FULL TRANSCRIPT:

“WHAT IS THE ARCHITECT’S ROLE IN THE ‘HOUSING CRISIS’?”

28th June 2017 19:00 - 21:45
The Rotunda, Cressingham Gardens, Tulse Hill.

Hosted by Architectural Workers, an independent network of people who work in and around the building industry - in particular, within urban regeneration. We exist to expose and critique the conditions of our work, alongside the role it plays in gentrification, social cleansing and environmental discrimination. We organise anonymously to voice the opinions we cannot have openly at work.

This is a full transcript of the event held at Cressingham Gardens between invited speakers: architects who work in regeneration, academics who specialise in gentrification, housing activists, and council estate residents; and members of the public. All attendees were invited to take part in an open discussion about the role of the architect in the housing crisis. We wanted to ask what agency the architect has, and discuss its limits and potential. Our aim was to facilitate an active discussion between all of the ‘experts’ in, and those directly affected by, estate ‘regeneration’.

Named Participants

AP - Andy Plant
AM - Anna Minton
AV - Ashvin de Vos
CA - Concrete Action
DR - David Roberts
GD - Geraldine Dening
PK - Paul Karakusevic
PW - Paul Watt
SB - Simon Bayliss
SE - Simon Elmer

AP:
Good Evening, so we're here to talk about what is the Architect's Role in the Housing Crisis? If the people around the table would like to introduce themselves, starting with Paul Watt -

PW:
Paul Watt, Birkbeck

AM:
Anna Minton, Reader at UEL and I've just written a book called "Big Capital: Who is London For?".

SB:
Simon Bayliss, I'm an architect and an urban design and I'm the managing Partner at HTA Design.

AV:
I'm Ashvin De Vos, I'm a local architect at Variant Office, and we worked together with Cressingham Garden to develop Cressingham Gardens People's Plan.

DR:
I'm David Roberts, I teach at the Bartlett and I'm here to read a statement which isn't mine... on behalf of Kate Macintosh.

PK:
I'm Paul Karakusevic from Karakusevic Carson Architects.

CA:
My name is [redacted for anonymity] and I run a website called Concrete Action.

GD:
Geraldine Denning, Architects for Social Housing.

AP:
I'm Andy Plant and I'm facilitating this evening. This event is split into two sections, we will have people at the table presenting their positions then we will an open discussion on the question of this debate: "What is the Architect's Role in the Housing Crisis?". This debate is an open platform for all of us to interrogate the role of the architect. I'll now read a statement on behalf of Architectural Workers.

We, Architectural Workers, are an independent network of people who work in and around the building industry - in particular, within urban regeneration. We exist to expose and critique the conditions of our work, alongside the role it plays in gentrification, social cleansing and environmental discrimination. We organise anonymously to voice the opinions we cannot have openly at work. We have been collating questions from others, both in and out of the profession, to put forward today, and you will find a list on your chairs.

We initially called for this debate in response to the furore over Patrik Schumacher's keynote speech at the World Festival of Architecture 2016. He outlined the unfettered privatization of the city, featuring the transfer of the city's council homes, as a solution to London's 'housing crisis'. Although the public shock to Schumacher's proposals was justified, what he described isn't a new idea yet to be enacted - the shift of the city's public land into private hands has been happening for decades. Schumacher is an easy scapegoat, with little working experience in estate regeneration; although he is now trying to capitalise on this opportunity (as Zaha Hadid Architects are currently working on a proposal to densify an estate in Hammersmith & Fulham, utilising the cross-subsidy model).

We want to broaden the focus of public scrutiny. Behind our office doors, we are immobilised to question how things are being done or why - yet the companies we work for make a healthy profit from it. There is little opportunity to challenge these practices on a daily basis - for risk of losing our jobs, and an endemic 'there is no alternative' culture. However, there are clear precedents of architects doing things differently. We can draw strength from them, and use them as practical models for the future.

We agree that there is a crisis in housing, but it is one of distribution, access and quality - not quantity. The rhetoric of 'crisis' creates profit for those willing to demolish and 'develop'. It does nothing but worsen the very real effects of housing insecurity.

We believe we need to re-focus on the foundational principles of both the industry's professional bodies, the RIBA and ARB Codes of Conduct: honesty, integrity and competency. We believe that the horrific murder at Grenfell Tower was enacted by a system that puts profits over people. Whilst the specific details are investigated through slow public enquiry, we cannot deny that what happened at Grenfell is an extreme example of what the architectural profession facilitates through the common-place practice of estate regeneration. People's homes are designated as brownfield sites. Buildings are reclad to make them less of an eye-sore for rich neighbours. Residents' concerns are ignored by local authorities, developers, and architects. Consultation events present schemes with scant detail, and have a pre-determined outcome. Architects extend red-line boundaries over neighbourhoods. Residents' choices are steered and managed - at the best, engaged, but never empowered. Neighbourhoods are designated as desirable - or not - and communities are moved on to make room for those with more ability to pay. It is clear that our current model of estate regeneration, and given solutions to the housing crisis, do not work in the interests of the people they claim to serve. We do not want to participate in, or profit from, this work. We believe the role of the architect is to serve the public.

We are hosting this event to scope out - as 'professionals' - what can we do differently? We have called upon specialists active in housing estate regeneration; academics who have extensively researched the current economic and social context; groups of architects and other consultants who are also calling for - and creating - alternatives; and people who have been active in fighting the negative effects of development, and questioning those who want to dictate how and where they should live.

We want to ask all architects: How do we use the agency we have? What is the alternative? ... 'What is the Architect's Role in the Housing Crisis?'

PW:
Ok, I'm going to do the non-architectural bit. I know nothing about architecture - so all I've been asked to do today is provide a bit of a framework in relationship to the housing crisis, social housing and urban regeneration. A plug for my forthcoming book, which looks at the way social housing, urban regeneration, and urban renewal has happened across social housing estates across a national perspective.

Ok, so if you look at the discourse of the regeneration industry and the professionals working in it, or politicians, essentially it's a very successful discourse - in other words - everything is doing extremely well. This was a report, a couple of years ago, this was a quote from David Lunts, who was the executive director of Housing and Land at the GLA. Basically what he is saying is London has these massive housing challenges, but it's heartening to see the huge number of successful estate regeneration schemes getting underway in the Capital. In Kidbrooke, which was the old Ferrier Estate in Greenwich, Woodberry Down in Hackney, Grahame Park in Barnet, South Acton West Hendon in Barnet - these are estates being transformed all across London. So this is a very positive narrative that you get. After researching two of those estates in particular, I've spoken to lots of residents on those estates. That is certainly the idea - that this is highly successful - and certainly not what a lot of residents themselves say and think, about the way their lives have been fundamentally transformed by the process that has gone on.

I want to talk a little bit about the rationale about what's going on right now. I think it's important to understand the way the whole thing is framed. Essentially the renewal regeneration in relationship to social housing estates. This is really now being pushed as one of the key ways to solve what is called 'London's Housing Crisis'. It's a housing crisis which is interpreted in a particular direction. There are four key arguments as to why it is then that council-built estates - and there are hundreds across London - why is it then that they need to be renewed, regenerated, and in fact demolitioned and to have new housing built on the land.

The first is demographic. What's happened since the 1980s is that London's population has increased. Many of the estates were built at a time of relatively low population. Estates like this [Cressingham Gardens] have got relatively quite a lot of green space. So the argument is that if you knock these existing estates down then you can rebuild and build at higher densities, and provide more homes, which will then help to solve the 'housing crisis'.

The second argument is an architectural aesthetic argument. There are all kinds of critiques that have been formed in relationship to the estates, and particularly I suppose the archetype of modernist-brutalist estates like the Aylesbury and the Heygate. The argument then is you can improve design standards, and particularly the environmental standards are much better now than 30 or 40 years ago - you can improve the environmental standards. Then you can replace the ugly modernist estates with the popular street. This was very much the argument that Lord Danis put forward in his Villages Report a couple of years ago. The great bits of London are the old Victorian streetscapes - what we need then is to get rid of those awful modernist estates, and then in some way return to the landscape of the Victorian City.

The third reasons is social reasons really. The argument then is that estates in London tend to have high concentrations of deprivation. So the argument then is that if you can actually deconcentrate the levels of deprivation in the area, by building new private housing, you actually end up improving

people's lives. You'll create then, in the jargon, 'mixed tenure sustainable communities'. Increasingly this is the argument that is put forward, for example in relationship to Cressingham, is that it's a win-win, because you'll also then be able to reduce your social housing waiting list.

The economics arguments are that refurbishment is too costly, as again in relation to Cressingham. Again of course the key argument as well is that you can bring in private funds, and in many ways it's bringing in these private funds that is the key thing that drives a lot of this anyway. So what's actually happened - if you take the argument that this is a fantastic thing it's going to increase the amount of housing -well yes it does. This chart from the GLA report that was done a couple of years ago, and basically what it shows is, it looks at 50 estates in London that were demolished and it looks at what the type of housing that was produced on those estates. You can see here is a 10-fold increase in the private housing. What's also gone up is what's called the intermediate level housing, shared ownership, shared equity, affordable rented products basically. Affordable rents up to 80% of market rents - that's also gone up. But as you can see from this bar chart here, the tenure that has gone down is socially rented housing. So that's gone down by eight thousand. Many of the arguments that are put forward currently by politicians is that well, 'this is the past'. We're going to enter a bright new dawn. For example, in the case of Haringey, having some very complex mechanisms that are supposed to lever in the amount of social rented housing. But the available evidence so far suggests that it hasn't happened, and there are very good reasons for that because it all relates to the issues of private finance. The point is that when the developers are involved in these kind of processes they're not doing it for charity - they're doing it to make money. Essentially they operate on a roughly 20% return on capital. If they don't get that 20% then they will argue that the scheme is unaffordable, it's financially unviable. Always what happens then, is that the element of regeneration mix that decreases, if the developer says that it is unviable, is the amount of affordable housing, contained in it is the socially rented housing.

So if you use the past as some kind of idea of what is going to happen, then the argument is that actually really if you think about the London housing crisis, not in terms of mere number of units, but exactly what housing is being produced, then it's very clear to me that knocking down estates to rebuild new mixed tenure developments won't actually do it. At the end of the day, it'll probably actually reduce the amount of socially rented housing - and it's that element of the housing crisis which is never properly factored in. That's the key factor of the housing crisis, it's been going on for forty years, it's essentially a working class problem. It's really only the last ten years as private renting has got much more expensive and the housing crisis hit middle classes, so that's become the way the housing crisis is framed.

I just want to say, where did this all come from? Where did it come from, the idea that you build all these public housing estates in a period of optimism, and then 30 or 40 years later you think 'Ok, they're a problem, lets knock them down' ? Well essentially, it came from the US, and it really comes from what's called the projects. In particular, projects, large scale public housing like the Robert Taylor Homes, which was built in 1960s and was demolished in 2007. Huge area in the south side of Chicago, cut across by two major expressways. In many ways, these projects, in particular Robert Taylor Homes, came to signify the failures of public housing. A very famous sociologist called William Julius Wilson wrote a book about the inner cities of the US, called "The Truly Disadvantaged", and what he basically argued was, that these areas, contained spatial concentrations of the really really disadvantaged. It has a strong, a very powerfully strong, racialised aspect of it in the US, because 95% of the inhabitants of Robert Taylor Homes were African American. So what then happened, and what Wilson argued was that, you had a series of what were called neighbourhood effects. The argument is then that people in Robert Taylor Homes, they're poor not just because they're poor and got low incomes, but they're also poor because they're clustered together with similar poor people

like themselves. So hence then, the argument comes forward, and this was enacted from what's called the 'Hope Six Programme' was to demolish many of the projects like Robert Taylor Homes. So the argument was that, what you have to do is, is spatially deconcentrate the poor, so you have to knock down the existing dwelling, and you have to rebuild, and you have to rebuild mixed tenure developments. The idea is that if you do that, then you'll prevent these neighbourhood effects. So that's where it comes from, and this is basically what Mike Darcy calls a 'globalised discourse of deconcentration'. This is the policy orthodoxy.

