

# Tripwire



It was very tempting to produce this edition of Tripwire without using the B word, and on the whole I feel that we have been reasonably successful. Despite this, we are obliged to recognise that as Tripwire goes to print, it is within the context of what might be described as being in the midst of an historic socio-political fault line.

The title of 'Are we there yet?' is taken from an article by Dr Janice Morphet (Visiting Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning) on the RTPI's Web site which I would encourage members to read: [www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/policy/topics/brexit/are-we-there-yet/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/policy/topics/brexit/are-we-there-yet/)

Meanwhile on planet normality, notwithstanding the implications of a possible / probable changed relationship with mainland Europe, the world of planning continues and does not stop from



addressing ongoing important issues irrespective (in one sense) of whether we regain the bastion of a full English breakfast or continue to embrace the odd early morning pain au chocolat and cup of espresso.

This edition of Tripwire is one of the most eclectic for some time, containing ways in which we can better engage people in understanding planning, issues involved in valuing and protecting the historic / cultural built and natural environment, the mysteries of beauty as well as the region's response to forthcoming national events in Birmingham and Coventry.

We hope you enjoy this edition and continue to encourage members to not only contribute articles on subjects they feel are important but also to submit themes for future editions. ■

**Michael Vout**  
West Midlands RTPI Hon. Secretary

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# Tripwire



Tripwire magazine is published four times a year in digital form by the West Midlands region of the RTPI. The opinions expressed in Tripwire are the view of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, publishers, or the RTPI.

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Design & layout: Alistair Brewin

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## What can Planners learn from Greta Thunberg?

In my first Chairman's column I want to explore what the implications of Greta Thunberg's global plea on Climate Change mean for us as planners. She reminded us that as humans we are merely tenants of our planet Earth. As such we have to plan for future generations. Greta, along with all the thousands of schoolchildren who have taken time out to explain why they want action on climate change exemplifies why we cannot wait while we damage our climate and environment.

There are of course multiple causes, not the least of which has been the huge growth in the world's population especially in the 20th and 21st centuries as a result of economic, social and medical progress. Global population has increased from 5.3bn in 1990 to 7.6bn in 2018. By 2100 the UN's medium forecast is a population of 10bn.

Alongside this we have seen growth in CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, growth in transport & mobility, and the continued extraction of metals, minerals and materials to satisfy our human hunger for goods and comfort.



*Handover from 2018 Chair Maria Dunn to 2019 Chair Sandy Taylor.*

Our natural environment has come under increasing threat. The human species needs food to live. This means that fish, animals and plants are all now under severe pressure. Species extinction is now openly foreseen on a scale which is unprecedented. Indeed, are we as humans creating our own extinction?

We are now commodifying nature through Natural Capital assessments. Whether this takes fully into

account the ecological impacts of removing trees, wildlife and green space remains to my mind a moot point especially when we calculate life purely as a financial sum in a Shareholder's balance sheet.

So, where does that leave us as planners?

The RTPI, along with an alliance of organisations remain deeply concerned about the future of Planning and the Environment as Brexit impacts. The vaunted 25 Year Environment Plan is not the panacea. The RTPI's recent research study "*UK Planning and EU Environmental Directives After Brexit*" shows the magnitude of our task.

So what lessons should we take from Greta? Maybe we need as Planners to come out more strongly to demand – dare I say it - campaign for a much more substantial role to create and enable better places for us humans. How can we bring back into the political and public mind the vital role of planning to create better places for people *and* nature? I value your views! ■

**Sandy Taylor**  
RTPI West Midlands Chair

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**“ The RTPI, along with an alliance of organisations remain deeply concerned about the future of Planning and the Environment as Brexit impacts. ”**

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# The RTPI West Midlands 2018 Planning Summit

RTPI West Midlands // Spring 2019

**Major Events: Securing a Planning and Regeneration Legacy. Tuesday, 4th December 2018 at the Macdonald Burlington Hotel, New St, Birmingham B2 4JQ, UK**

The regional RTPI annual Planning Summit is a highlight on our events programme, attracting over 100 delegates each year. The following is an overview of the 2018 event.

The morning opening address was made by **Maria Dunn (MD)** who welcomed members and the array of speakers to the summit. **Sandy Taylor (ST)** chaired the morning session and introduced the speakers.

**Victoria Hills (VH) Chief Executive of the RTPI** provided the Keynote Address. ***The Legacy of the Commonwealth Games and City of Culture: Putting the West Midlands on the Map.***

VH expressed her privilege at speaking to an audience that included people who were involved in securing and planning for the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. She agreed that the City was well placed to showcase sporting talent to a world audience as the 'Heart of the UK: Soul of the Commonwealth' and highlighted London 2012 as an exemplar of good practice to guide decisions in Birmingham.

VH explored five key areas; **Strong Leadership, National Profile, Strong Executive, Funding and Community.** In terms of strong leadership, the profile of the elected mayor and the effectiveness of the

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) were extremely important. She also identified that input from the planning profession CAP (Commonwealth Association of Planners) might be a useful conduit to bring in additional professional expertise.

Victoria reminded the audience that four previous Olympic Games featured medals awarded for town planning including one for the design of a sports centre in 1932.

VH expressed there was much to be gained from the Games, using recent personal experience of Barcelona.

***'The time was ripe for the West Midlands to deliver, enjoy and open its travel shop window to the world'.***

**Ian MacLeod (IM)** Birmingham City Council ***The Commonwealth Games: Regeneration Legacy.***

IM expressed the excitement of Birmingham winning the Games bid and what this might mean in terms of an estimated 765,000 visitors, 4,000 media and 5,000 athletes coming to the City over 11 days of competition.

The Perry Barr area will be the focus of the athletes village and Ian provided a whistle-stop overview of the proposals including the constraints and the opportunities and how a planning application has been made following various successful CPO's to assemble a workable site.

As a legacy, up to 5,000 new dwellings will be built of which 25% will be affordable housing policy compliant. Lend-Lease is the selected contractor drawing on their successful project at Elephant and Castle. New transport infrastructure and addressing old inadequacies with the A34 are key to the regeneration scheme. There is a detailed social, local contract and employment charter relating to the scheme to maximise the retention from the £165m of drawn down public funds.



**Les Sparks (LS)** Chamberlain Highbury Trust ***Heritage and the Identity and Regeneration of Cities.***

LS began with a quote from Jane Jacobs ***"Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them.... for really new ideas of any kind — no matter how ultimately profitable or otherwise successful some of them might prove***

***to be — there is no leeway for such chancy trial, error and experimentation in the high-overhead economy of new construction. Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings.”***



Curzon Street Station, Birmingham.

In a quest for a culturally diverse experience LS evidenced the need for preservation and adaptation of built heritage. With reference to numerous examples LS took the audience through English Heritages Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008) citing buildings of historical, aesthetic and communal value. LS explained that heritage through tourism is the UK's 5<sup>th</sup> largest export earner, provides 10% of employment, accounts for 9% of GDP and forms 14% of employment from BME communities.

With Birmingham being the fastest growing city of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it has a diverse and distinctive built heritage to draw inspiration from. LS cited many examples such as Curzon Street Station, the Grand Union canal, the Law Courts, Birmingham School of Art and Small Heath School.

A deep incite was given in to the life, times and achievements of Joseph Chamberlain and LS concluded with a plea to support the Chamberlain Highbury Trust.

**Chris Walsh (CW)** Cannock Chase SAC Partnership

***The Commonwealth Games. - Ecological Challenges for Cannock Chase***

CW explained the context of the environmental and ecological designations of Cannock Chase with a focus on three key habitats, Heathland, Ancient Woodland and Plantation Forest.



