

148 **URBAN
DESIGN**

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**THE VALUE OF
DESIGN REVIEW**



**URBAN
DESIGN
GROUP**



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GETTING DESIGN REVIEW INTO PERSPECTIVE

I would like to believe that design review is seen as an opportunity to improve your design, not trash it. In last night’s conversation over a beer in the Earl of Essex with the UDG’s Treasurer Leo Hamond, we agreed that design review is a bit like Marmite. You either love it (especially if you do it) or hate it (especially if you are being reviewed).

We shouldn’t be afraid of review, after all, most of us start our training being critiqued, and continue to be critiqued by clients and consultants throughout our careers. However, the experience of design review can be as bad as your first driving test, or a French literature exam paper. You think you know what you’re doing, you are prepared, but what questions will you face? Worse, how can you expect a design review panel to be as up to speed on the project as you? Your design team didn’t spend all this effort on a scheme only to have it critiqued to death by a bunch of amateurs.

But, design review can also be a vindication of your scheme and improve the chances of its delivery from the drawing board. And, if your design is, to be quite frank, trash, better to hear it at a design

review, than after it’s built. Just think where we could be today if design review had been around in the 1960s.

The truth is that despite our best intentions, there are very few excellent designers out there who wouldn’t benefit from a little review now and then. Whilst many of us like to think we are as talented in the built environment as for instance, Marcello Gandini of Bertone is in the automotive world, most of us are not. After all, if we were that good, we wouldn’t have design review in the first place; and the Government wouldn’t have enshrined it in policy.

Let’s be honest, urban design is a mongrel discipline (according to Matthew Carmona¹). We and our design teams draw upon a wide breadth of skills, and few of us can even hope to be masters of them all. How much do you know about psychology for example? The built environment is so important, and the effects of poorly designed places are so far-reaching, it is right that design review now embraces a wider latitude of panel members.

However, be careful in how you interpret design review advice (it is after all a review, a sensible pause in the great scheme of things). Design by committee almost always results in banality. Innovation doesn’t happen without mistakes and few ideas come into this world perfectly formed. And when people see faults, too often they criticise and condemn, rather than help to put things right.

Imagine if Marcello Gandini had to take on board all of the comments of today’s inclusive design review panel when he penned the Lamborghini Countach? Flip up wing doors? Nope – not very accessible to wheelchairs. No rear visibility, deafening noise, a planet warming v12 petrol engine? Fat chance of getting that past the sustainability expert... Had Marcello taken all of their advice he would have been lucky to emerge with a bicycle. The world would have been denied one of its most iconic, if imperfect, examples of automotive creativity, and young boys in the 1980s left only with that wall poster of a chimpanzee on a toilet.

This will be my last piece as Chairman of the Urban Design Group before I hand over to my successor, who will be elected at the Urban Design Group Conference. And so rather than look back on what the group has achieved over the last few years, let’s look forward and continue to support the UDG, its Executive and the editors of this journal, and contribute to the platform that we provide to keep urban design fresh and relevant in an ever-changing world.

Thank you. ●

Colin Pullan, Chair of Urban Design Group and Director of Urban Design at Lichfields

¹ Urban Design a Mongrel Discipline
Matthew Carmona – Journal of Urban Design, 2010

¹ Image courtesy of Lamborghini.

DIARY OF EVENTS

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

11 OCTOBER 2018

1:30pm – 5:00pm

Electric Vehicles – Infrastructure and Impact

17 OCTOBER 2018

6:15pm – 8:30pm

Lessons from 2018 Study Tours to Stockholm & to Abruzzi

14 NOVEMBER 2018

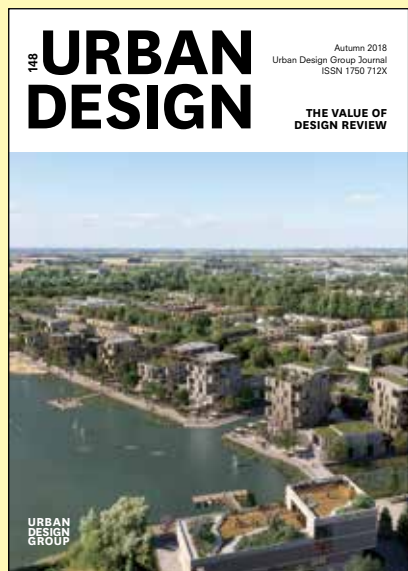
6:15pm

Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture 2018:
Tim Pharoah

12 DECEMBER 2018

6:15pm

UDG Xmas Party



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Document (DFD) by Fletcher Priest
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Civic and RLW

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Collaborative Design Processes

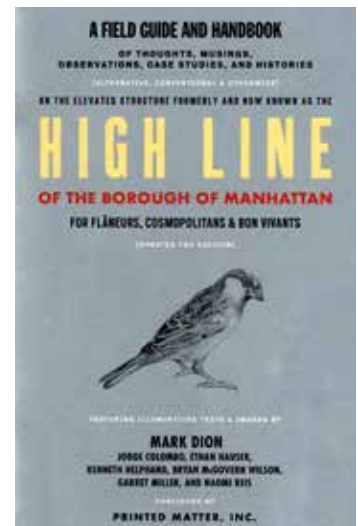
In this issue we look at design review and how it has been helping designers and clients to improve their proposals in a collaborative way, with examples gathered by Matthew Carmona and Wendy Clarke.

It is interesting to note how far this practice has changed since the appointment of the Royal Fine Art Commission in 1924 (whose royal warrant was renewed and extended in 1933) to call to the attention of government departments or other public or quasi-public bodies any project or development which might affect amenities of a national or public character. Its role mostly concerned planning matters in London and projects of national importance. After the Second World War and the reconstruction that followed, the commission's scope was further extended to include the design of new buildings, alterations to existing buildings, and the visual effects of roads and bridges.

This body, which operated from 1924 to 1999 and was sometimes seen as 'a toothless watchdog', was nevertheless the precursor to the open, collaborative and more democratic design review processes now being undertaken. Much of this openness was instilled once the commission had been abolished and the new Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE 1999-2011) established. Design review has continued since in many forms, led by different bodies, paid for by different players, and operating at different scales. It is a good reminder that the design rationale always needs to be clear, and its aims and proposals happily open to scrutiny.

In a similar vein, we are delighted to include in this issue Behind the Image (see p.6), a new feature devised by a group of urban designers: Lionel

Eid, George Garofalakis, Rosie Garvey and Alice Raggett. As urban design commissions rarely include the luxury of being able to design places in great detail, a key tool in practice is to draw upon precedents from elsewhere, to indicate the kind of places that visions, frameworks, masterplans or guidance can deliver. Our first Behind the Image example explores in detail New York's High Line, which since it was first proposed in 1999, has grown to become a much-loved inspiration for renewal in other cities, but often only shown through the use of one image. The High Line offers much to learn from as this 'field guide and handbook' outlines. We hope that this new feature will enable readers to see more of the new exemplars being created around the world, and understand them better. ●



Louise Thomas, independent urban designer

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

TownFest

13 June 2018, The Gallery, London

Before this event at the Gallery, it wasn't clear what a TownFest was; it was planned as a source of inspiration for the National Urban Design Conference in September, with participants invited to give five-minute presentations on the problems and potential ways forward for towns and smaller cities.

Alexandra Rook opened the proceedings referring to what she called towns' Unique Sense of Place (USP); she showed images of Todmorden, Margate and Folkestone as examples with a recognisable character. She praised the way that they settled into the landscape and seemed to emerge from it. Brian Love's subject was Connected Cities, the connection not being the internet but permanent way public transport (i.e. rail based transport). A town along a connecting line could develop on the principle of pedsheds, where the whole place can be reached on foot or cycle, and then be linked to others on the same line to form a city. The largest of them would be the hub, and Stevenage and an arc of towns around it were shown as an example.

From Nottingham, Laura Alvarez

lamented the lack of resources and skills in the Midlands towns where she works. Having done an audit of the public realm related to planning applications, she found that the quality was mostly in the 'not acceptable' category, very rarely 'acceptable', and never 'outstanding'. She pleaded for help to raise standards.

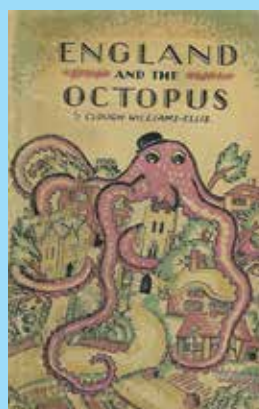
A totally different subject was approached by Mark Shepherd who had been researching the planning response to betting shops. These seem to be granted planning consent, mostly on appeal, far more frequently than could be expected. They seem to cluster in areas of deprivation, where there are vacant shops and where crime has increased. Although more research was needed, Mark had some recommendations for local authorities who want to resist the growth of this undesirable use.

Susan Parham followed with a condensed history of garden cities and a discussion on the future of Letchworth. With design principles to guarantee high quality developments, she reported that the town's expansion could be achieved successfully. Finally Lachlan Anderson-Frank wondered whether Poundbury was the only answer for new housing and looked elsewhere for inspiration. He showed examples ranging from dismal to good cases, but the latter were mostly (although not all) historic or in other countries.



The presentations were followed by workshops where participants were invited to discuss a series of questions loosely related to the future of towns. It was rather obscure and there was no feedback or conclusion. How this contributed to the TownFest evaded me, but I hope others managed to find some coherent messages to take away. ●

Sebastian Loew, architect and planner, writer and consultant



Contribute to *URBAN DESIGN*

Are you interested in contributing an article to *Urban Design*?

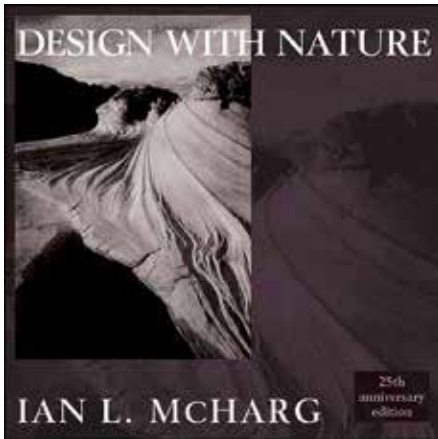
In each issue, we announce the topics to be led by guest editors in the next two or three issues of the journal (see p1 Future Issues). We are always interested in receiving proposals of articles which address these topics, for the topic editors' consideration. In addition, the journal has a number of regular features which are contributed by UDG members, and for which we are always happy to receive more suggestions; these are:

- Reviews of recent urban design-related events around the country
- Books for the Urban Design Library shelves – suggesting and also reviewing seminal urban design texts
- My Favourite Plan – outlining a key plan or map and explaining why it is so important to you

- Viewpoints – discussing ideas on design issues, and
- Dissertation and Project Research – recent work undertaken as part of an educational course, or a research commission.

The UDG is always pleased to receive case studies and project reviews through its annual awards programme, which invites entries each year between July and September for the award categories for practices and local authorities.

Urban Design is now in its 38th year and has a rich history of great contributions from a wide array of UDG followers. If you would like to be one of them, please email your suggestions to the editors: louisethomas@tdrc.co.uk or sebastianloew@btinternet.com. ●



Urban Design Library #27

Design with Nature, Ian L McHarg, originally published by Natural History Press 1969, re-issued by Wiley as 25th Anniversary Edition in 1992

It seems appropriate that Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature* should be taken down from the *Urban Design* library shelves immediately after Nan Fairbrother's *New Lives New Landscapes* (UD147, p26). Both Fairbrother and McHarg were landscape architects and both books were published close to 1970. *Design with Nature* preceded *New Lives* by a year. By coincidence it also seemed appropriate that I should be rereading *Design with Nature* whilst enjoying the dune-backed beaches of western France.

There are marked differences in approach and style but both books reflect the growing concern at that time of the impact of mankind on the natural environment, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* had been published only seven years earlier in 1962, and the call for environmental professions to work more closely together was increasing. Here the similarities end. *Design with Nature* had been commissioned by the American Conservation Foundation and grew from a series of lectures that McHarg had given at the University of Pennsylvania. These lecture-based elements are interleaved with case studies, also derived from work done in Pennsylvania.

The lecture origins of the bulk of the text is clear and McHarg's Scottish origins shine through. There is something of the Presbyterian minister about his style and he writes with a passion that verges on anger. By interleaving theory and case studies the danger of the book becoming solely a polemic is avoided. Throughout the book there are dramatic illustrations and fine graphics, which are especially strong.

Following an introduction by no lesser character than Lewis Mumford, the opening chapter *City and Countryside*, establishes McHarg's commitment to the joy of the natural environment and his strong distaste for

the ruthless destruction of nature that he sees as being wrought by narrow minded single focus action. McHarg was writing at the time of the Vietnam War and the first space missions. Mankind could destroy jungles with Agent Orange, yet could look down on planet earth and see, for the first time, the isolated and self-contained nature of our small world.

The first of the case studies follows the initial scene setting chapters and as this is McHarg writing, it is not simply a case study but is dramatically entitled *Sea and Survival*. It is here that my experience of the French coast springs to mind. The focus of the study is the dune-backed coast of the American Eastern seaboard and the destructive consequences of past failures to recognise the frailty of the area that resulted in the loss of both homes and habitat. McHarg uses this to make the case for more regulatory planning. The same cavalier approach to these frail areas could be seen on the French coast in the early seventies. Today the dunes are protected and the earlier free-for-all is now under careful management, a McHarg effect perhaps, but there is more to *Design with Nature* than dunes.

There are six discursive chapters setting out McHarg's underlying philosophy, separated by eight practical studies. The studies cover a range of scales, from a restricted valley in Maryland to the ambitious Comprehensive Landscape Plan for Washington DC.

McHarg follows the dune study with his exploration of the opposing views of mankind's role in the world: either as 'master of the universe' or being submerged in nature. He clearly favours the latter view and the next case study looks at what McHarg sees as the tyranny of the highway engineer. He seeks to demonstrate that there is a better way of highway planning that takes land characteristics and especially local ecology as the guiding principle rather than simple crude highway geometry.

Taking space exploration as the means of showing the interconnected nature of the world and the need or a place for nature McHarg then looks at a research project Metropolitan Open Space from a Natural Process carried out in Pennsylvania University. The notion of using the analysis of land characteristic is developed further to identify a strategy for urban open space that goes beyond what he quaintly describes as 'organised sweating'. Having examined the way in which landscape and landform have values, the book moves on to look at the co-operative action of landowners in rural Baltimore and the way in which a local plan of action can be developed. The key to preparing a successful plan is seen as co-operation and a deep understanding of the local ecology.

As the book progresses, theory and practice are increasingly blended together and McHarg demonstrates the use of his favourite tool, overlays. It is here that the graphics serve so well. The mapping of the elements that compose a site, region or city are brought together so that previously diverse

elements are blended together to enable a hierarchy of locational opportunities and design solutions to be integrated and identified. The overlay or sieve technique had been used by geographers for many years and should not be confused with the sieve analysis process used by construction engineers. McHarg demonstrated that by categorising the various elements that make up an area it was possible to bring together diverse issues ranging from hydrology to scenic value, from slope to ethnicity, and use this merged information to create a broadly based solution to developmental problems. Whether such an apparently rational process is as truly objective as McHarg suggests is perhaps debatable. It is certainly convincingly presented and has been much used.

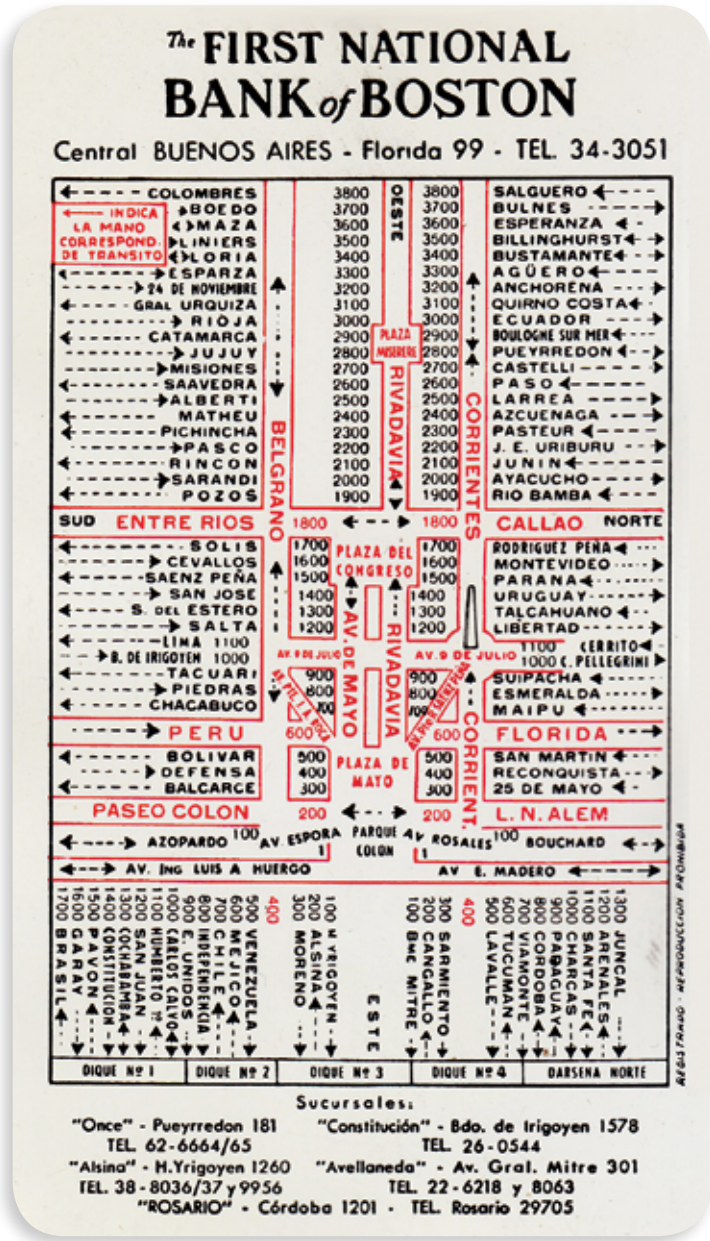
McHarg is at great pains to show that mankind is not the only force on earth worthy of consideration, we are but a part of a whole world system. To quote McHarg:

'Our eyes do not divide us from the world, but unite us with it. Let this be known to be true. Let us then abandon the simplicity of separation and give unity its due. Let us abandon that has been our way and give expression to the potential harmony of man-nature. The world is abundant, we require a deference born of understanding to fulfil man's promise. Man is a uniquely conscious creature who can perceive and express. He must become the steward of the biosphere. To do this he must design with nature.' ●

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

READ ON

Gore, Al, 2006, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It*, Rodale Books
Carson, Rachel 1962/1977, *Silent Spring*, Houghton Mifflin and Pelican
Fairbrother, Nan, *New Lives, New Landscapes*, 1970/1972, Architectural Press and Penguin (Pelican) Books



CURRENT POSITION

Freelance consultant and co-editor of *Urban Design*

Experience

Many years teaching planning at South Bank University and urban design at the University of Westminster
Urban design training for local authorities and practices
Writing on urban design and related issues
Design review

Education

Architecture, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina
Diploma in Town Planning, Architectural Association, London
PhD, Reading University

Specialisation

Jack of all trades

Ambitions

Not many left...

