yard (refusal)
- 24 Murray Grove (current Application)

The examination of these applications will inform the study in terms of the operation of the existing UDP policy context in particular. This will be particularly important in preparing for Stage 4 of this Study, which will provide a number of recommendations for planning policy within the Local Development Framework.

In addition, we will consider planning matters in relation to the identified Area Action Plan localities, the City Fringe, Dalston, Kingsland Road and Bishopsgate areas, and other council estate redevelopment in general.

3.15 Conclusions

3.15.1 Issues for the LDF

The new Planning and Compensation Bill will likely come into force this July. This review of the planning system, and particularly the development plan system sets the context for the production of the Tall Buildings study, which will feed into the development of the Council's Local Development Framework. Other initiatives, such as the Government's Sustainable Communities programme, provide a number of broad themes, which have implications for the study. These include tackling the shortage of housing in the South East by meeting the anticipated quantum of growth in high quality environments in identified growth areas such as London – Stansted – Cambridge (which includes parts of Hackney).

3.15.2 Responding to Best Practice

There are also the more established principles of Government policy to consider, set around the theme of urban renaissance. These include maximising the potential of previously developed land, providing a mix of uses, and providing high quality design in all new development. Furthermore, and in response to a growing interest in tall building development, English Heritage and CABI have now offered their response to the need to control tall building development.

3.15.3 Policy Context

Regional Planning Guidance seeks to enable the urban renaissance in the South East, partly through regeneration and renewal of urban areas. In doing so, the guidance also seeks to ensure that London remains to be a world city, and that new development supports London's international role as a business and commercial centre. Taken this further, the London Plan provides more proactive policy in relation to development density and tall buildings, through its 'Compact City'

policies. The Spatial Development Strategy encourages London boroughs to review tall building policies, and also provides broad criteria guidance for acceptable tall development.

3.15.4 Existing LBH policy

From an initial review, it is considered that the Council's adopted policies relating to tall building development has been broadly effective. This is partly based upon containing a robust definition of what 'tall buildings' mean – elsewhere Borough's have tended to define tall by particular heights or numbers of storeys. The Council's policies reflect strategic views and important settings, encourage wide consultation in relation to planning applications, consider design and microclimate issues, and encourage the use of planning agreements where necessary.

3.15.5 Neighbouring Authority Policy

Elsewhere in London, policies restrict tall building to certain areas of the borough, or in Islington's case, provide a broad-brush restrictive approach across the whole Borough. The City of Westminster and the Corporation policy approaches also differ significantly, but each emphasises the importance of townscape and heritage.

Urban Design Architects
Marquise apartments in
Melbourne illustrates the
potential to achieve high quality
residential accommodation
through tall buildings

4.0



4.0 Tall Buildings: Design, Sustainability and Conservation

This section of the phase 1 report sets out issues and opportunities in relation to tall buildings with particular reference to design, sustainability and conservation. The components of this section are;

- A Achieving Quality: Tall Building Design
- B Sustainability: Tall Buildings and the Urban Environment
- C Tensions: Conservation Areas and Tall Buildings

A Achieving Quality: Tall Building Design

Given the context, extent of development pressures, and policy guidance set out in the preceding sections of this report, it has been assumed that an increase in densities, potentially achieved through some tall buildings, will be an inevitable part of the future townscape of Hackney and adjoining boroughs. This however does not mean that tall buildings are appropriate everywhere, to the contrary, it places additional pressure on the urban analysis undertaken in the later phases of this study to identify the locations, in which it is appropriate to build higher forms of development.

This section broadly outlines a number of the design considerations that affect tall buildings and their relationship to their surrounding urban environment.

4.1 Tall Buildings Typologies

In the context of the UK three main typologies of tall building exist. These are defined largely by their relationships to existing development types and their interaction with local transport infrastructure.

4.1.1 A New Tower Within the Context of Existing Tall Development

This typology is the most common and it reflects the development patterns of most major centres in London. Such developments are usually attached to high capacity infrastructure associated with the existing development and consolidate a cluster of tall development. This typology is potentially the least complicated to integrate into existing urban patterns.

4.1.2 The Solitary Tower

The development of single tall buildings within the context of smaller buildings reflects some of the issues and problems associated with the residential tower block model of the 1960's. However certain sites, such as those that terminate vistas or mark distinct areas of the city, a solitary tower can contribute positively to the skyline. This typology is usually the most difficult to sensitively design and integrate into the townscape.

"Dotting tall buildings around the city completely loses the impact and sense of their importance. It also has the disadvantage of dwarfing attractive smaller buildings, without any commensurate benefit" (RTPI, 2001)

4.1.3 New Clusters of Tall Buildings

Usually within the context of comprehensive redevelopment / regeneration projects, the creation of new clusters of tall buildings is widely accepted as the most positive means of introducing tall forms into the skyline of a city. As well as making for more efficient public transport systems, clustering tall buildings can have distinct advantages in terms of design, infrastructure, and townscape quality.

4.2 Design Quality

Design quality is recognised across all levels of government as an important factor in raising development standards and in ensuring the positive contribution of new buildings to an area. The London Borough of Hackney anticipate design quality to play a major role in relation to all new tall buildings and should have high expectations in relation to the appearance, sustainability, and contribution that any tall buildings will make to the borough and the wider townscape of London.

“Many of the arguments used to support proposals for tall buildings, including design quality, were also put forward in favour of examples which are now regretted.” (CABE & English Heritage, 2003)

4.2.1 Advancements in Design Approach

Where once tall buildings could be broadly argued to be similar in appearance, largely due to limits associated with construction technology, more recent examples exhibit as much variety in form, massing and internal arrangement as any other typology. Such advancements in construction technology combined with a growing body of architectural knowledge mean that the contemporary tall building can provide exciting as well as sensitive design responses to their setting.

4.2.2 Fitting into the Urban Grain

Tall buildings by their very nature can have difficulty in reflecting the urban rhythms and fine grain of areas within central London. New tall buildings within this context need to make reference to their surroundings through their form, massing, setback and architectural language.

A variety of built examples exist around the world that effectively deal with these issues through the articulation of the lower floors of the building to reflect the character of the street, the set back of the upper floors to create the impression of a continuous streetscape, and through the use of materials that responds to surrounding buildings. These approaches also help to ensure that the streets remain at a human scale.

4.2.3 Longer Views

Mention has been made in previous sections about the potential visual intrusion of tall buildings on the townscape. Equally, when appropriately sited an attractive and well-designed tall building can make a strong and positive contribution to the skyline of the city, attract investment, assist in way finding, and act as a catalyst for regeneration.

“Tall buildings can enhance skylines, particularly if their tops are designed with flair - perhaps thrillingly slender or strikingly patterned. They mark the centre of a city and provide a point of orientation that is visible from far away.” (Civic Trust 2001)

In many cases the general reaction to tall buildings is to try to conceal or downplay them. Conversely it should be argued that the initial approach should be to promote exceptionally well-designed buildings that do not need to be hidden.

A review of the strategic view corridors of London is contained within section 3.0 of this report.

4.2.4 Climatic Considerations

As previously mentioned, tall buildings over a certain height can adversely effect the environmental quality of surrounding areas through the diversion of high speed winds to ground level and through the overshadowing of adjacent development and public spaces. The impact of both of these elements can be mitigated through good design and sensitive siting.

Windswept spaces at the base of tall buildings can be avoided through the use of architectural devices such as awnings and terraces as well as through set backs in the façade of the buildings. Overshadowing is impossible to 'design out' but its

effects can be minimised through appropriate siting of the building and through the manipulation of orientation and floor plate dimensions and overall building height.

4.2.5 A Meaningful Public Realm

Tall buildings in particular need to be designed in such a way as to create safe, comfortable and attractive spaces around them. In this regard the way in which tall buildings 'touch the ground' is of utmost importance, spaces surrounding tall buildings should resist privatisation by having their edges well defined by development and activated by public uses with transparent facades on the ground floors. Such public spaces should also be aligned and designed to maximise solar access and reduce the impact of wind and overshadowing.

4.2.6 Open Space Requirements

The Borough local plan outlines requirements for the provision of private open space within new developments. To a certain extent this might be accommodated through roof terraces, balconies and internal courtyards, but these elements will not be sufficient to ensure that all residents and workers have access to open space. As a result tall buildings will of course be required to proportionately contribute to the enhancement of the existing public realm and parks in the vicinity.

