



Thames Estuary  
Development  
Conference

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# Thames Estuary Development Conference

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## Conference Report

Wednesday, 3rd April 2019

ExCeL, London

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# Contents

<p>03 <b>Foreword</b></p> <hr/> <p>04 <b>From the Keynote</b></p> <hr/> <p>05 <b>A view from PBA (part of Stantec)</b></p> <hr/> <p>06 <b>Session 1: Why the Thames Estuary?</b></p> <hr/> <p>08 <b>Session 2: Showcasing Existing Projects</b></p>	<p>10 <b>Session 3: Vision from the Leadership</b></p> <hr/> <p>12 <b>Session 4: Infrastructure Key to the Thames Estuary</b></p> <hr/> <p>15 <b>A view from PBA (part of Stantec)</b></p> <hr/> <p>16 <b>Future Development Plans</b></p> <hr/> <p>18 <b>A view from PAGABO</b></p>
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# Foreword



**Keith Griffiths,**  
Managing Director,  
Built Environment  
Networking

The UK government's ambitious Thames Estuary 2050 growth vision could see over £10bn worth of development taking place from the London City Ribbon and ending at the mouth of the River Thames over the next 25 years. 10,000 new homes are expected imminently, 1.3 million new jobs are to be created and an additional £190bn additional GVA will be added to the UK economy—the sheer scale of this project is overwhelming and will likely safeguard the future generations long after you or I are around.

To capture the essence of this, Built Environment Networking delivered the first official Thames Estuary Development conference which sought to unify the various key players that have been tasked with delivering such a mighty project across such a challenging geographical and political landscape.

With the full support of our excellent partners Peter Brett Associates (now part of Stantec) and strategic partners SELEP, Opportunity South Essex and the Thames Estuary Kent Partnership, we took our delegates on a thought-provoking journey, promoting opportunities for them to

professionally profit from the various development schemes that are coming up across the South East. At this conference there was literally something from everyone, no matter which part of the built environment supply chain you operate in. Over 350 delegates took it in turns engaging with decision makers both on and off stage throughout the course of the day.

This is a very 'public sector driven' vision but as with recent trends, Built Environment Networking have been in a position to connect the visionaries with the deliverers. It has become a great source of professional pride that different spectrums of the development process are now approaching us to help facilitate conversations. With the Estuary vision being still in its infancy we plan to be at the forefront of outreach and development activity for many years to come. Keep your eyes peeled for next year's instalment and if you want to get involved then get in touch!"

**Best wishes,  
Keith**

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# From the Keynote



Rokhsana Fiaz

Mayor of Newham

[@NewhamLondon](https://twitter.com/NewhamLondon)

More households are living in temporary accommodation in one east London borough than in the whole of the north of England our Thames Estuary Development Conference has heard.

Rokhsana Fiaz, who was elected mayor of Newham last May, said during the opening keynote that the housing crisis facing the country is 'particularly acute' in London.

A total of 7,500 children live in temporary accommodation in the borough and 28,000 people are on the authority's housing waiting list, she said: "We have significantly more residents and families living in temporary accommodation than in the entire north of England combined."

The scale of the problem means that housing is the "top priority" for her administration:

**ONLY A MASSIVE HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME CAN BEGIN TO ADDRESS THE SCALE OF THIS CHALLENGE.**

Backing from London Mayor Sadiq Khan will enable Newham to build 1,100 "genuinely affordable homes", which will help the authority to meet its target to build 43,000 homes over the next 15 years.



Newham is very committed to the estuary's development, Fiaz said: "We can't conceive a situation where the Thames Estuary won't be a priority for my organisation."

But the council didn't want to repeat the mistakes from the past when its residents hadn't necessarily benefited from the growth of the borough, Fiaz said:

**“THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEWHAM AND THE THAMES ESTUARY ARE HUGE, BUT WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT IT WORKS FOR RESIDENTS. GROWTH MUST BE INCLUSIVE AND DELIVER FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES. TOO OFTEN GROWTH HAS COME IN AND NOT BROUGHT BENEFITS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE, WHICH IS WHY WE INTEND ON DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY.”**

Fiaz said Newham has introduced a community wealth building strategy to ensure that growth creates local employment and the authority is keen to encourage large companies, which operate in the borough, to become accredited London living wage employers.

# A View from



PBA, now part of Stantec, is a leading consultancy of engineers, planners, environmental consultants and economists delivering major development and infrastructure projects. With our clients, we aim to create better places for the communities in which we work. We were excited to be part of this conference, as we work extensively in and around the Thames Estuary region. As this conference so effectively spotlighted diverse views of the potential for development of the communities that share the riverside, it was an opportunity to understand the wider context of our work and to be inspired by the vision and achievements of others.

