

DIARY OF EVENTS

Unless otherwise indicated all LONDON events are held at The Gallery, 77 Cowcross Street, London EC1 at 6.30 pm. All tickets purchased at the door from 6.00 pm. £5.00 non-members, £2.00 UDG members, £1.00 students

FRIDAY 14 - SATURDAY 15 OCTOBER 2005

UDG ANNUAL CONFERENCE, BIRMINGHAM

THE MULTICULTURAL CITY:

URBAN DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Drawing on a range of speakers from the private and public sectors, the conference will question how urban designers should respond to the challenges of place-making for diverse, multi-cultural communities. Convened by staff from UCE's urban design course - all welcome. Register now with Susie Turnbull
E: udsl@udg.org.uk T: 01235 833797

WEDNESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2005

'THE VALUE OF SKILLS'

CHRIS MURRAY - ACADEMY OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

We all generally accept that learning, knowledge and skills are important, but why are they important, what is their real value, which skills are most important for which context and what learning methods will work best to build sustainable communities? These are some of the questions that the Academy for Sustainable Communities has been asking as it prepares to launch in late 2005, and that will be discussed during this presentation.

WEDNESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2005

EVERYDAY SPACES: THE POTENTIAL OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SPACE

PAULINE GALLACHER

Everyday spaces points to an intriguing gap in thinking around what may be called neighbourhood civic space. What might such spaces be in 21st century neighbourhoods? The author of *Everyday Spaces*, published in collaboration with the UDG, presents the pioneering work in Glasgow that led to this inspiring book. Her latest project promotes neighbourhood action in one of Glasgow's suburban communities.

WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2005

TRAVELLERS TALES FOLLOWED BY THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

Presentations on the year's two Study Tours, The Baltic States – Alan Stones, and Lyon – Sebastian Loew

Tickets: £12.00 per person

WEDNESDAY 11TH JANUARY 2006

SUSTAINABILITY: THE DESIGN CUE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

KEN YEANG

URBAN DESIGN COVER PICTURES

Urban Design's editors would like to receive images for the journal's front cover and for each image used, the author would be credited and paid £50. Images should reflect the theme of the journal, including street scenes or people in a variety of contexts, showing the benefits of urban design. Images should be submitted digitally to the editors, at a resolution of 300dpi at A4 size (2500x3500 pixels), by email or on CD by post.

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COVER

View of Lewisham Gateway, Arup Urban Design

LEADER

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ANNUAL RATES Individuals £40 Students £20

CORPORATE RATES Practices, including listing in the UD Practice index and *Source Book* £250

LIBRARIES £40 **LOCAL AUTHORITIES** £100 (two copies of *Urban Design*)

OVERSEAS MEMBERS pay a supplement of £3 for Europe and £8 for other locations

INDIVIDUAL ISSUES of *Urban Design* cost £5

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Left photograph courtesy of CABE/Mark Ellis & Ashley Bingham, ICD Ltd.
Right photograph Louise Thomas

PROCESS & PRODUCT URBAN DESIGN IS THE NEW DIY

Lawrence Llewellyn-Bowen and The House Doctor have been cast aside and a new trend hit our TV screens this summer. While we should have been out enjoying the summer, Channel 4 piloted a new show involving a series of streets with mixed houses, scruffy front gardens, chip wrappers stuffed in hedges and neighbours living as strangers.

As our houses are now supposed to be all done and decorated (in neutral colours) inside, this new series looked at our streets – the boundary treatments, colours, architectural unity, personalisation, upkeep and planting. Rather than tackle the ‘public’ realm, neighbours are gathered together to take a long hard look at the impact of their own property on the street scene, and to collectively do something about it, DIY style. Each show ends with the indispensable estate agent quantifying the increased value of each property, as a result of better urban design details.

Combining basic building skills, an appreciation of architectural ‘appropriateness’ and proportion, negotiation, and cross-subsidising projects to achieve a larger vision, this experience is probably harder than it looks.

What is interesting to watch is that most people discover a community immediately outside their front door (who are mostly like-minded), but also that they have a responsibility to the public realm, which was previously invisible to them, after the first blush of kerb appeal.

Will this be the start of a new interest in streets and community power? I hope so, if only so that millions of ordinary places become more loved, and people enjoy where they live and take control.

On a similar note, this kind of ‘learning by doing’ proved itself at this year’s CABE Summer School in East Lancashire, where over 100 delegates assembled for three days of just that, and went home with new understanding and awareness. The topic for this issue is ‘Master planning’, where process meets product, and we hear from a variety of practitioners using projects to explain their ideas.

LOUISE THOMAS

Urban Design

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Can Design Coding Work Here?

KEVIN LYNCH MEMORIAL LECTURE, THE GALLERY, LONDON, 15 JUNE 2005

Hank Dittmar, chief executive of the Prince's Foundation did not answer the question rhetorically posed by the title of his lecture. But he did explain what design coding is: written by one party, to be designed by others; pro-active, specific and space related with focus on form and type, and expressed in both graphic and written forms. Codes express the writer's vision and act as a device to check that objectives have been achieved; in other words they go one step further from a brief.

Arguably the most interesting aspect of design codes (and of Dittmar's talk) is that they are form based as opposed to land use based: when form must no longer follow function – as uses change much faster than the containing buildings – form becomes a predominant element in shaping the city and one that needs to be controlled. Less convincing was the 'Transect', a tool developed in the USA for structuring regions divided into zones ranging from Natural to Urban Core, with codes for each of them. (see p7 this issue)

Reference was made to research commissioned by CABI to monitor the application of coding to pilot schemes (see *UD* issue 94, p7). It appears that the ODPM's main goal is to increase the speed of development but at the moment there is no guarantee that coding will either achieve that or improve satisfaction with the schemes. Dittmar suggested that there were three ways of applying design coding within the current British planning system:

- as part of a landowner's development brief with legal status established at the project's inception
- in 'plotland' types of development where individuals build on small parcels of allocated land within a master plan and with a code
- as part of a local authority's planning guidance or a Section 106 agreement.

All three cases are somewhat exceptional, indicating that coding may not easily be applied extensively. Dittmar suggested that they are most appropriate

Codes are most appropriate for fairly 'ordinary' areas, places which neither have iconic buildings nor employ iconic designers

for fairly 'ordinary' areas, places which neither have iconic buildings nor employ iconic designers, but where the general level of design could be raised.

A lively question and answer session indicated that the audience was not entirely sold on the idea of coding and could not see it fitting easily within the current planning system. A new series of boxes to be ticked may not be what is desired at the moment. To be fair, more research on the subject is being undertaken and this will be published later in the year. Watch this (coded) space.

Sebastian Loew

Urban Design in Europe

URBAN DESIGN GROUP ANNUAL LECTURE/RTPI URBAN DESIGN NETWORK EVENT
THE GALLERY, LONDON, 6 JULY 2005

In the light of recent referenda on the EU Constitution and the British zeal for public sector 'bashing', Sebastian Loew's talk gave a heartening perspective on how urban design sits within Europe.

Tracing the importance placed on design from the Commission of the European Communities Green paper on the urban environment in 1990, the European Charter for the City, through to the mandatory EIA process, he identified that the Napoleonic Code was actually the most unifying across mainland Europe. Other than that, the diversity of federal, regional and urban governments across Europe has since created many different systems and approaches.

Looking at what we can learn from each country, France creates 'urbanistes' not architects or urban designers. Planning applications must be submitted by architects for proposals more than 70 square metres in size, and building regulations are integral to planning consent. The quality of design is determined by local authorities, setting heights, massing, roof lines, materials, etc with the overarching Code de l'Urbanisme setting common regulations.

The public sector in France has

its own real teeth, being very well resourced and powerful, creating the public realm in advance of developers' involvement, selling off serviced plots, typically having established spectacular and bold visions. It is these visions that have created La Défense, Parc Bercy and the now well established Paris Plage (see *UD* issue 93, p11). The extent of public sector control is evident in historic and urban centres in particular where major public transport projects or environmental improvements are completed with a simplicity in design and process that we fail to do here. Similarly with open space and lighting, taking the lead (through higher taxes and funding) means comprehensive designs for advance infrastructure and planting, established before development begins.

Italy – packed with historical artefacts and archaeology – displays a less precious approach to conservation, with modern adaptations and extensions making places liveable today. The public realm similarly, while far more intensively used and enjoyed than here, is well designed in historic centres to be simple and the setting for daily life. In



terms of environmental standards, public realm focussed design and enthusiasm for modernity, Germany is also important, with Holland and Scandinavia also offering good examples of attention to detail – 'throw away the catalogues' Sebastian urged. He summed the differences as being about 'a roundabout vs traffic lights mentality'.

Questions ranged from funding and taxes, risk (imported from the USA?), and consultation processes, but as Carrefour and Monsieur Bricolage illustrate, most attention seems to go on the centres, while edge cities spring up in adjacent départements.

Louise Thomas

Urban Design Study Tour of the Hanseatic Cities of the Baltic: Part II, The Baltic States

4-12 JUNE 2005



Above Tallinn Old Town, Photograph by Alan Stones

In 1990 the Urban Design Group visited those Hanseatic cities which lie scattered along the Baltic coasts of Germany and Poland. This time we continued eastward to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to resume our exploration of this homogeneous built heritage.

The first city we visited, Vilnius, was not Hanseatic, but had been the joint capital with Warsaw of the vast medieval Polish-Lithuanian empire, which stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea. At that time Lithuania was the last pagan country in Europe. Vilnius became a centre of the Counter-Reformation, with the foundation of an extensive university in 1579, whose courtyards are well worth exploring.

Military conquest of all the Baltic States by Russia in the 18th century brought industrialisation, the Orthodox Church, Russian language and a big increase in the Jewish population, approaching 50 per cent by the end of the 19th century. Terrible slaughter wiped out the Jews and their ghettos during the Second World War, and today the sites of the Jewish quarter contain low-density housing from the 1950s in the heart of the city centre. There is an ambitious proposal to rebuild the Jewish quarters.

Vilnius has an attractive skyline, but a ring of Soviet apartment blocks around the city centre is very apparent. Today 19 per cent of the city's population is Russian. Despite the shabby condition of much of the housing, money is being spent on repaving the city centre's main shopping street, Gedimino prospektas, to a very high standard.

Outside Vilnius we visited Lithuania's first capital, Trakai, with King Vytautas' island castle of 1400 in Lake Galvé, surely the most picturesquely sited brick gothic building in northern Europe.

Lithuania's second city, Kaunas, has a number of brick gabled merchants' houses, its focus being a huge square containing the 17th century town hall, with the cathedral off one corner.

Riga was the first Hanseatic city we visited, and is the largest of the Baltic capitals. The Old Town has all the characteristics of a Hanseatic city; huge brick churches, wide streets and gabled merchants' houses, the difference here being a greater use of stone. The German merchant class continued to play a leading role in the city until Latvian independence and land reforms in 1920.

Unfortunately, the Old Town suffered heavy destruction in both world wars, and the Soviets built the bunker-like Occupation Museum to one side of the devastated Town Hall Square. In 2002 however, the square was restored to its original appearance by the addition of replicas of the previous town hall and of the elaborately façaded Blackheads' Guild of 1344 provided as part of a planning gain deal. Only the Occupation Museum detracts from the medieval scene.

The UNESCO status of Riga also extends to the grid of streets leading eastward from the Old Town, which contains a unique mix of small wooden houses from the mid-19th century Russian period and spectacular Jugendstil buildings from the 1890s. It was only the First World War that saved the remaining wooden houses from redevelopment, and today many of them are derelict and obviously have 'hope value'.

Current planning concerns were explained to us by city planners Andis Kublacovs and Aigars Kuskis. One concern is the lack of relationship between the city and its river front, which is occupied by a major traffic artery. This could be resolved by construction of a further river bridge to create a ring road on the opposite bank, or else expensive undergrounding of the river-front highway. Another concern is the decline in resident population in the Old Town. The Soviets concentrated food retailing in central market buildings, but new businesses have now relocated into the Old Town, resulting in massive displacement of dwellings.

Finally Tallinn provided the full-on Hanseatic townscape experience as northern Europe's best preserved medieval town, its silhouette bristling with spires and domes. There are

two walled Old Towns. The upper one contains the 13th century cathedral, the 19th century Russian Orthodox cathedral, and the parliament building. It has spectacular views over the lower, merchants' town, whose streets are lined with substantial guild houses and churches, and merchants' houses with raised front doors of a type that we saw in Gdansk, although here they are in stone rather than brick. The town has northern Europe's only surviving gothic town hall, with a slender, minaret-like tower said to be inspired by the Orient. The town hall square, however, is swamped by tourists and bars and restaurants catering for them.

Urban Design Group member Aliis Kodis, who works in Tallinn, arranged for us to see the early stages of regeneration of the harbour area (in the 18th century Tallinn was the main Baltic port of the Russian Empire). The problem is that it is severed from the Old Town by a major ring road, over which so far there is no proposal for a bridge. By the end of the 19th century 90 per cent of Tallinn's population was Estonian as compared with less than 60 per cent today, so it was instructive to see indigenous building traditions at the open air museum outside the city.

As in Riga and Tartu, the historic centre of Tallinn is surrounded by a ring of residential districts of wooden houses and apartments, many with interesting decorative detail. These were started by Russians at the end of the 19th century, and added to by Estonians as an expression of national cultural identity during the inter-war independence period. Today many of these buildings are in disrepair, with most of the population living in Soviet slab blocks further out.

Estonia has a rapidly growing economy, with links to Scandinavia and a high level of internet connection. A major challenge will be whether it can resolve the problems of Tallinn's tourist saturation and of the state of the built environment outside the Old Town.

Alan Stones

Urban Design Group Annual General Meeting

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I was very honoured to be elected chair of the Urban Design Group in June 2004. This was an exciting time with the UDG having just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The UDG has come a long way since it was established in 1978, so that urban design is firmly established on central government's political agenda, and is recognised as a professional discipline. *Urban Design* is the foremost authoritative journal on urban design, and the UDG has grown to an organisation with over 1,200 members, and is a founding member of UDAL.

Building on this success, the Awayday last year focused on the theme of 'Urban Design: The Next Generation'. Central to this are membership, education and skills. Action on education has focussed on the continuing skills deficit, and so the UDG has campaigned for the establishment of a bursaries scheme to foster urban design skills, to which a representative of the ODPM's office has given favourable reception. The UDG is also engaging with academic institutions about urban design education, and has lent its support to a new residential mid-career course on design and management of the public realm.

The UDG has continued to collaborate with other organisations; such as CABE and the IHT in training highway engineers on the principles and practice of urban design. CABE has also given its support through sponsoring *Graphics for Urban Design and Planning* (forthcoming), a publication on design statements (in preparation), and Julia Thrift, director of CABE Space gave a talk on its campaign 'The Value of Public Space', which the UDG supports.

In the last year STREET Marketplace events have taken place in London, Manchester and in Belfast, along with urban safaris and soirees, masterclasses, mentoring, and debates to raise the profile of urban design.

The UDG's Annual Conference, 'Urban Design: Art and Science' was held in Manchester in November 2004, and the feedback judged it to be a success. The UDG Patron's Lunch, kindly hosted by John Worthington at DEGW this year, provided a valuable opportunity to talk to the patrons about the initiatives for the year ahead.

The UDG also launched its manifesto for the incoming government prior to the general election this year. The key issues that it asks the new government to address are to:

- put design at the heart of the planning

system

- integrate planning and transport
- develop urban design skills
- promote sustainable development
- champion urban design.

Over the past year the UDG has also responded to government consultations on PPS 1, the Egan Report, Changes in Development Control (principally about local development orders and design and access statements).

On 17 June the UDG re-launched UDG Ireland with its regional convenor James Hennessey. Another European initiative that the UDG is involved in is with the Nordic Urban Design Association (NUDA), which will stage a conference on urban design in February 2006.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank John Peverley, who has been the UDG's treasurer since 1997, having served in the same post in 1980-87 – a total of 15 years. He has helped the UDG develop into what is now a developing business with a turnover in excess of £100,000 a year.

We need more help from members interested in taking an active role in the UDG's work - securing sponsorship, assisting in maintaining the website and as a new treasurer. The next *Urban Design Source Book* will be published in 2006 and will involve a change in style, and the student exhibition is planned again for 2006.

Finally I would like to thank all my colleagues on the executive committee for their work and support during the year and to thank all UDG members for their continuing support.

Barry Sellers

TREASURER'S REPORT

In the financial year 2004-05, there were a number of slight changes to the UDG's financial performance from the previous year:

On income:

- subscriptions - down by £574, due to overdue subscriptions
- publications - higher at £15,828 due to the sale of the *Source Book*, adverts, and the Education Index
- sponsorship – amounting to £12,450 for the *Source Book* and *Graphics for Urban Design and Planning*
- training – a new source of income for the UDG, brought in £3,375
- donations - from Urban Design Services Ltd topped £15,520, plus just over

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 28 February 2005

INCOME	
Interest received	£1,171
Subscriptions	£65,572
Publications	£15,828
Donations from UDSL	£15,520
Gift aid	£1,020
Training	£3,375
TOTAL INCOME	£102,486

EXPENDITURE	
Printing <i>Urban Design</i>	£30,118
Printing <i>Source Book</i>	£5,528
Graphics for <i>Urban Design and Planning</i>	£11,000
Design statements	£1,000
Part time director	£16,841
Part time administrators	£23,041
Rent, rates, light, heat	£9,400
Insurance, telephone and broadband	£2,097
Postage and stationery	£2,390
Administration and travel expenses	£1,596
Accountants fees including VAT	£728
UDAL contribution	£2,000
Other expenses	£132
Website	£317
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£106,188

Loss for the year	£3,702
BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD	£32,945
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD	£29,243

BALANCE SHEET at 29 February 2005

Fixed assets:	
Computers	£5,086
Less depreciation	£3,623
Net value	£1,463

Current assets:	
Cash at bank	
Current account	
Charities official investment fund deposit accounts	£24,550
COIF (general) a/c	£14,979
COIF (publications) a/c	£4,586
Cash float	£50
Net current assets	£44,165

Current liabilities:	
Sundry debtors (UDAL)	£26
Items banked in wrong entity	£16,359
	£16,385

Net current assets	£27,780
Total assets	£29,243

£1,000 of Gift Aid recovered from the Inland Revenue for 2000-01.

All of these sources of income are particularly welcome and have helped to keep the deficit lower than expected this year.

For expenditure:

- publications - increased by about £21,900, due to the colour printing of *Urban Design* at an extra £5,366 than last year, the *Source Book* added a further £5,528, and £11,000 was paid to the team producing *Graphics for Urban Design and Planning*.

- Management and administration costs were lower than last year, when the website set-up costs were incurred.

In summary, UDG assets fell by £3,702, from £32,945 to £29,243.

John Peverley



Photograph from John Thompson's talk at the RIBA conference

At last the RIBA is beginning to recognise that creating places is more important than creating buildings, something the Urban Design Group has been campaigning on for the past 25 years. To open the conference, RIBA President George Ferguson announced the launch of the Academy of Urbanism (www.academyofurbanism.org.uk) and the Academy's inaugural European City of the Year Award.

The Academy of Urbanism has been conceived by the RIBA's Planning Group, chaired by John Thompson, with input from CABI, English Partnerships and the Academy for Sustainable Communities and many others. Together they have come up with the concept of a new stand-alone membership organisation, focused on identifying, promoting and disseminating best practice in urbanism throughout the UK.

The Academy, will comprise 100 people with a shared passion for creating great places, and will include representatives from each UDAL member. It will have two main areas of activity: education, and an annual awards programme. Education will be via a series of events and courses involving studies of places, starting with Oxford, led by Trevor Osborne, partnered with Oxford Brookes University. The Academy is also developing an initiative for promoting urbanism as a core-curricula subject within primary and secondary education.

The Academy's Urbanism Awards will be run on the model of the Oscars, with nominations and awards for European City of the Year, the Great Town, the Great Neighbourhood, the Great Place and the Great Street. The European City of the Year will alternate annually between Europe and the United Kingdom

RIBA Conference on Urbanism

– THE PRINCIPLES OF PLACEMAKING AND LAUNCH OF THE ACADEMY OF URBANISM, BRISTOL, 30 JUNE - 2 JULY

with the other award categories being for the UK only. The material created to support each nomination will be used in the Academy's education programme. In order to kick-start the Academy's awards and educational programme, the first European City of the Year Award was announced. The cities nominated included Aarhus, Barcelona, Dublin, Groz, Groningen, Rotterdam and Zurich, with Copenhagen winning the award.

