

151 URBAN DESIGN

Summer 2019
Urban Design Group Journal
ISSN 1750 712X

**POLITICIANS AND
URBAN DESIGN**



**URBAN
DESIGN
GROUP**



Extinction
Rebellion
March,
London,
March 2019

SPRING AT THE UDG

A week is a long time in politics they say; Brexit may have been put on hold for a few months but we now face the uncertainty of a Tory leadership campaign and a new PM. We can but hope that soon politicians will address other pressing domestic issues, including urban design... segue into this issue of the journal – Politicians and Urban Design.

Much of what we have heard from politicians about urban design over recent years has been about house building and numbers, which if we are not careful can get translated into low density car-dependent housing estates. I suggest politicians should instead be talking about ‘town building’ or ‘neighbourhood building’, that is places with houses, apartments, parks, schools, workplaces and most importantly, life. Perhaps those of us striving for better cities, towns and villages could take a cue from Extinction Rebellion’s bold stance and persuade politicians that poor urban design, like climate change, is an issue that requires urgent action.

The first step might be to produce a national plan for urban design, which would add a spatial dimension to the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). Spatial plans are utilised in other countries, such as Holland and Ireland, and are able to link up strategies for housing with those for

public transport, open spaces, schools and workplaces. This would help in terms of placemaking but also in terms of investment and certainty.

A UDG SNAPSHOT OF THE LAST THREE MONTHS

In March we had the National Urban Design Group Awards, where we were able to celebrate the best in urban design across the country in an interesting new venue for us in Shoreditch (see p.6). The Practice Project Award and the Public Sector Award shortlist all showed innovative approaches to town and neighbourhood building. Congratulations to all the winners and to John Thompson who won the Lifetime Achievement Award; check out our new UDG YouTube channel in collaboration with UrbanNous, for shortlisted project videos and speeches.

In February we had standing room only at our Future High Streets event, a new format for us with 18 quick fire presentations aimed at helping local authorities and communities to create successful bids for the £675 million fund (see p.3). Other successful events included a riveting presentation on the UDG’s trip to China and a joint event with JTP on best practice charrettes. (see p.3)

The UDG has also been helping shape policy through attending and contributing to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government ‘Better Design for Better Places’ conference in Birmingham. We also contributed to an event organised by the Cabinet Office looking at a potential update to *Manual for Streets*, where we suggested that the first move might be enforcing a

better take-up of the principles in the existing document.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Over the rest of the year we are continuing our two campaigns. The first, led by Roger Evans, encourages local authorities to use the UDG’s experts to review their draft local plans and site allocations so as to identify the best places for new development, avoiding unsustainable locations. We invite local authorities to get in touch with the UDG for more information via the email address below. The second campaign is Making People-Friendly Places, which is being run with a number of other organisations.

It celebrates Francis Tibbalds’ book *Making People-Friendly Towns* with a campaign to put people back into the heart of planning, design and engineering. Please check out the website www.peoplefriendlyplaces.org. On Making People-Friendly Places, our next major event will be the Urban Design Conference on 26–28 September in Birmingham. Our plan is to tackle many of the issues raised in Francis Tibbalds’ book. We would love to hear from anyone interested in presenting or attending.

At the time of writing, upcoming events include our usual varied range of talks, visits and hands-on sessions. Topics include: designing a safer urban environment for children; a Manual for Towns and Cities; main streets and boulevards; and a ‘big draw’, going out and sketching the urban environment. We also have potential urban design days out to Hackney Wick and Margate. Work on tidying up our website continues, as does our increased presence on Twitter and hopefully the launch of an UDG Instagram presence later in the year.

GET INVOLVED

Recalling our three objectives, to be relevant, to be cutting edge, and to be fun, if you have an idea for an urban design event, or would like to get more involved, please do get in contact with us at administration@udg.co.uk ●

Leo Hammond, Chair of the Urban Design Group and Associate Director at Lambert Smith Hampton

DIARY OF EVENTS

Throughout 2019 the UDG will be marking the 25th Anniversary of the publication of Francis Tibbalds’ book with a series of events. If you would like to run your own Making People Friendly Places event – please contact administration@udg.org.uk. Always check the UDG website www.udg.org.uk for the latest events and details of venues.

Videos of past UDG events can be viewed on UrbanNous: www.urbannous.org.uk

22 JULY

Great Bridges of England
The Gallery, London

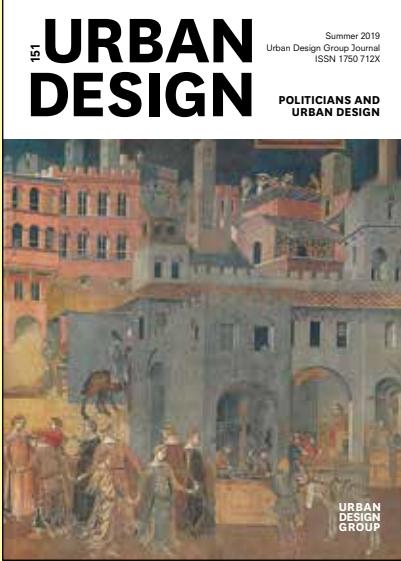
17 SEPTEMBER

Parking Conference
The Gallery, London
Afternoon conference reviewing the design and management of urban areas and the provision of parking, the economics and

opportunities for better use of the land, and the potential that higher development densities and better facilities for walking, cycling and public transport could have in reducing the need for car ownership and use.

26–28 SEPTEMBER 2019

The National Urban Design Conference
Making People Friendly Places
Millennium Point, Birmingham
plus conference fringe events



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Printing Henry Ling Ltd
© Urban Design Group ISSN 1750 712X

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This issue has been kindly sponsored by
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Ambrogio Lorenzetti

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Good Government

In what was the council chamber of Siena's town hall in 1338, Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted a series of frescoes entitled *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government*. One of them, the *Effects of Good Government in the City* vividly represents what this issue's topic is about: good governance means a safe city where people can dance in the streets overlooked from the surrounding buildings, a lively economy with numerous trades, a pedestrian environment, and a dense harmonic but varied architecture. Maybe a copy of this fresco should be on the walls of every town hall in the country to show elected representatives what to aim for.

We live in very different times and political priorities do not include maidens dancing in the streets, indeed today they include many cars instead of children playing. Unfortunately, it is likely that very few politicians even realise that urban design is one of the contributors to good government or can help resolve, at least in part, the greatest threat to the world that is climate change.

Tim Hagyard's collection of articles shows the gap between ambitions and achievements, and between awareness and reality, and gives some ideas about where the solutions could come from. It is not all gloom and doom but a greater concern for and involvement in urban design requires leadership, resources and a cultural shift which may not exist at the moment.

Politicians in central and local government are too busy with other matters that they think have higher priorities, and the media discourage them to think otherwise. In our last issue, Louise Thomas wondered whether by now we would have left the European Union and yet we have just voted on European Parliament elections. The Brexit catastrophe is paralysing government and postponing most other decision making.

Meanwhile the housing deficit continues to grow and the quality of what is being built is not improving. Furthermore, in order to placate some of the NIMBYs, beauty (obviously not defined) has been reintroduced in official language, as if all problems come from aesthetics.

Coincidentally a number of other articles and contributions in this issue are also relevant to the debate on quality of the built environment and leadership: Ivana Sirovica reports on her research on how people use urban green spaces; Richard Cole questions the accepted views on conservation when confronted with environmental concerns. Reports on events and books reviewed repeatedly allude to quality and the role of governments in improving it. Finally the UDG study tour to Nantes and St. Nazaire in late April showed how it is possible to regenerate cities through collaborative government initiatives based on a deep understanding of the character of place.

Placemaking, healthy neighbourhoods, and a safe and resilient environment don't happen by accident. Governments have a duty to ensure that they do. ●

Sebastian Loew, architect and planner, writer and consultant



The Future High Street Fund, Inspiration for Success

28 February 2019, The Gallery, London

The subject of this afternoon event must have struck a particular nerve in the urban design community, as the Gallery was packed with colleagues eager to hear the latest advice on solving the problems of the high street. The seminar was organised as a kind of PechaKucha with 18 speakers given about 8 minutes each to do their presentations. This made for a very lively and diverse three hours even though the suggestions offered, not surprisingly, tended to repeat themselves.

First on the list was the need to know the place: research its history, observe how the high street and its surroundings were used, consultation with shopkeepers and locals, were some of the methods suggested by several speakers. From this should emerge what is special about the place, 'somewhere, not anywhere' as Ivo Barros of Metropolitan

Workshop stated, or the place's DNA as other speakers said. The analysis should also reveal whether locals value the place, or more specifically what sectors of the local community rely on the high street.

More varied approaches were suggested to revitalise high streets. Most speakers mentioned improvements to the public realm, including full or partial pedestrianisation, lighting, way-finding signage, landscaping, street furniture, greening, etc. David Rudlin of URBED was the one dissenting voice as he thought the public realm improvements were not so important for the success of a high street. For him, what counted most of all was the catchment population that could be attracted by the variety and diversity of the retail offer, which should include independent shops and cafes. High streets should not be seen as open shopping centres with no roof, but as community assets. Clive Fletcher of Historic England added that independent shops were a brand in themselves that could attract customers, precisely because they were not international brands.

Other solutions included introducing different uses to high streets, primarily residential but also cultural, community facilities and co-working spaces. Some speakers emphasised that these had to have



some connection to the place, so that the local population could relate to them.

Widening the above, it was suggested that the public spaces should be used imaginatively and for diverse activities, starting with markets and extending to events of various kinds that would attract a wider population. Attention to architectural details and design quality were also elements mentioned as helping to reinforce a place's identity.

Finally the importance of leadership and management were emphasised to ensure that the renewal of high streets would be sustainable. This event was certainly stimulating but regrettably no time was allowed for debate between speakers and the obviously eager audience. ●

Sebastian Loew



Charrettes — Best Practice for 21st Century Placemaking

local development. Using mapping and visual communication stimulates co-creation as an iterative process in the context of uncertainty. Communal learning, prototyping and designing create lasting societal value and the longevity of such projects.

where development was initially resisted. He was proud to note that the development which is nearing completion, visibly originated from the outcome of a charrette. This demonstrates the long-term benefit of charrettes as they can lead to lasting social, economic and environmental benefits.

Lynne Ceeney, though not a design professional, conveyed thought provoking lessons from her vast experience as facilitator. She put genuine engagement with local people first as means to helping them to help themselves, gaining their trust and assisting in diverse opinions being heard and respected. She was realistic about consensus building and found that raising awareness of others' needs and aspirations was a solid ground for compromise. The unheard among the community was an issue to overcome. Charrettes were vehicles to explore problems, propose options and refine them after communal selection.

The short question and answer session evoked key issues about the co-design process and its direction of travel, demonstrating symmetry of knowledge among all present. A main point was the need for better soft skills training for design professionals so that their projects can genuinely benefit from the local knowledge of communities for which they will shape future places.

Nick Taylor, based on his experience in Scarborough, where collaborative placemaking managed to turn around urban decline, stressed the importance of the venue of co-design, as well as the need to stimulate the process over a longer period of time to keep the momentum going and key stakeholders involved. The main factors of successful co-creation were energy, kindness, honesty, generosity and respect for diverse cultures rather than design skills.

Informal mingling after the event confirmed the importance of post-event engagement. What remains a challenge is how to build up an open access collective memory of this shared tacit knowledge. ●

Judith Ryser, researcher, journalist, writer and urban affairs consultant to Fundacion Metropoli, Madrid

Charrettes — Best Practice for 21st Century Placemaking

6 March 2019, JTP offices, The Rum Warehouse, London

This event was chaired by JTP partner, Charles Campion. Speakers represented key stakeholder positions, encompassing academic, institutional, business and political interests.

With his contagious enthusiasm Husam Al Waer summed up research findings into the facilitation of participatory placemaking, supported by the Scottish government. The key messages focussed on the community design process which has to start early with the brief; requires engagement throughout the development with clear stakeholder responsibilities; is clearly benefiting from facilitation; and has to be iterative and include after-care post-development and feedback.

Tom Perry, Head of Cities programme of the Design Council referred back to his co-design work with the Prince's Foundation. For him collaborative placemaking consists of discovering, defining, developing before designing. The collaborative process predates facilitation intervention and requires interaction with local people already involved in

local development. Using mapping and visual communication stimulates co-creation as an iterative process in the context of uncertainty. Communal learning, prototyping and designing create lasting societal value and the longevity of such projects.

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Kevin Collins gave his view as a local councillor who steered through the expansion of villages in a semi-rural situation,

IMAGE: JTP



1 Not Abbey Road,
but a Manchester
version of it with
barefoot Brian Deegan

Crossing the Street, London Living Streets and UDG conference

12 March 2019, The Gallery, London,

This half day conference was one of the current series jointly organised by London Living Streets and the UDG (see *UD150* for the report on Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, the first of the series).

A full Gallery was reminded by Dick Mullis that Living Streets' objectives were to filter out extraneous traffic, reduce traffic speeds and improve pedestrian crossings, the subject of this session. He introduced Mike Clerk from Wandsworth Living Streets who had been responsible for conceiving and managing a questionnaire-based survey of users of signalised crossings, *The Pedestrian Experience*. As a campaigner rather than a design professional, he outlined his concerns. Streets were seen as a means of getting to places and in the past, there had been direct negotiations between pedestrians and other road users. This had been lost as enclosed and insulated cars prevented communication. The result was an increasing use of signals and the 'vehicularisation' of pedestrians. To the frustration of traffic engineers, people refuse to behave like vehicles. From observation, people will begin to take risks at crossings after waiting 30 seconds. A personal risk assessment is made, and between 60 and 80 per cent of pedestrians will cross on a red signal. For the first risk-taker this is often satisfactory, but people will follow a lead, and a combination of factors puts later red-crossers and the less able at risk. 30 per cent of pedestrian accidents happen at crossings. To get traffic light timings changed, hard data was needed. This prompted Clerk to develop a questionnaire-based survey. Volunteers were found and 45 crossings, including 12 mid-link

ones throughout the TfL area were identified and examined, before and after timing changes. 3,947 crossing pedestrians were interviewed. Reductions of up to 44 seconds in waiting times were introduced and a follow-up survey identified a significant increase in user satisfaction. Even 'bad' crossings were valued, possibly as a reaction to a fear that surveys were a precursor to closure. Crossing times were also an important measure of satisfaction and longer crossing times were needed. It was noted that timings were shortened only, '...as far as the engineers were able...'. In other words, they would not compromise vehicular timings beyond current policy limits. Those policies need to be questioned and Clerk's data could be of help.

Next, Andy Rogers from TfL's signal change team focussed on pedestrians and on buses. Data on bus usage was available but there was little on the actual number of pedestrian movements within London. It was possible to extend the time for buses to pass through traffic lights and to introduce a smoother flow through signals for buses and possibly for cyclists. Even these limited measures could be seen as reducing waiting time for non-car users throughout London, saving as much as 2,503 hours per day. A more significant development had been the Green Man Authority approach. This prioritises the pedestrian push button request and sets pedestrian crossings to show a Green Man until there is vehicular demand. It was hoped that this would reduce the number of 'illegal crossings'. The introduction of tactile and audible warnings was being explored.

Brenda Puech from London Living Streets introduced their draft *Good Design Principles for Pedestrians at Junctions and Crossings in Greater London*. These had been prepared in response to the Mayor of London's Safer Junctions programme and would form the basis of the Living Streets response to consultation on the 73 junctions identified for improvement. Puech expressed particular concern about authorities lecturing rather than facilitating. She identified a

particular dislike of staggered crossings and the need for junction radii to be tightened. Crossing times needed to be longer and crossing pathways wider, to avoid clashing phalanxes of crossers. There should be a pedestrian only phase and crossings should be raised at all crossings to allow the favoured diagonal crossing. Where possible, crossing points should be narrowed and signalised where older people crossed. Living Streets also favoured the removal of guardrails and roundabouts, the replacement of one-way gyratory systems and give-way lines being placed to the rear of footways. Where possible cycles should be segregated at junctions. The draft principles can be viewed via londonlivingstreets.com/contact/ and Puech invited the audience to send comments.

In an addition to the programme, Rick Andrews introduced proposals for improving pedestrian and cycle safety at cross roads and T junctions. These essentially involved additional ahead and turning phases giving three options for turns at T junctions and four at cross roads. Rick's proposals are best viewed as diagrams on www.livingstreets.org.uk.

The final speaker was Brian Deegan from Urban Movement presenting his on-going work in Manchester. In a dynamic presentation Deegan revealed three discoveries; paint, the zebra crossing and that Britons are expected to wait longer at crossings than other nations. In Manchester waiting times are up to 2 minutes 30 seconds, while in Paris the average is 24 seconds.

Inexplicably throughout the world the zebra crossing was exploited more extensively than in the UK where it had been first introduced. Zebra crossings were the only area of the highway where the pedestrian had authority. In Manchester the experimental use of unsigned zebra crossings at side-road junctions had a marked effect on drivers' behaviour. They simply gave way. Generally, zebra crossings were well understood and accepted. They were part of highway culture. All the elaboration of signs and signals was unnecessary. Painted zebras reinforced the oft-ignored Highway Code rule that drivers when turning from the main highway should give way to pedestrians crossing. There were problems with bus bypasses and with cyclists, who often failed to give way.

From the audience, concerns were expressed by blind and partially sighted users. Deegan was of the view that technically these problems could be resolved. It was usual that 'the thing we cannot do has been done'. He concluded by suggesting that 'we should be a little more like the rest of the world'.

A short discussion session involving all five speakers focussed largely on the problems of the less able and it was clear that more work needs to be done in this area. ●

Richard Cole, architect and planner

Creating Neighbourhoods, not Housing Estates

8 May 2019, JTP offices,
The Rum Warehouse, London

This collaborative event was introduced by Noha Nasser of MELA Social Enterprise and followed a community envisioning meeting which she had organised in February. The objective of that meeting was to design a liveable neighbourhood, liveable streets and adaptable homes in the context of changing demographics. A number of recommendations were the trigger for this meeting. The first speaker was Dr Jenny Thomas, head of Built Environment at MHCLG who reported that the government was committed not just to build more housing but to placemaking, as the two were inseparable. She listed a number of initiatives (including funding) that would help fulfil these objectives, including the development of the Planning Practice Guidance and a Design Manual.

The problems identified by the evening's title were mostly the construction of isolated (private) housing estates in the countryside, with no access to public transport and no public facilities that would make them places or neighbourhoods. Unfortunately most of the evening's speakers presented successful and attractive schemes in existing urban areas, where neighbourhoods already existed, albeit in a very deteriorated form, as well as communities that could be involved. The challenges were totally different than those faced by so called town extensions. Tricia Patell of PTE talked about infill projects and showcased Dover Court in Islington. Clare St. Martin of JTP presented the transformation of the Lenton Gardens neighbourhood in Nottingham; Angela Koch outlined the processes she uses to engage communities. All of these were interesting but did not deal with how to create neighbourhoods outside urban areas, where no community exists, and where mass house builders are not even thinking of neighbourhoods.

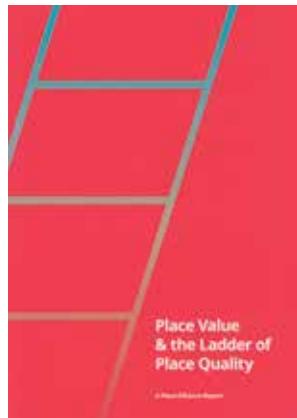
Only Matthew Carmona and David Rudlin addressed these issues. Matthew summarised the result of his research on councillors' attitudes to residential design (see p. 44-46).



David made the bold but very convincing statement: 'Good design is an economic issue', listing several points to support this, the first and essential being the importance of capturing land value (debated in this country since 1944!). Without fundamentally changing systems (including the planning system), neighbourhoods will not be built.

Noha Nasser then asked each of the speakers to tell the Ministry's representative how they would contribute to create neighbourhoods. Most chose instead to say what the government should do! An entertaining evening but not one that will solve the problem of desolate housing estates. ●

Sebastian Loew



Big Meet 9 Leadership in Placemaking: Beyond Beauty

2 April 2019, UCL

This whole day event organised by Place Alliance focussed on the role of government, central and local, in creating real places. At present, the quantity of house building has a higher priority than the quality of what is being built, and this needs to be addressed.

The first speaker was Andy von Bradsky, architectural advisor at MHCLG, who stated that design quality was a priority for government first of all because it was a means to win communities' support. A team in the

Ministry was working on quality criteria to evaluate schemes and these would cover all aspects of the built environment. He summarised existing government initiatives, *inter alia* a strengthening of planning policies on design and community engagement, and announced a new design manual and a design toolkit for neighbourhood planning.

He was followed by Sir Roger Scruton in probably his last public engagement as chair of the Building Better Beautiful Commission. He argued that beauty needed to be addressed, and mentioned places that were successful because they were aesthetically pleasing.

Dan Roberts of Homes England stated that although the role of Homes England was to produce more homes, they had introduced place quality as a criterion to assess schemes. They understood the benefits of placemaking and design quality, and these were gradually being embedded in their processes, through a three-stage programme that included training, the adoption of *Building for Life 12*, an emphasis on local character, and more.

An international perspective was introduced by Frederic Saliez of the United Nations Habitat programme who explained that places were important in joining people, the economy and the environment; their governance was a multi-level issue of concern for the UN. He mentioned the European Urban MAESTRO programme. Joao Ferreira Bento, research fellow at the Bartlett, presented the results of his research comparing spatial leadership in different countries.

The UDG's Katja Stille introduced the

group's campaign *Making People Friendly Places* inspired by Francis Tibbalds' book that prioritised mixed uses, the human scale, safe movement for pedestrians, and adaptable sustainable places. Matthew Carmona summarised his department's research on the value of place for which a substantial amount of evidence had been collected. The result was *Place Value & the Ladder of Place Quality*, a short practical toolkit for anyone involved in placemaking.

Carmen Mateu-Moreno of the RIBA listed a number of issues to be taken into account when designing places, citing the Future Place programme that aims to promote quality within local authorities. Amy Harrison of Bristol Architecture Centre talked about her work with children and young people, 'the next generation of place makers'. Valentina Giordano of the Bartlett reported on research on councillors' attitudes to design quality. Unfortunately the latter is undervalued though it is key to making schemes acceptable. Improvements may be achieved through the programmes developed by Creating Excellence presented by Julie Tanner that include training events for councillors. Equally Angela Koch of Imagine Places works on how to enable, secure and create trusting working relationships with all stakeholders in order to improve place quality.

This varied and stimulating day ended with a debate chaired by Urban Design London's Esther Kurland. The message is in synergy with this issue's topic and we can only hope that it will be heard. ●

Sebastian Loew



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National Urban Design Awards 2019

28 March 2019, The Tab Centre, London

Over the years, the Urban Design Group has managed to choose interesting venues for its annual awards event, and this year was no exception. Until a few years ago the Tab Centre was a derelict Victorian church in the middle of a site ripe for development. Some members attending this event as well as this writer remembered that the site was used as the basis of a project for the University of Westminster Master's in Urban Design course. Since then the site has been redeveloped and the listed Grade II church refurbished by Matthew Lloyd Architects, and converted into a mixed use building with offices leased to charities, and what would have been the nave used for various events, the UDG awards one in this case. The space is attractive and very suitable, with the balcony available for drinks and the lower level for the dinner and presentations.