The Thames Estuary area has in the past been considered as a gateway to other places, to London in the west, Europe and the rest of the world to the east. And yet it is also such a valuable environmental resource - the RSPB describes it as 'a vital migration hub for hundreds of thousands of wildfowl and wading birds'.

We heard that the communities of the Thames Estuary define the area as a place in its own right, as vibrant and ambitious, with aspirations to grow and reinforce their reputation as great places to live and work. The estuary area is unique, it is the engine room of the capital providing a driving force to keep London, the largest city in western Europe and the biggest financial centre in the world, functioning.

The discussions showcased a genuine range of views and experiences; we heard from political leaders from many of

the Thames Estuary local authorities, like Rokhsana Fiaz (Mayor of Newham), who described the Council's initiatives focusing on good growth that gives the young, diverse population 'a real stake in development'. Those involved in progressing existing projects talked about housing, as well as retail and commercial developments and discussed ways to overcome barriers to delivery. Ken Dytter referred to the need to break down the silos of government, and Mark Quinn to the need to change expectations of landowners. Angela O'Donoghue emphasised the wider benefits that the new Campus at South Essex College had brought to the community.

But we also had time to reflect on the investment that will be needed to realise these ambitions for growth in the area. PBA's Tim Allen led a session covering transport and movement infrastructure of all types, where there was an acceptance that collaboration and communication were key in setting common objectives.

The conference demonstrated the huge potential of the Thames Estuary area for development of all kinds, and highlighted that in order to realise the aspirations of the leaders of southern Essex, northern Kent and east London, we need joined-up thinking and action in government at all levels. We need confidence to try new ways of thinking about and delivering development and the flexibility to embrace advances in technology.

# Why the Thames Estuary?

## Panel Members:



**Phil Laycock (Chair)**

Phil Laycock, Director, Built Environment Networking  
@BENetworking



**Paul Moore**

Director of Place, Communities & Infrastructure, London Borough of Bexley  
@LBofBexley



**Stephen Lawrence**

Chief Executive Officer, Thames Enterprise Park / iSec  
@iSec\_group @Thames\_Ent\_Park



**Kate Willard**

Chair, Opportunity South Essex



**Matthew Norwell**

Chief Executive, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
@TGKPartnership



**Lyn Carpenter**

Chief Executive, Thurrock Council  
@thurrockcouncil



**Ken Dytor**

Founder & Executive Chairman, Purfleet Centre Regeneration  
@urban\_catalyst



**Adam Bryan**

Managing Director, South East LEP  
@southeastlep

## LOCAL PLAYERS URGED TO TAKE LEAD OF ESTUARY GROWTH

Local authorities and other key players in the Thames Estuary should not wait on central Government to give a lead on the area's development, Thurrock Council's Chief Executive has urged.

Lyn Carpenter said that the new strategic board, which the Government has backed in its response to Sir John Armit's Estuary Growth Commission Report, must be put in place "quickly".

Expressing disappointment that the Government wants to choose the membership of the strategic board she said:

**WE SHOULD BE GETTING ON WITH DOING IT. WE SHOULD SET OURSELVES DEADLINES. LET'S DO IT OURSELVES AND GET ON WITHIN IT. WE HAVE GREAT LEADERS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.**



Carpenter said that south Essex's authorities had already drawn up a joint strategic plan, which has identified six growth corridors, and the next step for the authorities will be to set up a joint committee structure with the power to make decisions on those areas which they have opted to collaborate on.

Noting the role Manchester council's leadership had played in getting the Northern Powerhouse initiative off the ground, Kate Willard, Chair of Opportunity South Essex, said: "We've got some fantastic leaders, let's use that to give us an edge."

Paul Moore, Director of Place, Communities & Infrastructure at the London Borough of Bexley, agreed:



**WE WANT TO CRACK ON AND GET SOME SOLUTIONS DELIVERED.**

Matthew Norwell, Chief Executive of the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, said that the estuary is "a bit cagy" about promoting itself compared to other parts of the country:

**EVERYTHING WE NEED IS THERE. WE HAVE TO GET INTO A CULTURE OF BEING MORE AMBITIOUS AND PROUDER OF THIS PLACE.**

As an example, he pointed to the opportunities thrown up by the Thames Estuary production corridor, which could enable the area to capitalise on London's status as a world leader in creative industries.

He added that the Thames Estuary does not require a single body to oversee its development: "It shouldn't have a single steering committee, every previous attempt to do that has failed miserably. One of the shortcomings of previous efforts in the estuary has been to cure the estuary of its complexity. We have to accommodate the complexity."



