



Walsall's Waterfront Wins Regeneration Award

A new £65m canal-side development at Waterfront South, Walsall has been successful in winning the best 'Area Based Regeneration' section at the prestigious National 2011 Waterways Renaissance Awards. The innovative development of around 300 houses and apartments and 730m² of commercial space being built by local company Jessups, was also runner-up in the Design and Construction sector.

The former derelict 5.5-acre town centre site runs parallel to the Town Arm of the Walsall canal, adjacent to the iconic New Art Gallery. Local builder, Jessups, and their architects, S. P. Faizey have worked closely with Walsall Council, Walsall Regeneration Company and the Homes and Communities Agency, (HCA) to design an innovative scheme that would enhance this important location.

The improvement of the canal towpath means that there is now a pleasant walk from the town centre to Walsall's new £170m hospital. Indeed, the Health Authority has reserved 68 apartments at Waterfront South as accommodation for senior medical staff.

The HCA provided the scheme with the largest 'Kickstart' grant in the West Midlands. Christine Smeaton, Area Manager for the HCA Midlands said "We are proud to have supported this scheme through our investment and are delighted to see its impact on the wider regeneration of Walsall town centre."

Jessup's 'localism' policy means that the scheme has used local contractors to complete the work, boosting local employment and creating apprenticeships for young people and inputting millions of pounds into the local economy.

The first phase of 158 homes at Waterfront South (known as Art 1 & Art Square) was completed in January this year. The second phase of 164 apartments (to be called 'Waves') is due for completion in June 2012. The awards are run by The Waterways Trust to recognise exceptional projects that are using canals and rivers to enrich people's lives across the UK. ■



Architect Steve Faizey and Clive Jessup at Waterfront South Walsall.

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Message from the Chairman

As I sit down to write this Chairman's report, I am amazed to think that I am already six months through my year as Regional Chair. It really has been an enjoyable but very active time for me.

At the end of May, I accompanied the RTPI Chief Executive, Trudi Elliott, CBE on her first official visit to the West Midlands. As many of you know, Trudi lives and previously worked in the region before taking up her role at Botolph Lane, so she is already familiar with the region, how we work and who we are.

Our visit included meetings with the Planning Schools at Birmingham University and Birmingham City University which gave me a chance to hear about the exciting new initiatives our (accredited) universities are currently pursuing as part of their courses. It also gave me the opportunity to meet

with undergraduate and post graduate planning students and talk to them about the work of the RTPI and hear their thoughts and concerns about their future planning careers.

During her visit, Trudi also attended a working lunch with colleagues from Alliance Planning and YP West Midlands to discuss, amongst other matters, licentiate members' concerns about the complex APC route to corporate membership. This has become a barrier to membership of the Institute for many potential members and I was pleased that Trudi agreed to feed the comments back to colleagues at Botolph Lane. The visit was rounded off with a 'meet and greet' event with RTPI members before the RTPI AGM and the Regional Activities Committee on 23rd May. Trudi gave an inspiring summary of her first five months in post and her priorities for taking the Institute forward.

At the start of June I attended the RICS West Midlands Annual Dinner and Awards event as the guest of RICS West Midlands Chair, Martin Perks. I am very grateful to RICS West Midlands for making me feel so welcome. The guest speaker, Lord (John) Prescott, gave a very interesting speech focussing on the importance of sustainable construction methods in delivering sustainable development and contributing to the climate change objectives of the Government. The standard of nominations for the RICS Awards was very good and highlighted to me the exemplar schemes that have been delivered in the region in recent years.

And speaking of Awards! The last few months have been a busy time for everyone involved with preparations for the RTPI West Midlands Awards Dinner and Ball at the Botanical Gardens, Birmingham on the 8th July. Bookings for the event have been going very well and (at mid June) we have only a few seats available and indeed are on course again to sell out. So a massive 'thank you' to everyone who is supporting us again this year either via sponsorship, by nominating Award winners

or by attending the Ball. I look forward to meeting you on 8th July. For those unable to come, look out for the review of the Ball in the next edition of Tripwire.

The last few months have also seen the publication of a number of important national consultation documents – the Natural Environment White Paper and the Advisory Group's draft of the National Planning Policy Framework to name but two. In addition, the Department of Transport's consultation road-show on 'High Speed 2' has been touring the region. RTPI West Midlands is currently preparing a response on the matters set out in the consultation document and we would like to hear what you think.

