

# UDG UPDATE

## Chairman's Thoughts

It is two years since the UDG members elected me as Chair and so at the AGM this June I will formally hand over to a new Chair. Two years is really not long enough to do all the things that any new Chair wants to do. One doesn't have long enough to redecorate one's office let alone set and implement policy, so to speak. It is just as well then that the Chair doesn't actually have an office or a salary and can't implement anything without the support of the Executive Committee.

The role of chair doesn't involve dinners, honours or supermarket openings. It is about dedication, responsibility and above all enthusiasm for the Group and the subject matter. The role as Chair is collaborative, rather like an Olympic relay cycle team where the group can travel faster than the individual if everyone takes a turn up

front. So it is time to hand over my stint in lead to someone with fresh legs.

The Executive and the Group as a whole give legitimacy to the person at the helm, therefore this is a call for deepening the knowledge and experience of the Group by seeking to elect a new more diverse Executive. I feel sure that the new Chair will be keen to see new faces at the first meeting of the new Executive.

I'm extremely grateful to the current Executive and to Rob, Grace, Susie and John Billingham who set the scene for me, but I'm equally grateful to Robert and Louise who have now embraced their new roles at the UDG and supported me in navigating the UDG through my time in the hot seat. I'm optimistic about the future. The membership is growing continuously, there is a great support team in place and there are

new initiatives which stand a chance of implementation. The UDG is firmly focused on the future.

I've benefitted from the wisdom of the past Chair, Barry Sellers, and I shall support the next Chair with the same degree of sympathy for the role. I will continue to be deeply involved in the UDG whether on the Executive or not and I hope that my dedication, enthusiasm and sense of responsibility has made a difference to the UDG, its profile and its future.

See you soon.

**Ben van Bruggen**

## The UDG's Director tells what's going on

There are three important developments to report for this edition of *Urban Design*. Firstly, *Design & Access Statements Explained*, the UDG's latest publication is now available to buy. The new guide produced by a team led by Rob Cowan explains what design and access statements are for, how to prepare them, and how to use them. It encourages good practice and innovation rather than prescribing a standardised tick-box approach. There is a Cowan cartoon on every other page, that not only makes the document a very easy read, but serves to educate the reader without them realising. It is a refreshing approach that perhaps if followed by government might lead to a range of policy documents that people not only read and understand, but also practice. Please check the UDG website for purchase details.

For your diary there are two items: Urban Design Week and the UDG Annual Conference. Urban Design Week this year will be held between 15 September to 22 September. It is an opportunity for all of us who care about urban life to get together with others and organise events, celebrations, seminars and exhibitions. Please think about

getting involved. Urban Design Week is held annually and parallels European Mobility Week <http://www.mobilityweek.eu/>, which includes European Car Free Day. Former UDG chairman Barry Sellers has been working on a handbook for running activities in Urban Design Week. He has produced a comprehensive list of topics that can be tackled by individuals, small groups or large organisations and local authorities; with tasks ranging from simple activities that can be completed in an afternoon to major projects and campaigns that will change the face of town.

The Urban Design Group Annual Conference is taking place in Liverpool on 10th/11th October under the theme Urban Connectivity. The UDG North West team including Chris Standish of Elevate East Lancashire and Annie Atkins of Renew are putting together a programme that will cover connections at the national and regional level through to connections with the local economy and between people. The conference venue is the Empire Theatre, Liverpool, which, in true estate agent's language, enjoys stunning views over the newly restored St George's Hall. There is a programme of workshops and visits that

will enable us to learn from Liverpool and learn from each other. And lest we forget that Liverpool's existence is based on the age of sail, it is expected that at least one of the visits will be to Paradise Street, which is famous for being a piece of privatised public realm (but see p. 24-25), and infamous as the setting for the sea shanty Blow the man down which catalogues the downfall of a sailor who commits an offence under Section 28 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847. No one who visits Liverpool goes away without having been touched by its power. Join us in Liverpool and understand what makes cities great.

**Robert Huxford**

URBAN  
DESIGN  
GROUP

# DIARY OF EVENTS

Unless otherwise indicated, all LONDON events are held at The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ at 6.30 pm. All tickets can be purchased at the door from 6.00pm: £5.00 non-members, £2.00 members, £1.00 students

## WEDNESDAY 9TH JULY 2008

### REINVENTING SEASIDE TOWNS

For over two centuries, the British sea-side enjoyed unparalleled tourism-based prosperity with pleasure piers, donkey rides and sticks of rock becoming a much-loved part of our popular culture. However, the advent of cheap flights and package holidays abroad brought an end to the golden age of the British seaside, leaving deserted beaches, empty theatres and hardship for the once thriving coastal resorts.

Yet now concerted efforts are being made to redress this decline and recapture the former vibrancy of our seaside towns. At July's UDG event, a panel of experts from different aspects of coastal regeneration - including representatives from GVA Grimley and RTKL - will discuss their various considerations and strategies for reinventing and revitalising the Great British seaside for the 21st century.

## WEDNESDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2008

### FRANCIS TIBBALDS PRIZE

This special event is the culmination of the new awards scheme introduced by Urban Design last year. Each of the eight short-listed practices featured in the journal over the past year will give a succinct summary of their entry. Janet Tibbalds will then announce which practice has been voted by the membership as having submitted the best project of the 2007 entries. As part of the evening, George Ferguson will provide his Reflections on Urban Design.

## FRIDAY 10TH - SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2008

### UDG ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008

This year the Urban Design Group Annual Conference will take place in Liverpool on 10th/11th October. The theme will be Urban Connectivity. The UDG North West team, including Chris Standish of Elevate East Lancashire and Annie Atkins of Renew, are putting together a programme of speakers and workshops that will cover connections at national and regional levels through to connections within the local economy and between people.

The conference will be held at Liverpool's Empire Theatre which enjoys stunning panoramic views over the civic heart of the city including the newly restored St George's Hall and the Walker Art Gallery. There will also be opportunities to explore what is on offer in the capital of culture and how urban designers can learn from it. Keep an eye on the email newsletter for further details.

## WEDNESDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2008

### DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS

Following the recent publication of the UDG's Design and Access Statements Explained, author and former UDG director Rob Cowan will discuss best practice with regard to design and access statements and how they should be approached in a practical context. Don't miss this opportunity to hear probably Britain's most experienced urban design trainer and author of some of the most influential urban design guidance.

## Urban Design Group

**CHAIRMAN** Ben van Bruggen

**PATRONS** Alan Baxter, Tom Bloxham, Sir Terry Farrell, Colin Fudge, Nicky Gavron, Dickon Robinson, Les Sparks, John Worthington

**DIRECTOR** Robert Huxford

**OFFICE** 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ, Tel 020 7250 0872/0892

Email [admin@udg.org.uk](mailto:admin@udg.org.uk)

**WEBSITE** [www.udg.org.uk](http://www.udg.org.uk)

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**COVER** Salthouse Dock, Liverpool, Photograph John Benbow

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**CURRENT SUBSCRIPTIONS** *Urban Design* is free to Urban Design Group members who also receive newsletters and the *Directory*

**ANNUAL RATES** Individuals £40 Students £20

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**LOCAL AUTHORITIES** £100 (Two copies of *Urban Design*)

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# CREATIVE LIVERPOOL



Following the issue on Creative Cities, *Urban Design* dedicates this one to Liverpool, a city that could be given as an example of these and as such, has been designated

European Capital of Culture for 2008. This label is only as meaningful and fruitful, as the particular city decides to make it. In past years the designations have made a real and lasting impact in some of the cities, Glasgow and Lille spring to mind, and none at all in others. The articles in this issue's topic show examples of what is being done in Liverpool but also ask questions about wider issues affecting the city; some of the contributors show a healthy scepticism about the long time effect of the designation. On the other hand some of the articles give an image of a vital city where innovation is being developed almost against the odds. Members of the UDG will have a chance to check for themselves by attending the Conference which will take place in Liverpool in October.

The theme of creativity is continued with a reflective article on Singapore, questioning whether creativity can be imposed from the top or results from a slow evolution, growing organically. In a different context, one of our viewpoint authors also counsels slowness, equating food and design. More than ever, reflection and creativity will probably be essential for urban designers during the coming period of economic downturn, in order to avoid the abandonment of principles long fought for and gained during the boom years.

Readers will have noticed that with issue 106 we started a new feature, the *Urban Design* interview. The purpose of this is two-fold: to show what urban designers who are not regularly in the limelight, think and do and how their careers have evolved; and to involve UDG members who may not have much of an opportunity to get involved with the group. We would be pleased to hear from anyone, and particularly those away from the South-East of England, who feel they have something to contribute and would like to be interviewed.

## SEBASTIAN LOEW

### Urban Design

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

John Billingham, Matthew Carmona, Tim Catchpole, Alex Cochrane, Richard Cole, Alastair Donald, Liezel Kruger, Sebastian Loew, Malcolm Moor, Judith Ryser, Louise Thomas

#### EDITORS

Sebastian Loew (this issue) and Louise Thomas  
sebastianloew@btinternet.com  
louisethomas@tdrc.co.uk

#### BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

Richard Cole

#### DESIGN

trockenbrot (Claudia Schenk and Anja Sicka)

#### ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES

Urban Design Group  
70 Cowcross Street  
London EC1M 6EJ  
Email admin@udg.org.uk

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## A Walk in the Park: Designing Green Space

### THE GALLERY, LONDON 12 MARCH 2008

The *language of design* emerged as a fascinating discussion point on an evening that saw a packed audience at The Gallery. This thought provoking evening began with an introduction to the Spaceshaper initiative, given by Brian Quinn of CABE Space.

Described as a 'facilitated questionnaire about space', Spaceshaper creates a context within which user groups and professionals alike can quickly develop a dialogue based around the on-site assessment of a given space and its appropriateness for its community. Spanning a media arc of clipboards and wellies to digital desktop analysis, the results of the process are represented as usefully comparable graphic representations of the questionnaire results. Importantly though, the process is promoted not as a scientific, objective one but as a subjective analysis that bespeaks the intuitive responses of the user.

Simon Munro of Kingston University's School of Landscape Architecture then took up this theme with a perusal through some of his students' work. The term *analysis paralysis* was introduced to describe the tendency of some students to be overwhelmed by the sheer ease with which digital information about a site or a design brief could be accessed - and then represented. The result can be a media overload where the dead hand

of objective analysis and linear decision-making smothered more intuitive design responses. In preference, our speaker reflected on an interactive project that students had carried out with fine art students in Brighton, where an intuitive and iterative dialogue had led to a creative and dynamic design process - and more meaningful results.

The final speaker of the evening was Henk Bouwman of the Dutch practice HKB, who stimulated first thoughts of the language of design with a story of why the act of placemaking has such a profoundly important role in the Dutch psyche. As was made pointedly clear by the speaker, there is simply no equivalent word in English that means - as *polder* does to the Dutch - the literal creation of a place.

A famously watery landscape, most of the Netherlands is land physically claimed from the sea and drained to provide settlements. The polders that were created to engineer the foundations of this new landscape became the veritable solder of society during the Dutch Golden Age. So essential were they to providing the land that drove the economy, that an entire society readjusted itself around the need to deliver them. Eventually it became a virtual model for interdisciplinary dialogue concerning the design and management of landscape, communities,



and cities; and an entirely new verb in the language - to polder.

This notion of placemaking through dialogue resonated with the Spaceshaper initiative, and we were immediately led to reflect on just how established and ingrained it is in our culture, in contrast to such a close neighbour. A quick tour through some of HKB's projects confirmed the other key thread of the evening. When *poldering*, the designer knows that their role in the process is to make the right design decisions, be they functional, or be they poetic.

The evening concluded with some fascinating discussion points emerging from the audience, mostly focussed on drawing together the twin notions of intuition and dialogue in design. Debate about whether here, somewhere, there might lay an undiscovered language of design, continued into the night.

Alex Cochrane

## Francis Tibbalds Prize

The *URBAN DESIGN* journal introduced Project Awards for urban design work last year and the first Francis Tibbalds award winning scheme voted by UDG members will be announced in September. The prize being provided by the Francis Tibbalds Trust consists of £1000, to fund two members of the winning office (or offices) to participate in an UDG study tour or an alternative study tour to be agreed, in the following year. The objectives of the award scheme are to attract high quality case studies for publication in the journal and to give recognition to urban design work particularly at the project stage.

Following a vote by the membership for the best short-listed project, the prize will be awarded at the evening event at The Gallery on Wednesday 17th September. Eight projects were short-listed by the judges from 21 entries, and these have appeared in the last four issues of the journal. They will also be available on the UDG website.

The short-listed projects are:

### IN ISSUE 104

- 1 Holt Town Waterfront, Manchester by EDAW
- 2 Grahame Park, London by Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects and Levitt Bernstein Associates

### IN ISSUE 105

- 3 Urridaholt, Iceland by John Thompson & Partners
- 4 Merton Rise, Basingstoke by Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design

### IN ISSUE 106

- 5 Telford Millennium Community, by Jon Rowland Urban Design
- 6 Scotswood Expo, Newcastle upon Tyne by Urban Initiatives

### IN ISSUE 107

- 7 Leicester Public Realm Strategy by Burns & Nice
- 8 Leamouth London by Skidmore Owings & Merrill

The voting will be arranged through the UDG website by email responses and all individual members of the UDG will have the opportunity to vote. It should be emphasized that the entry conditions included the following criteria:

'The *URBAN DESIGN* journal is looking for projects that are a contribution to urban design thought and ideas. All entries should describe the principles on which the project is based, the process - indicating how the project has been developed and lessons learned - indicating conclusions that have been drawn. The submissions should concentrate on urban design issues.

It is hoped to get a good response from individual members so that the result will be an appropriate reflection of the quality of the project assessed by urban design professionals.'

John Billingham

## Talking Cities : Sunand Prasad

ANNUAL URBAN LECTURE SERIES, BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL, 18 FEBRUARY 2008



The RIBA President, Sunand Prasad's talk raised great expectation and anticipation from the audience. An urbane speaker, Prasad spoke initially of contrasts between a North Indian domestic architecture, (Delhi's quarter built by the Mughal leader Shah Jahan), the additional quarter designed by Lutyens in 1911, and the later private villas built now by the wealthy suburban elite.

The *haveli* or courtyard house was discussed: its closed façade and open interior was illustrated as a successful urban model which provides for a high density population, yet retains privacy and family intimacy. Today this is

contrasted by 'the car and the gate', the stand alone villa in enclosed grounds. This building type now stretches around the world, indistinguishable to a people or geography and an individualized, atomized, approach to life.

Our appetite whetted, we then jumped to Birmingham and its heroic deeds and aspirations for a post war-weary New World Utopia. One aspect of connection was for a return to risk within the public realm, in the sense of allowing the public a common-sense approach to safety measures, one of self-control and self policing, not to create something too tidied or mannered, retaining rough edges containing an active energy.

An important question posed by Prasad was of city design and who takes part in this creative process; what are our ambitions when faced with so many serious challenges and consequences for all? Are we moving again to city as city state, competing with other world cities, for world markets? Prasad called for trust in the civic local authorities mentioning their importance in mending an important part of democracy. This is very pertinent for Britain's second city: we must ask ourselves what do we want, and

what are our common goals and values? As the Victorian industrial canal cities looked to Venice for inspiration and affirmation, will Birmingham today look at other cities as models of excellence? Shah Jahan's Delhi for example?

Simply put, Can our UK cities benefit from the knowledge of previous city practice and workings? How do we marry or mend the old and the new? Which successful urban heritage can be of benefit to our main streets, enabling activity and vibrant participation, creativity and harmonious living for all? Can we draw upon these rich and varied heritages, full of practicality and wisdom; of life lived, extended families celebrated, trade enhanced and wealth distributed?

As Wellington, the 'Iron Duke' commented, 'Those who govern least, govern best; and those that govern best, govern not at all', sentiments to which Shah Jahan would concur. Perhaps this is one of the keys needed for our own time; of renewed local governance where we as citizens across all professions and skills actively participate and regulate ourselves. A new Utopia?... let's hope so.

Mahmud Manning

## VISIONING THE CITY: 20 years on from the Highbury Initiative

AUSTIN COURT, BIRMINGHAM, 14 APRIL 2008



The Highbury Initiative, a weekend workshop held in Birmingham in March 1988, became a celebrated model of how a city could develop a new vision for its centre. Neither a small exclusive group, nor a democratic but diffuse public consultation exercise, the Highbury Initiative policies were hammered out over three days by about eighty invited

participants from the city, from Britain and from abroad; people from design, planning, politics, business, and the arts.

A conference held in April 2008 marked the 20th anniversary of the Highbury Initiative, looking back at the event and evaluating it, looking forward at what was coming next, and also comparing Birmingham's experience in creating a vision for its future with that of other British cities. Joe Holyoak, course director of MA Urban Design at Birmingham City University, and a participant in 1988, brought together some of the organisers and participants from the Highbury initiative, the city's current chief planner, and speakers from Manchester and Sheffield.

