



# London Wall West Proposal Evaluation

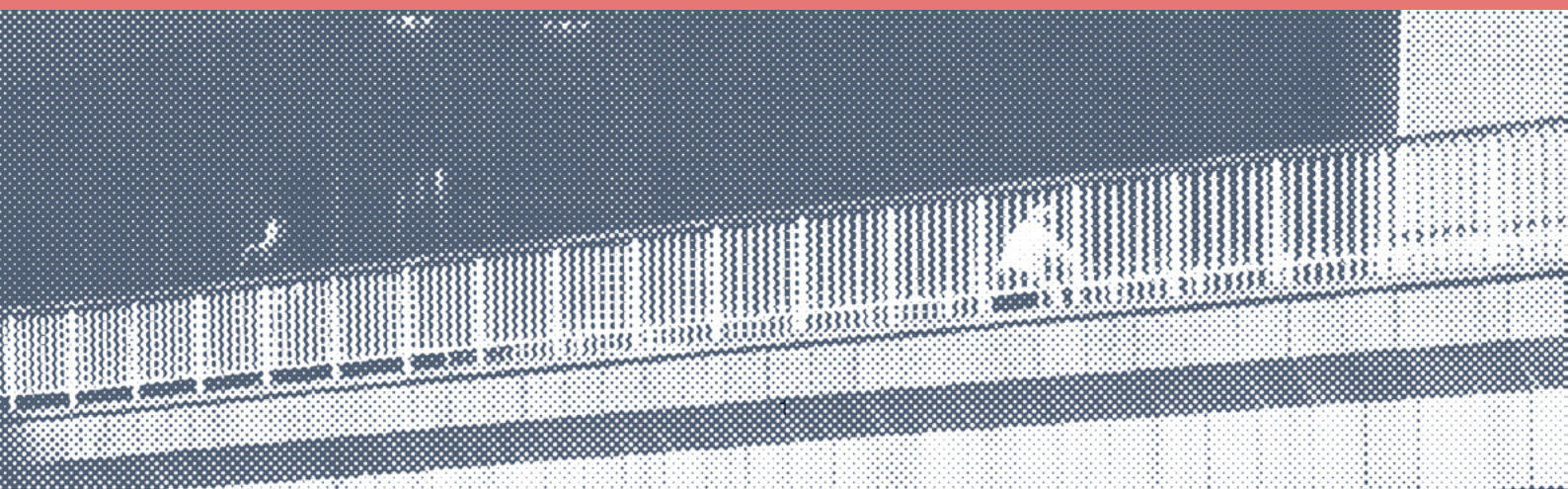
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on behalf of

### Barbican Quarter Action

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## London Wall West Proposal Evaluation

### Douglas and King Architects

It must be recognised that 140-150 London Wall is a site of critical importance in terms of both location and history, requiring a sensitive and forward-thinking approach to preserve and augment its unique character. The constrained nature of the site and its complex adjacency relationships mean that particular attention must be paid to visual impact and townscape considerations to avoid overdevelopment.

In addition to the significance of the site's proximity to the remains of the Roman city wall, London's post-war urban heritage tells a story of the pioneering spirit of modernism in the aftermath of catastrophe - a story worth preserving in the urban fabric in the same way that traces of ancient history are. After the area was devastated by bombing raids, an uninspired and piecemeal post-war regeneration approach gave way to the bold and imaginative urban planning to which the Barbican owes its uniquely modern character. This celebrated urban quarter forged its identity through a resistance to conventional and outdated thinking - a resistance to 'more of the same'. Today, more of the same would refer to carbon-intensive glass and steel office towers, and the outdated thinking that allows these types of developments to be represented as contributing to Net Zero.

The Museum of London and Bastion House are buildings of historic significance, pioneering design and high quality construction, delivered by an award-winning architectural practice at the height of its powers during the post-war period. Powell and Moya's oeuvre has a history of successful retrofit and refurbishment works. This indicates that these buildings are worthy of preservation and re-use, in addition to their monolithic structural system lending itself well to that end.

The premise for the redevelopment proposal is predicated upon the misconception that retention and retrofit is unfeasible, leading to the unreliable conclusion that demolition is the only viable course of action. Independent analysis has identified a number of core assumptions which do not stand up to scrutiny, while the argument for demolition contradicts best practice and undermines the environmental goals as outlined in the City's own Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027, among other publications.

Our assessment of the site history and the strategic context of the London Wall West proposal leads us to conclude that a rethink is urgently required in order to avoid wasting money, diminishing public cultural value and missing an opportunity to deliver a pioneering low-carbon, culture-focussed re-use and extension scheme on a prestigious site.

The Culture Mile initiative does not constitute a coherent development strategy: the absence of a comprehensive masterplan for the area means that the City continues to treat each site as an individual development opportunity, leading to incoherent decision-making. As recently as 2010, £20.5m was spent on renovating the Museum of London, before the site was effectively condemned just 5 years later when the Museum announced its intention to move. If this is not urgently addressed, more money will be wasted. In light of this inefficiency, the need to support the Museum's relocation costs should not override the need to take a considered and objective view on the appropriateness of the proposed buildings for this site. Further, the risk

that the Museum of London's operations may be indefinitely suspended as a result of the uncertainty surrounding the feasibility of its move to West Smithfield should be independently assessed, with a contingency plan drawn up to cover the possibility of remaining at the London Wall site.

The current buildings have a rich diversity of uses, and the cultural value of these should be recognised and augmented to activate the public realm. The character of the surrounding streetscape is austere and impermeable, though this can be addressed without the need for wholesale redevelopment.

The Centre for Music scheme offered a vision of the site's future where a world-class cultural landmark was the central development objective. A fundamental shift has occurred with the transition to a developer-led office scheme; embedding culture is no longer essential to the proposal and is now subject to compromise. No other form of intensive development of the airspace above the rotunda is appropriate, and any initial positive response to the Centre for Music scheme cannot be misconstrued as support for the London Wall West scheme.

The purported benefits of the London Wall West proposal disguise its core commercial agenda. The soft strategies which are used to mollify its image are neither vital to the scheme, nor contingent upon wholesale redevelopment at all. Too many development drivers are referenced which are either simply not relevant for the planning stage, or acutely exposed to risk of dilution or value-engineering during the later development stages. The result of this is a polished presentation firmly anchored by professional digital visualisations, which to the public paints a green and community-focussed picture of a commercial scheme - belying the corporate-leaning nature of London Wall West.

It is not adequately explained that the City of London is the applicant at the planning stage, and the commercial mechanism of securing planning permission is often to raise the value of a property for sale - making existing built assets more attractive to speculative developers and investors. While it is vital for the City to represent the scheme as green and culture-focussed in order to garner support at the planning stage, the motivation for a developer who might ultimately acquire the site with planning permission is to maximise profit. This is most often at the expense of cultural offerings and public realm improvements. With proposals of this nature, what you see is very rarely what you get.

In order to avoid missing the valuable opportunity this key site presents, the City must revise its predisposition towards demolition and redevelopment, in order to recognise the substantial carbon investment already in place on the site. In order to demonstrate that its priorities are aligned with the Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027, we would urge that the London Wall West proposals be withdrawn prior to any planning submission taking place, in order that the core assumptions underpinning the brief can be objectively examined. The only development strategy which is conducive to the implementation of Net-Zero principles is one in which the assumption of maximum practical retention replaces the assumption of total demolition. Many scenarios are possible which include adaptive re-use, expansive re-use as seen elsewhere in the city, or a retrofit and re-cladding work to extend the current functional life of the buildings.

In order to remain a Destination City, London must internalise forward-thinking values to deliver low-carbon urban regeneration solutions fit for our time, taking the initiative - as demonstrated by other major global cities - rather than falling behind into short-sighted 'business as usual'.

## Key Reference Documents

The Future of London Wall West - City of London 2022

Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027 - City of London 2020

The Square Mile: Future City - City of London 2020

*Creating the world's most inclusive, innovative and sustainable business ecosystem.*

London Wall West Whole Life Carbon Assessment

London Wall West Consultation Pack

[www.londonwallwest.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CoL.LWW\\_.A0.Boards.WEB\\_.21.06.17.pdf](http://www.londonwallwest.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CoL.LWW_.A0.Boards.WEB_.21.06.17.pdf)

[DRAFT] City Plan 2036: Shaping the Future City City of London Local Plan

London Plan Guidance: Whole Life-Cycle Carbon Assessments - March 2022

Report on Structural Assessment of Bastion House and Museum of London - Alan Conisbee and Associates 2022

London Wall West: Review of Carbon Policies and The London Wall West Whole Life Carbon Assessment - Targeting Zero 2022

Douglas and King Architects have been appointed to appraise and comment on the proposals for the future of London Wall West, ahead of the anticipated planning application by the City of London. Through this analysis we seek to establish an understanding of the architectural character and history of Bastion House and the Museum of London, as well as analysing their key relationship with the Barbican Estate. This will underpin our appropriateness in the wider urban context of London Wall.

This report aims to establish the timeline proposed for the development, in order to frame an understanding the City's goals in pursuing a scheme of this nature. We will consider the potential benefits and shortcomings of such an approach from urban, social, sustainability and conservation perspectives.

We aim to critically evaluate the success of the proposal's response to the City of London's targets as outlined in its Climate Action Plan 2020-2027, the principles of the Culture Mile vision, and the stated aims for the Future of London Wall West. This will cover as assessment of the proposed benefits of the scheme, and differentiate those benefits which are inherent to a full demolition and redevelopment approach from those which might more practicably be delivered with a more measured strategy.

