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Last week Cargiant, one the biggest landowners in north-west London, labelled the £26bn Old Oak Common regeneration project a "cock-up" and a waste of public money. Here protagonist Tony Mendes, managing director of Cargiant, and Liz Peace, chair of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation, give their divergent views on the progress made on the project, its future and the challenges associated with it.

'A new centre of gravity in west London'



Liz Peace CBE, chairman,
Old Oak and Park Royal
Development Corporation

Old Oak is the largest and perhaps the most exciting mixed-use regeneration programme in the UK.

Sitting on 140ha of brownfield land in zones 2/3 in west London, this currently inaccessible land will be transformed when the new HS2 and Elizabeth Line station opens in 2026. This station will be the largest new station to be built in the UK in a century and will make Old Oak one of the most accessible locations on the UK transport network.

The mayor of London and OPDC are keen to unlock the

huge benefits this massive public investment presents.

Alongside the three local authorities of Brent, Ealing and Hammersmith and Fulham we have a shared an ambitious plan to deliver 24,000 new homes and 55,000 new jobs at Old Oak.

Old Oak will become a new centre of gravity in west London, a new community offering much needed new homes and job opportunities for both local people and the wider London economy to continue to grow.

To this end the industrial land at Old Oak is being released, in a plan-led approach, through the mayor's London Plan and OPDC's Local Plan

to accommodate new mixed-use development at Old Oak. This will be complemented by protecting and intensifying the important industrial offer at Park Royal.

To secure delivery at Old Oak, OPDC and the GLA have also submitted a Housing Infrastructure Funding bid to central government to secure £250m of public funding. This funding would be used to start delivery of the first pieces of costly strategic infrastructure and to commence the first large phases of development in Old Oak North.

This public-led intervention will give the mayor and OPDC the certainty that up to 10,000 new homes and 5,500 new jobs

would be delivered for Londoners by the early 2030s.

Development on complex brownfield land is a challenge. We are working hard with local landowners to minimise impacts on local businesses where possible.

My team are committed to working constructively and flexibly with all landowners. We stand ready to consider any alternative proposals that will support the mayor's long-term plans for the area.

We have been having these delivery-focused discussions for many months, including with Cargiant, and so its current public approach is disappointing. We will continue and we believe solutions will be found.

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'This is too important to get wrong'



Tony Mendes, managing director,
Cargiant

Cargiant has been entirely supportive of the regeneration of Old Oak Common since the plans were first tabled.

We did not oppose the plans and seek to frustrate development. Instead, we worked closely with the OPDC for years in an effort to ensure that any plans that came forward were capable of securing the relocation of our business in the local area so that we could retain our staff and customer base we have spent 40 years building.

We became a reluctant developer purely to ensure we could protect the future of our business.

We had a Planning Performance Agreement with the OPDC during this time and fortnightly meetings with its officers. We spent £8.5m of our own money seeking to make this work and as a result gained a thorough and detailed understanding of the technical challenges and solutions needed.

It was the OPDC which told us to stop and told us that our plans were not viable. It was the OPDC which stopped working collaboratively with us and then hired consultant after consultant to work up its own plans without sharing any of this with us.

The bid it has submitted for £250m of government money

is based on utilising land which we own and which is essential for the operation of our business.

Not only has the OPDC refused to share even basic information about what exact land-take it is proposing but, shockingly, it has also confirmed in writing to us on 22 January 2019 that "the OPDC has not yet undertaken a detailed assessment of [Cargiant's] operations".

Given this fact, we find it barely credible to accept the statement from the chair of the OPDC that "We are working hard with landowners to minimise impacts on local businesses where possible", or that "My team are committed to

working constructively with all landowners".

£30m has already been spent and the CPO process has already been started and yet no assessment of the impact on local business has even been commenced.

It is perfectly possible to kick-start development at Old Oak Common and deliver the first new infrastructure and homes, but not in the way that the OPDC is proposing and without needing to spend £250m.

Given the issues at stake here and the enormous sums of public money involved, this is why we are simply calling for a pause while this whole matter is reviewed. This is too important to get wrong.



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