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- Gavin Parker, Emma Street, Mike Raco and Sonia Freire-Trigo on planning and the public interest

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inside stories

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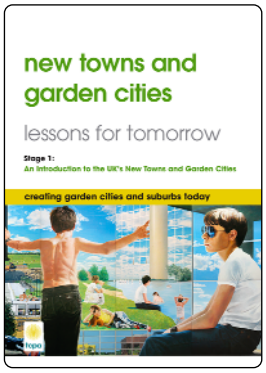
TCPA publishes first-phase report on lessons from the New Towns and Garden Cities



As the nation's housing crisis escalates and the need for urgent action becomes ever more apparent, the role of comprehensively planned, larger-scale developments, alongside the continuing task of urban regeneration and renewal of existing towns, is firmly on the political agenda, as is a new generation of Garden Cities built as part of a portfolio of solutions to housing need.

With a programme of new Garden Cities and new towns looking increasingly likely, it is important to learn the lessons from past experience – both good and bad – of large-scale development and the creation of new communities – an area in which the UK has a long and rich history. The TCPA is undertaking a two-stage project looking at these lessons, and has published a report on the first stage, *New Towns and Garden Cities: Lessons for Tomorrow. Stage 1: An Introduction to the UK's New Towns and Garden Cities*.

The report provides an overview of the Garden City and New Towns story, and, using the latest data, offers a snapshot of the state of these communities today. The publication includes a main report and a set of 'Five-Minute Fact Sheets' on each of the New Towns.

The New Towns and Garden Cities: Lessons for Tomorrow project is sponsored by the Lady Margaret Patterson Osborn Trust, David Lock Associates, and the Planning Exchange Foundation. The report is available from the TCPA website, at www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities.html

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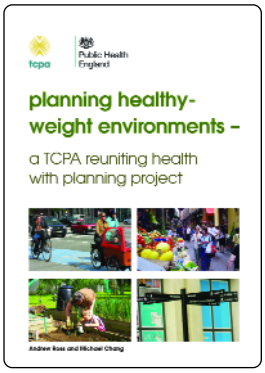
TCPA issues *Planning Healthy-Weight Environments* resource



Almost two-thirds of adults and one-third of children in the England are now obese, and by 2020 over half of the adult UK population could be obese, according to a 2007 Foresight report. The UK's obesity crisis is escalating at alarming levels, and has become a major social, economic, health and financial issue. The causes of obesity are complex, and the influence of the environment in which people live is only one factor; but planners can nevertheless play an important role in shaping healthier environments. To do so, they need to collaborate effectively with a wide range of other professionals across the built environment and health professions.

To help bring this about, the TCPA has issued a resource identifying the potential for planners and public health officers to work together to help people live lifestyles that will enable them to maintain a healthy weight. *Planning Healthy-Weight Environments*, published with the support of Public Health England, draws on current evidence and experience and is designed to help practitioners to identify common ground and areas with the potential for collaboration.

Planning Healthy-Weight Environments presents an illustration of how a healthy-weight environment could be planned. The publication, a product of the latest stage of the TCPA's Reuniting Health with Planning programme, is timely as Public Health England steps up a gear in efforts to reduce obesity through a whole-systems approach to tackling obesity.

The TCPA has also separately published a number of recommendations for Government departments, agencies, stakeholder organisations and practitioners on the steps that should be taken to bring about healthy-weight environments through the planning system.

Commenting on the launch of the resource, Kate Henderson, TCPA Chief Executive, said:

'Planning and public health have shared roots. However after years of working separately, there appears to be a lack of joined-up thinking. With the nation facing an obesity crisis, we can see that planning has an important role to play in helping to create high-quality environments that offer opportunities for communities to make healthy choices and live healthier lifestyles. By reuniting public health with planning, and bringing together built environment and health professionals, we can work collaboratively to identify local health needs and tackle the obesity challenge.'

Planning Healthy-Weight Environments, and the separate recommendations from the TCPA are available from the TCPA website, at www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/planning-out-obesity-2014.html

TCPA Past-Chair Lee Shostak awarded OBE

Lee Shostak, Immediate Past-Chair and Trustee of the TCPA, has been awarded an OBE for services to the Association. The award was presented to Lee by Her Majesty's Representative in Greater London, Lord-Lieutenant Sir David Brewer, at the TCPA's Annual Reception following the TCPA Annual Conference on 25 November.

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east meets west

In October the TCPA led a week-long trip presenting workshops to Chinese politicians and professionals in Beijing, Shenyang and Chongqing. Diane Smith, Wei Yang, Deirdra Armsby, Councillor Lewis Herbert and Michael Chang explain the aims of the trip and look at its outcomes for both UK and Chinese participants in the events involved

Above

The pace of development in Shenyang, as elsewhere in China, is astounding

In the spring of 2014, the TCPA was commissioned to lead a group of UK planning practitioners to Beijing, Shenyang and Chongqing in October as part of a training and knowledge exchange project funded by the Strategic Prosperity Fund of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Beijing.

As one might expect, the trip featured a busy schedule of events as the project group presented on the theme of low-carbon urbanisation at several workshops in three different cities. The workshops drew the attention of BBC News on the eve of the team's departure,[1] and met with a very positive reaction in China.

Members of the group – Wei Yang (Wei Yang & Partners), Deirdra Armsby (Newham Council), Councillor Lewis Herbert (Cambridge City Council), and Diane Smith and Michael Chang (TCPA) – together have a comprehensive range of experience and expertise, on matters including holistic approaches to sustainable planning (including adapting Garden City principles for the 21st century), climate change adaptation in urban areas, sustainable energy solutions, planning for health-promoting urban environments, urban regeneration, and large-scale masterplanning for new communities.

The schedule

Starting on 20 October, the group travelled from Beijing to Shenyang, the capital of the north eastern province of Liaoning and its largest city, with a metropolitan population exceeding 8 million people. With good regional transport links and a diversifying economy, Shenyang serves as an important industrial centre within the Chinese national economy.

The TCPA-led visit was organised as part of 'UK in Shenyang Week', which was hosted by the British Embassy. The key theme of the week was urbanisation,[2] and the TCPA participated in the 'Beyond Green Buildings – Green Development in China' workshop, which was opened by the British Ambassador, Sir Sebastian Wood.

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Above

The TCPA-led group, among presenters at the 'Beyond Green Buildings' workshop in Shenyang (left), and meeting with professionals from the Academy of Macroeconomic Research (right)

The group were then whisked back to the airport for an evening flight back to Beijing, but nevertheless witnessed evidence of a scale of development that is truly astounding, with mile after mile of tall new buildings housing apartments interspersed with high-rise offices and commercial premises.

On the following day, the group met professional colleagues from the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research (AMR) to exchange knowledge on low-carbon urbanisation. The AMR is affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and gives advice to central government on macroeconomic policy-making. Attendees from the AMR were primarily economists and project managers from its International Economic Co-operation Office: it was thus important for the TCPA-led team to make an economic case for pursuing low-carbon urbanisation as well as the environmental case.

The third day featured the principal objective of the trip, as the full TCPA-led team led a half-day workshop in Beijing as part of the National Academy for the Mayors of China's (NAMC's) ten-day long training event. NAMC is a training institution organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, with goals of building and improving mayors' leadership and capacity to manage cities and of promoting the sustainable development of China's cities. Mayors and vice-mayors were in attendance from 30 different towns and provinces with a combined population in the tens of millions.

The ability and expertise of individual members of the audience varied – some had perfect English and some had been trained as urban planners; but it was clear that they were all there to learn and find out more about how successful cities and communities are built in the UK. The workshop, entitled 'UK Green Low-Carbon Urbanisation', was chaired by Wei Yang, and featured an introduction by Joanna Key, Urbanisation Director at the British Embassy Beijing, and then presentations by Diane Smith and Deirdra Armsby, and by Councillor Herbert, who joined the group straight from a flight from London. Simultaneous translation and training materials were provided.

Two members of the group, Wei Yang and Deirdra Armsby, then flew to Chongqing, a major city in South West China with a metropolitan population of more than 6 million people, to give presentations at the Chongqing Academy of Social Sciences' 'Chongqing Low Carbon' workshop held on the following day as part of an FCO-funded Strategic Prosperity Fund project. Councillor Herbert had a separate schedule involving several meetings with local universities in Beijing before travelling to Tianjin to exchange ideas for future collaboration with Cambridge City Council.

Thoughts from the group

Diane Smith, who led the TCPA group, said:

'It was an extraordinary experience. It is hard to visualise a city which has over 21 million inhabitants, as Beijing has, and even having been there it is hard to understand how it functions. But even with five ring roads inside the urban area, many with six lanes; with mile upon mile of apartment blocks juxtaposed with iconic office buildings and commercial premises; with 15 metro lines (offering travel at 2p a ticket); with cars, cars, cars and no lane discipline; and with the smog which was present daily – even with all this the citizens were going about their work and leisure in an unstressed

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and efficient manner. Can this apparent harmony be due to the fact that everyone is housed and has a job? Can we learn something from the Chinese?'

Wei Yang, who chaired the workshops, said:
'China's unprecedented level of urbanisation will continue for the next 20-30 years, generating the need for a new policy dimension focusing on urban-rural reform. However, comparing China's experience today with the UK's urbanisation issues of some 100 years ago, it is obvious that the challenges facing Chinese urbanisation are not all new. Adapting Garden City principles to Chinese urban-rural development is an innovative approach which we have been proactive in promoting over the last few years. At the heart of the work has been community development and place-making. In practice this means that we need to work closely with key stakeholders to realise a shared and, therefore, more deliverable vision, creating special places that last for generations. Furthermore, the long-term land stewardship model advocated for rural communities has the potential to be a new policy break-through, addressing the problems of the current land ownership issue in China.'

Deirdra Armsby, who provided presentations on Newham's experience, said:
'This was a challenging experience: how to find synergies between the challenges facing the London Borough of Newham, with a population of just over 300,000, and the urban conurbations of China with an average super-city population of around 7 million. The Olympic legacy was a good starting point, particularly when linked to the provision of sustainable infrastructure, and this, together with the climate change challenges facing London and the role of the Thames Barrier, were both issues which resonated well with the mayors from many of the provinces. Although many of the super-cities in China are relatively new, the issue of regeneration is already paramount, and there is real concern about creating sustainable solutions at the local level. London living and London neighbourhoods are clearly topics that the Chinese are keen to learn more about.'

Councillor Herbert said:
'China and Britain have so much to learn from each other, so much to share. Integrating planning and transport is a central challenge that we both have to address, as is low-carbon development. Transport is a major disconnect in both countries and a barrier to future sustainable growth. We have less smog but we do have serious invisible pollution damage to health in the worst-congested parts of urban Britain. Daily congestion and repeated gridlock reminds us that Britain has to move transport up Westminster's long list, as it is moving up the agenda for China, Beijing and Tianjin. If you get the chance to visit China or another fast developing country to talk to their planners and local politicians, grab it and share the lessons you learn back home.'

Concluding thoughts

The experience of delivering the workshops and of the trip as a whole provided a contrasting perspective to UK's growth challenges and opportunities. As China has 40 times the landmass of the UK and vastly different political and cultural processes, this is perhaps not surprising. However, the fundamental purposes and objectives of good town (urban) planning are applicable across the world. As the TCPA hosts an increasing number of delegations from Chinese provincial and local governments and research institutes wishing to expand their knowledge on matters of good practice, it will continue to emphasise the importance of people and place as we build new and regenerate existing communities.

The UK can be proud of its achievements in good place-making, not least through the Garden Cities principles. It must be willing to share its knowledge of both the art *and* the science of good planning as China endeavours to build a generation of low-carbon new cities (and increasingly undertake low-carbon regeneration of existing cities) in development timescales without precedent in the UK.

• ***Diane Smith*** *is TCPA Head of European Affairs,* ***Wei Yang*** *is Managing Director of Wei Yang & Partners and is currently advising several Chinese cities on masterplanning new communities,* ***Deirdra Armsby*** *is Head of Planning and Regeneration at Newham Council,* ***Councillor Lewis Herbert*** *is Leader of Cambridge City Council, and* ***Michael Chang*** *is Project and Policy Manager at the TCPA (he managed the project and has also acted as host for a number of Chinese delegations to the TCPA).* *The TCPA acknowledges the funding from the FCO Strategic Prosperity Fund, the support of NAMC, and the generous hospitality of British Embassy staff during the trip, in particular Joanna Key and Weichen Jin. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 R. Harrabin: 'UK experts to advise China on sustainable cities'. *BBC News*, 18 Oct. 2014. www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-29668563

2 'British Ambassador and Vice-Mayor of Shenyang launch biggest ever celebration of UK-Shenyang links'. News Article. British Embassy Beijing, 20 Oct. 2014. www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/british-ambassador-and-vice-mayor-of-shenyang-launch-biggest-ever-celebration-of-uk-shenyang-link

notes from the dark side

Tom Pain looks – in vain – for something genuinely new in the Coalition Government's Autumn Statement announcements on new Garden Cities

danny and the magic bean stalk

Christmas is just so depressing, and there's nothing like the pantomime season to really push you over the edge. Hardly had December crept its way in to our lives than the Government was presenting a full-on production. We were expecting the Autumn Statement but in fact we got Danny Alexander pulling on the green tights and rapidly losing himself in a winter wonderland of housing announcements.

'Danny and Magic Bean Stalk' is a tale of a happy-go-lucky Treasury Secretary who swaps reality for some magic beans. His unhappy Coalition partners throw the beans into the South East of England. (There is no North of England in this story.) The next morning the beans begin to sprout. First, a Garden City at Ebbsfleet and then another at Northstowe, and finally one at Bicester, which will get a golden egg of £100 million pounds. But it gets better. Danny will build 300,000 homes a year through a new government-backed development model. Infrastructure will be paid for, and all with the enthusiastic support of local authorities and local communities.

As Danny left the stage, the applause was deafening. Finally we have action to deliver a new generation of Garden Cities. After a moment, though, many people began to have that curious feeling that while we were all looking at the spectacle the Government had stolen our metaphorical wallets.

Just for the sake of clarity, the Autumn Statement was, in fact, the full and final follow-up to *Locally-led Garden Cities: Prospectus*, so there is no room for any more 'wait and see' policy positions. All that the Government intends to do on large-scale growth is now on the table. And so as applause dies down and we make our way back from this political theatre, what do we have? In fact, beyond the rhetoric, what has five years of this Coalition Government done for planning for large-scale housing?

First there's the question of 'newness'. All three places which are variously referred to as Garden Cities or Garden Towns or even New Towns were identified for growth prior to 2010. No-one can escape the irony that Bicester emerges from the Eco-towns programme, which this Government has spent much time deriding. Ebbsfleet is child of a certain John Prescott and has all its key permissions for housing. The spin in the press was particularly misleading in implying that there would be 13,000 'new' homes at Bicester, when in fact this is simply the collective figure in the emerging Local Plan. In fact, none of these three places bring real additional homes to the table.

And because they all already in planning process, the Government does not to have to confront any of the hard issues about winning public consent for new places. In Bicester's case, homes are already being built, under a powerful agenda based around quality and community governance. What does Danny Alexander's announcement add to that agenda?

Second, these places cannot be credibly described as Garden Cities. In all three cases, but particularly in relation to Ebbsfleet, it is very hard to see how the core Garden City principles of land value capture for the benefit of the community and a strong social housing offer can possibly be delivered. In fact, the Government has actually done nothing new at all, and in particular has done nothing to bring forward the kind of genuinely new proposals which will be needed to address the ongoing housing crisis.

It is simply, as the Shadow Planning Minster stated in the House of Commons on 9 December, a pretty cynical rebadging exercise. This is no reflection at all on the fantastic work which places like Bicester have already done to drive forward high-quality growth. The point is: what is the added value of this new badge?

Third is the issue of money. The Garden Cities *Prospectus* was meant to bring some capacity support from the Department for Communities and Local Government and ATLAS and perhaps some limited funding to the table. Bids for the Large Sites Infrastructure Fund was a separate process, with a deadline only some four weeks after the *Prospectus* was published. Since no new money was announced in the Autumn Statement, any new cash was to come out of existing departmental allocations. Both

Above

Work has already started on site at North West Bicester

joyous and curious, then, that Danny Alexander announced that Bicester will get £100 million in new funding. Ebbsfleet got twice that, but this turned out to be largely about transport infrastructure and money which was already allocated. The point is that someone should ask some hard questions about whether this new money is genuinely about supporting a new community or simply repackaged transport spend, or indeed whether it is real at all.

Fourth, what does Danny Alexander's commitment to 300,000 homes backed by a new state-led housing commissioning model mean? Well, the short answer appears to be 'nothing'. The longer answer is that the Homes and Communities Agency's role at Northstowe is a form of state-led housing commissioning model, but it is certainly not new and has been available to government since the HCA was set up in 2008. And 300,000? That seems about as credible as the cat's commitment to vegetarianism.

The real frustration here is that this big talk is simply not matched by any serious long-term policy development, either in fiscal terms in relation to land value capture or in policy and law in terms of updating and then using the New Towns legislation. The fact that a Planning Bill is passing through the House of Commons with no attempt to modernise Development Corporations, or to deal with the Compensation Code, is a lasting indictment of the Coalition Government's failed approach to large-scale growth.

'The real danger is that the powerful place-making values of the Garden Cites are being used as a fig leaf to hide a bankrupt policy agenda which leaves England with neither an urban policy nor a pathway to highly sustainable new growth'

The real danger is that the powerful place-making values of the Garden Cites are being used as a fig leaf to hide a bankrupt policy agenda which leaves England with neither an urban policy nor a pathway to highly sustainable new growth.

Garden Cities are now a political football between the Coalition partners, with the Liberal Democrats saying positive but some unrealistic things about them, while the Conservatives know only too well that the last thing they need in fighting UKIP is a sensible planning and housing strategy.

And while the jokes about Garden Cities at Ebbsfleet on Radio 4's *News Quiz* are pretty good, they indicate that the wider public are both cynical and confused about the Government's agenda. And the risk is that, by association, they will become cynical about the Garden City model.

The cat has looked at me and asked when I was going to make a cheap joke about Puss in Boots. In fact, I'm gripped by the optimism of a new year and by an appreciation that 2015 will a defining battleground for the future of England. While we should urgently expose the comic scale of much of the current Government's dysfunctional policy, we should also put more effort into the positive advocacy of high-quality, resilient and inclusive places.

● ***Tom Pain*** *is a believer in the power of planning to build better futures. The views expressed are personal.*

David Lock on planning to meet housing need, the need for planning system participants to act in good faith, and Silkingrad revisited

some plums from the pudding of 2014

Yah-boo housing strategies

In last month's column extolling the virtues of the Lyons Review of Housing, I argued that while the Review might have been commissioned for the Labour Party, the issues addressed and the solutions described were inevitable and inescapable, and therefore should be a matter of cross-party consensus.

Yah-boo politics by political parties is not only demonstrably a tedious turn-off for electors, but is seriously obstructing the right of everyone to a decent home. We must set housing policy free from cynical short-term political cycles.

It is with pleasure, therefore, that we can turn the year reminding ourselves that *grande fromages* from the three main political parties did recently sign an open letter alongside council leaders, heads of homelessness and planning charities, leading architects and planners, and chief executives of development companies and housing associations.[1] They call for a national consensus on solutions to the housing crisis that 'aim to ensure people's happiness and secure national prosperity'.

The letter recognises that good planning is part of the solution to meeting the nation's housing needs, stating that:

'Good planning goes beyond the cycle of elections, and cross-party support... is vital for high-quality developments to be delivered. For too long planning has been marked by division. It is time the nation came together.'

