



London's Hotels: expanding social spaces

London is the third most visited city in the world, with one of the highest hotel occupancy rates of any European city.

The capital has a pipeline of over 13,000 new hotel rooms but the sector faces new challenges due to cultural, technological and lifestyle changes. With political uncertainties and the disruptive forces of the sharing economy, hotels are adapting by expanding their offer of spaces for socialising and public interaction.

This report looks at what lessons can be learnt from these changes and how such spaces contribute to the city as a whole.

Programme champion:



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dexter
moren
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This research paper was published by New London Architecture (NLA) in December 2019. It forms part of NLA's year-round Hotels programme which explores London's most innovative responses within the sector.

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In the age of the sharing economy, connection to local areas and genuine social interaction, aided by the latest technologies, have become central to customer preferences. Airbnb launched in 2008, promising visitors an authentic experience of the city, but only started to take off in London after 2014. That same year, WeWork opened its first space, refreshing the dull office into a platform for collaboration and creativity. This movement spread rapidly, with diverse brands and online platforms offering similar ways of blurring the boundaries between live, work and play. These new conditions have transformed the way we use temporary accommodation, work and leisure spaces in cities and have been driving the adaptation of hotels ever since.

Urged to do better, the role of the hotel has evolved, reinventing itself by focusing on its local context and harnessing its ability to bring people together. Hotel lobbies have always functioned as public entrances to the building, but walking into a hotel without a room key in your pocket would have felt rather strange 20 years ago. As hotels have become more visible and accessible within the urban landscape, people feel more welcome to use their spaces in ways they may not have in the past. Successfully turning outwards, hotels are opening up their social spaces for visitors, workers and the local community.

Consumer demands have driven greater choice, broadening the spectrum and diversity of accommodation and their offer. The upper end of the spectrum includes ultra-luxury, boutique and lifestyle brands. These are increasingly the types of accommodation expanding their hospitality offer, including a diverse mix of uses aimed not only at guests but also at locals. At the other end, there are pod hotels, a new generation of hostels, apart-hotels and a raft of budget brands. The rise of consistent quality, functional budget hotels and hotel alternatives has helped make cities like London accessible to a wider range of visitors, while enabling areas in the city to remain vividly operational. However, the increase in budget hotels, which accounts for almost 30 per cent of the sector, is only one part of the story; globalisation and ease of travel have contributed to a higher demand for diverse types of hotel. With over 19 million visitors, London was the third most visited city in the world in 2018, making the case for the need for more hotels to satisfy the tourism demand.⁰¹ Since 2015, nearly 22,500 new rooms were added to London's supply⁰² and an additional 77,743 rooms will be required to service demand by 2050 — an average 2,221 rooms per annum.⁰³

Even with tourism currently on the rise, the sector still faces many challenges, including competition from alternative accommodation providers such as Airbnb and the uncertainty of Brexit tempering demand.

19m+

London visitors in 2018

30%

of the London pipeline is comprised of budget hotels

2,221

new rooms per annum will be required by 2050

The UK's departure from the European Union (EU) is also driving some EU workers away at a time when employment levels are at record highs;⁰⁴ whereas Airbnb is putting pressure on local authorities that struggle to ensure housing targets are met. With London's borough councils under pressure to deliver homes, create local jobs and add community value, it adds extra complexity to planning decisions.

And yet, novel opportunities are on the horizon. New technologies are already playing an important role in shaping not only the physical and virtual spaces of hotels, but also in providing solutions for some of the challenges the sector faces. Furthermore, as the climate emergency rises up the political agenda, it will continue to influence demand and design, with a new generation of conscious guests expecting lower environmental impacts from their travelling, as well as hotels seeking to reduce waste and energy consumption. Expanding the experience of physical social spaces into virtual ones, a tech-augmented hospitality pushes hotels into the future.

This research explores the innovative responses to these challenges currently faced by the sector: from lifestyle hotels opening their doors to a larger public and exploring next-generation technological opportunities, to budget hotels activating local areas and public authorities safeguarding the contribution of hotels to local communities. ●

Occupancy and revenue

84.3%

occupancy rate in London in 2019

£127.7

revenue per available room
(RevPAR)

+3%

increase of RevPAR
compared to 2018

2020 pipeline

121

new hotels will open
in London by 2020

13,000

new rooms will open
in London by 2020

30%

of the London pipeline is
comprised of budget hotels

Growth

141,000

approximate number of rooms
currently in London

+41%

increase of London's overall hotel room
capacity in ten years (2010–2020)

77,743

projected number of additional rooms
required in London by 2050

Sources: PWC, *UK Hotels Forecast 2019–2020* (2019); JLL and London & Partners, *London hotel development monitor* (2018); GLA Economics, *Projections of demand and supply for visitor accommodation in London to 2050* (2017)

2020 pipeline

Fig. 01:
Type of accommodation
Source: STR / Knight Frank, *UK Hotel Development Opportunities* (2019)

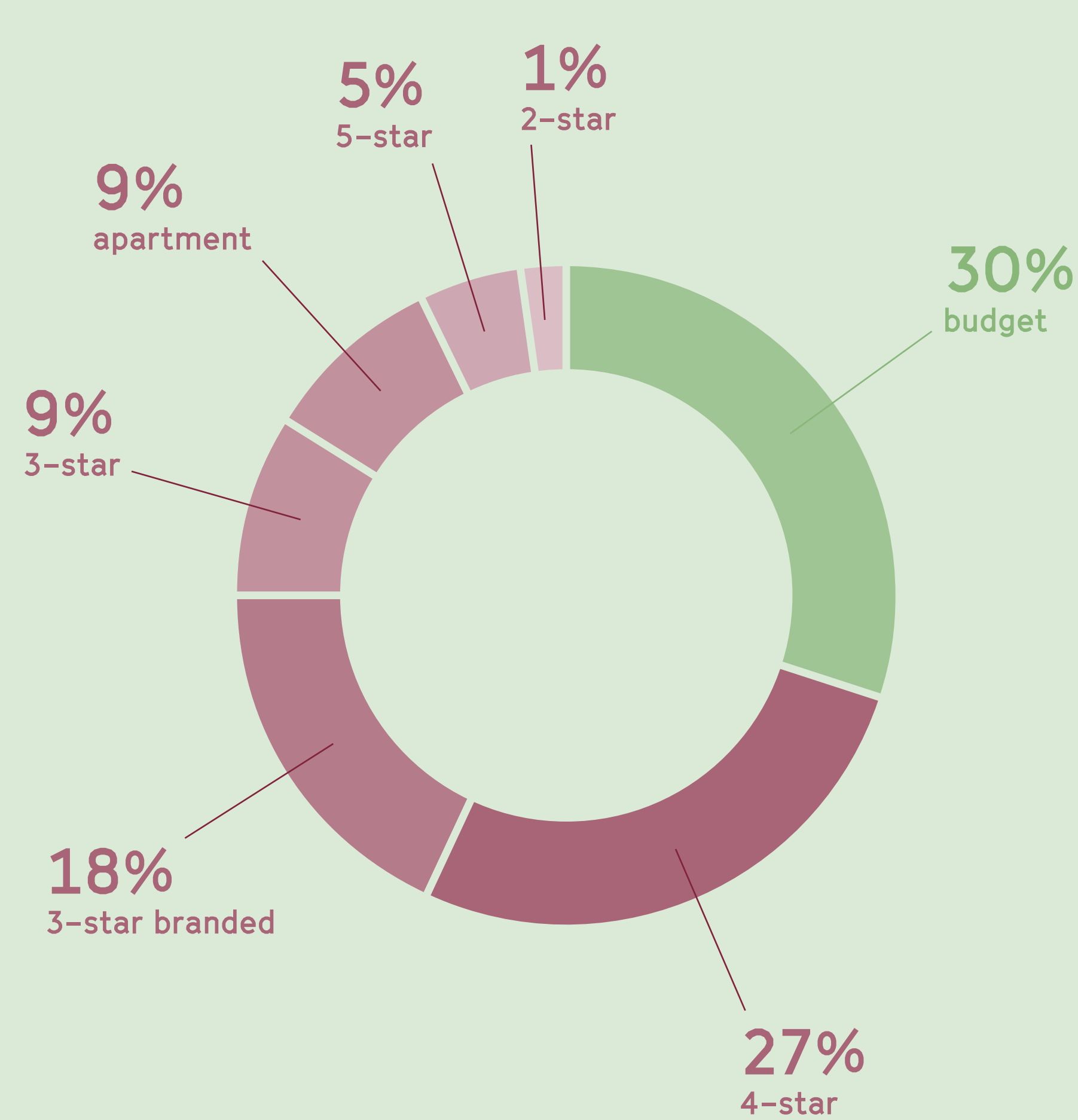
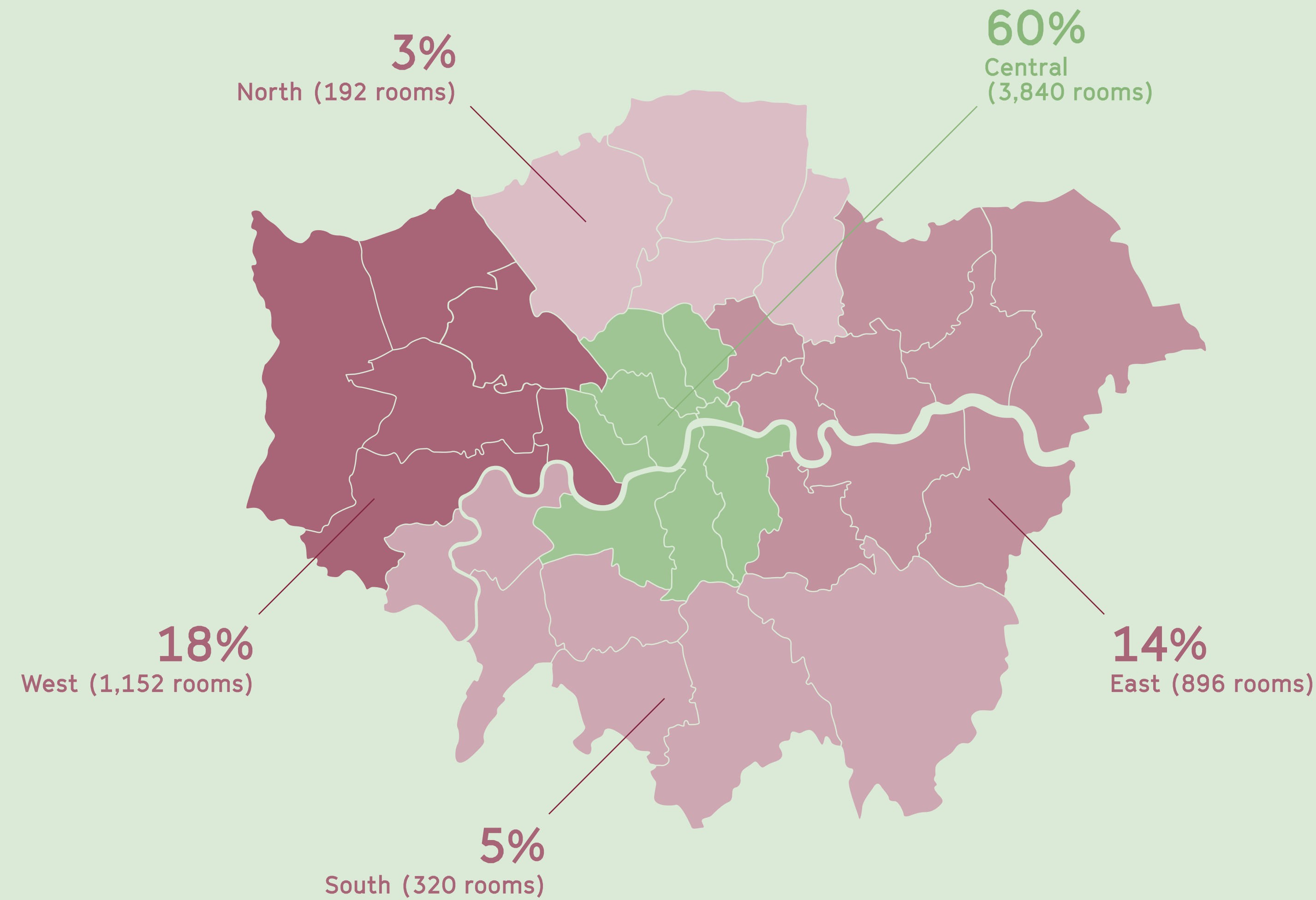
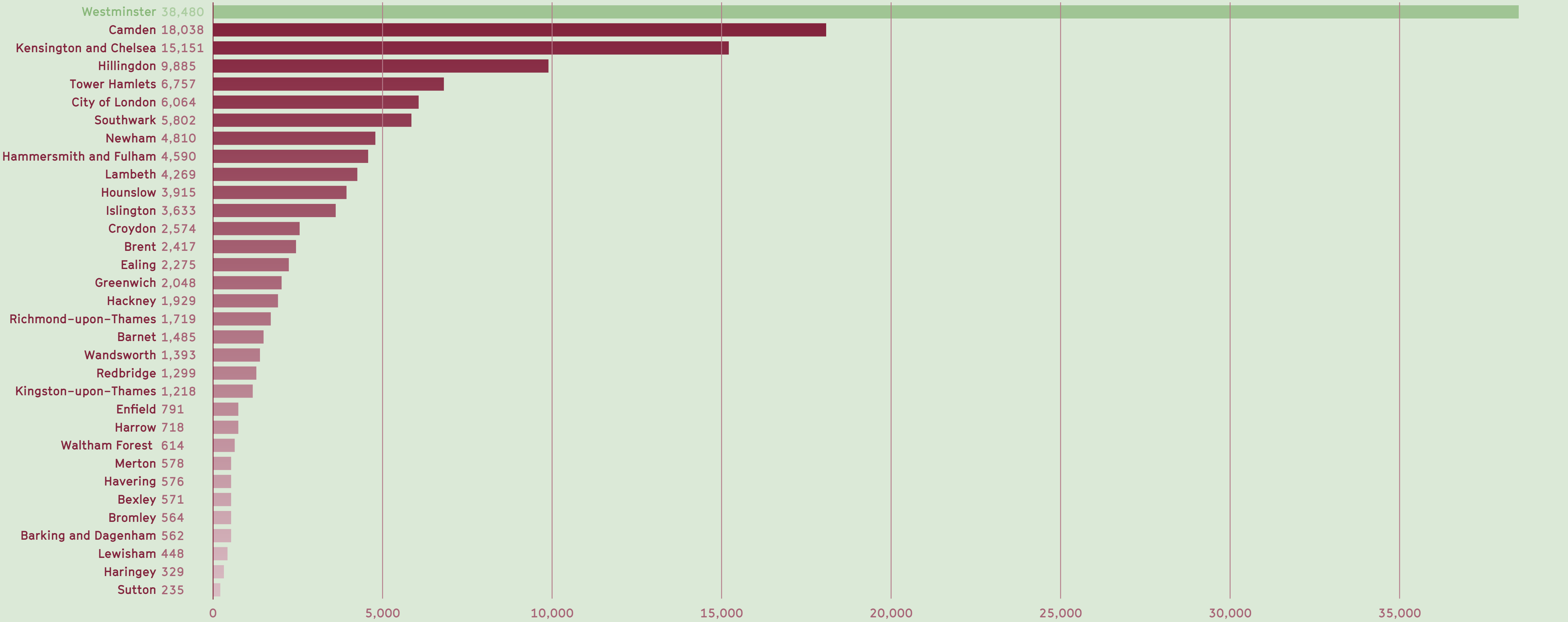


