

INVOLVING PEOPLE IN URBAN DESIGN

Urban Design Assistance Teams

The Way Forward for Europe?

Practice Profiles of Andrews Downie & Partners

Philip Cave Associates and Terence O'Rourke PLC

UDQ Issue 49

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**URBAN
DESIGN
QUARTERLY**

UDG PROGRAMME

Main events in early '94 concern

'What is a City' and include:

Wednesday 26th January

Panel discussion chaired by Alan Balfour, Head of the Architectural Association

Wednesday 16th February

Lecture by Jan Kaplicky and Amanda Letevre of Future Systems

Wednesday 9th March

Lecture by Brian Hanson of the Prince of Wales Institute

Wednesday 6th April

Lecture by Jonathan Glancey, Architectural Editor for the Independent

All these events will take place at the London Exchange, 10 Cowcross Street, London EC1. Events start at 6.30pm and admission is £2 for members and £3 for non-members.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A highly successful annual conference was hosted by the South West UDG Region in association with the University of the West of England last October on the subject of Design Briefing. Over a hundred delegates were in attendance, representing all the Regions, with presentations which included amongst others Terry Farrell, Peter Fidler, John Punter, Alan Day, Les Sparks and a view of local initiatives from both Bristol City Council and local architects. The proceedings will be recorded in a forthcoming issue of the Quarterly.

Any comments from delegates as to how future conferences might be further improved or developed would be welcomed.

Moves are afoot to hold a major UDG event later this year in Birmingham, with particular emphasis on the role of engineers in shaping the urban environment. Anyone wishing to get involved could contact John Peverley or Roger Evans via the Group's Didcot office.

DESIGN COMPETITION

A competition for the enhancement of the Market Square and High Street in Biggleswade is being promoted by a partnership comprising Mid Beds District Council, Biggleswade Town Council, Biggleswade Chamber of Trade and Bedfordshire County Council. The competition is open to all UK registered architects and architects in collaboration with professionals from related disciplines. Team submissions displaying skills in landscape design, town planning, highway and transportation planning are welcomed, with first, second and third prizes of £3,000, £2,000 and £1,000 respectively. A registration fee of £29.38 is payable to RIBA/Biggleswade at RIBA Competitions Office, 8 Woodhouse Square, Leeds LS3 1AD. The deadline for submissions is 16th February.

eine Harzreise



STUDY TOUR

The Group's study tour is again being organised by Alan Stones, and this year will travel to the Harz mountains between May 28th and June 5th. The Harz mountains were not only the cradle of the Romantic Movement in German art and literature, but in medieval times were the European centre of silver mining and minting. As a result, towns and villages grew up which today are of great historic interest. Until recently the area was difficult to visit, as it straddled the border between East and West Germany. Our tour, however, will include both sides of the region, showing the contrast in the fortunes of different towns. On the return journey we shall visit an early 20th century attempt at recreating the German historic town - the Margarethenhohe at Essen.

The fee is £375 and includes rail travel from London and nine nights' accommodation and breakfast in tourist class hotels. The tour will include, we hope, a trip each way through the Channel Tunnel.

Further details from Alan Stones, Fullerthorne, Church Street, Kelvedon, Essex CO5 9AH or phone 0245 437642 (direct line). The last booking date is Friday 25th March 1994.

UDG REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

A number of UDG events are taking place up and down the country. If you would like further information, or to get involved in their planning do contact your regional convener:

Scotland	Mike Galloway	041-429-8956
North	Alan Simpson	091-281-6981
Yorks/Humber	Tony Dennis	0904-613161
North West	Stephen Gleave	061-491-0972
East Midlands	Merideth Evans	0476-870424
West Midlands	John Peverley	021-235-4188
South Wales	Gordon Lewis	0222-231401
South West	Andy Gibbins	0272-222964
East Anglia	Alan Stones	0245-437642
South East	Roger Evans	0869-350096

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE QUARTERLY

Quite a lot of material is being sent to the Editor in response to the notice about future issues and in some cases it is received too late for consideration as the contents have already been finalised. Members are asked to let John Billingham know in advance if they would like to contribute to specific future issues so that their work be considered when planning is being done.

Members response to articles would be welcome and a page will always be available for letters to the editor.

LEADER

The term 'urban design' has to many people in the UK had something of a narrow meaning, a concern for the niceties of 'townscape' and the 'character of towns' and cities from a visual standpoint, and not always thought to deal with the 'harder' social, political and financial issues which impact upon the urban environment.

Increasingly in one country, the United States, 'urban design' speaks to numerous spatial scales - regional, city, town, neighbourhood; to the many activities contained therein, commercial and industrial, cultural and educational, residential and recreational; to the systems that link these, transportation, communication and utilities; this approach has been notably developed over the past twenty five years or so through the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Urban Design Assistance Team (UDAT) programme.

The AIA UDAT programme has grown as a new movement in urban design practice with the primary characteristics of urban design as 'process' and means of consultation working directly with community and business interest groups; urban design as moderator of structural and infrastructure issues; and urban design as a generator of urban form. Regional Urban Design Assistance Teams were first developed in the 1960s in the shadow of the civil rights movement in the United States and were a response to the wholesale demolition of inner city neighbourhoods and the destruction of communities. The lack of any form of proper consultation with those directly affected by clearance programmes began to give rise to often violent reaction to planning proposals and urban re-development schemes. Communities began to demand a say in the future of their neighbourhood and in the future of their city. The first UDAT was carried out in Rapid City, South Dakota as a response to a specific request for help put to the American Institute of Architects in Washington DC. The AIA responded by agreeing to gather together a multi-disciplinary team of advisers who visited Rapid City on an expenses only paid tour to help in any way they might. The results were profound and what was discovered of greatest significance was that with a little stimulus from 'outside' local communities had resources enough to

begin to solve their own problems.

Through the development and promotional work carried out by the American Institute of Architects on behalf of the UDAT programme, formal procedures now exist for the development of initiatives and interventions on behalf of local communities. Requests for assistance are initially made through the local AIA officials and representatives who in turn seek the further assistance as appropriate of the national AIA UDAT Group in Washington DC. Teams are assembled from a large 'pool' of volunteers, many of whom are by now well experienced in UDAT procedures and techniques, and are always assembled on a voluntary basis joining projects on expenses only paid tours. Additionally there is a commitment not to seek or accept any form of professional commission for twelve months either side of the UDAT project. Consequently teams maintain independence and a high degree of objectivity in their relationship with the project, an essential characteristic of the service.

The recent experience of UDAT-like exercises in the UK, such as Theatre Village, Newcastle upon Tyne and Kings Cross, London indicate substantially differing attitudes by community and business interest groups to the process; the question of 'civic responsibility' and whose town is it anyway, is not so readily answered as in the United States where an attitude of 'my neighbourhood' and 'my city' seems to prevail more so; nevertheless, perhaps the US experience of twenty five years and some 130 UDAT programmes through the AIA programme has more to offer European urban and civic design endeavours than we have so far appreciated.

This issue of the Quarterly refers to the experience in UDATs and similar events in the United States and in Britain, and also includes a final article which is intended to enable the UDG to produce a code of practice for UDATs. This could then be used by the Group to make communities aware that such a service could be available in suitable circumstances. To enable this to happen members' views are needed to see if there is general support for the procedures that are proposed. If they are supported this could be the start for a UDAT Europe programme.

Alan Simpson



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of this issue relies on the background and experience of the AIA/RUDAT programme and the advice and support from David Lewis from Pittsburgh and Charles Zucker of the AIA. The articles by David Lewis and by Alan Simpson and Charles Zucker first appeared in the Routledge Companion to Contemporary Architectural Thought published in the UK in November 1993 and in the USA in December 1993.

A number of illustrations in the Quarterly are reproduced with permission from the AIA to use drawings from 'DAT - Creating a Design Assistance Team for Your Community' published in 1990, including the network shown on page 28.

URBAN DESIGN GROUP Chairman: Jon Rowland Tel: 071-388 2421. ENQUIRIES and CHANGE OF ADDRESS: 140A The Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8RJ. Tel: 0235 815907 Fax: 0235 819606. PATRONS: Alan Baxter, Honor Chapman, Sir Philip Dowson, Terry Farrell, Peter Hall, Simon Jenkins, Jane Priestman, John Worthington. TOPIC EDITOR: Alan Simpson, LAYOUT and EDITOR John Billingham, NEWS Roger Evans, BOOK REVIEWS Tim Catchpole, EDITORIAL GROUP John Billingham, Kelvin Campbell, Roger Evans, Tony Lloyd-Jones, Francesca Morrison, Bob Jarvis, Tim Catchpole, Alan Simpson. PRINTING Constable Printing. DTP Kingston Type, Oxford. COPYRIGHT Urban Design Group ISBN 0266 6480. Material for publication or review should be addressed to: The Editor, 26 Park Road, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1DS. Tel: 0235 526094. Quarterly is free to Urban Design Group Members (Subscription £25.00 with students £14). The Urban Design Group is not responsible for the views expressed or statements made by the individuals writing in this journal.

TONY LLOYD-JONES REPORTS ON LECTURES BY ADRIAN ATKINSON AND ARUN JAIN Resources & the Urban Future Adrian Atkinson

Two UDG lectures on urban sustainability in late September and early October presented divergent radical and reformist positions on the topic. Both speakers, however, were keen to stress the central importance of cultural and aesthetic factors, and the role of image and aspiration in either promoting or impeding urban sustainability.

The first of the speakers, Dr Adrian Atkinson, is an architect who specializes in environmental impact studies and in urban analysis from an environmental perspective. He presented the by-now familiar environmentalist argument of impending global catastrophe as the context in which to discuss what form cities would take if this argument were to be taken more seriously. Much of the talk was concerned with putting the environmentalist approach in general and the notion of urban sustainability in particular in its historical setting.

He described the concept of sustainability defined at the Rio summit of June 1992. Of special significance was the convention signed at that conference known as agenda 21 - a 600 page guide to government policies on every issue from an environmentalist point of view, two thirds of which related to urban policies.

The background to this major shift in perception of the environmental aspects of urbanism was the Brundtland Report which sought to redefine the notion of development, hitherto limited to traditional western concepts of economic growth. In parallel, the unofficial environmentalist movement, had long been pressuring the World Bank to change its development policies.

Dr Atkinson presented the environmentalist position in the familiar format of graphs showing the exponential growth of the human population and consumption of resources. Despite the shift in perception represented by Agenda 21, if the message is true, it is clearly not getting through as powerfully as it should.

China and other Asian countries representing a third of humanity are set to shift rapidly from low per capita energy and resource consumption to developed country levels. What is the environmental impact of this scale of development likely to be on top of previous industrial development? According to Dr Atkinson it is the positive reinforcement in the presentation of Asian economic growth in the West that is helping to encourage this development. At the same

time, environmentalists have had strictly limited success in persuading the governments of poorer countries not to follow the same polluting and resource depleting paths of the rich world.

Though the traditional conservationist perspective is anti-urbanist, Dr Atkinson presented himself as a confirmed urbanist. Cities are central to human culture. They are a "force for progress and centres of production and culture". Urbanization can take the pressure off rural resources. Higher densities are less resource consuming in so far as you need less energy to move around. Resources are more likely to be better shared in cities.

But he had in mind a particular model of the city. Certainly not the 'megacities' which deplete global resources and are inherently unsustainable. Such cities, according to Atkinson, rely wholly on imported resources and external sinks for their wastes and cast an 'ecological shadow' across the globe.

The Green movement's solution is regional self sufficiency - small compact cities existing within productive rural areas, each serving the needs of each other. This notion of 'politically self-responsible bio-regions' has been a favourite of Greens from the days of Blueprint for Survival. Ideas of local self-reliance, reintegration of local and regional ecology and resources have also been linked with the re-emergence of local culture.

As Atkinson pointed out, these ideas of local self-sufficiency are rooted firmly in the Utopian tradition that dates back to Thomas More's original Utopia with its carefully regulated, (one might say regimented) and balanced self-sufficient community. Greens are now actively promoting a 'New Protectionism' against the excesses of the global liberalisation of trade represented by GATT.

It is questionable, however, if notions of local and regional autonomy and culture can be viewed in isolation from the tricky political issues of territory and cultural atavism that have thrown so many parts of the world into conflict and turmoil. And many of the qualities of urbanity that Dr Atkinson seemed to feel at ease with surely arise from the cosmopolitan character of the 'megacities' generated by increasing international exchange.

In the discussion that followed the talk, it was suggested that the Green movement was presenting an ethical argument and relying too heavily on moral exhortation. Dr Atkinson, however, insisted that his argument was primarily aesthetic, that the political impact of green ideas lay in the beauty of the utopian image, of "lifestyle as a dance".

He had little to say on the nuts and bolts issues of designing for urban sustainability

preferring to stress the importance of environmental audits and impact analysis leaving a section of the audience, perhaps, somewhat frustrated. There is clearly a huge area of debate which was not broached at this meeting. Discussions of transport issues; of integrated transport and land use policy; of how to increase the attractiveness of higher density living or how to increase the climatic-responsiveness of urban forms through layout as well as building techniques; of more practical models of urban sustainability such as Curitiba in Brazil which will have to wait for another occasion.

Adrian Atkinson's talk, however, provided a useful starting point and overview for what will undoubtedly be a continuing and increasingly important set of issues to be addressed in the future.

Rethinking the American Suburb Arun Jain

Adrian Atkinson professed a continuing faith in the aesthetic power of the image of the ecological lifestyle to transform our cities without demonstrating how this was to become a political and practical reality. Arun Jain's starting point was acceptance in large degree of the cultural imperative of the existing Californian suburban lifestyle with its strong emphasis on the separation of workplace and residence: "The pursuit of low density single family detached homes in the suburbs has always been driven by its symbolic and cultural appeal within American society...there is no evidence to suggest that this aspiration is changing."

This lifestyle, with its sprawling dormitory towns where a plot size of 1 acre is the norm for a family dwelling and huge remote office parks and shopping centres (where the area devoted to car parking can take 4 to 6 times the footprint of the buildings), Jain agreed, was unsustainable. His design philosophy, as illustrated in the two projects described in his talk, is to find pragmatic solutions, solutions which adapt to the social aspirations of the American public rather than challenge them in any fundamental way. The challenge of sustainability, Jain argued, is not served by attempting to modify people's behaviour through social engineering or architectural determinism. Sustainable solutions must be market-oriented not utopian.

He stressed that Americans, and particularly Californians, are far more wedded to the idea of low density suburbia than Europeans. Daniel Solomon, another California-based urban designer, has suggested a powerful connection with the myth of the 'lone rider of the prairies', "the idea of Americans as a population that lives on the land, about a culture of vast distances that is so exotic and unattainable. That

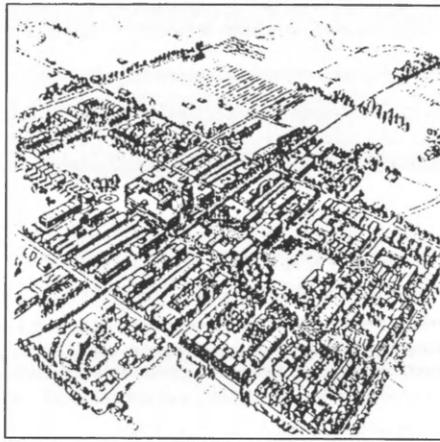
culture has been perpetuated, disseminated and made mythic by sixty years of cinema and the real merchants of dreams - the advertising industry....As the west became urbanized, the culture of the wilderness, not the town, prevailed."

But as we heard in Adrian Atkinson's talk, Europe too, has its anti-urban myths, less arcadian perhaps, more grounded in the memory of small town and village life, but no less influential in terms of the effect on urban form and suburban aspirations. Selling suburbia to those who can afford it, with or without ecological add-ons, is in no way unique to America. The flight from overcrowded, insecure and unhygienic inner cities by the better off has been a feature of urban life ever since it became safe to live in unfortified villas beyond the city walls and to travel unmolested through the open countryside to workplaces in the city centre. And the image of the lifestyle of the rich has been always and almost universally a spur to the aspirations of the less well off.

A project for a residential 'community' of 50,000 people "sought to address regional jobs-housing imbalances" by virtue of its location close to an area of office parks but there was no attempt at integration on a local level. The development had a retail and community services core with a mix of housing 'products' including 'high density' subsidized housing of 24 dwellings per acre close to the centre and a density drop off to 8 dwellings or less per acre on the periphery. The low density neighbourhoods focused on local community and retail centres. The 'green' character of the whole development was emphasized by a network of green corridors, local community and neighbourhood parks and 6,000 acres of preserved open space around the periphery.

Beyond the purely cosmetic green aspects of this development, the somewhat higher housing densities than is the norm represent a step in the right direction, although Jain did not suggest that even this token approach to sustainability could be readily sold to the developers. Whilst the urban design approach aimed to reduce internal trip generation whilst addressing market needs, there appeared to be no clear strategic approach to the transport question, which is surely a key to sustainability.

The development would lie on a rapid transit rail link to San Francisco Bay, some 30 minutes away and would be pedestrian-oriented, although in a community of this size and density, unlike a 'Pedestrian Pocket', most people would not be within walking distance of a station. Electric golf carts were intended to replace private cars for a large part of local use although it was somewhat unclear how this policy was to be



View of a model Pedestrian Pocket Community

implemented.

Ideas of sustainability were taken somewhat further and appear to be more fully thought through in the second project, a residential community of 2000 homes in a large site owned by a Catholic institution close to San Francisco Bay. The project, in providing homes for people already working on the site (up to 40% of the proposed residential population), offered an opportunity for built-in home/workplace integration. It was designed as a series of villages 'sensitively located within the landscape'.

The design aimed at relative resource efficiency, not complete self-sufficiency. Again there was a mix of housing types following a density gradient away from the core area. Local streets replace regional highways and are connected to a regional rail transit system with dedicated routes for bikes and electric carts. A regular electric shuttle was to link residential 'villages' to the transit station. The urban design and planning policies provided the framework for more detailed technological solutions to problems of resource conservation, waste water treatment and recycling, and low energy housing.

As Arun Jain's presentation culminated in elaborate cash flow analyses that demonstrated the ultimate profitability of the scheme, Adrian Atkinson's utopian schemes began to appear more attractive. In reality, even if the environmentalist argument is only partially true, we can hardly wait for ideas of sustainability to filter slowly down through the leafy lanes of the new Californian suburbia to more lowly urban realms. The answer must surely lie somewhere between these two approaches in challenging the existing culturally-determined aspirations, not with utopia, but with practical ideas that can generate real support for change at a political level.

Tony Lloyd-Jones

References:

1. Solomon, Daniel, 'Fixing Suburbia', in Kelbaugh, D. et al, *The Pedestrian Pocket Book*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1989.

THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN CAPITALS IN KNOWLEDGE BASED DEVELOPMENT GOETHE INSTITUTE SEMINAR

Shortly after the demise of the Berlin wall, the Goethe-Institute brought together key players among planners, developers and investors, academics, as well as politicians and citizens to explore 'New Strategies of Urban Development'. The purpose of the second seminar in June 1993 was to examine how European capitals would fare after the completion of the single market. Would capitals compete with each other for European primacy or would a federal pattern emerge with a financial, cultural and political capital instead? London, Paris and Berlin are the prime contenders, although Brussels lays claim on Europe's administration. Many urban analysts now see the knowledge base of cities as the key asset to success.

Over thirty speakers from London, Berlin and Paris including representatives of intergovernmental bodies, economic analysts, business leaders, culture workers and planners contributed to the seminar.

Defining knowledge culture

Why should urban designers concern themselves with the 'knowledge base' of cities? "Knowledge culture" eschews unequivocal meaning and begs the questions of what knowledge and for what purpose. Auguste Comte claimed that "information is knowledge and knowledge is power". Does this maxim still apply to our information society and does the power of knowledge irretrievably lead to domination? Reverence to formal knowledge may devalue development that draws on everyday experience and cultural diversity and relies on know-how rather than acquired technologies. The importance that governments attach to 'the message' over information adds further confusion to the relationship between knowledge and values.

In English, the 'knowledge base' concept is both a hold-all and an overwhelming complex of notions. It does not translate easily. The Germans avoid defining the concept explicitly by using "K" as a prefix (for 'Kenntnis, Konzeption, Kompetenz, Kultur, Kommunikation, Kreativität'). The French circumscribe the phenomenon as "économie ou métropole à fort contenu en connaissance", a wording that lacks both elegance and intelligibility. However, they have undertaken elaborate studies of Paris' knowledge base. In all three cultures, the knowledge base encompasses more than just the yields of science. Besides a high value-added economy, it relies on empowering institutions and responsive governance. It encompasses quality of culture and the

environment, together with human resources capable of generating both.

It is difficult to conceive how capitals could ever have survived without a knowledge base. From Alexander the Great to Victoria, rulers in Europe have maintained power and expanded their wealth with the help of knowledge producers. Cities remained prosperous as long as they stimulated innovation, linked knowledge to production and nurtured a high quality environment. With the rise of nation states, their capitals accumulated power and knowledge and thus sharply increased their competitiveness. In more recent times, globalisation together with the emergence of regional consciousness threatened the nation states and their capitals. In the seventies, synergy between brainpower and white technology was displaced onto greenfield sites. However large agglomerations still provide both the markets and the hubs of dissemination. Arguably, these functions contribute to the knowledge infrastructure of mature industrial societies. They guarantee survival to-day and may sustain living standards to-morrow.

Formal production of knowledge

Capitals tend to dominate and perhaps be dominated by the formal production of knowledge and advancement of science.

Notwithstanding Oxford and Cambridge, London has the greatest concentration of centres of excellence in higher education that further attract specialised research institutes and many knowledge producing agencies.

In France during the early eighties, the incoming socialist government tried to spread knowledge production more evenly throughout the country. Yet, still more than half of the nation's research is carried out in the Paris region in the nineties. The 'technopôle' movement was an initiative to counteract the concentration of knowledge in the Paris region, but the verdict of their effectiveness remains pending.

The federal structure of Germany gave rise to specialised cities. The physical and ideological division of Berlin had adverse effects on the centres of excellence located in the capital of the new Germany. Nevertheless, West Berlin has a large student population, not least because it was exempted from military conscription, while East Berlin had the best educated population of East Germany which manned the universities, academies of science and numerous national research institutes concentrated in the 'capital of the GDR'.

Know-how and informal knowledge

Capitals may be less well equipped to generate applied knowledge and technological advances, as they are losing

their manufacturing base. London does not seem unduly alarmed by the estimate of its manufacturing base reducing to less than 5% of its workforce by the year 2006, nor by the low knowledge content of its financial sector. Paris is busy exporting its service demands to cheap labour areas in Asia and the far East. Berlin, on the other hand, is seriously considering ways of restructuring its existing industrial base by linking formal knowledge to know-how, not least to protect its existing labour force from unemployment.

Outside the productive sector, intuitive 'knowledge' and the cumulation of everyday experience prevents formal knowledge from becoming 'cultural tyranny'. 'Capital culture' owes as much to artists as to company directors and urban development strategies need to harness all forms of knowledge accordingly.

Measuring knowledge content

Defining what does and does not constitute the knowledge base of a capital city is one thing, measuring and assessing it in economic terms is quite another.

