

MAGAZINE FOR THE RTPI WEST MIDLANDS

TRIPWIRE



Editor's comment



– **Michael Vout**
Tripwire Editor

August 2022

As someone who wanted a normal-sized Mars Bar™ this was anything but 'fun'.

There was a time when a Mars Bar™ was just a Mars Bar™.

...then the world changed and we were given the Mars Bar™ 'fun size™' which was a considerably reduced version of the famous confectionary treat. As someone who wanted a normal sized Mars Bar™ this was anything but 'fun'.

And so here we are in 2022, after a tumultuous two years of Covid-19¹ which, like all major events has caused great change and indeed has forced us to change in so many ways.

It has had an enormous impact upon the way we work and socialise, the way in which we value and use the public realm, how we shop and an enormous awakening to the importance of and access to green open space - an issue which has been reinforced by the recent heatwave.

To say that it is imperative that the planning system and planners need to be responsive to these changes is an understatement. Planning is not a panacea but it does have an extremely significant role in addressing and helping to solve these issues and in the making our world a better place.

Our actions, however small, whether through DM or policy have the ability to assist or hinder ways in which we can not only react to but to positively address these changes.

The RTPI and your regional RTPI are there to help enable you to do this.

And so.... back to Mars Bars™.

Tripwire has a long and successful history, mostly under the direction of the previous RTPI President John Acres and is one of the few remaining regional RTPI 'magazines'.

Its purpose has been to provide a platform for regional planning events and opinion, interesting articles, regional and national RTPI news presented in an accessible and (hopefully) occasionally 'humorous' way.

It is important that Tripwire evolves and is responsive to the changes in which we inform and communicate. This edition of Tripwire is responsive to these changes. It is 'Tripwire Fun Size™' or what be better termed as 'Tripwire Lite'.

As always, we are extremely grateful to those who have helped to produce this edition of Tripwire especially Katy Gibson (RTPI Regional co ordinator) and welcome and encourage contributions and opinions from members.

¹ Postscript 12th September 2022. And a genuine 'end of an era' with the passing of Queen Elizabeth II

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At the time of writing, we are already into the third quarter of the calendar year and my year as West Midlands Chair is rushing along. It's a privilege to be Chair for 2022, a year in which we have seen Birmingham host the Commonwealth Games within the region which was truly exciting.

One of our themes within the business plan this year is around promoting the profession. With this theme in mind, I thought I would focus my piece on what inspired me to enter the planning profession.

Without realising it, I was interested in planning from a young age. Parents tend to think highly of their children, but my parents thought that I had a special talent. At the age of 3, I was able to recite a vast array of countries. As I got older, I moved onto cities. I can recall packs of cards where there was the flag of a country or a picture of a capital city, and I was able to identify it. Unfortunately, that was the limit of my capability and, until I went to secondary school, I had little interest in studying.

Fast forward to careers day in year 9 and I wanted to either be a professional football player or a coach driver. Why a coach driver? Frankly I saw it as an opportunity to visit places. I was fortunate enough to go on field trips at school and it was something I enjoyed. Getting lost in a new place and navigating my way back was something I relished. Looking at how different places connected and the interaction of a population with the built environment was again something that intrigued me.

From a subject perspective I was fortunate that geography came naturally to me. When I look back, my passion has always been the built environment. During my school years - apart from becoming a footballer - my flirtations with potential industries all linked back to the built environment. I took geography at A-Level and my form tutor Mr Dixon suggested that I consider a course run at the University of Birmingham titled Geography and Planning. This was really the trigger for me progressing within the planning profession.

It was at University that I really learned about planning as a profession. It also became clear that I'd been studying the subject at school without realising it. I would be interested to know whether students at secondary school know what Town Planning, or other linked professions are.

Dr Mike Beazley particularly helped me along the way. He suggested that I attend something called the RTPi West Midlands regional meeting. This opened new opportunities for me, here I got to meet working professionals who were passionate about planning.



It also helped me realise that there would be a job after University because there was a shortage of Town Planners.

For my sins I still considered a career outside planning. I considered a conversion course to law, I even applied for a few graduate schemes in banking. In my final year I was offered a role at a high-profile bank but, ultimately, I knew my passion was within the built environment profession.

It was during my final year that I was fortunate to get some interviews in planning. Trying to convince prospective managers that my employment as a forklift truck driver was transferable to the planning profession was challenging. I was lucky enough to start my career at Redditch Borough Council in May 2006, a role which I do miss. I was given a lot of support and management were patient with me while I learnt the practical application of the role. I am truly grateful for my introduction to town planning and I believe the work at Redditch was good for me personally in developing a wide skillset. When I joined the profession, I was able to concentrate on learning the trade.