Fig. 02:
Rooms by area
Source: PWC, *UK Hotels Forecast 2019–2020* (2019)



Existing room supply

Fig. 03:
Serviced accommodation room supply by London borough, December 2015
Source: GLA Economics, *Projections of demand and supply for visitor accommodation in London to 2050* (2017)



Visitors

Fig. 04:
International visitors to London in 2018
Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

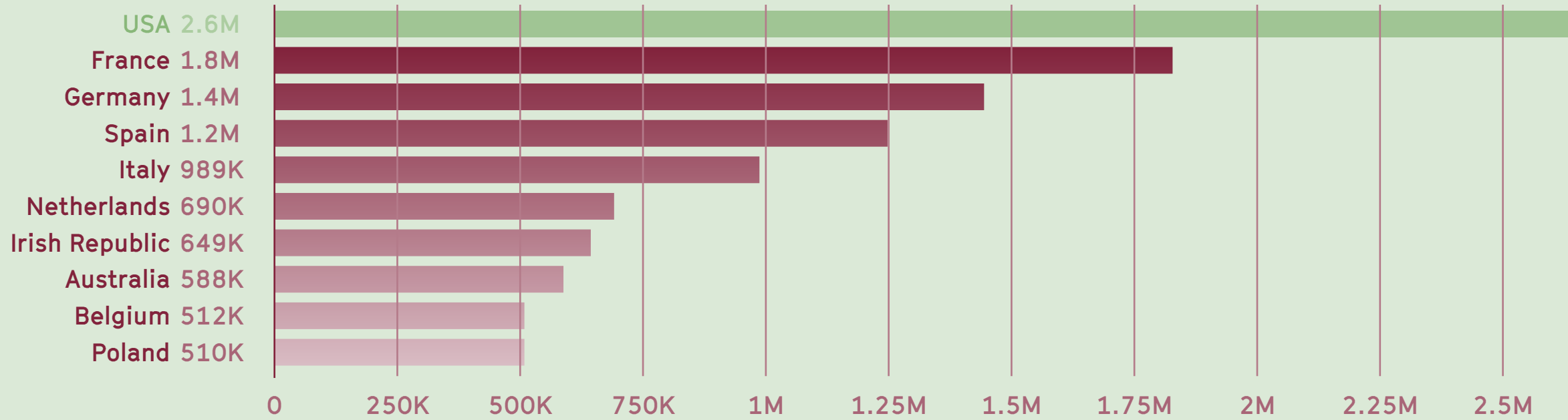
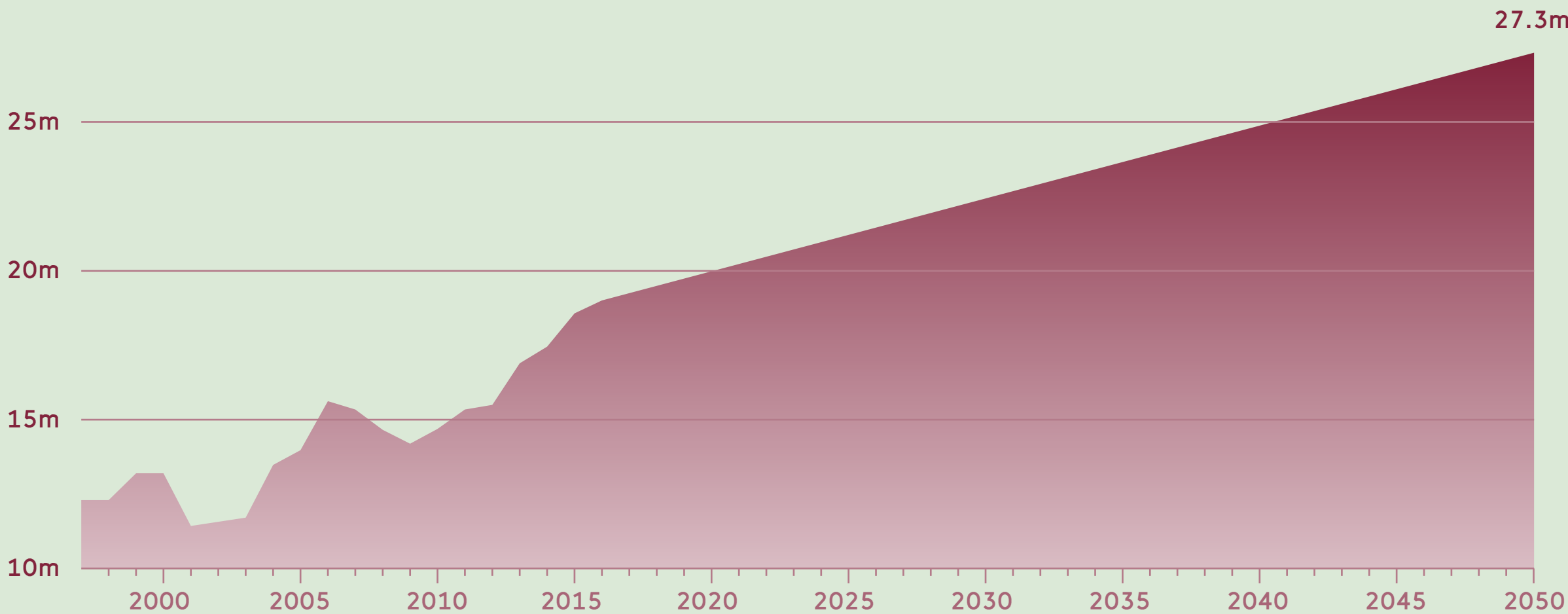