My Favourite Plan: Sebastian Loew

First National Bank of Boston map of Buenos Aires

WHY I LIKE IT...

Is it a plan? Is it a map? Is it a diagram? It is a piece of plasticised card that fits into a wallet. Well before Google maps or mobile phones, this card was given to clients of the First National Bank of Boston in Buenos Aires at the end of each year. On one side was a calendar (1961 in this case) and on the other a map of the central area of the city.

The city's layout is a grid of approximately 100m square blocks. Each block's addresses are within 100 numbers and correspond approximately to the position of the entrance within the block. The blocks number start at 0 on the river (at the bottom of

the map) in one direction, and on either side of the main avenue at the centre of the map (Av. Rivadavia) in the other direction. But unlike Manhattan where the streets are East or West on either side of 5th Avenue, the north point in our card is on the right, west is at the top and east at the bottom. So for east-west streets 560 is an address in block 500, five blocks from the river, and some 60m from the beginning of the block. North-south streets change names at the central avenue and it helps to know which side of it you are looking for. Little arrows on the edge of the map tells you the direction of the traffic on each street.

The plan has no scale and is not a realistic representation of the city but an abstraction that helps orientation.

Once you have learned these basic rules, finding a location in the city is simpler than having a satnav and does not need a phone connection. Most people know from memory the order of streets at least in the area they frequently use, and will know how far they are from a particular address. Fifty years

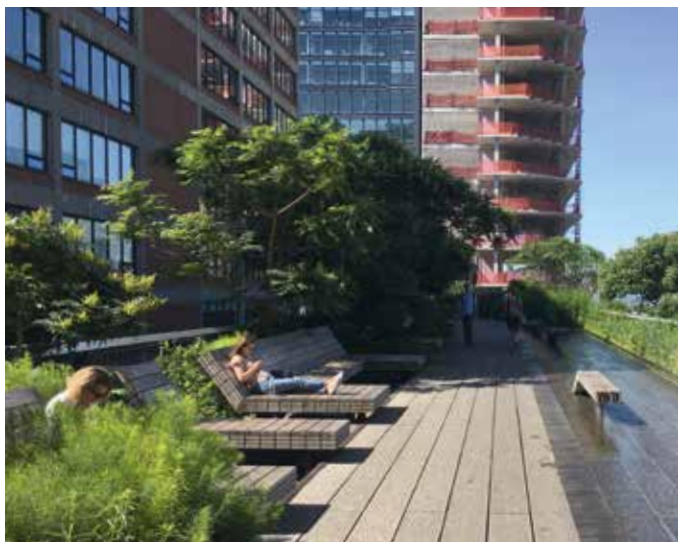
after leaving the city, I can still recite the names of streets in the right order, in one of the map's quartiles. And if looking for any address in the city centre, a quick look at the card will help me to find it.

WHAT TO LEARN FROM IT...

I love the rational design and presentation of this helpful piece of kit and am amazed by the fact that its form and dimensions resemble that of a phone screen, which wasn't in anybody's imagination at the time. It shows that we can manage well with low-tech design products, provided the urban structure is simple and rational. For a long time, urban designers have been advocates of grid developments and many cities in the New World are based on such grids (so were those founded by the Romans). These can be represented in a diagrammatic form and easily understood by visitors as well as locals. And contrary to the myth, they are not necessarily monotonous. ●

The High Line, New York

A redundant elevated railway line stretching almost 1.5 miles along the west side of Manhattan, now converted into a linear park



In use: Even in its narrow sections, the High Line is layered to allow different activities to coexist in parallel: from resting (left), to movement (middle) and play areas (right).



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

Lionel Eid, George Garofalakis, Rosie Garvey and Alice Raggett



Details: The public realm celebrates unique aspects of the site. Historic railway lines and wheels are incorporated as details within the landscape and urban furniture.



Peak and off-peak: At its busiest, the High Line offers a range of spaces to accommodate relaxation and peak pedestrian flows. When all is quiet, an army of gardeners work to keep the park attractive and fit for purpose during all seasons.



Entertainment: The deliberate use of stepped seating and visual frames create a sense of performance in the streets below for the audience of High Line visitors.



Thresholds: As pedestrians walk along the promenade, they cross many thresholds: from compact urban environments to vast, unexpected vistas of the skyline.



Reflection: A programme of temporary artworks, seasonal planting and philanthropic sponsorship ensures that the High Line is constantly evolving and maintaining its appeal to locals and tourists. Occasionally, popularity is at odds with its delicate landscape edges where boundary wires and a high maintenance regime have been adopted.



Missed Opportunities in Green Infrastructure

Rosalie Callway reports on an investigation into green infrastructure evaluation and delivery

A growing body of research focuses on the values that green infrastructure (GI) or soft landscaping might bring to new neighbourhood developments. There has been less research however examining how GI is evaluated by masterplanning practitioners and whether formal evaluative practices actually affect what is designed and delivered on-site. In this study I have looked at how GI is currently understood and evaluated by different actors involved in masterplanning processes to see if the sustainable neighbourhood standard BREEAM Communities (BC), created by the Building Research Establishment (BRE), has improved how GI is considered.

Six English neighbourhood-scale projects were studied between 2015 and 2017, reflecting three broad types of projects: estate regeneration, urban infill and rural-urban extension. In each type, two sites were studied, one that had adopted the BC standard and one that had not. 48 practitioners and local actors involved in the masterplans were interviewed and the planning documents for each site reviewed.

In broad terms, the technical evaluations for each of the sites conducted by the design teams and consultants were found to be fairly consistent, including surveys relating to GI such as Landscape Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs), ecology, tree and flood risk surveys.

To examine the treatment of particular GI issues, an in-depth analysis of 13 'evaluative episodes' was then undertaken. In 11 of the episodes, GI recommendations established at the outline masterplan design stage were compromised or watered down during the detailed design and construction stages. Such compromises occurred regardless of the use of the BC standard. Four main findings emerged from the study which point to why GI was compromised in the majority of the episodes:

- GI is still not an established concept for



1

all masterplanning practitioners

- GI is principally treated as an object for anthropocentric intentions
- There is a weak sense of responsibility for GI by the dominant actors, and
- There are limited opportunities for local engagement in formal GI evaluation.

LACK OF SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF GI

Overall, key GI principles, such as long-term ecosystem functioning, inclusive provision, multi-functionality and multi-scalar connectivity did not seem to be commonly understood by practitioners, and few rules or policies clearly promoted this multi-faceted view of GI. Developers, housing associations, residents and some consultants tended to refer to one or two specific functions (e.g. ecological conservation or flood relief) rather than the wider multiple benefits. Urban designers, landscape architects and ecologists who worked directly with GI presented a broader understanding, as did local authority officers. However, local officials referred to conflicting policies and resource constraints, such as five-year housing targets and budget cuts, which meant

pressure to compromise on GI principles.

For example, unless legal protections were involved or the GI onsite was particularly large, post-planning consent checks tended to be desk-based reviews rather than on-site checks. As the local authority biodiversity officer for Infill 2 said 'We've got 1000s of applications a year. No, we don't have time to go'.

The inconsistent definition of GI within rules, guidance and cultural practice also limited the prioritisation of GI over more familiar evaluative intentions, such as time management, cost control and hard infrastructure; the arboriculture assessor for Estate 2 reported that: 'In truth trees are so insignificant they are often an afterthought... The biggest financial problem is not mitigating [for the loss of] the trees. It's the wrong trees affecting the site footprint. If that means a loss of units that's going to hit the purse strings'.

The narrow interpretation of GI during evaluation had direct implications for decision-making. For example, evaluative recommendations supporting ecological connectivity were poorly supported by regulations and norms, resulting in compromises

	Estate 1*	Estate 2	Infill 1*	Infill 2	RUE 1*	RUE 2
Masterplan type	Estate regeneration	Estate regeneration	Urban infill development	Urban infill development	Rural urban extension	Rural urban extension
Location	Central London	Outer London	North East England	Inner London	South West England	South West England
Area	28 hectares	25 hectares	12.1 hectares	1.85 hectares	47 hectares	73 hectares
Dwellings	3,575 units	2,517 units	800 units	257 units	1400 units	4,000 units
Density	125 dwellings per hectare	101 dwellings per hectare	66 dwellings per hectare	138 dwellings per hectare	30 dwellings per hectare	55 dwellings per hectare
Affordable units	50%	50%	25%	35%	30%	35%
Client	Local authority and housing association	Local authority and housing association	Local authority and housing association	Local authority and housing association	Local authority	HCA / Local authority and housing association
Timeframe	2010 – 2032	2011-2027	2011-2032	2012 – 2020	2011-2035	2012-2037

on three sites (Infill 2, RUE 1 and RUE 2). At RUE 1, despite earlier commitments to make ecological connections to a neighbouring ancient woodland by using soft Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs), natural hedgerows and tree planting, the developer increased car parking provision due to minimum requirements at the detailed and construction stages, cut back on tree planting, introduced more hard SUDs, and planted predominantly ornamental miniature hedges.

ECO-CENTRIC OR ANTHROPOCENTRIC?

A commonly held view about GI is that its intentions are predominantly anthropocentric. In terms of evaluation, the arboriculture, noise, flood, energy, microclimate, overshadowing and transport surveys did not formally consider GI as a subject or living system. For example, arboriculture surveyors seemed more concerned with ensuring that trees were safe for humans. Even where trees were classified as good quality (A or B categories under BS 8537) they were often sacrificed to deliver other development priorities, such as highways, car parking, underground utilities (episodes 7, 8, 10 and 12). Energy models, flood surveys, overshadowing and microclimate surveys also did not formally recognise that GI might be affected by or mitigate negative development impacts. For example, in episode 2 (Estate 1) trees and vegetation were not considered in

a transport survey for their potential buffering role, protecting against visual, air, soil, water, and noise pollution, and providing physical protection for pedestrians. GI was not proposed until neighbouring residents protested about their loss of visual amenity.

The problem with equating green infrastructure with grey infrastructure is that ecological systems risk being treated in the same manner, as objects for human use and not as living organisms with their own agency and functions, intrinsically valuable in their own right. One interviewee felt that the GI concept itself was framed against ecological agency: ‘Green infrastructure is more for people.... You can’t make a wildlife site multi-use... you know the usual parlance. “We’ll put a road through the heathland. It won’t matter if the badgers get run over. That’s hard luck you know”’. (Local ecologist, RUE 2).

This highlights a tension between the anthropocentric views that underpin terminology such as green infrastructure, ecological services and natural capital, and an eco-centric view where human needs and intentions are but a part of a wider ecological context (Lent, 2017).

WEAK GI RESPONSIBILITY

Unlike financial and hard infrastructure evaluations, which were conducted regularly, most GI-specific evaluations were heavily front-loaded at the outline design stage (developer, Estate 2). This front-loading was

- 1 The soft SUDs system in this scheme was linked to the existing sewerage system for unnecessary second treatment (Infill 1)
- 2 The data on the six projects studied between 2015-2017
- 3 The 13 evaluative episodes in which the initial GI recommendations were compromised.

encouraged by planning rules and norms. During the detailed design and construction stages however, GI-related evaluations were conducted more intermittently and often by consultants peripheral to the core design team, weakening evaluative accountability at those stages. This was demonstrated by failures to plant the agreed number of trees in Estate 2, Infill 1, and RUE 2), construct functional soft SUDs (Infill 1), or establish a living green roof (Infill 2).

Evaluative responsibility requires a clear intention by practitioners to respond and track evaluative recommendations. This study points however to constrained, risk-averse and pragmatic evaluative behaviour by both developers and local authorities that undermine GI intentions. This was particularly true when evaluating forms of GI perceived to be relatively new, such as soft SUDs, green roofs and geographically-linked landscape design. The episodes also highlighted imbalanced evaluative negotiations that favoured more culturally embedded intentions (e.g. cost control). For example, soft SUDs and green roofs proposed at outline design stages were later dropped due to installation and maintenance cost reasons (Estate 2, RUE 2 and Infill 1). Biodiverse green roofs were downgraded to cheaper, single plant variety (Sedum) mat roofs during the construction (Infill 2). Similarly, good quality A and B category trees were identified for removal to make way for hard infrastructure and were not considered for

Site	GI evaluative episode	Decision-making stage	Dominant actor	GI response
Estate 1*	1. Inclusive view of park	Outline to detailed plan	Developer (Local authority – LA)	Compromised
	2. Neighbours street view	Outline plan Detailed plan	Design team Design team	Compromised Prioritised
	3. Overshadowing of gardens and public space	Outline – detailed plan Detailed plan	Developer National regulator	Compromised Prioritised
Estate 2	4. Courtyard block trees	Outline to Post-construction	Design team Developer (LA)	Compromised
	5. Trees and allotment external to block	Detailed plan Construction	Design team Developer	Prioritised Compromised
Infill 1*	6. Soft SuDS	Outline to detailed plan Construction	Design team Developer	Prioritised Compromised
Infill 2	7. Street trees	Outline – construction	Developer	Compromised
	8. Link to local park (and SINC)	Outline plan Detailed plan to construction	Design team Developer	Prioritised Compromised
	9. Green roof	Outline – detailed plan Construction	Design Team Developer	Prioritised Compromised
RUE 1*	10. Link to ancient woodland (and SINC)	Outline – construction	Developer	Compromised
	11. Soft SuDS	Outline – detailed plan Detailed plan	Local authority Developer (phase2)	Prioritised Compromised
RUE 2	12. Street trees	Outline plan Detailed plan	Design team Developer (private)	Prioritised Compromised
	13. Amphibian wildlife corridor	Outline – detailed plan Construction	Developer (private) Developer (LA)	Compromised Compromised

4-5 A scheme which originally included street trees along the curved frontage, was revised removing them entirely when the utilities were redesigned. The proposed character area with trees in the foreground, which were later removed (RUE 2)

on-site relocation, again for financial reasons (Estate 1, Infill 1, RUE 1 and RUE 2).

EXCLUSIVE GI EVALUATION

Local residents, associations and park groups were not expected to engage with most technical evaluations relating to GI, including Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), microclimate, overshadowing, flooding, noise, arboriculture and ecology surveys. Instead, they were engaged through more generic design workshops and public exhibitions. At all six sites, these groups displayed considerable knowledge and commitment to aspects of GI, but indicated that there were limited opportunities to engage with the formal surveys. Developers and their consultants talked about wanting to avoid consultation overload and conflict. But the exclusion of local groups reduced developer’s intentions towards local GI recommendations, and damaged local trust and general engagement.

A second aspect of inclusivity relates to the distributional impacts of design proposals (Holland, 2014). The formal GI evaluations studied here did not consider who benefitted or lost out from different design decisions. For example, the LVIA in Estate 1 and Infill 2 did not consider the impact on social housing tenants. Affordable housing tenants were not allocated flats with a view over neighbouring local parks, so that these units could be sold at a higher value to private owners. Similarly in Estate 2, only private owners had access to a roof garden on one block. External rules and norms did not support a more inclusive or equitable distribution of GI functions, except in Estate 1 where legislation relating to Compulsory Purchase Orders enabled the CPO inspector to evaluate the social sustainability impact of loss of light to the public realm (episode 3). More opportunities are needed for early and deliberative dialogue about masterplan intentions regarding GI, increasing accountability about the impacts of alternative options, with sufficient space and resources for dialogue and learning.

ROLE OF BREEAM COMMUNITIES (BC)

The study suggests that the BC standard played a limited role in shaping how GI was evaluated and responded to in the three sites that applied it. Existing norms and accepted practice appeared to be more influential in shaping how practitioners addressed GI. To affect greater change, BC

needs to be more closely aligned with how masterplans are actually developed and delivered. All planning and delivery stages need to be reviewed (not just the design stage as BC does now), and evaluative practices where key decisions are made (i.e. cost appraisal, utilities and highways appraisal) need to be specifically targeted. BRE is currently reviewing BC, which offers an opportunity to address the gaps identified by this and other research.

In the context of the narrow GI conceptualisation and the paucity of tools to evaluate GI more roundly, it is understandable that GI intentions are compromised. More work is needed on the definition and evaluation of GI intentions, especially during construction and in-use stages, including clarifying who should take evaluative responsibility at the latter stages, and the resources required. There is also a need to consider how GI might be better dealt with in formal evaluations such as LVIA’s, to reflect inclusive, long-term, multi-functional and multi-scalar GI systems. ●

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Urban Black Holes Reimagined

Hagar Melamed describes best practice for integrating former urban military bases into the urban fabric



In many cities around the world one can come across high fences surrounding inaccessible, sometimes heavily guarded areas. These 'urban black holes' form points of singularity within the city, attracting people and goods into them, but to the public eye they give nothing away, and can only be observed indirectly through the influence that they exert on their environment.

THE PULL OF URBAN BLACK HOLES

Much like stellar black holes, urban black holes generate gravitational forces created by their physical and nonphysical features. The former consist of land uses such as government and local authority institutions, hospitals, factories of national importance or military bases. The activities taking place within them usually require a high level of security control, ownership and management by a national organization. This results in physical characteristics such as having a large urban site, being gated and guarded, and creating a sterile surrounding public realm.

Urban military bases are an extreme case of an urban black hole. Occupying large urban tracts of land, surrounded by fences and heavily guarded, they present themselves as uniform impermeable urban islands. The activity taking place within them is mostly confidential and vital for civilian population safety and security, but what actually happens there remains obscured. Urban military bases have significant historical, financial and social roles, both locally and nationally. Historically, these are the places where national identities and history have been written. Financially they are

active players in local and national markets as job providers and products consumers. And socially they are providers of services such as health, safety and civilian order.

Urban military bases in cities are in contrast with and disturb organic urban development. Their scale, fences and walls result in impermeable blocks within a living urban fabric. Employees and services providers enter urban military bases, sometimes *en masse*, but all of this activity happens behind high level security and surveillance, and contributes nothing to the surrounding street life. Moreover, due to security needs, the surrounding streets are often devoid of street furniture or greenery.

OVERCOMING URBAN BLACK HOLES

The periodic process of military reorganisation results in different military needs, which is often followed by land disposals. This has been recurring the world over for many years and more future base disposals can be expected in the coming years as threats and military expertise change. It is recognised that the closure of urban military bases has the potential to become the catalyst for urban regeneration and gaining public benefits (Doak 1999); however there are numerous challenges to achieving a successful integration with the city.

