

LONDON CALLING

The Journal of the London Branch of the RTPI

October 2005



Message from the Chair

Two issues ago we focussed on the recruitment and retention of planners in London. One of this issues we highlighted was the current reliance on planners from Commonwealth countries, and it is clear that without them the planning system in the capital would be in very real difficulty.

Despite this, the Government has recently changed the Working Holiday Maker Visa Scheme, so that planners from Commonwealth countries will only be able to work for 12 months of their two-year visa.

I have therefore written to Ministers at the Home Office and ODPM to express the concerns of the RTPI London Branch.

In doing so I have made clear that the medium- to long-term aspiration must be to encourage more people who are permanently resident in the UK to train as planners and to remain in the profession. In the meantime, however, colleagues from Commonwealth countries are playing a key

role and we cannot afford to lose them after twelve months.

We are in contact with RTPI HQ and the ALG who have also made representations to Ministers. I will keep you informed as to how this issue unfolds.

Meanwhile our Honorary Secretary is preparing, in common with other RTPI branches in England, for our transition to 'regional' status. Because of the way the London Branch is run, the implications of the change in status are relatively minor. However, we are taking the opportunity to revise our constitution and we'll need the approval of members at a forthcoming



Branch Chair, Richard Lemon

Extraordinary General Meeting. Details will follow and we hope to see you there.

Finally, my colleagues on the London Branch Executive are working on a number of affordable, and in most cases free, CPD events. We'll be holding seminars on sustainability, live-work, housing and retail planning policy in the next few months. For information on these events keep an eye on our website at <http://london.rtpi.org.uk> or sign up for our email list by contacting our Branch Administrator at londonbranch@rtpi.org.uk

As ever we're always keen to hear from you. Do get in touch if you have views or comments or if you want to get involved.
Richard

Richard Lemon is the chair of the RTPI London Branch and a Senior Consultant at Roger Tym & Partners



PPS 6 – the end of out of town stores?

Spatial Planning – the need to change emphasis and succeed

Community Planning is essential to meet the aims of achieving sustainable development, but is the planning system really reaching those that need to be involved. Nancy Astley considers the need to change the current emphasis to make sure communities are taking the initiative in creating local environments.

The last few years have seen a gigantic turn of approach in the world of planning. Gone is the focus on land-use planning and the control of sacred green-field sites, replaced by a far reaching approach that aims to ensure the sustainable use of land by assessing competing demands. To this end, applications and policy must now take account of the broader perspectives and produce a decision that is conducive to sustainable development factors, such as health, education, employment, crime and of course the environment.

In accordance with this approach to create greater sustainability is the need for the public to play a larger role in the decision making of the local area. Emphasized by the changes in planning legislation and accompanying guidance notes (especially PPS 1 and PPS 12) participatory planning is the new way forward. After all, as PPS1 highlights 'the outcomes of planning affects everyone, and everyone must therefore have the opportunity to play a role delivering effective and inclusive planning'.

In theory this approach to involving the local community is great. It promotes ownership, responsibility and closer workings between users and deliverers. It is logical that end users of developments should have easy access to the planning system at an early stage to state their desires without having to wait for the democratic voting process to set planning agendas. However, in practice spatial planning can't truly work, and for one main reason; it doesn't take account of human nature. The theory doesn't address the fact that the majority of people

don't want to get involved in the planning process. They don't want to spend valuable time debating potential developments when they could be spending time with the family or walking the dog. In practice, without a change of emphasis it will mean that those who do have time to interact will get the greatest say on how their environment is shaped whether this is beneficial to the majority or not. (At least with voting the majority get the biggest say). This is not a wild claim, but a plea to manage spatial development properly so that those who should benefit, do. At PAL we pride ourselves on our expertise in community participation, even so, for myself and colleagues it is a hard fought contest to get members of the public to participate in planning projects, even if they are

free. For spatial planning to truly work a lot more emphasis has to be placed on the public to have responsibility to initiate interaction with the planning process.