Ken Dytor, Chief Executive of Urban Catalyst, told delegates about plans drawn up by infrastructure developer Metrotidal for a new orbital Thames rail route that will connect Crossrail with the North Sea.

Overseas investors, like those he was just about to visit in Japan, have an appetite for this kind of visionary proposal, Dytor said:

**THEY WOULD EAT UP THESE MAJOR PROJECTS. WE NEED SUPPORT TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. NOW IS THE TIME TO IDENTIFY THE VISION AND MAKE SURE THE FINANCIAL STRUCTURES ARE IN PLACE.**

At Purfleet, where his company is working in a joint-venture with Thurrock Council to regenerate the town centre, efforts to improve transport infrastructure could include extending the Clipper river bus service and upgrading the local railway station.

Thurrock's Carpenter said 2 ha of prime riverside development land in Purfleet is having to be held in reserve because it is one of two potential locations being considered for the future Thames flood barrier, along with its existing site at Greenwich.

# Showcasing Existing Projects

## Panel Members:



**Phil Laycock (Chair)**

Director, Built Environment Networking  
@BENetworking



**Ian Piper**

Chief Executive Officer, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation  
@ebbsfleetdc



**Jason Robinson**

Managing Director, Urban Catalyst  
@urban\_catalyst



**Angela O'Donoghue**

Chief Executive and Principal, South Essex College  
@SouthEssexColl



**Mark Quinn**

Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Quinn Estates  
@Quinn\_Estates



**Russell Loveland**

Portfolio Director, Landsec / Bluewater  
@LandsecGroup  
@TweetBluewater

## EBBSFLEET GARDEN CITY HOUSING PICKS UP PACE

Delivery of new homes has speeded up at Ebbsfleet garden city, according to the head of the body overseeing the project to build the first new garden city in a century.

Ian Piper, Chief Executive Officer of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, told delegates that 600 dwellings have been completed in the last twelve months, up from 325 in the previous year.

The new town is on target for 525 new homes this year, more than 700 next year, and then 1,000 in 2020 and 2021 – with detailed planning permission having now been granted for 2,466 houses.

Just over 1,400 dwellings have been built so far at Ebbsfleet where the garden city is being delivered in a redundant north Kent quarry. Despite the progress, the corporation is keen to not become complacent, Piper said:

**THE PACE OF DELIVERY IS INCREASING, BUT ITS LESS THAN 10% OF OVERALL PERMISSION SO THERE IS A LONG WAY TO GO.**



Ten developers are currently on site, including seven housebuilders, with a further two due to start in the next few months – and the first new primary school, two community centres, a pub and a hotel have all opened in Ebbsfleet already.



The corporation has however yet to deliver the central area while delays to the major resort planned on the nearby Swanscombe Peninsula pose “challenges” to the delivery of the garden city.

Jason Robinson, Managing Director of Development at Urban Catalyst, warned that the delivery of the Thames Estuary development requires deadlines in order to avoid continuing to be a “talkfest”.

A key figure in the planning and delivery of the 2012 games Olympic Park, he said: “If you look at the Olympics, we needed a deadline, something to aspire to and deliver to, whether numbers of homes or expenditure on infrastructure projects. Without a deadline we are at real risk of continuing a talk fest. Talk fests are great but no one in the room just wants to talk.”

He said a decision is anticipated “imminently” on Urban Catalyst’s outline planning application for the Purfleet town centre development, which the company is undertaking in a joint venture with Thurrock Council and housing association Swan.

The scheme, which incorporates 2,850 social and private homes, are designed to be integrated with commercial uses. The JV hope to start on site with the first 61 homes



this year, and a six-form academy secondary school is due to open in September – followed by the opening of two-form entry primary school and a mini campus for London South Bank University in 2022.

In addition, 500 homes should be complete, Purfleet’s level crossing will be replaced with a bridge and there will be a new town centre for Purfleet, which will be connected to the riverfront by a high road that will form the “fulcrum” of the development.

Mark Quinn, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Quinn Estates, agreed with Robinson that more targets should be laid out for the estuary’s development:

**WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE GOALS AND SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND TIMETABLES.**

Quinn expressed scepticism that modular housing will become financially sustainable if there is a fresh construction market downturn. Previous attempts to set up offsite housing manufacturing had struggled during recessions to compete with more flexible traditional builders who would cut prices to secure work.