From the seminar, it appeared that Paris was most advanced in such data capture. France has a solid tradition of urban analysis, long term projections and scenario writing. Based on measured evaluation and underpinned by rolling five-year plans, France's strong central powers have sustained non-partisan long term investment, for example, into the public transport system of the Paris region. Nevertheless, rivalry between the state and the capital always existed which led to countercurrents against the primacy of Paris. In the 60s, De Gaulle launched the "métropoles d'équilibre"; at present, investment is redirected to provincial cities and diffused to other cities in the 'Bassin Parisien' while the state continues to control the regional strategic plan of Ile-de-France and its budget, supposedly in the interest of the nation as a whole. Meanwhile, the president of the Republic rivals with the mayor of Paris with "grands projets" which means that Paris obtains a disproportionate amount of public subsidies for culture.

West Berlin was rich in data but poor in indigenous economic dynamics, as the city was propped up by federal subsidies. Nevertheless, some see the presence of an albeit outmoded industrial base as a strength, because knowledge can be incorporated into restructured production with rising immaterial content. Before the demise of the wall, East Berlin lived its myth of European capital without tangible evidence. Pan-Berlin organisations are now painstakingly compiling information on the city as a whole. They found that East Berliners were much better educated than those in the West and

science parks are being set up to harness this asset. On the other hand, the divide between the two cities may be more devastating than anticipated, especially in cultural terms.

London nurtures its own myth of 'world city' and 'financial capital' of Europe. It sees itself in a league with Tokyo and New York despite the failure of its Taurus system and heavy shake outs in the service sector. There is no proof that the latter makes a real contribution to the strength of London's economy. Further, it is not clear whether the knowledge base matters more than deregulation in the competition for inward investment. It may be unwise to guarantee mobility and personal safety to footloose managers rather than high culture. Locally, social peace may be easier to secure by empowering 'low culture' which, in turn, could contribute to London's wealth. The advantage of the English language may not compensate for all the ignorance about London's strengths and weaknesses, including the significance of its dying industrial sector.

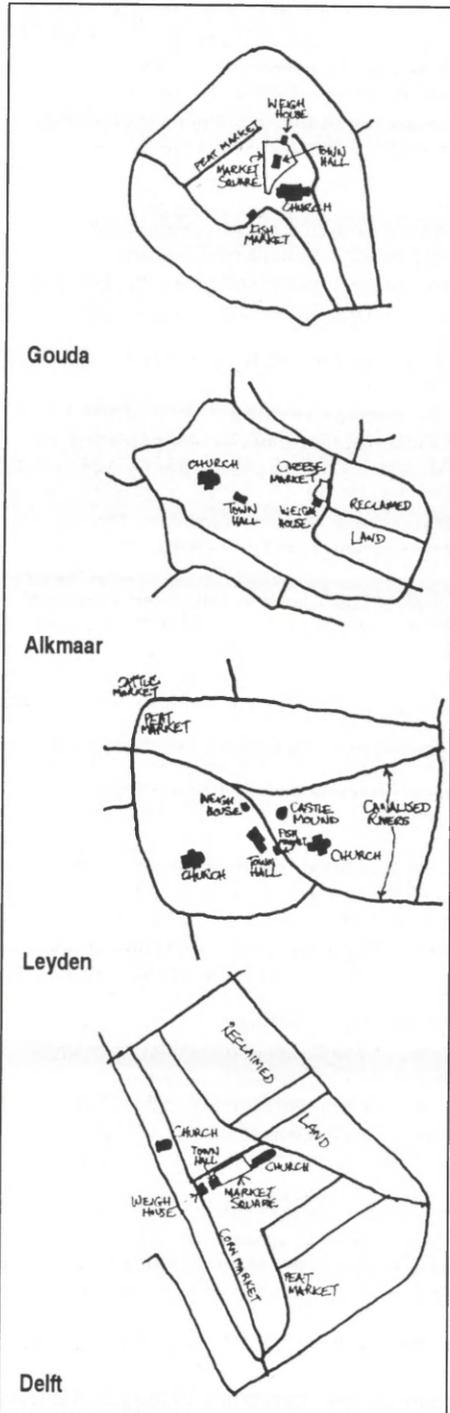
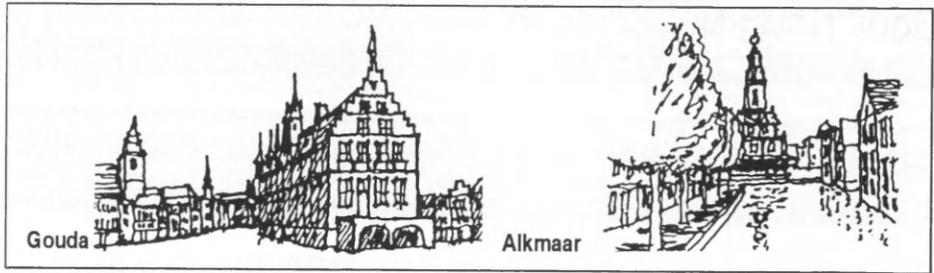
Assessing knowledge based strategies

Coming out on top in the race for European capital status may mean an optimal mixture of all these perceived characteristics. Nobody has managed to establish the costs to tax and rate payers and the weaker groups of the local population of maintaining capitals in a competitive position or simply ensuring their survival. The fact that none of the three capitals seems to have an adequate system of governance may complicate their position further. The power of the Paris region is undermined by both the powers retained by the central government and the rivalry between the city of Paris and the Ile-de-France region. Berlin enjoys extensive powers as both a city state and a municipality, despite the scar of its division. It is hampered though by the lack of a hinterland and rivalry with the Land Brandenburg. Closer links between the two Laender or a merger may improve the situation in the future.

Despite widespread complaints about the effects of London's fragmentation, no consensus emerges on the need for a directly elected government for London. The latest initiative by John Gummer to establish 'London Pride' deliberately excludes governance. Meanwhile, the lack of transport investment, the absence of a voice for London and its peripheral planning powers raise serious concerns among those who are most able to contribute to, and harness the knowledge base to the benefit of the aspiring capital of Europe. ■

Judith Ryser

DUTCH TRADING TOWNS STUDY TOUR MAY 1993



The historic towns of the present day Netherlands may be divided between those towns east of the Zuider Zee which belonged to the Hanseatic League and traded with Eastern Europe, and those to the west, in Holland proper, which traded mainly with southern Europe. It was the latter that we visited on this trip, and were interested to note a number of common themes shared by all the towns.

The early settlements tended to be on spits of sand in an otherwise water or marsh bound environment. As land was reclaimed from water or marsh, urban extensions had to take place on reclaimed land, and often a change in morphology is noticeable from a more organic plan within the original settlement to a tightly planned, rectilinear layout within the urban extension. In both cases the format is of tall, gable-fronted merchants' houses similar to those encountered in the Hanseatic region, but often with a pronounced, outward lean due to shifting sub-soil conditions!

Though many mediaeval buildings survive, the 'Golden Age' of economic expansion and grandiose building was the late sixteenth century. In fact, most of the core area of Amsterdam could be said to be a new town dating from this period.

It is a truism that Dutch towns are based on networks of canals. In fact, the canals are not as all-pervasive as in Venice - often there will be one or two parallel streets interposed between canals, and the canals themselves have street frontages. Thus, there was a social differentiation between houses which had to have water access and those that did not. Canals are, however, stronger townscape features than streets, and have a disproportionate effect on the image of the town.

In the historic core areas, there are recurring features: the town hall and the weigh house facing one another across the main square, the substantial parish church (now Protestant with side-facing pews focused on the pulpit) the roofed, open-sided fish market alongside a principal canal.

Exceptionally, there are surviving urban windmills, remnants of batteries of windmills serving many purposes that used to sit on town walls in order to catch the wind above the roof-tops. Most of the walls have now gone, but there are some remarkable late-seventeenth century town fortifications of the Vauban period.

Our first port of call, somewhat outside Holland proper, was Middelburg in the Walcheren. A nuclear-plan town, its centre was completely destroyed in the last War and rebuilt to the original plan. Many attractive residential streets outside the core survived, but we found the quality of rebuilding a little disappointing. Dordrecht fronts the

intersection of major rivers, but its most attractive feature is a number of linked, enclosed harbours focusing at one end on a massive church (with a leaning tower!).

Gouda is based on a radio-centric pattern of canals with a huge public square at its centre, occupied by the town hall, weigh house and church (shown below).



Utrecht is a much bigger city, but it has an intimate scale due to the location of all the major monuments, including the cathedral, along a winding canal sunk deep below the streets, with two levels of quays.

Alkmaar is a textbook example of the split between the original urban core and the later expansion on to reclaimed land. At the join between the two sits a truly palatial weigh house, which dominates views along a number of canals.

Leyden is unusual in that its main commercial activity centres on the fork of two canalised rivers which pass either side of a castle on an artificial mound.

Delft's historic centre lies along two closely parallel canals, at right-angles to which is the main square with a massive church at one end and a town hall at the other. The canal theme was less evident in two Zuider Zee ports - Hoorn and Enkhuizen - that we visited, in which the gable-fronted houses were smaller in scale and the townscape more charming.

The Netherlands has an enviable reputation for rational town planning in the twentieth century. The undeniable logic of the Randstad ring of cities has been compromised by the location of the new town of Zoetermeer in its erstwhile green core. We were impressed by the attention to landscape and public transport but, apart from a bustling pedestrian street in the town centre, looked in vain for a strong urban focus and spaces. The texture of Zoetermeer is largely suburban, but the typical late twentieth century form of development in the Netherlands has all too often been a particularly inflexible ranging of parallel rows of slab blocks. We have to look back to the late nineteenth century to find an attractive form of street architecture, and one which looks very familiar to the English visitor, as this was a period when English domestic architecture borrowed heavily from its Dutch neighbours. ■

BERTHOLD LUBETKIN: ARCHITECTURE AND THE TRADITION OF PROGRESS by John Allan, published by RIBA Publications 1992 £60.

This meticulously researched and physically very weighty book is the most substantial biography yet produced of a modern movement architect working in England. Its magnificent intellectuality has occupied my mind in months of night-time reading, whilst by day, as Haringey's conservation planner, I have grappled with the conservation problems posed by repair projects to Lubetkin's Highpoint, his human scale white block of flats exquisitely crafted and designed, but technologically experimental.

Lubetkin became a name in the 1950s, when as a child I overheard my father speaking with awe of the difficulty of comprehending his radical philosophical architecture. This was in deep contrast to Lutyens, the other twentieth century English architect to have received a thorough biography, whose work I have always found immediate, powerful and meaningful, even as a child.

Unlike the famous contemporary modern architects who notoriously live in Georgian houses, Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (possibly the century's greatest theoretician of landscape architecture) has *chosen* to live in Lubetkin's Highpoint I. In his foreword to Allan's book he recalls "my wife and I had lived contentedly for 50 years in a Georgian terrace house and garden... we fell for Highpoint immediately on opening the door... after eight years I have the same feeling of uplift that I had at that moment. What is the magic that only an artist-architect can create? We moved from static Roman thought into Greek creative thought. How this sense of uplift of flight from earth is achieved in solid concrete is described in the scholarly and perceptive study of a genius that follows."

Allan's book was written during the last twenty years of Lubetkin's life during which the author had a unique personal contact with Lubetkin. It covers Lubetkin's origins abroad, the key works of the 1930s, the paradox of the post war decline whilst modernism took off, and his rediscovery and reassessment as an octogenarian. As a conservation planner, my reading focused on English Modernism in the 1930s as history, the post-war decline and the significance of this early English modernism today.

Lubetkin was trained classically in pre-revolutionary Russia and in the heady world of revolutionary constructivism (*Art into life!*). After these stresses, he chose the Grand Tour and then exile and work in Paris meeting Corbusier, a path which gave him a

need to assert geometrical form, a renaissance humanist aesthetic of space and a socialist objective to his architecture.

The 1930s

Lubetkin's first experience of England was of tradition, order and repose with admiration for the indigenous building material he was to ignore in his own work. "But what brick! From the softest creams through scarlets, strong and blood red to violet purples - there, matured by centuries it is the palette from which the English mason composes his masterpieces...brick. This foundation of the English architectural tradition shows immense vitality and prodigious adaptability to all conditions..."

Perhaps the most significant work of the 1930s was the zoo architecture: the Gorilla House and the Penguin Pool at London Zoo, work at Whipnade and in the midst of industrial development at Dudley, a whole Zoo around a castle. The Lubetkin approach to animal housing was not naturalistic, it accepted the superiority of 'man' and the spectator role. This enabled full expression of the dramatic capability of new technology and concrete in the modernistic idiom. First a circle for the London Zoo's Gorilla Cage, then a constructivist double helix for the Penguin Pool which "first dramatically attracted the attention of the world to developments in England" (Henry Russell Hitchcock, 1937). The progressive zoo establishment was allowing modern architecture to be tested on animals prior to human domestic consumption with the geometric forms integrated with the humanism of welcoming entrances and comfort for animals.

Highpoint

Whether or not the original idea was to house Gestetner's workers, Highpoint was of continental inspiration and attractive to the middle class significantly emigre jewish residents who still form a good proportion of its tenants. Highpoint I, a six floor double cruciform block in a park, in Highgate, contains an extraordinary variety of features and creature comforts and was an attempt to show multi-floor living could be desirable. The ground floor *promenade architecturale* from curved drive through sculpted canopy fascia past string quartet to tea room and wonderful gardens overlooking Hampstead Heath represents allusively a little journey from the urban to the natural. The modernism of the open lift shaft leads to the technology of windows that slide back to create an internal balcony. Anthony Cox in 1938 characterised Highpoint I as 'standing on tiptoe and spreading its wings' in contrast to the second block whose caryatids marked

Lubetkin's split with Corbusier and nascent Brutalism which 'sits back on its haunches like a Buddha'.

Decline

Lubetkin's relation to other modernists and to his post-war housing involves Allan in some assessment of the failure of modern architecture to cope with the explosion of public housing construction after the war and the associated financial constraints. The problems go back to the beginning. J. M. Richards, a contemporary modernist apologist, admitted in 1968 that Modern Architecture came to Britain a dozen years late with the tendency to adopt images, that had already been created, without question. Worse in the 1930s you were either for or against modern architecture and there was little incentive to discriminate between good and bad in modern buildings. It is hard today to remember the insular conservatism of the intellectual scene which as late as the 1960s claimed complacently not to 'understand' continental ideas.

The reputation of the radical MARS group (Modern Architecture Research Society), Allan notes, has declined steadily as more first hand evidence has come to light of its political naivety and formalism. Despite his involvement, Lubetkin's own words show distanced disapproval, "What is the purpose of the group? the use of the word 'Research' in the absence of a cogently defined aim cannot be expected to transform what might easily become a mutual admiration society into something more positive... the aim you appear to want would be to dislodge the entrenched mandarins in the professional institution and then gain controlling positions... unfortunately I cannot agree with this 'come into my parlour' policy." Later Lubetkin noted "the function of MARS should have been to objectivise architectural and aesthetic criteria. I tried to bring a philosophical and political position to the group, but nobody else was talking that language or understood those terms. To have educated them to this view would have taken time... MARS was really a 'flat roofs club' based on a gentleman's agreement."

This is suggestive of a broader view of British modernism, Lubetkin was an artist with classical training; others, it seems, didn't know how to follow. Francis Skinner, his chief associate said "where he was unusual was his theoretical approach, understanding the process of architecture from a historical point of view and its role in society".

Standards and architecture of this sort did not fit in to the climate of mass housing construction. Lubetkin's 1930s achievements (the buildings cited and the Finsbury Health

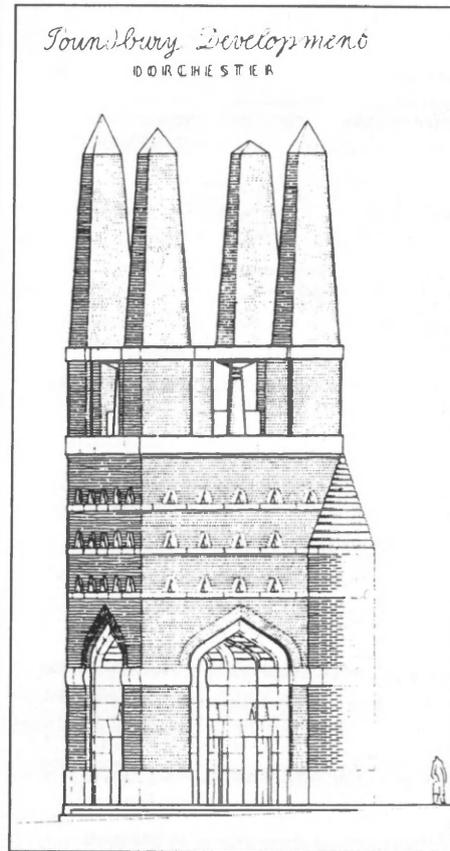
Centre) were followed after the war by compromise in the Finsbury flats, and then at Peterlee new town, by defeat at the hands of bureaucracy. As Allan says, Lubetkin "married into one age to find himself a widower in the next". Andrew Saint's review suggests that "somewhere in the streets of Finsbury, Worringer's theory lost its way." So Lubetkin, perhaps our greatest modern architect, gave up full-time architecture for farming and eventually retired.

Until, as an octogenarian, he was rediscovered and, one day in 1982, fifty years after his creative moment, he was given the extraordinary accolade of the RIBA gold medal.

This award must be seen as very retrospective. Lubetkin's architecture in the last decades appears not to have been consistently inspiring. His intervention in favour of Palumbo and Mies Tower at the Mansion House public inquiry (he said the tower would affirm "man's rationality and ordered knowledge in the midst of chaos") seems out of touch, indeed Allan recalls that earlier "he had sought explicitly to counter Mies' mechanistic aberration". His rather flexible attitude to the conservation of his own buildings shows his distance from the conservation movement and his buildings as they are now. Perhaps his refusal to visit Highpoint in his later years derived from a fear that reality might tarnish memory.

Allan's book offers a meticulous 1980s style deconstruction of each of Lubetkin's buildings, of his political activities and cultural milieu making superb use of contemporary quotes and private remarks made subsequently by Lubetkin to the author. This yields a perspective on some themes of the broader incomplete modernist project: the construction of beauty in modernity, the task of creating comfortable modern buildings, post-war modernism's 'brutalism' and consequential lack of popular success. So Lubetkin becomes an ideal historical vehicle to reassess modernism from within, an approach which is still almost taboo. It is good that the reader may leave this patient and courageous study wondering about wider things.

Steve Gould



LEON KRIER: ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN 1967-1992
 Edited by Richard Economakis Academy Editions. £49.50

As an island race, including a due measure of urban designers, the British are accustomed to playing host to various Continental persuasions, provided they do not come in landing craft or with muddy boots. Leon Krier must rank as one of our semi-residents although rumour has it that he has now returned to the European landmass, specifically Switzerland, there to concentrate more upon the piano keyboard than upon anything he might put on paper.

He seems disconsolate. Even in his introductory remarks to this lavish, celebratory volume of urban design projects and designs spanning a quarter century, he expresses a personal disappointment that 10,000 or so drawings - his own estimated output during this period - have come to so little on the ground.

Not that this failure, as he clearly regards it, is anything unusual. I well recall an after-dinner speech in which the late and great British architect Sir Basil Spence lamented the sad fact that only about 30% of his full-blown designs ever got built. We only have

to recall the sad fate of Nicholas Hawksmoor in the shadow of Wren to appreciate that you can be right almost all the time and yet receive scant recompense for your pains.

Leon Krier will remain a puzzle. Unlike Terry Farrell, who has an undeniably deft touch with a prestigious Planning Committee, able to magic up an "inevitable" and convincing urban design solution to a tricky site, Krier seems determined to remain an outcast, an iconoclast, a worker against the grain. Whatever his polemic intent, however, he is to an extent betrayed by his own prodigious graphic ability, allied to that of such collaborators as Rita Wolff and Carl Laubin, both of whom adorn this volume.

There is no doubting his virtuosity as a manipulator of urban form. In the Legoland of classically-derived elements he reigns supreme, able to concoct a visually consistent and superficially convincing stage set for the civic life of Voltaire's *Candide*. His drawings are consistently stunning, an inspiration to those of his cast down but jumped-up geography students masquerading as urban planners or project managers, but they never tell anything like the whole story.

Difficult functional requirements tend to be swept under the visual carpet; traffic is invisible, congestion unknown, development seamless, silent and totally without conflict and clamour. Krier's vision is always highly selective, but is all the more seductive for being drawn up with such undoubted virtuosity, ready for the nod from Highgrove and all points west.

And yet this weighty volume is immensely appealing. It flies in the face of all those worthy but ultimately mind-numbing urban interventions - I trust that such is the correct term these days - beloved of community planners and local councillors called Brian or Ruth. It speaks of the power of built form, admittedly selected from a very narrow catalogue of options, to create a fitting setting for civilised urban life. Genuine doubts only begin to crowd in once the classical fancy dress begins to wear thin. One has only to enjoy at first hand some thoroughly modern pieces of urban intervention by Carlo Scarpa in Italy or by Rafael Moneo, Spain's leading architect, to appreciate that thoroughly contemporary design solutions can really do the business. For all his dexterity, Leon Krier remains defiantly a prisoner within his chosen past.

Neil Parkyn

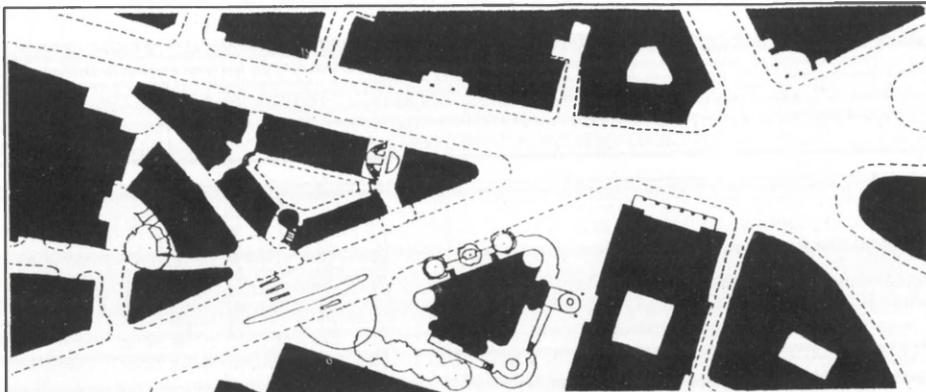
TERRY FARRELL: URBAN DESIGN
An architectural Monograph. Edited by
Andreas Papadakis. Academy Editions
1993 £45.00.

Terry Farrell is an architect and urban designer. He has been an important force in the Urban Design Group since the early days of its existence, helping to formulate its ideas and directions. This new monograph celebrating his achievements over the last ten years shows how successful he has been in using design to create a lasting contribution to our urban fabric.

He has been called an 'Ironic Classicist'. Certainly if you look at his earlier work he has managed to create a persuasive link between the portentousness of much classical public building and the lightness, airiness, and brashness of the 1980s. But he is more than just that, as this book shows. So we find, with pleasure, Henley Regatta Headquarters juxtaposed with the Comyn Ching triangle providing both urban design statements and a respect for the surrounds which Robert Stern calls Farrell's "urban minded balance between contextuality and individual identity". If that is what he is best at, how does this lavishly illustrated book explore this theme?

The book deals with his recent projects, mainly in London. These are set out as a series of visual communiques - almost wordless stories - that rely on his drawings, sketches, photos of models, and the buildings themselves to explain the genesis of his urban designs. There are, of course, a set of common themes. This historic pattern is exposed through a number of figure-ground diagrams. Farrell's buildings are shown to offer logical structures which respond to existing street patterns, open up opportunities for public space, and establish the scope for a landmark. This notion of a continuum with history, of experiencing the street, of encouraging the return of the diversity of traditional urban life - often in difficult circumstances - are all urban design principles that Farrell uses successfully over and over again. His interest is in the public realm and in the fine grain of the urban fabric. Nowhere is this clearer than in the examples drawn from Mansion House and Poultry at one end of the spectrum, and Kings Cross Railway Lands at the other.

