120 URBAN DESIGN

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TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES

URBAN DESIGN GROUP

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

The rioting season started with a roar this year and plenty of pundits are claiming that we can redesign our cities to protect ourselves against rioters and looters – by design they probably mean more CCTV cameras, more shutters, bars and security systems, which is not how most urban designers would like to see the city evolving.

Realistically, while city riots cannot be stopped by improving public realm, other aspects of urban life can be transformed through this process. The daily walk to work or going out at lunchtime can be made into a pleasure by the quality and character of the spaces one passes through or occupies. The City of London has a very high daytime population density, a very small number of intensely used public open spaces and potentially healthy budgets to throw at improving public space, particularly around new buildings.

A new tall building in the City has been recently unveiled – Heron Tower by well-known civic architects Kohn Pederson Fox, on the corner of Bishopsgate and Camomile Street. A high profile location and designers with a track record of major urban projects – so what has happened there?

This new tower has four sides exposed to the public realm, and what occupies the ground floor of this block? Escape stairs on the most visually prominent corner, plant rooms, service areas (these things could go underground).... Oh, and entrances to the offices above and to upper level restaurants. Apart from the entrances, there is not a single metre of active frontage, no engagement with the raw space of urban footpaths – a depressingly dead building. Even the Gherkin – another pavilion concept tower surrounded by public realm – does much better than this with a good chunk of its ground level given over to retail and café uses.

Worse still, bounding the north side of the Heron Tower is a small street with shops opposite. This street was happily closed to vehicles for over a year while construction took place, a perfect opportunity to re-open it as a shared-surface or pedestrian-only space with good quality paving, street furniture and trees. But no, the kerb, channel and black-top have re-appeared, the carriageway hard up against a narrow footpath by the (now-closed) south-facing shops, with a single line of trees struggling to establish character.

Is this recession-standard high quality design? Or did the planning authorities just look the other way? We need to make the public realm better not worse in straightened times and surely London's bailed-out City should be leading here.

● Amanda Reynolds

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Urban Design Group Membership subscriptions can now be paid by direct debit. We would like to encourage all UDG members to pay in this way in preference to PayPal or cheque: it is easier for us to administer and will help to reduce the running costs of the UDG in these difficult times.

One of the tasks we all face is to convince people outside the urban design community that it is possible to improve the design of towns and cities, and that the skilled practitioner in urban design is the sort of person needed to achieve the task. I was therefore very encouraged to hear Lindsay Smales (who hosted last year's National Urban Design Conference at Leeds Met) making an appeal for a more intelligent approach to managing traffic in urban areas on the BBC Radio 4 programme "You and Yours". If we can all follow Lindsay's example, little by little, the public profile of urban design will rise.

The Urban Design Education initiative has been making very considerable progress. Katy Neaves, with the help of a number of the Universities in the UK, has produced a 34 page analysis of course content which is being circulated among the group. It will form the basis of further work running into 2012.

Louise Ingledow, the UDG Development Manager married in July, and this is a photograph of her walking through the streets of Carlisle with her new husband Mark. It is nice to celebrate her wedding in the journal, as she contributes so much through her hard work and determination. But more than this, it is a wonderful reminder of what streets can be used for. This year we have seen streets providing the stage for the worst aspects of human nature and the best. And though urban design can get bogged down in a dehumanised discussion of plot-ratios, permeability, density and so on, we should remember that people and life are its ultimate purpose.

● Robert Huxford

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Tel 020 7250 0872/0892
Email admin@udg.org.uk

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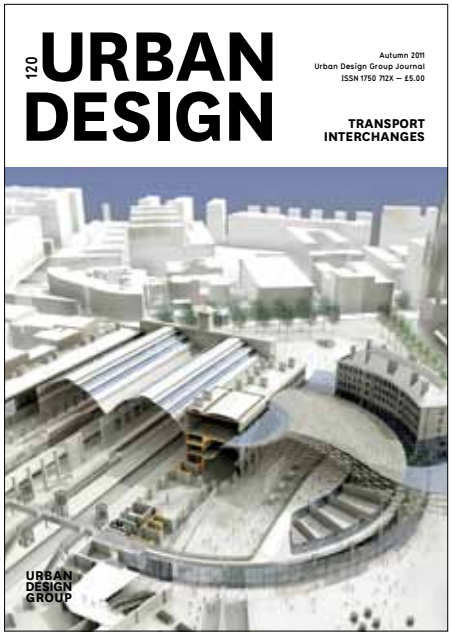
CONTENTS

This issue has been generously sponsored by URBAN INITIATIVES

COVER
King's Cross Station, (Image by John McAslan + Partners)

FUTURE ISSUES
Issue 121 – The Developer and Urban Design
Issue 122 – Temporary Urbanism



ERRATUM
In Issue 119 the cover photograph and lower image on page 21 are not by Ripin Kalra as stated, but by photographer Swati Singhal.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Unless otherwise indicated, all LONDON events are held at The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ at 6.30 pm. Tickets on the door from 6.00pm. £3.00 for full price UDG members and £7.00 for non-members; £1.00 for UDG member students and £3.00 for non-member students. For further details see www.udg.org.uk/events/udg

THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER
Transport Interchanges
Based on the current issue of Urban Design, this event will look at recent new build and refurbishment transport interchange projects, considering examples of current best practice.

20-22 OCTOBER 2011
The National Conference on Urban Design 2011: Cities 2030 - Live, Work, Play
Taking place at venues around Greenwich and Deptford, including the Stirling Prize winning Laban Dance Centre, the 2011 conference will address how we work towards creating viable, lively and sustainable cities for the future, with – on the eve of the Olympics – a particular focus on how such major events can bring about real and durable change. With first rate speakers, original research findings, tours and exciting venues, the UDG conference brings together the whole urban design community - not to be missed!

TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2011
Urban Design Communication
Exploring the latest strategies, techniques and technologies for the most effective communication in urban design with Bally Meeda of Urban Graphics (author of Graphics for Urban Design) and Janine Tijou, Director of architectural visualisation experts Design Hive.

WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2011
Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture 2011: Christopher Alexander
Christopher Alexander, architect, theorist and winner of the UDG lifetime achievement award for 2011, in conversation with the UDG's patron John Worthington. Christopher will discuss his career, his tremendously significant and influential 'pattern language' and his forthcoming new book. Advance registration required - additional fee applies.

WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2011
East Midlands Airport, 6–7.30pm, UK's Greenest Hotel Welcomes UDG
UDG East Midlands with North West Leicestershire District Council, East Midlands Airport and Radisson Blu is offering members a tour of this new hotel to explore its sustainability credentials.

Opened in October 2011, Radisson Blu's £22m hotel at East Midlands Airport has 216 bedrooms and a BREEAM Excellent rating, complementing the airport's aspiration for ground operations to be carbon neutral by 2012. Designed by Leach Rhodes Walker, the hotel is powered and heated by a tri-generation combined heat and power plant with surplus power exported to the grid; the hotel is expected to achieve an 88% reduction in CO_2 compared to a traditional build. It also has rainwater harvesting, motion sensitive lighting and a 62,500 litre capacity underground storage surface water tank. See www.radissonblu.co.uk/hotel-eastmidlandsairport

Places are free but booking essential. Email Laura Alvarez by 16 November 2011: udgeastmidlands@hotmail.co.uk.

DECEMBER 2011
UDG CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION
Date and venue TBC.

INSPIRATION AND LOCALISM: GETTING THE MESSAGE

This issue looks at Transport Interchanges, where stepping from the street into a bus or train is usually a hard-won design challenge. Like good design itself, interchanges should be so simple that we barely notice how convenient they are; yet the rarity of good design interchange means that it is always a novelty and pleasant surprise when places, people and transport work well together.

With more locally-driven decision-making taking place, would it be optimistic to hope that this people-first approach will become the predominant demand amongst new local voices? A recent example presents a dilemma in how urban design can inspire but also confuse local thinking. Earlier this year, Graham Paul Smith, frustrated by Oxford City Council's plans for a substantial new housing area outside the city's 'ring road', organised a local conference to examine the issues around how it would be joined into the city's urban fabric. As part of the discussion the audience heard how travel patterns no longer respect traditional urban structures, how this ring road had isolated other peripheral communities, but was also not the fast moving urban motorway it was designed as. It was clear that a boulevard design was needed to urbanise and slow the road, join the new and existing neighbourhoods together, give a highly visible space for supporting retail units, and ensure that this new community had an urban to suburban to rural cross-section, rather than just be developed as a housing estate. However, this logic was subsequently lost on commentators in the local press declaring the boulevard a terrible compromise – the worst of all worlds – why not create a buffer for the new development with greenery instead?

It has been disappointing to see how short-sighted these local views are; instead of choosing good urban design, there is a danger that the safe no-design option will prevail. Is this what localism will produce? How can we engender trust in urban designers' visions and put good design back into the planning process?

Happily, this issue also features this year's shortlisted Practice case study and Publishers' Awards, illustrating the breadth and scale of ideas that are being explored at this time elsewhere!

● Louise Thomas

Urban Design Group
CHAIRMAN Amanda Reynolds
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Office
Urban Design Group
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ
Tel 020 7250 0872/0892
Email admin@udg.org.uk
Website www.udg.org.uk

Editorial Board
John Billingham, Matthew Carmona, Tim Catchpole, Richard Cole, Alastair Donald, Tim Hagyard, Joe Holyoak, Liezel Kruger, Sebastian Loew, Jane Manning, Malcolm Moor, Judith Ryser, Louise Thomas

Editors
Louise Thomas (this issue) and Sebastian Loew
louisethomas@tdrc.co.uk
sebastianloew@btinternet.com
Book Review Editor
Richard Cole

Design
trockenbrot (Claudia Schenk and Anja Sicka)
www.trockenbrot.com

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London's Public Spaces

The Gallery, London, 15 June 2011

Three contrasting yet complementary speakers shared the platform in front of a packed audience to present their views on London's public spaces. First was Lindsey Whitelaw who has had substantial practical experience of designing shared spaces and shared surfaces. After indicating that these already had a fairly long history in London (the Seven Dials scheme is about 30 years old), she gave eight lessons drawn from her experience. These include the need to have political support at high level (Cllr Daniel Moylan for instance), an integrated multi-disciplinary team from the start, engagement with stakeholders and a parking strategy, to avoid mixed messages, to think about servicing the space and services below ground, and to have an ongoing commitment to maintenance and management.

Anna Minton, the second speaker, author of *Ground Control* and contributor to Issue 118 of UD (p.24), gave a polemic talk on the privatisation of public space, which she sees as fundamentally linked to a form of regeneration that has turned the city from a publicly and democratic space to a private consumer oriented realm. She indicated the economic and policy origins of the change, used examples to illustrate her points and argued that misconceptions about people's feelings about security and comfort, were used to justify the policies. Her view of the future was gloomy even though she had some hope that the Mayor of London would encourage local authorities to adopt all new public realm.

Matthew Carmona, topic editor for issue 118, gave a much more upbeat view of London's public spaces and started by responding to the previous view by asking 'But is it really that bad?' His evidence based research which looked at a large sample of spaces, indicates that it is not. He went through a series of questions: Is London's public space neglected, invaded, exclusionary, insular, privatised, invented, scary, homogenised? And every time the answer was 'not really, though there may be problems'. In many cases when dealing with neglect, Matthew indicated that the way London had always been managed meant that sometimes spaces were cared for and others were not. Similarly he observed that some spaces were private and some

public, but their appeal to the public did not reflect this; some of the most valued spaces were private and some public ones were highly controlled. His views were subtly balanced and his conclusion was that the situation could be better, and corresponded to the complexities of a global city. An animated debate between the three speakers and the audience followed, concluding a most stimulating evening.

● Sebastian Loew

India

The Gallery, London,13 July 2011

It has been a couple of years since the UK's now defunct Sustainable Development Commission published *Prosperity without Growth* – effectively a Green-led cheer for austerity. In the meantime, many of us have struggled with the *lack* of growth, and increasingly designers have looked east. Compared with flatlining western cities, the likes of China and India offer not only the practical prospect of work, but also the chance to engage with an urban context that has a genuine sense of vibrancy and dynamism.

Gathering some of the contributors to the timely recent India issue of *Urban Design*, topic editor Malcolm Moor introduced the evening with some statistics; a birth rate (more than 50 per cent higher than China) which underpins the country's youthful effervescence; a rate of urbanisation that will result in 51 cities of 1+ million people and 10 megacities of 10 million people or more; and the emergence of a new scale of planning, evident in the 1500km Delhi – Mumbai growth corridor. You would need a heart of stone not to be enthused by this historic moment which will see millions move off the land, out of poverty, and hopefully up to western standards of living.

Of course there is history too, and it was the interaction of past and present that motivated the two main speakers. Noha Nasser of Greenwich University noted that Indian cities such as Chandigarh emerged when European modernists such as Le Corbusier started to work globally, and then posed an interesting question: what lessons might Europeans learn from India today? Next, aided by some beautifully presented graphics, Darshana Gothi looked at historical examples of campus planning, seeking lessons for future greenfield development.

Underlying each talk was a question as to the merits of universalising approaches to design and this provided a focus for the discussion that followed. Having criticised the masterplanning of Chandigarh for failing to respond to specific Indian climatic and cultural mores, Dr Nasser found herself under fire for a 'knowledge transfer programme' that exported to India some rather generic modern housing. Alas, no one questioned the accompanying sustainability frameworks, betraying that opposition to western exports is somewhat selective.

In the end, I was not convinced that the criticisms of generic housing and modernist-inspired campus development were rooted in the quality of specific developments. Rather they seemed more a defence of the assumed benefits of tradition and indigenous values – which, ironically, represent the types of cultural restrictions that modernising countries are often keen to escape from. It is an interesting debate that was heating up nicely when the plug was pulled on the evening, so I look forward to the second UDG India event in early 2012.

● Alastair Donald, co-editor of The Lure of the City: From Slums to Suburbs (Pluto 2011)

The Changing Face of Modern Britain, Professor Danny Dorling

The Gallery, London, 1 July 2011

For those of us who have came to urban design via geography, this expansive talk was particularly engaging and although the audience was small, the range and depth of questions exceeded that of many other evenings.

Danny Dorling is Professor of Geography at University of Sheffield and a social commentator with a media profile. He was authoritatively provocative railing against conventional wisdoms, such as that the poor pass on their poorness, or that money won't solve poverty.

He saw that from the 1920s to 1970s there had been a reduction in UK inequality enabled by the exploitation of poorer countries; but from the early 1970s we hit the limits of growth, and UK inequality increased as the dominant South East sought to maintain its wealth. But now the party is over, and there is no recovery happening, just like the 1930s. Inequality is increasing particularly at the bottom as benefits and state pensions are cut, leaders cling to a naïve hope of growth and trickle-down benefits to the poorest.

So what are we to do? One action would be to consolidate what we have, such as the valuable infrastructure investment in urban areas e.g. sewer systems. Demolishing existing housing is a neglect of this great resource. People should be encouraged to only have one home – we don't recognise how much housing is lost as second or third homes. There should be greater incentives to use the nearest school and also to limit the number of different jobs people do. Finally we must stop looking backwards – a problem for the UK as a former world power; comparisons with the Dutch who were once the global power before us, show that they are doing well now.

A long discussion followed Professor Dorling's talk with questions ranging from the intelligence of the general public; selfishness; climate change; urban design work; collaborative consumption; to the Big Society. A response was that Britain is uniquely troubled by inequality due to a more settled history, whereas strife and war-torn neighbours gained more common feeling and so valued greater equality. Consumption is not the answer, but we must help people to feel good about themselves in order to consume less. Change is always possible when realisation dawns, such as when wealthy landowners invested in sewers in the nineteenth century for the public good, as they understood their own increased vulnerability to disease without sanitation. Will environmental limits now lead to another similar shift?

Challenged to agree that some places have lost their economic rational, Dorling argued that London itself may already have done so. Burnley was mentioned frequently and the message seemed clear – we don't need to give up on places yet.

The evening may have left some without a sense of exactly how urban designers can tackle such inequalities, but as Robert Huxford concluded, in understanding class, wealth and inequality there is little else of less relevance to place-making.

● Tim Hagyard

Remembering Steve Tiesdell, 1964-2011

Steve Tiesdell died on the 30th June after an illness that he had bravely fought for 12 months. As well as a personal tragedy for his family and many friends, Steve's passing represents a huge loss for our field of urban design.

Steve was a person with an untapped enthusiasm for all things urban. His curiosity, huge knowledge of the field, incisive analysis and great humour made him a fantastic companion with whom to explore cities, both literally and intellectually. These were qualities that he brought to his teaching and writing as anyone who has ever attended a talk by Steve, or had an office anywhere in his vicinity, will know – Steve lectured more enthusiastically and typed louder than anyone I know. Both were a consequence of his great passion for the subject. Keyboards didn't last long when Steve was around!

After a childhood in Suffolk, Steve went to the University of Nottingham to study first architecture and then urban planning. In this he was a pioneer in a joint route through the two disciplines; and a number of others and I followed in his wake. Steve worked in practice as an architect, before returning to Nottingham as a lecturer and to do his PhD. After Nottingham he taught at Sheffield, Aberdeen and latterly Glasgow in, respectively, departments of architecture & planning, planning, real estate and urban studies, demonstrating that Steve was always ready to both cross and challenge the divides that so dominate our discipline.

In almost 20 years of teaching, Steve will have touched and profoundly influenced the lives of thousands of students from these disciplines, and to each he argued the case for the importance of a place-based view of the world, one in which design can have both a positive or negative impact, but should never be ignored. His impact will be even greater through his books and other writings, including important contributions to the literature on safer cities, revitalising historic quarters, design and real estate, public space, urban design process, placemaking... the list goes on. Each contribution was carefully researched and crafted, from the robustness of the argument, to the positioning of the last comma (about which Steve was an authority, as many students and academic collaborators will know to their cost !!!).

Steve had many more contributions to make and his passing at just 47 is tragically young for one with so much more to offer. Steve will be sorely missed by all who knew him, but his work will remain, continuing to enlighten us all for many, many years to come.

● Matthew Carmona

1 See Steve's article on the Urban Renaissance, Issue 108, p16

Urban Design Group's Annual General Meeting

The Gallery, London, 15 June 2011

TRUSTEES REPORT

This has been another good year for the UDG, with membership numbers remaining steady, albeit with a net loss of practice and local authority members, and many initiatives developing the UDG's profile:

DIGITISATION OF URBAN DESIGN

The digitisation of back issues of *Urban Design* is underway. The scanning stage has been completed and the next step is to take these scans and turn them into pdf documents – the first ten issues are already available on the UDG website.

URBAN DESIGN DIRECTORY

John Billingham coordinated the 2011 Directory in which 44 practices and 14 urban design courses were listed, and copies went to 3,000 addresses in the UK and internationally.

THE URBAN DESIGN AWARDS – FRANCIS TIBBALDS PRIZE

The Awards Group, led by John Billingham, augmented the Urban Design Group's Awards in 2010 with new awards for Public Sector work, Publishers for urban design books, Journalists and an individual's Lifetime Achievement, in addition to the established Practice and Student Awards. The first large scale Awards Ceremony was on 2 February 2011 at the Royal United Services Institute on Whitehall, sponsored by publishers Routledge and Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects, winner of the preceding year's Practice Award. These awards continue to receive the generous support of the Francis Tibbalds Trust which provides financial prizes in the Practice, Student and Journalist categories, and February 2012 will see the next group of winners selected and celebrated.

THE EDUCATION GROUP

An Education Group was established in July 2010, led by Katy Neaves and Duncan Ecob and with the participation of John Billingham, Sophie Burtt and Barry Sellers as well as Bob Jarvis and Noha Nasser representing universities. The first event was convened at the National Conference 2010 and an Education Symposium was held in Birmingham in May 2011 attended by representatives of 11 different courses from England, Wales and Scotland. The conclusions and full report of this gathering are to be circulated; this will form the basis of the UDG's education policy.

EVENTS GROUP

The events group, led by Paul Reynolds and Colin Munsie, maintained the varied programme of events offered by the Urban Design Group throughout the year featuring a range of speakers from around the UK and beyond. Highlights included the 2010 Annual Conference at Leeds Metropolitan University – *Urban Design on the Edge*. It was extremely well attended and the collaboration of Lindsay Smales, Edwin Knighton and others from the university was invaluable for the success of the event. The UDG Christmas Party was held at the Brunel Museum in Rotherhithe and included a visit to the main shaft of the Thames Tunnel, and the 2010 Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture was given by Sir Richard MacCormac, one of the UDG's new patrons.

The UDG is greatly indebted to all volunteers around the UK who run events in their area including:

- Scotland – Francis Newton, Jo White and Laurie Mentiplay running several events in both Edinburgh and Glasgow
- East Midlands – Laura Alvarez's highly successful Shared Space event in Nottingham in October 2010
- North East – Georgia Giannopoulou holding two events on Transition Towns and university based issues
- Yorkshire – Robert Thompson will be developing a new regional network over the coming months.

UDG PATRONS

The UDG has appointed four new patrons over the course on the past year. Irena Bauman, Sir Richard MacCormac, Helle Sohølt and Lindsey Whitelaw have now joined existing patrons Alan Baxter, Dickon Robinson and John Worthington. The group looks forward to their future involvement over the coming months and years.

URBAN DESIGN STUDY TOUR

This year's excellent study tour visited a number of towns in Tuscany and Umbria, exploring the impact of the Cittaslow movement in Italy, led by Executive Committee member Alan Stones, for over 40 practitioners and enthusiasts.

RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Mike Biddulph, recipient of the UDG's first research funding, is reaching the end of his study which looked at the impact of 'Manual for Streets'. An initial event summarising the research findings was held in January and a presentation will also be made at the 2011 conference.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

The email newsletter service is now received by 1,500 individuals. It provides a monitoring service of government websites across the UK, as well as research in areas that add to urban design including psychology, sociology, public health, technology and economics.

WEBSITE

A new website for the Urban Design Group has been created by UDG Member and enthusiast Edward Povey, with support from JMP. It will provide a better service to members, making information and resources more accessible and enabling new features to be added, such as a blog, the incorporation of news items covered in the email newsletter and the complete archive of back issues of the journal.

STREET YOUNG URBAN DESIGNERS NETWORK

Led by Katy Neaves, STREET London has gone from strength to strength over the past year, with popular walking tours around London and a cycle trip along the Thames Path.
A new STREET network in the North West, co-ordinated by Emma Zukowski, has already held a number of events and walking tours too.

FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28 FEBRUARY 2011

	2011 Totals
INCOMING RESOURCES	
Subscriptions	£78,784
Publications and Awards	£31,648
Donation from Urban Design Services Ltd	£5,049
UDSL Contribution to Office Costs	£5,000
Activities to Generate Funds	
Interest Received	£549
Inland Revenue: Gift Aid	£4,314
Miscellaneous Income	£581
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	£125,925
RESOURCES EXPENDED	
Publications & Awards	£51,789
General	£77,351
Development Expenditure	£2,500
Governance costs (accountancy)	£1,560
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	£133,200
NET INCOMING RESOURCES AND NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	(£7,275)
FUND BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD	£128,801
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD	£121,526
CURRENT ASSETS	**£143,367**
CURRENT LIABILITIES	**£21,842**
TOTAL NET ASSETS	**£121,526**








Changing Chelmsford – Collaborative Urbanism

This summer event was the inaugural UDG event held jointly with the Academy of Urbanism and the Royal Society of Arts. The speakers were Roger Estop, Stephanie Mills, Malcolm Webb, Barry Shaw and Professor John Worthington.

The context was the concept of Collaborative Urbanism, which was a term applied to the process of public participation, undertaken in conjunction with the development plan process at Chelmsford, Essex. It was called Changing Chelmsford and was an exercise in discovering how to make Chelmsford a sustainable place through developing a strategic vision.