Chris ran through the context of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) explaining the legislative extent. The audience was guided through an overview of Appropriate Assessment and then focus was given to the specific context of the Commonwealth Games planned MTB events including issues of landscape sensitivity.



CW explained that 70% of bike rides on Cannock Chase were in or in close proximity to areas of sensitivity and that 16% of riders were unaware of the existence of designated trail routes. Issues of car parking, education, mitigation, the need for consent and the need for a positive legacy were covered.

A positive mitigation strategy will allow the LPA to provide a legal planning consent to secure economic benefits that will safeguard and provide overall environmental benefit.

**Andrew Walsh (AW)** Mott MacDonald

***The Commonwealth Games Transport Challenge: An Opportunity to Deliver a Sustainable Transport Legacy for the West Midlands***

AW recognises the great opportunities for a sustainable transport legacy from the Games involving 22 sports, 4,300 athletes, 3,000 media, 12,500 volunteers, 30,000 contractors, 1.2 ticketed events over 11 days and across 17 venues. Andrew identified a series of key themes:

- Start from a business unusual approach.
- Demand will exceed capacity.
- No priority to the Games over other travel demands of populous.
- There will be significant daily variability in event scales.

AW explained it will be a “Public Transport Games” and there will be a wide variety of transport ‘solutions’ and described how this sat within a background context of highway investment and initiatives; the emerging capital programme, the relationship to HS2, the Highways programme, Network Rail investment in stations, BRT sprint routes and the significance of clean air zone plans.

There will be a Games transport strategy which includes a Legacy in rail improvements, station upgrades, park and ride sites, metro investment as well as various highway improvements.

AW encouraged the audience to embrace the Games and be as much a part of it as they can. ***‘The transport network might creak but it will cope’.***

The morning session concluded with an extensive Q&A chaired by Sandy Taylor covering issues such as negative perceptions of major built change,



*Perry Bar Station, Birmingham.*

affordable housing requirements, alternative MTB venues to the SAC, Birmingham’s cycle revolution and the involvement of the RTPI.

**Joshua Wainman (JW)** opened the afternoon session and introduced the speakers.

**Ian Manson (IM)**

***Clyde Gateway Glasgow Games: A Planning Legacy***

IM explained that Clyde Gateway was formed six years in advance of the Glasgow Games with a mission that “Glasgow will use the staging of the 2014 Commonwealth Games as a springboard and catalyst to regenerate some of the most historically deprived communities in the country”.

The Winning bid was announced on 9 November 2007, the Clyde Gateway was formally established as partnership on 27 December 2007 and its Chief Executive was appointed 1 May 2008.

The Clyde Gateway is a partnership between Glasgow City Council (GCC), South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) and Scottish Enterprise (SE) and is funded by The Scottish Government. The project, which has a twenty-year lifespan beginning in 2008 is Located 2km to the east of Glasgow city centre, is 840 hectares in size of which, in 2007, 350 hectares (42%) was classified as vacant, derelict, contaminated or constrained by poor infrastructure.

IM emphasised that you must not promise to communities unless you can deliver.

A snapshot of the area in 2008 was one of high level of economic inactivity, outward migration, an ageing population, low educational achievement, poor basic skills, the worst health statistics in Scotland, a deteriorating housing stock and a poor reputation.

Getting local support was critical in the early years. This included face to face meetings and no gathering was too small. Ian highlighted the importance of input from local people, to establish their priorities and to turn this into an agenda for delivery.

10 years on what's happened? 245 hectares of derelict land remediated and ready for development, 86,521 square metres of business space completed and occupied, 5,579 jobs created/new to Clyde Gateway area in construction, sports & leisure, oil & gas, manufacturing, social care, IT, media and marketing.

Examples of change  
Springfield Road, Glasgow – September 2009



Examples of change  
Springfield Road, Glasgow – July 2016



The project has directly supported more than 2,000 local businesses in the area including printers, retailers, vehicle hire, electricians, designers, accountants and PR/marketing specialists. Just under 2,900 local people have been involved in employability programmes funded by Clyde Gateway and over 5,600 people participated in events organised by Clyde Gateway. Almost 150,000 participants have been involved in learning/health/sports capacity building events. It has levered in £422m of additional funding from various sources, long-term unemployment is down from 39% to 26% and the historical decline in population has been halted and reversed.

**Alex Codd (AC)** Hull City Council

### ***Hull City of Culture 2017 – A Legacy***

AC introduced his presentation with a video: “Made In Hull / In With A Bang: Everyone Back To Ours”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtveI7HD1LI>

This was followed by an overview of the history of Kingston upon Hull, the Historic England Urban Panel (HEUP) recommendations, the Heritage Action Zone and the opportunity of the City of Culture.

The Historic England Urban Panel met the City Council and landowners in Hull in 2014. (HEUP are a national group of leading architects, urban designers, regeneration specialists and conservationists). They visited the city with the objective to assess how effectively heritage had been used to promote ‘place’ and left a detailed schedule of recommendations.

AC then outlined the City ambitions; more city centre housing, more retail, regeneration of key quarters such as Castle St, Fruit Market and the Cruise Terminal using HAZ and HOTHAS measures



*Queen Victoria Square, Birmingham.*



to bring forward difficult sites to development with refocus on maritime heritage.

The City of Culture received unprecedented level of public support. It focused upon its rich heritage and history, its brand as a world class destination, quality public realm and included a massive investment legacy estimated at £3bn.

In summary, City of Culture – Lessons Learnt:

- Correlation with a long term plan
- Opportunity to promote the places heritage
- Early involvement with City of Culture company
- Don't complete all projects for start of year
- Maximise public participation
- Showcase your own assets & investments
- Be flexible with the planning system.

**Laura McMillan (LM)**, Coventry City of Culture  
**Coventry - City of Culture 2021**

LM – City working from a Vision that Coventry 2021 will reimagine the place of culture in a diverse, modern Britain. Starting from a position with many people in UK having no perspective of Coventry – might know Lady Godiva and the legacy of the blitz but little else. Coventry is a youthful and dynamic City with a much younger age profile than the rest of Britain. City of Culture to be built around themes of 'being human', 'moving', 'underground' and 'reinvention'. City of Culture will celebration of youth, multi-culturalism, creativity, activism and pioneering spirit.



Step Changes to be built from targets; 80% of population to experience 3+ events, 50% outreach to schools, 20% increase in BAME audiences, 16,000+ volunteers, 20% increase in dance and physical activity, 2000+ new jobs, 2.5m visitors, 20% increase in visitor spend.

The afternoon session concluded with an extensive Q&A chaired by JW covering issues of effects of property values, perceptions and population displacement, creativity and finally the impacts of BREXIT.

**John Acres (JA)** President of the RTPI 2018  
**Conference summary and conclusions**

In closing John commented on what had been an insightful and interesting summit looking at the impacts major events can have on regions and places. Whilst celebrating the achievements of athletes and participants is one thing, it was important to bear in mind the work that goes into facilitating these

events and as, or even more importantly their legacy – what is left afterwards. Planning and planners have a key role to play in delivering long term change which is beneficial to an area and its people. All the speakers had or will be contributing in their own way and their skills and knowledge should be recognised and appreciated.

Finally, he referred to legacy taking a number of forms – it does not need to reflect an event but can be a person – here John referenced the presentation given earlier in the day by Les Sparks former city planner at Birmingham and now chair of the Chamberlain Highbury Trust. The Trust was hoping to be successful with a Heritage Lottery Grant bid which would allow for the enhancement of the home of Birmingham's most famous son, Joseph Chamberlain. John was keen to see this bid realised and hoped that when the Commonwealth Games comes to Birmingham in 2022 visitors to the city will have the opportunity to visit the home of someone who cared passionately about cities, people and vibrant communities... ■



**Hugh Lufton**  
BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI, Principal  
Lufton & Associates Chartered  
Planning Consultancy

PS. Look out for news regarding the 2019 summit...and as with previous years, we would be grateful for companies and organisations willing to assist and sponsor the event.

