

Tripwire



MAGAZINE OF THE RTPI WEST MIDLANDS

Issue 103 // Winter 2019



Tripwire



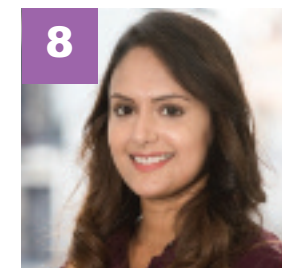
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The planning process involves a variety of words and terms when dealing with the issue of nature such as *green infrastructure* and *ecosystem services*. One of the most commonly used words is *Biodiversity*.

The word BIODIVERSITY originates from the Greek word BIOS = LIFE and the Latin word DIVERSITAS = VARIETY or DIFFERENCE. The whole word BIODIVERSITY therefore generally means: VARIETY OF LIFE.

Over 60 years ago ecologists such as Eugene Odum recognised that diversity was key in creating resilient natural communities and urban designers in the latter half of the 20th century identified that diversity in schemes and its 'mantra' of mixed use assisted in creating healthy human developments.

Mid 20th century planning and indeed more recent eastern European planning often pursued a simplistic model of zonal planning where (very convenient for graphic purposes) areas of a settlement were designated for particular uses. In the 1960's Christopher Alexander (in the Editor's opinion) correctly challenged this simplistic view in '*A City is not a Tree*', which remains a classic planning text.

However, recognising the importance of diversity and applying it in planning involves a cost. It involves an attitude of mind and is a challenge in terms of helping to create mixed communities (so much easier to allocate single use to specific areas).

Diversity does indeed appear to be a good principle in planning places. However, it is a principle which goes beyond the products of planning and involves the process and mind set of planning and the practice of planning.

It is said that diversity is a set of practices that involve:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing
- Recognising that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

My personal belief in fairness and diversity appears to have survived exposure to the 'comedy classics' of '*On the buses*' and '*Are you Being Served*' as a youth.

Good planning, it would seem is based upon professionalism, integrity, intelligence and fairness. Supporting diversity, which is the primary focus of this edition of Tripwire, with all of its challenges is both professionally and morally right and helps to create planners who are discerning, wise and professional.

As always, the West Midlands RTPI is very grateful for all who have contributed to this edition of Tripwire and would send all of its members our very best wishes for the festive period. ■

Michael Vout

West Midlands RTPI Hon. Secretary



“ Good planning, it would seem is based upon professionalism, integrity, intelligence and fairness. ”

Signing off from the 2019 Regional Chair

2019 – A Year of Uncertainty and an Uncertain Future to come!

I have been the Regional Chair in a very challenging year for all of us. The RTPI has increased its profile nationally and our Chief Executive – Victoria – has pushed the voice of planning wherever it needs to be heard – with investors, politicians, business.

Following the General Election this month we must continue to impress on the new Government the “Importance of Planning” manifesto which the RTPI sent to every Parliamentary candidate.

The RTPI has published a number of key papers during the year:

- On the need for Chief Planners to sit at the top decision-making tables in Local Authorities
- On the under-resourcing of Local Authority Planning Departments



Sandy Taylor.

Our own region hosted the RTPI President – Ian Tant in April. His visit to our Region’s 2018 Award Winner – St Modwen Homes Stoke Park development was an inspiring project showcasing the value of listening to and engaging with local community input to a very sensitive issue of how to preserve the memory of Stoke City FC’s former ground. He also learned from dialogue with the Combined Authority and the region’s Head Planners of the need for the resumption of strategic planning.

I am however concerned that the capacity of our region and Local Authorities to re-engage with strategic planning is weak. The ambivalence of national government towards strategic planning has meant that locally there are now no strategic planning powers left – only development and Local plan processes. As such we need to ensure that our young planners are engaged in the value of strategic planning. That is why I have been so pleased that RTPI nationally and our region have supported BCU and UoB Planning Schools through the “WM Futures” Student scheme, learning from the knowledge acquired by former strategic planners in our region through the Futures Network West Midlands. Over the last three years we can begin to see the value of strategic planning education being in place. I would urge you to have a look at the RTPI website where all the papers produced over the last couple of years are available.

I would hope that we in our RTPI Region will continue to ensure that the capacity and knowledge is developed, and I look forward to seeing how we achieve this.

There are three further issues I would like to mention:

“ During the year, Greta Thunberg has hugely raised international awareness with her high-profile role. This is, in my view, to be greatly welcomed. ”

Firstly, of great concern to us as planners is Climate Change. During the year, Greta Thunberg has hugely raised international awareness with her high-profile role. This is, in my view, to be greatly welcomed. And in our region, we have seen that young people are very concerned about their futures. I went on the children Climate rally and March in September in Birmingham. The public's mind and indeed the political mind in many of our region's Local Authorities, who have announced "Climate Emergency" votes, is arguably now focussed on this. The urgent need to plan to protect communities from extreme weather is now vital – witness the distress in Yorkshire recently.

inefficiency of our existing stock. Not to mention the aim of a decarbonised and electrified future.

The Walsall Housing Group for example is pioneering housing innovation through small sale modular construction for over 300 sites they are involved with in Walsall, while the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust has shown the way in building homes with higher standards.

So, can we look forward to a year where housing quality and design takes a prime place? Let's hope so with the Combined Authority's work on Housing Design and the promised National Design Guide.

new Regional Coordinator – Ella Sumner – who I hope many of you will have already met throughout the year. She has come into our regional life with huge commitment and enthusiasm and long may she stay with us! Michael Vout has ably performed the vital role of Regional Secretary, and I would like to thank my colleagues on the RAC and RMB

And of course, our Annual Ball team led by Steph. This year the Ball and Awards go from strength to strength. I am so pleased that our region continues to support this. Thanks to our sponsors, and of course great thanks to all who come to applaud the Award winners and danced the night away.

“ We have to ensure that we plan for the regeneration and revitalisation of our existing housing stock. ”

Secondly, Housing and how to provide the numbers needed to address the wide-ranging issue of housing need – not just demand. We must always remember that of the housing stock we will have in 50 years' time, 95% has already been built. So, while we need to plan for places for new homes, we have to ensure that we plan for the regeneration and revitalisation of our existing housing stock. This is vitally important if we are now moving towards the promised land of a "Green New Deal" to fix the chronic energy

Thirdly, we heard at our annual West Midlands RTPI Ball from Sue Manns – our current Vice-President – that as Planners we have an obligation to address the inequalities in our society. But that at the same time we have to ensure that as a profession we are also diverse and seek to remove any barriers to inequalities.

I would conclude my year by thanking our excellent regional team. Behind the scenes we have had a

It has been a great privilege to be your Chair during this tumultuous year on the political scene and congratulate Luke Hillson on taking up the baton in 2020. ■

Sandy Taylor
RTPI West Midlands Chair

“Great Places, For All”

In addition to the honour of becoming the Chair of the West Midlands RTPI in 2020, I am also passionate that, as Planners we deliver great places.

