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RTPI PLANNING AWARDS 2009

Presented on Thursday 4 February 2010

JUDGES' REPORT

The Royal Town Planning Institute established its Annual Awards for Planning Achievement in 1977. The purpose was twofold: to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne; and to throw a public spotlight on the positive achievements of the town and country planning profession.

INTRODUCTION

It has been a fascinating year for the judging panel as we tackled the difficult, but immensely enjoyable, task of identifying quality planning achievement.

Entries were of a consistently high standard and this made selecting the shortlist, and then the Award winners, very hard. We have no doubt that some very good schemes and strategies didn't make it to the shortlist, but those that did demonstrated merit in abundance.

All our 32 finalists deserve congratulations. Planning and planners are too often criticised and too rarely praised. The RTPI Awards give us the opportunity to put that right. They underline the sheer volume of work that is needed to produce good design and places where people want to live.

Key themes to emerge this year are:

- the high level of commitment by planners across the country to producing worthwhile outcomes;
- that successful schemes are often driven forward over years, sometimes decades, by one or two key people;
- the timescale over which we need to plan to resolve issues satisfactorily, not riding roughshod over them to meet artificial targets; and the
- importance accorded to climate change and sustainability throughout.

There are 14 Award winners for 2009 and eight Commendations in a total of 14 categories. As in previous years we took care to ensure that judges declared an interest in any submission in which they could have been perceived to have had an interest – there were 3 instances of this. There was no award in one category “Neighbourhood Renewal”. This also happened last year so the Judges on next year's Panel will consider whether to drop this category in future years. Two new categories “Public Realm” and “Contribution to Planning” were created to better reflect the scope of the achievement demonstrated by two of the Award winners.

The Panel looked for something special and significant at national level in terms of the process involved and/or the outcome. Thanks are due to everyone who helped us by addressing the criteria clearly in their submissions and “filling the gaps” during visits or presentations, enabling us to deliberate on the awards in the light of all the available evidence.

We travelled first to Bristol to hear about the Planning Inspectorate's new Householder Appeals Service which developed from a pilot study and enabled a smooth start from April 2009. Then we saw the Cabot Centre – a major addition to the city's retail offer that has transformed a previously very run-down city quarter. Moving to Radstock we heard how the Council had worked with the local community to take a constructive look at the re-use of derelict rail land with the aim of giving a boost to the whole town.

In the City of London we saw how the imposition of a security zone around the City had been turned into an opportunity via a series of projects that secure major improvements to the urban realm.

Travelling to the south coast we were impressed by One Brighton, the forerunner of a series of 'One Planet Living' communities which will help to 'raise the bar' in respect of levels of sustainability in future developments across the country. In Gosport a good attempt had been made to develop a collection of historic buildings in Royal Clarence Yard into a new community, although this proved a difficult task because of market conditions and lack of funding for the public transport infrastructure that should have transformed the area's accessibility.

Travelling from there by water taxi we were given a whistle-stop view of the conflict between marine industries and the seemingly relentless pressure for developing "homes with a view". In offices attached to one of the few remaining commercial boat yards we gained an insight into the thinking that led to preparation of the Solent Spatial Strategy which has already influenced regional and local planning policy. It provides evidence of the importance of high-end marine industries to the sub-regional economy to support decision-making. After the presentation we added to our collection of "trains and boats and planes" as we left to catch rail connections home by ferry across the Solent.

There were three retail-led schemes in the City and Metropolitan Areas category, one in Bristol has been mentioned already. The second was in Newcastle where the unlovely Eldon Square shopping centre has been revamped and re-integrated into its surroundings. Spending the night in the city enabled us to see the Tyne riverfront splendidly illuminated and gave us the opportunity to sample one of its excellent restaurants.

Castle Howard provided similarities and contrasts in terms of historic associations and context. Here in the face of the staggering bill for restoration of its Grade 1 listed buildings, monuments and landscape, the landowners took the bold step of developing a conservation management plan that goes beyond the confines of an estate management plan by proactively engaging in spatial planning for the whole area. Hearing from those involved and seeing the potential of the approach was inspiring, and reinforced the message that planning is very much about people and ensuring that they can live fulfilling sustainable lives in rural, as well as urban, communities.

Coincidentally both schemes shortlisted in the Rural Areas and the Natural Environment category were in Wales. During a surprisingly infrequent occurrence of a heavy squall - given the wet summer of 2009 - we arrived during August at St. Davids' Gateway and the Oriel y Parc Gallery to a warm welcome and presentation on this sustainable and integrated development which serves both locals and visitors. We then travelled north and after an overnight stay in a very good hotel in Aberaeron walked part of the "Ceredigion Coast Path. This is a good model in the development of new coastal access and well worth a taster visit as an essential component in the Welsh Assembly Government's plan for an all-Wales Coast Path to be created by 2012.

Our visit to Scotland enabled us to see Captain Scott's "Discovery" in dry dock at Dundee en route to see the living proof that historic buildings can have a continuing role in community life. Gardyne's Land comprised a group of buildings so dilapidated that they seemed beyond rescue. Over several decades a unique partnership developed between a University lecturer, his students, the City Council and a hostel operator which has breathed life and purpose into this restored city-centre complex. The restoration has boosted the local economy by bringing visitors into the area, drawn into venturing off the normal tourist routes by a reasonably priced and well located place to stay. In Glasgow

we had a presentation on the Clyde Valley Partnership Integrated Habitat Network Model and saw an example of its use.

Linking our visits to Scotland and Northern Ireland we next visited Belfast to hear about the Streamlined Consultation Scheme introduced by the Northern Ireland Office in cooperation with Derry City Council. This, and the second entry we included in our list of finalists - the stunning Victoria Square Regeneration Project, was impressive given the unique planning system in Northern Ireland and the stage reached in its development. Victoria Square has real potential to unite communities with its mixed retail and leisure uses which are open into the evening.

The Ashford Ring Road Project demonstrated a high level of innovation and originality in the planning and design of road-space and streetscape. It has resulted in a more civilised and sustainable urban environment and is a model for other UK towns and cities with similar problems. From here a taxi transfer took us to Cobham Hall the Grade 1 listed building (now a school) in Cobham Ashenbank. Via the happy chance that High Speed One runs through the area, funds won for mitigation have been used to good effect to create part of a wider green network. We heard that the Darnley Mausoleum had been saved by this project rather than the TV "Restoration" programme, and that public ownership, funding and access has been secured for the whole area. A dash for Ebbsfleet station enabled us to sample the Javelin train to St Pancras in its first week in service. Thanks for arranging this, and for support for all the other elements of our work and visits, go to Judy Woollett and Sue Percy at RTPI HQ.

Our next stop was Dorney Rowing Lake. Located in the green belt adjacent to the Thames this is a first class sporting facility available for international events and public use when not in use by its owners Eton College. In a far-sighted move the College has created a facility that provides benefit for its own students and the wider public – the recently completed landscaping making this a fine setting for informal recreation for local residents.

In the same, busy, week we also fitted in a visit to Birmingham, walking round its transformed city centre and viewing the plans to widen the work to bring in the surrounding inner core areas under one planning concept linked to the City's corporate vision. Then we went to Stockport to see the covered market - the final "jewel in the crown" of a revitalized historic quarter of the town.

Travelling via the Docklands Light Railway from Bank we saw firsthand how close the new Woolwich Arsenal Extension brings people from this previously amazingly isolated community to the jobs and opportunities of the City and the London City Airport. The new station has been well integrated into Woolwich town centre and also provides a direct link to the London overground rail system.

At intervals throughout the summer we had presentations at Botolph Lane. We were grateful that a party from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council travelled down to London to give us an insight into why and how they produced the first Education Sites DPD and how it links to the authority's corporate agenda, and to Liverpool University Civic Design Department for coming to expand on their entry to mark their first 100 Years of Planning Achievement. We also had presentations on the London Brownfield Sites Review, London Rivers Action Plan, and Olympic Delivery Authority's Inclusive Design Strategy and Standards, Southwark's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD,

Moving Green Roofs into the Mainstream, the Mill Hill AAP, Communityplanning.net, and a Benchmark for the Spatial Planning Function. All these amply illustrate the quality of achievement in a diverse range of planning work.

There were several contenders for the Silver Jubilee Cup but we decided to award it to “Victoria Square Regeneration Project, Belfast” in recognition of the scheme’s outstanding contribution to both the science and art of town planning, and to community development in Northern Ireland.

Kay Powell (Chair) BSc, MSc, MRTPI, MIHT
Professor Chris Couch, MRICS MRTPI
Gareth Pryce MSc, DipArch, RIBA, MRPTI (ret)

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES (*sponsored by The Crown Estate*)

Award for Sustainable Communities

to

“One Brighton”

Submitted by Brighton and Hove City Council

One Brighton is a high density mixed-use redevelopment on a 0.39 hectare site north east of Brighton Station. The scheme comprises 172 residential units (31% affordable), 1,206 M² office space and 972 M² of community space and forms part of the ‘New England Quarter’ (NEQ), an 8.0 hectare inner city mixed use development that is nearing completion. The developer is BioRegional Quintain with Crest Nicholson and builder Denne Construction.

In the decades following the closure of Brighton’s locomotive works in the late 1950s, the whole area was subject to a number of large scale redevelopment proposals, none of which came to fruition. In the late 1990s a superstore proposal was successfully resisted. Following this, the council prepared supplementary planning guidance in the form of a masterplan for mixed use redevelopment. This resulted in the submission in August 2001 of a ‘hybrid’ planning application, comprising an overall masterplan and detail for certain blocks. This was granted permission in December 2002.

As work progressed, council planners were in an ongoing dialogue with the Ethical Property Company, who co-ordinated the response to the masterplan’s requirement for a community centre and green spaces. This led to meetings with BioRegional Quintain and to the ‘One Brighton’ mixed use development nearing completion in summer 2009.

One Brighton is one of the first projects to be underpinned by BioRegional Quintain’s ‘One Planet Living’ (OPL) principle, which aims to enable and encourage people to live within a sustainable ecological footprint, taking responsibility for their consumption of resources.

