

121 URBAN DESIGN

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THE DEVELOPER
AND URBAN DESIGN



URBAN
DESIGN
GROUP

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Babies and bathwater spring to mind with respect to the government's approach to changes to the planning legislation – yes, terrific to reduce over a thousand pages to 53 as per the *Draft National Planning Policy Framework*, but only if you can also distil all the essential elements – existing and new – into those 53. From the urbanist's point of view, there are some crucial elements missing from the NPPF's distillation, primarily around the thorny issue of design quality, which although mentioned as an important component, is not embedded into the planning process; the suggestion that the non-complying projects would only be those of 'obviously poor design' begs more questions than it answers.

The NPPF is silent on methods of achieving good design and silent on what constitutes 'obviously poor design'. We may all

think we know the answer to this, but there are bound to be disagreements, and no basis is established for assessing 'good' or 'poor'. Over the last decade, design review panels and design guidance documents have created benchmarks for design quality in the public realm and built form. Many local authorities have design review panels and the Design Council/CABE intend to continue in the latter's reviewing role for major projects. However, not all projects go to these panels and not all local authorities have them, so a lack of consistency and continuity is a major risk.

What of the widely used and accepted design guidance which the NPPF fails to refer to – let alone embed into the planning process?

In recent years, literally hundreds of design guidance documents have been produced, many under the auspices of CABE, government departments or local authorities, each putting their own stamp on the same story. Arguably there are too many of these, all saying similar things in slightly different ways; however, the message has not changed and the basics of good urban design can

be achieved by adhering to the principles expressed in the top five design guidance documents. By ignoring this valuable information, the NPPF is sending the baby down the plughole – to over-extend the metaphor.

My top five are very simple: most of them have been in use since the beginning of this century but express principles which would have been understood by the Romans building liveable cities 2000 years ago. These principles will not change simply because the UK planning process changes; this needs to be clearly recognised and reference to these documents embedded into new legislation. My top five for the 'new world order' are: *By Design*, *Better Places to Live*, the *Urban Design Compendium*, *Safer Places* and *Manual for Streets*. You will have all of these on your shelves – even though several are out of print – or on your computer, or filed in your brain and all of us should be supporting their continued use.

● Amanda Reynolds

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

This has been a really busy autumn for the Urban Design Group. There have been two major events, namely the national conference in Greenwich, and the Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture given by Professor Christopher Alexander, ably supported by UDG Patron John Worthington and kindly hosted by Alan Baxter. We have doubled the number of events that are run from Cowcross Street, many of which are filmed and made available to anyone free of charge on Urbannous thanks to the unstinting efforts of Fergus Carnegie.

The autumn witnessed a continued analysis of the so-called London Riots and the knee-jerk solution of removing the barriers to the erection of roller shutters. What better ways are there than this to advertise that a place is dangerous and to deter normal people from using it? But this was a side-issue compared with the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework for England. There was extensive face to face and

on-line debate, and following a lot of hard and thoughtful work put in by Tim Hagyard in developing a first draft, the UDG Executive submitted a response to government. A submission was also made to the inquiry being conducted by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee. I know there have also been individual members who submitted their own responses direct, and some, very helpfully, participated in debates on the NPPF on national newspaper websites: it is vital that we talk to people outside the urban design circle.

One of my worries in this present economic climate is about what is happening to young urban designers. To help them stay in touch with professional practice, we ran a workshop on Reinventing Greenwich as a prelude to the conference, at the invitation of Geoff Belcher, the coordinator of the World Heritage Site. I was delighted when 30 enthusiastic individuals turned up; more details can be found on page 4. At the reception hosted by the University of Greenwich that evening, Joe Holyoak commented that the work could be worth around £20,000. He may have been generous but it was a reminder that the work urban design professionals do is of huge value to society, and

that communities are the poorer both financially and in terms of the quality of their lives, for want of good urban design.

The veteran politician Aneurin Bevan, once lamented a 'poverty of expectation' in the public. People should demand fine places in which to live out their lives, and not settle for the polluted, grey environments in which many do. Can we change this? The email contact list for the urban design community has reached 1,600 and there are over 250 people who are members of the email forum; the STREET network is growing by the day, and an expanding core of members are Recognised Practitioners. We are potentially a powerful and influential group. Although the state of the economy hurts us sore, and some of us much more than others, we are witnessing in practitioners not depression and defeat, but a growth in determination and energy. Let us look to 2012 as a year when we all strive to convince public and politicians of the value of good urban design.

● Robert Huxford

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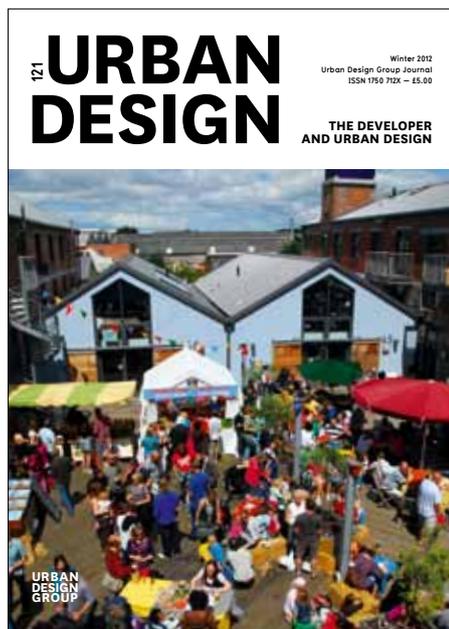
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DIARY OF EVENTS

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

THURSDAY 5 JANUARY 2012

UDG Film Night: The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces

The 1988 film by William H. Whyte, companion to his 1980 book of the same name, is a seminal work in the study of human behaviour in urban settings, and forms the basis for the ongoing work of the Project for Public Spaces in New York. A screening of the film (approx. 60mins) will be followed by a discussion session on whether its conclusions are as applicable today as they were a quarter of a century ago.

WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 2012

Urban Design & Public Health

Soaring rates of obesity, depression and vitamin D deficiency are all evidence of a public health crisis...but can good urban design help? This event will look the interplay between urban design, planning and the public health agenda. Research is showing that well designed places can have a major impact on improving the health and general wellbeing of individuals and communities. Martin Willey from NHS London Healthy Urban Development Unit will discuss measures to improve collaboration between the planning and health sectors in London and Janice Morphet from UCL will present her work on health and spatial planning.

WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2012

UDG Awards Event 2012 at 61 Whitehall, London

The Urban Design Group's 2012 Awards Event will take place at the Royal United Services Club (RUSI), 61 Whitehall, London. The evening will commence at 6.45pm with drinks and canapés in the impressive first floor library followed at 7.30pm by the presentation of the awards in the historic Wellington Hall. See page 35 for more details. Tickets required - available from UDG office.

WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH 2012

The Developer & Urban Design

To accompany issue 121 of Urban Design the UDG will be hosting an event to explore issues around the role and perception of urban design by the property industry. Leading figures from the private sector will engage in conversation with Ben van Bruggen, to explore what value urban design can bring to projects and what the future requirements will be from those commissioning urban designers. Questions to the panel may be sent to louise.ingledow@udg.org.uk in advance of the event. Venue and cost TBC.

WEDNESDAY 21 MARCH 2012

The Evening Economy

The evening economy can bring both vitality and identity to a town, and can be of particular importance when retail is faltering. Speakers including Prof. Marion Roberts from University of Westminster, will explore the best ways to encourage a vibrant evening economy, whilst addressing issues such as personal security, transportation and antisocial behaviour. How can the negative external impacts be managed? This event will provide an invaluable opportunity to hear about the latest research and the status of the Purple Flag Award scheme.

GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY

The government is having a hard time convincing not just the nation but its own backbenchers, of the wisdom of carrying on with the proposed NPPF. The debate at the moment is mostly centred around the protection of the English countryside, ignoring the other side of the coin, the urban environment; the fact is that the two are inseparable. When Lord Rogers was commissioned to lead the Urban Task Force, his remit was to find a way of protecting the countryside by making cities more attractive. His report did exactly that, and for a number of years people started realising that living in urban areas had advantages, particularly if they were well designed, well managed and had good public transport. It is difficult to see why the government is not following the same route; the argument that getting rid of planning controls and allowing growth on green fields will create economic growth doesn't make any sense: Jane Jacobs showed many years ago that urban areas attract investment and generate growth, not the countryside. Add to that the cost of the additional infrastructure needed to make green fields buildable and of the resulting commuting, combine it with the fact that thousands of

hectares of brown field sites are available in accessible locations, and the government's position is untenable.

Good urban design is however a critical factor to ensure that urban areas remain attractive. Fortunately in the past decade Britain has managed to develop expertise in this field and to vastly improve the quality of urban areas, adding value to them at the same time. This issue's topic shows that it is not just us, urban designers, who think so, but developers, precisely the sector that the government pretends to support. We are very happy that this endorsement comes from a group of people who, each in a different way, have contributed to the country's wealth and well-being. Good quality urban design is good for the environment, for society and for the economy. That is what sustainability is!

The issue also include the local authorities' initiatives shortlisted for the Francis Tibbalds award. They are further proof of the quality of work being done by hard-working local authority planners and councillors. This is part of the country's wealth but it is being neglected and diminished by current government policies.

● Sebastian Loew

Urban Design Group

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The High Street

The Gallery,
London 8 September 2011

If people were told the world was to end in four hours time, where would they go? Would they gather in the car park of the local retail mall? The answer to this question, posed by the late J G Ballard, is a most emphatic No! One's thoughts turn either to home or high street, which people continue to identify as the heart of the community. But that heart beats at an ever slowing rate and concern is growing as to its future, and it was the future of the high street that was the subject of the UDG's September event.

The first speaker, Joanne Cave of David Lock Associates, took the theme of 'Identity, Place and Performance'. She noted that the government has recognised that there were problems and had appointed Mary Portas as High Street Tsar; with some forecasts predicting that in 20 years, around 50 percent of common household purchases might be made online, the problems are significant. Joanne believed that people would continue to go to high streets for the sensory experience that the internet cannot provide, as well as simply to meet other people. She thought that there could be a resurgence in food retail, given the growth of farmers markets. The recipe she commended was a mix of retail, leisure and social interaction. Local authorities also should take a more imaginative look over the use of their own assets. Their car

Transport Interchanges

The Gallery - 13 October 2011



Three speakers in succession - all three contributors to *UD 120* - addressed the issue of transport interchanges at this event at the Gallery, located almost on top of a new interchange being built at Farringdon. John Dales of Urban Initiatives started his very entertaining talk reflecting on the possible impact of new technologies on the way that



parks though providing revenue income, could be more valuable if developed to support the high street's vibrancy.

One of the major players in recording the decline of the high street and in developing ideas for its revival is the New Economics Foundation, represented at the event by Elizabeth Cox. She began by running over data on 'clone towns', contrasting Petty Curry in Cambridge with its two independents, 55 chains, 9 varieties with Tankerton Road, Whitstable and its 50 independents, two chains, 20 varieties. Liz warned that the economies of clone towns were fragile, risking higher levels of vacancy rates, poorer quality of public realm and reduced possibilities for social interaction. She wondered whether we wanted high streets that were about nothing more than consumption. She introduced the idea of 'Plugging the leaks': being aware of how money enters the local economy, including tourism and welfare

benefits, and how it leaks out. Actions that individuals could take included choosing locally sourced products and supporting independents, establishing a 'transition town' group or civic society, or establishing a local currency. Local authorities could offer rate reductions to small businesses, establish High Street Transition hubs, and support community land trusts.

In the ensuing discussion, some wondered whether there was a risk of taking too much of a middle class perspective, ignoring the realities of shopping on a restricted income, and having a over-romantic idea of community. The worry is that it may be too late for debate: internet retail already commands 10 percent market share, and may soon out-compete both high street and out of town outlets. Is there the collective will and imagination to anticipate and address the changes that would ensue?

● Robert Huxford

people use public transport. But his main subject was the importance of a well functioning and attractive public realm as part of the interchanges, in order to avoid walking becoming the most negative part of the experience. Through examples he showed how the pedestrian is often completely forgotten in the design of interchanges, and how this can have an impact on the whole journey and therefore on the success of the transport operation. He also indicated that designing a good space was not easy, particularly as conflicting demands were made: for example, street furniture required by some was seen as clutter by others. However his conclusion was encouraging: 'everybody values quality public realm'.

TfL's John McNulty's subject was Regeneration through better interchange. He started by outlining the various reasons that have resulted in a terribly inefficient system: fragmented ownership and management, inadequate cooperation between transport planners and city planners, fragmented and short term funding, lack of joined-up governance, and as result of all this poor outcomes and value for customers, communities and tax payers. An image of Victoria station's forecourt summarised this mess. On

a more positive vein he suggested that the existence of a Mayor for London was a great advantage as it gave leadership. The current Mayor's strategy deals with interchanges in an integrated way and should achieve results. McNulty used Stratford station to explain how difficult it was to get all stakeholders to collaborate but how in the end he succeeded and was pleased with the results. He ended up showing a few other current and potential successful interchanges in London.

Finally June Taylor described a number of European interchanges from the point of view of the user. She observed that in large stations, money was spent in creating glamorous spaces to attract retailers and shoppers but frequently the spaces outside of the station, where the interchange took place (the bus stop for instance) was neglected and unfriendly to pedestrians. Small towns with smaller stations could not afford the investments but sometimes offered a better experience to the customer through very simple solutions.

Surprisingly though all three speakers had a large number of images, there were few diagrams or sections to explain the spatial configuration of some of the interchanges.

● Sebastian Loew

Cities 2030 – Live – Work – Play UDG National conference on Urban Design

Greenwich 20 – 22 October 2011

The conference was held over three days, starting on Thursday with a workshop, a visit of the Olympic Park and a reception at Greenwich University. The main event took place on the Friday at the Laban Centre in Deptford and was followed by the annual dinner. On Saturday, tours of Greenwich and the Olympic area were organised.

20 OCTOBER 2011 RE-INVENTING GREENWICH WORKSHOP

It was a very cold Thursday morning by the Thames, when a group of around 30 urban design students and young practitioners gathered at the entrance of the Discover Greenwich centre in the Old Naval College, eager to take part in the Re-Inventing Greenwich Workshop which was organised by the UDG in partnership with the University of Greenwich, as a precursor to this year's conference.

The day began with an introduction to the area from Geoffrey Belcher, World Heritage Site Coordinator and our host for the day. He set out some of the history of the area and highlighted the fact that in the past ten years, visitor numbers had grown from 1.5m/yr to 10.5m/yr. This massive increase looks likely to continue (with the Olympics and re-opening of the Cutty Sark next year), and the town centre is already struggling to cope with the demands put on its constrained public realm.

Geoff also introduced the site for the day's workshop - a busy and traffic dominated road junction on the edge of the town centre. Bounded on one side by the Hawksmoor designed St Alfege Church, and on the other by the new University of Greenwich School of Architecture and Construction (under construction), it has the potential to be a major public space for the town. Before visiting the site, the participants divided into groups of five, were told what to look for by UDG Director Robert Huxford, as within less than an hour, they would have to undertake a rapid analysis of the site and grasp the key urban design issues.

After lunch, which many spent exploring the rest of the town centre, the groups quickly started to develop ideas for the site and how it could be improved. These were at a variety of scales and everybody was encouraged to 'think big' to overcome some significant challenges. Then, midway through the afternoon, Dr. Noha Nasser gave some top tips for street design which helped the



participants to refine their big ideas and consider the detail of how they might be delivered.

Time flew and there was no stopping for a tea break. The excellent presentations ended in the Old Brewery refreshed by a well deserved drink. It was a valuable exercise for all concerned, and hopefully some of the great ideas that were produced will find their way to fruition. They may even be taken forward by those young professionals that came up with them.

21 OCTOBER 2011 – LABAN CENTRE
Nick Raynsford, MP for Greenwich and Woolwich opened the conference at the Laban Centre in Deptford, setting the scene by declaring that urban regeneration and climate change were two major challenges for the next twenty years. Referring to the local area he saw the transformation of the Millennium Dome into a music venue as a major symbol in the regeneration of historic Greenwich. He emphasized that good planning and design were needed to address the challenges of climate change.

LEGACIES AND LESSONS

Barry Shaw, director of the Essex Design Initiative, reviewed the transformation of Docklands starting with the Docklands Joint Committee work, the efforts of the LDDC to enlist the private sector as fully as possible, the early Isle of Dogs proposal by Cullen and Gosling, the scheme initiated by G Ware Travelstead, and ending with the Olympic and York funded development of Canary Wharf. Public transport, a key component, was inadequate until the Jubilee Line was introduced at a later date. Shaw referred to good examples of housing by Jeremy Dixon and Richard MacCormac, and projects such as Butlers Wharf that saved existing buildings of character. His key lessons were that leadership and vision, and a design team that gave priority to quality were essential, and that spaces were more important than buildings.

Niall McNevin from the Olympic Park Legacy Company emphasised the importance of the Olympics in transforming the east end of London, helping to inspire people, providing

sustainable development and offering opportunities for Londoners in sport, jobs and commercial development. He showed the Legacy's importance by making comparisons with Athens and Sydney where many facilities were either unused or not maintained. In London a hundred year timescale was the reference. McNevin reviewed the priority themes and policies, and contrasted the existing state of the area with its end state when the Olympic park would connect with surrounding areas to form a twenty mile corridor along the Lea valley and repair an existing tear in the urban landscape.

Richard Walker from Savills, one of the sponsors of the conference, questioned the use of showcase projects in regeneration. He used the Arsenal stadium to illustrate how two objectives had been realised - the funding of a new stadium and the conversion of the existing stadium into apartments. He contrasted this with redevelopment at Hulme, Manchester, and Castle Vale, West Midlands, suggesting that these would have been helped by the location of major city wide facilities, as Bilbao had been by the Guggenheim and West Bromwich by The Public, a cultural centre. He examined in some detail the proposals to provide a new stadium for Tottenham Hotspur and the way in which it could assist in regenerating an area; this would not happen without grants and Section 106 funds. His conclusion was that regeneration schemes need more than a new building to create places where people want to go.

21ST CENTURY URBAN DESIGN

Kelvin Campbell of Urban Initiatives presented excerpts from his recent publication - *Massive Small - The Operating system for Smart Urbanism*. His presentation was too brief to explain how his new approach might deliver but it provided plenty of food for thought: 'Never waste the opportunity offered by a good crisis' (Machiavelli), 'obsessed with certainty we see almost nothing,' 'design alone will not save us'. Kelvin's quotes reveal his thinking: top-down, command-and-control doesn't work for us any more; those in power say that bottom-up is the better way of addressing sustainable growth and change,

and they may be right. Despite the boom of recent years, the quality of place wished for has not been delivered. Bigness has been the order of the day and many places have fallen victim to the big bang masterplan. Our thinking, tools and processes for planning, design and delivery in this new normal world are broken and will not be put back together again! Kelvin made the case for simple rules to resolve complex situations. His presentation induced curiosity in seeing how these principles were translated into projects at Urban Initiatives.

Carl Vann from Pollard Thomas & Edwards described a number of projects, of which the work at Diespeker Wharf seemed to offer most lessons. Many years ago the practice had located its offices there; since then, their workspace had expanded from existing buildings to larger spaces enhanced by the adjacent canal. Community gardens, the addition of other facilities and new residential development, had all served to benefit the practice and the community.

Charles Scott of Sheppard Robson defined the four categories of issues to be considered for 2030: cars and cycling, interactive modes of communication, quality and convenience of the high street, and lastly the testing of ideas. He felt (speaking as a cyclist) that the time involved in designing for the car was out of proportion, particularly as alternative modes are sure to increase. He thought that although on-line sales of goods were increasing, the social role of the high street needed protection. And as interactive and mapping technologies were becoming much richer, testing of proposals would become easier.

STREETS AND PUBLIC REALM

Mike Biddulph from Cardiff University explained his work on shared space developed with the aid of a research grant from the UDG. He compared seven schemes based on *Manual for Streets* (homezones) to three based on *DB32* rules. His conclusions (see *UD 118*) were that the homezones outperformed the others and were used much more for children's play, while speed limits alone would not change the level of street activities. Further analysis of the better projects may reveal the aspects that made them successful and in what specific way.

Stuart Reid of MVA addressed the question 'Is Shared Space the answer?' and thought that it should not be seen as a single solution: a space had to be designed in its totality. Projects where the redesign of a space resulted in the removal of the traditional crash barriers and the replacement of signage, showed how a totally different streetscape could be created to the benefit of all. His analysis of solutions involved providing a vision, clearly stating the purpose and following on with appropriate action. Reid also mentioned the impact of speed and how techniques could be used to help people with disabilities.

Continuing with the same theme, Chris

Lines investigated the use of technological solutions to reduce speed and whether Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) offered an answer to improving safety and environmental aspects. As 1 mph reduction can reduce accidents by 5 per cent, an ISA might save 28,000 crashes/year. 'Intelligent' vehicles could be introduced where speed would be controlled by the car's computer. Smoother driving would result and cycling could be integrated more easily.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Mark Curry of the Grosvenor Group introduced this session by describing the role of the developer in improving the public realm adjacent to their property holdings, in projects carried out in Westminster. Their main strategy was to reduce through traffic, enable activities to benefit from this change, provide pocket parking and improve the pedestrian and visual environments, and to do this in partnership (including finance) with the local authority.

A final discussion session was devoted to the issue of whether we have the answers and are really sure about the questions. Ideas flew in various directions from the importance of designing the process (and not just the project), to issues of scale (macro, micro and in-between), to the impact of (un) certainty about the future, and the social purpose of urban development. Several members of the audience made comments and one thought that the day's papers contained a series of contradictions. This may be what such a conference is about: not problem solving but imagination raising!

The UDG chair, Amanda Reynolds, gave a final summary: responding to one comment from the floor, she expressed the concern that sustainability shouldn't have to be stressed all the time as it should be taken for granted by all. She thought we should concentrate on those matters on which we can have an influence - the middle section, between the big (planning) and the small (buildings) - and seek flexibility, integration and visioning.

As a parting gesture, participants had been asked to provide a collective noun for a gathering of urban designers; from an extremely small response, the favourite was 'a density of urban designers'. Follow that!

● John Billingham and Paul Reynolds

↳ Herzog & DeMeuron's Laban Centre, in Deptford where the Conference took place
 ↗ Top to bottom: Working group redesigning a corner of Greenwich
 A full room during one of the conference's sessions
 Delegates during a guided tour of a near-by scheme by Pollard Thomas and Edwards
 Another conference session



Ecotown, Dream or Nightmare

The Gallery,
London 21 September 2011



Jack Warshaw and his fellow travellers presented the case of Bordon, one of the 16 designated eco-towns under one of the previous government's initiative towards lowering the UK ecological footprint. No doubt the objective was laudable, but Warshaw demonstrated that eco-towns, as currently pursued, are not achieving that goal, quite the reverse. As the only urban designer living in the designated eco-town area, he endeavoured to make a positive contribution during the consultation process which turned out to be rather wanting; residents concerned with the proposals then formed a pressure group 'baag' (www.baaga.co.uk).