My year as regional RTPI Chair will be guided by three key overarching themes:

- Design
- Inclusive
- Diversity

Design

As planners, we are responsible for collectively raising the acceptable quality of urban design across the country.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government recently released the National Design Guide. Fronted by Head of Architecture, Andy Von Bradsky, the Design Guide will be seen as a successor to ‘*By Design*’, a similar seminal guidance document released by CABE in 2000.

Whilst many of the ideas are not new it is important to keep design at the top of the agenda. I recently hosted the Design Quality Summit as part of the National Urban Design Conference in Birmingham at which we were given an insight into the new national design guide. The outcome of that Summit and indeed of the recently RTPI Design Quality Survey revealed the importance of design, co-

operative masterplanning and the use of design codes. MHCLG are due to release Part II of the Design Guide early next year: *the National Design Code*.



Inclusive

My second focus for the year is inclusivity, inclusive in the RTPI management of the West Midlands and extended network but also throughout our built environment. It is crucial that accessibility (in all of its definitions) is addressed. In simple terms, both RTPI regional management and our built environments should be inclusive and welcoming places.

Diversity

As a masterplanner I know that it is crucial to analyse and understand a development site as well as its context including the surrounding community. It is important to engage with local residents and prospective users to gain a better understanding of an area and the needs and potential requirements of the future development.

We need to ensure that our built environment is shaped in a way which caters for all users. By increasing diversity throughout our profession, we will be able to gain a greater and better understanding of the full spectrum of issues that face us and collectively address them.

It's increased collaboration which helps create great inclusive places and I look forward to working with the region over the next year to achieve it.

I would finally like to wish all of our members a very merry festive period and a happy new year. See you in 2020. ■

Luke Hillson

Incoming Chair of the West Midlands RTPI for 2020 and Chair of the region's Urban Design Forum.

Twitter: @lukehillson / @RTPIWestMids



Women in Planning // West Midlands Overview

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2019

We're delighted to have been asked to be a part of the RTPI's Tripwire 2019 Festive Edition, with several of our Committee Members providing insightful articles, commentary and mindful activities.

Women in Planning are an independent network whose aims are to promote a diverse, equitable and inclusive planning industry. The network has been created by a group of people that believe in the empowerment of women working in the profession. It is a network for all genders that puts equality at the forefront of discussions. Our vision is to:

- Increase the visibility and profile of women in the planning industry;
- Identify and promote inspirational female role models in the planning industry;
- Champion the promotion of women by creating an environment where like-minded professionals can connect, talk openly about their ambitions and encourage each other to take on new challenges;
- Support the professional development of our members through insightful events;
- Create networking opportunities which allow for the sharing of experience, knowledge and best practice in our sector;
- Provide members with a forum for making meaningful professional and social connections; and
- Foster an environment that promotes a culture of diversity, equality and inclusion.



The network was established in London in 2012 by co-founders Charlotte Morphet, Alison Mackay and Mary Fortune. Since then, 13 additional branches have opened and collectively we have:

- delivered over 80 events;
- secured over 700 mailing list subscribers;
- written 15 external articles and quotes;
- spoken at 10 conferences;
- featured 13 member awards and nominations, including The Planner's Women of Influence List 2019.

The West Midlands branch was launched on 17th January 2019 by Latisha Dhir and Kate Green, who

saw an opportunity to start the conversation on diversity and create inclusive spaces whereby the profession could share ideas and begin to spark a positive change in the West Midlands. Since launching, the West Midlands branch has grown into a network comprising over 170 members, led by 11 Committee members¹. We have hosted several events which have focused on the empowerment of women, including tackling taboo subjects such as imposter syndrome and the menopause, together with shining a light on senior women in the industry who have kindly shared their career experiences and provided advice for those about to embark on, or, who are in the early stages of theirs.

Our twitter handle is: @wiplanningwmids

Our instagram handle is: @wiplanningwmids ■

Kate Green & Latisha Dhir

Notes

- ¹ Latisha Dhir (Co-Chair), Kate Green (Co-Chair); Alice Jones; Emma Cartledge-Taylor; Lucinda Hancock; Mandy Gill; Elizabeth Pywell; Rosalind Blewitt; Rose Sanger; Tamsin McSmith; and Thea Osmund Smith.



Mandy Gill is a commercial property solicitor at Irwin Mitchell Solicitors and a committee member on the Women in Planning West Midlands branch.



Irwin Mitchell Solicitors is a full service national law firm with fifteen offices and I am based in the Birmingham office. My workload ranges from acting for commercial developers with strategic land acquisitions and management to general commercial property disposals, acquisitions and refinancing.

One piece of advice I would give to my younger self is to embrace every opportunity offered. Women typically suffer from Imposter Syndrome more than men and this impacts on confidence and ultimately career progression in the long term. Every experience, good or bad, adds to your skill set; which makes you unique.

How did you get into the legal industry and how did you decide which sector to focus your career on?

I always wanted to be a criminal lawyer and was enticed by the audience grabbing performances by barristers at murder trials in the soaps. I attended Keele University and was introduced to the different specialisms a law career can offer. After attending several vacation schemes at law firms, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to be a commercial property solicitor and I have never looked back.

What interests me about commercial property is the variety of the work. Within the real estate sector there are different subdivisions which range from residential, to commercial development sites, to landlord and tenant work. No two days are ever the same.

Do you think support for young people at the beginning of their careers has changed since you were starting out?

Support has definitely improved and there are more initiatives aimed at encouraging young people into further education ranging from GCSE level through to university. Irwin Mitchell's IM Aspiring group is involved with the PRIME Initiative which is a consortium of law firms aiming to improve social mobility in the legal sector. Irwin Mitchell invites a

number of school leavers from restricted social mobility backgrounds for work experience placements every year. The introduction of university tuition fees has added a considerable amount of pressure on students, particularly those from lower social backgrounds and ethnic minorities. Undertaking further study brings debt and students need to be absolutely certain that a particular career is right for them.

Within Irwin Mitchell, there are several other initiatives set up to assist with social inclusion and diversity such as *IM Equal* which is aimed at raising awareness of issues for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees and clients; *IM Powered* focuses on promoting gender equality; *IM Respect* raises awareness of the cultural and ethnic diversity; *IM Able* highlights areas where greater support and assistance to those with disabilities or issues impacting on mental health and wellbeing can be offered; and *IM Age* focusses on issues related to age. Steering groups for each initiative enable everyone to voice their experiences, no matter their circumstances and this in turn can assist with breaking down the barriers which can limit career progression. As a testament to Irwin Mitchell's commitment to diversity, the firm is a

“ One piece of advice I would give to my younger self is to embrace every opportunity offered. ”

Stonewall Diversity Champion member and is listed eleventh in the Stonewall's top 20 LGBT law firms.

Outside Irwin Mitchell, there are many opportunities to meet other professionals in Birmingham. For example, through the Birmingham Professional Services (BPS) Network, professionals from different sectors can attend a variety of events or sector specific initiatives such as Women in Planning and Women in Property which also offer mentoring programmes.