The traditional planning process requirements were considered to fall short of what was required. Planning needed to support and enhance economic success, then ensure a more equitable distribution of resources. It needed to be part of process of managing and moderating change. Time was critical: the objective was to create meaningful spaces with local people.

John Worthington outlined three barriers to collaborative urbanism:

- centralised decision-making - financial controls over budgets from Treasury
- an adversarial culture - planning appeals, lawyers involved in legal challenges
- Dependency culture - the notion that there is someone to do it for us

We need a process that achieves a better balance between participatory and regulatory democracy. Collaborative Urbanism is an iterative process from community consultation to co-production. There needed to be continuous community engagement whereby an agreed set of values emerged which informed design thinking. All members of the community (accountants, shopkeepers, residents, etc) need to be able to fulfil their role in design thinking as part of a co-production to achieve results.

The process has formed the thinking behind the Changing Chelmsford initiative, a collaboration between four partners: Chelmsford Borough Council, The Academy of Urbanism, The Essex Design Initiative and the Royal Society of Arts.

Stephanie Mills was the curator and project manager. She described the origins of the process in 2008 following a decision by the eastern region of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) to set up a network of residents, as part of the process of preparing an Area Action Plan. It was agreed to work with the various organisations within Chelmsford, and Derek Stebbing from the council was invited to discuss the plan. Seven specific issues were identified to get involved in, and there was an overall view that Chelmsford was not a deprived town, but that there was a perceived uncertainty about its identity.

Barry Shaw (Essex Design Initiative) was engaged in helping the delivery of the Action Area Plan. For him it was about working to defining the character and cultural life of the town as well as its physical form, and Derek Stebbing described a democratic deficit in the town centre. For those living in the surrounding areas, there are parish councils, but there was no such mechanism in the centre of the town. The initiative's role was therefore to bring the various sectors together, and a Steering Group was set up to promote community engagement in the town centre.

The Group had three aims:

- to strengthen the forum
- engage the local community
- involve leading thinkers – people with experience in comparative towns

The first conference took place in September 2009, at which Charles Landry gave a talk on the 'art of city-making'. The event was successful in stimulating people's imagination. Barry Shaw indicated that the process was no longer about blueprint planning but about developing a structure to give direction and vision. The RSA Group was helpful in stimulating new ideas and reinvigorating the local Civic Society. They were interested in getting ideas that were fresh and distinctive, a creative initiative that stood alongside politics and bureaucracy. The group learned from other towns, involved the university, gave briefings to leaders of Chelmsford and Essex County Council, established an events programme and the branding 'Reimagining Chelmsford' was born.

wThe events programme involved eleven events over five weeks, including eight workshops, 120 participants, a shared identity and a collaborative web site, www.changingchelmsford.wordpress.com. Over one hundred ideas were generated and this seeded self-organising initiatives based around the arts, education and learning, environment and empowering communities. These included: Transition Town Chelmsford; Young Urban Explorers – mapping underutilised or vacant space in the town; Creative adaptive reuse of key buildings including the Shire Hall, Marconi factory (site of the first radio broadcast on 15 June 1920) and Anne Knight buildings; Establishing a UniverCities project, to link Chelmsford's learning providers with practitioners, researchers, businesses, public and private organisations; a Fringe Festival and various arts initiatives including finding temporary studio space.

John Worthington concluded that the process undertaken had implications for wider practice, as a way to:

- engage civic society and harness responsible participation
- break down barriers and integrate public, private and civic sectors
- increase awareness and understanding, clarifying choices and easing decision making
- move from regulation to change management
- generate leadership and participation through the small scale and incremental
- show how localism can work with the planning process, with community led plans and strategies, and
- secure cultural inclusion as part of the development process

● Barry Sellers

Sustainable Development and Wellbeing

This year's Planning Summer School in September at Swansea University cleverly brought together elected members with planning responsibilities and officers for the Planning Summit. It proved good timing as planning was on very many people's lips, thanks to George Osborne's article in the Financial Times, decrying objections to the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The summit was opened by Adrian Penfold of British Land, who set the NPPF in context and summarised the subtle but significant shift in government planning policy. From the Open Source Planning document of March 2010 to today's draft NPPF, we have moved from localism and communities being at the heart of planning, to economic growth and development instead. This has revealed a dichotomy: local people are being encouraged to take control, yet with fewer frameworks in place to support them. There is a clear division between those who are able to get involved in localism, and those for whom it is beyond their horizons. How localism might be embraced touched upon financial incentives (TIFFs, CILs, etc), but with the development industry struggling to borrow and make sufficient profits, this is unlikely to guarantee appealing 'payouts' to local communities. If planning is society-led, what does today's society or communities want, and how will they communicate this?

Workshop sessions followed, one of which was led by Bruno Moore of Sainsburys plc, discussing very interesting case studies from the large audience. A very common theme was that while peripheral supermarkets are often seen as draining life from local high streets, central stores can save smaller towns from dwindling footfall. Moore conceded that the in-house design team were briefed to design stores around the car, which suggests that better urban design rests with the local authority, which may or may not feel empowered to ask for appropriate design modifications. It is pertinent that there is much to do to civilise peripheral retail parks too, as we will be stuck with them for some time yet.

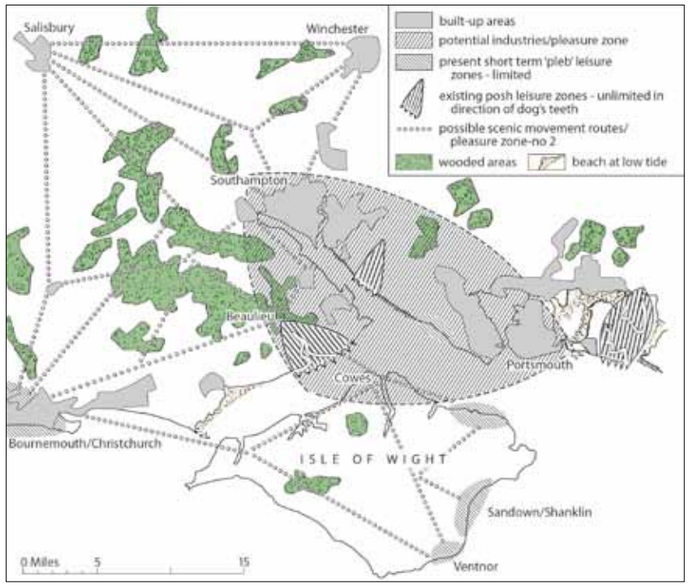
However the most interesting session was the Big Debate on the definition of sustainable development – in the context of the NPPF – at first glance a rather dry topic, but which in fact explored three distinct visions. Liz Peace of the British Property Federation (BPF), who has been quoted widely over the summer, set out the BPF's desire for a simplified planning system to enable the developers of brownfield regeneration schemes to deliver better places. Where a local plan is not up-to-date (and an earlier audience poll suggested that these may be the majority), there would be a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development'. She argued that sustainable development, like many key policy ideas before, can be defined by government now, and enacted upon by industry. Given the concerns voiced by Simon Jenkins, the National Trust and CPRE about concreting over England and the relaxation of policies to prevent this, this definition is the nub of the issue...

A passionate Angus McIntosh of Jones Lang Lasalle showed how our strategy for growth has led us astray with statistics linking home ownership and debt to economic performance. He demonstrated that England, the US, Spain and Ireland had unstable economies, while Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland where long term renting is more prevalent, have remained less troubled. Concerned that the weight of sustainability standards required of developments continues to render them unviable, he raised whole-life energy costing as a better way to reappraise how sustainable our development industry is. Moreover, the rapid turnover of planning minsters was a key indicator of short-termism in policy-making, rendering sustainability unachievable; he called for a 25 year sustainable governance timeline and the adoption of transition town principles.

However the most engaging argument came from Clive Bates of the Welsh Government Sustainable Futures Group, who has had the mean task of defining sustainable development as a central organising principle for decision-making in Wales. His work had led him to a simple definition and overall objective: the well-being of today's people as well as in the future. Nature and ecology were clearly part of the wellbeing concept – strategically as well as on a day-to-day level. Wellbeing, or 'the absence of misery' as it had first been termed, has also been studied by the Sarkozy Commission, and demands a careful rethink of policies presenting tough political choices. Applying the concept of sustainable development properly impacts, for example, upon whether we put complying with air quality regulations over preserving a major employer, or deal with crime or ill-health once it is a problem, or actively manage and educate society to avoid them. Bates showed however that managing political ambitions and agendas in this way is a long term plan, as the environment soon loses support once the economy falters. The Welsh Government is to be applauded for taking this bold action throughout all areas of its work.

The debate concluded that the NPPF is not disastrous, but with the kind of definition that Wales has adopted, it offers the opportunity for society or local communities to develop a shared vision, which with strong leadership could be implemented over the long term.

● Louise Thomas



The Urban Design Library # 2

Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom (New Society 338, March 20, 1969) by Paul Barker, Cedric Price, Peter Hall & Reyner Banham

If we set to one side the current glut of house make-over programmes on television, it is fair to say that planning and architecture do not often make it into the popular media. But about every decade or so, something breaks through, for example *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), *From Bauhaus to Our House* (1981), or *Edge City* (1991), all, notably, written by journalists.

This issue's classic text is from the 1970s: Published in 1969 in the magazine New Society, 'Non-Plan: an Experiment in Freedom' was a collaborative article written by journalist Paul Barker (also deputy editor of the magazine) architect Cedric Price, urban geographer Peter Hall and architectural historian and critic Reyner Banham.

Admittedly, the instalment came a little early, but by 1969, as many said, the sixties had already ended. Nixon was in the White House, Labour was on its way out and the Summer of Love and solidarity of the student protests was breaking up into the shards of the Weathermen, the Angry Brigade and Baader-Meinhof gang. Within architecture and planning, the reaction against CIAM orthodoxy by Team Ten and others had become mainstream. In 1966 Robert Venturi and Aldo Rossi had completed the key texts of what would later be dubbed Post-Modernism (Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, and The Architecture of the City), and by 1969 the UK and US were immersed in Pop Culture, a preoccupation wonderfully codified in *Learning from Las Vegas* (Venturi, Scott-Brown and Izenour).

Non-Plan paid tribute to Las Vegas for its unabashed vitality but was more radical in its interpretation of what the city represented. The central proposition of the article is clearly stated in the title: do away with the planning system and let people build what they want, where they want. The underlying questions are, would things really be any worse than they are if we didn't have a planning system? Why do we need to impose ideals, particularly aesthetic ideals on people?

These are questions worth asking any time but it was particularly pointed in Britain in 1969. To understand why, it is useful to recall the deep and rich seam of discontent with contemporary development going back to the fifties, in particular embodied in the 'Townscape' movement. John Betjeman, Thomas Sharp, Gordon Cullen and most excoriatingly, Ian Nairn voiced a collective despair at the creeping banality of modern development – overseen by the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.

In caricature, 'Townscape' and 'Non-Plan' were two opposite responses to the problem: more control on the one hand, less on the other. But that caricature sweeps away the important question that 'Non Plan' posed: is planning really doing what we want it to do? Clearly the answer for Barker et al was a resounding NO and their response was to ditch it altogether. Well, perhaps not altogether: they acknowledge the need for economic planning and opted for limited 'zones' in which planning regulations would be removed – an experiment that clearly foreshadowed Michael Heseltine's 1982 Enterprise Zones, which applied the idea, only on a much smaller scale.

In describing how development might pan out in the Non-Plan zones, the authors provide shockingly accurate predictions, hammering home the central premise that we seem to end up with the same thing with or without the fuss of planning.

Re-reading *Non-Plan* you can hear chimes of recognition: campaigns for design guides to preserve local distinctiveness, promotion of public participation in planning, and the hope that information technology (cybernetics) will help solve our problems. *Non-Plan* also seems to chime with the underlying ideas of the Localism Bill. One is tempted to think the authors of *Non-Plan* were naïve about who would be in a position to exercise the freedom in their experiment. By the evidence of virtually all development since 1969, you would have to be cripplingly jejune to think it was Parish Councils or individuals, except in the most affluent areas. And you get the sense that while Barker et al might have underestimated the extent to which Pop Culture would become the self-combusting fuel of corporate interests, they knew who would be in control and didn't care. In fact, it was the care and fuss of planning they wanted to eliminate. They didn't feel the need to worry because they saw unplanned, ordinary environments of whatever period as a positive alternative, fascinating and pleasurable because they just work – spontaneous, local and imperfect, a particularly English/ British version of the Japanese idea of wabi-sabi.

There remains much to chew over from *Non-Plan*, as the maniacal vibrancy of the Las Vegas strip is compressed into the non-place realm of the interwebs, and where the corporate culture of the LARGE leans in mutual support against institutions addicted to endless reports, consultations and strategies. We might reflect, too, that the demographic bulge in '69 wanted to see progress but they – and many others – now prefer the peace of their quiet garden undisturbed by development. That is the radical sequel to *Non-Plan*. It is not planning, but NO DEVELOPMENT AT ALL.

In the end, if I were to come up with a new experiment in freedom, it would be to give real control to Parish, Town and City Councils – not merely planning powers but fiscal and financial freedoms. Like *Non-Plan*, the focus should be on the economy to give the incentive for local action and co-operation to build regional infrastructure and a broad-based mix of activities from forestry and energy production to manufacturing, services and tourism. Let people get on with making a living. Trying to instil vitality in a place by design alone, as is the current orthodoxy, is window dressing in a shop that has nothing to sell.

● **Karl Kropf**

Read on

Nairn, I. (1968) *Nairn's London* (Penguin, London)
Koolhaas, R. (1994) 'What ever happened to urbanism' in Koolhaas and Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (Monacelli Press, New York)
Barker, P. (2009) *The Freedoms of Suburbia* (Frances Lincoln, London)

The Urban Design Interview: Riccardo Bobisse

What is your current job and how long have you been there?
I am a Principal Urban Designer at JMP where I lead the urban design team. I have been working for them since the early 2007. At the time I was the first non-engineer or planner there! We started from add-on streetscape jobs for our engineers and have gradually grown, now winning work for our engineers and expanding into wider urban design studies and masterplanning.

Can you describe the path that you followed to become an urban designer and what motivated you?
Well, it was quite a winding path… despite a long interest in cities and architecture, I graduated from university in Venice with a degree in Business Administration, with a dissertation on airport logistics. I then worked in IT for a large multinational firm. After 5 years I decided I wanted to do something more useful and creative, so I looked back at my old vocation and applied for a MSc in Urban Regeneration at the Bartlett. I loved the urban design module on the course, so, after a relatively short work experience for Haringey Council, I started a second Masters, this time in Urban Design at Westminster. There I met Paul Smith, who at the time was an Associate Director at JMP and was thinking of setting up an urban design team. We both agreed that integrating the different disciplines was a powerful idea, so we did it!

What do you find exciting about your work?
The best thing is the wide range of people you meet and the variety of contexts, situations and problems you face. Every scheme is different, and it's exciting to identify the right balance of ingredients to allow a place to work.

What do you think are the most important skills of an urban designer?
Listening, listening, and more listening. Isn't that the difference between urban design and architecture!? A strong ability to synthesise information, clear communication and negotiation skills are also essential.

What would you like to be doing in ten years' time?
Be a Mayor. Running a city would be the ultimate fetish for anyone involved with designing public spaces and new neighbourhoods.

As an urban designer, do you have a role model?
That's a difficult one. I prefer to think about books and ideas, otherwise I end up mentioning Che Guevara or Peppino Impastato! Sticking to urban design, I suppose I really like the Richard Sennett, author of The Uses of Disorder. The text exudes a deep love for the democratic value of public spaces, which should be central to any scheme.

If you were to recommend an urban design scheme or study (past or present) for an award, what would you chose?
It would definitely have to be a street markets. They are incredibly difficult spaces to deal with without prejudicing their character. Their energy, opportunity for discovery and micro-scale socio-economic significance is amazing. If it was possible to identify its designer I'd say Borough Market (despite it is now deteriorating as too many love it and big chains have started moving in). If that doesn't count, well then I'd say Whitecross Street Market, near Old Street, for its beautifully effective simplicity.

Where is your favourite town or city and why?
Pienza, (shown below) the organic yet rational utopian city of the Renaissance. Then I'd say Alingsas. It's a little town near Gothenburg. Nothing really exciting, except during their festival of lights. The space changes completely and shows the potential of lighting in shaping space.

Where is your most hated place and why?
Old Street Roundabout; a stubborn monument to traffic in one of the most prominent locations in Central London. The surviving private squares of the capital do annoy me as well. It's amazing that the public only have one or two chances a year to enjoy these spaces.

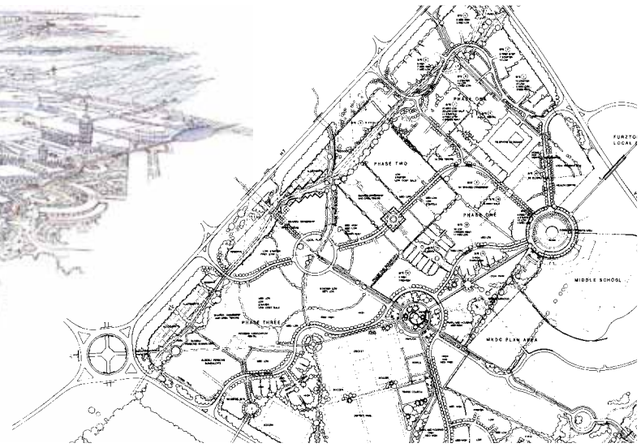
What advice would you give to UD readers?
Go back to see how people use the place you've helped to shape, ideally after some time. That is best learning exercise you can ever have; comparing your expectations to reality.

What should the Urban Design Group be doing now or in the future?
Increase its visibility. Many in the business still ask me what the Group is. Also, while it's important to differentiate the UDG from the other organisations, I do believe it is also important to seek opportunities for collaboration with other bodies promoting good urban design, including RIBA, RTPI, and Design for London.

Finally, who would you like to see interviewed by UD?
Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs would be great. It would be great to hear their take on real-life communities, as opposed to the digital communities they work so hard to create. If I have to stay local, I would say the lighting designer Mark Major, his book (co-authored with Speirs and Tischhauser) *Made of Light* is an eye-opener on the relationship between light and space.

CELEBRATING THE WORK OF JOHN SEED (1939-2011)

Andy Hiorns describes the work of master planning architect John Seed who died earlier this year



John was part of that unique cohort of highly talented architects attracted to building the new city of Milton Keynes in the 1970s under the leadership of chief architect-planner Derek Walker. John's early work included plans to conserve and develop the 13 ancient villages captured by the new town, and each plan accompanied by illustrations of quintessential English life.

John prepared grid square master plans for many areas of Milton Keynes, for example Pennylands (also designing experimental passive solar housing), large parts of the north-eastern flank of the city at Bolbeck Park, Giffard Park, and Willen, developing his characteristic rational geometries, with curvilinear tree-lined avenues, circuses, crescents and squares – in the English garden city tradition of Louis de Soissons – creating a soft, legible and forgiving (of the house builders) form.

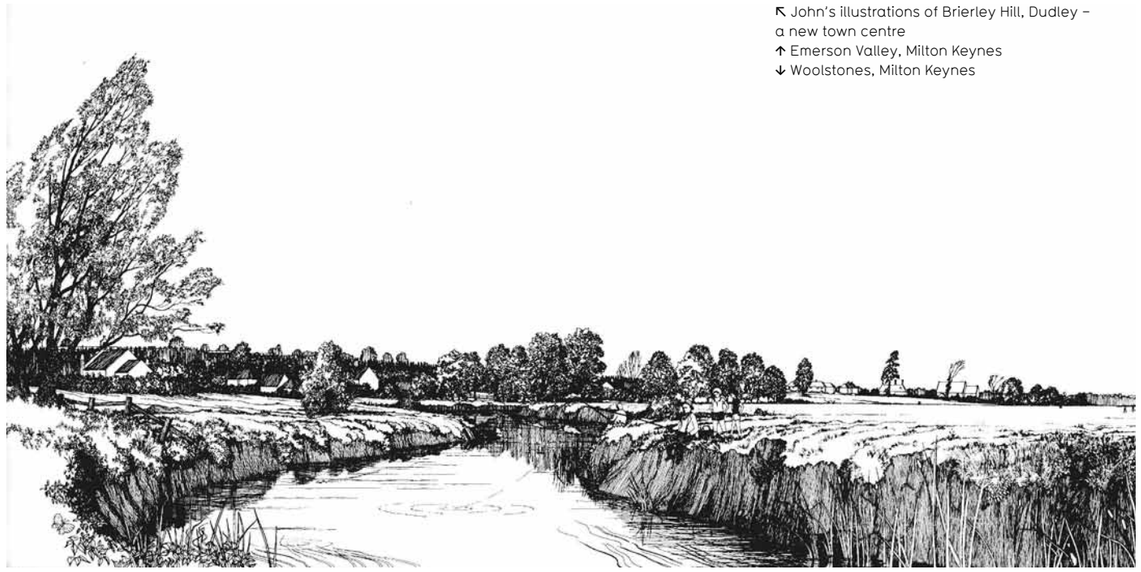
Joining Conran Roche in 1979, John continued to work on projects in Milton Keynes including plans for Emerson Valley and Tattenhoe grid squares, and large scale plans for several Urban Development Corporations, including his spectacular plan for the Royal Docks.

Turning freelance in 1990 gave John the opportunity to work with his (now far flung) former colleagues preparing schemes for the National Stadium in Manchester, a new town in Taiwan and many diverse regeneration and development projects.

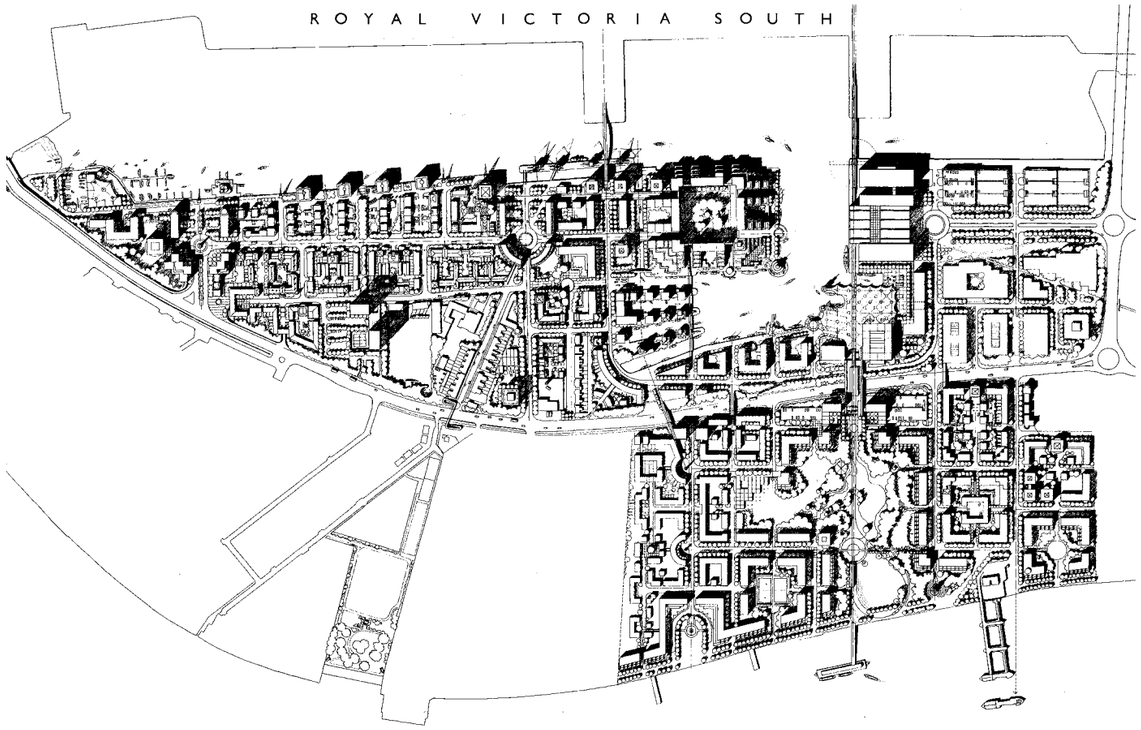
John's talent for illustration allowed him to show how his buildings and spaces would be activated – his perspectives are legendary, great masterpieces of the art, but also very human, populated by scenes from everyday life; people walking, cycling and running; barking dogs, cows, sheep and ducks; chaps in flares and girls in short skirts.