The first main speaker was John Sorrell, chairman of CABI, who clearly put the emphasis on better designed neighbourhoods and suburbs, involving the input of local people. Most recent city success stories relate to city centres, but not far away there are streets and spaces that have been neglected for decades. Research by MORI shows that 66 per cent of the factors that determine the quality of life are linked to the quality of the built environment. If we want to improve the former, we must first improve the latter. The quality of much of the public realm is not worthy of the fourth richest nation in the world.

Sorrell advocated the need for people to re-discover a sense of ownership of their neighbourhood because this could generate pride and respect. He suggested that we should think about the 700,000 children who will be born in the UK over the next year. Most will be born in hospitals, live in houses, learn in schools, work in offices and play in parks, and we must design and build an environment which for each child, over its whole life, gives the best possible quality of life.

Jan Gehl, king placemaker from Denmark, spoke passionately about the use of streets and how that has changed in recent years. Every city or town is now strictly controlled by a traffic department that has statistics and plans for traffic and parking, but no statistics or plans for pedestrians, and hence no discussion about the importance of public life in streets. Every town should have a department to protect pedestrian and public life interests, which Copenhagen now has.

Terry Farrell spoke about the rediscovery of the city over the past 10 years, but that architects were still object obsessed, rather than looking at the master plan scale. Martha Schwartz, American landscape architect, gave a stimulating talk on the role of art in placemaking. Art can make people

think, and it can capture a very human side of us. It can also give a focus to a community and create self esteem. A beautiful environment is fundamental to human health.

John Peverley

A breath of fresh air came in the form of the delightfully profane Roger Madelin, in his role as the enlightened developer. In accepting the sad truth that architects have long since relinquished their own role as the instigator of large scale urban projects, we now have to answer the difficult question of how to make good urban design happen. How to ensure that ideas do not languish on the drawing board as we attempt to circumnavigate the demands of greedy clients, short-sighted authorities and the constant tyranny of the highways engineer? In the face of diminishing public confidence it makes you wonder 'does it really have to be so difficult?'

We enjoyed a lively debate between the professional establishment in Europe and the topical Charter for New Urbanism as touted by our American colleagues. As David Mackay exulted over the cultural richness of our European cities and pilloried the Disneyland stylisation of the modern suburb, Hank Dittmar opened with an address from the Prince's Foundation before establishing his principles for good design. However, as the conference drew to a close, it became clear that despite the differing methodologies behind creating the ideal 'neighbourhood' or 'neighborhood', we face common foes and share common goals in our need to reaffirm the importance of the architecture of everyday life.

This year the RIBA Annual Conference has focussed attention on the hot topic of urban design. On the same day that Live 8 was raising public awareness of global poverty and homelessness, it seemed appropriate that architects should gather together with the single aim of making better places for people to live. As Jonathan Meads adroitly stated, sometimes we need to concern ourselves less with isolated architectural icons and provide 'a better standard of ordinary'.

Laura Wright, Architect & Principal Urban Designer, David Lock Associates

An Introduction to Design Coding

In August a key feedback session of the CABE/ODPM coding pilot programme took place. The projects under review are developments that have been constructed to a variety of codes, and in some instances, it is the case for coding a particular area that has been subject of review. The design code research programme was initially launched in May 2004 by the ODPM based on seven pilot projects.

The findings have created disquiet for those who believe in the efficacy of coding to create successful urban realm. There would appear to be a great deal of misconception (and no less misinformation) about the role of coding in the UK

A design code is a set of three dimensional, site-specific design rules for development. It is informed by a spatial master plan and describes the rules through words and graphics. It is a tool that can be used in the design and planning process, but is more regulatory than other forms of guidance commonly used in the English planning system.

The Prince's Foundation has enthusiastically promoted the use of codes in its belief that they are the basis for a holistic approach to the design of urban areas. The Foundation has also engaged Andreas Duany of Duany & Plater-Zyberg, who has pioneered the revival of codes in the USA, and Christopher Alexander, specialising in the self-organising ability of natural science, and Paul Murrain, who has championed their use in the UK.

VIEWS OF CODING

Codes have been integral to the formation of cities and towns throughout history, including the greatest and most loved places – this is no accident. As HRH The Prince of Wales has written, "It is commonplace to say that cities like Siena are beautiful, that they are civilised. They are places we want to go to, rather than get out of. But such beauty was not inevitable. Siena was, and is, a banking city – one of the most important in Italy – a city with a living to make. But its citizens believed in rules that expressed their ambition to live within harmonious and beautiful surroundings... Siena has always had a code."

Architects complain about the restrictions on creativity that codes create. Duany states, "Those who object to codes imagine that they constrain architectural masterpieces (their own, usually). But masterpieces are few. Codes can assure a minimum level of

competence, even if in so doing they must constrain certain possibilities."

"We must code so that the various professions that affect urbanism can act with unity of purpose. Without integrated codes, architects design buildings that ignore the streets of the civil engineer, landscape architects ignore both the roads and the buildings. Without codes, there is nothing but the unassembled collection of urban potential."

APPROPRIATENESS

The most recent codes seek to generate the complex patterns of the best urban spaces through innovative coding parameters. Duany's own 'SmartCode' uses a so-called 'transect' system, organising developments according to an urban to rural transect, from intensive human uses to wilderness.

Duany notes that many of the worst mistakes of urbanism over the past 50 years have come from developments that are in the wrong place. The SmartCode remedies this by assigning parameters according to an urban-rural transect.

CODES IN THE UK

The application of coding in the UK is particularly important for growth and the consequent threat to the character of some of our best loved towns and rural fringes. By offering design guidance that relates to existing vernacular, coding protects the character of a local area against the modern housing development.

Although there are strong historical precedents of coding in the UK, this tradition has been interrupted. Recently, initiatives (including the work of The Prince's Foundation) have pioneered the reintroduction of codes as a mechanism for delivering guidelines and design standards for growth areas.

But the recent CABE feedback session raised serious doubts about skill levels in both the writing and

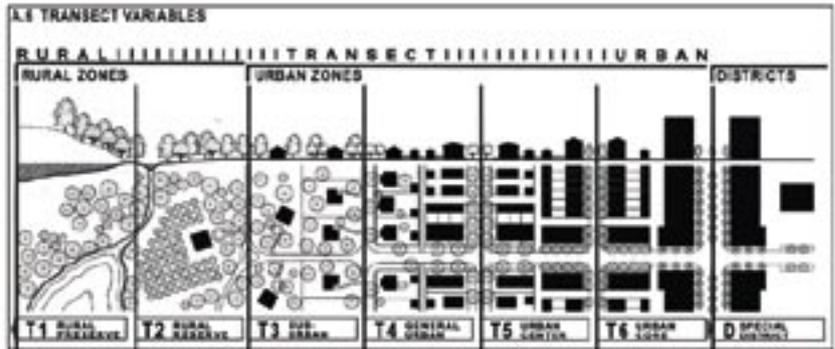
application of codes in this country.

In the formation of a code, very few of the pilot schemes, it was revealed, had been the subject of the type of rigorous stakeholder consultation that leads to the creation of a successful code. Additionally, there did not appear to be any of the necessary checks in the implementation process that bind developers to a code once they are committed to a site. Where it is clear that abiding to the code will be a condition of appointment, design skills can develop appropriately. At Upton, Northampton, where the Foundation developed a code for land brought forward by English Partnerships, the insistence on coding caused a major and positive shift in the approach of developers and their design teams; not only those now appointed, but even at bid stage, as they grappled with the practical implications of building out a coded development. The design quality of submissions was raised significantly.

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Where there is confidence that a community's requirements are represented in the devising of a code, a much tighter set of guidelines can be delineated, satisfying public aspiration and the private sector interest. Without meaningful stakeholder participation, a code becomes a mere wish list for urbanism – more in common with generic design guidance for urban areas. More pertinently, where the use of a code is not a condition of the procurement process it carries little or no value. In evaluating codes it must be recognised that the code functions as a prescriptive, regulating plan for land that will be independently developed. Defining a code is a political act that relies on the commitment of both developer and regulator.

James Hulme, Policy and Network Manager,
Prince's Foundation





A clear master plan is seen as an integral part of the design submission



Above top Oldham aerial view

Above middle European 3 winning scheme in Groningen by S333 Architects

Above Zaanstad, European 2 winning scheme by Maccreanor Lavington

Aerial view of one of the sites at Oldham, courtesy of Oldham-Rochdale HMR Pathfinder. European 3 winning scheme in Groningen, Netherlands, courtesy of S333 Architects. European 2 winning scheme by Maccreanor Lavington in Zaanstad, Netherlands, courtesy of Anne Bousma. All kindly reproduced by permission from European Europe publication 'Implementations - European 1 to 6 negotiated projects'.

European 8 Competition

Government policy is clear; we need more, better-designed and innovative housing that responds to the needs of diverse communities. Our homes are not merely about providing shelter but form the fabric of our neighbourhoods - we need to create places where people want to live - places which stimulate our everyday lives. But how we deliver this so that the results are truly inspirational is another matter.

With the European competition, there is the possibility to create a series of smaller housing developments which could influence the wider issues in the UK.

European is a biennial competition for young architects, under 40 years of age, to design innovative housing schemes for sites across Europe. For the first time in its 16-year history, the UK part of the competition is being run by CABE with support from ODPM, English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation.

Unlike some architectural competitions, European is focussed on delivery. It strives to engender fresh, critical thinking about specific city sites and how they relate to new and existing neighbourhoods, asking participants to propose innovative urban and architectural solutions.

However, this is not an ideas competition - European's key objective is that the winning team gets to realise and build its proposal. As a result, it now has a legacy of completed buildings and commissioned master plans throughout Europe, and has kick-started the careers of a number of established UK practices such as S333 Architecture & Urbanism and Maccreanor Lavington. Both practices have managed to build their winning proposals in the Netherlands during the 1990s.

For the current session of the competition, European 8, CABE has selected three UK sites that relates to CABE's enabling work with the Sustainable Communities Plan. Oldham and Milton Keynes are located within the wider Housing Market Renewal (HMR) and Housing Growth Area agendas respectively, while the site for London will form part of a larger Housing Action Trust development. As a result it creates an opportunity to build projects that question current trends and propose pioneering, feasible solutions within locations that will be the subject of a much larger investment in housing in the near future.

To ensure that competitors consider the issues holistically, they have been asked to focus on both the master planning and housing aspects of each site. Indeed, each brief is informed by urban design principles and requires competitors to respond carefully to the issues relating to character, continuity and enclosure, ease of movement, legibility and diversity. The European site in Werneth, Oldham exemplifies this.

Working with the site sponsors, Oldham Rochdale HMR, Oldham Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Group, the brief is founded upon the real situation of the HMR and uses the current urban design framework, together with the Werneth strategic master plan, as the basis for the competition. One of the key objectives for this site is looking at how to create a strong urban form that helps to define a grid pattern for the streets, and clarifies a clear relationship between the plot, streets and buildings, and between public and private space to create a positive environment that is a desirable place to live in. A clear master plan is seen as an integral part of the design submission, a fundamental tool that will help to make places work and function for local communities.

In taking on the management of European 8 CABE is clear that the competition is based on real sites - where winning schemes really can be delivered; real clients - who are committed to the role that design can play in creating successful homes and communities; real issues - such as those faced in the UK in housing market renewal and housing growth areas; and, real briefs - which will ensure genuinely deliverable housing solutions for the sites.

By February 2006, when the winners are announced, this session of the European competition should have challenged us all about how we think about and create high quality homes and neighbourhoods.

Implementations - European 1-6 is a publication that outlines completed projects from the past six sessions of the competition. This is available from the European Europe website - www.european-europe.com/pages_eng/publication/realisations.php.

Peter Maxwell, Enabling Advisor, CABE

Re-tracing the Grid: Laurieston, Glasgow

Glasgow's fragmented urban forms are testimony to the city's past, define the city's present and imply the city's possible futures. Its distinct central grid and dense tenemental districts are defined by the River Clyde, its urban parks and by urban voids created by a combination of absent industry, major transport infrastructure and vast tracts of windswept anti-urban Modernist space.

The Laurieston area of the Gorbals in Glasgow could be said to find itself in one of these urban voids. Located on the Clyde's south bank, opposite the city centre and between the regenerating districts of Tradeston and New Gorbals, it is framed by Victorian rail viaducts and blighted by the legacy of planning which decimated its previously dense urban form.

The incoherent spatial structure of the existing area is exacerbated by indistinct open spaces which are dominated by four high rise slab blocks. The plight of Laurieston is compounded by a poor public health record, very low economic activity and an insufficient functional mix for a successful neighbourhood with very few services and facilities available to a population largely without access to a car. Laurieston is facing a future dominated by a motorway viaduct cutting across its southern edge.

However, Laurieston has a number of key assets. These include numerous notable examples of Glasgow's rich Georgian and Victorian architectural heritage, renowned cultural venues, a riverside location and a close proximity to the city's centre. Laurieston's colourful track record of transformation and reinvention can be charted from neo-Classical Georgian city centre extension through condemned tenemental slum to the Comprehensive Redevelopment Plans of a Brave New World. Its current situation is unsustainable and under-utilises its prime location. Its assets are ripe for exploitation to support a dramatic regeneration of the area and continue the transformation of Glasgow's river corridor.

In January 2004 Glasgow City Council appointed a multi-disciplinary design team to prepare a local development strategy for Laurieston. In the meantime, I undertook parallel design investigation into opportunities for urban regeneration as part of postgraduate diploma in urban design at Edinburgh College of Art. The outcome

was my thesis Masterplan – Re-tracing the Grid – Laurieston/Glasgow.

Following research into the physical, social and economic context of the area together with the testing of alternative design strategies, core concepts emerged enabling the development of an urban design framework and master plan. The framework set out key design principles outlining a strategy which retraces the historic urban grid of routes across Laurieston's fractured urban terrain. This would bind together the surrounding districts, creating new linkages between Glasgow's centre and its Southside, maximising permeability and interconnection across the master plan area.

Working with the retained built form, rail viaducts and the River Clyde, the master plan creates a coherent network of interlinked open spaces that define new urban blocks and establish a spatial hierarchy of road-street-route-path to enhance legibility. At the heart of the master plan is a new Linear Park as a focus for the renewed neighbourhood and acting as a key space in a pedestrian route linking across the River Clyde suspension bridge into Buchanan Street and central Glasgow. The Linear Park would be framed by the re-densified urban form with a range of urban block typologies, offering a wide variety of residential units and tenures. The park would be enclosed by a new Civic Forum to the north and the proposed Crossrail Station to the south; its presence driving regeneration, attracting business and providing access to the national rail network at a strategically important location.

The phased delivery of the dense, medium rise, mixed use district outlined in the master plan was tested for economic viability and patterns of use and movement. The master plan for the 14.7 hectare site demonstrated a strategy for delivery of:

- more than 100 residential units per hectare
- minimum 30 per cent affordable housing
- at least 1/3 of its land area for public open space
- a walkable district to reduce private car dependency
- improved access to services, employment opportunities, amenities and public transport
- a range of new community, cultural, retail, leisure and commercial properties.

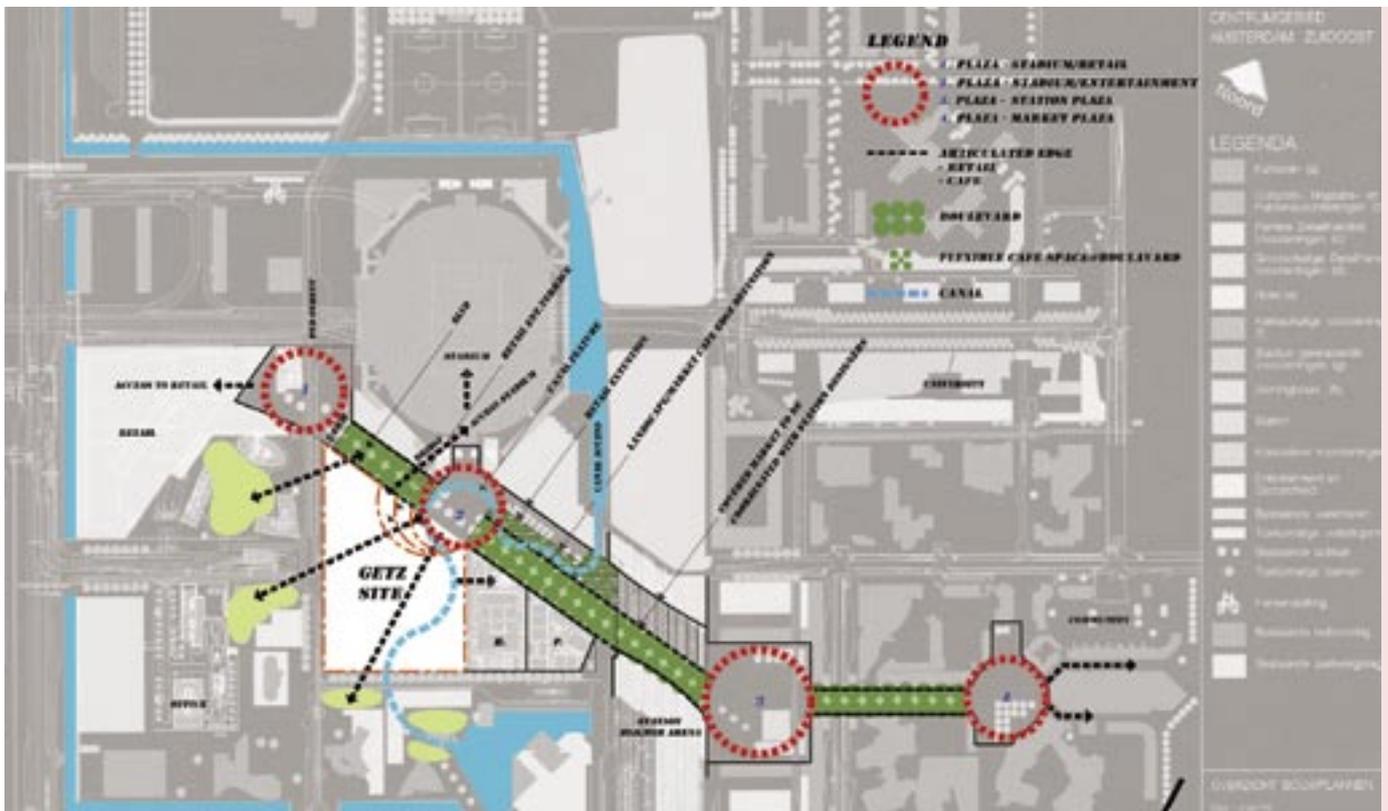


This master plan sought to demonstrate that through the reintroduction of the historic grid a compact, dense city can be realised which is contemporary in its morphology and character and aspires to deliver a vibrant and vital cityspace befitting the 21st century European city.

By realising its latent potential, Laurieston could act as an exemplar in how to create convivial urban living and provide a template for sustainable, adaptable and robust urban design master planning. I look forward to seeing Glasgow City Council's local development strategy for Laurieston which I hope can achieve these aspirations despite the spectre of the M74 overshadowing it.

Top Typical high rise blocks, which are removed
Above Master plan view from the south east with new development in yellow

Graham Ross is an Associate with Austin-Smith:Lord in Glasgow and received two awards at this year's Scottish Design Awards (the Chairman's Award for Architecture and the inaugural Student Place-making Award) for *Masterplan – Re-tracing the Grid – Laurieston, Glasgow*. Terry Farrell was chairman of the judging panel.



Making Connections and a New City Centre in Amsterdam

David Rogers describes the challenges of bringing new life to old segregated districts

In recent years, the Centrumgebied Zuidoost district of Amsterdam in the southeast corner of the city has existed in a separate realm from the rest of the city, cut off from the daily bustle of downtown life and largely undiscovered by the global community. It is an area that feels unsafe and disconnected not only from the rest of Amsterdam, but also from its own component parts. A plan is under way, however, to reclaim the lustre of Zuidoost's rich cultural diversity and transform the area into a cohesive, integrated global entertainment and retail destination – and a second city centre for Amsterdam.

