

# Conservation

*bulletin*

## Housing



Demand for new homes far outstrips supply. So how do we use traditional housing, historic building conversions and sensitively designed new homes to meet that demand while conserving and enhancing our heritage?

Unapologetically projecting its Brutalist facades towards the city, Sheffield's Grade II\*-listed Park Hill estate – the most ambitious inner-city housing scheme of its time – is being redeveloped into a mixed-use scheme of over 900 homes by Urban Splash in partnership with Sheffield City Council.

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

# Editorial:

## Our homes are our heritage – which is why we need to make sure that new housing respects the inherited distinctiveness of places.

We all know that the housing market in England is a perennial topic of conversation, all the more so over recent years as house prices have fluctuated. Similarly, most people have become increasingly aware that there is a growing mismatch between demand for housing and the available supply. The reasons behind this are varied, but its effects can be seen in rising prices and increasing pressure for development in many of our historic towns and cities. In response, central and local government, the construction and house-building industries and other stakeholders have all made concerted efforts to address the issue and drive up the rate of house building. There are signs that these efforts are starting to bear fruit.

Like many other types of development, new housing brings with it threats and opportunities for the historic environment. Threats in the sense of pressure on significance and local distinctiveness; opportunities in terms of investment and potential reuse together with the possibility of creating the heritage of tomorrow. Existing housing represents an important part of England's heritage. Not just the grand country homes, listed buildings and conservation areas that people may instinctively think of when prompted, but also other, more ordinary, housing: terraced communities, garden cities – even inter-war suburban housing is increasingly coming to be regarded as significant. While some of these are distinctive to England, all of them represent elements of our housing heritage.

Bearing this in mind, the debate about housing demand can sometimes seem to be simply a discussion about necessary targets and numbers of homes

to be built, together with their potential locations. There can also appear to be an assumption that new residential development may have negative impacts on its surroundings in visual or aesthetic terms.

This edition of *Conservation Bulletin* is intended to take a more nuanced approach to the issues, and look in greater detail at both the likely implications of current housing demand on historic places, and how the consequent pressures can be managed or indeed harnessed to create successful outcomes. Many organisations and individuals are attempting to provide those involved in planning and building new housing development with the tools and techniques to be able to do this.

Understanding how new development can be accommodated in historic places, what design solutions can be used to ensure it suits local contexts and how historic buildings can themselves be refurbished and reused as modern housing is important in two senses. It can not only make a significant contribution to increasing housing supply, but is also a sensible and responsible approach to conserving what is significant about England's housing.

Appreciating the significance of the local historic environment in question, and ensuring that these types of techniques are appropriately applied, are key elements in ensuring that the historic environment has more to gain from current housing demand than it has to lose. It is an opportunity we should not allow to be missed.

Tim Brennan

Senior Regeneration Adviser, English Heritage

*Conservation Bulletin* is published twice a year by English Heritage and circulated free of charge to more than 5,000 conservation specialists, opinion-formers and decision-makers. Its purpose is to communicate new ideas and advice to everyone concerned with the understanding, management and public enjoyment of England's rich and diverse historic environment.

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# Drivers of Change

**England is experiencing a surge in demand for homes. What is behind this, and how can planners and housebuilders react?**

Since the ‘credit crunch’ of 2007–08, it has become clear that demand for houses is not being met by some measure. At first this was because of the problems customers faced in accessing mortgages, but then, as the banks became better able to lend again, with problems of supply. There are a number of underlying trends that are converging to create this pressure (Melville pp 4–5), some of which are likely to continue over the medium to long term. This will mean a continuing high demand for new homes. The ability of the house building industries to respond to this demand is something that is clearly affected by the planning framework within which they work (Stevens p 8) and which will have an impact on the existing built environment.

Older homes are an important element of England’s heritage – and successful renovation and of housing offers a range of economic, environmental and social benefits to local communities and other stakeholders (Clarke pp 3–4) that fit with modern views of what heritage means. Putting recent planning reforms into practice more effectively (Haylock pp 6–7) could offer the prospect of local communities helping to shape new development that successfully matches its context.

## The value of heritage in our homes

George Clarke, *architect and television presenter*

Britain faces a number of critical housing issues. There is a series of difficult and complicated problems that needs to be addressed so that we can have a clear and long-term housing plan that is not only

sensible, but also achievable. Short-term reactions don’t work, but with cross-party approval a long-term strategy can be consistently implemented by whichever government is in power. If we don’t have that long-term plan then the crisis will never be solved. I sometimes wonder whether the scale of the crisis is so large and the decisions that have to be made are so difficult that elected politicians aren’t quite sure how to deal with it and are even afraid to do the right thing. But doing nothing is not an option. The government and the country as a whole need to act – and they need to act now.

Good buildings not only improve the lives of those that use them and live in them, but also make significant, positive contributions to the built environment. They enhance the villages, towns and cities in which we live. Good architecture has a powerful effect on all of us and can add value in so many ways. When I talk about adding value, I’m not talking about the monetary value added to the economy (although this is definitely a positive effect of good buildings too!) but adding value to the quality of our everyday lives. I once asked a brilliant architect ‘what makes a good building?’ His reply? ‘One that makes you smile.’ I love that. It is so simple, but it’s true. If you can feel safe, content, comfortable and moved by a building and it makes you happy, then it’s a good one.

Older homes that have stood the test of time have done so because they are successful buildings that have a value to those that experience and feel passionate about them. I am not an architectural historian nor a building conservationist, but I come into intimate contact with these kind of buildings through my architectural practice and when following the lives of our incredible restoration warriors when I’m filming *The Restoration Man*. I see the power and value that our heritage has on our everyday lives and how important history is in defining who we are. Every stone, every brick and every piece of timber has a story to tell. I love the process of finding out why a building was built, who built it, why it may have fallen out of use and why it should be saved and given a new lease of life. We now live in an age where recycling and up-cycling are words on the tip of everyone’s tongue. Surely recycling an existing home is one of the most sustainable things we can do. There is so much embodied energy in our existing buildings and with the incredible developments in material and

New doesn’t always mean better, as witnessed by this terrace of renovated Victorian houses at Crumpsall in Manchester.  
© English Heritage





product technology there is no reason why our old homes can't be reinvented and dragged into the 21st century in an intelligent and sustainable way.

The mass demolition of so many Victorian terraced homes over the last 10 years has been a national scandal, which is why I launched my Homes from Empty Homes campaign in 2011 ([www.emptyhomes.com](http://www.emptyhomes.com)). These buildings needed investment and maintenance over their lifetime and when this didn't happen many were allowed to irreparably decay. Many of these dwellings could – and should – have been saved at a time when there was such a need for more homes. Instead, they were swept away, ignoring the environmental, social and even economic advantages that renovation offers. New doesn't always mean better.

We have managed to show that there are ways of saving our old buildings and giving them new purposes to suit the way we live today. We have also provided skills and training to so many young people who are desperate to learn a trade in the building game. It is a sign of our heritage-hungry times that the recent Stirling Prize winner, Astley Castle in Warwickshire, shook the foundations of the architectural establishment by not only being the first home to win the award, but also the first restoration project. Controversial indeed, but it did make me smile.

Preserving our heritage and reinventing our old homes in an exciting and innovative way, while at

the same time building beautiful new buildings, is the future of Britain. We should all embrace the opportunities our heritage offers. ■

### Social and demographic trends and their impacts on housing

Duncan Melville

*Economist, English Heritage*

Rising house prices, both in real terms (after allowing for inflation) and relative to earnings, have led to public concerns about the affordability of housing. The proportion of households in England and Wales who owned the home they live in fell from 69% to 64% between 2001 and 2011, the first time this has happened since 1918.

House prices are a product of the balance of demand and supply in the housing market. The most important factors increasing the demand for housing in the long run are rising population, increasing numbers of households and growing real incomes. In the 30 years to 2011, real house prices have increased by 119% in the UK, median real household incomes by 81%, the population by 12% and the number of households by 29%.

Since 1971 real house prices have been on a rising trend, especially since the mid 1990s. In 1971 the average house was worth £63,000 in today's money; by 2013 it had risen to £169,000.

In 2013, Astley Castle in Warwickshire became the first domestic building to win the Stirling Prize for architecture following its restoration by the Landmark Trust.

Source: Flickr/Bruce Stokes, some rights reserved

The ratio of house prices to earnings is a standard indicator of affordability. However, the shift towards dual-earner households means that the ratio of house prices to earnings may underestimate the purchasing power of households. As the graph (top) shows, the ratio of house prices to income has risen over time. This rise has also been especially pronounced since the mid-1990s, notwithstanding a moderation in the years since the 2007–8 financial crisis.

The ability of housing supply to respond to rising demand depends on the supply of land for development (and thus on the planning system) and on the capability and motivation of the construction sector.

Supply has not responded adequately to rising demand and price pressures in the housing market. This can be seen by comparing the annual number of house completions against annual household formation (bottom). Over the last 30 years, housing

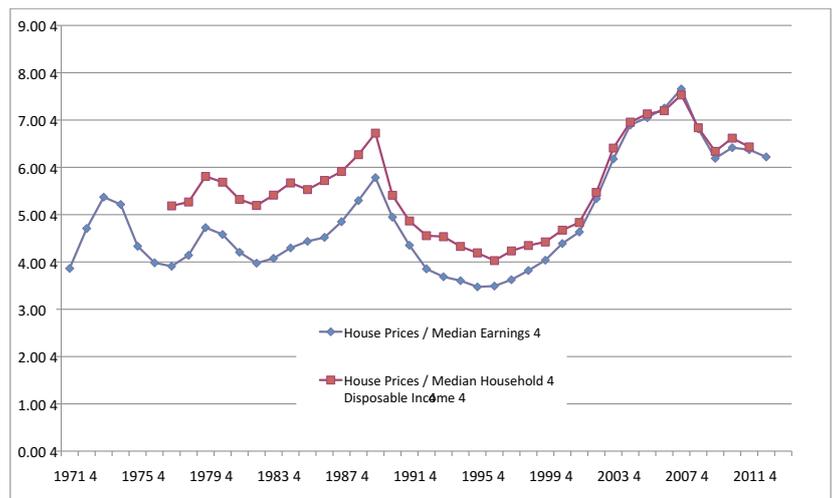
completions have generally fallen short of household formation. This century, they only exceeded household formation in England between 2005 and 2007, and the shortfall increased sharply following the global financial crisis of 2007–8.

This backlog in supply adds to the pressures for housing development. Between 2013 and 2021, the number of households in England is projected to increase by 1.76 million (8%). Over the same period, the population of England is expected to rise by 3.12 million (6%) and between 2013 and 2036 by 8.04 million (15%). Given these figures, there is no escaping a corresponding requirement for new homes – and in turn a need to ensure that new development integrates with its context and existing settlements. ■

*More information about the statistics and how they are used in this article can be obtained from the author (duncan.melville@english-heritage.org.uk)*

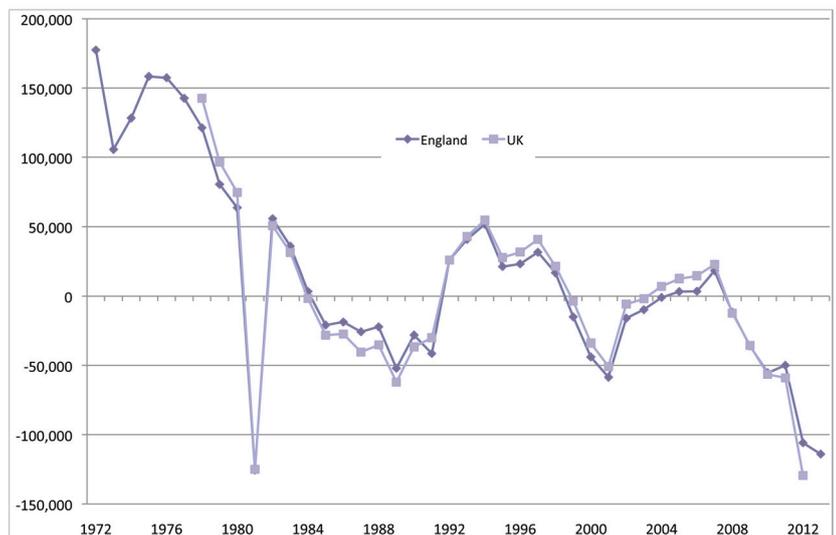
Ratio of UK house prices to median household income.

Sources: Nationwide, *House Prices Since 1952*; ONS, *Middle Income Households 1977–2011/12* (2013).



Annual housing completions minus annual household formation in England and the UK.

Sources: ONS Live tables on household projections and house building.



