



Blists Hill wins RTPI Regional Award

An exciting project which combines regeneration, archaeology and tourism has won the coveted RTPI West Midlands Award for Planning Achievement. The Blists Hill scheme in Telford was delivered by an integrated team of planners, architects and urban designers from the design & planning consultancy, the Nash Partnership.

The scheme which includes a new Heritage Site Orientation and Gateway Centre, a new street of Victorian buildings, two open air events areas.. and much more, has already shown significant social, communal and educational value, with the attraction more than meeting its ambitions, with visitor numbers growing by 50%.

Two projects were awarded commendations – firstly, Birmingham City Council and GVA for the Library of Birmingham project, and secondly, Lichfield District Council and its partner, Keele University, for the Shortbutts Park project in Lichfield,

The awards were presented by the RTPI National President, Richard Summers at the lively and very successful West Midlands RTPI Ball held at

the Birmingham Botanical Gardens in July. Richard will be visiting the successful Blists Hill project during his Presidential tour of the West Midlands region on 12-14th September.

The RTPI Ball, which has now become the ‘must-go’ event in the region, adopted a Brit Awards theme and the ballroom was resplendent with union jacks and glitterati. The event included the presentation of awards to the best Local Authority, the Planning Consultant of the Year, the Young Planners’ Award, a Special ‘Team’ Award and the RTPI Regional Chair’s own Special Award – which this year went to Peter Taylor of DLA Piper.

Special thanks must go to Alliance Planning who sponsored the RTPI award for Planning Achievement and were major supporters of the event, together with the other key sponsors, No 5 Chambers and GVA. We would also like to thank DLA Piper, No 5 Chambers, JMP, Place Elements and Alliance Planning for their sponsorship of the various awards and to the hard working organising team which made it such an enjoyable event. ■

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Blists Hill visitor centre.

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Message from the Chairman

Summer is here and holidays are on the forefront of everyone's mind but the last few months have been another busy period for Planners and RTPI West Midlands. In July we held the RTPI West Midlands Dinner, Awards and Ball event at the Botanical Gardens, Birmingham. The event was sold out in June with a waiting list for places and the Dinner is becoming a 'must go' event in the diaries of many planning professionals and major players in the Region. A full review and photographs of the event are presented elsewhere in *Tripwire*.

I was very pleased to welcome RTPI President, Richard Summers to the Dinner, (who presented the awards), together with RTPI Chief Executive Trudi Elliott, representatives from RIBA and other friends and contacts from the Region and beyond. The event is well established now and I am grateful for the wonderful support we receive from planners and companies in the Region.

This year I have also seen, first hand, all the hard work that goes into organising

an event like this and so would like to acknowledge the enthusiasm of the many unsung volunteers who assisted Sue Griffiths Jones in making this year's event bigger and better than before. To you all, and you know who you are, a bit thank you from me. I understand that Andrew Thompson has already started planning next year's event, which will be held again at the Botanical Gardens in July.

A key aspect of the event is the awards ceremony. They are a great way to acknowledge and reward the hard work and dedication of planners across the Region. This year I was part of the judging panel for the overall Regional Award for Planning Achievement, sponsored by Alliance Planning, and saw the very high quality of schemes and projects that are taking place across the Region. In all the projects put forward this year, planners have taken an active role in delivering sustainability objectives. This was pleasing for me against a background of so much bad press about planning. So congratulations to the overall winners, the Nash Partnership, for the development of the Visitor Centre at Blists Hill, Ironbridge.

In September, (12th-14th) we welcome RTPI President, Richard Summers back to the region for his official visit to West Midlands. This will begin with an open debate on Monday evening (12th), hosted by the University of Birmingham, on the 'Future of Planning'. The event is free and will be a great opportunity for all the planners in the Region to meet the President and take part in a wide ranging discussion that Richard is undertaking across the Country. Further details are available from Sue Griffiths Jones. He will also be visiting the successful Blists Hill scheme the following day.

Preparations are gathering apace for the other major event this year, the RTPI Young Planners Conference in Birmingham in October. Ticket sales are going very well and this could be the biggest Young Planners Conference yet. So if you have not booked your place yet please do so as soon as possible.

Other issues that we have been working on over the Summer include the production of an advance CPD programme for 2012, that includes a season ticket

option, to allow delegates to purchase multiple events and receive a discount. Look out for more details in the next edition of *Tripwire*.

We are also well underway with preparations for hosting the Inaugural RTPI West Midlands 5-a-side football tournament to be held in Birmingham. Initial interest from companies and Local Authorities has been high. We have already identified 20 teams – the minimum number we need to make the event happen. Thank you to everyone for your support. Details of the event, to be held in mid-October, will be being sent out soon. We are now seeking sponsorship, which will help us cover the costs of administering the tournament, which I hope that will become a regular social fixture in the RTPI calendar.

