

CHANGING ATTITUDES TO THE CITY

**The East Thames Corridor
Bristol's Framework Restructured
Bucharest, Budapest and Prague
The Centrality of Urban Design**

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URBAN
DESIGN
QUARTERLY

UDG AGM

The annual general meeting took place on the 20th May and welcomed Jon Rowland as the new Chairman, taking over from Kelvin Campbell. Kelvin stood in as chairman for most of the year and has given much time and energy to the Group, including the current very successful lecture and workshop programme.

Jon Rowland spoke of two main objectives to be confronted over the next few years:

... The first objective involves acting as a network which operates at local and regional level as well as at a national level.

... I am pleased to say that we have now embarked upon the regionalisation of the UDG... and have specifically set up a group within the new committee structure to do just this...

The second objective is for the UDG to become a central player in the environmental design arena, setting the agenda for better urban and rural design and planning. If we are to achieve this we need to increase the influence we have on environmental issues. The UDG with its community interest, its broad church of disciplines, can bring to bear its enthusiasm, objectivity and lack of professional caucusing and jealousy to promote good urban design and a good quality of environment.

The new committee structure of the Group will be based on six groups:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Publications | John Billingham |
| Business | Arnold Linden |
| Communications | Andy Farral |
| Programme and Events | Jack Warshaw |
| Education & Practice | Kelvin Campbell |
| Regional Activities | Roger Evans |

This team together with the Chairman will be responsible for Policy and Strategy. All members are welcome to participate in any of the various groups. Please contact the chairs noted above.

Last year's arrangement with the Regional Studies Association has helped organise the membership database, accounts and records. However, as from this June this management role will come under the Business group. Membership enquiries and notification of change of address should be made to:

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 tel: 0235 815907

REGIONS

Gordon Lewis will be the regional convenor for South Wales and can be contacted on 0222-231401. The list of regional convenors in the last Quarterly neglected to list John Peverley, who will coordinate activities for the Group in the West

Midlands. Members will have already received a letter discussing regional activities from John.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Fred Koetter's lecture in March titled 'Urban Patterns' showed studies carried out in London, Edinburgh and the USA to illustrate the 'physique' of the city. Referring to the many alien building forms littered throughout the City of London, Koetter felt was like "watching a species become extinct... I can trust community groups more than I can trust bureaucrats".

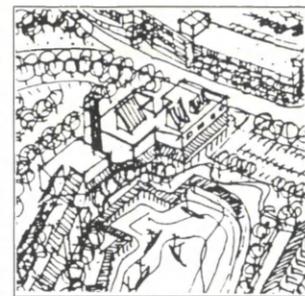
In April **Duncan McLaren** of Friends of the Earth warned members that there was no point in producing aesthetically attractive environments now if we don't look to their effects on the future. He defined the sustainable city as one in which energy saving was the focus of the design brief; buildings and infrastructure designed for a long life, using low-energy transport with undeveloped land safeguarded and the development of vacant sites promoted. The recycling of waste, the control of pollution and the increase of greening would, he felt, be of vital significance.

At the AGM lecture in May **David Lewis** spoke with passion on the Los Angeles riots and the role the urban designer could play in enabling communities to take charge of their own destinies. Listing a series of startling and depressing statistics concerning the urban poor in America, whose total welfare and security cost is estimated at \$170 billion per year, he posed the question "is there a better way to spend this money?" Government spending, he contended, had empowered a bureaucracy, not the poor, and the basic issue was not one of top-down aid but one of empowerment of people in their own neighbourhoods.

The last lecture in this series will be on 17th June when **Geoffrey Broadbent** will talk of 'Emerging Concepts'.

'SHAPE OF LONDON' WORKSHOPS

The second workshop, '**The River Reviewed**' was held in April and chaired by Nicholas Falk. Following a presentation by Barry Moore on the analysis behind the GLC's Thames-side guidelines, a series of presentations looked at different perceptions of the waterways. Falk summarised the work of URBED as a first stage in transforming the environment of the South bank. Judy Grice, chief landscape architect for British Waterways, explained the canal-corridor approach and displayed her team's work on the canals of Westminster and other areas. Finally, James Marriott, an artist working with Platform on a project called 'Still Waters' presented a relief map which evoked a view of London in terms of its watersheds and rivers.



In May Roger Evans chaired '**Activity Spines and Spaces**'. After separate brainstorming sessions to identify the key requirements for successful streets and places, the meeting drew up a list of fifty points on which to campaign. Other ideas for action included a 'no traffic' day for part of London to focus attention on transport issues and the wider functions of city streets. The list is being refined and will provide a platform for action in the Autumn.

The June workshop concerned '**Urban Edge and Gateways**'. Chaired by John Billingham, Jed Griffiths, Strategic Planner for East Sussex CC, described issues arising in the urban fringe, Kelvin Campbell spoke about outer gateways and their characteristics, and Gavin Smith from the Centre for Independent Transport Research in London spoke about inner gateways such as Elephant and Castle and Aldgate.

The remaining workshops in the series are:

8th July
'Emerging Places'
 Barry Shaw

9th September
'Green Structure'

Tom Turner

The workshop series will contribute to the Group's Annual Conference on 30 and 31st October.

BERLIN COMPETITION

The International Union of Architects together with the Federal Government of Germany has announced a competition for the urban development of the Spreebogen area in Berlin. The competition is open to architects, landscape architects and town planners, but those not 'qualified' under these terms could join together with a UDG Member who is. A registration fee of 300DM is payable to the competition organisers: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Wettbewerb Spreebogen, Paulstrasse 20 C, D. 1000 Berlin 21 Germany.

REFASHIONING THE FIFTIES

The twentieth Century Society (formerly Thirties Society) is organising a conference on Fifties Architecture, that period of great optimism for improving the environment, at the AA from 2-4 October. Details with SAE from Alan Powers, 99 Judd Street, London WC1 9NE.

EDITORIAL

This issue takes as its major theme 'Changing Attitudes to the City', the title of a talk given by James Bruges to the Urban Design Forum in Bristol. He put forward the view that it is the definition of city blocks related to the existing urban fabric and its structure that is most important in forming a framework for a number of agencies and developers.

At a different scale Peter Hall in his Kevin Lynch Memorial lecture examines issues relating to the East Thames Corridor and considers that this could create the opportunity for new rail related garden suburbs. He revisits Bedford Park, Hampstead Garden Suburb and Brentham, the latter two by Parker and Unwin, to see what lessons can be learned. In particular he emphasises the need for good links to rail based public transport, something Bedford Park possesses to a greater extent than the other two suburbs. He compares these earlier examples with current work in California where Peter Calthorpe's 'Transit Oriented Developments' are being applied to a city-wide context in Sacramento.

Many would take issue with the densities at which these suburbs operate and whether rail based public transport can be viable although surely this depends on the frequency of stops and possibly a secondary service network.

The 'Urban Villages' report published in June, and briefly reviewed in this issue, aims to deal with this by promoting developments at a higher density with the qualities of mixed use, human scale and a self sustaining basis. The aims are highly laudable but it is difficult to see the normal run of volume builders being prepared to build along the lines of the example illustrated in the report (shown above right) nor do I believe it meets what the public are generally prepared to accept. Nevertheless, the report and the illustrations add to the debate about what environmental qualities people seek and if it leads to a proper approach to sustainability and a wider range of forms of development at different densities then it will be of positive benefit. If on the contrary 'urban villages' as a term is bandied about without meeting these principles, merely to secure planning approvals, then society will be the loser.

John Billingham

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FORTHCOMING ISSUES

UDQ 44
DESIGN CONTROL
Guest Editor
John Punter
Issues on Urban Design Practice and on Education are also proposed.

EAST THAMES CORRIDOR

The second golden age of the garden suburb

Peter Hall

The 1991/2 Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture was given by Professor Hall who is Director of the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at the University of California at Berkeley and who has recently been advising the Government on development strategies for the south east. In October this year he will take up a Chair of Planning at University College London and also continue to spend part of the year at Berkeley.

When I received the invitation to give this lecture my first inclination was to decline. Not because I was feeling churlish or arrogant, but simply because I felt incompetent to deliver it. I never had had the slightest sense of myself as an urban designer; I came to planning through geography, and I think of myself as an urban and regional planner, with a stress on the second. My sense of urban design, I suppose, is about as highly developed as the next person's in the street. So I really felt I couldn't trespass on territory that wasn't mine.

Then I felt a double trepidation, because this was to be the Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture. I have had something of a feeling of awe toward Kevin Lynch, ever since I first came across his work some thirty years ago. I was then going through a kind of adulation of things American, as was very common at that time. The winds of urban change were blowing across the Atlantic, bringing with them new and fresh ideas, among which some of the most remarkable were from Lynch. The notion, for instance, that the view from the road was now an important element in the design of cities. The idea that a loose grid form, with multiple centres, was perhaps a perfectly valid alternative to traditional star-shaped or dendritic cities. Those notions, and others coming from the same direction, had an enormous influence on a whole generation of British planners and of British planning. Lynch's appropriate memorial might well be not this lecture, but Milton Keynes: *si monumentum requiris, circumspice*.

That gave me a certain comfort, as I sat down to sketch out some ideas. What could I possibly say or do, that might justify bringing you all out on a winter night like this, when instead you might ... as my favourite American newspaper columnist recently put it ... be curled up in front of a roaring telly?

I decided to start at the beginning. Giving two earlier lectures of a similar memorial nature, dedicated to two other equally distinguished planners, Frederic Osborn and Jimmy James, I found it helpful to ask: what would they have thought about it all? Suppose you could have brought them back from the shades, what would they have said? I decided to do the same for Lynch.

EAST THAMES CORRIDOR

What would he have told us, if we could have taken him down the East Thames from the Royal Docks to Tilbury and Gravesend? What methods would he have used, and what advice would he have given us?

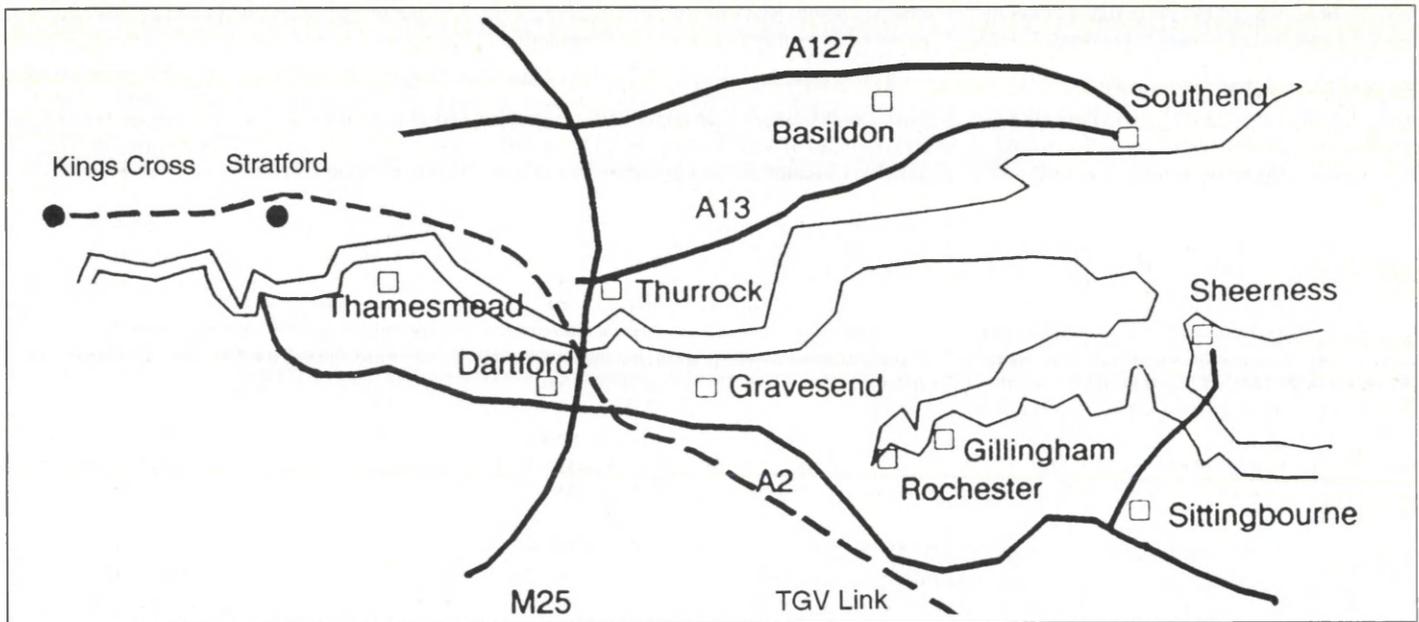
Kevin Lynch had two fundamental approaches to urban design. One, which made him famous and has been imitated hundreds of times in design schools all over the world, was to ask people, absolutely ordinary people, to describe what they felt as they walked about cities or rode about them. The other was to do this himself, very meticulously, in cities all over the world. The travel journals of his Italian tour of 1952-3, which have been reproduced by Tridib Banerjee and Michael Southworth in their wonderful edition of his work, "City Sense

and City Design", are very revealing as to his method. Reading these, and other essays, I was struck by a remarkable similarity to the style of Raymond Unwin, whose remarkable tome, "Town Planning in Practice", is in fact a textbook of urban design, likewise based on Unwin's own fantastically deep experience of what you could call the perambulatory approach to city form. This, I was convinced, was the way to go.

But there was of course a problem. Where was the model? What streets, for this particular exercise, needed to be walked as Lynch or Unwin would have walked them? For, to a remarkable extent, the East Thames Corridor is a tabula rasa. Of course it does have an urban structure, a remarkable structure of small waterside communities. But the overwhelming sense, as you travel the corridor, is of the vast intervening spaces of marsh or quarried chalk, always backed by the equally vast expanse of the tidal Thames. It is a very horizontal landscape, a very Eastern English landscape: often savagely degraded, often very monotonous, but possessing a kind of tremendous drama or glory of its own, because of the huge mass of water and the feeling that this is indeed England's great corridor to Europe and the world.

The townscapes are important, of course, very important. They often give an extraordinary sense of history. There is the great street market at the branching of the ways of the great eastern post road at Stratford Broadway, the old medieval herring port next to the great space of the old ruined Abbey in Barking, the high street of Gravesend climbing so dramatically away from the river; all these and others are going to have to be conserved and enhanced. But they don't really give us much clue as to what to do with the intervening space. This is going to be a job of designing not one new town, but perhaps a dozen.

We have to start with a structure. That is going to be a key remit for the consultants, Llewelyn Davies Planning, and I do not want to trespass on their territory. But I think that Lynch can help all of us here. In one of his finest general essays, an undated piece called "The Visual Shape of the Shapeless Metropolis", he distinguishes what he calls "those dimensions which seem most crucial in perception at that scale, and which also have some likelihood for manipulation by planned action". First, interestingly, he puts "the major path system ... the streets, rail lines, canals, promenades, airways". He is quite specific that "These are perhaps the most crucial elements of all". A plan, he says, would need to "specify the general sequence form of the various paths (progressive, recurrent, climactic, etc) as well as the principal entry and climax points". In second place he lists "The major centres, focal points or nodes", in other words "the peaks of density, or access, such as shopping centers and major terminals". The plan, he says, should "be concerned with the location of these nodal points; their general perceptual character; their relation to each other, to the path system, and to the natural features; their



sense of local connection or of contrast with their wider surroundings:.. And third, he mentions what he calls "Special districts" which he defines as "areas of appreciable size associated with memorable activities, character, or associations": large special institutions like universities and hospitals, ports and heavy industry, the CBD or principal office districts, major open spaces or recreation office districts, major open spaces or recreation zones, and special historical areas. The plan, he says, "would be concerned with the location of these districts, their visibility and accessibility from the path system, and their general visual character including spatial and activity texture, silhouette, landscaping, light, climate and noise" (Lynch, 1990, 69).

PATHS

Here, I think, Lynch gives us what we need to get started. For, in the essay, he goes on to discuss alternative models of metropolitan form ... a theme he had also discussed in another classic paper, "The Pattern of the Metropolis" 1961. He started, interestingly for our present purposes, with what he called "The Linear System". This was "organized by a set of parallel, relatively close, dominant paths, which are reinforced by the presence of a dominant edge or edges. The interplay between path and edge is an important element of the visual form. The paths are organized into rhythmically recurrent visual sequences". "Along the paths", he writes, "are a chain of distinct focal points, perhaps changing progressively in any one direction, and perhaps with some ranking of importance. Between the centers on the parallel lines run short cross-paths. Foci, cross-paths, and sequential rhythms are co-ordinated so that progress along one main path can mentally be correlated with that long the other main paths. There may be one main center, or several, distributed along the lines ... one main path, or two or three". Later he says that "Major open spaces are also linear, and probably part of the edge system. They have sequential patterns along their lengths,

which are also correlated with the path sequences". Lynch points out, significantly, that "This form can grow indefinitely in either longitudinal direction without losing its integrity, but can grow laterally very little. Thus it may be best fitted to sites (as on a narrow sea coast) where lateral expansion is permanently restricted". And he concludes that "Here we have a model powerful enough to organise a large complex, without hampering or being incongruent with its communications-dominated function (as long as the region is otherwise constrained at the sides or attracted to the center line)". He seems almost to have been describing the East Thames Corridor (Lynch 1990, 76-7). For the first point about the corridor, which all observers have grasped from the first analyses by SERPLAN, is the strength of the paths. First of all, there is the river itself, which gives an immensely strong linear characteristic to the entire development. Two major highways, effectively of motorway standard or planned to become such, the A13 and the A2, define its outer limits on the north and south sides respectively. An additional spine, the planned Thames Spine Route including the Dartford Bypass, runs in parallel on the south side nearer the river, with frequent short cross-links to the A2. The Dartford Bridge and Tunnel and the planned East London River Crossing provide very powerful perpendicular cross ties. Similarly, there are parallel rail spines formed by the Tilbury line on the north side and the North Thames line on the south. All that was missing was a dominant diagonal path; and the historic decision, to route the Channel Tunnel Rail Link across the corridor, has provided this.

The rail link is important in at least two ways. First, it is destined to become the main way in which people are going to travel between London and the main cities on the north-west European mainland: Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Cologne, Frankfurt. So it, and by definition the corridor, will provide the main first and last image of

London for visitors to Britain. Lynch wrote of the view from the road; we need to be thinking of the view from the train. Traditionally, train journeys into and out of London are associated with long and dreary miles of sordid and monotonous house backs. We have to do something more glorious with the rail link. Second, if only in order to help pay for it, the rail link corridor will also need to carry the main commuter rail service to the entire corridor, both for longer-distance commuters coming into London from East and Mid-Kent, and also for shorter-distance travellers within the corridor itself. So, in a sense, the whole corridor will be strung along this dominant spine. And that will be particularly the case, because it is certain to be the policy of any government to encourage as many trips as possible, especially trips to and from work, to be made on rail rather than on the roads.

NODES

That brings us, logically, to Lynch's "major centers, focal points or nodes". In the corridor, they almost seem to define themselves; at least, that seems to be the feeling that emerges from the analyses that have been made so far. At the western end we have two: the Royal Docks, part of the London Docklands Development Corporation, in which redevelopment has unfortunately been stalled by the current economic recession, but will surely resume; and Stratford, the site of the future international rail terminal. The plan of course is that British Rail will run trains on to King's Cross, while others ... running via Stratford or not will have to be constructed ... will go to the terminal under construction at Waterloo, which will have opened long in advance of the rail link, in 1993. There are those who believe that Stratford will be an insignificant way station on the way to King's Cross, or at most a kind of Parkway station for those who want to come by car. It will certainly be the latter, but it will be far more than that: linked to two tube lines, the Docklands Light Rail

and the new Crossrail express link across central London, it will surely become London's main European station for the City and a large part of the West End. So logically, difficult as it may be to conceive for those who look at the area today, it must over time develop the same kinds of facilities as today cluster around a major international airport.