The Bordon case illustrates convincingly the misnomers of the eco-town concept, hastily put forward by what is now the Department of Communities and Local Government. It seems that besides the genuine efforts of reducing carbon emissions, the selection of locations was guided by land in public ownership, and in particular the Ministry of Defence which owns some 2000ha in the vicinity of Bordon. The MoD is an important employer of its 12,000 inhabitants, although employment seems to be transient and sporadic. The locals are preoccupied by the employment deficit that its departure would leave, especially in view of the doubling of Bordon's population forecasted in the eco-town proposals, without forthcoming jobs.

Bordon is situated in a very rural setting near the South Downs, surrounded by protected sites, ancient forests near the town

activities. Below is an incomplete list and we would be very grateful to members if they added to it or correct information that they think is wrong.

- Urban Design Forum, udf.org.au
- Urban Design Alliance of Queensland, www.udal.org.au
- Australian Council for New Urbanism, acnu.org/index.php
- Dutch Association of Urban Designers and Planners (BNSP), www.bnsp.nl
- Urban Design Institute of South Africa (DISA)

development from the 1950s. The price of £440 (£400 for UDG members) includes rail travel to and from London and three nights' accommodation (sharing room).

You may if you wish combine this with a longer tour, led by Alan Stones, from Saturday May 12th to Sunday May 20th which includes visits to other important Baroque cities such as Nancy, Karlsruhe and Mannheim. All these cities have geometrical layouts focused on the ruler's palace and have gone on more recently to upgrade their public realm and link city to suburbs with modern tram systems. We shall be talking to planners about their urban design policies and plans. We shall also be taking a look at the contemporary Paris classical set-pieces, such as the Place des Vosges, Palais Royal, Place Vendôme and Axe des Tuileries. The price of

centre, playing fields and a working farm. Although not opposed to growth, the residents objected to its scale, the small size of dwellings, the high density, the building on green spaces and its traffic impact. Converting a business park site into yet another supermarket would exacerbate the situation.

Warshaw demonstrated that the eco-town criteria were not fulfilled by the masterplan, which is being imposed by the conservative district on a liberal-democrat town, and he suspected ulterior motives. A lively discussion ranged from suggesting how to obtain further assistance to propose an alternative masterplan, to honourable ways out for the protagonists of a plan which has encountered considerably changed circumstances and local resistance, getting prepared for the even more pro-development localism bill and National Planning Framework under discussion, to declaration of independence.

What was seen as the major problem is that both alternatives - do nothing and an imposed eco-town - would lead to insecurity and planning blight, considering the uncertainty of MoD's departure. This is the case of a well-intentioned idea for sustainable planning that has gone astray. An urban design event in the form of a local charrette could be organised to produce a viable, sustainable alternative of high ecological quality while addressing the fears of the community for its idyllic rural way of life.

● Judith Ryser

- Urban Design Forum (NZ)
- Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design, www.hkiud.org
- Institute of Urban Designers India (IUDI), www.udesindia.org
- Institute for Urban Design, New York, www.ifud.org
- Van Allen Institute, New York
- Nordic Urban Design association (NUDA), www.nuda.no
- Urban Planning Institute of Slovenia, www.uirs.si ●



£880 (£840 for UDG members) includes rail travel, participation in the Bordeaux visit and eight nights' accommodation (sharing room).

Further information is available from Alan Stones, Fullerthorne, Church Street, Kelvedon, Essex CO5 9AH, phone 01376 571351, or email a.stones907@btinternet.com (Please note the new email address).

The last booking date is Friday 10th February 2012. ●

The Urban Design Interview – Rob Thompson



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

I have been in my current post as principal urban designer at Sheffield City Council since September 2004. Within this role, I manage the city's Sustainable Development & Design Panel which brings together independent experts to review strategic projects across the city; I am part of a team providing design advice on development and currently working on the city's new Market proposal; I am responsible for urban design policy within the city's planning documents, and have worked to develop a sustainability toolkit.

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

I have always loved cities. When growing up, I thought nothing of walking the length of Edinburgh to get home from school and one of my favourite things is to meander around a city for hours on end. I studied planning at Glasgow School of Art and the mindset towards creativity was fixed. The design oriented course had some inspirational tutors (particularly Peter Booth and Brian Edwards) who ignited and developed my design instincts and awareness. After that I knew what I wanted to be doing and started my career working in urban regeneration; this included a spell helping to deliver Barnsley's urban renaissance. Finally I enrolled on a part time MA course, which was a factor in being appointed to my current post.

What do you find exciting about your work?

There is something special about being able to shape your surroundings. I've tried to explain what I do to my six-year old daughter, who now proudly tells all her school friends that her daddy makes Sheffield beautiful. It's sometimes helpful to be reminded of the reason for doing what you do, and of the art of simple explanation. It's also quite handy to do something you enjoy; I don't think you can be an urban designer and not enjoy your job because you are constantly surrounded by work!

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

Being able to grasp ideas and evaluate sites and proposals is invaluable but two key skills are important: first, being able to see things at a number of levels, from the broader city-wide masterplanning to the detail of particular sites. Second is communication, the ability to appreciate different perspectives and explain things in a variety of ways to suit the audience. Finding different arguments for good design is imperative in making sure all parties understand that it is integral to the whole process, not just an aesthetic add on.

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

Following my daughter's directive, I'll be making somewhere beautiful.

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

Without question, it is Gordon Cullen. As a first year undergraduate, I picked up his *Townscape* and it changed my world. Beyond the obvious skills as an artist, the way he communicated the experience and drama inherent in good townscape was a revelation. Many of the concepts he put forward remain valid today; one of the key attributes of his approach is to consider emotional reactions to places – surprises are important and the city can be made memorable through intense experiences. I'm currently working on a book that seeks to offer a 21st century take on his ideas.

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

I love 'indoor – outdoor' spaces: ones where there is that implicit townscape drama and wow factor. Often these tend to obscure or blur the boundaries of where urban design begins and ends. The rejuvenation of St Pancras has helped to celebrate once more the romance of travel. In a similar vein, I've recently visited the reopened National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh by Gareth Hoskins and Ralph Applebaum. The different spaces work well together; being there was a real pleasure, and a reminder of how great design can not only make a place feel good and look good, but crucially work well.

Where is your favourite town or city and why?

I've been fortunate enough to visit and spend time in a great number of great places across the world. We can still enjoy the quality of diversity and individuality that a truly great place can bring, through a combination of culture and personality, architecture, materiality and climate. Although I have a soft spot for both Edinburgh and Glasgow, I do love returning to North Berwick, on the coast in East Lothian: it has a fantastic relationship with its coastline and enjoys fabulous beaches at either side of the harbour; the main High Street is a wonderful piece of townscape and, from a work perspective, a study in the constant

art of survival in the face of large scale retail. Being able to enjoy the elements before heading back into the town revitalised, is a great experience.

Where is your most hated place and why?

Just as it is difficult to single out one good place, it is difficult to point a finger at a wholly bad place; everywhere has some good and some bad. It is disappointing to realise that a chain of events leading up to a particular development could have easily led to an alternative one – often with negligible differences in cost. Unfortunately, the current system does not properly reward quality. At its most depressing, this manifests itself in seeing the same housing development – with identical porch details and weathervanes – some 250 miles apart. The argument goes that it is what people want, but invariably people inhabit and sometimes make the best of the places they are given.

What advice would you give to UD readers?

Two recommendations: travel and sketch. Travel, because there are unlimited experiences and fantastic opportunities for learning. Sketching is great fun and it improves with practice. More than anything else, it helps to develop one's skills of observation; sit and draw something and you have to properly look at it and appreciate how it fits together, a critical element in understanding place. Digital cameras make it increasingly easy to have a passive relationship with our surroundings, but drawing helps you to stop, engage with and appreciate the world around you. The feel of a place doesn't just come from the physical nature of the built form, but from sounds and smells.

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

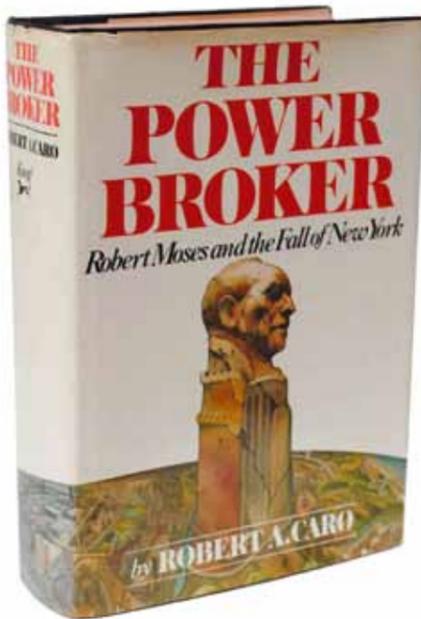
It should work on relevance, to ensure that the benefits of design quality go beyond mere aesthetics – design has a clear role to play in how places work at all levels. A huge amount of design decisions within the built environment – about units, floorspace, development mix, etc - are taken by a host of other professionals well before architects or urban designers ever get to see what is going on. These critical decisions have a significant impact on how places work, and earlier involvement in getting them right will have a profound impact.

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

I think it is important that urban design as a profession continues to look outside its normal boundaries – taking different perspectives from a range of fields is useful in thinking laterally. Two radically different areas spring to mind: firstly, how entrepreneurial business leaders analyse and redirect their core business and think of new ways of marketing and adding value. Secondly, the approach taken by those connected with the visual arts to bring drama and interest into towns and cities. ●

THE URBAN DESIGN LIBRARY # 3

Robert Caro: The Power Broker Robert Moses and The Fall Of New York (Knopf, New York, 1974)



Robert A Caro's epic account of the life of Robert Moses, the man central to shaping the physical fabric and governance of 20th century New York, is both scholarly and highly readable. It is considered a definitive account of the play of power in the making of the greatest world city at the height of the American Century. The interplay of history and personality, of grand vision compellingly and painstakingly pursued through the lens of a life story, means *The Power Broker* can at times evoke the brilliant writing of Philip Roth.

Moses built 14 Expressways, hundreds of public parks, swimming pools and scores of other developments, including Triborough and Verrazano Bridges. He transformed the physical landscape of New York City, commissioning projects that embody some of New York's finest historical architecture and landscape. His impact on New York draws comparisons with Haussmann's remodeling of Paris.

The reach of Caro's research is as remarkable as the extent of the works; the story is told from the inside. Moses' appointment in 1934 as commissioner of parks and parkway development by newly elected liberal republican Mayor Fiorello La Guardia provided a platform for him to re-engineer the city's bureaucracy and to begin re-crafting the city itself. The City drew on the Federal Government's New Deal resources, supplemented by the raising of tolls on bridges, and by issuing bonds. Steadily, Moses influence grew as

independent vehicles were created to raise finance, to commission and deliver public works. The reformer set out to end the Tammany Hall systems of patronage in contracts, and took supreme control of jobs, contracts and privileges in a regime as elitist as the system the youthful Moses set out to eradicate. Moses' determination to drive an expressway through Washington Square, Greenwich Village, and Jane Jacobs' winning determination to stop him, became the defining moment in establishing the values that inform contemporary urbanism.

Not until the 1960s did the 'power broker' fall from grace. The Rockefeller administration took back power and control from the executive: a different consensus between public and political elite had to be struck.

Moses, forced to engage with the book which 'tries to prove I was a good boy, who fell from grace, became a politician and mistreated the poor', denounces its veracity in his inimitable style: 'the biography is full of mistakes, unsupported charges, nasty, baseless personalities and random haymakers thrown at just about anybody in public life'. Caro, tersely retorts: 'It is slightly absurd (but typical of Robert Moses) to label as without documentation a book that has 83 solid pages of single-spaced, small-type notes and that is based on seven years of research, including 522 separate interviews'.

In the introduction, Caro invokes Sophocles: 'We must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been'. Caro looks on despairingly at 1960s New York, the sunset of Moses' career, and sees chaos, congestion, fear and despair.

Yet twenty years on, Caro's negative assessment is not universally shared. Ballon and Jackson's 2007 re-appraisal of Moses notes a renewed interest in Moses' achievements, spurred, they suggest, by 'a fear that New York can no longer execute ambitious projects because of a multi-layered process of citizen and governmental review'. Moses 'looks different in a national context than he does in isolation'. Without seeking to diminish his failings, their account re-poses New York's transformation in terms of the imperatives of growth, modernisation, and responses to federal funding and policies.

The challenge exposes the central flaw in the Caro account. Many of the apparently exceptional features of New York's development are typical of city development across the USA. It becomes clear that Caro's narrative of naïve public support for Moses in the 1930s followed by loss of faith in the 1950s actually reflects a wider loss of confidence in government and urban programmes altogether, rather than a specific loss of confidence in Moses. Caro's focus on the individual, although highly contextualised, over-emphasises Moses' personal attributes and thereby undervalues the wider social and political changes at play.

Moses viewed the world from the perspective of the needs of the city as a whole rather than the neighbourhood and

its communities. While, Jacobs' 'view from the street' is rich and human, as citizens our needs and desires are bound up with the futures of cities and regions too. Today, we have become mistrustful of governments and politicians; despite Moses' disdainful contempt for the public, he could engender popular support for his projects in a manner unimaginable in our risk averse, suspicious, mistrustful times.

Can we imagine public support for large-scale transformation and development, not just for 'nudging' incremental and organic changes? Probably, the answer is: not at the moment. Right now, the most optimistic outcome could be for the government to put more tools and resources in the hands of people. Allowing people to come together to take over buildings, to experiment with social enterprises and to plan simply by taking over, can be a good way of kick-starting a new wave of urbanism. It is perhaps one precondition for resurrecting a sense of agency. Caro would cheer: the solution is for all the contemporary Robert Moses figures to simply get out of the way.

But we should recognise something lost here. We sorely need large-scale investment and development to meet our needs. To achieve this we need plans to extend our cities and to embrace growth. We need to scale up our imagination, our ambitions, and our plans. Moses demonstrated technical and organizational possibilities; in different social circumstances, that power could have been democratically controlled and put to popular use.

● Michael Owens, Director, Global Cities and author of *The Planned City* in Williams, A. and Donald, A. (eds) *The Lure of the City: From Slums to Suburbs* (Pluto Press, London)

READ ON

Goodman, R. (1972) *After the planners* (Routledge, London)
 Ballon, H. and Jackson, K.T. (eds) (2007) *Robert Moses and the Modern City* (W.W Norton and Co., New York and London)
 Campbell, K. (2011) *Massive Small: The Operating Programme for Smart Urbanism* (Urban Exchange, London)

Design Council Cabe – a new future

The merger of CABA into the Design Council was a result of significant effort over a short time, starting with a shared vision expressed by their respective Chief Executives to meld together two world class design organisations. Both championed the value of good design nationally and had similar operating models – using a core team and a wider family of Design Associates/Enablers to deliver expertise and guidance to key audiences. As each faced reductions in central government funding, merging and sharing their skill sets and expertise had compelling benefits..

So on 1st April 2011, I was one of twenty CABA staff who made the short move from Kemble Street to the Design Council's office on Bow Street. I think that it was particularly evident that both teams of staff were starting afresh and keen to work together. For many of us transferring, the survival of CABA was a huge relief, and the Design Council Cabe was a new venture able to set its own agenda as a charity working for public benefit.

The work programme we have been developing has taken some of the work previously done by CABA, particularly design review, and has also taken new directions, working much more directly with communities and specifically helping local authorities prepare for the radical changes to the planning system expressed in the draft *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). The direction of our work has been influenced by the Bishop Review – a critical analysis of the design support landscape across England, published on 18 October 2011. This review reinforces the value of a centre of excellence for design in the built environment which acts in the public interest. Many examples showed the high regard that CABA's work was held in – how many places and buildings are demonstrably better because of the inspiration, challenge and practical advice given by CABA staff, design review panel members and enablers.

FACILITATOR'S ROLE

However it was also noted that the environment had changed since CABA was set up in 1999. A range of organisations of local and national stature now deliver design advice and review. Design Council Cabe is affiliated with eight independent design review panels that cover all of England apart from London. Many local authorities have design review panels as well. There was clearly a specific demand for Design Council Cabe to be a strategic body that would deliver less itself, but act instead as a 'learning and facilitation hub'. This hub would be able to examine and facilitate debate on new challenges and themes, gather best practice and 'next practice', and disseminate such learning



efficiently to practitioners, via networks and in partnerships. This is a significant shift from CABA's previous role: this 'learning hub' approach is much less top down, fletter of foot, with much more interactivity, debate and sharing of ideas with our audiences, through websites, blogs, social media and formal and informal networks.

Indeed, our target audiences will continue to expand in this networked environment. Local communities are one relatively new audience and Design Council Cabe should be able to facilitate their engagement in shaping their neighbourhoods. We have already begun a programme that has given out 13 grants (for which we had over 130 applications) to organisations working with specific communities to advance or develop a design project of public benefit. This has been incredibly illuminating: it showed how many communities want to drive change in their local area and deal with what matters to them, and want support on design to achieve it. It is taking Design Council Cabe out across England into rural areas, towns and small villages. Many of the projects aim to reconfigure left-over bits of public space or to develop new uses for redundant civic buildings, belying the idea that people are not interested in what happens beyond their garden fence. It has given Design Council Cabe the opportunity to work in partnership with 13 organisations as well as the communities. Design review grants for organisations developing new ways of bringing the community into the design review process have also been made available. These projects are continuing through to March 2012 and we will be reporting on them periodically on our website.

SUPPORT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

While we have a new focus on working with communities, we have not neglected our ongoing relationship with local authority planning departments, still central to the new planning system. We are very much aware that the design capacity within local authorities is reducing, as cuts are made to staff. It

is critical therefore that we continue to offer enabling support and advice to help them develop local plans that are spatially aware and set a clear vision for their locality. This year we have run seven 'design in planning' workshops reaching nearly 90 local authorities, and continued to run our Local Development Framework panel workshops to help local authorities complete their plans.

EVOLVING WITH THE TIMES

Looking forward, we will always be open to new ideas and new audiences. Many commentators are waiting with some trepidation to see what the NPPF will bring to the urban design sector and those seeking to improve the environment. Design Council Cabe will be very much in the centre of the debate as a national, independent, strategic thought leader. We look forward to integrating with the Design Council, learning from their ways of working, and sharing our own knowledge and skills. In this way we will create a centre of excellence for design across all sectors, thus improving the quality of people's lives.

● Brian Quinn, Advisor in the Localism and Planning team, Design Council Cabe. Please note that Design Council Cabe as expressed (lower case Cabe) is our new name not Design Council CABA

CATCHING UP WITH CLIMATOLOGY

Michael Hebbert reports on research showing the relationship between climate and urban design



Around midsummer 2011 a group of scientists and practitioners gathered in the country club setting of the University of Manchester Chancellor's Hall to discuss the state of play in applied urban climatology. Participants included Evyatar Erell, co-author of *Urban Microclimate - Designing the Spaces between Buildings* (2011), Rohinton Emmanuel, author of *An Urban Approach to Climate Sensitive Design: Strategies for the Tropics* (2005), Sue Grimmond of KCL who advises the Mayor of London on climate strategy, and the past and present directors of the urban meteorology unit of the City of Stuttgart.

As a scene-setter we watched the classic documentary movie *Urban Development and Urban Climate*, made by the ARPA studio in Munich as an official German exhibit at the United Nations Habitat I Conference in Vancouver in June 1976. The movie describes, with voice-over in Chinese, Russian, Japanese and English, how the post-war city of Stuttgart tackled its air quality problems through a combination of systematic meteorological research and physical design. The film's vivid imagery includes long shots of shimmering thermal hazes, and three-dimensional animations of the city in its valley setting, with cold air flows - streams of blue gel - pouring down the slopes and being blocked or channelled by buildings. We see *Oberbürgermeister* Manfred Rommel, the pipe-smoking son of the WW2 general, pondering with his experts

how to optimise the natural ventilation system through intelligent planning of landscape and urban forms.

Stuttgart's interest in climate-management was provoked by specific problems of a motor manufacturing town in a steep valley setting with low wind speeds. It was an unusual case in the 1970s, when most cities regarded smog and soot as a thing of the past, and wind roses and rainfall distribution maps were becoming a rarity. How do things stand today, 35 years on from Habitat I? This was the theme of the workshop.

CLIMATOLOGY REDISCOVERS THE CITY

Urban areas were traditionally left out of weather models or treated as localised anomalies within a background climate. Faster computing and improved spatial resolution are bringing them into focus and encouraging the development of new sub-models which realistically incorporate the exchanges of heat, moisture and momentum between urban surfaces and their dynamic atmosphere into the regional models of the Met Office and other weather forecasters. A complementary shift is occurring at the micro-scale of building physics and heating and ventilation research, which traditionally focused on comfort conditions within the 'cube', disregarding consequences outdoors in the 'canyon' and the wider urban climate of which it forms

a part. The concern for carbon emissions and thermal performance has had the effect of bringing the sciences of indoor and outdoor environments together

Research on urban heat island (UHI) has expanded greatly and the workshop heard many examples from around the world. In the Netherlands the topic had been dropped when studies of air pollution ended in the 1970s. Excess heat deaths in 2003 and 2006 came as a wake-up call. The Dutch realised that they could no longer take for granted their temperate climate and the mitigating influence of the North Sea. But they had no data, because the national weather stations of the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) were located in out-of-town locations, following standard practice. So, intensive measurement campaigns were launched, combining installation of new automatic weather stations, transect surveys with bicycle-mounted data-loggers, and compilation of weather records from hobby meteorologists. Significant urban heat island effects were discovered, with nocturnal temperature differences between rural and urban areas of up to 7 degrees, and high variations in thermal comfort levels.

CLIMATE MAPPING

Sue Grimmond's keynote paper on the history of climate investigations in London underlined the advance in knowledge. Despite the recent closure of the London Weather Centre in Holborn, today's city has a more extensive weather measurement network than ever before, thanks to the new availability of low-cost sensors and automatic data transmitters. The cost of numerical modelling is coming down too, and the workshop heard several examples of urban-scale application of ENVI-Met, the freeware programme developed by Michael Bruse of the University of Mainz, simulating the three-dimensional interactions between buildings, vegetation and atmosphere within the urban environment.

