Solihull Council is grasping the ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunity presented by the proposed HS2 Interchange Station to create a new growth hub for the West Midlands.

The Council has used local consultants, Arup, to develop a strategy which builds on the former M42 Gateway plans to provide a new settlement designed on Garden City principles focused around the HS2 interchange and the M42/A45 junction, together with associated business, entertainment and innovation zones.

Linked with the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham Airport, the ‘Hub’ location is home to the greatest concentration of high profile activities in the West Midlands. Combining the ‘Hub’ with the Jaguar Land Rover complex, North Solihull, Blythe Valley Business Park and Solihull Town Centre creates a broad portfolio of investment opportunities that defines the UK Central ‘package’.

This location is already attracting major investment with the £150m Resorts World Birmingham due to open in spring 2015 and a new £60m state of the art advanced manufacturing and technology facility on Birmingham Business Park with a further £1.8bn of planned investment in North Solihull on new homes, schools, retail developments, and an enterprise centre.

The announcement within the Autumn Statement to deliver major improvements at M42 junction 6 will improve the connectivity to the new HS2 Interchange Station and further support the economy.

The UK Central proposal, is all part of achieving an estimated 100,000 jobs and an anticipated £15.5bn - £19.5bn annual investment by 2040 across the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership area.

This project has the potential to become a major force for the regional economy and a trigger for a national economic resurgence which could have wider repercussions for the West Midlands.

The key objectives are opportunity, quality, accessibility and connectivity. Bold and ambitious it may be, but it sends a clear message that the West Midlands is not only open for business, but that the region will succeed and prosper.

Comments on the new UK Central ideas are invited before 16th January 2015, and are planned to be incorporated into a Local Area Plan.
A final message from the West Midlands Chair – Dan Roberts.

So, this is it… my last ‘Word from the Chair’. My stint almost over; the job, pretty much, done. I have to say, it has been my privilege to represent the region this past 12 months, and during the Institute’s centenary year, as well. Someone had to! I appreciate that I can be (okay… I am) an acquired taste. For instance, I’ve been made aware that my musings have been described as pretentious twaddle, so apologies to those of you with which they haven’t struck a chord. Equally – actually, more so! – thanks to the (mercifully) many of you who have been kind enough to let me know you’ve enjoyed and, indeed, on occasions agreed with, some of them. Each to their own. And, of course, if you’re not happy, the answer is quite straightforward…

On that front, I must pay tribute to all the hard work carried out at the regional level of the RTPI in the West Midlands. It is only when you become a little more involved, as I have managed to do this last year, that you realise all the time and effort that is put in, voluntarily. It is truly remarkable. It really does bring home to me that, often, the things we do over-and-above the ‘day job’ turn out to be the most worthwhile and rewarding.

Granted, such commitment can seem daunting. It has been, and continues to be, a difficult period for many of us, as planners. Some of our number are overworked and under ever-increasing pressure, as sections of the economy gather momentum and, thankfully, recognise the need to gain permission along the way. Others feel overworked but undervalued, considered somewhat unnecessary by current governmental doctrine – and, therefore, constantly, wearingly under threat.

We know, as a profession, that we’re important to the future of this region and the country, and part of the solution rather than the problem – and I feel we should say so more often and forcefully. Toeing the government line doesn’t seem to have been a massively winning tactic, thus far. As a General Election looms, perhaps, as an Institute, we can feel more confident and able to robustly fight our members’ corner.

Personally, the one thing I will take from this year is a rediscovery of, and pride in, the strategic importance of what we do. Often, what sets us apart from other built environmental professionals is our pursuit of the greater, common good. Planning is not just about promoting a single development or a solitary scheme but – if we’re doing it properly – making sure any development positively influences its locality, and beyond.

Does this mean, by definition therefore, as a profession, we tend a little to ‘the left’?! During a particularly interesting and stimulating discussion at the last Regional Activities Committee meeting, where we were exploring the manifesto of Future Network West Midlands, it was reported that, in ‘certain quarters’, planning is seen as an inherently socialist activity! I ask you! As someone remarked, don’t businesses plan, too? In order to make a profit, the better ones do. Otherwise, they fall by the capitalist wayside.