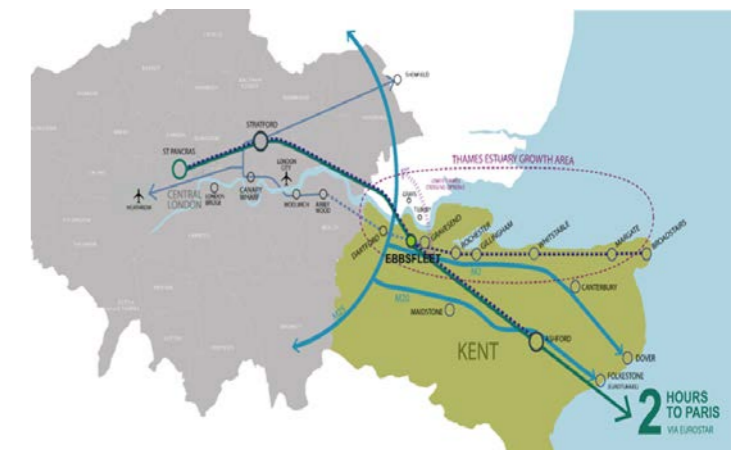
The Government would need to prop up demand for modular homes by continuing to place orders with factories, he said:

**IT’S VITAL THAT THE GOVERNMENT STEPS IN AND KEEPS THOSE FACTORIES BUSY OTHERWISE EXACTLY THE SAME THING THAT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE WILL HAPPEN AGAIN.**

In terms of the company’s own projects, Quinn said it has secured housing infrastructure funding for a new 6km relief road that will link his planned development near the Kent Science Park, which is currently served by a single-track road, to the A2. The company will be submitting an application for 11,500 homes and 20,000 sq m of commercial space.

Angela O’Donoghue, Chief Executive and Principal of South Essex College, told delegates that its Centre for Digital Technologies in Basildon town centre will open in 2020. Work has started on site at the centre, which the college is delivering in partnership with Homes England and Redrow, building new homes on the land that it is vacating.

The college has just submitted planning permission for The Forum II, which will focus on creative and cultural skills, performing arts and media when it opens in 2021.



# Vision from the Leadership

## Panel Members:



**Kate Willard (Chair)**

Opportunity  
South Essex



**Chris Naylor**

Chief Executive,  
London Borough of  
Barking and Dagenham

[@lbbdcouncil](#)



**Andrew  
Blake-Herbert**

Chief Executive,  
Havering Council

[@LBofHavering](#)



**Neil Stubbings**

Director for Regeneration,  
Havering Council

[@LBofHavering](#)



**Councillor  
Robert Gledhill**

Leader,  
Thurrock Council

[@thurrockcouncil](#)



**Councillor  
Teresa O'Neill OBE**

Leader, London  
Borough of Bexley

[@LBofBexley](#)

## EAST LONDON COUNCIL BOROUGH REVEALS PLANS FOR NEW RAIL LINE

Havering Council is working up plans for a fixed rail link in a bid to improve north-south links in the east London borough.

Andrew Blake-Herbert, Chief Executive of the authority, told delegates that Havering will benefit from three new stations on the new Crossrail line, more than any other borough, when it eventually opens.

However, Havering's growth had been hampered by poor links between the north and south of the borough, he said:

**NOTHING GOES NORTH AND SOUTH. THE ABSOLUTE PRIORITY IS CREATING SUSTAINABLE NORTH-SOUTH TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE. WE'RE CURRENTLY WORKING ON WHAT A TRAM OR MONORAIL NETWORK WOULD LOOK LIKE.**

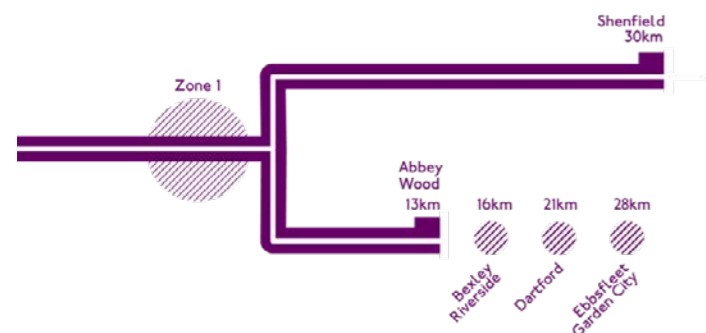


He said the council is "not wedded" to Transport for London providing the mooted services, which could be furnished by a private operator.

Blake-Herbert said Havering is already due to deliver £3.3bn worth of investment and 7,618 homes through three joint ventures which it has recently entered. The largest JV is with Wates Residential for twelve sites, which will be worth £1.3bn and deliver 5,223 homes. In addition, the borough has signed a £500m JV with Savills and First Base to deliver 1,070 new homes and a £300m partnership with Notting Hill Genesis at Rainham with aims to build 866 dwellings.

Responding to a question about digital infrastructure, he said he "wasn't sure" that the council should own cabling because it would be difficult for a local authority to keep up with the rapid pace of change in the sector, but it's "absolutely crucial" that the council owns the pipes in the ground that the cables run through.