The scheme’s central location, high density, and access to public transport, shops, services and employment are integral elements of its sustainability. It has achieved an “Excellent” rating under EcoHomes with maximum credits i.e. considered to be ‘Zero Carbon’ rated. The commercial offices and community space are designed to achieve BREEAM ‘excellent’ ratings. The Zero Carbon energy strategy seeks to reduce all energy demands, through the thermally-efficient building fabric and energy efficient lights and appliances, and to supply all energy from renewable sources. Space heating and hot water will be provided through an on-site communal biomass (woodchip) boiler. Electricity is supplied through a combination of on and off-site renewable energy generation technologies. As part of the planning application, the developer has committed to reduce carbon emissions by 95% in relation to a target developed by a third party consultant on behalf of Brighton and Hove City Council.

Efficient appliances, aerated taps and showers and low dual flush WCs are installed in all dwellings. An area of roof-top mini allotments allows residents to lease food-growing space as part of an approach to promote local, seasonal and organic food. The development features best practice recycling facilities, including an on-site in-vessel composter. The aspiration is to divert 98% of waste from landfill by 2020. Building materials have been carefully selected taking account of their thermal performance,

embodied energy and carbon, and overall environmental impact, using local materials and suppliers wherever appropriate.

Parking spaces are limited to disabled users and vehicles from a car club, as well as sheltered and secure cycle storage and excellent access to public transport, cycling and walking routes.

From the start of the implementation phase of the overall NEQ masterplan the council established a steering group, co-ordinated and chaired by a planner with specific responsibility for its delivery. Planning officers were integral in providing a positive response to BioRegional Quintain's aspiration to find a site for its first OPL development in Brighton.

A key issue was the need to reconcile variations between the proposed scheme and the permitted outline masterplan. In the event it was agreed that the ground floor retail element envisaged in the masterplan was not economically viable and would not be included. For similar reasons the heights of buildings and number of dwellings were also raised substantially compared to those proposed in the masterplan. The local planning authority and developer worked co-operatively to negotiate this outcome to balance considerations of planning policy and economic viability.

The scheme represents a model of sustainable development. One Brighton is the first of a series of OPL communities that is intended to be established in at least five countries. Locally it will serve as an exemplar of sustainability which will help to 'raise the bar' in respect of levels of sustainability required and expected in future developments. For these reasons the judges have given the 'One Brighton' scheme an Award in the Sustainable Communities category.

CITY AND METROPOLITAN AREAS

Award for City and Metropolitan Areas to “Victoria Square Regeneration Project, Belfast” Submitted by BDP

Victoria Square opened in March 2008 in Belfast city centre. It is a landmark, retail-led, mixed use urban regeneration scheme comprising 63,000m² of retail space on two levels, anchored by a flagship House of Fraser store. It has a multi-screen cinema complex and a food-court on two levels, restaurant terrace, 106 residential apartments and a two level basement car parking for approximately 1000 cars.

Victoria Square was previously an urban backland between the main shopping area and the recently developed Laganside. The site was previously used mainly for open car parks and low grade retail and office uses. It contributed little to life in the city centre and was a barrier to the expansion of the city's primary uses. Its lack of vitality and associated security issues made it a very inhospitable area, preventing any life after dark.

The initial proposals were submitted to the Department of Regional and Social Development (DSD) in 1999 and the scheme was selected as the preferred city centre development scheme and a major component of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Statement. Throughout its gestation, the scheme has been characterised by a close partnership approach between the developers (Commerz Real AG), DSD, BDP and the DoE NI Planning Service as well as a wide range of statutory consultees. Following a Public Inquiry into the DSD Victoria Square Development Scheme and Vesting Order in 2002, full planning approval was agreed in April 2003. Demolition work commenced in 2004.

However, whilst lengthy planning processes are not unusual in such city centre locations, Victoria Square is far from being a straightforward retail-led development. It is part of the “street-scape” not a “mall”, with every facet of the footprint of the development connecting directly onto the surrounding city streets. The architecture successfully integrates with the surrounding streets using a variety of materials to complement the proportion, elevations and massing of the building elements.

Belfast's well-established Kitchen Bar has been successfully relocated into a former tea warehouse - a listed building which has been refurbished and forms an integral part of the new development.

The car parking access ramps are well integrated into the road network and barely visible from the streets. The development is totally inclusive and accessible to all members of the general public, including ambulant and wheel-chair users, deaf and hearing impaired persons, blind and visually impaired people as well as families with small children.

In addition, Victoria Square creates an iconic image on Belfast's skyline for at its heart, and encompassing all the main horizontal and vertical circulation, the development is crowned by a magnificent 37metre diameter glass dome on a 24metre high circular stone colonnade. This feature is dramatised by lifts and escalators linking a series of

floating “platforms” and providing access to all shopping and entertainment levels. At the highest level and inside the dome there is a superb viewing platform - a place that has now become a major tourist, visitor and children’s attraction.

The dome is lit by blue LED lights at night and, set high above the surrounding buildings, is clearly visible from many parts of the city. It looks down on the roof of the development itself, a roof-scape that has been regarded as a “fifth elevation”. Its grass roofs and well concealed engineering plant and equipment represent an enlightened and innovative approach for such a large development.

Central to the sustainability of Victoria Square is the energy saving “open-street” concept, demand-controlled ventilation system for the basement car parking, the sedum green roofs; a condenser-loop system for heating/cooling the retail units and a number of other facilities. A solar “sail” within the dome tracks the sun thus helping to reduce the build up of heat in the central space in summertime.

This delightful and exciting piece of “place-making” has contributed enormously to the environment of the city centre – attracting tourists and bringing people back into the city centre to live as well as for entertainment – a thing the people of the city have avoided for over 30 years. For many years much of Belfast has been seen as “contested space” by sections of the community. However the dome and central space provided by Victoria Square is acknowledged to be “uncontested” – a space for everyone, enjoyed by the whole community and symbolising pride and optimism in the newly-found peace and prosperity of the city.

We consider Victoria Square to be a visionary area regeneration project of high quality emanating out of a strong and committed private / public sector partnership. It forms an integral part of the DSD’s regeneration of Belfast City Centre and is a catalyst for other improvements and future developments in the surrounding area. For these reasons the judges have given the Victoria Square Regeneration Project an Award in the City and Metropolitan Areas category, and have also awarded it the Jubilee Cup.

**Commendation for City and Metropolitan Areas
to
“Woolwich Arsenal Extension”
*Submitted by Docklands Light Railway***

Opened in January 2009, ahead of schedule and on budget, the £180m Woolwich Arsenal DLR extension is a cross-river transport link that offers significant benefits including providing a splendid new station and interchange at the heart of Woolwich town centre.

The whole area has been suffering for some time from extensive economic and social decline, exacerbated because the River Thames acted as a barrier to labour markets and services in the rest of the city. It was commonly cited that a lack of accessible cross-river transport prevented local people taking advantage of jobs, education, training, healthcare, shops and leisure facilities outside the immediate vicinity.

From the outset of the project DLR engaged with the London Borough of Greenwich and together they devised an integrated solution to encompass the new transport link,

station, and wider town centre redevelopment and improvement and this was underpinned by preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

The scheme was progressed via a Transport and Works Act (TWA) application submitted by DLR which included powers to widen Woolwich New Road for two way-traffic as part of the overall solution to improving town centre access and interchange.

Of the four route options the selected route was the most challenging from a design and construction perspective, and that which would cause the most short-term disruption to town centre businesses and properties and with 16 properties in the town centre required to be demolished over a three-year period. Despite these challenges, following intensive consultation with businesses and the community, a survey showed that 95% of respondents supported the scheme. Ultimately it was also the option judged to provide the greatest long-term regeneration benefits.

The TWA was approved with only 50 objections, the lowest ever for a DLR extension. Powers were also secured in record time, taking only 18 months from submission to agreement.

The design of the route and station broke new ground for DLR as Woolwich Arsenal is fully integrated with the town centre and includes three points of access, two at street level for the town centre, buses and adjacent housing and a third providing direct interchange with the adjacent rail station.

Woolwich Arsenal station itself is a positive addition to the town centre in design terms, fitting elegantly into the street scene, enhancing the setting of the adjacent art deco station and enabling wider improvements in the urban realm. It is also the first new DLR station built to include public art, designed by award-winning artist Michael Craig-Martin.

Particular care was taken during the construction phase to minimise disruption, support relocated businesses and to provide information and allow for suggestions and feedback. From an environmental perspective, the extension adopted a pioneering approach as spoil from the tunnels was removed via barges on the River Thames, saving the equivalent of 11,550 lorry movements through the town centre.

The extension has already brought about sustainable development, and will continue to do so in future by:

- acting as a catalyst for regeneration in the area,
- enabling local people to take advantage of employment opportunities and amenities on both sides of the Thames, including the City and West End;
- improving interchange with bus and rail services; and
- offering an environmentally friendly alternative to those who own a car.

A product of excellent partnership working, this piece of new transport infrastructure has been well integrated into Woolwich town centre and its public transport links, and has the potential to transform the lives of local people. For these reasons the judges have given a Commendation to the Woolwich Arsenal Docklands Light Railway extension in the City and Metropolitan Areas category.

**Commendation for City and Metropolitan Areas
to
“Cabot Circus”
*Submitted by Land Securities***

Cabot Circus is a large mixed-use redevelopment of part of Bristol’s Broadmead shopping area. The scheme comprises 93,000 square metres of retail space, a 2,600 capacity car park, 280 student bedspaces, 240 apartments, 20 affordable houses, a multi-screen cinema, restaurants, a 150 bedroom hotel and a site for future office development.

Broadmead was developed in the 1950s as a replacement for Bristol’s war-damaged central retail area. With only one significant redevelopment since then, Bristol had fallen from 9th to 23rd rank in terms of national retail provision between the 1960s and 2002.

The Bristol City Centre Strategy was first published by the City Council in 1998 and updated in 2005. It aimed to provide a framework for guiding development in an area of significant change. Three key sub-areas were identified for planned investment. The first, Temple Quay, has subsequently seen the development of a new office quarter with good pedestrian accessibility from Bristol Temple Meads railway station. The second, Harbourside, has brought leisure, offices and residential accommodation to a former derelict waterfront area. The redevelopment of Broadmead represents the third key area of change.

The Council initially undertook research to establish the nature and scale of retail investment that would be required. The site, which lies to the east of the established Broadmead area, was identified and marketing took place in 1998-2000. Following the Council’s consideration of two competing schemes, Hammerson and Land Securities – the Bristol Alliance - established a joint venture to develop the site. Working in collaboration with Bristol City Council a masterplan-led outline planning permission and compulsory purchase order were secured.