Developments abroad that incorporate high quality public spaces within the building itself will also need to be explored as a way of achieving the necessary open space standards. Such an approach aims to provide community uses such as playgrounds, schools and indoor sports facilities within the envelope of the building. An example of this is Friedensreich Hundertwasser's residential building in the city of Vienna which provides a variety of green spaces integral to the building.

Similarly, open space requirements could potentially be offset by increasing the size of residential units and offices so that residents and workers enjoy significantly more space on a day-to-day basis. Such a model requires testing although many examples exist in the UK where flats built with floor areas in excess of the Parker Morris Standards achieve a high level of residential amenity.

4.2.7 Land Use

A vertical mix of land uses throughout tall buildings can help to reinforce activity within the public realm and create activity throughout the day. Ensuring that the lower floors of tall buildings have some community/public function can significantly help in integrating new development into the lives of surrounding communities.

"Despite ... concentration in commercial areas, tall buildings need not be single use buildings. Office, residential and retail uses are an attractive combination for those who work in pressurised jobs and wish to live close to their workplace." (RTPI, 2001)

4.3 Summary Points

Tall buildings represent a number of design challenges and opportunities. In seeking to ensure that tall buildings make the most positive contribution possible the following major points require detailed consideration.

4.3.1 Maximising the Positive Contributions of Tall Buildings

Tall buildings represent significant design challenges as well as exciting design opportunities. Through the considered and sensitive development of designs for tall buildings the potentially negative effects of overshadowing and wind funnelling can be reduced and the positive attributes of exciting new development can be enhanced.

4.3.2 Ensuring Design Quality

In designing the latest generation of tall buildings, architects and planners should strive for the highest quality in building siting and design. This will reduce the need to 'hide' tall buildings and enable new tall buildings to be sensitively slotted into the existing fabric of the city. Similarly the tall buildings of the future will need to

make an effort to improve the quality and vibrancy of the public realm, which the towers of the 60's failed to recognise.

4.3.3 A Mixed Use Approach

The built legacy of the modernist era where external form dominated the design process and produced single use private buildings should not be repeated. Through good design tall buildings should strive to be memorable parts of the urban experience. The new generation of tall buildings should also be more permeable to the public, more responsive to environmental conditions, and embrace the principles of sustainability.

B Sustainability: Tall Buildings and the Urban Environment

Advancements in construction technology, a raised awareness of design in general, and a heightened public awareness of environmental issues have paved the way for sustainability to be recognised as a critical element in the future planning and development of our cities. Tall buildings have a strong role to play in delivering more sustainable working and living environments as well as improving the overall sustainability of Hackney.

4.4 Standards and Best Practice

All new development, including tall buildings, will be required to achieve high standards of environmental design as part of a sustainability agenda for the whole of the city. The design brief for individual buildings should be carefully respectful of orientation, building performance, materials specification and energy management strategies, in order that they are seen to demonstrate responsible environmental design principles.

4.5 The Ability of Tall Buildings to Deliver Sustainability

The design and construction of tall buildings within the context of local, regional and international sustainability objectives, as well as the national urban renaissance agenda, demands that tall buildings make a positive contribution to their urban context, raise the profile of sustainable technology, and improve existing benchmarks for energy efficiency and resource management. Many of the tall buildings built across the world in the last ten or so years have in some small, or large, way contributed to achieving more sustainable cities. Whether these advancements relate to building form, energy efficiency, natural ventilation, sky courts or any other number of architectural elements, there is little doubt that tall buildings have an important role to play in developing and refining sustainable technologies and in improving the overall sustainability of our cities.

One of the challenges in delivering sustainability through tall buildings in the largely developer driven market lies in the fact that operational efficiency takes precedence over longer term environmental impact. This balance is slowly being redressed through growing government pressure and the increasing number of successfully implemented sustainable high-rise schemes, which act as benchmarks for new development. Of particular concern in this context is the gap between the aspiration of the developer for low construction costs and the end users desire for reduced energy consumption costs.

However, when designed to high standards, tall buildings represent significant opportunities for exploring, developing, and utilising sustainable design and construction practices. However such aspirations need to be encouraged and enforced by local planning authorities and other statutory bodies.

4.6 Tall versus Small

Tall buildings, like more traditional forms of development, have a series of advantages and disadvantages in terms of their ability to improve the sustainability of our cities.

Advantages of tall buildings include the following:

- Increases in relative density provide the platform for increased public transport efficiency.
- Tall buildings can occupy a smaller footprint than other forms of development thus providing the potential for larger areas of public space. (Although the quality of this space must be of the highest quality)
- Tall buildings offer larger economies of scale and can therefore potentially represent better value in terms of construction.
- Tall slender buildings, because of the relationship of total floor area to building depth, provide better daylight penetration and thermal mass.
- Tall buildings provide opportunities for efficient access through centralised cores.
- Tall buildings provide greater opportunities to provide a vertical mix of uses, enlivening the street scene.
- Substantial savings can be made in the provision of buildings services when focused on a single larger building.
- Tall buildings can reduce our cities' dependence on greenfield land development by increasing densities.

Some of the **disadvantages** of buildings taller buildings are as follows;

- Tall buildings overshadow smaller adjacent development.
- The public spaces adjacent to tall buildings require more careful consideration to ensure that they are comfortable and safe.
- Wind can be funnelled to from high up down to the street level.
- Tall buildings generally have a lower Net Floor Area (NFA) to Gross Floor Area (GFA) ratio, as more space is required for structural and access elements.
- Traditionally materials used in the construction of tall buildings have high levels of embodied energy. (The amount of energy used to design, manufacture and deliver the product)
- Tall buildings have a high surface area to volume ratio, which can mean they generally require more energy to control the internal climate.

4.7 Sustainable Densities

One level at which the tall building can most obviously contribute to the increased sustainability of urban areas is that of increased density. The maximisation of the capacity of development sites, particularly in a centrally located London borough such as Hackney where land for development is at a premium, represents one of the fundamental principles of current best practice in urban design.

"By building to greater densities and to higher levels of energy efficiency in urban centres that have established public transport systems we can reduce reliance on the car with all its attendant problems." (Foster in Abel, 2003, p9)

However, as mentioned in the introduction to this study, urban capacity can be increased through either building high or by pushing lower development closer together. Both approaches help to make the most efficient use of the land but neither is always appropriate.

The Civic Trust (2001) suggests, *"Increasing density does not necessarily entail an increase in height. Building shorter, larger footprint buildings, which can be more easily adapted for changing IT requirements, can help meet demand. Shopping*

arcades cutting through the heart of large footprint buildings can provide new pedestrian routes, attract more business and allow multiple uses on the site.”

However it has been suggested by other commentators that developments that opt for a lower but denser form, such as London’s Broadgate, suffer their own challenges. With so much ground floor space to ‘activate’ and service, many of the facades of these developments offer blank walls or service bays to the pedestrian.

4.8 Contemporary Needs

A general shift in national demographics and family structure, a change in the way that big businesses perceive the value of intellectual property and people over capital assets, increasingly flat organisational structures within companies, and the use of computer technology to transform business has informed a general shift in working practices in the last ten or so years.

These changes have manifested themselves in the form of new buildings that aim to be increasingly more robust and able to adapt to the continually changing demands of business and people. This structural adaptability, in addition to the increasing use of ‘smart environment’ technology, will help to make the latest generation of tall buildings more sustainable and contribute to their ongoing relevance in the future.

4.9 Transport and Tall Building Clusters

An approach that favours the clustering of tall buildings rather than isolated buildings is generally perceived as being more efficient in terms of transport.

“A tall building may contain thousands of people. It must therefore be well served by public transport. Transport interchanges are thus ideal locations for intensive development.” (Civic Trust 2001)

Cities such as Hong Kong , which have been studied in this context, have been revealed to be some of the most transport efficient. Similarly, the location of existing transport interchanges and corridors are widely perceived to be the best locations for increasing density within our cities. (Abel, 2003, p9)

4.10 Energy and Resources

The management of energy and resources in the construction and ongoing operation of new buildings are widely recognised as key areas of focus for delivering sustainability through tall buildings. Edwards and Hyett (2001) suggest *“50% of all resources consumed across the planet are used in construction, making it the least sustainable industry in the world”*. Although the technical aspects of these elements are not the focus of this study it is worthwhile articulating the following points.