How do you think the industry has changed over the past 10 years? Do you think it is becoming less male dominated?

The legal industry is definitely becoming less male dominated and there is evidence that females are catching up in terms of promotions to senior

positions compared to their male counterparts. At Irwin Mitchell, 44% of partners and 30% of the Executive Board are now women. Nevertheless, there is always more that can be done.

For example, I have struggled to attend external CPD and networking events hosted before or after work due to childcare commitments. The time of the event immediately excludes working parents from attendance. Women in Planning recognise this and have actively hosted events during the working day to include working parents. However, in a drive towards diversity and inclusion in the sector, event organisers need to be mindful that it is not lack of commitment preventing parents attending, it is simply logistics.

The industry has moved forward in terms of introducing policies such as agile working, working

flexible hours and home working. However these policies are only as effective as your line manager allows. Coming from a demographic of females which has traditionally taken a step back due to inflexibility of work and managing family life, I feel that I am supported enough to work around my personal commitments whilst maintaining a healthy work life balance. In spite of this, I am aware that my experience is not typical of other working parents. I believe that active encouragement of employees to embrace these policies from senior managers will be a positive move to pave the way for more people from diverse backgrounds to enter the profession, remain in the profession and reach the glass ceiling. ■

Mandy Gill
Solicitor
Mandy.gill@irwinmitchell.com

“ The legal industry is definitely becoming less male dominated and there is evidence that females are catching up in terms of promotions to senior positions. ”

Designing for Urban Childhoods and Ageing Communities

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2019

Fostering inclusive environments for all generations

Planning and designing for people is at the heart of our profession yet many of the places we live are not inclusively designed with different users in mind. *Cities Alive* is a series of publications produced by Arup which recognises the need to take a human-centered approach to how we design and manage the cities of the future. These reports consider some of the key global challenges we are facing and explore the relationships between place and people, looking at how we can collaboratively work together to tackle some of these issues. Two of the publications in the series consider how underrepresented groups in our society, the young and the old, could be better served by the places they live.

Designing for urban childhoods

By 2050 around 70% of the world's population will live in cities and the majority of them will be under 18. Air pollution, traffic and crime are all factors making cities child-unfriendly by restricting independence and leading to physical and mental health problems among young people. Whilst planning has its roots in creating better places for families, child-friendly planning has been neglected in recent decades, with stories of deterring kids from loitering in public places seemingly more common. Cities that fail to address the needs of children are impacted economically and culturally and become less diverse places as families move away.

Cities Alive: Designing for urban childhoods sets out the foundations of child-friendly urban planning which recognises the importance of the built environment in improving a child's development, prospects and access to opportunities. This vision moves beyond simply providing playgrounds. The report identifies two main concepts which are key to adopting a more child-friendly approach to cities:

- **Everyday freedoms:** A child's ability to get around their neighbourhoods safely without an adult e.g. by travelling to school or the park.
- **Children's infrastructure:** The network of spaces and streets that are child-friendly and encourage everyday freedoms.

Recommendations for more child-friendly designs focus on walkability and minimising the dominance of the car. Formal, large scale megaprojects such as museums often exclude children who do not have access to them and a focus on interventions at the neighbourhood scale can often be more far more beneficial and equitable. The report cites some key recommended interventions which include:

- **Play streets** – Temporarily closing streets to traffic to allow communities to use the space and reduce air pollution and traffic accidents. The City of Bogota regularly closes streets to cars and other cities like Bristol, London, Adelaide and New York have started to follow, including Birmingham with plans to temporarily close part of the A38 to create a paved park.



- **Intergenerational spaces** – Increasing the opportunities for interaction between younger and older communities has many benefits, including health and wellbeing. Kings Cross Central generated playful interventions from its early stages of development, incorporating arts programming, urban gardens and water to generate outdoor activity and a space for young and old to meet and interact.
- **Wild spaces** – Flexible and adaptable areas that bring nature back into the hearts of communities can reduce stress and anxiety in children. A heavily polluted 13km stretch of river in Qian'an City, China has been transformed into an ecologically rich landscape with a system of wetlands, paths and cycle routes and is now a popular gathering place for children.
- **Integrating child-friendly thinking into decision making** – Cities such as Rotterdam, Vancouver and Tirana have started to seek feedback from children and plan with them in mind to develop child-friendly design and development guidelines.

A child-friendly approach to planning ensures that we create inclusive cities that work better for everyone and helps to solve other city challenges. Seeing a place from a child's perspective enables us to understand how the environment could be improved for future generations.

Designing for ageing communities

Alongside an increasingly urban population, cities around the world are becoming home to larger, older populations as people are living longer. Planning for ageing communities presents decision-makers and built environment professionals with a number of challenges. In Birmingham it is predicted that the number of adults aged 65 and over will grow by 37% by 2036.

Cities Alive: Designing for ageing communities examines what built environment professions can do to ensure that older people have fulfilling, happy lives and considers how some of the common issues facing ageing populations, such as loneliness and isolation, can be combated by adapting urban environments. The report's framework highlights the following four central needs that cities should consider when planning for older people:

- **Autonomy and Independence:** Autonomy is key for older people's independence and freedom. However costly home modifications and unpredictable public transport can hinder mobility. Creating walkable environments, ensuring access to transport, enabling ageing-in-place and

providing wayfinding can all help retain a sense of independence.

- **Health and Wellbeing:** The physical environment profoundly impacts the physical and mental health of older residents. By ensuring access to health services, providing space for exercise and recreation and connections to nature this can contribute to places where older people have positive health and wellbeing outcomes.
- **Social Connectedness:** Loneliness and isolation from a lack of interaction are key issues which can be common amongst older people. Promoting inclusion and civic participation, creating intergenerational spaces and providing options for older people to stay in their communities can help to create feelings of connectedness.
- **Security and Resilience:** Many global changes that we face, such as the increased likelihood of extreme weather conditions, affect older individuals more due to their physical vulnerability. Preparing for extreme climates in addition to designing safe streets and public spaces and promoting dementia safety are key strategies for responding to security and resilience issues.

One of the key strategies for autonomy and independence is enabling ageing-in-place, which refers to a living environment that is adaptable to a person's changing needs over time. A good example of this is the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) which provides social housing that includes homes specifically designed for older people. BMHT are constructing two-bedroom bungalows that are

smaller than an average two-bedroom house and designed to respond to residents changing needs over time. Occupants can live on the ground floor with access to all the necessary amenities, with the upstairs containing a second bedroom and bathroom which can allow for guests or future caregivers, adding to an age-friendly living space.

Including older people during the planning and design process allows communities to benefit from their experience and knowledge of the places they live and provides a way of ensuring that the environment responds to their needs.