The City of Stuttgart remains at the forefront, with its municipal weather stations and in-house analytical expertise. Its most significant contribution since 1976 has been the concept of a 'climate atlas', a high-resolution map combining physical analysis of the urban microclimate with planning recommendations. The city's first

✓ Rotterdam, thermal survey by cargo bicycle. Image, Professor Bert van Hove, Wageningen University

Klimaatlas was published in 1992 and it was updated in 2008 to cover the entire metropolitan region, enabling climate management to be factored into every scale of urbanism from strategic green space protection to site layout, landscaping and detailed building design. Ulrich Reuter, who heads the climatology unit, showed how mechanisms invented to protect air quality now serve the larger agenda of carbon mitigation and global warming strategy.

Stuttgart's methodologies have been widely emulated. Lutz Katzschner of the University of Kassel has applied the method in Kassel and Frankfurt, and he showed the workshop an experimental interactive table-top flat-screen *Klimaatlas* for Arnhem in the Netherlands, where prospective designs for the UHI can be sketched and tested for their effects on the microclimate. Much of his current work is in Southeast Asia. We heard from Chao Ren of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, how the Stuttgart approach has been transferred from the context of low-density cities to high-density tropical urbanism on the Pacific Rim. For example, climate mapping and design of wind-paths - *kaze-no-michi* - are being widely applied in Japanese cities such as Yokohama, where summer warming has been compounded by anthropogenic weakening of the natural ventilation effects of land and sea breezes.

The architect/climatologist Edward Ng described how Hong Kong's permissive building regulations have created unbroken walls of waterfront apartments sealing off sea breezes from the street canyons. Air conditioning units worsen the outdoor heat burden. In response to the 2003 SARS epidemic Professor Ng launched a major research campaign to raise awareness of Hong Kong's ventilation crisis, involving field surveys of thermal comfort, wind tunnel modelling, GIS mapping and numerical simulation modelling. The Chinese University prepared its own Hong Kong *Klimaatlas* with detailed recommendations for building height and setback in the most affected zones. This robust evidence base and Ng's forceful lobbying put the outdoor environment onto the political agenda, bringing revision of the planning codes to ensure building separation in the interests of public health. The Hong Kong

government went on to initiate a climate mapping exercise as the basis for urban design of its former airport site.

DRAWING LESSONS

Rohinton Emmanuel and Evyatar Erell summarised the need for designers to understand the urban climates they are working in. The world's fastest growing cities are in the tropics, and local warming doubles the impact of global climate change. When temperatures are close to human tolerance thresholds, every degree of mitigation matters. Too few planners appreciate the importance of outdoor comfort and the availability of viable remedies to encourage natural ventilation and promote shade and evaporative cooling. Expertise remains scarce but the costs of data collection, modelling and monitoring the urban climate have never been more affordable.

The workshop reached clear conclusions. Climatically responsive urban design requires local investigation. Sectoral measures such as building performance standards, carbon inventories, emissions limits, and green space targets go so far but like oral medicine in a human body they may not touch the spot. Effective medication sometimes needs to be topical, applied just where it matters. The idea of the climate atlas is to show up the invisible atmospheric ecology of the urban heat island, its climatopes, hot-spots, pollution sumps, rain pockets, cold air production zones and drainage slopes, and more. As Edward Ng (2011) argues, this is evidence worth having.

● Michael Hebbert, Professor of Town Planning, University of Manchester
The City Weathers Workshop, was funded by the ESRC. Papers, powerpoints and the 1976 Stuttgart documentary movie are all available for download from www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/architecture/research/csud/

↓ Yokohama, *Klimaatlas* 2010. Image, Yokohama City Council
↓↓ Hong Kong, the campaign for fresh air. Image, Professor Edward Ng, Chinese University of Hong Kong
↓↓↓ Frankfurt, point-specific design recommendations based upon high-resolution climate analysis. Image, Professor Lutz Katzschner, Kassel University



MOBILITY, ACCESS AND CHOICE IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

David Metz explains how the decline in car use in London can be a model for other cities

The pattern of human habitation has been shaped by the development of transport systems, which in turn has depended on the evolution of transport technologies. Two hundred years ago nearly all travel was on foot. This meant that most people had to live close to where they worked and had limited choice of dwellings, markets, schools and other facilities. Rising incomes have made possible the widespread adoption of successive technological innovations which permit faster travel and hence more access than is possible by walking – principally bicycles, buses, trams, trains, motorised two-wheelers and cars.

IMPACT OF TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGIES

Peter Hall has described how, for each successive development of transport technology, there was a corresponding kind of city, but the relationship was mutual in that the previous growth of the city shaped and constrained the subsequent transport options. Michael Thomson investigated twenty eight cities from five continents and identified five archetypes which reflected geographical features, relative accessibility, development control and dynamic processes. Peter Newman and Jeff Kenworthy distinguish different classes of city according to population density. 'Walking cities' were the major urban form for 8000 years and substantial parts of the central areas of many major cities retain this character. 'Transit cities' developed from 1850 to 1950 based on trams and trains, allowing 20-30km spreading along rail corridors. 'Automobile cities' from the 1950s on could spread further at low density to 50-80km. Newman and Kenworthy find that constant average travel time defines the shape of cities – successive innovations in transport technology have permitted travel at higher speeds, hence greater distances are possible in the limited time available, and lower densities ensue.

Investments in new transport technologies which allow higher speeds of travel have permitted greater access within the time available for travel, and this in turn has offered increased choice of employment, residence, shopping, leisure and educational facilities, etc. The findings of the National Travel Survey shown in Figure 1 make clear what has been

happening over the past forty years. This survey covers all modes of personal travel by British residents except international travel by air.

The average number of journeys made has held steady at about 1000 per person per year (pppy). The average time spent travelling has also stayed fairly constant at about 370 hours pppy or an hour a day. What has changed is that the average distance travelled has increased from about 4500 miles pppy in the early 1970s to reach 7000 miles around 1995, since when it has plateaued. Although we lack direct data, what we know about social conditions and urban geography would suggest that we could extrapolate back to an average distance travelled of about 1000 miles pppy two hundred years ago, just before the first railways in the 1820s. 1000 miles was how far you would go each year on foot, allowing an hour a day for travel.

We know also from the National Travel Survey that the purposes of journeys have changed little over time. The main purposes, in rank order, are shopping, visiting friends, commuting, education and personal business. So why is it that we travel faster and further for the same purposes? Our need for daily travel is predominantly to gain access to regular destinations outside the home. The faster we can travel, the more choice of each kind of destination we have. This choice is valuable, which is why speedy travel is attractive. In fact, access and choice increase with the square of the speed of travel, since what is accessible is defined by the area of the circle whose radius is proportional to the speed of travel. On the other hand, choice is subject to the economic principle of diminishing marginal utility – each extra increment of choice is less valuable than the previous.

This combination of access increasing with the square of the speed and the value of choice governed by diminishing returns implies a saturation of demand for travel, which is what we see in Figure 1. The average distance travelled has not increased since the mid-1990s, following two hundred years of steady growth. This cessation of growth of travel is also seen in other developed countries and it is helpful for concerns about sustainability, since the transport sector has been seen as less tractable than others as regards reducing carbon emissions. Note, however, that the

analysis excludes international travel by air, which is still growing. Note also that thus far we have focused on per capita travel behaviour. It follows that future growth of total daily travel demand will be driven by population growth (and, to a lesser extent by other demographic changes, in particular population ageing).

POPULATION GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION

The population of Britain is currently 62m and is projected to grow to 70m by 2035. A key issue is where the additional population will live and work. Historically, the growth of the housing stock has largely taken place on greenfield sites, on the edges of existing settlements or, on occasion, in the form of entirely new towns. In recent years, however, new housing in Britain has predominantly been erected on brownfield sites. Indeed, in 2009 80 per cent of new dwellings, including conversions, were on previously developed land.

New houses on greenfield sites at relatively low densities in pleasant environments, have always been attractive. Car-based mobility is the preferred transport mode. On the other hand, brownfield developments within existing urban boundaries allow little opportunity for additional carriageway construction and thus for car use, particularly when the road network is already congested. Hence more public transport provision is the natural response to the mobility needs of growing urban populations. The recent and future development of London illustrates the possibilities.

At the beginning of the 19th century the population of London was one million. It grew to over eight million by mid-20th century. Then after a period of decline followed by one of stability in the 1980s, London's population has grown steadily to reach 7.6m by 2008. The forward projection is for continued growth, with around 1.3m more people and more than 750,000 additional jobs by 2031. Population growth has been within the existing urban boundaries, such that 96 per cent of capacity for new housing comes from formerly used sites.

DECLINE IN CAR USE

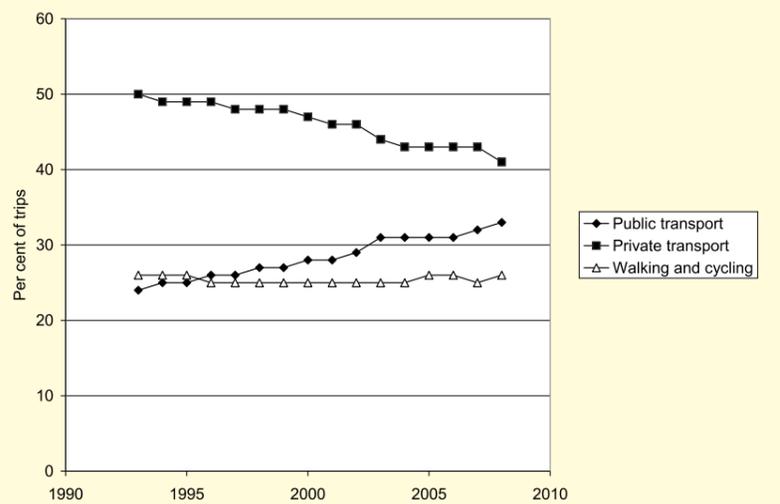
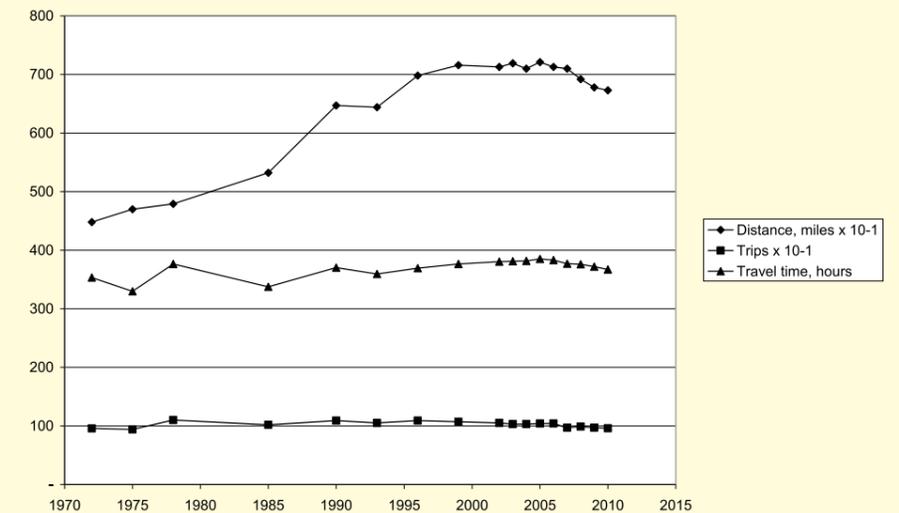
Population growth in London over the past two decades has been accompanied by declining relative car use and increasing

→ Average distance travelled (miles), travel time (hours) and trips, per person per year.
 ↘ Trip based mode share by main mode in London.

popularity of public transport. Figure 2 shows estimates made by Transport for London of the share of journeys by mode, 1993-2008. Private transport has been declining while public transport use has been increasing, with walking and cycling staying level. The total number of car-based trips – driver and passenger – has held steady over the period at about 10m per day, consistent with a fixed amount of road space, but the share of car-based journeys has fallen on account of population growth. Private transport mode share is projected to decline to 37 per cent by 2031, from the present 41 per cent, compared with a peak of car use in London of 50 per cent of all trips in the early 1990s.

This decline in mode share for car use in London reflects the revival in urban living, for which the car is less central. The relegation of the car is most marked in the urban regeneration that has taken place in the former Docklands area, where redevelopment was catalysed by crucial rail-based transport developments (Docklands Light Railway, Jubilee Line and surface Overground). This rendered Canary Wharf accessible in ten minutes from the historic financial centre of the City. As a result, a second financial district has grown up, with a working population of approaching 100,000. There are only 3000 car parking spaces at Canary Wharf, reflecting the very large reliance on urban rail travel, with a further underground line – Crossrail – under construction.

The trend of declining car use in London is remarkable. Historically and globally, as incomes have grown, so has car use. Yet in London, a world city with a vibrant economy and median incomes in the inner boroughs 50 per cent above the national average, this trend has gone into reverse. This has been fostered by the provision of more and better public transport, but also by a number of circumstances that constrain car use: a fixed road network with a greater share of carriageway allocated to bus lanes; enforced restrictions on, and general charging for, parking during working hours; and the Central London Congestion Charging scheme. The increasing population density implies smaller catchment areas, whether for schools or supermarkets, which in turn allows readier access by walking, cycling and public transport.



The trend of increasing urban density in inner city areas first seen in London has spread to other economically buoyant British cities over the past decade, including Manchester, Nottingham, Bristol and Sheffield, as employment in finance and business services has grown. This reflects a break from the previous long term trend of declining inner city populations and shift of employment to low density residential areas in the urban periphery and beyond.

Globally, there is a trend to urban living, with 50 per cent of the world's population now resident in urban areas, up from 36 per cent in 1970 and projected to grow to 70 per cent by 2050. The experience of London has implications for other major urban centres. A high quality public transport system, particularly rail-based for journey time reliability and low emissions, can serve to constrain the historic growth of private transport, even amongst those who can readily afford to own a car. It is noteworthy that London's new financial centre at Canary Wharf has been made possible by new high quality rail transport, which has proved

acceptable, despite overcrowding at times of peak use, to the well-paid staff of the international businesses that have chosen to locate there.

CONCLUSION

The Government is consulting on a new National Planning Policy Framework. Regrettably, this includes the proposed removal of the current 60 per cent brownfield target for housing development. The existing policy of preferring brownfield sites for housing has been successful in promoting urban regeneration, protecting the countryside, fostering more sustainable travel behaviour, and helping absorb a growing population while minimising the environmental impact. It should be retained.

● David Metz, Centre for Transport Studies, University College London

THE CHEONGGYECHEON RESTORATION SCHEME, SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Clare Healy explores the restoration of Seoul's 'lost' river and the value of blue infrastructure in cities



Everyday an estimated 90,000 people visit the Cheonggyecheon river in Seoul, South Korea. It is hard to believe that less than a decade ago the 5.6 km long river was 'lost' as a polluted sewer beneath a 10-lane highway and four-lane elevated expressway, a victim of Seoul's rapid post-war economic growth. After a 40-year absence from Seoul's streetscape, the Cheonggyecheon re-opened in 2005 following a multi-million dollar investment programme.

Last summer I was awarded the Planning Summer School travelling scholarship to visit South Korea and research the restoration of the Cheonggyecheon river. The project provides an interesting and topical case study for cities in the UK and across the globe wishing to open and revive their own lost river channels. London alone has more than a dozen tributaries flowing into the River Thames that now exist only as culverted subterranean sewers.

SEOUL'S 'LOST' RIVER

The Cheonggyecheon, which literally means 'valley of clean water', was originally the centrepiece of Seoul when the city was designated capital of Korea's Joseon dynasty over 600 years ago. Over the pursuing centuries, the Cheonggyecheon became an integral part of the people's everyday lives, including

a place for laundry, play and cultural festivities. However, during Japanese colonial rule in the early 20th century, the river deteriorated as a sewerage system. Many farmers evicted from their land migrated to Seoul and built illegal dwellings on the banks of the Cheonggyecheon. Soon the stream became a polluted breeding ground for infectious diseases, a situation that worsened with the onset of the Korean War in 1950.

In the 1960s, Seoul experienced rapid industrialisation and economic growth of unprecedented levels compared to Western counterpart cities. Economic development was partnered with rapid urbanisation and between 1960 and 1990 the population of Seoul rose to become one of the most densely populated cities in the world. As Seoul advanced towards modernisation, policies pushed to cover the contaminated Cheonggyecheon to meet increasing transportation demand. By 1967 a 10-lane highway and four-lane elevated expressway covered the Cheonggyecheon and the river was forgotten.

By the 1990s the highway and expressway were carrying a combined total of 170,000 vehicles daily. The huge volume of traffic and associated air pollution was taking its toll and surrounding areas were in decline. Drastic action was needed and in 2002

the Mayor put the demolition of the road and expressway and the restoration of the Cheonggyecheon at the centre of his political manifesto.

DELIVERY

The project was delivered solely by the city government, including all budget, planning, design and execution. The restoration of the Cheonggyecheon began on the 1st June 2003 and opened ahead of schedule on the 1st October 2005 at a cost of US\$386 million (approximately £237 million).

Even critics of the project have lauded the approach to extensive and meaningful community involvement in the delivery of the scheme, with approximately 4,000 meetings held with local businesses and residents. Whilst also raising the profile of the project, consultation initiatives also hoped to encourage an active interest and instil ownership and respect for the Cheonggyecheon. The 'Wall of Hope' programme invited the public to decorate a 10cm² ceramic tile with their wishes and more than 20,000 of these are now on display on the walls of the Cheonggyecheon.

A key challenge encountered in delivering the restoration of the Cheonggyecheon was how to demolish one of the city's major transport arteries whilst avoiding a traffic disaster. The city government used the project as an opportunity to reform the city's public transport system and expand low-emission transportation infrastructure. The capacity of the buses and subway were increased and upgraded, and campaigns were launched to promote public transport and encourage car owners to leave their cars at home. Bus-only lanes were also designated and expanded in the city, and a synchronised payment system was implemented across the bus and subway network.

Other initiatives included a crackdown on illegal parking and raising downtown parking fees, deploying traffic guides, and designating a number of streets one-way to facilitate transport flows.

URBAN STREAM IN NATURE

A detailed design guide for the Cheonggyecheon was established, which divided the river into three, two-metre long zones. The overall aim for the design was to restore an 'urban stream in nature',

- ✓ The Cheonggyecheon
- A reminder of what used to exist
- ↘ Entertainment on the Cheonggyecheon
- ↘ An interactive space
- ↘ The Jonhchi Piers

with each zone making the transition from an urban landscape to a natural one as the river flows downstream away from the centre of Seoul. Each zone was subsequently themed as follows:

- Zone 1: 'history and tradition' – upstream, located in the centre of Seoul, designed with national motifs and a number of ancient restored bridges
- Zone 2: 'culture and modernity' – decking and promenades to provide public entertainment spaces
- Zone 3: 'nature and future' – river widens at the lower reaches to support ecological habitats

First impressions upon visiting the Cheonggyecheon is how green the river is, with some 1,500,000 trees and shrubs planted during the restoration. In order to implement the 'urban stream in nature' concept, landscaping focused on the optimal balance between its recreational function for citizens, visitors and tourists, and its ecological and biodiversity value. The design balance between these competing priorities gradually shifts as the Cheonggyecheon flows away from the centre of Seoul through the three design zones. Whereas upstream, waterfront decks, art works and small squares dominate the landscape as functional public spaces, as the river flows downstream, the stream widens and is designed to look overgrown and untamed, with the northern terrace largely inaccessible to the public to support ecological habitats.

Upon walking along the Cheonggyecheon, it is clear that what makes this river different from most conventional watercourses is its interactive nature. Visitors have close contact with the water and this tactile relationship is greatly encouraged by the design of the Cheonggyecheon, which involves a large amount of terracing. The cleanliness, shallow depth and slow velocity of the river also play a key role in persuading visitors to dip their feet in the water or splash in knee deep.

Whilst designing an urban stream in nature was the overall goal, flood control was a key concern and improving the city's resilience to climate change and likely increases in flash rainfalls greatly influenced the cross section design of the Cheonggyecheon. During periods

of heavy rainfall, the Cheonggyecheon takes on a flood attenuation function. Pedestrian access to the river at such time is prohibited and surface water runoff is diverted into the stream through a series of floodgates. The cross section is designed to withstand the worst floods recorded in the last 200 years.

A number of historic artefacts were uncovered during the opening up of the Cheonggyecheon and have been restored in the river, including the 600-year old Gwanggyo Bridge. Representing the area's more modern history are the Jonhchi piers, three supporting structures, relics of the elevated expressway left intentionally as a permanent commemoration. The scale of these piers is visually impressive, particularly with their juxtaposition against the gently flowing river.

VALUE OF BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Cheonggyecheon river has provided a place for the people of Seoul to reconnect with their past and heritage and celebrate their culture, recovering and restoring important assets and long-forgotten history. The project has enabled citizens to take pride in their city. The Cheonggyecheon also offers a location to visit and socialise by the riverfront. The terraces underneath the bridges are busy with people, day and night. Numerous events are held along the river, including dance shows, lights displays, concerts and even catwalk shows.

The 5.6km long uninterrupted stretch of green space encourages pedestrian activity, walkers and joggers, boosting fitness and wellbeing of the population. The space is a break from the hectic nature and commotion of such a large metropolis.

The Cheonggyecheon also provides a welcome respite from the heat and humidity of summer in Seoul, with temperatures 5 degrees cooler by the river than the surrounding roads. A diverse range of plants and wildlife has also been recorded in the river. In addition, a decrease in traffic in the area has caused levels of harmful gases, dust particles and noise to be considerably lower.

More than ten million Koreans visited the Cheonggyecheon within two months of its opening. The project is testament to the value of incorporating blue infrastructure in spatial planning and urban design, and provides an inspiring example on how to transform a city for the 21st century.



● Clare Healy is an urban planner at Arup. For more details on the Planning Summer School travelling scholarship please visit www.planningsummerschool.org.uk

URBAN DESIGN AND THE DEVELOPERS

Six developers were invited to give their opinions on urban design, to describe their experiences in dealing with urban designers and to evaluate whether these were positive or not. We were fortunate in getting a varied range of developers, from one of the largest in the country to a relatively small regional one, and from a traditional and long established organisation to a former private developer who is now a local government manager. Their candid opinions can reasonably be seen as representative of the industry as a whole though unfortunately, there are also less responsible firms out there!

Although the approaches to the subject and comments are as varied as the background of the writers, their responses are uniformly positive. All of them understand what urban design is about and believe it has made a contribution to their success; they regret that not everybody in the industry understands the value of urban design and would like to remove the barriers to a wider influence of the profession.