But the last few months have not been all Balls and football. In July, following the excellent Joint Regional Debate on the topic of the Government's proposals for the High Speed 2 proposals, held together with the Transport Planning Society and the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation, RTPI West Midlands prepared and submitted a consultation response to the Department of Transport.

The Government also published the draft National Planning Policy Framework in July and we are preparing our own input to the RTPI response to the document, on your behalf. If you have any comments on the NPPF, and specifically how it will affect planning in the West Midlands, please forward them to me. We have also been consulted on the new RTPI subscription rates but I will provide you with an update on this matter in the next edition.

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 Tuesday 20th September at the University of Birmingham, Birmingham. ■

Mark Walton
RTPI West Midlands Chair.



Shropshire Council is second in line to receive CIL Inspector's report

Shropshire Council look likely to be the first authority in the region – and the probably the second in the country to adopt a Community Infrastructure Levy Schedule, having received a favourable Inspector's report this week.

Hard on the heels of Newark & Sherwood DC's Inspector's report a fortnight ago, the Planning Inspector, for the Shropshire CIL Inquiry, Sue Turner MRTPI RIBA IHBC, concludes that the Council has sufficient evidence to support the Schedule and can show that the levy is set at a level that will not

put the overall development of their area at serious risk. She has therefore concluded that the Shropshire Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule provides an appropriate basis for the collection of the Community Infrastructure Levy in Shropshire and recommends that it should be approved. ■

The National Policy Planning Framework

Introduction

On 25th July, the Government published the draft version of the National Policy Planning Framework for public consultation. The deadline for responses is 18th October 2011. Although the draft does not yet represent formal Government policy, it does signify a 'direction of travel' and therefore constitutes a 'material consideration' in decision making.

The 'Foreword' by Greg Clark emphasises that '*the purpose of Planning is to help achieve sustainable development*' and that 'sustainable' means '*ensuring that better lives for ourselves doesn't mean worse lives for future generations*'. He underlines the fact that planning is about meeting peoples' needs, housing a rising population and responding to new technological challenges. 'Development' means '*growth*' and '*Sustainable development*' is about '*change for the better*' – '*the planning system is about helping to make this happen*'.

The Draft National Policy Statement

What it is: A summary statement of policy, currently contained in PPS's, and circulars condensed into a 58 page document starting with general policies, on 'Delivering Sustainable Development' and working through various topic areas, such as Business, Housing, Transport, Natural Environment and Climate Change, etc.

What it is not: A spatial national plan indicating the scale or distribution of development. Nor is it a blueprint for Britain setting out inflexible plans or proposals. Powers will rest with local Councils.

The approach towards '*Delivering Sustainable Development*' has 3 main strands:-

- **Planning for prosperity** (an economic role) – using the planning system to build a strong responsive and competitive economy by ensuring sufficient land of the right type and in the right places is available to allow growth and innovation and by identifying and co-ordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure,
- **Planning for people** (a social role) – using the planning system to promote strong vibrant and healthy communities, by providing an increased supply of housing to meet the needs of present and future generations etc.
- **Planning for Places** (an environmental role) – using the planning system to protect and enhance our natural built and historic environment, to use natural resources prudently and to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Implications for local authorities, developers and the planning profession.

The purpose of the draft NPPF is to set a positive framework for development whereby growth is encouraged and local authorities are urged to progress their Core Strategies (Local Plans) without further delay, or suffer the consequences! This will put major pressures on local Councils.

There will be a '*presumption in favour of sustainable development*' where the default position is 'Yes'. This more 'up-beat' message reflects the content of the most recent Budget Statement where the

Chancellor indicated that planning must be the **solution** rather than the **problem**. Planning must be used in a pro-active way to help meet the need for new homes and jobs and assist economic recovery. It therefore throws a completely different perspective on emerging plans and proposals around the country. It also provides scope to deliver Neighbourhood planning. The question is; how will sustainable development be interpreted?

The absence of a strategic tier of planning could result in a lack of consistency and co-ordination. Will the Duty to Co-operate provide a suitable safeguard? Local authorities could in future be driven more by incentives rather than needs.

The loss of so much detail from the PPS's and planning circulars will potentially leave a serious 'planning vacuum' where current advice and guidance (for example on calculation of housing land supply) has been omitted. This could lead to confusion and confrontation (between parties) or more likely a proliferation of 'Best Practice' guides – either produced formally (through DLCC) or informally (through other bodies such as the RTPI).