The needs of both the old and the young are critical to the success of our future cities and communities. The issues that come with increasing urbanisation require urgent changes to the way we plan, design and live. As planners these issues present us with opportunities to consider how the built environment can shape our lives from the very beginning and enable us to work towards creating healthier and more inclusive places for people of all ages. ■

Rosalind Blewitt

Senior Planner, Planning, Policy & Economics, Arup

For further information on these reports and others in the series, please visit the Arup *website*. If you are interested in health and inclusive planning, you may find the following RTPI reports of interest:

- *Child friendly planning in the UK: a review*
- *Dementia and Town Planning*

20 Books and Podcasts for 2020

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2019

How to do it all – Books for when you aren't sure how it is all going to get done and how to cope when it's not.

1 The Mother of all Jobs: How to have children and a career and stay sane(ish)

By Christine Armstrong

The working parent's bible. The Mother of All Jobs brings together the wisdom of the women who opened up about everything into a manifesto for happy professional families. Ignoring the glossy lives presented on social media, this book shows that, while it's not always pretty, working parents can thrive if they have the knowledge others learnt the hard way.

2 Every Woman's Guide to Saving the Planet

By Natalie Isaacs

Every Woman's Guide to Saving the Planet is Natalie Isaacs' inspiring story combined with a practical tool kit for reducing your carbon footprint and mobilising your community around the biggest issue of our time - climate change. With loads of tips, tricks, easy-to-understand info graphics and an inspiring can-do message, this book is for everyone who wants to make a difference but just isn't sure how.

3 Calm

By Fearne Cotton

Part of Fearne Cotton's series of books regarding mental health and wellbeing (other titles in the series include Happy and Quiet). Calm is part

workbook, part motivational read and part autobiography with a focus on working through life's daily stresses to find a peaceful centre.

4 Becoming

By Michelle Obama

In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America - the first African-American to serve in that role - she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history, while also establishing herself as a powerful advocate for women and girls in the U.S. and around the world. In her memoir Michelle Obama invites readers into her world and shares her story.

Books to Make You Think, Challenge and Take Yourself out of the Comfort Zone

5 Rebel Ideas

By Matthew Syed

By the author of Black Box Thinking, Rebel Ideas is all about cognitive diversity to generate those "out there" or "rebel ideas" that work towards betterment but go against the "norms" we traditionally find ourselves going down.

6 Invisible Women

By Caroline Criado Perez

Invisible Women shows us how, in a world largely built for and by men, we are systematically

ignoring half the population. It exposes the gender data gap - a gap in our knowledge that is at the root of perpetual, systemic discrimination against women, and that has created a pervasive but invisible bias with a profound effect on women's lives. With Chapters specifically focussed on Planning this is a must read.

7 Once Upon a Time in Birmingham: Women Who Dared to Dream

Collated By Louise Palfreyman

Once Upon a Time in Birmingham, provides a lively introduction to thirty of Birmingham's most awe-inspiring women, past and present. From pioneers in their field to everyday heroines, these are women who refused to be silenced, who fought for what they believed in, who proved they were just as good as men... if not better!

8 The Rules of Thinking

By Richard Templar

The Rules of Thinking outlines the guiding principles that show you how to make wiser decisions, stop procrastinating, know when to compromise, avoid mistakes, find other options, think well with others, stop obsessing about things, keep your brain active, be more creative, and have happy, healthy thoughts.

9 Letter to My Daughter

Maya Angelou

Dedicated to the daughter she never had but sees all around her, Letter to my Daughter

reveals Maya Angelou's path to living well and living a life with meaning. Told in her own inimitable style, this book transcends genres and categories: it's part guidebook, part memoir, part poetry - and pure delight.

Podcasts (and Films) for Those who Prefer to Listen (and Watch)

10 The Guilty Feminist

Hosted By Deborah Frances-White

The Guilty Feminist provides a supportive forum to discuss the big topics all 21st century feminists agree on, whilst confessing our "buts" – the insecurities, hypocrisies and fears that undermine our lofty principles.

11 Happy Place

Hosted By Fearne Cotton

The Happy Place series builds on the success of the bestselling Happy and Calm. Fearne draws on her own experiences and shares advice from experts on how to work through feeling blue to finding joy each and every day.

12 The High Low

Hosted By Dolly Alderton and Pandora Sykes

The High Low is based on the founding message that life is best consumed with a mix of the trivial and the political. The errant chin hair to the Trumpian politics, if you will.

13 How to Fail with Elizabeth Day

Hosted By Elizabeth Day

How to Fail with Elizabeth Day is a podcast that celebrates the things that haven't gone right. Every week, a new interviewee explores what their failures taught them about how to succeed better.

14 On the Basis of Sex

Directed By Mimi Leder

On the Basis of Sex is a biographical legal drama film based on the life and early cases of American Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader-Ginsburg. Ginsburg spent a considerable part of her legal career as an advocate for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights, winning multiple victories arguing before the Supreme Court.

15 Adulting

Hosted By Oenone Forbat

The podcast that's trying to figure out all of the things we never got taught in school.

16 Boob Sweat

Hosted by Katie Sturino

There's a lot of stuff out there women are afraid to talk about, but Katie Sturino wants to talk about them anyway. Listen as Katie talks about the topics that might make you sweat. From divorce to dating in your thirties.

For the Mini Planners

17 Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls

By Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo

Aimed at children from 4 years and up. Goodnight stories for Rebel Girls has lots of one pagers on famous women and those not so well known throughout history.

18 Greta and the Giants

By Zoe Tucker

Aimed at ages 4-8 years. This uplifting allegorical picture book is filled with stunning fairy-tale like artwork and includes an afterword introducing the real-life Greta Thunberg and a list of ways children (and their parents) can help the environment.

19 The Paper Bag Princess

By Robert Munsch

Aimed at ages 0-4 years. The Paper Bag Princess is a Princess Story with a twist, where it's the Prince who gets rescued. The Paper Bag Princess is the Perfect fairy tale bedtime book for young children

20 The Track Series

By Jason Reynolds

Aimed at ages 10- 13 years. The New York Times bestselling Track series focusses on a fast but fiery group of kids from wildly different backgrounds, chosen to compete on an elite track team.

Collated by Elisabeth Pywell

The Planner of the Future



Planning is for and about people and the spaces and places that they use. The legacy of decisions that planners take will last for many generations and impact upon many lives.

With this in mind it is essential that these decisions are properly informed. Planners, whether considering the formation of policy or determining applications are required to consider and balance a wide range of factors based upon technical studies and professional judgement. Despite change and improvement over recent years, those tasked with decision making are still not as representative of society as they might be. In order for different voices to be heard, they must not only be welcomed into the room but once there they must also play a meaningful full part.

The planner of the future will not fit a single description, rather they will be part of a team which reflects the diversity of the society that they serve, where differing views are heard and valued.

In 1994 Clara Greed commented that *“it has been demonstrated by research and human experience that women suffer disadvantage within a built environment that is developed primarily for other men”*. Whilst we have made considerable steps



towards ‘numerical’ diversity within the profession with women making up 39% of members (in 1988 it was 85% male), BAME accounting for 7% and those registered disabled accounting for 1%, this is not reflective of society.

More importantly these numbers are unevenly spread, with less than 20% of those at the top of the profession i.e. the key decision makers, being

women. (Data is not available for other groups). Women make up half the population and BAME 19% and yet they are a minority in decision making. This imbalance needs to be addressed as the better the balance, the better decisions are likely to be.