Chris Brown enjoys working with talented designers but finds that local authorities and investors don't seem to share his enthusiasm. He clearly knows what is important in achieving quality and is prepared to fight to obtain it. David Partridge is a strong advocate of urban design and he has no doubt

that quality public realm adds value to a development.

In a different vein but equally an enthusiast, Ken Dytor thinks that the great talent of urban designers and their experience in this country, should be combined to that of financial services, and exported to the Far East, where the future lies. Ashley Nicholson laments the approach taken by many investors, for whom buildings are just a commodity. And he doesn't think that they would change their views unless forced by tighter conditions.

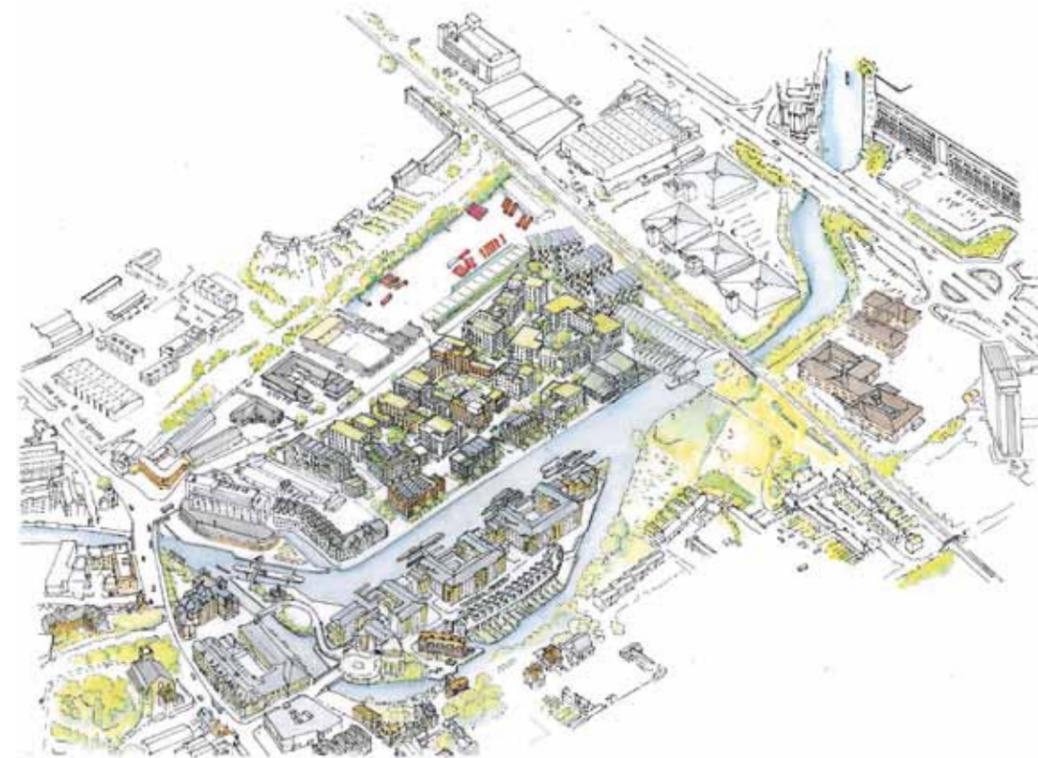
Charles Brocklehurst is in the position of seeing both sides of the coin; as a former developer now working for a local authority, he knows the difficulties in getting the private sector to improve the quality of schemes, particularly if the developer is not interested. Finally Peter Bourne shows by examples what good practice can achieve in improving the quality of the public realm and adding value to a long-term portfolio.

All these successful businessmen are interested in quality, relish the combination of new and old and understand that history can teach us lessons. We hope that government members and civil servants will read their comments, which challenge the received ideas about the cost to the economy of planning and urban design.

● Sebastian Loew

WE HAVE A PROBLEM

Chris Brown reflects on his relationship to urban design



I have a problem with urban design in the UK. As clients at Igloo Regeneration for large, sustainable, mixed-use regeneration projects on the edge of the top 20 city centres in the UK, we use urban designers all the time. My problem is that the UK doesn't seem to have many good ones. Historically, we haven't trained many urban designers, so that now there aren't enough experienced ones, and those that are, have to struggle with poor instructions and poor clients because we don't seem to value their input to projects and place-making.

The ideal approach to urban design would have a talented urban designer appointed from the beginning of the project to the end, with a role that includes the management of the design interface between different architects. Only the incremental organic evolution of a city or urban neighbourhood, building by building over the centuries, could beat this.

In contrast, the recent British approach, particularly by the public sector, has been to commission master planners who are paid off before the developer is even appointed, and whose work is then often ignored. A number of architects have sought to move into this arena but my experience has been that very few have the skills to do great urban design (although a far larger number think they can), in the same way that most people trained in town and country planning also lack this ability.

IT'S NOT THE DESIGNERS FAULT

But I shouldn't blame the designers; it is the clients who should take most of the blame. As an industry, we put virtually no value on urban design, we don't pay enough for it, and therefore few good people do it. Our regulatory systems are similarly powerless to achieve good quality urban design.

Many clients seem to struggle with the urban design basics like the difference between a street block and a building, the need for fronts and backs to buildings, or using the micro-climate of a site to its best potential. In my experience, urban design for a commercial client is often a function of arithmetic: how can we maximise the Zone A, the size of floor plate or the number of units.

Markets are very good at valuing urban design once it has been implemented, and a scheme can be seen and touched. Time and time again our best 'designed' (often evolved) places have higher values than their ill-conceived (usually designed) neighbours. But valuers are very poor at differentiating between well designed and poorly designed places on the drawing board. The 'location, location, location' mantra seems to overwhelm them and so they struggle to identify the features of the location (or neighbourhood as I prefer to think of it) that create the value. There is evidence about the contribution to value that comes from important urban design considerations such as trees, water and connectivity, but less about the

↑ Brentford Waterside aerial sketch by Ash Shakula architects



↑ Klas Tham's sketch of Brentford
 ↑↑ Brentford masterplan

WORKING WITH URBAN DESIGNERS

My most recent experience of urban design has been the Isis Waterside Regeneration scheme in Brentford, west London. We were incredibly lucky to work with Klas Tham (probably most famous for his work on Bo01 at the Western Harbour in Malmö), supported by Tovatts (Ralph Erskine's former studio where both Johannes Tovatt and Klas Tham worked) and Urbed's Manchester office. Isis is one of the very few developers who employ an in-house urban designer (Chris Breslin). This resource is enormously helpful in ensuring the organisation behaves as an intelligent client, producing good quality briefs and procurement processes and challenging and managing the design team to best effect.

I had a fantastic design session with Klas in a lighthouse at the top of an old lighting factory in Stockholm, and it was a privilege as well as a pleasure, to watch him sketch a fabulous public square (a skill that many people who call themselves urban designers seem to lack). I will always remember the Christmas card he sent me with his sketch of the scheme.

My first real experience as an urban design client was in Manchester's Northern Quarter. I don't count Albert Dock in Liverpool because the 1.2 million square feet of buildings were Grade 1 listed, so that while we had some control over their use, we were almost completely constrained in what we could do around them.

Despite the fine words about good design in many policy documents, few planning authorities pay much attention to their design advisors

In Manchester, we first tried out a process we call evolutionary design. This doesn't involve a single urban designer in the traditional sense; instead a group of Manchester designers (all architects), many of whom had developed together in their careers, were brought together under the watchful eye of George Mills of MBLC (who played more of an uncle's than a co-ordinator's role), to develop a street and urban block layout based on historic patterns and desire lines. The blocks were then divided into individual buildings and each of these allocated to a designer.

The design interfaces then became a matter of negotiation between designers, with the results subject to periodic critique by the wider group. Again the need to keep the existing buildings on the site helped create interest. The first phase was delivered, and although subsequently the architectural design was poor, the urban design has proven reasonably robust in its ability to deliver a decent place in the face of unbridled market forces. It is indeed still winning awards.

In between Manchester's Smithfield Market and Brentford Lock West the opportunities to deliver neighbourhood scale urban design have been relatively few. However at the moment, we are working on some incredibly exciting neighbourhood scale projects in Cardiff (Porth Teigr), Newcastle (Lower Ouseburn) and Glasgow (Spiers Wharf and Maryhill Locks). Few clients get

layout of streets and public spaces, or the micro-climate.

And the planners don't seem able to help. Despite the fine words about good design in many policy documents, few planning authorities pay much attention to their design advisors, whether in-house or external design panels. Hopefully the Bishop report may help us make progress in this area. Those authorities that do take urban design seriously, take a significant risk at appeal because inspectors, who are not supposed to have their own views on these matters, when faced with the developer's experts opining on the brilliance of the design, seem unable to differentiate between good and bad. CABE provided a great service by surveying the whole country and quantifying the extent to which designs fell short of expectations. Even the Government's draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises this as it says 'Our standards of design can be so much higher. We are a nation renowned worldwide for creative excellence, yet, at home, confidence in development itself has been eroded by the too frequent experience of mediocrity.'

I may be naïve in hoping that the move to neighbourhood planning will improve the situation. Neighbourhood design panels, backed by a strong neighbourhood plan, may have the potential to hold developers and designers to account. However the bar in the NPPF, set as 'Permission should be refused for development of obviously poor design', does not appear to be particularly high.



to lead a significant number of projects and even fewer get to see these large-scale and long-term projects through from beginning to end. This is a fundamental challenge, and one that means that we need to get the most out of our experienced clients and urban designers by extending their careers for as long as possible.

MODERNISM VS TRADITIONAL URBANISM

There is usually an enormous contrast between doing urban design with a modernist architect and with a traditional urbanist, but Klas Tham in particular was able to bridge this chasm, encouraging contemporary buildings in ways that recreate the cherished elements of traditional, mainly organically evolved, cities and urban neighbourhoods. When it comes to Modernist urban design versus Traditional Urbanism I go for the latter every time. For me the urban design at somewhere like Poundbury (Leon Krier) is streets ahead (excuse the pun!) of the work of OMA at Euralille.

I never tire of the image I took of a lady pruning the roses over the front door of her house in Poundbury. The design brilliance here was to leave a narrow planting zone between the back of the pavement and the building to allow roses to be grown, and therefore pruned, thus leading to the lady chatting with her neighbours. Detail matters even at the scale of urban design.

To avoid any doubt, this is not a comment on architectural style which is something quite different! I am a particular fan of an architectural style I call contemporary vernacular, something that I am increasingly seeing in architect-designed housing in the UK; this follows the Stirling Prize win for Accordia in Cambridge, designed by FCB Studios, McCreanor Lavington and Alison Brooks for Countryside. We are currently working with two of these practices, on competitions for relatively small sites that have existing buildings on them, which tend to make achieving good urban design easier. My mantra with existing buildings is 'if in doubt, keep them?'

AN APPROACH TO INNER URBAN NEIGHBOURHOOD DESIGN

Keeping existing buildings (and trees and other biodiversity assets) is for me, the starting point. Cities evolve organically and it is incredibly difficult to create an attractive place from a cleared site in a relative short period of time. Bluntly, the more

of the existing we can keep, the better and more valuable the resultant place is likely to be.

There are also a process and a practical point here. Jane Jacobs remarked that the range of uses and activities that relied on low-cost older buildings played an important role in the neighbourhoods. In current market conditions this is critical and meanwhile uses are the identifying feature of the age. Sites like Birmingham's Eastside Locks sitting for years as seas of rubble because perfectly serviceable buildings were prematurely demolished, are sad to see.

Some of the best designs emerge when contemporary architects intervene in robust but unprotected buildings like these. This is an approach we are currently encouraging with the extremely talented people at Ash Sakula, on a project called Northgate Riverside in Leicester. This is about much more than just keeping buildings. It is about keeping and releasing the potential of existing businesses and entrepreneurs.

In addition to our focus on environmental sustainability, design quality and social progress, our igloo Footprint approach has health, happiness and well being as its fourth leg. It is clear to us that financial value derives directly from how people feel about a place. As we see this in existing popular neighbourhoods, we need to recreate it in our new neighbourhoods.

So for me, the key elements of the successful re-creation of inner urban neighbourhoods, something that is desperately needed in most major cities (including some parts of London), include:

- An intelligent client: either the local community, or a developer or local authority working with the community
- A talented urban designer appointed from beginning to end of the project, working with multiple quality architects
- A brief that retains the existing, identifies the value in green, micro climate, water, mixed uses, etc., and seeks contextual contemporary vernacular architecture
- A team and stakeholder ethos that values the feelings of the people that will use the place in the future

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE?

Our current challenge is to find the best urban designers to help us deliver large projects in this way, in Nottingham and Northampton. All recommendations gratefully received! ●



↖ Aerial view of Bo01 in Malmö
 ↑ Poundbury: narrow planting strip allows roses to grow and be pruned

● Chris Brown, Chief Executive of Igloo Urban Regeneration and Director of Isis Waterside Regeneration

URBAN DESIGN AND ARGENT

David Partridge describes urban design's long standing and positive contribution to the work of Argent



BRINDLEY PLACE

Argent first employed urban design, as in the art of creating and shaping places and cities, when we bought the Brindleyplace site in Birmingham in 1993. Although it was derelict, having been cleared for development for a number of years, it came with the benefit of a masterplan originating from the office of Terry Farrell, subsequently taken on and developed for us by John Chatwin, after he left that practice.

Our work at Brindleyplace since then has become an exemplar of successful city centre regeneration, and in many ways it made Argent's reputation as one of the leading practitioners in this field. Over 1.5m square feet of offices, restaurants and retail, homes and leisure uses has been created and are enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people throughout the year.

While we were in the process of creating Brindleyplace, Argent also became involved in Manchester, particularly in the Piccadilly area, where we developed both One Piccadilly Gardens and the Piccadilly Place complex, adjacent to the main-line Piccadilly Station. Although these are on a smaller scale than the 17 acre Brindleyplace site, many of the same principles of good urban design were employed. Four new office buildings, a hotel, apartments and serviced apartments have now been completed, all above a wide range of restaurants and lively bars.

KING'S CROSS

At King's Cross, however, the lessons we had learnt have really come into play. Our involvement

commenced in 2000, and it wasn't until 2007 that we really got going with construction on site. October 2011 marks the opening of the first major elements of the public realm, and the first anchor building – the new campus for Central Saint Martins, part of University of the Arts London.

In total, King's Cross will be around 8m square feet of a diverse mix of different uses – education, leisure, retail, restaurants, homes, offices, hotels, student accommodation, culture, arts and heritage – around 20 new streets and 10 new squares, public realm which will take up more than 40 per cent of the 67 acre site. In addition to this there will be schools, a library, a health and sports centre and a huge commitment to social and community initiatives.

PUBLIC REALM FIRST

The key contribution which urban design has made to these three city-wide developments has been to engender an understanding that it is the framework of the public realm, the streets and the squares, the places and the parks, which are the lasting legacy of development on this scale, not the architecture of the buildings which then populate the masterplan. The framework engenders connectivity both within and beyond the masterplan site, providing accessibility from and into the areas around, for both public transport and for pedestrians. Without this interaction, the new set piece open spaces within the development itself would be starved of the vital transfusion of people which can bring them alive, and transform them from spaces into places.

Bridges and crossings (whether over canals – as

at King's Cross and Brindleyplace, or over a road at Piccadilly) are extremely important in creating new connectivity to radically alter the movement dynamics of a city and to divert the flow of people into and through the new places. There have been many examples throughout the last ten years of the creation of very well-designed and beautifully landscaped public spaces, which are ultimately sterile because they lack accessibility or an anchor use to encourage people into them. Better examples from the past are interventions like Nash's Regent Street, which opened up the whole of the backwater which was Regent's Park, by driving a new connection into the heart of London at Piccadilly Circus. The new King's Boulevard at King's Cross will achieve the same, by providing a direct connection from the area between the two stunning new stations at King's Cross and St Pancras

It is the framework of the public realm, the streets and the squares, the places and the parks, which are the lasting legacy of development on this scale

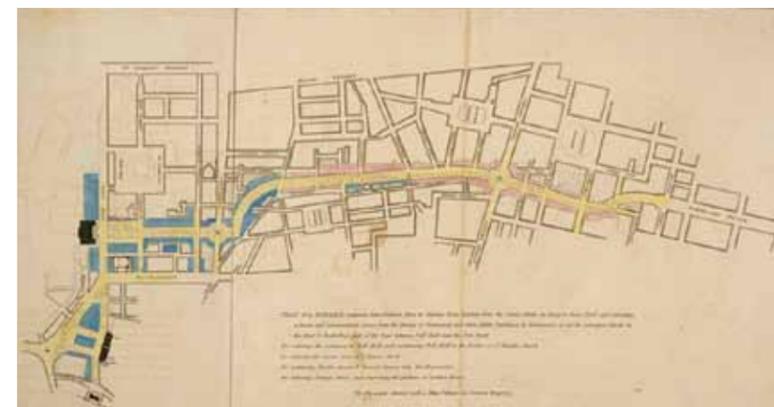
International, up to Granary Square in front of the new Central Saint Martins complex.

The early picture of Brindleyplace demonstrates this approach again, whereby we built the streets and main central square, fully fitted out with lawns, fountains and sculpture in the very first phases of the development, and only subsequently were able to encourage the commercial occupiers to follow suit, once the area had been established.

Intriguingly, the approach of putting in the infrastructure first has also, as it has done in cities through the centuries, allowed Argent to deliver infrastructure which could not happen other than on a vast scale. In the case of King's Cross, a site-wide District Heating Network services all of the plots within the development (and potentially some adjacent areas) with hot water generated in a central Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant. Each individual plot will be provided with a hot water service thus eliminating the need for boilers, at a price which is equivalent to doing the same with gas. The CHP engines, which can be converted to bio-mass in the future, sell electricity to the grid, and produce the hot water for tri-generation as a by-product.

MIX OF USES

Having set up the key Masterplan framework, good urban design then goes on to help create the places themselves by setting out guidelines about issues such as containment, scale and hierarchy which the architecture that will surround them must address. But equally important, places will only come alive through the uses which are encouraged within them and in the buildings which front onto them. Sterility also comes about because of mono-culture, and the success that Argent has achieved at Brindleyplace and Manchester and is beginning to happen at King's Cross, has come about by virtue of ensuring that a wide mix of uses is always delivered, especially at ground floor level. In addition to



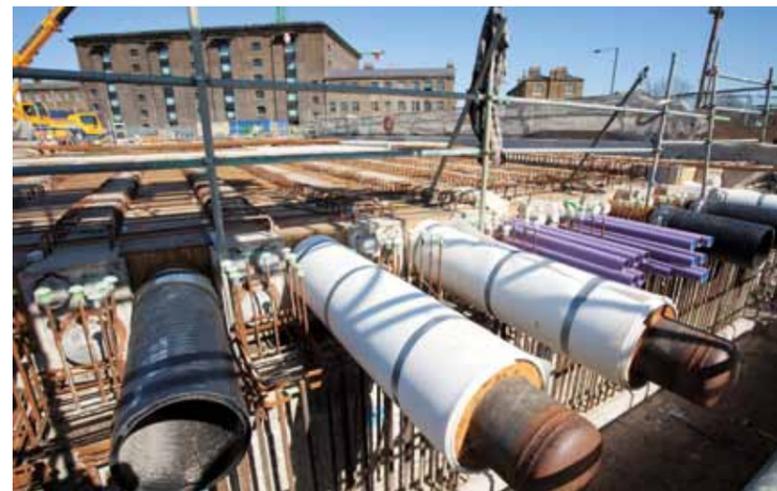
the coffee shops and restaurants with outdoor terraces, which are now ubiquitous but didn't exist under commercial or residential building in the 1990s, our schemes include art galleries, theatres and hotels, cultural centres and leisure activities, all of which contribute to provide opportunities for people to populate the spaces. Above ground, the mix of offices, commercial, residential, affordable housing and student accommodation ensures that there is always a mix of different sorts of people at different times throughout the day, the week and the seasons.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Even more interestingly, in many ways the key element which urban design has delivered to Argent, is not in fact to do with the architectural form or landscaping of the eventual product, but the influence urban design has had on the commercial deliverability of the scheme in the first place. Both Brindleyplace and King's Cross were commenced in the depths of recession, and they were kick-started by the uses which would, in a normal development business plan, be considered peripheral.

↑ King's Cross aerial view of the completed scheme (computer generated image)

↑ Brindleyplace, Birmingham in 1994
 ↑↑ Brindleyplace in 2010
 ↑↑↑ Original Nash plan for Regent Street



↑ King's Cross infrastructure plan
 ↑↑ King's Cross District heating Network
 ↑↑↑ King's Boulevard (CGI)
 ↑↑↑↑ A-Z plan of King's Cross in 2020

● David Partridge, MA (Hons), Dip Arch, RIBA, Joint Chief Executive, Argent Estates Ltd.

In Birmingham, it was leisure, retail and a bit of 'give-away' residential which we had reluctantly inherited from the Masterplan which provided the early disposal cash flow, and subsidised the creation of the public realm up-front. It was only once this new address had been delivered, that the office market in Birmingham – which had previously been hidebound in a more conventional central business district – began to start paying attention and voting with its feet.

Without a clear vision and commitment to the public realm which will link these different activities... these early phases would never have come about

At King's Cross it is the educational use, affordable housing, student accommodation, a cultural institution and a hotel which have provided the proceeds to be ploughed into the substantial infrastructure required to render the future plots developable on a stand-alone basis. And these uses have been spread across the site from the southern-most tip to the northern-most point, with Central Saint Martins in the middle.

Without a clear vision and commitment to the public realm which will link these different activities, and indeed without an idea of the city which welcomed this broad mix of activities in the first place, these early phases would never have come about. And without these early phases, the emerging progress on the more directly commercial uses – offices, market housing and retail/restaurants – would not be possible, as the development cycle swings round to more benign conditions in these sectors.

ARGENT'S ASPIRATIONS

All of the ideas embodied in this approach were set out in Argent's publication *Principles for a Human City* (July 2001), in which we set out ten clear aspirations for both what King's Cross should become and the way that we intended to go about delivering it:

- A robust urban framework
- A lasting new place
- Promote accessibility
- A vibrant mix of uses
- Harness the value of heritage
- Work for King's Cross, work for London
- Commit to long-term success
- Engage and inspire
- Secure delivery
- Communicate clearly and openly

These principles have guided the vast enterprise that involves the creation of a new piece of city, and still continue to do so. The ultimate intention for King's Cross, and in many ways the proof of whether or not urban design has done its job well, is encapsulated in an A-Z of London which incorporates the whole area into the city as if it had never been a development site at all. ●

FROM BARKING TO BEIJING

Ken Dytor transfers his successful experience as a UK developer, to work in China



It is now over five years since I took the hard decision to 'soft land' Urban Catalyst as an operating company and exited property development more than a year before the market started to fall into the economic decline that we currently find ourselves in. It was not an easy route to take because for the previous six years, we had arguably become one of the leading mixed-use regeneration real estate developers in the UK. By committing ourselves to quality design, linked to an innovative approach to public-private partnership, we had secured a first class development programme that was setting standards that were subsequently followed by others.