4.10.1 New Technologies and Construction Practices

Recently emerging technologies and design approaches that have been incorporated into a number of tall buildings have had a major impact on the sustainability of the tall building model of development. The following elements are the focus of attention in attempts to increase the sustainability of tall buildings;

- Design
- Improving day lighting / internal air quality
- Alternative energy generation such as solar and wind
- Energy efficiency
- Storm water / rainwater management
- Free Heating and Cooling
- Bore Hole Cooling
- Construction practices and material specification
- Waste reduction and recycling
- Improved efficiency of lifts

Increasingly available technologies are heightening the sustainability of tall building proposals within the UK. Such elements, which include combined heat and power units (CHP), are capable of significantly reducing fossil fuel consumption. Laminated glass facades in combination with 'skinny' floor plates, can reduce the need for artificial lighting and dramatically improve the quality of the everyday working / living environment. The often-large facades and roof areas of tall buildings also provide opportunities for the application Photovoltaic Cells that can power lighting and ventilation equipment within the buildings. Similarly, roof gardens and green roofs are providing solutions to storm water management and also have a key role to play in providing high quality green spaces for occupants of the building.

The utilisation of such sustainable approaches has other benefits as well. Such design features can have a strong and positive impact on the public's perception of the occupier as well as dramatically decreasing medium to long term operating costs.

4.10.2 Life Cycle Assessment

Life Cycle Assessment is a process that aims to integrate the principles of ecologically sustainable design into the design and construction processes. *"LCA identifies the material, energy, and waste flows associated with a building over its entire life in such a fashion that environmental impact can be determined in advance"* (Edwards & Hyett, 2001).

This process is particularly important for tall buildings, which utilise high quantities of resources in their construction. A full life cycle assessment should accompany applications for tall buildings within the borough.

4.10.3 Flexibility

On average the life of buildings in the UK is approximately 50 years, in comparison to the average length of occupancy, which is in the region of 7 years (Steel Construction Institute 1997). As characteristics of society and the economy evolve throughout the life of the building, so the requirements of the building change. Designing new buildings for flexibility of use and the potential for future change helps ensure their usefulness throughout their life.

4.10.4 Smart Environments

Increasingly accessible "smart environment" type technology will have a major role to play in the sustainability of buildings in the future. Such systems aim to cohesively manage all of the electronic and information systems of the building with the ultimate goal of improving work practices and energy efficiency. Examples include lights being programmed to turn off when a room is not being used.

4.11 Summary Points: Tall Buildings and Sustainability

The sustainability of all new buildings, either tall or small, is critical in achieving positive urban environments. The following conclusions have been drawn from the broad review of sustainability issues continued in this section of the study.

4.11.1 Sustainable Development Through Tall Buildings

Tall buildings have much to contribute to the improved sustainability of urban settlements. Increased density, economies of scale, improved construction practices, improved energy use and generation techniques and experimental architectural approaches are important elements in a sustainable approach to development.

4.11.2 Advancements in Sustainable Technologies

Recent advancements in construction materials and practices have the ability to greatly improve the energy efficiency of tall buildings and should be encouraged at all levels of the design and development process. A number of tall buildings have been directly responsible for advancements in sustainable technologies and can provide useful models for future development in Hackney.

4.11.3 Improved Design Quality

Improvements in design brought about through a growing body of knowledge in relation to successful tall buildings can contribute to improved longer-term flexibility and robustness.

4.11.4 Delivering Sustainability Through the Development Industry

Increasingly the development industry is aware of the short and long-term benefits of more sustainable buildings in ensuring improved operational efficiency, reduced costs, and better quality living and working environments.

4.11.5 A Clustered Approach

In most cases a clustered approach to tall buildings provides a more sustainable development model. Groups of tall buildings surrounding transport interchanges or corridors increases accessibility and reduces reliance on private transport.

C Tensions: Conservation Areas and Tall Buildings

This section of the report aims to articulate the tensions, issues and opportunities that exist between tall buildings and the historic environment. In particular, the relationship of conservation settings to new taller forms of development.

4.11 Historic Development

The following brief history of Hackney provides the context to this section of report and assists in providing insights into the character (past, present and future) of the Borough. The information contained within this subsection is taken from the council web site at <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/history-quick.htm>

4.11.1 Three areas come together

Until 1965, what is now known as the London Borough of Hackney was three separate metropolitan boroughs - Shoreditch, Stoke Newington and Hackney. Each had distinct histories stretching back to the Middle Ages, but common themes link the three areas: urbanisation, industrial innovation, and ethnic diversity.

Hackney was first recorded in 1198, Shoreditch in 1148, and Stoke Newington in 1274. For 400 years after these dates all three were farming communities in the Middlesex countryside. Each was a parish, centred on a parish church. These survive today as Old St Mary's, Stoke Newington; St Leonard's, Shoreditch (rebuilt in 1740); and St Augustine's Tower in Mare Street, which is the only remains of Hackney's medieval church. The large parish of Hackney contained several other hamlets, such as Homerton, Clapton, Dalston and Shacklewell which still survive as districts in today's Borough.

4.11.2 Country House to Terrace

The development of Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington was heavily influenced by the growth of London. Aristocrats and government officials who wanted to be close to the City and Westminster had country houses at Hoxton and Homerton. Sutton House in Lower Clapton Road is the only one to survive, and is now owned by the National Trust, and is open to the public. After about 1660, as south Shoreditch in particular became increasingly built up, the aristocrats moved away. Their big houses were turned into schools or private lunatic asylums. Developments such as Charles Square and Hoxton Square were built for prosperous people who wanted to keep up a connection with the City.

The richer businessmen still had big houses in Hackney and Stoke Newington until

the middle of the 19th century. They too eventually moved away to more fashionable and less populated areas, especially after the railway came to Hackney in 1850. Then it became possible for the less well off to commute daily from Hackney to the City, and the Victorian villas and terraces were built which are still such a feature of Hackney today.

4.11.3 The development of Industry

The Victorian period saw the development of industry in the Borough. Shoreditch, particularly around Curtain Road, became the centre of London's furniture manufacturing. Hackney saw innovation in paints (Lewis Berger & Sons in Homerton), chemicals ("petrol" was originally a brand name created by Carless Capel & Leonard at Hackney Wick) and toys (Lesney Products, makers of "Matchbox" model vehicles, had their factory on Lee Conservancy Road between 1975 and 1983). Although changing economic circumstances led to a number of firms moving out of Hackney in the 1960's, 70's and 80's, many small businesses and some larger ones, notably the clothing firm Burberrys, are still here today.

By the late 19th century much of the housing of industrial workers, particularly in Shoreditch, was recognised as unsatisfactory. Programmes of slum clearance were implemented. The local authorities of the day, the three Metropolitan Borough Councils of Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington, undertook a number of projects to rehouse many people in better conditions. These included the Bannister House estate in Homerton, the Whitmore estate in Hoxton and the Lordship South estate in Stoke Newington. Amenities for local people were created, such as baths, libraries and day nurseries. The London Borough of Hackney continues to provide housing, public services and leisure facilities as started by its three predecessors, and builds on their work with its community redevelopment and regeneration initiatives.

4.11.4 A vibrant and culturally diverse place to live

This community has always been one of which people of diverse ethnic origin and different political and religious beliefs have been part. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Stoke Newington and Hackney were centres of nonconformist worship and radical politics. People from many parts of Europe came to work in the furniture industry in Shoreditch in the 19th century. Jewish people have been living in Hackney since 1684. The Afro-caribbean community developed fully from the 1950s, but there has been a Black presence in Hackney since at least 1630. Similarly, people from the Indian subcontinent came to Hackney in numbers only after the Second World War, but Asian nurses of British children, visiting Britain with their employers, had been staying in Hackney from 1900. Today Hackney people from Africa and the West Indies, Turkey, Cyprus and the Indian subcontinent contribute to the rich cultural diversity of the London Borough of Hackney.

4.12 Conservation Areas

The borough contains a rich diversity of conservation areas and settings mostly associated with the Victorian and Georgian legacy of growth in the area. Taken from the LBH local plan (1995) the following key conservation areas will have an impact on the ability of tall buildings to be developed in certain part of the borough.

Hackney has 22 conservation areas. They vary greatly in age, size, character and style. They include the historic core of Hackney, centred on Clapton Square, and also historic urban open-spaces, such as Clapton Common and Broadway Market. Conservation areas also protect large areas of Georgian and Victorian housing developments, such as de Beauvoir Town, and areas of industrial heritage, such as South Shoreditch.

Clapton Square

The Clapton Square Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and extended in 1991 & 2000. It is dominated by St. John's Church, built in 1792-97, and St John's Gardens, together with terraces of listed buildings on Clapton Square which is protected by an Act of Parliament as a London Square. Sutton Place also contains

well preserved listed buildings dating from the late eighteenth century in the south side, with pairs of early mid-nineteenth century houses to the north.