In view of the importance of this issue for the region, we have organised a joint regional debate with the Transport Planning Society and the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation, with the kind support of DLA Piper, to discuss the planning and transportation issues associated with the scheme. The event will comprise a panel of speakers from Centro, Birmingham International Airport, Birmingham City Council, DLA Piper, CIHT and RTPI and will be held at the offices at DLA Piper in Birmingham on the 6th July commencing at 6pm. The event is free to RTPI members but places are limited, so please contact Sue Griffith-Jones for booking details at westmidlandsbranch@rtpi.org.uk

As always, I am happy to hear from you if you have any comments, concerns or compliments regarding the work of RTPI West Midlands or any suggestions as to how we can better assist all our members in the region. Please contact me at mw@alliance-plan.co.uk or better still come along and see if you would like to join us – our next RAC meeting is on Monday 11th July at the Old Joint Stock, Birmingham. ■

Mark Walton

RTPI West Midlands Chair.



National Planning Policy Emerging

After a year without any clear national guidance, things are beginning to become more clear.

Following the 'Planning for Growth' statement issued on 31st March (after the Budget), an Advisory Group of 4 'planning experts' issued a draft of the National Planning Policy Framework, which has been widely circulated as a 'dummy run' for the real thing. The West Midlands RTPI is preparing comments on this which will feed into a national response from the Institute.

On 15th June the DCLG published the draft of the 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development'. Ministers will be inviting consultation responses on this (and the formal draft NPPF) in July.

Meanwhile, the Localism Bill had its first reading in the Lords on 19th May and the 2nd reading took place on 7th June. Amendments are now being debated, many of which are important in terms of planning policy and practice. The RTPI submitted a briefing to members of the Lords raising concern in

particular about proposed Clause 124 which seeks to make 'local finance considerations' a material consideration when determining an application. This clause, which arises in part out of the introduction of the New Homes Bonus, would seem to strike at the heart of the planning process whereby applications should be determined on their genuine planning merits.

Comments from members would be welcomed on these aspects. ■

Changing from commercial to residential

A reaction to the proposed relaxation of the Use Classes Order to allow housing on industrial land without the need for planning permission.

The Government is consulting on a proposal to allow the permitted development of housing on industrial and commercial (ie, office) land and premises without the need for planning permission. It takes the view that there is a lack of land available for housing, the clearest evidence for this being that housing land values are persistently higher than industrial and commercial land values. It considers that the distinction between B (commerce/industry) and C (residential) use classes is largely to blame.

It believes that removing the distinction will stimulate house-building from its current low levels. In cases where there needs to be development or redevelopment (ie, not simply a conversion within the building), the Government has stated that all industrial land would have the principle of housing established through the permitted development right, and any redevelopment for housing would only need detailed planning approval, not approval on principle, without the ability to test the effect on jobs and the industrial land supply. The consultation deadline is 30th June.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1883189.pdf>

In reality, it is highly unlikely that these proposals will boost house-building. Firstly, there is plenty of land for housing across the West Midlands released through the planning process yet the rate of building has stayed much the same, and secondly, converting factories into flats may not be what the market actually wants, which is more houses with gardens and off-street parking.

But this proposal could have serious implications:-

- A devastating effect on jobs and the industrial land supply.
- Landowners could get good quality industrial land revalued as housing so as to raise the value of their company assets on the balance sheet.
- Landlords could kick out industrial tenants to realise the windfall gain from housing. There would be no provision to relocate them.
- New housing could destroy the coherence of industrial areas, further constraining industry and blighting the area. The uncertainty of whether there will be housing next door could itself deter future industrial development.
- House-builders would concentrate on the most readily available industrial

land, pushing industry back to the most difficult-to-develop sites.

- It could lead to industrial flight as a result of onerous conditions from new residential neighbours, this could result in a loss of industry, hindering economic growth and recovery in an area that is particularly dependent on industry and manufacturing,
- Since manufacturing is the most global of businesses, industrial production could disappear abroad.

Quite aside from these adverse economic consequences, this could also affect the forward planning process. At the moment Local Plans (or LDF's) allocate and safeguard industrial sites, but under these proposals they could no longer do this and assume that the proposal would be implemented. In effect, policies relating to safeguarding industrial land would be rendered incapable of operation.

In our view, these proposals are anti-growth and will hit economic investment, coming at a time when industry is just getting back on its feet after a hard recession. We feel they have no merit, they will mess up the development plan system and they should be scrapped. ■

Mike Smith (Regeneration Manager; Planning Policy) & **Sandy Urquhart** (Principal Planning Officer) Walsall MBC.

The New World of Local Enterprise Partnerships

A planner's view from BIS West Midlands, by Ian Smith.

On answering the phone to an eminent local planner recently I was asked whether I was trying to emulate Dr Who – another re-birth. I am certainly in a new world but I haven't yet been physically regenerated!

On moving from the West Midlands Government Office to my new role in BIS West Midlands I was faced with the inevitable rush of new jargon. One term was 'white space' (areas without LEP's). You'll be pleased to hear we don't have any of that in this region, quite possibly because of the strong history of partnership working. The West Midlands now has six LEP's: Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire, Greater Birmingham & Solihull, Black Country, The Marches, Worcestershire, and Coventry & Warwickshire.

Over the last few months they have been recruiting their Boards, refining their priorities and forming working groups on a range of issues – including planning of course. They've also been

applying for support from the Capacity Fund, Start-up Fund, and Regional Growth Fund, and bidding for Enterprise Zones.

I've seen a number of familiar faces recently but I've also seen business people who have previously had no involvement with public sector initiatives. In my previous life planners often complained to me about the difficulties of engaging business, yet LEP's appear to have them in truckloads – and at a very senior level. They clearly believe that LEP's have a job to do and they're keen to be involved.

Common priorities emerging from the LEP's in this region include:-

- removing barriers to growth,
- increasing the number of businesses,
- inward investment,
- private sector jobs growth,
- increasing skills progression,
- super-fast broadband,
- promoting innovation and R&D,
- delivering the right infrastructure for business, and
- promoting a low carbon economy.

So there's no shortage of work for those involved.

When you talk to Board members the recurring concerns appear to be; access to finance, regulation, planning, transport, and skills. There are clearly many issues to be addressed. The immediate priority for many Boards is refining those 'concerns' into specific action plans!

The recent Centre for Cities Report suggests LEP's should be given more strategic responsibilities in relation to planning and transport. I couldn't possibly comment on that, but Ministers are clear that LEP's should be setting their agendas and doing whatever is necessary to boost growth. However they develop, planners should be involved.

If you aren't already, do find out what's going on in your area – they all have Google-able websites – or contact me. Ian Smith at ian.smith@bis.gsi.gov.uk. ■

Ian Smith

HS2 – The Great Debate

In our last issue we featured an article by Andy Cowan about the proposed High Speed Rail (2) project being promoted by Government which is subject to consultation until the end of July 2011.

As part of that wider consultation, we are publishing two articles in this issue; one by Geoff Inskip from Centro

supporting the proposal and the other from Graham Long (Ladbroke Action Group) resisting the plans.

The RTPI has also organised a joint debate between the RTPI, Transport Planning Society (TPS) and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) at 6pm on 6th July 2011 to discuss the merits of the project,

before the RTPI submits its own comments on the plans.

The debate will take place at the offices of DLA Piper LLP at their offices at Victoria Square in Birmingham. Places are free to RTPI members but booking is essential. To register your place please contact amrit.mudhar@mottmac.com ■

HS2 – The case for the motion

The case for High Speed Rail in the West Midlands can be put simply – we can't afford to be without it.

This is an opportunity to create jobs, bring investment and build for future generations. It is a chance to provide better and faster links for our region, not just to London but to the north of England and Scotland as well as Europe.

A new city centre station will be built next to the Bullring and Moor Street Station, providing great access in the heart of Birmingham, while the proposed Birmingham Interchange HS2 station will bring huge advantages in terms of connectivity to the wider West Midlands, with links to the motorway network, Birmingham Airport and the NEC.

Journey times will be reduced and connectivity improved for our businesses and workforce. In addition, capacity on existing lines will be freed-up meaning that more services can run across the West Midlands from stations including Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

A great deal has been written about why this scheme **shouldn't** happen and, unfortunately, many false claims have been made. But before examining some of the criticisms of the scheme, I want to explain why High Speed Rail is so important to the West Midlands and the UK economy, why we cannot afford to be complacent and why it is vital we support plans to bring High Speed Rail to the West Midlands.

The economic rewards are likely to be tremendous and working families will benefit. Economic output in our region will increase by around £1.5bn a year and 22,000 jobs will be created. Around 1,500 permanent operational posts will be created in the West Midlands, with 300 jobs at a depot in Washwood Heath, one of our region's socially deprived areas. But these are not just jobs for Birmingham. The Black Country and Coventry will also see thousands of jobs created and huge boosts to their economies.

Rail travel is increasingly popular. It has been forecast that there will be 35% growth on the West Coast Main Line

between Birmingham and London by 2020. Rail journeys within the West Midlands have increased by almost 40% over the last five years. This increase will put additional strain on existing services unless new capacity can be found. Although a number of options have been examined, extensive studies show that the building of a new railway is needed. If we do not build a new railway, improving the West Coast Main Line can only be achieved by cutting local services; something that would be a disaster for local businesses and cause greater congestion on the roads.

Under proposals drawn up at Centro, High Speed Rail will allow for the restructuring of regional rail bringing more services to towns and cities across our region. Coventry, for example, would see increased services to Birmingham and Oxford, as well as new services to Liverpool and Scotland. Wolverhampton would benefit from additional services to London, Birmingham International and Milton Keynes, while Walsall would get new services to London, Liverpool, Northampton, Milton Keynes and Coventry.

It is these regional enhancements that will unlock so much of our potential and allow for growth. Bringing HS2 to Birmingham alone would generate a £600m increase in economic output and around 10,000 jobs. But, combined with the improvement in regional rail services, High Speed Rail's impact on our economy is more than doubled.

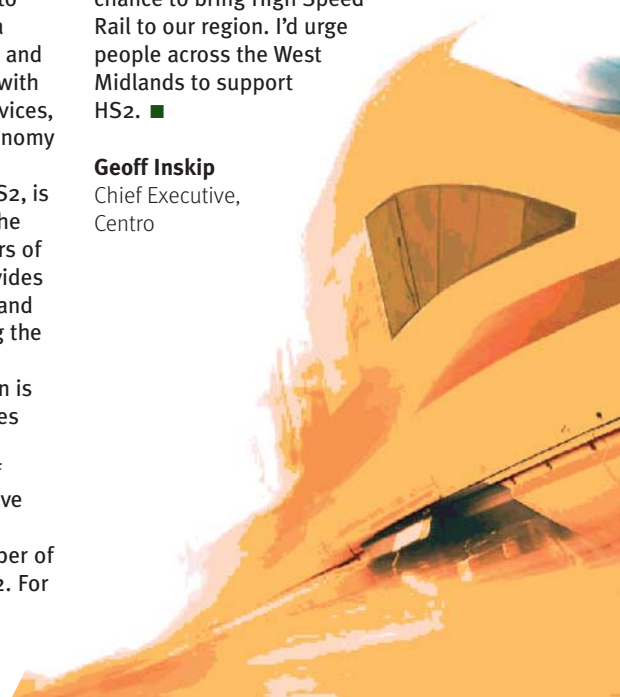
One of the main criticisms of HS2, is the effect the scheme will have on the environment. But increasing numbers of people are using trains and rail provides a realistic alternative to road travel and domestic flights. People living along the line of route understandably have concerns and the public consultation is their opportunity to make their voices heard. However, it is only right that millions of people and thousands of businesses in the West Midlands have the opportunity to be heard as well.

Unfortunately there are a number of myths and inaccuracies around HS2. For

example the widely reported 'costs per household' noted by opponents do not take fare revenues into account. HS1 has been branded a failure, but it has already delivered 100,000 jobs in the south east and been valued at £20bn – 40 times its original estimate. Critics have suggested Britain is simply too small to accommodate HS2, yet the most successful high-speed service in Germany runs 110 miles from Frankfurt to Cologne (similar to the distance between Birmingham and London). There have also been suggestions that fares will be excessive, but trebling the capacity between Birmingham and London will only drive competition as increased capacity in the airline market has proved.

I don't want to dwell on the inaccuracies because HS2 is a fantastic opportunity for the West Midlands. This is about creating jobs and building for future generations – for our children and our children's children. This is about increasing economic output and freeing-up existing capacity across our region. It is about providing links from the West Midlands to the major cities in the UK and Europe. We cannot afford to miss this once-in-a-generation chance to bring High Speed Rail to our region. I'd urge people across the West Midlands to support HS2. ■

Geoff Inskip
Chief Executive,
Centro



HS2 – The case against the motion

It may surprise your readers to know that opponents of HS2 share the Government's desire to improve our railway infrastructure. Where we disagree is on how to do this.

HS2 is promoted by the Secretary of State as being the only way to improve capacity and services. This is wrong. The choice is not HS2 or nothing. There are lower risk, lower cost, incremental alternatives to HS2 which can be implemented quickly, which represent much better value for money.

Business can benefit from improved services and increased capacity for Inter City rail services, delivered sooner and at a fraction of the cost of HS2. These alternatives are:

- more effective at reducing crowding than HS2
- provide benefits within 5 years, instead of by 2026 at the earliest
- cuts journey times, similar to the German Frankfurt – Cologne service
- provide direct connections to Birmingham New Street and Birmingham Airport
- benefits areas that would suffer service cuts if HS2 were to proceed (Birmingham suburbs, Coventry, Black Country, Leicester, Stoke-on-Trent, Peterborough, Doncaster), not just those places close to proposed HS2 stations,
- do not involve massive disruption as a result of a complete rebuild of Euston
- are much less expensive and provide better value for taxpayers' money
- cut CO₂ emissions and don't destroy ancient woodlands, SSSI and an AONB.

This approach would double the standard class capacity of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) through train lengthening from 9 to 12 cars and by reconfiguring one underused first-class carriage to standard class. Overall Inter-City seating capacity on this route can be increased by 121% on the 2008 base used in the evaluation of HS2, with an increase in standard class capacity of 181%, before any significant infrastructure investment is needed. Similar improvements can be achieved on the Midlands Mainline and East Coast Main Line routes.

It is also possible to deliver further incremental journey time reductions, by raising maximum speeds to 140mph (the design speed of the rolling stock) on the WCML and ECML as signalling systems are upgraded to the European Train Control System (ETCS) and by electrifying and raising speed restrictions on the Midland Main Line.

A further significant capacity increase could be achieved through a limited number of infrastructure improvements at around £1.663bn to allow an increase from 9 to 11 trains per hour. This gives a total increase in standard class capacity of 215%, more than 3 times the capacity in the 2008 base, which is far in excess of the 102% background growth forecast by HS2 for 2043. There is, therefore, no case for construction of HS2 to meet any WCML increased capacity for the foreseeable future.

This approach is not as glamorous as HS2 but it achieves better value for money by optimising existing assets. It is also less risky as it can be rolled-out in line with demand. This releases funds for other rail improvements – essential, given the Government's budget cuts and is in line with the recent McNulty report, *"Realising the Potential of GB Rail"*, that says *"there should be a move away from 'predict and provide' to 'predict, manage and provide', with much better use of existing system capacity"*.

It is also important to cast a critical eye on HS2 assumptions. The DfT agree that time can be productive on trains but their figures still assume time is unproductive, accounting for over half the benefits. Use of an inappropriate forecasting model, unrealistic personal income figures and an unrealistic comparator also inflate benefits and/or demand.

The existing "HS1" route from London to the Channel Tunnel provides clear empirical evidence of what is likely to happen in practice. The HS1 line from Ashford is running at less than half its forecast demand. It cost the taxpayer billions and left commuters 'up in arms' over higher fares and cuts to local services.

Increasingly Government is promoting HS2 on its transformational potential to redress the north south divide. Much is said about new jobs, but the consensus from numerous academic studies is that the vast majority of new jobs will be in London.

The journey time improvements proposed by HS2 are not transformational. Indeed the Chiltern Line "Evergreen 3" upgrade will deliver 90 minute journey times from Birmingham to London from September, (only minutes more than the Virgin route to Euston), also serving Solihull (82 minutes), Warwick Parkway and Leamington Spa – and at no cost to the taxpayer. This will capture some of Virgin's current business, albeit directly relieving the WCML route.

So far HS2 has officially announced 4 station locations and they are all in the wrong place:

Euston – the line should have started at St Pancras – the Channel Tunnel line was re-routed from Waterloo in order to facilitate routes to the north.

Old Oak Common – is no-where near anything – even if a link to Heathrow is wanted, this is a hugely inconvenient and expensive way of doing it.

Bickenhill – is in the middle of nowhere and appears to have been chosen due to the potential to unlock green-belt land for development, but will result in an inconvenient and expensive links to the NEC, Birmingham Airport, and the existing Birmingham International station (which is so far from the route, it's not on HS2 Ltd maps).

Curzon Street – the terminus in Birmingham, has no connections to mid-Wales, Wolverhampton or the Birmingham suburbs, all requiring a 400 metre walk up the platform and the use of a 'supersonic' travelator to the key "hub" at Birmingham New Street station.

In April 2010, the rating agency Fitch looked at high speed rail projects and commented *"Rail projects are often high profile. This exposes them to 'political entrepreneur syndrome' where the public authorities overestimate the benefits of the project to get it approved for the purposes of political gain"*. It's happening again! HS2 cannot be a sensible use of over £30bn. You do have a choice, despite what Government tells you. ■

Graham Long

Chairman of Ladbroke HS2 Action Group and Director of HS2 Action Alliance Ltd.



Culture: an essential strand in delivering thriving places



At the end of 2010, Property Week magazine ran a competition inviting 'artists, thinkers and entrepreneurs' to come up with ideas for 'meanwhile uses' (temporary use of land awaiting development), for a number of building sites close to the Royal Docks in East London. *Plan Projects* led one successful team, putting forward the 'Honey Factory' for a site in Canning Town, designing a visually striking multi-functional space providing event and educational facilities, a café and housing for a number of bee-hives set in a 'wild flower meadow'.

This provided a case study on how projects at the intersection between creative expression, economic development, social inclusiveness and environmental improvement could be an extraordinarily powerful way of delivering change.

People are familiar with a strategy whereby 'culture-led' regeneration occurs on the back of new capital projects such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. This is not however the only model in which culture can deliver change. 'Culture within regeneration', takes the form of more subtle intervention, often working at the grass-roots, that seeks to help a community adjust to new economic realities or address entrenched social issues. For new communities, culture-based initiatives can build identity and connections to established settlements. The term 'area cultural strategy' refers to the development of a place-based programme of projects that address key issues of relevance to the decline or sub-optimal performance of towns and cities.

The emergence of 'culture' as a specific aspect of planning is part of a broader phenomenon. During the latter part of the 20th C, partly as a result of the conspicuous failure of modernism, urban designers responded to the need for places to work better for people. The continued importance of improving standards was underlined by CABE's well-known report into design quality that found that the vast majority of new housing developments were of mediocre to poor standard. (CABE, 2007). The development industry therefore remains under pressure to improve. 'Liveability' has become a buzz word. This quality is applied to places that offer access to economic opportunity, enjoy a strong civic culture and possess a high standard of environmental quality. It is argued, cultural strategies should form an essential component in delivering such conspicuously successful places.

At the level of the city, an important aspect of this is to do with economic 'resilience.' Some UK cities during the recession were revealed to be 'brittle'. Their vulnerability in the face of change accounted for by their economies being insufficiently diverse or their workforce lacking the skills required by emerging industries. They lack sufficient differentiation so that there were no compelling reasons for investors to remain.

Commentators have observed this condition comes as a result 'one dimensional' economic development focussed solely on the 'hard economic outcomes' of job creation and new

workspace created. This fails to recognise the fundamental inter-connectedness of the civic and economic lives of places (CLES, 2010).

Both at a local and city level, a cultural programme can be helpful in addressing precisely these issues of 'brittleness.' It can assert the true complexity of how places work. It can support the wider economy by improving the skills of the workforce and encouraging confidence and aspiration among young people. It can build an approach to regeneration that respects (and capitalises on) the embedded values and traditions of place. This has been shown to be effective in strengthening people's basic skills, such as interacting with others and prompting a willingness to participate in wider society. Furthermore, within a vision for the regeneration of towns and cities, the 'civic economy' offers a powerful means of economic diversification.

This is economic opportunity generated **by** the community, **for** the community. While ostensibly a form of economic development, such activity has been shown to be high in cultural value by improving social cohesiveness and providing a wealth of informal services of great social value. ■

Above: Image for *Plan Project's Honey Factory* submission

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'Pork Scratchings or Caviar'

A report on the West Midlands RTPI Urban Design Forum, by Mike Vout

The latest West Midlands Urban Design Forum on 12th June consisted of a presentation by Matthew Woodthorpe and Alessia Mosci from MWA, (a London-based architectural practice specialising in contemporary housing design).

It focussed mainly on their involvement with "The Village" Telford Millennium Community – one of seven schemes developed in 1997 as part of the 'Millennium Communities Programme' – to demonstrate that energy efficient, environmentally responsible development was achievable regardless of geographic location.

The Millennium Communities Programme aimed to influence the house building industry and encourage higher standards of housing and improved energy efficiency. Each Millennium Community Project had to meet tough environmental standards for its homes, to reduce the energy used in constructing homes by 50%, to limit the amount of water consumed in them by 20% and to reduce energy consumption by 20%.

House-builders were encouraged to use modern and energy efficient construction methods and materials to deliver high quality homes to set a standard for other house builders to follow.

All the *Millennium Communities* aimed to:

- Minimise resource consumption
- Protect and enhance local environment
- Maximise design quality
- Improve construction quality and efficiency
- Increase social inclusion and participation
- Maximise quality of life
- Achieve long-term economic viability

The presentation was an open talk and discussion about the successes of the Telford Millennium Community (its awards include Housing Design Project 2007), as well as observations about the problems and difficulties in delivering the project.

Issues raised included:

- the reduction in housing densities for later phases and the effect this might have upon the integrity of the original approved regulatory plan,

- the importance of good quality public realm,
- the financial viability of producing homes to a very high sustainable standard and
- the need to produce homes that look like they will last.

As for the title, 'Pork scratchings or caviar?' This concerned the big question of identifying the 'right' housing 'product', ie. one which is financially viable and socially acceptable to the buying public. We were told that people will often choose the product that they are 'safe with' rather than the (possibly) better 'contemporary product'.

This brings to mind the words of Henry Ford who said 'If I'd asked them what they wanted they would have said faster horses'. Playing safe with an accepted product may indeed lead to building houses which will sell but it does not particularly move us forward in discovering even better products. ■

Michael Vout

Chair of West Midlands RTPI Urban Design Forum

Planning Aid England launches new services

A new Planning Aid service in England began on 13th June. This follows the success of securing £1m from the Department for Communities & Local Government's new Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning fund.

Two main services will be provided – a single national Planning Advice Line on **0330 123 9244** where all callers can receive 15 minutes of free, independent and professional advice. In addition some callers may be eligible for further assistance from a professional volunteer. Other callers will be guided to the website and to other organisations.

A neighbourhood planning service will also be provided to support people and communities in gaining knowledge about the planning system and how they can be involved. A team of

community outreach co-ordinators have been recruited to support volunteers to work within target communities to build their own plans for the neighbourhood they live in. Details of the service can be obtained by calling **0207 9299453**.

The RTPI is keen to engage and mobilise its volunteer network as a priority and a volunteer workshop will take place on **1st July** in **Leeds** for all volunteers. For volunteers unable to attend the Leeds event local events will take place. This will be an important opportunity for local community outreach co-ordinators to engage with local volunteers. Volunteers are central to the Planning Aid England service and will be at the forefront of the work in engaging disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

In addition the RTPI has set up a Planning Aid England (PAE) Giving Scheme to encourage donations to help support its work following the reduction in PAE's funding from Government. To help the RTPI promote the donation scheme to stakeholders and through networks please visit <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/4641/23/5/3> for more information.

There will continue to be a close working relationship between Planning Aid England, based in London, and the Regional Activities Committee in the West Midlands – which is setting up a sub group to monitor and assist the Planning Aid service in this region.

For further information, please contact our Regional Chairman, Mark Walton or Planning Aid England's local community outreach co-ordinator Bob Keith on bob.keith@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk ■

European & International Group

Travel, as they say, broadens the mind. It was therefore encouraging that a sizeable group of planners met up at the RIBA offices at the Birmingham & Midland Institute on 13th June to explore ideas for visiting foreign countries, maintaining and developing inter-cultural links and learning from planners abroad.

The Group has an impressive record of organising study visits, staging and attending

conferences and setting up exchanges with our counterparts within Europe and the rest of the world. At present we have very strong links with Poland & Lithuania, but we have also organised visits to the European Parliament in Brussels, and to China, America & Japan.

The meeting was chaired by Richard Hammersley (in the absence of Christina Mannerling), but the Group is seeking not only

a new Chair, but also new members to inject new blood and bring in more areas of expertise.

If you are interested in getting involved please contact Christina on Christina_mannerling@hotmail.com or Sue Griffith-Jones on westmidlandsbranch@rtpi.org.uk ■

Planning Summer School – Swansea

Every year, planners and elected members from across the UK meet to hear the latest thinking on planning, share best practice, network with colleagues in other areas and gain up to 20 hours of CPD. This year's Planning Summer School takes place at Swansea University between 3rd and 7th September, and is based around the theme of 'Planning with Communities'.

Elected members are the key focus for the first two days with presentations and workshops around enforcement, housing, tourism and infrastructure. Planners, including professionals working in private practice, will get particular value from attending the latter two days, the agenda for which has been designed specifically with them in mind.

A day-long Planning Summit has been sandwiched between the elected members' school and the planners' school. This will offer a unique environment for planners and elected members to work together to further their understanding of each others' roles and discuss and consider shared challenges. The line-up of speakers at the School includes Russell Harris QC, Steve Quartermain from DCLG, Arup Fellow, Corinne Swain, Adrian Penfold of British Land and Trudi Elliott from the RTPI.

Each year, Planning Summer School awards a scholarship for one candidate to carry out a research project overseas. In return, they are asked to attend the annual Planning Summer School and present their findings to the assembled audience.

The 2011 winner is Clare Healy, a planner with Arup in London, who is currently on full-time

secondment to Thames Water. Clare's project will see her travel to South Korea to study the Cheonggyecheon River Restoration Scheme. Until 2005, the 5.8 km long river was 'lost' as a polluted sewer beneath a four-lane elevated highway, a victim of Seoul's rapid post-war economic growth. After a 40-year absence from Seoul's streetscape, the Cheonggyecheon was opened up, following a multi-million dollar investment programme.

Clare will present her research findings on Wednesday 7th September at 11am. Tickets for the 2011 School start from just £225 for a day ticket and delegates can choose from a menu of packages to include the elements they require. Full details and booking forms are available on www.planningsummerschool.org or by calling 01722 339811. ■

RTPI WM Football Tournament

The RTPI West Midlands are considering hosting a 5 a-side football tournament this autumn. The format is likely to be group stages followed by a knock out to determine the winner. The tournament is likely to be hosted in the Birmingham area, on a weekday evening. The cost for each team will be around £50.

Once the organising committee have established the level of interest they will be finalising the arrangements and will be formally advertising the event, those who have expressed an interest will get priority entry to the tournament.

The tournament would also include an opportunity to socialise with the potential for food and drink to be provided. At the stage we would like to find out the number of possible teams that may wish to enter.

If your planning department or company would be interested in entering a team please contact me by the end of July. ■

Ashley Baldwin – Planning Policy, Principal Planning Officer. Tel: 024 7637 6329
Email: ashley.baldwin@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk

Are you coming to the RTPI Ball on 8th July?



Continuing Professional Development

..... Events Calendar :: July > October

Regional Programme

Non-members of RTPI welcome to attend.

TUESDAY 19 JULY

Archaeology & Planning

Venue: Birmingham City Council Lancaster Circus **Birmingham B4 7DJ**

Time: 6pm – 7.30pm (refreshments from 5.30pm)

Cost: **Free**. Booking essential.