RICH CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Zuidoost has been primarily known for the entertainment venues along Arena Boulevard – a place to go for a couple of hours of live music at the Heineken Music Hall or Pepsi Stage, a movie at the Pathé Multiplex Cinema, or a football match at the Stadium Arena. Once the show is over, though, it's best to go home or finish your evening in another part of the city. Many people avoid the district's Bijlmer train station, as it is thought to be rife with pickpockets and muggers. The station's reputation has helped reinforce the separation between Zuidoost and the rest of Amsterdam, as well as the division between Arena Boulevard's attractions and Amsterdamse Poort, a shopping centre of more than 200 shops, just on the other side of the station, frequented by an immigrant community of people from Surinam, Ghana, Morocco and Turkey who live in the adjacent residential area. Local merchants sell goods from Amsterdamse Poort's wonderfully diverse open-air market and the 40-stall covered Shopperhal marketplace. Families typically live over the shops, helping to bond the community and create a vibrant energy. Yet few locals from other districts of Amsterdam, let alone visitors from other parts of the country or the world, ever set foot in the neighbourhood.

ZUIDOOST - A CULTURAL DESTINATION

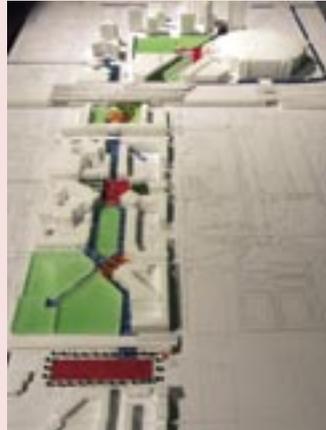
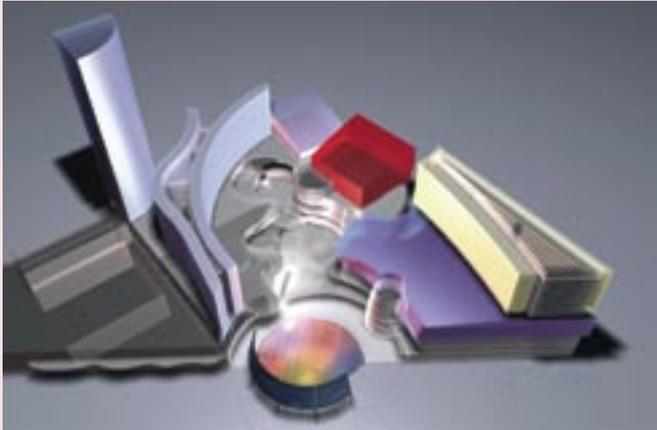
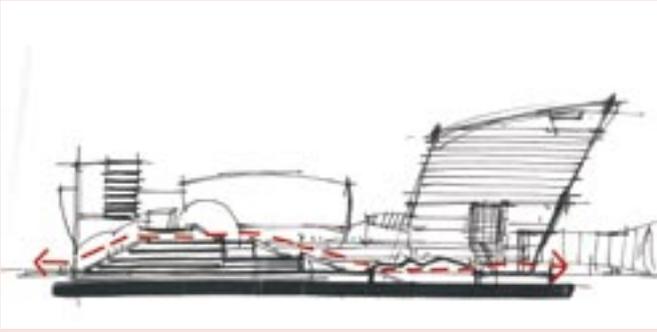
Nine years ago, the city of Amsterdam and OMC (a joint venture between the three Dutch real estate companies Ballast Nedam Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij, BAM Vastgoed and ING Real Estate) hatched a plan to create a second city centre in Amsterdam's Zuidoost district. The idea was to upgrade Bijlmer Station; revitalise the area around it and Arena Boulevard, where the entertainment venues and retail outlets only attract people on an intermittent, short-term basis; and to improve and promote Amsterdamse Poort as a welcoming, lively and culturally rich retail destination.

OMC commissioned The Jerde Partnership to propose concepts for the development of the new GETZ Entertainment Centre, while ING Real Estate and the City of Amsterdam engaged Jerde for the revitalisation of Arena Boulevard and Amsterdamse Poort.

The Jerde team started the project by researching the site, its history and people. In order to successfully revitalise and reconnect the area, the plan would need to reflect the district socially and culturally, and become a place desirable to the current residents and business people, as well as newcomers from across the city and the world. In addition to reviewing the property market and extensive local analysis, the team also met with local groups – including arts and community action groups – to discuss their hopes and dreams for the neighbourhood.

CONNECTIVITY AND SCALE

In the quest to identify the DNA of each area, the most pressing urban and community design challenges to confront the Jerde team were those of connectivity and scale. People feel safe and comfortable in well-integrated areas of appropriate human scale. Arena Boulevard, the width of an eight-lane Californian superhighway, and the divisions



Opposite page Amsterdamsepoort master plan diagram
Clockwise from top left Getz section sketch, Getz concept model, Amsterdamsepoort model, Getz bird's eye north view

between Zuidoost's areas work directly against these concepts. Separately, Amsterdamse Poort and the areas around Arena Boulevard and Bijlmer Station were not attracting sustained activity or interest from outside the area.

The GETZ Entertainment Centre, the largest entertainment complex in the Netherlands, is named after the Dutch acronym describing the various activities to be offered at the Centre, ie health, entertainment, theatre and business. More specifically, hip and fashionable GETZ is likely to include retail, cultural events, a performing arts theatre, an adventure zone, cinemas, restaurants, a casino, residential units and a hotel.

The design concept for GETZ creates a focus on a welcoming central plaza that opens onto, and is fully integrated with Arena Boulevard. A series of terraces rising above the central plaza below provide an urban theatre with performance areas for various public and community functions. Following careful study of sun conditions, the terraces will be illuminated by natural light for most of the day. These 'sky plazas' will have sunlight and cool breezes in the summer and will serve as winter gardens protected from the elements in winter.

Terraces fit the scale of many urban sites and can create community spaces that can be seen from surrounding areas. They also provide views to activity in the streets below. Jerde has successfully used terraces in several of its projects, including Caretta Shiodome complex at Dentsu's headquarters in Tokyo - enclosed stone terraces that give views out into the open-air piazza; Namba Parks in Osaka, which creates landscaped terraces on a roof that rises high up and creates a clearly visible park in the urban centre; and Warsaw's Zlote Tarasy, which means "golden terraces," where a terraced three storey development overlooks an open-air park and a central square.

AMSTERDAMSE POORT'S DISTRICTS

For Amsterdamse Poort project, the Jerde team and the Dutch landscape architecture firm Karres en Brands are working with the City's Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Zuidoost to develop a mixed-use plan that 'reimagines' the district as a unique, culturally diverse area. In the plan, a range of shops and restaurants are complemented by outdoor elements such as public art, landscaping and extensive water features in a mix of colours and textures drawn from the cultures represented

in the area. Twelve distinct areas articulated within Amsterdamse Poort will draw visitors through the area, providing them with attractions along the way, and the plan integrates the district successfully with the surrounding neighbourhoods, encouraging access and use by residents and visitors from nearby areas.

The Jerde Partnership is also working with Karres en Brands to improve Arena Boulevard as a pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare that effectively connects the major components of the Zuidoost district. Plans include re-paving the Boulevard and adding a series of raised water, seating and planted areas. The lighting scheme for the area will be refreshed, and consideration is being given to adding more retail and dining choices along this major artery, while Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners is developing a new plan for Bijlmer Station.

For the Jerde team, both the design of GETZ and the revitalisation of Amsterdamse Poort are equally interesting and challenging, but the scale of place and expectations for each are quite different. While the GETZ Entertainment Centre will be a one-of-a-kind global destination and set the bar very high for other projects to follow, Amsterdamse Poort has an expectation equally as high as it endeavours to be a cohesive new community within the greater Amsterdam region.

CONNECTIVITY, DIFFERENTIATION AND ARTICULATION

To create a truly memorable place where people come, stay for a while, and return with friends and family, the design is based upon connectivity, differentiation and articulation. Connectivity is the glue that pulls the components of Zuidoost together to create a unique destination for relaxation and entertainment. The differentiation and articulation of the components within the whole district allow visitors to discover areas for themselves.

By 2009, people will see the revitalised Zuidoost as a safe and desirable place to visit. GETZ will be an exciting entertainment complex, and Amsterdamse Poort will be a richly energised area enlivened by a mix of activity and cultures. Zuidoost then will assume its role as an integrated and welcoming district and Amsterdam's vibrant second city centre.

David Rogers, Senior Vice President and Director of Design, The Jerde Partnership



Still Seeking an Urban Renaissance

So New Labour goes on, as does the Sustainable Communities agenda, the reformed planning system, the Academy for Sustainable Communities (national skills centre), the liveability agenda, and CABE. All of these are changing the way the built environment is shaped in England. As election issues however, they largely failed to register on the national consciousness.

So is everything rosy in the garden? Clearly not if successive MORI polls are to be believed, which consistently identify dissatisfaction with the local environment as high amongst the issues vexing local communities. Lord Rogers also clearly has his doubts as he attempts to re-form the Urban Task Force to move the urban renaissance agenda on once more.

So what alternatives exist to place the delivery of urban quality centre-stage? Here are a few ideas:

1. START WITH URBANISM

A critique that many have voiced is why do we start the built environment education process by indoctrinating students in the narrow pre-occupations and biases of their future deep specialisms – architecture, planning, property, and so forth? Other professions do it differently; lawyers are trained to understand the basis of tort and common law before specialising in, for example, criminal or matrimonial law. For their part, doctors need to understand the basics of physiology and bio-chemistry before embarking on a specialisation. So for built environment professionals, why is the bit that unites us all

– the urbanism – so often taught as an afterthought, a postgraduate specialism, or not at all? Such an approach shuts the door once the horse has bolted. If we are to understand how we all contribute to a greater whole, we need to radically rethink and reverse our educational process.

2. FOCUS ON THE PUBLIC REALM

With education exacerbating a blinkered approach, we typically focus on the separate elements of the built environment and rarely on the connective tissue between. The impact is felt most acutely in areas where we all have a stake, but no one is responsible – the public realm. Better education may (in time) help to redress the situation, in the meantime, the way that local government is structured only acts to exacerbate the problems, with responsibilities for the built environment split between different departments and different tiers of local government. All intervention should be co-ordinated by one authority – the Public Space Authority – with a holistic responsibility for all parts of the public realm, and a statutory duty in all its functions to enhance the quality and liveability of public space whilst encouraging sustainable patterns of life.

3. INSTIGATE URBAN DESIGN REVIEW

A key responsibility of such an authority might be for urban design review. Increasingly, design features as a significant dimension of planning – at least in national policy terms. Yet planning authorities are rarely equipped to deal properly with design and other short-

term objectives often dominate decision-making. The answer may lie in independent urban design review panels in all local authorities, feeding into the deliberations of planning committees. Many American communities have a similar system with powers and responsibilities quite separate from the planning authority – namely to guide, review and approve the quality of design in development proposals. The benefit is that design quality is automatically prioritised – everywhere – and the process is appropriately resourced (often using external advisors) in order to deliver informed and consistent decisions on design. In the UK, design decision-making infrastructure needs an urgent injection of legitimacy, urban design review incorporating all public investment and private development within its remit could provide the means.

4. RETHINK CONSERVATION

Conservation has effectively developed into a regulatory system of its own that overlays the system of planning. In an environment where government guidance tells us that high quality, contextually sensitive design is a priority ‘everywhere’, why do we need conservation areas, with all the inequalities that their use implies? Inevitably there will be the exceptional places that require complete preservation; protection akin to that given to listed buildings. But with these exceptions aside, everywhere else deserves the same high quality design with an appropriate regard to context. Abandoning the vast majority of conservation areas, and the system that goes with them, would have the added benefit of freeing up the large number of highly skilled conservation officers, to help fill the quality gaps elsewhere.

5. A MASSIVE INVESTMENT IN SKILLS

Even if rethinking conservation could help to deliver design skills, the pool of such people is small, and new skills are required of such an order that the Academy for Sustainable Communities has its work cut out to deliver. As the market seems to be failing to attract enough people of the right calibre into the built environment professions, the investment may instead need to come from central government and over a sustained period of time. The Planning Delivery Grant represents a case-in-point. This valuable initiative has greatly increased demand for postgraduate planning education, although educators in some parts of the country do not currently have the capacity to meet the demand. Such capacity is difficult to turn on and off like a tap, but is critical if the skill shortage is to be overcome sustainably. The built environment is a fundamental ‘public good’, and just as it does for schools or the health service, the Government needs to invest to guarantee its future quality.

6. SUPPORT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

A related necessity that will also help to cross-fund the educational capacity required in universities is the need to invest in developing a serious research and development capacity. CABE’s report ‘The Real Budget for Research’ revealed the paucity of research in the built environment, particularly in the softer, non-technological, issues such as urban design and development process. The implications are huge and include a construction sector that has barely moved out of the dark ages, and policy and practice, that are driven too often by fashion and unsubstantiated hearsay with little serious evidential base. Long-term well-funded research programmes are required, funded both by industry and government. A dedicated built environment research council may be one means to overcome the eternal problem that this type of research too often falls between the gaps. Given the universal impact of the built environment on health, wealth and wellbeing, it is astounding how little we actually understand it and the processes through which it is shaped.

7. GIVE SPATIAL PLANNING A CHANCE

– BUT SUBSUME COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

This point supports what has already been happening in England,

namely the introduction of a new system of plan-making. However, given the time it took to bed the last system down (at least a decade) one can not help worrying that patience will quickly wear thin. This is doubly so given rumours that the implications of a more holistic ‘spatial’ approach to planning are poorly understood at the coalface and continue to be under-resourced. Nevertheless, in its essence, the system of spatial planning tries to deliver exactly the sort of integrated approach to the built environment that the rest of this article is advocating. The other side of the coin is that – if done properly – spatial planning should deliver the sort of joined-up community visioning process that community strategies have been put in place to deliver; although with a clear spatial overlay and statutory process for delivery. Perhaps it is time to abandon the community strategy process, and instead to direct the resources and energies of the local strategic partnerships (LSPs) into the new spatial planning process. The latter desperately needs this if it is to deliver, whilst for their own part the LSPs have so far largely failed to ignite either vision or widespread community commitment to their cause.

8. ABANDON DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

The system of development control, meanwhile, has been hardly touched by the planning reforms, and a radical review may be required in order to move beyond the discredited regulatory mindset. The RTPI (amongst others) has argued for ‘development management’, through which planners would provide a more enabling, rather than controlling service. This would require planners to look beyond planning permission – currently their only way to influence development – and instead to use the full range of local government powers to guide, incentivise, and (only then) control development. Such a system might finally move planning back to where it was 60 years ago – a system of delivery and investment (public and private), and not simply regulation and control. Involving LSPs fully in the spatial planning process, and using local government’s new ‘well-being’ powers to the full might provide the tools and resources to make this possible. Planning reform is still unfinished business; development control should be the next priority.

9. MERGE OUR PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTES

Returning to where these proposals began – with the theme of urbanism – our failure to create high quality urban environments has often been put down to the carving up of responsibilities, with professions blaming each other when individual efforts fail to come together into a greater whole. Perhaps it is time to abandon our professional ‘closed shops’ altogether in favour of one Institute of Urbanism. Such an institute could have a simple objective at its heart; not the protection of members’ interests, but the delivery of a high quality, sustainable, built environment. Members would be viewed as urbanists first and foremost, and some would just happen to specialise in buildings, some in landscapes, some in highways, etc. We need to talk to each other far more and condemn each other far less. This could set the context for such a dialogue.

Looking at the setting for urban quality today, one can’t help concluding that this government has made all the right noises, and in recent years, many of the right moves. In so doing, it has decisively moved the built environment agenda forward. Equally, there is still a long way to go, and more radical thinking may be required in this third New Labour term. Unfortunately, none of the above will deliver quick wins. Instead they will require long-term political commitment, if, over time, a design-led urban renaissance is to be delivered.

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

Opposite page left Gunwharf Quays - conservation and newbuild hand in hand
Opposite page right Covent Garden, a liveable public realm
Photographs by Louise Thomas



Experiencing London's Millennium Bridge: an Analysis

Since the Romans imposed their architecture on the British landscape, the design and construction of bridges has continued to perform a peremptory role in emphasising the physical and ideological connection and separation of opposites, within the urban fabric. Through the centuries, technological progression has enhanced the potential of bridge design, expanding the discipline into an art form where the engineer's mission was to balance huge spans with a modern aesthetic to create objects as striking statements of a city's power and affluence. Such statements have fostered great works, perhaps most notably by engineers such as Robert Maillart and engineer-architects such as Santiago Calatrava.

The sculptural qualities of Maillart's and others' bridges are often presented in photographs which, presumably, are intended to show the bridge as a designed object within a setting which further enhances its qualities. These photographs almost always show the bridge in elevation where a distant view is available or obliquely where viewpoints are more constrained. Few images exhibit a bridge's aesthetic elegance from on the deck. It appears that the aesthetics of bridges are to be viewed from afar. Nevertheless, in the city, when we create a physical connection across a river, we are extending the city fabric across this spatial vacuum and the experience of its traverse becomes equal to its symbolic or sculptural value.

An exception to the pattern of development in bridge design has been the dalliance that architecture and engineering have had with the concept of the 'living bridge'. In 1995, the Peabody Trust launched a competition to design a bridge that specifically worked as a 'microcosm of the city experience'. This bridge was to be located between Bankside and the steps up to St Paul's Cathedral in the north, creating the same link as the most recent addition to the Thames, the Millennium Bridge.

THE BRIDGE IN THE CITY

The Millennium Bridge has been well publicised, not least because of its structural shortcomings at its opening, but also because it creates

a major new landmark and vital link between the City and Bankside. It may be suggested that much of the bridge's value, is present, merely by virtue of its location. However, in addition to the need for the link within the context of inter-district movement patterns demonstrated by the work of the Space Syntax laboratory, a perceived need was also identified to allow pedestrians to linger within a vehicle-free space with excellent views of notable London landmarks. The structure also allows pedestrians a closer relationship with the river, allowing them to temporarily escape the physiological stress of the urban environment to contemplate the only apparent natural, albeit controlled, process.

In addition to this physiological role the bridge satisfies some, perhaps all of the requirements of cognitive psychology, as applied by Kevin Lynch. The positioning of the bridge also responds to the influential guidance of Gordon Cullen. Cullen suggests that the art of townscape design 'is to take all the elements that go to create the environment.....and to weave them together in such a way that drama is released.' This drama is created, not least by the tension between the two vastly different architectural styles of the Wren masterpiece and the monolithic shell of Gilbert Scott's power station. The project team has, whether consciously or through a tacit response to its training, exploited this and a number of Cullen's recommendations for choreographing the urban landscape.

Consequently, the tension within the structure is reflected in the tension held between the secular 'temple' of the art gallery and the Christian temple of St Paul's within the hallowed City of finance and commerce, entertaining a symbolic notion of 'millennium' and echoing the allegorical use of the bridge in van Eyck's painting. Through this tension, a sense of departure and destination is created when crossing the bridge and an urban order, redolent of a recreational zone in Le Corbusier's 'Contemporary City' is defined.

However, exploitation of location, movement frameworks or physiological and psychological needs are not sufficient to maximise the potential of the bridge as an extension to the urban public realm



Opposite page St Paul's Cathedral terminating the vista from the bridge deck. Cullen indicates a special architectural quality presented by the dome, likening it to 'an architectural personality, a presence as jovial as a fat man in an overcoat, as magnetic and as outsize as a balloon which has made a forced landing in somebody's back yard.'

Far left 'The Madonna with Chancellor Rolin' by Jan van Eyck. The bridge is ironically used to emphasise the connection and separation of two cities, representing the distinction between earthly and divine power.

Left In contrast to St Paul's, the crossing is terminated by the 'bluntness and vigour' imposed by the brutal presence of the Tate Modern.

Bottom left and middle Concave, open handrail and choice of materials contribute to the structure's apparent lightness. In combination, these linear elements lead the eye to the imposing grandeur of the buildings at either end.