Military land disposal, particularly in urban areas, is a prominent topic in current professional fora and conferences. Recently, at the Festival of Israeli Architecture 2018, a leading conference of the Israeli architecture and design professionals community, Brigadier General architect Orly Shtern (from the Israeli Defence Force) reviewed the disposal

process of an Israeli military base located in an area of prime demand. Shtern emphasised the potential of the disposal process to create wide circles of public influence.

However, existing practice lacks focus on urban design approaches and clear criteria for the successful disposal of military bases. The study described here aimed to fill this gap and offer urban design guidelines for the integration of these urban black holes into the city.

METHODOLOGY

The main aims of this study were:

- To describe urban black holes' characteristics and types
- To examine urban military bases as extreme cases of urban black holes
- To develop criteria for more successful urban military base land disposals and propose urban design guidelines for their reintegration into the city.

A literature review was used to cover the existing base of knowledge, mental maps and supplementary questionnaires to understand perceptions of urban black holes, and examples and case studies to learn from existing places, with interviews with professionals focused on confirming the criteria for successful disposal processes. These criteria became the basis for the proposed guidelines.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

The case of the Royal Arsenal, located in south east London, was chosen because of its historical importance and successful regeneration process. Established at the beginning of the 16th century as a Royal dockyard, the site was developed for 400 years, until it became an important national centre of research, development, testing and manufacturing for the Royal Navy. Following several growth cycles that were triggered mainly by war times, the Royal Arsenal reached its peak production and employment levels during the First World War with more than 80,000 employees. Despite its high national and local importance, the Royal Arsenal remained secret, hidden from the public by high walls and guarded heavily. It appeared in the A-Z street map of London as a blank space.

From the 1950s onwards, military activity on-site gradually declined. What was once an economic engine for the region and a national asset for defence and technology became

- 1 Aerial image of the Sarona Compound, Tel Aviv. Image by Itamar Grinberg, source: <https://www.israel21c.org/postcard-from-israel-sarona/>
- 2 The Sarona Compound, source: Elad Cohen
- 3 Mahane Rabin and Sarona Compounds in Tel Aviv, source: Google maps, edited by the author
- 4 The Royal Arsenal Aerial View, source: Google maps, edited by the author

‘one of the most economically disadvantaged districts of the UK’ (Doak 1999). In 1993 the Greenwich Waterfront Development Partnership set out a redevelopment strategy for the entire area and the masterplan, developed under an overarching theme of the historical context, was completed in 2004.

The redeveloped site can be considered a success in urban design terms, as reflected in the mental maps and questionnaires prepared in this study. It is well connected to nearby neighbourhoods, rich with historical context, inclusive and welcoming to visitors and residents. The open space network is reinforced by effective links to the River Thames. The public realm is not very vibrant at the moment but this is likely to change with the opening of future cultural attractions and further residential development. The main street and entrance square are planned as a mix of uses such as retail, food places and cultural nodes surrounded by residential areas. This gives an enriched user experience with an added value of the historical context, without being focused purely on consumption activities. This also contributes to its social integration with the surrounding local community since the story of the Royal Arsenal, presented in street signs and historical elements, is the story of their community.

The second case is Hakiryra, the former name of the operating military base Mahane Rabin and the adjacent disposed Sarona compound in Tel Aviv, Israel. This was chosen because the qualities of the disposal process outcomes are equivocal and there is much to learn from them.

The Sarona settlement was established during the end of the 19th century by the German Templars. The place was considered beautiful because of its ordered layout, house styles and extensive landscaping. Following political turmoil the settlement was converted into a quarantine centre, and later into a British military and police base. At the end of the British Mandate period, Sarona was given to the Israeli army and became Hakiryra, a significant place in the early days of the Israeli state as its first informal capital. In the following decades the base was intensively developed, but disposal attempts did not come to fruition due to operational, political and financial reasons.

The initiation of a national urban military base disposal scheme in the 1990s made the disposal of Sarona compound possible. A zoning plan was approved in 2006 and the

redeveloped compound was opened to the public in 2014, with retail and food places, a visitors’ centre and a small museum. Sarona today is vibrant and crowded with visitors at all times, but its urban design success is questionable.

Beautifully preserved and loved by the general public, the main criticism, expressed by local architecture publicists and professionals, is about the superficial user experience that this place offers as it is subjected to the ruthless dominance of capitalism. The public realm of Sarona is appealing to the eye but lacks the added value of the historical context or any other social or cultural values. This makes the place dull and exclusive – relevant only to those able to participate in its celebration of shopping.

THE PROFESSIONALS’ VIEW

Identifying indicators for the successful disposal of urban military land is of significance as it creates a shared base of knowledge from which future projects can learn.

The common indicators, which arose in the interviews with professionals relate to the financial, social and cultural aspects of the disposal process and outcomes. They include good planning, appropriate and genuine public participation, an appropriate alternative for the disposed military facility, proper integration with the urban fabric, the financial success of the new redevelopment, the flexibility of the masterplan, and preserving the historical context in the new design.

However the psychological aspect of the disposal process and outcomes is of no less importance since urban black holes are perceived by their boundaries, while their core remains unknown to the public. Being able to change public perceptions is a key indicator in the success of turning urban black holes into liveable places, seamlessly integrated with the surrounding urban fabric.

LET THE SUN SHINE IN

‘Letting the sun shine in’ is the overarching theme of the proposed urban design guidelines in this study. Two mechanisms are recommended during all phases of the design process: designing from the inside out – exposing the hidden physical and contextual cores of urban black holes to the public; and designing from the outside in – dissolving the perceived boundaries of urban black holes. The resulting proposed urban design guidelines are:



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1. Structure a programme for public consultation meetings at key milestones of the disposal process to create an open dialogue and build trusting relationships with existing and future residents.
2. Ensure a strong framework for the masterplan, which enables flexibility for other issues to be resolved in response to changing circumstances and needs.
3. Plan a mix of uses and ensure a critical mass of non-commercial land uses to encourage a wide range of social groups to engage and enjoy the place.
4. Add value and context to the public realm by using historical wayfinding, heritage signage, public street art, street furniture and landscaping related to the story of the place.

Implementing those guidelines should assist in the crucial process of opening up and letting the sun shine into urban black holes. It is this delicate transformation which can eventually result in enriching the adjacent urban fabric while retaining the desired core values of the disposed land. ●

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This study was prepared as a part of a Master’s degree in Urban Design at the University of Westminster, London in 2017.

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From Scandinavian Exemplar Projects to Export Programmes

Paul Woodville discusses the ongoing evolution of urban planning and environmental design programmes



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Ever since a young Ralph Erskine arrived in Sweden in the 1930s 'with a bicycle, a rucksack and a sleeping bag', architects, planners and politicians alike have been travelling to Scandinavia to visit exemplar housing and planning projects. Many Scandinavian cities have even made something of a business of this, with a number of organisations now providing tours and arranging visits for foreign delegations. More significantly, many projects in Scandinavia are being developed specifically as a springboard for exporting a range of innovative urban technologies, design and consultancy services.

There has always been a healthy two-way exchange of ideas in urban planning and housing design between the UK and Scandinavia. Ralph Erskine stayed in Sweden and subsequently re-imported his distinctive urban planning approach back to the UK, combining his earlier experience of working on Welwyn Garden City and his English domestic architecture sensibilities with a Scandinavian focus on community participation and climatic design, most famously at Byker in Newcastle. As well as being an early pioneer in environmental design, Erskine also pioneered the international export of planning and design services, having worked in Scandinavia, the UK, France, Holland, Italy and Canada.

Environmental and urban infrastructure technologies developed in the Nordic countries are now also to be seen in many parts of the world. Much has been written about the physical planning (both good and bad)

and technical infrastructure of exemplar urban planning projects in Nordic countries, especially the better known projects in Sweden. What has been less well covered is the policy context behind these projects, and the policy initiatives currently being implemented to promote environmental and design innovation in the Nordic countries.

HOUSING EXHIBITIONS

Historically, the Scandinavian tradition for design and housing exhibitions has been one of the key drivers of design innovation in the Nordic countries. One of the best known, Malmö Boo1 completed in 2001, is contemporary with the Greenwich Millennium Village project in London (masterplanned by Ralph Erskine in his old age). Boo1 has been followed up by a number of showcase housing projects across the Nordic countries such as the Viiki project in Finland, Hammarby Sjöstad, and most recently in Sweden, the Vallastaden housing exhibition.

Norway has also held several housing exhibitions; however, these have consisted primarily of smaller sites, rather than the more extensive and central urban projects typical of Sweden and Finland. However, Norway's most significant contribution has been its exemplar project programmes, which have provided inspiration for wider pan-Scandinavian programmes. While there are many commonalities between the Nordic countries, there are also many differences in their respective planning systems. Compared to many countries in Europe where

the public sector has a more direct role in creating and delivering masterplans, the Norwegian planning system is slightly closer to the UK in requiring public-private cooperation. Over the last ten years, a series of programmes and knowledge-sharing networks, focused around the delivery of exemplar projects have acted as one of the main fora for public-private cooperation and dialogue aimed at encouraging innovation in the built environment. There are also several interesting parallels between these programmes and some of the work originally carried out by CABE in terms of the use of informal tools for design governance: assistance, evaluation, promotion, knowledge and evidence (Carmona, 2017).

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

The prototype for the Norwegian model for exemplar project programmes was first tested as a result of Stavanger being European Capital of Culture in 2008. Stavanger is often referred to as Europe's largest timber city, with its historic core consisting of approximately 8,000 timber buildings. One of the projects within the Capital of Culture programme was Norwegian Wood, aimed at promoting the use of timber in construction and urban development projects in order to explore and reinvigorate Stavanger's identity.

The project was set up as a partnership between the main local authorities in the region, a range of government agencies and departments, private partners from the timber industry, as well as the project developers themselves. Fifteen exemplar projects were selected, ranging from individual buildings to larger urban housing developments. Common to each was a requirement for design innovation, especially in the use of timber and environmental design. By participating, individual projects gained access to a network of specialist design consultants, as well as the opportunity to take part in seminars, site visits and conferences. An exhibition was subsequently displayed at various locations around the world.

FUTURE CITIES PROGRAMME

This model for developing knowledge-sharing networks, focused on the delivery and promotion of exemplars was then applied on a national scale as part of the Future Cities programme - a government initiative covering a broad spectrum of issues, from public transport to district heating and flood management. The Future Cities initiative's

1 The 2017 Vallastaden Housing Exhibition, Linköping, Sweden. Photograph by Vallastaden

2 Kristiansand Town Hall Quarter, an environmental regeneration and conservation project within the Future Cities exemplar project programme. Architects: HRTB Arkitekter. Photographs by Rambøll.

programme consisted of urban planning and building projects delivered as part of a national network through which specialist design guidance, facilitation and project promotion services were available to project participants.

It was decided to focus this programme on the regions, but to run a parallel programme addressing the more specific challenges of the wider Oslo metropolitan area - the FutureBuilt programme. Its aim is to develop 50 exemplar projects in masterplanning, public realm and building projects that will 'inspire and change practices in both the private and public sector'.

Common to both programmes is the requirement for a detailed quality element for each project. As well as addressing project-specific design issues, these include a fixed requirement for a minimum 50 per cent reduction in carbon emissions, against benchmark standards for the project as whole, so that transport, energy and construction emissions are considered together. Another requirement is for each project to demonstrate design qualities that define them as exemplars. Both programmes share a common platform for promoting these projects, cooperate on the development of design guidelines and technical standards (using the same network of specialist advisers), as well as organising conferences and events.

In the last eight years, FutureBuilt has also helped to facilitate over twenty design competitions in the Oslo region. These have ranged from masterplans to individual buildings and ideas competitions aimed at promoting cycling.

EVALUATION AND CRITICISM

An evaluation of the Future Cities programme identified one of its key successes as being the creation of a forum for dialogue between the public and private sectors, local and central government, which should be maintained. Following the completion of the Future Cities programme in 2015, the Bylivsenteret (Centre for Urban Vitality) was established. Its aim is to build on previous programmes and act as a strategic partner for local authorities that can 'provide professional advice, practical assistance and planning tools' (Bylivsenteret, 2016). The FutureBuilt programme will run until 2020, but is expected to continue in a new format after that date.

3 The Bo01 Housing Exhibition, Malmö, Sweden. Photograph by Aline Lessner (imagebanksweden.se).

4 The exhibition about the Norwegian Wood exemplar project programme. Photograph by Nasjonalmuseet

The FutureBuilt programme has not been without its critics. The head of the Norwegian Housebuilders' Association has argued that there should be more focus on achieving a greater volume of house building, rather than encouraging the adoption of design standards above and beyond the minimum regulations. Referring to recent projects, FutureBuilt countered this by pointing out that quality, volume and economy were not mutually exclusive. Participation in the programme is not compulsory, but a number of private developers have been keen to take an active role via the development of exemplar projects. Grønn Byggallianse, a membership organisation for developers, is also an official partner of the programme.

FROM NATIONAL TO NORDIC COOPERATION

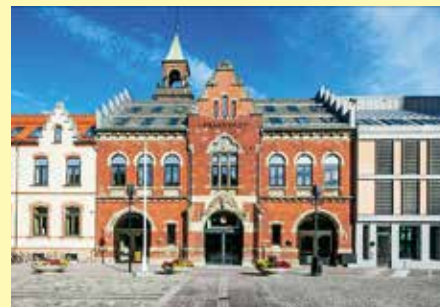
The Nordic Council was established in 1952 and is the main vehicle for political and economic cooperation among the Nordic countries. In 2014, it launched the Nordic Built Cities project with a wider innovation and business policy programme, and several parallels to the Norwegian pilot project programmes. The three main aims of the programme are:

- To encourage dialogue on urban challenges related to physical urban spaces
- To stimulate innovation which addresses such challenges and makes way for liveable, smart and sustainable urban spaces, and
- To promote these in and beyond the Nordic Region to strengthen the Nordic brand.

A RACE TO THE BOTTOM, OR THE TOP?

The common thread running through all of these programmes is a focus upon the promotion of both high environmental and design standards. As well as having direct benefits for the communities and markets where they are located, the development of exemplar projects in Nordic countries is a central part of a co-ordinated export strategy.

For the Masthusen project in Malmö - the next phase in the development of Bo01 - the BREEAM Communities environmental certification system for masterplan projects is being used. BREEAM was initially a voluntary standard, but has gradually become a de facto mandatory requirement for many projects in the UK, before gaining international recognition and being exported around the globe, including to Norway and Sweden.



Any developed economy considering removing mechanisms aimed at encouraging high environmental and design standards should also consider the longer-term impact on the future export potential for its goods and consultancy services. As many rapidly urbanising countries are seeking the latest innovative environmental design and urban infrastructure solutions, and European competitors already have a strong foothold in these emerging markets, an ever-increasing list of exemplar projects at home to show foreign visitors around will continue to be important. ●

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Yiwu: the Neo-Liberal City

Austin Williams describes how economic growth has transformed a little known Chinese city



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Yiwu is a provincial city in Zhejiang, east China and an unlikely point of origin for a trading route that reaches out far beyond the narrow confines of the region and country. A bustling backwater that has emerged as a multi-billion-dollar link to the rest of the world, it is the greatest little town that you've possibly never heard of.

This relatively small dot on the map, 200km southwest of Shanghai, is the starting point of the world's longest freight journey. Longer than the trans-Siberian railway, the new 6,200-mile rail route from Yiwu depot takes goods through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany and France, finally arriving in Madrid in Spain, 21 days later, and a full 10 days quicker than by sea.

At Yiwu railway station, a wilfully unimpressive, grubby concrete shelter, visitors are greeted with signs in several languages boasting that Yiwu is the 'world's largest small commodities producer'. This means that Yiwu has effectively cornered the market in trinkets, the kind of novelty items that make the world go around. Allegedly, 60 per cent of all Christmas crackers are made here, somewhat unprepossessing evidence of its claims to global influence. But Zhejiang Province is rightly famed for its entrepreneurial spirit.

ENTREPRENEURIAL TRADITIONS

Just 100km north of Yiwu is the provincial capital city of Hangzhou (elevated to first-tier city status in 2017), which is home to the world's largest retailer Alibaba, the £175 billion online shopping behemoth. Zhejiang's

second city, Ningbo, is one of the biggest trading ports in the world and renowned for its business values and financial culture. Indeed, the province has a long history of merchants, traders and moneymen. In 1912, the first president of the Republic of China noted that its merchants were 'excellent at commerce. No-one can compare to them'. Neighbouring Wenzhou was the first city in China to set up business cooperatives and private enterprises. Zhejiang's people are proud that their entrepreneurs' knowledge managed to survive the Mao era, and that a new generation of traders have grown up free to embark on business as usual.

After Mao died, President Deng Xiaoping cleared the way for isolated experiments in piecemeal urban capitalism in the early 1980s. The city of Yiwu has been a beneficiary of this 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' as a state-sponsored enterprise zone. Local politicians are keen to promote the myth that Yiwu has emerged onto the world's stage as the result of China's contemporary Belt and Road Initiative, but in fact it has been pampered by a Communist Party policy of development through trade since 1984. It has been allowed to express itself as an urban oasis of free-market capitalism and open trading unlike any other city in China.

China's experiment with market-driven urbanisation centred on the 'single commodity industrial district' based on the doctrine of 'one village, one product'. Under this model, village communities were allowed – encouraged – to pool their resources

to specialise in one product. It was common to drive through villages across China that made only one thing: a town specialising in baths for example, followed by a town making only toilets, followed by tap towns, vitreous villages, sink estates, etc.

Only ten years ago, Yiwu's neighbouring town of Datang became China's sock city, a market town and small production facility that now allegedly churns out 10 billion pair of socks every year designed for companies like Walmart and Disney. This specialist town, a significant economic performer in its own right, still relies on the agency role of its neighbour in order to take its products to market. Over a short period of time, Datang has been enveloped by Yiwu's voracious appetite for trade, an administrative region sprawling outwards and demanding ever-greater supply chains to feed its growth.

DIVERSIFICATION AND TRADE

Yiwu's original specialism was plastic straws (over 7,500 tonnes of them a year) sucking up huge profits. It's fair to say that manufacturers were producing biodegradable versions long before Britain's environment minister Michael Gove's campaign to rid the world of such evil commodities. It wasn't environmental regulations that made Yiwu diversify, but the global financial crisis of 2008 that pushed Yiwu to become one of the first towns to showcase a mix of commodities. In other words, it wasn't a Party decree but the ripple effect of the global financial crisis that nudged Yiwu to embrace the efficiencies of the market mechanism. By doing so, it stole a march on all other start-up cities. By 2017, its annual GDP had reached \$16 billion (equivalent to Iceland).

