

154 **URBAN
DESIGN**

Spring 2020
Urban Design Group Journal
ISSN 1750 712X

**THE FUTURE OF
THE HIGH STREET**





Goldsmith Street
in Norwich by
Mikhail Riches

NEWS FROM THE UDG CHAIR

Welcome to the Spring issue of *Urban Design*. The theme of this edition is The Future of the High Street, a topical subject as the irrepressible growth of e-commerce is taking its toll on bricks and mortar retail and town centres. In the UK, one pound in every five spent with retailers is now online and that is set to increase.

Yet this is not necessarily an occasion for doom and gloom; the retail decline of high streets is an urban design opportunity. All too often in the last few decades, high streets and towns in the UK have become sterile places, dominated by chain shops and dwindling residential populations. They now have the opportunity to provide new housing for a residential population that will give life to the streets and spaces in the evenings and weekends. With fewer chain shops there is also the potential for more community facilities and locally based enterprises to occupy the ground floors. In short, high streets can become places again.

A UDG SNAPSHOT OF THE LAST THREE MONTHS AND A PERSPECTIVE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

It has been an exciting three months in urban design in the UK with the publication of

two major reports: *Housing Design Quality Audit of England* and *Building Better Building Beautiful*. The UDG was at the launch of the first of these and there was some good news since the last audit in 2007: the assessed schemes scored well for design for safety and security and for delivering a variety of housing types. However, the audit exposed the endemic problems with the quality of greenfield development in England: they are solidly mediocre, with the shocking statistic that 25 per cent should never have been given planning permission.

Both the audit and the *Building Better Building Beautiful* report have good suggestions on how to tackle poor quality urban design. The latter was disregarded in some quarters as being a nebulous report about architectural style, but it has surprised many in supporting the UDG's campaign for *Manual for Streets* to become mandatory policy and not just guidance. Another good suggestion is that there should be a Minister for Place in central government, and that similarly local authorities should have a Champion of Place. More talking about place and urban design can only be a good thing and will hopefully spark more of a debate in the media and with the public about urban design and housing quality.

It is wonderful news that an urban design project won the Stirling Prize, Goldsmith Street in Norwich by Mikhail Riches. It is even better that the project was for a public sector client, Norwich City Council, and that it is high quality affordable housing to Passivhaus standards. A group of UDG

enthusiasts on a mid-winter day went to see the scheme and found that it looked fantastic. Wouldn't it be great if we could have the quality of urban design exhibited by Goldsmith Street, replicated in towns and cities across the UK? To help achieve this, in the summer we will run a design quality summit in Lewes, addressing key issues. Raising the quality of urban design will also be a major theme in our autumn conference in Sheffield; more details are to follow in the coming months.

David Rudlin, speaking in Nottingham at the UDG-RIBA design conference led by Laura Alvarez, reflected that in England, you have to be exceptional to create good quality development; in other systems, ordinary unexceptional developers consistently achieve high standards. The UDG has written to the Government calling for the creation of a design quality unit, to ensure we get the quality of development that the country and its citizens deserve. After all, the *National Design Guide* asks us to 'create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities', which unfortunately does not tally with the results of the *Housing Design Quality Audit*.

An ongoing UDG initiative is concerned with climate-responsive urbanism and there are early discussions on actions around the 2020 United Nations Climate Change conference in Glasgow, at the end of the year. The UDG is also working with others to address the problems of street design, appraisal and funding that seem to be still biased against public transport, walking and cycling. Education and skills are vital, and we are working with the Academy of Urbanism to address how urban designers can be best equipped to deliver sustainable urbanism fit for future generations.

GET INVOLVED

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

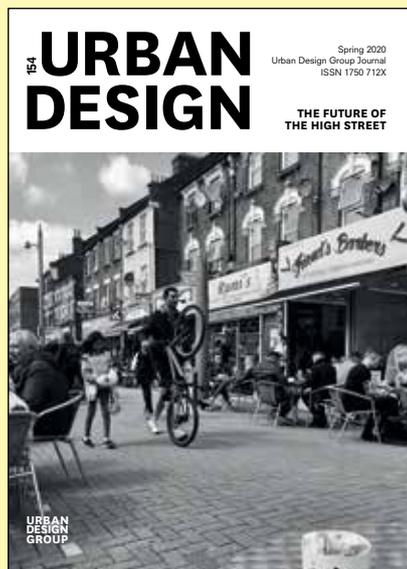
Leo Hammond, Chair of the Urban Design Group and Associate Director at Lambert Smith Hampton

DIARY OF EVENTS

TUESDAY 12 MAY 2020
Towns & Cities for Children
The Gallery
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ
1:30pm – 5:30pm

WEDNESDAY, 10 JUNE 2020
Urban Design Symposium:
'Rethinking the Scope of Urban Design'
Doctoral Academy Friary House
Greyfriars Place
Cardiff CF10 3AE
11am – 6:00pm

Please check the UDG website www.udg.org.uk for the latest events and details of venues.



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

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by Neville Fearon

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Respecting Ecosystems Large and Small



Written in the context of a potential pandemic, as the Coronavirus creeps its way around the globe, and catastrophic flooding sweeps through many UK cities, towns and villages, this issue of *Urban Design* seems to reflect the world in which we live and must work hard to make better.

Our globalised work-leisure lifestyles mean that our great sharing of knowledge, expertise and products between countries and people, can also bring threats in the form of new viruses spreading rapidly through travelling, and virtual trade and retailing routes can be threatened by disrupted manufacturing processes and supply chains. In the meantime, as Neil Bennett and Katerina Karaga of Farrells explore, high streets have suffered from the boom in virtual or online retailing, losing a significant tranche of their custom. Much is being done to rediscover and reuse these socially significant places in the future. Understanding both the historical and contemporary purposes of city and town centres has never been so important, and the solution depends to a large extent on the combined actions and energy of local councils, their consultants, landowners, occupiers and shoppers alike.

At the same time, climate change-related extreme weather patterns throw new light on decisions made about what to build where, in terms of new housing, infrastructure or simply tinkering with natural ecosystems. This points to the need to constantly look strategically, as part of our work, at how places work, the landscapes in which they sit, and the ways in which they could evolve. The Urban Design Group is supporting practitioners to develop a better understanding of sustainability and climate-responsive design, which is also a key theme running throughout this issue.

The shortlisted Student and Book Award entries for the 2020 National Urban Design Awards are featured in this issue. They provide confidence that urban design will continue to innovate and challenge conventions in seeking new ways to solve big problems. ●

Louise Thomas, independent urban designer and joint editor

HOW TO JOIN

To join the Urban Design Group, visit www.udg.org.uk and see the benefits of taking out an annual membership.

- Individual (UK and international)** £55
- UK student / concession** £35
- Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design** £85
- Small practice** (<5 professional staff) £275
- Large practice** (>5 professional staff) £495
- Education** £275
- Local Authority** £100
- UK Library** £90
- International Library** £120

Central London Walking Networks

28 November 2019, The Gallery, London

This half day event organised by London Living Streets and the UDG, in conjunction with Transport for London, launched the Central London Walking Network, a web of routes intended to make walking the easy, natural and safe option for residents, workers and visitors. Although focused on London, the presentations and discussion were pertinent to other places seeking to encourage more walking.

Will Norman, the Mayor of London's Walking and Cycling Commissioner, set out the challenge: only 31 per cent of adults and 20 per cent of children in London get enough activity to meet World Health Organisation guidelines. Today's generation of children are likely to live five years less than their parents as a result. However it only takes 20 minutes of walking a day to reduce the risk of mortality by 20 per cent, and the benefits are wide-ranging: personal physical and mental health; a reduced burden on the NHS; and a contribution to local economies and communities.

David Harrison of Living Streets highlighted some challenges that the Central London Walking Network seeks to address: the misallocation of road space favouring vehicles despite the high volumes of pedestrians; end-to-end journeys, including the importance of arrival points; and weaknesses in vital links, such as barriers or deviations in routes. Ultimately, the simple answer is that attractive, direct, low traffic and less polluted streets will attract walking.

A variety of speakers followed, highlighting initiatives that form part of the proposed walking network and describing the challenges for walking. One highlight was a passionate talk by Oliver Sells, chair of the City of London's Streets and Walkways Subcommittee, explaining that we need to increase capacity for pedestrians by taking road space from vehicles, change mindsets and think of streets as open spaces, and provide higher quality streets.

John Dales of Urban Movement emphasised the importance of having complete and cohesive walking networks; missing links undermine the best of intentions in improving individual streets. Kate Jeffery, of the Institute of Behavioural Neuroscience and Department of Psychology at University College London, gave a fascinating insight into how the brain conceptualises space. There are two kinds of spatial behaviour: habit-based navigation based on the structure of



the environment; and, long-range navigation using the hippocampus' 'place' cells. Further research is needed to understand how the brain responds to different designs of streets.

Ultimately, this was a reminder of the need to pay more attention to walking, and a call to improve streets for pedestrians. Making walking easier and better is not difficult in design terms, nor does it need to be expensive, but it does require political will to take space away from vehicles, and to deliver cohesive networks requires effective cross-borough cooperation. For central London at least, there is hope that Living Streets' Walking Network will be a catalyst for this cooperation and change. ●

Richard Crappsley, Principal Consultant, Steer

Film Night: City Dreamers (2018), Director Joseph Hillel

9 January 2020, The Gallery, London

City Dreamers is a portrait of the architects Denise Scott Brown, Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, Phyllis Lambert and Cornelia Hahn Oberlander. Each of them had extraordinary and accomplished careers, and in this documentary they share their thoughts on cities and reflect on their own work over the last 70 years.

The film shows the four architects in their respective cities, in Canada and North America, and in more private spaces such as their homes, studios and gardens. These moments are punctuated with archival footage from earlier points in their professions. The film is a tapestry of personal stories which provides an insight into the architects' varying approaches, and the challenges and successes that they have encountered throughout their careers. Hillel's portraits convey a real sense of the intelligence, curiosity and humour that each of the architects embodies, and the ways in

which their lives and work entwine. In an early scene at Lemco van Ginkel's home, she shows a model of the rooftop town square and children's play area that she designed in 1948 as part of Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*. She explains that the scale model was recreated and gifted to her as the roof of her birthday cake, but jokes that the cake was not to scale with the rest of the building. This captures the human perspective that is expressed throughout the film.

Hillel clearly has the intention of telling the stories of four women who rose through the male-dominated field of architecture from the 1950s onwards, but the film offers much more than this. All four architects are still actively questioning how cities should evolve to meet our needs now and in the future. This is demonstrated in scenes showing Lambert, Lemco van Ginkel and Scott Brown's work to preserve historical parts of Montreal and Philadelphia. Hahn Oberlander is shown walking through Vancouver, where she raises issues ranging from housing and public money, greenery in the city, and the need for the maintenance of the public realm.

City Dreamers addresses some of the challenges that these four architects have faced throughout their careers, often as a result of structural gender imbalances. This includes Lemco van Ginkel's inability to



receive a scholarship to Harvard as it was only available to men, and more recently, Robert Venturi receiving the Pritzker Prize with no acknowledgement of Scott Brown's equal contributions to their work. Despite this, the approach and character of Scott Brown, Lemco van Ginkel, Lambert and Hahn Oberlander leaves viewers uplifted and inspired to continue the work they started over 70 years ago. ●

Amanda Gregor, Public Practice Associate, and Urban Design Officer, Sevenoaks District Council



A Housing Design Audit for England

21st January 2020, Macmillan Hall, UCL, London

The Place Alliance’s Big Meet 10 saw the launch of what should prove highly valuable new evidence on the quality of new housing in England. The *Housing Design Audit*, co-funded by the Campaign to Protect Rural England, was overseen by a broad advisory group including the House Builders Federation (HBF), UDG, Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation, Green Building Council, Civic Voice and Design Council.

As Matthew Carmona, chair of the Place Alliance, explained to the 200 plus audience, the work employed comparable criteria to the CABE audits of 2001 to 2006, thus providing a comparison and a baseline for future

study. 142 large housing schemes across England were assessed by a team of volunteer design professionals who were trained to record evidence and objectively score it against 17 design criteria. Helen Grimshaw of URBED and Colin Haylock of UCL described their experiences as auditors: the sometimes unwelcome reality of developments that they would not normally visit, the evident dysfunction and disconnection of phased schemes, and the occasional unexpected delight.

The results revealed a patchy picture with a minimal uplift in quality (8 per cent) since the last audits. The majority of schemes were ‘mediocre’, and 20 per cent so poor in design terms that they should have been refused planning permission. The previous CABE audits had found a higher proportion (a third) of equally poor schemes, which begs the question: why so much new housing remains of such a poor standard? Regional variations were significant: poorer areas had a ten times higher chance of poor

outcomes; Greater London, the South East and West Midlands regions accounted for all of the overall improvement in design.

Aspects of design which scored best related to ‘safety and security’ and the ‘mix of housing types and tenures’. Highway design scored lowest. Location and density were shown to be highly significant features. Design outcomes deteriorated with sites furthest from the urban core, so that rural greenfield and low-density schemes were the worst. Density correlated strongly with quality: the average density of ‘very good’ schemes was 56dph, but it was 25dph for ‘very poor’ schemes.

Interestingly, the same house building companies produced both ‘very poor’ and ‘very good’ quality schemes, suggesting their approach was tailored to local circumstances. Better design increased final development values (by up to 75 per cent) and yet design review was little used, even though it costed no more than 0.005 per cent of the overall value of a project. The recommendation to developers was to commission more research on the economics of good design, and to take a big leap forward in design quality.

All design governance tools help but the most effective are site-specific, such as design codes and design reviews, which are up to five times more likely to be associated with the best designs. For this reason, the audit recommended that local authorities require design reviews on all major schemes.

The Audit also noted that design quality was set aside in the interests of housing delivery, so a key recommendation to government was that it should encourage inspectors to reject poor design as unsustainable. It also recommended that government should formally adopt *Manual for Streets*, be more prescriptive on density increase to raise design standards, and accept its duty to commission future housing design audits.

The final message was that good design was possible everywhere. The launch predated the report of the *Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission*, on which Nicholas Boys-Smith spoke briefly to endorse the research and its findings. The HBF did not dispute the findings but fully accepted its challenges, as did Andy von Bradsky for the Design team at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The following debate included criticism about the selection of the schemes and the methodology, but generally the audience showed its appreciation for the work and its findings. ●

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

- 1 Very good
- 2 Poor
- 3 Good
- 4 Mediocre

UN Sustainable Development Goals

5 February 2020, The Gallery, London

The UN *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) were established in 2013 as a global set of goals for every country to work towards. February's event was convened to explore their use in the UK and their relevance to the work of urban designers. Generally, the SDGs are not well-known or used in the UK. Indeed, urban designers working in developing countries will be more familiar with them.

Paul Reynolds of Urben opened the evening by giving some background on the goals, how they evolved from the Millennium Goals, and now provide a framework for every country in the world. Each country reports on progress against the goals annually with a commitment to achieving all 17 goals by 2030. Paul highlighted the value of looking at the UK's national review of 2019 to help understand how the UK has interpreted the goals.

Chris Martin of Urban Movement then took the audience through each of the 17 goals. For each goal he showed the relevance to urban designers, providing examples of appropriate interventions and design principles, as well as links to particular case studies where each theme had been well considered. For example, under goal 3 on health, he highlighted interventions such as

healthy foodscapes, 10mph speed restrictions and social spaces as all highly relevant to achieving the objectives under the health goal. Chris advocated the use of the goals as a kite-mark standard for designers.

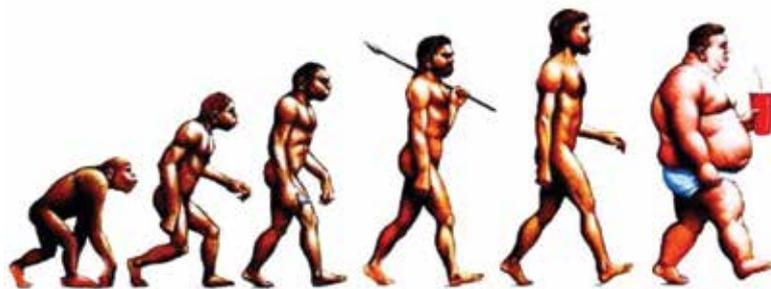
Camilla Ween of Goldstein Ween Architects then gave some insights into working with the goals. She encouraged everyone to use the goals far more in their projects. She emphasised that they are the best guidance that we have, and that the goals are decent and ethical for both people and the planet. She also stressed that the focus should not necessarily be on doing more, but doing better. Camilla explained that the Urban Economy Forum was set up in October 2019 with the remit specifically to help cities deliver on the goals (ueforum.org) and that this is great repository of urban practice.

The discussion that followed was both

reflective and proactive. Relatively few of the audience had actively used the goals in urban design work, but could see their significant potential. The platform created by the declarations of climate emergency was debated, as was the potential for the UK to become more aware of the goals as we become more globally focused. Much discussion was had around the scope for the Urban Design Group to create an open source framework using the SDGs and this is now being taken forward by conveners of the event. The hope is that such guidance could give real clarity on how to use the goals as an overarching framework in steering and assessing urban design. ●

Jane Manning, Director at Allies and Morrison, Urban Practitioners

The way we live is killing us.



National Urban Design Awards 2020

For the last ten years the National Urban Design Awards have celebrated the best in the design of towns and cities, streets and spaces, and with the current political and public focus on health, well-being and climate change, we realised that there was no better time to take stock. We have a cumulative total of 88 winners and finalists of the Practice Project and Public Sector Awards: an impressive array of entries ranging from local authority design guidance, public realm schemes, community engagement methods, and masterplans and frameworks in settings ranging from city centres through to derelict industrial sites in economically challenged regions. A group of UDG volunteers has been reviewing these entries, asking questions such as:

- What sort of design guides actually change what is built locally?
- What are the factors that lead to

masterplans progressing into development?

- Why do some schemes stay true to the original design aspirations, and others drift? What leads to schemes being well received by the local community?

- How do schemes best add to the health and well-being of the people they have created or provided for?

By identifying common factors behind successful schemes, we will be able to identify practices that can be adopted to raise design quality and improve overall outcomes.

The review is now well underway and we have already learned lessons. Success can be in the form of high quality buildings, landscape and public spaces, but it can also be in less tangible forms, such as changing behaviour, breaking up professional silos, overcoming difficult local conditions; what may be relatively straightforward at one end of the country may be considerably more difficult at the other.

These are all qualities that we want to bring to light, acknowledge and respect. We hope that it will give all urban designers increased self-belief and confidence in creating, building and delivering good and



sustainable urban design. So look out for the new Award categories for 2021!

This year, we will be celebrating the Student, Book and Lifetime Achievement Awards. We will focus on the future talent coming out of urban design courses, and on some of the insightful and informative books that have been published over the last year. ●

Robert Huxford, Jacqueline Swanson and Esther Southey, UDG



Climate Responsive Urbanism

9 January 2020, The Gallery, London

2019 was the year when the world woke up to the prospect of climate change. It is fitting that the first event of 2020 was the launch of the year-long programme on Climate Responsive Urbanism, staged jointly by the UDG and the Edge Debate. The aim is to have by the end of the year, a clear idea of how to manage the urban climate.

Keynote speaker Gerald Mills of University College Dublin (as shown) introduced the Köppen climate classification scheme:

A: Tropical

B: Dry

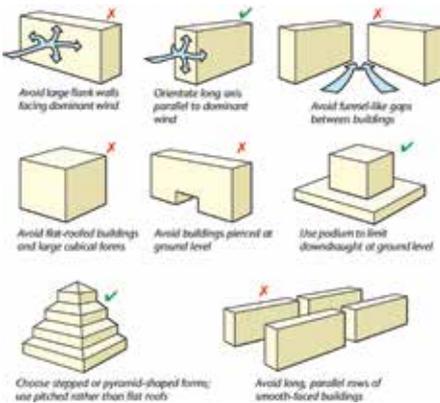
C: Temperate: this is where most of the world's population lives

D: Continental

E: Polar and Alpine

He warned that climate change will move type C climates towards type A, raising concerns including:

- Heat wave events. Humans have difficulty in adjusting to short-term changes in temperature. However, more people die of cold than of heat.



1



2

- More intense rainfall, and
- Rising sea levels which he considered to be the key driving force for adaptation.

