



HOUSE OF LORDS

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The Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

Inquiry on

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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Witnesses: Sunand Prasad and Quinlan Terry CBE

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
 Baroness Andrews
 Lord Clement-Jones
 Lord Inglewood
 Earl of Lytton
 Baroness Parminter
 Baroness Rawlings
 Baroness Whitaker
 Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Sunand Prasad, Penoyre & Prasad Architects, and **Quinlan Terry CBE**, Quinlan & Francis Terry Architects

Q64 The Chairman: Good morning to everybody, particularly our two witnesses. Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website, and you will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you briefly to introduce yourself to the Committee?

Quinlan Terry: I am a practising architect; I have practised for 55 years. I sat on the Royal Fine Art Commission for three years.

The Chairman: We are being broadcast. Mr Prasad?

Sunand Prasad: My name is Sunand Prasad. I am also an architect. I have not been practising quite as long as Quinlan, but nearly—40 years. I was president of the Royal Institute of British Architects for two years between 2007 and 2009. Although I was not involved with the Royal Fine Arts Commission, I was a founding commissioner of its successor, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, and was there for a little while. Currently, I just enjoy doing architecture.

The Chairman: It is not a bad job to do, is it? Thank you both very much. The first question I am going to ask deals with place design and heritage. What is your view of the quality of new housing and commercial developments over the past 30 years? Will the designs of today

have heritage value in the decades to come? Are we doing well enough when it comes to making good places?

Quinlan Terry: We were talking outside. I think we have to say that over the past 30 years we have failed miserably. The question I should like to ask, not just to you but architects generally is: can you give me an example of a successful public space that has been designed over the past 50 years that is in any way comparable with Parliament Square, even Bedford Square, or the centre of Oxford, Cambridge, Bath or Edinburgh? The real problem is that we do not have a public space that is successful and has been built over the past generation.

The Chairman: Why do you think that is? Have the great British public suddenly decided that they just want blocks everywhere, or just want and need houses so badly that there has had to be a quick build and get on to the next lot?

Quinlan Terry: I think it comes on to other questions that you have raised about architecture, architectural training and taste. You ask in one of the questions whether we should do more to support good architecture. Of course, it gives rise to the question: what is good architecture? Unlike medicine, law or a lot of the other professions, architecture is in a state of tension between the traditional way of doing things, like the building we are in at the moment, and modernism, which is turning its back on historic traditions and doing the opposite. That has taken over the whole of our generation, so that, generally speaking, government, the schools and royal societies such as the RIBA, the Royal Fine Art Commission and the Royal Academy all heavily support modernism, thinking that this is the way forward. I think it is time that the Government reconsider their loyalty to the whole modern approach.

Q65 The Chairman: This question is not on the list of questions, but it strikes me: do you think that if we had been sitting around this table 50 years ago you would have made that sort of statement—that we would not be able to do anything—or do you think they were planning to build the Bedford Squares, Parliament Squares and Baths and all the rest of it?

Quinlan Terry: I think 50 years is not far enough back. Lutyens was vehemently against architects being qualified, because they get into an institution where they are brainwashed. Really, you learn by working with an architect, which is what we ought to be doing. If you look at the great architects of the past, Palladio was a stonemason, Michelangelo was a sculptor, Raphael was a painter. Even thinking of this building, Pugin was an assistant to Nash, as was Barry. Barry was a draughtsman and expert on ancient buildings, which he

went to measure, Vanbrugh was a soldier and dramatist, Wren was a mathematician and his clerk was Hawksmoor. I wasted five years at the Architectural Association and came out knowing less than nothing, but then I worked with the last serious classical architect, Raymond Erith. I was apprenticed to him and everything I learnt was practical. I watched him; I went to stonemasons and joiners, and talked to them. That practical world, which we see all around us in buildings like this, is not taught in schools.

It sounds a bit awful, but I think we would gain an awful lot by encouraging young people to work in an architect's office, even a modernist, because they can see how it works and have their own point of view. We would gain an awful lot by getting rid of the schools that have taught nothing. What have any of the architectural schools achieved? I went to the best one and that was a waste of time, because it becomes a place where you employ architects who cannot do. I have probably said enough about that.

Sunand Prasad: I am going to be relentlessly cheerful. I do not want Quinlan, rather than the Committee, appointed to be the questioner, but he has made a number of points that are very well worth talking about. I start by agreeing that the condition of our public spaces, especially the more neglected areas of our cities, not necessarily the centres, is abysmal. We have very little to be proud of in the mass housing built even in the past 30 years. There are very few places of which you can genuinely say that the results of the planning system, the architecture and the patronage, whether public or private, are something to be proud of, to leave behind as heritage.