Bottom right The combination of the level changes and structural lightness creates an interesting perception of people traversing the deck. The movement of pedestrians and life and colour to the apparent minimalism of the bridge structure.

as these elements alone do not address the kinetic sequencing of the layers of space through which the visitor will move.

EXPERIENCING THE DECK

In considering the urban experience, the project team's main objective was to create a slender structure with negligible impact on views from the wider environment. The concept of a 'long, straight, thin blade' was adopted. This concept has been achieved by creating a lightweight bridge deck, suspended by highly tensioned cables, with a deck around six times shallower than a conventional bridge, allowing structural elements to be located predominantly below the deck itself, avoiding any cage-like enclosure retaining key views unimpeded. However, this concept must be translated to the detailing if it is to be successful. Hence, to maintain the apparent lightness of the structure, steel and aluminium were chosen as the materials for the structure and deck and complemented by slim, open and tensioned detailing to the handrails and unintrusive treatment of the lighting.

When travelling east or west along the Thames, the bridge occupies only a limited depth within the field of vision due to its slender deck and aligned suspension cables. The perception of this lightness, however, decreases as the bridge draws nearer and its robustness becomes more apparent. Ascension to its deck, further enhances this sense of the solidity of the structure due to the parallax of the various bridge components and the increasing awareness of the size of the bridge piers and the suspension cables. On the bridge deck, the perspective created by the handrails creates a foreshortening effect making these elements appear more massive than they actually are.

EXPERIENCE IN CONTEXT

However, it is likely that much of the bridge's value as an urban experience is incidental to the initial key decisions to locate the bridge in alignment with the St Paul's vista and to maximise the privileged vantage point across the Thames, as well as specific requirements of planning policy and the competition brief. For example, the concave profile design of the handrail resulted from a need to prevent more adventurous pedestrians from climbing the structure, but its effect of intensifying the sense of closeness to the river is subsidiary and

perhaps, post-rationalised.

More gravity appears to have been given to the experiential design prior to the construction of the new footbridge across the Seine in Paris. The Solferino Bridge manipulates the different levels of the opposing quaysides to give pedestrians not only a choice of two routes but also a choice of two different experiences. However, the Solferino Bridge has much in common with its London contemporary. It too suffered an unpredicted sway at its opening. Both are long span, lightweight pedestrian structures and such light, thin structures are still relatively rare in realisation. In creating a structure that creates a pedestrian-focused environment, both the Solferino and the Millennium bridges have required some sacrifice in terms of a successful engineering solution.

The sleek and minimal intervention above ground is not reflected below as groups of massive locked coil cables are anchored at each bank to an abutment founded on a three metre reinforced concrete pilecap, anchored by a group of two metre diameter reinforced concrete piles, 12 to the north and 16 to the south. The visible concrete piers are themselves founded on two six metre diameter concrete caissons. In elevation, the bulk of the deck's anchors, supports and foundations are inconsistent with the slenderness of its superstructure and the concept of the 'blade of light.'

The long span, together with the lightweight structure, has necessitated the construction of a self-consistent and engineering object, reliant on the structural, spatial and aesthetic resolution of its two ends. Hence, the bridge exists as a disjunctive event, an interruption to the urban continuum which differs from its inhabited counterpart and the bridges of Venice, Bruges or even the Green Bridge at Mile End, which vary to accommodate elements of the urban fabric, such as landings, adjacent shops or park. The extra cost of the bridge may contravene the engineering tradition which subscribes to efficiency through the economic use of materials but it has delivered more than a bridge. It has delivered a physical and psychological link between two districts, a new exhibit within the city museum, an urban event and a new experience of public space.

Jenni Lang, Senior landscape architect at Scott Wilson, Manchester and currently studying for a Master of Studies in Inter-disciplinary Design for the Built Environment at the University of Cambridge

How Well Does Urban Design Travel?

BUILDING A BODY OF THEORY

Notices advertising vacancies for urban designers drop through my letterbox at the same rate as those for pizzas. Urban design has certainly come of age and no self-respecting local authority, large planning or architectural practice would be without urban designers on their payroll these days.

This is a welcome sign of widespread acceptance. However, it raises the question of how well the discipline travels. Are the concepts, theories, assumptions, methods and policy options offered by urban design globally relevant? Is there an inbuilt parochialism underlying its assumptions about how people perceive and use space? Are concepts about space and built form based on culturally specific contexts but applied as though they were universally valid? In short, is urban design guilty to some extent of ethnocentrism?

Urban processes have been relatively restricted to situations in affluent economies, where the rate of change is relatively manageable and resources are available.

DIFFERENT SPATIAL LANGUAGES

However, things are very different in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Here, annual population increases in cities such as Shanghai, Mumbai, Sao Paulo, or Cairo, routinely involve numbers of people that are difficult to comprehend, let alone accommodate. For example, the annual population increase of Mumbai in India is equal to the total population of Milton Keynes. To make the challenge even more daunting, most people contributing to this growth are extremely poor, yet live in cities where land prices and other costs are not dissimilar to London, Paris or New York. In addition, the lack of an established structure, or one inherited from colonial periods or imported through international competitions, often creates a regulatory framework which benefits an emerging middle class and disadvantages the poor majority. This is the real challenge of urban design.

For low-income households, many of whom have migrated from rural settlements, cultural traditions are vital in maintaining their sense of identity in a rapidly changing world. A study in Morocco noted that whilst middle class women were frequently seen in public, traditional women were only seen in semi-private communal spaces in informal settlements. It concluded that if urban design was to help liberate such women from the confines of their homes, it was vital to provide the same such spaces in new development.

DEMAND FOR URBAN DESIGN

Urban design has a unique and critical role to play in creating new, or improving existing, settlements, especially for the poor. As Southworth (2002) notes, “public spaces – streets, squares and promenades – are the most important form of social infrastructure in urban settlements, particularly in the lives of poorer people, whose housing is often too small for household needs. Here public space effectively extends the house or shack, providing space for social and economic activities. These spaces also accommodate the informal events that are central to the process of urban living”.

Urban design is not only needed by the poor, but increasingly by more affluent groups. Although many emerging middle classes in developing countries aspire to western lifestyles, they also possess a cultural identity which distinguishes them from western ways of perceiving and using space. For example, no self-respecting designer in urban India would design a residential development without taking into account the principles of Vastu, which “aims to align living spaces with unseen spiritual and natural laws” and “align both the home



Left Igia village, Japan in Nitschke, G 'Ma' – *The Japanese sense of 'place'* AD March 1966 pp116-154

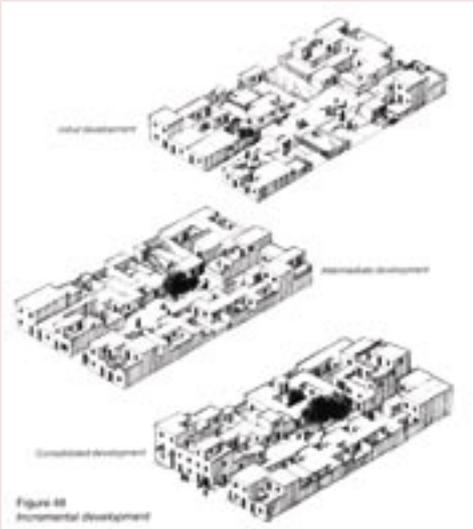
and garden with the cosmos” (Pegram 2002). Vastu has evolved over 3,000 years akin to the Chinese tradition of Feng Shui. These ancient traditions have even been recently adopted in the West, suggesting that a range of spatial languages is in international currency. However, to be understood in any cultural context, it is important for urban designers to be aware of these different spatial languages, even if they are not fluent in them.

MIND THE CULTURAL GAP

Despite this potential demand, a review of the urban design literature suggests that issues in developing countries have largely eluded professionals and assumed that western concepts are universally relevant. In his seminal book on urban form, Morris (1972, 1979) reflected an awareness of different traditions but did not provide an analysis of why societies had evolved distinct urban traditions. Similarly, Lynch (1981) illustrated examples of good urban form primarily through western examples.

A notable exception is the journal *Urban Design International*, in which several contributors from developing countries (Southworth 2002, Nicks 2003, Gu 2001, Heng Chye Kiang 2001) note that urban design is only beginning to feature as a valid mainstream concern. This suggests massive potential to improve the quality of life of millions of people worldwide who are presently denied access to professional help.

Many contributors to *Urban Design International* from developing countries use or adapt concepts derived from European or American experience (eg Moirongo 2002, Southworth 2002, de Holanda et al 2002, Limin 2001, Kiang 2001, Hillier et al 2000) when analysing their environments. However, a good example of a culturally determined concept of space was published in articles by Gunter Nitschke (1964, 1966) on the Japanese concept of 'Ma' or 'place'. Nitschke defined this as the “simultaneous awareness of the intellectual concepts form+non-form, object+space, coupled with subjective experience”. He identified three different ordering principles, namely: ‘apparent disorder’, ‘geometric order’ and ‘sophisticated order’ and likened the first category to ‘fortuitous order, in which “man’s efforts to impose his own order on nature are unsophisticated (see above). Similarly, in geometric order “man seeks to impose an intellectual concept or order on nature. Number and geometry are used as the means of control in this conscious stage”. Using early Shinto shrine precincts as examples,



Left Incremental development in Ismailia, Egypt, from 'Ismailia Demonstration Projects' report Culpin Planning 1978 mimeo Vol 1 Fig 3.2

Right Katsura Rikyu, Kyoto, Japan, (ibid opposite page)

he demonstrated how the effect of geometry "leads to 'perfection of type'" and "to rigidity, to a dead order" (1966:120).

According to Nitschke, sophisticated order "emerges only when man has fully absorbed and worked through the principles of geometric order – which pertain to a static, immutable world – and discovers the order of an organic, constantly changing universe. This stage is not altogether unlike the first, but the intuitive grasp of nature has been replaced by perception and a conscious application of her principles". He explained the transition from one stage to the next as appearing to be "simply a progression from unconscious asymmetry through symmetry to conscious asymmetry" but considers it "in fact far more complex. In each phase there is a different consciousness of space, or rather place, which is the determinant in the shaping and placing of all forms" (1996:118). As examples of 'sophisticated order' Nitschke cites Katsura Palace (see Figure 2) and Nijo Castle, in Kyoto, both of which "permit new elements, of the same, or different quality and size, to be added or taken away as required; in other words, it permits 'change' in its three aspects of growth, fulfilment and decay, to take place". (ibid:133).

The issue of structures which allow local variations and organic process of growth and change, was addressed by Patrick Geddes (Tyrhitt 1947). In a series of studies in India, he advocated diagnostic surveys and pioneered the concept of 'conservative surgery' in which the role of the professional was to work with the grain of local traditions.

The importance of cultural factors in spatial form is acknowledged by Hillier (2001) who notes that residential processes generate "a distinctive pattern of local differences, because culture is spatially specific". It is in the layout of residential areas that cultural differences are most significant and need to be recognised when planning new developments.

TAKING UP THE PRACTICAL CHALLENGE

If urban design is to make an important contribution where it is most needed, practitioners need to address issues of growth, poverty and inequality within developing countries, as well as the principles of incremental development and provide informal communal spaces for new social interaction and economic activity (see above left) for an example in Ismailia, Egypt by Culpin Planning). As Hillier et al (2000), stressed in the case of Santiago, it is vital to provide scope for 'edge orientated commercial activity' in order to stimulate self-generated economic activity and house consolidation, echoed by Southworth (2002) and Nicks (2003) of Cape Town, and Kiang (2001) in Manila.

While the evidence suggests that many aspects of urban design such as 'Responsive Environments' and Space Syntax have much to offer, UK and US educated designers in developing countries need to be exposed to their cultural traditions in order to be effective. More recognition

also needs to be given to urban designers writing in other languages, particularly Spanish and Portuguese. The dominance of western spatial languages should not be reinforced by the dominance of English as a written language. Urban design courses in developing countries which seek British validation should be assessed by those who able to understand and acknowledge contributions in local languages.

In addition to the examples cited above, Rapoport's concept of the 'cultural core' whereby a community is able to accept changes which do not threaten its core cultural values, provides a practical tool to assess options for change in settlement planning and design. Radovic (2004) has also evolved a culturally sensitive approach to teaching urban design based on the Asian experience, whilst Nicks (2003) and Southworth (2002) have demonstrated how urban design can embrace social, economic, symbolic and even spiritual aspects of life in healing the divisions created by apartheid in South African cities. If it can heal those wounds and provide a means of stimulating socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development under these conditions, it is a discipline with much more to offer than has so far been realised.

Geoffrey Payne, Geoffrey Payne and Associates

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MASTER PLANNING NEEDS QUALITY DESIGN TIME

A number of processes are at work that are resulting in towns becoming less individualistic in the pursuit of the democratisation of greater choice. A form of homogenous urbanity is levelling out the differences in town centres and high streets as we all aspire to the same range of shops and facilities. There is a serious risk that a form of ubiquitous 'standards-ville' is becoming the norm.

The creative master plan is the only tool available to both raise standards and make distinctive places that people will want to live in because they feel they belong and will want to visit to experience their special-ness. As we aim for higher standards in all aspects of urban living the process of preparing masterplans is being constantly stretched to address a wider range of issues; well described in Taylor Young's first piece. As we uncover more aspect of sustainability the list of tasks will lengthen further with an ever expanding team of specialist consultants for the master planner to co-ordinate. This is an opportune moment to ask if the management time resulting from this broadening scope of work is in danger of reducing the quality design time that the creation of distinctive new urbanism requires?

Urban designers will recognise that stage of a major project where they know the site and the brief backwards, have attended countless committee meetings and consulted everyone at very stage and are now sitting in front of a plan that efficiently satisfies all the technical requirements and schedule of uses; it does the job, but somehow it doesn't sing. It verges on being derivative (gasp) and at risk of repeating a pat solution that has worked before. It needs more design time to find that quality that can make this a memorable plan with a sureness of place that could only be there and nowhere else; but the budget is already over stretched and a final presentation is looming.

All of the projects featured have obviously overcome this problem. They illustrate how urban design skills have taken the clues of context and local knowledge to manipulate built form and urban space to create places of real character. This has been achieved in ways ranging from challenging the client to be more adventurous in a small town, by design ingenuity in accommodating the massive floorspace requirements within existing street patterns in the town centre renewal projects to a severely constrained site where high density and retained features have been coaxed into the elegant form of a new community. Whether these urban design strategies were achieved by intensive team work late into the night, deft sweeps of the marker pen just afore the pub or some mysterious urban alchemy the designers have adroitly achieved their aims.

MALCOLM MOOR



Above Stratford City: layers of the master plan
Right Lewisham Gateway: Concept diagram - legibility

MASTER PLANNING: PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR SUSTAINED SUCCESS

Jim Fox gives a succinct overview of the masterplanning process and asks if plans will stand the ultimate test of delivery

With the rise in the recognition of the importance of urban design and renaissance at the neighbourhood, city and town centre levels comes an increase in demand for the master plan. This is great news for master planners. Over the coming years, however, will this wave of often regeneration inspired plans stand up to the ultimate test of delivery? The following paragraphs focus on the master planning process, rather than the more eye catching product, to shed light on how and why a wide range of plans are prepared and whether they will ultimately be considered as successful. Much of the content of this article is based around a seminar at this year's CABE Summer School and includes a combination of presentation material and discussion topics.

THE BEST TOOL FOR THE JOB

Master plans sit within the urban design toolkit somewhere between the broad brushed area development framework and the detailed design brief, and alongside design guides and codes. These urban design products have their own strengths, weaknesses and purposes and there is a danger that the more recognisable term 'master plan' becomes overused. This is further complicated by its connotations – suggesting a degree of control and finality that is not always appropriate, especially in the messy reality of regeneration.

The master plan has three main elements:

- the strategic framework – including a clear vision, strategic objectives and supporting baseline 'evidence'
- the spatial master plan – plans, visualisation, landscape and transport frameworks
- the implementation plan – phased programmes, financial models and proposed delivery mechanisms.

The plan provides detail at the street block level and includes 3-dimensional visualisation illustrating the proposed physical form. This clearly differentiates the master plan from the 2-dimensional land use plan.

BEYOND SEDUCTION

Master plans need to communicate a clear vision. However, seductive visuals must be supported by a strategy with substance. Getting the master planning process right is often the key to this. CABE's useful



document *Creating Successful Master plans* clearly outlines the process from preparation, design and implementation, through to delivering projects, incorporating feedback loops – emphasising the point that this is not merely a linear operation.

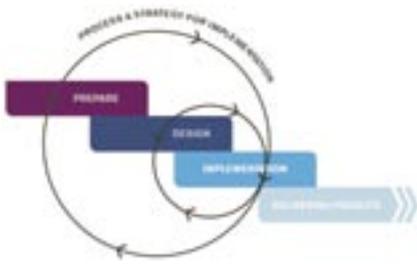
The preparation stage of the process provides the foundation for the master plan. Is the client group clear about what it wants to achieve? Does it, in principle, have the resources to deliver? Are the key stakeholders – including potential funders – on board? The result of this critical early stage is the brief. Organisations may be sufficiently resourced to undertake the work in-house. It is more often the case that the specialist skills involved and the benefits of an independent approach leads to the use of consultants. Preparatory work also includes gaining a clear understanding of the place – its assets and challenges – and the preparation of a robust 'evidence base', providing a clear understanding of the rationale for change. This evidence based approach is a requirement for many funding sources, as is the need for a physical understanding of the place to be grounded by insight into the economic and social context.

The baseline work will raise many issues. It is an important task for the master planner and the client to sift out false constraints. For example, if the life span of the strategy is 15 years, will what appears to be a restrictive policy be appropriate in the medium term – can the master plan inform policy development, especially in the light of the changing planning system? Master plans need to look outwards to ensure that they are not unnecessarily parochial and are linked to sub-regional economic and transport issues. Neighbouring town centres should be complementing each other, rather than competing for the same 'regional creative centre' status, for example.

Master planners come in many forms – all are creative, to varying degrees. The more instinctive ones will leap ahead to a potential vision, which may well have some benefits, particularly when looking to change the image of a place. At some point – the sooner the better – this 'blue sky' approach will need to be tested.

The design stage of master planning uses earlier work as a

Above Master planning for housing market renewal in Burnley – more than a two-dimensional land use plan



Top left The master planning process - not merely a linear process (Source: CABE)
Above left Maintaining trust through community engagement - Blacon Estate, Chester
Above right Demonstrating the potential of a place - West Bromwich

platform, including the establishment of agreed aims and objectives. These need to address economic and social issues, as well as those focusing on physical aspects. Options may be developed and tested using this touchstone. Further levels of testing may include sessions with potential developers. The emerging master plan is an important tool here. It can be used to begin to demonstrate the potential of a place which may assist in actually creating a market for investor interest.

DON'T BE LEFT ON THE SHELF

Why do some master plans end up on the shelf? One reason, as with all plans, is a lack of consideration of delivery issues – at all stages during the master planning process, in preparing the brief and in the follow up. The master planning process needs to support the establishment of consensus and commitment from key stakeholders, with agreed roles and responsibilities. The implementation plan should provide a clear but flexible structure for projects – providing links with agreed objectives, establishing priorities as well as measurable outputs and outcomes. Guidance on phasing will highlight short, medium and long term actions.

Costings and development appraisals will highlight the scale of the funding gap or planning gain opportunities, depending on the degree of the regeneration challenge. This will enable funding issues to be highlighted and addressed – at least in principle. It is important that the client group uses

the ammunition provided by the master planners to continue the support of key funders which should have already been established.

Regeneration motivated master plans often involve complicated land ownership arrangements. To secure delivery land owners will either need to be persuaded to follow the vision or land will need to be assembled. Some local authorities have retained compulsory purchase skills, in many other locations considerable expertise has leaked away over the years. Capacity is beginning to be increased and regional agencies are providing support in areas of strategic importance. The consequences of land assembly will include relocations. This issue will need to be considered by the client group at a level beyond the boundaries of the master plan, including the early identification of suitable locations for relocated uses.

