EALING MATTERS

New London Architecture: London Tall Building Survey

Summary of findings 2014 – 2019

May 2020

Survey background

New London Architecture (NLA) describes itself as:

'an independent forum for discussion, debate and information about architecture, planning and development in London'

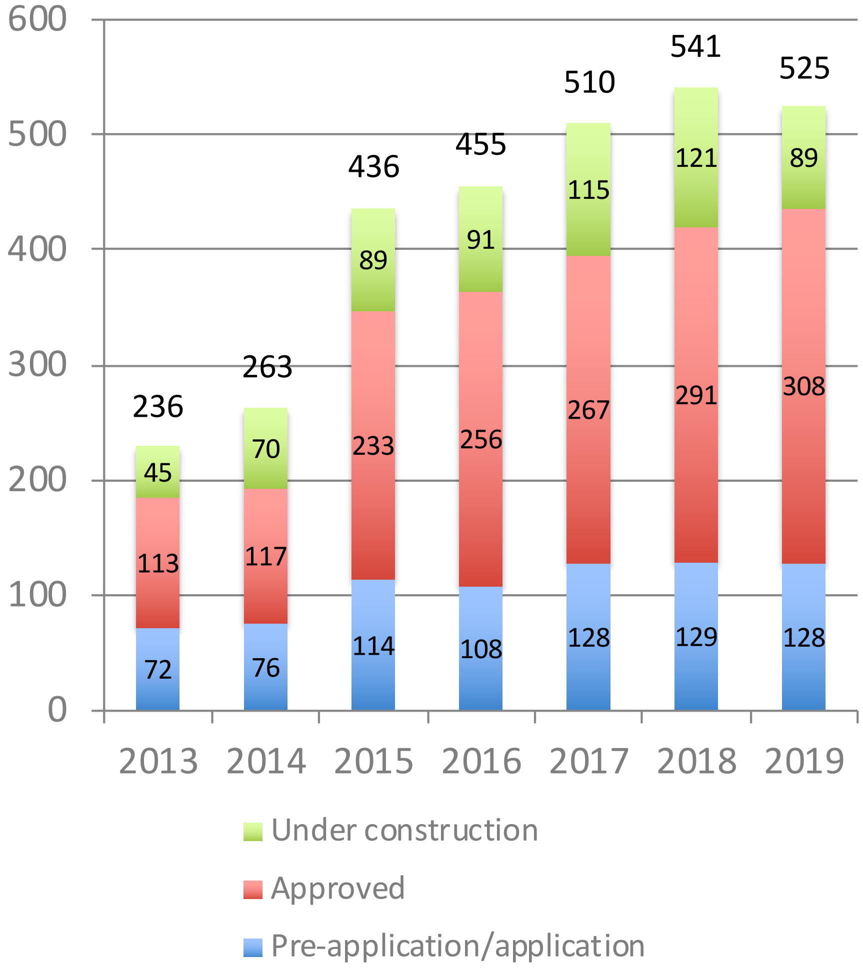
NLA, together with G L Hearn, a property consultancy owned by Capita Plc, has been producing an annual snapshot of the planning and construction status of buildings of 20 storeys or more across London since 2014. NLA has sought to improve the scope and quality of data produced with each report.

- The 2016 report in particular marked the start of NLA's access to Egi (Estates Gazette's database) and enabled it to be more exhaustive in its tracking of tall buildings by expanding the timeframe covered by each report from two years to five years.
- The survey period also changed from March of one year to February of the next to calendar year from the 2017 report.

The effect of these changes has been to impair the comparability of the data over time. It should also be borne in mind that not all developments will reach the end of the pipeline, due to the refusal of planning applications, the failure to build despite planning permission etc. The survey nevertheless indicates the direction of travel.

Please note that each of NLA's annual reports refers to the pipeline in the preceding year. All charts quote the year to which the data relate rather than the year of publication.

Tall buildings evolution in London



This chart shows the number of buildings in the different stages of the planning pipeline for London as a whole. As mentioned previously, data obtained for 2015 onwards were more exhaustive than those covered earlier, which may partially explain the step change in the number of tall buildings in the pipeline after 2014.

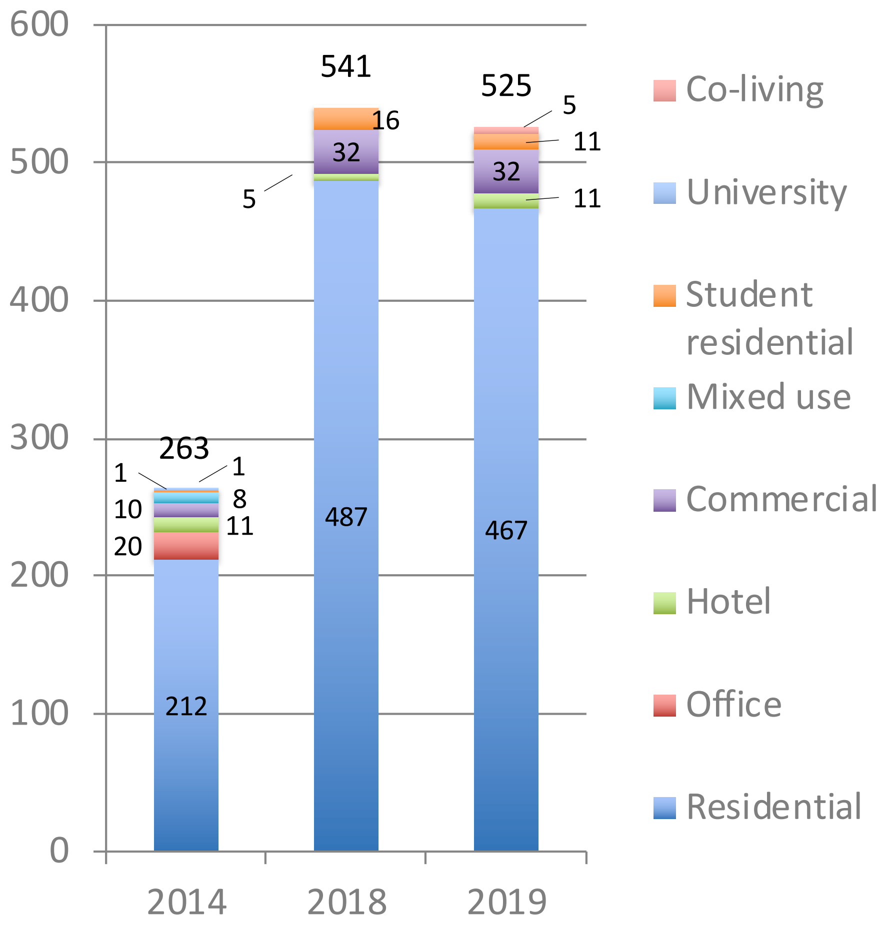
The overall number of tall buildings in the pipeline was down 3% in 2019 compared with 2018. This follows cumulative growth of almost a quarter (24%) over the preceding three years. The largest fall in 2019 was among tall buildings under construction (-3%) taking the numbers back to 2015 levels, while those at the pre-planning application or planning application stage remained at a similar high level for the third year running. However, the number of tall buildings achieving approval continued to grow (by 6% in 2019).