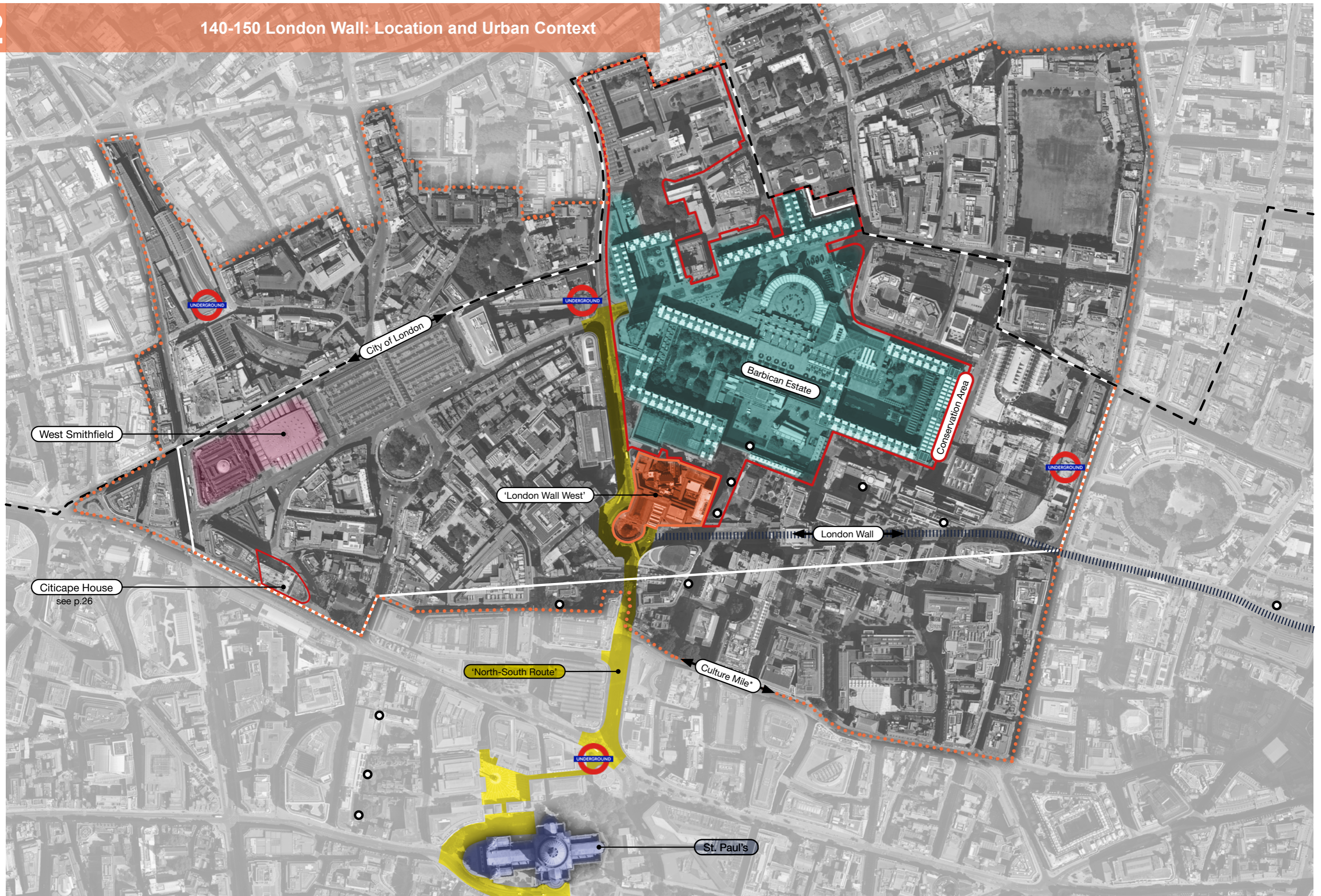
While appraising the London Wall West proposal, it is also crucial to assess potential futures for the site which have not been fully explored. This includes questioning why an earnest attempt to propose a sensitive retrofit and expansion programme has been deemed unfeasible, and the paramount role of anticipated profit in shaping the City's approach to determining the future of this historic site.

Douglas and King will explore the historical importance and conservation value of both the Museum of London and Bastion House, arguing that by virtue of location, form and character these buildings are excellent candidates for retention and retrofit. Following on from this, we will propose alternatives to the current London Wall West strategy which could deliver substantially greater carbon savings. We believe it is critical that the City's development ambition is aligned with its own Climate Action Strategy, and that any redevelopment of this key site must fully recognise the value of the carbon investment already made.

A sensitive retrofit and extension scheme will also be appraised in terms of its financial viability, delivery timeline and potential phasing. The latter would promote community benefit achieved through meanwhile use, while mitigating the risk of future economic or political shifts leaving the prematurely closed Museum of London without a site, indefinitely.

We believe that another way is possible: being at once financially viable, sensitive to its historic context - both ancient and modern - and minimally impactful on the environment. Only in this way can the City of London be seen to stand steadfastly by its own values, and demonstrate thought leadership in urban development befitting a Destination City.

*This report is conducted on the basis of information available to the practice at the time of writing, which includes neither a full survey of the existing buildings on the site nor any project information for London Wall West which is not in the public domain.*



*A unique site of critical importance requires a sensitive and forward-thinking approach to preserve and augment its character.*

### 02.1 Site Context

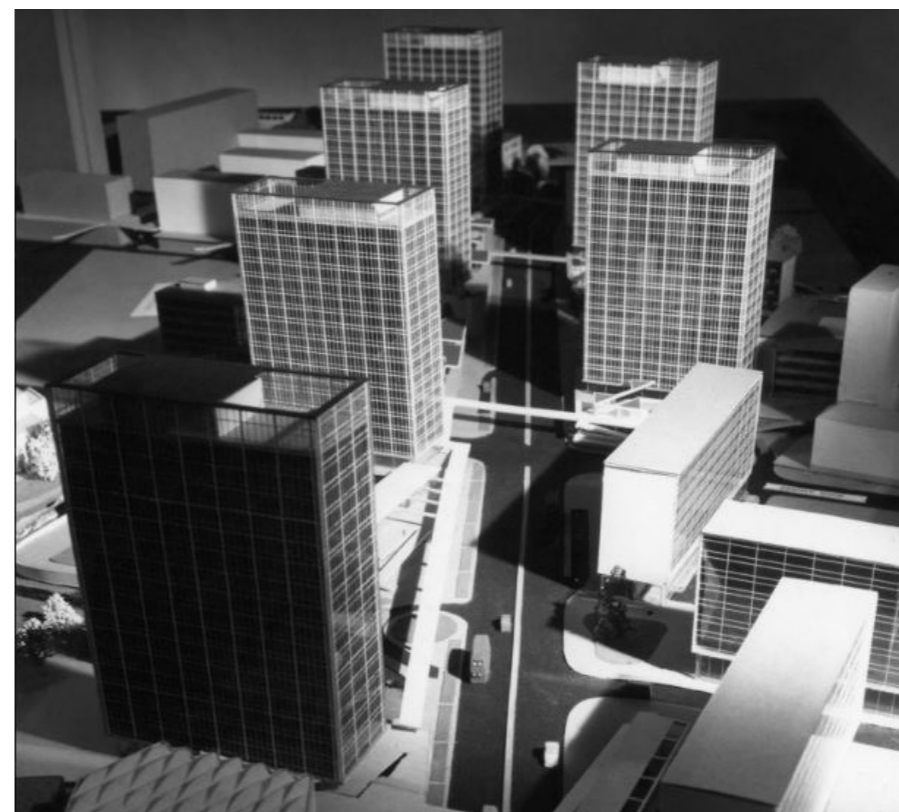
The existing buildings of Bastion House and the Museum of London occupy are located at the Western terminus of London Wall, the key East-West axis which traces the internal perimeter of the historic Roman fort wall, lending the area its name. The site marks the intersection of London Wall with Aldersgate Street to the North and St. Martin's le Grand to the South, as well as forming the Southern point of the Barbican Estate. The site itself is complex, multilayered and subject to a number of key constraints. It's well-established limitation in size induces the Museum of London to span the Rotunda, with traffic passing beneath a deck linking the museum buildings with a protected public garden. The museum currently sits at the point of inflection where the primarily residential development of the Barbican Estate to the North gives way to principally commercial uses to the South.

### 02.2 Views + Planning Constraints

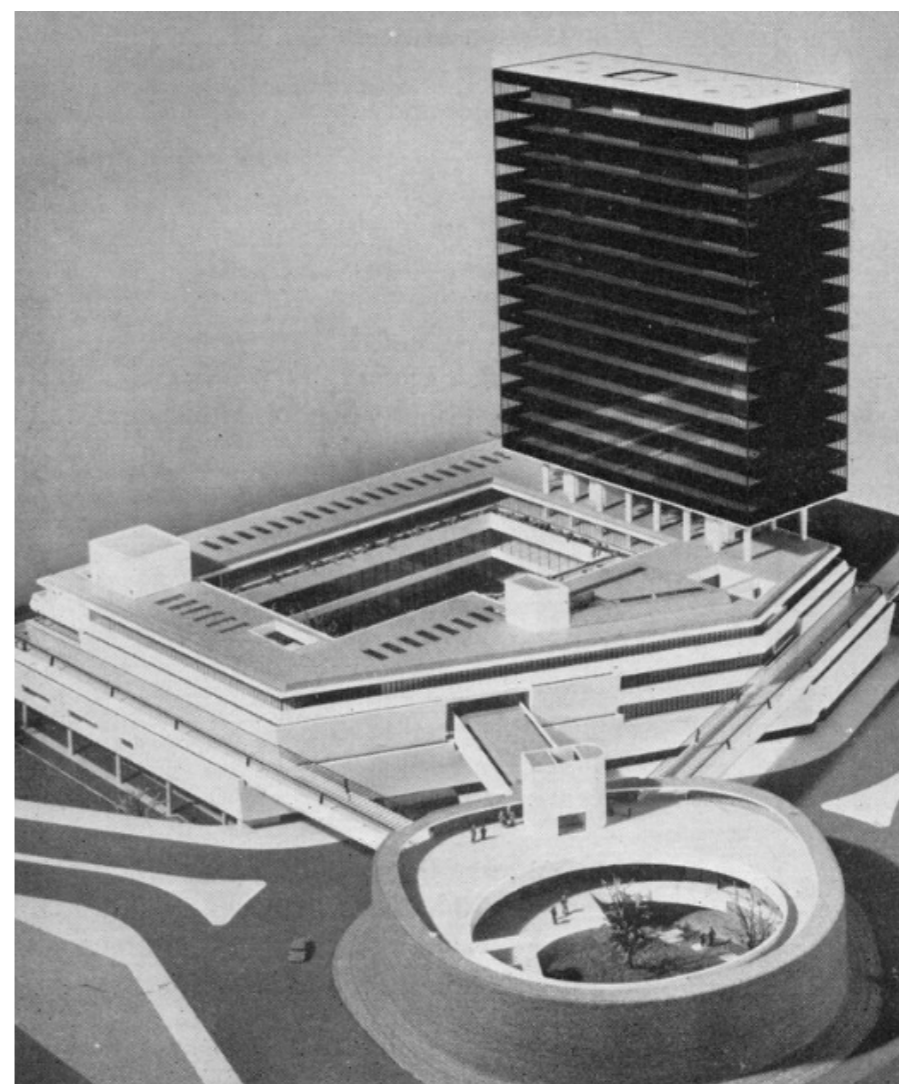
The Rotunda holds the distinction of being the point of convergence of 4 key routes through the Square Mile. St Martin's le Grand to Aldersgate forms a key part of the North-South route through the culture mile, linking to the Millennium Bridge and across the Thames to the Tate Modern via St. Paul's Cathedral. As such it represents an important focal point, and any development here must aim to maximise cultural value in such a way as the Centre for Music sought to. This focal position means that the visual impact on the townscape composition and buildings of historic importance must be given particularly close attention. The defensive nature of the walled Rotunda obscures views across the site, and introduces a substantial obstacle to both pedestrian wayfinding at ground level, and accessibility of the surrounding streetscape. Any development should seek to ameliorate this condition, opening the views through and across this junction to improve pedestrian visibility rather than increasing the mass. Any massing proposed for future redevelopment of the site will be subject to height limitations governed by the London View Management Framework, particularly those from the Millennium Bridge and Hungerford Bridge. This does not mean that these long skyline views are the only ones that should be considered: also of critical importance are the axes of approach to the site; Aldersgate Street, St-Martin's le Grand and London Wall.

