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Growth, Modernisation and Control: The Transformation of London's Landscape, *c*.1500–*c*.1760

DEREK KEENE

ONE OF THE GREAT CONTRASTS between Dublin and London in this period was in the scale of their physical inheritances from earlier times. Medieval Dublin was a small but lively commercial city, though in 1600 it was but a shadow of Bristol. The spectacular expansion that was to eclipse its ancient core and make it the second metropolis of Britain and Ireland lay well in the future. London, on the other hand, had been prominent for many centuries as one of Europe's leading commercial cities and as capital of a powerful, centralised kingdom. London's physical infrastructure, dense, solidly-built, complex and extensive, continued to shape its future growth: with unfortunate effects, according to some critics. Moreover, London was deeply imbued with a culture of regulating its physical environment for both practical and political ends. The geographical aspects of the two cities also influenced their fabric. Thus Dublin, which in the Middle Ages had been to some degree shaped by Londoners, later often looked to London both as a model and as an example to be surpassed, although other European capitals also had an impact.[1] London, however, was much more directly linked to Continental networks of ideas and trade. In some respects Paris, as an unchallenged seat of monarchy, was London's most significant counterpart and model, but in others commercial capitals such as Antwerp and Amsterdam were more influential. Such comparisons would be much less appropriate for Dublin.

The single most important factor underlying change in London's fabric between the late thirteenth and the late eighteenth century was demography, driven by London's fortunes as a centre of trade, government and fashionable resort, and by Europe-wide episodes of famine and epidemic disease. In 1300, with perhaps 80,000 inhabitants, London was at its medieval peak in size. From after the Black Death to the early sixteenth century it perhaps contained no more than 50,000 persons. By 1550 it had regained the earlier peak, and was embarking on a period of rapid expansion, attaining

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[1] R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600–1972* (London, 1988), pp. 17, 135–6, 174, 185–90.

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populations of about 200,000 in 1600, about half a million in 1700 and almost a million in 1800. These fluctuations were accompanied by equally dramatic changes in the extent and density of building. In 1300, perhaps 80 or 90 per cent of London's inhabitants lived within the established jurisdiction of the City itself, an area which included extensive suburbs beyond the City walls. From 1570 onwards those Londoners who lived outside that boundary rapidly increased in number. In 1650 they represented about half of London's population, in 1700 about two-thirds, and in 1800 more than 85 per cent. At each of these dates much of the land that they occupied would within living memory have been green fields. Within the City itself, there was a comparable— but less extreme—shift outwards: in 1700 about 57 per cent of its inhabitants lived within the walls, the proportion falling to about 50 per cent by 1800.[2]

I

By 1300, London was established as the capital of the state in more or less the modern sense of that term. It had also achieved its distinctive modern form as a metropolis ordered around two poles, represented by the seat of commerce in the City and by the seat of government at Westminster, with a patchwork of jurisdictions outside the square mile of the City itself. For at least a century the citizens had been accustomed to regulate building so as to prevent the spread of fire, ensure privacy, contain sewage, and restrict obstructions of the street. The management and cleansing of the streets was linked to ideas concerning the social and moral order of city life, and to the provision of formal public spaces for the reception of the king and other dignitaries.[3] Monuments defined those spaces, and the citizens themselves had erected fine public structures such as the Guildhall, the Stocks market house and a piped water supply.[4]

By 1300 too the standard form of London street-frontage house had emerged.[5]

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[2] For the basis of these population figures and calculations, see D. Keene, 'Medieval London and its region', *London Journal,* 14 (1989), 99–111; V. Harding, 'The population of London, 1550–1700: a review of the published evidence', *London Journal,* 15 (1990), 111–28; W. Page, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*, vol. II (London, 1911), pp. 112–20.

[3] D. Keene, 'London from the post-Roman period to 1300' in D.M. Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, vol. I, The Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 187–216; D. Keene, 'Fire in London: destruction and reconstruction, A.D. 982–1676', in M. Körner, ed., *Destruction and reconstruction of towns: destruction by earthquakes, fire and water* (Bern, 1999), pp. 187–211. See also H.M. Chew and W. Kellaway, eds, *The London Assize of Nuisance, 1301–1431: a calendar*, London Record Society, 10 (1973).

[4] M.D. Lobel, ed., *The City of London from prehistoric times to c.1520* (The British Atlas of Historic Towns, vol. III: London, 1989), pp. 75–6, 95, s.n. Great Conduit, Guildhall, Stocks Market.

[5] R.H. Leech, 'The prospect from Rugman's Row: the row house in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London', *Archaeological Journal,* 153 (1996), 201–42. E. McKellar, *The birth of modern London: the development and design of the city, 1660–1720* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 155–7, argues that the brick terraced house was a revolutionary innovation of the late seventeenth century. That may have been the case in terms of materials and proportional design, but as a standardised house type the London terrace had much earlier origins.

Developments in timber-framing[6] meant that such structures could easily be built several storeys high and in uniform rows, often over stone cellars and with shops on the ground floor. Lack of differentiation between the upper stories reflected the need for flexibility in the provision of accommodation, for single houses were commonly occupied by several families and lodgers. These basic characteristics of London's speculative housing provision persisted into the eighteenth century and beyond, despite changes in materials, in methods of heating and in ideas concerning privacy and domestic order.[7] This type of dwelling, later known as the 'terraced house', but perhaps more effectively described by the North American term 'row house', was eminently suited to artisans and shopkeepers, the predominant London class, but was readily adaptable for purely domestic use by much wealthier residents.[8]

The thirteenth-century public building programme was matched in the fifteenth, with a new Guildhall (1411–30), and new market houses (1410–11 and 1440–4).[9] One of the latter formed part of a sophisticated scheme at Leadenhall, where provision was also made for a public granary, a chapel with a college of priests, and a school. Between the fourteenth and the early sixteenth century many of the city's numerous parish churches were enlarged and beautified and the city's guilds or 'livery companies' began to build elaborate halls for themselves. These two building types were to be prominent in the city into the mid-nineteenth century. The parish churches endowed London with its distinctive skyline, reinstated after its destruction in the Great Fire of 1666 but on new architectural principles. Aristocratic houses, once predominantly (though not exclusively) a feature of suburban zones, in the late Middle Ages made a notable contribution to the now less densely built-up landscape within the walls, especially along the river.[10]

At the same time, as the monarch's interest continued to focus ever more closely on the capital, royal and magnate building made further striking, if sometimes short-lived, contributions to London's fabric close to the heart of the city. These included Baynard's Castle, a new royal residence on a city river frontage (1490s); the Savoy Hospital, expressing new royal ideals for social welfare (1509 onwards); Bridewell Palace (1515),

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[6] G. Milne, *Timber building techniques in London, c.900–c.1400: an archaeological study of waterfront installations and related material*, London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Special Paper 15 (1992).

[7] For indications of such changes in the nomenclature and use of domestic space, see F.E. Brown, 'Continuity and change in the urban house: developments in domestic space organisation in 17th-century London', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 28 (1986), 558–90.

[8] The 'common run of houses in London' 'where the extent of the front is limited to a few feet' described by Isaac Ware in 1756 is of this type, although Ware seems to associate it with residents above the rank of shopkeeper: J. Ayres, *Building the Georgian city* (New Haven, 1998), pp. 238–9. For the eighteenth-century fashion in London for great men to occupy plain 'street houses', see Anon. [James Stuart], *Critical observations on the buildings and improvements of London* (London, 1771), p. 37.

[9] Lobel, ed., *City of London*, pp. 76, 78, 95, s.n. Guildhall, Leadenhall Market, Stocks Market.

[10] J. Schofield, *The building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* (London, 1984), pp. 111–17; J. Schofield, 'Saxon and medieval parish churches in the City of London: a review', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society,* 45 (1994), 23–146; Lobel, ed., *City of London*, pp. 49–52.

a residence replacing the burnt-out royal apartments at Westminster and linked to the Blackfriars, the King's Wardrobe and Baynard's Castle near by, so as form an impressive royal complex in the western part of the City at the mouth of the Fleet; the palatial house in Southwark of the duke of Suffolk, given up to the king in 1536; Whitehall Palace, quickly designated as the king's principal residence (1529 onwards, and based on the recently-rebuilt townhouse of Cardinal Wolsey); and the nearby royal palace of St James (1530s).[11] No later programme of royal building in London has had such an impact, long-term outcomes of which were to define a new royal focus north of Westminster itself and to emphasise a landscape of power extending along the north bank of the Thames.[12] Whitehall Palace was a particularly powerful statement of the monarch's appropriation of metropolitan space, for its large new precinct spanned a busy public street, where two imposing gatehouses announced the royal presence.[13] The formal designation of recreational spaces on the fringes of the built-up area also became a matter of general concern. In 1478 and 1512 fields to the north of the city were laid out and improved for the benefit of the citizens,[14] while the creation of the new royal parks at St James's and Hyde provided for hunting, walking and other forms of recreation, with links to indoor sporting facilities at Whitehall.[15] This established a new type of space for élite sociability which was to be a powerful long-term influence on the form of the capital.

In many ways, the fabric and architecture of London during the half century or more after the Reformation compared poorly with that of preceding generations. The great conventual churches had been secularised. The cathedral and parish churches suffered from uncertainty about their purpose and a consequent physical neglect. Civic investment in the fabric, so notable earlier, was distinctly low-key. The Royal Exchange (1566–70),[16] however, was a substantial quasi-civic enterprise in the established tradition of providing protected space for specialised trading. In the seventeenth century and later, the Exchange was to be the focus of the city's commercial life and a symbol of London's role as the heart of a trading empire, but at the time of its construction, to an Antwerp design and using materials imported from Antwerp, the Exchange rather emphasised London's dependency on the dynamic market overseas, which was the chief source of its prosperity. At the same time the great expansion of

[11] H.M. Colvin, ed., *The history of the king's works,* vol. III (London, 1975), pp. 196–210; vol. IV (London, 1982), pp. 50–1, 53–8, 241–3, 271, 286–8, 300–16. S. Thurley, *The royal palaces of Tudor England* (New Haven, 1993), pp. 36, 40–2, 51–6.

[12] This riverscape of power is clearly apparent in H. Colvin and S. Foster, eds, *The panorama of London circa 1544 by Anthonis van den Wyngaerde,* London Topographical Society, 151 (1996).

[13] G. Rosser and S. Thurley, 'Whitehall Palace and King Street, Westminster: the urban cost of princely magnificence', *London Topographical Record,* 26 (1990), 57–77.

[14] John Stow, *A survey of London,* ed. C.L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1908; reprinted with additions 1971), vol. II, pp. 76–7.

[15] Colvin, ed., *King's works,* vol. III, pp. 157, 243, 312.

