

as friends. Surely this is a better solution than taking two or three separate journeys in smaller vehicles?

Though the 4x4 is often vilified, one vehicle that never seems to get urban environmental protesters heated is the Defender, the daddy of all Land Rovers. I suspect this is because it is such an honest working vehicle and so utterly fit for purpose. The current Defender can trace its roots back to the original 80-inch wheelbase Series I, of course, although virtually no parts are carried over. The closest you get to a carryover part is the soft-top hood cleat – introduced on the 1949 model and still in use on the current Defender. So, at least in concept, the Defender is 60 years old and still going strong.

Sooner or later, though, it must be replaced. I'm often asked what sort of a vehicle a brand-new Defender should be. Well, I don't know anything about Land Rover's official model plans and I'm certainly not involved in developing such a vehicle anymore.¹ But here is my personal view.

For starters, it doesn't need to be too far removed from what we've got now. It needs to be conceived as the world's ultimate all-purpose off-roader – just as the Series I was, just like the current Defender is. So the requirements are that it needs to be tough, simple and full of character.

We've got to get more space into the driving and passenger compartment; the current vehicle is cramped, a by-product of its age. And we've got to get more technology, of course.

It has to continue to be versatile. Right now, the Defender is probably the world's most versatile vehicle, capable of being turned into anything from a station wagon to a pick-up to a fire engine. It would be good to maintain this flexibility. So it would be better to have a ladder frame chassis and some sort of Meccano-style construction. The T5 platform, which is currently used on the Discovery 3, would provide the perfect base. It is not only very strong but also very adaptable.

We should also keep the basic Defender style, just as BMW did with the new Mini, just as the latest Range Rover did from the first Range Rover Classic. In other words, brand spanking new but recognisably a Defender. The Defender probably has the most iconic shape of any vehicle ever designed – so simple, a child could draw it – and we have to keep those general proportions.

We clearly need to give the customers what they want. I've been listening to customers since the Sixties and the one thing they regularly say is that they'd

¹ Roger is now manager of technical communications in the Land Rover press office with no role in developing new vehicles. He insists, 'This will be my last job at Land Rover.'