### 02.3 Ironmongers' Hall

Ironmongers' Hall was completed in 1925 and narrowly escaped the bombing which destroyed a substantial area to the North and East. The awkward positioning of this building - which collides obliquely with the prevailing urban grain of the Barbican Estate and the Museum of London - comprises the most intractable constraint of this site. As the original study model opposite indicates, this was not initially intended to be the case. As originally conceived, the museum volume neatly encompassed the perimeter of the site, running parallel to the Southern edge of the Barbican Estate and surrounding a generous, light-filled courtyard. During the planning process, the anticipated compromise with Ironmongers' Hall did not materialise. By remaining in place rather than relocating, it became something of a 'nail house', resulting in a substantially impeded site. The consequent truncated form led to the dearth of accommodation which the museum now seeks off-site. This deleterious impact will continue to be felt through any future redevelopment of the site, as this unlisted building continues to exert disproportionate influence over its future.



Study Model for South Barbican, London Wall; LCC - 1961



Study Model for the Museum of London; Powell and Moya

**03.1 Site Layout and Adjacency**

The Museum of London (A) comprises the central part of the site, with Bastion House (B) located above it to the Eastern edge of the site. To the South, a protective brick bastion encloses a public garden in the centre of the Rotunda (C). The museum building spans the Rotunda to create a sunken garden protected from the surrounding road traffic by a brick structure reminiscent of the circular bastions remaining from the Roman Fort built in 110AD, which also lend Bastion House its name.

**03.2 Streetscape and Access**

The museum is well-connected to its surrounding context at highwalk level, forming - along with the Barbican Estate - an integral part of the best-preserved 'pedway' network in the city. It is linked with Thomas More House to the North, the One London Wall and 200 Aldersgate office buildings to the South, as well as the highwalk approach to Terry Farrell's Alban Gate to the East. Once maligned for the navigational difficulties they introduced, the network has been augmented in recent years in recognition of the benefits associated with providing car-free circulation for pedestrians. The Rotunda and Museum have been recognised as suffering from wayfinding issues and navigational difficulty, issues which any redevelopment should aim to address. Despite recent Culture Mile initiatives, the character of the surrounding public realm is austere and impermeable; at street level very little is offered in the way of hospitality, retail or leisure. Pavements are often narrow and devoid of street furniture, while any establishments who might offer al fresco tables find that any views across the rotunda are blocked; the atmosphere is claustrophobic. Temporary artworks or 'identity-enhancing public realm improvements'<sup>1</sup> may offer brief and modest amelioration, however these soft strategies are most useful in building the narrative towards a sensitive re-evaluation of the streetscape - rather than an end in themselves.

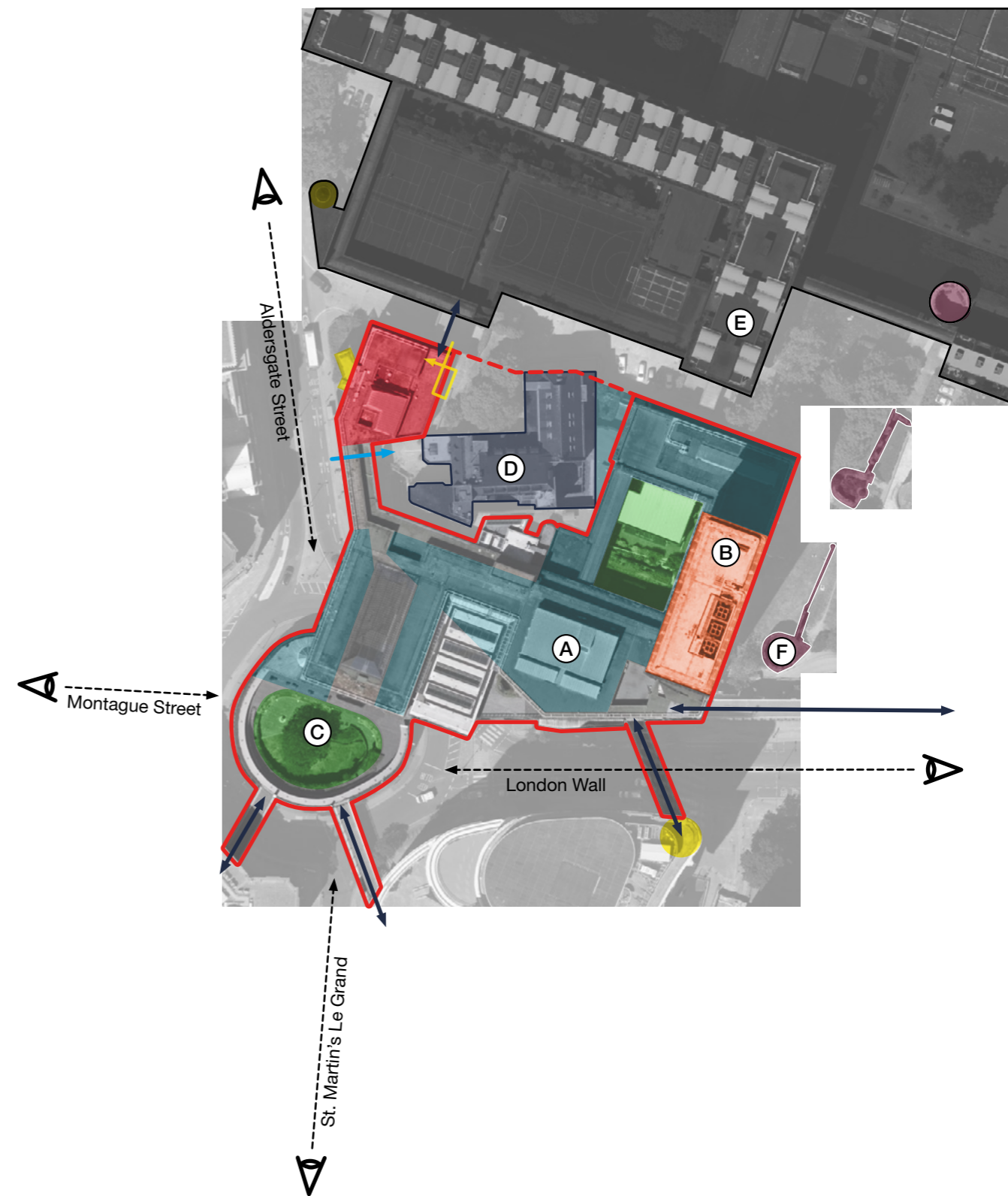
**03.3 Programme and Diversity of Use**

It is important to remain conscious of the fact that the Museum of London today is characterised by a diversity of uses, incorporating the core cultural offering of the Museum itself, office space in Bastion House, publically accessible gardens as well as restaurants and bars at the podium level bounded by the Rotunda wall. The North-West section of the building houses the Weston Theatre along with learning spaces and seminar rooms. A sensitive adaptive re-use and extension scheme should seek to maintain this diversity of use while assessing the needs of local stakeholders.

**03.4 Public Realm Activation**

One of the key shortcomings of the current building arrangement is that the aforementioned diverse uses are inert in their influence on the streetscape below. They are unable to activate the public realm - to spark intrigue or draw foot traffic - simply because they are hidden from the view of pedestrians. Part of this is due to the flawed implementation of dual-layer pedestrian circulation, which focusses on the highwalk level at the expense of the ground plane. More culpable however is the defensive character of the Rotunda volume and Museum facades at ground level, which were designed as a response to the increasing inhospitability of a traffic-filled city. Where the highwalk might have once been intended to replace the street, we can expect that - through the implementation of the Climate Action Strategy - reduced traffic, electric and low-emission vehicles as well as improved cycling infrastructure will allow the highwalk and the street to augment one another, creating an atmosphere of excitement, possibility, creative and cultural activation.

1. <https://culturemile.cargo.site/What-is-Culture-Mile>



- |          |                     |  |                            |  |                     |
|----------|---------------------|--|----------------------------|--|---------------------|
| <b>A</b> | - Museum of London  |  | Barbican Estate            |  | Access to Highwalk  |
| <b>B</b> | - Bastion House     |  | 'London Wall West' Site    |  | Museum of London    |
| <b>C</b> | - Rotunda Garden    |  | Scheduled Ancient Monument |  | Highwalk Connection |
| <b>D</b> | - Ironmongers' Hall |  | Ironmongers' Hall          |  | Street View         |
| <b>E</b> | - Mountjoy House    |  | Garden/Green Space         |  |                     |
| <b>F</b> | - Roman Wall        |  | Educational Use            |  |                     |



Wolfson College, Oxford: 1972



Chichester Festival Theatre: 1962

#### Powell and Moya Selected Works:

Extensions to Brasenose College, Oxford: Completed 1961 (Grade II listed)

Chichester Festival Theatre: Completed 1962 (Grade II\* listed), renovated 2013

Churchill Gardens, Pimlico: Completed 1962 (partially Grade II listed)

The Cripps Building, St. John's College, Cambridge: Completed 1967 (Grade II\* listed), renovated 2016.

