Urban Realm Design

From Strategic Urban Realm Plans, through the design of whole streets and spaces, to detailed "de-cluttering" exercises and landscape design, we're recognised as leaders in the design of the public urban realm. Place by place, we know how to strike the best balance between technicalities and aesthetics. With several award-winning and noted exemplar schemes under our belt, we're not only passionate about streets but skilled, knowledgeable, experienced and able both to get the message across and to DELIVER.

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

Streets and spaces should look as good as they can while working as hard as they need.

Spatial Planning

Land use patterns will always influence movement, yet conventional transport consultancy overlooks this, focusing on the symptoms not causes. Our approach to spatial planning - SMART URBANISM - handles complexity and delivers compactness and connectedness. We offer a truly joined-up approach to land use and transport planning, using cutting edge tools like Urban ISM (Integrated Spatial Model) which is a quicker, cheaper, yet highly robust alternative to the big models and appraisals of the past.

Movement Strategy

Traditional approaches to hierarchy, network layout and modal priority have led to polarised, disconnected and inflexible transport networks. We bring NEW THINKING and use new tools like the 'Urban Movement Grid' and 'Link and Place'. From whole-city, multi-modal studies to corridor strategies and network design, our movement strategy work recognises that transport is almost always a means to an end. It is also grounded by the expertise gained from 21 years of masterplanning and place-making commissions.

Most trips involve more than one mode, so our strategies encompass all networks.

1 Fitzroy Square, London  W1T 5HE
T: +44 (0)20 7380 4545  F: +44 (0)20 7380 4546
j.dales@urbaninitiatives.co.uk
www.urbanmovement.co.uk

120 URBAN DESIGN

TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES
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 – 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.

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.

Amanda Reynolds
This issue has been generously sponsored by URBAN INITIATIVES

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

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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 Meada 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’s 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 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 CO2 compared to a traditional build. It also has rainwater harvesting, motion sensitive lighting and a 62,500 litre capacity underground 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, and 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

London’s Public Spaces


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 democratically 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 cleared 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 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 Lew

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 flattening 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 youthfulness offering; 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 1000km 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 Ground Control argued the masterplanning of Chandigarh for failing to design and this provided a focus for the debate between the three speakers and the audience. Noha Nasser gave eight lessons drawn from her experience of working in early 2012.

Sebastian Lew

News

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Of course there is history too, and it was the interaction of past and present that motivated the two main speakers. Noha Nasser of Ground Control argued the masterplanning of Chandigarh for failing to design and this provided a focus for the debate between the three speakers and the audience. Noha Nasser gave eight lessons drawn from her experience of working in early 2012.
For those of us who have come to urban design via geography, this expansive talk was particularly engaging and although the audience was small, the range and the quality of the questions exceeded that of many other evenings.

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

He saw that from the 1970s to 1990s there had been a reduction in UK inequality enabled by the exploitation of poorer countries; but from the early 1990s 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 increased the 1990s inequality is increasing particularly at the bottom of society and state pensions are cut, leading 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 own their homes – we don’t recognise that urban 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 were which the Dutch once did 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 realisations dawn, 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 lead to a 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 do not need to give up on places yet.

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

Tim Haywood

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 unapplied 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 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 – Stevie 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 his wife for Nottingham he taught at Sheffield, Aberdeen and latterly Glasgow in, respectively, departments of architecture and 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. He was 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, place-making, 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 how Steve was an authority, as many students and academic collaborators will know to their cost!).