Maybe this is the point at which I need to wish you a very red (and green) Yuletide break – with a seasonal but not too disruptive dusting of white, for good measure.

And what do I feel is my proudest achievement this year? It has to be managing to nurse the fragile metal through the trials and tribulations of that forms my period in office. While many have fallen to pieces or been lost (or didn’t turn up in the first place), by restricting its wearing to only what I decided were ‘official engagements’, I can now retain it as a souvenir. And the memories are good. Thank you to all who made them – the memories, that is, not the badges.

Here’s to the next 100 years…

Dan Roberts
RTPI West Midlands Chair

Tripwire 2015

The Regional Management Board is keen to develop a regular ‘blog’ along the lines of the London Region which will highlight events past and present and wider planning news in the region, but this will require a small team to monitor and edit items and ensure this is kept regularly up to date. If you are interested in joining a small communications team, please contact John Acres at the usual Tripwire address below.

Tripwire has been running in its present form for nearly 15 years, since before websites were in common use and prior to the existence of ‘blogs’ in the English dictionary. So as part of this review, the Regional Management Board has decided to reduce the frequency of Tripwire to 4 issues per year, which will follow the same format as before and be issued in the Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter of 2015 in the hope that the magazine and the blog will run side by side.
A message from the in-coming Chair – Mike Vout

“In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.” Albert Einstein

I listen to my local radio as I drive to work, I find it a good way of keeping aware of local issues as well as the local ‘take’ on national issues.

A recent radio item involved the potential redevelopment of a local landmark site for mixed use. When questioned by the radio interviewer, the developer listed several important parties they needed to speak with, not least of which were ‘the Planners’.

Sometimes ‘the Planners’ are spoken about in the ‘Scooby Doo’ sense of ‘we would have got away with it if it had not been for those pesky kids’ (replace the word ‘Planners’ for the word kids) perpetuating the idea, as some government announcements over the past few years would have us believe that ‘the planners’ are responsible for frustrating economic recovery and growth. Fortunately I sensed that in the case of the developer in the radio interview they identified engaging with ‘the planners’ as a positive aid in the process rather than something that would frustrate it.

During 2014 you will have noticed that the strap-line attached to the RTPI logo had been changed to ‘100 years of professional planning’ in recognition of the centenary. In 2015 the RTPI returns to its regular strap-line of ‘Mediation of space – making of place’. One can view these things as relatively unimportant (and in one sense they are) but a strap-line does try to encapsulate a value which is central to an organisation. In this case the word ‘mediation’ stands out as being one of our core values and one which I sense is often not realised and appreciated by society as being central to what Planners are and do; mediation and being mediators.

When my colleague Tom Lewis is churning out statistics about the percentage of brownfield land or I’m reading page after page of unrelenting background to a policy it can seem a million miles from ‘planning the world around us’. But we should never lose sight of the fact that we are part of a profession which is about the relationship of things, which seeks fairness and solutions and is one which at its heart involves being mediators for a complex world.

As we move into 2015 I would express my considerable gratitude to Dan Roberts as the Chair for 2014. His shoes will be hard to fill (partly because I take a size 7 and Dan takes a size 8). I would also thank those involved in promoting and working for the RTPI in the region (especially Sue Griffith-Jones and Paul Harris who continue to be a ‘bedrock’ of support for the WM RTPI). Thank you to the WM RTPI Young Planners and all of the various groups that make Planning real and relevant, and last but not least a thank you to all Planners in the region who have been a part of the regional RTPI activities during 2014. You are the RTPI. Be even more active in 2015 and be ‘Proud to be a Planner’.

Michael Vout
In-coming Chair for 2015.

Solihull Local Plan: Court of appeal decision

Is this the end of the story or just the beginning?

It’s back to the drawing board for the housing policies within the Solihull Local Plan.

In the week before Christmas, the Law Lords at the Court of Appeal passed judgement on the appeal by Solihull MBC against the previous High Court ruling by Mr Justice Hickinbottom to quash the part of the Adopted Solihull Local Plan which addresses housing needs. The Law Lords have endorsed the early High Court ruling and have also upheld a cross-appeal from the original appellants – Gallagher Estates and Lioncourt Homes – who argued that the review of the ‘Full Objectively Assessed Housing Need’ for the Borough should be remitted to the Council to resolve afresh, rather than simply being reconsidered by a separate Inspector.