[16] A. Saunders, ed., *The Royal Exchange,* London Topographical Society, 152 (1997).

the metropolis was accompanied by overcrowding and the proliferation of poor housing in marginal districts. The latter involved much shoddy building, often on ill-drained ground or in areas containing gardens, banqueting houses and bowling alleys that had been valued for recreation and air. There was thus a growing sense of the physical disorder of the metropolis and the social degeneration of its fabric, linked to concerns about infection, the problems of supplying food and fuel, and the lack of the dignity appropriate to a capital.[17]
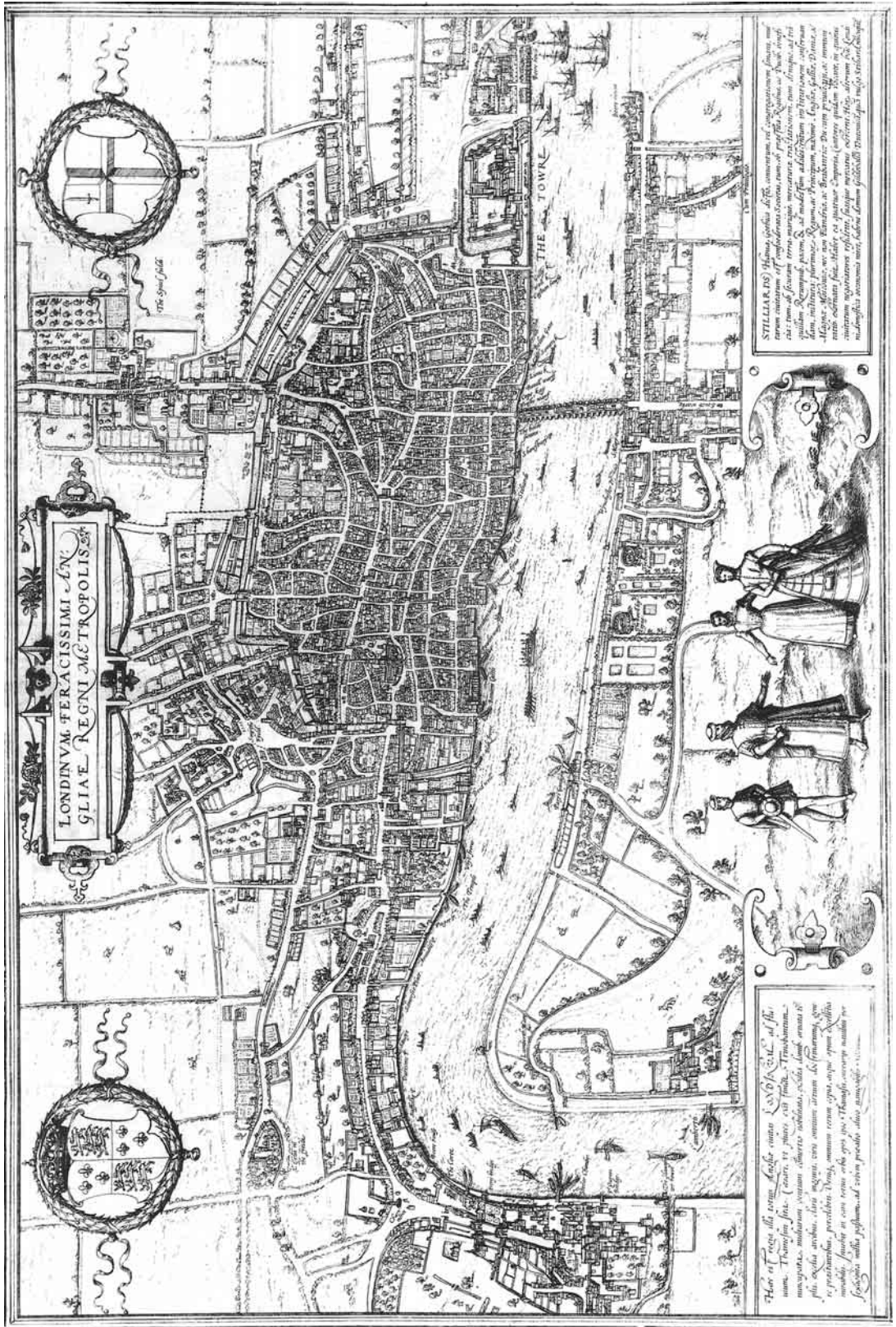
The physical pattern of London's growth was complex and has presented problems of description both to contemporaries and to historians in the present day. Nor is there a sequence of cartographic sources that clearly depicts all the significant phases.[18] In 1550, the mass of Londoners still lived within the City walls (see Figure 2.1). Suburbs were most extensive towards the west, as had been the case since the twelfth century when magnate residences became prominent in the continuous line of building extending to Westminster. By the sixteenth century the western suburb also contained London's legal quarter, where lawyers and their students resided in a cluster of inns off Fleet Street, The Strand and Holborn. The origins of the quarter can be traced before 1300, and in the fifteenth century its distinctive character was acknowledged as a neighbourhood for education and residence conveniently situated midway between the City and the courts at Westminster. Numbers at the inns increased rapidly between the mid-sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, as training in the law, or simply the opportunity to take advantage of the delights and opportunities of the capital, was more widely taken up by young men from landed families.[19] The 'finishing school' character of the inns stimulated the provision of other forms of training—in music, fencing, and dancing, for example—in the neighbourhood, as well as patterns of material consumption which in due course came to be associated with the law terms, parliamentary sessions and 'the season'.

The north-western suburb of the City, around the great livestock market of Smithfield and containing industrial areas served by numerous streams, was also

[17] P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin, eds, *Tudor royal proclamations* (New Haven, 3 vols, 1964–9), vol. II, no. 649, vol. III, no. 815.

[18] N.G. Brett-James, *The growth of Stuart London* (London, 1935) is still a valuable account. The principal cartographic sources used for the following discussion are: a detailed map-view of the 1550s, now surviving only in part but evidently the source for two later maps (see A. Prockter, R. Taylor and J. Fisher, *The A to Z of Elizabethan London,* London Topographical Society, 122, 1979); W. Morgan, *London &.c. actually survey'd* of 1682 (reproduced with introductory notes by R. Hyde, London, 1977); Rocque's map of 1746 (reproduced, with introductory notes by R. Hyde, as *The A to Z of Georgian London,* London Topographical Society, 126, 1982); and Horwood's map of 1790 and later (reproduced from an edition of 1813, with introduction by P. Laxton, as *The A to Z of Regency London,* London Topographical Society, 131, 1985). McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 12–37, is useful and emphasises the difficulty of relating population growth to topographical expansion.

[19] W.R. Prest, *The inns of court under Elizabeth I and the early Stuarts, 1590–1640* (London, 1972), pp. 6–7, 21–46; Lobel, ed., *City of London*, p. 52.

Figure 2.1

substantial.[20] To the north-east and east, suburban growth was less extensive and tended to follow the roads approaching the city. A narrow strip of building extended along the river to the east of the Tower, reflecting the growth of shipping-related activities and of industrialised brewing. On the south bank, the suburban population concentrated in the bridgehead settlement of Southwark, notable for brewing and other industries, brothels and entertainment, inns serving travellers, and gentry residences.[21] As on the north bank, a long arm of building extended east along the river.

Seventeenth-century expansion took place partly around this framework, but was also distinguished by two or three districts of substantial infilling or extension (see Figure 2.2). One, immediately east of the city outside Aldgate, near Houndsditch and Whitechapel, contained pockets of extreme deprivation and makeshift housing adapted from sheds and stables.[22] Yet only a short distance to the north, outside Bishopsgate, French-speaking immigrant silk workers had by 1571 established themselves in a distinctive cluster, which from then onwards promoted considerable employment in silk manufacture among poorer householders outside Aldgate and elsewhere. Eventually, and especially after 1685, the Bishopsgate cluster evolved into the Spitalfields silk district with its substantial merchants' houses, standing in sharp contrast to the poor housing elsewhere in the neighbourhood.[23] Further south and towards the river were the more noxious industries and maritime trades (tallow melting, bell founding, gunmaking, brewing, vinegar yards, alum yards, timber yards,

[20] For some of its occupational characteristics, see A.L. Beier, 'Engine of manufacture: the trades of London', in A.L. Beier and R.A.P. Findlay, eds, *London, 1500–1700: the making of the metropolis* (London, 1986), pp. 141–67, and T.R. Forbes, 'Weaver and cordwainer: occupations in the parish of St Giles without Cripplegate, London, in 1654–93 and 1729–43', *Guildhall Studies in London History,* 4 (1980), 120–7.

[21] For a characterisation of Southwark valid for the sixteenth century, see M. Carlin, *Medieval Southwark* (London, 1996).

[22] Some very poor housing east of the city is vividly portrayed in the 'Return for inmates and divided houses' for Portsoken Ward in 1636/7: PRO, SP16/359, fos. 89–99 (cf. *CSP 1637*, pp. 178–83). For a typescript of the returns, see T.C. Dale, ed., 'Returns of divided houses in the city of London', in Guildhall Library. See also Stow, *Survey*, vol. I, pp. 127–9.

[23] L.B. Luu, 'Skills and innovations: a study of the stranger working community in London, 1550–1600' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1997), pp. 183–6; between the 1580s and the 1620s silk twisters and silk weavers represented about 4 per cent of the males with occupations recorded in the memoranda books of the parish clerks of St Botolph outside Aldgate: London, GL, MSS 9234/1–8.

Figure 2.1 (facing page) London, Westminster and Southwark in the mid sixteenth century. From G. Braun and F. Hogenberg, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, first published in 1572. This reproduction is from the second state of the map first published in 1574. See note 18 and J. Howgego, *Printed Maps of London, circa 1553–1850* (2nd edition, Folkstone, 1978), no. 2. The map shows the Royal Exchange, built 1566–70, but also the spire of St Paul's Cathedral, which was destroyed in 1561. The map appears to be derived from an earlier, much larger-scale survey made between 1547 and 1559. It provides a good indication of the extent of building and open ground in and around the City. © Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

Figure 2.2

ropewalks and so on). Further out, in Shadwell and Wapping, where most people depended upon the river for their livelihood, housing development was more orderly but predominantly small-scale, with one room to a floor.[24] This traditional type of small-scale housing[25] was probably typical of the rapidly-expanding craft, industrial and maritime areas associated with the north-western, northern and eastern margins of the city, and also with the south bank, where the extension of the built-up area downstream was notable. These many neighbourhoods each housed a distinctive combination of activities which was the main source of their identity: exclusive clustering of trades was rare. Transitions between such districts, and between pockets of substantial housing and the maze of alleys housing the poor, could be abrupt.