Steve had many more contributions to make and his work, just at 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 Comona

1. See Steve’s article on the Urban Renaissance, issue 108, p16

Urban Design Group’s Annual General Meeting


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 was completed in 2010, and the final 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 49 practices and 15 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 Award was won by John Billingham, augmented the Urban Design Group’s Awards in 2010 with new awards for Public Sector work, University for urban design books, Journalists and an individual Lifetime Achievement 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 Eccott and with the participation of John Billingham, Sophie Burt and Barry Sellers as well as Irena Bauwens and Joha 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 Munies, 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 Linda 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 who run the UK who run events in their area including:

• Scotland – Francis Newton, Jo White and Laurie Mentley running several events in both Edinburgh and Glasgow
• East Midlands – Laura Alvarez’s highly successful Shared Space event in Nottingham
• North East – Georgia Giannoulopoulous hosting two events on Transition Towns and sustainability
• 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 of the past year, Irena Bauwens, Sir Richard MacCormac, Helle Sohøl and Lindsay 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 range of towns in Tuscany and Umbria, exploring how the restoration movement in Italy, led by Executive Committee member Alan Stone, 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 a Civilised Island’ on the re-designing the urban form and coherence in the Thames region. A further opportunity will be explored at the 2011 conference.

Email Newsletter

The UDG email newsletter is now received by 5,150 individuals. It provides a monitoring service of government websites across the UK, as well as a channel for news and views on urban design including psychology, sociology, public health, technology and economics.

Websites

A new website for the Urban Design Group has been created by UDG Member and enthusiast Edward Povey with support from the trustees. 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 a complete archive of back issues of the journal.

Street Young Urban Designers Network

Led by Katy Neaves, Street Young 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 Emu Zulowski, has already held a number of events and walking tours too.

Financial Review for the Year Ended 28 February 2011

This comprehensive review of the UDG’s activities for the year ending 28 February 2011 is available on the UDG website.
The Group had three aims:

- to strengthen the forum
- to engage the local community
- to 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 Council, established an events programme and the branding ‘Reimagining Chelmsford was born’.

The events programme involved eleven events over five weeks, including eight workshops, a public discussion, a shared identity and a collaborative website, www.chelmsfordchange.org.uk/communities. Over one hundred ideas were generated and this seeded self-organising initiatives based around the arts, education and learning, environment, health and wellbeing, and communities. These included: Transition Town Chelmsford; Young Urban Explorers – mapping and utilising streets and spaces; Young Urban Explorers; Chelmsford – Speed of Light; Take Your Pick; Future Chelmsford; Creative adaptive reuse of key buildings including the Shire Hall, Marconi Factory (site of the British postal pavilion of the 1950) and Anne Knight buildings; Establishing a Universities 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 spaces.

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 citizenship and participation through the small scale and incremental
- show how localism can work with the planning process, with the 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 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 (TIFS, CLIs, etc), but with the development industry struggling to borrow and make sufficient profits, this is unlikely to guarantee ‘paying’ 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 Sainsbury’s plc, discussing very interesting case studies from the process. A very common theme was that while peripheral super-markets are often seen as draining life from local streets, central cores can save smaller towns from dwindling footfall. Moore conceded that the in-house design team were brought in to design 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. 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 vision 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 CIORE 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 ministers was a key indicator of short-termism in policy-making, rendering sustainability unachievable; he called for a 35 year sustainable governance timeline and the adoption of transition town principles. In his closing questions followed, one of which was led by Louise Thomas

- Louise Thomas
by 1969 the UK and US were immersed in ture, and The Architecture of the City), and would later be dubbed Post-Modernism and planning, the reaction against CIAM orthodox by Team Ten and others had become of the Weathermen, the Angry Brigade and protests was breaking up into the shards Summer of Love and solidarity of the student torian and critic Reyner Banham.

The Urban Design

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 Beshouls to Our House (1978), 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 tests 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 ‘Townscapemovement’. 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, ‘Townscapemovement’ 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 Enter prise 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 character, an insistent 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 naive 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 ridiculously naive to think it was Parish Councils or individuals, except in the most affluent areas. And yet the sense that while Barker et al might have underestimated the extent to which Pop Culture would become the self-consuming 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 creative alternative, fascinating and plausible 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 vibgyor of Las Vegas strip is compressed into the non-place realm of the interwebs, and where the corporate culture of the LARGE learns it would support against institutions addicted to endless reports, consultations and strategies. We might reflect on the demolitions (in 1969) of this wondrous little pocket that wanted to see progress but they – and many others – now prefer the peace of their existing quiet gardens undisturbed by development. That is the radical sequel to Non-Plan. It is not planning, but NO DEVELOPMENT AT ALL.