Fig. 05:
International visitor projections to the year 2050
Source: GLA Economics, *Projections of demand and supply for visitor accommodation in London to 2050* (2017)



334K

visitors per year from China
are projected by 2025

Source: JLL and London & Partners,
London hotel development monitor (2018)

Fig. 06:
Top 10 global destination cities of 2018
Source: Mastercard, *Global
destination cities index* (2019)

#	City:	Visitors:
01	Bangkok	22.78M
02	Paris	19.10M
03	London	19.09M
04	Dubai	15.93M
05	Singapore	14.67M
06	Kuala Lumpur	13.79M
07	New York	13.60M
08	Istanbul	13.40M
09	Tokyo	12.93M
10	Antalya	12.41M

48%

of people took a city break
in the past 12 months

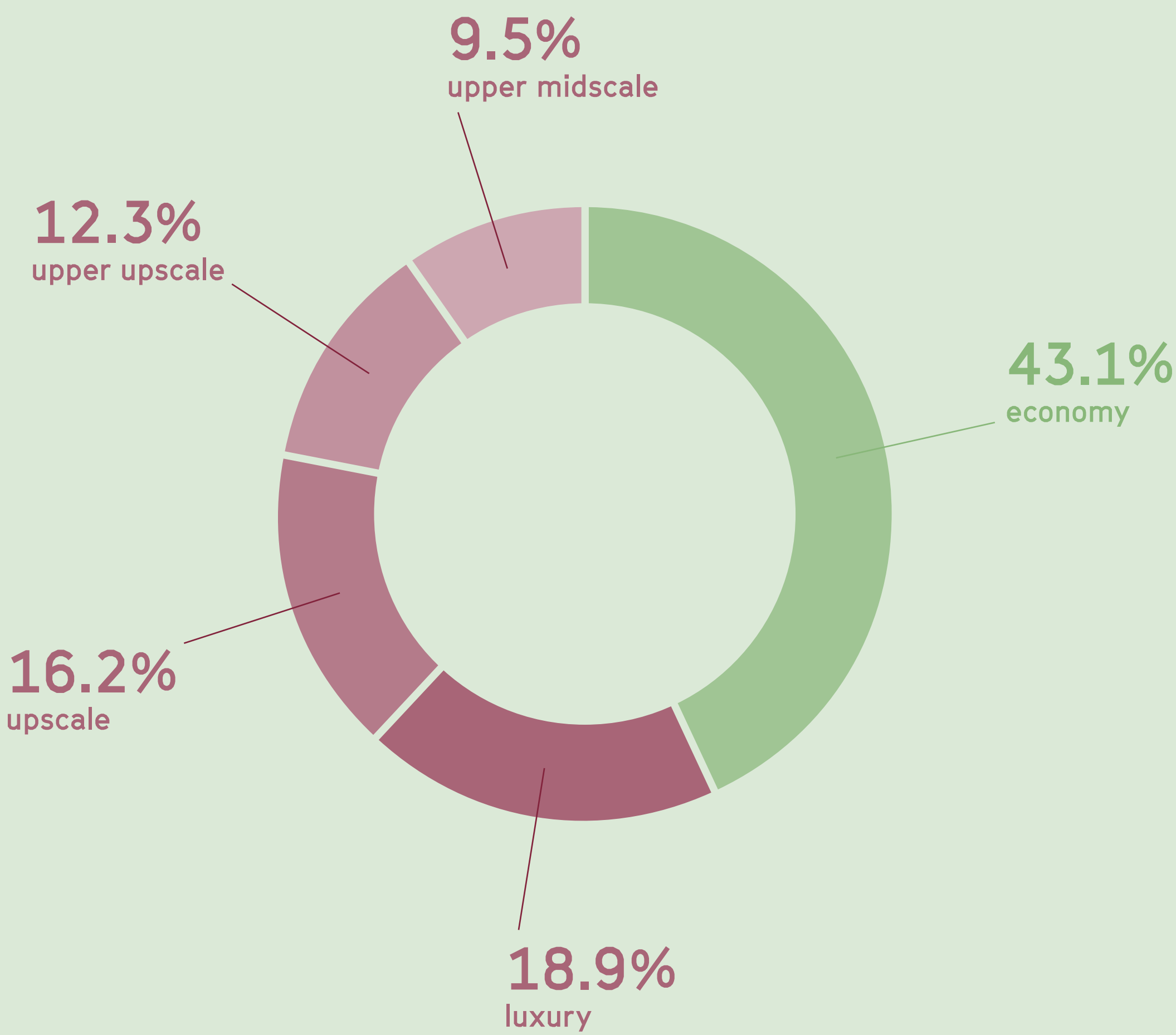
Source: ABTA, *Holiday habits report*, 2018

Fig. 07:
Top 10 most visited
European cities in 2017
Source: WorldAtlas (2019)

#	City:	Visitors:
01	London	19.84M
02	Paris	14.26M
03	Rome	9.57M
04	Istanbul	8.64M
05	Prague	8.55M
06	Barcelona	7.62M
07	Milan	6.88M
08	Amsterdam	6.57M
09	Antalya	6.46M
10	Vienna	6.04M

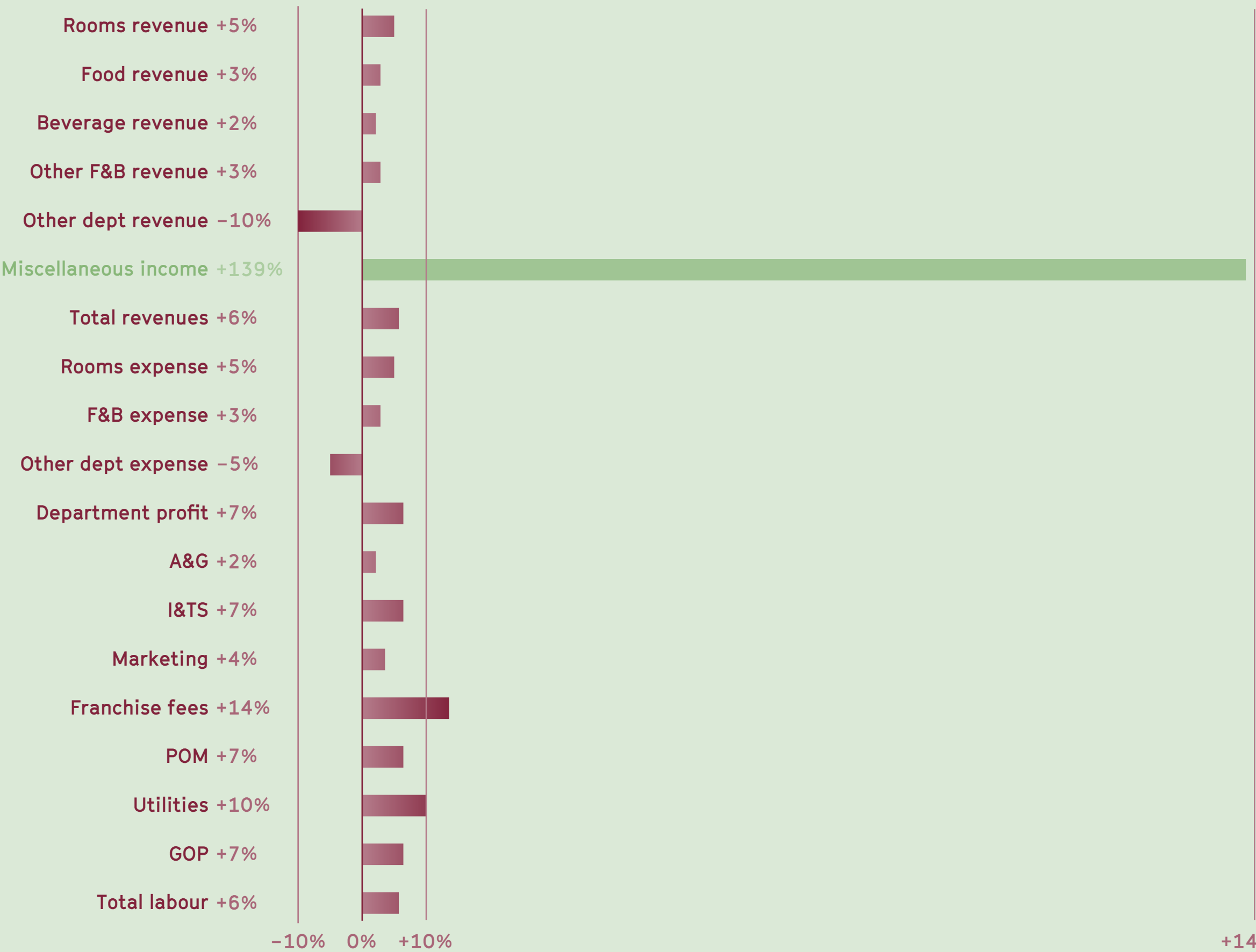
Conversions

Fig. 08:
New hotel conversions by class
Source: STR



Growth

Fig. 09:
2018 year-over-year growth by department
Source: STR



Miscellaneous income represents income from rentals of space for business purposes, including concessions in any of the departments mentioned under other operated departments. For all other definitions visit [str.com](https://www.str.com) →

Social spaces: physical



The core function of a hotel has remained unchanged for centuries — somewhere to sleep and perhaps get something to eat — but changing purpose and a broadening of uses are challenging hotel design. In arguing that the concept of a ‘use class’ should be overcome, Dexter Moren, partner at Dexter Moren Associates, explains that ‘hotels were always open to the public but there was nothing in there that you wanted to go and see. They were referred to as furniture warehouses — nice furniture but empty spaces.’ He points to how hotels have transformed, becoming places that attract people inside.