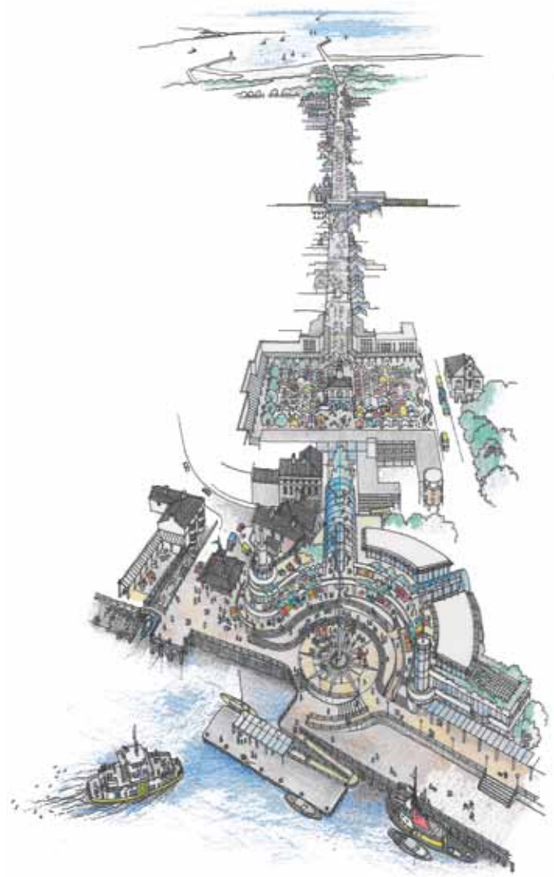
To watch him work was a marvel; a blend of pure talent allied to a master-craftsman's skill, methodically and surely developing his ideas across the page. John's modesty meant he never received the recognition he deserved, but those who knew him had the utmost respect for his abilities. A rare and special talent indeed.

● **Andy Hiorns, David Lock Associates**



↖ John's illustrations of Brierley Hill, Dudley – a new town centre
↑ Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes
↓ Woolstones, Milton Keynes





↑Royal Victoria Docks, London
← Harton Staithes, South Shields, Tyneside

HIGHER RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES IN THE OUTER LONDON SUBURBS

Richard MacCormac explains a design and planning approach

INTRODUCTION

We urgently need to look at new kinds of suburbia. The most pressing and immediate reason for this is that densities of development in the outer London suburbs have risen dramatically, largely reflecting the boom in the provision of small apartments rather than family accommodation. A consequence has been a substantial increase in land values, which then require higher residential densities to achieve financial viability. These densities are also broadly supported by the Density Matrix of the London Plan.

This situation represents a challenge to the very idea of suburbia and the vision of family housing in open, green and leafy surroundings - quiet, private and a good place for families and bringing up children.

This is a political dilemma for the representatives of communities who see the values of their constituents threatened by high density development. This dilemma will be more sharply focused as local communities gain the power to influence planning decisions and participate in the creation of local development frameworks.

Underlying this issue is the fact that housing density is little understood, and there are preconceptions that higher densities equate with overcrowding, loss of privacy, problems of public health and social breakdown. These concerns probably reflect the failures of public housing in the 1960s and 1970s, and specifically the experience of families with young children in middle and high rise flats. However, there is a real risk that we are repeating these failures.

DENSITY AND CHARACTER

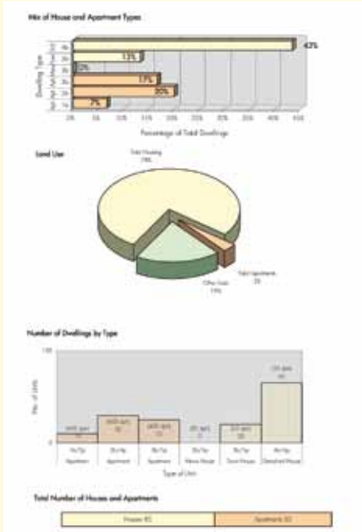
What we need is a renewed understanding of the relationship between density and residential typology or, density and the character of development. In our recent study for the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), we looked at a range of suburban densities and the house types and layouts which match them. What these studies begin to offer are a series of benchmarks against which planning authorities, their elected members and local communities can evaluate developers' proposals.

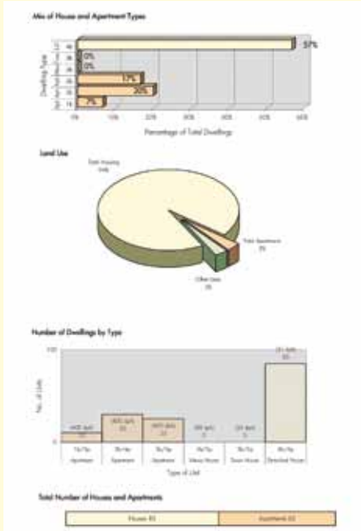
These studies have demonstrated that suburban development can be achieved at significantly higher densities than hitherto, without losing the values associated with the house and garden set in leafy surroundings. Detached housing can be achieved at 35 dwellings per hectare (or approx 14 dwellings per acre), but probably the most useful benchmark is the evidence that the typical two storey house with a 6 metre wide frontage in short terraces or semi-detached forms can meet the density of 50dph (or approx 20 dw/ac); this dwelling type is familiar to the volume house builder.

New kinds of suburbia must supersede car-dependent layouts and highway engineering which gave precedence to vehicular movement. The map extract shows a 1970s development in Milton Keynes in which the misfit between road and housing layout results in areas of left over space which constitute nearly 40 per cent of land use.

↙↙ Housing at 35 dph or 14 dph
↙ Housing at 50 dph or 20 dw/ac
↙↙ L Shaped houses at 50 dph or 20 dw/ac
↙ 75 dph or 30 dw/ac mews houses

↙ Site in Milton Keynes with poor use of land
↙↙ Study infill site with a variety of typologies nearby
↓ Proposal 1 development mix
↘ Proposal 2 development mix





NEW SUBURBAN PLANNING

The reformulation of suburban planning must involve a cultural shift from the picturesque, towards more formal planning which may be perceived as more urban. It actually draws on a suburban tradition of the US; think of the setting of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie houses in the generous grids of the Chicago suburbs such as Oak Park.

Fundamental to this more formal approach is the recognition that land is a resource, the use of which must be accountable and given the same value given to the floor space of buildings. In the 50dph layout, the house plots and car courts fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and this in turn depends upon the overall dimensions of the plot which frames the housing group.

This is not to suggest that such relationships should be prescriptive, but a reminder that achieving such layout efficiency must optimise the relationship between site dimensions and housing typologies.

FAMILY HOUSING STUDIES

We studied a one hectare site in the London Borough of Merton, where the existing context was characterised by a wide variety of suburban typologies ranging from Victorian terraces with long back gardens and front gardens facing each other across wide streets, to detached or semi-detached inter-war developments, and more recent three storey town houses and flats giving an approximate overall density of 30 dph (approx 12 dw/ac).

Our study used L-shaped two storey terraced houses with 6 metre frontages at 50 dph (20 dw/ac) and 4 metre frontage three storey mews houses at 75 dph (approx 30 dw/ac). The proximity of the local park and the inclusion of two shared open spaces, ensured that all the private gardens also had access to recreational areas. The overall density at 50dph is substantially higher than that of the surrounding area.

What was significant, in terms of the outer Boroughs' density dilemmas, was that the proposal would not have stood out visibly as denser than the surrounding context. The small clusters of houses which characterised the layout would probably be perceived as less urban than the long Victorian terraces.

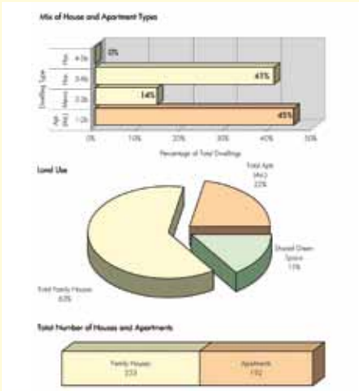
Initially our density studies for the HCA addressed family housing, but given the demography of the UK, and the increasing requirement for accommodation for the elderly, the studies needed to include apartments. This led to a rather unexpected outcome.

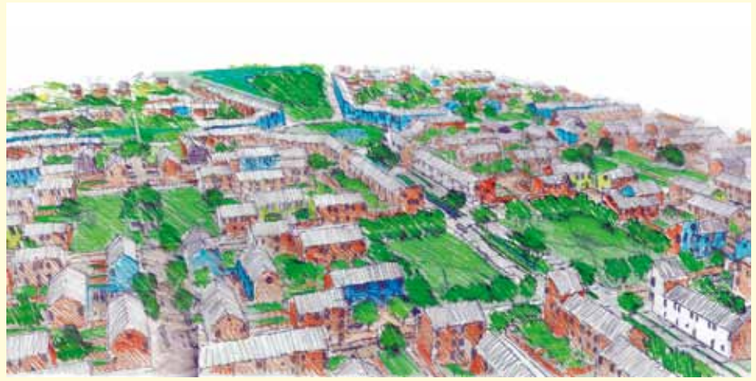
HOUSES AND APARTMENTS

Two hypothetical proposals for suburban development were tested with different residential mixes and allocations of public open space. In Proposal 1 over 50 per cent of the dwellings are small apartments at a high density of 400 dph (roughly 160 dw/ac), which might require buildings of up to eight or nine storeys, which would appear to contradict the suburban vision. However, there is a very advantageous trade-off; the density of the apartments could limit their footprint to just 3 per cent of total land use, leaving nearly 80 per cent of the development area to be two storey mainly terraced housing, and nearly 20 per cent to recreational open space, while achieving an overall density of 50 dph.

In Proposal 2, the same quantum of high density apartments achieves another kind of trade-off which is that over 90 per cent of the development area could consist of detached houses while still sustaining the density of 50 dph. So, in each case, the inclusion of high density apartments enhances the suburban potential of the development as a whole.

This approach to investigating the character of different development options is particularly applicable to suburban locations where the rise in land values requires high densities to achieve commercial viability. A further study was undertaken for a site in the London





Borough of Barnet where land values require development densities of at least 70 dph (28 dw/ac). The graph and pie chart illustrate the stages in the evolution of the option for a development brief which includes 55 per cent of family housing at 50-80 dph (20-32 dw/ac) and 45 per cent of apartments at 400 dph (or roughly 160 dw/ac), which could be limited to four or five storeys. In this case the density of the apartments is relatively modest but their footprint can still be limited to 22 per cent of the development area and their location at the north edge of the development site is associated with existing apartment buildings beside a major road and public transport route. Family housing constitutes 63 per cent of the development area and has access to landscaped open space which constitutes 15 per cent of the site.

A PRACTICAL PLANNING TOOLKIT

This is just one of a range of possible options which could illustrate the potential character of development and enable local amenity groups as well as the local authority and its elected members to formulate development briefs. Such studies, which can be undertaken remarkably quickly, are a way of providing the localism agenda with a practical planning toolkit.

The studies described here were largely a response to the pressure of rising densities in the outer London suburbs, but they also reflect the finding of our original report for the HCA entitled *Sustainable Suburbia*. In the research project, we concluded that higher densities which sustain the private benefits of a family house and garden, can also offer the additional shared benefits of walkable access to local facilities, schools and public transport. At 50 dph, 5,000 family homes could be within ten minutes walk of a local centre. The inclusion of a proportion of higher density apartments with a reduced footprint could release up to a fifth of the development area as open space for recreation, children's play, biodiversity, rainwater management, mitigation of climate change and even local agriculture.

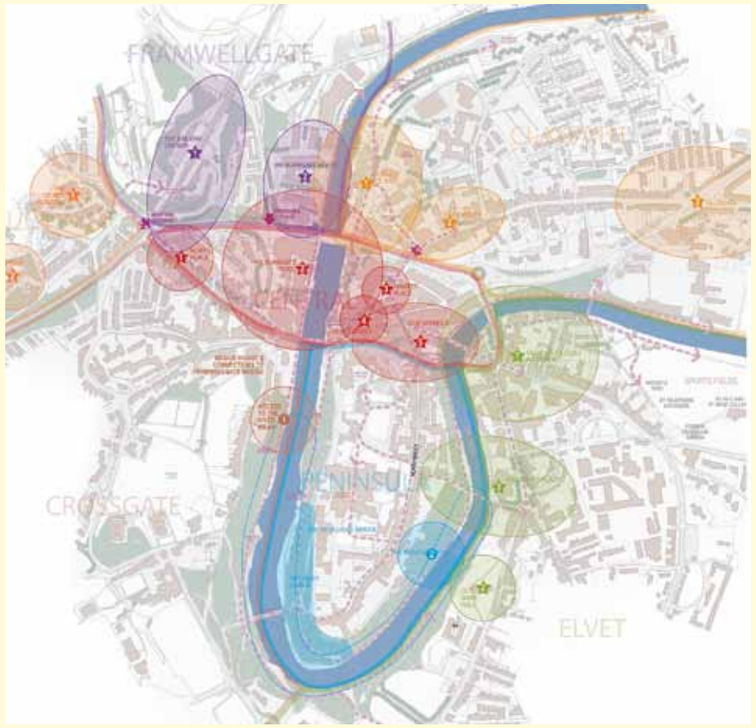
Higher densities offer new kinds of suburbia, with less car dependence and varied pedestrian environments connected to schools, transport and local facilities in lively and sociable communities.

● Sir Richard MacCormac, Founder and Consultant, MJP Architects

↙ Option Master plan showing 233 houses and 192 apartments, at 64dph (26 dw/ ac), and 15 per cent open space
↙↙ Development mix for master plan option
↓ The potential within 10 minute walkable area
↓↓ A new vision of suburbia?

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND THE ROLE OF URBAN DESIGN: DURHAM CITY

Lee Pugalis examines a partnership approach to change



Inspired by the collection of articles edited by Tim Hagyard on the subject of Urban Design and Local Authorities (UD 113), this article charts the role of a public sector partnership responding to the significant spatial challenges posed by global economic restructuring in an historic city. Through the lens of Durham City – a university city situated in the north of England with a relatively small population of around 42,000 inhabitants – urban design can be seen as part of a layered spatial design strategy to support city sustainability and wider economic objectives. The potential for urban design to be sensitively deployed binding different practices and city fabrics is evident.

BACKGROUND AND SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

Durham City is the economic and cultural heart of a rural county, positioned between the Tyneside and Tees Valley conurbations. Whilst the rest of the county has struggled to manage the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, Durham has been more fortunate. Until this Great Recession, the city benefited from consumption-fuelled economic growth, propped up by accelerated public sector employment.

Perceived as a spatial asset, historic Durham has untapped potential as a world class visitor destination and international centre of education. Boasting the cathedral and castle UNESCO World Heritage Site, Durham could play a much stronger role in the urban revitalisation of the North of England. Its spatial quality and historic atmosphere are valued by visitors and inhabitants, and much of its building stock dates from the medieval period with many listed buildings. Yet there is a perception that the city's offer – its housing, leisure, retail and cultural facilities, and the quality of its public spaces – is not competitive.

The compact city centre surrounded by a Green Belt and major roads built in the early 1970s, along with a distinctive morphological structure epitomised by the River Wear peninsula, has had both positive and negative design impacts. Whilst outward expansion has been curtailed and the historic character retained, modern city requirements (such as larger building floorplates) and growing visitor expectations (e.g. ample car parking) have not been widely provided. Consequently, its cultural offer has stagnated in comparison to other historic places such as Lincoln, York or Chester. During the 1990s, local and regional actors debated the concept of a networked partnership entity to deliver the vision for Durham.

DURHAM CITY PARTNERSHIP

Durham City Partnership was established in 2003, taking forward the partially implemented Development Framework

↖ City quarters – Sites of 'opportunities' dispersed across the seven city quarters
↑ Milburngate – Design and layout plans for an opportunity site
↑↑ Central quarter – consumption-led spatial design 'opportunities'

Strategic projects	Description	Status
The heart of the city: market place and vennels	Physical streetscape improvements including lighting and signage, events and business development initiatives including upgrading the indoor market. Changes are intended to reconfigure and reprioritise space for pedestrians. A 'Time Line' installation depicts Durham's history	2011 completion anticipated
Capitalising on existing assets	Utilising, promoting and broadening the appeal of existing spatial assets, including the castle, cathedral, bridges, university, Gala Theatre/ Millennium Place, and the integrity of the historic city core	Elements complete, with others ongoing
Redevelopment of the former ice rink site Freemans Reach	Mixed-use development urban infill opportunity. Latest aspirations are for a green office for around 2000 employees	Site acquired by public sector in 2009 and design brief completed. Completion/user occupation planned for 2013, but delays anticipated
World Heritage Visitor Centre Owengate	Conversion of a 19th century almshouse building. Providing a focus for the World Heritage site, with the aim of attracting more visitors and local spend	Opened May 2011
Necklace Park	An innovative 12 mile proposal intended to draw together existing places along River Wear, from Finchale Priory to Sunderland Bridge	Stalled; completion unlikely within medium-term
Durham Riverbanks Gardens	Linked to the World Heritage site and Necklace Park, a restoration project to provide a garden attraction and enhancement of overall visitor experience	Ongoing
Light and dark and signage strategies	Ambitious strategies intended to put the city centre at the forefront of urban lighting and signage in the UK and Europe	Completed

for the Heart of Durham by David Lock Associates in 1998. The unincorporated partnership, convened when a two-tier local government structure existed, consisted of Durham City and County Councils, One North East Regional Development Agency, Durham University, the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, and the business community represented by the North East Chamber of Commerce, with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) a more recent member. This partnership governs the implementation of the Durham City Vision masterplan and provides strategic leadership to a small executive team of professional officers. In summary its aims are to:

- Put Durham 'back on the map'
- Drive forward regeneration aspirations
- Ensure that the city cements its place as 'the jewel in the crown' of North East England, and
- Fulfills its potential as a key regional centre of employment

DURHAM CITY VISION: 2020

The city centre masterplan (also prepared by David Lock Associates), Durham City Vision, was launched in March 2007, with the aim of reinvigorating the county's economy through the creation of over 4,000 additional jobs, as a result of spatial design enhancements recasting the city centre. Analysing the city's spatial assets, the masterplan considers how people use spaces and what people value, putting forward a combination of capital and revenue strategies for different themes and functions.

In order to cement Durham's role as a regional jewel in the crown, the masterplan also sets out a vision that respects and enhances spatial assets such as its Norman cathedral and castle, and distinctive built morphology such as its market square, bridges and vennels. Its objectives are to:

- Reconnect the city and river, public spaces and outlying communities by developing a necklace park along the banks of the River Wear
- Create a thriving retail scene and wider mix of leisure activities, based on niche speciality providers, distinctiveness and markets selling locally produced goods
- Refurbish buildings and promote new developments to a high standard of contemporary design, and
- Proactively promote and manage city facilities, services and events
- The masterplan comprises a series of strategies which are spatialised in seven city quarters (Central, Claypath, the Peninsula, Elvet, Framwellgate, Crossgate and the Viaduct). The masterplan has been developed so 'that local decisions can be made in a strategic way'

Whilst the masterplan can be critiqued for copy-pasting pre-packaged design solutions from other places (particularly in terms of its use of generic visual aids), it can be applauded for drawing on a fine-grain analysis of the everyday cultural dimensions of the city and its intricate spatial flows. It recognises that the spatial reordering of Durham does not hinge on the production of iconic big projects, warning that although such projects are politically seductive, a failure to deliver could paralyse revitalisation ambitions. Instead, the masterplan is grounded in four design principles:

1. Realisable development ambitions – anchored in market realism with a commitment to world class design quality befitting the historic setting
2. Jewel development opportunities – smaller scale interventions that establish a reputation for well-crafted, small scale new buildings
3. Reinforce the cultural role of the Market Place – re-establish it as the heart of Durham's everyday user's city and social life
4. Improve the management and marketing of assets – engage local people and businesses; opening up fresh opportunities for collaboration, creativity and enterprise

Guided by these principles, place quality improvements (to date) have been sensitively designed with a contemporary urban aesthetic (see table). The key strategies have helped to capitalise on existing spatial assets, and where possible, delivering the masterplan has been aligned with other projects including accessibility and transport improvements. Nevertheless, some schemes have encountered significant implementation problems, local resistance, or been sidelined due to local politics or financial considerations. Such adaptations to a long-term masterplan vision would support the view that 'big projects' are not necessarily the most appropriate response – especially those with questionable viability and significant implementation barriers.

Since local government reorganisation, the new county council has taken a more prominent role in Durham City Partnership. With the retraction of external funding in early 2011, the Partnership's executive team has been disbanded and staff brought in-house by Durham County Council. There are worrying signs that the county council's powerful partnership position has played a considerable role in realigning the vision and its strategic priorities in favour of bigger property ventures.

↘ Top left Durham Castle and Cathedral UNESCO World Heritage Site from the banks of the River Wear
Top right Durham peninsula, photograph by J.D. Whittaker
Middle left Durham Castle and Cathedral
Middle right River Wear
Bottom left Millennium Place
Bottom right World Heritage Visitor Centre, Owengate






AN INCREMENTAL AND LAYERED STRATEGY

The masterplan 2020 Vision 'reflects a premise that Durham has not yet reached its true potential and the Vision is therefore a guide for the future'. In terms of preservation and restoration, there is an uneasy relationship between economic and cultural values. Whilst often overlaying one another, these values can sometimes be in conflict to the extent that promoting economic values can rebuff cultural values and vice versa. In setting broad strategic directions, space is allowed in the flexible masterplan for new political imperatives, shifting community aspirations and different economic climates. The latter has been particularly important, as post-credit crunch the development climate is markedly different to when the masterplan was published in March 2007. Indeed, the deficit reduction plans of the Coalition Government are having significant impacts on public investments: most notably big capital-intensive regeneration projects. In keeping space open, the network of actors involved in Durham's incremental and layered spatial design strategy have recognised the clash of values between historic built environment preservation and the capitalist production of space.

Durham's charm and spatial uniqueness owes much to its built heritage, urban morphology and medieval street network; '1000 years of evolution have created the Durham we see today; always changing but always the same. It is a City firmly anchored in both time and place, and it is eternal' (Durham City Partnership). It is therefore imperative that a clash of values – through public debate and community participation – is actively encouraged. Such democracy can put safety-valves in place to prevent the pursuit of short term profit over longer term socio-environmental value. Indeed, if Durham's spatial assets provide its competitive advantage, then insensitive development would be akin to killing the golden goose. In some of Durham's city quarters, such as Claypath, there is a risk that historic elements are being selectively recycled, which could amount to the production of an internationally standardised space, devoid of local spatial character. Conversely, there are also hazards from an overemphasis on nostalgic preservation, where a preoccupation with the past ignores the potential of the present. No right decision can be made about what is preserved and why – which supports the need for democracy. Following such a philosophy may prevent the political-economic imperatives of a few decision makers, subverting the rights of the many citizens. It is possible for a space to testify to the past and simultaneously project images of the future, when guided by an incremental and layered spatial design strategy.