Conclusions

Looking at things in a positive light, if Planning is now seen as the **solution** rather than the **problem**, this presents a major opportunity for the profession. The RTPI can exert a stronger role in guiding policy and practice. Our members (whether in local authorities, private companies or consultancies) will have a growing influence in making things happen. ■

John Acres



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Winner of RTPI Regional Award – Blists Hill

The Nash Partnership from Bath, has won the RTPI Regional Award for Planning Achievement for its innovative scheme at Blists Hill Victorian Town at Ironbridge, in Telford (Shropshire).

The project which was delivered on behalf of the client, Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust and Telford & Wrekin Council began in 2005 and at that time was conceived on a much smaller scale, with a focus largely on increasing the number of Victorian era buildings on the site. However, Nash Partnership's integrated team of planners, architects and urban designers highlighted the potential for developing the project into a central feature for the whole Blists Hill site.

The project therefore grew to include:

- The new World Heritage Site Orientation and Gateway Centre
- A new street of Victorian buildings, including active businesses
- 2 new open air events arenas
- Site wide infrastructure improvements
- An inclined lift, linking upper and lower levels and making a fully accessible circuit of the site, and
- A railway taking visitors to some of the furthest parts of the site, featuring an underground mine exhibit.

Nash's team had to overcome many challenges associated with such a historically significant site including underground and surface archaeology of international significance but

have succeeded in delivering a scheme which stands the museum in good stead to face the current economic uncertainty with confidence.

The particular role of the planning process was its ability to provide flexibility for a project that needed safeguard a wide range of specialist interests. The project's real strength is its ability to give social and cultural identity to a region still suffering from the longstanding decline of British manufacturing industry.

Its success has been demonstrated in the results achieved since it was completed. Within its first year of opening, the attraction has more than achieved its ambitions with a 50% increase in visitors and resulting in significant social, communal and educational value.

Speaking about the award scheme, Edward Nash said; *'The enlarged project secured funding three times its original target and was immensely challenging. The grant offer was time limited and needed a planning permission to be achieved within 6 months of the ERDF and RDA grant offer. To meet that timescale Nash needed to prepare detailed planning applications for seven projects scattered over the site in two months. We had no topographical surveys, ground stability data, ecology or traffic data*

and rumour of buried ordnance all of which risked the future of the project. But all the team and the many involved on the LPA side felt the project's ambitions to be really important and through close collaboration found ways to keeping its cultural programme on track despite these challenges to normal project management procedures.'

It has provided a real boost to the local community during a period of challenging times, speaking to the roots of their cultural identity and creating a popular place to go that puts people in touch with their social history.

The RTPI Regional Award for Planning Achievement was sponsored by Alliance Planning and the awards and the Judging Panel this year comprised Mark Walton (our regional Chairman), Charlotte Gallagher (Vice-Chair of the West Midlands Urban Design Forum) and Ben Simm (a member of the region's Young Planners Group). ■



Birmingham Library scheme wins RTPI commendation

GVA and Birmingham City Council were strongly commended at the RTPI Regional Awards ceremony for the Library of Birmingham project.

The new Library will deliver a state-of-the-art destination for knowledge, learning and culture, and will attract up to 10,000 visitors a day. This high profile project touches all sectors of Birmingham's diverse community and will be a major visitor attraction.

Relating the development to its context was particularly challenging because of its position between the radically different Grade II listed Baskerville House and the 1970s Repertory theatre. The concept of three visually distinct buildings along the northern edge of Centenary Square was the foundation for the design response, enabling the new Library to be of its own time and have its own identity, without feeling out of place.

The success of the project is founded on a strong partnership approach and the unwavering commitment to the project of Birmingham City Council.

GVA were appointed to advise the design team and co-ordinate the preparation of the planning application. Working closely with the Council's development control planners, GVA were key to the smooth transition of the scheme through the planning process.

The new Library is a major transformational project that will help to raise the City's international profile. Furthermore, as the first tangible development to emerge from the Big City Plan, the Library will provide a catalyst for wider regeneration of the City's Westside.

The award was presented to Nick Harrison, Associate at GVA and Terry Perkins, Head of Project Management at Birmingham City Council by the RTPI President, Richard Summers. ■

Lichfield District Council receives commendation

Lichfield District Council and its partner, Keele University, have received a commendation in the RTPI Regional Awards for their impressive Shortbutts Park project in Lichfield. The project comprises the adaptation of an existing park to improve access, play provision and provides biodiversity that affords greater appeal to the local community, in a manner that is consistent with the District Council's positive approach to sustainability.