SUCCESSFUL SCHEMES

The exciting Barking Town Square regeneration project (designed by AHMM) was at fourth floor construction, and was already winning awards; work had started on site at Bermondsey Square (designed by Munkenbeck & Marshall). In both cases we had been working closely with the local authorities to secure long and hard fought planning consents. Both these developments set out to achieve true mixed-use regeneration, and incorporated community friendly uses such as Shortwave Films outdoor cinema and a production training facility. I look back on these developments and am proud of the design teams' input that resulted in achieving our original agenda, successfully combining commerce with community, art with architecture and public with private.

We were working with some of the leading global design companies including Terry Farrell, Will Alsop, Ken Yeang, Ken Shuttleworth's MAKE

(I believe we may have given Ken his first paid commercial appointment on a bid), Buro Happold, Cartwright Pickard, MUF and Arups. In addition we had a powerful consultancy team that was providing key work for both John Prescott as Deputy Prime Minister and Ken Livingstone as Mayor of London. The latter's appointment resulted in our proposing the role of a Design for London director. Peter Bishop, the one person I had in mind when we produced the report for the Mayor, subsequently stepped into this role.

INCREASING CONCERNS

Even though by this stage, the Urban Catalyst development programme was all in a joint venture company with Carillion, I was increasingly concerned at the problems we were encountering not only on site, but more generally with the UK procurement process that was costing too much and delivering too little. Just as importantly, I was alarmed not only by the state of the property market but by the general economy that was showing similar symptoms to the late 1980s: at the time, I was at British Land with the unique and impressive John Ritblat, when he steered a counter-cyclical strategy that led to the company becoming FTSE100.

Whilst it was with a heavy heart that I made the decision to transfer the Barking development to Urban Catalyst's second largest shareholder Redrow, and Bermondsey Square to our financial partner Igloo, I knew it was the right decision to make because it would secure the future of these ground-breaking developments and ensure that the high-quality designs would have the regenerative

↑ South Beijing International railway station by Terry Farrell



↑ Terry Farrell's masterplan for the Thames Gateway
 ↑↑ Barking Town Centre (CGI)

benefit which they were designed to do. The subsequent awards and critical acclaim showed that we made the right decision from a design perspective. Whether we would have survived the financial tsunami that followed is anyone's guess; all I do know is that I was relieved to have exited direct development when I did. Nevertheless, I went on to chair the Regeneration & Development Committee of the British Property Federation, a valuable role that I am honoured to have had through the difficulties of the last three years, when we have needed to engage constantly with Government. Throughout this time I have never failed to be impressed by the high standards of our design teams here in the UK and the value that they have for UK plc. The failing in the development process has been the unwieldy, costly and ineffective procurement process – a situation that must still be addressed.

I have argued strongly that as we need to open up new markets and sell ourselves globally, our design and construction skills which are generally admired around the world, must be harnessed. Furthermore, it should not just be the commercial practices but

organisations such as English Heritage (I have to own up to say that I am in my third term at the EH London Advisory Committee) and our Universities and Colleges that should be exporting their skill base.

We also need to incorporate public realm design and management experience such as that gained through the Circle Initiative set up under Pat Brown's influential Central London Partnership, under the guidance of the much missed late Sir Simon Milton. Working closely with them, we created a template for public realm management that led to the creation of the UK-wide Business Improvement Districts (BID) programme. The urban-rural agenda also needs to be considered as the pressures grow for global urbanisation; Terry Farrell's recent Thames Park work shows what can be done. Combining all this know-how with the financial expertise of the City of London, creates a powerful argument for taking our real estate design and development skills abroad in a total package that would be attractive to most countries around the world. For my part I have found there to be a real appetite to engage, and I have harnessed this rich

design experience in order to establish increased economic activity in my various business interests.

WORKING IN CHINA

In the last four years, as I noticed that the global dynamic of economic activity was shifting to the East, my focus has increasingly been China-centric. This has led me to spend several months in China in the last year alone, building up first-class relationships and creating commercial opportunities that will lead to the opening in January of a new office in Beijing. It has been exhausting but worthwhile. The level of support that we are obtaining not only in China but also in Singapore and elsewhere in the Far East, is both refreshing and promising. The high regard in which UK-led design is viewed there is increasing all the time, as companies such as Fitch, Zaha Hadid and those I worked with at Urban Catalyst, are carving out successful profiles.

However, all is not plain sailing in China. In a recent edition of *China Daily*, the front page lead article 'Bad Boy Architects & China's New Face' argued that the introduction of international firms such as Herzog & de Meuron, Rem Koolhaas and Norman Foster may not be viewed as positive by everyone in China:

"The works of international architects have sprung up like mushrooms in China's cities. These urban gurus brought their cutting edge designs here, but also the world's attention to what can be built in China. Constant global media coverage has

I have harnessed this rich design experience in order to establish increased economic activity in my various business interests.

portrayed China as an open stage for ambitious, innovative urban design, a reputation which initially pleased...but later raised doubts and reflections of whether the country was being misused as a testing ground for maverick projects?

These are strong words but for the reasons that will be stated below, they are not on the mark. In any case, the desire in China to raise standards whereby art and architecture merge and sustainability drives the agenda, should not be misunderstood. I recently showed David Adjaye's Rivington Place, an award winning arts-centred development in Shoreditch, completed on time and budget (through an organisation which I was fortunate to chair from concept to post completion), to the leaders of a Beijing District. They are creating a new city of 226 hectares, incorporating an impressive cultural and creative cluster that already includes 5,000 artists at work in purpose-designed studios and galleries. Whilst such scale of development in China eclipses our own, the respect for how we integrate art and design in a sustainable regeneration environment was clear to see.

FUTURE COLLABORATION

I view the introduction of high-quality design and construction skills from the West, working in close association with experienced practices from



↑ Shanghai, two views of Will Alsop' International Cruise Centre

the East, such as Singapore's RSP and Malaysia's Ken Yeang, as positive. Indeed this collaboration should result in increased standards of sustainable regeneration and planning, which the Chinese Government is quite rightly committed to deliver. Arguably one of the failings to date, leading to the comments in the *China Daily*, may have been that not all clients in China have been able to harness the talent of these design practices; additionally in many quarters, the way in which long term value is created by high-quality design, is still not appreciated. There is a need therefore to bring forward comprehensive packages which include financial expertise and global marketing skills, led by clients who can work alongside the Chinese Government and Chinese companies in true partnership. Everything in China is changing at an amazing pace and I am confident that we will increasingly see the spread into key Chinese cities of the type of development quality that ten years ago, we were trying to achieve at Urban Catalyst. Achieving this is essential, as China needs to make that progress for the good of the planet, both financially and environmentally. In turn this will also be positive for the future of design quality in the UK. ●

● Ken Dytor, Managing Director, Regeneration Investments Limited

PLACE-MAKING

Ashley Nicholson wonders why developers do it so badly and what can be done to improve it?



All of us will be able to name a suitably offensive redevelopment somewhere near where we live, or close to our hearts. Often this will also involve the loss of a building with some historic and vernacular merit, and its replacement by an anodyne identikit building that erodes the town's identity. Often as well, its ugly new face will sneer at any attempt at vibrancy on the street it fronts.

Before attempting to provide any solutions it is necessary to understand the circumstances that caused this to happen. Contrary to Prince Charles lambasting of architects some years ago, the villains in the dock are developers, the 'system', and to some extent all of us who are prepared to both buy and let the end product. Architects may be the assassins but others pay to put the knife in their hands.

THE MÉTIER

Developers are not urban designers, they are traders. They (we) create products for people to live, work or play in, that can be sold or alternatively let and then sold to an investor. The difference between developers and other traders is that their product is the built environment we live in. Their only constraints are the planning system and how public spirited they may be. However, as buildings are pretty much the largest trading stock

around, those attracted to the trading floor are generally not the most public minded.

Stacked against the poor planning officer is the power of the financial 'system': because buildings, particularly in large regeneration projects, are so expensive to build, their financing has to come from City Institutions; therefore their form needs to be palatable to them.

The average pension-fund manager is unlikely to have a degree in urban design; instead he is focused on mitigating risk. At the top of his list will be a requirement for a long lease to a big company, in a building that has all the boxes ticked in the same way as all the other similar buildings in the market place. Attracting international companies requires international, not vernacular tastes, so it will be best to design it as in Dallas, Dubai, or Malaysia. The nearest whiff of a small independent developer will get him reaching for his abacus and adjust the price to reflect the increased risk. If this were not bad enough, any mention of including some residential in the development, will make him think he is at a comedy night. People like this will need a lot of managing, and in addition the legislation and tax implications will make their lives too complicated. Better to look at a single-let building to spend £50m on, and book a round of golf!

Fortunately, the residential sector is far more consumer focused and attuned to design ...er... no. Whilst the residential sector includes many more small independent builders and many local ones, who continue the tradition of stitching seamlessly into the historic fabric of a town, the market is unfortunately dominated by the national house builders. These are experts at efficiency to cope with volume and tight margins. However, this specialism comes at a price: standard design and materials, and most damagingly in terms of urban design, a refusal to engage with commercial uses. Their method of dealing with the increased need for mixed uses is to package the commercial uses to a big company, on a long lease that can be forward sold. Alternatively they minimise the cost of commercial provision by placing it underneath flats; this meets the planning obligations but only adds a few extra vertical metres of walling, particularly if it is then left as a shell with a boarded-up front.

Stacked against the poor planning officer is the power of the financial 'system'

POSSIBLE REMEDIES

Whilst the scene thus painted may be simplistic, it is unfortunately true that the providers of much of our built environment have, by their very structure, motivations opposed to those of urban designers. Like in much of today's world dominated by corporate and global interests, little can be done to change the 'system'.

Assuming that the free market survives the current tremors resonating around the world, are there measures that can be taken to improve our towns and cities? My belief is that there are tools we can use within the existing system, and that upheavals always present new opportunities.

The fact that banks and even governments can be considered un-creditworthy may change the way investments are evaluated. If there can be no certainty that a single occupier will remain in a building for the length of a lease, it may be better to spread the risk through multiple lettings. So, instead of designing a building as a one-size-fits-all that appeals to the international corporate market, a design that appeals to a myriad of local users may have advantages. Occupation, as in the hotel sector, may become the new investment mantra and if it does, our towns and cities will be all the better.

The current stagnation of activity in the residential sector, itself a key driver in the economy, may force the government to alter legislation to encourage institutional investment in this sector. Institutions, one of the major providers of the built environment, would for the first time, be interested in both commercial and residential buildings, thus eliminating the barriers currently existing between the two. History shows that mixed uses were one of the main reasons for towns and cities to grow organically. It is the combination and mix of commercial activities alongside living, that gives them the vibrancy and 24-hour culture so clearly lacking in business parks and gated residential communities.



Architecture in many ways has been guilty of looking forward too much and being too concerned with style, rather than learning the lessons from the past. I have always been mystified why so many of us seek out old towns for their irregularity and idiosyncrasies, and yet never seem to replicate them. My belief is that the fear of pastiche drives architects to try and re-invent principles rather than replicate those that have been proven. Additionally architects can be preoccupied with stylistic considerations rather than with a layout that ensures that the public realm functions satisfactorily.

↑ Paintworks: The main courtyard before conversion
 ↑↑ Jazz concert in the renewed courtyard
 ↑↑↑ Event space internal view



↑ Paintworks, Bristol A model of the finalised development, phase 3

AN EXAMPLE

Paintworks scheme in Bristol, was an attempt to create a piece of town out of an isolated, derelict former paint factory on the edge of town. Perhaps unusually for a developer, Verve's background is based more on meeting the needs of occupiers than providing a ready-meal for the investment market. Utilising the knowledge gained across both commercial and residential markets, the arrogant ambition was to create a new mixed-use community based on the principle of replicating old towns. This could then be used to provide evidence and empower local authorities to insist on integrated mixed-uses, and to better resist the unnecessary loss of historic vernacular architecture, even if this was of humble quality. Further arrogance was shown in the hope that others might follow this lead and better integrated, vibrant new developments would ensue.

Working with George Ferguson, narrow streets, alleys, arcades, courtyards were carved out of the single mass of the former factory. Brickwork was deliberately not cleaned, nor windows regularised. Uses were carefully layered into the street scene as they would if grown organically. A bar (village pub) and event space (village hall/ church) and outside space (village green) were all included, albeit in an urban and irreverent way. The objective was that the activities and their interaction with the public realm, were far more important than the style.

Much has since been written about the way the scheme has successfully created a new creative district in the city. The biggest compliment came from the planning officer who said it was 'the only place I can think of where I would like to work and I would like to live'. In reality there is nothing innovative other than the fact that the whole scheme was done as one piece of work, rather than over generations; the rest is simply looking at what works elsewhere and copying it.

ADVICE

One way to achieve less anodyne developments is for planners to condition consents. Conditions could include setting aside part of large retail schemes for small independents which could provide a splash of localism to the multiples-dominated high streets. The layout would have to be

designed in a way that would stop small units being used by larger retailers. Similarly, large commercial and mixed-use schemes could be conditioned to include low-rise small office, non-residential institutions (D1) and retail units. Organisations with less than 15 staff require technological and human interaction with others whilst companies with more than 15 people, tend to be self-sufficient. So, small units will provide the vibrancy, variety and the connection to the local area, which would be lacking otherwise. If the planning consent for a development has these conditions, the funding institutions will have no alternative but to find a

Public realm is often used as a tool to justify high density, rather than the starting context into which buildings are placed.

way to deliver it. Authorities need to be robust in upholding their requirements; they are too easily brow beaten. Likewise they are too easily persuaded to accept corporate architecture which dilutes the distinctive appearance of towns and cities.

In some circumstances, there is little commercial demand or value to justify such demands. In these cases, bodies such as artist communities can be incorporated. Through section106 agreements, ACME artist studios have contributed to several recent schemes, adding to the vibrancy and public accessibility of residential schemes.

PUBLIC REALM AFTERTHOUGHT

On re-reading my first draft of this article meant to explain the processes and consequences of developers' actions, I noted there was little reference to the space around buildings and the way they relate to each other. The reason for this omission was that the public realm is very rarely a material consideration in the process. In the majority of cases it is a purely voluntary option or an afterthought. Density is the primary driver; public realm is often used as a tool to justify high density, rather than the starting context into which buildings are placed. Therefore, the absence in this narrative of references to the built environment providers' concern for the public realm, is very instructive in its own right.

Perhaps the most important element for improving our built environment is to understand the reasons it has failed to provide the richness our towns and cities have acquired organically, and as a result are so loved by so many of us. If we understand these reasons and those that motivate the providers of the built environment, we may be able to produce better new developments: there is nothing wrong with copying what works. ●

A PROVINCIAL TOWN PERSPECTIVE

Poacher turned gamekeeper, Charles Brocklehurst evaluates the work of developers in Wycombe



As an ex-developer, I became poacher turned gamekeeper in 2004. I chose to join my hometown's Council, to help put the place back together again. The trigger was the Council's rejection of a large-scale mixed-use development that I had assembled, because it did not recognise the 200 or so jobs it would have created as employment (these were leisure related rather than in the B1/B2/B8 categories). It made me realise that planning policy, like valuation, was backward looking because of its need for an evidential base, and not forward looking; it could therefore never keep up with the times. So, on the basis that 'if you can't beat them, join them', I decided to try to get change from within.

Their forbearance at letting loose a creative developer within an authority previously dominated by its regulatory functions has been commendable. However, another professional discipline - one that understands the mystique of development appraisals, profit margins and the strength of one's negotiating position, that is able to explain the detailed effects of leasehold tenure and all its jargon relative to the funding markets, and that can advise on market conditions by being active within it - adds an additional dimension to what would otherwise be a single discipline (planning) team, and enables it to be better armed to deliver change. It is the teamwork that has kept me there through boom and bust, in what is at times a frustrating workplace, and that has provided me with an observation point. As a result I can consider whether good urban design in a provincial town needs always to be force-fed by regulation or can ever be market led?

Theory would have it that developers will recognise that good quality urban design adds value over and above its additional cost, and will therefore adopt improved urban design out of commercial self-interest. But in a provincial market, as against a city one, where development economics are markedly more marginal and competition is less, is this theory borne out in practice? Or is it more a case of the blind-leading-the-blind - a competency issue amongst those force-feeding (regulating) and those unable to recognise the added-value case?

TWO COMMERCIAL EXAMPLES

Located on the M40 motorway and Chiltern Rail, High Wycombe is equidistant to London and Oxford. Its position in a valley in the Chiltern Hills (AONB), constrains its outward growth. It has an immediate population of about 100,000 and is generally prosperous. A London commuter town, it has an historic High Street and church core. Though Wycombe has an industrial heritage, it is now largely service sector dominated.

For nearly 20 years, the Council had plans for the Western sector of the town, known as the Western Desert after at least one abortive attempt at initiating its redevelopment. The proposal for an area of some 7has, on the other side of the Inner Relief Road (a 1960s brutalist flyover with a shopping centre underneath), was for a new department store and larger retail outlets. In 2005, a £250m scheme of some 80,000m² branded Eden High Wycombe, was finally brought to fruition: it includes two department stores, a multi-screen cinema with bowling and restaurants, a library and apartments.

↑ Wycombe Historic High Street



↑ Wycombe's Sainsbury: public realm with the Eden centre in the back
 ↗ Two residential developments in Wycombe: Wye Dean, Berkeley Group
 Kingshill Grange, Taylor Wimpey



Such a large-scale transformation provided the opportunity to apply urban design best practice and the intention to do so was certainly there: streets instead of malls, individual blocks, animated frontages and public realm enhanced by public art, were the order of the day. The developers portrayed themselves as integrated contractor/developer/investors (not trading developers), who intended to retain the finished product as an investment, maintaining that they had a long-term commercial self-interest in quality. Trophy architects gained planning consent, with much detailed design left to Reserved Matters.

With construction using design-and-build contracts and different architects for the working drawings, the dumbing-down of detailing began to show. Policing it was a challenge, given fast-track construction and pressure not to hold things up: details were often agreed retrospectively, after the start of implementation. The need to meet longstop dates was the driver. In one sense, the rush paid off: the scheme was completed in March 2008, just before the recession, and 80 per cent of it was occupied from day one. Six months later and the letting market would have been missed. However, the quality of the finished product seems to be different to that originally proposed. The public realm is somewhat bare, with poor seating, little noticeable public art, spaces lack animation and apart from the integral bus station, the scheme largely turns its back on its surroundings.

Compare this to an almost simultaneous, adjacent 10,000 m² redevelopment by Sainsbury's, wrapped around a re-modelled 1970s multi-storey car park and including an hotel and drive-thru restaurant. In this instance, the trophy architects were retained throughout and the construction was with a partnership contractor. As a company, Sainsbury's has an interest in design patronage.

The result is some striking contemporary design, with a degree of quality in both the building and its surrounding public realm: glass ventilation towers (designed to be blue lit from within, though never seen working!) paving, planting and seating, give a feeling of completeness. Whether the hotel/drive-thru under construction with their different architects, will add to this, remains to be seen.

RESIDENTIAL SCHEMES

The sector which boomed until 2008/9 has fortunately started up recently again as a result of the pent-up demand in a popular area like High Wycombe. Two current residential schemes, both reflecting the past decade's policies on density (as against the current decade's concern about size of units) and two volume house builders' differing approaches offer similar comparisons.

In the case of Berkeley Group's Wye Dene, a 500 unit in-town redevelopment, the contemporary design somewhat brashly strives to be a quality product. Its grand entrance, use of materials and structured landscaping, including the re-shaping of the River Wye which divides the site, immediately give an up-market feel, compensating for the perceived less than prime location, and attempting to create a sense of place and wellbeing.

By comparison, Taylor Wimpey's Kingshill Grange, a 250 unit scheme developed on edge-of-town former playing fields, is more pastiche and verges upon being a suburban housing estate with token urban design touches (an 'art feature'). The two developments share one common factor: their affordable housing is of lower design quality. Both are selling well and their sales values are on a par. It may be that the land purchase costs of one were lower than the other, enabling more to be invested in the build quality. The reader will have to decide which one it is.

Two further examples reflect smaller scale residential developers approach. The contemporary versus pastiche approaches are probably due to commercial viability but here, the schemes are the result of ramped-up densities and both seem to be somewhat incongruous. The in-town Caitlin building, a UK spin-off of the Irish property boom (and still incomplete), is one or two storeys too high, whilst the West Wycombe Road blocks look like they are on steroids, with scale and proportion all wrong. Neither contributes much to the street-scene, although the Caitlin building is meant to have an active ground floor. If nothing else, the West Wycombe Road blocks could have had a decent front hedge, to soften their street frontage.

HOTELS

Another comparison is offered by two budget hotels. Travelodge's somewhat eclectic façade, presumably an attempt to overcome the uniformity of bedroom windows, looks likely to be matched by Premier Inn's attempt to do the same, with the use of yet more bland rendering (cf Eden) broken up by columns of ubiquitous stretcher bond brickwork. The latter at least earns brownie points as an all timber framed construction above the first floor. Both involve near 100 per cent site cover and front existing pedestrian walkways, but neither appears to have been required to enhance these through surface treatment, lighting or signage, nor have they recognised that to do so would be in their commercial self-interest.

Unless there is a proven track-record of delivering quality, what prospective developers promise before planning consent, cannot be taken as a guarantee of what will ultimately materialise

LESSONS FROM A PROVINCIAL TOWN

Sadly, it seems that unless there is a proven track-record of delivering quality, what prospective developers promise before planning consent, cannot be taken as a guarantee of what will ultimately materialise. Unless there is a demonstrable corporate culture that appreciates that good design and craftsmanship generate faster sales at higher values (or will preserve rental growth), regulation will still have to force the issue. The difficulty is that enforcing conditions stretches the ever-more limited resources of local authorities, whose officers are invariably inundated with the next proposals, and have inadequate time to police what they have conditionally consented. It is better to get binding commitment ahead of the point of value creation (before granting planning permission) than to try and chase after it, once planning consent has been banked.

Adding to this difficulty is the propensity for developers to pay too much for land, or for the public sector to seek too much because of 'best consideration' obligations. This results in value engineering, the subsequent cutting-back of costs (and hence quality) to make schemes commercially viable: given that there is seldom scope to



make savings below ground, it is inevitably the superstructure and more particularly the external areas that suffer.