Inside the city limits, this non-descript town is teeming with opportunities for trade. The city centre is effectively bypassed and marginal to the urban form. Instead six major roads and one vast motorway run south-west to north-east all leading outwards to the commodity market district of Futian International Trade Mart Shopping Area. One report suggests that this is 'a Haussmannized city, promoting the 'natural flow' of goods and people through urban space'. At Futian, a vast region of four square kilometres, has been given over to megamalls, dividing the region into five distinct districts.

Even though these new trading precincts were built in in 2005, like much Chinese construction, they look 50 years older. Gigantic

- 1 One of the many small traders in the city.
- 2 Friday prayers at the Jiangbin Road mosque
- 3 The variety of international street food stalls and restaurants
- 4 The decrepit buildings which are the busy new trading precincts.

decrepit concrete shells are merely warehouses for trade - the basic shelter in which to do business, machines for shopping in. There is no pretence at architectural design, human scale or urban integration. Instead, these are buildings filled with suppliers, each occupying a coffin-sized booth and touting for business.

The official guide says that these malls contain 75,000 booths in which 100,000 suppliers try to flog 400,000 different kinds of product over an area roughly the size of the City of London's square mile. From tiny stalls, local traders sell wholesale to the world. For those who cannot get into the malls, the rest of the city is the next best thing. Trade is everywhere with the ground floor garages of high-rise housing projects converted, illegally, to shops and markets.

In 2017, the first train from Yiwu pulled into Barking depot in east London after a 12,000km 18-day trip. It is reported that it contained socks, household products and bags. On the return journey, Britain sent soft drinks, vitamins, pharmaceuticals, baby products and whisky. What this says about the developmental priorities of each country is for others to decide. As I argue in the forthcoming *Handbook of Research in Transport and Urban Transformation in Contemporary China*, this is not just a flow of goods but the exchange of ideas and social ambition. As a result, such trading relations in and with China have deeply political and modernising resonances.

MULTICULTURALISM CHINESE STYLE

Take, for example, Yiwu's adopted version of western cosmopolitanism which is unusual compared to anywhere else in the country. As Yiwu's local cooperation networks forge global connections, so African and Middle Eastern restaurants have opened to serve the international traders flooding into the city. Indians, Senegalese, Algerians, Egyptians, Afghans, Uyghurs, and the occasional European stroll along Exotic Street. It gives the impression of a harmonious melting pot community in a country that prides itself on being 92 per cent Han Chinese.

Five minutes' walk from the huge mosque on Jiangbin Road is the Christian church and further still, a synagogue. These are a series of urban landmarks that are not commonly referenced in China. Friday prayers at the mosque are attended by over 7,000 people when the road is blocked, metal detectors and armoured vehicles give



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lie to the idea that this is some kind of multi-cultural nirvana, but at the same time, Yiwu displays a tolerance of cultural difference and religious expression that is not often seen, even in China's tourist hotspots and large metropolitan areas.

Yiwu, the size of Luxembourg, is a small city by Chinese standards. With about 40,000 foreigners living and working there, the bulk of the population is made up of Chinese migrant workers, many coming to do business and make their fortune. The local government has begun spending some of its profits on greening the city. It goes some way to improve the shoddy appearance of a profit-driven city, but also gives the centre and edges a sense of place beyond the gigantic fortresses of turbo-charged capitalism to the north-east of the city. It has recently completed the man-made Xihu Park (enlivened by kite-flyers and granny dancers) in the centre of the city and a five-mile long green riverside walk.

Yiwu's urban planners are keen to adopt Charles Landry's so-called 'asphalt currency' that measures urban improvements in terms of economic benefit, in this way, everything can be translated into the currency of productive space. Of course, this is China and so there is not really an autonomous urban



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design process but one that is carefully managed and pragmatically permitted by the central authorities. As long as it continues to make money, Yiwu will remain a reasonably harmonious, multicultural, mercantile city embedded in the middle of a single party state. ●

Austin Williams, senior lecturer, Kingston School of Art, director of the Future Cities Project, and author of *China's Urban Revolution: Understanding Chinese Eco-cities* (Bloomsbury, 2017).



CGI of thriving Market Square at NW Cambridge (Eddington) now built

Design Review

Design review is the peer review process for the design of built environment projects. With the demise of national funding for design review in England in 2013, the landscape for this practice has rapidly and fundamentally changed. From a public-sector activity offered free of charge, design review is now typically a pay-to-use service delivered by a wide variety of providers. It is an activity which the 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) set out clear guidance for: 'Local planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place' (para 62).

In 2017, the Place Alliance, in partnership with the Urban Design Group, published the results of a national survey they conducted: *Design skills in English local authorities* (Carmona and Giordano 2017). This revealed that despite financial austerity measures and the decimation of design capacity in many planning authorities around the country, 64 per cent of these continue to use design review. However, most of those use it only occasionally or very rarely, whilst by definition 36 per cent never use design review at all. Only 19 per cent of local planning authorities are monthly or quarterly users of design review.

The survey further revealed that about a third of local authorities that use design review manage their own design review panels, whilst others look to a wide range of providers – public (other authorities), private and not-for-profit – to deliver a design review service.

The articles in this issue survey this new scene and explore some of the shifting models, opportunities, challenges and foci of design review. The topic opens with two articles that explore mainstream practices of design review: first, Matthew Carmona, Wendy Clarke and Valentina Giordano examine the latest research on design review practices in London (the most

developed of the new markets for design review). This is then countered with a discussion by Julie Tanner of the particular challenges faced by design review outside the capital.

Next, the issue features a more in-depth look at two particular panels: Robin Nicholson examines the innovative practices of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel and Anisha Jogani explores how the new Croydon Place Review Panel was set up as an in-house panel, and is now successfully running within this busy London Borough.

Whilst these panels focus on a range of issues, their day-to-day work is dominated by housing. The next two articles reflect the broader range of design review as a tool. Respectively they focus on major transport infrastructure, in Deborah Denner's exploration of the High Speed Two rail network's (HS2) Independent Design Panel, and the public realm through Paul Dodd's examination of Urban Design London's public realm panels.

The topic concludes with a final contribution looking much further afield, from Auckland in New Zealand. There, Ben van Bruggen shows that no matter how far you go, the essentials of good design review remain the same: a determination to see something better, consistency in application, and political buy-in to the process and the results. ●

Guest topic editors Professor Matthew Carmona and Wendy Clarke, The Bartlett, University College London

London: Reviewing Design Review

Matthew Carmona, Wendy Clarke and Valentina Giordano report on recent research findings



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Design review in London has a long history as a government-run and funded activity focused on the peer review of major projects. Today's design review practice follows many of the practices first established by the Royal Fine Arts Commission created in 1924, suitably adapted by its successor, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) after 1999. CABE developed a robust and active programme of design review, with a strong focus on London where approaching half of its design review work was focussed. Their publication, *Design Review, Principles and Practice* (2009) became the guidebook for design review nationally, prescribing it to be: independent, expert, multidisciplinary, accountable, transparent, proportionate, timely, advisory, objective and accessible.

With the removal of public funding for CABE in 2011, for the first time in 90 years there was no direct government sponsorship for, or provision of, design review services. However, in lieu of financial support, the government strongly endorsed the use of design review in the 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) in the hope that this would kick start a new market for design review services across England.

Judged solely by the amount of design review taking place, this has been a success, most notably in London where there are now around 30 formal panels operating across the city, at different scales, run by different providers – public, private and not-for-profit. Most are directly funded by a charge levied for the service by local planning authorities, reflecting the fact that the system is now largely paid for by private developers. At the same time very significant gaps remain in the coverage of design review across the capital, with some London boroughs conducting monthly or even twice monthly panels, and others none at all.

Despite this very different landscape for design review, there has been an absence of serious research into how the new market is working. Stepping into this gap, the research report *Reviewing Design Review in London* undertaken in 2017 examines a range of design review panels and cases in London, leading to detailed findings based upon in-depth interviews with applicants, designers, panellists, and panel managers. The study provides a 360degree analysis of the diversity of design review practices across the city and of the benefits that flow from high quality, professionalised provision. This article provides a few headlines from the research.

ACHIEVING BETTER DESIGN AND PLACE-MAKING

Over the years design review has generated strong but mixed feelings amongst protagonists. Today, whether managing, commissioning, serving on, or presenting to panels in London, there is a common and widely shared aspiration that design review will lead to better design and place-making than would otherwise be achieved without it. With this in mind, those interviewed were generally positive about the purpose and value of design review, accepting that for a modest cost

1 Merton, London: Housing modified to show a well-defined street line. The panel judged that it had previously failed to create a coherent street scene

2 The final scheme reduced the visual impact of the large blocks further

3 Types of design review panels in London

the process did improve design outcomes.

Benefits are felt by all parties and underpin a solid case for investing in the process. Whilst the charges levied for design review varied significantly (on average £3,670 in London), they were never seen by applicants as a barrier and were even welcomed by developers when they led to a smoother and more streamlined route through the planning process. Most felt that the costs associated with design review represent value for money.

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE BUT NOT A PERIPHERAL ONE

Despite being funded by applicants, panels need to be an independent voice, capable of providing impartial design advice, with their role and status made clear. The absence of demonstrable independence can quickly undermine trust in the process, as has sometimes happened in the new market for design review services. As a minimum this should require that, even if a provider of a design review service is paid directly by an applicant, the client for the review remains the public authority.

Panels also need to be more explicit about their conflict of interest provisions, including being clear with applicants (as well as panellists) about how such matters are managed.

The danger of independence is that design review can be seen as a peripheral activity. In fact design review works best when its role in relation to wider planning and design processes is properly established and well understood. To achieve this, consistent criteria are required for determining which projects should be subject to design review, for example all major projects and others of local or city-wide significance.

The most effective borough panels – those whose advice has the greatest impact – are the ones that have managed to get and retain the confidence of both planning case officers and the planning committee. This requires the design review panel to have:

- a good understanding and respect for the local policy context, development challenges and planning process;
- an effective dialogue with the planning committee and key officers that goes beyond the reviews themselves; and,
- a high status when feeding panel views into decision-making.

It is also important to establish from the start the issues that are within or beyond the scope of the design review process. Panels should take a broad view of design that includes place-making and which extends across spatial scales from very large-scale urban design concerns to the internal arrangements of buildings; but this does not mean questioning every planning matter such as the percentage of affordable housing.

MANAGING DESIGN REVIEW

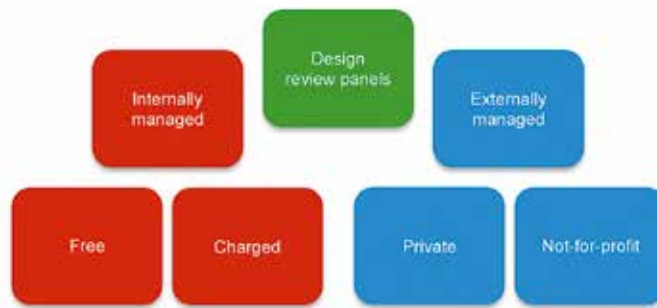
In London, design review panels follow one of four models: internally managed, free or charged; and externally managed, private or not-for-profit. There was no evidence that any one of these four approaches is intrinsically superior to the others. If properly resourced, all are capable of delivering excellent design review services.

In this regard fees for design review support a professionalisation of the service and a greater consistency in the quality of provision, to the great benefit of all parties. Fees also reduce or eliminate the drain on local authority resources and can even contribute to securing greater in-house design expertise through any excess funds generated.

The use of *ad hoc* design review by boroughs without dedicated panels of their own was widely considered a sub-standard model. Such practices lead to a lack of consistency in panel membership and to an associated lack of local contextual knowledge amongst panel members.

GETTING THE RIGHT PANEL

The most important factor to get right in design review is the constitution of the panel. The research demonstrated the need for a combination of:



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- panel members with a recognised professional standing and expertise;
- local knowledge and commitment;
- a broad spread of inter-disciplinary expertise across the panel; and,
- a diversity of panel members drawn from an inclusive recruitment process.

Good design review comes down to the panel members being open-minded and constructive in their criticism. For example, panellists with very fixed stylistic views should be avoided in favour of those with a more open and pluralistic attitude to architectural design.

THE JOURNEY THROUGH REVIEW

There is no single correct mode of operating panels, and they frequently adopt different practices for very good reason. That said, some practices continue to play into long-held negative perceptions about the process. These can be avoided by focussing more effort on a number

BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING DESIGN REVIEW

1. Consistent panel membership across successive reviews on large schemes (the absence of which can significantly undermine the credibility of the process)
2. Panels that are not larger than they need to be (smaller panels were consistently regarded as more effective)
3. Comprehensive briefing of the panel prior to review regarding relevant policy, the site, ownership constraints, and the planning process
4. A site visit conducted prior to the first design review on a project
5. A presentation by the design team that follows clearly enforced time limits to allow adequate time for the subsequent discussion
6. A carefully structured review discussion, following a flexible checklist of topics circulated in advance (to allow applicants to prepare in advance and ensure a comprehensive coverage of subject matter on the day)
7. A transition in topics across successive reviews for large projects, from broad strategic issues to the detail design, while avoiding revisiting settled issues
8. Careful use of language during reviews, avoiding the use of unduly negative language or unsubstantiated comments that can overshadow constructive engagement
9. Avoid getting bogged down in 'non-design' matters, such as the percentage of affordable housing
10. Panel members with a sensibility to the viability constraints affecting schemes
11. Avoidance of any attempt to negotiate on behalf of the local authority
12. Discouraging panel members from attempting to design projects themselves or recommending alternative designers.



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of consistently important characteristics for successful design review.

An optimum journey through design review for large projects would typically involve three visits at key stages, while smaller projects requiring a one-off design review should be seen at a mid-way stage when it is not too late to make serious changes, if required.

CLOSING THE LOOP

Following the panel comes the letter or report. Many panels adopt the standard that the report should be provided within ten working days of the review. In this, clear recommendations should proceed in a hierarchy from fundamental concerns to the 'nice to have'.

Design teams then need to demonstrate how they have made a considered and intelligent response to the recommendations of panels. This is best done by requiring a section in the Design and Access Statement that sets out publicly and formally how they have responded to the panel. Similarly, when case officers, planning committees and other regulators choose to depart from an explicit recommendation of a design review panel, a careful justification should be incorporated in the officer's report and/or decision letter in order to justify this.

OPENING UP THE PROCESS

A downside of the fragmentation and commercialisation of design review services after 2011 has been the absence of a mechanism to share good practice. Today, despite most still signing up to the original CABE principles in *Design Review, Principles and Practice* (now firmly endorsed by the Mayor of London in his own *London Quality Review Charter*), the majority of panels are clearly not 'transparent' or 'accessible'.

In London, some panel hearings are far more open than others, without obvious damage to their processes, levels of engagement or reputation, which suggested that a greater degree of

transparency could be the norm. If design review is to be seen to be demonstrably conducted in the public interest, then the somewhat closed nature of the process may need to be reversed.

Being less secretive and better at sharing experiences and practices between panels and across the sector is essential. A learning culture should begin by establishing robust feedback mechanisms on how local design review practices are operating. This is a neglected aspect of most design review services which could encompass feedback:

- from service users to managers of design review on their experience;
- to the panel members on how their recommendations are being used and on the effectiveness of the service; and,
- to the public about design review services, about the role of design review and its impact.

GETTING ALL THE DUCKS IN A ROW

The report *Reviewing Design Review in London* demonstrates a clear range of positive impacts from design review. But despite the benefits, as an approach to improving design quality, design review will always have its limitations. It can never, for example, replace the on-going dialogue that it is possible to have with a permanent design advisor within a planning or highways authority. The research suggested that in-house design advice and independent design review are most effective when they operate together.

The recommendations of panels are also only as good as the determination of all parties to see them implemented. Ultimately the success of design review is dependent on:

- the applicant and design team being willing to engage positively with the process and address the concerns of the panel
- the public sector being willing to deny the necessary permissions (or funding) unless and until the concerns of the panel have been addressed
- failure to attend design review when invited being treated as a material consideration in the planning process, and
- a continued focus on delivering design quality by the development team and planning authority even after the necessary regulatory gateways have been passed.

Getting all these ducks in a row is not easy, but it is possible. The diversity of practice across London offers plenty of lessons about how. ●

Professor Matthew Carmona, Wendy Clarke and Valentina Giordano, The Bartlett, University College London
Reviewing Design Review in London is available on the Place Alliance website <http://placealliance.org.uk/>

4 A residential-led mixed used scheme considered by the London Legacy Development Corporation. Design review led to the appointment of a new design team to engage positively with the design review process

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF DESIGN REVIEW

- Better designed projects and places
- Culture change locally through which better design is seen as the norm
- A more collaborative process
- More empowered designers
- A more intelligent design process (benefitting from informed independent critique)
- Greater certainty in the development process
- A faster formal planning process
- Potential endorsement for the promoters of more challenging projects
- Support for internal design capacity within local authorities (where it exists)
- Help to fill design skills gaps in local authorities
- Greater confidence amongst public sector decision-makers
- Learning opportunities for all involved.



Design Review beyond London

Julie Tanner describes how design review is making a difference in the regions

As a regional Design Review Panel Manager, it is a privilege to be invited into design review discussions to hear about the evolution of schemes, and the motivations and obstacles that shape the efforts to create great new places. This year I am also Chair of the Design Network which, through its eight not-for-profit members, manages regional design review services across the country. These organisations are both local and strategic in their perspective and can draw on a pool of national expertise when required, making them highly responsive.

A DIFFERENT CONTEXT

Working across two regions – the East Midlands with Opun and the South West with Creating Excellence – I see our context as entirely different to that of London. For a start we do not have the remit that the *London Plan* provides, and secondly, design review is sporadic to say the least, not in its availability as I will go on to explain, but in its take-up.

Outside London, the context in which we work is predicated on our relationship with the local planning authority (LPA), notably on a LPA's policy position on design, its pre-application processes, and on whether its case officers have the capacity or the experience of securing design review when needed. Often it is perceived as simply yet another task and fee, so the degree to which it is taken up varies. LPAs need to make it clear when a design review is required. Inevitably this reflects the local design policy context, which is also mixed, although architects

and design teams will and do approach us directly when they feel help is needed to achieve excellent design outcomes.

We also have a wide range of environments that we work in: cities, towns, suburbs, villages, coastal, rural, national parks etc. and a large number of greenfield sites. Greenfield sites can be unspoiled valleys or farmland, and everyone feels the weight of responsibility when planning for homes there. Economies are also varied and often not healthy: where market failure is prevalent, market fatigue has stalled progress, or where ambitions far outweigh current market expectations. Fundamentally, public transport is not available to the same extent and accommodating cars is a dominant factor in any scheme. Speed is another aspect, so that everyone (in housebuilding) is always in a rush and design review can be seen to delay applications.