Turning to local climates, Gerald outlined how urbanisation changes the atmosphere, hydrology and biosphere. He identified three specific areas where urban areas differ from rural areas, and bring about the urban heat island effect:

- 1 The fabric of the city** – impervious roofs and paved surfaces shed water rapidly but also greatly reduce the potential for evaporation and cooling. The hard surfaces break the connection between soil and atmosphere.
- 2 The unchanging city** – while the rural environment changes its properties with the seasons (leaves) and rainfall events (the saturation and drying of soils), the urban environment changes relatively little.
- 3 The geometry of the city** – tall buildings and canyon streets control access to wind, sunshine and sky.

In simple terms, the sun heats up surfaces during the day, while at night surfaces lose heat to passing air currents and by radiating thermal infrared radiation into the sky. In general, the greener the area, the lower is the urban heat island effect. In leafy suburban areas where the trees are allowed to grow bigger than the buildings, the local urban heat island effect may be relatively small. Different buildings have different needs. Modern office buildings want visible light but not full sunshine and the heat that it brings, and so many office buildings produce excess heat which they need to lose. Useful actions included:

- **Change the albedo** (the ability of an area to reflect light) including painting roofs white, and urban greening. However, changes at roof level may be less valuable than action at ground level where people spend time. The entire urban environment needs to be considered: it is no use having a white roof supermarket surrounded by large black-topped car parks.
- **Plant trees:** they connect the soil and atmosphere, which green building façades do not.
- **Develop a common language:** currently air quality specialists, building engineers, climate scientists, designers and planners do not use a common language.
- **Circulate knowledge:** this is not happening at the moment.
- **Reduce traffic noise** in order to allow people to leave their windows open, the most energy efficient form of cooling.

Marielena Nikolopoulou of the University of Kent added more detail on the impact of the form, height and massing of buildings. Research has identified urban forms that present higher irradiance values in winter and lower values in summer. Pedestrian wind comfort is influenced by building heights and street ratios.

The variability of how humans experience climate should be considered. The temperatures that people say are neither too cold nor too hot vary with the seasons, according to their expectations, their experience of air conditioning, and their social background. The climate strongly influences people's use of outdoor spaces. In Mediterranean climates, public spaces are popular around midday in the winter, whereas in the summer, it is the coolness of the evening that attracts people. The searing heat of the midday summer sun can lead to deserted public spaces.

Nicola Bacon of Social Life introduced the idea of social sustainability, an appeal to place people at the heart of what is done, rather than treat them as an adjunct. Social sustainability combines the design of the physical realm with design of the social world in four elements: infrastructure to support social and cultural life; social amenities; systems for citizen engagement; and, space for people to evolve and grow.

Rachel Toms of Public Health England (PHE) raised the issue of health inequalities and how the less well-off are liable to be the least able to deal with climate effects. The impact of air pollution and heat are obvious concerns, but there are others, including stress and mental well-being. People who have been flooded are approximately six to seven times more likely to have depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder a year later. PHE advocates multi-disciplinary collaboration between public health, health-care, built environment and climate change professionals at all levels and in all sectors, from policy and strategy to 'on the ground action', and adopting a whole systems approach to tackling climate change.

The systems approach was echoed by Asif Din of Perkins + Will who gave a presentation on BS67000 and City Resilience. The response to climate change requires leadership, organisation and action, rather than policies and press releases. Both central and local government should use BS67000 and if necessary, implement the ISO 9000/9001 Quality Management process to ensure that their systems are robust and responsive, that they are effectively led, and that their practices are up-to-date. Things clearly need to change. ●

Robert Huxford, Director, UDG

1 Avoiding excessive wind-speeds at ground level
2 An 1/10 scale model of a street, which can be arranged with different surfaces to examine the impact on albedo

Global Climate Change Digest

Our panel of climate experts share the latest key reports and research, highlighting what they mean for urban designers.

EXPANDING OUR URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

The analysis stage of any urban design project is critical to steering the guiding principles as well as the character of the solution that emerges at the end. As urban designers we aim to be as comprehensive as possible in our baseline evidence gathering, but many of us have been grappling with capturing climate change information at this baseline stage. However, an increasing number of data sources are coming to our aid. In this quarter's climate change digest, we flag up useful data and maps that urban designers can now draw on to better support the climate change and environmental side of their baseline analysis.

UNDERSTANDING THE FUTURE CLIMATE OF URBAN AREAS

The Met Office has evolved its UK Climate Projections (UKCP) with the release of a new data set: UKCP Local. The key novelty is that the local grid is now 2.2km rather than 12km, and this means greater recognition of urban areas where the dataset is better able to present the heat island effect. The urban heat island effect arises from the different terrain characteristics of cities (such as reflectivity and the friction effect of surfaces), the ability of buildings to absorb heat by day and release it by night, and the energy dissipated within cities from human activities. This is a subject currently being explored by the UDG-hosted EDGE debates.

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp/index>

On the theme of understanding future climate scenarios for different urban areas, there have also been some very useful comparator studies completed in the last year. A study published in 2019 sought to pair over 500 global cities to illustrate how the climates of each will change by 2050. The study found that over 75 per cent of cities are 'very likely to experience a climate that is closer to that of another existing city than to its own current climate'. The remainder will experience climate conditions 'that are not currently experienced by any existing major cities'. The study provides a real sense of the changes that each city will have to contend with by finding its closest future comparator; this means that in 2050 London will experience a climate much more similar to that of Barcelona. Whilst that might sound positive, the consequences would be significant for the city's built fabric and infrastructure, including such major issues as the over-heating of the existing building stock.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0217592>
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/figure?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0217592.g003>

For designers working in North America, one study has gone beyond global cities and has mapped the comparator climate for over 500 urban areas in the US. A great interactive app allows you to click on any urban area and find out which other one currently experiences the climate that it will have in 2080. For example clicking on Los Angeles draws a line to Las Palmas in Mexico where it is nearly 80 per cent drier.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-019-08540-3>
<https://fitzlab.shinyapps.io/cityapp/>

We are not aware of a similar study of UK urban areas, but will keep you posted if we find one!

EMBODIED CARBON DATA

For many urban design studies, it would be fantastic to be able to understand the

embodied carbon of the existing built fabric. Such an understanding would allow designers and clients to make more informed decisions on whether to refurbish or demolish certain buildings. Two sign-up databases exist to provide the data to enable such an analysis to be undertaken. Firstly, the Inventory of Carbon and Energy (ICE) Database which is the world's leading source of embodied energy and carbon data and is available for free.

<http://www.circularecology.com/embodied-energy-and-carbon-footprint-database.html#.XjABEmj7Tcs>.

Secondly, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' database also provides a free and publicly available resource on the embodied carbon of different materials and buildings, from which estimates can be made for existing buildings.

<https://wlcarbon.rics.org/About.aspx>
<https://forestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d8c253ab17e1412586d9774d1a09fa07>

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

Data on open spaces and nature reserves is often easily available from public sector clients or via websites such as MAGIC (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>). However, the availability of data on trees is often more tricky to source. The Forestry Commission now provides an interactive map (with downloadable GIS layers) for tree canopy cover for most areas.

Air pollution data is also increasingly easily accessible for urban areas. Some useful websites are now drawing together data sets on a number of factors to provide an interesting overview of the environmental experience of places. The Consumer Data Research Centre for example combines data on air pollution, access to blue and green space, as well as access to health and retail services.

<https://maps.cdrc.ac.uk/#/indicators/ahah2/default/BTTTTFT/13/-0.4147/51.8860/> ●



CDRC maps



Forestry Commission tree canopy cover



ICE database



MAGIC maps



Met Office UKCP Local



North American cities



Northern American City App

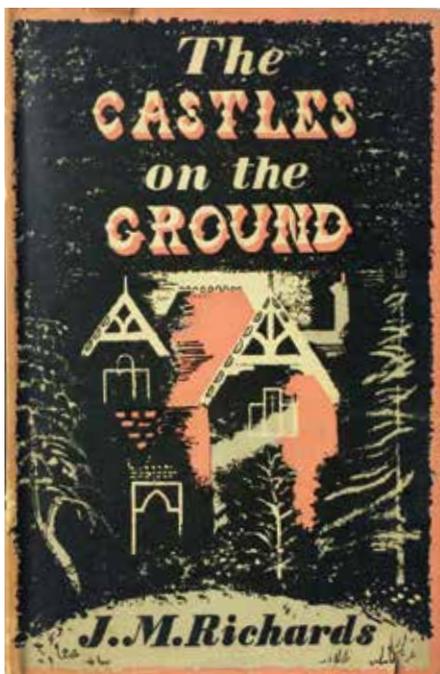


PLOS City comparator



RICS database

We are providing Quick Response (QR) codes which give instant access to key sources of information and further reading. Simply hold your smartphone over the QR code whilst in camera mode and you will be taken to the relevant web page.



Urban Design Library #33

The Castles on the Ground,
J M Richards, 1946, Architectural
Press.

Reprinted in 1973 by John Murray
and 2011 by Faber Finds

This book, despite being over 70 years old, contains a number of compelling arguments that remain relevant to how we approach the design of new communities today. It is essentially a book about the differences in architectural taste in housing between that of communities and that of architects and other professionals. Written at a time when there was concern amongst professionals about the perceived lack of taste in the architectural style of the suburbs being built, *The Castles on the Ground* takes the reader on a journey through suburbia to explain its values, from the perspective of the resident.

Richards explains that well-designed suburbia is not a hybrid of town and country but has instead its own unique typology; in order for us to understand it, we need to see it from the perspective of the people who desire to live there. Importantly, he makes a distinction between a successful suburb, which is compact in design with the required community facilities provided and the 'unworthy' suburb comprising uncontrolled sprawl.

He identifies two reasons for the popularity of well designed suburbs. Firstly, they provide for a sense of escape (he suggests that the 'fantasy' and 'make belief' of the period architectural references contribute to this) and secondly, they provide for the creativity, freedom and individuality of residents. Richards explains how in suburbia, the

individual buildings are less important than the whole scene, which is revealed along gently winding tree-lined streets with front gardens, hedgerows and other landscaping, together with beautiful homes featuring traditional rustic-inspired detailing to create an appealing backdrop to people's lives. For Richards, a 'romantic instinct' inspires the treatment of the suburban landscape, and the tradition of scene-painting 'where the products of nature and of the builder are each made to play their part in producing in an apparently casual way, an elaborately synthetic picture' can be traced back to the English Picturesque movement.

In a chapter entitled The Voice of the School Teacher, Richards warns against the imposition of taste from the 'superior station' of architects, authorities and professional organisations (the school teachers). He explains how the appeal that suburbia holds to the '90 out of a 100' is not based on architectural values, and it is therefore not appropriate or in any way helpful to seek to impose a particular style on them. The fact that the suburban style has a firm foundation on what ordinary people like and that it remains almost universally popular across generations is, Richards suggests, evidence that suburbia is a true vernacular, because it is rooted in people's instincts.

Richards argues that 'if democracy means anything it is deciding to pay attention to the expressed preference of the majority' and he suggests that building programmes should be based on a 'true analysis of people's needs'. In response to the argument that people do not really choose the suburban style because they have no choice as to what is being built by speculative builders, he explains how the house builder is responding to a demand and that it 'instinctively reacts to the nature of the demand'. He says that there is nothing to be gained by condemning the housebuilders' traditional style when the thing that is most valued about it is 'its cosiness and familiarity which makes a secure anchorage in a changing world'. It is for this reason that Richards believes that successful suburbia will always continue to contain an element of fantasy and make-belief.

He explains that we should avoid enforcing a finished design, style or typology that people have to passively accept and that 'we must not expect people to settle down... in an environment designed from the outside and on the basis of someone else's idea of what ought to be given'. He argues that rather than trying to 'put the brakes on' the suburban style, the focus should be on creating good, compact suburbs that function well for residents, and suggests that professionals should be encouraged to create great, beautiful suburbs comprising well designed homes that meet the needs and tastes of the people who will live there.

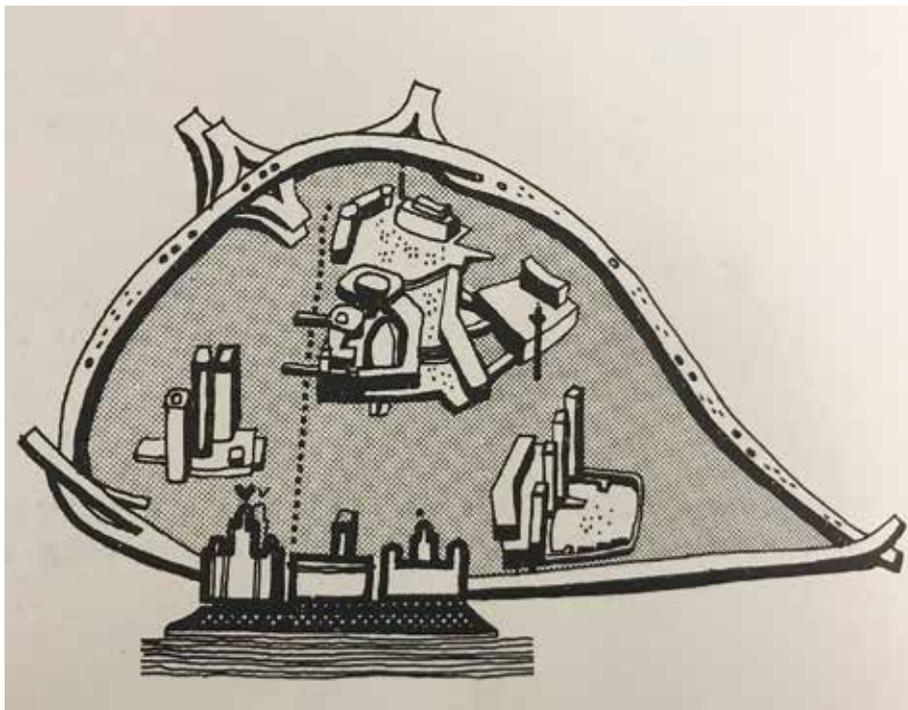
The Castles on the Ground contains lessons for how we approach the urban design of new residential-led communities today

and in the future. We know from the 2018 Policy Exchange survey of 5,000 people, and their report *Building More, Building Beautiful*, that there continues to be a very strong preference for traditional and period architectural styles for new homes in suburban settings. Housebuilders too recognise a continued desire from their customers in many locations for a traditional style of homes, and the enduring appeal of attractive landscaped settings for them. As designers, we should seek to understand the values, instincts and style preferences of the communities who will live in places that we design. As we deliver ever better and ever more sustainable places comprising well designed homes for modern living, we should remember that the sense of belonging, security and happiness of the communities depends to a large extent on whether the character and appearance of the homes and the place reflect their instincts and values. If, as the evidence suggests, there continues to be a preference for new homes with traditional and period detailing, we should help to deliver this through thoughtful and responsive designs. Otherwise, we will overlook the many qualities of an enduringly popular typology for housing that when done well creates beautiful, charming and sustainable places to live that get even better with age. ●

Kevin Parker, Group Masterplanning Director,
Redrow Homes

READ ON

Barker, Paul, 2009, *The Freedoms of Suburbia*,
Frances Lincoln Limited
Barrett, Helen and Phillips, John, 1987,
*Suburban Style – The British Home, 1840-
1960*, Guild Publishing
Lewis, Phillipa, 2014, *Everyman's Castle –
The story of our cottages, country houses,
terraces, flats, semis and bungalows*,
Frances Lincoln Limited
Oliver, Paul et al, 1981, *Dunroamin – The
suburban semi and its enemies*, Pimlico



A modern centre, from
Liverpool City Plan 1965

My Favourite Plan Dr Victoria Lawson

The Liverpool City Plan (aka The Shankland Plan)

WHY I LIKE IT

I'm not sure the 1965 Liverpool City Plan is my favourite plan as such, but I find it a page-turner: it's a compelling read. I like it in a twisted way. Published in book form, its pages sweep away a beleaguered city centre of 19th century decay, WW2 bomb damage and long-established areas of dock-related industry, and replace it with a comprehensive redevelopment of radical forms. Having assessed the 'total problem' of Liverpool, new American style malls were proposed, along with clusters of tall buildings, office and municipal schemes, an entertainment district, a central-loop railway and a city park. While completely encircled by a new inner motorway, its core was for strollers, particularly along aerial walkways, or streets in the sky, which offered both weather protection and complete freedom from the car. Cars, meanwhile, were to be left behind in a ring of multi-storey car parks capable of hoovering-up traffic from the inner motorway at a rate of 12,000 vehicles per hour. In short, the *Liverpool City Plan*, also known as the Shankland Plan, after its key consultant, Graeme Shankland, had serious design ambitions.

I also like it because much of the plan was very humane and wished to represent all aspects of city life. And I like it because the true enthusiast can continue reading beyond the plan's 160 pages, into its 11 background reports and find a further 300 pages full of

surprises. For example, Gordon Cullen makes an unexpected appearance on the motorway design team. Under his influence, the proposed inner motorway system is seen as an object of beauty and magnificence. Elevated for most of its length, Liverpool was to be revealed in a fresh way for those in cars, with serial views to be enjoyed as the new centre began to manifest itself below. It would have been like driving into the next century.

WHAT TO LEARN FROM IT

This is not an account of unbuilt Liverpool: the Shankland Plan was partially developed. It was launched with much fanfare in a city experiencing an economic revival and energised by the Mersey beat. However, despite such an optimistic start, the plan soon became viewed as a nightmare, with critics labelling Shankland a megalomaniac and the Butcher of Liverpool. Apart from the rail improvements, the plan's limited implementation led to developments of lasting regret. As such, today the Shankland Plan mainly serves as a cautionary tale: a warning about the dangers of forceful planning. In particular, the lessons learned pivot around ensuring that the funding is available to redevelop before clearance commences. The plan led to planning blight, with twilight zones in areas cleared for schemes which never happened. Lessons can also be learned about the use of modernist architecture, which, while well-meaning, was just too thuggish for an ordinary work-a-day city centre like Liverpool. ●



Current position

Town Planner at PWA, Preston

Past Positions: teaching at Manchester University, urban designer at Capita Symonds, urban regeneration officer at New Zealand's Christchurch City Council, professional campaigner (planning for cycling)

Education

BA Hons Town and Country Planning, University of Manchester; BPL (Bachelor of Planning), Universities of Manchester and Amsterdam; MA Urban Design, Birmingham City University; PhD, University of Manchester

Specialism

Investigating the success of design-led approaches to development in regenerating city centres previously in decline (the topic of my PhD)

Ambition

I've had both British and New Zealand passports for a long time, but I'm still trying to work out how to lead a double life between these two great countries ...

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Almost a decade after London hosted the Olympic Games, we look at how the largest new piece of city in the capital is maturing into a place of its own.

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

Lionel Eid, George Garofalakis, Rosie Garvey, Alice Raggett and Emad Sleiby



A semi-wild landscape: One of the most appealing aspects of the Queen Elizabeth Park is its abundance of high quality, natural environments that have been made available for public enjoyment. Despite being in such close proximity to Stratford, a major urban centre, the park is distinctly wild in character.



An engineered environment: Deliberately understated infrastructure makes the park highly accessible without diminishing its wild and rugged character. These design interventions are embedded in the landscape and support a network of continuous routes through a vast area that was once unavailable to pedestrians.



Industrial heritage: The grittiness of the River Lea is reflected by the mirror bridges which celebrate the industrial heritage of the locks and waterway network.



Sculptural elements: An ongoing programme of public art offers a platform for local artists and provides an evolving and playful visual landscape for visitors.



Modest buildings: The spectacular sports venues of the games once took centre stage within the park. Today, more modest residential buildings, such as those at Chobham Manor, provide a more comfortable and human-scaled edge to the park.



Flexibility: The park's infrastructure was designed to be adaptable. After the games, many bridges were reduced in width to suit the decreased footfall.



Maintenance: The London Legacy Development Corporation is currently responsible for managing the park but this will change once separate councils take over its maintenance. It will be interesting to see how coordination between Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets is executed and whether the quality of the public realm will vary across these areas.



Activation of the Lea Valley: Much of the Lea Valley was out of sight and out of mind for ordinary Londoners but the riverside has now been activated through popular boat tours. Often, these are led by people who grew up near the Olympic Park and who have welcomed its transformation.



