he urgency of the housing crisis has stimulated rejuvenated ambitions, alongside access to funding and Mayoral support for the strengthening of in-house teams, so that for the first time since the 1960s and 1970s many London councils are now starting to build new homes. As architect Paul Karakusevic has remarked, there is now greater recognition that 'resilient cities are places that look after their citizens and incubate opportunity. London's new generation of public projects are promoting such values and demonstrating that change is possible even amidst political and economic adversity. 43 As private-sector development has not

register does not necessarily mean that the site is available or suitable for redevelopment. Equally, if not more important, has been the massive discrepancy between land values between inner and outer London and between different use classes: residential has been estimated to be worth on average 3.2 times more than industrial land in London, and within the residential sector, land values have reportedly been so divergent that each hectare in Westminster can fetch over 12 times the price of the same area of land in East London.⁴⁷ It is not surprising, therefore, that in an age of austerity councils have sold land in order to recoup much-needed income to support key services. But slow

The urgency of the housing crisis has stimulated rejuvenated ambitions, alongside access to funding and Mayoral support for the strengthening of in-house teams, so that for the first time since the 1960s and 1970s many London councils are now starting to build new homes.

been meeting housing need, recent years have also seen the emergence of a new form of housing delivery. London boroughs have been setting up their own local development companies, with the aim of accelerating the delivery of new homes; more than half have already done so. Other councils have focused on a direct delivery approach, sometimes as a result of political decisions. Yet, even with more resources at their disposal, councils still need to work together with private developers and housing associations in order to provide the number of new, high-quality and affordable homes desperately needed.

Where can homes be built?

London's boroughs have a statutory duty to ensure that their residents have safe and secure housing. Despite a longterm history of sales of land at discounted prices to private developers, Right to Buy, and the transfer of public housing to housing associations, the capital's local authorities remain major landlords. It is estimated that they own about a quarter of all of the council housing stock available in the whole of England, and house about one in eight of London's population.⁴⁴ One of the critical issues for the vast number of new homes required, however, remains land supply. In 2016 the Mayor set up an online register of publicly owned land and property—a result of the work of the London Land Commission, one of the main aims of which was to identify and map the extent of publicly owned brownfield sites in London.⁴⁵ When released this showed that about a quarter of land in London is owned by the public sector (including major institutions such as the National Health Service), rising to 40 per cent in some boroughs.⁴⁶

But there is a significant caveat: the presence of these on the

build-out rates for new housing by the private sector have been one of the main reasons why many local authorities have been led 'to consider their role as patient public investors, acquiring property to provide income and longer-term development potential.'48 There are large-scale brownfield areas undergoing regeneration, notably in Barking and Dagenham, but as Barbara Brownlee, Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing, Westminster City Council, highlights, very few London councils have 'acres of land': most sites for potential housing development by councils and/or their partners are of two main types—existing housing estates and smaller infill sites.

Many public housing estates in London built in the 20th century no longer meet the standards required for accommodation and have been identified as places not only where better homes can be provided for existing residents but also where new homes can be added within the same area, i.e. creating a higher density. While improved living conditions remain a priority, such schemes also generally include homes for private sale and rent to cross-subsidise the development of new social and affordable rented homes. The types of development vary greatly in scope and degree of intervention as Architects Mae, who have worked on such projects, have articulated, from the reuse and renovation of existing stock, infilling as a means to intensify and sustain a neighbourhood, and remodelling in order to positively regenerate failed estates.⁴⁹

On the other hand, the role of small sites in helping to support the delivery of new homes has come to the fore in the new London Plan, in which boroughs should apply a presumption in favour of development of up to 25 homes per site if they meet certain criteria, such as vacancy or underuse. This has