Today, I am concerned that, when graduates join us, there are so many challenges outside of planning that it can be a distraction to their development, in particular the financial challenges within a Local Authority. Linked to this the capacity within local authority planning departments mean we are often asking graduate staff to take on a significant and challenging workload from an early stage. This is something that I won't dwell on here, but I do wonder how this would have affected my development.

I believe that a big factor that has helped my career is my involvement with the regional arm of the RTPi. My work with the Regional Activities Committee of RTPi West Midlands did open new doors for me and the connections I have established have helped me develop professionally. I hope that I can offer others support as they develop, and I would encourage those new and experienced to get involved with the regional institute.

I would like to congratulate all of the nominees and winners at this year's regional awards which we held at Millennium Point on 30 June. It was a fantastic evening, and it was great to be able to host such a big in person event.

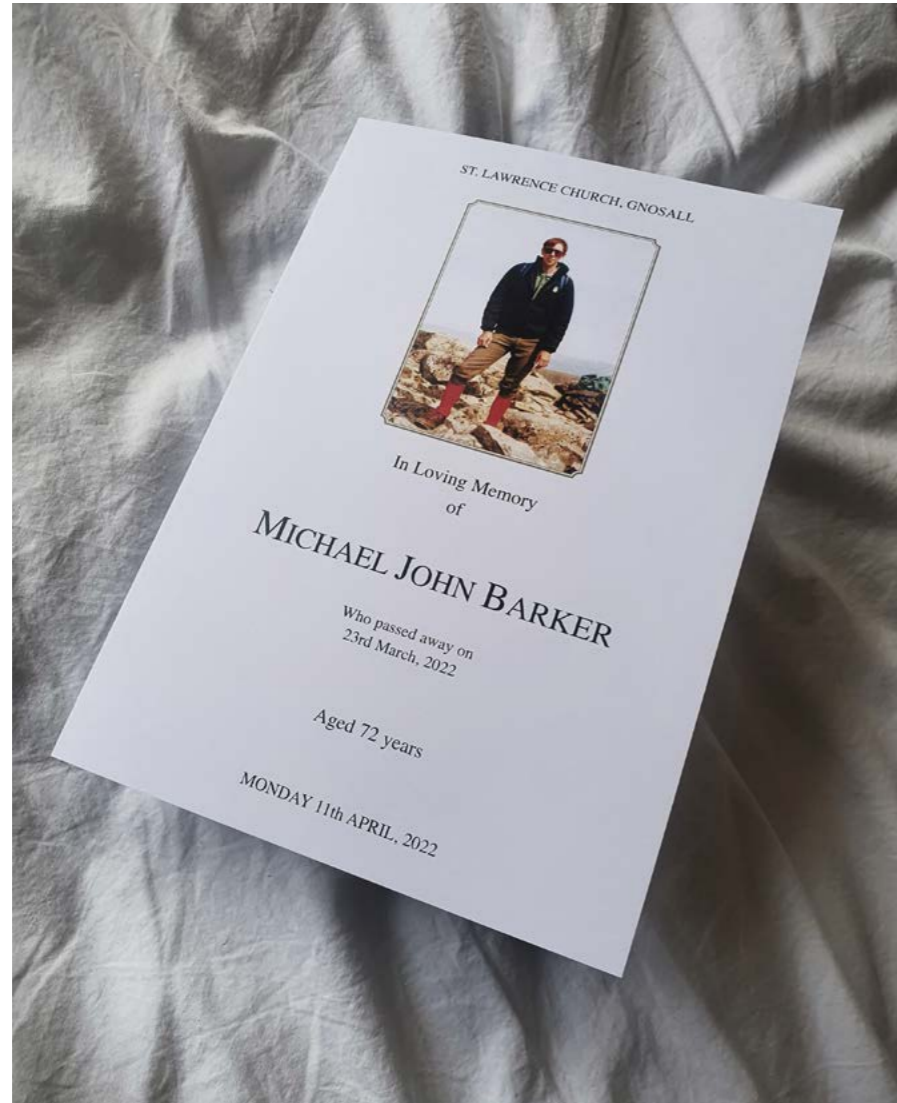
Finally I'd like to pass on my condolences to Michael Barker's family. Michael was a former Chair of the region and his passing is sad for all of us.

