

“We Have to Hold Their Hand”

Differences Among the London Boroughs in Forming Public-Private Sector Relationships To Build New Housing

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Abstract

Urban planning research now recognizes the importance of actor relationships between the public and private sectors. Simultaneously, local governments' targets for new housing are increasingly unrealized. Yet there is insufficient research on the impact of the former on the latter. Using interviews with politicians and planners in London, this paper investigates how relationships between planners and developers affect implementation of new housing targets. The primary finding was that working with "good" developers is essential to forming productive working relationships, and differences between how planners in the Boroughs operate largely stems from their access to these "good" developers. However, market forces lead to spatial inequalities in where these developers choose to operate. Ultimately, differences in the relationships between planners and the developers do influence housing construction, but these differences reflect manifestations of geographic and economic forces beyond the control of the individuals involved.

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Introduction

The reframing of urban planning as a field of social research, highly dependent on local contexts and norms, rather than a science with universally applicable answers and best practices, has been underway for several decades (Allemendinger, 2017). Simultaneously, planning in practice has shifted from giving little regard to public participation and local contexts in the immediate post-war years, to great importance to stakeholder engagement, bottom-up processes, and communicative rationale in the present day (De Roo & Voogd, 2019) (Allemendinger & Twedwr-Jones, 2002). Such a shift gives greater power to a wider range of actors and stakeholders. While development decisions once involved a small team of professional, highly technical planners and decision-makers, contemporary planning is often expected to maximise the number of stakeholders, degree of public engagement, and questions which are asked (Harvey, 1989). The consequence is that more actors are involved with more aspects of more decisions than ever before. Yet analysing urban planning from the perspective of actor relationships, and viewing consequent outcomes as the result of these relationships, is still a nascent field, with many elements severely under-researched (Özogul, 2019).

One of the great challenges faced by the field of urban planning in the 2020s is the need to deliver sufficient housing within existing large urban areas (Raco et. al, 2022). Endless outward expansion is not a solution for most mature cities, for reasons ranging from geographic limitations in California (Ward, 2022), to cultural priorities in the Netherlands (Korthals Altes, 2018) and environmental concerns in China (Kim et. al, 2022). Although some cities succeed in creating affordable housing within livable urban areas, many others set ambitious targets for new housing construction which they frequently fail (Wetzstein, 2017). This is a policy-outcome gap, and how best to minimise policy-outcome gaps once a goal has been determined demands research into urban planning in practice (Abdullahi & Othman, 2020)

This paper explores to what extent differences in the relationships between public sector planners and private sector developers result in greater policy-outcome gaps regarding housing construction. Based on the literature, an answer is sought through the further exploration of three sub-questions:

Do public sector authorities with differing records of new housing delivery also differ in their ability to form functional and high-quality relationships with developers?

Do public sector authorities with differing records of new housing delivery also differ in how they view the role of the private sector and themselves?

Do public sector authorities with differing records of new housing delivery also differ in their willingness and ability to be adaptive and creative?

The subjects of research are the Boroughs of London, which provide a unique opportunity to understand public-private sector actor relationships and the role they play in policy implementation. Despite working under nearly identical rules of governance, and serving a highly interconnected job and housing market, there are 32 Boroughs, each with their own separate institutions, collections of actors, and planning landscapes. These Boroughs all work with one institution, the Greater London Authority, to agree on annual targets for new housing over a multi-year period which is best suited to their communities, but are then left to implement these housing targets separately. They do so under a British planning system which grants them a great deal of independence, and a uniquely high degree of freedom to adjust to situations on a case-by-case basis, relative to other European countries (Rode, 2019) (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014).

Despite sharing one governance structure and metropolitan economy, there are great variations between the boroughs in the gap between policy and outcome of achieving annual new housing targets. In the 2021-2022 planning year, residential completions in all of Greater London were 73% of what was targeted for during that period, but some boroughs accomplished as little as 12% of their targeted completions for the 2021/2022 year, while others achieved 148% (GLA, 2023) . The wide discrepancy between boroughs does not only reflect a circumstantial year: Since 2004, overall achievement of London Plan policy goals by individual boroughs has ranged from as low as 61% to as high as 144%, with many boroughs perennially failing their targets by many percentage points, while other boroughs exceed their targets almost every year (GLA, 2023) . Historically, attributing these divides to the political preferences of Boroughs would not be unfair, as Boroughs dominated by the Conservative Party have more strongly resisted infill growth (Kensington and Chelsea, 2022). But today, party-control no longer neatly explains the differences between boroughs, with those whose councils are dominated by the Labour party among those with the highest *and* lowest residential completions relative to target amounts.

To learn if this variation in the success of policy implementation is explained by differences in how the public and private sector work together, two boroughs with similar characteristics, but wildly different outcomes in delivering on their housing target, were identified and researched . Interviews were conducted with those who work in planning and elected councillors from both boroughs to discover if there were differences between one another among 5 elements of public-private sector relationships, as identified in the literature.

The ultimate result was that boroughs with differing policy outcomes also saw differences in the relationships between public sector planners and private sector developers, but not in all aspects identified in the literature. These differences do impact the degree to which new housing is built and policy targets achieved. Importantly however, these differences are not owed to choices by those involved in planning, but three external forces beyond their direct control:

The public sector's ability to form a trustful and communicative working relationship with the private sector is affected by the spatial inequality of where "good" developers choose to operate. These are developers which, among other qualities, are larger, more experienced, more professional, and more willing to adapt to councillors' wishes. The spatial inequality of these "good" developers is largely explained by inequality in land values between the two boroughs.

The public sector's view of the role of the private sector and themselves is affected by the discrepancies in resources available to the planning teams in each borough. The most important element of this is whether a borough is able to proactively approach developers, form comprehensive strategy, and promote opportunities. Available resources vary so greatly because budgets between boroughs are unequal. This is a consequence of localities which are expected to fund themselves, but contain very different sources of revenue with which to do so.

Finally, the public sector's willingness and ability to be adaptive and creative is affected by the perceptions of the planning process, and development overall, held by councillors and the public. Although all interviewees work in communities which favour new housing as an abstraction at the political level, the boroughs vary greatly in how the public views the nature of their community and new development, and how councillors perceive developers and the planning process. Locally-elected councillors are the ultimate decision-makers on approval for new housing, and thus their opinions and perceptions of the work done by professional planners is highly relevant. Explanations for these differences emerge from the geography and history of the communities, as well as contrasting experience with development in the past.

In this paper, a literature review will first explain the fragmentation of modern-day governance regimes, the importance of actor relationships, and the contemporary methods of implementing housing policy. To explain why elected councillors were interviewed in a paper about the actions of urban planners, the influence of politics on planning will also be presented. Then, a conceptual model containing the elements of public-private sector relationships which were researched will be presented and operationalized. Afterward, important context for how planning in the United Kingdom, and London in particular, will be given. The two Boroughs themselves will then be introduced. Finally, the results of the interviews will be demonstrated, followed by an analysis section highlighting to what degree differences in the elements of private-public relationships were also witnessed in boroughs with different policy outcomes. The conclusion will highlight the importance of public-private sector relationships on building new housing, but also the degree to which such differences are predetermined by forces beyond the control of those involved in planning.

Literature Review

1. Transition From Top-down Planning to Fragmented Governance

It was once believed that good spatial planning practice in one place was good planning practice in all places, and that to study urban planning was to study universal rules which played themselves out with predeterminism (Allmendinger, 2017). The rejection of this idea gained traction in the 1970s, and current literature not only approaches planning from a perspective of local context and communicative rationality, but also takes institutional perspectives (Allmendinger & Twedwr-Jones, 2002) (Özogul, 2019). Contrary to the modernist belief in planning as a rational and universal field, in reality, all spatial planning takes place within a unique context of governance, an ecosystem of norms and relationships sometimes described as the governance landscape (Özogul, 2021). Because governance is made up of both formal and informal actions, the governance landscape is not only permeable to higher laws, but also to contextual external influence, which is thus highly relevant to consider in research (Kantor & Savitch, 2005).

Governance is broader than government: It does not merely entail making decisions or using power, but shaping those decisions in a way which reflects societal expectations, often through more subtle or informal mechanisms than that of the traditional state (Fasensfest, 2010).

Governance is often discussed in the context of managing a limited common resource, so that one actor's behaviour does not ruin the ability of others to use it, also known as the Tragedy of the Commons (Armitage, 2008). While government was once seen as the only way to prevent a Tragedy of the Commons, there has been increasing acceptance since the 1990s of a shift away from viewing solutions to common-resources challenges as strictly the domain of government, with its connotation of prohibiting bad behaviour through force, to governance, whereby people collaborate to create entrepreneurial systems which reward good behaviour through social and tangible rewards (Armitage, 2008) (Ostrom, 1990). Although once strictly applied to natural resources, the concept of urban governance has been adopted by global institutions to describe more broad concepts, such as efforts to "ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation" in cities (UN Habitat, 2023).

In the present day, governance is increasingly fragmented, particularly regarding urban development. This largely results from neoliberal policies which greatly increase the number of actors involved in governing urban areas, and which encourage various authorities to pursue different and disconnected approaches to policy goals (Ozogul, 2019). Rather than viewing all governance as universal, contemporary research acknowledges and explores landscapes within which governance takes place. This may refer to regulatory landscapes (Brenner & Theodore, 2005), institutional landscapes (Fischer, 2006), and landscapes of urban development (Özogul,

2019). Akin to how an environmental landscape contains its own conditions, limitations, and rules within which the natural ecosystem exists, these human landscapes determine the conditions, limitations, and rules in which visions for an idea are transferred into practice (Özogul, 2019) (Özogul, 2021). Thus, when researching how local institutions apply regulations to shape urban development within the context of fragmented governance, each institution should be treated as its own planning landscape. This does not entail that every or most aspects vary between the landscapes, but that differences between institutions should not be ruled out without further research.

Categorizations of planning landscapes exist, and provide a framework with which to discuss the plan-making process. These distinctions often contrast a process which seeks to maximise certain and control with one which tolerates some degree of uncertainty. One such distinction, regarding how planners manage to integrate plans with one another to avoid conflict, is between Hierarchy and Network Structure. Whereby Hierarchy involves one person who has formalised authority to oversee subordinates and can be held responsible for an overall policy, Network Structures are based on informal coordination, trust, and shared responsibility (Rode, 2019). Hierarchy and Network Structure may be created to pursue vertical integration, whereby policies within a field must conform to those at a higher level, as well as horizontal integration, whereby policies in various fields at the same level of governance compliment one another (Rode, 2019). Importantly, Hierarchy and Network Structure may not only reflect codified rules of procedure, but internal uncoded culture as well (Rode, 2019).

Another important categorization of planning landscapes in which variation often emerges is in how the public sector perceives its role relative to the private sector. Growing dismay with traditional governance approaches to solving problems led municipalities around the world to transition from viewing government primarily as a provisioner of services to the perspective that its primary role should be to enable entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989). Further distinctions were later made in how the public sector enables that entrepreneurialism, with one example being the distinction between Top-Down Governance and New Public Management. Top-Down Governance is closer to the traditional planning paradigm, whereby government organises collective action and believes itself essential to managing public-private partnerships (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014). Standing in contrast is New Public Management, which believes the public sector exists to formulate goals, but actual implementation should be undertaken by the private and non-profit sector through contractual obligations (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014). Supporters of New Public Management's emergence in the 1990s hoped that entrepreneurial government would be a more effective government, allowing it to be more flexible (Madanipour, 2010).

The paradigms of Hierarchical organisation in comparison to Network Structure, and Top-Down Governance perspectives in comparison to New Public Management, are not mutually exclusive. Rather, planning in practice frequently blends elements of Hierarchy with

elements of Network Structure, whereby the public sector exhibits elements of both characterizations in their work with the private sector. Furthermore, Top-Down Governance and New Public Management may be combined into an altogether new perspective: Integrative Management Perspective (Rode, 2019) (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014). Within Integrative Management Perspective, planners do not view one approach as superior, but instead approaches each situation critically and with an open frame of mind (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014). In both examples, the proposed fusion perspective does not seek to typecast planning and governance into “either/or” scenarios, but rather provide a framework with which to understand public sector decision-making, often by identifying to what degree actors demonstrate either type of behaviour.

2. The Importance of Actor Relationships

The current direction of research into spatial planning is towards viewing the field as the product of human interaction, particularly by focusing on the relationships between planners and market actors. It is important for contemporary research to study these actor relationships.

At all levels of government, decisions are increasingly individualised, particularly within property-led urban regeneration, due to the increasing use of contracts between public and private sector actors as a means to deliver policy goals (Taşan-Kok et. al, 2021) (Peck, 2013). These public and private-sector actors pursue their interests within the contexts of a planning landscapes, but those landscapes change through experience in practice, challenges over time, and the behaviour of those involved (Healey and Barrett, 1990). Fragmentation exasperates the differences in experience and challenges faced by public sector actors, and thus increasingly divergent planning perspectives are observed (Özogul, 2019).

The real power planners hold is often not in the decision they make within a process, but in how they are able to shape that process. Yet researchers frequently ignore the degree of informality which occurred in forming collaborative processes, choosing instead to analyse the formalised final product (Mintzberg, 1994). Until recently, there has been a large gap in research on how planners form relationships with the private sector, which several papers have since sought to address (Özogul, 2019) (Özogul, 2021) (Adams et. al, 2017). Seeing planning as made up of human beings who learn, get along (or do not), and demonstrate a human range of stubbornness and flexibility, is important to gain insight into planning systems which are increasingly built on human behaviour and working relationships. This is especially relevant considering the aforementioned increased fragmentation of contemporary planning, whereby institutions and the actors who participate in them are increasingly diverse and demonstrating behaviour different from one another (Tasan-Kok et al., 2020) (Özogul, 2019). The result is that planning cultures are increasingly unique and different from one another, dependent on the actions and behaviours of those who participate in them.