In the end, if we were to come up with a new experiment in freedom, it would be to give real control back to our engineers and have gradually, now winning work for our engineers and expanding into wider urban design stud- ies and masterplanning.

Can you describe the path that you fol- lowed to become an urban designer and what motivated you? 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 2000s. 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 stud- ies and masterplanning.

What is your most hated place and why?

I’d say Alingsås. It’s a little town near Gothenburg. Nothing really exciting, except during the festival of lights. The space changes completely and shows the potential of light- ing in shaping space.

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

It would definitely have to be a street mar- kets. 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 distinct quintessence, 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, then I’d say Whitecross Street Market, near Old Street, for its beautifully effective simplicity.

What do you find exciting about your work? The best thing is the wide range of people you meet and the variety of contexts, situa- tions 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. That’s a difficult one. I prefer to think about books and ideas, otherwise I end up men- tioning Ch Guevera or Pippi Impastato! Sticking to urban design, I suppose I really like the Richard Bennett, author of The Uses of Disorder. The text exudes a deep love for the democratic value of public spaces, which would 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 choose?

What advice would you give to UD readers?

Where is your favourite town or city and why?

Finally, who would you like to see inter- viewed 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 dig- ital 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 Tischhauser) Light of Life is an eye-opener on the relationship between light and space.

Read on


The Urban Design Interview: Riccardo Bobisse

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

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What would you like to be doing in ten years’ time?

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 Ch Guevera or Pippi Impastato! Sticking to urban design, I suppose I really like the Richard Bennett, author of The Uses of Disorder. The text exudes a deep love for the democratic value of public spaces, which would be central to any scheme.

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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
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.

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 associated 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 90 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. 50, 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...
### 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 Haygarden 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, and much of its building stock 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...
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
• Fulfils its potential as a key regional centre of employment

DURHAM CITY VISION: 2020

The city centre masterplan (also prepared by David Lock Associates) for Durham City Vision, was launched in March 2007, with the aim of reinventing 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 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 focusing 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 the city core – engage local people and businesses; opening up fresh opportunities for collaboration, creativity and enterprise

Guided by these principles, place quality improved significantly and encountered significant implementation problems, local resistance, or been sidetracked due to local politics or financial considerations. Such adaptations to the masterplan have been aligned to the project’s objectives and accessibility and transport improvements. Nevertheless, some schemes have encountered significant implementation problems, local resistance, or been sidetracked due to local politics or financial considerations. Such adaptations to the masterplan have been aligned to the project’s objectives and accessibility and transport improvements. Nevertheless, some schemes have encountered significant implementation problems, local resistance, or been sidetracked due to local politics or financial considerations. Such adaptations to the masterplan have been aligned to the project’s objectives and accessibility and transport improvements. 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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 overlapping they can sometimes be in conflict to the extent that promoting economic values can rebuffer 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. Latterly, this has been particularly important, as post-credit crunch the development climate is markedly different to 2004 when the masterplan was published in March 2007. Indeed, the deficit reduction plans of the Coalition Government have had significant impact 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 that the durability of the city’s asset irrespective of how to approach the spatial design of a historic place through a more layered approach. The revitalisation of collective spatial-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 support of ESRC award PTA-030- 2015-06392 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.

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.

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...
number of elderly people who now travel aided by pensioner passes. Their needs are often overlooked in the milieu of social interaction. Social change 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 in contrast from character from high streets and shopping homes. However, in order to foster 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 should be a wide range of development extending outwards from interchanges into the communities served (Scott, 2005). This 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 connectivity over generations rather than imposing arbitrary short term urban patterns (Allies, 2010).