We must come away from the idea that the local councils must control participation (though obviously they will still need to maintain their management role) and create a system where local people can easily understand planning issues affecting them and be responsible for quickly and easily putting their views to the local planning authority. A good example of how a change in emphasis actually works, is a recent project undertaken by PAL in conjunction with the Women's Design Service and The Bridgehouse Trust. The project focussed on teaching community groups to undertake safety audits of



their local areas, pinpointing poor design issues and learning how they may lead to an increase in perceived crime. The project ticked all the right boxes of the spatial planning approach, crossing design with planning to achieve greater safety and teaching the community to interact and participate in the decision making process. However, try as we might, we found it difficult to get groups to participate in the project. The groups approached felt that they knew what was wrong with their area, they'd tried working with council's and police before but nothing was achieved. They didn't believe this project could be different. Their apathy to a certain degree was well founded. At that point we'd been treating the project as PAL teaching them something new, believing that they would naturally want to get

involved because the issues affected their local area.

It wasn't till PAL changed emphasis that we managed to get groups interested. We had to show possible participants that it was they who were going to be taking the initiative, they who were setting the agenda, and though PAL would manage the process, it was they that had a responsibility for making the changes.

The change in emphasis has produced great results, this project led to groups attending and addressing Council Forums, putting their findings to Councillors and applying for funding to undertake improvements. This type of change now needs to be implemented throughout the planning system.

For example, we can no longer pretend that Statement of Community Involvements will be the ultimate


answer to encouraging greater participation. SCIs are a tool to help but will be severely limited by the fact that they (like UDP policies) are being implemented from the Council to the local communities. For SCIs to work, they will need to be developed by the local groups, implemented through the groups framework and not the Councils. Councils will need to enable local residents to take the initiative in getting involved and then and only then will spatial planning truly meet the needs of people and be come sustainable.

Nancy Astley works for Planning Aid for London. This article first appeared in Planning Aid for London's Volunteer News. Any comments will be welcomed.



Time for success?

If you are a candidate looking for a new challenge or a client with a specific requirement, then please contact:
Nina Ramskill, Hugh Sowerby or Aaron Bowes on
0202 494 2555 or email: nina.ramskill@juddfarris.co.uk
hugh.sowerby@juddfarris.co.uk
aaron.bowes@juddfarris.co.uk



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Calling all mentors!

Interested in assisting in the professional development of a new generation of Planners?

We're waiting to hear from you...

From September 2005, the RTPI will roll out the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) as the new route to Corporate Membership. This will initially apply to graduates of RTPI accredited 1-year Masters programmes, and from 2006 will include graduates of all RTPI accredited degrees. The APC will test the extent to which candidates have built on their initial professional education by developing and demonstrating essential professional planning skills, competencies, understanding and knowledge.

Graduates seeking Corporate Membership through this route will apply to become a Licentiate of the RTPI as they work towards the APC. Licentiate status is a new class of membership introduced to support the APC by bridging the gap between Student and Corporate membership. The Licentiate route to the APC structures and formalises the experience gained in the workplace and encourages newly qualified practitioners to reflect on the work undertaken. This can be achieved with an extra level of support from the RTPI from the earliest stage in a practitioner's career. Access to a mentor provides an excellent means of delivering this support.

Why become a mentor?

Perhaps you already have some experience of acting as a mentor to a friend or colleague, whether formally or informally? Volunteering to mentor a Licentiate working towards the APC is a great way to develop this experience, by providing tailored support to a newly qualified planner who perhaps is not able to benefit from the experience of a Chartered Planner in their own workplace. Mentoring is a great opportunity for existing Corporate Members to shape, through the new generation of planners, the face of the profession in the future, and to contribute to the way in which standards are maintained. As a mentor you will benefit from:

- Free training in the form of four

mentoring modules delivered through the online learning resource www.planningmatters.co.uk. Initial mentor training will take only an hour and a half to complete, and can be accessed online at any time;

- Future central and regional training and networking opportunities;
- A two-way process: the opportunity to learn directly from the Licentiate and to share experiences;
- An excellent opportunity to develop your management and coaching skills, and to contribute to your Continuing Professional Development.

What will mentoring involve?

APC mentors will

- Support, guide and encourage the Licentiate in preparing for election to corporate membership through the APC;
- Provide support and advice on professional and professionally related matters;
- Assist the Licentiate in bridging the gap between the initial educational experience and future professional experience in practice;
- Offer advice and guidance on Professional Development Planning, maintaining a reflective log book, and meeting the competency requirements of the APC;
- Guide Licentiates towards becoming more critically reflective of their own practice and progress.

Detailed guidance on the requirements of Licentiates on their route to the APC, and advice on fulfilling the mentoring role, is available from www.rtpi.org.uk/apc.

Becoming a mentor

You may already have been approached directly by a Licentiate seeking a mentor, which is an excellent way to establish a mentoring relationship. However, for a number of reasons a Licentiate may not be able to identify a mentor for themselves. The RTPI is therefore seeking enthusiastic volunteers who are willing to be paired with a graduate and to support them as they progress through to the APC and Chartered status.

Interested?

To register an interest in this rewarding role, and to receive a mentor registration form, please contact apc@rtpi.org.uk, or download the form from www.rtpi.org.uk/apc.

Employer of graduate Planners?

The introduction of the APC is likely to affect all employers who recruit graduate Planners from 2005. If you, or any of your colleagues, would like to receive more detailed information on this new initiative, and how it may impact upon your current training and development processes, please email apc@rtpi.org.uk.



On Hallowed Ground?

The London and South East Branch of the Landscape Institute (LASE) is holding an inter-professional Meeting for landscape architects, architects, engineers, planners, urban designers, public artists and anybody working, or aspiring to work, in the built environment or related professions on Monday 31st October.

The meeting is focused on trans-disciplinary working in the area of Urban Design. Currently there is a debate going on in Greater London and the South East on how to improve Urban Design Skills in the region. Urban Design London has been established for the purpose of promoting and improving education, understanding and quality in Urban Design skills. A recent report by OPM for Urban Design London has found a serious lack of Urban Design skills in Local Authority Departments in London and a corresponding lack of Higher Education courses providing suitable Urban Design training. LASE recognises that Urban Design is a distinct area of knowledge and skill, yet is currently not the province of a single professional body. LASE wishes

to aid inter-professional working and discussion in providing and improving Urban Design Skills in education and practice.

Questions LI LASE would like to explore in the meeting are:

- How can landscape architecture, architecture, engineering, planning and other built environment courses be improved to provide better Urban Design skills?
- How does each profession seek to identify and promote its own unique contribution to the practice and understanding of Urban Design?
- How can better understanding between professions be promoted?
- How can all professions work together more effectively in offering better Urban Design skills and understanding?
- What delivery or governance mechanisms are needed to ensure the delivery of Urban Design skills in the built environment professions, local authorities and institutions?
- What are the weaknesses and strengths in our professional areas of expertise?

- How does each profession view the other?
- Does the current spotlight on Urban Design offer opportunities for improving the desirability of all professions to new students?

It is important to discuss these issues with our colleagues in sister professions. If you are a University Lecturer, a Local Authority Officer or currently work, have worked, or aspire to work in any of the built environment professions, please come and join us in this important and unique inter-professional meeting offering a unique opportunity for frank and honest discussion across professional barriers. A speaker from Urban Design London will be joining this event.

Help LI LASE let the skeletons out of the cupboard! Hallowe'en, Monday 31 October 2005. The proceedings from this event will be presented to Urban Design London to help in their remit to improve Urban Design skills provision. For further info please contact: Adam Cook, Secretary, LASE at honsec@lase.org.uk

Sustainability Appraisals Update and Review

The London Branch together with the RTPi Environmental Planning and Protection network and EDAW are holding an evening CPD Seminar on Tuesday 25th October. The event will focus on Sustainability Appraisals (SA) giving an overview and update on guidance. Through case study it will examine the positive role SAs can play in the preparation and implementation of DPDs and SPDs, and particularly its role within masterplanning and the development of more sustainable communities. Confirmed speakers include consultants from Eversheds, Capita Symonds and WSP Environmental and a senior officer from the Government Office for London.

We are pleased to announce that this will be a free event and is followed by a drinks reception sponsored by EDAW. Please refer to <http://london.rtpi.org.uk> for more details and to book your place – we are expecting attendance to be high!