This issue matters not because those at the top are not currently doing a good job, many are, but

“ Ensuring that planners of the future are more reflective of society will go a long way to ensuring that our places and spaces work for everyone. ”

because we could do an even better job if the diversity of society was better reflected. There is a ‘data’ gap, a gap which derives from the different experiences that can be brought to the table by different groups and used to inform policy development and decision making.

Ensuring that planners of the future are more reflective of society will go a long way to ensuring that our places and spaces work for everyone. Many of those taking decisions in what they believe to be the best interests of the wider public may unintentionally miss something of importance simply because the voices and experiences of those within the room are not sufficiently diverse.

A well balanced profession, both numerically and ‘vertically’ will ensure that decisions take into account the different ways that the built and natural environments are used by different groups. For

example, discussions around traffic generation and accessibility are often dominated by those in households who have access to more than one car or van (in 2018 this was 35%). Yet at the same time 24% of households did not have access to a car or van i.e. almost 1 in 4. How often do we hear from these people about their travel needs?

Data about the complexity of journeys by gender (women are more often accompanied by children or elderly relatives or carrying shopping and tend to make more complex journeys in a more local area) is frequently missing from technical reports and not asked for by those, predominantly car owners, using the reports to inform decisions. An understanding of what an accessible environment means for different groups is key and if properly considered will have wider benefits. Similarly, the importance of safe places and spaces cannot be under-estimated; an unsafe built environment affects everyone, but the

impacts are often felt to a greater degree by women, the elderly and young males.

A healthy built environment is an inclusive and attractive one, with people visibly using the spaces and places that it contains across all hours of day and night. It works for all ages and genders.

Planners of the future just as those of today will be trusted to balance a wide range of factors and reach decisions that work for all those in society. A better balanced profession will bring with it added value for the benefit of society. We need to actively welcome, encourage and support planners from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that we capture the positive opportunities that diversity and inclusivity can bring. Better the balance: better the decisions. ■

Sue Manns
Vice President RTPI

Cybertrucks and Urban Design

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2019

“Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.”

Albert Einstein

This article touches upon a variety of issues. Its primary purpose is to stimulate our thoughts and attitudes regarding the way in which we plan and design places as well as a response to the recent West Midlands RTPI Urban Design CPD event.

The Cybertruck

This is not the latest Star Wars spin off but rather the launch of the new Tesla *Cybertruck*.

For those who have not seen it, it is unlike anything previously produced in the world of small trucks and has attracted considerable media attention (beyond the confines of what, to the average person in the street would probably be a selective niche market) ... and it has split opinion.

Several commentators have expressed dismay. One observer commented, *“Ugliest automobile I’ve ever seen. Period”*, whilst many others are impressed, with one observer commenting, *“Understanding the design goals and constraints that led to this design makes it beautiful”*.

This last phrase, which forms part of a larger appraisal is particularly interesting as it distances the commentator’s opinion from a subjective



response and instead appeals to the sense of beauty (and aesthetics) *resulting* from the truck’s materials, construction and performance.

“What the vast majority of folks seem to miss is that the Cybertruck is an exercise in materials technology and load design that inevitably resulted in the current aesthetic. Basically the engineering dictated the design.

The heavily rolled 301 Stainless Steel (body) cannot be stamped, or deep drawn into complex shapes. At

best it can be formed on single bends, and even that’s difficult. Tesla wanted a truly tough truck exterior, and this is what you get - planar.

The other big aspect is the move from body on frame to unitized construction, which for a truck that can haul a real payload, is a massive change. The unitized structure makes it a lighter and simpler design. This truck is literally a truss. So Tesla thought outside the box on load design and exterior damage tolerance, and this is what you get”.



At the recent West Midlands CPD Urban Design CPD event, attendees were presented with a picture of the *Alessi Juicy Salif Citrus Juicer* by Philippe Starck and asked whether they liked or disliked it. After the vote, Sue Manns (current Vice President of the RTPI) quite rightly identified that the item was messy to use and in many ways failed to practically

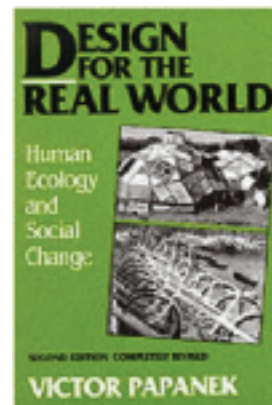
do its job. Interestingly both I and a past president of the RTPI voted that we rather liked the object (I won't mention your name John¹). What made me and others vote for the citrus juicer when it clearly had obvious limitations?

What is going on here?

Might it be that in our pursuit of 'functionality' both in objects and in the performance of places, we fall victim of restricting and limiting our definition and understanding of the word 'function'.

The well known phrase '*form follows function*' (quoted [out of context] by the architect Louis Sullivan at the end of the 19th century) is often used in connection with design. Good as this might be, it seems to have elevated practical function over other issues that affect us and rather follows the 'if it works then it looks good' principle in the design process.

In '*Design for the Real World*' Victor Papanek attempted to revise the apparent simplicity of 'Form follows function' through his '*Function Complex*', which embraced aesthetics and moral, environmental and social aspects into the meaning of function.



Observation and research would appear to support the fact that the way in which we experience and respond to things extends beyond their practical function.

Head and Heart

We are confronted by two issues which Victor Papanek attempted to resolve in his *Function Complex*; recognising and bringing together the very tangible aspects of function with the less tangible. In doing so, Papanek was, in a sense echoing the famous Albert Einstein quote: "*Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.*"

The 'professionals' (a word which itself needs clarifying) might argue the case that we can assess much of the quality of a building or a place by its pragmatic 'functionality' such as active frontages, type and amount of car parking, environmental credentials, access to facilities etc, which to some extent is central to *Building for Life 12* assessment. Issues of character and local identity are of course included in these assessments but can often be problematic to pin down and apply.

A community might also argue against a development on similar pragmatic issues such as traffic congestion or lack of school places **but** may also object on what might be termed 'emotional' and less tangible terms such as whether a development 'fits in' as well as from a conservative attitude and resistance to change.

Consultation or collaboration?

Is the word '*consultation*' sufficient to describe the process of engagement with communities? Recent reports and guidance on design quality have identified that '*good design helps communities accept development*'. Whilst a perfectly understandable statement in itself, a difficulty lies in what is understood and collectively agreed by what is 'good design' and indeed much of the content of recent guidance is spent trying to explain what it means.

Establishing common ground regarding what constitutes 'good design' (one of the great strengths of the charrette process) would appear to be very important otherwise parties can be talking at cross-purposes which is a recipe for frustration and conflict.

Place and Placelessness

Place and Placelessness is a small unassuming book by Edward Relph published in 1976. As they say, 'you should not judge a book by its cover' and certainly *Place and Placelessness* is a classic example as behind its rather unexciting jacket, it packs a wealth of information and helps unlock and answer a number of key issues and questions.