In many ways the social and physical texture of the newly-built districts resembled that of the medieval city, and the combination of intermixture and sharp juxtaposition remained a feature of the metropolis as a whole throughout the period. Nevertheless, the distinction between the financial, commercial, retailing and high-quality finishing districts within the city walls and the manufacturing areas outside was becoming sharper. One exception was the intramural waterfront district which, with its dyeing and brewing trades and its handling of imports and exports, retained its traditional character. In almost complete contrast, the western suburb acquired, in the fields to the north of The Strand and St James's Park, a new type of district characterised by formal layouts, a relative uniformity of building, and the houses of aristocrats, gentlemen, and 'men of ability', whose numbers and capacity to spend time in London were increasing.[26] But even this neighbourhood, where the interest of many focused on the royal court, was far from socially uniform. Shopkeepers, artisans and labourers in service trades occupied the interstices between blocks of superior housing, and new

[24] M.J. Power: 'East London housing in the seventeenth century' in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds, *Crisis and order in English towns: essays in urban history* (London, 1972), pp. 237–62; 'East and west in early modern London' in E.W. Ives, R.J. Knecht and J.J. Scarisbrick, eds, *Wealth and power in Tudor England* (London, 1978), pp. 167–85; 'Shadwell: the development of a London suburban community in the seventeenth century', *London Journal,* 4 (1978), 29–46; 'The East End working community in the seventeenth century', in P.J. Corfield and D. Keene, eds, *Work in towns, 850–1850* (Leicester, 1990), pp. 101–20.

[25] The best discussion of this type of housing in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London is now provided by P. Guillery and B. Herman, 'Deptford houses: 1650 to 1800' (Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, unpublished report, 1998). See also McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 155–84.

[26] These districts and their inhabitants are surveyed in L. Stone, 'The residential development of the West end of London in the seventeenth century', in B.C. Malament, ed., *After the Reformation: essays in honor of J.H. Hexter* (Manchester, 1980), pp. 167–212. See also R.M. Smuts, 'The court and its neighbourhood: royal policy and urban growth: the early Stuart West End', *Journal of British Studies,* 30 (1991), 117–49.

Figure 2.2 (facing page) London, Westminster and Southwark by Nicholas de Fer, published 1700 (Howgego, *Printed Maps*, no. 44(1)). This simplified and not entirely accurate representation, ultimately derived from a detailed survey of 1682 (see note 18), nevertheless shows the great increase in building since 1550, especially to the west of the city of London and downstream along both banks of the river. The improvements to the streets and markets within the city made after the Great Fire of 1666 are also apparent. © Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

To Martin Ffolkes Esq.r President of the Royal Society.—This PLAN of the CITIES of LONDON AND WESTMINSTER AND BOROUGH of SOUTHWARK, WITH THE CONTIGUOUS BUILDINGS; is humbly Inscribed by his most humble Servants, *John Pine* and *John Tinney*.
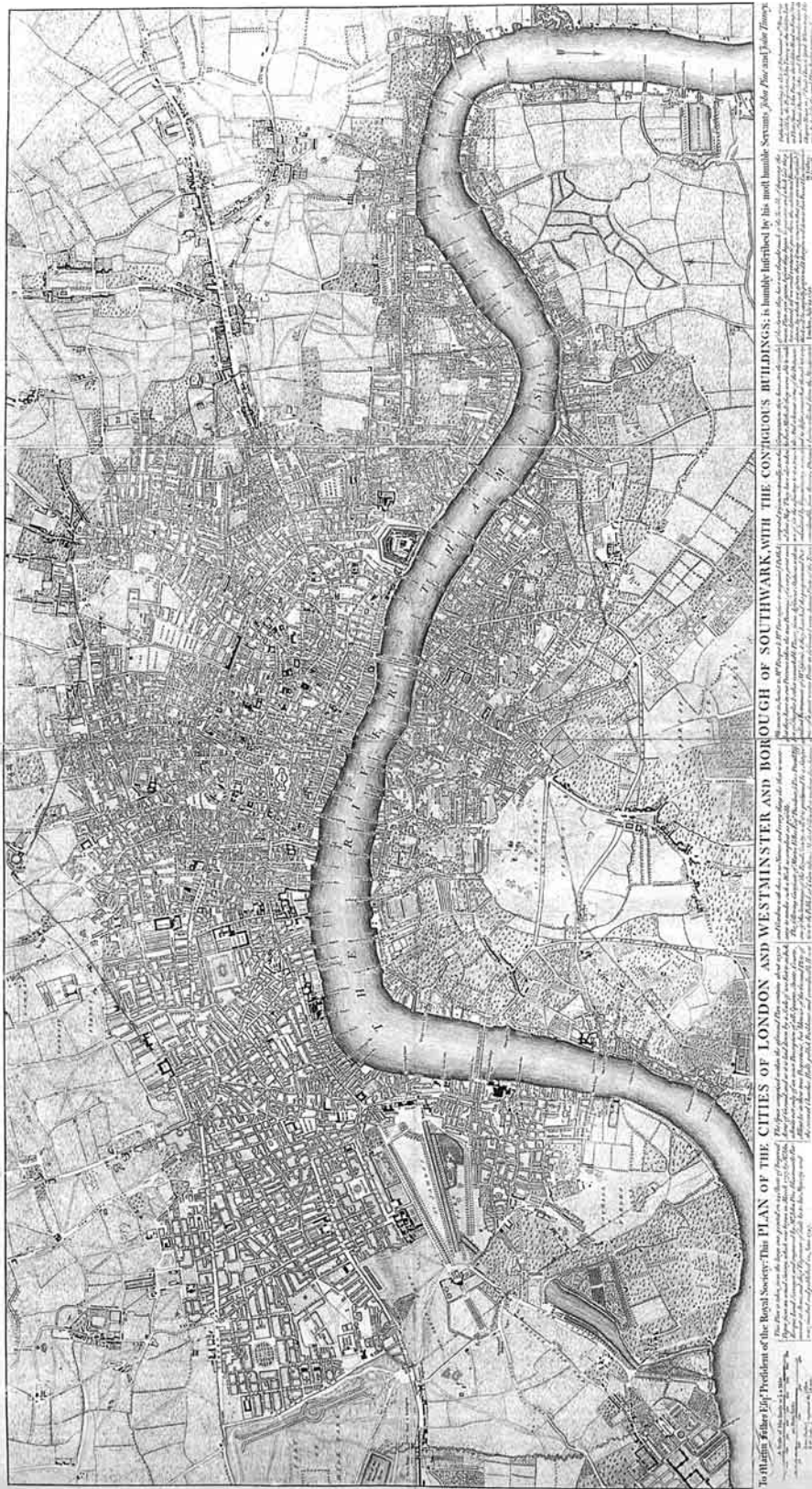
Figure 2.3

industries such as coachmaking and instrument-making, plus service trades such as tailoring, came to be established in the area. Overall, however, the continued growth of the metropolis encouraged specialisation and the spatial differentiation of functions, both within the city and elsewhere,[27] so that the differing cultures of such neighbourhoods as St James's or Exchange Alley became more readily apparent to outsiders.[28] At the same time, the increasing difficulty of moving across London and the circumscribed employment patterns of many people's lives probably increased a tendency for individual districts to become unfamiliar to the residents of others. On the other hand, there were presumably many people like the merchant and baronet John Verney, who at the end of the seventeenth century moved easily between business in the city, a residence in the new, fashionable street of Hatton Garden, cousins in Covent Garden and other family at Chelsea. Verney was equally promiscuous in his London church-going.[29]

By 1700 (as shown in Figure 2.2) the metropolis was coming to be organised more clearly than ever before around two distinct focal points of business, each characterised by high land values and a high density of building. These were the city itself and the growing shopping and marketing district around The Strand, which served a Court rather than a mercantile clientele. Land values and density declined with distance from these poles, on a concentric pattern which emphasised an increasing contrast between the wealthy districts and their peripheries. Some of the poorest areas of squalid housing now lay between the two cores, most notably in the Fleet valley and Holborn. But even that poor district was only a few steps from the fine houses in Hatton Garden. In this view Westminster, isolated from The Strand by the royal enclave at Whitehall and containing a good deal of low-value housing, was itself peripheral.[30] As John Verney's life-style suggests, the nascent 'West End', around and to the north of The Strand, owed at least as much to interaction with the city and the legal quarter as it did to its proximity to the Court. There arose a degree of rivalry between the City's shopping

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[27] D. Keene, 'The setting of the Royal Exchange: continuity and change in the financial district of London, 1300–1871', in Saunders, ed., *Royal Exchange*, pp. 253–71.

[28] See Stone, 'Residential development', p. 189, citing Addison in 1714.

[29] S. Whyman, 'Land and trade revisited: the case of John Verney, London merchant and baronet', *London Journal,* 22 (1997), 16–32.

[30] The pattern is most clearly demonstrated in C. Spence, *A social atlas of London in the 1690s* (London, 2000). Lack of sources prevents this study covering London south of the river, where Southwark should probably be considered as part of the city's periphery rather than as an independent 'core area'. E. Jones, 'London in the early seventeenth century: an ecological approach', *London Journal,* 6 (1980), 123–33, is limited to the city, but reveals the concentric pattern.

Figure 2.3 (facing page) London, Westminster and Southwark, 1746 (Howgego, *Printed Maps*, no. 100(1)). The map, published in 1749, is a reduced version of John Rocque's survey of 1746 (see note 18 and Howgego, *Printed Maps*, no. 96). It shows the further expansion of the West End and settlement downriver, and provides a more realistic sense of London's spatial texture than does Figure 2.2. Westminster Bridge is shown, although it was not completed until 1749. The line drawn on this copy of the map represents that of the Civil War defences. © Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

A new Pocket Plan of LONDON WESTMINSTER and SOUTHWARK, with all the Adjacent Buildings. Also a correct List of upwards of 300 Hackney Coach Fares.1790

Figure 2.4

streets and The Strand, where splendid new bazaars such as the New Exchange (1608) and Exeter Change (1676)[31] proclaimed and helped consolidate this new focus of consumption and business. Nevertheless, City shops in Cheapside, in Cornhill and around the Royal Exchange continued to attract discerning and fashionable customers well into the nineteenth century, and even to the east of the City, in Spitalfields, mercers' establishments of the mid-eighteenth century could sport shop fronts of the most fashionable kind.[32]

During the eighteenth century London grew patchily on its northern, eastern and southern fringes, incorporating formerly detached villages and hamlets and infilling between earlier extensions shaped by main roads (Figures 2.3 and 2.4). Ribbon development along roads approaching from the east and south was especially extensive. Defoe's description, written in the 1720s at the height of a building boom, effectively captures the *ad hoc* pattern of London's growth which 'has spread the face of it in most straggling, confus'd manner, out of all shape, uncompact and unequal; neither long nor broad, round or square'.[33] Between Southwark and Lambeth, within the bend of the Thames, there was much new building, especially from the middle of the century onwards. This was in part associated with the extension of commercial and industrial activities (especially timber yards) upstream along the river bank, but owed more to the construction of bridges across the Thames at Westminster and Blackfriars,[34] which connected this area to the main body of the metropolis and in due course contributed to shifting London's notional centre of gravity westwards from the City. To the northwest, from Piccadilly across Oxford Street towards Marylebone, and from Tottenham Court Road to Hyde Park there appeared a large new area of predominantly (though far from exclusively) high-class housing, which with the earlier development adjoining to the south and east consolidated the identity of the Court end of town.