Lobbies used to be huge functional spaces, often with just a few people milling around, check-in desks, maybe some seating, and a concierge. Clever design and simple efficient technology mean that less space is now needed for these basic functions. Stuart Adolph, senior vice president at Sydell Group, states that ‘we don’t need desks now, with five check-in positions, you can get away with two or three.’ With an iPad or tablet device, a concierge does not necessarily need to sit behind a desk, check-in can be done online, and room keys downloaded to a guest’s smartphone. This frees up lobby space for a diversified range of alternative uses, increasingly transforming what were once private spaces into public social hubs. Angela Dapper, principal at Grimshaw, explains that ‘nearly every hotel is looking at these kinds of shared spaces, where they invite outsiders in to become part of the space.

You would not have walked into a hotel maybe five to ten years ago but now you might have a meeting in a hotel lobby.’ Yet the offer in these spaces extends beyond meeting areas. Emma Holt, associate at Ben Adams Architects, points out that ‘pop-up shops, retail, yoga classes and all kinds of different activities with potential for income generation can happen in these spaces.’

‘All kinds of different activities with potential for income generation can happen in these spaces’

Social spaces in hotels are not solely confined to the lobby and ground floor areas: with good engineering, rooftops can be freed of bulky services and transformed into gardens, bars and restaurants. It is an opportunity to create a unique communal area but more than that, an opportunity to create an important and valuable experiential space. Ben Martin, principal at HKS, explains that ‘building into the design “Instagrammable” moments is hugely important if you can achieve it.’ As an example, he cites the Marina Bay Sands Hotel in Singapore with its floating rooftop swimming pool. It is the subject of a continuous stream of social media posts doing much of the hotel’s marketing for it. Similarly, in London many

popular hotel rooftops keep popping up on the city skyline, including The Ned and ME London. Instagram’s unquestionable power to influence consumer choices is now being used to drive direct business through its booking feature. London in particular is home to one of the best performing hotels on Instagram, The Hoxton, with 180k followers.⁰⁵

Hospitality, once almost exclusively the preserve of the hotel and leisure sector, has simultaneously become part of a broader narrative across the built environment. Offices have cafés, suites or meeting rooms with on-site catering teams and facilities for visiting clients to freshen up after an overnight flight. As workspaces start to include concierge services, hotels are stepping into co-working, blurring the boundaries across sectors. Dexter Moren says that some hotels have taken being a ‘great place to work’ to a more formal work environment opportunity. The Hoxton, for example, in early 2020 is set to open *Working From_* a co-working brand with its bespoke workspace, formalising the hotel’s unofficial workspaces ‘where home comforts meet hotel living’. It operates like any co-working space with different levels of membership depending on requirements, and is backed by the hotel services and brand, adding footfall and active spaces that attract more people.

Similarly, some high-end hotels are including residential in their developments. Ben Martin cites

The Old War Office on Whitehall, which EPR Architects will convert into a Raffles Hotel together with 88 apartments. Off-plan sales help with cash flow but ultimately it will increase footfall and business. Residents benefit from exclusive on-site services together with a menu of additional, chargeable services such as dinner party catering. A potentially more radical approach to mixing residential uses will be seen by Kensington Forum, which will redevelop an existing Holiday Inn in Chelsea to include new affordable homes and create up to 800 jobs.

Food and beverage (F&B) remain a key component to any hotel’s offer. Hotel restaurants have become destinations in their own right: across London there is now a plethora of different and unique offers, from casual cocktail bars to Michelin-starred restaurants. Not all hotels have the luxury of separate social spaces, but rather they are designed with chameleon-like qualities, with the ability to adapt to different uses. Mark Bruce, main board director and head of hotels at EPR Architects, cites The Ned in the City of London as ‘a great example of how a well-designed hotel can deliver multiple atmospheres and experiences in the same space over the course of a single day. In the ground floor of The Ned, the same dining area in which a guest can enjoy an early morning breakfast, can be subtly transformed into a fantastic cocktail destination by differentiating the level of service and altering the mood with well-designed lighting

and expertly curated entertainment.’ Angela Dapper argues that loose fit design is more crucial than ever as the market is moving so fast: ‘By the time you have something on the drawing board the landscape can have changed quite a lot.’ She adds that a 2–star hotel can become a 4–star hotel or even an office through the design process.

‘By the time you have something on the drawing board the landscape can have changed quite a lot’

Where a mixture of offers may be slightly less relevant is with budget hotels. If their purpose is to make an area accessible and to be functional, somewhere to sleep but little else, then cocktail bars and destination restaurants are less important. What budget hotels can do is bring people into an area who will then visit local restaurants, shops, and attractions. This can be particularly important if the rooms are small. Liz Hall, managing director at Liz Hall Hotel & Travel Consulting, argues that ‘people will put up with a smaller room, they can always go into spaces on the ground floor or even around the neighbourhood.’ The increase in micro and pod hotel concepts is a case in point, providing small, efficiently designed rooms that are purely for sleeping and showering. Research

by Lambert Smith Hampton estimates that compact hotel rooms accounted for approximately 18 per cent of all hotel rooms opened in 2018.⁰⁶ ‘People live more nomadic lifestyles’ adds James Mitchell, partner at Axiom Architects; whose work is introducing design innovations that appropriately respond to the needs of modern nomadic guests. Multiplying rapidly across London, hub by Premier Inn also attracts guests who prioritise location and essential comfort over room size. Some build to rent developers follow a similar model — modest apartments are complemented by well-designed communal space — and hostels have been operating by this concept for decades.

Bedrooms are still the core business of hotels, but traditional room types will soon cease to represent a hotel’s principal product.⁰⁷ Instead, there is a move towards personalisation and ‘bundle’ pricing, where guests pay only for what they want and need rather than a standard rate that includes unrequested offers. This so-called ‘attribute-based booking’ is also fostered by the possibilities new technologies have to offer. Additionally, conscious travellers are increasingly focusing their choices on health and wellbeing, valuing not so much the traditional gym and swimming pool, but elements such as air quality and lighting properties, that can positively affect mood and mindfulness. One strategy used by The Curtain, for instance, is biophilic design which ensures a sense of well-being throughout the hotel’s interior. Nicholas

18%
of all hotel rooms opened
in 2018 are compact rooms

Black, director of hotels, hospitality and leisure at Buro Four, explains that ‘those sorts of things can be designed in early and if you can charge a premium that’s where it is heading.’

Regardless of how much a hotel charges and what facilities it provides, the way people experience the space and services is paramount. Rob Harris, principal at Elementa, says online reviews has changed the expectations of brand delivery: ‘Every experience needs to be a quality experience in some way, shape or form. It is a significant change from where the industry was 20 years ago when if it was cheap you expected cheap, now you expect a positive on brand experience everywhere and if it’s not it’s very easy to shout about it.’ ●

‘Every experience needs to be a quality experience in some way, shape or form’



LP at The Curtain Hotel, a members-only space that hosts various events, from morning yoga classes to club nights



At Green Rooms, the ground floor areas serve as informal co-working space in the daytime, and host events and performances during the night

New technologies have been one of the biggest disruptors among most sectors across the built environment. However, a smart combination of hardware and software, such as physical spaces enhanced by a simplified guest-oriented digital infrastructure, could become a potential problem-solver for the hospitality industry.

It starts online, the first place where customers often experience a hotel. Over 80 per cent of people book their holiday accommodation online,⁹ however, online travel agencies have taken control of this business with consequences for hotels, especially on the revenue. Therefore, hotels need to better promote the benefits of direct booking but also ensure websites offer a good user experience. Moreover, hotels could take advantage of new online services in order to rethink their traditional offer. The growing popularity of food delivery services such as Deliveroo and UberEATS is already having an impact on how hotels operate. BDO's Hotel Britain Report predicts that 'hotels will embrace delivery as a way of bolstering their food and beverage offering. Instead of seeing it as a threat to their food and beverage business, savvy hoteliers will look for ways to incorporate delivery into their own unique selling proposition and guest experience.'⁹

A hotel's physical space is already changing as a result of technological advances allowing, for instance, a more streamlined check-in process. With online

check-in becoming more common, innovative ways of using technology include the use of Bluetooth technology for downloading a digital room key to a smartphone allowing immediate access to a bedroom. 46 per cent of millennials agree that being able to check in using a mobile device would encourage them to return to a hotel.¹⁰ Having less check-in desks helps to free up lobby space for other uses, while staff can focus on more value-driven services. Dexter Moren cites the example of Once, a hostel in Cape Town where reception staff curate activities and trips for guests as check-in is done online. Human interaction is still extremely important; indeed, it is expected at the luxury end of the market, but technology can also help streamline the physical check-in experience if not eradicate it completely. Describing the foyer as a 'clumsy experience' when queues form, Matthew Marson, head of smart places at WSP, argues that the ability to monitor and predict activity is an important tool: 'We can understand how people are moving or where queues form and be more reactive to what's going on in the foyer', allowing hotel management to predict busy periods and employ staff accordingly.

Data collection and artificial intelligence are playing an increasingly important role in enhancing the guest experience, creating something more personal and building brand loyalty. Stuart Adolph states that software can capture how guests use the hotel, including their preferences such as a favourite pillow

80%

of people book their holiday accommodation online

46%

of millennials agree that being able to check in using a mobile device would encourage them to return to a hotel

type, preferred newspaper or drink at the bar: ‘When a guest stays in Los Angeles and comes to a property in New York, all that data is on the system, so staff know to put the New York Times or the Financial Times in the room.’ This information can also be harnessed through an app with the customer able to change their preferences.

‘Software can capture how guests use the hotel, including their preferences such as a favourite pillow type’

The smartphone may prove an even more powerful tool for hotels. Smartphones, one of the simplest consumer-facing technologies, represent the best way for hotels to offer a personalised hospitality service, at everyone’s hand. But with 42 per cent of consumers already using digital assistants in their homes,¹¹ combined technological amenities like AI-enabled chatbots and in-room technology, will be an essential part of the experience of future guests. Visitors are already familiar with — and even expect — interaction with such technologies, pushing the sector to embrace these technological advances. Hotels having their own in-room *Siri* or *Alexa* style device is one option, but Matthew Marson suggests that in the future the personal ‘digital

assistant’ on smartphones could interact directly with the hotel’s AI, communicating preferences for everything from favourite foods to activities, so that the right experiences and services can be offered. But then again simplicity is not to be underestimated: super-fast publicly accessible Wi-Fi is the most important hotel technology service for over 54 per cent of guests.¹²

The alliance of smartphones and a hotel’s in-built tech is a powerful one, not just in the ways it can enhance personal experience. With sustainability rising up the agenda, it can also help reduce energy costs. In-room heating, cooling and lighting are often left on while guests are out but using a combination of preference data, smartphone GPS and central controls, Matthew Marson argues that this problem can be solved. By tracking a guest’s movements, heating and lighting can be automatically switched on and off depending on their proximity to the hotel.