Sir Albert Bore, Leader of the Labour group in the City Council, now not in power, but in 1988 the influential Chair of the Economic Development Committee, set the scene. He reminded us that it was not the ugly and car-

dominated city centre itself that generated Highbury, but the economic crisis, caused by the collapse of its traditional industrial and manufacturing base, that the city found itself in. In order to build a new economy that could compete with other, more attractive cities, the city had also to reinvent its physical shape.

John Worthington of DEGW and Nicholas Falk of Urbed, the two main organisers of the Highbury Initiative, described both the organisation of the weekend and the policies which it produced. Worthington confirmed Sir Albert's economic perspective, pointing out that at a Government level, the event was driven by the Department of Trade and Industry, not the Department of the Environment. The medium of discussion was design, but design as a way of thinking, not as an end in itself.

The beginning of the process was empirical – going out and experiencing the city, and in particular listening to

and learning from the assessments of the visitors. Some were memorable; one recalled by Falk was the engineer Peter Rice's shocked reaction to using a pedestrian subway at night. The policies agreed on Sunday at Highbury and implemented since were radical but now seem quite conventional – removing the ring road, pedestrianising streets, making quarter plans, and creating urban design guidance.

Clive Dutton, Director of Planning and Regeneration, outlined Birmingham's new expansive plans, currently being produced by Urban Initiatives, and linked them back to the Highbury policies. Lawrence Revill of David Lock Associates gave an outsider's view. He characterised the city as healthier than Manchester, but still favouring the big and brassy, and still suffering from inferiority complex.

Andy Topley of Creative Sheffield and David Rudlin of Urbed gave fascinating accounts of two northern cities' different approaches to urban reinvention. Manchester's route in particular has been strikingly different; Rudlin characterised it as no coherent vision, but energised by local culture, and of course an IRA bomb.

Mahmud Manning

## An Agenda for Urban Design

### THE GALLERY, LONDON 16 APRIL 2008

In no small part due to the efforts of pressure groups like the Urban Design Group, over the past ten or so years, urban design is now a mainstream part of urban policy in Britain. Given this success, it is fitting that UDG members should now be contemplating what the future agenda for urban design should be. This was the focus of the discussion held at Cowcross Street on 16 April. Led by short presentations from several speakers. The discussion ranged across varying topics of current or potential concern to urban designers.

Matthew Johnson, from the London Community Recycling Network, kicked off with a perspective on waste and how to reduce it. Around 20% of the traffic on our streets is carrying waste around (with a large proportion of this relating to construction and buildings, in one form or another). Recycling is a key sustainability issue, but also an urban design one. Communities need to be involved in managing it and recycling takes up space so needs to be considered as part of any integrated urban design framework for an area.

Duncan Ecob spoke about Ecotowns – the government's latest wheeze for producing low carbon housing on a grand scale: brand new settlements of from 5 to 20,000 dwellings. 15 locations have been short-listed, with urban extensions and greenfield development on disused airfields being to the fore.

As might be expected, a number of those involved in the discussion that followed remain to be convinced or outright sceptics. Transport concerns

were raised, along with fears about the social engineering implications.

On the whole, urban design hitched its cart to the urban renaissance and for sustainability buffs, new towns are something of a red herring compared to dealing with the existing urban building stock (where 99% of us will continue to live and work). On top of this, government housing aspirations for delivering sustainable new housing hinge completely on delivery by a mass house-building industry that is rapidly shutting up its shutters in the face of collapsing house prices.

Following up on the discussion of sustainable communities, John Saunders, raised ongoing issues of skills shortages and capacity shortfalls in local authorities, with many duplicating policy work and/or being too small to hold on to professionals.

Barry Sellers followed up with an update on UDG efforts to establish 'recognised practitioner' status for urban designers. Though most of those present indicated support for this agenda, this remains something of a minefield where accreditation is implied.

The final discussion ranged over the issue of urban transport with concerns about the complexity of the planning system, the Government's lack of commitment to investment in sustainable infrastructure and the pressing need for transport policy to give greater attention to the sustainability agenda. Urban design as an integrated set of skills was seen as key to taking this forward.



In all then, a scattered but related set of themes in search of a big idea to bring it all together. It seems the UDG is in search of the Urban Renaissance for the twenty first century, but perhaps we don't need to look so far. The Urban Renaissance is unfinished business as far as the greater part of our cities in the UK (the still neglected inner cities around the revitalised commercial cores) are concerned.

As far as cities in the developing world it hasn't even begun. This was a point raised toward the end of the evening when Geoff Payne noted that 1 billion of the world's population lives in slums, and this was predicted to rise to 2 billion by 2030. Low income communities need professional help and urban designers have the skills to work with them. Here really was new ground for urban design to tread.

Tony Lloyd-Jones

## The Creative City: A critical Appreciation

THE GALLERY, LONDON, 15 MAY 2008



Mayors around the world who have bought into the conventional creative city concept have bought a load of “snake-oil”, according to LSE’s Andy Pratt, speaking at this UDG event. Focussing on the philosophies of Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Andy warned that the concept of the creative city that had been

advocated was seductive, but flawed. The notion was that to have a thriving city economy you need people who are in the knowledge industries, who can make your city compete in a global market. In particular you need to attract CEOs and get them locate their businesses in your city. How do you do this? By providing a sophisticated, cultured environment. And adding to the seductiveness is a feel-good factor for the middle class, that under-appreciated group who will be called upon valiantly to bring their enterprise and energy to bear, and in so doing bring economic redemption. What mayor with an instinct for self-preservation and self-promotion would not embrace the creative city concept?

This is place-marketing, said Andy. It is one city pitted against another, and the one that provides the best environment and the best lifestyle wins. There is no net wealth creation, only wealth shuffling from one city to another. Above all it fails to recognise that the creative industry is a producer; a generator of income in its own right. Films, games and entertainment are major export industries. Few people realise the importance of the film and special effects industry to the UK, but its presence means that there is a powerful synergising cluster of skills and knowledge that have established a world lead.

Creative city policies need to be directed at fostering the creative industries directly for reasons of production, not merely for consumption. Andy Pratt thought that cities need to be designed and managed to encourage informal contact. Urban design and building design need to be tailored to the business needs of the creative industries. Direct contact with consumers was important for some sectors of the industry, and this meant that city centre locations were essential, out of town business units could consign creativity to the grave.

Andy’s arguments were convincing: we do need to create environments which encourage the creative industries. But it is ironic that a segment of the creative industry is successfully creating virtual environments that rival the ones created by urban designers and where many people chose to spend significant parts of their real lives. Maybe we should be inviting the designers of *Second Life* or the *Sims* to join the Urban Design Group and introducing them to the principles of urban design. We might even see a convivial version of *Grand Theft Auto*, where crime rates plummet thanks to the careful designing in of overlooking, activity and natural surveillance in the virtual streets.

Robert Huxford

## Eine Bodenseereise

UDG STUDY TOUR 10 – 18 MAY 2008



On Saturday 10th May fifty UDG members, friends and spouses set off by Eurostar from the new St. Pancras International Station for Lake Constance. This forty-mile long lake lies at the confluence of Germany, Switzerland and Austria, and is the focus of many

interesting historic towns. The tour was, however, a contrast between old and new, as we also spent a day visiting recent sustainable buildings in the Vorarlberg province of Austria, and concluded with a look at Zürich’s regenerated former western industrial quarter.

A spell of settled weather during the first part of the week made for pleasant cruising by lake steamer from one historic town to another. Our first port of call was the town of Schaffhausen, which is located in a Swiss enclave on the north bank of the Rhine. This may be why the town was bombed by the Americans twice during the Second World War, either through confusion or perhaps because local firms had been coerced into producing munitions for surrounding Nazi Germany - the facts are not clear. Despite this the town is well-preserved,

with a medieval plan based on two intersecting main streets and a wealth of substantial Renaissance and Rococo merchants’ houses, some displaying elaborate narrative frescos on their facades. However, the most distinctive feature of the town is the many oriel windows which not only ornament the facades but also provide residents with a view up and down the street. The town is dominated by the Munot, a round fortress on a commanding hill, and also has a Romanesque minster with a cloister and gardens.

A two-hour cruise on the Upper Rhine brought us to Stein-am-Rhein, a smaller town in another Swiss enclave on the north bank. The town is exquisite, based on a serpentine main street between gate towers lined with substantial fresco-fronted houses with oriels. From here on the Upper Rhine

widens out into the Untersee arm of Lake Constance. Konstanz, our next stop, is a German enclave on the south bank of the lake. A larger and more prosperous city, it retains its medieval layout, including narrow lanes, gate towers, market places and a minster which affords good views from its tower though its interior is without interest. Eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings have taken their place alongside surrounding older buildings in the streetscape. Being on the same bank as Switzerland the town escaped allied bombing. Its main claim to fame was the papal conclave of 1414-18 which ended the Great Schism and during which the Bohemian reformer Jan Hus was burnt at the stake. The Konzilgebäude, a medieval warehouse, in which the conclave took place, dominates the harbour front and is today a posh restaurant. Another feature on the harbour is Peter Lenk's revolving sculpture, Imperia (1996) which highlights the role of courtesans at the time of the conclave.

Peter Lenk's sculptures, both whimsical and ironic, are amongst the most successful and accessible works of public art today. Benefiting from superb locations, they make reference to sometimes obscure historical events, and are both thought-provoking and controversial. Berlingen, a much smaller German town, has a Lenk sculpture of a horseman crossing the frozen lake supported by ageing water nymphs. It also has an impressive late-medieval minster and town hall and an unusual fortified perimeter using natural ravines which descend to the lake.

Meersburg's harbour is also graced by a Peter Lenk sculpture, this time depicting an eighteenth-century exorcist casting out devils. Passing through a gated lower town by the harbour, a steep and twisting street leads up to a market place, from which a series of varied-sized squares opens like the rooms of a house. One is fronted by the baroque New Palace whose esplanade enjoys panoramic views across the lake to the Alps, whilst a lane accesses via a drawbridge the medieval Old Castle, which dominates the urban ensemble and was home to the romantic poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff.

A voyage along the greater part of the lake brought us to the island town of Lindau. The harbour frontage, its entrance framed by a lighthouse and a giant 19th century stone lion marking the southern extremity of the German Reich, is today something of a resort,

with smart hotels and open-air cafes. The railway comes on to the island and its terminus is right on the harbour, presumably at one time the jumping off point for Switzerland and Italy. Behind, however, is a medieval street layout focussing on a market square fronted by the grandiose baroque Cavazzen-haus and two medieval churches, on the broad main street, fronted by a variety of merchants' houses of every period, and on the lavishly frescoed Renaissance town hall.

At the extremity of the lake is Bregenz in Austria, a town that has been spoiled by ill-considered development, but which has an interesting, tucked-away upper town. From here we made a coach tour of buildings in the Vorarlberg province dating from the 1990s onward. Over the last twenty years the province has gained a reputation for being at the forefront of sustainable design using timber construction and, often, weatherboarded cladding. We looked at a 1997 three-storey housing scheme using heat pumps at Dornbirn, a business park at Lustenau, an extension to a civic theatre at Götzis, a secondary school at Fraxern, and a hospital admin block and indoor swimming pool at Dornbirn. All these buildings are simple, flat-roofed structures. Some complement and some contrast with their surroundings. There is, however, the start of a recognition in Vorarlberg that to deal with development pressures resulting from its favourable central location in Europe a wider conception of sustainable development is necessary than just concentrating on environmentally friendly construction.

We ended our tour in Zürich, which is a beautiful and ancient city on both banks of the River Limmat at its exit from the Lake of Zürich. Downstream of the city centre is the former industrial area of Zürich West. Many of the former engineering halls and sheds have been kept and put to new uses such as retail, workshops, theatres and apartments. The area has an alternative reputation due to some of the temporary uses that moved in from the 1980s onwards. There is a multi-storey barrier housing scheme between the river and a major traffic artery, and squares have been formed by demolition of some surviving industrial buildings. Overall, however, we felt that retention of the existing layout in almost its entirety had resulted in a formless plan with a chaotic mix of pedestrian and vehicular circulation routes.

Alan Stones



**Opposite page** Town Hall, Stein-am-Rhein  
**Top** Lindau, Main Street  
**Middle** Konstanz, Peter Lenk's revolving sculpture, Imperia  
**Above** Sustainable design, indoor pool, Dornbirn, Austria

## The Summer Is Here: Time To Set Off To The Seaside?



**Top** Cleveleys coastal protection, Lancashire  
**Above** National Maritime Museum, Falmouth, Cornwall

How many of us will be taking our holidays in England this year? What can English seaside resorts offer to an ever more demanding visitor? Why have so many people turned their backs on the English seaside in favour of guaranteed sunshine abroad?

The story goes that many of our seaside resorts have experienced a decline in their fortunes over recent decades. Weakening economies, resulting from changes in tourism and issues relating to housing and transport, have combined with a lack of investment in the public realm. People feel our seaside resorts are not what they used to be.

But now CABE – the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment – is encouraging seaside resorts throughout England to come up with creative ideas to put culture and design at the heart of their renaissance. With £45 million from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport over the next

three years, CABE is working with local authorities in deprived coastal communities to invest in projects that will see more visitors staying longer and spending more money, and also improve quality of life for residents.

We want to tell a new story about our seaside towns. A story that values these resorts for the fantastic quality of life that they can offer to both residents and visitors. Our story celebrates the unique natural environment of our coast, and recognises the often neglected but superb built heritage as an invaluable asset. It puts culture centre stage.

The programme is called Sea Change and we aim to secure this sea change in our resorts, some of the most distinctive and loved places in England. CABE believes that public investment in cultural projects and public spaces can give a huge kick start to local regeneration. Sea Change will invest in projects that complement and enhance wider regeneration programmes.

Of course culture is important to all places, but this programme is directed specifically at seaside resorts. In 2001, the English Tourism Council said: 'Seaside resorts have made an enormous contribution to the cultural identity of England and contain some of the finest examples of our built heritage. This is overlooked rather than promoted.' In 2003 CABE and English Heritage published *Shifting Sands* which demonstrated that high-quality buildings and open spaces can radically enhance the ways that historic seaside resorts are recapturing the special appeal that they held for previous generations. Sea Change draws on the lessons of *Shifting Sands* and, following the Communities and Local Government Committee Report on Coastal Towns in 2006/07, represents a positive response to the issues identified in seaside resorts.

High-quality, inspiring and innovative buildings, spaces and places can make a huge difference to the way that historic seaside resorts develop, change and reinvent themselves. They can provide a new cultural heart and renewed pride for residents, bringing in new visitors and revenue.

Recognising the impact of climate change on patterns of behaviour, Sea Change also offers new opportunities to make English seaside towns increasingly attractive for visitors, encouraging greater numbers of people to head to the coast for their holidays and short breaks instead of flying abroad.

CABE leads the Sea Change Partnership which includes Arts Council England, Big Lottery Fund, English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, and the seven coastal regional development agencies.

In April 2008 we launched the programme by announcing investment to three towns: Blackpool, Dover and Torbay. Blackpool is planning a new public space at the foot of Blackpool Tower which will provide an exciting focus for dance and other events. Dover wants to make visits to the Castle even more enjoyable and also create new connections between the Castle, the town and the port to help visitors make the most of their stay. Torbay is seeking investment to renew the seafront in the resorts of Brixham, Paignton and Torquay, and also improve opportunities for the creative industries to thrive in the area.

Other local authorities have applied for funding and more will do so over the coming years. The money will be used for projects such as improving high streets, promenades, harbours or gardens; constructing new buildings or converting existing ones for use as cultural centres; or enhancing existing galleries, concert halls, dance spaces, theatres and arts centres.

All the projects will come with match funding, so that we make the most of this £45 million. It may be a drop in the ocean compared to the need for investment in our seaside resorts, but it's a start, and one that we hope will demonstrate the ambition of these towns to regenerate through culture, and make the case for further funding in the future. Sea Change also aims to add value to the cultural regeneration of seaside resorts through a learning programme for those involved which will include exploring case studies to see what works and what doesn't.

Sea Change will run for three years and the next wave of funding opens for application in autumn 2008. Together with other programmes to support coastal regeneration, it will mean that by 2011 many of England's much-loved seaside towns should be well on the way to becoming the delightful, attractive and thriving places they once were.

Have you packed your bucket and spade yet?

**Richard Russell, project manager,  
Sea Change, CABE**  
[www.cabe.org.uk/seachange](http://www.cabe.org.uk/seachange)

## The Urban Design Interview

### Brian Quinn answers UD questions

#### 1. What is your current job and how long have you been there?

I've been working as a senior programme officer in CABA Space since August 2007.