At the heart of the park's design lies the philosophy of 'Free Play', whereby opportunities for imagined rather than prescribed activities are presented, in addition to more traditional forms of play provision. 'Free Play' also encourages the use and appreciation of the natural environment and has been supported through the incorporation of a wide range of natural elements.

Constant input by planning staff has been the key to progress in terms of design and sustainability. The project officer for Shortbutts Park combined his planning knowledge with skills in landscape design and fine art to develop the project philosophy through to its realization on the ground.

A Life Cycle Assessment was used for the project, undertaken by specialists from Keele University's Project Green. This gave the Council's planning service a greater understanding of how the refurbishment and maintenance of a park impacts on the environment. The approach has already helped inform carbon saving decisions in the design and procurement work of the Council.

The overall success of the project is perhaps best judged by an estimated ten-fold increase in park usage at weekends and holidays, including regular visits by family groups for extended periods.

The commendation award was received from Richard Summers, RTPI President by Jeremy Trill, Principal Assistant for Regeneration at Lichfield District Council and Tom Chapple from Keele University. ■



Those RTPI Awards in Full

There were five additional awards given out at the RTPI Ball and Awards Ceremony at the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham.

The Young Planner of the Year: sponsored by consultant 'Place Elements' was awarded to **Jo Hooper** of Drivers Jonas Deloitte. Jo has been a key figure and latterly the Chair of the West Midlands Young Planners Group (YPwestmids) over recent years. She has played a major role in raising the profile of young planners across the region through staging a number of high profile events and has been a valuable member of the team in helping to attract the forthcoming Young Planners' Conference in October to Birmingham. Jo was the winner of the 'Tomorrow's Leader' award for the West Midlands two years ago. Sadly Jo is leaving the region for a new job with Drivers Jonas Deloitte in Manchester. The award was presented by Julie from Place Elements.

The Consultancy of the Year: sponsored by No 5 Chambers, went to **Brooke Smith Planning** who it was felt take a proactive, problem solving approach to planning issues and while being commercially driven, retain a strong moral compass. Their involvement in advising on town planning and land use issues following natural disasters have been in sharp focus in both Japan and New Zealand. The contribution to the 'student support scheme' was also recognised and it was felt their commitment to significant schemes in and around the region should be commended. Louise Brooke Smith has recently been inaugurated as RICS Vice Chair. Will Charlton, Associate Director at Brooke Smith Planning said: 'The team was delighted to have been awarded 'Consultancy of the Year'. It is an honour to have the recognition of our peers, particularly when up against some very worthy, major competitors. Our mantra is always to strive to go that extra mile for our clients, and clearly this year that professionalism has paid off.'

The award was presented by Ian Dove QC from No 5 Chambers.

The Team of the Year: sponsored by DLA Piper, was awarded to the **The Black Country Boroughs** who have been particularly successful in engaging both individuals and organisations in creating a strategic vision and an agreed document, whilst working across four authorities in a co-ordinated manner. The award was presented by Peter Taylor of DLA Piper to Annette Roberts and Helen

Martin of Dudley MBC. Annette Roberts said "We were absolutely delighted that the team was recognised for all its efforts in the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy - the biggest Core Strategy in the Country".

The Local Planning Authority of the Year: sponsored by JMP was awarded to **Lichfield District Council** who it was felt have demonstrated a firm commitment to community engagement based on an exceptional approach to partnership working with the local community, helping improve the reputation of planning and planners generally.

Craig Jordan said: 'we all recognise that one of our roles as a LPA is to engage as much as we can with all parties interested in the future of their areas. We will never please everybody but that is the nature of planning. However, what we can do and what we are trying to do at Lichfield is to break down the traditional barriers that exist between residents, stakeholders, members etc and see how collectively we can move forward for the sake of the District'. The award was presented by Alan Bain of JMP.

Last but not least was the **RTPI Regional Chairman's Special Award** sponsored this year by Alliance Planning. Mark Walton, the Regional Chairman explained that this is a special award to acknowledge a person, team or project that has supported planning and planners in the West Midlands over the last twelve months. The Chairman's award honours well known but unsung heroes in the region. This year's winner was **Peter Taylor** of DLA Piper. Peter heads up the national planning team at DLA Piper based in Birmingham and is well respected across the West Midlands and the UK in the provision of expert legal and planning advice to a range private and public sector clients. Peter is also a keen marathon runner and has raised many thousands of pounds for his chosen charity the Good Grief Appeal.