Whilst some may view his architecture as populist, he revels in the visual confusion and aesthetic chaos that is our urban environment. "I have a strong belief that the ad-hoc and pragmatic can achieve a particular kind of harmony. London is a web of virtuoso bits, which add up to create a unique and wonderfully livable city without grand gestures."



He takes this idea of virtuosity to create not only the urban design parameters for his architecture, but also to carry it through to the enrichment and enlivening of different parts of his buildings. Thus TVAM plays the games of streetscape, canalside, festival, and atrium architecture, whilst sporting a range of symbols from flagpoles to eggcups.

This approach to design has made his buildings very 'accessible'. He doesn't intellectualise like Venturi or Graves, rather he uses the physical or intangible themes and motifs he finds in the context within which he's working. He does this as an advertiser would pick and choose the image of his product. Sometimes this can lead to a carefully scripted gem such as Henley; other times it can lead to a lack of clarity such as Vauxhall Cross, where we end up with a sort of Victorian music hall of design. This sort of celebration seems more successful at the smaller scale where Farrell's humour can be contained. When writ large it can lead to what Simon Jenkins has called "an uneasy aura of transience, of a good joke that could begin to pall."

This book enables the urban designer to examine these different facets, to see how Farrell can successfully bring together these elements when doing a mixed use masterplan for Quarry Hill in Leeds, or Brindley Place in Birmingham; or architectural pavilions such as Charing Cross or Carlton Gardens. Ultimately it is the interplay between Farrell's strengths as a designer of 'set pieces' and his use of simple yet fundamental urban design principles that gives this book its great interest.

The book is a sumptuous must, but at £45.00 is missing its market. If only it was a paperback, it would - like his architecture - be more 'accessible'. Every urban designer could then read, learn and visually digest the important lessons on urbanity that make Terry Farrell one of the key figures in shaping urban Britain in the nineties.

Jon Rowland

LONDON DOCKLANDS
URBAN DESIGN IN AN AGE OF
DEREGULATION
by Brian Edwards
Butterworth-Heinemann 1992, £24.95

Now that the redevelopment of London Docklands (except for the Royal Docks) is largely complete, a number of writers must be queuing up to tell the story. Brian Edwards is among the first in the queue. He grew up in East London and has obviously had a personal interest in the progress of this remarkable, nay controversial, experiment in urban regeneration.

His theme is that the avoidance of an overall master plan for London Docklands has produced not urban design, but 'urban collage', a fashion show of architectural exhibits which are rich and varied individually, but which do not hang together coherently. Moreover, "the reluctance of the LDDC to invest in master planning has led to many problems and may yet undermine the value of the investments made. Buildings constructed to date run the risk of poor connections in terms of both public space and urban transport."

The author's statement is of course evidenced by the vast amount of completed office floorspace in the Isle of Dogs that is not really connected to public space (except water) and is serviced by an inadequate fairground train. However, this statement should not necessarily apply to other areas such as Wapping and Surrey Docks, and the author does occasionally run the risk of making generalities about the whole of London Docklands based on the particular experience of one area, namely the Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone.

The book has a good turn of phrase, it contains useful material and there is an appendix featuring three excellent interviews with Reg Ward, Michael Heseltine and Barry Shaw. However, we wondered if the book itself doesn't fall short of a little 'master-planning' as we were lost in parts of it. For

example, there are two references made to the Cullen and Gosling plan for the Isle of Dogs in an early chapter without any indication of what this plan was. The plan is eventually described in a later chapter on the Isle of Dogs while the illustration of the axial view from Greenwich, a major feature of the plan, occurs in a concluding chapter. Similarly, the Isle of Dogs chapter concentrates on the Enterprise Zone projects and gives no coverage to other interesting developments like the Compass Point housing, the first reference to which appears in a concluding chapter.

We were hoping that the author would give a reasonably complete account of the Docklands story but there are some details missing. There is very little coverage of earlier plans before the LDDC was set up and no explanation as to why the boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich were excluded from the LDDC area. The GLC is credited with the regeneration of St Katherine Docks but no explanation is given of how this was achieved and how it might have served as a model for other regeneration without the LDDC being formed. Nor is there any coverage of the alterations in the Canary Wharf plans, particularly in the location of the three tower blocks, between first submission in 1985 and the go-ahead in 1987.

Another reservation we have is the bias towards architecture. Much of the text and most of the illustrations are devoted to buildings. The infrastructure is covered in a short chapter which includes no illustrations of a DLR train, nor roads, nor London City Airport. The public realm and landscaping is also covered in a short chapter and again illustrations are seriously deficient. The landscaping in Docklands is of a very high quality and yet few credits are given and there are no illustrations of street or dockside furniture, nor works of art. The bias also understates the role of the actual urban designers and planners who worked behind the architects who have received so much credit for what has been achieved.

The photos unfortunately are in black and white and do not do justice to the rich variety of colour that is described in the text. Most photos are remarkably devoid of people; maybe this is meant to be a subtle commentary on the social success of the Docklands experiment.

Finally, there are a number of little inaccuracies. The author for example abolishes the GLC in 1985 (one year before the Government did so), he credits the design of the ELRIC bridge to Halcrow Fox (instead of Sir William Halcrow and Partners), he describes the council estates near the Tower Gateway Station as being in Hackney (they

are in Tower Hamlets) and in the references he dates the GLC's Thames-side Guidelines as 1976 (they were actually published in 1986). These little errors, not to mention a considerable number of printing errors, together with the other shortcoming and omissions mentioned above, undermine the value of this otherwise useful book.

'London Docklands' is bound to be a success because it is one of the first books to tell this remarkable story. However, it appears to have been produced in a hurry. If it runs into a second edition and if it is to survive as an historically accurate record, then there are many refinements, additions and corrections to be made.

Tim Catchpole and John Parker

VARIATIONS ON A THEME PARK, THE NEW AMERICAN CITY AND THE END OF PUBLIC SPACE

Edited by Michael Sorkin, 1992, New York: Hill & Wang £11.95

This is a very interesting collection of articles on the emerging forms of urbanism in North America. Michael Sorkin, who has skilfully edited the book, was the architecture critic of *Village Voice* for ten years and teaches now at Cooper Union. The contributors are academics in architecture, geography, and planning fields in United States and Canada, each describing the changing face of the cities from a different angle and with the use of vivid examples from these two countries.

In the suburbs, which grew especially in the post-war years in the form of urban sprawl into the countryside, edge cities are now evolving. Huge shopping malls, hotels, and offices next to the Interstates, disaggregated suburbs without cities, and reliance on the use of the new means of communication are the main features of these 'cities'. The traditional urban forms focused around an identifiable downtown have no role to play in the new 'exopolis', where 'the solid familiarity of urban space melts into air'. The place becomes departicularized and ageographic: an inward-looking atrium hotel can be inserted equally in the heart of a town or in an open field.

The pattern that the new cities seem to follow is Disneyland (and Disney World), which invokes 'an urbanism without producing a city'. They are utopian theme parks which address the problems of the cities without being urban: 'crime, transportation, waste, the relationship of work and leisure, the transience of populations, the growing hegemony of the

simulacrum'.

The new city is obsessed with security, where the contemporary architecture and police converge around the problem of crowd control. Increasing numbers of neighbourhoods are fortified with walls and gates and the shopping malls offer a repackaging of the city in a safe, clean, and controlled form. The 'public' spaces, of the megastructures and supermalls, which replace the traditional streets, are strictly controlled by the private police forces.

The traditional urban spaces are themselves undergoing change in parallel with these transformations. In the downtown, the use of underground and overhead passages, which are promoted for the control of harsh climates, help eliminate the 'most fundamental of urban activities - people walking along streets'. In an environment of crime, drugs and deteriorating race relations, these controlled passages accelerate the social segregation. The downtown is being suburbanised also as a result of the investment of the real estate market in the declining areas, urban regeneration schemes leading to gentrification and displacement. These schemes, as for example those along Manhattan waterfront, are often isolated, self-enclosed patches of development, which are laden with 'historical allusions to the traditional vision of the city', representing the image of a city rather than its reality. The result is that urban designers are 'almost wholly preoccupied with reproduction, with the creation of urbane disguises'. In the new cities or at the heart of the existing ones, the democratic public realm is being replaced by the theme park, presenting 'its happy regulated vision of pleasure'.

The descriptions of the new urban forms and their insightful interpretations, the range of different disciplinary viewpoints, and the special emphasis on public space all make the book potentially appealing for anyone with urban design interests.

Ali Madani Pour Department of Town and Country Planning University of Newcastle upon Tyne. ■

PLANNING WITH PEOPLE

David Lewis is joint author of 'Urban Design in Action' and has been involved with UDATs in the United States since they were introduced in 1957. This article unfolds the genesis of the idea.



This story begins with a town meeting. Three hundred and fifty people are crammed into a small church hall. They sit in rows on uncomfortable wooden chairs. No one has to tell them that their city and neighbourhoods are in trouble. The boarded up shops on Main Street, the peeling paint and sagging porches of the houses in the older neighbourhoods, the closed-down mills upriver, brooding and smokeless, the unemployed in food lines, the exodus of young families to Texas, Alaska and California in search of other futures, tell them that.

Located below the escarpments of hills rich in coal seams, for a century it has been a one industry town; iron and steel. But today foreign steel is cheaper than domestic steel. The challenge of the future is to find a new economic base. The mayor has appointed an Economic Revitalisation Committee (ERC) of twenty one men and women - lawyers, bankers, merchants and trade union officials. ERC in turn has called in professional help and has taken a step back in time. It has convened a town meeting to open up the crisis facing the city for public debate.

Many decades have gone by since the last town meeting was held in the city. There was a time when town meetings were quite usual and any issue in the public interest could be debated. In fact town meetings are one of the oldest of the US democratic traditions, dating back to the earliest urban settlements in New England. But as government became more bureaucratic and regulatory, town meetings became less frequent until they died out altogether. The revival of the tradition at this critical moment for the city has been enthusiastically publicised by the local newspapers and television station, and the mayor has been applauded for his initiative. Banners have been strung across each end of

Main Street and the organisers have driven through every residential street with loudspeakers.

THE MEETING

A cable television camera beams the proceedings into hundreds of sitting rooms in the metropolitan area, so that people who cannot make it to the meeting that hot summer evening can be part of what is going on. And a telephone hook-up put together by a local popular disc jockey, with complicated wires trailing all over the place and speakers propped up on window sills, encourages citizens to 'phone ideas into the church hall and to hear the response their inputs generate'.

Planners, architects, economists and other professionals appointed by ERC are on hand to explain the technical aspects of the crisis. The mayor and council are there to hear the debate. After all it is important for them to understand the mood and priorities of the people when they come to make the crucial political decisions that lie ahead. The debate begins by being intensely focussed. The consultant economist speaks. He uses charts to put the depressing events facing this city into the setting of the national recession. The crisis here is symptomatic he says, of the crisis facing many other cities in the northeast and midwest, including giants like Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Chicago. Coming closer to home he explains how high-sulphur coal has become progressively more expensive to process and how importing cheaper foreign steel fits into the picture of US international trade.

The two steel mills upriver closed three months ago, and no one knows if they will open again. Another mill down river is on half-time. All three are obsolete and need huge investments of new capital if they are

David Lewis is Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Carnegie Mellon University Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Chairman of U.D.A. Architects Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. He received the American Institute of Architects' (AIA) National Kemper Award in 1988; has been the author of several books on Art, Architecture and Urban Design; was William Henry Bishop Professor at Yale University, 1974-76; and Founder, with Jonathan Barnett and Ann Ferebee, of the International Institute for Urban Design, in the United States.

ever to come back. The city's only department store went bankrupt two weeks ago. It is on the main square opposite the domed courthouse and back-to-back with the market house.

But the city cannot rely on traditional source of public funding. Categorical grants to aid cities have been cut from the national budget. New local resources have to be found to replace them if trends are to be reversed.

OLD TIMER

The people listened respectfully. They find the economist's speech to be cold comfort. An old man gets up and begins to talk. He is not used to speaking in public. But he doesn't talk about urban economics. Nor does he talk about the steel mills. This is odd because everyone knows that the old man has worked all his life in the furnaces.

Instead of addressing the issues that the economist talked about, the decline of industry and the erosion of employment, the old man begins talking about the town, the way it used to be when he was a boy. The economist senses that already with the very first speaker the meeting is drifting off the point and tries to intervene. Another man leaps up and says angrily "Hey fellow this is our meeting. You sit down and listen. Let the gentleman say what he has to say." The old-timer continues.

He tells about his youth, about the time when the market house, and the church beside it, and shops around the square with shopkeepers' families living in apartments over the shops, were the centre of his community long before there was a department store, about how his grandmother made the dark breads with molasses in them which his mother in her skyblue dress and long white apron sold on market days, about how people would row their skiffs upriver to bring vegetables and meats and cheeses, and buy weekly supplies, about how his father and uncle on his mother's side worked the coal barges; and about how the cobbled streets rang with the metallic clatter of steelworkers boots and hooves of horses and the crunch of wagon wheels as bales of wires and machinery parts were transported to the railhead from a dozen workshops and fabricators long since put out of business by the centralisation of the big mills.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY LADY

An earnest young woman picks up where the old man left off. She is a member of the local historical society. She tells the meeting that before the department store came, there were indeed small shops all around the square, just as the old gentleman had said. The department store, she said, was part of a

national chain. But the parent company was too cheap to put up a new building. So instead it hollowed out the interior walls of the old shops, and covered their facades with curtain wall to make it look like a new building. I think those old facades are still there she said.

The telephone rang. Someone was calling in from outside. The voice crackled from the loudspeaker like dried sticks; yes, indeed those old facades are still there! I was a carpenter in the construction crew that put the curtain wall up. Maybe, said the historical society young lady, now that the department store is out of business, we can find a way of taking that cheap curtain wall down and putting our main square back. A row of older people sitting together clapped vigorously.

A BLACK MOTHER

A black woman rises to her feet. She is obviously uncomfortable about speaking in public among so many white folk and in front of a television camera. But what she has to say is as eloquent with images as the old-timer's speech had been.

She speak about a part of the city simply called Westside, the residential streets that used to exist near the big mill upriver. The streets were brick and lined on each side by shade trees and clapboard houses with front steps and porches where families could sit on summer evenings, talking with passersby and keeping an eye on the children's street games. Yes, most of the houses were poor and every spring the river would flood, and the pollution from the tall chimneys of the mill was strong, especially in the autumn when the fog clung to the river. But the houses were owned by the families that lived in them, and were painted white or blue. There were corner stores and local churches, and as you walked up the street in the evening you knew from the smells what everybody was cooking for dinner.

Then along came the city planners and they said the district was blighted. They told us the floods make the place unhealthy. None of us knew that before. So all the families were evicted and dispersed. Many were too old and poor and tired to start again. They didn't get much for their homes, so they went into public housing. That's what our family had to do. But there we can't own our houses. And income restrictions are imposed on us. If our kids work hard and get through college, they can't live in our community because they earn too much. Poverty and segregation and failure are built into our personal lives.

The only structures in our old neighbourhood that were not knocked down were three of the churches. They are still standing there among the weeds. Every

Sunday people come from all over the city to those churches. We call ourselves the absentee community. The architects had big plans for Westside. They were going to build a levee along the river to keep the floods back. And there were to be new houses all strung together, townhouses they called them, and apartments with shops in some of them, and a park along the levee. Everything depended on the levee. Then the federal government cut the national budget for flood control. So nothing was ever done. The model of what the architects wanted to build is still up there in City Hall. We can't live in a model. Not that we would want to live in what they designed for us anyway. No one ever asked us what we wanted. They just went ahead and designed what they thought we ought to have. You see we don't want to live in apartments or townhouses that look like brick boxes with flat roofs. We like to have individual houses with porches, with our own gardens at the back. And we didn't ever want those levees that could close us off from the river. We don't mind the floods. We have lived with them all our lives. We were born with them. They only come for a few days in the spring. And our houses and porches were raised up anyway, with front steps and back steps. But no one asked us.

COMMON FACTORS

The speech is greeted with general applause. Other speakers follow. Calls on the telephone hook-up come in. The architects have pinned up huge sheets of paper on the walls and are recording with broad flow pens the things the citizens say. Commonalities begin to emerge. At the core of almost everyone's remarks is a resentment against faraway government and big institutions, and against decisions being made without citizens input. The big mills had knocked out the small fabricators and distributors. The big department store chain had covered up a sequence of small shops which had the shopkeepers families living in the upper floors. Two regional shopping centres located north and south of the city had drained the commercial strength of the old downtown. Westside had been demolished to make way for government sponsored housing that was never built. In each case the small textures of individual ownerships and initiatives had been corroded and replaced by remoteness and centralisation, and when the national economy went into recession the big elements lacked the nimbleness to respond.

But the market house survives. It is being joyously rediscovered. At its stalls you can still buy home made breads and sausages, the sauerkrauts and pastas that reflect the ethnic heritage of this plural city, and the produce of

Planning with People



small farmers is piled on the counters as though it is spilled each dawn from an unseen cornucopia.

INSIGHTS

As the architects write on the large sheets of paper they find themselves seeing the city with insights that are new and exciting to them. They perceive an urban tradition different from the traditions they had learned about in the universities or were promoted in the architectural journals. Indeed they are seeing the city, not from the outside in terms of its form, but from the inside in terms of its life. Most of the people in the meeting know nothing of classical history and the sources of eclecticism, and contemporary architecture with its sheer skins of glass, aluminium and precast concrete is perceived as cold in its aesthetics and remote from their everyday lives, a technological language reflecting the power of big money and big institutions.

Two speakers, one of whom is a young pharmacist who operates a drug store on Main Street, even apologize for what they call their lack of education. They like the architects personally and don't want to insult them by saying that they would rather see nothing happen than have more of the ailing downtown razed to make way for modern office and apartment buildings of the kind that have already gone up here and there in the city, set back and surrounded by asphalt parking areas and blighting the historic sequences and texture of the streets.

But the architects begin to see it differently. All architecture is interventionist. However, the body language of intervention betrays the sensitivity or lack of it of clients and designers to local contexts. It is not a question of washing machines. They suddenly see themselves as symptomatic of the many gaps the meeting has revealed - the gap between bureaucratic agencies and the public, between centralized corporations and local initiatives, between contemporary architectural practice and inherited urban form.

At this point the ERC chairman calls for a brief intermission. There is coffee, soft drinks and other refreshments on a long table at the back of the hall. This gives everyone a chance to greet one another and to talk informally, and also to look at some of the maps the architects have pinned up around the room, before the meeting starts up again.

A YOUNG MAN SPEAKS

When the town meeting resumed the chairman of ERC said, where do we go from here? And a young man who had not spoken before got up and told the meeting how he and his wife had left New York City three years ago and chose deliberately to settle in this city because it was small. True we have problems here, problems that are symptoms of yet far larger problems affecting not just our city but many other cities as well, problems that are national in scale, and although they affect us deeply we cannot solve them on our own. But we have a lot of things we can do if we set our minds to it, and a lot of resources to draw on. The first thing that happened to my wife and me when we came was that our neighbours gave a block party to greet us. We quickly discovered how friendly the whole city is. Everyone knows everyone else. We can get together, as we have done this evening. We can form action groups to get the things done that we know we can do for ourselves.

We have a city in a beautiful setting, among the hills and beside a beautiful river. Have we ever advertised our hills, with their woodlands and fruit farms? and look at our river, with its uncared for river banks strewn with garbage: have we ever thought what a marvellous riverside park that could be? Then we have block after block of historic architecture. But we have felled our street trees and permitted historic commercial buildings to be covered with cheap curtain wall and plastic signs.

We have heard in this meeting about the market house. Yet have we thought how symbolic it is of the ethnic heritages that are

living in all of us, and that make our culture so rich? Where in the city do we have a place for food festivals, ethnic dances, theatre, jazz or blue grass? We complain that our public agencies are not responsive to the voices of the citizens, but we forget that our officials are citizens too.

The budgets they spend on our streets, schools, parks and housing are our own tax money. And one of the things we can do right now is develop a plan of action for Westside that is truly responsive, simply by starting to work with those citizens who refer to themselves as the absentee community.

So let us begin with the things we can do. We can create a historic district, and restore our historic architecture on a building-by-building basis, which has always been our tradition. We can replace our street trees, and develop a riverside park. We may not be able to start up the steel mills again without investment on a national scale; but we are certainly far more likely to find a developer for the department store property who will put our old facades back, if we let the world know that this city has the determination to pull itself up by its bootstraps, and that it has a plan composed of action-oriented increments in which the citizens are directly involved.

The young man's speech was greeted with a standing ovation. The chairman immediately suggested that the people form smaller groups on a voluntary basis. The architects, planners and the economist split up and worked with each group far into the night - one on historic architecture, another on parks and street-scapes, yet another on public and private investment partnerships: and so the planning began. ■

NORTH DOWNTOWN PORTLAND OREGON

If the American Institute of Architects Urban Design Assistance Team (UDAT) process could be compressed into one basic principle - that the measure of a successful city rests with its people, the strength of their attachment to a place and their ability to join forces in the ongoing process of regeneration and improvement or city-making - then Portland, Oregon, offers a perfect example.

Alan Simpson and Charles Zucker describe how Portlanders seem to understand the current and potential value the city holds for them, and the time it takes to make changes. As one prominent city developer indicated "city growth is an ongoing thing to be measured in decades; politicians, by necessity, hold a two to four year vision; it takes committed citizenry, business and investment interests and strong community leadership to make changes over the long haul".

Alan Simpson is Senior Lecturer in Urban Design at The Bartlett School of Architecture and Planning, University College, London and Director of Urban Design Associates, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Charles Zucker is Senior Director American Institute of Architects (AIA) Community Assistance Initiative.

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DEVELOPMENT OF PORTLAND CITY

Of two major land claims filed in 1845, establishing Portland's downtown core, the one recorded by Captain John Couch identified and established patterns for future development. Couch subdivided the land in 1865 using a street pattern oriented to true north, contrasting with the magnetic north orientation of the adjacent downtown business district. This simple shift in geometry, perpendicular streets intersecting diagonal streets created a strong new avenue (West Burnside) which became a symbolic dividing line between the Central Business District and the North Downtown Area.

Although various plans and policies were prepared over the years to better connect the two downtown areas Couch's subdivision had set the course of development in the North Downtown area that would continue through the 1970s; and in 1972 citizens working with the City Planning department, produced the Downtown Plan which created a bold vision for re-vitalising the Central Business District with considerably less attention being paid to the North Downtown Area. The new plan set its sights on an economic and urban design image of the central business district, which had by 1991 been almost completely implemented as originally conceived.

