

Tripwire



'Shires' Edition
developed and edited
by RCA Regeneration







Tripwire



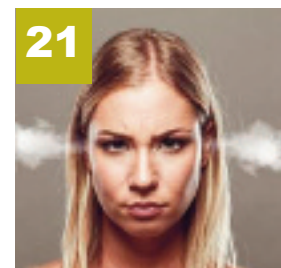
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Well it's been a real honour to be involved with the RTPI West Midlands Tripwire publication. RCA are based out in Droitwich Spa in Worcestershire and though we do cover the full gambit of rural and urban planning its fairly clear from the

recent budget and speeches coming from the Government that the 'Shires' are coming under increasing pressure to deliver new homes.

On this basis, welcome to our 'Shires' winter edition of Tripwire. In between the usual round of reports from your faithful chairman and the always exciting events diary you will find, we hope, a range of articles that should at least provide an entertaining debate.

I kick off with my views on the Green Belt which continues to raise its head as the leading issue in the supply of more housing in the 'Shires' and particularly here in the West Midlands.

This is followed by a vision of a wonderful future of mobility for the elderly, a tongue in cheek look at the benefits of the self driving car.

For those of you more interested in the details of the law, a quick article on the impact of the East Staffordshire Borough Council High Court Judgement is included.

Land values are then discussed by my co-Director Robert Csondor in relation to whether these hold the key to the housing crisis. After this article – it's probably time for a cup of tea and a mince pie while you try to

solve our Christmas Crossword – the first correct crossword sent to us (info@rcaregeneration.co.uk) gets a luxury hamper worth £100.

Once suitably refreshed, you can then enjoy a brief article on the impact of local politics on planning which concludes with an interesting suggestion!

The final articles cover the Autumn Budget (in brief), should we tackle homelessness in Plan making, financial viability and the dreaded use of planning conditions.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed writing it. ■

Sian Griffiths

“ welcome to our ‘Shires’ winter edition of Tripwire. In between the usual round of reports from your faithful chairman and the always exciting events diary you will find, we hope, a range of articles that should at least provide an entertaining debate ”

Yes, that's right: I hate Green Belt

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017



As guest editor of this edition of Tripwire it has given myself and my co-authors the opportunity to write about elements of planning which we are passionate about. Whilst I imagine that the title has grabbed your attention, I should probably start by

appropriately caveating this piece by saying my views are my own and are not necessarily the views of the RTPI.

I understand the history of it and its basic premise: I know it's a very simple, much-loved and historic planning policy supported by the CPRE and Natural England and many politicians, as well as many people who live next to it, or within it.

Indeed, in 2015, an IPSOS Mori poll referenced in the Guardian newspaper concluded that 2/3rds of people would prefer to see Green Belt remain¹, (although it should be noted that the poll was conducted for the CPRE).

However, I intensely dislike how it is used, appropriated and manipulated by those who often have a lot to lose if it disappears, but by the same token have very little in the way of development need.

Just because it's green...

Green Belt is often confused with landscape

protection policies and many lay people use it to argue for the protection of countryside for its visual and landscape quality. Perhaps some people confuse the Green Belt with Valued Landscape² as there are very few areas of Green Belt that are also within, say, AONB, and it's not hard to see why. Even the CPRE admit that:

*'Green Belts have a lower concentration of: land in agricultural use, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, nature reserves of national importance, and open access land, than land that does not have Green Belt designation'*³

So why does it attract such polarised views? It's a very simple planning policy, and in its simplicity it has perhaps appealed to the circumspect politician who supports development restraint, particularly if their older middle class electorate are affected. Many claim it has done its job post-war and should now be completely overhauled. The Landscape Institute, in their Consultation Findings of August 2016, state that:

'Most members agree that the Green Belt has served its post-war purpose well, preventing urban sprawl and coalescence. However, to continue to preserve it as it is, may be to preserve an idea of the Green Belt that has become a fiction. Many argue that the public perception of the Green Belt as countryside is at odds with the reality of degraded or over-farmed land with little amenity or ecological value. For example, the policy is often

*misunderstood as a designation that assigns landscape or amenity value.'*⁴

Writing as someone who has experience of winning and losing in development terms on sites in Green Belt, I for one know its impacts. I know how restrictive and unfair it can be and I know how it can fundamentally create unsustainable patterns of development. But I also know that it is valued by those who live near it (and overlook it) and I recognise the contribution it sometimes makes as one form of green infrastructure or another. Albeit, I consider such contributions are often 'overcooked' - perhaps by people who do not understand the relative ecological value of a ploughed field.

I am also acutely aware that many people who do not work in the development industry value its openness. However, as farmland goes it is not always the best and most versatile, it attracts fly tippers, unauthorised development and some very strange restrictions on sites that contribute nothing to openness.

Of course, the protection of countryside and improving the densities in our towns and cities is a laudable aim. However, it's not something that the green belt does particularly well anymore - primarily because through the development plan process, Green Belt can, and is, still removed regularly to facilitate growth. So managing the expectations of those living next to it is nigh on impossible.

GB Reviews should be once in a lifetime – regional approach?

I shall at this point lament the passing of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RIP) and hopefully some of you are with me on this at least.

The regional approach to spatial planning gave us a focus and target for development within the strategic settlement hierarchies beginning with the main cities/major urban areas, with a simple 'ratio' requiring the lion's share of development to those best served by employment, education, shopping and public services. The rural areas then took less development – not no development – but a quantum commensurate with the roles that county, market towns and large villages play. At the time it was criticised for being undemocratic (see the article coming later on Politics in planning) but the current process doesn't seem to be able to respond to what is a massive housing crisis.

Objective assessment

What Green Belt does is reduce the ability for planning authorities to objectively and properly look at all land and make good, well-rounded town planning decisions based on:

1. Reducing congestion and improving modal shift.
2. Using the lowest value land in agricultural and landscape terms.
3. Avoiding historic landscapes and buildings.
4. Allowing development where it is most needed in affordability and accessibility terms.

5. Creating employment where it is most accessible and least likely to impact on the above.
6. Ensuring implementation in a timely manner.

I have first hand experience of being involved in the SHLAA process which does look at land this way, but immediately discounts anything in Green Belt, despite there being reasonable and well-rounded development opportunities to be found there.

What policymakers are often left with are priority areas of non-greenbelt land, which can be built on first, avoiding the green belt almost at any cost. This can lead to far worse cumulative urban sprawl as a result.

Take Droitwich as an example: a market town in Worcestershire, home to around 35,000 souls. The town centre is historic, having been settled since Roman times and has grown up and around its retail core. However, it is sandwiched between two areas of Green Belt, to the south separating Droitwich from Worcester and to the north separating it from Bromsgrove and Birmingham. Its newest developments have seen the town grow well over a mile to the south where new residents have very little hope of walking to town or the railway station, leading to decisions that could result in very little benefit for town centre shops and facilities as the draw to Worcester (with its wider range of comparison shopping, education and employment options) is much greater. Developing elsewhere around the town, could have led to a very different result and perhaps a more sustainable outcome.

This leads me to the view that as a policy tool, it is already frustrating the planning process and artificially affecting patterns of development to the degree that new housing and employment is being proposed in unsustainable locations, just to avoid the loss of Green Belt. I don't know how that represents good town planning practice and it leaves many professionals in authorities and the development industry feeling frustrated. ■

Sian Griffiths

Planning Director, RCA Regeneration

Notes

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/aug/03/uk-green-belt-land-survey-countryside-housing>
2. NPPF, Para 109
3. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/green-belts/item/.../466>
4. https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/GreenBeltPolicy_LICo nsultationFindings_Aug2016-003-1.pdf

Mobility for the elderly and the self driving car

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017



Christine

I am going to start this shire themed transport article with a story of a visit to the local supermarket. Having decided that I needed to identify whether it was possible to buy 100ml cartons of soy milk, I decided to visit the local Waitrose (yes – I

have become that middle class, my apologies if you are rolling your eyes right now, in my defence, it's quite a niche item). Having parked up, grabbed a parking ticket and placed it on the dash, I turned around to be confronted by a frail looking old lady who asked if I would give her a lift home. She was brandishing a fiver whilst holding a box with a loaf sticking out of top. Christine was this lady's name and I rather suspect, looking back, that there was a bottle of gin in the bottom of that box.

Who has the heart to say no to a little old lady with white fluffy hair and watery eyes? Not me. Christine lived around 2km from the supermarket off a series of quiet country lanes. The distance was actually relatively short but her house is not particularly accessible on foot (no footways or lighting) and her shopping was heavy (with all that gin). She could have called a cab but I don't think money was actually the issue. She lives alone, she is old and perhaps she doesn't quite trust the local cabbies. So, probably not for the first time, she simply walks around the car park approaching women or couples to see if they will give her a lift. I doubt very much whether any of the people

who give her a lift ask her for any money and so she gets a relatively safe, free, lift home.

Curmudgeonly old folk

It got me thinking, I don't blame Christine for not wanting to move, she struck me as a person who had lived and had a lot of happy memories associated with her home. She lives in quiet rather idyllic countryside and with a little bit of help probably could stay right where she is (judging by her ability to heft shopping – she isn't quite as frail as all that!). Some old ladies (and men) don't want to go and live with other people in similar positions and chat all day long, some old ladies (and men) like their space and freedom. What everybody wants is the ability to **choose** whether to be sociable. The difficulty with sheltered accommodation and some extra care is that the whole concept is designed around living close by and indulging in community. My Granny actively revels in the fact that she only knows two people on her entire street after living there for over 30 years and I am very much the same.