Discourse analysis in two minutes... So, the way to think about it is this, essentially there are two discourses going on. A discourse is simply a framework of knowing, and also a framework for action. By and large there are two frameworks going on. The hegemonic discourse, that is the one that dominates the policy mainstream, that dominates the mainstream thinking. Opposed to that is a counter-hegemonic discourse and oppositional discourse. Essentially the official mainstream discourse is all about tenure mixing, you have to have tenure mixing, you can't have tenure mixing of mono-tenure areas. You have public-private partnership, and what you have to have is you have to de-spatially concentrate the social tenure tenants. Tenants, then, because the place that they're living in is so awful, as with Robert Taylor Homes, they're only to glad to leave, they want to be rehoused. Consultation in this process is bottom-up, it's genuinely participative. The new homeowners who come into the estates then function as aspirational role-models for the remaining social renting tenants. Gentrification is positive, and the new communities following renewal are strong and stable, mixed and stable. At the city scale, they contribute towards an urban renaissance. And at the societal level heightened aspirations increase social mobility. It's a win-win. That's the dominant discourse, that informs the entire regeneration industry very largely. On the other side then, is a bunch of people like academics, a bunch of people then on the ground, residents who are increasingly critical because of what is actually being done to their estates. Who basically say it's actually the long term function of neo-liberalism. What it really does then is a process of social cleansing. It's a process of filtering the poor out of areas of the city. By and large many of them want to stay in these estates, particularly London estates. There is nothing wrong with them fundamentally, they're decent places to live, it's just that they've haven't been properly invested in. Consultation processes - consultation is part of the statutory process that regeneration has to go through - but from this perspective actually the consultation process is top-down and ideological. They're simply run as stamping exercises, they're not genuine. I've spoke to lots and lots of residents of lots of estates, if you use the word consultation they'll simply laugh at what's involved.

The new home owners then, rather than being aspirational role-models will simply be sealed off in their bit of the private estate behind gates. Gentrification is then state-led. Then of course the new communities that follow the regeneration rather than being mixed and stable are definitely unstable. Again, you can see some of this partitioning off in some of the new estates. There is clear physical divide between old bits of the estate and new bits of the estate.

At the city scale, what this means then, is that it's a reduced right to the city. At the national scale, what you get then is an entrench that spatially reshuffles social inequalities. The poor still stay poor, it's just that they're just not poor here, they're poor over there basically.

AP:
Right, now I'm going to add a bit of perspective for what Paul has been saying. I'm a resident here on Cressingham Gardens, and we've been through the process that he just showed you. In terms of architecture, we believe that we have an architecturally fascinating estate. When Roland Karthaus [of Karthaus Design] did the original scoping exercise for here, his plans were basically barrack blocks of flats. What we've heard from our Council, from the regeneration department is that 'it's ok,

we'll make sure you have statement architecture'. So yes, great, you're going to knock down where we live, the places that we love, and you're going to put a portland facing, a bit of fancy coping on the outside of the building, great.

Consultation, Paul also mentioned, it is an exercise in stage management. There is no other way that you can put it, as with the Aylesbury and the Heygate - it's the same here. We had Council Officers at various workshops saying that 'you can't take notes', 'no, you can't take away the hand-outs from the workshop', and basically if you asked a question they didn't like, no, strike the question off the record. Not brilliant.

Tenure mixing, well actually we've got around 70% council tenants and 30% leaseholders and freeholders here. We're already tenure-mixed, and we all get on. I'm a tenant and I'm bloody proud of it.

The model by which our Council is intending to fund this is through a Special Purpose Vehicle. They'll create a set of housing associations to manage properties. What this does is it removes my secure tenancy as a council tenant, because I can only move back onto the redeveloped estate if I give away my secure tenancy and sign up to standard assured tenancy, which we are promised will be almost as good as your secure tenancy, but of course it doesn't have the parliamentary protection that a secure tenancy has.

Environmental benefits, great. Better insulation, the problem is that, I don't know, a million tonnes of embodied carbon in this estate. The amount of trundling up and down the estate for five or six years because they want to phase the development, of lorries taking away rubble and bringing in new materials.

The company that have been awarded the design and management tenure, Mott Macdonald, have actually shown us nothing yet, except that they could have part of the Conservation Area out the back, the Brockwell Park Conservation Area, included as part of the estate. They believe they could have the Conservation Area as part of the masterplan so they could flatten it and build housing on it as well. Lambeth Council hadn't told them otherwise, because Lambeth Council don't tell anybody anything that they don't have to.

Anyway that's all I have to say on that.

AV:
Hey there, my name is Ash. I'm part of a practice called Variant Office. We're Brixton based. I was a resident on the estate for a few years at the beginning of the regen process and so I got involved in this project. With the community, after the council had finished with their first round of option appraisals, where they unilaterally discarded the options to refurbish the estate. And turned around to the community once they'd been offered 5 options to choose from, and told them only one is viable, and that's the full demolition.

So, briefly, I partly got involved because the community were keen to understand the truth behind the Council's claims. One of the key claims was that if we demolish this estate, then we can add more Council housing. Great, in principle. However, they could only add 21 new Council houses in a new development of 464. The community were quite curious to test this hypothesis. The question to me was, is there a way to add value to the estate? Is there a way to increase the amount of Council Housing on the estate without fundamentally changing the format of the estate, and without removing people from the estate?

One of the issues we faced was that everyone had already been over-consulted. Living on the estate I remember the amount of times Social Life used to knock on our doors, and ask us the same questions, attempting to lead us in a particular direction. What we were keen to do, our strategy was, 'How do we get the community to talk about the problems?'. In different parts of the estate there are different problems. 'How do we get them or re-enfranchise them in the process?'. Give them ownership of what is fundamentally theirs, and the process, and let them take control of that.

The strategy was, rather than saying 'Here are the answers, we are the architects, here are the answers', we set out a series of questions on some engagement boards. I'll put the boards up and talk very quickly about them. Part of the strategy as well was rather than having one, always having meetings, everyone coming to the Rotunda and making it formal - we instead printed five or six sets of these, and on each walk way someone would keep the boards and they would pass them around, they would meet up for cups of tea and discuss the problems, discuss the proposals, take notes and then eventually over the process of a few months where this was happening in a very informal way between residents. Residents taking ownership of the design process, and also of the decisions without someone else taking notes on their behalf. We were able to develop a robust strategy that ended up in what was the People's Plan - which is fundamentally a technical document to match the Council technical documents.

Very briefly, one of the key things we found when looking at the estate was actually there were significant amounts of underused areas. There is a void block to the north of the site, which is six disused houses, and then there's also 5,500 sqm of completely, well very, underused car parking right on the perimeter of the estate. Easily accessible by vehicles. So this, to put it in perspective, is around thirteen five-a-side pitches, that's a lot of space. So what we sort of developed, we looked at the site, we looked at the perimeter, we talked about where things could go, we talked about how the community could get involved in developing these spaces, in very informal ways, maybe they would come together and talk and build temporary structures. Those things could develop into little shops and cafes for example, because actually one of the amazing things about the estate is that, it acts as a filter through which people from the west of Brixton, go through into the park. So there is a thoroughfare that happens already, so how do we engage, how do we enliven this space a bit more?

Then, going a little bit further, we started to do some analysis on the spaces, we looked at the void blocks to the north of the site. We developed a twelve two-bed unit model that we could test for viability, because as we all know it's not won on design, it's all on spreadsheets. So we have to play this game as well. So we also developed these two bed infills, that slot into each of the carparks. As you walk around, you'll see these carpark spaces. They can be quite spacious - these all complied with the necessary regulations. We engaged with the existing character, we're keen to make clear that it's not so alien. In Islington, TfL have used a similar strategy where there is a disused car parking space, which they infilled with housing quite successfully. Within that strategy, we developed this proposal.

We also looked a bit more at some of the previous claims by the council. Amongst them of course was accessibility. Apparently there was a lot of problems with accessibility, so we went through and analysed every single level change right across the estate. To try to establish what the problems were, what we found interesting was that most of the problems were caused by bad repairs to steps. So, any steps that historically had been left alone were actually left alone actually complied with the relevant regulations. Any steps that had layers and layers of tarmac added on, like this one, actually stopped complying. Then the Council, at the cost of £40,000, added new pavement around the estate a few years ago, and lo and behold those steps didn't comply either.

Through this process, we developed other routes that less-abled people, or as the population aged, we could find accessible routes to pretty much every property on the estate. What were also keen to do was engage with this idea of mutual swapping. Looking at how the community within the estate can facilitate change, because there are people on the estate who live in larger houses, but it's actually pretty difficult to swap with others within the estate. Most were happy to exchange, but they weren't actually allowed to, because they had to join a central list and then people would refurbish - and maybe they would never return to this estate. So there were lots of policies that prevented, set-up by the Council, that prevented this access.

We looked at energy, apparently increased energy efficiency as a result of the new build. We actually found that the estate generally performed better than average houses, the Victorian stock that we live in. But we worked with an engineer to look at other strategies that we can develop to generate income, maybe through solar power because we have 206 roofs that face due south. You get whole-house ventilation, because one of the biggest problems that face the community, particularly certain types is the fact that there's mould in the houses. This problem is coming because of some incredibly shoddy refurbishment to double-glazing. Trickle vents, insufficient extract ventilation in the flat, and these can all be resolved through better design, or better considered design, rather than shopping them off to some contractor to do the job badly. So, fundamentally our approach was an approach that focused on refurbishment, because we believe that refurbishing our current stock is actually better in the long terms. Because if you actually look at the UCL engineering study, what this has proven over sixty years, a new-build and a refurbished property that is to the same time would probably cost the same in sixty years from this point on.

We looked at infill in unused spaces like the car parking, we proposed alternative uses to maximise productivity and focus of revenue generation. Focusing on community control of decision making, of the process. The community is working separately to look at taking over the management of the estate as well. We looked at improving accessibility and energy efficiency. For us its an evolutionary project, we're still developing these ideas, it's not something that because we're not here we don't engage. We've been talking to some community groups that work with [inaudible].

One of the predicaments that was faced on our original scheme, was that the leftover space behind the housing was probably very undesirable. There's 1500 sqm there, and using a community growing project there - we could potentially produce 30,000 salad bags every two weeks. That's quite a lot of money, that money could fund housing, that money could fund refurbishment.

As you can see, the people's plan proved to be more interesting to people. Finally a reflection of the lessons learned, design plays a very small role in this process. Viability was fundamentally what the council worked on, it's all won on spreadsheets. Very dubiously as well. The misuse of language. They say 'the new community that you build', I mean community - having lived in one that is amazing and vibrant - does not occur overnight when a group of people randomly buy something. It takes 40 years for people to get to know each other. There's a problem as well between this contextualism and this culture of 'make anywhere'. That's partly not entirely architects' fault, but if it's a profit-driven thing, you are looking at how quickly you can turn things around. Whereas these estates were designed with love and care. I was lucky enough to speak to the project architect of this estate, and the stories he told me about the development of the estate were fascinating. These are the things the Council has no idea about, but we won't reveal them because they're going to prove to be quite interesting later on.

Ultimately it's a closed game. Architects can use their agency to go in and develop community

projects, help a community build a centre, or work with a church, but actually almost impossible for smaller, agile types of practices - practices that are hungry to actually engage with the housing crisis, to even get close to it. Because it's in the interest of some to keep it closed, that's something that I find very frustrating. I know there are practices out there that work really hard, and have worked really hard to break into that game, but it is fundamentally a very difficult game to break into, and that is something that should change I believe.