One proposed method of analysis which responds to increased fragmentation is “Behavioural Flexibility”, in which the quality of relationships between public sector planners and private sector market actors is a paradigm through which project outcomes can be understood. (Gurung & Özogul, 2022). Flexibility is important for long-term projects to reach delivery in the face of uncertain events, by focusing on maintaining a functional and fair process, rather than making inflexible commitments to delivery of a specific goal (De Roo & Rauws, 2012). However, flexibility is not a final goal in itself, but a means to a productive end. This is because limitless flexibility frequently leads to developers who fail to deliver the promised investments and social benefits to communities when economic conditions change (Muñoz Gielen & Tasan-Kok, 2010). Within the paradigm of behavioural flexibility, the ultimate goal is productive and functional relationships, whose formation requires high levels of trust, communication, and goal congruence between the stakeholders involved (Gurung & Özogul, 2022). Such features are frequently underestimated by conventional perspectives within the planning field, but increasingly analysed in contemporary academic literature (Armitage, 2008).

In decentralised planning cultures, private interests are most often viewed as the mechanism of implementation, while local planners have greater flexibility to manage development and work with developers (Nadin et al, 2008). Thus, Behavioural Flexibility is a particularly fit framework for analysing decentralised planning cultures because it considers the importance of individual decision-making. The importance of analysing relationships with private sector actors will only grow in importance, as they take the place of public sector government in designing, implementing and maintaining projects over the long term (Özogul, 2019) (Raco, 2022). Furthermore, as countries continue within their current trend of adopting more entrepreneurial governance systems, where public sector responsibilities are outsourced to a growing number of actors, planning will increasingly take place under conditions where public sector approaches to private collaboration are almost as important as legislation (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014).

Experience with the private sector, at the level of a group or at the level of an individual planner, is also important to understand the if and how relationships are formed with market actors. Planners working on areas or in fields where success depends on collaboration with private sector actors are able to learn to form stronger and more collaborative relationships. By comparison, those who work in areas or in fields where the public sector remains the primary decision-maker, akin to traditional top-down government, may lack the experience in forming such relationships, and may struggle to collaborate rather than dictate (Özogul, 2021). The transformation and densification of existing urban real estate will become increasingly more prevalent than completely novel development, as global cities like London exhaust the available land left on which to build, and must turn to densification to achieve their goals for new housing (The London Plan, 2021) (Wetzstein, 2017). At the same time, private sector actors make up an increasingly large share of new housing construction and hold control over increasingly large

and complex redevelopment schemes (Tasan-Kok et. al, 2020). Thus, when achieving greater densification, public-sector planners who are experienced in working with the private sector on urban redevelopment will be better prepared than those which have not (Özogul, 2021). Furthermore, achieving government policy, particularly, new housing targets increasingly depends on the private sector for implementation, blurring the lines between government policy and commercial activity, and making these developers important in determining whether policy is successfully implemented (Raco et. al, 2022)

However, in a newly fragmented and flexible world of planning, where the demands for higher levels of new housing construction within existing areas are approaching new heights (Wetizstein, 2017), experiences with private market actors will only lead to better relationships when those experiences are turned into learning. Such learning can take place at various levels of intensity: Planners may demonstrate single-loop learning by learning alternative tactics to address problems on a project-by-project basis. Planners may demonstrate double loop learning by changing their individual basis. At the most transformative level, planners may demonstrate triple loop learning by transforming their institutions (Özogul, 2021).

A further planning theory which describes the ability of public sector actors to form relationships with the private sector is Contingency Planning. Contingency Planning stands in contrast to scenario planning, which is premised on responding to what is known will be uncertain, while Contingency Planning operates with the assumption that we do not know what is unknown yet (Allmendinger, 2017). Thus, rather than being committed to a series of inflexible goals from the start, goals and targets should shift over time, requiring the public sector to accept that what may have been expected at the start of a process is not what may be delivered at the conclusion. While scenario plans may prepare multiple scenarios for a variety of potential options, Contingency Planning demands mechanisms for the involved actors to change course immediately, to address a potential crisis which had not even been considered at the start of the planning process (De Roo & Voogd, 2019). As an example, scenario planning may provide several options for preceding with a construction plan, depending on the inflation rate, while Contingency Planning allows the entire project to be reconsidered in the moment and changed in an uncertainty few to nobody could have expected, like a global pandemic. Contingency Planning grew in popularity at the same time as communicative rationality, but as a response to growing economic and social uncertainty in the 1970s, which challenged public faith in the stability and accuracy of long-term planning (Madanipour, 2010). Privatisation processes in the 1980s and 1990s further weakened faith in scenario planning, due to the increasingly large number of private sector stakeholders relied upon to implement any given policy, who acted independently of government hierarchy (Madanipour, 2010).

While this paper focuses on the behaviour of public sector actors, it is important not to ignore the diversity that exists among private sector actor behaviour as well. Although these actors are

more globalised and financialized than ever, they are not monolithic. Meta-analyses find that developers may be differentiated by the spatial scale on which they operate, their size and social composition, their investment object, and the behaviour of their investment and social character (Özogul & Tasan-Kok, 2020). However, in existing literature, there is still insufficient discussion on categorizations of the private sector, and how their behaviour relates to achieving housing targets (Raco, 2022).

3. Contemporary Methods of Implementing Housing Policy

Cities around the world face a shortage of housing, particularly affordable housing, which frequently leads to poor living conditions, the reduction or disappearance of disposable income, urban dislocation, and homelessness (Gallant, 2019) (Wetzstein, 2017). Besides the social imperative of averting widespread hardship and stress, it is also in the economic interest of urban areas to keep major cities affordable for the essential workers who make them economically viable and livable for everybody. Nevertheless, despite cities' intentions to make housing affordable, on a global scale there is a growing gap between the new and affordable housing which cities strive for, and are delivered to market (Raco et. al, 2022) (Wetzstein, 2017). Cities around the world are failing to implement policy to a level desired by their constituents, leading to a policy-outcome gap which represents failed policy implementation.

Research into policy achievement should not be perceived as a pursuit of “better” planning, because normative assessment of planning depends on whose values and desires are prioritised, which can never be objectively agreed upon (Allemendinger, 2017). Rather, policy implementation studies deviations from what is already determined to be desirable, and what actually results. Policy implementation more often has features and benchmarks which may be quantified, providing a metric which practice can be compared to. Regarding housing, data on when and where new housing was constructed can provide insight into whether a policy was successfully implemented, especially when such data has specifics regarding housing type, affordability, and other key nuances (Raco et. al, 2022) (Sincl, 2017). Empirical questions are essential to research on housing and affordability, as long as they occur in tandem with contextualization into the larger theory, and awareness of the greater political context (Wetzstein, 2017).

A common theme in the literature is that successful policy implementation requires a high degree of flexibility, communication, and developed interpersonal relationships. Flexibility, in the form of contingency theory, entails a willingness to redefine practices and goals in real time, in order to achieve an outcome which is preferred to the alternative of complete failure (Muñoz Gielen & Tasan-Kok, 2010). Flexibility may be reflected in public and private sector behaviour, where it is essential to achieve collaborative relationships where the financial objectives of developers and social goals of public planners can both be achieved (Gurung & Ozogul , 2022).

Interpersonal communication between planners and the actors is similarly vital to materialise projects (Friedmann, 2017). Likewise, a collaborative nature can be highlighted as essential to success, if planners remain flexible in what they expect from the private sector (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014). The preconditions for creating Networks, include multi-agency cooperation which bridge organisational cultures, are actors who value cooperation (Rode, 2019).

Successful development occurring on land owned by private market actors, especially a multitude of actors, requires public sector planners to build long term relationships with private sector actors (Özogul, 2021). The private sector itself also emphasises the importance of relationship building between planners and socially conscious developers, finding it essential to minimise their risks and conflicts (Squires & Moate, 2012). Without relationships, the planning bureaucracy is seen by developers, even those who want to deliver social benefit, as an obstacle rather than a tool (Squires & Moate, 2012). Potential for conflict is even greater when working with developers with less social consciousness. While some literature is favourable to flexible planning (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014), there is also fear that it prevents development planning beyond the single project, and which is more accommodating to private sector interests (Özogul, 2019).

In dealing with the private sector, planners will likely find two types of development the most difficult: Urban Regeneration and Socially Responsible Property Investment (SRPI). Urban Regeneration seeks to create sustainability, affordability, leisure, and safety in urban spaces where little presently exists (Squires & Moate, 2012). SRPI, which may include but is not limited to urban regeneration, is any project which maximises social and environmental benefit while satisfying investors who may be socially conscious but are not saints (Squires & Moate, 2012). These types of planning better suit the socio-economic goals of planners and their communities, but they are not the most enticing for investors, as urban regeneration is riskier, while SRPI is often more complex without greater profit to show for it (Squires & Moate, 2012). Nevertheless, urban regeneration is essential to meeting new housing targets, while SRPI delivers results most often favoured by the community (Tasan-Kok et. al, 2020) (Squires & Moate, 2012) .

4. Politics Influences Planning

Planning is not a field which exists in isolation, and like all government actions is permeated by external political influence, which must be considered and, depending on the context, included in research (Auerbach 2012). This is frequently due to intentional efforts to make planning a process which involves members of the community, which is perceived as more just and necessary in many contemporary planning environments (Pløger, 2021). This emerged as a reaction to a growing dissonance between “the planner and the planned, ” which reached an-all time high in the 1960s, well-exemplified through urban renewal projects which disregarded

public interest, and often exasperated the problems they were claiming to help (Allmendinger, 2017 p.150). Growing realisation that these urban renewal schemes, led by professional planners with little external input, put pressure on planning processes to be more democratic. Ironically, growing democratisation of planning ended the image of the all-powerful master planner, and thus eroded societal interest in the profession, while high levels of distrust remained (Friedman, 2017) (Allmendinger, 2017).

Planning in the 21st century is largely perceived as the implementation of political desires, and thus the relationship between, and influence of, the political and planning spheres is highly important to understand policy outcomes (Auerbach, 2012). It is equally important to understand the ways in which those who are politically active perceive the planning process differently. One is that the public would often benefit from the greater social benefits of new housing, but individuals frequently do not want to see new housing built where they live, which frequently manifests itself through objections to locally elected politicians (McNee & Pojani, 2022). This is exacerbated where political accountability takes place in small jurisdictions, putting greater pressure on elected politicians to avoid conflict from constituents, without facing the negative reaction of a larger society (Scally & Tighe, 2015). These politicians, not the planners, are frequently the last step of approval to new housing, and thus their perspectives and decisions are highly relevant (Barlow, 1995). However, politicians are not only different from planners in what they are incentivized to deliver, but also in how they perceive elements of the planning process; Both groups may support the same action, but approach it differently. Whenever high-level decisions are made by people without extensive background in a given field, it becomes increasingly important to deliver visuals which accurately and convincingly portray the problem or possibility discussed, in ways more direct than those within the field are used to (Sheppard, 2005). Furthermore, while closer to their constituents, politicians are infrequently informed about new and innovative policy developments, and bear greater risks if these actions fail, and thus not as willing to take risks or try new courses of action (Hagen & Higdum, 2020). Ultimately, politicians face different incentives from the planning community, and even when they align, perceive plans and their consequences differently, which must be considered in research on collaborative, participatory planning systems.

Conceptual Model

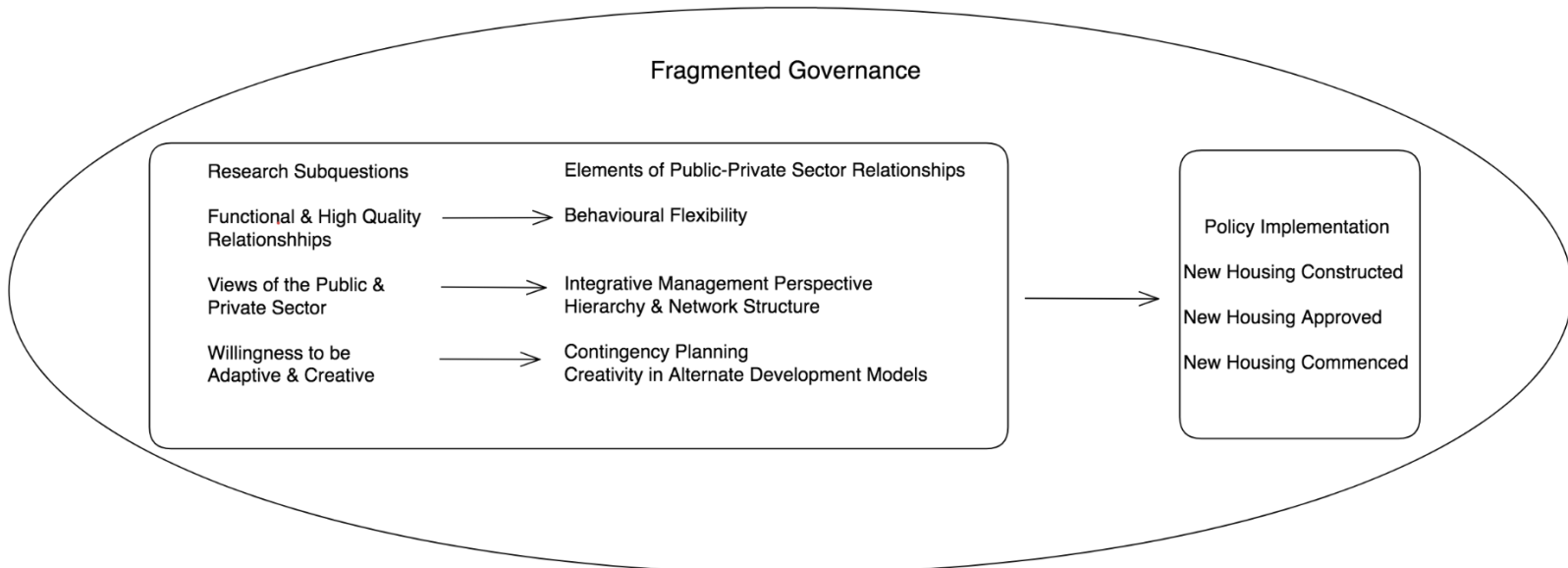


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

The underlying premise of the conceptual model is that planning takes place in a system of fragmented governance, where priorities, practices, and actor relationships may differ greatly from one another, even if the actors share the same governance structure. (Özogul, 2019). Thus, the nature of these relationships cannot be assumed to be the same between any two authorities, and should be researched. Within Fragmented Governance, the nature of actor relationships are greatly important, because they determine the degree to which the public and private sectors may work together to achieve developments which are mutually beneficial (Guring & Özogul, 2022) (Özogul, 2021).