Some 100 people attended the evening, many representing the shortlisted teams. After some time spent networking whilst

sipping drinks in what would once have been the church's gallery, participants descended to the lower level for dinner and the formal part of the evening. As was the case last year, places had been allocated so that people wouldn't have to find one that suited them.

To start the proceedings Leo Hammond, chair of the UDG, introduced Janet Tibbalds who said a few words on the influence of her late husband Francis, one of the founders of the UDG. She also alluded with some irony to the recently created Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission chaired by Sir Roger Scruton. Leo followed with a homage to the recently deceased Ben Hamilton-Baillie who had been hugely influential in policies to tame traffic and the introduction of shared spaces in this country (see p.11).

Starting the awards, Georgia Butina Watson who had chaired the Book Award panel, then gave an overview of the shortlisted titles, commenting on their quality and the difficulty in making a choice. She announced the winner: *Beyond Mobility, Planning cities for people and places* by Robert Cervero, Erick Guerra and Stefan Al, published by Island Press.

Next Graham Smith presented the Student Award which carries a £600 prize given by the Tibbalds Trust. This was won by Owen Reading of Oxford Brookes University, for

his project *Using urban change to create an inclusive area in intensifying Brisbane*, a strategy for incremental change.

A pause in the formal proceedings allowed for further networking whilst consuming the main course of the very good dinner. There is little doubt that this is the part of the evening most enjoyed by the participants who can then engage not just with their colleagues but with new members of their professional community. We can only hope that these newcomers, having had a pleasant evening, will become members of the UDG.

UDG's natural MC, Amanda Reynolds, chaired the second part of the awards presentations. The first of these was the Public Sector Award, recognising the best urban design work undertaken by local authorities or other public sector agencies. Short videos were shown of the three shortlisted entries. The winner, voted for by the membership in advance of the evening was South Cambridgeshire District Council for the Marmalette Lane co-housing scheme, and the award was presented to the team by Janet Tibbalds. The scheme has an original approach to housing design and tenure, and offers attractive public spaces.

Generally the most eagerly awaited award of the evening is the Practice Project Award where the judges shortlist the schemes that best fulfil the criteria of high urban design quality and aspirations; clear communication; following a rigorous process; and, drawing lessons from the project. Four schemes that fulfilled the criteria had been shortlisted and the UDG membership had voted for the winner. Once again short videos were shown of the shortlisted entries and people attending the evening remarked on how much the videos had improved over the years. Dar's presentation for their scheme for Ibadan, Nigeria was signalled as particularly concise and informative. However the year's Practice Project Award, which comes with a cheque for £1000 given by the Francis Tibbalds Trust and presented by Janet Tibbalds, to be spent on a UDG study tour or equivalent, was won by Studio Partington for their Andover Estate project in London's Islington. The regeneration of an existing council estate was undertaken in phases and in collaboration with the local community and greatly improved the public spaces.

Finally this year's Life Achievement Award for Outstanding Contribution To Urban Design was given to John Thompson. As John was unable to attend, his friend and colleague of many years, Harry Harrison accepted it in his name and summarised some of the highlights of John's career. Notable was his involvement in community architecture and community planning starting in the early 1980s, when methods of involving local people in development were in their infancy. Later on, John worked to persuade developers to adopt good urban design principles, including mixed uses and tenure blind accommodation. As a result of this work John



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- 1 View of the hall during dinner
- 2 Janet Tibbalds and the Studio Partington team winners of the Practice Project Award
- 3 Leo Hammond opening the event
- 4 Janet Tibbalds with the South Cambridgeshire District Council team winners of the Public Sector Award
- 5 Graham Smith with Owen Reading, winner of the Student Award



5

won many of CABE's *Building for Life* awards. In 2006 he became the founder Chairman of the Academy of Urbanism, of which he is now the Honorary President. To quote Harry Harrison:

John was unusual in that although trained as an architect, he had a passion for creating good places and saw placemaking as the core discipline in his work and visionary initiatives. But what I think is the most remarkable thing about John is his ability to convincingly communicate his ideals, not only to the hundreds of collaborators including me and some others present in this room this evening, but also to the literally thousands of so called ordinary people who attended John Thompson Planning weekends all around the British Isles and overseas.

Perhaps more lastingly, his legacy is the fact that a *Statement of Community Involvement* is a statutory requirement on planning applications.'

The formal part of the evening ended with a few words from Leo Hammond encouraging people to enter next year's awards and thanking all those that had helped to make the event a success. ●

SHORTLISTED BOOKS

- *Characterising Neighbourhoods, Exploring Local Assets of Community Significance*, Richard Guise and James Webb, Routledge 2017
- *2020 Visions: Collaborative Planning and Placemaking*, Charles Campion, RIBA Publishing 2018
- *Designing the Compassionate City: Creating Places where People Thrive*, Jenny Donovan, Routledge 2018

Winner

- *Beyond Mobility, Planning cities for people and places*, Robert Cervero, Erick Guerra, Stefan Al, Island Press 2017

SHORTLISTED STUDENT ENTRIES

- Stereotype Perception, how film can support placemaking, Yizhjou Liou
- Stratford Reconnected, A reflective strategy for the area's future, Erfan Abaii, Lucy Bretelle, Stephanie Goldberg, Sébastien Herman and Yaohan Liu

Winner

- Using urban change to create an inclusive area in intensifying Brisbane, a design strategy for incremental change, Owen Reading

SHORTLISTED PUBLIC SECTOR ENTRIES

- Mitcham's Corner Development Framework, Cambridge, Cambridge City Council
- Somers Town, London, London Borough of Camden

Winner

- Marmalade Lane Co-housing, Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire District Council

SHORTLISTED PRACTICE PROJECTS

- Hull City Centre, re-form landscape architecture
- Ibadan City Masterplan, Dar
- Manydown – The Main Street, Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design

Winner

- Andover Estate, Islington, Studio Partington

Sebastian Loew



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Nantes and Saint Nazaire Study Tour

25–29 April 2019

In April Sebastian Loew led a party of 31 UDG members and friends on a four-day study tour of Nantes and Saint Nazaire.

Nantes was once the historic capital of Brittany but is now in the region of Pays de la Loire. It stands on the north bank of the Loire river at the confluence with the river Erdre, some 50km from the sea but within its tidal reach. The city is the sixth largest in France and it still has a pronounced maritime character.

Nantes has a remarkable if troubled history. The town was once disputed territory between the Normans and Bretons before settling down in the medieval period as the seat of the dukes of Brittany. By the 18th century Nantes was flourishing as France's biggest port, but much of its wealth came from its pivotal role in the slave trade, with millions of enslaved Africans being transported to French colonies in the Caribbean. The modern city is now confronting this shameful legacy through its public monuments and museums.

Once a major port and shipbuilding centre, the last shipyard in Nantes closed in 1987. The industrial decline prompted a shift to the service sector and the city is now prosperous and planning for considerable growth. The city offers the visitor interesting lessons in regeneration through the transformation of the old dockside areas and investments in transport and the public realm. A diverse cultural programme complements the physical works.

Our visit began with a stroll around the city centre. Nantes' historic core has numerous fine streets and squares, many of them largely traffic-free, and with an architecture unified by the creamy local limestone. There

are also generous green boulevards, some of them created after the First World War by infilling Loire tributaries.

The Beaux Arts set pieces in the Place Graslin and the Place Royale are amongst the historic landmarks, as well as several idiosyncratic churches. Highlights for our party were the Passage Pommeraye, a multi-level shopping arcade from the 1840s that brilliantly exploits its steep site, and the elegant Rue Crémillon. Four blocks of 18th century merchant houses on the former île Feydeau once fronted the water but are now marooned inland. Memory of the water is expressed through green spaces. Nantes Castle, a deeply moated stronghold from the 15th century, is an impressive if heavily restored example of military engineering.

Nantes was heavily bombed in the Second World War, allegedly when the Allies mistook it for St Nazaire. Of the more recent buildings, the Tour Bretagne (1974) is unavoidable; a 32 storey office stump that dominates city views and in turn offers great views of the city from the bar at the top, but with no compensating architectural merit. A more responsive intervention can be found at the newly restored Musée d'Arts, with its sleek extension to the 19th original building by British architects Stanton Williams.

PLANNING POLICY

On Friday we met two of the region's planners, Stéphane Bois and Matthieu Baradeau, who gave an introduction to the city. Nantes has a population of 330,000 within a region of one million inhabitants. Stéphane and Matthieu described the metropolis and its ambitions for growth and regeneration. After the loss in the 1980s of heavy industry and port activities, the Mayor of Nantes Jean Marc Ayrault (later French Prime Minister) initiated a major regeneration programme that continues today. The aim has been to promote a diverse economy with a mix of manufacturing, tourism, services, higher education and digital industries. Environmental improvements combine with integrated

public transport and better housing as part of the strategy. A green line on the city's pavements links a number of art installations and landmarks and aims to show Nantes' cultural tradition.

The growth programme is based on intensifying existing built-up areas and using brownfield land to create a compact city. The Loire is central to planners' thinking, who are looking to establish a chain of public spaces between the station and the river; *Petite Hollande au bord de la Loire* (Little Holland on the banks of the Loire) is one initiative. Another strategy focusses on healthy living and active retirement.

The wider subregion of Nantes-Saint Nazaire is one of 21 eco-cities in France, with access to state subsidies for specific and exemplar sustainable projects. The aeronautical industry (Airbus and its suppliers) remain important. Nantes won the European Green Capital Award in 2013 for its environmental achievements and ambitions.

MOBILITY AND CONNECTIONS

Nantes and its region have been criticised for dithering on the relocation of the local airport, currently south of the Loire. However, the city is well served by TGV trains to Paris and there is an excellent tram and bus network with two new lines being considered. Car sharing is being promoted, with smart card technology offering incentives of free periods of electric cycle hire. The aim is to reduce car journeys to a third of the present level by 2030. Three out of four journeys are expected to undergo a modal shift, from cars to public transport, cycling or walking.

LA BOTTIÈRE-CHÉNAIE ECO-QUARTER

On Saturday morning the group took a tram from the SNCF station to La Bottière-Chénai to see a new eco-quartier, built on low carbon, high sustainability principles. Development started in 2003 with designs by Jean-Pierre Pranlas-Decours (architects) and Brûlé-Delmar Landscape Workshop (masterplanners) on the sites of a former market garden. The integration of allotments and streams with tight-knit, mainly low-rise housing is a hallmark of the development. The project is a Zone d'Aménagement Concerté (ZAC) financed by Nantes Métropole and will eventually have some 2,400 homes, of which 30 per cent will be affordable or social rented. The ZAC procedure allows the local authority to acquire land, prepare a masterplan, lay the infrastructure and then sell parcels to developers, thus recouping their initial investments.

Opinions were divided on the success of the development. The human scale of the housing was admired, as was the abundant and almost carefree greenery. Equally commended was the proximity of a school to a block of flats for seniors. But there seemed too much concrete on the ground and for an eco-quartier, there were a surprising number of parked cars in spite of the easy access to



1 UDG members around the model of the île de Nantes

2 La Bottière-Chenaie éco-quartier

3 Two office buildings on the île de Nantes

4 Passage Pommeraye in the historic centre

5 Reuse of an industrial structure including industrial archaeology

6 New private housing on the île de Nantes

7 An 18th century terrace facing a green space where water used to be

8 The Elephant, part of *Les Machines de l'île*

9 The Talensac market in Nantes, Sketch by Richard Cole





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the tram. The orientation of buildings to the streets was also questioned, with lengthy dead frontages and few signs of life outdoors, despite visiting on a sunny weekend. It would have been good to have talked to some residents.

ÎLE DE NANTES

The group made two visits to the île de Nantes, the large island in the Loire that formerly accommodated much of the city's industry. A vibrant new quarter is transforming an area of 337 ha and aims to complement the historic core of the city rather than compete with it. A segregated bus route runs along the spine of the island, with prioritised traffic lights at junctions.

Prairie-au-Duc, another eco-quartier, is a lively new neighbourhood at the western end of the île and houses the School of Architecture, the Palais de Justice (by Jean Nouvel), an arts school, a film school, and numerous start-ups related to the creative industries and new technologies. Innovative place-making strategies are anchored to the area's maritime heritage. This included re-using industrial elements, with cranes, furnaces and covered slipways repurposed. Banana warehouses now accommodate a bar and visitor centre.

The vitality of the Prairie-au-Duc area owes much to the success of *Les Machines de l'île*, a highly original visitor attraction that draws on the imaginary worlds of Leonardo da Vinci and particularly Jules Verne, who was born in Nantes in 1828. The mechanical bestiary and phantasmagoria, painstakingly crafted in wood and steel, offers fun for

people of all ages (including urban designers) but also has a clear educational agenda.

SAINTE NAZARE

On Sunday the group took the train to Saint Nazaire and the Atlantic coast. Saint Nazaire was no more than a fishing village until the mid 19th century when Napoleon III began to develop it as a shipbuilding and naval base. In the Second World War the harbour became the French headquarters for the German navy who built gigantic reinforced concrete submarine pens, where U-boat flotillas were built and sheltered.

The town and docks were almost completely wiped out by the Allies in more than 50 air raids but the U-boat pens, with walls 9m thick and reinforced roofs, remained stubbornly intact. They survive today, too costly to remove and seemingly too difficult to convert to more benign purposes. Their heavy, brooding presence is a poignant reminder of the follies of war.

Saint Nazaire was rebuilt in the 1950s and shows the characteristics of that period's urbanism; a spacious grid lined with functional slab blocks. In recent years efforts have been directed to improving the public realm, reducing the space allocated to vehicles, rotating the grid 90 degrees and subordinating traffic to pedestrians.

Saint Nazaire today is 'not one of France's most attractive cities' – those are the words of the Brittany tourist office – but in its efforts to rebuild and reinvent itself, it makes an intriguing destination for urban designers. The challenge remains of how to respect the wartime legacy whilst also creating a

very different place. The submarine base is gradually being adapted to accommodate creative and collective uses. The surprisingly attractive newly redesigned seafront and the new Place des Commandos showed the town's potential.

The area's industrial base remains key. Saint Nazaire's *Chantiers de l'Atlantique* shipyard is still one of the world's largest, building and fitting out cruise liners of the likes of Cunard's Queen Mary 2. One of the city's ambitions is to not only build the liners but to have the cruises stop in the port in the future.

The return trip to Nantes was by boat, a leisurely two hour meander upstream along the Loire, taking in views of the Saint Nazaire *Chantiers* (shipyards), the enormous Cordemais power station, marshland wildlife and riverfront villages. Periodically, lookout towers appeared, belvederes 5m high by artists, enabling views of the river from the marshland. These were part of a wider project *Le paysage, l'art et le fleuve* (landscape, art and the river) biennale with large scale sculptural works. The most enigmatic of these is *House in the Loire*, a tilting, half-submerged villa by Jean-Luc Courcoult. ●

Geoff Noble, urban designer and heritage consultant

10 Saint Nazaire: the indestructible U-boat bunker – ©Vitor Moraes

11 Art on the estuary: The House in the Loire by Jean-Luc Corcourt

12 St. Nazaire market, Photograph by Simon Carne

13 Playground with dragon, part of central Saint Nazaire renewal

Ben Hamilton-Baillie

1955-2019

Ben Hamilton-Baillie, who died of cancer in March this year aged just 63, was one of the most significant figures of his generation in the design of streets and the public-realm. He was perhaps the boldest of a handful of people prepared to tackle head-on the post 1930s highway design philosophy that prioritised motor vehicles above pedestrians, cyclists and place; a philosophy that safety depends on regulated behaviour and segregation, which brought swathes of signals, signs, lines and barriers to cities, towns and villages.

Ben studied architecture at Cambridge, and following a period working in social housing, moved to Sustrans where his persuasive personality was put to work in developing parts of the National Cycle Network. In 2000 he carried out a study tour on behalf of Sustrans, with Transport 2000 and the Children's Play Council, the costs of which were covered by a Churchill Fellowship. In 2001 Ben was the first non-American Loeb Fellow at Harvard University. He spent a mere six weeks touring Europe, specifically the Netherlands, and visited some 40 cities, towns and villages. At the start of this research he met key figures in the Dutch movement, including Steven Schepel, Head of the Road Safety Directorate and Joost Vahl 'the godfather of the *woonerf*' and learned of the work being carried out by the safety engineer from Groningen Province, the late Hans Monderman. These experiences seemed to ignite his passion for what he described as 'civilising streets' and 'reclaiming urban spaces for people'. With the death of Hans Monderman, Ben became the figurehead of the shared space movement.

THE EVOLUTION OF SHARED SPACE

The underlying ideas continued on from the *woonerf* concept of the 1970s, which had been absorbed into the *Dutch Traffic Manual* by the 1980s. They included the notion that people adjust their behaviour in accordance with the local environment and the risks they perceive (the theory of risk compensation and homeostasis as advocated by Professor John Adams) and that humans, given a choice, will not consciously hurt one another. This was something that Ben, similarly to Hans before him, used to demonstrate by lying in the middle of the road in the face of oncoming traffic. These principles translated into streets redesigned to look like places for people, rather than clearly defined and engineered corridors for fast-moving traffic. The expectation was that drivers would naturally drive more slowly and carefully on so-called 'self-explaining roads', taking behavioural cues from the environment through which they passed.

Early schemes included towns such as Ashford in Kent, from around 2005 onwards, and which provided the motivation for the showcase Exhibition Road design in Kensington. The *Transport Research Laboratory Report 661* showed how drivers' speed choice was influenced by the environment, a connection that was incorporated in *Manual for Streets*. The publication in 2011 by the Department for Transport of *Local Transport Note 1/11 Shared Space* gave it added weight. Shared Space became hugely popular with politicians, and many local councils tried their hand. Ben was in great demand as an inspirational speaker. He was very generous with his time, but at a personal cost: there were periods when he was barely earning the minimum hourly wage.

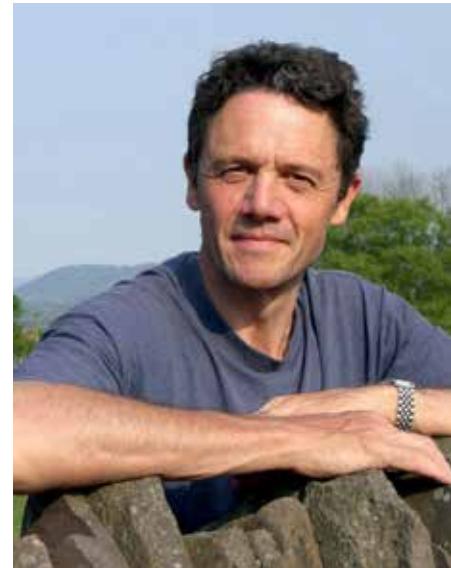
Ben continued to try to evolve the shared space model, with schemes at Frideswide Square, Oxford and Poynton in Cheshire, the scheme of which he was most proud. The film *Poynton Regenerated* has been viewed over a quarter of a million times on YouTube. The transformation of Poynton from a dismal traffic dominated town, into something that is genuinely pleasant, and beautiful in parts, is an outstanding achievement.

PROGRESS AND CONTROVERSIES

Almost from the outset, shared space was an embattled concept. Not only was there the problem of risk-averse and reactionary highway departments, which obstructed not only Ben's work, but Government's best practice guidance in the form of *Manual for Streets*, but also the question of blind and partially sighted people. Exhibition Road developed into a confrontation between the local authority and Guide Dogs for the Blind, which threatened judicial review and initiated a campaign 'Say No to Shared Space'. Behind the scenes were attempts to introduce a British Standard with a view to blocking shared space schemes, but they in turn were blocked by the Department for Transport.

Ben's influence was felt nevertheless. As town centre work was slowing down, it was villages and small towns that were most receptive and where Ben found his skills and vision in demand. He produced many proposals to declutter villages where conservation areas had been brutalised by poorly conceived highways practice. The conventional but extensive use of lines and signage can lead to drivers becoming overconfident, disregarding the fact that they are driving through a place where people live. Ben contributed to English Heritage's regional *Streets for All* series, and produced several sensitive rural highways design guidance, such as *Dorset's Traffic in Villages*.

At the end of 2015, the blind paralympian Lord Holmes published a report *Accidents by Design* criticising shared space. There were calls for a moratorium. In April 2017 the Scottish Government held a conference to discuss shared space, followed in early 2018 by a professional assessment by the Chartered Institute of Highways and



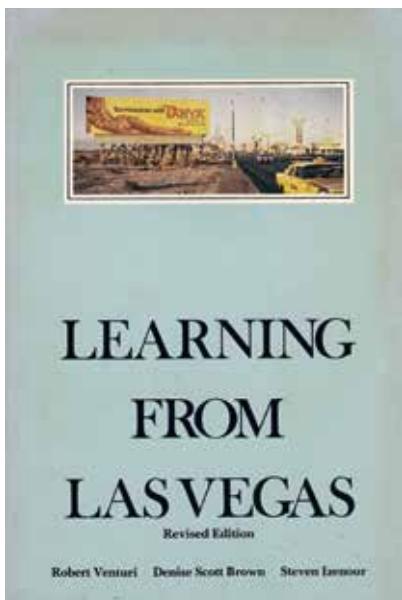
Transportation Creating better streets: Inclusive and accessible places. In the summer of 2018 transport minister Nusrat Ghani MP wrote to councils requesting them to pause shared space schemes. The letter, apparently written and issued without the prior knowledge of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, caused a storm, and was subsequently qualified: the request to pause was not intended to apply to low-trafficked residential streets or to conventional traffic calming measures such as speed tables and raised crossings (even though these are shared surfaces). By this time Ben was very ill, and unable to play a part in the debate as he once would have done. Nine months later he died, with his life's work side-lined. Or perhaps not: shared space has not been the blood-bath that Jeremy Clarkson predicted; and Poynton proves that streets can accommodate vehicle flow in an attractive environment. The outstanding question is over blind and partially sighted people, and while academics have opined on shared space, there have yet to be any well-designed case-control studies that compare the performance of shared space environments with standard highways ones.

We remember in Ben a bold, non-conforming radical, who was prepared to challenge convention, and to stand up for the things in which he believed. ●

Robert Huxford, Director of the Urban Design Group, and Graham Smith, urban designer

For further information

<http://hamilton-baillie.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/hamilton-baillie-reconciling-people-places-transport.pdf>



Urban Design Library #30

Learning From Las Vegas, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, The MIT Press, 1972

First published in 1972 and since translated into 18 languages, *Learning from Las Vegas* was a celebration of the so-called ugly and day-to-day landscape of Las Vegas, the gambling city in the American southwest. Co-written by the late Robert Venturi and his partner-wife Denise Scott Brown and collaborator Steven Izenour, the book is one of the most influential urban studies of the 20th, or perhaps, any century.