Having said that, the past 30 years are a very interesting slice of time. A great deal has been changing in the past 30 years. To start with public spaces, one of the real advances in schools of architecture, as well schools of planning, and also in practice and the public bodies that guide these things, is a real understanding of how much public space matters; how much the space between buildings is important; and what actually makes public space. Is it the geometry of it, the look of it, the way it is used, where it is or the connections, for example? It is the sophisticated art of city-making and place-making that we are finally coming to grips with, after admittedly a period in the desert of tabula rasa architecture where good things were swept away, and there was little care for the spaces in between buildings, and where quasi-monumental buildings were built, whether for housing or something else. This is a radical transformation like, for example, the change in Trafalgar Square with the public space created in front of the National Gallery, or the removal of the concrete collar around

Birmingham, the new setting of Selfridges and St Gilbert's church and the sheer liveliness that has brought about. This is not an architect's view. It is people who are voting with their feet to occupy these fantastic new spaces. Those are just a couple of examples.

I think style is a complete red herring in this debate. The quarrel between modernism and classicism, or current and traditional architecture, is really about style. There is so much to be learnt from history and classicism, from Pugin, Barry, Lutyens and all those forebears. We do stand on the shoulders of giants. I genuinely think that what is to be learnt from them is not necessarily or entirely the appearance of buildings—the motifs, the decoration and ornamentation—but the sublime combination of usefulness and beauty. How do we match that? The past is like a challenge. How can you do it as well in your own times with your own materials with new discoveries and new pleasures that are available, such as large glass walls which nevertheless can be managed to control the sun? There are large glassy outlooks and indoor spaces seemingly blending with the outdoors without interruption. This modern discovery is sublime and as fantastic as a Palladian villa or a Michelangelo piazza, if properly done. However, it is not very often properly done. One of the tragedies of modernism is that while there are some great practitioners, and every year we produce some fantastic buildings, they are very few in comparison with the mass of what is built. The mass is way behind the best, and that is because copying modernism is often a disaster, whereas copying classicism generally leads to success. I am using “classical” as shorthand. When you copy all the canons of traditional architecture—whether it is gothic, classical, Romanesque, Indian or Egyptian does not matter—you are unlikely to make too many aesthetic mistakes because they are an established language, whereas modern architecture is hard to copy and do well. I hope you do not mind me rambling on like this.

The Chairman: It is not rambling on, but we do have a timetable.

Sunand Prasad: To some extent, we have to catch up with the world as it now is. This quarrel and debate is almost in the past already. There is a generation of architects now who were never indoctrinated with modernism; even their teachers were not exposed to the hagiographies of the modern masters. They are genuinely dispassionate in this subject. I am interested to see what they are choosing. What they are choosing is a new synthesis of the old and new and the past and present. It is not either/or any more. I was party to the Farrell report. One of the most interesting and probably hidden chapters of that is this idea. It is not either/or any more, and we must seize that. It is a glorious thing to have happened. That

argument has withered away. I am all for Quinlan's architecture getting more air time, but it is not the Government who will decide; it is the market.

Can I say one final thing in defence of schools of architecture? Talking about trades, it would be wonderful if everybody learnt a trade before they became an architect. I have always believed that. I myself learnt a trade. Those who learn a trade may well become modernists because they may be inspired as much by pre-classical societies, by peasant construction, or vernacular architecture. The primitive hut is the origin of all architecture, where you put one thing on top of another and construct a simple shelter. In a way, that is nearer to some of the modern thinking about architecture than the classical language.

Q66 Baroness Whitaker: I want to pursue the question of the public realm. I would like to ask Mr Terry what he thinks of modern spaces such as More London and other areas of the South Bank, but my general question is this. The more iconic public realm buildings—magnificent places such as Trafalgar Square—have been very well done, but have the places where ordinary people live and work, in particular the relationship between where they live and where they work, been relatively neglected? Tourists have a marvellous impression of London—anybody who walks around the centre of it does—but the huge numbers of people who live in and around London do not get such a good deal from the current system. What is the view of both of you on that?

Quinlan Terry: It is a difficult one to answer. I would recommend, if they have not done so already, that everybody here familiarises themselves with the work of Create Streets. You may have heard of it. Create Streets is doing a great deal of research into exactly what you say about the place where Mr Average lives and the sort of place he can find to live. What has come out of that is that it is not a question of density. They realise that there has to be dense building. In the old days there had to be a density of 200 persons per acre. They have found that the planning authorities seem to prefer multi-storey estates. They give lots of examples of the experience of people who live in those estates and their much greater preference for traditional terrace houses and streets, which is the more traditional way of doing things. The evidence is very convincing. We have to listen to these public consultations. They do MORI polls and things of that sort that show what people really want. I think that is important.