It calls for a consensus on building new homes based on three interlocking 'objectives':

- Comprehensively planned redevelopment of major urban brownfield sites.
- Expansion of existing towns and settlements where the addition improves the overall level of amenity for the existing population rather than detracts from it. This will not be achieved by merely adding numerous housing estates at the edge of a town. It will require a proper provision of additional services and support for the existing transport networks to prevent them becoming even more crowded.
- New planned settlements based on Garden City principles where new social and physical infrastructure ensures that they provide a good quality of life and are sustainable.

The letter says:

'Providing most new homes in one of these three ways will make it possible to protect smaller towns and villages in the countryside from a rash of new housing estates. It would preserve and enhance our natural and historic environment, and should be founded on a robust, locally led and democratic planning system.

'This requires a cross-party and cross-sector commitment to the visionary strategic planning of place... It is time the nation came together and set itself on a truly sustainable pathway to create the future communities our children deserve.'

Great. Now get on with it.

Police Commissioner out of tune

Blaby District is mostly a green and pleasant land that curls under the southern edge of the tightly bounded City of Leicester. After a very long and heroic planning process, with no doubt some very uncomfortable decisions having to be taken in the long-term public interest, the District planned a major urban extension to the south west of Leicester. The new residents would reinforce Leicester's sub-regional role, and the plan would protect deeper countryside. The plan-led path had included the Long March through the Regional Spatial Strategy (since abolished along with all other Regional Spatial Strategies by the Coalition Government, who must surely be wondering why they did it) and Local Plan processes.

In parallel, the promoters of the site, called New Lubbesthorpe, had prepared and submitted a panning application so that detailed site-level information and impact assessments were available during consultation and public examination stages. The planning application was submitted in February 2011 and included proposals for 4,250 dwellings, a

mixed-use district centre and two mixed-use local centres, a secondary school, primary schools and nurseries, an employment site of 21 hectares, open spaces, woodlands, two new road bridges over the M1 motorway and M69 motorway, and more.

In November 2012 Blaby District Council resolved to grant outline planning permission subject to a section 106 agreement. In March 2013 the Secretary of State confirmed he would leave it to the Council, and in December 2013 the agreement was signed, and after two years in the process outline planning permission was granted on 14 January 2014.

On 20 March 2014, without any forewarning, the Police and Crime Commissioner[2] launched a legal action in the High Court seeking to quash the Council's grant of outline planning permission.

The development will provide £537,000 towards additional equipment needed by the police force and a maximum of approximately £1.1 million towards the acquisition or extension of police premises. The core of the Commissioner's claim was that the timing of the contributions meant that substantial additional policing would be required before any payments were received by the force. He claimed around £2 million.

Mr Justice Foskett in June 2014 noted that the Commissioner had engaged in prolonged negotiations about the amount and timing of the contributions and the representations had been properly considered by the Council.[3] Councillor Ernie White, Leader of Blaby, was delighted that:

'Lubbesthorpe will deliver over £159 million of much needed infrastructure including 4,250 new homes of which at least 25% will be affordable homes, 1,530 new jobs, 205 hectares of public open space... and over £1.6 million to Leicestershire Police to pay for vehicles, communication equipment and premises. Blaby District Council is saddened that the PCC chose to take this action. It has cost the local taxpayer a lot of money, and delayed much needed development.'

The planning system assumes participants act in good faith and are people of good will. Not for the first time, this presumption was challenged by a last-minute attempted bounce; and planning won.

Stevenage as 'Silkingrad'

Thanks to James Maurici QC of Landmark Chambers (we have been working together on an appeal – 53 houses on a brownfield site with houses next door, a decision retrieved by the Secretary of State who one might have thought would have better things to do, but that is another story), there is a revival of a House of Lords decision of July 1947: *Franklin and Others v Minister of Town and Country Planning*.[4]

Mr Maurici came to this item in preparing a

Above

Stevenage railway station, with signs famously altered to 'Silkingrad' in advance of the Minster's visit in 1946

lecture about the powers and responsibilities of the Minister/Secretary of State, which are awesome. Soon after the New Towns Act 1946 and Town and Country Panning 1947 came into effect there was a challenge to the system. In broad terms, the Minister had been enthusiastic about the first New Town to be designated, at Stevenage, and the challenge was that the Minister had therefore prejudiced himself in deciding the Designation Order after public inquiry. That's enough background for this column at this season, and so let's get to the plum.

The date is 6 May 1946, the place is Stevenage Town Hall, and the 'lively meeting' is to consider the designation of land in the neighbourhood of Stevenage as the site of a New Town. Signs at Stevenage railway station had been changed to read 'Silkingrad' for the Minister's visit. The Minister Lewis Silkin (for it is he) rises and says:

'I have now had the advantage of two interim reports – both unanimous – from this committee [the Reith Committee]*, and based upon these reports the Government has decided to introduce legislation to facilitate the creation of these new towns. The New Towns Bill, published twelve days ago, will receive its Second Reading on Wednesday, and I am here to-day.* [Voice: You are leaving it a bit late.] *In anticipation of the passage of the Bill – and I have no doubt that it will go through – certain preliminary steps have been taken regarding Stevenage by way of discussion with some of the local authorities concerned* [Voice : There has been no discussion with the Stevenage local authority.] *and the preparation of a plan, and the giving of notices for the acquisition of land under powers which I already have...*

'I think you will agree that if we are to carry out our policy of creating a number of new towns to relieve congestion in London we could hardly have chosen for the site of one of them a better place than Stevenage... Now I know that many objections have been raised by the inhabitants of Stevenage, perhaps not unnaturally...

'I want to carry out a daring exercise in town planning. [Jeers.] *It is no good your jeering; it is going to be done.* [Applause, boos, and cries of 'Dictator'.] *After all, this new town is to be built in order to provide for the happiness and welfare of some sixty thousand men, women and children... For a number of years we in this country stood together and suffered together, whilst fighting for an ideal, for a democracy in which we believed. I am sure that this spirit is not dead in Stevenage, and, if you are satisfied that this project is worth while and for the benefit of large numbers of your fellow human beings, you will be prepared to play your part to make it a success. The project will go forward. It will do so more smoothly and more successfully with your help and co-operation. Stevenage will in a short time become world famous.* [Laughter.] *People from all over the world will come to Stevenage to see how we here in this country are building for the new way of life...*

'... in due course Stevenage will gain. Local authorities will be consulted all the way through. But we have a duty to perform, and I am not going to be deterred from that duty. While I will consult as far as possible all the local authorities, at the end, if people are fractious and unreasonable, I shall have to carry out my duty.' [Voice : Gestapo!]

Best wishes for 2015. It can't get any worse for planning, can it?

● ***David Lock CBE*** *is Strategic Planning Adviser at consultancy David Lock Associates, planners and masterplanners for the New Lubbesthorpe project. He is a Vice-President and Trustee of the TCPA. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 *The Times*, 20 Oct. 2014. Political signatories included Lord Andrew Adonis, Cllr Paul Carter (Leader of Kent County Council), Lord Deben (John Gummer as was), Nick Raynsford MP (and TCPA Trustee), Lord Mathew Taylor of Goss Moor, and Lord Simon Wolfson

2 The posts of Police and Crime Commissioner were created by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Sir Clive Loader OBE, who lives in Buckinghamshire and had a distinguished RAF career, was elected in November 2012 by 55.5% of the turnout of 16%, and serves until March 2016. Sir Clive's salary and office running costs amount to more than £1 million per year

3 *Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicestershire v Blaby District Council*. 9 Jun. 2014. Ref: CO/831/2014

4 [1948] AC 87. Lords Thankerton, Porter, Uthwatt, du Parcq and Normand

a manifesto for a better future

Governments may continue to skirt around the nation's underlying problems, but Hugh Ellis and Kate Henderson's new book shows that even now it is not too late to ask how we would like to live and then plan coherently for the future, says Dennis Hardy

Funny place, Britain. First off the block with town planning legislation but always reluctant to make the most of it. The envy of the world, too, in pioneering Garden Cities, yet from the start leaving out the more radical features that were envisaged by Ebenezer Howard. And in the annals of political thought, there has never been a shortage of ideas about making Britain a better place, although too often these have been dismissed as 'simply utopian'.

The result of not taking the plunge is a story of mediocrity and disappointment. Planning has largely confined itself to the spatial management of neighbourhoods, towns and even sub-regions. Beyond that, not a lot has happened. Regional planning has come and gone at the whim of different governments. And as for the national scale, one might just as well set one's sights on Mars.

In spite of the head-start offered by Letchworth and Welwyn, city planners, by and large, have opted instead for risk avoidance. Not too many council meetings will have dared to discuss such an *outré* subject as utopianism.

It's not that our predecessors haven't tried to raise the stakes. Indeed, during the Second World War it looked as if there might well have been a breakthrough. The TCPA's own F.J. (later Sir Frederic) Osborn was tireless in urging politicians to see the bigger picture. Hitherto, governments had been loath to intervene more than was absolutely necessary. But the success of the war effort, based inevitably on planning across the board, changed all that. Overnight, everyone was talking about the part that planning could play in rebuilding Britain. There was a real sense of a nation not wanting to return to the pre-war landscape of economic depression. And it was widely understood that change of this magnitude could not conceivably happen without an unprecedented effort from the top and a plan to guide the way forward.

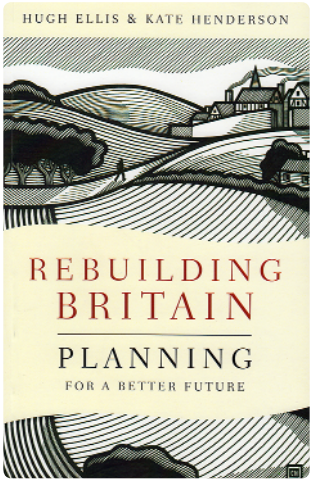
As we know, however, the challenge was ducked then and, apart from a brief flurry of interest at the time of the Wilson administration in the 1960s, there has not been a political appetite to return to this overarching agenda. We now reap what was sown: more than a hundred years after planning came onto the statute books, modern governments continue to skirt around the nation's underlying problems.

The failure to integrate planning in our national life is an extraordinary shortcoming. Each government makes decisions of great import: a nuclear power station here, a high-speed railway there; the free movement of labour from other parts of Europe without a thought for where the newcomers will live; repeating the old rhetoric of redressing regional imbalance, while supporting the finance sector and the further growth of London; treating each new incident of flooding as if it is just a 'one off'. And so it goes on, one political party as culpable as another for this shambolic way to run a country.

But just because we have failed to bite the bullet in the past, does this mean that we have lost the argument to plan for the future? Are we incapable of asking how we would like to live and then providing a coherent answer? Is planning just a good idea but beyond our reach? Not at all, say two of the TCPA's leading lights, Hugh Ellis and Kate Henderson. In their recently published book, *Rebuilding Britain*, they argue that the time is right to reassert the case. There is a vacuum to fill in our national life: 'As a nation we are gripped by a collective fear of economic insecurity and environmental crisis, but we have no plan for the future, no strategy to guide us.' Their timely book shows how we can fill this vacuum and remould planning to play a more creative role in the future.

Having reacquainted the reader with a long utopian tradition, the authors turn the spotlight on

key contemporary issues. A future plan must enable the achievement of a fair and efficient society; the recovery of public trust in government and decision-making; a programme to build the homes we need; and commitment to the ideal of a resilient and low-carbon strategy. And to pay for all of this, they return to the 19th-century utopian idea of capturing the value of land for the community.



Hugh Ellis and Kate Henderson: *Rebuilding Britain: Planning for a Better Future*. Policy Press, Bristol, 2014, ISBN 978 1 44731 759 3, PB, pp.172 + xii., RRP £14.99
www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?k=9781447317593

Tomorrow's utopia will not emerge from a blueprint. Instead, it will allow for diversity and fluidity as the world itself continues to change. All of which makes good sense, so in the final section of their book, when the authors ask if it is too late to rebuild Britain, there can only be one answer. Of course, it is not too late, although the nagging questions that have challenged all prior utopians are ones of 'how' and 'why' – how do you change mind-sets, and why will politicians and others commit themselves now to what they have deliberately side-stepped in the past?

The road from 'here' to 'there' can never be easy – indeed, if it were this book would not have been needed in the first place. But change is most likely to occur when circumstances make it necessary, as is the case now. It will also occur when there are visionaries as well as practitioners who have the ability to make things happen.

In its long history, the TCPA has brought forward some exceptional figures – Howard to start with, Osborn later on, the influential work of Peter Self and the advocacy of David Lock, and the outstanding contribution of Peter Hall. These social luminaries have all influenced events. Hugh Ellis and Kate Henderson have stepped onto the same stage and can now make their own mark; their book offers a thought-provoking manifesto that should be widely read and discussed by everyone who wants to make a difference.

● ***Emeritus Professor Dennis Hardy*** *is a writer and consultant. The views expressed are personal.*

planning for the good society in scotland

The Scottish Government's intention to pursue further land reform is just one element of a focused and progressive approach to land use planning that is sadly lacking south of the border, says Peter Hetherington

Land reform and planning mean a lot to the Scottish Government. For senior Ministers they are essential elements in delivering the ideals of a good society, rooted in the values of the 1947 Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act and the post-war settlement. Immediately after the 1945 election, land nationalisation was seen as a possibility. After all, in 1937 Clement Attlee had said Labour 'stood for the national ownership of land', while the party's post-war manifesto spoke of 'working towards' land nationalisation. But it was not to be.

While today public ownership of land in Scotland might be a political non-starter, the new First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, is happy to say that her values are firmly rooted in social democracy. As such, land reform and community empowerment are at the top of a new legislative programme – and junior Ministers are suitably positioned to undertake those tasks. 'Scotland's land must be an asset that benefits the many, not the few,' she told the Scottish Parliament in November in her opening political shot as First Minister.[1] Consequently, legislation will give her Government powers to 'intervene where the scale of land ownership or the conduct of a landlord is acting as a barrier to sustainable development'.

This would be strong stuff in an English context, but land ownership has been a politically charged issue in Scotland at least since the 18th century 'clearances', during which entire Highland and Island communities were forcibly removed by landowners to make way for sheep, resulting in large-scale emigration and, eventually, resettlement in coastal areas.

A Land Reform Commission will now be created, and new measures introduced, to make ownership more transparent and owners more accountable. Business rate exemptions enjoyed by large estates will be removed. The money raised will boost the Scottish Land Fund, which helps communities buy and manage land, from £3 million this year to £10 million from 2016.

Along with a focused and progressive planning regime, strongly supported by Scottish Ministers, the new measures – which will further strengthen existing land reform legislation, giving communities the first right of refusal when big estates go on the market – are a far cry from the laissez-faire approach taken in England, where land reform is off the agenda for the large political parties. Likewise, a national planning framework, or a spatial plan.

While the Conservative-led UK Government, bent on deregulation and deconstruction, struggles with the concept of any overall planning strategy for England, Scotland's National Planning Framework – officially dedicated to sustainable economic growth and the transition to a low-carbon economy – has completed its third revision. Few, if any – whether in the business world or in the Labour opposition in Holyrood – quibble with its aims and objectives, although Scottish Conservatives are alarmed at the prospect of land reform. One Tory MSP complained: 'The class war is alive and well in the Scottish Parliament.'[2]

That aside, the new Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, and his Ministerial team are infinitely more engaged with the brief than most UK Ministers. He speaks eloquently and fluently about the importance of planning in delivering a good society, both locally and nationally, and the imperative of a national framework: 'Essentially, it's structured around having a clear idea at national level of what is acceptable... big picture stuff about

what the country is going to look like – a spatial plan,' he explained to me a year or so ago.[3] 'It gives people clarity: don't come to [a particular] part of the country and try to build, say, a major industrial plant because it's not going to happen. Business wants certainty, whether it's a 'yes' or a 'no'.'

Unlike his English counterparts, Swinney has been heading his department for some time. He is on top of a broad range of policy, as Scottish chancellor-cum-economic-supremo. Is there a lesson here, perhaps, for a more streamlined, focused Whitehall, in which an enfeebled Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is currently sidelined by the Treasury on issues (such as city-region governance) which should be the preserve of DCLG?

By contrast, in Scotland, planning has been aligned with the wider economy in one streamlined department – and former Planning and Local Government Minister Derek Mackay (now Transport Minister) has talked about the importance of planning-cum-place-shaping with an evangelism rare in the UK ministerial context (he has just been replaced by Marco Biagi, MSP for Edinburgh Central). Mackay is passionate in declaring that 'place' rather than 'process' must have the highest priority.

At RTPI Scotland's recent Centenary Congress in Glasgow – where I represented the TCPA – Mackay evoked Edinburgh-born Thomas Adams, former Secretary of the Garden City Association, the original incarnation of the TCPA, who became the first manager of Letchworth from 1903 to 1906. Mackay, a former Leader of Renfrewshire Council, which embraces Paisley, near Glasgow, said the SNP Government aimed to build on Adams' legacy through planning reform focused on leadership and culture change: 'Having a priority for place-making... means having a priority for the needs of people and their quality of life... we want a planning system that carefully balances the needs of folk, work and place... that is fair and inclusive.'

Refreshingly, Mackay placed this imperative in the context of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1947 (sister legislation to the English and Welsh Act of the time) and the 1942 Beveridge Report, which laid the foundations of a welfare state to attack the five 'Giant Evils' on the 'road of reconstruction' – poverty, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness.

It did no harm for Mackay to remind the audience, in the splendid Emirates Arena, built for the recent Commonwealth Games (which includes the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome and a vast, multi-purpose sports hall) that this groundbreaking legislation was aligned with a suite of measures to create a welfare state, the National Health Service, free education and full employment: 'It provided the structure for building, renewal and improvement on a grand scale, with not just ambitious but completely new ideas emerging and, more importantly, being delivered on the ground.'

Mackay, Business Convenor of the Scottish National Party – in effect, the SNP's Chair – rattled through the successes of the post-war Labour Government with an enthusiasm rarely found south of the border: council housing, 'a key part of the welfare state supported by the 1947 Act', which delivered 1.25 million council homes between 1945 and 1951; five Scottish new towns, at East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Cumbernauld, Livingston and Irvine; an associated Glasgow clearance programme which relocated 750,000 people (to New Towns and huge, housing estates – or 'schemes' in Scottish parlance); and, of course, the concept of Green Belts. 'These major changes in planning have shaped the Scotland in which we live now,' he enthused. 'Today planners might take these concepts and this history for granted. However, an awareness of many of these principles and developments is important when we consider the challenges we face over the next 100 years and the role planning will play in addressing them.'

On one level this was music to my ears. Who could disagree with Derek Mackay placing the need

Above

Derek Mackay – 'it's important that we that we have great, visionary and inspiring development plans'

to address climate change, tackle inequalities, promote healthier communities, create better places, in a broader agenda for planners, rather than a narrowly defined concept which – to a planning outsider like me – too often seems the norm of a profession sometimes lacking in ambition? Planning, says Mackay, should be seen as a key to a fair society – 'one which cares about everyone and provides the framework for our development as a successful country'.

Directly reminding planners of their responsibility to society, he added: 'I want you... to remind

yourselves every day that your value, your legacy, will be measured by the outcomes that you achieve – by the way the built environment of Scotland, and the quality of all our lives, is changed for the better by your work... it's important that we make planning engaging, and relevant to our communities... that we have plans not just up-to-date – not just acceptable – but great, visionary and inspiring development plans... grounded in the overall public good.' Absolutely.