The early recognition that Durham City does not require a proliferation of big projects is a development philosophy that other cities may want to consider, especially as planning is now taking place in a climate of austerity. While the ongoing incremental spatial-historical reordering of Durham is not a resounding success story, it does offer an interesting case of how to approach the spatial design of a historic place through a more layered approach. The revitalisation of collective spatio-historic assets is an incremental process, and so a multilayered spatial design strategy may prove more fruitful – politically, culturally, economically and environmentally – than big projects predisposed to deliver 'quick wins'.

● Dr Lee Pugalis, School of the Built and Natural Environment, Northumbria University and a Visiting Fellow of Newcastle University's Global Urban Research Unit. The author would like to acknowledge the receipt of ESRC award PTA-030-2005-00902 and the support of Durham County Council.

NEW RAILWAY STATIONS, AND THEIR ROLES AS CATALYST FOR URBAN REGENERATION

In this issue we focus on the very topical and much talked about issue of transport interchange. We look at their role in the revitalisation of specific areas and of cities as a whole, as well as their more immediate effects upon the urban realm on which they sit.

Fundamental to any discussion about transport interchanges today, especially when considering them in the context of a High Speed Rail network, is what do we want them to achieve? Are we looking for urban revitalisation, easy access for local businesses to other cities, or urban realm advances for the surrounding area? It is important to see that the arguments are not necessarily environmental, but for a driver of economic and social growth.

We start with Brian Edwards examining ways in which to design Transport Interchanges today, and how to focus their regenerative properties on social improvements, using transport investment to achieve better conditions for all – not just for those who travel or manage the transport network.

John Dales raises the importance of the urban realm around interchanges for those arriving and leaving stations on foot. A mode often overlooked in terms of the effort and other resources assigned to the environment around stations.

Anton Valk investigates the model Dutch interchange, through the case study of Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA, exploring how they support the regeneration of whole areas. He raises the interesting argument that interchange is a great inconvenience however this transfer barrier is an integral part of most, if not all train journeys. Moreover, he says, interchange does not contribute to the passenger requirements in a positive way and is generally an unwanted interruption in the journey.

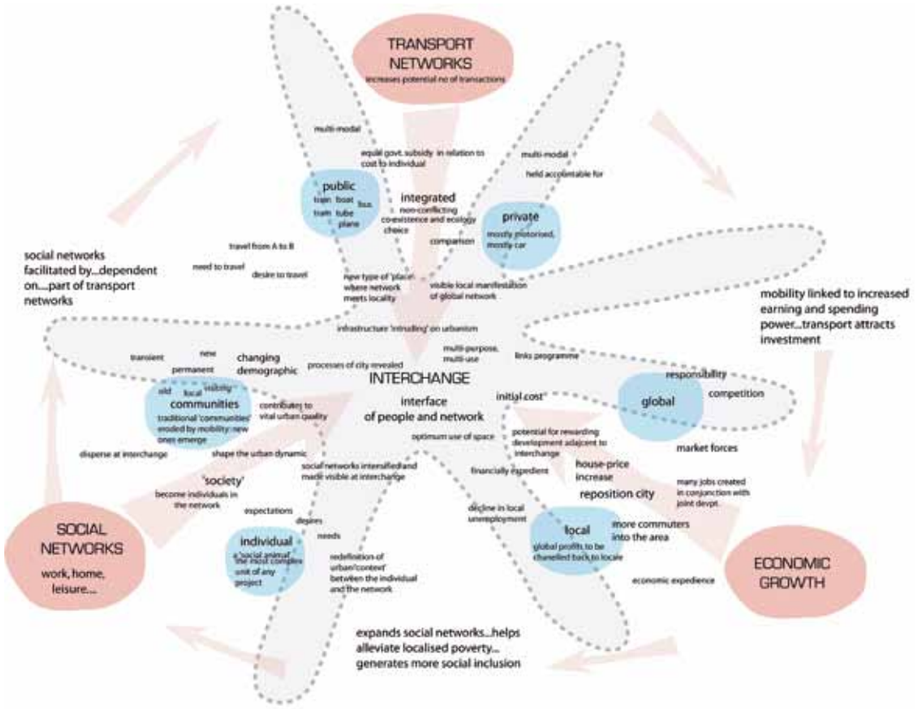
June Taylor looks at case study interchanges throughout Europe and their benefits have been filtered down to a regional and local level, to create efficient transport with effective and balanced regeneration.

Lastly John McNulty and Kate Pasquale look at the very topical case study of Stratford, and the importance that interchange has in underpinning development, at that scale. They go on to describe the decisions and processes that were taken, which eventually helped to catalyse regeneration and aided substantial benefit to the area.

● Sir Peter Hall and Christopher Martin

TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES: A CHALLENGE FOR URBAN DESIGN

Brian Edwards sets out how interchanges must perform



From an urban design perspective the transport interchange offers many opportunities to enrich the public realm, to support social sustainability, and to create conditions for the economic recovery of inner city areas. As such any local plan action needs to address a wide range of issues beyond that of infrastructure planning. Unfortunately, too often the agenda for transport interchanges is established by engineering considerations rather than the creation of sustainable communities.

The transport interchange is a social, economic and spatial point of exchange, not merely a transport hub. It is important that policy makers and urban designers use transport investment to achieve better conditions for all, not just those who travel or manage the transport network. This means considering the needs of people and businesses affected by interchanges, both directly and indirectly. Urban design is the key arena for bringing together the wide range of disciplines involved in transport planning. The current growth in investment in public transport and talk of new high speed rail investment raises opportunities for urban designers. However, it is necessary to address urban design from four perspectives: social, economic, transport and the spatial. Designers in the past have seen interchanges as primarily exercises in space manipulation: it is much more than that.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Social sustainability is an essential starting point in any discussion of transport interchanges. The transport hub is a social hub where many people gather for different purposes. There are those embarking or returning from a journey and those who are not; there are interchange passengers and single journey ones; there are those who are familiar with the routes and those who not; those who arrive on foot, bike and bus; those who are able bodied and those disabled; and those who are wealthy and those poor. Hence transport interchanges are complex places socially. With an ageing population another characteristic is the

↑ Fiona Scott's model of the connections needed at Interchanges (Image by Fiona Scott)

number of elderly people who now travel aided by pensioner passes. Their needs are often overlooked in the milieu of social interaction.

Socially the interchange is a new form of community hub. Here many buy their groceries, use internet cafes, take shelter and gather information. The generous concourses of transport interchanges provide magnets to draw in both rich and poor, old and young, local and immigrant. They are the new urban magnets, distinct in character from high streets and shopping malls. However, to perform their social potential, the interchange needs to connect smoothly with existing street and squares, and to provide some of the services associated with urban centres such as police stations, libraries and welfare offices. These could be branch facilities, acting as stepping stones to wider provision.

Social connectivity is crucial. Ideally, there will be ribbons of development extending outwards from interchanges into the communities served (Scott, 2005). These will help to reinforce wider social networks, making the routes part of the civic realm thereby countering the divisive nature of much transport provision (pedestrian tunnels, bridges, railway cuttings). Since transport planning entails long time frames, urban designers should think more in terms of cultivating physical and social change over generations rather than imposing arbitrary short term urban patterns (Allies, 2010).

ECONOMIC FACTORS

The transport interchange has big economic impacts which can run counter to social gain. Just as the railways brought wealth and expansion to the Victorian cities of the UK, the modern interchange is a powerful commercial driver. Its power extends beyond the boundaries of the interchange and can be diverted by good planning and urban design to areas where regeneration is required. In terms of sustainable development, the transport interchange provides opportunities to develop new business districts and to establish cultural, administrative and educational hubs within walking distance. These can be grouped around the transport network to provide a rich and vibrant civic realm. As scale and complexity grows, the cross section becomes more important than the plan in shaping the character of places. Mixed use neighbourhoods (within 500 metres) and multi-functional buildings (within 100 metres) served by integrated transport is the ideal pattern around interchanges. In time the transport interchange should become an economic interchange where services and knowledge are created, exchanged and flow to enrich the cultural and social realms.

At the interchange the flow of economic forces is reflected in the flows of people in and around key buildings. The use of air rights and planning policies should encourage growth upwards as well as outwards. The location of the interchange will then be reflected in the urban scene by the height, mass and architectural diversity of supporting structures. Liverpool Street Station in London is a good example. However, in achieving this intensification of uses and commercial functions, it is vital that the interchange remains visible and is imageable. Protecting its rights to daylight is important since natural light is one of the most cherished qualities of interchanges.

One common problem encountered is that of placing retail functions above or below the interchange. Such a location undermines the ability of shops to define key routes between transport facilities and urban areas. It also creates cul de sacs which tend to reduce spatial permeability. Another problem is the loss of daylight which is frequently encountered in such locations – either in shopping areas or within travel concourses.

TRANSPORT FACTORS

The interchange is defined as a multi-modal transport facility. Its primary role is that of accessing varying forms of transport (both public and private) whilst providing a gateway to cities. A key quality is that of connectivity in space and time (with coordinated timetabling). Connection is made through the medium of space – both urban and transport. Hence, space is the most important element in transport connection, reinforced by light and directional guides and is usually a mixture of interior and exterior space. However, different types of interchange have their own physical characteristics and associated urban design patterns. In most interchanges space exists three-dimensionally. This is why plans alone are not enough to describe the weaving and flowing of movement.

Generally speaking there are four types of transport interchange – train, bus, ferry and airport. Since the interchange is a place where two or more types or modes of public transport interconnect, there is also much hybridisation. As interchanges mature they tend to add new transport connections which add stress to existing facilities and the city round about. Hence, loose development frameworks are better than fixed geometries. Frequently the demands of transport infrastructure take priority over human movements which in turn compromise social flows. One answer is to provide enough space at the outset for people as well as transport systems and to ensure that this is not sacrificed to commercial pressure. Maintaining the visual and physical links between transport concourses, streets, malls, squares and landmarks is vital.

Transport space is about gathering people, moving them in organized flows and delivering them to platforms or gates. Engineers are largely responsible for carving out the volumes needed for transport infrastructure working with architects who design the people interfaces. Urban designers are too rarely employed at the outset since the transport geometries are seen as primary drivers. There should be rebalancing of professional inputs with urban designers choosing the paths of rails, roads and pedestrian links simultaneously. Crossrail in London will be judged on its contribution to civic life as well as that of transport logistics.

Increasingly we are seeing the design of transport interchanges as against single railway station, bus, ferry or airport provision. Early modernist functional singularity is giving way to pluralism. Sadly, Britain is behind much of Europe in its appreciation of the interchange as a smoothly running machine for inter-connecting people with a variety of mass transit systems. Although the Kings Cross-St Pancras Interchange has brought many benefits, it still lacks the elegance and efficiency of many European counterparts. Discussion of the high speed rail link to Birmingham has also focused insufficiently upon questions of interchange both in central Birmingham and London Euston.

The hierarchy of transport systems at typical urban interchanges extends from foot to bike, taxi, bus, tram and rail. Similar patterns exist at bus, ferry and airport hubs. Too often feet are ignored in favour of wheels and heavy wheels dominate light ones. 'Feet before wheels' may make a catchy slogan, but it is hard to implement given current organisational structures.

> Urban design is an indispensible tool in the reconciliation of the many conflicting forces surrounding transport design

Different patterns have emerged in Europe with regard to the impact high speed rail investment has had upon city design. In France the pattern initially was one of locating new interchanges outside city centres (eg Lille and Avignon) thereby reducing the capacity for effective inter modal exchange. Such a policy also reduced the scale of benefits to inner city regeneration and hence social sustainability. In Germany, on the other hand, high speed rail has been taken into the centres of regional cities, providing a chance to upgrade 19th century terminals and their hinterland (eg Dresden and Leipzig). Here the interchange is a vibrant mix of old and new with high speed rail investment used to rebuild or re-structure worn out parts of the city. This is particularly true of the former East German cities. Hence, one could argue that Germany provides a better model than France for Britain to emulate as it shifts investment from road to rail over coming decades.

SPATIAL DESIGN

Urban design is an indispensible tool in the reconciliation of the many conflicting forces surrounding transport design. Existing large urban stations such as London Waterloo, Edinburgh Waverley and Liverpool Lime Street require drastic remodeling to serve the transport needs of the twenty-first century. Even without high speed rail investment much needs to be done to provide better facilities for the growing number of inter-connecting passengers. The bus–train interface is often the most critical and ignored (often in favour of taxis). The metro bike interface is also overlooked even in bike friendly Copenhagen where the author is based. Too often major roads form pedestrian barriers around interchanges with passengers taken into tunnels or left on isolated traffic islands. Road space for cars and taxis should be much reduced and converted to paved areas for feet and narrow wheels (bikes). This is the pattern in Sweden and Holland where public transport and cycling provide the bulk of journeys to work in the larger cities. As a statement of democracy road space for cars is unduly distributed in favour of motorists around interchanges.

Urban design should move beyond land-use and spatial (figure ground) planning into flow analysis and cross sectional design. The geometric rigidity of many plans fails to recognize the flows and spatial syntax of movement. Sectional diagrams help as does the use of CAD or parametric modeling. Too rarely are sections employed in the three dimensional world of interchange design. However, the section unlocks understanding of the potential of daylight, sunlight and views to orientate passengers as they navigate between the interchange and the city.

The spatial needs of people and transport are quite distinct. Public transport is normally linear

↑ Remodeling of Aberystwyth Station to improve interchange facilities to designs by BDP (Image by BDP)

↑ North Hamburg Bus Rail interchange to designs by Blunck and Morgen in association with Martin Tamke (Image by Martin Tamke)

↑↑ Kings Cross and St Pancras Interchange with its wider urban improvements, to designs by John McAslan + Partners (Image by John McAslan + Partners)

in configuration and with predictable flows. People on the other hand move unpredictably and have varying degrees of personal mobility. Different types of transport have different space and engineering needs. Hence at the interchange the space demands of different providers are in a state of flux and often competition. People navigate this world impeded often by invading commerce and poor travel information. This is true of both the interior volumes of the interchange and the exterior concourses, routes and public spaces.

At interchanges it is important that space is understood typologically and physically. There is transport space (platforms, gates), movement space (escalators, concourses), waiting space (seating areas, booking halls), economic space (shops, malls), social space (greeting areas, entrances) and information space (ticketing and timetabling). These spatial zones flow into one another and extend outwards to impact upon the life of the city. One challenge for urban design is to understand the spatial patterns and to forge them into a machine for movement between urban areas and the transport web.

Over time space is stressed by new demands. This may occur as a result of the insinuation of a new transport mode into existing provision, a change in culture (such as London's adoption of the bike), commercial pressure or new environmental imperatives. Hence flexibility is required. Generally space stress occurs as result of growth rather than decline with passenger space eroded by commercial pressures. People are crammed into ever smaller areas with seating removed to aid passenger flows. The result for elderly travelers is often distressing.

Since space is the medium of connection it needs to be addressed at four distinct scales. Below is a list of rules which should be followed to ensure that transport interchanges function effectively, whilst also acting as gateways to cities and to sustainable development:

CITY LEVEL

- Link transport interchanges to urban areas using a network of streets, pedestrian malls and cycle ways
- Ensure these are lined by shops and public facilities
- Place civic, commercial and educational buildings within 500m of transport hubs
- Open up views from interchanges to city landmarks

URBAN DESIGN LEVEL

- Form squares and gathering spaces at interchange entrances
- Remove barriers to movement around interchanges such as busy roads, pedestrian fences.
- Ensure visual connections to all forms of transport
- Provide level traffic free flows around interchange
- Reduce taxi areas to minimum and maximize bike storage areas

INTERCHANGE DESIGN LEVEL

- Create passenger flow space three-dimensionally
- Connect interior routes with exterior ones
- Maximize daylight especially in underground areas
- Provide views to interior and exterior landmarks
- Create memorable concourse spaces

INTERCHANGE MANAGEMENT POLICY

- Single ticketing
- Multi-modal information boards
- Complementary, not competing services
- Limit advertising so that travel information is dominant
- Provide clocks with faces
- Establish clear zones to limit commercial encroachment

CONCLUSION

Transport interchanges are one of the urban design challenges of our age. Just as the nineteenth century grappled with bringing railways and canals into cities, today we face the challenge of high speed rail and integrated transport. Rather than see transport planning primarily as infrastructure provision, it is necessary today to view this within the wider embrace of sustainable development. Then social, economic and environmental considerations can help direct transport investment towards the most beneficial ends. Social regeneration can act as a partner to economic renewal if the right plans and policies are put in place. Government has a key role to play in directing investment and in ensuring its own space needs (government office etc) are met near to interchanges.

Urban design as a discipline between architecture and urban planning has a key role to play. It acts as a bridge between different interests; engineering, real estate, public policy, landscape and sustainability. However, plans are not enough, especially the traditional land-use and figure ground drawings employed by many urbanists. New tools are needed and this may entail greater use of three-dimensional CAD-based graphic analysis. The urban cross section in particular may need to be revived in order to understand the complexities of movement, function, aesthetic and environmental requirements at interchanges.

Plans which steer change are preferable to those which dictate formal patterns. Interchanges are lessons in incremental inter-generational change. The aim should be to cultivate social, economic and environmental improvement over time, employing different agencies and many sources of funding. Stresses will occur such as the expansion of high speed rail or simply growth in public transport usage. Here the UK could learn more from Germany and Holland than France and Spain. ●

● Professor Brian Edwards, author of Sustainability and the Design of Transport Interchanges (2011), and lecturer at the Royal Danish Academy of Architecture and Design in Copenhagen

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URBAN REALM AROUND THE STATION

John Dales describes how to add value to places for people

↑ Liverpool Street Crossrail Station proposals

TWO FEET GOOD

All too often the consideration of 'interchange' at railway stations is confined to providing links between trains and one or more specific feeder modes. These latter typically include other public transport modes (i.e. other trains, bus, tram, taxi) and possibly also 'kiss-and-ride' cars and even bicycles. The Cinderella mode of interchange is walking. Despite the huge number and large proportion of trips to and from railway stations that are made on foot, these are often almost taken for granted, in terms of the effort, and other resources assigned to dealing with the walking environment at and around stations.

There are several reasons for this: but none that is very convincing from the traveller's point of view: one is that interchange between mechanical modes often takes place in a realm that, while effectively public, is actually private. When it is their asset that is involved, station operators recognise their duties, are keen to enhance value, and are comfortable with managing any risks arising. However, once the realm is truly public, beyond the notional red line of what constitutes the station interchange, these agencies tend to lose interest. It is not their land, and hence not their job.

Another reason is simply that transport planning professionals, from all backgrounds, seem to be rather mode blind when it comes to walking (and often also to cycling). As it is an activity that is so commonplace, it is taken for granted despite its importance – a bit like breathing perhaps? Whereas the infrastructure related to transport is typically the focus of interchange design – from where the different vehicles go relative to one another, to the signs and other paraphernalia to help people switch between them – the best that the world beyond usually gets is one or two signs saying 'Way Out'.

THE POWERS TO IMPROVE

Those local authorities with direct responsibility for the public realm can often struggle to get properly involved with interchange design. Although, as planning authority, they have a necessary measure of engagement with and control over any major projects. As highway authority, they may be unable to get a real seat at the decision-making table, powerless to get more than a few specific pieces of infrastructure (e.g. a new signalised crossing) by way of Section 106 agreements, and short of resources to implement change to the public realm that complements the new private realm. When no substantial change to the station itself is planned, local authority officers have a very hard time trying to convince council members and budget-holders that improving the public realm around a station is a high priority for constrained public funding.

One other issue worthy of note is the old-fashioned problem that those with the

responsibility to make decisions still grapple with the issue of how to factor public realm quality and even pedestrian benefits into conventional cost-benefit analyses. As people, they know that they themselves prefer a convivial, legible and convenient external walking environment. Yet, as professionals, they find themselves trying to weigh these more qualitative apples against the quantitative pears in established transport cost-benefit appraisal; they cannot find a way to make the case. Numbers masquerade as facts, and decisions get made in the same old way, while the urban realm around the station loses out again.

Whatever the reasons, the pedestrian environment and broader issues of urban realm quality around stations are usually, in practice if not in policy terms, too far down decision-makers' agendas; but it should not and does not have to be this way. The following three case studies, each set in completely different contexts, demonstrate why we must and how we can do much better:

CASE STUDY 1 – WEST HAMPSTEAD STREET INTERCHANGE

Let us begin with West Hampstead because it is representative of a type of interchange that is all-too-easily overlooked, and improvements have recently been implemented. The interchange here takes place entirely within the public realm and therefore is of a kind that does not usually register as an interchange at all: the interchange is the street. To be more precise, it is a section of a street – West End Lane – that was featured in Traffic in Towns ('The Buchanan Report' 1963).

The reason that this 200m section of this street qualifies as an interchange is that it provides direct access to three quite distinct West Hampstead stations serving three different rail lines. The stations are listed from south to north: the Underground Station (Jubilee Line); the overground station (North London Line); and the mainline station (serving what used to be called Thameslink). There are no sub-surface links between these stations, and so connections are made at street level. While the walking distances involved are probably no greater than those encountered at several of London's larger interchanges, the subterranean passages are not local high streets and traffic distributors, carrying significant flows of general traffic, buses, cyclists and pedestrians going about everyday business.

The array of transport demands placed on West End Lane caused Traffic in Towns to conclude that, 'West End Lane is used for two incompatible purposes – the passage of traffic and shopping... Either it must be adapted as a distributor road and the shopping centre removed, or the through traffic must be taken right out'. This either/or solution was thankfully never pursued; although its cheaper proxy – the attempted segregation of pedestrian and vehicle flows using street furniture – was. As in myriad other similar streets, however, it did not work.

At peak times, West End Lane becomes flooded with people interchanging between the stations, and they simply do not fit onto the existing footways. The guard-railing that had been deployed to keep pedestrians on the footways simply took up valuable walking space and meant that those who inevitably still walked in the gutters were prevented from squeezing back up onto the footway if traffic conditions suddenly got too hairy. It being the truly public realm, the reworking of the street was commissioned and implemented by Camden Council. They recognised that the challenge was one of 'fitting a quart into a pint pot' but also that this street section was a true station interchange. This meant that its design needed actively to encourage and enable passengers to move from station to station, not merely spit them out into a hostile environment and hope for the best.

Our design response to the challenge was essentially to recognise that it would be both impossible and undesirable to constrain pedestrians to the footways at peak times. With ongoing major development at the Thameslink station, the challenge will indeed only get greater. So the scheme that is now being implemented is very simple: footways have been widened where possible; they have been thoroughly de-cluttered; new pedestrian crossings have been introduced in specific locations; better wayfinding information is planned; and the street has been made into one where its different users can more clearly understand that they are sharing it with many others and need to be more circumspect. No user group gets favoured: but that's street life for you!

CASE STUDY 2 – LIVERPOOL STREET CROSSRAIL STATION

Liverpool Street will be the busiest Crossrail station, and the scale of the urban realm design challenge we were set was compounded by the fact that one of its two entrances will be within what is currently a completely different station: Moorgate. The urban realm about the station is particularly complex, partly in view of the number of movement demands placed upon it (heavy commuter pedestrian flows; busy bus services feeding the Liverpool Street Bus Station; taxis; and access to the many local offices and business premises). The complexity was also partly the result of the fact that the realm we were designing in was not all truly public. Broadgate Estates (British Land), Network Rail and Transport for London all have land interests, in addition to the City of London as local highway authority.

Amongst the many issues that we encountered, and perhaps the most difficult one to resolve, was that of improving conditions for pedestrian movement while also improving the urban realm to make it a more attractive place to linger, and not just pass through. We undertook a range of observation surveys at different times and found that during large parts of most days, almost every conceivable space that could be sat or perched on (walls, steps, bollards and any other street furniture) was used by people having a break, a snack, chatting with others, waiting for onward transit, or waiting to meet someone. Adding to the challenge was the design objective of turning a hard-working urban realm in a fittingly impressive gateway to the City of London.