## Making better use of the planning system

Colin Haylock

*Architect, planner and Past-president of the Royal Town Planning Institute*

A consistent pattern in politics is for every change in government to bring with it a radical reform of the planning system. It is therefore interesting that the Labour Party is signalling that it would not look to make further profound changes were it to form the next government. It likes the idea of localism and broadly supports the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It would refine it to aid delivery but not seek to radically change it. So the broad shape of the current reformed planning system is likely to be the one with which we will have to work for some years.

Hopefully, we are now all relatively familiar with the shape of the present system – one in which a local plan is guided by an NPPF itself based upon a presumption in favour of ‘sustainable development’. Beneath the broad strategy set out in the local plan are the neighbourhood plans that allow communities to shape the detail. It is a system that is predicated on the principles of localism and incentivisation; one in which schemes such as the New Homes Bonus are seen to be a more effective way of delivering development than the top-down targets set by regional planning frameworks

We also cannot help being aware of the disproportionate impact that public-sector funding reductions have had on planning activity and, even more so, on design and heritage services within local authorities. These are serious challenges to the

effective operation to any system – leave alone one which claims to be committed to deep localism.

Other articles in these pages touch on the issues of demand and supply and the role of the existing housing stock. Leaving these hugely important questions aside, where does this pattern of reform leave us in terms of the contribution of planning to the creation of new housing? New housing which not only provides additional accommodation but at the same time creates great new places or helps improve existing ones?

At one extreme are the local authorities without up-to-date local plans and without a five-year supply of housing land. These will be struggling to fend off applications from developers claiming any proposition they offer is ‘sustainable development’ that should benefit from the ‘presumption in favour’. Far too often, the outcome is development on greenfield sites in preference to the more challenging urban brownfield sites whose regeneration can be vital to repairing damaged environments at the heart of our urban communities. More than this, they fail to secure the design quality and integration with existing facilities to which their communities aspire.

At the opposite extreme are planning authorities with completed or well advanced plans; ones that are encouraging communities to take charge of the sensitive allocation of their requirements to specific sites of their own choosing. The local authority then shapes the detailed specification of those developments to ensure that they integrate with and support their established surroundings. The cooperation between South Oxfordshire District Council and Thame Town Council in the Thame



Neighbourhood planning allows communities to take ownership of local growth and change © Design Council CABE

Effective planning in action: the Tibby's Triangle development by Ash and Sakula in Southwold, Suffolk.

© Ash Sakula/Peter Cook



Neighbourhood Plan serves as an excellent example of this (See Rowlands, pp 38–9).

As well as allowing communities to take ownership of local growth and change, this kind of collaborative working is good at identifying sites which minimise damage to cherished local environments, can best be integrated with them and sometimes even repair past damage. In addition, the relatively small size of many of these sites may attract smaller-scale developers who are themselves more likely to be locally based and locally sensitive.

The challenge now is to persuade government and local politicians to recognise the value of this activity and to appreciate its importance not only to the delivery of quality environments, but also the creation of a climate in which communities are more willing to accept new development. This is highly demanding work in terms of resources and skills – and comes at a time when we have major shortages of both.

How then, do we to shift the balance in favour of this more positive participative – an approach which Terry Farrell might recognise at ‘proactive planning’ – and ensure that local communities are fully engaged with successfully managing change and development?

Most fundamentally, government needs to resist being distracted by peripheral ideas like garden cities as successors to the failed model for eco towns, or from tinkering with the Use Classes Order which, unconstrained, can wreak havoc with town centres and low-rent employment and cultural areas. What we need instead is for:

- Local authorities to recognise the vital importance of taking charge through local plans – and for government to incentivise and support their completion and updating.
- The government to genuinely recognise the value of neighbourhood planning; to simplify its processes to make them less resource intensive, and to help bring in the necessary resources and skill.

And while we wait for an unlikely sea-change in attitude and investment, what can we in the heritage and planning sector best do to help?

- Seek out and promote champions for quality new and reshaped environments, both nationally and locally.
- Use celebration and promotion to help national and local government, developers and communities understand what good processes and outcomes look like; to encourage more of this, and to strengthen resolve to resist poor-quality proposals.
- Develop guidance that will help local authorities, development professionals and communities to make most effective use of limited resources and skills.
- Work with universities and accrediting bodies to increase the emphasis on participative planning in the education of those involved in shaping our environments
- Do likewise through the life-long learning programmes of our professional bodies. ■

### Responding to demand

James Stevens

*Strategic Planner, Home Builders Federation*

How many homes can the industry build over the next twenty years? The answer is linked inextricably to how much capacity the plan-led system provides.

The previous Labour government thought that the housing question would be addressed by building 240,000 dwellings per year. The most recent 2011 census-based household projections suggest that 221,000 new homes would be needed each year to keep pace with household formation. The best post-census estimate is 240–245,000. Labour is currently talking about a target of 200,000 homes.

Unlike Labour, the Coalition has no view on how many homes should be built locally or in aggregate. This is a matter for local planning authorities to determine after undertaking their own ‘objective’ assessments of need. No longer infantilised by Whitehall, the theory is that local authorities will grasp at the opportunity to plan ambitiously. However, not entirely trusting them to plan positively, the government, through its National Planning Policy Framework, exhorts councils to ‘boost significantly’ the supply of housing.

How many homes are being planned in aggregate is unknown. Nobody collects data on what councils are planning to provide. My own tentative research suggested that the planning system was on course to provide for about 180,000 dwellings per year, but it is difficult to be precise because every local plan adheres to a different timetable.

Can the house building industry (private and social) build 200,000 homes per year? Firstly, it is important to understand that the industry is only as big as the planning system allows it to be. For the past twenty the private sector has only been building an average of 121,000 homes, supplemented by 23,000 a year from the social housing sector. To increase capacity from current build levels to what is needed will take a few years – but it is an achievable goal if the conditions are right. It is worth remembering that from the 1950s through to the 1970s the industry was regularly constructing in excess of 250,000 homes per year, peaking at more than 300,000 in the latter half of the 1960s.

What’s gone wrong? The main difference is that until 1991 the industry was free to respond to demand. Since 1991 and the advent of the plan-led system, that responsiveness has been severely curtailed, with councils determining not just the location of development, but the number of



New housing development in Rothwell, Leeds, integrating the Grade II listed late-19th century clock tower. © Design for Homes

homes to be built, dwelling mix, density and even products.

Expanding capacity depends, therefore, on local authorities producing realistic, up-to-date plans that take account the new census results. Currently only 55% of local authorities have an up to date plan – a deep concern given the ‘plan-led’ nature of our system.

Another obstacle to increasing supply is the constraint to land supply in many major settlements. Many depend upon their rural neighbours releasing land to enable them to expand. Unsurprisingly, there is often little appetite to accommodate those needs. Unless we address this constraint it is unlikely that house building can exceed 200,000 a year. The Duty to Cooperate, introduced by the Localism Act of 2011, is far too weak to resolve these often politically contentious cross-boundary issues.

One consequence of this process of ‘urban containment’ is to place pressure on the existing built environment. Metropolitan local authorities are obliged to explore every avenue to accommodate as much of their housing requirement as possible. However, the stock of brownfield land is diminishing as the scale of need increases. Most informed commentators recognise the necessity of significant greenfield release. York and Bath provide examples of this new realism: two councils with extensive historic fabric who accept they will only meet their housing needs while simultaneously conserving their valued heritage by releasing land from their green belts. ■

# Understanding the Resource

**The more we know about England's existing stock of buildings, the better we are able to ensure they remain fit for the future.**

As our understanding and appreciation of heritage grows and evolves, so a broader range of buildings and places come to be acknowledged as being part of the historic environment. Research at English Heritage is attempting to deepen understanding of what makes housing in these types of places significant (Harwood pp 14–16), Whitfield p 18).

Ensuring that historic homes continue to be fit for purpose well into the 21st century is what this edition of *Conservation Bulletin* is all about. This is a principle that has exercised local authorities and others over a number of years (Ahmed pp 17–18), and learning the lessons from successful initiatives in renovation and refurbishment is clearly important (Ratcliffe p 16). Even the most seemingly intractable buildings can be turned around with persistence (Yates pp 12–14) while others that were considered to be unpopular and outdated can now offer hugely popular modern living (Lynch pp 11–12). Against all this, efforts to ensure that traditionally constructed buildings remain sustainable are being aided by the broadening of understanding of how they function and how environmental improvements can be accommodated (Griffiths pp 9–11).

## Responsible retrofit of traditional building

Nigel Griffiths

*Director, Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance*

The UK has made ambitious commitments to reducing carbon emissions from buildings in use. However, the retrofit of traditional buildings raises technical and heritage concerns that have not yet been fully addressed.

Some of the most serious technical issues relate to the application of insulation to solid walls. The type and location of insulation is critical as it affects the hygro-thermal profile, which can give rise to both surface and interstitial condensation. This may lead to fabric degradation such as mould growth, with its associated impacts on human health. Retrofit works to the building envelope may also reduce ventilation. As well as exacerbating moisture issues this can reduce indoor air quality below acceptable levels.

A typical solid-walled terraced street with features that would be obscured by external solid-wall insulation.

© Nigel Griffiths

Heritage risks are also significant because solid-wall insulation covers up historic fabric. Traditional buildings, especially terraced streets, shape the landscape of many of Britain's major cities and play an important role in people's sense of place and social wellbeing. They have served communities well for over a century, so any loss of this heritage has to be balanced very carefully against predicted environmental gains.

There are also specific concerns around the models used to assess older buildings, and in particular the default values (for solid walls) used in the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) and resulting Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs). This is particularly relevant as these models underlie the Green Deal and the forthcoming Private Rented Sector regulations.

## STBA

The Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA) is a collaborative forum for sustaining and improving traditional buildings in the UK. It is comprised of non-profit bodies from three main sectors – heritage, industry and sustainability – so it is in an excellent position to marry the differing priorities of these three groups and agree a common way forward. Heritage, in this context, is not confined to historic and protected structures, but refers more broadly to all traditionally constructed buildings, including the 20% of our housing stock that was built prior to 1919.

The debate about retrofit is often framed in terms of carbon emissions from buildings in use. Purely in carbon terms, this narrow definition ignores the



## HOUSING

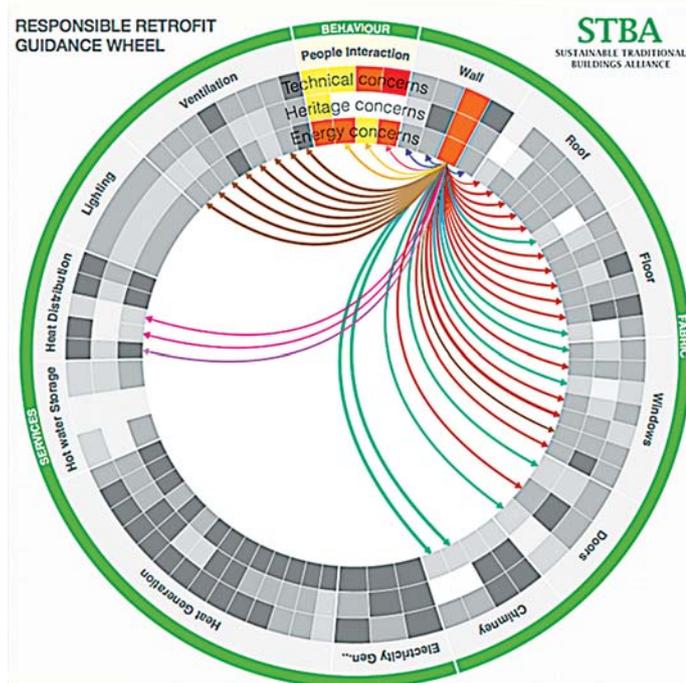
emissions generated by the retrofit process, the carbon costs of rectifying unintended consequences and the possibility that reductions in emissions here could lead to increases in other areas of the economy (the rebound effect). There is thus a danger that well-meaning policies aimed at reducing emissions from buildings could lead to a rise in emissions in the short term and have little or no effect in the longer term. Just as importantly, the interpretation of sustainable refurbishment for traditional buildings needs to take into account all aspects of sustainability when setting out an appropriate strategy for their retrofit.

### Responsible Retrofit Report

Following a gap analysis in 2012, the STBA produced the *Responsible Retrofit Report* on behalf of the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC). The key recommendations of the report were that:

- Different assessment procedures are required for traditional buildings based on an understanding of their performance, along with skills training for contractors and engagement with occupants and owners.
- Additional conventions for assessing the heat-loss of solid walls need to be established as soon as possible. BR 443, RdSAP and commercial U-value calculators should not be used without an understanding of their limitations.
- BS 5250:2011, used for assessing moisture risk, is very limited in scope. BS EN 15026:2007 should instead be required for the modelling of traditional buildings.
- Documents that require U-value improvements for solid walls should set targets that are appropriate for these constructions, both with regard to the limits of realistic heat loss due to thermal bridging and in order to avoid condensation as a result of over-cooled wall fabric.
- The wider consequences of individual retrofit measures on traditional buildings need to be taken into account in policy. These consequential and systemic effects must be acknowledged in terms of liability.
- Good maintenance, repair and improvement work should be considered as a valid retrofit measure and be brought into the Green Deal.