Clapton Pond

This attractive area, designated in the 1970s, contains a group of listed buildings to the east side, including the Bishopswood Almshouses originally built in the late 17th century. The conservation area also includes Pond House, a grade II* listed villa built circa 1800.

De Beauvoir

The De Beauvoir central and south Conservation Areas were declared in 1971 and 1977 and extended to the north in 1998. The central area focuses on the De Beauvoir Square, the centrepiece of Richard Benyon De Beauvoir's unique 'new town' development built from the 1830s.

De Beauvoir's Town was the first large scale housing development built to a formal plan in Hackney. The square is included on the schedule of London Squares as being worthy of statutory protection. The houses were designed in the picturesque Tudor-cum-Jacobean style and exhibit a number of interesting features, such as shaped gables, sculptured chimneys and windows with lozenge-patterned leaded lights. The simpler style and scale of the buildings within the southern area, such as Benyon Cottages in Hertford Road, contrast with that of the square. These semi-detached houses date from 1839 and demonstrate an Italianate style as applied to modest early Victorian housing.

Clapton Common

Clapton Common Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and focuses on the Common, including also the fine group of Georgian buildings known as Clapton Terrace. The area immediately in front of this terrace is protected as a London Square.

Clissold Park

Clissold Park Conservation Area was designated in 1972 and includes Clissold Park, the two parish churches, the town hall and a number of adjoining listed buildings. The planted area to the front of 207-228 Stoke Newington Church Street is further protected as a London Square.

Albion Square

The Albion Square Conservation Area was designated in 1975 and includes Albion Square itself and Stonebridge Common, both of which are scheduled London squares and further protected by Act of Parliament, together with their surrounding residential properties. These houses comprise pairs of semi-detached houses dating from the 1840s built of yellow or grey stock brick with stucco dressings and classical decorative features.

Victoria Park

Victoria Park Conservation Area was originally designated in 1977, and includes most of the historic buildings fronting the Park and Well Street Common.

Hoxton Street

Hoxton Street Conservation Area was designated in 1983 and includes the shopping centre frontage and other remaining 19th century buildings. Some fine Victorian shop-fronts remain, together with some listed buildings. The overall character of the area is derived as much from the scale of the buildings and the use of traditional materials, as from the merit of individual buildings. The Conservation Area declaration has given added impetus to an extensive programme of environmental improvements and building facelifts.

Stoke Newington

Stoke Newington Conservation Area was designated in 1983 and extends from the Clissold Park Conservation Area along Church Street and includes substantial parts of the High Street as well as the whole of Abney Park Cemetery. It is predominantly

a commercial area but with some residential uses and contains a number of listed buildings

Queensbridge Road

Queensbridge Road Conservation Area was designated in 1985, and comprises the mid-Victorian terraced houses and villas on the east side of Queensbridge Road, from Dalston Lane in the north to Brownlow Road in the south, incorporating a number of listed buildings. The majority of the houses were constructed between the 1850s and 1870s.

Fremont and Warneford

Fremont and Warneford Conservation Area was designated in 1986 as an exemplary survival of the Victorian suburbs that were developed in Hackney during the second half of the nineteenth century. The area exhibits an unusual breadth of styles, employed by the local speculative builders of the time to create an area of individual character at a unified scale.

Newington Reservoirs, Filter Beds and New River

Stoke Newington Reservoirs Conservation Area was designated in 1986, and includes the course of the New River from the Borough boundary on Green Lanes to the east reservoir, and both the east and the west reservoirs, together with the adjoining filter beds on the west side of Green Lanes. A number of listed buildings are included such as the former 'castle' pumping station. The area is of outstanding character, unique to Hackney, and is of great historical importance, relating to the water supply of North London since the seventeenth century.

Sun Street

Sun Street Conservation Area was designated in 1987, and comprises a terrace of early nineteenth century buildings fronting the north side of Sun Street together with later nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings. The area demonstrates the juxtaposition of early nineteenth century domestic buildings with mid-late nineteenth century commercial and industrial premises at a unified scale, which is characteristic of this area of South Shoreditch.

Underwood Street

Underwood Conservation Area was designated in 1990, and is a fine group of nineteenth century warehouses, but also includes other important historic buildings, such as the Eagle Tavern. The orthogonal street layout derives from the historical pattern of paths following the layout of the walled gardens which used to occupy the area prior to its development.

South Shoreditch

The history of Shoreditch has been largely dictated by its location outside the City walls of London. The origin of the name is unknown, but it has a Saxon origin and may come from the "Sewerditch", a stream, which ran east of St Leonard's to near Holywell Lane. In the Middle Ages, the Augustinian Priory of St. John the Baptist in Haliwell dominated the eastern area.

The Priory site was split up at the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, however several of the remaining courts and yards in Shoreditch are believed to follow the layout of the Priory complex. It is perhaps not widely known that the first two London theatres were built in Shoreditch. The first playhouse, called simply 'The Theatre' of 1576 was on Curtain Road at the junction with New Inn Yard, the first permanent playhouse in Britain.

The Curtain Theatre, on the site of Hewett Street, eventually came under the same management as The Theatre. Centrally theatre was centred round the Globe at Bankside. William Shakespeare came to Shoreditch as an actor and lived in Bishopsgate and possibly in Holywell Street. Industries have existed in Shoreditch since Medieval times much as brick making along Kingsland Road. Others were there because they were not allowed to operate within the City walls, such as tanning.

The Hoxton area, in contrast to Shoreditch, was laid out by this same period to a more formal street pattern. Hoxton Square was laid out shortly after 1683. Pitfield Street existed by name. Hoxton Market was simply called the Market Place. Hoxton and Charles Squares, were the most fashionable residential areas, Shoreditch included. One of the earliest Academies (of 1669) was in Hoxton Square.

The squares were centres of illegal non-conformist sects. South Shoreditch was the centre of the London furniture trade in the Victorian period. The opening of the Regents Canal in 1820 made timber transportation cheaper and easier. South Shoreditch and Hoxton were near enough to trade with the City yet far enough from it to keep lower rents. By 1861 about 30 per cent of all London furniture makers worked in the East End. Many of the areas surviving warehouses and showroom buildings are associated with the furniture trade.

Shoreditch High Street

The Shoreditch High Street Conservation Area was designated in 1991 and is one of the few remaining areas which retains the urban grain of this historic route out of the City of London.

Broadway Market

Broadway Market Conservation Area was designated in 1995, and lies along the route running north-east to south-west known as the Market Porter's Route, a traditional route of transportation of produce from the fields in Hackney to markets on the City.

Comprehensive development along its fringes began in the early nineteenth century, and then along Dericote and Croston Streets to the rear, which contain good examples of early-mid nineteenth century linked pairs of dwellings, now grade II listed

Town Hall Square

Town Hall Square Conservation Area was designated in 1995, and links Mare Street Conservation Area with Albion Square Conservation Area to the north. It includes the listed Town Hall and Hackney Empire, as well as a number of other historic buildings of note, such as the old Central Hall and Library, now converted into the Ocean music venue.

Graham Road and Mapledene

The Graham Road and Mapledene Conservation Area was designated in 1997, and is Hackney's largest conservation area. It is an area of largely early-mid nineteenth century housing, but also includes a number of Georgian properties to Dalston Lane.

Kingsland

Kingsland Conservation Area was designated in 1998, and centres on the Kingsland Road which follows the line of Ermine Street, a Roman road linking London with York. It includes important listed buildings such as St. Leonard's Church, the Geffrye Almshouses (now the Geffrye Museum), and St. Columba's Church.

Mare Street

Mare Street Conservation Area was designated in 2000, and is one of the earliest routes through Hackney. It contains many fine Edwardian buildings and includes the Lansdowne Club, a grade II* listed early eighteenth century townhouse.

4.12 The Relationship of Tall Buildings to Conservation Areas

The relationship of tall buildings to the historic townscape of the borough provides the greatest urban design challenge and one of the principle focuses of this study.

"Responses to the challenge of developing in historic areas have been variable. On the one hand there have been those who have wanted to mark a complete break with the past in terms of scale, materials and methods. On the other there have been those who have wanted to preserve at all costs" (CABE and English Heritage, 2001, p4)

4.13.1 Tall Buildings in Conservation Areas

Current guidance and best practice suggests that contemporary buildings, although not necessarily tall ones, can be comfortably stitched into conservation settings as long as they can relate to the local urban patterns and geography, respect key views, respond to the scale of adjacent development, utilise some vernacular materials, and most importantly positively contribute to the overall urban setting.