For the purposes of this article, one of its many points is to explain how different people, organisations and communities have different views and experiences of a place. One might justifiably argue the weight given to different views is a big issue but nonetheless, Relph explains that all are useful in their own way.



A local community can bring intimate knowledge about how a place feels and functions whilst an outsider (such as a planner) 'looking in' might identify issues that residents may have missed. The local resident brings detail knowledge, both tangible and less tangible but can be 'coloured' by being part of that place. The 'outsider' on the other hand may only have limited knowledge but can interrogate a place in an analytical way and bring a more 'objective' and perhaps 'dispassionate' view.

The key point is that both parties can bring different, complimentary and important information to the table.

Cybertrucks and urban design

So finally, returning back to the cybertruck. I still have difficulty liking the appearance of this vehicle but despite this, after hours of checking and rechecking I do now appreciate the many features which make it a good design and why it looks the way it does. This has not completely removed my reservations but I can now appreciate and understand it, and can come to terms with it.

Might this be equally so for new development? A community may initially and instinctively feel unfavourably towards it, but perhaps through collaboration and understanding, whilst not being entirely supportive, a community may come to appreciate and understand the properties and benefits of a development which demonstrates good design attributes (both tangible and less tangible), and in doing so, come to terms with it. ■

Michael Vout

West Midlands RTPI Hon. Secretary

Notes

¹ "Don't tell him, Pike!"

“ Recent reports and guidance on design quality have identified that
‘good design helps communities accept development’. ”

RTPI Tripwire Christmas Quiz 2019

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2019

Questions:

1. Where did Sue Manns start her planning career?
2. How many candles should be placed on an advent wreath?
3. How many reindeers pull Santa's sleigh? What are their names
4. How many words does NPPF Paragraph 11 (d) contain (excluding footnotes)?
A: 76. B: 94. C:37. D: 53
5. How old is Cannon Hill Park?
6. What is the name of the Grinch's dog in the film "How the Grinch Stole Christmas"?
7. What time is the Queen's speech on Christmas day?
8. True or False: if you drove every road in the city of Birmingham you'd have covered more than 2,000 miles?
9. When was the first Christmas card printed?
10. When was the first Christmas Day swim organised?
11. True or False: there's a crater on the moon called Birmingham?
12. Which country donates the Christmas Tree to Trafalgar Square?
13. What does BSA stand for in motorcycles?
14. What is the name of the Regional RTPI co ordinator? Is it:

- a. Ella Sumner
 - b. Andy Summers
 - c. Ella Fitzgerald
15. Who invented crisps? Was it:
- a. George Crum
 - b. Gary Lineker
 - c. Joseph Salt

Answers:

1. Birmingham City Council
2. 5 (including Christ candle)
3. Nine
 - i. Dasher
 - ii. Dancer
 - iii. Prancer
 - iv. Vixen
 - v. Comet
 - vi. Cupid
 - vii. Dunder (various spellings include: Donder / Donner)
 - viii. Blixem (various spellings include: Blixen and Blitzen)
 - ix. Rudolph
4. 76
5. 146 years old.
6. Max
7. 3PM

8. True
9. 1843 by John Calcott Horsley
10. Christmas Day 1864
11. True
12. Norway – the city of Oslo donates the tree and has done every year since 1947
13. Birmingham Small Arms (the Gun Quarter)
14. Ella Sumner
15. George Crum

The Colour of Mindfulness

RTPI West Midlands // Winter 2019

In an increasingly fast paced digital world the practice of mindfulness can help improve both our physical and mental health¹. Colouring has been shown to relax the part of the brain which is activated in stressful situations as well as encouraging creativity and coordination. Emma Cartledge Taylor, on behalf of Women in Planning, has collated these images, which show the great city of Birmingham through the ages. They have been reproduced from “The Birmingham Colouring Book”. ■