The Leader of Bexley Council welcomed the Government's recent announcement that it will back work on improving



**YOU CAN STICK A TRAIN DOWN THE VICTORIA LINE EVERY 5 SECONDS. THE TECHNOLOGY EXISTS TO MASSIVELY INCREASE CAPACITY ON THE OVERGROUND RAIL NETWORK.**

transport links between Abbey Wood, Crossrail's current south of the river terminus, and Ebbsfleet in north Kent.

Shortening the south east branch of Crossrail means that services stop short of several major opportunity areas, Cllr Teresa O'Neill said:

**WE BELIEVE THAT THE GAP BETWEEN ABBEY WOOD AND EBBSFLEET NEEDS TO BE SORTED. THE JOB NEEDS TO BE FINISHED.**

She said extending Crossrail, involving the delivery of three new stations in her borough, would open a growth corridor for new housing and jobs.

Highlighting opportunities in the region O'Neill said that Bexley alone contains nine km of brownfield sites with the capacity to deliver 31,000 homes and 17,000 new jobs over the next 25-30 years.

The Thames Estuary as a whole has a greater development capacity than the Oxford Cambridge ARC, she said: "The estuary has the opportunity to deliver more houses and jobs than Oxford-Cambridge corridor. We have the aspiration and capacity to deliver that."

Chris Naylor, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, said that modern signalling technology has dramatically improved the potential capacity of the rail network:

He added that Barking could be a new stop on the HS1 line, which runs underneath the town's main station. Integrating HS1 with the rail services, which already run through Barking station, would boost use of the currently under-used line.

Cllr Robert Gledhill, Leader of Thurrock Council, said that his borough would also benefit from a HS1 station: "HS1 whizzes all the way through Thurrock. It would be the ideal place to have another station."

However, a choice had to be made between the two if HS2 is to continue to be a high-speed service, he said: "We need an intelligent conversation about whether it sits best in Barking and Dagenham or in Thurrock."

Gledhill also said that his authority is determined to avoid repeating the mistakes of the Thurrock Development Corporation, which had delivered housing without supporting infrastructure like transport and schools.



# Infrastructure Key to the Thames Estuary

## Panel Members:



**Tim Allen (Chair)**  
Director Land Development Midlands, PBA now part of Stantec  
@PeterBrettLLP



**James LeVesconte**  
Head of External Affairs, Highways England  
@HighwaysEngland



**John Speakman**  
Estates and Property Manager, Port of Tilbury  
@forthports



**Anna Eastgate**  
Assistant Director, Thurrock Council  
@thurrockcouncil



**Julian Ellerby**  
Director, Local London  
@local\_london



**Anusha Shah**  
Chair, Thames Estuary Partnership  
@ThamesEstPart



**Nadine Collins-Smith**  
Head of Thames Estuary Vision, Port of London Authority  
@LondonPortAuth

## ESSEX BOROUGH CHALLENGES THAMES CROSSING

Plans for the new Lower Thames Crossing are being resisted by the Essex authority where the tunnel will emerge, our event heard. The new crossing, which will carry 14.5 miles of dual to three lane expressway in the UK's longest road tunnel, is due to emerge on the north bank of the Thames in the borough of Thurrock.

The project is designed to improve the links between Kent and Essex and relieve the Dartford crossing by connecting the M2, A13 and M25.

But Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Thurrock Council, warned that her authority is objecting in principle to the scheme:



**IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE BENEFITS FOR THURROCK. WE NEED TO DELIVER NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN A WAY THAT DELIVERS LOCAL BENEFITS. IT OFFERS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR SOUTH ESSEX. IF DONE IN THE RIGHT WAY, IT CAN PROVIDE A PLATFORM FOR GROWTH.**

"We are keen to ensure that the infrastructure that will be in place for the next 100 years will be fit for purpose and not simply a short-term solution to the different problem of how



to relieve congestions at the Dartford crossing. The design, height and scale of the scheme is obtrusive. We agree a new crossing is needed but not this crossing."

Eastgate also said the crossing is a "missed opportunity" to unlock opportunities for growth in south Essex along the A127 corridor.

She also said the council has a "very, very real concern" about the "knock on impact" that the hiatus over the crossing is having on Thurrock's ability to deliver its local plan, which contains allocations for 20,000 new homes and space for 24,500 new jobs.

The Thurrock Director pointed to question marks over the funding of the project following Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond's announcement in last year's Budget that the PF2 has been abolished. The PF1 mark two was previously identified as the mechanism for financing the crossing, which could cost as much as £6.8bn to deliver. The council are continuing their discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government about the project.