The UK government has clearly taken these concerns seriously and in 2013 three further projects were commissioned from STBA: Guidance Wheel, Knowledge Centre and Moisture Guidance.



The STBA Guidance Wheel

### Guidance Wheel

This interactive, on-line tool has been designed to aid decision-making. It enables the user to specify the type and context of a building, select building elements and explore potential retrofit measures. The Guidance Wheel organises retrofit measures by categories around the outer circumference and has summary 'rings' for technical, heritage and energy concerns. The colours (green, yellow, orange, red) point out the level of the risk (minor, medium, high, major) for the various concerns: minor-medium-high-major. (<http://retrofit.org/wheel>)

### Knowledge Centre

Directly linked to the Guidance Wheel is a Knowledge Centre that will enable users to search for and ultimately share information on retrofit measures in traditional buildings. The Knowledge Centre builds on the robust research and guidance identified in our *Responsible Retrofit Report*, and will be constantly updated as additional high-quality research becomes available.

### Moisture Guidance

A new *Moisture Risk Assessment Methodology and Guidance* document has been drafted on behalf of DECC. The guidance has already been subjected to extensive peer review and will be the subject of a public consultation this spring, ready for publication in the summer of 2014.

**Next Steps**

There is a need for much greater awareness of the challenges of retrofitting traditional buildings among industry, public bodies and building owners. STBA is actively working with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and others to develop training courses for contractors and assessors and to raise awareness of the tools and guidance which are now being developed.

In the domestic sector, knowledge about how traditional buildings function is very limited; the advice from contractors and the implicit guidance from manufacturers and Building Regulations is often insufficient to address all risks. STBA will therefore continue to work with SPAB, English Heritage and others to share knowledge with traditional building owners and communities of practice. ■

**Historic buildings, new homes**

David Lynch

*Development Manager, Urban Splash*

We recently celebrated Urban Splash’s 20th anniversary. Born out of redeveloping industrial buildings in and around the North West, we now work on a variety of projects nationwide, culminating recently in the completion of the initial phase of homes at the Grade II\* listed Park Hill in Sheffield.

A large proportion of the 353 awards we have won to date have come from pioneering projects that have reused historic buildings as residential homes.

**Our projects**

Like many buildings in the Castlefield area of Manchester at the time, Britannia Mills had served as a textile mill but had fallen into decline and dereliction. The red brick buildings were redeveloped into 125 homes; utilising the large internal spaces, many are duplexes with architectural features, exposed brickwork and connected to the canal side docks. It was a commercial success in an untested marketplace and became a catalyst for more than £300m investment into the local area.

Seeking to replicate this success across the Pennines, we turned to Lister Mills, sitting aloft of Bradford. At the heart of the Manningham community, the buildings have an intrinsic cultural link to the locals. Despite the suburban location, the sales launch of the contemporary apartments saw queues around the corner. We created high-quality contemporary homes with exposed vaulted

ceilings and preserved ornate iron columns. The residents of the 245 homes are now a well-established community and we have plans to bring the unique zinc-clad rooftop pods to the marketplace soon.

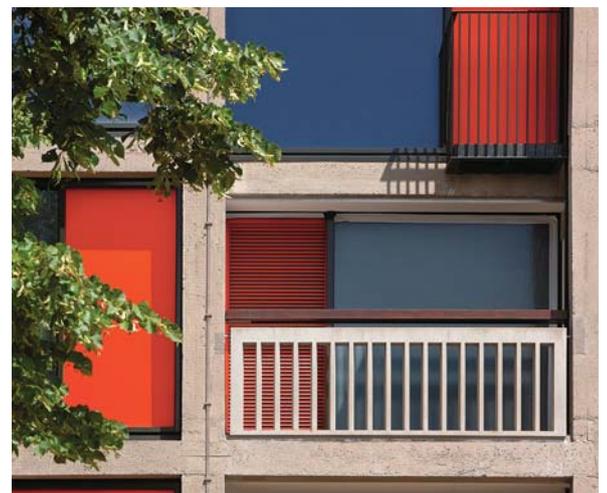
Royal William Yard in Plymouth is a very different project. A collection of waterside limestone and granite buildings, it forms the largest collection of Grade I listed ex-military buildings in Europe. Here, 133 modern homes were created within the yard in keeping with its original context – making features out of impressive existing materials such as timber arches and exquisite stonework. The first phase was sold out in a single day and now the yard is a popular destination, full of artisan bakeries and waterfront restaurants.

Park Hill in Sheffield is our current poster-boy Grade II\* listed regeneration project. Unapologetically projecting its Brutalist facades towards the city, it is currently being redeveloped into a mixed-use scheme of over 900 homes. We released the first phase in 2012 to critical acclaim – it was shortlisted for the Stirling prize – and was a commercial success.

**Using historic buildings**

In a sea of housing mediocrity, the symbolism of an established landmark building can provide an opportunity to create something unique. Historic refurbishments were initially driven by the demand for loft-style apartments. Decades later, people view these buildings as being warm, characterful and full of monetary and social value.

It’s fair to say that where there is demand in a



With advice from English Heritage Urban Splash revitalised Sheffield City Council’s Grade II\* Park Hill housing scheme in a way that preserves the historic significance of its reinforced concrete frame while allowing substantial changes to the internal layout and decorative infill panels. © Urban Splash



Urban Splash's conversion of the redundant Grade I Royal William Yard naval victualling depot has created a new residential and social hub for Plymouth.

© Urban Splash

property market, there is value. Urban Splash has been able to deliver this on a variety of projects by creating a product that is contemporary in design terms – and thus palatable to the requirements of the modern marketplace – but that avoids pastiche.

One of our guiding principles is to be respectful of the original building fabric – not just the elements of architectural interest but also the textures, materials and sheer volume that combine to portray the history of these buildings. Working with the grain of the building is another priority, not forcing it to do things it doesn't want to do. We always seek to retain the original structure whenever we can, but there at the same time not be afraid to change it where there is good reason. We strive to achieve a clear architectural language to articulate and express the building inside and out. While concentrating on creating spacious, well-planned light and airy homes we also pay attention to the quality of common parts and the interaction of an historic building with its local surroundings at ground level.

Historic buildings are not just attractive development proposals. They also retain their value over time, have the ability to leverage viability-gap or grant-funding subsidies and can contribute to wider regeneration efforts. Local authority master plans, development plans and economic strategies can target historic buildings for development with demonstrable results in terms of planning gain.

Alongside the economic rewards there is also the gain to conservation. By transforming redundant buildings into homes and giving them a new day-to-day use we are ensuring their preservation and ongoing maintenance for many generations to come. ■

### 549 Lordship Lane: from ruinous shellbuilding at risk to affordable housing

Alice Yates

*Freelance heritage consultant*

The conversion of 549 Lordship Lane into five shared-ownership flats is the fruit of a successful partnership between Southwark Council, the Heritage of London Trust Operations Ltd (HOLTOP) and Hexagon Housing. Working with Hexagon Housing raised some challenges both for the client, HOLTOP, and the lead professional, Paul Latham of The Regeneration Practice (TRP). Not only was this Hexagon's first involvement with a listed building but they were also deeply rooted in the tradition of employing builders on a fixed price to construct their housing. With everyone working together towards a shared goal, though, the problems were far from unsurmountable. And the result is reaping the awards. The flats are occupied; the once-derelict local landmark is now a source of

local pride and interest, and the scheme is attracting accolades.

As a building preservation trust, HOLTOP operates in a similar way to a developer but with conservation, rather than profit, as its focus. The aim is to cover overheads and to secure the future of the historic building in the most appropriate and practical way. Set up in the early 1990s as a joint initiative by English Heritage and its sister organisation, the Heritage of London Trust, HOLTOP's primary objective is to support English Heritage in finding new uses for Greater London's buildings at risk.

When Southwark Council asked HOLTOP in 2008 to help find a solution for 549 Lorship Lane, this Grade II 'building at risk' was unsafe to access. Built in 1873 by Charles Drake using his 'Concrete

Building Apparatus', the house was Drake's own home. A fairly modest residence, designed in the gothic revival tradition, its significance stems largely from its structure: it is one of the earliest examples of massed concrete construction.

The first step for HOLTOP was to commission an options appraisal. Prepared by the Morton Partnership and TRP, the study demonstrated to Southwark Council that the building was capable of repair and had a future in residential use. The council was prepared to issue a compulsory purchase order (CPO) on the owner as long as HOLTOP was willing to enter into a back-to-back agreement which transferred responsibility and ownership of the listed building to HOLTOP.

Hexagon Housing, a housing association with existing stock in the local area, was lined up by Southwark Council's Empty Homes Officer and HOLTOP, to purchase the property and its five residential units on completion of the project. Like many housing associations, Hexagon Housing was limited in the amount it could offer for the building. An Empty Homes Agency grant filled the gap and with funding already secured from English Heritage and the Pilgrim Trust, as well as a short-term loan from the Architectural Heritage Fund, the project was able to start in June 2012.

Both the client, HOLTOP, and the conservation architect, Paul Latham, had to navigate around the housing association's ingrained approach to development: they tended to use the same criteria for this Victorian building as they did for new-build development. For instance, the lease (HOLTOP retained the freehold) contained extensive appendices and required HOLTOP to offer a ten-year guarantee on the work as if it were all completely



Above and right: 549 Lordship Lane, London Borough of Southwark. At the beginning of the project the Grade II house was a ruined shell. The porch, the bay windows and half the roof had collapsed. Not long after the project was completed in September 2013, 300 visitors passed through its doors for the Open House weekend.

© Paul Latham (before) and Robin Barrett-Forster (after)



new. Comfortable applying current housing policies to their new-builds, Hexagon intended to do the same to Lordship Lane. Yet if applied without balance, Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and Lifetime Homes Standards can obliterate many of a building's original features. This led to Paul Latham spending much of his time championing the conservation brief.

Furthermore, Hexagon were used to a fixed-price contractor-led design and build contract in which negotiated variations in price are based upon value for money with sole reference to a standardised housing brief. They were unfamiliar with dealing with a traditional building contract in which the conservation architect leads the contractor, works closely alongside dedicated trades and specialist skills, and often requires architect-instigated variations and additional financial contingencies. Delays were not something they had encountered before. To their great credit, Hexagon compromised on their standard practice and agreed to increase their purchase price when contingencies ran out in order to achieve a successful conservation project.

The solution? Paul Latham believes mutual understanding is key. Both he and HOLTOP are positive that partnerships between building preservation trusts and housing associations can result in satisfying results for all. In their experience, a flexible approach combined with the drive of a shared goal are fundamental to the successful completion of such a project. Within six weeks of being put on the market, all five flats were sold to eligible local people. An exemplar partnership for all. ■

### Low-rise post-war social housing

Elain Harwood

*Senior Investigator, Assessment Team (South), English Heritage*

Say 'post-war housing', and most people think of a concrete tower of flats. Trellick Tower, completed in 1972 by Ernö Goldfinger, is the acme of the genre. What few realise is that Trellick forms part of a larger estate of three-storey houses and flats, themselves listed in 2012. Even at their peak in 1966, high-rise flats accounted for only 26% of new council dwellings in England and Wales. Yet little research goes into low-rise housing, for it is popular and sustainable, though easily taken for granted; it is also easy to obliterate its interest simply by changing windows and roofing materials. This article is concerned with public and private housing built in pairs or short terraces in towns and the countryside,

sometimes with blocks of flats to provide visual contrast and more varied dwelling types.

The late 1940s saw a burst of council house building in rural areas for farm workers. Terraces built for Loddon Council in Norfolk are listed, but the extent of this provision has never been appreciated. One area of post-war housing that has been extensively researched is that built for private sale by Span Developments Ltd in suburban south London and the Home Counties. Some flats are listed, but in 1998 the minister rejected the houses as unexceptional: victims of their success, for these simple dwellings were widely imitated around London. Span's architect, Eric Lyons, achieved densities of seventy persons per acre using two-storey terraces thanks to careful layouts with limited road access and dense planting. It was an updating of the traditional Georgian terrace or square, their formality relaxed by carefully contrived pedestrian ways and landscaping.