But on another level, I thought Mackay's excellent contribution to the Centenary Congress raised serious questions about cross-border co-operation – and about a shared Anglo-Scots political identity, which is not always a popular area for discussion. Think of the progressive ideals, and practical projects delivered by British governments to Scotland and all the UK – for starters, that whole post-war social settlement which so enthused the Minister – and you soon realise we are far more united than divided.

Think further about those grand post-war Scottish projects: the creation of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board (now, sadly, and scandalously privatised), followed by the Wilson Government's Highlands and Islands Development Board (now morphed into Scottish Enterprise). Think about the impact of UK industrial policy – steel mills in Scotland and Wales; car assembly plants in Merseyside and Clydeside; aluminium smelters in Wales, North East England and Scotland; grand industrial estates in Wales, Scotland and the North East – and you realise that active UK governments had something to celebrate (although not all these ventures ultimately proved enduring).

Now ask a simple question: in spite of strengthening Scottish self-government, regardless of the outcome of the September referendum, when Scots voted against independence by a margin of 55-45%, are there areas of a common, cross-border interest which both countries should exploit for the benefit of Scotland and England (especially Northern England)? The answer should be an emphatic 'yes'.

When I ventured to suggest a number of areas for co-operation in a presentation towards the end of the Centenary Congress, Scotland's largest city – Glasgow – had already partly answered the question. It recently joined the Core Cities Group of eight English cities, and the UK Government – through (English) Cities Minister Greg Clark and Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander – had concluded a City Deal with Glasgow and seven other Clyde Valley councils. This includes a £1.1 billion infrastructure fund, supported by the UK and Scottish Governments, to improve transport and regenerate and develop sites, help small enterprises, create programmes to support the jobless, and test ways of boosting the incomes of people on low wages. According to Gordon Matheson, Leader of Glasgow City Council, his authority has far more in common with English cities, such as Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle, than with the rest of Scotland.

For starters, I suggested building on this co-operation with – say – a cross-border economic zone, embracing northern parts of Cumbria and Northumberland. Health services, for instance, are shared across the border – with English patients attending Borders General Hospital, near Melrose and, in some cases, enjoying free prescriptions as clients of Scottish GP practices. Conversely, patients from much of Scotland depend on the heart, lung and liver transplant facilities at Newcastle upon Tyne's Freeman Hospital.

So if trade across the border is already part of everyday economic life, alongside travel-to-work areas which ignore national boundaries, why not closer co-operation between local authorities and appropriate economic agencies – underpinned by the planning regimes of the relevant Scottish and English councils (Northumberland, Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, and Scottish Borders)?

Such co-operation is vital on the public transport front, with buses and trains criss-crossing the border, and people commuting daily north and south. After all, the increasingly unreliable East Coast Main Line, for instance – from Aberdeen (and Inverness) and Edinburgh to Berwick, Newcastle, and southwards to Kings Cross – will only be improved with a cross-border campaign to update its inadequate electric power, iron-out bottlenecks, extend platforms, and introduce truly Euro-style high-speed trains linking Scotland and the North of England with Europe. Forget HS2 in the dim and distant future: this short- to medium-term project is vital for the national interest of both countries.

Could this conceivably make the beginning of a new Anglo-Scottish planning partnership? Why not? And could a future UK government learn, from its Scottish counterpart, that a proper, functioning planning system, delivered by committed Ministers in the spirit of the 1947 Act, is good for everyone? But as for English land reform? Dream on.

● ***Peter Hetherington*** *is Chair of the TCPA. He writes regularly for the Society section of the Guardian and chaired the TCPA-appointed 'Connecting England' Commission and led the work on the follow-up report, Connecting Local Economies. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 N. Sturgeon: 'Programme for Government'. Speech to the Scottish Parliament (introducing *One Scotland – Programme for Government 2014-15*), 26 Nov. 2014. http://news.scotland.gov.uk/Speeches-Briefings/First-Minister-Programme-for-Government-12b1.aspx

2 M. Dickie: 'Scotland's huntin' and shootin' landowners under fire'. *Financial Times*, 26 Nov. 2014. www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bb7cb03e-7591-11e4-b082-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3LXjCrlcm

3 P. Hetherington: 'Scotland goes its own way on spending and economic growth'. *The Guardian*, 6 Sept. 2011. www.theguardian.com/society/2011/sep/06/scotland-john-swinney-spending-cuts

in planning we trust?

public interest and private delivery in a co-managed planning system

There is a pressing need to focus attention on how the public interest is being maintained in an era in which planning activity is being incrementally privatised, as well as squeezed financially, say Gavin Parker, Emma Street, Mike Raco and Sonia Freire-Trigo

The basis for planning shaped and implemented in the UK has been a reference point for other planning systems across the world. Elements of the system continue to be imitated across the globe, and appetite for lesson-drawing from what UK planners are perceived to 'do well' shows no sign of diminishing. However, despite this laudable international reputation, the fundamental principles and structures of planning still found in the UK have come under sustained attack domestically and from all sides of the political spectrum; perhaps particularly so in the English context.

Wave after wave of critique has been made of planning practices, structures and processes, with much of this being politically and ideologically motivated; seeking to question the ability of the state to plan effectively, inclusively or efficiently. Local authority planning has faced particularly fierce attacks on both its legitimacy and its resource base as central government has instigated unprecedented cuts.[1]

This article considers one aspect of change that has remained relatively under-discussed: namely, the growing role of the *private sector* in the planning system. Given the scale of involvement that consultancies now have in all aspects of the governance, management, regulation and implementation of planning, it is remarkable how little scrutiny there is of their practices, motivations and influence, and of the impact they have upon (public) planning decisions and outcomes.

We aim to start a wider debate to redress this gap in our understanding and bring into critical view a shift that has been under way for at least the past two decades. We call for more research on the mechanisms through which planning activities have been undertaken by private planning consultancies acting on behalf of a range of clients, including developers, local communities and planning authorities themselves.

This evolution has been steered by many social, cultural and political shifts that have impelled central and local government to open up planning processes to public debate and to look for 'efficiencies', with the latter aim taking on a new urgency in the wake of austerity cuts. As planning authority functions have been pared back, local politicians have assumed a more central role and responsibility in maintaining the public interest in planning matters. However this 'democratisation process' has, for some, failed to provide sufficient transparency in decision-making processes, nor has it generated wider discussion over the moral case for state intervention.

The time feels right in this, the RTPI's centenary year and as we head towards a general election, to re-evaluate some of the fundamental values of

planning and to pose some rather difficult but as we see it *essential questions* about how the public interest is being maintained in an era in which the private sector is being invited to undertake more and more work, sometimes to complement that of public sector planners, but often to replace them altogether. We focus here on one aspect of planning change that begs more reflective and substantial attention: the maintenance of the public interest when planning activity is being incrementally privatised, as well as squeezed financially.

Planning and the public interest in private hands

While there is a thoughtful literature on the public interest in planning, the theoretical consideration of public interest justifications for planning have not (as yet) been accompanied by much reflection on the impacts of recent trends. Much of the literature has become rather outdated as the trend towards private sector planning growth has continued.[2]

Reflecting on current trends, we can see a further shift in orientation of the membership composition of the RTPI. While around 50% of *active* RTPI members work in local authority planning departments, and a quarter work for planning consultancies,[3] this leaves another set working for national government and other institutions (including the third sector) and a significant number who are students or retirees. Thus the active and qualified proportion in consultancies is much higher than a quarter. There are many others undertaking planning work in both the private and the public sectors who are not RTPI members; such individuals prefer instead to retain membership of a range of other related professional bodies or to opt out of professional institute purview entirely. This also highlights that planning activity is open to anyone.

'The process of drawing in the private sector to deliver public services is becoming a *normalised* and routine response to planning's perceived problems'

The result is that bodies such as the RTPI lack the appropriate regulatory power and reach to police the protection of the public interest and look to a combination of national and local politicians and its own membership to keep this in mind as a foremost aim. While the RTPI Code of Conduct sets out the sensibility that Chartered Planners should maintain, it is, in reality, not practically enforceable:

'[Professional planners] shall act with competence, honesty and integrity [and] shall fearlessly and impartially exercise their independent professional judgement to the best of their skill and understanding.'[4]

We argue that since the last burst of reflection on the public interest, around the turn of the millennium, and going back to Nicholas Ridley's period as Secretary of State in the early 1980s, planning reforms have been subject to a process of *co-evolution* in which the privatisation of elements of the planning process has gone hand-in-hand with the growth of a new and expanded consultancy sector. Global players have emerged to provide policy-makers with off-the-shelf planning solutions, along with a plethora of small-scale practices, many of which have been set up by former public sector planners. In England, as we see it, the shift towards private participation in public planning has taken on the following forms:

- the direct discharge of local government planning functions such as development management to private consultancies;
- the use of consultants (of many types) as specialist service providers, and the contracting-out of research and other work for local planning authorities – including the production of masterplans;
- the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs), which may involve funding for a planning officer to work exclusively with a developer on a large scheme;
- the introduction of neighbourhood planning, with its emphasis on neighbourhoods leading the planning process, but very often supported by private consultants;
- the introduction of regulatory requirements on developers, such as the production of a Statement of Community Involvement in major development schemes in which private companies input their own interpretations of 'community needs' directly into planning deliberations; and
- the expansion of consultant-led citizen engagement in which the public's experience of planning processes is increasingly being mediated by private consultants acting on behalf of developers or local government.

Much of this change has been promoted by successive central governments and has received qualified support from organisations such as the Audit Commission, which has openly argued that planning services could be better delivered by the private sector – a position that has partly been justified by a lack of qualified planners and the 'buying-in' of missing skills.[5] In a context of austerity and growing Treasury influence on all aspects of policy-making, this rationale has been strengthened to the extent that the process of drawing in the private sector to deliver public

Left

Care is needed to ensure that the planning system's remit to deal with long-term change in the public interest is met

services is, we argue, becoming a *normalised* and routine response to planning's perceived problems.

However, given the (political) sensitivities bound up in the practices of planning, there are key considerations that require careful treatment, not least as a consequence of the planning system's remit to deal with long-term change and the fact that outcomes delivered through planning decisions impact significantly on peoples' current (and future) quality of life. The experience of other privatisations in the UK, such as the railways or utilities, demonstrate a high degree of public disquiet, with recent YouGov polling evidence indicating widespread support for re-nationalisation.[6] Such examples indicate that the long-term implications for the legitimacy and efficacy of a planning system led by profit-making private organisations could be serious in the absence of robust regulatory and governmental checks and balances.

What does this mean for those planners who are working for the private sector promoting development and acting ostensibly in their client's interest? Initial research suggests that this is a significant, and growing, part of the profession, yet no records exist centrally of how many planners are working in this context. There is, to the best of our knowledge, no research about the arrangements whereby local authorities have turned to private sector providers to deliver some or all of their planning services.

Global corporations such as Capita, Balfour Beatty and SERCO, for example, are prominent in supplying local government services. There has been contracting out of planning services in, for example, Breckland, Salford, North East Lincolnshire and Barnet – indicating that there is a new and deeper dimension to the privatisation of planning than has been seen before. This is a relatively new phenomenon, but other private inputs have accumulated and become a part of everyday policy-making; many local authorities have been drawing on private consultancy for a considerable time, given a lack of local planning authority capacity in-house. But the scale, scope and depth of these shifts requires consideration, as does whether additional measures are needed to ensure that the decisions made are legitimate (in part achieved by sufficient public scrutiny). This is of particular concern given planning's continued ethical and professional focus on the protection of the public interest. Moreover, how such assessments are made generally and on a case-by-case basis needs to be revealed and understood.

Acting in the public interest remains a central meta-narrative for planning, and the term is often rehearsed as a justification for decisions made at central and local government scales. Yet demonstrating public good/harm, let alone deliberatively asserting the public interest, is a long-standing challenge. Indeed, some may say that the kind of 'elitist' planning that dominated during the 1950s and 1960s has led to a legitimation crisis that has yet to be resolved. The democratisation of planning has been partial, and the interests of local authorities may occlude a wider public interest that is sustained in part through the principles of sustainable development (i.e. the considerations of futurity, participation, development, environment, and equity).

Yet, more prosaically, we also perceive that there is very little understanding of the scale, scope and arrangements that are operating and passing between public clients and private contractors. This set of conditions *may* place planning as a public activity (and associated public confidence) in significant jeopardy. The fact is, we know very little about this situation and it urgently needs further investigation.

While local authorities are faced with reforms, funding cuts and lack of staff capacity, there is a danger of public sector planning being locked into a downward spiral in which the public interest and associated planning vision are degraded. The position of local authorities in particular resonates

with the idea of a 'squeezed middle'; facing pressure from all sides.

We see two possible future scenarios emerging: one in which planning is discharged primarily by the public sector, with the need for appropriate resources and political support; or (and perhaps more likely) a scenario in which the private sector continues to have a significant (and potentially growing) part to play in the various roles set out above. Either way, there needs to be an improvement in the transparency, oversight and regulation of planning practice – a function that the state needs to enable if not discharge itself – to ensure that the public interest is and will be the prime consideration in decision-making.

'New policies and regulations may be needed to ensure that, whatever the distribution of planning activity across sectors or across scales, planning remains effective'

Conclusion

Our experience of working within, and researching, the planning system suggests that an incremental process of change and a re-orientation is occurring through the development of a set of co-evolved planning practices. These have entailed three related elements with which, cumulatively, the governance of planning over the past three decades has not kept pace in order to effectively oversee the public interest criterion. To recap, we see these elements as:

- the co-evolution of planning whereby business, communities and a range of private consultants, as well as government, have been actively shaping system *design*;
- the co-production of policy *content* to reflect the power of those active participants; and
- the co-creation of *decision-making* influenced by the above.

This set of overlapping features has been observed by many within the profession and beyond, yet there has been very little discussion or critical reflection on the wider repercussions. This is important, not least given the traditional central professional and ethical remit of planners to work on behalf of the public interest, both present and future.

We argue that there is now a pressing need to refocus attention on these changes and the critical issue of the appropriate governance of co-managed planning. As part of this we need a much clearer understanding of the characteristics of the active participants, including the 'private sector', and whether or not a clear set of priorities and agendas (including the pursuit of *private interest*) exist in relation to planning. For example, we know little about the ethical codes and standards that companies set and apply to their own practices, how their activities mediate and shape the relationships between citizens and planning processes, and whether or not they undertake their tasks in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

New policies and regulations may be needed to ensure that, whatever the distribution of planning activity across sectors or across scales, planning remains effective. The transparent determination and scrutiny of the assessment of public interest is needed. This involves, first, better research and evidence to inform change, and, secondly, the implementation of mechanisms to ensure that *all* those involved in providing evidence and informing decision-makers on planning matters are acting with integrity and are openly and fully cognisant of the public interest criterion.

We argue that there now needs to be a process of substantive review if professional planners (and others) are to be charged and trusted with co-producing our futures independently and fearlessly.

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Notes

1 See, for example, P. Hall: 'Reflections on a lifetime of town planning'. *The Guardian*, 1 Oct. 2014. www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/oct/01/sir-peter-hall-reflections-on-a-lifetime-of-town-planning

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whither household projections?

With household projections based on full 2011 Census data due to be published early in 2015, Ludi Simpson considers the weight that we should place upon them in the light of assumptions made in the interim projections about the effects of the economic downturn

Left

The household projections based on full 2011 Census data will be the basis of local assessments of housing need

The Government's 2011 interim household projections are shortly to be replaced with final projections which, using full Census information on household formation and revised population projections, will run up to 2037. How interested should we be in them? Despite claims that the recession invalidates the projections, there are reasons to doubt this, and to treat the new projections with more authority than ones made in the previous decade.

Lower household formation – a new trend or a temporary aberration?

In the 18 months since the interim projections were published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), their ingredient of a slower rate of household growth than in past projections has been rather dismissed. The House of Commons Library suggests that the 2011-based projections are 'a reflection of the severity and extent of the post-2008 economic downturn. The 2008-based projections are still regarded as a solid indicator of potential levels of housing demand over coming years.'[1]

The Planning Advisory Service's technical advice on assessing objective need for housing states that 'The evidence suggests that the higher-than expected household sizes are partly a demand-side effect of the last recession – so that due to falling incomes and the credit crunch fewer people could

afford to form or maintain separate households'. It recommends that the long-term development of household formation should be assumed to be in line with the 2008-based household projections.[2]

An RTPI Research Briefing reports that 'A detailed analysis of the census and other data points to two main reasons for the census finding fewer households than expected: increased international migration; and changes in the types of households in which younger adults are living', both of which are judged to be temporary phenomena.[3]

These views, which have also been reflected in Planning Inspectors' views of appropriate forecasts of housing need, rely heavily on a major research paper from Alan Holmans, published in *Town & Country Planning*.[4] That research was an excellent response to the interim projections, but has not been subject to the update and review that it called for.

The research included long-term projections of housing need for England, based on an assumed return to housing formation closer to the 2008-based projections. Holmans stressed that this was only one among significantly different assumptions that *could* be made.

Room for doubt

The forthcoming 2012-based DCLG projections will rely on the same 2011 Census as the interim projections – so how should we use them? My review of the evidence on which the interim projections were assessed suggests that we should not after all discount the new projections, for the following reasons.

The causes of reduced household formation are varied, began before the recession, and mostly are likely to continue with or without recession

Much attention has been focused on reduced household formation among those aged 25-34, the fall in numbers of single and couple households of those ages, and the rise in the number of adults living with older couples and in other multi-adult households. But as Alan Holmans pointed out, of the 1 million fewer one-person households in 2011 compared with what had been projected by the 2008-based projections, only 200,000 of the shortfall were among those aged 25-34.

In the 2000s there was a sustained increase among young people not leaving home, and in those returning home (see Fig.1). The increased number living with their parents began at the turn of the millennium; the increase did accelerate after 2008.

The introduction of student fees from 1998, and the increase in precarious employment, including the rapid growth of part-time work, could both change in the future. But they appear at the moment as fixed circumstances of the policy and economic environment.

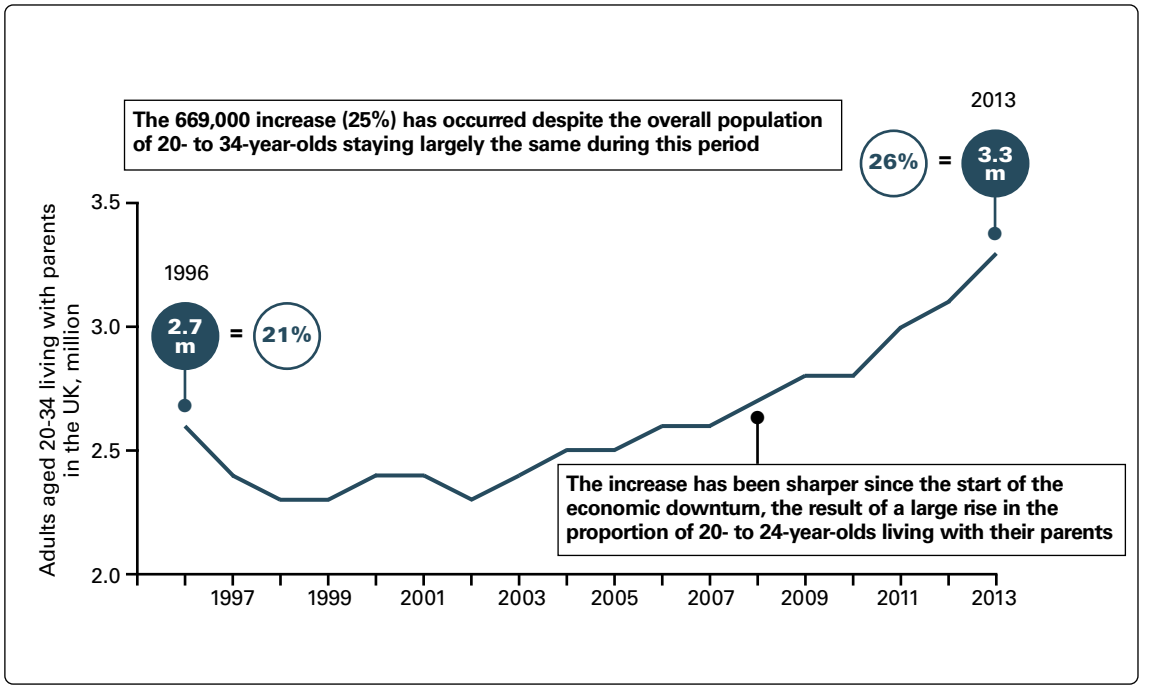

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Fig. 1 Since 1996 there has been a large increase in young adults living with their parents
Source: 'Large increase in 20- to 34-year-olds living with parents since 1996'[5]

The long-term increase in the number of childless women, both through delayed child-bearing and through not having children at all, which increased the number of smaller households, stopped and has fallen since 2000.