Map of Croydon Smaller Sites Programme, 2019 led several councils to classify such places as garage sites or car parks as areas for potential. Croydon's Smaller Sites programme developed and delivered by its housing company Brick by Brick has been leading the way, seeking to deliver more than 1,000 new homes on 50 infill plots, previously considered to be unviable, by combining them into a single masterplan and with an ambition of 50 per cent affordable housing. Building on small sites in a city the size of London is not without its challenges, however. Colm Lacey, Managing Director and Chief Executive, Brick by Brick, explains that: 'Often, large regeneration schemes are "irrelevant" to people's daily lives in a way that small infill schemes are not. People struggle to engage with scale. For example, a consultation on a Brick by Brick scheme of about 400 homes in Central Croydon attracted some 10 people, whereas 50 people attended one for a nine-home scheme in a district centre.' In addition, says Dan Hawthorn, Director of Housing, Regeneration and Planning at London Borough of Haringey, small sites can present high costs and logistical challenges; 'we think the "sweet spot" is more than 20 but fewer than 100 homes' for such sites.

What are the ways in which new homes are being delivered?

A major and ongoing study of local authority direct provision of housing by The Bartlett School of Planning has shown that local councils across England are engaging in this activity because of a range of motivations, the most common being meeting housing need, dealing with homelessness 'in a positive and permanent way' and increasingly, generating long-term rental income in order to deliver other essential services such as social care: 'what has been described as "profit for purpose". A variety of mechanisms are available, among the main ones being the use of the council's own HRA funds and public loans for capital investment ('direct delivery'), planning obligations—section 106 agreements through which developers are required to provide a certain proportion of affordable or social housing in new private housing projects—and, increasingly, local authority housing development companies.

New homes delivered directly by the council are not only increasing stock but can also embody a borough's more proactive approach in a positive way to its residents and the wider community. James Masini, Regeneration and New Supply Manager at London Borough of Lewisham, describes Pollard Thomas Edwards' infill scheme of six, two-storey family houses on a site formerly occupied by derelict garages in Mercator Road as a 'symbol putting us back on the map' in terms of what the council can do, despite the project's relatively small scale; it is the first new social housing scheme built by Lewisham in a generation. In terms of delivery via planning obligations, the use of section 106 agreements to provide affordable housing continues but has become less prevalent since 2012, when viability tests were introduced. Developers can use these mechanisms to lower the number of affordable homes in a scheme, if they can argue that changing market conditions have made the original plan financially unviable.⁵¹ This trend may be exacerbated by the noticeable slowdown in private residential sales, certainly in central London, which are key to the cross-subsidy model.

Housing associations continue to be key partners and stakeholders for London boroughs. In 2017 the members of the G15 group of the largest London housing associations built more



 \circ

that do not distinguish between public and private housing—and shared entrances are also a stated prerequisite now in terms of design. However, there is often a fine balance to strike between the individual requirements of a community compared to those of a planning authority: 'parents want safe spaces but planners often want more open spaces—although you have to comply with policy you have to look at what local people want', says Andy Fancy of Countryside.

The durability, texture and details of materials are all very significant in adding and retaining character, and in helping to build a sense of ownership and value and a coherent identity; with the addition of new homes on estates in particular, there are often concerns that an influx of new residents will adversely affect a sense of community that already exists. Robustness is essential for the purposes of maintenance. Much new public housing has been built in what has become known as the 'new London vernacular': well-proportioned brick or brick-clad homes taking inspiration from historic typologies. (The architecture critic Rowan Moore has called this 'an updated Georgian that is at best handsome and dignified, at worst inoffensive, 63 while architect Sir Peter Cook has criticised what he has called the 'biscuit boys'-architects who 'enjoy what I call the grim, biscuit-coloured world'.64) But this may not work in all parts of London, especially outer areas where the 'vernacular' may be quite different in character. At the launch of NLA's 'London Boroughs Report in 2018', the Head of Planning at Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Lisa Fairmaner, said Kingston was 'right at the start of its journey' in housing delivery, with 'fear' about this style of architecture, and a different perception among some outer London communities about what they see as appropriate.65