From an architectural point of view, crowds love to go to beautiful cities like Venice, Florence, Rome, Oxford, Cambridge and Bath. These are the cities that have been left alone,

generally speaking, by modernist architects, and of course there is a limit to building height. You say the argument is over. Those cities have a very strong policy about the height of buildings, which sadly London no longer has. What one sees on the periphery of London with the permissions that have been given for very high buildings is a real tragedy.

Having recommended Create Streets, I would also recommend that more people, particularly government, listen to one man who my profession ridicules. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who spends more time and effort than almost anybody on trying to make pleasant public spaces and areas for people to live in. If you have not visited Poundbury, I would encourage that you do so. It is not encouraged by the architectural profession. I suppose I am an interested party because I have done some of the work. It is a living community; 5,000 people live there. They have work, they have affordable housing and commercial housing, they do not have a high crime rate maybe partly because it is in Dorset. It is certainly worth moving forward and giving a lot of developers an idea of how they could develop, which we will have to do in the future, and take more seriously what Poundbury has done and what the Prince of Wales has said.

The Chairman: That is interesting. We have discussed trying to get him here as a witness, but I do not think that is possible. We have also spoken about writing to him.

Quinlan Terry: I know The Duchy would love to take you round. If you want it I am sure that could be arranged.

Sunand Prasad: I agree there is a greater problem outside the thriving centres of cities. We still have not understood how to make spaces between houses and buildings that are genuinely loved by people, partly because we have not yet quite solved the problem of the car. Developments are still very car-dominated. In addition, the skills in dealing with the external spaces and landscape are undeveloped, and external space is underfunded. Nobody picks up the tab. That is a bit of a reflection on the extent to which our society feels collective responsibility for shared things. Public space is shared space and has to be funded. We have to find ways of properly funding it and making it of good quality. The classic example is that you have a private estate with Yorkstone paving and an adopted public highway that has tarmac on the paving. Tarmac is cheaper both to lay down but also to maintain. When the utilities come along and dig it up you can just dump a bit more on top and smooth it over. There is a lack of being 'house-proud' collectively; a lack of a real sense of what public space is and how important it is to people. That is missing.

The Chairman: Yesterday most of the members went to Elephant Park at Elephant and Castle in the rain and all the rest of it. I was very struck by the very point you make about place. The space did seem to be very inviting. I even remarked to you when we were walking back on the flagstones into building areas and hiding cars. Maybe things are beginning to get there. It has been a rush to try to get up to 400,000 new homes per year. This has been absolutely central to successive Governments. I remember the first meetings in the 1960s when I worked as an adviser to Tarmac. In mitigation, I do not think that the general populace does not care about it but that other things have taken precedence.

Sunand Prasad: Previously, yes, but we have been failing to build houses in such numbers.

The Chairman: We must get on.

Q67 Lord Inglewood: We have been talking about this very much in the abstract. Architecture is about concrete examples. Could each of you give us a couple of examples of good and bad so that we can physically look at it?

Sunand Prasad: I have given you a couple of recent examples of good public space already. One way to answer the “bad” question is: drop anyone from a helicopter almost anywhere on the outskirts of any town in the UK and they will see only highway-dominated spaces, poor spaces, business parks and retail outlets. Those are terrible; they are just not for people. They are there for the hermetic idea of arriving by car, getting into the shops and going out again. There is no care for the public space. Those are two examples.

The Chairman: Mr Terry, do you have examples of good and bad?

Quinlan Terry: I thought I had given a lot of examples.

The Chairman: You have given us the good: Poundbury. What about the bad?

Quinlan Terry: I can think of one awful one, which is Harlow new town by Sir Frederick Gibberd. It is always a knighted architect who does it. I can think of very little good work that has been done.

The Chairman: Thank you. If you do think about it, perhaps you could give us a hint.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I was very interested in the anxiety about the current fashion for taller blocks. Do you think local authorities are doing them because they want to make buildings that are statements rather than functional, or are they building higher because they need to realise the value of the land as land values increase? How easy is it to get to those sorts of densities they are approaching with traditional build?

Quinlan Terry: It has been established—this is why I recommend Create Streets—that you can get the density required with a more traditional type of building. Five or six-storey buildings designed in terraces will give you the density that a point block will give you with lots of space all round it. I do not find the argument for high buildings very convincing. The other thing is that people hate living in them, with the lifts and the crime that goes on inside those spaces, whereas if it is more public, as it would have been in Georgian times, with Georgian squares and terraces, people are much happier and the space works.