Construction work proceeded quickly. A key task was the eastward diversion of the existing inner ring road, to bring more usable land into the scheme. The retail centre was completed in the autumn of 2008 and most of the other uses are also now open.

The scheme has significantly enhanced the physical environment of the area, providing a mixed-use redevelopment that meets the needs of contemporary stakeholders. Particularly successful are the three public spaces that have been created. Within the retail centre a multi-level space in the central atrium provides an attractive place for meeting, eating and relaxation. Within the existing Broadmead area the restored Quakers Friars buildings are situated in a square that has been transformed from a service yard into an elegant piazza surrounded by shops, restaurants and apartments: an excellent piece of urban design. The community open space in the St Jude’s area has also been landscaped to a very high standard and provides good integration between the scheme and the adjoining inner urban residential zone. Other links to adjoining area have been made by improving access across the inner ring road and by opening up views to St Paul’s church in nearby Portland Square.

The scheme scores well on sustainability. During construction as much waste as possible was recycled and many of the materials were locally sourced. There was a

high standard of liaison and communication with local communities and other stakeholders. The completed development has achieved an 'excellent' BREEAM rating - the first for a city centre regeneration scheme in Britain. An original feature is that the retail centre is not fully enclosed but comprises a series of pedestrian streets above which an artist-designed roof is provided at a high level to offer some protection from the worst of the elements.

A key issue that had to be overcome was the sheer complexity of the interests involved and the requirement for a very sophisticated level of planning and collaboration between the City Council, the developers and other stakeholders. The presence of a strong ethic of shared goals and teamwork is self-evident. The quality of professional work undertaken to ensure the success of the scheme, from planning, to design and project management, is impressive.

Whilst further work needs to be carried out on public transport linkage and on ensuring sustainability for the wider city centre retail sector, this development significantly enhances the functioning of Bristol city centre, strengthens connections between the retail core and adjoining communities and has excellent eco-credentials. For these reasons the judges gave 'Cabot Circus' a Commendation in the City and Metropolitan category.

TOWN REGENERATION

Award for Town Regeneration

to

“Ringling the Changes – The Ashford Ring Road Project”

Submitted by Kent County Council

Following the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003, Ashford was identified as one of the future growth points in the South East, its population of 55,000 set to double over a 25 year period. The overall approach to planning this expansion has been to aim for a fairly compact development that maximises use of the potential of existing sites before expanding elsewhere. In order to achieve this aim it was clear that the town centre would have to be developed and nearby brown-field sites unlocked. The reconfiguration of Ashford’s inner ring road marks a major stage in this regeneration.

Built in the 1970s the inner ring road created a ‘concrete collar’ that restricted pedestrian movement to and from the centre and physically defined its boundaries. One of the key transformational projects to revitalise the town centre, in a ‘mend before extend’ policy, was to reconfigure this one-way ‘race track’ inner ring road. A better balance between the needs of pedestrians and motorists was seen to be essential. To do this an innovative ‘shared space’ philosophy was chosen, which had been successfully implemented in continental Europe, but is still relatively untried in the UK. *“Shifting the balance from a ring road to a network of quality streets and spaces that connect the town centre with its surrounding neighbourhoods”* (Ashford Masterplan Vision).

The scheme was designed by a team involving planners, engineers, urban designers, landscape architects and public artists and cost around £13.5m. So far the whole inner-ring road has been converted from a one-way to a two-way road, and a third of its length has been transformed into a series of streets where the space is shared between vehicles and pedestrians. The safer and well designed environment has become a more attractive location for retail and business development and has opened up the possibility of redeveloping adjoining brown-field sites on the ‘outside’ edge of the former ring road.

Sustainability is at the heart of the Ashford Masterplan and the transformation of the inner ring road represents a significant step forward in achieving a more sustainable form of urban development. Specific sustainable policies within the scheme have included whole life costing of materials, re-use of waste materials, energy efficiency of bespoke lighting design and sustainable urban drainage. Unnecessary street furniture, pedestrian guard rails, road markings and traffic signals have been removed and the speed limit reduced to 20 mph. Artist-designed elements enhance the street scene which now includes a major new civic space, fronted by the new extension to the County Square shopping centre and fully integrated with the adjoining public realm. As well as sustainable drainage the redesigned West Street contains a ‘pocket park’ within its central reservation.

The scheme represents a major departure from previous traffic planning practice in similar situations and a key challenge was to obtain the support of elected members, the local community and media. This was achieved through member presentations, including a site visit to Holland by a small key member group, public exhibitions, involvement of local residents in the redesign of West Street and a Stakeholders Group where progress and issues were reported and discussed.

The expansion of Ashford is being coordinated by Ashford's Future Partnership, an organisation that brings together the interests of relevant agencies including Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, SEEDA and the Homes and Communities Agency. The scheme is embedded within the planning framework provided by the Ashford Masterplan. The planning context was key to the implementation of the scheme.

The scheme demonstrates a high level of innovation and originality in the planning and design of roadspace and streetscape which has resulted in a greatly enhanced and more civilised and sustainable urban environment: truly mediating space and making a better place. It provides a model that other UK towns and cities with similar traffic problems will surely follow.

For these reasons the judges have given 'Ringing the Changes - the Ashford Ring Road Project an Award in the Town Regeneration category.

RURAL AREAS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Award for Rural Areas and the Natural Environment to

“St. Davids Gateway and Oriel y Parc Gallery Scheme”

Submitted by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

The opening of Oriel y Parc in 2008 marked the culmination of a 20 year plan for the development of the National Park Authority's Grove site, at the entrance to St David's historic cathedral city and a focal point for the area's tourism industry. The scheme accommodates the National Park Visitor Centre, Oriel y Parc Gallery (including the Graham Sutherland collection), educational facilities and a cafe. It also provides the city's principal visitor car park and is strategically located to relieve traffic pressures on the city's streets, providing the hub for coastal bus services around the St David's peninsula.

The problems that needed to be addressed were that the existing visitor centre was poorly sited in St David's. Local roads and public transport were inadequate to meet the growing needs of both local residents and visitors. Traditionally tourism had been seen as a seasonal activity, placing uneven demands upon the local economy, housing and transport systems at different times of the year. However, there have been a growing number of out-of-season visitors. In developing the scheme, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) sought to provide a better location for the visitor centre, a more sustainable transport network and to extend the provision of facilities for tourism beyond the traditional season. At the same time there were opportunities that the scheme sought to exploit. These included the possibility of relocating the Graham Sutherland collection into the site from a former gallery elsewhere, and using the scheme to promote PCNPA's aims with regard to sustainable development and raising environmental awareness.

The building has been sensitively and unobtrusively fitted into the local environment and landscape. Sustainable development lies at the heart of the project, which has received a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating. Building orientation, massing, fenestration and ventilation were key drivers at the planning stage. Systems and technologies deployed included a ground source heat pump for space and air heating, a solar thermal system for hot water generation and photovoltaic panels for on-site electricity generation. There has been considerable use of recycled materials and a long term waste and recycling strategy is in place. Design is inclusive for all, regardless of disability, age or gender. The 400 capacity car park incorporates permeable surfaces in line with SUDS best practice.

The centre, gallery and education programmes promote awareness and understanding of the area's rich and varied landscapes, cultural and natural resources and to the principles of sustainable living and man's responsibility for his environment.

The coastal bus network was developed through the Greenways Sustainable Transport Partnership. By providing a hub for three of the County's coastal bus services, the scheme also serves to reduce traffic pressure on the narrow lanes of the wider St David's peninsula. The scheme aims to encourage visitors to park, receive their orientation at the National Park Visitor Centre and proceed to the city or adjoining coast and countryside on foot or by bus. The availability of Welsh Assembly Government grant funding has been crucial to the building of the network, and the PCNPA has

invested its own resources to enable most of the services to operate on a 12 month basis.

The development of the scheme is embedded within the planning system through the 1990's National Park Local Plan and the 2006 Joint Unitary Development Plan, and this has been reflected by the Wales Spatial Plan. Implementation was achieved via the development management process provided by the local planning authority.

Although no individual element of the scheme is in itself original, its particular contribution is that each strand has been woven together to provide a centre that is innovative in terms of combining a building of high environmental quality, with a strong environmental awareness raising purpose and a significant contribution to sustainable tourism.

The scheme demonstrates a commendable level of collaborative working between a large number of organisations and a high quality of planning, design, construction and management. This has resulted in a development that makes a significant contribution to sustainable development and environmental awareness.

For these reasons the judges have given the St David's Gateway and Oriel y Parc Gallery an Award in the Rural Areas and Natural Environment category.

**Commendation for Rural Areas and the Natural Environment
to
"Ceredigion Coast Path, West Wales"
*Submitted by Ceredigion County Council***

On the rugged and beautiful west coast of Wales, Ceredigion is a rural county highly valued for its landscape, wildlife and culture. The coastal zone is at the core of the area's important tourist economy containing a Heritage Coast with a number of SSSI's, a National Nature Reserve and the Dyfi Estuary Biosphere Reserve. Along the shoreline and out to sea there are two Marine Special Areas of Conservation covering a large part of Cardigan Bay.

The Ceredigion Coast Path was opened in July 2008. It follows a 60mile/96km route along Cardigan Bay between the Teifi and the Dyfi estuaries. The coast has a number of small towns including Aberaeron with its attractive 19th century harbour.

The Coast Path has been an integral part of the Council's plans for the development of tourism and recreation and is underpinned by the Ceredigion Coast and Countryside Strategy 2000 and the Ceredigion Tourism Growth Area Plan 2002. EU Objective 1 funding was secured in 2001 with wide-spread consultation about the project and the proposed route involving landowners, agricultural and conservation organisations, access as well as local town and community councils. In addition to the Ceredigion County Council, further funding came from the Countryside Council for Wales.

The Council's Planning Department commenced work in 2002 and through close cooperation with the farming community, who were the major land-owners, it gradually gained acceptance for the project. Compensation packages were established which included arrangements for access, new fencing and security for the farmers. As a result

of this consultative and inclusive process, the line of the coast path was agreed with the use of Path Creation Orders under Section 26 of the Highways Act only where absolutely necessary.