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[31] L. Stone, 'Inigo Jones and the New Exchange', *Archaeological Journal,* 94 (1957), 106–21; J. Harris and G. Higgott, *Inigo Jones: complete architectural drawings* (New York, 1989), pp. 36–8; London County Council, *Survey of London*, vol. XVIII (London, 1937), p. 125; McKellar, *Birth*, p. 50.

[32] F.H.W. Sheppard, ed., *Survey of London,* vol. XXVII, *Spitalfields and Mile End New Town* (London, 1957), pp. 227–36 and Plates 84–6.

[33] D. Defoe, *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain*, vol. I (London, 1962), pp. 314–30, especially pp. 314–15.

[34] J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (revised edn, London, 1988), pp. 271–3.

Figure 2.4 (facing page) London, Westminster and Southwark in the late eighteenth century. This 'new pocket plan' (Howgego, *Printed Maps*, no. 198a(4)), was first issued in 1792. It was accompanied by a list of hackney coach fares and reveals new patterns of circulation in the metropolis. These include, on the north, the 'New Road from Paddington to Islington' and The City Road, and, on the south, Blackfriars Bridge, St George's Circus and the 'New Road' from Westminster Bridge to Southwark. It also shows the substantial increase in building, especially to the north of Oxford Street. The line drawn on this copy of the plan defines the jurisdiction of the City of London. © Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

Derek Keene

II

In the mid-seventeenth century, population and building densities were attained in the business heart of the City of London which have probably not been witnessed in Britain either before or since. Densities fell slightly with the reordering which followed the Great Fire of 1666, but even in 1695 the mean for the entire intramural area was about 200 persons per acre (81 per hectare), with the highest densities (398 persons per acre, or 160 per hectare, in one instance) in central commercial parishes close to the main axes of business and on parts of the waterfront, following a pattern which had probably been established within a generation or two of the Norman Conquest.[35] During the eighteenth century a radically new distribution of population began to take shape, essentially that characteristic of the heart of the metropolis today. The City within the walls lost about twenty per cent of its population, especially as more of the central district came to be occupied by streets and by specialised commercial buildings. At the same time, the populations of several peripheral parishes within the walls, and of all City parishes outside, increased. Thus in 1800 the highest population densities in London, and some of the greatest concentrations of poverty, were to be found in neighbourhoods just within and just outside the City walls, within a few minutes' walk of some of the wealthiest districts.[36] Despite the demands of business and traffic, the City included some of the most densely inhabited neighbourhoods of London until well into the nineteenth century. People active in commerce had to be close to where business was done, and also required the services of a host of servants, porters and messengers resident close by.[37] Population densities were likewise high around the commercial focus in the western part of London, but by 1800 there are signs that a similar development to that in the City was taking place, for some of the highest densities in that area were now to be found in peripheral districts such as Soho and St Giles in the Fields rather than along The Strand.

The density of residence and the complexity of the networks by which people went about their business generated street congestion, especially from the late sixteenth century onwards as the number of journeys to and from London increased and as coaches came to be more commonly used for travel within the metropolis. Journeys across town became very time-consuming, and the river could be quicker or more comfortable. The problem was most acute during the law terms and when parliament was sitting, but

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[35] The distribution of parish churches indicates early densities of population. The best guide to relative densities of population in the late medieval city is provided by the parish totals of communicants in 1548, which display a pattern not fundamentally altered by 1634: C.J. Kitching, ed., *London and Middlesex chantry certificate 1548*, London Record Society, 16 (1980); for the 1634 totals, see Lambeth PL, CM VIII/18 and 25. For 1695, see P.E. Jones and A.V. Judges, 'London population in the late seventeenth century', *Econ. HR*, 1st ser., 6 (1935–6), 45–63.

[36] These statements are based on census population totals and acreages for City and Middlesex parishes in Page, ed., *Middlesex*, vol. II, pp. 112–20.

[37] Keene, 'Royal Exchange'.

legislation proposed during the 1660s to deal with such congestion in Westminster failed.[38] Most attention seems to have focused on the narrow and often dangerous streets of the City, which from George Buck's proposals of 1612[39] onwards were the subject of successive schemes to ameliorate them. After the Great Fire, the numerous small-scale changes made to the City streets, and the removal of markets from the main thoroughfares, improved circulation; and improvements of that type continued to be made through the eighteenth century.[40] These changes, along with the increasing provision of conveyances for the wealthy,[41] made some London journeys easier, but perhaps had little impact on congestion overall. Moreover, they did not meet the requirements of those who, like John Gwynn in 1766, proposed to eliminate the 'horrid passages' of both the City and the western parts of town by introducing new grids of housing and 'capital streets'.[42] Congestion was perhaps worst just below London Bridge, where from 1617 onwards a one-way system was employed for drays carrying goods to and from the quays. Despite the enormous increase in trade, those who controlled the quays managed until the late eighteenth century to resist moves to transfer the handling of ships and cargoes to more spacious and efficient sites downstream of the city.[43] As in other aspects of the infrastructural development of London, such as the City's corporate opposition to proposals to bridge the Thames, short-term interests and fears of loss of income or trade hindered projects which might well have benefited the metropolis as a whole.

By the 1650s, houses on the principal street frontages in the heart of the City had attained their maximum practicable height of four or five full storeys above ground, with garrets on top. On the eve of the Great Fire, for example, stretches of the Cheapside frontage appear to have been occupied by runs of five-storey houses, some of them built or raised to that height only a few years previously, while towards the rear of the plots and in side streets near by, houses were one or two storeys lower.[44] In outlying areas houses were lower still, although single-storey dwellings were rare. This established custom concerning heights was modified by the Rebuilding Act of 1667 and in subsequent legislation which specified four storeys for London houses on 'principal

[38] J. Hoppit, ed., *Failed legislation, 1660–1800* (London, 1997), s.a. 1662–3; cf. J. Stow, *Annales* (London, 1631), p. 865.

[39] G. Buck, 'The third universitie of England' (1612) in J. Stow, *The annales or general chronicle of England . . . augmented . . . by Edmond Howes* (London, 1615), pp. 980–1.

[40] Keene, 'Fire in London'; Keene, 'Royal Exchange'.

[41] E.L. Jones and M.E. Falkus, 'Urban improvement and the English economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' in P. Borsay, ed., *The eighteenth-century town: a reader in English urban history, 1688–1820* (London, 1990), pp. 116–58.

[42] J. Gwynn, *London and Westminster improved* (London, 1766).

[43] E. Bennett, *The Worshipful Company of Carmen of London: a short history* (London, 1952), pp. 37–8; H. Roseveare, '"The Damned Combination": the port of London and the wharfingers' cartel of 1695', *London Journal,* 21 (1996), 97–111.

[44] D. Keene and V. Harding, *Historical gazetteer of London before the Great Fire: 1, Cheapside* (Cambridge, 1987), esp. All Hallows Honey Lane parish, Figs. 1–3.

streets', three storeys for 'streets and lanes of note', and two storeys for 'by-streets',[45] principles which appear to have been respected throughout the eighteenth-century metropolis. Immediately after the Fire the new height limit probably contributed to the fall in population at the city centre and thereby encouraged lateral expansion.

Building high was the principal method of generating sufficient rental income to cover the cost of land on commercial frontages. The limit on height was not straightforwardly technical, for it was possible, and not necessarily expensive, to build houses which were higher. But it was uneconomic to go higher than four or five storeys, since without efficient lifts upper rooms were too distant from the street to generate sufficient rent: finding tenants for the top floor of a four- or five-storey building was still a problem in the mid-nineteenth-century city; hence such places served as accommodation for servants or the relatively poor. In the seventeenth century, London's tallest buildings were a storey or two lower than in some Continental cities, most notably Paris.[46] That difference in height may have arisen from London's lack of a pressing need to maintain a defensive circuit which would have constrained lateral growth, but I propose that the explanation lies rather in a relative cheapness of land in the immediate environs of London, by comparison with Paris. Cheap suburban land could well have been a consequence of the ease with which London drew on supplies of food and fuel, especially the latter. After 1600 London, burning coal shipped from Newcastle, no longer required large tracts of woodland close by to supply its heat,[47] thus making land more readily available for grazing, cultivation and building. Paris did not enjoy that ready access to coal, and despite its great size continued to draw heavily on the immediately surrounding territory for firewood.

Trends in building did not straightforwardly match demographic change. They could reflect the fortunes of particular social groups. In the late fourteenth century, for example, the overall contraction of the city was accompanied by a building boom as its fabric was reshaped to meet the needs of newly-prosperous artisans. In the later fifteenth century, despite a generally slack housing market and some signs of decay in the city centre, there was a rising demand for housing and new building took place in some suburban areas.[48] That was probably a response both to the increasing number of subsistence migrants to London, who found lodging in outlying areas, and to new industrial and commercial developments. In the later sixteenth century, there were contrasting responses in building, responses on the one hand to the needs of prosperous merchants and the members of a landed class whose real incomes were rising, and on

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[45] T.F. Reddaway, *The rebuilding of London after the Great Fire* (London, 1940), pp. 80–1; Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 34–6, 46, 105–7; S. Porter, *The Great Fire of London* (Stroud, 1996), p. 155.

[46] A.M. Crinò, ed., *Un principe di Toscana in Inghilterra e in Irlanda nel 1669* (Rome, 1968), p. 205.

[47] J.A. Galloway, D. Keene and M. Murphy, 'Fuelling the city: production and distribution of firewood and fuel in London's region, 1290–1400', *Ec.HR*, 2nd ser., 49 (1996), 447–72.

[48] D. Keene, 'A new study of London before the Great Fire', *Urban History Yearbook 1984*, 11–21; Keene and Harding, *Historical gazetteer*, *passim*; Carlin, *Southwark*, pp. 54, 57–60.

the other to the basic requirements of a horde of migrants seeking marginal employment. Later the needs of growing professional and manufacturing groups had special impacts. Social geography affected the pattern of building, in districts such as the Court end of town, the legal quarter, the financial and wholesaling neighbourhoods in the City, and industrial or maritime zones.

