



## Urban Design Network News July 2020



Main image: Beckenham Place Park - Ariel of Lake, Mansion and Stables - Lewisham Council. [Taken from a submission to the RTPI 2020 Awards](#) under the category of Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture. Following a £5m Heritage Lottery Fund and additional funding from the Council, Beckenham Place Park and its historic buildings have been fully restored to its original 18th century parkland landscape.

## Welcome to your Urban Design Newsletter

It is always presumptuous to speculate on contemporary events having the 'hand of history' on them, but it certainly feels like we are going through momentous times. While some of the recent speculations on the transformative effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the way we live our lives in the future arguably have more to say about the authors than reality, some degree of change is likely. Change certainly is very real for now, with both working practices and the physical environment looking very different. Whether it be pop-up cycle lanes or design review panels going virtual, opportunities and constraints are there and to have several excellent articles and reports linked from this newsletter on the subject.

As well as the wide-ranging reports produced centrally by the RTPI such as [Plan The World We Need](#) (which examines how planning can contribute to calls for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the current health and economic crisis), and a collection of reports on the [Sharing experiences](#) page. We are also fortunate to have a number of insightful articles from our members across the UK. As we look to build the Urban Design Network, we have new 'Champions' for the nations and regions to both

improve links and maximise learning points from the innovative work that is going on in their areas.

Notwithstanding the justified dominance of the pandemic in current thinking, there is a lot going on in terms of the wider design dimension of planning. Starting with some positives, we welcome the appointment of Joanna Averley as the UK Government's new Chief Planner. A founding director of CABI, Joanna brings a wealth of urban design experience to a crucial role. The importance of leadership is a theme picked up by Professor Matthew Carmona in his article for the newsletter on plans for a new 'Design Quality Unit for England'. Linking to a number of broadly positive developments relating to work, such as the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission, there are also more troubling moves in motion from Westminster. It remains unclear how far planning reforms will go and to what extent commitment to 'high quality design' will go beyond mere rhetoric but moves to extend permitted development rights are certainly of concern.

On the heritage side, fears abound on the risk to skills within the sector from the Pandemic and the wider economic recession, with some emergency funding from the likes of Historic England seeking to provide some respite. More generally, one notable case that has potentially far reaching implications is that of the recent Supreme Court ruling on Idlicote House (link below). A 'landmark' case in more ways than one.

Finally, if you would like to contribute content for future editions of this newsletter, please email [max.tolley@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:max.tolley@rtpi.org.uk)

All the best to everyone for staying safe in these challenging times.

Justin Webber  
**Chair, Urban Design Network**

## Covid-19 and Design

### **Designing for 'The New Normal' in a Post-COVID-19 World**

**Luke Hillson** is the Design Director at Barton Willmore; he is the Chair of the West Midlands RTPI and Chair of the Urban Design Forum; he is the RTPI Design Champion for the West Midlands; a Visiting Tutor to Coventry University and a Built Environment Expert for the Design Council.

The impact of the COVID-19 virus and subsequent lockdown has been far reaching. The lockdown has resulted in lots of people spending more time exploring their local vicinity more, the parts of their neighbourhood that are only accessible by foot or bicycle (or scooter or wheelchair or skateboard or e-scooter... but that'll need to be covered in another blog). People are staying closer to home, they're discovering little pocket parks, little canal side footpaths and woodland walks that they didn't previously know existed. For others they've discovered just how much they miss having a garden, or a balcony, or a study, or a place for home-schooling.

This lockdown has increased the speed in which many companies have moved to flexible remote home-working. It has seen the Government advise people to avoid public-transport and use their private cars. It's seen parents juggle home working with home schooling. It has seen a supermarket home delivery slot become a highly sought-after service. In short, the pandemic and lockdown has changed how we work, it's changed how we live and it's changed how we play. It's changed how we think of where we live and changed our perceptions and attitudes.

It's shown that many of our current homes, streets and neighbourhoods are not fit for purpose. Our homes don't offer the flexibility to be able to accommodate home schooling alongside home working, with private amenity space and storage for a new bicycle (or e-scooter). It's shown that it's not possible to walk along streets whilst keeping 2m apart from fellow passers-by. It's shown that our work environments are not as flexible and adaptable as we thought they were, or highlighted that transport options available to us are limited.

Design and planning moving forwards needs to consider, analyse, address and deliver appropriate solutions to this change in need. Our homes need to be more flexible. Our streets need to be more people-focussed. Our neighbourhoods need to be more adaptable and responsive. By keeping people as the focus within the built environment, it will be possible to accommodate their evolving needs, wants and demands. These changes need to be made now, so that our built environments can continue to thrive in The New Normal.