#### 2. Can you describe the path that you followed to become an urban designer and what motivated you?

I've been relatively unusual in making a career change from high finance in the City into urban design. In Chicago after my last City job I saw the book *Suburban Nation* by Plater-Zyberk, Duany and Speck. I picked it up and read it from cover to cover. It was a real lightbulb moment: I realised that people were employed to design urban areas and that there was a field of urban design. A few months later, I met David Wilson, then events officer of the UDG, and came to my first Wednesday lecture. From there everything snowballed; by September 2004 I had enrolled on a full-time MA in Urban Design at University of Westminster. I graduated in late 2005 and headed out to get some experience under my belt.

While I had had plenty of intellectual challenge, I wanted a field where I was more interested in the subject matter and where there was more tangible impact. Talking about streets and parks and walking around real schemes is a lot more interesting than life insurance sales regulation. I'd always been interested in cities and urban form since reading *Geography* in Oxford. So I like to think there was some logic to my route into urban design.

#### 3. What do you find exciting about your work?

What is really great about my role at CABA is the variety of issues and projects I get involved in. This keeps the job interesting and exposes me to a wide range of organisations and experts. I've been involved in a project assessing how to enhance the capacity of community groups to improve local public spaces. Local people often have some of the most insightful perspectives on how spaces might be improved.

#### 4. What do you think are the most important skills of an urban designer?

An ability to listen and gain the respect of members of the community in explaining designs, and how they may evolve over time. British people can be very sceptical of the main tenets of current urban design thinking, particularly around density and parking provision. The majority of the British population have spent their formative

lives in relatively low density suburbs with driveways and front and back gardens. We need to be able to articulate better how higher density schemes work, especially for families and for those with concerns about parking and privacy. Schemes such as *Accordia* in Cambridge offer fresh ideas on what near city centre living can be like but that is not necessarily directly applicable in other towns. We must be robust in designing genuinely for the local context, perhaps using lower densities for family housing in conjunction with higher densities in the same scheme.

Also planning for flexibility is something that seems to be rare and often unresolved in many schemes, especially retail led schemes in town centres. We must avoid over planning or we will create as inflexible a design as many of the failed 1960s schemes.

#### 5. What would you like to be doing in ten years' time?

I'd like to be investigating consumer trends towards modern housing developments and see how that changes as decent sized high quality schemes become more commonplace. Wouldn't it be great if British people wanted to live in a modern house on a development that follows good urban design principles just as they aspire to own a stylish new car or the latest gadget?

#### 6. As an urban designer, do you have a role model?

I like reading Sir Peter Hall's commentaries and the way he argues that the built environment sector must work at a suitably macro strategic level. His writings on the potential to reshaping/using the greenbelt need a wider audience although it will be a hard sell given how the words greenbelt and concreting over appear in almost any media article about urban expansion. Also I valued the work of the late Hans Monderman. To me it was a high water mark to get street design discussed on *Newsnight* with Jeremy Paxman. We need more people who can get engaged with the mass media.

#### 7. If you were to recommend an urban design scheme or study (past or present) for an award, what would you chose?

I tend to admire schemes that have an identity and sense of place – Edinburgh's *New Town* for example. I wish we could build today a scheme with the same coherence and sense of scale and flexibility.



#### 8. Where is your favourite town or city and why?

I have spent a lot of time in US cities and enjoy Boston and San Francisco – both places that have distinctive neighbourhoods and vibrant streetscapes.

#### 9. Where is your most hated place and why?

It is hard to pick without naming and shaming but I do lament in many towns with significant brownfield sites, an easy acceptance of generic retail big boxes and large roundabouts/distributor roads. Short-term regeneration will have lasting negative effects on the chances of a genuine sense of place developing long term. I've seen this in Doncaster and in smaller towns like Thetford. We should demand a higher standard of masterplanning and ensure that the road infrastructure is at a scale that allows a more viable streetscape to develop long term.

#### 10. What advice would you give to UD readers?

To come along to UDG events of course and also to be prepared to present work in public – get involved in the debate about your local area. There is a continuing need to keep communicating to the outside world that urban design exists as a vocation and has relevance to the man in the street.

#### 11. What should the Urban Design Group be doing now or in the future?

I would like to see the UDG taking a stronger role in the mainstream media: urban designers being interviewed on news programmes and in current affairs discussions. We should deliver key messages to a *Grand Designs* type audience.

#### 12. Finally, who would you like to see interviewed by UD?

Following on from the above I'd like some of the property programme experts talking about the value of good design and exploring the potential to get British people fired up about it – how about Kirsty Allsop or Sarah Beeny?



## Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance, part 2: Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and Leeds

Michael Hebbert reports on the second seminar of the ESRC series

The story so far: in the last issue John Punter described the first of four two-day ESRC-funded seminars comparing and contrasting sixteen narratives of design-led regeneration since 1999. The opening meeting last November discussed Cardiff, Birmingham, Nottingham and Bristol. (See UD issue 106) The follow-up in January 2008 covered Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds and Sheffield. By the time you read this article the caravan will have rolled on to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Belfast and the series ends with four London boroughs.

Here's the drill. Each city gets half a day. An opening presentation from the local authority is followed by an overview from an urban design academic. In the fullness of time these academic critiques will develop into chapters of a book edited by Punter for Routledge. Then come presentations from a developer or architect, a development controller, and an independent commentator, for example a CABE enabler, then the floor is thrown open for further contributions from an invited audience of knowledgeable participants. Within the common format each session takes its own direction. Clone-town Britain may rule the High Street but city personalities are as individualistic as ever and their regeneration narratives contain as much difference as similarity.

### MANCHESTER'S EARLY START

Tom Russell, formerly of the New East Manchester Urban Regeneration Company, set the tone for the home city session by focussing on inner city neighbourhoods: the rebirth of the city centre is a fact so well established it can get taken for granted. Mancunian speakers found it hard to keep to the post-1999 time-frame of the seminar because their key changes had already happened before the Urban Task Force set to work, and indeed helped shape its recommendations - Richard Rogers may not have had Mancunian connections but Jon Rouse, David Lunts, Anne Power, Peter Hall, Martin Crookston, all did.

So this renaissance story began more than twenty years back when the city's Labour group broke from the New Left, accepted rate-capping, and started to build strategic alliances with business to transform Manchester into a modern, internationally-oriented, European regional capital. Design awareness and street architecture were part of the package. The régime has kept a pretty consistent focus through all the shifts in the property cycle, national politics and funding regimes, and the upheaval of an IRA bomb. Design standards devised for the regeneration of Hulme in 1992 went on to form the basis not just for Ancoats and New East Manchester but also for the city-wide



**Opposite page** Manchester Exchange Square

**Above** Hulme Regeneration Ltd - the celebrated master plan (Manchester City Council)

**Top right** Grey Street, Newcastle (picture by Ali Madanipour)

**Right** Blue Carpet, Newcastle (picture by Ali Madanipour)



guidelines that became incorporated, with some dilution, into the new Local Development Framework. Manchester's place-making has been based on the application of simple rules about street-making, block form, frontage and corners, applied as much through partnership and developer negotiation as through control. However, the principles have not evolved with the market. Density and height policy have been kept off-limits, and Manchester has little to show in terms of area characterisation. Developers scaled up for the buy-to-let boom with little regard to design quality or space standards. The legacy looks more dubious by the day.

### NEWCASTLE'S TRANSFORMATION

The fact that almost all the contributors to the Manchester case worked or had worked with the City Council gave a strong impression of policy continuity and shared direction. Newcastle has had a more rumbustuous renaissance decade, with shifts of political control and executives coming and going 'in a flurry of powerpoint management'. Nevertheless this second case also offered a good demonstration of the Urban Task Force hypothesis about urbanism and regeneration. As explained by Harvey Emms, the city's Director of Housing Planning and Transportation, Newcastle struggles to contain the exuberance of streets that were only recently deserted after working hours. Ali Madanipour, Professor of Urban Design at the University of Newcastle, sketched the main lines of action: the turn to the river initiated by the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation in the 1980s, the great transformation of historic core Grainger Town (particular praise here for English Heritage's decisive intervention when the integrity of Grey Street was threatened by a tower), ingenious if partial remediation of highway severances, and excellent public realm with some real artistic flair. Today's political leadership has come to realise what a formidable

collective asset their townscape is, and even property agents have at last discovered the potential they'd been missing in character buildings and upper floors.

Looking ahead, we discussed Newcastle's strategy to work more closely with Gateshead across the Tyne, where major regeneration projects are under way, and to spread the regeneration effect eastwards over the motorway and west along the Tyne Gorge. A Scotswood Expo is being launched as a Geordie IBA, developing innovative approaches to high quality family housing through an Area Action Plan funded by capital receipts from city land sales. And out on the western edge, at Great Park, Newcastle is working with CABE, Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey to create that rare thing in the UK, a sustainable city extension designed around public transport connections.

### CITY CENTRE'S SUCCESS IN SHEFFIELD

Sheffield's story of design-led regeneration was a high point of the series. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner had called the city a 'miserable disappointment'. It was heavily blitzed and lacks major buildings and civic spaces, its centre is strung along a single interminable shopping street and its inner ring road was a design disaster. After traumatic manufacturing losses, the city's World Student Games of 1990 were a brave but financially ruinous experiment in post-industrial regeneration. In the words of City Development Manager Simon Ogden 'Sheffield had the hardest road to travel'.

But Sheffield also had many assets: Objective One funding from the EU, inspirational leadership from Sir Bob Kerslake as chief executive 1986-2008, the Sheffield One Urban Regeneration Company, and Creative Sheffield, a regeneration partnership between the city, Yorkshire Forward and English Partnerships. There's a strong in-house design team within the Town Hall and also a well-established Urban



Design Review Panel chaired by architect John Pringle. Advisory master plans by Koetter Kim and Allies & Morrison have laid the basis for a broadly consistent city centre strategy, and roster of architects currently working in the city centre includes O'Donnell and Tuomey, Foreign Office Architects and Sauerbruch & Hutton. Last year's flooding has prompted innovative thinking about environmental planning: the culverted River Sheaf and Porter Brook are being restored to daylight, there's a strategy to open up full public access to the River Don, and an interesting initiative for a River Stewardship Company to work with riparian owners and the water authority for sustainable management of its watercourses.

The most remarkable achievements are in the city centre: from the railway station at the bottom of the valley right up to the heights of the university, public realm improvements and new developments combine to make a sequence of memorably attractive places out of spaces that were previously disconnected and inhospitable. These are the results of the 1996 Heart of the City project, precursor of the current round of regeneration. The inner ring road has been tamed and Sheffield Hallam University's humdrum collection of buildings stitched into a stylish urban campus linked to the exquisite art collections and palm courts of the timber-framed Winter Gardens and Millennium Gallery - a real jewel! The enhanced setting has enhanced commercial values so developers are now willing to invest in quality architecture - it's the virtuous circle urban designers dream of. The sense of innovation extends into the retail core, where a major new extension is being developed by Hammersons to a BDP master plan. It's no conventional mall but a quarter of streets and urban blocks with eight teams of architects at work on separate sites.

In a generally appreciative critique, Philip Booth of Sheffield University noted that the Hammerson scheme has involved some

disputable demolition. Controversy also surrounds losses of low rent industrial spaces, including historic steel and cutlery-making workshop types as development pressure spreads out from the centre. We were reminded that manufacturing is still an important economic sector for Sheffield with space requirements - including expansion requirements - that need Use Class protection. Nor have planners and elected members been much more successful than their neighbours in shaping the urban apartment boom. But there was no disputing John Pringle's verdict that 'Sheffield sets a fantastic example to the rest of the UK'.

#### CONTROVERSY IN LEEDS

Leeds, the final case in the ESRC-CABE seminar, has never enjoyed the same access to public regeneration funds as Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle. It's also the city with most to show in the way of explicit urban design policies. Chief Planner Philip Crabtree introduced its 10 key design initiatives, which include a street design guide, a tall buildings policy, a city centre design strategy, and extensive use of briefs and design statements for individual schemes, and repeated visioning exercises about the big picture. John Thorp in his role as Civic Architect has greatly encouraged this culture of design awareness, and he delighted the ESRC-CABE seminar by talking through some of the distinctive multi-coloured graphic diagrams by which he stimulates public debate and awareness of place, space and scale. In her academic critique of the city's design achievements Rachael Unsworth of Leeds University praised Thorp's creative vision and his 'dynamic patience' in engaging with very strong and sustained developer pressure. The apparatus of design policy has been most effective in protecting the heritage assets and townscape character of the city centre and helping the development industry bring back life to its street frontages and mixed-use buildings. 800 years on from the granting of its borough



**Opposite page** Sheffield's Winter Gardens (picture by Philip Booth)  
**Above** Rim Dynamics, concept diagram by John Thorp, Leeds Civic Architect, Leeds City Council

charter, burgrave plots survive in Leeds and are being celebrated as part of the character and distinctiveness that make for present economic success.

But most of the Leeds session was spent exploring the limitations of design policy during the buy-to-let apartment boom. Try as it might the city has been no more successful than laissez-faire Manchester in securing design quality, greenspace and a balance of dwelling types. Irena Bauman (Bauman Lyons Architects) contributed a hard-hitting critique of the legacy of shoddy, over-dense, under-managed apartment blocks, built without environmental performance standards or waste disposal, located inaccessibly and gated from the street. Her pitiless visual images contrasted the hype of the agents with the dreary mediocrity of the product. This critique stimulated intense discussion - developers responded with counter-examples of schemes with high BREEAM ratings, the Leeds Civic Trust pointed to the lack of consistent urban leadership within the Council, the Leeds Property Forum replied that leadership was there but not always in public view, and the bar owner and developer Peter Connelly cautioned planners for draining the quality of schemes through Section 106 requirements - there were too many snouts in the trough.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the two-day seminar John Punter mused on its lessons. For all there is to admire in the regenerated centres of the four city centres their greatest challenge is elsewhere, in the disconnected and depopulating spaces of the middle ring, and the outer suburbs beyond where urban design has so far brought little more than conservation area designations. To attain the 2021 goals of the Urban Task Force British cities will need to think their design on a strategic scale. Every German city has a city-wide master plan: why none in Manchester,

Newcastle, Leeds or Sheffield? There are other troubling gaps. Designed regeneration is being too narrowly defined. Environmental performance standards need to be in the policy frame and so must density - regeneration projects of four to five hundred dwellings per hectare are intolerable. The push for high-quality urbanism too easily becomes the pull of bling or what's known in Newcastle as 'the Bilbo effect'.

A seminar which had shown civic design at its best was also a reminder of the structural weakness of British civic life, the absence of fiscal autonomy, localities' subordination to the centre's constantly-shifting policy fads, the limited scope for municipal enterprise. The issue of institutional capacity cuts to the heart of urban design, because the skills base has shifted to the consultancies, depleting local authority teams. Several of the creative, talented public-sector officers who presented the four cities at the ESRC-CABE seminar are nearing or past retirement: who will replace them ?

**Michael Hebbert, Professor of Town Planning, University of Manchester**



## 'Slow' Design Pays

Jeremy Caulton calls for more considered design processes

Fast foods seem to be taking over the world and look where it is getting us! We need more Rick Steins in the design world to go back to the timeless ways of designing our cities both in product and process - for 'slow' design can create the urban quality we all so desire. Slow design is not a speed thing, it is about understanding - getting to know what's best for the city, designing beyond the red line, literally getting your hands dirty, taking a layered approach and allowing for inclusive working. It may manifest itself as speed, but by its very nature it is a slower more considered approach.

You will always get designers, mainly architects, who will push the bounds of city designs - mainly in the direction needed to accommodate their building forms. There is nothing wrong with contemporary building design per se; in fact many new buildings are admirable, but some forms determine and affect our city fabric badly even though many of their designers will call themselves urbanists. Moreover, there are those who 'buy' contemporary building design, like certain public sector bodies who believe that things must move on and change, and so import new approaches and new city designs. The result? Great patterns on the paper and some interesting contemporary architecture, but do they offer us the quality, urban environments that we seek? (I emphasise both words here).

Similarly in large housing developments, driven by profit for the volume house builders, quantity comes before quality. There may be aspirations to deliver sustainable developments but this simply refers to the house and not the urban environment in which it sits.