The Future of the High Street

One of the most debated topics in the built environment over recent years has been the future of high streets. In the UK, central government is dedicating £1 billion to the Future High Streets Fund to help local centres and towns across England 'from Dudley to Dover and Scarborough to Stockport' to develop plans to reinvent their high streets by improving access into town centres, converting empty retail units into new homes and workplaces, and investing in infrastructure.

However, almost a decade after the Grimsey (and Portas) Reviews, we are still exploring the issues. We regularly see new research on the topic from leading industry organisations, and many seminars and exhibitions are being organised, including last year's UDG conference on the topic of The Future High Street Fund: inspiration for success. In addition, London First dedicated a series of events on the Management of High Streets and Town Centres, and the Centre for Cities researched the link between cities' economies and the strength of their high streets.

WHY THIS INCREASED INTEREST IN HIGH STREETS?

Fundamental structural changes in retail, which today dominate the high streets, are accelerating quickly. These changes are driven by customers' increased reliance on technology and a shift to online shopping. At the same time, retailers are battling rising rents, business rates and a drop in sales; last year was recorded as the worst for sales for 25 years.

Many town centres struggle to retain existing activities, attract new business investment and face stubbornly vacant units on their high streets. The national vacancy rate in high streets and town centres had reached 10.3 per cent in July 2019 according to the British Retail Consortium, and high street footfall has declined by 2.7 per cent year-on-year.

HOW TO SAVE THE HIGH STREET

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but it is likely that successful high streets in the future will be more compact and have a real variety of uses, including 'experience-led' retail, office, leisure, entertainment, health and well-being, education, and public services, all boosted by an increased number of people living in town centres, thereby becoming truly experiential places for social interaction and lively 24-hour places.

In this issue, we have looked at these challenges and opportunities from different angles, in order to provide a holistic overview. David Harrison sets the scene by learning from the past and reminding us what high

streets and town centres used to be like: multi-use places, places of gathering with markets and fairs, and permanent shops with people living above them, as well as places of continuous and ongoing change, with local distinctiveness. Governance was much more local, in comparison to the current top-down influence of central government, highways authorities and more.

Neil Bennett of Farrells sets out the argument for reviving town centres as truly mixed use places. He uses lessons learned from case studies to tackle evident challenges and the thorny issue of delivering change. We then look at fixing the physical issues, the spaces between the buildings: Lucy Saunders describes the implementation of her 10 Healthy Streets Indicators, a people-centric toolkit that can be applied to improve the physical experience of high streets. She also reflects upon the success of those thriving 'retail +' streets and places created and governed by the private sector.

On data analytics and the actual use of technology, Caroline McDade of Deloitte looks at four areas where data can further support high streets in enabling informed decisions, which is especially successful when the data is combined with traditional property consultancy skills. Neil Bennett describes the real and successful story of Roeselare in Belgium, the one place that has implemented recommendations from the Grimsey Review. Mark Davy of FutureCity complements this with an exploration of the intangibles that make a place different, and some pithy observations on current trends. He reminds us that we need to be bold in visioning for an ever-changing society and for generations to come. He emphasises the need for 'originality, experience and authenticity' in a time of community-led society and an increased use of technology, crowdfunding and social media tools. Lastly, Robert Huxford looks at the simple ways in which high streets could be more pedestrian-friendly.

In conclusion, many aspects need to be considered to drive change in town centres and no cookie-cutter approach will work. We need to work together with all of the forces, from planning to implementation and active management, from the physical to the intangible, while using technology itself to help to resolve the challenges that it has brought. Let's not forget that these challenges are still evolving, so we need to be constantly on the case! ●

Katerina Karaga, Associate, Farrells
Neil Bennett and Katerina Karaga, guest topic editors



1

Learning from the Past

David Harrison explores the history of high streets as multi-use places of gathering

'And it is my will... that no one shall buy or sell except in a market town'

As these remarkable words of the early 10th century law issued by Edward the Elder indicate, towns have been the chief focus for shopping for over a millennium. Many were set up or re-founded at that time, often on a regular grid pattern as is the case in Oxford, which was laid out with ramparts, gates and streets just above the flood plain of the Thames, where an important crossing had existed since the 8th century.

Much buying and selling took place in fairs and markets. Fairs might happen once or at most a few times a year, and the most important ones, such as those at Stamford, St Ives, Boston and Winchester, could be huge and attended by merchants from many countries. Markets were often weekly. The author of a 12th century account of London wrote that 'In a suburb immediately outside one of the gates there is a field that is smooth (Smithfield). Every Friday crowds are drawn to the show and sale of fine horses'.

Shops too were in evidence from an early date, commonly in premises which were also residential. The building known as the Jew's House was built in Lincoln in 1170-80 with a first floor hall

for its residents and shops on the ground floor. A particularly fine merchant's house dating from the 13th century still stands in Southampton. It consisted of residential accommodation, including bedrooms, a hall and cellars for holding stock with a shop at the front. Another survival, Abbey Row cottages, originally over 20 single-bay houses each just under 12 feet wide, were built by Tewkesbury Abbey in the late Middle Ages. It is likely that the houses were let to merchants or artisans and that the front rooms facing the street served as shops with wide openings. As was typical at the time, these would have been closed up with wooden shutters overnight, but during the day the shutters would be taken off to allow customers to look into the shop and converse with the shopkeeper.

Substantial investments were also made by major landowners in other types of commercial buildings such as inns, which were constructed all over the country. In 1445, Winchester College spent £400 (a large sum for the date) rebuilding the Angel Inn and parts of it still remain today.

Provision was made to protect buyers and sellers from the elements. One form was the market cross; many fine examples can be found, for example in Chichester and Malmesbury, both erected around 1500. Protection was also provided by covered walkways such as the medieval Chester Rows and the Tudor Butterwalk

1 Smithfield horse market, recorded as taking place since the 12th century

at Totnes. In this period open-sided market halls multiplied. Good examples can be seen at Much Wenlock (c.1540), which was enlarged at a later date, and Chipping Camden (1627). The buildings reveal two key features: firstly, their local distinctiveness by being built of locally available materials, honey-coloured Cotswold oolitic limestone with a roof of Cotswold slate in Chipping Camden, and a timber-framed structure in Much Wenlock. Secondly, the building at Much Wenlock contains a magnificent council chamber and court on the first floor which were symbols of self-government. For centuries the town had significant control over its affairs, a situation which continued until about 50 years ago.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Social and technological advances led to major changes. Shopping had long been a social activity, witness London's Royal Exchange, which was opened in 1571 on the same site as its modern-day successor with a royal licence to sell alcohol and valuable goods, on a model adopted from Antwerp. Nevertheless, historians of the 18th century have long argued that shopping became more of a fashionable activity than it had been in the past, and in order to provide for polite society, pavements were installed for protection from vehicles.

Technological change had a significant impact as improvements in glass manufacture meant that it was possible for shops to have glass windows to display goods; it also became more common for shoppers to enter shops. Retailer Francis Place was one of the first to experiment with this new retailing method at his tailoring establishment in Charing Cross in London, where he fitted the shop front with large plate glass windows. No.56 Artillery Lane in Spitalfields was probably erected in the 1720s for a Huguenot silk merchant. Around 1756 it was re-fronted and the present shopfront, one of the oldest in London, installed. By the mid-19th century relatively cheap large sheets of glass became available, and often combined with cast iron features, produced a new type of attractive shopfront, as the magnificent feasts of decoration provided for two ironmongers at opposite ends of Witney (1870-80).

In the late 18th century, there was a big increase in roofed structures housing multiple retailers. Large covered markets appeared, such as the one in Oxford (1774). About this time iron-framed buildings began to be constructed, and St John's Market, Liverpool was one of the first and the largest of the 19th century, as a fully enclosed roofed market hall. It opened to the public in 1822, sporting 136 stone-trimmed classical arched window bays, supported by 116 interior cast iron pillars. Bazaars and arcades where several retailers operated under the same roof opened about the same time, the first being the Soho Bazaar (1815) where a young JMW Turner, who was attending the Soho Academy, bought painting materials and sold his works. Another Regency innovation was the shopping arcade with glass roofs. Burlington Arcade, opened in 1819, is a fine example. Another burst of arcade-building took place later in the century with examples such as Thornton's Arcade in Leeds (1877-8) and the art nouveau Royal Arcade in Norwich (1899).

By 1850 the department store appeared. Its birthplace was Paris, where the Bon Marché opened in 1852, and one of earliest in Britain with the same name opened in 1876 in Brixton. By the end of the century, department stores had been built all over Britain. A good example is Jenners in Edinburgh, the largest shop in Scotland when it opened. It survived until very recently, but is now likely to be converted to other uses.

TRANSPORT INFLUENCES

Rail transport using steam locomotives arrived in the 1820s and the subsequent railway boom began to have a significant impact on retailing. WH Smith & Son took advantage of the boom by opening newsstands on railway stations, beginning in London's Euston station in 1848, which created a national brand. In 1905, faced with steep rent increases, the company responded



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by opening 150 new shops in the streets leading to the stations, each one fitted out in the recognisable company style. Other chain stores followed: Liptons, the grocers, was founded in 1871 and by 1899 had more than 500 shops; Hepworths the tailors, Boots and Marks and Spencers followed soon after. For about a century, historic buildings were demolished to make way for large chain store shops. Even very early buildings of great importance were sacrificed. In Cornmarket, Oxford in 1954-5, Woolworths demolished the Clarendon Hotel, including remaining parts of the Norman vault of its cellar.

DESIGNING FOR THE CAR

Just as the railways had a major impact in the 19th century, in the 20th century the car has transformed shopping and urban areas. From the 1950s, new types of structures were constructed at a time when there was a determination to accommodate mass car use. In some places, following wartime bomb damage, the previous street layout was obliterated; one of the most striking examples was the brutalist Tricorn Centre in Plymouth (1963-5, demolished 2004) with detached stair and elevator towers. City centres increasingly ceased to be residential and whole quarters were demolished to

2 Lincoln: Jew's House had residential accommodation over shops. Photograph by Richard Croft

3 Much Wenlock: Tudor Guildhall has a splendid court and council chamber. Photograph by Humphrey Bolton



4



5



6

make way for mono-cultural shopping centres with associated car parks and wide roads; in Oxford, the St Ebbe's area of 16th to 19th century houses was obliterated and its residents were displaced to suburban housing estates. The new centres usually segregated vehicle and pedestrian spaces, although anyone trying to access them on foot would normally endure a pretty miserable experience.

Despite the destruction of whole urban quarters, shoppers remained exposed to the elements in pedestrian precincts; the next proposition was the large enclosed shopping centre with huge car parks, such as the Bull Ring in Birmingham (1964, demolished 2001) and the Arndale Centre in Manchester (1972-9), which was described as 'the longest lavatory wall in Europe', a phrase attributed to the journalist Norman Shrapnel.

But even these giant structures could not provide the easy access and large areas of parking that their customers wanted. Out-of-town superstores began to spread throughout the country in a variety of styles: big box, Essex barn and high tech. The

The vast number of inner urban car parks and redundant shops provide a splendid opportunity to repopulate towns and cities

car-based out-of-town shopping centre reached its apogee in the massive mall developments built in the 1980s and 1990s, mostly based on motorways. These are now household names: MetroCentre, Merry Hill, Meadowhall, Cribbs Causeway, The Trafford Centre and Bluewater, the largest covered over 200 acres and had over 300 shops. Then came another bout of technological change with internet shopping and the loss of shops, including major chain stores. The largest out-of-town malls have survived, but the post-war high street is now in serious decline.

THE WAY AHEAD

What are the lessons of this brief history, and what do they suggest about the way forward? Firstly, there has always been change, but it is becoming ever more rapid. Secondly, for centuries, towns were characterised by high density mixed development with people living in towns, often above the shop; the vast number of inner urban car parks and redundant shops provide a splendid opportunity to repopulate towns and cities.

Thirdly, local towns were attractive and distinctive, with regional building materials, styles and even paving; we can now see the folly of demolishing so many historic buildings to produce structures which have rapidly become redundant; we must treasure the remaining beautiful buildings which means not just saving the structures, but also ensuring that they are set in a fine public realm.

Finally, governance is extremely important. In too many places, local people have little say in their future. Today, even great cities such as Salisbury have been reduced to the level of a parish council. Their fate is decided by central planning regulations, planning inspectors, the out-of-date notions of councillors from suburban and rural areas, and engineers in distant highway authorities. Towns and cities can once again be vibrant and attractive; in finding the way forward we must learn the lessons of the past. ●

Dr David Harrison, retired House of Commons Clerk, medieval historian, author of *Bridges of Medieval England* (OUP 2004) and Vice Chair, London Living Streets

4 The Royal Exchange in an engraving by Wenceslaus Hollar. Artwork from University of Toronto Wenceslaus Hollar Digital Collection

5 Edinburgh: Jenners department store. Photograph by Stuart Caie

6 The Clarendon Centre, Oxford, formerly Woolworths store. Photograph by Yorkshire Lad

Evolve or Die – A Call for Action on the High Street

Neil Bennett discusses how design and active management must work together to reviven high streets



1

'Evolve or die' is an all too familiar phrase, and one that now needs to be applied to the UK's high streets. Many high streets, especially those that have become mono-cultural retail centres, rather than multivalent city centres, have now arrived at a state of crisis. Arguably the decline began to accelerate with the advent of off-high street and out-of-town shopping areas with acres of close, free and surface car parking. Convenience began to win over the authenticity of the high street. Today's challenger to both models is the even greater convenience of the internet for some types of shopping, heralding an entirely new interface between providers and their customers, and an economic existential threat to static, retail-dominated high streets.

Against this background of accelerating change, Farrells' strategic work with the Greater London Assembly on 21st century high streets, and most recently with the London Borough of Sutton on Sutton High Street, has demonstrated the pressing need to fundamentally reconsider the positioning of high streets. Similar to many towns and cities across the UK, the course of our work in Sutton saw many significant chain retailers close their doors, including Toys R Us, Maplin and PoundWorld, alongside a further realisation that with an adjacent Asda, a Sainsburys and a Morrisons, the town was over-provided with large format food stores, the previous anchor attractions for the town, not forgetting the Debenhams store, hidden within a 1970s shopping mall.

In Sutton, as all across the country, its small High Street also faces competition from larger shopping centres where new investment is being concentrated. In Sutton's case, these are Kingston and Croydon, the latter with its forthcoming Westfield shopping centre, a covered, carefully curated, lifestyle environment.

THE EXPERIENCE ON OFFER

Today, with many physical attributes of retailing becoming completely redundant and irrelevant, people will go to the high

street to get a service-based experience they cannot get at home:

- To see, touch, try and test products: to go to a 'show' room
- To have human contact and advice
- To be stimulated and entertained: a piece of theatre
- To buy something that they can't get elsewhere: something unique
- For convenience shopping: to pick up something quickly, or something ordered online.

The traditional high street model is having to be re-imagined, with much more emphasis on inspiration, stimulation, and entertainment as part of a wider experiential model, one in which eating, drinking, shopping and working are being realigned.

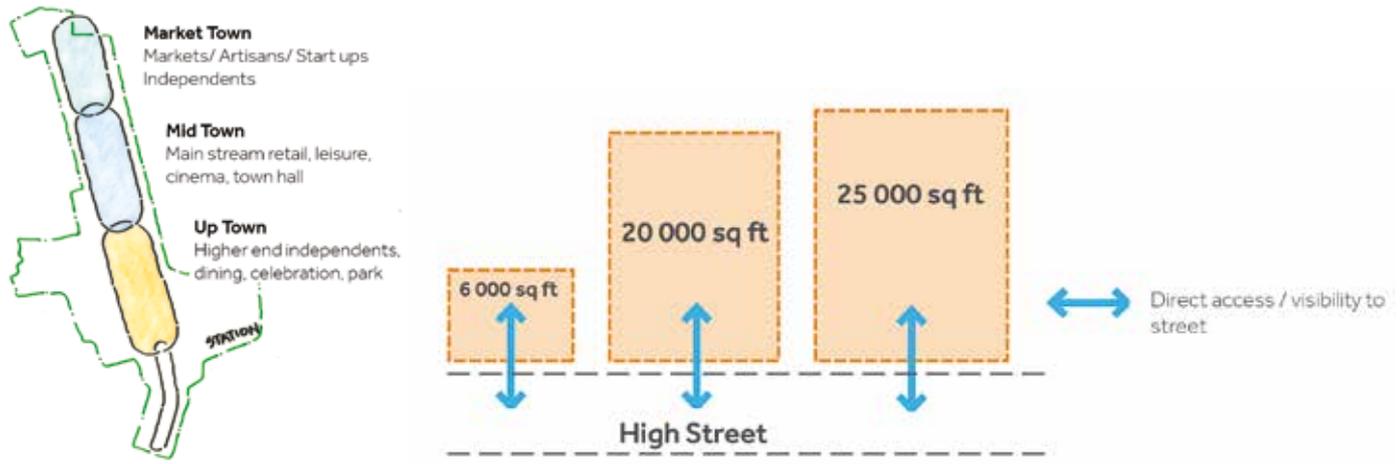
All of this supports our long-held view that a high street should not just be a shopping centre, a specialised mono-functional place only for shopping, but rather should return to being a multi-functional place of cultural, social and economic exchange: a place where you live, work, shop, eat and drink, and can be social, civic and healthy, throughout the day and week.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND USES

A first consideration perhaps then is the underlying structure of the place. For Sutton's High Street, over 1km long and a street that I have described as having 'good bones', an initial step toward defining its future was an understanding of its underlying historic structure as three linked places, each still with a discernible character: a market town with a street market and smaller independent shops; mid-town with two large shopping centres, busily diversifying and introducing a mix of uses; and, up-town around the station and the town's food and drink hub. Through recognising the shape of the place, and then revealing and reinforcing the hidden drivers, places can begin to rediscover, reshape and reinvent the identity and vitality of their local high street.

Turning to achieving a mix of uses and activity, a powerful driver is the need for housing, and in Sutton's case a very substantial increase in the number of people living in the town centre. The downside

1 Sutton High Street, London, dominated by mono-cultural shopping centres



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of an influx of new customers, of people bringing 24/7 life to the High Street, is the accompanying pressure on values and rents, and the implied and real pressure on that valuable commodity, daylight and sunlight.

Work is another rapidly changing activity with, according to our analysis, the decline in the need for large corporate space, and the increasing demand for and the potential supply of smaller, flexible managed workspaces, ideally directly accessible and visible from the street, and in units from 6,000-25,000sqft in size. Health and well-being spaces are also beginning to inform this rich mix between work, social and retail spaces.

DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

The typical high street mix of retail and food and drink (F&B) activity is also rapidly evolving with increasing available real data and insight into how people actually use and access the high street. In Sutton, CBRE, our project partners, employed their Calibrate tool to analyse the digital footprint of mobile phone users. This enabled the client and consultant team to visualise real flows on Sutton High Street, including the interaction between retail and F&B outlets, and to accurately predict the impacts of change, such as reducing car park capacity. Calibrate also gave us an idea of the future capacity of the high street and where natural footfalls were highest. Typically, we found in many high streets, from the eastern end of Oxford Street to more local high streets, a shortage of mid-sized retail space, from 2,500 to 10,000sqft, largely due to the small size of shops possible within the grain of older buildings.

Beneath the surface, many high streets are well loved by local shop owners and customers, and they are behind a small, but discernible trend towards mixing retail, and food and drink premises into a more personal and unique experience, led by the approach of ‘activity first, built form last’.

Directly linked to this better understanding of how a high street actually works is the growing belief that in a three-way fluid partnership between landowner, active occupier and council, a high street needs active curation and management. Another contention is that a high street needs a frequent shot of adrenaline, to make it an interesting, relevant, entertaining and changing environment, where there is always something new to see or visit.

FIRST STEPS

Learning from experience elsewhere, we think that the generic first steps are to:

- Experiment with new ideas and be prepared to fail, using temporary structures and empty spaces
- Deliver small-scale upgrades and quick-wins as a continuous process
- Establish an Urban Room as a hub for continuous communication about the change and regeneration process, and a place for change-leaders to meet

- Stage a party: a festival of managed and curated transformation, rather than merely construction disruption.