Increasingly older formation of couples or families, which had increased the number of single-person households in the 1980s and 1990s, has levelled out since 2001.

Whether young adults aged 25-34 will recover to their previous levels of household formation when the economic situation improves is arguable, and is dependent on the success of 'Help to Buy' schemes and the impact of high affordability ratios, high rental prices, welfare retrenchment, and increased student fees and debts. The housing market and government policies to provide or stimulate affordable housing will affect future household formation.

The 2008-based projections were presented at the time not as a solid trend, but as insecure, because the past steady trends had already been broken prior to the recession

In preparing the 2008-based household projections, DCLG was faced with a dilemma: its own report on the methodology used noted that 'Labour Force Survey (LFS) data suggests that there have been some steep falls in household representative rates for some age groups since the 2001 Census. If these shifts in household formation behaviour are sustained in the longer term, and this can only be truly assessed once the 2011 Census results are available, the household projections using the method as in the 2006-based and previous projection rounds would turn out to be too high.'[6]

There had already been 'observed deceleration between 1991 and 2001' in household formation rates, although there is some doubt about that decade because of unusual difficulties with the 1991 Census enumeration. The 2008-based household projections opted, as worded in the same report, to 'revert to the trend' of increasing formation rates. We know that this trend was observed only prior to 2001, and perhaps not even to that year.

The report on the methodology of the 2008-based projections also warned that 'There are cohort effects that are ignored by the methodology... [This is] of particular concern if recent falls in household representative rates for younger age groups are carried forwards through a cohort process into older age groups in future years.' There has, in fact, been such a carrying through: the drop in formation rates for those aged 20-24 and 25-29 apparent already for 1991-2001 has emerged for those aged 30-34 and 35-39 in the period 2001-2011. Thus the 2008-based projection was itself considered as precarious rather than a 'solid trend', and was to be judged against the 2011 Census.

Immigration, said to have caused half the slowing of the household formation rate between 2001 and 2011, did not, after all, have such an influence

Holmans' calculations on immigration are probably the only point at which his analysis may be faulty. He notes much lower household representative rates for immigrants who have entered the UK in the past year than for the general population, and applies the large difference to the total number of extra immigrants during the period 2001-2011. However, his own evidence shows that immigrants with 0-5 years in the UK come much closer to the general household representative rates, and the difference is not visible for those with 5-10 years in the UK. Thus in 2011 the extra immigrants of 2001-2011 will have on average an experience very close to the general population rather than those of migrants in the past year used in Holmans' calculations.

The importance of this observation is only to suggest that very little of the decrease in household formation can be laid at the door of a temporary increase in immigration during the 2000s.

The interim and final projections since the 2011 Census are based not on short-term trends, but on trends since 1971

Although it is sometimes claimed that the current household projections are based on the experience of changes between 2001 and 2011, this is true only of the allocation of households to household types in the second stage of the projections. The total numbers of households in England and in each local authority are projected on the basis of 40 years of trends in household formation, from 1971 to 2011.

The quality, methods and purpose of household projections

The forthcoming household projections due early in 2015 are to an extent predictable. They will adopt the 2012-based population projections for local authority areas of England which are already in the public domain. They will repeat the approach of the interim projections but use the full range of 2011 Census outputs, as demanded by the methods established for household projections in England in the last decade. But the interim projections already used the major ingredient from the 2011 Census – the total number of households in each district. The projected change in household formation rates was so small that projected population change accounted for 98% of the household change, at least when averaged over England. And finally, since the projection is based on 40 years of data, the changes coming from using the full 2011 Census data are not likely to make major revisions to the interim projection of household formation rates, although of course there will be some districts that change more than others.

Looking further ahead, one can expect improvements in the projection methods. They currently employ a mixture of two sets of Census data and are more complex than methods used in Scotland and Wales. They do not identify the 'concealed families' which used to be a useful marker of suppressed need. Perhaps they could be developed to include 'concealed single-person households'. The projection of migration could take into account a longer period than the past five years' experience as at present.

In addition, demand for scenarios of household need and housing provision could be satisfied by an authoritative producer inside government or supported by government. Alternative scenarios can assess the impact of uncertainty in the factors not under local planners' control, such as fertility, mortality and international migration, and also assess the demographic consequences of planning investments that are under planners' control.

'Some honest thinking is needed to resolve a mismatch between the need for affordable housing and the mechanisms to supply it. At present the lack of affordable housing undermines the assessment of housing need which demographic projections support'

Some honest thinking is needed to resolve a mismatch between the need for affordable housing and the mechanisms to supply it. At present the lack of affordable housing undermines the assessment of housing need which demographic projections support.

Conclusions

The imminent household projections based on full 2011 Census data will be the basis for the determination of locally assessed housing need for the following two years. The previous 2008-based projections provide neither a substitute nor a benchmark.

The societal changes that created smaller households in Britain since the 1960s have now affected 50 years of those reaching adulthood. However, the experience of the past two decades, and not just the economic crisis of the late 2000s, does suggest that we are not in a position to expect further increases in household formation rates of the same kind. Household size in England cannot continue to reduce indefinitely, although it has not reached a limit and is not as low as elsewhere in Northern Europe. The future in the UK is likely to be a continuation of precarious household formation. It will probably be lower than once projected and carry more uncertainty, until further structural shifts occur.

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a geological disposal facility for nuclear waste – if not sellafield, then where?

In the wake of the publication of the *Implementing Geological Disposal* White Paper, Andrew Blowers looks at political and policy developments in the search for a site for the geological disposal of higher-activity nuclear waste, and argues that the White Paper leaves the way open for further procrastination

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Sellafield – site of the existing storage for much of the UK's long-lived highly radioactive waste

The search for a suitable location to dispose of the country's existing and estimated future arisings of higher-activity nuclear wastes has been going on ever since the Flowers Report declared in 1976 that a solution was necessary. A solution would need to demonstrate 'beyond reasonable doubt that a method exists to ensure the safe containment of long-lived highly radioactive waste for the indefinite

future'.[1] Despite repeated efforts to devise and implement policies to achieve this goal, there is no disposal solution in sight. The Government's latest effort in the search for a site, conveyed in a White Paper hubristically titled *Implementing Geological Disposal,* leaves the way open for further procrastination and a solution as far away as ever.

Radioactive waste management confronts a paradox. On the one hand, it is a matter of the utmost urgency to deal safely and securely with these eternally dangerous materials, the more so in order to legitimate the nuclear new-build programme. On the other hand, the process of finding a site in which to bury the wastes spans short-term political horizons so that no government actually has to deal with the problem during its watch. Time and again, governments have avoided uncomfortable decisions for fear of electoral offence. A politics of delay and defer has enshrined a policy of stay put and store. For the foreseeable future, the solution is storage and, in practice, that means in Cumbria (Sellafield), where two-thirds of the wastes by volume and radioactivity are already stored, with some early-legacy wastes requiring complex and costly treatment.

Early efforts and reverses

Nonetheless, the Government's persistence in searching for a permanent solution is commendable given the fruitless search so far. The early efforts are briefly described here.

Following on from Flowers, in the late 1970s and early 1980s a programme of borehole drilling to determine the suitability of rock formations for deep disposal of high-level wastes (HLW) had to be abandoned in the face of local opposition. Meanwhile, the sea-dumping of wastes in the North East Atlantic was suspended (and years later abandoned altogether) as a result of the combined efforts of Greenpeace, trade unions and international opposition at the London Dumping Convention. During the 1980s the newly created Nirex, established to examine the disposal of nuclear wastes, undertook a lengthy but ultimately doomed campaign to establish repositories for intermediate and low-level wastes (ILW and LLW) in a deep mine on Teesside and in a shallow repository at one of four sites in Eastern England. These early efforts, based on the decide-announce-defend (DAD) approach to siting, each confronted opposition that cut across geographical and social divisions.[2]

Faced with defeat, Nirex tried a new approach, combining the search for suitable geology with an effort to promote public understanding and potential support.[3] This approach recognised the need for any site selection to be based both on scientific (geological) credibility and social acceptability. This science/society combination has underlain subsequent approaches, although with varying degrees of emphasis.

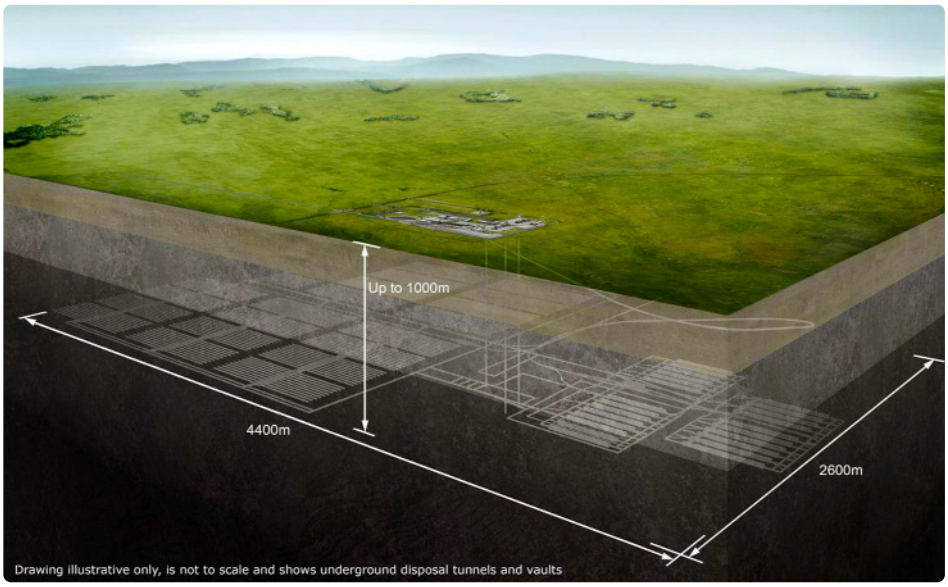
Nirex undertook a seemingly rational approach (multi-attribute decision analysis) to identifying sites, gradually winnowing the number of possibilities from more than 500 down to 39, and eventually 12, reflecting various attributes and geological environments. The list was then reduced specifically to Dounreay and Sellafield, 'two areas where there is a measure of public support',[4] but which also happened to host the bulk of the wastes to be disposed of. Unsurprisingly, Sellafield was the preferred option (transport costs the apparent determinant) for the development of a rock characterisation facility (RCF). It appeared at the time that with appropriate geology and public support a final, indeed obvious, solution was in sight.

Alas, it was not to be. After a very long and closely argued public inquiry the Sellafield RCF was rejected (on the eve of the 1997 election) by the Secretary of State, on the advice of the Inspector, on three counts: on local planning grounds; on the 'scientific uncertainties and technical deficiencies in the proposals'; and on concerns 'about the process of the selection of the site'.[5] Thus there were deficiencies both in the scientific and in the social aspects of the case for the RCF. After two decades, attempts to pin down any site for a repository had been comprehensively defeated. Each attempt had been met with organised, informed and determined opposition, exposing a lack of trust and confidence in government and the nuclear industry.

Inspiring public confidence

By the turn of the century there was a palpable shift from confrontation to consensus in the search for a solution to the problem of nuclear waste. The nuclear industry was in retreat, and a new mood of public participation transformed relationships in environmental policy-making. A new lexicon emphasising openness, transparency, engagement, dialogue and related concepts revealed the new approach to decision-making. Under this new dispensation the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) was established and set about a root and branch exercise to recommend 'the option, or combination of options, that can provide a long-term solution'.[6]

For three years the Committee undertook public and stakeholder engagement in all its myriad forms, compared options through an elaborate multi-attribute decision analysis designed to satisfy the demands for robust science, and considered ethical issues and overseas experience, bringing all these knowledge streams together in an open, integrated and interdependent set of recommendations. 'Within the present state of knowledge' the Committee recommended geological disposal as 'the best available approach', but only in conjunction with a robust programme of interim storage and a commitment to intensified research into long-term



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Demonstration of the potential scale of a geological disposal facility

Source: Consultation: Review of the Siting Process for a Geological Disposal Facility.[9] © Crown copyright 2013

safety and flexibility in decision-making. Unlike all previous attempts, CoRWM proposed (or rather confirmed) an option; it did not identify a site.

However, CoRWM did devise a process by which a site might eventually be selected. Emphasis was given to the idea of volunteerism (or voluntarism), whereby communities would be invited to express a willingness to participate in a siting process that might ultimately lead to hosting a repository. The community would have the right to withdraw from the process up to a pre-defined point (realistically before development began). The success of the process would depend on the three 'Ps' of participation, partnership and packages (i.e. incentives to participate and compensation for participation, or bribes, depending on your point of view).

The Government broadly adopted the approach but, pressed by the then urgency of the emerging nuclear new-build programme, placed the emphasis on implementing geological disposal as quickly as possible, rather than the more measured integrated storage and disposal strategy recommended by CoRWM. It is important to note that CoRWM's remit extended to legacy wastes only; the Government included new-build wastes which, according to CoRWM, raised different political and ethical issues, extending the timescales for implementation into the unknowable future. Nevertheless, in its anxiety to identify a site, the Government pressed ahead. And, once again, attention turned to Cumbria.

The process stalls again

The Government's call for expressions of interest in entering a siting process without commitment to host a geological disposal facility (GDF) met with a predictable response; i.e. no response at all except from the one area in England (Scotland had by this time adopted a policy of long-term storage rather than disposal) where there was support for the nuclear industry and where the bulk of the wastes were already in store – Sellafield.[7]

To be precise, the expressions of interest came from three local authorities: the District Councils of Copeland (encompassing the Sellafield site) and neighbouring Allerdale in West Cumbria, and Cumbria County Council, the upper-tier authority covering West Cumbria, the Lake District, Furness, the Eden Valley, Carlisle and the Solway Firth. The three councils constituted the decision-making bodies, and they entered the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste (MRWS) Partnership with other bodies, including churches, voluntary organisations, trade unions, and farming, business and conservation interests, although anti-nuclear NGOs refused to join on grounds they were against geological disposal.

For a period of just over three years (2009-12) the Partnership diligently worked away at deepening its understanding on such matters as inventory, geology, planning, retrievability, ethics, and raising public awareness, generating involvement through public and stakeholder engagement programmes. It produced its final report in August 2012[8] as a basis for the three councils to decide whether or not to proceed to the next stage, entering the siting process. The question had become highly controversial, and the councils paused before simultaneously making their individual decisions in January 2013. The result was dramatic, with the two West Cumbrian district councils voting in favour of proceeding but the county council voting to withdraw. As a result of an earlier understanding, whereby at least one district and the county must agree, this meant the process was terminated.

Although the process was widely considered a failure, a refusal to proceed was always a possible outcome. And there were aspects of the process that might be regarded as successful and innovative, notably the partnership-working, the public and stakeholder engagement, the development of principles for the distribution of benefits, and the opening up of significant debates about geology, inventory and ethics.

Reasons for reversal

So, what went wrong, or, rather, why did the process stall? It happened for reasons of both substance and process, but also because of increasing public awareness and participation.

In terms of substance, by far the most important was geology, or more specifically hydrogeology. The earlier RCF inquiry had rehearsed the geological problems with the Sellafield location. In short, was there anywhere a sufficiently large and suitable hard rock formation at appropriate depth (200 to 1,000 metres) that could accommodate the volume (put at 6 to 11 Albert Halls in size) of wastes destined for the repository?

This question was much disputed, although the area has probably been subject to more detailed investigation than anywhere else in the country. On the one hand there was the view that there were two areas, one near the Solway Firth, the other beneath Eskdale, that might be potentially suitable. On the other was the claim that in a region of unpredictable geology and complex hydrogeology there was nowhere that was suitable, especially when compared with more favourable areas elsewhere in the country. It would be a waste of time and resources to undertake detailed exploration when the outcome was so uncertain. Geology must be put before voluntarism in seeking suitable areas for a GDF.

In the end, the process stalled because of the process. Although the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership worked well in a number of ways, it also suffered from certain structural and procedural defects. Although it had a broadly catholic membership, over half the members were local authority councillors, a dominant group which provided the chair of the Partnership and generally assumed a leading role. This created a sense of exclusion, whether deliberately self-inflicted, as with the NGOs, or paranoically experienced in the case of the parish councils, which felt that they, like the local authorities, should also possess the right of veto.

This local authority dominance was compounded by two other factors. One, a structural feature, was the Partnership's decision not to make recommendations as to whether to proceed further but, rather, to report its findings in the form of advice to the three councils for them to decide. The Partnership declared that it was important 'for the Councils to be able to weigh up our work and opinions across the range of topics and issues... before making a decision'.[8] In effect, the councils already dominant in the Partnership were free to act as they thought fit.

This dominance in decision-making was reinforced by the procedural factor, the protocol whereby the two tiers of local government must be in agreement. This had pitted the pro-nuclear West Cumbrian authorities, particularly Copeland, against the rather more diverse geopolitical interests of Cumbria county. Voluntarism had opened the way forward in West Cumbria, only for its path to be blocked in a decision-making stalemate.

The Partnership was remarkably successful in developing public awareness and in opening up the debate, so much so that opinions on whether to proceed became distinctly polarised. Although a survey undertaken by the Partnership found net support for continuing the siting process, opposition was increasingly vocal, reflected in the local media, in the campaigning of established environmental groups, and in the spawning of new ones specifically focused on the repository issues. A collective effort was made to wrest the initiative from the Partnership, which had adopted a neutral stance, and to capture public support for pulling out of the process through a campaign of opinion surveys, media publicity, exhibitions, demonstrations, public meetings and debates.

In the final phase this power of participative democracy had a decisive impact on representative democracy. Although it made little impression on the two West Cumbrian district councils, both deeply dependent on the nuclear industry, it was more successful with the more biddable Cumbria County Council, with its wider range of competing environmental interests.

The decision not to proceed to the next stage of the siting process was certainly seen as a set-back for the process and, on the face of it, a set-back also for siting a GDF in West Cumbria. As with the RCF in 1997, so with the GDF in January 2013. The outcome of this latest essay in siting a repository appeared, once again, to confirm the scientific and social unsuitability of Sellafield as the final, as opposed to the interim, location for the nation's most dangerous nuclear wastes. But, it raised even more acutely the question – if not here, then where?

Reaction, reflection and response

The Government lost no time in reacting to the Cumbrian debacle. The day after Cumbria's decision not to proceed, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pronounced that the Government remained committed to geological disposal but needed to reflect on the experience in Cumbria. As a preparatory step the government announced a 'Call for Evidence' asking for views on improving the process and attracting potential participants.