ECONOMIC FACTORS

The transport interchange has a big economic influence and social impact on its run. The cost of the interchange is often the result of the need to accommodate the pressures of business and to design facilities for effective land use, rather than ensuring the interchange is an integral part of the city. Urban regeneration and transport investment are often挂钩. New transport systems are an important component of urban development and can help to stimulate economic growth.

TRANSPORT FACTORS

The interchange is defined as a multi-modal transport facility: its main role is that of connecting 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 intermediaries. However, different types of interchange have their own physical characteristics and associated urban design patterns. In most interchanges space initially 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 the essential point where two or more types of transport interconnect, there is also much hybridisation. As transport interchanges grow in size, 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.

TRANSPORT FACILITIES

The demands of transport infrastructure take priority over human movements which in turn compromises in their design. Other social factors are then added 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 points. The urban designer is responsible for ensuring the space 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 roads, rails 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 stations, bus, ferry or airport provision. Early modernist functional singularities 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 context of the city and the national transport network.

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. ‘First before wheels’ may make a catchy slogan, but it is hard to implement given current organisational structures.

Urban design is an indispensable 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 on urban interchanges. In France the patterning was one of locating new interchanges outside city centres (eg Lille and Avignon) thereby reducing the capacity of the central city transport interchange. In Germany, many interchanges have taken into the centres of regional cities, providing a chance to upgrade 19th century terminals to new standards (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 stronger model of integration for the European level. In France for Britain to emulate as it shifts investment from road to rail over coming decades.

SPATIAL DESIGN

Urban design is an indispensable 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 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 platforms. 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...
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.

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Another reason is simply that transport planning is an old-fashioned problem that those with the power to improve are reluctant to improve – it is seen as a bit of a nuisance and hence not their job. Agencies tend to lose interest. It is not their land, 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 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 may have a necessary measure of engagement with and control over many 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 public realm that complements the new private realm. When no substantial change to the public realm that complements the new private realm. When no substantial change to the public realm that complements the new private realm. When no substantial change to the public realm that complements the new private realm.

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 simple, it is often neglected. Once cycling becomes the norm, the realm is truly public beyond the red line of what constitutes the station interchange, these agencies tend to lose interest. It is not their land, and hence not their job.

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 is walking. Despite the huge number and large proportion of trips to and from railway stations that is walking.

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One other issue worthy of note is the old-fashioned problem that those with the
responsible for making decisions itself 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 arguments against the quantitative pears in established transport cost-benefit appraisal; they cannot find a way to make the cases. 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 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 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 interchanges here, and so 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 interchangeing 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 gaters were prevented from squeezing back up onto the footway if traffic conditions suddenly got too hairy. It being the rare public realm, the street was commissioned and implemented by Camden Council. They recognised that the challenge was one of ‘fitting things into a pre-existing environment’. The walking distances associated with this street section was a true station interchange. This meant that its design needed actively to encourage and enable passengers to use the station, not merely split them out into a hostile environment and hope for the best.

Our design response was essentially to recognise that it would be both impossible and undesirable to constrain pedestrians on footways at peak times. With ongoing major development at the Thameslink station, the challenge will indeed only get greater, so the applied to vest is a solution that was simply 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 when 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.

The station (serving what used to be called Thameslink). This crossing was closed afterwards.

So, we were tasked with delivering an urban realm that would work 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 public realm conversion. The winners of this competition were hardworking urban architects and urban designers who found a way to work in a hostile environment at peak times.

**CASE STUDY 2 – LIVERPOOL STREET CROSSRAIL STATION**

Liverpool Street will be the busiest Crossrail station, and the scale of the urban design challenge we were set as architects was such 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 either to take a break, have a snack, chat with others, waiting for onward transit, or waiting to meet someone. Adding to the challenge was the design decision of turning a hard-working urban realm in a fittingly impressive gateway to the City of London.

