



Image: Low energy proposal for S. London tower by Paul Vick Architects.

Paul Vick was at COP26 Green Zone in Glasgow on The Built Environment Day in Nov. For one of our immediate feedback reports on COP26 [click here](#).

The need for a written ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) statement has gained momentum and is here to stay. While the statement is a start, it is not of itself a blueprint for meaningful investment in property which has a positive environmental impact.

Where ESG investing looks to add to existing ideas of investment and longer term improved outcomes, many are asking, 'How does one actually capture this added value and – ideally - be ahead of the curve in property development?'

This leads to further detailed questions. What are the pitfalls, how do you define a meaningful brief, how do you design new buildings, what can be expected from and is desirable from the supply chain, how do you monitor the supply chain, what are necessary costs and what are not? How do you plan ahead where technology is often behind the curve? What is an acceptable holding position and what is a necessary lost leader? Indeed, what is a regenerative building? And what is regeneration in development today and tomorrow?

On the ground, what is possible and what are the issues?

When I drafted an 8000-home zero carbon scheme some 20-years ago in NE London, we looked at built form that enabled different types of living and enablement for the residents as part of the solution. We questioned 'plug and play'- that infrastructure could be plugged into a clean grid and this would solve many environmental problems. A clean grid will make a huge, positive environmental difference. Institutions (including universities, estates and councils) often have had the opportunity to lead the way with district and local systems. When I drafted the British Museum Masterplan/Spaceplan prior to setting up my practice, the design team reviewed estate wide passive strategies of efficiency.

Today the government has said it will try to have a clean grid by 2035 subject to security requirements¹. While this is extremely promising, the 'clean' grid still has some way to go. It is also not the whole picture and zero carbon and carbon negative are possible.

Figure 1: Indicative delivery pathway to 2037 by sector

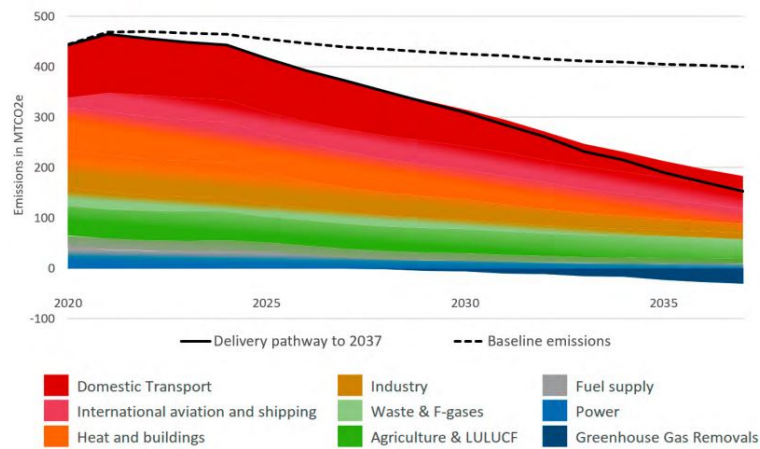


Image Source: [Net Zero Strategy; Build Back Greener](#), p18, BEIS

Currently, for a 22 acre regeneration site and sister Sacre site where we have developed a vision and are going through phased planning permissions at The Royal Ordnance Depot in Northampton with our client Michael Chittenden, we combine strategies to deal with new build and existing listed buildings. Whether homes, care homes, independent living, boutique hotel and office co-working and retail, we have different approaches, and implement them in a phased manner of investment.

With 80% of the building stock expected still to be in use by 2050, the chances are your current buildings will be here in 30 years too. This is positive for efficiency of resources and the embodied energy already used to create these buildings yet is not enough to reach targets of 1.5°C or 2°C temperature rise compared to pre-industrial levels (1850-1900).

The strategies for a low energy, 1st age to 3rd age new build home in west country and low energy retrofit in London (Passivhaus AEB standard and EnerPhit standards respectively) that we designed and were built out in last 14 years see the fabric and design of the buildings reduce load and increase resilience with low impact materials. The design team identified the quick wins of cost to performance and which technologies had less likelihood of going wrong or needing extensive maintenance.

These are significant solutions. Yet we need to adjust our approach to reduce greenhouse gases further. For example, if all the concrete used in buildings worldwide were a country it would be the third largest carbon emitter in the world². And that is still after many of us have been using less carbon emitting concrete mixes for decades.

Construction, and what we demand of it as clients, designers and users, needs to address this now and forever.

Please call us to discuss your ideas.

Notes and references:

[1] [Net Zero Strategy; Build Back Greener](#), BEIS Oct 2021 p19

This includes no new gas boilers being sold by 2035.

[2] [Making Concrete Change](#): Innovation in Low-carbon Cement and Concrete, Chatham House Report June 2018 [Fig 5]

More generally see [Climate change: The massive CO₂ emitter you may not know about](#) BBC News Dec 2018

We bring you 100% planning permission giving you confidence your vision will succeed.

Call us to discuss your ideas.



Paul Vick Architects has won:

Most Innovative Architecture Firm London 2020, 2019 and 2018

Best Cultural Architecture Practice UK 2019

Best Construction Adviser UK 2017

See www.paulvick.co.uk/newsletters for more information or Contact us.

t: +44 (0)20 7993 6573 e: paulv@paulvick.co.uk w: www.paulvick.co.uk click for Movies.