Two of Lynch's nodes, then, at the west end, a mere two and a half miles from each other, or four minutes on the new Jubilee line. The other major node, without doubt, has got to be somewhere on the intersection between the rail link and the M25. It could be on the Essex side, at Rainham, or on the Kent side at Dartford; it could even be at both, though then problems might arise with the number of station stops on the rail link. For this too has got to be an activity centre of far more than local importance: in fact a Euro-city, dedicated to activities that have an international dimension. One of the most important and most intriguing tasks for those who will plan the development of the corridor is exactly what mix of activities will go here, what mix in the Royals and what mix at Stratford. I can't anticipate this evening what may emerge in the final scheme. What is certain is that they will have to include an entire range of activities that we now barely conceive of as major bases of urban economies: scientific research and higher education, entertainment and cultural activities, exhibition and conference space, centres for human interaction on a vast scale. And the resulting built forms will powerfully shape what Lynch, writing about such nodes, called "the mix of visible activity, spatial texture, the use of associated landmarks, skylines, distant visibility, entrance points, micro-climate and noise" (Lynch 1990, 69). We need to make an effort, here, to conceive the likely scale of development at these three nodes, and the way in which they will appear to the first-time visitor to Britain by the new rail link. There is scope here for visual drama of a very high order, and it must not be missed.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Then we have Lynch's third element, the "special districts". Some of these, too, almost define themselves. As well as being a home for a very wide array of advanced service activities, the corridor will have to continue to be a major trade route for goods. The Port of London at Tilbury, the areas of surviving heavy industry and power generation along the riverside, the possibility of large-scale freight transfer activities if the rail link were designed to carry freight, the special historic townscapes like those at Barking or Gravesend, the new community forest at the eastern edge of London, the site of special scientific interest in the Rainham Marshes, all of these will become central elements or fixed points upon which the urban design will have to be hung.

So one can almost say that the main elements of the design fall logically into place of their own accord. There will be parallel road and rail routes on each side of the

Thames itself. The new rail link, and the associated commuter services, will provide an additional diagonal path linking these others. All these will be joined by many short cross-links, two of which will be longer and of regional importance: the M25 and the new East London River Crossing. There will be two strong activity anchors at the western end, one of which will form a kind of articulation or jointing structure with the Docklands development. And there will be one or more such anchors at the eastern end. Between them, and around them, areas of special character will provide constraints and opportunities which the urban design will have to recognise.

But what about those intervening spaces? A major objective of the entire exercise, after all, must be to provide homes to meet a substantial part of the entire projected demand in the South East of England over the next fifteen years. How many, precisely, will be established only in the course of the consultants' work. But we must be talking of the equivalent of several medium-sized new communities. We are not, of course, talking about either new towns of the kind that we built in the approximately twenty years between the start of Harlow and Stevenage and the start of Milton Keynes and Peterborough. Nor are we talking about the smaller, self-contained, privately-financed new communities, like Stone Bassett and Foxley Wood, that became so fashionable with the housebuilders (but so much less popular with Secretaries of State for the Environment) during the 1980s. The reason we are not talking about either is, once again, that the geographical conditions in the corridor very powerfully condition what kinds of communities can be built.

GARDEN SUBURBS

What we are talking about, I think, is garden suburbs. By definition, they are going to be suburbs, because however many jobs we can provide in the corridor itself, many of the people who come to live here will find employment in central London, while relatively few are likely to find suitable employment on their own front doorsteps. They are also going to be suburbs because the very linear form of the corridor means that the predominant direction of movement is going to be east to west, or vice-versa, along the spines. And they are going to be suburbs because they will be built by private builders working to sell their houses in the market, and the market shows that the majority of people are going to be looking for fairly conventional single-family housing with private garden space.

I know that there will be those who will immediately jump up and remind me that there are huge and fundamental demographic changes like rising divorce rates and two-income childless couples; and that our dinosaur-like builders are providing homes for the market of twenty or thirty years ago. I heard that argument very persistently in the city of Adelaide, South Australia, where I have been working as regional planning consultant over the past couple of years. But,

when the planners conducted a housing preference survey, they found that all these new kinds of household wanted exactly the kinds of conventional single-family housing that the old kinds always wanted. Indeed, the single mums were positively insulted that anyone should be trying to fob them off with less. And I strongly suspect that what goes for South Australia will go also for the East Thames.

The real question is what sort of suburbs. They could be good or bad. There is probably a good way of building them, one that represents one of the best British urban design traditions, the garden suburb. So I would like, without apology, to describe this tradition and what it might imply for design in the corridor.

The garden suburb has habitually been presented in the literature as if it were a failed garden city. This is because it disappointed the purists in the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, the precursor of today's TCPA. In fact, from the very start Howard's Association had two objectives: as well as the "building of new towns in country districts on well thought out principles", also "the creation of Garden Suburbs, on similar principles, for the immediate relief of existing towns" as well as "the building of Garden Villages .. for properly housing the working classes near their work" (Abercrombie 1910, 20). And the Association warmly commended the construction of Hampstead Garden Suburb, as well as the dozen or so schemes co-ordinated by Co-Partnership Tenants between 1901 and World War One. They did object, vociferously, to what Clifford Culpin called "quite a number of schemes which take the title 'Garden City' promiscuously, without having any claim whatever to use the name, their objects being as foreign as possible to the conceptions of the founders of the movement" (Culpin 1913, 5). And, after World War One C B Purdom, then editor of the Association's magazine and one of the true Garden City purists, complained: "There is hardly a district in which the local council does not claim to be building one, and unscrupulous builders everywhere display the name on their advertisements ... The thing itself is nowhere to be seen at the present date, but in Hertfordshire, at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City" (Purdom 1921, 33).

Unfortunately, it was precisely the mythical quality of Letchworth and Welwyn, and then the postwar new towns built in their image, that has obscured the real achievement of the planned garden suburb between about 1870 and the onset of World War One. The original inspiration was American, and Howard was without doubt well aware of it, for he seems to have borrowed the very name Garden city from what was in fact a pure garden suburb outside Chicago. The garden suburb, as first conceived there, was a planned speculative housing development built around a stop on a tramway line or a commuter rail station. Dozens were built, between about 1870 and 1910, around American cities, particularly in the heroic age of trolley-car and light-rail construction after

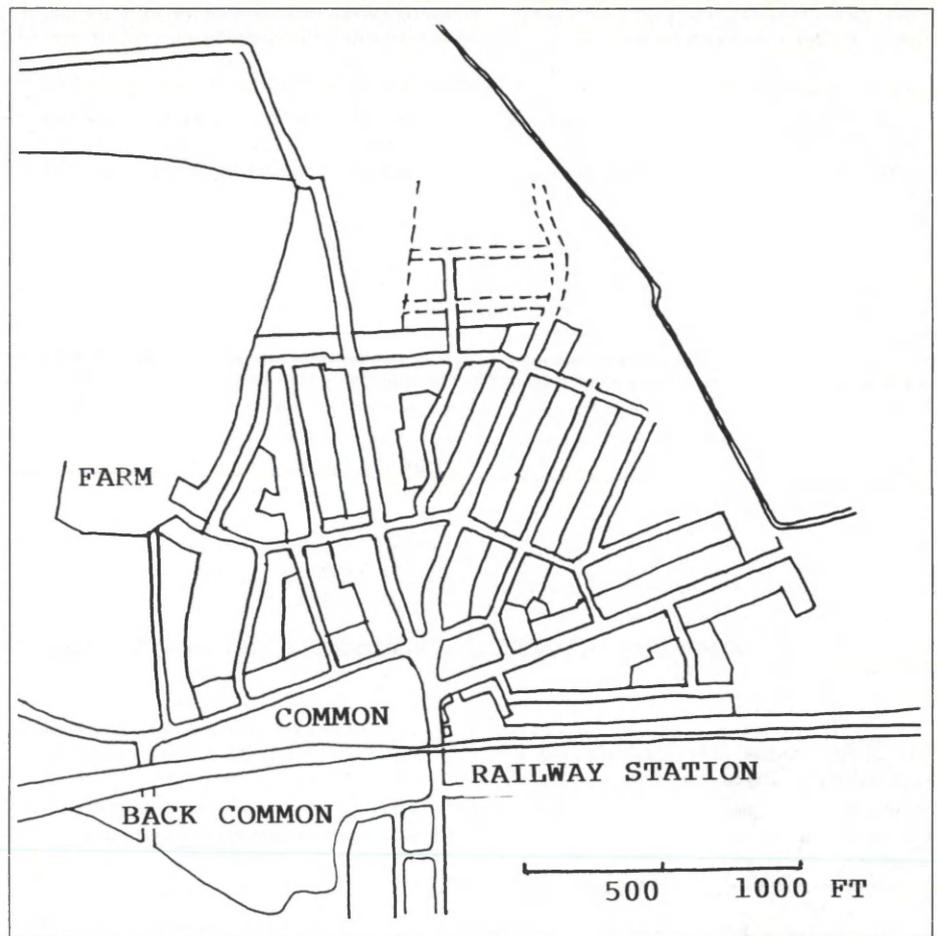
1890. The major transit barons, such as Henry Huntingdon in Los Angeles or F E "Borax" Smith in the San Francisco Bay Area, developed their very extensive systems as deliberate vehicles for real-estate speculation on a huge scale. The usual resulting pattern is very similar all the way from St Louis to Oakland and Berkeley in California. The usual pattern was a gated community, the gates symbolizing arcadian peace and protection from what was doubtless the nearby city. Within, detached houses were built on curving street lines, with a good deal of stress on aesthetic quality in the better developments.

BEDFORD PARK

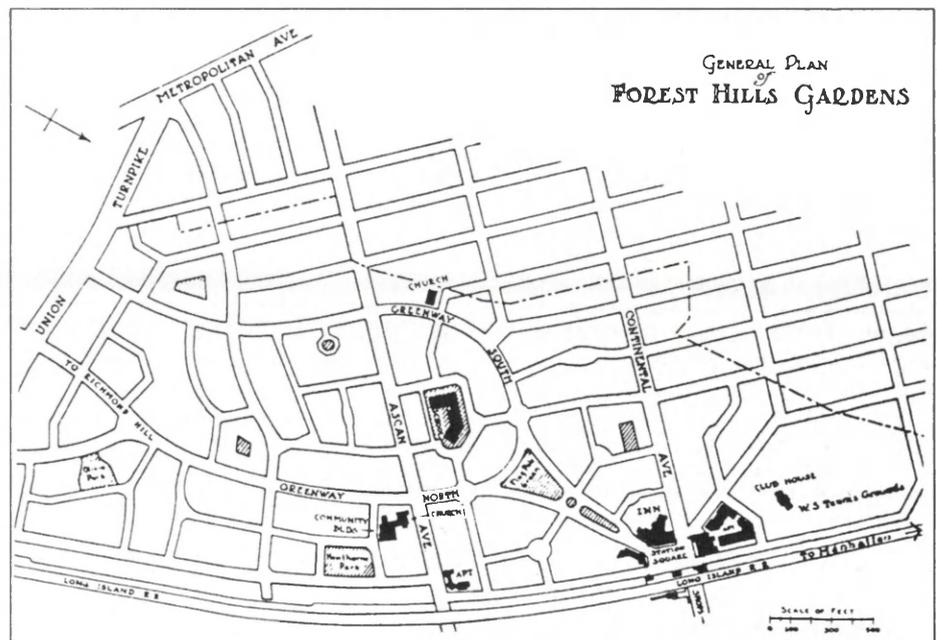
It was this kind of development that the speculator Jonathan Carr introduced to England with Bedford Park in west London, started in 1877. This "oasis", as the American planning historian Walter Creese describes it, was consciously planned around a railway station on the then brand-new District line extension to Richmond. Norman Shaw, who was appointed architect when the project had already started, planned a church and tavern and general store immediately next to the station, clustered around the existing open space of Acton Green, which thus served as a kind of village green where the local civic society still holds an annual "Green Day" each June. A few steps away was a social club. Radiating from this complex was a complex of fairly short streets, four of them straight ... one indeed originally a Roman road ... the rest curving. Even the straight streets were designed to be closed by buildings. The curving streets offer a constantly changing vista to the returning commuter, who is deceived by false closures that then reveal further streetscapes.

It is a brilliant piece of design, hardly ever equalled. Creese called it "the first sylvan setting for the middle class, where the nightingale and lark could still be heard" (Creese 1966, 89). John Lindley, the landowner, was curator of the Royal Horticultural Society and his trees determined the ground plan. Additionally, limes, poplars and willows were planted. Everyone, even at the time, noticed how different this was from conventional suburbs; the difference lay in the effect of greenery in breaking hard lines. So, as he points out, the effect is very un-stiff, because vistas are closed by trees, and space is established through filtered light (Creese 1966, 89-90). The proud paterfamilias could have a feeling of "a house of his own in the country", as Betjeman put it (Creese 1966, 91-2). Popular magazines noticed it; one wrote: "It is hardly four years since the first brick of the first houses was laid, and yet the whole place has the snug, warm look of having been inhabited for at least a century" (Creese 1966, 89).

There is a quite uncanny parallel between Bedford Park and an American development, Forest Hills Gardens in the Borough of Queens in New York City, begun some 35 years later. Here too the streets branch out from the commuter train station, with the



Above: Bedford Park, Chiswick in 1896 showing the original area laid out in 1877. The first architect was E W Godwin, followed by Norman Shaw, Maurice Adams and E J May. Below: Forest Hills Gardens, Queens, New York.



shopping street on the other side. Here too there is a similar stress on the enclosed neighbourhood ... unsurprisingly, perhaps, since this project was started by the Russell Sage Foundation and provided the model for the Foundation's resident sociologist, Clarence Perry, when he developed his concept of the neighbourhood unit in the late 1920s. And, for those of you who like historical connections, he did so for the New York Regional Plan, which was being directed by Thomas Adams, a British emigré who was then regularly shuttling across the Atlantic to a planning consultancy back here in London. I don't know of any conscious imitation of Bedford Park, but it seems inconceivable that the architect planner of Forest Hills Gardens, Grosvenor Atterbury, did not know of it.

The reason these two suburbs work so well, I think, is that they are deliberately and self-consciously railway suburbs. How right was one writer of the 1950's recalling a Victorian childhood, who wrote that "Suburbia was a railway state ... a state of existence within a few minutes walk of the railway station, a few minutes of the shops, and a few minutes walk of the fields" (Kenward 1955, 74). Given that fact, all three needed to be stressed in the overall design. These best of all suburbs are deliberately focussed on station and shops. They are at the same time so related to green space that they have a sense of arcadian, semi-rural calm. The Victorian commuter left his rural retreat to focus on the station that would take him into the bustling city; he returned to face back into the Arcadian retreat.

Now the strange fact is that Raymond Unwin, that earlier master theorist of urban design, who in so many ways anticipated Lynch, seems never to have understood this basic fact. The more one looks at Unwin's garden suburbs, the more puzzling and the more unsatisfactory they become.

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB

Creese notes that Hampstead can seem very disappointing on one visit (Creese 1966, 220). I would have to say that it appears even more so after two or three, or ten. It is true, of course, that he could not choose his sites freely, and that he always stressed the need to adapt the design to the topography. But even so, it is impossible to avoid using the old quip about Unwin's design: that, like the curate's egg, it was good in parts. He and his collaborator, Barry Parker, are at their best at the very micro-scale, comprising a group of houses around a green or on a short cul-de-sac space, in which Hampstead abounds. At this scale, as in Bedford Park, there is a good feeling of harmony with nature, especially through tile roofs, which Unwin and Parker borrowed from William Morris; in his book Unwin stressed that roofs were very important in a town's image (Unwin 1909, 137-8); he felt that the roofline gave a communal quality to the townscape, which is why he disliked flat roofs (Creese 1966, 227-9).

All this is good. So is some of the street planning, again at this local scale: the special

act of Parliament allowed the local by-laws to be set aside so as to create closes and culs-de-sacs. They are filled with parked cars today, but they still give the essential quality of what Creese calls "the medieval implications of mystery, safety and enclosure within the settlement" (Creese 1966, 239). But, especially given that the site is so small ... originally, only 243 acres ... the larger design is, frankly, a mess.

To see how much a mess, arrive at Hampstead the way the Edwardian commuter would. He has a covered way down from the new Golder's Green tube station. He makes a rather abrupt hairpin right turn and there is a rather low-key gateway into the suburb. The new shopping centre is on his left, under the bridge; it has the same approximate relationship to the suburb as at Bedford Park, but as we shall see in a minute it doesn't work in the same way at all.

For what happens now is that he begins to navigate a long straight street that looks even longer and straighter than it actually is, which is terminated at a T-junction. The street on the left takes him back to the main Finchley Road, the street he has just left. The one on the right does take him into the southern half of the suburb, but it directly serves only a narrow ribbon of houses on the east side of the Heath extension. All other residents are now required to turn again, having progressively walked east, south, east again and finally north, to get to where they want to go.

It is all rather perverse. One cannot help thinking that Unwin had decided that this is the daily experience they ought to have. For what he has done is to lead them to his suburb by his Heath extension, which is critical to his concept because it provides a green belt and a psychological barrier vis-a-vis the evil city to the south. He makes such a meal of this that, as I am sure you all know, he actually builds a fake medieval wall to mark the boundary of the heath and the suburb, complete with fake medieval watchtowers. And this was something that he himself says, in his book, would be an "affectation" (Unwin 1909, 154). He says that we should seek to give an edge to towns, or to distinguish new suburbs.

"Though we shall not copy the fortified wall of the old city, we may take from it a most pregnant suggestion of the value of defining and limiting towns, suburbs and new areas generally" (Unwin 1909, 154). He suggested using narrow woodland belts, or a wide grass glade and avenue; or, in larger towns, wide belts and park land, playing fields or agricultural land may be used (Unwin 1909, 163).