As technology becomes ever more important, both front and back of house, it will be an essential part of hotel design from the outset. Guest satisfaction can be achieved through offering not only front-of-house technological amenities, but also equipping staff with the latest smart-enabled wearable technologies. Partnered with Samsung, the Viceroy Hotel in California, USA, has been using smartwatches to improve overall guest experience and customer

54%

of guests agree Wi-Fi is the most important hotel technology service

service, so that all members of staff, from concierge to housekeeping and maintenance can satisfy, and even predict, guests' needs and preferences.¹³ Putting digital technology in the hands of housekeeping can give real-time analysis of when guests check out and which rooms are clean and available if a guest arrives early. Smart technology can ultimately promote human interaction and connect both physical and virtual social spaces. The Standard hotel has launched a platform that connects social networking with physical spaces. *The Standard Lobby* is an app that guests can download to their smartphones to socialise with other guests and eventually meet in the actual lobby,¹⁴ bringing people together by linking virtual and physical spaces. ●

‘As technology becomes ever more important, both front and back of house, it will be an essential part of hotel design from the outset’



Speedy check-in kiosks at hub by Premier Inn improve the check-in experience, while an app accompanies guests throughout their stay



Smartphones, one of the simplest consumer-facing technologies, represent the best way for hotels to offer a personalised hospitality service

Planning for the future



Hotels can open up their social spaces to the public and use technology to enhance the guest experience, but what role do they play in a wider local community context? Hotels have already turned outwards, broadening food and beverage offer in urban areas, providing somewhere to work — either formally or informally — or space for events. But while demand for hotels continues to rise in the capital — GLA research estimates 77,743 new rooms will be needed in London by 2050 —¹⁵ the sector faces stiff competition from housing. This is pushing up development costs and it is no surprise that conversions accounted for 30 per cent of hotel development in 2017.¹⁶ Besides, historic buildings have spaces of a character hard to replicate nowadays, offering the quality of authenticity valued by hotels, such as the new Four Seasons at Ten Trinity Square, which brings back a former building of the Port of London Authority to its original splendour.

Local authority planning departments have to balance competing demands while ensuring economic vibrancy and community benefit from all development. But how do hotels demonstrate community benefit? Bethany Cullen, head of development management at London Borough of Camden, points out that as a result of their mixed-use policy, recent planning approvals for hotels in the borough have also provided some affordable housing or affordable workspace. What the borough are looking at more closely is how schemes

bring benefits for residents. ‘It is a big thing for us at the moment, we are getting lots of applications for hotels and it’s how they connect into communities.’ That connection also needs to be inclusive. While a hotel can help add to the vibrancy of an area, which is important for attracting workers, she questions the impact it can have on local residents, will those living in social housing close by feel any benefit, particularly given that the suggestion is that some lower-skilled jobs are at risk from technology. Deirdra Armsby, director of place shaping and town planning at the City of Westminster, argues that the industry needs to get better at proving the wider value: ‘Practically every developer with any land use is very bad at defining their benefits. It’s a longstanding issue.’ She also reveals that a tourist tax is one item currently under discussion at the local authority, but which would require primary legislation. If local communities struggle to see hotels offering anything for them, the social spaces within hotels have the opportunity to fulfil a role.

While hotels bring people to an area, the offers can vary considerably, especially with budget hotel operators, which are often more functional and provide much more limited services. Brands such as Premier Inn see the hotel’s community role as an enabler, supporting local businesses so that rather than providing additional community services, guests eat out at local restaurants or spend money in local

30%

of hotel development in 2017 were conversions

shops. Data collection can help and Derek Griffin, head of acquisitions for London and South at Whitbread, explains that one of the benefits Premier Inn has is that 98 per cent of bookings are made through its own website rather than an online travel agent which gives them a wealth of evidence of demand. However, data is severely lacking in other areas. ‘There is no data to demonstrate the wider positive impacts of hotels. We need some empirical research because at the moment it tends to be anecdotal,’ he adds. The role of social value within the built environment is becoming more widely acknowledged and technology and data may help in demonstrating community benefit, but tools for measuring and predicting impact are in the early stages of development and not yet widely adopted.

‘There is no data to demonstrate the wider positive impacts of hotels’

Airbnb has had a vast disrupting influence on the hotel sector not only providing a home away from home alternative but also satisfying a need for an authentic experience by allowing people to stay off the beaten track in residential areas. While hotels have worked to differentiate their offer from such services, their existence has put further strain

on housing provision as landlords choose short term lets for their houses and apartments. ‘We've got more than 6,000 homes within the borough which are being advertised as short term lets via platforms like Airbnb, this alongside the preference for developers to build hotels rather than permanent residential, places more pressure on us in providing the residential accommodation needed.’

In 2015, the government limited short-term letting of whole residential premises, restricting the number of days people can let out their homes in the capital to 90 days per year. This encouraged Airbnb to announce in 2017 that it would go beyond informing hosts and block accounts after 90 nights within a calendar year, which was well-received by planning authorities calling for other platforms to follow suit. Airbnb managed to reduce from seven to four per cent the number of entire homes that are booked for 90 nights or more on a short-term rental basis — this four per cent confirmed they have permission to host for longer, such as serviced apartments. But this approach does not seem to be enough and many cities worldwide are starting to review their planning policies to control this problem. One such case is Edinburgh, where the government is currently consulting on further regulation so that more homes remain for community rental rather than for visitors. There are no quick solutions; meaningful change requires lobbying parliament.

The hotel sector is a strong market in London and, as tourist demand continues to grow, the future of accommodation in the city looks promising.

‘The hotel sector is a strong market in London and the future of accommodation in the city looks promising’

However, urban planning will need to make sure that all involved parties work together to ensure hotels bring benefits to local communities as well. Recent pioneering experiences such as Green Rooms, prove the power of partnership between the public and private sectors, successfully setting up a social enterprise that contributes to and supports local communities, jobs and places; while welcoming visitors and providing a prime hospitality experience ●



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While the future looks promising, hotels must demonstrate the benefits they bring to local areas and communities



Urban planning will need to make sure that all involved parties work together to ensure new hotels bring benefits to local areas

Part 2: Viewpoints



Expanding hospitality: The Curtain
by Dexter Moren,
Dexter Moren Associates



A new social hub: The Standard London
by Melanie Martin, Orms



Working from: The Hoxton
by Alex Lifschutz,
Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands



Welcome to the hotel of the future
by James Mitchell, Axiom Architects



A living heritage: Ten Trinity Square
by Nicholas de Klerk, Aukett Swanke



Small rooms, great locations: hub by Premier Inn
by Derek Griffin, Whitbread



Hotel living: Kensington Forum
by Jonathan Manns, Rockwell



Hotels as social enterprises: Green Rooms
by Beth Kay, London Borough of Haringey

Expanding hospitality: The Curtain

by Dexter Moren, Dexter Moren Associates



Wooden panels, leather chesterfields and velvet armchairs make *Billy's*, The Curtain's members' club, a unique social space that appeals to a community of like-minded people

Them and us, left and right, out and in. Sometimes it seems as if the world is more divided than ever. In this context, it is not surprising that many people are looking to create a sense of belonging by building like-minded communities. Hotels can embrace this, turning outwards, to bring together guests, visitors and locals with shared views and values.

To support this, a new multi-functional offer is emerging to appeal to guests and non-guests with work, rest and play under one roof. In this brave new world hotels are acting as cultural curators refining their offer to build their ‘tribe’.

The five-star Curtain Hotel in Shoreditch is a good example. This nine-storey new-build is located on the site of a former 1970s office block on the corner of Curtain Road, in the heart of eclectic Shoreditch. Alongside its 120 rooms, The Curtain also includes a rooftop pool, gym and spa, three restaurants, music venues, a screening room and a private members’ club.

It was hotelier Michael Achenbaum’s decade long vision to create a conceptual venue in London. Achenbaum wanted to be in an area that is ahead of the curve, but also growing organically, and to appeal to like-minded and forward-thinking creatives. His chosen site for his new high-profile hotel, restaurant and members’ club was in Shoreditch: an area with a rich industrial heritage now home to both high-tech and creative industries.

The venue needed to reflect the area’s industrial past and current creative incarnation as the unofficially christened cool capital of London, bringing together an eclectic mix of users and programmes with the specific intention to encourage unusual moments and interfaces.

‘The venue needed to reflect the area’s industrial past and current creative incarnation as cool capital of London’

The Curtain’s private members’ club is a core part of its offer. London’s private members’ clubs have undergone something of a revolution in recent times. From stuffy, elitist places where who you know (or more importantly where you went to school) is what counts, to dynamic creative venues with relaxed furnishings, dynamic cultural and events programmes and a more meritocratic route to entry.

At The Curtain, members have preferential rates on rooms and event space bookings. Alongside hotel guests they have access to the hotel’s 24-hour gym and 1,600 ft rooftop terrace, including a Moroccan style heated pool and the LIDO bar and restaurant as well as two members only food and beverage spaces. Many members of this creative tribe run start-ups or are self-employed, so creating a dynamic working

environment was a priority. Early last year the hotel launched a co-working space (AKA Design Studio) open to members and hotel guests including seating areas, a coffee station and boardroom.

For the hotel, the members' club has the financial aspect of being able to add annual membership to revenue, while creating a pool of repeat business members for the food and beverage offers. Members are also likely to take up accommodation, particularly on weekends when this City fringe location may be quieter than midweek from business demand.

A programme of carefully curated events is an important ingredient in both attracting members to visit regularly and maintaining their interest. A members' app includes the updated programme from intimate gigs with big name stars, raucous club nights and mind-blowing cabaret, to panel discussions, creative masterclasses and themed quiz nights.

The hotel also organises events for non-members helping to bring like-minded people into the hotel from the local area, from yoga classes to a regular Sunday 'Gospel brunch' at the hotel's flagship Red Rooster restaurant with a live choir and fried chicken. Wellness is a key aspect of the hotel with elements accessible to members, guests and local residents and workers. Strong biophilic design ensures a sense of well-being throughout the hotel's interior.

The Curtain hotel shows how hospitality can transcend traditional bed and board by creating a variety of services that appeal to a community of like-minded people. For hoteliers, building their tribe is not just a nice thing to do, it also makes commercial sense. ●

‘The Curtain hotel shows how hospitality can transcend traditional bed and board by creating a variety of services that appeal to a community of like-minded people’



© Justine Trickett

Overlooking Shoreditch, *Lido*, the Moroccan-inspired rooftop pool and bar, is open all year round for guests and members

A new social hub: The Standard London

by Melanie Martin, Orms

© Tim Soar



© David Cleveland

The Library Lounge derives exactly from its past use and despite its cosy intimacy is host to a bar, DJ and recording booth

On the south side of the Euston Road opposite King's Cross station, the old Brutalist 1974 Annexe of Camden Town Hall might seem an auspicious place to launch The Standard's first European hotel, but it works as a sophisticated new local hang out, infiltrating and transcending its context in equal measures. As lead consultant, Orms were responsible for the exterior architecture, shell and core. The project was a collaborative effort and we worked closely alongside interior designer Shawn Hausman Design and interior architect Archer Humphries on behalf of Crosstree and The Standard.

The main hotel entrance is tucked up on Argyle Street, offering a street view that is slightly reminiscent of the old King's Cross, with its Victorian terraces and a scattering of B&Bs. The previously inhospitable space surrounding the building has been completely opened up with the demolition of the link to the historic Town Hall and a reinstating of the pedestrian route and gardens to the rear. This clearing out and renewing of historic routes has brought an inviting vitality and clarity to both the public streets and the spaces within. The porosity of spaces along the public realm is striking with several entrances leading into a collection of meticulously curated social spaces.

Once ushered through the front door, the experience is one of sensory overload, with a flowing sequence of

intermingling spaces that wind throughout. There is no large double height space, as may be the obvious architectural move, but a series of small discreet spaces, richly decorated, scented and planted with seductive lighting, showcasing the people within and numerous tactile features with dramatic effect.

‘The narrative directed by The Standard plays not only on the building’s 1970s heritage but also to its original use’

The narrative directed by The Standard is an authentic one that plays not only on the building's 1970s heritage but also to its original use. The Library Lounge derives exactly from its past use and despite its cosy intimacy is host to a bar, DJ and recording booth and can be arranged to host talks and events as well. The library space bleeds into *Is/a*, another one of the five F&B offerings on site. *Is/a* extends out into a large open-air lush garden terrace. Both the Library and *Is/a* lead around to either end of *Double Standard*, a long street facing bar at the opposite end to the main hotel entrance. There is a glamorous intimacy to the endless niches and booths that flow through the ground floor creating a circuit of theatrical socialising and a variety of settings.

An entrance directly on Euston Road leads to the glossy red shuttle lift that takes people up to the top of the three-storey extension Orms created on top of the existing building. Here, two bars and a restaurant, *Decimo*, offer knock out views across London. The atmosphere shifts subtly between spaces, orchestrated by a clever alchemy of decor, lighting and seating arrangements. The proximity of different seating groups to the bar ensures privacy whilst still keeping guests immersed in the buzzing ambience.

‘The atmosphere shifts subtly between spaces, orchestrated by a clever alchemy of decor, lighting and seating arrangements’

The Standard’s primary offer is a collection of atmospheric social hubs and community vibes, with the rooms being perhaps a secondary offer; a new generation of seemingly endless choice to suit many moods. The Standard in London redefines the luxury experience as being part of a lifestyle that is accessible and intimate, with a playful and cheeky party vibe. ●



© Tim Soar

Renovating Camden’s historic Town Hall, The Standard’s first European hotel works as a sophisticated new local hang out

Working from: The Hoxton

by Alex Lifschutz, Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands

© Agnese Sanvito



Helping to transform 'Blackfriars Boulevard' into a hub of South London, The Hoxton welcomes office workers, guests and locals

The Hoxton, Southwark, is an ambitious project that integrates 192 hotel rooms, restaurants, bars and function rooms with 4,000 sqm of flexible co-working office space, all stacked within the same slender 17-storey building. It is the latest in a series of hotels in the UK, Europe and USA under The Hoxton brand, and is the outcome of an initial collaboration with Derwent London, one of the London's most innovative office-specialist developers.

The combination of an industrial, loose-fit building and an operator with a feel for the local context, and a mission to integrate culturally, has delivered a special project, already becoming a 24/7 destination both for guests and locals, helping to transform 'Blackfriars Boulevard' into a relevant piece of Zone 1, Central London, rather than a slightly neglected poor South London cousin.

The Hoxton, Southwark, is a new example of the hospitality sector leading trends in co-working and co-living by treating premises and buildings as active and integrated rather than passive resources. At this Hoxton guests will be able to enjoy fine hotel rooms or co-working office space with outstanding views across London's South Bank and also a cocktail of other offers from events and happenings, private dining and conferences, food and drink at ground floor or rooftop level. This multi layered building picks up from Oxo Tower Wharf just around the

corner, on the River Thames. One of our earliest and best-known projects, Oxo also provided a very varied and integrated mix of uses including affordable co-op apartments, independent shops, designer maker studios, an exhibition gallery plus the emblematic Harvey Nichols OXO Tower Restaurant, Bar and Brasserie at roof level, which is still going strong after 25 years of operation.

At The Hoxton, Southwark, we put an emphasis on materiality, adaptability and generosity. The building is clad in precast brick panels in buff and dark brown brick, which sit comfortably with the close-by Roupell Street Conservation Area, and the overall look and feel of the building is in distinct contrast to the more monolithic glass buildings that have been put up nearer the river. It sits comfortably on Blackfriars Road, and thanks to its brick facade, will weather well.

All the floors can be served by six passenger lifts allowing great flexibility in the way in which the hotel, office and function room floors interconnect. So, for instance, the co-workers on levels 7-12 can directly access the rooftop restaurant and bar and/or the meeting/banquet rooms at mezzanine. The hotel and the office floors lend themselves to conversion to apartments and vice versa to workspace.

The building has a very permeable, active and attractive ground and mezzanine floor on the street

with abundant planting and sitting out spaces that are sheltered by awnings and heaters for all season use. Chiming with The Hoxton's open-door policy, visitors are welcome to enter the building without having to check in and go up to the mezzanine function rooms and bar, the co-working suites or the sky bar and restaurant.

‘Chiming with The Hoxton’s open-door policy, visitors are welcome to enter the building without having to check in’

A stripped back aesthetic inside allowed The Hoxton's in-house interior design team to draw inspiration from Southwark's eclectic, industrial past. The history of the hops trade has inspired the botanical print fabrics, tiles and wallpaper, which feature throughout the lobby, apartment and rooftop, whilst a mix of antique and bespoke furniture has been sourced from British makers.

Working From_, Ennismore's new shared workspace concept, will occupy six floors of the building above the hotel with its own dedicated entrance. A natural extension of The Hoxton's lobbies, which have been used by locals, freelancers and creatives since 2006, *Working From_* will boast 744 desks, five

meeting rooms, a wellness studio with daily classes, a winter garden and quiet booths for making private calls. Fitness partner, Refinery E9, will curate the programming in the wellness studio, running daily classes, and YCN will curate the member events programme designed to inspire and enrich professional development. *Working From_* is scheduled to open its doors in January 2020.

The Hox Friends programme will be rolled out at The Hoxton, Southwark, following its success across the rest of the portfolio. This initiative is designed to further connect with the community and bring local culture into the bedrooms for guests to enjoy and discover. For example, 192 handpicked locals have each chosen a selection of books that feature on the bookshelves of the 192 bedrooms. Hox Friends is profiled on the dedicated Instagram page, [@hoxfriends](#), which acts as an insider guide for guests to help facilitate discovery of The Hoxton's neighbourhoods. ●

‘The Hoxton has always set out to do things differently, and we are continually evolving as a brand in response to guest demands and the trends we’re seeing among travellers. We’re quite unique as a hotel as we set out to position ourselves as a destination for both guests and locals, with everything from our open-door lobby culture to our events programme, Hox Friends initiative and destination restaurants being designed with both in mind. Working From_ will bring a whole new experience to the space and enhance our offering, helping us to continue to evolve.’

Martina Luger, Chief Marketing Officer, Ennismore



A stripped back aesthetic inside allowed The Hoxton's in-house interior design team to draw inspiration from Southwark's eclectic, industrial past

Welcome to the hotel of the future

by James Mitchell, Axiom Architects





Taking elements of wellbeing into account help to ensure guests' happiness and health aren't compromised whilst on the move

Few people today live truly nomadic lives, but the movement and transience of individuals and communities remains an important part of our experience. We move from place to place for work, to study and for recreation. Each is increasingly redefined by the pace of technological advancement and an instant, worldwide connectivity. What it means to be a modern nomad is not a static concept, but one which is shifting daily and that must be fully understood if towns and cities are to meet our needs.

As specialists in the hotel sector, at Axiom Architects we are rethinking how hotels need to work and introducing clever design innovations which transform the guest experience. Together with Rockwell, we produced 'Nomad City', a research piece that draws together and highlights some key themes to begin a much-needed discussion about the future of the hotel and visitor accommodation amongst those who will design and deliver it.

Key to our new approach is bringing more light to rooms via circadian lighting, enabling even the darkest basement room to appear bathed in daylight. Humans have an internal clock that synchronises physiological functions on a roughly 24-hour cycle called the circadian rhythm. This biological process is synchronised with the natural day-night cycle through different environmental cues, the main cue being light. Studies have shown that light exposure has an impact on social mood.

By taking these elements of our wellbeing into account in our hotel design, we are helping to ensure guests' happiness and health aren't compromised whilst on the move — even when staying in city hotels with smaller rooms and perhaps less access to natural light. Working with forward-thinking hotel chains who are changing the landscape in the sector, we approach wellbeing in hotel rooms with technology playing a central role. For example, Whitbread's hub by Premier Inn feature augmented reality maps of London on guest room walls to help guests plan their stay.

‘We approach wellbeing in hotel rooms with technology playing a central role’

Other design innovations being introduced in our projects include amenity-led communal spaces, more akin to co-working spaces than the average hotel, and space efficient bedrooms. Whitbread launched their hub by Premier Inn brand in 2015, with standard rooms of 11.4 sqm, almost half the size of a typical Premier Inn offering, and a third of the average American room. Hub by Premier Inn join other brands such as Motel One, Moxy, Z Hotels and citizenM in having a clear focus on quality of space over quantity and delivering room sizes in the region of 8–16 sqm. ZIP by Premier Inn, Sleeperz and YotelAir are offering “cabin” rooms from 6 sqm

upwards. The majority of these brands were founded within the last decade, and yet research by property firm Lambert Smith Hampton suggests that compact hotel rooms accounted for approximately 18 per cent of all hotel rooms to be opened in 2018.

Rethinking the traditional approach to hotel design is essential if the industry is to keep up with consumer demand. People want more and do not expect additional expenses whether they're on holiday or on business. Hotels need to be much more than a simple room to stay in. Cleverly designed communal space such as the foyer can become a major asset for guests and for other people coming to use the hotel on a regular basis.

Good light, air quality and comfort should be standard across luxury, more basic and economy rooms and we believe our approach is making this happen. Light in particular is key to improving the customer experience even in a relatively small hotel room. Working with Light Cognitive has enabled us to transform spaces and truly enhance a guest's stay.

Thinking about the modern nomad is vital not only for designing and delivering hotels of the future, but also the towns and cities of the future. At a time when the hotel and visitor accommodation sector is changing so quickly, designers, planners, developers and operators each need to respond to ensure that these changes are handled appropriately. ●



© Axiom Architects

Cleverly designed communal spaces can become a major asset for guests and locals to use the hotel on a regular basis

A living heritage: Ten Trinity Square
by Nicholas de Klerk, Aukett Swanke

© Agnese Sanvito



The Rotunda, a lobby bar with a plaster frieze, handcrafted in one-metre-wide sections in a Paris garret

Broadly speaking, there are two approaches to working with historic buildings. That which embraces John Ruskin’s thinking on conservation — the ‘stabilised ruin’ — which brooks no interference with remains of a structure that might alter its inherent tectonic or material qualities and that which his French contemporary Eugène Viollet-le-Duc argued for; the full restoration of a structure to a putative and idealised state of completion that may never have existed at any point in the building’s existence until then.

Our conversion of the Grade-II Listed former Port of London Authority building at Ten Trinity Square into a new Four Seasons luxury hotel falls firmly into the latter category. The original building was designed by Sir Edwin Cooper and completed in 1922, and is, according to the Historic England listing citation, a ‘large, detached monumental building of Portland stone’ with an imposing four columned entrance portico overlooking Trinity Square Gardens and addressing the Tower Hill World Heritage Site directly opposite.

Prior to the recent development, the building had already been substantially altered in its lifetime. It was subject to significant bomb damage during the Second World War in which the courtyard rotunda — formerly a grand rates hall — was completely destroyed, while a main stair core had to be rebuilt after the war.

Despite this, the building retains its grandeur and several of the fine interior spaces survive, such as the UN Ballroom — so named as it hosted the reception following the inaugural meeting of that organisation in 1946 — and two wings of timber panelled management suites which were all restored as part of the redevelopment.

‘The building retains its grandeur and several of the fine interior spaces survive’

When we were appointed to the project in early 2014, shell and core works had already been substantially completed for a previous owner to create new guestroom accommodation lining the original courtyard, four levels of rooftop apartments designed for modular construction, as well as a new structure in the courtyard that would eventually house the rotunda lobby bar with a new function room above. We redesigned the hotel for our client Reignwood within the building as we found it but went through a process of auditing and reconsidering previous assumptions. We reduced the number of guestrooms rooms that had previously been provided for, restoring those within the five-meter-high ground floor spaces to their original proportions. This enabled us to deliver spaces and accommodation much more in keeping with the historic building.

The individual aspirations and requirements of a complex stakeholder body, including client, developer and hotel operator have to be carefully balanced in a project such as this. Undertaking this task in the context of a Grade II listed building brings a whole set of other constraints that need to be addressed. The wide variety of uses that hotels tend to accommodate — sleeping accommodation, restaurants, workspace and leisure environments — tends to demand large and sometimes unwieldy consultant teams which brings a particular dynamic to a project. Clear leadership and sensitive diplomacy might seem to contradict one another, but deployed hand in hand, are fundamental to the successful design and delivery of a project such as this.

‘Clear leadership and sensitive diplomacy are fundamental to the successful design and delivery of a project such as this’

Interior design is a crucial element of a hotel scheme, given how fundamental it is to the guest experience. This can be a double handed issue in hotels converted from historic buildings, which routinely have spaces of a character and a quality that can be challenging to replicate today. This character lends the sought-after quality of authenticity prized by landmark hotels,

but is one which comes with attendant risks for the hotel interior. If the scheme is too timid, it risks being underwhelming and insipid viewed alongside its host building; too strong and it risks competing with the historic space and devaluing both.

The approach to interior design here is best understood as one of emphasis, of light and shade, understanding the spaces in which the design needs to work harder and where it needs to hold back. Ten Trinity Square had six international interior designers working on different areas of the building and in addition to acting as lead architect; Aukett Swanke also delivered the interior schemes. This enabled us to ensure parity with Four Seasons operational and design standards across the hotel, carefully integrating them with the architecture and the required services, in careful cooperation with City of London planners and conservation officers. Standout spaces include the rotunda lobby bar with its plaster frieze, handcrafted in one-metre-wide sections in a Paris garret, and the Latour Room in the club which blends the atmosphere of the historic panelled interior with the sparse drama which characterises the wine cellars of its namesake.

The conversion of the former Port of London Authority building into a new Four Seasons Hotel is a large and complex project which has successfully extended the useful life of what was essentially a commercial office building. This was only achieved with the support of

a committed client, a skilled and experienced design team working alongside equally skilled specialist and general contractors, artisans and suppliers. Dialogue and collaboration have enabled the evolution of a dramatic and historic building from one that owes its existence to London's historic trade links into one that speaks to how those links have evolved in twenty first century London. ●



© Agnese Sanvito

The Latour Room blends the atmosphere of the historic panelled interior with the sparse drama which characterises the wine cellars of its namesake

Small rooms, great locations: hub by Premier Inn

by Derek Griffin, Whitbread

© Agnese Sanvito



© Agnese Sanvito

At King's Cross, the hub's lounge is used as much by guests as it is by flexible workers and residents from the local area

There is no question that London is one of most successful visitor destinations in the world. With more than 19 million international visitors travelling to the capital every year and hotel occupancy in the city averaging 83 per cent, the numbers speak for themselves.¹⁷

Premier Inn has been contributing to London’s visitor economy for years. Though we have had hotels in the city since the early 1990s our presence in central London really took off following the opening of Premier Inn County Hall, a 316–bedroom hotel on the South Bank, in 1998. Since then we have grown Premier Inn and hub by Premier Inn, Whitbread’s compact hotel brand, to offer guests over 13,000 bedrooms within the M25. We are continuing to invest across the city as it grows and evolves—roughly 40 per cent of our current property requirements are in London.

Hotels are clearly not alone in seeking the best locations in the city. With limited land supply, and stiff competition for sites from other land uses, we have had to be nimble to secure budget hotels in the most central and connected locations where our customers want to stay and spend time.

In the early 2010s we recognised that in order to secure sites in central London, and continue to offer

rooms at genuinely affordable prices, we needed to design a more compact hotel that would make prime locations financially viable for us.

We also recognised that hotel guests would compromise on the size of a hotel bedroom for excellent connectivity (in the physical and digital senses) and well-appointed and welcoming communal areas. Following a year of intense design and customer testing, we launched hub by Premier Inn in 2015 at a site on St Martin’s Lane in Covent Garden.

‘We recognised that hotel guests would compromise on the size of a hotel bedroom for excellent connectivity’

The principles of the hub by Premier Inn brand are very simple: we created a compact bedroom roughly half the size of a standard 11.4 sqm Premier Inn room. Within the room we used every inch of available space and paid close attention to design, fittings and guest comfort. We also packed the room with technology—including free high-speed wi-fi, a Smart TV, a connectivity panel for devices, advanced in-room lighting and temperature controls—and a dedicated guest app.

Since launching the brand, we have expanded hub by Premier Inn to eight hotels in Central London (1,560 bedrooms in zone 1 and 2) and three hotels in Edinburgh. We have been very flexible to achieve this growth: our hub by Premier Inn hotels in London have been delivered in many ways including by repurposing outdated office and commercial buildings, constructing new freestanding hotels and using vacant space above shops. Despite this variety, the design of the hub bedroom has not changed — the initial design testing paid off and our customers continue to enjoy it and leave very positive reviews.

What has changed with the roll out of hub by Premier Inn is the design of the brand’s communal areas. Recognising that guests want to experience the city when they visit, the F&B concept for hub has always been deliberately light touch. An initial café-style offer at St Martin’s Lane has evolved into a ‘lounge’ space with free coffee and tea available during the day and light bites and a good value cocktail bar in the evening.

The hub by Premier Inn at King’s Cross is a good example of this flexible space in action. On any given day the lounge is used as much by guests as it is by flexible workers and residents from the local area. It is an urban living room — a place to get together, work, relax and enjoy a drink and a snack before heading out and experiencing the city. The same is true of our other hub hotels. Compact hotels offer an opportunity to satisfy the demand for hotel rooms in the city whilst giving back to the local area. They can also make use of space that would not be suitable for offices or new homes, creating successful hotels in complex, challenging and unconventional locations. Recognising this potential is important for all stakeholders involved in planning the city. ●



At hub by Premier Inn guests are welcomed by a bay of touchscreen assistants where check-in can be done online

Hotel living: Kensington Forum

by Jonathan Manns, Rockwell

© HayesDavidson



Addressing Cromwell Road, the new hotel provides outstanding amenities including restaurants, bars, health spa and conference facilities

Redevelopment of Kensington Forum will replace the existing 906 room hotel, recognised by the Borough as an eyesore, with a sustainable 1,089 room hotel and serviced apartment building of exceptional quality. From the outset, the emphasis has been on delivering a development which is fully integrated, in terms of both design and use, into the surrounding area.

The location of the scheme at Gloucester Road creates an opportunity for it to contribute meaningfully to the vibrancy of the surrounding area. In addressing Cromwell Road, it will provide outstanding amenities including restaurants, bars, a health spa and conference facilities. These are vital not only to meeting the demands of potential guests but also to providing a destination and amenity for Londoners.

Adjacent to the new building will be a new publicly accessible 2,700 sqm garden, more than doubling the existing accessible green space. This replaces a fragmented, unusable and unused space — created in 1971 — with the only publicly accessible green space within 1km of the site. A draft Garden Square Management Plan has been agreed with local residents and owners, creating a sense of ownership, whilst public access provides an important amenity which can be enjoyed by all.