Building on a budding interest in the quotidian car-centric scenography of the American hinterland, Venturi and Scott Brown led a Yale University architecture studio study of Las Vegas in the late 1960s. They put together a serious, exhaustive analysis of the architectural form and character of a rather tatty, seemingly unserious place. Areas of study ranged from signage to the oasis interiors of casino megastructures, to the white supremacist undertones of its aesthetic symbolism. They photographed buildings and spaces, extensively recording their observations with wit and reverence. They contextualised Las Vegas, placing it in an architectural pantheon that spanned ancient Rome to the Renaissance, and in so doing, made us take mass culture more seriously. The book reminds us that throughout most of architectural history, until Modernism, iconography, symbolism and ornament were central to the expression of buildings. Las Vegas, the authors assert, may seem so modern but it is merely doing what has been done for centuries. It makes more sense in the arc of Western architectural history than, say, a Miesian tower block.

Beyond its artfully scripted prose, this

is a highly visual book. Its photography of the streetscapes, the ordinary scenes and the extraordinary (such as neon signs), are enigmatic. Photography, much of it taken by Scott Brown herself, is used as a visual analysis tool. There are striking grids of photographs illustrating apple-to-apple comparisons of different typologies, such as casinos: their panoramas, fronts, sides, parts, entrances and parking arrangements; or petrol stations and the variance in their brand expression. The graphics too are radical and instructive. They tell many stories: from the distribution of rent-a-car spaces to the footprint of hotels to illumination levels at night. Intricate monochromatic analytical maps are drawn with a care that likely would have impressed Nolli himself. They are works of art in their own right, and in choosing to portray such a lowbrow place with such care, they elevate the very place itself.

One highlight is a brilliant illustration of every written word seen from the road along the Las Vegas Strip. With hints of Guy Debord, words from neon signs are placed two dimensionally, to scale and at their exact orientation, on a plan of the Strip. Forty-seven years after it was first published, it still feels fresh and contemporary as a piece of communication design. This exceptionally conceived cartography demonstrates just how valuable sophisticated graphic design is to the work of urban practitioners. (Any report of urban analysis can flop spectacularly if it does a poor job at visualising the urban). No surprise that graphic design students accompanied Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour on their Yale studio. The lesson is that even in the cold analysis of hard urban data, there is room for graphics to be a bit tongue-in-cheek, to have a personality. I suspect they were taking a cue from Las Vegas' own sense of fun.

There is much more to learn from *Learning from Las Vegas*. It gives us a methodology of how to study, analyse and diagnose a city in the round. In fusing together elements of architectural investigation with a bit of amateur anthropology and some high art scholarship, the book sets out an approach for how to uncover the DNA of a place. Everywhere has a vernacular that can be explored in this way.

On re-reading it, I asked myself if Bob and Denise – my first employers after I finished university – were in their prime today, what would they study? I think they would have loved to scrutinise a Tokyo or a Hong Kong, or perhaps somewhere within that arc of urban growth between -ai cities – Shanghai to Mumbai to Dubai – where much of the world's urbanisation is happening. Today, they would have certainly had to grapple with the issues of mobile technology and social media, and how they are shaping and altering our experience of the city. Just imagine the photography element: Instagram that.

And how would a study of Las Vegas in 2019 be different? For one, Sin City now is

bigger and flashier with a population more than double what it was in 1972. It's also much more diverse. A significant largely Latino immigrant population lives there, many of them employed in low-income jobs in the hospitality industry. There is a restive labour movement in the city struggling for better working conditions. It is a reminder that social injustice makes Vegas possible. And, we should acknowledge, so does ecological terror. The recklessness of having a large sprawling, car-centric, energy intensive mega-suburb in an inhospitable climate, is arguably criminal.

Ultimately though *Learning from Las Vegas* does offer a timeless lesson. It teaches those who are custodians and shapers of the city to be a bit humbler. 'Learning from the existing landscape is a way of being revolutionary for an architect,' the book opens, 'not the obvious way, which is to tear down Paris and begin again, as Le Corbusier suggested in the 1920s, but another, more tolerant way'. As a series of tactics, the study was not just innovative, it was an emphatically inclusive undertaking. We could all use a bit more of that spirit these days. ●

Daniel Elsea, director at Allies and Morrison add and personal assistant to Venturi and Scott Brown in 2002

Read-on

- Koolhaas R *Delirious New York, A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, Monacelli Press, 1994
- Venturi R and Scott Brown, *Architecture as Signs and Systems*, Belknap Press, 2004
- Venturi R, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art New York, 1984
- Las Vegas Studio: *Images from the Archive of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown* University of Chicago Press, 2014
- Barnet J, 2019, 'What can we really learn from Las Vegas?', *Journal of Urban Design*, vol 24, No 3
- Kunzmann K, 2019, 'Las Vegas in digital times', *Journal of Urban Design*, vol 24, No 3

CONTRIBUTE TO URBAN DESIGN JOURNAL

This journal has a number of regular features, which are contributed by UDG members, and the editors are always happy to receive your suggestions, for example:

- Reviews of recent urban design-related events
- Books for the Urban Design Library shelves
- My Favourite Plan
- Research undertaken as part of a taught course or a research commission.

Urban Design journal has a rich history of great articles from a wide array of UDG followers. If you would like to be one of them, please email your ideas to the editors: louisethomas@tdrc.co.uk or sebastianloew@btinternet.com



My Favorite Plan: Leo Hammond

San Francisco Plan, 1905,
Daniel H. Burnham

WHY I LIKE IT...

Growing up in grey London I often dreamed about going to San Francisco, seeing the Bay, the hills and the Golden Gate Bridge. Without the opportunity to visit it, I read and looked at pictures of the city. When I got to university, I was fascinated to discover Burnham's 1905 plan in Sir Peter Hall's Planning History class at the Bartlett and it inspired my love of urban design. Let me tell you why.

First, the plan was so carefully prepared. This was an age when the urban designer often drew up plans in isolation from the site and the local community. By contrast, Burnham set up camp at the top of Twin Peaks to study the city with his team and organised a conference where over 200 civic

groups shared ideas for improving the city. Eventually the plan was circulated as a comprehensive book of 190 pages with maps, diagrams and drawings.

Secondly, the plan has a wonderful sense of order and imaginative reach. Here were majestic radiating boulevards punctuating the regular gridiron form of San Francisco. There was an extension to Golden Gate Park which made a continuous walking route from the Pacific through the city to the Bay on the other side. There were parks on top of the city's hills making the most of its spectacular views.

Thirdly, the plan was for the people. San Francisco at that time had few public buildings or services. Burnham wanted the plan to improve and inspire the lives of all. There were sections on the settings of churches, principles for such public buildings as schools and hospitals, and initiatives to restrict heavy traffic.

Finally, the plan was flexible. It was not intended as a strict masterplan manual but rather an inspiring illustrated and practical guide for the city over the coming decades.



CURRENT POSITION

Urban Design Associate Director, Lambert Smith Hampton
Urban Design Tutor, University College London
Chair, Urban Design Group

EDUCATION

MA in Advanced Urban Design, University of California, Berkeley
MPhil in Town Planning specialising in Urban Design, University College London
BA (Hons) Music, Anglia Ruskin University

SPECIALISMS

Masterplanning, outline planning applications, planning briefs, design codes, and estate regeneration

AMBITIONS

To design and build places that have the lasting qualities of Georgian streets and squares; to continue to repair the worst of post-war planning; and to get the general public talking about urban design.

Perhaps we could learn something in the preparation of local plans in the UK today.

Burnham hoped that his plan would be implemented after the 1906 earthquake and fire, but instead the city was rebuilt in its gridiron form for practical and legal reasons. Even so, many of his guiding ideas have influenced its later development.

Eventually I made it to San Francisco and got to walk in Burnham's footsteps when I studied for an urban design masters at Berkeley. Our professor, Peter Bosselmann, took us on fascinating walking tours of San Francisco and we created our own plans for the beautification of the city.

WHAT TO LEARN FROM IT...

- Combine visionary ideas with the practical
- Plan for improving and inspiring the lives of all
- City plans work best as flexible guides, not manuals
- Believe in your plan and think big; as Daniel H. Burnham said, 'Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood'

Valparaíso Cultural Park, Chile

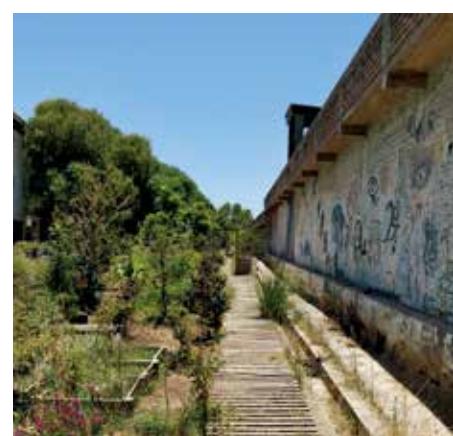
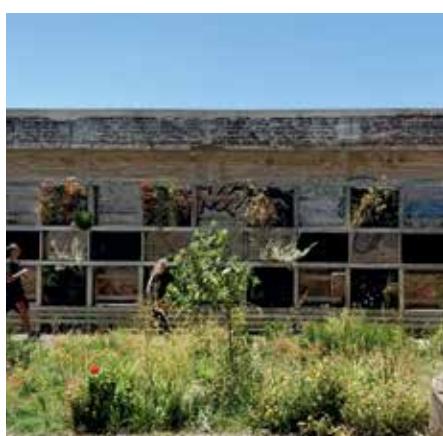
The transformation of a prison compound into a city park with associated artist studios, a theatre and social centre open to the public.

In each issue of Behind the Image, one of our contributors visits a contemporary public space from around the world. The photography tries to reveal an alternative perspective on a familiar precedent, famous space or place. These images illustrate how the public space works in practice: exploring its features (designed and unintended), and the way it relates to the surrounding context. ●

Lionel Eid, George Garofalakis, Rosie Garvey and Alice Raggett



Openness: The large interior space has been cleared of all light structures and greened, with only the prison building, gatehouse and historic Powder Keg retained. Alternative proposals for the complex's refurbishment placed new developments within the space, whereas the aim of this scheme was to maximise open space for the city.



Inner edge: Due to its previous functions as a fort and prison, the internal edges of the Cultural Park are hermetic as opposed to active or porous. Rather than feeling oppressive, the enclosure creates a calm oasis separated from the chaotic city outside. Walls become a feature of the space with each boundary given different functions, from green walls to displays for mural and graffiti art.



Inclusive: The park is appropriated by different users and feels open and uncultured. The incorporation of informal community facilities such as raised planting beds, greenhouses and gathering areas allows spaces to be incrementally adapted.



Routes: Discontinuous pathways lead visitors to particular spaces rather than through the park. These are intended for slow movement and encourage people to dwell. Informal tracks reflecting latent desire lines are retained, adding to the variety of routes available.



Climate: Several elements have been designed in response to the climatic conditions of Valparaiso. Trees have been given elegant supports to protect them from heavy winds alongside mechanical sculptures designed to move in the hilltop breeze.

Relationship with the city: The Cultural Park occupies a large plateau nestled in the sloping hills of Valparaiso. Elevated neighbourhoods have views into this oasis but vistas from the park towards the Pacific waterfront are rare due to the site's enclosed perimeter.

Reflection: The external edges of the complex maintain the historically defensive and inward-looking character of the compound. However, walls that previously existed to confine, now provide a space of contemplation and respite from the surrounding city.

Walkability and Green Space

Ivana Sirovica explores the reasons for walking in and through green space through the lens of four types of walking



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Designing walkable and pedestrian-friendly cities has been at the forefront of urban planning for years. While studies often cite green space as an element that enhances the walkability of urban space, there have been few studies about the walkability of green space itself. Traditionally, the concept of walkability, as applied to urban space, has been concerned with two major categories of walking: utilitarian, where people purposefully walk to get from point A to point B, and recreational, where people walk for pleasure with no intended destination in mind. This research adopted the utilitarian-recreational paradigm traditionally used for urban space, but noted that when applied to green space, four types of walking were more appropriate. Russell Square in London was chosen as the green space to study these four types of walking because of its central location, its sheer size, meaning that most people who walk in it treat and view it as a park, and for its similarity to other urban green spaces as London has a rich heritage of green squares.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Walkability has become increasingly popular as a concept among urban planners, in policies and design aimed at combating sedentary lifestyles, encouraging transport modal shifts and creating vibrant outdoor spaces, in order to achieve more sustainable communities. However, most of the literature regarding walkability has been conducted within urban space in general. Little has been researched on the walkability of green space, apart from the presence of green space being an element of urban space that increases an area's walkability. Just as streets have various components that can influence their walkability, so do green spaces.

While macro-scale components like green space, street connectivity and residential density have been identified in the literature as aspects of the built environment that make an urban space walkable, the walkability of an urban space is also affected by individuals themselves and what purpose they have for walking through a space.

An outline of the literature review shows the qualities important in determining what makes an area walkable. It is important to understand what these qualities are in order to understand how they can affect walkability.

REVIEW OF MAJOR QUALITIES OF URBAN SPACE THAT AFFECT WALKABILITY

MAJOR CRITERIA	DESCRIPTIONS
(1) Location and accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, easy to get to, opening hours if applicable
(2) Convenient and useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of footpaths, short routes to destinations
(3) Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature and landscape elements, pleasantness and attractiveness, size of space
(4) Social environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and security, adequate lighting, presence of people, things to do and see
(5) Environmental conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good weather, good air quality, low noise pollution
(6) Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian-oriented furniture and facilities, path condition and width, trees for shade/protection from weather, familiarity

Typically, walking has been divided into two broad categories:

- **purposive or utilitarian walking** – when walking is the means to a destination
- **discursive, recreational or leisure walking** – when the journey and the sites along the route are more important than the destination in itself.

Both of these types have been shown to generally exist in urban space. However, because green space is a component within urban space, a further split is needed when applying the concept of walkability to green space, based on whether an individual walks through it or stays within it. Thus, there can be two types of utilitarian walking and two types of recreational walking.

- 1 A direct path
- 2 Footpath usage during peak lunch hour
- 3 Diagrams of types of walking: utilitarian and recreational walking

METHODOLOGY

This study divided those who walked within Russell Square into the four different types of walkers and then identified qualities within the green space that invited them to walk through or within the space. Observations and interviews were adopted as research methods to collect this qualitative data.

Observations were conducted by walking through and within the green space and taking note of what qualities the space possesses as per the table above. While observations noted the more physical aspects of the green space that might have attracted people to walk through it and within it, the data collected was of a limited nature in that it did not provide the subjective qualities that may have attracted people to the space. Due to this limitation, semi-structured interviews were chosen as an additional data collection method. This approach allowed for a greater depth of discussion and the possibility to ask open-ended questions in order to gain more meaningful responses.

A pilot study validated that participants within Russell Square fell within all four types of walking and made it possible to compare these. It also helped to identify the exits from Russell Square as the best spots to interview participants.

Upon leaving the green space, participants were asked to give their reason for walking in the space in order to categorise them into one of the four types of walking. They were also asked to draw on printed maps of Russell Square the route they took through it. Lastly, they were asked what aspects of the space invited them to walk through it or within it.

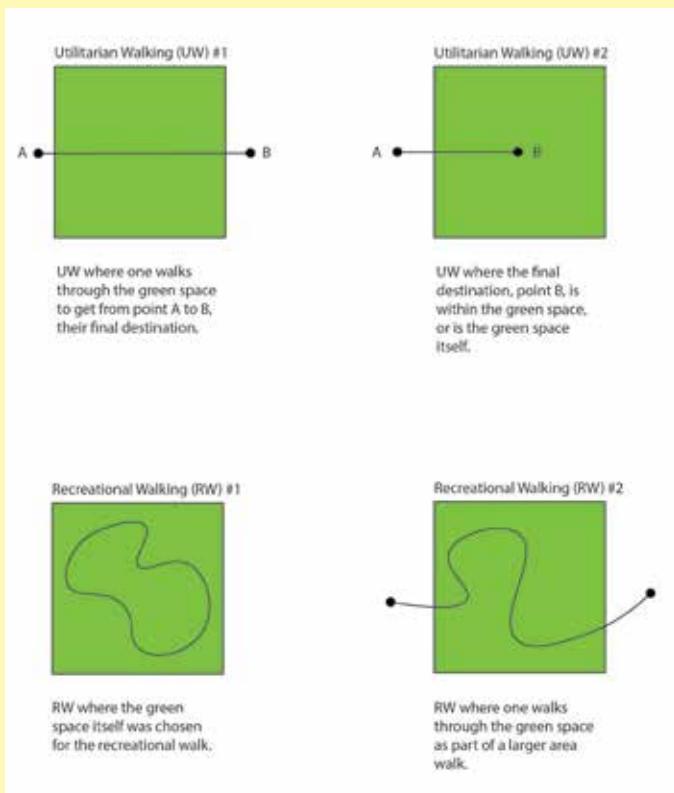
Overall, 20 interviews were conducted at each of the six exits from the square, resulting in a total of 120 interviews (including the pilot). Attempts were made to choose participants reflecting different ages, individuals, groups of people, as well as people who live, work, study or who were visiting the area. Interviews were also conducted throughout the day, in order to see if different times of the day attracted different types of walking.

These two methods, when taken together, made it possible to: identify the aspects of the green space that encouraged people to walk through it; identify what kind of walking users of the space were engaged in; and, compare whether the qualities of the green space that invited people to walk there remained the same or differed between the four types of walkers.

FINDINGS

The key findings of the research confirm that qualities that traditionally affect the walkability of urban space also influence the walkability of green space. The diagrams compare the urban space qualities of Russell Square that the four different types of walkers said most influenced their decision to walk in the space.

All four types of walkers placed a significant value on the physical environment, with natural and landscape elements such as trees and grass influencing their decision to walk in the space. The social environment was the second most valued quality of urban space. The presence of people in the space seemed to be a catalyst for other social activities occurring within the space. For example, dog walkers chose the green space to walk their dogs and meet other dog owners, which in turn, gave people-watchers more reason to visit the space since they had people to watch. These Type 2 utilitarian walkers then attracted Type 2 recreational walkers who may not have had a specific plan to walk through the space but chose to walk there



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after seeing the large amount of people and activity.

The location of the green space was most valued by Type 1 recreational walkers. People engaged in a recreational walk enjoyed having local green space not too far from their home, work, or hotel that they could easily visit. Type 1 utilitarian walkers overwhelmingly favored the convenience and usefulness offered by direct routes and mostly used the space because it was the quickest route to get to their destination, paying less attention to other elements in the space such as the fountain, benches or café. Type 2 utilitarian walkers whose destination was within the space itself most valued the environmental conditions, choosing to visit the space to eat their lunch in sunny weather and get out of the office. Comfort qualities were most favored by Type 2 recreational walkers because their decision to include a walk through the square within their larger overall recreational walk of the city would not take place if there were not things that made the space comfortable to visit, such as benches and a café.

An important finding revealed by this research is that when designing green space, it is important to include a combination of direct and meandering pathways through the space proportionate to the kind of walking expected there. Type 1 utilitarian walkers most valued direct routes, whereas Type 2 recreational walkers most value diverse and meandering routes.

CONCLUSION

This research showcases the complex nature of walkability and how it cannot be treated as a uniform concept, while at the same time demonstrating how it can be applied to an important component of urban space—green space. It is hoped that this research could help public authorities and urban planners when designing green space by making them more aware of what kind of walking may or may not take place within a given green space, and how the type of walking within a green space can be better integrated into an urban area when seeking to make cities more walkable and pedestrian-friendly. ●

Ivana Sirovica, recent graduate of UCL's MSc in Urban Design & City Planning programme, and works as an urban designer in London

Is Conservation killing us?

Richard Cole reflects on early conservation studies and their impact today



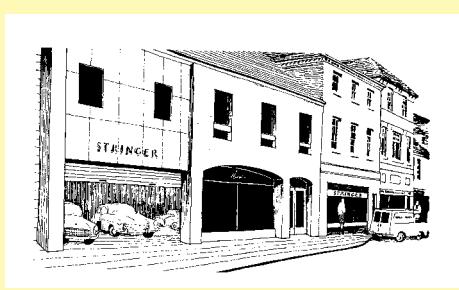
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In 1967, the MP Duncan Sandys sponsored the *Civic Amenities Act*. Amongst other things, this Act required local authorities to consider, for the first time, the importance of whole groups of buildings of architectural or historic value and to designate 'conservation areas'. Prior to this Act being passed, four Studies in Conservation were commissioned for the towns of Bath, Chester, Chichester and York. These studies were intended to '...produce solutions for specific local problems and to learn lessons of general application to all our historic towns...' This objective is perhaps the most important to the Urban Design Group.

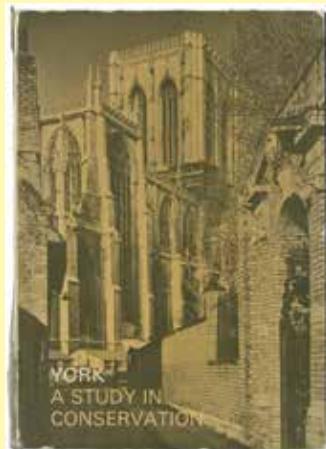
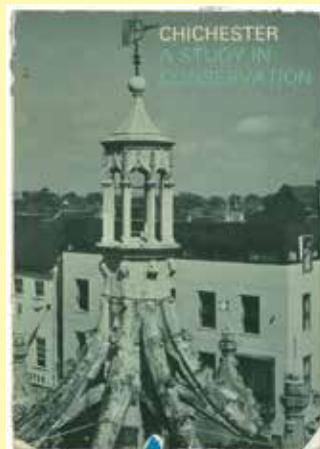
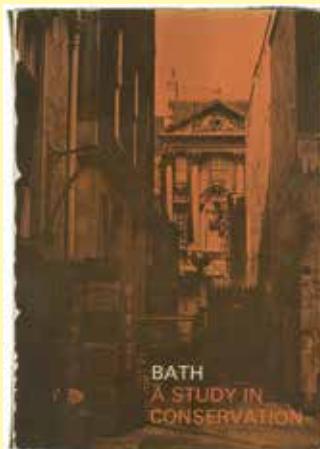
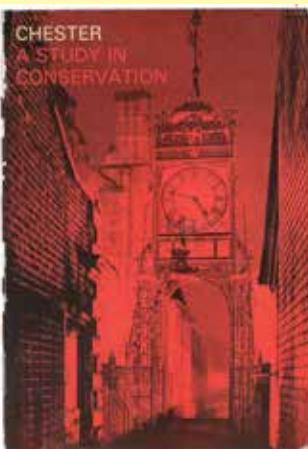
Why were these reports necessary and what was the thinking behind them? Britain in the 1960s was still recovering from the impact of the Second World War. The second generation of New Towns was under construction. Comprehensive Development Areas were seen as a solution to the problems of poor housing and traffic congestion. Large areas of the older parts of towns and cities were designated



1–2 Left, two photographs of Chichester's streets today. Right, sketches of the same places from the Chichester Study showing the current view (then) and suggested improvements
3 The covers of the four Studies

as unfit and summarily cleared. Significant buildings like the Euston Arch were being destroyed in order to enable wider redevelopment. This belief in the comprehensive and large scale was driven partly by the apparent success of the postwar rebuilding of cities like Coventry and parts of cities like the Barbican in London, and by a belief that as in manufacturing so with building, there were economies of scale to be exploited. At the same time however, there was a growing concern that the built heritage was being eroded and communities destroyed and lost forever, under shoddy monoliths.

