

If we could design London we would...

understand that this can only ever be a task to be undertaken by a myriad of different contributions.

We would start by looking and trying to understand the richness and complexity of the city as it exists.

London is very particular in its complexity and opportunity. Its very shapelessness and extensiveness makes it remarkably adaptable and able to accommodate urban change. Its resistance to a single identity or single interpretation makes it highly tolerant both in the way it extends itself in an additive way and in the way it is able to accommodate a rich cosmopolitan culture.



We recognise that a review of the density of the city should also acknowledge the unique character of London.

With a gross average density of 45.6 persons per hectare (low compared to New York with 71.1 but spread over a much wider area) and the increasing need to accommodate its growing population the city requires a sensitive approach not only to a private space but also to the public realm which is increasingly eroded by the dominance of private ownership and the private domain. As projects in the city increase in ambition and scale the recognition of the individual within the whole, of community and the 'feeling of home' must be preserved.

We would adopt an approach that is based on realism, seeking to transform and reinterpret the everyday and familiar.

The city's remarkable resistance to urban planning creates a physically diverse environment and requires a specific response based on a close observation of the conditions as found and an understanding that as the city slowly builds upon itself, new interventions should be generally understood as additions to the background of the city. This suggests an approach which is based on realism, seeking to transform and reinterpret the everyday and familiar.



Any intervention on the urban fabric should recognise that the population of the city has increasingly diverse needs.

With a population of 8 million (equivalent to the population of Switzerland and double that of Barcelona), 30% of whom comprise ethnic minorities, the wide cultural diversity and varied population of London increases the scope of reference available and the need to negotiate adaptations to generic urban models. This encourages tolerance - a conceptual tool we see as offering an open-ended response at both strategic and detailed level, encouraging adaptation and change, openness to the idiosyncrasies of programme and change.

We would employ a measured form of repetition in any new urban structures, but one that is inherently tolerant and flexible.

In instances historically in London where planning has been successful (as seen here in Bloomsbury for example) a tendency towards adjustment and modification within the repetitive orders of terraces becomes visible - a sort of difference in sameness. These adjustments, often the product of the idiosyncrasies of land ownership, topography and programme are made richer and more complex by the expression of individual formal tendencies of the developers' use of pattern book designs modified by their preferences in detail. They illustrate how repetition is enriched by the expression of the specific and prosaic.



We acknowledge that legislation is the most powerful tool in improving the quality of a city, the result of negotiation involving great responsibility.

London attracts more international companies and foreign banks than any other region in Europe with over 300,000 people (the whole population of Zurich) employed in banking, finance, insurance and auxiliary services, and the overwhelmingly mercantile nature of the city leads to a market-led and economically driven attitude to construction and quality. Low expectations of construction quality prompt a conceptual response which engages with this reality making imperfection a significant contributor to form and to the feeling of things, turning the built environment into a sort of poetic expression of the real.

We recognise that not everything we add to the city needs to be spectacular but all of it should be decent and appropriate.

With London's formal density and diversity in architectural production adding to an already heterogeneous built environment there is a growing need for buildings to mediate with their surroundings and be sensitive to the contribution they will make. The notion of adding to the grain of the city becomes important as a strategy of resistance to the increasing tendency of speculators, institutions, corporations and local authorities to favour the 'iconic' landmark building in an ambitious but culturally short-sighted search for 'newness'.



We recognise that for a contemporary city to function it requires considerable and continuous investment in public transport.

London is the third most expensive city to live in after Tokyo and Osaka and with house prices five times the annual income of the average household and the need for its inhabitants to earn 30% more than people in other European cities, it is the focus of extreme wealth and poverty. This unbalanced economy with its huge levels of consumption and commerce, requires a great degree of servicing, not only in terms of infrastructure but also of good quality and low-cost homes for key workers.