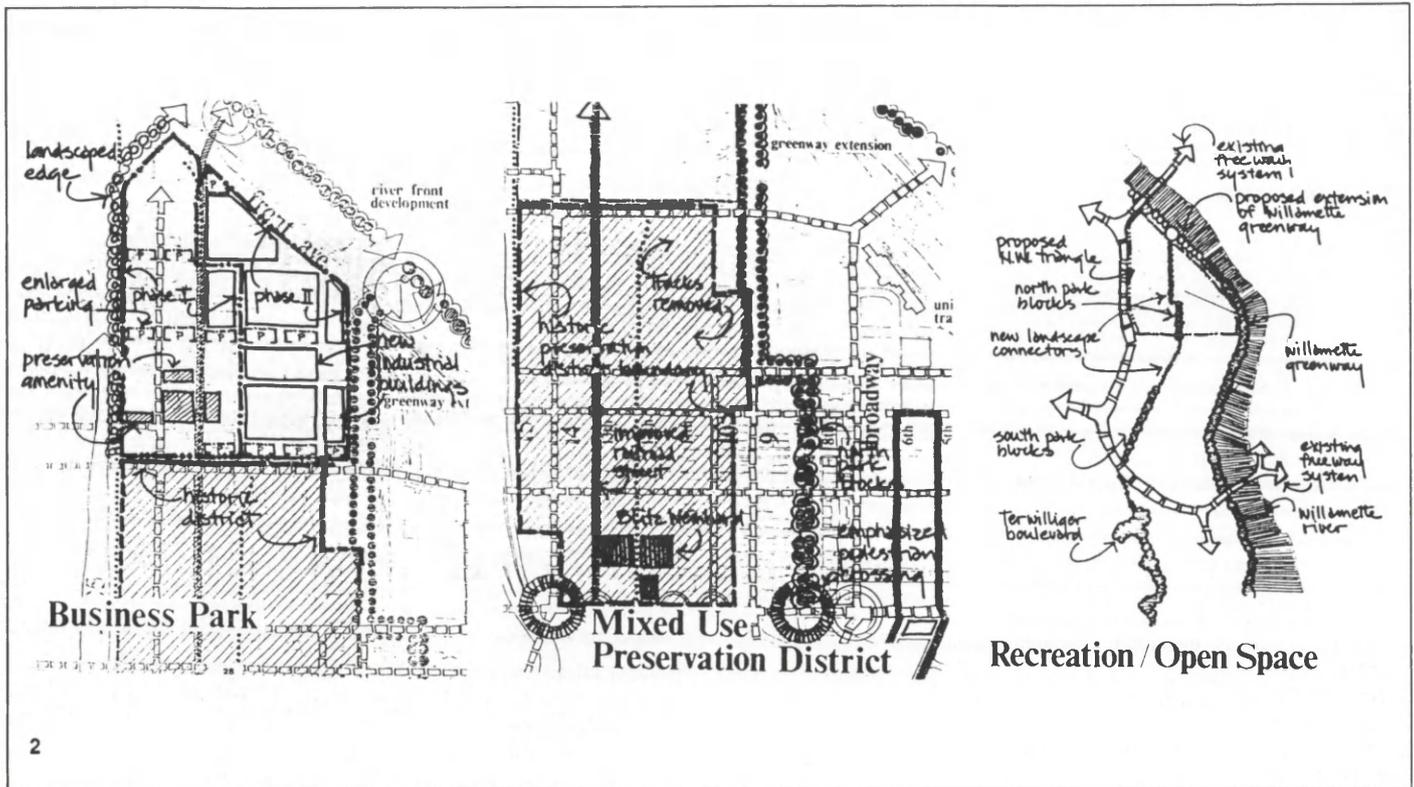
THE NEED

From 1972 through to 1982, as the Central Business District flourished under the Downtown Plan, the North Downtown area continued its downward spiral toward functional obsolescence. Major changes in the nation's economy were taking place, particularly within the industrial and transportation sectors, and Portland too was feeling the effects of this process.

The need for railroad and river frontage multi-storey masonry warehouse buildings on narrow streets within an historic downtown core, was replaced with a need for access to trunk routes, generous single storey warehouse space, and market outlets in new suburban industrial and retail centres. Even though the North Downtown Area remained an active wholesale and retail centre, the public's image of the place worsened as more and more buildings were vacated and businesses moved to outlying suburban locations. The area came to be perceived as a dangerous place only known for its derelict buildings, boarding houses, homelessness, crime and dark uninviting streets.

If the North Downtown Area was to prosper it needed a new guiding vision, one that would take up where the 1972 plan left off, and in the process develop the vision initiated through the plan of 1865.

The Last Place in the Downtown Plan



THE PROGRAMME

In March 1982 the new president of the Portland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects proposed that, in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Downtown Plan, the Portland Chapter invite a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) to visit Portland, meet with its citizens and leaders and prepare a report of recommendations for the future. This would be the first planning event that specifically addressed the North Downtown Area in over a hundred years.

An application to the national AIA was prepared by the steering group; a research sub-committee was created to produce a briefing document describing the growth and demise of the North Downtown Area; a sub-committee of area business representatives was formed and a fund-raising programme collected some \$20,000 which contributed toward total estimated costs, including volunteers and donated services, of over \$180,000. Students were enlisted along with business people, city officials, professionals, and citizens to participate in the process.

After approval of all aspects of the pre-UDAT work by the national AIA Committee a letter of commitment was delivered to the Portland AIA notifying them that a team of volunteer professionals would be selected and visit the city on a date to be agreed for a

period of four days.

A workroom site was found to accommodate over 40 professionals and set up on the ground floor of the Portland School of Design with folding chairs, a large public meeting space, drafting tables, word processing area, and food area. The Portland AIA Urban Design Assistance Team programme was in place.

THE PROCESS

On Thursday March 6 1983 an eight member team selected by the national AIA arrived in Portland. The team included two urban designers, two architects, a regional economist, preservationist, transportation planner, and a social scientist. Backed by a support team of twelve local professionals and students from the University of Oregon and the Oregon School of Design, the team began by touring the area.

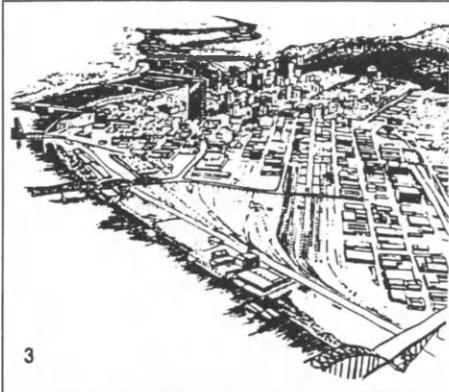
The Local Steering Committee asked that the team address three main issues in assisting owners, tenants, city planning agencies, developers and citizens to better understand the value of the North Downtown Area; to initiate discussions about the area's future; and, to recommend short term and long term actions for both public agencies and private groups.

Working in small issue-based groups the team discussed and tested ideas and

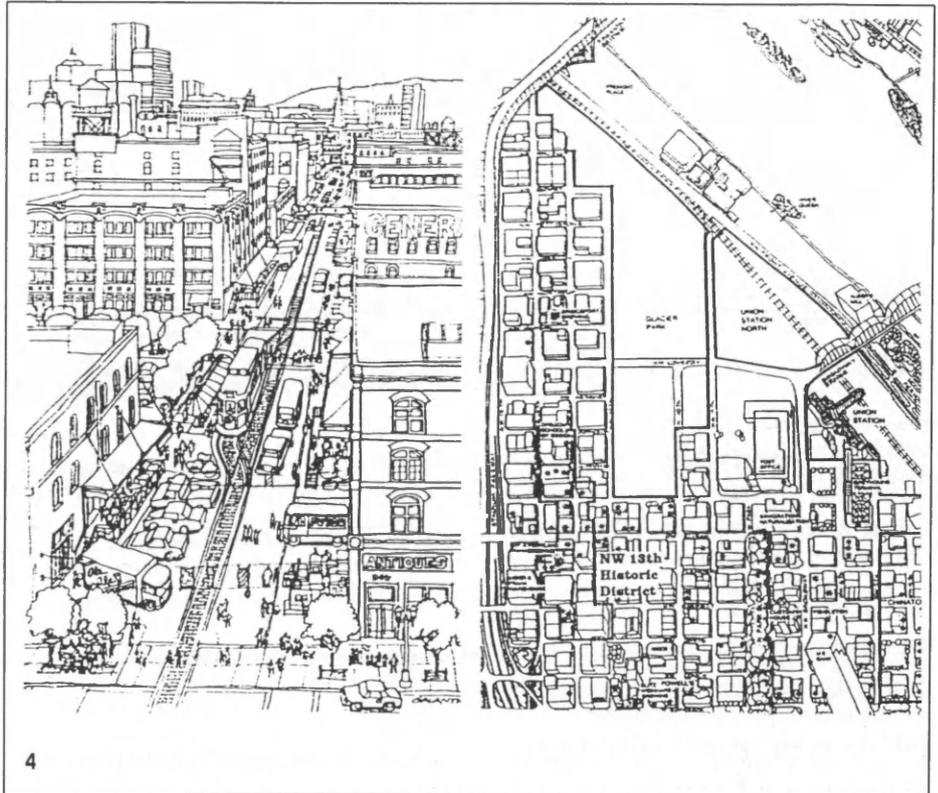
assumptions. By late Friday evening the team realized that they had to redefine their original assumptions and verify the method and scope of the study; the problems needed greater clarity; there was no urgent or pressing issue requiring immediate action. This absence of a crisis atmosphere represented a challenge and a potential to the UDAT team; they needed to "unearth" the area of missed opportunity and focus attention on what could be, creating a new future, a new reality, rather than attempt to correct conditions which had led to the area's demise. The preservation of the existing, and often historic building stock was seen to be important since it created a special image and a competitive position when compared to other discrete areas within the city or the region; and while the area was obviously in transition it became clear that the existing building stock lent itself to multiple uses which could add vitality and investment opportunities to the city.

THE RESPONSE

The report, *Last Place in the Downtown Plan*, offered Portland a new and optimistic view of the North Downtown Area as a whole; a greenway system linked riverfront development with development of the street-grid blocks; a new historic district recognised the re-use potential of the nineteenth-century



2 Some of the ideas generated in the Portland UDAT of 1983
 3 General view of North Downtown area
 4 Proposals developed within the Portland Bureau of Planning for the NW 13th Street Historic District



warehouse buildings along 13th Street; and the establishment of an area-wide business and community organisation.

- Specifically the UDAT recommended;
- the establishment of a North Downtown Area Association to bring a coalition of business owners, property owners, developers, residents and city officials, together to decide upon the area's future;
 - the extension of the Willamette Greenway connecting the South and North Park blocks into a continuous Portland riverfront;
 - the development of the riverfront through a mix of commercial, office and retail activity between the Fremont and Broadway bridges;
 - completing the inventory of historically and architecturally significant buildings, establishing a mixed use preservation district, and creating a fifty block historic area for guiding adaptive re-use and new construction that would house a mixture of professional, service, distribution, and arts archives;
 - developing the Union Station rail centre and relocating the Bus Station to create a transportation terminus;
 - establishing a twenty block business park in the railyards;
 - and creating new neighbourhood support services for residents and transients.

THE FOLLOW UP

Almost immediately several investors and developers with interest in the area used the UDAT study to establish the North West Triangle Business Association to work with the City; and UDAT recommendations prompted the preparation of the North West Triangle Report, a UDAT follow up policy document adopted by the City Council in 1985, focussing on the North Downtown Area and including recommendations on the future land use character of six sub-areas, sensitive redevelopment along the riverfront, new transportation facilities, and historic resources proposals.

The newly formed community and business associations kept pressure on the city and citizens to address the new value they had begun to see in their area by holding seminars which informed and debated emerging concepts in creative and adaptive re-use of existing structures and historic preservation. New and adventurous investment in the area became visible, especially within the "public realm" or the "street environment" through new landscaping, soft and hard, new paving, seating, and street lighting, providing the area with an enriched character and quality, which in turn attracted interest from investors and developers who began to see a new confidence emerging in the area and its long

term future. In 1986 a Property Owners' Association was formed primarily to establish the North West 13th Avenue Historic District, which resulted in a powerful and pro-active group working in 1990 in collaboration with the City Planning Department to provide the North West Historic District improvement programme.

The City authorities became active in the area independently through major environmental improvement works to Front Avenue along the riverfront, facilitating development and the continuation of the river "greenway"; and in 1987 took a significant risk in acquiring Union station as a development opportunity, ahead of the private sector, which is now a major civic amenity and public attraction.

Individual developers now use the UDAT study regularly to interest investors in the area's potential through the conversion of factory loft buildings for apartments, small business accommodation, and studios for designers and artists; whilst the UDAT recommendations on transportation and infrastructure improvements are being actively pursued through collaborations between the city authorities and community and business interests. ■

COMMUNITY-BASED CHARRETTES

Anthony Costello reflects on his participation as an educator in over fifty community-based, charrette workshops. Each one has provided an opportunity to evaluate the attributes and liabilities of such an intense and participatory methodology. They have involved acting as coordinator of student participants in two AIA sponsored R/UDATS and, initiating the Community-Based Projects (CBP) Programme and the Muncie Urban Design Studio (MUDS) at Ball State University, both of which have extensively and successfully used the charrette workshop in a wide range of applications.

Anthony Costello's first involvement in a community-based, charrette took place at the end of the turbulent '60s, that period in American history that forever changed the perception and reality of the "power of the people". He began the decade as an undergraduate student of architecture at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, and ended it as a young Assistant Professor of Architecture at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. During this decade, segments of the architecture and urban planning professions in the United States underwent fundamental changes as advocacy planning, "storefront studios", community design centres and public participatory workshops became commonplace. These workshops soon became known by the term "charrettes", derived from the intense, fast-paced, round-the-clock, nature of such happenings that often bore a striking resemblance to the last days of preparing graphic presentations in traditional academic studios.

In fact, architecture and planning students and faculty were almost always a major catalyst and component of these charrettes, leaving the theoretical models of traditional university settings for the "hands-on" reality and learning taking place amidst the unrest prevalent in American cities.

Anthony Costello is Irving Distinguished Professor of Architecture at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.



It is worth noting that it was the decade of the '60s that gave rise to what became known as *urban design*, that found a niche as the traditional architectural and planning professions polarized on either side of the design/public policy debate. Almost uniquely, urban design spoke to the need to: simultaneously address policy and physical design issues; empower people with knowledge and tools to make informed decisions; and, actively incorporate their participation in the consensus building that is critical in a community-based planning and design process.

Schools like Harvard, Columbia, and Pennsylvania initiated urban design into curricula, eventually leading to graduate degrees. Others, like Pratt Institute, North Carolina State, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, initiated community design centres that continue to this day. New York City Mayor John Lindsey brought architects like Jonathan Barnett and Jacques Robertson into city government and legitimized urban design as a public sector responsibility.

The '60s also saw the American Institute of Architects (AIA) establish the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) Programme that used interdisciplinary teams to respond to requests from communities - including large cities and small towns - to assist them in shaping the future of their cities and neighbourhoods. Peter Batchelor and David Lewis, Editors of *Urban Design in Action*, which chronologues the history, theory, and development of the R/UDAT Programme, wrote in their introduction, "The first team discovered that the city is a living organism, embodying within prototypical problems the local culture, history and aspirations of its citizens. Most of all, they realized that the citizens wanted to help shape their own destinies, to participate in the formulation of policies whose implementation would result in a new sense of community".

In 1969 a five-day charrette was sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and

Indianapolis Model Cities Programme, one of the many federal government programmes aimed at revitalizing America's inner city neighbourhoods in which Ball State faculty and students participated. The primary focus of this charrette was the design of a new elementary school that would also serve as a multi-purpose, community center.

What began in an atmosphere of great distrust, fear and animosity among the participants, ended in a public presentation of findings that demonstrated the power inherent in the human spirit - if committed to the common good - and what can evolve from a process that facilitates honest confrontation, dialogue, and consensus building. Marvin Rosenman summed it up in an article entitled, "Charrette - A Real Way to Learn" (*AIA Journal*, Jan '71):

"The limits of educational systems and facilities have transcended mythical boundaries of the classroom in thought and in action. Concern for design in the classroom is giving way to design interest of a more critical nature - that of the entire community.

Initially, tension among the participants was acute, but through mutual perseverance, misunderstandings gradually changed to trust. Slowly at first, and extensively toward the end, the students translated the needs and desires of the community into graphic presentations. The product of their efforts covered three entire walls of the gymnasium which housed the forum."

My experience at this charrette had a lasting impact on me as an educator. I realized just how much our students had learned - not just about planning and design - but rather about the need for our profession to be able to facilitate and translate citizen input into physical design terms and the critical role of teamwork. It also reinforced the importance of truly listening to our constituents, valuing their contribution, and giving them "ownership" of the process and product. The term that emerged in the late '80s is *citizen empowerment*, and it is proving to be critical to the success of any



Far Left: Ball State student presents charrette findings for the community.

Left: preparing graphics for the public presentation and working as a team on developing ideas.

community-based, revitalization effort in the United States. The community-based charrette, with its "grass roots" ambience, typically provides an atmosphere that is conducive to consensus building and a "win-win" situation for all participants.

POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS

My first experience, and the dozens that I have had since, also have reinforced a very strong feeling that those who contemplate using the community-based, charrette workshop must first objectively evaluate whether this process is, indeed, suited for achieving the desired results. It is very important to have realistic expectations of what can be achieved through a process that employs a condensed time-frame in which the normal steps used by planners and designers are executed. Understanding the complexity and methodologies of incorporating citizen participation is equally critical. Acknowledging that the charrette will typically produce a definition of issues, conceptual diagrams, "image sketches", and often generates more questions than answers, is also critical to the success of its use.

My conclusion is that the charrette is most successful and useful when used at the "front end" of a project and when one is looking to define and explore a great number of issues and ideas. It is especially suited to a context in which public input and participation is desired. Personally, I cannot think when this is not desired. Indeed, we have found it mandatory for any project that attempts to respond to the needs of the residents, whether in an inner-city neighbourhood or a rural small town, and has any hopes of ever being implemented.

David Lewis, often talks about charrettes producing "A Plan for Planning" and the drawings that are produced as "talk-pieces". The latter are sketches of concepts and images that prompt and facilitate a dialogue among the many community constituents often represented at a charrette. We have often found that images produced by Ball

State Charrette teams provide powerful incentives in Indiana small towns searching for an identity and focus for their revitalization efforts. Often we use these graphic images to reinforce historic resources already existing but tarnished and maligned by indifference and neglect over decades of decline.

It is important to the ultimate success of the community-based charrette that all participants - the professionals, officials, and citizens - understand the intent of the charrette and that it will not produce the final answers. However, it will often facilitate the formulation of what the real questions and issues are. As an educator, I have concluded that this may be one of the most important skills that we can teach our students.

TWO DECADES OF CHARRETTES

Since that first charrette, I have organized and participated in dozens of charrettes in Indiana - from inner city neighbourhoods to a unique array of small towns. I have seen hundreds of our students receive experiences that simply cannot be duplicated in an academic setting. I have witnessed thousands of citizens of the state of Indiana taking part in the democratic process of participatory governance and planning. The charrette process has been the vehicle to establish the conceptual basis and "visioning" for now-implemented projects ranging from a new state park in Indianapolis to an Ohio Riverfront development in Madison, to extensive downtown revitalization in Elkhart and Noblesville, to affordable housing in Muncie. Each community has greatly benefited - in physical, social, and economical terms.

PRACTITIONERS

As an educator, it is the next generation of practitioners (architects, landscape architects, planners and preservationists) with which I concern myself the most. Recent contact with two former students reinforces why I continue to see the charrette process as such an

important educational involvement. Bruce Race, an '82 Ball State graduate and now an architect and planner with Elbasani & Logan in Oakland, California, often contributes to public service through various urban design projects of the San Francisco Chapter of the AIA. He related to me recently, "My community outreach philosophy emanates from my experiences in the Community-Based Projects Program where we utilized the charrette process to visually communicate public planning policy alternatives."

Scott Truex, who received both an undergraduate architecture degree and graduate urban design degree from Ball State, is now a faculty colleague and one of the driving forces behind our Small Town Assistance Program that has conducted over fifty charrettes in Indiana's small towns in the last fifteen years. "The charrette process provides an opportunity for a city, town, or neighbourhood to develop an 'agenda for community enrichment' based upon that community's heritage - architectural, cultural, and social," offers Scott. "The role of the student and faculty team is to respond to the input of the citizens and generate a vision that revitalizes community pride and purpose."

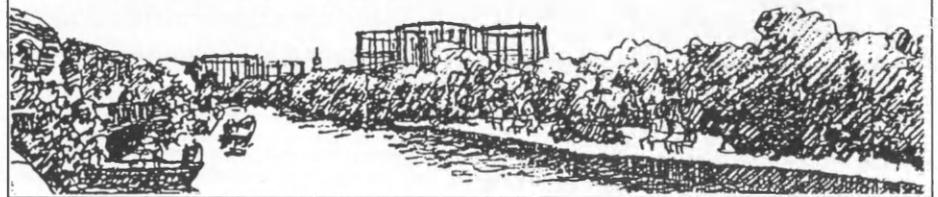
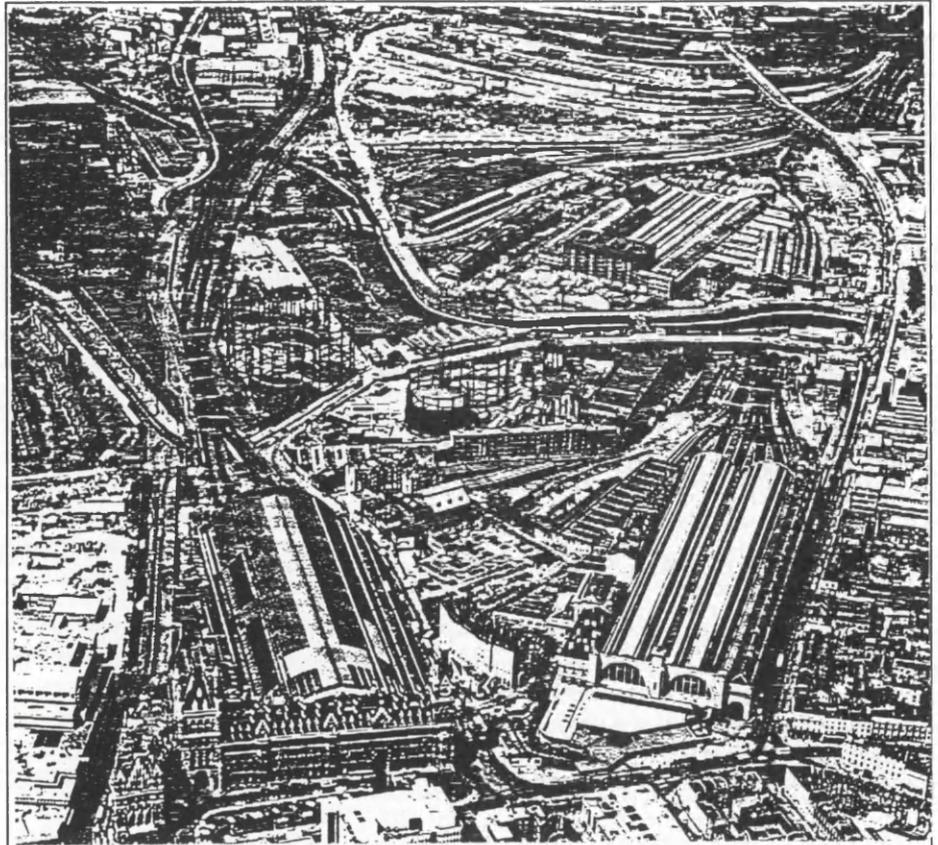
The charrette process, as we have been involved in it, has been able to provide unique and lasting educational experiences for our students remote from the traditional educational settings typically found on college campuses. Equally important, it has allowed our college to invite citizens to actively and constructively participate in planning the future of their communities. For these two reasons alone, I have concluded that the community-based charrette, if engaged with realistic expectations and coordinated and administered by experienced professionals, can be an extremely productive and worthwhile planning and design undertaking. ■

PROCESS AND PRODUCT

Kings Cross, Brick Lane: different places, different communities, the same questions. How can both the physical and the social environment be improved for the better, and what are the relationships between them?

John Thompson describes the approach to these projects which has been based on the fundamental belief that people, professionals, and politicians, if given the time and the space to work together constructively in a non-hierarchical, holistic, open-ended but carefully structured way, can find meaningful and appropriate solutions that professionals and politicians, working in isolation from both the people and the place, can never hope to achieve on their own.

The hope is that through describing these recent projects the minds of the unconverted can be opened, sustenance can be given to those that already know how much harder this approach can be and it can provide a flavour of the immediacy and excitement of the process and offer a glimpse of the rewards that are to be had, in terms of both personal and professional development.



KINGS CROSS

Our Client was a local businessman who has struck an 'accord' with the local pressure group, the Kings Cross Railway Land Community Development Group, under which the results of an extensive 'Planning for Real' exercise would be available for use. With limited resources available, it was decided that the whole of the design process would be compressed into a five day Community Planning Weekend.

From the interim findings that were available to us at the Planning Weekend, it was abundantly clear that local people saw the merits of a mixed land use approach and that they were well aware of the need to think of national and strategic issues, not just local. In understanding their views it was important to realise that this particular community regarded itself as under threat - not just from developers, but also from

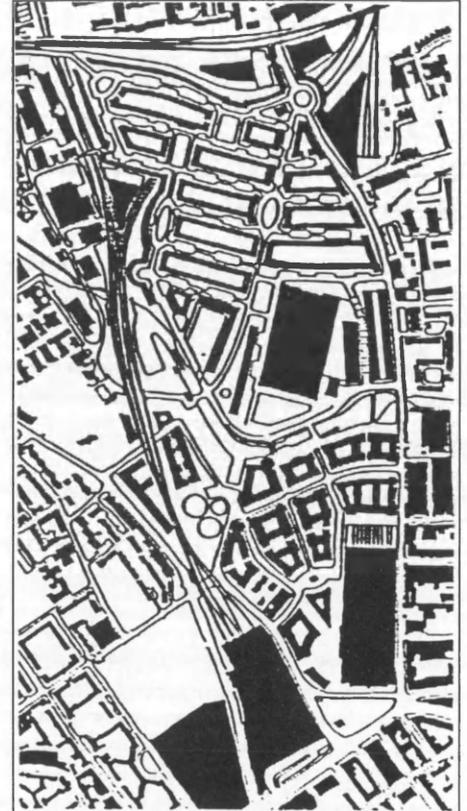
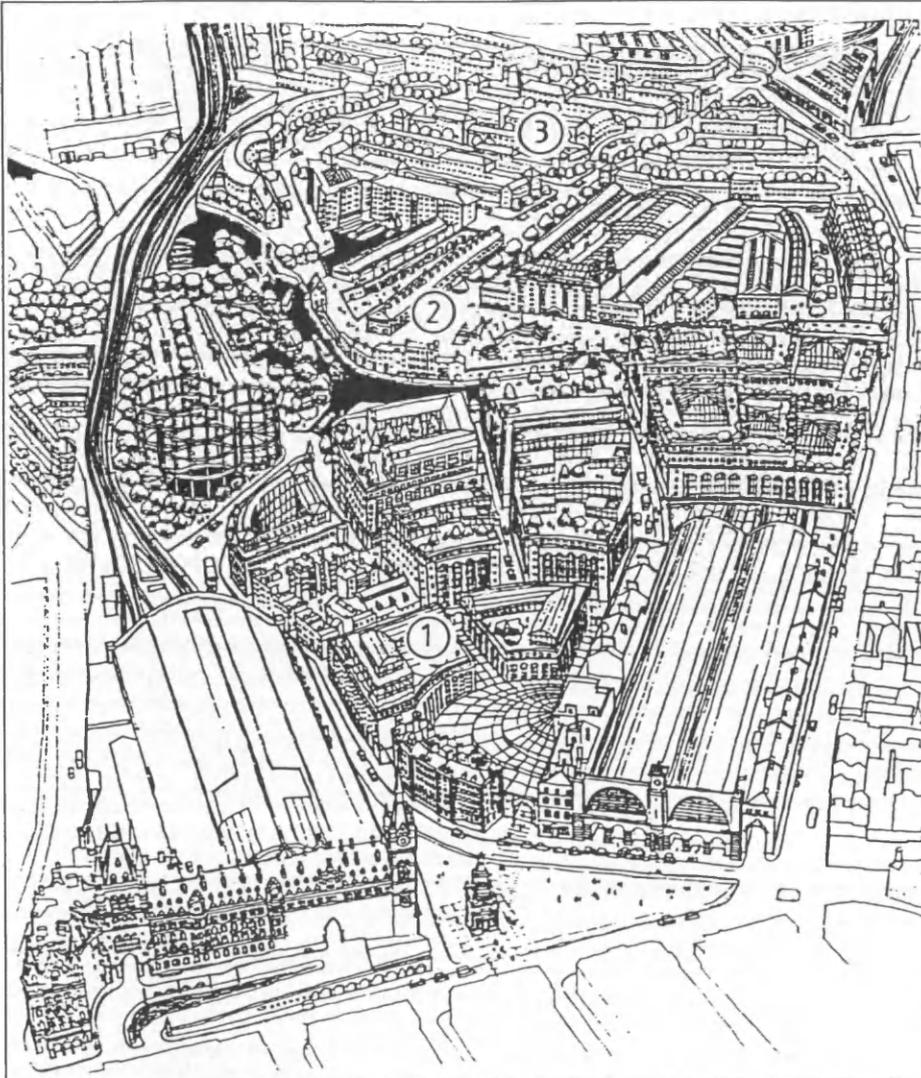
eviction, bureaucratic and racial harassment, cuts in public service and physical attack. As a response to these threats, each element of the community had developed its own strong sense of solidarity and territoriality, and there was clear potential for involving community based enterprises. Insensitivity in the development process would clearly be devastating. On the other hand, sensitive development enhancing the community's strengths and capacity for local initiative and management would meet with considerable support.

Key Conflicts

Three key conflicts emerged continuously throughout both the Planning for Real exercise and the Planning Weekend:

Quality v Quantity;
Integration v Segregation;
Community Benefit v Commercial Profit.

John Thompson is a Partner of Hunt Thompson Associates London, Vice Chairman of the Community Enterprise Scheme, and Tutor in Community Architecture and Planning at the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture.



Above Left: Masterplan showing site divided into three distinct quarters

1. City interchange, commercial and retail uses with rooftop housing above
2. Cultural Heart, serving both local and London needs using listed buildings
3. Housing Neighbourhood, mixed tenure housing, employment and mixed uses.

There was overwhelming local opposition to the proposal to site the Channel Tunnel Rail terminal underneath Kings Cross - meaning as it does a massive 'land take' of not just a large part of the site including Camley Street Natural Park and the listed great Northern Hotel, but also a large area of buildings adjoining the site, to the south and east of Kings Cross Station. There were several other areas of common agreement amongst local people - such as the importance of the listed warehouses and gasometers at the centre of the site, the need to enhance the canal and the suitability of the area to its north for housing, open space and supporting facilities. Mixed land use proposals emerged for the remaining areas, sensibly graded according to location and site characteristics. Transport issues were clearly identified, ranging from the overwhelming need to integrate the site with the

surrounding areas through introducing foot, cycle and vehicle access points wherever possible.

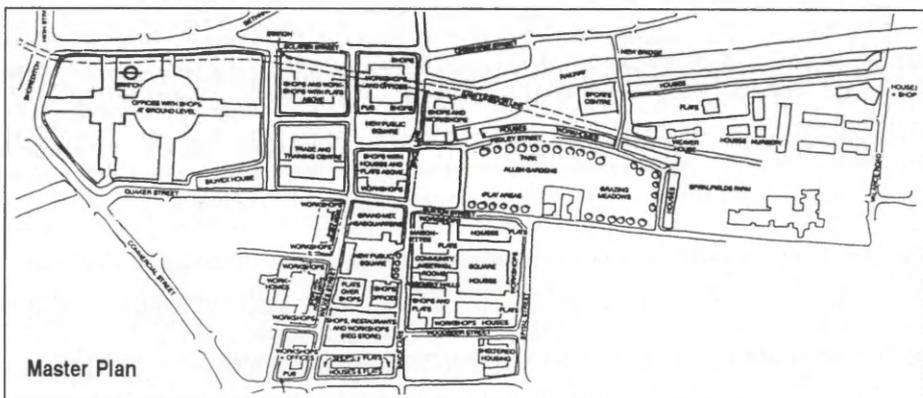
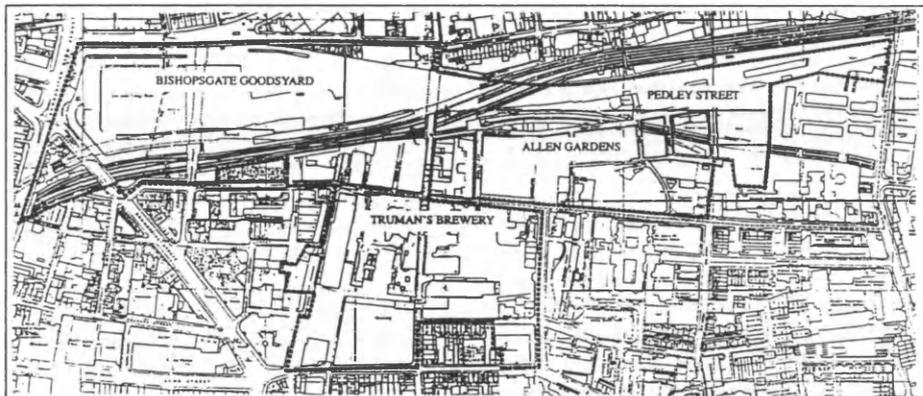
Masterplan

Inner city environments can often be complex and confusing, lacking in character, without continuity or ready interpretation. A strong urban design and landscape framework can provide an environment which is readily understandable. Our Masterplan therefore aimed to create three distinct 'quarters' - the city interchange, the cultural heart, and the housing neighbourhood, each with its own character and local identity; the tight urban grain to the south, the conventional streets and squares to the north, and the civic scale of buildings and spaces around the cultural heart.

The Future

Time has yet to judge whether the results will have any real and lasting impact on the ground. Since the London Regeneration Consortium (LRC) were chosen by British Rail, the recession has come. The planners are prevaricating, the politicians are against LRC's scheme, the Kings Cross Railway Lands Group has submitted its own proposals; but whatever else may happen, an awful lot has already been learned by many people through active debate and participation, on their own terms and in their own time and if something does happen, then let us hope that a seat has already been reserved at the bargaining table for those that have already demonstrated both their commitment and their credibility - the people that ultimately have the most to win or gain from the redevelopment of their area, for it is to them that it must eventually 'belong'.

Process and Product



BISHOPSGATE SPITALFIELDS

The site was in the east end of London, straddling the heart of the Bangladesh community, centred on Brick Lane, just to the north of the Broadgate office development over and around Liverpool Street Station where Bradman and Lipton made their names. London & Edinburgh Trust (LET) were already on the shortlist of four and there was only a month to go before bids and schemes were to be submitted. Somewhat to our surprise they agreed to our condition that the proposal must be developed with the local community from the outset, with a guarantee that there would still be a place for them in the project in the future.

With the help of Tower Hamlets Environment Trust we organised a Community Planning Weekend at very short notice, the first event to go by that name, based upon my experiences in Pittsburgh in early 1987 and the Newcastle upon Tyne Theatre Village Workshop of the same year, organised with Alan Simpson and the local branch of the RIBA.

At Bishopsgate we were boycotted before we even started, but we did get a small but significant input from local people - through a fast track Planning for Real exercise, followed by two and a half days of open

house and discussions. We had a memorable moment of crisis, as always on Saturday night but this time in the somewhat more salubrious surroundings of the Great Eastern Hotel. There was blood on the banquetting table and this time the threatened walkout came from within our own Hunt Thompson team! With the motivation of the developers clearly open to question and a none too easy relationship to be resolved with LET's commercial architects, it was not too surprising. To add to the frustration our final Monday night's presentation would have to be held in private, restricted to a few invited guests only, due to British Rail's condition of secrecy before the bids were made. The community was understandably furious. Even so, it was pretty bold of LET to agree to the openness of the process in the first place, and it was probably madness on our part to even attempt it in such hostile and potentially dangerous circumstances.

The aim of the process was to show that through partnership and cooperation the needs of the 'State', the 'Market' and the 'Community' could be reconciled to the mutual benefit of each. In the nine months that followed this preliminary stage the unprecedented degree of cooperation continued.

Planning for Real was used as the basis for

formulating the detailed community brief, but with a significant difference. At Bishopsgate we had the advantage of developing our urban design approach in parallel with the Planning for Real exercise, rather than following on afterwards. With the site enlarged by the addition of the Brewery and further parcels of British Rail and Tower Hamlets land to the east we started to develop our ideas working in a constant dialogue with the Community Development Group (CDG) as they embarked on an extensive and in depth Planning for Real exercise. As they became aware of the nature and extent of the physical possibilities that existed so too did we become aware of the social needs and aspirations that our designs would ultimately have to accommodate. By the end of the process our own Masterplan and CDG's Community Brief, in terms of land use planning and schedules of accommodation, were within a hair's breadth of each other, and by the time our proposals were submitted for detailed planning consent the essential principles that lay behind them had already been agreed by all three sectors.

Our Masterplan envisaged the creation of an Urban Village focussed around Brick Lane with 1.3 million square feet of mixed uses of housing, shops, restaurants, community facilities, small business premises, workshops, managed workspace, training, recreation and leisure facilities. We developed an urban framework that both complied with modern standards of access and parking and responded to the nature and figure-ground of the surrounding area - a network of interlinked streets and squares with buildings tight on the back of pavements, and wherever practical, a mixture of uses that would keep every element of the scheme alive by night and by day.

CONCLUSIONS

It is the participatory process of community architecture and planning that offers our professions the greatest hope of understanding the real nature of both the people and the place, without which our urban futures are likely to be just as inappropriate as our more recent urban pasts. The time may now have come to systematically equip this and every succeeding generation of professionals with the essential tools and techniques without which they are likely to remain just as remote from the real task in hand as their predecessors. ■

ACTION PLANNING

John Worthington examines the fact that as Urban problems become more complex, and interest groups more diverse, there is a growing interest by communities to draw on experience outside their immediate areas that focus on local issues. In North America such support has been channelled nationally through the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Urban Design Assistance Teams (UDAT)¹ or the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Professional Panels. More locally groups such as City Architectural clubs and the Urban Downtown Associations have harnessed voluntary professional expertise to help improve the urban environment. In Europe cities such as Hamburg, Berlin and Birmingham have used the concept of "invitee think tanks" to raise the debate about the future of their cities.

The common theme of all these approaches is that the demand must originate from the local community. Panels should recognise they are not a vehicle to advocate the point of view of the host, but a group drawn together to listen, look, assess the situation, identify the issues and present a strategy in the interests of the wider community.

John Worthington is Chairman of DEGW Scotland and Director and Professor of the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at the University of York and Past President of the UDG.

Action planning can take many forms, and often creates heated arguments about the political correctness of one approach against another. The range of forms can be various, provided the results are seen to be identifying issues not establishing solutions, and the process allows the views of all members of the community to be heard.

There are a number of essential common themes for success:

A Multi-disciplinary approach, which draws on a variety of different areas of expertise, where no one viewpoint is seen to be dominant, but the approach grows out of what is appropriate to the situation. Experience has shown that a team made up not just of the traditional property and construction professions, but including communicators, lawyers, organisational consultants, and academics has a better chance of success.

Focusing on Goals, Issues, Priorities and not solutions. Local community expectations are often that they will be provided with immediate implementable solutions. This is not the role of action planning. Action planning should set agendas, and clear the ground for proper professionally supported studies to be carried out later.

Community sponsorship and commitment. The desire to make something happen must originate from the local community, who should then have the commitment to achieve action. Too often invitations originate from groups who see it as an easy way out of political deadlock where there is no desire for action. Treat such approaches with caution, and always insist for a commitment for follow up afterwards by the allocation of future funds and a plan to bring at least some of the panel back after a year to review progress. Finally insist that all sections of the community are represented at the event though to the group in power their voice may be unacceptable.

Careful and thorough presentation is critical to success. Two days intense work needs at least two months preparation with the commitment of adequate resources.

An intensive period of work, with the panel living and working together. Ensure that it concludes with a presentation and a product that can be given to the sponsoring body. The role of facilitator is critical. He or she should have the skills to pace the time, bring those less likely to talk forward, and synthesise and communicate ideas.

Wide dissemination of recommendations. The greatest impact of an action planning event, is the gradual dissemination of the ideas within the community in the months that follow. Initial responses at the public forum may be cool or even hostile, as new ways of looking at the

problem are proposed, often conflicting with deeply entrenched views. Time however softens, and the event acts as a catalyst for changing perceptions, and alternative viewpoints to surface.

Follow through is a pre-requisite. The local community has had the benefit of valuable time, intellect and imagination of leaders in their fields and they should be prepared to respond.

THE ARGUMENT FOR ACTION PLANNING

Many have argued that action planning events are no more than "cut price" professional advice, "solutions on the cheap" and raise false expectations concerning what might be achieved. Above all it is argued that the panel selection could be elitist, provide opportunities for a select few, and lead to work that could be lucrative consultancy assignments.

Such criticisms fail to recognise the essential nature of these events as preparing the ground and identifying a clear brief. They are not solutions and such events should expand the understanding and demand for professional services.

For the hosting organisation it provides a neutral forum:

- to present issues and define an agenda
- to integrate local interest groups, and with the local authority act as a catalyst to bring together different professional departments.
- to set goals and define issues for action.
- to heighten public awareness, and structure a responsible debate.
- to meet outside professionals and experts, to whom they can present issues.

For the invited experts the event provides an opportunity to:

- network between disciplines
- build team spirit for future assignments
- educate potential clients and users
- raise awareness
- create a well briefed assignment for the future
- increase public exposure and awareness.

MORAL DILEMMA

Throughout the action planning debate, one fundamental moral dilemma arises. Should a member of a panel be allowed subsequently to be put forward for a consultancy appointment? Will the advice be tainted by the expectation of a project later? In North America the rules are clear. Panelists should be drawn from well outside the area, and are debarred from taking a commission for a specified time. In the UK geographical distinction is rather harder, and it is argued that the panels can act as a means for clients to assess professionals prior to selection.

Managing the Process of Urban Change

Professional bodies might argue that participating on panels where the outcome could be a project is equivalent to providing knowledge for nothing. In my own mind I feel clear that both sides go into the event with full knowledge of each other's agenda.

HIGHBURY INITIATIVE

During 1988 DEGW and URBED organised a major event for Birmingham City and the City action team, entitled the Birmingham City Centre Challenge Symposium.² The purpose was to explore ways of strengthening the relationship between economic activity and the quality of the physical environment. Over eighty participants came from the widest range of backgrounds, architecture, planning and landscape, the development and business world, economic development and management consultants, artists, surveyors, and landowners. They came from many parts of the world: from the east and west coast of the United States, Japan, Germany and Holland. The strongest factor in the event was the dialogue between those who knew the city intimately and those who could draw on wide experience elsewhere.

The 48 hour event was organised in three phases. Friday afternoon was devoted to learning about the city by looking and listening. Saturday's programme was a series of six workshops each considering different issues which culminated in an interim report that was produced overnight. Sunday's session aimed at reaching consensus and priorities for future action.

The final report produced soon after the event recommended an urgent review of the role of the city centre in the light of the findings of the symposium. The report highlighted the opportunity to reinforce character through distinctive quarters, pedestrian priority, design quality and the need for a formal forum to bring together the business and residential communities and City Council to create a management strategy for the city centre which had the commitment of all. The results were enshrined in the Highbury Initiative Report, and a year later many of the participants returned to find the City had been true to its word. The inner ring road had been tamed, an urban design strategy proposed, pedestrianization achieved, and above all a fruitful alliance established between business and the corporation.

Outside experts, careful pre-planning, and firm stage management achieved a definition of issues and goals which set firm foundations for effective consultancy assignments later. A new vision for Birmingham City Centre was formed.

A SECOND OPINION

Some see Alexandra Palace and Wood Green's Shopping City as notable follies of their respective times. Robert Cowan reports on a brainstorming session that looked for a more positive link.

The Urban Design Action Team (UDAT) based on Wood Green and Alexandra Palace in north London broke new ground in adapting the American technique of participatory urban design to the very different circumstances of the UK.

'A dull centre, with a mediocre environment and very little going on' — as Haringey Council's planners described Wood Green — enjoyed for two days the undivided attention of Nigel Coates, Richard MacCormac and a dozen other volunteers with a wide range of experience of design and development.

A major problem with British planning is that the public — and even the planners and their political masters — tends to consider an area's future seriously only when a developer puts forward a controversial scheme. By then it is often too late to start thinking about a positive alternative.

The UDAT put the future of Wood Green and Alexandra Palace on the front burner,' said Haringey's chair of

planning, Nicky Gavron, whose enthusiasm gave the council's planners the political support they needed to try this novel approach. The event will have been a success if bringing the issues to the boil lifts the planning process for the area into a new creative dimension.

Starting from scratch

The American RUDATs (the R is for regional) were developed as a way of introducing planning and urban design to locations where scarcely a designer or planner had been seen (AJ 14.3.90 p48). RUDATs are always invited in by a community, which hopes that the experience will help to galvanise it into effective action.

That model has been tried on a handful of occasions in the UK, though rarely with resounding success. Haringey was different. Here it was the council which invited the team in and organised the event, and which will take on the job of feeding the ideas into public debate and promoting action.

