

Create Streets

We can help you make better places

Suddenly *The Evening Standard* is talking beauty and streets...

4th May 2016

We're not experts in such matters but it's probably no surprise that *The Evening Standard* has backed Zac Goldsmith for mayor of London. However, what has surprised (and pleased) us has been the reason. Just as we're finding that what urban developments look like and how they perform 'urbanistically' (sic) really matters in winning public support for development, so it would seem that beauty matters in winning the soul of *The Evening Standard*. Who knew?

In an interview today with Zac Goldsmith, the Standard's City Hall Editor, Pippa Crerar, writes:

'On one key issue Zac Goldsmith has shown himself to be the stronger candidate. He has a vision of how London can grow in such a way as to be a green and beautiful city as well as a big and prosperous one....

Although the Tory hopeful said he was a "big fan" of Boris Johnson he suggested he had been too quick to approve tall buildings — there are around 400 in the pipeline — and had given big developers too much freedom.

"A large development is a form of public art and it's going to be there for our lifetime. It matters that we get it right, and I think too often we get it wrong... We have not been building well, or sensibly, or respectfully.

"I would take a different approach to planning. I will make the developers work harder to demonstrate that they are actually going to be enhancing communities.

"That doesn't always mean you're not going to have tall buildings, of course, but my default position would veer towards low-rise, high density, street-based developments."

Labour was "disingenuous" for suggesting he would knock down estates as he had pledged only to redevelop with community consent, he added.

It's great to see Zac Goldsmith developing some of our important themes. We're non-partisan and pan-party but we hope that our supporter of all parties and of none won't mind us thanking Mr Goldsmith for picking up our work in

this way. We're even cited in his manifesto. How we live, where we live, wellbeing really matters and much wider political support is the best ultimate tool for unpicking London's housing crisis. However, what then took our breath away was *The Evening Standard* editorial:

'Mr Goldsmith has also given thought to the question of how the housing stock is to grow in a way that will not diminish our quality of life. He has said that housing should be medium-rise rather than tall; he is likely to take a robust approach to developers promoting poorly conceived high-rise developments. There will be many more homes built whoever is mayor, but with Mr Goldsmith it would be in the context of a coherent aesthetic.....'

Mr Goldsmith is not a combative politician and his wealthy background is a problem for some voters, but his vision for the future of London as a safe, beautiful and harmonious city is an attractive one. Of the two strong candidates, he has more compelling ideas on tackling pollution and congestion. That is why we support him. Now our readers must make up their own minds."

As we say, probably no surprise that *The Evening Standard* is backing Mr Goldsmith but we're delighted that the themes we're trying to help communities and town halls focus on are featuring so prominently in public debate. And we thank them both for focusing on them.

One last thing. In (just) living memory, people died so that we might have the right to vote. If you live in London or anywhere in Britain with elections tomorrow and whatever your politics – do please vote!

Nicholas Boys Smith