Above all there seems to be a loss of appreciation of detail: poor production and reading of plans (not necessarily helped by the clinical crispness of CAD); failure to understand the art of proportions; an inability to visualise two-dimensional plans in three dimensions; a lack of understanding of the finer points of building construction and of the importance of articulation of elevations (flush mounted fenestration, no overhanging drips, poorly executed parapet walls) are major contributors to a lack of excellence. All constituent parts of a scheme should be detailed and hang together, both within the site boundaries and throughout the spaces linking it to others. Whilst much of the above is outside individuals' control, some at least comes down to three Cs – competency, commitment and care – which are often lacking in a world dominated by that other C – commerciality. ●

↑ West Wycombe Road housing
 ↑↑ Caitlin residential building (unfinished)
 ↑↑↑ The Travelodge hotel's eclectic façade

● Charles Brocklehurst
 Former Director of ICE
 Developments, now Head of
 Property Services Wycombe
 District Council

A CLIENT'S VIEW OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Peter Bourne argues that quality in the public realm is critical in adding value to property



A good public realm ties together the 'bits in-between' into an attractive location. A whole range of factors make a good location: access to it, access within it, facilities and services, and the proximity to other important draws – whether these are shops, offices, restaurants or other destinations. Often a significant factor is simply being in an attractive place.

From an investor's point of view, there are two ways of approaching location: the passive approach – picking the right location; or the active one – creating the right location. Either way, developing the right approach requires specific strategies rather than a 'one size fits all'.

REGENT STREET

In the case of Regent Street, The Crown Estate

started the regeneration process twelve years ago with a whole raft of strategies. We began by setting up a Strategic Planning Group to capitalise on the expertise of our consultants, which included Les Sparks, one of the founding Commissioners of CABE, and planners and development consultants from CB Richard Ellis. The Group brought together expertise in the fields of architecture, conservation, branding, servicing and restaurant quarters, and addressed each of the use types - residential, retail and office. This helped us to deliver our vision: to position Regent Street as a unique international destination and a world class environment that delivers quality, heritage, style and success to businesses, visitors and local communities alike; in short, a place for people, business and shopping.

The public realm strategy, developed with

Atkins, translated that vision into the following:

- Create more space for pedestrians by widening the footways and turning them into a comfortable space. In order to achieve this as well as other strategies described below, it is necessary to further reduce vehicle numbers
- Increase freedom to move along the street by closing off side-streets or creating headway treatments, and enhance pedestrian access from side to side by improving crossings across the street
- Reduce noise, smell, danger and disruption, by reducing vehicle numbers. This has helped with several other strategies
- Improve entry points from tube stations, on foot from the surrounding area, by bus, cycle and taxi
- Improve the ambience by removing street clutter, floodlighting the buildings, adopting high quality natural stone materials, and creating attractive areas off the main street where people can relax

By adding a median strip along sections of the road to encourage safe informal crossing, pedestrians should no longer have to seek permission to cross it

IMPLEMENTATION

So far, a partnership of Westminster City Council, the Mayor of London (through Transport for London) and the Crown Estate has undertaken the following projects:

The Oxford Circus diagonal crossing scheme, which provides a third more usable footway space, allowing pedestrians to cross where they want without adversely affecting traffic flows (see UD issue 116).

The Piccadilly two-way scheme, completed in October 2011 in time for the Olympics, which delivers a similar improvement for pedestrians as the Oxford Circus scheme did. It also tames traffic, restoring Pall Mall, St James's Street and Piccadilly to two-way working, making it easier for pedestrians to cross these roads. The key objectives of this scheme are:

- To civilise the area by removing the multi-lane one-way streets which isolated St James's from the rest of central London
- To restore Piccadilly to its former grandeur
- To enhance the views down Regent Street towards the Duke of York Column and the Palace of Westminster beyond, and down St James's street toward St James's Palace
- To improve Piccadilly Circus by giving more space to pedestrians, where necessary to ensure that people can enjoy the iconic sights within the Circus, but crucially also the views out from it

In addition, the Crown Estate on their own had already carried out smaller public realm schemes just off Regent Street, creating some successful oases. Heddon Street and Swallow Street are Regent Street's food quarters featuring al fresco dining, while New Burlington Place, Regent Place and Princess Street are quieter areas.

The main entry points at Oxford Circus and



Piccadilly Circus have been upgraded, as have most of the side roads. Innovative de-cluttering has removed much of the unnecessary street furniture, vastly improving the pedestrian experience. Three side-streets off Regent Street have also been closed to traffic, and headway treatments created for most of the nearby streets. By adding a median strip along sections of the road to encourage safe informal crossing, pedestrians should no longer have to seek permission to cross it. Hopefully this process will be extended to the rest of Regent Street.

TRAFFIC REDUCTION

The reduction of traffic levels is a key element to achieve these objectives of public realm improvement. Two years ago we started a retail delivery consolidation scheme, which allows retailers to have their deliveries made to a warehouse close to the M25. From there, the goods to be delivered to several shops are brought to Regent Street in a single lorry which, since July 2011, is an electric one. As a result, deliveries to the participating retailers have been reduced by over 80 per cent.

We have also worked on reducing office deliveries by starting a preferred supplier scheme. Our logistics consultants, Arup, identified that

↑ Heddon St, Before and after



↑ Waterloo Place before and after
 ↑↑ The Regent Street electric delivery lorry

● Peter Bourne, Development Manager The Crown Estate

described above has allowed us to look at many areas with new eyes.

Waterloo Place marks the point where Regent Street reaches The Mall. It is a lost London square with the fantastic architecture of the Athenaeum Club and the Institute of Directors on either side, the Duke of York Column at the centre and several monuments and statues. But this splendour surrounds what looks like a car park. Regent Street, between Waterloo Place and Piccadilly Circus, is another glorious architectural set-piece in need of a face-lift. And Haymarket with its two glorious theatres, the Theatre Royal and Her Majesty's, has an appalling public realm. After the Olympics, in January 2013 we hope to start restoring all these streets to their former glory.

CONCLUSIONS

So what are the conclusions we can draw from this experience? Does this approach deliver value to our properties? We are convinced it does but it is often hard to quantify. The public realm strategy is only one element of the programme of improvements, and it is virtually impossible to attribute the undoubted increase in value we have experienced through the actions outlined above, to a particular element. We are though, sufficiently convinced, to make public realm improvements a key element of our emerging plans to improve our St James's portfolio.

What is the secret to achieving the various public realm improvements we have delivered in the West End? Initially clear strategic objectives have to be set and the aspirations of local communities taken into account; then they have to be delivered with flexibility. Working with the grain of the local authorities' policies and maintaining a clear understanding of their objectives as well as of our own, balancing the needs of residents and visitors, is also essential. In all these cases we have employed urban designers and they have collaborated with traffic planners and pedestrian flow analysts, as well as with Westminster City Council, to come up with the initial designs, at our financial risk. Once the designs are adopted and the funding package agreed, the costs are then shared and implementation is passed to the council, with the urban designers retained by us to ensure the design features are not diluted.

All this requires persistence, patience and the right professionals working in a collaborative way with other specialists, but the results are worth it. From a client perspective, the public realm is a critical element of our improvement programme in both Regent Street and St James's. ●

many office deliveries were of similar commodities: stationary, milk, drinking water, newspapers and sandwiches. We have selected suppliers which provide good value and who are prepared to adopt sustainable delivery methods. For example, our preferred stationary supplier delivers into the area at night in bulk; the last-mile-delivery is then carried out during the working day, using cargo bikes.

Unfortunately, these delivery reduction measures, while useful, do not address the main source of congestion and air pollution caused mostly by buses and taxis. We are putting pressure on TfL to limit the impact of these, and once a major reduction has been achieved, footways along the rest of the street can be widened and de-cluttered to make them more comfortable for pedestrians.

We have started applying the same sort of public realm strategies to the regeneration of our St James's portfolio. The Piccadilly two-way scheme

UDG AWARDS 2012



↙ Reception in RUSI's library before last year's award ceremony

The next awards event will be held on Wednesday 15 February 2012 at RUSI on Whitehall, London. Tickets will be available in mid-January.

Four awards will be presented: Best Practice, Best Student, Best Public Sector Project and Best Publisher. In addition, a Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented by the chair of the UDG, Amanda Reynolds.

The event has been generously sponsored by Atkins, last year's winner of the Practice award, Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design, and the publishers Routledge who will be exhibiting a display of books.

The awards will be presented by Janet Tibbalds, chair of The Francis Tibbalds Trust which has funded the prizes for the best practice and the best student. The awards were devised by John Billingham who chairs the UDG awards group, and are administered by Louise Ingledow.

In January UDG members will be asked to vote through the website, for the Practice, Student and Public sector awards. Look out for this and don't forget to vote!

JUDGES

The short lists for the Practice, Public Sector and Student awards have been drawn by a panel of judges that included:

- Louise Thomas, co-editor of *Urban Design* and chair of the panel,
- Richard Hayward, academic and practitioner,
- Paul Reynolds from Atkins
- Stefan Kruczkowski from North West Leicestershire
- Lindsey Whitelaw, patron of the UDG.

PRACTICE AWARD

Fourteen entries were received for this award and six shortlisted by the judges. These were published in *Urban Design* in July 2011. UDG members will be asked to vote for the project they feel achieved the highest standard. The prize of £1000 is to fund two members of the winning office to participate in an Urban Design Group study tour (such as the one mentioned on p.6), or an alternative agreed with UDG.

The practices selected and projects published are:

- **John Thompson & Partners** – Suzhou EcoTown
- **NEW Masterplanning** – Greyfriars, Gloucester
- **NJBA A+U** – Rush 2020 Strategic Vision
- **Richards Partington Architects** – Howden Urban Extension Masterplan
- **Studio REAL** – Moat Lane, Towcester
- **URBED** – Brentford Lock West

PUBLIC SECTOR AWARD

Local authorities and public sector agencies were invited to submit projects under a wide description of categories. Free membership of the UDG for a six-month period has been provided for all entrants but there is no additional financial award to the winner.

Twenty seven projects were submitted; the following six were shortlisted and are published in the following pages of this issue of *Urban Design* :

- Exeter Residential Design SPD by **Exeter City Council**
- Urban Design Academy by **North East Derbyshire District Council**
- Freight Depot visioning document by **Gateshead Council**

- Castle St Improvements by **Carlisle City Council**
- Tactile City Model by **Planning Aid for London**
- Quality Places Charter by **Partnership for Urban South Hampshire**

STUDENT AWARD

All the courses listed in *Urban Design* were invited to nominate a student who was then asked to submit a limited amount of work for consideration. Eight entries were received and three students were shortlisted. The schemes will be displayed on the UDG website and members will be asked to cast a vote for the best scheme. A prize of £600 will be awarded either as a single prize or shared by two students.

The shortlisted projects are:

- **Radical Reconstruction** by **Ralf Furuland**, student at Edinburgh College of Art
- **Gallowgate Renewal** by **Ian Brodie**, student at university of Strathclyde
- **St Pauls Neighbourhood** by **Dongni Yao**, student at University of Cardiff

PUBLISHER AWARD

For this award regular publishers of books about urban design were contacted to nominate a book. A panel of four UDG members, Marc Furnival, Jonathan Kendall, Juliet Bidgood and Laurie Mentiplay, chaired by Alistair Donald, drew a shortlist and selected the winner. The shortlisted books were published in issue 120 or *Urban Design*. There is no financial award for this category.

The publishers and shortlisted books are:

- **RIBA Publishing**: *NewcastleGateshead, Shaping the City*, Peter Hetherington
- **Routledge**: *Urban design, The Composition of complexity*, Ron Kasprisin
- **Wiley**: *Urban Design Since 1945, A Global Perspective*, D G Shane
- **Ashgate**: *Learning from Delhi, Dispersed Initiatives in Changing Urban Landscapes*, Maurice Mitchell, Shamoon Patwari and Bo Tang

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

This award is intended to recognise outstanding work by an individual in the urban design field. Nominations are made by the UDG Executive. ●

IMPROVEMENTS TO A CONGESTED ARTERY

Carlisle City Council describes their public realm scheme for Castle Street



Castle Street lies at the heart of Carlisle's historic quarter. It links the retail heart of the city (centred on the Market Cross) to Carlisle Castle. At its southern end Castle Street connects with the pedestrianised centre, and to the north, runs towards the castle and parkland beyond. The street is flanked by the 12th century cathedral, and by mixed office and commercial development.

Until recently this key street was dominated by parked cars, and by vehicles circulating the narrow medieval street plan in search of parking. A notable impact of this was the almost continual presence of blue badge parking on double yellow lines along the boundary of the cathedral precinct. No view of the cathedral was complete without a permanent honour-guard of nose to tail vehicles. In 2007 a scheme was conceived to strip out much of the parking from half the length of the street, and to introduce a restricted parking zone to limit other traffic.

DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTION

A public realm study of the historic quarter by the City Council identified Castle Street as an achievable and significant public realm opportunity. While numerous other streets were also strong contenders for improvement, Castle Street was at the heart of the city, and any improvement here would benefit residents, businesses and visitors. The street is also a key connection between the city and the long distance Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail and cycle route which skirt Carlisle.

The City Council, working with the local highway authority Cumbria County Council, developed draft proposals to reduce the flow of vehicular traffic through the area while enhancing its attractiveness to pedestrians. Full pedestrianisation was one option considered, but maintenance of some through-traffic was felt to animate the space, and constraints on neighbouring streets limited alternatives for circulation. Traffic options for the

area were developed by City and County Council officers working closely with a small working group of members. Extensive public consultation took place in 2007-08.

The scheme which emerged proposed to narrow the width of the carriageway (making it one-way), and to significantly increase pedestrian space by doubling pavement width on the commercial eastern side. With minimal (50mm) kerbs and flush crossings, the space was intended to be returned to the pedestrian, yet allowing traffic to access other allocated on-street parking that businesses had lobbied strongly to retain. A traffic order enabled the stripping out of yellow lines and substantial signage, although the process of obtaining DfT approval for this was lengthy. Displaced blue badge parking was replaced with parking in allocated bays with a general reduction in availability of disc. However, a number of large and underused car parks are available within reasonable walking distance. The scheme (Castle Street Phase 1) covered half of the total length of the street, with the remaining 100m length identified as a future phase.

A materials palette was developed, drawn from the local street masonry of whinstone, granite and the russet Lazony sandstone which gives Carlisle's historic buildings their reddish hue. While existing concrete flags were recycled elsewhere in the district, granite kerbs were retained and retooled, reducing overall costs and minimising environmental impact.

Project costs were in the region of £700,000, with the majority of both design work and physical execution undertaken by the City Council. The

← Congestion in 2007
 ✓ Plan of Phase I scheme
 → Concept sketch of proposed works
 ✎ Completed Scheme

footprint of the scheme covered some 1000sqm. As work began on site for Phase 1, the Council was fortunate enough to secure European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) finance for the remainder of the street (the Roman Gateway project). This centred on Tullie House Museum and on improving signage links to the nearby Hadrian's Wall long distance footpath and cycleway. The installation of monolithic granite benches by the Cumbrian based artist Hannah Stewart completed Phase 1 and both schemes were completed in late spring/summer 2011.

PROGNOSIS

The removal of signage clutter and of extensive parking has allowed a key street in the city to become a place for people rather than a route for traffic. Use of the street for pavement cafés has expanded and in pleasant weather the street can be seen to be a place to linger rather than a conduit made uncomfortable by heavy traffic. Public responses during the scheme development phase were mixed, with a common concern being that other streets were more deserving of attention. In retrospect, a clearer setting out of the wider benefits of the scheme to Carlisle as a whole might have addressed these concerns. Political support was markedly broad based, with a members steering group drawn from all main parties and both City and County Council. With hindsight, it may have been possible to provide a contraflow cycle lane, which would have benefited cyclists (who must now push their bikes an additional 100m travelling northwards). A number of granite bollards were installed to physically prevent parking on the pavements, which conflicts somewhat with the desired goal of reducing clutter.

Although a modest improvement considering the scale of works in other larger conurbations, Castle Street has perhaps been the most significant public realm intervention in Carlisle since the pedestrianisation of the city centre in the late 1980s. It has given the public, local businesses and our elected members the confidence that the city can be improved in ways which respects its historic character, allows for the reasonable needs of vehicle access but also gives full weight to the needs of the pedestrian.

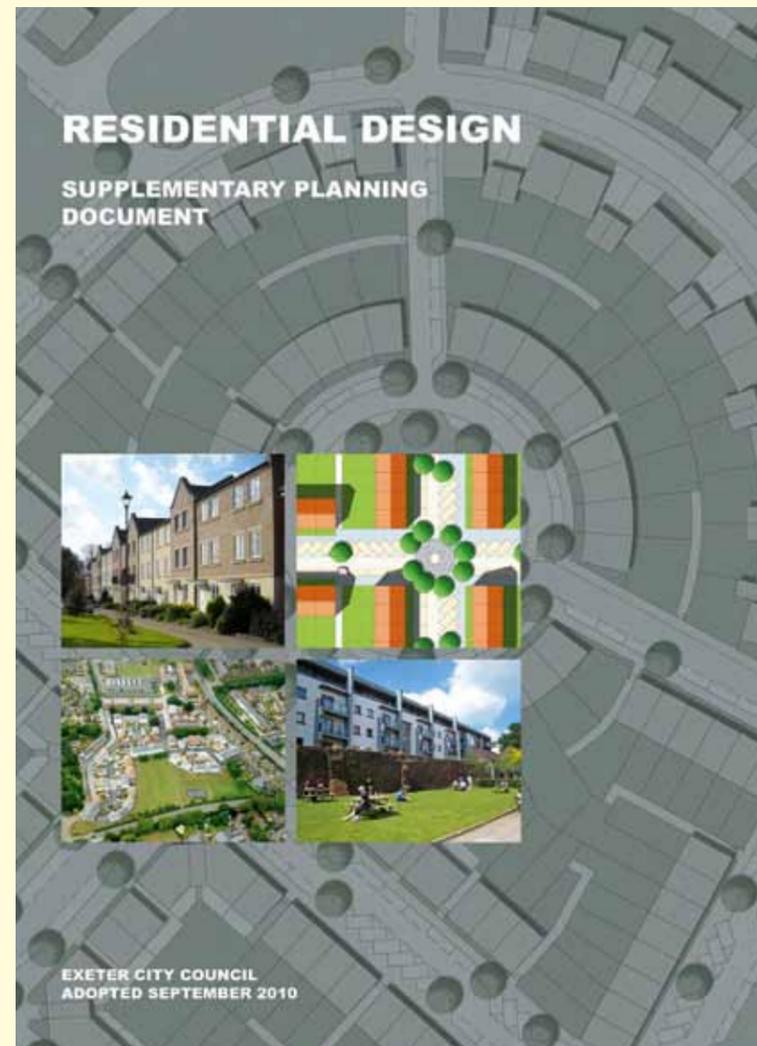
It is these, not a row of parked cars, who are the lifeblood of the city and those that keep its economy active.

While tightened finances have stalled plans for wider public realm improvements, (in particular the need to address the severance effect of Castle Way, a 1973 inner ring road which compels visitors to the castle to use either a bridge or underpass for access) this particular scheme has a robustness in design and in materials which should ensure that it is of lasting value to the city. ●



DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Exeter City Council trusts that their new SPD will raise the quality of residential schemes



Exeter City Council identified a need for design guidance to enhance the quality of residential developments. Recent schemes were failing to create high quality places, and achieved predominately poor or average *Building for Life* scores. Officers identified significant problems with these schemes, including a failure to create a distinctive sense of place, a lack of consideration of sustainable design or potential for adaptation of housing, poor provision of parking, and poor internal spaces and amenity. The need for guidance was heightened by the potential for rapid rise in housing development: 15,000 new homes were allocated around Exeter by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), then reduced to 12,000 in the submission Core Strategy.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

To develop the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), officers reviewed existing guidance (including CABE research, housing precedents and other local authority documents) and instigated a detailed consultation process with house builders, planning officers and householders in recently completed housing schemes.

Householders were invited to workshops where a facilitator and council officers ran through exercises to discuss the residents' views on the development and their homes. Parking, lack of adequate living and storage space, residential amenity, lack of adaptability and sustainability, and the location and quality of open space were identified as

problems. Layout, architectural design and retention of existing trees and buildings were identified as important factors in achieving a positive sense of place and community.

An initial workshop was also held with house builders. It covered a range of topics, and concerns were raised about intervention in the market, but the consultation was appreciated, and the benefits of clear guidance understood. All felt that it was essential that any guidance created a level playing field.

Following these workshops, officers developed the SPD setting out best practice for the design of new housing. The design process was identified as a significant barrier to good design. Often developers were seen to start the design process with a concept layout without an adequate understanding of site constraints and context. The SPD, therefore, sets out a design process which starts with site and context appraisal and concept layouts, and then provides clear design guidance for each aspect of the design; it starts with layout and place-making before considering more detailed issues. The expected approach to climate change and sustainable design is clearly set out, not only for the design of new buildings, but also in relation to site layout, connections to neighbourhood facilities and promotion of sustainable transport modes. The City Council also worked with Devon Wildlife Trust and RSPB to ensure that the protection and enhancement of biodiversity is embedded into the guidance at all levels (from site wide measures to individual dwellings).

Research into space standards was carried out with CABE enabler Juliet Bidgood and Creating Excellence's Mark Pearson. This included a workshop for south-west local authorities where Exeter City Council presented its research and proposals. The City Council based its guidance on research by HATC Limited for London and developed volume builder house types to demonstrate the practical application of space standards. Housing colleagues were particularly supportive of requirements for new housing to be adaptable, enabling people to live contentedly in one place as their circumstances change.

Special attention was also paid to developing a rationale for parking

✓ Exeter's Residential Design guide cover.
→ Residents' views on the quality of recently built housing developments were mapped and assessed
→ Exemplar floor plans illustrate how 'standard' house types could be modified to meet Internal Space Standards
↳ 'Test' layout for RNSD Lower Site – illustrating that density is not compromised by principles set out in the SPD

guidance through research into demand and the pros and cons of allocated versus unallocated provision. English Partnerships' *Parking – What works* where was a useful starting point for this chapter, with the final guidance clearly demonstrating the inefficiencies of courtyard parking and the benefits of on street parking. Phil Jones Associates provided census statistics to assess car ownership patterns, ensuring that parking guidance is practical and meets local need. Parking layouts were tested to ensure that different ones and mixes of allocated and unallocated spaces were achievable.