In all, 14 miles of new path was constructed and 28 existing path diversions negotiated. Steps were cut into the hard landscape and 18 bridges built over valleys and small gorges and many stiles, gates, signs and badger diversions installed.

The coast is extremely exposed to westerly gales and erosion of the cliff face is a common occurrence. In order to avoid continual closure, negotiation and realignment of the path, an innovative way to combat this problem was the development of "rolling path" agreements with landowners. These agreements enable the County Council to divert the path as necessary, and have already been used on three occasions.

In such remote and difficult terrain vehicular access was often not possible and materials ranging from concrete, bricks and timber to steel trusses had to be hand-hauled. Along one particularly difficult section a new path over a mile in length was cut into the virgin bracken and rock along severely sloping ground falling steeply down to the sea. Now this section of path provides dramatic views over the Bay where walkers can sit and enjoy watching a wide range of sea birds including choughs and peregrines as well as bottlenose dolphins in the inshore waters.

The almost wholly volunteer labour force was essential to the implementation of the project and the commitment and knowledge of the local residents to the scheme was evident. The workforce also included the Ramblers, local students and United Nations conservation volunteers. Using all these solutions and ingenuity the total cost of the project was kept to just over £500,000.

Spending by walking visitors brings over £550 million into rural and coastal economies and visitors contribute some £82 million to the Ceredigion economy each year. Surveys have shown that the use of this new path has grown 41% between 2008 and 2009. To date, some 19 indirect jobs have been created already and this is likely to increase significantly as the Coast Path becomes better known. Tourist information is widely available, a detailed walking guide has been produced, and a limited linking bus service has started.

The Ceredigion Coast Path serves as a model of good practice in the development of coastal access in Wales and is an essential component in the Welsh Assembly Government's plan for an all-Wales Coast Path to be created by 2012.

For these reasons the judges have given a Commendation to the Ceredigion Coast Path in the Rural Areas and the Natural Environment Category.

HERITAGE

Award for Heritage

to

“Castle Howard Conservation Management Plan and Development Framework” Submitted by Castle Howard Estate

Castle Howard in Ryedale - lying almost entirely within the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - comprises an outstanding group of historic buildings and designed landscape dating from the early 18th century within gardens and parkland. The Vanbrugh designed house and landscape are both Grade 1 listed and the landscape contains 200 listed buildings and monuments in an agricultural estate of 10,000 acres.

Until a few years ago the estate had been operating in isolation. Recognising that this would not secure a sustainable future they worked with the local authority and government agencies, supported by a consultancy team coordinated by planners, to prepare a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) completed in December 2008. The aim was to create a long term dynamic management plan informed by the estate's significance, values and special qualities as a historic entity, which is still a family home.

Key stages in the process of preparing the plan included an audit of assets; stakeholder and parish council consultation; survey and assessment; research into significance and values; a summary of issues; mitigation and management recommendations and proposals for future investment. Moving beyond a traditional CMP it provides a development framework with signature projects to secure protection and enhancement of the estate and its assets in the long term.

Following a devastating fire in the main house in 1940 more than £9 million had been spent up to 2007 on conservation and essential repairs beyond normal maintenance. But at least £24 million is required to conserve and retain the listed buildings alone, five of which need very urgent repair being on English Heritage's register of Buildings At Risk. This amount is likely to increase exponentially if work is not undertaken soon.

Other key issues were identified during the CMP process, including the need to:

- conserve and retain other Grade II listed structures and buildings not on the 'At Risk' register but reaching a critical state of deterioration;
- find constructive use for buildings and structures across the Estate (including redundant farm buildings) to contribute to revenue generation;
- plan and manage major landscape elements such as the avenues of trees to ensure their character is retained;
- enable greater access including via public transport;
- balance the continuity of the Howard family's residence in the house, their enjoyment and commitment alongside the commercial needs of the Estate as a major year-round leisure destination;
- conduct research into the nationally important scheduled monuments and archaeological remains across the Estate, and understand its biodiversity; and
- diversify to reduce potential over-dependence on visitor markets, and ensure the long term viability of the farming and forestry enterprises.

The CMP highlights the significance of the physical elements of the Estate (both built and landscape), identifies the current and future threats and provides policies, management guidelines and initiatives which help raise funds to address the conservation deficit and direct and prioritise future activity and planning. Proposals include:

- housing development within Slingsby village associated with the consolidation of Slingsby Castle (Grade II and SAM on the Buildings at Risk Register), improved access to open space and improved interpretation;
- the development of holiday lodges within woodland on the estate;
- reuse of the Pyramid Gatehouse for residential, hotel, B & B, retirement home or outdoor activity centre;
- reuse of a wing of the mansion for art gallery/exhibition space, conference facilities, concerts;
- restoration of Terrington Carr (a fen habitat valued for its cultural associations); and
- a management plan for the main Avenue.

The CMP breaks new ground by addressing the socio-economic realities of management and provides a model for other CMPs. It has already shaped decision making on the Estate and has been used to support:

- representations made to Ryedale District Council on the emerging LDF;
- a ground source heat pump for the main house (completed in August 2009);
- the planning case for new housing in Estate villages that respect their character and role in sustainable development; and, as importantly, has led to
- improved dialogue between key partners enabling them to appreciate each other's perspectives and concerns.

For these reasons the judges have given the Castle Howard Conservation Management Plan and Development Framework an Award in the Heritage category.

Award for Heritage

to

“Gardyne’s Land, Dundee”

Submitted by Dundee City Council

Gardyne’s Land is a complex of five historic buildings situated within an outstanding conservation area in the centre of Dundee. The earliest part of the complex comprises a merchant’s house built around 1560. It is the only complete domestic building surviving from the time when Dundee was Scotland’s second city and is one of only a few recognisably ancient urban buildings left in Scotland. The other buildings date from 1640, 1790, 1820 and 1865 respectively. All are listed Category A by Historic Scotland.

It has taken a partnership between the public and charitable sectors and strong individual leadership more than a decade to conserve and restore this modest but very important element of Dundee’s built heritage. By the early 1990s, the buildings were in a poor condition. Much of the rapidly deteriorating upper floors had remained empty for many years. The buildings were structurally interrelated with shared access, a small

overall footprint and restoration was constrained by adjoining developments: all of which limited the scope for commercial investment in their future.

In 1991 Dundee City Council became concerned about the buildings and in 1995 Tayside Building Preservation Trust, with financial support from the Architectural Heritage Fund and Scottish Enterprise Tayside, undertook a feasibility study into the scope for preservation and re-use. Concurrently, the Trust opened negotiations with the then owners, Prudential, and completed the purchase of the complex in 1999. With an endowment from Sears Group Properties a first phase of urgent works was undertaken in 2002. Lottery funding for the remainder of the restoration was obtained with a view to starting on site in June 2004. However, for legal reasons work was delayed and in April 2005 the project was handed over to Dundee City Council who, with the Trust acting as advisors, managed the project through to successful completion in 2008. The total project costs for the work are estimated at just over £4m.

The underlying philosophy behind the restoration has been to 'conserve as found', reflecting the fascinating layering of history and building styles and methods found on the site. The project has preserved a complex of buildings 'at risk' and brought them back into use. It had originally been anticipated that the buildings would have been re-used as flats. However such a use was unlikely to secure the necessary funds because any restoration would not only have to retain and enhance the significance of the buildings but embrace economic regeneration, community involvement, education and public access. In the end, conversion to a youth hostel was seen as the best use that met all the criteria.

The 90-bed Hoppo back-packers' hostel, which opened in May 2008, provides a facility formerly lacking in the city and makes a useful contribution to the local economy through tourism as well as the direct employment of full time staff.

In terms of sustainable development, the energy embodied in the construction of the original buildings has been retained and wherever possible natural materials have been used in the restoration.

A novel element of the restoration process has been the involvement of successive cohorts of students from Dundee University's postgraduate programme on European Urban Conservation. These students make a significant contribution to the work of the Trust and in return gain valuable practical experience in the conservation of historic buildings. The project encouraged and attracted interest from the local community, with many visiting the works through the annual Doors Open Day. One room has been restored as a library/research facility where the public can learn about the building's history, construction and its relationship with the city.

Dundee City Planning Department supported the restoration of Gardyne's Land at every stage and worked closely with the Trust in ensuring that the proposals were consistent with the Adopted and emerging Local Plan and in pre-application discussions.

The project represents an excellent example of partnership working. The sustained leadership of a small number of individuals has been key to the success of the project. The tenacity with which they pursued the project, sought funding from an array of sources and overcame legal and technical obstacles over such a long period, serves as a model for other heritage schemes.

For these reasons the judges have given Gardyne's Land Dundee an Award in the Heritage category.

**Commendation for Heritage
to
"Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme"
Submitted by Gravesham Borough Council**

Over a 12 year period the Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme (CAMS) galvanised opinion, co-ordinated action, secured the resources to restore a historic Repton-designed park and Grade 1 listed buildings, and put in place long term sustainable management for the area. Given the complexity of the interests and issues involved this is quite an achievement.

CAMS lies east of Gravesend in the Metropolitan Greenbelt at the northern end of the Kent Downs AONB, between the growth areas of Kent Thameside and the Medway Towns, Kent Thames Gateway. To the east is Strood, an area of significant deprivation, to the west the village of Cobham.

The project centres on the historic Cobham Park, once the seat of the Earls of Darnley. The estate is now in multi ownership. Grade 1 Cobham Hall with its courtyards, gardens and pleasure grounds containing four listed garden structures is part of an independent school. The grounds include West Park - used for organic grazing - Cobham Wood (SSSI), the restored Grade 1 Darnley Mausoleum - owned by Gravesham Borough Council but to be transferred to the National Trust during 2009 – and a privately owned farm and lodges. The area is bounded by the A2/M2, High Speed 1, and a domestic railway and forms part of a wider complex of public open spaces - the Cobham Shorne Countryside Partnership area - within the Kent Thameside Green Grid and Thames Gateway green infrastructure.