Blue Boar Quad: Completed 1968 (Grade II\* listed), renovated 2007-2008

Wolfson College, Oxford: Completed 1974 (partially Grade II listed), zero-carbon renovation ongoing (2022-)

Museum of London & Bastion House: Completed 1976, Renovated 2010 (COIL\*)

QEII Centre: Completed 1982

*These are buildings of historic significance, pioneering design and high quality construction: worthy of preservation and re-use.*

#### 04.1 Architectural Significance and Design Quality

When considering the future of the Museum of London site, it is first necessary to carefully understand the nature of the existing buildings. Completed in 1976 by a pioneering practice at the height of their powers, the Powell and Moya scheme was already underway as the practice won the RIBA Gold Medal in 1974, with founder and Project Architect Sir Phillip Powell knighted a year later in 1975 in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the arts. In a distinguished career spanning more than four decades, the practice made numerous key contributions, emerging at the vanguard of modern architecture in the post-war period. Their outstanding oeuvre includes educational buildings, groundbreaking residential developments addressing the post-war housing shortage, as well as healthcare, civic and cultural institutions such as the Chichester Festival Theatre and the Museum of London. An overview of their key works opposite indicates the regard in which they are held, many having received listed status by Historic England in recognition of their special conservation value.

Far from representing generic examples of misguided and poorly-constructed post-war architecture, these are high quality buildings designed and delivered by a leading practice of its day. The fact that much of their work's conservation value has been recognised and preserved through careful renovation is reflected in their listed status; buildings worthy 'of special interest warranting every effort to preserve' them.

#### 04.2 Suitability of Building Fabric for Re-Use

The monolithic character of these buildings and many other Brutalist structures marks them out as robustly engineered; built to last using reinforced concrete and consequently excellent candidates for preservation and low-carbon retrofit. The fact that numerous buildings designed by Powell and Moya have been successfully retrofitted to deliver low-carbon performance upgrades serves as evidence that this is not only desirable but achievable. Examples from world-leading institutions including the Cripps Building at St. John's College, Cambridge and Wolfson College, Oxford demonstrate thought leadership in low-carbon retrofit of this architect's work.

#### 04.3 Recent History and Renovation

In 2010, the Museum of London was brought up to date with a £20.5m renovation programme, completed to a design by leading London architecture practice WilkinsonEyre. The fact that this work was successfully funded and undertaken indicates a recognition of the value of these buildings and an intention to preserve them. Only 5 years later in 2015 a Certificate of Immunity from Listing was issued for the Museum and Bastion House, with the former announcing its plan to move to a new site in West Smithfield. This abrupt U-turn confounds expectations and suggests a lack of cohesive planning in relation to the future of the Museum, raising genuine concern that the London Wall West proposal is founded upon short-sighted principles which ignore not only the inherent quality and conservation value of the existing buildings, but the substantial recent investment which suggests a building worthy of preservation.

\*Certificate of Immunity from Listing.



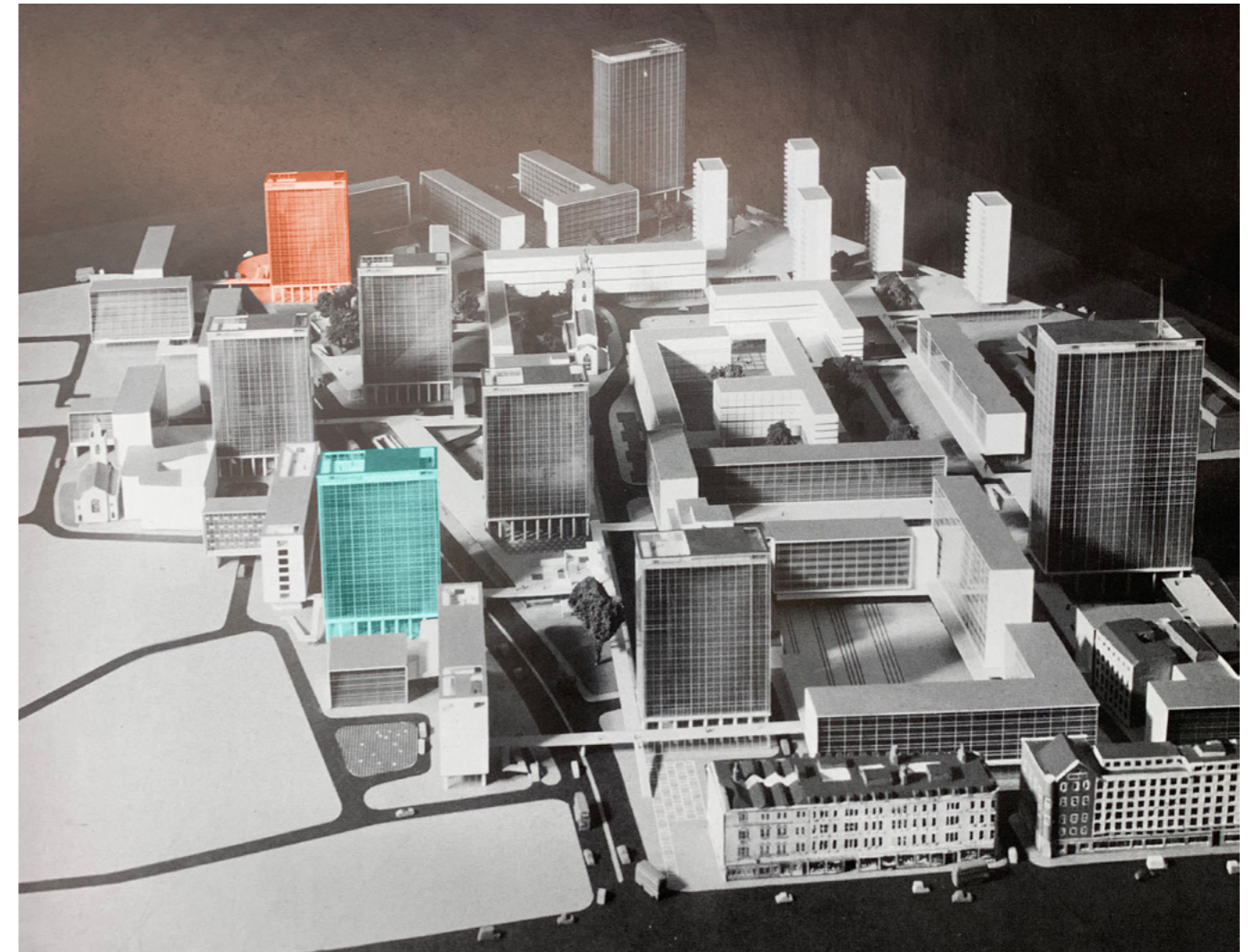
*London's post-war urban heritage tells a story of the pioneering spirit or modernism in the aftermath of catastrophe - a story worth preserving in the urban fabric.*

#### 05.1 London Wall Urban Regeneration

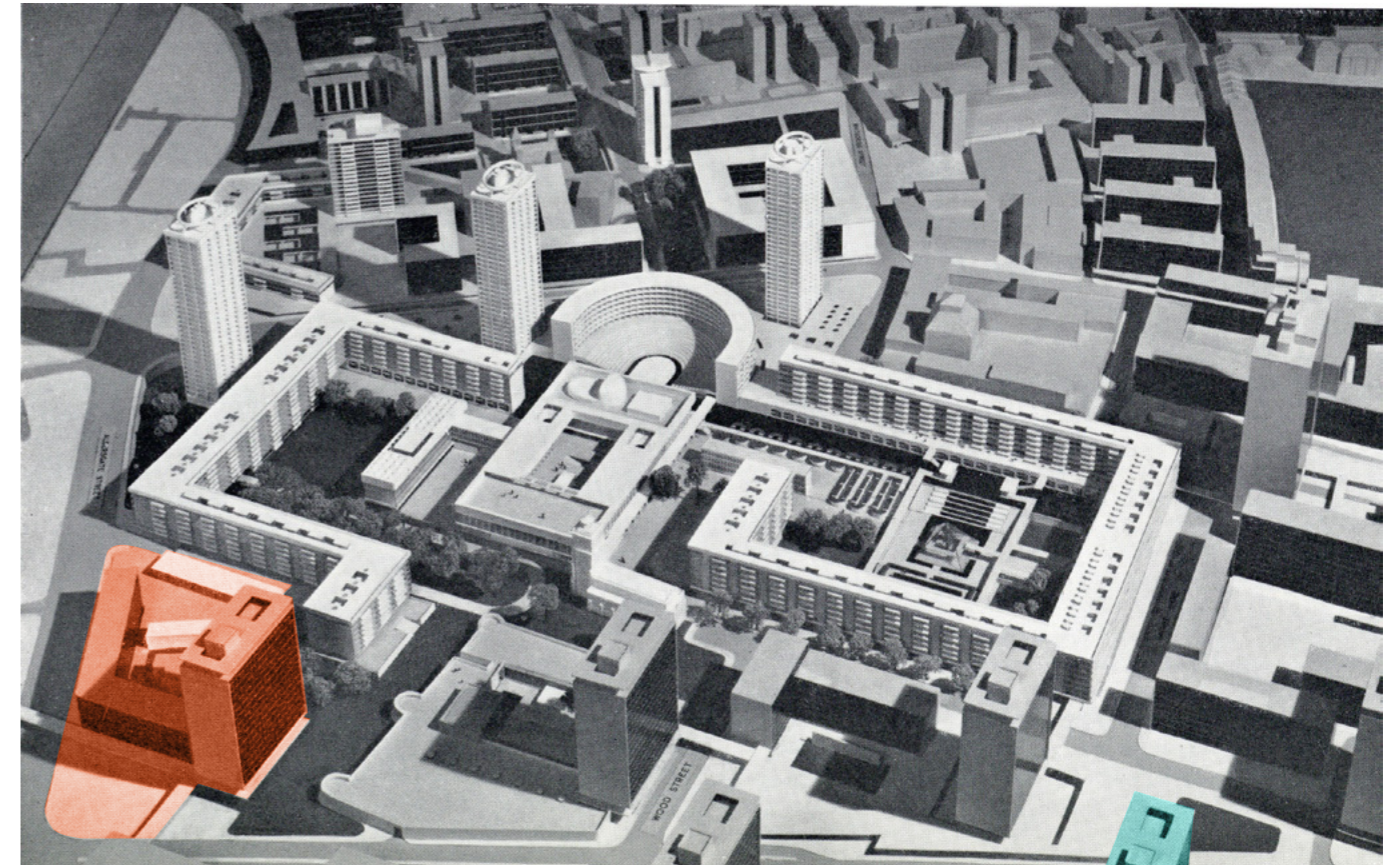
Following the devastation wrought upon a vast swathe of the City of London by bombing raids during World War II, London Wall became a canvas for progressive urban planning and pioneering design ideas born of the Modernist movement. In 1944, the City of London Corporation took possession by compulsory purchase of around 40 acres of critically bomb-damaged urban fabric North of St. Paul's Cathedral. Today, the urban heritage of this critical period in the City's history is manifest in the architectural integrity of the Barbican Estate, as well as the remnants of the original Six office towers interlinked at the highwalk level.