TESTING

The draft guidance was thoroughly tested to ensure it was practical and would allow viable developments. Layouts for approved development sites were tested by the design team to allow comparison of density and viability. Designs for houses from volume house builders were tested against the space standards and revised internal layouts produced to demonstrate that the proposed standards would be viable and not have an impact upon density.

A further workshop was held with house builders to present the draft and receive feedback on the implications for the industry. Concern was voiced that duplication between the SPD and other policy/legislation should be avoided. Significant discussion took place on the impact of internal space standards in a competitive market. Opinions ranged from confidence that the market delivered the housing people wanted, to an understanding of the logic of specifying space standards. There was consensus however, that any extra costs identified in building houses to specified space standards should be reflected in the price paid for land rather than being passed on to purchasers. Experience since adoption of the SPD demonstrates that expectations of land value present a challenge to achieving good quality sustainable designs.

PUTTING THE SPD INTO PRACTICE

Following revisions and public consultation, the SPD was adopted in September 2010 and provides detailed guidance related to design policies in the Local Plan and in the emerging Core Strategy. It is now used in negotiations



Typical 3-bed House Type



Amended 3-bed House Type



for all residential development proposals in Exeter. Recently approved applications indicate a more successful approach to place-making and design, as they achieve Good and Very Good *Building for Life*

scores. The City Council has also had success at recent planning appeals where the SPD's internal space and amenity standards have been supported by Inspectors as reasons for refusal. ●

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR URBAN SOUTH HAMPSHIRE

Local authorities in South Hampshire have teamed up to improve the design quality of developments



PUSH is a partnership of the unitary authorities of Portsmouth and Southampton, Hampshire County Council and the district authorities of Eastleigh, East Hampshire, Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester. PUSH works with local partners and government agencies to deliver sustainable, economic-led growth and regeneration. To achieve this PUSH has constituted a number of themed Delivery Panels.

Quality Places is one of the themed delivery panels. A principal aim is to ensure new developments conform to high standards of design in the built environment to increase the quality and liveability of the sub-region. Priority

actions were developed including the preparation of a design charter and guidance, launching design awards and implementing a programme of skills development and capacity building.

PUSH QUALITY PLACES CHARTER
The Charter was drawn up by the Quality Places Practitioners Group (QPPG), which comprises local authority officers responsible for design and reports to the Quality Places Delivery Panel. It acts as a statement of intent by all signatories to recognise the principles of quality places and place-making and to ensure their delivery becomes an everyday part of service provision. The Charter was



signed by the leaders of each council as a reflection of its importance, and to help ensure that its message would be cascaded down throughout each authority.

The Charter's statement of intent is as follows:

'The PUSH authorities are committed to the creation of quality places. We recognise the different components that combine to create quality places and will ensure implementation of place-making principles and the processes for their delivery. We acknowledge that we must collaborate and cooperate with the many other organisations and bodies responsible for the management and development of the public realm to achieve high quality places. We call upon those organisations and bodies to commit to delivering the place-making components identified in this charter.'

PUSH recognised that delivering high quality places and buildings could not be achieved through a statement of intent alone. The Charter identifies that it is equally important that appropriate delivery mechanisms and processes are in place. Each local authority in South Hampshire, as a signatory to the charter, is committed to delivering the following:

↙ University of Portsmouth Library
↘ Wellstead Primary School



- Leadership and management structures to ensure that creating quality places is a high priority
- A design-led multi-disciplinary culture which plans, designs and manages new and existing places in an integrated way to achieve high quality
- Place-making and quality design policies which underpin Local Development Plan documents, including detailed guidance on creating high quality development where necessary
- Decision making which considers the wider value of creating quality places as a prime consideration, rather than cost alone
- Opportunities to improve the quality and management of existing places
- Appropriate place awareness and design training for leaders, councillors and officers
- Community involvement in the planning, design and management of places

Members of the QPPG continue to promote and embed the vision of the Charter into their organisations and as part of their everyday work on design matters. They are also developing design guidance, offering a framework within which PUSH authorities can set detailed, locally specific policies to help realise the principles of the Charter.

The full version of the Charter is available at www.push.gov.uk/quality_places_charter.pdf

SOLENT QUALITY PLACE DESIGN AWARDS

To promote good practice and reflect the principles of the Charter, the QPPG established a sub-regional design award scheme. The awards recognise and reward the contribution that a scheme makes in creating a quality place, rather than the merits of the building(s) design alone. The emphasis is on schemes that create special places for people, that lift communities and create richer experiences for the users. The awards also help to encourage and raise the profile and quality of place-making in the future. Schemes that meet the criteria receive a Quality Place award. There is an overall winner and a winner chosen by the local community following an on-line vote.

In conjunction with the Solent Centre for Architecture and Design (SCAD), a set of judging criteria was established:

- Civic-mindedness – the impact for the public good
- Delight – the lifting of the spirit
- Firmness – Concerning the fabric of the building/ scheme
- Commodity – The scheme's functionality for its users

There were 12 shortlisted schemes (see www.solentdesignawards.org.uk) from which the Quality Places winners were chosen by a panel of judges. The award winners were:

- Quality Places Award, Overall Winner: University of Portsmouth Library
- Quality Places Award: Wellstead Primary School, Hedge End
- People's Choice Award: University of Portsmouth Library

The winners were announced at an Awards Dinner at Winchester Guildhall organised by SCAD and sponsored by Warings Construction. A keynote address was made by Wayne Hemingway, who spoke about the importance of the liveability of buildings, places and spaces.

The second Quality Places Design Awards are set to take place in 2012.

UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH LIBRARY (PENOYRE & PRASAD ARCHITECTS)

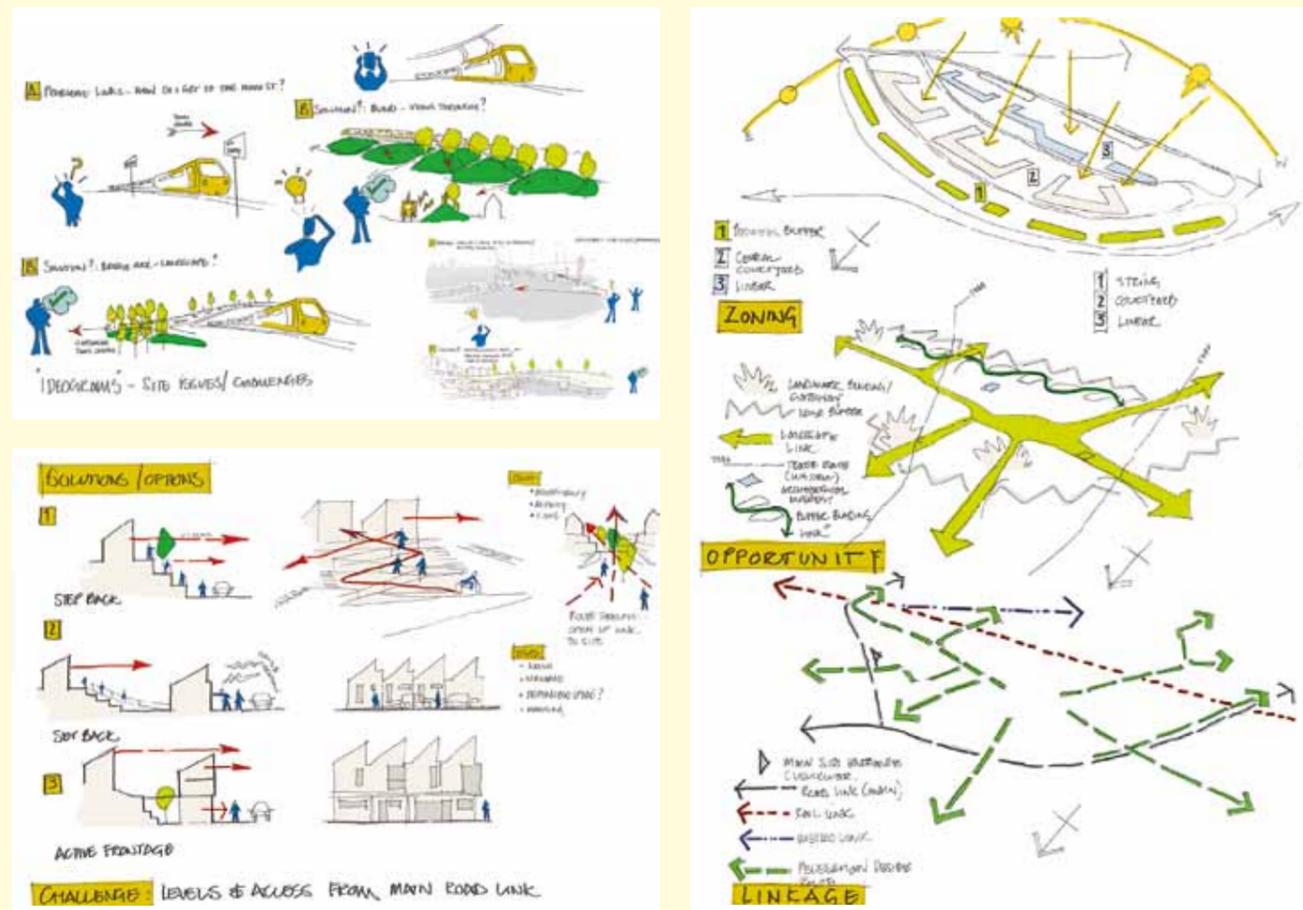
The Library was extended to meet the growing student numbers and their expectations of a high quality learning environment. It includes enhanced IT facilities, study and teaching rooms, as well as a café. It bridges over the entrance to a public park, acting as a gateway and is accessed from a new urban square which provides space for students and the public to congregate. An internal street, which can be used by the public provides a direct connection to both sides of the park.

WELLSTEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL, HEDGE END (HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ARCHITECTS)

Wellstead Primary School is a new building within a modern housing development in Hedge End. It is set around a courtyard, with the main teaching block on one side and the administrative and social block on the other. A library and a glass passageway link the four sides. The glass provides the necessary security but allows the school to be visually connected to the community outside. The design allows the school to act as a central focus for the local community. ●

FREIGHT DEPOT VISIONING DOCUMENT

Gateshead Council has produced a document to stimulate the imagination of developers



In 2008, Gateshead Council launched its search for a private sector partner with which it could build 2,400 new homes on 19 sites across the borough. A former Freight Depot near to the Felling Bypass transport corridor was deemed the flagship site for this project. The site's location and scale meant it was of strategic importance to the local housing market renewal and to help realise the area's economic potential. Placed at a major gateway into Gateshead's centre and the wider conurbation, it has great potential to act as a catalyst for the regeneration of a community that has suffered from decline for many years.

CREATING A VISION

To articulate this message, the council's area planning team set about creating a visioning document that would ensure development proposals reflected its ambitious plans for transforming the Freight Depot. The team worked hard

to create the original brief for the site but was limited by policy, national guidance, in-house expertise and software. Articulating its aims within these constraints became extremely difficult, and left little room to manoeuvre. The council recognised the need to create a document that would really capture the attention and imagination of prospective developers, and resolved to seek the help of an external specialist.

DEVELOPING IDEAS

A consultant was needed to drive forward the visioning document based on the original planning brief. It appointed IDP Partnership to do this, with support from BioRegional. The three organisations worked together to shape the vision, ensuring the correct elements were given the right emphasis. This resulted in a comprehensive document that set out a thorough agenda for the development of the Freight Depot.

It provided planning policy, design guidance and masterplanning concepts on how the site might be developed as well as setting out sustainability measures that could be taken. This would guide the type and general format of the development, and help the council's future partner to formulate its design proposals for the site.

The urban design issues considered by the document included land use, landscape, transport, access and movement, and a contextual analysis (the site's history, assets, constraints and key features). BioRegional also produced a Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) outlining how the site could achieve *One Planet Living* status.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

The process of developing the vision was broad and varied. It included:

- project familiarisation by IDP Partnership
- gap analysis of four key areas (initial

- ← Exploring urban design concepts
- ✓ Looking for access solutions
- ✓ Developing zoning and linkages
- ↳ The Freight Depot sits at the heart of central Gateshead
- ↳ Evolution Gateshead's proposed designs brought the Freight Depot vision to life. Designs by Studio Egret West



- concept design; detailed design construction; post construction)
- a workshop on BioRegional's SAP
- design and sustainability of the wider development area
- a presentation of the draft proposals to stakeholders and
- consultation with local residents

The involvement of local residents was an interesting and innovative experience. The council's Urban Design Reference Group - made up of residents trained in CABE's *Building for Life* principles - were used to shape the content of the document. Their knowledge of the local area and informed views about urban design provided invaluable insightful feedback on the emerging vision.

REACTION FROM DEVELOPERS

The visioning document was given to private sector developers that were bidding to be the council's joint venture partner. Their response was overwhelmingly positive. The vision's non-prescriptive approach attracted multiple interpretations of the various urban design challenges presented by the site. It included indicative plans and precedent images but allowed developers to present alternative solutions - ultimately generating a wide range of responses to transforming the Freight Depot.

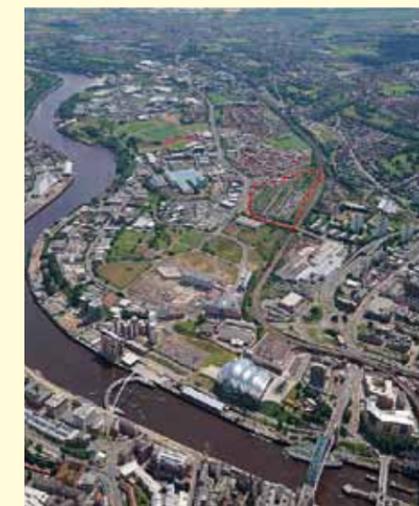
However, developers did have some hesitations in terms of the costs of delivering the vision's goals. When the document was released in early 2009, the requirement for 'zero carbon'

was perceived as being beyond what developers were willing to achieve. It was assumed to add significant construction costs to the project. Since then, progress on the *Code for Sustainable Homes* standard and government requirements on new developments have helped to ease the pressure of delivery, and developers later recognised the 'zero carbon' objective as more achievable.

There were also reservations about some of the more creative approaches of the visioning document. The document included an indicative solution to connect the Freight Depot to its surroundings via a green bridge traversing the adjacent highway. While this illustrated Gateshead's commitment to connectivity, it did not fully translate into a realistic solution. The competitive dialogue process with developers revealed the concept was limited by problems with how and where the bridge would land on the other side of the highway. The idea was discussed throughout the dialogue process and was eventually agreed to be untenable. A surface-level crossing was proposed instead.

SETTING URBAN DESIGN STANDARDS

Despite these challenges, Gateshead took valuable lessons from the production of the visioning document. Firstly, the combination of graphics (including site plans and illustrations) and text enabled the council to set out its aspirations in clear terms. This resulted in equally clear submissions from developers, who picked



up on the key objectives of the vision and provided innovative responses to its urban design ambitions.

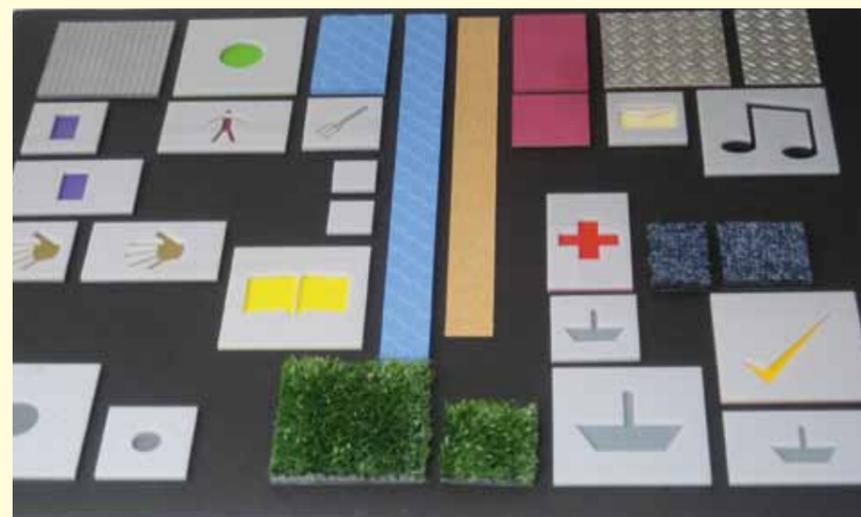
Even more significantly, the document set a new standard for the council in creating development briefs. Officers learnt that for developers to take aspirations seriously there needed to be significant groundwork in terms of research and collaboration. Without the expertise of IDP Partnership and BioRegional, the document would have lacked the detail and scope to really push design and environmental standards. Indeed, the *One Planet Living* concept introduced by the visioning document has been taken on board by the successful bidder who is looking to develop the principles across all 19 sites.

The success of the visioning document led Gateshead Council to improve the quality of its development briefs and visions. Appropriate graphics software, increased urban design staff, and the experience learned from the Freight Depot have equipped Gateshead with the tools to approach other sites in the same way, and inspire creative urban design throughout the borough.

Evolution Gateshead (a consortium of Galliford Try and Home Group) was appointed Gateshead Council's preferred joint venture partner in 2011. The partnership hopes to start work on the Freight Depot later this year. ●

TACTILE CITY MODEL

Planning Aid for London and Knott Architects present a tool to include people with visual impairments in the processes of urban design and planning



For people with visual impairments, the conventional tools of drawings and diagrams are of no use, neither are the normal, fragile, masterplan models that are often produced. Too often the time that the blind and partially sighted have their chance to contribute to the planning process is after the event – once a project has already been implemented.

COLLABORATIVE WORK

A partnership between Knott Architects and Planning Aid for London (PAL) has collaborated in order to address this issue of accessibility and inclusion. Each of them reached the above conclusion from separate directions. PAL's charitable

vision is to break down the barriers that exist for individuals and groups to engage in the planning system, through for example the *Involving Young People in Planning* initiative, or by providing planning training to groups whose first language is not English. George Knott of Knott Architects (in his role as PAL Volunteer Consultant) found himself designing a granny-flat for a client with no sight and, so, started experimenting with robust, touchy-feely models as a way of discussing design ideas. The result of the collaboration is a marriage between the Tactile City Model and a growing series of education and consultation opportunities that it can be used for.

Over three years the partnership has created prototypes of different versions of a Tactile City Model which is designed to be read with one's eyes... or one's fingers. In its current format, it consists of over 300 magnetised pieces that can be arranged in any format on magnetic baseboards. Diagrammatic cityscapes can be modelled, either as generic scenarios or site-specific situations. A menu of brightly coloured tactile symbols and distinctive textures represent 22 different land-uses. For example a carpet texture represents residential use and a red cross symbol indicates a health building; sandpaper represents roads and astro-turf is green space; the symbol of an open hand is a community building and a fork represents a café or restaurant; and so on. Wild-cards that can be customised for specific situations are included.

Three Access Models have been added to the Tactile City Model to illustrate the urban environment at a closer scale. These three models are used specifically to generate discussions about issues encountered in moving around public spaces: entering a building from a car park using a ramp or the stairs, negotiating revolving, swing or sliding doors and using a public park space with ramp and bench.

TESTING THE MODELS

All the models are robust, transportable and adaptable. The prototypes have been workshoped with school pupils, community access forums and local authority groups. For example the first prototype was significantly improved after workshops at Lindon Lodge, a specialist sensory and physical college for blind pupils between the ages of 3 and 19. Mark 2 of the model was workshoped with groups of disabled people in four London boroughs: Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Croydon and Tower Hamlets. Feedback from these test-drives have enabled the model to be refined and improved to its current form. Feedback from the London boroughs workshops also showed that everybody taking part thought that the exercise had increased their knowledge of planning and 88 per cent felt they had achieved new skills and knowledge which would 'enable them to take part in consultations on planning applications and planning policies'.

An additional outcome from the workshops was that various third parties,

✓ Prototype 1 school workshop 2009

✓✓ Production model 2011

✓ Production model city scape 2011

✓✓ Prototype 2 community workshop 2010

✓✓✓ Access model Entering a building 2011

including local authority planning officers increased their understanding of the needs of disabled people in relation to the built environment and consultation processes.

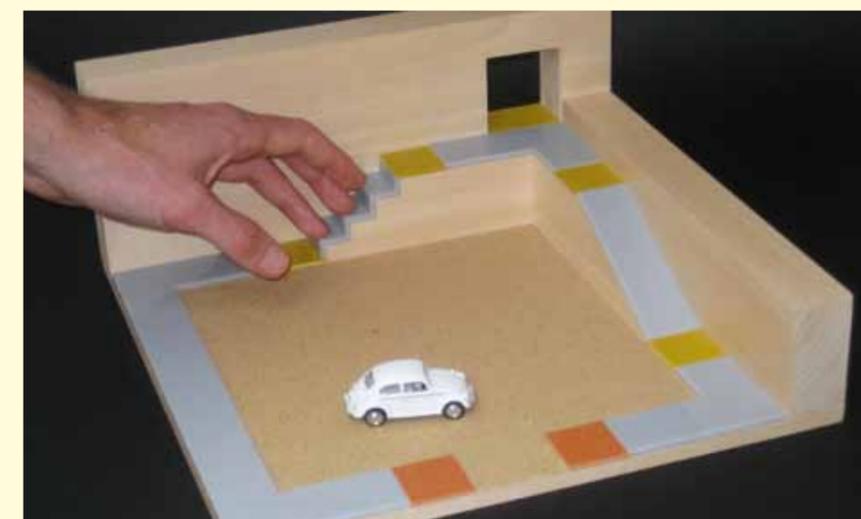
In order to understand the model and how it works, participants in workshops benefit from a one-to-one induction. Therefore more trained facilitators will be needed in the future. A full report called *Shaping Places* can be seen at www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk on the publications page

The final model has recently been manufactured in a format that can be mass-produced. In the future, Planning Aid for London will be running a series of London-based workshops of various kinds. The model workshops will assist people to gain an understanding of land-use planning processes, the needs of people with physical disabilities when negotiating the built environment, and consultations for development and regeneration affecting their local area. Our aim is to be able to share this model and workshop structure and as well as to have others produced, so that they can be used all over the country.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following are the lessons we learned:

- The model is very versatile but guidance is required on how to use it
- We have acquired an intimate understanding of how to make workshops for disabled people accessible
- The workshops were effective in increasing participants' understanding of planning and development, and confidence to participate in decision-making
- The workshops provided valuable links between planning officers and disabled people. These links should be increased and enhanced
- The programme generated six key recommendations for planning policy and practice ●



URBAN DESIGN ACADEMY

North East Derbyshire District Council outlines their initiative to promote design excellence



Our Urban Design Academy (UDA) shows how by thinking big, an ambitious district council can take a transformational role in promoting leading-edge design. Furthermore, the collaborative partnership has delivered impressive outcomes on a shoestring budget from the council of less than £10,000.