# West Midlands is going international

RTPI West Midlands // Spring 2019

**Question: What do the Caribbean, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sierra Leone, and South Africa have in common?**

**Answer: They are all countries that have links and contacts with RTPI members in the West Midlands.**

A small group of members got together in Birmingham as a newly established International Group and discovered that, while many of us had links abroad, when that information was pooled, it was particularly impressive. We have two universities with planning schools who have international links and students. We have Clive Harridge, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Association of Planners, who is based in the West Midlands. The RTPI Immediate Past President, John Acres, who can now add globetrotting to his list of hobbies, is based the West Midlands. Put all these together with our own individual links, and we have, between us all, an enviable extent of international planning knowledge.

The next question is how do we put all this knowledge into use. The answer will have something to do with the 'B-word' (whisper it, 'Brexit'), and with the fact that the Commonwealth Games are coming to Birmingham in 2022. Before that, Coventry is the City of Culture in 2021. In the build-up to these events, particularly the Games, we plan to arrange a set of workshops and seminars, not only to build knowledge of international planning and to learn of best practice

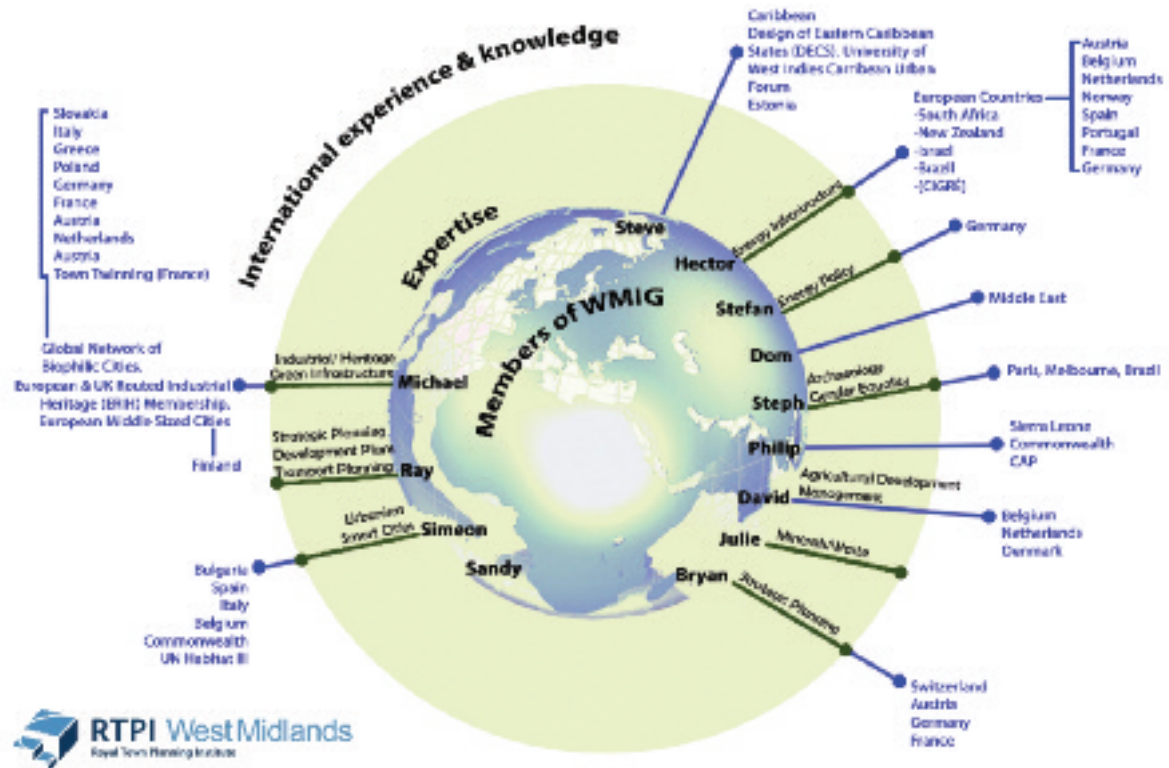
abroad, but to use the theme of planning for major international events and their legacy.

The 'doughnut' diagram sets out some of the links and expertise of a few of the West Midlands members. Can you add to it? Can you join us in our meetings – we've only had four meetings so far? If meetings aren't your thing (Goodness knows, we have enough

of them in the day-job), are you willing to help us stage events? If you can say 'Yes' or even 'Si', or 'Oui' to any of these, then we'd love to hear from you. No international experience necessary: just enthusiasm. Please contact Hector Pearson, as below. ■

**Hector Pearson**  
hecpearson@gmail.com

## RTPI WEST MIDLANDS INTERNATIONAL GROUP



Involving the public in planning is a familiar concept. Yet, for all its familiarity - and 50 years passing since the publication of the Skeffington Report - resource-efficient, timely, effective, enjoyable and inclusive engagement and consultation processes seem sparse. The arrival of Apps, social media and other digital technologies have possibly helped but not eliminated the challenges at hand. This article focuses on the use of 'serious games' in planning and explains why most participants love this participation method.

Playing games is an enjoyable activity, not just in childhood. Why? Answers, such as 'because it is fun' or 'it appeals to our competitive side' only scratch the surface. Research relating to Self-Determination Theory, a theory about human motivation<sup>1</sup>, identified three innate 'psychological' needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness. These factors seem closer to explaining the success of employing games in education/learning and for public consultations where all three factors are likely to be addressed:

- **Competence:** The game/event is informative and allows sharing and creation of knowledge / ideas;
- **Autonomy:** Participants can decide for themselves how much or how little they contribute and what role(s) they wish to 'play' or represent;
- **Relatedness:** The activity is done with others in a pleasant, safe 'social' setting with new, interesting or familiar people and the activity makes it easy to relate to the issues at hand.



While some, if not all, these factors can be met by some online games<sup>2</sup> and Apps<sup>3</sup>, this article focuses on board games; and particularly sharing some insights from my own experience of co-creating and testing several planning games and an online participatory gaming resource. The term 'serious gaming' is often used for games which prioritize learning or knowledge sharing rather than entertainment. I got into serious gaming via the 'accidental' output created for a RELU<sup>4</sup> research project dissemination conference in 2011 on 'Who Should Run the Countryside' which banned powerpoint presentations! The project lead, Professor Alister Scott suggested to use a board game format which we then developed in a collaborative effort, creating RUFopoly<sup>5</sup>.

The RUFopoly game engages players to discuss 'real-life' informed place-making challenges while travelling through a hypothetical rural-urban fringe (RUF) area



at the pace and settings dictated by the throw of a dice<sup>6</sup>; this 'randomness' also reflects real life situations where participation is only allowed or possible in some circumstances rather than for all planning decisions (in this game the players would likely 'land' on 4-5 of the 28 'contexts' or 'challenges' on their journey through the rural-urban fringe; of course each game played may make the players land on different contexts). RUFopoly soon caught the attention of the national press, professional bodies, local authorities, and community groups and was awarded the RTPI West Midlands Planning Excellence prize in 2012. Since then it has made numerous appearances across the Midlands and beyond and has been extensively used in teaching and planning student recruitment.

Realising the appeal and effectiveness of the game, and critically reviewing and addressing its strengths and weaknesses (Table 1), we developed an online resource, PARTICIPOLOGY ([www.participology.com](http://www.participology.com)).