This paper follows a differential comparative analysis model, whereby research begins with observed difference, and concludes by identifying one or more elements which vary between the subjects, while explaining differences between them (Pickvance, 2001). What is already known before research, and explained in the contextual section, is that the London Boroughs vary in their degree of policy implementation. Because the literature presents actor relationships as highly important for achieving policy, the expectation underlying the model is that a difference in actor relationships leads to and helps to explain differences in policy implementations. The model enables further research to verify if this is the case by asking the research question:

To what extent do differences in the relationships between public sector planners and

private sector developers result in greater policy-outcome gaps regarding housing construction?

In order to categorise these relationships, 5 elements of public-private sector relationships have been selected from the literature, with one or multiple elements corresponding to each of the research subquestions. The left side of the model thus refers to potential ways in which differences in the borough may be identified as *causes*. The right side of the model refers to the *effects*, which are ways to measure successful policy implementation, specifically achievement of housing target

Construction, approval, and commencement were chosen as metrics of successful policy implementation, because they each identify an important element of the planning process. Construction is the most consequential: Abetting the global housing crisis requires homes to be delivered to market, and not merely planned for. Tracking delivery of units over the long-term is especially important, as it demonstrates structural elements of a planning landscape within an authority, rather than merely reflecting a lucky or unlucky year for that authority. Approval and commencement are also useful metrics, as they reveal to what degree a policy outcome gap results from Boroughs' failure to approve housing which has private-sector interest, or whether the private sector is failing to deliver what the Boroughs expect.

Operationalization

The process of turning a request for housing into approval does not take place in an academic vacuum; Instead, public sector participants work in the language of individual projects. Therefore, questions to interviewees, particularly councillors, must focus on experienced aspects of the planning process. Understanding how interviewees fall within the established academic perspectives on actor relationships required questions which provoked interviewees to describe elements of their work, or if they were councillors, than in their perception of how planners displayed these elements. 5 aspects formed the basis of interview questions, based on the existing literature, which were then transformed into elements of lived experience which could be discussed in interviews.

Functional and High Quality Relationships:

Behavioural Flexibility (Gurung & Özogul, 2022)

Behavioural Flexibility pertains to actors' ability to establish trust, communication, and congruency in goals. Without either element, it will be difficult or impossible for the private and public sector to agree on an approved project. More specifically, the consequence of a lack of behavioural flexibility will result in developers unable to propose a project which the council deems acceptable, despite the best efforts of the planners to guide them to a solution. Thus, questions seeking to understand whether the boroughs demonstrate behavioural flexibility touch

upon the working relationship between planners, the Council, and developers who they work with to build new housing. These were the most open-ended type of questions, and largely led to discovery of further, unanticipated important explanations for the differences in policy implementation in between boroughs.

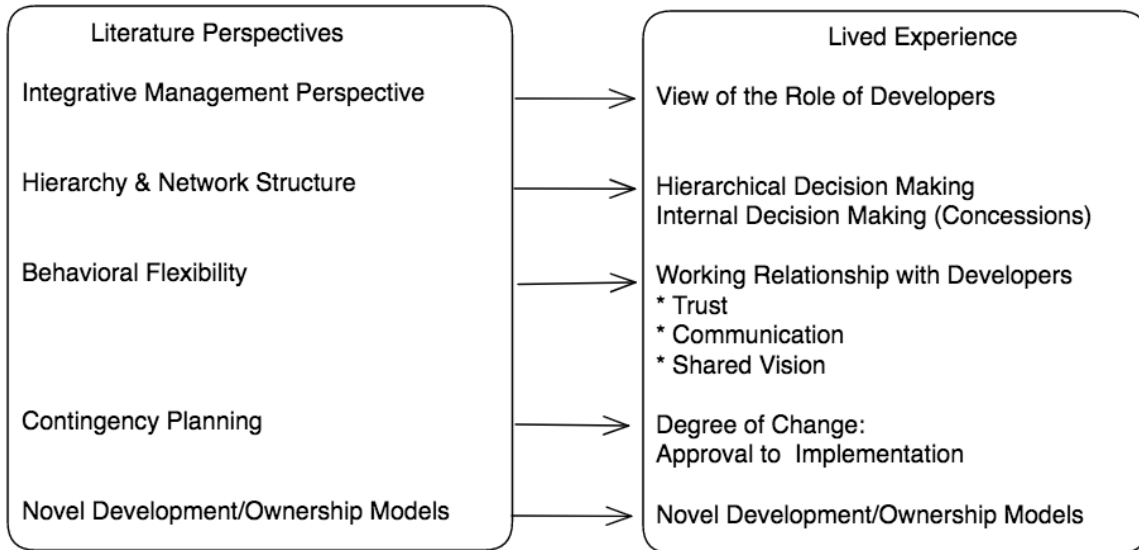


Figure 2: Operationalization

Views of the Public and Private Sector:

Integrative Management Perspective (Heurkens et. al, 2014)

Integrative Management Perspective pertains to how proactive a role should be taken by government in leading policy, and whether government exists to enable the private sector to serve the public interest, or should do so itself. Within the context of this paper, this refers to the degree to which plans enable the private sector in accomplishing its goals. Interviewees were asked questions which pushed them to identify to what degree they demonstrated behaviour characteristic of Governance and New Public Management perspectives. In practice, the focus of these questions pushed them to identify if plans are written to enable private sector visions deemed acceptable by the council. The alternative perspective would be that Borough plans reflect established visions of the council, and it is expected that developers will adjust their plans to these visions.

Hierarchy & Network Structure (Rode, 2019)

Hierarchy and Network Structure pertains to the process by which an ultimate decision is made, and who is able to dictate when it is time to take action and what that action is. Questions seeking to understand where interviewees fall between Hierarchy and Network Structure push them to identify how decisions are made within their planning team or on the Council, and

whether this process is power-diffuse or power-consolidated.

Willingness to be Adaptive and Creative:

Contingency Planning (Madanipour, 2010)

Contingency Planning pertains to the degree that plans are made with the expectation that circumstances will change, and are not dependent on conditions remaining constant to proceed. These questions were especially pertinent because of the period interviewees were asked to reflect on, which included the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic and a subsequent spike in construction and labour costs. These questions focused on the degree to which changes in agreed-upon conditions occurred, and whether they were in the boroughs’ interest, giving interviewees the chance to share how they dealt with new circumstances which could be make-or-break moments for the deliverability of a project.

Creativity in Alternate Development Models (Squires & Moate, 2012), (Wetzstein, 2017)

The literature suggests that municipal planning in the UK shifts as much responsibility and implementation as possible to the private sector (Heurkens et. al, 2014). Thus, it was not expected to discover any radically novel practices in land and home ownership, despite the urgent need for such interventions (Wetzstein, 2017). However, questions were asked to gauge how planners thought about such action, and if their office tried to innovate within the frameworks they did operate. Furthermore, questions about changes over time were directed to push planners and councillors to talk about how the field of planning had changed over time, namely if there had been a growth in Socially Responsible Private Investment.

Operationalization Matrix

Element of Theoretical Framework Explored	Lived Experience	Indicator	Measurement
Behavioural Flexibility (Gurung & Özogul, 2022)	Working Relationship with Developers	Do planners feel they can trust developers?	How do you form relationships with developers which are trustworthy, rather than adversarial?
	Trust	Do planners feel they have open communication with developers?	Does communication ever break down with developers? If so, under what circumstances?
	Communication	Do planners feel that they have a shared vision with developers?	What are features which make a project particularly easy or difficult to implement?

<p>Integrative Management Perspective (Heurkens et. al, 2014)</p>	<p>Planners' View of the Role of Developers</p>	<p>Who initiates a project? Borough or Developers</p> <p>What initiates a plan? Borough needs or developer desires</p>	<p>On recent developments: Did the borough develop an idea and seek a developer, or did a developer approach the borough?</p> <p>Do you believe Redbridge's 4-year housing strategy adapts to developer desires, or that developers adapt to Redbridge's plans?</p>
<p>Hierarchy & Network Structure (Rode, 2019)</p>	<p>Hierarchical Decision Making</p> <p>Internal Decision Making (Concessions)</p>	<p>Do planners feel like they work with internal hierarchy?</p> <p>How are concessions agreed to?</p>	<p>Do you think there is a clear hierarchy in your office? How does this affect how disagreements are resolved?</p> <p>Who determines when a project is more in the community's interests than against it?</p>
<p>Contingency Planning (Madanipour, 2010)</p>	<p>Degree of Change: Approval to Implementation</p>	<p>Does the planning team tolerate an evolution of project features?</p> <p>Do the goals of borough planning evolve over time?</p>	<p>How often do the requirements of a project change over the course of planning/development? (i.e height, unit number, rental cost?)</p> <p>Do you feel these changes are more often advantageous to you or the developer ?</p> <p>Do changes in projects make it easier to fulfil evolving policy goals?</p>
<p>Novel Models of Development & Ownership (Squires & Moate, 2012) (Wetzstein, 2017)</p>	<p>Novel Development/ Ownership Models</p>	<p>Does the Borough discuss or take action to take a more active role as developer?</p> <p>Does the Borough discuss or take action for new ownership models?</p>	<p>Is taking a more active role ever discussed? Buying property and redeveloping?</p> <p>Do projects within the borough vary in ownership models, or is there a dichotomy between market-rate private and council-owned social?</p> <p>Do new projects look different than those of 10-20 years ago? Do relationships with developers look different?</p>

Contextual Knowledge: Planning in a London Borough

1. Nature of Planning in the United Kingdom

Governance in a metropolitan area is permeated by influences at the national level, and while the planning landscape of London is unique, it also takes place within the greater governance regime of British Planning. The United Kingdom is rare in Europe in that the planning system is discretionary, meaning planning decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis. This contrasts to mainland countries such as Germany, where legally binding land use plans are drawn up, and novel planning decisions frequently only involve ensuring that a new proposal meets the requirements of the law (Rode, 2019). Administrative borders in the UK frequently reflect historical and cultural origins, rather than reflecting the scale at which governance is necessary, further complicating policy implementation governmental layers do not reflect the areas to which governance is necessary (Rode, 2019).

Policy changes in the 1980s shifted the role of local planning authorities from leaders of urban regeneration to mere regulators, with developers replacing the public sector as initiators of new projects (Adams et. al, 2017). In this system, development becomes very cost-centred, leading to regeneration undertaken for financial gain above public benefits, often resulting in greater pollution, exclusion, and wasted opportunity of land (Squires & Moate, 2012) (Adams et. al, 2017). Municipalities in the UK often prefer for public space to be managed by private owners with legal obligations for their maintenance, rather than administer such spaces themselves (Heurkens et. al, 2014). Consequently, between 1992 and 2012, 4X as much money was spent on urban regeneration by the private sector than by the public sector (Squires & Moate, 2012). This reliance on a variance of stakeholders, combined with a desire for flexibility, is linked to a British partnership culture which seeks informal collaboration (Heurkens et. al,2014).

During the interview process, it was learned that developers in the UK frequently make use of the right to a locality in exchange for the time and consultation of the planners, especially for larger projects. At a later stage, the same could be done for the time and consultation of the locally elected council. This was perceived by all interviewees with whom it was discussed as a way to better prepare developers to propose a project that the Council would ultimately deem acceptable, and demonstrate commitment to the project. Unwillingness to participate in such consultations was seen as very detrimental to the relationship between the parties.

2. Nature of Planning in London

London's perpetual governance challenge is the perception that it is too big for one centralised government, and yet the communities which compose it have always relied in some way on city-wide, or national, assistance (Lightfoot, 2006). London's planning system is highly

politicised and identity-oriented, existing to reflect local identity as much as to achieve efficient governance.

London has a brief and weak history of centralised governance before the 21st Century. Until the mid-18th century, the only institution which resembled a municipal government was The City of London Corporation, which retains jurisdiction over a small area of Central London to this day (City of London, 2011). Government institutions such as a County Council, representing areas of London which the City was not willing to provide services to, emerged in the 1850s and 1880s to provide public infrastructure and social services such as social housing. Distrust for centralised metropolitan power led to the formalisation in 1899 of London Boroughs; Local jurisdictions, rooted in historical church parishes and community identity, which provided a small degree of social services. (Lightfoot, 2006).