James LeVesconte, Head of External Affairs at Highways England, expressed confidence that the crossing is backed by ministers, pointing to support for a body to lead on the project in the Government's recently published response to the Thames Estuary Growth Commission.



"As far as finance is concerned, there is a commitment from the Government to still deliver on the Lower Thames Crossing and we are looking at how we fund and procure the scheme," he said, adding that the outline business case for the crossing is due to be presented to the Government this year.

John Speakman, Estates and Property Manager at Port of Tilbury, said that the facility is expected to double in size to handle 16.5m tonnes of cargo per annum by 2030.

The first phase of the London Distribution Park, which is being built on the site of a former power station next to the port, will be open by next year, whilst the LDC's port, which contains a ro-ro facility able to handle half a million square metre units per annum, will be operations within a year of receiving planning permission.

Nadine Collins-Smith, Head of the Thames Vision Delivery at the Port of London Authority, said using barges instead





of heavy good vehicles to transport construction materials could slash emissions and relieve congestions, but there must be improved access to the river from the road and rail networks.

Collins-Smith also told delegates that the Greater London Authority's review of safeguarded wharves is into its final stages. Having secured 50 wharves and supporting infrastructure, she said the port's focus is now on reactivating these facilities while supporting development along the Thames.

As an example, Collin-Smith pointed to Peruvian Wharf in London's Docklands, which the port has purchased for use as an aggregate's facility.

Anusha Shah, Chair of the Thames Estuary Partnership, urged the adoption of higher sustainable building standards, including the incorporation of features like cross ventilation and shading.

Julian Ellerby, Director of Local London, said "real progress" could be achieved in the Thames Estuary by greater cross border work between its local authorities.



# A View from



## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION SHOULD LEAD THE WAY IN DELIVERING INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT GROWTH IN THE THAMES ESTUARY

The Thames Estuary seaports are at the forefront of innovation in international port operations and in exploiting the River Thames as a key corridor into London. By contrast, the movement of most people in the area to London and beyond is growing increasingly difficult as much of the existing infrastructure reaches capacity.

There is a particular difficulty with the existing railways in the Thames Estuary, however, upgrading these are notoriously expensive and difficult to deliver. Yet, improving rail transport is key to delivering significant enhancements for both freight and people. Improvements supporting both are essential if the Estuary is to deliver on housing and jobs as well as creating a unique opportunity to grow the local economy.

Such improvements can be delivered cost effectively by utilising the latest technologies. The concept of 'Digital Railways', whereby railway infrastructure is digitised to improve capacity, reliability and reduce journey times, is a way of increasing railway performance without constructing expensive new lines. In Germany, Deutsche Bahn have shown that train operating companies can lead

in delivering digital track improvements, ensuring these are implemented where most needed and creating rapid improvements for passengers. This contrasts with relying on the infrastructure managing company which has different incentives. For this approach to work in the UK, more change is needed to the existing train operating company and Network Rail (the infrastructure manager) relationship.

Additionally, High Speed 1 represents a unique opportunity to radically improve the use of existing rail assets. This railway carves its way through the north and south Thames Estuary regions, stopping only at Ebbsfleet, with high-speed railway services. The line has considerable potential to increase the frequency of trains heading into London, and provide connections to the C2C Essex Thameside network by providing with a junction in the vicinity of Purfleet, therefore opening up passenger and freight opportunities in the area.

Such innovation and 'outside the box thinking' is very much the mindset of Port of London, who is currently reinventing the role of the Port of Tilbury as a freight hub for goods into London and the UK as well as a cruise terminal. Capitalising on the River Thames as a transport route they are investing heavily in upgrades to piers within central London and attracting operators to add new river bus routes linking Essex and Kent to the several parts of London. The investment shows the River Thames represents a significant untapped opportunity to provide new transport connections for the Thames Estuary at relatively low capital cost.

There are a number of unique opportunities for the Thames Estuary to improve its transport connections and become directly connected with new destinations which, with good planning and development, will support sustainable long term growth in the area. The challenge is to embrace the emerging technologies that can deliver these changes and improve the way we plan and pay for improved infrastructure.





# Future Development Plans

## Panel Members:



**Richard Davidson (Chair)**

Richard Davidson, Director, Willmott Dixon  
@WillmottDixon



**Paul Kitson**

General Manager - South East, Homes England  
@HomesEngland



**Dawn Wylie**

Land Director, Weston Homes  
@WestonHomes



**Stephen Lawrence**

Chief Executive Officer, Thames Enterprise Park / iSec  
@iSec\_group  
@Thames\_Ent\_Park



**Geoff Pearce**

Executive Director for Regeneration & Development, Swan Housing Association  
@SwanHousing

## HOUSING ASSOCIATION AND COUNCIL IN MODULAR HOMES JOINT-VENTURE TALKS

A major housing association is exploring establishing a modular housing venture with a local authority.