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The die setting the agenda and keeping it to about 30-45 min playing time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not address strategic issues – case by case discussions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A safe hypothetical space for discussion and conflict management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose may not be clear to the player(s). “So what?”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps moving outside comfort zone and ‘soapboxes’ (e.g. via role play element)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of accountability of decision made during the game</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aiding visioning and reflection upon these</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual bias</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational and learning role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power relations and political context hidden</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible and adaptable game / rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflexible: fixed format/map and associated questions do not meet different scalar needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fun, inclusive and ‘different’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a competitive game</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitation can bring out deeper reflection and social learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator dependency</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Review of Strengths and Weaknesses of the RUFopoly planning game; which then informed the development and improvements of the PARTICIPOLOGY resource. Source: Carter, C., A. Scott and D. Adams (2015) Learning lessons from Rufopoly as a participatory tool, November 2011 to March 2015, Work Package 1 Report (ESRC project grant ES/M006522/1 ‘Maximising the Impact of Games as Effective Participatory Tools: The Rufopoly Resource Kit’). Birmingham: Birmingham City University (28pp).

The resource provides examples, templates and guidance to help engage people in game-based participatory processes leading to a plan or strategy. The various national and international applications, include business use (e.g. LEPs); community

planning; cross-party / cross-departmental dialogue (e.g. Politicians in Planning Network); environmental planning; and education. Recent interesting applications include the ‘Bromsgrove RUFopoly’ game and the Planning Game ‘Place Makers’.

Several BCU graduates who played RUFopoly in class or were facilitators in outreach events, now apply it in their workplace. For example, Alison Grimmatt and Louise Jones used the RUFopoly board but adapted the questions/challenges to suit their ‘Issues and Options Consultation for the Bromsgrove District Plan Review’. Between September and November 2018 they used the game to seek the views from young people (aged 10-17+) at local schools and colleges. In early 2019, the game will also be used in their public consultation events. Comments on the resource included:

*“It was easy to adapt to fit our own needs and we were able to edit the pdf file with the help of our graphic designer. [...] Very cost effective. Very little cost for the quality of consultation conducted. [...] Suitable for all ages, this is an advantage for the Local Authority who consults with all ages in the community. [...] Instantly able to get valuable feedback.”*

*“Group discussions worked well and the students involved each other. [...] It was particularly noticeable with the college students that they were reluctant to engage. However, once the game got underway, it was difficult to stop them!”*

*“The schools and colleges were really keen to have their students involved in the process and they were able to see their students making decisions as well as meeting some of the curriculum goals.”*

The 'Planning Game' project was a collaboration between BCU and the RTPI (RTPI Careers, Education & Professional Development; RTPI West Midlands; and RTPI North West), which took forward a game idea that arose from previous collaboration under the ESRC Knowledge Exchange project that produced PARTICIPOLOGY. During 2017 the goal was to design, test and produce a game for GCSE and A-level students that would also act as a resource for the RTPI Future Planners project<sup>7</sup>. This game engages young people in the key questions, challenges and opportunities a planner might face. Building on lessons learnt about RUFopoly and other games developed under PARTICIPOLOGY, we produced test games and progressively adapted the game layout, rules and instructions in response to the feedback and suggestions from pupils and teachers as well as based on testing the game and



discussions in-house. The final project idea was taken to a Design Firm which slightly simplified the game and produced a limited edition of 100 games. 'Place Makers' was advertised via social media and disseminated for free very quickly with plans to secure sponsorship for a larger production run.

The above examples illustrate the benefits of a game's deliberative and creative power and that gaming is able to provide a level playing field (as 'players' rather than singling out experts or specific participants) and a 'safe' environment to deliberate and think out-of-the-box to develop innovative solutions quickly. The gaming approach may not always be an immediate success and will require careful tailoring and facilitation. Sometimes, various cultural barriers need to be overcome. For example a 'professional' stakeholder may not find 'playing' appropriate to their habitus; or participants of different gender, generation, religion or educational status may not feel comfortable in engaging with one another; or issues of prevailing language or (male, expert, ...) dominance in group discussions may compromise the dynamic and success of the game.

Still, based on our own experiences and those of colleagues/contacts (e.g. Green Surge City – The Game<sup>8</sup>), as well as published research on serious games, planning related games appear to be very popular and effective. Are you playing with the idea of using games-based approaches yourself? ■

## Notes

- 1 Ryan, M.R. and E.L. Deci (2000) 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being'. *American Psychologist* 55(1): 68-78.
- 2 e.g. the role-play based urban simulation game [QuAG](#)
- 3 e.g. [MapNat App](#)
- 4 RELU – the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme funded interdisciplinary research in the UK between 2004 and 2013; see <http://www.relu.ac.uk/>
- 5 See also <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/research/-centres-of-excellence/centre-for-environment-and-society/projects/relu/rufopoly>
- 6 For more details, see the RELU-RUF project website: <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/research/-centres-ofexcellence/centre-for-environment-and-society/projects/relu>
- 7 <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/engagement-and-outreach/>
- 8 For more details, see. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGBuvey9R8>. This is a game that formed one of the outputs for the EU FP7 project 'Green Surge' (<https://greensurge.eu/>), and games were distributed to contacts / interested parties rather than commercially produced and sold.

**Claudia Carter** Birmingham City University

*Claudia Carter is an Associate Professor in the field of interdisciplinary environmental research and environmental governance. Her research relates to climate change and sustainability adopting social-ecological systems thinking/approaches. She has been teaching undergraduate and postgraduate planning students since 2011.*

# Contentious conservation? // The heritage of postwar reconstruction

RTPI West Midlands // Spring 2019

Our towns and cities must change, but equally there are sound reasons why that change needs to be carefully managed. One is sustainability: we should be building for the long term, aware of the implications of what we build and the materials we use: concrete, for example, is one of the most problematic materials in terms of carbon emissions and long-term sustainability. If we build for flexibility and adaptability, buildings can often find new uses. And, if we build to a high quality, there may be aesthetic reasons relating to architectural and townscape contribution why we might want to retain – conserve – buildings, even relatively recent ones.

Recent research has been exploring some of these issues relating to the large number of buildings, and extensive areas, constructed soon after the Second World War, many as replacements of structures destroyed or damaged by bombing. This new construction was extensive, many individual developments were large-scale and their architectural form was often a considerable contrast with their surroundings. This was the “brave new world” of post-war Britain.

But these buildings are no longer new; in some cases they are pushing 70 years old and are (over)due for refurbishment or demolition. Some have not made it to that age, and have already gone. In making decisions about these buildings we should be considering their conservation, although this remains extremely contentious.



*Madin's Birmingham central Library being demolished, 2016.*

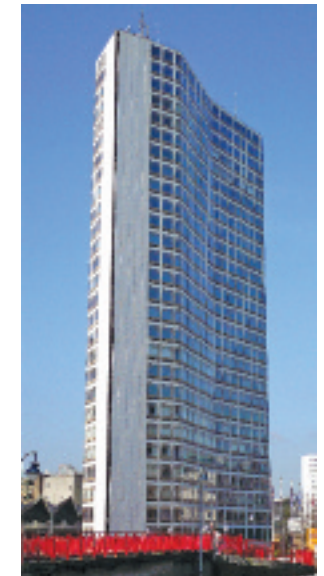
English Heritage, now Historic England, has – from as early as the mid 1980s – been recommending some listings, but recent research has been engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to better understand some of these issues. In Birmingham, the long saga of the Central Library is now well known. The vehement opposition of some senior city politicians and officials to any suggestion

of reuse or conservation is noteworthy, as is the campaign by library supporters, using both new and traditional media (culminating, after the demolition, in Alan Clawley's book of the 'library saga'). English Heritage twice recommended listing, but two Ministers decided not to accept those recommendations. It would have been expensive to refurbish the 1970s library, although its replacement was at least twice as expensive. Civic ambition outweighed both local and expert views.