CHALLENGING OLD PERCEPTIONS

Up to 2005, the council didn't see itself as lead agency on development, acting in a reactive rather than proactive way. This position changed when work on the regeneration of one of our main town centres, Clay Cross, picked up pace, and the overarching development document – the *Clay Cross Regeneration Framework* – took shape in 2006.

In putting together the Framework, the council knew that selecting an urban design professional and architects who could challenge old perceptions and expectations was key. We engaged Maxim Urban Design and Evans Vettorri Architects – the start of a long-standing collaboration with both in support of the Academy. Right from the beginning, Graham Marshall of Maxim Urban Design, made an invaluable contribution, providing ongoing and relentless advice and support across all elements of the Academy's work.

PLACING DESIGN EXCELLENCE AT THE CORPORATE HEART

The Urban Design Academy was born out of this process. The initial idea was

to focus on design within Clay Cross, but it evolved to become an initiative to promote design excellence district-wide. Developers GMI Rovinion – the company delivering the Clay Cross town centre regeneration – also threw their weight behind the initiative. Not only have they promoted the UDA, but they also contributed to the development of the Academy's Creative Practice module through consultant Pell Frischman, whose staff delivered a lecture on transport and highways infrastructure.

From a position of no internal urban design expertise, no Building for Life (BfL) assessors and limited design guidance and policy for developments, we implemented a massive cultural change within the council – placing design excellence at the heart of corporate objectives and activity. Supported by private sector developers, local urban design companies, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Chesterfield College, we secured overwhelming support from partners – all impressed with the foresight, ambition and enthusiasm of a small council to advance the design agenda.

The HCA provided invaluable support through an initial grant of £5,000 for a new accredited learning programme. Meanwhile the College was open to the idea and embraced the challenge with enthusiasm. With Maxim Urban Design as professionals, the college staff as educators and the council clear on its staff training needs, the three organisations

collectively put together the Creative Practice module. The HCA made further contributions to the Academy, with contributions from Rob Cowan at the best practice event and also on the Creative Practice module.

FROM ASPIRATION TO REALITY

The Urban Design Academy was launched in March 2010, with guest speaker Derek Latham, Chair of OPUN, the Architecture Centre of the East Midlands. Around 50 guests attended from private, public and voluntary sectors. Latham's has continued to lend expertise to the Academy, delivering the first lecture of the Creative Practice module, plus advice and information for coursework.

Critical to the success of the Academy has been the role of the council's elected members who have taken up the role of Design Champions with huge enthusiasm.

SEEING RESULTS

Some of the impressive results of the UDA are:

- Skills audit for councillors and officers, using the *Capacity Check* programme
- Nine council staff accredited as BfL assessors across three disciplines
- A BfL briefing for all councillors
- Adopted a policy that all housing schemes, above 10 homes, must reach a score of BfL 14 to secure planning approval
- Established the Urban Design Best Practice Group to oversee the design quality of all major development schemes. It includes Chief Executive, Council Leader and Deputy Leader, Planning Committee Chair and staff from all levels/teams
- Delivered a new accredited foundation degree module for 13 staff. Alongside those already mentioned other contributors include Andy Beard, Justine Leach and a range of HCA and Chesterfield College staff
- Organised with the HCA an Urban Design Best Practice event in March 2011 for district councils with over 60 representatives attending
- HCA contributed £5,000 to the Academy and provided four free places on the BURA regeneration training programme
- A Design Guide for Silkston development site
- One member of staff is undertaking a

✓ The Best Practice Event, March 2011 (L-R) Cllr Graham Baxter MBE, Leader of the Council, Cllr Betty Hill, Deputy Leader, Rob Cowan, Urban Design Skills and John Erskine HCA

Masters in Urban Design to develop and retain in house expertise

We are also working with other local authorities to drive up design standards. Having secured external funding for a Housing Market Area Development Guide, Chesterfield Bolsover and North East Derbyshire councils are working collaboratively to produce a design guide to set standards across the sub-region.

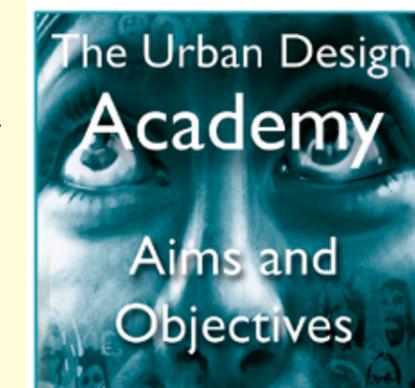
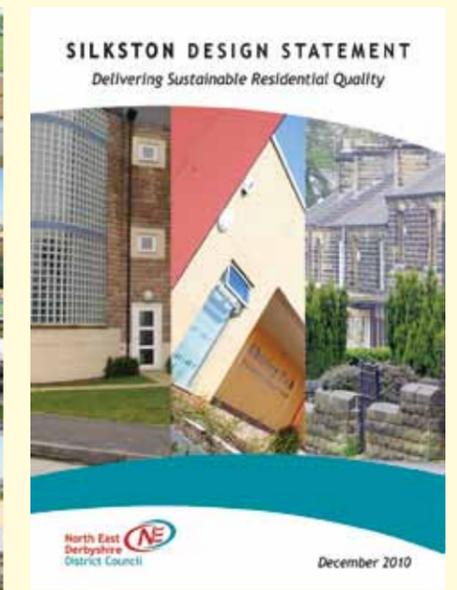
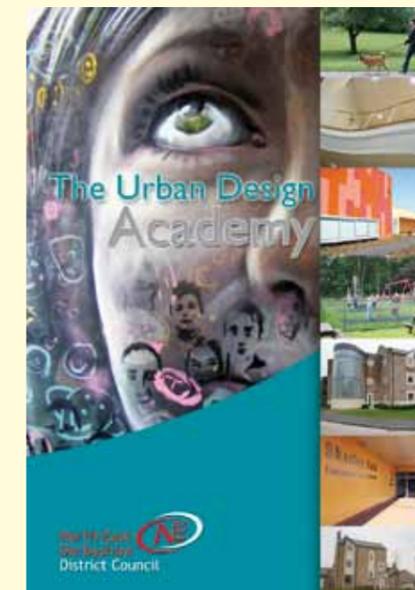
This approach of reacting to and challenging poor design, and the confidence this has instilled in both staff and elected members, is one of the unintended outcomes of the Academy. Richard Guise of Context 4D was engaged to produce the graphics for the Development Guide, and has also contributed to the Creative Practice Module.

LESSONS LEARNED - GOOD AND BAD

- You can never be too ambitious: a small district council thinking big won over the support of individuals and businesses who wanted to help make our vision become reality. The enthusiasm and commitment of our Leader and Deputy Leader has been second to none and a major contribution to our success
- You can never be too cheeky in what you ask for: our staff have learned to 'blag' big time! Much of our success has been thanks to the expertise and resources we levered in, providing resources way beyond our budget
- You can never network enough: tell people once, twice and then again, again, and again! Taking every opportunity to raise the profile of the Urban Design Academy and its ambitions pulled in resources and made it a sustainable resource

THE FUTURE

It is difficult to think of anything we would or could have done differently as it has been such a positive experience; the challenge is where do we go from here? We are not going to hang up our boots yet! There are plans for an Academy Board, a local design review panel, and also to roll out the accredited training programme, and that's just for starters! ●

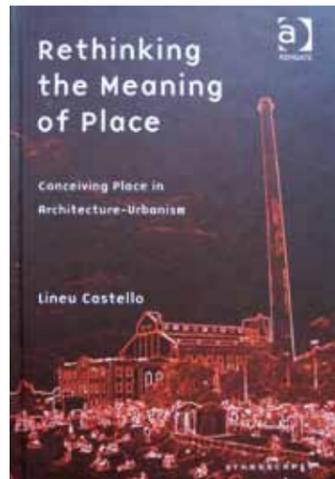


Aim

To provide elected members and staff with the understanding and knowledge to be able to passionately promote design excellence for North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC).

Objectives

1. To ensure that the NEDDC policy of design excellence is supported and promoted by the council's staff and members.
2. To provide an accredited learning programme for professionals focussing on best practice for urban and landscape design.
3. To develop the capacity of members to engage with the regeneration process and champion the cause of good urban design
4. To identify officer and member 'Design Champions' across services and associated with major developments.
5. To work in partnership with agencies to develop the professional skills and understanding of NEDDC staff and members around design excellence.



Rethinking the Meaning of Place

Lineu Castello, Ashgate, 2010, £65.00, ISBN 978 0 75467 814 4

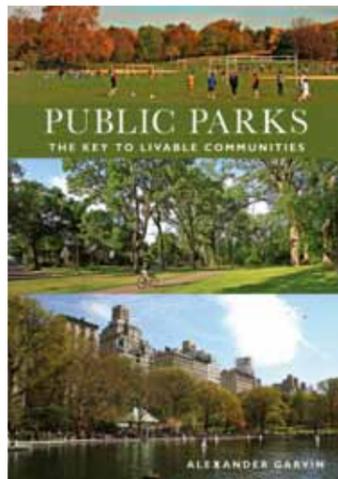
What distinguishes this book from others reviewed in *Urban Design* is its perspective from the other end of the kaleidoscope. Lineu Castello is a Brazilian architect and urbanist. His book engages the developing world into a dialogue with urban theories elaborated in the developed world.

The book consists of two parts, a theoretical discussion of place and examples of contemporary place-making. The first conceptualises the notion of place in modernism and postmodernism by studying its history, typology, role in urbanity and design, its representation and role as model of reproduction.

He reviews the changing understanding of urbanism from Rem Koolhaas's 'project for what used to be the city', to Cedric Price's egg metaphors, François Ascher's metapolis, Saskia Sassen's global city, Arjen Mulder's Trans-Urbanism, and others. He connects these findings related to new social practices and innovation in information technology to New Urbanism and applications in Latin America. This review alone is worth the book, as it is scholarly and comprehensive.

Castello's personal immersion into the contemporary world of places occurs through his extensive travels and his design experience. He focuses on what he calls the 'places of cloning' generated by place-making and place marketing. For him, snow slopes in Dubai, urban artificial beaches, Disneyland and other make-believe fun palaces, including shopping malls and airports are all inducing stimulated perception.

He combines post-modern 'starchitect' designed illusions with other paths to cultural memory of the city, such as integrating urban conservation into commodification of space, often used as a city marketing ploy. Such variations of place cloning are often successful in economic and cultural terms. Eduardo Rojas is promoting this approach in Latin America as it generates positive



externalities and propels rehabilitation into a self-sustained stage.

Castello uses his intimate knowledge of Brazilian towns to illustrate his conceptual models of contemporary place by expressing his professional concerns as a designer 'within the pragmatism of constructing and marketing of places of cloning'. In his conclusion, he reviews the theoretical and practical controversies he has raised while defending the approach to cloned places, claiming that it creates spaces where people want to be. He affirms that the global profile of today's places are reflected in local practices, fostered by the rapid diffusion of technological progress. He defends the privatisation of the public realm which according to him is producing de facto public spaces, justified by the existential pattern of current society. Even gentrification is contributing to the reactivation of places as public spaces, and their broad variety underpins the theory of place.

In practice, when new places are based on locations endowed with significant generative factors such as cloned places are capable of stimulating the perception of urbanity by the population. Castello concludes that architect-urbanists, or urban designers can learn useful lessons from the study of places of cloning. He is confident that if urban designers can produce images of urbanity capable of stimulating people they will turn spaces into places.

● Judith Ryser

Public Parks: the key to livable communities

Alexander Garvin, W. W. Norton, 2010, \$65.00, ISBN 978 0 39373 279 5

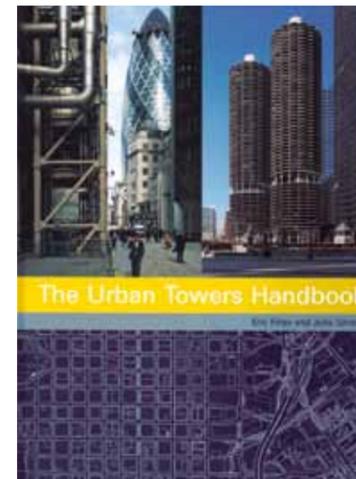
In the UK at least, the importance of public urban parks – for health, for wellbeing, for ecology, for clean air, for property values and for lots of other reasons – has been well made for us by the late lamented CABI Space in its research and many publications. Alexander Garvin sets out to demonstrate the same case. The task is a no-brainer but in its

pursuit Garvin gives us an attractive, useful and enjoyable assembly of history, analysis and case studies. It's an American book, and the focus is on US parks, but with appropriate credit given to British and European precedents. New York's Central Park, which he has used from toddlerhood to old age, recurs throughout the book as Garvin's classic demonstration of virtuous and enlightened park design, and Frederick Law Olmsted is his hero. I knew that Central Park was inserted into the Commissioners' grid before the area was built up. Garvin tells us that in fact when the park was designed, New York was still three and a half miles away to the south. What amazing foresight and confidence!

Public Parks is well illustrated by plans and photographs of parks in colour, many of the pictures cropped into page-wide super-landscape format. It is beautifully designed and produced. The emphasis is on the design quality and visitor-experience of parks, but they are supported by plenty of facts and figures too. Hard to believe it, but parks apparently constitute 26 per cent of New York's area, more than in any other big city. Nonetheless, if Manhattan's residents were to be provided with parks at the normative ratio of 4ha per 1000 population, the parks would cover more than the area of Manhattan. So there wouldn't be any residents. I am still trying to puzzle this one out.

Public Parks doesn't supersede Alan Tate's 2004 *Great City Parks*, because its purpose and structure is different, but it is complementary to it. Like Tate, Alexander Garvin has written a hymn in praise of the public park, and his tone is relentlessly positive. The story is all good news. There is a little, but not much, devoted to the darker side of parks. The familiar story of the decline and renewal of New York's Bryant Park is included, but it lacks the deeper cultural and sociological perspective that Rosalyn Deutsche brought to the similar story of Union Square Park in her 1996 *Evictions*. Garvin's book is up to date, and the High Line, with its industrial/naturalistic landscape setting for strolling 9m above Manhattan's lower west side, features as a new addition to the park typology

● Joe Holyoak



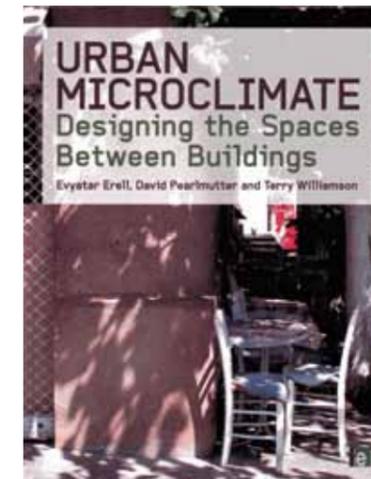
The Urban Towers Handbook

Eric Firley and Julie Gimbal, Wiley, 2011, £50.00, ISBN 978 0 470 68474 0

The authors' aim is to produce a tool that relies on its graphical qualities, which this compendious and well-produced book achieves through excellent photos, aerials and plans. The subject is the tower, the most extrovert and contentious of building types, the rock star of the building world. The authors stress that towers must be viewed within the context of the urban fabric and not just their obvious impact on the city skyline.

The book is divided into three sections. Section A is the main part with case studies covering a broad geographic and stylistic sweep of towers, from the Soviet realism of Moscow University tower to the high-tech pinnacle of London's Gherkin. The 52 case studies are sub-divided into three types of urban towers: Solitaires, Clusters and Vertical Cities. Anyone working on major interventions involving towers would do well to study these, particularly when considering the relationship of buildings to the ground and the public realm, often the Achilles heel of the high-rise. Section B assembles the essential regulations covering zoning, height limits, urban skylines, protected view corridors and street set-backs for seven world cities: London, Frankfurt, Vienna, New York, Hong Kong, Singapore and Paris. A sequel could usefully include Beijing, Shanghai, Mumbai and Delhi as being the current development hot spots.

Section C covering the environmental implications of towers, asks 'Are Towers sustainable?' The answer appears to be: 'it depends how you measure sustainability'! By the usual LEED/BREAM/HQE assessments, towers will inevitably consume more energy than low-rise buildings and being more complex, will cost more to build and service, and have higher embodied energy costs. The key benefits are optimising use of land and making urban transportation more efficient. The book does not propose a system or formula to



reconcile these opposing aspects of sustainability but it does a thorough job of raising the key issues.

The graphics have been given a lot of attention. Photos are of consistently good quality, useful context plans are at a comparable scale of 1/2500, a third of projects include detailed floor plans (why not all?) and the invaluable comparative table of all projects gives stats and plot ratios. More explanatory diagrams would have been helpful and I found the small font size and postage-stamp sized location plans taxing. It is understandably difficult to satisfy all readers without the book growing way beyond its 264 pages, but even at £50 there is a lot of valuable information for the money.

● Malcolm Moor

Urban Microclimate - Designing the Spaces Between Buildings

Evyatar Erell, David Pearlmutter and Terry Williamson, Earthscan, 2011, £70.00, ISBN 978 1 84407 467 9

Much more has been written about urban design's imponderable social, cultural, psychological and economic aspects than about the physical dimension that can be measured and put to scientific test. This book aims to provide a summary of the science-basis of outdoor design. It addresses an ancient type of climate change, in which the scale, density, morphology and typology of a built environment create a microclimate distinct from that of the surrounding landscape. Traditional cultures got this understanding by trial, error and custom. Modernism tried but failed to put it on a scientific basis, baffled by the difficulties of meteorological observation and the three-dimensional complexity of the physics. Recent advances in observation and modelling have brought the science of urban climatology to a fresh level of utility: architect-urbanists Erell, Pearlmutter and

Williamson want to share the good news.

The book begins by establishing the scales of analysis, from the canyon street to the entire urban heat island: height-to-width ratios and sky-view factors provide geometrical parameters. Add solar radiation at various wave-lengths, the heat produced by anthropogenic activity, plus that stored in the urban fabric, minus the energy that becomes latent through evaporation or is used in organic evapotranspiration - the climatic implications of canyon geometry, vegetation and surface porosity are clearly explained. Then add the complex patterns of airflow as regional winds are disrupted and perturbed by the 'roughness layer' of buildings, losing power and breaking into eddies, vortices, and countercurrents; after pages of formulae, readers might wish for less technicality and more on how modelling software takes the strain. Finally add humans with their physiological requirements and comfort perceptions, again expressed at the level of basic science.

Thermal preference analysis marks the transition to the second half of the book, where microclimatology provides a rationale for design. The authors are primarily interested in the problems of hot dry environments, with little discussion of rainfall or tropical humidity, and nothing on snow, ice or driving winds. Still, their sections on air quality, vegetation and street canyon design are of general interest, and so is the account of physical and numerical urban climate models. We end with case studies of a residential neighbourhood in the Negev desert, and (tackling a hot-humid environment with shade canopies, wind-pipes and water-sprinklers) the Clarke Quay riverside festival village in Singapore.

This book attempts translation in a field where scientists tend to speak only to each other. It could have ranged more widely and gone further to meet the needs of the non-scientific reader. Still, it's a valuable start.

● Michael Hebbert

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

● Sebastian Loew, architect and planner, writer and consultant

● Tim Hagyard, Planning Team Manager, East Herts Council

● Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer

● Malcolm Moor, architect and independent consultant in urban design; co-editor of Urban Design Futures

● Paul Reynolds is a landscape architect and principal urban designer working for Atkins plc

● Judith Ryser is a researcher and urban affairs consultant to Fundacion Metropoli, Madrid

● Barry Sellers, Principal Planner, Wandsworth Council

● Louise Thomas, independent urban designer

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PRACTICE INDEX

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

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Above all, landscape

The Great Western Railway line between Birmingham and London shoulders its way through Digbeth on a big blue brick viaduct. Branching off it is the Duddeston Viaduct, an historical curiosity. It is not only unfinished, but never used – a train has never run along it. Its history is confused, and there are contradictory accounts of how and why the viaduct was built. One version: it was built in the 1840s for the Birmingham and Oxford Junction Railway, as a result of a deal done with the London and North Western Railway to share its Birmingham terminus at Curzon Street. But the viaduct never reached there, as LNWR meanwhile closed Curzon Street, and bypassed the station to lead to a new city centre station at New Street. The Duddeston Viaduct met the new line at a right angle, and stopped dead.

What to do with the viaduct has for 30 years been a personal project for me. In 1979 I made a design for building student housing and pocket parks on top, reached by staircases and lifts, and threaded together by walkways. It was a winner in the 1980 *Art into Landscape 3* design competition organised by the Arts Council (a wonderful and populist annual event, which sadly ran for only three

years). Since then, the idea of the viaduct's reanimation has occasionally surfaced, and as a result it is now included in the Big City Plan as a proposed linear park.

The 160 year old structure has *persisted* – industry has burrowed into its arches, a jungle of native flora grows on top, and it performs something of the function of a Lynchian *edge* as it articulates the industrial quarter it marches through. Now a colleague has bought it on a 999 year lease. Work that out – it is his until the year 3008. His intentions towards the viaduct are rather unspecific – well, there is plenty of time to decide. To help him, earlier this year I ran a design project with four students from the Birmingham MA Urban Design course, setting them the task of proposing a future for the viaduct which makes it an attractive public asset. They proposed housing, sculpture parks, cinemas, studios, but above all (literally), space for people to wander through a landscape and enjoy extensive views over the rooftops.

There are three wonderful precedents which we discussed. In Paris there is the park of Viaduc Daumesnil (La Promenade Plantée) near the Bastille. More recently in New York there is the celebrated High Line, whose second phase opened in June 2011. And near Dumfries there is Charles Jencks' and Maggie Keswick's *Garden of Scottish Worthies*, on the disused railway viaduct which runs through their garden.

The viaduct does not require to be transformed all at once. An initial intervention could open up a small part of it – we have an idea for using it for a film festival next year. This would establish the idea of a new public space, a new destination, one with a unique spatial relationship with the city, which could grow and be established incrementally. The Viaduc Daumesnil and the High Line pass between taller buildings, and one can stroll along and enjoy peering into people's second-floor windows. The scale of buildings in Digbeth is smaller, and from the top of the viaduct views are largely uninterrupted. 1960s planners' fantasies of high-level pedestrian walkways proved to be thoroughly impractical and unpleasant (the fragment built in Bristol comes to mind). But pedestrians replacing railway trains (even if only trains that never existed) on top of robust 19th century engineering, and strolling through gardens and public art, surveying the distant horizon, is an idea both practical and delightful.

● Joe Holyoak

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