Above and right

Demonstration outside Carlisle Castle (above), and campaign material produced by Marianne Birkby (right). A survey undertaken by Marianne Birkby found net support for continuing the siting process, but opposition was increasingly vocal, reflected in the local media and in the campaigning of new and established campaigning groups

Marianne Birkby

The Call for Evidence provoked the following criticisms of the siting process:

- too much emphasis on achieving a GDF quickly to the detriment of a more measured approach;
- a lack of clarity on what would comprise the inventory of wastes for disposal, especially if new-build wastes were included; and
- a concern that the decision-making power was too elitist and unresponsive to the participatory process.

Consequently, among the requirements suggested for an improved process were:

- more and earlier information on geological conditions;
- clearer definition of community;
- clarification of the decision-making process; and
- greater emphasis on the importance of safe and secure storage as an integral part of long-term management of nuclear wastes.

The lack of trust that was cited as a criticism was probably more a lack of trust in the policy than in the process. Support for voluntarism was unquestioned, although how a voluntary approach might succeed in finding a site elsewhere having been instrumental in the reverse in Cumbria remained the tantalising and unanswerable question.

Informed by the responses to the Call for Evidence, in September 2013 the Government launched a consultation on its review of the siting process.[9] It continued 'to favour an approach based on voluntarism... working in partnership with communities that may ultimately host a facility' (p.5).

But there were some significant changes proposed for the siting process. It would begin with a national public awareness and engagement programme, providing information on geological disposal, types and amounts of wastes, regional geology, socio-

economic impacts and indicative benefits. This would precede any formal discussions with potential host communities. Such discussions would be on a continuous basis through a 'learning' and a 'focusing' phase, leading up to a 'demonstration of community support' to host a repository, at which point the right to withdraw would cease. The GDF project would be supported by a National Policy Statement and would come under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure planning regime. The scale and timing of community benefits would be clearly set out.

The whole process would be managed by a Steering Group, a troika consisting of the local authority (representing the host community), the Government (responsible for national infrastructure) and the developer (Radioactive Waste Management Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, NDA).

The Government's answer to the supposed cause of the failure to proceed in Cumbria was to propose only one representative level of local government to have the decision on proceeding and 'that this level should be the relevant District Council in England' (p.26), a red rag to the county bull if ever there was one. On the all-important issue of geological suitability, the idea of screening out unsuitable areas was rejected in favour of an approach that would provide increasing detail (from desk study, to surface investigation, and ultimately to boreholes) for interested communities, progressively eliminating those areas where the rock below was unpromising.

The whole package of proposals was based on the heroic assumption that communities (as well as or other than West Cumbria?) could be attracted, persuaded or cajoled to engage in the process 'with more confidence, and ultimately to help deliver a GDF' (p.19).

Geology and governance

It is fair to say that this new approach, although widely debated, went down a bit like a lead balloon. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) tried to stimulate interest by sponsoring a series of deliberative participation events in different parts of the country, including sector (local government, industry, NGO) and national stakeholder workshops and public dialogue workshops (four groups each over two weekends), all of which were meticulously reported. There were 719 written responses to the consultation paper (although 301 were part of a letter-writing campaign) – in all a substantial expression of interest. Subsequently, the Government published a summary of the responses[10] and its own response to the consultation.[11]

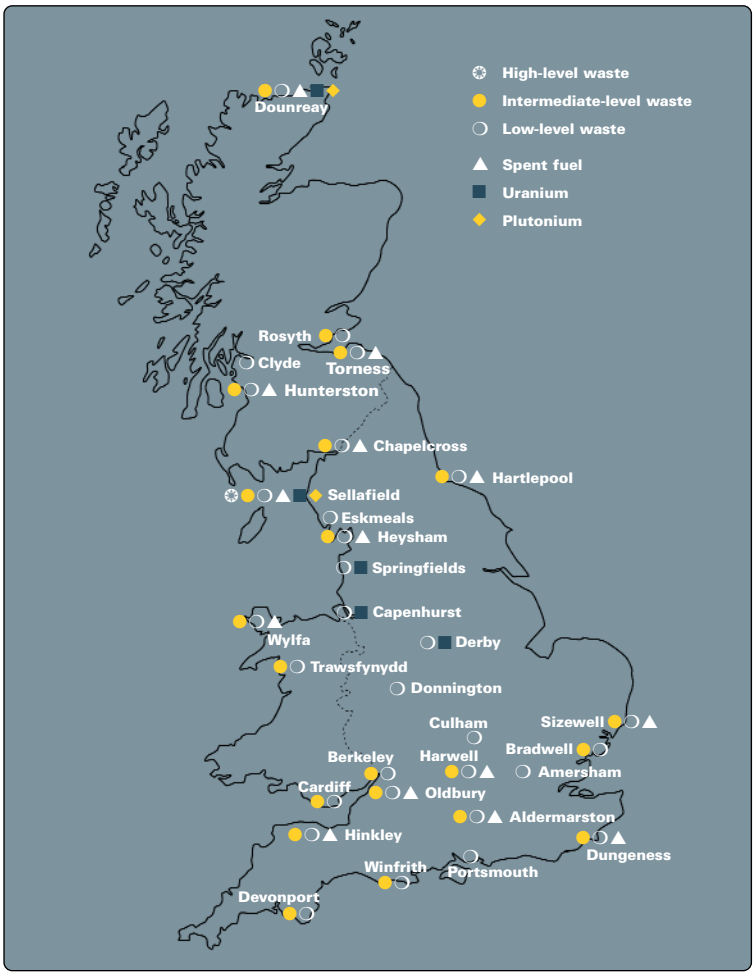
Predictably, two issues dominated the critical responses – geology and governance. On geology there was a view, strongly expressed, notably in the Cumbrian responses, that a national geological screening process should be undertaken to enable a focus on potentially suitable areas before seeking volunteers. Indeed, some, notably the newly formed Cumbria Trust, went so far as to argue that Cumbria should be excluded, since the geology had already been shown to be unsuitable, and provocatively indicated more suitable areas elsewhere in the east and south east of the country. The Trust stridently proclaimed: 'it is in the national interest that we squander no more time in basing our entire national nuclear waste strategy around seeking a geological disposal solution in entirely unsuitable geology'.[12]

The problem of finding suitable geology within a short timescale led several respondents to argue for far more emphasis on safe storage as an essential and integral part of the solution, notably for West Cumbria, where much of the early-legacy waste was stored in deplorable conditions. Indeed, for some NGOs, storage had to be the de facto solution since, they claimed, there could be no support from civil society for a GDF 'whilst nuclear new build is actively pursued by government'.[13]

On the issue of governance, concern was expressed about the tripartite concentration of power, which was 'too centralised, undemocratic and unfit for purpose'.[14] There should, at the very least, be some independent oversight of the process. It was entirely unclear how the process would be carried forward since there seemed no proposal for partnership-working on the lines of the West Cumbria MRWS, but instead a vague idea of a consultative partnership as the only machinery of governance. This roused considerable ire as the upper tier of local government, the county councils, was to be relegated to this consultative role while the lower tier, the district councils, was part of the decision-making triumvirate along with the Government and the developer. To many respondents this smacked very much of re-entering West Cumbria by the back door opened by the willing districts, with the front gate firmly shut to the county.

All in all, many respondents felt that the practice, if not the principle, of voluntarism had been impugned by the proposals, and that there was a lack of clarity about the way forward. There was regret that what had been, in the days of CoRWM, a promising scenario 'has been downgraded into a manipulative process guaranteed to deliver a GDF at Sellafield, come what may'.[15] The failure to proceed in Cumbria highlighted the difficulty in proceeding elsewhere, and the consultation breathed hope rather than expectation in this regard.

Even among the more optimistic critics of the consultation, there was a call for a more integrated process of storage and disposal, confined to legacy wastes, 'that operates according to abiding principles of voluntarism, partnership, democratic accountability and equity'.[16] The Government had promised both to learn and listen to the responses



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Sites where radioactive waste and materials are currently stored

Source: Based on map published in *Implementing Geological Disposal*[17] (original map © Crown copyright 2014)

in preparing its revised approach. The degree to which it had done so was revealed in the White Paper published in July this year.

Fumbling into the future?

The White Paper, *Implementing Geological Disposal*,[17] certainly showed that the Government had been listening; the problem was that in striving to achieve a consensus the resulting policy and process was opaque, uncertain and, as it stood, unfathomable. DECC's team of officials had striven earnestly to meet many of the criticisms of the consultation, but the outcome could well be a recipe for political prevarication and procrastination.

The White Paper had an air of incompleteness, with some of the key questions unanswered and options left open. While the objective of a GDF remained paramount, the pathway to its achievement was strewn with uncertainties. The whole process had seemingly slowed down. It was to open with a dumbed-down programme of raising public awareness, mainly confined to explaining the science of geological disposal and developing national level information to assist 'in engaging with communities across the country on early questions of their geological potential to host a GDF safely' (p.35). This would come in the form of 'high level geological screening guidance',[18] which could be applied to produce initial assessments of potential suitability for volunteer communities. Thus the White Paper had moved some way towards the demands to give geology priority over voluntarism in the first instance.

There was also a subtle shift in emphasis on the priority accorded to the GDF. While achieving a GDF remained the central objective, there was explicit recognition in the White Paper that 'Interim waste storage is an essential component of higher activity radioactive waste management' (p.17) and that safe and secure storage might well be required for more than 100 years. As expected, there had been no movement on the inventory for the GDF, which would include spent fuel from new-build, up to a defined amount.

As to the issues of governance, the processes remained obscure and incomplete. Although the White Paper repeated the mantra of voluntarism and partnership, both these concepts had been

Left

Even under the most optimistic timescale, the development of a geological disposal facility seems a distant prospect, so ensuring that storage facilities, such as the legacy ponds and silos at Sellafield, are safe and secure must remain the immediate priority for clean-up

compromised. The idea of a partnership as a participative and representative component of the decision-making process on the West Cumbrian model had seemingly disappeared. Its successor, the consultative partnership, is under-theorised in the White Paper and its role in decision-making would appear to be marginal.

It is entirely unclear what will comprise the machinery of governance and how it will operate. Much of the detail of what constitutes a community, what will be the roles and responsibilities of community representatives, how and when a test of public support will be made, and what options there will be for disbursement of community investment is consigned to the deliberations of a 'community representation working group'. This will comprise 'experts in local democracy' drawn from government, local and national, the developer and academia. On the recommendations of this group, the Government will decide all the practical details of 'the process of working with communities'.

The role of local government as representative authority has been much diminished. Under pressure from Cumbria and others, the leading role assigned to district councils in the consultative paper has been replaced in the White Paper by the woolly notion that all representative bodies should have a voice but 'no one tier of local government should be able to prevent the participation of other members of that community' (p.43). As a result, the elected local authorities have been disempowered.

It's Cumbria now and for the foreseeable future

What all this seems to foreshadow is an altogether more *dirigiste* approach to voluntarism, with the Government ultimately both arbiter and decision-maker. The White Paper claims that communities 'sit at the heart of the voluntarist siting process' (p.27) and that they hold the right of withdrawal. And there is much emphasis on the need for continuing participation and engagement on the part of communities and local interests. But, in the sense that the Government will define communities and then negotiate with any that volunteer unhampered by a proactive siting partnership and in the absence of local government as decision-making bodies, power has become concentrated. Add to that the key role of the government-financed NDA as the implementing body and it becomes clear that voluntarism has become bounded by governmental constraints.

To underline central government's role, it is intended to bring the GDF, as well as any borehole drilling, within the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime. The whole process will be guided by a non-site-specific National Policy Statement which will set out the planning parameters for a decision on the GDF. This proposal raised concerns that alternatives would be unconsidered and 'in principle' decisions would foreclose debates at an early stage.[19] Anyone doubting the Government's intent to seize control of the implementation process will be disabused by the White Paper's refrain that the Government 'reserves the right to explore other approaches in the event that, at some point in the future, such an approach does not look likely to work' (p.30).

And yet the former urgency has been replaced by a more languorous air in this White Paper. Part of the reason is the slowing-up of the new nuclear programme, which takes the pressure off finding a solution for its wastes. There is also the recognition that a GDF is a long way off, at best more than a generation away (2040 is the notional date at present) and that it may not materialise in the foreseeable future. Moreover, siting and developing a GDF is a transpolitical process, a set of decisions that can be continuously delayed with the uncomfortable problems transferred to the next parliament or generation. This transgenerational

quality, comprising many stages and decisions, removes any immediate political priority.

Although the immediate prospect of siting a GDF in West Cumbria has been removed, the possibility has not been ruled out. The Government has concluded that 'There is no robust basis on which to treat Cumbria differently from other areas in this respect'.[20] But increasingly it becomes apparent that a GDF is a distant prospect, if not a mirage. In reality, storage is the long-term solution, stretching into the next century. That means not only Sellafield but coastal sites all round the country where radioactive wastes are already stored and to which might be added spent fuel from new build as well as wastes that will arise as power stations are decommissioned. In the next century, with the power stations closed and the wastes in deteriorating conditions on sites vulnerable to storm surges and sea level rise, the legacy left to distant generations will be costly to maintain and dangerous to manage.

So, the sites for long-term waste management are already determined. The immediate priority is clean-up at Sellafield and decommissioning at other sites. New-build, if it happens, will compound and extend a problem that is barely manageable for future generations to deal with. Cumbria, for decades to come, will be the main, although not the only, site for the management of the nation's nuclear legacy.

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travails in the politics of housing

Samer Bagaeen considers how, more than a year after Brighton and Hove City Council submitted Part 1 of its City Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination, the Council risked being forced to withdraw the plan, while the city found itself torn between the need for new homes and a widespread desire not to build them

Photos: Samer Bagaeen

Above

The city of Brighton and Hove – not alone in facing problems in meeting housing need

In a piece written for the *Daily Telegraph* during the summer of 2014,[1] the then new Minister for Housing and Planning Brandon Lewis MP suggested that Nimbyism was a thing of the past – and that the 'Government's radical new planning strategy' was the reason, as people now had more say in where new housing was built. Not so, this article will argue, as recent experience in the small city of Brighton and Hove in East Sussex demonstrates.

Mr Lewis was of course right to make the assertion he did in as much as the most recent British Social Attitudes survey[2] found that the number of people supporting the building of houses in their area has risen in the three years from 2010 to 2013. The survey found that opposition to new homes fell substantially, with 46% of respondents saying they would oppose new homes being built in their local area in 2010, compared with 31% in 2013. The proportion that was supportive of housebuilding increased from 28% in 2010 to 47% in 2013.

However, what the survey also found was that although opposition fell across all age, tenure and income sub-groups and among respondents living in different types of areas, homeowners, particularly those living in small cities and towns and in rural areas, were still more likely to be opposed than renters and those living in large cities.

Above

Two of the sites identified in Brighton and Hove's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, undertaken in 2011 – off the The Martlet in Hove (left) and off Highcroft Villas in Brighton (right)

Changes to the planning system brought about through the Localism Act 2011 and the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 have shaped the way that development needs are assessed and met across England. Local Plans seeking to guide development in each local planning authority area are being shaped, revised and updated within this context. Further measures introduced in 2013 were meant to allow applications for major schemes to be made directly to the Planning Inspectorate where the local authority has been 'underperforming' in handling applications. The Planning Inspectorate was given responsibility under the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 to consider applications for major developments where a local planning authority is designated by the Government to be in 'special measures'.

But even under this new policy landscape, not much appears to have changed. Debate on housebuilding approaches still features heavily in the national press, exemplified by two pieces – Dave Hill's 'Let's at least talk about building on London's greenbelt' in *The Guardian*,[3] and Ben Webster's 'Snap a waste of space to solve house crisis' in *The Times*[4] – published in July 2014. More recently, in November 2014, Sir Michael Lyons, who led a Labour Party commission on housebuilding, told the TCPA's Annual Conference that there was not enough brownfield land to meet national housing need, while the Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE's) report *From Wasted Space to Living Spaces,* also published in November 2014, suggested that England has the brownfield capacity to build a million homes. Webster's piece had already given voice to the 'Waste of space' initiative led by CPRE. This campaign asked people to pass on information on brownfield sites which could then be used to put pressure on the Government to provide incentives for developers to target brownfields.

Dave Hill's piece flagged a taboo among London's politicians that prevents them from even suggesting homes could be built on green belt land. He quoted Paul Cheshire, Professor Emeritus of Economic Geography at LSE, who had argued that 'Building on greenbelt land would only have to be very modest to provide more than enough land for housing for generations to come: there is enough greenbelt land just within the confines of Greater London – 32,500 hectares – to build 1.6 million houses at average densities [reducing] pressure to build on playing fields'.[5] Hill wrote that opposition is visceral and informed by a fear of being accused of going against nature by covering acres of it with bricks and mortar. The refuser front, he pointed out, includes politicians in the centre and on the left and the right.

The numbers game and the City Plan

The Government was already well aware of the arguments on both sides of the divide when, in August 2014, it announced a new measure to help unlock brownfield sites for new housing, through a £5 million fund for councils to get work started on new homes, potentially paving the way 'for planning permissions on up to 200,000 new homes across the country'.[6]

In Brighton and Hove, brownfield sites are a rare commodity, as the city's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), undertaken by GVA Grimley in 2011, found.[7] The SHLAA identified 275 sites in the city (most were occupied or in daily use) with a capacity to yield up to 7,425 homes by 2025 (two of these sites are illustrated above). But even a brownfield fund will be insufficient to solve Brighton and Hove's woes, as the city finds itself torn between a need for new homes and a widespread reluctance to build them.

Curiously, for a town in which universities contribute millions to the local economy,[8] and going against officer recommendation, city councillors voted in June 2014 against the University of Sussex's £500 million plan for student housing and academic buildings at its campus in Falmer.[9] The plans would have provided housing for 2,530 students

on campus, contributing to accommodation for an expected 4,600 increase in students at the University by 2018. The local daily newspaper, the *Argus*, reported that the size and breadth of the scheme was too much for councillors, who felt the application could be broken down into smaller proposals. Councillors' objections focused on four themes:

- the impact of tree loss on the campus' ecology;
- concerns over the scale and height of the plans, with fears that it would create a 'dense urban environment';
- a failure to demonstrate that there would be no negative impact on the city's housing stock; and
- conflict with the composition of the campus as originally envisaged by Sir Basil Spence in the 1960s (when the campus was originally intended for 800 students).

The decision to refuse permission represents a reversal of policy for the Green Party run City Council, whose leader, Councillor Bill Randall, was quoted in the *Argus* in 2011 as saying that there are '3,500 homes in the city occupied by students. If we build more student housing then naturally that frees up homes for families.'[10]

The problem in 2014 is that urbanising the urban fringe, where the University of Sussex sits, has become a key battlefield ahead of the 2015 elections. Meaning to test the City Council's resolve, the University of Sussex announced towards the end of November 2014 that it would be appealing the Council's decision.[11] The anti-housing and anti-development sentiment noted in Dave Hill's *Guardian* article is rife in Brighton and Hove. For example, there has been plenty of political opposition to a scheme for housing in Ovingdean village on the eastern fringe of the city[12] (on, in a sign of shifting attitudes on the part of the City Council's planners, a site previously listed as 'undeliverable' in the 2011 SHLAA). In response to a proposal to build 112 homes on a greenfield site in the Meadow Vale area in Ovingdean, Simon Kirby, the Conservative MP for Brighton East, promised to press Ministers to call in – or review – any planning application submitted to Brighton and Hove City Council to develop the site.

