



Coffee break with Michael Lowndes

Executive director, Turley

What is your proudest achievement and why?

Other than helping launch three brilliant children into the world, being at Wembley to see Ipswich Town win the FA Cup in 1978: the latter allowing me to reconcile lifelong commitment with absolutely no expectation = much joy!

What would you have been if you hadn't chosen the path you did?

Geography teacher (with PE!).

What is your favourite film?

Withnail and I – one of the finest films available to humanity.

What is your favourite restaurant?

Lecture Room & Library at Sketch. Neatly rolls up everything that is great about London: contemporary decoration in a wonderful historic space; brilliant food and classy service – the whole experience is brilliant.

Which is the worst building in London?

Strata.

Which is the best?

Modern: LSE Saw Swee Hock Student Centre – an intelligent, crafted, accessible and living building, go see it now / Ancient: Kenwood House – the austere beauty of the building along with its landscape setting and its art and interiors – all together sublime.

What or who has been the biggest influence on your career thus far?

Gordon Chard, former director of planning at Westminster City Council – he equipped me for professional life

outside City Hall. Before that Pete Smeltzer my geography (and PE) teacher who directed me towards an appreciation of the form and beauty of towns and cities.

What would your advice be to those starting out in your profession?

Find your own Gordon Chard!

Following the Housing and Planning Bill debate, what state is planning in?

Dazed and confused but up for the challenge; as David Lunts recently said: 'with all this additional complexity it's a good time to be a planning consultant'.

Where do you stand on the green belt debate?

On a field holding a shovel just west of Uxbridge. The green belt should not be sacrosanct – unattractive sites at accessible locations should be allowed to come forward for development.

What single thing would improve the development process?

Better resourced planning departments paid for by locally set application fees.

What are your hopes from the Mayoral election, specifically for the built environment in London?

Endorsement for the current intensification and densification agenda including mid-rise and taller built forms where appropriate.

What would you do if you were Mayor for the day?

Introduce a pan-London approach to affordable housing including standardised viability assessments; a more direct route to commuted payments and allowing beyond borough delivery (with nomination rights) to drive early delivery and increased numbers.

How optimistic are you for the year ahead (and why)?

Cautiously optimistic – as the market softens and sites are recycled we will see continuing investment along with the emergence of smart, well designed and brilliantly negotiated placemaking schemes!