The aim is to provide a continuous spectrum of spaces and uses from single day pop-up events through to others that might last for five years, and involving food and drink through to flexible workspaces. There should be no more dividing lines in terms of fixed tenancies and fixed uses. The big picture is that to survive, high streets need to become unique through regaining their previous vibrant mix of uses, and concentrating more on the human experience. To do this, we need to intervene and curate, allowing organic unplanned, unplannable activity to grow, to thrive and to fail, so that the high streets can become interesting places again, literally worth leaving home for. ●

Neil Bennett, urban design partner, Farrells, with particular experience in repairing and reviving the UK’s town centres



- 2 Characterising the 1km long Sutton High Street into three broad areas
- 3 The type of managed workspaces required today
- 4 The type of retail spaces required in today’s market. Image by CBRE Retail

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Healthy High Streets

Lucy Saunders analyses the physical issues involved in delivering a healthy high street



signage, making it a challenge to walk along the street. The road crossings are not placed on desire lines and passing vehicles make it difficult to cross the street. Noise and air pollution mean that you don't want to be out on the street, and as there is nothing to do without spending money, many people can't afford to be there at all. If high streets were treated with an unwavering focus on the human experience, they would look and feel very different.

When people wring their hands in consternation as to why high streets are not thriving, I propose that they spend ten minutes walking up and down a high street to see how it feels. Perhaps then try it with a group of children in tow, or accompany a person with a mobility impairment, or carrying large or heavy luggage, or go there with a headache, or all of these at once. This is not an enjoyable way to spend time and it is a basic human instinct to avoid unpleasant experiences in favour of more pleasant ones. The people who design streets in private shopping centres understand these issues well. They focus resolutely on considering how to make people of different ages and different walks of life feel welcome in the space. They know that once people spend time in a space, there is a much better chance that they will also spend some money.

Of course, some important aspects of private shopping centre streets are not comparable with a public high street.

As a public health specialist and developer of the Healthy Streets Approach, I am often pressed to name the healthiest streets in the world. I assess how healthy a street is by looking at the 10 Healthy Streets Indicators. These are based on the biggest known public health issues related to street environments, including air and noise pollution, risk of injury, and the opportunity to be physically active and interact with other people and nature. The 10 Healthy Streets Indicators are all framed around the human experience. How people experience a place is an effective way to assess how well that place meets their need for a safe, unpolluted, relaxing and engaging environment.

Reflecting on these Indicators, the high streets that spring to mind as the healthiest include The Street in Westfield shopping centre, Stratford, East London. This is a street with wide clear pavements, beautiful planting and trees, a glass roof to protect people from the rain and reduce wind, well-designed seating, play areas for children and a range of activities that change throughout the year to entertain people of all ages. There is easy access to well-maintained public toilets and the place feels clean, cared for, safe and relaxing. Perhaps the best demonstration of how healthy this street is, comes from observing who is using it. The answer appears to be everyone. Stratford is a diverse town in a global city and this is reflected in who is seen spending time on this street. Spending time is the key here, people don't just pass through, they don't come just for the transaction of purchasing goods, they come to spend a pleasant time here doing a range of different things.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

This stands in stark contrast to many high streets. They are often lined with parked cars and vans so that you can't see across the street, and the pavements are narrow and cluttered with



1 Seoul, South Korea: This high street is a vibrant space that works well for people by day and night. Copyright Lucy Saunders
2 Healthy Street Indicators. Copyright Lucy Saunders

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They often have vast car parks that generate huge amounts of vehicular traffic on the surrounding streets. These shopping centre streets are not always seamlessly knitted into the surrounding urban fabric, making navigation to the street itself difficult and creating an island that is disconnected from the existing place. These streets are also private spaces, so that while it may look like the full breadth of society are using them, there will be some people who are excluded or feel unwelcome.

USING INDICATORS

Healthy Streets takes a comprehensive approach to the spatial planning, connectedness, design and management of streets in the whole of a place, in order to guard against the creation of one isolated street that meets the 10 Healthy Streets Indicators at the expense of the surrounding area. For this reason The Street in Stratford's Westfield shopping centre cannot really be an exemplar. In fact it would be difficult to name any individual street as such. Healthy Streets is a wider framework for delivering better places for people in the round, by focusing on the human experience of being on streets as the ultimate test of success. Achieving the 10 Healthy Streets Indicators requires policies, planning and programming that go far beyond physical design. This is particularly apparent in relation to addressing one of the biggest challenges facing many streets: traffic dominance and the unbalanced allocation of space to private motorised vehicles.

DEPRIORITISING VEHICLES

If we look across the railway tracks from The Street in Stratford's Westfield, we see Broadway, Stratford's traditional town centre

high street. This fine street has been blighted for many years by a gyratory system installed to hasten traffic flows. It has recently been removed and the street is now easy to cross, with protected space for cycling, space to wait for buses, public seating and planting. It is by no means perfect, it still has to accommodate many vehicles which necessarily impacts on the human experience, but it is a vast improvement.

This was achieved by first acknowledging that prioritising movement and parking for motorised vehicles undermines efforts to improve the experience for people walking, cycling and spending time on the street. Although this may seem obvious, many high street redesign projects are clearly based on a brief that does not acknowledge it. The designer is, in these situations, expected to achieve the impossible by maintaining the existing provision for vehicles while improving the on-street experience. In most cases what results is an expensive re-laying of the existing layout in the vain hope that good quality paving will be sufficient to draw people.

As mentioned earlier, the human experience gives a good assessment of how healthy a street environment is. One demonstration of this can be seen in the results of on-street surveys that I commissioned in 2014 while working at Transport for London. These surveys were conducted across London and asked people on the street to rate how they thought the street performed against each of the 10 Healthy Streets Indicators at that moment. The results closely correlated with objective data on the volume and speed of traffic and even more closely with people's perceptions of traffic dominance. The conclusion is that the designer cannot deliver a specification for a high street that attracts people to spend time there if they are not given permission to deprioritise the motorised vehicles.

TOOLS FOR DESIGNERS

A very useful tool that can be deployed is the Healthy Streets Check for Designers. This simple spreadsheet tool asks the designer to score 31 quantitative elements of the design of a street (existing street layout and proposal), which generates a score out of 100. Because of the role of motorised vehicles on so many of the Healthy Streets Indicators (e.g. clean air, not too noisy, easy to cross, people feel safe) it is very difficult to achieve a high score on a street where traffic is prioritised.

The Healthy Streets surveys and design tool can both help the design team to make the case for a high street focused on great human experiences. Designers who are aiming to create high streets that are fit for the future will need to passionately advocate reducing motor vehicle

3 The Street, Westfield shopping centre, Stratford, a modern idea of a street with a diverse audience

4 The Broadway in Stratford, a traditional high street, previously blighted by a traffic gyratory system

numbers and traffic dominance. Only by making this commitment can we create the possibility of designing streets that feel pleasant and relaxing to spend time on. This is an important role for designers to embrace because senior level decision-makers will also be listening to the concerns of people who are in the habit of driving through and parking on the high street and are reluctant to change their routines. In addition, local business owners may be worried that a reduction in kerbside parking or of through traffic could have a negative rather than positive impact on their profits.

Many case studies can be cited to show that high streets perform better when they are rebalanced in favour of people walking, cycling and dwelling on the street. But these conversations need to be sensitively handled – data and case studies are not sufficient on their own to win the argument. Using the Healthy Streets Approach can be an effective way to broaden the range of stakeholders involved in discussions. These can then

champion a street designed to meet their needs as children, older people, people on low incomes, people with mobility impairments, people who walk and cycle, people who are concerned about their health or their connections with their community. There are many potential advocates for better high streets and the Healthy Streets framing helps to bring them together and create a shared vision that can be realized. ●

Lucy Saunders, public health specialist, urbanist and transport planner, and founder of Healthy Streets

How Data-Driven Technology can help shape the Future of High Streets

Caroline McDade illustrates how new forms of information could shape more responsive high streets



The structural changes on the high street are well rehearsed. Rapid innovation and changes to consumer habits are influencing how the high street will function in the future. To date, this has been focused on the merging of online and high street retailing with an omni-channel approach. Whilst technology and data is being used to tailor retail to customer’s online needs, the physical impact of vacancies on the high street is evident in many towns. However, around 85 per cent of shopping still happens in stores, and therefore, whilst demand from consumer habits is still evolving, the high street

1 Shoppers on smart street Bird Street, London become walking power generators thanks to a 10sqm Pavegen walkway. Airlite paint also reduces nitrogen oxides, munches bacteria and repels dust. Image by Pavegen

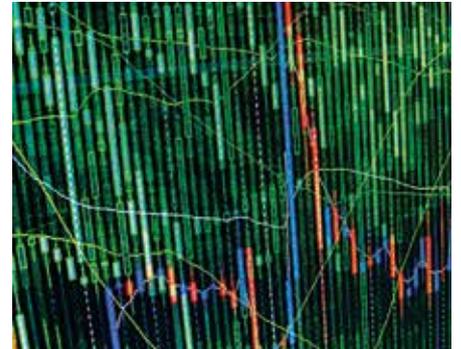
needs to respond if it is to survive.

Using data to make informed decisions about the future of high streets can help them respond to these changing needs. The use of real-world accurate spend data combined with data sources on rental values, demographics and more, can help to make data-driven property decisions about how a high street might best serve its community with appropriate uses and tenants. The data, when combined with traditional property consultancy skills, creates a wealth of opportunities to make high streets more sustainable places in the future.

It is clear that central government is still grappling with what and how data should be captured and used to support high streets and town centres. Bill Grimsey, chair and author of *The Grimsey Review* and *The Grimsey Review 2*, told the 2019 Select Committee Inquiry into High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 that the Government needed to endorse a central data hub populated with statistics and best practice for people to access. The Future High Streets Taskforce is expected to deliver on this initiative, but this is only one part of the answer.

This article looks at four areas where data can further support high streets:

- Quantifying future high street needs
- Identifying future uses



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- Creating a successful urban environment
- Creating partnerships and engaging.

QUANTIFYING FUTURE HIGH STREET NEEDS

High streets are all different in terms of their evolution: history, physical layout and space all affect how they can respond. Town planning practitioners are well versed in the art of retail needs assessments for town centres. Traditionally, these would be based on a narrow range of data sets, some of which might be a number of years old, and using static catchment areas. Now, new layers of data sets are available (most at a cost) which can be interpreted to produce a real-time, and therefore, realistic position on the existing health and needs of the high street and a more accurate forecast of future demand. They can also be used to determine which uses should be located where through geo-spatial and demographic analytics. As Springboard’s research on four town centre types has shown, an analysis of footfall data can help to plan or reconfigure high streets for the future.

Whilst data cannot replace advisory skills, commercial expertise and local knowledge of the area, when combined, they can create a much deeper understanding of what is required. Of course, uses for this data stretch beyond just retail: for example, the type of residential space or product best suited to a particular town centre can be defined by interrogating demographic datasets.

Through a deeper understanding of a town centre, data can therefore help to better inform planning decision-making. Similarly, its use can provide flexible, faster and future-proofed masterplans, with the ability to respond and be refreshed on a regular basis.

IDENTIFYING FUTURE USES

For many towns, identifying and responding to a new set of needs may mean radically moving away from being primarily retail destinations. Use diversity and flexibility are becoming increasingly important factors in both maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness of town centres as places to spend time and invest. In addition, what else can be realistically offered beyond convenience, service or value will be unclear. Where retail is not the most appropriate solution, data can be used to define the opportunities to broaden the functions of the high street; for example, this might be around the quality of the existing evening economy or the leisure offer and the potential to strengthen it. Our experience in advising local authorities confirms that high streets and town centres with a wide choice

of uses, alongside well designed and planned residential and office space, are more resilient to changes and are adapting more successfully.

Customer data has, in the past, been used by retailers reactively rather than proactively. New ways of collating data are giving a more complete picture of consumer behaviour, meaning that patterns and behaviours can be tracked and monitored. These online behaviours can help to direct physical store requirements, but are not yet being used to any great extent. However, new analytics tools like Deloitte’s Shopalytix, where retailers can optimise their physical spaces like they would on an e-commerce site, are likely to change that, creating seamless shopper experiences. Stores are increasingly being seen as destination locations, with some going as far as to say they can be place-makers themselves, and others focusing solely on the visitor’s experience with no products available for sale.

Data is also supporting how servicing, logistics and stock are managed for shops on the high street. This will inevitably affect the physical environment of town centres, driven by the need for last-mile consolidation centres catering for both high street and on-line demand. These storage requirements can be scaled up and down depending on stock requirements over the course of the year, all driven by real-time and historic data analysis.

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL URBAN ENVIRONMENT

As well as the types of uses, the environment and character of a town centre is vital to its success. Deloitte’s research *Forces for Change: Smart Cities* (2018) references how cities, through data analytics amongst other initiatives, can

2, 3 and 4 Newcastle’s Mosley Street, part of the Kinetic for Cities platform connecting data from devices to show the value of sharing data for the benefit of individuals, organisations and the city

better manage their local environments. It goes as far as to suggest that in the future, cities will be ‘intelligent, connected ecosystems built on a sensor-based physical infrastructure’. New data-driven solutions are emerging. The report refers to Santander in Spain: there, data is creating a more responsive environment to meet residents’ daily needs. Similarly, Sidewalk Labs in Toronto plans to use data-driven management tools to make parks and public plazas in the city more comfortable, lively and safe. The Australian analytics company, Neighbourlytics, draws on a wide range of datasets to provide insights on how people use and experience places. This can feed into masterplans and vision documents.

The use of data to help shape decisions on placemaking in the UK has been limited to date. The Design Council report *Healthy Placemaking* (2018) found that only 27 per cent of practitioners were able to access and use local data to identify local priorities when working on place-making projects. It is vital to have access to up-to-date data to be able to provide a successful place-making response.

Smart streets are on the rise, such as those in Newcastle and Bird Street in London, where stores and streets are linked to technology to enhance the environment, increase footfall, and provide wayfinding. One London borough has linked pedestrian flows derived from mobile phone data and combined it with sunlight, wind and noise modelling, to help it understand comfort levels in its public realm.

All of this requires investment in technology connections and is reliant on partnerships between local authorities and the private sector to set up and monitor big data feeds. Indeed, collecting and analysing data in a meaningful way requires specialist expertise that will see the public and private sectors working ever more closely together. Local authorities have a key role in sourcing funding to help support the process. Funding from the Future High Streets Fund should go some way to facilitate this.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

Engaging all people in their local high streets and town centres is important and the use of data driven technologies is playing an increasingly pivotal role in achieving it. With communities’ increasing desire to play a greater role in shaping where they live, these technologies are more readily accepted as part of planning consultation and engagement.

Scenario tools use data to accurately assess a place for improvements and can allow those promoting or assessing projects to quantify the impact of proposed developments, taking the guesswork out of the planning process. Using data can be very helpful to debunk myths or assumptions that a community or part of that community has about an issue. Planning consultations can quickly derail but with data, the result should be more evidence-based and forward-looking solutions.

CONCLUSION

Each high street is unique, with different challenges and opportunities. Combining data with traditional real estate skills can offer more in-depth support on what the future high street might look like.

Most high streets need to support retailers to take a more proactive approach to physical stores, and create customer experiences that attract increased footfall to the high street. Real-time, easily accessible and shareable data is needed to inform decision-making for the high street and to enable it to adapt and be relevant in a technology-led changing world. Live data will give great potential for high streets, enabling retailers, town centre landowners and local authorities to experiment in an agile manner and to learn much more rapidly from ever-changing consumer trends. ●

Caroline McDade, Director, Deloitte Real Estate



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Real-time, easily accessible and shareable data is needed to inform decision-making for the high street and to enable it to adapt and be relevant in a technology-led changing world



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5 Increasing retail spending remains a key issue for high streets
 6 Deloitte’s Smart City Framework, showing the key parts of a successful place

Learning from Elsewhere: Roeselare in Belgium

Neil Bennett describes a place where people have enacted the Grimsey Review's recommendations



With the partial exception of Stockton-on-Tees, nowhere in the UK has put into practice the recommendations of the two Grimsey reports on the UK's high streets. Bill Grimsey is a retired retailer with 45 years of active and senior experience from Tesco and Wickes to the Big Food Group. The author of *Sold Out: Who killed the High Street* (2012), he led the publication of *The Grimsey Review: An alternative future for the High Street* (2013), with a follow-up *Grimsey Review 2* (2018).

At the heart of the 2013 Review lay the proposition that 'By becoming gathering points for whole communities, which also offer a great experience facilitated by technology and incorporating health, entertainment, education, leisure, business/office space and shops at the heart of a thriving community hub, every high street and town centre can have a positive future'. The Review was intended to be a living, breathing document, to inspire change in town centres. In the UK, the journey for each town centre has yet to begin as the challenges anticipated by the Review are clearly now with us, and the pace of change is quickly accelerating.

However in 2014 Roeselare, a small middle ground town in West Flanders, Belgium, faced with town centre decline, looked beyond its national boundaries for best practice and ideas to revitalise it, and without Grimsey's initial knowledge, became the only place to apply the recommendations of the Review.

LOCAL COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Led by a passionate council alderman and now Mayor, Kris Declercq, Roeselare's council tailored the Review's recommendations to their not dissimilar Belgian context and began developing a plan. This was based on the identity, place and purpose of Roeselare, through an understanding of what was

driving change, a celebration of setting and character, and an understanding of Roeselare's economic trajectory.

This was followed in 2015 by the formulation of a set of seven core ambitions, supported by 50 specific action points, that are all either implemented or in the final stages of delivery. A key symbolic step forward was the public commitment to this plan by over 300 local retailers and politicians. Kris Declercq said 'Collaboration between politicians and town centre stakeholders is vital, and courage among all the leadership is required'. The ambitions in the plan, ranging from 'an inviting public domain', through to support for traders and a 'city of experiences' are measured against three key goals: supporting local businesses, matching consumer expectations, and changing perceptions.

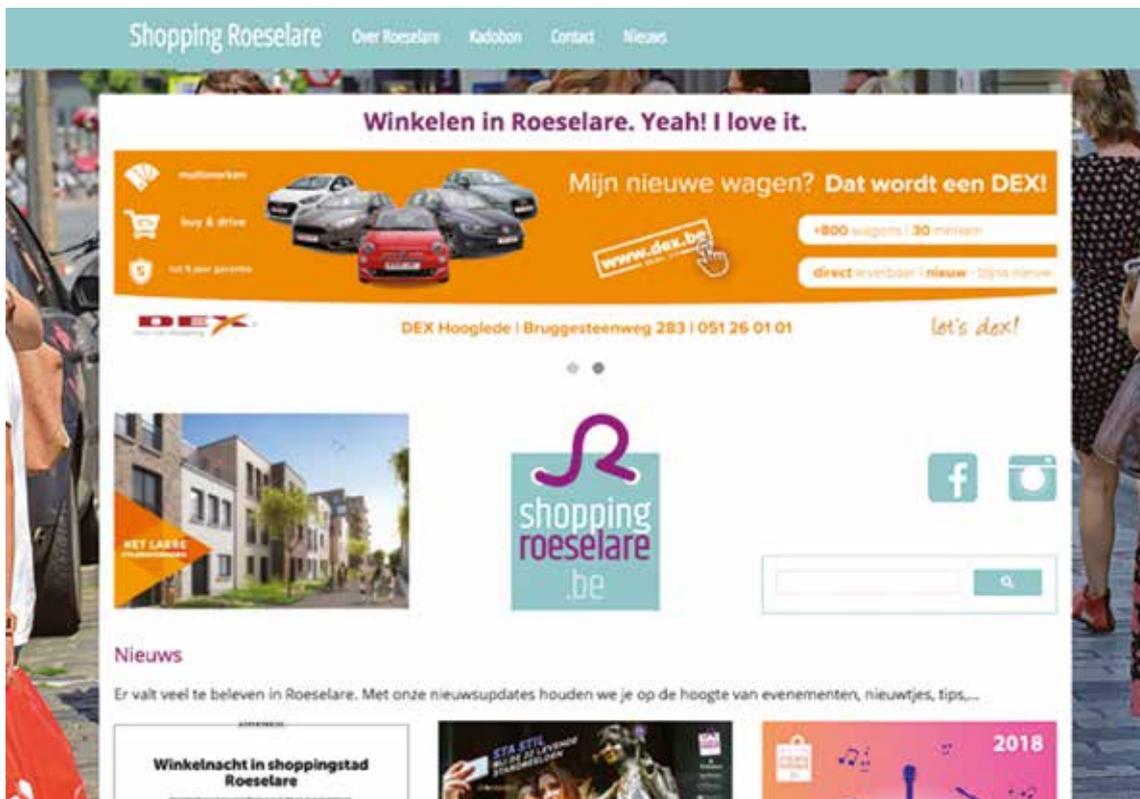
The action points, many of them controversial, included encouraging businesses back into the city centre, giving property owners a financial incentive to fill empty shop units, and providing free and convenient short-stay car parking on the main retail streets.

