



Courtesy: British Museum

## How London Developed

14/05/2020

- **Key features have influenced London's development:** location and topography including the Thames and its tributaries; patterns of settlement of successive societies; treaties, wars, persecution and plague; the economy including trade; and successive technological advances have all shaped the city we know today.
- **Growth has been largely organic with a few notable and not always successful exceptions.** It has tended to follow field lines and established road networks, with most overall growth occurring relatively recently, since 1840.
- **London's growth was limited by the extent of non-mechanical transport until the advent of the railways and motorised vehicle transport.** It was further helped by the use of tolls which allowed the road network to support expansion.
- **London's government and law have enabled or constrained both amount, type and quality of development, alongside economic opportunities.** Financial growth brought concentration of power, wealth and opportunity for further expansion. The leasehold system enabled the speculative development and expansion of a number of areas of the city. Densities were much lower in places and times where land was plentiful and cheap.
- **Successive waves of overcrowding and poor housing conditions with poor health have led to mass relocations further out from the centre, with the promise of clean air, space and nature, supported by commuting opportunities to the centre.** Both public and private housing were included during these periods of outward expansion, with varying attention to the standards of homes and a variety of typologies, with mixed views on the success of those which departed radically from historical norms.
- **At the start of the 1970s – Did we ever have it so good...or bad?** The end of the post war 'good times' have given way to runaway consumerism and global economic and climate crisis. Our current context includes many varied narratives of decay and rebirth, and a future where we need to value the lessons of the past as we move into the future.



*Courtesy: British Museum*

**Speakers:**

**Attendees: 251**

Vanessa Harding, Professor of London History, University of London Birkbeck

Edmund Bird, Heritage Advisor, TfL

Professor Matthew Davies, Executive Dean School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy, University of London Birkbeck

William Palin, CEO Barts Heritage Trust

Susie Barson, Historic England

Aileen Reid, Historian at the Survey of London at Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL

Mark Clapson, Freelance historian and writer

Darryl Chen, Partner, Hawkins Brown and Trustee of the London Society