Geoff Pearce, Executive Director for Regeneration and Development at Swan Housing Group, told our event that the Essex-based association is in discussions with an authority about an offsite homes factory partnership: "We're talking to a local authority about opening a jointly owned modular housing factory that would be a commercial enterprise and producing homes for us."

He also rebutted concerns that the cost of modular housing will be unsustainable if there is a housing market downturn:

**WHAT IS DIFFERENT TODAY IS THAT THE HOUSING MARKET IS BECOMING A MUCH MORE MIXED ECONOMY. THERE IS A BURNING PLATFORM BECAUSE WE ARE SEEING A REAL DECLINE OF PEOPLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY WITH SKILLS. IF WE CAN GET TO A POINT WHERE THE MAINSTREAM OF HOUSING PROVISION IS PRODUCED OFFSITE AND WE TOP THAT UP WITH ON-SITE TRADITIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WE CAN BECOME A VERY SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY.**



He added: "To get the scale of development we want across the south east we are going to need that mixed economy. The Government has to encourage ways for the industry to deliver. We haven't got workforce to deliver 200,000 homes per annum."

He said a heightened focus on quality, with homes having to be designed to ever higher standards of air tightness, cannot be achieved using traditional skills.

Swan operates a 80,000 sq ft factory to manufacture homes using cross laminated timber beams for its own developments.

Pearce also said that Swan has been awarded preferred bidder status by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to regenerate the Queensway estate. The project, a joint-venture between Southend Council and Swan, will deliver up to 1,600 new homes, of which over 500 will be affordable, as well as a new centre for the town.

Residents could be won over if developers demonstrate the benefits such regeneration projects can deliver, he said:



**WHAT CONVINCED LOCAL PEOPLE WAS THE NEED TO CHANGE WHAT WAS ALREADY THERE IF THEY SEE WHAT IS ON THEIR DOOR STEP ISN'T GREAT.**

In terms of procurement Pearce said that Swan's existing construction framework is just about to expire, and the association will be moving to a "more flexible" dynamic purchasing system.

Stephen Lawrence, Chief Executive Officer of the Thames Enterprise Park, said vertical farming is one of the uses it is considering for their major new employment zone.

The park, which is proposed on the site of a former oil refinery near Tilbury, is also hoping to create the UK's first food logistics hub with space for 180,000 pallets. By using a similar approach to that taken by Amazon at its nearby Tilbury site, the park will aim to make much more intensive use of the site than conventional logistics facilities.

The clean-up of the first 70 acres of the former refinery had already begun and is due to be completed later this year.

An outline planning consent has gone in for the whole scheme with a detailed application for phase one due to be submitted within the next two months so that ground can be broken in the first quarter of 2020. Financial support, either through tax breaks or grants, will be required to

cover the "enormous" capital expensive involved in the heavy level of automation that the proposals will require.

Dawn Wylie, Land Director at Weston Homes, told delegates that the housebuilder plans to be onsite at the end of the summer with its project at the former Abbey retail park, which occupies 2.1ha of derelict brownfield land on the edge of Barking town centre.

The scheme will connect Barking train station with the river via the grounds of the town's ruined medieval abbey. It will deliver a total of 1,091 homes, 35% of which will be affordable in line with the Greater London Authority's policy requirements. The scheme is set to be considered by Barking and Dagenham's planning committee in June and work could start before the end of the summer.

However, smaller housebuilders like Weston cannot offer as much in terms of planning benefits as their larger counterparts, she said: "One of the things we can do is speed up planning because holding costs for small companies are incredibly high, if we can find a way to get smaller sites through planning quicker it would genuinely help them to get under way."

Weston is also integrating modern methods of construction into its schemes by ensuring that the bathrooms in its homes are manufactured offsite and then fitted on site.



# A view from PAGABO

## THE MOMENT SOCIAL VALUE WAS BORN

It is 40 years since the British gangster movie, *The Long Good Friday*, was released and there have been numerous documentaries to mark the cinematic milestone. In the film, the main character Harold Shand (played by Bob Hoskins) gives a stellar speech aboard his luxury yacht moored on the banks of the Thames, presenting a vision for London's Docklands that had social value at its heart. The commentary was as much a crystal ball, the size of a wrecking ball, to brownfield land regeneration schemes as it was a piece of cinematic dialogue.