The concept of protecting a specific building through listing was well established but the character of historic towns was seen as being the product of groupings of otherwise undistinguished structures. There was increasing concern, manifest through the Civic Trust (now Civic Voice) that there should be protection for groupings of buildings when these formed a coherent and recognisable group, regardless of the quality of its constituent individual buildings, a view



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reflecting the basis of Gordon Cullen's *Townscape*. Partly in response to this concern, the minister proposed that studies should be made of appropriate towns in order to learn general lessons about the approach to be taken in conserving groups of buildings. The town studies were to be that rare thing in British legislation, a test bed for a relatively new idea.

In the event the towns to be studied do not seem to have been selected on any wholly logical basis: it was more a matter of interested local authorities making known their wish to be involved, or in some cases not involved, as they were expected to pay half the costs of their study. The original list, resulting from a conference at Churchill College in Cambridge, grew perhaps more rationally. It included King's Lynn and Warwick, but in the end, only Bath and York remained from the original list. The study of Bath was to be undertaken by Colin Buchanan, who already had a team in Bath involved in a transportation study. Donald Insall was to undertake a study of Chester; he had originally been proposed for Warwick but the good people of Warwick 'lacked enthusiasm' for such an intrusion in their city. York's study was to be undertaken by Lord Esher (Lionel Brett). King's Lynn was dropped when the county council decided that having just finished a study of part of the town, they could not justify another one. Chichester was the smallest of the cities to be studied, and was included largely through the lobbying of the city's town clerk. Here, consultants were originally to be appointed, but apparently for 'safety's sake', this idea was dropped and the county planning officer was given the task. No competitive tendering existed in the 1960s!

A recent analysis of these studies by John Gold¹ shows that they were not consistent in their findings. In Bath, Buchanan unsurprisingly found a need for significant traffic engineering works and comprehensive development. In Chester, Donald Insall suggested a middle-ground: he accepted the need for modernity but rejected any 'clean sweep approach'. He saw mixed development and conservation as a partnership. Interestingly Insall remains as an advisor to the city. In the smallest study area in Chichester, the establishment confirmed the established strategy as being appropriate. Their report is interesting in its use of Cullen type visual analysis of small areas. Fifty years on however little has changed in the study area. In York, traffic management was the focus of the study and today York runs an extensive park and ride system. There was some commonality of view and one issue common to all four towns was the general poor maintenance of historic buildings and in particular, their often neglected, empty, unused or underused upper floors. This problem remains in many towns today.

Whatever the generally disappointing outcome of the four specific studies, there are now over 10,000 conservation areas in the UK. Initially, some local authorities embraced the concept of conservation areas and in Cheshire, the Chester inspiration extended beyond the city to rural and village conservation areas; Conservation Area Action plans were produced which intended to provide a basis for the further enhancement of conservation areas. Example, not just control was seen as the way forward. Other local authorities were less enthusiastic. Following local government reorganisation in 1974,

Chichester District Council chose not to establish a conservation team but to rely on West Sussex County Council to provide a service. It did however appoint a Conservation Area Advisory Committee whose role was to advise the council on the impact of planning applications within the city's conservation area. Following the reduction of professional services within the County Council, the District reluctantly appointed a small team to deal with the 80 conservation areas within their area. More recently, this small team has been decimated by staff cutbacks and resignations. Today there is no in-house conservation staff. A single part-time consultant from Lewes has to perform the role for the whole District which includes part of the South Downs National Park for which the district is supposed to provide conservation advice. The situation in Chichester District Council reflects the national situation as described in issue UD144.

Has the notion of conservation, a cornerstone of the early days of the Urban Design Group had its day? Have we become complacent? Is it a matter of 'job done'? Indeed, has conservation become an inhibition to the innovations needed if we are to cope with the phenomena of climate change? Talk to members of the public today and mention conservation, they will almost certainly assume the discussion is about saving wildlife and protecting the wider environment. Saving a few old buildings will be the least of their concerns even though the existence of a conservation area may have a significant impact on environmental proposals. In some areas, it is difficult to install solar panels on buildings in a conservation area, and the listing of an individual building may well make the provision of double-glazing unviable. Both these inhibitions can make a small contribution to the damage we are inflicting on the world. Surely we value many older urban areas because they represent different responses to different needs, at different times. Many of the brick-faced buildings lining Chichester's historic core were originally timber-framed. Just imagine an application to brick face a timber framed building being made today! Of course, such a change is not likely today but our predecessors, unencumbered by the sentimentality and nostalgia that seem to afflict us, would have accepted the need to reduce their carbon footprint, and embraced the use of innovative techniques. Sir Christopher Wren would never get away with changing the 'approved' design of St Paul's now in the way that he did. Actually, he might have done, noting the staffing levels in local authorities today.

There is perhaps a worse phenomenon at large: the phenomenon of complacency and its companion, misunderstanding. Real conservation may be part of our salvation. ●

Richard Cole

A conference to mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of the Four Studies will take place in Chichester's Assembly Room on 4th and 5th October 2019

References

- 1 Gold J, and Pendlebury J. 2019 The 'spirit of living continuity'? Revisiting the urban vision, methodologies and influence of the Studies in Conservation, in Town Planning Review 90 (1)



Palace of Westminster from the dome on Methodist Central Hall ©Colin

Politicians and Urban Design

This journal regularly inspires me with articles of the what, where, when and why of great urban design. This issue is really about how the benefits of urban design can be integral and central to the planning and development processes. How do we see policy introduced that ensures development leads to better places?

Politically we live in unsettled times. Hansard Society polling over the last 17 years shows its lowest ever ratings for trust in UK politicians. An Ipsos Mori poll in November 2017 showed that the public's trust in politicians at 17 per cent, was lower than for any other profession; scientists and doctors by contrast rated at 83 and 91 per cent. This could be both a problem and an opportunity for urban design.

As the articles in this issue reveal, politicians have a major role in promoting urban design. Our survey backs this view: we know that the public wishes to protect the countryside, act on climate change and revitalise neglected places. Is a wider manifesto needed or as Meredith Evans argues, shouldn't urban designers simply show how they can help politicians achieve their objectives?

Laura Alvarez shows that local politicians have championed design and committed in-house resources, but she questions the appointment of Design Champions. Victoria Lawson reviews the case of Liverpool One: a response to years of ideological conflict as the city worked to re-invent its centre and counter the negativity of national politicians who had written the city off.

Amy Priestley writes about the success of Mini-Holland. This required local collaboration and the determined leadership of Waltham Forest's councillors. Matthew Carmona reports on the 2018 Place Alliance's survey of local councillors, which highlighted their frustration of not being able to deliver better design, their support for design training and more resources, and their demand for comprehensive national guidance on design. Councillor Liz Kessler writes of the hopes and frustrations of an urban designer turned local

politician in Winchester. She reflects on the poor understanding of urban design in government, the shortage of skills and the fragmentation of local structures, but still notches up some notable achievements.

Chris Brown of developer Igloo writes of his experience in citizen-led placemaking and the merits of co-production with residents, professional designers and politicians. He is sceptical of the current stress on developer-led design and advocates increased use of charrettes, neutral experts and greater co-production. Ultimately it is Parliament that sets the direction and priorities that affect the planning and development world. There are 1,148 All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) on the 2019 register, but none for urban design. There is a Housing and Planning APPG, as well as groups for Land Value Capture, London's Greenbelt, Obesity and Town Centres, but who is joining it all up as Urban Design and Placemaking?

Nick Raynsford, Lord Deben and Lord Heseltine are a few national political figures named by our readers, who historically have been supportive of urban design. Mayors at the city level are proven leaders too as politicians highly identified with place.

Imagine politicians and urban designers now working with the public, with real purpose to tackle climate change, to reduce our carbon footprint, regenerate left-behind Britain, revitalise neighbourhoods and town centres, and provide the genuinely affordable housing that people want.

Where are the current national figures who will provide political leadership? Can this be collaborative, consensual and cross-party as our readers hope for? With politics in such a state of flux, this issue says that urban design offers a great value toolkit for canny politicians looking to rebuild trust with the wider public. ●

Tim Hagyard, formerly local government planner and urban designer.
Currently working with CPRE Hertfordshire

The Urban Design Community's Views on Politicians

Tim Hagyard summarises the findings of an urban design survey



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This article summarises the findings of an on-line survey about urban design and politicians run by the Urban Design Group from November 2018 to February 2019. Most of the 61 respondents work as urban designers in the built environment.

NATIONAL VERSUS LOCAL POLITICIANS

The good news for all politicians is that they are clearly seen as important in delivering good urban design. 89 per cent agreed to the importance of local politicians and 76 per cent to that of national politicians. Unfortunately, neither group of politicians rated well in their understanding of the value of urban design, clearly a matter to focus on: 88 per cent said national politicians didn't understand its value, 64 per cent that local politicians didn't.

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

In an open question asking readers to say which politicians they would commend for their support of urban design, 17 local and national politicians were named. These came from a range of political parties and included seven current national politicians

- Four MPs: Helen Hayes, Layla Moran, John Howell and Dr Roberta Blackman Woods
- Three former MPs and ministers: Lord Heseltine, Lord Deben (John Gummer) and Nick Raynsford
- Three mayors: Ken Livingstone (Design for London), Andy Burnham (Town Centre Challenge- Manchester) and George

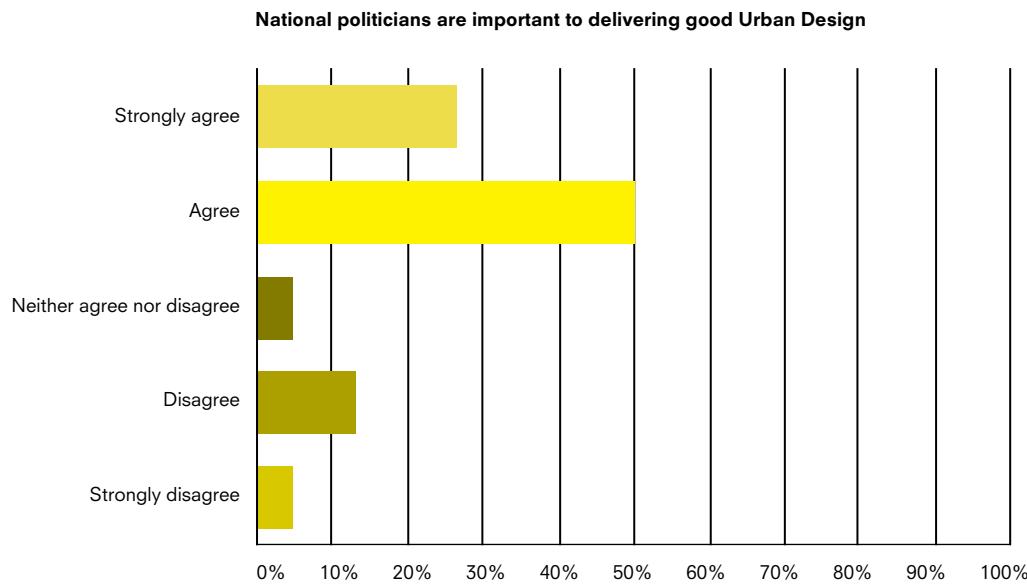
Ferguson (Bristol)

- Daniel Moylan of Kensington and Chelsea for his work on Exhibition Road
- Cllr Liz Hutchinson (Winchester – City Centre Major Development)
- Cllr Clyde Loake (Walthamstow – Mini Holland)
- Cllr Daniel Anderson (Cycle Enfield 2015 – 2018).
- Cllr Stewart Gardiner (Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan 2018)
- Cllr Richard Blunt – NW Leicestershire
- Cllr Trevor Pendleton – NW Leicestershire.

TOP POLITICAL ACTIONS FOR URBAN DESIGN

Politicians wanting to support urban design could do worse than take on board the following top three suggestions from our respondents: firstly, re-establish a national agency such as CABE to produce national design guidance; secondly, require local authorities to employ in-house urban design staff; and, thirdly ensure that highways officers are trained in design.

1 The Houses of Parliament seen from the River Thames



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The following secured the highest rankings out of a range of 20 possible measures to support urban design:

1. Urban design expertise within all local planning authorities
2. National agency to promote urban design and the built environment
3. Training in design for highways professionals
4. Public realm teams to replace highways in local authorities
5. National urban design guidance as a material planning consideration

There was also widespread support for councillors' training, for public realm works as an expectation in new development, and for strategic design review as a required element of local plan making.

Other ideas promoted by respondents included:

- a proactive public authority approach to land management and land reform e.g. shift landowners to builder-developer (as per Raynsford Review)
- promotion of design review
- a compulsory role for design-based professions in planning applications
- appointment of Chief Planning Officers in all local authorities
- a minimum MA in Urban Design qualification for planning managers in local government
- limits to the scope of permitted development.

TIME FRAMES

Most respondents agreed that the longer-term time scale of urban design strategies against the shorter-term electoral horizon of politicians was an inherent problem. Ways to address this ranged from establishing a broader culture that values urban design with in-house expertise and stronger cross-party government support; more robust national guidelines in the NPPF; greater citizen engagement to assure longevity of design quality. Some suggested masterplans should be designed to be more flexible over the long term; greater support for urban design within neighbourhood plans was also suggested.

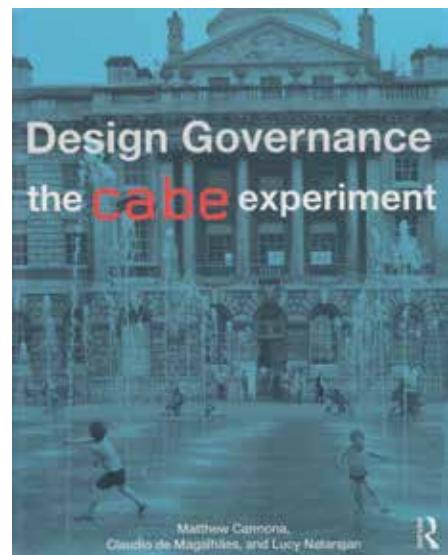
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Other comments made were that although local authorities may be receptive to urban design, there is a great need for training as officers and councillors' knowledge is poor, and persistent cuts in local government have made the situation far worse. Furthermore, urban designers aren't often at a senior level and their views are marginalised when inconvenient; they may even be

THE COUNCILLOR'S GUIDE TO URBAN DESIGN



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Urban designers aren't often at a senior level and their views are marginalised when inconvenient; they may even be kept away from leading politicians

kept away from leading politicians. Consequently, working as an urban designer in a local authority can be frustrating. Decisions respond to those who shout loudest, or short-term solutions are arrived at for popularity and to feed egos.

URBAN DESIGN GROUP

The Urban Design Group was seen as too London-centric and more regional support was requested. One respondent saw the need for a professional accrediting institute. There was a lot of support (74 per cent) for a common built environment manifesto agreed with other professions.

POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Most respondents (74 per cent) agreed that politicians were thinking about a building's aesthetics when discussing good design. The majority also said that politicians tended to favour the needs of the car driver; only 10 per cent agreed that

politicians were prepared to limit car usage in the interests of placemaking. For urban designers and politicians here is the challenge of an ingrained car culture, although the demands for climate action, cleaner air and healthier active lifestyles may change public attitudes towards car use. Almost half of respondents said that politicians were unable to prioritise good urban design if there was local opposition to development. This underlines the value of placemaking as a means to move the discussion along; it is crucial for decisions to gain public support if they are to succeed.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ON URBAN DESIGN

The importance of leadership gained a ringing endorsement by respondents with a virtually unanimous view (98 per cent) that long-term support and the leadership of politicians were needed. There was also strong agreement (83 per cent) that cross-party consensus was required to advance urban design, and that mayors and ministers with a higher profile role could raise standards (76 per cent). While leadership was crucial, it was seen as different from decision-taking; most respondents agreed that politicians were better engaged in setting overall objectives than in making detailed decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

Our survey confirmed the view of experts in the field that politicians seriously matter for the delivery of urban design but that few of them have a good appreciation of its value. This is clearly an area for the Urban Design Group and all like-minded built environment professions to address. The Raynsford Review has called for a reinvigorated and creative local planning regime, and the value of good urban design would clearly be integral to that purpose. Good urban design with pro-active local authority work can open up new placemaking opportunities which enable the regeneration of towns and cities, as well as provide for their development needs. Urban designers, politicians and communities have to align themselves with placemaking visions that can endure beyond immediate election timescales and be robust enough to meet the critical demands of climate change, as we completely rethink urban life in the shift away from carbon-based consumerism and energy systems. ●

5 John Selwyn Gummer, Lord Deben, Secretary of State for the Environment 1993-97 and an advocate of environmental policies

6 Nick Raynsford, former Housing Minister and author of the *Raynsford Review of Planning 2018*, Source TCPA

7 Michael, Lord Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment 1979-83 and 1990-92

Tim Hagyard



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Urban Design in a Political Environment

Meredith Evans wonders about the merits of an urban design manifesto

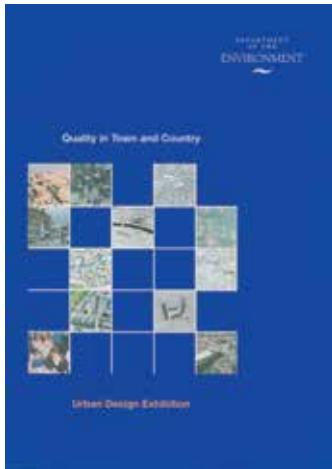
Do manifestos have a role in influencing politicians in the 21st century? Most urban designers work within the planning system and often within the public realm which are both governed by authorities or agencies which operate within a political environment. Consequently, attempting to influence this environment is indirectly, if not directly, part of the job. However, the 2018 survey of *Urban Design* readers reveals that 88 per cent felt that national politicians do not understand the value of urban design which suggests that there is a need to address this issue. From my own experience in local government, I found local as well as national politicians generally uninterested in design as a subject. But I am not sure that this lack of interest is the main issue to focus on. It is more productive to focus on what politicians profess to be concerned about and then demonstrate how urban design can contribute to addressing those concerns. This, then should be the starting point for any manifesto.

Having said that, there is some evidence that national politicians at least have discovered a renewed interest in design generally and urban design in particular. The revised *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) published last year demonstrates a strong commitment to good design and the important role that planners have to play in delivering this: 'The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development'. There are

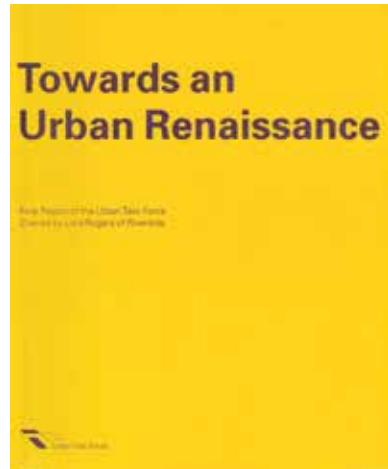
other supportive statements along the same lines. In terms of national policy, it doesn't get much better than this. So why isn't it always happening?

Building good places is a long-term endeavour. National and local governments, however, have a four or five year horizon before seeking re-election. While this is healthy from a democratic accountability perspective, it is unhelpful when long-term investments and commitments are needed. Even where a particular party sustains a run of election successes, as happened under Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair, their initial ambitions, concerns and priorities were regularly subject to changes. These tend to occur in response to changing circumstances, to growing public concerns on specific issues, or simply to events, usually unforeseen and beyond their control. This is why manifestos are problematic for politicians. Seen as essential to garner popular support at election time, they become a millstone while in office, when alternative priorities should be followed.

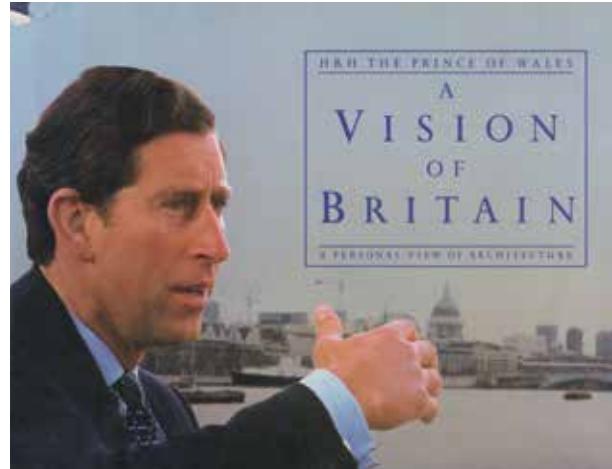
1 Birmingham: Brindley Place's regeneration, the result of visionary political leadership



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The prevailing political priorities can be likened to a spotlight that focusses brightly on the issues of the day but inevitably moves on at some point to the next big issue. Any approach to influencing politicians needs to recognise this cycle of changing political direction.

EVOLUTION OF URBAN DESIGN IN UK NATIONAL POLITICS

Over the last 40 years there have been a number of changes in policy direction in terms of political interest in good design and placemaking. The importance of urban design in delivering high quality places for people to live in is such that the built environment professions need to find ways to prevail despite these changing fortunes. It is, therefore, worth reflecting on the political drivers behind these cycles if we are to be more successful in achieving sustained political support in the future.

In terms of the highs and lows of political support, the publication of *Circular 22/80*, published as the title suggests in 1980, was about as low as it could get. Planning guidance in those days was set out through the regular issuing of circulars, usually dealing with one area of planning policy. This one, published in the early days of the Thatcher government, set out rather bluntly that design was not an issue for planners to get involved with and should be left to architects who were trained in these matters. The circular was not part of a campaign against good design (although it could reasonably be seen as such) but part of a broader objective which was to reduce or remove constraints on development, particularly those imposed through the planning system. This in turn was part of an even wider political objective to deliver the government's vision of a free market economy. The role of the state, including planning, was being rolled back.

However, this policy backfired, as the following years witnessed the relentless spread of out-of-town retail developments, a decline of traditional high streets and the damaging environmental impact on the countryside. The result was a growing public backlash; pressure mounted on the then Major government to re-instate planning controls to help save high streets, conserve the character of towns and villages, and protect the environment. A perhaps surprising champion of these causes was the Prince of Wales who published *A Vision of Britain* in 1989. While the focus of this document was architecture and his version of what that should be, it added to the pressure on government to take more seriously the quality of the built environment.