In presenting the award, Mark Walton commented: 'Peter's support and assistance, and that of his colleagues, means that RTPI West Midlands have been able to offer a much enhanced programme of debates, free events and affordable CPD conferences to all RTPI members during a challenging period where training budgets have been squeezed, but the planning system has continued to evolve'. Well done Peter! ■



Young Planner of the Year. Jo Hooper receives award from Julie Morgan (Place Elements).



Consultancy of the Year. Louise Brooke Smith, Ghazala Javed, Will Charlton & Andrea Caplan receive award.



Team of the Year. Annette Roberts & Helen Martin receive award from Peter Taylor (DLA).



Local Authority of the Year. Craig Jordan receives award from Alan Bain (JMP).



RTPI Chairman's Award. Peter Taylor receives award from Mark Walton.

HS2 Solution or pollution?

Are planners for or against the motion of the new High Speed Train? That was the topic of the debate held jointly by the West Midlands RTPI and the Transport Planning Society in July as a prelude to formulating the HST2 consultation response.

Four high profile panellists, representing both sides of the argument were given a platform to present their respective cases at a packed evening meeting at the offices of DLA Piper in Birmingham on 6th July, starting with a show of red or green paper signals which indicated that - certainly at the outset - a majority were in favour of the project.

After two hours of heated discussions and lively questions, the vote was somewhat more balanced, albeit with most people supporting the need for more public investment in rail infrastructure but many doubting the feasibility or value for money of the present project.

Is it necessary to build the HS2 to generate sufficient rail capacity between London and the Midlands? Will the time savings result in a boost to the regional economy? Would the scheme bring regeneration benefits to the wider West Midlands region (other than simply to Birmingham)? And above all, would the construction of the HS2 result in

improvements elsewhere on the existing rail network or result in cutbacks due to the absence of funding? All these questions are difficult to answer conclusively without a much more in depth examination of the assumptions and conclusions of the cost-benefit exercise.

A West Midlands response has been submitted (which is designed to complement the reply from our National RTPI HQ) which answers the 7 key questions raised by the consultation exercise, but tackles some of the more tricky regional issues. Copies of the response are available from our RTPI Regional Co-ordinator Sue Griffith Jones or from the Tripwire Editor. ■

Planning Aid Update

Regular Tripwire readers will know that there have been significant changes to both the structure and the service delivered through Planning Aid England recently. The following summary by Trudi Elliott (RTPI Chief Executive) provides a useful update on progress.

Planning Aid Advice Line

Over the past months the Planning Aid Line has been centralised to one single number and has continued to take calls - currently just over 900 since the beginning of April. A fundamental revision of the process supporting the Advice Line has led to a far higher number of calls being resolved in the initial 15 minute phone call.

Community Engagement

We are in the process of setting up our first tranche of community activities, and the opportunities for volunteers will increase significantly, covering all aspects of community engagement. We expect these events to gather momentum in early

Autumn, once the holiday period is over, and will be contacting Planning Aid volunteers shortly with further details of how they can get involved.

In order to support these activities, the seven Community Outreach Co-ordinators will work with the liaison person on each RAC. If this person is not yet in place, we hope RACs could organise this as soon as possible, letting Charles Veal know once appointed. Due to the time and funding constraints of the new service we need to be very careful about how we use the Community Outreach Co-ordinators time and limited budget. We hope that by working effectively with the RACs, we can harness the support that individuals, groups and committees can give to Planning Aid.

As the new funding is based on specific areas of need in deprived communities, and in line with the Government's localism agenda, Planning Aid England is no longer operating under a

regional structure. As far as possible the new Community Planning Outreach Co-ordinators will align themselves geographically to their nearest RAC or RACs. Through Charles Veal we are reviewing how we can best keep you informed on the progress of the Advice Line, our community and neighbourhood activities and the sharing of good practice.

Regional Involvement

Bob Keith, is the new Planning Aid Co-ordinator covering our region. Bob gave a helpful introduction on his role at the last Regional Activities Committee in Birmingham. In addition, the RAC has decided to set up a new Planning Aid Sub Group, which will oversee the Planning Aid service in the region. This will be chaired by David Marr. It is important during this transitional period that the Planning Aid volunteers continue to keep involved to maintain the important service which Planning Aid provides. ■

Steps to Healthy Planning: Proposals for Action

In recent years much evidence has accumulated which shows just how important the physical, social and economic environment in which we live and work is for our health. Many of the issues that spatial planners are responsible for, interact with human health and can, if we get them right, contribute to improving our physical and mental health, and diminish inequalities in health. Decisions about local transport and open space, for example, can have long-term consequences on health.

I'm writing to let you know about a Spatial Planning and Health Group report

which was recently published. The report is available at: www.spahg.org.uk

This report, called *Steps to Healthy Planning: Proposals for Action* suggests 12 Action Points for how town planning can improve public health. These identify practical actions that would improve health outcomes and the people or groups that should carry out such actions. It provides a clear and concise way for planning and health professionals to work together.

