



Blue Light Estates  
Development  
Conference

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# Blue Light Estates Development Conference

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## Conference Report

Monday, 11th November 2019  
Kensington Town Hall, London

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# Foreword



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

“Let’s get on with the One Public Estate agenda and provide our emergency services estates teams with some clarity and direction” was the overwhelming message from both delegates and speakers at the 2019 Blue Light Estates development conference, as several senior figures from the sector expressed frustration with the slow speed of estates related judicial reviews at the Home Office. With the spectre of a general election looming, politics and the potential result was of intrigue across the piste on the day.

Our team worked hard to deliver this event for the second year running and Built Environment Networking is proud to share a strong relationship with both the National Police Estates Group and the new National Fire Service Estates Group who helped shape the programme. Collaboration (and best practice examples of this) were featured heavily during the agenda. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Wilmott Dixon for being our corporate partner on the day and to Place Partnership for their

invaluable insight on a couple of sessions.

One of the most interesting sessions of the day features a lively on stage debate between Police and Crime Commissioners which added a totally new dynamic to proceedings because these are the people setting regional policy and in many cases holding the purse strings across the UK.

Now that UK politics has a firm direction for the next five years, we expect 2020’s event to be the biggest yet with several major blue light services already pledging to come along and talk about their estate masterplans. With that in mind, there is no time like the present for your business to get involved and expose your services to our clients; please get in touch with myself or one of the team so we can explain to you the benefits of partnering with us on this conference.

**Best wishes,  
Keith**

[keith.griffiths@built-environment-networking.com](mailto:keith.griffiths@built-environment-networking.com)





# From the Keynote



**Jason Hallas**

Regional Framework  
Manager, Willmott  
Dixon

[@WillmottDixon](#)

## THE 'FINITE MINDSET' IS HOLDING BACK THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

"We have to get better"

The case that the construction industry needs to look beyond the short-term was made passionately by Jason Hallas - Corporate Partner and Regional Framework Manager at Willmott Dixon.

Hallas expressed the notion that this attitude had bred a culture which is slow to embrace new innovations, he said: "About modular construction and off-site building, I get the impression that customers don't feel like the construction industry is responding fast enough to these new technologies."

The constant need to bid for new work was cited as a major cause of the entrenchment of this mentality within firms and the lack of a secure pipeline of work causing a sense of cautiousness within firms:

**IF WE MOVE FROM A FINITE MINDSET TO AN INFINITE MINDSET, IT WILL GENERATE TRUST, IT WILL GENERATE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION WILL COME OUT.**

Hallas suggested this mindset estranged firms from clients, who often have needs suiting a more long-term mindset: "I see customers I work with in the blue light sector as being infinite players, their world is always changing."

He praised the framework method of procurement, a form of procurement where a list of preferred providers is used instead of an open bid process for projects to allow for a pipeline of work to be provided. He cited the fact that 85% of Willmott Dixon's work is done through this process. However, he acknowledged that

**THERE'S A PLACE FOR EVERY PROCUREMENT ROUTE AT THE START OF THE PROJECT.**

A major shake-up in the mindsets of the construction industry is needed to create the innovation that firms need to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. A short-term mindset will ultimately only be enough for the short-term.



# Blue Light Estates Sector Update

## Panel Members:



**Chair: Andrew Pollard**

Managing Director,  
Place Partnership  
@Place\_Part



**Sallie Banks-Nash**

Coordinator, National Police  
Estates Group



**Simon Dackombe**

Strategic Planner,  
Thames Valley Police  
@ThamesVP



**Martin Scoble**

Assistant Chief Officer,  
Northamptonshire  
Police & Fire  
@NorthantsPolice

## CROSS-SERVICE 'TRI-LIGHT' COOPERATION LEADING THE BLUE LIGHT SECTOR

Emergency services and their estates are becoming increasingly interlinked.

A number of different pressures have pushed emergency services closer together, making such cooperation an increasing norm across estates and the provision of blue light services.

The impact of austerity and the push of the government from 2010 onwards towards consolidation of public services provided a significant incentive for blue light organisations to combine estates in a cost-cutting measure.



Sallie Blanks-Nash, Coordinator at the National Police Estates Group, described this shift: "In the blue light sector since 2010, in the police particularly, estate strategies have been all about saving money and the number of sites in those ten years have reduced by 25%."