#### 05.2 The Martin-Mealand Plan

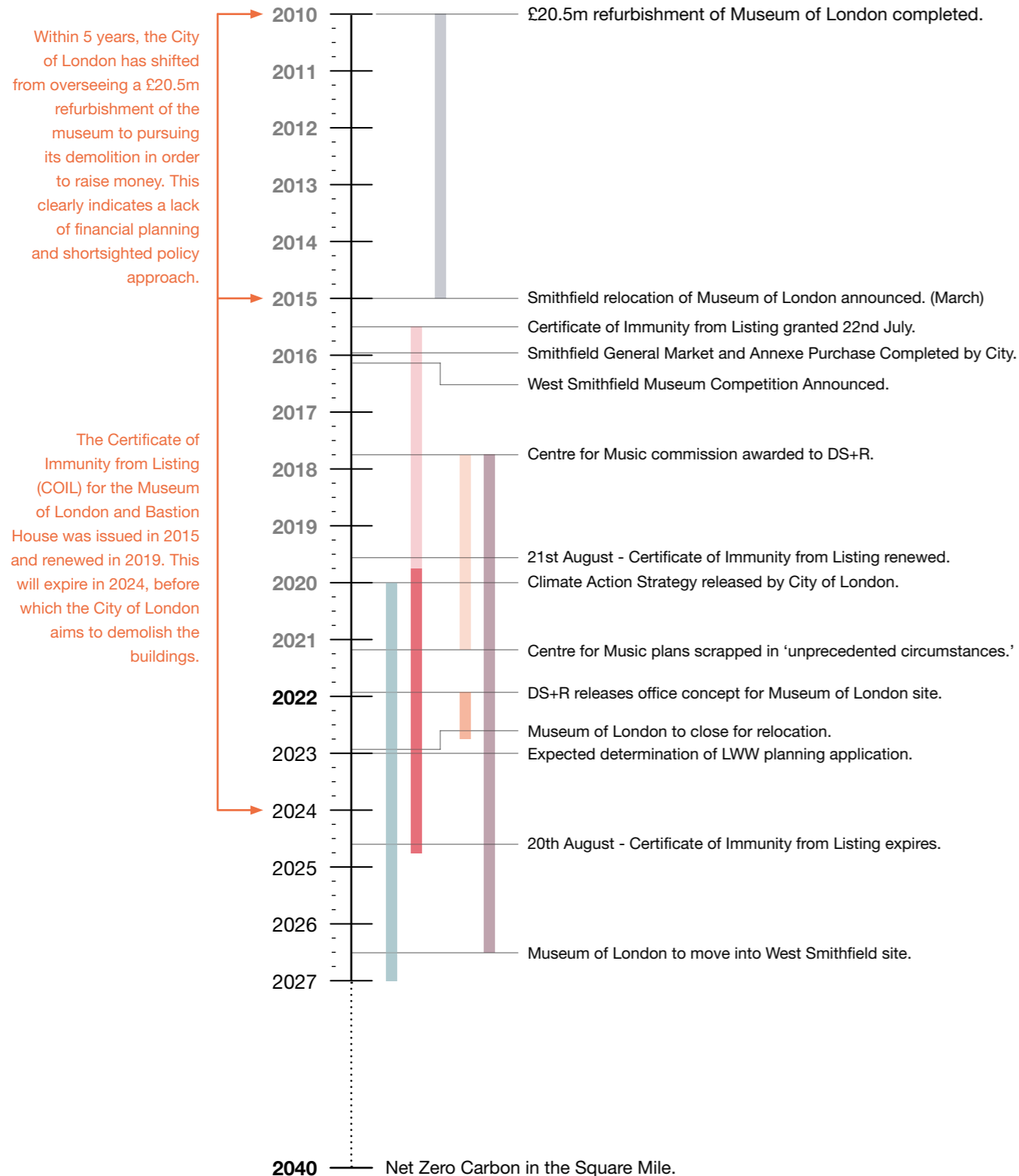
In collaboration with the New Barbican Committee, the City's head of planning - H.A. Mealand and the LCC's Leslie Martin unveiled a bold new vision for the quarter in 1955. This initiative gave rise to the unique architectural character of London Wall's post-war regeneration, before piecemeal commercial redevelopment through the latter 20th Century compromised the integrity of the original scheme - with Farrell's Alban Gate breaking the crucial visual link between the original six towers, which have since mostly been demolished. Of these, only Bastion house remains in its original form, with Britannic House having been refurbished and retrofitted - becoming Beaumont City Tower. It is our view that in response to unimaginable catastrophe, this era of optimism and faith in modern materials and ideas to reimagine the post-war city constitutes a valuable layer of urban history, in much the same way as artefacts of the Great Fire of 1666 and before do.



Scale models throughout the post-war planning process described the urban vision. These include Bastion House (Orange) Britannic House (Turquoise), Refurbished as City Tower by GMW in 1990, and 2013 by retrofit specialists Orms in 2013.



**A rethink is urgently required in order to avoid wasting money, diminishing public cultural value and missing an opportunity to deliver a pioneering low-carbon re-use and extension scheme.**



In addition to the urban context, in order to appraise the success of the London Wall West scheme we must evaluate it's stated aims, as well as the site's planning history and the circumstances surrounding the proposal. In doing so we will establish whether the proposed development strategy will successfully deliver on the City of London's targets in terms of the Climate Action Strategy, the Culture Mile initiative and the ambition to ensure the capital remains a 'Destination City'.

**06.1 Refurbishment to Demolition**

A key reference point in the planning history of the site is the substantial renovation work to the museum undertaken by WilkinsonEyre, completed in 2010. Just 5 years later, it was determined that the site would be abandoned entirely. The fact that £20.5m - almost 30% of the purported relocation budget shortfall of £70m - will in this case have been effectively wasted, calls into question the efficacy of investment policy and decisionmaking associated with the site.

**06.2 Museum of London Relocation**

The timing of the announcement in 2015 that the Museum of London would be moving to a new site in West Smithfield calls into question the priorities of the City of London in this case. It is now understood that the move is contingent upon securing funding from the redevelopment of London Wall West; the viability of which is subject to a determination by the local planning authority in relation to the proposed designs. Given that the decision has been taken to close it in December 2022 - before these conditions for its relocation have been satisfied - the security of the Museum's future has been placed in jeopardy. Once ceased, the Museum's suspension of operations may be prolonged indefinitely. Expected to fully reopen in 2026, this date will be subject to unforeseen changes in the economic climate or delays in the construction process with the new West Smithfield site. According to the City of London's financial modelling, completion on this new site is dependent upon funding secured through the redevelopment of the old site - capital which is effectively unlocked with the grant of a planning approval for the London Wall West scheme. This causal chain presents the approval of the scheme as a fait accompli; where now opposition to the proposals may be conflated with threatening the future of the museum itself.

**06.3 A New Centre for Music**

Following an international competition featuring some of the most prominent names in contemporary architecture, Diller, Scofidio + Renfro were selected to advance proposals for a permanent home for the London Symphony Orchestra. Viewed as an opportunity to address London's perceived need for a world-class concert hall, this was the first conceptual look at how 140-150 London Wall might be redeveloped. Notably absent from the competition was a discussion for the future of Bastion House, focussing instead on the principle of a large volume replacing the Rotunda. Given the international profile of such a programme, these concepts cannot be seen to either pave the way for an office building of the same scale on the site, or constitute support in principle for any other development.

**06.4 Certificate of Immunity from Listing**

The Museum of London and Bastion House have been considered by Historic England as having a "low degree of architectural and historic interest".<sup>2</sup> While we disagree with this determination, it has no bearing on the value of retaining these buildings for their embodied carbon and excellent potential for re-use. It is vital that the City of London does not consider this certificate to constitute a demolition license; in our view this would be short-sighted and fail to apprehend the value of the existing carbon investment in the site.

2. London Wall West Whole Life Carbon Assessment, May 2022 p.9

***A fundamental shift occurs with the shift to a developer-led office scheme; embedding culture is no longer essential to the proposal and is now subject to compromise.***

#### 07.1 Expansion and Intensification

When considering the future impact of the 'London Wall West' proposals on the Culture Mile initiative, it is necessary to understand this scheme in the context of the preceding plans for the Museum of London site. This concept scheme - as described by the competition-winning architects - was intended to:

*"turn the Barbican's inwardly focused campus inside out, providing ample, light-filled public space, a world-class concert hall, and much needed learning and outreach spaces. The Centre would be a beehive of activity both day and night—a place where music of all kinds is made, learned, experienced and shared. It would be a place where people want to spend time, even without a concert ticket."* (DS+R)

Notably, this scheme would only have required the demolition of the Museum of London's rotunda garden and the volume spanning the road itself. The Eastern part of the site was considered for redevelopment under these plans, though not represented in the competition as the topic of extensive demolition was not broached. To make way for the key volume of the Centre for Music, Bastion House's demolition would not have been necessary. It must be articulated that this is not simple a replacement of one design with another, it is a significant expansion and intensification of the site which incorporates only some vestigial remnants of the original Centre for Music concept.