Tall buildings are able to respond to the majority of these 'best practice' principles but by their very nature are visually intrusive and require careful design to integrate them with the surrounding environment at ground level. In particular tall buildings that are significantly higher than their surrounding context would be difficult to comfortably fit into fine groupings of listed buildings but might comfortably sit within less intact parts of some conservation areas, for example within south Shoreditch.

4.13.2 Conservation Areas and Urban Density

In general, conservation areas in Hackney, particularly those that are the result of highly organised Victorian and Georgian planning, meet or exceed current Central Government aspirations for urban densities.

4.13.3 Tall Buildings and the Wider Context

The relationship between tall buildings and important views within, out of, and to the borough is based on the premise that the impact of tall buildings will always be negative. Although tall buildings in the wrong location can have negative effects, well-sited tall buildings can enhance the visual quality of the skyline. For example clustering new tall buildings around solitary towers, or using them to frame views can add drama to the skyline and visual experience of the city.

In the wider context tall buildings should be sited, where possible in clusters, on the edges of strategic view corridors so that settings are framed rather than weakened.

4.13.4 Tall Buildings and the Local Context

Localised views of key historic buildings or groups of listed buildings are usually the most sensitive to the visual intrusion of tall buildings. Although beyond the strategic level remit of this study, the following local scenes and views should be generally protected from the visual impact of tall buildings.

- Views to, and the backdrop of, significant listed buildings such as churches and other important and visually attractive buildings and spaces.
- The setting and backdrop of groups of listed buildings such as important terraces, crescents or other regularly laid out buildings.
- Important borough wide views which should be identified through further study and adopted through a borough wide views policy.
- Special local views identified at a more detailed level.

Later phases of the study will identify a series of strategic views that are potentially sensitive to the intrusion of tall buildings.

4.13 A View Policy for Hackney

In order to protect particular strategic and important local views it is recommended that, based on the findings of this study, a view policy study be commissioned and used to inform views policies for the emerging LDF. This could be prepared as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in support of this study.

4.15 Summary Points

The following broad conclusions in relation to the potential impacts of tall buildings on conservation settings have been distilled.

4.15.1 Detailed Analysis

Detailed analysis of the special characteristics of each conservation area is required to make informed judgements about the impacts of specific tall building proposals on the conservation setting.

4.15.2 Preserving Special Characteristics

Tall buildings should, in general, respect and reflect the unique urban grain, visual axes, materials, and topography of surrounding conservation areas.

4.15.3 Protecting Cherished Views

Tall buildings should not interfere with cherished local views. This particularly applies to the backdrops of groups of historic buildings or the visual envelope surrounding single buildings such as churches. These views should be identified through detailed urban design analysis in a phase of work following this study.

4.15.4 Allowing Breathing Space

Tall buildings should provide breathing space for listed buildings. This means that tall buildings should not overshadow or visually smother historic buildings.

The Flatiron Building
In Manhattan illustrates that well designed tall buildings can become an enduring and memorable part of the townscape

5.0



5.0 How Tall is Tall? : Defining Tall Buildings

Tall buildings have been the subject of a variety of definitions in recent times. In some instances the definition has been derived from the relationship of buildings to their surroundings, the way in which buildings relate to the height of natural features such as trees or ridgelines, or in some cases definitions have provided specific heights in response to quite specific areas.

For example "In the UK 'tall' can mean as low as fifteen stories, although in world terms the expectation would be for them to be over fifty" (Murray, 2002). Similarly, recently produced SPG for the London Borough of Southwark suggests "...they are generally taken to be more than 25-30m high (9-10) storeys) or of any height that exceeds surrounding development." (London Borough of Southwark, 2002).

To provide some context, the definitions of tall buildings within some neighbouring London Boroughs are set out below;

London Borough of Islington

The London borough of Islington's recently produced SPG on tall buildings identifies a number of sites and areas where tall buildings are seen to be appropriate and provides the following definition for tall buildings within those areas;

'5 storeys (20m) to a max of 8 storeys or (30m) depending on road and location within it'

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets suggest that *"A high building is defined as one that exceeds 20 metres in height"*

City of London

The city of London describes tall buildings as those that are *"significantly taller"* than their surrounding context.

London Borough of Haringey

The UDP for Haringey outlines that tall buildings are *"buildings which are significantly higher than neighbouring buildings"*

London Borough of Newham

The London Borough of Newham sets out no definition for tall buildings within its UDP.

General View

Within the consultation processes undertaken for previous similar studies the majority of key stakeholders agreed that the issue of whether or not a building is tall is an issue of context and that the relationship of particular proposals should be assessed in detail against their urban surroundings.

5.1 Working Definition

For the purposes of this study the following evolving definition for tall buildings has been developed.

"Buildings or structures that are significantly taller than surrounding development"

This definition allows for the fact that areas of different character within the borough have different sensitivities and that a five storey building in a two-storey context is equally as prominent as a much taller building in a more built up context.

5.2 Determining if a Building is 'Significantly Taller'

The definition is a key element of the strategy as it will be the trigger for the strategy and tall buildings guidance that will be developed in the later phases of this study.

In general terms, the key issue is in determining if a proposal for a new building is 'significantly taller than surrounding development'. One way of establishing this is to develop a process whereby applicants would be required to provide an assessment of the mean height of development surrounding the proposed building and setting this against the height of the proposal.

This then suggests that buildings that are significantly taller than the mean height of surrounding development should be sited in the areas identified through the emerging Strategy and be subject to the design guidance that will be developed in support of the strategy. However, it should be noted that to deliver some measure of flexibility that over and above any calculations or definitions, LBH should make the final decision as to whether a building is considered to be 'significantly taller'.

5.3 Tall Buildings Categories

In refinement of the definition, and to aid in broadly articulating the wide variety of scales associated with tall buildings, a number of sub-categories have been identified:

5.3.1 Mid-Rise Buildings

Mid-Rise buildings are those that are considered to be tall in the context of relatively low-rise development but that in absolute terms are in the region of 6-9 storeys (18 - 26 metres).

5.3.2 Tall Buildings

Tall buildings are those buildings, which are significantly taller than the mean height of surrounding development. These buildings are anticipated to be set within a highly urban context and be in the approximate range of 10-15 storeys (30 - 45 metres).

5.3.3 Very Tall Buildings

Very tall buildings are those that are excessively taller than the surrounding built form. These buildings would be from 16 storeys upwards (46 metres +)

5.5 Further Definitions

It may be identified through the downstream activity associated with this study that areas of individual character should be the subject of individual definitions that are more tailored to the unique aspects of that part of the borough.

6.0

A commercial building
In Tokyo's Ginza district illustrates how advancements in construction technology have enabled the creation of lightweight and transparent structures that are able to contribute to the richness and visual delight of the city.



6.0 Demand and Market Issues

This section of the Phase 1 baseline review sets out an overview of the recent residential and commercial office market conditions within the Borough, which has an influence on the development of the strategy by seeking to identify those sectors and areas of the borough where tall buildings pressure is highest.

6.1 Residential Market Overview

Pockets of 'trendiness' associated with the arts community as well as private sector development have occurred in areas such as Hoxton, Shoreditch, De Beauvoir Town and Stoke Newington in the late 1990's / early 2000s. The Kingsland Road corridor has also been a development 'hot spot' for a number of years. Elsewhere, private sector investment residential development focused on council estate regeneration. In addition, mixed-tenure redevelopments have occurred at former problem housing estates such as Holly Street and Trowbridge

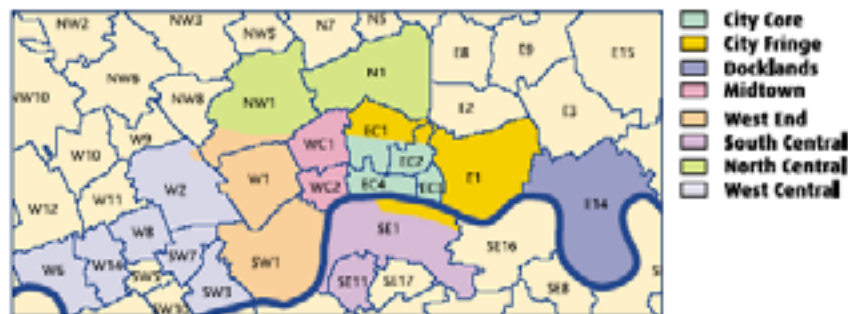
There are lots of locations within the Borough that are not yet mainstream acceptable, and offer significant future development opportunities. Influence is growing northwards through the Borough to include Dalston, Hackney Wick, Homerton and Clapton. The forthcoming East London line and the Olympic Games proposals will be considered as major opportunities, given the existing poor public transport links.