How will the master plan be delivered – what are the most appropriate delivery mechanisms? This is another implementation issue that needs to be considered early so that preparations can be made alongside the master planning process. The optimum approach may be a complicated one - depending on the mix of projects - involving a combination of direct delivery by the public sector, joint ventures between different sectors and the establishment of a community asset base bringing in the not-for-profit sector. An appropriate organisational structure will also need to be in place to drive the master plan forward and ensure that the vision and strategic objectives are not diluted. The appropriate model may range from an urban development corporation to a development trust. This organisation will need the necessary resources and influence to match the level of aspiration and intervention embodied in the master plan. The implementation plan will often provide the basis for a more detailed business plan to be prepared by the client group.

GETTING ENGAGED

Consultation and engagement runs throughout the master planning process, building on what has been achieved before. Principles should be agreed with the client group early on, potentially leading to a charter with local groups. The benefits of consultation include the level of local knowledge gained, the raising of aspirations – rather than specific unrealistic expectations - and the ultimate ownership and sustainability of the end product. The engagement process needs to be managed to ensure that it is inclusive and that local people are aware of parameters so that the result is not merely a 'wishlist'.

Establishing and maintaining trust should be a key objective.

Tried and tested consultation techniques are appropriate for different objectives, including one to one meetings to flush out potential issues, walkabouts and tours to tease out local knowledge, workshops to begin to develop consensus and exhibitions and 'surgeries' to maximise meaningful feedback. More innovative techniques include web based communication, the use of public artists and the targeting of hard to reach groups. Ultimately, the package of techniques used needs to be fit for the purpose. Design training is an often neglected tool in raising the level of understanding of participants – local people, officers and councillors - so that they can most effectively contribute.

Master planning is clearly not a linear process - thinking on delivery should begin at the earliest opportunity, early conceptual thinking may challenge perceived constraints and developer testing may result in a rethink of designs.

So, why is a master plan to be prepared in the first place? Such a detailed, physical led strategy is not appropriate for all situations – as highlighted earlier, the master plan is one item within the practitioner's toolkit. A master plan is clearly appropriate for defined areas of major physical change where the client group has a significant degree of control over this change. In other situations an area development framework or other tool may be more appropriate for the job. The advantages of the master plan are clear – it provides a long term tangible vision and agenda, it is a tool for consensus building and area promotion, and promotes design quality. This emphasis on the physical makes it clearly different from other documents, such as land use plans.

INTO THE FIFTH DIMENSION

Who is best placed to prepare master plans? This will be influenced by the emphasis of the brief, but urban designers are clearly best placed to think in three dimensions – rather than 2-dimensional land use based planning. There is a view that master plans should look to the fifth dimension – nothing to do with science fiction! The economic and social aspects of the process outlined above mean that whoever is leading on the preparation of a master plan will need to successfully appreciate and manage valuable inputs from specialists in economic development, transport planning, the property market and the 'social market'. The 'big architecture' approach is useful in generating striking concepts and initial investor interest. However, progress in northern towns and cities is demonstrating that the substance is often being provided by alternative approaches.

And how do master plans fit with other plans - notably those in the planners toolkit? The status of the document is important to its influence on change, especially where delivery relies to a significant degree on the private sector. Under the new planning regime local authority wide local development frameworks will incorporate targeted area action plans (AAP). Local authorities are exploring how master plans fit within this context. Under the old system master plans could relatively easily be adapted as supplementary planning guidance. As part of the new system if a master plan is to be incorporated as an AAP the process must involve consultation and sustainability appraisals that satisfy strict guidelines and are commenced at the earliest stages. On a positive note, the present round of master plans has the potential to inform the emerging planning framework.

THE MASTER PLAN IS DEAD – LONG LIVE THE MASTER PLAN

Master plans are also being used to support elements of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan. They are proving to be an appropriate tool for significant urban expansions in the south of the country. In Housing Market Renewal areas in the North and the West Midlands, area development frameworks are in the process of being developed into a series of master plans dictated by challenging timescales and guidance set by the ODPM. In many cases the next steps involve land assembly and

developer procurement. As a result of this, developers will be commissioning their own master planners and architects. This whole process needs to be carefully thought through so that the right level of detail is presented at the appropriate stage and local people understand the differing degrees of certainty provided in each plan. Design training, as highlighted earlier, is important in this respect. Taylor Young is in the process of supporting North Huyton New Deal Communities – residents, officers and other stakeholders – in navigating their way through the design and developer procurement process.

The creation of successful master plans has been clearly documented in recent years. The following is a personal view of some critical success factors:

- The client brief – have clarity of purpose and be in a position of influence
- The steering group – ensure it is inclusive and decisive
- The master planning team – secure creativity with a track record of delivery
- The analysis – understand assets, key drivers and potential barriers to change
- The options – think the unthinkable and the deliverable
- The master plan – communicate the vision, in more than two dimensions
- The engagement process – engage key stakeholders and be inclusive
- The delivery framework – prepare for resourcing and engage those responsible for implementation early
- The follow through – include 'quick wins' as well as catalytic projects.

This article has been based on a master planning seminar at this year's CABE Summer School. Participants included around a 50/50 split between those who considered themselves as commissioners of master plans and those involved in production. Such a mix of participants with a growing common understanding bodes well for the need for clients and master planners to work together to maximise the opportunity for master plans to be transformational where necessary and deliverable. In many areas this present round of intensive urban design activity provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for positive change. Both the product and the process need to be right to provide the best platform for development and regeneration over the next decade and more.

Jim Fox, Associate Director, Taylor Young

DUMBARTON HARBOUR: DESIGN FRAMEWORK, MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Amanda Reynolds describes how the design of Dumbarton's riverfront exceeded the limited expectations of the council's design statement



BACKGROUND

The client for this project, the Carvill Group, is a successful residential development company committed to producing high quality and affordable housing in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England. Llewelyn Davies Yeang has worked with Carvill for several years as master planner on a number of projects in the UK as well as in Germany. On this project the company was also responsible for the landscape design.

As well as quality design, Carvill is committed to developments that express the characteristics of sustainable urban form. Consequently all its projects start with an analysis of the urban design context. Carvill thoroughly explores urban design options, delivers built form

true to good urban design principles and adds substantially to the neighbourhood or town in question.

Llewelyn Davies Yeang worked on this project with Cooper Cromar Architects, the Glasgow-based architect firm which was responsible for the architectural design of the scheme.

The local authority is the West Dunbartonshire Council (in Scotland) and a detailed planning application was lodged at the end of January 2005. Presentations have been made to Architecture and Design Scotland (the Scottish equivalent of CABI) as well as a long list of local and national stakeholders. A well-attended public consultation exhibition was held over three days in August 2004.

The site is a fantastic piece of riverfront land previously used for shipbuilding and most recently whisky distilling - both fine Scottish traditions - in the town of Dumbarton, which lies to the west of Glasgow (30 minutes by frequent train service) where the River Leven meets the Clyde. The Leven runs from Loch Lomond north of the town and Dumbarton is theoretically on the tourist trail from Glasgow to the Loch.

However, even though Dumbarton's setting encompasses the river and an historical rock and castle at its edge, the town currently offers nothing that would attract a visitor longer than it would take to drink a cup of tea. In particular there are no attractions or uses along the potentially attractive riverside, the accessible part of which is occupied by a municipal car park.

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

The site's location is on a prominent 'corner' of the River Leven and looks south towards its confluence with the River Clyde at the magnificent Dumbarton Rock, and was recognised as an immediate opportunity for a high-profile development. That the site is also immediately adjacent the busy local High Street offering shopping and other community amenities, five minutes walk from two other major shopping areas and 10 minutes walk from the train station also meant that a relatively high density development was easily justified.

The town of Dumbarton has a lot of potential to build on its character, with an unusually curved High Street following the line of the river, a number of attractive listed buildings on or around the High Street and a strong traditional frontage along this street. The site sits behind a number of listed buildings including the Riverside Parish Church and its surrounding stonewall and several other previously commercial buildings now all used as pubs.

The relationship between the development, the adjacent listed buildings and the wider built form of the town was clearly of importance, and informed our approach to the master plan.

As well as the river to the south, the eastern boundary of the site is also a water edge. A tidal basin previously used for ship building activities lies adjacent the site to the east and gives the site terrific potential for continuous pedestrian access to the water along both boundaries.

THE SITE, THE BRIEF AND THE BUILDINGS

A whisky distillery since 1938, the site previously consisted of a variety of buildings in terms of scale and form. Most of the buildings have recently been demolished however they originally ranged in height from four to 17 modern storey equivalents, with an overall average height of six modern

storeys. None of the buildings were listed and our client was unsurprisingly intending to demolish them all.

The distillery was a major part of the town for decades. The buildings had strong industrial heritage qualities and several had architectural merit - although many of them were conversely unattractive and contributed negatively to the local townscape. The site had the most prominent and interesting structures in town and opportunities for adaptive re-use merited exploration. The Carvill Group was prepared to consider refurbishment options and LDY was asked to explore the potential for retention/conversion of the buildings to residential use - the primary focus of the redevelopment brief.

Some of these structures clearly offered the potential to create a development that built on the positive aspects of the site's character and identity, as well as retaining an historical connection with the town's industrial past that was fast disappearing. The buildings had to contribute to the new development, both in terms of architecture and public realm.

All the buildings on site were assessed for their refurbishment potential. Their footprint size, location on site, existing fenestration and structural integrity were all considered and the conclusion was that most of the structures were simply over-sized, awkwardly located, had inappropriate openings/floor plates etc, and would present considerable difficulties in conversion to residential.

Finally, the two (attached) buildings that made the grade were the Mill and Still buildings. They are respectively the equivalent of 17 and eight modern storeys with the Mill building being the tallest and most elegant structure on the site. Both buildings have an efficient footprint for residential conversion (approx 18m x 18m each) and excellent fenestration on most exposed sides that suit adaptation to residential use.

However, there were structural issues with both buildings and engineers Stuart McTaggart had to develop a complex response to the structural design problems of the existing corners. A solution was found and it was agreed that the high cost of refurbishment was worthwhile for the contribution these buildings would make to the development concept, the variety of types of units available, and the town as a whole.

THE COUNCIL'S DESIGN FRAMEWORK

As well as the broader Scottish national and local policy requirements relating to planning and design, the LA (WDC) commissioned a design framework for the Dumbarton Waterfront area that included the distillery site, which needed to be considered as part of the design process.

A design or development framework can be a very useful document in contributing to the development process - giving council planners parameters within which to consider design issues, and helping the designers to identify and respond to important issues in the local context.

In the case of this project, the framework document adopted as supplementary planning guidance by the WDC is expressed at a fairly conceptual level and sets out the key urban design principles for the waterfront area. A series of development options is also established within the framework, exploring a range of land-use and public open space opportunities.

The general principles and approach of the framework reflect good urban design practice and were considered to be a useful contribution to the development of the master plan. The principles included:

- a linked series of developments across the waterfront
- conceiving of the town and waterfront as one linked experience
- reinforcing the existing positive aspects of the historic old town
- improving links between the town centre and the castle/rock.



Opposite page top Aerial view of site which is in a fantastic location adjacent the High Street, surrounded by water on two sides, commanding spectacular views of the River Leven and Dumbarton Rock and within 10 minutes walk of the Dumbarton Central Train Station.

Opposite page bottom Concept plan: the key design objectives include waterfront housing, multiple access routes to and along the waterfront, and intimate public spaces linked by landmarks, views and vistas and supported by active uses.

Above top Much of the site is in a state of dereliction with the majority of the buildings under demolition, however, the distillery dominated the site and view of the town from the river

Above 2004 Urban grain: the 2004 figure and ground plan shows that much of the original urban grain and structure of the town centre has been severely eroded over recent decades.

As designers we did not believe our master plan contained any significant areas of divergence from the principles expressed therein.

However, this was not the view of the council and its most critical points were our proposed retention of the Mill and Still buildings and, proposing higher than four storey buildings for this site, which was 'presumed against if all the distillery buildings were demolished' (design framework).

DESIGN RESPONSE TO THE FRAMEWORK - RETENTION OF BUILDINGS

It is probably a somewhat unusual position for urban designers to find themselves in, having persuaded a developer to retain unlisted but important buildings, to then have the council wish them to be demolished.

These buildings were not retained lightly. Close discussions were held with the immediate neighbours (the listed church and public houses), which resulted in the developers agreeing to provide a new hall structure and garden for the church in return for landscaped public pedestrian access through the churchyard and into the site, a benefit largely pertaining to the community.



Above The master plan is for three perimeter blocks with internal courtyards above ground level parking and a row of townhouses.

Historic Scotland and local heritage groups also supported the refurbishment of the distillery buildings as they represent the last remnants of the industrial heritage in the town centre.

The design framework explores a range of options for built form, uses, public spaces etc with most of the options making a presumption towards the retention of some of the distillery buildings.

Although the illustrated concept plan from the framework for Option 3 (the preferred option) shows the removal of all existing buildings, the accompanying text states that this option includes 'either a re-use of the existing distillery buildings or a new block... the re-use of the distillery buildings would create a special living environment in line with the approach regularly adopted elsewhere with many former industrial buildings'. On this basis, and following our assessment of the buildings' potential we felt retention and refurbishment as proposed were well within the parameters of the framework.

However, despite Scottish national planning policy to encourage the retention of historic and industrial buildings where possible, and against their own local plan and wording of the framework, the council has expressed its preference for the removal of the remaining distillery buildings. This is for several reasons, most particularly because it would like to see a grand vista between the spire of the Riverside Parish Church and Dumbarton Rock, which the Mill and Still buildings currently prevent.

To support this preference the council has interpreted the framework in a prescriptive manner, requiring the development to comply with one of the illustrated versions of Option 3 entitled 'Potential residential developments onto the waterfront', rather than assessing the proposal against the broader principles of

the framework.

Herein lies the danger of design frameworks. Intended as conceptual 'guidance' for developers, designers and planners when preparing master plans, they are being used in a prescriptive fashion by council officers with a limited understanding of design and urban form, placing constraints on development that were neither envisaged nor intended by the framework itself.

BUILDING HEIGHTS

The design framework reiterates WDC Local Plan (1999) policy 'which presumes against [building] over four storeys, unless exceptional townscape benefits can be demonstrated', with some possibility of going up to six storeys at the edge of the tidal basin.

In the broader regional/national/global context of needing to build sustainable urban developments by using compact city principles in order to reduce dependency on car use, improve public transport, and increase support for local facilities, this location, in the centre of an existing but underperforming town close to a number of major destinations, ticks every box for a higher density living development with lower car usage.

This context, along with an obviously dramatic site, makes an unarguable case for a development with strong visual and physical impact. Indeed Architecture & Design Scotland considers that there is scope to push the envelope provided by the framework to achieve higher densities and deem the eastern edge of the site to be suitable for taller buildings to maximise the waterfront location.

The project itself is effectively described in the accompanying drawings with the design principles building on those from the framework:

- creation of a series of high quality public spaces that naturally connect the High Street to the river via refurbished heritage buildings
- improvement of the setting of the listed church and focusing a main riverside square on the refurbished Mill building
- creation of a series of legible residential blocks that reflect and extend the original urban grain of the town rather than the existing fragmented late 20th century character
- addition of a new 12 storey 'lighthouse' tower building on a waterfront location as a beacon landmark and signalling the regeneration of the town
- provision of a range of affordable housing types and tenures, including retirement housing, in a highly attractive location.

In summary, the proposal clearly demonstrates 'exceptional townscape benefits' within the guidance principles of the design framework.

However the council, through the design framework, has interpreted the four storey policy of the local plan in its most literal sense by considering that any development greater than four storeys will have a negative impact on the existing townscape. Yet the benefits that this town centre site has the potential to deliver will not be achieved with a maximum four storey development, instead providing a suburban solution to a town centre problem and contributing little to Dumbarton in terms of identity or income.

The design framework contradicts Scottish national policy, which recognises the importance of denser developments at central and accessible locations and encourages local authorities to identify sites suitable for taller buildings. It also demonstrates council's reluctance to move away from the more prescriptive policies of its somewhat outdated local plan and its lack of understanding of what is needed to create truly sustainable communities.

Amanda Reynolds, Practice Director, Urban Design, and Nicole Murphy, Senior Planner, Llewellyn Davies Yeang

STRATFORD CITY AND LEWISHAM GATEWAY

Michael Lowe and Malcolm Smith compare the evolution and progress of two of the most significant new master plans in London, at Lewisham and Stratford City



Arup Urban Design is master planner for two major brownfield mixed-use projects where the aim is to regenerate two strategic local centres in London. They are both good examples of sustainable integrated transit development centred on major transport hubs. The planning processes are similar, in terms of the structure of the documentation to achieve planning permission. They are both outline applications with some infrastructure detail, have design strategies (to ensure design quality) and development specifications, as well as the usual transport assessments, environmental and planning statements. The Stratford City (SC) project has permission and Lewisham Gateway is about to be lodged for planning. As Stratford City is more than ten times larger than Lewisham Gateway the planning process has inevitably been more protracted. Comparing the projects:

Stratford City has taken eight years to lodge an application with Newham, the timing being determined by the programme of investment in the high speed rail link to Europe. The capital investment will be in excess of £4 billion (with no grant assistance) for a 1.3 million square metre metropolitan centre, spread over at least 20 years. The project is very complex and will involve submitting further detailed master plans before building designs can be advanced. The London 2012 Olympics are now an integral part of the development, with SC supplying the Olympic Village. The project is seen as a significant part of the regeneration of the Thames Gateway, which has involved central and local government, at all levels, to achieve approval and for implementation into the future.

Lewisham Gateway has taken 18 months to make a planning application (due to be submitted in September 2005). It will require an SRB grant to enable the project to proceed, where a major roundabout and services need to be relocated in order to create the regeneration site. The project has a capital value of £200 million and will take about five years to implement, with approvals required for five buildings, to be procured by competition. The development is one of the Mayor of London's 100 Public Spaces programme, while Stratford City does not currently have that status.

LEWISHAM GATEWAY: BACKGROUND

The client is Lewisham Gateway Development (LGD), a developer consortium of AMEC and Taylor Woodrow, which

will develop the site for the landowner consortium of LB Lewisham, LDA, Transport for London (TfL) and London Buses. The site lies between the Lewisham town centre and the transport hub of the main line station, Docklands Light Rail station and bus interchange in the London Borough of Lewisham, south of London Docklands.

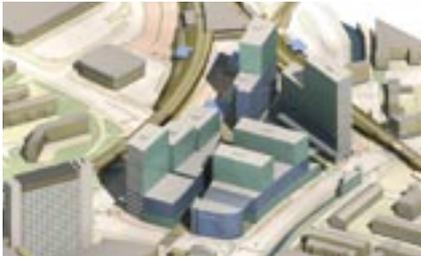
The scheme was defined in an SPG prepared by London Borough of Lewisham that defined the objectives and parameters for the proposed development. The council commissioned an urban design study from Jon Rowland Urban Design (see text box p26), and based on this consultant/developer teams were invited to submit schemes. LGD won the limited competition (supported by Arup Associates – master planner; Peter Brett Associates – transport and infrastructure engineer; Townshend – landscape architect; and Gardiner & Theobald – quantity surveyor), in June 2005, to be development partner with the landowner consortium.

Design development of the scheme commenced in September 2004 and an outline planning application will be lodged in August 2005. Extensive consultation with key stakeholders has been undertaken in a series of workshops and other meetings. Presentations have been given to the Government Office for London, Mayor of London and his specialist advisors, CABE and the local Single Regeneration Budget board.

SITE AND KEY ISSUES

The 3.3 hectare site is currently occupied by a major roundabout serving the A20 regional route and town centre road links. This intervention, implemented in 1992, severed the direct pedestrian connection

Above left Lewisham Gateway before proposals
Above right Arup proposal



Above Scheme massing in Site Context

from the rail/bus station into the town centre. The key objectives of the proposed development are to make a better direct connection from the station, to incorporate a high density, mixed use quarter at the important transport node and to rationalise the bus interchange to increase capacity and allow for direct rail/bus connections without crossing any roads. Other goals were to introduce a high quality public realm incorporating the two local rivers (Ravensbourne and Quaggy) at a new 'Confluence Park' and to become a 'pump primer' for wider Lewisham regeneration initiatives, including enhancing links to isolated neighbourhoods.

DESIGN CONCEPT

The design concept is to re-plan the road layout to the site periphery, to release land for development for a central north/south pedestrian spine from mainline rail/DLR station to the town centre.