LOCAL TRADERS

In supporting local traders, a carrot-and-stick approach was put in place, including tax rebates and financial support to stimulate trade and not stifle it as in the UK's ever-increasing business rates levied locally by central government. Measures include tapered relief on property tax for new retailers, with a further refund for those moving their business from the periphery into the town centre, and for businesses that open a second store or live above their store. Echoing the UK's problem of small shop units, there are also rebates for businesses merging premises, and support for pop-up uses.

On the stick side of the equation, the council now actively understands who owns what, and will approach the owners of empty stock to ask if they can help, but also to remind them that a local 'empty shop tax' will apply after 12 months and increase year-on-year, as an incentive for owners to set sensible, attractive and appropriate rents. A Bizlocator app connects prospective tenants with the owners of vacant properties, whilst landlords

1 The *Lokaal* showcasing local produce in an under-used church



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can put their property into the Roeselare Excites scheme, which allows start-ups to rent space on a short-term licence or fixed low-rent basis.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The results so far have been positive: vacancy levels have stabilised and footfall increased year-on-year. A vacant department store has been brought back into life in a collaboration between several local DIY businesses, with an independent and unique retail offer growing elsewhere in the town, and beyond the expected new coffee, food and beverage outlets. In the public arena, the town has built upon the success of the ARhus resource and knowledge centre, once a library and now a meeting place for the wider community, which offers access to IT, health and wellbeing, as well as council services. Public squares have been enhanced, with streets losing some car parking areas but gaining green spaces, and new signage giving a clear identity. Accessibility measures range from those whose mobility is impaired to the needs of parents with children.

However it is not all about physical measures. The town has focused on the necessary ongoing day-to-day management required to sustain the plan, with fines for anti-social behaviour including littering and not recycling waste. Shop tenants are required not to neglect their shopfronts and window displays. On a positive note, to deliver ‘a city of experiences’, there is the ongoing curation of events, including the Lokaal, a showcase of local produce in a local church. Beyond this, there is an ever-changing series of events to keep attracting people back into the town for the next new experience.

Dwell-time in the town centre has been increased by providing free wi-fi, with a new Roeselare Citie app providing a local loyalty scheme, alongside information on the town’s shops, facilities and parking. However successful it has been to-date, the mayor agrees that not all of the implementation has been painless, and constant creativity is required to sustain a real community: ‘one thing we have learnt is to look hard at what people want first, before we think about delivering’.

The town is now working on a second town centre plan to take account of Roeselare’s evolution and external changes since 2015. This work is led by Vanessa Dehullu, the council’s head of housing, economics and agriculture. She has said ‘Don’t expect

2 Roeselare’s website: a town pro-actively creating a complete retail, leisure, civic destination

Roeselare is a trendy shopping city where life is good. We even have our own word for it: roeseling. It includes everything the city symbolises: cosiness, ambience and fun

miracles to occur within 12 months – you have to keep going at, maintaining and refreshing your approach for years and years. If you have passion for your city, and you want to see it thriving, and doing really well, you can’t just sit on your hands and watch people leaving the town. You have to try things, whatever it is that works. Sometimes these things regrettably don’t work – know from me that doing nothing is not an option, because you will end up with a dead city centre’.

Today, many towns in the UK have to catch up to retain their high streets as enjoyable sustainable places. Can they learn from the results and the continuing hard work in Roeselare? ●

Neil Bennett, urban design partner, Farrells

Fixing the Intangibles – Identity, Brand and USP

Mark Davy gives his thoughts about what to do when even McDonalds leaves a town centre



Articles and reports describing the imminent collapse of the British high street have become so commonplace, that more than eight years after the *Portas Review* and two *Grimsey Reviews*, which gave their own diagnoses of its decline, we still seem to be stuck in the same loop of what is wrong and what needs to be done.

Well-rehearsed options range from ‘capturing the experience economy’ and ‘activating the public realm’, or ‘getting rid of cars’ or ‘making space for more cars’, ‘promoting pedestrianisation and a bicycle friendly green high street’, ‘using empty spaces for pop-ups’ and ‘providing more concept stores’, ‘seeing high streets as community hubs’, and even ‘placing a micro-pub on every corner’. However, whilst the world around UK high streets has changed beyond recognition, we seem stuck with the idea of the 20th century high street. We still use the same professions and processes to fine-tune existing structures, offering individual cures to the patient like an 18th century apothecary diagnosing mystery ailments.

Even high streets such as the one in Stockton-on-Tees, which has been held up as an exemplar for adopting many of these measures, continue to fight an uphill battle against society’s changing behaviours. No wonder the latest government solution is to throw money at the problem through the Future High Streets Fund, and even allow developers to turn ground floor commercial space into residential units. Maybe there are no silver bullet solutions left, which is why this article does not attempt to promote individual ideas; instead I want to challenge the current orthodoxy to see what emerges.

A QUESTION OF SCALE

My first question is a simple one: how many activities make a good high street? Is it really worth all the handwringing about collapsing high street anchors, comparison goods stores and chain retailers? Were we ever truly happy with endless cut-and-paste shops offering the same package of garishly lit, primary coloured, plastic façades with the same fit-out schemes, the dated logos, globalised products, piped music and warm air? Those of us of a certain age can see how one type of bland high street offer is being replaced with another: betting shops, charity shops, estate agents and fast food outlets fuelling the obesity epidemic. Perhaps instead of trying to rid ourselves of them, we need to look at new ways of bringing them into a wider place-making conversation.

But before we change anything, are we even fit enough to shop? We seem to have grown increasingly weary, fatigued, bored and exhausted by the idea. Perhaps we have caught a hitherto undiscovered consumer version of SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) delivered to our high streets by

1 Stockton-on-Tees market square. Photograph by Wheatley Hill

overexposure to globalisation. We no longer want to carry anything, to walk very far, to wheel our tartan trolleys along pock-marked patterned chewing-gum streets. IKEA might still just cut it as a family day out, lured by the offer of a Billy Bookcase and a plate of Swedish meatballs, but nobody wants to traipse around a giant hardware store for an hour looking for one particular type of screw, conveniently bagged up in packs of thirteen. Let's admit it, we are becoming increasingly lazy, binge-watching Netflix reruns of *Friends*, using the miracle of the combustion engine to have Uber Eats deliver a chocolate bar to our door. We thrill to the sound of the doorbell as Amazon delivers 20 Shades of Grey T shirts to try on and then send back, and salivate at the hedonistic pleasure of Just Eats' menu of fast food, and don't get me started on using the internet to book a holiday or buy a plane ticket. It makes one wonder how suitable a mile-long pedestrian shopping parade is to contemporary needs.

But perhaps the pendulum of consumerism has swung to its sedentary extreme. It does feel as though we are at a tipping point, where if we don't take a radical step, virtual reality will offer a fantasy world so seductive that we won't need to physically move at all. If we are to rescue the high street, it won't be Portas TV that turns the tide, but a mix of new technology, climate change, culture, young people and nationwide yearning for something different. There is evidence that we have begun to return to the simple pleasures of the small, compact and personal. The philosopher Marshall McLuhan suggested that whenever a new medium emerges it renders another obsolete, but it can also revive a dead medium from the past. In the case of e-commerce, it has seriously challenged the role of the department store, but it has also created space for small independent retailers that had all but vanished from the high streets. How else can we explain the peculiar scenario where well-to-do city professionals head to Bellenden Road in Peckham, south London, on a Saturday morning armed with wicker baskets and empty jam jars to refill with lentils and quinoa, paying £5 for misshapen carrots and potatoes grown on an allotment in Bexley, from their local greengrocer who tots up the total on a wooden abacus.

The idea of the *bourgeoisie* buying cheese from the cheese shop, fish from the fish shop, bread from the bread shop and vegetables from the (I know they have real names but you get my point) has seen the appropriation of the working class idea of individual shops offering unpacked products served and explained by people who know a lot about what they are selling (to see this in action visit Royal Hill in Greenwich). But despite its Barbour-wearing, straw-basket carrying pretentiousness, it should be celebrated as an embrace of the personal, the distinctive and the local against the onslaught of our throwaway, impersonal, global-digital culture. A progressive and largely positive response to a sense of nostalgia and loss is felt as much in South Shields as East Dulwich, and would not look out of place in Farageist populism.

PEOPLE, NOT PRODUCTS

The urban equivalent of truffle hunting sees Theresa May's Metro liberal elite shopping for expensive pomegranates presented in all their autumnal glory in an old wooden R White's Lemonade box. But there are other case studies out there. The individualism and variety yearned for by most of us who remember high streets as active places can be found in a short walk from Bellenden Road to Rye Lane, Peckham. Bookended by ASDA, Tesco, Lidl and Morrisons stores, it sustains Chinese grocers pumping out Asian techno music, innumerable shops and temporary market stalls collectively offering an African and Asian-focused cultural cornucopia of fruit, vegetables, halal meat and fish, dispensed in climate-denying blue plastic bags. An urban experience connected by a terrifyingly busy road where a diverse, multi-cultural wave of humanity is blown along by gusts of nail varnish-scented wind, serenaded by a preacher with a megaphone proclaiming their imminent redemption.



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There is no room here for smart wi-fi enabled street benches with sage growing in the base. On Lee High Road in Lewisham, every shop has a different purpose and a different nationality serving the community: Lebanese coffee and cakes, a Vietnamese grocery store, a Jamaican barber, Eastern European cafes, Asian nail bars, African hairdressers, a curry house, Polish stores, trading cheek-by-jowl as a truly global high street.

THE PUBLIC REALM

So, what about that other problem child of the high street: the public realm? The majority of our high streets are still road-focused canyons of flat-fronted shops with narrow pavements, fighting hard against the foreign idea of eating, drinking or doing anything outside. Whilst culture-led place-making has become an increasingly attractive idea for retailers with its idea of 'animating the public realm', it is still based around programming what is already there: empty shops, underused car parks and tough urban spaces. Yes, we should take out some of the shops and car parks and infill them with pocket parks and places for events, but this brings us to a second question. Who will operate and fund the activity? Too often design solutions come first, then a vision, and content last of all. By all means create public places suitable for cultural and promotional events, but it must be aimed at helping the high street: to attract footfall, encourage repeat visits, to gain publicity and attention, provide marketing material, and attract new visitors and inward investors to the town or city. Masterplanners and consultants enthuse about a programmable landscape but it only takes a few probing questions to bring these conversations tumbling to earth, usually beginning with the simplest of all. Why? Yes, that beautifully landscaped plaza in Barcelona might support great artisan markets and folk festivals, but why does that mean a similar one will blossom in Becton?

2 Stockton Town Hall and Shambles Market Hall. Photograph by Petegal-Half



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The unique identity of local communities is increasingly commercially important to retailers and communities

CURATORS

For radical change, though, the biggest challenge facing high streets is one of fragmented ownership. High streets are formed of a linear collection of individual owners and an array of different types of landlords, whether local owners, absentee developers, fund-managed portfolios of shops, local councils, single family-owned buildings, or owners living out of town and abroad, whose properties are managed through estate agents. For local owners, they are too busy trying to make ends meet to contribute financially or physically to bigger thinking about the area. In this context, investors in high streets need to find ways of connecting up the landlords as well as the businesses.

They should also start seeing themselves as investors in people, not just in bricks and mortar. This requires a completely different skills set to the spreadsheet-led approach to asset management that has prevailed for the last 50 years. For years, shopping centres were able to outcompete high streets by offering a safe, warm, well-lit, car-friendly service under the auspices of a single owner. Curation is an overused term, but the ability of shopping centres to bring together different elements of a shopping experience clearly trumped the Wild West nature of the high street and it may well do so again as we show our financial

3 and 4 Rye Lane, Peckham, London, individualism and variety, making a mixed town centre urban experience, and facing a busy road. Photographs by sarflondondunk and Diamond Geezer

appetite to spend money on 'experience over product'. It should be no surprise that stores opening every day at the same time, selling the same limited stock, are finding it difficult to survive and compete. The complementary trend to specialisation is the emergence of hybridisation: barbers that offer coffee, vinyl and live music in the evenings; bookshops that offer food and places to meet; jewellery stores that run workshops on sustainable craft; the baker that provides apprenticeships to local college kids, who then help with the branding and social media of the store. These places don't just appeal to us for the quality of their services or products, they appeal to our values and our sense of identity.

There are still opportunities for new thinking. The expansion of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) offers a joined-up approach to the compartmentalisation of the high street, although many are still focused on the basics of providing clean and safe environments, rather than the ideas that are exciting larger retailers. One thing that the Future High Streets Fund could usefully be put to is wide-scale investment in skills and training to build up expertise in this area: investment in people who have the cultural programming skills to programme their high street's events seasons two years in advance, to call up a local museum to organise a temporary exhibition, or help to structure a social enterprise to run a programme of workshops. We should also encourage property owners to be more creative, not by charging them rates on empty properties as soon as a light is switched on, but instead by rewarding those who use their shops for creative non-profit purposes.

Equally the models and structures of BIDs need to evolve and innovate. Current approaches leave little space for residents and community champions to engage in the high street. If the trump card against the Amazons of this world is community loyalty, then the worst thing we can do is isolate local people from active involvement through the creation of opaque and unaccountable governance and funding structures. If there is some kind of lesson to take from these snapshots it is that content is not king, people are. The priority of any public realm improvements should be a new take on the old saying that we are a nation of shopkeepers.

LOCAL INVESTORS

What can we do to bring new operators to the high street and encourage more engagement and ownership by the neighbourhood? In an age when presidential campaigns can be fuelled by crowdfunds, it shouldn't be beyond our intelligence to create models for local people to invest in their high streets in return for making them more responsive to their needs.

The result could be transformative. The retreat of retail could be replaced by the advance of spaces for lifelong learning, for cultural experimentation, places for debate and knowledge exchange, for social services to re-engage with people, for cultural organisations to come out of their museums and galleries and into the high street. Schools, colleges and universities should have outposts as should larger businesses. We might finally find a place to house the 98 percent of national museum collections that currently sit in locked warehouses.

I want to conclude on an optimistic note. We are in a time of momentous change, throwing off the old systems. Those with memory of the way it used to be are getting older and the young will soon call the shots. We do want originality, experience and authenticity. The unique identity of local communities is increasingly commercially important to retailers and communities who now have the social media tools to make their voices heard. No one can do it alone anymore, collaboration and partnership are the only way forward. Local councils are taking more financial and leadership responsibility for investing in businesses and in the conditions needed to make them thrive, rather than leaving it to the private sector. There is recognition in both the private and public sectors that art and culture offer identity, differentiation and originality. Technology offers undreamed-of access and reach and, by default, the ability to promote products, events and businesses.

So, let's avoid old fashioned short-term, compartmental thinking that sees the only answer to the problems of the high street as more of the same, only better! Co-working offices, greener residential, more government grants, tap dancing in the streets and more urban planning-driven problem-solving



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isn't enough. Let's not mourn the end of the high street, instead let's get radical and look to make something new and evolving, born out of the demands of our rapidly changing society. ●

Mark Davy, founder, Futurecity, a culture and place making specialist, with a particular interest in the culture-driven development of urban centres

5 Royal Hill, Greenwich, London. Photograph by Ewan Munro

Pedestrian-friendly High Streets

Robert Huxford shows how places could be improved by simple measures

Observing many town and city centres, it is clear that there is a need to make more attractive places for people to dwell – spending time and money locally. This can be achieved in a number of ways to enhance the pedestrian experience of town centres. The following images illustrate possible solutions:

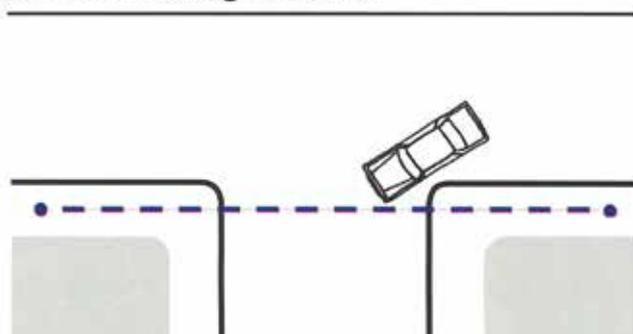


Crossing side streets

Keep pedestrian paths direct and safe, and traffic speeds should be 20mph or lower as the norm.

This 15 metre radius kerb presents pedestrians with a 20 second walk in the carriageway itself, unless they indent or turn into the side street to cross at a narrower point. Large street corner radii are against the advice of *Manual for Streets*, and are potentially a breach of the Public Sector Equality Duty; therefore kerb radii should be kept small. Large vehicles may have to swing onto the opposite carriageway to make turnings, but their drivers are protected by a steel safety cage in their vehicles, unlike pedestrians or cyclists on the street. *Figure 6.3 Manual for Streets, DfT 2007*

Small radius (eg. 1 metre)





Footways should be continued at the same level across side roads. Tactile paving should be provided to allow blind people to detect the carriageway edge.



Ramped kerb units are available that allow footways to continue uninterrupted over private driveways.



Crossing the street

Crossing the street can be greatly aided by reducing traffic speeds and providing a central median. In Poynton, Cheshire, the already narrow carriageway is reduced further by lines of stone cubes laid at the carriageway edge, reducing the optical width of the carriageway to barely 2 metres.



Clutter

Street signs cost money and many are unnecessary. Balanced decisions should be made, taking into consideration the effectiveness and need for the signs and carriageway lines, as opposed to the impact on places.



Zebra, Puffin and Pelican crossings must comply with the Traffic Signs Regulations, and can be up to 10 metres wide. Many highway authorities only use the narrowest width specified of 2.4 metres.



Regulations dating from the 1970s require zig-zag lines at Puffin, Pelican and Zebra crossings. The theory was that preventing cars from overtaking at crossings would reduce collisions, but this theory was never subsequently evaluated. As few drivers are aware that zig-zag lines prohibit overtaking, rethinking is needed.

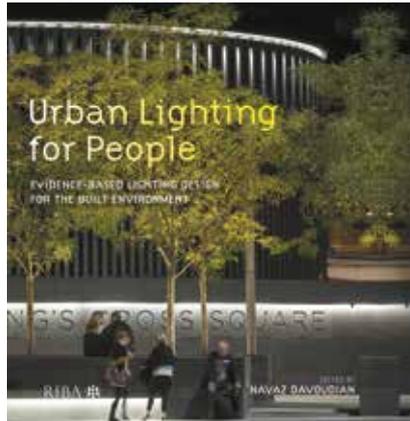


A pair of synchronised Puffin crossings outside St Paul's Cathedral, London provides a 30-metre width for pedestrians.



The effect of zig-zag lines on a historic high street.

Robert Huxford



NATIONAL URBAN DESIGN AWARDS 2020

This year we are delighted to publish four shortlisted Student Award entries, selected from more than twenty submissions that included some particularly commendable entries. This led to vigorous debate amongst our judging panel, with wide-ranging perspectives from private practice, local authority and education experts (see the judges' profiles on the UDG website). The winner will receive £600 thanks to the continuing support of the Francis Tibbalds' Trust.

As always our Book Award judging panel has worked hard to read the many excellent books submitted by publishers this year, and their shortlisted book reviews are on the following pages. We are grateful to all the judges, convenors and Award entrants for participating in the Awards. ●

Robert Huxford, Jacqueline Swanson and Esther Southey, UDG

Urban Lighting for People, Evidence-based lighting design for the built environment

Navaz Davoudian (ed.), 2019, RIBA Publishing, £36.00, ISBN 978 1859468210

Urban Lighting is an impressive multi-disciplinary collaboration between researchers from five universities and practicing lighting designers. They bring their experience of large-scale high-profile masterplans and public realm projects such as the Olympics and King's Cross, and of generating innovative exploratory research. The book aims to exemplify an evidence-based approach to design. The contributors include designers from engineers Arup known for 'total design', where specialist knowledge is fully integrated in design processes.