Among members of the professional and mercantile classes a new relationship between residence and workplace, involving daily (or almost daily) travel between one and the other, slowly emerged. The dramatist who in 1691 wrote of the wife of a City alderman, who forced her husband to leave Mark Lane in the City for a new suburban house in Soho Square, anticipated the clear emergence of that trend by at least a century, but presumably reflected contemporary sentiment.[49] Social aspiration played a part in such moves to houses on the western fringe of town, but the desire for space and air, with a prospect of open fields (such as many aristocratic London houses had enjoyed for centuries), was also important. In 1725, at the height of a building boom, Defoe wrote of the people who were quitting 'old noble streets and squares . . . and removing into the fields for fear of infection'.[50] In the nineteenth century the rocketing demand for business space in the heart of the City and the degeneration of some fine streets of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century housing just beyond Temple Bar accelerated this development, causing City men and lawyers to move to 'Tyburnian mansions' and to colonise the northern part of the Bedford Estate.[51]

Other factors also influenced cycles of building. The Civil War interrupted a phase of expansion, which was resumed towards the end of the Interregnum, but was again interrupted as capital and labour were absorbed by the task of reconstruction after the Great Fire. As the rebuilding of the city neared completion, so peripheral expansion resumed, to be halted by financial crisis. There was a renewed peak of activity in the third decade of the eighteenth century, prompted by the availability of capital in a period of peace and the need to repair and replace the buildings erected during the decades of concentrated building after the Fire. During the broadly expansionary second half of the eighteenth century, war, financial stress, and the crises of over-provision typical of the building market occasioned set-backs, some of a cyclical nature.[52]

The transformation of London's fabric was thus a complex and far from uniform phenomenon. It expressed a dynamic of city growth which was already ancient at the beginning of the period, and which was conditioned by established patterns of social

[49] F.H.W. Sheppard, ed., *Survey of London*, vol. XXXIII, *The parish of St Anne Soho* (London, 1966), p. 44. For the aldermanic preference to dwell in the City in the late seventeenth century, see Stone, 'Residential development', pp. 186–7.
[50] Cited in F. Sheppard, V. Belcher and P. Cottrell, 'The Middlesex and Yorkshire deeds registries and the study of building fluctuations', *London Journal*, 5 (1979), 176–217, at pp. 184–5. Cf. D.J. Olsen, *Town planning in London: the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (New Haven, 1964), p. 19.
[51] Keene, 'Royal Exchange'; Olsen, *Town planning*, pp. 109–10.
[52] Olsen, *Town planning*, p. 7; Sheppard, Belcher and Cottrell, 'Middlesex and Yorkshire deeds registries'.

behaviour, an entrenched physical infrastructure, and a dense network of property rights. Everywhere, construction was accomplished piecemeal in small units, in a tradition of speculative building established long before 1300. From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, much of the more substantial work was undertaken within the new contractual framework provided by what was later known as the building lease, although in many districts new development and rebuilding was undertaken on the basis of freehold acquisition. Pre-existing freeholds, leases and field boundaries— themselves reflecting earlier patterns of arable, pastoral and industrial use—were a strong influence in shaping the physical layout of new streets and building. Some condemned the building-lease system for promoting short-term attitudes and shoddy construction, which was certainly true in some cases, but the quality of building in any particular district seems rather to have reflected the local market for housing, landlords' intentions as estate planners, their expectations of profit, and their power to enforce contracts concerning standards of layout, construction and maintenance. In fact, most landlords lacked the resources to develop their estates on their own: they were more concerned with the immediate cash return from the sale or lease of land, while the intricate system of assignments, sales and mortgages proved an effective means of raising the necessary finance from layers of relatively small-scale investors. [53] On greenfield sites, where many acres might be under the control of a single landlord, a uniform approach was possible, should the finance and will be available to sustain it.

Thus both the pattern of landowning and the demand for a certain type of urban landscape in the vicinity of the Court contributed to the distinctively ordered appearance of some western parts of London. Ordered features, however, were also apparent in new building in virtually every other part of London, though often in isolation or intermixed with older structures and layouts. In the poorer districts to the east of the city and on the south bank, even within large freehold land units, much building was especially incremental and small in scale, and was also characterised by the subdivision of houses, plots and gardens and by the adaptation of non-residential structures as dwellings.[54] There, the growth of London's fabric often generated labyrinthine networks of streets and alleys,[55] yet in similarly poor or marginal districts the same process of piecemeal construction could, over a few decades, produce long rows of relatively uniform shop or cottage housing as the unplanned outcome of the housing market,[56] while even in the western part of London, labyrinths emerged between the ordered spaces.

Physical change was a cumulative process. In districts where building was already

[53] D. Keene, 'Landlords, the property market and urban development in medieval England' in F.-E. Eliassen and G.A. Ersland, eds, *Power, profit and urban land: landownership in medieval and early modern Northern European towns* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 93–119; Leech, 'The prospect from Rugman's Row'; Olsen, *Town planning*, pp. 29–38; Stone, 'Residential development', p. 202; McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 38–70.

[54] For an example in East Smithfield, see Keene 'Landlords', Fig. 6.2.

[55] For a vivid description of one such cluster of alleys, see J. Strype, *Survey of the cities of London and Westminster . . . written at first in the year MDXCVIII by John Stow . . .* (London, 1720), book II, p. 28.

[56] Leech, 'The prospect from Rugman's Row'; Guillery and Herman, 'Deptford houses'.

dense and property values high, change often involved the reshaping of structural ele-
ments from earlier periods, which constituted a substantial investment which could not
readily be erased. Thus after the dissolution of the religious houses, their churches, con-
ventual buildings and precincts (in many cases already containing many dwellings
inhabited by lay people) were adapted to new uses rather than cleared and rebuilt. In
this way substantial elements of the medieval fabric were absorbed, and their influence
on the layout of streets and buildings is still apparent in some places. The former
religious precincts offered particular opportunities for conversion to aristocratic
residences, although as the city grew other uses prevailed.[57] They could also provide
accommodation for large-scale governmental or industrial enterprises, such as the
Office of Revels at Blackfriars and the former hospital of St John of Jerusalem, the
Ordnance Office storehouses and workshops in the former Minoresses' precinct, or
the Navy Victualling Yard on the site of the Cistercian abbey of St Mary Graces near
the Tower.[58] Even after the Great Fire the rebuilt part of the City owed much to the
fabric of its predecessor. Masonry walls of churches and other substantial buildings
were sometimes reclad and incorporated in the new structures, while on the sites of
private houses cellars and foundations were commonly reused, even though building
above ground was reordered so as to eliminate the accumulated complexities of pre-
Fire house plans.[59]

   Thus in 1760 a large part of London was occupied by buildings of the first genera-
tion on the site, another large area was occupied by buildings of the second or third
generation, while in the city, Southwark and parts of Westminster the fabric embodied
elements from a period extending over at least six hundred years. Overall, with the
rebuilding after the Great Fire and the rapid pace of construction thereafter, London
must have presented a striking image of uniformity and modernity. But even in that
context, the rate and character of growth and renewal at successive periods and in any
one district had a powerful influence on the degree to which individual architectural
aspirations and styles were apparent in the fabric. Despite constant rebuilding, there
were many survivals, even of relatively modest structures such as the late sixteenth-
century timber-framed houses which still stand near Smithfield, or the elaborate timber
facades of that time or a little later which were still visible in many London streets of
the late eighteenth century.[60]

   Juxtapositions could be striking. In The Strand the frontages of Somerset House,
the first serious attempt to compose a classical facade in England (1547–52),[61] the
contemporary Exeter House, and even the long timber-framed street range of Bedford

[57] For the fate of Holy Trinity Priory within Aldgate, see J. Schofield, *Medieval London houses* (New Haven, 1995),
pp. 155–7.
[58] Colvin, ed., *King's works,* vol. III, pp. 15, 81, 92–3; E.A. Tomlinson, *A history of the Minories, London* (London,
1907), pp. 120–55.
[59] Schofield, 'Saxon and medieval parish churches', pp. 119–20; Keene, 'Fire in London', Fig. 5.
[60] Leech, 'The prospect from Rugman's Row'; Schofield, *Medieval London houses*, pp. 142–9.
[61] J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530 to 1830* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 5th edn, 1969), pp. 45–6.

House presented a dramatic contrast to the narrow, timber-framed, gable-fronted artisanal dwellings which adjoined them. The brick- or stone-fronted gentry houses in the Netherlandish manner erected in The Strand and Holborn early in the seventeenth century would have stood out from their neighbours in a similar fashion.[62] Elsewhere in The Strand, as in the City, stylish and up-to-date magnate residences tended to be set back from the street behind rows of smaller, more old-fashioned dwellings.[63] Moreover, older styles of building could persist for simple dwellings long after they had been abandoned for more ambitious houses, especially on the fringes of London. Thus, in Deptford High Street timber-framed houses with conservative 'seventeenth-century' plans were being built for craftsmen and shopkeepers during the mid- and later eighteenth century, while only a few yards away, from 1705 onwards, a street of more up-to-date brick houses had been erected for residents of higher status.[64]

The ever-advancing fringes of London were also remarkable for the way in which uses associated with marginal areas during the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century relocated further out. This was as true of industrial production[65] as it was in the servicing of leisure.[66] Moreover, the almshouses and hospitals which were such a distinctive feature of London's semi-rural periphery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had had predecessors closer to the city walls: they reproduced and enlarged a suburban landscape of piety and charity which had first been created in the twelfth century. Architectural forms and materials might have changed, but many of the habits which shaped London's fabric did not.

III

By contrast, the external appearance of the fabric generally—and the spatial organisation of magnate dwellings—changed more rapidly in response to fashion and models overseas. A continuing strand was the reception of classical and Renaissance forms, although for much of the period that was an indirect process, rather than one involving direct contact with or knowledge of Italy. In the fifteenth

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[62] Summerson, *Architecture*, pp. 100–101.

[63] C.L. Kingsford, 'Bath Inn or Arundel House', *Archaeologia,* 72 (1922), 243–77, and 'Essex House, formerly Leicester House and Exeter Inn', *Archaeologia,* 73 (1923), 1–54. Hollar's 'map-view' of The Strand *c.*1658 shows the contrast in that street between new aristocratic house façades and the traditional pattern of building: F.H.W. Sheppard, ed., *Survey of London,* vol. XXXVI, *The parish of St Paul Covent Garden* (London, 1970), pp. 20–7 and Plate 1.

[64] Guillery and Herman, 'Deptford houses'; cf. McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 161–2, 182–3.