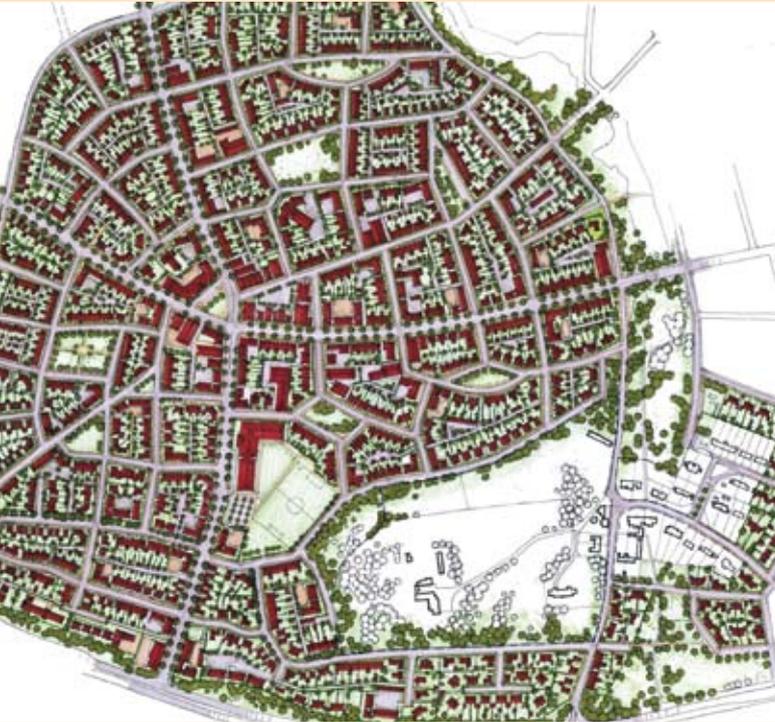
Why do we produce designs for city growth and alien urban forms with no relationship to their context at all? There is much talk about living streets and walkable mixed use neighbourhoods, but the designs delivered for new urban growth areas belie these simple design principles, often undermined by imposing an architectural language or profit-driven design solution incapable of meeting these aspirations. These are the not isolated incremental infill developments, but larger developments and urban extensions, like the Thames Gateway. The main reason for this, it would seem, is the desperate need for quick solutions

to deliver large bits of city, to meet burgeoning growth and the resultant demand. Of course the blame must also lie with those procuring these designs and their belief that what is being produced is new and different and therefore good: the Emperor's new clothes perhaps?

Over ten years ago I wrote in this journal (Issue 56) about the soft city (after Jonathan Raban's lovely book), and it appears that it is time to do it again. This time though, it would be responding to the anti-urbanist culture metered out by big architecture practices who love to produce plans that are either unreadable or merely make nice patterns. They may offer great apartments; but pity about the lifeless urbanism. Is it the computer that has enabled us to mindlessly design and paste large chunks of city to accommodate thousands of residents, or designers trying to out do their contemporaries? Or is it a lack of understanding of how cities work; or a desire to create works of art that bear no relationship to the context within which it will sit? I suspect all have had their part to play. The city as a result is not growing in the traditional sense, but has huge alien areas bolted onto it as each designer tries to stamp their mark. The days of doing what is best for the city seems to have been outdone by designers doing what is best for designers. For example, try working inclusively in a multi-design team, as I would advocate to most clients, and it soon becomes apparent. In fact I'm often asked 'if there are two design practices on the team, what's our role?'

While urbanists try desperately to hang on to what has worked for centuries, some local authorities and developers seem in need of quick fixes and opt for the bright, shiny new solutions. The result may be contemporary cutting-edge architecture, but the urban environments that they are creating are generally anti-urban with desolate streets and factory finishes.

In the name of progress they forget that 'The city is a chaos of details...., an encyclopaedia, through which the user is constantly coming up against the absolute mysteriousness of other people's reasons' (Raban). Today unfortunately we tread the road of the quick fix, with fast design and quick delivery. The desire for a quick fix may



be the main reason, but it is the technology and profit that deliver it, both playing their part. The developer will always try to cram as many one and two-bedroom apartments into a scheme as he can, regardless of the local authority's need for family accommodation. Similarly, the white heat of technology through the use of the computer and its programmes removes the humanity of our urban environments. Of course, we all need computers in this business but not at the expense of our urban environments. Bottom drawer masterplans and technological crutches are increasingly resulting in urban environments that are designed by one and built by one, instead of being designed by many and built by many.

I would like to advocate that we as designers should quite simply give more time and effort to our process. The Urban Task Force raised awareness of what urbanists had long been advocating – Raban's soft city – that character in the built environment arises from people, places and their activities, and so urbanists seek to create a sense of place. This is about places that are understandable, comfortable, safe, accessible and adaptable, offering choice – a feeling of community. This could be done if designers took time in city design and went back to basics, breaking down the design into neighbourhoods, the neighbourhood into quarters, the quarters into blocks and the blocks into plots – of various sizes and shapes. Sounds simple? It is, but why isn't it a process used by many city designers today? Perhaps it is easier to design a single contemporary apartment block or terraced housing form, and repeat it across the site. This sounds all too familiar to some, I bet.

Local distinctiveness takes time, and a layered approach is needed; an iterative process breaking the new design down into parts, and parts of parts. Codes today try to establish what these parts should be for the future developer, but if the plan was such that its resultant form enabled Raban's city, then they would only need to be simple guides rather than prescriptive diktats. If Rick Stein were an urban designer, he'd be a new urbanist, knowing that slow design pays in the end.

Jeremy Caulton, urban designer and planner, is a director with iCube Ltd.

Top, from left to right A neighbourhood design – Strategic Structure, Town form, master concept, master working drawing  
Above Masterplan

The days of doing what is best for the city seems to have been outdone by designers doing what is best for designers



## Can Creative Cities Be Planned?

Perspectives from one degree north of the equator by Lily Kong

Driven by global economic competition, many countries have increasingly focused on building knowledge-based economies, shifting away from their former dependence on industry based economies. This is grounded in the belief that being competitive requires new ideas and knowledge, as well as new forms of organisation and management.

How innovative a country, city or region is depends on its 'milieux of innovation' – 'the social, institutional, organisational, economic and territorial structures which create the conditions for the continuous generation of synergy' (Castells and Hall, 1994:9).

Amongst the strategies that have been pursued to develop "for milieux of innovation" is one that focuses on developing endogenous capacity in innovative activities. This has been encouraged through research collaborations and associations between universities and industries, the promotion of high tech business start-ups, and the development of creative industries. In particular, the clustering of activities such as scientific research, design, art, and business start-ups is often encouraged and facilitated. The phenomenon is described by a plethora of terms such as technopoles, incubators, technology centres, business parks, science parks, and creative clusters, each with varied shades of meaning.

In many cities, clustering of creative activity has become a priority strategy for building creative cities and knowledge economies. The underlying assumption in establishing such clusters is that technological innovation stems from scientific research, and that developments such as science parks will provide the catalytic incubator environment to transform creative scientific knowledge production into commercially viable innovations (Westhead, 1997).

### SINGAPORE'S ONE-NORTH

Singapore is no different. It began with developing the Singapore Science Park in 1984. The idea of a Science Hub was germinated in the 1990s, which eventually became One-North, a 200ha-site to accommodate the aspirations of a knowledge-based economy. Located in the south-west of Singapore, One-North aimed at providing an intellectually stimulating environment for innovation and creativity. Its name refers to the location of Singapore one degree north of the equator. Spearheaded by the JTC Corporation, an organisation which used to build factories and industrial estates, the master planner and developer was not just providing the physical infrastructure but aimed to create a thriving community, a place 'for the meeting of minds, where researchers, innovators, business angels, venture capitalists, corporate lawyers and other technopreneurs inspire and are inspired', where they may work, live, play and learn together.

One-North encompasses a range of iconic places, Biopolis and Fusionopolis, dedicated to research. The former contains imposing buildings which accommodate bioscience research institutes and biotech companies with names such as Genome, Chromos and Helix. The latter will contain IT and media-related research institutes and companies. Education is provided by the French business school INSEAD, the Ministry of Education, the British-based Tanglin Trust School for 3 to 18 year olds, and Singapore's Nanyang Technological University alumni clubhouse.

One-North includes a technopreneur park, Phase Z.Ro, a collection of brightly painted containers converted into incubators for IT related start-up companies. Food and drink spaces have been introduced to



**Opposite page** Zaha Hadid's Biopolis overview  
**Above** Biopolis space during the day

## clustering of creative activity has become a priority strategy for building creative cities and knowledge economies

fuel the social and recreational opportunities and to create a buzz, in converted old colonial-style houses in Rochester Park next to a clubhouse established in 1982 by the Ministry of Defence for the Singapore Armed Forces. The Colonial Bar is another site of social interaction offering food and drinks in an almost bucolic setting in a style reminiscent of past times.

Two existing residential estates were included in the planning area. Wessex Estate is located in undulating greenery and contains semi-detached houses and blocks of three-storey walk-up apartments, all in a characteristic black-and-white style of Singapore's colonial past. The blocks share one feature – they are each named after places such as Aden, Gaza, Gallipoli and Khartoum, all of which refer to military feats of British history (de Koninck, 2003). These dwellings are used as homes, work places or combined work living spaces. Residents are engaged in the creative/cultural industries - photographers, artists, designers, architects and the like - and the gradual influx of the creative class gave the area its current character of a cultural/artistic cluster. When the landlord JTC Corporation noticed the growing agglomeration, it decided to support and develop this trend, actively seeking to fill vacant units with occupants from the creative industries and even converting apartments into lofts. Nepal Hill, the other close-knit residential community does not have the same presence of the creative class.

### ORGANIC GROWTH

Just how possible is it to plan and develop a creative cluster and a creative city? To answer this question requires that we understand first

how creative activity can be enhanced in clusters. Some scholars and policy makers believe that clusters encourage creativity and develop innovation because they facilitate institutional thickness (high level of synergy and interaction among individual units within a cluster), allow for embeddedness in wider social relations, create conditions for tacit understanding of local context and practices, and help to nurture trust within relational networks. However, empirical evidence does not necessarily substantiate this.

One-North demonstrates that trust, embeddedness, institutional thickness, tacit understanding etc come with a sense of community, place and identity which develop best organically over time. Facilitating these relationships requires the organic growth of intangible relations between people, and between people and place. One-North is a fairly recent development launched in 2001 and it may be premature to pass judgement on the success of this project. It is to JTC Corporation's credit that it has been interested in systematic and independent research to understand what has been accomplished and what else needs to be done, not so much in terms of physical infrastructure, but in terms of developing a sense of place, nurturing a sense of community, and stimulating a sense of creativity.

Based on a survey and in depth interviews conducted at One-North in 2007, the challenges of planning and developing a creative cluster, let alone a creative city, have become apparent. Many of One-North's constituents recognise the distinctive characteristics of the place. They value the natural environment, the presence of historic buildings and the stimulating landmarks which act as places of interaction and relaxation. They are conducive for interpersonal engagement to



**Left** Singapore unplanned  
**Below** Singapore life  
**Opposite page** Singapore forest



the empirical evidence is a reminder that developing a cluster and a community requires more than drawing perimeters around existing and new structures

stimulate innovative ideas among scientists who also appreciate the new, well-equipped facilities.

However, from an overall perspective, a sense of community has not yet emerged. Perception and experience of One-North is very uneven among its constituents. New sites developed in One-North - Biopolis, One-North Park, NTU @one-north, Phase Z.Ro and Fusionopolis - are more readily recognised as part of it than existing sites (Nepal Hill, Wessex Estate, Temasek Club, Tanglin Trust School and ColBar). Thus the idea of the entire area, old and new, as one coherent integrated entity is not apparent to many. Nor are the origin of One-North, its name, responsibility for it, and other basic facts well known. Without such basic knowledge, it is not surprising that there is no clear sense of identity, territorial community or imagined community.

#### DEVELOPING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

In addition, even though there are distinct areas within one-north designated for various purposes, the vision of a work-live-play-learn integration within one-north has yet to be achieved. The vast majority of its constituents works there but live in other parts of Singapore. Outside work, One-North does not feature prominently in other daily pursuits of its constituents. The most common impression of One-North is that it is allocated to science and technology, impressive and dynamic, and has good potential for future growth. For the resident population, the impression of One-North has a negative inflection of disruption, noise, messiness borne by the huge amount of ongoing construction work.

None of this is to say that there is no sense of identity and community, or that these affective senses cannot develop. Currently there exists a fragmented sense of community and identity within pockets of One-North, especially Nepal Hill and Wessex Estate where social interaction within each estate is extremely frequent, warm and even intimate. If given a choice many would want to continue living there. However, the empirical evidence is a reminder that developing a cluster and a community requires more than drawing perimeters around existing and new structures, over more than three years (or six from the launch of the project).

The experience of One-North suggests that there are some specific challenges of building a sense of identity and community. Some can be addressed easily, others require a larger contextual evaluation and strategy, yet others require a fundamental re-examination of assumptions.

#### MANAGEMENT AND TENURE

While basic facilities and estate management issues are not usually associated with more intangible higher order objectives of community building, identity construction and tacit understanding, they have an impact on the affective relationships with place, and the development of trust, as they form part of daily practical realities. Numerous issues concerning facilities and estate management which bother residents (eg. consistent unresponsiveness to clearing debris and repeated inability to install broadband effectively) detract from the sense of pride and identity, and erode the relationship of trust between resident



and landlord to the extent that constituents may feel disenfranchised and unheeded. Such problems warrant due diligence from the managing agents who need to deal effectively with these fundamental obstacles to building good relationships with constituents and their sense of pride for their place.

The resolution of other challenges requires a larger context of planning and coordination. An example is the great uncertainty over future tenures at Wessex Estate and Nepal Hill. Leases of no more than two or three years have created a sense of insecurity and a threat to the existence of precisely those communities which display the greatest sense of identity, belonging and attachment. They have the greatest possibilities to stimulate new ideas, explore, collaborate and experiment due to their enhanced sense of embeddedness, trust, and tacit understanding. However, the uncertainties of tenure impose constraints on investment and discourage emotional attachment to people and place.

#### **DOUBTS**

A third type of challenge is more fundamental. If the work-live-play-learn environment is envisaged as a holistic environment that stimulates close interactions, deep ties, trust and embeddedness, the question is why the overall One-North environment is not attracting more people. Is Singapore just too small for this to be necessary? Is it more attractive to dine in Holland Village, a hop and skip away? Is it the case that people may prefer to live away from their work environment? Are family ties in other parts of the island (representing domestic help

and familial support) more important in deciding where to live than the location of the workplace? Fundamentally therefore, is the vision of a work-live-play-learn environment built on an assumption which does not apply to a small (40 km x 25 km) island-city-state like Singapore? The work-live-play-learn environment is intended to help cultivate deep bonds and relationships. Will such a holistic environment ever work in tiny Singapore? Tackling this issue head on may well help to address the fundamental question of what One-North stands for.

*Lily Kong, sociologist at Singapore University*

# LIVERPOOL: EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2008



This issue of *Urban Design* takes a special look at urban place making in Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008. According to *Vogue* fashion magazine, it's all happening in Liverpool cool! The *Sunday Times* says its 'glam up north'; populated by up for it, shopping- and grooming-mad women, Liverpool is having a real fashion moment. Over 350 events covering music, visual arts, performing arts, street theatre, architecture, sports and heritage: a real celebration of culture for everyone.

Highlights include The Turner Prize, Gustav Klimt Exhibition, Sir Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, The Tall Ships Race, Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic, The 5th International

Biennial, The Stirling Prize, Le Corbusier in the Metropolitan Cathedral Crypt and the Mtv Europe Music Awards.

This unique *Urban Design* topic asks the question: is the momentum of the European Capital of Culture being used to create new attitudes towards the quality and use of the public realm? The city has been declared a World Heritage Site including the Pier Head, Castle Street, Exchange Flags, The Albert Dock, Derby Square and St Georges Plateau. In Liverpool One, Grosvenor, in the short space of four years, have created millions of pounds of new streets, squares and the new Chavasse Park. The controversial question for Liverpool One remains, will the new urban spaces remain public or become gated privatized zones?

In contrast, Rope Walks has seen gradual urban regeneration over fifteen years, largely led by Urban Splash who has set new standards in public spaces in Concert Square. Liverpool Vision has had a major role in making the linkages between different parts of the city and 'The Big-Dig' has been tackling the quality of existing pedestrian routes. Both The Liverpool John Moores University Centre for Architecture and Liverpool University School of Architecture have immersed themselves in urban projects and master planning exercises in the city. The City now celebrates the fifth Biennial of contemporary international art; increasingly public art features in the public realm.

How is the city using its urban spaces? During the launch of The European Capital of Culture 2008, an audience of 40,000 gathered on St Georges Plateau to listen to Ringo Starr and Anfield Stadium is the venue for Sir Paul McCartney. It's all about using existing spaces. Liverpool has a fine legacy of Victorian parks and in Sefton Park Africa Oye concerts are to be held in the rehabilitated Palm House. There are many Street Festivals and 500,000 will get together in the Cavern Quarter to celebrate popular music. Hope Street links the two twentieth century cathedrals and the street and surrounding spaces are the focus of musical events.

Finally, we pose concluding questions: is The European Capital of Culture 2008 a healthier city? What will be the legacy of the European Capital of Culture and will Liverpool leave an urban inheritance for its children?

**DR ROB MACDONALD, READER IN ARCHITECTURE, LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY.**

# LIVERPOOL – MARITIME MERCANTILE CITY WORLD HERITAGE SITE

John Hinchliffe discusses the effects of World Heritage status on the buildings and spaces of the city



## AN OUTSTANDING PLACE

Liverpool was inscribed onto UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2004 as 'the supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain's greatest global significance.' Liverpool's global significance stems from its pivotal role in the development of international trading systems, its (regrettable) role in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 18th century and its pre-eminent role in mass emigration from Europe in the 19th century. The city's places, spaces and buildings bear witness to Liverpool's outstanding universal value and its contribution to those fundamental stages of the world's history.