The report highlights the political uncertainties of 2019 (e.g. lack of certainty regarding the UK's relationship with the EU, the general election) as contributing to a slowdown in the land market last year. However, it pre-dates the Covid-19 health emergency due to its calendar year timeframe.

NB 2013 –14 reports cover the pipeline over a 2 year period, 2015 – 19 over a 5 year period

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution
Primary use



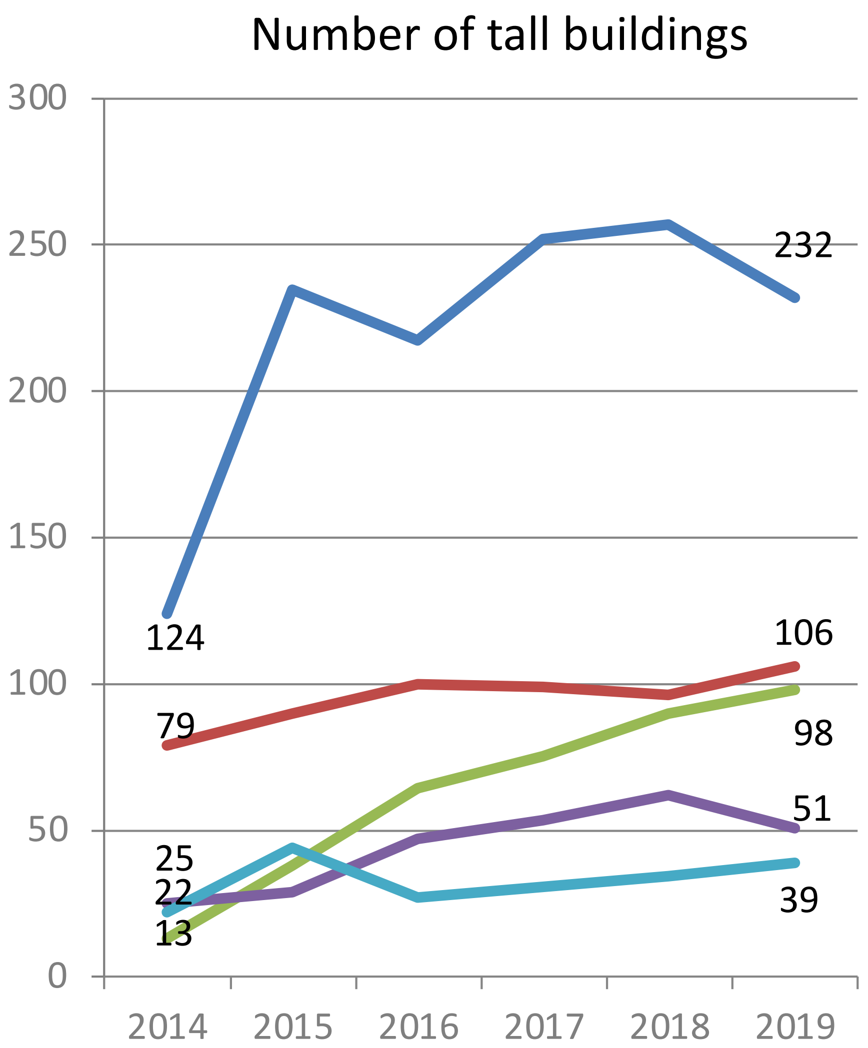
This chart shows the number of tall buildings in the planning pipeline across the capital measured in 2014, 2018 and 2019 split according to the primary use of the building.