To create a rich mix of uses is to include retail and restaurants and ground and first floor levels in adjacent buildings in order to activate the public realm. Cinemas, educational facilities and housing at upper floor levels, to reinforce town centre use (day and night).

The public realm layout is to be re-defined to provide direct links to surrounding areas in conjunction with optimising building/retail layouts. The landscape strategy is to enhance the river environment and provide a robust ground surface for intense pedestrian movement and to incorporate formal tree planting that defines edges and routes.

Designing the river environment to minimise flood risk, offer visual/physical access to water and to increase biodiversity.

Optimising building massing optimise sun penetrations, respond to market demand and viability and be sensitive to the surrounding areas as well as offering an exciting and spectacular skyline image for Lewisham.

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN

The illustrative master plan indicates the overall design intent of the proposed development placed with its immediate context. The plan incorporates a reconfigured road system that removes

the roundabout and sets new roads to the perimeter of the Gateway while rationalising bus requirements and traffic capacities/flows to provide a balance with pedestrian movement. This strategy incorporates a major bus interchange facility around the core area that allows direct access for pedestrians between buses and trains.

This core area, measuring two hectares, incorporates the main pedestrian route between the rail stations in the north, to the existing shopping centre in the south. This route engages two main public spaces; Confluence Place at the junction of the Ravensbourne and Quaggy Rivers, and St Stephen's Square. A series of buildings defines the edges of the public realm and creates the overall form of the development. The principle of the massing profile is articulated in three zones, namely a low commercial zone, a mid housing zone, and a high housing zone. The relative heights of each of these zones is very important. In order to articulate and distinguish high landmark blocks from the lower development with three towers at the periphery to reinforce public realm edges. The broad landscape strategy and wider planting proposals, together with indicative treatment of roof gardens are also incorporated into the illustrative plan.

To maximise its strategic location at the Lewisham transport hub the Gateway incorporates a high density, mixed use development to create a lively urban environment offering a wide choice of facilities and lifestyles, both day and night. The maximum of 100,000 square metres applied for, in the planning permission, include:

- retail 17,000 square metres
- offices 8,000 square metres

- hotel 3,000 square metres
- housing (800 units)
- education/health 10,000 square metres
- leisure 5,000 square metres.

The site development density is relatively high and reflects its strategic location at the Lewisham transport hub. Based on a possible maximum gross floor area of up to 100,000 square metres, the plot ratio is 3.1. If the net site area (excluding surrounding roads) is used, the plot ratio is 5.1, which is approximately equivalent to strategic Central London locations.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation programme anticipates a construction start for road and services in mid 2006 with full completion in 2011. The delivery of the scheme is incorporated into four main strands:

- development specification document that defines the maximum and minimum gross floor areas and uses, public realm elements, residential mix/proportion and parking ratios (also including a construction method statement for the implementation of roads and infrastructure)
- detailed building designs to be procured by open competition, limited competition, short listing and selection of consultants by direct appointment
- design guidelines, incorporated into a design strategy document that provides a reference for future architects (the infrastructure and public realm will be designed by the original master plan team)
- design review process that is structured to permit continuity of design thinking through briefing and panel reviews.

Michael Lowe, Principal Arup Urban Design



Lewisham Gateway will complete the SRB process of regenerating an area that was torn apart by the insertion of a major roundabout into the urban fabric of the time.

Following a significant consultation process in which the public showed great radicalism in advocating street-block regeneration, a conceptual master plan was drawn up by Chesterton, Colin Buchanan & Partners and Jon Rowland Urban Design (JRUD as above). This reflected the need for viability, transport and traffic requirements, new squares and public spaces, and an improved riverside environment. This, in turn, formed the basis of both planning and development briefs that led to the international competition won by AMEC and its team. JRUD continues to be retained by Lewisham Council as 'design guardians' and, together with the Greater London Authority's Architecture & Urbanism Unit, monitors the emerging master plan to ensure design quality and adherence to the original design parameters.

STRATFORD CITY

Stratford City is the new metropolitan centre for London, located in Stratford, East London, at one of the new high-speed Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) stations. The project was fundamentally enabled by the CTRL which created a single land ownership and reinforced the already substantial accessibility and connectivity of the site. The regeneration of the site started in 1997 with London and Continental Rail, the landowners, appointing development partners Stanhope and Chelsfield to develop regeneration proposals. Since then the master plan has been developed by the core design team of Arup Associates, Fletcher Priest Architects and West 8.

KEY ISSUES

Stratford City comes about primarily because of the interaction of four key issues:

- single land ownership - this eliminates risk and creates a critical mass of development
- accessibility of the site - good connections to a number of key attractors including central London and its financial cores in the City and Canary Wharf, airport connections to Stanstead and City Airport, the south east region and Kent in particular, and high speed rail connection to Europe
- political will - the local borough of Newham along with all levels of government has recognised the evolving development of London to the east, and Stratford City is a strategic site in this process
- economic opportunity - the north east of London suffers from a substantial economic drain to west London and lacks a metropolitan centre compared to the overall structure of London, which creates the opportunity for Stratford City to stem the economic drain and reinforce East London's economy.

DESIGN CONCEPT

Stratford City is a significant piece of new city on a completely vacant site. The key principle guiding the physical, social, economic and temporal strategies for development has been integration into its surroundings. While the site is vacant, and has been significantly disconnected from the surrounding areas for 100 years, it is surrounded by diverse conditions and opportunities. This diversity became the point of departure for Stratford City. Four distinct neighbouring conditions about the site:

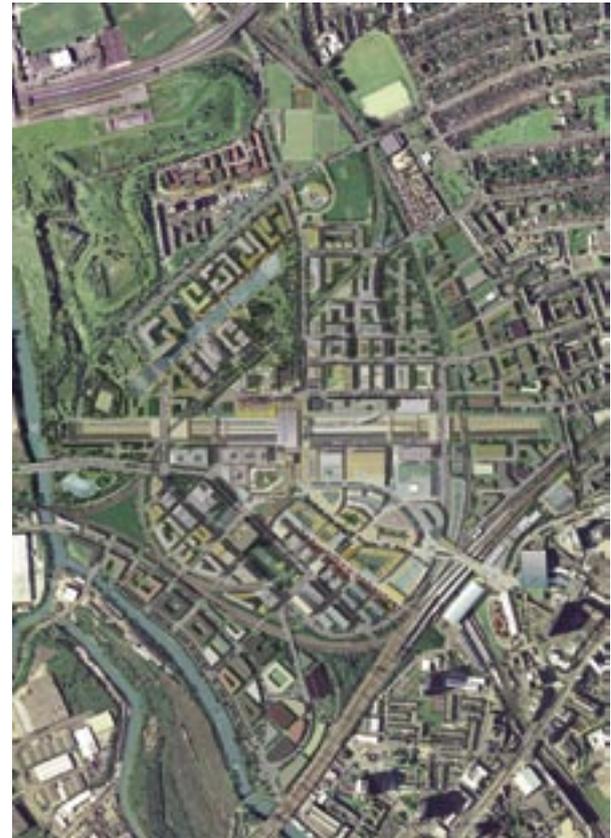
- town centre district to the south east
- residential district to the north east
- landscape of the lower Lee Valley to the north west
- changing nature of the post-industrial environments of the lower Lee Valley to the south west.

Stratford City sought to understand how these conditions operate and to reinforce and build upon them. In this way a strategy for four districts growing out from the surrounding environments evolved:

- town centre district, which is retail-led
- Leyton district, which is residential and community-led
- Lee Valley district, which is characterised by its relationship with landscape - the primarily residential nature of this district was appropriated by the London Olympic master plan to become the heart of the Olympic Village
- Carpenters district, a mixed-use environment between Stratford regional station and Stratford International Station connecting to the rediscovered Lee river system.

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN

The strategic nature of the Stratford City proposals necessitated specific issues to be clearly defined but other issues were guided and left for resolution at a later date. In order to secure the



Top left hand image Stratford City in London context on the new channel tunnel rail route
Top right hand image Future Stratford City site, under construction looking towards Canary Wharf
Middle Master plan evolution model studies
Above Illustrative master plan looking south



Above Master plan model study looking south

fundamental intent and character of the project the key parameter to be fixed in the greatest level of detail was the open space structure. London demonstrates how open space structures are at the heart of a legible and dynamic changing urban environment. This typology, coupled with the deprivation of quality open space in East London, confirmed the strategy of securing the open space network in both layout and quantity.

It was also central to the aspirations of the team that the proposals should be authentic to Stratford, not imported and generic. The process of achieving this was to prioritise the significant constraints of the site and the opportunity of the existing surroundings. By clearly understanding these conditions and developing strategies for addressing them, unique and appropriate design opportunities evolved. The significant constraints of the site included:

- 2.5 million cubic metres of spoil from the CTRL rail tunnels which raised the site approximately eight meters in height
- CTRL rail box in the middle of the site creating a one kilometre long, 50 metre wide, 25 metre deep incision across the site
- site geometry and the aspiration to create a structure for development that was not only flexible in the first generation of development while continuing to be adaptable and responsive to inevitable change.

The combination and negotiation of all these factors produced a guiding concept for Stratford City. In fact, the concept for Stratford City could be described as a 'place of many places'. This diverse structure of open space formed the structure around which four urban districts, extensions of the existing neighbouring conditions, could take shape.

This approach to the master plan was the result of seven years of evolution. When the regeneration team started work in 1997 the perception of the site

and its possibilities was very different. Stratford City has always recognised the retail-led potential of development, but the opportunity for a mixed-use metropolitan centre at the scale of the eventual planning approval was not even entertained. Stratford City also bridged significant political milestones. The work predated the formation of the Greater London Authority, the Urban Task Force and the resultant urban renaissance report on the debate of UK cities as well as the option for London hosting an Olympic Games.

The images illustrate the evolution of the scheme from a retail dominated strategy to the retail component being just over 10 per cent of the 1.3 million square metres of development approved for the site.

LESSONS

The evolution of Stratford City has produced a number of lessons that could be taken forward in considering large-scale regeneration strategy in urban environments.

Master plans for large pieces of urban environment must engage the necessary complexity and contradictions required in a healthy human environment. Open space plays the most significant role in the playing out of this complexity and must therefore avoid singularity of intent and interpretation.

Scale is determined by human perception, not abstract sizes of sites. The 72 hectare site of Stratford City will be understood in much smaller entities and the design strategy should recognise and facilitate the scales of interpretation. Red lines do not exist in the real world, and boundaries, whether physical, social, or economic are in a process of continual change and negotiation.

Urban fabric must be resilient to change without losing the essence of urban intent. London has been characterised by its capacity to respond quickly to change and the corresponding value that comes with this. Healthy environments need to be capable of quick change as a protection for becoming redundant.

Urbanism is not big architecture. It is an increasingly unique approach to design that must reject the heroic architectural gesture in favour of a complex, negotiated and authentic approach to places.

Urbanism must be a background for human existence and memory making not a foreground of architectural gesture and competition. While the physical structure of the urban environment plays a significant role in understanding, the stories it houses and passes on from generation to generation create the urban narratives of our understanding.

Healthy urbanity has the capacity to simultaneously hold contradictions: diversity with integrity, complexity with order, meaning without prescription, order with change, structure with flexibility.

URBAN DESIGN WORKS ON A DIFFERENT FREQUENCY TO ARCHITECTURE

Stratford City is the rediscovery of a lost site within London. A previous hole in the fabric of East London is being healed with a metropolitan centre that aims to create a true reflection of London and its people in the 21st century and a structure that will sustain and remain relevant long into the future.

We may indeed 'plant the tree' of Stratford City, but the quality of its 'shade' will be judged by the generations of Londoners to follow us. We trust that our aspirations and intents will be realised, understood and relevant.

Malcolm Smith, Leader of Arup Integrated Urbanism Unit, Arup Urban Design
 Development partners, Stratford City Development Partners
 Landowner, London and Continental Rail
 Master planners, Arup Associates, Fletcher Priest Architects, West 8
 Local authority, London Borough of Newham

THE PARADISE PROJECT MASTER PLAN

Richard Rees and Terry Davenport describe how the quality of design and the use of a wide range of architects are contributing to the Paradise Project in Liverpool



The Paradise Project in Liverpool is based on an exemplar of retail regeneration, a unique inner city master plan that will transform the city centre. It is a complex development, but is based on a few key inspirational guiding principles that have shaped it over the course of the design process and are now bearing fruit. Liverpool in 2008 will be European Capital of Culture and by the start of the year the new development of the Paradise Project (formerly known as the Paradise Street Project) will be largely constructed. The City of Liverpool realised in 1999 that it needed to regenerate a city centre that had lost out to its competitors through decades of underinvestment. It focussed on an area of 42 acres around Paradise Street, containing one of the city's oldest buildings, Bluecoat Chambers, and Chavasse Park, an area left over after Second World War bombings. Significantly, the development area is connected to Church Street, the present focus of shopping in Liverpool.

A competition was set up in the summer of 1999 which was won by

Grosvenor, led by Rod Holmes, with BDP's Manchester office as master planners, led by Terry Davenport. They were joined by Peter Drummond and Richard Rees from BDP London for the crucial period that defined the structure of the final master plan.

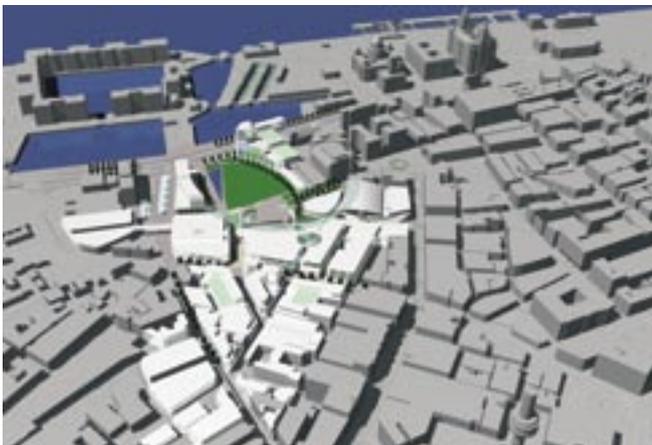
Landscape master plan

CHALLENGES

Grosvenor and the master planning team spent a year working with Liverpool City Council before submitting a 'hybrid' planning application in January 2001. A number of key challenges emerged during this period.

- There were a number of large 1960s structures on the site that would have to be purchased and demolished.
- There had to be sufficient retail content to cover the cost of site assembly, the securing of anchor stores and the cost of meeting non-commercial objectives, such as connecting up the disparate parts of the city centre and regenerating adjacent areas.
- Fitting a large car parking component into the available land, in addition to the other uses would be difficult and expensive.
- Utilisation of existing streets to create viable shopping circuits, connected to the existing retail area would require ingenuity and the acquisition of some critical and expensive properties.

There were constraints created by listed buildings and the Ropewalks Conservation Area. And there were complications at that time concerning an option on Chavasse Park by the Walton Group, which put forward an alternative scheme, designed by Philip Johnson. In addition, there were issues about the relocation of the city's main bus station.



Top Existing shopping movement
Middle and Bottom Aerial views of model

OPPORTUNITIES

The levels were helpful in that Castle Hill (Derby Square) combined with the idea to locate car parking under a new Chavasse Park allowed the potential to create a two level street, the new South John Street. There was the possibility of using the connection into Church Street to create the desired retail circuit. These ideas fused into the solution for linking the available development area to the rest of the city: the integration of the city centre in terms of built environment. It created the opportunity to remove poor quality post-war buildings, to reinstate the historic pattern of the urban grain and to create a series of distinctive areas, buildings and public spaces.

CONCEPT

The concept was to create a street based retail and mixed use district that integrated with and extended existing retail circuits to the south west and also created a new leisure destination. The intention was to make a series of linked districts appropriate to the scale and historic context of Liverpool as a major European city. Anchor stores, including a replacement John Lewis and a new Debenhams, were to be located at two of the corners of roughly triangular shopping circuits. Levels were to be utilised to create a two level street at the common base of those triangles. Grosvenor also made it clear from the start of the project that design excellence was to be a major objective from concept to detail. This was demonstrated from the outset with the quality of the design teams brought on board for the buildings around the listed buildings and conservation area that had to be submitted in detail in the hybrid application.

The gestation period of what would become the master plan took about three months in the summer of 2000 with fortnightly meetings in Liverpool between the design team, the council and its consultants. From the first sketch concept, several strong principles emerged that have remained in the plan until today.

PRINCIPLES

Application of the linkage and penetration principles included realigning New Manesty's Lane to become a south-west to north-east 'discovery axis' (first developed at the competition stage), linking the city with the waterfront. The two level street emerged along a realigned South John Street. The link through to Church Street was created through an existing building, as an arcade.

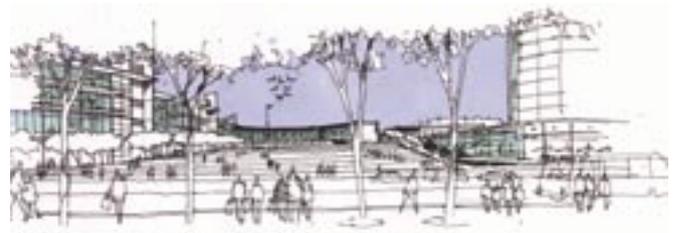
The distinctive areas concept emerged quite quickly. These soon were named: Peter's Lane; Paradise Street; South John Street; Hanover Street and 'The Park'. Peter's Lane changed in geometry over a period but basically created a strong north-south route from Church Street along New Manesty's Lane to Paradise Street. Contrary to the general principle of using existing streets, the southern end of Peter's Lane was closed to create the discovery axis and to allow servicing to the eastern part of the development area. This was the only area of the project where the existing street pattern was significantly altered. There was much agonising about this but the benefits in terms of creating a vibrant 'Bluecoat Triangle' outweighed the disadvantages.

Paradise Street changed shape and geometry a number of times until it settled into its final tapered form, essentially retaining the current alignment. The team had to allow for the potential cross-city tram link and also make sure that the new south-west anchor store (John Lewis) was visible along the length of the adjacent streets. The design went through a number of evolutions in terms of the shape of the space in front of John Lewis. It became an enlargement of the street and is now seen as a crossing event rather than a major space.

South John Street has become the main value generator of the scheme, with an anchor store at each end and the main bulk of multiple retail presence on two levels. It has been a very tricky street to design and the design team has had debates with, for example, Peter Stewart formerly of CABE as to the nature of this



Left Land use plan at street level
Below Artist's impression



street and the use of outdoor escalators. There are good European exemplars (Nijmegen, Aviero and the Beursplein) that were invoked to convince him.

The park itself responds to the outline of the underground remains of an historic dock. Two thousand cars will be located under the park as well as a comprehensive servicing network. The passenger transport authority initially proposed a bus link under here which would have created a very dismal underground environment dominated by transport. In the final master plan the bus interchange is away from the park on Canning Place.

PROCESS

Grosvenor was proactive in involving Terry Farrell, Cesar Pelli and Rafael Vinoly in workshops to review the emerging master plan. Cesar Pelli joined the team to develop the urban design for the park area and has worked closely alongside BDP ever since.

The first planning application was submitted in January 2001 with subsequent amendments in October 2001 and February 2004. This was a hybrid application – an outline for the entire development for the sites adjacent to listed buildings and within the conservation area. The master plan document accompanying the application placed emphasis on variety with strong design principles, followed by an analysis of the design development, more detailed design principles relating to districts and finally an illustrative design brief for each site. This was not strictly design coding as it was felt that would restrict the creativity of the individual architects too much, but a number of parameters were set as guidance to ensure that the essence of the master plan was maintained. The applications for the initial detailed elements were produced by Page and Park, Haworth Tompkins, Brock Carmichael, Dixon Jones and BDP's Manchester office. A detailed EIA was developed for the planning application that proved its worth in the subsequent Compulsory Purchase Inquiry in 2004.

The master plan design that is now being implemented is still evolving in detail as more architects are brought in to contribute to its development. These now include Wilkinson Eyre, Piers Gough, Allies and Morrison, John McAslan, Austin:Smith-Lord and Stephenson Bell. BDP has also been invited to contribute from its large spread of offices and BDP Glasgow, London and Liverpool are all involved on different sites. Groupe 6, the French BDP affiliated office, is undertaking the design of the Debenham's store. As well as continuing to lead the master plan team, BDP via the Liverpool and Manchester offices, is providing the executive architect role for most of the site west of Paradise Street on behalf of the client and its construction partner, Laing O'Rourke.

KEY LESSONS

The master plan is still very recognisable as that developed in 2000 with each succeeding architect adding further richness, variety and detail. The success of this master plan will be based on the original principles set up by Grosvenor and carried through consistently. The key innovations and lessons of the process can be summarised as follows.

- A strong politically aware client with great commitment and vision is essential to deliver a master plan of this complexity.
- Local authorities and developers need to work together from an early stage in the process for a successful outcome.
- Some architects are better than others in fitting into the process of developing the details of the sites within a strong master plan.
- The comprehensive layered master plan concept that has been thoroughly tested by a strong multi disciplinary team where the engineers, planners, retail agents and others all contribute significantly.
- It is important to hold on to the principles of the master plan and not allow a diminution in value during the process.
- The consultation process was a success based on public workshops. Grosvenor has been particularly proactive in this respect.
- Since 2004 weekly design workshops with the concept teams and key consultees have been a vital means of controlling the emerging designs.

It is unlikely that there will be a city centre master plan scheme as complex as this again in the new few decades. Over 15 architectural teams are being co-ordinated to achieve the 2008 target delivery date, with another six or seven still to be appointed. The total investment over eight years will be £920 million. The proof of this development will be in the final product and that is not now far away. The Paradise Project will not only help Liverpool as European Capital of Culture in 2008, but to re-establish it as a leading European city for future generations.

Richard Rees, architect and Urban Design Director, BDP London
Terry Davenport, architect and Company Director, BDP Liverpool

SIMPLE VISIONS AND COMPLEX SOLUTIONS

Jon Rowland explores lessons from one of the Government's Millennium Community projects



The issue of how urban designers are addressing master plans for new communities has taken on a greater significance in the face of the burgeoning requirement for some 600,000 dwellings in the South East over the next 15 to 20 years.

In many situations urban designers are working on sites where there is little built or there is poor landscape quality and few cues around which to build a new character. The question of establishing new morphologies or townscapes in the light of new design agendas, such as sustainability or energy resource efficiency, is often put aside for the comfort of a more acceptable route of piecing together a series of perimeter blocks, often associated with guidelines redolent with historicism. This is not to say that such urban design is not a valuable contribution to the improvement of our towns, but the response has often been somewhat trite and uninteresting.

In a way, the idea of the Government's Millennium Communities is to understand and respond to the increasing complexities of the future of our growing towns and cities and our new stand-alone settlements. John Prescott announced the

programme to explore and demonstrate new approaches to the design of housing and neighbourhoods in the 21st century.

In broad terms he proposed a set of challenges to the developers and their consultants such as to:

- exemplify the best in environmental sustainability including energy and water use, recycling and ecological awareness
- demonstrate the best in urban, landscape and architectural design with particular reference to higher density housing and prefabrication
- reduce car use and promote walking, cycling and bus use
- consult with local residents as part of the social sustainability agenda
- include Information Technology and other mechanisms to increase inclusion

OUTLINE APPLICATION VITAL STATISTICS

SITE	37 HECTARES
DEVELOPABLE AREA	16.5 HECTARES APPROX
TOTAL DWELLINGS	UP TO 750 UNITS
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	30%
HOUSING MIX	ONE BEDROOM FLATS TO FOUR BEDROOM HOUSES
LIVE/WORK UNITS	SEVEN
OPEN SPACE PROVISION	LAPS/LEAPS/NEAP/COMMUNITY PARK/ECO-ZONES
MINESHAFTS	29
CLIENT	ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS, BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN, TAYLOR WOODROW
TEAM	CAPITA SYMONDS CARMARGUE ENTEC JON ROWLAND URBAN DESIGN LIFSCHUTZ DAVIDSON PHIL JONES ASSOCIATES URBED



Opposite page top Telford Millennium Community illustrative master plan
Opposite page left Visualisation of the entrance to the community
Opposite page right One of the proposed new home-zones
This page above A plan of one of the proposed new home-zones
 Visualisations courtesy of Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands

and life long educational opportunities.

The critical tasks also reflected the need to encourage the building industry to adopt new forms of construction; new standards, new products and ways of working that could be replicated elsewhere. Millennium Communities are therefore test beds for techniques and technology.

Telford Millennium Community is one of seven such projects. These include communities at Greenwich, Allerton Bywater near Leeds, Kings Lynn and Oakgrove in Milton Keynes. All have suffered teething problems, but planning permissions have now been granted for most of the master plans.

Taylor Woodrow and its consultant team won the competition to develop the Telford Millennium Community (TMC) on a site of 37 hectares at East Ketley owned by English Partnerships and Telford & Wrekin Borough Council. Critical to delivering the vision were design and development principles that were set out in the original brief and evolved through the project on the back of greater understanding of the site and its constraints. Such principles address social progress, stewardship, engagement of local communities, provision of open space, crime reduction, mix of house types and tenures, construction techniques, healthy lifestyles, home zones, links to existing communities, needs for the disabled, education and health provision, renewable energy, effective protection of the environment, remediation and land forming, urban design, landscape and habitat enhancement, densities, transport, parking, energy efficiency, rainwater harvesting, waste management, local economic opportunities and improved skills. This is a very complex series of challenges in any urban design or master planning process. And it requires a complex nexus of consultants to resolve. It is compounded in the Millennium Communities by seeking to achieve these all at the same time. This is exciting for designers but requires great flexibility in policies, product and process by developers and councils with all their differing departmental agendas.

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Telford is a curious amalgam of existing villages interspersed by residual mining and industrial land overlapped by a 1960s New Town. The site is close to the centre of Telford. It is an area that has been associated with mining and industry since the Bronze Age and is one of the most complicated in Telford. It has 30 mineshafts, colliery spoil, mineworkings and two tips. Part of the land is covenanted.

The key constraints have been:

- the ground conditions with its legacy of mining, water and contamination, which have limited the development area
- the topography and the steep north-facing slopes that have made issues such as daylighting, sunlighting and house design critical to the success of the master plan
- environmental and ecological assets, which have included protected flora and fauna species, that have further constrained the developable areas
- sitting in the middle of the site a small row of cottages is to be included in the plan
- the financial constraint of creating a viable development in the face of these physical constraints.

The resulting constraints leave a hodgepodge of development opportunities.

The ‘soft’ constraints were provided through the consultation process. This took the form of establishing a Community Consultation Group, visits to exemplar sites in the UK and Holland, regular committee meetings and presentations, and a Design Week workshop event.

THE CONCEPT - NO BIG IDEA

For TMC – there has been no imposition of a grand plan, no big idea. Rather the plan has evolved through a number of core principles and by picking a way through the various constraints. In this I am reminded of the words of Sherlock Holmes that ‘when you have eliminated all of which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth’. Thus at each stage the team has explored what is possible and generated a plan to reflect that. However, the team also looked at the idea of transformation, as a starting point. When you transform it is important to know what to keep, how to moderate the constraints, and where to intervene. This approach offered the opportunity to develop a plan that would reflect the history of the area, and provide for different experiences throughout the site.

Four core principles informed the design process:

1. The interface between the sensitive ecology and development, and the means of mediating between the two, provided the



Detailed draft plan for Phase 1 of the project, the entrance and 'civic' focus of the community, used to explore detailed constraints

conceptual territory in which this approach was tested. The random locations of mine shafts and spoil tips, the stand-offs from the new ponds, and the views travelling through the site all helped locate the key points at which a space or building or 'event' could occur or where the built and unbuilt meshed.

2. Establishing a unifying element that held together this disparate site. The curved spine route was critical in providing a means of linking the site together, getting through the various obstacles on site, and creating the opportunity for different experiences along the route. These experiences were geared to local topographical, environmental and urban design criteria.

3. Establishing different local identities based on the local topography also responded to local community concerns about monotonous development. The plan therefore reflected not only physical attributes but also the roles that each area required as well. A 'civic' area at the entrance to the site, where the main community functions would be accommodated, emerged, together with a lakefront environment and terraced hillside development and eco-friendly housing areas.

4. The nature and form of housing and its design were developed to suit these character areas, linked to an overall set of design principles. Many different designs were developed to celebrate different locational conditions and lifestyles. No differentiation between income levels allows tenure blind 'pepper potting' – an important social goal.

This has led to a master plan that is unusual in form, which originates new housing types, and perhaps changes the perception of what urban design can achieve.

ARRIVING AT THE PLAN

Getting to the master plan required an understanding of the technical issues, community and client agendas. All three

elements had to be taken on. The process therefore took the form of a series of parallel tasks that were brought together at community, consultant and client forums.

The result of a community 'Design Week' was the starting block for the plan. Case studies were examined for positive and negative attributes. Design principles and structural concepts were discussed with the community. Evolving technical issues were put in the pot. Key to the plan was the creation of a new landform which would minimise the north-facing development and create a series of terraced platforms, some quite small. This in turn led to opportunities to use the landform to create interesting architecture and built form such as upside-down houses, belvederes, 'sliding plots'.

Because of constraints, not all the site could be developed so the issues of density and mix were particularly relevant and reflect ecological sensitivity, location, and landform.

Up to 750 dwellings are proposed as part of the master plan. This is not enough to support a great mix of uses so a wider context is taken. The result is some live-work units, primary school, community centre, small offices and some flexible units.

The master plan is based around the central spine route, which changes in character through the site. It is linked to a grid of shared-surface streets (home-zones). This is a simplified hierarchy that promotes pedestrian priority and safe routes, and the idea of sharing scarce resources such as a useable open space to avoid duplication. Resource efficiency continues to be a challenge as the rhetoric of councils and their separate departmental agendas do not always match. The parking strategy includes on-street, on-plot, parking squares and courtyards and potential undercroft parking making the most of the topography.

The plan is also geared to sensitive landscape and ecology, both in the form of spoil tips that have been ecologically rich over the years and the 'terraforming' that will help to create development land while incorporating existing landscape features in a meaningful way. Relocation of reptiles, acid grasslands, and lowland heath areas untouched by development will continue to provide a unique amenity.

Open space is geared to areas that cannot be built upon. Those spaces within the development take on a more formal and functional character expressing particular activities. 'School Square' is an example of contemporary design that incorporates existing trees. The shared-surface streets are designed as part of the architecture through a constructive dialogue between the council's highway department and the design team, and incorporate amenity and play space. The sustainable urban drainage system will enable the creation of a new lake and waterside housing.

The urban form is built around different functions and roles:

- the high density formal entrance to the site overlooking the community park
- the ecologically sensitive, lower density 'green' part of the site
- the high density newly created landscape adjacent to the tip.

There is no overarching architectural style on which to establish a strong character. All around is undistinguished, and the master plan has therefore sought to develop its own character that incorporates the best aspects of urban design without being too urban. In doing this the master plan seeks to redefine a suburban typology by introducing new forms of housing, a simple permeable network, and development that is designed to take advantage of orientation and passive solar gain. This contemporary approach is reinforced by other innovations such as rationalised construction, information technology, waste management, renewable energy and 'stewardship'.

The master plan has been reviewed informally by CABI which gave a warm welcome to 'these impressive proposals'.

From the Design Week consultation to planning stage took some eight months. The master plan has been granted outline planning application. The detailed master planning for the first phase has proved the robust quality of the plan. An important aspect of the master planning process has been the close working dynamics between urban design, master planning, architecture and landscape design. All the way through the issue of how house types need to respond to urban design or land remediation requirements, or how terra forming and urban design has to change to accommodate viable house types has meant that there has been a seamless move from conceptual to detailed plan. Having architects as part of both the master planning and delivery team has created a level of design consistency that has resolved the need for codes. (The procurement implications are obvious.) Thus at the master plan and individual house design level, there was a conscious decision to relate to the immediate context which provides great variety and interest, but also helps contribute to the overall identity for the site. There has been no imposition of a design formula; this development has been designed from the ground up and not the other way around. The application for Phase 1 is due this summer following an application in the spring for land remediation and public

realm works associated with a licence to relocate the newts on site.

So, what lessons are there for urban designers in this process? I have already mentioned the complexities of the project – and the necessity of understanding and working with the different 'layers' of the plan. Just as the Millennium Communities exercise has tested process and product so it has also tested the professions and the ability to think 'out of the box'. This and the need to respond to differing agendas have shifted the role of the urban designer. There is still a view that master plans are about felt tip pens and good illustrations of what could be. Increasingly they are about detailed explorations of specific issues, technical, social and financial, the 'hard and soft', and mediation between the aspirations of different stakeholders in order to reduce confrontation. But even this role may need to be re-examined in the light of additional demands made on master planning teams. The role of the urban designer as 'generalist' and 'broker' may be changing (even before it has been established). The question that is now being posed is about design approach and collaborative process. As the scale and complexities of projects increase there is a danger that time given to good design is being reduced. In this context has the urban designer now become a meaningless generalist in that rather than rise to the technical difficulties a knee-jerk reaction in the form of standard typologies has now become the accepted form of response? How many master plans have we seen that provided similar urban patterns, draped like a patchwork quilt over a piece of countryside or large brownfield site? It may be that urban designers may be resting on their recently earned laurels and not exploring new ideas.

The Millennium Community programme is a big enough challenge. It is testing our professional capabilities and we need to address them.

Telford Millennium Community has pushed the boundaries. So far, the approach taken by the team has proved strong. It remains to be seen how sustainable the master plan remains as it is developed out over the next few years. It will also rely on the resources and skills of the council and developer to see this project through.

Jon Rowland, Principal of Jon Rowland Urban Design and past Chair of the Urban Design Group



A Lifestyle Renaissance for a Market Town

Alex Cochrane describes how a historic market town became the setting for strategic environmental enhancements to respond to modern-day lifestyles.

Faced with the problems of accessibility, distance and low population density, and coupled with increased personal mobility and changes in lifestyles, the sustained provision of local services in UK market towns has become inherently difficult. A small, dispersed, rural catchment population, which is too easily attracted elsewhere, means that services can quickly become unsustainable, leading to a vicious circle of decline.

The historic market town of Newent, which lies at the northern tip of the Forest of Dean in western Gloucestershire has, in recent years, been subject to some of these critical shifts in the nature of local centres and market towns.

In the autumn of 2004, REAL was commissioned by the Newent Initiative, in partnership with the Forest of Dean District Council, with the South West Development Agency and the Gloucester Market Towns Forum to provide a vision and proposals for environmental enhancements in the town, which would contribute to ensuring its economic vitality and sustainability for years to come.

THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT IN REGENERATING MARKET TOWNS

Viability studies carried out by Forest of Dean District Council along with research conducted by the University of Newcastle upon Tyne¹ has shown that a mutual dependence exists between market town services and their hinterland residents, and that the 'clawing back' of spending from other urban and peripheral centres depends on market towns taking advantage of particular demographic trends in rural areas by:

- recognising and delivering the 'unique selling point' and 'added value' that historic market towns have the potential to offer to today's consumer, as an attractive and culturally resonant environment
- responding to changing demographics and lifestyle patterns by shifting opening hours to capture top-up shopping of convenience goods
- enhancing the quality and frequency of leisure services and the evening economy; and

- creating opportunities for linked trips to other services in the town.

Local towns such as Ledbury and Ludlow, as well as those further afield like Emsworth had shown that market towns could foster their own renaissance by repositioning themselves to respond to a growth in the leisure and lifestyle economy.

In the case of Newent, the town's role as a local service centre is coupled with its attractiveness to visitors. The lakeside, Shambles Museum and events including the annual Onion Fayre make the town a significant visitor destination in the region, particularly during the summer months.

In order for Newent to play to its strengths, a strategy for environmental enhancement was required. The commission aimed to:

- provide a vision for progressing environmental improvements in the town centre
- set out detailed proposals for environmental improvements
- establish associated costs and set them against possible funding streams in order to identify a route through to implementation.

THE GROWTH OF A MARKET TOWN

From the time of the Norman Conquest until 1411, Newent and its priory belonged to the Abbey of Corneilles in Normandy. Around this time, the Abbey obtained the right to hold two annual fairs and a weekly market in the town, which ensured its economic ascendance over the neighbouring rival town of Dymock. Prosperity and growth was fortified by its position on one of the main cattle drove routes into Wales.

The prosperity of the town continued into the 17th and 18th Centuries, with industrial activity beginning in the form of glass working, cloth manufacture and iron working. The marketing of cattle continued to be the mainstay of the local economy; in the 17th century, five times as many cattle were killed in Newent as in Gloucester. Many of the buildings that were erected during this peak period still remain in the town, most notably the Market House; a charming timber framed



Opposite page left Framework master plan
Opposite page top Public consultation in Market Square, Newent
Opposite page bottom Newent Market Square in 2004
Left Bird's eye sketch of key proposals
Above Newent Market Square in 1914

structure, elevated on stilts above the market square.

Industrial and economic restructuring during the 20th century saw the decline in the economic fortunes of the town, the redundancy of rail and canal links, and the transformation of the town into a local retailing centre and a satellite settlement of Gloucester.

THE APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

Four broad and interlinked strands were agreed as the basis for environmental enhancement in Newent – each strand representing a characteristic to be achieved.

1. MENDING GAPS

It is the unique sequence of historic and sometimes very low-key buildings and spaces that generates the exceptional character of the town. Gaps in this sequence such as empty sites, derelict facades and buildings that fail to play a role in the rhythm, scale and proportions of the town must be dealt with.

2. CREATING A BUZZ

The continued vitality and viability of economic activity in the town will rely on an increased catchment population that chooses to use those services the town has to offer, coupled with an increase in services to meet their needs: a virtuous cycle. The aim is to achieve a balance of activity - and a slight surplus of demand - that will help to sustain the viability of the town's services for the years to come. The local service sector must also respond to changes in lifestyle to reflect the modern day needs of the local and hinterland population, particularly in opening hours.

3. SPACES FOR LINGERING

The tendency for people to wander and browse the shops is key to both retaining visitors for longer periods, as well as enhancing footfall for shops and services. There are also growing demands on the town for spaces that can contain outdoor events. Building frontages, the design of street surfaces and furniture will influence the attractiveness of spaces for lingering.

4. GETTING TO TOWN

The lifeblood of the town is the local population which uses it as a local centre, and the visitors who come to the town in the summer season, so access to the town must be maintained for all. There are clear conflicts arising from this; unless the town is rebuilt around the car, there will always be a constraint on the number of people who can access the town by car. There is a significant resident population in Newent who live within a five-minute walk of the town centre; walking must

therefore become an instinctive choice for the vast majority of these people.

THE FINAL PROPOSALS INCLUDED:

- a composed sequence of attractive, characteristic and intriguing spaces and streets throughout the central area of the town, which link the key focal points of the lakeside, car park and historic core
- improvements to the quality of key town centre spaces and to the setting of historic buildings
- improvements to pedestrian amenity and comfort in the town centre, including links to outlying residential areas
- more town spaces that can be used flexibly for a variety of events and markets
- maintained levels of parking throughout the town along with an improvement in parking management
- steps to ease congestion at pinch points
- opportunities for small-scale mixed use development in the town centre
- opportunities to improve existing frontages in the historic core of the town
- designs for derelict and underused sites for development which reflect the traditional character of the town
- opportunities for community facilities to remain and expand in the heart of the town.