The book can add depth to an urban designer's knowledge of the subject of lighting and aims to extend the application of established urban design theory. The team identifies urban lighting as part of the 'critical infrastructure of everyday life and interaction'. The approach is distinctive in its combination of behavioural, psychophysical and technical methodologies, demonstrating the range of knowledge that can inform design. The book is structured in three parts and seven chapters, each chapter amplified with case studies and concluded with key learning points. The parts cover night, city, society, exploring the night city and post-project evaluation.

Chapter 1 focuses on the social study of urban lighting referring to the work of Kevin Lynch and Jan Gehl and their observation of the social experiences of place, noting that their work could almost be said to be 'untouched by night', a time when concerns about risk and safety, health, well-being and pleasure come to the fore. They explain why we should consider how to focus light on use, rather than buildings, and highlight how social research enables designers to

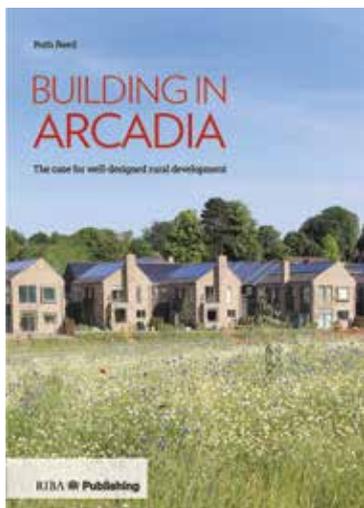
understand complex civic spaces and how diversity and social practices shape place identity.

Good lighting can only become more important in the future, especially in giving older people (who will make up 30 per cent of the population by 2039) the confidence to go out after dark. The book is a celebration of lighting design and how, when well done, it can deliver nocturnal city beautification by using colour temperatures and brightness. The authors recommend that masterplan design teams work with lighting designers early in the design process. King's Cross is a case study used to demonstrate how a distinctive and responsive lighting strategy can render a series of places that are safe, unique and environmentally-friendly.

The chapter on the night city aims to extend Lynch's *The Image of The City* for the night-time. Lighting can highlight landmarks, illuminate paths and add to visual character, working with how people's cognitive maps change at night. Case study comparisons demonstrate how people interact with three London public spaces night and day, evidencing the role of lighting to provide reassurance, extend uses and enhance the night-time experience. The last section is devoted to post-occupancy evaluation, stressing the importance of closed loop design. Ten case studies, masterplans, public spaces, bridges and viaducts explore the relationship between design processes and outcomes.

The book emphasises throughout that lighting design is not just about devising a technical solution but is a creative practice. Successful projects should have a 'strong, simple and unique lighting concept' that relates to context. Design standards are a starting point but not a design guide. A strong narrative should inform a design framework captured in night-time plans. ●

Juliet Bidgood, architect and urban designer, director at the design and communication studio – Neat and a CABE Enabler



Building in Arcadia: The case for well-designed rural development

Ruth Reed, 2019, RIBA, £30.00
ISBN 9781859468968

In the context of England's acute housing shortage, this book presents a reasoned, yet impassioned and practical argument identifying the key barriers to rural development.

The English's romantic perception of the countryside prevents them from objectively distinguishing the key elements of rural areas. A number of additional issues intervene as well. Firstly if national planning policy requires that we recognise the beauty of the countryside, we need to be able to distinguish between genuine countryside and areas that are just green and in some cases, actually detrimental to the balance of nature. This shift from all countryside being protected for its own sake to recognising its intrinsic character and beauty, has been allowed for in national planning policy since 2012. Secondly, the urban and rural are often perceived as two mutually exclusive poles, rather than a spectrum of gradual shift. Thirdly there is often a general resistance to development, partly as a response to poor quality construction and design. Fourthly, local authorities tend to further exacerbate the rural issue with superficial requirements to maintain 'character and appearance', rather than a deeper understanding of what this constitutes, and much of it not physical. Fifthly, an Anglo-Saxon attitude across towns in Great Britain, North America, and Australia, is biased towards lower density and individual detached houses, whereas the opposite predominates in Europe and South America. There, a small town of only a few thousand people will often have many 3-6 storey buildings.

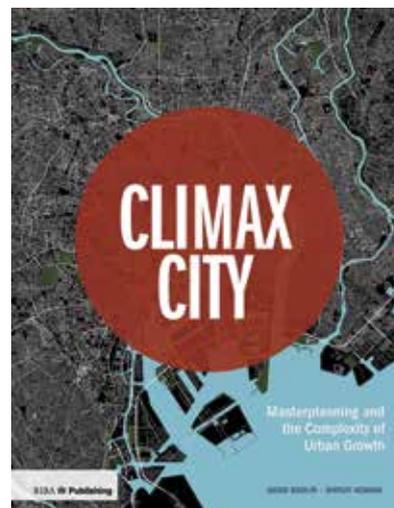
With the scene set, Ruth Reed's *Building in Arcadia* tackles these deep-set issues with aplomb and in less than 200 pages. The book is socially important especially in the context of the climate change emergency. The desire

of many people to live in the countryside can be satisfied by more rural areas being made viable places to live for a wider range of people. If places outside the largest, most dense areas can be made more sustainable and holistic, the pressure to move into big cities can be reduced. These would include regional capitals through to market towns, villages and their outlying areas, and could achieve more sustainable circular supply and waste cycles in the same area. It would also be easier if developed adjacent rural areas were combined in a joint municipal area.

The first of the book's three sections looks at planning constraints on countryside development; the second uses case studies to argue for development; and the final section outlines a new approach. There is a good balance of referenced and colour images and diagrams, and a readable text set out in clear sub-sections within the chapters, including side quotes. It could be used as a text on: English attitudes to rural development; research into the attitudes of local councillors; descriptions of what good rural development can be; and a technical guide for preparing planning applications.

A number of important points are made in the book. Impact assessment automatically has a negative connotation, whereas 'affecting assessment' would perhaps be better; less fixation on housing style, rather than its quality and liveability; and, planning only defines the countryside in terms of development, not by what green areas actually are, therefore making it difficult to assess the value or benefit of different types of countryside.

Development should not just be seen as houses in landscape, but from a wider urban design perspective, including the social, economic and environmental characteristics of a well-functioning place where people can not only live well day-to-day, but plan a long-term future. The broader and deeper context that urban design understanding can provide would form a solid basis for quality decision-making. Understanding the need for various functions, their quantum, how they interrelate, and how a development could benefit an area, would provide a context for



the more usual discussion of scale, style and external materials. ●

Marc Furnival Urban designer and architect, writer, tutor and urban design consultant

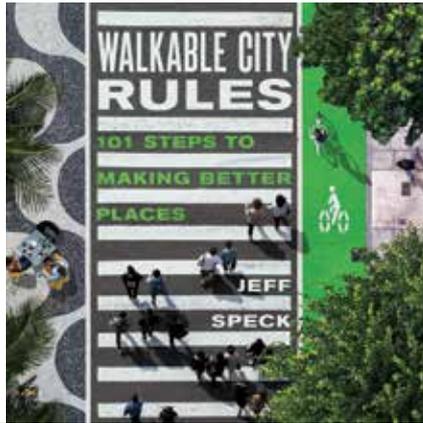
Climax City: Masterplanning and the Complexity of Urban Growth

David Rudlin and Shruti Hemani,
2019, RIBA Publishing, £36.00,
ISBN 978-1-85946-763-3

The preface to *Climax City* has the subtitle 'obsessive cartography'. The phrase serves well as a succinct encapsulation of its authors' motivations and the content of the book, which, they freely acknowledge, is the product of many years of thinking about cities through the act of mapmaking.

Climax City is global in its scope and aims to explore cities and settlements around the world through the production of plans drawn to common scales and notations, allowing a systematic comparison of urban form and structure. Five scales are carefully chosen, each successively five times larger or smaller than the preceding one, creating radii that range from 80m (tissue) to 50km (context), allowing issues of landscape and infrastructure to be communicated strategically alongside the spatial and experiential qualities of specific key locations.

The plans and the illustrations, which include atmospheric hand-drawn perspectives and explanatory diagrams, bespoke and have been created by the authors. The work is a labour of love and clearly the product of extensive research and exploration. The locations studied range from informal settlements to planned contemporary metropolises, and the book conveys a profound interest in how and why such environments are created; urban form is not viewed in a



dispassionate analytical manner, but with a critical eye to the social, political and economic dynamics of cities and the processes through which they grow and change.

The book is organised into four clearly defined sections. The Spontaneous City looks at places that have grown in organic and informal ways through the emergent behaviour of multiple individual decisions, often in places of deprivation, lacking the infrastructures or power systems of higher-level governance. The Designed City by contrast, introduces the formal act of masterplanning and the superimposition of order, often expressing notions of idealism and power. The Unruly City showcases locations of divergent dramatic change, including those characterised by explosive growth, decline or limitless sprawl. The fourth section, The City and the Planner, explores and celebrates the processes through which planning and urban design activity seeks to guide and direct the city through time, responding to social, technological and environmental considerations, showcasing changing attitudes during and beyond the modernist eras. The final chapters look to the future and the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century city.

To most readers, many of the cities and phenomena described in the book will be familiar; others will be unexpected juxtapositions or revealed in new ways through the comparative drawings and commentary of the authors, drawing on their professional experience and academic research. The work covers a wide range of conditions around the world and the writing is underpinned by an enthusiasm and curiosity to celebrate diversity, commonality and an interest in the mechanisms through which these environments are created.

The title of the book is drawn from a biological metaphor: the concept of 'climax vegetation' is the distinctive natural state towards which an area of landscape will move in the absence of human intervention; each part of the planet has a different climax state dependent on climate and local context, and this seemed to the authors to be analogous to the diversity of urban conditions around the world. *Climax City* is an

optimistic celebration of that diversity. It is a fascinating read and a beautiful artefact that will be enjoyed by – and should be strongly recommended to – a wide range of professionals, academics and a curious general audience. ●

Jonathan Kendall is a partner at Fletcher Priest Architects and senior teaching fellow at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL

Walkable City Rules: 101 Steps to Making Better Places

Jeff Speck, 2019, Island Press, £22.99, ISBN 978 1610918983

When designing, designers use rules of thumb, which they acquire over time. Some of these become codified as good design principles, or even more formally, make their way into design standards. The problem with such rules, principles and standards is that as they are met, their implications are often ignored. This is a problem particularly in complex design fields such as architecture, urban design and highway design. The built environment is extremely complex and with the increasing specialisation of technical knowledge, every design profession focuses on issues of particular concern to their specialism. In designing cities, standards applied by highway engineers have, over the last 20 years, attracted particular criticism for narrowly focusing only on their standards which aim to get vehicles from A to B as quickly as possible, at the expense of all other street users and almost every desirable quality of cities: clean air, liveability, freedom from noise pollution and safety.

Do we need another book of rules, even if it is about rules to enable walkability? Surely it is, at least in part, rules that got us into this traffic-dominated urban mess in the first place. And would anyone want to read a list of rules?

It turns out that these 101 steps are

actually an excuse to tell us stories about why previous rules didn't work, and therefore, what we should do instead. Organised into 19 parts that contain the 101 rules, the book's logic is designed to send effective messages to design decision-makers: designers, officials and importantly, political leaders such as mayors. The book debunks or at least moderates many current rules of thumb of designing cities, by showing us the implications that those earlier rules had not anticipated. These implications are backed up by research, and so, carry substantial weight as a convincing means of political communication in support of better city design.

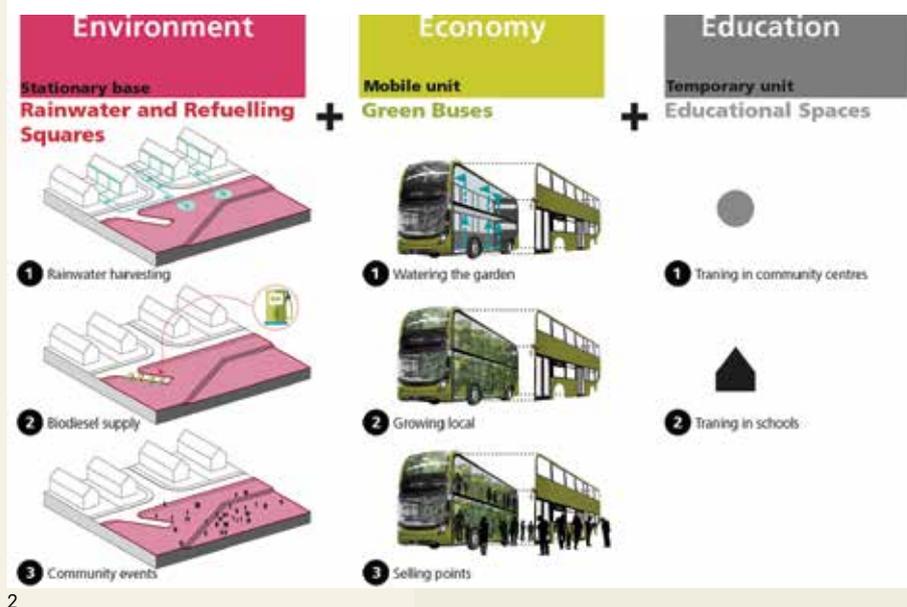
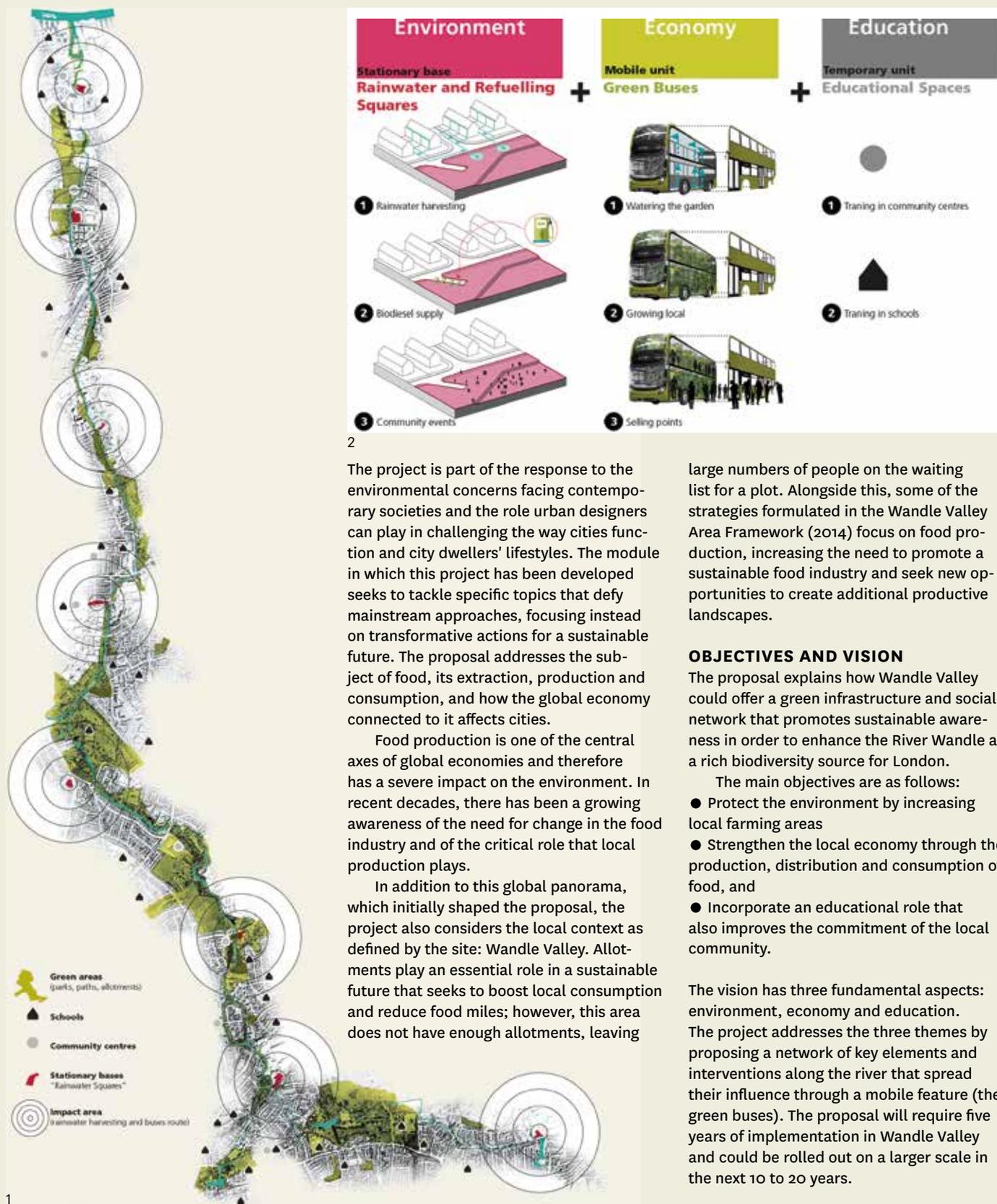
This brings us to another notable quality: at first glance, the rules seem to deal with a very wide range of issues of urban design, and not strictly walkability; walkability seems only to be an excuse to link this book to Speck's previous one, which it does. However, walkability is so central to good cities, and so many aspects of good urban design – from alternative modes of transit to the pleasantness of walking routes, and the relative locations of trip origins and destinations and hence density – that the rules for walkability do indeed have to be as wide-ranging as those set out here.

So, it is not a book of rules, nor is it really about walkability. Is it a good read? Yes, I read it in one sitting. The language is direct, and to write a useful book of rules that is entertaining is quite a feat. Is it useful for promoting better city design? Yes, it draws a lot of the latest practical and evidence-based wisdom about designing cities, especially for movement. While many of the examples and some of the issues raised are particular to North American cities, it makes convincing arguments relevant to decision-makers everywhere in favour of the walkable city, which, as we have argued, is a proxy for well-designed, lively, liveable cities. Finally, back to our earlier question, do we need another book of rules? Yes, we need this one. ●

Louie Sieh, architect and urbanist

A Sustainable Vision for Wandle Valley

Consuelo Morales proposes a green bus system and growing local food



The project is part of the response to the environmental concerns facing contemporary societies and the role urban designers can play in challenging the way cities function and city dwellers' lifestyles. The module in which this project has been developed seeks to tackle specific topics that defy mainstream approaches, focusing instead on transformative actions for a sustainable future. The proposal addresses the subject of food, its extraction, production and consumption, and how the global economy connected to it affects cities.

Food production is one of the central axes of global economies and therefore has a severe impact on the environment. In recent decades, there has been a growing awareness of the need for change in the food industry and of the critical role that local production plays.

In addition to this global panorama, which initially shaped the proposal, the project also considers the local context as defined by the site: Wandle Valley. Allotments play an essential role in a sustainable future that seeks to boost local consumption and reduce food miles; however, this area does not have enough allotments, leaving

large numbers of people on the waiting list for a plot. Alongside this, some of the strategies formulated in the Wandle Valley Area Framework (2014) focus on food production, increasing the need to promote a sustainable food industry and seek new opportunities to create additional productive landscapes.