Cobham Park fell into decline during the late 19th and early 20th century. By the 1950's, the Hall and surrounding gardens and pleasure grounds, already in a poor condition, were given to Government in lieu of death duties and sold to an Education Trust. Cobham Wood and the Darnley Mausoleum remained in the ownership of the Earl of Darnley but were effectively abandoned and subject to increasing abuse and antisocial activity. In the 1980's a fire in the Mausoleum resulted in significant internal damage, prompting a review of options. Planning applications for its conversion to residential use were called in by the Secretary of State and while approved were not proceeded with because of the subsequent property market crash. During the 1980's and 1990's, Cobham Wood and the Darnley Mausoleum were subject to regular burning of stolen cars, fly tipping, vandalism, and damage in storms, and both were seen as intractable issues by English Heritage and English Nature. Local farms were subject to regular incursion and vandalism.

In spite of these problems, in response to the Hybrid Bill for the Channel Tunnel High Speed Rail Link (now High Speed 1), Gravesham, with local and national partners, petitioned Parliament on the impact on Cobham Park. Agreement was reached for a study of the area from Union Railways and subsequently for a package of mitigation works with £750,000 for landscape restoration and enhanced public access. The approach has been recognised as a model for future compensation agreements

CAMS - an informal partnership of Gravesham Borough Council (GBC), English Heritage, The National Trust (NT), Natural England, Union Rail, Cobham Hall, Kent County Council, and The Woodland Trust, hosted by GBC - coordinates planning, management and funding arrangements for the area. Planners have played a key role throughout.

A major achievement of the partnership has been the restoration of the Grade 1 Darnley Mausoleum with funding from CAMS, the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, Communities and Local Government, and the Georgian Group. A unique “back to back” agreement with the National Trust provided Gravesham with the confidence to acquire Cobham Wood and the Darnley Mausoleum, allowing for funding submissions to be made. Subsequent restoration works have minimised environmental impact, re-used existing materials, and used cleaning techniques that minimised water demand. Other restoration work has good sustainability credentials.

There has been a sea-change in local attitudes, a significant increase in visitors to the site, and restored commercial production on adjacent farmland. Building on its success the Cobham and Shorne Countryside Partnership (CSCP) links Cobham Ashenbank with neighbouring countryside projects to provide public access, interpretation and security for a major green space covering 730 hectares.

For these reasons the judges have given the Cobham Ashenbank scheme a Commendation in the Heritage Category.

PLANNING PROCESS

Award for Planning Process

to

“Barnsley Education Sites DPD”

Submitted by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Barnsley lies between the two cities of Leeds and Sheffield. Historically the Borough's employment has been centre on the coal mining industry and as a consequence comprises a dispersed spatial pattern of small towns and villages with generally poor environmental quality.

The end of coal mining in Barnsley in the 1990's had a devastating effect on the employment, social and economic life of people in all sections of the community living in Barnsley. Against this background, Barnsley's secondary schools were suffering falling roles and by national standards, there was considerable educational underachievement. The school buildings were generally old, dilapidated and unsuitable to meet the reasonable aspirations of the community. There was an urgent need for the Council to tackle these problems and to offer the people of Barnsley an holistic programme for change and a new belief in the future.

The first of the Council's Sustainable Communities strategies, *Remaking Barnsley* was aimed at the sustainable regeneration of the town centre and the improvement of the physical environment. This was followed by a fundamental review of the needs of the population *Remaking Learning* offering the people of Barnsley the chance to learn new skills and to improve educational opportunity for all.

Central to this strategy was the need to replace all the secondary schools across the Borough with new Advanced Learning Centres (ALC's), to improve an existing special school and to build a new special school to provide exciting, inclusive and safe learning environments. An essential ingredient was for the new ALC's to become the new centres for community and leisure facilities to serve all sections of the community.

Six of the new ALCs were planned for existing school sites. Having regard to the historic pattern of development and an extensive Green Belt the challenge to the Council was to select sites for the three remaining ALCs to complement the overall strategy, with good accessibility and a wider spatial distribution. Each site also needed to respect the landscape and other environmental considerations. To raise the necessary finance, an asset management programme was run in parallel to identify potential sites and other redundant Council facilities for disposal.

A cultural transformation of the traditional education and planning services was required and in 2004 planning consultants G L Hearn were appointed to set out the methodology for identification of potential sites. The methodology had to be robust and use both desktop and detailed site assessments. Working alongside the MBC Planning and Transportation Service, Planning Aid and the Plain English Campaign an initial Issues and Options Report was produced and considered by the Council in 2005.

A programme of Borough-wide consultation was carried out through 2006. Apart from the more traditional consultation with community groups and amenity societies, this involved exhibitions and workshops, use of the Council websites, forum meetings, and

letters to all parents of children likely to attend the new ALC's. From this extensive consultation the preferred sites were chosen and work commenced on the Education Sites Development Plan Document (DPD).

Using a combination of innovative methodology, partnership working with key stakeholders and involvement with the wider community, consultation on the preferred options was carried out in October 2006, outline planning consent was sought, and the DPD submitted for examination in December 2007. Perhaps because of the depth and inclusive nature of the consultative process, the Inquiry was considered by written representations and the DPD, complete with a Plain English crystal mark, was formally adopted in January 2009.

The Education Sites DPD forms part of the Barnsley Local Development Framework and is integral to its *Remaking Learning* strategy. It was the first DPD to be adopted in Barnsley's suite of LDF documents and has been an invaluable tool in dealing with inevitably controversial planning applications.

To obtain initial Central Government funding the new ALC's have to be completed by 2012. By 2009 five are either on site or have been completed and £1.1 billion of investment in the educational aspirations and the future economy and regeneration of Barnsley secured.

Production of the DPD, its methodology and programme demonstrates in a practical sense how close corporate working relationships within the Council can use good spatial planning to develop a fully comprehensive, sustainable, ambitious, accessible and transformational agenda.

For these reasons the judges gave the Barnsley Education Sites Development Plan Document an Award in the Planning Process category.

**Commendation for Planning Process
to
"Householder Appeals Service"
Submitted by The Planning Inspectorate**

The Planning Inspectorate has successfully introduced a new Householder Appeals Service which improves efficiency and saves costs without affecting the quality of outcome. In doing so it has made a significant contribution to changing the culture of planning.

Householder appeals, accounting for a quarter of the Planning Inspectorate's work although not normally raising complex issues, used to be dealt with using very similar processes to those for major commercial schemes. From April 2009 a streamlined Householder Appeals Service has covered every local planning authority (LPA) in England. This simpler, easier and quicker process has been designed to deliver time and cost savings for LPAs, the Planning Inspectorate, and appellants without losing the benefit of independent assessment of the issues involved.

Crucial to the successful introduction of the service was careful preparation, including a year-long pilot project, and good communication. The latter included making extensive

efforts to engage local planning authorities and the third sector including via Planning Aid. Feedback received during the pilot allowed the processes and procedures to be tested and modified.

Planning officers in local planning authorities used to waste a disproportionate amount of resources on managing and defending decisions on householder cases, including producing an appeal statement that replicated their reasons for refusal and attending each site visit. The Planning Inspectorate used to spend a good deal of time chasing up documents and assembling files. Appellants had to wait for a decision while the planning officer produced an appeal statement and the Inspectorate re-consulted, processes which generated more paperwork but rarely any new material considerations.

The new process is simpler and more cost-effective for local authorities. They now submit only the Committee report, reasons for refusal and the application file. It is also better for appellants, requiring less form filling and relies mainly on documentation already sent to the planning authority. Electronic efficiency also enables the Planning Inspectorate to spend less time putting the paperwork together.

The new way of working requires a culture change, particularly within local planning authorities whose planning officers need to ensure that their Committee report and reasons for refusal are clear and unambiguous. It also requires a different approach from third parties who need to ensure that their initial comments on a householder application cover all the issues they wish to raise, whether the planning authority or the Inspectorate takes the final decision.

As well as cost savings for the Inspectorate, it is estimated that the full service - assuming 6 hours of a planning officer's time per appeal - could free up nearly 10,000 planning hours each year in London alone. Replicated across England this is expected to result in considerable cost savings for local planning authorities.

The pilot project ran from January 2008, initially with 9 local planning authorities, building to nearly 150 by March 2009 and covering over 190 appeals. The results achieved during the pilot were outstanding, with all cases being determined in less than the interim pilot target of 12 weeks. The pilot service also showed higher satisfaction ratings from appellants than those for the previous service, and more confidence in the process. The aim for the full service is for 80% of householder appeals to be determined within 8 weeks.

The Panel was impressed by the drive and commitment of the Inspectorate and their foresight in seeing the advantage of piloting the new system to test the concept and ensure that all those operating it became accustomed to the new way of working involved. The potential to free up resources for more complex cases provides an argument for extending the concept in appropriate cases. Similar thinking has already been applied to TPO appeals.

The Householder Appeals Service has shown the benefits of re-engineering processes taking account of information technology to ensure they remain fit for purpose in the 21st century. For these reasons the judges gave The Planning Inspectorate Householder Appeals Service a Commendation in the Planning Process category.

**Commendation for Planning Process
to
“Streamlined Consultation Scheme, Northern Ireland”
*Submitted by the Planning Service, Northern Ireland***

The Northern Ireland Planning Service is an Agency in the Department of the Environment and is responsible for all statutory planning functions with the 26 District Councils having a consultative role.

Custom and practice since 1973 had resulted in a very inflexible system for assessing planning applications. The Planning Service consulted each council's Planning Committee on every application, regardless of size. Any application on which the Planning Service had not formed an opinion in time for the Committee meeting was held over until the next, leading to a delay of at least a month.

Following the ceasefires, the Good Friday Agreement and the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly, there was a significant increase in development pressure and an upsurge in planning applications. Between 2000 and 2006 the number of applications increased by 62% to over 30,000 a year, placing enormous pressure on the development control system, resulting in increased processing timescales and some criticism. Something had to give.

To find a way forward, the Planning Service set up a small stakeholder group in Derry to consider priorities for improving customer service. Early discussions centred on the inflexibility of the “one size fits all” approach to consulting Councils on planning applications and the possibility of moving to a system involving delegation of the smaller and less complex applications. The Divisional Planning Office team offered to take the lead in designing and delivering a suitable process in partnership with Derry City Council.

There was no model for the scheme so research was conducted on other “delegation schemes” to learn from best practice elsewhere. An internal working group was established in summer 2007 to design the new process.

Local political support for a pilot scheme was sought and secured, without which the idea could never have taken off. A protocol was agreed with Derry City Council, the Planning Service agreed a six month pilot project and the then Minister of the Environment launched the scheme jointly with the Mayor of Derry.

The pilot scheme started in December 2007 and enabled decisions on agreed categories of non-contentious applications to be issued without formally consulting the Planning Committee. Decisions on such cases were issued as soon as the Planning Service had assessed them, provided the application was to be approved and no objections were received. This resulted in a reduction of average processing time for these categories of applications from 89 days before, to 24 days during, the pilot - a saving of 65 days.

The Scheme was reviewed after 6 months and Derry City Council agreed to extend it indefinitely, and to widen the scope of applications included. Currently almost 70% of applications in the City Council area fall into the Streamlined Category.

Following the success of the pilot in improving efficiency and speeding up the decision making process, the Planning Service committed to roll out the benefits of the Scheme to other Councils. The pilot was such a success that others began to express an interest in participating. The Streamlined Consultation scheme has now been introduced to all the remaining 25 District Councils in Northern Ireland in a very short time-scale.

The Scheme has clear social and economic benefits, with the average processing time for a streamlined application of 24 days, and greater certainty for the local development industry. Case officers have been released to concentrate on the more complex applications and Council Planning Committees have more time to focus on major applications.

The role of planning officers was important in promoting the benefits to Councils, reassuring members that there were appropriate safeguards to ensure democratic input to decision making and thorough professional assessment to comply with both planning policy and statutory requirements. Planners also reassured architects, agents and key consultee, the Roads Service, of the value of streamlining. The scheme has had the wider benefit of improving relationships between the Planning Service and Councils, agents and consultees and provides a platform for developing process changes as a part of the overall planning reform agenda. For these reasons the judges gave the Streamlined Process for Council Consultation in Northern Ireland a Commendation in the Planning Process category.

E-GOVERNMENT

Award for E-Government

to

“London Brownfield Sites Review (Stage 2)”

Submitted by Arup

Brownfield land, particularly when it is derelict, can have a negative impact on perceptions of safety and crime, economic prosperity, and attractiveness of investment to both commercial and residential land developers. Those working to make more productive use of brown-field land need access to accurate and up-to-date information on potential sites and their characteristics. Arup, with a planner in the lead, was instrumental in establishing a system to deliver this for London.

Stage 1 of the London Brownfield Sites Review had identified a number of shortcomings in current knowledge of brown-field sites in London, including low levels of return of variable quality by Boroughs to the National Land Use Database (NLUD). This aims to record of all previously developed land and buildings in England that may be available for development, whether vacant, derelict, or still in productive use.

The Homes and Communities Agency wanted to use the data for more detailed analysis and to enable Boroughs to update and amend site information more easily; the London Development Agency also hoped to identify sites and promote their reuse where appropriate. Arup was therefore commissioned in October 2007 to undertake the Stage 2 Review to develop a new database of brown-field sites in London with a linked website, a good practice guide to the redevelopment, and an action plan to ensure these could be maintained and developed.

The database they devised is based on NLUD, but captures more information about each site to a higher degree of accuracy and includes smaller sites (<0.25ha) not previously included. The website provides user-friendly access to the database in a way that Boroughs can retain ownership of their data, other stakeholders can feed in their own data, and prospective development partners can access the information.

Creating a database and website that met all the criteria of the brief was a significant task. Arup used in-house advanced GIS expertise to create the database and appointed web developers Rade to construct and implement the web site.

A major strength of the solution was the data gathering process in compiling sites and site data. Initial reviews of NLUD data were undertaken to check and validate borough returns. Arup then worked with each of the 33 London local authorities to update the NLUD returns to ensure they remain relevant. The study team also sought information on additional smaller sites, below the 0.25ha NLUD threshold.

In all, the study team held around 70 meetings with Boroughs, exchanged thousands of emails and phone calls, and worked meticulously to ensure that data took full advantage of Boroughs local knowledge. This is important as each Borough will continue to be responsible for its own data.

Through meetings, discussions and involvement in the study Steering Group, a high level of support and buy-in was achieved with a wide range of stakeholders. This had a

number of positive effects as stakeholders were able to shape the website and GIS interface and to offer their own sites and/or metadata for inclusion within the database.

The majority of existing web-based mapping solutions deal with static information that the user cannot control, provide maps that can't be scaled; and have limited layers of information.

The London Brownfield Sites Database:

- provides data linked to mapping that users can interrogate easily;
- allows data to be customised by switching on or off 30 layers of metadata such as flood risk mapping;
- ensures site and data confidentiality where necessary.

This work has set a benchmark using the power of information technology to provide an innovative, sophisticated, but accessible way to identify sites for potential reuse to assist in the process of bringing them forward for development, together with a robust updating system. The project involved working with professionals "on the ground" to produce a robust system that is likely to be maintained and developed because it adds value. As a bonus it has created a network of professionals keen to apply their experience in London and elsewhere, and has informed a nationwide review of NLUD and its implementation. For these reasons the judges gave the London Brownfield Sites Review (Stage 2) an Award in the E-Government category.

ARTS, CULTURE, SPORT

Award for Arts, Culture Sport to “Dorney Rowing Lake, Eton” *Submitted by Capita Lovejoy*

The opening of Dorney Rowing Lake was the culmination of decades of planning and development by Eton College. The College had a strong tradition in rowing but, increasing tourist traffic on the River Thames was seriously impeding the College's rowing activities.

A new purpose-designed rowing lake was required. However the spatial requirements were very specific. The location needed to be close to Windsor, an area wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB), the Thames floodplain and the Thames Valley Area of Attractive Landscape. As a consequence, the options were limited and several conflicts with planning policy needed to be resolved.

The site identified comprises 400 acres of open land on the northern bank of the Thames west of Windsor. It comprises a flat area originally in agricultural use that had been designated as “set-aside” for many years in accordance with EU agricultural policy. Apart from small remnants of former field boundary hedges, the site was barren and lacking trees, bushes or vegetation other than that along the river tow path.

The estimated capital cost of approximately £17million was significant. However, subject to planning permission, it was possible to off-set most of these costs by extracting the gravel which had to be removed to create the rowing course.

Capita Lovejoy was appointed to design the scheme and develop the landscape proposals for the site in 1992. Following a Public Inquiry, planning permission and footpath diversion orders were granted by the then Department of the Environment in 1994. As a result of undertakings entered into at the Inquiry the College embarked on an open and inclusive approach to detailed development of the site which has resulted in a “win-win” outcome.

The rowing lake covers 90 acres of the site including the main lake 2,200metres long, a parallel warm-up channel and return lake. The water is fed from underground aquifers, percolating through the gravel, with natural methods being used to control weeds.

From the outset, Dorney Rowing Lake was designed to international standards and as a place of excellence. This bore fruit when the International Olympic Committee visited the almost completed lake and decided it was ideally suited to host the rowing and flat water canoeing events in the London Olympic and Paralympics Games 2012. Additional works were required for this, including a new bridge and access point to the return lake which attracted grants from Sport England, UK Sport, the Regional Development Agency and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The landscaping provides an extremely attractive setting for the facility, retaining the openness of the site and enhancing the Metropolitan Green Belt. This has been achieved by the planting of an 80 acre park and arboretum with approximately 30,000 native and specimen trees to the north of the lake and a 100acre nature conservation

area including wetlands and wildflower areas adjacent to the Thames. Gentle contouring of the land ensured that any flood waters would not be impeded and yet was sympathetic with the generally flat nature of the landscape setting. Ecological consultants and archaeologists were employed throughout the work to advise on landscape including new tree planting on bunds covering archaeological finds.

The extraction and transport of gravel presented problems that required mitigation measures including a new bridge over the Thames with a conveyor to carry gravel to a storage area south of the river. Although the conveyor was temporary, the bridge is permanent and now provides a footpath and Sustrans route.

There is considerable public use of all the facilities. Footpaths and bridleways have been re-aligned and there is free car parking for towpath users who previously parked on verges and nearby villages. The parkland and the nature conservation area are used as an educational resource by local schools, societies and specialist wildlife groups as well as Eton College, and a Visitor Information Centre is manned by local volunteers.

The rowing lake is used by over 100 schools and clubs and over 2000 children and young people have taken rowing tuition under the Junior Rowing Initiative.

For these reasons the judges agreed on an Award for Dorney Rowing Lake in the Arts, Culture and Sport category.

SPATIAL STRATEGIES – (*sponsored by CLG*)

Award for Spatial Strategies to “Solent Waterfront Strategy” *Submitted by Adams Hendry Consulting Ltd*

By getting back to first principles and basing their work on robust evidence and a shared understanding of future opportunities and challenges, the team responsible for preparing the Solent Waterfront Strategy has made a major contribution to spatial planning. Their work provides an exemplar of best practice by highlighting the depth of knowledge and insights needed to underpin a strategic plan for a major sub-region.

The Strategy was prepared by a team led by Adams Hendry Consulting Ltd Chartered Town Planners, with WS Atkins and Marina Projects Ltd, as a result of a commission from the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA). For the first time it provides an evidence base, analysis and strategy for marine industries and marine-related industries across the Solent sub-region.

The study area contains the international port of Southampton, the main base of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth, and the best known waters in world yachting, within a city region of some 1.2 million people with substantial environmental resources in an outstanding coastal setting.

In spite of their significance to the economy, the study showed that there was inadequate knowledge of marine and marine-related industries, and as a result their significance was undervalued. Possibly because they are not in a single Standard Industrial Classification they were largely ignored in spatial policies at all levels. They were regarded as a “problem industry” to such an extent that their survival was being put at risk. This was despite the fact that they produce or use some of the most advanced technologies alongside traditional skills, employing a highly skilled workforce and are responsible for around 30% of GVA in the sub-region.

The study plugged the gap by assessing the economic impact of marine and related industries via a business survey, undertaking a marine facilities and sites audit, considering future trends via interviews and workshops, and reviewing existing and emerging planning policies and strategies at national, regional, sub-regional and local scale. Data collection included recording of key strategic sites, a telephone survey of 480 companies, face to face interviews with a sample of these, and consultative workshops.

The study recognised that the whole area, its industries and people needed to have a robust strategic context to help cope with the effects of rising sea levels and climate change. A wide range of issues was considered including “invisible” infrastructure such as dredged channels for shipping and green infrastructure as well as conserving coastal and inter-tidal habitats which are of exceptional quality in the Solent area.

The study emphasised that growing existing businesses and establishing new ones is not easy. It is imperative to find sustainable solutions. Past planning policies had not favoured industry on waterfront sites against proposals for example for residential

development. Increased land values had made survival of shipbuilding and related uses in these locations precarious. By pointing this out, the Strategy has helped to reverse conventional thinking and to inform future policy development.

Shortly after publication of the Solent Waterfront Strategy in July 2008, it was considered by the Panel at the South East Regional Spatial Strategy EiP, who referred to it in their report to the Secretary of State and recommended a similar approach for the rest of the region. SEEDA, the local authorities, Partnership for Urban South Hampshire and business leaders have actively disseminated the results, and SEEDA has taken coastal land into ownership as a consequence.

The Strategy promotes innovation in, and support for, core marine clusters to ensure that they continue to flourish; safeguarding marine sites; tackling sea level rise; and setting all of these in the context of long term strategic planning for the area.

The study was completed in just over a year. It demonstrates the importance of policymakers commissioning robust evidence and analysis, and the role that professional planners should play in providing this - those drafting National Policy Statements should take note!

The Panel was impressed by this exceptional piece of work that has already informed regional, sub-regional and local policy and decision-making. For these reasons the judges gave the Solent Waterfront Strategy an Award in the Spatial Strategies category.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Award for Climate Change to “London Rivers Action Plan” *Submitted by the Environment Agency*

The London Rivers Action Plan (LRAP) aims to raise the profile of river restoration as a key feature of sustainable development. It's innovative and imaginative use of the planning process has already achieved positive results and is helping to create a more sustainable London.

River quality in the River Thames has improved greatly in recent years but 70% of the River's tributaries still flow through culverts or concrete channels. And while in the past fifteen years, twenty two kilometres of Thames tributaries have been improved or restored the ambition is to step up the rate of river restoration.

Indeed, the London Plan has a target of restoring 15km of river by 2015. LRAP aims to support this vision by providing a practical guide to improving London's rivers to manage flood risk, support sustainable regeneration, improve wildlife habitat, help adapt to a changing climate and, contribute to a better quality of life for Londoners.

LRAP develops and combines the existing North London and South London river restoration strategies. Whilst these strategies were successful in stimulating thinking about river restoration across the London area, the new plan goes further by identifying the restoration needed to meet targets and to highlight the importance of river restoration in adapting to climate change.

The project supports delivery of the London Biodiversity Partnership and London Plan river restoration targets, the Thames River Basin Management Plan, the policy aspirations of the Thames Catchment flood management plan and implementation of the Greater London Authority's (GLA's) access to nature aspirations. It also contributes to sustainable regeneration through the implementation of green infra-structure initiatives such as the East London Green Grid and Wandle Valley Regional Park as well as contributing to Climate Change adaptation measures for both flood risk management and ecological purposes.

LRAP comprises an information resource in hard copy and with an interactive webpage hosted by the River Restoration Centre for planners, developers and designers showing them the opportunities for river restoration and helping to influence the solutions they devise. It showcases the positive benefits of river restoration in Greenwich, southeast London, where a section of the River Quaggy has been brought out of its underground culvert. The river now flows across Sutcliffe Park, creating wetlands with cycleways, footpaths and open spaces which have become a valuable community asset and a haven for many forms of wildlife including kingfishers and dragonflies.

LRAP was produced in partnership by the Greater London Authority, the Environment Agency, Natural England and voluntary organisation including the Thames Rivers Restoration Trust, London Wildlife Trust and WWF UK. The content and format were

tested at stakeholder workshops with delegates from local authorities, the GLA, Natural England, and river user groups and it was launched in January 2009.

The guidance document provides a one-stop-shop of advice and information for planners, developers, landowners and others to help them recognise the benefits of restoration, including case studies of existing schemes.

The webpage contains maps, a directory of projects, including completed and developing projects, detailed case studies and links to best practice and policy documents. The web page will be updated on a six monthly basis, to enable new opportunities to be included and enable completed projects to be documented.

LRAP is helping to dispel the myth that flooding of public open space reduces amenity value. It supports the idea that 'Making Space for Water' creates more natural floodplains and wetland habitats. It shows that everyone can benefit if rivers that are currently lost beneath the streets and open spaces of London are released from their subterranean world to flow on the surface once more. It is well-produced and inspiring set of materials that make a real contribution to raising the profile of planning that helps to adapt our urban environments to climate change. For these reasons the judges gave the London Rivers Action Plan an Award in the Climate Change Category.

**Commendation for Climate Change
to
"Sustainable Design and Construction SPD"
*Submitted by London Borough of Southwark***

The London Borough of Southwark has a corporate commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050 and to pursue a decentralised energy strategy. It's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD translates these requirements into a workable framework for development management. The document was widely consulted on for over a year before being adopted by the Council's Executive.

The objective of the SPD is to ensure that new developments have a positive impact on the environment by reducing emissions from construction, adapting to unavoidable climate change, conserving water, and being planned to reduce flood risk. It also addresses energy use in buildings, because this is responsible for around 85% of the CO₂ emissions across Southwark. With over 16,300 new homes to be provided by 2017, over 36,000 new jobs and major retail expansion at Elephant and Castle and Canada Water, reaching this target is a real challenge.

Cross-departmental working was vital to the SPD's production. Technical knowledge and expertise was needed to understand the issues and find solutions, for example devising templates so that developers provide technical information in a consistent format which helps development management staff to analyse this.

The SPD covers the whole range of issues involved in sustainable design and construction, from liveability of housing to explaining the energy hierarchy. Minimum standards are required for major developments of more than 10 residential units or 1000sqm of floorspace and developments are also required to connect area-wide

combined heat and power/combined cooling heat and power (CHP/CCHP) systems where these exist or are being developed.

The latter are very important in a Borough in which the Council owns and manages around 55,000 homes, many of which are served by district heating systems. In fact they have recently selected a partner to manage a multi-utility-services company (MUSCo) being developed at the Elephant and Castle. The MUSCo will provide electricity, heating, non-potable green water, vacuum waste collection and fibre optic termination for new development. Plans are in progress to provide a district CHP system to serve the 4,200 new homes to be provided as part of the landmark regeneration of the Aylesbury Estate, and the Council is exploring the feasibility of an area based approach for the Canada Water action area. It is clearly vital that the area based energy strategy remains a commercially attractive and viable proposition for its partners.

Over half the borough and most of the areas with greatest potential for development are located in a flood zone (Zone 3a in Planning Policy Guidance 25). This also poses considerable challenges for development. The SPD provides a mechanism to implement the recommendations of a recent strategic flood risk assessment, setting out guidance on both standards sought with regards to water attenuation as well as mitigation measures such as SUDs and flood resilient design techniques.

In order to help council officers in the development control as well as other teams implement the SPD, the Council ran a number of joint training sessions with the Creative Environmental Networks to develop a stronger level of understanding of the requirements of the document and the ways in which it can assist their work.

The SPD has already been used successfully to ensure that the larger developments which have been approved at the Elephant and Castle have been designed to connect to the MUSCo when it is operational via S106 agreements. The Council is also using the SPD approach to guide the development of energy strategies in other areas such as Aylesbury and Canada Water. The Aylesbury AAP contains a commitment to providing CHP, a requirement for developments to connect, and a requirement for all homes reach Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 as a minimum.

The SPD ensures that development management staff are aware of the critical elements that need to be scrutinised across the whole range of sustainable design and that they feel able to apply policy with confidence. For these reasons the judges gave the London Borough of Southwark's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD a Commendation in the Climate Change category.

**Commendation for Climate Change
to
"Moving Green Roofs into the Mainstream"
Submitted by the Environment Agency**

As climate change bites, London is likely to experience more extreme weather, with hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. This will inevitably increase the incidence of overheating, flooding and droughts. The use of 'green' or 'living' roofs can make a contribution toward mitigating and adapting to climate change by contributing to sustainable urban drainage and enhancing biodiversity.

Planners at the Environment Agency have been encouraging people to consider greening London's rooftops. They worked with the Greater London Authority to develop a 'living roofs and walls' policy in the London Plan. That policy (4A.11) states that:

"The Mayor will, and boroughs should, expect major developments to incorporate living roofs and walls where feasible, and reflect this principle in DPD policies. It is expected that this will include roof and wall planting that delivers as many of these objectives as possible: accessible roof space, adapting to and mitigating climate change, sustainable urban drainage, enhancing biodiversity, improved appearance.

Boroughs should also encourage the use of living roofs in smaller developments and extensions where opportunity arises."

Whilst the policy recognises all the benefits of living roofs, Environment Agency staff found themselves spending a lot of time explaining how such roofs could be designed and used in the context of individual development proposals. The decision was therefore taken to prepare an on-line Green Roof Toolkit to promote the benefits and dispel the myths about green roofs, improve the quality of green roof design and move green roofs from the sidelines to the mainstream of sustainable design.

In late 2007 funding of £30,000 was secured to support the proposal and a project team was set up involving Environment Agency planners, the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) and the Green Roofs Consultancy. A key task was to review existing green roof experience internationally: particularly practice in Germany and Switzerland where this technology has been extensively used. A workshop for planners, developers and architects involved in green roof delivery provided a shared vision for green roofs in London. Discussions were also held with engineers to clarify reduced surface water management costs.

The Green Roof Toolkit took six months to prepare and was launched at the World Green Roofs Congress in London in September 2008. Subsequently a communication plan was developed to continue to promote the toolkit to key stakeholders in London. The Green Roof Toolkit is 100% web-based and is designed to be used by planners, architects, engineers and others at an early pre-application stage to secure high quality green roofs. It provides clear and concise practical advice on the design of green roofs, including technical assessments of structural loading for different types of green roof design, and calculation of reduced rates of water run-off. The toolkit covers the key issues involved including sections on the policy context; the benefits, challenges and constraints of incorporating green roofs into different types of development, and links to other relevant web-sites.

The toolkit is freely available on the Environment Agency website and allows planners, not just in London, but across the country, to contribute to meeting the challenges of climate change in a way that has proved practical and effective. It facilitates engagement by planners in the formulation of green roof policies in development plan documents, in pre-application discussions with developers, architects and engineers, and in responding to planning applications. For these reasons the judges gave Moving Green Roofs into the Mainstream a Commendation in the Climate Change category.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Award for Equality and Diversity to “Inclusive Design Strategy and Standards” *Submitted by Olympic Delivery Authority*

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA)'s vision - for all the sites and venues for the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games is to set new standards for services, facilities and opportunities to ensure that the whole design and all the individual elements are truly inclusive. The aim is to create a much wider legacy than simply facilitating re-use of the sites and buildings after the sporting events in 2012. The ODA's unique inclusive design strategy will ensure that the Games become a showcase for today's best practice and tomorrow's standard practice. The principles and standards apply to all the sites and sports facilities that are being used in 2012, whether newly built or adapted.

A key aim of the ODA is to ensure that the regeneration of the site on which the Olympic Park is being built transforms the prospects of the whole of east London and the opportunities available to its residents. The ODA recognised that they could only do this if they involved, communicated and consulted effectively with all stakeholders including the diverse communities living in the surrounding areas.

In the past recreational and sports facilities have been designed mainly for people without disabilities, with a few modifications such as wheel-chair accessible toilets and seating areas incorporated as a token gesture, often very late in the design process, with very little research based on actual need in either quantitative or qualitative terms. This means that many people with mobility problems including older people, young children and mothers with prams and pushchairs are also effectively excluded from using the facilities.

The ODA has turned the traditional design principles on their head. By taking a holistic view of peoples' needs the ODA is using the power of the Games to change the way people think about designing places. The aim is to plan from the ground up to create places that are accessible to everyone and that can accommodate the needs of a wide range of different people and uses, now and in future. This needs an approach that considers the landform, the entry and exit points and access routes, the use of each site and building in the longer term, and works backwards to accommodate the temporary requirements of the Olympics/Paralympics.

The new model delivers the goods by setting out to offer the same quality of experience to everyone by setting initial benchmarks and testing these out with people with different needs. To help develop access standards the ODA established an interim access panel from the early planning stages which comprised people from panels in the five London Boroughs with land covered by the Park. This enabled issues to be discussed and problems solved. In this way the boundaries of what could be achieved were stretched, leading to the development of a concept of a “ring of access” to the main stadium, to give people in wheelchairs level access to some of the best seats in the main Stadium.

Other work involved focus groups considering faith issues to ensure that visitors and local residents have the facilities on site that they need such as suitable places to use for prayer, separate changing areas for the sports facilities and so on.

Through ownership of the site Master-plan, its set of inclusive design guidelines, a design review process, quality procurement and delivery, the ODA has the end-to-end control that is vital to delivering a quality outcome.

There is evidence that the standards have led to changes in the mind-set of planners, architects and designers. Increasingly they are coming forward with proposals that incorporate the needs for example of people with differing degrees of mobility and sight, and take into account requirements dictated by faith. There is also a strong indication that the principles will influence the design of sports facilities that are built in the future including the Winter Olympic Games at Sochi in 2014. For these reasons the judges gave Inclusive Design Strategy and Standards an Award in the Equality and Diversity category.

PUBLIC REALM

Award for Public Realm to “City of London Streetscene Challenge” *Submitted by City of London*

Following the terrorist attacks on the core of the City in 1992 a Traffic Environmental Zone (TEZ) was introduced overnight as a security cordon. Points of entry into the City were narrowed to calm traffic, 17 minor streets were closed and 13 were converted to one-way traffic. The TEZ was expanded to north and west in 1998 and between Holborn and Victoria Embankment in 2003. These measures have resulted in a 40% reduction in traffic within the Square Mile and offer the potential of revitalising the public realm by redressing the balance between pedestrian and traffic movement to create a safer and more inclusive environment.

The Cheapside Area Strategy has been developed by the Corporation’s Street Scene Team to coordinate the delivery of public realm enhancements in the Cheapside Area. It seeks to provide a strategic context in which development proposals, transportation and infrastructure works and essential security measures are considered holistically and in a way that respects the historic street pattern and secures Cheapside’s role as the centre for public life in the City of London.

Cheapside is one of a number of strategic areas that have been identified under the auspices of the adopted UDP and are now firmly contained within the LDF Core Strategy for the City of London. They now form part of a rolling programme of consultation and debate, in partnership with other stakeholders, on plans for the enhancement of the public realm.

Such was the priority and importance of the work that the City of London Corporation established a corporate team reporting directly to a Committee dedicated to preparing and delivering the programme. A wide range of funding mechanisms such as Section 106 and 278 contributions were utilised as was external funding from sources such as Transport for London and a partnership established with the private sector who contributed significantly to the design, funding and implementation of the projects. Operating under the umbrella of the “Street Scene Challenge Initiative”, the Corporation has clearly demonstrated at Fen Court and the Shoe Lane Quarter how with a clear vision and a strategic approach significant enhancements to the public realm can be achieved.

Quality and coordination with the private sector on design and materials is an essential component of the Corporation’s approach. At Fen Court, the partnership was between the City and British Land and the funding provided by means of a Section 106 Agreement. It is a busy through route in close proximity to Lloyd’s running between Fenchurch Street and Fenchurch Avenue. Prior to its enhancement it was drab and uninspiring with little sense of place beyond its function as a pedestrian route.

Now, the garden to the west of Fen Court creates a pleasant and enjoyable space with high quality planting and accessible seating. Materials have been carefully chosen to distinguish and separate the garden from the main pedestrian route with the whole space being focused on a magnificent artwork commemorating the abolition of the

transatlantic slave trade in 1807 and in recognition of the historical links of this area to the Rector of St Mary Woolnoth (1770 -1807) who inspired William Wilberforce in the fight for abolition.

The artwork is the result of collaboration between sculptor Michael Visocchi and poet Lemn Sissay. It was commissioned by the Parish of St Mary Woolnoth, Black British Heritage and British Land and unveiled by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu on 4th September 2008.

The Shoe Lane Quarter project covers a much wider area with impressive hard landscaping, a reduction in street clutter and at its centre a magnificent iron sculpture, this time by Antony Gormley. The project was undertaken through an equal partnership between the City of London and Goldman Sachs, who occupy significant buildings in the area and were concerned about vehicular movement and security. The TEZ enabled the removal of through traffic and the creation of a new public space off Farringdon Street. St Bride Street is now a piazza and the five-ways Shoe Lane road junction has been landscaped with circular paving and granite sets, dropped kerbs with tactile paving and an almost total absence of street signs and the clutter normally associated with a traffic junction of this complexity.

We were impressed by many aspects of these schemes, from the formulation of the initial strategy to the very high quality and detailing of the individual projects. The corporate approach created by officers and members within the Corporation appears to match the single-minded focus of the private sector and through this the partnership approach has clearly worked. Whilst there is still a great deal to be done, the achievements to date demonstrate well what can be done with the programme now developing a momentum of its own. All of which augers well for future projects in Chancery Lane, the Riverside Walk, the Barbican Area and other parts of the City.

Above all, these schemes have their roots in the disastrous and threatening times of the early 90's but they are now transforming the City of London as a place to live, visit, relax and enjoy. For this reason the judges gave the City of London Streetscene Challenge an Award in the Public Realm category

CONTRIBUTION TO PLANNING

Award for Contribution to Planning to

“100 years of Planning Achievement”

Submitted by University of Liverpool Department of Civic Design

The UK's first Planning Act was passed in 1909 authorising the preparation by local councils of planning schemes for any land “which is in course of development or appears likely to be used for building purposes”. At the same time, an equally important achievement was the birth of the world's first University Planning School established in Liverpool.

William Hesketh Lever, the first Lord Leverhulme, industrialist and founder of Port Sunlight model village was of paramount importance to the founding of the University's Department of Civic Design. At the behest of Charles Reilly the Professor of Architecture, Lord Leverhulme acted as benefactor for the establishment of the Lever Chair, the first professorship in town planning. He also enabled the publication of the Town Planning Review, the first international journal on the subject.

Now in its centenary year, there have only been 7 Lever Professors. All leading lights in the profession, 4 also served also as President of the Royal Town Planning Institute and its predecessor, the Town Planning Institute. Alongside teaching duties, the early professors were encouraged by the University to engage in professional practice and travel extensively to become informed about the latest developments in the fledgling profession. Amongst these, Sir Patrick Abercrombie became widely regarded as the leading British planner of the Twentieth century, preparing plans throughout the world and breaking new ground in planning methods at urban and regional levels. William Holford, the third Lever Professor lead the way for post-war reconstruction, city centre planning and establishing the basic principles for the system of comprehensive planning set out in the 1947 Act. The achievements are many and they continue up to the present day.

The Department of Civic Design has been instrumental in the development of planning education. Initially the Department offered Certificate and Diploma courses for municipal engineers and architects in town planning. After the Second World War there was a demand for rapid city reconstruction and new town development. The Schuster Report sought a significant increase in the number of qualified planners and Liverpool lead the way in 1950 with Professor Gordon Stephenson's innovative proposal for a 2 year postgraduate qualification open to well qualified graduates in any subject and centring on the three distinct groups of skills: the science of inquiry, the art of creative design, and the systems of administration - the Master of Civic Design (MCD).

The importance of the MCD course to planning education and achievement cannot be under estimated. The course was a model for other Universities and its students contributed significantly to the profession both nationally and internationally.

In 2004, the RTPI review provided the opportunity to rethink post graduate education and Liverpool brought forward a new version of the MCD to meet the needs of spatial planning. The University has continued to be at the forefront of planning education and also includes an under graduate course.

Planning research has always been key. Recently the University has developed a unique partnership with the Xi'an Jiao Tong University in China, creating the XJT/LU campus in Suzhou where an innovative under-graduate degree in City Development will be taught jointly in both Liverpool and Suzhou.

An equally important cause for celebration is the continued publication of the Town Planning Review which has an extensive international readership. It is renowned for its rigorous editorial standards and its contribution to the advancement of planning, particularly within the developed world. In 1979 it was joined by the Third World Planning Review founded by Professor Gerald Dix, now known as the International Development Planning Review, which concentrates on planning and economic development in developing countries.

Now under the leadership of Lever Professor Peter Batey and Professor David Shaw, the Department of Civic Design continues to strive for excellence in delivering planning education in line with the long established traditions of Liverpool. The contribution made by the Department to the development of national and international planning education, research and professional practice for 100 years is immeasurable. For these reasons Gareth Pryce and Leonora Rozee agreed that an Award should be made to the Liverpool University Department of Civic Design in the special category Contribution to Planning.