As early as 1963 architects at the Ministry of Housing and Local Government explored the use of two- and three-storey houses in terraces and squares, achieving a density of eighty persons per acre in a model scheme at Ravenscroft Road, Canning Town. The scheme also showed that Parker Morris standards of flexibility, garaging and central heating could be met within tight budgets. These houses were built of conventional brick and weatherboarding, but the Ministry developed its



Patio houses at High Kingsdown, Bristol, 1968–74 by Anthony Mackay of Whicheloe and Macfarlane. James O. Davies © English Heritage

Bishopsfield, Harlow, 1963–6 by Michael Neylan, the flats at the top of the slope, with an underground car park below.

James O Davies © English Heritage



own 5M steel-framed system for subsequent housing at Gloucester Street, Sheffield, and elsewhere.

Other architects used the terrace as a means of returning to the traditional street pattern, a reaction from the late 1960s against the wholesale clearance of urban areas for large blocks. The London Borough of Camden had the most ambitious housing programme of the late 1960s and early 1970s, funded by its high income from local rates. Led by Sydney Cook, most of its programme was low or medium-rise, the most interesting schemes by an in-house team of bright young graduates, but terraces had to become more complex to reach the densities required in inner London. Their work is epitomised by Mansfield Road, where Gordon Benson and Alan Forsyth designed two tiers of maisonettes – the lower level with a rear garden and the upper one with a roof terrace – in a terrace that follows the curve of the road. Roof lights and stepped sections brought light into the deep plan. Simpler models were adopted by the London Borough of Lambeth, where tall building was seen only as a stop gap while low-rise schemes were developed, sometimes in conjunction with the refurbishment of older houses. Darbourne and Darke built similar houses and maisonettes in brick for enclosed sites in Islington and at Queen’s Road, Richmond, which is partly listed.

More distinctive models for low-rise, high-density housing came from abroad. Just as Le Corbusier had inspired high-rise slabs with his first *Unité d’Habitation* at Marseilles, so his low-rise schemes for *La Sainte-Baume* of 1948 and ‘*Roq et Rob*’ from 1949 inspired architects to exploit a sloping site by placing entrances on the higher side

of the slope, using the fall in land to insert a second unit or other amenities. The Swiss architects *Atelier 5* popularised hill terraces with their *Siedlung Halen*, Berne, in 1960–1. By entering on a mid level, the lowest floor could be given over to children’s bedrooms opening into the garden, while adults had a private space on top. *Atelier 5* built a scheme at *St Bernard’s*, Croydon, but it was perhaps at Lambeth that their work had the greatest impact, when *Central Hill* was rebuilt with terraces of maisonettes in 1969–74, the upper maisonette entered from the upper slope and the lower maisonette from below.

Even single-storey houses could be built to high densities, using a patio plan where the blank side wall of one unit enclosed the courtyard garden of the next in a series of ‘L-shaped units. Here the model was Danish, with Jørn Utzon’s housing at *Kingo*, Helsingør, begun in 1957 and at *Fredensborg* (1962–5). Ralph Erskine incorporated patio houses into *Dunn Terrace*, part of Newcastle’s *Byker* estate (Grade II\*), but their most dramatic use is in the two-storey development of private houses at *High Kingsdown*, Bristol, built in 1971–4 to designs by Anthony Mackay of *Whicheloe Macfarlane*.

All these influences come together in one remarkable development that led the way in Britain for low-rise, high-density housing. The new towns were criticised for their low densities, and in 1960 Harlow Development Corporation decided to hold a competition to encourage new housing types. It was won by Michael Neylan, then working on Chamberlin, Powell and Bon’s road-hugging four-storey *Crescent House* in Goswell Road, London. His scheme, built in 1963–8 at Bishopsfield, comprised 239 units ranging from bedsits to five-

bedroom houses, all with outdoor space. The flats crowned a small hill, built over car parking that exaggerated its scale, and single-storey patio houses were strung out in pedestrian alleys below with long fingers of common land between them. The scheme beautifully integrates the need for flats and car parking, but it is the narrow defiles of houses that give the area its character, dubbed 'The Casbah' by locals.

The most interesting low-rise housing seems to appear where the architects faced most constraints, whether through the need for high densities or where sites were steeply sloping. Nevertheless, pockets of interesting housing await rediscovery across the country. ■

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## Barrow Island

Darren Ratcliffe

*Historic Places Adviser, English Heritage (North West)*

Sir James Ramsden and Henry Schneider's vision and investment brought the railway and iron to Barrow from the 1840s. With access to steel, this coastal Cumbrian town grew rapidly to become a world leader in shipbuilding. The first submarine in the world to fire a live torpedo was built here as early as 1886 and BAE systems nuclear submarine shipyard at Barrow today has the company's largest workforce in the UK. Its base dominates Barrow's skyline.

On a narrow island peninsula, cutting-edge manufacturing takes place alongside a remarkably

intact historic grid-plan townscape of former ship workers' tenements. Despite this rich continuing heritage, Barrow Islands community resides in the 3% of most deprived wards in England.

Around 750 of the 1770 dwellings on Barrow Island are in tenements built in the 1870s, most of them now listed either Grade II\* or Grade II; the overall settlement was designated a conservation area in 1994.

Decline in the UK's shipbuilding industry has resulted in job losses, de-population, economic challenges and a prolonged weakening of Barrow's housing market. Because 30% of all private-sector dwellings in the borough failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard, Barrow Council delivered a £15m Housing Market Renewal programme between 2006 and 2011. In April 2012, 349 of the tenement flats on Barrow Island remained vacant. There is no owner-occupation or social housing in these flats and to compound matters some blocks fell into receivership.

With conditions worsening, social facilities being lost and vacancy levels increasing, it is not surprising that some members of the community were until recently calling for the tenements to be demolished and the area redeveloped. Taking control, local residents established the Barrow Island Community Trust and secured £1m from the Big Lotto to build themselves a new community centre, leisure facilities and to co-ordinate community groups operating in the ward.

Meanwhile, following a £400,000 repair grant from English Heritage, Holker Estates began a £4m improvement of its grade II\* Devonshire Buildings and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) offered £3.5m from its Clusters of Empty Homes Fund to bring 229 vacant flats back into use.

In 2013 Barrow Council commissioned an international design competition run by the Landscape Institute supported by English Heritage and Places



An artist's visualisation of transformed public spaces at Barrow Island Tenements – new gardens, places to play and somewhere for the elderly to meet and socialise.

© Noel Farrer

Matter. Farrer Huxley Associates have since been appointed to develop plans to transform public spaces and landscape around the flats with a budget of £1.15m from the HCA. These plans promise new gardens with places to play and for the elderly to meet and socialise. These areas will replace windswept car parks and broken streets. Hearts and minds are changing. Confidence is growing; a developer has now agreed to acquire the flats in receivership for rehabilitation.

Government policies at a time of public austerity are designed to empower communities to take ownership of their environment and local services. The Barrow Island project demonstrates that the most deprived communities are often the strongest and most resilient. The challenge moving forward will be to foster the area's heritage and grow partnership working while providing appropriate technical aid to the community – not to mention bringing more than 300 badly needed homes back into the market. ■

## Housing renewal in Pennine Lancashire

Shaju Ahmed

*Heritage Investment Officer, Regenerate Pennine Lancashire*

Pennine Lancashire is the area covered by the local authorities of Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale. Five of these borough councils (excluding Ribble Valley) were part of the previous government's 15-year Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder programme. The HMR programme was tasked with rebalancing areas of low-demand housing and tackling issues of multiple deprivation. However, funding was cut half-way through the programme as part of the current government's austerity programme. Local authorities had to rethink their plans

to address housing market issues without government funding and to prevent decline in the areas that had already benefited from investment.

The local economy remains relatively buoyant despite the recession, thanks to its higher-value manufacturing sector. As a result, Pennine Lancashire local authorities are now focused on both delivering housing growth and renewal to meet the needs of the expanding local population. The area has an abundance of small, low-value terraced properties, but faces a growing demand for larger homes. The Pennine Lancashire local authorities have responded by undertaking a number of schemes to ensure 'heritage' complements housing and economic growth.

### Whitefield

The Pendle ward has experienced significant heritage-led housing regeneration. The first phases of pioneering 'two-in-one' properties, which initially began with public funding, extended housing choice from two to four-bedroom housing, and are now occupied by families. Further properties are in the process of being refurbished. The larger but carefully conserved and energy-efficient homes have replaced the dark, cramped and cold houses which affected people's health and added to local deprivation levels. A new primary school is being built, making the area an ideal place to bring up families. Other terraces in the Bradley and Waterside wards of Pendle will be regenerated using private-sector investment.

### Woodnook

In this area of Accrington post-HMR work has begun on 200 empty homes with an investment of £14m. An innovative joint venture between specialist empty-homes developer PlaceFirst, registered provider Twin Valley Homes and Hyndburn Borough Council, will deliver high-quality energy-efficient homes for market rent. Phase 1 comprises six blocks of terraced houses that were previously earmarked for demolition. Some of the traditional 'two-up, two-down' terraced houses will be knocked through to become modern three or four-bedroom homes but at the same time retain their original character and heritage. This phase will see 71 houses brought back into use, with the first families expected to move in before the end of 2014.

### Looking ahead

The Pennine Lancashire authorities recognise the key role that heritage plays in regeneration and have committed to increase capacity to support invest-

At Nelson in Lancashire, cold damp two-up-two-down cottages are being joined together to create the larger energy-efficient four-bedroom houses demanded by modern families. © Regenerate Pennine Lancashire



ment. Regenerate Pennine Lancashire, a company owned by the local authorities, and English Heritage have joint-funded a post to deliver heritage investment within housing and economic development. One of its tasks will be to develop the Pennine Lancashire Heritage Investment Strategy by mapping out key investment and funding opportunities against heritage assets. This commitment is further complemented by the designation, until 2018, of Pennine Lancashire as a 'priority area' by Heritage Lottery Fund. All of this means that there are likely to be further opportunities for local developers and registered providers to bring back empty homes by offering higher-quality market rentals of the kind that have been developed in Woodnook. ■

### English suburbs

Matthew Whitfield

*Investigator, Assessment Team (South), English Heritage*

Suburbs represent more than 80% of the everyday places where people live but they do not remain in stasis, despite popular perceptions to the contrary. Now, English Heritage has identified them as worthy of special attention within the National Heritage Protection Plan. Fieldwork is currently underway to improve our understanding of suburbs in the face of change: decline, densification, evolving functions and altered character.

Faced with a seemingly open-ended subject, the project team have drawn up a typological framework within which we can begin to understand most suburban development across the country. Rather than revisiting discrete, well established topics that have typically exercised researchers – garden suburbs, the middle-class developments of Metroland etc – we have started out with broad themes such as high-status suburbs, social housing and informally planned areas. Within these can be identified numerous types of suburb such as villa parks, cottage estates and plotland developments, sometimes crossing between themes. This has allowed us to target fieldwork at the types of suburban development that have previously been under-researched such as the Freehold Land Movement, municipal suburban expansion of the inter-war years and post-war expanded towns.

Since the start of conservation area designation in 1967, many councils have identified the attractiveness and special character of their older suburbs as worthy of protection. Taking a national view of such designations we have seen common themes emerge, for example the historic, engulfed settlement that contains pre-suburban fabric survival



and often a village-like character. But there are other kinds of suburban area that have received attention, albeit unevenly. In Liverpool, protection was given as early as 1971 to four areas of inter-war municipal housing in the outer suburbs, the landscapes and buildings of which were designed to a high standard by the city's nationally celebrated Housing Department. In Exeter, the Freehold Land Society estate centred on Prince's Square in the St Thomas area was designated in 1992 in recognition of the historic interest of the society (it intended to extend suffrage in the city) and the haphazard, picturesque layering of suburban housing types that resulted from its incremental development. The use of examples like these has offered us valuable insights into local enthusiasms: the pattern of conservation area designation is, by definition, local and therefore somewhat disjointed.

The broad themes and suburban types devised for the project have defined our avenues of research as we seek out examples to visit. Many of these are not conservation areas, because we are deliberately seeking to fill in the 'gaps' that are clearly identifiable in the national designation system. In the monograph that will be the major outcome of the project (2016), we intend to provide an account of the multi-faceted reasons for suburban growth and the inspiration behind its often complex character, moving beyond the tightly focused studies of the past to make clearer the bigger picture. ■

The Exeter Freehold Land Building Society laid out their estate in the St Thomas district in 1857. Given a formal road plan and generous plots, it was built up over the following century with individual and small speculative developments.