The Bull Ring shopping centre was widely unpopular surprisingly soon after its construction, and redevelopment was

suggested only a couple of decades later. It has gone, along with Portsmouth's Tricorn Centre and many other large-scale developments in the

“Brutalist” style. It is easy to see how such large scale, poor performance and unpopularity outweigh any suggestions – from architects mainly – that these should be retained. Yet the much smaller-scale building with many of the same design features, though its



*Siefert's Alpha Tower, Birmingham, Listed.*



*Madin's Powergen (Midlands Electricity Board) building, Shirley, being demolished 2018.*

architects refuted the "Brutalist label – Birmingham's New Street signal box – was listed in 1995.

The Rotunda was listed in 2000, but this has not prevented a major and radical refurbishment – with the support of the original architect, James Roberts, and having received all appropriate consents. Its overall form and mass remain, though all the cladding is new and the appearance (the balance between glazing and panels) slightly changed.

The sinuous office block on Smallbrook Ringway is also subject to redevelopment proposals. Recladding, 2 extra stories, and a new central tower have been proposed. In this case listing was considered but not recommended. This was the first

section of Birmingham's inner ring road, and although the city was trying to secure an income stream from the shops and offices on this narrow site, the Ministry felt that these were inappropriate alongside a high-speed route and the design of subsequent sections was changed. Official disapproval decades ago seems still to influence decisions today.

Coventry faces challenges as its extensive reconstruction-era buildings age. Part of the Precinct has been listed, despite significant alterations (it also contains a rare plaque to a planner!), but much is not. Many of the 1950s-60s buildings seem 'ordinary' now, hence not 'special' and so unlistable. Yet they, together with new street and plot patterns, produced a radical new, modernist, urban landscape. Both here and in Plymouth, equally badly bombed and radically replanned, that landscape is worth considering for



*Coventry Upper Precinct, Listed despite intrusive ramp.*

protection of some form. This would seem particularly appropriate for Coventry, the forthcoming City of Culture and international focus for peace and reconciliation.

A related issue has been the heritage of the bombing itself. Although most bombed buildings were cleared very quickly, some remained – and a few remain even today. There are bombed churches remaining in quite a few urban landscapes: London (several), Bristol (three), Birmingham, Coventry, Southampton, Plymouth, Liverpool, and so on. Some were deliberately kept as war memorials, others as landscaped gardens (a combination of

public open space and memorial), while some seem merely to be landscape features, historic centrepieces of new developments. Some seem to be attracting new uses and users, for example with the community and art-related uses of St Luke's Liverpool. Obviously Coventry Cathedral, and St Martin le Grand, York, are part of



*St Peter's Bristol, bombed ruin retained in public park.*



*New front, "Big Top" site, High Street Birmingham (the section to the left is now being worked on, both retain the original concrete skeleton).*

thriving and active churches, and have also built profiles as centres for peace and reconciliation. Others, though, seem scarcely used or visited; and this would include St Thomas Birmingham despite its re-invention in the late 1980s as a Peace Garden. Many of these were disposed of by the Church of England fairly soon after the war, and are now the responsibility of local authorities. Maintenance of such structures is expensive and funding, of course, is lacking. The continued conservation of these structures may be increasingly doubtful, given their low use, and the length of time that has elapsed since their ruination. Families that may have lost members in these

calamities may well have moved away or moved on; incoming residents have little or no special attachment to these places. Despite this lack of direct engagement with these sites, any suggestion of redevelopment is likely to be contested.

Stakeholder research for these contested buildings suggests that individuals can be extraordinarily powerful in decision-making processes; and that the actual decisions made, perfectly legally, may not seem to be firmly evidence-based. For Birmingham's library, the social media comments of some pro-redevelopment individuals appear emotive and less evidence-based, while Tessa Jowell's comments to local radio, as the Minister responsible, give a feeling that personal taste may have influenced decisions. Protesters are becoming very 'smart' in mobilising support via new media, often from far afield. Decision-makers need to learn lessons about how the process of decision-making can be presented in this arena: how the careful, professional evaluation of evidence arrives at a clear decision in a transparent manner.

Balancing pressures for change and conservation is often difficult, particularly so when the urban landscapes are now familiar and modernist, and the buildings ordinary or brutalist. Yet we need to face up to the challenge of evaluating the new postwar urban landscapes, which have become familiar and ordinary, as they may nevertheless have some wider historic significance. ■

### Notes

*The towns where these problematic buildings are located are key stakeholders, and some of this work was presented to the Historic Towns and Villages Forum, published as James, N.M. (ed.) (2017) New Town Heritage, Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre, ISBN 978-1-9999517-0-2.*

*The Central Library research was published as a paper for the Ancient Monuments Society (a statutory conservation consultee even for "non-ancient" sites like these): Peter Larkham and David Adams, The un-necessary monument? The origins, impact and potential conservation of Birmingham Central Library', Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society vol.60 (2016) pp. 94-127*

*David Adams and Peter Larkham's new book on the rebuilding of Coventry and Birmingham, The Everyday Experiences of Reconstruction and Regeneration, will be published by Routledge later this year.*

**Peter J. Larkham**

Birmingham City University



## The Urban Street Trees Challenge Fund, The Woodland Trust And The Tree Charter

In January this year the Forestry Commission and Defra held an Urban Trees stakeholder workshop in Birmingham. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss arrangements for the delivery of the Challenge Fund for the recently announced government £10 Million Urban Tree Fund to plant 1 million urban trees by 2022. Defra wants the views of all those with an interest in urban tree planting, including local authorities, the private sector and commercial interests.

The workshop considered a range of important issues:

- Identifying priority places
- Types of trees
- Bio security
- Resilience
- Parks and other public areas
- CIL contributions and S.106 obligations
- Awareness and training
- Flexibility in implementation
- Street trees vs. urban trees
- Flagship projects
- Targeting deprived areas
- Productive (orchard) trees
- “Crowd Funding” as matched funding
- Long term planning vs. early delivery
- The role of local authorities and public consultation



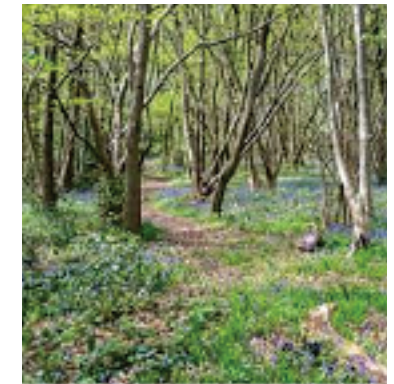
The workshop discussions were wide ranging with strong views about whether public engagement and consultation by local authorities should be mandatory or optional.

Further information can be obtained from Jim C. Smith at the Forestry Commission at [jim.c.smith@forestrycommission.gov.uk](mailto:jim.c.smith@forestrycommission.gov.uk). The official deadline for representations was the end of February 2019.



The February meeting of the Trees and Design Group (TDAG) Midlands met in Birmingham with two speakers from the Woodland Trust, Kaye Brennen and Nick Sandford. Kaye is Head of Campaigns at the Trust and Nick deals with policy matters. Kaye provided an update on the Tree Charter one year on. She explained that the Charter sets out 10 Principles by which trees and people in the UK can be stronger together. Trees and woods can provide environmental, health, leisure, social and economic benefits for communities across the UK.