In 1990 the government published a white paper *This Common Inheritance* which sought to address at least some of these issues. Pressure increased further following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Sustainable development became the new watchwords and this demanded a radically different approach to development and its impact on the local as well as wider environment. In 1993 John Selwyn Gummer, took over as Secretary of State for the Environment and signalled a radical shift in policy from the Thatcher years. In 1994, he published *Quality in Town and*

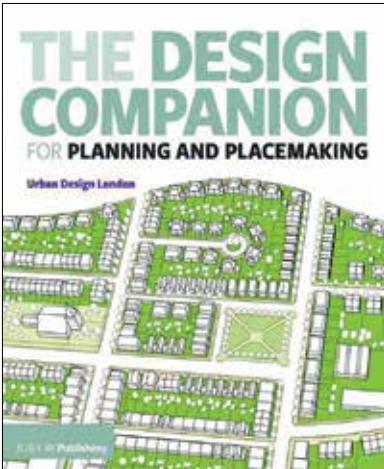
Country which recognised the value of the public realm, walking and cycling, and the need to sustain the vitality of town and city centres and to respect local context; in essence recognising the value of sustaining and creating good places and by association the value of urban design.

The incoming Blair government in 1997 not only maintained this approach but took it to a whole new level. The new focus was on the major cities, and support and investment flowed into these just as the art and science of urban design became more widely understood and adopted by many planning authorities. Lord (Richard) Rogers' *Towards an Urban Renaissance* was published in 1999 and CABA was set up with government funding to promote and advise on good design in the built environment. Placemaking moved centre stage, planning authorities were given the task of delivering this new vision of how places should be and, equally importantly, given the resources to do it. Urban designers were placed at the heart of this work. Things could surely only get better.

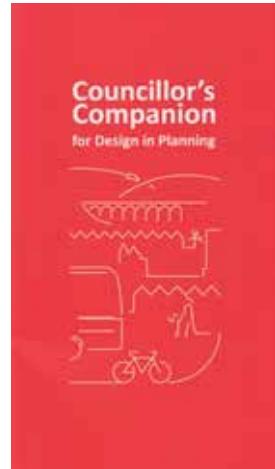
It was Harold Macmillan who when asked what prime ministers most feared replied 'Events dear boy, events'. The financial crisis of 2008 was remarkable for its unexpectedness as it was for the economic impact it had across the world. It can therefore be reasonably described as a political 'event' rather than a feature of the normal economic cycle. The resultant austerity measures introduced by George Osborne under the relatively new Cameron government not only wiped out most public funding for regeneration and environmental projects, it saw a year-on-year dramatic reduction in the funding for local authorities. Planning departments were hit particularly badly with budgets cut by 50-60 per cent and the consequential loss of skills and capacity.

More recently, the May government declared housing a major national priority. The aim of delivering significantly higher numbers of new houses was not new but delivering the policy had a new urgency. However, the government

2 Two influential documents: *Quality in Town and Country* (Department of the Environment, 1994), *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (Urban Task Force, 1999),
3 The Prince of Wales' controversial but influential book *A Vision of Britain*, 1989



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recognised that public resistance to new development was a major barrier to delivering this objective. One of the contributing factors it believed was the low or mediocre quality of housing built in the last 30 years with much of it looking the same wherever you were in the country. In recognition of this the government has, in addition to the recent NPPF, launched a number of new initiatives such as the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission and has also funded training events around the recently published *Design Companion* (UDL, 2018, published by RIBA). Applying urban design principles is again seen as an important means to a political end.

While the renewed recognition at national policy level of the contribution urban design can and should make through the planning system is very much welcomed, the reinstatement of funding at the local level to deliver this ambition is missing. The ability of local planners to do anything more than their basic statutory duties in plan-making and processing planning applications remains severely limited. Telling local authorities what they should be doing is not enough when they don't have the resources, skills and, increasingly, the motivation to deliver on these exhortations.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This brings us to the role of local as opposed to national government. The delivery of much of the built environment is through local, not national government. The ability to adopt a clear and long-term vision for their areas backed up with a commitment that is able to withstand a changing national financial and policy climate is the hallmark of the most successful authorities. The transformational regeneration of regional cities led by visionary leaders such as Sir Richard Knowles at Birmingham, Sir Richard Leese at Manchester and Lord (Bob) Kerslake at Sheffield is a tribute to the importance of strong local leadership. While each city had its own priorities, opportunities and challenges, the principles of good placemaking have been consistently adopted. It is their application shaped by local circumstances and characteristics that makes each a successful and distinctive place.

The Urban Design Group's suggested manifesto proposes a number of sensible and practical objectives, most of which could be adopted relatively easily by national or local government given the will. However, the way in which this is structured and presented needs to be multi-layered and targeted, reflecting different areas of responsibility and responding to the different agendas of the target audience. Items relating to national government need to focus on national policy such as delivering quality housing, adequate resources for local authorities, and the stronger integration of planning and transport which has remained an unfulfilled ambition for too long. Those items relating to local government should focus more on plan making, the processing of applications and providing the necessary design skills to deliver on the ground.

Unfortunately, being rational and worthy is not always

The priority must be to secure greater skills and resources for local government coupled with re-energising local planners and urban designers to take up the task that central government is asking them to undertake

sufficient to gain the attention, let alone the support of politicians. To overcome this, each proposal should be able to demonstrate how it directly supports the delivery of the government's (national or local) stated priorities. This is not as challenging as it may sound. Most political manifestos promote objectives that seek to make life better for everyone. Demonstrating how urban design can help with these objectives should not be too difficult. The point is that it should come across as a document that says 'this is how urban design can help deliver your agenda' rather than 'this is what government should do to deliver our agenda'. Reflecting on the last 40 years, urban design has prospered when it has not only demonstrated its relevance to the political issues of the day, but offered creative and practical ways to help to deliver solutions.

KEY PRIORITIES

In the current climate, the priority must be to secure greater skills and resources for local government coupled with re-energising local planners and urban designers to take up the task that central government is asking them to undertake. The latter may be as hard to achieve as the former. After years of cutbacks and being blamed for everything, their motivation and energy levels have been sapped. I fear that the excitement and ambition that characterised my early days in local government are in danger of ebbing away. If planners are part of the solution, as the government now insists, then giving them the practical tools to undertake this role is what needs to happen.

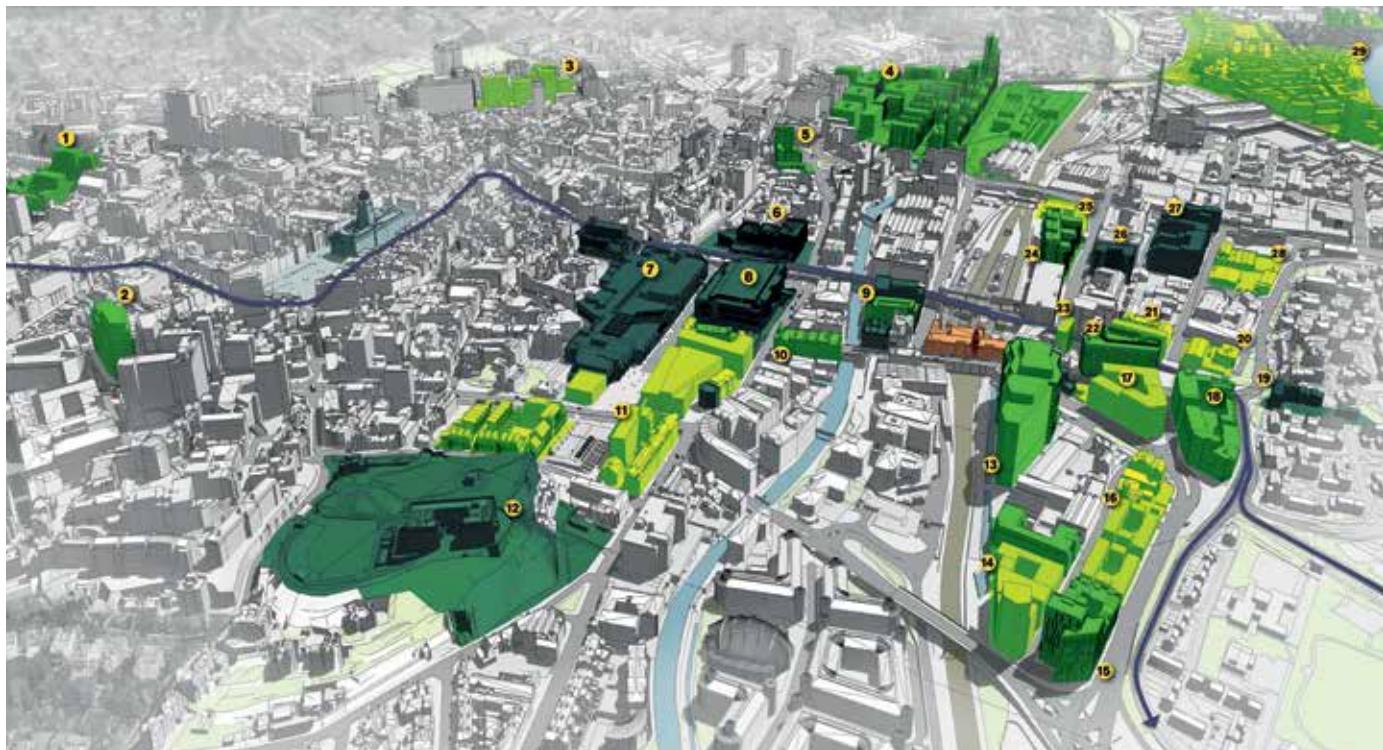
A strategic and targeted lobbying strategy that specifies the tools and resources needed to deliver the government's stated objectives would be more effective than a single manifesto. ●

4 *The Design Companion* (Urban Design London, RIBA 2017) and *Councillor's Companion* (Urban Design London, 2018)

Meredith Evans, planner and urban designer, former Corporate Director of Telford and Wrekin Council

Nottingham's Politicians Champion Design Quality

Laura Alvarez and Nigel Turpin explain the long road to securing design quality



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Over a decade ago following CABE's recommendations, Nottingham embraced the concept of Design Champions to raise the quality of schemes. Les Sparks was the chair of the City's independent Design Review Panel and became Design Champion for Nottingham. Although the use of Design Champions was short-lived, it was the catalyst that gradually drove Nottingham towards a much more complex but stable design quality system that developed organically, and eventually became part of the culture of the City Council. This progression was supported by the leader of the Council, Cllr Jon Collins, by the chair of planning committee Cllr Chris Gibson, and by portfolio holders Cllrs Jane Urquhart and Linda Woodings.

A CHANGE OF CULTURE REQUIRES POLITICAL STABILITY

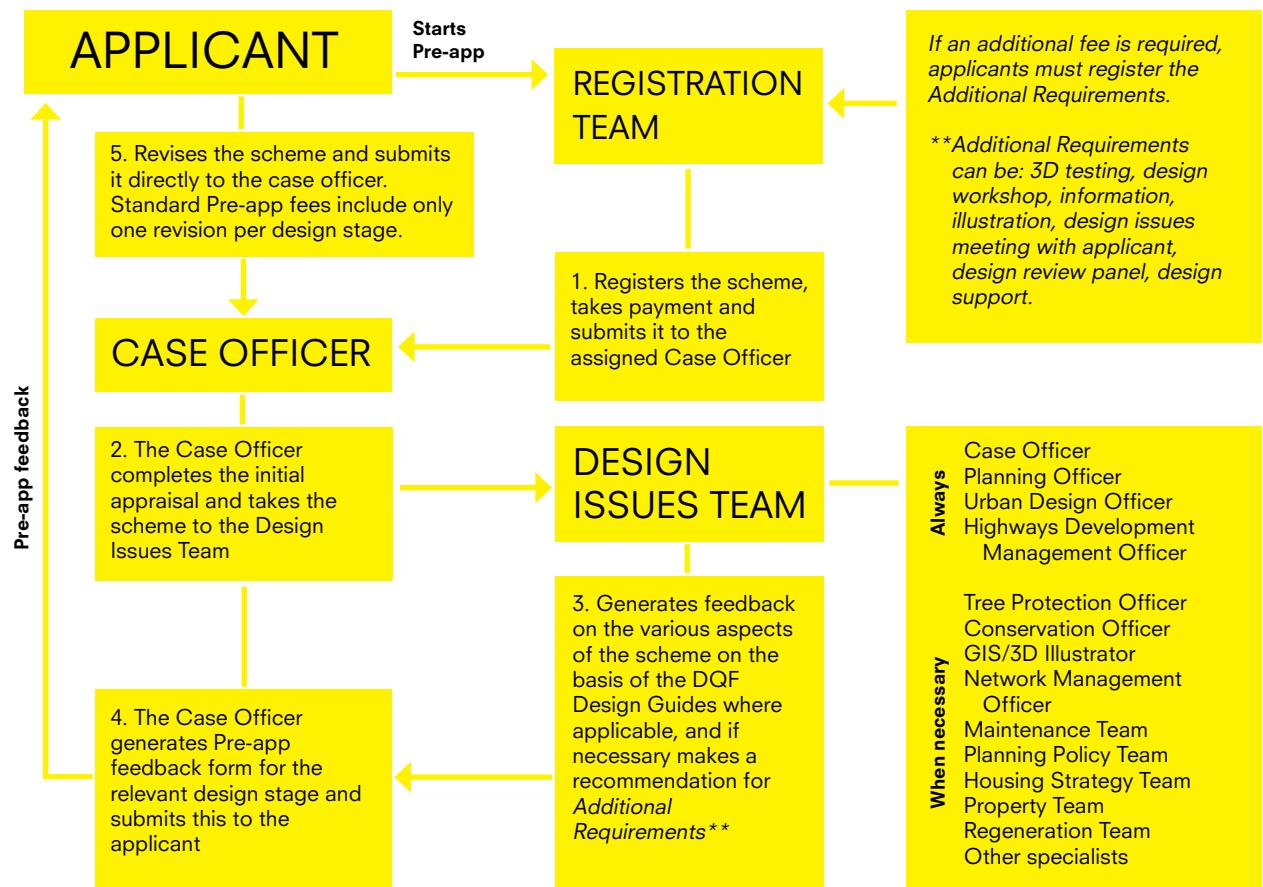
A few years ago, surveys showed that the quality of design in the built environment was declining: a CABE review of building quality (2006) showed that 42 per cent of homes were substandard, which correlated with the quality of places being built in Nottingham. Initially the use of a Design Champion seemed like a good idea but in time, it became apparent that it was inadequate as an instrument to promote design quality. Two significant issues were difficult to reconcile with collaborative, collective approaches to placemaking:

- Despite the level of expertise, a professional or trained politician was unlikely to have an opinion on design that was entirely objective and there was a risk that his/her opinion would seem to be superior to everyone else's.
- Appointing Champions had a perceived danger of making built environment decisions an elitist process and the quality of place an issue concerning the academically adept over others.

Instead, a system where the role of leading professionals was equal and level with all other stakeholders seemed like an option more likely to foster a culture of pride, ownership and place-care. The problem with this democratic approach was that to achieve collaborative placemaking in practice, two significant changes were necessary: a change in culture, so that everybody understood technical concepts and could communicate what good design meant to them; and a review of the planning processes so that tools and strategies could support the change. Given this dilemma, 15 years ago the City embarked on a long-term plan to forge a culture where place quality was at the heart of every project, no matter how big or small.

The epicentre of this change was the Heritage and Urban Design Team, supported and strengthened by the council leadership. Initially, staff found significant barriers to promoting place quality: there was a perception that quality costs more, and that gains were not quantifiable; the value of good design had not been evidenced sufficiently to justify some political decisions. However, as time passed, where minor risks could be taken,

1 Nottingham South proposed improvements, showing sites under construction or with planning approval



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2 The pre-application process in Nottingham 3 and 4 Market Square, Nottingham before and after improvements

projects became roaring successes. The in-house skills helped produce graphics that communicated ideas to politicians who then supported the schemes. Public realm improvements like the Old Market Square were soon loved by all and are still celebrated. Gradually, in-house experts gained the trust of leaders and politicians. A significant factor that allowed this process to take place was the political stability in Nottingham, where changes were not radical enough to jeopardise the gradual development of this working ethos. Strong, stable and long-term leadership meant that perceived risks could be taken and perhaps more importantly, trust was built over time.

PROMOTING A GOOD WORKING ETHOS

Councillors and key decision makers began to appreciate the value and benefits of good design and collaboration, and a goal was set for staff to work collaboratively across departments. Different teams began to understand each other's technical language and came up with formulae that worked for all. Staff across teams established shared processes that were timely and avoided delays. These are now being incorporated in various guides to offer applicants more clarity and certainty regarding the steps towards achieving planning approval. The process of producing these has proved to be more important than the documents themselves: bringing all parties together in a collaborative environment is invaluable to achieving consensual good quality design advice. Crucially, the Heritage and Urban Design Team began to become involved in every pre-application and planning submission appraisal. *Building for Life* was adopted, the GIS team developed the 3D city massing tool to work alongside urban designers, and the independent Design Review Panel



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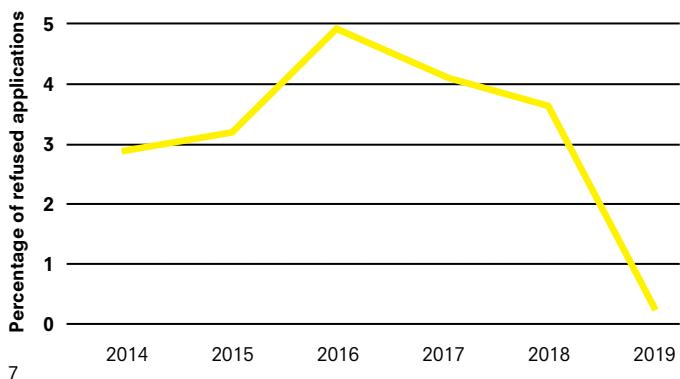


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A significant strength is the confidence of accepting that not everything can always go to plan and that some solutions do not deliver expected outcomes



was used more often to appraise schemes. Nottingham soon became an avid user of the pre-application process and currently schemes are developed by practitioners in collaboration with an in-house team of experts. The changes also involved the introduction of the Design Issues process, a weekly meeting of officers where all departments involved in a scheme sit together at various stages to review design quality. Formal appraisals, including a multidisciplinary commentary, are produced for applicants after the meeting; these also inform the members of the planning committee. This process not only facilitates conversations and helps the officers involved to overcome design constraints by arriving at consensual solutions, but it also brings everyone up to speed with the main concerns and goals of the expert and departments.

A significant strength is the confidence of accepting that not everything can always go to plan and that some solutions do not deliver expected outcomes. Staff and leaders regularly review schemes to appraise positive and negative aspects of designs and processes. These evaluations become a tool for training and form a case study archive that is regularly used as a reference to inform other schemes.

OFFERING CERTAINTY TO INVESTORS

Inward investors want certainty and a good degree of confidence. Nottingham is achieving this through comprehensive spatial strategies such as the Heritage Strategy, and the City Centre Urban Design Guide (2009). A programme of strategic masterplans is currently being produced for the City Centre as well as Supplementary Planning Documents for regeneration

areas and large sites. These have offered confidence and certainty to commercial investors and have been crucial to support bids for additional funding. For example, the Heritage Strategy was pivotal to Nottingham winning bids through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the biggest Heritage Action Zone allocation in the country. Through this funding Nottingham opened its Urban Room in 2018, after years of detailed planning following the 2013 Farrell Review.

Funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government helped the delivery of a *Design Quality Framework* (DQF) for the City. The framework involved an in-depth analysis of gaps in the quality of places and buildings, and in the planning processes that led to them. The study also highlighted positive approaches. For example, it evidenced the value of the pre-application process as a tool to speed up the process and to reduce the number of planning conditions. It also evidenced the need for adopting the Nationally Described Space Standards through the Local Plan, recently supported by the planning inspector. The results of this analysis informed the production of a series of design guides developed in collaboration with industry, residents and local communities. The DQF process itself has fostered a positive change in the way in which the Council works with local communities and the public. Four DQF documents were launched in April 2019: the *Introduction to the DQF*, the *Housing Design Guide*, the *Streets Design Guide* and the *Façades Design Guide*. Other documents will follow.

Another strategy introduced by the Council was a pre-agenda meeting where technical staff, the planning committee members and local councillors review the forthcoming items of the planning agenda and the design process portfolio. Through this procedure, planning committee members are made aware of the changes that have often resulted from extensive negotiation and pre-application discussions. It is another way of making councillors aware of the design process and its nuances, and of building that all-important trust, since they have made the commitment to become involved in the pre-application process and work with technical staff. Councillors approach the team when a scheme in their area is submitted for pre-application and they remain briefed throughout the process, having an opportunity to make representations on behalf of their constituency. The number of planning refusals is now extremely low, which gives confidence to applicants that working in collaboration with the Council can speed up the process and remove barriers to achieving planning permission. Initially, the percentage of refusals increased when the quality of

5 Cllr Linda Woodings
6 Cllr Chris Gibson
7 Diagram of percentage of refused planning applications in Nottingham

design became more relevant, but it rapidly decreased once the change in culture was more widely embraced.

Politicians involved in design quality conversations are now part of the movement striving for better design. Meetings involve more formal 3D reviews of massing and heights, to informal detailed reviews of proposals, looking at the depth of reveals, palettes and shadows. Members have developed a taste for good design, an urge to understand technical issues, and the use of a common language. The City has now programmed urban design and placemaking training for councillors and committee members. Workshops will involve the review of those schemes where leaders and staff have been involved, and will include desktop studies, site visits and the use of appraisal tools such as *Building for Life* and *Nottingham Design Quality Framework* toolkits. The question is currently how to ensure the process also engages citizens who know how places work for them and often have simple but effective ideas.

INVESTING IN URBAN DESIGN

Contrary to the national trend, the City Council has not only maintained but also expanded the Heritage and Urban Design Team as the value of place quality became evident through an increased interest from investors and an improved regeneration platform. This has meant that, with adequate software, a strengthened in-house team, and with expertise in heritage, archaeology, conservation, funding sourcing, history, urban design, architecture, illustration and social sustainability, the value of good design has become the driver of a business model that could help Nottingham make the most of its assets and secure long-term financial sustainability. To that end, it now offers its skills in helping design layouts to external partners, and it is even becoming technically astute at charging fees for its service.

In 2017, Nottingham City Council took part in the UDG and Place Alliance's Survey of Design Skills in English Local Authorities. The survey measured four key themes: change over time; in-house capacity; design review; and design guidance and training. The table below shows the results of the study in comparison to Nottingham City Council's service.

POLITICIANS AND PLACEMAKING

Politicians' support on investing in urban design skills brought significant positive changes in Nottingham and therefore the City will continue to develop this model of strategic planning, attention to detail, collaborative work and continuous learning.