WOOD GREEN, HARINGEY

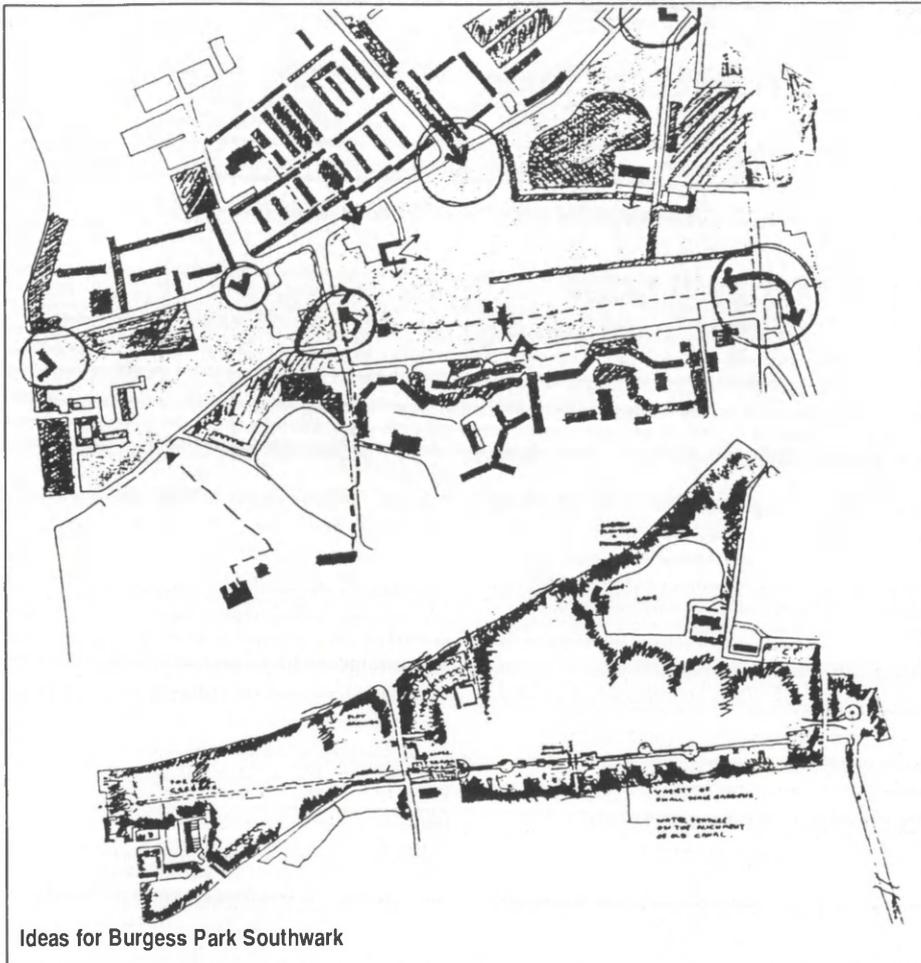
In 1990 the Urban Design Group in association with the London Borough of Haringey Town Planning Service organised the Wood Green Urban Design Action team.³ The objectives of the event were to:

- Explore Wood Green's potential as a regional centre
- Review Alexandra Palace's national potential
- Identify the complementary benefits of Alexandra Palace and Wood Green
- Create an identity for Wood Green to ensure commercial and cultural success
- Encourage development which will bring benefits to local people
- Create a favourable development climate, and stimulate action
- Encourage corporate working within the Council

The guiding principles for the working of the group were that it should:

- provide concepts not proposals
- balance the achievable and imaginative
- keep a strategic perspective

- present a range of realistic targets
 - provide a plan of action
- After the event which produced a strategy for action Haringey's response was as follows:
- Haringey Council is tremendously grateful to the UDAT participants who gave of their time and creativity to produce a stimulating and enlightening package of ideas for the heart of Haringey. It was a remarkable experience. The Council must now expand the dialogue with the community, commercial as well as residential, who are, after all, the principal consumers of the centre's regeneration.
 - The Council will not lose sight of the need to keep a strategic perspective, in the absence of any democratic London-wide government, in looking at the regional role of Wood Green and Alexandra Palace.
 - The various and sometimes visionary ideas and concepts must be translated into implementable projects and proposals which can be promoted and financed, probably using various forms of partnership



Ideas for Burgess Park Southwark

- and collaboration with the private sector.
- At a time of continuing restriction on resources, promotion of Wood Green can only proceed if it is given a correspondingly higher priority in relation to projects elsewhere in the Borough.
 - The newly elected administration on the council will be invited to re-state the previous commitment to the Wood Green Initiative, and to the new ideas set out by the UDAT.
 - The Council will have the confidence to publicise UDAT ideas, discuss widely the practical proposals, and then to start delivering within a few months.
 - The Council has also undertaken to reconvene the UDAT after 12 months, to report back to the panellists and to the community what has been achieved in the first year of the new Wood Green.
- Three years later the UDAT has not been reconvened, and resources with the City Challenge initiative have been redirected to Tottenham Hale. The event opened up awareness in the Borough, changed

perceptions, and created a climate for ideas and dialogue. Politics intervened and perhaps Wood Green was the loser.

BURGESS PARK, SOUTHWARK

Business in the Community Professional Firms Group under the chairmanship of myself ran an action planning event at Burgess Park, Southwark.⁴ The objectives were to identify issues, set goals, consider achievable options, and propose a vision. "Abercrombie's 1943 strategic master plan for London envisioned a green lung from the Elephant and Castle to Greenwich. Burgess Park is the reality of that vision. Unloved, unsafe and dramatically under resourced". The issues the team identified were:

- a lack of political commitment and vision
- no sense of community ownership
- breakdown of trust between the authority and the community

In the two days of intensive work the mixed team of lawyers, accountants, surveyors, architects, landscape architects and communicators were able to focus on the

issues and present a strategy that aimed to find a mediating path between the interest groups. To unlock the breakdown of communication the team recommended that:

- A "Friends of Burgess Park" group was formed and professional support provided to undertake a thorough review.
- Burgess Park and the responsibility for its management is put in the hands of an independent Trust.
- Burgess Park is perceived as a Metropolitan asset, and efforts should be made to attract resources and commitment from the wider Greater London constituency.

Managing urban change is never easy but nearly a year later some progress has been made. The Park is no longer a political football, there is a strong likelihood that a groundwork project will be set up, and London First has placed Burgess Park as a key area of London requiring metropolitan private sector support.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Action Planning events aligned with the growing City Visions⁵ movement provide an opportunity to place Urban Design firmly on the agenda. The Urban Design Group should take the initiative and become the focus for experience and guidance on such events. The UDG breadth of membership provides an excellent foundation for selecting panelists whilst the UDG Source Book could be a directory of experience and provide guidelines for setting up events. The UDG could collate experience and feedback, and periodically publish results and follow up reviews, to ensure action. In addition the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at the University of York, through its mid career professional education programme is exploring the format of an event to draw together experience from action planning events and train facilitators.

The public is eager for participation, elected councils are searching for direction, is action planning the missing ingredient? ■

References

- ¹ *Urban Design in Action*. Peter Batchelor and David Lewis, North Carolina State University 1985.
 - ² *The Highbury Initiative Proceedings of the Birmingham City Centre Challenge Symposium DEGW 1988*.
 - ³ *Cities Don't Just Happen* Report of the Wood Green UDAT London Borough of Haringey and UDG London 1990.
 - ⁴ *Report of the Burgess Park Action Team* Business in the Community London 1993.
 - ⁵ *Vision for London newsletters*.
- References to events in UK and abroad.

PARTICIPATION AND REALITY

Redeveloping large mixed-use sites in inner urban areas has to respond not only to local and central government policies and the economic realities of the property market, but also to the legitimate, and not so legitimate, expectations of the resident community. Steve Bee and Jon Rowland describe Llewelyn-Davies' experience in preparing a development framework for a seven acre site in London's Docklands which provides a useful insight into the tensions and pressures which shape such projects.

What we discuss here is not the physical



elements of the development framework, but those aspects of public consultation and involvement which influenced the project and the lessons that may be learned.

It is our experience, having been involved for many years in housing and development projects, both here and in the Third World that the initiative and the pressure for participation must come from the community itself if a project is to be successful. Sometimes this is a spontaneous and overriding urgency which when met, flickers and dies. Other situations lead to sustained involvement over time, and these usually work because of some form of external intervention. This is either in the form of a deliberate precipitation of some form of change that will ensure a community becomes formally engaged in a project, or an insertion of community development workers, who are there to catalyse and channel the community's efforts. This element has become one of the main platforms of 'sustainability', to the extent that few people question the validity of community participation. Indeed for some time it has been axiomatic that development within a community could not be justified if it had not been generated by a grass-roots response to conditions within a particular environment.

Over time it has become apparent that any realistic effort to secure active involvement by the general public in future proposals for any area has slowed progress enormously and opened up local political opportunities which have negated or frustrated the elected democratic process. This is not always a bad thing of course, but means that the potential for claiming representative status is almost infinite amongst the general public.

Local activists and people generally have begun to realise that, with a few notable

exceptions, the output of our planning process was not changing as a result of this apparent glasnost, nor was there any sign that schemes being built were significantly different from how they might have been had the community not been involved.

So the term consultation seems to have replaced participation in the lingua franca, reflecting perhaps a more honest idea, namely to consult on ideas generated rather than expect people to initiate original work. The increased use of UDATs may change this, but that has yet to be tested on any scale.

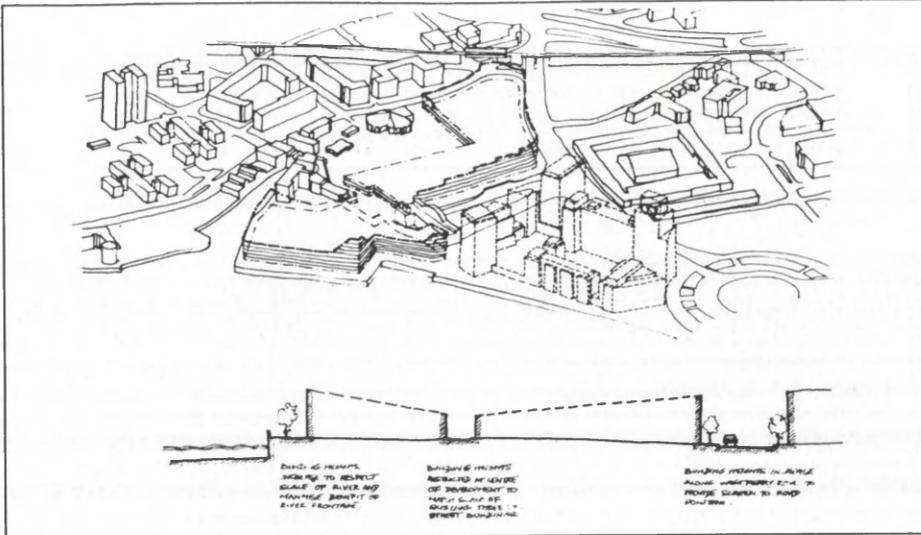
Our recent work has spanned this semantic divide, seeking to reconcile long-standing expectations and priorities in local community with the realities of funding sources, public sector policies and the economics of development.

LIMEHOUSE ESTATE

Earlier this year, our work on the former St. Vincent estate in Limehouse brought into focus many of the conflicts which can both frustrate and stimulate action.

- Local demand for new social housing to reduce local overcrowding was frustrated by Council and Government policy on housing priorities. This meant that housing was directed to those in greatest need on a Borough-wide basis, rather than meeting local needs.
- The Council and local housing associations were keen to respond to local demand and provide new social housing, but were constrained by levels of grant aid and controls over borrowing.
- The Development Corporation - a non accountable institution - recognised its responsibility to respond to local community needs but was constrained by a requirement to achieve the best possible

Steve Bee is an Associate and Jon Rowland is a Technical Director at Llewelyn-Davies



Perspective shows Building Massing studies developed for St. Vincent estate

financial return.

- Previous consultations had raised expectations. Local people were, in their view, repeatedly let down by a variety of agencies who had raised aspirations in the past but failed to deliver. They were cynical and distrustful of any new initiative to encourage their ideas and involvement.
- A small number of active, informed and enthusiastic individuals had managed to secure funding for implementing local development projects, but only achieved progress through constant badgering of the local authority, the Development Corporation and other public agencies. However established local groups and committees were only able to identify problems and possible solutions without managing to make more progress.
- Legitimate self interest within disadvantaged groups was tinged with chauvinism and racism.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

What lessons are there to be learned by urban designers? Community involvement means

- **No great expectations** - don't expect a large response, don't expect the goals, objectives and issues to be agreed, don't expect to identify a consensus, don't expect to be trusted - until you have proved yourself with real achievements.
- **Persistence** - spontaneous but limited outbursts of participation such as UDATs can act as catalysts if they are followed through. Otherwise they are another gimmick. A steady and realistic interventionist programme may be more productive. To get to know as many people as possible, to be seen in the area regularly, and better still, to base your activities

locally, all helps. However, if there is no physical output, community action can become bitter.

- **Publicity** - there is no such thing as too much. Use, but don't rely on the media. Do it yourself through posters, leaflets, news sheets and word of mouth. Community sponsorship and commitment is critical.
- **Honesty** - don't promise local people more than the team can deliver. Those most likely to be involved will know the limitations and may already have gone through a similar process. It is important to draw realistic parameters, at least in any initial project, so that modest success rather than grand failure encourages successive stages of action. This will build on the community's collective desire for improvement, but only if the follow-through is attainable.
- **Inclusive** - make every effort, from the outset, to draw all opinions and interests into the project. We faced the problem of a small group setting up in competition. With few resources and incomplete appreciation of the problems their efforts were wasted, but they could have been a valuable source of enthusiasm and local knowledge within the project.
- **'Agit prop'** - occasionally the community's participation is politically motivated and an end in itself. More common is the use of the output from a study to press for changes in restrictive or discriminatory policies. Our project's ability to respond to local demands for social housing was hampered by the Housing Corporation rules, but we called for lobbying to change these, and we provided some of the ammunition.
- **Talking to people** - spend as much time as

the budget will allow. Get ideas down on sketch plans, models, and drawings as soon as possible. Everybody responds more constructively to ideas set out visually. Forcing people to reconcile conflicting expectations helps them to recognise the importance of consensus; so too do prioritisation and funding constraints. The strength of opinion often comes with the level of self interest. Don't ignore the democratic process and elected representatives.

- **Don't look for a formula.** Trying to apply a set approach to such a multi-dimensional problem as identifying urban improvement issues or getting new development into an established urban environment is unlikely to work.

The basic principles of setting objectives, allocating responsibilities for action, identifying sources of funding and generating an implementation programme may be common to all community involvement. But these abstract professional tools will be alien to most people in the local community and must always be expressed directly in terms of how they affect local people and conditions.

Our recent experience suggests that the main barrier to constructive community involvement is trust, and this can only come through a mutual understanding between the local groups involved and the professional team, working in an integrated cross-agency and cross-disciplinary manner. ■

UDAT EUROPE : A DRAFT GUIDE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Urban Design Group has already agreed to be involved in Urban Design Assistance Teams and contributed to one held in Wood Green. This article aims to summarise the main points concerning UDATs in order that a code of practice can be developed for use by the UDG. The proposals should be seen as a draft to which responses are needed which can then be evaluated to enable the UDG to adopt a code.

Whilst the article hopes to be able to take the idea more widely into Europe it is important for it to be used successfully by the UDG in Britain first of all.

Some issues emerge from the proposals in this paper including the following:-

Team members should not be involved professionally with the UDAT community for twelve months either side of a UDAT visit.

Team members' services should be provided on a voluntary basis with only their expenses reimbursed.

The size of the team should be determined by the nature of the study but should be kept within manageable limits.

Your comments are welcomed on the whole article in order to produce a code that the UDG is prepared to support.

There is no formal mechanism in Europe, at international or national level, through which communities might request assistance in dealing with local critical urban problems, other than through public sector or consultant routes; the former tends to be bureaucratic and slow to respond, the latter commercial and therefore expensive. The UDAT experience in the US has provided a middle route between local government and consultant approaches which encourages involvement from both public and private sector practice together with the further primary characteristics of voluntary multi-disciplinary professional inputs within precise time frames, and the central feature of community participation at all stages of the process.

The Urban Design Group has for over a decade promoted the cause for urban design as a broadly based multi-disciplinary activity concerned in particular for the quality of 'place' and 'quality of life' in cities, the 'public realm'; and with an emphasis on close collaboration with the community and neighbourhood groups, cultural, business, and commercial interests which make up the 'city'. It is appropriate therefore that the UDG might take the lead in promoting the UDAT Process. With the support of a number of professional and amenity institutes, and in collaboration with colleagues across the European Community it is proposed that the UDG establishes a UDAT Coordinating Committee and develops a practice handbook through which a UDAT Europe programme could grow. Funding is currently being sought to support the investigations and consultations which need to be carried out. The UDAT Europe initiative could be an important focus of the Urban Design Group and its activities in the future and UDAT committees could be formed to drive the programme forward.

The Urban Design Group looks to receive responses from the membership expressing both interest in and views about the future of the UDAT Europe programme. We need to hear from colleagues wishing to become involved in the programme as UDAT members or as community group representatives suggesting locations for possible UDAT opportunities. We need most urgently to establish and promote an operational framework through which communities might make requests for assistance, and secondly, whilst somewhat simultaneously, we need to make it widely known that the UDG would be available to organise UDAT events; only through live application of the principles can the process itself be rigorously tested and developed. To this end we offer a draft guide to the UDAT process and await members' responses.

THE PROCESS

The UDAT process comprises four primary elements; commitment; preparation; the visit; and follow-up activities.

COMMITMENT

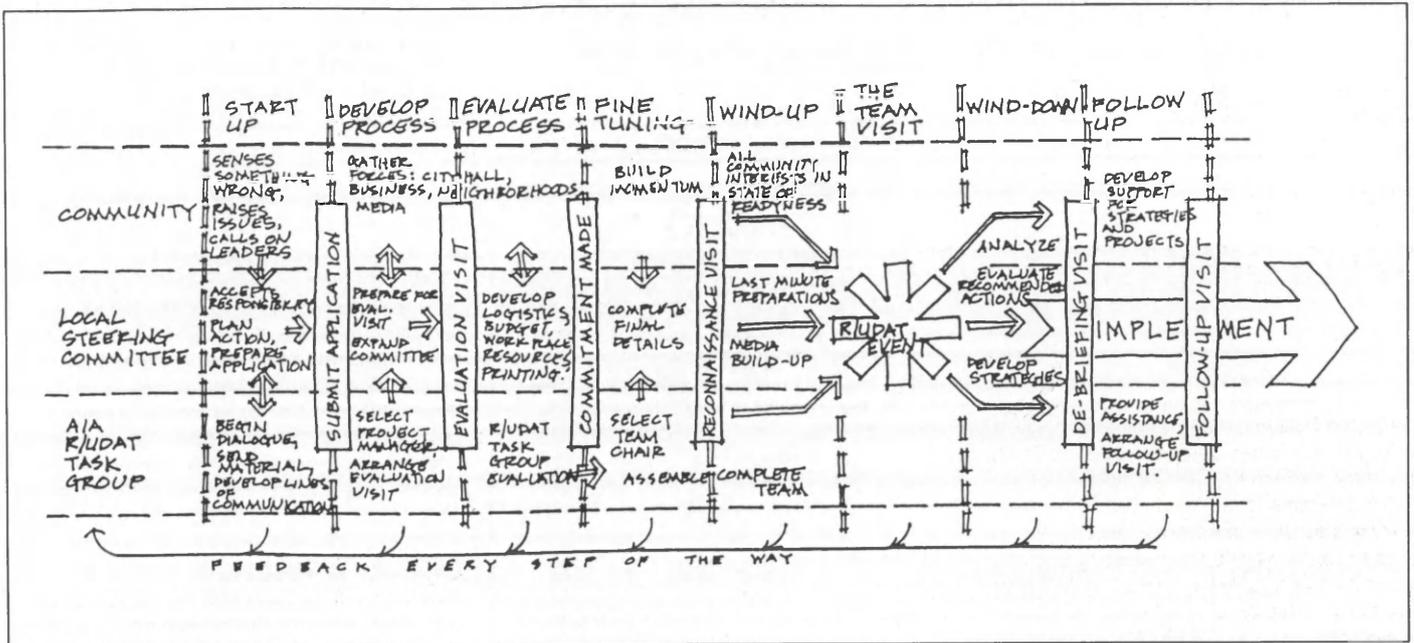
UDAT programmes should never be forced upon a community, the process should emerge from local initiative and be substantially community led, channelled through appropriate representation. The request for assistance should be directed to an Urban Design Group UDAT Coordinating Committee who will then arrange a reconnaissance visit to assess the nature of the programme, identifying goals, issues, and priorities; the extent of the consultation process and networking procedures; the character of the multi-disciplinary team to be assembled; and budget requirements. We propose that team members volunteer their time but their expenses need to be reimbursed; we also propose that they cannot accept commissions for work resulting from the study's recommendations and should not be involved professionally with the community for twelve months either side of the UDAT visit.

PREPARATION

The preparation required for a UDAT will normally take at least 3 months, dependant upon the complexity and magnitude of issues involved, from the time of the initial request through to the visit. The process requires the assembly of substantial relevant briefing documentation for study by the team prior to the visit; the networking of all potential advisers to the UDAT, local and regional; the identification of the UDAT Chairman and at least 8 Team Members; finding a suitable location accessible to the study area and capable of housing and servicing the activities of the team working intensively over a 4 day period; accommodation for the team; and a public venue capable of accommodating the public meetings which start and end the visit.

THE VISIT

Team visits typically last 4 to 5 days and include a weekend. The UDAT visit begins, surrounded in publicity, with a public debate and awareness raising event when the community at large meeting with the UDAT have the opportunity to air views and express feelings relevant to the programme; publicity and public debate is at the core and determines the success of all aspects of the UDAT process. Days 1 and 2 are taken up with visits to the location under scrutiny and in depth meetings with civic leaders, community representatives, and local business interests. Days 2 and 3 will find the



UDAT members seeking out particular areas of comment and guidance from community interest groups whilst simultaneously starting to develop particular ideas and 'ways forward' for the UDAT study. By Days 3 and 4 the Team will begin to withdraw to prepare their response to all that has been seen and heard, through an intense work programme over 24 to 36 hours which prepares the UDAT study recommendations in the form of a Report and Exhibition of the work carried out. The last day sees the Final Report printed and circulated in readiness for the presentation of the UDAT output to the concluding public meeting.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

The UDAT process is designed to assist local public service and professional activities through the provision of imaginative and workable recommendations often beyond the prevailing vision of local political, economic, and environmental aspirations and made possible through the unique objectivity a UDAT can bring to a community. It is however up to local expertise and ingenuity to drive the programme forward and get things done after the team's visit. The commitment established which defined the need for a UDAT visit, will need to be sustained by the community and its representation through follow-up activities. The local Follow-up Committee will need to analyse the recommendations and organise a structure for carrying them out; give priority to certain recommendations and identify those for early implementation; establish strategies and leadership for the

effort identifying the key actors and the process for involving them; and maintaining regular contact with an Urban Design Group UDAT Committee with a view to follow-through visits from the visiting team.

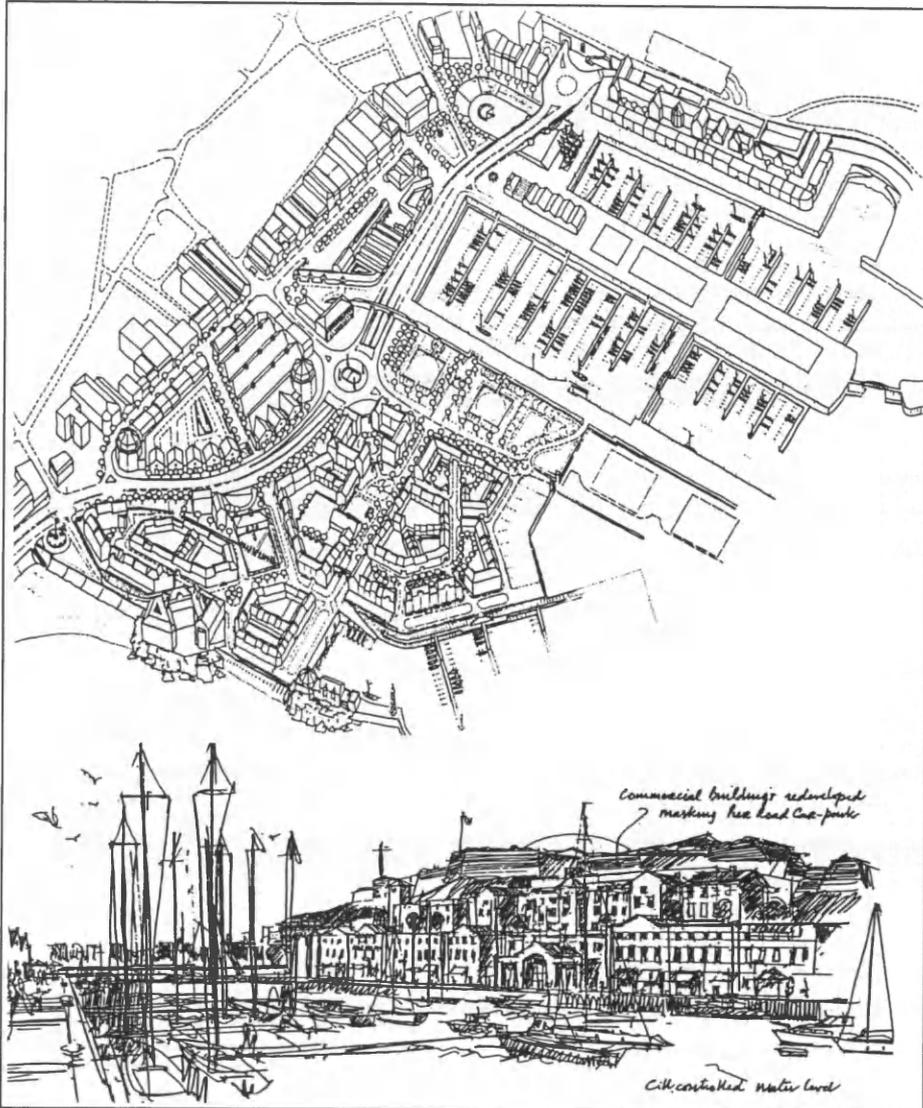
STEP BY STEP

1. the Community Interest or Amenity Group establishes the initiative through the identification of a specific and critical urban problem or series of issues, and decides to 'act'; the initiative-takers form a steering group and begin work on making the case for a UDAT visit;
2. the community make initial contact with the Urban Design Group offering a brief description of the community and the broad objectives of the proposed visit; the Urban Design Group at this stage will offer guidance on the next stages;
3. the local steering group then needs to gather support from community interest and amenity groups; identify the areas and issues to be studied together with perceived problems and opportunities; identify the people involved, who will facilitate the process and who will accept budgetary responsibility; produce diagrammatic and plan based information; and arrange publicity and media contacts;
4. in consultation with representatives from the Urban Design Group evaluate the project proposals through site visits and meetings with the community groups involved;
5. the Urban Design Group will then decide to go forward with the project, so that a date can be set for the visit;

6. the Urban Design Group UDAT Coordinating Committee will identify a Chairman and select a multi-disciplinary team which will match the issues to be investigated;
7. the Chairman will visit the community some weeks before the event to meet with representatives, finalise briefing documentation to be circulated to the team prior to the visit, check on working and domestic arrangements, secure media attention, and finalise budgetary details;
8. the UDAT visit takes place and a report is submitted;
9. the Follow-up procedures come into operation, enabling the initiative to move forward within the devised framework, and the Urban Design Group UDAT Coordinating Committee maintains a monitoring role.