[65] The pattern of industrial relocation emerges from a comparison of Rocque's and Horwood's maps: see above, n. 18. A single instance is provided by the Vinegar Yard shown just north of Upper Moorfields on the former, succeeded by the Vinegar Manufactory to the north of Old Street on the latter.

[66] M. Ogborn, *Spaces of modernity: London's geographies, 1680–1780* (New York, 1998), pp. 116–57.

and early sixteenth centuries, the Court style of the Burgundian Netherlands exercised a strong influence on royal and aristocratic building in and around London, and was the means by which many classical features first found expression in England. Italian craftsmen were employed for fine detailing, but the dominant impression was Netherlandish, and important architectural features in palace building were imported from France.[67] But, as Summerson noted, 'whereas the art of Italians and Frenchmen had to be fetched, the art of Antwerp flowed of its own accord'.[68] Thus in the housing fabric of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London, the predominant style of architectural decoration was derived from the city's closest trading partner, by direct observation, by imported or immigrant craftsmen, or by use of the abundant products of the Antwerp printing presses. These last were perhaps the most effective means by which a knowledge of classical and Italian detailing was distributed through Europe.[69] The more elaborate London houses incorporated brackets and strap-work carved or modelled in the Antwerp manner, and Netherlandish carvers working in London produced high-quality work for fireplaces and other features, which were supplied to both London and country clients.[70] In the course of the seventeenth century, Amsterdam and Dutch classicism succeeded Antwerp in this role as the dominant overseas influence on the style of building in London.[71]

Perhaps the most striking aspect of London's physical transformation in this period was the step it took in its long evolution from the soft, organic city fabric of the early Middle Ages to the hard mineral fabric of today. This was a continuous process, in which the massive increase in the use of stone in the twelfth century marked an important phase, but even in the early seventeenth century London houses were perceived to be predominantly of timber, clay and plaster, for much of the stone in their fabric was invisible.[72] The key change then taking place was the widespread adoption of brick, which endowed London with a distinctive new appearance and a new approach to building. Bricks were used increasingly from about 1350 onwards for those parts of houses most vulnerable to fire. By 1500 they were commonly used for the main carcass in substantial buildings, where they were often clad with stone. The distinctive brick architecture of the Low Countries, however, lent stylistic validation to the visible use of

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[67] Thurley, *Royal palaces*, pp. 11–37, 85–111 (perhaps underestimating the continuing force of Netherlandish influence as a mode of transmission).

[68] Summerson, *Architecture*, p. 53.

[69] P. Lombaerde, 'Antwerp in its golden age: "one of the largest cities in the Low Countries" and "one of the best fortified in Europe"', in P. O'Brien, D. Keene, M. t'Hart and H. van der Wee, eds, *Urban achievement in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 99–127.

[70] A. Friedman, *House and household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby family* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 108–23.

[71] Summerson, *Architecture,* pp. 99–101; H.J. Louw, 'Anglo-Netherlandish architectural exchange, *c.*1600–*c.*1660', *Architectural History,* 24 (1981), 1–23.

[72] Fynes Morison, quoted in J.D. Wilson, *Life in Shakespeare's England* (2nd edn: Cambridge, 1926), p. 116.

brick for high-status building in London. Early Stuart building proclamations specified the use of brick or stone for reasons of health, dignity and safety from fire, making specific reference to the City's thirteenth-century building regulations. Moreover, King James I took pride in having found the city and suburbs of sticks and left them of brick.[73]

But proclamation alone was insufficient to promote the common use of brick, which was made possible by the fundamental changes in the city's fuel economy then taking place. Bricks could only be used in large numbers if burnt close to the site of building, and while brickearth was readily available in London, economically accessible supplies of wood fuel were strictly limited. The moment at which coal became London's general fuel thus opened up possibilities of vastly-increased energy consumption, and new prospects for building in brick, which after 1600 progressively became the dominant mode.[74] Even so, timber retained an essential role in construction. The houses of 'timber and Flemish wall' which predominated in the eastern parts of London in the 1650s were probably timber-framed structures with brick rather than daubed panel infilling. Well into the eighteenth century, framed houses clad with boards continued to be erected in outlying parts of the metropolis, while well into the nineteenth brick was often used to provide a uniform, fire-proof envelope for new houses which were fundamentally of timber and plaster construction.[75] London's use of coal and stone, and its increasing use of imported timber for building from the late seventeenth century onwards, all demonstrate that its character as a commercial city, able to draw in materials from afar, was central to the maintenance and evolution of its fabric.

Renaissance detailing was certainly employed in timber and plaster construction, but brick, especially in combination with stone dressings, lent itself more readily to the application of classical principles of uniformity, symmetry and ornamentation, which otherwise, given the high cost of fine freestone in London, could only be employed in palatial structures. These principles, associated with Inigo Jones and the conscious following of Italian models, are all expressed in the uniform brick and stone houses of gentry or aristocratic status erected during the 1630s at Covent Garden, Great Queen Street and Lincoln's Inn Fields.[76] Similar ideals informed James I's building proclamations, which from 1611 onwards stressed uniformity of frontage and the avoidance of the projecting features associated with timber buildings. The proclamations of 1619–20

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[73] J.F. Larkin and P.L. Hughes, eds, *Stuart royal proclamations*, vol. I (Oxford, 1973), nos. 51, 87, 113, 120–1, 152, 175, 186, 204, 234.

[74] For a similar argument concerning the later adoption of brick in provincial towns, see Jones and Falkus, 'Urban improvement'.

[75] Guillery and Herman, 'Deptford houses'; Power, 'East and west'; D. Cruickshank and N. Burton, *Life in the Georgian city* (London, 1990), pp. 104–10; McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 159–60.

[76] London County Council, *Survey of London*, vol. V, *The parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields (Part II)* (London, 1914), pp. 42–58; *Survey of London*, vol. XXXVI, pp. 29–30; Summerson, *Architecture*, pp. 134–5, 161–4; Colvin, ed., *King's works*, vol. III, pp. 141–5.

display an even greater ambition, and their references to shop fronts with pilasters and arched windows in brick or stone can be read as a form of discourse in the manner of Serlio (the sixteenth-century writer on architecture) on the ideal bourgeois house, as recently interpreted in Paris.[77] We know very little about the actual appearance of such houses in London before the 1630s, or indeed how numerous they were, but King James certainly associated the uniform appearance of the new brick houses with the international standing of his capital and asserted that they were greatly applauded 'by Ambassadors of foreign nations and others', while the royal Office of Works devoted much attention to the preparation of aristocratic houses in London for use by embassies.[78]

Royal proclamations on the style and materials of building were part of a larger concern for ordering the capital, on the one hand to contain its physical growth and on the other to promote buildings and public spaces which were dignified and ornamental. George Buck's proposals in 1612 for street improvements and a 'piazza' in the city were clearly in the same set of ideas.[79] The dual aims of containment and improvement were not entirely compatible, and the outcome was that new buildings perceived to be nuisances were destroyed while at the same time licences to build others were granted. This highly political process, affecting both the city and the suburbs, was supervised by commissioners answering to the king, but had little effect on restraining London's overall growth. Some of these royal aims were widely shared. Soon after 1600 there began a sustained revival in city church building and improvement, and in the remodelling of livery company halls. This ushered in the major programmes of the 1630s, including the great remodelling of St Paul's.

Following the City's improvements to the layout of Moorfields in 1605, royal support was extended to the scheme for laying out Lincoln's Inn Fields and to the earl of Leicester's plans for his newly-acquired fields. The lack of dignity of Goldsmiths' Row in Cheapside became a matter of public concern, and in the 1630s the earl of Bedford's proposal for Covent Garden, the first formal piazza on Franco-Italian lines, was welcomed (along with licence fees of £4,000) on condition that it was an ornament to the capital. The streets entering the piazza, sixty feet (18 metres) wide and so broader than any in the City, also brought new ideas of space and vista to London. The Strand was envisaged as a processional way linking the City and the Court end of town, where the new developments provided formal definition to the edge of the metropolis and a setting fit for commencing royal journeys into the country. Even more ambitious was the scheme, drawn up in the late 1630s but soon abandoned as politically and financially impossible, for rebuilding the ageing and disordered Whitehall Palace according to a

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[77] H. Ballon, *The Paris of Henri IV: architecture and urbanism* (New York, 1991), pp. 71–86. For the 'French' character of the Covent Garden houses, see J. Harris and G. Higgott, *Inigo Jones: complete architectural drawings* (New York, 1989), pp. 191–2.

[78] Colvin, ed. *King's works*, vol. III, pp. 153–4; Larkin and Hughes, *Stuart proclamations*, no. 234; cf. below, n. 110.

[79] Buck, 'Third universitie'.

scheme exceeding the Escorial in its scale.[80] It is perhaps not surprising that one commentator in 1659 expressed the view that the diversity and irregularity of London's buildings was a sign that it enjoyed greater freedom than Paris.[81]

After the Restoration, proposals to rebuild Whitehall Palace were again put forward, but financial constraints, the problems of rebuilding the city after the Great Fire, and political uncertainty intervened.[82] With the destruction of Whitehall by fire in 1698, another plan for building there a palace of magnificence was proposed, but nothing came of it: William III preferred to reside at Kensington, as did his successor Anne, while the early Hanoverians favoured the old palace of St James's. All three palaces were piecemeal accretions, giving cause for some to deplore the royal lack of style. The most important royal or governmental contributions to the fabric of the metropolis in the first half of the eighteenth century were the rebuilt Custom House, the Admiralty, the Royal Mews and the Horse Guards, handsome structures but expressing concerns very different from those of magnificence. The fabric of the capital reflected the financial and political constraints on the monarchy, the strategic interests of the state, the wealth of the landed aristocracy, and the underlying importance of the city's commerce.[83]

Trade was the prime force which conditioned the reordering and rebuilding of the city after the Great Fire, for the need to restore it quickly as a centre of business took precedence over more grandiose plans. For London as a whole one of the most important outcomes of that episode was the legislation, subsequently revised and extended to cover the entire metropolis, concerning the heights, storey heights, and wall thicknesses of houses, and reducing external inflammable elements to the minimum.[84] In some respects that legislation did no more than regularise existing practice, building on what had emerged informally during the Middle Ages,[85] and on the Stuart proclamations. Nevertheless, the use of bricks, whose dimensions were defined by statute, the use of timber components prefabricated away from the site, the scale of rebuilding and the statutory definition of a body of rules did much to promote standardisation in building practice and in the form of London houses throughout the eighteenth century and beyond.[86] This reinforced an important link in London between, on the one hand, the

[80] Colvin, ed., *King's works*, vol. III, pp. 139–54; Summerson, *Architecture*, pp. 119–39; *Survey of London*, vol. XXXVI, pp. 25–6; Smuts, 'The court and its neighbourhood'; J. Newman, 'Inigo Jones and the politics of architecture' in K. Sharpe and P. Lake, eds, *Culture and politics in early Stuart England* (London, 1994), pp. 229–55; J.F. Merritt, 'Puritans, Laudians, and the phenomenon of church-building in Jacobean London', *Historical Journal,* 41 (1998), 935–60. The overall character of the new western part of London is well represented in Hollar's map-view of *c.*1658.