#### 07.2 Cultural Accessibility

A 'Culture Cap' does not constitute an adequate replacement for the 'dynamic place of exchange' originally presented. Moreover, as a tertiary use this space will not be publically accessible unless it is independently programmed and served by a separate entrance and lift core. Details such as these are subject to change throughout the planning and construction process; where a scheme is presented as being culture-focussed, the determination of how accessible this culture will eventually be to the general public is subject to ongoing debate until close to completion. Questions as to how these proposed cultural spaces might coexist with the interests of future corporate tenants and remain publically accessible must be addressed now.

#### 07.3 The Essential and the Dispensable

Where the original Centre for Music proposal presented an overdevelopment of the site in principle, this was tempered by the fact that the essentials of such a scheme focussed on creating a world-class concert hall on a key urban axis. Other than the acoustics, the essential criteria upon which the success of such a landmark institution would be judged are inextricably tied to the cultural value it would bring to the area. A commercial office scheme will not be subject to the same scrutiny. Since in this case the City of London itself will act as the Local Planning Authority, it is worth questioning which of these promises will survive the journey to completion, and which will be compromised to attract the investment capital the City seeks through the sale of the site to developers. Once granted, any planning permission is subject to amendment; once sold to a developer, the incentive will change from representing a green and culture-focussed concept, to ensuring the maximum return on investment from the purchase of the site. For the developer, office floor space and Net Internal Area are essential; aspirational cultural offerings and investment in public realm elements are dispensable and typically the first to feel the effects of the inevitable value-engineering process.



*DS+R's Centre for Music concept design as viewed from St. Martin's Le Grand.*



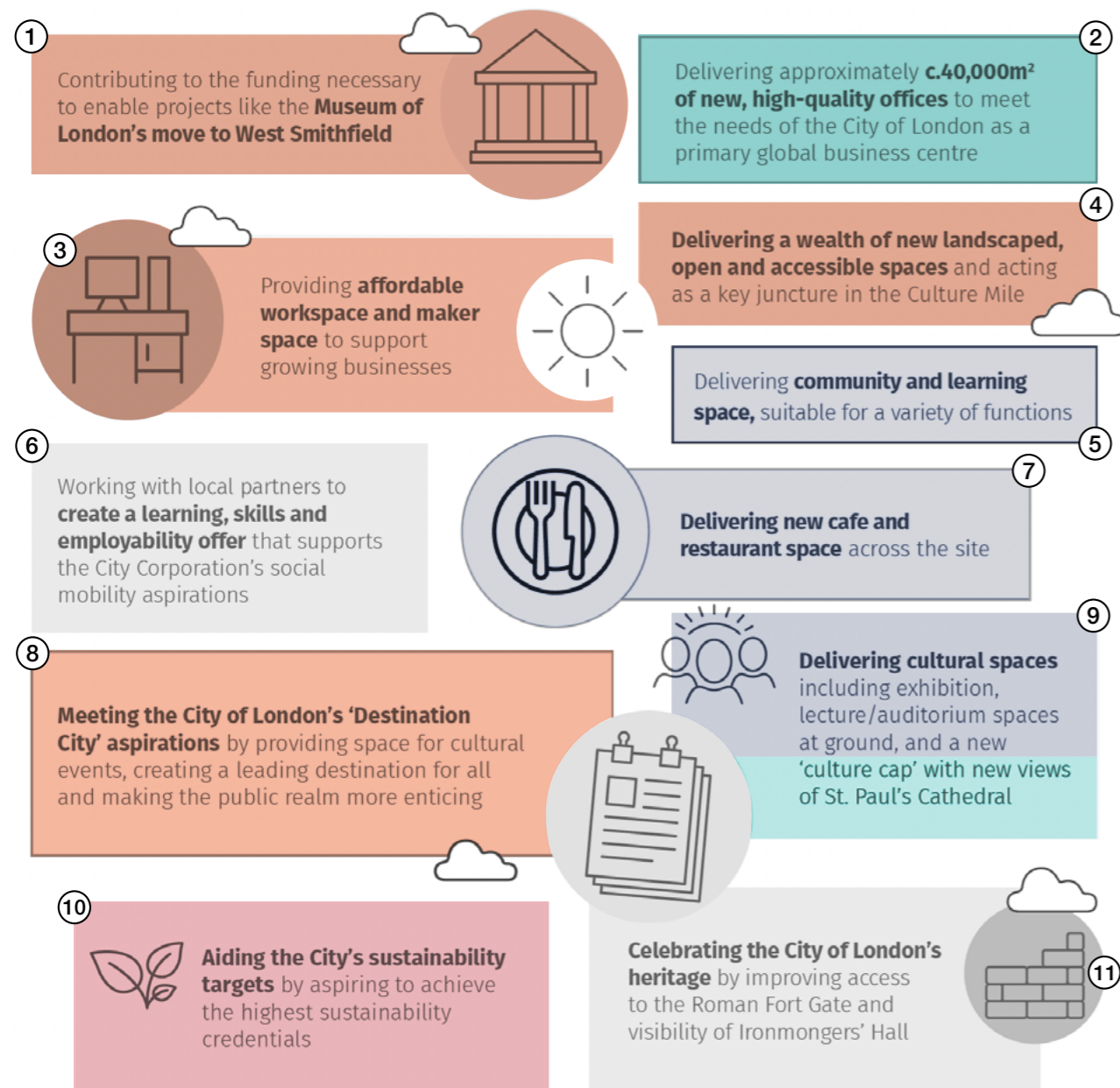
*This scheme proposed a cultural programme of undisputed value which was central rather than peripheral to its primary purpose.*



*The proposal would have seen a state-of-the-art concert hall venue with acoustics rivalling the world's best.*

*The purported benefits of the proposal disguise its core commercial agenda with soft strategies which are neither contingent upon wholesale redevelopment, nor relevant for the planning stage.*

- Benefit inherent to LWW proposal.
- Benefit achievable through retrofit + extension.
- Replacement of existing amenity.
- Benefit unlikely to be achieved by LWW proposal.
- Benefit not contingent upon development whatsoever.



**08.1 Town Planning, Site Appropriateness and Public Realm**

As previously articulated, the Centre for Music concept represented an overdevelopment of the portion of the site currently occupied by the museum Rotunda. Where there existed a potential justification for a globally recognised cultural centrepiece, a commercial office tower in this location cannot compensate for the opportunity missed in opening up street views to reconnect this visual focal point. The proposition to truncate the road encircling the Rotunda brings with it an opportunity to improve pedestrian accessibility and the navigability of the site at street level, though this initiative stands on its own merit and is by no means inherent to this form of wholesale redevelopment. The public realm improvements represented in the scheme's green and polished visualisations take pride of place in the London Wall West Consultation exhibition, hosted by the City of London's Property Investment Board. Less clearly articulated are the lease boundaries at the ground and highwalk levels; without adequate consideration and subsequent planning conditions being imposed by the LPA, areas such as 'The Meadow' risk becoming quasi-public spaces. Accessible at highwalk level, 'The Meadow' is at particular risk of becoming a defensible space in the event that management becomes the responsibility of a private lessee. Though beyond the scope of work the planning stage, it must be acknowledged that any planning approval brings forward a broader spectrum of possible futures than those suggested in unerringly green and sunlit visualisations.

**08.2 London Wall West Development Brief**

With reference to the page opposite, this assessment aims to classify and evaluate the stated aims of the development brief. Consideration will be given to the proposal's response, the relevance to a scheme at the planning stage, as well as the extent to which each aim requires the planned level of development.

1. Apparently constituting the core objective of the London Wall West scheme, a windfall land deal with a prospective developer client would enable the City of London to profit substantially from the sale of the site. The approach to massing is typical of this goal, with a dramatic intensification of use curtailed chiefly by the protected views under the LVMF. As a planning consideration however, this is immaterial. The City's struggle to secure funding for either the Centre for Music scheme or the completion of the West Smithfield relocation project should not justify overdevelopment of this key site. The entrenched yet untested conviction that retention and retrofit is not a financially viable option indicates that this is indeed the path the City intends to take.

2. Of all the benefits outlined overleaf, this goal represents the essence of the scheme.

3. Affordable workspace and support for growing creative enterprise is a programmatic aspiration that has little relevance to the scheme at the planning stage. While this may demonstrate some initiative to distribute employment opportunities, the developer who may eventually deliver the scheme may have other priorities regarding the affordability and use of the space. Without a detailed planning condition being imposed, this goal remains a distant possibility.

4. While landscaped gardens and publically accessible spaces may be well represented in architectural visualisations, these are not an outcome inherent to the current London Wall West proposal, and could be achieved cost-effectively through retention and re-use of the existing buildings.

5. The Museum of London currently offers seminar rooms and other multifunction spaces which could be adapted or expanded to deliver a similar benefit: this is not a novelty associated with the LWW proposal.

6. Forging such partnerships to promote learning, skills and employability is a soft strategy which has no bearing upon the content of a planning application. Were the will to exist, these benefits could be delivered today within the existing museum buildings in partnership with local stakeholders.

7. The Museum of London currently offers ample cafe and restaurant space, which was augmented in 2010 with the delivery of WilkinsonEyre's refurbishment scheme. It would be equally beneficial and more cost effective to improve access and amenity with respect to the existing provisions, rather than proposing a replacement in kind.

8. It seems that the 'Destination City' narrative is better suited to describing the aspirations associated with the defunct Centre for Music proposal. In proposing a 'destination for all', it follows that access to this culture should be guaranteed; something which is not safeguarded in a situation where the cultural use is subservient to commercial use.

9. Exhibition spaces, and a lecture theatre/auditorium refer to uses already established within the existing museum building. These could be extended or adapted to broader use with comparatively little cost in the event that a need for further provision is identified. The 'Culture Cap' seems to be a remnant from the Centre for Music scheme which - as impressive as such a space may be - still requires clarification as to its ownership, management and eventual accessibility to the public.