—
Ashley Baldwin
RTPi West Midlands
Chair 2022



Michael Barker

1950 – 2022



It is with sadness that we report that Michael Barker passed away on 23 March 2022. Michael joined the RTPi West Midlands committee in 1986, he was Regional Chair in 1994 and represented the region on RTPi Council from 1995 to 2000. He was active in various aspects of the Region's work, including Planning Aid and Environmental Education.

Most recently Michael was the West Midlands RAC Regional Policy representative and co-Chair of the West Midlands International Group. He was also a member of the Independent Consultants' Network.

Having been an active member of the West Midlands Regional Activities Committee and Regional Management Board for over twenty years, his expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to RTPi and town planning will be greatly missed. Our condolences go out to his wife and sons.

It's time to nominate

For volunteer roles on our Boards and Committees in the Nations and Regions



#RTPIelections

Support your profession for the future of planning and stand in the RTPi elections

Nominations are now open and will close on 30 September 2022

If you have fresh and practical ideas that will help us deliver value for our members and contribute to our continued success, become one of our leading voices by putting yourself forward in the RTPi Elections.

We're looking for nominations for a number of vacancies across RTPi's Nations and Regions on RTPi West Midlands Regional Management Board and Regional Activities Committee.

Each Regional Management Board guides a programme of regional activity through the preparation, monitoring and delivery of the Regional Business Plan. It is supported by members of a Regional Activities Committee which delivers activities arranged by .and for members including CPD programmes, events, newsletters, awards as well as other activities.

Subject to meeting eligibility criteria for some positions, we welcome nominations from

all members who are able to demonstrate the qualities and experiences we're looking for.

Our governance should be as diverse as our membership. In order to achieve this, we need members from the widest possible range of backgrounds to nominate. Different experiences and views are essential for effective decision making. If you're passionate about making a positive change – this is the time to put yourself forward or tap a fellow member on the back and encourage them to.

To nominate yourself, please click on the link and complete the nominations form by 5.00pm on Friday 30 September 2022.

Save the date!



–
Tim Crawshaw
RTPi President

13-14 October is RTPi President Tim Crawshaw's visit to the West Midlands. He'll be looking around local projects, giving a lecture at the University of Birmingham and attending a reception at the Lapworth Museum.

Want to be involved?
Email ...

westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

Are Young Planners talking to young people?

Designing for all need not be complicated, just get out and have a chat!



Simeon Shtebunaev
RTPi West Midlands Young
Planner of the Year 2021



This year we are celebrating the European Year of Youth, an initiative launched by the European Union. My compatriot, Mariya Gabriel, the Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth said it is a recognition of the sacrifices that young people have made during the Covid-19 pandemic. Closer to home, young people are “the missing voice” in the planning process as identified in the UK Government’s ‘Planning for the Future’ White Paper, begging the question: Do Young Planners consult young people in their day-to-day professional work?

Working with young people needs to start at home and in some cases talk about the ‘home’ first. I have been asking young adults (18-30) about their experience of Birmingham’s residential developments and post-pandemic recovery. “The Brum Youth’s City?!” project came about as a Small Grant by the Academy of Urbanism and has been a simple survey issued every year throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past two years, the results have revealed a mixed picture of a demographic unable to step up the housing ladder and dissatisfied with the space and design standards observed around the city. Unfortunately, the policy avenues to acknowledge their opinions are still lacking. One positive development in the last year has been the Birmingham’s Healthy City Planning Toolkit - a policy document which has taken the idea of child- and youth-friendly development to heart. We need much more proactive engagement by local planning authorities’ planners with this demographic.

Consulting young people requires proactivity, but the rewards can be insights which we all miss out as planners who rarely live in the areas we plan. In years past, I taught at Broadway Academy in Perry Barr about smart cities, so when the opportunity arose to reply to the Perry Barr 2040 Vision consultation, I emailed my

teacher contact and arranged a workshop with Year 10s. Half an hour into the workshop it was crystal clear that, in an area where the average family consists of 5-6 intergenerational people, the proposed developments in the masterplan of 1-2 bed apartments were not serving the local community. The overwhelmingly non-white Year 10s were telling me that these are not housing developments serving their future – a future in which they want to take care of their children and their parents under the same roof. We submitted a formal response to the consultation; however, multi-generational living should have been a criterion baked into the original design brief to the architects if we are serious about preventing the displacement of local communities.

On a rainy Monday afternoon this April, I stood with an artist at the Edgbaston reservoir in Ladywood, a week before the revised Masterplan consultation was to be closed. In the space of two hours, we managed to speak with seventeen young people between the ages of 8 and 35.