In the post-war years, increasing divergence emerged between the conservative middle and upper-class suburbs, who opposed incorporation into a greater municipality and resisted construction of social housing, and the Boroughs of inner London, which was urban, left-wing, and built large amounts of social housing. The massive growth of London in created demand for planning strategy at a metropolitan level. which was nevertheless prevented from fruition by conservative and independent-minded suburbs (Lightfoot, 2006) (Rode, 2019). This ended in 1965, when many suburbs agreed to form a Greater London Council in the hopes of establishing Conservative control. The Greater London Council redrew and expanded the Boroughs to include the 32 which exist today, with roughly the same boundaries. (Lightfoot, 2006). However, the Greater London Council was abolished in the 1980s, largely over Conservative anger at the acquisition of suburban land for municipal housing, leaving the 32 Boroughs with spatial planning and housing as their own competence (Lightfoot, 2006). Left-wing voters and the Labour Party always favoured return of citywide-government, which was brought back in 1999 as the Greater London Authority (GLA), and is the citywide governance structure currently in place. Under this system, the boroughs retain their competences for spatial planning and housing, but in a way which must conform to the policies outlined by the directly elected mayor and assembly (GLA, 2023). The boroughs range in size from 150,000 to 400,000 people, but have far greater variation in geographic size.

Despite the fact that boroughs hold much of the planning power normally held by municipalities, every borough drafts its own local plans, but they must conform to what is outlined in the London Plan, and be approved by the Mayor's office within 6 weeks of submission (Mayor's Office Of London, 2023). Even plans made by the borough for specific geographic areas, called Neighbourhood plans, must conform with the London Plan. As a result, the boroughs consult the mayor throughout the plan-making process, not wanting to put time and effort into a plan only for it to be only rejected (Mayor's Office Of London, 2023). The London Plan officially only refers to land use, but land use is frequently used as the vehicle through which London achieves

<p>LP1Ba: King George and Goodmayes Hospital</p> <p>The Council expects a comprehensive housing led mixed use development at King George and Goodmayes Hospitals in accordance with the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i Land in and around King George and Goodmayes Hospitals will be developed to provide around 500 high quality new homes (including affordable and family housing); ii Optimising densities compatible with local context, sustainable design principles and public transport capacity, in line with the Density Matrix of the London Plan; iii The conversion and reuse of non-designated historic assets will enable provision of new homes. This will include conversion of the former mental health asylum buildings unless it can be demonstrated that this is neither feasible or practical; iv On site provision for a new secondary school; v Delivery of a new health hub; vi A permeable design – a walkable neighbourhood with routes and spaces defined by buildings and landscape; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vii Enhanced open space provision, including the protection and enhancement of land designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation; viii Improved east-west pedestrian and cycle routes to link the new neighbourhoods together; ix Development to be of the highest quality design, respecting the nature and character of the area; x At King George and Goodmayes Hospitals development should maximise the opportunity to create a centerpiece for the new neighbourhood with opportunities to enhance the setting of the former mental health asylum; xi The provision for decentralised energy networks, subject to technical feasibility and viability. Any provision that is secured on this site must comply with policy LP29 in order to limit impacts on residential amenity; xii Development of this site should also comply with all other relevant policy requirements of this plan; and xiii The phased development of land in separate ownership should be considered in the context of a Planning Brief/Masterplan for the site as a whole.
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Figure 3: Example of a Local Plan. An example from the Redbridge Local Plan (2015-2030), entailing the Council's Plan to redevelop land around a local hospital. Local plans may be very specific or very general in their goals. In this example, developers hoping to build in the area of the hospital will need to demonstrate that they meet most to all these criteria, some of which are specific and objective (i: provision of 500 homes), while others are more vague and subjective (vi: A permeable pedestrian design). The job of the Borough Planning and Regeneration Teams is to work with the developer on a project proposal which meets these criteria to the highest degree, while still being financially viable. Ideally, but not necessarily, that proposal is then approved by the Council.

policy goals at the metropolitan level. For example: The mayor can affect public health by limiting new fast food restaurants near schools, even if further approval is dependent on the Boroughs (Brown, 2017).

The current London Plan was implemented in 2021 by Mayor Sadiq Khan as a replacement of the 2016 London Plan of his predecessor. It contains visions into 2041, with plans ranging from the abstract and interpretative to concrete (The London Plan, 2021). Perhaps most important of the concrete goals is the 10-year housing targets, which outlines the exact number of new homes to be constructed, in each borough. These housing targets must also be agreed to and negotiated with the boroughs.

Unlike in many other European countries, Boroughs rely on internal taxation, rather than standardised funding from the central government. In the 2019-2020 year, local authorities received 77% of their total income, on average from taxes on income, property, and businesses within their locality, with only 23% coming from the national government (Atkins & Hoddinott, 2020). Consequently, local governments which are home to wealthier residents, more valuable property, and higher-income businesses will collect more tax, and have more resources than areas of lower income, lower property value, and lower commercial activity.

3. Policy Implementation in the United Kingdom

Policy implementation in the United Kingdom is highly localised, case-dependent, and incorporation of interpersonal relationships with the Private Sector. British municipalities rarely if ever assume uncontracted risk, revenue, or responsibility, instead choosing to pass these burdens and benefits to the private sector through agreements, and expecting various spatial policy goals to be achieved by the private sector. (Heurkens et. al, 2014). There is plenty of opportunity for political risk, however, because England's ward-based system ties politicians to specific communities. Each member of the London Borough councils represents a geographical subdivision of the borough, called a ward, where they represent between 3,000 and 21,000 constituents (City Population, 2023). The vast majority of these wards are smaller than 3 KM², which can be walked from end to end in a matter of minutes, creating a clear link between spatial changes and political accountability at a highly local level.

There is poor vertical integration regarding the construction of housing between layers of governance in the United Kingdom. Local councillors may face consequences for supporting disruptive development within their ward, but regional and national politicians may be rewarded for growing the housing supply (National Housing Federation, 2017). There is high social pressure in the national level to deliver sufficient housing at the larger spatial level which the population can afford to buy, because in recent decades large elements of traditional social security have been replaced with "asset-based welfare," whereby financial security lies in

owning a home rather than direct assistance from the government (Watson, 2010). Furthermore, while the national government pays private landlords to house the homeless, they have increasingly withdrawn from funding social housing, leaving that burden to local councils and housing corporations (National Housing Federation) (Wilson & Barton, 2022) (CIH, 2017). A family who moves from a private home, supported by subsidy, to a council-run social home goes from costing the national government money to costing their municipality. Consequently, there are greater incentives at higher levels of government to build more housing, including social housing, while there are often decreasing incentives at lower levels, despite the fact that local government is often the only level with the jurisdiction to approve and deliver such housing (National Housing Federation, 2017). Finally, while social housing corporation units may be rented in perpetuity, national legislation means that all residents of Council housing have a right to buy their home at a significant discount (Gov.UK). Consequently, councils have even further financial barriers to building council-housing, as it only guarantees affordable housing for one generation, rather than in perpetuity. Combined, these factors create contradictory policy objectives, which make implementation of targets difficult (Watson, 2010).

Because plans in the UK are approved on a case-by-case basis, and the advice of professional municipal planners is not legally binding, the approval of construction should not only be viewed as a legal process, but a political one. Planners shape the details, but the decision to approve or deny comes from elected non-experts whose work for the council is part-time. Because the merits of each project are reviewed individually, complex and disruptive projects involve many consultations between councillors, planners, and developers. These consultations constitute a working relationship between elected members of the community and the private sector, with the official planning team as intermediary. As one planner described it:

“The residents of Redbridge are able to control aspects of their own area and rather than having it being imposed on someone who work in an office 16 miles away in central London”

Thus, although this paper fits within planning research, it is important to include the council in data collection and analysis, as they not only set housing policy, but are actively part of implementation throughout.

4. Policy Implementation in London

The London Plan is the Mayor’s primary mechanism of implementing his or her desired policy, including housing targets, and yet relies on the boroughs to implement these plans (Brown, 2017). The need for larger-scale intervention has grown more important as London experiences a worsening housing crisis (Edwards, 2016). The most recent plan seeks to build 66,000 homes across the GLA, a goal which has broad support in abstraction, but meets resistance from local

communities, including outright hostility to the idea at all from Conservative Outer Boroughs (Brown, 2017). Planners feel that although the GLA enables more effective policy implementation, but policy implementation remains difficult at the most local levels of spatial planning due to lack of direct control (Rode, 2019).

The Mayor can advance the London Plan by rejecting borough plans which do not achieve policy goals, such as the amount of new units which are to be built in each borough (Mayor's Office Of London, 2023) (The London Plan, 2019). The boroughs are asked in the plan to prioritise smaller development, with a goal laid out for 25,000 of the homes to emerge from these sites (Brown, 2017). Such projects will look more like spatial transformation than spatial development, and will be much more dependent on cooperation with a variety of developers to be implemented (Brown, 2017).

The power held by Mainland European municipalities to implement policy, where planning documents are legally binding and applicable to all future plans, is not the power held by the Greater London Authority (Rode, 2019) (Travers, 2018). Boroughs conduct their own spatial planning, zoning, social housing provision, and project approval, and work with developers themselves (Borough of Hackney, 2023). This work is most frequently undertaken by a Planning Committee, consisting of members who dedicate a large proportion of their time to attending meetings with developers and the Borough's team of professional planners. The voting of the Planning Committee to approve or disapprove development is almost always the determinant of whether plans will pass the Council as a whole. London's own website emphasises the subordination of the boroughs to the mayor's policy (Mayor's Office Of London, 2023), but popular media and various analyses present a much weaker GLA, dependent on the boroughs to implement their will, and subject to failure if the boroughs have their own competing political visions (Lightfoot, 2006) (Brown, 2017) (Travers, 2018). There is also doubt in public discourse about planners' power - be it the mayor or the boroughs, in the face of the private market, suggesting that "planning as a tool works better at directing development than initiating it" (Brown, 2017).

Importantly, there remains an unsolved degree of vertical integration in London, which leads to conflicts in strategy and delays in implementation while differences are fought over (Rode, 2019). These differences between teams of planners at the Borough and metropolitan level should thus not be diminished. A rarely-discussed power of the Mayor is to revoke planning powers from a borough if councils consistently do not meet three-quarters of their agreed upon housing target. In this case, councils may be compelled to approve all development, unless harm "significantly and demonstrably" outweighs benefits, and may even lose all planning authority to the GLA itself (Munro, 2021). Although rarely used, this threat is a powerful deterrent to independent-minded localities.

The Case Studies: Brent and Redbridge

1. Selection of Brent and Redbridge as Case Studies

To better understand if and how planner-developer relationships affect the creation of policy targets, interviewees were sought from two boroughs which have experienced completely different outcomes in implementing housing. Such outcomes were measured relative to targets agreed upon with the GLA, which in themselves are already supposed to account for available localised factors which make it easier to build housing in some areas than others.

The metrics of successful policy implementation were measured according to data available from GLA, available to the public online. This included datasets identifying residential approvals, commencements, and completions within each borough since 2004. (GLA, 2023). Residential completions were the primary metric of comparison, as successful policy implementation entails delivery of what was promised. . However, looking at residential approvals and commencements allowed identification of to what degree boroughs gave approval for housing they would like to see built, but which was not started or delivered by developers. All housing implementation statistics were calculated as percentages, relative to the Borough's housing target for that year. Comparing raw numbers would not be a suitable metric of policy implementation, due to the large variation in Borough populations and in housing targets.

Only data for permanent, self-contained units were included in analysis. This included student rooms, elderly homes, "Pocket" homes, and a series of other non-traditional housing forms, but not homeless shelters, or non-permanent structures. The most important attribute was "% of overall units complete since 2004," when available data collection began. This was because almost all boroughs demonstrated high variation between years, and even the boroughs that most exceeded their target over many years usually saw at least one or two years of underperformance. Thus, performance over the previous two decades was considered a better indicator of policy implementation than the data for any particular year, which may have been an anomaly for that particular borough.

Residential approvals, commencements, completions, and entry to the real estate market were analysed for two planning cycles: 2018-2019 and 2021-2022. 2021-2022 is the most recent planning cycle to be completed, and gives insight to planning in the boroughs currently. However, it was discovered during analysis that data for the previous year was continually being uploaded as the GLA received it from the Boroughs. Thus, 2018-2019 data was heavily considered, since it was the most recent planning year for which data is fully complete, but which did not occur during the COVID pandemic, when all of London saw approvals and completions significantly dip relative to targets.

Borough	% of Housing Target, Units Completed, Since 2004	% of Housing Target Approved 2018-2019	% of Housing Target Delivered 2018-2019	% of Housing Target Delivered 2021-2022
Brent	116%	435%	121%	161%
Greater London	88%	202%	88%	73%
Redbridge	62%	81%	59%	19%

Figure 4: Brent and Redbridge relative to Greater London

Policy Implementation in Brent and Redbridge compared to London as a whole. In all categories, Redbridge falls below the performance of Greater London, while Brent exceeds.

Column 2 demonstrates what percentage of targets have been met since 2004, and is one of the best indicators of successful policy implementation, since most boroughs see large fluctuations between years. In this category Brent was among the 5 highest performing boroughs, while Redbridge was the lowest.

Column 3 demonstrates approvals for construction in the last full planning year before COVID, where data is complete. Compared to Column 4, housing approval is generally much higher than housing delivery.

Column 4 demonstrates that Brent and Redbridge continue to demonstrate highly divergent records of policy implementation into the present. However, data for 2021-2022 is still being updated and numbers are subject to change.