Values of over £400 per sq. ft have been breached in the Borough, for example St George in Hoxton Square (2001/02). Otherwise specialist / niche residential developers dominate in the south, which has led to an emphasis on owner occupiers as opposed to investors. Newer schemes have represented a 'step-change' in the Borough in terms of scale and location – Kings Crescent Estate, Finsbury Park is an example of this.

6.2 City Fringe Office Market Overview

The following information is taken from Market Analysis - London Office Database (January – March 2004). This source considers the 'City Fringe' as EC1 (Sectors M, N, R, V, Y), EC2A (excluding Finsbury Pavement, Finsbury Square, Appold Street (Hackney) and Chiswell Street), E1 (includes small part of LB Hackney), SE1 (sectors 0, 1, 2 and 9).

Source: Market Analysis - London Office Database (January – March 2004)



6.2.1 Availability

Total availability fell by almost 5% this quarter as few significant additions were added and over 40,000 sq m was withdrawn. The increase in space under construction was due to works commencing speculatively at Blackfriars and RLAM's Palestra, SE1 scheme. The largest single addition was Hargreaves Goswell Down being instructed on BT's old space at Milton Gate, EC1 but the Reuters deal at 30 South Colonnade affected the Fringe as well as the Core.

6.2.2 Average Asking Prices

Prices for new stock have risen for the second quarter running but, like the City Core, other grades continue to suffer. The amount of new stock dries up throughout 2004 and 2005. However, there is around 87,000 sq m of new stock still lying empty in the market keeping the supply-side high – although this is relatively little compared to other markets.

The highest asking price in the market is £511 psm (£47.50 psf) sought at Broadgate West phase 2, but less than a mile away on the Bethnal Green Road/Shoreditch High Street junction only £134.55 psm (£12.50 psf) is sought at the newly refurbished Tea Building, E1.

Second hand grade A space experiences similar dichotomy; two floors at 15-25 Artillery Lane (nr Liverpool Street Station) are available for only £53.80 psm (£5 psf) but at Aliffe House, Mansell Street (further south), E1, 5,695 sq m is available at £407.95 psm (£38 psf).

6.2.3 Take Up

Like the City Core, the City Fringe was unable to match last quarter's performance when it reached its highest level for two years. No upward trend is yet visible. The market saw some significant deals from serviced office operators this quarter: Relocate took 2,544 sq m at 14 Bonhill Street, EC2.

6.2.4 Completed space still available as at Q1 2004

There was only one speculative completion this quarter in the City Fringe – 10-14 Dallington Street, Clerkenwell, EC1. There is almost 87,000 sq m of new space empty, but compared to all other markets (except Midtown) this is very little and only equates to just over 30 units. The largest existing liability is at Gemini Investments' Broadgate West, EC2 where almost 17,000 sq. m is available. Prospects for the market are apparently good, but developers still have to wait two to three years to find tenants for their stock.

6.2.5 Construction Starts

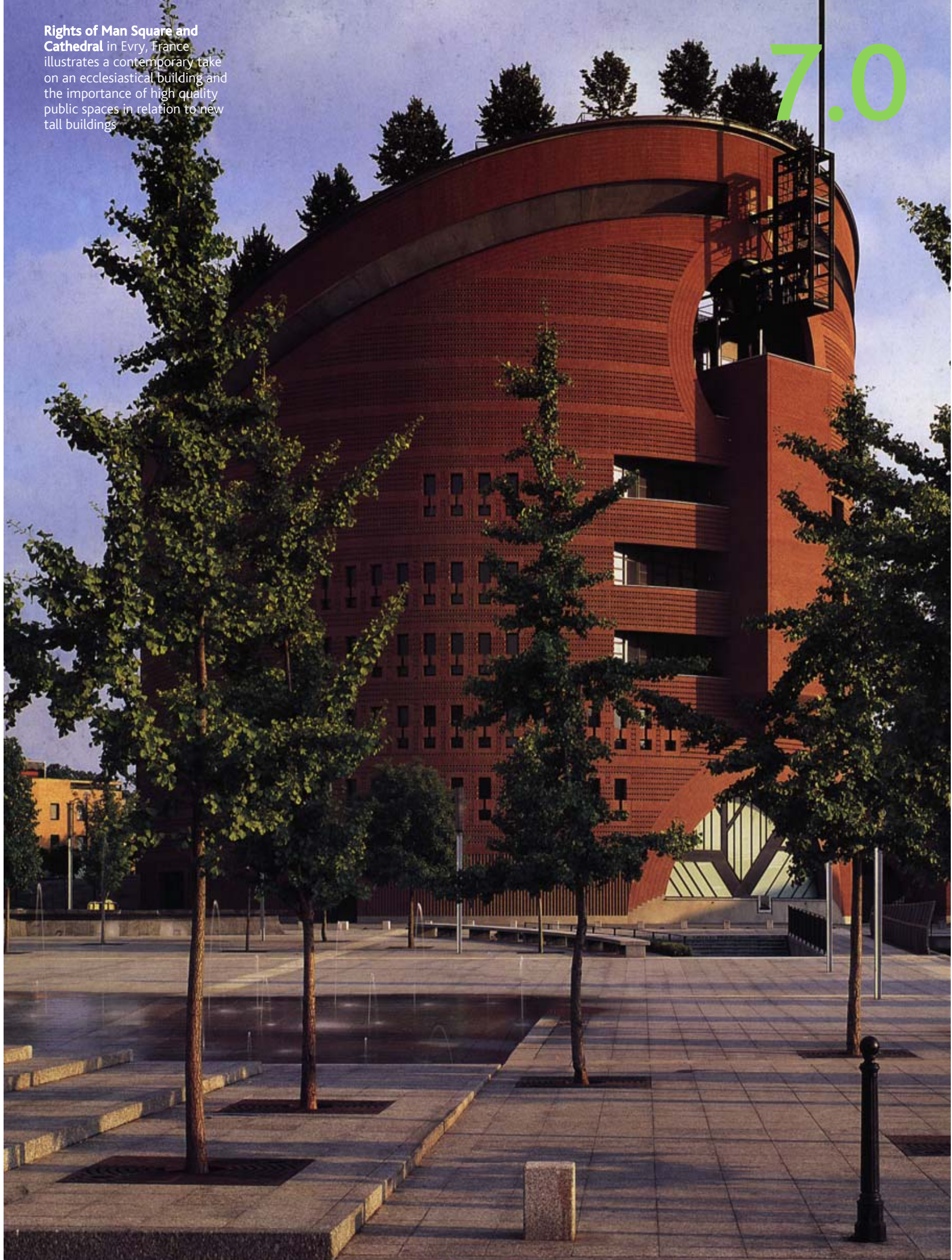
Like the City Core, the slow market has put off developers over the last year but Blackfriars Investments and Royal London Asset Management have finally bucked the trend and started works on Palestra, SE1 after a long wait. It was the only start in the market this quarter.

6.2.6 Under Construction and still available

Before Palestra commenced this quarter, there was only 8,600 sq m of speculative space set to complete – all in 2004. Although space has the capacity to remain vacant after completion for three years, there are currently only nine speculative schemes under construction across the whole market. The market improvements already under way are set to continue and developers should be encouraged to start schemes.

Rights of Man Square and Cathedral in Evry, France illustrates a contemporary take on an ecclesiastical building and the importance of high quality public spaces in relation to new tall buildings

7.0



7.0 Baseline Review: Key Points

These conclusions have been drawn from the reviews, critiques, and summaries set out in this working report.

7.1 Maximising the Use of the Land

Tall buildings have a strong contribution to make to maximising the efficient use of the land, particularly in the context of an inner London borough such as Hackney.

7.2 Delivering Increased Density in Variety of Ways

Most sites, particularly in a city with such a rich historic built form, are probably not able to cope with the visual intrusion of tall buildings. In these cases similar densities are likely to be achieved through more traditional development patterns. However, some sites and areas of the city, which will be identified in the following major section of this study, will be able to absorb tall development in varying degrees.