The foreword to the report, written by eminent health inequalities expert, Professor Sir Michael Marmot, highlights the importance of spatial planning to

health outcomes, pointing out the potential for town planning to make a difference for those with the poorest health.

The Spatial Planning and Health Group was formed from the NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) Spatial Planning and Health Programme Development Group (PDG), appointed by NICE to examine the available evidence related to spatial planning and health. SPAHG began after the PDG ended in November 2010.

For further details please contact the Chair of SPAHG, Tim Chapman, at: spahgchair@gmail.com ■

Harbury Affordable Housing Scheme

A new affordable housing scheme in Harbury in Warwickshire has taken the Warwickshire Rural Housing Association to the important landmark of completing 500 homes. Schoolchildren joined parish councillors and partners to celebrate the opening of the innovative community-led £1.85 million scheme which will provide much-needed affordable homes in the village.

Residents and WRHA representatives planted a tree outside the house to celebrate the key milestone. They also presented prizes to pupils from Harbury Church of England Primary School for a house designing competition in which youngsters drew what they thought WRHA's house of the future would look like.

Paul Spooner, Executive Director of the Homes and Communities Agency, Midlands, which has invested £1m into the scheme, attended the opening ceremony along with representatives

from Harbury Parish Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Linfoot Country Homes, Jephson Housing Association Group and Warwickshire Rural Community Council.

The 22 homes have been built under Stratford-on-Avon District Council's "Local Choice" initiative, which allows communities to promote developments that meet the local housing needs they have identified. WRHA will own 13 of the properties for rent available only to people with a local connection to the area. The other nine homes are being offered for sale through Linfoot Country Homes, initially only for buyers with links to the parish to make sure the scheme satisfies local housing needs first. Residents need to have been born in the parish, lived or worked there for at least 12 months or have close family members living in the area.

The scheme, which has also been supported by Harbury Parish Council, has

received £186,000 of funding from Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

WRHA Chairman Derrick Dyas said: "I welcome the completion of such an important scheme which brings a vital injection of affordable housing to this community.

"It is most rewarding to work with our partners and local communities to help them meet their own housing needs."

Paul Spooner, of the HCA, Midlands, said: "Providing affordable homes that meet local needs is a priority for the HCA and makes a crucial difference in rural areas. We are delighted to have supported Warwickshire Rural Housing Association and Stratford District Council to deliver this important scheme for the local community."

For further information please contact Lyndsey Hunt, of Word Association, on 01455 614333 or email Lyndsey@wordassociation.co.uk. ■



Editor's thoughts

Somehow you know it is the silly season when one reads 'Paul Daniels hit in the face by pizza thrown by Sooty!' But it is not often that the topic of 'Planning' becomes the lead article on the front page of 'The Times'.

Yet this week, the headline was '*Planning revolt fuels fears of the economy*'. It arose out of the growing tension arising between the countryside lobby groups and the Government over proposals within the National Planning Policy Document to introduce a new 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' which they fear will damage the countryside. The National Trust (more used to restoring country houses and serving cream teas), CPRE, WWF and RSPB (who curiously were represented in the group of 4 experts who put together the first draft of the NPPF) - have together formed a 'green alliance' to fight proposals.

There is no doubt that the draft policy is controversial. The prospect that permission could be granted '*where a Local Plan is absent, silent, indeterminate or where relevant policies are out of date*' is bound to send shivers down

most local authorities' spines. But above all, it fundamentally shifts the balance so that developers only need to 'prove a positive', rather than try and achieve the sometimes impossible task of 'disproving a negative'.

Of course this is well trodden ground for the various proponents for and opponents of new development. In the 1980's planning controls were loosened by the then Tory Government to facilitate more private sector growth, only for policies to tighten again in the late 1990's, culminating in the 2000 version of PPG3, which introduced the 'brownfield' first approach. Now the pendulum has swung firmly back to a pro-growth strategy.

But the opportunities for positive planning – both in the public and private sectors are now much more evident. Local authorities have a strong incentive to progress quickly with their Local Plans (and indeed Neighbourhood Plans) which once adopted will put them firmly in the driving seat. Developers on the other hand, have a clear opportunity to engage with the planning system, to promote initiatives through public consultation and to submit planning

applications where their proposals are aligned with those plans – or where plans are still absent or unclear.