Sunand Prasad: I would refer to a couple of things. One is a report called *Superdensity*, which is produced by a consortium of practices working in this area for a long time that started to become alarmed by the trend towards higher and higher density and taller buildings. It is a very thoughtful piece. It is not anti-tall building, but it approaches the whole subject in a very rational way, starting with the numbers. I am also a member of the London Mayor's Design Advisory Group. We are currently completing a piece of work called "London's Growth and Form". A whole section of that is about tall buildings and the problems raised by their construction.

The tall buildings currently being built are very attractive to buyers, especially overseas ones, but this is slightly exaggerated. In the end, well under 10% of the actual built volume is being bought by overseas buyers. Savills and others have done the numbers. It is not the state stipulating tall buildings; it is developers who are driving up these densities for very complex reasons. We have certainly heard evidence from Create Streets, many of whose principles I very much share, but it is not possible in the available land in London to meet the need for 50,000 more houses per year for 1 million people in the next 10 years or so—we do not know what happens after that—with three or four storeys and low-rise houses. If we went more for the pattern of Ladbroke Grove and Notting Hill, where there are beautiful streets with communal shared areas at the back, going up to eight, nine and even 10 storeys, but extraordinarily still making streets and public space, we would have a much greater chance. The identification of land in London for developing is a very big subject, but it has been thoroughly considered because of the now desperate need to build more houses. I refer you to those pieces of work.

Q68 Lord Clement-Jones: You have already mentioned the Farrell review, and I am sure you are both familiar with its conclusions. One of its concerns was that the built environment policy was not sufficiently well co-ordinated across government. I take Mr Terry's point that

it is difficult to define good architecture, but do you think that the Government are doing enough to support good architecture and design? If so, what more would you like government to do? For instance, one of the recommendations was that the Government should appoint a chief architect. Is that something that appeals to you?

Sunand Prasad: If I may answer the last point, there are three broad areas where government can be extremely influential in the outcome of our built environment. One concerns the money raised through taxes that is spent on buildings by Governments, not necessarily central government, as they devolve powers to the NHS and others. Taxpayer money is being spent in a way that you could say that the public estate is the biggest single client for all our built environment, amounting to as much as a quarter of annual construction expenditure. Do not quote me on the numbers—I am rusty on those—but it is a very significant number, billions of pounds of public money that is spent. If every one of those projects set out to be exemplary in the way they are commissioned and the client side is handled, government would revolutionise our world. It would have a knock-on effect and set such high standards. One of the biggest frustrations—I am sure Quinlan shares this—is that we know there is talent and ability out there that simply is not being captured for public benefit and the benefit of our built environment. If government as a purchaser of architecture says that it wants to find the best but also to a cost, we can certainly say how that can be done. People have said over and over again that procurement has to be reformed. Some of the rules and laws will have to be looked at again, but that is a huge thing that government can do. There is no reason not to do it, because it would not cost any more money.

The second point is in the realm of regulations and so on. A classic example of how not to do it is the way the entire energy and thermal comfort regulations have been mishandled after a promising start towards zero carbon, for example. They have become overcomplex but diluted at the same time, with the result that the renewable energy sector is in disarray, and we as architects also lose ground when project managers say, “We don’t have to do that. Why make it more sustainable?”. There is another question about sustainability further down. The Government could do a lot.

The third point as regards potential government action refers to another of the questions that we received about the capacity of local authorities. In the end, central government delivers relatively little building. The vast amount of our taxes spent on buildings are

channelled through the NHS, local authorities and so on. Local authorities and those bodies also deal with the whole of the private sector. There is undoubtedly a lack of skills. I appreciate that there is a problem here about how much central government can spend. I think central government could do a lot more to help devolved public bodies, administrations and local authorities to raise their game enormously at the very low end just by making best practice more prevalent; generally acting as a hub that can communicate best practice from authority to authority and from this to that NHS trust; and, more ambitiously, by directly intervening to help where we can see local authorities lack the skills. Local authorities do lack skills. They have been starved, and there is a huge chunk of work to be done there, and the Government could be very helpful.

Lord Clement-Jones: Chief architect?

Sunand Prasad: Yes. We have a chief medical officer, a chief planner and a chief construction adviser, which has just been abolished. That abolition is not a good signal.

Lord Clement-Jones: Sitting where?

Sunand Prasad: I would like them to sit in DCLG as the best of a number of unsatisfactory options in some ways. The chief construction adviser sat in BIS. That makes sense, but in a way that is why the place leadership council has been proposed in the Farrell review. There needs to be some mechanism to bring it together without creating some super-ministry or new cumbersome quango-type body. I am for a chief architect, or architectural adviser, but in the context of joining up with planners and constructors.

Lord Clement-Jones: I would like to hear from Mr Terry. Are you more sceptical about the power of government in these circumstances?

Quinlan Terry: Yes, I am. You want more freedom. Get back to the 18th century where you left architects alone, or important people did certain things. As to a chief architect, I made the point earlier, but it has not gone in, that there is a huge tension in architecture between good-quality traditional building and modernism. If you made me chief architect I would have a field day; if you made Richard Rogers chief architect he would do the complete opposite. Do not trust architects, because they are very opinionated people. You really want the clients to say what they want and choose the architect they want. It is not like going to a doctor; doctors are all pretty good. When you say, "I want a skyscraper", fine; you go to someone like that. If you want a classical house that you want to live in you go to a different sort of architect. You cannot say that of any other profession.

Lord Clement-Jones: You would not have a chief government architect because they would be one side or another.

Quinlan Terry: They would definitely be one side or the other. There is no such thing as an architect who is not of one extreme or the other. You have two of them here.

Sunand Prasad: I could imagine a chief government architect whose role was not to arbitrate about the kind or style of building but it would be about process.

The Chairman: What would his role be?

Sunand Prasad: I talked earlier about how government can be a great client. I think the role of such a person would be to help government be a great client and put policies and, for example, research ideas in place.

Quinlan Terry: But it is not an architect. An architect feels about form and place.

The Chairman: We do not have fisticuffs here. All of us want to get involved in this particular debate.

Q69 Baroness Rawlings: To go back to sustainability, or the long-lasting, Mr Prasad, do you think the Government should be preserving good old architecture and converting old classical buildings, rather than making it cheaper to pull them down and give tax incentives basically to build new? What is your view on the tax position and pulling down all these buildings just to build something new because you do not have to pay VAT?

Sunand Prasad: Absolutely. Most of us would be unequivocal about this. If you are going to pull down a building, you must have a very good reason now, not only from the point of view of heritage, which is in itself an enormous reason. Look at what is happening round the world and the way heritage is being destroyed. We are going to emerge in centuries to come as the only place in the world with something like that still left, and we have to hang on to it.

Baroness Rawlings: They are pulling them down to build new because of VAT.

Sunand Prasad: The impact of VAT is catastrophic. I am completely opposed to charging VAT on refurbishment while there is zero VAT on new homes. The RIBA has been campaigning to get that changed since I was president. We have not succeeded. We have even found some evidence that tax revenues would go up if you equalised VAT because so much avoidance is happening because of this rule, especially with the higher rates now. From the point of view of sustainability you have to make a very good argument indeed to pull down old buildings and lose the embodied energy and carbon in them, but from just the historical point of view these are lodestones; they set standards that we need to aspire to.

Quinlan Terry: This is one thing on which I think we do agree. On sustainability, people do not realise that, generally speaking, modern construction and materials produce a building that lasts a few decades, whereas traditional materials—load-bearing masonry—produces a building that lasts for centuries. Whatever the talk about sustainability, if you are to have steel and glass buildings that have a few decades of life, you have to take that into account in the equation. A recent American report was done saying that the useful life of a steel and glass building is 25 years. Traditional buildings last for centuries and they can be repaired, but for a lot of these steel and glass buildings the whole problem is that the materials used in them—glass, plastics, aluminium and steel—have a very high coefficient of thermal expansion. When the sun comes out it expands, when it freezes it contracts, and you have to have an expansion joint, which is its total weakness because water gets in. Therefore, you have a structure that will not last for centuries; it has to be constantly repaired with plastic seals over the gaps and glass having to be redone. The whole question of sustainability is part and parcel of the traditional versus modern tension.

Lord Inglewood: Is it desirable that every building should be conceived as being something that will endure for a very long period? Surely, in a quickly changing world there is an argument that with a lot of these sheds in 25 years you start again and do something completely different in line with the requirements of the world that number of years hence.

Quinlan Terry: I would say this building is a very good example of something that is built to last.

Lord Inglewood: I am not saying that nothing should be built to last, but is it right to start from the proposition that everything should be built to last?

Quinlan Terry: I agree there may be cases involving factories, but I live in a house that is 200 years old; my office is 400 years old. The office was also used as a shop. I have designed schemes. My Richmond scheme is mostly offices, but parts of it are retail and parts residential. It is really a matter of what goes on behind the sash windows: a bed or a desk. Therefore, the traditional way of building in this country, which has gone on for hundreds of years, should continue in the way it did previously.