In addition, the Court of Appeal has supported the High Court’s decision to remove two housing sites controlled by Gallagher Estates and Lioncourt Homes from the green belt. The Solihull Local Plan had proposed that both sites be returned to the green belt, and this decision was supported by the Local Plan Inspector in his report, despite him taking a different view in the previous Local Plan (where he was also the Inspector). The Law Lords were satisfied that there were insufficient ‘exceptional circumstances’ which might justify the decision to return the sites to the green belt. Whether the Gallagher scheme is granted consent now rests with the Secretary of State, since a S78 appeal decision is still awaited.

The upshot of this Court of Appeal ruling now means that Solihull Council will be back to square one. In order to determine their legitimate housing requirement they will first need to undertake a proper Objective Assessment (consistent with paragraph 47 of the NPPF) before they can apply any policy constraints in determining their final housing provision figure. The Law Lords are clear that this two-stage approach to determining the level of housing provision is ‘mandatory’.

Effectively, since Solihull will need to engage with other authorities in the West Midlands metropolitan area and beyond through the Duty to Co-operate, this means that they will also now need to take on board the full implications of the Strategic Housing Needs Study for the wider Birmingham Housing Market Area, currently being undertaken by Peter Brett & Associates, before they can reach a conclusion.

John Acres
Editor

Michael Vout
In-coming Chair for 2015.
Who decides where new homes should go – the Borough Council through their evidence-based submitted Local Plan, or the local community through their emerging Neighbourhood Plan? On the evidence of the most recent Secretary of State’s appeal decision – clearly the latter.

Eric Pickles has shaken the planning world to its foundations by dismissing an appeal for 100 dwellings at College Fields in the village of Rolleston on Dove in East Staffordshire, (a landmark case reported in previous editions of Tripwire).

The site was allocated for housing in the East Staffordshire Local Plan, but the local village community thought otherwise and produced a Neighbourhood Plan which excluded the housing site. Meanwhile the landowner, Burton & South Derbyshire College, having applied for planning consent was refused permission by members against their officers’ advice. The college lodged an appeal, which was heard at an Inquiry in early March 2014 and recovered by the Secretary of State three weeks later.

The Secretary of State has adjudged in his appeal decision that the weight of the Neighbourhood Plan, despite it not yet having been taken to a referendum, should outweigh the lack of a 5 year housing land supply and the limited weight which he gave to the emerging Local Plan. Essentially therefore he has decided that the appeal scheme would prejudice the Neighbourhood Plan and so should be dismissed.

So after a 9 month wait, the Secretary of State has issued his decision, leaving the Council having won the battle, but lost the war. With the Local Plan having only recently been suspended by the Local Plan EIP inspector due partly to a shortage of readily available housing sites, it now has to decide where to allocate another 100 houses. Pre-election, Ministers have clearly signalled that ‘Local choice’ means the right to say no.

John Acres
Editor

‘Home made’ plans judged preferable to locally produced strategies

With ‘Black Friday’ and ‘Cyber Monday’ now annual fixtures in the UK, and with Christmas almost upon us, there is no question we are in the most important season of the year for retailers. What is also becoming increasingly apparent is how rapidly our shopping habits are changing. For the food shopping sector it has been a tough time for the ‘big 4’ as their customers become more discerning, more savvy with their cash, and more demanding of how convenient they want their convenience shopping to be. Discount retailers have benefited and the landscape of retail development has changed significantly, especially in terms of the scale and location of new stores.

In the comparison retail sector, it has also been a challenging time for town centres with the increasing competition from online retail and ecommerce (approaching 10% of all UK retail spending) forcing many of the ‘stalwarts’ of the high street to embrace it and adapt, or step aside.

Smaller town centres in particular have suffered from the additional competition and availability of access to various multi-media shopping channels. At the same time national retailers are seeking to rationalise their presence to city centres and prime regional shopping centres, from where they can attract shoppers from a wider catchment area.