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8 Nottingham
Contemporary by
Caruso St John

Councillors in Nottingham are aware that, as we move towards an age of placemaking, the planning process not only needs to adopt tools and strategies that will enable multidisciplinary teams to work closely together, but must also have communities and residents' input at their heart. Therefore the next stage involves making the planning process more open and available to the public and implementing and establishing inclusive, accessible tools that enable everyone to have an equal voice and an opportunity to shape the city. The Urban Room project and the development of the DQF with an inclusive ethos are testaments to this commitment.

All of this creates a culture of securing design quality, a task way beyond one figurehead, one that requires a team, a department, a planning authority and a city as a whole. ●

Laura Alvarez, Senior Principal Urban Design & Conservation Officer, and Nigel Turpin, Heritage & Urban Design Manager, Nottingham City Council

VARIABLE	SURVEY FINDINGS	NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
Urban Design and Placemaking team	<p>Only 10 per cent of the authorities have a team</p> <p>Non specialist planning officers are making decisions regarding design issues</p>	Nottingham has a team of nine qualified specialists to support planning officers
Design Review	<p>Only 19 per cent of the authorities are regular users of Design Review Panels</p> <p>Only 30 per cent of the authorities have their own Design Review Panels</p>	Nottingham has its own Design Review Panels formed by independent consultants and specialist practitioners. Compulsory for large schemes as part of the pre-app process and recommended where necessary.
Proactive Design Guidance	Resources for the production of new proactive design guide for sites or large areas have now largely disappeared	Nottingham is producing a series of SPDs for large development areas, a Citywide Masterplan and a Design Quality Framework (DQF) comprising multiple design guides to set clear minimum standards.
Training and skills	Urban design training is typically minimal and focussed on raising awareness rather than on delivering skills	Nottingham is rolling out a design skills programme based on the DQF content to planning officers, councillors and planning committee members.



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Liverpool One: A Case Study

Victoria Lawson presents a fairly unique and successful experiment in local political leadership and partnership

This article seeks to give insights into the retail-led Liverpool One scheme (2008) in Liverpool city centre: broadly speaking, a development of exceptional quality in terms of both its expensive materials and the thoughtfulness of its design. The scheme is of interest because the juries for two of its key awards, the RTPI national award (2008) and the European Laureate award (2010), praised the pace at which the scheme was developed, seeing a success story based on good urban planning/design and good governance. In this light – good governance – the role of politicians in the production of Liverpool One is the focus of this article. Its findings stem from interviews with local politicians, but also others, to ensure that a range of perspectives of the scheme were captured. All 28 interviewees agreed to take part anonymously. Therefore the article does not centre around the actions of individual politicians, but more their reconfiguration of council processes to aid the delivery of Liverpool One. This involved the creation of a new political climate and within it, decisions about land assembly, securing an income for Liverpool City Council and creating fast working conditions. Each of these will be examined in more detail.

1 The change of scale and complexity brought about by Liverpool One.
Source: *Liverpool: regeneration of a city centre*.

CREATING A NEW, POLITICAL CLIMATE

In May 1998 the Liberal Democrats won control of Liverpool City Council. They announced there would be a 'new Liverpool' with an incredibly business-friendly agenda. Central to this ambition was the city centre. As such, the City Council quickly passed a resolution for the comprehensive redevelopment of an area which later became known as Liverpool One. Given that the City Council did not have enough money to redevelop the site, they advertised for potential private development partners. In 2000 they selected Grosvenor for this role, the development company owned by the Duke of Westminster, then the late Gerald Grosvenor. Despite the fact that Gerald was Britain's 3rd richest man when the scheme opened in 2008, there was a certain tolerance towards capitalistic approaches to redeveloping Liverpool city centre spaces in this way. Revealed in the interviews was the sentiment that central government had continued to ignore Liverpool, so why not facilitate the private sector in reshaping the city instead? This response stems from the 1980s, when Liverpool's hard-left Militant City Council clashed with Thatcher's government over public spending, amid a more general city-wide feeling that, faced with Liverpool's economic decline, central government was happy to leave the city to rot.

ASSEMBLING LAND

Covering 42.5 acres, Liverpool One is often referred to as an 'outdoor mall'. If a mall is to make serious money, it has to be large to achieve the required regional retail pull. Therefore the outdoor mall as a built form is difficult for the private sector to achieve alone. They need the land assembly powers of local government to amass the necessary land for development, through Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs). Interestingly, it was Liverpool City Council who pressed to compulsorily acquire such a very large site. They wanted to maximise the available floor space, so any future developer could gain the biggest possible commercial benefit from the scheme. As no grant aid was available for a retail proposal, any future development had to be financially viable in its own right. In fact, in the interviews, Grosvenor staff admitted to initially feeling quite perplexed by the sheer size of the proposed scheme.

The City Council needed to acquire 248 different interests and ownerships across the pre-development site when assembling land for the scheme. However, the use of CPOs led to some considerable criticism: CPOs were only to be undertaken for public benefit and arguably a mall of shiny shops developed to make a profit for private investors, did not fall within this category. Matters came to a

head over the compulsory purchase of Quiggins, an alternative shopping emporium and creative hub which was regarded as part of Liverpool culture. Quiggins opposed their CPO, as did the local Quaker church whose building was only 24 years old at the time. However, at the CPO inquiry, the inspector found favour with the City Council/Grosvenor partnership, who had argued that in order to succeed, the scheme design had to be comprehensive and not piecemeal. Therefore buildings could not be left out of the demolition programme.

SECURING A FUTURE INCOME

To this day, Liverpool One remains a joint venture. While routine operations are firmly in the hands of Grosvenor, Liverpool City Council remain the landowner of the site. They have the freehold, although they have granted Grosvenor a head lease for 250 years. From this arrangement, the City Council has secured an income from Liverpool One from cash flow and overage. Cash flow is Liverpool One's total annual income after all expenses, insurance, maintenance, utilities and so on, have been paid. Overage is a percentage share of the tenants' rent which is payable to the City Council once Liverpool One profits have gone over a pre-agreed threshold. While figures are hard to pin-down, in 2004 the *Liverpool Echo* reported that the combined cash flow/overage income would amount to roughly £5–£6m a year, which equated to more than 5 per cent of Liverpool City Council's income. Given that the City Council makes a sustained, long-term financial return from Liverpool One, this means arguably, that a mall of shiny shops is actually for the public benefit, as the income is distributed evenly across the city and spent on keeping council taxes down. These taxes were said to be the highest in the country, to finish paying off the debts run up by the Militants through their rapid expansion of Liverpool's municipal housing stock. Part-funded by loans from overseas banks, the Militants almost bankrupted the City Council, forcing them to sell off municipal real estate to pay their debts. The ongoing associated ill-feeling about this was the reason the City Council refused to sell Grosvenor the land on which Liverpool One stands, but granted the head lease instead.

Additionally, retaining land ownership gave Liverpool City Council leverage in their negotiations with Grosvenor, as they sought to keep the scheme's streets open 24 hours a day. This was partly in response to the 'mall-ing' of Liverpool city centre which had already taken place, with former streets disappearing under the enclosed malls of St John's Precinct (1971) and Clayton Square (1988). Their construction had severed walking routes across the city centre, particularly at night when the malls were closed. Liverpool One, in contrast, created a version of the area's original, pre-war street pattern, which knitted into the adjacent street network and was permanently open to both the sky and pedestrians. Given these efforts, there was some exasperation that the press criticised the scheme for its privatisation of previously public space and with it, Grosvenor's power to decide the rules and regulations for that space.

CREATING FAST WORKING CONDITIONS

Initially, Liverpool One was largely a bank-rolled development. As a scheme in Liverpool was viewed as risky, it proved difficult for Grosvenor to attract co-investors. While the final bill was actually around £1.3 billion, Grosvenor had to put together £400 million of the initial £650 million projected development costs with bank loans. As such, due to the pressures of bank debt/interest, Grosvenor needed a planning approach which would enable working at speed. In response, the City Council's Scheme of Delegation was utilised, which had been established to deal with small-scale development like porches and garages. It was agreed that, first, outline planning permission would be sought through submitting an overarching 152-page masterplan for the whole development site of 27 individual buildings and six open spaces. The masterplan would go before the planning committee to be determined. Following the granting of outline



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Liverpool One created a version of the area's original, pre-war street pattern, which knitted into the adjacent street network and was permanently open to both the sky and pedestrians

permission, any outstanding details were to be dealt with via delegated powers, at the planning officer level. Only if there was a major deviation from the masterplan would the determination of a detailed application be elevated to the planning committee. However, two key individual sites sought detailed planning consent straight away. They were to act as exemplars of the design quality that was expected to follow, in order to build trust between the design team and the politicians that the approach would work.

While this approach allowed the planning process around Liverpool One to be tightly programmed, handling the planning applications in this way meant that Liverpool One could potentially go before the planning committee – the representatives of the people – only once. Therefore, working in parallel with this approach was a Member Working Group (MWG) of five local politicians, selected from all parties to combat any political division over the scheme. Originally created to select the development partner, after Grosvenor's appointment, the MWG

2 Quiggins on Peter's Lane: an alternative shopping emporium which was demolished. Source: J. McCoughlin.

3 Peter's Lane arcade today: the scheme's high-end area for 'aspirational' boutiques. Source: V. Lawson



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changed from a selection committee to a design forum. The politicians were to work with Grosvenor staff to support and develop the design of Liverpool One, as well as being involved in the architect selection process for some buildings. They met at weekly Design Review Meetings (DRM), where depending on the issues or sites being discussed, Grosvenor's architects and designers and City Council design advisers and officers, including planning staff, were also in attendance. In this way, the DRMs were central to the scheme's decision-making environment.

However, the MWG had no decision-making powers, unlike the ten local politicians who would normally sit on a statutory planning committee. Instead, the role of politicians at the DRM was variously described as 'sitting-in', 'commenting' and 'giving opinions'. When the issue was raised, during the interviews, that the creation of a MWG had actually removed elected members from decision-making processes, the approach was defended. It was argued that local politicians were actually able to influence the scheme much more than a planning committee because they were involved in the evolution of the design the whole way through. To be informally involved was more powerful. Yet the irony was that the politicians on the planning committee potentially wielded a huge amount of influence over the scheme design. This was evidenced by the relative ease with which the planning committee modified the height of One Park West. Of the 800-plus detailed design issues stemming from the master-plan, the height of this building was the only application which

went before the planning committee at the detailed design stage. The architect, César Pelli, initially proposed a tower approaching 40 storeys. Following strong opposition from English Heritage, this was reduced to 20 storeys, and after further opposition from English Heritage and two statutory objectors, the planning committee lowered the proposed height to 17 storeys, leaving an infuriated Grosvenor with no time to appeal within their tight delivery programme.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

The speed, scale and complexity of change brought about by Liverpool One were certainly impressive, and the scheme has many admirers. However a range of people were interviewed for this article and concerns were raised about the processes behind Liverpool One. These concerns centred on public and political participation in the production of the built environment, not least because the MWG/DRMs were viewed as an inner group of city makers who kept proceedings behind closed doors. This frustrated some, especially as Liverpool One was something of an experiment which they wished to know more about.

Furthermore, such feelings of exclusion were exacerbated by the fact that ward councillors did not appear to be utilised as a vehicle for communicating their constituents' dissenting views. It was suspected that this was because the City Council and Grosvenor were enjoying good working relationships and nobody wanted to disrupt this. However, an award-winning scheme was produced and in response to these types of criticism, a local politician highlighted that 'we are a can-do-city... building the whole of Liverpool One is what a can-do-city does'. As a vast scheme which needed momentum if it was to be completed, politicians saw their reconfigurations of council processes as the types of appropriate government mechanisms required to kick-start regeneration in Liverpool city centre, and they have had significant, continuing success. The value of completed city centre schemes during 2018 was £745 million, with an estimated £890 million of completions due for 2019 (*Liverpool Development Update*, 2018). This article has hopefully provided insights into how experimentations of this nature, especially so focussed on delivery, operate in the built environment. ●

4 The 42.5 acre Liverpool One scheme boundary in red.
Source: *Liverpool One: remaking a city centre*, (Littlefield, 2009)

5 An initial proposed tower at One Park West approaching 40 storeys was eventually lowered to 17 storeys by the planning committee

Dr Victoria Lawson, chartered town planner and urban designer with a design-related PhD from the University of Manchester.

With thanks to Trevor Skempton, urban design consultant to Liverpool City Council

Better Streets in Waltham Forest

Amy Priestley shows how the support of local politicians has helped a scheme to improve the borough's streets



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Many local authorities are coming to realise that their streets need to work more efficiently, the air needs to be cleaner, and communities more active, healthy and less reliant on cars. However, encouraging people to drive less and walk and cycle more, not only means making walking and cycling attractive choices, but also making driving a less attractive choice.

Why? The first reason is competitive advantage and breaking the habits of a lifetime. People are accustomed to driving cars, even for short, walkable journeys. In London, over 80 per cent of journeys made by motorised modes (including car and public transport) could be walked or cycled, and most of these trips are currently made by car. Even when it isn't quicker to drive, people still perceive that it is. When driving feels easy, the competitiveness of walking and cycling is diminished.

Secondly, streets have a finite amount of space, and on many, most of it is given to vehicles. Making space for walking and cycling therefore means taking away space from cars in order to either separate cyclists from motorised traffic, or create low traffic, low speed environments.

This involves making some difficult decisions, especially for elected politicians. So how are we to encourage people to think differently about how their streets should work, and how people should move around their neighbourhood, town or city?

ENJOY WALTHAM FOREST

The London Borough of Waltham Forest is an example of a place that has taken big steps towards rebalancing streets to better support and encourage walking and cycling, and thinking about streets as places for people, rather than principally for the movement of vehicles.

In 2014, the Borough was awarded £27m from Transport for London (TfL), through the Mini-Holland Programme, along with similar amounts to Kingston and Enfield Boroughs. The programme sought to encourage higher cycling levels in outer London Boroughs, primarily by improving infrastructure. The programme known as Enjoy Waltham Forest (Enjoy WF), employed a variety of approaches. So far these include introducing 22km of segregated or semi-segregated cycle tracks on key corridor routes such as Lea Bridge Road, upgrading major junctions and crossings for cycling, and redesigning side road junctions and bus stops to improve safety.

Area based or 'Village' schemes such as Walthamstow Village were based on the Dutch *woonerf* concept to reduce traffic dominance in residential areas. Controversially, Village schemes involved introducing 43 modal filters that filter out vehicle traffic at a specific point in the street to allow only pedestrians and cyclists to pass through. When used strategically, through-traffic can be prevented in an entire neighbourhood, forcing non-local traffic back onto the strategic network and giving streets back to residents and their neighbours.

The initial aim of the Enjoy WF programme was to increase cycling mode share to 10 per cent (from around 1.8 per cent), and to make cycling a safe and attractive option for all aged from 8 to 80. However, it became clear that designing for cycling was also an opportunity to design streets for walking, people and placemaking.

1–2 Francis Rd, Leyton, before and after the improvement scheme

Modal filters became new pocket parks and green spaces, tired verges were transformed into linear parks and new public spaces, and green spaces were created. Key improvements included part-pedestrianising Orford Road and Francis Road, two local shopping parades previously traffic clogged and with little space for outdoor seating and pedestrian life.

Central to the success of Enjoy WF is the determination and vision of Cllr Clyde Loakes, Deputy Leader of London Borough of Waltham Forest and portfolio holder for environment, supported by an excellent team.

What follows are some reflections on how the team has achieved what at times, felt like the impossible, overcame barriers and public objections, and delivered transformational improvements to streets for walking and cycling. We hope this helps to advise, inspire and give confidence to others with a similar vision, to start a conversation with colleagues, political leaders, decision-makers and local communities.

PITCHING IT RIGHT

Achieving modal shift towards cycling and walking essentially means designing for people who currently do not walk and cycle much. Ironically, the target market of many of the projects introduced throughout the borough often included the very people who felt the most angered and frustrated.

Talking to the wider community and politicians about cycling schemes and cyclists can be difficult. Firstly, most people currently don't cycle as part of their everyday lives, therefore assume the scheme is not designed to improve their lives. Secondly, angst against cyclists as a particular type of person does exist, and therefore any attempt to improve cycling infrastructure is perceived to be validating the bad (and not actually bad) things that cyclists do, such as red light jumping, weaving through traffic, even getting places faster than motorists, etc.

Pitching the Enjoy WF programme to the local community in the correct way was therefore vital. Despite the TfL funding being primarily directed at delivering cycling improvements, it was important that the conversation with the community was focussed around improving streets for people to get around and enjoy in a healthier, more sustainable way, reinventing the active travel narrative.

Therefore, the approach in Waltham Forest was to lead with the message of Walk, Cycle, Enjoy under the banner, *Enjoy Waltham Forest*. The term 'cyclist' became 'people who cycle' and rather than talking about 'infrastructure', greater emphasis was placed on streets as places for people.

SET OUT THE FACTS

Having data is the key way to start a conversation and build a logical, coherent narrative for a scheme. Furthermore, when faced with concerns or objections, having evidence and data is useful to provide reassurance, dispel myths and counter arguments, whether with the local community, council officers, decision-makers or politicians.

The broader the base of data and evidence, the better. It could cover anything from air quality, retail spending, health data, collisions, propensity to cycle, cycle and pedestrian counts, school travel, vacant business units, resident/visitor surveys, bus journey times, or research into public life. Where data for an area is not available, increasing amounts of useful research and precedents exist. Monitoring the council's own schemes is also a great way to generate evidence to inform future schemes.

The impact on local businesses was a particularly pertinent concern in LB Waltham Forest, and it was important to recognise the local context to reassure businesses. Surveys with businesses on Lea Bridge Road found that 63 per cent of business owners perceived that customers drove to their business. In fact, 64 per cent of people surveyed on-street reported that they walked, and just 20 per cent travelled by car. This data proved invaluable in conversations with concerned businesses.



Concerns and claims that the Orford Road scheme, which part-pedestrianised a local shopping parade, would damage local businesses formed the basis for many objections. These were quashed when a post-scheme audit found that all business units were occupied for the first time in several decades. Similar findings are emerging on Francis Road, which received a similar treatment to restrict vehicle traffic and regenerate a tired local shopping parade.

ENGAGE EARLY AND MEANINGFULLY

One of the worst outcomes of a scheme is not that it receives objections, but that a debate never starts and that people genuinely don't feel they have any say in proposals. This alienates communities, leads to distrust, deters potentially supportive people, and exacerbates any negativity.

Early community engagement (i.e. prior to any comprehensive design work) helps to build a positive relationship and ensures the debate starts from 'how can your street be made better' rather than a negative rhetoric about cycling, loss of parking or the engagement process. The Enjoy WF scheme design process began with an area-wide online survey, using the Commonplace platform, enabling people to report their views and feelings about

3–4 Orford Road, part of the Walthamstow Village scheme, before and after implementation

their neighbourhood, and suggesting how it could be improved. Design workshops were also held with schools and communities, helping to design everything from pocket park schemes to the location of modal filters.

A number of new community groups have formed or grown as a result of Enjoy WF community engagement, maintaining street planting or organising community events, from children's scooter clubs to Christmas carol concerts, to make use of new and improved streets and spaces. However, not all schemes gained community support: suburban wards at Highams Park and Chingford, where car ownership levels were higher, were perhaps some of the most vocal, despite being in areas where some of the lightest touch measures were proposed. Curiously, residents and businesses in the Markhouse Village scheme area, despite having high levels of deprivation, low levels of car ownership and several traffic rat-run streets, remain the most resistant to the Enjoy WF scheme, and so far no modal filters have won community support at consultation.

Despite these cases, there are signs that engagement has helped to start a debate and encourage people to think differently about their streets. Residents in the Hoe Wood Village scheme area who initially objected to the scheme (resulting in some proposals not being implemented) have now asked the council to be consulted again. This rather staggering u-turn in public opinion shows how engagement and debate even when a scheme is rejected, can still be a very effective and important exercise for communities.

MAKE FRIENDS

Developing a strong relationship with key stakeholders and groups that have a similar sustainable agenda helps to maintain a positive message and support for a project, especially when objections become louder. They can reach out to people in places the Council can't get to, such as social media, where key debates amongst the community take place. They may also have shared interests and perspectives (being a neighbour for example), helping them to have more open and trusting conversations with people about particular schemes.

The Waltham Forest Cycling Campaign (WFCC) was a key asset and critical friend to the Council, providing feedback on the design of schemes and generating visible, vocal support, ultimately helping the programme to weather the backlash and gain wider support. WFCC maintained a strong social media presence throughout, publicly debating, promoting and defending schemes when criticisms were at their most impassioned. Additionally, they and other supportive residents, groups and communities came together to launch their own We Support WF Mini-Holland campaign, broadening the positive, supportive message.

There were other friends along the way too, including schools, businesses and community groups, often with a more localised link to a specific project within the programme. These helped to highlight the wider benefits of the scheme to businesses and communities. School children helped to plant and look after rain gardens, and local business owners rallied around their neighbours and utilised improved footways. Other local community groups also made use of the Council's bike borrowing schemes and led rides.

SEEING RESULTS

The journey was not always the smoothest. To date, one High Court challenge and one public inquiry have been brought against the Council by community group E17 Streets 4 All, both of which were ruled in the Council's favour. Two protests were held following the first Walthamstow Village scheme, which included the part-pedestrianisation of Orford Road.

Despite this, in the 2018 local elections Cllr Loakes increased his majority significantly, as did the Labour Party across the borough. Encouragingly, candidates that supported the programme increased their majorities across the borough, while those



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Developing a strong relationship with key stakeholders and groups that have a similar sustainable agenda helps to maintain a positive message and support for a project

candidates that didn't support the Enjoy WF programme saw poorer results.

There have been positive signs of the Enjoy WF programme having an impact too, huge increases in cycling levels recorded (a 93 per cent increase comparing Oct 2017 to Oct 2018 on Forest Road). Research by Dr Rachel Aldred (University of Westminster) found that, after year 1 of Enjoy WF, people living in 'high dose' scheme areas were walking for 32 minutes extra per week and cycling an extra 9 minutes per week compared to the London average, despite TfL not expecting the Mini-Holland Programme to see any impacts within the first year.

Overall, the message from the Council of making better, healthier streets and places has succeeded, helped hugely by facts and evidence, and continuous support of key stakeholders. The changes Waltham Forest is delivering have raised the aspirations of the local community and produced some excellent examples of what can be achieved when streets are thought about differently, and it is clear that many in the local community agree. ●

Amy Priestley, urban designer at Urban Movement

5 The Salop Road/
Essex Road pocket
park scheme, a
community planting
day with the Council



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Citizens and Politicians

Chris Brown advocates the involvement of politicians and communities in urban design and placemaking

Who speaks for the people? Who is the most representative? This arm wrestle typically arises in urban areas in the power struggle between community groups and local politicians. ‘We’ve been democratically elected’ say the politicians. ‘Who elected you?’

Dig a bit deeper and things look different: in my local ward near London Bridge, the politicians were elected by about 12.5 per cent of the people on the electoral roll. The main local community group here is a tenant management organisation that has a continuation ballot every five years. They were supported by 71.5 per cent of their tenants and residents. Who is the most representative?