In the revised SPD, the young people were seen as users of the reservoir’s activity clubs – sailing, rowing, canoeing. But the stories we heard about were very different – the reservoir was a space where young people walked, skated, cycled, danced, reflected, fell in love and much more! None of these activities by that demographic were seen through the prism of the planning document as worth noting, let alone enhancing. We were there, present, on site, listening.

The common thread in both cases were the multi-ethnic, lower economic background, majority non-white areas where the reality on the ground did not match the plans the council was proposing. There is a serious question if we are discharging the Public Equality Duty correctly. In light of the RTPi’s CHANGE plan, Young Planners need much better training in engaging and considering all demographics.

Are Young Planners talking to young people? (cont.)



It bears repeating that “age” is one of the protected characteristics. Just because it is hard to pin down young people in a church hall at five o’clock doesn’t mean they are not interested in a consultation about their area.

We can try and engage young people creatively in the planning of our cities and in the process develop better understanding of the issues all of the community face. In the winter of 2021, we hunkered down at the GAP Arts Centre with artists, architects, planners, lots of samosas and thirteen teenagers (14-18) to develop CLIMANIA, the climate action game. This engagement tool is free to download and play and focuses on the needs of local communities to understand built environment issues in light of the climate crisis. Using the board game as a tool, we managed to engage a wide demographic of local people in the development, testing and disseminating of the project. Consultations need not be drab meetings around Styrofoam A1 boards or fancy sleek digital tools that cost money – you can play a game!

Learning from interdisciplinary and international examples is key. In early 2022, the Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation was launched, a network of interdisciplinary young people (15-35) across the Commonwealth aiming to support knowledge exchange, best practice and policy development. It includes planners, architects, local government officials, engineers, academics, researchers, all working towards the same aim of delivering a better-connected Commonwealth where young people can be embedded in the decision-making processes that shape our built and natural environment.

Young people should not be the ‘missing voice’ in planning and engaging them does not have to be difficult or expensive – get out and talk to your peers, talk to the teenagers hanging around, talk to the twelve-year-olds cycling about and listen.



Shape the future Join RTPi West Midlands’ committees

Nominations are open for volunteer roles on the West Midlands Regional Management Board (RMB) and Regional Activities Committee (RAC), starting from January 2023.

The following roles are available:

West Midlands Regional Management Board

- Junior Vice Chair (2023)
- Regional Representative on General Assembly (2023 & 2024)

West Midlands Regional Activities Committee

- Chartered Member (2023 & 2024) eight vacancies
- Student or Licentiate (2023) four vacancies
- Associate (2023 & 2024) one vacancy
- Affiliate (2023 & 2024) one vacancy

The Regional Management Board oversees what we do through the preparation of the region’s business plan and budget. The Regional Activities Committee delivers a range of activities supported by various working groups.

Members of our committees and working groups:

- Shape the development of our CPD events programme for the region
- Input into consultations and policy updates
- Inspire future planners and support Young Planners in the West Midlands
- Contribute to research
- Organise inter-professional networking opportunities
- Raise the profile of planning
- Contribute to Tripwire - the regional newsletter
- Judge the RTPi West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence

Our RMB and RAC members come from the public, private, academic and third sectors and play a vital role in supporting our members – volunteering their time, enthusiasm and expertise in planning. Find out who is on the 2022 [RMB](#) and [RAC](#) by clicking the links.

For more information, and for a description of roles, contact westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk.

To apply, click here to visit our elections nominations website and submit your nomination by 5pm on 30 September 2022.



The RTPI West Midlands Summer Ball and Awards Ceremony was held at Millennium Point 30 June 2022, sponsored by No5 Barristers’ Chambers, with additional sponsorship from Avison Young, Claremont Planning, Hayfield Homes and Pegasus Planning.

The RTPI West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence winners for 2022 are as follows:



Winner



West Midlands Best Plan - Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework Document and Grove Lane Masterplan, submitted by Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and Birmingham City Council

The Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan have been produced by an innovative partnership of Sandwell Council, Birmingham City Council, Homes England, West Midlands Combined Authority, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust and the Canal & River Trust. These stakeholders have come together to produce a shared vision for the major regeneration corridor between Birmingham and Smethwick. The framework sets a transport strategy and guiding development principles for the cross-border corridor. The Grove Lane masterplan provides more detailed proposals for the major regeneration site around the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital.