Anyway, I digress, but I do this to make a point, mobility allows us to control our exposure to others both in how often we visit and how we travel. Nowhere is this more evident than with access to a car. Once we grow old and can no longer drive, we don't have that control, and as such it is easy to lose that element of independence. You can no longer spring a visit on kids, pop off to the local garden centre or nip to Waitrose to stock up on sherry. Whilst I am sure that in the future online

ordering will become a lot easier, at the moment it's time consuming, plus – buying your sherry gets you out into the fresh air...

So – the next question is, what can we do about it? Well for many older people the mobility scooter can give some of that freedom back (though not for longer journeys to visit family), for the elderly living in rural communities it's not that simple. Christine lives off a couple of country lanes. Roughly 1.5km of her journey is on lanes that are neither lit nor particularly wide. People can be terribly impatient (anybody who cycles regularly will testify to that), so for her the options are limited, I am not sure I would fancy travelling that route in a mobility scooter (not even with flames on the tiny wheel arches!).

She isn't in the minority either, most Shire authorities can testify to a population that is growing older and immigration from mostly those aged 50 plus. These are the people for whom rural life is in some ways easier, they don't have to work and hence don't need to live in commuting distance. The problems for these people arise as they lose the ability to drive.

Arise Self Driving vehicle!

Opinions appear to be somewhat divided over self-driving cars but if I was Christine I would be sending letters containing empty gin bottles and forthright notes on slovenly lazy young people to Google now. Forget the car obsessed masses, its people like Christine who will really benefit from the self-driving car revolution. Take the driver out of transport and

you take out the wage and respectfully, having looked at accident statistics as part of my work for the last 16 years, the risk. If the driver and the driver error goes then the insurance cost should reduce. In addition, self-driving cars are likely to be very heavy on cameras and black boxes removing the he-said/she-said element of litigation.

I am considering the cost of this because I anticipate that costs of being driven will significantly reduce – this is going to help Christine no end but also points to a wider dilemma for all transport planners with respect to self-driving cars.

There is a legitimate concern that self-driving cars are going to exacerbate the current traffic issues rather than ease them. If the cost of private transport falls and the overall model of car ownership stays the same, then that could well be the case, however I can't see this happening.

My fervent hope is that the future of car travel is by subscription, I want to pay a monthly fee for access to a form of comfortable, convenient, fast transport. I am not wedded to the car, I rarely enjoy driving – I appreciate that many people do enjoy it, and I am sure that some 'leisure' driving experience will emerge (maybe with VR). If we no longer own our cars then it is likely that instead there may be mega corporations who own and lease cars out on this subscription basis with payments varying depending upon time of day, route choice and vehicle comfort levels. Many transport planners will rejoice as this

model would provide a form of vehicle congestion charging that was looked at in the early 2000s in cities across the UK, namely time/distance/place.

In addition, think how much easier taxation would be – essentially the treasury could collect the equivalent of a VAT charge (specific to vehicular travel) from a few companies rather than administering a system of payment for millions of people. They too might offer this taxation in relation to journeys undertaken on the busiest routes in the peak.

The reason why ownership of self-driving cars will (I hope) become a thing of the past is that they would be an asset that would be expensive but also capable of generating income. You can effectively send your car out to work for you when not in use. However, to do this you would have to be monitoring the asset – which if you already have a job isn't going to be easy. You would want to check at the end of each trip that the vehicle interior is fine, that the occupant hasn't left any rubbish, vomited, scratched or otherwise defaced the vehicle. In the nicest possible way, no person is going to have time to launch litigation for that in any event, hence the rise of the corporation.

Those lost driver jobs – well somebody still has to look after the fleet and monitor passenger behaviour, I anticipate control centres staffed by real people for that. Sales and marketing of subscription vehicle services, fleet management and repairs will also require human intervention, not everything will be mechanised.



*Which would you prefer?
(Both pictures courtesy of pixabay)*

Driveways – pah!

In the UK where land is scarce that driveway could become a larger kitchen, playroom or granny room rather than a piece of land that is only utilised for 50% of the time, in the UK that will be a major benefit of no longer owning your own vehicle, particularly if house prices remain high.

Pass me the gin

Also think of the fun you might have taking some journeys in a really luxury car, fancy going into work in a Bentley as a treat? For £100 pound plus vehicle charge - you can!

And the image above sticks in my mind with the potential advent of the self-driving car and all its possible futures; Christine, enjoying a nice gin cocktail travelling back home from Waitrose in a Bentley. ■

Sarah Loynes
RCA Regeneration

The Implications of the East Staffordshire Borough Council v Secretary of State for Communities High Court Judgement

The High Court decision handed down on 22nd November 2016 by Mr Justice Green (*East Staffordshire Borough Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2016]*) has significant implications for development not identified within Development Plan Documents (DPD). Although the judgement handed down by Mr Justice Coulson (*Wychavon District Council v SoSCLG [2016]*) in March 2016 found that Paragraph 14 of the NPPF has broad scope for development to be approved even where conflict arose with a DPD, the judgement found that development should only be permitted outside of the bounds of the DPD as an exception rather than the norm.

There are 2 main approaches to the production of a DPD:

1. a single stage Local Plan where of growth is allocated to meet the entirety of the needs across the plan period, and
2. a two-stage process with a Core Strategy followed by a Site Allocations Documents.

Realistically then, only the second approach could make significant allowances for windfall development (given how protracted the DPD process can be), where it could be brought forward



Picture courtesy of Pixabay

prior to the Site Allocations Document being adopted. To complicate matters further, a LPA could retrospectively allocate a windfall site within a DPD after the development proposal has been approved.

Following the East Staffordshire judgement, it appears that securing permission for development proposals outside of an adopted DPD may be much more difficult, especially where the DPD process is based on the single stage and holistic 'Local Plan' approach.

I don't think that windfall development will completely cease, it will always occur through very small scale conversion/subdivision of existing dwellings; infill schemes inside of settlement boundaries, speculative development at times where a 5YHLS cannot be demonstrated and perhaps less reliably through Permitted Development (office to residential). For example, Redditch BC have incorporated 117 in their windfall allowance from this source⁵.

Arguably, Paragraph 48 of the NPPF may require amendment. The approach that planning practitioners are now legally required to apply in determining planning applications has changed. The traditional method of calculating the quantum of windfall development allowance has been undermined as it is partly based on historic windfall delivery to estimate future windfall development projections.

The upshot of the High Court judgement means that it will unlikely be a justifiable approach to make significant allowances for windfall development within future 5YHLS calculations based on historic contributions of windfall development towards a Local Planning Authority housing land supply.

This could have longer-term implications on 5YHLS and many local authorities take a varied approach to calculating their windfall allowance. Much of this is because of historic windfall rates being extrapolated, or where an area has been without a plan for some considerable time. However, it is becoming clear that past experiences may now not be a good 'bellweather' for future trends. See table over the page: ■

Ed Simcox
RCA Regeneration

Local Planning Authority	Windfall Allowance	Years Applied To
Wychavon DC	82dpa	Final 2 Years
Malvern Hills DC	35dpa	Final 2 Years
Herefordshire Council	100dpa	Final 2 Years
South Staffs Council	30dpa	4 Years
East Staffordshire BC	90dpa	Final 2 Years
Stroud DC	75dpa	Final 2 Years
Lichfield District Council	55dpa	5 Years
Cotswold District Council	80dpa	Final 2 Years
Shropshire Council	299dpa	Final 2 Years
Coventry City Council	0dpa	For the first 5 years of the plan period
Ashfield District Council	0dpa	
Amber Valley Borough Council	70dpa	5 Years
Derbyshire Dales District Council	15dpa	5 Years
East Northamptonshire District Council	41dpa	Final 3 Years
Kettering Borough Council	76dpa	Final 3 Years
Wellingborough Borough Council	48dpa	Final 3 Years
South Derbyshire District Council	23dpa	5 Years

Notes

5. See Page 84 - <http://www.hwa.uk.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BDC-RBC-Hearing-statement-XB1-4-3-16-F.pdf>

Is a focus on land values the key to resolving our housing crisis?

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It has become increasingly common for residential planning applications to be accompanied by a viability case which seeks to reduce the burden of planning obligations. It is my experience that when faced with applications which are accompanied by viability

cases many planning officers will recoil at the prospect of having to build the assessment of such cases into their recommendation given the suspicion with which such cases are viewed given their somewhat “opaque” nature.

Having worked for both LPAs and developers I am certain that there have been cases where applicants have used viability to dodge their obligations. However, it is often my experience that there are usually one or two key variables in an appraisal that will be vital in determining whether a scheme is viable or not.

Most cost elements, certainly for new build residential schemes, can be fixed within broad parameters. Assessors can refer to the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) as the basis for benchmarking build costs and broad allowances can be made for external works, professional fees and finance costs. Sales values can be confirmed through a relatively straightforward market assessment and comparable analyses and whilst minor variations in all of these elements can

cumulatively have a reasonably significant impact upon the overall appraisal, the main areas of contention tend to be the level of developer’s profit that it is reasonable to allow an applicant and the value of the site as a cost to the scheme or as a benchmark against which the residual land value (RLV) is compared.

Profit shouldn’t be a dirty word

My experience of preparing and appraising viability cases is that developer profit levels tend to range between 17.5-20% of gross development value (GDV), with additions or deductions depending upon the nature, and therefore the risk, of the scheme. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to conclude that land value is perhaps the critical element in most viability appraisals.

There are several sections in the RICS’ guidance that deal with site value but the most important is the definition contained within Box 7 which states that *“Site Value should equate to the market value subject to the following assumption: that the value has regard to development plan policies and all other material planning considerations and disregards that which is contrary to the development plan”*.

It is this term, “market value” (MV), which is the ‘holy grail’ of valuation and which I believe has been abused to suit the purpose of those ‘few’ unscrupulous applicants that have, in my view, tarnished the reputation of viability to the cost of those with genuine viability cases.

The key element of the above definition of site value is the assumption that it has to have regard to development plan policies and disregards that which is contrary to the development plan. The RICS’ guidance suggests various methods for assessing “market value” which can be used separately or in combination, including current use value (CUV), existing use value (EUV), alternative use value (AUV) and comparable assessment.

CUV and EUV are both based upon the existing use of the site with alternative uses and hope value being disregarded. For the purposes of ensuring that these definitions reflect the viability guidance at paragraph 173 in the NPPF with regard to providing *“competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable”* a premium is advocated to be added to CUV and EUV to incentivise the landowner to

“ land value is perhaps the critical element in most viability appraisals ”

release the site for development. However, there is little clarity on the size of this premium or the reasoning for choosing a particular premium in any of the guidance, with the Valuer being left to determine what is reasonable. AUV allows for a higher value to be attributed to the site where an alternative use can be readily identified.

Using an appropriate and justifiable evidence base

Each of the above methods depends upon and can be supplemented by comparable evidence and it is here where I believe that most abuse readily occurs. Applicants will often cite comparable transactions as evidence of what their site would readily change hands for and, therefore, what they should be allowed, either as a cost in the development appraisal or as a benchmark against which their RLV calculation should be compared.

The problem with most transactional evidence is that it is usually in respect of sites that can have a multitude of differences from their own site, be it in respect of ground conditions, build specification, development finance, market appeal, levels of planning obligations, etc. This is not to mention what are often vagaries in the transactional deal itself which are never usually disclosed in detail and might involve some form of incentive. On this basis, I would argue (contrary to RICS valuation guidance) that comparable evidence can be used at best as a sense check for other forms of land value assessment and at worst should be disregarded completely.

Planning authorities should be mindful that unless unforeseen land issues are determined part way through the planning process or that market failure is identified, landowners should always be the ones taking the hit on anything that affects land value, including abnormal costs and planning obligations. Even then, there is often recourse within most option agreements for the developer to deduct unforeseen abnormal costs from the price to be paid to the landowner. Where landowners will not release their land because they believe the return is not sufficient or because they have unrealistic perceptions of what their land is worth, we may just have to let them walk away until they temper their expectations or should they refuse to do so, consider de-allocation of their site in favour of one that is more likely to be delivered.

Allocated sites are all viable right?

The Government has proposed that viability cases should not be allowed on allocated sites because the system for assessing viability is broken and allows too many developers to get away without meeting their planning obligations. Instead, it is suggested that the mere allocation of sites should be sufficient because this demonstrates that a site is deliverable. However, this assumes that the whole plan viability assessment which has been undertaken has been done so to a level of detail with regard to ground conditions and a myriad of other issues such that it is certain that a site can be viably delivered. It also assumes that there are no changes in both the site and in wider market

conditions that would render the site undeliverable within the plan period.

Clearly, such assertions are unrealistic and are akin to blaming the car for the accident and not the driver sitting behind the wheel. The ability for a developer to make a viability case has to persist but what has to take place is a re-alignment of land values to ensure the provisions of the NPPF in respect of having regard to the development plan are enforced. We will likely have to suffer some short term pain whilst the land market re-adjusts itself in order to provide long term gain. Perhaps then we will be having less arguments in court about deliverability and five-year housing land supply and our housing crisis would not be so acute. ■

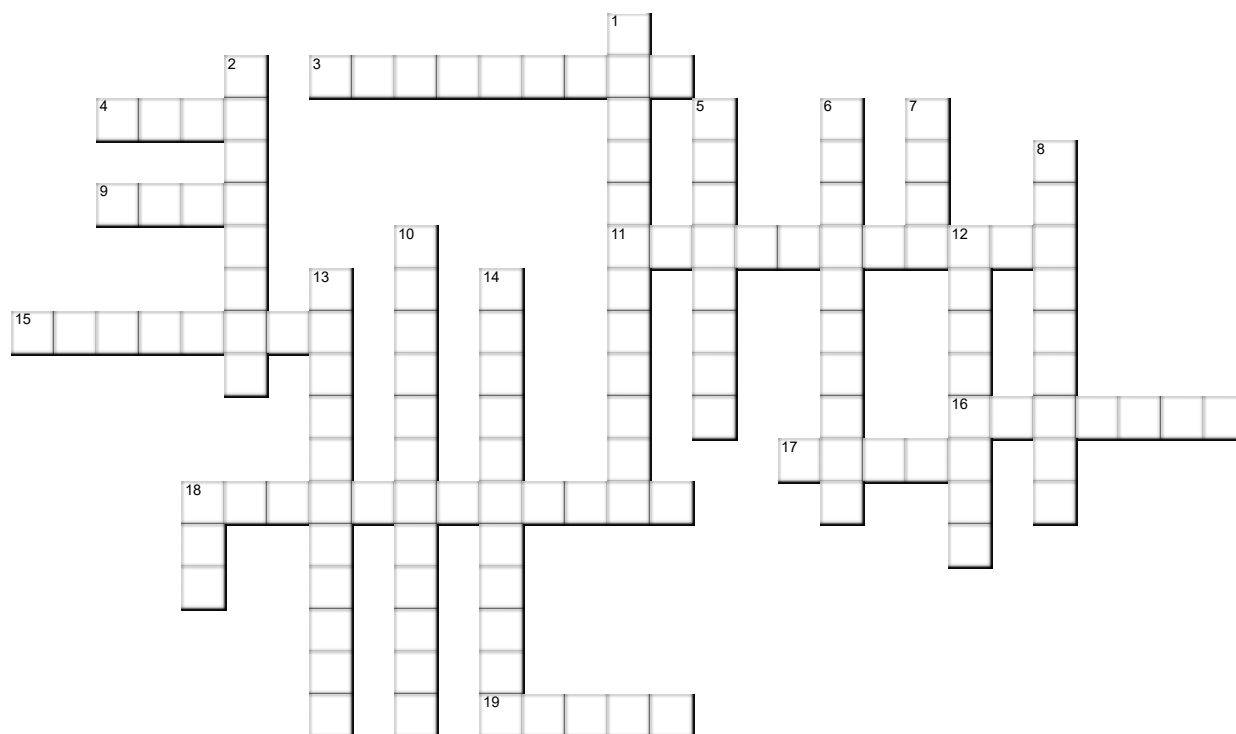
Robert Csondor

Development Director, RCA Regeneration

Christmas Crossword Competition



RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017



ACROSS

- 3 Overall Aims (9)
- 4 professional planning body (4)
- 9 Area protecting birds and bees (4)
- 11 Anag: A BALI SUNSET (11)
- 15 Christmas Season (8)
- 16 Pleasantness or attractiveness of a place (7)
- 17 santas reindeer (5)
- 18 Main document of Local Development Plan (4, 8)
- 19 Report assessing adequate supply of land (5)

DOWN

- 1 On the 11th day of Xmas my true love gave to me.. (6, 6)
- 2 Festive Snack (5, 3)
- 5 Anag: Serpents (8)
- 6 Secretary of State (5, 5)
- 7 Main legislation forming basis of planning (4)
- 8 where development is resisted (5,4)
- 10 Ask the public (12)
- 12 Christmas Film feat. Billy Bob Thornton (3, 5)
- 13 Footnote 11: To be considered... (11)
- 14 s 106... (11)
- 18 Involuntary acquisition of land (3)



Are politicians to blame for the housing crisis?

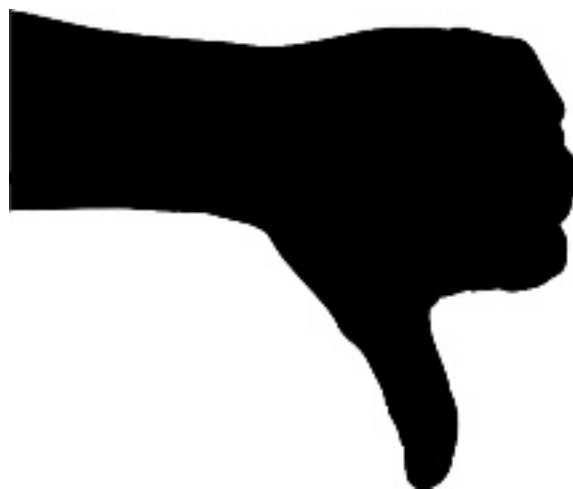
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With housebuilding in the UK at one of its lowest troughs since World War II, there is a general acceptance that the UK has not been building enough dwellings to house its growing population. **In the 20 years between 1975 to 1995 we built over 4.8 million dwellings in the UK; in the 20 years from 1996 to 2016, we built fewer than 3.7 million. The approximate population growth for those same periods was 2 million between 1975 to 1995 and 7 million between 1996 to 2016⁶.** So, even though the UK population continues to grow exponentially, we have built a million fewer dwellings over the same period.

As can be evidenced from the above data there is a significant under supply of dwellings being built across the UK. This is further exacerbated by the delivery disparity at the north/south divide. An example of this can be seen in the number of dwellings completed in Barnsley and Oxford. Between 2006 and 2016 6,270 dwellings were built in Barnsley whilst only 3,180 dwellings were built in Oxford⁷.

Thumbs down

In 2016 Daniel Watney LLP made a freedom of information request asking 418 principle Local Authorities to detail the costs awarded from appeal proceedings. This data showed that between 2010 and 2016, of the 217 Councils that responded to the request, that 178 of those Councils had paid out a sum of nearly £12 million over that 6-year period.



Committee members are not bound to follow the advice of their officers and the £12 million of costs that has been paid out highlights that they can and

will make decisions that they believe their electorate care about. This is especially prevalent in the authorities that have seen some of the largest growth in house prices over the past 20 years, which are invariably areas south of the divide. This can be seen in the list of the worst offenders, which includes; Cornwall Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council, Horsham District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Solihull and Cheshire.

Is this really the best way to plan for our future? What is the point in adopting Local Plans and employing qualified Town Planners to assess applications if Committee members can continue to ignore their own policies and officer's advice. Whilst the £12 million in costs is a startling statistic I am still unsure that this revelation will make councillors think twice before going against officer's recommendations. Since the release of this

“ Do we need to reassess when sites should go to planning committee, do we need to review the trigger points for discussion at planning committee. ”

information I have had an application refused at Planning Committee against the officer's recommendation which has now been allowed at appeal and another costs award given against the Council.

If you look at the Planning Inspectorates statistics for April – June 2017; 29% of Written Representation appeals were allowed, 41% of Hearings were allowed and 50% of Inquiries were allowed. The allowed percentages have been relatively steady since July 2014. For the same period between April – June 2017 2,550 dwellings were allowed at appeal, considering this covers a 3-month period that is a not insignificant number of dwellings that should have been approved by the Local Authority. **From October 2015 – June 2017 52,236 dwellings were allowed at appeal. That is essentially a city the size of Cambridge being allowed at appeal.**

Whilst it is accepted that there are a host of issues surrounding the supply of housing, the fact that over 50,000 houses were almost lost from housing supply due, in part, to what is in our view small minded politics. Do we need to reassess when sites should go to planning committee, do we need to review the trigger points for discussion at planning committee. Particularly for sites allocated within a development plan, where the principle of development is clearly not an issue and has been consulted upon previously.



Vladimir Putin.
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Wikimedia Commons.

The slightly more radical solution?!

It is interesting to note that the two G20 countries with the highest number of owner occupiers are China (90%) and Russia (87.10%)⁸ both of whom are listed in the Democracy Index as Authoritarian. Owner occupation in England by the way stands at just 63.5%. Clearly, if we want to solve the UK's housing crisis, we need to dissolve parliament and get rid of the dreaded Planning Committee. Vive la révolution. ■

Notes

6. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/overviewoftheukpopulation/mar2017>
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>
8. <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/home-ownership-rate?continent=g20>

Gareth Sibley

Senior Planning Consultant RCA Regeneration



After two years as a licentiate member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), I decided to take the plunge. On the 1st of November 2017 I submitted my Assessment of Professional Competence (APC), in the hope of becoming a chartered

member of the RTPI. So I'm going to take this opportunity to reflect on the process.

But first, what does it actually mean to become a Chartered Town Planner? The RTPI's websites states that;

“employers recognise the high quality of skills and experience that are held by Chartered Town Planners. They know that they can rely upon the designation as a sign of professionalism. Chartered Town Planners must adhere to a code of conduct that specifies standards of professional ethics.”

All Chartered Town Planners are required to maintain a level of professional development throughout their career thus ensuring they remain at the forefront of new developments, legislative changes and the latest knowledge in planning.”

When first reading those two paragraphs, I remember thinking “is that me?” Well, for the moment, until I receive my certificate from the RTPI, who knows?

I'm going to be honest, the APC process is exhausting. I don't think it's to do with the amount of work you have to physically do, I think for me, it was simply trying to understand and recognise what the APC process is trying to achieve.

A lot of other licentiates I spoke to about the process would say “it's just luck really”. Hmmmm. I would often question this statement because I knew it was important to go through the steps of the APC process and try to understand what the assessors were looking for. Of course, the APC guidance handbook is very helpful in answering this.

Reflect, reflect, reflect...this is one of the key themes that runs through the APC guidance. I knew I had to demonstrate that I was a reflective practitioner, to question why I made certain choices and what did I learn from them. This still didn't stop me from writing page after page demonstrating (or trying to demonstrate) my competencies and planning skills to convince the assessors that I should be let in to this elite group. However, without looking back at what we have done, we will never learn. For me, this is a vital part in trying to become a better Town Planner.

Whilst getting on with the day job, it was easy for me to think that simply gaining more planning experience and attending CPD events would be sufficient to help me develop as a planner. However, the APC allowed me to take the time to reflect on my experience and competencies which in turn

helped me identify what goals I wanted to work towards, and how I could develop in order to meet these goals. The APC is an opportunity to shape your professional development. Having completed the submission, I feel proud of what I achieved so far in my career having had the chance to reflect back. This has helped me value the process of the APC and how important it is.

The RTPI provide a range of help regarding the APC submission, however, I found that having a chat with someone who had recently become chartered was extremely helpful. I would urge all those preparing their APC submission to do this as it will help you understand what is required for the submission. It also allows you to vent out your frustrations with preparing your submission...this too was extremely helpful.

Although I am yet to learn whether I have been successful or not, the APC process has taught me that reflecting over my work is vital in bettering myself as a planner. My advice for all licentiates preparing their APC submission would be to think about why did you choose this job? What keeps you in the world of planning?

Reflect, Reflect, Reflect... ■

Chris Lane

Planning Consultant, RCA Regeneration

Planning and the Autumn Budget Summary

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

You may recall from the Conservative Party Conference in October, Theresa May pledged to dedicate her premiership to fixing Britain's housing crisis. Therefore, this budget was the first real litmus test for the Government to literally 'put their money where their mouth is'.

Here are the key comments from the Autumn Budget:

Planning Reform

New homes will continue to be directed to urban areas and the protection afforded to Green Belt will remain. However no actual planning reforms were presented by the Chancellor, but within the supporting background documents a number of ideas are presented: minimum density targets in city centres and around transport hubs, supporting unallocated sites where discounted first-time buyer

homes are for sale, policy changes to make retail and commercial property conversion to residential easier.

So long to the HCA: Hello Homes England

The HCA will be expanded to become Homes England, which will bring together money, expertise alongside planning & compulsory purchase powers.

Review into the timeframe between permission and construction

This relates to the perception that developers and housebuilders are 'land banking'. An urgent review established to examine this issue and is being chaired by Oliver Letwin MP. An interim report is expected before the Spring statement, and if land banking is found to be occurring by the Government then direct involvement via Compulsory Purchase Order powers.

Money, money, money

£44 billion over 5 years to be precise (an increase of £15.3 billion). However, this is not just capital funding projects but also incorporates loans and guarantees.

Abolition of Stamp Duty for 1st time buyers

The Government believe that removing stamp duty for 1st time buyers will also benefit the housing market. This proposal applies from the day of the Budget for properties up to £300,000 (or, in London, the first £300,000 of a property worth up to £500,000). ■



“ New homes will continue to be directed to urban areas and the protection afforded to Green Belt will remain ”

Planning for the Homeless

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

The latest National Audit Office report stated the number of people sleeping rough has risen 134% since Autumn 2010, putting increased demand on local authorities' prevention activities and assistance.

The rise in homelessness is, for the most part, due to the affordability of tenancies and cuts or caps to welfare. The cost of private rented accommodation has risen by 24% and earnings have only risen by 3% since 2010 and many have been forced out of their homes. Local Authorities are faced with spending cuts but are having to spend more on the response to homeless applications for temporary accommodation and currently costs the public sector in excess of £1 billion a year.

As it stands, our current system is failing our most vulnerable members of society and without significant changes to the welfare system or local authority budgets, alternative solutions are needed.

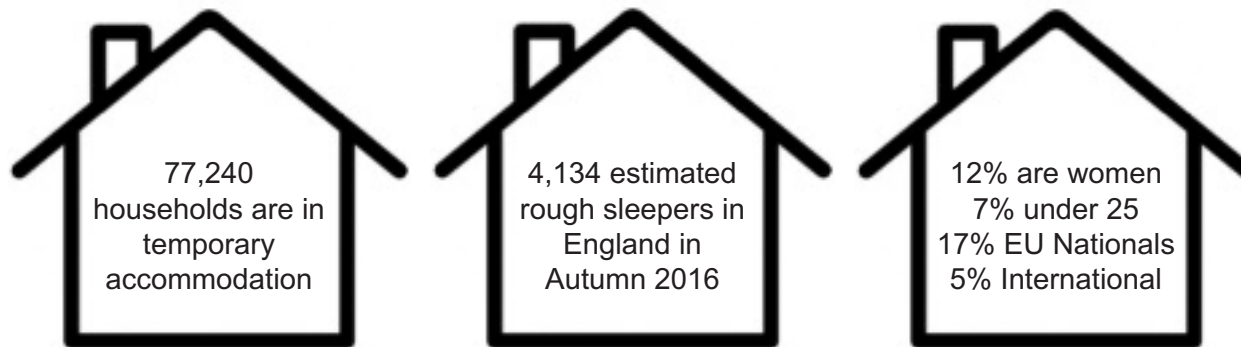
In response to the crisis a Midlands charity 'The Homeless Foundation' has purchased its first micro-home as transition accommodation for those coming from hostels or HMOs. The [iKozie](#) is cheap to build, transport and can also be stacked. One measures 186 square feet (17.25m²) and contains the essential bedroom, kitchen space, toilet and living space for one person.

This isn't a new idea though, Portland, Oregon has a tiny homes community which has accommodated

the increasing homeless population. One community in particular, [Dignity Village](#) is the first city-sanctioned camp set up initially by those who were homeless and needed a safe space to shelter. But there are clear rules; no drugs; no alcohol; no violence; no discrimination of any form is allowed and residents must take turns to man the security desk. Dignity Village is self-policing and keeps a good relationship with the fire service so crime is virtually non-existent, residents take pride in their tiny homes and community.

It's likely that many local residents would be likely to object to such a community in the Shires, but tiny homes, at the very least, would be a step in the right direction to tackle homelessness. Worcester City Council alone has received more than [6,000 approaches from those at risk of homelessness in the last five years](#). It would help those who would not have not found alternative accommodation through traditional avenues and give back some control and routine to those who for so long have not had the luxury.

Homelessness is a complex and often controversial matter which requires a comprehensive approach and it can be hard to know where to begin. But I propose Councils use their Local Development Plans to plan for homelessness and support innovative schemes such as the tiny home revolution. Indeed, the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2006-2030 does not contain the word 'homeless' at all, it appears the issue is being



Source: National Audit Office, September 2017.



Photo Credit: The Homeless Foundation.

ignored. If planning policy is silent and does not encourage innovative solutions to an ever more prevalent issue, we may never find a positive solution. Underutilised space in town centres should be identified which are close to public services and employment opportunities. Development Plans have the potential to allocate areas which are suitable for alternative accommodation such as the iKozie or include specific policy to address homelessness. They should be inclusive and not ignore an increasing sector of the population, the homeless should not be ostracized to the outskirts of cities or society. We have a housing crisis and homelessness is on the rise, I don't believe using Development Plans will solve the problem, but it's a start. Everyone has a right to a better life. ■

Rachael Walker
Assistant Planning Consultant

“ Homelessness is a complex and often controversial matter which requires a comprehensive approach and it can be hard to know where to begin. ”

Financial Viability in Planning – the not so ‘Dark Art’

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

By now, we have all seen the articles or news stories on how developer’s viability arguments are ‘cheating’ local authorities out of affordable housing and infrastructure contributions. The latest of these stating that a supposed loop hole in the planning system has enabled developers to wriggle out of providing for affordable housing by overpaying for land. ‘Greedy Landowners’ and ‘Greedy Developers’ are often at the heart of these passion pieces. And to some degree I can empathise with these views due to the veil of confidentiality that is draped over the viability negotiation process. But is it all as shady as it seems?



Picture courtesy of Pixabay

Whilst images of paper brown envelopes crossing palms are still common place in the movies (the story of a London Councillor being bribed by notorious gangster Lenny Cole in the Guy Ritchie classic RocknRolla being my favourite), this couldn’t be further from the truth. **Email trails, ‘open book’ appraisals and detailed records of discussions are now commonplace in the appraisal and negotiation process, ensuring as much transparency as possible in all dealings between the applicant, the LPA and their respective consultants.**

Some LPAs are even going so far as requiring submitted appraisals to be made publicly available for all to see (although this is still an area of significant dispute due to the potential commercial implications). It is also worth mentioning that most viability appraisals and independent assessments are undertaken by qualified surveyors, who are required to adhere to a strict code of conduct and ethics set by the RICS.

Having undertaken many viability appraisals and assessments on behalf of private developers and LPAs alike, I have encountered every trick in the book that some less scrupulous developers might seek to employ. This usually occurs where insufficient due diligence has resulted in over paying for land, and the S106 and affordable housing contributions are often the first areas targeted to save money in order to achieve their required profit margins. However, upon interrogation of such

appraisals, it soon becomes apparent where there genuinely is a viability case to be made, or where the facts are being stretched to suit the financial desires of the developer. In all assessments the price paid for a site is examined in detail, and this is often the most disputed element of a viability case. Contrary to popular belief, where land has been over paid for, the independent assessment seeks to ensure that the ramifications of this fall on the developer and their profit expectations and not on the LPA and their S106 contributions.

In the majority of cases where I am asked to assess an appraisal on behalf of an LPA there are very real difficulties in bringing sites forward lying at the core of the viability appraisal. These often involve the redevelopment of contaminated sites or conversion of listed buildings, which carry significantly higher site abnormalities and build costs. Another common issue is where the existing use value of the site exceeds the end value of the development upon completion. Due to the very bespoke nature of sites like these, it is not possible to fully test the viability of planning obligations on every possible scenario during preparation of the development plan, resulting in policies being adopted that cannot be met by all schemes alike.

So, what about the positives?...

One such case I was involved in comprised the redevelopment of a locally listed Victorian Mill building in the city of Worcester. The applicant

“ Email trails, ‘open book’ appraisals and detailed records of discussions are now commonplace in the appraisal and negotiation process ”

sought to redevelop these buildings, included within the heritage at risk register, for apartments with sympathetic new build to the rear of the site. In this instance I prepared the appraisal on behalf of the developer, and submitted this to the LPA for assessment. There was a significant amount of recorded negotiation surrounding the assumptions on build costs and values included within the appraisal, and inevitably the dreaded discussion on developer’s profit allowance. All correspondence was copied to the LPA so that it could be made available, upon request, to committee members so that they fully understood the reasons for why an officer was recommending approval on a scheme with reduced planning obligations.

The full policy obligations from the proposed development would have rendered the site completely undeliverable, and this was acknowledged early on by all parties involved. Ultimately, a greatly reduced contribution was agreed which, whilst not maintaining a viable scheme in the developer’s eyes, was considered deliverable at a reduced profit allowance. This was considered to represent a win for both the LPA, the applicant and the residents of the City by the retention of these locally valued buildings. Without these viability considerations, the already at-risk buildings would have been left to ruin until, eventually, an enforcement notice would have been served requiring their demolition resulting in the

loss of the heritage assets altogether. In these circumstances, and applied properly, the provisions for financial viability as a material consideration in the planning process are key in facilitating the delivery of at risk and locally cherished sites, or heavily contaminated sites for housing that would otherwise not be able to be brought forwards. Without this consideration, the already worryingly low delivery figures would be significantly lower, and the ‘brownfield first’ aspirations of our current government would never be achieved. ■

Jack Barnes
Development Consultant, RCA Regeneration



Picture Courtesy of Pixabay

The planning profession has been grappling with the use and effectiveness of conditions for as long as I have been a qualified planner (22 years). I am of the age where I still recall Circular 11/95: Use of conditions in planning permission, which provided the necessary secondary legislation to allow the enactment of the provisions of s70 (1) (a) of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Circular 11/95 affirmed the six tests which conditions should meet, being:

- Necessary;
- Relevant to planning;

- Relevant to the development to be permitted;
- Enforceable;
- Precise; and
- Reasonable in all other respects.

Circular 11/95 was subsequently rescinded following the publication of The Framework (Paragraph 206) and its associated Planning Practice Guidance in 2014, with the exception, of Annex A with respect to model conditions. The six tests remain. This is on the basis in which conditions should be used as a means of approving development that would otherwise be refused through mitigating against impacts and to enhance the quality of the development.

Planning Practice Guidance (2014) reaffirms that conditions attached to a planning permission should be:

“...fair, reasonable and practicable. It is important to ensure that conditions are tailored to tackle specific problems, rather than standardised or used to impose broad unnecessary controls.”

Having spent my career in both the private and public sector, I believe I have a relatively fair insight into negotiating a planning application for a client in the private sector and determining an application working for a Local Planning Authority. Both sectors need to improve on how conditions are dealt with through the application process.

As a case officer working for a Local Planning Authority the focus is on performance and determining a planning application within the statutory timeframes. This, along with rigid deadlines and timeframes for report writing to meet target dates and due to the volume of work often means that conditions are never at the forefront of the officers' mind. Many weeks and sometimes months can be spent negotiating on a scheme so that a positive recommendation is made, with the officer report and associated conditions 'thrown together at the end'. Within the private sector, due to the pressure of a land deal, pipeline targets in terms of on-site start dates and general client expectations put upon planning consultants, clients are often happy to just get the consent and worry about the potential implications of conditions afterwards.

We need to be better as a profession at working together and recognise the importance of discussing conditions at an early stage. The current situation often results in the imposition of conditions that do not meet the six tests but more importantly result in fundamental problems in terms of the ability of a developer to start on site so that they are compliant with the planning permission and not in breach of it.

Following the submission of a discharge of condition application, the situation often gets worse with the Local Planning Authority case officer struggling to get consultees to sign off details submitted with respect to conditions in a timely manner. The main difficulty is where planning is used as a means of resolving other legal issues and the condition in the

first place fails to meet the tests through overlapping other legislation and therefore not being necessary. This particularly relates to detailed highway design where the Highway Authority will use the planning conditions as a means of supporting the associated highway adoption agreement.

On the other side of the fence, the planning consultant will be constantly reminding the client of the importance of complying with the conditions imposed on the planning consent pointing out the relevant timeframe required for determination and the inter-relationship of implementing the permission with other legal requirements. All too often, a developer will start on site without being a position where all pre-commencement conditions have been satisfied at their own risk.

Below are examples of recent planning conditions attached to planning permissions that have sparked debate in our office regarding the 'tests' but for one reason or another have been imposed by Local Planning Authorities on decisions:

1. *No development to commence on site during the bird nesting season unless a competent ecologist has first checked for active bird's nests – **unnecessary** since birds are protected by separate wildlife legislation and licensing regime through Natural England.*
2. *No development shall commence until a scheme of foul drainage has been submitted*

*and approved – **unnecessary** since drainage is covered by Building Regulations and with connections to foul requiring separate legal approval from the relevant statutory undertaker.*

3. *Any reserved matters application shall include details of how Secured by Design Standards have been applied to the layout – **unnecessary** since the reserved matters application would be accessed against this in any event as part of the overall design.*
4. *No part of the development shall commence until a scheme for the provision of water supply and fire hydrants for fire-fighting purposes has been submitted and approved – **unnecessary** since this is covered by Building Regulations.*
5. *No house, that has a downpipe, shall be occupied until it has been provided with a minimum 190 litre capacity water butt fitted with a child-proof lid and connected to the downpipe – **unreasonable** within the planning balance and **unlikely to be successfully enforced** across whole developments.*
6. *No development shall commence (excluding demolition, site clearance and initial ground investigation works) until details of the access(es) into the site, together with parking [including details of lines, widths, levels, gradients, cross sections, drainage and lighting] have been submitted to and approved in writing*

*by the Local Planning Authority – **unreasonable and unnecessary** since this seeks to approve the detailed highway design that would form part of a S38 Agreement. Where this condition is imposed, many Local Planning Authorities will then not discharge the condition until the highway adoption agreement has also been signed causing delays to the issuing of a discharge of planning condition approval.*

7. *The following materials not indicated, or not clearly indicated, on the supplied plans and supporting documentation shall be used. Roofs - plots 4, 5 and 6 – Thatch – **unreasonable** due to the added cost to the development, the site is not in a Conservation Area and does not impact upon the setting of any listed buildings.*
8. *In order to minimise the impact of the development on local air quality any gas boilers provided must meet a dry NOx emission concentration rate of <40mg/kWh. The specification of the gas boiler(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by The Local Planning Authority before they are fitted and the approved specification shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the dwelling and shall be maintained for the lifetime of the development – **unnecessary** since Building Regulations assesses boiler installations, **unreasonable** and **unenforceable** in the long term.*

The above illustrates that planning is often viewed as a catch all process where the aspirations and wishes of all consultees and stakeholders is sought to be secured through the system with little consideration as to whether the proposed conditions meet the 'tests' or not. Due to the time frames for appealing, it is often rare for applicants to appeal against conditions unless it impacts upon the operation of a business, such as opening hours and whether the conditions are onerous or not, the developer will just submit the required information.

Intervention

The Government has recognised the failings of the current system and issued a consultation document entitled 'Improving the use of planning conditions' in September 2016. This was to inform the content of primary legislation forming part of The Neighbourhood Planning Act. The Government's intention is to change the way in which conditions are imposed on planning permissions to reduce the gap between planning permission being granted and the commencement of development. The consultation document and the response to it published in 2016 by the Government stated that:

"...planning conditions perform an important function in shaping planning proposals, and achieving sustainable development. However, we remain concerned that too many overly restrictive and unnecessary conditions are routinely attached to planning permissions, with little regard given to the additional costs and delays that they impose."

The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 has been enacted in part with s14 of the Act seeking to change some of the established principles with respect to the imposition of planning conditions. The six tests remain being worded as:

- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.
- Relevant to the development and to planning considerations generally.
- Sufficiently precise to make it capable of being complied with and enforced
- Reasonable in all other respects.

The key change is that planning permission for the development of the land may not be granted subject to a pre-commencement condition without the written agreement of the applicant to the terms of the condition. Secondary legislation is still awaited at the time of writing to allow the enactment of the changes set out by s14 of The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 to clarify what types of conditions may or may not be imposed and to set out the procedure for reaching agreement on pre-commencement conditions. One of the key issues must be, what happens if agreement cannot be reached between both parties, will this result in an increase in appeals against non-determination or will it have the effect of resulting in the issuing of planning permissions that are less onerous and development ready?

Only following the publication of the secondary legislation and the operation of the changes in practice will the profession be able to reflect whether it has resolved a long-standing problem through the removal of the imposition of conditions that do not comply with legislation and whether development commences quicker on site following the grant of planning permission. ■

Caroline Reeve

Principal Consultant RCA Regeneration

Notes

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/aug/03/uk-green-belt-land-survey-countryside-housing>
2. NPPF, Para 109
3. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/green-belts/item/.../466>
4. https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/GreenBeltPolicy_LICo nsultationFindings_Aug2016-003-1.pdf
5. See Page 84 - <http://www.hwa.uk.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BDC-RBC-Hearing-statement-XB1-4-3-16-F.pdf>
6. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/overviewoftheukpopulation/mar2017>
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>
8. <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/home-ownership-rate?continent=g20>

“ Have your say! We are seeking Guest Editors for all editions of Tripwire in 2018. ”

Have your say! We are seeking Guest Editors for all editions of *Tripwire* in 2018.

As Guest Editor you will be able to choose themes and seek and write articles. We will provide guidance on the role, obtain the pieces that appear regularly in each edition, including seminar reports, and undertake all the administration in terms of collating, coordinating, printing and publishing the final newsletter.

Tripwire provides a platform for you and regional RTPI members to express the



things that you and they feel are important, so that planning makes a real and positive difference.

If you don't want to be a Guest Editor but are happy to contribute informative articles or opinion pieces for *Tripwire*, this would also be welcome.

If you are interested in either being a Guest Editor and/or contributing to upcoming editions of *Tripwire* do please contact Trish Cookson (Regional Coordinator) at westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk. ■

RTPI West Midlands Chair's end of year remarks

Welcome to the Winter Edition of Tripwire and my last column as RTPI West Midlands Chair for 2017. It has been great to serve the Region in this capacity and to hopefully use this particular opportunity to air views and thoughts shared by many colleagues if not all.

It has been another roller coaster of a year when it comes to planning: we have had a major White Paper telling us that the housing market is broken and needs fixing. We have had a number of government pronouncements subsequently explaining what is going to be done about it, including recently a consultation paper. The White Paper certainly generated a lot of publicity and it is understood that a large number of representations have been received to the consultation paper. We still are not sure whether the Green Belt is up for discussion and, depending on who you talk to, we don't know whether there is significant new money for housing and, if so, whether it is being directed where it should to make a real difference.

Still at the national level we await publication of the Industrial Strategy after an earlier Green Paper – it

is rather a shame that the obvious link between housing and economic growth (amongst other things) was not recognised and that we had separate Government papers prepared. Hopefully the Industrial Strategy will highlight some more joined up thinking.



Craig Jordan.

More locally, we have had the creation of the West Midlands Combined Authority and the election of the new mayor. Interestingly and somewhat surprisingly for many observers, the CA, so far anyway, has shied away from addressing key planning issues such as future housing growth, preferring to concentrate on assisting delivery of existing plans. Attempts to undertake some form of 'strategic planning' are taking place at the sub-regional level (see the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP and GBHMA work as examples alongside the review of the Black Country Core Strategy). With the Midlands Engine progressing and Midlands Connect bringing forward major investment plans, surely the case for planning across administrative boundaries in the West Midlands area covered by the CA will need to come onto the agenda in due course. If not we are doing a disservice to the area and its people and its long term interests.

At RTPI West Midlands we have been doing our bit to ensure that planning is at the heart of local decision making, highlighting the value of plans and policies in delivering sustainable economic growth. In March we hosted the President Stephen Wilkinson and took him to see the significant work being undertaken by planners and politicians in the Black Country and Stoke on Trent to create the right conditions for investment and in doing so address social inequalities and major image problems. It was quite refreshing to note the positive attitudes being shown and the results of collaborative working underpinned by a shared vision. If like

many you have not ventured to these areas recently, or hold a view based on what you have heard or read, I would suggest you make an effort and go and see for yourself - I think you will be pleasantly surprised.

My theme this year has been about raising the profile of the profession and showcasing what we are good at – that is identifying issues and making things happen. It is often the case that this means highlighting big infrastructure projects or the work of high profile individuals or organisations. They certainly have their place but to me it is also about ensuring that as planners we have the necessary skills and abilities to make a difference wherever employed. Here, I would like to think that our CPD programme, together with one-off events, play a great part in this, providing an opportunity to learn and share ideas and experiences.

Please continue to let us know how the CPD programme can be improved to meet your needs. Notwithstanding the above, planning continues too often to get quite a bad press – maybe this is because of the nature of the system we have in England and cultural attitudes. We can all do our bit however to deal with this. From next year at the national level the RTPI is going to adopt a more proactive and firmer stance on issues of concern and speak out – this is to be welcomed and hopefully will ensure that our voice as a professional body is heard and influences thinking, policy and action. We should take this lead and at the local level counter poor, imbalanced reporting at least as a first measure and secondly, where possible, actively promote the benefits of good planning decisions. It's not much to ask and if we don't do it, it's unlikely anyone else will.

So, in closing, it has been an eventful year and I am sure next year will be just the same. As members we should be proud of the interest the media, politicians and residents within our communities show in planning. I look forward to enjoying what 2018 will bring. As regards 2017 I would like to thank my RTPI West Midlands RAC/RMB colleagues for their support this year – it is true that you are only as good as the team that works with you. I now pass the baton across to Maria Dunn as chair for 2018 and wish her well, I know she will do well. ■

Have a wonderful Xmas and new year!

Craig Jordan
RTPI West Midlands Chair 2017

“ At RTPI West Midlands we have been doing our bit to ensure that planning is at the heart of local decision making. ”

Incoming Chair // Maria Dunn

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

Maria Dunn will take on the role of RTPI West Midlands Chair for 2018. Maria is an experienced policy planner who has been actively involved in RTPI activities throughout her career. She has been a Planning Aid volunteer since 2005 and has been a member of the steering group for much of that time. Maria's work with RTPI WM began when she joined the Young Planners' committee in 2009 and she was a key part of the team that organised the 2011 Young Planners' Conference in Birmingham.

I am looking forward to taking on the role of RTPI West Midlands Chair. This is a great opportunity to positively promote both the planning profession and the work of the RTPI within the West Midlands. 2018 is already promising to be an interesting year for the planning profession. As the Government's drive to increase the delivery of new homes continues, the planning profession will undoubtedly continue to be in the spotlight. It is important for planners across the sectors to continue to work together to deliver high quality places.

The theme for my year is centred on breaking down barriers. In the context of a move away from regions, I want to build links across the traditional regional boundary, and as part of this I am encouraging joint events with our neighbouring regions to meet the needs of those members who are located near to regional boundaries and to help promote all areas of the West Midlands.

Additionally, it is important that the built environment professions work together and I will be continuing the excellent work that has already happened in this area. The Great Regional Debate will once again bring together the built environment professions; for our members in the North of the region we will be working with RICS to host a joint dinner in Stoke-on-



Maria Dunn.

Trent in April and I will be looking at other opportunities for joint working throughout the year.

This year will see changes to the established programme of events with a Reception being held in Spring and the Ball moving to Autumn. This will allow us to continue to present the regional awards at the Ball. Once again we have an excellent package of CPD events to look forward to in 2018 for which booking is now open. I hope that you will continue to support these successful events and encourage colleagues to do so.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and thank you for your on-going support for RTPI West Midlands. ■

Maria Dunn

Planning Policy Team Leader

Worcester City Council and RTPI WM Chair 2018

New Vice Chair // Sandy Taylor

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

Sandy Taylor will be the new RTPI West Midlands Vice Chair in 2018. Sandy now operates in a voluntary capacity as a “Green Urbanist”, exploring connections between society, economy and environment, following nearly 30 years at Birmingham City Council. He is a Trustee of the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, and also currently chair of Futures Network West Midlands. He is a member of the RSA (Royal

Society of Arts), the Academy of Urbanism and the Lunar Society.

While at Birmingham he led the Council's Economic Strategy in the 1980s and 1990s, followed by extensive work at regional level on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and worked with AWM on regional Economic Development initiatives. In 2007 he was tasked with accelerating Birmingham's green

agenda and successfully established the city's first Green Commission and Carbon Roadmap.

Sandy has also worked extensively with European cities via the Eurocities network on international climate change and environmental issues. He has been Chair of the Eurocities Environment Forum 2012/14 and its Air Quality Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Working Group 2007/14. ■



Sandy Taylor.

West Midlands Planning Summit 30 November 2017, Birmingham

Planning delegates from across the West Midlands gathered for an extremely useful and insightful day on this extremely cold but crisp November day. It was great to see a wide range of planners from both the public and private sector alongside academia and, of course, retired planners! Most attendees I spoke to said how they really appreciated the opportunity this Summit afforded to think more broadly than in their day-to-day jobs about the technological, demographic and economic trends which are (and will affect) the shape and transform the planning of the future.

Part I: A Vision of the Future: Our changing world and what it could mean for planning and development

After an extremely pleasant but cold walk through the German Christmas Market and morning refreshments at the Rep, *Craig Jordan* (Chair, RTPI West Midlands/ Head of Economic Growth, Lichfield District Council) introduced the Summit and explained that it sought to replicate the success of last year's event and be a stimulating and insightful day.

Maria Dunn (Planning Policy Manager, Worcester City Council / Incoming RTPI West Midlands Chair 2018) then chaired the first session.

Dr. Rick Robinson (until recently Director of Technology, Amey, now Smart Cities, Infrastructure and Property Leader, Arup) then gave an incredibly interesting and informative keynote speech about how technological innovation is changing the world, including the astonishing fact that more data has been created in the past 2 years than in the entire history of the human race. However, Rick warned that these changes were also widening income

inequality and increasingly concentrating wealth into the hands of asset holders. Nevertheless, he also suggested ways in which technology could be used to the benefit of planning such as the 'Heineken Project' in Staffordshire whereby technology was used to coordinate the work of various utility and infrastructure providers when digging up the roads. It was estimated that this project saved around £2 million. Indeed, Rick stressed the importance of getting public-private partnership 'right' so that they deliver positive social outcomes. He also highlighted the key role that social enterprise can play in delivering social outcomes.



Planning Summit delegates listen with interest.

Tim German (Senior Stakeholder Manager, Energy Systems Catapult) then outlined the varied and very valuable work that the catapults are undertaking in supporting the Smart City agenda. Tim spoke in particular about the role that energy can play in this agenda including the need to integrate energy generation for transport, electricity and heat which have traditionally been separate in households and subject to market failure. Tim highlighted how heat, in particular, accounts for 33% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions and how 50% of these emissions in turn come from the domestic sector because gas powered boilers generate 88% of domestic heating. Tim then outlined how this could be addressed through developing Local Area Energy Frameworks, local carbon targets and Cost Optimal Heating System Pathways. However, Tim cautioned that while increasing energy is relatively straightforward in new build homes and social housing (though cost is clearly an issue here), it is much harder implementing it in privately rented and owner occupied homes.

Roland Bolton (Senior Director, Strategic Planning Research Unit, DLP Planning) then spoke about demographics and how this is projected to change in the future, including the growing proportion of older people (especially the above 85 year olds). He helpfully showed a map which showing the future spatial disruption of where these older people will live and how, instead of living in cities, they typically will be located in rural areas like the South-West and East-Anglia with all the challenges that this will

bring. At the same time, he spoke of how Brexit could significantly reduce the working age population. Roland then evaluated the pros and cons of older people remaining in their family homes which are typically under-occupied. For example, older people often have emotional attachment and informal care support networks in their family homes but these homes are also often unsuitable for their needs and cause the real problem of under-occupation. However, he argued that the solution is not necessarily a land use one but ultimately a political one. We can either significantly increase the land supply to enable older people to stay in their own homes or introduce a 'bedroom tax' for older people to penalise them into downsizing.

Nick Grayson (Climate Change and Sustainability Manager, Birmingham City Council) then spoke of how important green infrastructure is to everything which we do. He highlighted that, whereas it has been undervalued in the past, natural capital accounting and valuation will become vital in the economy in the future, especially in the context of the UN's *New Urban Agenda*. He argued that, although the NPPF stressed the need for no net loss of green infrastructure in new developments, the policy aim should be to *increase* the amount of green infrastructure. Nick then outlined some practical ways this has been applied in Birmingham including mapping the 'supply' and 'demand' of biodiversity, local climate and recreation. He also said that both the Langley Sustainable Urban Extension in Birmingham's Green Belt and the HS2

route aim to be net positive in terms of green infrastructure. He concluded that green infrastructure should be at the heart of policy through the 'Star Framework' rather than just an 'add on'.

Part II: What does this mean for built environment professionals and the planning system?

After a hearty lunch, further interesting conversations, a look around the exhibition including demonstrations of work by students from Birmingham City University, and a quick breath of fresh air, the second half of the day was chaired by *Daniel G. Wilson* (Barton Willmore / RTPI WM Young Planners' Committee).

Technology

First up was *Paul Evans* (Spatial Planning Consultant) who gave a talk on the very topical issue of building techniques. He stressed how conservative the British construction sector is with around 70% of the UK's new built homes being on-site, masonry construction which is very labour intensive. However, he did highlight that there has been some improvement in masonry construction with cavity wall insulation. Although alternatives are emerging such as timber and steel framed construction where important lessons, such as around thermal overheating, have been learnt. Paul stressed that there is still the need for rapid change through highlighting the *Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model* which underlines how

the dominance of masonry construction has led to building material and labour shortages (which could be exacerbated by Brexit) and is a relatively 'slow' method of building when demand for housing is extremely high. Indeed, Paul argued that off-site factory manufacture could lead to up-skilling alongside high quality, modern design although there is a wide variety in the degree to which homes can be manufactured off-site. Paul concluded by showing some examples of where this is already taking place including Craylands Estate, Basildon, New Islington, Manchester and where off-site experimentation is taking place at the Explore

Industrial Park (Nottingham) and Skanska's 'flying factories' in Slough.

Ina Dimireva (Smart Cities Consultant, Arup) then spoke on the Global Review on Smart City Strategies which Arup has been conducting. She started by arguing that the Smart City agenda developed because it was (and is) perceived as being very beneficial for businesses with the market predicted to grow from \$313bn to \$757bn in 2020. Moreover, most cities see it as being economically beneficial through greater efficiency and quality in public services although cities are now increasingly

recognising the social benefits of Smart Cities including creating more equitable and inclusive cities. Indeed, Ina argued that quality of life is now the main reason why cities are implementing Smart City strategies. She then highlighted how most cities are seeking to pursue a Smart City approach through collaboration and most have produced a stand-alone policy document. Ina argued, however, that Smart City approaches work best when integrated and embedded into existing statutory frameworks and where there is strong political leadership.

Demographics

Hugh Barton (Emeritus Professor, University of West of England) then highlighted the challenges of the UK's ageing population including the fact that the proportion of the population aged over 65 will rise from 14% in 1974 to 25% in 2045. However, he also presented some very sobering statistics on how longevity is stagnating, even declining, due to inequality which is widening. He argued that planning bears some responsibility for this due to the fact that housing costs are arguably the most important factor in determining disposable income and quality of life. Indeed, Hugh highlighted how many new developments have been too car based and with too few social facilities which is especially problematic for older people who cannot drive. He therefore argued that, drawing inspiration from Freiburg, development needs to be much more centred around public transport, have more facilities and be socially mixed. Nevertheless, he explained



Plenty of interest at the student exhibition.

how, in Germany and other European countries, this is possible because local councils have much greater fiscal powers to buy land, at existing use value, and then prepare it through providing infrastructure and facilities financed by the land value uplift. He argued for a similar system in the UK as others like Peter Hall in *Good Cities, Better Lives: How Europe Discovered the Lost Art of Urbanism*.

Ian MacLeod (Assistant Director Planning, Birmingham City Council) then gave a fascinating case study talk on the regeneration of East Birmingham and North Solihull (EBNS). Ian highlighted how this area has a population of around 300,000 people making it comparable to the size of Newcastle or Nottingham! Ian firstly outlined what a challenging area it is through presenting lots of very sobering facts including that, within eight stops on the Cross City Line into Birmingham from Four Oaks, life expectancy declines 9 years. Indeed, nearly 40% of EBNS residents have no qualifications. Ian outlined how through transport improvements, like the Metro extension and new railway stations at the Fort and Castle Bromwich, the Council hoped that connectivity would be improved and that local residents would be able to reach the job opportunities available at the Airport/NEC and the City Centre. However, he still conceded that parts of the area would still have very poor public transport links. He also outlined the Council's *Comprehensive Approach* to EBNS, which includes bringing the key stakeholders together like

the NHS, local Schools and FE Colleges, and the Council's *Housing Infrastructure Fund Bid* which aims to unlock sites for housing like the former Yardley Sewage Works. He concluded by highlighting that the Council is producing a Masterplan for the area.

Urban Form/Natural Capital

Professor Rob Mackenzie (University of Birmingham) then spoke about the pressing issue of air quality and highlighted how 50,000 premature deaths are caused by it in the UK. He then explained the chemistry of air pollution, including nitrogen dioxide, and argued that urban form will still continue to be important in the future even with clean, electric, non-polluting cars due to particulate matter from road surface erosion. Rob then explained the importance of open space for air circulation and how, especially hedges on the roadside, can be vital at shielding pedestrians from the worst effects of air pollution. He also spoke about the potential of different types of trees to reduce air pollution including how trees can actually increase pollution concentrations in street canyons and, in certain places, can contribute to ozone and smog. Consequently, he recommended establishing whether an area is 'at risk' of ozone smog and therefore whether a local study needed to be conducted.

Michael Vout (Urban Designer) was the final speaker of the day who began by outlining the various, completely contrasting utopian and

dystopian views of future cities. He then spoke of the importance of creativity in planning including the need for a balance between unity and variety in cities and the need for high quality design which he thought that documents like *Building for Life* ensured. In particular he credited Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways* as being a key read in developing creativity!

John Acres (RTPI Vice President) then gave an excellent, concise summary to the day, especially how informative and inspirational it was in enabling us as planners to 'think outside the box' about the future. I totally agree with this conclusion and hope that the RTPI runs another event like this. In the meantime, after the Conference delegates then wended their way back from the Rep through the sights and sounds of the German Christmas Market to New Street Station!

Charles Goode

Charles Goode is a PhD candidate in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Birmingham and is evaluating whether reforming the Green Belt is a feasible solution to Britain's housing crisis. He is very interested in the views of RTPI members on this topic - feel free to contact via email: charlesgoode@hotmail.co.uk ■

Young Planners Review of 2017

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

As we come to the end of a busy year, this is a great opportunity for us to look back and celebrate our successes over the past twelve months, but just as importantly for the Young Planners West Midlands (YPWM) Committee, we are also looking forward to what 2018 has to offer.

2017 has had many highlights for YPWM. In spring of this year we welcomed the RTPI President, Stephen Wilkinson to Birmingham, offering young planners the opportunity to discuss their priorities and future aspirations for the profession. Spring also brought with it a chance for us to strengthen links with other young professionals in the property sector when we hosted two topical joint events with our colleagues at Women in Property.

In the summer, YPWM attended the RTPI West Midlands Summer Ball where James Carpenter from Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council was named RTPI West Midlands Young Planner of the Year. Congratulations to James and to our own Chris Moore who was given a commendation by the judging panel.

Another highlight of the year came in June when our previous Chair Luke Coffey was named RTPI Young Planner of the Year 2017 at the National RTPI Awards. This accolade was thoroughly deserved and Luke's enthusiasm for the profession makes him a great role model for young planners across the country.

In autumn our members had the opportunity to learn new legal lessons at our seminar 'Heritage and the NPPF' hosted by Kings Chambers, and new skills at our seminar 'Social Media in Planning' hosted by Snapdragon Consulting. YPWM also helped to inspire future members by giving careers advice to students at the local universities.



Rosie Cotterill.

As we move into winter and the New Year, we welcome a number of new members to our Committee and we are busy planning our events programme for the year ahead. Things to look forward to include: a seminar in January by HS2 Limited and Birmingham City Council on the new high speed rail link from London to Birmingham and the regeneration potential for the West Midlands; an opportunity to meet the RTPI President for 2018 (John Acres); and a host of other exciting events.

On a final note, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the RTPI West Midlands Regional Management Board and Regional Activities Committee for their continued support for young planners across the West Midlands. We would also like to wish our members and colleagues and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. ■

Rosie Cotterill

Turley (YPWM Chair 2017/2018)

World Town Planning Day 2017

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

On the 8th of November the RTPI celebrated World Town Planning Day. We joined planners from over 30 countries in celebrating planning's achievements in helping to create a more sustainable and resilient world. The RTPI was involved in several events, with a focus on reasserting the importance of planning in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), and implementing the New Urban Agenda (NUA) adopted by the UK government in 2016:

16 winners of the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning, in different categories, were announced in Edinburgh. The judging panel used the Sustainable Development Goals as criteria for choosing winning entries.

In London, the Nathaniel Lichfield Lecture took place at UCL. Prof. Peter Head, CBE, delivered a lecture on how planning can contribute to sustainable development.

The School of Planning of the Ulster University organised an event open to school pupils to introduce them to what planning is and why it matters.

Cymorth Cynllunio Cymru / Planning Aid Wales organised a conference on community engagement, one of the foci of the New Urban Agenda.

Our Commonwealth partners, the Canadian Institute of Planners, hosted the annual World Town Planning Day conference as an online event and showcased planning best practices in Canada and abroad.

Connect with @InternatRTPI on Twitter and see more in detail of what went on. Search #WTPD2017 ■

Michele Vianello

RTPI International Policy & Research Officer



To celebrate RTPI World Planning Day 2017 Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning Department made this cake (submitted by Emily Farmer, Planning Officer).

Sue Manns elected Fellow of the RTPI

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2017

Our very own RTPI West Midlands Committee member Sue Manns is the newest Fellow of the Royal Town Planning Institute following her election in November. Fellowship is the RTPI's highest membership class.

Sue is Regional Director for Pegasus Group (Birmingham) and their specialist lead on consultation and engagement.

She started her career at Birmingham City Council before becoming a senior lecturer in planning law and practice at the University of Central England where she led the research into public speaking at planning committee – a now widely adopted practice.

Newly elected Fellow, Sue Manns said:

“Being elected a Fellow is a very special and very treasured award as it is a recognition by professional colleagues of the work that I have done to date; but perhaps more importantly it provides me with a greater platform from which to engage and excite people beyond the profession in good planning and what it can do for the whole of society.”

Graham Stallwood FRTPI, Chair of the RTPI Board of Trustees said:

“Sue's passion for planning and genuine community engagement makes her truly deserving of this

recognition. Her dedication to the profession and the Institute over many years makes her a fantastic advocate for planning and Fellowship will provide her with a new platform to do this – congratulations Sue.”

In 2002 Sue became Head of Planning and Transport at Advantage West Midlands with responsibility for the integration of regional



economic and planning policy and a range of major projects. This was followed by a move to Arup in 2005, where she led the growth of their Midlands Planning, Policy and Economics Business.

Sue is perhaps best known for her role as National Planner for the RTPI Planning Aid England. Passionate about good planning and positive engagement, this role enabled her to act as an advocate for best practice, providing advice, support and training to a range of public and private sector organisations. She was lead author of the RTPI Planning Aid 'Good Practice Guide to Public Engagement in Development Projects'.

Sue has been involved in the RTPI for many years; she has served as West Midlands Regional Chair and is currently their representative on the General Assembly. She is an Assessor of Professional Competence for all routes to membership. ■

Read: [how to become a Fellow](#).

2018 CPD Programme

Further information about all of these Seminars and how to book is available on the RTPI website at <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/the-rtpi-near-you/rtpi-west-midlands/events/>

Wednesday 28 February (am)

Town Centres and Retail Planning
Solihull College

Thursday 15 March (am)

Air Quality Regulations and their impact on planning and development
Wilkes Solicitors, Birmingham

Thursday 22 March (am)

Think Planning – Think Global:
Planning Challenges in the Commonwealth
University of Birmingham

Tuesday 17 April (am)

Planning Law Update (Spring)
DLA Piper, Birmingham

Wednesday 25 April (am)

Utilising infrastructure to unlock housing delivery
Glenn Howells Architects, Birmingham

Wednesday 23 May (am)

Neighbourhood Planning – here to stay?
University of Birmingham

Wednesday 6 June (am)

Delivering Sustainable Transport
for a Healthy Future
Pinsent Masons, Birmingham

Tuesday 10 July (am)

Planning and Viability
– how to deliver better place outcomes
Birmingham

Monday 17 September (full day)

Preparing for Public Inquiries
and Examinations in Public
Colmore Gate, Birmingham

Thursday 27 September (am)

Design for the Real World
Bond Co., Birmingham

Tuesday 9 October (am)

Planning Law Update (Autumn)
DLA Piper, Birmingham

Thursday 1 November (am)

The challenges of delivering the
'right homes in the right places'
– a regional perspective
Pinsent Masons, Birmingham

Save the dates

West Midlands Great Regional Debate.
Thursday 1 February, Birmingham

Joint event with RTPI South West.
Wednesday 21 February, Worcester

Planning for Economic Growth.
Thursday 1 March, Birmingham

With Brexit, the Government's Industrial Strategy and commitment to the Midlands Engine Strategy, planning for positive economic growth in the Midlands has never been more crucial to the UK's economy. On 1 March we will host a Planning for Economic Growth in the West Midlands Conference, supported by Indigo Planning. A packed programme will offer delegates the opportunity to hear from key industry influencers and planning practitioners from the West Midlands, as well as network, share ideas and debate practical solutions to ensure economic growth is at the forefront of their work. The event will provide opportunity to take part in roundtable discussions and hear key insights from the RTPI's latest research and tool kit on the economic value of planning. Further details available shortly.