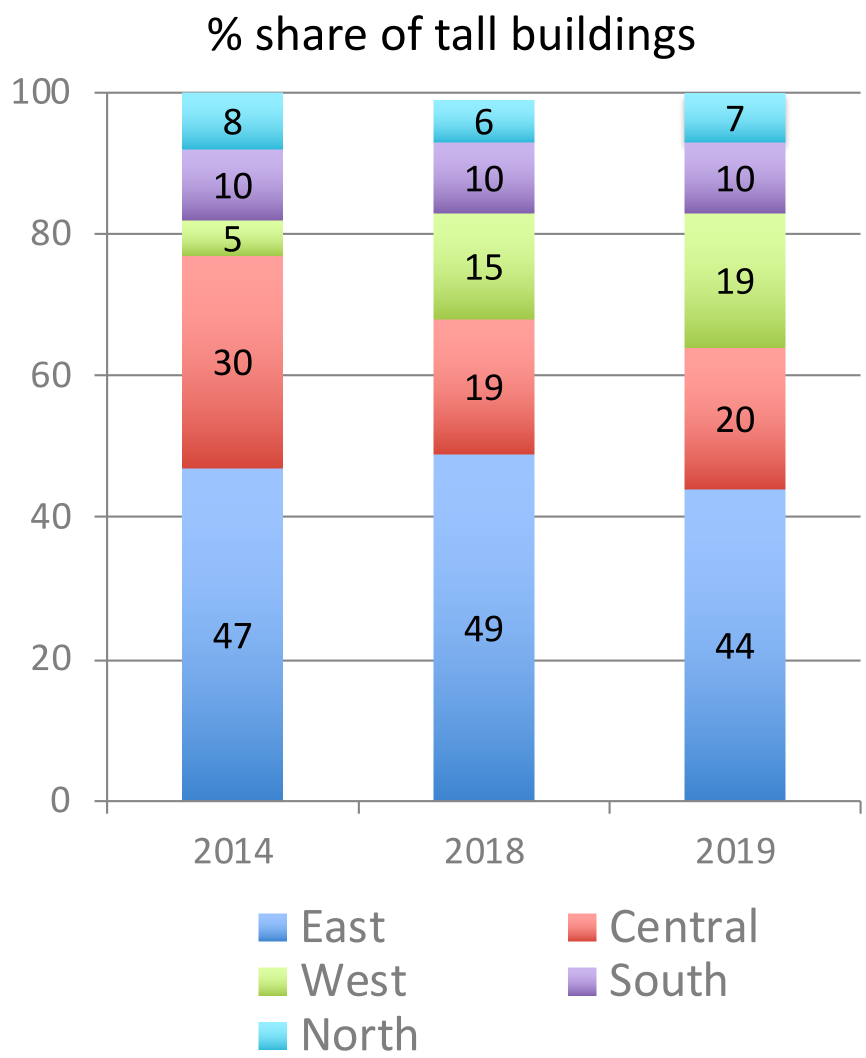
Residential was by far the most common primary use in all three years shown. Having increased its slice of a bigger cake from 81% in 2014 to 90% in 2018, residential more or less maintained its share in 2019 (89%). Student accommodation shrank in 2019 (from 16 tall buildings in 2018 to 11 in 2019), but any loss was made up for by the new co-living category (5). These three residential categories comprised the primary use of 92% of tall buildings in the pipeline in 2019 (vs. 93% in 2018).

The number of tall buildings used primarily as commercial property (32) was stable year on year having tripled in number in 2018 compared with 2014. Having fallen in number in 2018, hotels re-attained their 2014 number (11) in 2019.

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution by sub-region





Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution by sub-region

The charts on the previous page examine the number of tall buildings in the pipeline over time and the share accounted for by each geographical sub-region defined as follows:

East: Tower Hamlets, Newham, Lewisham, Greenwich, Hackney, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Bexley

Central: Southwark, Lambeth, City of Westminster, City of London, Camden, Islington and Kensington & Chelsea

West: Hammersmith & Fulham, Hounslow, Ealing, Brent, Harrow, Hillingdon, and Richmond upon Thames