THE HOUSING DESIGN IMPERATIVE

Housing growth has become a dominant aspect of our work – sustainable urban extensions, and lately garden towns and villages – and there are two good examples of this. The first is based on the work of Opun (East Midlands Design Review Panel) in providing design support on Tresham Garden Village scheme. Opun's involvement was secured following a planning delivery grant by the then Department for Communities and Local Government. The panel is working with the developers, land owners, local

1 Tresham Urban Design Framework, July 2017, diagram by Studio REAL



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authority and Joint Planning Unit to support the scheme's progress. It has added confidence and transparency to the delivery process and has been cited as an example of best practice by the government. Its success has been due in part to financial subsidy, but also to the timely engagement of specialist design expertise and the enthusiasm and willingness of all participants. The Tresham Panel brings continuity to the discussions and sets a marker for progress that has kept it on track and allowed the vision to be revisited and tested at each step.

The second example is adapting design review to support a housebuilder's ambitions. The Housing Excellence Design Panel managed by Creating Excellence (South West) was set up initially at the request of Barratt Homes in Exeter to help them in their ambitions of achieving the quality mark of Building for Life 12 (BFL12) Outstanding on a number of their emerging sites. Design review and an iterative process have supported pre-application dialogues with the local planning authorities resulting in three schemes achieving BFL12 Outstanding.

Part of the remit on housing schemes is to support reserved matters applications, where the key strategic decisions relating to design have already been made, and we are trying to assist with practical details. It is challenging at times and the consistent use of a standard house type can be frustrating, but there are rewards overall as more efficient schemes take shape and recommendations are followed that improve connections, street treatments and better integrated open spaces.

A GAP (OR TWO)

There is a gap between the supply and take up of design review services. The Design Network provides a nationwide design review service. Consequently design review is available everywhere and to all. There are no actual gaps in design review provision, yet its use is still very variable.

Panel members' expertise and experience are identified and chosen to suit each scheme and panel managers provide an intermediary role to ensure that the needs of the local authority and developers are met. The panel chairs are also drawn from the panel but remain separate from the dialogue that a panel manager holds with the local authority and the developer prior to the design review. Our motivation is to secure the best outcome for the place, scheme or building, and our apolitical position allows us a unique role in seeing past local anxieties. Difficult issues are not overlooked, and because we convene in confidence, trust is established to allow braveness and honesty in admitting to the obstacles.

2 Minerva, Redhayes masterplan, Outstanding BFL 12 for David Wilson Homes (Exeter), plan by PLACE by design

We explain to participants that we will be challenging, but we are also pragmatic at the same time. There is no point in going into a design review and asking why a site was allocated in the first place. Instead a design review will support the design team to probe further into the potential of the scheme within its given context, to sometimes challenge the brief but to always think beyond the red line planning boundary.

It is not unusual, for example, for there to be a shift between an approved scheme and the final adoption of its roads and streets, or how the efficiencies of a management plan can affect how open space and/or trees are integrated. Design review panels will discuss this in detail in an effort to secure the design ambitions and vision for the scheme. In this regard county highways' involvement (in non-unitary areas) is crucial to design review, and it can be hugely beneficial when they are part of the wider discussion on design rather than purely street design. It is outrageous for example that *Manual for Streets* is not used as the design standard. A scheme that is adopted with a multitude of conditions can soon be watered down through such means, and there is very little at this stage that design review can do to change that.

AN ADVISORY, INDEPENDENT BUT VARIABLE SERVICE

There is often confusion as to our role; we are not a proxy planning authority as we are advisory only, and this is particularly the case on paragraph 79 houses (previously para 55, i.e. single dwellings in the countryside). Some LPAs use design review to advise on architectural and sustainability criteria, to assist them in determining whether a scheme is an acceptable exception to policy and appropriate in an open countryside setting. Some design review providers have a relaxed approach to this – undertaking a design review without a site visit and limited time for discussion, leading then to a consent – whereas Design Network members often suggest two if not three design reviews to ensure that the integrity of the scheme is of the highest possible standard, and work hand-in-hand with the local authority and the design team to achieve this.

So, the approach and degree of scrutiny is variable depending on which design review service you use. A cynic would say that the easier route would be more appealing, but architects value the degree of scrutiny that rigorous design review offers; it provides integrity and ultimately confidence in the scheme.

Whilst the best panels retain high standards of delivery, respecting the *Ten Principles* inherited from CABE, many smaller or private sector-led design review panels have been created since the promotion of design review in the 2012 NPPF. Paragraph 62 of that document has allowed



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the market to respond to demand for design review and as a result, new, eager individuals have launched design review services, or architectural firms have responded to procurement calls to deliver design review on larger infrastructure schemes. Some might suggest supply has caught up with demand.

Beyond London relatively few local authorities have procured their own local design review panels. Some that have include Cornwall and Bristol, the latter through the Urban Design Forum at the Architecture Centre. Creating Excellence has recently won the tender to deliver design reviews on the emerging strategic development locations for Bath & North East Somerset District Council. Irrespective of how a design review panel is set up, the principle remains the same: the design review process should be completely independent. The greatest strength of design review is the three-way dialogue between the local authority, landowner/developer and their design team, supported by an independent panel to encourage freedom of expression and an openness of dialogue. In this way recommendations can cut across perceived barriers.

As Creating Excellence's Panel Manager, I work closely with a number of local authorities. Swindon Borough Council, where Creating Excellence has been providing design review services for nearly a year, wanted design review services to provide challenge, consistency and credibility. Having a dedicated chair and securing panel continuity has been essential in order to build trust and further validate the role of the planning authority in its relationship with developers. Our relationship with Swindon BC will continue to evolve and adapt to keep the service fresh and responsive. Developers now know that Swindon is serious about design.

SURVIVING IN TURBULENT TIMES

The survival of the Design Network through such turbulent times has been a testament to the exceptional tenacity of my colleagues. Going from a 100 per cent grant-maintained service, we have adapted the design review model to be more customer-facing, and now the service is exclusively funded on a fee structure (similar to planning application fees). Predominantly the developer pays.

All this has taken place whilst retaining high design standards design standards and leading best practice as well as integrity and adherence to the *Ten Principles*. Our confidence has had an additional boost when we successfully won a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government grant to deliver design training for councillors across England. Launched in July 2018, it uses Urban Design London's *The Design Companion for Planning and Placemaking* as an aide to help elected members to achieve well-designed housing growth.



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CONCLUSIONS

Although there is a range of design review services on offer, there is no way of knowing about the schemes that are slipping through the net. Not all schemes that should go through design review, do go through it. We also need design review to be more mainstream and not just used by built environment professionals. Members of the public rarely use design review as a source of help, and councils rarely advocate or signpost design review as a means of supporting community engagement, probably due to funding constraints and capacity. Design review could help more in wider consultative dialogues. The latest revisions to the NPPF secure the essential role of quality place-making in planning delivery. While the wording has largely remained unchanged in respect of design review, the overall emphasis towards design quality will enable local authorities to be braver about insisting on design review, particularly for large or sensitive schemes. They also need to build their design confidence, particularly those without in-house urban designers, and design review can help to achieve this.

3 A Paragraph 55 'exceptional house' in the countryside, The Lighthouse, Frome, Somerset, by CaSA, with SEED Landscape Architects

4 Creating Excellence South West Design Review Panel on a site visit in Swindon. Photograph by Doug King

Julie Tanner, Chief Executive, OPUN/ Design East Midlands and Panel Manager, Creating Excellence
www.designnetwork.org.uk



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The Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Robin Nicholson reflects on the Panel's approach and processes

Paragraph 62 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) states that 'Local planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design'; but the challenge for members and officers, and indeed for design review, is to understand what these high standards are and where design review fits into an increasing confused planning system. This includes having the resources to insist on a high quality of design and delivery.

Having chaired design review panels for CABE and other bodies since 2004, I believe that some of the practices of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel (CQP) are worthy of wider adoption, bearing in mind however that the focus in Cambridgeshire is on new settlements and urban or village extensions, which is different from reviewing buildings in mature urban contexts or single houses in the countryside.

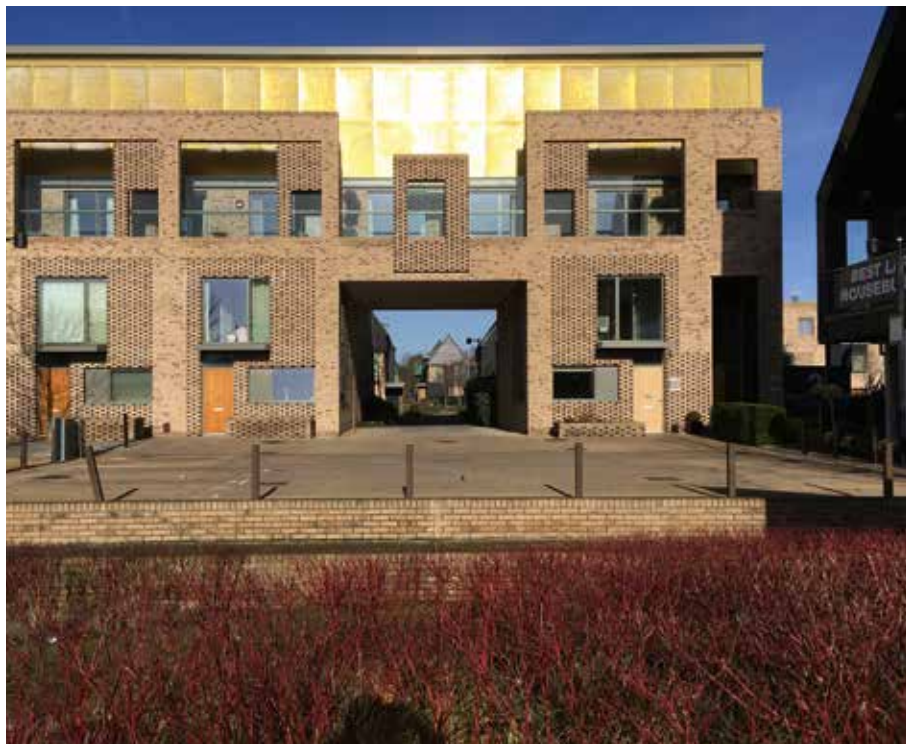
The story of the battle to grow Cambridge – after years of restraint following the Holford and Wright Plan of 1950 and the Cambridge Futures options study (1998–2000) – has been told many times. Yet it was the establishment of Cambridgeshire Horizons in 2004 as the delivery vehicle for Cambridge's growth strategy as part of John Prescott's *Sustainable Communities Plan* that led to the Quality Charter. Cambridgeshire Horizons brought together the county, the city and four districts councils, and was funded by central government, but the subsidy was subsequently reduced in 2011 by the new coalition government. Responsibility for the Quality Panel then passed to Cambridgeshire County Council.

As part of a package of support, consultancy URBED was commissioned to organise study tours in England and Europe, a symposium, conferences and workshops. The resulting *Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth* was launched in May 2008 with four principles: Community, Connectivity, Climate and Character, which became known as the 4 Cs. In 2010 the Quality Panel was set up to administer the 4 Cs and I was invited to chair the Panel, which included John Worthington as its deputy and ten other members.

A CRITICAL FRIEND, NOT A GATEKEEPER

While the Quality Panel embraces the 'Ten principles of Design Review' from *Design Review: Principles and Practice* (Design Council Caba 2009), it is significantly different from a conventional design review panel. Firstly we have the 4 Cs as an agenda under which schemes are presented and our reports are structured; secondly the Quality Panel is more of a critical friend than a gatekeeper and, most importantly, the Panel is multi-disciplinary.

1 The more rural hinterland at Abode with 274 homes of which 40 per cent are affordable



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Panels consist of a chair and five members drawn from the membership that is now 18 people strong. We are fortunate to have a high calibre team currently made up of three architects with environmental expertise, four architect/urban designers, three community facilitators, two environmental engineers, one housing specialist, two landscape architects and three transport engineers/masterplanners. Of these, five live locally.

Being a critical friend allows us to make constructive comments over the long period that most major schemes will take to develop. For example, since 2010 we have seen the North West Cambridge (Eddington) masterplan and landscape plan, the design code and all 16 lots and individual buildings within phase 1, some of them twice. Apart from the housing for sale, which is well under construction, the first phase is complete, and so now we need feedback on its successes or otherwise. The Panel has greatest impact where it is seen by the local authority as a partnership with sufficient trust to bring a scheme for design review at an early stage.

The local economy has remained strong but even in Cambridge there are variations in demand and a gradient in value. In the first seven years, the Panel met 81 times and saw 168 proposals, some of which are being revisited. The relatively small size of the Panel means that we get to know more of the local issues and build a collective knowledge base. We write an annual report and present it to the steering group of members and officers, which allows rare contact with the wider political process. In the annual reports we identify that year's lessons, which have remained fairly constant.

THE QUALITY CHARTER

While the best developers and designers quickly understand the value that the Panel brings, there is not surprisingly, a general determination to rise only to the minimum standard. While this is deeply frustrating, the Panel examines proposals to see how good a place would be to live in as a pioneer, and in 30 or 200 years, as the new communities adapt it for different behaviours, uses and the climate. Taking each of the Cs in turn:

Community: Based on the research of one of the panel members into the workings of Cambourne (Platt 2007), a new town nine miles to the west of Cambridge, we are keen to understand the provision that the developer is making to foster a sense of community from day one; this can involve 'meanwhile uses' for a site, an arts project or access to a ground floor

2 Part of the main square at Abode, Clay Farm (Great Kneighton) by Proctor Matthew for Countryside plc. One of the first schemes seen by the panel with the challenge to tame and frame a roundabout already built

space. In Cambridgeshire the primary school is often built for the first residents, so there is a temporary over-provision that can be used for community services, as in the first phase of Northstowe. This makes the location of the school and its access arrangements especially critical. The Panel regularly looks at implications outside the red line planning boundary of the site.

Although in the early years, before the Panel came into being, access from Cambourne to Cambridge was very difficult and the local authority offices were poorly located to generate activity in the town centre, a very strong Parish Council has since developed. This means that the current scheme for West Cambourne has the benefit of its experience and advice on issues such as play and the maintenance of the public realm and landscape.

Connectivity: Urban extensions are often resisted by existing communities but this can change over time. For example at Northstowe there was fierce resistance to the idea of 10,000 new homes on the doorsteps of two villages, Longstanton and Oakington, where people insisted on there being a small park and sports pitches between them and the settlement. As time passed, some began to realise that they would not only have greater choice of primary schools but they also wouldn't have to drive miles to the nearest secondary school; they would have good shops without having to go into Cambridge, good sports facilities as well as the guided bus system.

While the guided bus network helps, village residents are very dependent on and like their cars. However from the beginning there have been two transport debates, one between the Panel and the 'rules' of the County's highway engineers, and the other about the future of the privately owned car (and the tarmac they all need). The Panel's transport members treated the car as an unwelcome visitor and so the debate centred on the impact of automated cars as a service rather than as a necessity or trophy.

Climate: The Panel has championed both a strategic and fabric first approach to environmental design, with a special focus on water management and overheating. However, despite the groundbreaking 2010 *UK Climate Change Act*, the abolition of the *Code for Sustainable Homes* and zero carbon design in 2015 has had a serious impact, and we wonder if we are merely going through the motions. Overheating is poorly understood and orientation largely ignored as changing climate is subject to little regulatory control. Nevertheless the Panel has considerable expertise in designing for energy-demand reduction and the beneficial impact of good landscape. We live in hope that one day most developers will understand the value of appointing a good landscape



architect and consider environmental engineering right at the start.

Although indoor air quality (IAQ) is of growing importance, it is unlikely to feature heavily in developers' consciousness until there is regulation and easy monitoring. More consequential is the need to make plans geared for health and well-being, but evidence of what works well is sorely needed.

One of the major multi-lot schemes the Panel has considered is Eddington (4), formerly North West Cambridge, which retains its ambitious Code 5 specification with follow-up testing, and includes an exemplary site-wide rainwater recycling network. An early decision to invest in a central CHP plant and heat network may prove to be a somewhat stranded asset as the heat demand is low and the electricity grid is being decarbonised faster than had been anticipated. A full whole-life cost-benefit analysis would provide useful knowledge for the industry.

Character: There has been extensive use of design codes by the City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) but the range of understanding amongst developers and their consultants about urban design and what makes a scheme local in character is hard to overstate. The most sophisticated developers employ good architects and full design teams who start with a serious site analysis, whilst others endeavour to roll out their standard products in their usual manner. One redundant airfield developer sensibly started by planting a tree nursery so that they could transplant larger trees at no extra cost.

SCDC recently held a half-day workshop with two developers and their design teams, following a morning's visit to a few model sites. With both developments at an early stage, the idea was to agree the objectives and purpose of their design code, and how to make this just sufficiently detailed to be useful.

The Panel and the applicants have spent many hours

3 Waterbeach Development Framework Document (DFD) by Fletcher Priest and David Lock Associates for Urban and Civic and RLW, seen by the panel in 2016 and 2017

4 Lot M3 (Athena) at North West Cambridge by Pollard Thomas Edwards for Hill Residential. Athena has 106 homes between the cricket pitch, the supermarket and central square; seen by the Panel in 2016

discussing what is local, for example what gives a scheme its 'Ely-ness'. The local members of the Panel bring an extensive knowledge of Cambridgeshire village and town typologies, the scale of village greens and town squares, the impact of the topography, historical uses and the management of water in the Fens.

We discuss urban character in terms of what it looks like, and the landscape design (or the lack of it) is regarded as an integral part of every scheme. I was recently challenged by an upmarket Chinese developer, whose team I had taken around Great Kneighton and Eddington, on why in the UK we still build modern architecture!

Procurement through the design and build route is of particular concern for getting the full landscape built as designed, one critical element being the integration of play facilities into the landscape. Masterplanning developers need to exercise their long-term interest in the quality of the settlement, and character can be compromised by developers selling off lots divided by roads instead of designing streets as part of coherent places.

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The UK has been subjected to huge changes in the practice and politics of planning, as is spelled out in the draft *Raynsford Review* (2018) documenting the history of planning and the progressive weakening of public interest since deregulation began as the dominant ideology in 1979. Do we need to worry about the overall quality (for all) as the Government endeavours to fix the housing problem, preferably with the private sector doing most of the heavy lifting? The Quality Panel has sought funding to test the Panel's values and the impact of its work, but none has been forthcoming from Cambridge University, Homes England or the MHCLG. Now we do at least have our first Land Economy Masters student analysing three built schemes.