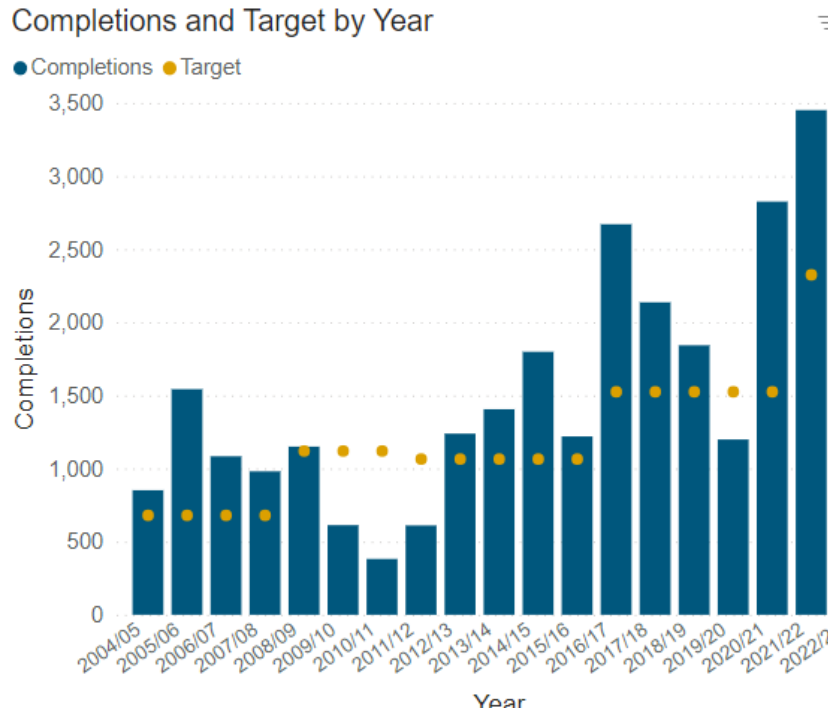


Figure 5: Housing Completions in Brent Relative to Target by Year. Source: GLA.

The Boroughs of Brent and Redbridge were the most divergent in achieving their own housing targets. Brent not only achieved 121% their housing target for the year 2018-2019, but has exceeded their targets in all but one year since 2013. While neither this number nor overall percentage of units completed since 2004 are the highest in London, Brent was the borough which measured in the top 5 among boroughs in all of the categories listed in the chart above. Redbridge on the other hand, only saw residential completions achieve 59% of their target for 2018-2019. Redbridge falls below 80% of their targets for housing completions in 14 of the last 18 years, and has an overall completion- to-target ratio of only 62%; Tied for the lowest in Greater London. In all categories used to determine which boroughs would be analysed, Redbridge was among the lowest performing 5. The consistency with which Redbridge has not met their new housing targets over the last 20 years was the primary reason they were selected for analysis.

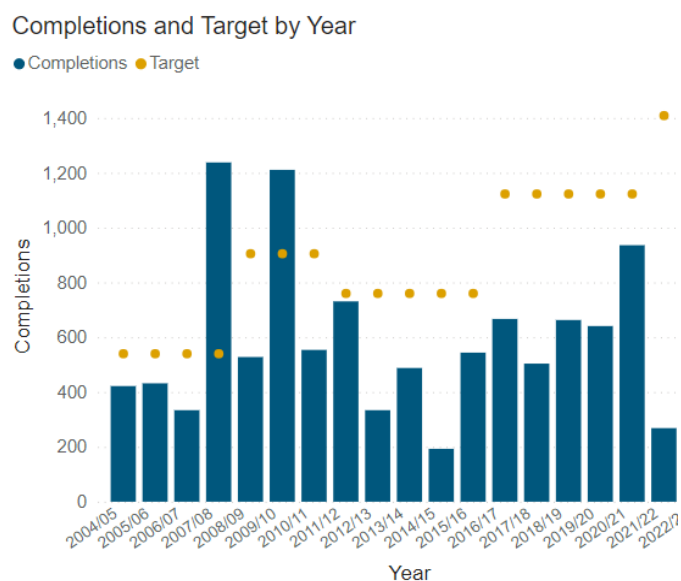


Figure 6: Housing Completions in Redbridge Relative to Target by Year. Source: GLA.

2. Information About the Boroughs

Brent and Redbridge are notable for the degree to which they diverge in policy implementation, and yet share many other elements in common. Both are designated Outer Boroughs under near-complete Labour political control, which reduced (but does not exclude) the risk that a lack of housing construction results from political opposition, rather than a reflection of planning culture. Both boroughs have demonstrated evidence of political interest in creating more housing: Members of Brent’s council have spoken frequently of the benefits to locals of increased housing, although they disagreed on what such housing looked like and what it meant for it to be affordable (Williams, 2023). Meanwhile, the council-members of Redbridge make frequent and eager promotion on their website of what housing construction has occurred, suggesting that the borough does not work against its own housing goal (Borough of Redbridge, 2023). Thus, as a goal in itself, both boroughs show interest in more housing as a concept, even if there is disagreement on what that means in practice

“We all want more housing, we don't want to stop housing,”

- Interviewee #4, Redbridge Councillor

A notable difference is that Brent is home to Wembley Stadium, the site of a 2-decade effort to turn underused land into Britain’s largest build-to-rent scheme in the country at the time (Quentain, 2017). The site of so much previous parking and low-grade commercial activity around a well-trafficked, well-connected landmark provided an obvious opportunity for redevelopment. Nevertheless, Brent’s high housing target reflected this development, but was nevertheless exceeded consistently.

Basic Information: Brent and Redbridge

	Brent	Redbridge
Demographics		
Population	340,000	310,000
Density	7900/KM ²	5500/KM ²
Non-White Population	~65% (Among most diverse in UK)	~65% (Among most diverse in UK)
Politics		
Political Control	Labour (59/63 Seats)	Labour (58/63 Seats)
Claims Building New Housing is an Important Goal	Yes	Yes
Economics		
% earning <60% Median Income, After Housing Costs	36% (Above avg. for London)	27% (Avg. for London)
% Earning Below Living Wage	29.5% (Above avg. for London) ¹	23% (Above avg. for London) ²
Budget, 2021-2022	Brent: £306 Million ³	Redbridge: £192 Million ⁴
Budget Per Resident	£900	£620
Geography		
Transit Access	Underground & Overground	Underground & Elizabeth Line*
Optimal Travel Time to Central London:	25 Minutes	25 Minutes*
TFL Zone	3 & 4	4

1. Trust for London, Brent 2. Trust for London, Redbridge 3. Borough of Brent 4. Borough of Redbridge

Notable similarities between Brent and Redbridge include their population, demography, political makeup, and distance from Central London. Notable differences are Brent's greater density (described as "urban character" by two interviewees) and larger budget, despite serving a lower-income population.

*The Completion of the Elizabeth Line and subsequent decreased travel time to Central London did not open until May 2022

3. Data Collection

8 interviews were conducted, either in-person within the interviewee’s respective borough, or virtually. Half the interviewees came from each borough, and 5 worked in planning and regeneration, and 3 were borough councillors. Councillor’s involvement on their Planning Committee was not a prerequisite. Only Borough Employees whose job included working with developers were contacted, which was a primary responsibility for some, and one aspect among many for others. Although distinctions are made between planning and regeneration in London, all civil servants are referred to in the paper as planners, because the element of their work which related to working with the private sector on new development was the aspect on which interview questions focused. Those involved with planning ranged from team leaders in charge of multiple operations, to those involved more directly on specific projects. Similarly, councillors’ experience ranged from active members of the Planning Committee, to regular members outside the Committee's work. Nevertheless, even when speaking contrary to the views of the majority of their fellow councillors, outsider personal perceptions proved insightful in understanding the planning landscape of the council as whole.

Interviewee	Borough	Role	Experience in Other Boroughs?
#1	Rebridge	Regeneration & Planning	Yes
#2	Rebridge	Regeneration	Yes
#3	Rebridge	Planning	
#4	Rebridge	Councillor, Planning Committee	
#5	Brent	Planning	Yes (Including Redbridge)
#6	Brent	Regeneration	
#7	Brent	Councillor, Planning Committee	Yes
#8	Brent	Councillor	

Interviewees’ experience in planning, regeneration, or borough councils ranged from 1 year to over 15, and included both heads of departments, as well as mid-level planners. Notably, 4 of the 5 planners had experiences working in other boroughs; According to many interviewees this was very common in London, as the close proximity of, and variance in salaries between, boroughs encourage movement when a job with a higher level or pay emerges nearby. One interviewee actually had work experience in Brent and Redbridge, and thus could make comments directly on the differences between the two, while an additional 3 planners were able to compare and contrast their current experience with that in another borough.

The interviews proved to be of high value in answering the research question. The 5 interviewees who worked with planning all had jobs which involved interface with private sector stakeholders, including developers. Each interviewee described their job as one which involved bridging between the council's policy goals and what was feasible from the developer. However, some respondents emphasised that their role was not strictly "planning," of focusing on delivering new homes, but sometimes focused more closely on regeneration of existing areas, or focusing on commercial growth. Thus, not all respondents were able to answer all questions, but the holistic nature of their jobs meant each had some experience with working with the private sector, and on projects in which housing was involved. Interviews with councillors on the Planning Committee were also highly relevant, as they were able to speak about their (very differing) experiences with approving proposals and perceptions of development.

Finally, the boroughs proved to be good contrasts, as the interviewees' comments pointed to genuine differences in planning between the boroughs. This was perhaps best summarised by the interviewee who had working experience in Brent and Redbridge. When asked if any element of their job was more difficult in Redbridge, the interviewee replied:

"Undersupply, underdelivery, and not being able to go meet our target and what we were doing as a result So, you know, it's two extremes, actually. And it's interesting that you've taken these two, for your case study."

- Interviewee #5, Brent Planner

Interviewees were read a statement assuring that, although anything they said could be cited in the paper, they would not be personally identified, and reserved the right to rescind any comments at any time between the interview and finalisation of the paper. None of the respondents asked to have their comments rescinded.

Results

Within each of the research subquestions, differences emerged in how planners formed relationships with developers, although these differences were not present in all five of the elements of public-private relationships. The greatest of these differences was in the public sector's ability to form functional and high-quality relationships with developers. The oft-cited reason for this was the difficulty faced by those in Redbridge in working with "good" developers, which subsequently made productive behavioural flexibility more difficult to achieve than in Brent. The public sector's view of the role of the private sector and themselves also varied, with Redbridge much more reactive and less self-promotional than Brent. The explanation for this difference is the fewer resources available to Redbridge, and the planning team in particular. Finally, ability (but not willingness) to be adaptive and creative varied

between the boroughs, with those who worked in Redbridge hampered by a public which was more sceptical of new development, and a Council which was sceptical of developers and the planning process overall. Redbridge demonstrated greater ambition to deliver innovative housing models than Brent, but ultimately both boroughs were similar in their dependence on housing which was either fully market-rate operated, or owned by the Council.

Most importantly, within all three research sub-questions, the differences between the boroughs are not the consequence of individual desires to act differently, but are consequences of geographic inequalities, which are explored in further details.

1. The Spatial Inequality of “Good” Developers

The most important finding of this research is that working with “good” developers is essential to a functioning public-private working relationship which delivers desired housing targets. The spatial inequality of where these “good” developers choose to operate in London, if they are even able to do so profitably, makes it difficult for those within planning jurisdictions like Redbridge to form functional and high-quality relationships with the private sector. This is because building trust, maintaining good communication, and aligning on common goals is difficult with private sector actors who do not share the qualities of a “good” developer.

7 out of 8 interviewees talked about some variation of a “good” developer, either explicitly or in similar language. Interviewees in Redbridge frequently desired to work with more of these developers in the future, and were frustrated with their inability to attract them in the present day. On the other hand, interviewees in Brent recalled many experiences with such developers, and were able to reflect on examples of working with them in the near past and present.

“....what we have worked to do (is) try and bring better quality developers into the borough, get them interested in developing the borough”

- Interviewee #2, Redbridge Planner

“.....And that was a way of just trying to get more of the good players into Brent and attract them to work here”

- Interviewee #5, Brent Planner

Several qualities of a “good” developer emerged. The first and most easily identifiable of these was size, whereby small developments and developers proved more challenging for planners to work with. One reason for this is that small developments and small developers were unlikely to have a professional planner on staff. Consequently, when planners attempted to work with these developers, they found themselves communicating with somebody with little to no experience in the planning approval process, and who were unable to provide required documents to

demonstrate policy goals for new housing, such as environmental impact evaluations. Small developers also struggled to defend their proposals beyond the technical, with one example including the inability to defend the design merits of a project to a sceptical council. In these instances, the private sector actor whom the planning team was trying to help was unwilling and/or unable to move through the process in a timely manner. As a result, these smaller developers had a difficult time proving to the Council/s Planning Committee that their developments were in line with the policy objectives in the Local Plan, and thus in the community's interest. This most directly affected the public sector's ability to communicate effectively, since those in Redbridge had to spend a large amount of time accommodating their private sector actors to the process, rather than working productively within the process itself, which was compared by one planner to hand-holding.

“(A) small scale local architect who operates out of a ground floor retail unit on Ilford lane... is vastly underprepared, and doesn't know any of the details of what you're asking them to do. ... And so essentially, we as the planner, as the authority, have to almost hold their hand and guide them through the entire process. it costs the council more money in time and resources to process an application. It just takes so much time and communication between myself and our team leader.”

- Interviewee #3, Redbridge Planner

In contrast, large developments (which were nearly synonymous with large developers) were almost certain to have a professional planner on staff, if not an entire team. The responsibility of the professional planner(s) representing the developer was to navigate the approval process and form positive relationships with the Planning Committee, via the planning team of the Borough. These developers were also better able to navigate sudden and unexpected circumstances; Examples of such circumstances ranged from Brexit and the Covid pandemic, to changes in fire safety following the deadly fire in a housing tower several years prior.

“You look at the changes that came in quite quickly around fire safety... That sunk one of my schemes completely. The expectation that all developers are big enough or robust enough to be able to roll with that is a bit of a misconception..... The smaller developers and house builders will struggle.”

- Interviewee #2, Redbridge Planner

A second quality of a “good” developer was reliability and experience in delivering on what was promised. Redbridge councillors griped that developers who were willing to work in Redbridge were often unable to honour commitments in a financially feasible way. Interviewees in Redbridge from the planning team felt that they frequently worked with developers to whom they were able to secure approval from the council, but who then reneged on promised benefits or stopped the project completely because they were losing money. For Redbridge interviewees,

there were many experiences with developers without sufficient record of delivering on what was promised, and thus they had difficulty trusting what could be delivered in the future. These frustrations were not a big theme with Brent interviewees, who highlighted their success in attracting credible developers in the recent past. Reliability, experience, and size were described as frequently connected, with larger developers also being those with the best track records, and the most experience in delivering on agreed-upon goals.