> Numerous signs proclaim 'No Pedestrians on Bridge', as though it was a matter of pride

So, we were tasked with delivering an urban realm that would be great for walking to and from the various public transport access points, great to stay in and look at, and also of course fit for purpose in terms of handling bus, cycle and other essential vehicle movements.

Bearing in mind the general complexity of such a task, and the challenges of dealing with stakeholders whose interest in the public realm is marginal, it is worth reporting that an additional obstacle we encountered was, paradoxically, that of other stakeholders having a genuine but too narrow interest in public realm quality. Namely, that how it looks must trump how it works.

This view stems from applying to the public realm ground plane the same principles that are typically applied to vertical elements, like buildings. Buildings that are attractive to look at are great: but no one will be trying to walk or drive on them. Streets and spaces are quite different; if their design is successful, the vast majority of people will not care and often won't be able to see the finer details, such as the specific materials used and the pattern in which they are deployed. While aesthetics are important, especially in such a high profile location as this principal gateway to London's financial centre, such considerations must work with the provision of an urban realm that facilitates movement and other static activities.

At Liverpool Street, we obtained and presented strong evidence showing both that there would be plenty of room for pedestrian movement even under 'worst case' forecasting for 2054 and that there is huge demand for things to rest on. Nevertheless, we were faced with strong opinions (and personal preferences) about the importance of keeping the street space empty of clutter that would impede pedestrian movement or visual simplicity. Confident of our rationale, we resisted inappropriate pressures and proceeded to develop flexible designs for the urban realm around and between both station entrances (see image on page 23). These are best able to handle the wide range of both functional and aesthetic demands that will come once Crossrail is open, and for many years afterwards.

CASE STUDY 3 – ABBEY WOOD CROSSRAIL STATION

This interchange case study is entirely different from both the previous two; Abbey Wood station is to see significant change as it becomes not just a station on the North Kent Line but the eastern terminus for Crossrail services south of the Thames. The current two tracks will be expanded to four, and the new station design is predicated on providing excellent cross-platform interchange between Crossrail and North Kent line services in the same direction (eastbound or westbound). However, the scale of the opportunity and associated complexity goes well beyond the internal workings of the railway station.

Up until 1976, the east-west railway corridor was traversed by the north-south local high street by means of a level crossing. This crossing was closed and replaced by a dual carriageway flyover on the north-south alignment (Harrow Manor Way). The flyover was built without footways and numerous signs proclaim 'No Pedestrians on Bridge', as though it was a matter of pride. North-south pedestrian movement is facilitated by a large complex of steps and ramps to overcome a 6m change in level. Although providing 24 hour public access across the tracks, the structure is currently also used by passengers entering and leaving the station. The sheer number of steps is bad enough, but those who cannot use them must negotiate a dispiriting and very long set of switchback ramps. The environment beneath the structure is as attractive as you would imagine...

Bus-rail interchange is focused at the high level, with passengers walking between the bus stops at the summit of the Harrow Manor Way bridge and the platform level using the steps and ramps just

↑ West End Lane, West Hampstead Street Interchange (Base photo by Google)
↑↑ West End Lane proposals

↑ Abbey Wood Crossrail Station

described, except that the dual carriageway bridge design means that people walking to and from the eastern (southbound) bus stops are not permitted to cross the highway and must use an extension of the steps/ramps complex to pass under the bridge at 'mezzanine' level. There is no step free access to these southbound bus stops. This is both a truly dismal interchange and an urban realm that is hostile in every sense imaginable.

Putting aside the obvious refrain that 'they should never have built it like that in the first place', what constrains the opportunity now to is the challenge of enabling a range of different partners to focus on the whole rather than just their section of it. Each partner – Network Rail, Crossrail, Transport for London, and the London Boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich (their boundary line runs due north-south along the old high street) – are subject to their own constraints in terms of engineering feasibility, land ownership, legal powers, funding, leadership and internal communications. There is, however, a willingness to work together for the greater good, despite these constraints, and a recognition that the whole must be greater than the sum of the parts.

Testimony to this is the fact that we are now pursuing a design option that transforms Harrow Manor Way into a more balanced street that accommodates walking and cycling; one that can be crossed safely by pedestrians; and has a vibrant high-level interchange as its focal point. If these are achieved, the steps/ramp complex will be removed. Focusing on the wider urban realm, rather than on specific technical challenges and modal priorities, has meant that there is now a probability that the Crossrail project will not only deliver a better station but underpin the badly-needed regeneration of Abbey Wood as a place.

SUMMARY

Addressing the improvement of the urban realm around stations is almost always key to maximising the benefits of any improvement works focused on the stations or main-mode interchanges themselves. Failure to pay attention to the attractiveness of the walking environment around stations and of the setting of station buildings, invariably leads to a failure to make the most of the opportunities available: to add value. This usually involves greater complexity, both in terms of the technical aspects and the number of partners who need to be involved and agree what is to be done. For people travelling; and therefore for everyone else involved, this is very worthwhile. ●

● John Dales, Director, The Urban Movement Team at Urban Initiatives Ltd

AMSTERDAM BIJLMER ARENA STATION

Anton Valk describes a model Dutch interchange

The Netherlands has one of the best performing railways in Europe operating on a densely used network. With services operated by NS and infrastructure operated by ProRail, more than a million passengers per day use the train services, and NS prides itself on understanding customer requirements be it in transit, at stations or when purchasing tickets.

With nearly 17 million people living in the Netherlands in an area equivalent to the London and South East of England, the Dutch rail system faces operational challenges to maintain peak flow through stations and onto other modes of transport to complete journeys. With no truly large cities, but over 50 major conurbations to transport passengers to and from, the Dutch rail system consists of a network of interlinked services operating regularly.

A journey can be broken down into specific components to deliver a seamless travel experience to a customer. These are:

- deciding the mode of transport for the journey
- preparation for the journey
- travel to the departure point
- station facilities, including ticketing
- finding the train, boarding and departing
- the journey itself (A to B)
- arrival at the destination station
- station facilities
- onward journey to destination, and
- customer care and after sales

It is recognised that the actual train journey from A to B is only part of the journey made by passengers. It is necessary to think holistically about the passenger's journey and look beyond the parametres of the train ride and work with other public transport operators and local authorities in order to ensure the entire journey is as easy and satisfying as possible. Stations play a crucial part in this. Passengers' main requirements during their journey are:

- Safety and reliability – feeling safe and secure throughout the journey; find what you expect at any time and place in the journey
- Speed/ travel time – fast end to end journey; smooth and seamless interchange, and
- Ease – a hassle free, seamless journey

From detailed studies conducted by NS, there is clear evidence to show that the most important difference between a train and a car journey is the fact that car drivers do not have the inconvenience of an interchange. This transfer barrier is an integral part of most if not all train journeys.

The interchange or transfer barrier is generally an unwanted interruption in the passenger's journey which does not contribute to the passenger requirements in a positive way. In studies for NS, Van Hagen and Peek found that one of the most efficient ways of mitigating the impact was to add value to the time that passengers spend at, or passing through, a station. In order to make interchange time more valuable, station development in the Netherlands is built around three principles – accelerate, condense and enhance:

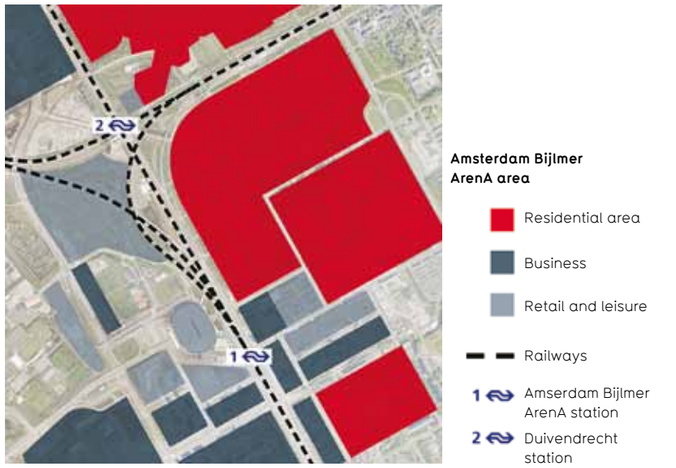
- Accelerate: reduce the journey time for passengers
- Condense: locate urban facilities such as housing, working places and leisure centres, closer to a station
- Enhance: provide an attractive environment with services and facilities that enhance the least valued element of any journey – the waiting and transfer time

These principles are being successfully applied by NS and ProRail in close cooperation with local authorities and communities for the major Dutch stations. They were also used when redeveloping Amsterdam Biljmer ArenA station.

Around 18,000 rail passengers travel in or out of Amsterdam Biljmer ArenA station on any single day, a further 1,500 use the station as a rail interchange. Over 8 million people can travel to this station within an hour by rail or road making it a highly accessible destination for business, commuting or leisure purposes. In addition, during major events at the ArenA, the station comes under increased pressure with in excess of 10,000 passengers per hour travelling through it. Accommodating train, Metro, urban and regional bus transport, Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA is a station hub and an interchange between national, (inter) regional and urban public transport.

The original station on the Biljmer site opened in 1971. It was a small station on the rail line connecting Amsterdam and Utrecht. In 1976 it was redeveloped into a station with rail and metro tracks. In the late 1980s the retail and business area Amsterdamse Poort was opened on the eastern side of the station. Following the 1992 Bijlmer air crash urban redevelopment works have been undertaken which have significantly changed the area. In this period too, the Amsterdam ArenA, home to football club Ajax, was opened (1996), accommodating 50,000 people and the surrounding business park Amstel III was developed. In 2007 the Utrechtboog was opened, which is a flyover railway line in the south-east of Amsterdam that directly connects Utrecht and Schiphol, doubling the track between Utrecht and Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA.

These developments resulted in a shift in the station's status, from a small station with footfall of approximately 4,500 passengers per day and little



← Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA Station
↑ Master plan and station locations at Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA
↑↑ The Utrechtboog flyover railway line

↑ Platform level with the long glass rooftop

interconnectivity, into a larger station connecting major cities such as Utrecht and Amsterdam with anticipated passenger growth of 250 per cent. It is expected that by 2020 passenger numbers will increase to 20,000 per day and with increased residential investment in the local area.

Considering this investment in leisure, residential and commercial infrastructure, and the potential demand the station could expect, Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA became a prime site for redevelopment. When designing the station, it had to meet two key criteria:

- Optimal passenger comfort, including enhanced sense of safety
- Connecting the two urban areas surrounding the station on the East and West side

> This superior station, with its unprecedented flair and self-explanatory location, is unique in the Netherlands

Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA was a joint project between Grimshaw Architects and Arcadis Architects. The design of the Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA station won both firms the BNA Building of the Year 2008 architecture award. This award is an initiative of the Royal Institute of Dutch Architects (Bond Nederlandse Architecten, BNA). The jury was extremely impressed with the building, stating 'this superior station, with its unprecedented flair and self-explanatory location, is unique in the Netherlands. This heroic building is, in all its facets, the very image of good craftsmanship. It is, above all, a paragon of openness that transcends its function of public transportation hub'. The jury also commended the building for its roof, which creates an enchanting and pleasant feeling of spaciousness and a phenomenal play of light.

The Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA station opened in 2007 and plays an important part in the redevelopment and regeneration of Amsterdam Bijlmer/ South East. The contemporary glass building fits perfectly with the on-going improvement of the surrounding area. Creating the new, large and transparent station to accommodate the six railway tracks and two Metro tracks transformed the station environment and provided a more open connection between the two parts of Amsterdam Bijlmer/South East. The new station is built on top of the 70m wide, 700m long pedestrian passage (ArenA Boulevard), connecting the eastern and western side of the area.

Transparency was one of the key criteria in developing the station building. The result is a 200 metre long glass rooftop, rising from 20 to 30 metres high. Glass was used for the roof to achieve maximum passenger comfort and an increased sense of safety and security. This has proved successful with passenger satisfaction increasing significantly. Customer surveys show that 85 per cent of passengers find the station a pleasant place to be in 2011 compared to just 28 per cent in 2007. They also saw a remarkable improvement in station cleanliness from 32 per cent in 2007 to 90 per cent in 2011.

The station consists of 8 tracks:

- Two are dedicated to the Metro, and both have separate dedicated platforms
- Two are connected to the Utrechtboog, that directly connects Utrecht and Schiphol to Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA
- Underneath the platforms is the bus station, accommodating regional and urban bus services from several operators
- Underneath the station, on the south eastern side, an automated guarded bicycle storage facility is provided for residents and customers
- Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA also has one of the largest park and ride facilities in Amsterdam. It has a capacity of 500 spaces, where cars can be parked for €6 per day and customers receive two Metro tickets to travel into the city centre of Amsterdam
- The station and surrounding parking facilities are opened up to the surrounding motorways A1; A2; A9 and A10

Some key features that improved the station include a modernised station hall situated on the ground floor with retail facilities to enhance the quality of time spent at the station, and to contribute to passenger comfort. Escalators and elevators take passengers up to the platforms.

Architecture, the use of high quality materials, the provision of facilities for passengers and approaches to interchange have proven in the case of Bijlmer Arena to be a successful contributor to passenger growth and satisfaction at a medium size station and supporting the regeneration of a whole area. Similar approaches are now also being incorporated at other stations under redevelopment in the Netherlands. The approach taken at Bijlmer Arena could also serve as a best practice example for similar sized stations in regeneration projects across Great Britain. ●

● Anton Valk, Chief Executive, Abellio Group, a subsidiary of Netherlands Railways, and which also provides bus and train services in Great Britain and Germany

NEW RAILWAY STATIONS AS CATALYSTS FOR REGENERATION AND URBAN HUBS

June Taylor asks whether bigger is always better when it comes to station design

INTRODUCTION

In 2010 I had an opportunity to visit transport interchanges throughout Europe, funded by the Sintropher project, to study and report on good practice in interchange design. I set off armed with a copy of Transport for London's Guidelines, and a basic knowledge of transport planning, urban design and the many other fields of knowledge that help explain how urban places function. This article is based on those visits, and represents the subjective and partial view of an amateur enthusiast visiting a random selection of interchanges – not always the biggest, newest or best. The examples illustrate interesting points about the design and function of transport interchanges and their place within the wider urban environment.

Although most interchanges are simply railway stations with provision for other transport modes tacked on as an afterthought, other modes may become more significant in the future, particularly in the urban context, and encouraging their use may depend upon providing high-quality seamless interchange facilities. For these reasons, this article sometimes uses the term transport interchanges where railway stations would do as well.

Transport interchanges are both nodes within a transport network and places within the city. Passengers arrive and leave, changing trains or transferring between modes, perhaps having no interaction with the area beyond the interchange. However, interchanges and the surrounding public realm also offer opportunities for people to wait, meet, shop, eat and drink. They often form part of an historic town or city centre, appearing on tourist itineraries and co-existing with a multitude of urban functions in neighbouring buildings. The combination of node and place qualities has the potential to attract people in great numbers, explaining the renewed interest in commercial property development in and around major stations, particularly those with connections to high-speed rail networks and airports. The increasing numbers of office workers reinforces the demand for shopping, eating and drinking, and so the status of the area as a destination. Finally, interchanges also impact upon the permeability of the surrounding urban fabric, either reinforcing or reducing the physical barrier of railway tracks.

The art of designing a transport interchange could be described as one of integrating and balancing these three functions – an efficient interchange between transport services, a link within the urban fabric, and a destination in its own right.

DESTINATIONS

When the French city of Lille became the central node in the high speed rail network linking London, Paris and Brussels, it also became, almost inevitably, an attractive location for commercial office, retail and leisure development. Linking the new Lille Europe station to the tram network

↑ Liège-Guillemins station
↑↑ Euralille under Avenue le Corbursier

↑ Tram approaching Valenciennes station
↑↑ Eschwege interchange
↑↑↑ Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA

and to regional train, metro and bus services at the old Lille Flandres station concentrated public transport accessibility within a confined space. With 500 metres separating the two stations, Lille is more successful as a destination than as an interchange – although facilities within the stations are limited, the Euralille development, built in the space straddling the two stations to accompany the opening of the high speed line, is now one of the main business districts in France. The open space between the stations provides the main pedestrian link but also succeeds as public realm; sheltered by the surrounding buildings and Avenue le Corbusier running above, it seems a good place to sit or throw a frisbee on a sunny afternoon.

The recent refurbishment of St Pancras station in London also illustrates the synergies between a new high-speed rail terminal and property development opportunities (in this case, the widely celebrated transformation of part of the Grade 1 listed station building into a hotel). The ongoing redevelopment of 67 acres of unused railway lands behind the adjacent King s Cross station and a second station refurbishment suggest the wider area will become an important hub of activity, and it will be interesting to see how the stations retail offerings face up to the competition. The range and quality of shopping and eating experiences currently available at St Pancras suggests passengers are expected to spend a substantial amount of time in the station itself – a realistic aspiration in the case of those with long-distance and international connections, but perhaps less so for everyday commuters.

The 19th century railway station building in the French town of Valenciennes forms a visual node and landmark, sitting behind a public space at the semi-circular meeting point of five streets in a small commercial quarter between a major road and the railway tracks. A tram service, introduced in 2006 to link the town with the widely dispersed surrounding areas, runs across the front of the building – somewhat ironically, the building's historic status imposes statutory restrictions on the use of the adjoining space which prevent the trams from stopping directly in front of it. Nonetheless, the intimate street layout, the concentration of hotel, office and restaurant uses in the surrounding streets and new trams sweeping elegantly past the station have echoes of successful urban regeneration schemes elsewhere and suggest this could become an economically vibrant area again.

> An interchange can attract new economic activity to the surrounding area

If it can increase the catchment area for potential employees, clients and business partners (providing a wider range of transport services and better connections between them), an interchange can attract new economic activity to the surrounding area. However, the example of Valenciennes suggests smaller towns and cities may struggle to replicate this effect, even where historic buildings and street patterns create a sense of place.

TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES

The major railway stations are now expected to impress as destinations, but it is less apparent that they are designed to encourage interchange with the bus, tram or metro. The Hauptbahnhof in Kassel, Germany provides a more seamless integration of regional rail and Regiotram services, sending both below street level to stop at adjacent platforms, linked by stairs and lifts to a common concourse running across the length of the building. Although bus services are less well integrated, the interchange between rail and tram could hardly be more convenient. Rail services terminate here, but the Regiotram continues, emerging onto the street several blocks away on its way through the town centre and into the surrounding villages and rural areas.

Interchange design should be a simpler matter at small stations but encouraging train passengers to continue by bus may depend on whether buses can be made to seem sufficiently attractive – few will relish a long walk in the rain to an unwelcoming bus stop. At Nelson, a small town in the north of England, passengers alight from the train into a warm and secure interchange facility , opened in 2008, which serves as ticket hall, information point and waiting area (complete with refreshments and toilets) for both trains and buses. The new station in the equally small German town of Eschwege, opened in 2009, provides an exemplar of this approach and indicates that effective interchange design might involve thinking beyond the traditional station building: a single covered platform serves both trains and buses, remaining comfortable even in heavy rain, and leading directly into a ticket office-café-shop with additional covered outside seating. Although a railway station in name, Eschwege makes no distinction between train and bus passengers.

Yet, although providing an equal standard of facilities for train and bus passengers seems a simple concept, it rarely occurs in practice. Institutional fragmentation could be cited as a reason for this failure, with poor co-operation between national rail operators and local public transport authorities. At both Nelson and Eschwege, the new interchange projects were led by local authorities as part of an explicit economic and social regeneration agenda, involving replacement of an old, inaccessible and unpopular underground bus station, and of an old railway station on the edge of town with one in the centre of town, respectively.

PERMEABILITY

Railway tracks (and urban motorways) create a physical divide and lead to community severance and the design or redesign of transport interchanges should be seen as an opportunity to bridge this divide. At Sint-Niklaas, a city in the Flemish region of Belgium, the highway runs parallel with the railway tracks but is diverted into a tunnel under the railway station, which also links to car parking facilities (the tracks run above ground level). Controlling and segregating fast through traffic leaves the space in front of the station almost traffic-free, providing bus bays, cycle parking and safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists. This is a transport interchange that seems to meet the needs of all modes, even the private car. An open concourse through the station building at street level, and the commercial development also forming part of the building, provide links across both highway and the railway.

A similar approach is adopted at Amsterdam Zuid in the Netherlands. The railway and metro tracks sit between two halves of a ring road, running through the Zuidas financial district. The ground level dips slightly, allowing the pedestrian walkway to blend into a street-level concourse connecting the two sides, beneath the road and rail tracks. Although the concourse has ticketing and other passenger facilities, it is used equally as a pedestrian link – ticket barriers are located at the foot of the escalators to the platforms, allowing unrestricted access for non-travellers. This could be a useful strategy in the UK context, where controlling access to fare-paid areas is often an important issue.

Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA station sits in the middle of two large, mainly pedestrianised, developments (leisure facilities including a football stadium and cinema to the west, and a shopping centre and residential neighbourhood to the east). It was rebuilt in 2007, incorporating Metro services alongside trains, with the embankment structure that separated the two areas replaced by raised viaducts carrying the rail tracks. With its size, elevation and striking design, the station provides an effective focal point for the large high density developments characteristic of both areas. At street level, the ticket hall, access to platforms and bus bays are offset to one side, leaving a light and open central pedestrian space that merges seamlessly with the surrounding areas.

↑ Liège-Guillemins station – the structure itself provides informal seating

THE PERFECT INTERCHANGE?

Liège-Guillemins station in the Belgian city of Liège was designed to accommodate the arrival of high speed rail, replacing the existing station in 2009. Celebrated by architectural critics, it has become a tourist attraction in its own right and visiting it is an unforgettable experience. Interchanging between trains is smooth and efficient, with the consistent treatment of lifts, escalators and stairs to the concourse below and footbridge above. Retail units, passenger facilities, lifts and service information are integrated within the design of the concourse area, easy to access without obstructing passenger flow. Variable ground levels in the surrounding area are used to good effect, separating car parking facilities at the higher level to the rear of the station from access for pedestrians and public transport users at street level. The curved structure also provides some shelter from the sun and an array of informal seating. Despite its many excellent features, however, Liège-Guillemins remains just a train station, missing the opportunity to improve facilities for bus passengers and so to become a transport interchange in the true sense.