This has caused a serious reduction in the spending available to individual services for estate development, Martin Scoble, Assistant Chief Officer at Northamptonshire Police & Fire said:

**THE AMOUNT OF MONEY GOING TOWARDS FIRE GENERALLY AND PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT HAS BEEN ALMOST NEGATIVE.**

A joint approach between fire and police estates is being taken in many councils, including Northamptonshire, which Scoble has been tasked with consolidating. The cross-service nature of modern emergencies has shown a need for collaboration, Scoble said: "We're increasingly asking our police officers and fire service to deal with more complex events."

Blanks-Nash raised attention to inter-service issues at the Grenfell Fire, she said it was her understanding that: "There was a problem during the fire with the national police air service's video system where the fire service teams on the ground weren't able to access to see images from the air."

Changes are coming to the sector, following government commitment to increase police numbers and all parties promising spending increases for the blue light sector ahead of the 2019 December General Election. Scoble said:

**WE'RE NOW SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY OVER THE LAST 9-10 MONTHS OF ACTUALLY BEING ABLE TO PUT SOME MONEY ASIDE AND DEVELOP OUR ESTATES.**

These spending increases also provide new challenges for police, as raised by Simon Dackombe, Strategic Planner for



Thames Valley Police: "Plugging in however many offices a year, how is that going to be managed, the kind of pressure that's going to put on us is going to create administrative challenges for us."

The Thames Valley Police are currently building its first bottom-up created tri-light facility, Dackombe said: "It's a large scale blue light hub in Milton Keynes which is due to come online for occupation the middle of next year."

Dackombe also noted the need to consolidate disparate technological systems, he said:

**IT'S ABOUT THE WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH AND WHETHER THAT'S THE BEST USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND BEST USE OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES.**

However, Dackombe also dismissed calls for a unified system approach: "If we start bringing in new national IT systems, we'd still be talking about it in 10 years, you don't need to replace these systems you just need a thin layer of software on top."

Inspections of the Fire and Police service were merged in 2017 with the advent of the HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Service), as previously the Fire service relied on peer-to-peer inspection if inspections were carried out.

Despite this, the approach has faced some obstacles, particularly with ambulance estates, as the service is also beholden to the NHS. Blanks-Nash said:

**ON THE GROUND A LOT THE CLIENTS FOR THE AMBULANCE SERVICE WOULD RUN A MILLION MILES IF THE POLICE ARE TURNING UP.**

The push has also brought blue light providers in cooperation with other public service organisations, and Blanks-Nash spoke of the increasing prevalence of a consolidated approach: "We're creating small pods, co-locations where there's small little police hubs within community centres or town councils, city councils."

Regional differences determine the viability of a unified blue light presence, with Blanks-Nash noting that it "tends to work better in the rural areas where you have vast distances."

The Blue Light sector had to change in the face of funding losses, yet in adapting to struggling conditions, the sector has made efficiency improvements. While cooperation does have limitations, the combination of cooperation and funding increases could lead the sector to a historically strong position.





# Fire Service Estates – Innovation & Development

## Panel Members:



**Chair: Phil Laycock**

Director, Built Environment Networking  
@BENetworking



**Alex Brown**

Head of Property Capital Projects & Estates, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue  
@RBFRSofficial



**Duncan Savage**

Assistant Director, Resources, East Sussex Fire & Rescue  
@EastSussexFRS

## AGEING ESTATES ISSUE PROVIDES GREEN RENEWAL OPPORTUNITIES

Ageing estates across the blue light sector have promoted calls for a serious renewal of the sector, with Alex Brown Head of Property, Capital Projects and Estates at Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue warning of the “very real potential for real asset failure.”

Speaking at our Blue Light Estates Development Conference Brown explained the depth of the crisis which has become a national issue within the sector: “My entire property portfolio needs replacing due to its ageing condition, times that by the 40-odd fire services across the UK, you start to get the picture of an ageing estate that desperately needs capital investment to keep it functioning and operational.”

In Berkshire they have developed a strategic approach to their estate development for blue light, Brown explained: “I have a very supportive fire authority who approved a 15-year programme of work under the strategic asset investment framework.”

Despite this, of the four stages of planned works for the Berkshire service only the first stage has been fully funded. Brown explained the importance of fully updating estates:

**EVERY PHASE NEEDS TO BE DELIVERED TO ENSURE THE PORTFOLIO IS FIT FOR PURPOSE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE.**

Brown explained the role that innovation from the private sector can play in positively shaping estates projects: “The fire service has very limited budgets we still want good looking buildings that provide a 3-dimensional business card to our local community. We are far more detailed and professional in approach in Berkshire than we used to be, and we have carried out what we call an ARIBA-1 stage or discovery stage.”