In planning, the battle between in centre and out-of-centre retail development continues, and the signs are that the latter is currently ahead on points despite the longstanding and core ‘town centres first’ principle of national planning policy being retained by the NPPF and PPG. This is reflected in research undertaken by Verdict which showed that between 2007 and 2012 the amount of out-of-centre retail floorspace increased by 23%.

Earlier this year the Secretary of State approved a major out-of-centre retail and leisure development outside Rushden. It represented a ‘landmark’ decision that raises awkward questions about the status and integrity of the key tests of impact and sequential approach.

However, with signs of an improving economic outlook and with forecasts showing expenditure growth returning to town centres, the inevitable fight back from the high street should be interesting to watch. It is clear that customers will be the main beneficiaries as developers and investors aim to provide schemes that offer an enhanced and more innovative shopping experience.

Successful retailers are also embracing multimedia strategies and providing improving customer service and interaction, as well as store designs that seek to excite, and not just sell.

The return of leisure to town centres as well as the potential for other complementary mixed uses over time, as other markets continue to improve, suggest we could be at the dawn of a transformational period for the physical retail landscape in the UK. The planning landscape may need to adapt to keep up.

Mat Jones will be organising and chairing the RTPI Season Ticket Seminar on Retail Planning in October 2015.

Mat Jones
Director, Turley

‘Tis the Season to be Shopping

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Mat Jones
Director, Turley
‘Fracking’ Update

In our Summer edition of Tripwire (No 82) we included a brief item on ‘Tackling Fracking’ which explained how Arup, consultant planners and engineers based in Solihull had been working on the first planning applications for the exploration of shale gas, on sites on the edge of Blackpool and in rural Fylde. In this edition, we explore in more detail the processes which are required to take forward a ‘Fracking’ application.

In addition to leading the planning work, the Arup team also oversaw an extensive pre-application consultation with local communities around the proposed exploration sites, which began almost a year prior to the application submission. The team have championed a best practice approach to consultation ensuring that communities have the opportunity to have their say at an early and effective stage of the planning process. The engagement has continued beyond the application submissions in May and June of this year through ongoing dialogue with statutory consultees.

Arup have encouraged an open process whereby local communities are provided with all the facts about shale gas exploration, including the findings from the comprehensive environmental impact assessment work, also undertaken by Arup. They have advocated the importance of using a range of innovative consultation tools to encourage engagement and understanding of complex and highly technical issues. This has included animations of the fracturing and site development process; 360° panoramic views and 3D models of the exploration site and surroundings, to give stakeholders a full perspective of the proposals. An online ‘community map’ was also developed, giving people the opportunity to provide feedback remotely.

Since the applications were submitted, there have been several developments in the national shale gas exploration agenda.

Firstly, in May the Government launched a consultation on their proposals (under the new Infrastructure Bill) seeking to simplify the perceived costly, and untimely procedure to obtain underground drilling access. Following the conclusion of the consultation in August, the Government confirmed that they will proceed in putting the Infrastructure Bill before Parliament. The Bill is now in the process of passing through Parliament. If implemented, it will grant access rights for underground drilling below 300 metres.

Secondly, and more recently, 28th October saw the conclusion of a three month bidding period for the 14th round of Petroleum Exploration and Development Licenses (PEDL) across the UK, giving developers the opportunity to obtain licenses required for shale gas exploration. So what will be the impact on the West Midlands? Notwithstanding the progressions detailed above, the prospects for shale gas exploration in the West Midlands are perceived to be relatively poor. Whilst the new round of licensing does offer PEDL blocks across the majority of the West Midlands including Birmingham, Wolverhampton and some of Coventry, generally the West Midlands does not possess the principal geological units which could supply shale gas. However, the area should not be dismissed altogether for shale gas exploration in the future.

Mark Smith
Arup

Notes

WM Futures Network produces Strategic Planning Manifesto

‘Working together for a better West Midlands’. That is the title (and the objective) of the new West Midlands Futures Network which aims to see a more co-ordinated approach to planning in the region.

The Manifesto, which is designed to influence not just Westminster politicians but also the local decision-makers, sets out a clear message to deliver more integrated sub-regional planning across local authority boundaries.