Members of the Quality Panel are clear that they find the process more rewarding than the conventional design review process and feel that we are saying the right things, but we need evidence of its effect. However as planning resources are cut further, if planners are less able to insist on developers submitting high quality schemes without the evidence to support their opinions, design review could be marginalised. ●

Robin Nicholson, Senior Partner, Cullinan Studio, The Edge

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Croydon Place Review Panel

Anisha Jogani explains how the Council set up a design review panel



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As a big London borough with a major commercial centre, excellent connectivity and a large Opportunity Area, Croydon offers much development potential, and a substantial quantity of development is coming forward. It is essential that the right design decisions for the built environment are made, given the long-lasting impact they will have, and to ensure that Croydon becomes even more of an attractive place to live, work, socialise and shop than it is today. The Croydon Place Review Panel (PRP) acts as an important component in this process.

Singled out in the 2014 Farrell Review for its exemplar approach to planning, Croydon Council identified the PRP as the next step in ensuring exceptional quality. The establishment of an impartial, locally informed and multidisciplinary Place Review Panel (PRP) in November 2016 was therefore an important step to help further Croydon Council's continued commitment to elevating the quality of its built environment and public spaces. The panel helps ensure that Croydon's increasing popularity as a development location continues to be shaped by the delivery of exceptional quality design and place-making. Place reviews are now integral to all major regeneration projects planned for the town centre and the wider borough.

The Croydon PRP initiative builds on the work that has taken place over recent years to establish a comprehensive planning framework that promotes high quality design and place-making. As such, it complements the work of Croydon's Spatial Planning and Development Management Services in seeking to secure high quality developments through the planning process as well as other council-led projects. Importantly, the PRP has high-level support from the Chief Executive and the political administration.

1 New Addington Leisure and Community Centre. An earlier design was reviewed in August 2017 and the scheme is now under construction. Image by GT3 Architects

RESEARCHING THE RIGHT MODEL

Prior to the establishment of Croydon's own Place Review Panel, the Council utilised the design review services of Design Council Cabe and Design South East on an *ad hoc* basis. In recent years, however, there has been an increasing scale and quantum of development proposals in Croydon, as well as an increase in the range of in-house regeneration and growth plans. Consequently, in late 2015-early 2016, it became apparent that it was time to begin investigating the potential of establishing a dedicated and locally sensitive panel of our own. It was apparent that this should focus on place-making as a whole, not purely traditional architectural design, as some other panels do.

Considering the complexity and diversity of one of the largest London boroughs, a panel that was thoroughly briefed and aware of the local physical, social, economic and cultural landscape, as well as development plans and aspirations, was required in order that advice would be both productive and place-specific. With these objectives in mind, we set out to thoroughly research existing panel models, before deciding on the right structure.



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It was important to capture some of Croydon's existing success stories within the welcome briefing packs... establishing the ethos of the place-specific panel and process from the start

We carried out in-depth research into models of design and quality review, and observed a series of local and national reviews. This included other local authorities, development corporations, regional and national review bodies, as well as researching a variety of approaches to establishing the panel itself, from authority-initiated and managed, to private consultancies establishing and managing the panel.

It was of particular importance to research a broad variety of review models to gain a thorough knowledge of the possibilities, barriers and successes, challenges and lessons learnt. Investing time in this phase made the process of defining the final PRP model and getting sign-off a lot more efficient, and in the end it was decided to establish a new independent and multidisciplinary panel in-house in order to complement Croydon Council's well-established and proactive approach to the pre-application process. This enhances development discussions with focused design guidance provided by the Council's award-winning place-making and development management teams, ensuring that new places are designed and delivered to the highest standards.

Acting as a gateway to the planning committee, PRP scrutiny is now available for all major and complex schemes, providing locally sensitive, impartial advice from a panel of high calibre built environment experts. But the panel's advice is not limited to major development schemes. As part of the significant regeneration and growth of the borough's infrastructure and highways, parks, street furniture, public realm projects and civic spaces are also reviewed by the 25 multi-disciplinary panel members (comprising three chairs and 22 panellists) with experts from the fields of architecture, planning, landscape architecture, urban design, conservation, engineering and culture.

APPOINTING THE PANEL AND GETTING STARTED

Significant energy had to be focused on a rigorous procurement process to appoint panel members, which was an interesting challenge given that this was not a standard process for local authority procurement systems. This had to be combined with developing an attractive open call in collaboration with a design PR agency in order to ensure that we were tapping into the right

channels to get to the right people.

The approach led to an overwhelming response with over 100 strong applications. This also meant that the procurement drive and shortlisting process was longer than expected, leading to the necessary sifting out of a large number of extremely high-calibre applications that in normal circumstances would never be turned down. Consequently the selection criteria had to be very strict.

The next steps included establishing contracts for the panel members, the terms of reference, considering the PRP structure, roles and responsibilities, preparing a Customer Advice Note and PRP application forms, establishing training presentations for other Council departments who will be affected by the PRP and/or have to integrate the PRP into their processes (including legal, finance, development management etc.), arranging the briefing days, briefing packs and press packs, and running a press launch event to welcome and inform the panel.

As the PRP was intended to further enrich the proactive planning processes that Croydon Council is renowned for, and ultimately to elevate the quality of places as they evolve, it was important for us to capture some of Croydon's existing success stories within the welcome briefing packs for panel members and the press, establishing the ethos of the place-specific panel and process from the start. This included a mapping book that captured the physical, socio-economic, political and cultural landscape of the borough, a tote bag and prints commissioned from local artists, some unusual local produce and more. The welcome packs and launch event in January 2017 were sponsored by Gatwick Airport.

Once the panel members were selected, they were required to attend two briefing days during which they were thoroughly briefed on local plans and policies, had a borough drive-through, visited major regeneration sites that were either in development or about to be developed, and walked around key masterplan areas. We were then ready to start.

RUNNING THE PANEL IN-HOUSE

There are one or two review days per month with up to three schemes reviewed during each day. Where possible this is held on the same day every month. Each review day involves one chair and up to five panellists, selected from the pool of panellists and chairs. The selection of panellists is based on the expertise and specialist skills required for the projects being reviewed that day, with panel membership kept consistent where possible for schemes that undergo subsequent place reviews. The review panel and applicant team are the only active participants during the review sessions, with planning committee representatives and

2 A new main stand at Selhurst Park, Crystal Palace Football Club. An earlier design was reviewed in January 2018, and the scheme now has planning consent. Image by KSS

council officers attending as observers only, although the panel chair may ask them clarification questions if required.

Reviews are structured as follows:

1. Officers' briefing to the panel: a pack for the projects being reviewed is sent to the panel in advance of the review day and includes an officer briefing and the draft Applicant/Design Team presentations
2. Site visits with relevant officers
3. Review projects, each following the same format:
 - Applicant/Design Team presentation
 - Questions and Clarifications
 - Open discussion and panel feedback.

The schemes for review are selected on the basis of their size and significance with case and placemaking officers providing clear recommendations and guidance to applicant teams for schemes seeking planning permission regarding the requirement for a place review. Applicants for schemes seeking planning permission are advised to undergo a place review at as early a stage as possible (prior to the first planning committee); this is discussed and agreed during the inception meeting and integrated into the project programme. The first review and any anticipated follow-up reviews are incorporated into the project programme and planning performance agreement. Follow-up place reviews and post-submission reviews are also recommended depending on the scale, significance and/or complexity of schemes. For example, a review may be highly advisable during the consideration of reserved matters and occasionally during the discharge of conditions for large schemes.

Over the first year of running the panel, great importance has been placed on collecting feedback from both applicants, panel members and officers in order to streamline certain processes and to ensure that the best possible, independent, locally informed, and productive advice can be provided from the panel of experts.

An AGM is planned for the coming months with the intention of discussing and evaluating how the PRP has been working over the last year or so, to receive panel feedback on areas that have worked well and areas for development and improvement, and to include a mini-briefing on new developments and changes in the borough. In this way we aim to ensure that the panel's local knowledge is kept up-to-date, in addition to the knowledge that panellists glean through the Place Review Days they attend. As Croydon changes ever more rapidly, local knowledge and context are even more important to understand.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The panel will run for two years from November 2016 to November 2018 and will then be reviewed and refreshed, if necessary. Each new panel member will be required to attend two briefing days to gain a thorough understanding of the local context.

Croydon Council is one of the few local authorities with a proactive, in-house place-making team, which is closely involved in providing expert place and design advice on development and regeneration schemes. Alongside this, we strongly believe in the value of place reviews providing an independent, moment-in-time check to help to elevate the final quality of places and spaces that are being developed in the borough. ●

Anisha Jogani, Placemaking Deputy Team Leader, London Borough of Croydon



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3 Croydon Youth Zone, Whitehorse Road. An earlier design was reviewed in May 2017 and the scheme is now under construction. Image by John Puttick Associates / OnSide Youth Zones
 4 Residential development at 38-40 Addiscombe Road. An earlier design was reviewed in January 2017 and the scheme is now under construction. Image by Metropolitan Workshop

High Speed Two Rail: Big Infrastructure and Design Review

Deborah Denner highlights the significance of design quality advocacy for this major project



When the High Speed Two rail (HS2) Independent Design Panel was set up in the autumn of 2015, it was the third step in a process through which the government and HS2 Ltd made a public commitment to achieve design quality for the new railway. Earlier in the year, the HS2 Design Vision was published, setting out the role that design can play in making HS2 a catalyst for growth across Britain. At the same time, Professor Sadie Morgan was appointed as the Design Panel's chair, so that she would be able to steer the process of recruiting panel members. These three moves all pre-dated the Royal Assent for the *High-speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Act 2017*.

A UNIQUE PANEL

The panel is unique in its breadth, both in terms of geographic spread, and the range of professional expertise that it includes. It advises on Phase One of HS2 from London to Birmingham, and also on Phase Two continuing north to Manchester and Leeds. Its remit extends not just to the stations and civil engineering structures along the route, but also to other aspects of design quality including sustainability and customer experience. Frame Projects were appointed as Secretariat to the HS2 Independent Design Panel in the summer of 2015, to support a recruitment process to appoint a multidisciplinary panel to meet this demanding brief.

The panel is also unique in terms of the status that it has been given by the government, and in that it has a direct line of communication with the Department for Transport. Quarterly

reporting by the design panel to the Director General of the Department for Transport ensures that emerging design issues and priorities are communicated directly to the government. The *High-speed Rail Act* makes numerous references to the role of the design panel as part of the planning process for HS2. The Act also creates a requirement for specially constituted station design panels, including members selected jointly by HS2 Ltd and the local planning authority. So where there is a local design review panel in place, Frame Projects have co-ordinated panel meetings attended by a 50/50 mix of HS2 and local design review panel members.

During its first year in operation, the panel worked with HS2 Ltd to establish priorities for its ongoing work, deciding where best to focus the panel's energy and resources. A series of route briefings, minibus tours, and workshop meetings with HS2 Ltd staff helped set a programme that includes not just the most high-profile elements of the project, such as stations and large civil engineering structures, but also smaller elements,

1 Colne Valley Viaduct
Specimen Design by
Knight Architects



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such as bridge parapets and track security fences. The panel is not only interested in iconic projects like the stations and the Colne Valley Viaduct. It feels passionately that the many smaller bridges, viaducts, cuttings, embankments, depots and construction compounds should also be designed with care.

A WHOLE PROCESS APPROACH

A key focus for the design panel has been to work with HS2 Ltd on their procurement processes when appointing main works civil contractors and also station design services contractors. There was a recognition from the start that it was essential to test the competencies of bidders to deliver designs of the quality required for a nationally significant infrastructure project. For stations in particular, the panel welcomed the approach of including ‘design challenges’ as a way of testing the design skills of bidding teams, in an efficient, focused way.

One of the first topics that the panel was invited to comment on was the Landscape Design Approach, which is part of a suite of design guidance documents expanding on the principles of the HS2 Design Vision for specific areas of work. Given the scale and importance of the landscape to the project, this document has been produced to demonstrate HS2 Ltd’s approach to the development of the landscape design along the route. The panel encouraged HS2 Ltd to take an integrated and holistic approach to landscape design and the final document achieves this by setting out guidance for temporary, rural and urban landscapes associated with the new high-speed railway. The work was highly commended in the 2017 Landscape Institute Awards.

An area where the panel has challenged HS2 Ltd is on its approach to consultation and engagement. During the progress of the Phase One hybrid Bill through Parliament, there was an emphasis on formal consultation. Post Royal Assent, the panel has called for a shift from consultation to engagement to inform design development. The panel has emphasised the value that organisations such as the National Trust, the Forestry Commission and local wildlife conservation charities could add to the design process. The panel has also promoted early engagement to encourage communities to build a sense of ownership for the

project, for example by involving local communities in the design of landscapes along the route.

2018 will be a crucially important year for the design of HS2 stations. The Phase One station designers were announced in February for Birmingham Curzon Street, Interchange Station, Old Oak Common Station and Euston Station. These teams are working towards the submission of Schedule 17 applications to local planning authorities in early 2019. At the same time, preliminary design work is continuing on the Phase Two stations in the East Midlands, Manchester and Leeds. The panel and HS2 Ltd have agreed that there is a clear need to work collaboratively with local planning authorities and other key stakeholders to integrate stations into their urban contexts. The panel sees this as essential for HS2 to deliver on its promised regeneration benefits, and the ambition to be a catalyst for growth. In this context the panel is delighted that HS2 Ltd have recently appointed Joanna Averley as new Head of Urban Design and Integration. This appointment will strengthen the HS2 Ltd design team, helping to ensure the integration of stations with the public realm and developments in the surrounding area.

A WHOLE ENVIRONMENT APPROACH

One of the highlights of HS2 Ltd’s approach to achieving high quality design has been the leadership shown in commissioning specimen designs for the Colne Valley Viaduct and the Phase One

2 Euston Station Design Panel site visit.



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bridges and viaducts. Knight Architects were appointed for this work, setting a benchmark for design quality, alongside other design guidance such as the HS2 Bridge Design Requirements. Phase One Main Works Civil Contractors were appointed in mid-2017 to undertake the detailed design of £6.6 billion worth of civil engineering structures including ventilation shafts, tunnel portals, bridges, viaducts, as well as the landscape design and ecological initiatives that form part of these projects. The panel has been working to support HS2 Ltd in ensuring that the ambitions of the design requirements and specimen designs are followed through.

HS2 Ltd has published a *Sustainability Approach Document*, which provides a vision for the performance of the project in terms of environmental and social sustainability. The design panel has played a role in providing independent expert advice on sustainability, with Tony Burton, vice chair of the HS2 Independent Design Panel, taking a lead on this aspect of the panel's work. This has allowed the panel to contribute to strategic thinking about sustainability issues including carbon, climate change mitigation, and the circular economy. Sustainability experts are also involved in commenting on station and civil engineering projects. This will help to ensure that the strategic approach is followed through as detailed designs are developed.

The panel plays a role in advising the HS2 Ltd Railway Operations team on topics such as rolling stock design, digital services and station operations. To enable it to do this, the panel's membership includes experts in consultation and engagement, marketing and customer experience, and digital service design. The panel has encouraged HS2 Ltd to base design requirements on substantial customer research, with the aim of innovating to meet future customer needs. Market research has informed design in areas such as luggage, seating, catering and ticketing, but the panel has asked that observational studies should also be carried out, looking at what passengers do as well as what they say.

Art has the potential to shape the way that HS2 is experienced and perceived, both by passengers and local communities. The panel has encouraged HS2 Ltd to understand art as integral to achieving the ambitions of the HS2 programme, rather than being an add-on with separate works created by individual artists. For example, the excavated material generated by construction could be used to create land art, new spaces created can be incorporated into the public realm, and locations identified for projects such as a sculpture park. The opportunity for a grand gesture, such as an *Angel of the North* type of intervention, should not be discounted but the success of the project will depend just as much on a succession of more modest initiatives.

Art has the potential to shape the way that HS2 is experienced and perceived, both by passengers and local communities

LEARNING FROM PHASE ONE

Whilst detailed design work continues on Phase One of HS2, the design of the Phase Two route is at an earlier stage. The hybrid Bill for Phase 2a from West Midlands to Crewe was deposited with Parliament in the summer of 2017. Preparations for the Phase 2b hybrid Bill from Crewe to Manchester, and from the West Midlands to Leeds is being progressed towards a hybrid Bill submission in 2019. The panel has already been involved in commenting on Phase Two stations in the East Midlands, and at Manchester Airport, Manchester Piccadilly and Leeds. There are also particularly sensitive sections of the route, for example, where it passes through a heritage corridor near Hardwick Hall, Sutton Scarsdale and Bolsover Castle.

The phasing of HS2 creates a genuine opportunity for the lessons learned in the Phase One design process to inform the way in which Phase Two develops. The panel has been asked to contribute to this process through a workshop session with key HS2 Ltd staff, reflecting on their experience of leading different aspects of design work for the project. Issues which it has already highlighted include:

- the need to move away from a mitigation mindset, towards a more positive approach to celebrating the new railway in the landscapes and cities that it connects,
- the scope to build on the success of the specimen designs, and
- the refinement of procurement processes, in terms of hard requirements vs. soft guidance.

The HS2 Independent Design Panel will continue to support this process, making sure that the value of good design is articulated and championed for this nationally significant project. ●

3 Design for a green bridge over the rail infrastructure

Deborah Denner, Director, Frame Projects



Reviewing the Public Realm

Paul Dodd explains how design review can improve public space design

A quick glance at the list of newly appointed Mayor of London's Design Advocates reveals numerous architects, a few planners, urban designers and landscape architects, and just one traffic engineer. For the Mayor, it seems, the main focus of design is building, specifically the plans to deliver 66,000 new homes over the next ten years as outlined in the new *London Plan*. But streets and the public realm are hugely important to the functioning of London, and it is time to treat them as seriously as new home building. This is where design review comes in.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PUBLIC REALM

There is widespread agreement about the importance of well-designed streets and spaces. They play an essential role in helping to create places that are durable, beautiful and fit for purpose. They can help to deliver overarching political and strategic objectives: combating climate change; improving air quality and health; promoting inclusive access; and, addressing security concerns. They can create a strong sense of character throughout the city.

Streets are more than just conduits for vehicles, they are places for people. Well-designed and welcoming streets can encourage people out of their cars to embrace a more active lifestyle through more walking and cycling. Evidence shows that

increased physical activity can lead to a longer happier life and can have economic benefits.

ENTER DESIGN REVIEW

Commissioned by Urban Design London, the Mayor of London and Place Alliance, *Reviewing Design Review in London* (see earlier article) confirms that there is now widespread agreement about the benefits of design review in helping to create better designed places. Design review can shape the process of securing better design through dialogue with the local authority, and this extends to the design of streets.

Street space is a scarce resource that is under pressure day and night from competing interests. Pedestrians, cyclists, parked and moving vehicles, and various commercial interests compete for space with street furniture, green and blue infrastructure, and utilities. The rise of segregated cycle provision, sustainable urban drainage and electric vehicle infrastructure further pressurise the street. Design review is a great way to help designers to balance these often conflicting demands and secure wider place benefits.