Judges comments – *Ambitious and well thought out plan, clear benefits to a diverse and deprived area, real and positive outcomes for local communities.*

Commended



Perry Barr 2040: a vision for legacy, submitted by Birmingham City Council

Perry Barr 2040: A Vision for Legacy was produced by Birmingham City Council and Arup with the support of delivery partners including Homes England. The masterplan sets an ambitious vision for ongoing change which builds on existing momentum to create the conditions for the delivery of some 5,000 new homes, alongside a high-quality urban centre complemented by vibrant hubs of activity, and new and better-connected green spaces, in Birmingham’s best-connected suburb. Perry Barr will become a place where people choose to live, work, play, and visit in ways which are equitable, healthier, better-connected, climate resilient and low-carbon.

Judges comments – *Planning is at the heart of the project, sustainability is a strong feature, real effort made on public engagement.*

Winner



West Midlands Best Project – Houlton School, submitted by David Lock Associates, Urban&Civic, Rugby Borough Council

The Houlton School project has fully realised the ambitions set for it: restoring the heritage of Rugby Radio Station and making it publicly accessible, creating a sustainable, distinctive and state-of-the-art school. An innovative and committed public/private partnership has created an iconic education facility in the heart of a new community, delivered on budget and on programme, almost entirely during a global pandemic. Standing proud once again, not just as a preserved heritage building but as a vibrant, bustling school where children are learning and being inspired by how their school was part of our country’s most pioneering communications advances.

Judges comments – *Interesting and innovative project with tangible benefits and outputs, great example of reuse of built heritage and partnership working.*



A BIG Thank You to our judges for 2022!

Thank you to our 2022 Awards for Planning Excellence West Midlands judges, headed by region Vice Chair, Claire Eggington of Coventry City Council. The judging panel comprised Claudia Carter of Birmingham City University, Ray Colbourne MBE, Matthew Marshall of Arup, Mark McFadden of CBRE and RTPI WM Young Planner Committee Chair, Kat Salter of University of Birmingham and Simeon Shtebunaev of Birmingham City University and WM Young Planner of the Year 2021.

Winner

West Midlands Small Consultancy of the Year 2022 – Eldnar Consultancy

Eldnar Consultancy (Eldnar Ltd) was established in 2019. They do not pretend to be a massive company, nor do they intend to be the biggest – just one of the very best out there.

Their aim is very simple – to work with a select number of clients at a time on a variety of projects in order to achieve their objectives in the most cost-effective, and timely, manner possible and if they cannot help you, they will say. You will not find a more effective, honest and tenacious, company to have on your side.

Judges comments – *For a small consultancy, they have a range and depth of knowledge that serves their client-base well. Impressive.*

Winner

West Midlands Planning Authority of the Year 2022 – Birmingham City Council

Birmingham is committed to achieving net zero carbon and delivering on its levelling up strategy. Planning is at the heart of achieving these aspirations and a number of significant projects across the city, led by planners, are shaping the City's post Covid-19 economic recovery, most notably, significant development at Perry Barr, kickstarted by the successful bid to host the Commonwealth Games, the redevelopment of Smithfield to form a vibrant expansion of the city centre, the regeneration of Digbeth and the continued success of the Enterprise Zone. Our Future City Plan will continue to drive change.

Judges comments – *Innovative engagement ideas, impressive list and scale of large development projects, strong team and excellent management.*

West Midlands Young Planner of the Year 2022

Alice Jones



Alice produces exceptional outcomes across varied, complex projects. Her work shows skill, innovation, and a sophisticated grasp of planning in a public sector context, as well as commitment to delivering inclusive, sustainable growth which benefits Birmingham's residents.

Her approach is praised as exemplary by colleagues and partners, who also value her assured, personable approach, her logical yet creative problem-solving which makes her a great team worker, and her ability to drive and take personal responsibility for work. A role-model for Planners, for women, and for those starting their career in any sector, our profession is lucky to have Alice.

Judges comments – *Talented and effective planner, achieved a great deal in a remarkable variety of high profile and complex planning policy and development management roles.*

Alice was also awarded the overall regional winner trophy for 2022!

RTPI West Midlands' winners from 2022 will join the 2021 regional winner of the Award for Planning Excellence – the Alexander Stadium Redevelopment project - and 2021 West Midlands Young Planner of the Year Simeon Shtebunaev as finalists in the national Awards for Planning Excellence to be announced at a ceremony in London in November, sponsored by WSP.