© Damian Grady, English Heritage

# New Housing in Historic Places

**Building new homes in valued places can be a sensitive matter – but with proper understanding and forethought, each can enhance the other.**

New housing in historic places can arouse strong emotions. Local communities can be closely attached to historic buildings and places, and the prospect of development can bring fears regarding the qualities that make them special. But cities, towns and villages across England have always changed as their functions evolved and the people and housing within them were influenced by new ideas and fashions. In many places, this gradual change can be understood as a kind of architectural narrative illustrating historical development (Adam pp 26–7). Taking this type of understanding as a cue for new development is important in ensuring that it moves the story on seamlessly (Studdert pp 19–20), while it also informs the English Heritage philosophy of ‘constructive conservation’ and its approach to new residential development in historic areas (Gates p 21).

There is growing recognition of the contribution that the historic environment can make in achieving an increase in housing supply. A number of valuable lessons can be drawn from the now-completed programme of disposal of historic hospitals (Johnson pp 23–4) and their successful redevelopment. Indeed, many of these lessons, together with other new approaches, are forming part of the activities of the Homes & Communities Agency in bringing forward public sector sites and heritage assets to the market (Brand pp 22–3).

Notwithstanding the capacity of historic buildings and places to accommodate new housing, many challenges remain, not least in terms of design and site context. Collaboration and consensus is often the key (Jefferson pp 27–8), while guidance and available information can help guide the development and location of proposals (Lake pp 24–5), and create a better platform for decisions. Taking a broader view of regeneration aims by thinking at a neighbourhood level and ensuring a wide range of end uses are represented in development can help ensure initiatives in historic areas have the greatest impact (Brown pp 28–9).

## Responding to local context

Peter Studdert

*Former Director of Planning, Cambridge City Council and member of English Heritage’s Urban Panel*

One of the most positive aspects of heritage designation is that it celebrates and conserves buildings and places that work for people. The best places have strong emotional resonance but also continue to meet very practical needs. This is particularly true for housing. Georgian streets and squares are listed because they are intrinsically beautiful and elegant – but also because they provide a civilised and efficient model for a high-density urban neighbourhood that is as relevant today as it was in the 18th century. Victorian villas and terraces are protected not just because they are handsome and well built but also because they are adaptable, and sustainable in the true sense of the word. At its best, even 20th-century modernist estate planning embodies a vision of social progress that can still be relevant to 21st-century needs. The best housing survives and is celebrated; the worst becomes a slum and is swept away.

So how can an understanding of historic places – townscapes and landscapes – help us build new places that can satisfy the needs of a growing and changing population and become the heritage of the future?

The recent reforms to the planning system are proving to be a mixed blessing. The Government’s commitment to neighbourhood planning has handed responsibility for meeting housing needs squarely onto local communities and their political representatives. But because of delays in the provision of guidance on key aspects of national planning policy, many local authorities have struggled to produce Local Plans that meet the tests for ‘soundness’ set by the Planning Inspectorate. And in the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, local communities are at the mercy of the market and the ill-defined ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’.

Local authorities and their communities therefore need to get ahead of the game. In the absence of a formal system of strategic planning in England outside London, informal joint working on planning policy between local authorities within housing market areas is essential. If random suburban

sprawl is to be avoided, there is a need for a visionary strategic framework within which the market can learn from history. And following best planning practice, there is a need for a sequential approach that embraces small-scale, local opportunities as well as more radical large-scale interventions.

The starting point has to be the regeneration and revitalisation of existing places. This is particularly true for historic town centres and high streets. The growth of online shopping and home working is already changing the role of town centres from places of transaction to places of interaction. Encouragement should therefore be given to converting the empty space above shops or city-centre town houses converted to offices back to their original use, building on past initiatives such as *Living over the Shop* and taking advantage of recent changes to permitted development rights. And where valued historic buildings have outlived their original purpose, maximum advantage should be taken of the new Community Right to Purchase to create additional housing to meet local needs if this is the most appropriate use. Government should show its commitment to conservation by restoring the reduced rate of VAT to alterations to listed buildings and extending it to repairs, to go some way to helping to put it on a level playing field with new build.

The demand for additional homes is so great that new build will nevertheless remain the main focus

of housing delivery. But it is often the poor quality of new housing that so alienates local communities. Rather than building organically from existing places, new housing estates balloon out in the spaces between, where they meet the least resistance. Meanwhile strips of ‘green separation’ are zoned to maintain the fiction that life can go on as before in existing communities, isolating the newcomers in characterless ghettos. How much better it would be if the quality of new housing was such that it would be welcomed as an enhancement to established communities, bringing new life and new activity and knitting in to the character of the place.

This does not require a pastiche approach. The best developments build around and within existing places and provide a range of contemporary responses to tried and tested traditional built forms, as at *Accordia* in Cambridge. We need much more good practice that shows how contemporary housing has learnt the lessons from the past. We need visionary and forward-thinking local authorities who see meeting housing needs as an opportunity to enhance and enliven their towns and cities, not as a threat to their heritage, and who reward and encourage developers who are making a creative response. And we need a national government that gives local authorities the support they need to think strategically and be more proactive. ■



Accordia in Cambridge  
– a contemporary  
reinterpretation of the  
Georgian townhouse.  
© Peter Studdert

## What does ‘constructive conservation’ mean for housing?

Dr Natalie Gates

Principal, Historic Places Team, English Heritage (East of England)

The term ‘constructive conservation’ describes English Heritage’s approach to the active management of change. Essentially, *Conservation Principles* explains what we are trying to achieve, *constructive conservation* is all about how we achieve it. Constructive conservation is a balance between conserving significance and promoting enhancement. It is all about the art of the possible!

New build in historic areas creates challenges. Commercial layouts and designs can veer to pastiche or feel alien to local settlement patterns. Designs for new buildings often give only a ‘nod’ to vernacular architecture or the use of local building materials in the palette for the development. English Heritage advice focuses on retaining the qualities that make a place special and supporting responsive architectural design. Commercial deliverability and local distinctiveness are not mutually exclusive.

My first example is the only housing development to have won the Stirling prize, right next to our Grade II offices in Cambridge. As RIBA states, ‘Accordia demonstrates that British cities need more of a masterplan, a collaborative approach and an eye for both the detail and the big picture in landscape and architecture’ (RIBA 2013)

This innovative high-density housing development (illustrated on p 20) provides private, shared

and public space in a way that is both communal and aesthetically pleasing. It acknowledges the architectural details of the Cambridge colleges, given a modern interpretation; uses Cambridgeshire-style white bricks (sadly not authentic), and it has vistas and spaces which knit the development together. The development’s modern, but referential, architecture chimes with the nearby conservation area, extended to include Accordia.

At a different scale, the award-winning Tibby’s Triangle development in Southwold has delivered much-needed housing in the heart of this historic seaside town. The former distribution yard of Adnams Brewery has a long frontage to the main street, close to the Grade I St Edmund’s Church, and is in the conservation area (illustrated on p 32). We encouraged the creation of a new street through the triangular site, with smaller passageways that evoke the existing grain of Southwold, opening up attractive new views to the Church. The buildings are modern interpretations of Southwold’s traditional terraces and use local brick and flint for the walls with clay pantile roofs.

The Bishop’s Walk development in Ely is a good example of restoring the traditional ‘grain’ of a city. The design of the prominent riverside site frames views of the internationally significant cathedral, drawing on the west-east orientation of existing developments. Using vernacular styles and local materials, the site includes both town houses and apartments with a variety of layouts. It was built in the early 2000s and it has worn well, providing a stark contrast to the contemporary, generic western urban extension to Ely.

These examples show how using the local historic environment is central to creating successful and attractive new places. Constructive conservation is about understanding and responding to the significance of a place. Good new design is not created in a vacuum, and if we are to leave a positive legacy for the future, understanding our past is key to building our future. ■

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The Bishop’s Walk development in Ely is a good example of restoring the traditional ‘grain’ of a city.

Source: Masterplan and design code: lathamarchitects.co.uk



### Public sector sites

Anthony Brand

Strategy Manager, Homes and Communities Agency

In case you missed it, things changed in 2008 following the market crash, particularly for those of us working in housing. The majority of the housing market has yet to return to that pre-credit crunch world, and whether or not you see that as a positive thing, there is no doubt that it poses challenges for the property and development sector.

In 2010 the (then) new government responded to the credit crunch with fresh ideas and priorities. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), as its delivery agency for housing and regeneration, was asked to be at the heart of some of this. Fast forward a few years, and we are now managing government programmes to provide recoverable investment to private partners (rather than traditional grant), using public land, infrastructure and other enabling investment to unlock development and stimulate housing and economic growth.

The HCA's land role has also grown significantly as a result of the government's commitment to dispose of land with capacity for 100,000 homes by 2015. Some of the assets we have acquired from the

former Regional Development Agencies and other Whitehall departments have significant heritage value, including 87 listed buildings and 13 scheduled ancient monuments – a pattern that is likely to continue as more public land passes through the HCA's books after 2015.

The HCA already manages heritage assets in line with the *Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate*. Most are in good condition, some are already tenanted, and many are at the heart of plans for bringing sites to market. We have been able to bring a significant number of them back into use over the last four years, from the great mills in Ancoats, Manchester to the award-winning low-carbon transformation of Graylingwell Hospital in Sussex and the exciting Tower Works scheme that has provided new commercial space in the historic Holbeck area of Leeds.

However, the HCA recognises that heritage assets pose risks as well as opportunities. The challenges of re-developing heritage assets have been particularly affected by the post-credit crunch fall-out and the need to focus limited public funding where we can have the greatest impact. Private developers struggling to access private finance also tend to prefer higher-margin, lower-risk greenfield developments to complex developments that are perceived to carry environmental, heritage or market risks.

The key (which we find ourselves saying a lot) is to see heritage assets as just that – *assets*, and valuable ones, that can help deliver economic and housing growth, environmental sustainability, education and skills, and community empowerment. Historically significant buildings can bring considerable benefits to all parties when we think about and integrate them into development in the right way. They can boost sales-interest and values, give a place a unique identity, foster local support, reduce environmental impacts by bringing existing structures back into use, all the while protecting and enhancing our nation's historic buildings.

The sites the HCA has brought forward in the last few years have included some of our most challenging and valued heritage assets. At Bewsey Old Hall, Warrington, it was the heritage element that made the site so attractive for the developer, opening the door for us to work with the local planners and cabinet members to bring forward a unique and highly sought after scheme through a realistic approach to 'enabling development'. At Hanham Hall, near Bristol, a low-carbon housing scheme has been developed around the transformed Grade II\* hospital building, which provides a visual, physical

The Grade II-listed Fair Mile hospital at Cholsey in Oxfordshire sits at the heart of a development of new-build homes, open spaces and community facilities.

© HCA



Bringing historic mills back into use in Ancoats, Manchester, to deliver high quality new homes and create a bustling canal-side community.  
© HCA



and community focus to the new neighbourhood around it. These are sites which have been successful because of, not despite, their heritage.

It is for this reason that we are continuing to work closely with English Heritage to identify the potential of heritage assets on land with which we are involved. Many of the sites mentioned above benefited from collaboration with English Heritage and they feature in our joint publication *Capitalising on the Inherited Landscape*. By properly understanding and making use of what we have, we can put history at the heart of our economic future while continuing to deliver the high-quality homes and places that people want. ■

For more information, visit [www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/article/importance-heritage-our-work](http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/article/importance-heritage-our-work)

## Re-using historic hospitals

Alan Johnson

*Architect and heritage consultant*

An important contribution to the conversion of non-residential buildings to housing is being made by former psychiatric hospitals, empty as a result of the introduction of Care in the Community from the late 1980s.

The Lunacy Act of 1845 changed the status of mentally ill people to patients and made compulsory the construction of asylums in every English county. The 1890 Lunacy Act gave asylums a wider role and unleashed a campaign of hospital-building. The typical hospital at the turn of the 20th century

was a big, purpose-built, multi-functional and largely self-sufficient institution erected on a green-field rural site, well away from the town centre. The principle of deinstitutionalisation at the heart of Care in the Community has released a host of such sites for re-use.

Developers have been quick to recognise the potential of these low-density complexes, which are almost invariably complemented by attractive mature parkland. Three developments currently being completed by the Home and Communities Agency (HCA) as part of the Hospital Sites Programme initiated by the former English Partnerships make enlightening case studies.

Bristol's Hanham Hall Hospital did not declare its heritage significance to the casual visitor at the time of its closure in 2000. The unsympathetic 1916 adaptation of a 17th-century gentry house as a private institution for the care of 'inebriates' was compounded by the addition of modern ward-wings which paid little regard to the layout of earlier formal gardens and the farmstead of the former small estate.