The Tree Charter was launched in Lincoln Castle in 2017 on the 800th Anniversary of the 1217 Charter for Forests. For more information on trees, woods and people and the Tree Charter and the Woodland



Trust go to [treecharter.uk/home](http://treecharter.uk/home). The Woodland Trust has produced a number of informative documents: “Tree Charter – Ten Principles for Trees, Woods and People and You...”, “Tree Charter Ten Principles and Your Local Authority” and “Bringing the Tree Charter to Life: A Toolkit”. ■

**Michael Barker**  
Chair, Tdag Midlands

# What is beauty and is it important?

RTPI West Midlands // Spring 2019

***“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and it may be necessary from time to time to give a stupid or misinformed beholder a black eye.”***

**‘Miss Piggy’<sup>1</sup>**

*The only way we stand a chance of winning support for this (housing) output is if people like what we build – beautiful buildings gather support.’*

Kit Malthouse<sup>2</sup>

‘The profession that doesn’t use the language of beauty is town planning. Some beautiful projects don’t get planning permission.’

Ron Arad<sup>3</sup>

**T**his article was inspired by the recent national *Better Design for Better Places* conference in Birmingham and in particular presentations and discussions which involved the controversial subject of beauty.

Two key questions related to beauty are **what is it** and **is it important**, and for planners this includes the additional issues of **what is its role in good places** and **does a place need to look beautiful** as well as being functionally good or successful?

Although these questions continue to be debated they are frequently avoided because of the complex social, cultural, collective and individual values and

meanings which are involved. However the fact that beauty can be difficult to explain or tie down should not prevent us from having a better and more informed understanding.

Wroclaw is a city in western Poland. Between 1919 and 1935 a residential area was created on the eastern side of the city based upon ‘garden city principles’ called Sepolno.



*Sepolno.*

In 2005 I had the honour to study the area with the professor of urban design from Cottbus University<sup>4</sup>. Whilst the development delivers many of the features one might expect from a garden city I could not help remarking that the architecture (a rather stripped back basic Art Deco style) had a hard, slightly brutalist look about it, typical of similar

eastern European developments of the time. In a sense I was saying that it did not look ‘pretty’, especially when compared to the charming Arts and Craft /Edwardian architecture of English Garden Cities. The professor, who lived and worked in what had been a satellite state of the Soviet Union had no such issue with the architecture and remarked ‘you have to look beyond appearance. Good places transcend appearances’.

Was the professor correct, to what extent do his remarks reflect his own experience of Soviet planning and architecture and to what extent was I displaying my own aesthetic preferences? At the very least his remarks resonate strongly with many urban designers who would equally assert that good place making is far more than just appearance.

It might be noted that in the pursuit of understanding beauty even this description betrays an assumption that it is a visual issue rather than something which is more comprehensive.

Building for Life 12 is one of our most established methods of assessing good urban design. The assessment involves 12 criteria:

- 1 Connections**
- 2 Facilities and services**
- 3 Public transport**
- 4 Meeting local housing requirements**
- 5 Character**
- 6 Working with the site and its context**

- 7 Creating well defined streets and spaces
- 8 Easy to find your way around
- 9 Streets for all
- 10 Car parking
- 11 Public and private spaces
- 12 External storage and amenity space

All of the 12 criteria in Building for Life 12 help us create places which ‘work’ and how they function to effectively address and meet social, environmental and economic needs. However, the only criterion which appears to come close to addressing the issue of beauty is criterion 5.

In a similar way, whilst much of the debate at the recent *Better Design for Better Places* conference discussed many of the issues contained in BfL12, the event only marginally addressed our understanding of what beauty is and the role or contribution of beauty in creating good places.

As I write these notes I have in front of me an object of great beauty, my Iphone. This is my personal opinion but it would also appear to be an opinion which is shared by millions of other people. If however we were living in the late 17th century during the highly ornamental Baroque period, (assuming the mobile phone had been invented of course) I and others might well be expressing quite different opinions.

Am I, like so many others, just a product of the ‘Modernist Creed’?:<sup>5</sup>

### The Modernist Creed

‘To me good design means as little design as possible’

- Simple is better than complicated
- Quiet is better than confusion
- Quiet is better than loud
- Unobtrusive is better than exciting
- Small is better than large
- Light is better than heavy
- Plain is better than coloured
- Harmony is better than divergency
- Being well balanced is better than being exalted
- Continuity is better than change
- Sparse is better than profuse
- Neutral is better than that which must be sought
- The obvious is better than that which must be sought
- Few elements are better than many
- A system is better than single elements

It is reasonable to assume that Apple intended the iphone to be beautiful, *but is it necessarily beautiful?* In answering this question design commentators make reference to Immanuel Kant and his basic tenets of beauty described in the *Critique of Judgment*:<sup>6</sup>

- We enjoy something because we find it beautiful, rather than find something beautiful because we enjoy using it

- When we find something beautiful, we expect that others will find it beautiful
- We enjoy the beauty in things independent of their intended purpose

Identifying beauty is complicated by the fact that what we collectively deem to be beautiful not only differs between different groups, cultures and societies but this judgement also changes over time.

In his work *Taste and Fashion*, James Laver<sup>7</sup> identifies a ‘Cycle of fashion’:

Indecent:	10 years before its time
Shameless:	5 years before its time
Outré:	1 year before its time
Smart:	—
Dowdy:	1 year after its time
Hideous:	10 years after its time
Ridiculous:	20 years after its time
Amusing:	30 years after its time
Quaint:	50 years after its time
Charming:	70 years after its time
Romantic:	100 years after its time
Beautiful:	150 years after its time

It is also probably worth noting that the concept of aesthetic discrimination (and thus the ability to express and articulate distinctions and opinions between ugly and beautiful) did not arrive in England until the 17th century<sup>8</sup>.

One can already see from these brief notes that we have a veritable maze of issues which relate to the concept of beauty. Is there a way to navigate this and particularly, a way which can help us in dealing with beauty within planning?

I suggest that there are at least two sources which may help.

- **Marcus Vitruvius Pollio**
- **Victor Papanek**

### Marcus Vitruvius Pollio

In the 1st century BC the Roman author, architect, and engineer Marcus Vitruvius Pollio produced his multi-volume work; *De architectura*. In this work he asserted that there were three principles of good architecture:

**Firmatis** (Durability) – It should stand up robustly and remain in good condition.

**Utilitas** (Utility) – It should be useful and function well for the people using it.

**Venustatis** (Beauty) – It should delight people and raise their spirits.

For over 2,000 years these principles have remained key to our understanding of good design and are notable for their enduring power as well as the acknowledgement of beauty.

The principles which Vitruvius first set out have been repeated in various forms over the centuries and one can see an extremely close parallel in the structure of modern day Design Quality Indicators.

#### Design Quality Indicator (DQI) 2002

The DQI questionnaire:

The DQI questionnaire is a short, simple and a non-technical set of statements that looks at the functionality, build quality and impact of buildings.

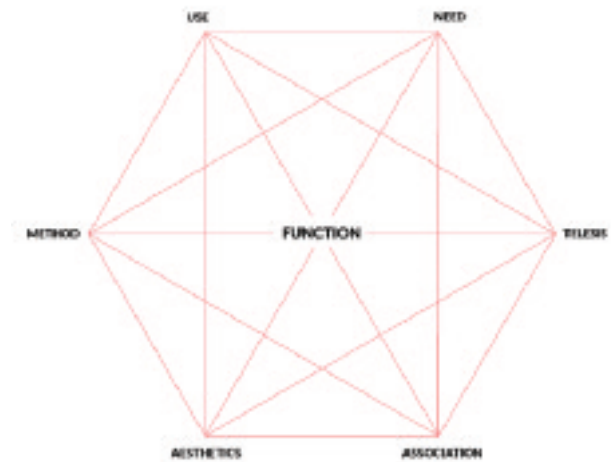
Functionality is concerned with the way in which the building is designed to be useful and is split into use, access and space.

### Victor Papanek

In 1971 Victor Papanek produced the seminal book *Design for the Real World*. In addition to wise words about design and social and environmental responsibility, the book contains the concept of **The Function Complex**.