Liverpool's historic places, spaces and buildings provide the tangible and visible link to the city's historic global significance, but they are also part of a vibrant city and not an urban museum. They must be protected, conserved and enhanced but must continue to contribute to the social and economic life of the city. Their maintenance and continued evolution must be managed with an understanding of their significance but also with recognition of their potential to generate income, activity and a unique spirit of place.

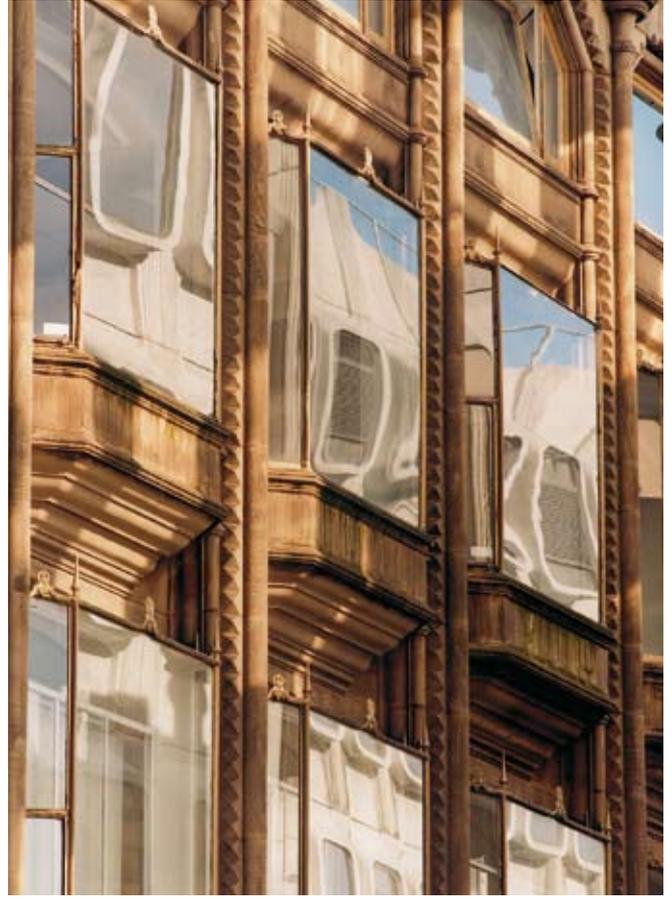
## TRADITIONAL AND NEW-FOUND PUBLIC SPACES

The biggest traditional public spaces in the World Heritage Site (WHS) are the Pier Head, St John's Gardens and St George's Plateau. Whilst these are spaces of immense character and architectural drama, none can lay claim to ancient authenticity. The Pier Head was created at the beginning of the 20th century as variously a tram terminal, a bus station and only latterly an urban square: it is currently being transformed by a new canal, a

landscape renaissance and a new family of angular buildings. St John's Gardens was created following the demolition of St John's Church in 1898: it remains the Valhalla of Liverpool worthies and its high maintenance standards have earned it a Green Flag Award. St George's Plateau was conceived as Liverpool's Ancient Forum but its traditional setts are only from the late 20th century, when it was rescued from a sea of tarmac, concrete flags and early 20th century disfigurements.

Liverpool remains a major port and has 'the biggest and most complete system of historic docks anywhere in the world' but its historic docks were declared redundant in 1972. Despite being unsuitable for modern shipping, the historic docks are inter-twined into the urban fabric of the city and help to make Liverpool's townscape unique. The docks may have been created as berths for merchant ships but they remain as effectively water-filled public squares. The Beatles could have been singing about the docks when they said '...some have changed, some for ever, not for better, some have gone, though some

**Above** Princes Dock, opened 1821, now a water-filled public square for surrounding quayside developments



## Extreme conservationists and myopic regenerationists are both guilty of misunderstanding the concept and objective of World Heritage Sites

remain.’ The conversion and conservation of Albert Dock and its warehouses in the 1980s was an exemplar of heritage-led regeneration and made them once again an integral part of the life of the city. The great challenge facing the other historic docks, such as Stanley Dock, is to find sustainable and active uses which retain their integrity and engages a wide audience.

### **BUILDINGS - A TRADITION OF CHANGE AND INFLUENCE**

Liverpool’s WHS includes the city’s 800 year old streets, palaces of commerce and warehouses galore but no buildings survive from before 1719, as the city has a tradition of change and renewal. In the 19th century, the architects and their clients fought out the battle of the styles between classicism and gothic. And yet Elmes’s St George’s Hall, ‘... the freest neo-Grecian building in England and one of the finest in the world’, sits comfortably opposite Waterhouse’s neo-gothic North Western Hotel – with its picturesque ‘outline to be seen against the sky’. The pioneering maverick Peter Ellis, jumped into the stylistic mix, with his pre-modernist Oriel Chambers and 16 Cook Street. Stylistic differences in Liverpool are nothing new!

The Bund on Shanghai was famously influenced by the blockbuster trio of buildings on Liverpool’s Pier Head Waterfront, but in an ironic reversal of roles, Peel Holdings now have an ambitious vision to create Shanghai on the Mersey with their Liverpool Waters scheme. A key issue will surely be that of scale, as well as style.



**Above** Aerial view of St John's Gardens (1899 by Thomas Shelmerdine)

**Opposite page** Source of all pictures: English Heritage

**Right** Water Street – Oriiel Chambers, Water Street, Peter Ellis, 1864

**Left from top to bottom**

St George's Hall, Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, 1854

St George's Plateau – Monument to King's Liverpool Regiment (1905 by Sir W.

Goscombe John) in St John's Gardens

Lime St, North Western Hotel, Alfred Waterhouse, 1871

Stanley Dock (1848) and the disused Grade II\* Listed North Warehouse (1855)

## MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

The inscription as a WHS raised Liverpool's heritage status without imposing additional statutory controls: it rightly raised expectations that the protection and enhancement of the historic environment will be given greater weight in decisions over the city's future but it should also bring new attitudes towards creative use of its buildings and its public realm. The Vision for the WHS is that it will be managed as '...an exemplary demonstration of sustainable development and heritage-led regeneration'.

Extreme conservationists and myopic regenerationists are both guilty of misunderstanding the concept and objective of World Heritage Sites and would do well to come to terms with WH Committee's Budapest Declaration (2002) which overtly states that WHSs should seek to achieve an appropriate and equitable balance between the needs of conservation, sustainability and development so that WHSs can continue to contribute '...to the social and economic development and the quality of life of their communities'.

Professional journalists, who should know better, have also mis-reported a desire for false historicism for new buildings in Liverpool's WHS. Liverpool has a long tradition of innovation in architecture and technology and the WHS Management Plan positively promotes the continuation of that tradition, provided that new buildings are appropriate to their historic, spatial and townscape context. This approach is supported by UNESCO, as its *Vienna Memorandum* (2005) advocates contemporary

architecture in WHSs which is '...complementary to the values of the historic urban landscape...'.

## THE FUTURE OF THE PLACES, SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Supplementary planning guidance is currently being prepared for new development in and around the WHS to encourage harmonious design and exemplary conservation, and which, in the words of its brief, will '...provide a framework for protecting and enhancing the outstanding universal value of Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site, whilst encouraging investment and development which secures a healthy economy and supports regeneration'. The great expectation is that the guidance will help Liverpool's Places, Spaces and Buildings to maintain the city's cultural distinctiveness.

**John Hinchliffe, World Heritage Officer, Liverpool City Council**

For further information on Liverpool - Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site, visit [www.liverpoolworldheritage.com](http://www.liverpoolworldheritage.com)



## ARCHITECT IN PARADISE?

Dr Rob Macdonald speculates on whether Liverpool One will open the gates of Paradise

'Liverpool One exudes a certain artificiality, lacking the dynamism that normally typifies the city. It thus remains to be seen whether it can fulfil the promise of an authentic urban experience and therefore be truly distinctive.'

Harm Tilman, *de Architect*, April 2008.

If high class shopping, a multiplex cinema, two hotels, a new park and 600 apartments are your idea of Paradise, then Liverpool One will be the place to be in 2008. In 1998 Liverpool City Council invited proposals for the regeneration of the City Centre and the Duke of Westminster and Grosvenor Estates won the opportunity of re-developing a massive 42 acres of the city. Known as Liverpool One, it also goes by the optimistic title of the Paradise Project.

It has been a considerable urban undertaking encompassing 2.5 million sq.ft. spread over six districts; Paradise comprises twenty-one different architectural projects, including two major department stores, Chevasse Park, two hotels, a bus station, cinema, over 600 housing units and 3000 car parking spaces including a dramatic sunken parking area, under a green park. A crèche

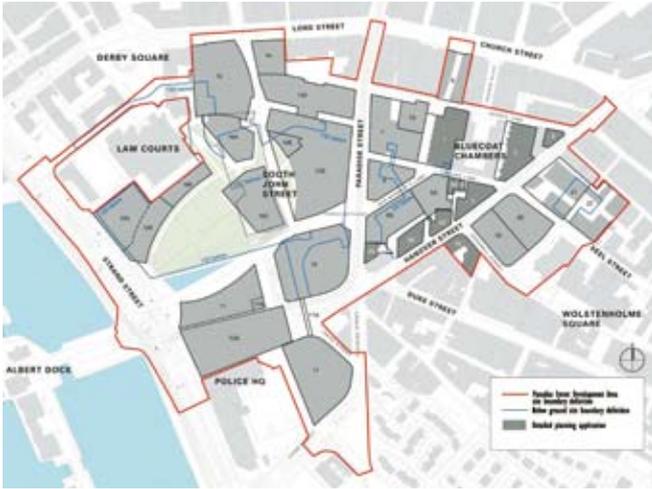
has been provided within one of the residential blocks and there are even underground spaces for electric mobility vehicle charging.

### SHOPPING PARADISE

In Paradise, shopping will be the new cultural mantra. Regeneration is being led by retail and commercial impetus and Liverpool One will certainly present serious competition for existing Church Street, Lewis's, Bold Street and London Road on the shopping edge. Already, John Lewis have vacated their long established property to move into a completely new department store in Liverpool One, and Liverpool Football Club is also relocating into a new store. Grosvenor's massive injection of £920 million, combined with proactive securing of sites through compulsory purchase orders helped to expedite proceedings, including the painful purchase of Quiggins. Quiggins was a low cost shopping bazaar in an existing building, that held out against Grosvenor, taking them right up to a public inquiry. Unfortunately, the power of the big developer won the property game and Quiggins were forced to relocate elsewhere.

### MASTERPLAN

Building Design Partnership (BDP) designed the master plan for the whole area resulting in a matrix that meshes in with the existing tissue of the surrounding urban fabric. Within this matrix, twenty one architects were commissioned to design a variety of individual buildings. This is no typical out-of-town shopping mall because the individual buildings have been designed around a number of new public spaces and existing



streets including Chavasse Park, South John Street, Paradise Street and Hanover Street.

At the time of writing, the central public spaces are looking very impressive, comprising a low level hard zone with water features that marks the spot of the original Tidal Pool and first Enclosed Dock. This is the area that featured in a recent Time zone TV Programme presented by Tony Robinson. There are numerous gentle ramps, pedestrian flyovers and high level walkways. However, these walkways are not comparable with those of the seventies, rather they merge and sweep together as natural paths. The landscape designers have used a variety of quality hard edges and surfaces; hopefully, they will stand the test of skateboarders, parcours jumpers and free flow runners.

Paradise includes the Bluecoat Chambers, which is Liverpool's oldest cultural building and it is fitting that it has been renovated and extended in 2008 by Dutch architects BIQ. The original front courtyard has been kept but major changes have been made to the secret and hidden rear garden; this has not been entirely well received by users with urban memories! Adjacent to the New Bluecoat is a shopping arcade designed by Sir Jeremy Dixon. Even on a tour of the building site you can feel the quality of bronze and Indian marble. The faceted glass BBC Radio Merseyside Headquarters, designed by Page and Park from Glasgow, is a fine building in the Liverpool tradition of Oriel Chambers. Behind the BBC Building is the Friends Meetings House, built in a warm orange brick. One of the most visually controversial buildings is Mr Herbert's (Bling-Bling) on Hanover Street and designed by London based Piers Gough.

There are two landmark department stores for Debenhams and John Lewis. Award winning architects Wilkinson Eyre (New Echo Arena) designed the new curving bus station and the steel and light twisting foot bridge that connects the Liver Car Park to John Lewis. The Liver Car Park has already been nominated for an architecture award. The New York architect Cesar Pelli has designed the leaning tower of Liverpool which faces the Strand. The views from the tower are spectacular; to the South West is the new Arena and due West is the new Liverpool Museum (under construction). Two new underground ramps have been cut into the Strand to allow access to the underground parking.

**QUESTIONS**

Not everybody in Liverpool agrees that Liverpool One will be Paradise; there has been much discussion about private gated streets and urban sheriffs. Despite these various disputes and debates, the Paradise Project has been an impressive urban achievement for the European Capital of Culture 2008. Having just spent the morning walking around the new streets, Chavasse Park and urban spaces in Paradise, I am inclined to speculate that Paradise will be a very pleasant place to visit and shop in. It will form an important link between the City, Albert Dock and



Opposite page Liverpool One aerial view  
 Top left Liverpool one main plan  
 Top New Stadium, photograph by Sarah Bibby  
 Above Rear of Mr. Herbert's Bling-Bling building (Piers Gough of CZWG Architects), photograph by Sarah Bibby

the new Echo Arena. Its important that Liverpool is seen to raise the quality of what it offers its residents and its visitors. However, it remains to be seen whether in the long term, the project will be an authentic urban experience and whether Paradise will have a trickle down effect for the rest of the City. Only time will tell...

**Rob Macdonald** Reader in Architecture, Liverpool School of Art & Design, Liverpool John Moores University. (With appreciation to Rod Holmes and Norman Potter, Grosvenor.)

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF ROPEWALKS

Bill Maynard enthuses about the success of Ropewalks and wonders about the future



Urban Splash was born in the Ropewalks area of Liverpool. It was some 15 years ago when Messrs Bloxham & Falkingham set off on their adventure to transform the inner city. At that time the City Council was in a state of chaos and the private sector steered a very wide berth around Liverpool. Mass unemployment, a failing economy and crumbling infrastructure typified the city at that time.

Out of all this mess the young Splashers talked the talk about the city centre living, mixed uses, pavement cafes- all underpinned by a belief that strong design could lead the way. There was even talk about becoming the Covent Garden of the North. The word lofts entered our vocabulary- something only Londoners and New Yorkers had ever heard before. The young Splashers embarked a series of projects: Liverpool Palace, Baa Bar, Concert Square, Tea Factory - nice clever conversions which tapped into the mood for change. Young architects and designers began to find their feet. Perhaps they didn't need to drift off to London.

The political mood in Liverpool was

also changing- less talk about bringing the government down, more about regeneration and sorting things out. This blossomed with the establishment of the Ropewalks Partnership which started a major transformation of the area under an ambitious Integrated Development Operation- the first in Europe.

The Partnership created by the City Council, English Partnership and the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) committed over £42 million to the regeneration of the area. Master planners BDP were appointed, design competitions held and a huge programme of public realm improvements was rolled out. The Ropewalks Partnership can be very proud of its achievements- major derelict buildings were brought back into use and the public realm programme with its new artwork was successfully delivered. After much battling, Eddie Berg's team delivered the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT), the most important cultural facility in the area.

Bold Street refound its identity and at last we got our Chinese Arch. Urban Splash finished off projects like the Tea Factory and Vanilla Factory and even had a go at church conversion, saving the magnificent St Peter's Church and securing its future with help from the blessed Rob Guttman.

## BALANCE SHEET

Sadly after five years the Ropewalks Partnership was dissolved. In terms of urban design, what was achieved? what was the good, the bad and the ugly? The BDP Masterplan was highly pragmatic and robust and it created a series of high quality public squares



and infrastructure improvements. High quality natural materials were used throughout. Local architects such as ShedKM and Arkheion delivered some excellent schemes. The private sector was encouraged to invest throughout the area with mixed results: some good buildings were delivered other were less satisfactory.

The essence of Ropewalks has always been its variety, the rich mixture of architectural styles and the eclectic range of activities from artists, musicians to retailers and pinstripes. While the Ropewalks achieved much, the area is still blighted by dereliction and too many buildings are still at risk. The loss of the listed Seel Street Terrace has made a mockery of the legislation designed to protect our heritage and character of our cities. Also the maintenance of the public realm is becoming a major concern.

