

RTPI

RTPI

# North East News

Newsletter of the Royal Town Planning Institute North East Region

Winter 2011

## New Chair for RTPI NE



**Joe Ridgeon is the 2012 Chair of RTPI NE, having been elected at the Annual Meeting in December 2011.**

Joe, a Planning Consultant at the Wolsingham office of George F White LLP, completed his Masters Degree in Town Planning at Newcastle University in 2007, having previously gained a BA in Geography at Durham. His first post after leaving university was at Dickinson Dees, during which time he also benefitted from a secondment to Castle Morpeth Borough Council.

Joe has been one of the prime movers in the reinvigoration of RTPI NE's Young Planners Group, and worked on bringing the national Young Planners Conference to Newcastle in 2009. He is also active in young pan-professional circles, a keen brass band player and a rugby enthusiast.

At the RTPI NE Annual Meeting Joe introduced himself as the only person to have used a Young Person's Rail Card to attend the recent meeting of incoming Regional Chairs with the RTPI President. He also gave as his themes for 2012, Rural Planning, Working with Other Professions, the Olympics, and Leading the Charge of planners explaining to all who would listen that Planning is part of the solution, not part of the problem, in tackling current economic and environmental issues.

Finally, Joe urged his audience, especially at this time: "Ask not what the RTPI does for you, ask what you do for the RTPI!"

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## The Chair's Year

*David Stovell, Chair of RTPI NE during 2011, looks back on his year of office*

Towards the end of the last RTPI NE Policy Committee meeting during 2011 our Secretary had a conversation with the incoming Chair, Joe Ridgeon, about dates for 2012 events. It is at such times that you realise that you are yesterday's news and it is time to pack your bags. My year as Chairman of the Region was effectively over and just about the only thing left was to chair the AGM and write this review.

It seems like just yesterday when I sat down to write about the things that I felt we should be focusing on during 2011. It seems a lifetime ago in planning, such have been the fundamental changes to the process. Planning has occupied central political ground and a prolonged period as front page news. Regionalism is Out and Localism is In as we continue on the never-ending political roundabout of initiatives.

I have enjoyed chairing the Region and considered it a privilege. I believe we are fortunate in this Region to have such able people involved in administering its affairs. Mention should be made of David Barraclough, the Hon Secretary; Graham Garnham, the Hon Treasurer; Joe Ridgeon, Chair of the Activities and Policy Committee and next year's Region Chair; together with the various Chairs of the Sub-Committees - Chris Clarke (Member and Public Relations), Steve France (Education and Research),

Richard Arkell (Regional Policy), and Jonathan Nicholson (Planning Aid) - not forgetting all the people who are members of the committees and those involved in our successful Young Planners Group. It also helps to have an extremely efficient Region Co-ordinator in Kay Lough. Lastly I am grateful for the support of Jan Bessell, our Regional Representative on General Assembly, and Julian Ringer, my predecessor as Chair, who, as well as their many contributions to the Region, helped provide accommodation for our meetings.

It is one of the traditions of the position that a Chairman selects a number of themes for his year before it commences. This is to enable us to focus on these themes in our conference programme, policy meetings and design awards. As well as the general Institute duties as Chairman my main themes during 2011 were to focus on community involvement, local design and member support.

**Community Involvement** in the planning process, particularly in regeneration and development, is not new. It has been an important part of plan formulation since the early 1970's, when I commenced work. The difficulty has always been to have this properly articulated, particularly in communities where, under social stress, the community structure has fragmented. I had been in a position to understand the valuable work that had been done by Planning Aid North (PAN) in this field and I was anxious to investigate extending its service. In the end I was obliged to accept its closure and part rebirth under Planning Aid England. I believe that we have left the Institute in no doubt about the support from this region for a PAN service.

At the time that the Government precipitously ceased funding for Planning Aid we tried to promote an interim Planning Aid North organisation. I am pleased we tried and sorry we failed. I am pleased that we now have a reformed Planning Aid England service and we are fortunate in obtaining the services of Chris Anderson, who previously worked for PAN as the Region's Community Outreach Co-ordinator. However, we are still some way from being able to provide the type of support for communities that we had hoped just over a year ago.



The main reason for including **Local Design** as one of my themes for the year was to have the opportunity of a whinge about the use of celebrity architects as a tool for redevelopment and regeneration. It seems to me to be a high risk tactic. I wished to advocate planning and design that is informed by its local context and distinctiveness; in other words town planning. It is an interesting debate which I have pursued in various forums. The debate was to some extent overtaken by the collapse in the property investment market and the decline or absence of schemes that would justify a celebrity architect approach. Local distinctiveness in planning appears to be firmly back so I claim victory even if it is by default.