CONCLUSION

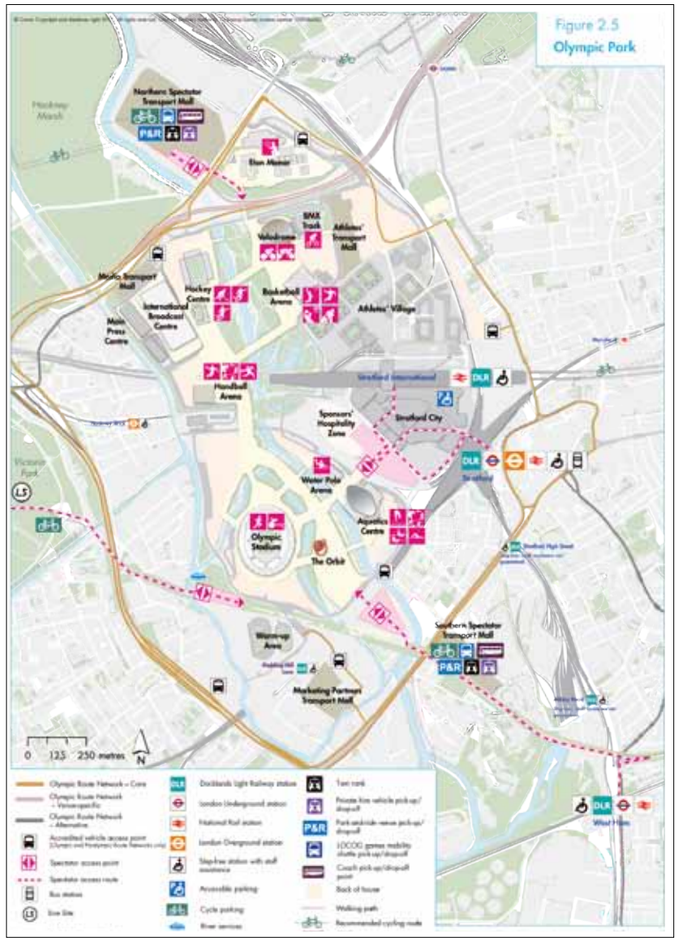
Whether transport interchanges can become or can help to create destinations depends at least in part upon the ability of the surrounding area to generate a variety of economic activities and a critical mass of people. Where this commercial potential exists it can, in turn, help attract funding to improve interchange and permeability functions. The major cities forming the hubs of the high speed rail network have all benefited from this synergy, but perhaps the biggest challenge is to find a way of extending the virtuous circle to small interchanges in more peripheral areas. ●

● **June Taylor, Research associate, UCL**

This article draws on site visits undertaken by the author as part of, and funded by, the Sintropher project. The Sintropher project is a five-year research project with the aim of enhancing local and regional transport provision to, from and within five peripheral regions in North-West Europe

REGENERATION THROUGH BETTER INTERCHANGE – STRATFORD CASE STUDY

Kate Pasquale and John McNulty describe a complex collaboration success



↑ Olympic Delivery Authority Transport Plan for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Second edition, June 2011

BACKGROUND

Visit Stratford today and it is unrecognisable from the industrial ramshackle and council estate dominance of the 1980s. This once unfrequented part of the east end of London is seeing rapid and enthusiastic change, brought on by the excitement of the London 2012 Olympics, as well as a host of regeneration initiatives and transport investment. As would be expected, this transformation was not an overnight inspiration, but a series of well planned, project managed and negotiated initiatives, with tremendous collaboration, support and commitment from key stakeholders, both public and private sector.

Stratford City is now recognised as one of the most ambitious developments within London's M25 motorway, as well as one of the largest mixed-use developments in the UK. The site covers 73 hectares of principally derelict land, which is now seeing the creation of a new £4bn metropolitan centre in East London. Over the coming fifteen years, Stratford City will become home to more than one hundred shops, two department stores, cafés, schools, hotels, parks and health centres. Whilst, landmark towers and new leisure facilities with integrated water features will provide a heart to the new commercial district, the surrounding new urban districts will provide the quarters' extra 11,000 residents and 30,000 workers. As part of this, Westfield's Stratford Shopping Centre is estimated to provide some 13,000 jobs and is due to open in September 2011, whilst the residential element is now complete and ready to perform as the Olympic Athlete's Village for the London 2012 Olympics next year.

OLYMPICS ROLE

The importance of Stratford as the gateway to the Olympics cannot be understated, as Hugh Sumner, Director of Transport for the Olympic Delivery Authority said, 'Fundamentally the Games are about changing society: not just about hosting a summer of stupendous sport. The new Stratford station is therefore the gateway not just to the Games but in the longer term 10,000 jobs, maybe 30,000 housing units, the biggest mall in Europe and the largest park built in Europe in the last 150 years.'

With so much visionary development, the challenge was ensuring that it was supported by, and integrated with, Stratford Regional Station, one of London's busiest transport interchanges. What has been achieved at Stratford City is significant and can in part be attributed to the Transport for London (TfL) Interchange team - responsible for the planning, initial design and business case for the integrated multi-modal interchange at Stratford Regional Station.

TEAM WORK

As early as 2003, TfL Interchange recognised the potential viability issues of this strategically important regeneration scheme and the respective major transport requirements. The complexity and substantial size of the scheme meant that neither the Borough nor the developer had the in-house capabilities or resources to adequately address the challenges and opportunities being presented there.

Ultimately, much of the success of the newly enhanced integrated transport interchange at Stratford is the result of the strong programme and stakeholder management, as well as TfL Interchange's commitment to ensure that the multi-modal transport hub would be delivered in harmony with the major development and regeneration in the area. It is this type of leadership, planning and coordination that ultimately allows the organisation to provide efficient, accessible and usable interchanges and spaces, giving customers and local communities a better experience, and in due course contributing to a better quality of life.

A BENEFIT TO THE ECONOMY

The benefits of TfL's intervention and planning have helped to catalyse regeneration and contributed substantial benefit to the area; as Volterra Consulting stated in their July 2011 report[1] on Westfield Stratford City:

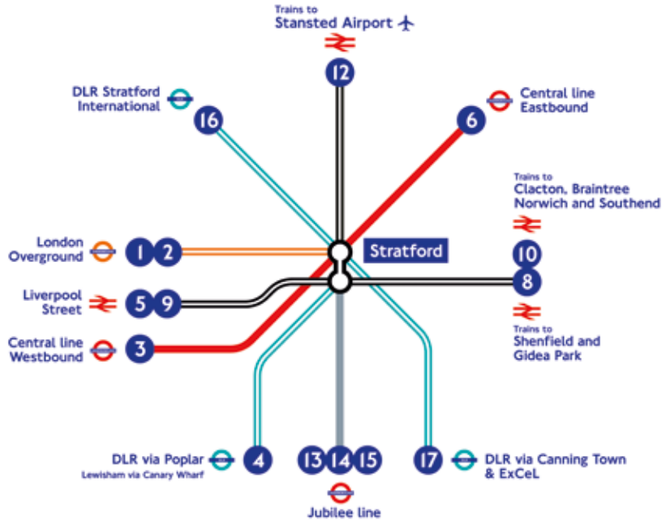
'The public sector investment in infrastructure underpinning the Olympic Games enabled Westfield to bring forward their development of Stratford City around 5-7 years earlier than would otherwise have occurred... bringing forward the benefits of this significant scheme by 5-7 years is worth £1.1-£2.2 billion to the London economy'.

> The success of the newly enhanced integrated transport interchange at Stratford is the result of the strong programme and stakeholder management

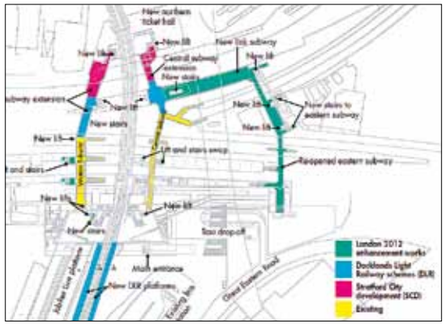
The TfL Interchange team brought together and coordinated various stakeholders, promptly commissioning a feasibility study, given that a development planning decision was forthcoming. These stakeholders included Stratford City Development Partnership (a partnership between major developers Stanhope and Chelsfield), London Borough of Newham, Greater London Authority, Network Rail, Transport for London (including London Underground, London Buses, London Rail, Docklands Light Railway, Streets, Public Carriage Office and Land Use Planning) and central government (including Department for Transport, Government Office for London, and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister). TfL Interchange established a Strategic Forum with the full support and commitment of the many key stakeholders. This was an approach employed previously to great effect at Wembley National Stadium, Kings Cross-St Pancras station, and other key interchange developments, whereby the team also successfully facilitated the forum and relationships with many stakeholders and associated issues. The forum was chaired for TfL by advisers to the Mayor of London. Additionally, the establishment of the Stratford Station Programme Board enabled the provision of joint governance of the transport scheme and overall programme management of the developments at Stratford.

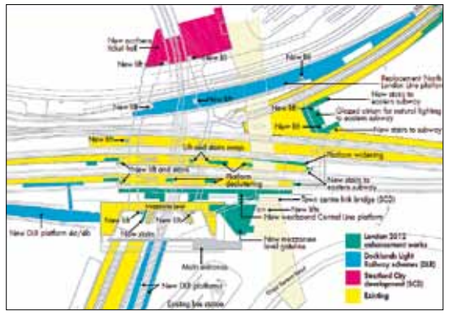
DESIGNING FOR GROWTH

TfL Interchange's role was to capture the various stakeholders' requirements, and following tendering, commissioned a feasibility study. It



↑ Stratford City and Stratford's interchange
↖ Stratford's 17 platforms, creating a major interchange





→ Stratford Station upper level and subway plans showing enhancements to Stratford Regional Station

soon became clear that pre-feasibility assumptions were correct, in that a major investment would be required to develop the Stratford interchange and its many connections, in order to accommodate a growth in demand of approximately 100%. Approximately half of the predicted 100% growth was directly attributable to the Stratford City development, with the other half attributable to background growth. It was initially considered that this doubling of demand would require the prohibitively expensive rebuilding of the entire station, presenting both affordability and value-for-money challenges. However, creative planning and design led to the identification of a cost-effective, incremental interchange development that has since proved to be very efficient in terms of delivering the required benefits whilst minimising construction impacts and costs. This incremental development was then supported by incremental funding from both the developer and other public private sector funding as it became available.

> A large number of complementary and smaller measures have helped to bring Stratford Station up to a higher specification

In interests of ensuring value for money, the programme underwent robust value management reviews whilst working in conjunction with the Borough and the Olympic Delivery Authority to secure funding via the section 106 agreement from the Stratford City Development.

It was during the course of the feasibility study that London announced its 2012 Olympic bid, centred on Stratford. This introduced significant complications in terms of additional stakeholders and requirements. However, it ultimately transpired that the preferred option would satisfy peak Olympics and Paralympics demand, including the provision of full step-free access throughout the interchange. In addition special operational management measures were envisaged to ensure that the interchange would properly accommodate the large number of visitors, including many non-English speakers.

CONVERSIONS AND CONNECTIONS

The scheme works also involved modification of the existing North London Line (NLL) platforms and tracks to accommodate the conversion of the existing NLL to Docklands Light Railway (DLR) use; this permitted the conversion of the existing NLL lines and platforms for the new DLR railway extension - connecting the DLR at Canning Town to high speed international and Kent Fastlink services at Stratford International Station, via Stratford Regional Station. It was established that the DLR extension from Stratford Regional to Stratford International would satisfy the planning obligation on High Speed [1] to provide a 'mechanised link' to connect these two stations. This has been complemented by two pedestrian routes between the station – one through the shopping centre, a distance of some 400m, for those who may want to shop en route, and a shorter route from the Stratford International domestic services eastern ticket hall, for people who want the fastest walking route.

The construction of new terminating platforms for the NLL to the north-east side of Stratford Regional station has permitted the conversion of the existing NLL to DLR services between Royal Docks and Stratford.

A new ticket hall to the north of Stratford Regional Station has been integrated into the new Westfield Shopping Centre, adding value to the development with direct and easy access, and enhanced footfall, whilst reducing the overall transport construction costs. In addition, a new public footbridge over the railway now connects Stratford City to Stratford town centre, fully accessible from Stratford Station. Furthermore, a large number of complementary and smaller measures have helped to bring Stratford Station up to a higher specification, including the DLR service towards Canary Wharf, with new lifts making the station fully accessible, a new integrated bus station and cycle facility and other improvements including integrated signage and wayfinding, stairway improvements and platform decluttering.

This landmark scheme has now been completely delivered, with the final component being the Westfield Shopping Centre with its integrated northern ticket hall, bus station, cycle facilities and pedestrian footbridge, opening in September 2011. This is an excellent example of what can be achieved through proper collaboration and leadership. ●

● **Kate Pasquale, Programme Manager and John McNulty, Head of Transport for London Interchange**

1 Section 3 (Operational Employment Impacts of Phase 1) from Westfield Stratford City Report: The Inheritance before the Games, Volterra Consulting, July 2011

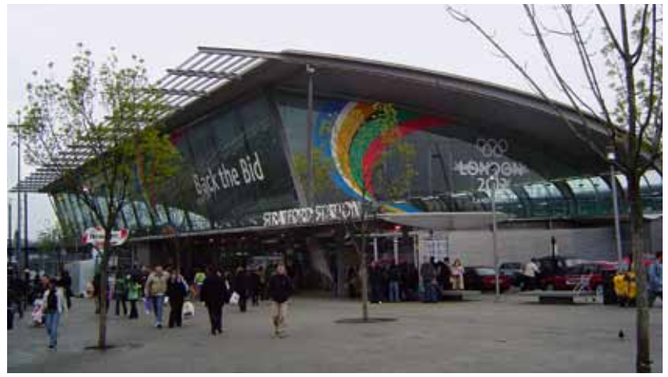
ACHIEVING BETTER INTERCHANGE

Peter Hall and Christopher Martin sum up interchange design issues

The major lesson that emerges from these contributions is that an interchange needs to be much more than an interchange. True, it must perform its basic function of transferring passengers speedily, efficiently and comfortably from one transport mode to another – and it must do so with the basic consideration that many of these passengers – parents with small children, travellers encumbered by heavy baggage, the older travellers who form a fast-increasing proportion of travellers in Europe, Japan and some other advanced economies – have special mobility problems and needs. It can be done, and even done brilliantly, as some best-practice examples in the preceding pages illustrate. It can and has been done exceedingly badly, as demonstrated by some of the negative examples in these contributions, happily now being remedied. But, as shown by the report that Chris Green and I wrote in 2009 for the then Secretary of State for Transport in England, there are very many interchanges where much still remains to be put right.

That said, the best of these interchanges show that they can do much more than merely move passengers. Located in the right urban locations, planned intelligently in close coordination with city planning offices and regeneration agencies, they can serve as major agents of revival for urban areas that are in need of economic transformation. Two spectacular examples demonstrate this brilliantly: the new Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA station, located on the east side of Amsterdam adjacent to a large housing estate with social problems, now being transformed by the new arena and by large-scale back office development, and London's new Stratford interchange, embodying the existing domestic station served by rail, underground, light rail and local buses, and the new international station which carries commuters from the Kent coast and will eventually also be served by international trains to mainland Europe. Here the new complex, connected through one of Europe's largest shopping centres which opened in September 2011, will similarly serve as the centre of a multi-use regeneration scheme for one of London's most deprived areas, including several sports arenas built for the 2012 Olympics which will then be converted to permanent use, as well as five large new housing developments (the first based on the Olympic village) and major back office development.

Not every city can aspire to regeneration on such a mega scale as these two examples. But, in many cities around the world, an existing interchange can be spectacularly enhanced by injecting new transport links, whether a new metro line or a new stopping point on inter-city and international services. This is a model illustrated long ago by examples like Shin Osaka on the original Japanese Shinkansen line, or Flemingsberg in Stockholm. It can and should be followed by cities across the world. ●



● **Sir Peter Hall, Professor of Planning and Regeneration, The Bartlett School of Architecture and Planning, University College London Christopher Martin, Urban Designer at Urban Initiatives and PhD Researcher at UCL**

↑ Stratford Station
↑↑ Amsterdam Bijlmer ArenA station platforms

EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY AT CITY-SCALE SUZHOU ECO-TOWN

John Thompson & Partners (JTP) led a team that won an international competition to design a new eco-town next to China's third largest lake

For this project, JTP collaborated with Gillespies' Glasgow office (Landscape and Urban Design); Colin Buchanan's London and Shanghai offices (Transportation Engineers); Joachim Eble Architektur (Eco-architects) based in Tübingen, Germany, Professor Yen-Yi Li (bioclimatic design and wind modelling) from Taiwan Shute University, and Professor Shuh-Ren Jing (hydrological management and waste water management) from Taiwan Chia-Nan University of Pharmacy and Science.

AIMS

The aim of the masterplan was to create a balanced eco-system to enable long term, sustainable human habitation – environmental, social and economic.

The key to achieving this was to develop a bioclimatically designed masterplan that established significant and effective synergies between the different components of landscape, movement, urban design, energy and water systems.

CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

The concept was informed by knowledge gained from the Eco-City project – an EU funded research project that set out to develop a framework for sustainable urban development. JTP and JEA were key team members in the project. The central theme emerging from Eco-City is the need for integration of all aspects of the design and use of our living environment.

In our proposal for Suzhou this is reflected in a series of strategies that show how human needs can be met in ways that are in harmony with natural and ecological systems.

THE PROCESS

Six integrated strategies:

1 AGRICULTURE + URBAN LIVING + WATER

The existing land use of the area designated for the Eco-Town is predominantly agricultural. The Eco-Town proposals encourage 'Agro-Urbanism' – the establishment of a coherent, functional inter-relationship between the production, distribution and consumption of food. This concept is enshrined in Ebenezer Howard's visionary diagrams of the Garden City, and the Suzhou plan incorporates these ideas by connecting the urban areas to the agricultural land between the Eco-Town and Tai Lake. Water forms a key component of the open space framework and a network of canals will be used for flood control, irrigation, cleansing of eutrophication, and also water transport, enabling farmers to bring their produce to strategically located floating markets in the urban centres.

2 CLIMATE + URBANISM

Agro-Urbanism contributes to the concept of Bio-climatic design, in which agricultural land, recreational green spaces, and tree-lined streets are interwoven within the urban environment. These green spaces and water bodies, being cooler than built-up areas, capture and cool breezes that reduce the 'Urban Heat-Island' effect. This in turn reduces energy consumption and emissions.

The masterplan embraces the traditional Chinese principles of south facing, west-east orientated streets, yet combines this with bio-climatic strategies to ensure the creation of comfortable micro-climates throughout the year. These strategies have been applied at a wide variety of scales, from city to urban block, and are based on a rigorous understanding of the environmental conditions of the local climate.

In summer, the more fractured urban form to the south will allow the southerly breeze to flow along the wind corridors and cool the streets and buildings. Waterways woven throughout the scheme promote passive, downdraught cooling, and tree-lined streets shade southern facades from the summer sun.

In winter, the more solid urban form to the north shields the colder winter wind from entering the Eco-town. The southern facades of buildings receive passive solar gain from the low winter sun.

By incorporating these bio-climatic principles, the Suzhou Eco-town drastically reduces the amount of energy used for heating in the winter and cooling in the summer.

3 MOVEMENT + ENVIRONMENT + LIFESTYLE

A Slow-Movement strategy, combined with Slow-Life principles is the basis for the approach to movement in and around the site. The strategy, founded on the town's compact and functional layout, encourages the use of healthy, environmentally-friendly modes of transport and discourages the use of private cars. Integrated transportation – light rail / trams and buses – combine to serve the Eco-Town and connect it to Suzhou.

The overall masterplan is divided into areas of contrasting character and density in order to create a legible series of distinct neighbourhoods each with its own strong identity and connected through the integrated transport system.

4 URBAN STRUCTURE + INTEGRATED RECYCLING + BUILDING COMMUNITY

The urban framework is based around a main town centre surrounded by a series of eight walkable neighbourhoods, each with its own local centre. The centres have been designed to promote a strong sense of community, with shops and services, schools and recycling facilities for local residents.

Each recycling centre is part of an 'Eco-station' in which the processing of domestic and agricultural waste is combined in a 'Terra Preta' grey and black water treatment system that produces rich soil for use in agriculture. This soil can be sold as an income generator and also used on site to grow vegetables, also for sale.

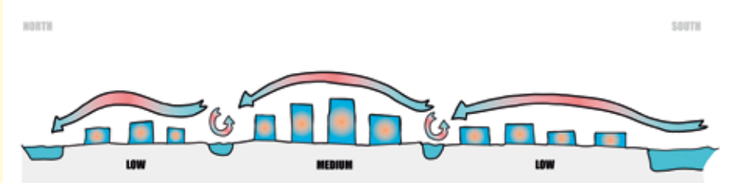
5 ECOLOGY + ECONOMY + LOCAL CULTURE

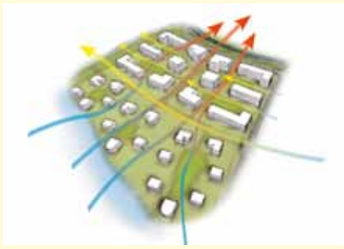
Generating income does not have to be at the expense of ecology and bio-diversity. Eco-Tourism makes a virtue of the preservation of the environment, with the offer of nature reserves, visitor centres, boat trips, eco-trails and outdoor pursuits. This is reinforced by Agro-Tourism, through which visitors enjoy organic produce and can join tours to learn about the techniques used to make it. In this way the local community's traditional farming methods, including silk production, can be transformed to mesh with modern lifestyles.

6 CHINA + EUROPE

Tying these concepts together is an approach to urban design based on combining local context, tradition, an understanding of local conditions and climate with principles of European Urbanism. The integration of water and buildings in the layout itself combines western and local concepts; Suzhou is described as 'The Venice of the East' a city based around a network of waterways.

↙ Masterplan informed by traditional Suzhou water towns and bio-climatic principles
→ Relationship between urban form, landscape and water strategies
↘ Well defined wind corridors harness spring and summer breezes, Wind corridor principles, Computer-aided wind corridor analysis (CFD)
↘↘ Aerial perspective of town centre





LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

At present, China's overall environmental footprint is relatively low, but peaks highlight growing patterns of unsustainable development in urban areas, such as The Yangtze Delta region where Suzhou is located.

As the world's fastest growing economy, there is an urgent need for China to introduce new exemplar sustainable concepts to prevent unsustainable approaches being rolled out for the world's most populous nation.

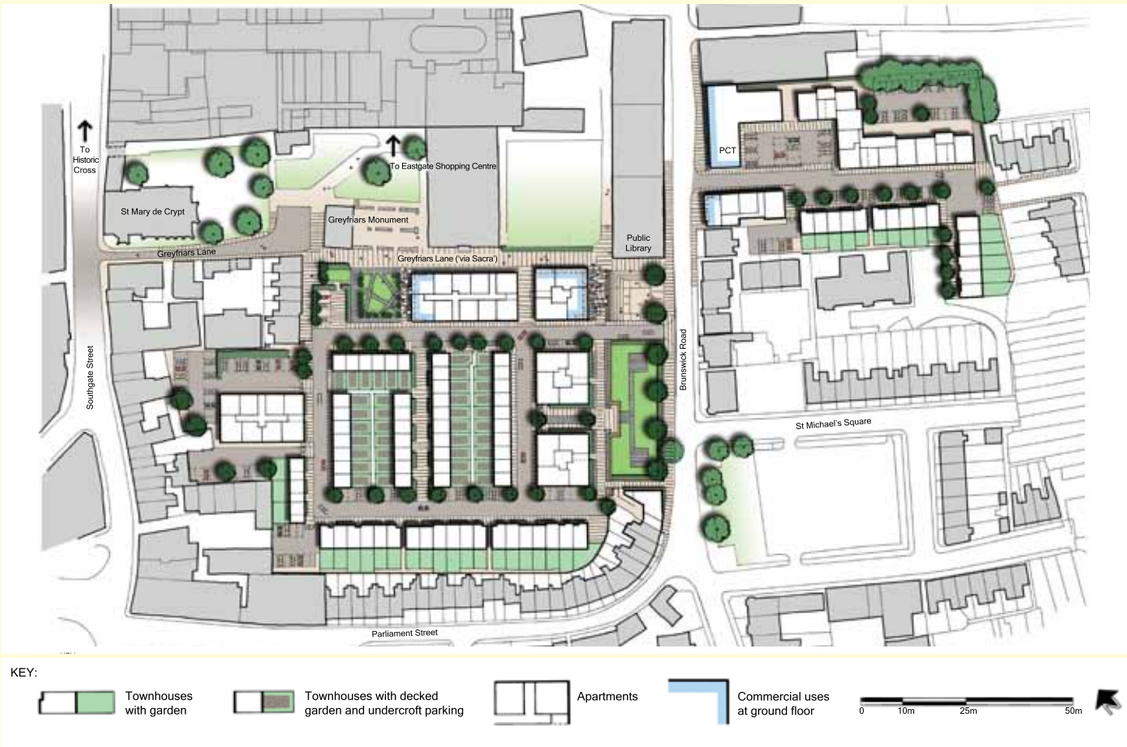
Integrated planning at a city scale combined with bioclimatic design can create a low carbon and energy efficient infrastructure before fabric technologies are even considered for buildings.