7.3 Respect for Historic Settings and Key Views

Historic environments demand breathing space and as such tall buildings should be sited in areas of the city that have minimal visual impact on historic areas. Similarly, strategic views and important vistas should be complemented, not compromised by tall buildings.

7.4 Integrating Sustainability at a Strategic Level

The identification of areas within the city that are capable of absorbing tall buildings should take into account issues of sustainability. At the strategic level at which this document works, issues of transport efficiency and accessibility are key elements in ensuring the sustainability of tall buildings. Similarly tall buildings should be sited in areas of city where they will bring about the most social and economic benefit.

7.5 A Generally Clustered Approach

It has been widely acknowledged that a clustered approach to tall buildings provides a better design and planning outcome than a series of individual towers set sparsely across the urban landscape. The clustered approach concentrates the negative effects of tall buildings such as overshadowing and visual intrusion whilst maximising the positive visual contribution that tall buildings can make to the image and the skyline of a city.

However, some sites within the city, particularly those that terminate views and vistas or that have particularly special characteristics, might be suitable for single, or a small grouping, of taller buildings.

7.6 Focusing on Transport Corridors and Interchanges

Siting tall buildings in proximity to existing transport interchanges and employment areas adds to the vibrancy of these areas and strongly contributes to a more sustainable transport approach within the city.

7.7 Feasibility

The identification of areas of tall development also needs to take into account issues of demand. Proposals should aim to strike a balance between commercial viability and other issues such as visual impact and transport accessibility to ensure that schemes are able to maximise their contribution to the city. Schemes that are sited in parts of the city that are more financially marginal are less likely to be able

to contribute to the surrounding public realm or be of the necessary high design quality.

7.8 A Vertical Mix of Uses

A vertical mixture of uses within any building can help to ensure that a variety of activity occurs throughout the day and can contribute to a livelier street scene and safer public realm. Mixed use tall buildings should be sited in areas, such as existing local centres, that can be strengthened by such significant increases in activity. Placing a tall building at the edges of existing centres could, depending on the exact nature of the proposal, drain life from existing commercial centres as well as minimise the potential performance of the new development.

7.9 Contributing to a Safe and Attractive Public Realm

Tall buildings too often contribute to overshadowed, windy and lifeless spaces at ground level that suffer from a lack of spatial definition. At detailed level individual proposals should seek to create well-oriented and lively spaces that positively contribute to the wider public realm.

7.10 Good Design at a Detailed Level

Tall buildings within LBH should be of the highest design quality. Investment in good design can minimise problems associated with tall buildings such as visual intrusion, overshadowing and wind tunnelling. Well designed proposals can similarly maximise the positive contributions that tall buildings can make to the borough and wider city by providing exciting and sustainable buildings that can help contribute to the image of Hackney as a progressive, diverse and culturally rich part of London.

Crescent Block
In West Silverton by architects
Tibbalds Monro

8.0



8.0 Next Steps

This report has provided a review of information from a wide variety of sources and has established a firm platform from which to build the remainder of the strategy. Following the review and finalisation of this piece of work a number of other core activities will be undertaken in the preparation of the full Tall buildings Strategy for Hackney. Key aspects of forthcoming work include:

Phase 1: Baseline Studies

Finalisation of this report including its ongoing iterative development in preparation for its inclusions into the final strategy. This phase also includes the finalisation of a definition of tall buildings that will be used to trigger the final strategy and design guidance.

Phase 2: Urban analysis and Consultation

Includes the development of the spatial strategy that will identify areas of the borough that are suitable, un-suitable, or potentially able to absorb taller development.

Also, a number of consultations with LBH officer have been identified as important in both officer level buy in to the strategy as well as enabling the consultant team to gather 'local knowledge'.

Phase 3: Location and Development Studies

Utilising the areas identified through the urban analysis process a series of more detailed area development studies will be undertaken aimed at assessing in detail the potential for various areas of the borough to accommodate tall buildings.

Phase 4: Policy Recommendations and Assessment Criteria

The last phase of work aims to provide clear policy recommendations to LBH to assist in the finalisation of the emerging Local Development Framework. In parallel to this design guidance on tall buildings will be produced as a supplement to the main strategy. These will enable certainty for both development control officers and developers about the design aspirations in relation to new tall buildings within the borough.

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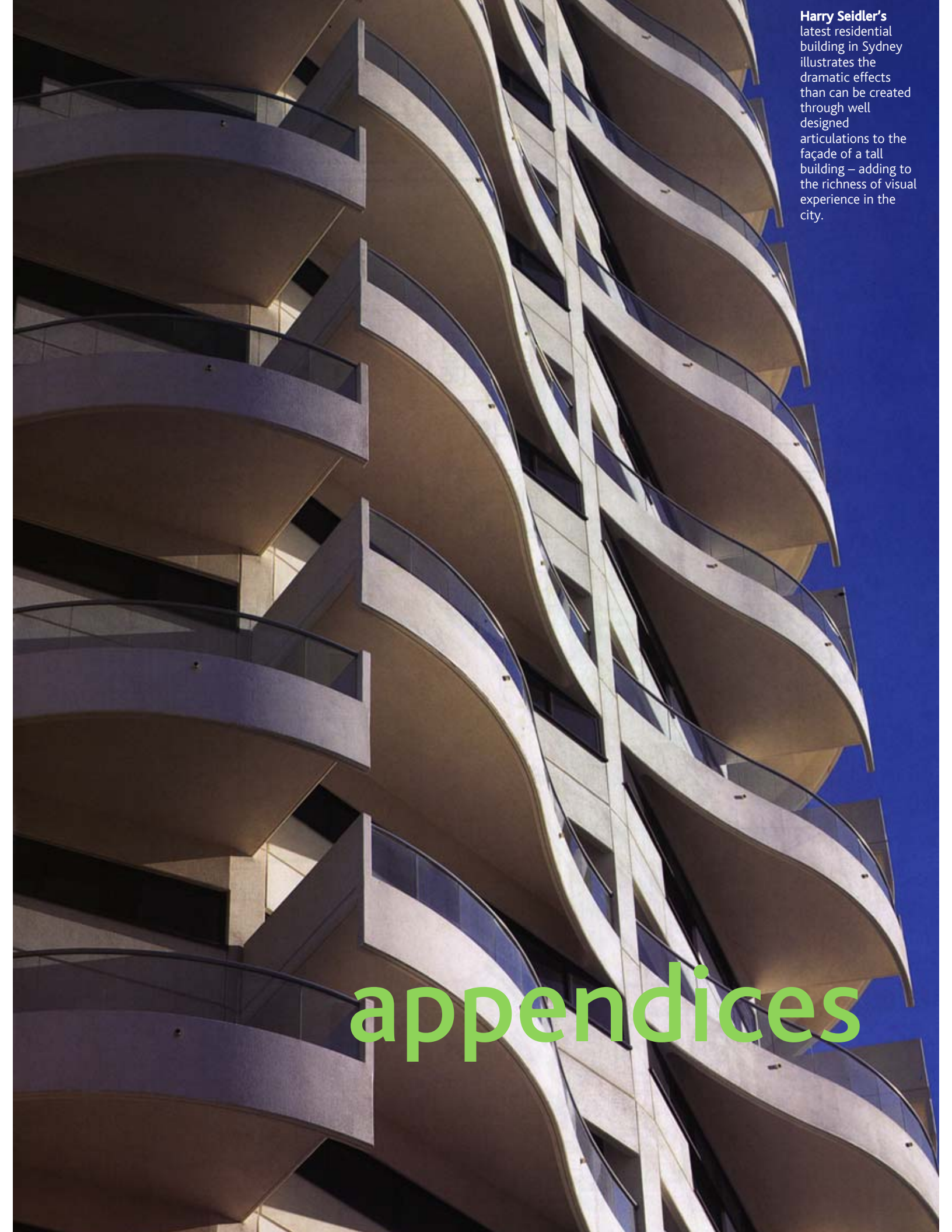
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Harry Seidler's latest residential building in Sydney illustrates the dramatic effects than can be created through well designed articulations to the façade of a tall building – adding to the richness of visual experience in the city.

appendices

Appendix: Policy Extracts

A1 London Plan (2002)

A1.1 Policy 4B.1 Design principles for a compact city

The Mayor will, and boroughs should, seek to ensure that developments:

- Maximise the potential of sites
- Create or enhance the public realm
- Provide or enhance a mix of uses
- Are accessible, usable and permeable for all users
- Are sustainable, durable and adaptable
- Are safe for occupants and passers-by
- Respect local context, character and communities
- Are practical and legible
- Are attractive to look at and, where appropriate, inspire, excite and delight
- Respect the natural environment
- Respect London's built heritage.

These principles should be used in assessing planning applications and in drawing up area planning frameworks and UDP policies. Urban design statements showing how they have been incorporated should be submitted with proposals to illustrate their design impacts.

A1.2 Policy 4B.3 Maximising the potential of sites

The Mayor will, and boroughs should, ensure that development proposals achieve the highest possible intensity of use compatible with local context, the design principles in Policy 4B.1 and with public transport capacity.

Boroughs should develop residential and commercial density policies in their UDPs in line with this policy and adopt the residential density ranges set out in Table 4B.1. The Mayor will refuse permission for strategic referrals that, taking into account context and potential transport capacity, under-use the potential of the site.

A1.3 Policy 4B.6 Sustainable design and construction

The Mayor will, and boroughs should, ensure future developments meet the highest standards of sustainable design and construction and reflect this principle in UDP policies. These will include measures to:

- Re-use land and buildings
- Conserve energy, materials, water and other resources
- Ensure designs make the most of natural systems both within and around the building
- Reduce the impacts of noise, pollution, flooding and micro-climatic effects
- Ensure developments are comfortable and secure for users
- Conserve and enhance the natural environment, particularly in relation to biodiversity
- Promote sustainable waste behaviour in new and existing developments, including support for local integrated recycling schemes, CHP schemes and other treatment options (subject to Policy 4A.1 and 4A.2).

Applications for strategic developments should include a statement showing how sustainability principles will be met in terms of demolition, construction and long-

term management. Boroughs should ensure that, where appropriate, the same sustainability principles are used to assess planning applications.

A1.4 Policy 4B.8 Tall buildings – location

The Mayor will promote the development of tall buildings where they create attractive landmarks enhancing London's character, help to provide a coherent location for economic clusters of related activities and/or act as a catalyst for regeneration and where they are also acceptable in terms of design and impact on their surroundings. The Mayor will, and boroughs should, consider all applications for tall buildings against the criteria set out in Policies 4B.1, 4B.3 and 4B.9. The Mayor will work with boroughs and the strategic partnerships to help identify suitable locations for tall buildings that should be included in UDPs and Sub-Regional Development Frameworks. These may include parts of the Central Activities Zone and some Opportunity Areas.

Boroughs should take into account the reasons why the Mayor may support tall buildings when assessing planning applications that are referable to the Mayor. Boroughs may wish to identify defined areas of specific character that could be sensitive to tall buildings within their UDPs. In doing so, they should clearly explain what aspects of local character could be affected and why. They should not impose unsubstantiated borough-wide height restrictions. In considering applications for tall buildings, the Mayor will take into account the potential benefit of public access to the upper floors and may require such access.

A1.5 Policy 4B.9 Large-scale buildings – design and impact

All large-scale buildings including tall buildings should be of the highest quality design and in particular:

- Meet the requirements of the View Protection Framework set out in Policy 4B.15 of the plan
- Be suited to their wider context in terms of proportion and composition and in terms of their relationship to other buildings, streets, public and private open spaces, the waterways or other townscape elements.
- Be attractive city elements as viewed from all angles and where appropriate contribute to an interesting skyline, consolidating clusters within that skyline or providing key foci within views.
- Illustrate exemplary standards of sustainable construction and resource management and potential for renewable energy generation and recycling.
- Be sensitive to their impact on micro-climates in terms of wind, sun, reflection and overshadowing.
- Pay particular attention, in residential environments, to privacy, amenity and overshadowing
- Be safe in terms of their own integrity and the safety of occupiers and have an acceptable relationship to aircraft, navigation and telecommunication networks.
- Be appropriate to the transport capacity of the area ensuring adequate, attractive, inclusive and safe pedestrian and public transport access.
- Provide high quality spaces, capitalise on opportunities to integrate green spaces and planting and support vibrant communities both around and within the building.
- Where appropriate, contain a mix of uses with public access, such as ground floor retail or cafes
- Relate positively to water spaces taking into account the particular needs and characteristics of such spaces.

A1.6 Policy 4B.15 London View Protection Framework.

The Mayor designates the selected set of strategically important views listed in Table 4B.2 to be managed in accordance with Policies 4B.16 and 4B.17. These

policies will become operational when Strategic View directions are withdrawn (see below). The Mayor will keep the list of designated views under review. Views will only be considered for designation where:

- The viewing place is open, publicly accessible and well used, a place in its own right allowing for pause and enjoyment of the view.
- Significant parts of London, or significant buildings, would be visible.
- The view is highly valued and allows for the appreciation and understanding of London as a whole, or of major elements within it, and does not replicate existing managed views without added benefit.
- The view represents at least one of the following: a panorama across a substantial part of London, a broad prospect along the river or a view from an urban space, including urban parks, which may be a linear view to a defined object or group of objects, which offers a cohesive viewing experience.

Within designated views, the Mayor will identify strategically important landmarks where the landmark is easy to see and to recognise, provides a geographical or cultural orientation point, and is aesthetically attractive. Preference will be given to landmarks that are publicly accessible. The landmark should be a natural focus within the view although it does not have to be the only one. Boroughs should base the designation and management of local views in their UDPs on Policies 4B.15-4B.17.

A1.7 Policy 4B.16 View management plans

The Mayor will, in collaboration with strategic partners, prepare and review management plans for the views designated under Policy 4B.15. These plans should seek to:

- Reflect the benefits of the view, helping to promote an appreciation of London at the strategic level and to identify landmark buildings and to recognise that it is not appropriate to protect every aspect of an existing view.
- Seek to enhance the view and viewing place in terms of access and the ability to understand the view.
- Prevent undue damage to the view either by blocking, or unacceptably imposing on, a landmark or by creating an intrusive element in the view's foreground or middle ground.
- Clarify appropriate development height thresholds.
- Protect backgrounds that give a context to landmarks. In some cases, the immediate background to landmarks will require safeguarding to ensure the structure can be appropriately appreciated.
- Be based on an understanding of its foreground, middle ground and background, landmark elements and the relative importance of each to the view in its entirety.

Management plans for different types of view will also be based on the following principles:

- River prospects. The management of these prospects should ensure that the juxtaposition between elements, including the river frontages and major landmarks, can be appreciated within their wider London context.
- Townscape and linear views. These views should be managed so that the ability to see specific buildings, or groups of buildings, in conjunction with the surrounding environment, including distant buildings within views, should be enhanced.
- Panoramas. Within these views, proposed developments, as seen from above or obliquely in the front and middle ground, should fit within the prevailing pattern of buildings and spaces and should not detract from the panorama as a whole. The management of landmarks should afford them an appropriate setting and prevent a canyon effect from new buildings crowding in too close to the landmark.

A1.9 Policy 4B.17 Assessing development impact on designated views

The Mayor will, and boroughs should, assess development proposals where they fall within the assessment areas of designated views (listed below) against general principles of good design set down in this plan, local urban design policies, and the management principles in Policy 4B.16. Assessment areas are:

- Landmark viewing corridors
- Front and middle ground assessment areas
- Landmark lateral assessment areas
- Landmark background assessment areas.

The Mayor will, and boroughs should, normally refuse or direct refusal of all development within the landmark viewing corridors above threshold heights (see Policy 4B.16), and development within landmark background and lateral assessment areas, which fails to preserve or enhance the ability to recognise and appreciate landmark buildings. The Mayor will, and boroughs should, normally refuse or direct refusal of developments in front and middle ground assessment areas that are overly intrusive, unsightly or prominent to the detriment of the view as a whole.

A2 Hackney UDP (Adopted 1995)

A2.1 Policy ST7

The council will protect important views across and within Hackney and will resist excessively tall buildings.

A2.2 Policy EQ2 - Protection of strategic views

In considering proposals for tall buildings which may affect the strategic view and setting of St. Paul's Cathedral, the council will:

- Resist developments within the background consultation area which Would have an adverse effect on the setting of the cathedral;
- Consult with local authorities along the viewing corridor, and other appropriate bodies, on planning applications which may affect the setting of the cathedral.

A2.3 EQ3 - Tall Buildings

The Council will resist proposals for buildings which are significantly higher than their surroundings, but will consider exceptions in circumstances where the building will:

- Identify with and emphasise a point of civic or visual significance;
- Be carefully related to the massing and profile of other nearby buildings and building groups;
- Not detract from the character or appearance of conservation areas and/or listed buildings;
Would not adversely affect the setting of St. Paul's Cathedral

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