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**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 high street 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 either to take a break, have a snack, chat with others, waiting for onward transit, or waiting to meet someone. Adding to the challenge was the design decision of turning a hard-working urban realm in a fittingly impressive gateway to the City of London.

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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 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 at 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.

Anton Valk describes a model Dutch interchange

The Netherlands has one of the best performing rail networks 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 to be 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 parameters 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 key 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 Bijlmer ArenA station.

Around 18,000 rail passengers travel in or out of Amsterdam Bijlmer 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 50,000 people 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 Bijlmer 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 1990s 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 Amsterdam Holstein was developed. In 2007 the Utrechtbrug 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

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**AMSTERDAM BIJLMER ARENA STATION**

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NEW RAILWAY STATIONS AS CATALYSTS FOR REGENERATION AND URBAN HUBS

June Ayres 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 and facilities 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 interchange 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 – activities 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 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.

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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 an interchange – although facilities within the stations 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 connectivity than can be achieved by tram and rail alone), an interchange can attract new economic activity to the surrounding area. However, the example of Valenciennes suggests that while trams and trains 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 part of the functions for which they were intended, but it is less apparent that they are designed to encourage interchange with the bus, tram or metro. The Hauptbahnhof in Kassel, which provides a seamless integration of regional rail and Regiotram services, sending both below street level to stop at ground level, could hardly be more convenient. Rail services terminate here, but the Regiotram continues, emerging onto the streets several blocks away on its way through the town centre and into the surrounding villages and rural areas.

Interchange design is a simpler matter at small stations but encouraging train passengers to continue by bus may depend on whether buses run at a frequency that is competitive – few will relinquish a long walk in the rain to an unwelcoming bus stop. At Nelson, a small town in the north of England, passengers are transported to 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.

Yes, 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 connects to the underground 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 integrated, the interchange between rail and tram could hardly be more convenient. Rail services terminate here, but the Regiotram continues, emerging onto the streets several blocks away on its way through the town centre and into the surrounding villages and rural areas.

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The existing station in Kassel, Germany provides a more seamless link but also succeeds as public realm; sheltered by the surrounding buildings and Avenue le Corbusier, 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 60 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 Flemish 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 indoor plant life, adding 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 different modes 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 the 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.

THE PERFECT INTERCHANGE?

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REGENERATION THROUGH BETTER INTERCHANGE
STRATFORD CASE STUDY

Kate Pasquale and John McNulty describe a complex collaboration success

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 £6bn metropolitan centre in East London. Over the coming fifteen years, Stratford City will become home to more than one hundred shops, two department stores, coffee shops, 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 Athletes’ 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 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.

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 Chessfield), 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.

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 report1 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.”

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DESIGNING FOR GROWTH

TFL Interchange’s role was to capture the various stakeholders’ requirements, and following tendering, commission a feasibility study, it
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 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 measures have helped to bring Stratford Station up to a higher specification, including the DLR service to the new Westfield Shopping Centre, adding value to the development with enhanced footfall, whilst reducing the overall transport construction costs and access.

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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.
EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY AT CITY-SCALE
SUZHUO 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 Chia-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 JRA 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 oriented 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 built environment. Waterways woven throughout the scheme promote passive, downdraught cooling, and tree-lined facades from the summer sun.

In winter, the more solid urban form to the north sheds 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. ECODY + 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 trails, guided nature walks, guided boat trips, eco-trails and outdoor pursuits. This is reinforced by Agro-Tourism, through which visitors enjoy the 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.

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 bio-climatic 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 560 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 cafes 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.
RUSH 2020 - STRATEGIC VISION
NJBA A+U crafts a new image for a small coastal community

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 can close to 125 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 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.

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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 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 breadth 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 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 (sha 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 and priorities of the project are communicated through exhibitions of work 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 the 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.
MOAT LANE, TOWCESTER
Studio REAL design to secure the future of a market town

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 medieval ‘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 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 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.