NLA's 2018 research 'Factory-made Housing: a solution for London?' investigated how modern methods of construction are starting to find favour again with London boroughs charged with demanding programmes of housing delivery. Today, homes constructed offsite can be built up to 30 per cent more quickly than traditional methods and with a potential 25 per cent reduction in costs. The use of modern precisionmanufactured components, materials and systems can bring other advantages, including superior quality control, better energy performance, reduced numbers of site deliveries, and lower levels of noise, pollution and disruption for residents. Lewisham Council in particular is highlighting the application of high-quality and well-designed modular structures not just for temporary accommodation in such projects as PLACE/ Ladywell but also permanent schemes. However, the embedded perceptions about the legacy of system-built failures remains strong and others remain more cautious about a greater take-up of factory-made construction for public housing.

Maintenance and management

Overall management of public housing has historically been the responsibility of local authorities, but huge pressure on budgets and staff cuts mean that—even with high-quality design—repairing and maintaining homes in good condition over the long term is yet another key challenge for boroughs. The experience of housing associations, which have been responsible for managing large estates and other homes over decades (if not longer), provides valuable precedents. For new build, management and maintenance strategies can be built at an early stage through the use of durable materials, as mentioned above, and through

bringing in from the start the teams charged with maintenance regimes to understand requirements, feasibility and specifications: 'we have been working with our maintenance teams early on especially for mechanical and electrical services such as lifts and heating systems to ensure they are fit for purpose', says Fiona Fletcher-Smith, Group Director for Development and Sales, L&Q. Investigating the approaches used in other building types, such as offices, can also be useful, she points out: the lobbies, lifts and other communal areas in the average city commercial building experience heavy wear and tear with thousands of people coming and going each day. As the application of Building Information Management (BIM) becomes more widespread, automated monitoring of energy performance and other systems may help to deliver efficiencies in maintenance and management. Agar Grove, designed by Hawkins\Brown with Mae for London Borough of Camden's Community Investment Programme, for example, will provide 493 affordable homes with Passivhaus certification, designed to optimise energy efficiency and significantly reduce bills for residents. However, a hands-on, site-based and permanent team is always essential, not least from the point of view of residents feeling safe, secure and valued: 'having a visible presence on our developments is key', says Sandra Fawcett, Executive Director of Operations, Swan Housing, which employs its own caretaking and cleaning staff on site.

Effective stewardship of public housing on a large scale is especially complicated by the fact that, with the effect of Right to Buy over nearly 40 years, almost all estates are a mix of tenures, as are new housing developments because of the cross-subsidy funding model. Local authorities and housing associations now have to think about 'service design' strategies—for cleaning communal areas, for example—early on in the development process; and appropriate and affordable levels of service charge are an especially problematic issue to resolve. Services have to reflect the often different expectations of new and existing residents, while also being as integrated as possible. Serving what may become a hugely diverse resident base is often a 'question that is not given enough thought', says Paul Quinn, Director of Merton Regeneration, Clarion Housing Group, responsible for the delivery of 3.000 new homes in Merton, Instead, as many suggest, community development trusts—along the lines of that pioneered by Coin Street Community Builders on the South bank—can provide a useful model to follow. Community development trusts are non-profit, independent, and communityowned; they are responsible for managing not only housing but commercial, retail and community facilities, the surplus income from which can be recycled into long-term sustainable management of an estate. This can fund elements such as skills, training and employment programmes for local people. A similar example is found in Croydon, where Brick by Brick builds homes for Croydon Affordable Homes, a charitable partnership established by the council to which it leases publicly owned land on a 40-year term. The council is able to set rents, with the goal of at least 340 local homes costing a maximum 65 per cent of the usual private rent to borough residents by 2020. As the homes are owned by a charity, they are not subject to Right to Buy, and residents gain assured shorthold tenancies lasting between one and three years.⁶⁶ The charity is also able to commission the council to manage and maintain the homes. Such innovative approaches represent the increased flexibility and adaptability that third-sector and charitable organisations can offer in the management of new housing, while also ensuring long-term affordability and high-quality living space for residents.