Ropewalks was to be our creative industries quarter our little piece of bohemia. In this respect the glass is half empty: Urban Splash has delivered its network of funky offices and Beethams transformed the Bridewell area. We have FACT, and Open Eye 3345 and Korova are still doing business. Bold Street is great as home to Mattas and Utility and numerous other retailers. However much remains to be done.

**CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE**

In some ways Ropewalks is a job half done. We now have an enlarged and revamped Liverpool Vision; perhaps it should pick up the challenge and spearhead the final stage of regeneration with a view to tackling the dereliction at the heart of the area and stop the rot once and for all by:

- reinforcing and encouraging the creative and artistic community in the area build upon the success of FACT,
- sort out the maintenance of the public realm,
- encourage new cultural and artistic activities,
- support the Bold Street and China Town traders to face up to the challenge of Liverpool One.

Ropewalks now has a shining bright neighbour in the Liverpool One project and it should play an important role as the quirky bohemian neighbour to the prime retailing of the Grosvenor Scheme.

As they say, make no little plans.

**Bill Maynard, Managing Director, Urban Splash Liverpool**

**Opposite page** Concert Square  
**Top left** the Tea Factory  
**Top right** Converted St Peter's Church interior  
**Above left** Concert Square at night  
**Above** St Peter's Church

# WALKS OF FAITH

Colin Dyas expresses his very personal theology of place



Above Hope Street

Do we have faith in place? People and place and places for people makes for a good mantra, but is communion with place about pilgrimage or penance? This view comes from the pew rather than pulpit as whilst I have several years' regeneration experience, I am not a designer, but a 'Placevangelist' with a passion for place and design.

We walk through place daily and might praise or despise it. We might also take on its physical and intellectual challenges by ignoring its confines, and negotiating the disrepair, mess, and baffling designs that take us from A to B, via Z. Place can be hierarchical and pluralist. At its best we congregate within it, but at its worst it makes patronising assumptions on human intelligence, and self-determination. It has function by joining up buildings, helping us navigate journeys and carrying public services, and is social, in determining informal contracts about how people negotiate their space in place. It is also exclusive regarding rights of enjoyment.

## THE FIVE BOOKS OF PLACE

Matters like these create a place canon. We have a *Book of Enforcement* related to the privatisation of public space, and transference of rights to private companies. We see avarice toward car

users, commandments on licensed rights (including planning) and new testaments of judgemental bylaws on public rights. Judgemental, as its fine to be middle class and carry chardonnay to your car, but bad to be a hoody carrying lager on a skateboard. Faith in place can be selective?

Hence the *Book of Vandalalation* where feral definitions of ownership and territory are deconstructive in terms and actions. Vandalism, graffiti, and crime are alternatives gospels of irreverence, perhaps reflecting poorly designed and under-used places, and middle-class, top-downism on inclusiveness? It's not all the fault of place, but bad place alienates some, as much as it gives roots to others, and there is clearly something wrong when people trash their own neighbourhoods as a badge (asbo) of honour. It is interesting that much anti-social activity linked to place, including substance and street sex issues, are expressions of the disenfranchised from people who can't vote, don't vote, don't care, or can't care.

Then there is the middle ground and its *Book of Stupid*, one that sees millions spent on physical regeneration with little thought on maintenance, even to collect litter. One where public utilities trash more realm than the world's youth skateboarders ever could. One where cul-de-sacking and mass urban re-engineering is done with little holistic thought for social and economic consequences. Where quality of design can lack primacy and where good design principles are ignored, so that gating, road barriers, and pedestrian schemes, coral people without thought to access, movement, or psychology. To the public congregation, this is alienating, and begets a commandment 'Don't trust thy neighbour'. But worse still is when regeneration is rewarded by roller-shutters that turn revived streets into metal canyons. Who in the regeneration industry talks to the insurance industry about this? The gospel of this book is one where the privatisation of rights can create a socialisation of problems.

But there is a *Book of Hope*. Where I live I see seated congregations on pavements fronting terraced houses, and indeed children's pavement art. I also see street performers and street retailing that adds colour to place and people returning to Liverpool city centre because it's a better place. It would be nice to see more place animation, but perhaps people need encouragement and invitation.

As for the *Book of Futures* perhaps we'll see more public intervention in creating and scrutinising place. The government recently announced public representation for cultural and sports boards, so perhaps a similar clergy can consider place. The UK is supposedly a beacon of creative industries, so let us empower our excellent architectural practices to work at the social design level far more. Master planning helps, so too contextual pattern books and improved governance. Let us also quantify value in place and gear this toward maintenance and management funding. We should nurture place and act responsibly toward it, whether as corporations, citizens or public bodies. We should also create place consciousness through education, comparative practice, and awards. The Stirling Prize features place nominations, and with green awards for beaches and parks, perhaps we need something similar for urban place. We intrinsically know when it's bad, so should reward it when it's good.

In conclusion, I am conscious of my own faith in place, but see lasting judgements from the past that undermine this. My own mantras, that places are nothing without people, and that people make places, is important, as faith has no boundaries, even in narrowly defined man made places.

Colin Dyas, Development Manager, Liverpool Vision

# MASTERPLANS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Professor Douglas Clelland makes suggestions well beyond the current masterplans practice



Beyond the theme Liverpool, the title of this article involves not only masterplanning itself, but a scenario for the century we inhabit – seven (some would say) momentous years of which have passed – portents for the remaining 93 lying in the realm of the unknown, where, at the very least, we can expect the unexpected – a volatile world. Two issues already underpinning this volatility, followed by a résumé of master-planning priorities for the years ahead, are considered.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH / CLIMATE CHANGE

Citizens are confused about the relationship between economic growth (good?) and climate change (bad?), to the effect that growth is no longer self-evidently good at all. How is internationally-agreed change to be initiated? As the UN Environment Programme's recently published 4th Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) pointed out, the Earth's biological capacity is 15.7 hectares per person, while we currently have an ecological footprint of 21.9 hectares per person, resulting in the need for 1.4 Earths to sustain the average lifestyle. The UN reports that Cuba is the only sustainably-developing nation, and that is changing, given the new political situation there.

There is the need for those setting the programmes for master plans – those working upstream of design and construction – to set parameters that place climate change significantly ahead of economic growth.

## VIOLENCE / CO-OPERATION

Commenting on Ben Kiernan's book, *Blood and Soil – A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, William McNeill writes, 'Clearly cooperation and violence coexist among us and always have'. By 2100, can there be a sustainable human population living largely in cooperation, reasonably educated, fed, watered, housed and clothed, living within the biological capacity of the planet, with at least some other significant flora and fauna sharing it with us? To get there, we will require unprecedented intelligence, education and leadership, hand-in-hand with a renunciation of the violence that has significantly shaped human affairs since homo sapiens, millennia ago, doubtless slaughtered all other hominids. Effective masterplanning exists where cooperation (Herodotus hermeneutics) exceeds violence (Thucydides hermeneutics).

Where conflict infects a community, the creation of effective masterplanning – let us say for a problem housing

Above A 'Methuselah' tree – the final fragment of the ancient Caledonian Forest



**Above** Masterplan for a zero-CO<sub>2</sub> new town on Merseyside based on the creation of a solid economic heartland

## There is a need... to set parameters that place climate change significantly ahead of economic growth

estate – is nullified, and where violence predominates – let us say in today's favelas and shanty towns – there is little point setting out to create masterplans.

### ZERO-CO<sub>2</sub> PRACTICES

As a résumé of priorities for masterplanning for the years ahead, let alone the 21st Century, and restricting matters to the UK, the following seem imperative.

It would be meaningful to see government giving every town and city until 2012 to create a deliverable, auditable strategy to achieve zero-CO<sub>2</sub> performance within a decade, through the masterplanning of every part of its geography. Non-compliance should be treated in the same manner as the zero-tolerance now pertaining in matters relating to Health and Safety, something that a decade ago was unacceptable to the people who are typically in denial about the seriousness of climate change.

Masterplanning would no longer need to square (economic growth) the circle (climate change). This should be a national movement and not relegated to the creation of 15 Eco-towns.

### COOPERATION

The liberalism that underpins this country's best previous achievements in masterplanning has cooperation and multiculturalism at their heart. That openness, and the achievement of radical change to the way our towns and cities perform, requires cooperation that moves us from an average ecological footprint of 21.9 hectares (the footprints of the population of many wealthy areas being far, far higher), towards the 15.7 hectares benchmark.

### AUTHENTICITY

Those who can afford to, choose to live in settlements that have a sense of place. There is a great danger that the Eco-towns, harbingers of a necessary change in energy matters, will fail to be other than housing estates. The existence of the authentic tends to be based on an economic heartland being present in a settlement, and therefore for example, the cooperation of the retail chains in understanding the need to move beyond current paradigms is paramount.

### ROLLING OUT INNOVATION

Masterplanning is an evolving discipline, dependent not only on political and economic guidance, but also on ideas for the future created by designers. We rapidly need to leave a period when our masterplanning paradigms have been built on false premises, towards a period with new paradigms, evolving in advance of / parallel to political change.

Poussin's landscape paintings suggest a balance between man and nature. In a digital age, *The Century of Nature*, that seems to be a principle still worth believing in.

**Doug Clelland is Lead Design and Head of Research at Aire Design and the Herbert Rowse Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Liverpool John Moores University.**

# LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL, PUBLIC ART & THE PUBLIC REALM

Lewis Biggs describes a programme that brings spaces back to life



Richard Wilson's *Turning the Place Over* was tested on a Tuesday last June, the process captured on their mobile phones by two girls passing by. They put the clip on YouTube, and before the official launch that Friday, their video received 350,000 hits. There are now more than 20 videos of the work on YouTube. Its presence makes people stop to look, talk to their neighbours, but it has also captured the imagination of people who have never seen it. By creating a bond between people, this gesture in the urban environment has become a civic place: a place where citizens relate to each other outside shopping or eating.

## CREATING CIVIC PLACES

For a city with so many wonderful buildings, it's astonishing that Liverpool's city centre has only two places in which civic events can take place - St Georges Plateau and the Pier Head. Albert Dock almost qualifies, while Exchange Flags, Derby Square and, of course, Lime Street Station still have the potential to become (or return to being) civic. We're hopeful that the Liverpool One development will give us more: it takes an unusual and visionary commercial developer to create genuinely civic places.

Liverpool Biennial, the organisation, is a commissioning agency 'engaging art, people and place'. Through the power of imagination, we aim to inspire people to become art lovers and to turn dead spaces into pleasurable places. We're 'turning the place over' to the people, and hoping to recover some sense of the civic along the way.

We organise an international festival of contemporary art

with counterparts in cities all over the world (the most famous being Venice Biennale), although Liverpool Biennial is unique in its insistence on commissioning new art and in its focus on the intersection of the international and the local. The biennial rhythm is long enough to chart real change, short enough to carry the memory of each event forward to the next. It's an event that is both ephemeral and powerfully cumulative in its effect on the way residents, and visitors, think about the city.

People activate spaces through mere presence, and if it is a pleasurable enough space to linger in, then it will quickly gather the sense of being a place: adding a dimension of appreciation. In 2003 we were invited by South Sefton Development Agency to suggest how art might bring people to Crosby Beach. Siting Antony Gormley's *Another Place* there has certainly achieved this, bringing two to three times the number of people as before (with all the desired effects on the local economy). But it's what people

**Above** Impression of Rotunda Pavilion. Gross Max Landscape Architects, 2008



The difference between creating alienation and creating a sense of community can be addressed through design and people’s imaginative engagement with it.

understand by being there that is important. This artwork returns the beach from being a neglected corner to being the pivot between the old and the new worlds that it was when so many tens of millions of emigrants saw it as their last bit of Europe. It was an area to walk the dog. Now it’s a place where school classes gather for their history lessons on emigration, and churches present their nativity plays at Christmas.

**REUSING DERELICT LAND**

This summer, Gross Max landscape architects are transforming wasteland in front of Rotunda Community College into a folly and gardens, a site for neighbourhood relaxation, but also as a vessel to be filled with activity. After a long period of consultation, this Biennial Big Table commission is already a matter of neighbourhood pride.

Back in the city centre, for the Biennial festival this September, Atelier BowWow (Tokyo) have been commissioned to create a contemporary amphitheatre in the bombed site that commands the vista down Berry Street from Great St. George’s. Our aim with this temporary artwork is to imagine a new civic place at the top of Bold Street. The railed off public garden / war memorial of St Luke’s Church turns its back on street life, rather than embracing and absorbing it. The implied theatricality (such a feature of Liverpool) of this key crossroad is begging to be expressed more fully.

Another take on theatricality is provided by New York partnership Diller, Scofidio + Renfro’s design for a green space in the Baltic Triangle. The partnership is currently overseeing the creation of *The High Line*, an elevated railroad spur stretching 1.45 miles along Manhattan’s Westside, which they describe as a ‘reflection on the categories of nature and culture’. Their proposal for Liverpool offers a still point of reflection within a turning environment of moving vegetation.

2008 is, of course, a turning point for Liverpool. *Turning the Place Over* alludes to the process of redevelopment within which the artwork sits. It also refers to housebreaking, turning the place over to strip out valuables (whether they be commercial or sentimental only). The difference between creating alienation and creating a sense of community can be addressed through design, and people’s imaginative engagement with it. Let’s turn the place over to pleasure in design.

Lewis Biggs, Director of Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art



**Top** Artists’ impression of commission for Liverpool Biennial International 08, Atelier BowWow, 2008.  
**Middle** *Turning the Place Over*, Richard Wilson, 2007 Commissioned by Liverpool Biennial. Photograph by Sean Hawkrigde  
**Above** *Another Place*, Antony Gormley, 2006. Photograph by Steve White

# THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE – A HEALTHIER CITY

Dr. John Ashton ,CBE, reflects on the links between health and city design



It is 20 years ago this year since Liverpool hosted the first World Health Organisation Healthy Cities Conference in support of its Healthy Cities initiative.

That initiative had come out of a decade of debate about the need to change the way in which we think about health away from a pre-occupation with hospitals, medical salvage and a fantasy about the indefinite postponement of death towards one which embraced a holistic notion of people living in habitats, the social and environmental conditions that shape our health, well being and quality of life – the city where we ‘live, love, work and play.’, ‘cities to grow people in.’.

In the lead up to the Liverpool conference there was a workshop which focussed on identifying the ecological criteria for defining the Healthy City. Four such criteria were identified:-

## 1 Minimum intrusion into the natural state

The principle of minimum intrusion requires that new development and restructuring should reflect the topographic, hydrographic, vegetal and climatic environment in which it occurs. A close reference to the natural site will benefit drainage, ventilation, insulation, the indoor climate, the micro-climate and open green spaces.

## 2 Maximum Variety

Maximum Variety should be aimed for in the physical, social and economic structure of the city. Land uses and activities should be mixed where this does not create hazards, rather than separated and fragmented. A range of economic activities will make cities

and communities less vulnerable to change and reduce social polarisation and equality.

## 3 As closed a system as possible

The principle of closed systems in urban and environmental health management would mean that waste is recycled within the urban area wherever possible and that the water, energy and resources are renewable. The management of green spaces would maintain nature and recreational opportunities within cities.

## 4 An optimum balance between population and resources

Urban and population change must relate to the fragile natural systems and environments that support them. Balance is required at the city and neighbourhood levels to provide a high quality and supportive physical environment as well as economic and cultural opportunities.

## RELEVANCE TODAY

Twenty years on these criteria have become more important than ever and the papers given at the conference

**Above** Allotment gardens and nutrition messages at the International Garden Festival in 1984



**Top** A 'liberated' plot of land in Central Manhattan courtesy of the urban open space coalition

**Above** Actors perform a vignette about dental health at the International Garden Festival sponsored by Michael Heseltine

**Right** The signing of the Liverpool Declaration on Urban Health during the WHO Healthy Cities Conference in 1988



## we need a new impetus which embraces a marriage of ecological thinking to active citizenship

covering a wide range of topics including urban economies, community architecture and housing, transport, poverty and regeneration, community action and the greening of cities are as fresh as ever. In the intervening years global warming has moved high up the agenda and has begun to impact on the issue of closed systems. However the other three criteria have barely been discussed in relation to regeneration in Liverpool and other cities.

In 1988 Liverpool was a basket case and the question was whether it would survive as a major city. Today, after £2 billion of European Union investment, a massive change of mood and renewed economic vitality, there is little question that it is going to be around as a major player into the future. But what about Health and Healthy Cities?

### LINKS BETWEEN HEALTH AND PLANNING

The Healthy Cities project itself was in part a reincarnation of the Health of Towns Association of the 1840s. Set up in response to the publication of Chadwick's report on The Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population in 1842, the Association campaigned for urban sanitary reform and was instrumental in bringing the 1848 Public Health Act to the Statute Book. It began a movement whose partners included the early town planners and it is no coincidence that the Liverpool University departments of Public Health and Civic Design were among the earliest such departments in the world.

Indeed public health and town planning were Siamese twins in the later 19th Century and early 20th Century. That has not been the case since the end of the second world war, and the disaster of slum clearance has blighted attempts at integrated development along the lines of Ebenezer Howards' garden cities ever since. But perhaps the tide is changing!

Without doubt, the glass in Liverpool is half full. But to fill it up we need a new impetus which embraces a marriage of ecological thinking to active citizenship. In this year of City of Culture we also need to consolidate the centrality of health, culture and the arts. One of the legacies of Liverpool's engagement with the Healthy Cities Project has been a rich experience of collaboration between public health and art, architecture and various cultural activities. Adrian Henri was Public Health's Artist in Residence throughout 1997 when the city celebrated the 150th anniversary of the appointment of William Henry Duncan as the Country's first Medical Officer of Health. Rob MacDonald and this author have worked closely on bringing health to architectural students and vice versa.

But if we look round the city-scape of Liverpool 2008 and reflect on how far we have come in shaping an ecological city fit for the 21st Century with health and well being supported at every turn, we have a long way to go.

**Dr. John Ashton, Director of Public Health, Cumbria, CBE**

### FURTHER READING

Website – johnrashton@securemachines.co.uk  
 The New Public Health, John Ashton and Howard Seymour, Open University Press 1988  
 Healthy Cities ed. John Ashton, Open University Press 1991  
 Proceedings of 1988 Healthy Cities Conference, Liverpool (johnrashton@securemachines.co.uk)

# THE URBAN DESIGN LEGACY, 2008 AND BEYOND

John Stonard wonders what the long term effect of European Capital of Culture will be



Even before the successful city had been announced there was much talk of the regeneration impact of the award of the European Capital of Culture 2008 title. The general consensus seemed to be that the 'Glasgow effect' had the potential to transform the fortunes of one of the six shortlisted cities. Indeed, many commentators glibly observed that Liverpool won because of its overwhelming regeneration need rather than anything to do with the quality of its bid. Five years later what impact has Capital of Culture had on Liverpool's built environment?

The simple answer is very little. This may come as a surprise to anyone who has visited Liverpool recently and had to squeeze past the knots of fluorescent-clad workmen jostling for space beneath a canopy of tower cranes. From the Pier Head to the universities, the city-centre has undergone a dramatic transformation, and it is far from over. In terms of area, at least one third of central Liverpool has been refurbished, redeveloped or received a major planning consent in the past five years. However, few people locally would attribute this directly to winning the Capital of Culture title.

While the prospect of 2008 has undoubtedly helped to lift spirits, forge a shared sense of purpose and loosen a few purse strings it is a symptom of change rather than a cause. The crucial period for Liverpool's current regeneration came some time before and is exemplified by the fact that the city felt confident enough to submit a credible bid in the first place. Many of the formative factors in this change have been illustrated in previous pages but among others you could include: a national re-engagement with cities and the subsequent boom in city centre living; the impact of European Objective One funding; the focus provided by the formation of Liverpool Vision in 1999; the re-emergence of a strong local development sector; and the creation of a city centre movement strategy and public realm

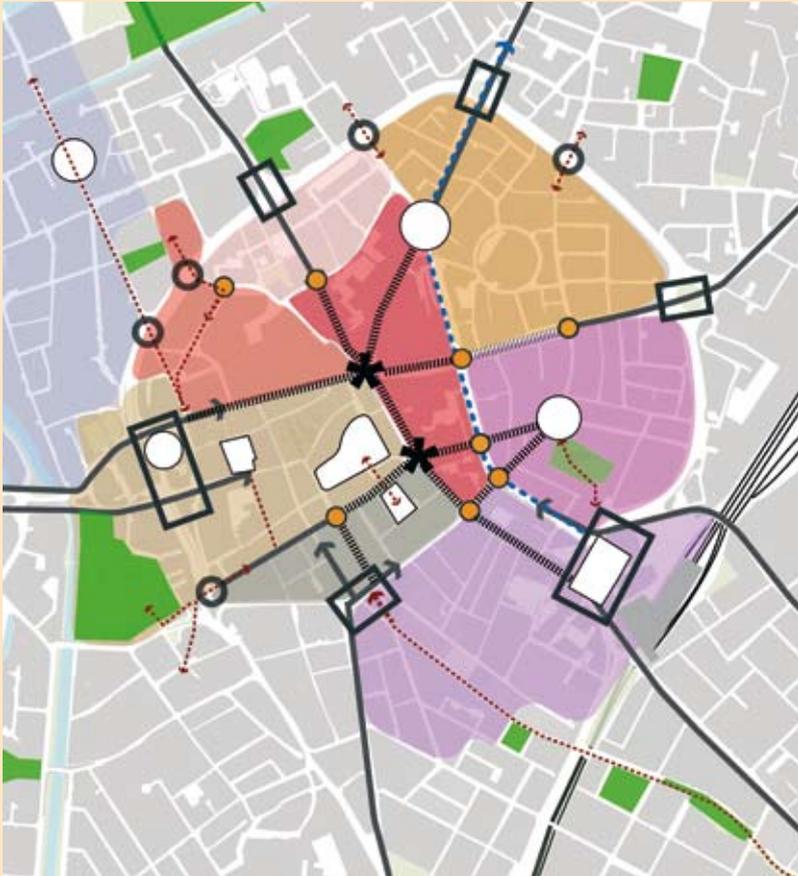
implementation framework from 2000 onwards.

Because there is little that can specifically be attributed to the Capital of Culture its legacy is difficult to determine. However, one of the unforeseen benefits of a period in the international spotlight is that Liverpool is getting the chance to reflect on what has happened in recent years. Already it is becoming apparent that many of the more successful elements have been based on a specific response to the city itself rather than relying on stock solutions from elsewhere and that grand gestures are not the only way of reviving a place already rich in the dramatic and iconic.

When 2008 draws to a close and the hundreds of bedraggled banners have been taken off the lampposts perhaps some of the more valuable lessons will have become engrained in Liverpool's culture. It is hoped so, because continuing the momentum beyond the city centre into neighbouring districts, little touched by this year's festivities, presents a potentially tougher challenge, and from past experience a far greater chance of getting things wrong.

John Stonard is currently CABE Programme Manager, Design Liverpool

**Above** Overview of development within Liverpool city centre over the past six years



## The Leicester City Centre Public Realm Strategy

Burns + Nice describes an ambitious strategy to make Leicester's city centre more legible and accessible

Leicester is the focus of major regeneration, the scale of which has not been experienced in the city since the arrival of the railways. The financial interest in the city has resulted in a coincidence of activity: the building of a new Arts Centre, the redevelopment and extension of the Shires Shopping Centre and inward investment within the emerging city areas such as Waterside and Abbey Meadows. The built fabric of the city centre is changing extensively. The regeneration projects provided an opportunity for Leicester City Council to re-evaluate the role and meaning of its public realm within the city centre. Burns + Nice were appointed by Leicester City Council to undertake the City Centre Public Realm Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in December 2005. The Strategy has established a city wide public realm Masterplan that will create a coherent city centre based upon urban design principles: special hierarchy, visual order, legibility and connectivity

The Strategy has determined public realm improvements by providing a coherent design approach that has enabled the city centre to be appreciated as a totality by the people of Leicester, departments within Leicester City Council, the Leicester Regeneration Company and private developers. The impetus to the Strategy and its rapid implementation, which has a three year programme 2005-2008, has been the redevelopment of the Shires Shopping Centre. This redevelopment contributed some £19m solely for improvements to the public realm. The rationale of the Strategy is that an attractive public realm encourages greater use of the city centre by pedestrians and this new vibrancy will sustain existing and enhance further economic development.

### MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

The realisation of the City Centre Public Strategy has over the last two years redefined the city's image by capturing the intrinsic urban qualities that are unique to Leicester and applying a coherent design approach that reinforces Leicester's urban complexity, thus creating a memorable city centre. The Strategy is based on the introduction of a spatial hierarchy that creates a legible and fully accessible city centre which integrates the new developments within the city's emerging urban form. The Strategy is based on the following elements:

- Character Areas were identified based on historic development and existing uses.
- Character Streets give a coherent structure and legibility to the city centre by knitting the character areas together and connecting into key public spaces.
- City Spaces: the city centre has only two open spaces, the Town Hall Square and the Cathedral (City Green). It is proposed to create a series of city spaces that will provide focal points within the city centre and further strengthen the identity of the character areas.
- Meeting Places: the historic focal points and the image of Leicester: the Clocktower and Market Place Approach.
- Gateways: located at key junction places along the linked street and pedestrian routes to enhance the sense of arrival in the city centre. The gateways provide a series of special places with particular design guidelines, wayfinding elements and paving materials.
- Thresholds: areas of change within the fabric of the city such as crossing points and boundaries between character areas or character streets. They are small interventions which knit the city together.



Opposite page left Framework plan  
 Right Gallowtree Gate during the day  
 Above left Lighting Plan  
 Above Gallowtree Gate at night

### THREE DISTINCT ZONES

A series of Design Guidelines were developed based on the analysis of the city's historic development twinned with its present day functions. Three city zones were identified: the Historic Quarter, the Retail Core and the Mixed Use Zone. Common to all the city zones is the historic use of red granite kerbs. The existing red granite kerbs are being retained where possible or replaced with new ones. A restrained palette of paving materials has been devised for each of the city zones:

- Historic Quarter: in response to the medieval street pattern of the Lanes and historic significance of the quarter small unit sized dark and light red granite paving is used
- Retail Core: to contrast with the historic quarter and to acknowledge the distinct function of the retail core within the city its own paving vocabulary has been specified based on mid grey granite. Paving is to be kept simple to create a neutral setting for the adjacent buildings. City spaces and meeting places as urban features or embellishments have dark grey granite paving
- Mixed Use: pre-cast concrete paving with linked streets to retail core in granite

The design of the street furniture by Burns+Nice has been applied throughout the city centre to harmonise the new streetscape designs. A series of seats that are compliant with DDA and benches that are adaptable to the wide range of conditions and needs have been designed. Within Market Place Approach a sculptural seat is to be installed.

### ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

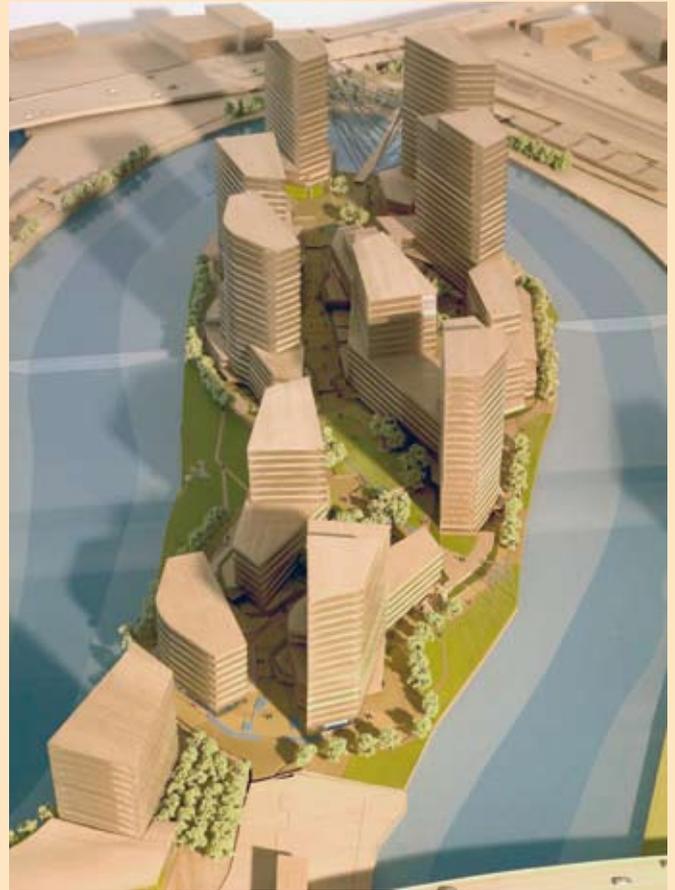
The development of a city-wide Wayfinding Strategy and a Lighting

Strategy, both developed by Burns+Nice, further underpin the intentions of the Public Realm Strategy to create a vibrant and dynamic public realm that is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike, that is celebratory of Leicester's diversity and its success and future.

In order for the £19m programme of work within the public realm to be achieved there needed to be an agreed, robust strategy in place that established design guidelines in terms of materials, street furniture and lighting which has been applied by Burns+Nice as well as other practices involved in the detailed design and implementation of the public realm projects to ensure a coherently designed city centre. The agreement to standards of construction and specification of materials benefited the programme as well as maintenance and management approvals.

The philosophy of the City Centre's Public Realm Strategy has been used as the basis for the public realm strategies of the new city quarters of Waterside, Abbey Meadows and St George's North, thereby ensuring integration with as well as extension of the city centre.

The re-defining of Leicester's public realm has been hugely ambitious in terms of the scope of the work being undertaken, all while maintaining a working city centre. Its achievement is due to the extensive consultations undertaken during the development of the Public Realm Strategy, the determination by Leicester City Council, Leicester Regeneration Company, the developers of The Shires together with local businesses and retailers that the programme of works would be completed by the end of 2008 and to the application of a clear city-wide Public Realm Strategy that has created a well connected, legible and pedestrian friendly environment.



## Leamouth Peninsula

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, London Shape a Unique Urban Community

The site lies in a strategic location in East London where the Lower Lea Valley meets the Thames Gateway. The area has been earmarked by the LDA, the GLA and the ODA as part of the Legacy to be delivered following the London Olympic Games in 2012 for the Lower Lea Valley. In particular, the site forms part of the urban core at Canning Town which is a key focus for regeneration.

This unique site at the mouth of the Lea River has been formed by the natural flow of water creating a unique peninsula / island setting. It was formerly occupied by the recently demolished Pura Food Factory. The site is currently severed from the urban grain of the local area by roads, rail lines and the river. This provides a unique opportunity to create a new island community with a more organic urban grain inspired by the character of the site and surrounding landscape environment.

### A SUSTAINABLE MIXED-USE COMMUNITY

Through a close collaboration between the client, architect, special consultants, key stakeholders and the local planning authorities, a diverse set of complementary uses has been integrated into the plan to support the residential-led focus of future development. Workplaces for incubator businesses will be created to complement Trinity Buoy Wharf and add to the diversity of employment in this part of East London. Also supporting the mix of new homes (both private and affordable), cafes and restaurants, indoor and outdoor community facilities, a cultural arts centre and a new primary school have been grouped together to form a local centre of week-long activity.

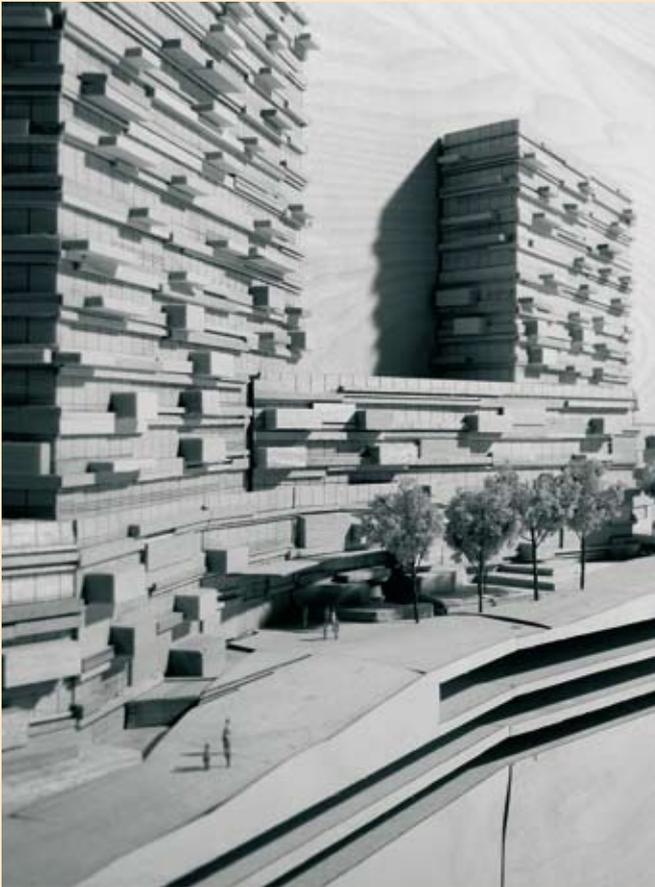
### TOPOGRAPHY

A new land form has been created for the site due to the design constraints of overcoming local barriers. In order to effectively connect the district to Canning Town, a new fixed pedestrian and cycle bridge is provided, spanning over the rail lines and the River Lea. To better facilitate connectivity and ease of mobility for all a new topography will be created for the site with a gradually sloping incline connecting people from the bridge link over the river down to existing grade. The new landform provides an opportunity to create a pedestrian priority environment with elevated viewpoints and public terraces framing distant views.