The WMFN highlight the problems which now exist following the abandonment of regional planning – the lack of co-ordination on economic strategies between authorities, the shortcomings in the Duty to co-operate, the difficulties of planning transport and infrastructure without a clear strategic approach and the lack of a clear, up-to-date and reliable evidence base for the Birmingham sub – region.

The Manifesto calls for:-
• A wider than local’ strategic approach to delivering prosperity in the West Midlands,
• Improved measures to enhance the economic performance of the region and assist the re-balancing of the national economy,
• The development of a framework to ensure that the benefits of investment are shared by communities in all parts of the region,
• Increased investment in infrastructure particularly for transport, energy and broadband connectivity,
• More effective co-ordination of housing policy to ensure that the region’s housing needs are met within sustainable communities,
• The better championing of the region’s historic, cultural and natural environment.

Copies of the Manifesto are available from David Thew at dthew@blueyonder.com and any comments should be sent to David.

Mark Smith
Arup

Notes
RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2015 – open for entry

‘Highlight - celebrate – inspire’. This is the vision for the Planning for Excellence awards which opens this month and extends until 30th January 2015.

The RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence celebrate the positive contribution that planners and planning make to society and highlight exceptional examples of planning. 25 judges from across the profession will be participating this year.

Entering is a low cost, high impact way to highlight your achievements to potential clients, peers and stakeholders. Winning and shortlisted entries will be disseminated through the RTPI’s website and other best practice resources and all winning and shortlisted entrants will have the choice of receiving an awards logo for use on their own promotional materials.

Cath Ranson, the current RTPI President said: “The RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence celebrate the very best planning projects, strategies and processes that help make great places. This is your chance to get the recognition you deserve for your team and the project you are most proud of.”

We are also looking to recognise and award exemplary individuals, teams and practices in the following categories:

• Young Planner of the Year
• Planning Consultancy of the Year
• Small Planning Consultancy of the Year
• Local Authority Planning Team of the Year
• Employer Award for Excellence

Submissions are also open in the following categories:

• Excellence in planning for community and well-being
• Excellence in planning and design for the public realm
• Excellence in planning for the natural environment
• Excellence in planning for built heritage
• Excellence in planning to deliver housing
• Excellence in plan making practice
• Excellence in decision making in planning
• Excellence in planning to deliver infrastructure
• Excellence in planning to create economically successful places

Each year the RTPI presents the Silver Jubilee Cup to the category winner considered the most outstanding from all the categories.

There is no requirement to be a member of the RTPI to enter the awards and entries for a project or a plan can be submitted by the planner, architect, planning authority, developer, or client.

If you wish to raise your profile we have an array of sponsorship opportunities available. Please contact our events and marketing department on 0207 929 9457 for more information. You can view last year’s winners and shortlisted entries in our 2014 brochure To enter go to www.rtpi.org.uk/awardsforplanningexcellence

Colin Bendall RTPI

Most promising newcomers

Two first year students – one from Birmingham University and the other from City of Birmingham University – were awarded RTPI West Midlands prizes as the most promising first year students on their respective planning courses.

Congratulations to Banu Sjadzali from Birmingham University and Olivia Hoare from City of Birmingham University.

Both prize winners received their awards from the current RTPI West Midlands Chair, Dan Roberts at the RTPI Regional Activities Committee in Birmingham earlier this month.

We wish them every success in the future.

Banu Sjadzali.

Olivia Hoare.
Young planners review for 2014

2014 has been a fantastic year for Young Planners. Our CPD programme has included a range of topics as diverse as Energy, Housing, Wind Farms, Green Belt, and Sustainability, alongside the regular APC workshops.

In May, YP hosted the regional visit by Dy Currie, President of the Planning Institute of Australia who spoke on ‘Building Resilience through Risk Management’, a particularly relevant topic to Australia’s recent history but also an interesting example of how a different approach to planning has achieved much needed results.

The RTPI President’s visit in June also included an evening with the Young Planners and it was a privilege to hear about Cath Ranson’s career and vision for the RTPI during her tenure.

YP celebrated the Centenary with the RTPI West Midlands Quiz, won this year by Mott MacDonald. The Ball was a great success and we were delighted to see Ben Simm honoured with the Young Planner of the Year award and Emma Evans commended by the judges. Ben and Emma’s ongoing support of YP has been very welcome!