Right:
Agar Grove, Hawkins\Brown,
2026

42

Agar Grove

Address: Wrotham Road, NW1-LB Camden Completion: July 2026

The largest of Camden's community investment projects, this masterplan provides 493 homes for new and existing tenants. Phase one, completed in May 2018, delivers 38 social rented homes built to Passivhaus standard. promoting a 'fabric-first' approach to energy performance and human comfort. As well as homes, a new community centre, offices for the tenant management organisation and two retail units complete the project. Once the whole masterplan is complete, the scheme will be the largest Passivhaus development in the UK.

Client: LB Camden | Architect: Hawkins\Brown | Masterplan Architect: Hawkins\Brown with Mae | Landscape Architect: Grant Associates Planning Consultant: CMA Planning | Structural Engineer: Peter Brett Associates M&E, Sustainability Engineer: Max Fordham | Passivhaus Assessor: WARM Passivhaus Consultant: Max Fordham | Project Manager, Cost Consultant: Arcadis Developer: LB Camden | Development Advisor: Savills, Urban Splash Contractor: Hill Partnership



Alperton House

Address: Bridgewater Road, Wembley, HA10—LB Brent Completion: June 2021

Delivering a thriving, mixed-use development in the Alperton Growth Area, this scheme provides 474 new dwellings, with a substantial percentage of affordable housing. Together with homes, 1,400 sqm of affordable workspace, office and retail space form part of a mixed-use, active ground floor plane. The proposal also re-provides the existing public housing on site which, combined with a new public realm strategy that aims to maximise the site's canal-side location, create an improved and inclusive space for the local community.

Client: (JV) Redrow & Peabody | Architect: Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects Structural Engineer: Conisbee | Landscape Architect: Turkington Martin Planning Consultant: Barton Willmore



Alton Road

Address: Alton Road, Roehampton, SW15—LB Wandsworth Completion: July 2021

Overlooking Richmond Park, in the Alton East conservation area, this scheme redevelops a 1960s building, originally designed for blind and visually impaired residents. As the original building is no longer suited to residents' needs, the new scheme proposes 41 extra care flats for elderly people and 54 intermediate tenure flats comprising a mix of shared ownership and London Living Rent. Three residential pavilions are set around a courtyard to encourage interaction between elderly residents and those of working age, creating a self-sustaining intergenerational community.

Commissioning Client: Optivo | Architect & Lead Designer: jmarchitects Project Manager, Quantity Surveyor: Gardner Partnership Structural & Civil Engineer: IESIS Landscape Architect (to Planning): MacFarlane + Associates

Planning Consultant: Quod | Transport Consultant: Caneparo Associates

Main Contractor: to be confirmed



Bacton Estate Phase 1

Address: Cherry Court, Wellesley Road, NW5-LB Camden Completion: June 2017

The transformation of the Bacton Estate in Gospel Oak is a community-led project which LB Camden sees as an exemplary model for new estates in the borough. The first phase delivers 67 homes (69 per cent social rent and 31 per cent market sale) out of a 314-home masterplan with well-defined public routes and a landscaped courtyard garden. The scheme has been informed by extensive engagement with an active resident group who were involved from the outset of the project through to construction.

Architect: Karakusevic Carson Architects | Landscape Architect, Public Realm: Camlins M&E, Sustainability Engineer, Structural Engineer: Rolton Group Planning Consultant: Quod

Project Manager: Developing Projects (on behalf of LB Camden)

Cost Consultant: Areadis | Contractor: Rydon



Battersea Exchange

Address: Battersea Park Road, SW8—LB Wandsworth Completion: January 2020

A residential led mixed-use redevelopment on a site of 1.8 heotares, the scheme consists of 290 new residential units (20 per cent affordable), a new two form entry primary school and 3,475 sgm of commercial space. Organised around a pedestrian-friendly public realm network—including a new street linking two railway stations, a new public square and the refurbishment of viaduct arches—the project is integrated into its wider context at a range of different scales.