To date, China's new Eco-Towns have required state subsidies for construction and maintenance, which compromises their economic viability. The Suzhou Eco-town strategy addresses viability issues by offering development land in 5-10 hectare parcels, to be governed by an environmentally-based Design Code. To assist potential development companies with the more complex technical aspects, the masterplan includes an Eco-Design Information and Advice Centre, which can also be a point of contact for other cities wishing to learn from Suzhou's ground-breaking experience.

The team's proposal also extends to a Branding Concept, to assist the marketing of the project and establish its innovative, integrated identity. ●

GREYFRIARS, GLOUCESTER

NEW Masterplanning describe the proposed transformation of the former 'GlosCAT' college site in the historic core of the city



Gloucester 'Heritage' URC (Urban Regeneration Company) has 500 listed buildings, with Victorian Docks, the most complete Dominican Friary in England and an ancient Cathedral (site of Henry III's coronation and Harry Potter's education). Even in a city of such historic importance, Greyfriars has a pivotal role.

The site marks the edge of the Roman city, contains Grade I listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, a medieval friary and monastic cemetery. It marks the transition between the commercial core and the surrounding residential areas and is an integral part of the visitor and shopper circuit.

HCA bought the Greyfriars site to facilitate GlosCAT's move to a new building in the docks. They chose Linden Homes to deliver an exemplar, modern, city centre, mixed-use scheme.

HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

Our masterplan is informed by the heritage objectives of the Historic Characterisation Study and the regeneration objectives of the URC Framework. The masterplan:

- Reinforces the Roman street pattern
- Supports the main shopping streets
- Enhances Greyfriars Lane ('via Sacra')
- Creates a housing typology to bring families back to the city centre

Delivering these objectives means changing perceptions of city centre living. In particular it means removing the 'monolithic' college buildings which the characterisation study stated dominate and isolate the site, and creating a finer grain of development in keeping with the historic character of Greyfriars.

REINFORCE THE ROMAN STREET PATTERN

The first design principle puts the emphasis firmly on Greyfriars Lane, the Roman wall and the historic Roman street pattern. Offices and apartments will front these streets, shops and cafes can spill out into these areas and pedestrian movement will be concentrated along these routes.

SUPPORT THE MAIN SHOPPING STREETS

The scheme is residential-led but focuses commercial uses in key locations to encourage activity and pedestrian flow.

Primary Care Trust and office uses front Brunswick Road. Restaurants and cafés announce arrival in the historic core of the city, at the prominent corner of Brunswick Road and Greyfriars Lane. This helps increase footfall between the important retail areas of Southgate Street, Brunswick Road and the Eastgate shopping centre.

ENHANCE THE 'VIA SACRA'

The improvement of Greyfriars Lane (the 'via Sacra') is a cornerstone of the masterplan. Currently it is a wide and unattractive street, flanked by large blank walls and parking areas. It has therefore lost much of its historic character.

HCA has committed considerable investment to relocate services which run under the parking areas. This enables the masterplan to remove the traffic, move the building line, narrow the street and restore an appropriate sense of enclosure. This is recognised as a significant heritage benefit for the city.

New public spaces, of very different character, mark either end of the 'via Sacra'. Library Square is a hard space fronting Brunswick Road and the Grade I listed public library. It is a lively space, allowing the proposed café to spill out and encouraging visitors to explore the via Sacra in more detail.

A NEW HOUSING TYPOLOGY

In contrast, Greyfriars Square is a quieter green space enclosed by 4 storey town houses, apartments and a restaurant. It reflects the historic 'cloister' of the friary, providing a 'contemplative' space for visitors and residents to relax.

The masterplan delivers a transition in land use and scale from city centre to residential. It integrates 'traditional' housing with a new form of family living in the city centre, developed with Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios.

4 storey apartment buildings front the busy commercial streets. 'Winter gardens' (enclosed balconies within the building line) provide amenity space without visual clutter. The apartment typology is a modern response to the grand residential 'villas' which still characterise the area.

A quieter residential area is created within the site. 2 storey town houses with rear gardens back onto existing houses on Parliament Street. In the heart of the site are 3 and 4 storey town houses with decked gardens. Undercroft parking ensures streets are not dominated by parked cars or garages.

The street orientation ensures sunlight penetrates all streets, spaces and gardens, creating usable amenity areas for family living. The permeable street network means this area is no longer isolated but connected to Greyfriars Square, Brunswick Road and the wider city.

DESIGN LESSONS

Securing public acceptance for essential demolition can be difficult, particularly if the only justification provided is financial viability. Although the 1930s college building on Brunswick Road attracted some local support, our design appraisals demonstrated that its retention would undermine the improvements to the via Sacra and the delivery of family housing.

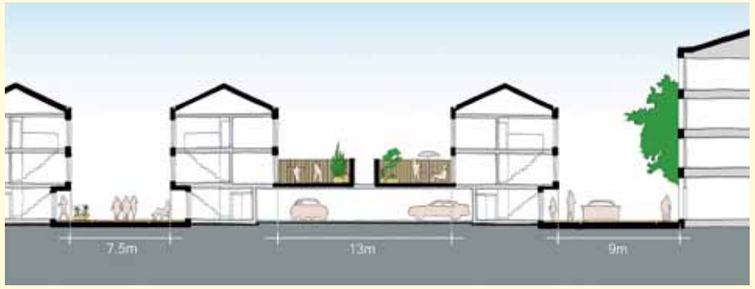
As more 'institutional' sites and large scale buildings are released, design based option appraisal can be an increasingly valuable tool in securing local support for redevelopment.

The second message has been the role of design review. Prior to our involvement in 2010 there was extensive public consultation. Whilst valuable, the exercise also led to numerous iterations of the masterplan and during this process the essential design principles became lost.

The URC Design Review Panel helped highlight this. Their recommendations were supported by HCA and Linden Homes and a fresh design approach was taken. This is a timely reminder of the valuable, and often unseen, role that peer review can play on complex sites. ●

↙ Greyfriars masterplan
↓ Top left: Gloucester city centre figure ground with proposal in red
↓↓ The impact of existing 'monolithic' college buildings and car parking on the 'via Sacra'
↓↓↓ The masterplan is underpinned by the Roman and medieval heritage

↓ A new public space enhances the setting of Greyfriars Friary (Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios Studios illustration)
↓↓ 3 storey town houses with decked gardens and undercroft parking provide city centre family living



RUSH 2020 – STRATEGIC VISION

NJBA A+U crafts a new image for a small coastal community

BACKGROUND

Fingal County Council's commissioners, Senior Planners Patricia Conlon and Peter Byrne initiated a dialogue with the town of Rush through an issues paper identifying the potential that underutilised or soon to be displaced horticultural sites offered for the future. NJBA A+U was commissioned to undertake a vision document to identify how the town could develop inwards while holding onto its specific grain and character. This evolved into an Urban Centre and Development Strategy.

TOWN CHARACTERISTICS

It became clear from site surveys that Rush had numerous characteristics which seemed to parallel a colourful history of seafaring. Though mixed it was important that a multi stranded character development strategy centred on a single theme would be an appropriate framework for the new plan.

THE HORTICULTURAL THEME

Rush and much of its hinterland has long been home to market gardens to greater Dublin and beyond. This activity is moving out of the confines of the town and potentially is leaving behind a residue of industrial greenhouses and processing facilities. In their absence the local authority identified 19 opportunity sites around which a new strategy was developed.

Keeping the horticultural theme a landscape strategy was developed which centred each site in a new character area which in turn support specific functional activities. New land uses were identified in correlation to the specifics of each character area. This synthetic process led to the development of an identity for the town (including a logo based on the town's horticultural history) and a strategy for improvements in the aesthetic and functional qualities of the town.

TOWN, LANDSCAPE, CHARACTER AREAS AND URBAN SPACES

The benefits of the plan can be measured under four headings, town, landscape, character areas and urban spaces to which the urban dweller may relate. The final document ran close to 135 pages from a short history of Rush to an analysis of the current form of the town and extended to provide strategies (in order of appearance) for the Urban Core, the Environment, Parking, Character Areas, and the utilisation of the opportunity sites (including land use proposals).

THE TOWN

The plan offers an integrated physical structure which resolves new connections for development areas while protecting the specific landscape topography of the town. The inward densification and expansion of the town is managed to provide a clear image legible to the citizen and visitor alike.

A new hierarchical matrix was proposed to give legibility and permeability to the maze of laneways and cul de sacs of Rush. This allows for the preservation of the specific 'seaside' character of the backlands. Embracing the historical figure of the town the plan builds on its strength, while opening up new vistas. Before and after figure ground maps were used to illustrate the evolving character of the framework. Traffic routing diagrams were used to test and confirm the strategy as well as making the argument.

THE LANDSCAPE

This was identified as a primary concern, in part due to the existing horticultural character of the town and local region. The subtle topography of the town is to be maintained over the requirements of any new urban infrastructure. This will allow each intervention to take up an organic

← Aerial View of town and proposals
↙ Character Area Strategy
↓ Civic Character Area and opportunity for new library
↓↓ Avenues as key east west links Green spaces in the new and existing areas
↓↓↓ Figure ground of existing town
↓↓↓↓ Figure ground showing proposed changes

relationship to the immediate and the larger landscape. The central landscape strategy was a seeding analogy whereby each character space would have a green space at the heart of the character area based on a site specific horticultural theme by type, season, colour or perfume. Another argument was to retain active agricultural landscapes within the town, providing access along and through these activities. To compensate for the loss of other existing horticultural activities it was proposed to locate a university led horticultural research and development laboratory in the town.

CHARACTER AREAS

With considerable disparity between the parts of Rush, establishing character areas was a very important aspect of the plan. These were developed from urban core principles about the types of appropriate development as much as aesthetic considerations. It was decided that character could be driven by activities which would find expression in the architecture and associated urban spaces that it supported. The landscape strategy would also help unify the disparate elements into one seamless entity. The creation of the character areas became a useful identifier and signifier to the citizens and businesses in Rush.

URBAN SPACES

The Urban Spaces developed for the plan were varied both in terms of their horticultural content as well as their orientation and connectivity. Each character area had at its core a key urban space that had a landmark element to enable identification. While the character areas drew together complementary themes and existing facilities the urban spaces that were identified in the centre of these took on a unifying role, best seen in the Civic Character Area where the unifying space provided opportunities for the existing functions of church, theatre, old mill building and new library.

LESSONS LEARNED

The holistic vision that underpins the document is an attempt at writing a code to which each necessary layer of urban development can be accommodated. A key element of this plan was the analysis that tested the viability of the density strategy including the extrapolation of key development data to provide necessary empirical data to assess future planning proposals. More importantly the plan provides a methodology for an entrepreneurial engagement with the urban environment including commercial and cultural proposals and new branding initiatives.

A greater amount of time than expected was required to tease out the breath of response in the plan. Though seen as an important foundation for future development it should not be seen as a flexible framework. Within the time frame of creating and approving the plan, demographic and economic conditions shifted substantially. These could have had a measurable effect on the detail. However priority was given to robust, flexible and generous elements in the plan so that it will remain viable. The temptation to visualise too specific a future is a straitjacket best avoided. ●

HOWDEN URBAN EXTENSION MASTERPLAN

Richards Partington Architects integrate new housing with an historic town

AMBITION

The masterplan aims to integrate a substantial housing development with the existing town of Howden by creating a natural and sympathetic extension of the town's historic structure. The spatial plan proposed by Richards Partington Architects (RPA) complements and enhances the existing town – sustaining it as a civic focus and centre of economic wellbeing. In this social context, 'sustainability' is not just a response to climate change.

The aim is to produce a balanced community that will support rather than compete with existing services. The close proximity to the town centre will allow good pedestrian and cycle connections. The whole development of 630 houses will be within eight minutes walk of the town centre and improved pedestrian connections are proposed as part of a package of benefits for the town. An innovative access and movement strategy has been developed in conjunction with transport consultant Tim Pharoah, based on a strategy of 'preferential routing' which encourages a high number of journeys to be made on foot. For most people the walk into town will be more convenient than taking the car.

RPA also proposes a comprehensive landscape structure for the whole town. A series of radial marshes, meadows and parks is connected by public footpaths and landscape routes.

CHALLENGES

The main issue for the project was that it proposed a significant expansion to the size and population of the town, exceeding the rapid expansion witnessed after the arrival of the railway in the nineteenth century. The increase in the number of households will be 33 per cent.

The town's Minster is a magnificent thirteenth century construction that once exceeded York in ambition if not historical significance. The Minster is visible from all approaches and establishes the character and scale of the town. The impact of development on this iconic landmark was another significant challenge for the team.

PROCESS

RPA's initial analysis mapped the critical views of the minster from strategic points. Cones of 'vision' were established to preserve or enhance these views and determine the shape of open spaces and the alignment of streets. The layout of the plan evokes the most memorable experiences of the historic core – meandering thoroughfares and glimpsed views of the Minster tower. This approach, which envisages a natural and organic extension of the town, also served to overcome another key problem – initial public opposition to the development.

LANDSCAPE

The site and its surroundings are characterised by ancient drainage ditches and marshlands that served to make this area, which is only a few metres above sea level, habitable. The position of open space and building land within the plan is determined by the contours of the existing flood plain and drainage structures. A new marshland habitat has been created to improve flood storage and create outdoor space with character and an ecological purpose.

The SUD system incorporates permeable hard surfaces and improved capacity in the existing drainage ditches. Off site proposals include the upgrading of drainage and flood mitigation measures all the way from the site to the River Ouse, some 1.5 km away.

The predominantly east-west structure of the main artery through the masterplan, Horsefair, maximises the opportunities for solar access. The height and massing strategy carefully balances useful shading with good solar opportunity and potential for renewables.

DESIGN EVOLUTION

RPA produced much of the early material, including analysis and development drawings by hand, which was readily accessible and understandable and importantly allowed a rapid evolution of the ideas without the finality of a CAD plan.

The proposal developed through a series of 'masterplan options', each evaluated by a design review panel led by conservation expert Roger Wools and also including lead consultant George E Wright and planning consultant Jennifer Hubbard. For a period of over three years the community, Howden Town Council, the parish and various local societies and groups have been actively involved. In the later stages of the process a three day public exhibition was attended by over 300 people.

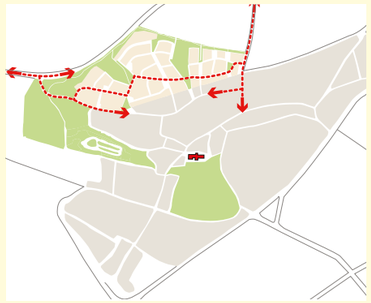
One outcome of this process was that the public realm (8ha in area) for the whole scheme has been designed in detail and provides an assurance of the quality of the masterplan implementation. A detailed Design Principles document, which the LPA is invited to condition has been prepared for the whole scheme to address the hierarchy of streets and development patterns and forms, materials and detailed building design.

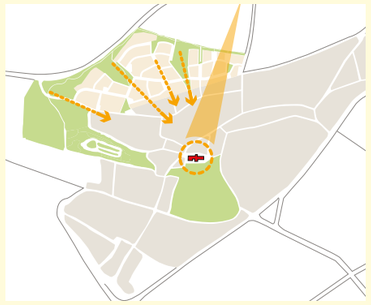
The focus of the stakeholder discussions has been the display of a large physical model of the whole town and its environs. Within this model the various iterations of the masterplan were installed, viewed, debated and amended.

LESSONS LEARNED

The progress, aims, ambitions and priorities of the project are communicated through a website and information leaflets. The consultations discussed the form of the development and also its long term management and stewardship leading to an arrangement where the town council volunteered to maintain the marsh and landscape spaces and contributed to its design and specification. The land owners are also prominent members of the town community and there is a strongly held sense of responsibility to the townspeople – a desire to ensure their legacy is memorable and appropriate. ●

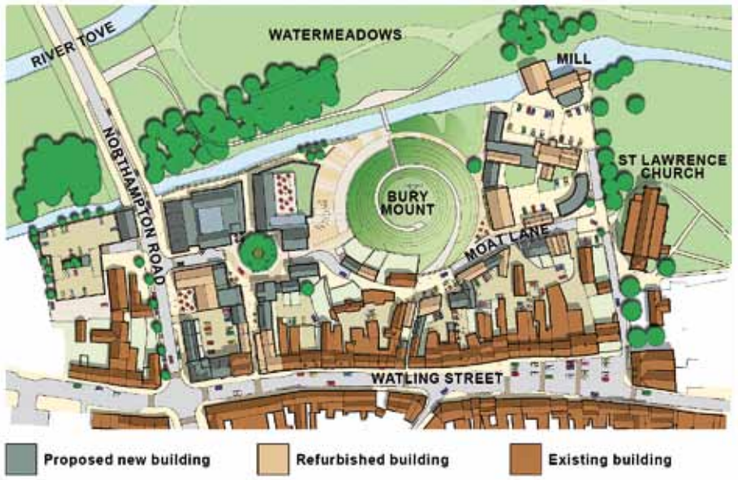
↙ Aerial view showing the marsh, strays and Minster views
↓ Access and movement strategy based on 'preferential routing' and strategic cones of vision
↘ Finger drain along Deer Park with strategic view of Howden Minster
↘↘ Barnes Wallis square (new public realm) with local play area





MOAT LANE, TOWCESTER

Studio REAL design to secure the future of a market town



The future of our market towns is a headline subject in national debate. As part of the South Midlands / Milton Keynes growth area, Towcester will expand from 9,000 to 16,000 residents. The partners to the project, South Northamptonshire Council (SNC), West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and Northamptonshire County Council recognised that towns like Towcester need to be made ready for the new population before they arrive, rather than react later in an ad hoc fashion. This is the basis for the Moat Lane project, and it provides Towcester with a wonderful opportunity to secure and enhance its traditional role as the focus of life for people in the town and the surrounding rural area. The partners have been assisted in preparing a masterplan by studio | REAL (masterplanners), Urban Delivery (viability and delivery) and MVA Consultancy (transportation).

FOLLOWING A LONG HISTORY

Moat Lane is an area of backland lying between Watling Street, which is the town's high street, and the river Tove. Its main feature is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Bury Mount, an 11th century Norman motte. The area is in the Towcester conservation area, overlying the Roman settlement of Lactodorum and characterised by a pattern of lanes and yards which follow the mediaeval 'burgage plots' of buildings on Watling Street. Many of these are listed, and the project area is adjacent to the grade II* registered garden of Easton Neston Park and the grade I church of St. Lawrence.

A PLAN TO RETAIN AND REFURBISH

The fundamental principle of the masterplan is to preserve and extend the existing urban form and pattern of uses into the project area. A network of small lanes is completed by linking Moat Lane, currently a dead end servicing the back of Watling Street premises, to Northampton Road. Two narrow pedestrian lanes, Whittons Lane and Bakers Lane, connect Watling Street to Moat Lane with further links to the Easton Neston landscape. The resulting network of routes provides opportunities for clusters of activity at the nodal points on Moat Lane.

Some inappropriate recent buildings, such as a car showroom and garage, are to be demolished, but otherwise all existing structures are proposed for re-use. Buildings flanking the pedestrian lanes will be refurbished with shop fronts to draw retail activity through from Watling Street. Existing yards behind Watling Street are kept so that existing businesses are maintained, and a number of smaller yards are merged to create more efficient servicing, with fewer access points so that Moat Lane can be consolidated as an active street frontage with refurbished buildings and new small scale infill.

RESTORING THE RANGE OF TOWN CENTRE USES

Town centres are not just for shopping. Traditionally they provide premises for business and services, places for people to meet socially and enjoy refreshment, varied kinds of housing, community facilities and, most significantly, a focus for the civic identity of the town. The masterplan therefore proposes a rich mix of uses, including extensive office space, a range of commercial space for retailers and small businesses, and a community building at the centre of the scheme. SNC have given the greatest possible endorsement to this objective, taking the offices and civic building for their own use and a new front-line facility for district, county and other local public services.

↙ A model of the regeneration area assisted greatly in consultation
↙↙ Roofscape showing new (grey) and refurbished (buff) buildings woven into the existing urban form
↓ Bury Mount at its opening in April 2010: new green space in the town centre

↓ Top to bottom:
Site location map
Birds-eye view
View towards Bury Mount
New civic square
Watling street, a busy centre

A VIBRANT PUBLIC REALM

In tandem with an enhanced network of access through the site, there is a very clear vision for the public realm. The centrepiece is Bury Mount, which has been restored as the first phase of the project. Completed in April 2010, it both preserves a gem of Towcester's history and creates an exciting piece of landscape for public use. The council also acquired the adjacent Easton Neston watermeadows so that the town centre, once very poorly provided with public green space, now has it as a major attraction.

Bury Mount provides the setting for some of the most important buildings in the scheme: the new civic building, Towcester Mill restored for hotel and restaurant use, and smaller mixed-use buildings in Moat Lane itself. A second main public space is also planned at the junction of Whittons Lane and Moat Lane, designed to strengthen the draw into Moat Lane from Watling Street. Its character is busier and more commercial, overlooked by the civic building and by shops and cafés which will extend in open air into the space.

Throughout the project area public space is designed to be clearly pedestrian priority, using high quality materials and street furniture. The key to this intention is the provision of public car parking in a new structure on Northampton Road, adjacent to but outside the most historic area of the scheme: essential since Towcester is the centre for a wide rural hinterland from which most people have to travel by car. Northampton Road will also be improved by reducing carriageway widths and planting avenue trees, creating further car parking on-street. Only occasional essential vehicles will therefore need to drive into the main area of the project.

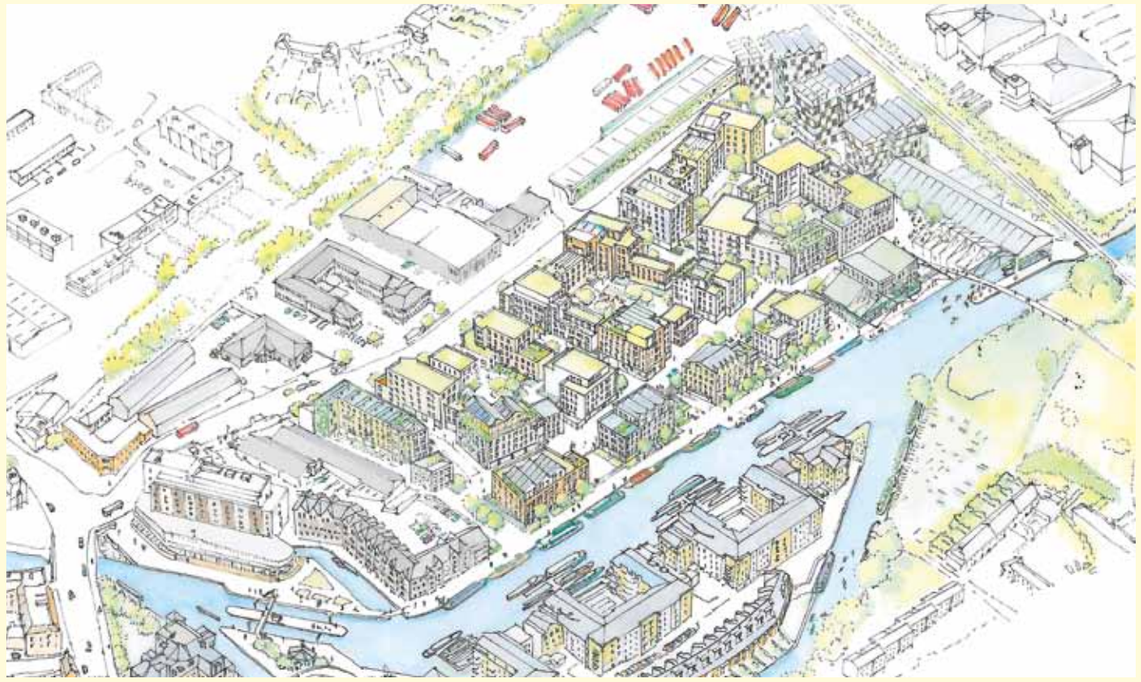
LESSONS LEARNED: MAKING IT HAPPEN

The regional design review panel, Opun, observed that the scheme 'has the potential to become an exemplar of market town development for the East Midlands'. Moat Lane demonstrates the capacity of masterplans to deliver projects on the ground and in particular the ability of councils to drive the process. Here, SNC set out a clear brief at the beginning to meet local aspirations and the masterplan has kept faithfully to it. The powers of the public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to the project, mobilise public support and bring in public funding. The Council's advance public realm projects at Bury Mount and the Watermeadows have been vital in raising public confi dence and awareness of the project.

