

# THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Newsletter of the **Royal Town Planning Institute East of England**  
Spring 2008 Edition

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[http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi\\_east\\_of\\_england](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_east_of_england)



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photo by courtesy of Barton Willmore



## What Lies Beneath

Can you recognise this town?  
You could win a £25 Marks & Spencer voucher  
(see page 4 for further details)

**INSIDE** Regional Conference Program 2008 • Regional Planning Award 2008  
• "Alice in the East Midlands Wonderland" • Who's Who • Planning Awards for  
the East • End of the Line, All Change • On Course to 240,000 Dwellings? • Young  
Planners Update • RTPI Learning Partners - How Can It Help You? • Regional  
Activities Committee 18.01.08

This edition of the Orient Express is sponsored by

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*Our lynx eyed reader from Burnham on Crouch will, I am sure have already noticed that this edition is subtly different from ones that have gone before.*

*OK, if you haven't noticed –take a quick shuftie at the back page. Where's Natasha's bit gone? Forget that for a moment -I'll come back to that in a minute.*

*What you will observe, is that there is a full page advert for our esteemed sponsors **Barton Willmore**. Furthermore at the bottom of the front page (I hope you're keeping up with these digital gymnastics) you will see that the Barton Willmore bit is bigger than previously.*

*Why, I hear you ask? Well it's because our sponsor, who let's face it, is doing a marvellous job and spending lots of dosh on formatting the newsletter and colour printing it, feels that it needs to raise its exposure within the newsletter both to increase its profile and hopefully to attract another joint sponsor to replace Bryant Homes who no longer wish to be involved. By doing this Barton Willmore hope to be able to demonstrate to prospective sponsors that it is worth their while.*

*Moving on. Our reader will be relieved to know that **Natasha** is still with us – now on the penultimate page!*

*A further change, is the repositioning of the very important **Regional Conference Programme** on page 3, i.e. opposite – in a more prominent position, rather than being buried in the middle of the mag.*

*This Spring edition is also different from the last Spring edition in so far as there are distinct absences:-*

*Where is the 'mug shot' of the new Chair? Where is the short biography where you can find out which school he or she attended and whether they are married? And the 'Address to the Region' deftly woven around such themes as –'Planning, The Way Forward', 'Working With*

*Others', 'Planning On The Ground' and 'Planning At The Underpass or Roundabout or something' ... ?*

*The reason is simple –we do not have a new Chair!!!!!!*

*Moving swiftly on again, congratulations to the winners of the East of England Regional Achievement Awards- full details inside-and again our reader will note how successful the East of England has been in the National Planning Achievement awards.*

*Congratulations also to the recently elected RTPI Junior Vice President – **Ann Skippers!** Ann is well known to many members of the RTPI East of England and held the position of Branch Chair in 2000.*

*Well that's it for now –see you in the next issue in the summer.*

**Peter Hakes**  
**Editor**



### NEXT ISSUE

The next issue should be published in Summer 2008  
Deadline for copy is 15 May 2008 to:

The Editor, Peter Hakes, 30 Viking Way,  
Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9HX  
tel: 01277 220043  
email: peter@hakes3334.fsnet.co.uk

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### THANKS TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS

### Peter Hakes & Tina Jessup

Peter's photo courtesy of Essex County Council and SAIL INTERREG Project

### Notice to Readers

The RTPI East of England Regional Management Board wish to point out that the sponsors have had no editorial role in the production of this newsletter and the Board does not endorse the sponsors or have any view on any matter on which they are involved.

*This edition is sponsored by **Barton Willmore***

## REGIONAL CONFERENCE PROGRAMME 2008

At the time of this newsletter going to print, the following is a draft Programme of Conferences planned for 2008. Keep up-to-date with progress by viewing the web site at [www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi\\_east\\_of\\_england](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_east_of_england)

SUGGESTED TITLE	DATE	LOCATION	COMMENTS
LDF'S - WHERE ARE WE NOW?	Thursday, 13 March	Marks Tey Hotel, near Colchester	Speakers confirmed
SUSTAINABILITY/CLIMATE CHANGE	22 April	Assembly Hall, Norwich	The RTPI East of England AGM will take place following this conference
PLANNING AND FLOOD RISK	Thursday, 15 May	Peterborough (tbc)	In association with the Environmental Agency. It is hoped that this will include a visit from the RTPI President
PLANNING ENFORCEMENT	June	To be confirmed	
MASTER PLANNING IN AN HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT	Tuesday, 8 July	Town Hall, King's Lynn	In association with the IHBC (tbc)
PLANNING AND THE LANDSCAPE	September/ October	Ipswich (tbc)	In association with the East Anglian Branch of the Landscape Institute
UPDATE FOR COUNCILLORS	October	Cambridge	
PLANNING LAW UPDATE	November	Cambridge	Annual update conference
ACHIEVING HOUSING QUALITY AND VOLUME	December	Milton Keynes (tbc)	It is hoped that this event will be held in association with another professional organisation

Any offers of help or assistance from Regional members would be very gratefully received! Suggestions of topics, speakers and venues are also useful.

Please help us to provide the Regional events you need!

Up-to-date information can be obtained from:

Tina Jessup, Regional Administrator, RTPI East of England

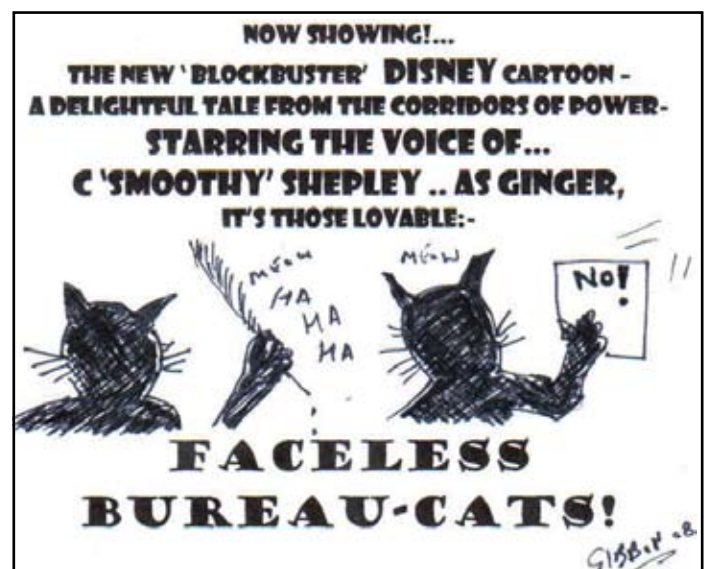
Tel: 01359 233408; Fax: 01359 232176; Email: [eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk)

Web: [www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi\\_east\\_of\\_england](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_east_of_england)

## HELPING MEMBERS TO ATTEND

East of England semi-retired, fully-retired and full time student Members in full time education are able to attend conferences at a subsidised rate. A carer's allowance may also be available for those Members who have to make special care arrangements to attend a Regional event.

For further details contact Tina Jessup –details above.



## QUIZ – WHAT LIES BENEATH

Another huge response-maybe helped by the Christmas break and having nothing better to do-you 'sados'! And we had 57 entries!

Slightly easier this time – the river with its moorings helped, I guess.

The answer of course was **Woodbridge** in sunny Suffolk. However there was one incorrect answer –he or she thought it was Maldon -I expect they had the map upside down – a method of reading, that I favour myself!.

The lucky winner this time was **Sara Nicholls** of Waveney District Council ...and she is, I suspect, at this very moment pushing her way through the lingerie section of Marks and Spencer clutching the £25 gift voucher!

The runners up were:-

*Darren Roberts, Rachel Knights, Nicholas Boyd, Edward Gilder, Myles Greensmith, Jean Perraton, Colin Endean, Catherine Brown, Eleanor Dash, Monica Palmer, Rachel Almond, Geoff Lyon, Gemma Pannell, Rona Hopkinson, David Glason, Gillian Richardson, Roy Warren, Philip Ridley, Anthony Knights, Peter Longden, Lowestoft Development Control Team at Waveney DC, Stephen Burgess, Gary Hancox, Peter Eyres, Sian Darby, Michael Ovenden, Adrian Parker, Connie Frost-Bryant, Alan Stones, Graham Nourse, Susannah Dyer, Margaret Young, Peter Moss, Frank Cross, Adrian Matthews, Philip Wilson, Michael Brooks, Ian Currie, Andrew White, Michaëlle Coupe, Peter Mansbridge, Mr. J Spurgeon, Peter Heath-Brown, Daphne Mair, Peter J Unthank, Myles Greensmith, Dave Bissenden, Dave Cookson, David Hughes, Don Ayre, Michael West, Richard Underwood, Philip Raiswell, Ann Pilgrim and Andrew Meddle*

Well now it's **your** chance to win that valuable voucher. All you have to do is decipher the aerial photo on the front cover and tell me where it is!

Letters, post cards and e-mails to the Editor (address on page 2) will be eligible.

These will be kept in a secure place until 4 weeks after central distribution from East of England RTPi HQ. The first entry taken (by someone independent of the RTPi) from this secure place will be the winner. Only those on the East of England RTPi register will be eligible with the exception of the Editor and staff of Barton Willmore.

**Good luck!**

## REGIONAL PLANNING AWARD 2008

Entries are now invited for the 2008 Award. This prestigious award is open to all members of the East of England Region. The Rules are simple and few in number:-

1. Any completed project or proposal in the field of town & country planning which has been or could be implemented or applied in the region is eligible.
2. Any member of the East of England Region may nominate an entry.
3. The nominator should give a title to the achievement, a brief description of it, and identify the recipient(s) of the Award.
4. The nomination should be accompanied by any supporting material thought to be appropriate (this can follow the nomination, but by the closing date).

**Closing Date: 23 May 2008**

### Assessment Criteria:

The entries will be judged on the basis of, Innovation; general applicability across the Region; public participation or partnership working; standard of presentation and outstanding recognisable benefits of the scheme.

### Entries should be made to:-

RTPi East of England Regional Office  
4 Opus House, Elm Farm Park, Great Green,  
Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3SH  
or email: [eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk)

All projects nominated for the RTPi National Awards will automatically be entered into the Regional Award. However, if you wish to nominate a scheme for the Regional Award only, there is no fee payable. See the RTPi East of England web site for an entry form.

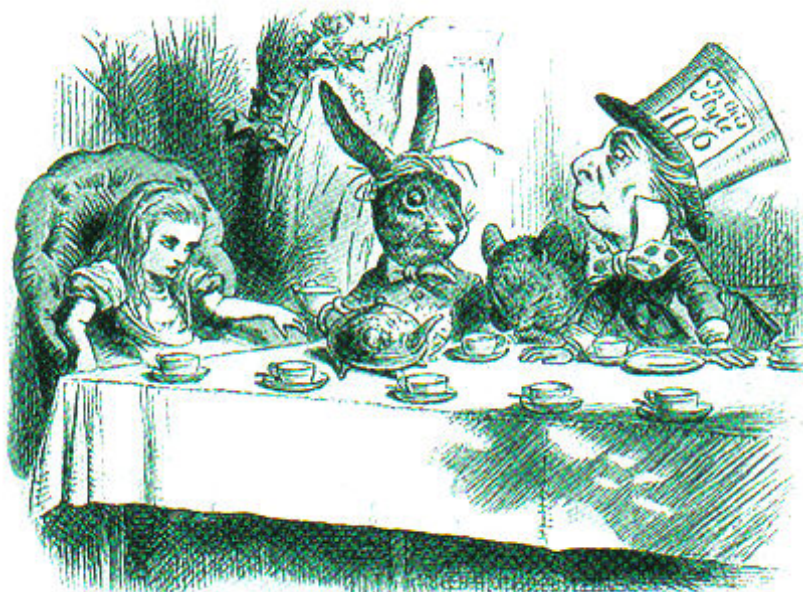
# ALICE IN THE EAST MIDLANDS WONDERLAND

Alice had got herself a temporary job in the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit. This had been set up specifically to respond instantly to the governments alternating desire to demolish a few houses because there were too many or build them because there were too few. Occasionally the unit was called on to do a bit of planning. This gave her a first hand opportunity to understand the new simplified planning system. This suited Alice, as she was essentially a simple girl.

However on her first day she became confused. The Mad Hatter was in charge. "You", he said in his self important way, "will be working in the LDF team in accordance with the LDF timetable to produce a DPD that will be compliant with the SCI and SA and in conformity with the RSS. That is of course subject to changes in the new Planning Bill which will change the new simplified system to something so ridiculously simple that even a simple child such as yourself will understand." "I see," said Alice without actually seeing.

"However", continued the Mad Hatter, "something far more important has happened. What do you know about ego towns?" "Ego towns, do you mean eco towns?" "Yes and no" replied the mad Hatter enigmatically. "They

are the future. The Queen of Hearts has announced a grand competition. Instead of this nonsensical process of spatial planning where everything is carefully considered; in this process everyone gets to vote for his or her favourite ego town and the winning entry gets built. Except of course the winner has already been selected. Let me show you"



He led Alice down the corridor and into a room where The White Rabbit was sat at a drawing board muttering to himself.

"This is the winner", said the Mad Hatter. Alice stared at the drawing board. "It looks a bit like a rabbit warren", she said nervously. "It looks like a rabbit warren", replied the White Rabbit, "because it is a Rabbit Warren. It is to be called Upton Poundbury and is being built on Watership Down."

"But how will the people get down the small holes" asked Alice timidly. "People", spluttered The Mad Hatter, "where in the design brief does it say anything about people. They are not eco friendly- rabbits are!"

• Ivan Moss, West Northants Joint Planning Unit  
*This article originally appeared in SPECTRUM - thanks to the East Midlands Region for allowing its reproduction.*

## What do you think about the new look ORIENT EXPRESS?

If you have any views on new format or anything else to do with the newsletter, or if you or your organisation would like to become a sponsor, please write to:

Peter Hakes,  
30 Viking Way, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9HX  
or email: [peter@hakes3334.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:peter@hakes3334.fsnet.co.uk)



## RTPI EAST OF ENGLAND 2008

### REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Regional Chair  
Regional Senior Vice Chair  
Regional Junior Vice Chair  
Regional Immediate Past Chair  
Regional Hon. Secretary  
Regional Hon. Treasurer  
Regional Representative on RTPI General Assembly

Vacant - awaiting nomination  
Vacant - awaiting nomination  
Vacant - awaiting nomination  
**Nigel McCurdy**, Forest Heath DC  
**Richard Chillingford**, Retired  
**Steve Bateman**, Private Practice  
**Richard Summers**, SQW Consulting

### REGIONAL ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE (RAC)

*(includes Members of the Regional Management Board - see above)*

### CORPORATE MEMBERS OF THE RAC:

<b>Tony Barker</b>	North Herts DC
<b>Claire Churchill</b>	Kings Lynn & W Norfolk BC
<b>John Dagg</b>	Barrister
<b>Peter Geraghty</b>	Brentwood BC
<b>Nigel Gibbs</b>	Dacorum BC
<b>Phil Godwin</b>	North Norfolk DC
<b>Peter Hakes</b>	Private Practice
<b>Ann Hockey</b>	Anglia Ruskin University
<b>Paul Maison</b>	Private Practice
<b>Andrew Martin</b>	Andrew Martin Associates
<b>Robert Phillips</b>	DLP Planning Ltd.
<b>Robert Purton</b>	David Lock Associates
<b>Shaun Scrutton</b>	Rochford DC
<b>Ian Vipond</b>	Colchester BC
<b>Jackie Ward</b>	Private Practice
<b>Peter Warner</b>	Great Yarmouth BC
<b>Richard Whittaker</b>	Environment Agency
<b>Richard Woolley</b>	Retired
<b>John Young</b>	Private Practice

### EAST OF ENGLAND PLANNING AID

Planning Aid Co-ordinator: Vacancy - to be appointed  
Planning Aid Caseworker: **Christine Flittner**  
(email: eecw@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)  
Planning Aid Community Planner: **Kirstin Smart**  
(email: kirstin.smart@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

### TECHNICAL MEMBERS OF THE RAC:

There is currently one vacancy for a Technical Member.

### STUDENT MEMBERS OF THE RAC:

<b>Steven Bainbridge</b>	The Landscape Partnership
<b>Phil Grant</b>	RTPI
<b>Robert Hobbs</b>	Norwich City Council
<b>Jillian Luntz</b>	East of England Regional Assembly

There is currently one vacancy for a Student Member

Please contact any of the above via the Regional Office, tel: 01359 233408; fax: 01359 232176; email: eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk

### REGIONAL CONTACTS

Regional Deputy Rep. on RTPI General Assembly:	Vacant - awaiting nomination
Regional Consultation Secretary:	<b>Peter Warner</b>
Regional Env. Education Convenor:	Vacant - awaiting nomination
Regional Newsletter Editor:	<b>Peter Hakes</b>
Regional Press/PR Officer:	<b>Phil Godwin</b>
Regional Programme Convenor:	<b>Richard Woolley</b>
Young Planners Liaison Officer:	<b>Robert Hobbs</b>
Regional Administrator:	<b>Tina Jessup</b>
Regional Clerical Assistant:	<b>Jean Aldous</b>

Please contact any of the above via the Regional Office, tel: 01359 233408; fax: 01359 232176; email: eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk

## PLANNING AWARDS FOR THE EAST

The East of England had some success in the 2007 RTPI National Planning Awards which were announced on 7 February.

The Award for Climate Change was presented to Cambridgeshire County Council for their "2010 - A Waste Odyssey: Development of a Sustainable Waste Management Park".

The Award for Rural Areas and the Natural Environment went to the "Broads Authority Sustainability Guide" submitted by the Broads Authority.

The Commendation for Renewed Neighbourhoods was awarded to Fenland District Council for the "Nene Waterfront, Wisbech".

Congratulations to all those who participated.

These three entries had also been selected as the top three in the Regional Planning Achievement Award. Further details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

### ...AND NOW START THINKING ABOUT NEXT YEAR!

THE RTPI PLANNING AWARDS FOR 2008:  
Closing date Monday 31st March

Details of the 2008 national planning awards are now on the RTPI website [www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk) under Events, Awards and Networking. This year all entrants will be encouraged to submit entries online and clear instructions will be given. The full list of awards and categories is as follows:

- Sustainable Communities
- City and Metropolitan Regions
- Town Regeneration
- Renewed Neighbourhoods
- Rural Areas and the Natural Environment
- Heritage
- Arts Culture Sport
- Climate Change
- Spatial Strategies
- Planning Process
- E-Government
- Equality and Diversity

And additionally the judges may identify other categories once they have received the entries. And don't forget all entries will automatically be entered free of charge for all Regional Awards. For more details on all the Institute's awards please contact [awards@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:awards@rtpi.org.uk) or phone : 020 7929 9473.

### RTPI Library & Information Service

The library is a reference-only collection consisting mainly of post-1990 publications on planning-related topics, including a wide-ranging collection of current UK development plans and 100 current journals.

The online catalogue is available at [www.rtpi.org.uk/library](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/library) and includes details of library holdings (excluding current legislation), a comprehensive index to journal articles, and details of Institute publications and policy statements.

The reading room at Botolph Lane is open in office hours. To get the best out of your visit you are advised to contact the library staff in advance.

Internet search facilities are available free of charge, and there is a staff-operated photocopying service (subject to copyright restrictions). Copies of Institute policy statements can be supplied free of charge.

The library operates an enquiry service, including the compilation of subject reading lists, and can offer advice on alternative sources of information as required.

Contact [library@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:library@rtpi.org.uk) or telephone 020 7929 9452.

## EASTERN WINNERS

### RTPI Eastern Region Awards 2007

Seven projects were entered into the Regional Awards competition last year.

The three winners represent some terrific work being undertaken by planners in the Eastern Region:

- ❑ In third place the **Broads Authority** has produced an excellent Sustainability Guide in CD and leaflet form. It is very accessible and attractive – a good hands-on approach to a technical issue. See next for further details.
- ❑ The project in second place is a really refreshing approach to a 'Cinderella' area of planning, waste planning. **Cambridgeshire County Council's** "2010 A Waste Odyssey" a deserving second place for a really excellent piece of work that tackles an important issue in a creative way.
- ❑ And the winner is ... .. **Fenland District Council** for the **Nene Waterfront project at Wisbeach**. This first class regeneration initiative has already won awards. In the words of one of our judges "A good traditional

piece of hands-on positive proactive planning". It also scooped The Waterways Renaissance Awards run by the Waterways Trust and BURA. Fenland District Council was praised for "punching above its weight". The project appealed particularly to the judges because of the innovative way the council acted as a catalyst to unlock the potential to develop 20 acres of land that had been derelict for more than 20 years. The project has its own website linked from the Fenland District Council site – a good example of positive planning in the region.

*(see following item in this issue and on page 9 of the Autumn 2007 edition)*

The four unsuccessful projects encompassed a Statement of Community Involvement, a good, clear document; a regeneration scheme that combined an interesting conversion with modern enabling development; a new development with close attention to sustainability and the creation of a 'community feel' and a new partnership funded community collaboration which is a great concept that is transferable to other situations.

Jackie Ward, Chair of the Awards Panel

## The 3rd prize winner in the Eastern Regional Awards



*From left to right: Guide Booklet and CD ROM; Principles of Sustainable Design set out as a 'Checklist' from the Guide.*

### Sustainability Guide for the Broads

As well as coming third in the East of England Regional awards this Sustainability Guide, produced and designed by LSI Architects for the Broads Authority has been announced an RTPI National Award Winner in the category 'Rural Areas and the Natural Environment'. The Broads Authority commissioned the Sustainability Guide to help property owners and developers in

making planning applications to meet the requirements for sustainability. Yet another example of the East of England leading the way for innovative thinking. The Guide covers all aspects of Sustainable Design, and was developed through research and consultation with key stakeholders from the Broads Authority. The guide is tailor made for the Broads Authority, relating to the topography, location and needs of The Broads. It is therefore written and graphically designed to be clear and easily understood. The guide is incorporated in a DVD case, in a brochure form, and on a CD. The CD enables the guide to be read in A4 format, and printed if necessary.

*When it comes to planning Fenland punches well above its weight:-*

## THE WINNER OF THE EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL AWARDS

Fenland District Council proved that it could punch well above its weight in winning the **RTPI East of England Regional Planning Achievement Award for 2007**, as well as securing a commendation in the Renewable Neighbourhoods category of the RTPI's National Planning Awards 2007".

Fenland set about methodically and imaginatively building a case for a comprehensive regeneration of the derelict Nene waterfront area of Wisbech. It is a planning approach that has proved so successful that the council is looking at adopting it for other sites around Fenland.

Fenland put together a compelling and viable case for taking control of the 20 acre site in multiple ownerships and succeeded in attracting funding that was more than three times its annual budget.

The site had lain derelict for more than 30 years and part of it, an old gas works, was heavily contaminated. The development was not able to be brought forward in the private sector due to the various impediments related to the land, notably contamination from previous industrial uses, and consequently public sector intervention was the only way to stimulate these brownfield town centre sites back into positive uses. Fenland District Council employed Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design to carry out a feasibility study in 2002, which became the blueprint for what has become a textbook urban regeneration project.

Armed with the feasibility study, the Council set about creating a funding package totalling over £10 million, much of it from EEDA, English Partnerships, ERDF (Objective 2) and the council itself, to pump prime key aspects of the project, including remediation, provision of environmental improvements, construction of the iconic Boathouse business centre, an extended yacht harbour together with a new wet dock, slipway and 80 tonne boat lift serving the east coast area. It also paved the way for a modern Foyer project to be constructed on the site, providing a safe home and educational facility for 17 disadvantaged young people, with land provided by the council for Axiom Housing to build and run the facility.



*Images supplied by Fenland DC*

Securing the sites was a prime objective and so Fenland District Council opted for a twin-track approach using negotiation with land owners alongside pursuing Compulsory Purchase Orders, which prevented land owners holding the project to ransom or blocking the project altogether. It also helped the council to remove a nightclub that was not part of the holistic vision for the site.

Before the start of the project parts of the land were identified for housing and there was no comprehensive or site specific policy for the land. This represented a particular risk if land was brought forward for development in a policy vacuum and in a piecemeal and uncoordinated way. In view of this, an area wide planning and development brief, design guide and Section 106 contributions framework was prepared and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for the site. The SPG established the development and design principles for the whole development and put in place a mechanism to lever in private sector funding to help deliver the necessary infrastructure to realise the grand regeneration vision, resulting in a £50 million regeneration development.

Ground contamination had been a key stumbling block for the development of the site for decades as remediation was likely to cost more than the land was worth. The external public funding included for a comprehensive remediation strategy designed to clean up the site in order to make it an attractive proposition for a private sector developer to take on the housing development side of the regeneration programme.

This comprehensive approach gave the partners the confidence to tender for a major house builder to construct more than 350 homes on the site to make it

## EASTERN WINNERS cont.

a vibrant mixed-use modern quarter of the town that would include shops and businesses and a yacht club. Taylor Wimpey subsequently won the tender as preferred developer and they are scheduled to begin work on site later this year.

Leader of Fenland District Council, **Geoffrey Harper**, said: "Our holistic approach to the regeneration of this derelict quarter of Wisbech has proved so successful, that we will be adopting it when we bring forward other key sites in Fenland. The Nene Waterfront Regeneration Project has totally

*transformed the mindset at the council. We now have the confidence to embark on major long-term planning projects. We have learned a great deal from this exercise."*



Day and night views (CAD impression)

## "END OF THE LINE, ALL CHANGE"

The Government has spent the last few years detailing change after change to the planning system, with the intention of helping first-time house buyers and to assist developers to provide these properties! We have been dazzled with stories of 240,000 new homes being built per annum. The reality is that we are not achieving this figure, the ability of first time buyers to purchase a house is still difficult and our ability to get a planning application registered, let alone approved, remains as volatile as it has for some time.



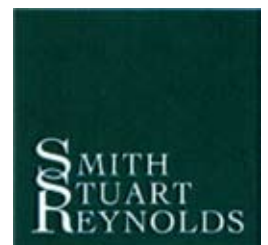
So what has the Government decided to do? That's right; more 'new changes'! The newest (as of 6th April 2008, but already being trialled by some local authorities) is for a Standard Planning Application Form, known as '1APP'. 1APP provides one application form for all local authorities, applicants and their planning agents for all applications. The 1APP is intended to ensure the same questions are asked by all Councils, making it easier for applicants/agents to know what is required to have a planning application registered. This is great, but like so many things there is, in the short-term at least, a downside in that the form is lengthy and each section must be answered, even if just to highlight that the question being asked is "not applicable".

In addition, the 1APP now requires more information

than before. This is no bad thing as it does focus the brain and it will assist Council planning officers by providing more detail about a development and also increasing surety as to how it will be brought forward, but it also means more time and money must be invested in thinking your development through before you apply, even if it is one of a speculative nature. This will require more detailed plans, consideration being given to the means of drainage and when you know, how this will be achieved. You will also have to state the number of bedrooms to be created and type of tenure for each new dwelling.

So we have more changes, it will mean more work and increased cost for applicants and planning consultants, but will it speed things up and allow for better decision-making? I seriously have my doubts that it will have any noticeable positive impacts, but in theory it should! Hopefully the increase in time that local authority planners are meant to find themselves with following the introduction of 1APP will allow the streamlining of their practices. It is hoped that by placing new burdens on applicants/agents, local authorities will be able to help in the delivery of 240,000 new dwellings per annum, otherwise we might soon witness some other new and helpful changes from Government.

By **Paul Smith** - Associate  
Smith Stuart Reynolds  
[www.smithstuartreynolds.co.uk](http://www.smithstuartreynolds.co.uk)



## ON COURSE TO 240,000 DWELLINGS?

Spring 2008 is expected to see the first of the emerging Regional Spatial Strategies to be published in its final form. The East of England Plan has been five years in the making, partly because of a lengthy four month EiP and Further Proposed Changes as a result of a detailed assessment of the Habitats Directive. The East of England Plan is likely to be followed hard on its heels by the Yorkshire and Humber Plan and the North East Plan.

All the English regions have now got on with preparing their draft regional spatial strategies and it is possible at this stage to see how EiP Panels and, in some cases, the Secretary of State have responded to the housing targets.

First, a health warning. A fairly cautious approach needs

to be taken in interpreting trends because the issues, opportunities and constraints clearly vary between regions. Nevertheless, the evidence to date suggests that both Panel Reports and the Secretary of State are prepared to propose an increase in housing numbers over and above those figures in the draft RSSs. To date, the largest increase has been in Yorkshire and Humber, which has a rise of 16% in housing numbers recommended by the Panel, followed by a further 9% increase proposed by the Secretary of State.

However, that may be overtaken in the coming months by the south-west region, which has seen a 24% uplift in housing numbers following the Panel Report in January 2008. The SoS's proposed changes are currently awaited.

Emerging Regional Spatial Strategy	Current Stage	Current Residual Annual Target for Dwellings in 2016	Next Stage
East of England	SoS Further Proposed Changes October 2007	26,830	Final Plan expected spring 2008
Yorkshire and Humber	SoS Proposed Changes September 2007	22,140	Final Plan expected March 2008
North East	SoS Further Proposed Changes Feb. 2008	7,725	Final Plan expected summer 2008
South East	Panel Report August 2007	32,004	SoS Proposed Changes expected spring 2008
South West	Panel Report published Jan. 2008	28,473	SoS Proposed Changes expected spring 2008
East Midlands	Panel Report published November 2007	21,757	SoS Proposed Changes expected spring 2008
North West	Panel Report published May 2007	22,844	SoS's Proposed Changes expected March 2008
West Midlands	Phase 2 of RSS Revision Draft Plan published on 7th January 2008 for consultation	18,280	
London Spatial Strategy		30,500	
<b>Total</b>		<b>210,553</b>	

Source: CLG and GOs

The Government has set a clear target in the Housing Green Paper of building 240,000 dwellings in England by 2016 with two million homes completed between now and 2016 and a further 1 million by 2020. If the residual average number of dwellings in the current stages of the RSSs and the London Spatial Strategy are aggregated, after taking account of dwellings completed since the start of the RSS, there would appear to be a shortfall of around 30,000 dwellings per annum still to be made up. Some RSSs (East of England Plan, for example) state explicitly that the overall housing provision is a minimum, not a ceiling, and

local authorities will be expected to exceed the overall total where this is justified in particular circumstances. All the RSSs will be subject to review leading up to 2016 so there is scope for the Secretary of State to make the case for an uplift in the overall numbers of dwellings to bring them closer in line to the 240,000 target.

### HOUSING COMPLETIONS

Whilst housebuilding targets in emerging Regional Spatial Strategies are clearly a critical factor in seeking to achieve the construction of 240,000 dwellings by 2016 in England,

Regional Spatial Strategy	Annual Average Dwellings in Draft Plan (over Plan period)	Annual Average Dwellings in Panel Report (PR*)/SoS's Proposed Changes (PC) (over Plan period)	Change
East of England	23,900	25,400 (PC)	+6.3%
Yorkshire and Humber	16,607	20,871 (PC)	+25.7%
North East	6,588	7,580 (PC)	+15%
South East	28,904	32,004 (PR)	+10.73%
South West	22,978	28,473 (PR)	+23.9%
East Midlands	20,418	20,980 (PR)	+2.8%
North West	22,844	22,844 (PR)	0%
West Midlands	18,280		
London Spatial Strategy Early Alterations	30,500		

Source: CLG and GOs

\* - Those figures taken from the Panel Report may still increase as a result of the Secretary of State's involvement.

up-to-date data on the level of permanent dwellings started and completed by quarter is perhaps a more useful tool to judge whether or not housebuilding rates are on track.

Annual housebuilding rates have steadily risen year-on-year since 2001/2 when completions fell to their lowest level since the 1920s. In 2006/7, completions rose to 167,577, a 2.5% increase on the previous year. The first two quarters of 2007/8 (April-October 2007) showed a slight increase of 1,100 above the same period in 2006/7.

Comparing housebuilding rates over a 12 month rolling total, there has been a steady trend of rising housing completions in almost all regions over the past two years, notably in the East of England, Yorkshire and Humber and the North East. There is concern, however, that this has been achieved through increases in density, with a large increase in the number of flats being built, rather than because more land is being released for housing. Only the West Midlands region shows a bucking of that trend with a significant dip in the last quarter. Overall, however, the fact remains that housing completions need to rise by a whacking 43% over the next 10 years if the Government's target is to be met. It looks a tall order when housing completions have risen by only 14% in the previous ten years up to 2006/7.

## HOUSING STARTS

Where is perhaps even more cause for concern is in the number of permanent dwellings that were started in the last quarter. 2005/6 saw the highest number of starts in England for more than 20 years with 184,906 dwellings under construction. However, that fell by 6% in 2006/7 to

173,382 and the evidence of the 12 month rolling trend suggests that the number of starts is not showing any significant signs of recovering to the 2005/6 level. There has been a slight upward trend in starts during the September 2007 quarter compared to the 12 months to June, driven by increases in the North East, Yorkshire and Humber and the South West. Particularly worrying, however, is the sharp fall in housing starts in London with a drop in 2 years from 24,741 starts in the capital to 19,796 – a 20% fall. Clearly, with starts (at least in most cases) turning into completions, and a downturn in housing confidence, the picture is not looking particularly rosy.

## IN CONCLUSION

The Government has made housebuilding growth and the need to improve affordability of new housing two key objectives, as demonstrated respectively by the housing targets in the Green Paper and the establishment of the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit to specifically improve accessibility to market housing. Indeed, housing is one of the highest priority areas of domestic policy across the political spectrum.

Background evidence that the overall national target is likely to prove difficult to achieve unless a significant increase in delivering housing can be met, will not overcome specific site constraints on a site.

However, it is likely that developers & house-builders will push for higher numbers in the future reviews of the RSSs which have been promised.

*Paul Foster is an Associate at Barton Willmore  
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### YOUNG PLANNERS' ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2007: CHANGING CLIMATE – CHANGING PLANNING

By Gary Ashby

The 2007 Annual Young Planners' Conference was held in Glasgow on 19th and 20th October 2007 and began by highlighting problems associated with climate change and how these problems have been experienced around the world. There now appears to be a general consensus that climate change is real and debate has shifted from whether there is a problem to finding ways to reduce the effects of current climate change and preventing further climate change from happening. The main focus of the conference was on the central role that spatial planning can play in helping to meet these objectives through the pursuit of sustainable development – from individual 'eco-friendly' dwellings to whole new 'eco towns'.

respond to the challenge of combating climate change, by improving the energy efficiency of new developments and reducing their 'carbon footprint'. Many examples of good practice in Scotland were given, such as the Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building which require all major new developments to be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement to demonstrate how sustainable the proposal is against 6 standards (please see [www.edinburgh.gov.uk](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk) for more information). Other initiatives from Scotland and the rest of the UK that were presented ranged from sustainable construction techniques to innovative information gathering systems that can be used to help monitor new developments and aid the decision-making process. The conference

also highlighted the role that urban design can play in creating sustainable communities and how it is slowly becoming firmly integrated into the planning process. Examples of good sustainable design included the Dongtan 'eco-city' project in China and the sustainable Vauban neighbourhood in Freiburg, Germany.

A strong planning policy framework can help to bring about change but more needs to be done to ensure that as much development as possible is 'zero-carbon' and is designed, planned, built and used in a sustainable way, particularly given the current pressures for more housing which – if not planned properly – could add to the problems of climate change.

A more proactive, joined-up approach is required using a combination of ideas, initiatives, strategies, skills and areas of knowledge if any real progress is to be made.

Planning as a profession is unique as it plays a central role in the development process and is in the best position to make a real difference to the way the built environment interacts with the environment. There is currently a significant gap in skills and knowledge in this subject area so more is needed to be done to ensure that future planners are equipped with the right tools at university and throughout the rest of their careers to be able to make a real difference. Although the emphasis of the conference was on the role planning can play in combating climate change it was stressed that everybody



Jim Claydon addressing the Young Planners' (photo courtesy of Jo Hooper)

The concept of sustainable development was explored from many different perspectives and many different ideas and initiatives about how to create 'zero-carbon' buildings and how to live 'zero-carbon' lifestyles were presented. A particularly memorable initiative presented at the conference was the Merton Rule, which is a policy pioneered by the London Borough of Merton that requires on site provision of renewable energy to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the built environment (to find out more about the Merton Rule, please visit [www.themertonrule.org](http://www.themertonrule.org)).

The conference highlighted the fact that climate change is now high on the Government's agenda and all areas of the wider built environment profession are beginning to

## YOUNG PLANNERS UPDATE

should play a role by altering their lifestyles and changing their attitudes, for example by using the car less frequently or by being more energy efficient.

Overall, the conference provided an opportunity to explore a current planning issue that is high on the planning agenda. This conference was very different to last year's one as it did not reach a definitive conclusion and it was made clear that there is no single magic solution in combating climate change. Please visit [www.climatechallenge.gov.uk](http://www.climatechallenge.gov.uk) and [www.carbonfootprint.com](http://www.carbonfootprint.com)

to find out more about the problems caused by climate change, what is being done to tackle these problems and ways in which we can all help, not only as planners, but as responsible citizens. As always, it was interesting to meet other planners and observe planning in another part of the UK.

*Gary is a planning policy officer at Tendring District Council and also a part-time postgraduate student at Anglia Ruskin University.*

**Norfolk Young Planners':** by the time you read this, Norfolk Young Planners' would have held their latest event entitled 'Housing and Sustainability' on 21 February at City Hall in Norwich, sponsored by **Inspire East**. An article about the event will appear in the next edition of Orient Express. Two more events are planned in Norwich in May and August of this year, the latter likely to be a walking tour around the city. Further details will follow.

Other events in the region: young planners met in Cambridgeshire in February to discuss plans to organise an event in the Cambridge area and it is hoped that there will be other events around the region this year following on from events organised in Hertford and Ipswich last year.

**Young Planners' Network:** a new-style Young Planners' Network steering group has recently been established. The group consists of one person from each region or nation, plus the young planner on the RTPI Executive Board. I am the representative for the East of England and **Andrew Taylor** is the young planner on the RTPI Executive Board. For details of each of the members visit the steering group page on the RTPI website at <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/1026>. The next steering group meeting is on 2 April in London.

If you have not yet registered for the **Young Planners' Network** and wish to do so, please visit the RTPI website at [www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk).

**Assessment of Professional Competence (APC):** there have been some concerns about the APC and the RTPI

will be reviewing this and the guidance notes this year. If you have any particular feedback about the APC process then please e-mail me and I can forward your comments to the RTPI. If you do not wish your name and details to be forwarded to the RTPI then please let me know with your comments.

**National Young Planners' Conference:** in the previous edition of the Orient Express I mentioned the National Young Planners' Conference held in Glasgow last October (see related article by Gary Ashby). This year the conference will be held in Brighton in October and further details will follow.

**Networks Conference:** the very first joint networks conference (including the Young Planners' Network) will be held in Birmingham on 23 April. There will be presentations from **Kelvin MacDonald** (former RTPI Director), **Joe Montgomery** (CLG), and **Huw Morris** (Planning magazine). There will be a choice of walking tours and the opportunity to have an open facilitated discussion to share good practice. The cost is £50 (excluding VAT), which includes lunch and all refreshments. See the RTPI website for more information.

**Regional:** we are also always looking to promote events throughout the region so if you would like to become involved in the organisation of the network then please e-mail me at [RobertHobbs@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:RobertHobbs@norwich.gov.uk) or phone 01603 212193.

*Robert Hobbs is a planner in the Planning Policy and Projects team at Norwich City Council.*

## RTPI LEARNING PARTNERS - HOW CAN IT HELP YOU?

RTPI Learning Partner status is a mark of excellence in training and development. **Jacqui Ward**, RTPI Education Projects Officer, explains more.

### What is the RTPI Learning Partner initiative?

RTPI Learning Partners is a way of identifying and helping to promote those employers who are committed to supporting their staff's professional development. It is also a way to set benchmark standards, so that employers who are just seeking to develop their support in this area have a framework with which to work in order to improve their practice.

Attainment of RTPI Learning Partner status endorses and promotes your organisation's commitment to professional competence and high professional standards. RTPI Learning Partner organisations have shown that they value professional membership and actively support training and development. Gaining the status therefore sets you apart as an employer leading the way in this area, and helps you to promote your commitments to the profession and beyond.

### What are the benefits of becoming an RTPI Learning Partner?

At a time of an acknowledged shortage of planners, employees are well aware that they can afford to 'shop around' to find the best employer. Becoming an RTPI Learning Partner – and promoting this through use of the RTPI Learning Partner logo – therefore demonstrates to current and future employees that you are committed to their professional and career development, and supports you in your recruitment and retention of high calibre staff. Stakeholders, clients and the public also have access to information on RTPI Learning Partners, not least through the RTPI's widely promoted online list, so can identify those employers who are actively committed to high professional standards through investment in training and development.

Becoming an RTPI Learning Partner also ensures that your organisation is contacted directly with updates, information or consultation relating to education, membership and professional development – guaranteeing that you stay at the forefront of the profession on training and development matters. It also gives you as the employer a clear contact within the RTPI for any problems or questions you might have on issues around membership, education and lifelong learning.

In 2009, we will be introducing an award for excellence among RTPI Learning Partners as part of the RTPI's



annual awards. Further details will be published on the Awards pages of our website shortly.

### What kind of evidence must an employer present in order to apply?

Many of our current RTPI Learning Partners have demonstrated innovative schemes to support their employees, from structured programmes for graduates and managers, to action learning and creative use of IT to support professional development. However such simple measures as formal appraisal schemes, support to attend training, mentoring and clear value for professional membership are also strong indicators of an employer who should be able to gain Learning Partner status.

### Are any RTPI Learning Partners based in the East of England?

From the public sector, Cambridge City Council and Three Rivers District Council have successfully become Learning Partners. From the private sector, Charisma Spatial Planning and Carter Jonas have both been successful, and Learning Partners Arup, Savills and Scott Wilson also have offices in the region.

### What do current RTPI Learning Partners think?

**Christine Leonard**, Policy & Projects Business Manager for Cambridge City Council, says 'Achieving accreditation as a Learning Partner has shown that our investment in providing CPD and training opportunities is worthwhile. It has also opened up dialogue with planning schools and the RTPI, creating a more constructive relationship in order to work together to produce planners equipped with the skills and knowledge they will need in the future'.

For more information visit [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education\\_and\\_careers/learning\\_partnerships/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education_and_careers/learning_partnerships/) or email: [lifelonglearning@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:lifelonglearning@rtpi.org.uk).

## MIDDLE-AGED PLANNING ACADEMIC OF THE YEAR



Cleo Vague is at the very cutting edge of academia at the Bill Bryson Centre for Urban Floorscape Planning at the Boadicea Eastern Counties University (BECU).

He has successfully steered the department through a particularly complicated and at times acrimonious reorganisation as the Partick Thistle University transmuted into BECU.

With great foresight and having a friend in HR, he managed to make himself redundant as Deputy Dean and returned late last year as a Part-time Professor (consultant!) to BECU -on a lot more money!

He began his career a long time ago with a rural district council (which wishes to remain anonymous) whilst lecturing in the evenings at Midbedsex Tech. And the rest is history!

His achievements have included holding the record for the number of student trips organised to obscure East European Republics in 2006. He recently gave a thought provoking paper on his nearly completed 'Comparative Study of the Use of Abbreviations and Acronyms in Professional Organisations', and is currently Vice - Chair of 'Edu-Kare' - which is understood to be Esperanto for The European Society of Deputy Heads of Planning Schools.

His latest challenge has been in setting up a European programme of research in spatial planning – which readers may be aware of – The European Research Environmental Co-ordinating Transferable Information Operational Network or ERECTION.

He is also collaborating with Dr Miles Bromley on a

huge tome called 'Climate Change - an ABC of all you need to know to save the Planet (earth)'.

He is currently married to Megan and they have eleven lovely daughters—all building control officers, and a large dog called Shepley.

His victory in a poll of members for the Middle-aged Planning Academic for 2007 wins him a year's supply of Inspectors' muesli. The runner-up, Dr Miles Bromley wins a two year supply.

At the award ceremony, Kurt Manifold said "Cleo is a highly motivated part-time member of the staff who works very hard to ensure every one else is working very hard. He is an excellent role model for all aspiring part-time academics."

Shortlisted candidates:-

Dr Miles Bromley, Visiting Lecturer in Environmental Studies at BECU

Professor Veronica Kneetrembler (aka Marcia Worlspittle) – Visiting Lecturer in Social Studies and Espionage at BECU

Gilles Gruntphuttock, Deputy Head of Comparative Planning at Saltfleet College of The Marshes.

The shortlist was compiled by the Grand Editorial Board of 'Planners Up Front and On Top', chaired by Abraham Oossedam.

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# TOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRE

### PLANNING AID

The National Planning Aid Conference 2008 is being held at King's College, Cambridge on 14 and 15 April 2008. The over-arching theme of the Conference will be Regional and Sub-Regional Strategies, and how both communities and developers can and should be involved, with particular reference to the new housing agenda. Further information will be available shortly. Contact: **Tino Hernandez** for further information.

### RTPI PRESIDENT'S VISIT 2008

The RTPI President in 2008 is Janet O'Neill, a consultant based in Yorkshire. Janet will be visiting the East of England on a date yet to be decided in 2008. Suggestions and ideas to incorporate into the President's visit are always welcome. Contact the Regional office at [eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk) or the Regional Honorary Secretary, **Richard Chillingford**, at [erchill@aol.com](mailto:erchill@aol.com).

## EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Would you rather receive information from the Region by email? The Region's e-mailing list is growing! We are keen to reduce the post coming through your letterbox or into your in-tray - would you rather receive your information by email?

There is the added advantage that you would receive the most up-to-date information at the earliest opportunity of events organised at short notice, or changes to published information about events.

Please contact the Regional Administrator **Tina Jessup** at [eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk) if you are keen to receive information electronically.

## WHY NOT ADVERTISE IN THE ORIENT EXPRESS?

The **Orient Express** newsletter is published quarterly. Eighteen hundred (1800) copies are distributed to planners throughout the six counties of the **East of England** and a copy is now available from the **RTPI East of England** region web site.

**It is therefore an ideal vehicle for your message!**

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planningmatters.co.uk has been developed by the RTPI to assist its users in handling their jobs effectively and in continuing their professional development.

Users benefit from their learning being recorded electronically in a personal learning log and in receiving an online self-assessment for each downloaded planning module. Users are able to use this log as evidence of their CPD.

All planning modules on this website are commissioned and prepared under the strategic direction of an Editorial Board.

The material is divided into the following types:

- ❑ Action Lists: spatial planning, business and management modules providing an easy-to-adopt set of steps to follow in implementing an action plan
- ❑ Knowledge Builders: modules which offer a detailed overview of the topic and references to further online and print based sources of topic specific information
- ❑ Self-Development: bite-sized, self-contained chunks of learning for personal development purposes
- ❑ Diagnostic: self-audits of existing processes, procedures, skills and knowledge
- ❑ Management Book Digests: easy-to-absorb abstracts of well-known management books

New content is added regularly!

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[www.planningmatters.co.uk](http://www.planningmatters.co.uk)

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE 18.01.08

### Bury St Edmunds

*Centre of Western  
Civilisation*



Held, as always, in Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds

- ❑ As the RTPI East of England is starting the year without a Regional Chair, Senior or Junior Vice Chairs, a chair was elected for the meeting.
- ❑ Formal congratulations were passed on to **Ann Skippers**, a previous Branch Chair, for her election as **RTPI Junior Vice President**.
- ❑ **Richard Whittaker** from the Environment Agency was welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee.
- ❑ **Barton Willmore's** continued sponsorship of the Orient Express was discussed. It was agreed that the strapline on the front of the newsletter be increased in size to accommodate a larger logo and a full page advert would be allowed on the back page.
- ❑ The Region will help advertise the **National Planning Aid Conference**, which is taking place in Cambridge on 14 and 15 April. (see Stop Press)
- ❑ The **Regional Planning Achievement Award Judging Panel** had now judged all entries received for the 2007 Award. See separate items in this newsletter. The Awards would be presented at the Regional AGM.
- ❑ It was agreed that Conference folders should be produced for conference delegate papers. Tina had received quotes, which varied depending on the number required. **Robert Purton** offered the services of his design team at **David Lock Associates** to produce a suitable design. (Since the meeting, David Lock Associates have very kindly sponsored the design and printing of these folders, which will be ready for the first conference of 2008!).
- ❑ Nominations were invited for the **Exhibition of Regional Good Practice** at the 2008 Planning Convention. It was suggested that the winners of the 2006 and 2007 Regional Planning Achievement Awards be nominated.
- ❑ The RTPI is looking at the possibility of setting up an **Association for Planning Administrators**. It is hoping to identify people from each Region who may be interested. The Committee suggested that details are included in the next Regional e-bulletin.
- ❑ **Robert Hobbs**, the Regional Young Planners Liaison officer, reported that the next Young Planners event will take place on 21 February in Norwich. Other events are being organised. See separate item in this newsletter.
- ❑ The **Regional Treasurer** was pleased to report that the budgeted income from conferences for 2007 had been exceeded. All conference organisers and helpers were thanked for their hard work in making the conference programme a success. Tina was also thanked for her tireless work in making the events happen.
- ❑ The cost of replacing the Regional laptop, used at conferences, should be looked into.
- ❑ With three vacancies on the **Regional Management Board** (Chair, Senior Vice Chair and Junior Vice Chair), it was agreed that **Jackie Ward** and **Robert Purton** be co-opted on to the Regional Management Board until the vacancies had been filled.

## REGIONAL CONTACTS

All Members of the Regional Management Board and Regional Activity Committee Members can be contacted via the Regional Office at: RTPI East of England, 4 Opus House, Elm Farm Park, Great Green, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3SH

Tel: 01359 233408    Fax: 01359 232176    email: eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk

## THE PENULTIMATE NATASHA!

*Natasha Oosedam, Editor of 'Planners Up Front and On Top', brings you 'love, intrigue and town planning' from the 'Ultimate pen of the Marshes' - Marcia Worlspittle*

### A 'CAREER GRADE' MAN?

He thought he was on the 'up' and then he had had that fateful meeting with old 'long pipe'-the Engineer and Surveyor of Crabton RDC, himself – in person. Normally the Deputy (Major Upshott-Smith) - nominally Head of Planning would have dealt with these matters. So why the 'big chief'?

He thought back - had it been that apparently unenforceable condition he had drafted when he was in DC?-or was it the rather lack lustre performance (influenced possibly by the five pints of Newcastle Brown, the night before) at the public meeting into the Upper Crabton Inner Relief Road and Old Town CDA? But to be fair though, the County boys did all the work!

Well anyway he was now in 'Special Projects' - in fact he was Special Projects. He had felt quite proud of himself to start with - until the sniggers and sideways glances as he walked through the typing pool.

"What is 'Special Projects'?" he asked his colleague, the APO for the West Area and Old Town. He coughed, took a look around and took a slow sip of brown and mild, and muttered darkly "that it was probably 'The Gypsy Issue' and interminable meetings with County and the Refuse Disposal Section on the proposed waste site."

"Looks like you've got the poisoned chalice" was his closing remark.

He felt very low after that chat in the 'The Ol' Herrin's Head'.

But next morning he popped into the Town Clerks office for a file on another Special Project - the County's consultation on the Advert Area of Special Control - when his azure blue eyes met those of Bella, the Town Clerk's new secretary. She had long golden hair, a pert turned-up nose, a curvaceous figure and very long legs - the latter were very apparent as she swivelled round on her chair and bent forward displaying her ample bosom as she handed him the buff folder.

He grabbed the file, felt himself go bright red, stumbled backwards towards the door and rushed out.

Back in Planning he noticed a new man in the glass box - presumably the new head of DC.

That evening he pretended to pump up the 26 inch front tyre of his maroon Philips Tourer, with dyno-hub lighting and four speed hub gears. At last she ran down the Town Hall steps as best as she could in her pelmet of a miniskirt, clutching her imitation crocodile skin handbag. "I say," he called. "There's a NALGO Car Treasure Hunt next Tuesday starting from the 'Herrin' –do you fancy going?"

Bella glanced at the bicycle with its chromium plated drinking flasks and black pannier bags and laughed. He quickly pointed out that his 'wheels' were at home being tinkered - with, but would be ready to 'rock and roll' next week. "We'll be cooking on gas!" he said, somewhat irrelevantly.

That night he polished his red MGB till it glowed in the setting sun – the engine still 'missed' a bit, but she looked immaculate...

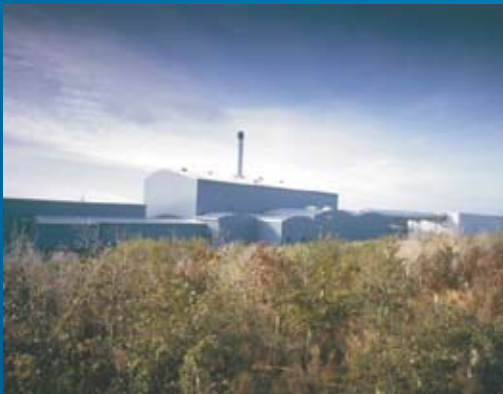
*To be continued...*

*This was first published in serial form in 'Large and Well Formed' under the title 'District Liaison and County Matters' but is now unavailable, except to those who read 'Planners Up Front and On Top'*



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The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Regional Activities Committee or Management Board, the Institute or the author's employer's.

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