PK:
Good evening everyone, I'm Paul Karakusevic from Karakusevic Carson Architects. We set the practice up seventeen years ago to work on public buildings, public housing. At the time, there was very little interest in all of the discussions we are having now. This is what new housing looked like in the day, mainly built by housing associations. Councils had obviously been closed down fifteen to twenty years before by Margaret Thatcher. I won't go through all of these, but this is what new housing looked like in the '90s. As an office, as a practice, we were not that interested in the private sector, we were really engaged with housing even then, in the late '90s. We built a practice of just over eighty people to almost work entirely in the public sector, so these are some of the things we are doing on a daily basis in the practice to push forward the highest quality of housing in public building in the UK. As Ashvin just said, its very very difficult to get into the public sector, because of procurement. There's a former club of practices - no one was overly welcoming back in the day and we have been working now with a new range of public clients; 12 local authorities, the GLA, TFL, the Olympic Legacy - some of which are doing a great job. We think there is a new generation. Ihink obviously there is a lot of pessimism about the housing scene, the housing crisis, even though it's been going on since 1919, there are a lot of big issues we are all trying to deal with. These are some of the people... Also as an office we see hardship and lack of opportunity for lots of young people, and we're helping with the Stephen Lawrence Trust a lot, and also through the Royal College Of Art, a bursary fund for disadvantaged kids trying to study architecture.

A little bit of our portfolio, fairly recent projects here and some earlier ones. We are working with Hackney Council on the Kings Crescent Estate, which is a partial refurb of about 250 homes, and about 450 new build properties in the wider masterplan. The first phase is just finishing off - so this is Hackney Council developing and building directly.

This is one of our early projects which was a series of infill buildings on the Mansford Estate in Tower Hamlets, next to Keeling House, with a community led Housing Association. This was probably our first proper project, which was a masterplan for just under 200 new homes, mainly on infill sites - bits of car parking, a former building which had already been sanctioned for demolition about ten years earlier but was still standing, that was the Claredale Project which is here, and then pieces of underutilized land in and around the edges of the estate. That raised, built, 100 new affordable homes, socially rented homes and raised about another 10 million pounds to help refurbish 740 existing properties which were all very beautifully designed but needed a little bit of love and care.

The Colville Estate, so this is the first phase, it started ten years ago, Bridport House which was the first wave of replacement homes.
This is the Fenwick Estate in which we were working directly for Transport For London, but looking to create 50 or 60 new affordable homes and a new community hall for the Fenwick Estate, on three small pieces of underutilized or leftover land next to the railway and the Fenwick. Here are some images of the 100% socially rented homes that will be gifted to Lambeth by Transport For London.

A recent project is London Borough of Enfield, a new street of 38 new properties. Approximately half are socially rented, and half are shared ownership or intermediate rent, again directly for the London

Borough of Enfield.

This is a recent publication, which I noticed one of you had been adapting quite nicely, but we definitely set up the practice to work on public housing and we are very very engaged with this discussion. And we think if it is done very carefully it doesn't lead to social cleansing, there are 25 case studies in that book which we think are probably the best examples in Europe right now.

In the final minutes - so this started five years ago - we were called by a group of residents directly, which is the first time that has happened in our career at that point. They had been really fighting with Camden Council for ten years to either refurbish properly or rebuild the Bacton Estate, they called us directly based on the Tower Hamlets project. We worked very closely with the steering group of the residents association there to work on the masterplan process, and then start to build the first phase of the replacement homes, which are the homes here in the red. These are now completed, in the first wave. 50 families and residents have moved into the first phase, indirectly commissioned by Camden Council - so eventually Camden and the residents formed a good relationship. And the residents have been involved, in fact leading the whole process all the way through, and this is a fairly recent photo of the new playground in the first phase. This is just under 50 socially rented properties for the council on the original terms, and 22 market sale flats that helped pay and contribute to the first phase. In the background there is the Bacton High Rise Tower which from the overall masterplan received 4 million pounds, for a light touch refurb, to give that an extra lease of life.

The things we believe in; probably not going to be too confrontational here. Picking up on that we are now a slightly more established practice, something we believe in is giving the next generation an opportunity to work on public buildings. We believe in community building, community land trusts, we are helping establish one of the largest community land trusts in the UK right now in Kings Cross, which includes about 750 affordable homes for the local community.

What we don't like about London right now, which goes back to this sort of issue of are we in a crisis or not, but I think these are all things that contribute to a crisis of quality and potentially quantity: bad procurement, bad contracting, contractors getting involved too early in the process, short-term thinking - which obviously has a horrendous impact on everyone - the commercial sector, things like the Haringey Development Vehicle, which we think is disastrous, lack of choice. Things that we think maybe could happen in the next 5 years which we think could maybe help the current problems we face; a bigger range of home builders, obviously the Councils are doing a little bit at the moment, the housing associations are doing very little, but it's obviously dominated by 5 huge construction and housebuilders nationally. An end to this hideous culture of value engineering, which again just erodes all sorts of quality and value for the buildings that we are trying to make and the public sector clients that we are working for, a bigger role for residents and more community building. Thank you.

CA: [video contribution]

Brian Anson was an architect and planner, provocateur, educator, political activist and storyteller, who was perhaps best known for his participation in the Covent Garden redevelopment in the 1970s, in London. As a planner overseeing the redevelopment, he lost his job at the Greater London Council when he sided with residents in their fight to save their neighbourhood from demolition and gentrification. Brian had an attitude that everyone was an expert, particularly in the built environment. The real experts were those who made it, those who lived in it. There is no denying the sheer passion, energy and commitment that Brian gave, not only to communities all over Britain and Ireland, but to the students and colleagues he worked with. He and others gave voice to some of the

most underheard and hidden parts of society, and they did it through architecture and planning. For architecture to become a much more political profession, architects should place greater value on the importance of both storytelling and story-listening in their role as agents in the built environment in society.

Jim Monahan: "Because the market was moving, the authorities had considered that they must come up with a redevelopment proposal. The market occupied about 13 acres and the whole of the area that they were considering was about 100 acres, so really it was quite a small patch that actually was physically affected by the move of the market and number of building. But then I think the primary reason that it was being motivated was one of pure greed.

"Hotels, nothing for us, nothing certainly for the local people. No homes for poor people or poorer people, working class people - there would have been nothing"

Jim Monahan: "I thought it was utterly undemocratic that you were going to take land away from people who lived in the area and give it to developers, and I must say I was appalled by what I saw, I didn't like it and I began to talk to other people and then we started a group of us said we ought to let everybody in the area know really what was happening. Well initially it was just to stop the redevelopment proposals, so to try to say widening Charing Cross Road, knocking all these buildings down and getting rid of the theatre and all these things was clearly bonkers and could you please abandon those proposals."

Penny Saunders - Covent Garden Community Association: "At that time there was someone called Brian Anson, he came from the GLC, he was very very, he was an architect he worked for the GLC, walked out one day and said 'I'm not going to work for these people, what they are doing is wrong', and came to Covent Garden. He was a very strong part of why the CGCA was set up."

CA - "In early 1974 a group of radical architectural students operating under the guise of the Architects Revolutionary Council announced their presence to the world. Staging a dramatic press conference and publishing an inflammatory manifesto which called for the destruction of the RIBA, and the establishment of an international movement towards community architecture. The ARC emerged from a unit at the AA run by Brian Anson, and defined themselves as 'architectural revolutionaries'. Their manifesto stated that 'when words such as 'destroy', 'enemy' and 'overthrow' are employed, they are meant. We wish to create a situation whereby every time a student passes a building such as centre point he vows that he or she will never work in a practice that is involved in such obscenities. Whenever a student walks through a gentrified area, where massive improvement grants have enabled landlords to evict long standing tenants, and raise the value of their property hundred-fold he or she will vow never to work in firms that indulge in such activities'."

David Bieda - CGCA "Because there was such a big protest in London, and people supporting the protest from all over the country, there had to be what was called 'a public inquiry'. And when that was finished the inspector would recommend whether the Greater London Council got the powers to carry out its plan. The Council had a very famous lawyer called John Taylor QC, and we started on Monday, and I think on the Wednesday he came up to me after the hearing had ended for that day and said 'I would like to invite you all round for dinner'. So the Friday evening we all went round to his flat, and he gave us advice on how to help demolish the Greater London Council case, because he didn't believe in it.

"When they listed all those buildings - 250 - I thought 'that's it, the plans gone' and it did, the plan went, out the window.

“It achieved the saving of Covent Garden, as we know it.”

Jenny Healey: “How do I feel? Very very happy. That we was all going to be able to stay and live in Covent Garden and hopefully bring our children up to do the same.

“So the next problem was: What were we going to do with all those buildings that were saved, that were historic, and what use could we use them for? Our main agenda for the area really was the community was housing, for ordinary people.

“The minister was called Jeffrey Rippin, and he agreed to kill the old plan and set up a new one, on the condition that we talked to the people of Covent Garden and worked out the new plan with them. We couldn’t just be a little group of people and say ‘we think this would be a nice thing to do.’”

David Bieda - CGCA “And so what happened that something called the Covent Garden Forum set up, and the Covent Garden Forum ran from 1974 until 1986 and I was on it the whole time. There were 15 residents elected from the electoral register and 15 businesses who were elected from the business register. And every single the GLC discussed had to come to this body.”

Geraldine Pettersson: “My job title for the GLC was Senior Planner with the Covent Garden team, and we were a small team. I had the responsibility of getting local people involved in the new plan, so it could reflect what local people wanted”

CA:
Whistleblowing has a proud history of helping to create change! By artificially speeding up the availability of information it creates pressure on the existing system. Yes, there are risks involved. We have full instructions on our website on how to send us information securely and anonymously. We also have a postal address on the bottom of this leaflet. It’s as simple as printing and dropping in the post.

DR:
Hi, I wish I were not here but in my place you would hear the tender fury of Kate Macintosh, who is an Architect in her seventies and who hasn’t really stopped, and who wrote the statement that Architectural Workers asked me to read out. But I think it’s important to give some context to Kate, because she designed sanctuaries for the public good. Like Cressingham, her buildings are inventive and generous and really intimate, and I implore you to instead of those slides go and visit Dawson’s Heights in Dulwich and Leigham Court Gardens in Lambeth to see what she can do. Like Cressingham the homes she designed are cherished by their communities of residents, and like Cressingham you can’t actually visit them without being moved by the sorts of possibilities that architecture has for creating humanity, and the inhumanity in people that wish to tear them down. So Kate offers this sort of wider picture historically and socially, and concludes with some advice. She says:

“During the thirty years of the post-WW2 consensus, across Europe, when it was generally accepted that decent shelter, education and health provision were the legitimate responsibility of governments, housing was not seen as primarily an investment, a repository for wealth, to offer the best form of security available, but as right, which any civilized society should confer on its citizens, as is recognized under the Geneva convention.

“Once housing is viewed as a commodity, for speculation and trade, exploitation of the vulnerable

follows naturally in its wake. That in our wealthy country, there are 28% children growing up in poverty, without the protection of a secure home, shows an abrogation by government of its first responsibility, to protect its citizens from harm.

“The argument that Britain is not building enough housing is widely accepted, though not by Danny Dorling in ‘All that is Solid’, who argues that there is sufficient accommodation, and that the housing problem in the South is caused by acute mal-distribution.

“That 75% of houses completed in inner London are sold abroad, off plans, to serve as financially secure investments, whether occupied or not, is both a symptom and cause of this malaise. There are more than 20,000 homes left empty in London some for as long as 10 years. These buy-to-let, asset-speculators intend simply to cash in on the rising market.

“Rent in England is costing, an average of 52% of gross disposable income, while the figure for London is estimated by some to be as high as 72% excluding housing benefit. Also, the private rented sector is increasingly dominated by a few multi-millionaires, some with close links to the present government.

“The failure to control the private rented sector can be seen when the housing benefit bills the UK redistributes cost significantly more in tax than all other European countries, costing Britain nearly 10 times as much as Germany.

“45% of land with planning permission in Greater London is owned by those who have limited intention of developing the plots. Indeed, despite the number of plots with planning permission having doubled in London in the last decade, construction levels have remained flat.

“The important over-arching factor is that the neo-liberal model, which has determined the weather, financial, cultural and social at least since 1979, is broken.

“Governments may not admit it but they know it, and are thrashing around for a new model. So there will be turbulent times ahead, but there is hope and we have to fight to keep the hope alive.

“Clearly there is not a great deal of enlightened patronage around for architects at present, Higher education is the one field where it still hangs in. But the universities are very badly affected by ‘brexit’ and so that will probably not last.