My idea of good local design is reflected in the Chair's Award this year which went to St Nicholas Square, designed by Robinson Landscape Design for Newcastle City Council and NE1 Ltd. (the Business Improvement Company). The scheme is an understated landscape scheme; it has a harmony with its area; it enhances the adjoining key buildings of St Nicholas Cathedral and the former Joint Stock Bank, as well as the statue of Queen Victoria, in the historic core of Newcastle. It provides a perfect sense of place. It was also heartening to read Sunderland Council's plans for their sea front which, although in the early stages, demonstrated a clear objective to reflect local distinctiveness.

We are living through difficult times, particularly for students and members not presently employed. My third main theme was therefore **Support for Members**. We have held a number of events and initiatives this year both for students and other members seeking employment. It is difficult to know how useful these types of events are but I found them informative and interesting. Importantly for me it demonstrates the Institute's support for its Members.

One of the benefits of being Chair is that you do get to **Meet and Greet** some interesting people. Top of the list has to be John Grundy, the broadcaster and author who was good enough to speak at both our Annual Dinner and Annual Meeting. He is such a genuine and interesting chap. On the night of the Annual Dinner he told us that he would have to leave early because he was to participate in a sponsored walk for a Christian Aid Charity project in India. Spontaneously it was agreed that we would all contribute towards his sponsored walk. People were extremely generous and it was a touching moment. A big thanks to everybody.

May I also say what a pleasure it has been to meet Trudi Elliot, RTPI Chief Executive, and Richard Summers, 2011 President. I cannot imagine how

the Institute would have managed without a Chief Executive this year, such has been the political profile and intensity attached to reviewing the planning process. I believe that great credit should go to Trudi and Richard, together with the policy and press staff at Botolph Lane.

Although we have had our internal debates over the Government's approach to planning, particularly with regard to strategic planning, the Institute has presented a united front, defended the interests of planning and has without doubt influenced the emerging Localism Agenda and improved the political status of the Institute from its position at the beginning of the year. It also has to be acknowledged that its approach has reaped benefits in Government support for the re-birth of Planning Aid England.

Communications with the Institute in London have improved significantly this year; partly I am sure as a result of the input of Trudi and Richard. We believe they can improve more and this is an ongoing matter.

Congratulations also to the winners of what must be the best RTPI football competition in the country. The pace was frantic. It made me tired watching. I had no idea we had so many decent footballers in the North East Region.

I have tried where possible to advocate **Plain Speaking** and to question the use of excessively complicated terminology in planning, something that when you get to a certain vintage you should be allowed to do. My *bête noir* for some time has been the word spatial. What does it contribute to understanding of planning? It seems to me to confuse rather than illuminate. At a recent party I dropped into the assembled company that I was a spatial planner. Someone hesitatingly asked me if I had anything to do with aeronautics before, after a short pause, the group moved quickly on to discuss depression. There is nothing wrong with being a chartered town planner involved in development plans, management, economic, retail, conservation, minerals or any other of the host of topics that planners are employed in. Is it some type of inferiority complex that encourages us to hide behind words that sound up to date and impressive rather than mean anything? We are not alone however. I now live next door to a "Learning Campus" that only last year was the local school.

**Lastly can I thank everybody involved in the Region for all for your contributions towards a year I have enjoyed. It is appreciated.**

## RTPI NE 2011 AGM Report

Guest Speaker at the well-attended RTPI NE Annual Meeting, held in December at Dickinson Dees on the Newcastle Quayside, was local broadcaster John Grundy, co-author of the revised "Pevsner" guide to Northumberland and Chairman of the Friends of Beamish.

With the help of his own slides, John took us on a guided tour of Newcastle, Sunderland, Blyth Beach



and Middlesbrough, taking in good bits (including Mowbray Park (Sunderland), Trinity Square (Newcastle Quayside), the Sage Gateshead ("there is a place for "oddness"") and the new square in front of Middlesbrough Town Hall), and bad bits (often involving roads, such as between Newcastle Central Station and The Union Rooms, or "legacies of times when we lost control", such as the immediate surroundings of Holy Jesus Hospital). Amongst the trends which attracted his favourable comments were the formation of new pedestrian areas and the imaginative re-use of old buildings.

From an RTPI NE point of view, it was particularly pleasing just how many of his examples of good planning had featured in our awards schemes over the years, such as those chalets on Blyth Beach, the new pedestrian links through Northumbria University, the paved areas along Newcastle Quayside, and the regeneration of Sunnyside, in Sunderland.

Above all he urged us to provide towns, villages

and spaces which would encourage vibrant activities, not just buildings, and reminded us that we should be proud that good planning has a demonstrative positive economic impact – compare the Quayside now with the derelict area of 20+ years ago.

The formal part of the Annual Meeting went through as smoothly as usual. Besides David Stovell's handover of the Chair and Badge of Office to Joe Ridgeon, David Cullingford was confirmed as Senior Vice Chair for 2012 and David Stovell agreed to take over as Jan Bessell's Deputy as Regional Representative on the General Assembly. Graham Garnham and David Barraclough will continue as Treasurer and Secretary respectively.

Chris Clarke, Steve France, Colin Haylock, Steve Litherland, Jonathan Nicholson and Teresa Strachan were elected or re-elected as corporate members on the Regional Activities and Policy Committee, while Charlotte Colver becomes a non-corporate member on RAPC. Unusually there were six candidates for the two vacancies as students in planning education on RAPC, but the meeting rapidly agreed to dispense with the election and elect or co-opt all six onto RAPC: Michael Baker, Kayleigh Brown, Charlotte Cornforth, Lorna Heslop, Sean Peacock and Patrycja Pikniczka.

There are still some vacancies, which will be considered by the Regional Management Board in due course, notably the position of Junior Vice Chair, but also three vacancies for corporate members on RAPC, and a Student/Licentiate in Employment. RMB will also be trying to persuade one of the members of RAPC to take on the role of Assistant Secretary.



Other continuing RAPC members (elected for two years in December 2010) are Richard Arkell, Nick Burden, Ian Cansfield, Eddie Halstead, Martin Marsh, Mike Mealing, Graeme Smith (corporate members), Rachael Ashworth (student/licentiate in full-time employment) and Liz Donaldson (non-corporate member).

# University Placements

**The School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University is one of only 3 schools of planning in the UK which offers a placement year as part of its Town Planning degree programme.**

The placement year is undertaken in the fourth year of the five year programme, at a point where the students have gained their BA Honours degree and developed knowledge and skills in interpreting the environment; collating, processing and analysing information; development management; built environment design issues; the planning strategy making process; and current agendas affecting town planning in the UK.

All students will also have completed their dissertation on a specialist planning related interest. Previous students and placement employers have confirmed the value of the Year Out as being the time when both parties gain enormously from each other. When students have completed their placement year, they return to Newcastle University to undertake the Diploma in Town Planning which affords the full accreditation of the Royal Town Planning Institute. Returning students are able

**!! PLEASE HELP !!**

to develop their new specialist fields that have been nurtured during their year in professional practice.

The University is now contacting employers in the hope that they may be in a position to consider the possibility of taking on a planning graduate for a period of approximately 12 months. Vacancies will be advertised from February 2012 and we would advise employers to hold their interviews around Easter time. However, we would be happy to circulate details of any placement opportunities that became available up until the middle of September 2012.

We understand that many organisations have recently experienced significant redundancies and financial restrictions, and that creating new posts in this environment can be extremely difficult. However, we believe that our student planners can often create an opportunity for an employer to secure short term professional support which can assist them on a particular project or programme. Also, we do not insist on a placement of 12 months and would be equally happy to look at 6 - 9 months full time, or a period of part time work.

We would be delighted to discuss any opportunity that would give the student the chance of a gaining some planning experience in areas such as development management, regeneration, policy, tourism and conservation.

Whilst on placement, our students undertake a number of pieces of work to enable them to gain a Certificate in Planning Practice, which is a qualification unique to Newcastle University. This comprises completing a monthly logbook (similar to that required for APC purposes), a presentation and a Practice Issues Report.

In many instances, the employer has found that it has been able to commission the student with a piece of research/problem solving that has been of benefit to its own planning procedures and practice. If you would like to consider the possibility of offering a placement for one of our planning graduates, then the University would be delighted to discuss this with you. Please contact Liam Fisher on 0191 2226024 email: [liam.fisher@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:liam.fisher@ncl.ac.uk) or Teresa Strachan on 0191 222 7801 email [teresa.strachan@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:teresa.strachan@ncl.ac.uk) . We would appreciate it if you could draw this message to the attention of anyone you think might be interested in provide placement opportunities.

# Strategic Planning - Where Now ?

**'Where Now?' for strategic planning was the subject of a half day conference organised by RTPI North East in Durham on 16 November. David Marshall reports on the discussion.**

Consideration of 'where now' for strategic planning was especially topical, taking place the day after the Localism Act received Royal Assent. Despite concerns about the planning vacuum left by the demise of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), the messages conveyed by each of the speakers were largely positive, the key one being that strategic planning will continue to exist but in different forms and using different techniques to what we may have been used in the past.

Chair for the session, Richard Arkell, set the scene for the discussion by reminding the audience that effective strategic planning is an essential prerequisite of sustainable development. Whilst the abolition of the RSS has created a planning vacuum, a

real concern was the damaging inertia caused by the resulting hiatus. Far from planning holding back development, it was the uncertainty arising from the lack of a policy framework. However, the CLG committee had acknowledged the importance of 'larger than local' planning and representations by the RTPI and others had secured inclusion of the 'Duty to Cooperate' in the new legislation. Whether this duty is an adequate substitute for strategic planning is the question that formed a backdrop to subsequent discussions.

Phil Barnes from NLP developed the discussion. The old RSS gave a clear regional focus to decisions on how we get new schools, hospitals, roads etc in the right places. Looking back it felt warmly reassuring to Local Authority planners. The RSS was about control, but unpopular decisions could always be blamed on the 'nasty' region. Now there was an element of fear which at best causes lack of confidence, at worst decisions that avoid criticism.



*David Marshall*

Among the principles of the new regime was the need for systems where people feel closer to decisions. An IPSOS/MORI poll found that only 15% feel they can influence planning decisions. On the other hand other research showed that most people are concerned about the impact of traffic.

There was also a need to speed up the planning process, although this brought with it an increased difficulty in prioritising difficult investment decisions. Interestingly almost all of Phil's examples were transport or roads. However, decisions have cross boundary effects and an example of social infrastructure where Northumberland councillors were worried about consequences of schools in Newcastle was cited as an example.

The 'Duty to Cooperate' will require Local Authorities and other bodies to cooperate involving constructive and active engagement. This could take many forms including joint planning approaches and joint planning documents. They would need to prove having cooperated at the EIP. However, consultation with the LEP

would be hard when the North East LEP doesn't even have an approved Board at present, so that its approach to strategic planning is likely to be some way off. Voluntary cooperation does not have a great record. As an example, successive agreed housing allocations for Newcastle and North Tyneside highlighted just how difficult this had proved in the past.

If the Core Strategy is in place, Neighbourhood Planning should be straightforward in theory. However there is a perception that Neighbourhood Planning will stop housing development and a succession of articles from the Newcastle Journal were used to illustrate the point. This led Phil to suggest that for the next 10 years strategic planning will be a battle.

In this context it is likely that we will require to develop and acquire new techniques for engaging with neighbourhoods and individuals. To illustrate this Phil outlined the results of NLP research on Positive Engagement. This looked at who objects to planning proposals, how they do it and why. Rather than traditional approaches based on Socio-economic group-

ings, respondents were grouped along lines used extensively in marketing such as 'professional rewards', 'active retirement' or 'terraced melting pot'. Each grouping wanted different and quite distinctive approaches to planning, although a common theme was that most objections related to traffic! The use of more sophisticated research techniques is likely to become much more prevalent as the new regime evolves and develops.

John Holmes then took us on a tour of the evolving structure for the promotion of development and regeneration. Whilst previous models were now seen as unaffordable, and things will never be the same again, there is a lot of laudable sentiment and fine rhetoric behind the new legislation. However the Government are not backing up fine words with resources. It is especially saddening that the regeneration industry in the region has been dismantled so quickly.

John gave a round up of progress with the Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs). There are 38 LEPs approved to date to date. However, only two of these have long term strategic plans in place. The performance of these is widely differing with Tees Valley being among the better examples. In Yorkshire, the LEPs are close to re-creating a Yorkshire regional strategy. Other examples of good practice cited include the Sunderland Economic Masterplan being led by Software City and the University of Sunderland.

A more detailed local example of good practice was provided by Neil Wilkinson of Gateshead Council who outlined the joint working on planning being undertaken with Newcastle. In this respect the Newcastle Gateshead joint plan is ahead of the game, despite work having started under the previous regime. The joint approach involves taking responsibility for contentious decisions, the local newspaper that day carrying a story of a stormy public meeting in Gosforth the previous evening providing topical evidence of this. As other speakers had mentioned, the RSS had previously provided an umbrella where they could blame the regional planners in such instances.

Issues facing the joint approach include the tensions arising from giving greater powers to neighbourhoods, but trying to deliver the service with less staff, less resources and less authority.

Rounding off the event, Nic Best from CPRE gave an outline of the new structure from the point of view of an environmental campaign group. CPRE and others had enjoyed a seat at the table in preparing the RSS and, whilst not always satisfied with all outcomes, always felt they had a fair hearing. There is a need for a planning system that can be seen as trusted and fair. The changes have raised the question of to whom is it fair. Interestingly, CPRE, which had been seen as anti-development under the old regime, has recently been portrayed, along with the National Trust, as 'left wing activists'.

## Summary

In summarising and reflecting on a fascinating and stimulating discussion, the following key points emerge:

- The Duty to Cooperate may not be an adequate substitute for strategic planning – it will be open to wide interpretation and there is a need for further guidance;
- In a system where Strategic Planning is a more informal process without firm guidance, it is set to be a battle for the next 10 years;
- Strategic Planning will still exist but not in the form we know it (no reinvention of the RSS). This will require very different ways of working for planners;
- It is likely to need less 'evidence' and more common sense;
- We need to get better at consultation, particularly certain groups (NLP) research;
- It needs to be combined with different approaches to regeneration, although at present many of the LEPs have not got their act together;
- There are already some very good examples of 'larger than local' working e.g. Newcastle-Gateshead;
- Interest groups and other third sector organisations can provide a valuable resource and input to the process.

***David Marshall is Director of Spatial Synergy Ltd.***

# 2011 Regional Award Winners

**The RTPI North East Regional Awards Scheme takes place annually in order to recognise, celebrate and publicise good planning practice in the North East of England. The main results were included in the last newsletter. This fuller report provides more detail on all the entries.**

For several years the North East Regional Awards Scheme has been run in close association with the RTPI's national planning awards. Entrants now choose whether to enter direct for a regional award, or to enter both for a national award and a regional award simultaneously.

In 2011 10 entries were considered by the NE regional judges, one less than in 2010. 6 of the entries considered this were direct regional entries and 4 were submitted through the national route. (An additional 2011 national entry – Distinctly Darlington – won the main Regional Award in 2010, so was not considered again by the regional judges in 2011.)

RTPI NE would like to thank all those who entered. The entries were varied, and came from most parts of the region. This year it was particularly pleasing to see an increased number of entries from Tees Valley. We are well aware that many planners and other construction professionals have had a difficult time over the last twelve months, and we are particularly pleased to be able to celebrate success with the winners of this year's awards and commendations.

In different ways, all the entries display the positive benefits of good planning: developments which would not have taken place without the intervention of planning and regeneration officers; developments which have been improved by the contribution of planning officers; and planning documents which will encourage new and better development in future.

## The Judges

The entries were appraised by present and previous members of the Region's Member and Public Relations Sub-Committee: Steve France, Chris Clarke, Martin Marsh, Ian Cansfield, Emma Walker and David Stovell. All entries were appraised separately by at least two judges, to avoid unintentional bias. No entry was individually appraised by anyone who had a personal or professional interest in it. The final results were agreed by the group as a whole. RTPI NE would like to thank all the volunteer judges, without whose efforts the awards scheme would not take place.

It was a particularly difficult year for the judges, with no entries that stood out head and shoulders above everything else, nor any entries which fell well behind the others. Given the economic situation and other distractions of the last year it seemed particularly praiseworthy that so many excellent schemes and plans were completed.

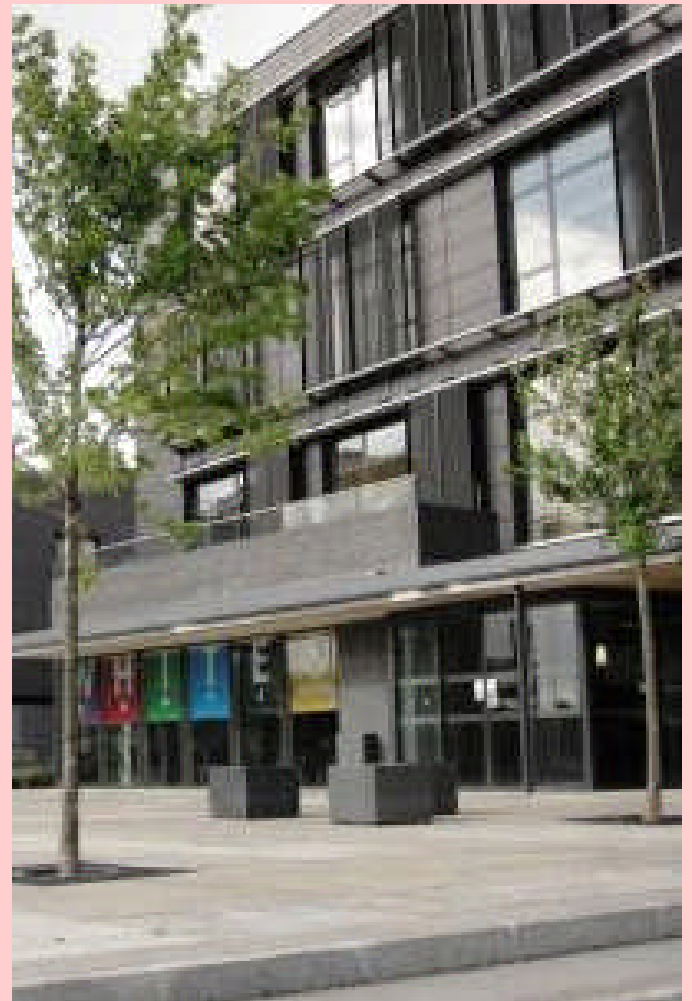
The 2011 Chair's Award was made to the entry which best illustrated the principles of Good Urban Design. The main criteria for the award were that the scheme should be successfully designed, and that it should have a sense of place, demonstrating that its design thoroughly understood, and was informed by, its context within the surrounding area.

More detail of all the entries is provided below, with summaries of the judges' views.

## Regional Award Winner 2011

**Boho One and Bohouse, Bridge Street West,  
Middlesbrough**

*entered by Middlesbrough Council*



These two bold and innovative developments comprise a Digital Enterprise Centre (Boho One) and 20 LiveWork units (Bohouse), part of the regeneration of the St Hilda's area in Central Middlesbrough, and situated close to Middlesbrough station.

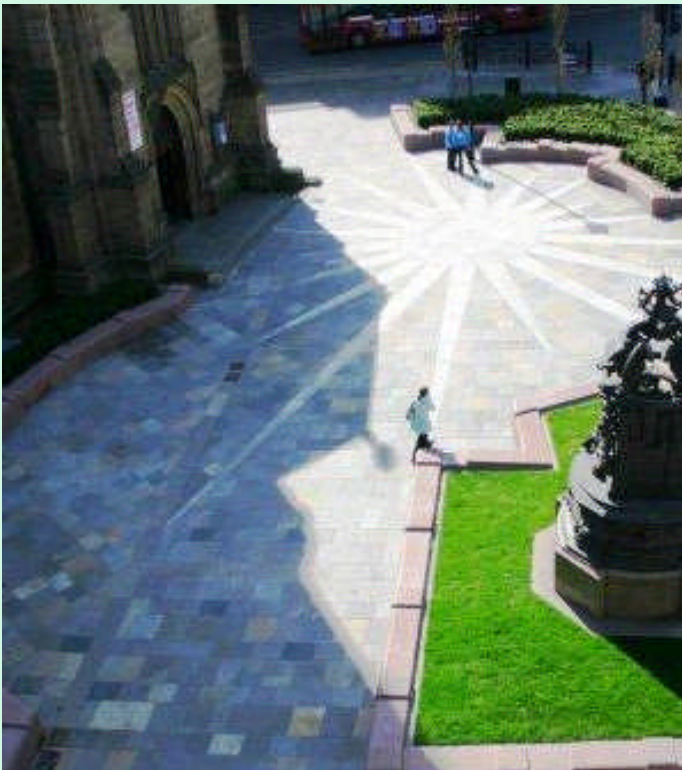
Boho 1 is the flagship building for the Digital City initia-

tive, set back behind a small pedestrian square. The adjacent Bohouse was developed by Erimus Housing, funded by the Homes and Communities Agency. Both projects were designed by Exsite architecture, drawing on the Masterplan for Greater Middlehaven, by Alsop Architects for Tees Valley Regeneration, Middlesbrough Council and English Partnerships.

Both buildings display key principles of sustainability (Boho 1 utilises a ground source heat pump and wind turbines, natural daylighting and ventilation) and their striking contemporary design sets a new quality standard for the area.

The Digital City initiative has been developed with extensive involvement from potential users and representatives from the University of Teesside and Digital City Business. Planning officers were central to bringing all partners together. The schemes both have a regional significance as sustainable business initiatives, helping to make the Boho Zone and Greater Middlehaven a leading example of good practice for regeneration professionals to visit.

**Winner of the 2011 Chair's Award for the entry which best illustrates the principles of Good Urban Design**  
**St Nicholas Square, Newcastle upon Tyne**  
*entered by Robinson Landscape Design Ltd*



This project comprises the complete redesign and renewal of the "pocket park" immediately in front of St Nicholas Cathedral in the historic heart of Newcastle. Designed by Robinson Landscape Design in collaboration

with the planning and engineering departments of Newcastle City Council and built by the Council's Direct Works section, the scheme was coordinated by the Business Improvement District Company NE1 Ltd and co-funded by NE 1, the City Council and the Cathedral.

While comparatively small, the square occupies a key location and is well used by the cathedral community, visitors and city centre office workers. It is the home of an imposing statue of Queen Victoria.

The revived space seems deceptively simple, but manages to relate well to adjacent historic buildings, provide a much better context for Queen Victoria, shelter users from the adjacent busy traffic light junction, and cater both for pedestrian routes and people wanting to sit and enjoy the space. The well thought out design is brilliantly held together by a starburst pattern in the new paving, and "greened" by an element of new planting. The design of the bench seats, which serve as small retaining walls, is also very clever.

Overall the previously tired square is now very attractive, simple, elegant and yet also highly functional: and provides a contemporary complement to its historic neighbours.

**Commendations**

This year the judges gave three Commendations – two housing developments in contrasting locations and the regeneration of one of the artist L. S. Lowry's favourite seaside resorts.

**The Courtyard and Hay Barn, Preston Farm, Eaglescliffe**  
*entered by PF Developments*



# 2011 Regional Award Winners

The development is the last stage of a farmstead redevelopment situated in a Green Wedge between the built up areas of Stockton on Tees and Eaglescliffe. Previous phases involved the conversion of traditional farm buildings to housing: The Courtyard is a new development replacing modern farm buildings of no architectural interest with seven affordable and market homes, built to high standards of sustainability, including underfloor heating, high levels of insulation and wood burning stoves, and provided with "home offices" with broad band connections.

One of the highest compliments which can be paid to the scheme is that, whilst building work was still being completed, The Courtyard already looks like a traditional, vernacular cluster of buildings. This is partly the result of the extensive use of reclaimed building materials, but also the cleverly varied design of the dwellings, and the overall built form, which keeps all the entrances within the sheltered courtyard and severely limits the clutter which might otherwise be evident when the development is seen across adjacent fields.

The development company responsible for the scheme has clearly regarded it as a labour of love, and have benefitted from the inputs of the architect, SM Design, and the responsible planner at Stockton on Tees Borough Council, who worked together in a development team approach which has resulted in a development of which all parties can be proud.

## **Durham Road Eco Homes, Gateshead**

*entered by Gateshead Council*



The project is a further success resulting from the former NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, which was commended in last year's RTPI NE Awards, for Avondale Park. It also links back to a Planning Aid North project with local residents, which was commended in the 2008 RTPI NE Regional Awards and resulted in the involvement of a group of local residents in the evolution of this scheme. It is somewhat ironic that both the Pathfinder and Planning Aid North have now come to an end, as a result of Government funding restraints. Moreover the development itself has been delayed by the economic problems besetting the construction industry, which forced the building company who started the development into administration. Fortunately a new investor (Gateshead Bayis Ltd) has now taken over the scheme, which is nearing completion at the time this report was written.

Built on the site of a former petrol filling station, on a prominent approach into Gateshead, the Durham Road development (now called 1-9 Camborne Park) comprises the construction of a terrace of nine dwellings built to very high standards of sustainability (Level 4 in the Code for Sustainable Homes). Each of the two house types is relatively large (4 or 5 bedrooms), to respond to local housing need, and the largest units contain a home-office, forming an upper floor above the rear garage. The contemporary design of the development responds to the scale of nearby housing, but does not ape its appearance.