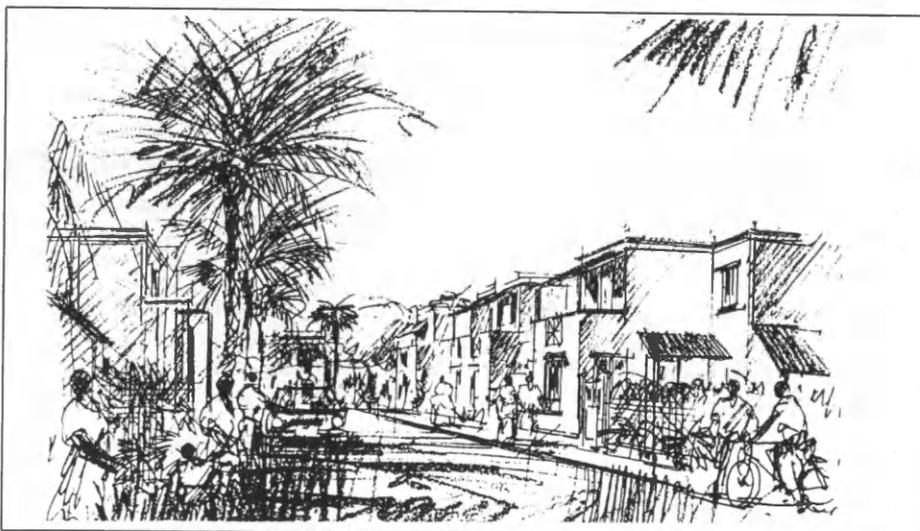
CONCLUSIONS

The UDAT Process will have assisted the community in identifying short and long term strategies in response to the issues, problems and opportunities; will have been instrumental in galvanising community action for the long term through the local Steering Group and Follow-up Committees; will have realised possibilities and made recommendations within a time frame and through a range of multi-disciplinary interests and skills; and perhaps of greatest value will have produced its output through a high level of consensus rarely experienced through alternative public participation or citizen empowerment programmes. ■



above St Helier Waterfront

below Port Louis Mauritius



The firm's work encompasses a variety of project types - small individual buildings, large masterplanning studies, residential commercial and leisure developments. Much of it involves historic buildings and conservation areas.

Our expertise is in the design of buildings and urban spaces, and in the creative physical aspects of planning. We believe strongly in joining forces with other disciplines, on a project-by-project basis, in order to apply the best of the required skills to the job in question. In this way we have worked with economists, highways and transportation engineers and numerous specialist development advisers, as well as the usual building project consultants.

A town is perceived as a combination of buildings and spaces between buildings, not of land use zones. A successful urban environment results from the inspired disposition of its streets, their scale, the buildings within them and the varied spaces and views between them. The importance of these influences has been forgotten in too many recent urban planning solutions.

The firm's approach to urban design begins predictably with an appraisal of existing influences ranging from topography to local architectural traditions. An understanding of the past and the present then becomes the springboard for ideas for the future, held together with an underlying order by which the looser subjectively-viewed aspects of the design process can be co-ordinated. The difference between a small infill scheme and a large new development is seen as a predominance of "responding" (to adjoining existing influences) in the case of the former, compared with "applying" in the case of the latter.

THE ST. HELIER WATERFRONT

This appointment was won in open international competition from a field of over eighty practices by a consortium led by Andrews Downie and Partners.

The brief from the States of Jersey set out a number of essential criteria - rationalisation of harbour operations, improvement of traffic and pedestrian routes, resolution of the relationship between the conservation area and the harbour, provision of new housing and a strategy for land reclamation.

The consortium's approach was three-dimensional and design led, as opposed to land use led, with sketch visualisations assisting the design team at each stage.

A thorough process, lasting some nine months, of familiarisation, analysis, consultation and testing resulted in a masterplan which was welcomed by all sections of the community and whose implementation over an expected 20-year

period is now in the hands of the statutorily constituted Waterfront Enterprise Board.

The masterplan covers around six kilometres of St. Helier's coastline, including the harbour, and two large new marinas. One of the key benefits it will bring is the revitalisation of the harbour area, at present noticeably separated from the commercial heart of the town by through traffic.

PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS

The site of 120 acres at Champville lies on the western slopes of Long Mountain on the north eastern edge of Port Louis. The development brief calls for 1400 new homes in various categories including low-cost housing, together with a local commercial centre, two schools, sites for community uses and landscaped amenity areas.

Champville will be a new "quartier" with an identity and a life of its own, but with strong ties to adjacent areas through a network of common roads. It is intended that its inhabitants should feel, from the very start, that they are part of a quality development where care has been taken in the detailing and landscaping of public areas as well as in the design and construction of the dwellings. A combination of new and existing topographical features will make the area immediately "legible" to its occupants.

The layout follows the traditional grid-iron pattern of Port Louis with wide streets giving space for car parking and tree planting.

KENSINGTON CLOISTERS, LONDON

This small but conspicuous office development beside the grade I listed St. Mary Abbots Church, Kensington, is a typical example of the firm's contextualist approach in a prime conservation area. Design details are drawn from the church itself and the adjoining church school. The scheme won a Civic Trust commendation in 1991.

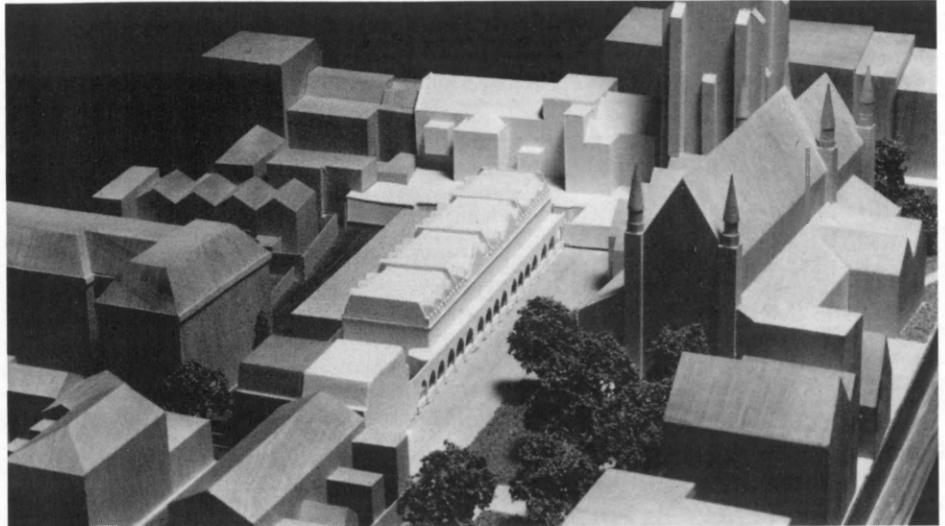
HAYLE HARBOUR, CORNWALL

The challenge here is to re-establish the Cornish town of Hayle as a working port and holiday resort alongside protection and improvement of outstanding dune and estuary wildlife habitats.

The viability of both development and wildlife protection is secured, unusually, by a comparatively high density of development with its inherent lower infrastructure cost.

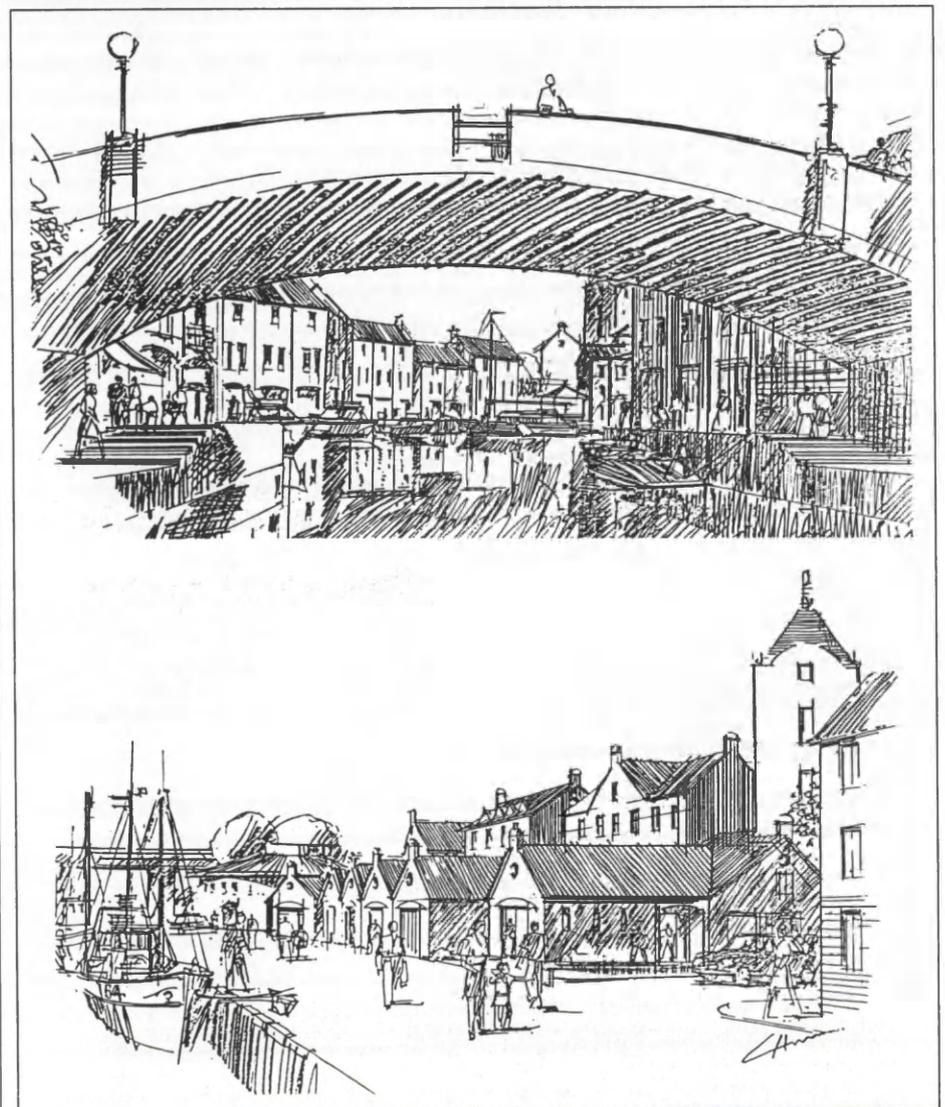
Existing quays are to be refurbished and new ones built as part of the formation of a unique waterfront community. ■

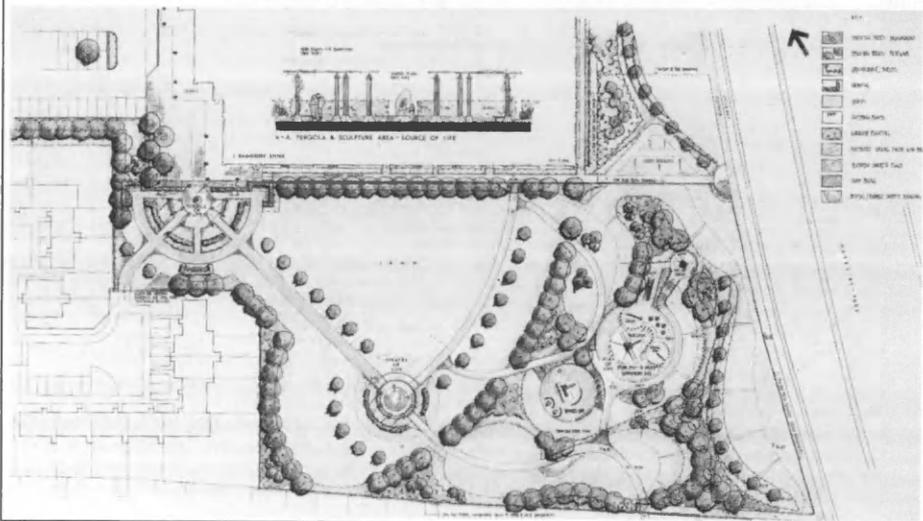
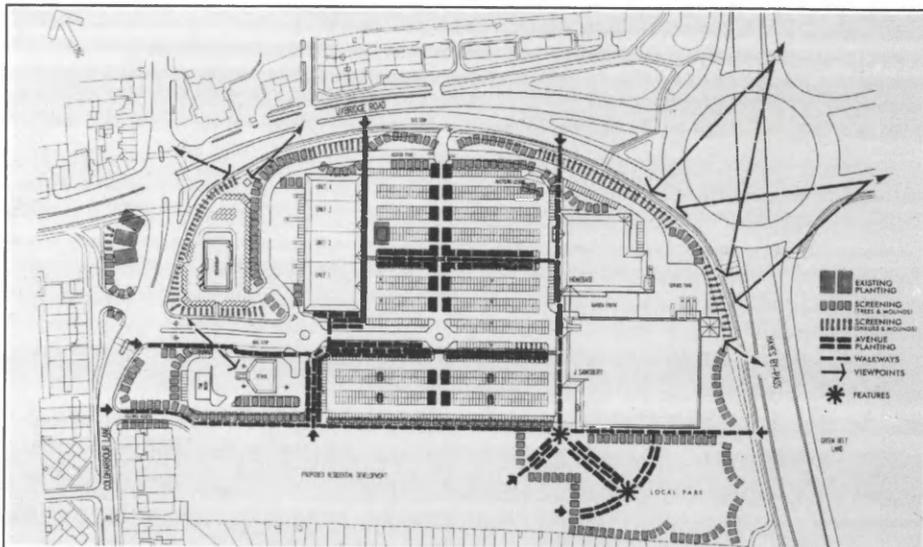
Charles Dorin
Andrews Downie and Partners
 6 Addison Avenue, London W11 4QR
 Tel: 071 602 7701
 Fax: 071 602 8480



above Kensington Cloisters

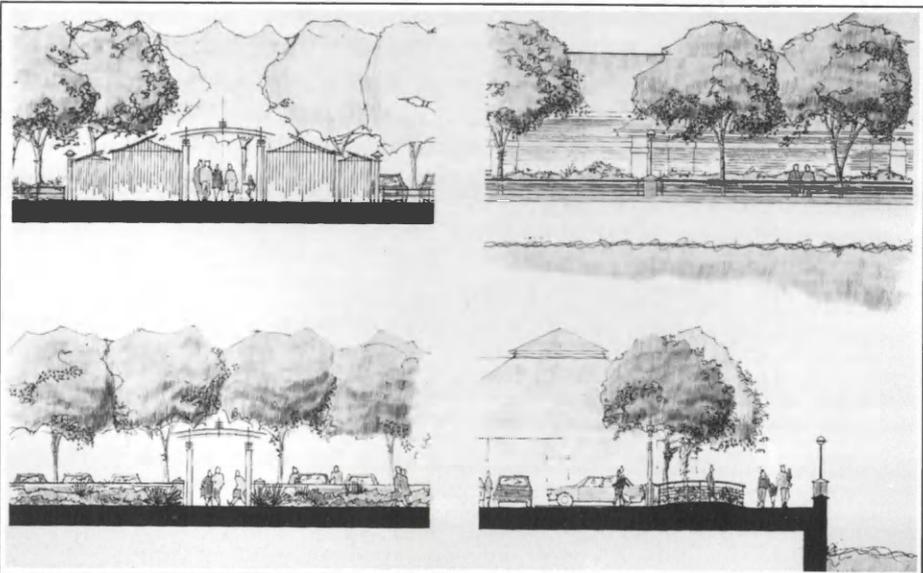
below Hayle Harbour





above Retail Park Hayes

below Riverside Promenade Fulham



The interface between Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture is indistinct. The training and practice of any one of these disciplines spurns a methodology and outlook that views opportunities and constraints from a different perspective. We see Urban Design as the common ground which allows this interaction to take place in order to create places that are more than just the sum of their parts.

Our practice of Urban Design is through Landscape Architecture, with the landscape seen as a holistic entity composed of natural, physical, social and economic factors. We do not pretend to have specialist expertise in all these factors, but at least an understanding of where they fit into the equation. Our specialism is in the design of spaces between buildings in an urban and rural context, which includes an input into the factors that create and influence those spaces.

APPROACH

The emphasis is on the experiential nature of the environment, and the desire to evoke in the participant that which allows them to live life to the full. Such experiences must be diverse and multi-faceted covering the whole spectrum from economic and business needs and aspirations through the social and recreational to the inspirational and spiritual.

The starting point must be the person partaking of the experience, be they sitting, walking, cycling, driving or being driven; at work or recreation. At the functional level spaces must be legible and the progression from one space to another a logical sequence that can be undertaken with ease and pleasure. There needs to be a hierarchy of spaces and the events encountered by moving through a space which affects the person's perception. Such events could be objects, or indeed people, and need to be orchestrated to make a space become a place to be remembered. The functional level begins to create a sense of place, but it is at the aesthetic, psychological and spiritual level that the responses are really moulded. Our objective is not just to make the participant feel easy and familiar in their environment, but to make available a whole spectrum of experiences. They need to be entertained, delighted, inspired, stretched and tested for the whole life experience to be there in urban design.

RETAIL PARK, HAYES

This twenty acre development site was masterplanned for two superstores, retail units, restaurant, public housing and a local park of three acres. The problem was to provide large areas of surface parking whilst the building forms had to be of necessity separate. Linkages were created between facilities in the form of pedestrian scale tree-

lined paths. The local park is entered as an extension of the mall linking the superstores. This 'Living Park', as it is called, begins as a formal arrangement with the 'Source of Life', moving through the 'Theatre of Life' to the 'Play of Life' which is informal and natural. The concepts are experienced by the user as they move through.

RIVERSIDE PROMENADE, FULHAM

The site was a derelict wharf on the banks of the Thames with the only contextual clues being some redundant dock rails and capstans. As water was the strong element, this was focused upon by a symbolic water course running the length of the promenade, punctuated at access points by arched bridges giving a sense of arrival. Handrails and general details were nautical. The functional requirements of a safe place to walk were easily accommodated so the conceptual design attempted to tap into the participant's psyche by symbolic references, hopefully making the place a memorable experience.

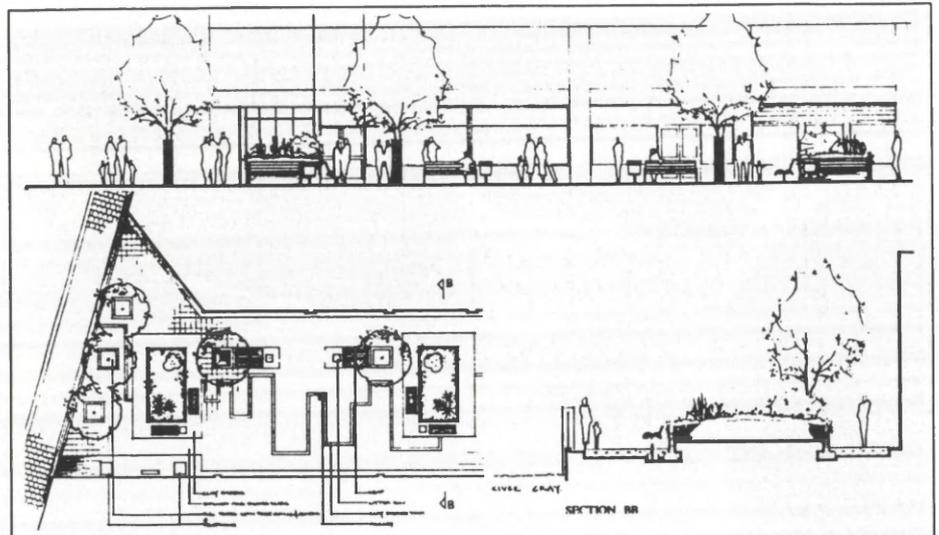
CRAYFORD TOWN CENTRE

The practice was commissioned by the London Borough of Bexley to prepare urban design proposals for the improvement and upgrading of the town centre. The approach was to introduce a new language of street furniture, paving materials and planting in order to bring a sense of identity and cohesiveness. Larger downgraded areas in both public and private ownership were chosen for more intensive development, with a paving design running throughout the town centre to give continuity and aid orientation. Colour and texture played an important part.