The intentions of Shand may have been compromised by stakeholder involvement, but it was a principled speech about what has today become an essential element of the regeneration game. That late '70s fictional vision was a forerunner that resonates today throughout one of Europe's most ambitious projects – the Thames Gateway.

Social value falls into three broad areas: environment, social and economic. The Thames Gateway catchment covers 3 million people and crosses 16 council boundaries and so is as much about making a place than merely building one. There are important commitments right through the process whereby major stakeholders must come together to achieve this, and we are in peril as businesses and individuals if we ignore social value. Planners, developers, architects, builders, colleges, governments, councils, and the wide range of ancillary industries must wise up to the fact that there is a chance to make a real difference in the communities they operate in. So what signs are there that it is on the horizon?



Social value rarely becomes headline news yet one procurement firm recently released figures about enabling a staggering £1bn social value threshold measured by its collective clients. And what's interesting about that is the fact so much weight is put on measuring social value today. Four decades on from *The Long Good Friday* and the entire industry is becoming shaped by the responsibility of a footprint more important than any physical, functioning and gleaming structure.

The CEO of procurement firm, Pagabo (the firm responsible for achieving £1bn in the social value enablement announcement) spoke about the increased importance of social value within the construction industry.

Simon Toplass said: "Social value (SV) is more important than ever. It has become a significant part of our strategy to make our contractors, consultants and suppliers be accountable for it – it's not just a policy or tick box exercise any longer. Pagabo is a driving force for social value prominence and that's why we released evidence of its growing importance to organisations, communities and the economy.

**THERE IS A CLEAR SHIFT FROM SIMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO 'ACCOUNTING FOR' AND WE EXPECT TO SEE PROJECTS SET AND THEN EXPECT MEASURABLE SV OUTCOMES IN THE NEAR FUTURE.**



Mark Bolger, CEO of Social Profit Calculator, an organisation set up following the introduction of the 2012 Social Value Act, suggests the social value driver is significant: "Social Value is the biggest driver behind public sector contracts. It is more than value for money, it is the added value that is created by the way in which public money is spent.

"Delivering Social Value doesn't have to cost more, changing the way a project is delivered can maximise impact and social value by focusing on employment and skills for local residents, spending in local economies, and full consideration of the environment. More is being done by government to drive the agenda, a minimum 10% weighting and criteria for delivering is currently being set. SV can be forecast at the start of a project to ensure that the client can embed in the procurement process and the supplier delivers social value through the commitments made during the contract.

Pagabo is committed to this and has been doing so for over a year, which means they have been able to account for the £1bn social value figure.

"We will start to see projects become awarded on social value 'P&L' accounts first and foremost and then price," continued Toplass.

**IT IS CLEAR THAT VALUE FOR MONEY NEEDS TO BE A HOLISTIC AND TANGIBLE VALUE, AND WHERE A SUPPLIER CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT £1 = £2.50, THEN THIS WILL BE FACTORED INTO DECISION MAKING RATHER THAN PURE LIP SERVICE. IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, SOCIAL VALUE ALLOWS THE GOVERNMENT TO SHARE THE 'HEAVY LIFTING' OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH OTHERS.**

So, with social value gathering mainstream momentum, the days of self-regulation from voluntary or opt-in policy are over as the rise can be seen of mandatory schemes on regional, national and even transnational level. Clear measurement can only help.

High social value is generated by delivering outcomes to people, communities, businesses and economies that

need it the most. The benefits of high social value means that you are accounting for the impact that you create and the value this has to people, communities, businesses and economies. Employing local people and providing skills opportunities for disadvantaged and vulnerable residents, spending in local areas on employment and supply chains creates economic uplift and productivity, considering health and wellbeing, inclusion and diversity of the workforce creates high social value.

One organisation that falls within the Thames Gateway area is South Essex College. They specialise in the types of careers a regeneration project requires. They have a dedicated team of apprenticeship officers who bridge the divide between education and employment.

The South Essex College Chief Exec and Principal, Angela O'Donoghue, addressed the skills gap dilemma saying: "There are major skills shortages in engineering, construction, digital technologies and logistics. When a workforce is essential on projects that last for years, even decades, then the next generation of employee, in numbers that are already under pressure, have to be found. Finding that skillset and skills base locally is a challenge we all undertake together.

"Using apprenticeships and the training levy is helpful in plugging the skills gap and our job as part of that bigger social value picture is to understand what companies need and it will pay dividends in retention and attracting talent to our area."

Social value requires responsible and ethical management since the impact of the Thames Gateway will be enormous. Thankfully with companies such as South Essex College, Social Profit Calculator and Pagabo, the catalyst for responsible growth for a thriving and vibrant environment for generations to come is in safer hands than a gangster like Harold Shand.



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# BE Thames Estuary Development Conference

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