The Chairman: Do you not think that people are now accustomed to seeing this glass, steel and all the rest of it and would not want to go back? They think it will be retrograde to go back to the 18th century.

Quinlan Terry: There is no doubt at all about the place in which they prefer to live. This takes us back to Create Streets. They would rather live in a terrace Georgian-style house or construction than a glass skyscraper.

Baroness Whitaker: Are Frank Lloyd Wright's houses now obsolescent? Have they collapsed?

Quinlan Terry: When you have a one-off architect like that it is difficult to say, but you are right; they are. Fallingwater is now falling apart. You can rebuild a glass building, but it means virtually starting again. It does not have the life that it would have if it was built with stone or brick and lime mortar, or slate roofs—all those traditional ways of the past.

Sunand Prasad: Can I put in a plea for this to be evidence-based and not rely just on views as to what does and does not last? I leave it to you. Please be evidence-based. We have a science of assessing buildings and doing post-occupancy evaluation to understand what is going on. It is not sufficiently widely deployed, but if we go back and learn from buildings, which we are doing, we are already collecting a lot of evidence that can bring some light into this debate.

The Chairman: Can I assure you that everything that we do in these scrutiny Committees is evidence-based. A lot of research has been done by the staff, so we are putting our own feelings in, in my case anyway because I am not an architect or anything like it. I can assure you that we would not quote anything or do anything if we had not tested it. If when you read the scripts you feel that this has gone wrong, perhaps you would highlight the points that you think we ought to think about as the reverse of the situation that you have described. Have I made my point clear?

Sunand Prasad: That is absolutely lovely.

Q70 Baroness Andrews: There is obviously a big issue for both of you about exactly how government can be effective. You talked about procurement. I very much take the point you made, Mr Prasad, about the integration of the historic environment with modern challenges and so on. I think it has been very successful in public space but not in out-of-town developments, estates, new build and so on. What government has been guided by and put some careful thought into is the construction of the National Planning Policy Framework. Indeed, over the past 30 years we have had statements about the value and importance of design in other bits of legislation, such as the Housing Act 2004 and then 2008. It is not that government has been unaware of the importance of design; there has been a massive

disjunction between what government has hoped would be achieved without its own intervention and what has actually happened. The NPPF says quite clearly, “Planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places”. That is exactly what you have been about and what we would all like to see; it is about community building, building character, and building definition and belonging into places, but the only choices you have are planning, policy making and place-making tools. What else can we do within these legal and political frameworks that compensates in a way or incentivises people like yourself and those who implement these policies to get it right on the ground?

Sunand Prasad: I wish I knew the answer to that, because I came here thinking, “What new is there to say?”, because so many people have been tackling this subject. The formation of CABI was a very significant step. The realisation of places and spaces and the importance of those, rather than buildings, and the mistakes of modernism of the type practised after the war had already been revealed. What more can we do?

Policy is one thing, but I think actively building capacity is neglected. It is easy to make policy; it requires resources to help build capacity and have the right training so that, for example, when somebody applies for planning permission, or a group of people get together to develop a neighbourhood, those who are going to apply the policy levers know what they are doing. Policy without the means of implementing it is not going to get anywhere. We may well have good policies, but we are very short on real implementation of them. We have very good sentiments in many places, on the face of it, in legislation, but they are honoured more in the breach than the observance.

Baroness Andrews: Should we campaign for the restoration of CABI?

Sunand Prasad: We should campaign for the restoration of a body that achieves the kind of things CABI did, but not necessarily all of it. It may not be CABI if that is politically difficult, but many of us lament the disappearance of CABI and its very large and nationwide network of people who were beginning to champion locally the making of places.

Baroness Andrews: Design teams?

Sunand Prasad: Yes. My own view is that CABI became too large. It started delivering services to DCLG rather than remaining more of a knowledge, design and process-focused organisation. It became more of a delivery vehicle that had to hit targets. There would probably be little point in having a chief designer or chief architect as well as CABI. There are two or three ways of kick-starting all this. One of those would be to have an architecture

policy of the kind RIBA recommended in *Designing a Better Britain*, which is another document that I am sure you have before you. The other one is to set up something like CABA, and another is a Farrell review-type option. I am evenly divided on those. It is the outcomes I am interested in. I think it could be achieved in one of two or three ways, but as to your sentiment about whether we should we have something like CABA back, yes.

Q71 Baroness Parminter: You mentioned earlier that we would come to the question of sustainability. This is it. Can I ask you to consider sustainability not just in the sense of longevity, which is an important part of it, but also in terms of minimising environmental impacts and tackling climate change? Do you think the criteria that the present Government have in place are sufficient to encourage environmental and business sustainability? If not, what particular criteria would you like to see? You mentioned zero carbon homes earlier, so perhaps both of you could touch on that.