OBJECTIVES AND VISION

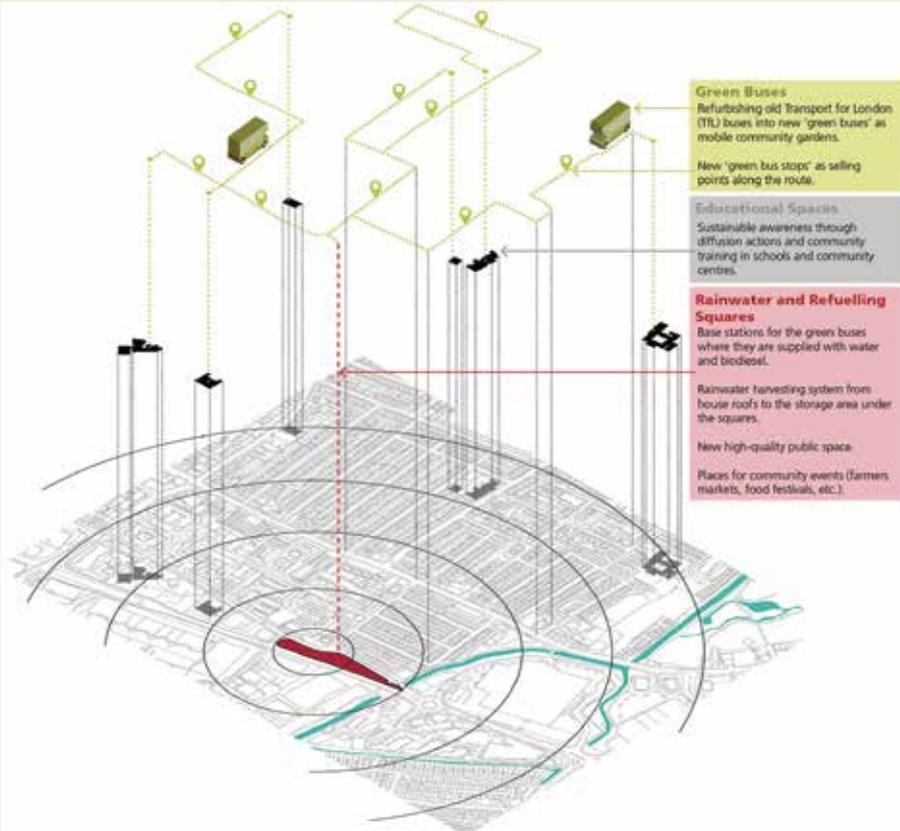
The proposal explains how Wandle Valley could offer a green infrastructure and social network that promotes sustainable awareness in order to enhance the River Wandle as a rich biodiversity source for London.

The main objectives are as follows:

- Protect the environment by increasing local farming areas
- Strengthen the local economy through the production, distribution and consumption of food, and
- Incorporate an educational role that also improves the commitment of the local community.

The vision has three fundamental aspects: environment, economy and education. The project addresses the three themes by proposing a network of key elements and interventions along the river that spread their influence through a mobile feature (the green buses). The proposal will require five years of implementation in Wandle Valley and could be rolled out on a larger scale in the next 10 to 20 years.

- 1 Macro scale of the proposal.
- 2 Three primary aspects of the project vision and their intervention components.
- 3 Components in the implementation area.
- 4 Proposal image for the future of London cityscape. Green buses as a new London symbol.



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DESIGN PROCESS

The design process began by addressing the need for new farming areas. In this context, it is important to consider new forms of space that take into account the shortage of land in cities. From this came the idea of a mobile garden that accommodates community gardening and the diffusion of local production, community training and selling points. Thus, the project appropriates a

common object – the red London bus – and proposes a new symbol for the city.

The next stage involves the development of a self-sustaining system for the mobile units, creating stationary bases that support the mobile units. For this, two types of supplies are considered: rainwater collected from surrounding houses, and biodiesel (recycled cooking oil from local shops). In addition to the stationary bases' functional

features, they are proposed as new strategic public spaces for community life, accommodating farmers markets, food festivals and more.

The three fundamental aspects of the project's vision are illustrated, and relate to the primary elements of each intervention. How the components work in the implementation area is also shown; and once the interventions are defined, the project is planned on a larger scale in order to have a more significant impact on Wandle Valley. The project consists of a sequence of interventions along the river that influence its immediate surroundings, constituting an extensive interconnected system.

FUTURE

The project will first be implemented in Wandle Valley, but it is intended as an agent of change that will spread to a wider context and to promote new ways of using spaces to grow food. The proposal understands sustainability as a process that requires education and evolution in order to create a shift in people's lifestyles.

LESSONS LEARNED

The academic exercise within which this project was developed called for a different approach to challenge common practice and produce transformative changes in a specific topic. It was while working with this approach that the main difficulties and key learning took place. The difficulties arose at the beginning of the exercise, when it proved hard to break the habit of devising interventions that addressed multiple key themes in a masterplan format. However, once the masterplan approach was superseded, the key lessons learned from the design exercise became clear: addressing a site based on a specific theme, and developing a strategic vision that can question and impact on people's lifestyles to a greater extent; these are the most fruitful and innovative lessons that can be replicated in other places, regions and cultures. As the world needs to revise how cities function, it is crucial to rethink key elements of their mechanisms, complementary to the development of masterplans that respond to traditional topics. ●

My House, My Neighbourhood *Minha Casa, Nosso Bairro*

Johannah Fening proposes integrating formal and informal settlements for an inclusive community in Santo Cristo, Rio de Janeiro



1

My House, Our Neighbourhood – *Minha Casa, Nosso Bairro* – is a proposal developed to provide high quality and affordable social housing in Brazil. The scheme prioritises housing for Brazilian minorities, displaced residents from the Olympic developments, low-income households and former favela residents. It aims to create a spatially, socially and economically integrated community while incorporating site specific urban design practices. The proposal challenges the current Brazilian housing provision programme called My House, My Life – *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (MCMV) – which provides affordable housing units for low-income households. The houses that MCMV produces are monotonous and poorly integrated with the rest of the city, which is an aspect the new scheme addresses.

URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

The former port site of Santo Cristo was selected by the Brazilian government for redevelopment post Rio Olympics 2016. A morphological analysis of the area was performed to understand the context of the neighbouring informal settlements – *favelas* – which influences the proposed building form and social spaces. Weaknesses emerged from the analysis: there is a harsh divide in the urban grain and social class between the formal and informal settlements, a lack of a commercial area and the use of trams.



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3

- 1 Morphological analysis of Santo Cristo
- 2 Masterplan proposal
- 3 A-A cross-section showing public spaces and building forms
- 4 Public realm of semi-private courtyards
- 5 Proposed housing typologies with naturally ventilated access block



4

DESIGN APPROACH AND INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

The vision is to create an integrated community for Santo Cristo. The design approach derived from an integration framework developed from case-study research on slum-upgrading via the *Favela-Bairro* programme in Brazil, which measured and analysed spatial, economic and social integration. As a result, integration is achieved through the following design objectives:

● **Provide inclusive, mixed use and adaptable housing reflecting local typologies**

The urban blocks have been adapted from a morphological analysis of informal patterns in Santo Cristo, which now includes tertiary roads and a walkable public realm for accessibility and permeability. Flexible courtyard spaces have been provided in each block including the use of verandas, balconies, platforms and canopies for social interaction and different types of play. A colourful mix of 1-3 bed apartment buildings with a maximum of five storeys, are evenly dispersed throughout the site, sitting parallel to the street edge and in keeping with the dense, low-rise, local residential typology. In addition, amenities are located at the corner of blocks, creating regular, walkable and commercial junctions.

● **Create vibrant and engaging public and private spaces which celebrate Brazilian culture**

Santo Cristo has a rich culture of samba dance and music with more than 15 local samba schools. The scheme includes a colourful street mural, a popular type of public art in Rio de Janeiro, painted along one of the connecting roads from the neighbouring informal settlements into the new development named *The Samba River – O Rio Samba*. The mural features 30 Black-Brazilian samba musician’s portraits previously exhibited in April 2019 at the local Rio Museum of Art. The mural creates a united place-identity by spatially connecting the informal

settlements to the new development while celebrating the contributions of black Brazilians in a historic slave-related site. Public areas are defined by a site-specific paving pattern, similar to the iconic Copacabana paving in Rio, based on the African samba quilt pattern, enhancing Santo Cristo’s place identity.

● **Incorporate natural ventilation and cooling strategies to reduce non-renewable energy consumption**

Santo Cristo receives strong prevailing winds throughout the year from the north and south. Therefore, the majority of the residential buildings are orientated in this direction to provide cross ventilated accommodation. The scheme responds to Rio’s hot climate and high sun position through canopies, trees, deep verandas and shading balconies. The building fronts and backs avoid facing south to prevent excessive heat gains and direct sunlight. In addition, the internal access stairwells feature high-level air vents to promote airflow and stack ventilation.

● **Empower the residents through local jobs, self-build strategies and adaptable spaces, revitalising an unused part of Santo Cristo**

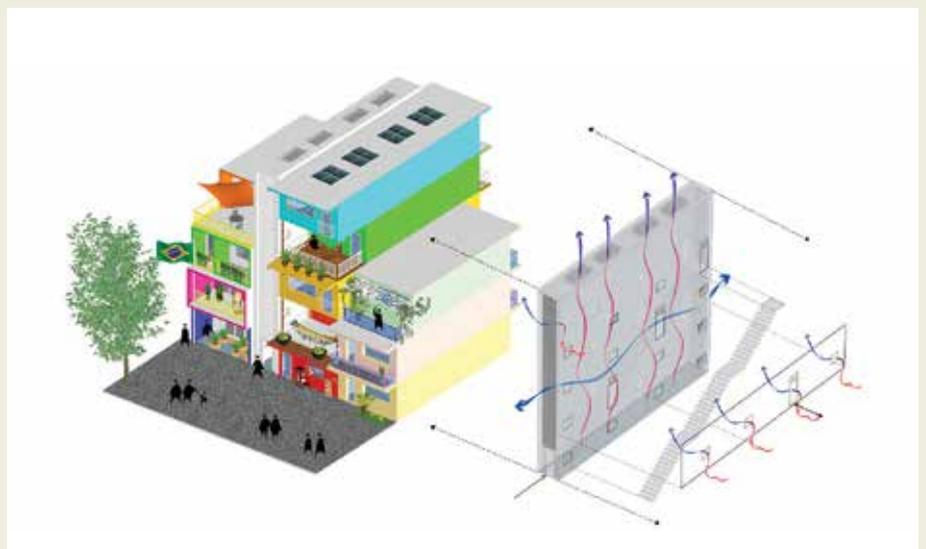
The commercial area provides local jobs for the residents and neighbouring communities, located adjacent to the existing tram line and added cycle lanes, enhancing mobility and boosting the use of the existing trams. The flexible semi-private courtyards enable the creation of temporary urbanism managed by the local residents. Adaptable

ground floor units provide residents with space for small businesses to grow over time responding to the gradual growth of the neighbourhood. Lastly, this scheme provides affordable half-built apartments using a framework of community-driven design codes, enabling more minorities to buy and own homes, and ultimately empowering the community.

LESSONS LEARNED

● **Effective ways of communication**
Language differences made verbal communication challenging when discussing ideas and urban strategies in the community engagement meetings with local residents, despite the presence of translators. On the other hand, the use of drawings served as an effective tool and a universal language to facilitate conversations.

● **The value of contextual understanding**
Being immersed in the culture of Rio de Janeiro was an essential part of the research and design process. It helped address any assumptions and unconscious bias from a Western perspective towards the context, through the inquiry by design approach, using local community engagement. ●



5

Poplar Connect

Paco Pui Chong Chan, Cecilia Hiu Ying Lam, Man Pok Leung and Ka Hei Kristin Leung redesign the public realm to improve connectivity



1

Large-scale development has taken place in the Borough of Tower Hamlets in the past three decades, with Canary Wharf being transformed into one of London's financial centres. Just north of Canary Wharf, Poplar has been seemingly disconnected from the massive redevelopment of its neighbouring ward, detached both physically and socially from the fast-paced and rapid development. Poplar has various ongoing development projects, and it is vital that connectivity and public spaces are integrated to harness the opportunities brought with them.

PROBLEMS

The wide high-speed A road and the DLR tracks separate Poplar from Canary Wharf, which makes Poplar inaccessible and difficult for pedestrians to find their way to Poplar. The streets are quiet with low levels of activity due to several underutilised and scattered green spaces and unwelcoming street layouts.

OPPORTUNITIES

Poplar has a rich history with many listed buildings and heritage that create local and tourist attractions. Large-scale commercial and residential regeneration projects include the redevelopment of Crisp Street Market.

OUR VISION AND AIMS

- Ensure that Poplar is lively, connected and sustainable for the fulfilment and enjoyment of its communities
- Boost connections between Poplar and its

surroundings

- Enhance the living environment and public spaces for local residents to make the area safe and friendly
- Promote the history of Poplar and improve awareness of the background of the area.

THE PODIUM

The Podium is designed to integrate the two areas with a public space over the highway, as it was identified to be the main cause of Poplar's isolation from Canary Wharf. It builds a connection between the residents and the white-collar workers in Canary Wharf by enhancing accessibility from the future Crossrail station and Poplar DLR station to Poplar. It will provide a 'doorstep recreation space' for white-collar workers

working in the skyscrapers of the financial centre. The interactive water fountain will create a soundscape to reduce noise from the traffic on the A road and the DLR.

To attract activity and interaction between the employed community of Canary Wharf and the residents of Poplar, a market has been proposed on the platform of The Podium to provide employment for people of Poplar as well as affordable and varied meals for people who work in Canary Wharf, and to contribute to the internationalism of the area.

RECLAIMING THE STREETS

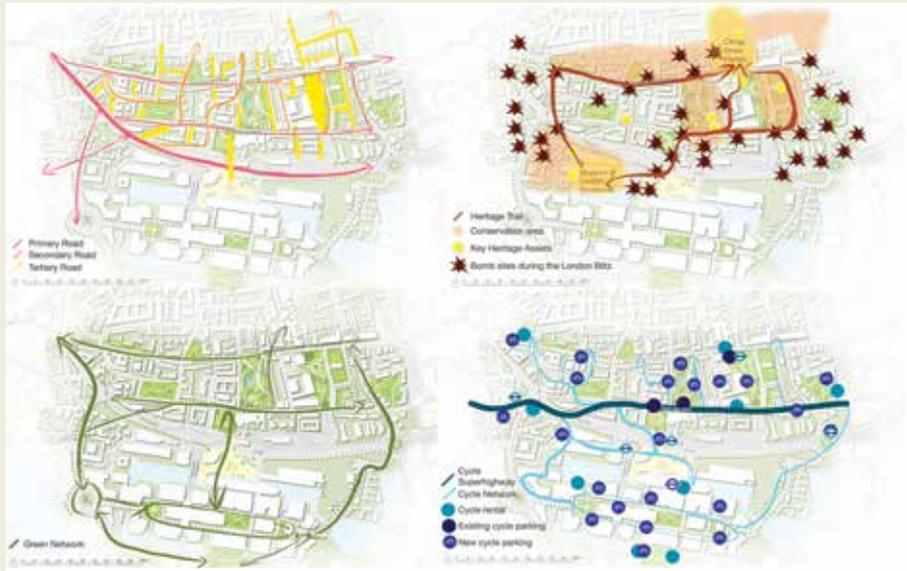
The streets and blocks are restructured to prioritise pedestrian movements and cycling. Primary roads have been designed with wider pavements to provide a safe and pleasant walking environment. Planters are added to secondary roads to make the area more aesthetically pleasing. Tertiary roads would be for pedestrians and cyclists only to discourage car use and enhance the place status of local streets. Speed cushions will be added to maintain the speed of vehicles in the area at 20mph. A reduced traffic flow would make it safer for pedestrians and children, and enhance the walking experience in Poplar. It therefore creates a more pleasant public realm with a safer walking environment for all.

The current cycle highway in Poplar is along Poplar High Street, sharing the same lane as all-purpose traffic, which poses a high risk of collision. The new cycle highway will be segregated, providing a safer cycling environment and improving the cycling experience. The wider network of cycle routes on tertiary streets in Poplar will improve cycling accessibility in Poplar. More cycle

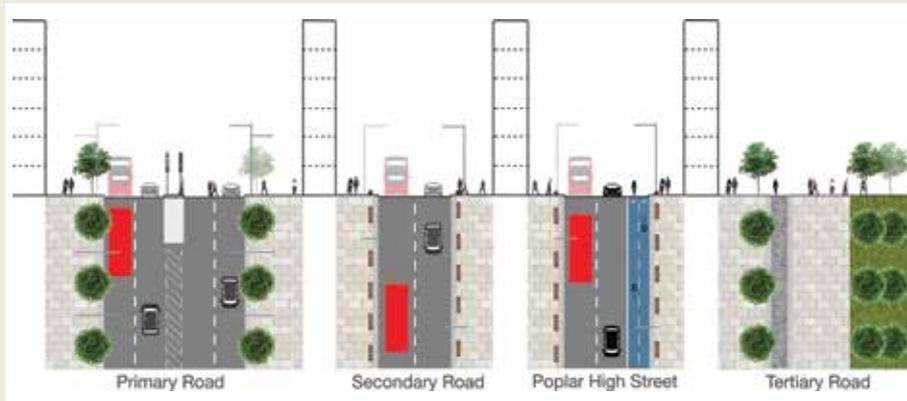


2

- 1 Masterplan
- 2 Visualisation of The Podium
- 3 Connectivity Plan
- 4 Road sections
- 5 Heritage Imprints at Lansbury Heritage Hotel



3



4

parking will be added throughout Poplar, allowing residents to park their cycles near their homes and popular destinations such as the Podium, the Chrisp Market and the DLR stations to park and ride.

GREEN NETWORK

The green network will connect the scattered green spaces in Poplar and Canary Wharf by planting trees along the route, making the area greener and more aesthetically pleasing and attracting people to visit and explore Poplar from Canary Wharf. The greener walking environment will also encourage people to travel on foot, which is more environmentally friendly. A variety of recreational facilities have been proposed on the green network to provide an area for residents to relax and improve the aesthetics of the area.

A green landscape will be constructed over the All Saints DLR station and DLR

tracks to utilise the space and create a better environment. It will also provide space for families to spend time together for picnics and sports activities.

HERITAGE TRAIL

A heritage trail has been designed to increase awareness of the history and heritage of the area. Starting from the Museum of London Docklands, bomb imprints will be added to locations where bombs were dropped during the Blitz to make people aware of the history around them. Similarly, there will be listed building signs to mark the many heritage assets, such as the Grade II listed Chrisp Street Market Clock Tower, Richard Green’s 1866 statue and the Lansbury Heritage Hotel. Heritage information boards will be integrated into Legible London signs to provide visitors with historical information on various stops of the heritage trail.



Bomb imprint



Listed Building imprint

5

The heritage trail will connect the past to the present by showing the history along the route, creating a sense of place and promoting local pride. This will encourage visitors to discover the history of the local areas in a more fascinating and intriguing way.

LESSONS LEARNED

We learned that it is important to use various analysis techniques to identify problems and development opportunities at the initial stages of the design process. It allowed us to come up with creative and innovative solutions, alleviating the problems through improving the public realm and other design strategies. It is also crucial to look at the wider context of the site during the design process to respect the local characteristics of the area. This project could be further developed through consultation with the local community to create a design that better serves the public interest. ●

Transforming Together

Omri Ben Chetrit suggests adopting London railway arches using the idea of commons approach



In the present climate of rapid urbanisation and the increasing pressure for new developments, cities are facing bigger and more complex issues. It has become almost impossible for cities to tackle local issues without engaging its residents. Using the idea of the commons approach, or knowledge shared for the common good, this project aims to study whether when applied to abandoned and neglected railway arches, it can help to generate a socially inclusive regeneration process.

London's railway arches were built in the 19th century to support the railways connecting the surrounding towns with the city. Infrastructure, such as this, provides essential linkages within the city, but it also acts as a physical barrier, causing segregation between neighbourhoods, dividing communities, and contributing to the social and economic fragmentation within the city.

Traditionally, railway arches were used for marginal industries, such as mechanics and metal working. This type of uses flourished due to the arches' low rental value and spatial advantages. Yet, many of them remained vacant and unused. In recent years, new types of uses have started to 'pop up' in the railway arches, usually trendy shops, bars or restaurants. This is a top-down design approach that aims to maximise the profit of private companies and not necessarily to enhance the needs of local communities.

VISION AND KEY OBJECTIVES

The project vision is to use London's railway arches to strengthen the local civic infrastructure, and to be a catalyst for urban

transformation that benefits local communities. It aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Frame a process that allows different actors to work together to address local needs
- Find possible uses that can suit the arches and contribute to local communities
- Explore methods to apply the common approach to the design process
- Analyse current and future uses for the arches and the effects they might have on the surroundings.

CHOSEN SITE

The project focuses on Deptford in London, a neighbourhood that is divided by railway arches. Deptford's attractive location made it part of the Thames Gateway project, the most significant regeneration initiative in northwest Europe. It also was named as an Opportunity Area in the London Plan. Those two regeneration projects create a unique pressure to develop the area and pushed 'elite stakeholders', such as the UK government and Greater London Authority to be more involved in the decision-making.

