

# OPINION



**No smoke without fire at the RA?**  
See Boots back page

## Why we can't afford to miss the train

I have often argued for fewer grand projects and a more fine-grained architecture and urbanism. But one place where big projects and systems thinking are needed is infrastructure, for it sets the framework for investments in place. So I am inclined to believe in investment in high-speed rail and airports, and argued for an extensive UK network in *Transport and Neighbourhoods*, my 2008 book with Edge Futures. High-speed rail, as a part of an overall transport system, can enhance the transport experience, stimulate regional economies and divert traffic from car and air travel.

But the more I look into HS2, the more I worry that it is being driven by engineering and cost-benefit analysis — leaving the core social and economic reasons for the investment out of the design equation. Not only does this undermine the case for HS2, it means that the project may fail to achieve the potential benefits.

Transport investments can help unlock access to land, permit more intense development and enable households to make different housing choices. This can transform



**'Investment in HS2 needs to unlock the shaping power of transport'**

Hank Dittmar

regional economies, if it is part of broader land-use transportation strategies. Making cost-benefit decisions primarily in terms of the effect of reduced travel times is too narrow, and allows the debate to be reframed negatively as a choice between noise and environmental impacts on neighbourhoods and the countryside and travel time savings for commuters with laptops.

A few people have recently offered perspectives that see transport investment as a tool to address housing affordability and regional competitiveness. If the debate can be reframed in this way, the question is no longer should we build HS2, but what HS2 should we build?

Peter Cuming's proposal for Euston station shows that design matters, by putting connectivity and related development over first cost. Michael Heseltine's idea to create urban development corporations around stations would capture the value created by improved access, creating a vehicle for providing needed housing and allowing the regions to create development strategies that will make them more successful. And many have

called for better connections to airports and HS1, and to what is amusingly called the "classic" rail network.

Many rail advocates have looked at HS2, seen its flaws and concluded it should be dropped. I fear if we don't move forward now, nothing will happen for a generation, and we can't afford to slip further behind. We must find the will to advance high-speed rail and airport investment in London. But both need to unlock and capture the value of the shaping power of transport.

Alongside a more broadly framed transport investment, government must use its powers to assemble land, create a friendly yet directive framework for private investment and thus enable the transformation. Architecture and urban design are critical here, for the project-driven approach will seek to save costs by cutting connections, simplify delivery by ignoring synergies, and reduce complexity by partitioning "outside" issues like value capture, user experience or placemaking into another project. What's needed is not more analysis of the benefits but an HS2 that recognises the centrality of these issues to project delivery and success.

### MATT WHITE

Founding partner, Matt Architecture

**YES** Arguing in favour of the regeneration of neglected sites to the readership of BD, whose livelihoods are all more or less dependent on the activity, seems at first like taking sweets from a child. Too easy — there must be beartraps! So let's start with those: where isn't it good to regenerate?

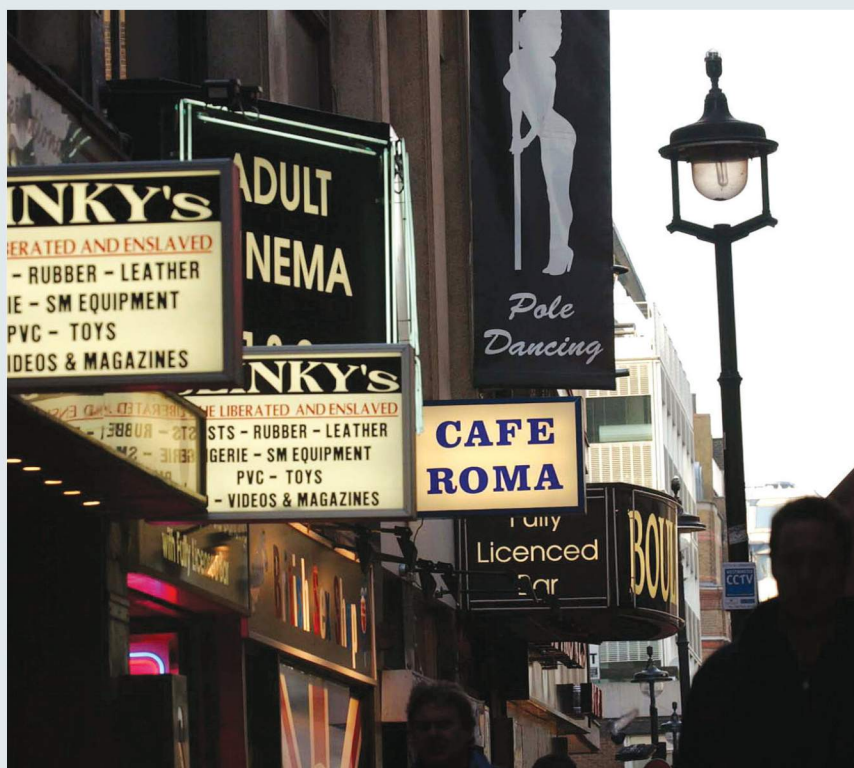
Well, Hartlepool comes to mind, and also Wolverhampton and Hull... if you read *The Economist*. If you don't, Chernobyl.