Quinlan Terry: In a way, I think I have answered the big question, but your question is the more detailed one. Double glazing and all those things that reduce the dependence on burning fuel are achievable and are good. I think it is right that it is being done, but part of it is that sometimes the legislation brings in other problems. For instance, double glazing depends on a seal that has a guarantee of five years. Quite often it last 20 years or more. Nevertheless, in the case of buildings that are not owned by rich clients, in certain parts of America the double glazing in buildings has failed and people do not have the money to re-glaze them, so you are worse off than having single glazing. Like all these things, it comes down to a practical issue.

My main concern is about the traditional way of building. I need not repeat myself. If you have a building that lasts for centuries you have far fewer problems than if you have to rebuild and start again. There is not only the environmental process but the damage to the environment. Steel requires furnaces. Concrete, plastics and all these things need a vast amount of fossil fuels, bricks less so. Stone is in the earth and slate is there. The old world managed on a much less dependence on fossil fuels. In a sense it worked, although a lot of the details we now have are worth incorporating.

Sunand Prasad: I am dismayed by the way the whole picture of regulation and action on climate change has gone, especially in the past five or six years. I think there was real optimism shared by industry generally and a willingness to rise to the challenge of building really low-energy buildings and learning from the past as well as the possibilities of the

present. That has gone from Government. A huge amount of action can be taken in this area if we really are to achieve this, by what I would describe as a society that genuinely learns from nature and that there is no such thing as waste in nature. Nature creates and when things die they help regenerate the next cycle of life. The ultimate goal of creating a built world would be to match that ability and have a world without waste. There is an interesting slogan from WRAP, which is a government-funded programme, though I cannot remember what the acronym stands for.

Baroness Parminter: Waste Resources Action Programme.

Sunand Prasad: The slogan is: “Working towards a world without waste”. I think that is a fabulous slogan. Initially, it sounds like dustbins and things, but it is much more profound than that. You can see how materials are mined and harvested and can be recycled once they are used, and how you can use every single thing fully.

As to the criteria that you mentioned, we can work back from that and look at reducing energy to the minimum, reducing dependency on fossil fuels—i.e. having the energy we need come from non-fossil fuel sources—and changing our behaviour and being much more sensitive to the way we use energy and resources. Resources are not only about digging things out of the ground but also transporting them, the cost of transporting them, the fuel to do that, and how we handle the waste. Although the BREEAM technique, which all of you will know, is now a very important part of trying to make buildings more sustainable, it is too complex. It is too easy to game complex systems like that to achieve the results you want through adding bicycle parking or taking an action, whereas the focus should be on the main headlines of energy, water, waste and resources, and draw up criteria where they are the ones that matter. We need to develop a kind of literacy about such things so we understand, just like everybody understands how much houses cost, the implications and impacts of what we do in the language of tonnes of carbon, kilowatt hours, the volume of water we are using or the resources we are using.

The Chairman: Consumers’ bills are the biggest indication of the lot.

Sunand Prasad: Yes.

The Chairman: This is why renewable energy has such a bad name. You see your bill going up from, say, £150 a year to about £1,500 in the space of about six years.

Sunand Prasad: Meanwhile, in Holland there is a programme of the mass retrofit of buildings. If you like, it is a green deal properly executed and then put on steroids. Their

stock does not have some of the great examples that we have. Many of the buildings we have cannot be subjected to precisely the techniques they are using, but we can learn from it. In 10 days, with minimum disruption to the occupant, they genuinely make their homes zero energy. Fuel bills disappear; there are no fuel bills. Then it does not matter how much fuel costs because you do not need any.

The Chairman: The great problem is that we are running out of time. Do you think you could give us the evidence or reference for that?

Sunand Prasad: They are called renovation trains.

Q72 Baroness Young of Old Scone: We have already heard that you think that architects need to be trained in a different way, in particular that they have exposure to other crafts and skills. Is there anything more you would like to tell us about the need for changes in the way architects are trained?

Quinlan Terry: The ideal is for them to go straight from school into an architect's office, as architects, like Pugin and Barry, always did in the past. I think that the five-year training of architects is misconceived, because it is a practical subject. You are sitting down listening to lectures by academics about all sorts of things, but when you get out of the institution after five years you have to do working drawings of buildings. The architectural profession is now saying that they find people coming out of the schools are almost unemployable. For instance, in my office we have boys and girls who have gone to the local technical college, so they are taught one day a week—we pay for that—and they do evening classes for three years, and yet they work in the office. They are seeing what they learn in the evenings and one day how it works out in practice on the drawing board, computers and everything else. Most of my staff are invaluable; they have been with me for 30 or 40 years. They have never been through a process of thinking that they are going to be designing the next multi-storey tower. They have a humbler approach to what is expected and the really bright ones, like Barry and Pugin, get to the top.