Finally, the partners have been able to remove many of the uncertainties that might deter private promoters bringing forward complex proposals, undertaking a great deal of detailed work to 'de-risk' the project. By autumn 2011 SNC expects to have a development agreement with a preferred partner in place. ●

BRENTFORD LOCK WEST

URBED, Tovatt Architects & Klas Tham collaborate on new urban neighbourhood



The Brentford Lock West (BLW) site is located in a largely vacant waterside area in the heart of Brentford, West London. It is situated on the edge of Brentford town centre, which has struggled in recent years, but is now in a state of transition spearheaded by the local community. This community had opposed a previous scheme on the BLW site. Over the last 18 months an intensive process of involvement by ISIS and URBED has transformed the scheme into one which has broad community support and supports the regeneration of the town.

Originally developed in the 1940s as a canal side industrial estate, the six hectare site has been largely vacant for a number of years. It has now been cleared and a programme of interim uses, including urban food growing, has been initiated whilst the site is developed. The dominant feature of the site, two warehouses overhanging the water have been partially retained along with three art deco frontages along Commerce Road, the main access into the site.

Following the refusal of the previous high-density residential development on the site in 2004, ISIS Waterside Regeneration Ltd a joint venture between British Waterways, Muse Developments and Igloo Regeneration organised a selective design competition to appoint a new design team. Their brief set out an aspiration to develop an exemplar sustainable neighbourhood that successfully integrated family housing into a viable scheme, which celebrated the qualities of Brentford. The project was developed in line with the ISIS Footprint Policy, which is an internal socially responsible investment policy covering sustainability, design, regeneration and health, happiness and well being.

Following a design competition, two of the entrants were asked to collaborate and so a design team was formed consisting of URBED, Tovatt Architects + Planners and masterplanner Klas Tham (who planned the Western Harbour in Malmo).

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

The design process was one of collaboration with the local community based on URBED's 'design for change' technique. This started with workshops run over two evenings at the start of the process in a local café. Residents and stakeholders from the area used the first occasion to develop a shared understanding of the area today. The second evening focused on generating a number of different options for the site through collages and plasticine models.

These models were then drawn-up by the design team and presented back to the community at a public consultation event. Following feedback from this event, an emerging development framework was drawn up. This was tested and developed further by the design team, and shared with the community through regular update events and exhibitions. In total seven engagement events were held, in addition to which ISIS regularly attended and presented progress to local boards and panels throughout the 18 months it took to develop the scheme.

This process was essential in re-engaging a previously mistrustful local community, and many of the people who participated in the design workshops had been actively involved in the campaign against the previous application. The scheme was granted outline planning in March 2011. The planning committee

↙ Opposite Aerial view of Illustrative Masterplan (Illustration by Ash Sakula, who provided additional illustrations for the scheme)
→ Illustrative Masterplan
↘ View down a residential street (Illustration by Ash Sakula)
↘↘ Design for change workshop with local residents

praised ISIS on their meaningful involvement of the local community in the development process, something that is a model for developer-led engagement under the localism agenda.

A NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD

The aim of the masterplan is to create an urban neighbourhood that grows over time by creating a framework that, on the one hand ensures the vision is delivered, while on the other hand retains the flexibility for each block to develop a separate identity and respond to market conditions.

The neighbourhood is based around four main blocks. These blocks enclose a series of narrow streets running down to the waterfront, picking up on the historic waterside form of Brentford. The blocks themselves are based on a Swedish housing model that accommodates family housing in a medium to high-density environment. In this courtyard-housing model, larger dual aspect apartments, which are suitable for families, are positioned around generous semi-public courtyard spaces. Private open space is provided through gardens within the courtyard, generous balconies and roof gardens at different levels of the blocks. Parking is in semi-basements located below the courtyards. Alongside the larger apartments a number of town houses are also included in the layout.

The predominant height of the development was reduced from the 14 storeys of the previous scheme to 4 – 6 storeys. The scheme steps up in height as you move away from the waterside with a single taller building at the north west end of the site to provide a terminus to the vista along Commerce Road. To ensure the streets feel vibrant and capture the urban character of Brentford's waterside streets, a strong enclosure ratio has also been set for the masterplan with most of the streets taller than they are wide.

The brief was to develop a mixed-use neighbourhood and the scheme includes a commercial hub with managed workspace and facilities for the local canoe club. These are accommodated in the retained overhanging shed and front onto a new public square. A new pedestrian bridge over the canal allows access to an underused park on the other side of the canal, as well as integrating the scheme into the existing residential area and reducing the walking distance to the station to less than 10 minutes.

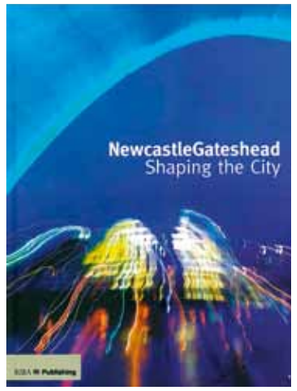
LESSONS LEARNED

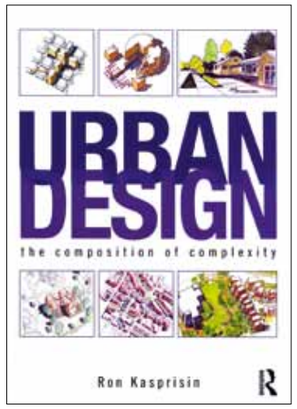
Before commencing the public engagement we were aware that it was essential that the expectations of both the community and the developer were clearly established at each stage of the process. In running design workshops, it was important that ISIS took on board the comments of the local residents, whilst the community acknowledged the need of ISIS as a developer to design a commercially viable project. With these criteria clearly set out, the engagement process has resulted in a scheme over which the local community feel a sense of ownership. With localism becoming more embedded within the planning system, this project demonstrates that community engagement can be beneficial for both the client and the local community.

Another success in the project was the collaboration within the design team. The unusual decision to appoint a Swedish and a UK urban design practice has resulted in a scheme that interprets a Swedish courtyard-housing model into a UK context. A design review panel is now being established by ISIS to help to select designs for the first phase of the scheme. This panel will help ensure that quality, design and place making are integral to the neighbourhood as it is built out. ●

SHORTLISTED PUBLISHERS AWARD BOOKS

For the second year, the UDG Awards Programme will include a Publishers Award. Publishers in the urban design field were invited to nominate one of their books published in the last 18 months. The four finalists are reviewed on the next two pages by the review panel which comprises Juliet Bidgood, Marc Furnival, Jonathan Kendall and Laurie Mentiplay and chaired by Alastair Donald. The panel will choose the winner, which will be announced at the Awards event in February 2012.





NewcastleGateshead: Shaping the City

Peter Hetherington, RIBA Books, 2010, £19.95, ISBN 978 1 85946 356 7

The latest instalment of the RIBA's *Shaping the City* series looks at NewcastleGateshead, rebranded as a twin-city and reborn as a vibrant cultural and tourism destination. It is written by Peter Hetherington, who writes for *The Guardian* and used to be a local government reporter in 1960s Newcastle. For this book, he returns to the North East on what he calls a voyage of rediscovery.

Structured in four chapters, Hetherington begins with a history of the two places. From its origins as a Roman fort, we learn about the area's growth into an energy giant, world leader in railways and a centre of excellence in neoclassical architecture and planning: a place that 'decades before Haussmann set the urban design pace for much of Europe'. In Turning the Tide, we learn about the different government approaches to regeneration and the key people involved; the 'adventurous municipalism' of charismatic council leader T Dan Smith, who 'tried to graft a modernist city into a neoclassical core' but ended up in prison for six years.

Chapter 3 consists of around thirty case studies from the last twenty years. The likes of Angel of the North, Sage Gateshead and South Staithes are grouped under headings of Connectivity, Culture and Public Art, Education, Housing, Offices and Hotels. Each project gets four pages under the headings of project description, client's brief, design process and evaluation. The sheer scale and quality of public and private investment is impressive, although it would have been interesting to understand more about how case studies helped regenerate areas of the twin-city. In the final chapter, Hetherington reflects on the challenges ahead for NewcastleGateshead, and the need for closer collaboration and innovative funding streams in an era of austerity.

Shaping the City is an entertaining book, either for flicking through or reading in detail. Sally Ann Norman's photographs bring a fresh perspective to familiar scenes. Even the much maligned central motorway looked stylish. Hetherington's knowledge and interest goes beyond architecture and planning. He has a keen eye for the social, economic and political context underpinning the history and development of one of our greatest places. Accessible, instructive and educational, this book should prove a valuable addition to RIBA's expanding series of city studies.

● Laurie Mentiplay

Urban Design, The Composition of Complexity

Ron Kasprisin, Routledge, 2011, £29.99, ISBN 978 0 415 59146

This book is a useful design primer for students or others coming to urban design without any former design training. Ron Kasprisin's dual aim is to provide 'instruction of the elements and principles of design and composition', and their application in the context of the 'often messy and complicated array of forces' encountered in design practice. The visual references are mainly taken from Kasprisin (and Partners) own drawings and projects.

The book is framed by the social geographer Edward Soja's concept of trialectic space that defines physical space in correlation with its social and political production. This aspect is tantalisingly omitted in the composition exercises through the book and in the appendix. These deal mainly with physical space and build up from simple exercises with platonic forms, to the implications of different typologies in urban composition and onto to three-dimensional compositions of city blocks. The emphasis on composition as an important exploratory, evolutionary and creative tool for urban designers is a laudable one. As is the advocation of hand drawing as a core skill 'the most effective means of visual thinking'.

But the ambition of exploring design theory at the same time as design processes feels unresolved. Despite the assertion, that urban designers need to attain a fluency in to enable them to remain open to the dynamics of public dialogue, it is not clear whether urban form is settled from a series of trade offs with programme and site. Or instead how this might evolve from and alongside a more complex interaction with people and places.

In a book that orbits around drawing practice one would like to see more critical observation of the relationship between design and drawing. While Kasprisin cites the examples of Gordon Cullen, Christopher Alexander and Kevin Lynch, he does not discuss how their drawings allowed them to explore or communicate particular ideas or specific kinds of intention. Surely in order to make links between theory and practice it is necessary to interrogate the methods of description and communication and extend the range of observation and analysis accordingly?

The book has a generous intent and is undoubtedly full of wise observations but, given its aims, would benefit from a more rigorous, navigable organisation and a fiercer edit. It could be read as two books: one a useful manual of formal exercises in urban design, another a series of essays about space as a dynamic social medium – as yet to be explored.

● Juliet Bidgood

Learning from Delhi – Dispersed initiatives in changing urban landscapes

Mitchell, Maurice, eds Shamoon Patwari and Bo Tang, Ashgate, 2010, £35.00, ISBN 978 1 4094 0102 5 (pbk)

Terms such as slum dwelling, favela and shanty town are evocative notions of which many of us have scant understanding. Learning from Delhi offers an enlightened awareness enticing us to revisit our normal perspectives.

A worthy continuation of the pioneering work of Professor Balkrishna V Doshi, it investigates human activity in diverse living environments, asserting quality of life and sense of place as genuine objectives and accepting change as a constant. Graphically well balanced with photos, sketches, maps, diagrams and montage-style proposals, there is a clear structure of: research and methodology; case studies with context and introductory synopses; and, concluding chapters drawing out key themes.

The topics range from new tenure initiatives, to construction materials recycling, to courtyard spaces – a traditional form that had disappeared from 'pukka' settlements (permanent, finished, legal) being re-introduced in 'kuchha' settlements (temporary, short life, illegal). Despite the large number of case studies, each is used to highlight a key aspect within the themes. The occasionally too short conclusions are mitigated by links to strategic implications, demonstrating their wider relevance, and making the case for a broadened definition of who is qualified to design.

If the difference between the emerging generation of designers and those before is an acceptance of a given situation as a starting point (and not an imposition of a more idealistic approach), then this is an example of how this difference can be explored.

Geddes' 'think globally and act locally' is here evident through 'broadened sensitivities' by engaging people in positively affecting their living environment, towards 'sustainable habitat and spatial justice' through 'informal and latent resources'. This advances the definition of sustainability through focus on available skills, habits and technologies.

Useful and beneficial for student, practitioner and academic alike, Learning from Delhi not only brings together notions of the spatio-physical and socio-economic, but also spatio-temporal and socio-environmental. An engaging book, joyful to go through; evoking the innocence of being a student, yet carried out with thoroughness and professional dedication, as well as the seriousness that such an exploding urban situation demands, particularly with the accumulating implications of not addressing these issues, and highlighting that doing nothing is not an option.

● Marc Furnival

Urban Design Since 1945 – A Global Perspective

David Grahame Shane, Wiley, 2011, £85.00, ISBN 978 0 470 51526 6

The title of Grahame Shane's latest book – a successor to his 2005 *Recombinant Urbanism* – is self-explanatory. As he is the first to acknowledge it is almost impossible to comprehensively address the post-war global development of cities in a succinct volume accessible to the wider audience at which this book is aimed. The book does succeed in establishing an overview of the explosion in urbanisation, setting this in a deep historical, political and cultural context, supported by a dizzying international selection of references.

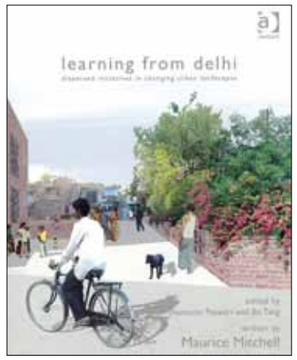
The structure of the book is thematic, with each of four conceptual city types introduced in dedicated chapters and supported by a chapter of illustration and specific examples. The initial sections of the book establish the four types – metropolis, megalopolis, fragmented metropolis and megacity/ metacity and also introduce the reader to Shane's organisational framework of armatures, enclaves and heterotopias – the building blocks of his reading of the city. Shane's ideas explicitly reference the work of theorists including Rowe, Krier and Foucault, to name but three. Prior understanding is not assumed; rather, this book may act as an introduction to a wide range of sources that will help the reader discover ways of reading urbanism. For those with a more developed knowledge, the book enables ideas to be linked and layered – recombined, to use his term.

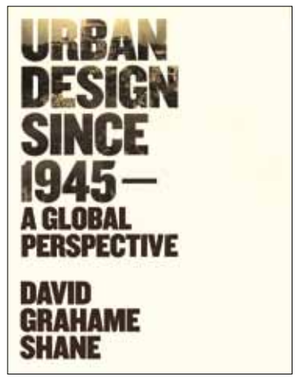
The book is extensively illustrated, including a wide range of historic images, photographs by the author and many new drawings and diagrams created specifically for this publication. The target audience is predominantly students and academics, rather than a practitioner or non-specialist readership, though the work would be of interest to anyone seeking to place the evolution of the discipline into an historic, cultural and conceptual framework.

The book is something of a heterotopia itself, with a wealth of references and links to wider sources that allow each train of thought to be followed through the writings of others. The footnotes and suggested further reading listed at the end of the book make this an invaluable launch pad for deeper immersion into the subject.

The book is not a spoon-fed chronological narrative. It is challenging and thought-provoking, establishing a window into a wider world. It concludes by asking key questions of the future, as all good histories should do.

● Jonathan Kendall





OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

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

- Matthew Carmona, Professor of Planning and Urban Design and Head of the Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

- Alastair Donald, urbanist and co-editor of *The Lure of the City: From Slums to Suburbs* (Pluto, 2011)

- Karl Kropf, Director, Built Form Resource and module leader, Oxford Brookes University

- Sebastian Loew, architect and planner, writer and consultant, teaching at the University of Westminster

- Tim Hagyard, Planning Team Manager, East Herts Council

- Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer

- Barry Sellers, Principal Planner, Wandsworth Council

- Louise Thomas, independent urban designer

Neither the Urban Design Group nor the editors are responsible for views expressed or statements made by individuals writing in *Urban Design*

REGIONAL CONTACTS

If you are interested in getting involved with any regional activities please get in touch with the following

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST
Robert Huxford and Louise Ingledow
T 020 7250 0892
E admin@udg.org.uk

STREET LONDON
Katy Neaves
E streetlondon@urban-design-group.org.uk

SOUTH WEST
Judy Preston
T 07908219834
E judy.preston@blueyonder.co.uk

EAST MIDLANDS
Laura Alvarez
T 0115 962 9000
E udgeastmidlands@googlemail.com

EAST ANGLIA
Dan Durrant
T 01223 372638
M 07738 697552
E Daniel.durant@eeda.org.uk

NORTH WEST
Annie Atkins
E Annie.Atkins@placesmatter.co.uk

STREET NORTH WEST
Emma Zukowski
E street-north-west@urban-design-group.org.uk

NORTH EAST
Georgia Giannopoulou
T 0191 222 6006
E georgia.giannopoulou@ncl.ac.uk

YORKSHIRE
Robert Thompson
T 0114 2736077
M 07944 252955
E robert.thompson@sheffield.gov.uk

SCOTLAND
Francis Newton, Jo White & Laurie Mentiplay
Edinburgh
E scotland@urban-design-group.org.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND
James Hennessey
T 028 9073 6690
E james@paulhogarth.com

PRACTICE INDEX

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.

Those wishing to be included in future issues should contact the UDG, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ
T 020 7250 0872
E admin@udg.org.uk
W www.udg.org.uk
C Louise Ingledow

ADAM ARCHITECTURE
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C Andrew Martin/ Sophie O'Hara Smith
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Oakview House, Station Road, Hook,
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T 01256 766673
E savery@bell-cornwell.co.uk
W www.bell-cornwell.co.uk
C Simon Avery
Specialists in Masterplanning and the coordination of major development proposals. Advisors on development plan representations, planning applications and appeals.

BIDWELLS
Bidwell House, Trumpington Road
Cambridge CB2 9LD
T 01223 559404
E helen.thompson@bidwells.co.uk
W www.bidwells.co.uk
C Helen Thompson
Planning, Landscape and Urban Design consultancy, specialising in Masterplanning, Townscape Assessment, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

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C Tim Day
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BROADWAY MALYAN
3 Weybridge Business Park
Addlestone Road, Weybridge,
Surrey KT15 2BW
T 01932 845599
E e.watson@broadwaymalyan.com
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Failing the endurance test

Between 1987 and 1996, a lot of my time was absorbed by the arguments over the future of the Bull Ring in Birmingham. Everyone agreed that the 1964 Bull Ring Shopping Centre, a pioneering but misguided development, was a disaster both economically and environmentally. I was a member of a citizens' group called Birmingham for People, founded in 1988, which was concerned that the shopping centre's replacement, initially proposed in 1987, was threatening to make the same urban design mistakes again, on an even bigger scale. Using the strategy of an alternative development proposal – which we called the People's Plan for the Bull Ring – we were able to bring about significant changes and improvements, resulting in the Bullring development that eventually opened in 2003.

One area where we failed to bring about change was in land use. The developers insisted that their scheme should be 100 per cent retail, and that was what was built. We criticised this decision, using all the now-familiar arguments for mixed uses. In particular we criticised the inflexibility of deep retail footprints, the great majority with internal mall frontages, with underground servicing. Because of this inflexibility, in an account of the design process[1] published the year after the Bullring's opening, I ascribed to it a projected lifespan similar to that of its 1964 predecessor – less than 40 years – leading to its demolition and replacement in about 2040. Little did I imagine that the demolition would in fact start in 2011.

The shopping centre owners have decided that their development needs restaurants. There are already a few on the wide external street leading downhill to the markets; the central axis which was introduced into the scheme as a result of the People's Plan. Then last year Jamie Oliver opened his 15th *Jamie's Italian* restaurant in the empty Borders' bookshop, conveniently placed with an entrance at the bottom of that street. It is significant that all the existing restaurants are on the outdoor street, because that is where the development most resembles a conventional urban block. In a city centre made out of conventional urban blocks, containing shops, offices and apartments, the insertion of a few new restaurants would proceed straightforwardly by a process of adaption and conversion, without disturbing the basic block structure. But currently, pedestrians in the Bullring have to navigate their way around a large building site, as infrastructure and fabric (including, ironically, the only good piece of architecture – the café by Marks Barfield, architects of the London Eye) is demolished to make way for three new restaurants.

There could not be a clearer demonstration of the inflexibility and unsustainability of the plan-form that was built in 2003. One of the major determinants of sustainability in urban design terms is that quality which *Responsive Environments* calls robustness; the ability to endure, to sustain a variety of uses and activities across a long lifetime, without requiring major reconstruction. Modern indoor malls are notoriously poor at this; they cannot persist, to use the odd but appropriate term that Aldo Rossi uses in *The Architecture of the City* to describe robust buildings like Palladio's Basilica in Vicenza, which has endured centuries of change and stayed the same. Modern malls are very different from nineteenth century arcades like the Galleria Emanuele II in Milan, which the architects of the 1987 Bull Ring proposal had the nerve to cite as a precedent. Those arcades are simply regular urban blocks with the street made special by a sheltering glass roof.

I hope that the new restaurants will be successful. They will add a welcome element of diversity to the retail monoculture. But if an allegedly state-of-the-art shopping centre cannot survive eight years without having to be partially demolished to accommodate minor change, I fear it may not be too many years before the hoardings go up again, and that we may not have to wait as long as 2040 to see the whole lot disappear.

● **Joe Holyoak**

1 Street Subway and Mall: spatial politics in the Bull Ring, in Liam Kennedy (editor), *Remaking Birmingham*, Routledge: Abingdon, 2004.

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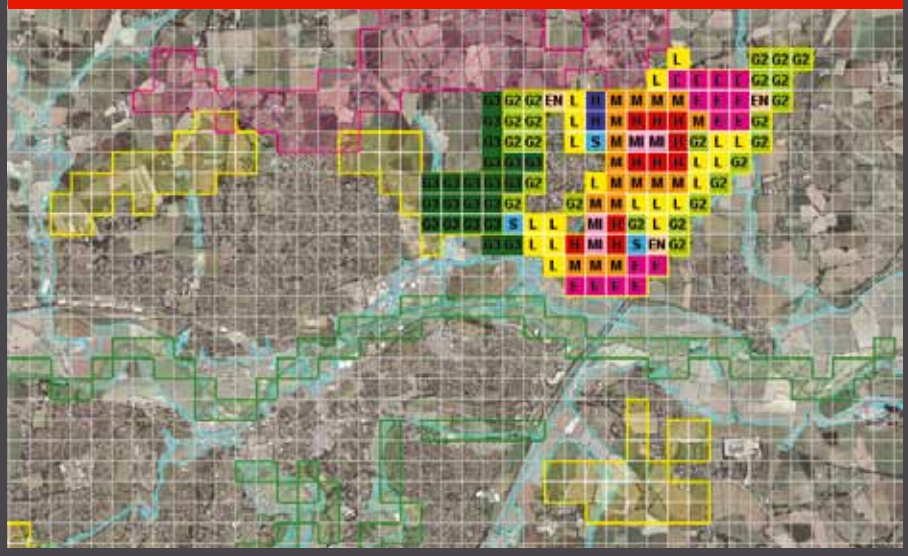
Urban ISM (Integrated Spatial Model) – land use & transport together (at last!)



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