### URBAN FORM

This new environment has the potential to maximise its highly visible location to create a new urban identity for the Leamouth area. The scheme provides a new urban fabric with a wide range of building types from 3 to 26 storeys aiming to strengthen the organic island nature of the site. The built form was configured to create a unique pedestrian experience drawing people through the site. The scale and layout of lower buildings reinforce a human-scale environment and frame distant views.

The scale, orientation and layout of buildings have been established to maximise direct sunlight, natural light and ventilation to both internal building spaces and external public spaces. The negative effects of wind have also been mitigated via a rigorous analysis and series of tests which have informed building massing throughout the development of the project.



**PROJECT FACTS** (Leamouth Peninsula North Only)

Site Area: 4.7ha  
 1800 Residential Units  
 18,000m<sup>2</sup> Commercial Space  
 10,000m<sup>2</sup> Community Amenities  
 60% Public Open Space / Public Realm  
 Total GEA: 180,000m<sup>2</sup>  
 Plot Ratio: 3.8

**THE PUBLIC REALM AND THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE**

A sequence of public open spaces has been created, and as envisioned by Martha Schwartz Landscape Architects, each will have its own distinctive feel and character. As one traverses the site on foot, each space will lead to another and an element of surprise will be created as the different character of each is experienced. The spaces will cater to a wide range of use such as hardscape plazas, gathering places for cultural events and performances, quiet communal gardens for residents and play areas for children.

The landscape of the River Lea corridor will be restored and pedestrian walks and cycle ways will extend in all directions to adjacent regeneration areas. The public riverfront promenade will meander between natural grasslands and restored ecological areas providing new wildlife habitat.

**CONNECTIVITY**

The core of activity in Canning Town will extend across the river with a new landmark pedestrian and cycle bridge link. This vital urban connection will provide access for the entire area to Canning Town and the local multi-modal station which offers strategic linkages to the City, Canary Wharf, Stratford city centre and the Royals. The majority of routes within the site are designated for pedestrians only while vehicular and service access is widely concealed below-grade within the podium structure. A continuous riverfront walk is provided along the perimeter of the peninsula connecting to and extending the wider network.



**Opposite page**

**Left** Context plan: change in urban grain in Leamouth Peninsula  
**Right** Complex massing closely integrated with landscape and circulation

**Left** With no immediate context, the architectural treatment proposes a strongly striated character

**Top** Aerial view of development sites on north & south of peninsula  
**Above** Peninsula Place, the public heart of the new development

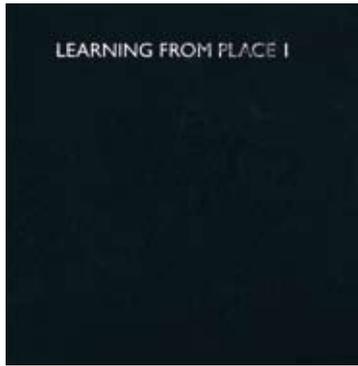
**LESSONS LEARNED**

The plan for Leamouth Peninsula can be a model for others to follow in creating a high-density urban residential district. This long collaborative process reveals the following lessons which have proved to be helpful in developing schemes of similar use and density in other parts of London and beyond:

- Ensuring a well-balanced mix of uses to complement the residential community including small shops, cafes, cultural uses and flexible workspace for local businesses
- Providing sufficient and usable public amenities for residents including a primary school, a community centre, formal and informal play areas for children of all ages
- Providing sufficient private amenities for residents including large private terraces at the ground level and roof levels, and private balconies for the majority of units between
- Ensuring an appropriate level of Design Guidance and Parameter Plans to guide a project of such a large scale through an evolutionary process
- Creating a cohesive architectural language while ensuring diversity by varying the material palette, balcony expression and envisioning a few landmark buildings which stand out.

**LEARNING FROM PLACE 1**

THE ACADEMY OF URBANISM, ED BRIAN EVANS AND FRANK MCDONALD, RIBA PUBLISHING, LONDON 2007, £19.95



ISBN 978 1 85946 282 9

The mission of the Academy of Urbanism is to record and document what can be learned from existing places. This book illustrates fifteen Great Places celebrated in the Academy's first Urbanism Awards. The various authors are keen to stress that this is the first attempt at this process of identifying what constitutes a great city, town, neighbourhood, street and place in the UK. In a series of essays, the book contrasts the blandness of new housing areas with the specialness of these successful places, and the role of control in achieving this. There are a series of key questions to test the places

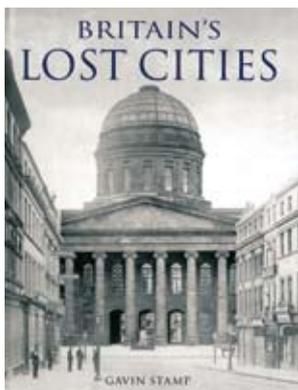
and unpack the 'art of city-making', and hence strengthen the Academy as a reflective and educative body. The three cities chosen are Dublin, Edinburgh and London; the three towns are Ludlow, Lincoln and St Ives, and this is the smallest settlement considered to be urban by the group. Alongside a mixture of figure-grounds, sketches by David Harrison and poems by Ian McMillan, the judges considerations are set out. The authors are keen to stress that this is not about the tourist's perspective, but local life, networks, 'community glue' and authenticity. Understanding what makes internal character is also studied at the neighbourhood scale in Glasgow's Merchant City, Clifton in Bristol, and Clerkenwell in London, and is very reminiscent of the Urban Villages movement of the early 1990s (with many of the same figures now in the Academy). The selected streets are Edinburgh's Royal Mile, London's Brick Lane and Marylebone High Street; the 'places where people want to be' are Borough Market (London), Brindleyplace and St Stephen's Green in Dublin.

A key concern however is that some quite substantial issues are glossed over, particularly about control and public-private ownership, perhaps masking a more general question about who this book would appeal to. At first glance it is a series of essays, but these offer a broad view across the particular places selected, without enough tangible information to meet the Academy's own aim of providing evidence-based information. Neither the processes of change nor the resultant places are 'recorded and documented' in enough detail to be of practical help, but it is clearly more than a coffee-table book. It would be useful to map the process of how and when these places have evolved in order to inspire others to see opportunities and leadership roles elsewhere. Perhaps the intention is to prompt the reader to experience the places first-hand. With the next issue to be published in winter 2008, it will be interesting to see whether the next volume's format and purpose has become clearer.

Louise Thomas

**BRITAIN'S LOST CITIES**

GAVIN STAMP, AURUM PRESS LTD, LONDON 2007, £25



ISBN 978 1 84513 264 4

The intriguing cover and title of this book conjures up Atlantis-like cities rediscovered around Britain, as long-forgotten and mythical places. The reality of its subject is the places lost to the Luftwaffe and merciless post-war planners who cleared vast areas of the cities described in the book. Gavin Stamp's intention is clear - to leave us cursing our forefathers' lack of humanity, and to muse at the urbanism that it is so hard to achieve

now. Stamp's tour covers Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Canterbury, Coventry, Dundee, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Worcester. The photographs range from single buildings which would be today's landmarks had they survived, through to attractive and busy streetscapes; the captions frequently state that 'all of these buildings were later demolished' due to bomb damage or to make way for new buildings or road schemes.

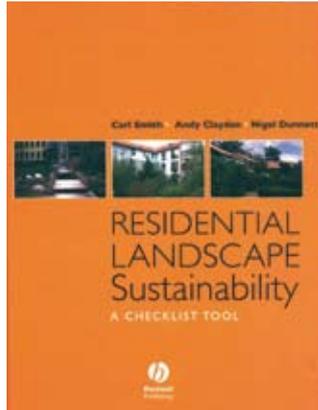
Stamp's introduction recognises the nature of cities, as places for people, activity and change. His charge is that the changes wrought by the 20th century were insensitive to existing historic centres. He cites Grainger Town and Edinburgh New Town as grand schemes where few regard the places demolished to create these re-planned areas as lost, and where the grand plans addressed their contexts positively. Only with compulsory purchase powers being exercised so freely did this change, and

he lists the bodies that pursued their redevelopment plans in many cities. 'If we are to have any chance of living at peace with the motor car, we shall need a different sort of city' warned Buchanan in 1963, but this was pursued with enthusiasm and new car-focussed cities were carved up. Stamp also blames the rise of the town planner for the loss of much of the urbanism portrayed, and sees the surveyor-engineer planner as the problem, with little interest in aesthetics (architects seem to fall into two camps). He leads the reader through this intensive history of demolition and change, and with an excellent quotation from Keith Waterhouse leaves us to judge for ourselves whether the changes were good, inevitable or disastrous. It is disappointing that he does not draw out the rise of urban design and traditional urbanism, or reflect on how future generations might view the work of the early twenty-first century and what we see as innovative.

Louise Thomas

## RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE SUSTAINABILITY: A CHECKLIST TOOL

CARL SMITH, ANDY CLAYDEN, NIGEL DUNNETT, BLACKWELL PUBLISHING, £47.50



ISBN 978 1 40515 873 2

Landscaping is one of the key elements of urban design and any book that promises a Checklist Tool would, on the face of it, appear to be both relevant and practical. *Residential Landscape Sustainability* is divided into four parts covering definitions and context, opportunities for improving sustainability, creating a checklist and a concluding set of case studies.

Following the Government's pronouncement that new homes should be carbon neutral, the book is timely. In the first part the authors note that '...Landscape architecture has a fundamental relationship with the environment; it starts with "place" and

each place has its own unique qualities and attributes' a comment that could equally well apply to urban design. A further insight is the recognition that when creating landscapes, designers need to be aware of the expectations of the wider society. It is no use pursuing a naturalistic, wild approach when the users of the landscape will view this as untidy and unkempt. Part of the contextual examination is a useful review of existing approaches to the appraisal of sustainability. Not surprisingly the conclusion is that a new checklist is needed.

The second part explores two themes: the need for conservation of resources and the minimisation of waste and pollution, and the need for a sustainable landscape to protect and enhance the ecological function of the site. This section includes the design of transport routes as part of a landscape strategy, the means of providing shade and taking advantage of solar gain. There is a detailed examination of material specification both hard and soft. The section concludes with a series of helpful pointers on the ways designers might make the acceptance of sustainable planting in the residential setting more acceptable.

It is understandable that the section

dealing with case studies focuses on two schemes only. Certainly the Greenwich Millennium village and Liverpool's Childwall provide interesting examples. But the illustrations, particularly those of Childwall are few and poor. It would have been helpful for the authors to include a typical housing scheme as a contrast to the enlightened schemes shown.

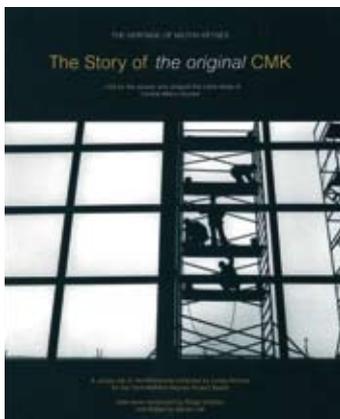
The book concludes with their checklist. This follows the established BREEAM approach by awarding credits for the provision of defined features in the subject scheme. These cover seven headings ranging from Energy to Materials, Pollution and Water. The checklist is simple and appears easy to use. It is however a pity that the authors have chosen to surround the core checklist with extensive guidance notes and references. This may well discourage practitioners from using an otherwise useful approach.

This is a thoroughly researched book: some 14 pages are devoted to references in the first three parts. It is clearly important to recognise sources but there is a point at which their number can create a serious impediment to readability. Overall a useful, if expensive book.

Richard Cole

## THE STORY OF THE ORIGINAL CMK

TOLD BY THE PEOPLE WHO SHAPED THE INITIAL IDEAS OF CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES  
ED MARION HILL, LIVING ARCHIVE, MILTON KEYNES 2007, £20



ISBN 978 0 90484 734 5

After publishing *Urban Design* issue 104 on 'Milton Keynes is 40', this book was recommended as the real story of how the city unfolded. Created

from interviews with twenty-two Milton Keynes luminaries, the book was commissioned and supported by Milton Keynes Partnership and English Partnerships.

Organised into sections on The Ideals, Preparing the Ground, Challenges, and The Team at Work, the book mixes photographs, sketches, quotes, facts and excerpts from *The Plan for Milton Keynes* (1970) into a busy scrapbook of memories and information. Less useful perhaps are the quotation boxes set out like poems, as the format implies a rhythm which is misleading and the longer quotes reveal more background. The early photographs are the most exciting, with great areas of previously 'dull' flat fields transformed into today's

city centre. The impact of the visiting experts described by Derek Walker in issue UD104 and his role in recruiting and managing designers comes across vividly. The buzz and enthusiasm of the team with this opportunity to design and build a new city is evident, along with the pressures of working in a constantly shifting commercial and political Britain. This is an intriguing and educational story about being a professional in an exciting time, making huge design decisions, fact finding, looking for supporters and watching the projects unfold. It captures the passion and shared commitment to goals of all involved. Are our 2012 Olympics designers getting that buzz today?

Louise Thomas

## CONTRIBUTORS

**John Billingham**, architect and planner, formerly Director of Design and Development at Milton Keynes Development Corporation

**Alex Cochrane** is a principal designer with Atkins Global, and a part time lecturer in urban design and masterplanning

**Richard Cole** architect and planner, formerly Director of Planning and Architecture of the Commission for New Towns

**Joe Holyoak**, architect and urban designer, Course director in urban design at University of Central England

**Tony Lloyd Jones**, architect, planner and urban designer. Principal lecturer at the University of Westminster

**Mahmud Manning** is a full-time student on the MA Urban Design course at Birmingham City University

**Alan Stones** architect-planner, urban design consultant and former Head of Design at Essex County Council

**Louise Thomas**, independent urban designer

Directory of practices, corporate organisations and urban design courses subscribing to this index. The following pages provide a service to potential clients when they are looking for specialist urban design advice, and to those considering taking an urban design course.

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Contacts Andrew Martin/  
Sophie O'Hara Smith  
Masterplans, urban design, urban regeneration, historic buildings, project management, planning, EIA, landscape planning and design.

**ANTHONY REDDY ASSOCIATES**  
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Contacts Tony Reddy, Brian O'Neill, Ronan Smith, Robert Keane  
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MA or Diploma Course in Urban Design for postgraduate architects, town planners, landscape architects and related disciplines. One year full time or two years part time.

## A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

As a child in the 1950s I lived on a busy High Street, and grew up accustomed to the daily noise generated by the shops lining the street, the Palace cinema next door, the Roebuck pub a few doors away, and the market on the next block. Daily Monday to Saturday in the daytime, that is; after 5.30 it was a lot quieter, with only pub and cinema customers coming and going, on foot, and after pub closing time, very quiet. (Sundays were quieter still. The still urban air was broken only by the St Barnabas bellringers calling the congregation to church. Between the changes, one could also hear, from a long way away, the approaching Boys' Brigade band, marching echoingly along the deserted High Street to church service.)

It's not like that now in the typical High Street. Not only is Sunday much like any other day of the week, but retail, commercial and leisure activity has extended from daytime into the night. Whether by popular demand, commercial opportunism, or government policy, we have moved some way towards the 24 hour city. Opinions vary on the virtues and utility of this, but on the whole I think our streets are better for having activity extended into more hours of the day. (Although I remain nostalgic for that empty 1950s High Street; always sunlit in my memory, with an imagined quality like a de Chirico piazza).

Parks are different. Whereas the street is legitimately a 24 hour space, the park traditionally has a clearly diurnal pattern, and is used only in daylight. Parks have enclosing fences, they may have gates, and if they are lucky enough to have a keeper, the gates may still be locked at dusk. The park at night is generally perceived as an unsafe place, where, if there is activity, it is nefarious and illicit, and maybe illegal. Both in fact and in imagination, the park at night is where murders take place. As I write, two teenagers have been given life sentences for the murder of a Goth in Stubbylee Park in Bacup. In film, an archetypal image of the park at night is still David Hemmings in *Blowup*, searching for the body in the shrubbery in Maryon Park, Woolwich, deserted and silent except for the wind sighing in the trees.

The Schools Secretary, Ed Balls, recently caused controversy when he proposed more night-time use of parks by children, including "midnight basketball" leagues, an idea imported from the USA. His motive, totally admirable, is to increase involvement in sports by children and to reduce obesity, but criticism was widespread, focussing on the established view of parks at night as locations of drug use and anti-social behaviour.

Our small local park, where I am Chair of the Friends, is making modest steps towards reclaiming the night. We have made a funding application to have floodlights installed on the all-weather playing pitch. In February we held our second annual "In the Park after Dark" event. Residents, particularly children, were invited to bring hand-held lights. Helium-filled balloons containing LED lights were tied to the railings. (Most got stolen, but that is perhaps a sort of appreciation). The local school designed, made and presented a spectacular backlit puppet show in silhouette. Hot soup and baked potatoes were consumed. Fun was had. We hope that perceptions of the nocturnal park were changed, in a small but significant way.

Joe Holyoak