We wish them all the best of luck! Find out more here >

Town centres and the future of retail

12 October 2022, STEAMhouse, Birmingham



One of the most controversial forms of development over the past 50 years, retailing planning challenges used to relate to one or more issues: design, traffic generation, noise, visual impact, spatial matters, socio-economic conditions etc. Shopping proposals, often promoted on out-of-centre sites with the requirement to demonstrate ‘need’, were frequently seen as contrary to the established pattern of development vigorously defended by local planning authorities.

In recent years, the distribution of retail facilities and established patterns of shopping have changed. While some city and town centres continue to be enhanced, on-line shopping - exacerbated by the pandemic - has been undermining many norms. In this session, we will seek to explore some of these recent challenges. Bringing together academic, public and private sector, this session will cover the basic question ‘where is retailing going?’ by looking at a city centre currently undergoing redevelopment of its post-war trendsetting status and examining the future of our smaller town centres as places and economic entities.

Speakers and presentations are as follows:

Retailing - where are we going?

Professor Steve Burt, *Institute of Retail Studies, Stirling University*

Coventry - the evolution of a city centre

Clare Eggington, *Coventry City Council*

Placemaking strategies to regenerate town centres

Stephen Hill, *Hyas Associates*

Socio-economic and property issues in town centre regeneration

– **Vince Sandwell**, *BE Group*

Tamworth regeneration case study

Matt Fletcher, *Tamworth Council and Parminder Dosanjh, Aspinall Verdi*

The session will finish with a Q&A session and a light lunch and networking.

[To book now, click here >](#)

RTPI West Midlands Autumn Planning Law update

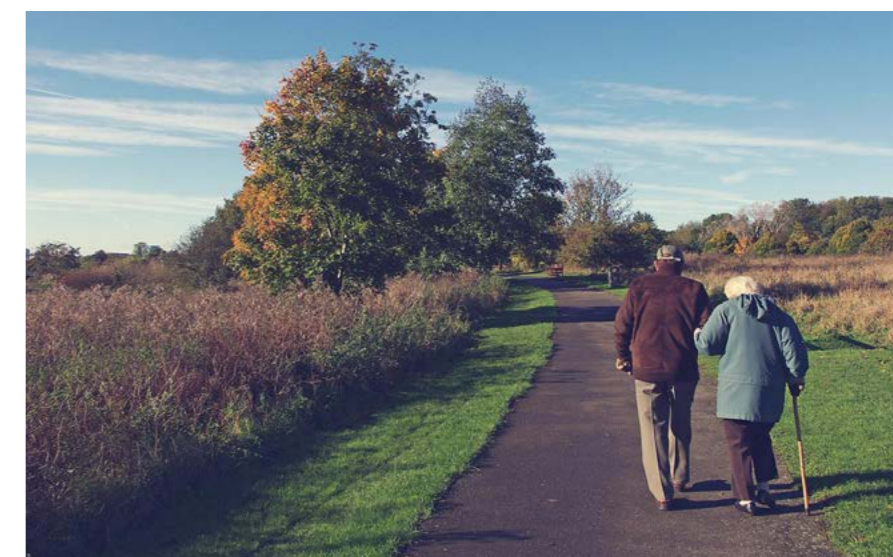
18 October 2022, DLA Piper Birmingham

For the second of our two annual Planning Law Updates, we are again grateful to DLA Piper for hosting the events and for providing excellent speakers. This session is essential CPD for all planning professionals in the region, and will provide an update on new legislation, policy and case law as well as looking forward to anticipated changes.

It is also a great opportunity to network over lunch with other professionals who you may have lost touch with during the pandemic. This CPD event is suitable for all involved in the planning process and for people working within the public and private sector.

[To book your place now click here >](#)

Later living webinar



Chaired by RTPI West Midlands Chair Ashley Baldwin, this session will discuss the later living pressures that exist within the planning system, acknowledge the importance of planning for later living within strategic plan making and identify learning from decisions and appeal decisions. Using evidence-based case studies, what should planners and other built environment professionals be taking away from these decisions?

Speakers will include:

Charles Banner, QC

Roland Bolton, DLP

Matt Hare, Carter Jonas

Simon James, DLP

[To book your place now click here >](#)

Contact us:



Tripwire is the magazine of RTPI West Midlands, produced by our members for our members. The opinions expressed are the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, publisher or RTPI.

If you would like to contribute an article, please email the Editor, Michael Vout at m.a.vout@btinternet.com

Contact RTPI West Midlands via email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

You can also follow us on LinkedIn, Twitter or see what's going on in the region on our website.