Mr Kirby's argued that 'people are rightly angry that the special village feel of Ovingdean, Rottingdean and Woodingdean could be compromised by this development'.[12] He suggested that the City Council should be looking more closely at brownfield and infill sites across the city to deliver more housing before approving developments on valuable green land. The city's Labour candidate for May 2015 general election, Nancy Platts, agreed with Kirby's assessment and expressed support for the Save our Deans campaign[13] set up by local residents to fight the Ovingdean proposals. Davy Jones, the Green Party candidate for Brighton Kemptown in 2015, also blogged about his opposition to the development.[14]

According to group leaflets, the Save our Deans campaign is trying to stop what it calls a high-density housing development on a lowland chalk grassland greenfield site, and to make sure that a 'precedent which could potentially open the floodgates to further development in the Deans' cannot go ahead.

Brighton and Hove City Council's own urban fringe assessment gave strong weight to the NPPF policy (at paras 73 and 74) of protecting existing open spaces, and to the protection of the city's biodiversity resource, with support being given to 'local designations' on sites. However, the Meadow Vale site, along with other sites in the city's urban fringe, are not subject to any nationally recognised designations which would indicate that development should be restricted.

The *Argus* broke the story about the proposed Meadow Vale development in February 2014,[15] suggesting that 'a huge housing estate' was being proposed 'on the edge of the South Downs National Park', immediately galvanising local opposition (the site was inside the South Downs National Park until the boundary was changed in 2009). The project was proposed after the Brighton and Hove City Plan (2010-2030), Part 1 of which was submitted to the to the Secretary of State for independent examination in June 2013, was judged to be unsound by the Planning Inspector, in part because 'the starting point for analysis of the [urban fringe] sites has been the desire to resist development'.[16]

Above

The Save Our Deans group garnering support at the Rottingdean village fair in August 2014

The Inspector's initial conclusions on the plan, issued in December 2013, found that Brighton and Hove had met the duty to co-operate by seeking to engage positively with neighbouring authorities in the region, but that further work was required on matters of soundness, in particular on meeting housing needs and on the assessment of sites in

the city's urban fringe to ascertain their potential contribution towards meeting the city's need.

Even though the duty to co-operate legal test had been met, the expectation was that the Council would still be required to work collaboratively with other authorities to seek to improve housing provision, given the identified levels of housing need in the city. This was because the Inspector, in her initial conclusions, found that the City Council had not been able to meet its own housing need through its Local Development Plan and recommended a robust assessment of potential housing development sites in order to maximise the extent to which the City Council could meet housing need within its own borders and identify a further source of supply.

Brighton and Hove City Council had spent two years drawing up the City Plan, which aimed to create 11,300 homes. However, the Inspector considered that the Council had not done enough to reduce the level of shortfall between the 11,300-unit housing target in the City Plan and objectively assessed housing need for 20,000 units.[17] Specifically, she noted, the Council needed to look more carefully at the urban fringe for potential housing sites.

Matters took a turn for the worse in July 2014 when, in a letter from the Inspector to Brighton and Hove City Council dated 21 July 2014, the Inspector wrote that if the Council was unable to agree to carry out public consultation on main modifications at its meeting in October 2014, she might need to conclude that the request made under section 20(7C) had been implicitly withdrawn, as envisaged in para. 4.28 of the Inspectorate's Procedural Guidance. In these circumstances she would be unable to find the City Plan Part 1 sound and would expect the Council to withdraw the Plan.

The reasons for the delay on the Council's side were, as explained in a letter dated 17 July 2014 to the Inspector from the City's Local Development Team Manager, because the proposed main changes ('modifications') to the City Plan were not likely to receive the support of a majority of councillors at the Council's Resources Committee earlier in the month and were therefore deferred until October to allow further discussions between councillors to seek a consensus.

The ongoing City Plan examination cannot therefore be concluded within the anticipated timeframe, and the City Plan cannot be adopted until this and other concerns are addressed through the modifications. The most significant requirement of the Inspector was for the Council to more rigorously investigate opportunities for potential housing sites in the urban fringe, to allow her to determine whether there is greater potential for the delivery of new housing from this source. The Inspector made it clear that only then would she be in the position to consider whether the Plan could be found sound. As in the transformation of the Meadow Vale site from 'undeliverable' in 2011 to a potential site in 2014, these 'modifications' represent a major shift in policy in the City Plan – and will require a major 'culture shift' in attitudes among the city's elected councillors.

The proposed changes to the City Plan were eventually agreed by City councillors at the Policy and Resources Committee on 16 October 2014. The changes proposed to increase the housing target for the city and open up the potential for limited housing development on a small part of the urban fringe to help address local housing needs.

Concluding thoughts

The case of Brighton and Hove outlined here clearly reflects concerns noted in the Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners post-NPPF insight document *Positive Preparations: A Review of Housing Targets and Local Plans*, published in March 2014.[18] This document suggests that progress on finding submitted plans sound appears to have slowed, with evidence and upward pressure on housing targets being the key factor and plans stalling due to the policy requirement to meet objectively assessed housing needs (OANs).

It found that between the introduction of the NPPF in March 2012 and the time of the study, 109 plans had been examined or submitted for examination outside London. Of these, just 40 (37%) had been found sound, and a quarter of those were subject to immediate or early review. In most cases the focus of the early review was a check that they met objectively assessed needs for housing. Moreover, in the two years since the NPPF came into force, 15 councils had withdrawn their Local Plans, with the main reason for almost three-quarters (73%) of these relating to housing provision. Of the remaining 54 ongoing Local Plans, almost half (48%) had experienced delays and required further modifications – as with Brighton and Hove. Of the 26 Local Plans that required modifications, 18 (69%) specifically required more evidence of objectively assessed housing need.

The report found that one-third of local planning authorities had to increase their submitted housing target in order to be found sound. In Brighton, although the Greater Brighton City Deal could deliver the enabling of sites to provide up to 2,000 new homes over the medium term, the lack of sites is proving a serious obstacle to meeting housing need. This in itself is a serious problem, as Bromsgrove District Council in Worcestershire found when its Local Plan hearing was put on hold after the Inspector concluded that it could not proceed until further work on the evidence base for its housing numbers was complete.[19] The Inspector had previously warned Bromsgrove over the Local Plan evidence base and has now disagreed with the methodology used to determine the housing requirement.

Councillors in Brighton and Hove did not initially understand that the benefit of having a quickly adopted City Plan was that it would carry full weight in decision-making. Applications for housing development would be assessed against the adopted City Plan housing target (13,225) rather than the full objectively assessed housing need figure of 24,000 homes (the top end of the range). This should have ensured that the city's aspirations for key sites/strategic allocations could be realised. Much-needed employment sites and privately owned green spaces within the urban area could then be better protected from inappropriate development.

An adopted City Plan and a published Urban Fringe Assessment Study with 31 hectares in the urban fringe found suitable for development (7.5% of the 400 reviewed) can be used to resist speculative development proposals on the 92.5% of the urban fringe that was found not to have housing potential.

Cities need strong political leadership that can deliver housing where it is possible and needed. Brighton and Hove's City Plan modifications document[20] notes (with reference to para. 3.155 in the City Plan) that 'Within the urban fringe, there will be some opportunities for development to help meet citywide needs. The appropriate nature and form of any such development will need to reflect the need to retain the setting of the city in its downland landscape.' This is a compromise designed to appease the Nimby lobby on housing development in the urban fringe. What follows in the consultation document under point PM064 is a Council statement indicating that policy will promote and support the careful use and management of land within the urban fringe to achieve objectives that do not include housebuilding, with emphasis on maximising housing opportunities that meet local housing needs only, rather than strategic need across the whole city.

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urban regeneration the chinese way

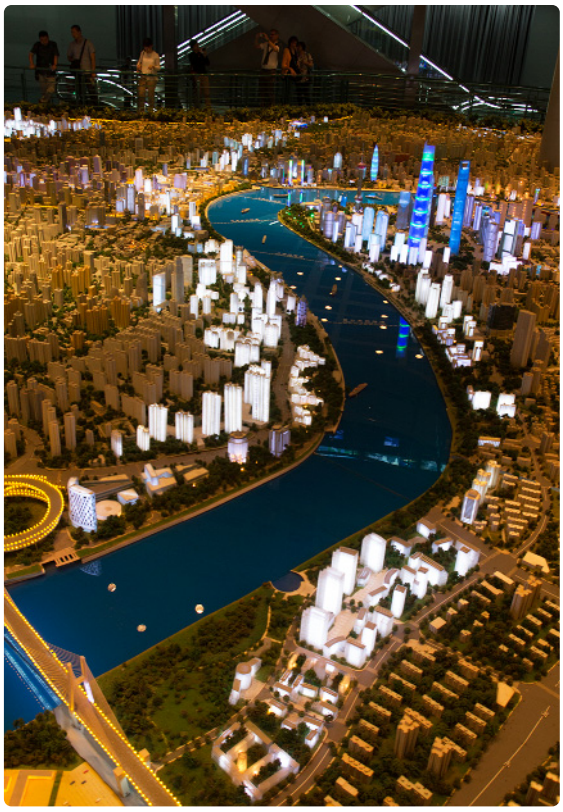
Martin Stott looks at some examples of approaches to urban regeneration in China

It is probably fair to say that most British people's perception of the Chinese economic miracle involves bullet trains, dozens of high-rise apartments and skyscraper office blocks, motorway flyovers, and prestige architectural projects ranging from new airports to facilities for the Beijing Olympics. As indeed it does – and seeing it all in person is a quite staggering experience. The Chinese people are rightly proud of it.

Planning is a much revered profession in China. What other country has prestigious urban planning exhibition centres similar to those found in Beijing and Shanghai located right on the equivalents of Trafalgar Square? The permanent display in Shanghai includes significant acknowledgement of the British contribution to planning over the decades, especially that of the Garden Cities and the New Towns.

What is less well known is China's less glamorous but equally fascinating approaches to urban regeneration. This article explores two approaches: one, housing-based regeneration in Beijing; and the other, cultural- and retail-based examples in Shanghai.

'Hutongs' are the traditional residential neighbourhoods in Chinese cities. The term means 'lane' or 'street', and until around 35 years ago a substantial proportion of ordinary Chinese people who lived in cities lived in a hutong. However, as the population of every city has grown massively through migration and population growth, practically all the new residents have been accommodated in high-rise developments; and while many cities have expanded enormously into surrounding rural areas, the central and therefore most accessible and desirable areas have been extensively redeveloped. Many of the hutongs have been swept away, characterised as areas with poor-quality housing and poor facilities (including lack of basic water and sanitation systems), and inefficient in their use of space.



Photos: Martin Stott

Above

City model at the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre

Despite this, some the residents have resisted this trend, as the alternative offered has often been a flat in a high-rise block in a distant suburb away

from friends, family and familiar neighbourhoods. Combined with a recognition on the part of the Communist Party of the value of historical and cultural traditions – of which they now see themselves as the modern-day expression, in a reclamation of nationalism rather than its rejection under the communism of the Mao era – there has recently been a marked shift towards the preservation and renovation of traditional neighbourhoods and historic buildings.

At the time of the 1949 Revolution there were about 25,000 hutongs in Beijing. Only about 800 remain in 25 'preserved areas', with about 100,000 houses in all accommodating about 15% of Beijing's population. Having spent several days walking the hutongs and being the guest of some local residents, it is easy to see why the hutongs are both appreciated and despised.

They are mainly located in what are becoming the more desirable parts of Beijing – in the Qianmen area of the city just south of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City (and very close to the Museum of Urban Planning which overlooks Tiananmen Square); and in the north of the city centre around the Shicha Lakes and their associated parks, an area which includes the newly-trendy Nanluoguxang district, which has become a fashionable residential choice for high-ranking cadres and successful entrepreneurs. The Beijing end of the Grand Canal runs through this area, and a number of new luxury housing estates have been built here in the 'siheyuan' or courtyard-style, modelled on hutongs. These are very popular with foreigners too.

However, traditional hutongs remain crowded, cramped and poorly maintained, and have poor standards of plumbing and sanitation. One of the most striking aspects of walking around a hutong area is the density of public toilet provision, because practically no houses have their own. In addition to the difficulty with providing proper plumbing, the houses are generally poorly constructed and very cold (and therefore energy-hungry) in winter, and, being only single storey, are an inefficient use of land in comparison with the high-rise blocks nearby.

In this context it is hardly surprising that traditional hutongs are under threat. But their historic significance is beginning to be understood, and their attraction as an alternative to high-rise living and as a way of retaining the historic cityscape, at least in parts of the central core of Beijing, is being appreciated. Throughout the Dashilan 'preserved area', about 15 minutes' walk

Above

Redevelopment hutong-style on the Grand Canal, Beijing

Box 1
Mr Wu and Mrs Wang's home

Above

Above left: Mrs Wang standing outside her hutong house. Above right: Inside Mrs Wang's kitchen

Mr Mu and Mrs Wang live in a 'siheyuan' or courtyard house in the Dashilan area south of Beijing city centre. There are 50,000 people living in this 'preserved area' in over 100 hutongs (lanes). The area has a Muslim tradition. Mr Mu and Mrs Wang's house was built around 1900 and was owned by an antiques dealer. It was nationalised by the Communist Government in 1949 and assigned to the Post Office for use by their employees. Mr Mu's father, a Post Office employee, was allotted it, and Mr Mu has lived there since childhood. The family has lived there since 1958, with two other families.

Both Mr Mu and Mrs Wang are now retired, Mr Mu having been a steel worker and Mrs Wang having worked in the railway station. The house is rented from the Government at a rent of 80 yuan (£8) per calendar month (a cup of coffee at a city centre Starbucks costs 40 yuan).

Built round a courtyard, their part of the house has a living room, a second living room or bedroom, a bedroom, a small kitchen, and a small bathroom. Although the structure is broadly similar to when they first moved in, it has been upgraded. Heating is now provided by electric heaters, which were installed to replace coal fires and so reduce city air pollution. Two-thirds of their heating costs are covered by the Government, coal having been much cheaper than electricity. Water and sewerage systems were installed some years ago, and the bathroom was created out of part of the kitchen. Cooking is on bottled gas, and there are electric fans in each room.

Furniture is limited – a sofa, chairs, a grandfather clock, and a TV in the living room. None of the rooms has direct sunlight: all face onto a corridor which runs the length of the courtyard and is used to access all the rooms. Mr Mu and Mrs Wang keep a dog and turtles in the courtyard, along with plants, and there is a place to hang out washing.

from Tiananmen Square, there was extensive evidence of renovation work, with the whole side of a hutong block being renovated at once in several parts of the area. Local people remark on the neighbourliness of hutongs, and Mr Mu and Mrs Wang, whose home I visited (see Box 1), were particularly appreciative of having lived in the house for so long, with the same friends and neighbours

Above

Hutong renovation within the Dashilan area of Beijing

around them and local markets just a couple of minutes from their door.

While Beijing is the political and administrative capital of China, Shanghai is its commercial and financial hub. This is reflected in its architecture, including that of the completely new financial district, Pudong, which in 1990 was little more than some warehouses set among paddy fields; and that of the world-famous Bund, constructed at the start of the last century but which has undergone major renovation after decades of neglect and is now an important tourist destination.

Less high profile but reflecting the diverse architectural heritage of the city have been the arts-, heritage- and retail-led regeneration projects in the historic French Concession area to the west of the Bund, such as Tianzifang and Xintiandi. Tianzifang has, to a Westerner, a more distinctively 'artsy' feel, with its mix of design studios, start-up boutiques, wi-fi cafés and some original residents. Its three main north-south lanes are intersected by east-west alleyways, giving an authentic 'back streets' feel to exploring the area. Anchor arts venues are the Deke Erh Arts Centre and the Beaugeste Gallery, which was hosting an exhibition of work by Charles de Gaulle's grandson Gregoire, entitled 'A Summer in Peking, 1978', and which provided a graphic reminder of just how much things have changed.

Significantly closer to the city centre and the world of shopping malls and corporate HQs, Xintiandi is more interesting from a planning perspective, because its location makes it a more contested space. A fairly ordinary couple of blocks of reasonably good-quality, Western-influenced, Chinese middle-class housing – 'shikumen'(literally 'stone gate') – were developed in the early 20th century in what would have been seen as a desirable part of the French Concession for bourgeois Chinese people to live in. It, too, had been neglected for decades. In 1996 proposals were brought forward for wholesale demolition and redevelopment.

However, this area had one unique feature. One of the shikumen was where the Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921 and so has major importance in the history of the nation. The realisation that historic and cultural assets had an economic value was something of a 'eureka' moment for the Chinese planning authorities. The whole area has subsequently been redeveloped, using the Museum of the National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party as the anchor tenant, by Honk Kong-based property development company Shui On Land and American architect Benjamin T Wood. Such has been its success that they have applied the same formula to a number of cities in

Above

The renovated Xintiandi quarter, Shanghai

China, including Wuhan and Chongqing, and the area has become a regular place of pilgrimage for Chinese planners seeking to understand the dynamics of successful urban regeneration – the 'Xintiandi effect', as it is known locally.

In reality, almost all of the area has been demolished and rebuilt, rather than renovated, involving the removal of several thousand residents and retaining only the pattern of the lanes and the frontages of the shikumen with their distinctive doorways. The original houses would have been quite unsuitable for the new uses – upmarket restaurants, international coffee chains, boutique clothes shops, and the like. Today, the area is far too valuable to be retained for residential use.

Apart from the Communist Party museum, just one shikumen has been retained as the Shikumen Open House Museum, which gives a good idea of early 20th century Chinese gentility. On the top floor is an exhibition of the history and process of the regeneration project, which admits that much of it is new. One rather revealing note in the exhibition reads 'Foreigners find it Chinese and Chinese find it foreign.' The Xintiandi clientele reflected this: a high proportion of foreigners, very much in their 'comfort zone', with plenty of well-off Chinese people in a place to 'be seen' in. The Communist Party museum itself studiously faces the other way onto the main street, with no access from the tree-lined lanes with their outdoor cafés.

While the bulldozer remains king in Chinese cities, there is no doubt that urban regeneration is being taken more seriously as an option. It reflects the increasing confidence that the Chinese Government feels about its nation's past and an increased desire to reclaim it – as well as an increasing willingness by foreign investors, led by companies such as Shui On Land, with its Chinese links, to invest in such projects. In the Five Year Plan adopted in 2011 the Communist Party Central Committee announced that culture is 'the spirit and soul of the nation' and would become a 'pillar industry', representing 5% of GDP. The kinds of preservation and regeneration projects described here are very much in that spirit.

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china, exports and opportunities for UK cities

Drawing on the findings of recent research, Matthew Cocks looks at the extent to which urban areas in the UK are encouraging and supporting local business exports to China

In the April 2014 edition of *Town & Country Planning* Professor Alan Harding highlighted the continuing and increasing uneven economic geography of the UK, noting that 'as explicit urban policy has faded away under the pressure of austerity, an implicit growth strategy centred upon London and fed by all manner of nominally 'place-blind' decision-making has increasingly imbalanced rather than rebalanced the UK's economic geography'.[1] When I began lecturing at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in Suzhou, China in the autumn of 2012 this situation was playing out across the UK. In England, the new Coalition Government had abolished Regional Development Agencies and severely cut available finance for any sort of regional or spatial policy related to economic development. In addition, local authority funding had also been targeted, with the highest cuts often occurring in the poorest parts of the country.

The situation in the UK seemed a stark contrast to that I encountered on moving to China. The Chinese economy was continuing to boom, although at a slower rate than its peak of 14% in 2008, and urban development was occurring around me on a colossal scale. This phenomenon was also intertwined with an unprecedented rate of growth of the middle classes. In 2000, 4% of the Chinese population could be categorised as middle class, according to McKinsey's definition as those earning approximately £6,000-£23,400 per year. By 2012, 68% of the population came under this category, with an expected increase to 76% by 2022.[2]

In Suzhou, a medium-sized Chinese city of over 10 million people, German cars paraded the streets, and increasing numbers of shiny, indoor shopping centres, containing many of the familiar chain stores observable across the West, were springing up across the city. There was clearly anticipation that local people had money which they were ready and willing to spend.

But it wasn't until I unexpectedly came across a branch of Costa Coffee in a Suzhou side street that the opportunity for UK businesses here fully occurred to me (more recently, Suzhou opened its first Marks and Spencer store on the main retail thoroughfare). I began to wonder how much real potential there was for UK firms in this huge emerging market.

As a researcher in the field of urban and regional policy, I also began to consider whether the various agencies involved in economic development in the UK's regions had glimpsed what potential there was and were acting upon it. Around this time, I came across an article in the academic journal *Local Economy* written by two economic development practitioners in Greater Manchester. They titled their piece 'The big China sell: UK cities need to hitch our supply to their demand to turn genteel decline into spurred growth',[3] and in it they suggested:

> *'China is a long, hard slog; not for the fainthearted... It is, though, the biggest economic prize on the planet and the cities, firms and countries that crack the world's fastest growing economy will be the success stories of tomorrow, as they hitch their wagons to what is strongly likely to be the globe's fastest growing major economy for a good long time, in contrast to the western economies with their gloomy forecasts of anaemic growth, prolonged stagnation and recession. The investment needed is high and risky, but the returns of success are large and long-lasting.'*

Photos: Matthew Cooks

Left

The new Marks and Spencer store, located at the eastern end of Suzhou's main shopping street

With the aid of some research funds provided by Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, I sought to investigate the situation further. I selected 46 UK urban areas outside of the South East of England, devised a questionnaire, and sent it to 130 organisations involved in economic development and business support, asking two basic questions:

- to what extent were they encouraging or facilitating businesses in their area to export goods or services to China; and
- did they have a specific strategy for doing so?

I then performed a content review of the strategies of all the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) outside of the South East which were available online at the time, searching for five key terms: 'China', 'emerging markets', 'BRIC', 'exports', and 'inward investment'. From my initial findings, I then selected a number of case study urban areas across the UK which seemed to be taking particularly significant approaches with regard to China and investigated these in further detail through documentary analysis and interviews with key personnel. Finally, I undertook a number of in-depth interviews with other relevant practitioners, including the China Advisor to the British Chamber of Commerce, and China-Britain Business Council (CBBC) regional heads in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber in the UK, and in Shanghai and Beijing in China.

Through this process I found a positive story in terms of both the opportunities for UK business and the role that local authorities and other economic development agencies can play. The Director of the joint CBBC and British Chamber of Commerce in China office in Beijing told me:

'There's certainly still a huge opportunity for British business in China... and the change that China is going through is creating opportunities for areas where the UK has specific strengths... The local government approached us recently in Beijing and asked us if we would put on a festival of British brands, to promote British brands to Chinese consumers, which they then contributed to significantly'.

In his foreword to a recent CBBC report entitled *Doing Business with Chinese Consumers: A Guide for UK Businesses*, the CBBC's Chief Executive, Steven Phillips, points out that 'The sheer number of Chinese tourists visiting the UK to shop and to experience our culture surely signals that the time is right not just to wait for the buyers to come to us, but to take more of our wares to them.'[4] Additionally, a 2009 survey by Anholt-GfK Nation Brands of 1,000 online Chinese respondents found that UK exports are highly rated by the Chinese and that they are confident about buying products made in the UK.[5]

The CBBC is also currently promoting the increasing opportunities in China's regional cities. In a 2011 report[6] the CBBC noted:

'The focus for many British companies in China continues to be in a small number of large and familiar cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen. However, business conditions in these cities are evolving quickly. In particular, numerous British companies are experiencing mature and increasingly saturated markets in these locations, with only niche opportunities for development, and growing competitive pressures from other foreign firms and increasingly sophisticated Chinese companies.'

The report shortlists 35 cities, based upon a range of factors, which may be particularly suitable locations for British businesses to concentrate their efforts. The Chinese Government's recent National New-Type Urbanisation Plan (2014-2020)[7] bolsters this view by putting forward a strategic focus on growing the country's small and medium-sized cities, and limiting development in its coastal mega-cities, which have been prime locations for urbanisation since China's 'opening up' in the late 1970s.

However, the findings of this study indicated a mixed picture in terms of how the UK's regional governance agencies are presently engaging with China. On the one hand, key agencies across the country are certainly supporting business. Of the 41 respondents to the questionnaire, 80% said that they were presently involved in encouraging or facilitating businesses in their area to export goods or services to China. But only 36% stated that they had a specific strategy for doing so. Indeed, out of this 36%, I was only able to identify one location which could point to a specific document setting out a strategy – Greater Manchester (the strategy, entitled *A Report on Growing East*, was published in July 2012). Nevertheless, the responses identified a number of specific approaches being taken.

'The study indicated a mixed picture in terms of how the UK's regional governance agencies are presently engaging with China. On the one hand, key agencies across the country are certainly supporting business... But only 36% stated that they had a specific strategy for doing so'

First, a number of organisations reported being involved with or organising trade delegations, and many UK cities also reported hosting Chinese visitors. Sometimes these were sector-specific. Shropshire Council reported having taken a recent 'fact finding' tour to parts of China and then having hosted a reciprocal visit from a Chinese delegation in support of development opportunities for local food and drink companies. Promoting/raising awareness of opportunities in China was also undertaken in a number of ways among respondents, and often in partnership with other agencies. Norfolk Chamber of Commerce reported sending updates which they receive from the CBBC to local businesses via Twitter.

A number of respondents reported working more substantially with other relevant agencies (particularly UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and the CBBC). For example, through its twinning relationship with Xiamen (Fujian Province) Cardiff City Council reported utilising the support of UKTI and the Welsh Government to assist companies looking to export and take part in trade missions. Coventry City Council employed a member of the CBBC during a recent visit to Jinan (Shandong Province) to assist with introductions and translation. A number of organisations also noted that they pass any enquiries from local businesses about exporting to China directly to UKTI or the CBBC.

A common strategy across the country is twinning (or other similar relationships) with Chinese cities. However, the nature, purpose and maturity of these relationships vary. For example, Liverpool has been twinned with Shanghai for over a decade, and the relationship has involved a number of initiatives (including Liverpool's involvement in the 2010 Shanghai Expo), whereas Somerset County Council reported being in the early stages of developing relationships with two Chinese cities. Nevertheless, one common thread is that more local authorities are now looking to their civic relationships for economic development purposes. In April of this year Sheffield City Council produced an International Trade and Export Strategy,[8] which states that:

> *'Very few of our current sister city agreements act as an economic lever to enable our businesses to gain access to important overseas markets... A new strategy, therefore, is required to refocus and activate proactive trade links... Our future international sister city agreements need to act as an economic lever for our business and growth sectors.'*

The city's established twinning relationship with Chengdu (Sichuan Province) has included economic-related interactions, and will be an important link in taking the strategy forward.

A number of urban areas reported having working groups or networking events specifically relating to economic linkages with China. Again, these varied in terms of their scope and maturity. In Swindon there is a small working group of businesses with an interest and/or specialism in working with China. Similarly, Leeds City Council reported having a China Working Group, bringing together organisations throughout the city to look at opportunities for trade and investment.

In terms of specific business support, other than UKTI and the CBBC, it tended to be Chambers of Commerce who reported providing such services.

Left

Costa Coffee in Central Suzhou

For example, Hampshire Chamber of Commerce has an International Trade Department which provides an export documentation service and guidance/advice for those looking to do business in China. This support is available to Chamber members and non-members.

With regard to LEPs, the documentary analysis indicated that while exports are certainly a key consideration, China, and indeed the other emerging markets, do not appear to be a strategic focus. Across the 36 documents included in the study, the word 'exports' appeared 201 times, compared with 157 mentions of the term 'inward investment'. However, 'China' was mentioned just 14 times (of these, six were found in the New Anglia LEP's *Towards a Growth Plan*), 'BRIC' eight times, and 'emerging markets' appeared in just three places.

Nevertheless, overall the research indicated that China is on the economic development radar of urban areas across the UK's regions. But on the whole strategic efforts are in their early stages. While many local authorities have shared formal relationships with Chinese cities over many years, generally authorities have only recently sought to capitalise upon these linkages for trade and investment purposes. However, a general observation is that inward investment still remains the priority of these efforts, with export-related benefits being a secondary consideration. Indeed, China is increasingly playing a significant investment role across the UK's regions. The purchase MG Rover in Birmingham by the Shanghai Automotive Industry Company in 2010 and the Chinese involvement in Peel's Liverpool/Wirral Waters development in Merseyside provide high-profile examples of such trends.

A number of potential economic development and planning policy implications emerged from the study – including, perhaps most importantly, that there is certainly an opportunity in China for UK business, and that local authorities and other related agencies can play a significant role in facilitating trade relationships, particularly given the strong power and influence exercised by Chinese government agencies. As discussed above, the research found a number of notable approaches taking place across the UK, and these can serve as inspiration and pointers for other areas wishing to take a more active role in encouraging their businesses to look to China. There is also substantial support available for both business and economic development agencies through organisations such as UKTI and the CBBC, and current national government policy also supports export promotion.

A further point is that local business involvement can be crucial. Liverpool's presence at the Shanghai Expo in 2010 involved substantial local business engagement and funding.[9] Indeed, the Director of the CBBC in Beijing felt that the process 'needs to be business led... rather than government led. But where there's demand for business to create those channels, then I think [civic relationships] can certainly make a difference'.

However, a number of points of caution that also emerged from the study are worth considering.

First, Chinese municipalities are interested in substance, and the economic-related urban relationships which are likely to be the most long-lasting and beneficial are those which deliver on their promises. Secondly, strategic complementarity is important, and careful research into the potential

'It is worth remembering the significant differences in scale between UK cities and regions and their Chinese equivalents... Regional or even larger-scale collaborations are certainly worth considering as a strategic optimum'

of particular Chinese locations is advisable – as exemplified by the approach taken in the Greater Manchester strategy. Thirdly, in the coming years some of the most lucrative opportunities are likely to be in China's small and medium-sized cities, which form the focus of the country's future urbanisation strategy. At this stage, such cities are often less westernised, and can feature more parochial mindsets and practices. While such places may offer the greatest opportunity for future engagement with China, at present they are also perhaps the most risky.

Finally, it is worth remembering the significant differences in scale between UK cities and regions and their Chinese equivalents. Jiangsu Province, my present location, has a population of just under 80 million people – roughly the same as Germany, the most populated country in Europe. Many medium-sized cities in China have more residents than Greater London. Reflection on the UK scale at which Chinese linkages are sought is also potentially important. Regional or even larger-scale collaborations (reminiscent of the Northern Way initiative) are certainly worth considering as a strategic optimum.

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Notes

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2015 could be an important year for moves towards localism, with support being drawn from all the major parties – but there are still things that could go wrong, says David Boyle

why we need to abolish DCLG and DWP

My last column was written in the full flush of excitement about the current debate on devolution, and it certainly does look as though 2015 is set to be an important year when it comes to the long-awaited breakthrough in UK localism. Other European nations (Norway, France, for example) grasped the nettle years if not decades ago. Still others (Germany) had localism thrust upon them two generations ago. The UK has struggled on with dysfunctional, centralised institutions for all this time – and has had a particularly difficult time since the ultra-centralising legacy of the Thatcher Governments in the mid-1980s.

Now, everyone from Nigel Farage to George Galloway, and a number of pretty sensible people between them, all seem to agree. When all five major UK political parties – seven if you include the nationalists – agree that change must happen, what could possibly go wrong? Well, a lot; and here are three things that could.

First, the motivations of all the seven different parties are so different that nothing is certain. In particular, the cities seem to believe – London especially – that they are well on the way to controlling all their own income tax – the stuff paid by their own residents.

This is theoretically possible, but while the UK still has wholly dysfunctional property taxes based on 1991 valuations to fund local government it really will not work. The property tax system would see all the resources go to London and the South East, and would require some system of centralised redistribution. This seems to be the most likely stumbling block. Local economic power is not going to be really effective unless the local government funding system is pretty seriously reformed, and that seems unlikely. In the meantime, there is ample reason to believe that the Labour Party – one of the most conservative institutions on earth – will turn against the idea of localising power.

The second reason for some caution is that the cities seem to have very little idea, in detail, of why they want to take on more power and responsibility, beyond that fact that they should. They will take on responsibility for those elements which the centre believes are all that local economics consists of – skills (not actually economics, but education policy) and building infrastructure (not actually economics, but land use policy) – and will not question too much whether there might not be other important roles that they might play.

It is bizarre that the devolution debate has been as free of economic ambition as it has been. Jim O'Neill's City Growth Commission won the argument by suggesting that the UK was missing out on £79 billion of local economic growth over 15 years, so it is clear that something different could happen – if only the cities knew exactly what.

But there is a third area of ambiguity which could still stymie serious devolution – and that is the vexed question of the continuing role for the centre.

'There is a third area of ambiguity which could still stymie serious devolution – and that is the vexed question of the continuing role for the centre. If Whitehall departments are going to devolve power it means they will have to contemplate giving up some of it themselves. What will they do instead?

If Whitehall departments are going to devolve power it means they will have to contemplate giving up some of it themselves. What will they do instead? And, even more worrying, what will the national politicians do – held responsible for what happens in Sheffield but apparently without any levers to do anything about it?

The practical answer, for the time being, is to abolish the departments of state that are rendered most redundant by the devolution of power. Two of them seem to me to cry out for abolition: the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

DCLG is already something of a white elephant, struggling to make itself heard by feeding stories about bin collections to the *Daily Mail*. There is some national co-ordination required for re-distributing local government finance, but that should probably go to the Treasury. There is also some residual policy-making linked to planning policy, which should probably go to the the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) or the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Otherwise, I can't see that it would be very much missed.

DWP is more difficult. Pensions policy will need to stay in Whitehall, perhaps at BIS, which has some chance of reconnecting what we pay into our pensions with sensible places where the money might be invested. Otherwise, the administration of benefits would be more fruitfully and imaginatively done locally. This is probably true whichever way the Universal Credit system emerges. If the pilots fail, as seems likely, then they must be devolved as soon as possible. If they succeed, then it still makes sense for them to be administered locally.

The other requirement in Whitehall is that the Treasury needs to be structured to reflect the emergence of effective and active economic regeneration managed at local level. It needs a local economics unit which can support the cities, bash through barriers on their behalf, and act as the learning centre and advocate for local economics at the heart of Whitehall.

These are fundamental changes at the centre. But my fear is that they are a bare minimum to make localism work. The sacrifice of a few departments of state, as Samuel Johnson might have said, concentrates the mind wonderfully.

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Martin Stott on the influence of William Morris' vision for the future

anarchy and beauty

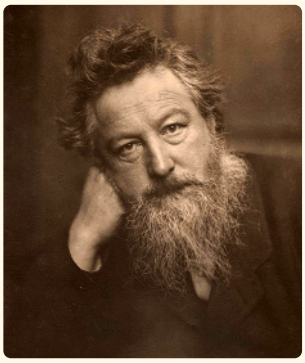
William Morris is someone that many people in the planning, architecture and design worlds have found inspirational. However, rather than looking at the man himself, Fiona MacCarthy's exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), which runs until 11 January 2015, takes a look at Morris' legacy. NPG Director Sandy Nairne introduces the exhibition by saying that it differs from others:

> *'by following the spirit of Morris and revealing its importance in a world needing to be aware of finite natural resources, continuing inequalities of wealth, over reliance on Western financial systems and with some desire to develop clearer principles for wellbeing at work and for the better design and production of objects in a very wasteful consumer society.'*

The exhibition and accompanying book don't really dwell on these contemporary concerns because it only charts his legacy up to a rather arbitrary 1960. But that doesn't mean that it isn't fascinating in what it does focus on. And much of this is of great interest to readers of *Town & Country Planning*.

The exhibition title – 'Anarchy and Beauty: William Morris and his Legacy, 1860-1960' – is misleading because it is very debatable that Morris was, in fact, an anarchist. Indeed, he left the Socialist League and ceased both funding and editing its journal, *Commonweal*, precisely because it was taken over by anarchists. But he was a free thinker and friendly with a number of anarchist activists of his day, including Peter Kropotkin, and he certainly influenced people who might have considered themselves to be anarchists of a sort, such as Edward Carpenter. And it is the connections between figures such as Carpenter and Morris and their influence down the years that makes the exhibition so rich.

Carpenter's sandals are on display. In his day he was known as 'the saint in sandals', and such was his enthusiasm for these alternatives to the 'leather



Left

William Morris, by Frederick Hollyer, 1887

coffins' in which most people's feet were normally encased that he set up his own cottage industry making them in Millthorpe, near Sheffield, where he lived. What I didn't know was that this sandal-making enterprise eventually moved to Letchworth. Garden Cities are a major theme of the exhibition. 'How we live and how we might live' was a constant heart-felt theme of Morris' writing about the hoped-for improvement in the physical conditions of human life. In a letter to his friend Louisa Baldwin in 1874, Morris pre-figured the vision of the Garden Cities movement, saying:

'But look, suppose people lived in little communities among gardens and green fields, so that you could be in the country in five minutes' walk, and had few wants, almost no furniture for instance and no servants, and studied the (difficult) arts of enjoying life and finding out what they really wanted: then I think one might hope civilisation had really begun.'

The exhibition canters through the connections spiritual, emotional and intellectual that these ideas generated in the likes of Ebenezer Howard, Octavia Hill and Patrick Geddes. Geddes, described as 'polymath and gardener, social evolutionist and city planner' is given something of a rehabilitation by MacCarthy, and one contemporary who compares him to Morris is quoted approvingly. Morris himself developed his own specific viewpoint on town and country planning in a lecture he gave near the end of his life in Manchester:

'For this is what I want done in this matter of town and country: I want neither the towns to be appendages of the country, nor the country of the town; I want the town to be impregnated with the beauty of the country, and the country with the intelligence and vivid life of the town. I want every homestead to be clean, orderly, and tidy; a lovely house to be surrounded by acres and acres of garden. On the other hand, I want the town to be clean, orderly, and tidy; in short, a garden with a beautiful house in it.'

It could be the introduction to the prospectus for Letchworth. Howard and Letchworth are well covered, including some remarkable footage of the funeral of Ebenezer Howard in Letchworth in 1928, with crowds of the town's residents turning out to pay their last respects. The 'joyous union' of town and country that the Garden Cities represented were also predicated on socially egalitarian principles – anti-snobbery, anti-luxury. Hence those sandals. Matters of design were important. When the Cheap Cottages Exhibition was held at Letchworth in 1905 it was Heal & Son who supplied the furniture for the show houses, demonstrating how 'sound housing' could be provided on a budget of £150 per dwelling and prompting Bernard Shaw's quip about staining the simple life green and selling it to cottagers for 36 guineas.

If Garden Cities are a major part of the Morrisian legacy, design is undoubtedly another. The inter-war artistic communities of Eric Gill, Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew sought to bring these ideas together in practice, albeit at a small scale and with variable success, but MacCarthy gives real prominence to the designers and architects involved in the post-war Festival of Britain. Herbert Morrison, or 'Lord Festival' as he became known, had grown up with Morris' writings as some of his guiding political lights, even joining Morris' old party the Social Democratic Federation in his youth and working as a market gardener in Letchworth while a conscientious objector in the First World War.

The Festival was both a reassertion of hope after the Second World War (Morrison described the site when it was selected in 1948 as 'nothing but mud and rotting wharves and warehouses, misery and poverty and railway lines') and a joyful expression of the possibilities of a more egalitarian, democratic and beautiful future which – encapsulated in the work of David Mellor, Robert Welch, Terence Conran and others who were to become household names in the 1950 and 1960s – was available to all.

There is much here for us to enjoy and reflect on, not least the continuing influence of Morris post-1960, which is exemplified in the range of contemporary artists, designers and film-makers who contribute introductory statements to the exhibition. It provides a hopefulness and a sense that the vision that Morris had is by no means lost.

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Olivier Sykes on the absence of 'informed' and professional voices from the debate on EU issues in the UK

anti-politics, professionals and a bear called paddington

The success of populist right-wing parties in a number of European countries continues to be one of the defining political trends of the day. In May 2014 the Front National won ten *mairies* (town halls) in the French local elections. Closer to home UKIP emerged as the party winning the most seats in the European elections, increasing its share of the vote by 11%, and since then has acquired its first two elected MPs.

Mainstream parties struggle to respond to the seemingly unstoppable increase in support for such parties, driven by what some commentators have described as a sentiment of 'anti-politics'.[1] The rise of Nigel Farage's 'reactionary cultural movement',[2] with its anti-EU and anti-immigration rhetoric, is pulling political discourse ever rightwards 'towards its own favoured terrain'[2] and has frightened David Cameron into making a gamble with Britain's future in the EU in the hope of placating hard-line Eurosceptics in his own party and stemming a flow of Tory votes in the direction of UKIP.

UKIP seems to have succeeded in widening its appeal from its initial support base of 'traditional' nationalist, C/conservative and Eurosceptic voters to attract a wider range of supporters, including some who previously voted for Labour. Despite a series of absurdities and gaffes – including recently mistaking Westminster Cathedral for a mosque in a rebuke for 'liberal bias' directed at the BBC,[3] or Nigel Farage bizarrely blaming his late arrival at a meeting in Wales on an M4 motorway which has become less 'navigable' in a country with 'open-door' immigration[4] – nothing seems to stall the rise of a party which even its (to use Keynes' phrase) 'academic scribbler' founder Alan Sked now describes as a 'Frankenstein's monster'.[5]

Politicians from the other parties (except, perhaps, the Liberal Democrats) appear reluctant to 'call out' UKIP and expose the potential implications of its policies and positions for British values and prosperity. Sustained and effective media scrutiny also seems limited.

Particularly striking is the contrast with the way in which significant sections of the media keenly emphasised that the 'Yes' campaign in the recent Scottish independence referendum apparently incorporated some 'nasty' nationalist elements.[6] UKIP and its members can, it seems, say all kinds of unsubstantiated things about immigrants, the EU and a host of other issues without facing a similar level of scrutiny. Nigel Farage has even enjoyed having his avuncular 'man of the people' image bolstered by being invited for a pint with a journalist from Britain's leading liberal newspaper.[7] The most coherent critique of 'Farageism' (at least on an implicit level) has probably been provided by a recent film about an illegal immigrant from the Ursidae family (*Tremarctos ornatus* one assumes), which lavishly celebrates Britain's historic tolerance and diversity and eulogises the welcoming and multicultural nature of its globalised capital city.[8]

Meanwhile, the debate (to use a perhaps rather flattering term) surrounding EU issues in the UK is driven by desperate politicians keen to appeal to the section of the electorate who seem angriest with the current 'state of the world'.

Steve Richards, writing in the *Independent* following the election of Mark Reckless as UKIP MP for Rochester and Strood, notes how those in the 'Westminster bubble' who scrutinise polls and focus group results 'are so in touch with the level of discontent that they try too hard to please, appearing to accept the premise that both Europe and immigration are the source of all the UK's problems when they know this is not true'.[1] He goes on to rather bravely observe that 'For some of the angriest voters or non-voters there is no reciprocal arrangement. They do not try to please the politicians by reflecting on the dilemmas and challenges faced by flawed leaders. It spoils the fun of feeling angry and betrayed.'

As many planners know from experience, the true sum of a society's feelings on a given issue does not necessarily equate with the position of those who have the strongest and most polarised views. Similarly, although objections to particular developments might rapidly fill the in-trays of planning departments, those who support a development are less likely to write in during a consultation process. Letters to say 'well done' to

planners from those particularly satisfied with a development outcome are even rarer – a pleasant surprise rather than something to be expected.

The point here is not to bemoan that attempts to work in the public interest (as a politician, professional, or active citizen) may sometimes feel thankless, but to reflect on the wider point that the current conversation on Europe seems to missing a number of what might be deemed more dispassionate or 'informed' voices.

For example, the 'business view', which one might think may have some authority and legitimacy, notably on the economic issues associated with British membership of or exit from the EU, seems to have been rather absent of late. Although many businesses and business organisations are privately deeply concerned about the prospect of a British exit (Brexit[9]), they frequently choose to keep their counsel rather than speak out – perhaps understandably given the shrill timbre of the current public debate on the matter. This is significant given that arguments for and against EU membership currently (and in the event of an in-out referendum after the 2015 general election will undoubtedly) revolve a good deal around its economic benefits, or costs (UK contributions to the EU budget, for example).

With UK growth currently higher than the EU average and unemployment lower, the arguments of the 'go it alone' or 'better-off not together' camp might appear attractive to some voters. However, the wider and longer-term economic perspective arguably needs to be more fully discussed than it is being at present. Equally, the 'European project' has always been about more than the completion of the Single Market and economic growth for its own sake. From the outset the pursuit of economic prosperity through the creation of a large free-trade area was viewed as a guarantor of peace, partnership and stability in Europe. Economic enmeshment, international trade and the oversight of key industrial sectors such as coal and steel by a High Authority (later the European Commission) was seen as a way of making another major European war not only unthinkable but to all intents and purposes materially impossible.

In time, 'Europe' adopted other principles and goals and developed an interest in diverse policy sectors, many with more obvious links to the concerns of planning. Action within the collective framework of the EEC (subsequently the EC/EU) in fields such as environment, transport and regional development policy reflected this widening scope. This was welcomed by some as a way of improving standards in some areas (for example in relation to environmental protection), but has been a matter of concern to others who see European 'competence creep' as a fundamental threat to state sovereignty.

Regardless of one's view on the EU's commitment to its wider stated goals beyond the economic, it is clear that it *is* currently about more than just economics. That is not to say that economic issues are not a central concern of the EU and its actions, particularly at present as many European countries struggle to find a way back to stronger growth.[10] Yet there are other issues and values that pertain to EU membership, and one might legitimately ask which interest groups, or organisations, are effectively highlighting these in the current public debate in Britain.

'The EU is about more than just economics... there are other issues and values that pertain to EU membership, and one might legitimately ask which interest groups, or organisations, are effectively highlighting these in the current public debate in Britain'

As regards the original goals of peace and stability in Europe, one might look to the European Movement founded in 1948 under the Presidency of Duncan Sandys (later founder of the Civic Trust and an Honorary RTPI Member), with Winston Churchill as one of its Honorary Presidents. However, this is a rather small organisation which does not have anything like the resources that a political party like UKIP can draw on from its wealthy Eurosceptic supporters, such as the multi-millionaire Paul Sykes.

The views of other interest groups on the value, or constraints, of EU membership in diverse fields are also barely represented in mainstream debates. Numerous NGOs either have representation 'on the ground' close to EU institutions or seek to lobby from a distance to promote their agendas. However, they have yet to play any major role in the public debate on the EU in Britain.

Many professions, too, have an increasingly international outlook, reflecting the impacts and opportunities of Europeanisation and internationalisation for their fields of activity. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has had an office in Brussels since 1993,[11] and the RTPI has taken an active interest

in EU matters over recent decades and become involved in initiatives like the ESPON programme.[12] The TCPA has also participated in EU-funded projects and considers planning as an activity within its European and wider international context.

Even 'at home' the EU scale of governance/regulation has become part of the 'professional world' of many professionals, including planners. As well documented since the 1990s, EU legislation, policies and programmes in a number of areas have had effects on the work of planners; through influencing the procedures of planning and helping to define the parameters of action in related policy fields such as environmental protection and regeneration. Yet the professional 'take' on the EU is also largely absent from the current public debate. This could be seen as contingent upon on the extent to which the values that a given profession might be interested in fostering (for example environmental protection) are considered. Professionals might, for example, be well placed to offer a view on how these are furthered, or possibly hindered, by belonging to a supra-national structure like the EU.

The absence of professional/expert views from the EU debate is, however, perhaps predictable. Although professions are commonly expected to perform a wider public interest role in relation to the areas of knowledge and expertise they oversee, and frequently develop and advocate a 'position' on key issues,[13] they typically seek to avoid appearing to adopt an overtly political role – not least because, as Paul Davidoff noted in 1965, 'Determinations of what serves the public interest, in a society containing many diverse interest groups, are almost always of a highly contentious nature.'[14]

Whether a higher-profile intervention on the part of professions would contribute to more informed and dispassionate debate on different issues relating to EU membership is in any case a moot point. In recent decades public confidence in expert opinion has been shaken by high-profile scandals and policy failures, while the development of the internet and diverse social media has made large amounts of data, information, and views on any given topic available at the click of a button. As a result, many of us may feel we can become instant 'experts' on the social or political issues of the day, with our views being reinforced by exchanges with like-minded interlocutors in different internet and social media fora.

The mainstream media does often seek out expert opinion from relevant professionals or researchers when covering news stories (for example inviting the TCPA or RTPI to comment on issues such as housing). However, on the 'Europe' question it seems unlikely that the views of planners, or of their associations and professional bodies, will be much sought, even if they may have some interesting stories to tell about the 'everyday' impacts of EU legislation, policies and programmes on real people and places.

As already noted, one might also wonder whether professional groups and in particular individual professionals would be comfortable offering views on one of the most contentious political issues of the day, for fear of appearing to lack impartiality. The risk of being attacked for being part of an out-of-touch elite/expert/professional social group (in the same way as the 'political class' or 'Islington types' are currently favoured targets of the 'Farageists') is also a strong disincentive to speaking out.

Yet there are other ways in which a climate of anti-politics and rising 'right-wing radical populism'[15] might impact on professional life. The growth in the number of elected representatives from parties such as UKIP and the Front National means that individuals who subscribe to their doctrines are increasingly to be found in public office and in a position to exercise power and influence. This is significant, and may become more so, given that in their work planners in democratic states are ultimately accountable to elected representatives. They are, however, typically expected also to uphold the values of their profession and act according to their own bona fide professional opinions.

Indeed, the question of how professionals should act if an employer asks them to undertake tasks, or support positions, that are contrary to the code of conduct of their professional body or their own professional opinions is commonly considered as part of training/education on professionalism and ethics. Should the professional demonstrate loyalty to, or find an accommodation with, the wishes of their 'employer' (especially in a context where the professional is accountable to a democratically elected body such as a local council), even if these conflict with their professional code and possibly their individual professional opinions?

Clause 3 of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct, for example, states that 'In all their professional activities members shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, creed, religion, disability or age and shall seek to eliminate such discrimination by others and to promote equality of opportunity.'[16] The rhetoric, and many policy proposals from the new wave of European right-wing radical populist parties like UKIP, means it is not hard to envisage a situation in which upholding such standards and values where one of their representatives holds power might prove challenging. In France it is already reported that a number of council officers are leaving local authorities with a

Front National mayor, some feeling they cannot continue to work under such political leadership.[17]

In this connection it is interesting to reflect on the words of Richard Blyth, the current Head of Policy, Practice and Research at the RTPI, who has recently argued that professional accountability to political leadership should not be confused with 'subordination'.[18] The RTPI's Code of Conduct requires members to 'fearlessly and impartially exercise their independent professional judgement to the best of their skill and understanding' as well as to 'discharge their duty to their employers'. Balancing these professional duties and responsibilities can be challenging at any time, but may become even more so where professionals are accountable to a political leadership characterised by 'strong' or radical positions on certain issues.

Conclusion

The definition of the role, objectives and ethical standards of professions is subject to change and can be affected by politics and ideology. As the history of planning shows, and as many of the discipline's theorists have argued, planning is an intrinsically political as well as a technical activity. Planners have worked for all kinds of political masters at different times and in different places, not always for the progressive ends which the 'liberal' profession of planning (as currently defined in places like the UK and by most of the contemporary planning 'academy') may like to think of itself as serving. This reflects the fact that definitions of the 'public interest' which professions are constituted to altruistically serve are mutable, affected by changing values and contexts, and, as noted by Davidoff, often 'of a highly contentious nature'.

In their daily lives professionals may eschew overt engagement in political debates for the understandable reasons discussed above, but at times when politics is in 'dangerous flux'[1] and controversies rage, politics may interpolate professional lives and assumptions in new and challenging ways. Anticipating this and thinking of strategies for individually and collectively coping with and responding to such pressures would seem currently to be an important part of reflective professional practice.

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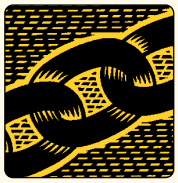

Solar farm storms

The Government seems to be in confusion over its renewable energy policies. Prime Minister David Cameron has prioritised cutting energy prices and so presumably favours the cheapest energy sources. The Department of Energy and Climate Change has forecast that energy generated by solar farms will be cheaper than gas within a few years – the Solar Trade Association has recently suggested that the breakpoint will be reached as early as 2018. And solar power will undercut the cost of electricity from other sources sometime in the next decade.

So is the Government supporting solar farms? It depends who you ask. Under Secretary of State for Climate Change Amber Rudd has described solar farms as 'unwelcome' and called for investment to be directed instead towards rooftop projects, despite these being far more expensive per unit generated. Environment Secretary Liz Truss has added her two pennyworth by claiming that solar farms are affecting food production, although her department has admitted that it has no evidence to support this; indeed, many farms are co-locating solar panels with sheep grazing. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Climate Change Envoy Greg Barker has urged DECC to carefully consider the findings of the Solar Trade Association's *Path to Zero Subsidy* report, which sets out the case for large solar farms.

Of course, the Government's overriding priority is to boost the economy. Again, this ought to mean support for renewable energy. Two recent reports – one from the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate and the second from Cambridge Econometrics – both highlight the need for investment in renewable energy and suggest that this will lead to faster economic growth than current policies. So even those Ministers who do not believe that climate change is a threat but constantly proclaim that their top priority is growth should be supporting renewables.

It seems that evidence-based policy-making is being overwhelmed by personal prejudice. Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles has personally called in some 50 wind turbine planning applications in the last year and has refused the latest five against the advice of planning inspectors. Environment Secretary Liz Truss bases her opposition to solar farms partly on her opinion that they are 'ugly', in addition to her unsubstantiated concern that they threaten food production: if she is so concerned about land being diverted from agriculture, why doesn't she do something about the golf courses that occupy more than 1% of all the land in the UK (and more than 2% in Merseyside, West Midlands and Surrey)?

To be fair, rooftop solar panels are far from useless. A study carried out by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology covering its home city of Cambridge found that the city could generate a third of all its energy needs from solar panels mounted on the roofs of buildings. The study used three-dimensional mapping combined with Google satellite imagery and took account of roof shapes and physical obstructions, as well as weather conditions. The online Mapdwell site (www.mapdwell.com/en) provides extraordinarily detailed information to identify which buildings would be most suitable for solar panels.

But that does not disguise the fact that rooftop generation is far more expensive than dedicated solar farms.

Bizarre economics

Another example of a failure of evidence-based policy-making is the weakening of Part L of the revised Building Regulations, which came into force earlier this year. These improved energy efficiency standards by just 6%, far less than either of the options consulted on. Worse, the Government is removing the ability of local planning authorities to impose higher energy efficiency standards if they so wish, a power that has been used by more than 100 councils. Communities Under Secretary of State Stephen Williams justifies this by claiming that the rules are 'often of little benefit and significant cost'.

Yet the evidence suggests the opposite. It is perfectly possible to build to the high Passivhaus energy efficiency standard at no extra cost but with significant benefits both in comfort and much reduced energy bills for those living in the house. For example, Great Yarmouth Borough Council has recently built four houses using the Beattie Passive build system that meet Passivhaus standards and cost the same as traditional construction. The benefit to the tenants will be considerable, with energy costs reduced by 90%.

So why can't the occupiers of all new houses benefit from dramatic cuts in energy costs? Dr Neil Cutland of Cutland Consulting – who has previously

Occupy Madison

Above

Left: Passivhaus-standard houses built by Great Yarmouth Borough Council. Right: Occupy Madison's homes for homeless

worked for BRE and National Energy Services – fingers the Treasury, pointing out that the Government's 'one in, one out' policy for regulatory reform:

> *'actually refers to the financial impact of the regulations being introduced and cancelled. So for every £1 in costs incurred by an industry, there has to be a saving of £2 for the same industry. Bizarrely, the calculation cannot include the savings which accrue to the people who live in the houses. In other words, the sums do not reflect the fact that an additional £1,000 on the cost of building a house could result in a saving of £20,000 in the owner's heating bills over the lifetime of that house.'*

Bizarre indeed.

Persuasive

Westminster politicians are regularly accused – not least by UKIP – of being out of touch with ordinary people. This certainly seems to be true in the case of the energy efficiency of homes: a recent survey by Europe's largest DIY retailer Kingfisher (admittedly not an entirely disinterested party) has found that British homeowners are more worried about rising energy bills than anything else. Some 64% said rising energy costs were their number one worry about their home – more than triple the number most concerned with keeping up with their mortgage or rent. The second highest concern – at 35% – was keeping the home warm, reinforcing the message that people want more-energy-efficient homes.

Incidentally, UKIP seems to be just as out of touch as Westminster politicians as its energy policy ignores home energy efficiency and would remove incentives for renewables; instead, the party's policy is based on gas, nuclear and coal, all of which will soon become more expensive than energy from solar farms.

Tiny houses

In view of the Treasury's obsession with cost-cutting, perhaps we should hope that the mandarins never visit the Wisconsin city of Madison, where a new community of nine tiny houses has just been completed. No, this is not a demonstration of how housebuilding costs can be cut, but an inspiring answer to homelessness from Occupy Madison, which describes its mission as 'To creatively work towards a more humane and sustainable world.' Built by volunteers and paid for through donations, the new community includes a resource centre and a gardening space.

Another group of activists – this time in the very different environment of the Nigerian city of Kaduna – has also been tackling the housing crisis. Their answer has been to build a house using sand-filled plastic bottles in what they describe as 'an environmentally smart strategy of chipping away at a housing shortage in Africa's most populous nation and cleaning the badly polluted environment'. To demonstrate the strength of the bottle house, the builders have invited people to throw stones at it, not a tactic likely to appeal to British housebuilders.

● ***Paul Burall*** *is a freelance writer specialising in business, environmental and design issues. The views expressed are personal.*

Save the Date...

TCPA Spring Conference

more homes, better places

Thursday 19 March 2015
St Martin-in-the-Fields, London WC2N 4JJ

With the housing crisis at the top of the political agenda, whichever government is formed after the 2015 general election will need to focus on building large numbers of new homes. So how do we ensure that we create attractive and vibrant new places that people will welcome, and not just characterless development?

This timely conference will explore the role of culture, creativity, design and landscape in creating unique, attractive new places with strong communities and thriving economies. It will look at how the Garden City principles can be applied at all scales, from garden village to mega-city, showing how they provide a practical framework for successful place-making at all scales.

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For further information or to book a place, please contact Michael McLean at the TCPA, on Michael.McLean@tcpa.org.uk – or book online at www.tcpa.org.uk/events.php