Because the buildings of Hanham Hall are listed Grade II\*, English Partnerships worked in collaboration with English Heritage to assess the historic significance of the whole site. This revealed that everything other than the Hall was of low architectural interest, thus allowing the resulting characterisation study to focus on the opportunities for sensitive redevelopment. The lack of significant surrounding structures also allowed the HCA to fulfil another important part of its mission – to

## HOUSING

provide housing that meets 'zero carbon' standards. In line with the recommendations of the characterisation study, Hanham Hall is being re-furbished for community use, including re-instatement of its former formal garden. The layout of the new housing will recover the character of the pre-existing small estate, complemented by waterways, orchards, allotments, gardens and the preservation of views to the adjoining Hanham Hills.

The West Sussex County Lunatic Asylum at Graylingwell on the outskirts of Chichester was opened in 1897. Of strongly symmetrical 'compact arrow' layout, the buildings were designed in Queen Anne Revival style by Sir Arthur Blomfield. Although none of the main hospital structures is listed, they form part of a conservation area on the grounds of their intact state and cohesive aesthetic.

After the last patients left in 2001, English Partnerships produced a development brief for the site that included a characterisation study carried out by English Heritage. This report helped the developer, architect and local authority to work together to decide which parts of the building fabric should be retained and which could be demolished. Once again, the development needed to meet the HCA's ambitions for carbon neutrality. The first phase of the project, in which new homes intermingle with converted administration and ward-blocks, has now been completed. The designer has clearly distinguished new-build from the retained buildings as well as carefully conserving their mature landscape-garden context with its many specimen trees.

The most ambitious development of the trio is the former Fair Mile psychiatric hospital at Cholsey in Oxfordshire. The institution opened in 1870 as the asylum for the county of Berkshire. It was designed by C H Howell and its landscaped grounds were laid out by Robert Marnock. Harmonious extensions to Howell's building were by the prolific hospital architect G T Hine.



Whereas the masterplans for Hanham and Graylingwell were realised by a single developer in collaboration with HCA, realisation of the 358 homes at Fair Mile was shared between Thomas Homes and Linden Homes, the former creating 134 dwellings in the retained buildings and the latter constructing the balance as new-build alongside the conserved Grade II Victorian buildings.

Notwithstanding the constraints of thin-walled Victorian buildings, a combination of internal thermal insulation and permanent mechanical ventilation incorporating heat recovery has allowed the converted dwellings to achieve the BREEAM 'Very Good' standard'. A very discerning and careful policy of conservation and re-use has also ensured that all repairs and necessary minor alterations harmonise with and complement the refurbished historic fabric. ■



Graylingwell hospital, West Sussex, where newly built houses are sited in gaps between the converted ward blocks.

© Alan Johnson

### New housing in rural areas

Jeremy Lake

*Historic Environment Intelligence Analyst, English Heritage*

Peter Bibby

*Department of Town and Regional Planning, University of Sheffield*

A major project, called the *Future of Rural Settlement*, is showing how new households have been created within the landscape and settlement context of rural areas. In 2001, the numbers of houses in England's rural domain, as defined by government's *Rural Urban Classification*, stood at four million, which is 2.8 times its 1851 level. Moreover, in recent decades the wider countryside, and in particular areas of dispersed rural settlement, has seen a greater net increase in the dwelling stock than has the urban margin – between 2001 and

At Fair Mile hospital at Cholsey in Berkshire, a facsimile of the original clock has been provided for the benefit of the new residents.

© Alan Johnson

2011 only 1 in 14 new houses were accommodated on the urban fringe

These new houses have been created not only through the physical expansion of existing settlements, but also the subdivision of existing property and the conversion of redundant (mostly farm) buildings. Work led by English Heritage has shown that, despite restrictive planning policies and the encouragement of economic use for redundant rural buildings, more than 30% of listed farm buildings have already been converted to residential use.

In some areas, map-based survey of the historic character and current use of traditional farmsteads has revealed that a significant, and until now largely unrecognised, level of business activity is associated with those that purport to be in residential use. This new awareness has helped to show how variations in local character can inform sustainable rural development in areas such as the High Weald AONB, with its distinctive pattern of dispersed settlements (Owen and Herlin 2007). It has also come at a time when calls are being made for an integrated approach to economic and residential development, including affordable housing for rural workers affected by high property prices.

Significant local variation in historic settlement, buildings and economic conditions mean that high demand and restrictive planning policies are intensifying pressure to convert and subdivide buildings in some areas while in others local character is being threatened by a lack of viable uses. These pressures are not confined to AONBs and National Parks.



They can be felt everywhere, but most notably in upland areas with significant stocks of redundant buildings and those parts of the country where rural historic buildings are under-represented on the statutory lists. Outside of rural conservation areas there are also areas of historic settlement in which only a small proportion of well-preserved traditional buildings meet national listing criteria or, because of the lack of support from a conservation officer, have yet to be registered on lists of locally significant buildings.

Challenges of these kinds call for an updated synthesis of our understanding of rural buildings (the first for 40 years) both at a national level and for local areas; a strategic understanding of rural settlement, buildings and the likely scenarios for change; and constructive guidance on how to develop and adapt different types of historic settlement and buildings.

Examples of the latter include the Farmsteads Assessment Guidance piloted by English Heritage in the High Weald ([www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org)) and Kent Downs ([www.kentdowns.org.uk](http://www.kentdowns.org.uk)) AONBs and the Worcestershire Villages assessment being undertaken by the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service with English Heritage support ([www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/archive-and-archaeology/information-and-advice/projects/villages-assessment.aspx](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/archive-and-archaeology/information-and-advice/projects/villages-assessment.aspx)). ■

*The data in this account is derived from the Future of Rural Settlement project that is being carried out by the University of Sheffield for English Heritage. By deepening the government's Rural Urban Classification ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/2011-rural-urban-classification](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2011-rural-urban-classification)) it will inform spatial planning policy, particularly within the context of promoting sustainable development within rural areas.*

#### REFERENCE

Owen, S and Herlin, I S 2007. *The Sustainable Development of Dispersed Settlement in the High Weald AONB*. Report for the High Weald JAC and English Heritage

An understanding of how this historic farmstead in the High Weald AONB had changed over time informed the siting of three new houses in the centre of the site. Significant but unlisted barns and oasts have been converted to residential use, and minor buildings (including rare surviving examples of hop-pickers huts) have been retained in ancillary use.

© High Weald AONB Unit, reproduced under licence, Crown Copyright, East Sussex County Council

## Respecting the narrative of place

Professor Robert Adam  
*ADAM Architecture*

Historic places are always changing. That change may have started a decade ago, a century ago or a millennium ago; the change may be rapid or it may be slow to the point of atrophy; but it is still change. The present condition of an historic place is always a stage in a process. New housing development will become part of that process.

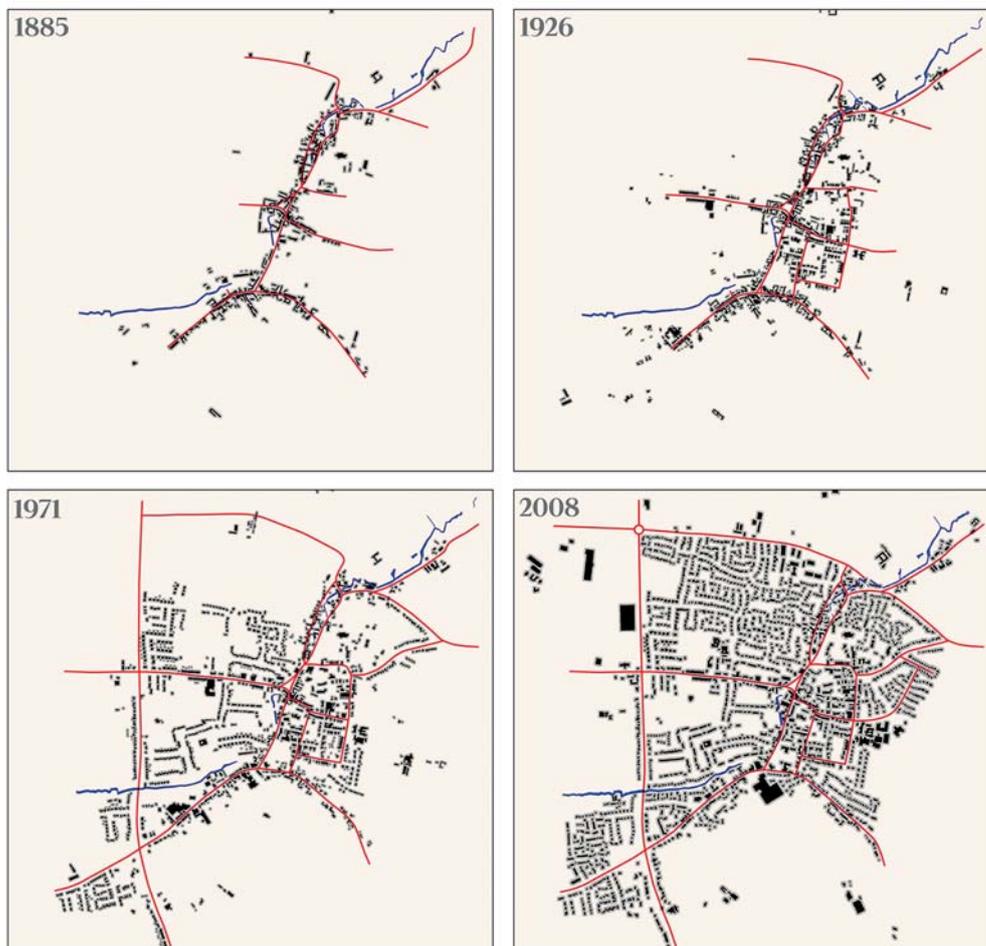
An historic town or village can be seen as the record of a progressive narrative that has as many chapters as the eras that have passed. Each chapter follows on from the other, the previous chapter informing the next. New chapters gain their meaning from how they add to this narrative and the greater the continuity the greater their relevance. If a new chapter tries to start afresh the narrative will be lost and the place will become a set of incomplete and incoherent episodes.

If the design of new housing in an historic town or village is to sit happily with a community, the people that live and visit must be able to understand that it is part of the unique narrative of the place.

There is no formula; the designer must simply engage with the pattern of change of the location and continue the narrative in a manner comprehensible to those who must read it.

The way a place has changed should be understood. Historic maps and records chart the pattern of that change. This will begin with the physical geography. All pre-industrial and most post-industrial settlements owe their foundation to particular natural features: a river crossing, a navigable port, fertile land, a water supply, defensive heights, the availability of a valuable resource, and so on. This geography will have a three-dimensional character. (A valley settlement will lose its essential character when development breaches the valley). From these beginnings a pattern of building will emerge that will have its own logic reflecting local and, often as not, wider events. Once this logic is understood it can be extended to set the scene for its continuation, moderated by current events and demands. With a well and intelligently researched narrative, the reasoning behind any development decisions can be rationally explained.

The narrative so far described is only the core of a more detailed understanding of how the character



The morphology of the market town of Raunds in Northamptonshire – understanding past change is the key to continuing the narrative of a place into the future.

© ADAM Architecture



Analysis of typical local building materials and practice – the recurrent details that define the character of a place.

© ADAM Architecture

of a place is made up. Beyond the broad pattern of change is the detailed record of landscape and building. The character of landscape will have its origins in the natural geography but will adapt over time with development and a pattern will emerge made up of open space (planted or paved), the relationship between buildings, streets and space, boundary conditions and so on. The vast majority of buildings will be housing, which will come together with other uses in particular ways, have a specific variety of scales, gather together or separate functions, use a range of materials, have distinctive architectural details and so on. A study of the character of building and contained space will provide the final detail of an historic narrative.

Only now can the unique requirements of new housing be applied to the place. As it is likely that house builder's sales imperatives or public provision will be based on an abstract concept of locational value or supply, the requirements for new development will almost certainly need moderation to adapt to the local narrative. Many conflicts arise out of a misunderstanding of this fundamental point. Financial and design requirements frequently raise expectations that cannot be accommodated in the narrative of an historic town or village and are often

subsequently defended on the basis of a misplaced financial imperative (generally based on excessive land cost) or an abstract concept of originality.

None of the analysis of narrative precludes originality or a rational principle of modernity. Nor does it require precise adherence to what has gone before. Indeed, many places have changed significantly over time. This will be part of the narrative and can be used to justify further change – but the specifically modern attitude to conservation must also be recognised. While many residents or visitors may not have an analytical concept of historic narrative, it will nonetheless be understood and people will be disturbed when it is contradicted. It is the duty of responsible designers to respond to the narrative and character of an historic place in a manner legible to the community. ■

### Design challenges in an historic area

Mark Jefferson

*Project Architect, bptw partnership*

Isobel Place is a new residential development in the Tottenham area of north London. It consists of 109 flats and houses for social rent and shared ownership. It was completed for Newlon Housing Group in 2013 by United House, with bptw partnership as architects.