Richard Hurford, Head of Energy & Sustainability at Place Partnership a public-private alliance focused on the development of Blue Light estates made it clear the usefulness of using large estates development for the incorporation of low-carbon technology:

**IT'S VERY MUCH ABOUT TAKING THE OPPORTUNITIES TO MODERNIZE YOUR TECHNOLOGY WHEN YOU NEED TO UPGRADE YOUR ESTATES.**

Specific proposals advocated by Hurford included LED lighting, which uses only 10% of the electricity of older lighting methods, and heat pumps which provide a more efficient method of heating than traditional gas boilers.

# Plans



**Richard Hurford**

Head of Energy & Sustainability, Place Partnership  
@Place\_Part



**Vaughan Williams**

Head of Estates and Facilities, Sussex Police  
@sussex\_police



The emergency services sector has embraced the 2050 national target for zero carbon. Hurford discussed the adoption of carbon-neutral vehicle, referring to the fact that “London fire has a fleet of 52 BMW electric I3 vehicles.”

Managing contaminants is an important part of managing fire estates, as often whilst tackling blazes equipment can become contaminated with toxic chemicals. Duncan Savage, Assistant Director for Resources at East Sussex Fire & Rescue, told delegates of the need for estates to accommodate the “separation of clean, dirty and transitional areas” and that contamination was a key challenge.

East Sussex have faced many of the same issues with aging stations as their colleagues in Berkshire have, with Savage describing a similar “spread of property” with their main station in Brighton dating from the 1930s.

Savage raised the difficulties that some fire services have with their antiquated buildings being listed, but they face restrictions in their ability to relocate. This was a concern for East Sussex when there were discussions of listing their Brighton station, yet they could not find an alternative site despite a 20-year search.

Sussex Police are looking to spend around “£14m over the next 5 years” according to Vaughan Williams, Head of

Estates and Facilities at the service. They’re also seeking to make substantial cost savings of 15-25% in the revenue of their estates.

As well as sharing their headquarters with East Sussex Fire and Rescue, Sussex police have cooperated with police services in Surrey to build what Williams described as a

**LARGE MULTI-SKILLED INTELLIGENT CLIENT FUNCTION.**

Williams also stressed the need to update guidelines on police station estates, which were last published in 2005, and presented an outdated model for future developments.

Outdated emergency services estates present a key obstacle to the provision of those services at their best, and do not represent the modern vibrancy the blue light sector is capable of. With the beginning of government action towards reversing funding cuts, there is massive potential for a new green estate overhaul.





# Blue Light Best Practice

## Panel Members:



**Chair: Matt Christie**

Director of Business Development, Built Environment Networking  
[@BENetworking](#)



**Jami Cresser-Brown**

Director of Creative Technologies, Bryden Wood  
[@BrydenWood](#)



**Jason Hallas**

Regional Framework Manager - Northern, Willmott Dixon  
[@WillmottDixon](#)

## DESIGN INNOVATION REDEFINING THE POSSIBLE WITHIN BLUE LIGHT ESTATES

"This is a very exciting time for construction and suddenly everything is possible" - declared Jami Cresser-Brown, Director of Creative Technology at Bryden Wood.

During the hour-long Q&A session Cresser-Brown challenged conventional notions of best practice as an achievable benchmark:

**BEST PRACTICE IN ITS VERY NATURE IS UNREACHABLE, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A BETTER, FASTER AND SMARTER WAY TO DESIGN AND BUILD THE CITIES OF OUR FUTURE.**

The increasing adoption of modern technologies within the sector was raised by Cresser-Brown who mentioned technologies "from automated design to robotic manufacturing" and the government's commitments to the future of construction: "Since the 2017 autumn statement the government has been setting a very clear vision to increase the adoption of modern methods of construction."

Digitally designed building components have been called for by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, through a platform approach to Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DFMA).

Cresser-Brown explained: "A platform approach relies on digitally designed components that can be used to build lots of different building types, these components are then assembled as close as possible to the finalised building product."

These standardised building parts can then be used on a wide range of projects.