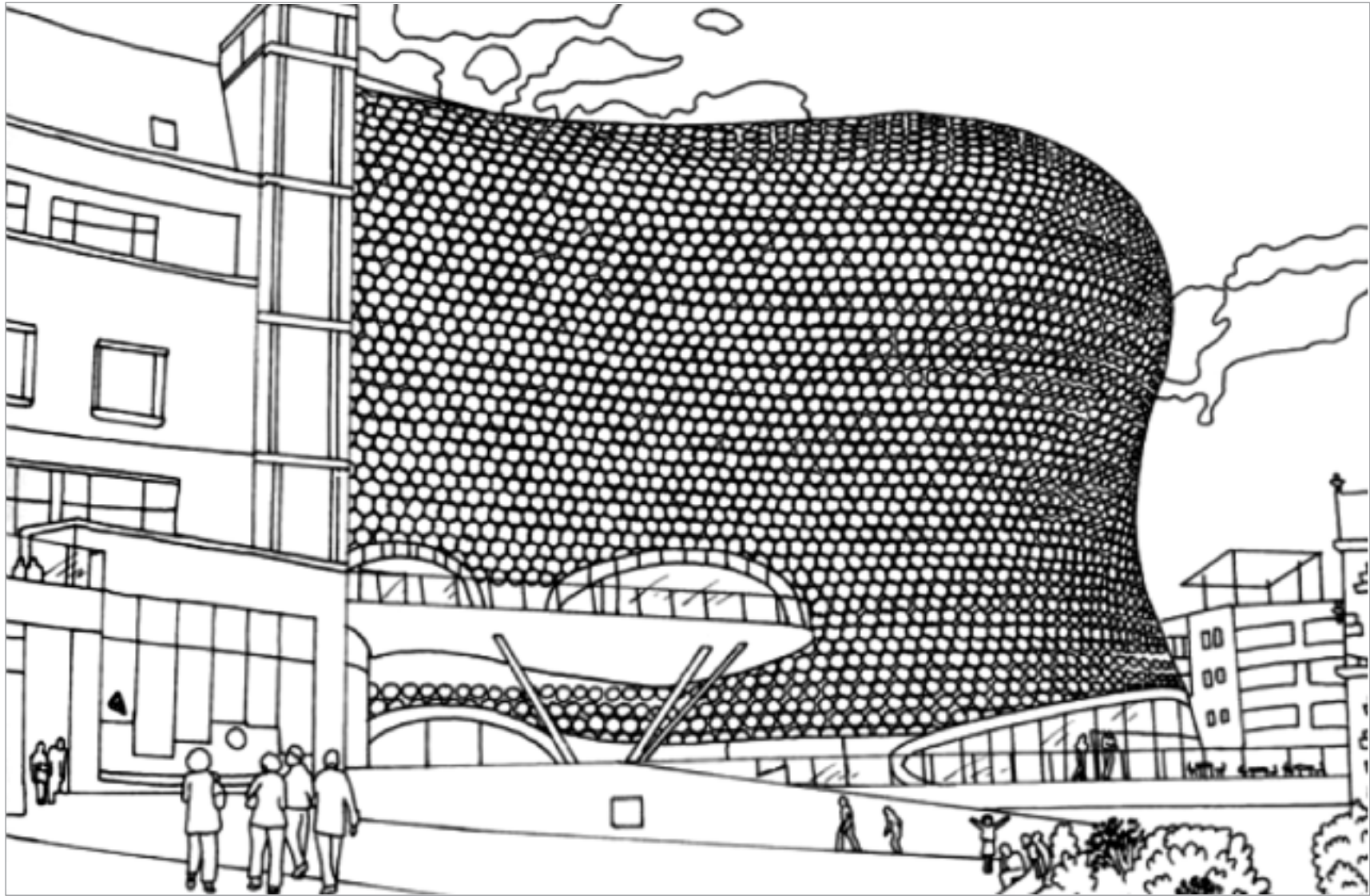


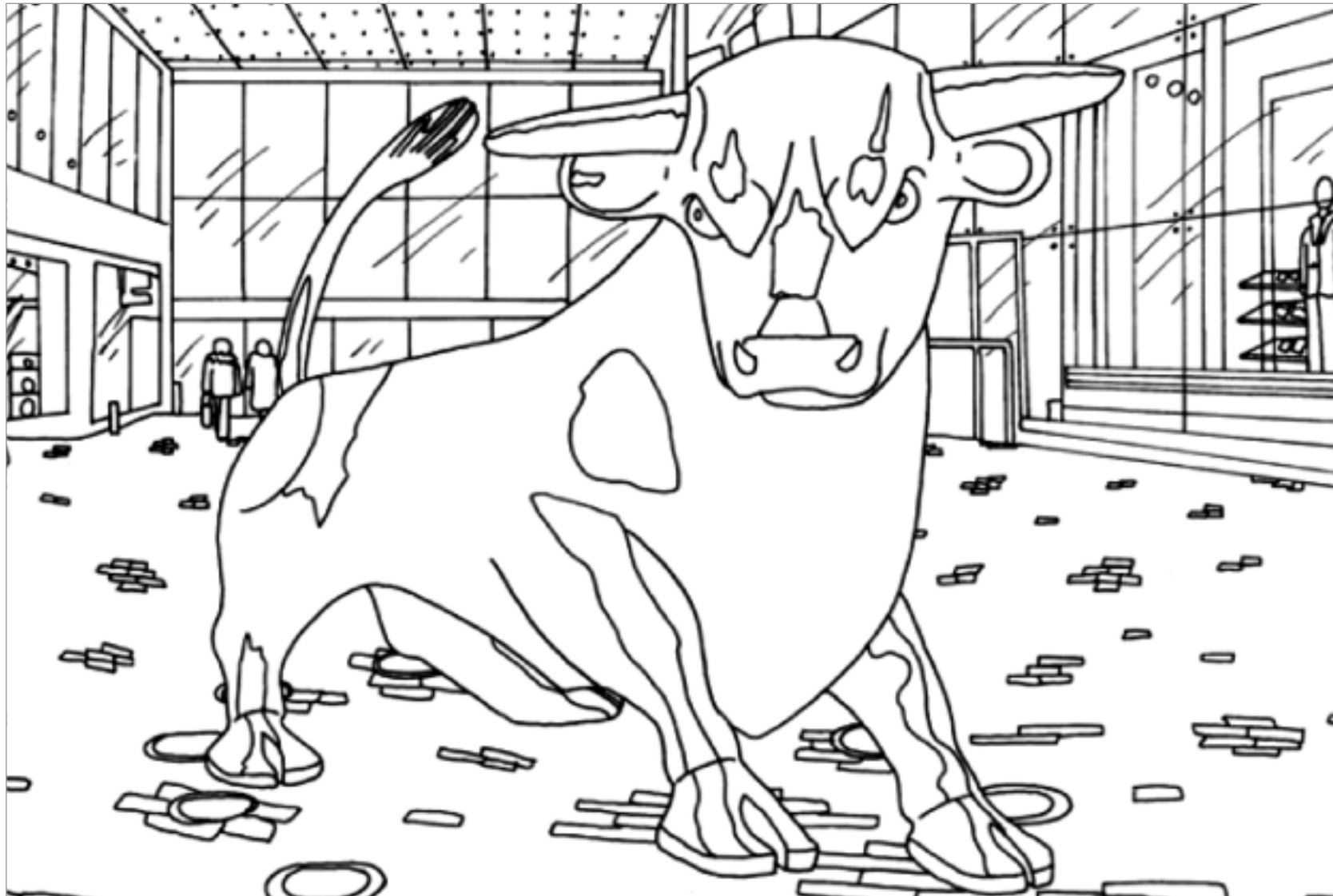
Notes

<https://bebrainfit.com/coloring-stress/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/nov/09/coloring-books-for-adults-benefit-mental-health-study-new-zealand-anxiety-depression>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/06/health/adult-coloring-books-popularity-mental-health/index.html>







Whilst the overall management of the RTPI is based in London at Botolph lane, each of the nine English regions is managed by a Regional Management Board (RMB) and a Regional activities Committee (RAC). Nominations for membership of both the RMB and the RAC is undertaken in the autumn of each year.

Membership of the RMB and RAC for 2020

RMB

Chair	Luke Hillson
Immediate Past-Chair	Sandy Taylor
Senior Vice Chair	Stephanie Eastwood
Representative on GA	Maria Dunn
Honorary Secretary	Bryan Smith
Honorary Treasurer	Ray Coulbourne
Young Planner Chair	Daniel Wilson

RAC

Claudia Carter	Michael Barker	Katherine Green
Sarah Fox	Kat Salter	Luke Coffey
Claire Bridges	Ben Simm	Polly Matthews
Craig Jordan	Neville Ball	George Ducker
Clare Eggington	Mike Beazley	Charlotte Allen
Victoria Lane	James Carpenter	David Brammer
Mark Walton	Stephen Hill	
Michael Vout	Dan Roberts	

Joint RAC and RMB meetings take place six times each year where decisions are made regarding regional RTPI activity. Whilst only members of the RAC are entitled to vote on decisions, all members are warmly invited to attend these meetings which take place in central Birmingham.

For further information including the 2020 meeting dates, please contact our RTPI regional Coordinator, Ella Sumner at: westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk.



Merry Christmas!



from us all at



RTPI West Midlands
Royal Town Planning Institute



The importance of planning for an ageing population

Date: Tuesday, 14 January 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

Venue: 321 Bradford St (Ground floor), Birmingham B5 6ET

One hundred years ago, the average life expectancy for men and women was 55 and 59 respectively. Thanks to advances in medicine, technology, diet and lifestyle, things look very different today. As a result, the number of older people in the UK is growing significantly and this rate of growth is projected to speed up significantly over the next 20 years. The latest government data projects that by 2032 there will be five million people over eighty living in the UK.

This seminar will contain presentations from the RTPI, a local planning authority, a leading developer and a university lecturer, who will explore the importance of planning for an ageing population.