The YP Core Group have attended a number of RTPI organised student meetings this year, and have also spoken to new University of Birmingham and Birmingham City University (BCU) undergraduate/postgraduate students as part of their induction programmes. This not only helps provide students with an overview of roles available within the planning profession, but has been a great opportunity to advertise RTPI West Midlands, the YP network and the support available to student and licenciate members.

The West Midlands is a fascinating region to be part of and the range and scale of projects underway, from transport, restructuring our city centres, housing land supply, and development pressure on the Green Belt provide case studies on a whole raft of issues. At the start of the RTPI’s next 100 years I hope the YP group remains close to these, using experiences to our benefit. Importantly, we would like to thank Amec for their sponsorship. This has been invaluable in providing a varied programme, including CPD, networking events and APC workshops. We are pleased these have been very well attended by members from both public/private sectors and universities and hope the links established between members will continue to grow.

It has been an honour to Chair the YP committee during 2014. We are incredibly lucky to benefit from the enthusiasm of the Core group, support from the RTPI region and universities, and interest of YP members. All of which is much appreciated, thank you.

Clare Lucey
Chair

Planning Aid England

Planning Aid England’s core function - to provide independent planning advice and to support communities to engage in, and influence, planning issues that affect them - has been given a boost with a number of new staff appointed to deliver the Planning Aid Direct service.

The new team consists of Kat Salter, John Harrison and Darren Carroll. The Planning Aid Direct team oversee a Q&A web resource (called Planning Aid Direct), the Advice Line (by phone and email), casework and outreach and community engagement.

Planning Aid Direct is a free web resource which offers answers to questions people often ask about planning; explanations of how the planning system works and signposting on where to go next. The website is proving to be a popular resource with over 1600 hits a month.

The team also operate an advice service and offer a limited amount of free, professional, general planning advice over the phone (0330 123 9244) or via email (advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk). Over 60 queries are received a week on all aspects of the planning system.

Our network of volunteers have been providing additional support with over 31 individuals and communities throughout England benefiting from further bespoke support over the last 7 months. In the West Midlands volunteers have assisted on a range of cases including helping an educational trust apply for prior approval for change of use from an office to a nursery.

Planning Aid England is expanding the services and support they can offer with a focus on community engagement and outreach. Over recent months volunteers have helped a residents’ group understand and engage in the planning system and assisted at a Local Plan consultation event.

Three volunteers from the region attended the annual volunteer conference in Manchester on 14th November which provided a chance to discuss Planning Aid England’s current and future activity. Planning Aid England continues to provide support to communities to deliver neighbourhood planning and over 236 communities have been assisted so far. In the West Midlands PAE are assisting 22 groups and these range from inner city areas (for example Balsall Health in Birmingham), urban suburbs (for example Coton Park in Rugby), market towns (Eccleshall in Staffordshire) to small rural villages (Welford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire).

Further information on the difference volunteers have made can be accessed here: http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/volunteering/volunteer-case-studies/ and if you are interested in volunteering please visit our website: http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/volunteering/.

Work continues on raising the profile of Planning Aid England and ensuring individuals and communities are aware of the services and support we offer. If you know of any groups or organisations who may benefit from such support please contact casework@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk. The eligibility criteria can be accessed here as Planning Aid England’s focus remains on assisting individuals and communities who cannot afford planning consultants and those who do not traditionally engage in the planning system.

Kat Salter
Planning Aid England
REGIONAL PROGRAMME
Non-members of RTPI welcome to attend.

Planning Law Update
Thursday 26 February (am) - Offices of DLA Piper, Birmingham
A seminar led by planning lawyers on topical legal issues, new and emerging legislation and guidance, recent case law and appeal decisions.

Development Management Update
Friday 13 March (pm) - Walsall Town Hall
The seminar will concentrate on new advice including recent cases, changes to Permitted Development, the Planning Practice Guidance and how this is being implemented in practice.

Planning for the Historic Environment
Wednesday 22 April (am) - The Bond Company, Birmingham
This seminar led by English Heritage, plus guest speakers from the historic environment sector, will focus on how to prepare Site Allocations documents and Masterplans, and conclude with a practical workshop.

