

# The innovative Interview Roger Madelin

In conjunction with **RIBA**

Roger Madelin was appointed to lead the development of British Land's 46-acre Canada Water site in February 2016. The project foresees two million sq ft of workspace, 3,500 homes and one million sq ft of retail and leisure. Before joining British Land Madelin was at Argent since 1987 where he was Chief Executive/Joint Chief Executive from 1997 to 2012. He was directly responsible for leading a number of Argent developments and from 2000 led the team working on the 67-acre King's Cross site.

Roger Madelin will take part in 'the British Land interview' on Wednesday 25 January at 17:30 in Olympia National Hall.



## What new products or materials are you looking into and why?

We are particularly interested in more use of timber and more use of pre-assembly. I don't just mean things like CLT but also the flexibility and adaptability of buildings in terms of occupiers taking them on for quite short periods. I think a lot of people want to understand how they might change their work environments a bit more regularly and create bigger volumes or different kinds of spaces. So we are looking at mixed-use spaces within the same structure or envelope but also adaptability within a particular use.

## What one thing would make your life as a developer easier or more satisfying?

The return of housing grants to finance the most subsidised forms of affordable housing. I think the removal of these grants some years ago has made the whole process of development not just more challenging but also more myopic. Before we were able to have much more intelligent and expansive discussions about the sustainable mixed communities we were trying to create.

## What do the next 10 years of architecture in London and the UK look like in your view?

I think they will be about providing more cost-effective and more adaptable buildings. I don't think there's going to be as much money per square foot to build and we are going to want more out of each square foot in terms of how it could adapt over time so it's a tough challenge. It will be about more for less, also because Brexit will mean the diversion of huge amounts of resources. There will be a lot of uncertainty in the short and medium term, and probably even in the long term.

## Which architect (living or dead) would you like to sit next to at dinner and why?

I would have to have Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe. I would also invite architects involved in estate regeneration, such as Paul Karakusevic, and all the architects I have been lucky enough to work with from David Chipperfield to Chris Wilkinson. If they could all come that would be great.

## The theme of this year's ARCHITECT@WORK is water. Is water important in creating places people want to go to?

It is important and if you have it you are lucky. What people like about water is the way it reflects light, changes with the weather and how it can be almost scary and impressive at times and joyous at others. At Canada Water we will put various water features in and try to recognize the fantastic docks history of the place. Around half of the site was dock 35-40 years ago!

## You are taking part in a talk about British Land. What will you focus on?

There are some huge themes that I will try and capture such as adaptability, flexibility, technology, the demographics of the millennial generation and the ageing generation. I will talk about Canada Water, which is a very unknown part of town but one of the most amazing places I have ever found. It's got huge parklands and woodlands, brilliant water spaces, the docks and the Thames and it's in Zone 2 and really easy to get to, which makes it very interesting from a workplace point of view.

## Sustainability seems to be over-touted or under-regarded. What are your thoughts?

There are still big challenges with occupiers as there are huge upfront costs in putting more environmentally sustainable infrastructure in. And I think the issues of health and well-being, social connections and mental health are important too. Other than that I think we need to resolve other really big issues urgently as well, such as use of land in cities, diesel cars, air pollution and public transport policies.

words by *Giovanna Dunmall*

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