

MAGAZINE FOR THE RTPI WEST MIDLANDS

# TRIPWIRE





# Editor's note



— **Michael Vout**  
Tripwire Editor

**Bob Dylan supposedly once said that there is nothing so stable as change. The irony contained in his statement is that the most constant and inevitable feature of life is change. In an extremely simplistic way one might say that a definition of the planning process is the reactive and proactive management of change.**

Change is not easy, but it would appear that the more we, both as individuals and as communities are able to be involved in and have some level of 'control' in changes the more likely we are to regard those changes as positive rather than negative or at the very least, to be able to cope and come to terms with those changes.

It's been 17 months since the last edition of Tripwire was published in June 2020. Not only has there been inevitable change during this period but events have resulted in changes of exceptional magnitude and extent involving a rethink about the way we work, our shopping habits, how and where we live and how we plan places.

Changes as a result of the pandemic have also had the effect of amplifying the significance, effects and implications of that other elephant in the room (less of an unseen elephant these days), climate change.

Sure, we can (and do) enjoy the increase in the beautiful and warm days we've been having but that is matched with a huge increase in dangerously hot temperatures across the world (on average between 1980 and 2009, temperatures passed 50°C about 14 days a year and in the same period, temperatures of 45°C and above occurred on average and extra two weeks a year).

To get a comparison, these are painfully hot temperatures when you consider that a hot Greggs sausage roll should legally be kept at a temperature of 63°C or above. This might be good for a tasty savoury snack but temperatures close to this are not only decidedly uncomfortable but life threatening (and this is before mentioning the amount of unsustainable resources used in air conditioning to make it tolerable).

Planning and planners are involved in the quality of our environment and the way in which it affects the way we live and therefore it clearly has a very significant role in addressing the issues involved in climate change. This includes how we plan and design the built environment to enable and encourage more sustainable behaviour and lifestyles or how the process requires the provision of elements such as green infrastructure and SuDS to mitigate and address the detrimental effects of climate change.

This edition of Tripwire is especially focussed upon this subject. Contributors have provided both information about climate change as well as opinions about what is important and what action we might take.

As always, we are very grateful for all those who have contributed to this edition and would encourage all RTPI members to use Tripwire as a place to share their knowledge and experience and to express their views and opinions.







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## RTPI West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence 2021

Please join us on 25 November 2021 for the virtual West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence sponsored by No5 Barristers Chambers. Find out who will win the three awards in 2021 – the West Midlands Award for Planning Excellence sponsored by TetraTech, West Midlands Young Planner of the Year and the West Midlands Chair’s Award.

**[Find out more about the nominees later in this issue >>](#)**



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## Congratulations to Maria Dunn

**At a recent meeting of the RTPI General Assembly, Maria Dunn was awarded with an Outstanding Service Award by RTPI President Wei Yang.**

A chartered Town Planner with over 15 years’ experience in local government, Maria is currently Head of Development Policy at Birmingham City Council. She was awarded the RTPI West Midlands Young Planner of the Year Award in 2013 and was shortlisted for the National Young Planner of the Year Award in 2014 and featured on The Planner’s Women of Influence list in 2019.

Maria has been a Planning Aid Volunteer since 2005, and a member of the West Midlands Regional Activities Committee since 2013.





## New co-ordinator for the West Midlands

We are delighted to welcome Katy Gibson as our new RTPI West Midlands co-ordinator. Katy joins us from the Institute of Physics where she was responsible for supporting the East and West Midlands branch committees and members. Katy will be your first point of call for member services in the Region.



—  
**Katy Gibson**  
New Regional  
Co-ordinator

**Please  
do get  
in touch  
to say  
hello!**

## STOP PRESS...

### Call for Contributions – Deadline 3 December – Forum for Global Challenges, Birmingham

The Forum for Global Challenges is seeking proposals on the following from our sector:

- 1) cities as an engine for change to tackle climate change and air pollution
- 2) tackling intra-urban inequalities to make cities more inclusive and resilient
- 3) encouraging citizens to lead low-carbon lifestyles through policy and city practice

[forumforglobalchallenges.com](http://forumforglobalchallenges.com)

## Contact us

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

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**If you would like to contribute an article, please email the Editor, Michael Vout, MRTPI at ...**

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



# Guest editorial:

## Climate and environmental change are happening fast – but will the political climate facilitate transformative planning?



–  
**Claudia Carter,**  
Reader in  
Environmental  
Governance,  
*Birmingham City  
University*

As planners we may identify ourselves or be described as ‘change-makers’. Planning and planners often get bad press about specific planning decisions or being too slow in coming forward with, and approving, new housing, for example. These labels and press coverage may however be more like rose-tinted glasses or a smoke screen than reality. So let’s consider some facts, figures and recent events from the local to the national to the global.

For a start, we know that many local planning authorities, consultant planners and planning businesses are pushing for zero-carbon, attractive and affordable design and nature-based solutions (eg multi-functional green infrastructure spaces and networks to ameliorate extreme temperatures, reduce flood-risk, increase biodiversity locally and regionally). Some of these places and new developments attract awards and serve as inspiration to encourage wider uptake. For example, across the West Midlands over 40 open spaces have in 2020 been given the Green Flag award, including West Park in Wolverhampton, and the Main Line Canal from Birmingham to Smethick.

Another example is the ongoing Port Loop housing development with households benefitting from shared green space, communal facilities, significantly reduced monthly energy bills and an excellent active-transport link into Birmingham city centre. Some schemes and local authorities in fact push so hard they are perceived to be unreasonable and “beyond current and emerging national policy” to use the housing secretary’s words as reported in **The Planner 7 May 2021** with regard



to Swale Borough Council’s stringent carbon reduction conditions for a proposed development of 675 homes at Sittingbourne, Kent. It appears that while national government likes the rhetoric of being the greenest government ever, its actual policy frameworks and actions to meet climate and environmental targets are less consistent or impressive.

The UK Committee on Climate Change, in their 2019 report **Net Zero: The UK’s contribution to stopping global warming**, concluded in May 2019 that “net zero is necessary, feasible and cost-effective”. It also observed that the Government is not on track for targets leading up to 2030 with  $\frac{2}{3}$  of potential emission reductions at risk of under-delivery, actual policies supporting the targets not yet in place and cost-effective opportunities to reduce emissions underused (eg provisions for safe active transport, making good quality and diverse blue green infrastructure provision and management compulsory for new developments, driving up building standards towards zero-carbon).

Interestingly, while many urban residents breathed cleaner air and enjoyed much quieter roads, the lockdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic only put a slight dent into persistently high greenhouse gas emissions trends in the UK and globally and worries about shared/public transport and a swift economic recovery is also potentially less ‘green’ than hoped and voiced by many. **National and international research** relating to the Paris Agreement also indicates that meeting the target of +1.5°C looks increasingly less likely and even staying below a 2°C temperature increase is not necessarily ‘safe’.

Still, rather than turning to cynicism or burying our heads in sand planners and planning can make a change:

1. Don’t wait. There is already enough evidence and reason to act on climate change

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2. Think several generations ahead (50-100 years), not just 5-20 years for sustainable policies and plans

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3. Facilitate / lobby for transition AND transformation

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4. Since all sectors and citizens are impacted by climate change, we need to work across existing barriers and singular priorities to create more inclusive, participatory and creative collaborations and solutions

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5. Use multiple-benefits approaches and those that do not rely on expensive technology and rare resources (eg Green Infrastructure can be very cost-effective and equitable)

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6. Get ‘sustainability-skilled’ – learn/think ecological

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7. Lobby government for clearer, stronger policies and incentives



# What can planners do to climate-proof development and aid multi-functionality?

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Claudia Carter, Reader in Environmental Governance,  
*Birmingham City University*





**In the guest editorial, I argue that reducing negative impacts of climate change sits firmly in the realm of planning. Urban development visions, negotiations, recommendations and decision-making by planners directly or indirectly contribute to climate change.**

This may be through the form, functionality / performance characteristics and orientation of buildings, or the balance between built-up and open space, or the need for and mode of travel, to name but a few aspects.