One of the fundamental aspects of the Function Complex is that it embraces aesthetics and (for what of a better word) the less ‘tangible’ aspects of design as part of *function*.

Papanek is describing the way in which the look and appearance of something is inexplicably linked to how



*The Function Complex.*

it is produced and how it works. Appearance is *not* simply the *result* but it is *an active contributory factor* in the design. Further, that design is fashioned by the meanings associated with a product as well as when and where the product was created.

One can see direct comparisons to *Responsive Environments*<sup>9</sup> which remains a key text for urban designers and describes similar influencing factors in the design of places.

The constraints of producing Tripwire prevents a more thorough analysis of this issue and therefore the following provides only a very brief summary of key responses which may help us navigate this subject and perhaps may help aid us when dealing with the issue in planning.

Both Vitruvius and Papanek make the case that aesthetics and beauty are an integral part of the design process. The way something looks and the meanings and associations involved **effects** the way something is constructed and practically functions, and equally, the way something is constructed and practically functions **affects** how it looks.

Whilst beauty is not a constant, static property, within certain parameters of culture, society and time period one appears to be able to identify some broad collective common ground regarding what is regarded as beautiful.

When we plunder local character in search of clues to the design of new development perhaps we should not only be seeking local identity but searching out those things which are beautiful.

What we collectively regard as beautiful is significantly influenced by the likes and dislikes, across all mediums of the times we live in and indeed is often 'decided' (as opposed to just influenced) by what we see in the media and what 'the experts' present to us as 'in style'. Thus the fashions of the catwalk or Meghan Markle's latest outfit of today become versions you can buy on the high street tomorrow.

The 1970's trend of artificial stone cladding to homes was dealt a death blow when Hilda and Stan Ogden had their terraced home converted in *Coronation Street*. The modern designs and conversions of *Grand Designs* have permeated contemporary

thinking and have been cited in discussions regarding paragraph 55 of the original NPPF.

It is accurate to say that despite this, the overall preferences which many people express with regard to housing tend towards what we might call the 'traditional' (a word that can mean many things). It has also been said (using an illogical cyclical argument) that volume house builders build the product that people say they want.

Whilst this feature is clearly irrefutable, the process of development and building homes is not and cannot be as quickly reactive or responsive to change as the clothes fashion industry. Perhaps, as history has shown us, change will happen, but it can be very slow at times.

This article began with two questions: what is beauty and is it important. The dash through the issues involved has attempted to provide some guidance to what it is. In doing so it hopefully has also demonstrated that it plays a significant part in how we respond to things, including the way in which we experience and respond to places ie. the important part it plays in people's lives and how we might deal with the issue in planning.

As a conclusion I will give the last word to David Pye who said: *To say 'It is beautiful' is a statement not simply about the thing seen, neither is it simply about the seer of it. It is about the effect of the scene on the seer and many others too. The only known verification of such a statement lies not in the fact that*

*what is seen has some particular measurable definable property (it has none) but in the fact that it causes a particular kind of experience in many people*<sup>10</sup>. ■

### Michael Vout

West Midlands RTPI Hon Secretary

### Notes

- 1 *The Muppets*
- 2 *Kit Malthouse defending the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission Architect's Journal 14 DECEMBER, 2018*
- 3 *The Royal Academy Is beauty an essential consideration in architecture? The Question By Ron Arad RA and Sam Jacob Published 14 November 2014*
- 4 *Cottbus is a city located in what was eastern Germany and a satellite state of the Soviet Union*
- 5 *Dieter Rams 1987*
- 6 *The Critique of Judgment (Kritik der Urteilskraft) 1790 Immanuel Kant*
- 7 *James Laver, CBE, FRSA (14 March 1899 – 3 June 1975) was an English author, critic and art historian*
- 8 *David Bayley Taste*
- 9 *Responsive Environments Sue McGlynn , Graham Smith , Alan Alcock, Paul Murrain 1985*
- 10 *David Pye in The Nature and Aesthetics of Design 1995*

Details will be circulated shortly for the forthcoming return of the regional Urban Design Forum.

View The National RTPI Urban Design Network report: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/news-releases/2019/april/planners-want-more-say-in-housing-design.-survey-finds/>.

## “Reimagining Housing And Living In A Digital World”

### How We Build, What We Build, Where We Build And Where We Work

**T**he subject of the Debate presented a challenge to both speakers and audience. Every year 16,500 new dwellings are needed in the West Midlands, with a target of 21,500 by 2031. Trying to achieve this using the “old ways” may not be possible or affordable. So how do we make sure we produce quality in design and construction to create exemplary places?

This was the 13th in the series of annual “Great Debates” and was well attended with an audience anticipating a diverse range of presentations from the speakers.

Each speaker had 5 minutes to present his or her views and opinions to initiate and stimulate the Debate. Speakers presented very distinct opinions, in particular the impact of 5G Communications and Connected and Autonomous Vehicles that are considered to be some of the strengths that the West Midlands can offer to provide world leading approaches to meeting housing needs.

Speakers set out how integrating “game changing” technologies with the built environment will require “global” leadership from our professions.

Chair John Acres, RTPI immediate past President, opened the Debate with the view that new technologies can take house building to the next stage in its evolution through the application of advanced methods of construction and embedding new ways of living and working into the home and work place.

The question is how can we take full advantage of HS2, the Common wealth games in Birmingham and the City of Culture in Coventry?



Speakers presented their own opinion in respect of what new technology can offer to the built environment. Can Prop-Tech, AI and Automation enable us to focus on the creative challenges within the sector to maximize innovation and outputs?

**Jacob Bonehill**, Strategic Delivery Advisor with the WM Combined Authority highlighted the scale of the housing target. He stressed the importance of growth corridors and opportunities across the region that can be achieved from partnerships between the public and private sectors. He referred to the potential of 5G and Advanced Manufacturing to change the way we work, how we communicate and how we move between home, work, education and leisure. He urged the built environment professions to embrace new technology.

**Robert Csercse**, Senior Product Manager at Houzen is currently leading the deployment of “deep tech” frameworks such as AI, Machine Learning and Big Data to apply automation to match the right property with the right people in “Real Time”. He talked about mobility and connectivity within urban areas and the potential of decentralization. He highlighted the vast range of technical data that will be available through 5G. He believes that the movement of data will reduce the need for the movement of people.

**Ben Senior** is a Partner and Project Director within the Arcadis Programme and a service Project Manager within Arcadis. Ben is also Head of Digital UK Buildings Business. He wants to create better

delivery and use of natural and built resources. He outlined the impact of technology on design and delivery. His contribution was to focus on how we use technology to create more efficient and effective living and work places.

**Phil Twiss** is Senior Associate and Design Director in the Birmingham Office of the global design firm Gensler. As an Architect Phil leads a diverse portfolio of projects from large scale regeneration to Data Centres, Commercial Offices, Schools, Hotels and residential designs. His approach is to start with the people not the technology. We need to know who we are designing for and what they need. He suggested that the use of virtual reality could assist the process of design. He stressed the value of home working in the future and the technologies for the movement of data.

**Sian Griffiths**. As Director at RCA Regeneration Ltd. Sian is both a planner and a Surveyor. Sian sees technology as a way to help planners and designers to engage more effectively with the public who are not planners and need help to articulate their needs and to realize their ambitions for living and working. Sian believes that we can use communications technology to more effectively achieve public support and engagement and broaden the level of participation in planning by involving the young and minority groups.

**The Debate** that followed was wide ranging and questioned the ideas and opinions that that the

speakers had presented. In particular the importance of having a Strategic Plan for the West Midlands was stressed. Also the need to manage expectations was considered to be essential to achieving successful outcomes with public support. The importance of developing along transport corridors was highlighted; an approach that did not appear to have been given sufficient attention. Commercial viability was also a matter that should not be ignored. Participants were concerned about building the right numbers in the right places to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Issues such as driverless vehicles and automated delivery were put forward as potentially bringing profound changes to the way we live and work. But if we are to take advantage of these opportunities the necessary infrastructure to support them will be essential at the right time and in the right place, rolled out alongside development.