A third important quality of a “good” developer was their professionalism and flexibility. Those involved in Redbridge planning recalled working with companies whose staff were not easy people to work with, and did not respect what is supposed to be the concessionary and collaborative nature of British Planning. Professionalism partly entailed how developers worked with planners, including interpersonal skills such as easy communication and politeness, and aspects of the working relationship, such as being unified internally. One Redbridge interviewee who worked most directly with developers was eager to share negative interpersonal experiences, including being called an “entitled millennial snowflake” for questioning the scheme and requesting certain concessions. Other developers may contain architects who were inflexible on their design, despite Council interest to see it modified to better reflect the neighbourhood. Planners wanted architects to be willing to adapt their designs to match policy outlined in the local plan, which planners and councillors in Brent recalled happening frequently, while at least one Redbridge interviewee recalled working with more stubborn private sector partners who were adamant about not changing what they had proposed. Such developers who resist modifications do not appreciate that the planning approval is not the end of the preparatory stage, but in many cases very often the middle or beginning, and thus faced more resistance from the council.



Figure 7: Like all boroughs, Brent works with many small developers, on smaller developments. However, a significant portion of development in the last 20 years has taken place on high-profile regeneration sites with one, or several large developers. The most extreme example of these developers is Quintain, who were responsible for the entire Wembley Park redevelopment, the largest build-to-rent redevelopment in the UK at the time, and whose name blankets the neighbourhoods.

Professionalism also included making the process easy for councillors who are also not experts in planning code, engineering or architecture, and whose job councillors take place in addition to their daytime jobs and commitments. For councillors, a developer which had the ability and commitment to translate planning specifics into something tangential made the process of approval much easier. Developers worked through the process better when they were not only good builders, but also good presenters who demonstrated the ways in which the goals of their proposal were congruent with the goals of the borough.

“In one planning application, we had an application that was hand-drawn in pencil in the old school ways,...and then the application that followed it was a full 3D.... Yeah, they spent time and money on that application on that model....you could tell straight away...it was a quality development. This made the application so much easier”.

- Interviewee #8, Brent Councillor

Finally, “good” developers were often socially conscious; Schemes had to be financially viable, but planners found the process of new housing approval much easier with those actors which demonstrated a commitment to development in the community interest. Interviewees in Brent recalled experiences with such developers, including a Brent Councillor who was otherwise highly cynical towards planning and development, but felt positively about socially conscious developers working on urban regeneration. These developers nurtured good relationships with the individual Councillors, and not just the planning team. Meanwhile, the councillor interviewed in Redbridge struggled to recall a positive experience with a developer, and felt the planning process was a constant struggle against greedier companies. Interviewees from Brent involved in the planning process felt that working with such developers was viable and increasingly common. Consequently, planners in Brent were able to achieve goal congruence with developers, viewing the process as collaboration to deliver a socially beneficial yet financially viable project, while those in Redbridge had to struggle harder to force concessions out of developers.

“Some developers seem much more responsive, much more..... socially minded than others.. So a lot of the work in South Kilburn at the moment has been done by a developer called "Countryside". And it seems to me that they act on a whole different ethos to what's happened so far. I mean, they really are interested in working with people, elected people.”

- Interviewee #7, Brent Councillor

There was a clear and consistent explanation for why Brent attracted “good” developers while Redbridge did not: Land values. Interviewees involved in planning in Redbridge were keenly aware that, while construction costs were near-identical across London, the price which developers could expect to sell a home for is not. One planner estimated that, anywhere in London, a developer will not build if they do not believe a home can be sold for at least £500,000. The average home price in Redbridge currently sits just below that, at £486,000, with the median price frequently lower in many areas (Duck, 2023). Meanwhile, the average selling cost for a home in Brent is £586,000, with some areas of the borough approaching a median of almost £1,000,000 (Duck, 2023) (Plumplot, 2023). These numbers do not vary greatly compared to high-end extremes in Greater London, but sitting below this threshold was a major challenge for Redbridge. Even when a development has potential viability, planners in Redbridge struggled to attract developers who are drawn to boroughs with closer proximity to Central London, where the potential for profit is even greater. The result is that “good” developers are attracted to areas of London such as Brent, leaving Redbridge to work with the smaller, less professional, and less collaborative companies who are left behind.

“The biggest challenge we have in Redbridge...we have got all of the same build costs as the rest of London, but we don't have the land values”

- Interviewee #2, Redbridge Planner

Additionally, the redevelopment of several large areas in Brent, including but not limited to the area surrounding Wembley, gave opportunity for large projects which were thus undertaken by large developers. In Wembley and South Kilburn, both large swaths of urban regeneration, the names of developers *Quentain* and *Countryside* brand large swaths of area, where large tracts of land were available to be redeveloped at once, allowing the Borough to work with one or a few large development companies. Redbridge, on the other hand, has had far fewer redevelopments on an equal scale, partly due to a more sprawling and suburban nature. This has led to a greater reliance on small projects and thus small developers, reducing the opportunity for a large number of units to emerge from a single large, experienced, professional company with multiple planners on staff.

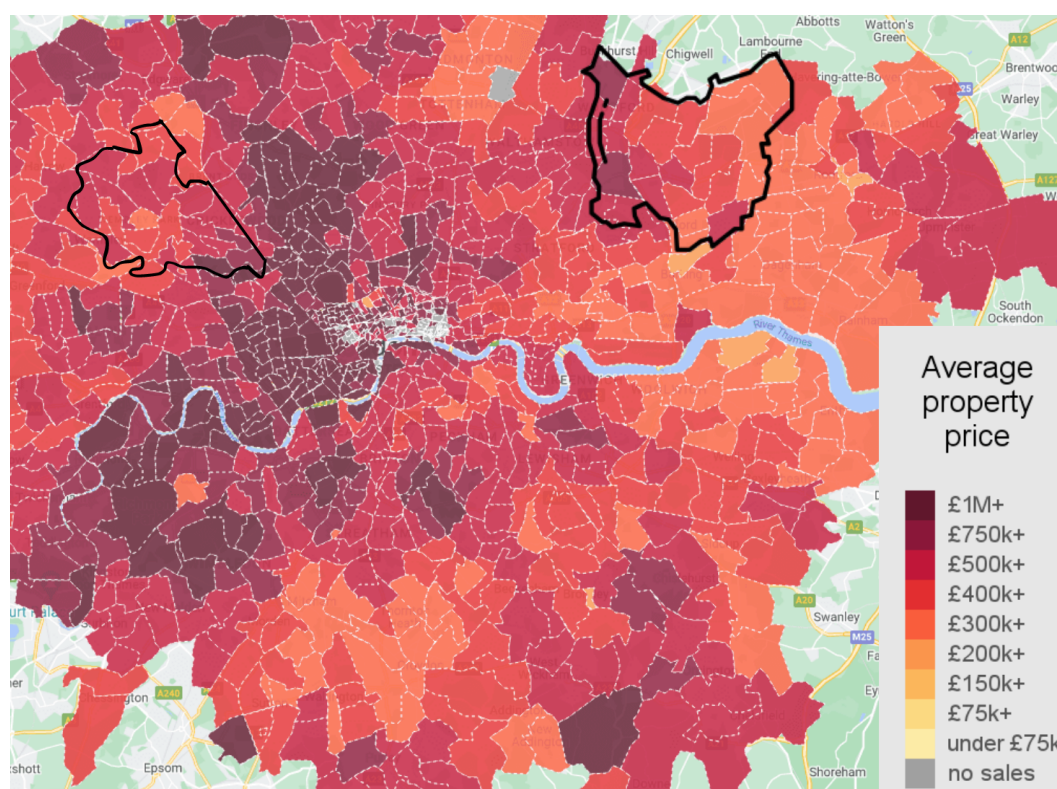


Figure 8: Average sale price for a home in London, with Brent (left) and Redbridge (right) highlighted. As a benchmark, even under favourable real estate prices, a developer will struggle to make a meaningful profit on a new home if it cannot be sold for more than £500,000, due to cost of materials and labour. Brent has many areas where the average price exceeds this; Redbridge has few. Source: Plumplot (2023)

2. Fewer Resources Leads to Less Proactive Self-Promotion

Regarding views of the role of the public and private sectors, little difference was found between the Boroughs regarding hierarchy in decision-making, but interviewees revealed large differences in how the boroughs reach out to the private sector and involve themselves in initiating approval processes. The Brent planning team took a much more proactive approach, seeing themselves as responsible for attracting developers and promoting opportunity sites, almost akin to selling a product. The Redbridge planning team was more reactive, laying out opportunity sites, but not in a way which involved as much outreach and selling of individual sites as in Brent. However, as one interviewee made clear, this was not due to a lack of desire to promote individual sites, but a lack of resources. This finding again demonstrates the constraints which external conditions place on actor behaviour.

Planners were asked if they felt that there were strong hierarchies in their offices, while councillors were asked more broadly about how decisions were made and who was involved in them. It is unlikely that differences in policy implementation in the two boroughs studied are explained by differences in internal hierarchy, formal or informal, because all interviewees described power-diffuse and collaborative structures. All those involved with planning agreed that their office had a hierarchy, but that it did not prevent most if not all decisions from being made through discussion and consensus. In both councils, it was the planning committees which held near complete control of whether projects worked on and recommended for approval by the planning team would indeed be voted on. Thus, councillors outside the planning committee engage infrequently to never with the specifics of new developments. Within the planning committee, however, there is little hierarchy, and most members work in a similarly consensus-like way. Ultimately, the titles of planners determined the scope of their responsibility, but did not give them the ability to dictate final decisions on their own, with respondents emphasising consensus, internal negotiation, collaboration, and questioning between people of different experiences and backgrounds.

“...if I was advising a graduate or planner, about an application, I would fully expect them to and want them to question my opinion on something.”

- Interviewee #3, Redbridge Planner

“, I think it is more a matter of negotiation.... It is more like a common agreement. And I think that's probably why it works. Because everyone kind of compromises a little bit....I think decisions are widely discussed before...we all agree with what's the common denominator to go out for and advise (the council)”

- Interviewee #6, Brent Planner

Where distinctions emerge in their view of the role of themselves and the private sector, further distinctions were later made describing how the public sector enables entrepreneurialism, with one example being the distinction between the paradigms of Top-Down Governance and New Public Management, and the grey zone of integrative management perspective which lies in between. Regarding the view of the role of developers, varying levels of integrative management perspective were observed. Both boroughs demonstrate strong elements of new public management, with implementation undertaken by the private and non-profit sector through contractual obligations. However, those in Brent demonstrate some elements closer to top-down governance, in that they take on a more organisational role that goes beyond formulating goals: The planning team in Brent highlighted their efforts to proactively seek developers to achieve policy goals in a range of fields, ranging from affordable housing to attractive design. When asked what worries existed in Redbridge that weren't prevalent in Brent, an interviewee with experience in both boroughs identified proactive promotion, and the lack of it in Redbridge. The interviewee described a social event, the Brent Design Awards, whose goal was to demonstrate financially viable opportunities for growth, but also to brand Brent as a positive way to specific types of developers. The planner acknowledged that it was not a completely novel idea, but that Brent's approach was innovative relative to others. Interviewees from the planning team emphasised the outsized role of councillors in promotion and direct outreach to developers to make specific sites attractive, relative to their experience with councils in job experiences in other boroughs. This promotion went beyond the normal New Public Management perspective of "goal setting," because not only did Brent set policy goals, but they put time and resources into attracting the private market actors who could deliver on it.

"When we adopted our local plan last year in February, and in September, we launched the plan to the development industry. So we had a meeting here, we invited various developers, housing associations, architects a lot. The leader was there, the Cabinet member was there, introduced the plan, our ambitions for growth. And that was a way of just trying to get more of the good players into Brent and attract them to work here"

- Interviewee #5, Brent Planner

In Redbridge, instances of such proactive promotion were not discussed, with implication that the public sector waited for proposals to be made. The planning team, acting for the council, was influential in shaping the details of development and facilitating its possibility, but did not "brand" or "sell" their borough in the same way as those in Redbridge.. Interviewees highlighted how many "opportunity sites" were created, and that they did promote opportunity sites, but made clear they did not approach specific developers unless the Borough was the landowner. Importantly, however, there was strong evidence that this was not the result of actor decisions, but circumstances beyond their control. One interviewee from Redbridge emphasised that lack of promotion was not an intentional choice, but resulted from too few resources with which to hire the planning staff needed for promotion.

“I think, if we had more resources, we could have a team actively working day to day, to bring those proposals together to promote them. to go out and sell it to the private sector side of things. Whereas at the moment it is kind of an add on to one person's job, really. And we just we aren't resourced in terms of promoting that in the way that I'd like... it builds up its own momentum, a kind of snowball effect, where you get some development going...you then use that to reinvest in promoting the next round of development.”

- Interviewee #1, Redbridge Planner

In other boroughs where the interviewee worked, income made from agreements with developers was available to go towards further promoting local opportunities to the private sector. Without the market forces for that initial round of investment, however, Redbridge's planning and regeneration teams did not have the funding to dedicate employees to similar activities. This difference was visible in local planning documents: In the local plans of both boroughs, policy goals are outlined and opportunity areas for new growth mapped. However, the Brent Local Plan contains more detailed maps and information on specific sites, in a way which almost outlines to the developer specific advantages and steps forward, leaving little ambiguity. The initial job of scoping opportunities is already done for a developer interested in building in Brent. The Redbridge Local plan is less site-specific, and while interviewees involved in planning emphasised how much of the borough is zoned for new development, where to begin requires more research and imagination from the developer.

The consequence of some boroughs having less resources than others, as identified by one interviewee, is that they were forced to react to developers rather than lead them. This reshapes how boroughs are able to view the role of the public and private sectors, with those in Redbridge less able to define conditions of planning. The Redbridge Council is as strong a goal-setter as that in Brent, but the planning team in Brent is better equipped to manage these resources into action.

3. The Power of Public and Council Perceptions

Regarding willingness and ability to be adaptive and creative, planners in Brent and Redbridge worked to meet new housing targets in divergent environments, where the perceptions of the public towards new development and perceptions of Council members towards the planning process were very different. Major differences were not observed regarding creativity in alternate development models, but those involved with planning in Brent were more able to engage in Contingency Planning, in part because of broader support from the public and the Council. However, it cannot be said confidently whether this support derives entirely from differing perceptions of new development, or additionally because new developments in Brent were of higher quality, and thus the community and their elected representatives had more reason to support them. All interviewees, including councillors, supported housing in the abstract and

believed new housing was a necessity. Furthermore, interviewees identified pro-growth elements *and* strong resistance to new development in both boroughs. However, five key differences between perceptions of the counsellors and the public in both boroughs emerged.

Regarding willingness and ability to be adaptive and creative through novel methods of development and ownership, there was much more activity and interest than literature on British planning would suggest, with interest shown by various respondents to ideas such as tenant-run housing and social-conscious market rate housing administered by the Borough. Planners from both Boroughs felt that the planning and regeneration team have more informal ability to develop novel development than what would be derived from the written law, and that many London Boroughs were taking more proactive roles as developers of non-council housing in ways that would be “radical and innovative” 10 years prior.

Both boroughs have a strategic incentive to build market-housing with highly regulated affordable units, rather than outright social housing. This is because of the right of tenants to buy their own social housing units at discounted rates, meaning that newly constructed council housing only remains so for one generation of tenants. This put greater responsibility on the private sector developers who held contractual obligations to provide affordable units within market-rate developments that meet targets for affordable housing, because that housing remains affordable past one generation of tenants.

Redbridge was much more involved in challenging the dichotomy of market-rate housing and building, establishing its own company in recent years to engage in private rental constructions, whose profits would then be invested back to the council to subsidise affordable units. However, this scheme ultimately failed, with the Redbridge planners believing it was too ambitious, unable to deliver profitable housing, and susceptible to the same changes in material costs and a mismatch between land value and expected sale prices which affected private developers. Interviewees in Brent had not taken such action out of similar fears, but spoke admiringly of other boroughs which innovated in new models of ownership. Consequently, both boroughs held a willingness to innovate with models of novel development and ownership, but lacked ability. Thus, it cannot be assumed that this element relates to differences in meeting housing targets.

On the other hand, perceptions of councillors and the public varied in 5 key ways which were heavily influential on the ability of public sector planner to engage in contingency planning:

Urban v.s Suburban Mindset

Part of why Brent and Redbridge were selected was because they were both Outer London Boroughs of a similar distance from the city centre, and both have major areas in London Underground “Zone 4,” which to many Londoners connotate definitively suburban areas. Yet Brent also includes many areas of older, more urban neighbourhoods in Zone 3, and has had

express trains to Central London for 100 years, which Redbridge just recently received. Planners and councillors described a more urban outlook on development, which stood in contrast to the councillor from Redbridge, who perceived their borough is definitively suburban. These divergent viewpoints made engaging in contingency planning easier in Brent, because the community and the representatives they elected were more tolerant of compromises over the lifespan of a project, such as increased height or density.

“ They (the councillors) get it a bit more here. And even though we're here in zone four, here in Wembley, it feels a lot more urban, and connected than Ilford (in zone four) in East London. It's amazing the difference. And as a result of that, I suppose communities here are kind of accepting change”

- Interviewee #5, Brent Planner

“we're a green borough. . I mean, if you look at that building, it doesn't look very nice in the middle of our town...I'd love to tell you what our target is, but it's ridiculous. I mean, we'd have to build a house in every every bit of green land”

- Interviewee #4, Redbridge Councillor



Figure 11: Large skyscrapers built around transit hubs, like this one next to Ilford station on the Elizabeth Line, dwarf the low-rise, single-family surroundings. Interviewee #4 , had concerns about the impact of future skyscrapers on sightliness, parking, character of the neighbourhood, and the burden on local amenities. Planners felt many of these concerns were widespread in the population, while community members in Brent did not share the same concerns.

Growth as Benefit v.s Growth as Burden

The councillor in Redbridge believed in new housing for the London area, but believed it was difficult or near impossible to achieve in Redbridge. This stemmed from their belief that the borough “can't take any more people,” due to spatial constraints, as well as belief that there were insufficient school spaces, general practitioners, and other community resources. This stood in contrast to Brent, where planners and councillors felt there was support for growth as a concept, and more specifically for the direct benefits it brought to the community. A member of the Brent planning committee emphasised that they “want people to come here,” and this experience was reaffirmed by those involved with planning, who felt that the councillors as a whole were “proactive,” and “very supportive of our work”. Rates of General Practitioners in both boroughs are quite similar, with both Boroughs having more patients-per-practitioner than the London average, and Redbridge being amongst London’s most overburdened boroughs. It was unclear to what degree these different perceptions of other limited resources reflected perception, and to what degree they reflected fact (Mellor, 2021).

“Here (in Brent) as in Redbridge...’No GPs, no school places’. That's always the rhetoric you get from communities. And In fact, we are delivering on infrastructure, we don't have a shortage of school places. In fact, there's a surplus in some places. So you know, that's not always true. So it's always getting that message out and communicating what's important”

- Interviewee #5, Brent Planner

Planning as Procedure v.s Planning as Placemaking

Although the 5 interviewees involved with planning all described their work as a way to improve the community and build better places by extracting concessions from developers, only one of the councillors from Brent shared the same view of planning. The other two councillors viewed planning as purely procedural, with approval contingent on whether basic criteria were met, and not whether the project contributed holistically to the neighbourhood. Similarly, while all 5 planners described their job as akin to a “balancing act” of decision-making and different interests, the same two councillors described the process as akin to rote rubber-stamping. This included one councillor outside the Planning Committee who felt “planning permission is all about ‘how many sinks you got’”, and thus there was no room to object to subjective matters more related to quality of life, such as character of the neighbourhood. However, the interviews suggested that while this was a minority view on Brent’s Planning Committee, it was much more prevalent in Redbridge. By contrast, the interviewee from Brent’s planning committee felt they held “powers,” in a productive process, and these powers forced developers to adapt their projects for the public good. This councillor, and many of his colleagues according to responses by Brent Planners, expected developers to adapt the conditions of their projects to Council

policy, on aspects ranging from timing of construction to spatial elements such as greenspace.

FIGURE 7: Ilford Investment and Growth Area

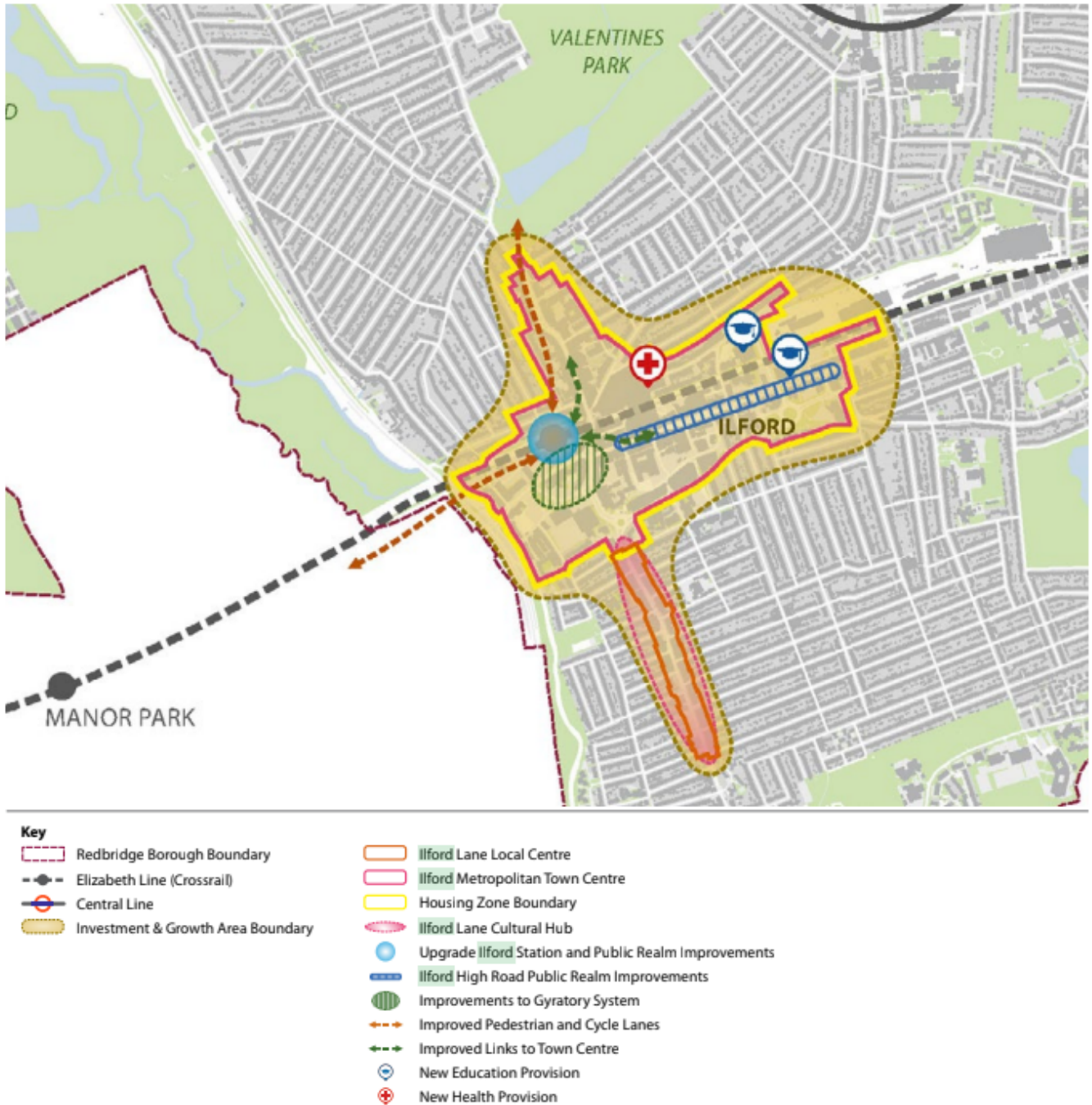


Figure 9: Redbridge’s Local Plan outlines spatial visions for neighbourhoods, and development requirements for specific sights. But it is not as specific about potential sites for spatial redevelopment as the Brent Local Plan. Source: Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030, 2018 Edition

RISKS	Site is currently occupied by supermarket which is trading well and Kwik Fit meeting their operation needs which may affect willingness of the owners to develop.
DESIGN PRINCIPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed-use development incorporating ground floor retail/leisure/commercial uses that maximises the potential of the site. An active frontage along Bridge Road, Forty Lane, Wellespring Crescent and Chalkhill Road. Creating a connection with the rest of the town centre through smaller scale ground floor retail/commercial that adds to the retail offer and vitality and viability of the town centre if the supermarket cannot provide the active frontage. To remove the obvious levels differences along the southern and south eastern boundaries for at least one building width by providing a street level building frontage. Adjacent development of nine and seven storeys indicate the potential for taller buildings than the traditional suburban context that will need to take account of the setting of the opposite Grade 2 Listed former Town Hall, Barn Hill conservation area and not adversely impact on protected views of the stadium. The relationship with space required for potential junction improvements need to be considered with a new development. Retain or provide for sufficient space along the frontages to accommodate trees.
INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thames Water has indicated the local waste water network capacity in this area may be unable to support the demand anticipated from this development. Upgrades to the wastewater network may be required. Thames Water will need to be engaged at the earliest opportunity to agree a housing and infrastructure phasing plan to ensure where required essential infrastructure is delivered prior to the development creating identified additional capacity requirements. Space for potential junction improvements at Forty Lane/Bridge Road may be required. Green and sustainable infrastructure should be part of the development process and the development.
JUSTIFICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site is located in an area of high public transport accessibility and large scale ongoing regeneration. Redevelopment for mixed use retail/residential development would create a more efficient use of land. The site benefits from accessible green space at the nearby Chalkhill Park and has good access to local shops and services within Wembley Park town centre.

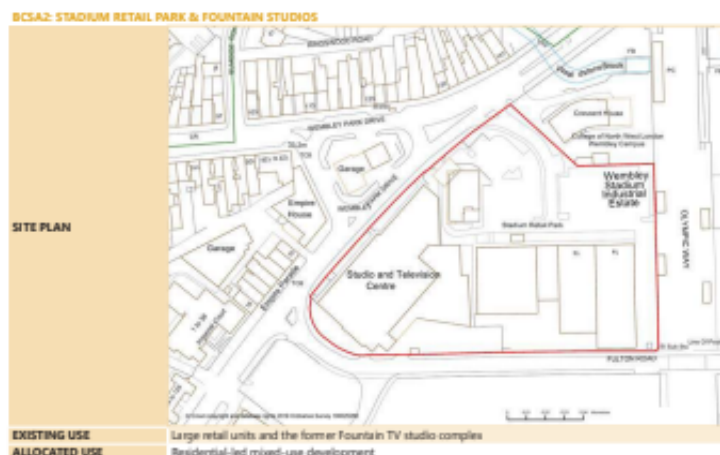


Figure 10: Brent’s local plan, on the other hand, makes clear to the reader (including potential developers) the specifics of individual sites, opportunities, risks, and requirements, alongside maps of individual sites. Source: Brent Local Plan 2019-2041

Interviewees who worked in planning in Brent described experiences which portrayed this as a common view, with the council feeling it had leverage when working with developers.