[81] K. Thomas, 'English Protestantism and classical art', in L. Gent, ed., *Albion's classicism: the visual arts in Britain, 1550–1660* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 221–38.

[82] S. Thurley, *The Whitehall Palace plan of 1670*, London Topographical Society, 153 (1998).

[83] H.M. Colvin, ed., *The history of the king's works,* vol. V, *1660–1782* (London, 1976), pp. 183, 239, 263–99, 347–8. H. Colvin, *A biographical dictionary of British architects, 1600–1840* (3rd edn: New Haven, 1995), pp. 818–20.

[84] See above, n. 45; C.C. Knowles and P.H. Pitt, *The history of building regulation in London, 1189–1972* (London, 1972), pp. 35–9.

[85] Schofield, *Medieval London houses*, pp. 141–3, 146.

[86] Cf. McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 71–92, 148.

practice of building, property development and finance and, on the other, the new intellectual view of the world, including London itself, as a machine with interconnected and measurable parts, as discussed by mechanical philosophers and political arithmeticians.[87] The versatile property developer Nicholas Barbon and his writings provide a striking embodiment of that link.[88]

A Tuscan visitor to the city in 1669 noted the regularity and symmetry of the new houses, 'following the good order introduced in Italy and contrasting with the old form of building in the kingdom'.[89] His implication that Italy was the model, however, was misleading for in their appearance and proportions, both inside and out, the new London houses drew rather on France and the Netherlands. In particular, designers and builders in Post-Restoration London appear to have drawn on French practice, where a classical language of fenestration had been developed which differed from the Italian models followed earlier in the century in its higher window-to-wall ratio appropriate to northern Europe. The new Amsterdam canal houses, incorporating similar principles, were also an important influence. Windows determined the appearance and proportions of the new London houses, inside as well as out, and the sash window, incorporating a balancing mechanism which seems to have been a distinctively English innovation, quickly became established as a London form and product. The English Palladians of the eighteenth century may have influenced the new proportions and encouraged even greater uniformity, but did not fundamentally alter what was by then common practice.[90]

After the Great Fire, London streets in many ways presented an image of Dutch order and neatness, which was perhaps most explicit on the City river frontage with the monumental new Custom House[91] and at the mouth of the newly-canalised Fleet River by Blackfriars.[92] There was no single strand of classicism, and so London houses could be of the plain, standardised types associated with Nicholas Barbon and eighteenth-century builders, they could express a city taste for carved ornamentation, they could hark back to the brick building experiments of the 1630s, or they could express continuing traditions of timber construction.[93] They thus came to embody complex, and probably often unconscious, sets of stylistic sources and references, which few of

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[87] M. Hunter, 'The making of Christopher Wren', *London Journal,* 16 (1991), 101–16. E. Hatton, *A new view of London* (London, 1708), reflects this new way of thinking about London, especially by comparison with J. Howell, *Londinopolis* (London, 1657).

[88] Cf. N. Barbon, *An apologie for the builder or a discourse shewing the cause and effect of the increase of building* (London, 1685). For discussions of Barbon, see Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 28–33, and McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 31–3, 42–52, 58–60, but his place in that wider world remains to be explored.

[89] Crinò, *Un principe di Toscana*, p. 206.

[90] H. Louw and R. Crayford, 'A constructional history of the sash window, *c.*1670–*c.*1725', parts 1 and 2, *Architectural History,* 41 (1998), 82–130, and 42 (1999), 173–239; cf. Cruickshank and Burton, *Georgian city*, pp. 134–49.

[91] Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *The London Custom House* (London, 1993).

[92] This Dutch-style orderliness is particularly apparent in the mid-eighteenth-century view by Samuel Scott reproduced in Porter, *Great Fire*, pp. 138–9.

[93] McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 163–79, 184.

London's inhabitants would have been concerned to disentangle but which nevertheless expressed its essential dynamic as a metropolis.

IV

During the earlier seventeenth century, landed magnates, like their medieval predecessors, erected imposing palaces on the edge of the built-up area, with extensive gardens and ready access to open country. At the same time lesser aristocrats began to site their houses near, or looking towards, the royal palaces and the parks. From the Restoration onwards these preferences came to be associated with a new appreciation that broad straight streets, uninterrupted vistas, rectilinear spaces, and perspective and monumentality were the appropriate thing. These ideas owed much to the Covent Garden Piazza and to the Parisian Place Royale in the state of dignity to which it had evolved by about 1640,[94] but also reflected much wider contact, both direct and indirect, with Renaissance ideals of monumentality and space. During the 1660s, for example, there was an astonishing proliferation of new types of prints of Rome, which instead of focusing on the individual monument—as they had done previously—displayed streets and squares of impossible width, straightness and length.[95] That indicates the growth of a general sensibility which was important even for London.

Within a few years of the Restoration a distinctive group of aristocratic houses had been erected on the western fringes of the metropolis, looking south across broad thoroughfares towards the royal palaces and enjoying formal vistas of open country to the north. They included Southampton House (*c.*1661), Berkeley House (1665), Burlington House (1665–8) and Montague House (1675–9). At the same time new squares were planned, where houses of similar status were arranged in groups looking onto a central open space: Bloomsbury Square from 1661, St James's Square from the following year, King (later Soho) Square and Golden Square in the 1670s, Red Lion Square from 1684, and Hanover Square, Grosvenor Square and Cavendish Square in the 1720s.[96] The new spaces made a strong impression. Concerning the future St James's Square, a French visitor noted in 1663, when it would have been far from certain how large the square was to be, that it was four times the size of the Place Royale and twice that of the Belle Cour in Lyon.[97] Some streets in the western part of London, such as Piccadilly and Pall Mall, began to acquire qualities as aristocratic landscape which had once been associated primarily with the river. This marked a radical break

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[94] Ballon, *Paris of Henri IV*, pp. 110–13.

[95] R. Krautheimer, *The Rome of Alexander VII, 1655–1667* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 3–7, 143–5.

[96] F.H.W. Sheppard, ed., *Survey of London*, vol. XXIX, *The parish of St James Westminster, part one* (London, 1960), vol. XXXI, *The parish of St James Westminster, part two* (London, 1963), vol. XXXIII, *The parish of St Anne Soho*; Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 23–6, 73–86.

[97] *Survey of London*, vol. XXIX, p. 58.

with the medieval pattern, in which aristocratic houses, though distinctively sited within and around the City, were usually inward-looking, rather than visible from the street, and were isolated one from another.

The aristocratic neighbourhoods established after the Restoration thus had a political and even a moral quality of their own, allowing for display, the circulation of coaches, and self-conscious association with the monarch. Never before had ideas of aristocratic lordship received such a coherent and overt expression in London's fabric. There were also practical considerations. The new developments, offering fresh air, space for exercise and relative tranquillity, had sanitary attractions. From the late seventeenth century it was the practice for builders of these neighbourhoods to pave the walkways in front of the houses and to provide them with drains, so long as they did not interfere with the water supply and drainage of the royal residences.[98] Some developments were also equipped with facilities such as chapels of ease, churches and markets, either in the square itself or set apart from it. Barbon portrayed them as so many 'new towns', stimulating the trade of London.[99] Monumentality was supplied by a church, a centrally-placed statue, or by an imposing magnate residence on one side of the square, as with Southampton House in Bloomsbury Square or the duke of Monmouth's residence, which looked north across King Square and down Charles Street towards open fields.

Not all these spaces were perfectly ordered. Some, like Lincoln's Inn Fields, were not formal enclosures in the Renaissance tradition, but arose from efforts to protect the open and recreational character of the neighbourhood. Sometimes it was many decades before a square acquired a focal point or a central enclosure. St James's Square, for example, was from early on used by coachmen plying for hire and as a dump for rubbish, and it was not until the 1720s that its central space was effectively protected and given a fountain as a monumental focus. By that date the private management of enclosed central gardens and the physical separation of traffic from pedestrian areas by means of bollards, railings and differential paving was becoming common, a development which had begun earlier in the more crowded conditions of the City and The Strand.[100] Yet St James's Square remained something of an exception, and while the squares of mid-eighteenth-century London exceeded those of Paris in number, few of them achieved Parisian standards of monumentality and decorum. Many remained irregular and incomplete, the bucolic aspect of their central spaces attracted criticism and, to some eyes, the juxtaposition of polite and impolite building was all too frequent.[101]

The new ideas touched many other areas of London. In the 1670s Christopher Wren was involved in licensing new building in Brick Lane, then no more than a deep

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[98] *Survey of London*, vol. XXXI, pp. 138–9.
[99] Barbon, *Apologie*, pp. 2, 22.
[100] *Survey of London,* vol. XXIX, pp. 66–7, vol. XXXIII, p. 51; McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 23, 148, 195–201, 205–7.
[101] Anon. [probably Benjamin Ralph], *A critical review of the publick buildings, statues and ornaments in, and about, London and Westminster* (London, 1734), pp. 28, 32; Stuart, *Critical observations*, pp. 10–20, 28–9.

and dirty passage for carts on the eastern edge of London, while not far away Well Close (off Cable Street) was a night-haunt for robbers. By the 1720s, however, Brick Lane was well paved, while Well Close, now with a church in the middle, was known as Marine Square, although that name did not stick, and at least one other square was beginning to form near by.[102] Thus on all sides, London's expansion could involve the imposition of order on an unruly fringe, as well as the proliferation of squalor. Moreover, the increasing provision of street lighting from the 1680s onwards and more effective measures for general paving in the eighteenth century added greatly to the overall amenity, civility and public culture of the metropolis.[103] The Tory Act of 1711 for 'fifty new churches', renewed in 1715, envisaged extending the successful programme of rebuilding the City churches after the Great Fire to the entire metropolis, providing recently-built districts with the places for Anglican worship that they lacked. In the event, the more prosperous rather than the most populous new neighbourhoods were provided for: only eight churches were erected where there had been none before, and only six existing churches were totally rebuilt.[104] The new structures, however, expressed up-to-date ideas concerning the appropriate spatial setting for churches, and made an important contribution to London's landscape.