In this spirit, Urban Design London offers design review and more informal design surgeries, with a particular focus on the public realm. Much of this work comes thanks to Transport for London

1 Leonard Circus, London. The panel recommended a level surface and a small kerb to balance legibility, safety and the desire to encourage pedestrian activity across the space. Photograph courtesy of London Borough of Hackney



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which requires any project that it funds over £1million to be subject to design review. The majority of our panellists have backgrounds in landscape architecture, urban design, transport planning and highway engineering. Projects are seen by one of three panels:

- Streets and public realm
- Transport planning and infrastructure, or
- Architecture and planning.

LEARNING FROM DESIGN REVIEW

Design review can act as a vital sounding board at key points in the design process and helps to instil confidence in the developer, designer and local authority, particularly where the proposal is innovative and departs from the norm. Each street and public realm review is unique, but some common characteristics have emerged over the last few years:

Balancing different needs: Highway engineers often lead on projects where the objectives are narrowly defined around improvements for a particular transport mode. This leads to a design proposal that benefits one transport mode at the expense of pedestrian comfort. There has been a big push to deliver cycle infrastructure in the capital, often in space-constrained streets, and design review panels with a range of built environment experts can help to shape proposals to balance movement and place issues, and put the needs of pedestrians foremost.

With the recent terrorist atrocities in London and elsewhere, protective security is becoming a hot topic in street design. A

thoughtful and well considered design response is needed to ensure that streets and public spaces remain welcoming and accessible for all. Good street design and design review can help this process by challenging the objectives and the design response.

Guarding against nasty surprises:

Grand streetscape concepts can founder on the discovery of uncharted below-ground utilities. Design review can encourage a more flexible design approach to help to mitigate this risk. For example, where the objective is to green the street, street trees should be proposed in locations that can be adjusted without a detrimental impact on the overall scheme design, in case of unexpected services below ground.

Sustainable urban drainage is becoming more widespread. The delivery of successful streets and public realm around such drainage requires a high level of technical expertise. Design review panels include technical experts who can advise on this, to ensure the issues have been fully considered at an early stage in the design.

Going beyond the red line: Panels often encourage designers to think big at the early stage of a project and consider the opportunities and impacts the project might have beyond the planning red line boundary. We often review streetscape proposals that are adjacent to planned housing developments but not integrated with them. This reflects a culture of silo working which still prevails in some local authorities: various departments are unaware of each other's projects and the enormous added value, synergy and funding opportunities cooperative design could bring.

We often review proposals where the public realm is considered as an afterthought to be designed once the highway proposal has been agreed. Greenery is seen as nice to have, something that can help to sell the design to sceptical communities rather than an integral part of the design. This approach does not build on the potential for streets and spaces to deliver places where people will want to visit, dwell and use actively. Design review can help to bring different perspectives together and challenge design teams to be more creative in their solutions.

Highlighting context: When designing a street it is useful to consider it as the stage upon which activities take place, not as the star of the show. The designer should think about the wider townscape context and ensure that the buildings which define the character of the area are fully considered in the design. A common mistake in dealing with the public realm is to overcomplicate the design in plan and create complex paving patterns, which are costly to build and maintain, and may not add anything meaningful to people's experience of the place.

2 Leonard Circus before – a traffic-dominated space with no public amenity.
3 Leonard Circus after improvements. The panel encouraged the designers to work up a proposal that emphasized pedestrian priority. Both photographs courtesy of Transport for London

Given the changing nature of streets and spaces, proposals should be able to accommodate change in use at different times of the day and in different seasons. Design review can help embed local distinctness in public realm proposals by including panellists with a good understanding of the local built environment, politics and culture.

Advocating value for money: Design review can be very helpful in advising on projects with limited budgets by focusing on key objectives and encouraging resilient design that can withstand a reduction in scope or the phasing of a project over a longer period.

Panels often recommend that designers keep materials palettes simple and select materials that are durable, robust and easy to maintain. Budgets are limited and construction detailing should be drawn up to ensure that proposals provide value for money. Panellists can share their hard-won experience at design review to help push this forward. Innovative schemes can be sense-checked through design review, and designers encouraged to provide temporary interventions to test out solutions and gain public support before delivering permanent works.

Like all design, streetscape design is subject to the whims of fashion; for example multi-coloured granite setts are currently very much in vogue in London. Panels often take a long-term view, raising questions such as whether the proposal is the most appropriate and whether it reflects the historic palette of materials.

SUCCESS STORIES

In London, a wide range of public realm projects have been subjected to, and improved through design review. Leonard Circus in Hackney is an award-winning scheme that transformed a traffic-dominated junction into a vibrant public space. Here the panel welcomed the radical design proposals, including changes to the carriageway alignment and tree planting in the carriageway to help slow traffic. The panel asked the designer for a clear justification for the proposed level surface and suggested a small kerb upstand might be more appropriate to balance legibility, safety and the desire to encourage pedestrian activity across the space. These considerations were taken on board to the benefit of the scheme.

At Narrow Way in Hackney, a design surgery highlighted the need for a completely new approach to the scheme, strengthening cues from the area’s historical and cultural assets. Given the complex social make-up and substantial development pressures in this part of the capital, the panel recommended that the scheme should help to deliver the borough’s social objectives beyond addressing the traffic and pedestrian issues. This led to a more subtle design approach, which aimed to reinforce the unique character of the area in terms of historic built fabric and the associated land use mix. At the same time, the scheme has aimed to safeguard the character of Narrow Way and encourage appropriate community and night time uses, and development proposals.

LOOKING FORWARD

The cost of design review is small compared to the capital works and maintenance costs of streetscape schemes. However, it is not a practice that all London boroughs have yet adopted. Clearly there is still work to be done to promote the benefits of design review, particularly where schemes do not require planning permission and review can sometimes be seen as an optional extra. But the evidence is very strong: streetscape design review adds real and lasting value to the process of designing and delivering great places, streets and spaces. ●

Paul Dodd, Head of Design Advice, Urban Design London



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Panels often recommend that designers keep materials palettes simple and select materials that are durable, robust and easy to maintain

4 Leonard Circus. The designer was encouraged to focus on vertical elements, as these have the most impact on how the space operates, including reducing vehicular speeds. Photograph by Paul Dodd
 5 Narrow Way, London Borough of Hackney. Design review gave the Council the confidence to rethink the proposals which, whilst innovative, were too complex for the context. Photograph by Paul Dodd
 6 Clapham Old Town, London. Design reviews helped to ensure that the new public space could accommodate a range of new uses and activities, plus bus standing. Photograph courtesy of Transport for London

The New Zealand Experience

Ben van Bruggen reports on how Auckland is managing design quality



By designing and shaping the keel to perfection, your vessel will overcome all obstacles... Good design is not some nice to have. It is not some pretty veneer. Good design is stuff that works. And because form follows function, stuff that works is so much more likely to please the senses. Good design has in the last two decades shown us, with the Wellington waterfront and Pukeahu National War Memorial Park and in Auckland, the Britomart and Wynyard Quarter, how the quality of the public realm can lift our spirits and make a city liveable, and that in turn attracts people and investment.¹

This opening address to the Urbanism 2018 Conference held in Wellington in May was delivered by the Minister for Housing and Urban Development and Transport, Phil Twyford. It is about as close to a national policy statement on the importance of design as New Zealand gets. It is a good start though the legislative and professional infrastructure to support it is not ready yet. In 2005 the *Urban Design Protocol* was published by the Ministry for Environment. Seen as an important step at the time, it lacked an implementation strategy and budget to match its ambition. It is now out of date and irrelevant.

It is a surprise that New Zealand has struggled in this way. After World War II, it was the fourth wealthiest per capita country in the world. Auckland could boast one of the highest public transport ridership levels in the world. The tramway

system enabled expansion to the suburbs and brought prosperity to the city and its rapidly expanding edges. Quarter-acre plots were staked out and single-family dwellings were the norm.

As affluence increased, the population dispensed with public transport and embraced private car ownership. The age of sprawl was enthusiastically adopted by Aucklanders and their politicians. The tramways were ripped-up in favour of private cars and a car-based infrastructure. The legacy is that New Zealand now has more cars per capita than almost anywhere else in the world (0.88 per person, or 3.6 million cars for a population of just 4.5 million people) and, shamefully, road deaths are on the rise particularly for younger people.

Nowadays climate change, population growth, affordability and infrastructure investment dominate the thinking about Auckland's future. Developing brownfield sites is complex and an ageing

¹ Projects which have benefited from design reviews in Auckland: Freyberg Place

infrastructure means that developers face considerable costs. Expanding into greenfield or edge city sites costs ratepayers \$120,000 per residential unit in physical infrastructure (excluding education and health provision).

But Auckland (also known by the Māori name Tāmaki Makaurau) is now undergoing something of a renaissance. Investment in new rail lines, busways, cycling infrastructure and a consistent approach to public realm improvements has supported the demand for intensification. The city centre, no longer referred to as the Central Business District, is now the fastest growing residential neighbourhood in New Zealand, from under 2,000 people in 1991 to over 50,000 people today. In Tāmaki Makaurau at least, urban change is possible.

THE AUCKLAND URBAN DESIGN PANEL

The origins of design review in the city are founded in protest. In 1999 a corporate tower was proposed on the waterfront in the city centre. An architectural and planning lobby group, the Society for the Protection of Auckland’s City and Waterfront, sought a High Court hearing to appeal against the approval of the tower. The subsequent action, political and professional pressure about this and other proposed developments, led to the establishment of Auckland City Council’s Urban Design Panel in 2003. Panel Members were drawn from the New Zealand Institute of Architecture, the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and the New Zealand Property Council, and later the New Zealand Institute of Planning.

The Auckland Urban Design Panel (AUDP) was established in 2010 following the creation of a unitary authority, Auckland Council, and is now part of the design process administered by the Auckland Design Office (ADO). Auckland Council established the ADO, a centre of excellence in the built environment, to promote better design outcomes for the newly amalgamated super city. The ADO and the AUDP have been heavily influenced by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) model.

There are currently 42 panellists supplemented by nine advisors covering topics such as universal access, sustainability and heritage. Those skilled and experienced in Māori design, an increasingly influential way of design thinking, are also included in the core of the panel. It is the recognition, understanding and promotion of Māori design that sets the city apart.

In the Auckland context, design review is a service provided to the resource consent (development control) function of the city planning department. The staff team in the ADO operates in a similar way to the internal consultees on a planning application in UK local authorities. Of the 14,000 consents per year in Auckland, the design review team comments on about 10 per cent and the panel on about 10 per cent of that, i.e. one per cent of all consent requests. Advice is directed to the planners in assessing applications for consent. This service is paid for by applicants, consequently there is a constant pressure to meet performance targets.

In addition to assisting the statutory function through design review, Auckland Council and the ADO has a team focussed on the revival and rejuvenation of the city centre; these are the custodians of the City Centre Masterplan.

In support of the design review and city centre programmes, the ADO seeks to direct the city’s design strategy through influencing the Council, developers and the central government by demonstrating the costs of poor design and promoting the added value of good design. This includes supporting the work of Auckland’s Design Champion, Ludo Campbell-Reid, and influencing industry. The Tāmaki Makaurau Design Alliance, an organisation that brings together the professional and academic institutes with the New Zealand Property Council, Ngā Aho (a network of Māori and indigenous design professionals) and the Design Institute of New Zealand, has been established and provides the ADO with a further touch-point to industry.



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THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF DESIGN REVIEW

As well as the approach to the inclusion of Māori design, the AUDP differs from other panels in that it includes the involvement of property developers and professionals. The New Zealand Property Council is an advocate for the panel, nominating their panel members and meeting regularly with the ADO to provide feedback on how well the panel is operating within the regulatory context. Rachel de Lambert, Panel Convenor, observes: ‘The move to include a property representative on Auckland’s Urban Design panel has been a good one, it has helped bridge a gap of acceptance that the panel understands the realities of projects whilst seeing good public realm and urban form / functionality outcomes. The early perception of the panel being ‘style police’ has certainly faded away.’

Another interesting point is the difference between the AUDP, which is an advisory panel to the Council’s urban design team, and the dedicated panels (such as those in the regeneration areas of Hobsonville Point and Tāmaki Regeneration) where the panel operates with the authority of the landowner, and therefore has much more power to say no. There, the panel’s decisions are not revisited by the Council. The Hobsonville panel, which includes representation from the original master planning firm Isthmus, met 58 times last year. Graeme Scott, panel

2-3 Auckland: Britomart Precinct and Manakau Bus Station



4

convenor says, 'I think the developers there would agree, in spite of occasional frustration over panel decisions, that they are making a positive contribution'. As Chris Aiken, CEO of Homes. Land. Community, the landowner of Hobsonville, is fond of saying, the design review process at Hobsonville, 'makes the boat go faster'.

A third point of difference is that the Council has actively sought to have its own urban design programme and capital projects subjected to design review. This includes masterplans, community projects, and infrastructure projects such as city centre public realm upgrades and urban motorway projects. The council Projects Design Review Panel offers a one stop shop for Council-controlled organisations to get consensus on a proposal from council departments. It offers a space for discussing the issues and trade-offs required and for promoting best practice.

Auckland's regeneration agency, Panuku, also operates a panel, commonly referred to as TAG – an independent Technical Advisory Group. The TAG panel operates outside the scope of the Auckland Urban Design Panel but does share several members with the urban design panel.

THE FUTURE OF THE PANEL

Design review is now well established in Auckland and it's generally agreed that Auckland Council's Urban Design Panel, in its various forms over the years, has had a significant impact on improving the quality of built development outcomes in the city. It has also been crucial in educating the development community, and some practitioners, about what quality is. Auckland's community of developers and designers is small. Knowledge and experience can be quickly shared, which can make for fast and effective results. As Rachel de Lambert says 'That's not to say there's not room for continued improvement, or that everything that gets built is great, but it's better than it might have been'.

Without introducing new legislation, there are those who will continue to avoid the push towards good design that is the moving force behind design review. As Graeme Scott has discovered, 'We like to think that the work of the Auckland Panel

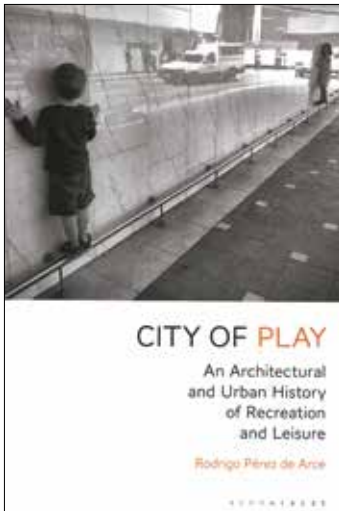
is often invisible in the city. The worst developments are discouraged and not built. I must say that's only partially true – a couple of projects my panel rejected are now nearing completion on site – but I still think it's an important aspect of raising the bar'.

Rachel and Graeme have recently been appointed as Panel Convenors. They are aware of the challenges which are also common in England. They are keen to seek continual improvements. According to Rachel 'When there are so many sessions, one of the challenges of Panel is consistency and high quality of feedback. This is something we work on'. Time is an issue as panellists are essentially providing a service as part of their commitment to the profession and to better built outcomes across the city, everyone is busy and making time for training is difficult to co-ordinate.

John Hunt, the long-standing convenor of the panel who recently stepped down, often remarked that design review in Auckland was moving from formative to summative. It's less common now, but developers used to present half-baked proposals on land they probably did not own. In a rules-based planning system, better design has to work hard to be recognised. Planning lawyers are not uncommon attendees at panel reviews, but everyone is starting to see the benefits of a more flexible design-led approach and of raising quality. The city centre, with its recently improved public realm and burgeoning lanes, proves that good design is good for business.

The politicians are adamant that we must say no to bad design. Legislative change will be needed but I am optimistic. There has never been a better time to create a step-change in the built outcomes for Tāmaki Makaurau. As Phil Twyford said in his speech: '[The] area of reform, and I concede it is the least developed, is unleashing the power of great design. But to be honest, government doesn't have much capability in this area. One of my jobs is to build capability and expertise in the public service for urban development, urban design and the built environment. We do however have the political will to work with you – the private sector, the design practitioners, local government, academia, the campaigners and advocates...It is not too late to start'. ●

Ben van Bruggen, Manager, City Design Strategy, Auckland Design Office
This article drew on the material in the book *Inter-View: The Contribution of Urban Design Panels to Auckland's Urban Story* by the ADO.

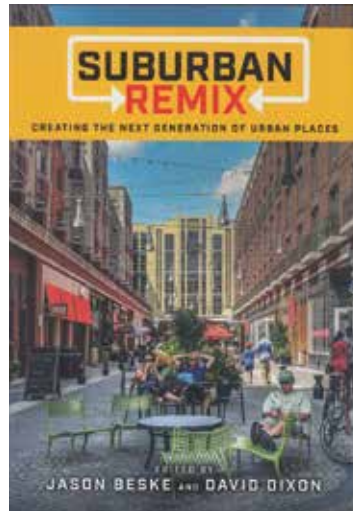


City of Play, An Architectural and Urban History of Recreation and Leisure

Rodrigo Perez de Arce, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018, £24.99, ISBN 978-1-3500-3217-0

This is a fascinating yet challenging book. It deals with a subject that is often ignored but that has, and is likely to have, an increasingly profound influence on urban form. From its simple main title to its enigmatic cover (are the children playing or hiding?) this is a book of contrasts and occasional frustrations.

The book focuses on the role of play and leisure pursuits in urban form. This is an important objective but the author chooses to move away from plain English and uses the term *ludic*. This is often used in practical urban design circles and whilst it does mean 'showing spontaneous and undirected playfulness' its unfamiliarity is distracting. If the book is to reach a wider audience, then play or even leisure would have been more appropriate. It should not be the purpose of a review to dwell on the author's use of English, but in this case the author frequently develops a line of reasoning only for one's attention to be disrupted by the unusual use of a perfectly correct word. An example concerns the use of the word *liturgy*. In describing the impact of hunting as a leisure pursuit, Perez de Arce refers to rural areas being turned into playgrounds by leisure-time hunters, '...without partaking in the expensive liturgy of the aristocratic hunt...'. To many the word *liturgy* has overtones of religiosity; what I believe the author meant was 'ritual'. This may seem unnecessarily pedantic but how we use language can mean that a valuable point is obscure. It also serves to distract from the main thrust of the book. It is worth speculating why this should happen; *City of Play* has its origins in Perez de Arce's PhD thesis and perhaps this is where the root of the problem lies. So too may the author's friendship with the late Peter Smithson, who used language



in very particular and sometimes idiosyncratic ways. Obscure words and specifically circumscribed meanings may be appropriate in an academic work, but they make hard work for an urban designer in practice and demonstrate the value of a rigorous down-to-earth editor. Setting these niggles aside, this is an important book. Fully researched, profusely illustrated with the authors own line drawings and with a very extensive bibliography. ●

Richard Cole

Suburban Remix, Creating the Next Generation of Urban Places

Edited by Jason Beske and David Dixon, Island Press, 2018, £30.00, ISBN 978-1-6109-1863-3

In recent years in the UK, urban designers have tried to convince many in the built environment field and beyond such as developers, elected members, government officials and communities, that walkable, green, permeable, non-car dependent neighbourhoods are more liveable, good for health reasons and better for the environment. The government is trying to sell these types of development to reluctant local communities to solve the housing crisis whilst avoiding sprawl. The contributors to this book start from a different point but arrive at similar conclusions and recommendations.