South: Wandsworth, Croydon, Sutton, Kingston upon Thames, Bromley and Merton

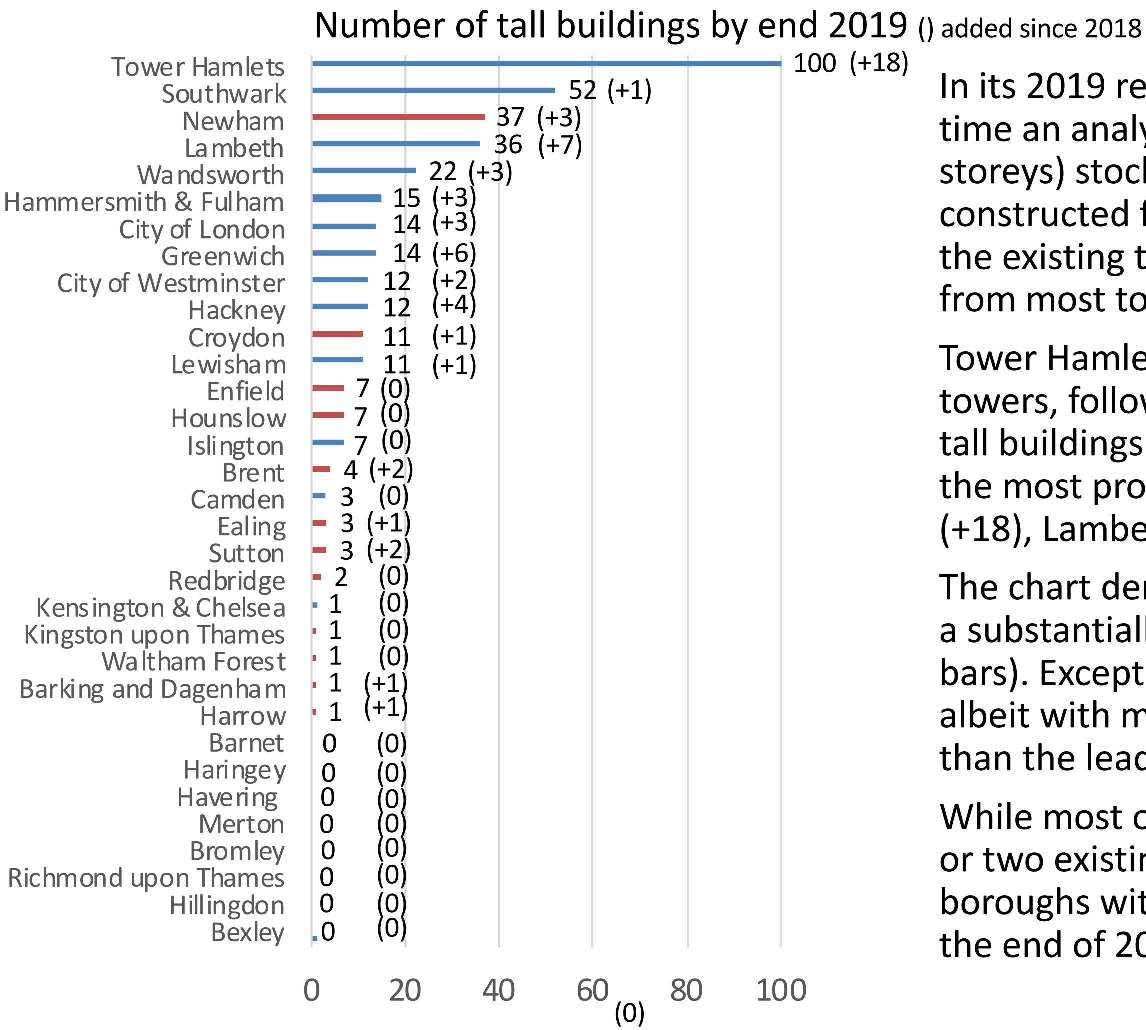
North: Enfield, Barnet, Haringey

With regard to tall buildings in the London pipeline in 2019:

- Despite shrinking numbers and a shrinking share in 2019, the Eastern sub-region continues to account for far and away the largest share of tall buildings in the capital's current planning pipeline (44%).
- The Central sub-region reverted to growth in 2019 vs. 2018 (+10%) but its share of tall buildings remains substantially lower than in 2014 (20%).
- The Western sub-region continued to grow in 2019 (+9%), its share of tall buildings in the pipeline increasing to 19 %, putting it on a par with the Central sub-region.
- The number of tall buildings in the pipeline in the Southern sub-region shrank in by 18% in 2019, but the sub-region maintained its share (10%).
- By contrast the Northern sub-region showed the fastest growth in tall buildings of all the sub-regions (+15%) from a low base, maintaining its share in the London planning pipeline (7%).

Source: New London Architecture

Existing tall building stock



In its 2019 report the NLA introduced for the first time an analysis of the existing tall building (20+ storeys) stock across London, defined as those constructed from 1950 onwards. This chart shows the existing tall building stock within each borough from most to least.

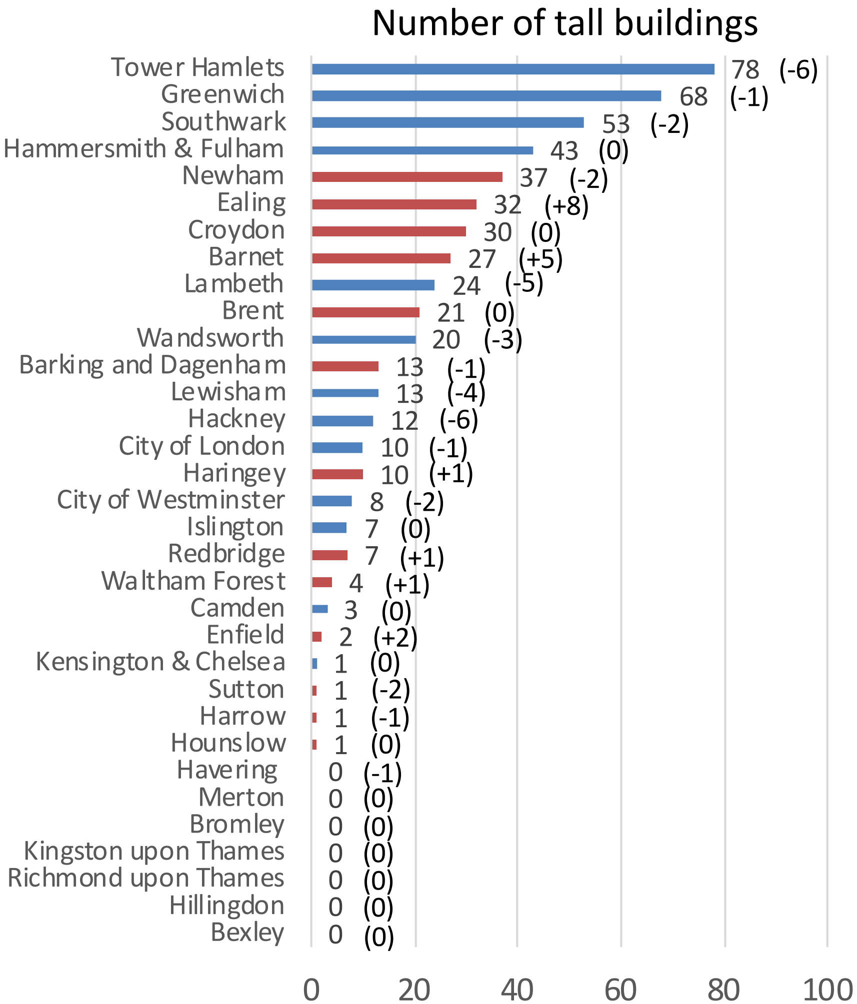
Tower Hamlets stands out with its 100 existing towers, followed by Southwark with 52. A record 60 tall buildings were completed across London in 2019, the most prolific boroughs being Tower Hamlets (+18), Lambeth (+7) and Greenwich (+6).

The chart demonstrates that tall buildings have been a substantially inner London phenomenon (the blue bars). Exceptions to this are Newham and Croydon albeit with much smaller numbers of tall buildings than the leaders.

While most outer London boroughs have at least one or two existing tall buildings, there remain eight boroughs without any existing tall building stock by the end of 2019, all of them in outer London.

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings in 2019 pipeline



This chart shows the number of tall buildings in the pipeline in 2019. While Tower Hamlets continues to outstrip the other boroughs, the numbers in Greenwich, Southwark and Hammersmith & Fulham, all inner London boroughs, were also high .