The royal foundation of military and naval hospitals at Chelsea (1682–9) and Greenwich (1695 onwards) further endowed London's suburban territory with a monumental character, following the Parisian model for such institutions and serving as landmarks for tourists. Such buildings stand in sharp contrast to the lack of ambition in palace-building, and reflect the strong practical element in public culture. Similar concerns informed the rebuilding of London's existing hospitals and the foundation of six new ones on the fringes of London before 1760, several of them monumental and in spacious settings.[105] In the City too the new public buildings erected in that period were, with the exception of the Mansion House, predominantly utilitarian in purpose. They included the headquarters of the South Sea and East India Companies, the Bank of England, the Excise Office and the Corn Exchange. One or two of them were of notable architectural quality, but all were in confined situations. The Bank, drawing on Bramante via Serlio and Palladio, established a distinctive new building type. This set of buildings began in a new way to define the business districts of the City and express the strength of its commercial institutions.[106]

The continuing growth of London increased congestion in central areas, while on the metropolitan fringe streets that had once opened into the country were 'shut up and

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[102] *Survey of London*, vol. XXVII, p. 123; Defoe, *Tour,* vol. I, pp. 237–8; McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 38–56, 204.

[103] Jones and Falkus, 'Urban improvement'; Cruickshank and Burton, *Georgian city*, pp. 3–22; Ogborn, *Spaces of modernity*, pp. 75–115.

[104] Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 57–72; M.H. Port, ed., *The commissions for building fifty new churches: the minute books, 1711–27, a calendar*, London Record Society 23 (1986).

[105] Summerson, *Georgian London,* pp. 95–6; McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 189–90.

[106] Keene, 'Royal Exchange'; D.M. Abramson, 'Money's architecture: the building of the Bank of England, 1731–1833', (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1993).

darkened by houses built across them next to the fields.'[107] Loss of amenity and the rise in land values tempted many residents of these once peripheral zones to relocate, so that the social character of many of the outer parts of the metropolis was in a constant state of flux. Social degeneration was the almost inevitable fate of ambitious new housing developments. Only the most powerful eighteenth-century London landlord residents, such as the duke of Bedford,[108] could resist such pressures or hold back encroachments on to their prospects of open fields. Some of the earliest cases of such changes took place in The Strand. During the 1670s and 1680s, for example, Arundel House and Essex House were replaced by streets of housing for gentry rather than aristocrats. About 1700 the earls of Bedford shifted their London seat to Southampton House, quitting Bedford House, which when built had looked north into open country but now adjoined the downwardly-mobile houses of Covent Garden, where few aristocrats now lived and where the once noble piazza was marred by the expanding market.[109] The fate of Covent Garden, however, was a pointer to longer-term changes in London's culture and fabric, for the mixture—diachronic as well as synchronic—of uses and activities which came to be established there seems to have been the nucleus for that cluster of qualities which later defined the 'West End'.[110]

These changes took place within the Court end of town, but more fundamental shifts in the pattern of élite residence were also in train. Since the twelfth century, aristocratic establishments in London had been clustered as much around the City as Westminster: for their owners, as for John Verney, commerce and finance were as important as influence at Court. Aristocrats and gentry still resided within the City in 1638, but after the Great Fire the City authorities were concerned that rebuilding in The Strand would attract both them and retail trade.[111] As late as the 1680s aristocratic dwellings were an important element in the suburban landscape to the north of the City, especially outside Aldersgate and towards Clerkenwell. Further east, the earl of Devonshire had only recently quitted his residence near the disreputable street of Houndsditch, a neighbourhood also occupied at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the earl of Oxford and at least one ambassador.[112] Congestion, industry and increasing air pollution on the downwind side of London made eastern neighbour-

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[107] Gwynn, *London and Westminster*, p. x.

[108] Olsen, *Town planning*, pp. 49–50.

[109] Kingsford, 'Bath Inn' and 'Essex House'; *Survey of London*, vol. xxxvi, pp. 82, 205–7; Olsen, *Town planning*, pp. 109–10; Stone, 'Residential development', pp. 194–5; Ralph, *Critical review*, p. 29; Defoe, *Tour*, vol. i, p. 326 notes the new streets of 'beautiful houses' off The Strand; McKellar, *Birth*, pp. 23–4.

[110] See discussion of Covent Garden in C.S. Smith, 'The market and the market's place in London, *c.*1660–1840', (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1999).

[111] Stone, 'Residential development', pp. 186–7; McKellar, *Birth*, p. 25.

[112] Morgan's map of 1682 shows many of these houses. For Devonshire House, see H.A. Harben, *A dictionary of London* (London, 1918), p. 196. The 'great brick house' which appears formerly to have belonged to the Earl of Oxford was in the occupation of his heir, Lord Willoughby, in 1624 and had once been occupied by the London agent of the archdukes of Austria: Corporation of London Records Office, HR 301(32). This was probably the 'Spanish Ambassador's house' remembered in Strype, *Survey*, book ii, p. 28.

hoods less desirable, although it is remarkable that aristocratic residences persisted as long as they did in such an environment and that the houses in Devonshire Square, constructed by Barbon on the site of Devonshire House, bore so close a resemblance to the gentry houses in the western part of town. Nevertheless, environmental change, plus the increasingly strong attractions in the vicinity of the Court, sharpened the social distinction between east and west. Thus in 1680 the earl of Bolingbroke left Spital Square outside Bishopsgate for a new house in King Square, two and a half miles to the west. The handsome houses built in Spital Square during the 1720s were for merchants rather than gentry, while the streets nearby were intensifying their industrial character.[113] Between the late seventeenth and the late eighteenth century the earls of Ailesbury, Berkeley and Bridgewater, and the duke of Newcastle, all left the Clerkenwell area for the west end of town.[114]

Even in the new squares to the west, social decline could begin almost as soon as they were occupied, although we should not forget that for many second- and subsequent-generation inhabitants the move to such places was a step up the social ladder. An effective measure of this process is provided by numbers of dukes and earls. Golden Square, for example, erected in the late 1670s but quickly hemmed in by offensive trades in the streets nearby, was becoming unfashionable within a decade. Six peers lived there in 1707, but only one in 1740. In 1724 Lord Masham moved from there to Cork Street. In 1753, in an attempt to give the square some dignity, a royal statue was erected there, but Golden Square was now entering a phase when the only trace of the peerage to be found there might be a widow, a Jacobite or an Irishman. The statue, still *in situ*, was second-hand, and very likely not royal at all but an allegorical figure reinvented as King George. In Soho Square by the 1770s the wealthier element had moved away to fashionable streets on the Burlington estate and in Mayfair. In 1800 the duke of Bedford finally acknowledged a new style of aristocratic living in town, in which spacious gardens and a rural prospect played little part, and moved from his Bloomsbury Square mansion to a street house in Arlington Street, St James's.[115]

Within the metropolis as a whole, the set-piece layouts were relatively small in scale and disarticulated by comparison with those in some Continental capital cities. As we have seen, that expressed fundamental characteristics of London as a commercial metropolis and of its relationship to the state and landed society, as well as the simple fact of its explosive growth. One consequence was that—despite many notable 'improvements'—a common impression of eighteenth-century London was of narrow streets, congestion, lack of vistas, unplanned development, and lack of refinement. By the 1730s a discourse of regret had begun concerning the failure to rebuild the City after the fire according to Wren's comprehensive plan. According to that view, neither

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[113] *Survey of London*, vol. XXVII, pp. 69–71, vol. XXXIII, p. 117.
[114] Comparison of Morgan's and Horwood's maps (see above, n. 18).
[115] *Survey of London*: vol. XXXI, pp. 138–46; vol. XXXIII, pp. 44–5. Cf. Stone, 'Residential development', p. 174.

St Paul's nor the parish churches could be seen to advantage. While it was admitted that expenditure on public building had been impressive, the result lacked elegance and discernment, and such grand and tasteful buildings as there were lacked space to set them off. Ignorance of polite arts such as statuary was widespread, even among the gentry, and was evident in such 'ridiculous and absurd' displays as the statue of King Charles II at the Stocks Market,[116] not to mention Golden Square.

Among the many stylised tensions and dichotomies of London life, one emerged between polite taste and the supposedly ignorant and exclusively money-making concerns of the City, believed to be apparent in the architecture of the metropolis.[117] A polemic of 1766 characterised London 'as inconvenient, inelegant, and without the least pretension to magnificence or grandeur', and proposed 'a general plan for the whole capital' and schemes for new streets which would eliminate obstructions and open up and connect the key central districts. By this date, however, a general atmosphere of improvement was in the air, as it was in Paris itself. An act of 1762, after a century of failed initiatives, brought paved streets and lighting to Westminster. At the heart of the City, streets and spaces were being opened up, primarily to improve circulation but with some regard for the setting of public buildings. London Bridge was cleared of its houses and made less of a barrier to navigation. The city gates, which under James I had been rebuilt or beautified as powerful expressions of London's identity, were now, with the short-lived exception of Newgate, removed as obstructions to circulation. Westminster (1739–48) and Blackfriars (1760–9) bridges were built, despite opposition from the city corporation, and private landlords promoted the 'New Road' from Paddington to Islington (1757) which did much to ease approaches to the City. In 1774 a comprehensive new building act was put into effect.[118]

By 1900 the proposals enunciated in 1766 had more or less been put into effect, but the continued growth of the metropolis had been such that, although its fabric was regulated more effectively than ever before, the apparent problem of its lack of coherence was much the same as a century earlier. Even in the 1990s, despite the prolonged assaults of planning and taste, the polemical critiques of the mid-eighteenth century and the simple wonder of earlier writers at the formless growth of London still provided appropriate descriptions of the fabric of a metropolis whose shape and extent are as uncertain as they have ever been.

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[116] Ralph, *Critical review*; cf. McKellar, *Birth*, p. 30. The statue had originally represented Sobieski triumphing over the Turk, but King Charles's head had been substituted for the Polish hero's.
[117] Stuart, *Critical observations*.
[118] Gwynn, *London and Westminster*; Hoppit, *Failed legislation,* s.a. 1661, 1690, 1693, 1723, 1726, 1740–1, 1751, 1757; Keene, 'Royal Exchange'; Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 97–110, 121–32; A. Picon, *French architects and engineers in the age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 186–210.

List of Abbreviations

APC	*Acts of the Privy Council*
BL	British Library
CARD	*Calendar of the Ancient Records of Dublin*, ed. J.T. and R.M. Gilbert, 19 vols (Dublin, 1889–1944)
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
CJ	*House of Common Journals, England*
CSP	*Calendar of State Papers*
Ec.HR	*Economic History Review*
HCJI	*Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*
GL	Guildhall Library
HMC	*Historical Manuscripts Commission*
Lambeth PL	Lambeth Palace Library
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew
PRONI	Public Record Office, Northern Ireland
RCB	Representative Church Body Library, Dublin
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
WAC	Westminster Archives Centre