For the first time in decades, there is a genuine incentive on both sides to get things done and not to delay the process – which ought to be good news for professional planners. For the time being though, there could be a period of conflict as local authorities struggle to cope with the pressures to prepare and adopt their plans, against a background of falling staff numbers, whilst developers resort to appeals to exploit the 'window of opportunity' presented by the emerging NPPF.

So whilst it may be easy to try and twist the debate into a traditional 'Punch and Judy' match between countryside campaigners and developers, about greenfield versus brownfield, it is perhaps worthwhile considering whether the new changes mooted in the draft NPPF will hasten or hinder progress, uphold or uproot the planning process and promote or prevent growth and recovery in the economy. ■

John Acres

The need to consider the prior extraction of coal resources ahead of development

A special report by Rachel Bust from the Coal Authority

Across the country valuable surface coal resources are being needlessly sterilised by new non-mineral development such as housing, employment and retail. In England in 2006 the introduction of MPS1 indicated the Government's desire to ensure that minerals are safeguarded from sterilisation through the definition of Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs). Similar obligations are set out in Minerals Planning Policy Wales, with a slightly different approach being advocated in Scotland under Scottish Planning Policy.

The roll-out of MSAs across England has been slow due to the general progress on LDFs, particularly as definitive boundaries need to be set out on proposals maps which usually accompany site allocation documents which tend to be the last to be undertaken.

Defining MSAs do not achieve the Government's aims on their own; they need to be properly implemented when

applications for non-mineral development come forward in such areas. Part of that consideration includes the need to assess the potential for the mineral to be extracted ahead of development being undertaken. This is known as prior extraction or pre-extraction. The prior extraction of coal resources has been successfully undertaken across the country both in urban and rural areas over many decades. In addition this can address mining legacy issues on some sites thereby facilitating safe development, whereas on other sites it can generate much needed additional revenue from coal sales. In all cases where coal is present on a development site, a separate permission is needed from The Coal Authority to intersect with or to remove the coal because it is owned by the State, this is a simple process dealt with by the operator themselves.

Prior extraction of coal can take place within major urban conurbations, it can occur on a small or large scale, and examples are recorded on sites ranging from 0.3Ha to 28.0Ha.

Practical Example: Sackville Street/Fitzwilliam Street in Barnsley which was the brown field site of the former Canister Works. 0.85 Hectares mixed use development including 188 residential units with ground floor A1/A3 units and parking within the main built up area Barnsley town centre. The site is located in an area of surface coal resource and also former mining legacy including shallow workings and mine entries. 1,600 tonnes of coal were extracted within 4 weeks as part of the other site works. This development achieved two national policy objectives: avoiding the unnecessary sterilisation of coal (MPS1) and removed existing land instability caused by former coal mining (PPG14). The development was successfully completed and now makes a vibrant contribution to the street scene.

Such extraction is usually undertaken as part of the overall groundwork activities on site and it normally only takes a matter of days or weeks rather than months or years. Also the appearance of such prior extraction looks more like other site preparation activity; it does not look like what most people would consider being mineral extraction.

As the protection of coal as a valuable energy mineral is important to the future diversity and flexibility of the UK energy market, The Coal Authority is charged with ensuring that the surface coal resource across the country is not needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development as one of the organisation's objectives. Further information on coal resource issues and the planning system can be seen on our website: <http://coal.decc.gov.uk/en/coal/cms/services/planning/planning.aspx>.

The Confederation of UK Coal Producers (CoalPro) is the Industry Body and together with the individual operating companies are keen to promote the opportunities for prior extraction of coal resources amongst decision makers and developers. Further details of operators can be obtained from www.coalpro.co.uk/members.shtml ■



Pillars of coal being extracted as part of ground works: prevents sterilisation and effective method of remediating unstable ground caused by former coal workings.



Coal close to the surface being extracted as part of ground works: prevents sterilisation and effective method of remediating unstable ground caused by former coal workings.



Outcrop of coal close to the surface which would be sterilised without prior extraction and has the potential to cause instability for surface development.



Rachael Bust

Chief Planner / Principal Manager
The Coal Authority

RTPI Ball – 6th July 2011



Continuing Professional Development

..... Events Calendar :: September > November

REGIONAL PROGRAMME

Non-members of RTPI welcome to attend.

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: 6.30pm – 8.30pm

Cost: **Free**

Venue: University of Birmingham, **Birmingham**

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel 0121 709 1599

Email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

Water Sensitive Urban Design

West Midlands Urban Design Forum event

Time: 2pm – 4pm

Cost: **Free**

Venue: MADE offices, **Birmingham**

Details: www.made.org.uk/events/view/water_sensitive_urban_design/

To book email Mike.Vout@telford.gov.uk

FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER

Positive Growth: making it happen

Morning seminar followed by lunch to consider current approaches to regeneration and development from the perspective of a local authority Chief Executive, a planning barrister and a representative of the regeneration industry with a retail focus. Will include a planning law update Chair - Andrea Bruce, Knights Solicitors

Speakers - John Barratt, Barrister, Kings Chambers Manchester

Mike Herbert, Regional Director of St Modwen Properties plc

John van der Laarschot, Chief Executive of Stoke City Council.