We can understand that, perhaps. The garden suburb was seen as a reaction, as a counterweight to the real and imagined evils of the late Victorian industrial city. It embodies the concept that Morris had set out in some lines of his 1868 poem *The Earthly Paradise*:

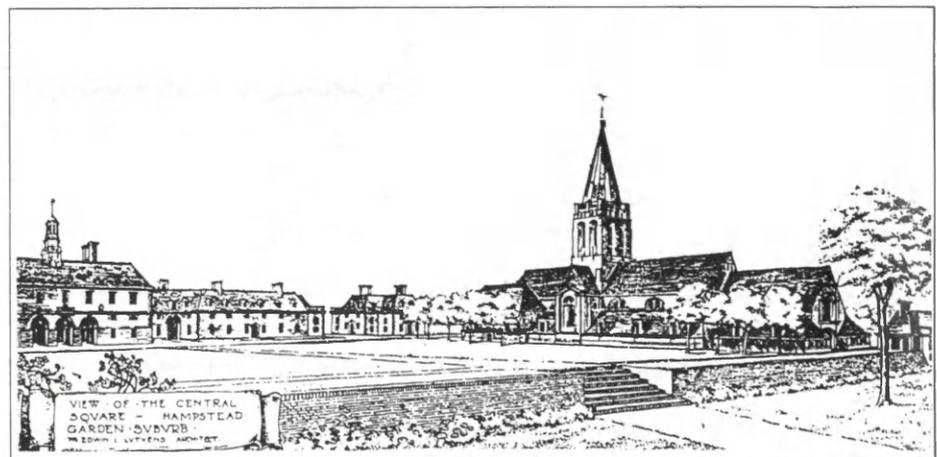
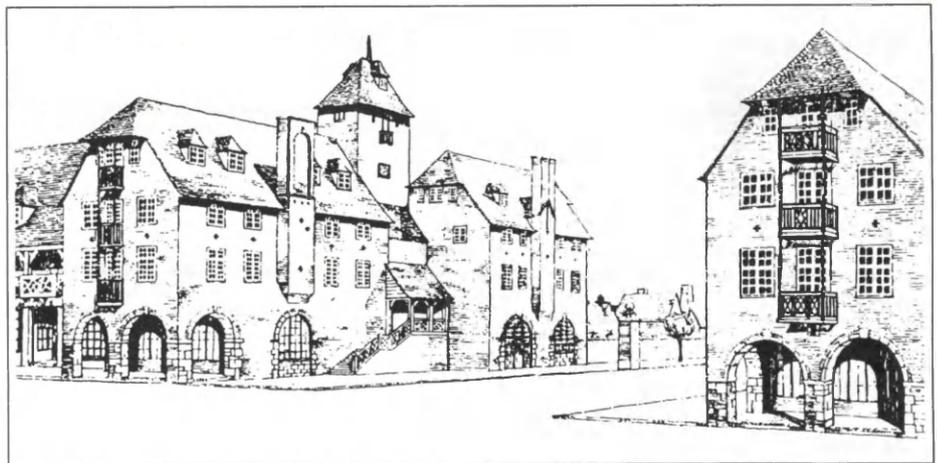
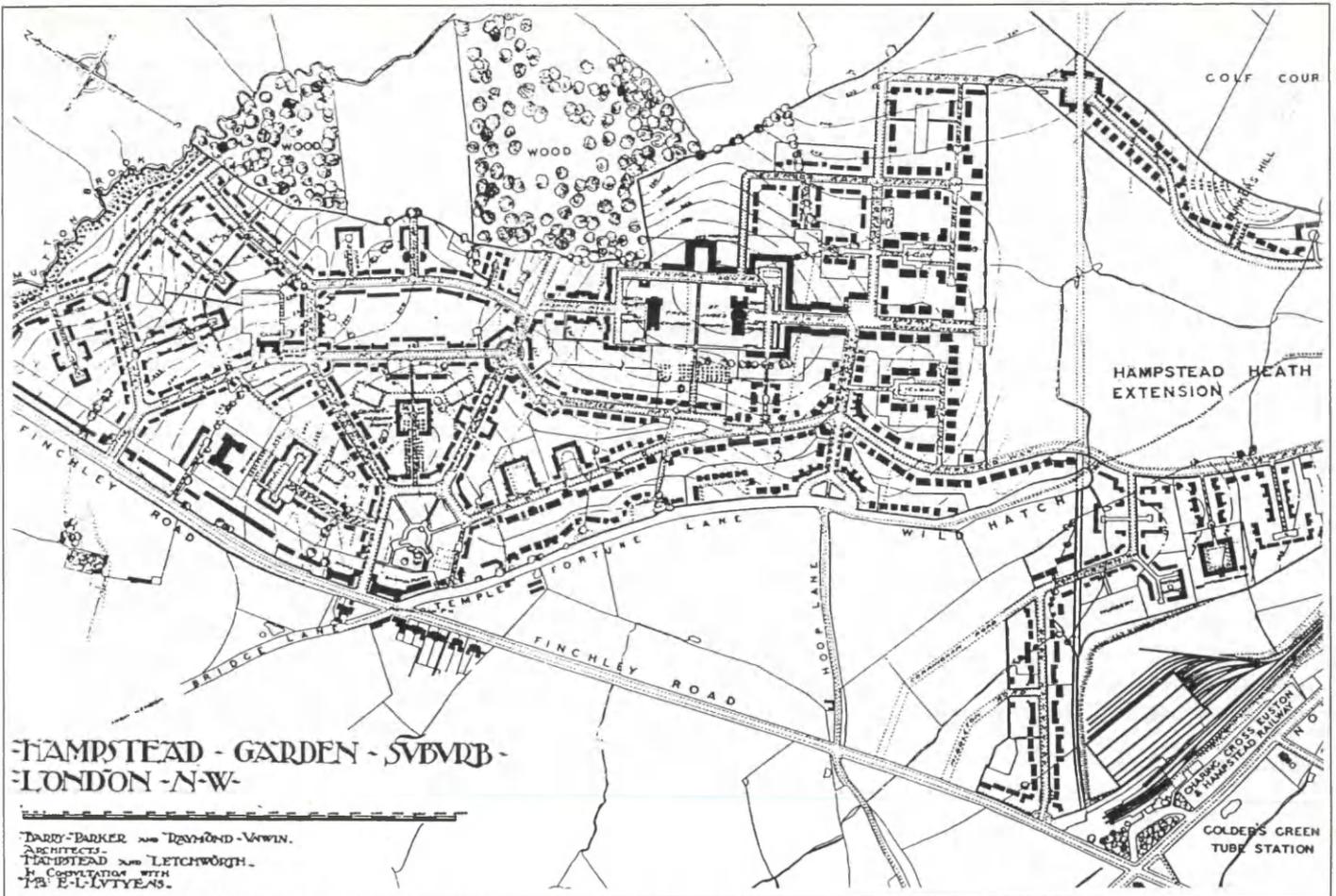
"Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small and white and clean,

The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green".

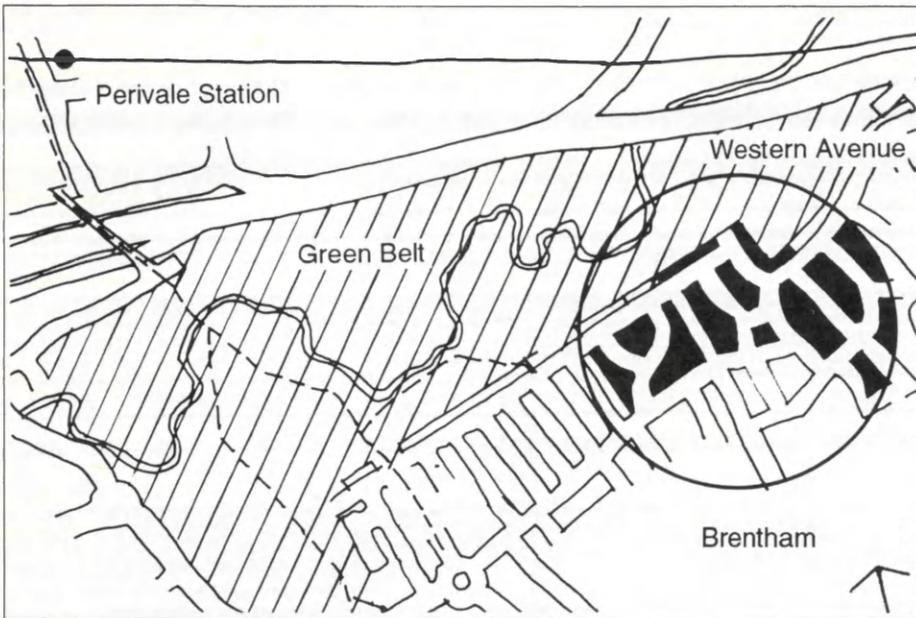
Given all that, the real oddity about Hampstead was that in his writing, Unwin actually stressed the value of the railway station as a kind of entrance gateway to the town (Unwin 1909, 171). He says that space in front of the railway station is crucial as the point of arrival ... and he repeats the point. It need not be the central point of the town, but it should be connected to the centre by a clear street pattern, so that the stranger can orient himself (Unwin 1909, 187-9). And this main centre should be on the high ground, sometimes on a slope (Unwin 1909, 189). If that was the aim, Hampstead certainly did not achieve it. The centre is on the high ground, as we shall see in a minute. But the station has no presence at all, and the connecting route is about as obscure and disorientating as it is possible to be.

The only other practical way for this Edwardian commuter to get home would be to hop on one of the tramcars of the London Metropolitan Tramways and ride another half mile up the Finchley Road, alighting at Unwin's extraordinarily fanciful Germanic gateway, which he borrowed either from Rothenburg ob der Tauber, a town he constantly sketched, or from a very similar gateway which Georg Metzendorf had designed for the garden suburb of Margarethenhohe outside Essen. It was widely noticed at the time that Hampstead followed German models, and Thomas Mawson in 1911 noted that the German style was influenced by medieval cities (Creese 1966, 243). Unwin adopted the German style of massing buildings and achieving more effective street pictures; he knew about "Die Städtebau" when he did Hampstead, but not at the time of Letchworth (Creese 1966, 243). According to Creese, the monumental Temple Fortune gateway was supposed to have a market place and public forum behind it, much like Margarethenhohe; but it somehow never happened. Perhaps that is the clue to the failure of the wider design (Creese 1966, 244). From there, it is true, the transition into the suburb is much better handled, through a dendritic pattern of curving streets which branch out in Bedford Park fashion, offering a constantly changing set of vistas. Again, the parts are brilliantly handled but not the whole.

The other curiosity about Hampstead is the centre. Three huge monumental public buildings, two churches and the educational institute, are grouped in the vast space of the central square. It must be one of the most totally dead spaces in any major urban design. In all the time I have visited it, I have hardly seen a soul there. It might be blamed on Lutyens, who did the detailed design and who seems to have been going through some rehearsal for the Imperial grandeurs of New Delhi. It might also be blamed on Dame Henrietta Barnett, who was determined that churches and schools should be on the highest point, though she made a mistake about that (Creese 1966, 220). But we have Creese's testimony that Unwin was fully in accord with the concept; we have Creese's

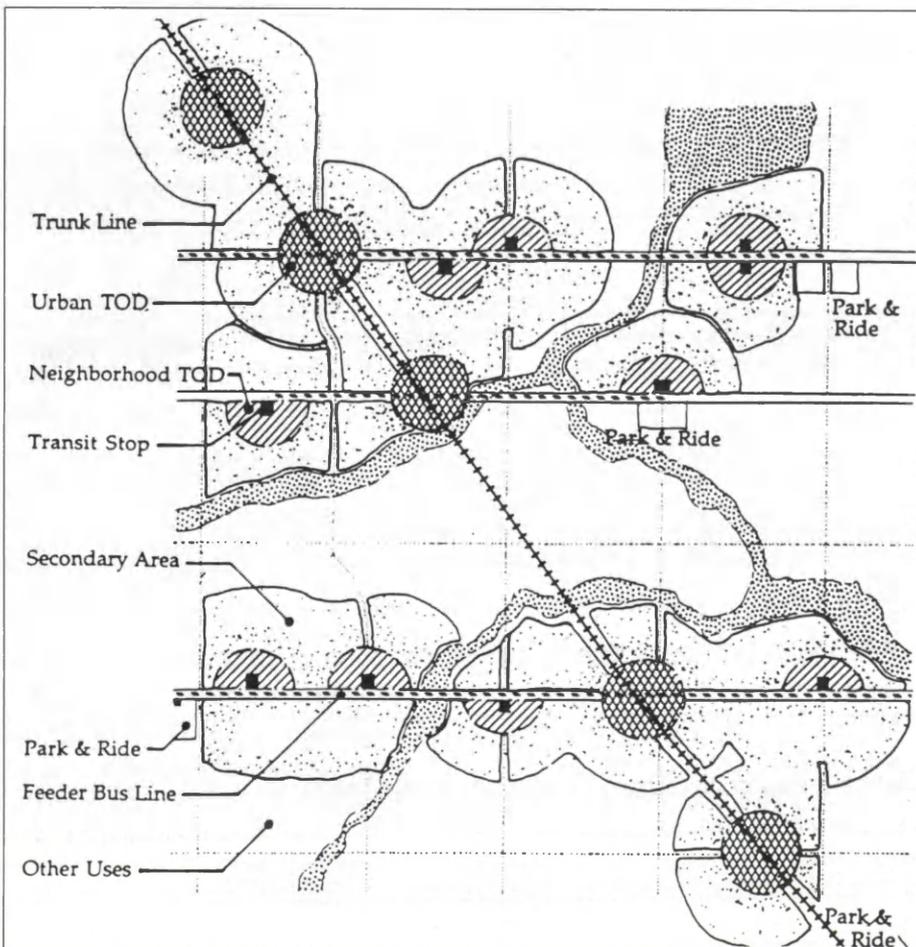


Above: Plan of Hampstead Garden Suburb showing Golder's Green Tube Station bottom right and Finchley Road gateway middle left.
 Right: View of Temple Fortune gateway on Finchley Road.
 Right: View of Central Square designed by Lutyens.



Top: Location of Parker and Unwin suburb at Brentham showing Perivale station and green belt.

Below: The principle of Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) proposed by Peter Calthorpe in California.



testimony that he had conceived of a monumental-scale square as central to a garden city as early as 1901 (Creese 1966, 231), and indeed he had done a very similar job in Letchworth.

The clue comes, once more, in his book, where he makes quite clear that the central square was intended to be like a Greek agora or Roman forum; it was to be a place for monumental public buildings. He says, specifically, that "The main centre would naturally be occupied by Government or municipal buildings and others necessarily related to these" (Unwin 1909, 176). And, to quote again, "...even in districts, suburbs, parishes and wards it is desirable that there should be some centre. There should be some place where the minor public buildings of the district may be grouped and where a definite central effect on a minor scale may be produced" (Unwin 1909, 187). So it seems quite clear what the square at Hampstead was intended to be: a vast Greek agora where the citizenry would gather, presumably to hear philosophers dispute with each other or poets recite their verse. The only problem is that they don't, and apparently never did: the space doesn't work. Even odder is the fact that the other major social gathering point, the community centre, is on Willifield Green half a mile away, in a similarly unvisited kind of space. It lost its tower in World War Two; you have to conceive of it as looking like the centre at Unwin's other London Garden Suburb, Ealing, where the tower dominates the design (Creese 1966, 245).

I think it is only possible to come to the conclusion that Unwin, and perhaps Howard ... for this is the nature of his original design for the Garden City ... actually desired this kind of void in the centre. And yet Unwin again and again stresses the importance of proper enclosure and of visual surprise in the entry into the great squares, the "places" he calls them in the book, in scores of old European cities. I can't help feeling that there was a kind of schizophrenia here. Unwin, who identified with the Fabian socialists, seems to have had some kind of antipathy to commerce. All shops are shut firmly out of the suburb, except on the remote north side where they are put right at the periphery. It's significant I think that though he mentions street markets often, he never mentions shops; the word doesn't even appear in the index of his book. But more than this: perhaps he doesn't even like the railway which is the lifeblood of his suburb. There doesn't seem to be any other reason why he should make his suburb turn its back so resolutely on the station.

To be fair to him, there were some interesting features at the larger scale. For one, there was the then-revolutionary mixture of house types, ranging in price from £425 to £3500, with rented workers' cottages forming an even lower tier. The affluent lived on the south, the middle class to the west and there were 70 acres of workmen's cottages to the north. Getting the right mix was crucial financially, and difficult because of the site (Creese 1966, 237-8). But in his book,

Unwin underlined how important he thought it was: "Both in town and site planning it is important to prevent the complete separation of different classes of people which is such a feature of the English modern town ... The growing up of suburbs occupied by any individual class is bad, socially, economically and aesthetically" (Unwin 1909, 294). Traditional English villages, he said, had grouped all kinds of people on a street or on the green (Unwin 1909, 294). There were also the planned structures for the disabled and unfortunate: The Orchard for old people (by Unwin and Parker, 1909) or Waterlow Court for working women (by Baillie Scott, 1911) (Creese 1966, 241). But overall, I cannot help feeling that as a suburb, Hampstead works less well than Bedford Park.

BRENTHAM

Oddly, he had handled these matters rather better at a neglected earlier exercise in the garden suburb genre, at Brentham in Ealing. Here too the station was newly opened. It happens to be in the floodplain of the River Brent, which was unbuildable. Unwin makes a virtue out of this, by using the floodplain as a half-mile wide green belt .. the same device as he would use with the Heath extension at Hampstead .. and then having his returning commuter traverse a half-mile walk down a country lane through the meadows. We need to remember that, in his book, he reiterated the point that the site should be treated with "reverence" (Unwin 1909, 136).

It is very clear, I think, what Unwin was trying to achieve here. In a lecture he gave in Manchester in 1912, he commends the idea of a "green girdle" and "park ways" around Chicago (Unwin 1912, 44) ... an idea his colleague Parker was later to follow outside Wythenshawe south of Manchester. He argued that each suburb should be distinguished by "some belt of open space, park land, woodland, agricultural, or meadow land, which would at once define one suburb from another, and keep the whole of the inhabitants in intimate touch with ample open space" (Unwin 1912, 48). Low-lying land was especially suitable for this purpose, he said. What happens as a result at Brentham must have been idyllic on a June evening, but less so in November. It is not even idyllic in June any more, because the path from the station has been brutally bisected by six lanes of the Western Avenue. And, in a less civilized age, when planning has to recognise the reality of muggings and rapes and attacks on children, it is a nightmare.

At Brentham, too, the shops are shunted off outside the suburb ... and on the other side from the railway approach. The idea presumably was that the men went off one way, the women another. But it is odd that the men could not even buy a newspaper or a box of matches on the way to the station. The social club is at least planned at the main focal point of the suburb, but it is totally unrelated either to the station approach, which actually slips surreptitiously into the suburb by a kind of back entrance a quarter of a mile away, or to the shops. Consequently,

though there is a focus, it is nothing like the focal point it ought to be. It certainly doesn't work in the way that the main constellation of buildings works at Bedford Park.

THE NEW SUBURB

I have been spending a long time in talking about railway suburbs of long ago. But I think it's important that we revisit them, because we look like having to design a new generation of such places. The East Thames Corridor is just the most spectacular opportunity, but others will occur along the new light rail system that have become the vogue in the late 1980s, and that are actually being built in Manchester and Sheffield. In California an emigre English architect, Peter Calthorpe, has been causing a great stir with his concept of the pedestrian pocket, which is nothing more or less than a railway suburb for the 1990s. Sacramento, the state capital, is so enthusiastic about the idea that it is developing its entire master plan around it. So I think it is very clear that this is an idea whose time has come round again.

Clearly, these latter-day garden suburbs are going to have to take account of a whole range of considerations that our urban designer forefathers never had to worry about. The new concern for personal safety, which runs counter to every good principle of designing quiet pedestrian access to places, is just one. Another, very evidently, is that however hard you try to design suburbs to persuade people to use convenient public transport, large numbers of them are still going to commute by car. This means that in Lynch's terms your path system will have to provide ... both in functional and visual terms ... for another pattern of access into the suburb. Should that be a totally different one, or should we try to focus both the highway and the rail system on to one central entry point, which would also contain the shops and the community facilities?

And the mention of shops raises another hornet's nest. Shaw at Bedford Park could provide one small General Store. Unwin at Brentham was content to provide a modest row of shops. Now the inhabitants will expect a Sainsbury or a Tesco superstore. How do you incorporate that into the urban fabric without destroying all the arcadian quality you are seeking to develop? Would it be possible, as Calthorpe believes, to produce an urban form where large numbers of people would be willing to wheel their shopping home without need for the car? Or will it be necessary to banish the store, just as Unwin did, outside the suburb?

Or would it be possible, perhaps, to square the circle by incorporating a kind of front and back access, one inward-facing and foot-based, the other looking outward and car-based? And if so what does that entail for the pattern of circulation? Can we go back to the principle of segregating foot movement and car movement, first developed at Radburn, perfected in Greenbelt and later in the Stockholm suburbs? And can we make that compatible with personal safety ... the planning nightmare of the late 20th century?

Thus the challenge of designing suburbs

for the 21st century is at least as great as the one that faced Unwin and Parker when they began their work in Derbyshire almost exactly one hundred years ago. It is certainly as great as the one with which Kevin Lynch wrestled between 25 and 35 years ago, when as a young designer he first had to think about the impact of mass motorization on the American city. It is going to require a huge co-operative effort involving the professions, the political decision-makers and the public who are going to live and work in the new urban forms. So let me leave you with a quotation from Unwin, with which he concluded his Manchester lecture of 1912. It is pretty appropriate, I think, eighty years later.

"Planning, then, calls for a great co-operative effort to recreate in our cities worthy dwelling places for our social life ... The engineer and the surveyor must be willing to co-operate with the artist, guiding him on sound and practical lines, but giving him the freest possible hand in dealing with the forms of expression; and the architect must cease to regard each unit in itself, of which he may make what he likes, and must learn to treat it as a detail in the greater street picture, and must regard it as his first duty the subordination of that detail to a total effect of ordered beauty, which the citizens must learn to require and appreciate, that each may in this way do his share towards the creation of a beautiful city (Unwin 1912, 62). ■

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BUCHAREST

John Winter



Last year's lecture programme was devoted to cities examining the issues that were affecting change and the results on the ground. Three of these cities were Bucharest, Budapest and Prague and summaries of these talks are included on the following pages.

John Winter, who runs an architectural practice in London, visited Bucharest in October 1988 as part of a cultural exchange programme organised by the British Council and the Rumanian Union of Architects. His talk to the Urban Design Group was given in September 1990, some nine months after President Ceausescu was overthrown. John's visit also covered areas outside Bucharest including villages which were about to be swept away under Ceausescu's resettlement programme.

Everywhere I went, in almost every room I entered, there was a photograph of President Ceausescu's, often with a quotation underneath. In the National Gallery Botticellis were interspersed with portraits of President and Mrs Ceausescu.

The main monument to the Ceausescu regime is the Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism. It is a wide boulevard, 2m wider than the Champs Elysee. It is lined with ten storey buildings and the focal piece at the end is the massive Communist Party Headquarters. All along the boulevard are fountains, only none of them appear to work.

The boulevard was driven through a historic part of Bucharest. Historic buildings and churches were demolished, but some were re-erected elsewhere in the city.

I was struck by the uncanny resemblance between this monument and the new monument currently under construction in our own capital. The boulevard on Canary Wharf is narrower but it is lined with buildings of the same height, i.e. ten storeys. The architectural style is similar. The buildings in Bucharest have pilasters and columns which rise to almost the full ten storey height. Those on Canary Wharf have similar neo-classical features. The focal piece, of course, is different; a fifty storey tower instead of the massive HQ. It is interesting to see how the proponents of the Extreme Left and Extreme Right have adopted the same style.

Other monuments in Bucharest include the

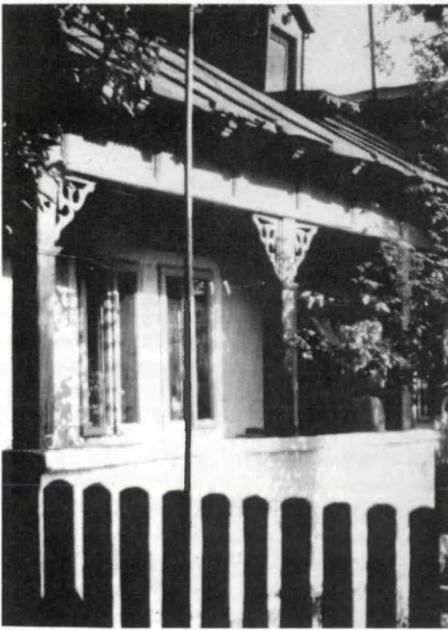
National Theatre which was built and then rebuilt twice in four years because Ceausescu did not approve of the first two designs; also the many monolithic blocks of flats that replaced traditional housing areas not only in the capital, but in the many villages throughout the countryside. What was the rationale behind the widespread demolition and comprehensive redevelopment? Architects in Rumania offered several explanations.

First there has been no reaction against high rise living as there has been in the West. The new high rise flats are very popular.

Secondly, old buildings do not have drains, plumbing, heating or insulation. There is no way that these can be provided as there are not enough architects to look at individual buildings.

Thirdly, old buildings are not earthquake-resistant. Following the earthquake of 1940 it has been necessary to ensure that new buildings are designed to withstand earthquake. To make old buildings earthquake-resistant involves looking at buildings individually and this comes back to the man-power problem.

Fourthly, there are state norms governing floor plans and room sizes. The floorspace per person (currently 12m²) will increase by 2m². As a result buildings gradually become obsolete and need replacing. Old buildings with different sized rooms can not be easily organised into this system.

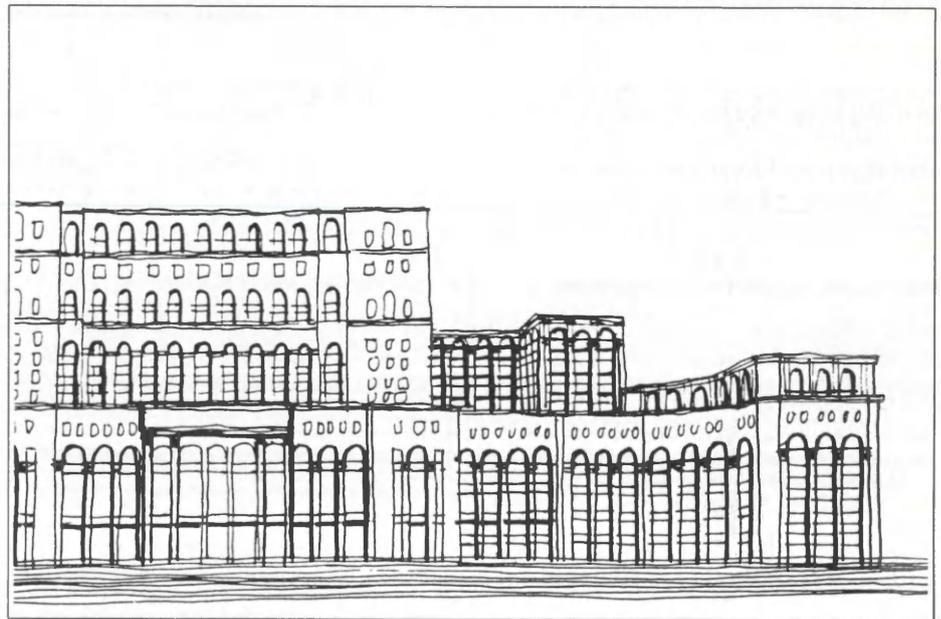


Above: Typical traditional house awaiting destruction.

Right: Otopene, one of the new agro-industrial centres replacing a group of old villages.

Middle: Communist Party Headquarters at the end of the Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism.

Bottom: Typical buildings along that Boulevard.



Lastly, Rumania is building a new way of life. Old single family houses with gardens are inappropriate for this new society.

I found all these arguments unconvincing, but I did not meet a single Rumanian architect who was critical of the bulldozing-the past policy.

As for the widespread destruction of villages, the explanation offered here was the need for new villages or 'agro-industrial centres' to be large enough to accommodate a shop and school. No such settlements could have a population of less than a thousand.

Amid all the demolition and devastation I was encouraged by one sign. The highlight of my trip was having tea with the Mother Superior of a convent. The 16th century convent church was at the time under elaborate repair, while other convent buildings had been rebuilt following the 1940 earthquake. Churches in Rumania were either being elaborately repaired or they were being rebuilt in facsimile from the foundations up.

In conclusion what can one say? The apparently monolithic state and society were a new and rather frightening experience. The sheer forcefulness of the policies is making everywhere look the same. There are good things and bad, but I have heard no word of criticism or even doubt from any Rumanian I met. The official policy was always supported. To a Westerner this was uncanny. ■



URBAN DESIGN AND HOUSING IN BUDAPEST

Jon Rowland

This article describes urban design and housing in Budapest. It traces the form and nature of housing provision and how that has changed overtime and pays special attention to the situation over the last six years when the economic and political liberalisation of the country has changed radically.



Hungary is set right in the centre of Europe. It was the point at which the furthest encroachment of the Ottoman ranks was halted. The capital, Budapest, has about two million people living in it, excluding the outlying areas and is really two cities, Buda set on the western heights of the Danube, with its castle, palace and hot springs; and Pest, the merchant city with a more formal street pattern, built up during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, set on the flat eastern bank of the Danube.

The formal street pattern follows the that of many European cities with street blocks, formal facades, and defined heights. It is said that what Vienna built in stone, Budapest built in brick and plaster. It is essentially a "democratic city" in that there is no definable central business district or major retail centre as such. It relies on a richness of mixed uses, with shops and offices on the ground floors, offices or residential on the upper floors. This mix is important in the way the city works. In the suburbs this has changed and municipal housing on a vast scale together with small plotlands make up the housing environment.

There is a housing crisis today. The number of dwellings constructed has fallen dramatically. In the years before this present revolution, the communist government, radically reduced its housing programme. It was estimated that over 50,000 families equivalent to nearly 10% of household units were on the waiting list. Past investment in

large public sector estates has not solved the problem and about five years ago radical ideas were introduced to try and resolve the situation.

To understand the situation today a brief history is required. After the war Government resources were concentrated on new industries. Spending on housing was reduced and the influx of workers into the urban centres led to many older apartments being subdivided and co-tenanted. These conversions make up the core of city centre stock.

After the 1956 revolt was suppressed the provision of housing was considered a priority. A 15 year programme was started in 1960 designed to solve the housing needs of one million dwellings. These were designed in collective form, multi-storey, state-owned, prefabricated systems. From four storey blocks, these gradually grew into tower blocks and then in the seventies into slab blocks, epitomised by a development at Ujpalata of huge and alienating scale. All those aspects that have so vexed our social planners and community development experts can be found in the increasing 'social confrontation' that has appeared on many of these estates.

In urban design terms Ujpalata demonstrates separation of functions, little understanding of public realm, and lack of personalisation and identification. To differentiate functions or tenure, buildings are coloured.

Large areas of 'public open space' are derelict and dangerous. People have captured space to personalize and have created their own garden extensions. Provision for cars was neglected.

This is the unsuccessful legacy of public housing in Budapest - as bad as the worst of our own housing stock in this country.

It became obvious that more radical measures were required to tackle the worsening housing needs. This meant a complete shift away from public sector to private sector involvement. The political goal was the provision, by the private and cooperative sector, of some 80% of the housing stock. New changes in financial and credit arrangements came about. This effected the urban design of housing projects.

The Hungarian authorities decided to look again at the forms of housing that were successful. Back in the 1960's, the reorganisation of agriculture led to a decentralised incentive oriented system that allowed the standard of living to rise, and the investment of profits and extra income into housing to take place. The number of houses produced this way was double the amount produced by the huge capital investment in prefabrication plants. What's more they were produced by small scale mutually aided building groups using traditional techniques.

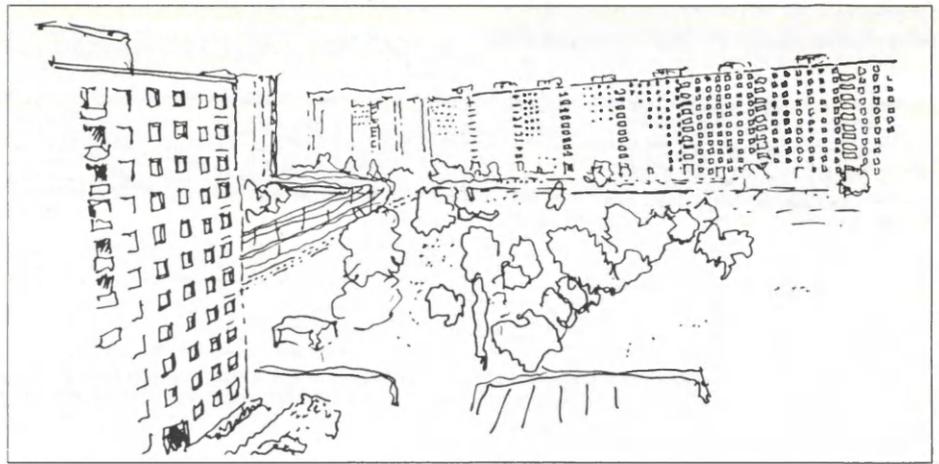
These ideas were increasingly apparent in Budapest where plotlands provided an opportunity for small investors to build their own houses or set up a cooperative to build small blocks of flats, set in streets. These plotlands derive from traditional forms of rural housing. The resulting environment is rich in variety and interest. The public realm is minimised, buildings are personalized. Style and form are in sympathy with the surroundings.

With increasing liberalisation, new developers have emerged. Initially foreign, mostly Austrian, but now increasingly local, the new developers have taken advantage of the change in credit systems set up by OTP, the Hungarian National Savings Bank, which is part building society part bank, and part developer itself. They have introduced small low rise housing schemes. These more 'formal housing' projects have complemented the continuing development of plotlands.

The popularity of these forms of housing has pushed the prefabricating yards not to move towards traditional materials but to traditional forms. The result is a move from high rise to the 'English style' of housing, using the same industrial components.

Architects and urban designers play a greater role in the design of housing. They have moved from a profession working within state architects offices which only articulated large blocks of dwellings on paper, to one which is now working in large part in private practice, and involved in smaller low-rise groupings of units.

Whilst it is the governments briefing and commissioning procedure that still continues to define the end product, it is the self builder and the new developers that may in the end determine the physical form that future housing will take in Budapest. ■



Left: City centre mixed use block.
Top: 1970's development at Ujpalata.
Above: Self build plotlands at CzepeI.
Right: Self build cooperative flats for four families.
Right: New developers housing OTP financed.
Below: 'English style' prefabricated housing.



THE UNIQUE TOWNSCAPE OF PRAGUE

Walter Bor

Prague was Walter Bor's home town where he lived and studied until mid-April 1939 when he left the city one month after the Nazi occupation. He can still recall his last walk through Prague before leaving, convinced that this beautiful city was about to be destroyed in the coming war.



- Above: Plan of Prague showing:
- 1 The Old Town with the Old Town Square.
 - 2 St Gallus Town.
 - 3 Line of fortifications.
 - 4 Charles Bridge over the River Vltava.
 - 5 The Little Town dominated by the dome of St Nicholas.
 - 6 Hradcany Castle.
 - 7 Hradcany Town.

Right: View across river towards Hradcany Castle and St Vitus Cathedral and detail of St Nicholas Church.

I returned to Prague with the Army after the war in 1945 and found it to my amazement physically almost unscathed although, of course, its citizens had suffered a great deal and many thousands had been killed. Two and a half years later, Prague saw the Communist Putsch of 1948.

I went back in 1967 to take part in the IUA Congress there, and things looked very hopeful but, a year later, Soviet tanks crushed the Prague Spring of 1968 and reinstalled a repressive Communist regime. What helped people to survive was their famous Czech sense of humour, as epitomised in the 'Good Soldier Schweik'.

THE PRESENT DAY CONTEXT

My most recent visit was in June 1990, some six months after the 'Velvet Revolution', following an invitation from the Chief Architect and Planner of Prague. The atmosphere was still euphoric and relaxed. Prague was more beautiful than ever as much of the historic core had been exquisitely restored and a well-designed and efficient new metro had been installed. Most importantly, this great historic city was now free again!

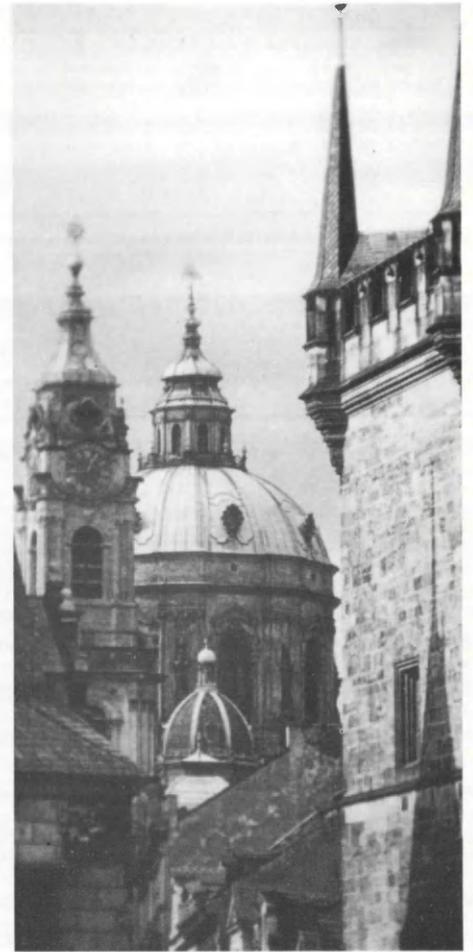
However, some painfully obvious mistakes had been made. The city authorities have been trying to accommodate the ever-growing number of cars. Prague, built in a valley surrounded by seven hills, is one of the cities least suitable for an even modest degree of motorisation. The high-density housing areas are already swamped with parked cars

and an urban motorway system is under construction, consisting of an inner and outer circular and twelve radials. Most of this system is still only on the drawing board, but a North-South link has been built through the inner area, skirting the historic core and causing visual havoc next to Wenceslav Square, the place of the "Velvet Revolution".

Furthermore, the large old housing stock is in an appalling condition, having had little or no maintenance throughout the past fifty years or so. Housing rents have been unrealistically low and hardly any funds had been available to repair the fabric externally and modernise it internally. Most of the new housing has taken the form of high-rise system -built blocks of flats grouped into massive dormitories on the northern and southern peripheries, with inadequate social facilities and hardly any workplaces. As a result, there is daily mass commuting from there to the jobs in the inner city.

Prague has had no effective high-buildings policy and this is beginning to show. Some of the unforgettable panoramic views from the hills surrounding the historic core have already been marred by the intrusion of insensitively-located and designed high-rise hotels, offices and a television tower in the form of a space rocket about to be launched.

These and related shortcomings were identified in a commentary that I prepared at the request of the Chief Architect. The remedial actions recommended included a stop to any further peripheral expansion and to the construction



of more high-rise housing. Instead, it was suggested that the future growth of Prague should be considered within a strategic planning framework for the wider city region, possibly in the form of expanded small towns and new communities, with more low-rise housing in a variety of forms.

Money saved from more high-rise construction should be diverted to the massive rehabilitation of the neglected housing stock, and mortgage schemes should be introduced to encourage home ownership. Other recommendations included comprehensive transport and parking policies, with a major emphasis on further improved public transport, including the introduction of a system of shared taxis, an effective high-buildings policy and urban design guidelines to assist the management of the development process.

These are the kind of urban management measures which are now urgently needed to preserve old Prague as one of Europe's finest historic cities and a tourist attraction of world fame, and to manage the mounting development pressures for joint ventures such as new hotels, offices, knowledge industries, cultural, sports and leisure facilities. Only the best of urban planning and design can succeed in reconciling such potentially conflicting interests of making the best of new opportunities and preserving the best of the historic inheritance.

PRAGUE'S UNIQUE TOWNSCAPE

The whole historic core of the town is

continuous, exciting townscape. Various attributes combine to give it this special quality.

First there is the *genius loci*. In Prague the accentuation of every major and minor local characteristic - be it the ingenious use of contours, the river, the siting of building masses and of individual buildings, or the use of local materials - results in a city with a dramatic sense of place.

Structure and scale are clearly expressed. The three main parts of the historic core - the Old Town, the Little Town and Hradcany Castle are distinct entities and individual communities, each with its own precinctual character and scale. Each of these townships has its own dominant features - the Gothic church of the Old Town, the green copper dome of St. Nicholas dominate the Little Town, Hradcany Castle crowns the whole city.

Prague is known as the city of the hundred spires. It has a splendid skyline, or rather many different and varying silhouettes. First and foremost is the dramatic outline of Hradcany Castle towering over the city and assuming ever-changing relationships when seen from different viewpoints. Then there are the many building groups with church spires, domes, steeples, pitched roofs, picturesque attics and sculptures, often in close proximity, combining into unforgettable compositions.

Prague is a city of urban progression. There is a constantly changing urban scene as your move round. There are no fixed

viewpoints, no main axis, no grand manner planning within the Old Town with its intimate mediaeval pattern, the Little Town with its large renaissance scale, the Hradcany Castle of grand dimensions gaining even greater prominence on the top of a hill.

Prague is a city of great character. A town has character if it is able to express its personality and if what is expressed seems to us interesting and valuable. There must be imaginative design of individual buildings as well as grouping of buildings so as to produce visual unity out of a collection of parts. Prague meets these qualifications to a high degree. It has many fine buildings of all periods integrated into a continuous and ever changing urban scene.

Contrast and drama are features of Prague's townscape. The main contrasts are derived from a skilful exploitation of the river valley and the surrounding steep hills which are either built up like an Italian hill town (the Little Town and Hradcany), or are tree-topped and thickly planted). The result is a dramatic contrast between compact building masses of hard stone and the informal gentle spread of greenery. Horizontal masses have many a spire, counterpoint of slender Gothic spires, and the gentle curves of the many cupolas and domes.

The narrow streets through which most of the squares are approached burst suddenly and unexpectedly upon an open space which is in strong contrast to the confined views between the buildings along crooked streets. Formality and informality are often

juxtaposed; the grand formality of the Gothic Tyn church or the serenity of the baroque church of St. Nicholas contrast happily with the informal and intimate scale of houses nestling at their feet. Buildings of such varied periods as Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, art nouveau, baroque and modern often stand in juxtaposition creating delightful contrast.

There is a unique sense of presence about Prague. There are few barriers to obtrude between you and the buildings. The patterned pavement stretches right up the stone walls of a Gothic spire or baroque palace; you can feel as well as see the textures of the walls. Most of the great architectural features assert their presence wherever one goes; the dome of St. Nicholas, for instance, the inescapable monument of the Little Town, is always there with its tremendous architectural personality; it emerges from among other buildings and is never isolated.

The River Vltava is Prague's most attractive and popular open space. Prague looks onto its river and uses it for a variety of public uses. Many important buildings such as theatres, museums, university buildings, concert halls, ministries, cafes, open-air swimming pools and parks all make imaginative use of the river front. There are extensive public promenades from which one can enjoy the many picturesque views from both sides of the river.

Historic Prague is a city without gaps or holes. There is a continuous and lively pattern of individual buildings forming themselves into streets and squares. Buildings from different periods and of varying architectural styles, but unified by a common scale and regard for their neighbours, link arms and create a unique visual architectural continuity throughout the town.

PRAGUE'S CHARM

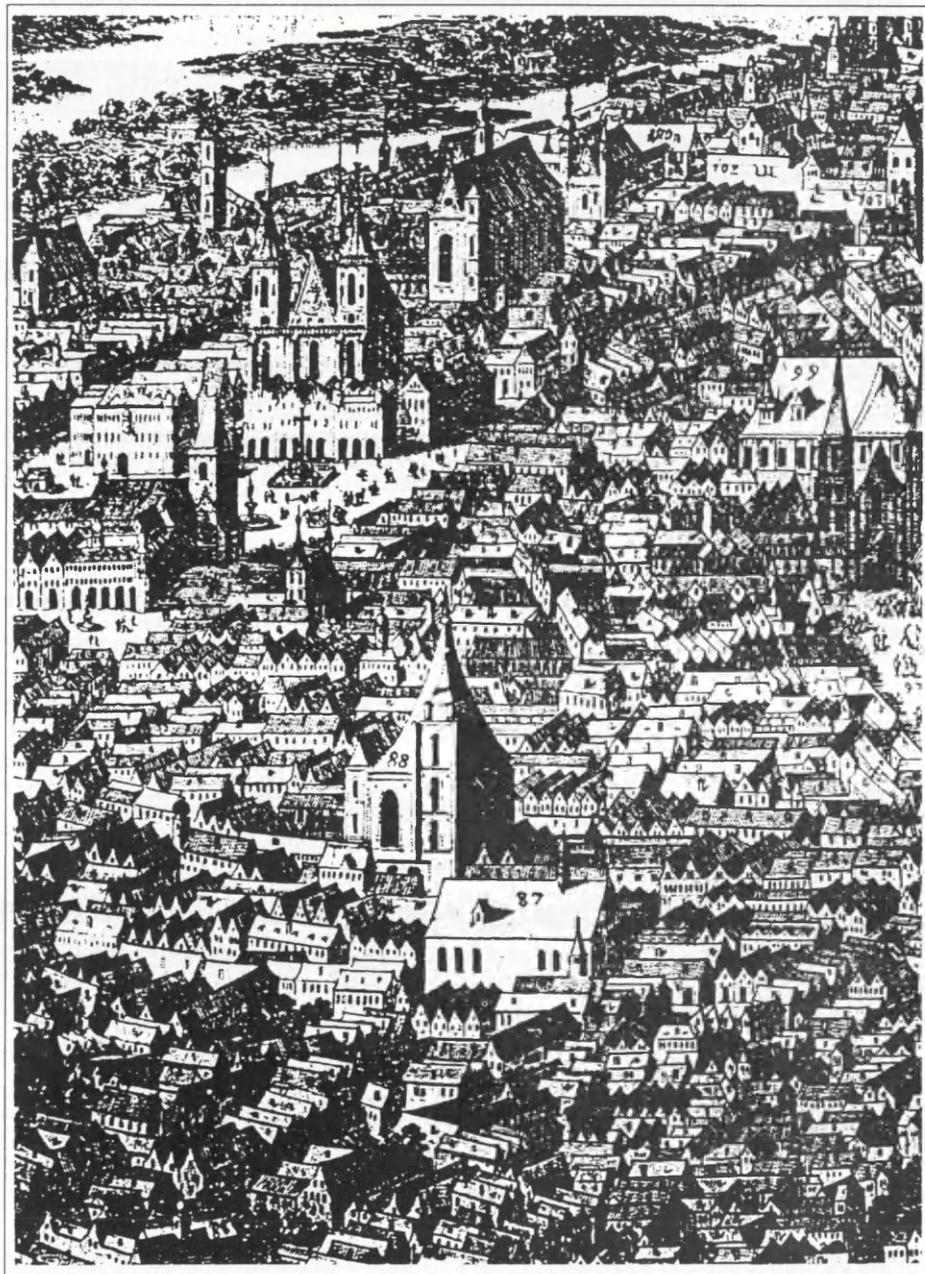
Prague is a city through which one must walk, walk slowly, or one misses this or that subtlety, in the fourth dimension of time. Round every corner there is the unexpected glimpse, the sudden revelation - these are the essence of Prague's charm. Indeed, Prague is a city in which one can still walk and wish to do so. This rediscovered activity is delightful there, not only because of the many visual pleasures, but also because Prague is still basically a pedestrian town and distances are short.

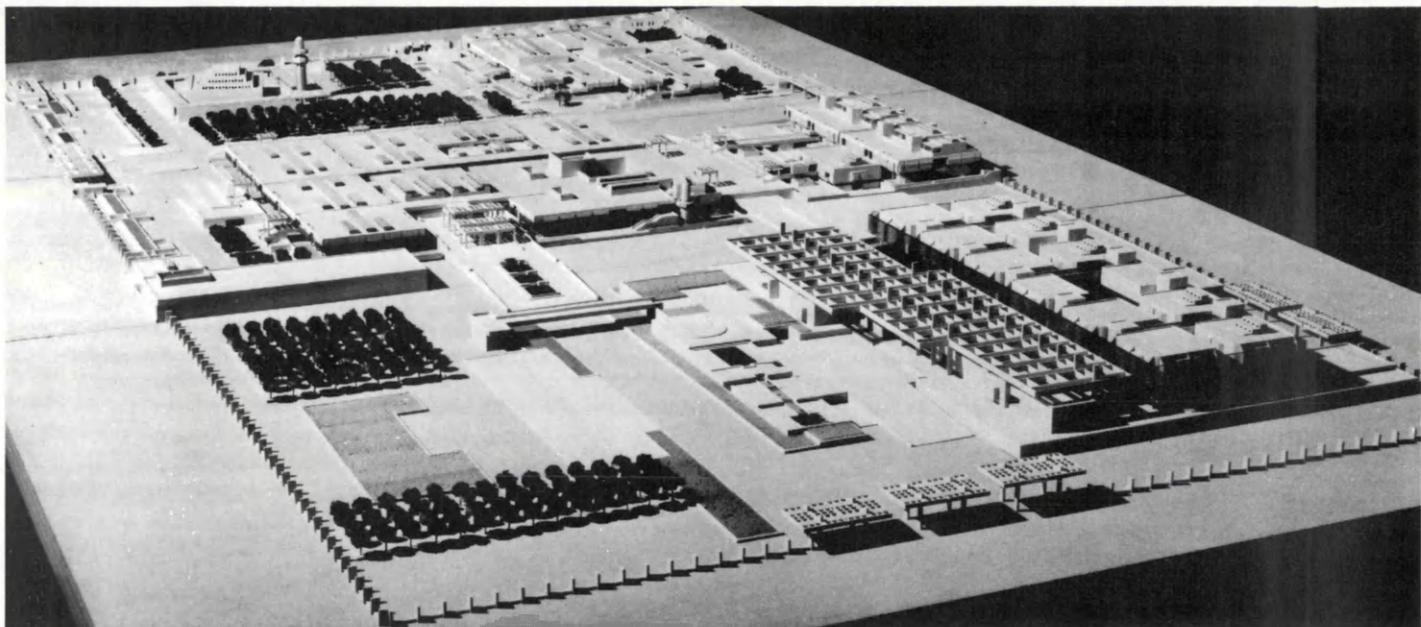
Prague is also a city of different moods. When the sky is grey, Prague is sombre and somewhat foreboding; when the sun shines Prague is splendid and inviting. In the evening sun, the city is golden and mellow; in the snow, it is a fairy tale.

All these remarkable attributes taken together amount to Prague's unique townscape. ■

View of the Old Town Square with Tyn church behind.

Engraving of Old Town showing Old Town Square in middle left.





Arabia is briefly introduced to provide a frame of reference for points regarding the nature of consultancy as compared with advisory commissions. The Taif experience serves to illustrate the reality of implementation of large scale government-commissioned work and of associated structure planning for future growth.

The first building group at Taif (Leslie Martin and David Owers Architects with ETEC Engineers) was shaped in the form of a 'mat' building aggregation approximately 120 metres square on plan. Eighteen ministry units were accommodated - each with Minister's suite, Deputy Ministers and an average of forty senior staff - together with the Council of Ministers, Advisory and a Prime Minister's unit.

Subsequently, with changes at the head of government, extensive new development was required. A range of accommodation was designed for the surrounding area. The further work implemented by Owers and Lumley Associates included ten ministry units on rising ground to the south-east and support accommodation at the boundary, forming a perimeter to the complex (see photograph). This work was associated with the preparation of a new structure plan encompassing land to the west and north of the original 300 metre square compound. The site amounted to approximately 30 hectares within which detailed designs were prepared for a number of substantial buildings, including the Ministry of Interior and the Royal Cabinet.

The architectural consultancy role at Taif, which provided credentials for subsequent advisory work in the region, represented a relatively conventional mode of engagement. Less typically, the consultancy for engineering, quantities and services, was combined under the auspices of a single 'bureau d'études'.

MAKKAH ADVISORY ROLE

An advisory role, however, is a quite different matter. The involvement at Makkah will

allow some distinctions to be made regarding the nature of such work and its implications for the future.

The Government's proposal for a new university campus at Makkah was the responsibility of the Rector of the University of Jeddah as the parent institution. Shortly after Skidmore, Owings and Merrill were appointed as consultants for the site outside Makkah, there was a change of rectors. The new administration, having inherited preliminary proposals, were adamant about the necessity for independent advice. We were appointed as planning and architecture advisors. In addition advisors on Islamic matters were required for the proper interpretation and collective development of the brief, with faculties such as Sharia and Dawa: J Michon, H Fathy and T Burckhardt (and subsequently S Bianca) covered these and related areas of concern. It will be seen that the University appreciated the need for informed commentary on proposals involving the complex logistics of the rapid establishment, on a 300 hectare site, of a new institution intended to reach a student population total of 15,000. The Rector and his colleagues made clear to the architects from the previous regime that the work would continue on the basis of a triangular dialogue - University/Advisors/Consultants. This radical shift in the terms under which university planning would function required adjustments - not least by SOM who were at that point in the process of proposing a 'detached pavilion' approach to the site.

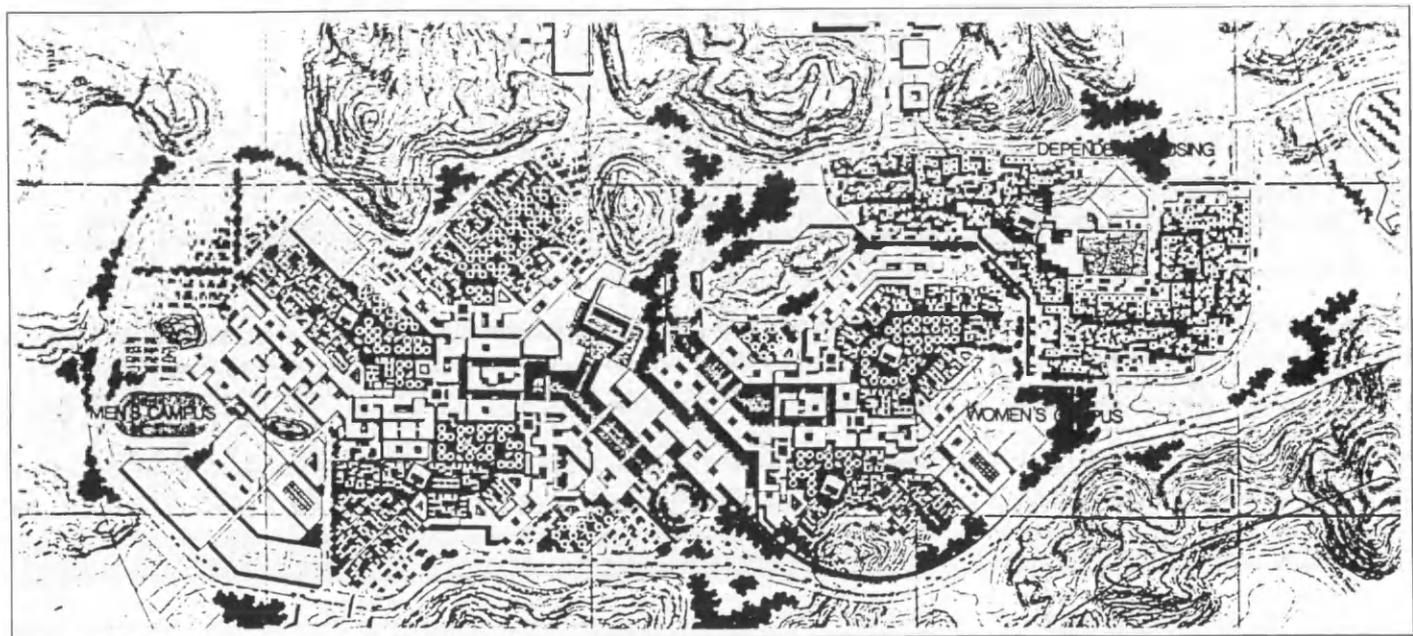
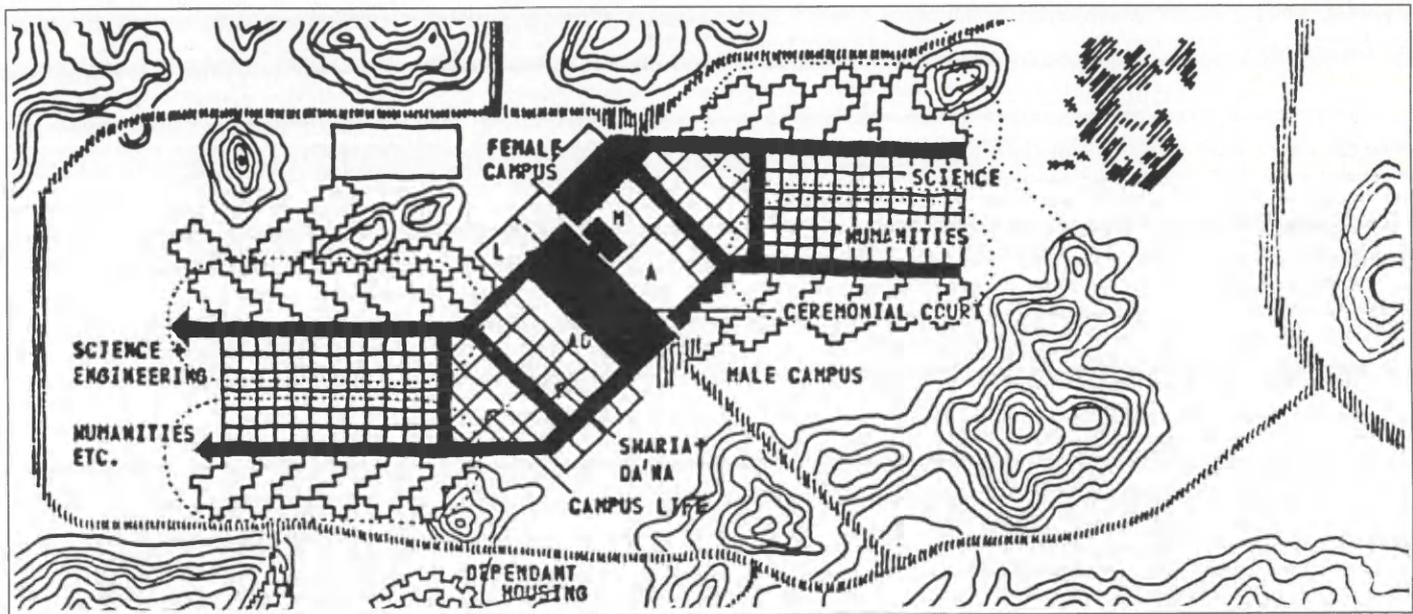
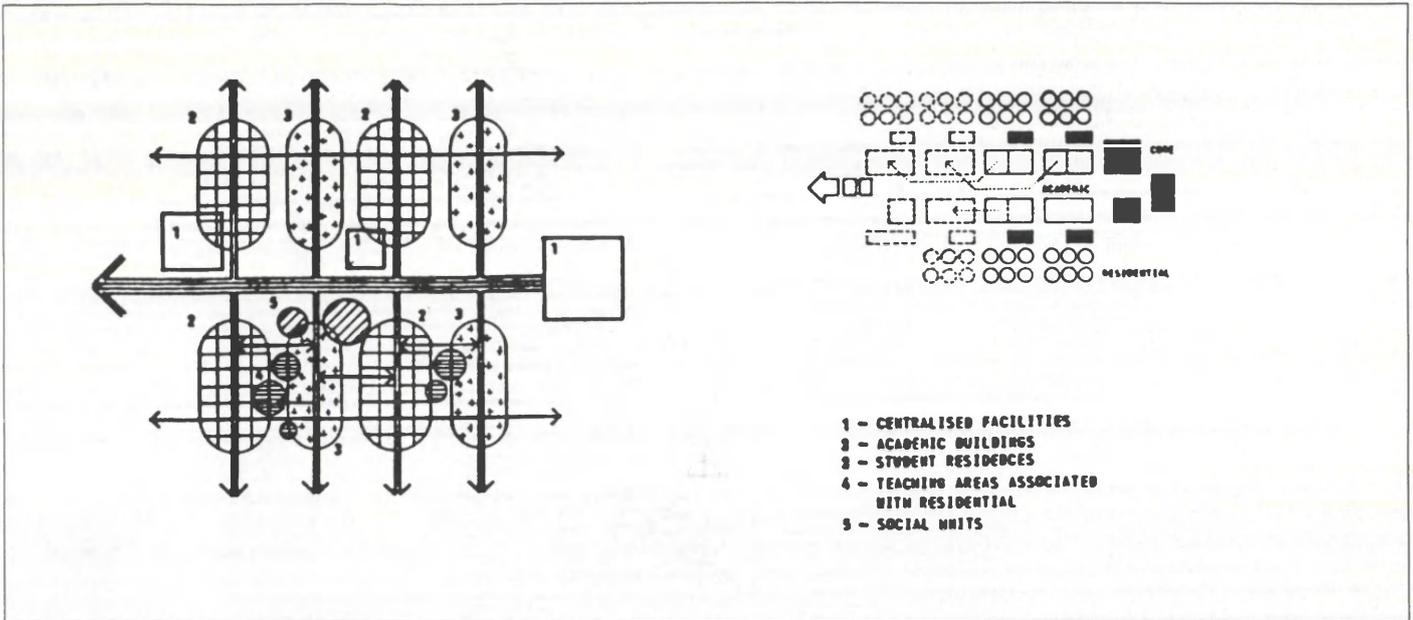
The position and background of the participants in these meetings varied enormously. The results could have been chaotic. The reality, however, was that over the three years a genuine dialogue ensued, with decisions adopted that were appropriate to the level and depth of that analysis. Also, significantly, studies were initiated that in some instances were outside the scope of the architect's previous endeavours - but throughout an impressive ability to adapt was demonstrated.

As advisors, faced with a campus approach having something of a transatlantic pedigree, the questions for concern were cultural, social and climatic. The drawings illustrate some of our early studies in response, including site and built form analysis (in respect of faculty, administration, teaching and related accommodation, and including 'madrassah' and residential forms) undertaken in order to convey notions of possibilities for continuity, for adaptability, and for a sheltering, inward-looking, court-generated building form.

There were important contributions from the client's representatives, from all advisors, and from the consultants, who carried the major role of initiating, digesting, adapting and most importantly producing the work. In time the general direction of the production implementation devolved increasingly on F Khan, the distinguished 'engineer' partner, whose communication gifts and understanding were respected by the client (and well deserved) - one practical indication of the professionalism of the consultancy.

An interesting feature of the process was the tradition (in Islam) of the equal expression of views, of the seeking, not necessarily of a consensus which can easily produce the lowest common denominator (particularly where the arts are concerned) but of the 'right' solution. In other contexts the triangle may be fraught, but the work here stands as a tribute to a process rather than to an individual or group contribution. The evidence for this lies, it is suggested, in the quality of the ultimate plan of SOM's (without pavilions): a three-storey, compact yet adaptable and legible arrangement of the complexities of a modern university for the region. (See figure 5).

The foregoing describes work outside the UK to which might be added two other recent projects, Erstein in Alsace and British Columbia. Erstein has significance as a competition with an 'urbaniste' requirement, but is discounted here since it falls mainly within the traditional (architect's) sphere.



Work for the University of British Columbia in Vancouver has some interest in passing, although it is something of a hybrid. The contribution to that project can be equated with brief writing, having a research element, the topic being student housing. However, an education related point could be made that applies to the others, namely the extent to which an essential component of this type of work is associated with assessment of the nature of the problem the client wishes to solve.

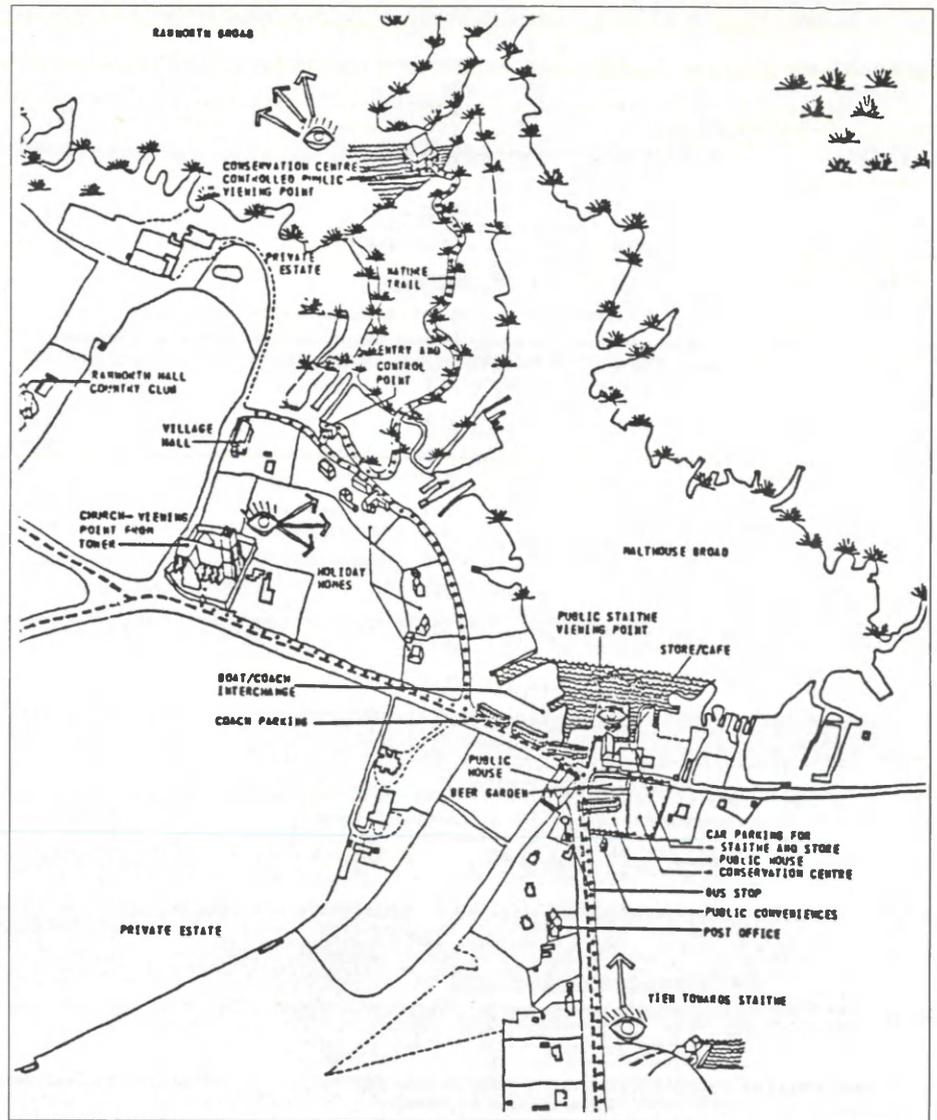
INTERVENTIONS

Although the following UK commissions differ, there are overlaps. A common thread involves case study methodology. The design consultancy for the Broads Authority required an early understanding of problems and opportunities for improvements over a considerable area and landscape network that included 200 kms of rivers. The Heigham Bridge output was a Local Plan; the special and contentious issue, that of riverbank chalets, had implications for the entire waterside planning system. Interrelated problems and conflicting interests characterised the background for design guidance. There was a fragile economy partially dependent upon tourism (boating-oriented), a permanent and a transient housing market, recreation and other resource pressures. All these factors co-existed within one of Europe's significant wetland conservation areas.

Elsewhere specific issues of general relevance were analysed such as movement, the point of interchange and access from cars to the river system. The Ranworth diagram gives some indication of the approach adopted. The value of the consultancy was less a matter of the site recommendations and small visitor centre buildings eventually implemented, and more that of the process - the educational value of the dialogue engaging officers and the public, the demonstration of possibilities for positive design action, for community rather than vested interest gains.

Another example may serve to illustrate the varied nature of this urban design territory. At Purfleet, King's Lynn, when an engineering proposal for concrete flood defences threatened the town, and specifically the grade 1 Listed Custom House, there were many objections. It was clear, following our appointment, that any 'technical' solution had also to be a 'procedure' solution, since substantial public goodwill was a prerequisite in order to alleviate the anguish generated previously. An 'options' approach was adopted and later embodied in a report. This emphasised the environmental and historical context, for public dissemination and acceptance prior to planning submission, a method which effectively precluded planning hiccups.

The interest of the work lies partly in its solution (its near invisibility, through use of the existing buildings as the defence wall, a minor case of lateral thinking perhaps) and partly in the process. The solution could only be as good as the liaison, which involved



Top: Diagram of Ranworth recommended improvements.
Below: Urban Design approach to flood defences with Borough's 'heritage' additions.



persuasion regarding the detail of the design, the strengthening of home owners' walls and gates; since any one of a number of these individual property owners, as well as an array of interested local societies, could have jeopardised the process. In the event there was some relief that a solution existed, not least from Anglian Water, the client, when it became clear that not only was an environmental argument likely to succeed, but that it was actually going to be less expensive than the previous concrete defence wall proposal.

The 'reticent' solution was implemented and on completion demonstrated a further advantage - funds generation. Goldcrest Films took over the Purfleet for the making of 'Revolution'. The town coffers benefited; our environmental guidelines such as granite setts, along with recommendations for car parking removal, were able to be implemented. The opportunity was there - goodwill existed, the difficult work was completed and a proven success. Ironic then that the Borough itself should decide to create some waterside 'heritage' atmosphere and, in the process destroy the potential simplicity of a granite quay. The 'picturesque' downside, with its plethora of railings, ramps, yellow stripes and modish 'objects' eventually will disintegrate or be seen as misguided by the guardians of quality and be replaced. Above such aberrations the Fleet itself and Henry Bell's Custom House stand intact, as evidence of purpose and quality - and, with the quayside buildings as part of the defence wall, of an 'urban design' approach.

IMPLICATIONS

Experience of this advisory work, and its attendant collaborations, suggests that ideally the advisor should adopt an enabling rather than an initiating role. It is also apparent that many architects are not equipped for master planning responsibilities when the concern is the understanding and initiating of physical proposals for complex programmes such as universities. The size of an organisation (and this type of work tends to be dominated by the larger practices) is clearly less a factor than the background of the individual. Inadequacies appear with circumstances that are outside the normal architectural problem - that is when there are large sites and programmes, unusual social and cultural circumstances, special climate and ecological issues, or exceptional management conditions including finance-led projects.

There is an observed tendency for architects to juxtapose the components of a complex brief as though they were absolutes such as 'rooms', to be manipulated in the context of other 'rooms'. A master plan then becomes manageable - an adequately simplified compositional exercise. Here we see the results of preoccupation with style. By contrast, and to avoid the distortion likely with such an approach, in the overseas examples described the attempt was made to demonstrate over numerous meetings an alternative method. This emphasised the need for responding to the cultural and climatic context, for a wide ranging

assessment of the programme, the interrelationship of elements, the shared characteristics and systems, the realities of growth and change. From such matters would be determined the detailed and the hidden agenda, such as the need for separation or continuity.

The advisory role then becomes that of initiator as well as that of enabler. The instrumental factor for success, I believe, concerns the nature of the dialogue and the manner of decision making. A common denominator in this overseas work has been the collective review, or jury framework, thoughtfully fostered by the clients concerned. The power of ideas, the notion that sound ideas will prevail, is dependent upon a consensus format. That, like cabinet government, has to be cultivated whilst retaining the special offering that each party - client, advisor, consultant - has to contribute.

When these three roles are related, as in the earlier matrix diagram, to the activities of architecture, urban design and planning, the above mentioned work is concentrated in the central zone - that is having an urban design emphasis with an advisory or consultancy input. The evidence of these projects from the advisor's viewpoint (and as seen from visiting teaching appointments) has suggested that architects generally are not educated to tackle the complexities of this type of commission. It may be argued that such large scale work is very much the exception. But the issue has more to do with the nature of the work than size.

It could be demonstrated that urban design is a mature discipline which encompasses architecture and much more. For example Alberti (who might be considered one of the earliest theoreticians of urban design) discusses the town in terms of topography and site selection, its relation to landscape, prevailing winds and environmental factors, principles of organisation, economic and traffic conditions, separate locations for shops, crafts, industries, the proportions for squares and their relationships.¹ Urban design is not an abstract planning mystique, it is an extension of architectural concerns - uses, functions, connections, space, surface, the creation of 'places'. It is the currently inadequately considered middle ground. That is the real casualty with the recent playing of indulgent, manipulative, property games - aloof from public needs.

The architect's grasp of the built environment reins looked increasingly threatened in the 1980's, as unbridled capitalism moved into the planning vacuum, for example in London's Docklands. Much of the booming workload benefited the narrow, commercially dominated practices. Style was an issue, widening public awareness but with curiously insular results, and stylistic undercurrents created unfortunate casualties along the way. Inability to adapt to the changing circumstances opened the way to a theoretically sound, but in practice, flawed solution, the clout of 'design build'. This was persuasive - in Cambridge, for example, civic building work in recent years has been dominated by this method, with city and

university as clients equally involved. Alberti's values were not on the agenda.

There are numerous attempts at a definition of the nature of the urban design activity; however, the point surely is not to add to the divisions amongst those involved in shaping the built environment, but to draw them together. There is an appeal in Jon Rowland's proposal for environmental design as the core element for coursework in universities. It lies in the notion of architects, planners, landscape architects, transport engineers and others sharing a common grounding.²

The argument could be taken further. A N Whitehead, in speaking of patterns in education, restated Hegel's 'progress' - thesis, antithesis, synthesis - as the stages in education of romance, precision and generalisation; it was the latter which should happen at university 'A well planned University course is a study of the wide sweep of generality. I do not mean that it should be abstract in the sense of divorce from concrete fact, but that concrete fact should be studied as illustrating the sense of general ideas'. And then regarding the cultivation of mental power ... 'This is the aspect of University training in which theoretical interest and practical utility coincide .. the function of a University is to enable you to shed details in favour of principles'.³ There are schools of architecture which would maintain that their emphasis coincides with Whitehead's ideal. However, the likelihood is that the 'general ideas' in fact have an architectural bias, and when dealing for instance with history, planning or urban design theory the emphasis remains architectural.

Architects in the UK continue to be responsible for only a small proportion of new building, and regrettably some of that work is as mediocre as that implemented without architect involvement. There is increasing evidence of the more substantial new building work being developer led and developer dominated. We might ask the question, why concentrate a system of education on the tip of the (environmental) iceberg, when these individuals, in numerical terms are not the most significant operators and do not exercise the final control? This argument is not totally tongue in cheek; it is recognised that in no period in history could the sphere of architectural influence be reduced simply to numbers. But it would be agreed that numbers are important when related to patrons. In John Major's newly proclaimed higher education model, the objectives include substantial increases in student numbers with one in three 18 to 19 year olds intended to enter higher education by the year 2000. All will be at 'universities'.

ALTERNATIVES

With these future patrons of the built environment receiving a university education, whose professional services, if any, will they seek? There lies one challenge which requires a response. The underlying issue is nothing less than visual literacy for an educated society.



View of Florence in 1493 showing urban design as an extension of architectural concerns not an abstract planning mystique.

A short term alternative to the normal architecture course could be centred on many of the existing schools. It might involve, as suggested by Rowland, a core 'urban design' curriculum but I suspect with advantage moving further than perhaps he intended to engage all those interested in physical planning. It could occupy a sizeable part of the first two years of a University education for a wide range of students - architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, estate managers, financiers, geographers, land economists and surveyors. The specialisations associated with these categories could be gradually phased in. Urban design would then continue for these allied disciplines but occupy a diminishing percentage of time. In the longer term perhaps only a radical restructuring of schools will suffice.

Urban design may be the wrong term within the context of this notion of Whitehead's "sweep of generality". But 'environment' has other associations and 'planning' seems destined to remain locked in a two dimensional time warp. The general knowledge and the shared ethos of a programme incorporating urban design would allow all individuals, contributing to the shaping of the environment, to communicate in later years with a common understanding and some common objectives. It is the antithesis of the notion of an architect's first

year devoted to 'self expression'.

The 'urbanist' focus could reverse the architecture schools' implied, if not always stated, emphasis on creating 'monuments' in the city. The UK is not alone in having a valued stock of monuments, mostly well protected. It is the fabric between the monuments that is unprotected, in decay, attractive for speculation, being destroyed and therefore most in need of attention. The issues are to do with content, programme, grain, scale, grids, edges, form, permeability and so on - and occasionally to do with monuments. Yet particularly now the circumstances represent an opportunity, not a limitation on the imagination. For example in relation to grid planning Unwin, in his essay on the individuality of towns, explains that it is not the limitations of the grid form that are impressive but the richness and diversity; or Sekler on Dubrovnik ... 'each house is like the next yet the city is a lesson in comprehensibility'.

This is an argument for a more generalised approach to education for the built environment. To a limited extent it already exists, where urban design programmes occur in parallel with architecture, through peer contact. The manner in which an urban design framework might reinforce for the architecture, landscape, surveying or other focus will need to vary. Rowland's suggested core element at the outset offers an interim

solution. It is clear that the existing postgraduate (urban design specialisation) approach with all its merits still makes insufficient impact on the way the majority of those involved in the physical environment think about their work, often with little sense of a shared purpose.

For such reasons, which include uninformed patronage, the debate needs to focus on environmental education both at University and pre-University level. The observations made earlier, concerning a lack of method and rigour in handling the complexities of institutional planning briefs, are paralleled by the evidence of designers' and planners' lack of influence over events in the movement systems, ambience and so on, can be seen as reflecting the separate, conflicting values and inadequate understanding of the public, the patrons, and the professionals involved, which may be attributable in part to their rigid, compartmented, education. To return to Whitehead ... 'The essential course of reasoning is to generalise what is particular, and then to particularise what is general. Without generality there is no reasoning, without correctness there is no importance.'⁴

CONCLUSIONS

The recent urban successes - and there are a number - have occurred where, with individuality and enlightenment, the client with his advisors have shared, common objectives. The acceptance of pluralism is a reason for optimism I believe, since ultimately it will be seen that style is intrinsically linked with form and content, and not a substitute for it. A shift in recognition regarding the built environment, towards the notion of the centrality of urban design commencing in the universities, could be the catalyst that leads towards a wider understanding of how the overall quality of the environment can be improved. The emphasis will then be on more socially conscious, responsible design and a greater harmony in city form. ■

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- 1 F Borsi, Leon Battista Alberti, Phaidon, 1977
- 2 J Rowland, 'AGM Debate' Urban Design Quarterly, Issue 37, January 1991
- 3 A N Whitehead, Aims of Education and Other Essays, Ernest Benn Limited, 1975
- 4 Ibid

CHANGING ATTITUDES TO THE CITY

James Bruges

James Bruges gave this paper to the Urban Design Forum in Bristol which expresses the view that it is the definition of city blocks related to a city's structure that is most important in forming a framework by a number of agencies and designers.

By contrast, setting out his vision for a renewed city, Le Corbusier said "I wish it were possible for the reader, by an effort of the imagination, to conceive of what such a vertical city would be like; imagine all this junk (referring to the centre of Paris), which till now has lain spread over the soil like a dry crust, cleaned off and carted away and replaced by the immense crystals of glass rising to a height of 600 feet". In his plan for Berlin he happily accepted the destruction caused by the war: "there is no need to pull down the master works of the past in order to rebuild. The destruction has been performed by aeroplanes".

The 20th Century inherited the smog and slums of the industrial revolution and dreamed of a new order. It is the century of idealism and total solutions. At one end of the scale Frank Lloyd Wright proposed a city of houses on one acre plots, at the other Archigram drew space age fantasies but both were equally radical. Tony Garnier started it very conveniently at the turn of the century by drawing his plan for an industrial city in which housing, shops and workplaces were clearly separated. The concepts of zoning and nonconforming uses have been with us ever since, sterilising the rich variety that makes city life stimulating and distinguishes it from the monoculture of the suburban estates. What started as idealism has sunk to the level of a convenient bureaucratic tool.

This is the century in which society is treated as mass categories - the workers, the bourgeoisie, the yuppies etc. The sciences that excited us were beyond the scale of daily life, such as those that explored the origin of the universe and promised unlimited energy. Modern man was unhappy with his surroundings and acted as if he had the power to change them. I sometimes wonder whether modern woman, had *she* been making the decisions, would have done the same.

In the last few years there has been a sea change in attitudes. We have seen visions of what might be and have decided that we prefer what we have already got. The sciences that now excite architects are those that relate to the human scale: the microchip which gives freedom to the individual and Chaos Theory which throws up rich unpredictable patterns from unstable beginnings. Furthermore there is no need for massive expansion of our cities because the population of Europe is no longer growing. Urban development in the future will consist of interventions within an existing order. The city of the 21st Century will be the same city that contains memories of our culture over many centuries.

In June last year the European Commission published a paper on the Urban Environment. Not much of it is particularly new. In fact it has many similarities to attitudes expressed by the Bristol City Docks Group 17 years ago and also with the Bristol Planning Department's current Local Plan. The significance is that it records received European thinking. For this reason it is an extremely important document.

It affirms the importance of our existing cities as the centres of economic activity, innovation and culture. It points to the failure of the periphery where there is an absence of public life, paucity of culture, visual monotony and time wasted in commuting. It stresses the need for density, proximity and choice. In particular it takes the attitude that electronic communication, far from encouraging dispersal, in reality increases the demand for face to face contact. It is a blueprint for the sociable city.

It is worth dwelling on the microchip for a minute because it is sometimes suggested that people sitting at home with their fax and computer will kill the city centre. The personal computer is indeed the most liberating of gadgets. It affects the way office interiors are planned. Gone is the individual room with framed pictures of children. People now group around screens or meet around tables and use enclosed rooms only when privacy is required. Interchange with colleagues may take place in your own office or in someone else's because you can take all the information you need in a portable computer, you can even do your work and consultation in a cafe or at home. The workplace becomes informal and must have a congenial atmosphere. This applies as much to the surrounding environment as to interiors. To meet this need for flexibility and contact the city needs to retain its tight sociable heart in which it is convenient and pleasant for people to meet.

CITY PRIDE

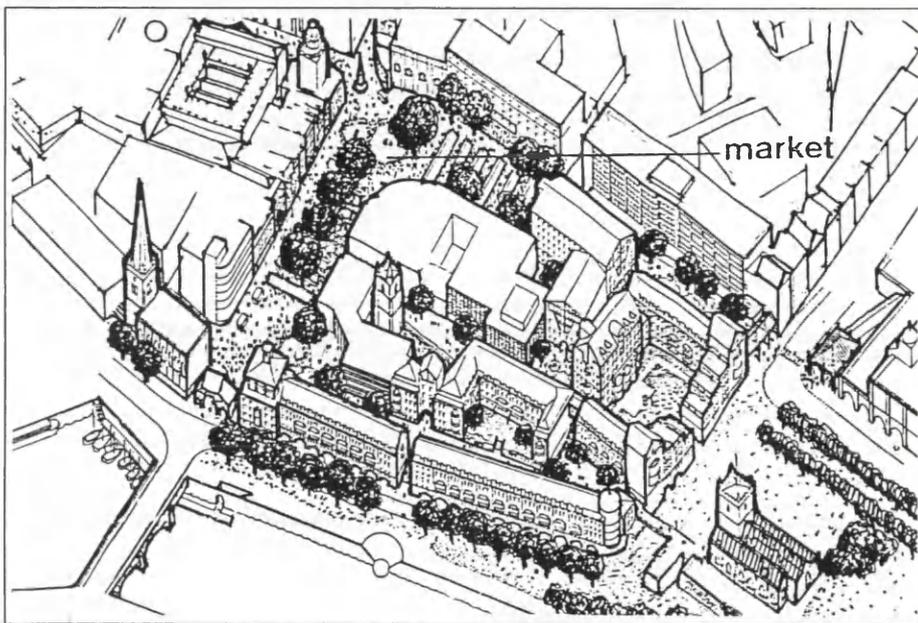
It is the quality of city life rather than its massive reorganisation that needs creative thought. We must also try to look beyond individual problems. Smoke used to be the nuisance that called into question the future of the city and it was dealt with satisfactorily. Cars are the current burning issue, as Jane Jacobs said they are one of those jokes that history sometimes plays on progress. I don't want to belittle the problem but I think it is reasonable to assume that we will come to our senses in due course and this will probably involve banning private cars from city centres. We must make sure that in the meantime they are not allowed to destroy the existing fabric of the city or prevent us from building congenial new city environments.

People used to take great pride in their cities. The Venetians referred to theirs as *Il Serenissima* and could not imagine how anyone could possibly wish to live outside it. To regain this delight in our surroundings requires civic pride and significant power in the hands of locally elected representatives. A healthy rivalry, competition with other towns, the ability to provide coordinated transport etc are considerations that appeal to both sides of the political spectrum. The European Commission acts on the principle that the larger unit of government has no right to take away powers that the smaller, more local, unit can do satisfactorily. Central government, if enlightened, can force a Council to adopt logical policies but it can not engender creative initiative in a community.

A city will prosper if it can attract employers to chose that city in preference to others because of its environmental qualities.

We are conditioned to thinking of cities other than London as being 'provincial' and this can breed an inferiority complex which is self fulfilling. As Europe becomes more regional in structure the dominance of the metropolis will reduce and city regions will become economic and cultural centres in their own right. A place the size of Bristol has all the advantages envisaged in the EC paper for the sociable city. It is sometimes said that British cities are peripheral to the centre of Europe and will therefore decline. This is rubbish. To take an example. A friend of mine who is professor of physics at Bristol University last year visited in order: Japan, USA, Greece, Germany, Japan, Holland, Germany, Russia and France and has received postgraduate students from Australia, USA, Ghana, Japan, Mexico, Venezuela, Germany, France, Italy, Russia, China, Iraq, Turkey, Algeria, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Nepal, India and Greece. This hardly indicates provincial isolation for those who wish to act on the world stage.

The renewed recognition of city centres as sociable places of great value has already started in programmes of conservation and enhancement. However most cities have failed with the large areas of dereliction at their centres and it is these areas that should contain our generation's most important contribution.



Left: High Cross Project.
Right: Canons Marsh.
Visualisation to illustrate the scale of potential development.

URBAN LAYOUTS

Richard MacCormac has produced fascinating projects for urbanism in London. However I believe that each of these was a comprehensive scheme produced for a single developer. My interest is in plans that allow several promoters of buildings to take part as and when the need arises. I believe that the key to this is for the authority to provide street and main service layouts which define city blocks. This is where I seem to part company with our local planners.

To take some examples, Foster has established a very simple pattern at Kings Cross. The IBA in Berlin is the most notable collection of new urban layouts and these mostly fall into the two simple categories, that of the urban villa and the perimeter block, on sites that are remarkably uniform in size. Stirling's Stuttgart gallery is inventive within a very regular street pattern. He addresses the outside formally and creates a wonderland inside the block. These and many other examples illustrate that a rigid street framework need not inhibit creative architecture or the uses to which blocks are put.

Urban layouts must not be confused with building projects or with architecture.

Architecture is a thing of fashion or whatever term you like to use, as are clothes. Fashion in clothes lasts a year. Fashion in architecture lasts a decade. Urban layouts are still around after a thousand years and in their time will contain a succession of buildings of different periods, styles and uses. For this reason urban layouts:

- should create attractive sheltered spaces,
- should not depend on particular building projects that may or may not proceed quickly,
- should provide city blocks that are large enough for single large schemes or a collection of small projects,
- should allow for change over the years unhindered by structure,
- should be simple enough to allow for variety in architecture,

- should be able to host a variety of uses,
- should respond to the genius loci,
- should not be determined by the current architectural cliché,
- should be carried out before political or commercial pressures become dominant.

Development will be slow to get off the ground where no urban framework has been established.

Urban layouts will not of themselves create a sociable city. They will only provide a framework within which society is encouraged to act in a sociable way and their success will depend on many social and financial factors over the years which cannot be predicted.

Healthy cities depend on a process of change and decay. Today's Yuppie flats may be tomorrow's affordable housing. Mario can't afford to open his bistro in a smart new development but staff in this development will visit him in his more decayed property round the corner. Layouts that allow adjacent buildings to be built in different ways and in different ownerships will decay and be replaced over different periods of time, thus setting the traditional process in train. It is areas of decay, where rents are cheap and enterprises can get started that give vitality to the economy of the city. These enterprises are more important to the stability of the city than major office implants that have little interaction with its commercial culture. In designing urban layouts we should accept the relatively humble role of creating the physical framework which will give form to unpredictable future development.

BRISTOL EXAMPLES

I want to finish with a personal case-history of Canons Marsh in Bristol. Twenty years ago Casson planned the docklands as Bristol's answer to the private car. This provoked the Docks Group into action and it contrasted the rich variety of traditional development with modern planning simplicities by superimposing bits of Oxford at the same scale. It pointed out that this was

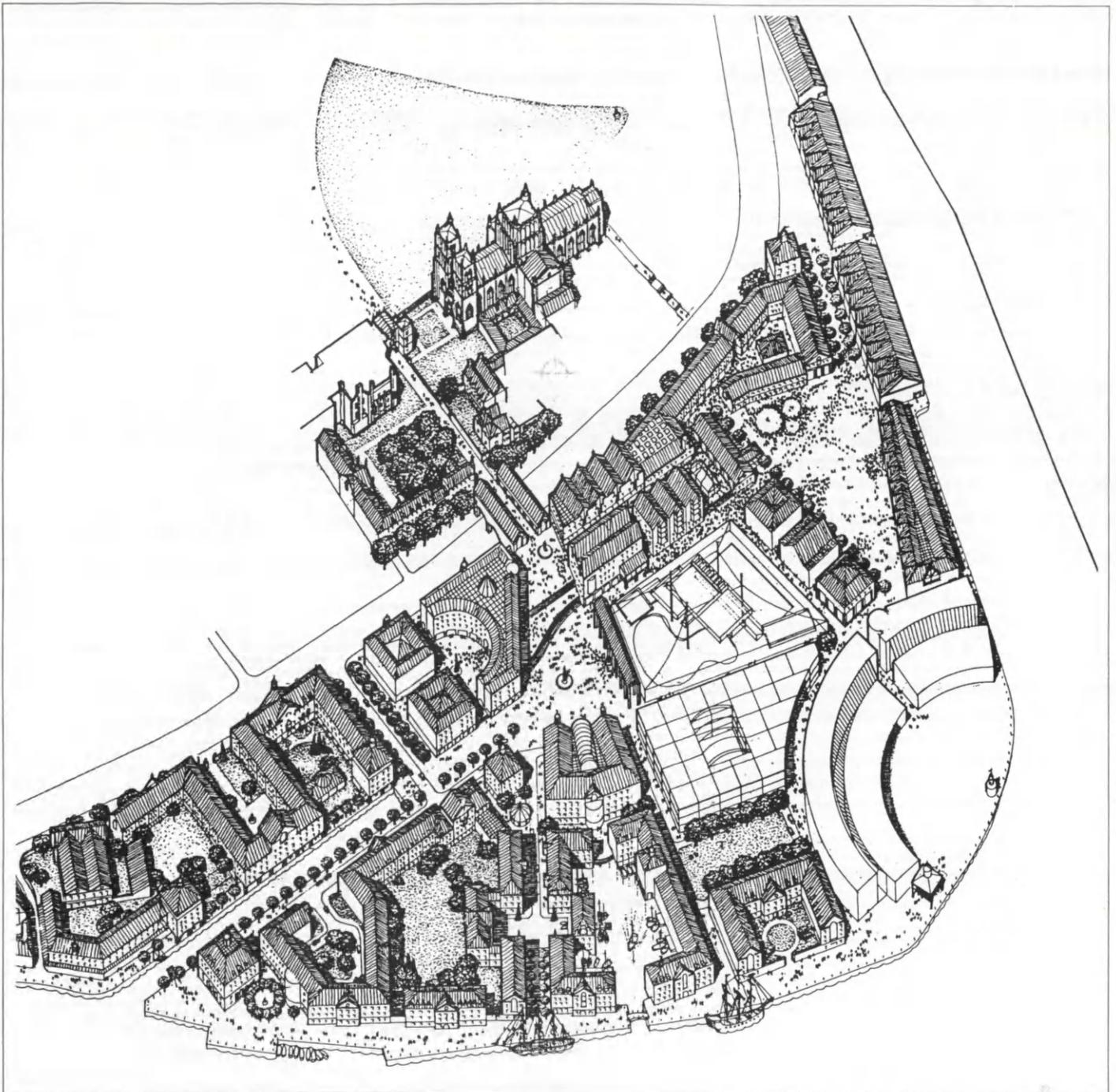
Bristol's great opportunity to create a congenial heart to the city on what must be the most spectacular city centre site in the country, surrounded as it is on three sides by water. This was our opportunity to make a major contribution to the city.

In succeeding years the planners produced written briefs stating, for example, that there should be no office buildings but they did not prepare an urban layout. A developer's competition was held and abandoned. A Sports Centre was started and abandoned. Eventually Lloyds Bank bought a site and built its headquarters taking up half the waterfront with a layout that does not invite adjacent buildings to form urban spaces. It is a campus building and, whatever its architectural merits, in terms of urban design it is a disaster. If an urban layout had been established before political and economic pressures became so dominant, the building could have been designed to a much tighter framework.

Before the second phase of Lloyds had received planning approval the Bristol Visual and Environmental Group asked me to set down their ideas on how a convivial environment could be created. Because the site has some spectacular views I proposed streets centred on the cathedral towers, St Mary Redcliffe, the Great Britain and the sunset. These divided the site into city blocks that could be made available for development as and when the need arose. It is an essentially simple plan that does not depend on any site being used for a particular purpose.

I illustrated it in a 'user friendly' way, as shown. Traditional building styles were shown to enable people to get a feeling for the scale of the spaces. I suggested uses within the city blocks but these were not essential to the plan.

Every cathedral city should have an ecclesiastical precinct distinct from its commercial centre and I showed how this can be formed by restoring the enclosure of College Square. There is a Norman gate



which at present leads nowhere that could become the entrance to Canons Marsh and the waterfront.

To take a small but significant example of the need for an urban layout. The Folk House, an Adult Education Centre, has wanted to come to Canons Marsh for ten years and is the kind of use that everyone wants to encourage. If the authority had provided the capital network and established street frontages, it could have been allocated a site and allowed to get on with it. Instead it has waited year after year for the authority to decide on uses or for a developer to offer space within a comprehensive scheme.

The only new building type I suggested was what I called a Winter Palace. Basically this is a place for people to meet. As well as sports facilities the it would contain multiplex

cinemas, discos, cafes, restaurants, somewhere to promenade, places to read the newspapers and listen to music. Every cold climate city should have one.

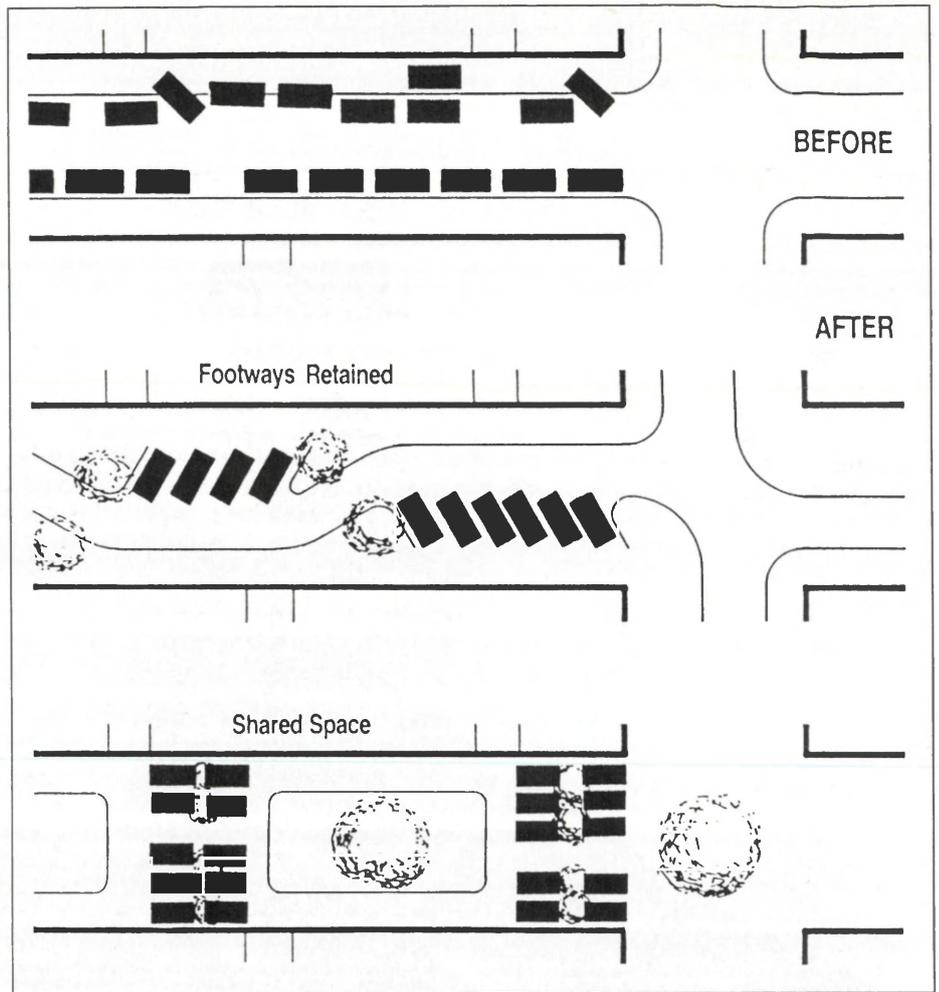
CONCLUSIONS

Bristol has several large derelict central sites and one can find reasons for layouts to suit each. At Canons Marsh it was the special views which generated the streets and squares. At Temple Meads it should be a route connecting the station to the city centre, not the isolated village at present proposed. On the edge of Castle Park the obvious starting point is the memory of the medieval city. A quarter of its pattern was destroyed in

the war and this quarter is big enough to include a residential community as well as offices and allow the dual carriageway to be turned into a market. Bristol's High Cross could be put back in its original location. Urban layouts can be very dissimilar but they must display a clear and unambiguous theme that is appropriate to their particular location. ■

**Traffic Calming
Urban Streetscapes
Percent for Art
Urban Villages
Landscape Europe
County Hall**

Asad Shaheed and Tim Catchpole are both employed by Halcrow Fox Associates. Simon Rendel is an associate with the ASH Partnership and Martin Richardson is a Consultant Architect.



**TRAFFIC CALMING GUIDELINES
Devon County Council Engineering and
Planning Department £20**

The basic premise of this book is simple and direct: Undue privileges have been afforded to the motor car on urban roads, at the expense of other users and their requirements. The needs of pedestrians, shoppers, residents, children, walkers, joggers, cyclists and so forth have taken a secondary priority in the management (of old) and the design (of new) roads.

In response, the Devon County Council - with a Project Team comprising Malcolm Baker, Tim Pharoah, Gerald Shapely and Dick Taylor, has produced an appropriately "simple and direct" handbook. The book through its rich collection of graphics and photos provokes ideas and offers solutions on how to design and manage public rights of way. The book is also refreshingly devoid of obscure philosophy and statistics.

"Traffic Calming Guidelines" pretends to be no more, and is no less, than the title suggests: a set of possible measures for improved traffic management, usership and design of roads.

The first part of the book deals briefly with the objectives of traffic calming, and importantly, questions traditional practice in

traffic management. It is argued that with the best intentions, policy makers and designers in the past have proposed measures such as full pedestrianisation and traffic diversions, whereby people are distanced from where they want to be: Residents are required to park at unacceptable distances from their cars, shoppers' parking is remote from shops and deliveries are made difficult. Early on in the book, the need is also identified for public involvement which would help to determine user requirements: and for a policy framework within which measures must be implemented.

The second part of the book describes a wide range of measures for traffic calming, covering: speed reduction, road markings, intersection design, finish materials, landscaping and environmental enhancement.

The final section of the book presents case studies of traffic calming schemes with examples from a variety of locations in Britain and from mainland Europe. Each case is described fully from its problems through to solutions and capital costs. Finally, an impartial assessment is made of the success or otherwise of each case study.

This is a useful reference book for Urban Designers.

Asad Shaheed

**BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
Tim Catchpole
56 Gilpin Avenue, London SW14 8QY**

PERCENT FOR ART: A REVIEW

The Arts Council £10

The object of this small attractive manual, published by the Arts Council, is, by furnishing information about the benefits, the administration, and examples of its use at home and abroad, to encourage the practice of Percent for Art in Britain.

It endeavours "to answer many of the outstanding questions about the formulation and implementation of percent for art policies: what is the relevance of Percent for Art for Britain? Is it legal? How should a percent for art policy be worded? How might it be implemented? Does a percent for art budget have to be spent on site? Does Percent for Art provide the total budget for the commission? Can Percent for Art be used in the private sector?"

"The arguments for Percent for Art employed by the public and private bodies that use it", the book suggests, "tend to include:

- The creation of a richer visual environment is a valid objective in its own right.
- A better looking environment helps to create an improved social and economic climate.
- Greater public access to contemporary art and craft.
- increased support for the arts.
- employment opportunities for artists, craftspeople and associated trades".

It points out that "for years, art commissioned for public places was seen as a problem-solver, as balm for the sores of unpopular contemporary architecture and design. Artists were called in, like paramedics, to 'do something about that wall' or 'put something in that forecourt'. Their task was often impossible and far from increasing the public use of space, art was seen as a signal of failure and deprivation. Percent for Art makes this approach to commissioning redundant.

Crucially, Percent for Art places artists and craftspeople on the same plane as architects, engineers, landscape architects, planners, quantity surveyors, conservationists and other professionals involved in the creation of public places. Their skills are integrated into the process and seen as complementary, not competing."

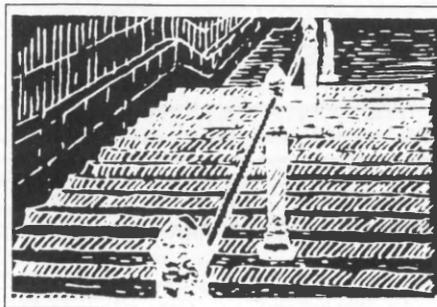
Though there are notable examples of the private sector practice of Percent for Art, in for example the US, and in the City, the principal application must be in that of public construction, and largely under the auspices of local authorities. As in so many fields, a litany of admirable examples from the Continent are set against sparse UK exceptions (such as Centenary Square, Birmingham or St Mary's Hospital, Isle of Wight).

The foreword was written by Tim Renton, who at the time of writing, two days before the general election, was the Minister for the Arts. One takes his euphemistic advocacy of

"the need for encouragement and persuasion, rather than prescription" to imply that government will be more generous with words than imply that government will be more generous with money. One hopes that the new government will be more prepared to invest in the unmeasurable, the unashamedly cultural, than has been the case over the last decade and more.

It would also seem as timely for the artist to rejoin society, as for the designer, too often entrapped in his arid preoccupations, to re-integrate the arts into his artefacts.

Martin Richardson



URBAN STREETSCAPES - A WORKBOOK FOR DESIGNERS

Johanna Gibbons and Bernard Oberholzer

BSP Professional Books 1991 £25

The bulk of this book consists of hand-drawn illustrations of street furniture and paving details from various parts of the world. These are supplemented by black and white photographs and short introductory sections giving some basic technical information. The book starts out with a succinct summary of the recent history of the street scene emphasizing its visual degradation in the 20th Century.

The wealth of examples, mainly from Japan, North America, South Africa, Britain, France and Italy, will be a valuable source of inspiration to many concerned with urban spaces. Although there is a certain arbitrariness about the selection, as though the authors have done little more than illustrative their travels, there are many unusual and amusing items which only a keen eye could have alighted on. The authors taste is evidently at the decorative, highly-textured, end of the spectrum with a virtual absence of classic modern movement examples.

The drawings, though not outstanding, serve their purpose and the photographs have good contrast and make their point. It is a pity, therefore, in a publication which is putting across the concept of visual co-ordination, that the typography and layout lack flair and in places appear amateurish.

At £25 this is a useful addition to the office library but it will probably seem over priced to the individual purchaser.

Simon Rendel

URBAN VILLAGES

The Urban Villages Group

London 1992 £19.95

Prince Charles in his book 'A Vision for Britain' referred to urban villages where 'human scale intimacy and a vibrant street life' could be reintroduced.

The Urban villages group was formed to take this idea forward and includes developers, housebuilders, planners, financiers and consultants led by Trevor Osborne.

This new book presents this idea which is 'to create sustainable and commercially viable places in which people can live and work and have a sense of community and human scale'. The Group is looking for sites up to 100 acres brownfield or greenfield which could accommodate 3,000 to 5,000 people. The book includes an imaginary case study which makes the proposals more meaningful but begs a number of questions. Will the volume builders be prepared to build the amount of medium high density terraced housing which is shown and will the public respond to that type of housing?

The book makes a case for 'Urban Villages' or 'Structured Planned Urban Developments' (SPUD) being seen as a new and separate category of development.

The danger is that the term urban village or SPUD will become merely a platitude and the real objectives of medium high density sustainability and a balance of housing and employment will be forgotten. The mainly Welsh garden Festival site will follow on the called an urban village; it does not seem to me to meet the prescribed characteristics. Nevertheless, the book makes a useful contribution to the debate about 'people-friendly places' which Poundberry, with difficulty, is already seeking to take further.

John Billingham

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE EUROPE 1992

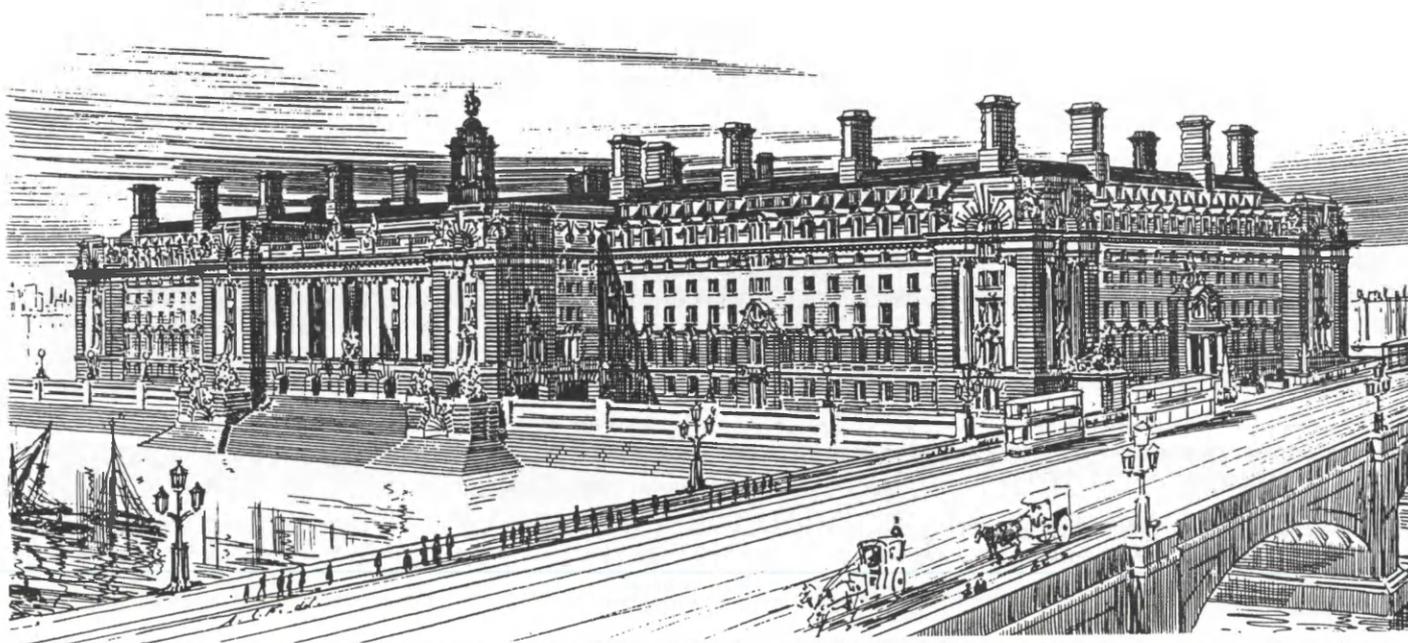
Landscape Design Trust, Reigate. £28.

This is the first edition of this publication which succeeds earlier directories limited to Great Britain. It includes European legislation and statutes, describes the European Foundation for Landscape Architecture and its Committee work, gives lists of organisations, illustrates about twenty projects and provides a Practice Directory covering all member countries with further details of those in Great Britain.

GENERATION OF OBJECTIVES FOR DESIGN CONTROL

A. C. Hall

This book was reviewed in March 1992. It is obtainable from Anglia Polytechnic at Chelmsford at a price of £12.50 including postage.



**COUNTY HALL
SURVEY OF LONDON MONOGRAPH
NO. 17
General Editor: Hermione Hobhouse
Price: £28 (£23 for former occupants)**

This book will appeal not just to those who once worked in County Hall (like myself) but to all in the urban design profession. It describes how this great monument to London bureaucracy came to be conceived, designed, built, extended and finally vacated.

The choice of site at the beginning of the century is well documented. One LCC councillor described the South Bank site as "cheap and nasty, unsavoury and inaccessible," while another councillor, John Burns, saw an opportunity to "lighten up a dull place, sweeten a sour spot and for the first time bring the south of London into a dignified and beautiful frontage on the River Thames".

The choice of design is also well documented. One radical weekly suggested that the LCC should put up the cheapest building possible, while John Burns drew attention to the Hotel de Ville in Paris and the grand town halls recently built elsewhere in Britain and favoured "a solid pile, less ornamental than Parliament, a massive building, yet fine to look upon, a structure that will fill with dignity and size one of the very best sites in South London.

Architectural Competition

A chapter is devoted to the architectural

competition. There were 152 entries reduced to a short list of 23. The young Ralph Knott won the competition with a design that was noted for its simplicity without all the costly embellishments of his rivals who included well established architects such as Lutyens. The neo-classical exterior is described by one admirer as "strong, serene, magnificent perhaps, but not grandiloquent".

Further chapters cover the modifications to the design (the crescent at the rear was transferred to the front to face the river), the completed building and the decorative treatment including sculptures. A chapter covers the extension of the County Hall complex into the North and South Blocks, which were designed in-house with assistance from Giles Gilbert Scott, and into the much ridiculed Island Block. The final chapter discusses the redevelopment proposals designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill which entail the refurbishment of Knott's building and demolition of the North, South and Island Blocks.

The book is handsomely produced with a large number of illustrations showing several of the short-listed entries, the winning scheme, modifications to the scheme, the sculptures of Ernest Cole that adorn the building facades and the many interior features such as the Council Chamber, Committee rooms, ceremonial stairs and the "corridors of power".

Quotes appear on every page. I particularly enjoyed Sir Hugh Casson's description of the interior: "It was a delight to pace those generously spaced and handsomely panelled

corridors and to wonder at the diligence and detailed attention of the designers; every corner beautifully turned, every cornice advancing and retreating in proper order giving a glimpse of well proportioned rooms, specially designed furniture and radiator casings". (My own favourite interior feature was the corridor on the second floor, nearly 250m long and uninterrupted by recesses, it had a Kafkaesque feel about it. Alas, it was divided up by a series of fire doors in the early 1980s).

The Future

While the future of County Hall is being debated - a Japanese Hotel, a Eurobank headquarters, a new home for the LSE, etc - this book has emerged as a memento of what was and might never be again. It has been produced by the Survey of London Team, formerly of the GLC and now under the control of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, and it is the 17th volume in their monograph series (monographs cover important monuments in London which are either under threat or in the process of change).

The book is a worthy memento and looks good on the coffee table. ■

Tim Catchpole

Ralph Knott's winning design for County Hall, 1908. The crescent proposed on the southern side was subsequently moved to the riverside.

THE LOST ART OF TOWN PLANNING

The starting point of these notes, the moment when the question first raised itself is quite simple, quite precise. The ramifications are considerable.

A Course Director is explaining "urban design" to us. It involves - in paraphrase - the way buildings are arranged; the qualities that transform mere "development" into "place"; being sensitive to context and to people; its a continuous process; its a link between land use strategies and architecture. Its ultimately about making environments that are better to live in.

We go on to discuss the kind of course its going to be. Who the students will be.

This course is going to be a postgraduate one leading to an MA. Town Planners are likely to be the main group of students.

But the definitions of urban design sounded, to me, just like "town planning". They were all kinds of things that the public might expect would be town planning. Soon there will be some new masters of this new art.

It is really a new art? Isn't "urban design" with all the paraphernalia of higher degrees, of quasi-professional interest groups, simply an adventitious phoenix, dancing in the ruins of the failure of town planning. the failure of town planning in practice, the failure of town planning philosophically, the failure of town planning academically, the failure of town planning as an art, as a skill and above all as place making.

But what is this art of town planning and how might it revive?

TRADITIONAL DESIGN SKILLS

Many of planners traditional design skills have been lost. Certainly 62% of employers in a recent PCL survey¹ felt graphic skills were either "too little" taught - or not taught at all - on planning courses today, and commented on how few recent planning graduates could read plans, draw or visualise the future of the places they planned.

Meanwhile, distinguished figures of an earlier generation of planners have made careful and coolly argued calls for the revival of "core competence" of planning - "making and implementing plans for places so that they work well and feel good to be in "and" good land use planning has a substantial if modest part to play in realising the level of civilisation"².

These central design skills are still there - just about - in the RTP1's education guidelines³ but its curiously phrased "aesthetic dimensions and design awareness" - are passive and appreciative rather than in an active, embracing, positive way. It's as if, as indeed for many planners I suspect it seems, "design" is just a tail piece, a coda, a

bit of window dressing to more important issues of policy, society, of strategy, of law. That of course is wholly mistaken. "Planning" is just an extended first stage of design, undertaken socially and with imprecise rules and objectives, by a wide range of agencies that eventually, sometimes, leads to a brief, finite, contractual phase that produces enduring results enjoyed or abused, suffered or tolerated by society as individuals in their everyday use of land and space. Without "design" planning is all talk. Without "planning" design is arrogance. Their works shape the same singular reality.

There are many to who I'm sure this will sound conservative and reactionary in the extreme, an attempt to invoke the spirit of Thomas Sharp⁴. (That may be no bad thing perhaps, but that is not my main concern here). Since then, the argument would run, times have changed: Society, the professions, our understanding of urban life and problems have moved with them; these are archaic ideas, rooted in a simpler older world, that is simply out of touch.

CENTRAL FOCUS

Such criticisms conveniently overlook two aspects. Firstly that for all our knowledge, of all our intellectual sophistications, the central focus of planning work is the mundane activities of a social biped capable of speech and reason, searching for shelter, sustenance, self-protection and generation on the surface of a planet whose climate and topography is only partly hospitable. The senses and perceptions, activities and preferences of this species are still more or less the same as they were when Vitruvius and Alberti, Sitte and (even) Sharp were writing, planning towns and designing spaces.

But secondly, for all that, for all the pushing forward of the profession of town planning, not only has it art been overlooked but also the arts themselves. Basic skills have been neglected. Drawing itself is a familiar, cheap, easily learned, infinitely adaptable information technology, a way of recording, analysing, transforming and projecting aspects of the nature, spacing surfaces and movements of people and things and their future possibilities. But where is it taught to town planners in that way? Ideas of - and in - art and design have moved too since the 1960's. The Georgian verses in which Sharp evoked Oxford and celebrated the English picturesque⁴ were antique thirty years ago. The arts on which town planning will draw must be of the present age: its no accident perhaps that Robert Hewison's recent survey *Future tense: A New Art for the Nineties*⁵ is as much a critique of urban development and reaction and creation in response to it as an account of the avant garde of "fine art" (whatever that is). It should be on the reading lists of every planning school, as should an engagement with the full range of contemporary arts, their concerns and expressions of urban life and place. It means more than the rearrangements of Brookside

that seem the lowest common denominator of planning school design projects (however, much their orthodoxies and conventions may please employers); but whatever adventures in media, form, style, imagination and language these explorations may bring, it must not be at the expense of those enduring everyday tests of urban spaces and places: *how does it feel?*

To argue for the art of town planning, to look to creative sensitivities about places, expressive means of their analysis, imaginative explorations of their future realities at the core of planning is not to argue for a revival of Town and Country Planning colour inks, (Red-Brown 2.2 et al) and repeal of every planning Act since 1947. But it is to argue that the consequences of choices of direction and emphasis the planning profession made in the 1970's and 1980's are wrong and have left a vacuum of purpose, skill and responsibility.

To think of "Urban design" as a separate skill is a diversion, a convenient separation of those difficult arts that are really nothing less than "town planning". The planning profession - whether it accepts and faces up to the fact or not - has had and will continue to have responsibility, through the drawing up of plans, the consideration of proposals and the recommendation of permissions for development for "urban design". It is an art that town planning must itself revive, must take again to its heart, and learn, again, to design.

For planners "urban design" is not an option, is not an extra, it is town planning. ■

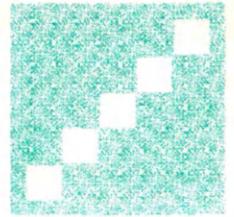
Bob Jarvis

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- (1) *Planning*, 27 March, 1992, pp 20-21;
- (2) *The Planner*, letters, 6 March, 1992, 3 April, 1992;
- (3) Summarised in *The Planner*, 17 April,
- (4) See Stansfield K, *Thomas Sharp* in Cherry, G.E., *Pioneers in British Planning*, Architectural Press, London, 1981;
- (5) Hewison, R. *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties*, Methuen, London, 1990.

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