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# The shape of developments to come

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The future is rarely a revolution, more of an evolution that we see unfolding before us. The future of driving is, in many ways, already here and is a transportation shift that will have significant implications for land use.

Increased use of technology and the "gig" economy are just two manifestations of evolving approaches. Autonomous vehicles may not have yet reached the mainstream showroom, but many of us rely on two early applications - gps and self parking for example. Car ownership has been falling steadily since the late 90s and is being replaced by "pay-as-you-go" alternatives, especially by city dwellers. Mobility as a Service (Maas) is already a familiar concept that is gathering pace and will be truly transformational when it reaches the countryside. Car rental schemes and Uber are the current convenient, flexible and affordable manifestations, but change is rapid and other companies are emerging to challenge the status quo.

While I am something of a petrol-head, this introduction is to provide some context, to my call to planners, developers, consultants and advisers to come together to discuss how this transport evolution will affect the built environment and, in particular, the housing developments of the future.

California, quick to embrace the era of the petrol engine, is early off the blocks in its response to this new age. The San Francisco planning department has estimated that "parking infrastructure reduces the amount of housing a land parcel can accommodate by 25%". Los Angeles is future-proofing new city developments, which have parking garages that can be quickly and easily converted to take advantage of a time when car spaces won't be needed. And in China managed housing estates are setting up their own arrangements with transport providers to look after the particular needs of their residents.

The UK response will take its own course, but in the not too distant future we will see, to some greater or lesser extent, the end of the suburban front drive and individual garage. What is the effect on the design of individual houses and the wider development layout? If autonomous vehicles are simply just dropping off their passengers, the reduced need for city centre parking could release space for more homes and green space. People can reclaim avenues and cul de sacs as the precision of driverless cars makes for a safer environment. There could be a surge in rural living, with city workers prepared to live further away from their offices, if commuting time becomes working time, in driverless cars that picks them and their neighbours up from their home.

DAC Beachcroft has had the good fortune to explore this subject with Martin Wedderburn, one of the country's leading transportation consultants, who recommends that planners, developers and associated consultants discuss potential adapted strategies from planners and developers for urban, suburban and rural housing". It is a conversation that deserves a wide stage if the housing sector is to seize the brief moment we have to be pro-active in our response and answer the many questions posed by the development of autonomous vehicles.

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