Despite significant economic investment in regeneration projects in Deptford in the last decade, it is still among the most deprived areas in London. The public and private sectors have failed to address local issues, so that residents have lost their trust in the planning system.

DESIGN PROPOSAL

To improve the social values in the neighbourhood and promote a more inclusive urban transformation, the project highlights the importance of a process rather than an

individual specific project. The proposed process, composed of the following actions, aims to involve different actors and encourage the residents to take part in all design stages. The proposed actions are:

1. Identifying local actors and building trust based on shared goals.
2. Using the common knowledge to unlock latent assets, understanding the character of the place, its real opportunities and constraints
3. Promoting small and medium sized interventions in public places and vacant arches, based on local mapping
4. Monitoring the effect that the local projects have on the neighbourhood
5. Scaling the successful projects into permanent use, implementing the needs of the community and adjusting local policies.

Based on those design actions, the project proposes a new design process to transform Deptford's arches.

PHASE 1 – SHORT TERM

The first phase starts by revealing a new 'common trail' that connects different civic places in the neighbourhood to the arches creating new places for residents to walk and use. The trail runs through local public places (squares and parks) that can be used for events to increase participation and local awareness. New digital interactive elements located at key points, in addition to an online platform, help to map the different actors, create new connections, and understand the real needs of residents. In other areas, hard elements such as an urban mood board can be used to invite residents to share their ideas.

In parallel, abandoned arches can be transformed into a new community centre to allow discussions between different actors, engage in informal talks, and build new connections. Identifying local actors and understanding the needs of the residents are the key elements of this phase.

PHASE 2 – MEDIUM TERM

In this phase, new east-west and north-south connections along the arches are opened to encourage people to walk and use new spaces adjacent to and in the arches. Vacant land and arches along the new routes will be transformed using low-cost and small-scale interventions. At this stage of the process, some of the interventions are local initiatives, while others are in partnership with different local actors.

- 1 A visualisation of the Phase 1 'common trail'
- 2 Phase 1 Short term activities
- 3 Phase 2 Medium term initiatives
- 4 Phase 3 Long term projects

This stage aims to bring new types of uses into the arches and encourage people to use them. In parallel, monitoring the successes and failures of projects and mapping the common good that started in phase 1 will be continued.

PHASE 3 – LONG TERM

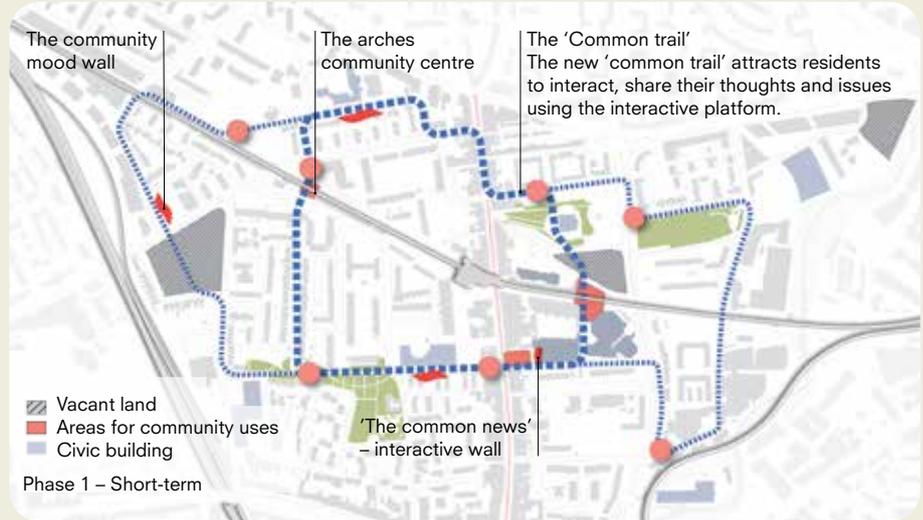
In the third phase, different actors trust each other and work together towards common goals, to create successful partnerships with private or public sector actors. Therefore, a larger and more complex intervention can take place, which can have a significant effect on the neighbourhood.

In the context of the chosen site, larger schemes can be proposed on three vacant sites, as well as improving the existing light industrial areas, and if necessary providing new industrial areas in the neighbourhood. This stage has the potential to affect and improve aspects not only around the arches but in the whole neighbourhood.

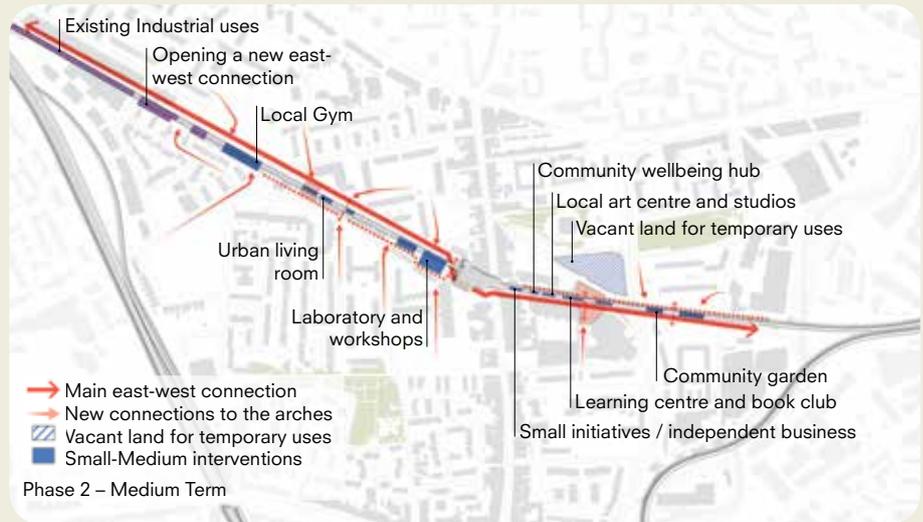
LESSONS LEARNED

Shaping a productive dialogue between the various actors is necessary to the success of urban transformation projects. Different actors hold different knowledge: while the public and private sectors have the expertise and financial capability to build larger and more complex schemes, local communities can help to discover place identity, unlock hidden assets and improve the sense of belonging amongst residents. Without local knowledge and the trust of local communities, urban developments often fail to address the local issues. Therefore, only by working together, all types of local issues can be addressed, and projects at different scales can be built.

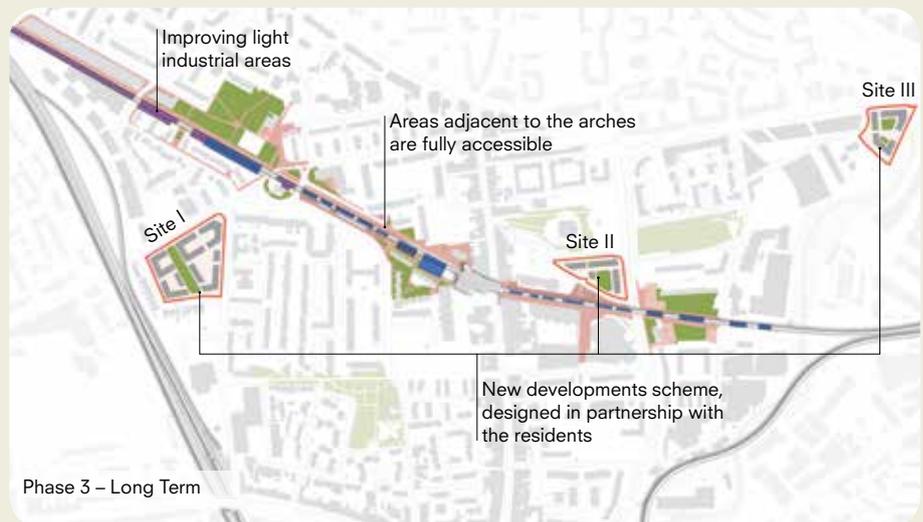
New technologies have the potential to connect citizens and public and private actors directly. This can change the way that citizens participate, build trust among different actors, and make residents an active group in the design process. Integrating these technologies in a design process can reframe the basis on which citizens, the private and the public sectors can work together to build a commons approach, with the private sector in particular, as endorser rather than enemy of the community. ●



2



3



4

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and Welsh School of Architecture,
Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII
Avenue

Cardiff CF10 3WA
T 029 2087 5607/029 2087 6131
C Aseem Inam
E inamat@cardiff.ac.uk
W www.cardiff.ac.uk/architecture/courses/postgraduate-taught/ma-urban-design

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W www.cardiff.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/taught/courses/course/international-planning-and-urban-design-msc

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C Dr Ola Uduku
E o.uduku@ed.ac.uk
W www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees

Jointly run with Heriot Watt University, this M.Sc in Urban Strategies and Design focuses on urban design practice and theory from a cultural, and socio-economic, case-study perspective. Engaging students in 'live' urban projects, as part of the programme's 'action research' pedagogy, it also offers research expertise in African and Latin American urban design and planning processes.

LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Law and Social Science
103 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA
T 0207 815 5877
C Manuela Madeddu
E madeddum@lsbu.ac.uk
W www.lsbu.ac.uk/courses/course-finder/urban-design-planning-ma

The MA Urban Design and Planning (FT or PT) provides an inter-disciplinary approach to urban design and equips students with a comprehensive understanding of urban design, planning and development issues. Through working at different scales of the city and engaging with theoretical debates, students will learn to think about the characteristics of good places and will be equipped to make a critical contribution to shaping those places in the decades ahead. The programme is fully accredited by the RTPI and includes a field trip to a European country.

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
School of Architecture, Planning
and Landscape, Claremont Tower
University of Newcastle, Newcastle
upon Tyne NE1 7RU
T 0191 222 6006

C Georgia Giannopoulou
E georgia.giannopoulou@ncl.ac.uk
W www.ncl.ac.uk/apl/study/postgraduate/taught/urban-design/index.htm

The MA in Urban Design brings together cross-disciplinary expertise striking a balance between methods and approaches in environmental design and the social sciences in the creation of the built environment. To view the course blog: www.nclurban-design.org

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Technology, Design and
Environment,
Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP
T 01865 483 438
C Georgia Butina-Watson
E gbutina@brookes.ac.uk
W www.brookes.ac.uk

Diploma in Urban Design, six months full time or 18 months part time. MA one year full-time or two years part-time.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
Development Planning Unit
34 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9EZ
T 020 7679 1111
C Camillo Boano and Catalina Ortiz
E c.boano@ucl.ac.uk
catalina.ortiz@ucl.ac.uk
W <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/programmes/postgraduate/msc-building-urban-design-development>

The DPU programme has a unique focus on Urban Design as a transdisciplinary and critical practice. Students are encouraged to rethink the role of urban design through processes of collective and radical endeavours to design and build resilient strategic responses to conflicting urban agendas, emphasising outcomes of environmental and social-spatial justice.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
Bartlett School of Planning
22 Gordon Street, London WC1H 0QB
T 020 7679 4797
C Filipa Wunderlich
E f.wunderlich@ucl.ac.uk
W www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/planning/programmes

The MSc/Dipl Urban Design & City Planning has a unique focus on the interface between urban design & city planning. Students learn to think in critical, creative and analytical ways across the different scales of the city – from strategic to local – and across urban design, planning, real estate and sustainability.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
Bartlett School of Planning
14 Upper Woburn Place
London WC1H 0NN
T 020 7679 4797
C Matthew Carmona
E m.carmona@ucl.ac.uk

W www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/planning/programmes/postgraduate/mresinter-disciplinary-urban-design

The MRes Inter-disciplinary Urban Design cuts across urban design programmes at The Bartlett, allowing students to construct their study in a flexible manner and explore urban design as a critical arena for advanced research and practice. The course operates as a stand-alone high level masters or as preparation for a PhD.

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Town and Regional Planning
Tower Building, Perth Road
Dundee DD1 4HN
T 01382 385246 / 01382 385048
C Dr Mohammad Radfar / Dr Deepak Gopinath
E m.radfar@dundee.ac.uk
D.Gopinath@dundee.ac.uk
W www.dundee.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/advanced_sustainable_urban_design_msc.htm

The MSc Advanced Sustainable Urban Design (RTPI accredited) is a unique multidisciplinary practice-led programme set in an international context (EU study visit) and engaging with such themes as landscape urbanism, placemaking across cultures and sustainability evaluation as integrated knowledge spheres in the creation of sustainable places.

UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
School of Architecture and 3D Design
Queen Street Studios
Huddersfield HD1 3DH
T 01484 472208
C Dr Ioanni Delsante
E i.delsante@hud.ac.uk
W www.hud.ac.uk/courses/full-time/postgraduate/urban-design-ma/MA;PgDip;PgCert in Urban Design (Full Time or Part Time).

The MA in Urban Design aims to provide students with the essential knowledge and skills required to effectively intervene in the urban design process; develop academic research skills, including critical problem-solving and reflective practice; facilitate design responses to the range of cultural, political, socio-economic, historical, environmental and spatial factors. It also aims to promote responsibility within urban design to consider the wider impact of urban development and regeneration.

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
School of Environment, Education and
Development
Humanities Bridgeford Street,
Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL
T 0161 275 2815
C Dr. Philip Black
E Philip.black@manchester.ac.uk
W www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/study/taught-masters/courses/list/urban-design-and-international-planning-msc/

MSc Urban Design and International Planning (F/T or P/T)
The fully accredited RTPI MSc Urban Design and International Planning explores the relationship between urban design and planning by focusing on internationally significant issues. With a strong project-based applied approach students are equipped with the core knowledge and technical competencies to design across various scales in the city.

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
Department of Architecture and Built
Environment, University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD
T 0115 9513110
C Dr Amy Tang
E yue.tang@nottingham.ac.uk
W www.nottingham.ac.uk/pgstudy/courses/architecture-and-built-environment/sustainable-urban-design-march.aspx

Master of Architecture (MArch) in Sustainable Urban Design is a research and project-based programme which aims to assist the enhancement of the quality of our cities by bringing innovative design with research in sustainability.

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
School of Architecture, The Arts Tower,
Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN
T 0114 222 0341
C Beatrice De Carli
E b.a.decarli@sheffield.ac.uk
W www.shef.ac.uk/architecture/study/pgschool/taught_masters/maud

One year full time MA in Urban Design for postgraduate architects, landscape architects and town planners. The programme has a strong design focus, integrates participation and related design processes, and includes international and regional applications.

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
Department of Architecture
Urban Design Studies Unit
Level 3, James Weir Building
75 Montrose Street, Glasgow G1 1XJ
T 0141 548 4219
C Ombretta Romice
E ombretta.r.romice@strath.ac.uk
W www.udsu-strath.com
The Postgraduate Course in Urban Design is offered in CPD, Diploma and MSc modes. The course is design centred and includes input from a variety of related disciplines.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
35 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LS
T 020 7911 5000 ext 66553
C Bill Erickson
E w.n.erickson@westminster.ac.uk
W www.westminster.ac.uk/architecture-and-interiors-planning-housing-and-urban-design-courses/2019-20/september/full-time/urban-design-ma
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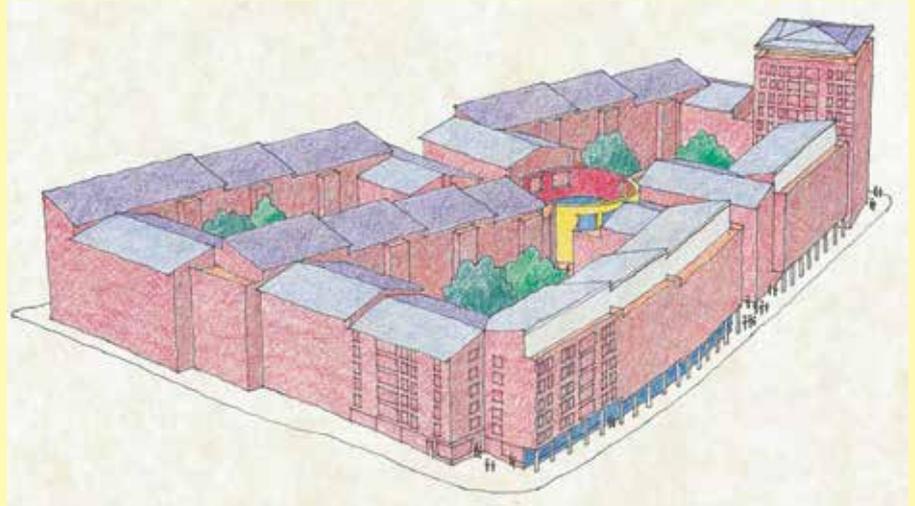
Three Gardens and a Circus

I do enjoy making a counter-scheme. I admit to being a bit equivocal about my competitive instinct, to which the idea of the counter-scheme appeals. It's not all good but I think a context in which counter-schemes can be made, enabling a comparison of attitudes and values, and generating a productive debate, is healthy. I have done a few schemes, and I think that the overall net result has been positive.

The first one I undertook was back in the 1970s. The Victorian Society was campaigning against a damaging redevelopment on Victoria Square in Birmingham, proposed by the Midlands Postal Board and designed by the big commercial developers' favourite architect, the notorious Richard Seifert. Despite the campaign, planning permission had been given for the demolition of the Grade II listed 1892 Head Post Office (HPO), the more utilitarian red brick letter sorting office behind, and the parcels sorting office on the adjacent corner. They were to be replaced by a linked series of commercial office buildings up to 14 storeys high, all to be built in precast concrete units, like Seifert's Centre Point and 1 Kemble Street in London. Those were in fact designed by Seifert's partner George Marsh, educated at Birmingham School of Architecture, and I expect he probably designed the Victoria Square scheme as well.

My colleague Jenny Thomas suggested that, instead of just complaining about Seifert's insensitive proposal, the Society should respond with a counter-scheme showing how it should be done, and I was asked to design it. We proposed retaining the listed HPO, and replacing the other buildings with new perimeter blocks no higher than the HPO's cornice. They provided about two-thirds of the floorspace in Seifert's scheme. We submitted the scheme for planning approval (no fee was required in those pre-Heseltine days) and obtained it. We sent a copy of the approval to the Midlands Postal Board. They invited us to lunch, and announced that they were dropping the Seifert scheme and were going to build our scheme instead. It had worked: delight and amazement all around!

More than forty years later, it's depressing to see how similar the circumstances are in which I am making another counter-scheme in Birmingham. The misplaced enthusiasm for tall buildings in unsuitable locations still flourishes. The same arguments have to be rehearsed and won again. This time the opposition is to a residential development opposite Zellig, where I work, next to the Custard Factory in Digbeth: 72,000m² gross floor area, in seven separate buildings. The highest is 30 storeys high



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and would loom over and cast into shadow the listed buildings on the opposite side of High Street, and the conservation area of which they are a part. The counter-scheme is for my landlord in Zellig, Bennie Gray, as part of his campaign against the developer's scheme. Bennie has a history in urban redevelopment campaigns, going back to Tolmers Square in Euston in 1973, in which he and Christopher Booker were key players.

Instead of seven separate buildings, our counter-scheme is two perimeter blocks with continuous street frontages, on either side of a new pedestrian street cutting through the site, and a circular nodal space at its centre. Bennie wants a snappy name for the scheme, and I have suggested we call it Three Gardens and a Circus, which is a description of its plan form. The building heights are generally uniform, mostly seven storeys. I like to think it is the sort of central European model that Robert Krier would build here, if commissioned: dense coverage, medium-rise, built up to the varying street lines, apartments enclosing shared private gardens, and complex pitched roofs. Like the Victoria Square scheme, there is less floorspace than the developer's scheme proposes, but it could be built more economically. I am writing this column three months before the plan's publication, and we have not yet made the counter-scheme public. We can guess what the developer's response will be, but we don't know what the responses of our neighbours in Digbeth, the planning officers and the planning committee might be. We hope to persuade them that a scheme based on sound urban design values of placemaking and the shaping of streets, is superior to a random assembly of tall rectangular buildings. We shall see; there might be another Endpiece on the subject to be written. ●

Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer



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1 An aerial view of the Three Gardens and a Circus counter-scheme
2 The 'Digbeth Deserves Better' poster for the campaign
3 Collecting signatures for a petition against the proposed development

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