“Seek work in situations in which you can be sure you are not harming the commonweal, and in which you are learning to improve your skill base, even if this is not directly in the field of architecture.”

GD:
Architects for Social Housing was set up in March 2015 in order to respond architecturally to London’s housing ‘crisis’. We are a working collective of architects, urban designers, engineers, surveyors, planners, film-makers, photographers, web designers, artists, writers and housing campaigners operating with developing ideas under set principles.

First among these is the conviction that increasing the housing capacity on existing council estates, rather than redeveloping them as luxury apartments, is a more sustainable solution to London’s housing needs than the demolition of the city’s social housing, enabling, as it does, the continued existence of the communities they house.

ASH operates on three levels of activity: Architecture, Community and Propaganda.
We propose architectural opportunities to estate demolition
We support estate communities in the resistance to the demolition of their homes
We disseminate information to counter negative preconceptions about council and social housing.

As seen in both the ARB and RIBA codes of practice, Architects have an ethical duty to the wider environment – and that doesn't just mean some abstract notion of environmental sustainability, but refers to all communities and people affected by our work, and as such it goes above and beyond simple contractual obligations.

In the case of estate regeneration, we therefore have a professional responsibility to challenge the brief to establish what is indeed in the best interests of the community, which may contradict the wishes of the client. There is an obligation to demand the client properly explore alternatives to demolition when we know that almost every estate regeneration scheme to date has resulted in the loss of social or council housing, and that residents will be hugely economically, socially and environmentally disadvantaged as a result.

At ASH we also believe that in order to begin to address this so called crisis we must first challenge the propaganda we are being fed, to question its role, its motivations, and who stands to benefit from what is being proposed. Architects are very good at solving problems – but first we need to identify the right problems by asking the right questions.

We are repeatedly told that London is facing an unprecedented housing crisis, and Tory and Labour agree that we must build 50,000 new homes a year to address this.

We are told that the majority of land available to Local authorities is the newly categorised brownfield land on council estates. Which, as a direct result of their architecture, are havens for crime and anti-social behavior, and in states of decay beyond repair. Due to central Government cuts, we are told that local authorities can no longer afford to subsidise council housing, or even refurbish what they have, so the only option is to demolish existing estates, and rebuild at higher densities providing the additional market or affordable housing needed to finance it. At the same time we are told that regeneration improves the economic and social wellbeing of the existing residents, housing them in homes which will be built to much higher environmental and other standards."

Myth no 1 – The housing crisis. This is not a housing crisis. This is a housing boom. There is nothing accidental about it – on the contrary, ever increasing inequality in housing is intrinsic to the nature of predatory capitalism.

Myth no 2: It's a case of supply and demand. Simply building more unaffordable housing, does not solve the problem of affordability, on the contrary – research in Toronto into the phenomenon of 'induced demand', shows that it actually pushes prices up. It's been demonstrated that although estate regeneration schemes may increase the density of housing on estates, contrary to what we are told in fact it has resulted in a net loss of over 8000 council or social rented homes since 2005.

Myth no 3 – There is no space left. The top 9 building companies are currently sitting on land on which you could build 600,000 homes in England. This is a deliberate attempt to drive up the price of land. Colin Wiles in Inside housing magazine in 2013 showed there is twice as much land in UK given over to golf courses than to there is to housing, and As Danny Dorling pointed out according to the 2011 census we are already living in a time where there are more rooms per person than ever before.

Myth no 4 - 'Affordable' housing. Now that this insidious term 'affordable' has been accepted in the policy lexicon, there is no longer any requirement to provide any homes for social rent, and local authorities and housing associations consistently replace social rent with 'affordable' which could be anything up to 4 times the cost of a social rent – anything but affordable.

Myth no 5 - Social and council housing is subsidized.In fact, through their rent, tenants on estates pay off the full cost of the housing they use, plus their share of the construction debt. Most post war estates have paid off their construction debt years ago, and are in fact now making money for the local authority. It is RTB, help to buy, housing benefit to private landlords and the vast transfer of public land into private hands in the name of estate regeneration which is subsidized.

Myth no 6 – Refurbishment is not viable. In terms of financial 'viability' – rather than being the more expensive option, Refurbishment is significantly more cost effective (and environmentally and socially more sustainable) than full demolition. In addition, as can be seen by the increasing number of new developments potentially built so badly they need to be torn down – Orchard village to name just one – what is being built in its place is not of a higher quality but worse.

Myth no 7 – Regeneration is good for you! In terms of improving the lives of residents on council estates, Joseph Rowntree's report in May 2016 showed that regeneration projects have a negative impact on existing residents – increased rents actually make their economic position worse, pushing people ultimately into private rental accommodation and homelessness and the uprooting of the community removes the close links which are the bedrock of our social infrastructures.

Myth no 8 – Architecture breeds Crime. Estates like the Barbican and the newly privatised Balfron Tower - which both conform to all the crime inducing architectural qualities of other brutalist housing estates - clearly demonstrate there is no direct relationship between architecture and crime and antisocial behavior. The attack on the architecture of estates by organisations like Create Streets is an ideological one, not an aesthetic one, and is intrinsically linked with a desire to eliminate the welfare state and social housing.

Contrary to what we are constantly told, housing estates are neither inherently flawed in their design and construction, nor come to the end of their natural lifespan. Rather, through the process of managed decline, estates such as Central Hill in Crystal Palace, (and indeed here at Cressingham Gardens) have been deliberately run down by the local authority, in this case Lambeth Labour council. The resulting state of disrepair is then cited by those same authorities to support their argument that there is no alternative to demolition and redevelopment.

The subsequent denigration of council housing by the media as places of crime and anti-social behavior leads to the wider cultural acceptance of the estate demolition programme by the general public.

To the right an image tweeted by PRP, the local authority's architect, accompanied with the question 'Would you walk down this alleyway?' This is ASH's alternative narrative confronting the propaganda of estate demolition with the reality of estate living.

Could you live on this estate?
Trapped in a concrete jungle?
surrounded by monotonous grey facades
Isolated by poorly lit walkways
In homes with no individuality

Lacking in care and love
a lack of communal spaces
caught in a poverty trap
a haven for crime and drug dealing
With gangs of kids roaming the streets?

These last few slides were taken at an event ASH organizes called Open Garden Estates, in which a dozen estates across London took part last year. This is an event designed to challenge the negative propaganda around council estates, as well as provide residents with an opportunity to organise their campaigns, and make contact with other estates in similar situations.

Moving on to ASH's design work, I'm going to briefly show some of the work that we are doing with residents on housing estates under threat of demolition. The plans are then used to challange the local authority's architects plans by demonstrating there are more sustainable alternatives to demolition. We call this 'Resistance by Design'.

Central Hill estate in crystal palace was designed around the existing trees and landscape, and is made up of pedestrian 'ways' off which pairs of stacked maisonettes are arranged over the hillside, with every home having a view of London to the north, and a courtyard to the south.

It's an estate of 456 homes, ranging from one-bed studios to 6 bed houses,

All of which are currently threatened with total demolition.

In contrast to this, ASH's proposal retains and refurbishes all the existing homes, keeps as many of the existing trees as possible, while making improvements to the landscape and community facilities, all paid for by the rent or sale of some of the new homes.

ASH's proposal identifies the possibility for over 200 new homes on Central Hill estate – roughly 40% of the existing estate. Infill housing in yellow occupies unused and derelict sites. Roof extensions, in pink, consist of one or two additional lightweight prefabricated floors on top of some of the existing flats around the edges of the estate where they do not obscure any views.

The chimneys of the long abandoned boiler house are retained, which is converted into 28 flats, with workshops on the ground floor, providing a new entry to the estate.

Fringe housing around the edge of the estate provides new wheelchair accessible housing and access while also tying the estate formally into the surrounding street pattern.

Roof extensions can be designed to respond sensitively to the qualities of the existing architecture and landscape.

The ASH scheme has been costed by a quantity surveyor, who calculated that the construction of 220 new homes and new community facilities comes to around £75 million. If we assume a similar cost per square metre, not taking into account the highly complex site conditions, which necessitated one of the most expensive estate projects of its time, or the costs of demolition, the notional cost of simply rebuilding the existing 456 homes would come to over £100 million. And that's before a single new home has been built.

Residents from West Ken and Gibbs Green estates in West London have been fighting for 8 years

against the demolition of their homes by the developer CAPCO as part of their £1.2billion earls court development. In September 2015, ASH was approached by the residents of the estates to do a feasibility study for additional homes and community facilities, and refurbishment and improvements to the existing homes and landscape. This feasibility study is the basis of the residents' current application for the right to transfer the estates from the local council into their own ownership and management.

We organized walks, which enabled residents to show and tell us about the area.As part of the walks we arranged to visit inside people's homes, to get an understanding of each of the typical layouts, and how they worked. It was also an opportunity to hear the residents talk about what their homes and the estate meant to them. This revealed one of the key issues at the heart of the current problem, namely that these are people's homes that are being destroyed. Not simply units for sale or investment. Not simply commodities to be exchanged. But well-loved places of memory and experience.

We held several design workshop events to enable us to get to know the estates and the residents, and drew maps to represent what they said.

In response to the residents expressed need and desires gathered over around 6 months, ASH produced specific designs for each site they had identified, and we exhibited these to over 60 residents, who both presented and commented on the proposals.

The final design proposes around 250-330 new homes on the estate (again around 40%). This includes roof extensions in pink and infill housing shown in yellow, whose interventions were also able to address urban design concerns residents may have with the existing estate.

Refurbishments to the existing blocks included winter gardens and roof extensions to the tower blocks and to the existing lower maisonettes as well as improved insulation, ventilation and renewable energy strategies.

Beside a renovated playground, ASH proposed new single-storey housing for elderly and disabled residents who are downsizing in response to the bedroom tax, or in need of supported accommodation. This could in turn free up the larger homes for families that are currently living in overcrowded accommodation elsewhere on the estate. Some of the currently underused garages could be converted to workshops, which could provide some income for the estate, and low cost workspace for residents, and would also improve the social qualities of this outdoor space.

A new infill block adjacent to an existing tower provides a new community space on the ground floor, which could open up to Franklin Square for community events.

The project has been costed, and a viability assessment done, and we are confident that the rent or sale of a certain number of these 330 new homes would enable all the remaining homes to be refurbished, and all the proposed improvements to the landscape to take place.

ASH's model of the estate proposals now remains with the residents who use it to describe the project to visitors, in this case Mayoral candidate Sian Berry, who continues to be very supportive of the project.

The architect is more often than not a key agent in the social cleansing of our cities, refusing to engage with the wishes of the communities they are designing out, putting profit over people and the

environment, and ultimately the sustainable future of our cities.

Architects today need to take a good look at the way in which their work is contributing to increasing inequality of wealth and health in our cities, and ask themselves – whose side am I on?

Resistance by design: Architecture is always political.

SB:
If architecture is always political then I guess as architects, we must become politicians. We definitely welcome this debate - it feels like there's a crisis in housing now, for us it feels like perhaps there always has been, and I would agree with many of the people here that it's mostly a crisis of quality, it's about balance, I think it's also a crisis of quantity. In terms of looking at population decline and growth in London over the last seventy years or so, it's relatively clear how that's come about, but of course we are not necessarily doing all the right things as people, as citizens, and certainly as politicians to insure the right things are done to solve that.

We have spent, as a practice, forty-eight years working in nothing really but housing and we were known as community architects back in the day. It was incredibly uncool, we spent an awful lot of time, a bit before my time, working with existing buildings, existing communities – a little bit like Covent Garden - that have been slated for demolition, for clearance, with everybody being displaced, and we spent a lot our time working with communities to regenerate, in the terms of what it was known as then. Very different from what we associate the word with now, communities like this which have gone on from strength to strength.

Quite often we change the buildings, we put entrances at the ground floor, I guess we followed that new urban sense that we had to have front doors and activity on the street. So we brought back design thinking to our work, but essentially it was always about working with communities who have been there for a very long time. We quite often go back and speak to our communities to understand how they have evolved over time, and see what lessons can be learnt from the people who actually live in the homes that we've been involved in.

Some of those estates that we worked in had some quite radical refurbishment, with buildings turned around to keep that life on the street, something that perhaps has gone away as a key driver, even though it's still an orthodoxy. Quite a bit of it involved partial demolition and infill in the way that we've been seen proposed on some of the estates that ASH have been involved with, and maybe Paul [Karakusevic] as well. We learnt quite early on that style wasn't particularly important, we did some things that some might see to be criminal. They were probably very much of their era, the 1980s had some style problems, and you can the fencing as well which actually still looks fantastic and the landscape which has been really well tendered and loved by the residents over the years. And these places have thrived and continue to be incredibly popular.

We have looked at tower blocks, obviously that's a very difficult subject at the moment, but we have refurbished some of the most distinctive houses in Tower Hamlets, and if you go along Commercial Road you will see this cradle on the top it's actually a load bearing brickwork structure, one of the tallest in the world, and it post-tensions with the existing building that was retained below.

But we have also knocked quite a few down as well, and all of that has always come about historically through working with the community and understanding what the community wants. So I really welcome the thoughts and statistics that we have seen, and I really understand the narrative that Paul [Watt] presented right at the beginning of this evening. But I do sort of seek for more

information and better understanding about what it is that citizens are keen to have in their future housing aspirations. Because many of the communities we have worked in, and this was a fifteen year project were engaged with in Dundee - the absolute driver for them was not a 20-storey multi tower block, on the very outskirts of the city, but actually low rise housing down to the ground. And what we put back wasn't particularly architecturally revolutionary, but it changed the lives of the people there, and it did change many of the problems that were associated with people who lived on that estate, and we worked with them for an incredibly long time. And I remember the early meetings when people threatened to leave because it was going to take so long and they were still there fifteen years later.

So HTA built a practice of about 170 people, we are architects, but we researchers and master-planners, we have planners, sustainability assessors, daylight consultants, graphic designers, website designers and people who specialise in engaging in the community. It's incredibly important to what we do - we believe in it wholly - but of course the times we are living in are changing, and we work also across the private sector as well as the public sector because we recognise that a lot of housing is being delivered by these groups, and that why should architects shy away from those that have traditionally built some of the worst housing across the UK. So we believe we should engage with all sectors in housing from community builders, self-builders to private housebuilders, through to communities, local authorities and housing associations alike. Through that we've managed to increase density in suburban locations that have helped deliver more homes, and we've created really innovative low-energy and low-cost housing that has been taken up by the community, and become incredibly successful. But of course what you want to hear from me is what we've done in regenerating estates, and how we might set the balance of any damage that we perceive that comes about through that process.

So South Acton, a very large estate which has been mentioned earlier on this evening which we have been working with the client for a very long time to deliver new housing, now I welcome more statistics but we are told that 80% of residents when the process started wanted to leave the estate and put in for a transfer from the estate. We understand that 80% have stayed on the estate and wish to remain for the future when the buildings are built, and when we work with communities like Ebury Bridge and you can see some of the buildings are retained and some are redeveloped, we worked with them for three years to understand the 'do nothing' option through to a comprehensive redevelopment. At the end of that process Westminster gave them an optional vote - 60% of residents came out and 78% of them voted for a partial redevelopment, and then we worked with the residents on the top heights of the buildings and they pushed the height, because they wanted additional windows and kitchens and bathrooms, and that was the best way to achieve it.

So through that we developed research across housing estates, across suburbs where intensification comes about where we can deliver the additional numbers because if the population of London has dropped from 8.5 million at the end of the war to about 6.5 million in about 1991. You will know better than me, that's easy to see how our housing numbers relieve the pressure, a lot of that reduction in London was from the inner boroughs, in fact the highest reduction was from the inner boroughs, and so now what we see is a reversal of that.

Which brings me to the Aylesbury Estate, many of you will know that, it's a very large area, very clear to see the boundary of that estate on the plan. It's in Southwark, about 2755 homes I think, although some of them have already been demolished.

I would argue that this is not a great place for people to live, coming back to that original argument of quality. There are many many council estates as you have seen - we have helped extend the life of

those, but I would definitely argue that Aylesbury is not one of those estates. It is not a great place to live, the vast majority of the people we've worked with for the past five years are desperate to see this estate knocked down. That is not true of a place like Cressingham Gardens, that is very obvious, but it is true of places like the Aylesbury estate. Its pretty bleak and it has some significant design issues. This is the front door for a three bedroom flat, that's on the second floor and their living room and their garden is on the ground floor, so they come up to the second floor to go back down.

Of course it's not all bad, there are great bits of the Aylesbury Estate, there are some small pockets of fantastic open space, some of the designs of the house and the dual-aspect nature are really really really good. But overwhelmingly, the problems of the estate would be very very challenging to deal with, through design terms, to deal with through refurbishment. So, we have worked with the community for, as I say since 2013, and as I say most of the people - although there are obviously some strong activists, some of them in this room against it, overwhelmingly the people we see in those events are desperate to see change. We have engaged with them in a wide variety of ways, to get children to speak to old people to understand a bit about the history of the estate, to make things that can then bring ownership to the estate, and we've been involved in working with film crews to record the estate, a couple of those people have come on to work in our office and learn and develop.

So we developed a masterplan, it was a very long slow progress, you can see the difference between the existing figure ground of the estate has developed in the masterplan to something much more I suppose similar to the surrounding area, and what's not obvious in that figure ground is that the actual amount of open space is generally going up, and we have gone on to do the detailed design for the first 1813 new homes, 50% affordable of which 75% are for social rent. We have got houses, 5 bedroom houses with front doors, which are not available on the existing street, we've got affordable social housing next to private sale housing, they look the same, we've got fantastic open space, and we've got communal gardens which everybody can access, everybody has the same front door, everybody has the same access to [inaudible], and there is a fantastic array of community services going back into the estate.

AM:
Okay so I have about fifteen minutes, and I am going to try and be quick. Some of my slides and what I have to say overlaps with Paul [Watt]. So I have got images, I'll flick through them pretty quickly. It's basically a game of two halves. The first part I am going to talk about the current reconfiguration of London, a very quick snapshot of the housing crisis... very quickly and then what is the architect's' role within that crisis, because that's the question for tonight, isn't it.

Okay, that's the book I've just written [Big Capital:Who is London For?, 2017] so if you're interested in what I have to say there's more in there.

So I think, the first thing to have on the top of our minds, how are actually architects – a lot of you in this room – contributing to the housing crisis, because arguably architects are contributing directly. Obviously it's a multi-faceted crisis with many many actors, but architects are central to this reconfiguration of London. Which here we have the former Heygate Estate, Elephant Park going up, the sort of hoardings that characterise contemporary London everywhere you go.

This is a CGI image of Elephant Park, the biggest public park in London I am told since the Victorian era. But it's of course not a public park but a private park. I am focusing on this because I have more information about Elephant Park, and the Heygate.

This is the Heygate, 3000 homes for people on predominantly low incomes, demolished in 2014 and

part of a much wider picture, as Paul [Watt] said, estates all around London have been demolished. I think its around 100 over the last ten years, and plans for many many more to be demolished. This is Robin Hood Gardens, Cressingham Gardens, this is Central Hill - all of these are up for demolition... Why? Well, Paul [Watt] has explained already some of that policy transfer from the US to the UK, but also a part of that policy transfer was also about this huge land value in London, and realising that land value, because otherwise why else would we be demolishing these homes? At a time of such acute housing crisis?

Paul [Watt]'s spoken about state-led gentrification. Academics also talk about this idea of the rent-gap, the huge gap between the price of the land before it gets redeveloped, and then the price of the land once it has been redeveloped into an Elephant Park-type development.

This is Lord Adonis explaining how much value there is in council-owned land, and how much council-owned land there is in London, and it's all part of this speculative house building casino economy. And the first phase of homes at the Heygate, the new Elephant Park development, which are now going for around a million pounds for a two bedroom flat, the first phase have all been sold to foreign investors. So that's the replacement of one kind of housing - social housing – with this sort of foreign investor safety deposit box type home, and those are the images of the homes on Elephant Park. There is 25% affordable housing but of course at 80% of market value, well yeah I think that counts most of us out.

Where did the tenants go? Not very much information on where tenants go. Geraldine already showed you this image, this is where the tenants have gone, mostly out of the borough, they largely stay in London even though they have to leave their communities and their schools. But look at where the owners go, the leaseholders, the people who actually own their own homes. So, huge disruption to communities, and this is the point when people say well actually most estate regeneration doesn't involve social cleansing.

There's not very much information out there, but every time you demolish - and this is a historical issue, we've been doing this sort of thing for years, even if not at this scale, even when Biker was demolished in the late '60s and '70s, Ralph Erskine actually lived in Biker, consulted with the community to such an extent, at the end of that whole process only 17% of the original Biker community moved into the new Biker. It is inevitable that there is a huge amount of change and when it occurs with this economic model behind it that tends to be a social economic demographic change, part of the new London.

Something went wrong there but anyway that's the top of Battersea Power Station with all the starchitects, Norman Foster, Frank Gehry, CGI images. One of my favourite slides - the new London here – so you know, we are seeing a new city, all around us, and actually architects are entirely complicit in this, and in the 300 residential towers that are going up from Southbank, if you go up the Southbank from Wandsworth to Vauxhall, Southwark to Blackfriars, you can just see one gated enclave after another, of high-security developments.

So that's a snapshot of part of the crisis, 'what is the architect's role?'. This is where the work is, what are you meant to do? You know I think actually, I am not an architect... I used to be a journalist - what sort of architect do you want to be? I had to ask myself that question what sort of journalist did I want to be? Well actually I found journalism, within many of the newspapers that I was trying to work for, was something I couldn't really do. I'm not a particular hero - I probably wasn't very good at it either. A lot of neo-liberal institutions in academia operate under the same constraints, you have to work out how you fit within it and your own role, you know nobody can tell you that. But I would

say actually don't engage with substantial estate regeneration projects if this is part of your belief system, instead help create alternatives.

Of course there are huge financial issues and working pro-bono isn't going to help you pay the bills, but I think we should actually reframe the question. It's not so much 'what is the architect's role in the housing crisis?' if we start thinking about how can we solve the housing crisis, then perhaps we can look at what the architects role might be – again enormous question, we don't have time to answer it. Lots of people have said that is something I should have looked at my book. I tried to give a diagnosis of how we got to where we are with the housing crisis, but there isn't a blueprint for change. But I have been thinking a lot about it, and it's clear to me that building social housing outside of the market, outside of the speculative housebuilding model must be part of it, and that is not councils acting as commercial developers – like Lambeth are planning to do through their special purpose vehicle – that is not council housing, and this is the sort of new council housing model.

You know I think we are in, I hate the sort of pundit kind of term, 'a change moment'. This is a change moment, we've had a so called 'change election', but we've also had a horrific national emergency, which actually is a defining moment in housing, with the Grenfell Tower fire… and actually this is a moment for housing because Grenfell has shone a light on the catastrophe of social housing provision in London and in the UK more widely.

Neither political party is seriously suggesting building outside the market at the moment, but I think we have to start to make a case for it, have to start to make a case for social housing as an idealistic thing to do, an idealistic profession as it was when Kate Macintosh was doing it. Why don't we have a social housing competition to rebuild the Grenfell Tower. We can build on the alternatives we already have, we've talked about infill, co-ops, we need to push for public land to be made available on the basis of long-term financing, not short-term speculative development.

Specific actions; I think it is a good time for radical policy development, and it's a time when actually people might start to listen. Wheres that going to come from? Well there are some good pockets in universities, architectural education is in places, you know there are some good pockets, there are networks like this, look at… it's full of people, amazing! But actually I think this needs funding, and there is money in the room for sure. So if people were really interested, then actually we need to have radical research proposals to look at some alternatives which can operate outside the market.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

AP:
Right now, happy to take questions from the floor, you can either read a question from the sheet that's on your chair or ask your own question.

QUESTIONER [A]:
I want to go straight in and address the presentation by HTA. The thing that I picked up on in your presentation and I thought this was a big mistake, was when you were talking about the tower blocks in Dundee, you actually said, when you were talking about the estate's reputation, you said the things, I've written it down here, you said 'things associated with the people that were there' on the estate, you said with the people. I think that was a bad move.

AUDIENCE:
Hard to hear, can you stand up and ask the question.

QUESTIONER [A]:
So when HTA gave the presentation, the thing that I picked up on was they said 'the problems with the people who lived on that estate' not the estate itself, but problems associated with people that lived on that estate. I think that was a mistake.

SB:
It probably was a mistake, if I can just answer that, it's an awful lot of words to try and fit into 5 minutes, essentially we arrived to work with the community which really struggled with the housing they were living in, we looked at different options with that community to see if there was a problem with the basic physical structure, and there was, and they felt that problem was impacting on their lives in a very negative way. So no of course it wasn't a problem with the people, it was a problem that the people had with the housing they were living in. It was a very long process to develop the masterplan, it involved an awful lot of talking and options but ultimately the end outcome of that was everybody supported, and that was a ballot as well, which was 90% 95% yes vote for comprehensive redevelopment. So apologies if the language was in a rush but it's absolutely not about the people that were living on the estate, fantastic people... a fantastic community, who were surviving and thriving against the odds... but the buildings were really horrific. Funnily enough it wasn't the towers that were really horrific... I've lived in a tower block and had the best of times... it was the lower-rise blocks, and the difficulty with anti-social behaviour around those. But the whole estate suffered.

QUESTIONER [A]:
I just wanted to be clear on that.

SB:
No, very good point, I hope that clarifies that.

AP:
Right, anyone else?

QUESTIONER [B]:
I just wanted to ask if you [Simon Bayliss and Paul Karakusevic] advocate to work with residents?

SB:
Umm, yeah, we would prefer to always work in an environment where the residents get to have a democratic view, I mean, the Westminster project I mentioned, it wasn't a requirement, and we had worked on two estates for the council; one of which was all about infill and putting new homes on the roofs, more little projects, and the residents voted against anything happening at all. And that was that! Done. And in some respects, that's the best outcome because we're not fighting against, you know, something that people don't want. In the Ebury Bridge Estate they had a different view, so I think it definitely gives a mandate for the architect and for everybody else involved to take that forward, and it creates a positive environment.The benefit was after the ballot, we were able to continue the process of engagement and the design changed dramatically, albeit we kept some of the principles of the buildings that were being retained. It is our preference, although it's not always the brief that's provided to us.

QUESTIONER [C]:
This is a question for Paul, that's your name isn't it. In your presentation you said that these processes lead to social cleansing, but you didn't explain in any of your project summaries, what the net loss of social rented housing was? And I was wondering, what those were, and whether you think there is any connection between the two, and whether you think there is social cleansing happening in any of those projects?

PK:
Uh ... I'd say we've always picked our clients, very, very carefully - uh, and I - so I don't think, generally don't think there's been any social cleansing on the projects we've worked on to date. Um, has there been any net loss of affordable housing - or social housing? I don't think so, yet, on any of the projects. Where councils are delivering probably between 45 and 55, maybe even more now, percent of social housing, and very affordable intermediate housing, which is I think a key part of what we should be providing, as well as low-cost housing. Yes there is intensification of some of the estates, yes there is underutilised land on some of them. I think the councils that we are working for are very very aware of the issues that we are discussing tonight. I've not met a politician yet, or an officer, that takes those lightly. I think we've worked with, probably 10 to 15, maybe more now, residents associations, who care very deeply about the people that they live with and their neighbours. I think any breaking up of those historical communities would be taken very seriously by the TRA and the residents groups that we speak with. I hand on heart, say that we are not doing any social cleansing on those projects.

QUESTIONER [C]:
So did all the people return to the flats?

PK:
On the Bacton Estate, which is obviously what we have just completed, there were 89 families in the Low Rise Bacton buildings, and in the first phase we created just under 50 new properties. There are another 240 homes being built in phase 2 and 3, so the rest of the residents will move into those shortly. It was one of the most challenging estates I've been on. This is going back 5 years. The residents had been fighting with Camden for about 10 years for better housing. Camden had done sort of a really low-grade conversion and refurb in the early to mid-'90s...[inaudible]. Damp, leaky windows, everything else, leaky roofs, big issues, and some of the residents didn't want to come back, regardless of what we were building, they wanted to leave, as quickly as Camden could rehouse them somewhere else. There were one or two families I think that were leaving London, but it wasn't – 'regeneration's coming: we're leaving', they just wanted to leave.

QUESTIONER [C]:
I mean in all of the projects that you showed, how many residents returned to those places?

PK:
Well on the Colville Estate, which we're working on the moment, 100%, all the residents we have spoken to, in the first phase, have returned. So the first little building we showed, 41 socially rented properties, the building that stood there before, there were 15 socially renting tenants in that building, they've all been rehoused in the new building. Hackney refurbish void properties on the Colville Estate, for the year and the half the building has been made. As soon as the building was finished they moved back into the new property, and were delighted with the outcome. And now the next phase is being built, and we are creating 168 socially rented properties in phase two, with complete support of the residents association and the wider estate. So it's actually at the moment, gaining in the social provision on the Colville Estate, in about a year's time when Phase 2 is completed.

CA:
I think I have a question for - well, maybe I should let everyone else speak actually - but no, I do have a question for the like, the more established architects in the room. And also anyone else in the audience who is also working in architecture at the moment. Um, when people are talking about - am I too quiet? - when people are talking about percentages of uh, of support for regeneration - or percentages of support for certain projects - like, where are you getting those figures from, and is there ever any kind of questioning of who has done, who has made this report, and who is actually - whose 100% are you talking about? Are you talking about 100% of 73 houses that somebody knocked on the door of and everybody said yeah! And there are 500 homes on the estate, and the other 450 just didn't reply. Or are you talking about 100% of the residents who are actually going to be affected? Because that a very difficult number to actually ever ascertain - you know you will never manage to get 100% recommendation that this is actually going to happen. Because you're not going to get 100% engagement, however you do it. So I guess my question is, a sort of open question, does, has any, who is doing this kind of consultation on the residents? And are you, as architects, immediately involved in that process?

PK:
So just the - just the - Bacton Estate actually, the consultation was done by the residents, it's a very tight knit neighbourhood and to be honest the residents didn't trust the council to do that exercise. This is going back 5 years, Camden were underfunded, under-resourced at the time - the residents took that upon themselves to make sure every door was knocked on, there was endless, you know, once a week workshops with the residents. We knew exactly what the housing need was of every single family of every single family that wanted to come back into the new housing, so [names redacted for privacy] who were the sort of lead members of that group made it their business for about 2 and a half years to check on the housing need and then enforced it with Camden. So, it was a truly resident led process. The Colville is obviously bigger... still incredibly tight knit community though, and the people on the TRA and the key members we meet regularly know anyone that is coming into the next phase, whether a family member has died, whether people have been born, and what the new housing need is. They make sure that Hackney officers are making the right housing for those people. So, just out of personal experience.

AP:
From a resident of Lambeth context; what we had here - and Central Hill in Crystal Palace have also had - is when residents associations have conducted surveys of tenants and residents, you have

a return of about 70-75% of which on the question of demolition roughly 80% are against. With Lambeth Council's own consultation exercises, they will not release the figures on which they are based, but we know roughly on the one here was that slightly less that half the amount of returns we got on the residents associations. So, like, its, a, so the actual, sometimes you are talking about it being based on maybe one third of households, where the residents associations ones tend to be based on two thirds.

AV:
With specific reference to Lambeth's approach, there is also people - like you point out - some skewing of the numbers, if there is something that is said that doesn't fit the rhetoric, that is not minuted. And there are fundamental issues around how the Council's vision and how they are pushing that forward, despite the fact that this community wanted, they became very aware that this community wanted refurbishment but they had in their head that actually the community will leave and be glad to get new homes. And so they pushed this sort of refurb and all this great amazing regeneration option, which is what it will all come back to. But if you pay more money or you only got 8% on the value of your house, you have to [inaudible] shared-ownership, if you own land, own property on the estate. And so the community quite rightly turned [inaudible] planning [inaudible] and suddenly, miraculously, the two options that the community favoured disappeared off the agenda. Which obviously was kind of, I suppose, was the outcome of the successful judicatory review, brought against the council. And I think this is a fundamental problem. We have to be very, as architects, going back to the second or third slide when she talks about our duty of care, I think fundamentally we do have to make the decisions - and yes, as a small practice, it is financially quite a burden but you have to take that because you have to kind of decide where you want to end up, you know, where does your practice want to be, and it's difficult, and I mean I worked with KCA when they were a lot smaller, and there were lots of tough decisions and a lot of pushing in different ways. I think it gets it's different when you're a bigger practice when there's this lack of, this inability to be this as..., and that's fundamentally the problem with the architect, if these projects, these regeneration projects are actually let to genuine open competition, the level of debate would change, the level of engagement would change, you know, and the ideas would be so much better. I mean, historically, you know Local Councils had architecture departments, you see a contextualism fundamentally. Hollambys' schemes working across Lambeth produced certain types of architecture in response to place, Neave Brown's team you know worked in a very different way, and produced very different architecture but each one was a response to place, and to these sort of research-led projects, which I suppose we don't have anymore because it is just this system build that comes out and it's and that's something I feel that needs to be addressed, going forward.

QUESTIONER [D]:
I just have a question for the two architects that have been involved in quite large scale kind of regeneration projects. How do you feel about Anna's proposal to kind of disengage from the current model... um what do you feel are the pros and cons of that, would you be prepared to do it, and would actively promoting an approach more similar to Ashvin's be an approach you would consider doing or have?

SB:
Umm.

PK:
I mean it, go on, you start, you start.

SB:
Well we are quite a big practice, and that does create pressures but it gives you choices as well, and there are projects that we choose not to take on, now we may have different reasons to those around the table who've given their criteria but we look at the number of people who would be affected, with the question about loss of social housing and people leaving the area, the projects I presented have high levels of affordable, in those cases social housing being put back, the was a net loss and there would be, there will be a net loss on the Aylesbury, if delivered as we have set out, but there will be an increase overall in the affordable provision, it's just made up of shared-ownership and social rent. So we do make choices about the projects we take on, we are always interested in different ways of approaching, we will always look at the projects, even if our brief is to redevelop it we will always consider it as a part-refurbishment project because we've been involved in projects for a very long period of time, where the criteria changes, so you deliver a masterplan, come up with the masterplan that's loose-fit enough so you can continually review it, perhaps starting with starting with the worst possible buildings. And those that are perhaps better quality, you could over time move to refurbish them.

So I think masterplans have to be incredibly flexible in that regard. I'm not sure I've answered the question but you said would we work in a different way?

QUESTIONER [D]:
The first bit is, how do you think about Anna's proposal to disengage, disengaging from the current model in which we work and promoting a new one, such as the one which Ash is proposing.

AM:
Well maybe, I could, if you don't mind, I could rephrase it. Disengaging from large scale estate regeneration which involves a lot of demolition.

QUESTIONER [D]:
Perhaps promoting the kind of agility, or the potential that smaller practices have. If they are...

SB:
Well as I said, we do not engage in some projects. I think the projects that we engage in we consider do have a justification for large-scale demolition, and [inaudible] is adequately balanced to give us confidence that people are not going to be disadvantaged by the project.

PW:
So, is it the case that the Aylesbury will result in net demolition of social rented homes in the process?

SB:
That is right.

PW:
To be, you know...

SB:
To be clear, quite a lot of them were empty for quite a long period of time.

PW:
Well, that's, that's fixable. The problem is, that, you know, if it's the case that, where there might be exceptions right across the city where by you might get some slight up of socially rented housing, the net effect across the city is that it's actually diminishing the amount of socially rented homes. Now, what that - even if there is no direct social cleansing - what happens is the council are faced with this huge deluge of people coming to them who need social housing. So if they're not building it through normal schemes and they're not building it, you've got a net reduction because of regeneration schemes, what that means is that then those people who then would have got social housing at one point, are then pushed into temporary accommodation. And we are currently 55,000 houses, 90,000 children - in this city - who live in temporary accommodation, they are not fixed, they are shunted around different parts of the city. So the problem city-wide is that what all these regeneration schemes do is they reduce the amount of social housing, and if that's the case, it actually makes the housing crisis, particularly for those people at the lower end of the income scale quantitatively worse, and that's what's happened in the last twenty years. There might be individual examples, Bacton is probably a good example, you know there's certain councils that seem better than others, Camden is probably better than some of the others but it's, you know, I've heard this before - people say, 'oh well you know we'll lose it on this one' but you know if it's a net reduction overall - that is a problem.

SB:
Absolutely, but if the balancing argument is people choosing not to live in a particular estate because the quality, and I'm sure it is about maintenance - but it's bad design, and bad fundamental construction in some of these estates as well. So I think there is always a balance where the estate needs to be considered. I mean you mentioned Bacton, I mean I knew that estate before, I mean it was terrible.

CA:
Can I add something into the mix, I think that I mean you can talk about different councils having different reputations, but in the end it's about - as architects - who is your client, and your client at least in my opinion, your client is not the council, and it's not the developer, it's the person who is gonna be living in the house right? And so if your client is the person on the estate then getting rid of their home, isn't gonna necessarily meet their needs, so I guess it's about if you reframe the question, and you say so what is the architect's role in the housing crisis? Come back to the original question, how is the architect dealing with this issue of like who is your client, and this comes back to this lady's question.

SB:
Well in the best cases, we are able to engage with those individual clients, we are able to find out the homes that they aspire to have, we are able to design for them and provide for them.

CA:
But is there an aspiration for that not to be just in the best cases, but to be the baseline?

PK:
Just to go to your point... Last year we turned away commissions for about 8,000 homes from the biggest housebuilders, some slightly commercial housing associations, one or two local authorities that we didn't think had the best interests of the local communities at heart. We were invited to bid for Cressingham for a very long time for Lambeth, and it was one we thought actually we want to avoid. We looked at Central Hill, this is going back three or four years again, and we thought there was a solution to look at a refurb, and we were very interested in that idea but we weren't selected.

PRP [Architects] were selected to do the initial masterplan study. I think we've tried three times to save Robin Hood Gardens, even the third time in the interview, clearly jeopardizing our potential to win that project.

In the end we did win a commision, but it was for the replacement homes on the industrial estate next door. So we've turned away huge commissions, huge offers of work to concentrate on I think realistically -I know there are some criticisms of Hackney, and some criticisms of Camden and all the other Councils but generally they are, the projects we are working on, I think probably at the moment, the best projects to be happening in the public sector. We're building a lot of new social housing.

Some of the 1960s housing is fantastic, some of it is dreadfully built, when the contractors were motivated by both sides. Normally the Conservative government were pushing for tax breaks for high rise. Some of that housing is dreadful, and it really it hasn't got much, the shelf life hasn't got that... maybe ten, twenty, thirty years.

Actually there are opportunities to make much better housing with community support in those situations. I think we are set up in public housing to improve that. Gordon Brown when he came into power gave local authorities the right to build again - the first time in thirty-five years. We... going back to Barking eleven years ago, we won the first Gordon Brown....

QUESTIONER [E]:
You're taking up too much space, defending good practice - which there obviously is - in architecture. There is a crisis in architecture at the moment, this meeting is very well attended. We need to address architects as a whole as a community and how they need to change the RIBA and how they need to form pressure groups to change architects as a whole. And all this sort of... Talking to yourself there for an hour talking about individual architects having to take on some sort of social... Standing out there and refusing work - that's not what it's about. It's about architects as a whole - as a unionised, hopefully, set of workers that can refuse neoliberalism in some sort of way. By bloody well turning out and saying 'no, this is not right!'.

QUESTIONER [F]:
[Talking to Paul Karakusevic & Simon Bayliss] I would say stop dribbling because you've lost it. My names Marianna, and I'm a resident of this estate.

When you talk about the poor, the poor, the poor actually make me understand what was your Prime Minister, or our Prime Minister - Cameron, said to the Queen of Nigeria - 'Corrupt'. If Nigeria is corrupt, and I live in Cressingham, I cannot say that my Councillors aren't corrupt. This has just awakened me to understand what civilisation is. And every time I stand up, I shed tears in the event of what has happened with the tower.

The voice of the poor, the voice of the poor is powerless, and the powerless people are always the poor. The rich have the voice, but the rich will never decay while the poor decay. There is one I have heard tonight, as a resident i have lived in Lambeth, also I come from a place once as a child from here from war. I have seen things in my time, but the generation I'm seeing now, is a different generation altogether. I'm not old, but I have got a little bit of experience. Now, my experience also has come from poverty. To be able to eat right, and to be able to see things, and to be able to find out that human beings can turn onto human beings for food.

Now this evening has been a very much eye opening for me. The first talk, by the gentleman, actually

you have educated me. The last talk, actually made me say 'wow, this is it'. What I have learned tonight is very much empowering, as a poor person everybody talks about me, is this. And also tell me where I'm going to lie down and where I should be... if I would be bought or if I wouldn't be bought.

What i would say to you, is i've heard about estates being sinking estates. I'm not just poor, I'm also a single mother with four children age ranging from the age this year, my first child will be thirty two. Born in Lambeth, she actually wasn't rehoused by Lambeth, Brockwell Gate is where she got her own mortgage. I singularly trained her. When I say to you she was one of those from the estates that sink - she went to London College of Fashion - which is the reason why i came to this country in the first place.

Now she is graduating there because buildings are meant for people. To cut my whole story short, also I have a disabled daughter, she is twenty-five with autism. If you can remember, if everyone of you have watched make me known. [inaudible]

I also have two boys and two girls with different challenges as a single mother, we needed a home. I have lived in an overcrowded dwelling, and moving into Cressingham Gardens actually changed everything. I said to my children "the only thing that'll stop you being who you want to be, it's not because you're poor, it's the society". When a society does not value the life of the poor, it reduces me to nothing. In the sense that, in Lambeth, whatever any resident here says, means nothing. The voice of the developer is higher. Also, whatever any resident says is rubbish. And I tell you why it is rubbish, because the whole system looks at the residents of estates to be sinking estates, stinking people. But what Lambeth did not know, is that within these estates there are lawyers, also we have mathematicians, also we have bin men. How would you feel if you walk out of the street, and you have no bin man. How would you feel? You drop your rubbish and you'd have no one to pick up that rubbish.

How would you feel if you design a house, you design a house for a million dollar person? The million dollar person woke up tomorrow morning, and I say to you, they walk out on the street, they have no nurses, they have no teachers, they no police, they have no firemen.

You know the only reason I'm seeing what is happening here is, it has come back to haunt me from what I am seeing from that fire burning, is this. Fantastically corrupt, moral corruption. Society without no compass. Also no compassion. It is easy to donate money, but do you feel that you can leave your tower...because there is one place I and the Queen will be sharing together and that is the cemetery. Bear that in mind.

Now there is something that you have mentioned tonight, it is this, you listen to the residents. What happened to the residents of Cressingham? Our Councillors actually cannot listen to us. Guess what: I voted Labour. If you have a dog, and you put Labour on it, Marianna gonna vote for it. But now - I didn't know how to type, I didn't know how to... It was one of my sons, who said to me, 'Mum, where we are living is to be demolished'. I said 'what?!' he said, 'I saw it on the twitter'. So, I found out who the twitter boy was... that was Matthew Bennett... Guess what! I was able to understand from my children, that 'Mum, your English is not a sensation, but you are too political'. For if I'm not political enough, then I would be lying down there, in my bedroom, being poor, being a carer, looking after my autistic daughter, with the help of the state... That says my daughter has the right to be a citizen, but she doesn't have the right to a home! And if I tell you that I do sleep every night, I would be a liar. Go home and check, facebook, Cressingham Gardens Facebook. My name is Marianna. I have just written a letter to my councillor - it's there on the Cressingham Facebook site. And I will say to you, that when you are designing or taking up a job, think of the poor! We all can be queen and kings, because, we all need each other. Raise up your finger, there, I will leave you with one notion tonight. If

you are poor, and you have no way of breathing. The air is taken away from you. Because you are poor. I don't know how the rich man would be rich, and happy, to have somebody serve food on their table. Thank you for coming.

[Audience applause]

AP:
So would anyone like to follow that?

AV:
So - can I? I'd just like to comment about the question about the RIBA. As a RIBA member I agree with you, because I find that fundamentally, we are so naive in this. We hire [inaudible], the average Part IIs, after two degrees, and Part II qualification can expect a good salary of 27K. Maybe after like - I was speaking to a friend of mine, who has been a qualified architect for 10 years, and she was like - I broke 40K this year. And then we are sitting there, at the same time, building houses, that our own people can't afford. It's almost like we are the ultimate anti-union. I find that very frustrating, as an architect, because it doesn't support me. I tried to join our local charter - oh God, it was even worse. So everyone is there, trying to climb higher up the pile. So I stay out of this, for my sanity. So I work on what I can control and what I can do, and I breathe as well as I can. But I think it's a very isolating experience, being on the inside. I would say that.

QUESTIONER [G]:
Can I just say something - I would like to agree with the gentleman here. I would like to make a comment: I think you all, as architects, really need to get together and say what sort of world you want to live in and work in. I'm a lawyer. Lawyers have basically done what you are all doing now, got on with the job, put the blinkers on, got on with that and look what's happened. We have no justice system, there's no legal aid, no help with travelling, you're actually not doing yourself any favours at all for the future by being so blinkered. You need to get together and change the way the world works.

QUESTIONER [H]:
Hi, I just wanted to ask quickly about Grenfell - things seem to be changing very quickly. We've had a number of politicians come out and say – look – the root cause of this was bad 1970s tower-block design, and what needs to be done about it is demolition. So I wanted to ask quickly, what this gentleman said, might, how you as architects change this debate to propose the kind of solutions that we need.

GD:
Just to respond to that first point, the only thing left standing at Grenfell is the 1970s concrete structure. It's everything else which resulted in this horrible event. So again, like so many of these things, it's precisely the opposite of what is being said, which is the truth is being concealed within that. The 1970s tower blocks are probably some of the safest buildings, and I live in one. The 1970s architecture is some of the best architecture, some of the most well-built architecture, compared to the stuff we are producing today, which is frankly an embarrassment, I think, to the architectural profession, buildings that have come out in the last ten, fifteen years. Which is having to be pulled down: you've got Orchard Village, Sovereign's Passage – these are just two, that need to be torn down. The only problem with Grenfell Tower – well – there were many problems with Grenfell Tower – but the problems were not – the original building. I think it's really really important that we steer away from that, because I think at any opportunity politicians have, we have the same narratives, which amount to negative propaganda against council housing. Any opportunity is taken, grabbed and

latched onto – and so we need to present those alternatives. Which are alternative narratives really – of our estates. Now's the time for council estate residents, and any housing estate residents, and people who agree to stand up and really refuse that narrative. In every possible way – whether you're a journalist, whether you're a lawyer, whatever, position you are you have a voice, and you can stand up and refuse to accept those statements.

PK:
I think it's a symptom of terrible contracting – that particular contractor is notorious for value engineering – they base their whole business model on value engineering. Probably, somebody specified a product – probably six or seven years ago – and by the time it arrives on site it's been VE'd about five times. Every time, a little bit of quality, a little bit of integrity gets chipped away. So then you end up with these, you know, bits of polythene and tin foil sandwiched in the middle, and obviously it was a disaster waiting to happen. The 0.5 billion to 1.5 billion pounds a year the companies, these contractors. There's a hideous process on site where the site managers get about 50p of the pound of every £1 saved. So you can imagine what goes on, where subcontractors arrive on site, or when they are doing the final construction drawings, that all of the specification and all of the information on site gets lost. So I think it's a real problem of contracting, and also poor specification.

AM:
Can I just say one or two points about it as well. I think that's all true – but it's also been a huge failure of the council, and a failure to listen to the residents, who repeatedly warned that a catastrophic event like this was going to happen. And they weren't listened to, in much the same way that they are not listened to when they say they don't want their homes to be demolished. And just to come back to the point about that was made in the presentation. This is really really horrific, for everybody. And I don't think that many people, apart from perhaps the people who were saying you know, demolish them now, they can't not be untouched by this. And actually it has opened a window for looking at housing a bit differently. So actually, for all the comments, about let's demolish tower blocks – that's happened, and I've written pieces saying that's not the issue, so has Paul [Watt], so have you [Geraldine Dening], so have other people. So with all those comments there's another window that's developing, which is that actually, let's do something about housing. And, as the lady said, actually local authority production, because that's part of what this is about as well.

AV:
This idea, that 'Oh, all council blocks, all 1970s buildings must be demolished' sits very comfortably with local council politics. Particularly in areas like Lambeth, and others, that have set up this model of the council as developer, which is fundamentally a contradiction. They should be working in the public good rather than their own profit. And Matthew Bennett, has been distanced from his housing core so that he is relatively clean when he takes up his role as CEO of homes for Lambeth. There are fundamental issues – and that is why it is really convenient – if it comes from the leaders then it sounds credible. I think people can be fundamentally very sceptical of this. And also sceptical of numbers – they get thrown at you, when they say 'it's not viable'. This estate, apparently, passed its viability, because at the end of the 60 year lifespan, they would make a net profit, having built 600 homes on it, of £800,000. All it would take, for it to hit the mains pipe, that serves Brixton, that is running somewhere under this estate, to totally decimate that profit. That is the basis of viability. I mean bollocks is the word that comes to mind.
[Audience laugh]

So i think be careful of this. As Geraldine says. Get more active, engage in this, and just refuse to take the man in the court telling you something and that being the answer. That's how things work in Cressingham. Actually the Regen team that live in Cressingham, that's Gelinda, Tom, Andy, Joanne,

they were phenomenal, if they sat opposite Lambeth Regen Team on a level playing field they'd have them for lunch.

[Audience Laugh]

You know, that's something that... it's only because it's not a level playing field that made the result the way it were. It's a shame for me to watch, because the effort and the energy put into that document was phenomenal. All the lessons they learned in the space of four months to deliver such a phenomenally comprehensive document was amazing. That's what people can do in that situation, they can take action themselves. Part of the problem is, don't rely on architects and I say that as an architect. Do it yourselves.

SE:
It's very interesting to hear this discussion, because all I can hear is two groups absolutely not listening to each other. Simon you started your presentation by saying that the housing crisis we all agree that it's about quality and quantity. But actually everyone said the exact opposite.

SB:
Well actually I didn't say that.

SE:
Yes you did, I wrote it down. They said the opposite of that, they said it's about affordability not about quantity and quality.

Paul, you said there is no loss of social housing on your projects. Well I looked very closely at your exemplary one, the Kings Crescent one shall we say. What you don't mention is the 357 council homes to clear that - I think you called it a blank canvas in your email to us - and to answer this person's question there was a loss of 196 homes for social rent on that.

[Addressing Simon Bayliss]

You say you're in favour of a ballot. As you know, or I presume you know, on the Aylesbury Estate there was a 76% vote and 72% turnout against the demolition of the homes for its regeneration. We also know that on the same estate there was a report that was produced that said that the cost of refurbishment wasn't actually impossible. Iit was actually done by some research by Levitt Bernstein which showed that it came to at most 58% of the cost of demolition and redevelopment. Unfortunately they couldn't testify at the trial, not the trial the inquest, because Southwark Council, the people you're working for, gave them the contract for the first redevelopment site...

I could go on here but anyway. I do admire your balls turning up tonight. Let's talk about Ben Derbyshire, someone mentioned him earlier over here. He's the head, the president-elect. This is a man that thinks we shouldn't use public funds to subsidise homes of people who don't deserve to live in them, and can't afford to. We know that subsidies are not going to that at all.

I noticed that you haven't brought up the Chalcot estate, which your practice clad in exactly the same material that Paul was talking about via Rydon. You haven't mentioned that at all. What else should I go into? You could go into the fact that Southwark, in your figures you came up saying that the homes that are going to be replaced are going to be affordable, a certain amount of homes... 35% are going to be social homes. We all know that there is zero money for social housing at the moment. The housing association that is going to re-build this, Notting Hill Trust, the head of Notting Hill Trust said

they're not interested in building social housing; there is no money for it at all.

We also know that out of the 4.7 billion quid that the government homes and community agencies have allocated for affordable housing in the next 5 years; 4.1 of it is for shared ownership. So there's just no real communication going on here, I think; between the architects who are engaged with these estate regeneration schemes - which always result in a form of social cleansing, a loss of homes for social rent - and those of us who are trying to fight it. So I'd like to propose that one of the things we do is we call on the RIBA to fire Ben Derbyshire, as someone who is not fit to lead an institution which I don't think any of us have got much opinion of, but certainly in light of what it's held forward as: some sort of ethical guide, god help us, to the profession. I think we need to come after these architectural practices until they start listening to what we're saying around this table - instead of listening to these incredibly corrupt councils - as ASH has talked about here - and the developers who are paying all the housing associations. I don't think there's someone like Ben Derbyshire - who shows nothing but arrogance towards council tenants, and whose practice is up to its neck in these kinds of estate demolition schemes which are leading to a vast loss of social housing. I don't think is someone we should get to lead the RIBA.

[Audience applause]

Someone: That's a good reply!

PK:
Sorry, can I just - the towers on King's Crescent were already demolished in 1997. So, uh ...

SE:
So are you saying that you that you inherited a blank canvas? There is no blank canvas in London. 350 social council homes were gone. This person was asking - did those people come back? They couldn't come back, because their homes were demolished. And you [inaudible] in denial.

PK:
Twenty years ago Simon, it's been a gravel field for twenty years. It's a big empty hole in the middle of King's Crescent.

SE:
But when - in your own documents, in books produced about it, in planning applications - I mean, I went through the planning applications for the GLA - who funded it of course, because this is all ... [inaudible] ... And the way they'd go around to try and come up with - what you've got - 50% affordable, 50% ... is just - you know, they demolished 357 homes, at least 79 were replaced there. This kind of massaging of figures is used over and over again.

PK:
There obviously is some of that ... [inaudible].

QUESTIONER [C]:
It's spin!

QUESTIONER [I]:
Can I just draw your attention to a leaflet, which is signed by Paul Watt, Anne Minton, Geraldine Dening, and Gerlinde. It's a picket - it's an appeal for some funds for the Aylesbury leaseholders, who are going to want to - take Southwark to court again for the second time, in the autumn. They

need some money; they need £20,000 at least. It's a very good barrister, Chris Jacobs, that I've got. He's knows how to charm. [Audience laugh] He needs to teach the architect a thing or two. But I'll be handing these leaflets out, on the way out. Please take one, and please ask yourself, what I can afford, and what my friends can afford.

[Audience applause]

AP:
Right, in closing ... "We would like to thank all of the panel members"

GD / PK / AM:
Someone else has a question.

Questioner [J]:
Is it too late maybe?

CA:
We want to wrap up at 10 to, so ...

AP:
You've got 5 minutes.

Questioner [J]:
Well, i just want to bring up the fact that personally I feel that the ethical practice seems like a difference between wanting to act as a good citizen, but wanting to make money. And it seems like it's a case of, well, questioning how directly, the impact of what ... how it all comes about. And it some jobs it's a lot quicker than others, and in the other jobs, it's a lot more distant - the relationship between the day-to-day work and the maybe negative impact of what's really going on. So it kind of would position that, you might have your personal interests and are wanting to do good, but you might also ... well, you also need to make money. I guess the question is, how does that lie with the business model side of it, and how you stay in practice and continue making money; do you just accept compromise in your jobs that you take on - yeah, how do you ... come to a compromise?

AP:
It sort of reduces it to allowing architects to say, "well, I was only following orders, though, doesn't it?" The Nuremberg effect .
[Audience laughter]

QUESTIONER [K]:
It comes back to Stefan's idea about unionising, and not being picked off as an individual moral choice, but actually taking collective actions, blacklisting those construction companies, that very often drive the whole development, in the first place... as they were doing in the '70s. If you actually get a map of who's who in the whole corrupt, corporate ... crime - organised crime, as it were. And then actually blacklist those people, possibly. Or you know, at least have some sort of collective action around what's ethical practice, and how we can recede. Because if the local estates actually, as Cressingham is trying to do, is to form their own co-op - then if that was linked into an architects' union, that's actually in the construction - ethical construction - company, then all the other players in the field ... rather than "I'm an architect, oh, but you know I feel terrible about what I'm doing, but I've got to make a living." - It just changes the whole picture. And this is a key point in the kind of neo-liberal, or hopefully the beginning of the end for that ... for us to actually start working collectively

and have the imagination to actually work together without it being so kind of sentimentalised all the time, into this kind of individual onus of, "Got to get up to 40K by next week, but I do feel terrible about it". It's nonsense. It's got to be a collective understanding, and that's the only way it's going to happen. And if people, as Andy said last week, and somebody mentioned this evening, that people have been paying in rent to the estate just, for years and years and years. That is of value in itself, and should actually be measured as something - that you've invested in this land, it's public land, you're a part owner in it, you are going to decide what's going to happen to it - not just end yourself by some - excuse my language - wanker in the council, who is very corrupt. Obviously, to just say, just dismiss, as you were saying earlier, very easy to dismiss, that have all the rituals of commissions, and part-owner leasings and all the rest of it, and they just go ahead and do want they were going to do anyway.

QUESTIONER [L]:
But essentially they're out of funding, really. They's by themselves, You know, councils, professional bodies ...

AP:
If we could wind up now, please.

GD:
Sorry, if I can point out, just very quickly - just in terms of how we value things. At the moment, you know, the only viability done on these estate demolition plans is the financial viability assessment. There's no social viability, or environmental viability, which has taken on board the beginning of these estates. And I'm actually addressing you two guys in particular [gestures to Paul Karakusevic and Simon Bayliss] : that you need to be addressing the social and the environmental viabilities of these projects that you're doing. And I just don't think that's really addressed. I don't believe, that you're, the people that are working on your schemes - I know, because I've done, you know the infill schemes that I've done on Central Hill [Lambeth]. For example, PRP [Architects] came up with, 70. And yet we looked at it, and we could find about 220. And it's like, they've clearly have not done their job, they clearly decided that they weren't really interested, because the client had probably said, well, you know, we're not really interested in doing the infill option, so you know, just give it to your Part I.

SB:
I haven't said ...

GD:
Yeah, it does. I think it's your duty, going back into the ARB code, it's your duty to the people that live there, to do that job properly. To insist on a proper refurbishment and infill option, not just something to just throw away, for a day.

SB:
Well, I think the number one priority ...

CA:
So we're going to have to stop it there, if you want to have any more discussion. There's loads of space outside...

AV:
Let him respond.

PW:
Stop, stop.

SB:
I think it's important that it's considered, ... a viable option [inaudible]. It must be considered.

GD:
Yeah, it needs to be considered.

CA:
I didn't mean to cut you off there. Architectural Workers want to read a closing statement, before everyone leaves it would be great ...

AP:
I'm reading this on the behalf of Architectural Workers:

We would like to thank all of the panel members and audience for their active participation in this discussion. Thanks to David Roberts, for your input in framing the direction of the discussion. Thank you to the residents of Cressingham Gardens, for being an inspiration in their tenacity and spirit, and who have been so generous with our use of the Rotunda. And thank you to Andy Plant, without whom this debate would have been impossible.

The role of the architect in the housing crisis is an evident concern for many working in the industry, alongside the wider public - and we have been overwhelmed by the positive response to our work. We need to be able to create spaces to freely and openly discuss this issue in order to instigate change. We hope that this event has played some small part. In the short-term, we will publish detailed minutes of the discussion today; in the long-term, this fight will continue.

Good night!