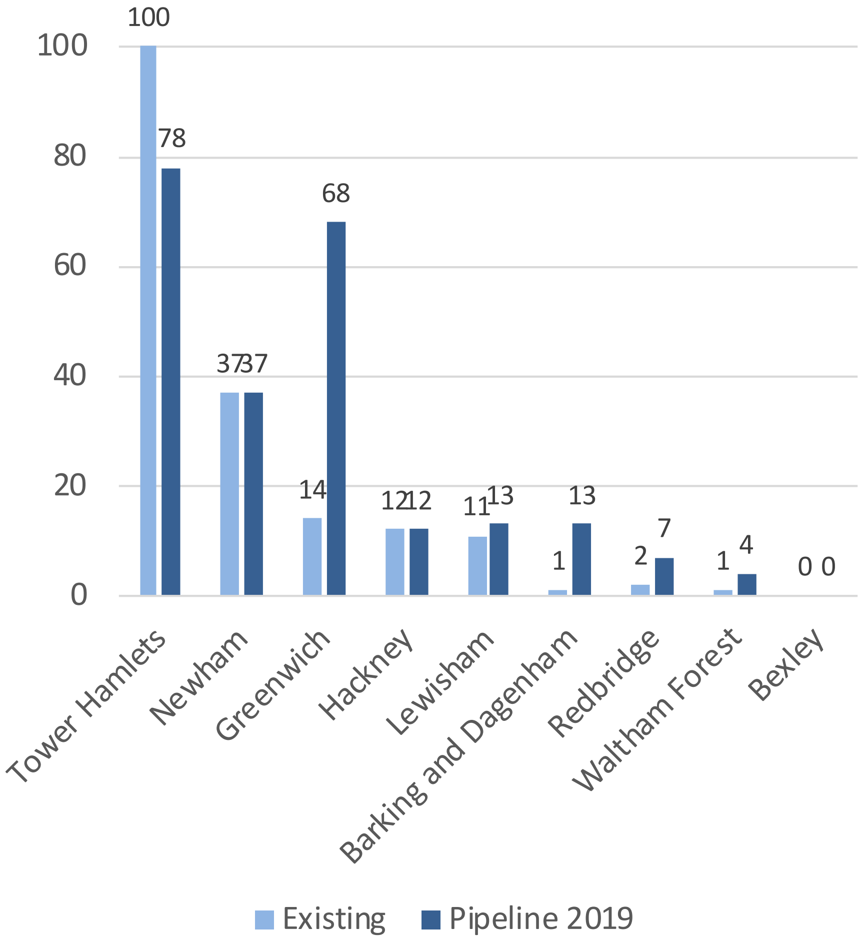
Whereas the number of tall buildings in the pipeline were stable or fell in 2019 (particularly in Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Lambeth) compared with 2018, Ealing saw the largest growth of all the boroughs, adding eight tall buildings to its pipeline in 2019, followed by Barnet (+5).

It is also worth noting that the number of tall buildings in the pipeline exceeds existing stock in 12 boroughs, eight of them in outer London. Ealing is one such borough where the number of tall buildings in the 2019 pipeline is more than ten times larger than its existing stock, reflecting the massive transformation taking place in the borough.

By contrast, seven outer London boroughs have continued to resist the trend towards tall buildings.

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution
Eastern boroughs



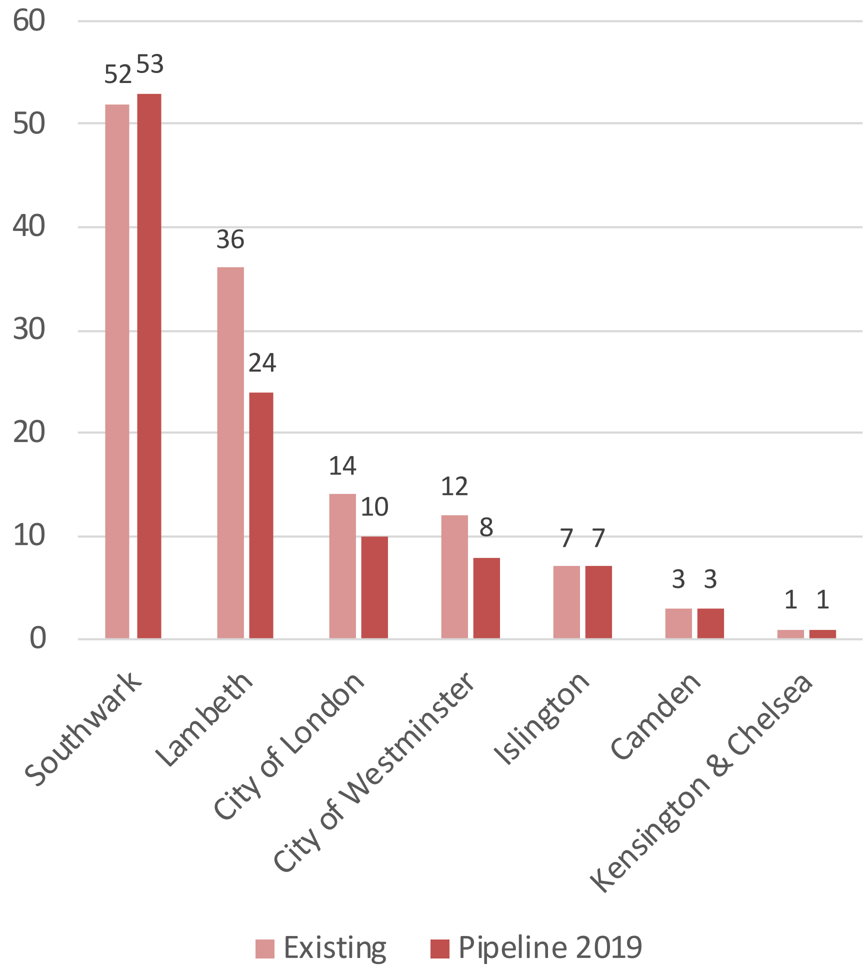
This chart looks at the Eastern sub-region in more detail comparing tall buildings in the pipeline in 2019 with the existing stock defined as those constructed from 1950 onwards.

Tower Hamlets continues to be home to by far the greatest number of tall buildings in the sub-region, with over two and a half times as many as Newham, the next highest. Only Bexley had no tall building stock in 2019.