Client: Taylor Wimpey Central London | Lead Architect: Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios Structural Engineer: Pell Frischmann

M&E, Sustainability Engineer: Ingleton Wood/ SVM Consulting Engineers Planning Consultant: DP9 | Project Manager, Cost Consultant: Rider Levett Bucknall Contractor: Midgard, Bennett Construction | Landscape Consultants: Planit IE



Becontree Avenue

Address: Becontree Avenue and School Way, Dagenham, RM8 LB Barking & Dagenham Completion: July 2019

BeFirst, Barking and Dagenham Council's regeneration company, plans to deliver 50,000 new homes in the next 20 years. As a pilot for future development in terms of both delivery and construction, this project provides 21 affordable homes in the inter-war Becontree Estate. While conceived to deliver a contemporary building, the design takes its cue from the existing garden city layout and character of the cottage estate. The development is conceived as a carpet of greenery on which two large suburban villas are placed.

Acoustic Consultant: KR Associates | Architect: Archio Building Control: Stoma Building Control | Client: LB Barking & Dagenham Civil Engineer: Wilde Carter Clack | CLT Consultant: Eurban | Cost Manager: Baily Garne Ecological: PJC Consultancy | Landscape Architect: Spacehub Planning Consultant: BeFirst | Services Engineer: Butler & Young Associates

Structural Engineer: Wilde Carter Clack

Sustainability Consultant: Low Energy Consultancy | Transport Planner: Steer Group



Regent's Park Estate

Address: Regent's Park Estate, NW1—LB Camden

The Regent's Park Estate scheme is a series of infill projects over eight plots, identified by LB Camden to rehouse locals being displaced by the path of High Speed 2. The primary aims of the project are to retain residents' sense of community and to provide high quality new homes in places that are sensitive to the surroundings. Given the current housing situation in London, it was essential to utilise space in the most considered and efficient way possible.

New homes, public gardens and the new community hall were designed by Mae, who were appointed by LB Camden after several resident consultation events. During consultations, architects reassured residents and nearby communities that careful consideration had been given to the designs and that the buildings would respond sensitively to surrounding contexts. Through continued dialogue it was also possible to identify areas in which residents felt their homes could be improved upon in order to create a lasting place that was comfortable to live in and which residents could call home.

Initial analysis of the immediate context revealed that there were two interesting building types in the surrounding area. To the north and east, LB Camden housing blocks display chequerboard elevations, concrete banding and terracotta coloured render. Peabody Estate buildings to the west of the site have stepped back upper floors punctuated with generous windows. Proposals for plots were developed in reference to the inherent urban grain of the original 1950s neighbourhood, with addition of new public squares and spaces framed by the new buildings.

The landscape improvements to the area create a generous public realm with wider pavements. Access improvements have been made from the existing residential block to create a tiered suite of communal gardens. Within the gardens, raised planters with comfortable seating edges create a shared public space for the neighbourhood.

With resident consultation and client engagement throughout the design process, the architects were able to adjust to the specific needs of the residents whilst refining the scheme to deliver cost effective, robust and sustainable schemes within a tight budget.

Viewpoint:

Working closely with residents from the outset was fundamental to this project. The feedback we gained from consultation sessions with residents gave us vital insight, allowing us to create a place that was an improvement to the buildings they were moving from, and a lasting place for future generations. This helped us meet a tight delivery timetable and achieve a high level of design quality and tenant satisfaction.

Alex Ely, Principal, Mae

Project team:

Client: LB Camden

Architect: Mæ and Matthew Lloyd Architects

Planning Consultant: Tibbalds Landscape Architect: East

Structural Engineer: Campbell Reith M&E Engineer: TGA

Project Manager: Arcadis
Client Advisor: Ikon





114