10. As will be further studied later in this report, presenting a dense new-build office scheme as a climate-focussed proposition where retrofit and adaptation or extension are viable is simply misleading. It may be the case that the proposed towers would aim for outstanding energy efficiency in use, though this characterisation disguises the enormous quantity of embodied carbon required to build them - let alone the carbon investment lost through demolishing buildings which are not at the end of their functional life.

11. Improving access to the Roman Fort Gate as a heritage asset is a solution which could be achieved individually without demolishing the existing buildings, while Ironmongers' Hall is unlisted, and questions remain around its heritage value.

### 08.3 Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027

Making sustainable cities is not just about green roofs, triple glazed facades or even the latest MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) system. Developers and architects have become necessarily adept at representing conceptual designs as clean and green; though while these new technologies inevitably mean that new buildings are able to perform better than their obsolete predecessors in terms of energy efficiency, this does not lessen the initial carbon impact of demolition and redevelopment.

Due to the embodied carbon required by the concrete, glass and steel of an intensive commercial office scheme such as London Wall West, the City's decision to sell the site with planning would result in a huge spike in the organization's 'scope 3' carbon emissions. These cover the indirect impacts - such as in this case - where the City develops a carbon-intensive building proposal, and sells the site to a developer who is ultimately responsible for the decision to build a carbon-intensive scheme. The way in which the City's climate action goals account for carbon emissions would allow this same behaviour to continue for almost 20 years, before the claimed scope 3 net-zero target. This is nowhere near urgent enough, and accounting for its actions in this way allows for the City to stoke the fire while avoiding scrutiny as the temperature rises. A future-looking City of London should be proactive in aiming not just to delay judgement through carbon accounting, but demonstrate real thought leadership in taking seriously the prospect of a groundbreaking re-use and retrofit scheme - rather than dismissing it on fragile pretexts.

### 08.4 The Culture Mile

In addition to its historical urban context, the site "has a unique and key urban location at the centre of Culture Mile, a new urban initiative and home for contemporary culture."<sup>1</sup> The Culture Mile vision "seeks to amplify the creativity embedded within the area and use it to create lasting change long into the future."<sup>2</sup> In this context, the implication of creative amplification is unclear. If assumed to denote the aspiration to deliver a development which actively promotes cultural engagement with a diverse programme of arts, it should be expected that any future development on this site identifies the existing provisions which might fulfil this goal. Having done so, the proposal should seek to enhance and intensify the cultural value already provided on the site, rather than simply replacing it. The Centre for Music had this goal as central to its premise: for a commercial London Wall West development, this has been reduced to a bolt-on.

### 08.5 Stakeholder Engagement

Although London Wall West Consultation Document describes 'talking to local residents, community organisations, businesses, visitors and those who work in the City to understand their priorities for the area'<sup>9</sup>, the outcomes of these consultations must be meaningfully interpreted and integrated into the design proposals in order to render these measures worthwhile. Reviewing the evolution of the London Wall West proposal, the City's disposition with regard to stakeholder engagement feedback is evidently one of selective application. Those measures which can be addressed through soft strategies are co-opted, and those which require meaningful change to the development initiative are ignored.

*With the approval of a planning application, the scheme which is granted permission is often the best of a number of possible future scenarios for which a precedent has been set.*



January 2020 "Sheppard Robson's 'radical' City scheme with giant green wall approved."<sup>4</sup>



September 2021 "Giant green wall axed in rethink over Sheppard Robson City scheme."<sup>5</sup>

**09.1 The Journey from Planning to Completion**

The City has established in its decision-making that the primary driver for axing the Centre for Music scheme and replacing it with a 'cash cow' commercial scheme in order to fund the relocation of the Museum of London. It is worth reflecting on the nature of the planning process with respect to the City's incentive for development. The concept visualisations representing the architects' intentions for London Wall West cannot be taken as a literal depiction of the future scheme. Over the course of a building's journey from planning to completion, buildings are liable to shift in shape, size form and programme. Interpreting the City's intentions in this case allows us to infer what will survive that journey, and what will be the first elements sacrificed to cost-cutting exercises. A guaranteed outcome is three new buildings, with floorplates as large as the site will allow in order to maximise profit. What we may not see is a generous, green and open public realm, freely accessible day and night. We may not get facades covered with plants which are green and vibrant year-round, a 'Culture Cap' with views of St. Pauls which is used for inclusive arts programming and not corporate events. We must be mindful that the planning process is long, while our memories can be short. Tenants may move out and be replaced, momentum and coherence may be lost. It is worth remembering that while we were originally warmed up to the idea of redevelopment with a landmark Centre for Music and now end up looking at a outsized commercial office scheme, we ought to be just as critical of these new promises as we might have been of the old.

**09.2 Greenwashing in Action on the Culture Mile**

Whilst it is undeniable that certain councils and developers are genuinely harnessing emerging technologies to green our cities, it is impossible to ignore the cynicism with which arresting images of lush facades and generous public spaces are used to garner support for commercial schemes. An exceptionally relevant example of this can be found in the evolution of another scheme by London Wall West's executive architects for a "new 11-storey 'gateway' building to the newly-established Culture Mile"<sup>6</sup>, featuring a "new living cladding system would provide 7 tonnes of fresh air and extract 9 tonnes of CO2 each year and would be the largest in Europe"<sup>7</sup>. While often interpreted as promises for a greener city, images such as these play a role in 'softening the blow' of urban densification schemes; once the principle of development has been secured, elements deemed extraneous are stripped away by developers whose primary motive is profit.

**09.3 Changing Incentives**

The commercial effect of securing planning permission is often to raise the value of property for sale, making existing built assets attractive to developers and investors. While it is vital for the City to represent the scheme as green and culture-focussed in order to garner support at the planning stage, it is critical to note that - once is sold - the developer is only beholden to those aspects of the scheme protected through planning conditions imposed by the council. In many cases, while land often sits unused and derelict an amended planning application is submitted, pressuring local authorities to approve designs of ever-lesser cultural and social value. In this case, since the City of London is both profit-seeking applicant and local authority, it does not require a stretch of the imagination to predict which elements of the London Wall West scheme are likely to survive to completion, and which will fall victim to 'value-engineering'.



Visualisation of London Wall West seen from Aldersgate Street. Source: Consultation Pack



4. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/sheppard-robsons-radical-city-scheme-with-giant-green-wall-approved>

5. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/giant-green-wall-axed-in-rethink-over-sheppard-robson-city-scheme>

*The premise for the redevelopment proposal is predicated upon the misconception that retention and retrofit is unfeasible.*

#### 10.1 Existing Building Condition and Performance

It is claimed in the 'London Wall West Whole Life Carbon Assessment' that the typical design life for a building constructed during 1971-1976 would be 50 years; leading to the assumption that in the near future we can "anticipate that structural and engineering issues can start to arise linked to the ageing of the structure."<sup>4</sup> Since a detailed case-specific inspection has not been carried out by the City of London, the validity of this assumption remains untested. It is also established that due to the age of the buildings, they suffer from poor energy performance. While this is unsurprising it is certainly a shortcoming that could be addressed through re-cladding or upgrades to glazing and servicing.

Given that a number of buildings designed by Powell and Moya have been successfully retrofitted - achieving substantial improvements to their energy performance - it is speculative at best to conclude that retention is unfeasible without the due diligence of inspection. The absence of evidence of visible spalling or corrosion on Bastion House or the Museum of London, alongside the aforementioned history of successful retrofits would indicate that these buildings may be significantly more resilient than assumed. A more positive approach would be to consider instead the technical life of the buildings, inspect their current condition and propose a viable course of remedial action if required.

#### 10.2 Constrained Proportions and Contemporary Standards

As outlined in the same report, in certain areas the floor-to-floor heights are below contemporary standards, and are not considered adequate to accommodate current market expectations. In particular, these are limited to the office floors of Bastion House and some areas of the upper level of the museum building. While the latter could be simply remedied through upward extension of the building fabric, the floor-to-ceiling heights of Bastion House are quoted as "approximately 2.54m". While this would indeed represent a substantial constraint for contemporary office accommodation, the architects' original drawings indicate a floor-to-floor height of 3.3m, a floor-to-ceiling height of 2.67m and a suspended ceiling. The BCO guidance of 2.8m to 3.2m as stated could be achieved by removing this suspended ceiling while upgrading servicing and lighting systems to align with contemporary technology.

#### 10.3 Potential for Adaptive Re-Use

While the Carbon Assessment document makes reference to the potential for a change of use of both Bastion House and the Museum of London, these approaches are not considered in detail. In the case of Bastion House, the issue of disproportionate collapse is invoked to preclude any further inquiry into potential re-use as either a hotel or residential building. The report contends that "the technical and engineering viability of providing a replacement transfer structure is not considered appropriate..."<sup>5</sup>, without consideration for the considerably simpler solution of providing auxiliary structure. Along with the lack of adequate investigation and the focus on the questionable threat posed by disproportionate collapse, the implication of this is a predisposition towards demolition and a reluctance to earnestly engage with the possibility of re-use.

With the future of existing uses on the site threatened by proposed demolition, a measured approach to retrofit and extend the Museum of London and Bastion House would allow continued use of parts of the site, either in their current capacity or for meanwhile use by local creative and cultural entities.