RTPi Networks

Just a reminder about the RTPi networks – HQ has set up nine of these to promote networking and the dissemination of best practice - each has a website:

development planning <http://devplan.rtpi.org.uk>
education for sustainable development
<http://esd.rtpi.org.uk>
environmental planning and protection
<http://epp.rtpi.org.uk>
international development <http://idn.rtpi.org.uk>
regeneration <http://regeneration.rtpi.org.uk>
sole practitioners' <http://soleprac.rtpi.org.uk>
transport planning <http://transport.rtpi.org.uk>
urban design <http://urbandesign.rtpi.org.uk>
young planners' <http://youngplanners.rtpi.org.uk>

RTPi members join online and non-RTPi members obtain an application form from the Network Manager although all the networks will have the application forms available to download from their websites by the end of this month.



Composed upon Westminster Bridge

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

William Wordsworth

Retail Planning Update

The London Branch is holding a seminar in October 2005 looking at current retail planning policy.

Ahead of the event Vicky Wilshaw examines one current issue; 'assessing retail need'.

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for town centres (PPS6) was launched earlier this year, by the government.

At a conference earlier this year, John Prescott acknowledged too many local planning authorities (LPAs) had used PPG 6 to stop things happening out of town whilst at the same time were not identifying sites where retailers could build.

PPS 6 seeks to counteract this by placing a stronger emphasis on the plan led approach. Local Planning Authorities should 'plan for growth' in town centres through identifying need and allocating sites accordingly.

LPAs should seek to 'locate the appropriate type and scale of development in the right type of centre, to ensure it fits into that centre and that it complements its role and function.' Put simply the; right development, in the right place, at the right time. Regional and local needs assessments will be a key component

in identifying future 'need' and planning to accommodate it.

PPS 6 promises further guidance on how to assess retail 'need'. It is expected this document will be released by the ODPM imminently.

Clearly, this document will provide much needed clarity for all planners. At present there is no 'official' guidance on how 'retail need' should be assessed. It is important that this key piece of guidance is released soon so that all involved in planning for retail in the future are approaching it in a consistent way.

Otherwise it could mean, in the absence of LPAs identifying sites to meet 'retail need', developers will continue to be frustrated by the planning process as current development plans do not identify sufficient sites to meet retail 'need'.

In London, however, The Greater London Authority, has pre-empted PPS 6 and last year commissioned

consultants to prepare a need assessment to inform the next London Plan. The consultant's document identifies significant amounts of retail need across the capital.

PPS 6 indicates the promised 'need' guidance will provide guidance on the relationship between the regional and local need assessments. In London, its release sooner rather than later would be well timed and could provide valuable advice on interpretation to London's authorities when preparing their LDFs.

The London Branch seminar on 18th October will be looking at this issue amongst in more detail. If you are interested, please email Branch Secretary Sarah Nickson: londonbranch@rtpi.org.uk for further details.

Vicky is Senior Vice Chair of the RTPI London Branch and a planning consultant at CB Richard Ellis.



PP6 – more protection for traditional high street?

Branch Events

Tuesday 18th October — 5.30pm Putting Town Centres First – a PPS 6 Update CBRE, 1A Wimpole Street, W1G 0RE followed by drinks reception
Event sponsored by CBRE

Tuesday 25th October — 6.10 for 6.20 pm Sustainability Appraisals Update and Review, Wilkins Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, South Wing, Main Quadrangle, University College London WC1E 6BT
Event sponsored by EDAW

Monday 31st October — 6.30 – 9.00 pm On Hallowed Ground? Hallowe'en Inter Professional Meeting, The Gallery, 70-77 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, London EC1M 6EJ

EGM, date and time to be confirmed

Friday, 11th November — PFI and Housing - Transforming neighbourhoods
CBI Conference Centre, Centre Point, New Oxford Street, WC1A 1DU
Organised jointly by the London Branches of
Chartered Institute of Housing : Royal Town Planning Institute :
ROOMatRTPI : Royal Institute of British Architects

Thursday 24th November — Annual London Branch Quiz, incorporating Branch
AGM, Venue TBC

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Spot the Building Competition!

The winner of the 'Spot the Building Competition' in the last London Calling was Garry Smith who is Director of Research & Development for the UK and Republic of Ireland with the Salvation Army. Last issue's building was 'The Gherkin', more properly known as 30 St. Mary Axe. Garry wins a £10 voucher for Books etc. Thanks to all those who entered. Answers to this month's building by November 30th please to jon.barker@atkinglobal.com.



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Elemental Chlorine Free



NAPM approved
recycled product



Fully recyclable and
biodegradable



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