This ‘power’ to act on climate change is, however, not always felt or practised. Policy guidance and political narratives are ambiguous and often foregrounding other issues, such as economic gain/growth and housing provision (both largely approached as short-term goals rather than long-term needs).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has just seen another revision (20 July 2021) and since this provides the foundation for most local planning policies and plans, let’s have a look at the changes in relation to what seems to have significance for enabling climate change action – be it adaptation or mitigation, or at least not making matters worse.

## Achieving sustainable development

Section 8 b) and c): The change for using ‘built environment’ to ‘places’ and the phrasing ‘protect’ and ‘enhance our natural, built and historic environment’ and ‘improving biodiversity’ indicate a firm commitment to social and environmental objectives in planning, even though the word ‘growth’ rather than wellbeing is still used in association with economic objectives in Section 8 a).

## The presumption in favour of sustainable development

Section 11 a) explicitly mentions climate change. It now states, ‘all plans should [...] improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects’. While using ‘should’ is not as strong as ‘must’, the revised paragraph can help justify a strong focus in Local Plans and planning decisions to achieve these goals. Importantly though, it should help go beyond a few nice, easy-win adaptation and mitigation actions and get seriously stuck into energy-efficient designs, materials and shifts in behavioural patterns; not building for the typical ‘past’ or ‘now’, but for the likely and/or desired ‘future’.





## Plan-making

### *Strategic policies*

Section 22 gently pushes the planning horizon more towards the long-term. While a move from 15 to ‘at least 30 years’ is a small step from an ecological and environmental recovery perspective, it requires planners to explicitly scrutinise forecasts and needs when larger scale developments or urban extensions are being planned.

## Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

### *Identifying land for homes*

In Section 73, the addition of ‘including a genuine choice of transport modes’ as part of supplying new homes is another step in the right direction - even though it implies rather than explicitly refers to energy-efficient public transport and safe active travel provisions. Section 73 c) in line with the introduction of the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code emphasises ‘well-designed and beautiful homes’ – what this may mean in practice is left open to interpretation.

To what degree this includes the highest environmental performance and excellent lifecycle credentials, or multi-functionality, is left blank but could and should be explicit in the produced design guides and codes produced by local authorities, developers and landowners.

## Rural housing

Section 79 may please rural area planners by finally removing ‘innovative’ - especially based on recent experiences where environmentally excellent development proposals were refused as they could not demonstrate sufficient innovation. While the emphasis in this paragraph again is generally on ‘exceptional quality’ of ‘design’, it should aid in approving highly energy-efficient buildings (also note the change from ‘dwelling’ to ‘building’).

## Promoting healthy and safe communities

In Section 92 b) the addition of ‘cycle routes’ alongside pedestrian routes and for both to be ‘attractive, well designed’ is also a welcome revision. Too often cycle paths are supplied for short stretches in awkward proximity to busy roads: the rewording will put an end to that and enable well connected and safe cycling infrastructure within and between new and existing developments and neighbourhoods.



## Open space and recreation

Section 98 hits the multi-functionality spot by emphasising high-quality open spaces not only to benefit the health and well-being of people and communities but to ‘deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change’. This means that any patch of grass or large sports field counts as a starting point but this is insufficient. Consideration needs to be given to a mix of species and functions (eg pollination, flood risk management, pollution absorption / carbon sequestration, shade provision).

## Promoting sustainable transport

Section 106 d) - similar to Section 92 b) - emphasises ‘attractive and well-designed’ cycling and walking networks, as well as ‘secure’ parking for cycles. This addresses an important aspect where bike thefts and vandalism would be discouraged and cycling encouraged for short-distance journeys such as shopping or commuting to work.

## Making effective use of land

### *Achieving appropriate densities*

Section 125 starts with a new sentence: ‘Area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.’ Efficient use of land should not just mean high density but also multi-functionality; while this is not explicitly stated, it is also implicit in ‘sustainable’ which aims to serve environmental, social and economic needs in a balanced and future-considerate way.

### *Achieving well-designed places*

Unsurprisingly, Sections 126-134 offer much new text in response to the introduction of Design Guides and codes. Section 131 is particularly noteworthy as trees get a whole new paragraph acknowledging their contribution to the ‘character and quality of urban environments’, encouraging more trees in parks and the planting of community orchards, ensuring ‘long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees and that existing trees are retained where possible’. Such provision is well overdue but why not highlight hedges or other high-quality, biodiverse and multi-functional green infrastructure too? While reference to ‘green and other public space’ is made in Section 130, for example, this falls well short of a more holistic perspective.

It also stands to prove whether action matches the rhetoric of being the ‘greenest government ever’ and the intention of the UK Government’s 25-Year Environment Plan ‘to help the natural world regain and retain good health’ and ‘set gold standards in protection’ (p9).


## Planning and flood risk

Section 160 explicitly features the development ‘and improvements in green and other infrastructure’ emphasising better and greater use of natural flood management techniques and highlighting the need for ‘an integrated approach to flood risk management’. This implicitly draws attention to the quality of existing green and blue infrastructure and the benefits of restoring their multi-functional characteristics. At present, much open and green space is heavily compacted with often short and monoculture-type vegetation cover, which overall have poor climate change mitigation and adaptation capacity.

## Habitats and biodiversity

Section 180 c) strengthens attention to biodiversity - no longer just to be ‘encouraged’ but ‘to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design’. Furthermore, in addition to the goal of biodiversity net gains multi-functionality is strengthened by the new text: “or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate”. While in practice biodiversity and recreation do not always easily go hand-in-hand (for example, disturbance via trampling and presence, noise and air pollution, or the need to manicure nature rather than letting it ‘rewild’).

Overall, the proposed changes seem a step in the right direction to help slow climate change and accelerate mitigation and adaptation measures. Whilst still vague in places and competing with other priorities, the changes can potentially enable a U-turn from biodiversity loss and accelerating climate change.



**You may also enjoy hearing Prof Alister Scott’s 13-minute commentary on the recent changes to the NPPF ... >**

# Our Common Future –

## Planning for Future Generations

Over 30 years ago the Brundtland Report 'Our Common Future' defined 'Sustainable Development' as development that

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*“meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*

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Avoiding going off on a tangent about whether we're meeting the needs of the present, particularly as we grapple with fundamental challenges to our way of life now - reflecting on our responsibility for future generations should be at the front of our minds.

The RTPI West Midlands' recent seminar on 'Planning and Contextual Safeguarding' showed how planning and our built environments influence the safety, quality of life and future life chances of our young people.

But the potential impacts that we as planners have on our children's children through the decisions that we make now, including, how we plan for some of our biggest challenges such as climate change and the biodiversity crisis, are difficult to comprehend.

When it comes to the climate emergency and thinking about COP26, there is often a focus on the design and efficiency of the physical fabric of our buildings and achieving 'net zero'.

This is undeniably an essential and effective aspect of climate mitigation in the short-term but is an area where our ability and power as planners to influence positive change can be constrained by the broader policy and regulatory context and often the need to balance the availability and cost of technologies against meeting needs in the present. Our towns and cities show that the spatial patterns of development we create that are often engrained and have an enduring influence





on the way that current and future generations live in our environments. So as spatial planners, perhaps, the biggest influence that we can have in the longer-term is by challenging the status quo. Designing in, planning for, promoting and facilitating behaviour change through a co-ordinated approach to development and infrastructure provision at an appropriate spatial scale, whether that's through encouraging mixed-use developments or creating pedestrian and cyclist-friendly neighbourhoods. Our greatest influence on future generations is surely our impact on the distribution and organisation of land uses and infrastructure.

Trending spatial policy concepts such as the '15 minute neighbourhood' appear to be recognising this. In these 'self-sufficient' neighbourhoods, residents can access most, if not all, of their needs within a short walk or bike ride from their home so reducing car use and encouraging active travel. The concept is based on four principles of: proximity, diversity, density and ubiquity as a basis for creating more liveable neighbourhoods that are safer, quieter, more diverse, inclusive and economically vibrant.

If we are intervening to create these 'neighbourhoods of the future' or taking other strategic spatial decisions about how we organise places in an effort to mitigate the impacts we are having on our environment, we must remember that these not only have the potential to influence our behaviours now but will affect the lifestyles of our future generations and how they use our places and spaces. It has never been more critical for us to ensure that we are effectively engaging young people in these important decisions that they will ultimately have to live with.

Whilst there are some fantastic examples of young engagement in planning, in the UK and abroad, our planning system is undoubtedly 'adultcentric' and we need to develop and embed new methodologies youth engagement in planning and the strategic spatial decisions that will affect them. Reflecting on this, my theme for this year's West Midlands RTPI Chair's Award is planning for future generations in its broadest sense, whether it is:

- How we engage young people in planning and designing our environments
- Considering the implications of our decisions on the lifestyles, health and wellbeing of future generations or
- Ensuring that the planning profession continues to become more diverse, reflective of the communities that we serve and able draw upon different ways of thinking to achieve more equitable urban areas fit for the future.

I look forward to the announcement of our Regional Award winners later this month.

–

**Stephanie Eastwood**  
*RTPI West Midlands  
 Chair 2021*



# Young Planners' Opinion



## What can planning do about climate change?



### **Frances Keenan**

*Senior Planning Officer, Rugby Borough Council*

**RTPi WM Young Planners' Committee Member**

In the UK, domestic transport emissions account for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions and 24% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, a major greenhouse gas linked to climate change (Committee on Climate Change, 2012). The motor vehicle is also linked to other social and environmental issues, such as air and noise pollution, traffic congestion, health impacts and the decentralisation of cities.

To tackle these issues, it is the role of Planners to implement and encourage sustainable transport infrastructure, technological developments and promote behavioural change leading to the formation of sustainable travel habits.

Targeting residents of new housing estates provides an opportunity to alter patterns of modern life, removing the pressures of conforming to societal norms such as travelling by private car.

Planners have the opportunity to connect residents with areas of employment, retail and leisure via sustainable modes of transport, reducing car-dependency and the negative environmental impacts that motorised transport imposes on our society.



### Molly Stanley

*Graduate Planner,  
Carter Jonas*

**RTPI WM Young Planners' Committee Member**

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The role of planning is pivotal in achieving global sustainable development and therefore addressing the issue of climate change, through facilitating sustainable and well-balanced spatial development.

The United Nations launched the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, underpinned by 17 **Sustainable Development** Goals which seek to guide the delivery of sustainable development. The latest NPPF revision (released in July 2021) now makes specific reference to these goals, and I am hopeful this will filter down into effective planning policies at the local level.

In order to be effective, local plans need to include policies which address the impact of climate change of a proposal through measurable targets. Guidance needs to set out how the global targets can be localised and translated into deliverable and achievable goals at the local scale. Yet, the timescales associated with the review of a local plan may prohibit the ability of policy to contribute towards the goals in advance of the 2030 target deadline.

It is our role as planners to promote sustainable practices in a proactive manner, through the effective design of spaces and places of new communities; to be a crucial component in the wider challenge against climate change.



### Grace Allen

*Senior Planner,  
CBRE*

**RTPI WM Young Planners' Committee Chair**

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Guidance, targets and technologies are constantly changing as more evidence becomes available in understanding and tackling climate change, for example the latest IPCC report (2021) ahead of COP26 states that it is “it is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, oceans and land”.

Planning, and Planners play an important role in shaping the built and natural environment for the future.

Whilst national and local policies currently are currently in place addressing climate change, as the global response evolves these will also need to evolve to be responsive to change and therefore be both specific, so that they are measurable, and flexible. This will assist Planners in the ability to successfully apply measures to proposed development that are effective in and can be viably brought forward, such as responding to and applying low / zero carbon building materials to developments, and incorporating renewable energy generations systems, and are proportionate to each development / scheme.



# Young Planners Opinion

## What can planning do about climate change?

*(continued)*



**Mark McFadden**

*Senior Planner, CBRE*

**RTPi WM Young Planners' Committee Vice Chair**

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Prior to the Coalition Government's decision to delay the requirement for all new homes to be zero carbon from 2016-onwards, many Development Plans had policies requiring low- or zero-carbon homes or commercial buildings by a certain date. Many urban authorities also pushed for connection to heat networks for low-carbon heating and cooling.

However, planning policies have struggled to keep up with developments such as the decarbonisation of the electrical grid and improved carbon performance of solutions such as electrical heat pumps. Building Regulations are yet to be updated, with the planned Future Homes Standard requiring homes to be zero carbon ready by 2025, leaving officers and applicants to navigate planning policy requirements, which sometimes differ or contradict Building Regulations during the development management process. A patchwork of different requirements ranging from sustainable materials to energy sources is not the most effective means of improving the sustainability of our building fabric or energy source.

Planning policy has a fundamental role to play in securing sustainable design, particularly through the layout and functioning of our rural and urban areas, and is most effective when it does not duplicate or contradict other regulatory regimes – the Government should use Building Regulations to secure the decarbonisation of our buildings, as they are non-negotiable and level the playing field. This will enable LPAs to focus their plan-making and development management efforts on shaping places, and free officers and applicants from individual negotiations on the energy performance and carbon efficiency of buildings.

# What can town planners do for our Mother Earth?



by RTPI President  
*Dr Wei Yang FRTPI*

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The following first appeared on the  
RTPI website on 22nd April 2021.



# International Mother Earth Day is a time for us to appreciate her generosity and kindness through our actions. The Mother Earth has given us so much, now she is unwell, so what can we do for her?

The theme of **#EarthDay2021** is “Restore Our Earth”, with up to one billion people taking actions to protect the planet. People are urged to focus not only on how we can reduce our impact on the planet but also on how we might actively repair ecosystems.

On 20 April, the UK Prime Minister agreed to legislate a new target to reduce national emissions by **78%** by 2035, following the Climate Change Committee’s advice on the **Sixth Carbon Budget**

Also on the same day, **Natural England** published new research highlighting how biodiversity is critical to reaching net-zero. The report outlined how different UK habitats can respond to the climate crisis by taking carbon out of the atmosphere.

For instance, carbon stored in deep peat soils such as those in fens and raised bogs are up to eight times greater than the amount stored by an equivalent area of tropical rainforest. The UK’s peatlands and native woodlands have the greatest capacity to store carbon and lead the fight in responding to the climate crisis.

However, the State of the UK’s **Woods and Trees 2021** report published by the Woodland Trust a week earlier had issued a wakeup call - just **7%** of Britain’s native woodlands are currently in good ecological condition.

While woodland cover is slowly increasing, from **12%** cover of the UK’s land surface in 1998 to **13.2%** (3.2 million ha), the wildlife within it is decreasing.

I encourage all RTPi members to read this important report - the first to present important facts and trends focusing predominantly on native woods and trees, and trees in towns and cities. It provides clear evidence that there is an urgent need to act. The report argues that location and quality are the key to success, including connecting existing native woods and creating new ones near urban populations and in areas at high risk of flooding.

The Climate Change Committee has recommended increasing UK woodland cover from its current level of **13%** of total land cover to at least **17%**, and possibly to **19%** by 2050, if the UK is to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The climate emergency and biodiversity crises are two sides of the same coin, and there is linkage between them and pandemics.





If the right approach is taken, we can find a ‘high nature and low carbon’ solution – that’s exactly what town planners can do for our Mother Earth.

Spatial planning can provide a systematic solution to enhance efficiency of inter-sectorial actions. With the empowerment of digital technology, planners can play a much bigger role in tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies, as well as enhancing health and wellbeing.

If we imagine the Earth as our birth mother, soils are her muscles, river systems are her blood vessels, woodlands are her hair, then cities, towns and villages are her organs. Everything is a part of a holistic, integrated and interconnected eco-system.

I see town planners as doctors for our Mother Earth, with the support of other specialists - for example, locally we can conduct a comprehensive and intelligent health check and develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies into **Local Environment Improvement Plans** which merge various single-issue environment plans into a single hard-hitting strategy to put the environment at the top table.

Also, to make sure our Mother Earth’s energy and natural resources will not be over-consumed further, planners can take the lead in providing Place-Based Approaches to **Climate Change**. We can plan mixed-use neighbourhoods with accessible local services and high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, such as **20 minute neighbourhoods**; maximise opportunities for onsite renewable energy and connections to decentralised low-carbon energy networks; and ensure that new development is delivered in locations and densities that maximise the potential for low- and zero-carbon energy and transport infrastructure.

Our future generations have the right to enjoy the love of Mother Earth as much as we do. We want to leave them a place in harmony with nature, as the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** set out - a place which ‘maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change’.

Town planners - let’s #ActNow and be leaders to **“Restore Our Earth”!**





# The trouble with Green Infrastructure

by Mike Grace







**The trouble with Green Infrastructure (GI) is that it does so many things for so many people. We've known this for a long time; the Victorian civic creation of parks as a response to unhealthy cities, the Garden Cities and New Towns movement that led, for example, to the Master Plan that envisaged Telford as a Forest City.**

More recently the creation of climate change parks in East London and the green roofs, walls and rainwater gardens addressing urban heating and flood risk as part of the economic future of London's business districts. And now GI as a critical part of a green-recovery post-Covid.

Whichever way we define it, GI is embedded into our present and future places and is part of the art and science of town and country planning. Furthermore, as Public Health England has established, the evidence is strong that GI literally is good for you (see this presentation @42mins **Achieving a Healthy Green Recovery** - Webinar).

Now we have unambiguous recognition of the emergencies associated with climate change and biodiversity extinction. These are linked issues. It is clear that developers and designers can use the inherent multi-functional qualities of GI to contribute a heady mix of mitigation and adaptation measures. The crucial role for planners here is to help make the whole bigger than the sum of the parts; reconciling different needs and issues, identify (and insist on) opportunities being taken.



This requires the planner to have effective knowledge and support on GI to work well towards achieving those multi-functional goals. The Government’s **25 Year Environment Plan** proposes a national framework for GI Standards to help planners and land managers to take this proposition further. It’s a tricky challenge to be able to meet multiple expectations and yet be a mechanism which has traction in the real-world dynamics of competition for land, viability and public benefits. The debate on GI has often been about reconciling nature with accessibility.

Strategic policies for natural capital and GI will enable land use to be more than the sum of the parts for net zero spatially across a city. It will also do other things; potential for the nature based preventative solutions envisaged in the national flood strategy, providing for corridors of movement of species as habitat ranges change due to warming and informing the footprint of outward expanding urban areas.

GI can be a critical part of the glue that binds strategic, local and neighbourhood planning together. This can incorporate the strategic or local responses to zero carbon and biodiversity through landscape and townscape quality, nature recovery networks, delivering on environmental net gain and high-quality design. There are bottom-up expectations that public policy will respond to climate change and there is clear support for GI within communities.

Planners’ understanding of place can help identify GI which can make the transition to carbon zero a just transition across these spatial divides. Local authority

Statements of Community Involvement can ensure that GI is an integral part of engagement processes to deliver on the benefits of GI for disadvantaged communities and for the environment itself. Neighbourhood Development Plans can help cement delivery and greater local ‘ownership’ of the GI resource.

The Trouble with GI? With apologies to readers of John Wyndham’s novel **‘The Trouble with Lichen’** (1960), GI will be a better and more equitable option for planners to deliver the long term health of the people and the places that planning serves.

## Planners’ understanding of place can help identify GI which can make the transition to carbon zero a just transition across these spatial divides

The ‘emergencies’ move that to how land use planning can deliver sufficient quantity and quality of GI that does both. Defra’s framework of standards (expected in 2022) will have to reconcile clarity of purpose with complexity of places and necessary local decision making. Not least, to ensure that they demonstrate the need for planning to connect with other place-making drivers and stewardship to secure benefits over the long term.

‘Natural Capital Accounting’ of urban GI exposes the hidden economic value for carbon sequestration and recreation and health benefits for local communities.



*Mike Grace’s professional experience includes planning roles at Telford Development Corporation, Manager of the Local Plans team at Telford and Wrekin Council, Head of Planning Services at Carlisle City Council and Regional Director Countryside Agency in the West Midlands.*

*In January 2017, Mike joined BCU as a researcher on the Urban Living Birmingham project, one of five UK Research Council funded ‘urban living partnership’ projects.*

# Index of climate tools

The RTPI has launched a guide for planners who want to understand how to reduce carbon emissions while also managing climate impacts such as flooding and overheating has been launched by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI).

The guide, produced by the RTPI alongside CAG Consultants, takes the form of an **interactive, online directory** showcasing 18 climate mitigation and adaptation tools which can be used in development management and plan-making.

**Past President, Ian Tant said:**

*“Spatial and strategic planning have a vital role to play in helping councils and communities move to carbon net zero - nearly 300 councils across the UK have declared a climate emergency and are seeking to take action to mitigate and adapt to current and future climate change. The Index of Climate Tools produced by the RTPI with CAG Consultants is an invaluable guide to help councils and planners access the best available tools and information on climate change and climate action.”*

The launch of the new module follows on from **Plan the World We Need**, the RTPI’s campaign to raise awareness of the vital role of spatial and strategic planning in reviving the economy, tackling inequality and meeting net-zero targets by 2050.

The RTPI’s ambitious **Corporate Strategy 2020-30** also has climate change at its heart, acknowledging the pivotal role of planning in achieving global sustainable development. To keep the module up to date, members are being encouraged to provide their own feedback on the tools mentioned and to inform the RTPI of climate tools which are not included. Get in touch by emailing [RTPI.Research@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:RTPI.Research@rtpi.org.uk)

**Climate Tools for Planners is available now on RTPI Learn, the RTPI’s online training site.**

CLIMATE TOOLS	Adaptation	Mitigation	Climate justice	Plan making	Development management
Adaptation Catalyst - supporting adaptation strategies	●			●	●
BEST - valuing the benefits of blue-green infrastructure	●	●			●
BlueHealth - collecting information on blue infrastructure	●			●	●
BREEAM - Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method	●	●		●	●
Building with Nature Standards and Accreditation	●	●	●	●	●
Climate Just - highlighting climate disadvantage	●		●	●	●
Climate View - carbon neutral transition tool	●	●		●	
Heat Resilient Cities Toolkit	●			●	
Natural Capital Planning Tool - implementing environmental net gain	●	●			●
Neighbourhood Planning in a Climate Emergency	●	●		●	
Overheating Toolkit - mitigating overheating risk in new homes	●			●	●
Planning for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy: a toolkit for planners		●	●	●	
RESIN - Climate resilient cities and infrastructures	●			●	
SCATTER - Setting City Area Targets and Trajectories for Emissions Reduction	●	●		●	●
THERMOS - optimising district energy network planning processes	●	●		●	●
Transport for New Homes checklist		●			●
Tyndall Carbon Targeter Tool - carbon targets by local authority area		●		●	
UKGBC Policy Playbook - driving sustainability in new homes	●	●		●	

The new directory, available as a free bitesized module from RTPI Learn, guides members through the tools available in their specific area.

# Plan The World We Need

## The contribution of planning to a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery.

To recover from Covid-19, we need to make plans. These must be holistic in nature, integrated in structure, and resourced for delivery. They need to accelerate progress to a zero carbon economy, increase resilience to risk, and create fair, healthy and prosperous communities. At this critical moment in time, our paper reflects on the current situation, and what needs to change.

**Chapter 1 summarises growing calls for a green recovery, and why planning is essential for delivering change on the ground.** It explains how planning originated as a public health intervention, helped the UK rebuild after World War II, and has since evolved into a unique approach for place-based systems thinking. As the recovery gains pace, planning will be critical for directing investment to solutions which balance economic, social and environmental objectives.

However, the UK and Ireland's capacity for proactive planning is unevenly distributed. Chapter 1 describes how, over multiple decades, a reliance on market-based solutions reduced planning to a more reactive and regulatory tool for managing growth. Prosperous areas have reinvested some of these proceeds into better planning, attracting the investment needed to enable sustainable development, tackle inequality, boost resilience and cut emissions.

But struggling areas, including those affected by de-industrialisation, have lost valuable tools to shape their future. A lack of joined-up planning and investment at the national level, coupled with the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis, has seen the gap widen between successful and struggling places.

The Covid-19 pandemic has layered new challenges onto these existing vulnerabilities, exposing weaknesses across the built environment that undermine resilience to risk. **Chapters 2 to 5 examine the impacts of Covid-19 on the built environment, across four themes:**

- **Health and wellbeing:** The disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 on vulnerable groups, especially BAME communities and older people living in deprived neighbourhoods
- **Economic sectors:** Changes to the economic landscape, including the loss of employment in at-risk sectors, growth in others, and the shift towards remote working
- **Travel and transport:** The challenges of reallocating road space to enable walking, cycling and social distancing, especially in areas designed around the car
- **Net zero carbon:** Risks to the investments needed to decarbonise buildings, energy and transport, delaying progress towards carbon reduction targets



In a fragile economy, with pressing social and environmental challenges ahead, recovery packages must be carefully designed and deployed. To assist this process, governments should:

1. Complement capital investment and support for individuals and businesses with the necessary resources and tools to plan effectively for the recovery, at a range of scales
2. View local and strategic plans as key mechanisms for directing stimulus measures towards place-based solutions which have local support and deliver multiple benefits, following the priorities set out below.

**Chapters 2 to 5 contain our priorities for a place-based recovery, across four themes:**

- Tackling place-based inequality: Delivering affordable and high quality housing in the right locations, regenerating deprived areas for the benefit of existing communities, and improving access to key services, amenities and infrastructure
- Enabling a green industrial revolution: Actively planning for the growth of sectors which deliver emission reductions, environmental gains and jobs, while helping places adapt to shifting economic and labour markets
- Prioritising healthy and sustainable modes of transport: Integrating temporary active travel measures into strategies which lock-in behaviour change and support regeneration, and plan for growth that helps public and shared transport to recover
- Accelerating the deployment of zero-carbon infrastructure: Local and strategic planning for energy efficiency, renewable energy, smart grids and nature-based solutions to flooding and overheating, guided by ambitious policies and standards

Achieving these will require a re-imagining of planning, which goes beyond purely statutory and regulatory functions, or a narrow zonal system.

**Chapter 6** starts by describing planning tools and approaches that can support a holistic recovery: allowing for direct engagement with diverse local communities, supporting local leadership and visioning, collaborating across geographical and sectoral boundaries, and providing flexibility and adaptability. However, to ensure a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery, actions are also needed by the UK Government, the devolved administrations and the Irish Government.

**Chapter 6 sets out key areas for change at the national level:**

- Governance and resourcing: Create powerful and effective structures for cross-boundary strategic planning across the UK and Ireland, and invest in the planning services needed to engage with communities, businesses and infrastructure providers
- Joined-up national strategies: To support the above, develop strategies which deliver investment in genuinely affordable homes, retrofit existing buildings, cut emissions from heat and transport, and plan networks of multi-functional green infrastructure
- Common objectives and metrics: Breaking with past trends by testing plans, infrastructure decisions and bailout packages against common objectives for the future, with clear metrics and targets for decarbonisation, resilience, health and social justice
- Data and technology: Establishing regional data observatories to provide common data and analysis for plan-making and investing in open source digital planning tools for scenario modelling, public engagement and coordination with infrastructure providers

The long-term impacts of Covid-19 on the economy and society remain uncertain, with new information emerging every day. Some of the information and analysis contained in this paper represents a snapshot in time, and the RTPI will continue to monitor these trends, update our assumptions, and provide more detailed recommendations as the situation develops. Have a look at the campaign, research and updates on our [COP26 Hub](#).

**How can planners help create the world we need post-COVID-19?**

We are calling on governments across the UK and Ireland to capitalise on the expertise of planners to achieve a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Plan The World We Need campaign aims to raise awareness of the vital role planners have in every aspect of the recovery in order to revive the economy, tackle inequality and meet net-zero targets by 2050.

Please support our vision and share the campaign **#PlanTheWorldWeNeed**





# Views from another perspective





# Planning for a Greener, More Resilient and Sustainable Future

*Karl Jones and Vince Smith of the Landscape Institute*

**With the world's economies in crisis due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and enforced lockdown measures, there has been an inevitable process of reflection among societies around the world, re-evaluating our relationship with the natural world on a number of levels.**

The pandemic has further highlighted our frailties and vulnerability as a species, increasing awareness of other impending threats facing humanity such as loss of biodiversity, pollution and climate change. As nations continue to unsustainably deforest the landscape, releasing carbon into the atmosphere, destroying valuable pristine habitats that buffer us from novel zoonotic diseases for which we have no existing immunity. **Deforestation forces species** into closer proximity to each other and humans, thereby spreading diseases that can further mutate and infect humans.

If we are to learn anything from this pandemic, it is that we must find new ways to rebuild our economies in more resilient and sustainable ways, that are more harmonious with the natural world.

## **Building ecosystem resilience**

If habitats become fragmented and isolated then, as environmental conditions change, certain species will not be able to migrate to more favourable conditions. Increasing ecosystem resilience will allow the widest range of biodiversity to survive and adapt. Efforts to build resilience should include conserving the range and ecological variability of habitats and species, creating buffer zones around high-quality habitats, **maintaining existing ecological networks** to avoid fragmentation and isolation, creating and/or restoring ecologically functional corridors and stepping stones, and increasing connectivity and landscape permeability between habitats to allow dispersal and migration of species across the **wider environment**.

Invasive non-native species often have no natural predators or controls, allowing them to quickly become dominant in a habitat. As a result, they are often able to dominate their new environment uncontested at the expense of outcompeted native species. Invasive species can threaten flood defences, biodiversity, agriculture, infrastructure and health, which will further compound the effects of climate change. Rigorous biosecurity controls must be tightened to prevent the spread of invasive species into the wider landscape.

As governments around the world develop strategies for moving forward post-Covid, we are seeing greener strategies emerge, to help build their economic recovery, including elements that tackle climate change and loss of biodiversity.

There are two main strategies for tackling climate change: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation involves addressing the root causes, by reducing greenhouse gases (GHG) from the atmosphere, of which carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) plays an important role, for example, through increased carbon sequestration by plants and carbon capture.



Adaptation involves developing ways to protect people, wildlife and places by reducing their vulnerability to the effects of climate change, such as building seawalls to protect against sea level rise and increased flooding and improving connectivity between habitats for wildlife to be able to move to **more favourable conditions**. Both strategies will be necessary because, even if GHG emissions are dramatically decreased in the next decade, adaptation will still be needed to deal with the global changes that have already been set in motion.

To mitigate these climate and environmental challenges, the European Commission, announced in December 2019 the European Green Deal, aimed at making 28 countries in the European Union climate neutral by 2050. Dovetailed to the European Green Deal, the UK recently passed legislation setting a new emissions target of net-zero GHGs by 2050 ('Net Zero target').

## Built development in the UK will need to be more sustainable, which will involve designing homes that meet higher environmental standards

The UK Government also promotes sustainable development through planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 (revised) aims to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible by creating or enhancing habitats in association with sustainable development. The **NPPF states** that planning permission should be refused if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or compensated for.

Natural England's 2015 Biodiversity Metric 2.0 provides a tool for measuring the biodiversity baseline of an area and an assessment of biodiversity losses and gains resulting from development or land use change.

The government's forthcoming Environment Bill is expected to require a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), when compared to pre-development biodiversity baselines, for all new developments.

### Placing a value on nature

Humans depend on Earth's various natural resources, such as soil, water, air and biota to survive. These assets and the resources they provide are referred to as natural capital and ecosystem services, respectively. Ecosystem services are the benefits that natural capital provides to society.

Most economic activities depend on some form of **natural capital**, providing essential 'services' such as clean water, food, timber, nutrient recycling, pollination and water retention, as well as regulating hazards such as flooding and erosion and mitigating the effects of climate change through carbon sequestration and storage.

Natural Capital Accounting and **Natural Capital Assessments** are tools for measuring and managing a country's natural assets and resources. Natural Capital Accounting sets out to value natural resources and the ecosystem services they offer (eg timber, carbon sequestration and air filtration by woodland). **Natural Capital Assessments** consider the assets and ecosystem services nature provides, and how they can be best used sustainably.

Both Natural Capital Accounting and Assessments can help landowners and developers make informed decisions and design strategies for the sustainable management of land, especially when considering offsetting and land-use change, such as selecting appropriate land for reforestation. Towards achieving net-zero GHG emissions

Reducing the amount of GHGs in the atmosphere through natural means alone (ie planting trees to sequester CO<sub>2</sub> and restoring natural carbon sinks such as peatlands), however, will not be sufficient if we are to achieve the 'Net Zero target'. Built development in the UK will need to be more sustainable, which will involve designing homes etc. that meet higher environmental standards, as well as potentially physically removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. Improving adaptation resilience for humans, wildlife and structures must be considered in tandem with any mitigation strategies, providing multifunctional solutions.

This can be achieved, in part, through building-in future climate proofing via infrastructure (eg improved insulation, solar power, provisioning charging sockets for electric cars, ultra-fast internet



for all to reduce the need to travel, dedicated cycle lanes, and using building materials, such as certified timber from sustainable sources).

The UK's independent advisor on talking climate change, the **Committee on Climate Change (CCC)**, states that homes in the UK are not suitably adapted for reducing GHG emissions and safeguarding our wellbeing as the climate changes. It warns that the 'Net Zero target' will not be met without the near-complete elimination of GHG emissions from buildings in the UK.

Efforts to adapt homes to the effects of a changing climate, for example higher average temperatures, flooding and water scarcity, are lagging behind. New built developments can achieve net gain for biodiversity as well as contributing to the 'Net Zero target' through responsible design plans that include climate adaptation resilience together with appropriate strategies for mitigation, enhancement and offsetting.

Development design plans should include well-informed effective mitigation and enhancement measures that contribute to increasing carbon sequestration and improving connectivity between key habitats and the wider landscape. This can include the creation/restoration of ponds, species-rich grasslands, shrubland, native hedgerows and trees for the benefits of wildlife. Designs should include appropriate measures to provide permeability for wildlife to move across the landscape and the positive management of infrastructure and watercourse corridors for biodiversity to reduce fragmentation by human infrastructure barriers.

## An often-overlooked component of design is the nighttime environment

An often-overlooked component of design is the nighttime environment. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), artificial light pollution affects species migration patterns, predator-prey relationships, and the circadian rhythms of many organisms. Plans should aim to maintain and restore dark skies and dark green habitat networks.

The effects of artificial light at night ('ALAN') on dark skies and on dark green infrastructure is gaining precedence (see the APPG for Dark Skies'

... living infrastructure can function as 'stepping-stones' or corridors that can maintain and enhance ecosystem connectivity, creating permeable landscapes

**Ten Dark Sky policies for the government (2021))** and aims to revolutionise light pollution in the UK, advocating use of policy solutions that could be seen in emerging NPPF versions. Well-informed nightscape and lighting strategies should be incorporated into development design plans and referred to in local plans and green infrastructure plans to minimise unnecessary energy usage (and reduced carbon emissions) and light spill into naturally dark corridors (eg trees and hedgerows that provide roost and nesting opportunities as well as foraging and essential connectivity to other habitats) that are important for nocturnal species reducing effects on biodiversity.

Living Infrastructure, including green, brown and blue roofs and green walls, are natural or semi-natural networks of soil, vegetation, and water covered spaces. Where feasible, these should be incorporated into design for effective mitigation and enhancement of sites to achieve net gain. Furthermore, living infrastructure can function as 'stepping-stones' or corridors that can maintain and enhance ecosystem connectivity, creating permeable landscapes.

Building climate change adaptation resilience into design and planning with a view to achieving net gain for biodiversity can not only help achieve the 'Net Zero target', but also lead to a more connected landscape and healthier places, with darker skies, cleaner air and water, improved soil fertility, better flood planning, increased natural capital and ecosystem services and better healthier places to live leading to higher quality of life – a win-win-win solution for society, the environment and the economy, on local, national and international scales.





# TripwireInterview

...with Birmingham City Council

Welcome to *Tripwire Interview* where the RTPI West Midlands invites key regional planners and planning teams to explain and discuss important planning initiatives and activities.

*Tripwire Interview* is grateful for the opportunity to discuss Birmingham City Council's **Our Future City Plan: Central Birmingham 2040 Shaping our City Together.**



**Ian McLeod**  
Birmingham City Council





**Question 1: What is the Our Future City Plan (OFCP) and why did you do it or need to do it ?**

The Our Future City Plan (OFCP) is a new approach to plan-making in the Council which looks to address the challenges we face and is a move towards collaborative planning.

“Shaping Our City Together” was the first document we launched under this banner with the purpose of stimulating discussion and community engagement to feed into the preparation of a new development framework for Central Birmingham to replace the Big City Plan (2011). Other more detailed documents will subsequently be produced as part of the Our Future City Plan based upon and unique to specific areas, topics or issues. The OFCP provided the opportunity to create a framework, a new vision and strategy for development to help stimulate green, inclusive growth that meets our diverse needs and maximises the potential of all of Birmingham’s communities. It will provide a renewed focus on creating a green, fair and inclusive city to tackle the current and future economic, social and environmental challenges.

**Question 2: What are the challenges the OFCP aims to address ?**

A major impetus for the OFCP is the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration in June 2019. The urgent need to act to tackle climate change has been set out in the City Council’s ambitious commitment to eliminate carbon emissions through the Route to Zero initiative. OFCP will help support this agenda by enacting the necessary steps for our transition to a greener, healthier environment; become a global leader in tackling climate change meeting the challenges head-on and grasping the opportunities of being at the forefront of a green revolution.

The investment being directed into the city centre hasn’t always directly benefitted the surrounding neighbourhoods and therefore we are looking beyond the traditional city centre core. We are looking beyond the Middle Ring Road and out to the inner-city communities to create a sustainable network of neighbourhoods to connect the inner-city areas and ensuring connectivity, and a range of social and physical infrastructure.

**Question 3: Who authorised the plan and who produced it?**

The OFCP was produced by the City Centre Development Planning Team of Birmingham City Council with the support of other specialist internal teams. The team worked with various stakeholders, including developers, businesses, charities and other public bodies to help shape the City’s vision. The intention is to work more closely with communities on the future Central Area Framework to make sure they truly reflect their aspirations for Birmingham in their neighbourhoods.

*‘The intention is to work more closely with communities on the future Central Area Framework to make sure they truly reflect their aspirations for Birmingham in their neighbourhoods’*

–  
**Ian McLeod**  
Birmingham City Council

**Question 4: What is the purpose, aims and objectives of the Our Future City Plan?**

The main aim of the document is to provide a shared vision for central Birmingham that will unite all stakeholders. It sets out a number of proposals and actions that we need to deliver in order to achieve its vision. We know a number of these actions will not just sit with the Council and that we can’t achieve this vision on our own. It will take strong partnership working with investors, businesses, public bodies, charities and communities. This is why the Shaping our City Together conversation is so important.

The vision is framed to ensure that we are pursuing all three of the objectives of sustainable development, creating a city that delivers social, economic and environmental gains to its people. A key objective of the Plan is to spread the benefits of developments, such as jobs, housing and public realm improvements into all areas as well creating a sustainable environment and supporting the continued success of our commercial areas.

It is also aimed at strengthening the links with the city centre and its integration with surrounding inner-city areas such as Aston, Nechells, Balsall Heath, Small Heath, and Sparkbrook.

**Question 5: Who will use the plan and how will it be used?**

The plan will be used by all stakeholders as a framework for the delivery of meaningful actions. Having clear priorities helps to unlock funding and work with investors, developers, communities and agencies to deliver the proposals within the plan. The framework also provides up-to-date baseline evidence to inform the Birmingham Development Plan Review.





*'Whilst the full extent of the changes is not yet known we need to ensure that the city is flexible and adaptable to future trends'*



**Question 6: How has the OFCP responded to Covid-19 ?**

No one can ignore the economic and social impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on all of us. The pandemic has made us all think differently about the lives we live, and it has stimulated us to have important conversations about the future of Birmingham.

The quality of environment, access to open space and nature have all been shown as incredibly important in helping communities through the pandemic. There are also questions over whether the changes to how we live, work and shop will have a long-term impact on our city, and we need plans in place to help places, businesses and communities adapt and respond positively to these changes.

Covid-19 has resulted in significant economic impact on business and residents, with the retail, arts, culture, leisure and hospitality sectors hardest hit by the downturn. There are short-term impacts, and several business survival measures have been put in place to help to address these. Long-term trends in change to retail patterns have been accelerated, and trends in working from home will alter the patterns of working in the central area. Whilst the full extent of the changes is not yet known we need to ensure that the city is flexible and adaptable to future trends. We need to find new ways to keep our offer attractive, relevant, flexible and resilient.

**Question 7: How has the pandemic changed the way you are engaging with communities?**

The initial online launch of the Shaping Our City Together document in January 2021 received over 9,000 views and interactions, our biggest ever launch event with international reach.

We have ensured that we've replicated the pre-pandemic approach to real interaction with local communities as much as possible by making full use of video conferencing applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams for our themed online engagement events.

During the consultation period, we had over 100 people attend these events, which helped generate large amounts of debate and discussion on the various topics intended to be covered in the OFCP. Additionally, we were proactive on social media, distributing a shortened online survey on the consultation document via Twitter which has provided us with over 200 representations. More in depth debate and discussion on the OFCP strategy was provided in the form of webinars, delivered by experts across the industry as well as Birmingham City Council officers from a range of specialities. The webinars are accessible via the Council's YouTube account here and have garnered over 1,500 views in total so far.

*'In fully embracing online communication platforms, we have been able to engage with a wider demographic of people and in particular the younger generation'*

We were also proactive in directly contacting community groups and neighbourhood forums in Central Birmingham and offering to present the document in their own meetings, allowing us to engage with more 'hard to reach' groups who may have struggled in the past to effectively voice their thoughts and concerns during consultations.

In fully embracing online communication platforms, we have been able to engage with a wider demographic of people and in particular the younger generation. However, there have been drawbacks, such as interacting with demographics who have difficulties accessing the Internet or don't have access to a computer. For these people, face to face meetings with officers in community centres or at the Council offices is often the best form of engagement – for the next stage of consultation, it is expected that lockdown restrictions will be eased and the Council will be able to set up physical meetings in local neighbourhoods. However, overall, we have learnt that maximising online engagement during consultation is vital in ensuring that the process is inclusive, transparent and allows people more opportunity to express their views.

**Question 8: How did you ensure younger people got involved in the consultation?**

Working with the Council's Youth Services department, we developed an events program aimed at young people i.e. under 18 year olds encouraging them to participate in the consultation and giving them a range of different ways to voice their views. This involved publishing a 'survey monkey' online tailored for under 18s, focus groups with young and older teens as well as young people out of work or training (NEET) and setting up a design competition.

Beyond the consultation period, we are aiming to work with Birmingham's universities (UoB, Birmingham City, Aston University) in establishing graduate working groups, which are aimed to give undergraduate and postgraduate planning students an active role in the production of the Central Birmingham 2040 masterplan.



## RTPi webinar Planning and Contextual Safeguarding

**On 3 June 2021, Dr Kat Salter hosted a webinar on behalf of RTPi West Midlands on Planning and Contextual Safeguarding.**

Kat was joined by two speakers - Laura Roden, a youth worker with over 10 years' experience in the voluntary sector who manages an early help mental health service for children, young people and families, and Madeline Tester, a Contextual Safeguarding Coordinator for Adur and Worthing Councils. Contextual safeguarding is a relatively new concept both in theory and in practice.

Developed by the University of Bedfordshire, the framework offers an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families – with a central focus on the urban form. The planning system, and design of places, has a crucial role and the webinar explored how theories of contextual safeguarding can be applied in practice.

Laura provided an overview of the contextual safeguarding approach and Madeline provided details of the specific approach adopted by Adur and Worthing Council which included engaging with developers at the early stages of regeneration proposals, ensuring play space is designed to meet the needs of all users and the value of small-scale interventions such as providing appropriate street lighting. A key message, which chimes with the wider community engagement ethos of the Centre for Urban and Regional Planning, was the importance of involving people, especially children and young people, at the earliest appropriate stages of the planning process.



–  
**Dr Kat Salter**  
University of Birmingham

**For more information, The Contextual Safeguarding Network has a wealth of resources on their website.**

# Rebuilding Out of Conflict

by  
Bryan Smith

**To celebrate Coventry City of Culture 2021, the RTPI West Midlands International Group is producing a series of podcasts entitled Rebuilding out of Conflict.**

The first episode featuring John Acres (PPRTPI) and Professor Peter Larkham (Professor of Planning at Birmingham City University's School of Engineering and the Built Environment) takes a look at Coventry and asks how can we rebuild our cities after conflict while remaining sensitive to their past, and what role does planning play in this?

The nature and cause(s) of the conflict varies. Whilst the impact and subsequent rebuilding upon cities such as Dresden and Plymouth in the mid-20th century are related to WWII, one of the most significant conflicts which has shaped Barcelona was the Spanish Civil War.

Future recordings will cover Barcelona, Plymouth, Valetta, Rotterdam and Gdansk.

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**The Coventry podcast Rebuilding out of Conflict can be accessed by clicking here>**



**Bryan Smith**

*RTPI West Midlands Hon. Secretary*

*Bryan Smith is a Chartered Town Planner with experience in both the public (Birmingham City, Redditch New Town Development Corporation, Bristol City and the former Avon County) and private sectors (including Carter Commercial Developments, McGuinness Finch, Clark Willmott and his own practice specialising in retailing, shipping, and renewable energy.)*

*He was a research Fellow/Lecturer in the Institute for Local, Regional and National at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich, Switzerland. Has published on such topics as retailing and European planning.*





**Join RTPI West Midlands for the virtual announcements of the winners of the RTPI West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence on YouTube at 7pm on 25 November 2021. The Awards celebrate outstanding planners, plans and projects that demonstrate the power of planning in the region.**

Sponsored by No5 Barristers Chambers, the awards highlight exceptional examples of how planning and planners have a positive impact on our quality of life in creating exceptional places and protecting our environment.



*This year we have a shortlist of six inspirational projects for the 2021 Award for Planning Excellence, sponsored by Tetra Tech Ltd.*



**Alexander Stadium Redevelopment,**  
*submitted by Arup*

This exciting project has provided a unique opportunity to demonstrate the multi-disciplinary capabilities of Arup. Arup are providing architecture, urban design and masterplanning, civil and structural, building services, planning, fire, lighting, transport planning, stakeholder engagement, landscaping, acoustics, and ecology from across the Arup network.

The team have reimagined the stadium to enable it to become a high-quality venue for diverse sporting, leisure, community and cultural events - creating a legacy that will last.





**Coventry Cathedral Conservation Management Plan,**  
*submitted by Purcell Architecture Ltd*

No century has left us a more varied set of conservation challenges within the built environment than the 20th century. Coventry Cathedral Conservation Management Plan sets out, for the first time, the understanding, significance, vulnerabilities and policies to support an informed management of change at this important Grade I listed Post-War site.

Our research and policy approach at Coventry adds to the international corpus of conservation planning for Post-War sites and the innovative conservation management toolkit provides a clear and objective methodology for assessing significance and managing sustainable future change.



**Glasswater Locks,**  
*submitted by St Joseph Homes Ltd*

Glasswater Locks is the latest phase in the regeneration of Eastside, Birmingham and will provide a more balanced community through the provision of 753 new homes and 2,301 sqm of flexible commercial/leisure floorspace that will complement a world class educational campus.

Glasswater Locks announces the arrival to the city centre and nearby HS2 terminus, whilst successfully responding to a number of heritage assets. An attractive public realm opens up the canalside environment and provides new connections to the surrounding area. The scheme evolved through extensive engagement with Birmingham City Council as well as the general public and technical stakeholders.



**HS2 Phase One Automated People Mover,**  
*submitted by HS2 Ltd*

HS2's Automated People Mover (APM) is a unique and exciting project which will connect the Solihull economic Hub and strategic transport links, to the high speed rail network. Via the APM its accessibility will be transformed and so will the lives of future generations in the West Midlands and beyond. The approved APM design sets a new benchmark for a people mover of this type, with a contextual design which is fully inclusive and accessible, and which will benefit and transform future projects around. All delivered through the effective collaboration of HS2, its consultant teams, Solihull Council and stakeholders.

*continued overleaf...*





**West Bromwich Outdoor Market,**  
*submitted by Sandwell Borough Council*

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The West Bromwich outdoor market redevelopment sought to replace a tired, unattractive row of market stalls with a new offer looking to improve the visual amenity of the area, deliver against the Council's sustainability agenda and increase the economic impact of the market, which is at the cultural heart of the town centre.

Through the use of ground-breaking PV technology, the markets are now a net contributor to energy in the borough, in addition to being a functional, distinctive market facility for traders. The scheme has been shortlisted for The Energy Awards 2021, recognising its green credentials.



**The West Midlands National Park (WMNP),**  
*submitted by The West Midlands National Park Lab, CATiD, Birmingham City University*

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The West Midlands National Park is a long-term vision for a new kind of National Park, applauded by the UK Government's Glover Review of Landscapes (2019). It is an integrated and holistic economic, social and environmental vision incorporating all of the land in the West Midlands, and all aspects of land use. It is about integrated, sustainable and meaningful transformation as much as conservation and preservation. The WMNP is shifting perceptions of the region; already impacting local and national government policy and spending; empowering communities and stakeholders and generating a sense of hope and optimism for the future.





*A shortlist of three are in contention for the 2021 RTPI West Midlands Young Planner of the Year*

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**Kamil Rog**

Kamil has engaged with planning practice alongside his studies, serving as the University of Birmingham’s Planning Society president, alongside championing collaboration within Birmingham City Council’s decision-making through community engagement. He has led the Planning Society through the pandemic’s restrictions to create thriving connections between students and practitioners via online events, most notably utilising Zoom’s breakout rooms to host truly quickfire speed networking.

Kamil’s research project utilised his policy knowledge to empower resident voices in the Edgbaston Reservoir Masterplan’s consultation process, producing a ‘community-led vision’ in collaboration with local stakeholders to pioneer Birmingham City Council’s first ‘Community Partnership Forum’.

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**Myles Wild-Smith**

Myles is a passionate, enthusiastic, and driven young planner, with a strong commitment to driving forward innovative approaches to planning and placemaking. For someone early on in their career, Myles has been integral to Lichfields growth in the region and has worked on a variety of innovative projects.

His understanding of planning and dedication to delivering positive outcomes is key to his approach and welcomed by his clients. He is also a leading voice in the industry, recognising that top quality, creative research and planning is crucial to the future of the West Midlands and the wider planning profession.

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**Simeon Shtebunaev**

Simeon’s fervour for inclusion has led him to become a passionate advocate for youth-friendly future cities working with developers, local authorities and professional organisations. Simeon is an ambassador for town planning across the cultural and architecture sectors, promoting the value of planning on regional, national and international level.

Practicing what he believes, he teaches secondary school children in underrepresented communities; co-ordinates annual summer school in architecture and urban planning in Bulgaria; lectures undergraduate and master planning students focusing on professionalism, digital planning and interdisciplinary design skills; and researches the opportunities for young people to shape the futures of their cities.



# COP26 Hub

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**The COP26 summit is taking place 31 October – 12 November and is bringing parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.**

The RTPI is hosting events during the summit, and you can find more information on the [COP26 Hub](#). You can also look at our research, resources and blogs on tackling climate change.

**Some of the events being held around the country with online access are:**

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## **The People's Proposals for Planning, Places and Transport – a discussion on Scotland's Climate Assembly Report**

*25 November 2021 at 3.30pm – 5pm*

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RTPI Scotland is delighted to be working with Scotland's Climate Assembly on future approaches to tackling climate change. Grounded in Scotland's Climate Change Act (2019), Scotland's Climate Assembly brought together a group of people who are broadly representative of the Scottish population to learn about and discuss the question, 'How should Scotland change to tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way?'

Arising from this they have published their Recommendations for Action Report which includes 81 policy recommendations from the Assembly's 100+ members, a number of which relate to planning and the planning system. You can [read the report here](#). This webinar is open to all and will look to explore these recommendations to identify priorities, assess their practicability and agree what would need to be done to make them a reality.

Our speakers will each examine a group of recommendations contained in the report, setting out their views on them in order to tee up wider discussion. There will be an opportunity for delegates to get involved in the debate after these presentations.

[Click here to book your space](#)

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## Decarbonising the transport network in the South East

6 December 2021 at 12.30pm to 1.45pm

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Organised by RTPI South East, this webinar will look at the critical role transport planning has to play in addressing climate change. In July the Government published its decarbonising strategy which sets out the pathway to net zero transport in the UK. This webinar will look at the challenges and potential solutions to delivering the strategy in the South East. Speakers will explore:

- Decarbonisation of transport through the Planning System
- What investment is needed to support decarbonisation of the network in the South East
- The approach to decarbonising different sectors (Highways, Aviation, Rail)
- Legislative changes to support decarbonisation

[Click here to book](#)

**01-12 NOV 2021**

**GLASGOW**

# COP26

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY**

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## Reflections on COP26 and the Ambitions for the North – delivering sustainable neighbourhoods at a local level

13 December 2021 at 12.30pm-1.30pm

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RTPI Yorkshire reflects on the outcomes of COP26. The UK Climate Change Conference 2021 is expected to be a pivotal moment in the fight against climate change. The event in Glasgow has four key aims, including securing global net zero by mid-century, keeping 1.5 degrees within reach, protecting communities and natural habitats, releasing finance and working together to deliver.

This webinar will examine the feedback and reflect on COP 26 in the context of Ambitions for the North. RTPI President Wei Yang and other speakers will reflect on the main outcomes of COP26 and implications at a local level.

[Book your place here](#)





## West Midlands RTPI event

### West Midlands Young Planners – strategic planning and the green belt

*Tuesday 30 November at 5.30pm*

This session will look at one of the greatest challenges facing the planning system since 2010 of local authorities meeting housing need whilst being responsible for managing the Green Belt, as a regional growth management policy, without statutory strategic planning.

**Click here for full information on this webinar including booking**



## Get in touch!

If you would like to contribute an article, please email the Editor, Michael Vout, at ...

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... or you can email the RTPI West Midlands via ... [westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk)

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