It would be helpful if government realised that, unlike other university courses—obviously law, medicine and everything else have to be taught in an academic way—architecture is much more practical. The high proportion of people who go through schools of architecture who then do not do architecture means that an awful lot of money is being wasted on the whole process of training. The best people can survive. In addition, you do not have to be an architect to practise. You have to be a qualified doctor or dentist to practise, but you do not

need a qualification to practise architecture; builders can put up a building, which is right and proper because, as in the old days, you wanted someone who had done something before. You would say you wanted a house or building like that. It is a long shot for government to understand that, but more people should realise that architectural training is not training like it is in medicine, law, languages and those things.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I can see Mr Prasad leaping up and down.

Sunand Prasad: I disagree profoundly with that. We get the most fantastic young people coming to my practice after completing an architectural degree. They are some of the most passionate, engaged and open-minded people who in three years have learnt the fundamentals of a very difficult art, which is to understand the world through the medium of design. Design is not just the concoction or forming of something; it is about understanding the deep structures behind how things work, and then to deploy them to make something new. As to the teaching of that critical understanding about design, the schools of architecture in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are probably the best in the world. People come here from all round the world. British architectural education, with the RIBA's mark, is world renowned for very obvious reasons. I am a huge champion of architectural education.

Some of the best schools give their students real hands-on experience. Architecture is not only about making buildings; it is about understanding communities, how cities work and the interaction between infrastructure and transport. The hands-on engagement of some of these students is exemplary in some schools of architecture.

However, we do have a problem. We are very poor at collaboration and working with fellow disciplines, because somehow the academisation of architecture, which I also partly lament—there I do agree with Quinlan—has denuded the profession of some softer skills of leadership, such as learning to work with others to realise how to marshal a whole team to get the best out of it. These things should be taught in schools of architecture. There is a lot of merit in a foundation course, or an early year, where all the disciplines work together. It is very difficult to do. People are trying, however. I would refer you to a couple of reports: the Edge report on collaboration, which I am sure you have, and the SCHOSA report on pathways and gateways. That is a revolutionary idea about changing the structure of architectural education. It would be the first major reform since the Oxford conference of 1958. It is changing things so a student may not need five years of academic study.

There would also be other ways into architecture, including on the tools and through practice and part-time ways, which would make the profession more aware of all the different ways of doing things and collaborating with others.

One of the big changes I would like to see is for the Architects Registration Board to be absorbed into the RIBA, with the RIBA also putting in place the right kind of governance to make sure it is not captured by the profession and there is lay oversight. We have the schools of architecture, we have the regulation of education and we have the gatekeeping of entry into the profession. There would not be the current three-cornered arrangement where ARB sits over here as a mini-quango, the RIBA sits there and the schools over there, with a confusion of roles. It would clarify the whole thing and make the RIBA more accountable for architectural education and entry into the profession. At the moment it can say, "ARB is responsible for taking into account European laws. Somebody else is causing this problem. We could reform everything tomorrow if it was not like that". Let it be their sole responsibility and hold them to account for the quality of architectural education, which is fundamentally sound but hugely lacks a number of things such as collaboration, awareness of cost and the implications of what you do. You go through a school of architecture without ever designing a building to a cost. This seems barmy. Clients want to know from an architect what is possible within their means and resources, and architects must respond to that.

The Chairman: Can I thank you both most sincerely? I am afraid that old Father Time has killed us off. I think that reflects badly on the Chairman not being able to manage it very well, but it has been so interesting to all of us. The two issues we have not managed to tackle are the health of buildings and buildings for health.

Baroness Whitaker: If we could have a note on providing skills in local authorities that would be helpful.

The Chairman: I was just about to get to that.

Baroness Whitaker: That came before.

The Chairman: I am working back. The big thing is consultation to get the public involved. Several sessions have emphasised this. I think there is unanimity in their approach, but we will have not got a real handle on how it should be done, and whether it is going to be of any use. I have probably overloaded you with suggestions. If you could get in touch with us, even with just a three-liner, to direct us to so and so, it would help. You can see that we are

finding our feet. We still have a lot of time before we finish evidence sessions. We do not have to finish the report until 23 March, which sounds an awfully long way away, but there is so much. I want to thank you particularly for coming here. It has been terrific, inspiring and fun. Thank you very much.