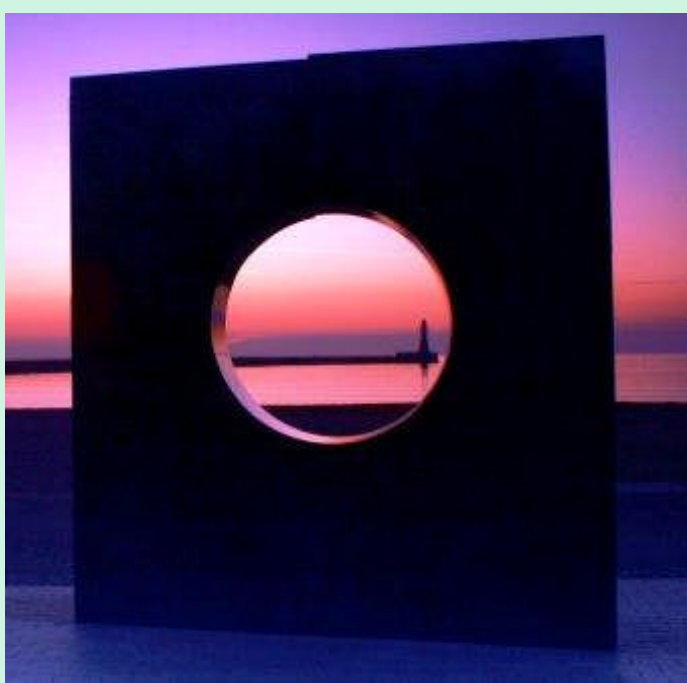
The appearance of the development from the front may not be to everyone's taste, but it is a radical improvement on what was there before, and will, when complete, make a valuable contribution to the renewal of the Saltwell community.

## **Sunderland Seafront Regeneration Project**

*entered by Sunderland City Council*

Sunderland's Seafront is still one of Sunderland's most valuable and best loved assets, but Roker and Seaburn have certainly fallen on somewhat hard times in recent years. Its revival is being led and managed by the Planning Implementation Team at the City Council, driven forward by a multi-disciplinary project group of officers from across the Council, and steered by a Seafront Members' Steering Group, with cross party membership from across the City.

The entry is notable for the well-presented suite of planning documents which are being used to provide statutory backing and inspiration for the implementation of an ambitious regeneration programme which has been kick-started with a number of environmental schemes along the promenade, but will only come to a successful conclusion when private sector developments in Seaburn come to fruition.



The Seafrost Regeneration Strategy, published in January 2010 provides the overarching context for the regeneration programme, backed up by the Marine Walk Masterplan, also January 2010 (a Supplementary Planning Document which provides the detailed context for a series of environmental improvements which have now commenced in the southern section of the seafrost) and the Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code (July 2011) (which provides guidance and a policy context for the proposed redevelopment of the area around the Seaburn Centre).

The first stages of the environmental works along the promenade, carried out this summer, make a promising start, with some attractive marine-themed features.

#### Other entries considered

##### **Jubilee Court, Kenton**

*Newcastle City Council and Your Homes Newcastle*

Newcastle's first supported housing scheme for vulnerable young families, constructed on an unoccupied cleared site at a busy road junction, and forming part of the city's Developer Framework Agreement, the development comprises 19 two bedroom apartments, a communal lounge, internal and external play areas, office and training rooms. The scheme benefitted from the prior preparation of both a Design and Access Statement and a Design and Development Guidance Note and has been constructed to Level Three of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

##### **Temenos, Middlesbrough Dock**

*Middlesbrough Council*

A huge and dramatic landmark sculpture, by Anish Kapoor, a modern complement to the historic Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge and a nearby crane, and to modern regeneration projects sited around the dock, including Middlesbrough Football Ground, the dramatic new building of Middlesbrough College, and the Community in a Cube (an apartment building now under construction).

##### **Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document**

*Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council*

thoughtful and comprehensive design guide, which will be of interest to many other local authorities contemplating the preparation of a similar document. The SPD is part of the local authority's extensive suite of Local Development Framework documents, and takes explicit note of the challenges of climate change (including making provision for electric vehicle charging infrastructure).

##### **The Heritage Strategy**

*Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council*

This is a beautifully illustrated and well written booklet, which deserves to be widely read in Stockton and by many others with an interest in heritage. Unlike many planning documents, reading it is likely to prove a pleasure for many general readers, as well as those with a professional interest in the subject! It contains sections on all Stockton's separate communities, on local personalities, and on the area's industrial past.

##### **St Andrew's Way, Eldon Square, Newcastle upon Tyne**

*NLP Planning, on behalf of Capital Shopping Centres, Leslie Jones Architects, Tweeds, Cundall and Sir Robert McAlpine*

The third and final phase of an ambitious redevelopment of the Eldon Square shopping centre, St Andrew's Way completely replaces a previous multi-storey car park, covered market and shopping mall with a new mall accommodating larger retail units, including a Debenhams department store. The development decisively moves the retail core of the city towards the previously marginal southern retail area, improves its appearance from Newgate Street, and is clearly a huge commercial success (welcoming 1.58 million visitors within its first two weeks of trading).

# 2011 Regional Award Winners