Details & booking: Kelly Darby

Tel 0121 464 9871 or email

kelly.darby@birmingham.gov.uk

MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER

The Future of Planning in Challenging Times

An opportunity to discuss the future of planning with RTPI President Richard Summers during his visit to the region. Hosted by UK-Ireland Planning Research Conference.

Time: Evening

Cost: **Free**

Venue: University of Birmingham, **Birmingham**

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel 0121 709 1599

Email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

Planning for Non-Planners

A half day seminar organised with RTPI East Midlands outlining the legislation and structure, policies and procedures of the

planning system for non-planners.

Venue: **Nottingham**

Time: 10pm – 1pm

Cost: **£36 incl VAT**

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel 0121 709 1599

Email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER – SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER

National Young Planners' Conference Planning for Growth

Venue: Birmingham Council House, **Birmingham**

Cost: 4 ticket options available

£99: Early bird rate (until 12 August 2011)

£135: Standard rate (13 August – 14 October 2011)

£35: Discounted rate for full-time students (limited places)

£35: Discounted rate for unemployed delegates (limited places)

Optional extra, Friday evening reception and dinner: £25 +VAT

Details & booking:

www.rtpi.org.uk/ypconference

Other Events

THURSDAY 28 JULY

A Big Legacy for a Big Society. Planning beyond 2012

A year before the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games this conference will

discuss the transformation of Stratford & the Lower Lea Valley

Venue: Stratford Circus, **London**

Time: 9am – 6pm

Cost: £75 + VAT for RTPI members. Price includes lunch, study tour & evening drinks reception.

Organiser: RTPI London

Details: www.rtpi.org.uk/download/12085/RTPI_London_Conference.pdf

Booking: Tel 020 8613 8357 or email

londo@rtpi.org.uk

MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER – WEDNESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER

UK-Ireland Planning Research Conference "Planning Resilient Communities in Challenging Times"

Venue: University of Birmingham, **Birmingham**

Organisers: University of Birmingham & Birmingham City University

Details & bookings:

www.curs.bham.ac.uk/planning-research-conference-2011

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

A Future for the Past?

Venue: CBSO Centre, **Birmingham**

Cost: £120 + VAT

Organisers: RIBA

Details & booking:

www.architecture.com/ribaconferences2011

Young Planners' Conference 2011 is coming to B'ham

This year YPwestmids (RTPI West Midlands Young Planners' Group) have been selected to host the National Young Planners' Conference in Birmingham. The two-day event will take place on 21 and 22 October at Birmingham Council House with a formal dinner to be held at the nearby Burlington Hotel.

The National Young Planners' Conference is the largest young planners' event in the RTPI calendar, and is an opportunity for young planning professionals to come together and learn about important issues that are at the forefront of the profession.

This year's event is titled 'Planning for Growth' and will focus on how planners can better respond to the need to plan for future generations. It will cover the themes of:-

- **Setting the Scene for Growth** – changes to the planning system at all levels and how to plan for the economic upturn;
- **Opportunities for Growth** – case studies of how planning for growth is being put into practice;
- **Challenges to Growth** – how do we plan for increased demand for housing, and how do we ensure engagement during challenging times.

Birmingham represents the perfect setting to discuss the theme of 'Planning for Growth' given the significant regeneration that has taken place over the past two decades, perhaps most notably the development of Brindleyplace and the Bull Ring shopping centre. Its regeneration continues today, driven by the Big City Plan, led by Waheed Nazir, Director of Planning and Regeneration at Birmingham City Council. This Masterplan for the city, described as 'the most ambitious, far-reaching development project in the UK', seeks to define how more than 800 hectares of land in the city centre will be developed and used for generations to come.

Confirmed speakers include:-

- **Steve Quartermain**, Chief Planner, Dept for Communities and Local Government;
- **Hugh Ellis**, Chief Planner, Town & Country Planning Association;
- **Trudi Elliot**, Chief Executive, RTPI; and
- **Ian Jordan**, Director – Project Sponsorship, High Speed 2 Ltd.

Delegates will have the opportunity to interact with the speakers through a series of seminars and plenary sessions in what

promises to be a thought provoking and stimulating two days. The National Conference also provides an excellent opportunity for young professionals to meet other planners working across the UK and to enjoy a range of social events in the heart of a city with a vibrant nightlife.

Be a part of this interesting and thought provoking conference from as little as £35!

There are 4 ticket options available:

£99: Early bird rate (until 12 August 2011)

£135: Standard rate (13 August – 14 October 2011)

£35: Discounted rate for full-time students (limited places)

£35: Discounted rate for unemployed delegates (limited places)

Book your place at:

www.rtpi.org.uk/ypconference

We are keen to build on the success of previous National Young Planners' Conferences and look forward to seeing you there! YPwestmids Conference Organising Group. ■