Time: 9.45am – 1.15pm (registration from 9.15am)

Cost: **£30 inc VAT** for morning seminar & lunch.

Full-time students & unwaged £15

Venue: Offices of Knights Solicitors,

Newcastle-under-Lyme

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: **£135**

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

Details & booking: www.rtpi.org.uk/ypconference

THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER

13th Annual Midlands Development Management Conference

The New Planning System

Conference run by Landmark Planning in association with the East and West Midlands RTPI.

Venue: Central Baptist Church, **Leicester** (close to railway station)

Time: 10am – 4pm (Registration from 9.30am)

Speakers: Hugh Richards, No5 Chambers "Year in Planning Law"

Justin Price-Jones, Harvey Ingram "The Importance of Housing Land Supply"

Peter Taylor, DLA Piper "Providing & Paying for Infrastructure"

Jason Redfearn, Focus "Energy Conservation & Renewables"

Philip Fermor, Middlemarch Environmental

"Ecological Myths & Legends"

Robin Hooper, Gateley "DC Implications of Localism"

Cost: **£120 inc VAT** (full-time students & unwaged £25)

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel 0121 709 1599

Email: westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER

Localism & Inquiry Masterclass with No5 Chambers

Time: 10am - 4pm

10am - 1pm Localism and NPPF

1pm - 2pm Lunch

2pm - 4pm Inquiry Masterclass

Cost: Half day (localism or inquiry masterclass) with lunch £50 + VAT

Full day (localism & inquiry masterclass) with lunch £80 + VAT

Full-time students & the unwaged £30 + VAT for morning or afternoon

£40 + VAT for the full day.

Venue: Austin Court, **Birmingham**

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel 0121 709 1599

Email: westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

OTHER EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

The Localism Bill & EGM

Venue: Offices of Wragge & Co LLP, **Birmingham**

Time: 5.30pm – 8pm

Cost: **£10**

Organiser: UKELA

Details & booking: Yvonne Tyler-Akerman

at yvonne_tyler-akerman@wragge.com or on

0870 903 1000 Ext 3330

MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER

Health & Well-Being Briefing Papers Launch & National Planning Policy Framework Consultation

Venue: **Birmingham**

Cost: **Free**

Organisers: West Midlands Public Health

Observatory

Details & booking: www.wmpho.org.uk/lfph

TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

The Self-Organising City: Mary W Rowe

Part of the Talking Cities Series

Venue: MADE offices, **Birmingham**

Time: 5.45pm to 8.00pm (registration from 5.30pm)

Cost: **£5**, students free with valid student card

Organisers: MADE & Sustainability West Midlands

Details & booking:

www.made.org.uk/events/view/the_self_organising_city_mary_w_rowe/

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

A Future for the Past?

Venue: CBSO Centre, **Birmingham**

Cost: **£120 + VAT**

Organisers: RIBA

Details & booking:

www.architecture.com/ribaconferences2011

FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER

Principles of Social Marketing for Regulatory Services

Venue: Cannock Chase Council Offices, **Cannock**

Cost: **£50**

Organisers: Cannock Chase Council

Details & booking: [davidprosser-](mailto:davidprosser-davies@cannockchasedc.gov.uk)

davies@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Tel 01543 464202

2012 CPD Programme

Next year, in common with some other RTPI Regions, we propose to fix our CPD programme well in advance and offer a season ticket rate so that both local authorities, consultancies and indeed individuals can receive discount for a block booking in advance.

Effectively, the RTPI Region is taking on the role of offering a low cost training programme whereby planners and indeed their employers can gain significant benefits from booking up for

several seminars at the beginning of the year.

We plan to offer 11 events, which are likely to be on the following topics:

- Planning Law Updates – two events
- LEPS & Regeneration
- Localism & Neighbourhood Plans
- Development Management & Delivery
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Planning for Councillors
- Urban Design
- Energy

- National Planning Framework & the Future of Strategic Planning
- Rural Planning

Further information about dates, speakers, fee rates and price discounts will be available in the next edition of Tripwire.

If you are interested in this idea or would like to express an interest in advance booking for these topic areas, please contact Sue Griffith Jones on 0121 709 1599 or at westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk ■