



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

Royal Town Planning Institute

Annual Review 2016



West Midlands

Chair's Foreword

During my year as Chair we've seen significant changes, not just physically in terms of development in the region, but also behind the scenes in a variety of policy and technical areas.

Media reports convey a great deal of optimism for the West Midlands. Birmingham is the place where many London-based businesses are choosing to relocate. The 'Good Growth for Cities' Index identifies Coventry as the 8th best city in the UK to live, work and undertake business.

However, significant challenges face the region and our profession.

First, the role and function of the West Midlands Combined Authority and how it fits within the existing governance structures, especially when it has no strategic planning functions, except for transport.

Second, the pressure to provide significant levels of housing across the region – including affordable homes for those who need them.

Third, the delivery of transport infrastructure, including HS2, West Coast Mainline, improvements to the strategic road network and the expansion of Birmingham Airport.

Finally, health continues to be a core issue faced by the region, with obesity levels, poor air quality and other factors putting ever-increasing pressure on medical infrastructure and services.

Of particular concern is that the profession, in both the private and public sectors, struggles with ever-increasing expectations but is unable to recruit sufficiently due to a significant skills shortage.

In terms of the activities and services the West Midlands has been highly successful through its CPD programme, Summer Ball and the Planning Summit. In addition we have increased our representation at the national level with John Acres elected as RTPI Vice President and James Carpenter and Lindsay Richards onto the General Assembly in 2017.

I have been immensely proud to represent the RTPI West Midlands Region and its members during 2016. Through my visits, events, networking and awards it is clear to me that the region has a body of really talented professionals within local authorities, consultancies, developers and academia. We all have a major contribution to make to the transformation of the West Midlands.

My overarching message is that we should be very proud of ourselves and the jobs we do; while it's not always appreciated, as planners we make a positive mark on people's lives and environment.

Regional Management Board

Chair: Ben Simm
Senior Vice-Chair: Craig Jordan
Junior Vice-Chair: Maria Dunn
Immediate Past-Chair:
Michael Vout
Representative on GA:
Susan Manns
Honorary Secretary:
Paul Harris
Honorary Treasurer:
Mark Walton

Regional Activities Committee

John Acres
Neville Ball
Michael Barker
Mike Beazley
David Brammer

Claire Bridges
James Carpenter
Ray Colbourne
Viral Desai
Sandra Ford
Chris Green
Richard Hammersley
Ken Harrison
Stephen Hill
Robert Keith
Dave Marr
Julie Morgan
Hector Pearson
Dan Roberts
Charles Robinson
Paresh Shingadia
Sandy Taylor



Championing the Planning Profession

Regional Awards

The Awards were presented at our illustrious Summer Ball held at Villa Park in June.

The winner of the Award for Planning Excellence was Dudley Council for the refurbishment of the Victorian fire station into The Old Glasshouse bar and restaurant. It forms one intervention to support the economic regeneration of the town centre.

The Young Planner of the Year Award was presented to Luke Coffey who works for consultants, Mott MacDonald. Luke was chair of the West Midlands Young Planners Group in 2016 and has taken a full and active part in promoting town planning to young planners.

Katy Craddock received the RTPI West Midlands Chairman's Award. Katy specialises in urban design and uses this experience in helping children to understand the work of planners and to show them what planning does to shape the world around them.

RTPI National Awards

The region was extremely pleased that Richard Hammersley was commended in the volunteer category. He has been heavily involved in the region's Planning Aid Service for many years and recently in working with the local community of Balsall Heath on its Neighbourhood Plan.

Students Awards

The region presents an Award to the most promising students at our two planning schools. In 2016 the awards were won by:

Jack Hanly and Norhanisah Binti Norzri from University of Birmingham

Thomas Cannaby from Birmingham City University

President's Visit

This occasion is always a great way of promoting the work of planners in the region. During his visit in March, Phil Williams met planners at Dudley Council and took a tour of schemes in the town centre. He also visited Birmingham city centre, taking in the Bullring, Brindleyplace and the new Central Library. While in the region, Phil met with planning students at Birmingham City University, members of the Young Planners Group and also sixth form geography pupils at Bromsgrove School to promote planning as a career.

Ethics in Planning

A CPD seminar stressed the importance of ethics to the planning profession, including the duty of care of planners in their dealings with individuals and society as a whole.

This successful project in Dudley will play an integral part in enhancing the town centre as a tourist destination which will help improve economic performance in the local area.

Judging Panel



Winner of the Regional Award for Planning Excellence: The Old Glasshouse, Dudley town centre



RTPI President, Phil Williams, looking over the rooftops of Birmingham city centre

Supporting and Growing Membership

Continuing Professional Development

Following its successful introduction in 2012, the RTPI West Midlands season ticket programme has continued to help planners undertake their CPD requirements and enable employers to book multiple places at a discounted price. Thirty-eight season tickets were purchased in 2016, together with a substantial number of individual seminar places.

A total of 11 events were held in a range of locations across the region. All of them were well-attended and some were fully booked. The subjects covered included: planning law, housing provision, green belt, neighbourhood planning, public inquiries, energy and economic viability

Great Regional Debate

This well-established annual event kick started the year in January. It took the theme Devolution Revolution – or more of the same? As with previous years it was jointly organised by the RTPI, ICE, RIBA, LI and RICS. It focused on the issues and challenges arising from the new Combined Authority for the West Midlands and the benefits which it is hoped will arise.

Planning Summit

After a few years' gap, a major Planning Summit was held in November. It was fully booked, with over 100 people attending. The theme was Delivering Development and it covered a wide range of issues, including the national housing crisis and the Government's response, the need for investment in training in the built professions, the West Midlands Devolution Deal, sticking points to delivery, and the implications of technological change on how we plan for the future.

Social Events

A range of occasions were held to assist regional members to meet up and network. These included the Annual General Meeting which included a presentation on the region's Futures Network, the Award Ceremony, Dinner and Ball attended by the RTPI Vice President, Stephen Wilkinson, and the Autumn Reception held in Stratford-upon-Avon in recognition of 2016 being the 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare...not forgetting the 5-a-side football tournament won by McCarthy and Stone.

Appearances can be deceptive: 2016 might have seemed a bit bleak, but if you know where and how to look, you can find hope springing eternal amidst the carnage.

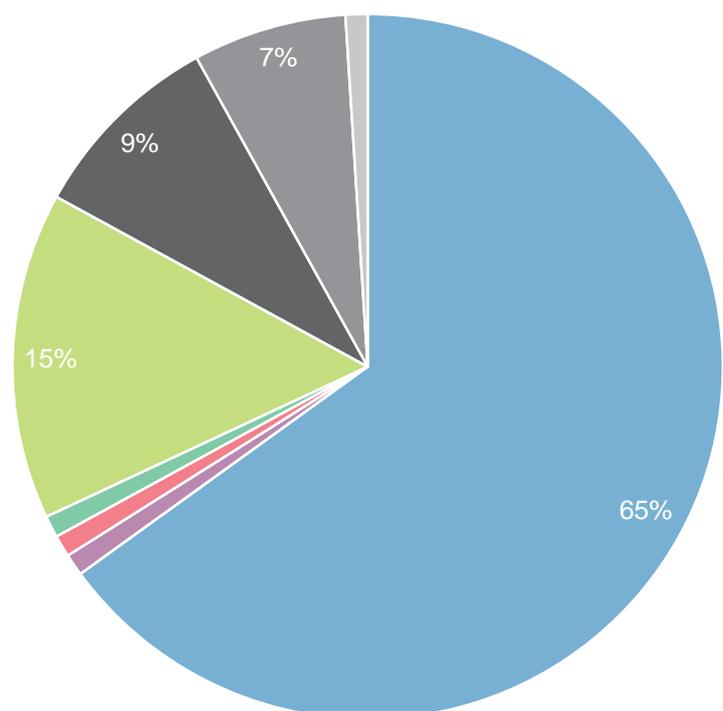
Paul Thompson reflecting on the Planning Summit

Regional Membership Figures 2016

Membership Class

- Chartered Town Planner*
- Fellow
- Associate
- Legal Associate
- Technical
- Retired
- Honorary
- Licentiate
- Student
- Affiliate

*This class includes Legal Members



Shaping and Informing Policy and Practice

The West Midlands Region provided a wide range of opportunities for its members to engage in this process during the year. Amongst these were the following:

Places and Spaces: The Midlands Big Meet

Birmingham hosted the first of a series of events around the country which brought together architects, planners and other professions to promote the importance of design in space and place. Using opportunities presented by higher density development, connectivity to main centres and sites around transport nodes were raised. It was argued that we are not being ambitious enough in shaping our urban centres.

Future of the Green Belts

The key message from this event is that Green Belts are here to stay but they need to be better managed and maintained. As well as fulfilling strategic purposes, it is important that land in the Green Belt is made more attractive and accessible to the public. Key conclusions included the use of transport hubs within the Green Belt as sustainable growth points and defining an additional Green Belt purpose which focuses on sustainable development and effective place-making.



The Green Belt around Birmingham

Dickens Heath

A seminar and visit considered this planned new village, built in the Green Belt to the south-west of Solihull. It was conceived as a reaction against unimaginative development on the edge of the conurbation. There was broad agreement that Dickens Heath functions as a village due to its social infrastructure, even if it doesn't have the physical characteristics of one in terms of building scale and design.

Energy and Development

The speakers at this event were not shy in expressing their views regarding the future of energy production and delivery. There are major concerns about the political and policy direction in securing energy for the future. However, positive signs are emerging with technology and action at the local level.

The Forgotten Rural

Britain's decision to leave the EU poses major challenges for the agricultural industry. It also provides an opportunity to consider how the planning system can help farmers increase productivity, and become more resilient and innovative. A key message is the need for planners to recognise new farming practices and to diversify the use of farm buildings.



Main Street, Dickens Heath

Empowering Communities

The West Midlands Region was very active in promoting the role of planning within our communities.

Playing with Participation

Researchers at Birmingham City University, led by Alister Scott, have devised a resource kit called Participology. It is a flexible tool that can be tailored for use by professionals, students and communities. It allows the user to select and download hypothetical playing boards that represent typical urban, lowland, rural, upland and coastal landscapes. The power of the resource kit is that it enables a diverse range of potential board game applications to be devised.

Supporting Community Planning

The Region commissioned research from the University of Reading to assess issues and opportunities for taking forward the Planning Aid service in the West Midlands. The study examined the views and experiences of communities and local authorities and other parties who have been actively involved in the service. A range of key recommendations were made to raise the profile of Planning Aid regionally and nationally.

Working with potential young planners

The built environment is a fabulous educational resource. It makes so many skills relevant because its professions and projects blend together subjects from all over the curriculum: geography, art, technology, ICT, business, communication, teamwork. A series of workshops in Black Country primary schools arranged by Katy Craddock has sought to raise children's understanding of the environment around them by bringing a variety of professional people to work with and inspire them.

Neighbourhood Planning

A seminar provided a useful opportunity for planners to refresh and update their knowledge of the process and delivery of Neighbourhood Development Plans from those involved at the forefront of engagement, implementation and examination of these documents. There is still a clear imbalance between the numbers of NDPs being prepared in affluent areas compared to less prosperous communities. So, areas that may not have the resources and skills to engage with the process may also be those communities most in need of the benefits from having a plan.

Education
breeds
confidence,
confidence
breeds hope,
hope breeds
peace.

Confucius



What will you be when you grow up?



Participology - A board game with a planning twist

Achieving Good Governance

Business Plan performance

During the course of 2016, the Region achieved the great majority of its stated objectives. In particular, its CPD programme and other training events, regional magazine (Tripwire), promotion of good design, career development for young planners, liaison with sister professions and member networking were highly successful.

Two areas have been identified as needing particular attention: improving its use of the regional media and promoting relations with planners in other countries.

Financial Report

The Region has again performed extremely strongly from a budget perspective. Following the generation of large surpluses in the period since 2012, the Region identified a 'deficit budget' for 2016 to seek to 'drive down' the surplus for the benefit of members.

In the last twelve months we achieved a deficit of circa £2,000 whilst also providing new and enhanced services for members, including:

- A varied and well supported local CPD programme
- A Planning Summit to discuss current planning issues in the Region

- A range of free to attend 'complementary' CPD events
- An enhanced' Autumn Reception event;
- Contributing to the RTPI Future Planners Bursary Scheme
- Annual Planning Quiz in association with the Young Planners Group
- Enhanced financial support for the Regional Co-ordinator post through an increase in working hours.

The table below compares the budget for 2016 with the actual outturn and shows the approved budget for 2017.

- The figures in the 2016 Actual column are taken from the Institute's 2016 Final Accounts. These have yet to be signed off by the auditors at the time of preparing this report, but are not expected to change.
- Income from CPD events continues to exceed budget expectations and is used to subsidise networking events.
- Costs associated with the Regional Co-ordinator's salary falls under Regional Governance & Administration.

The Region is conscious that an excessive surplus is undesirable and it has identified a number of new expenditure items over the coming year. Consequently the Business Plan for 2017 seeks to increase expenditure above 2016 levels by circa £25,000.

We are extremely grateful to our many sponsors. They helped us to provide a wide range of events and services which benefitted planners and promoted the planning profession in the region.

	Budget 2016 (£)	Actual 2016 (£)	Budget 2017 (£)
INCOME			
Grant from Central Funds	21,800	21,800	21,680
CPD Events	26,000	35,430	28,500
Other Income	21,100	23,100	15,600
Total Income	68,900	80,330	65,780
EXPENDITURE			
CPD Events	9,000	14,750	19,000
Other Activities	30,000	29,000	31,900
Regional Governance	38,000	38,550	40,520
Total Expenditure	77,000	82,300	91,420
Surplus/Deficit	-8,100	-1,970	-25,630
Accumulated Position at the end of 2016 (£)			
Surplus brought forward	43,503		
Deficit for the year	1,970		
Accumulated Surplus	41,533		



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