### **Climate-conscious COVID-19 planning in the City of Melbourne**

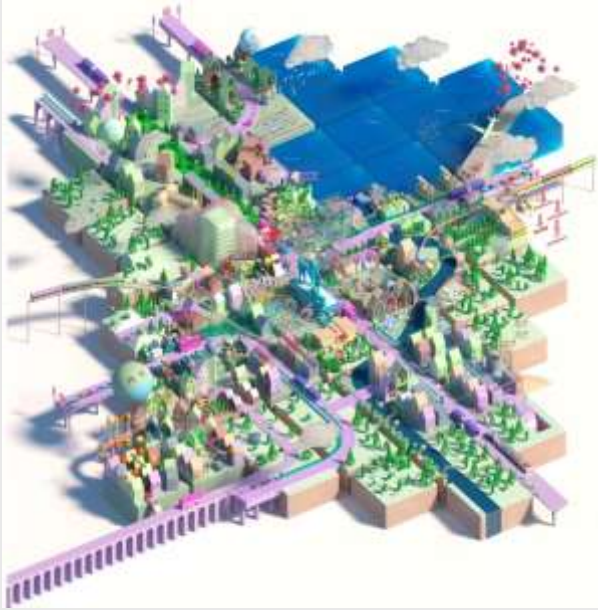
**Heather Claridge** MRTPI AoU, Principal Design Officer at Architecture and Design Scotland (seconded from Glasgow City Council). Heather is the RTPI Design Champion for Scotland

Seven months on since my study visit to Melbourne and there is no doubt the world has changed dramatically. Already much has been written on the place implications of COVID-19, with examples of cities responding with a range of interventions. Most widespread, is the reallocation of road space for walking and cycling. I was however curious to learn how Melbourne was adapting to this current crisis and what role climate conscious planning was playing?

The City of Melbourne is undertaken a range of different initiatives to support both planning for the COVID-19 crisis and addressing long term climate action. The most substantial of these is the project to plant 150,000 trees and shrubs in support of efforts to green the city and create a high-quality living environment for all. According to the City of Melbourne, this project will provide jobs to 64 people, who would otherwise be unemployed as a result of COVID-19. The City of Melbourne also launched a new planning tool during lockdown through an online event. Their new 'Green Factor' is a green infrastructure assessment tool designed to help with designing and constructing new buildings that are environmentally friendly and include green infrastructure. This is hoped to help encourage better greening of the private realm in the city.

The overall approach of turning crisis in to climate action was evident when I visited. The City had invested significantly also in water sensitive urban design interventions, open spaces, green walls and roofs following the Millennium Drought crisis. The incremental and long-term attitude to urban resilience displayed by the City of Melbourne is hopefully inspiring and replicable for other places.

You can read more about the findings of my Australia visit [here](#).



### ‘The Road to Reinvention: enabling adaptive planning and design to lead the recovery process’

**Mura Quigley** is a Designer and Researcher for Urban Scale Interventions in Belfast and the RTPI Northern Ireland Design Champion. Follow Mura on Twitter @MuraQuigley

A summary is copied below and for the full article, [please click here](#)

This article discusses a toolkit calling for a people-centred response to the global pandemic by Urban Scale Interventions:

[www.urbanscalereinvention.com](http://www.urbanscalereinvention.com)

With various calls to transform our streets, build back better and address climate change, the Road to Reinvention toolkit draws on findings of a survey of lifestyle change in Northern Ireland. It offers 5 themes and 3 tools for an adaptive response to the global pandemic, highlighting the importance of design to responding to the many challenges ahead in how we develop, use and manage public space.

## News in design and planning

### Delivering urban quality, time to get serious

**Matthew Carmona**, The Bartlett, UCL and Chair of the Place Alliance  
@ProfMCarmona

As the recently published [Housing Design Audit for England](#) revealed, we have been systematically failing to deliver good quality urban development across England for decades, particularly in our new residential environments. The Coronavirus pandemic has only emphasised how critical a high quality built environment is to our everyday sense of well-being, and how disadvantaged those are who suffer poor conditions inside and out (lack of living space, poor quality green space, environments that are not walkable, poor access to local facilities, etc.).

Building on the work of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission (BBBBC), there is now a once in a generation opportunity for the Government to show real leadership and ambition and to help turn the tide.

To drive the necessary culture change requires focus, capacity, leadership and resourcing. The Government should start by setting up a dedicated **Design Quality Unit for England** in order to confront the challenges head on and focus attention on the delivery of better design. This is the conclusion of a consortium of The Academy of Urbanism, Civic Voice, CPRE, Design Council, Place Alliance, Trees & Design Action Group, UCL and Urban Design Group.

Whilst welcoming the broad thrust of analysis and advice advanced by the BBBBC, they conclude in [Delivering Urban Quality, Time to Get Serious](#), that it is difficult to see how the BBBBC’s propositions will be delivered without a determined and very public effort by



Government that also reaches out and harnesses the knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment of the sector at large.

England needs its own properly resourced Design Quality Unit, and with the release of *Delivering Urban Quality, Time to Get Serious*, the consortium sets out options for making this happen.

Whilst various models are possible, ideally a design quality unit should work through a partnership and networked approach across the country to 'monitor', 'challenge', 'inspire' and ultimately help to 'deliver' real change. It is time to get serious about delivering design quality.