It always surprises me when I find politicians and community groups at loggerheads. Essentially, it is a battle for power, but canny politicians will work with community groups.

HIGH PROFILE BATTLES

In London the political damage wrought by botched estate regeneration – the highest profile probably being the Heygate Estate at Elephant and Castle – led pretty directly, via the reputation that Heygate developer Lendlease took with it to Haringey, to the regime-changing attempt to set up the Haringey Development Vehicle; this resulted in the resignation of the leader of the council in response to popular resistance to the proposed demolition of social housing.

Beyond Haringey, the political reaction to this was for Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London and a stream of London local authority leaders, to promise ballots to residents in all estate regeneration schemes, and in the case of Newham, to a pledge by the incoming mayor of Newham to a ballot on the final detailed proposals for the regeneration of Custom House. This had been requested by the

local Custom House community group, PEACH, a Local Trust partnership that was endowed with £1m by the Lottery to use as they thought best for their local community. Point 6 of their manifesto requests of the prospective mayors in the hustings was:

‘6. Guarantee that the final regeneration plans are put before residents in a binding ballot.’

The response of the successful candidate, Rokhsana Fiaz was reported by the group as:

‘Yes! Rokhsana supports the policy of having a binding ballot of residents, although she intends “to work with residents from the outset” so that “any plans are fully supported by the end’. She ends by saying that ‘she is committed to working in partnership with all residents to produce an affordable Masterplan for Custom House’.’

PEACH had had a less constructive relationship with the previous London Mayor (Boris Johnson) and had decided to prepare their own masterplan for the proposed estate regeneration scheme. They appointed community organisers, a combination of local residents and architects, who together started the process by listening to the needs and concerns of residents. At the end of this process they had a scheme that was widely supported in the local community; they even went one stage further and procured a financial appraisal (something most communities could use if they could find the funding), so that they could understand the trade-offs that the Council, who was the landowner, would have to make.

This process is ongoing and both the Council officers and members of PEACH recently took part together in a programme organised by Future of London on community-led housing. By all accounts, they wowed the other participants with their commitment to co-production as advocated by the mayor of Newham (Rokshana Fiaz) in her pre-election response to their manifesto.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CO-PRODUCTION

Co-production of this kind, where local authorities and local communities share decision-making power, requires political leadership. The Future of London programme emerged from the self-evident challenges for both community groups and local authorities in working together to co-produce places.

As developers, we at igloo think of the local community as locality experts and seek to absorb their views into the urban design brief from the start. Inevitably we

1 London Mayor Sadiq Kahn greeting a resident of the recently regenerated Marklake Court



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are from out of town, so this approach makes sense. The local community will always know the place much better than we will. The relationship with the local authority is different. They also claim place knowledge.

And there is a third party in the relationship between community groups and local politicians, the local authority officers. Some, like those working on Custom House in Newham, understand the benefits of co-production, but in many other situations they might view a community group as an obstruction, as creating inefficiencies or as being unrepresentative; they might regard their professional expertise as trumping local knowledge and resist the inevitable sharing of power required by co-production. Just one officer in the chain of command with these views can make co-production of place extremely challenging.

Let's not be naive about this: some people in community groups can be really awkward, as can some people in local authorities. And a failure to agree doesn't mean either side must be wrong, but when co-production works, it's great.

When my local tenant management organisation, Leathermarket JMB, set up a community land trust, Leathermarket CBS, to build new homes on tricky infill sites on its estates, it worked closely with the neighbours to produce a scheme everyone was happy with. There were no objections in the planning process and the result, replacing single storey garages with a residential building creating a strong street corner, an active frontage and a street block enclosing a communal garden, is a big improvement to the urban design on the estate. These success stories have many parents. But these positive examples are not universal.

A QUESTION OF TRUST AND GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

I've been in the middle of this, literally, trying to facilitate the understanding, relationships and trust between politicians, officers and community groups. In one recent experience both the community and the local authority tried to influence me to give them the power! That isn't how these processes work. Power must be shared. In a situation where trust doesn't exist, this is impossible. And trust requires relationships. So achieving successful urban design outcomes requires all stakeholders to get to know each other and each other's drivers and needs. This takes time and energy at the beginning, but pays big dividends in speed and positive outcomes later, though the high turnover of local authority officers can be a barrier to this.

There is a list of places in London where good projects are not fulfilling their potential because the critical partners, the community and the local authority, have not been able to work together effectively.



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Neighbourhood planning can have some of the same tensions. There are a couple of active inner London examples north and south of the river. In these situations the root of the conflict seems to lie in the difference between the more local perspective of the community and the geographically wider interests of the council. This is the classic tension in the planning system. It is only when we get to detailed proposals for building that the focus turns to urban design.

My experience has been that tensions are inevitable. There are professional urban designers, usually from outside the area, whose training has convinced them of a particular urban design solution. There are directly impacted citizens, often characterised as NIMBYs, who are very rationally seeking to protect their quality of life and, perhaps less rationally, resist change. There are local communities who have invaluable expertise about the place as it currently exists and is used. There are local politicians, with their own views and also a need to seek to mediate between different interests; and there are officers with views and a process to manage. And of course there is the developer whose motivations are generally profit orientated.

Many of us will be familiar with the charrette approach which, when used well, can be a very powerful way of building trust and mutual understanding of each stakeholder's legitimate positions, and of forging a consensus-based outcome. There is always extra power for the ones who hold the pen in the final iteration, the urban designers, and therefore an extra responsibility on them to represent the consensus of the group rather than their own views, but with this caveat it is a good way for politicians to manage the local politics.

Scotland has been using this approach

2–3 Marklake Court, Southwark, new community development with 27 homes. Source: Kilian O'Sullivan and Bell Phillips Architects



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Achieving successful urban design outcomes requires all the stakeholders to get to know each other and each other's drivers and needs. This takes time and energy at the beginning but pays big dividends in speed and positive outcomes later

widely and effectively through strong government leadership and funding. We were involved in a charrette at Port Dundas in North Glasgow, at the end of the Glasgow canal on the edge of Glasgow city centre. Politicians and community groups were involved. A real camaraderie built up during the process over three sessions totalling five days, despite the presence of some potentially very significant conflicts, and an excellent urban design scheme was evolved and supported.

DEVELOPER-LED ENGAGEMENT

In England we seem to invite resistance by putting the responsibility onto developers to engage with local communities. This process, enshrined in planning law, has evolved into something that encourages conflict. Developers appoint advisers (including some well-known names) who are prepared to tell communities

and planning authorities what the developers want them to hear, whether this is true or not. The system is shot through with dissimulation (lies) and deliberately misleading statements. Trust is minimal. Developers have money and expertise, and neither the communities nor the planning authorities generally have the resources to properly interrogate the lengthy technical reports accompanying planning applications.

There are many examples of this in practice but perhaps wind impact is a good one in the context of urban design. In high value areas it is often in the developer's arithmetic interests to build as tall as possible. But the impact of this on the quality of the street environment can often be severe and in one instance, in Leeds, it led to a death when the down-draft from the building tipped a lorry over on to a pedestrian, leading subsequently to some terrible retrofitted wind protection. The outcome was an awful urban design of an alien non-place.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

Politicians are resistant to putting themselves into positions of responsibility for events like these, but they do bear a clear responsibility through the planning system and one that could be managed through different processes. The fundamental challenge in all of this is who has the power when it comes to urban design.

There are some changes to policy that might help:

- Increasing the use of charrettes;
- Building on neighbourhood planning to generate a much greater use of co-production of urban design and placemaking;
- Having neutral experts or automating some of the process like wind modelling or viability testing and making these models freely available to all stakeholders.

The policy pendulum does seem to be swinging back towards a realisation that design quality, and the real involvement of local communities in placemaking, are important for a variety of reasons including quality of life and wellbeing. More examples of great community-led placemaking supported by local politicians should help drive the change. As Jane Jacobs said in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* – ‘Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody’.

Chris Brown, Executive Chair, igloo Regeneration

4 Marklake residents
Source: Joel Chant
5 Marklake updated masterplan
People's Empowerment
Alliance for Custom House (PEACH)



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Urban Designer as Local Councillor

Liz Kessler reflects on her influence from urban designer to elected local politician

At a time when the planning system, crucial to the delivery of new homes, is seen by ordinary people to be failing to respond to their needs, and when concern about climate change and the need to live more sustainably is growing, it would be good to think that urban design was at the heart of local government and the political process.

As someone who has worked as an urban designer, and is now a district councillor, I hope to draw attention to some of the connections, opportunities and difficulties that this presents. The term urban design is not understood by the public or those who make decisions about places – politicians and officers – whilst those with urban design skills are rarely involved at the key points of decision-making. Similarly there is widespread confusion about planning; people expect planners to plan, whereas their function all too often is to prepare policies, allocate land, and react to development proposals, but not to ‘plan’. As the Raynsford Review has said, planning is a ‘chaotic patchwork’, not capable of promoting the health, wellbeing and needs of local communities: ‘we ignore at our peril the anger and disaffection felt by so many communities at the failure of council planning policies and procedures to listen to their concerns and respond to their needs’.

UNDERSTANDING URBAN DESIGN

Urban design is about making places work for people. As Jan Gehl has noted, it’s obvious once you think about it, but it all too often goes unappreciated; work on places proceeds in professional silos, frequently without the input of urban design. Planners, developers, designers and decision-makers, local politicians and senior officers together can improve the built environment. The role of urban design is to facilitate this by communicating a clear vision and bringing all the elements together: buildings, streets, public spaces, parks, etc., to ensure

they work individually and, as part of the whole, and finding ways to see the vision realised. New development and regeneration covering a wide range of issues from new homes through to facilities, infrastructure, encouraging active travel, and green space and planting, is what matters to people at a local level.

WORKING FOR EC1 NEW DEAL FOR COMMUNITIES (NDC) IN ISLINGTON

My experience of urban design, and as a councillor, is that of a generalist. After a first degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, I completed an MA in Urban Design years later. I have always been concerned about cities, towns, neighbourhoods, villages and places that should provide the context for people to lead fulfilling lives, particularly for those living in poor areas that could be improved.

I completed the Master’s course around around the time of the Urban Renaissance, the emergence of CABE and the then government’s flagship programme of New Deal for Communities (NDCs) which offered an opportunity for 39 areas of multi-deprivation, with not insignificant funding, to begin the process of transformation. It was an opportunity, although never overtly recognised, or widely used, for an urban design-led

1 Central Winchester Regeneration area, view of the cathedral in the background



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approach to regeneration and not necessarily redevelopment. For six years I worked for EC1 NDC, south Islington, London.

The programme enshrined the principle of being led by local people; a bottom-up approach which was never well defined, or thought through, and ultimately failed. The process of merging bottom-up with top-down professional expertise, had much to offer. At EC1 we were able to effect considerable transformation to the environment: the streets, parks and large expanses of open, underused, unsafe and degraded space, dominated by cars, around large housing estates; change is continuing to this day. This was achieved by having an overall vision and strategy, breaking the neighbourhood down into coherent, and manageable, areas for which individual urban design framework plans, with costed action plans were produced. Design teams were selected to design and implement incremental improvements that over time have led to change in the area as a whole, from a bleak, colourless, car-dominated, run-down environment to one where many on the streets are walking and cycling, sitting out, playing, eating and talking in informally planted open spaces. At each stage, urban design practices prepared frameworks and plans, working closely with local people and officers.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The NDC programme came to an end in 2010. It was superseded by neighbourhood planning, another attempt to give local communities a say over development at a neighbourhood level especially where new house building was delayed, or not delivered, due to local opposition. Widespread disaffection with design and the lack of infrastructure to support new homes, as well as the way in which land was allocated, aptly described at the 2018 Urban Design Group Conference as ‘winning the lottery for landowners and developers’, had led to much controversy.

Neighbourhood planning’s main aim is to ensure that housing numbers can be delivered: by giving local communities a say about where development should take place, so that the process

of providing more new homes would be speeded up. It provides another opportunity for an urban design-led approach, although with very few resources; it is largely dependent on skills available, for free, within local communities. From 2012 until 2015 I worked on the early visioning and framework planning stages of a number of neighbourhood plans, mainly in Sussex.

A LOCAL COUNCILLOR IN WINCHESTER

I live in Winchester and in 2015 decided to focus on where I live. The town is facing pressure from developers and, despite being an attractive historic town with a magnificent cathedral and High Street, is dominated by cars, has degraded surface car parks in the centre, and poorly performing shopping centres. For many years, proposals for major regeneration schemes had failed to get off the ground. After being involved with two civic societies, the City of Winchester Trust and WinACC (Winchester Action on Climate Change), both of which aim to influence the Council, I decided to seek election as a councillor.

Inspired by the fact that significant change to cities had come about by urban design-led place shaping politicians and governance (e.g. Barcelona, Curitiba, Bogota, Bristol and 13th century Sienna), I hoped that being a councillor might be worthwhile in terms of improving quality of life, furthering the aims of the civic societies, and contributing to the improved delivery of new homes and regeneration.

The current arrangements for governance, departmental structures and funding streams however do not support an urban design approach. Focussing on places does not fit easily within local authority departmental and funding structures, even though there are mechanisms that can be used: proactive planning with urban design frameworks, the Local Plan, SPDs and area action plans.

Urban design and ensuring that work on the environment responds to how people use and value places, can influence a large number of decisions and the implementation of work carried out on a daily basis in a local authority; it would be good to think that councillors and officers made decisions on this basis, but that is the challenge. An urban design approach can positively affect minor works as well as major projects, but all too often work is treated as a series of separate interventions. Improving streets, reducing car dominance and making them safe and attractive for pedestrians and cyclists, while also mitigating climate change, and planning for development is especially difficult as planning and transport teams tend not to work together. The two-tier system of local government with no

2 Central Winchester: entrance to King's Walk Shopping Centre between Middle Brook Street and Tanner Street, Silver Hill and the antiques market
3 Central Winchester Regeneration Area Framework Plan, SPD, Source: JTP

effective joining up of planning and development (a district council function), with transport and infrastructure (a county council function), makes this especially difficult.

The recent survey carried out by the Bartlett has highlighted the shortage of urban design skills in local authorities, which are required to influence a wide range of activities. As a councillor, it could be thought that it might be possible to mitigate some of these deficiencies. The desire to see work progress well and to help develop projects remains, but experience is not welcomed and is often resented by both officers and other councillors. There is a very real need for greater understanding of the principles and processes of urban design, and what it can contribute, for officers at all levels, in a wide range of departments, as well as councillors.

Timescales are another issue. The urban design process, based on thorough analysis, working with stakeholders and residents, and across departments, is all too often seen to be too time consuming to fit the desire for a quick solution, and it clashes with the electoral cycle. This is particularly problematic in a district like Winchester where elections take place every year. Major regeneration projects fail, and fail again, because the pressure to deliver means that they start with a poor brief, analysis is inadequate, consensus is not built or sustained, and the process ultimately prolonged.

EVALUATING MY INPUT

The issues that I have encountered working as an urban designer on neighbourhood regeneration in inner city areas, neighbourhood plans, and as an opposition councillor in a small, well-heeled district council, might appear totally different but share similarities, most noticeably that structurally local authorities are not set up to respond to the needs of places or people. In Winchester this is further complicated by the fact that it is a small town (population of around 50,000), and the main settlement in the District, confusingly called Winchester City Council (WCC) which includes a number of smaller towns and villages covering a large land area. With no governance for Winchester town area, there is no plan, dedicated funding or officers to bring about improvements. Everywhere is different and there are of course exceptions, but it is useful to take stock and consider how, as an opposition councillor, it has been possible to use a background in urban design to highlight issues and, along with others, make a contribution over a four-year period. This has included:

- Reconsideration of an overbearing major city centre redevelopment project (Silver Hill which was rejected), re-starting the process with the appointment of an urban design practice to run workshops and charrettes and develop a vision and framework that has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Document, and progressing to the next steps.
- Preparing, and getting endorsement for, a walking strategy for Winchester town, recognising that walking, as transport, requires infrastructure changes.
- Making the case for a movement strategy for Winchester town, now being prepared by Hampshire County Council, with WCC.
- Public realm improvements to a small, neglected, historic area (implementation imminent).
- Drawing attention to the lack of focus on Winchester town and the need for improved governance.
- Building the case to commission a framework plan for Winchester town which is to be embedded in the Local Plan.
- Reconsideration of, and a revised approach to, another major redevelopment proposal near the station.
- Improvements to a neighbourhood park.

CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

This work has been influenced by the wider political context of major financial cuts, the NPPF, the Local Plan, centralised control, outsourcing to the private sector a wide variety of services



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The desire to see work progress well and to help develop projects remains, but experience is not welcomed and is often resented by both officers and other councillors



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including design and development management, and by being a backbencher in a minority party. Nonetheless, building on the urban design skills of having a vision and finding ways, it is possible, as a backbencher, to make a contribution, especially if there are other groups to work with. In May 2019 political control in Winchester changed; I am now in the majority party and already there is a greater sense that work that has been done in the background will be brought forward and possibilities opened up.

However, at a time when the private sector is able to attract staff with many with excellent urban design skills while the public sector is struggling, it would be good to think that the private sector would help to encourage a more focussed urban design approach, and despite other imperatives, have more influence over what they are asked to do by less informed officers, councillors and developers. ●

4 Public realm improvements due to be implemented shortly, for a pedestrian link between the High Street and the cathedral
5 Winchester station approach

Liz Kessler, urban designer and councillor for Winchester City Council



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Housing Design, the Local Political Perspective

Matthew Carmona, Valentina Giordano and Anastassia Gusseinova report on the results of research undertaken on local councillors' attitudes to design

As a nation it is clear that for too long we have been building too few homes, and those we have been building are of a quality that often alienates the communities they are meant to serve, rather than uniting them in an aspiration to build more. This has become a major political problem, and one which is occupying the minds and endeavours of our politicians nationally, as well as locally around the country.

As key decision-makers within their localities, not least as guardians of the local planning system, local councillors play a critical role in helping to shape the local built environment across the country. Yet, despite this, we know little about their role and perspectives beyond anecdote and hearsay. Recent Place Alliance research supported by the Urban Design Group had suggested that councillors themselves are increasingly poorly prepared and equipped to take on such a critical design decision-making role. Indeed, only half of councillors receive any kind of design training at all, and this is typically minimal.

To understand better the role of English councillors as regards the design of new housing development, their aspirations, priorities, challenges and responsibilities, a new Place Alliance survey was launched in 2018 with support from the Design Network.

OUR APPROACH

In order to get as accurate a picture as possible of councillors' attitudes to the design of new residential development, a short survey was sent to 16,578 councillors in English local authorities. In total, 1213 councillors responded to the initial survey representing a response rate of 7.3 per cent. A follow-up survey with six more detailed questions was sent to a sub-set of these – 343 councillors – who had expressed an interest in being involved further in the research. 93 responded. The remainder of this article summarises the results of the research and makes recommendations for addressing the key concerns raised.

DESIGN QUALITY MAKES DEVELOPMENT MORE ACCEPTABLE

The first set of questions focussed on councillors' perceptions of housing design

1 Overdevelopment is one of the major reasons for rejecting development proposals on design grounds

quality. On this front the research found that design quality in residential development is seen as a very important concern for the overwhelming majority of councillors and their constituents. Almost no councillors feel it is unimportant. Councillors in all political parties and across all regions of England share the concern to see high quality residential design in their area.

Given the levels of political support, there is some frustration that local authorities (corporately) are not taking design matters seriously enough. In this context almost all councillors believe that better design can make development more acceptable to local residents and is key to unlocking more housing development across the country.

SOME IMPROVEMENT FROM A LOW BASE

Positively, a small majority of councillors believe there has been some improvement in the design of new residential development in recent years, although this is coming from a low base. This is offset, by a significant minority, concentrated more heavily in regions under the greatest development pressure, who feel that design quality in new residential development continues to decline.

Efforts to involve local communities in the decision-making process and the willingness of some developers to change their practices to prioritise design is seen as having a positive impact on design quality. Here councillors advocate positively engaging with local developers in order to maintain a positive trajectory. On the downside, the standard practices of many developers, inflexibility of local highways authorities, loss of design skills in local authorities, and the perceived change in national policy to a presumption in favour of development (regardless of design), were all blamed for the poor standards of design where that occurred.

OVERDEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL CHARACTER

Councillors frequently perceive that the drive to optimise the development potential of sites (both by developers and in policy) is leading to a different pattern of development that often feels alien in the local context. This is reflected in their two standout reasons for rejecting residential schemes on design grounds: first, that developments are out of character with their area, and second, that by virtue of their height, massing or density, schemes are overdeveloped. Councillors also believe that development patterns are leading to problems which range from integrating parking, to poor access to local facilities and amenities, the creation of over-dominant roads (which feel unsafe), and to a mono-culture of housing without other uses.

Significantly, local character was viewed as a broad concept by councillors that encompasses all the elements that are special about the physical and social qualities of a place and make it distinctive. The choice of materials, relative greenness (including open spaces), prevailing density, a respect for history, the bulk and height of buildings, their architectural quality (not bland standardised designs), and the incorporation of necessary services and amenities were all seen as key character-giving elements.

A minority view worries that new housing too often caricatures the local vernacular (leading to pastiche) and that an undue emphasis on traditional design can undermine the potential for innovation in the design of new residential areas.

POORLY DESIGNED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS NEED TO BE REJECTED

The second set of questions turned from perceptions of outcomes to the processes through which outcomes are shaped. Here councillors are supportive of their planning team's ability to influence design for the better, although a concern exists in many councils around the absence of the necessary skills and capacity to specifically address design issues. This absence of design skills and capacity in planning teams strongly correlates with perceptions amongst councillors of a decline in the quality of new housing design.



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3

In order to send out a firm message that poor design will not be tolerated, councillors frequently express the view that more planning applications should be rejected on design grounds. At the same time they worry that such measures won't be supported nationally on appeal, and on those grounds officers often counsel against rejecting projects on design grounds alone.

LOCALLY TAILORED DESIGN GOVERNANCE IMPROVES DESIGN

To improve the situation, councillors argue that key design governance tools can help to improve design and strengthen the case against poor design at appeal. Effective tools, they believe, include better design policy in local plans and neighbourhood plans, local design guidance (including design codes) that articulate clear design aspirations, and the availability of design advice from specialist design officers and/or a design review panel. They suggest that more comprehensive national guidance on design would support the creation of design governance tools locally.

Councillors advocate confronting highways authorities over the negative impact of their highways and road adoption standards. They call for the adoption of new standards with a strong place focus at their heart.

2–3 Even the same developer can respond very differently in the priority they give to creating local character

COUNCILLORS ARE POLITICAL AND OFFICERS

TECHNICAL

The final group of questions focussed on the particular role of councillors within the design and development process. Councillors revealed that in some circumstances, design can become very political locally, notably in the face of ubiquitous pressures to densify, when development pressures are set against conservation concerns (built or natural), or when local facilities and amenities (including parking) are under strain. Despite this, design per se is rarely a party political concern, although judgements over local needs are often wrapped up in the extent of local opposition from residents to development proposals. Councillors admit that design can be used as a smoke screen to hide NIMBY tendencies, but this is much easier to achieve when the design of developments are obviously poor.

Developers, and to a lesser degree officers, were often not trusted by councillors. Indeed, the large majority of councillors would and do vote against officer recommendations if, in their opinion, developments that have been recommended for approval are either poorly designed or will impact negatively on local needs. Here the ability of officers to give confident advice on design matters was seen as a critical factor in gaining and retaining the trust of councillors.

THE UNIQUE LOCAL POLITICAL ROLE

Ultimately, councillors see their unique contribution as acting as a bulwark against powerful developers (and national policy) seeking to impose what they see as inappropriate developments upon their localities for short-term economic gain. In this regard they are often frustrated over the compromises which they see as preventing them from fully representing residents' views that developments should 'fit in' to the existing context.

Whilst many councillors feel they have no positive influence at all, most see their key leadership role in terms of setting and upholding local policy on design. Other important roles involve contributing local (lay) knowledge; acting as a conduit to the community; helping to educate constituents about the process by explaining how things can go wrong (which is often the focus for residents); and, helping to support the case within the council to better resource planning (and design). In all of this, councillors would welcome better design training, including case studies of success from which they can learn.



4

CONCLUSION

In seeking to understand the views of local councillors in England on the design of new residential development, this research examined a critical but often overlooked stakeholder group. As has already been argued, for too long we have been building too few homes and those that we build are often of a quality that unites local communities in opposition against them. Understanding the perceptions and role of local politicians as regards the design of new housing development offers a valuable surrogate for the views of local communities more widely. It is not a group that can, or should, be ignored.

The research offers important insights into how design might be made more acceptable locally, and therefore how more housing development might be delivered nationally. Our key recommendations for different stakeholders that flow from the work are summarised below. ●

4 The adoptable standards of highways authorities are a major concern of councillors

Matthew Carmona, Valentina Giordano and Anastasia Gusseinova, The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

For government

- There is need to publicise successful planning appeals made on design grounds in order to give councils the necessary confidence to reject poor quality design.
- The advice on design in the national *Planning Practice Guidance* needs urgently updating in order to strengthen guidance to local authorities on the design of residential development and to encourage the adoption of proactive design governance tools locally.

For local planning authorities

- Local authorities need to take the achievement of high quality residential design more seriously as a corporate objective. This can only be achieved by investing in: i) the necessary specialist design skills (in-house and through design review), ii) the preparation of proactive tools of design governance such as local design guides and design codes, and iii) by demonstrating leadership and rejecting applications outright if proposals fail to meet clearly defined local design quality aspirations
- Policy and guidance locally should be more specific about: i) defining the valued dimensions of local character, ii) parameters for measuring the acceptable development quantum (height massing and density) on sites, iii) how to successfully integrate roads and parking, iv) expectations regarding the provision and integration of non-residential uses, facilities and amenities (including greenery), and v) avoiding caricaturing the local vernacular.

For highways authorities

- Highways authorities need to rapidly update their highways design and road adoption standards to give them a strong and explicit place focus (along the lines advocated in *Manual for Streets*).

For developers

- Good urban design shaped through local engagement and a genuine understanding of local character is the most effective means of winning local community support for new housing development.

For councillors

- Encouraging communities to get involved in neighbourhood planning can help to establish clear local design aspirations in a manner that can't be ignored.
- It is incumbent on councillors involved in decision-making on design to engage in comprehensive and ongoing training on the subject, in order facilitate their important local and lay knowledge with the more specialist design knowledge required for a design leadership role.



Desire Lines: A Guide to Community Participation in Designing Places

Lesley Malone, 2018, RIBA Publishing, £25.00, ISBN 978-1859467275

This book promotes the practices of consultation, participation and collaboration in placemaking, and therefore it is welcome. But I do feel ambivalent about it: the author's background is in social research, not in design. While she brings a great deal of expertise to the subject, her language is very research-oriented, dense, at times rather abstract, and not free of jargon. Throughout 'user experience' is irritatingly called UX, yet one of her key summary points is 'Use clear and unambiguous language, avoiding jargon, design-speak and technical terminology'. At times I sense a distance between the book's very thorough rational advice and the unpredictable, untidy reality of discussion with sceptical residents around a model, or in front of a display screen.

The clue to this distance is, I think, where Malone writes in her introduction that her book '....offers guidance to designers'. It is meant to be read by urban designers and architects to help them to organise participatory design processes with lay people. But I have always understood that part of the philosophy of participatory design is the blurring of boundaries between professional designers and the recipients of design, recognising that everyone has knowledge and skills in placemaking, although maybe latent. I would not recommend this book to a residents' group that was intending to select an urban designer with whom to redesign their housing estate. I think they would likely be baffled.

There is a big contrast between this book and Nick Wates' *The Community Planning Handbook* which Malone strongly recommends: it is very accessible and user-friendly, and does go some way to removing barriers between professionals and residents. It explains what Planning for Real and

other participatory techniques are, and how to use them. Malone's book mentions Planning for Real once, but a reader not already familiar with it would end the book being no wiser as to what it is.

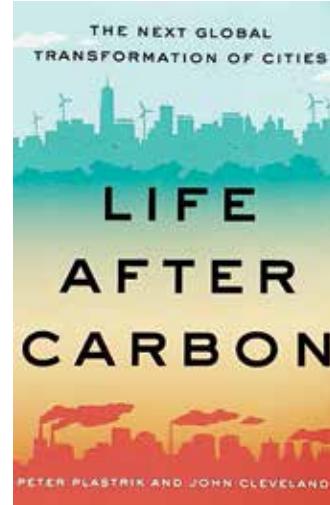
There are other issues. Jan Gehl's three categories of outdoor activity are mysteriously reduced to two. Sherry Arnstein's famous 1969 8-rung *Ladder of Participation* is needlessly replaced by a 6-rung *Spectrum of Participation* of 2014 which is similar but less specific to environmental design. Many photographs are uncaptioned, and others have baffling captions (Affinity diagramming?). A Space Syntax analysis of pedestrian routes in Nottingham's Market Square fails to convey the information which the caption claims. On the positive side, there is a very helpful schedule of types of bias which may occur in various situations, of which we need to be aware. I suspect I have been guilty of most of them. ●

Joe Holyoak

Life After Carbon. The Next Global Transformation of Cities

Peter Plastrik and John Cleveland, 2018, Island Press, £21.00, ISBN 978-1610918497

This is an encouraging read. It appraises 25 'innovation lab' cities which are now acting to address climate change, as they must since by 2050, cities will comprise 70 per cent of the global population. City authorities vie with national governments to comply with the 2016 *Paris Climate Change Agreement*. When President Trump withdrew from the agreement, the Mayor of Pittsburgh, a city built on coal, announced it would go 100 per cent renewable energy by 2035. The book reveals creative networks such as the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance: 7,000 mayors have committed to carbon neutrality in the 21st century. Mayor Gregor Robertson of Vancouver brands



his city a leader for green living; Enrique Penalosa, the pioneering mayor of Bogota, created the first car-free day back in 2000, and Oslo Mayor Raymond Johansen is excluding cars from the city centre.

The authors focus on four transformative ideas. The first is carbon free city advantage. By reducing consumption and investing in renewables and sustainable travel, Vancouver, Stockholm, Portland and Copenhagen aim to be carbon neutral by 2050, 2040, 2035 and 2025 respectively. Copenhagen's residents have been investing in offshore wind for decades. Vancouver requires new buildings to be zero-emission. New York targeted the 2 per cent worst performing buildings to reduce energy consumption by 45 per cent, and retrofitting is becoming mandatory.

The second idea is efficient abundance: cities build circular economies of zero-waste and well-being is focussed on quality of life, relationships, community solidarity and shared experience, rather than GDP. Waste is a resource and goods are re-used or recycled. San Francisco is leading the way towards zero-waste.

The third idea is that nature provides the context for development: the city within the ecosystem. Singapore has embraced biophilic urbanism with 50 per cent tree cover and 90 miles of tree corridors. Melbourne's response to drought was an urban forestry plan focussed on green infrastructure. Every tree has a financial value and the city is busy converting roads to green space, regulating for and grant-aiding green roofs and façades.

The final idea is that of adaptive futures: this includes compact city forms, Transit Oriented Development, and the revaluation of people and public space. Portland's neighbourhoods aim to meet daily needs within a 20 minute walk or cycle ride. Vancouver has removed two flyovers to build homes for 8,000 residents, green space, shops and businesses. Copenhagen's monitoring shows people increasingly outdoors enjoying urban space. 40 per cent of New Yorkers were found to be 'aspiring greens': green banks, green business support, carbon awareness in the professions and academia, as well as public engagement, all build a city-wide



ecology for innovative action.

The book is a reminder for urban designers that climate change will be the main driver and opportunity for future placemaking. With planning, life after carbon can radically enhance quality of life. Realisation and action haven't reached a tipping point yet but the authors feel that it's not far off. From Mexico's Zocalo District to Stockholm's Royal Seaport, this book, even though it lacks visual imagery, showcases liveability and provides encouraging accounts of city leadership. It's a useful reference for those looking to learn from elsewhere. ●

Tim Hagyard

Designing Change — Professional Mutations in Urban Design 1980–2020

Eric Firley, 2018, NAI Publishers, £40.00, ISBN 978-9462084810

Regula Lüscher's Foreword to *Designing Change* could not be more relevant to this issue's topic. Trained as an architect, working as an urban designer and teaching the subject, she is now a politician, Senate Director of Urban Development of Berlin. She has strong ideas on the profession and is certain that it has to change.

Eric Firley has collected interviews with 12 urban designers under the umbrella of the book's title. In his introduction he explains where he comes from: he sees changes in city development as the result of socio economic forces. 'We are just less aware of how intrinsically political every process of city making is'. He wants to know more about urbanism, about urban design practice and its future. The body of the book is an edited version of conversations with 12 notable urban design practitioners from Europe, North America and China, each one accompanied by three of their projects summarised and illustrated.

Each chapter or conversation has a theme. Thus, Chris Choa of AECOM deals

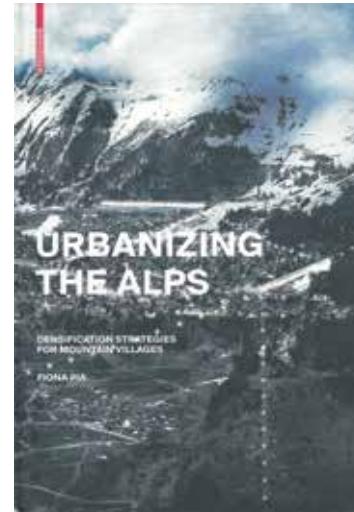
with reconciling opposites: core vs periphery, global vs local, European vs Chinese urban cultures, architect vs planner, although a number of other issues are broached as well. French urbanist Bruno Fortier on the other hand confronts the expansion of cities with the concern for and idealisation of nature, and focusses on continuity in traditional French urbanism. Paola Viganó, whose career combines academic research and practice has a formal and intellectual approach to urbanism which she sees as working across various scales and as a 'tool of research'. She refers regularly to the 'territory', a concept not often found in Anglo-Saxon planning literature but one which reflects a specific approach.

Liu Xiaodu, a Chinese practitioner who studied in the US and now teaches there, has a cross-cultural point of view and is able to critically evaluate both the American and the Chinese approaches to urban design; he offers *inter alia* interesting definitions of urban design and discusses hyper-density, adaptation to climate and property speculation in the Chinese context.

The conversations with New Urbanism's high priestess Elizabeth Plater-Zyberg concentrate mainly on zoning, the basis of most North American planning, legalistic and rigid, and in need of challenging. This, she and her partner Andrés Duany did by elaborating their own codes based on the relationship between buildings and the public realm.

There is not enough space here even to summarise and to do justice to the seven other conversations with Finn Geipel (Berlin), Adriaan Geuze and Winy Maas (Rotterdam), Djamel Klouch (Paris), Dennis Pieprz (Boston), Albert Speer with Michael +Denkel (Frankfurt) and Wenyi Zhu (Beijing). Each one of these deals with one particular subject within the overall framework of urban design.

The questions asked of each individual are different and personalised, although certain themes are recurrent. Firley is not just interested in the theories and practice of urban design, but also in the operation of the practices themselves, how they deal with their finances, what is their economic model, how they negotiate and present their



schemes, what is their interaction with politicians, etc., and he wants to understand the personal development of his subjects. Importantly he also discusses the future of the city as well as of the profession, in the context of a frequently changing agenda that increasingly incorporates societal and environmental issues.

The book is over 500 pages long and very dense. It contains a huge amount of interesting information and commentary but nobody is going to read it from cover to cover. It is full of quotable sections and lessons for all of us, but it may have been useful to edit it down to get more of the essence of each of the contributors which often gets lost in this conversational format. A good reference book but one that could be made more accessible in a different format. ●

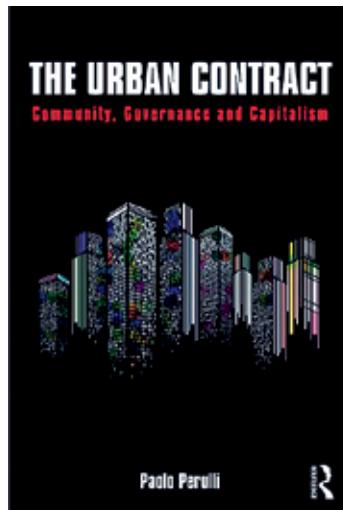
Sebastian Loew

Urbanizing the Alps, Densification Strategies for High-Altitude Villages

Fiona Pia, 2019, Birkhäuser, £41.50, ISBN 978-3-0356-1733-7

The challenges society faces from urbanisation have been increasingly well documented, as have the benefits of building at higher densities. Indeed, the need for places to continue to adapt whilst giving more space to people walking and reducing our reliance on cars is widely accepted; the question now is how best to achieve this. *Urbanizing the Alps* picks up on this, framing the conversation directly around the unique challenges facing Alpine towns, giving the discussion another angle that is both interesting and informative.

A research-led study, the book dives into the complexities and growth of Alpine communities, taking into account the unique climate, topography and seasonal tourism associated with them. Pia begins with the challenges of urbanisation and sprawl,



highlighting the need to change the narrative that often opposes densification. Indeed, it quickly challenges our perceptions of the idyllic chalet nestled alone upon a hillside, when the reality of piecemeal sprawl has already made this a somewhat different proposition. With some resorts having reached the limit of viable size, Pia suggests that the solution lies in higher density Alpine cities, a network of integrated compact cores connected by public transport. This description, and even the title of the book seems provocative, given the natural setting typically associated with such places, but with the benefits of compact development well-known, it succeeds in challenging the way we should be thinking about the future of Alpine settlements.

Pia explores five case studies: Verbier, Zermatt, Avoriaz, Whistler Blackcomb, and Andermatt, with the growth of each charted from their early beginnings before their 'industrialisation' as a ski resort, to the present day. Bold graphics complemented by scaled drawings ensure the case studies are easily interpreted, supported by in-depth research into the spatial arrangements, design and masterplans that have shaped these towns.

Using Verbier as the example, Pia moves on to establish a new model for Alpine urbanisation, integrating densification and public transport infrastructure through a closed loop cable-car system set around the perimeter of the town. It's a familiar concept but delivered in site-specific circumstances. The challenge is to integrate the 500m long 'inhabitable infrastructure' hubs within the natural landscape, as well as creating spaces where people will be inclined to dwell. The benefits are rationally set out, with the hubs described as a series of civil engineering interventions rather than buildings. Yet their scale and rigid form contrasts sharply with the natural topography of the mountainside in the way a civil engineering project might find easier to overcome. They are also realised as clean and highly functional structures, perhaps lacking the visual complexity that we associate with their surroundings.

The question is whether densification and public benefits can outweigh any

visual concerns. Ignoring for a moment that this is subjective, this consideration seems somewhat secondary to the argument put forward, which uses elements of the research study to support it.

The topic might be considered niche, but there is a lot we could learn from Alpine towns, such as why building more roads is not the answer; how public transport needs to be able to operate independently of external influences; the problems of sub-surface parking; and that electric cars do not solve congestion. What we need is an integrated approach to urban mobility and the lessons learned here could certainly be applied elsewhere. ●

Jack Pritchard, Associate Urban Designer at Glenn Howells Architects

The Urban Contract: Community, Governance and Capitalism

Paolo Perulli, 2018, Routledge, £36.99
ISBN 978-1472445902

This very ambitious book, proposes no less than a new theory of 'urban contract' to replace planning as we know it worldwide. This laudable attempt to rethink the deficiencies of current urban development practices is bound to have its limitations. Let us address just a few. First, how can a book aiming to bring new solutions to planning globally omit two rapidly urbanising continents like Latin America and Africa? Secondly, how can ten cities represent all complex global urban issues? Thirdly, the meaning of contract varies widely across the world: there is little common ground between Western rule-of-law-based contractual arrangements and interpersonal gift-exchange forms in Asia. Fourthly, in his pursuit of the socially embedded form of contract and how to apply it to cities, Perulli's daring ambition is to crack the planning silo and branch out to economic-juridical writings about contract

law on the one hand, and to historical-anthropological and socio-spatial literature on the city on the other, besides evocations of 'the urban' in novels and poetry. His own background is law and philosophy of law but his career focussed on cities at various academic institutions. Venturing into this vast field of global culture contrasts with his two main references at theorising, Max Weber's interpretation of capitalistic economy and society and Niel Brenner's planetary urbanisation, together with the notions of glocalism, network city and unity in diversity. Those who rely on graphics to understand space and locate places are short changed. Besides a few tables, the only graphics are some diagrams with arrows to illustrate conceptual models. This trend to omit pictures seems to suit both the publisher and the author coming from the social sciences.

All this does not mean that this book is not worth reading by urban designers. Quite the reverse. In the chapters on ten cities, preceded by a short introduction of urbanisation in Europe, North America and Asia, Perulli proceeds to give some more detailed discussions of his definitions of 'urban contract' and 'the urban' presented at the outset of the book, and his attempt of a conceptual synthesis of his thinking in the latter parts of the book. The city chapters give a brief description of the ten cities, their spatial relations and their economic and political geography; present some data on institutional, economic and legal frameworks in which contracts are made between local and global, as well as public and private actors; and provide an analysis of the socio-cultural context in which such contracts are embedded, and non-contractual forms of reciprocity and exchange are developed.

246 pages are nowhere near enough for so much erudition, presentation, discussion and critique, but they definitively help stimulate reactions and reflections about the role of urban designers in such a new, 'urban contract' based city development process. ●

Judith Ryser

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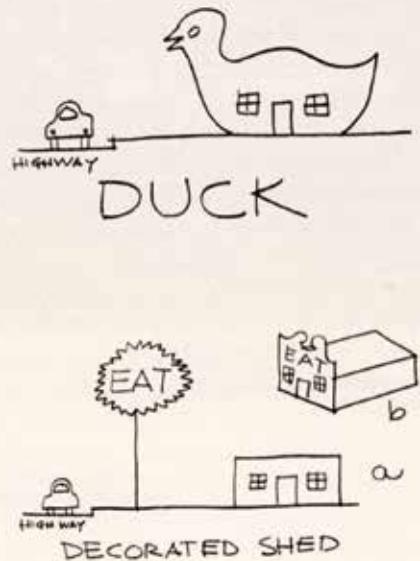
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1

2

A corner of a foreign field

The story of the Italian Chapel in Orkney has been told many times, and I have nothing to add to it except my own response to being there. For those unfamiliar with it, it is two corrugated iron Nissen huts placed end to end, and converted into a Catholic chapel by Italian prisoners of war. They arrived in Orkney in 1942, brought there to build four barriers between the islands in order to protect British warships moored in Scapa Flow from German submarines. Under the Geneva Conventions, prisoners of war are not allowed to aid the war effort, so their work was justified by building roads on the barriers, to make it easier for the civilian population to move between islands. The Italians cast thousands of huge concrete blocks which were dropped into the sea to form the barriers.

The hundreds of Italians living in Camp 60 on the tiny island of Lamb Holm were keen to improve their barren environment and, when not casting concrete, laid paths in the camp and planted flowerbeds. The British commandant, who got on well with his prisoners, agreed to give them a building they could use as a chapel. Led by Domenico Chiocchetti, who in civilian life was a church painter and craftsman, a gang of prisoners scrounged or recycled material, lined the huts with plasterboard, and painted an elaborate interior entirely in *trompe l'oeil*. At the entrance, they built an ornamented Italianate neo-classical portico from concrete (there was plenty available). After the prisoners returned home in 1945, the rest of Camp 60 was flattened, but the chapel was spared. A preservation committee of Orcadians was formed in 1958 to

maintain it. Chiocchetti returned in 1960, and again in 1964, to carry out restoration work on the interior.

Before I visited Orkney last year, I regarded the Italian Chapel as an interesting phenomenon, but merely kitsch of no great importance. But I found being there to be a moving experience. Not directly because of the architecture, but because of its social history, the story of men captured in North Africa, transported thousands of miles to the cold north, put to hard labour, yet motivated to improve their own lives, and in particular to construct a bit of Italy on a small uninhabited island off the north coast of Scotland. At the same time, I was moved that Orcadians should accept and cherish this foreign import surrealistically inserted into their landscape. The Orcadian poet George Mackay Brown wrote 'We who are brought up in the Calvinistic faith, a faith as austere, bracing and cold as the winds that trouble Lamb Holm from year's end to year's end, can hardly grasp the fierce nostalgic endeavour that raised this piece of Italy, of Catholicism, out of the clay and the stones. ...The Italians who fought weakly and without hope on the battlefield because they lacked faith in the ridiculous strutting little Duce have wrought strongly here...'

More directly related to urban design is the thought that the Italian Chapel is an almost ludicrously literal example of the Decorated Shed, Robert Venturi's antithesis to the attempted purism of the Modern Movement in architecture, which he illustrated in the book *Learning from Las Vegas* (reviewed on p.12). He defined the Decorated Shed as being 'Where systems of space and structure are directly at the service of programme, and ornament is applied independently of them'. Inherent in the idea of the utilitarian shed with the fancy front added to it, as shown in Venturi's drawing, is the distinction between front and back, now a fundamental principle

of urban design, but something the 20th century Modern Movement architects tried hard to eliminate. To Chiocchetti and his colleagues, the plain, inexpressive box of a church with an elaborate façade facing the street, was a familiar element in the towns they had grown up in. It's ironic of course that, as in so many other post-war urban settlements, the built context of the Italian Chapel was demolished, and it survives as an exotic freestanding object in a windswept landscape, its distinction between front and back no longer making much sense. ●

Joe Holyoak



1 Decorated Shed and duck from Venturi's *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972
2 The Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm in the Orkney Islands



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