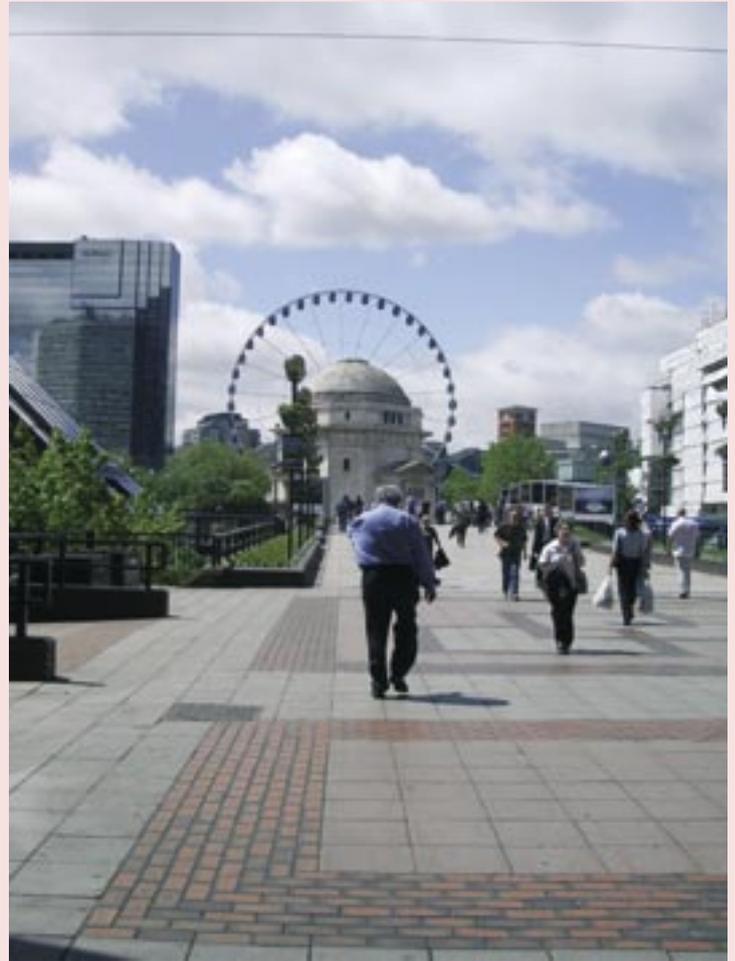
WHERE NEWENT GOES FROM HERE

The commission provided the client with a frame of reference and a long term vision for positive change when for making funding bids, achieving planning gain, and assessing planning applications in the town centre. During the course of the study, much development interest and several major funding sources were identified and were greatly excited by the aspirational spirit of the work of the Newent Initiative. Two major projects have already secured funding and are set to go ahead this year.

Alex Cochrane is a senior designer with REAL in Oxford, master planners of Newhall in Harlow.

REFERENCE

1 Powe, N A and Shaw, T; 'Exploring the current and future role of market towns in servicing their hinterlands: a case study of Alnwick in the North East of England', *Journal of Rural Studies* 20 (2004), 405-418



Brindleyplace Square revisited, June 2005

Oh, what a joy it is to visit a city where public transport makes sense. After the mayhem of the M40, Solihull Station is a haven of peace. In a cheerfully helpful ticket office, a return ticket to Birmingham Snow Hill is provided for no more than petty cash. So the Brindleyplace experience had started and for the first time this June the sun came out. On through the leafy suburbs, sleepy stations and the relicts of the nation's industrial heritage and then the city centre emerges, as a city centre should, as a cluster of high rise buildings. You know it's Birmingham because the 'Smartie' pile of Selfridges looms over the station. On then to Snow Hill and to an anticipatory climb to Victoria Square.

Arrival in the Square is perhaps spoilt by a proliferation of temporary marquees, then again perhaps this is the price one pays for creating a place so attractive to popular activity. Away from marquee city and into Chamberlain Square and there's more activity. This time the amphitheatre-like steps provide the idea setting for performance. It's a pity that a more appropriate covering than the now ubiquitous marquee had not been devised for the stage area. Perhaps this will be considered when the library is rebuilt. The library still provides the link on to Centenary Square and highlights a theme for this revisit, the theme of sequencing the art of linking spaces together. It's perhaps this art of linking that sets urban design apart from simple place making. One of the delights of a visit to our revitalising cities is this linking of spaces. It's the message that Gordon Cullen brought us in the 1960s continued by Kevin Lynch and Francis Tibbalds, and one that we forget at our peril.

But back to Centenary Square the space that once seemed too big now seems cluttered with the city's Ferris wheel. Is this just the sort of element that brings the square alive or is it a piece of fairground frippery

that spoils the integrity of the space? I tend to the former view. Through the Convention Centre, another one of those buildings used as a link, but should we rely on closable buildings to provide the most convenient link between spaces? Surely to be part of the urban fabric links must be under public control and freely available at all times. This issue of who controls the space is likely to emerge as another theme for this visit. Control apart it's still a pleasure to emerge into the bosky grove that now marks the canal side. A chance encounter with a pair of cheerful community police reveals that there is little crime in the area and 'it's got a nice continental feel'. Across the canal bridge and a citizen revisiting the area exclaims 'It makes you proud to live in Birmingham.' That really must be a true mark of successful place making.

The Tower of Brindleyplace Square emerges above the canal and our route on is nicely signposted. Into that haven of peace, water, greenery and fine detailing that makes the square. 'It's a nice quiet place' says the coffee stall vendor, and 'a great place to work' says a security man standing guard discreetly by. CZWG's coffee shop makes a pleasant spot for a rendezvous with Joe Holyoak and a chance to dig a little deeper into the issues surrounding the character of the place. The quiet calmness of the place has much to do; it seems with the presence of our security man that this is a place where discreet control rules. No buskers spoil the peace although there's a little open air theatre, no Big Issue vendors trouble our conscience for we are the subject of discreet control. Brindleyplace Square is not a public space but a private place to which the public have access. Yes it's delightful, yes it's clean and safe, but your face has to fit. There is a real dilemma for the urbanist here. By creating such exclusive areas are we contributing to social divisions rather than improving cities for all? Is there always going to



Opposite page top left Chamberlain Square in use
Opposite page bottom left Across the canal bridge
Opposite page right The Wheel, Centenary Square
This page clockwise from top left Crossing the canal, Oozles Square, Brindleyplace Square, Arcades and Costa Coffee, fine detailing in the public spaces

be a tension between public use and personal enjoyment? These are questions we will have to address more often in the future. Here in Brindleyplace they arose early for, as Joe explains, the first housing developers could not cope with the idea of linking into the main square. The opportunity to go from the square in to new housing via the canal bridge is thwarted by a firmly locked gate and the opportunity for free movement is lost.

These concerns do not detract from Argent's success in promoting a really finely detailed space. The flow of space from Brindleyplace Square into Oozles Square is seamless and the space in front of the Ikon Gallery has an almost Zen-like quality. What a pity there is no link from the square to the west. The latest office block literally blocks our way. Has the true face of commercialism emerged in this latest phase. Even if so, the scale of the place overall seems to cope with this latest addition. Back to the heart of the square and it's good to see small shops moving in. The square is becoming more than a lunchtime spot for busy office workers and seems in spite of the hidden hand of control to emerge as

a community. What do the users of the space feel about the square and its arcades? Do they really provide protection from the weather? Not according to one officer worker of seven years standing. According to him 'it's the coldest place in Birmingham during the winter.'

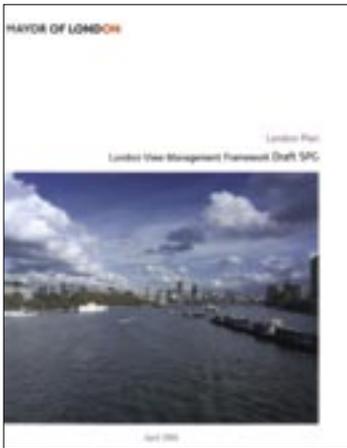
So is Brindleyplace Square anything more than a highly controlled and expensively detailed stage-set? Certainly it makes a valuable contribution to the sequence of spaces that make up Birmingham's new quarter. Yes the control can create a feeling of over-precious closeness, but it can also provide a distinctive character, and a distinctive identity is one of the pre-requisites of any good place.

Brindleyplace Square is certainly worth revisiting and so is the whole feast of urban delights that is the new sequence of spaces in downtown Birmingham. Can Manchester or Leeds match the experience? Perhaps we could find out in future revisits.

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

LONDON VIEW MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

MILLER HARE AND THE RICHARD COLEMAN CONSULTANCY, GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY, 2005



This is a very striking publication with spectacular colour photographs of London's protected views and with guidance on how to manage their protection. It includes images of a 3D computer model of London which has been used to assist in the guidance.

The publication should have appeared 30 years ago as a supplement to the Greater London Development Plan. However, the technology was not there at the time (most photography being black and white while computer modelling was in its infancy), nor was there the political will as there seemed to be no immediate

threats to London's views.

The publication could have appeared in 1992 as an illustrated RPG3A, the supplement to the government's Strategic Guidance for London. Technology was improving but the political will was limited and the illustrations in RPG3A were minimal.

Today the situation has changed, the technology is with us and so is the political will; threats are becoming more evident as London continues to intensify. The good news is that the number of protected views in London has increased from 10 in RPG3A to 26. The 'not such good news' is that the width of the protected corridors has decreased. The extent of protection is shown superimposed on each photograph and there are concerns about the potential canyon effect of mega-buildings (and we are entering an era of new heights) on the settings of famous historic landmarks.

It is noted that the images of the computer modelling include recent 'mega proposals' such as London Bridge Tower and the Heron Building, but these images have not been overlaid onto the photographs of the views. If the technology is now with us, then surely such illustrations could have featured

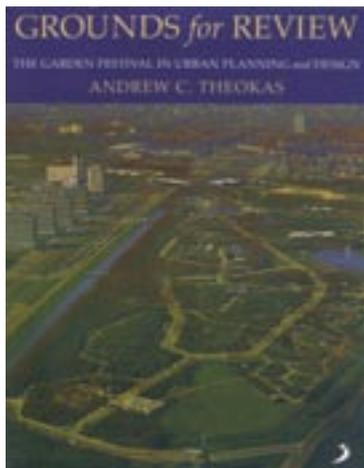
in this publication together with words from the inspectors' reports indicating why such proposals are acceptable or otherwise. Guidance is best presented by way of examples of good or bad practice, which in this publication are missing.

Also missing are a few more views. The ten indicated in RPG3A are mostly long distance views from major public parks on the rim of the London basin; the 16 which have been added are mostly riverside views. The missing views are from the tops of buildings such as St Paul's Cathedral and Tower Bridge. Both these views featured prominently at the celebrated Mansion House Square public inquiry in 1984, but neither has been included.

A further concern is the new terminology: AVR toolkits, backdrop advisory lines, middle ground assessment areas, lateral assessment areas, etc. Fortunately, the publication includes a glossary, without which the reader may be confused. Leaving aside some other potential concerns, it has to be said that this is a very well presented, latest state-of-the-art document, and the authors must be congratulated.

Tim Catchpole

**GROUNDS FOR REVIEW:
THE GARDEN FESTIVAL IN URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN**
ANDREW C THEOKAS, LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2004, £29.95



ISBN 0 85323 539 2

This book examines the role of the garden festival in regeneration processes, and as the basis for future urban parks. Describing 15 garden festival sites, the author's motivation is to celebrate their contribution, impact and legacy. It is their creation as responding to a

need for open space development that he pursues, and tracks their planning, implementation, short life span (of just seven months typically), consequences and benefits. The goal is always to maximise the quality of the end use – as a catalyst, and the role of the public and private sectors in funding different activities are explored. He uses the wide range of festivals to ask: What is a park? Is it green? Is it themed? Is it an exhibition? Is it a void?

It is divided into six chapters and the first four deal with German, Dutch and British festivals. It begins with a thorough review of German garden shows from Hamburg in 1896, through to World Expos and a forward programme up to 2015. The case studies include Stuttgart, Munich, Hamburg, Berlin and Rostock, through to Erlangen's more interesting city wide 'site', where the festival took over the city itself, not an unloved area on the periphery. More importantly, it was designed for the local community, not

millions of outside visitors. This set a new trend for garden festivals and has brought them into mainstream city planning.

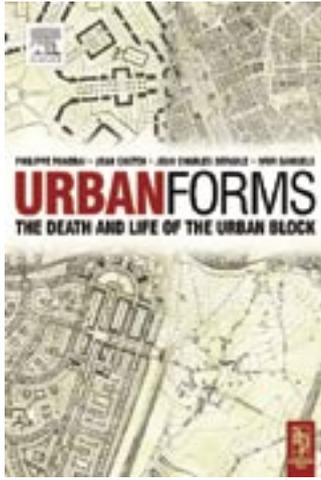
By contrast, the British chapter shows a sad story about the areas that were the focus of great visitor activity, especially in Liverpool and Stoke on Trent. Glasgow and Ebbw Vale are presented more favourably, and the chapter is a depressing reminder of Thatcher's Britain and the quality of what was built.

The following chapters visit examples from less consistent organisers of Green Festivals – for example France, USA, Austria, and China. It is the final chapter where the author analyses the festival concept, and how it should evolve in the future. To the enthusiast, this book offers a useful documentation of garden festival sites and situations, but to the designer, the master plans and photographs are too small and poorly reproduced to be fully legible as inspiration.

Louise Thomas

URBAN FORMS: THE DEATH AND LIFE OF THE URBAN BLOCK

PHILIPPE PANERAI, JEAN CASTEX, JEAN CHARLES DEPAULE, IVOR SAMUELS, ARCHITECTURAL PRESS, 2005, £24.99



ISBN 0 7506 5607 7

Urban Design does not usually review second or third editions, but in this case, the first two editions were in French, and this is the first time that this well-known and important book has been translated into English. Indeed, this book is somewhat long in the tooth, the original version having first appeared in 1977. Nevertheless, its enduring relevance is testified to by the fact that it has now been translated into six languages, and continues to be read around the world.

The structure of the book has remained consistent throughout its various guises, although it was brought up to date in the second French edition (1997), whilst in this English edition a final chapter has been added by Ivor Samuels who consequently also adds his name to the original cast of authors. The new editions continue an approach to the subject that is essentially scholarly and historical, with (now) nine chapters taking readers from Haussmann's Paris up to the present day.

No further justification is required for why the book is worthy of serious attention by practitioners and students, other than that given by Ivor Samuels in its introduction. There he identifies the four reasons why the book was worthy of translation.

- First, because the book explicitly connects physical form with economic, social and cultural processes - at a time when the former was being dismissed as a major concern by academics and practitioners alike.
- Second, the book focuses on the 'ordinary' landscape of cities, rather than on the exceptional landmark buildings that dominate so much architectural discourse. As such, it deals with the really

important parts of our cities where most of us live and work.

- Third, because it takes a European-wide view of the subject matter, tracing how movements developed and were translated across the continent. The new final chapter extends this analysis across the Atlantic to urbanism in the USA.
- Finally, the translation arrives at a time when urban design, and particularly a return to the street and block, has gained significant currency across the English-speaking world. Returning to what has been an influential contribution to the evolution of urban morphology (originally published when the subject was little known and even less understood), is therefore both timely and appropriate.

My only gripe concerns the unfortunate use of ultra-small text throughout the book, and the poor quality of some of the illustrations. Either I need to visit the opticians (highly likely), or this will turn off readers who otherwise have much to gain from it. That would be unfortunate. This gripe aside, this translation should hopefully give 'Formes Urbaines' (its original title) a new lease of life, and I for one give that a glowing endorsement.

Matthew Carmona

REVIVAL IN THE SQUARE

NICK CORBETT, RIBA ENTERPRISES, 2004, £19.95



ISBN 1 85946 160 3

This handsome book aims to give encouragement to those who wish to create public spaces by suggesting how these can be designed and managed. Implicitly it challenges the idea that 'public' public space (ie not produced and managed by private developers) is dead or dying but the author doesn't engage in this argument and assumes that public spaces will continue to be wanted and created. Corbett's book is grounded on theory and history; he has done his research well and

quotes from all the essential urban design texts. In addition he uses well-known successful examples to support his case.

The first part of the book is based on recent British experience. It explores issues for organisation, partnership, funding, participation and implementation. It also deals with management. The fascinating case of Birmingham is first described here (p30) and it would have been enlightening to know the details of how the city, acting as land speculator, acquired control over the Brindleyplace sites. (See Case Study this issue p38).

A second chapter deals with movement and spatial strategies. It follows the lessons of historic towns as well as Lynch, Space Syntax, Gehl and others, and predictably advocates a pedestrian-friendly public realm. The main case study here is Trafalgar Square, a choice which may be too exceptional and with not enough transferable lessons for more ordinary places. This is in fact one of the criticisms that can be made of the book; it is concerned with the civic public realm rather than with the

domestic, local neighbourhood space, often the one more difficult to design, to manage and to keep alive.

The next chapter is a kind of manual for the design of the public square; it brings together ideas from a number of authors from the Renaissance to the present. It is useful and to a certain extent daring, as contrary to so many recent texts, it suggests recipes for success. These are mostly based on history and the writings of Sitte and Kostof are often quoted.

The final section is a more detailed analysis of the transformation of Birmingham's public realm. Each chapter of the book ends with a Performance Checklist, a good idea that might have been better if it was made clear that not all questions are applicable in all cases. In the final chapter the checklist is replaced with a few thoughtful questions on Birmingham's achievements. Overall the book is well illustrated and has a series of quotes in boxes that make for a pleasant and easy read.

Sebastian Loew

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WE COULD HAVE BUILT YOU

(in memory of Philip K Dick)

Bobby Jay had been working late at Planitco (Inc), these past few weeks and it hadn't been good for him. It was just that things mattered to him, things that others could skim over. These days it was easy enough for the guys who knew all the big words, who had all the figures and the data just to plot in a few city parameters and feed a few projections they'd cooked up and press the 'something like' key on the CitySimulacron and it looked good enough. But Bobby knew those guys really hadn't got a clue what those condo towers and highspeed buzzways they were dialling up for the next outerworlds Titangames would really feel like. To them it was just another option, just another vizscreen to keep the future open and get the next policy OK'd by the precogs. Outside, who cared?

Outside? Whoever went outside? That was for freaks and 'roids. But Bobby cared.

He'd been trained up in the old days when, even though it was getting to be a bit dangerous he liked to walk around and check the pigmentex against the way the light really did fall on those dusty old pediments they'd built over for the first Greater Gateway Zone. So he was good. They used to say you could tell if he'd done the final reality checks on the cityscapes. But now he couldn't keep up, they could generate alternative futurescopes so fast his kind of detail never got seen anyway. One skim of the viewer and who could tell if it would stand up or if you could actually turn a corner without the whole thing dissolving back into the grid. Just so long as it looked real enough to get coverage.

He was unwrapping another amphigum to get him through when his holoplate buzzed and glowed with an incoming. Only low rate sales papes and long lost lovers got through at this time of night and she couldn't have traced him here. Forty red white and blue shoe strings, a thousand telephones that don't ring flipped up in his memory. Old age is measured in useless quotations. He needed a big break here, something to show them - Planitco promises Utopia - I deliver it.

Instead of the usual personalised 'Hi, Bobby' roll trying to sell him the latest in Simulacity visualiserware, complete with reverse rampjet rides, there was a flickery shot of a rather overweight guy with greasy greying hair wearing a Cal State sweatshirt and stroking a black cat. What kind of jape was this? But he had twinkling blue eyes and there was something that stopped Bobby going for the scam key.

-I wrote that, the holosim chuckled. Almost. The suspension of disbelief, perhaps that's the clue. Rather like a communion. Maybe I could help you here. All futures are fictions, they say. We're in the same business, really. If 'reality' can be trusted.

Bobby wasn't too sure what was going on here. Maybe it was a bad wrap of amphigum? This old style guy who talked like a priest on acid. What's this got to do with city imaging? How did he get into the frame here? The hologram from the past didn't stop:

-Your problem is that you need your audience to really enter into the feeling of, da sein, the Heideggerian ultimate moment of 'being there', of sharing that special experience of time and space that is yet to be, that only your simulacrum can offer. Back then, toys taking over the universe gave me that idea, Barbie and Ken. I added the truth drug and the shared experience it gave to block out the hovels of Luna. And it became my first big hardback deal. CanD, you should try it.

The holosim broke up. Bobby was sweating. He checked the transmission date. 3.2.1982. Past century. Pre-net time. Sender: Horselover Fat. Must be a code. But maybe, if he could get the techies to impregnate Planitco's simulacra with something that would, even just for one second, take the viewer into another world. And if you could add UniversalMosaic consumer group perceptions via the chemistry of the drug, who would need cities at all?

Bob Jarvis

FOOTNOTE

Phillip K Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* was first published by Doubleday in 1964. Emmanuel Carrère's *I am alive and you are dead: a journey into the mind of Phillip K Dick* was published by Bloomsbury earlier this year.