### [Supreme Court decision on Idlicote House](#)

A ruling in [Dill v Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government](#) concerns a landowner who sold two 18th century lead urns he had inherited with his home. He did this without being aware that they were subject to a listing order has had his appeal against an enforcement notice backed by the Supreme Court.

## Case Study



The Calton Barras Project, Glasgow was commended for Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy at the RTPI awards for planning Excellence 2020 and was titled Scotland's Most Improved Place at the November 2019 SURF awards. Thank you to Glasgow City Council for providing the images.

Principal Planners **Lindsay Pratt MRTPI** and **Michael Ward MRTPI**, Glasgow City Council

share some of the project learning with **Heather Claridge MRTPI**, Architecture and Design Scotland (seconded from Glasgow City Council) and the Urban Design Network Scotland Champion.

Extracts are copied below and for the full interview, [please click here](#)

**Heather Claridge (HC):** *Firstly, congratulations on the awards. I'm sure you're delighted the project is receiving well deserved recognition. For those who aren't aware of the background to the Calton Barras project, can you start off by telling us a bit more...*

**Lindsay Pratt:** Calton Barras is an area just to the east of the Merchant City in Glasgow and it acts as an important gateway, linking the city centre to the wider east end. It includes the traditional Barras market, Glasgow Green and an established residential neighbourhood consisting of low density housing. Although within walking distance of the city centre, there is a sense of disconnection caused by vacant land and the arrangement of existing road and rail infrastructure. During recent decades, the area has faced a number of complex issues including high levels of deprivation, physical and economic decline, and little private sector investment.

Over the last 10 years, we have taken an asset-based, placemaking approach to Calton Barras, working with local residents, traders and other stakeholders to repair and reconnect the urban fabric, effect a shift in how the area is perceived and realise its potential as an attractive, resilient neighbourhood with a diverse market at its core.

Our approach has been underpinned by a number of spatial strategies and action plans, including:

- Calton: Unlocking the Potential (Living Streets, 2011)
- Calton Area Development Framework (GCC, 2012)
- Calton Barras Action Plan (GCC, 2012)
- Barras Masterplan (WMUD, 2016)

As well as this layering of plans and strategies, we also led on the implementation of projects through an innovative, targeted investment programme which helped kick start the regeneration process and deliver transformational change.

**Michael Ward:** In addition to the above, I would add that the project, although underpinned by careful planning, was designed to be adaptable to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities across the lifetime of the project.

## RTPI News

Support our vision and share the campaign  
**#PlanTheWorldWeNeed**

[Plan The World We Need](#) The RTPI is calling on governments across the UK and Ireland to capitalise on the expertise of planners to achieve a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the current health and economic crisis.

[Watch our campaign video here](#)

Read the RTPI press release [here](#) and our first research paper on the topic [here](#)

[Nominations open for RTPI elections 2020](#)

Get involved in the running of the Institute - nominations are now open for a range of positions on the Board of Trustees, General Assembly, Regional Management Boards, and the National Executive Committees.

[RTPI Chief Executive reacts to Government planning announcements](#) in an open letter responding to recent reports from Westminster about a 'radical overhaul' of England's planning system.

[The Royal Town Planning Institute welcomes extension to planning permissions granted](#)

On 22 June the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and local Government (Robert Jenrick) announced an extension of planning permissions with expiry dates between the beginning of lockdown and the end of this year in England.

[April Update - Planning for the Unplanned...](#)

Timothy David Crawshaw - RTPI North East Chair 2020 and RTPI Design Champion for the North East.

[Wider Insights from the Profession - Part 2](#)

The RTPI has released a second paper containing essays from experts in the planning profession on the profession's rapid response to Covid-19.

[How Belfast City Council's planning department adapted to the challenge of COVID](#)

Aiden Thatcher has written a blog about the challenges Belfast City Council has faced moving to an electronic system and adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic to keep the planning system moving

[How the RTPI Future Planners Bursary helped me achieve my dreams](#)

RTPI Young Planner, Jennifer Campbell, discusses the benefits of the RTPI Future Planners Bursary, and the opportunities it has afforded her as a recipient.

## Podcasts and Videos

The RTPI's Planner Live Online events took place online 29 June - 3 July 2020, watch the videos on the RTPI YouTube Channel [here](#)

[Barton Willmore Podcast](#) (Episode 4, How does design of our homes, streets and places need to evolve.

[Trowers and Hamlins Webinar](#) (Designing for The New Normal: How homes and streets will need to adapt) (From 12 mins onwards)

[Smart Cities Podcast](#) (The future of cities in a post COVID-19 world)

## RTPI Events

[Virtual Tools for Co-Design and Community Engagement](#)

RTPI South East

17 July 2020 at 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

[Online CPD - Planning and design: making better places](#)

RTPI Training Masterclass

05 November 2020 at 01:30 PM - 04:30 PM



## Contact us

The Royal Town Planning Institute  
41 Botolph Lane  
London  
EC3R 8DL

[udn@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:udn@rtpi.org.uk)  
[020 7929 9478](tel:02079299478)

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