Developing the site for housing was part of a strategy to safeguard Tottenham Town Hall, then on the English Heritage 'At Risk' register, by providing cross subsidy from the new residential development. The town hall was designed by the architects Jemmett and Taylor and completed in 1904. It formed the centrepiece of an ensemble of civic buildings for Tottenham Council that also included the fire station, public swimming baths and school.

Haringey Council wanted to safeguard the future of the dilapidated town hall and therefore commissioned a masterplan for the site, including the adjacent derelict swimming baths site, where the Bernie Grant Centre and associated small business units had already been completed. The housing site comprised the remaining land to the rear of the original town hall extending back to the former council depot which borders the Liverpool Street to Enfield railway line.

Although selected as the winning proposal, the Newlon scheme underwent early revisions following negotiations with the council and English Heritage. The final scheme, as built, retained more of the listed town hall building and allowed the housing to maximise the benefits of the south-



facing aspects of the site in a series of spacious courtyards, with the former clock-house building for the Clyde Road depot forming the focus of the southern range of the eastern courtyard.

The residential accommodation of the eastern courtyard nearest the town hall is set around the original firemen's cottages which are now used as small business units. This block also physically connects to the northern rear wing of the town hall. Due to their proximity, the scale and mass of this block closely follows that of the town hall.

The clock house range of the depot was in extremely poor condition following years of neglect. This culminated in the clock tower structure falling through the roof, resulting in water ingress and brick-work decay. Following engineering advice and agreement from English Heritage and the local authority, a scheme of façade retention, reuse of salvaged materials and restoration of the roof and clock tower was agreed. The rear elevation was built in new brick. The upgrading of this Victorian industrial building to contemporary standards proved to be the most challenging element of the scheme, with the need to satisfy thermal performance and building regulations as well as securing the appropriate warranties.

In order to tie together the historic elements of the scheme, a salvage strategy was implemented for the project. Throughout the housing site, the hard landscaping features granite setts similar to those that formed the surface of the original depot roads and yard.

In economic terms the project proved a success; the town hall has been restored and brought back into full public use as small business units and brought the stunning Moorish Jacobean Council Chamber back into public use. This has been funded through the delivery of 109 new affordable homes contributing to the regeneration of a key community in North London.

Architecturally, the constraints of the backland

site have been overcome through a collaborative approach from the outset between architect, developer and local government agencies. As a result two historic buildings have had their setting significantly improved to the mutual benefit of the house and a Grade II listed building has been saved from the 'at risk' register.

Altogether the project took eight years to realise, due to the complex nature of the works and the detailed negotiations required at each stage of the process. There were significant hurdles along the way but the collaborative approach ensured a successful outcome. In addition to the successful new business uses making a positive economic contribution to the area, all the homes at Isobel Place were quickly let or sold, so addressing a chronic shortage in the area. ■

The clock-house range before its restoration.

© bptw partnership

The new and the old. Isobel Place looking towards the restored Tottenham Town Hall.

© bptw partnership



## Money Matters

Chris Brown

*Chief Executive, Igloo Regeneration*

In for the search for ways to increase housing supply, some economists suggest looking for ‘price signals’ when deciding where to build. They also note that historic areas, due to their being attractive, often have higher prices. So should we be targeting areas such as Mayfair and Belgravia for new housing, or looking to neglected areas where regeneration has the potential to add value at the same time as creating houses?

Large amounts of new housing are created on previously developed land, a potentially misleading term that can also encompass a change of use of existing buildings. Over much of the country, government has recently changed permitted development rights to allow this change of use to happen without planning permission. This is for a three year trial period and property owners are rushing to take advantage in places where residential values are substantially higher than those of offices and where they think they can acquire an empty building within the three-year window.

Too often, public authorities and other land owners are tempted to demolish decent buildings rather than find interim uses for them that can start the regeneration process.

In most of the country, including London, residential use offers the highest value, at least of upper floors. In lower-value regeneration areas, where no development is financially viable, it is often the slightly more valuable historic neighbourhoods that are targeted by residential developers as they require less grant subsidy. These are the areas in which the Igloo Regeneration Fund mainly works.

Igloo’s approach is to take a whole neighbourhood/community view. One of the objectives of urban regeneration is to bring a neighbourhood up to a level where it can operate normally without government subsidy. Igloo doesn’t try to maximise the value of each individual component of the regeneration project but rather to maximise the value (social, environmental and financial) of the overall project.

For example, although residential use generally offers the highest value, it often does not work well on the ground floor. Instead, it may benefit the overall value of neighbourhood if an active, but lower-value, community use is found for ground-

floor space fronting the street. In the 1950s and 60s, Jane Jacobs, the Manhattan-based author, similarly identified that many of the most interesting uses in a neighbourhood – such as artists’ studios and community space – took place in low-value buildings.

So a developer has options; to demolish and build new homes, to refurbish to modern standards for new residential uses or to make minimal investment to maintain the building at a low rent for interesting uses. Very often the first will deliver the largest site value while the last will deliver the greatest uplift over the wider area.

Too often, public authorities and other land owners, driven by short-term cost considerations like empty-building rates, insurance and security are tempted to demolish decent buildings rather than find interim uses for them that can start the regeneration process and provide the longer-term opportunity to maximise values over the wider area. Similarly, while refurbishment of a good old building for residential use may not maximise value in isolation, its impact on the value of the surrounding neighbourhood can be significant.

When we are promoting one of our residential projects we always market the neighbourhood first. Most people choose the neighbourhood they want to live in before they choose the building. What’s more, two thirds of them in our experience won’t buy the standard new-build product from a volume house builder.

We take the same approach to the non-residential elements of our mixed-use schemes. We aim to have those interesting artists’ studios, bike workshops, community cinemas, coffee shops or restaurants in operation before our residential customers arrive. The tendency of developers to leave ground floors empty, often for years, remains puzzling.

In our view, shaping the future of an historic neighbourhood with fragmented ownership is the job of the planning system. Planning policies need to be designed to protect those beneficial uses that individual developers, acting to maximise individual values, would not build or would displace. Such a framework would encourage a neighbourhood-wide approach to development and change, and to answer my original question, would help focus minds on areas where regeneration initiatives can make a substantial difference. ■

# Looking Ahead

**Providing the kinds of home that people want depends not only on good planning and design skills but close collaboration with local communities.**

Current trends and initiatives in the housing market are likely to have impacts across the coming years. High levels of demand for housing and land create issues for local authorities to be mindful of in planning new development (Robinson pp 30–31). This means that careful choice and application of the right techniques in managing and guiding change can be crucial (Orr pp 31–33). Quality of design and the involvement of local communities at a stage where they can influence outcomes can also help produce better results (Waterhouse pp 34–5), while considering conservation and design issues in the land-allocation process can address issues before they become sticking points (Boffin pp 40–1).

In terms of housing, perhaps the most important recent change to national policy is the introduction of neighbourhood planning. Emerging experience offers encouraging signs for historic places if the process is managed collaboratively (Rowlands pp 38–9), while on a much more ambitious scale, ideas for new garden cities could make a major contribution to housing supply by using the principles first established over a century ago (Lock pp 36–7). Yet the vast majority of the houses that tomorrow's communities will live in are already here – work is underway to ensure that we have the skills and the workforce to maintain them in the years to come (Turner pp 33–4).

## What modern housing means for heritage

Dickon Robinson

*Independent advisor on architecture and housing and member of the English Heritage Urban Panel*

Politicians of all complexions agree that we need more new homes. As housing creeps to the top of the political agenda there is a sense that the balance of public opinion is shifting away from heritage and environmental conservation, in favour of more housing at any cost.

Government policy is a mixture of relaxing planning constraints through the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework, and demanding that local authorities identify lots of housing land. The main impact so far seems to have been to stimulate a rapid escalation in housing values, but little sign of the increase in supply so fervently desired.

But perhaps we expect too much from government. I have always been more interested in the often unexpected trends in housing design and supply that seem to have their root causes out-with immediate government policy or control. In the late 1970s there was a popular revulsion against tower blocks and for a decade or two low-rise low-density housing schemes were de rigueur, especially for families. In the run up to the millennium, the towers began to creep back. In the past decade their return has been triumphant, now taller than ever!

Meanwhile in the shires the Poundbury effect seems to be everywhere. Gone is the calm rationality of garden cities with tree-lined streets and detached and semi-detached houses. Now we get higher-density, neo-vernacular, higgledy-piggledy planning; estates full of very small detached houses with no hierarchy, no permeability, and impossible addresses.

So what are the heritage implications? Higher densities are now a given, bearing in mind that there seems to be little appetite for seriously relaxing the green belt. As a consequence we will see more high-rise developments in our towns and cities. Meanwhile, outside the green belt there will also be a significant increase in greenfield development, as many brownfield sites have already been developed and those that remain are often prohibitively expensive to develop.

In London, local authorities are increasingly eyeing up their post-war estates as their densities are often lower than their modernist forms imply. Typical examples are the sad loss of the Heygate

Robin Hood Gardens in Tower Hamlets, designed in the late 1960s by Alison and Peter Smithson and now facing demolition. Source: Flickr © Steve Cadman





The Western Riverside Development at Bath – high density in the city centre in order to protect the rural periphery.  
© Crest Nicholson

Estate in Southwark and the scandalous impending demolition of Robin Hood Gardens in Tower Hamlets. Any estate in London not already protected by listed status is potentially at risk, and a re-evaluation of the post-war housing legacy is urgently needed if other decent examples of civic leadership and powerful architectural vision are not to be casually lost.

The impact of rising densities and retained greenbelt can now be seen in Bath, where the massive Bath Western Riverside housing estate is rapidly taking shape. One of the glories of Bath is the ring of green hilltops which surround it and form the backdrop to its exceptional architecture. Under great pressure from successive governments to meet ambitious new housing targets, the local authority has had the unenviable task of weighing up building on the periphery or in the centre of the city. In choosing the latter they have acquiesced at higher densities than would have been desirable and the consequence is, notwithstanding an excellent master plan and some potentially excellent architecture, a development that feels ‘big’ for its location.

With much more housing promised in the green fields around market towns and rural settlements, what is at risk is the historic relationship between the scale of town centres and their hinterland. Nowhere is this more starkly illustrated than at Ely. Ely Cathedral is a masterpiece of medieval European architecture that dominates the Fens from its elevated prominence. Up close, the extreme contrast between this huge building and the modest village that surrounds it was arguably unique in England. Today, that contrast has already been damagingly diluted by the vast swath of mediocre suburbia dumped on its doorstep. With more major housing development proposed, along with a

crassly sited major road in the foreground of the principal view required to service the new housing, the erosion of heritage value is obvious.

In conclusion, with the exception of still sadly unappreciated post-war architecture, the main impact is unlikely to be on historic buildings themselves, but on their setting which is likely to see great change. As they shrink in relation to their increasingly large neighbours, the risk is that our sense of their relative significance and importance when originally constructed will be diminished. ■

### **Making a home for heritage: tools for integrating housing development in historic places**

Steven Orr

*Land Use Consultants*

A strong sense of place, distinctive character and connections to a rich cultural heritage all combine to make historic cities, towns and villages attractive places to live. They are also a focus of pressure for new housing development. Local planning authorities (LPAs) play a central role in understanding and managing this pressure. However, they are often under intense pressure from prospective developers and government alike to make space for housing, particularly where this is seen as a driver of economic recovery.

A range of tools and techniques is available to help LPAs and developers to understand the character and significance of the historic environment and to assist in the delivery of appropriate and sensitive development. While none of these approaches is a panacea, used in parallel they can provide LPAs with the information and confidence to make robust decisions at both the strategic and site-specific level.

The development plan process is *the* key opportunity for LPAs, consultees and communities to shape a strategic approach to housing. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is the principal means by which negative effects on the historic environment can be avoided or reduced at the strategic level. They can also be used to test alternative scenarios for development and settlement expansion considered during the Local Plan process.

SA is a potentially powerful tool for understanding the location, scale, quantity and type of new housing that is appropriate for communities and the historic environment alike – but the availability of good-quality information and the professional skills to interpret it are the keys to unlocking its value. Recent experience also shows that English



New, higher-density housing in context, at 'Tibby's Triangle', Southwold. Looking towards the Grade I St Edmund's church. © LUC

Heritage is seeking a stronger understanding of setting issues in SAs of proposed housing allocations, something which will significantly increase their value. The traditional designation-based approach remains an important means of identifying specific receptors of change. Ideally though, it should be supplemented by a strong understanding of how individual assets, landscape and townscape interact to create a broader sense of time-depth and character.