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 public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to public sector partners have enabled them to assemble the site, introduce assets to
The Brentford Lock West (BLW) site is located on 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, as you move away from the waterfront, picking up on 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 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 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 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 waterfront 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 workspaces 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.
NewcastleGateshead: Shaping the City

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 tourist destination. It is written by Peter Hetherington, who was 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 neo-classical architecture and planning: a place that ‘decades before Hausmann set in on our greatest places’. 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 of the city from the last twenty years. The likes of Angel of the North, Sage Gateshead and South Staithe 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 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 Mintey

Urban Design. The Composition of Complexity

This book is a useful design primer for students or others coming to urban design without previous formal training. Kasprisin’s dual aim is to provide ‘instruction of the elements and principles of design and composition’ and ‘an architectural and critical context of the “often messy and complicated array of forces” encountered in design prac- tice’. The visual references are mainly from Kasprisin (and Partners) own drawings and projects.

Kasprisin’s book is framed by the social geog- rapher Edward Soja’s concept of triactic space that defines physical space in correla- tion 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 phys- ical space and build up from simple exercises with platonic forms, to the implications of different typologies in urban composition and onto three-dimensioned compositions of city blocks. The emphasis on composition as an important exploratory, evolitional and creative tool for urban designers is a laudable one. As is the advocacy 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 practice feels unresolved. Despite the assertion, that urban designers need to attain a fluency in enabling them to remain open to the complex interaction with people and places. In a book that orbits around drawing, 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 of wide educational value. Unfortunately, given its aims, would benefit from a more rigorous, navigable organisation and a fatter index. It could outdo the world’s one useful manual of formal exercises in urban design, another a series of essays about useful manual of formal exercises in urban composition 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 three-dimensioned compositions of city blocks. The emphasis on composition as an important exploratory, evolitional and creative tool for urban designers is a laudable one. As is the advocacy of hand drawing as a core skill ‘the most effective means of visual thinking’.

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EDUCATION INDEX

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
Department of the Built Environment
Faculty of Science & Technology
North Hykeham Campus, Beckholme, North Hykeham NG16 5BZ
T 0114 222 0000
W www.anglia.ac.uk
E b.a.hill@anglia.ac.uk

EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART
School of Architecture, Landscape & Planning
12 Roxburgh Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PQ
T 0131 248 1000
W www.ecal.ac.uk/index.php?id=523
E c.bovey@ed.ac.uk

LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
School of Architecture, Landscape & Planning
52 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9JT
T 0113 343 4000
W www.leedsmet.ac.uk
E c.bovey@ed.ac.uk

LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
100 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA
T 020 7815 7300
W www.lsbu.ac.uk
E c.bovey@ed.ac.uk

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY
School of Architecture, Design & Planning
25 Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2JF
T 01865 280000
W www.oxbrookes.ac.uk
E c.bovey@ed.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD
School of Architecture
100 Chatham Street, Salford M5 4WT
T 0161 275 5000
W www.salford.ac.uk
E c.bovey@ed.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
School of Architecture
210 Totley Road, Sheffield S10 2PS
T 0114 222 0000
W www.sheffield.ac.uk
E c.bovey@ed.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
Faculty of the Built Environment
University Avenue, Glasgow G4 0SR
T 0141 540 3960
W www.strath.ac.uk
E c.bovey@ed.ac.uk

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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 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

Spatial Planning
Land use patterns will always influence movement, yet conventional transport consultancy overlooks this, focusing on the symptoms not causes. Our approach to spatial planning - SMART URBANISM - handles complexity and delivers compactness and connectedness. We offer a truly joined-up approach to land use and transport planning, using cutting edge tools like Urban ISM (Integrated Spatial Model) which is a quicker, cheaper, yet highly robust alternative to the big models and appraisals of the past.

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Urban Realm Design
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urban movement
1 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 5HE
T: +44 (0)20 7380 4545  F: +44 (0)20 7380 4546
j.dales@urbaninitiatives.co.uk
www.urbanmovement.co.uk