Other than that, pretty much everything's fair game. While a site may become temporarily neglected, as soon as that neglect becomes permanent the site loses relevance.

Any place that remains alive in our imaginations is never truly neglected; we just have to make sure our plans for the future don't destroy our inheritance from the past.

In London, our own project (in collaboration with Soda) for Soho Estates in Walker's Court — once home to the iconic Raymond Revuebar — involves the regeneration of a decrepit site littered with sex shops, lap-dancing clubs and "walk-ups" — all of them failing as the economic thrust (pun intended) of their activity has moved to the internet.

In its 1960s heyday, however, the Revuebar



Sign of the times: dilapidated areas of London's Soho are now being regenerated.

was at the cutting edge of social change and launched its owner, Paul Raymond, towards becoming one of Britain's richest men. It's this heyday that we remember — and that we are celebrating in our proposals.

Its regeneration is necessary, though — to create a new chapter for our time. There will still be a couple of night-clubs, but there will also be a new theatre, restaurants, shops and apartments — and of course a restored sign, high-kicking its neon legs into the imagination of a new generation.

Now — what to do about Hartlepool?

### DEBATE

**Is the regeneration of neglected sites always a good thing?**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
Add your views at [bdonline.co.uk](http://bdonline.co.uk)

**PAUL McANEARY**  
Founder of Paul McAnearney Architects

**NO** Regeneration is not always appropriate: it is a site-specific question. Areas across London have evolved over hundreds of years, developing under a delicate balance. Any intervention must be sensitive to this history and social balance to ensure longevity. New developments at St Giles Circus are a key example of this.

The area is the backbone of London's musical heritage, with its music shops, studios and a cast list that has featured the Sex Pistols,

the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles.

The history and gritty nature of the area's medieval passageways were what attracted me to move my practice to Flitcroft Street, a charming but somewhat forgotten back street off Denmark Street.

We were forced out of our first office by a 30% rent rise but our new landlord welcomed us to St Giles rent free while we transformed his dilapidated listed warehouse. We introduced contemporary interventions but retained the historical framework of the brick structure.

Making new urban cuts can inflict mortal wounds. You need some dirt for anything to grow, and cities need affordable central spaces. If rent rises suffocate the eco-system, this appeal will be lost forever.

Regeneration of such areas can come at a cost without sensitive design consideration. It's our responsibility as architects to ensure a social perspective informs our work.

Our schemes should respect the history of the site, be sustainable in the long term and embrace their social context, not just reinvent it. We must ensure the safety of our heritage through careful design and contemporary interventions, halting the spread of identity-free, vanilla architecture.

## SPEAKING OUT

Amanda Baillieu pays tribute to Jubilee Line Extension mastermind Roland Paoletti

**R**oland Paoletti, who died last week, was one of the most significant patrons of post-war architecture in the most unlikely of circumstances. Appointed commissioning architect for the Jubilee Line Extension (JLE) in the dying days of the Thatcher government, he arrived determined to outdo or at least equal the legendary Frank Pick.

I knew him pretty well: when he was choosing the architects for the 10 new stations he used to ring me (I was a reporter on BD at the time) from a phonebox in LU headquarters to tell me his latest architectural conquest. I knew he wanted Norman Foster — they had trained in Manchester together in the 1950s — but he refused to tell me which station he was planning to give him. One day, just before BD went to press, my phone rang. It was Roland. "Foster, Canary Wharf," he said and then rang off.

When I interviewed him a few weeks later he was exhausted. He had seen 65 architects and at that point picked just three: Ian Ritchie for Bermondsey, Ron Herron for Canada Water, and Foster. None of them had any experience of working for LU before — seen even then as almost obligatory — which he considered an advantage. And he was prepared to take some big risks. Will Alsop was halfway through his first public building, Le Grand

Bleu, when Paoletti said he wanted to give him the largest station on the line: North Greenwich.

He made his job sound easy — "I have a list of architects I like and then I choose my favourite," he said to me once — but that wasn't quite true. Behind the scenes every station was its own mini-drama, whether it was the conjoined nature of Hopkins' Westminster, which had the MPs' offices of Portcullis House above it, or North Greenwich, which was designed as an open box but ended up with a roof.

**Y**ears later, I would tell him my current favourite station — I have had love affairs with most of them — and tease him that he had masterminded something so audacious that no architect would ever be let near a tube line again. "JLE was not extravagant," he'd say crossly. The architecture of course was a fraction of the cost and not why the line went over budget. Yet what he couldn't argue with was that, for Londoners, the underground is a fact of life but he turned this part of it into a source of national pride.

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