“We can't complain about (a lack of GPs) because that's not a planning constraint. A planning constraint straightforward: it's is the building safe, is it going to fall down, has it got ventilation, that sort of thing. Of course, they (the developers) have covered all of those angles. So it's very little, that we can actually push them on,

- Interviewee #4, Redbridge Councillor

When planning is perceived by counsellors as a procedure rather than a process of placemaking, there is greater resistance to being flexible on established rules and regulations, because these are seen as give-aways rather than steps to other positive goals, including the meeting of housing targets.

New Developments Benefits the Borough v.s New Developments Harms the Borough

Perhaps due to the aforementioned trouble in attracting good developers, the councillor interviewed in Redbridge had trouble recollecting a development which had a positive influence, but spent a great deal of time recalling those that did not. These included developments they believed were built on polluted ground, provided insufficient living space, overburdened local schools and hospitals, were too tall, and which would bring thousands of cars into the

community without parking spaces. From this Councillor's perspective, most new developments, or at least those most prominent in their mind, were burdens on the community. This stands in contrast to the councillor from Brent, who had personalised positive experience with redevelopment. The 20-year redevelopment of Wembley, which turned a vast expanse of parking lots and auto shops into residential housing, lively commercial use, and a highly used civic centre, demonstrated the benefits which could come from working with large developers. This led to a population, and especially a Council, which Brent planners described as pro-growth. By contrast, Redbridge has had no redevelopment scheme on such a similar and successful scale, giving no comparable example for locals to associate with positive development. Perhaps as a result, local objections to projects, even by a minority of residents, was described as a much more serious threat and delay in the planning process.

"I was born and brought up here and I used to ride my bikes and used to come out of these areas and seeing the change....I did not think it could be like this. 1000s of people extra living here. And it was all wasteland, no vision, no thought. And I've seen our own committee planning committees that were running the 80s and 90s. And they were not pro-growth, not in the slightest."

- Interviewee #8, Brent Councillor

The British Planning system gives regular citizens a relatively large ability to pause projects through lawsuits and judicial procedure. Thus, the planning team and council in Redbridge can try to mitigate legal intervention through favourable designs and community consultation, but to some degree will always be at the mercy of local opposition to delay a project and draw out valuable resources, even if the plaintiffs are ultimately unsuccessful. Although general resistance to all new housing is undoubtedly present in both Boroughs, it was Redbridge respondents who particularly discussed it, and discussed community opposition as a frustrating element of their job. Interviewees in Redbridge described continuous lawsuits which consumed time and money from the planning team, and lamented that local residents were particularly eager to protest individual housing projects because of immediate negative externalities, such as noise and short-term construction. Opposition to new housing along these lines is a feature of all democratic systems, including in Brent, but were cited more frequently by planners in Redbridge as a constraint on their jobs.

Understanding Planning and the Concessions Process

Planners in Redbridge felt that aiding counsellors to understand the process was a disproportionate part of their job, both in regard to understanding legal constraints, as well as when and what concessions were necessary to make a project feasible. The issue of time and resource-consuming "hand holding," which was also used to describe working with smaller developers, was used to describe some counsellors on the planning committee, particularly new

ones. A Redbridge planner and councillor both described holding meetings between the planning team and the committee about what was appropriate to discuss in meetings with developers. The experience of planners in Brent was completely different, with planners feeling they worked with a council that was well-informed about the process, and where all individual members “get it”. Planners in Brent did not feel they had to spend much of their time or energy informing the council about the nature of the process, because members understood procedural elements, and the practice of exchanging concessions for developmental approval. One example given by a planner was that councillors understand that trade-offs need to be made during the planning process to make a development financially feasible for the developer, such as allowing more apartments in exchange for providing increased greenspace. This gave the planning team greater freedom to adapt targets and plan contingently without fear of council rejection.

“ I think that's what makes Brent different...having councillors, lead members, that understand the process and the approach.my view is that people, at the same time they want green spaces, they also don't want tall buildings. And so, one thing needs to pay for the other. You're either going to have a larger building footprint and a lower building, or you're going to have to go up if you want to pay for the greenspaces. And I feel like this is often not clearly communicated (in other boroughs)”

- Interviewee #6, Brent Planner

Threat of GLA Takeover

During the interview process, it was learned that because Redbridge is so behind on their housing targets, they risked losing control of the planning process to the Greater London Authority. While the literature described the GLA’s implementation power as quite weak, interviewing with the Redbridge Counsellor revealed that there are indeed mechanisms in place for GLA to enforce its policy direction, and depending on one’s interpretation, “punish” the Borough. In the experience of the councillor, and according to GLA data, this has pushed the council to approve a far greater number of new developments. The counsellor felt that this resulted in developments which were detrimental to the Borough in many ways, such as “Pocket” homes which were too small, towers with too few parking spaces for future cars, and land on insufficiently decontaminated land. The need to approve housing further reduced leverage that Redbridge may have had, forcing them to accept in the most recent year almost every proposal they received. This forced contingency planning, in their mind, to favour the developer everytime, because the developer could obtain increasingly favourable conditions in the present day, and still receive approval.

“I don't think we would ever as a committee reject a claim, because we know that two days later, it's going to be rubber stamped (by GLA).”

“Yeah. I'd love to be in Brent's position where they can just say "no...They (Brent) got it all....they can say everything. And they'll get it. Where as us? We can hardly say anything”

- Interviewee #4, Redbridge Councillor

In conclusion, the governance regime in which planners in Redbridge worked is very different than that of Brent. Planners in both boroughs work with a council that seriously wants, and works to build, new housing, including affordable housing. However, even within that policy goal, there is large variation in how the councillors perceive development, planning, and the borough itself. Redbridge councillors and the public are more resistant to changes that they feel overburden local resources and threaten the suburban character of their community. This stands in contrast to Brent councillors and residents, who have more faith in growth to deliver positive results. This may largely stem from a higher quality of growth delivered in Brent, due to the borough's leverage to extract concessions from developers. The overall result is that contingency planning in lived experience is perceived negatively by the Council, and when combined with overall distrust from the public, makes flexibility over time difficult for planners to achieve.

Analysis

The results demonstrate that significant differences in public sector actor behaviour exist between the boroughs studied, but not in every element identified in the literature review.

Within two elements, there was no evidence that elements of actor behaviour affected policy implementation, because there were not significant differences found between the boroughs. Within the element of Hierarchy and Network Structure, respondents of all backgrounds in both boroughs described a collaborative, non-hierarchical system of decision making. This reflects the existence of network structures in both boroughs, and thus any difference in policy implementation cannot be attributed to differences in internal hierarchy (Rode, 2019). Within the element of Creativity in Alternate Development Models, respondents in both boroughs demonstrated a high level interest in the fields, but were constrained in their abilities by financial conditions and elements of the British planning system beyond interviewees' control. Interviewees gave other boroughs as examples of successful innovation which they admired for operating new models of housing, and these Boroughs could be the study of their own further research; However, the case studies in this paper do not provide conclusive evidence for the effect of creativity and innovation on policy implementation. It was anticipated that greater constraints in British planning would limit boroughs' ability to develop new models of home and land ownership, but alternate research would be necessary to understand if heeding demands for such innovation actually impacts the ability for the public sector to meet new housing targets (Wetzstein, 2017). The positive effect of Socially Responsible Property Investment was not established, because the results demonstrate that it is not necessary to be

categorised as an SRPI developer to deliver positive results: Those in Brent had positive experiences with developers in the traditional economic model, provided they had a social element. Being designated an SRPI company was not necessary to form strong working relationships, and thus, evidence was provided against the idea that SRPI development is necessary for meeting new housing targets (Squires & Moate, 2012).

Within this research, the most important result is that differences in the public sector's ability to build trust, openly communicate, and agree on congruent goals with private-sector partners are observed between authorities which successfully implement policy goals, and those which do not. When these three factors are insufficient, it is difficult to deliver new developments which are in line with stated policies *and* are financially viable enough to be delivered to market. This highlights the importance of behavioural flexibility (Gurung & Özogul, 2022). Simultaneously however, these differences are not the result of differing approaches or beliefs held by actors within the public sector, but rather the private-sector partners which are available to work with. The results demonstrate the enabling and constraining effects which private sector actor behaviour has on public sector actor behaviour. Research which emphasises the differences within behavioural patterns of the private sector and treats it with the same level of complexity and diversity as the public sector is emerging (Özogul, S. & Tasan-Kok, 2020), and as demonstrated by the results, should increasingly be incorporated into analysis.

Regarding the effect of Integrative Management Perspective on delivering policy targets, this element of public-sector actor behaviour encompasses all types of behaviour between two extremes, with actors able to be categorised by how much of each element they display. Nevertheless, it was learned that, even when public sector actors are engaging mostly decidedly New Public Management behaviour, some elements more akin to Top-Down Governance help attract developers to meet new housing targets. Specifically, proactive self-promotion of individual sites and opportunities was found by those in Brent to be helpful in meeting new targets. This is in line with the view central to Integrative Management Perspective that entrepreneurialism allows greater flexibility and efficacy in changing economic conditions (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014) (Madanipour, 2010). The results of this paper demonstrate that new Public Management perspectives focus on governance as goal formulation may prove inadequate to meet the challenges of the global urban housing crisis. Rather, formulation, when followed by attraction and enticement of developers, proves valuable in real estate markets where unexpected events such as epidemics, inflation, new safety regulations, and political changes emerge unexpectedly. Governance bodies with the ability to formulate goals, but without the ability to attract and entice private sector actors, may struggle to meet housing targets which do not consider this barrier.

Finally, regarding the public sector's ability to engage in Contingency Planning in pursuit of adaptability, the results demonstrate that it is difficult to do so when public sector actors work

for communities which hold distrustful views of the planning process, and dismissive views of its results. The more important finding is that this may occur even when new housing is a desired goal in the abstract, yet communities have diverging experiences with development, and different views on the nature of their own neighbourhood. As the private sector grows increasingly important in achieving policy targets, public sector actors must demonstrate that they can form collaborative and productive relationships with developers through their behaviour. This frequently requires the ability to learn from experience and improve through varying levels of loop learning (Özogul, 2021). However, when constrained by external geographic inequalities, public sector actors are unable to learn alternative tactics, nor change individual behaviours, and thus loop learning cannot occur.

Actor behaviour is important and influences policy implementation, but equally or more important are the external factors which influence actor behaviour (Kantor & Savitch, 2005). Within the three main results, public sector planners are found to not hold different perspectives, as much as they are reacting differently to different real estate conditions, resources, political bodies, and public perceptions. The role of these external conditions on actor behaviours is thus found to be highly important, merits further research, and are highly important to be considered in the formulation of housing targets.

Conclusion

Ultimately, there were key differences between how planners and councillors in the two Boroughs studied worked with developers. These differences resulted from three factors:

Firstly, the difficulty of attracting developers to Redbridge which were large, flexible, experienced, professional, and socially minded enough to deliver developments which councillors were comfortable voting to approve. Furthermore, even when approved, developers which met these descriptions often failed to bring housing to the delivery stage. Brent did not struggle as much to attract developers with these qualities, in large part because of geographical and economic conditions beyond either Borough's control. Land values also allowed planners and Councillors in Brent to have greater faith that developers would complete what was promised. The result of this inequality is that local authorities which struggle to attract "good" developers also struggle to form functional and high-quality relationships with developers, which in turn negatively affects the degree to which new housing is constructed.

Secondly, a difference in resources available to the Planning Teams in each borough, with Brent able to spend more money on its planning team, which thus meant more time could be spent working with developers. Furthermore, more resources meant more time and money could be spent on active promotion of the borough, including outreach to developers. The reason Brent has more revenue is rooted in decades of differential development patterns, a longer history of

easy transit access to Central London, and policies of localised funding which create stark differences between localities in funding. The result of this inequality is that local authorities with fewer resources are pushed to view their role as more reactive than those in authorities with greater resources.

Thirdly, a population, and thus a Council, in Brent which is more favourable to growth and new development. Relatedly, Brent's council is willing to work with developers and accept compromises to some policy goals in order to pursue others. However, it is important to consider that it may be easier for Brent Councillors to approve developments in their area, because these developments are of higher quality and more benefit to the community, due to the aforementioned increased presence of "Good" developers, and a greater willingness by developers to make concessions in order to extract higher property values than they would in Redbridge. The result of the differences in perception between councillors and the public is that planning teams in local authorities with resistant politics struggle to be adaptive in contingency planning. Willingness to be adaptive and creative of public planners may not suffer as a result, but ability does.

Thus, in answering the question "To what extent do differences in the relationships between public sector planners and private sector developers result in greater policy-outcome gaps regarding housing construction?," there is an available answer, but with a caveat. Relationships between those working with planning on the municipal side and developers does affect how much housing is built. But the nature and quality of these relationships is rooted in greater economic and geographical circumstances beyond the control of either party. Thus, actor relationships should not be discounted as an independent factor of policy implementation in the housing sector. However, this paper gives evidence that such relationships are manifestations of economic and geographic inequality, rather than reflections of individual choice.

Further research should develop linkages between categorizations of developers and planners, rather than study each individually. Furthermore, a case-specific research question is to what degree the London Plan and the Mayor's Office consider the limiting factors in this paper when drafting new housing targets. Pressure to meet an unrealistically high goal deprives Redbridge of any leverage it would have to say "no" to a developer and negotiate concessions: Thus, housing targets which are artificially high deprive the community as much as targets which are too low to reflect the housing crisis. Further research should investigate to what degree the conclusions of this paper are acknowledged by Greater London government, and if not, then what incorporating more abstract elements of the planning landscape into developing new housing targets would look like.

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