4. London Wall West Whole Life Carbon Assessment, 2022 p. 11

5. *ibid.* p.14



**The Standard, London**

*Orms' much-lauded 2019 retrofit and extension of the original Camden Town Hall Annexe transformed a maligned brutalist building into shining example of successful urban re-use.*



**HYLO, 103-105 Bunhill Row**

*HCL Architects' recently completed transformation of Finsbury Tower demonstrates how re-use of existing superstructure can bring about dramatic carbon reductions. Little imagination is needed to see that exposed concrete bearing marks of its former life represents a celebration of climate action taken seriously - rather than an eyesore which needs to be covered up.*



**City Tower, 40 Basinghall St.**

*The closest example to our case is Orms' 2013 re-clad and retrofit of what was once Brittanic Tower. Built to the same Martin-Mealand Plan specifications as Bastion House, this remnant of London Wall's post-war architectural heritage remains intact, with upgrades to performance and spatial quality delivered while the building was still partially occupied.*



**The development approach to the site must be reconsidered in order to recognise the substantial carbon investment already in place on the site, augmenting its performance where possible.**

### 12.1 Understanding Carbon Investment

With the tangible effects of climate change ever more present in our everyday lives, it is of paramount importance that environmental responsibility is considered as a key design driver, rather than as subservient to commercial interests. The City of London has indicated a disposition towards progress with its Climate Action Strategy, aiming to “transform the energy efficiency of our operational buildings through the adoption of best available technologies”<sup>6</sup> though this consideration is not attributed sufficient weight when the City proposes the development of this site. In order to meet the net-zero goals set out in this strategy, it is imperative that in addition to considering new development as a carbon investment against which to assess benefit, we consider our existing buildings as carbon investment already made on our behalf. Rather than finding reasons to pursue demolition, the most effective climate action would be to retain as much as is practicable

### 12.2 Expansive Re-Use as a Viable Approach

Examples from other London boroughs offer insights on how groundbreaking carbon-efficiency can be achieved through the careful retrofit and extension of existing buildings. While the height of Bastion House is not considered to be substantially extensible due to townscape constraints resulting from the London View Management Framework, additional accommodation could be added by way of lateral floorplate extension and supplementary structure.

In recent years, it has been shown to be commercially viable to re-use and extend existing buildings from the post-war period - in many cases incorporating a change of use. Richard Seifert’s King’s Reach Tower was successfully extended and converted for residential use in 2017, while more recently Finsbury Tower was incorporated into the larger Hylo Building (2021). In these cases, the determination has been made to replace that which is fundamentally obsolete - often low-performance facades and servicing - while retaining that which is still functional. Most often the concrete and steel superstructure has the highest embodied carbon of any building system; retaining this represents a significant carbon saving and should be considered wherever practicable.

### 12.3 Re-Use Before Recycling

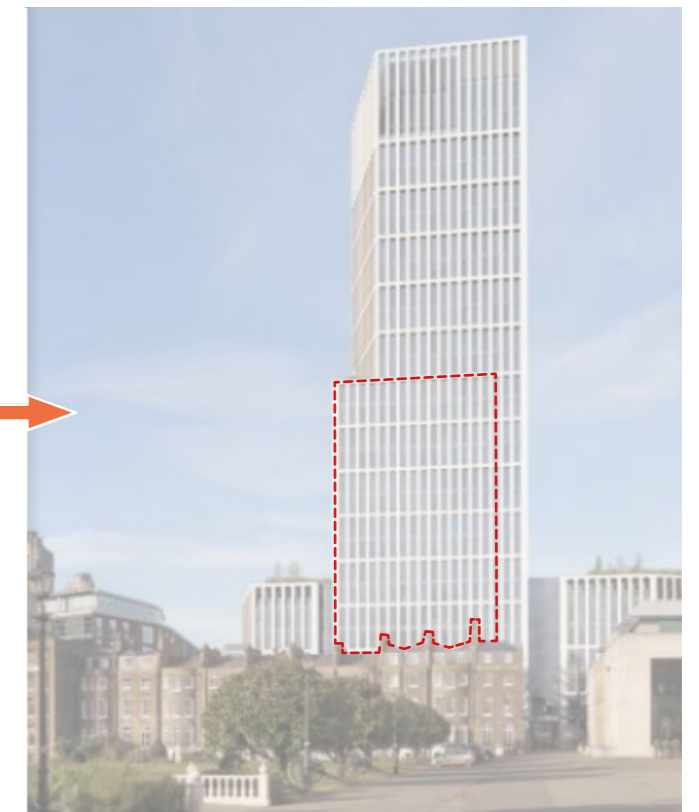
Concerning the London Wall West proposal, it is claimed by the City of London that “at present the design team believe up to 90% of the existing site can be recycled.”<sup>7</sup> The number of qualifiers here leaves this claim open to diminution; at present may not represent the future, this belief may subsequently be found to be erroneous, and ‘up to’ 90% may well be 30% or even less. It is difficult to interpret this as anything more than a vain attempt to justify demolition, which might accurately be regarded as greenwashing. As public awareness of the limitations around the concept of recycling grows, increasingly it is correctly viewed as a practice of last resort. The myth of recycling as the answer to any and all environmental questions means that single-use plastic still proliferates, more resource efficient modes of provision remain underdeveloped. At best, the recyclate generated from the demolition of the Museum of London and Bastion House will end up as hardcore: downcycled concrete waste which is resource intensive to remove, crush, grade, store and transport. Where carbon-intensive material still retains its functional capacity, it must be re-used in situ where possible.

6. City of London Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027 p.8

7. The Future of London Wall West p.13



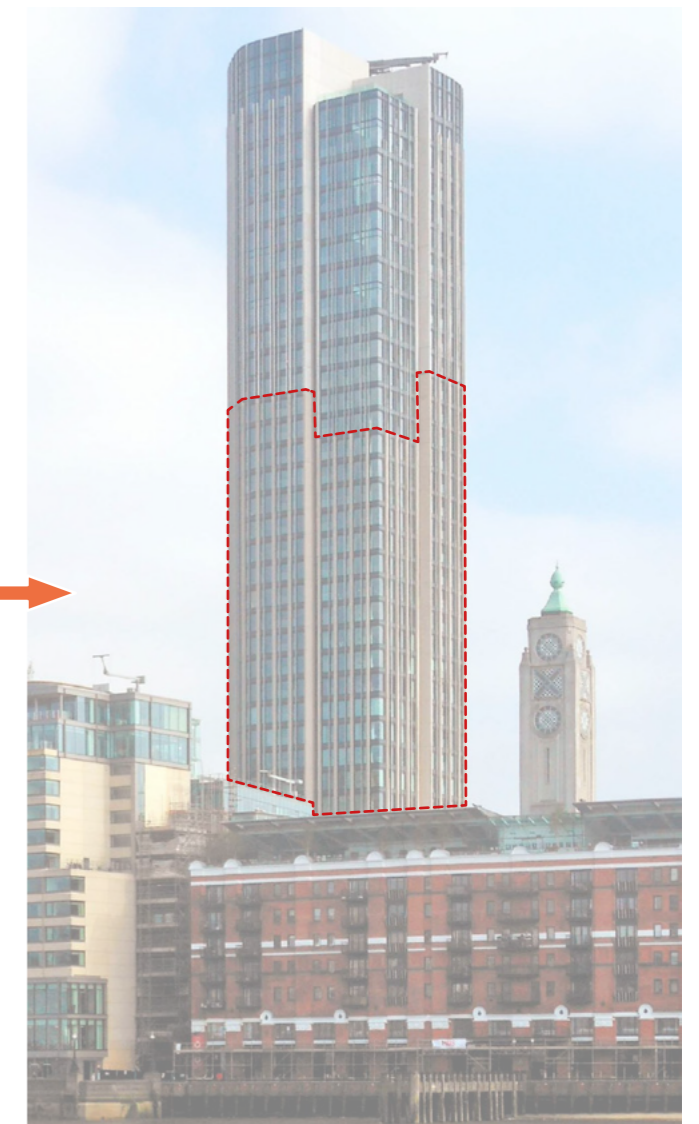
Finsbury Tower, 103-105 Bunhill Row



Hylo Building (completed 2021)



King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, Southwark



South Bank Tower (completed 2017)



**Left**  
*The High Line, New York, by Diller, Scofidio + Renfro - this visionary and largely experimental scheme achieved international acclaim and has driven both cultural and commercial growth across a large swathe of Manhattan through its imaginative re-use of derelict infrastructure to provide public green space.*

**Right**  
*The Palais de Tokyo, Lacaton + Vassal, 2014. This renovation of the 1937 museum in Paris demonstrates a shifting of values in architectural thought-leadership. In this case, rather than being dismissed as unsightly, exposed concrete structure is celebrated for its ongoing functionality and augmented with modern additions.*



*In order to remain a Destination City, London must internalise forward-thinking values to deliver low-carbon urban solutions fit for our time, taking the initiative as demonstrated by other major global cities.*

### 13.1 The Value of Green Innovation

Coincidentally or not, perhaps the most instantly iconic urban adaptive re-use project of recent times - New York's globally renowned High Line - is the work of London Wall West architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro. By combining urban infrastructure regeneration with an imaginative approach to existing urban fabric and the public realm, the practice redefined the ways in which this kind of sensitive work could drive investment in cities. The fact that this same architectural practice - widely celebrated for turning a disused railroad into a vibrant urban greenway - have been briefed to pursue the total demolition of a historic building poses questions about the City's underlying presumptions against retention and re-use.

In order to demonstrate thought leadership in keeping with groundbreaking urban redevelopments such as these, it is imperative that the City of London recognise the cultural value in existing urban fabric rather assuming a predisposition to demolition. 140-150 London Wall offers rich potential in this regard, and a longer-term view could help to cultivate an urban cultural asset to rival the High Line - catalysing a similar rejuvenation of the pedway system's remnants and cementing London's position at the forefront of current thinking.

### 13.2 International Best Practice

Rather than viewing existing buildings as obstacles to a preconceived notion of development, their inherent value must be independently assessed in discussion with local stakeholders, and a future determined based on the unique opportunities offered by what is already there. Recent Pritzker Prize-winning practice Lacaton + Vassal have forged a distinguished career through reinterpreting and augmenting existing buildings to unlock their inherent potential and extend their functional life. Working principally in Paris, their success has been demonstrated across both the residential and cultural sectors, and indicates a city with the ambition and imagination to rise to the challenges of Net Zero. The focus must be on actions not words. Projects such as these provide a valuable guide for re-framing the discussion around an existing building's potential for re-use. A willingness to embrace a variety of programmatic options is essential to unlocking this inherent potential, through an approach which can result in a cost-effective and aesthetically distinctive development. This is evident in the Palais de Tokyo redevelopment project (opposite), as well as the FRAC contemporary art gallery in Dunkerque. Here the existing structure is retained and contrasted with strategic interventions to create a balanced composition of old and new.

The critical location and unique historical significance of the London Wall West site is ripe for an architectural statement of genuine public value in the square mile, which can enhance the global reputation and cultural identity of the City; radically redefining how a Destination City should look - and more importantly how it should emerge as a leader in delivering urban projects which bear witness to the fact that a Climate Action Strategy is indeed about action, rather than words.

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