Standardisation of design has been seen as a way to achieve substantial cost savings within the blue light sector and other parts of the public sector. Cresser-Brown praised the potential for it but stressed the need to ensure it is

**AT THE RIGHT SCALE AND IT'S NOT ABOUT COOKIE CUTTER BUILDINGS.**

Andrew Pollard of Place Partnership, a public-private partnership that develops within Blue Light suggested that the sector could look at design innovation within other industries: "A lot of the elements of police stations look a bit like offices to me, and a lot of the bits of fire stations look a lot like warehouses to me."



**Simon Toplass**

Chief Executive, PAGABO  
[@Pagabo\\_](#)



**Andrew Pollard**

Andrew Pollard, Managing Director, Place Partnership  
[@Place\\_Part](#)



Simon Toplass, Chief Executive of framework provider PAGABO, expressed mixed feelings towards design standardisation:

**I THINK THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR STANDARDISATION STANDS UP FOR ITSELF, BUT IT'S A BIT FACELESS, FROM A PROCUREMENT PERSPECTIVE IT'S ABOUT THINKING ABOUT BEST VALUE.**

Cresser-Brown summarised the overall aims of the new design approach: "We want to minimise material usage, we want to maximize space, if we intensify the integration of components, we will be able to achieve the productivity to build the number of assets that society needs us to achieve."

Jason Hallas, Northern Regional Framework Manager at Willmott Dixon cited the importance of cross-sector working beyond the Blue Light sector: "We need to do more talking,

we need to do more cross-sector working, I don't think we do enough of it, if we do it, it's a bit ad hoc."

Pollard highlighted the importance of "using One Public Estate as a discussion forum." The move towards viewing public lands as a holistic entity is necessitating interlinkage and cooperation across the public sector.

These comments were echoed by Toplass, who praised the practice within Blue light:

**WE'VE SEEN GREAT WORK ACROSS BLUE LIGHT. BLUE LIGHT CAN LEARN FROM OTHER SECTORS AND OTHER SECTORS CAN LEARN FROM BLUE LIGHT AS WELL.**

Best practice in the blue light sector has been redefined by the way that attitudes within the public sector, procurement and design have evolved and grown. Whilst fundamentally still remaining driven by delivery of front-line services, it has benefited greatly from lessons learnt elsewhere.





# The Role of Police & Crime Commissioner's in Estates

## Panel Members:



**Chair: Phil Laycock**

Director, Built Environment Networking  
@BENetworking



**Katy Bourne**

Police & Crime Commissioner, Office for the Police & Crime Commissioner, Sussex  
@SussexPCC



**Hardyal Dhindsa**

Police & Crime Commissioner, Office for the Police & Crime Commissioner, Derbyshire  
@DerbysPCC

## POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS LEADING ON ESTATES STRATEGY

Police and Crime Commissioner's across the country are increasingly focused on estate strategy.

When the role was first created in 2012 the commissioners were given particularly broad portfolios, being tasked with ensuring the overall performance of the service. Many of the commissioners have devolved more powers to their appointed Chief Constables and focused on leading on the estate's development of their forces.

Hardyal Dhindsa, Police and Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire is one such commissioner, he explained: "I've given over ownership and delivery of operational policing and resources, but the estate is still something I own and control."

Katy Bourne, the Police & Crime Commissioner for Sussex described how the position has changed across the country:



**ULTIMATELY WE SET THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION, WE HAVE CONTROL OF THE BUDGET, WE CAN APPOINT AND DISMISS THE CHIEF CONSTABLE AND MOST OF US KEPT THE ESTATES.**

Dhindsa stressed the importance of fighting the climate emergency with responsible estates development, specifically citing "green vehicles, green buildings and reducing CO2 emissions" as areas of focus for the service.

Bourne echoed Dhindsa's climate focus laying out further carbon cutting measures: "We've also got energy reduction building management systems to key locations, including boiler optimisation, and we've invested in solar panel installations."

Bourne made a bold proposal for collaboration with developers:



# Strategy



**I WANT TO REDESIGN WHAT A PUBLIC FACING POLICE STATION SHOULD LOOK TO THE PUBLIC TO MAKE IT FIT FOR THE 22ND CENTURY.**

For the Sussex commissioner, One Public Estate has been the main way that the service has promoted a co-location agenda, Bourne explained: "In Sussex we're closely involved in our One Public Estate programme, we're sharing a new build in East Haven with East Sussex Fire and Rescue and Lewes District Council."

Derbyshire has been focused on cross blue light cooperation since 2013, and Dhindsa revealed that this had led to "mutual benefits in terms of capital investment."