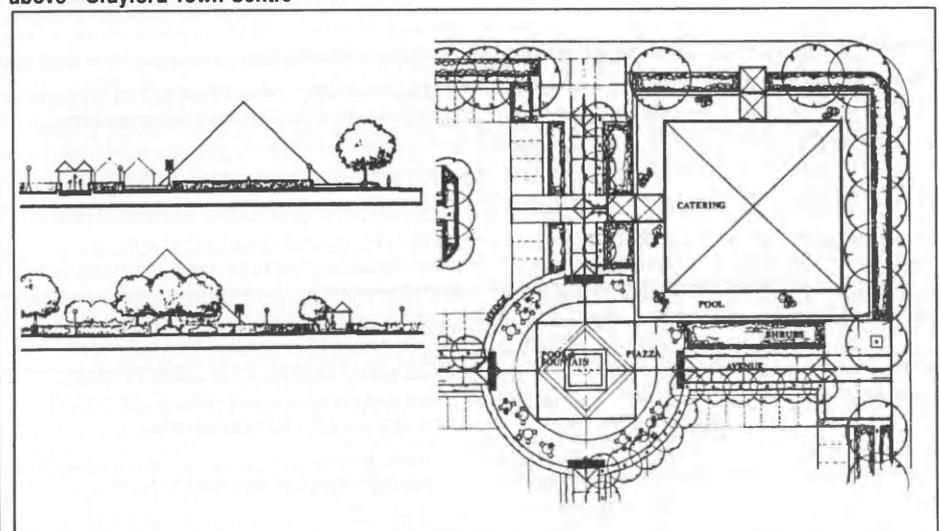
JARMAN FIELDS

This forty five acre partly landfilled site on the edge of Hemel Hempstead was masterplanned for a Hotel, Leisure Complex, Superstore, Restaurant, Offices and Athletics Track. The constraint was the space required for surface parking which restricted the area available within the site to create a landscape structure to become a place rather than a collection of buildings in a large car park. Our solution was to create a central Piazza set in front of the Restaurant, with the latter designed in a sculptural style. The individual buildings were positioned to allow pedestrian paths accentuated by formal hedges and avenues of trees to radiate out from the piazza on an axis of the building entrances. The piazza was centred on a fountain and provided the focus of activity at a pedestrian scale to give the development an identity. ■

Philip Cave Associates
5 Dryden Street, London WC2E 9NW
Tel: 071 829 8340 Fax: 071 240 5600

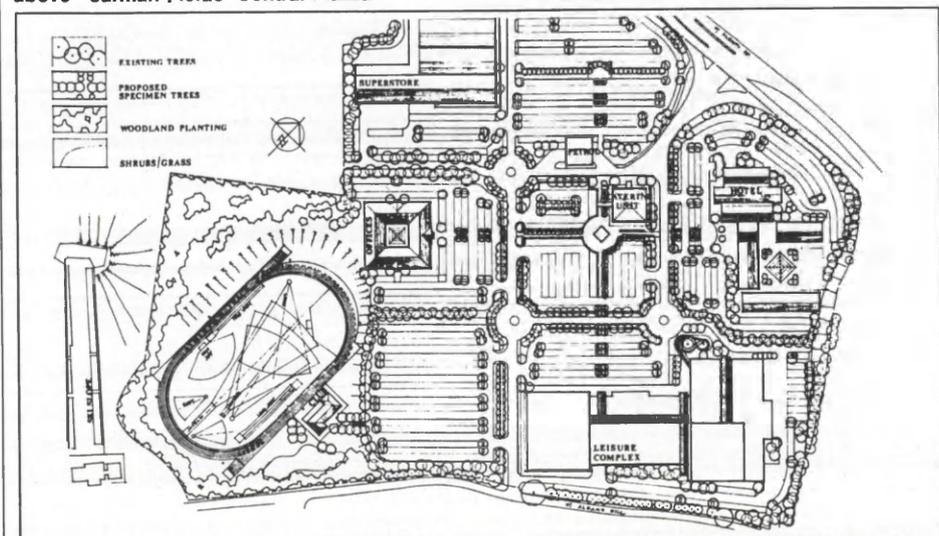


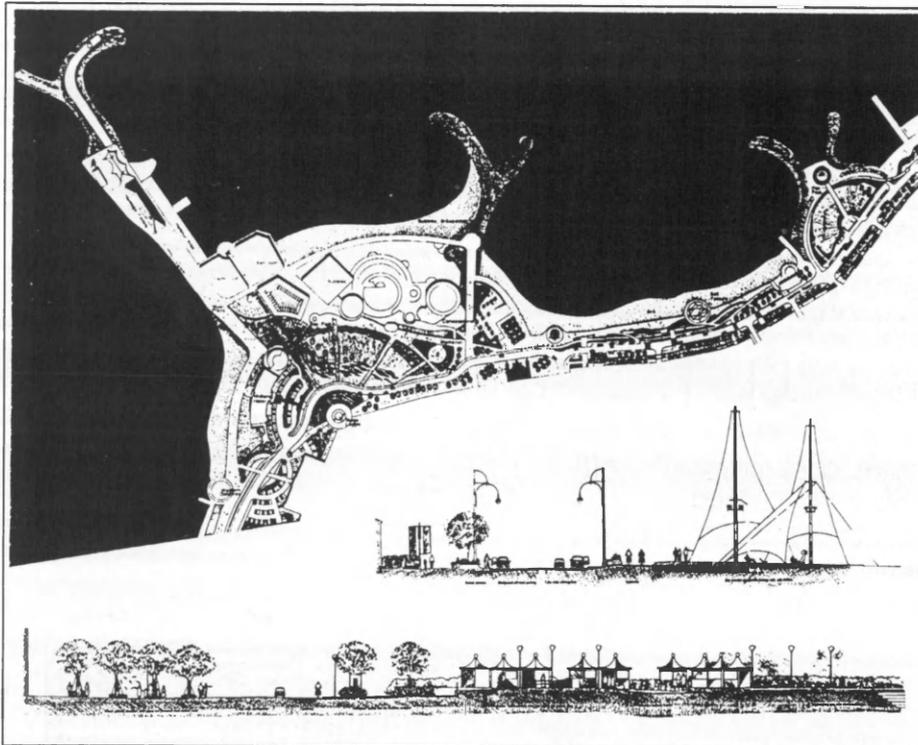
above Crayford Town Centre



above Jarman Fields Central Piazza

below Jarman Fields Master Plan

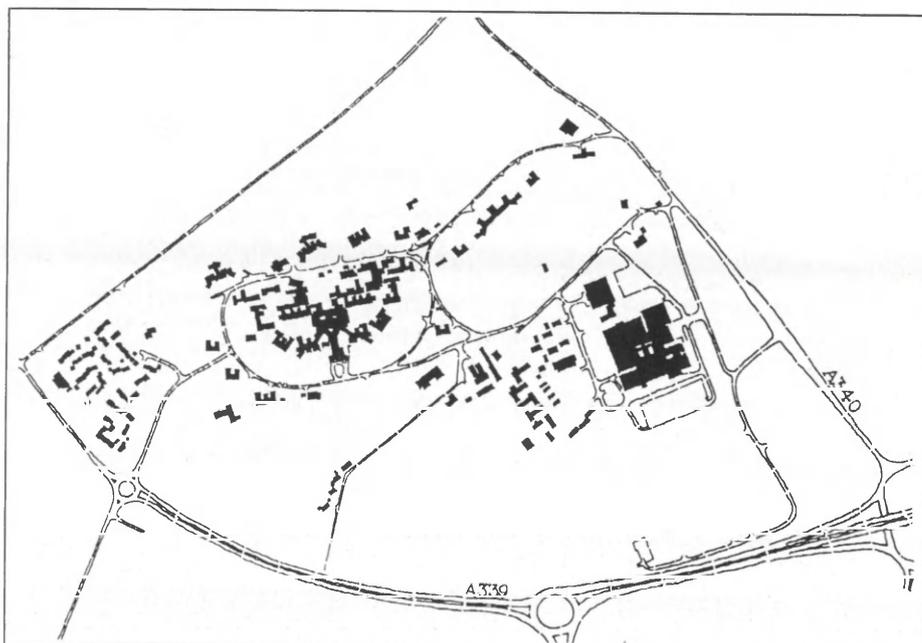




Morecambe Seafront: our design sought to integrate a large number of competing, overlapping and contiguous land uses into a coherent and unified strategy for recreation, commercial prosperity, conservation and coastal defence works. An important objective of the design was to create a strong contemporary identity for the area which would encourage a broader range of patronage

throughout the year via the creation of new recreation opportunities, social and educational facilities in a safer more congenial environment.

A major consideration of the design was that facilities were to be mutually supportive encouraging visitors to circulate between active and passive areas around the central core of a redesigned promenade.



We are an environmental consultancy that regards urban design as an integral component of virtually all the development projects with which we are involved. By combining the skills of town planners, landscape architects, urban designers and ecologists we have built up a team with an unusual blend of skills. The team is able to address the broader design aspects of all projects at their inception, whether the scheme lies at the environmental assessment end of the spectrum or raises the complexities of an inner urban site.

The Company was founded in 1985 and is based in Bournemouth and today employs 23 professional staff. The current projects range from the master planning of Bournemouth International Airport, new settlement proposals for two redundant long stay psychiatric institutions, the landscape master plan for Huddersfield University, advising on the strategic policy framework for renewable energy in Cornwall to the detailed landscape for a major office refurbishment in Croydon.

We have selected two projects to demonstrate our approach. Firstly, our winning entry to the Morecambe Seafront Competition (shown left) and secondly, a new settlement proposal near Basingstoke. Reference is also made to our winning entry for the Stella 'ideas' competition.

MORECAMBE SEAFRONT

In October 1991 we were awarded First Prize in the Morecambe Seafront Competition. This was organised by Lancaster City Council and the RIBA. Proposals were invited to revitalise central Morecambe, to enhance its position in the constellation of northern seaside resorts.

The competition required the integration of design proposals with imminent coastal defence works, to improve the overall amenities for recreation, commerce, vehicular and pedestrian circulation and parking and to encourage greater use of existing facilities.

The remodelled seafront area had to incorporate proposals for the areas surrounding a number of listed buildings, such as the Winter Gardens, Morecambe Railway station, the art deco Midland Hotel and several local monuments including a fire damaged pier and an impressive Storm Jetty which protrudes into Morecambe Bay, which is one of Europe's most important ornithological sites for migrating birds.

STELLA IDEAS COMPETITION

In May 1992 we were awarded First Prize in the RIBA/National Power Stella Ideas competition previously published in Urban Design Quarterly Issue 44. The competition brief called for ideas for the regeneration of a former power station site by the River Tyne.

PARK VILLAGE, BASINGSTOKE

Park Prewett is located on the north western edge of Basingstoke. The Hospital was built during the First World War as an Asylum. The implementation of the Government's "Care in the Community" programme will render Park Prewett redundant by the end of the 1990s.

The hospital occupies a site of 95 hectares, of which approximately 60 hectares will be available for development. The hospital is set within its own mature landscape including avenues of trees along the main roads into the site and, most notably, "the Spinney" a dense belt of beech trees, planted in 1912 as a windbreak on the perimeter of the original site. Architecturally the legacy is less distinguished. However, some parts of the hospital complex will be retained. These include a large hall, completely re-built in the 1980s and the hospital water tower which is a local landmark. Other obsolete buildings will be converted to new uses to provide historical depth and continuity.

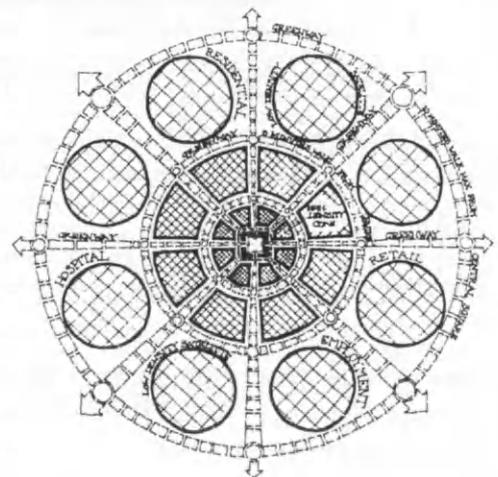
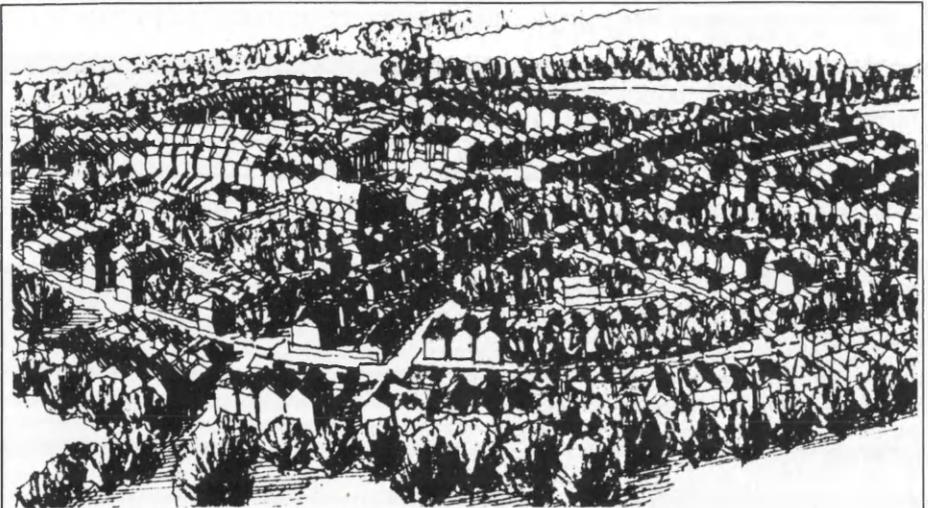
The planning context for the site is provided by the Deposit Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan which allocated Park Prewett and its grounds for 600 dwellings and associated community facilities to 2001. In the longer term the site will easily accommodate double this number of homes.

Our objective has been to create a relatively self-contained settlement with its own identity, based on a concentric "organic" model. The development pattern devised for this consists of a high density mixed use core centred on a village square fronted by public buildings, including the existing hall retained as a venue for community events.

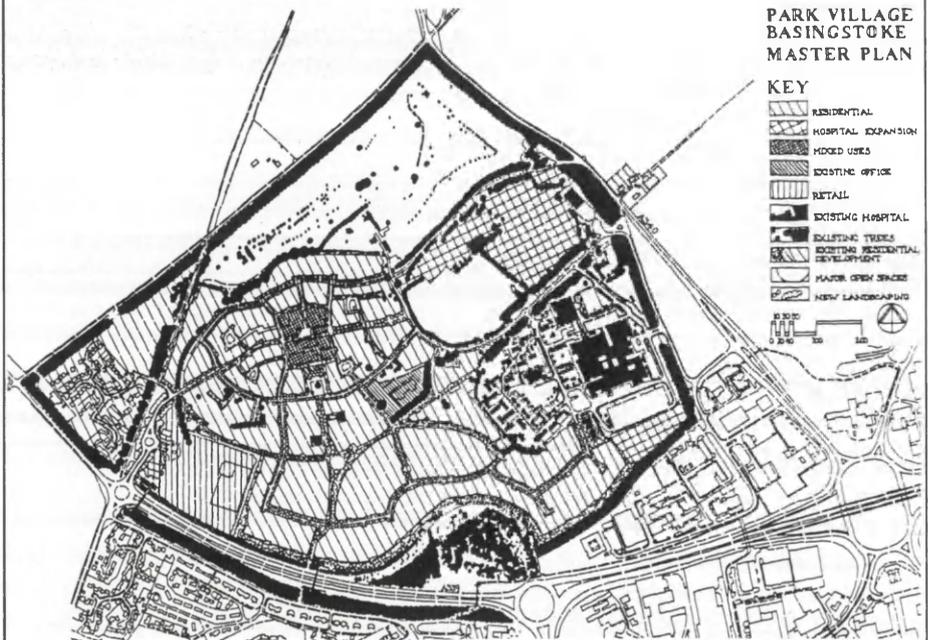
Beyond the core there are two further rings of development. The inner ring consists of high to medium density urban housing. The outer ring consists of lower density sub-urban satellites including non-residential land uses.

These three elements are connected by a matrix of concentric and radial greenways and roads. At Park Prewett this basic concept is rationalised to meet the constraints and opportunities presented by the site. The core has been placed off centre to exploit the existing buildings within the hospital complex. ■

Terence O'Rourke pic
 Everdene House
 Wessex Fields
 Deansleigh Road
 Bournemouth
 BH7 7DU
 Tel 0202 421142
 Fax 0202 430055



Park Village Basingstoke
 Left hand page: existing layout of Park Prewett Hospital
 Below: Proposed Master Plan for future development
 Right: Concentric organic model proposed for development with high density mixed use core.
 Above: sketch of urban core



PARK VILLAGE BASINGSTOKE MASTER PLAN

- KEY**
- RESIDENTIAL
 - HOSPITAL EXPANSION
 - HOODS USES
 - EXISTING OFFICE
 - RETAIL
 - EXISTING HOSPITAL
 - EXISTING TREES
 - EXISTING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
 - MAJOR OPEN SPACES
 - NEW LANDSCAPING

**DIRECTORY OF PRACTICES
OFFERING URBAN DESIGN
SERVICES AND SUBSCRIBING TO
THIS INDEX**

This directory provides a service to potential clients when they are looking for specialist professional advice on projects involving urban design and related matters and to students and professionals considering taking an urban design course.

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Fax: 091 268 5227
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Fax: 071 739 8948
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Contact: Robert MacDonald BA (Hons) DipArch (Dist) RIBA

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Brookfield
Wingfield Road
Trowbridge Wilts BA14 9EN
Tel: 0225 751166
Fax: 0225 751166
Contact: Michael Tollit

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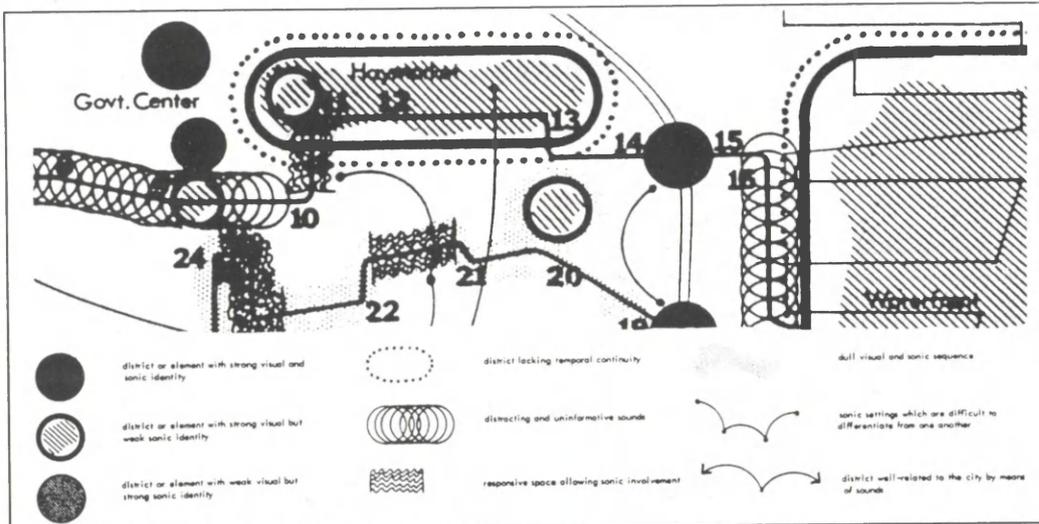
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A standard entry which consists of the name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the practice or school together with six lines describing a practice's or a course's specialisms involves a subscription of £80 covering four issues. Those wishing to be included in future issues should contact John Billingham 26 Park Road, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1DS. Tel 0235 526094.



**WU-WEI
Bob Jarvis**

They say: there is a city that is made only of light, air and time, that its beauty is unimaginable. They say: that many have tried to build such a city, but that as it is constructed it disappears.

Others say: the road to it is difficult to travel, yet others that it is a phantom, a trick of the winds.

Some reports describe it only by sounds: the cries of fish sellers echoing on stone vaults, the different footfalls of families strolling and workers shuffling to their creaking gates. Other accounts tell of a walk along a street of offices where the different papers used by lawyers, accountants and music copyists each perfumed the air. One even speaks of regulations to control the colour spectrum of light in the public squares.

Some say we all lived in this place, once. Then by building its edges, by constructing only its solid parts, by drawing only walls, pavements and monuments, we abandoned it.

At the conference in Bristol they spoke of master plans, of infrastructure design, of the line between policy and guidance, and applauded the spinning perspectives, infinite in number that could be conjured of imagined things, unaware of their world's doppelganger. The dockland presented as projects and schemes, development packages and opportunities. At dawn the dockland presented itself as still air, almost silence, and shadows.

Some see Turner as an aerial apotheosis of the Picturesque tradition, dissolving the

landscape into nothingness and light. Maybe in turning Townscapes into solid juxtapositions urban design has turned away from such possibilities of greatness. Instead of thinking about things, maybe we should consider absences; less of the dreams that money can buy (development) and more of what cannot be bought, about the light, air and time that already fill the public realm we would come to shape.

There are a few pointers. Kevin Lynch set 'ambient qualities' among the senses of a region that could be designed.¹ Even before that Michael Southworth speculated on the nature of 'sonic design' in cities spaces.² Composers like John Cage and Karl Heinz Stockhausen had experimented with musical compositions in space and everyday sounds.³ In the late 1980s Clinio Castelli in Milan developed 'Design Primario', an architecture of the senses that upturned the Renaissance (and Modernist) emphasis on form and structure, function and proportion.⁴ Last year a whole issue of *Places* was about nothing but light.⁵ The most coherent theoretical perspective is given by C. Thomas Mitchell. 'Design', he argues, has to be 'turned inside out',⁶ his examples are Chris Jones' rejection of tangible products, the performance work of Robert Wilson.

He cites Lao Tzu:

'We make doors and windows for a room; but it is the empty space that makes that room liveable.'

Thus while the tangible has advantages it is the intangible that makes it useful.⁷

One of Mitchell's examples is the work of the composer/artist Brian Eno. Trying to explain his mixed media environmental ambient works to a taxi driver, the latter concludes it's rather like fireworks!

Maybe we too need to think of fireworks. Of light and air and time. Of nothing.

References

1. Kevin Lynch, *Managing the Sense of A Region*, MIT Press, 1976.
2. Michael Southworth, *The Sonic Environment of Cities, Environment and Behaviour*, vol. 1, No. 1, 1969.
3. See: John Cage *Silence and For the Birds*, Calder and Boyars, 1970, 1975; Cott, J. *Stockhausen: Conversations with the Composer*, Paladin, 1973.
4. See: Andrea Branzi: *The Hot House*, Thames and Hudson, 1984, pp. 96-101.
5. *Places*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Fall 1992, 'Light in Place', edited by Martin Schwartz.
6. C. Thomas Mitchell, *Redefining Designing*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993.
7. Lao Tzu: *Tao-Teh Ching XI*

Acknowledgements

This is part of a project 'If town planning is an art... started on a sabbatical term at South Bank University, and includes material presented as 'Melting Moments' at Newcastle University School of Architecture. Wu-Wei ('doing nothing') is a central Taoist concept.

Illustration

Part of the 'Soundscape' of Boston (Southworth, 1969).

URBAN DESIGN GROUP

forum for architects, town planners, engineers & landscape architects

The Urban Design Group, founded fifteen years ago, has been established to provide high standards of performance and inter-professional cooperation in planning, architecture, urban design, and other related disciplines; and to educate the relevant professions and the public in matters relating to urban design. Membership is made up of architects, planners, landscape architects, engineers, surveyors, historians, lawyers, photographers, in fact anyone interested in the quality of our built environment. Local authorities, practices, and universities are also members. The U.D.G. runs a series of public lectures, workshops and other events which are valid for C.P.D. The Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture has attracted such speakers as Leon Krier, Peter Hall, Sir Roy Strong, and Sir Philip Dowson. Annual study tours are also organised. The U.D.G. publishes a quarterly magazine dealing with urban design issues and an Urban Design Source Book which identifies urban design practices, courses and members. The U.D.G. is working closely with the R.T.P.I.

to raise the profile of urban design. It has reciprocal membership with a number of complementary organisations including Vision for London, and the British Urban Regeneration Association (B.U.R.A.). The U.D.G. has set out an agenda aimed at explaining urban design and how, using urban design principles, the quality of the environment can be raised. These principles are encapsulated in the U.D.G.s "The Good City". The Urban Design Group continues to grow. Membership is national, and each region has its own convenor, who organises local events. The subscription is £25 per year with a concessionary rate for students of £14. If you would like more information on the U.D.G. please contact:

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URBAN DESIGN GROUP STUDY TOUR

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The last booking date is Friday 25th March 1994.