Every opportunity has been taken to capitalise on the potential benefits of the development. It will create

more than 800 jobs, an increase of 300 per cent from the existing number, with £1.4 million set aside towards training initiatives to ensure such opportunities are available to those most in need. This is particularly significant in the Royal Borough, which has the highest income inequality in London, and has seen the least positive changes to unemployment levels in the past three years.

In keeping with this, 62 homes have been included to integrate the development into the surrounding residential area. Each of the homes, collectively worth £90 million, will be genuinely affordable Social Rented Homes. This will help to address the clear need in the Borough, which has the least affordable housing in London and where over 70 per cent of those housed in temporary accommodation are accommodated beyond its boundary. It is believed to be the first time that any private-sector development in London has proposed 100 per cent of new homes to be genuinely affordable to Londoners.

In addition to this, Rockwell and Queensgate Investments have worked from the outset with leading architects SimpsonHaugh to design a development that will stand the test of time. This not only relates to the use of the building, but also the materials used. The brief has been to design a building which lasts at least 150 years, using the highest-quality materials such as Portland Stone and bronze.

‘The brief has been to design a building which lasts at least 150 years, using the highest-quality materials’

Each element of the redevelopment of Kensington Forum has therefore been considered in terms of both its design and also the social, economic and environmental impacts it has on the fabric of the surrounding community. The result is a scheme which will revitalise the area with a world-class development of exceptional quality that delivers on the aspirations and objectives of the draft London Plan and helps to create a city which works for everybody. ●

‘Kensington Forum is an ambitious scheme of exceptional quality which sets a new benchmark for global visitor accommodation. In doing so it delivers an overwhelming amount of genuinely affordable homes, meaningful employment opportunities, green space and public realm. I’m proud of the significant and positive contribution this will make to London’s continued success and am confident that this will stand as further testament to Rockwell’s passion, commitment and exacting standards.’

Donal Mulryan, Founder of Rockwell



© HayesDavidson

Adjacent to the new building will be a new publicly accessible 2,700 sqm garden, more than doubling the existing accessible green space

Hotels as social enterprises: Green Rooms

by Beth Kay, London Borough of Haringey



The bar serves as informal co-working space in the daytime and a successful evening venue for Wood Green

Wood Green is a place bursting with character, full of potential and inspiring people. It is one of eleven Metropolitan centres in London. Like many town centres the changes in the way people shop, work and play have transformed the role of Wood Green's centre. To remain a destination of choice, Wood Green, and the council's approach to it, has had to evolve and innovate.

Haringey Council's commitment to the sustainable transformation of Wood Green is underpinned by three themes: sustainable urban living, creating opportunity on people's doorsteps and revitalising the town centre. Significant physical and economic development takes time but also offers the perfect opportunity to test new ideas ahead of wider change through meanwhile uses.

In 2015, Haringey Council launched its 'Meanwhile Campus project,' with the aim of bringing back into use underused council owned assets to activate the town centre; make better use of existing cultural assets to boost the town centre economy; and enhance Wood Green's evening economy and food and beverage offer. The first Meanwhile Campus project to be delivered is the Green Rooms Hotel. Located in a council owned building on Station Road, the hotel opened in May 2016 and is the UK's first arts-led social enterprise hotel that offers affordable accommodation and event spaces.

The hotel is the brainchild of Nick Hartwright and was established in partnership with Kurt Bredenbeck of Quest Hotels, the founder and former owner of the iconic Hoxton Hotel in Hackney. The hotel provides 80 beds with discounts for travellers working in the arts and creative industries, many who are showcasing at nearby Alexandra Palace and other venues in the borough and beyond. The hotel also features a gallery and rehearsal space.

‘The hotel provides 80 beds with discounts for travellers working in the arts and creative industries’

The project was funded with a grant of £140,000 from the GLA, £40,000 from London Borough of Haringey and social impact private investment to make up the balance of the £1m plus costs of fully refurbishing the building.

On the ground floor there is a lively bar and restaurant. The restaurant offers six-month, rent-free residencies to new restaurateurs, acting as a business incubator project. The bar and seating area serve as informal co-working space in the daytime, and a successful evening venue for Wood Green with a regular programme of exhibitions, events and performances including live music.

Upstairs, alongside the hotel rooms, there is a gallery and rehearsal space.

Green Rooms employs approximately 25 individuals at a time on a full time or part time basis, with a focus on creating employment for young Haringey residents. The hotel provides job training and work experience to people with no previous background in the hotel industry. The majority of staff are local to the borough or neighbouring areas, many roles were filled with assistance from Haringey Works — formally Haringey’s Employment Support Team.

The hotel also uses local supply chains, with established supply contracts with a number of local businesses for the supplies necessary to operate the hotels, helping to build wealth in the local community. Grow N22, a local community growing group, also curate a community garden in the back yard.

Whilst bringing buildings that have been previously derelict, on fairly short term leases that require considerable investment, can be extremely challenging, Nick and his team have delivered a project that is now not only London’s first arts-led social enterprise hotel, but is also fully embedded into the local area, a huge community asset which proves that there is a way to bring these projects to life successfully.

The Green Rooms Hotel alongside creative and arts workspace providers such as Blue House Yard and Collage Arts, have linked Station Road with Haringey’s Cultural Quarter. Together, they are helping to raise the profile of the area’s creative business communities. Wood Green is fast becoming an arts destination of choice for Haringey residents, for London and beyond. ●

‘Wood Green is fast becoming an arts destination of choice for Haringey residents, for London and beyond’



The restaurant offers six-month rent-free residencies to new restaurateurs, acting as a business incubator project

Summary

The hotel sector needs to reassess its offer and contribution to the city in order to fulfil changing consumer preferences, harness advances in technology and realise the potential of social spaces.

Hotels have to expand their social offer, both in their physical and virtual spaces, and reposition themselves as new urban social hubs in order to incorporate these transformations. Future guests will demand the most up-to-date technologies for an enhanced hospitality experience, but simplicity and human interaction will continue to be central for visitors, even with the latest technological advancements.

There is still, however, a need for a greater understanding and evidence of a hotel's social value and contribution to local neighbourhoods. Planning the future of hospitality in the city requires creative thinking around the contribution of hotels to local places and their flexibility to adapt to new social and technological demands, to ultimately create significant and sustainable hotels for the future.

Key findings

- Hotels are reorganising their social spaces to attract more people: lobbies have evolved from functional entrances to unique experiential spaces while communal rooftops are becoming new attractions on the city skyline. A new generation of culturally relevant, neighbourhood inspired hotels is opening its doors to the public, becoming original urban hubs for working, interacting and socialising.
- An expanded mixture of offers has transformed hotels to incorporate co-working spaces, destination restaurants, members' clubs and spas. While other uses are becoming part of the hotel offer, hospitality has simultaneously become a feature of the wider built environment; residential, workspaces and even hospitals are now offering complimentary amenities.
- Loose fit design is more crucial than ever as the market is moving fast. Public spaces in hotels need to be flexible enough to quickly adapt to different uses on a 24/7 basis.
- A focus on sustainability and wellbeing is attracting a new group of socially and environmentally conscious guests who want their hospitality experience to bring them together with like-minded people.
- While bedrooms are still the central product of hotels, there is a move towards personalisation rather than standardised traditional bedrooms. Even smaller bedrooms, with no more than a bed, are an attractive offer among young nomadic guests who prefer to make the most of the communal spaces and the local area.
- Simplified guest-oriented digital technology is being used to improve and personalise guest experience. Hotels need to stay open to further technological shifts, but no matter how complicated new technologies might be, the smartphone and Wi-Fi remain the most essential tools, for both front and back of house.
- Growing international tourism safeguards the demand for new hotels. But political uncertainties, disruption from the gig economy and a growing housing need, force hotels to demonstrate the benefits they bring to local areas and communities. As local authorities struggle to balance competing demands, evidencing social value is becoming fundamental. Better data and tools for measuring and predicting impact are required.

Next steps

Responding to this research — If you would like to comment on this research, please send an initial 100 word response to federico.ortiz@newlondonarchitecture.org

International reflections — We are interested in examples of hospitality experiences and social spaces in hotels around the world. If you would like to submit an example, please write to federico.ortiz@newlondonarchitecture.org and/or share on social media:

🐦@nlalondon
📷@nlalondon
#NLAHotels

Have your say

Now we would like to hear from you! Tell us more about your own preferences and habits when it comes to travelling and experiencing hotels. Keep an eye on our social media and get involved; we will be gathering and sharing extra findings in 2020...

Further reading

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Acknowledgements

NLA would like to thank our Programme Champion Axiom Architects and Programme Supporter Dexter Moren Associates, and contributors whose support made this study possible.

Special thanks to the following people for sharing their time, expertise and insights, and their own research through interviews, discussion and/or participation in NLA workshops:

- Stuart Adolph, Vice President, Development, Sydell Group
- Deirdra Armsby, Director of Place Shaping and Town Planning, City of Westminster
- Nick Black, Director of Hospitality and Leisure, Buro Four
- Mark Bruce, Main Board Director, EPR Architects
- Max Camplin, Director, Head of London, Built Environment Communications Group
- Jim Cathcart, Policy Director, UKHospitality
- Bethany Cullen, Head of Development Management, London Borough of Camden
- Angela Dapper, Principal, Grimshaw
- Derek Griffin, Head of Acquisitions, London & South, Whitbread
- Liz Hall, Managing Director, Liz Hall Hotel & Travel Consulting
- Rob Harris, Principal, Elementa
- Laura Hills, Planning Policy Team Leader, London Borough of Southwark
- Emma Holt, Associate, Ben Adams Architects
- Beth Kay, Head of Area Regeneration, Wood Green, London Borough of Haringey
- Nicholas de Klerk, Associate Architect, Aukett Swanke
- Alex Lifschutz, Director, Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands
- Jonathan Manns, Board Director and Head of Planning, Rockwell
- Matthew Marson, Head of Smart Places, WSP
- Ben Martin, Principal, HKS
- Melanie Martin, Associate Director, Orms
- Nicholas Mee, Board Director, Head of Acquisitions, Rockwell Property
- James Mitchell, Partner, Axiom Architects
- Dexter Moren, Partner, Dexter Moren Associates

With thanks to Stacey Meadwell, researcher

Programme champion



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