Derbyshire took a slightly different approach to cross-force collaboration, Dhindsa explained: "We set up a limited liability partnership, which actually meant that the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority were Co-Chairs, which means we could maintain our separate identities."

Technology has enabled vital cost-saving measures within police services, as well as creating estate difficulties of its own. Bourne cited video evidence services and digital

records management, which save on administration time as well as the "digital beat" which requires less facilities, as enabling cost reductions.

Technology has also been a hindrance to cross-force cooperation. Dhindsa remarked on how system differences were providing an obstacle:

**WE WANT TO ENABLE OUR DIGITAL SYSTEMS TO WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY. WE CURRENTLY HAVE TWO ORGANISATIONS SHARING ONE BUILDING BUT WE HAVE TO USE TWO SYSTEMS.**

The Police and Crime Commissioners have found a natural role in overseeing the estates development of their police services. It allows a degree of public oversight in the management of police estates and can ultimately strengthen the service.





# Police Estates – Innovation & Development Plans

## Panel Members:



**Chair: Phil Laycock**

Director, Built Environment Networking  
@BENetworking



**Sallie Banks-Nash**

Coordinator, National Police Estates Group  
@ASPolice



**Vince Fihosy**

Property Services Director, Metropolitan Police  
@metpoliceuk

## POLICE ESTATES INCORPORATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

The Metropolitan Police Service is developing new public engagement into their estates.

These community engagements have been accompanied by a “just over a billion-pound programme” of estates regeneration that was conducted by the service between 2013-2017 according to Vince Fihosy, Property Services Director at the Metropolitan Police.

High-tech investment has been a major improvement area for police estates in the capital, with Fihosy mentioning that they were adopting

**“AN ESTATES STRATEGY THAT FOCUSES ON TECHNOLOGY AND THE INVESTMENT IN TECHNOLOGY.”**



He said: “We focused on productivity, and technology was a real big driver for this, which has become more important to the sector through things like body-worn cameras.”

Fihosy described the adoption of a more community-oriented approach in the development of their estates: “Some of the design principles we have incorporated into our buildings have been that open nature.”

Police estates have struggled with improvements due to delays in getting contractors on site, due to stringent guidelines, according to Sallie Blanks-Nash, Estates Consultant for Avon and Somerset Police: “If you’re going to work on site then going through police vetting can take a prohibitive amount of time. This could be 3-4 months in some cases.”

The service has attempted to reduce delays on works by introducing a process to reduce waits, Blanks-Nash explained: “There is a thing called the national contractors vetting scheme, this is an opportunity for you to put the onus on yourselves.”



**“INCREASINGLY WE ARE BECOMING AWARE OF THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF GOOD DESIGN.”**

Designing police stations to be more accommodating, not only reduces the stress of detainees, potentially reducing dangerous incidents, but also that of staff and those seeking help from the police.

This has long term connotations for the mental health of staff members, where hostile architecture is known to be detrimental. Creating a more humane and connected sector can be led fundamentally through good design as Blanks-Nash summarized:

**“THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT CAN AND DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO US ALL.”**

This allows contractors to not only get accredited to work on police estates, but also work across the blue light sector without having to constantly wait for approval.

The redesign of The Met’s most iconic and sometimes eponymous station, New Scotland Yard, has been focused on engaging more with the community, Fihosy said:

**“PART OF THE DESIGN BRIEF FOR NEW SCOTLAND YARD WAS FOR IT TO BE ACCESSIBLE, YOU CAN WALK UP TO THE BUILDING AND THE ROTATING SIGN IS IN AN AREA WHERE LOTS OF PEOPLE CAN SEE IT.”**

Fihosy described how the Met had attempted to incorporate that into making custody a more tolerable experience, giving the example of the: “We had an initiative to paint some murals in the custody suite, the intention of that was precisely to reduce aggression.

The rationale for this design philosophy was explained by Blanks-Nash:





# Conference Photos





# Conference Partners

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**BE** Built  
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# Save the date

**BE** Blue Light Estates  
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11th November 2020

London  
08:00 – 17:00

## GET INVOLVED:

Interested in having your brand at the forefront of the biggest national discussion focused on tri-light collaboration within the estate sector?

Get involved early and secure your spot as a partner to position your brand as a thought leader and support to hundreds of the nation's top players

For further information on partnership opportunities available contact:  
[keith.griffiths@built-environment-networking.com](mailto:keith.griffiths@built-environment-networking.com)



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