John Acres closed the debate with two important questions for the audience. First how can we give pedestrians priority over vehicles in and around our urban areas and second how do we avoid the unintended consequences of major change.

The question for us as professional planners with access to new technologies and changing resources is whether we can do better in the future than we have done in the past. ■

**Michael Barker**

## RTPI Roundtable on Local Authority Provision of Housing

Tuesday 8th January - University of Birmingham

On Tuesday 8th January, an RTPI roundtable was held on direct local authority provision of housing. The two-hour discussion included a range of planners from local authorities, Homes England, academia and Sandy Taylor from WM RTPI. It focused on the methods, opportunities and challenges of local authorities directly delivering housing.

The project is funded by the RTPI and led by Professor Janice Morphet and Dr Ben Clifford of the Bartlett School of Planning (UCL). The first phase of the project aimed to establish the extent of local authority provision and was very influential with the Government removing the Housing Revenue Account cap on local authorities. The second phase focuses more on how the planning system can facilitate delivery. Professor Morphet is very interested in examples of local authority provision in the West Midlands so to get in contact with her and for more information on the project see: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/better-planning/better-planning-housing-affordability/local-authority-direct-provision-of-housing/>.

Charles Goode is an ESRC Doctoral Researcher at the University of Birmingham where he is supervised by Dr Mike Beazley and Dr Austin

Barber. He is researching the Green Belt and the housing crisis and therefore very interested in the views of RTPI members on the Green Belt- feel free to contact him via email: [C.Goode@pgr.bham.ac.uk](mailto:C.Goode@pgr.bham.ac.uk).

## National RTPI News

### RTPI Chief Planners of Tomorrow

Young Planners from across the country have been given the opportunity to work-shadow for a day thanks to an RTPI pilot initiative.

Three local authorities in our Region – Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Warwick District Council and Staffordshire County Council all responded to the call to offer young planners opportunities to gain insight into what it is like to be a Chief Planning Officer.

Here is what our young planners and hosts had to say about their experience.....

Simeon Shtebunaev spent the day with Dave Barber, Head of Development Services, Warwick District Council:

*“The whole day was incredibly educational for me and the team in Warwick District Council were incredibly welcoming.*

*The most enjoyable part of the day were the one-to-one chats and the honest answers that I got back to quite hard questions. It was incredibly interesting to learn about the day-to-day challenges, the intricacies of working in a planning department and balancing politics with the need to run a department.”*

What would you tell to future participants on the initiative?

*“Do it! If you have the chance, you should definitely sign up to the initiative. The day will be an invaluable change of pace and a great opportunity to learn about the inner working of a Council. Especially if you work in the private sector!”*

Jennifer Joule spent the day with Helen Martin, Chief Officer Regeneration and Enterprise, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Jennifer:

*“Yesterday was excellent. Helen was extremely generous and welcoming. All the staff I met were very happy to share their experience and time and I’ve taken a lot away from it.”*

Helen:

*“I am pleased that the day was beneficial. The team and myself were very happy to take part in the initiative.”*

*“I wish I had been given the opportunity to do this in my early career... the current momentum around*





Jennifer Joule with Helen Martin (right).

*women in planning and women in property having a female role model in a senior position would have been very positive and motivating”*

*“The Council was also pleased to be involved - it is great publicity for all concerned”.*

Alistair Peet spent the day with Mark Parkinson, Economic Development and Planning Policy Manager, Staffordshire County Council.

## A day in the life of a Chief Planner

Mark Parkinson, economic development and Planning Policy Manager, Staffordshire County Council.

1. Discussing progress on the delivery of strategic sites with Director for Economy, Infrastructure, and Skills, Darryl Evers.
2. Assessing latest inward investment enquiries and portfolio of suitable employment site opportunities with 'Make it Stoke Staffs'.
3. Catch up with Andrea Whitworth from the Government's Cities and Local Growth Unit, Future High Streets Fund and Local Industrial Strategy.
4. Touching base with Midlands Engine on the five priority thematic areas within the regional strategy.
5. Hearing about self-build opportunities from Staffordshire CEO, John Henderson.
6. A look at the emerging Staffordshire Infrastructure Framework.
7. Discussion with a leading house building provider on their CSR and role in delivering high quality housing.
8. Conversation with Tamworth's Chief Planning Officer on 'plan making'.

9. Presentation from Homes England on their work to get stalled sites moving across Staffs.
10. Staff conference on how high performing teams can help deliver on the Council's corporate plan.
11. Wrap up to the day with council Leader on his role as spokesman on Housing, Planning and Infrastructure.

If you are interested in finding out about next year's Chief Planners of Tomorrow Initiative, contact Sarah Woodford, Head of English Regions – [sarah.wooford@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:sarah.wooford@rtpi.org.uk)



Alistair Peet with Mark Parkinson (right).

## Upcoming events

### Accelerating Public Sector Housing Delivery – Planning’s Key Role

18 June 2019 / Birmingham / From £50 + VAT  
This seminar will consider the role of public sector housing delivery and the role of the planner in helping to push it forward as authorities push forward with ambitious and challenging housing targets.  
Book here: [www.rtpi.org.uk/events/events-calendar/2019/june/accelerating-public-sector-housing-delivery-%E2%80%93-planning%E2%80%99s-key-role/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/events/events-calendar/2019/june/accelerating-public-sector-housing-delivery-%E2%80%93-planning%E2%80%99s-key-role/)

### Planning for Infrastructure

27 June 2019 / Birmingham / From £50 + VAT  
This seminar will provide delegates with a thought provoking insight into fully integrated, localised and tailored approaches to infrastructure delivery. The event is aimed at both private and local authority sector planners.  
Book here: [www.rtpi.org.uk/events/events-calendar/2019/june/planning-for-infrastructure/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/events/events-calendar/2019/june/planning-for-infrastructure/)

### Neighbourhood Planning

11 July 2019 / Birmingham / From £50 + VAT  
This seminar will explore the West Midlands’ experience of neighbourhood planning and assess what the opportunities and challenges are.  
Book here: [www.rtpi.org.uk/events/events-calendar/2019/july/neighbourhood-planning/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/events/events-calendar/2019/july/neighbourhood-planning/)

**RTPI West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence: Register your interest to apply to the RTPI West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence!**



The RTPI West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence celebrate outstanding projects that demonstrate the power of planning in our region. Entries reflect the diversity of planning achievement, whether in urban or rural areas, large or small in scale, involving new development, regeneration or conservation.

There are two categories available to enter: Regional Award for Planning Excellence and Young Planner of the Year. Entry is free of charge, and open to both members and non-members. Entries can be for a plan, strategy, initiative or project.

Entry submissions open Monday 29 April 2019. The deadline is 5pm on Friday 28 June 2019.

The winner of the West Midlands Award for Planning Excellence 2019 will be automatically entered into the RTPI national awards in 2020.

To register your interest in applying, or to find out more information, contact Ella Sumner at [westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk).

### Planning Aid West Midlands

If you would like to know more about the future activities of Planning Aid in the West Midlands and how you can get involved, please contact Ella Sumner at [westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk).

### SAVE THE DATE:

#### RTPI West Midlands Annual Ball:

The RTPI West Midlands Ball and Awards for Planning Excellence will be held on Friday 18 October 2019 at the Burlington Hotel, Birmingham.

#### RTPI West Midlands Planning Summit:

The RTPI West Midlands Planning Summit will be held on Thursday 7 November 2019.