Learning outcomes:

- Gain an understanding of the varying requirements older people may have of their housing
- Understand the perspectives of local planning authorities and developers on the importance of and challenges in planning for an ageing population
- Understand planning policy concerning planning for an ageing population

Core CPD Framework:

- Health & Inclusive Planning
- Housing

Planning law updates

(Spring) Date: Tuesday, 17 March 2020

(Autumn) Date: Tuesday, 17 November 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

Hosted by: DLA Piper LLP, Victoria Square, Birmingham B2 4DL

In line with previous years in 2020, two planning law updates seminars will be held. Again we are grateful to DLP Piper for hosting the events and for providing excellent speakers along with representatives from No. 5 Chambers. The sessions will provide an overview of national planning legislative, changes were applicable and an update on the implications of recent appeal/high court decisions. In addition a detailed legal review of specific issues relating to planning will be undertaken which are considered topical at the time of the session. This CPD event is suitable for all involved in the planning process and for people working within the public and private sector.

Learning outcomes:

- Remain up-to-date with the latest developments in planning legislation
- Hear about the latest case law
- Review the impact and significance of the latest case law and appeals

Core CPD Framework:

- Planning Law & Process

Unlocking infrastructure to facilitate development

Date: Wednesday, 25 March 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

Hosted by: Pinsent Masons, 55 Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2FG

This talk will discuss the unlocking of infrastructure to facilitate development. With HIF as the new kid on the block proving a great success, alongside the devolution agenda, funding is percolating to the ground through a variety of different methods. This session will discuss the different approaches to attracting funding and delivering infrastructure to enable development.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand what the HIF (Housing Infrastructure Fund) is and how it can be used to deliver housing
- Understand how infrastructure can be used to deliver housing
- Learn about the various funding sources available to enable the delivery of infrastructure and housing

Core CPD Framework:

- Infrastructure Planning & Economic Development
- Housing

Community engagement

Date: Thursday, 30 April 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

Hosted by: No5 Barristers' Chambers, Fountain Court, Steelhouse Ln, Birmingham B4 6DR

This WM RTPI CPD is suitable for all of those working or with an interest in the built environment sector, particularly planners, landscape architects,

surveyors, architects and other consultants and local authority workers. It will cover the basics of how to better engage with communities during the planning process and successful case studies. Participants will be working practically towards developing community-centred briefs for those involved in projects that interact with the public, whether through engagement exercises or getting people to design and build their own homes. We will be focusing on the concept of 'community as expert'.

Participants will explore a range of engagement approaches from inspiring examples covering co-design workshops, digital platforms, community-led housing design, and immersive methods to expand their repertoire on how to engage in a meaningful, transparent, responsive and extensive manner.

Learning outcomes:

- Gain an understanding of how to effectively engage communities in the planning process
- Learn how to develop community-centred briefs for planning projects
- Learn a variety of techniques for engaging communities in the planning process

Core CPD Framework:

- Championing Planning

Planning and retailing

Date: Tuesday, 19 May 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

**Venue: 321 Bradford St (Ground floor),
Birmingham B5 6ET**

From the 1970s for some four decades new retail developments created many challenges for the planning profession. Changes in the socio-economic structure of the UK reflected in such factors as greater personal mobility with increasing car ownership, larger number of women in the workforce, greater affluence, world-wide travelling etc. promoted greater suburbanisation of retail development as central areas became congested and inaccessible.

Mirroring shopping developments gaining credence in North America (malls) and mainland Europe (hypermarkets and retail warehouses) the traditional structure of UK retailing came under increasing examination. Established spatial hierarchical patterns were rigorously examined as retailers and developers sought planning permissions, often involving planning inquiries. Whilst new retail developments have not totally been abandoned the focus for planners has become increasingly on how to stem the impact of on-line retailing on the physical fabric of the existing retail structure in many areas, both in-town and suburban facilities.

This seminar will seek to examine where and how planning can contribute to accommodating the changing demands presented by consumer behaviour and business requirements including on what policies should be focussed in the future.

Learning outcomes:

- Gain an understanding of the changing patterns of consumer behaviour since the 1970s and how this has affected the requirements of current and future retail developments

- Assess how planning can accommodate this change in consumer behaviour and business requirements
- Assess current planning policy regarding retail developments and possible future policy developments

Core CPD Framework:

- Infrastructure Planning & Economic Development

Planning in a time of rapid climate change

Date: Wednesday, 10 June 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

**Hosted by: Birmingham City University,
4 Cardigan St, Birmingham B4 7BD**

This seminar takes an interdisciplinary perspective on climate change impacts and how planning and management across the sectors need to change accordingly. The content is suitable for public and private sector professionals and especially planning professionals in strategic positions, policy development, development control and landscape scale planning. It highlights the dangers of simply carrying on with business as usual and provides overarching principles and elicits specific examples of climate change mitigation and adaptation approaches and likely barriers.

Learning outcomes:

- Enhance your understanding of climate change impacts across different sectors and built and natural environment interests

- Recognise the need for integrated and environmentally aware policies and actions and how existing national policies and guidance facilitate (or hinder) this
- Gain valuable insights on champions of climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and actions at the regional and local scale.

Core CPD Framework:

- Environmental Planning

Digbeth: evolution

Date: Thursday, 25 June 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

Venue: 321 Bradford St (Ground floor), Birmingham B5 6ET

Digbeth - Birmingham's cool creative quarter is on the cusp of a major evolution through significant private investment development proposals and Birmingham City Council's emerging Masterplan. Through a range of speakers, this session will help you understand the 24/7 Digbeth of the future, why change is important and more about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. An optional 'hidden Digbeth' walking tour will be run in the afternoon.

Learning outcomes:

- Gain an understanding of the future proposed for Digbeth by Birmingham City Council's emerging Masterplan
- Learn about the private investment that is being made in Digbeth and the resulting development

- Gain insight into the potential challenges and opportunities that lie in Digbeth's evolution

Core CPD Framework:

- Infrastructure Planning & Economic Development

CIL and s106

Date: Thursday, 8 October 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

Hosted by: Pinsent Masons, 55 Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2FG

This session will consider the latest developments with respect to policy, guidance and best practice in relation to section 106 agreements and the development and implementation of CIL, particularly mindful of the West Midlands context. With complex large scale projects coming forward all the time and section 106 agreements becoming more and more multifaceted, this session will seek to demystify those issues to help unlock development.

Learning outcomes:

- Receive an update on the latest developments with respect to policy, guidance and best practice in relation to s106 agreements and CIL
- Gain an understanding on how s106 agreements can be applied to large scale developments
- Understand the relationship between CIL and s106 in delivering development

Core CPD Framework:

- Infrastructure Planning & Economic Development

Urban design

Date: Tuesday, 1 December 2020

Time: 9.30am – 14.00pm

Hosted by: No5 Barristers' Chambers, Fountain Court, Steelhouse Ln, Birmingham B4 6DR

What role does urban design play in planning? The purpose of this event is to discuss the role of urban design in planning, when and where does it feature in the planning process.

Learning outcomes:

- Gain an understanding of the role urban design plays in the planning process

Core CPD Framework:

- Design
- Planning Law & Process