The pipeline in 2019 saw increases in tall buildings over existing stock in all boroughs except Bexley, which continued to have none. By far the greatest gap between existing stock and tall buildings in the pipeline was in Greenwich, led by the Greenwich Peninsula development, with a 386% more tall buildings in the pipeline compared with existing stock. This contrasts with Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Havering where the number of tall buildings in the 2019 pipeline remains in single figures.

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution
Central boroughs

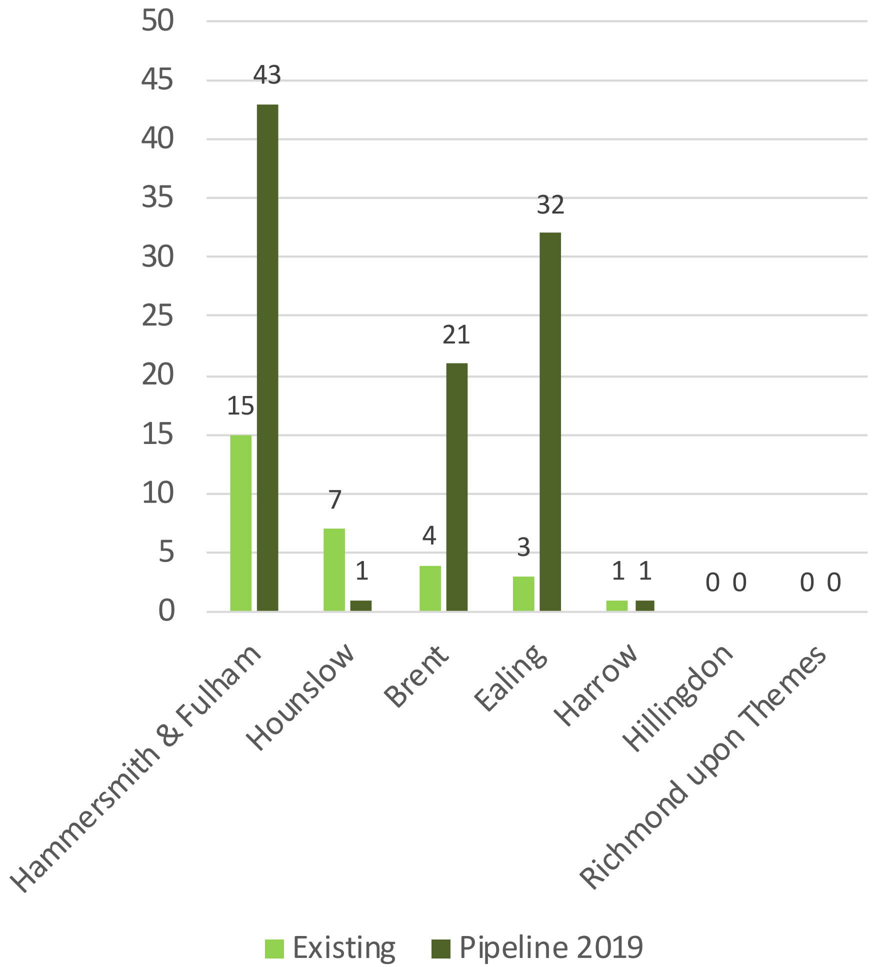


In the Central sub-region:

- As in 2018, Southwark has the largest existing stock of tall buildings, followed by Lambeth with just over two-thirds as many and the Cities of London and Westminster with around a quarter of the number.
- In contrast to 2018, Southwark was the only borough where tall buildings in the pipeline matched existing stock. In the other boroughs, the pipeline was either less than or equal to existing stock, marking a slowdown in new tall building development.

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution
Western boroughs



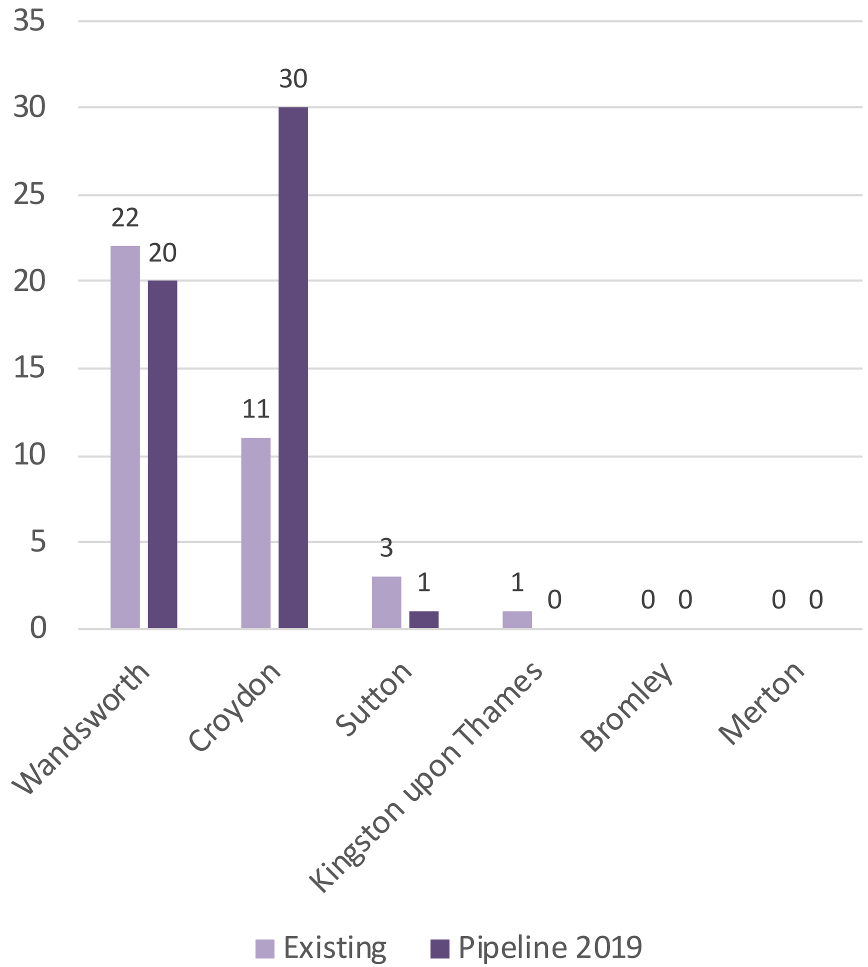
In the Western sub-region:

- Compared with many of the boroughs in the Eastern sub-region and much of the Central sub-region, the existing stock of tall buildings was small to non-existent in all boroughs apart from Hammersmith & Fulham and Hounslow (with 15 and 7 towers respectively).
- Hammersmith & Fulham continues as home to the largest number of tall buildings with 286% more in the pipeline in 2019 than its existing stock. Ealing, with the largest number of tall buildings in the 2019 pipeline, and Brent are facing even more face-changing increases of 1,066% and 525% respectively.
- At the same time Hillingdon and Richmond upon Thames with no existing tall building stock had none in the 2019 pipeline either.

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings revolution

Southern boroughs



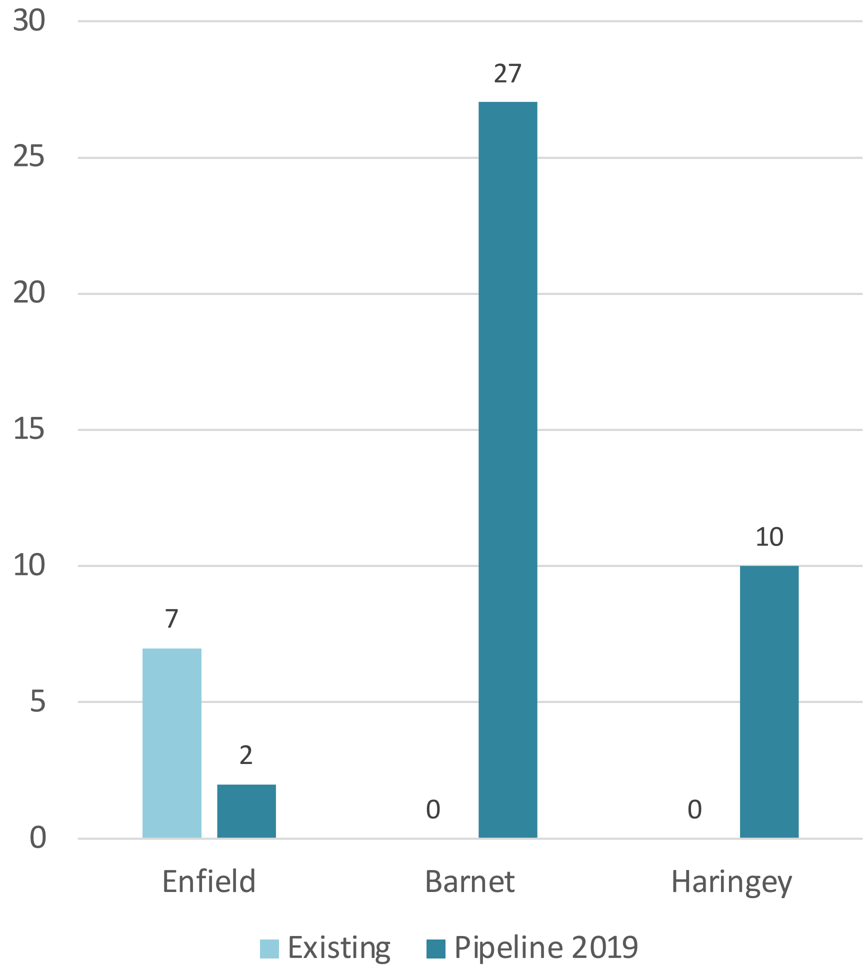
In the Southern sub-region:

- Wandsworth stands out for its existing stock of tall buildings, followed by Croydon with only half as many. Two of the boroughs, Bromley and Merton, have no existing stock of tall buildings.
- While Wandsworth pipeline of tall buildings slowed in 2019, as in 2018 Croydon continued to see three times as many tall buildings in the 2019 pipeline as in their existing stock.
- Three of the Southern boroughs, Kingston upon Thames, Bromley and Merton had no tall buildings in the 2019 pipeline.