New Government, New Housing – what can we expect?
Tuesday 12 May (am) - Stratford-on-Avon Council Chamber
This seminar will look at the key challenges facing the new Government and the new policy directions we can expect.

Reconnecting with the Rural Planning Agenda in the West Midlands
Thursday 21 May (am) - Visitor Centre, Chasewater Country Park, Staffordshire
This rural planning update will bring together experts with extensive knowledge and experience of rural development and land management issues. It will cover local plans and rural policies, permitted development rights, rural diversification, energy crops, farming, forestry and housing.

EIA: A Changing Environment
Wednesday 24 June (am) - Pincent Masons, Birmingham
An introduction to the new EIA regulations and the procedure relating to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). This seminar will explore good practice in the preparation of robust ESs and the role of the EIA process in delivering environmentally beneficial design solutions.

Regenerating Coventry through Urban Design
Monday 13 July (am & pm) - St Mary’s Guildhall, Coventry
This full day event will explore the role of urban design in regeneration and how relatively simple schemes can transform the character, feel and prioritisation of an area. It will include a walking tour of Coventry City Centre.

Preparing for Public Inquiries and Examinations in Public
Monday 14 September (am & pm) - De Vere Venues, Colmore Gate, Birmingham
A full day of training led by Barristers from No 5 Chambers, exploring all the procedures and practices necessary to prepare participants for a Public Inquiry or Examination in Public. During the afternoon there will be the chance to take part in a mock Inquiry or EiP.

Masterplans, Spatial Frameworks and Development Briefs
Tuesday 6 October (am & pm) - Offices of HCA, 5 St Phillip’s Place, Birmingham
This full day workshop will give delegates to develop a broader understanding and appreciation of the overall masterplanning process and the level of spatial and delivery detail needed at each stage of the planning process and enable delegates to develop and apply their own place-making and design skills.

Retail Assessments - guidance, good practice, and key considerations
Thursday 22 October (pm) - Offices of SGH Martineau, Birmingham
The session will be presented by experts in the field of retail planning and will include case studies and project examples from the Midlands and across the UK.

Planning Law Update
Tuesday 10 November (am) - Offices of DLA Piper, Birmingham
A seminar led by planning lawyers on topical legal issues, new and emerging legislation and guidance, recent case law and appeal decisions plus the significance and impacts of all of these.

Neighbourhood Planning
Thursday 26 November (am) - Birmingham (venue to be confirmed)
This half day seminar will look at the impacts of neighbourhood planning on planning practice, including democratic perspectives and implications for the profession.

Season tickets cost:
£220 + VAT for 5 places/credits paid for in advance (saving £30 + VAT)
£460 + VAT for 11 places/credits paid for in advance (saving £90 + VAT)

All of the seminars apart from “Preparing for Public Inquiries and EiPs” will cost 1 place/credit on the season ticket. Purchased individually these eleven seminars will cost £50 + VAT (£60) each for RTPI members, £60 + VAT (£72) for non-members or £20 + VAT (£24) for full-time students and the unwaged.

“Preparing for Public Inquiries and EiPs” will cost 2 credits on the season ticket, £100 + VAT (£120) for RTPI members, £144 for non-members and £48 for full-time students and the unwaged.

To encourage and assist full-time students to attend season ticket seminars, a few places at each seminar will be available for them at the special rate of £10 including VAT.

Please contact Sue on 0121 709 1599 or email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk to book or for further information.

OTHER EVENTS
Christmas in the Square - a social in Newhall Square Birmingham 5-8pm Wednesday 17 December
The event is free for RTPI West Midlands members to attend but booking is essential. For further details and to book go to www.made.org.uk/events/view/christmas_in_the_square_2014/

The West Midlands 2015 Great Debate “Election Time - Question Time” jointly organised by RIBA, RICS, ICE, Li and RTPI West Midlands will be held at Austin Court, Birmingham on the evening of Thursday 5 February. Free of charge but booking is essential. For further details and to book go to www.wmgreatdebate.co.uk/

Shale Gas Exploration, an evening seminar at the Arup Campus, Blythe Valley Park Solihull 6-8pm on Thursday 12 February. Free of charge. Contact Sue on 0121 709 1599 or email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk for further information.