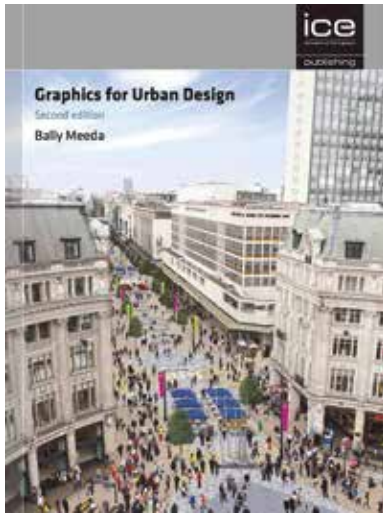
Suburban life, central to the American dream for most of the 20th century, has lost its shine and the result is economic decline and a lack of investment. The causes for the decline are demographic, cultural, social and economic: the nuclear family of two parents and two children is no longer prevalent; the suburban population is ageing and poorer; while Millennials prefer the buzz of the city to the peace of the 'burbs, dislike commuting, don't patronise out-of-town malls, and are attracted to diversity. They are moving

to the cities and shunning the suburbs. Local authorities rely for their fiscal income on activity centres such as business parks or shopping centres; these subsidise the residential areas which cost more (for instance in education) than they contribute to the authorities' coffers. But as the activity centres are increasingly less attractive and residential areas become older and poorer, therefore requiring more services, local authorities' deficits increase.

The solution is to re-urbanise the suburbs, to create more urban, walkable neighbourhoods connected by public transport, and this book shows that this makes economic sense whilst offering all the advantages of good urban design. It is divided in four parts with *Setting the Stage* dealing mostly with the above; and *Suburban Markets* taking the three main suburban land uses, housing, office and retail to show how each one can be urbanised to the benefit of all. Part three consists of *Cases Studies for Walkable Urban Places*, mostly from the United States and principally from the Washington DC area. One case study from China sits somewhat uncomfortably in the middle of these as both the context and the management processes are totally different, even though the issues may be similar. The last part, *Bringing it All Together* deals with planning and placemaking in a way that readers would find familiar. It includes a number of recommendations and lessons to take from past experiences.

The spirit of the book can be summarised in one sentence: 'Placemaking doesn't just create a livable, culturally sensitive built environment, it holds the key to succeeding in the marketplace'. It should provide useful arguments to embattled planners and urban designers wanting to sell their ideas, even though the American context is not the British one. ●

Sebastian Loew



Graphics for Urban Design

Bally Meeda, ICE publishing, 2018 (2nd edition), £55.00, ISBN 978-0-72776-171-2

This is an update of the 2007 first edition of the book, and this second edition is 42 pages longer than the first. There is little comment on the changes between the two but there appears to be more focus on graphics production, and a wider body of people and organisations have contributed good practice examples.

As one of my favourite urban design books, this new edition is just as visually stimulating, and reminds us how to use visual media to engage, excite and include in an intuitive way, whereas so many planning and technical documents are text-based and do none of the above.

The document is logically structured; the introductory section, Setting the Scene, provides a reminder of the importance of graphic techniques for the communication of ideas and of the history of graphics to convey urban aspirations. It puts into perspective our ability to produce visualisations of large-scale proposals today, and is described as a guide to help urban design teams to select the most appropriate form of graphics for any particular project and at the right stage.

The second section, The Process, emphasises the role of graphics within urban design – context and site analysis and the different diagrams that can be used such as figure ground, landmarks, historic evolution etc. Tracing paper, pens, post-it notes and photos highlight the value of simple tools people can use and are essential for good participation and engagement. The design rationale, which underpins the later more detailed ideas, can be presented via a storyboard of diagrams, photos, sketches, images and cartoons or in more graphical expression that can be easily shared.

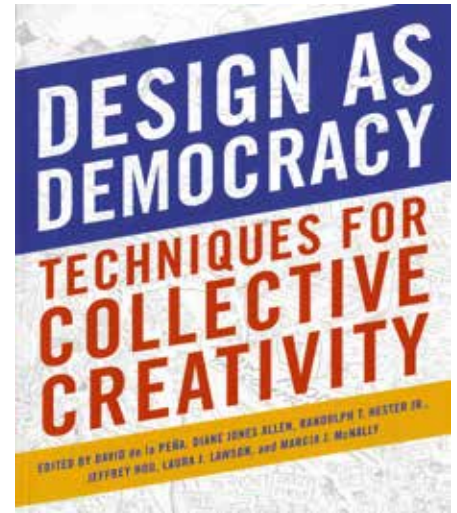
A third section of the document covers the practical creation of drawings. The step-by-step progression will be of particularly

value to students and newly employed urban designers. The final and longest section relates to Good Practice, useful for public and commercial design teams as they plan a project. It provides many good tips and useful examples of when and where to use different types of graphic representation such as photomontages and before and after images. It explains how graphical styles and techniques should become more definitive and measurable as the project moves towards final proposals.

The book is very legible and well presented with a full range of computer generated images (CGIs), 3D visuals, 2D plans and sketches. Pages are sparsely laid out and readable, practicing what it preaches – that breathing space is needed in final documents. Clutter and excess detail are to be avoided, a bit like in the built environment.

The book does not speculate how graphic design might evolve, e.g. increasing its use of data-gathering smartphone applications or with artificial intelligence software. A comprehensive index of standard urban design graphic symbols and a summary of potential graphic pitfalls would have been useful, although the foreword contains the important warning that good graphics can mislead and beguile to justify poor urban design. Any criticisms would be marginal, as the book is a valuable, probably indispensable reference for those wishing to develop and employ urban design graphic skills. ●

Tim Hagyard, freelance chartered town planner and urban designer

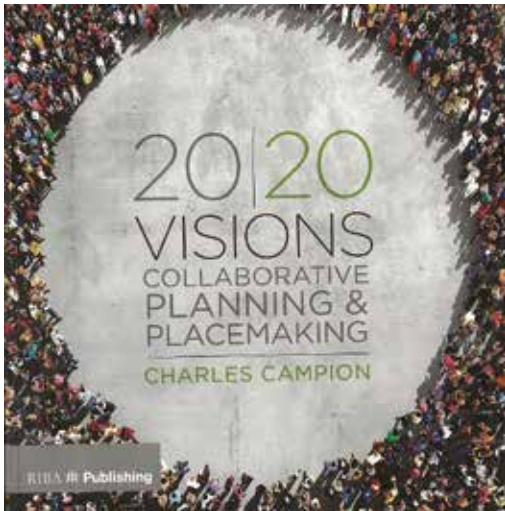


Design as Democracy, Techniques for Collective Creativity

Edited by David de la Pena, Diane Jones Allen, Randolph T. Hester, Jeffrey Hou, Laura J. Lawson and Marcia J. McNally, Island Press, 2018, £30.00, ISBN 978-1-61091-847-3

With such a positive title, this book potentially offers a great deal for designers and community groups. It aims to show that by giving more people a role in design processes, it can fulfil their needs better and inspire the long-term stewardship of places. Edited by a group of six academics and practitioners based in the United States, the language in the book is very quirky in places; although this may be deliberate, it is distracting rather than making it easy to read. The book was planned as a way of reinvigorating democratic design, and draws together ideas, experiences and techniques submitted to the team in 2015.

It comprises nine chapters which cover topics from preparation (Suiting Up to Shed), identifying commitment and interest (Going to the People's Coming), and other stages to build up an understanding of what could be done, where the energy is locally, what information is needed and from whom, to Co-generating, Engaging the Making, Testing, and Putting Power to Good Use. Each chapter includes techniques and a case study, submitted by a contributor. These are wide-ranging examples from prison gardens and buildings to public space designs. Frustratingly the techniques are not summarised elsewhere, nor the case studies highlighted separately, except within the index, so that each one has to be read and its transferability judged chapter by chapter. One interesting example is from Barcelona, where El Carrito (the cart) is rolled out onto the streets and acts as both an attraction to people using a specific space, and a meeting point to share or gather information. The design of the cart



is described as being as important as the maps or questions being used.

Another example is the idea of using big maps and mock-up models to engage people, or the importance of giving things away (e.g. popsicles from the Pop-Up Meeting van) to those who participate. Many of the case studies seem to have a long period in which to engage people in preparation for more specific discussions, building trust, relationships and perhaps local skills. It is rare that community engagement in planning and urban design projects allow the time, let alone the budget, to include many of these approaches, unless a core objective of the project is to build local skills and capacity. Sadly engagement is too often just consultation, and with very specific objectives to be achieved in mind. ●

Louise Thomas

20|20 Visions, Collaborative planning and placemaking

Charles Campion, RIBA Publishing, 2018, £32, ISBN 978-1-85946-736-7

Based largely on the approach and practical applications of John Thompson and Partners (JTP) of which Campion is a partner, this book focuses on charrettes. Fortunately, the word charrette does not figure in the title, as some find its unfamiliarity a hindrance rather than a help in co-opting local people to co-design.

The book consists of six chapters with most of the book taken up by 20 case studies in chapter 5, 12 of them facilitated by JTP. Chapter 1 entitled It's not enough to vote, and chapter 3 The importance of collaboration, are confined to a double page spread. Chapter 2 gives a history of collaborative planning. It attributes the origin of the multi-day charrette process to Caudill Rowlett Scot in 1948, followed in 1967 by the American Institute of Architects (AIA)'s response to urban riots with Regional/Urban

Design Assistance teams (R/UDATs). Used in two American case studies in Santa Fe and Nashville, the merits of R/UDATs are seen in professionalising local authorities and influencing urban policies. Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation published in 1969 is considered the cornerstone of theory about public participation, but Campion replaced it with his own version at the end of the book. AIA's promotion of R/UDAT charrettes gave credibility to urban design. It led to international take-up in improving the built environment as well as social provision and self-governance. Moreover, the speed and efficiency of charrettes attracted developers' appreciation. Transatlantic conferences linked charrettes with the UK community architecture movement and John Thompson facilitated the first charrette in the UK in 1989. Others like the Prince's Foundation further developed the collaborative planning process and New Urbanism adopted it as a key tool.

Chapter 4, entitled What is collaborative planning and placemaking, is core information for those adopting the charrette process. It lists the benefits and uses of charrettes, and describes the process in three phases:

- preparation – steering group, communication strategies, stakeholder hierarchy, pre-event launch, publicity, surveys, animating the community, involving young people, contacting the hard-to-reach, information collation
- event – programmes with examples of two and five-day charrettes, team greeting of participants, exhibition, dialogue workshops, tours and walkabouts, hands-on planning sessions, way forward workshop, team working, reporting back presentation, and
- outputs – development proposals, sustaining local involvement, town teams, community development trusts, community land trusts, design codes, evaluation of outcomes.

Looking at these components, it could be argued that many are common practice for normal planning processes.

Chapter 5 with the examples is introduced by an overview table, classifying them by country, date, types of client, scale, urban or rural setting, and vision focus. What is lacking is budget information, although the funding mechanism is quoted as the key determinant elsewhere. When charrettes are sponsored by local authorities and more rarely by developers, the surprisingly large team of professionals get remunerated. Charrettes organised by the community cannot afford such budgets and professionals may work pro-bono or on an expenses only basis. All community participants are expected to give their time and knowledge for free.

The only example initiated by a genuine local community in Barnes lasted one day and many of the listed tasks were carried out for free by the local community which was relatively homogeneous, well-off and had appropriate skills. Looking at the schedules, the majority of the time is taken up by the professionals sketching drawings based on information and wishes expressed by the community at initial sessions. It is not clear whether the feedback sessions are run as interactive events.

When participants are shown the project in a language familiar to designers such as plans, drawings, perspectives (called vignettes in the book) and more rarely 3D models, without prior notice, they may not be in a position to absorb this information. Chapter 6 sums up the lessons from the cases in 20 points. They state that the charrette process achieved consensus and appreciation by the participants. ●

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

Practice Index

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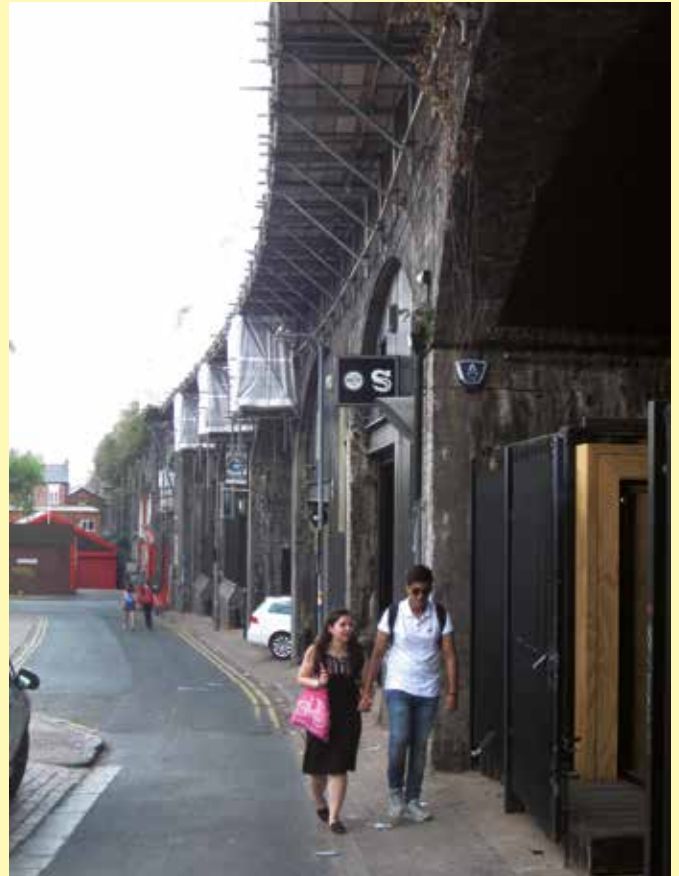
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Underneath the Arches

As a child in the early 1950s, one of my literary heroes was the great athlete Alf Tupper, who appeared weekly in the *Rover* magazine. He was a working-class mile runner, whose diet was mainly fish and chips. He worked as a welder in an arch of a railway viaduct, and he sometimes slept there too before a race. Ever since I have been interested in railway arches and the businesses that are found in them. Being an academic, I now refer to their premises as parasitic architecture.

Of course, the 19th century railway companies did not intend to provide space for businesses. Building a viaduct on brick arches was just the means to get a train economically from A to B; the space was just a byproduct. But apparently there are now about 4,500 businesses in the country working in arches. The landlord for all these businesses is Network Rail, which is intending to sell all its freehold land to a big commercial developer, and to invest the income into the operation of the railways. It appears that in order to increase the value of its land in advance of the sale, rents are being increased.

A group of tenants called the Guardians of the Arches is campaigning against the proposed sale. They reckon that some proposed rent increases go up to 350 per cent.

Network Rail denies this, and claims that the great majority of rent rises are below 10 per cent. However, one of the *Guardians*, who runs a business in an arch in east London, tells me that they were faced with a 350 per cent rent increase, which they managed to negotiate down to 100 per cent; a mere doubling of the rent.

Railway arches are a classic example of Jane Jacobs' dictum that, while old ideas can sometimes use new buildings, new ideas must use old buildings. The familiar image of an arch occupier is of a utilitarian business like Alf Tupper's welder or a car repair workshop. But arches also house many young entrepreneurs making furniture, brewing beer, running cafés, designing websites and so on. They can start their small businesses because the space is cheap. One of Jacobs' Four Conditions for Diversity is a sufficient supply of old buildings, a fact often not understood by politicians and town planners, for whom more expensive new buildings, which often displace usable old buildings, have a greater status and priority.

Birmingham's Digbeth, spanned by three separate railway viaducts, is a neighbourhood with a relatively high proportion of businesses in railway arches. They contribute to the small-scale diversity which is the characteristic quality of Digbeth, the often-surprising juxtaposition of uses and activities. On Shaw's Passage, underneath Moor Street Station and a stone's throw from where High Speed Two (HS2) trains from London will slow to a halt from 2026, can be found Motormech Limited, a car repair workshop occupying two arches. In the next

arch is Kilder, a cool black bar and café. Next door are the celebrated burgers of the Original Patty Men. They are street food regulars at Digbeth Dining Club, housed in another arch half a mile further down the line. Next is a 'global gaming arena', whatever that is, in an arch which not long ago accommodated a church.

This kind of diversity is what cities are for, and should be cherished and valued. Here it has grown naturally through incremental enterprise. But if Network Rail's plans to raise rents and sell to a big commercial operator go through, the attractive diversity of Digbeth and similar districts will be under threat. Network Rail's plans are alongside a bigger threat to Digbeth's diversity, which is the arrival of the HS2 terminal at Curzon Street. Land and building values are going up in anticipation, and the danger is that Digbeth will become part of an increasingly homogeneous city centre, both in its building scale and in its land uses. It is a conservation area, whose old buildings cannot be demolished without planning approval, and its management plan is currently being rewritten in the city council. There is a difficult but vital job to be done here: to ensure that investment in the neighbourhood is made, but in such a way that its scale and diversity is maintained, and not obliterated. ●

Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer

Footnote: On 11 September 2018, the railway arches were sold by Network Rail to Blackstone and Telerail for £1.5bn (the Editor)

Graphics for Urban Design

Second edition

Bally Meeda

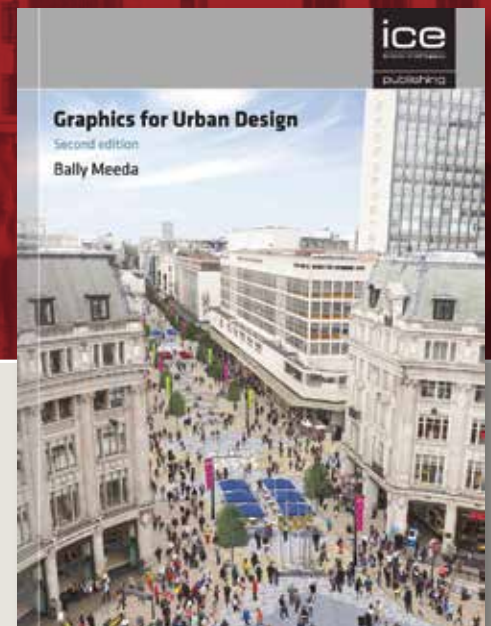
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