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution

Northern boroughs

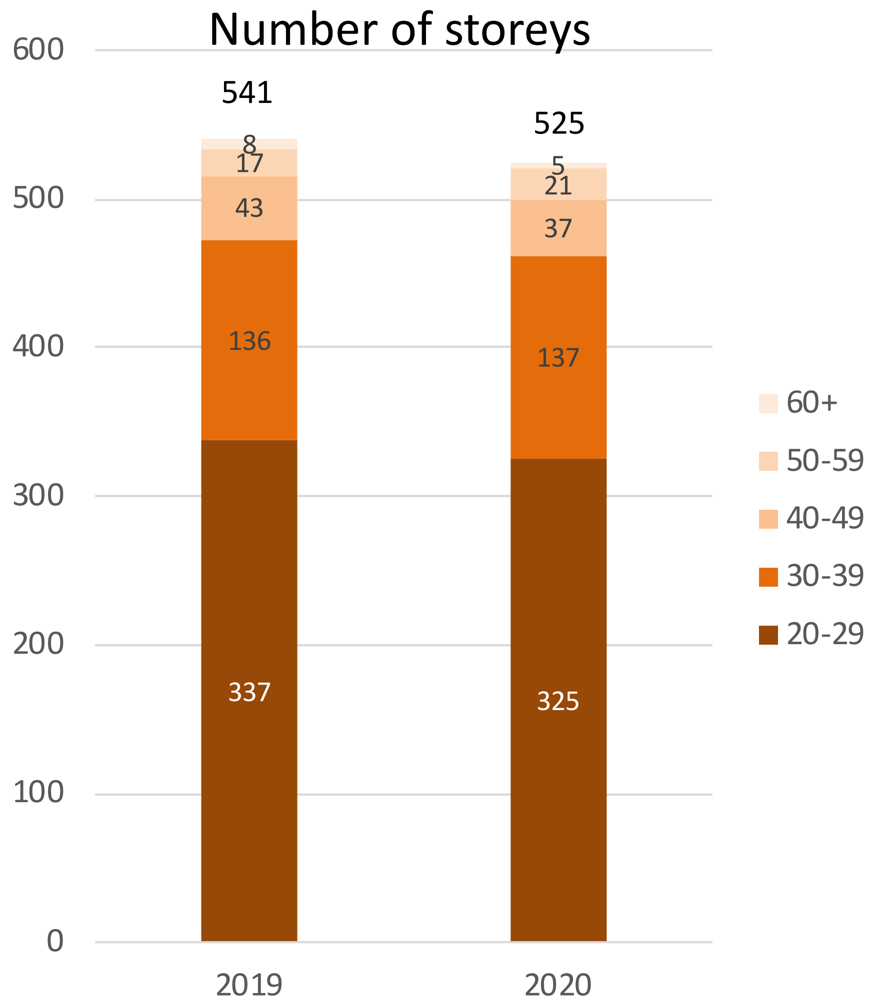


Among the three Northern boroughs:

- Enfield continued to be the only one with any existing tall buildings in 2019 with a further two in the planning pipeline during 2019.
- By contrast both Barnet and, to a lesser extent, Haringey, neither with any existing stock of tall buildings, had large numbers of tall buildings in their 2018 planning pipeline which grew in 2019 (in Barnet by five and in Haringey by one).

Source: New London Architecture

Tall buildings evolution
Building heights in London pipeline 2019 and 2020



Despite the overall fall in the number of buildings of 20+ storeys across London, the height distribution of these buildings remained broadly the same in 2019 compared with 2018.

Likewise the average height across both years was 30 storeys (calculated based on the mid-point of each height band).

This reinforces NLA's argument in its 2019 report that the figures show that there is an 'optimum height preference' for developers, and that building over this height is an exception and not the norm. Reasons given were the links between economies of scale and project viability as construction and engineering costs can increase over certain heights where structural reinforcements and core requirements take up additonal floor space. NLA said further that 'the location of existing tall buildings and the ability to actually be able to build tall in an area (dependant on planning policy, viability and ground conditions) also has a significant influence on height and where tall buildings tend to cluster.'

Despite the overall shrinkage in numbers, buildings with a height of 50-59 storeys increased in absolute terms from 17 to 21 year-on-year.

Unfortunately and in contrast to 2019, the 2020 report did not contain information on building heights for each of the boroughs individually.

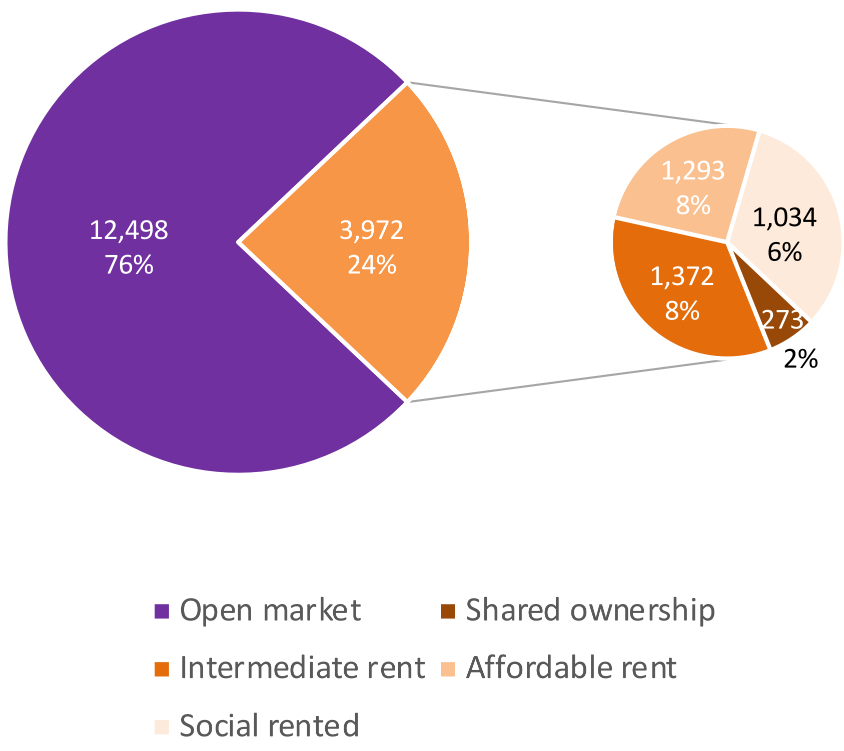
Source: New London Architecture

Schemes with tall buildings completed in 2019

Housing tenure

Number of units

(Total = 16,470)



The 60 buildings of 20+ storeys completed across London in 2019 delivered a total of 16,470 residential units, of which just under a quarter (24%) were classified as affordable. This share falls short of the affordable share of all housing units required by the current London Plan, which amounts to 40%*.

The report itemizes four types of affordable housing. Social rented and affordable rented units are both aimed at Londoners on low incomes with variations in the level of rent up to 80% of open market rent. Intermediate housing (whether wholly rented or part rented/part owned) relates to units available for sale or rent at a cost above social rent, but below market levels.

2,327 (14%) of units were in the social/affordable rented categories, while in the intermediate category, 1,372 (8%) of units were for rent and 273 (2%) shared ownership. At just under 59% of all affordable units, the ratio of social/affordable rented to intermediate units in buildings of 20+ storeys was marginally less than the balance between the two required by the current London Plan (60:40).

* This is based on a targeted annual average of 42,000 net additional homes, of which 17,000 should be affordable.

Source: New London Architecture