Characterisation techniques have evolved considerably since their inception in the 1990s, and have been widely employed from the county and local authority level down to the settlement or site level. Such studies can help to add context and detail to both strategic assessments and the master-planning and design of development. Our recent research highlighted the value of these approaches in informing conservation interventions, for example at the former hospital sites at Hanham Hall in Bristol and Graylingwell in Chichester (see Johnson pp 23–4). However, the same projects also underline the need for robust local policy approaches to ensure that their value is fully realised with regard to the layout, density and detailed design of new-build housing in historic contexts. Future initiatives making use of similar tools to guide developers would benefit from this integration, along with a design code or principles derived directly from the characterisation work.

Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Historic Area Assessments can be key design tools, ensuring that designers understand their site's interaction with the surrounding historic environment, including key views and relationships, and locally appropriate forms and materials. Successful schemes, such as Tibby's Triangle in Southwold, demonstrate the value of a strong understanding of place – in this instance ensuring that a comparatively large-scale development was effectively incorporated within a highly sensitive conservation area and the setting of a Grade I-listed church.

Nationwide, many LPAs are making use of a wide range of tools to shape development in historic contexts, from local design guidance to site-specific masterplans and development and planning briefs. These tools can help to encourage good-quality applications, but a further challenge for LPAs is to ensure that the conservation and management of historic features agreed through the planning process are delivered 'on the ground'. Monitoring compliance with conditions and legal agreements is difficult, particularly in resource-constrained circumstances. Stalled and compromised projects are a sadly widespread symptom of the economic crisis, and highlight a need for research into approaches to mitigating this risk to nationally significant assets, and to the delivery of new sustainable communities.

Perhaps the most important lesson from our

research and recent experience is that for any design or assessment tool to be genuinely successful it needs to be well integrated with planning policy and be supported by the availability of expert advice on the historic environment. Curatorial archaeologists and conservation officers are a vital link in the chain. Not only do they provide crucial interpretation of policy and guidance requirements, but they can also ensure that assessments and design responses are appropriate for the significance of the affected assets and thereby give confidence to decision-makers and developers alike. ■

### CoRE – creating the skills for tomorrow’s buildings

Elise Turner

*Project Manager, Festival of Retrofit, Centre of Refurbishment Excellence*

The Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE) opened in 2014 with a vision to help provide a workforce equipped with all the necessary skills to create a supply of sustainable, environmentally friendly homes through a large-scale programme of refurbishment. Such a strategy is designed to help address the paradox of the country’s shortage of affordable homes while at the same time thousands of older properties lie empty.

CoRE will showcase the latest sustainable build-

ing solutions and provide tradespeople with the knowledge needed to embrace the new technology and techniques necessary to help build a low-carbon future for homes in the UK. Funded by the Heritage Lottery, European Regional Development Fund and Communities and Local Government, CoRE is a not-for-profit organisation designed to support better retrofit in the UK.

Britain has the oldest housing stock in the western world. And inherited housing matters, not just because it preserves our heritage and sense of place, but because 80% of the houses which will be standing in 2050 have already been built. The UK’s 25 million homes currently account for 27% of all UK carbon emissions, and in order to meet our country’s 2050 emission targets, 7 million traditionally constructed (solid-wall) homes have to be upgraded to more thermally efficient ‘superhomes’.

In 2013, the Government promised the ‘biggest home improvement programme since the second world war’ and ‘a massive economic and job opportunity’ through the Green Deal, a pay-as-you-save finance package for home improvements, and the accompanying Energy Company Obligation (ECO), a fund to improve hard-to-treat properties. According to the *Guardian* (Jan 2014) the programme ‘has been more of a whimper than the “transformational” scheme that Greg Barker promised’.

Action is needed quickly if the country’s 2050



The Grade-II listed Enson Pottery Works and America Hotel in Stoke-on-Trent have undergone a £12 million restoration to become the Centre of Refurbishment Excellence.

© Purcell Architects

targets are to be met. A property needs to be refurbished every 50 seconds (Salford University), but at the current rate, it will take 500 years (Sustainable Homes). However, this urgency needs to be balanced with protecting and preserving our traditional buildings. A report by the Sustainable Traditional Building Alliance (STBA), *Responsible Retrofit of Traditional Buildings*, showed that there was a wide-scale 'lack of knowledge of traditional buildings and understanding the behaviour of their construction' (see Griffiths, pp 9–10). CoRE's mission is to reverse this trend and share knowledge from industry experts through its Masterclass programme and curriculum.

To give just one example, many contractors treat pre-1919 properties with solid walls as they would a more modern cavity-wall building, aiming to make them as air-tight as possible to prevent heat escaping. What they do not realise is that in a traditional building moisture is transferred in a completely different way and will become trapped within the walls, causing damage to the building's fabric and health problems for its inhabitants (for more details read English Heritage's guide, *Energy Conservation in Traditional Buildings*). This problem was encountered by Poole Phillips Architects, one of CoRE's members, when they undertook to undo a disastrous 1970s refurbishment which had virtually destroyed a 17th-century farmhouse in Worcestershire. You can view this and other fascinating case studies at [www.core-skills.com](http://www.core-skills.com).

To answer these problems is to encourage responsible retrofit. This differs from standard refurbishment in that it uses the latest research and technology to understand a building holistically. It is an approach that highlights how the installation of one measure, such as solid wall insulation, affects the whole of a building, and how without a full understanding of the connections and risks associated with each measure, long-term hidden problems will be stored up, damaging the building's fabric, heritage or occupants.

Thanks to Heritage Lottery funding, CoRE and STBA have developed Responsible Retrofit Training, a half-day course that is part of the CoRE curriculum and essential for anyone who wishes to make a heritage building more thermally efficient whilst maintaining its integrity and historical character. Courses are being run in centres all over the country throughout 2014, so for more details or to sign up visit [www.core-skills.com](http://www.core-skills.com), email [info@core-skills.com](mailto:info@core-skills.com) or call 01782 792900.

You can also keep up to date with the latest news and developments in responsible retrofit by

following CoRE on twitter @sustainablecore, signing up to our regular newsletter or becoming a member, which includes a free subscription to CoRE and BRE's new regular publication *Retrofit Briefing*. ■

### Design standards

David Waterhouse

Head of Programmes, Cabe at Design Council

We hear much argument about the amount of housing that this country needs to deliver. It is widely acknowledged that we (the industry) have under-delivered at vast levels for many years. Current projections indicate that we need to be providing at least 250,000 new units per annum. The dispersal of these figures across the country is not even, and those areas under greatest pressure for new homes, such as the Greater South East, are where most arguments take place.

The other side of the quantum coin is quality. The reason new housing is resisted is partly because the quality of the average development is poor. However, well-designed housing that is delivered in collaboration with the people who will live there, can be a real asset to communities and support existing services.

National planning policy makes it quite clear that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and indivisible from good planning. Good design is not just critical in individual building design, but in planning for places. Embedding strong design principles in a new development from the outset is the key to a sense of place and

This housing development in Derwenthorpe, by David Wilson Homes and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust has won a Building for Life award. It is located at the eastern edge of York and shows how new housing can be well integrated into an existing community.  
© Cabe at Design Council





The Russells at Broadway in Worcestershire has won a Building for Life Gold standard award. It is an example of a well-designed new housing development within the context of a much-admired historic settlement.

© Cabe at Design Council

functionality that is not at odds with the surrounding landscape and existing built environment.

A number of 'housing audits' undertaken by Cabe across England from 2004 onwards showed that much new development was of very poor quality. This was the case across the country, from both volume and regional housebuilders.

Fast forward to the emerging post-recession era and the issue of quality is still at the core. Our recent work on neighbourhood plans, and with housebuilders and local authorities, shows that there is still a major gulf between the quality of new developments and the existing townscape. This is never more acute than in sensitive areas and settings such as market towns.

This is where design standards and toolkits like Building for Life can help. Building for Life is a partnership between the Cabe team at Design Council, the Home Builders Federation and Design for Homes and is the industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. The latest version, *Building for Life 12* (BfL12), is refreshed to take account of the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework. It helps developers integrate new housing in to established neighbourhoods by enabling them to draw on and enhance the existing character and distinctiveness of the local context

Its 12 questions reflect our vision of what makes a new development work – attractiveness, functionality, sustainability and sense of place. Critically, BfL12 is also designed to help local planning

authorities assess the quality of proposed and completed developments, and to act as a point of reference in the preparation of local design guides.

BfL12 is shortly to develop further into a commendation, Built for Life, that will give consumers confidence and certainty that the new home they are buying meets high design standards across three key areas: integration into the neighbourhood, creating a place, and street and homes design.

However, providing tools for assessing the quality of a scheme is only part of the solution. Community buy-in, in the form of a robust dialogue with developers on local aspirations for a new scheme, is equally important. Cabe's recent work with the Good Homes Alliance, known as the Community Voicebox, explores how community empowerment and good, sustainable design can be delivered in partnership with developers.

Major developers are increasingly keen to get community consultation right the first time because of the substantial risks of a public backlash. Research indicates that the earlier the consultation, the better the outcome for all concerned – reducing the developer's exposure to risk, and helping communities get their voice heard.

The traditional approach has been for local authorities or developers to commission non-expert PR and communication agencies to conduct consultations that lack a proper understanding of design and planning. These tend to have low levels of engagement: public notices in local newspapers, on the street or notice boards at community centres just don't arouse people's interest.

The Community Voicebox tackles these issues by:

- providing expertise in sustainability and design to communities who want to shape new housing developments in their local area to drive up quality
- bringing forward the point at which communities and developers start talking – consultation is often criticised as tokenistic, carried out too late for communities to have a real influence
- learning and disseminating good practice nationally – to innovate and promote great engagement and consultation that meaningfully influences new housing proposals.

Design standards work, but they work better in conjunction with community engagement delivered from the outset; together they deliver housing people love, because they helped design it. ■

## Making new garden cities a reality

Katy Lock

*TCPA Garden Cities and New Towns Advocate*

The garden city concept is over 100 years old. It was devised by Ebenezer Howard in response to Victorian slums and represents one of the most significant influences on our architectural and social heritage, but the principles it established – the creation of beautiful, healthy places with social justice at their heart – are more relevant now than ever. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) has been leading a campaign for a new generation of garden cities, identifying the barriers to and opportunities for delivery, and exploring how to make this happen under the current planning system. But if we are serious about meeting our chronic housing needs we need commitment to changes in policy and legislation at the national level. As we move towards the 2015 election and with support voiced for new Garden Cities from all three major political party leaders, will a new Government have the courage to help make new Garden Cities a reality?

We all know that the UK needs more, better quality and greener housing. Many younger people want somewhere affordable to bring up a family, and many of the older generation are looking to comfortably ‘downsize’. But we need to think about more than just homes. We also need to create jobs, support growth in sustainable locations and bring about a transition to a green economy.

Building a few homes here and there is not

going to be enough. We need to think strategically about the best way to meet the needs of the nation. Larger-scale developments, based on garden city principles, make use of economies of scale and can truly fulfil the ambitions of sustainable development. As well as creating healthy and vibrant communities they can also deliver social housing, zero-carbon design, sustainable transport, local food sourcing, and access to nature. What’s more, new communities have the potential to develop governance structures that put people at the heart of developing new communities and caring for their own assets.

### Garden City principles

The TCPA has articulated the principles of the garden city model in a way that allows them to be applied to new communities today (see box below). These ideals were shaped by people who believed that there could be a better, more sustainable and more co-operative way of living. But the big achievement of the movement was to turn idealism into real progress at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities and to inspire similar development all over the world. These pioneers also used new, practical ways of giving the community a financial share in the place where they live. The model of land-value capture and stewardship applied at Letchworth means that £3.5 million was reinvested into the town last year through charitable initiatives such as health and arts services.

### Garden city principles

The garden city is a holistically planned settlement that enhances the natural environment in which it is set, and that offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. It is the manifestation of what is today called ‘sustainable development’.

Key elements include:

- strong vision, leadership and community engagement
- land-value capture for the benefit of the community
- community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets
- mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are affordable for ordinary people
- beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens in healthy communities
- a strong local jobs offer in the garden city itself and within easy commuting distance of homes.
- opportunities for residents to grow their own food, including allotments
- generous green space, including: a surrounding belt of countryside to prevent sprawl; well-connected and biodiversity-rich public parks; high-quality gardens; tree-lined streets; and open spaces.
- strong local cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable neighbourhoods.
- integrated and accessible transport systems.



Welwyn Garden City, one of the first garden cities to provide high-quality housing, strong green infrastructure and a range of tenures all within walkable neighbourhoods.  
©TCPA

### Creating garden cities today

The government first announced its support for a new wave of garden cities in January 2012 and soon afterwards the garden city principles were referenced in national planning policy. Despite some financial support for selected projects, we have so far seen little action to make new garden cities a reality. Meanwhile, local authorities are working hard to get their Local Plans in place, the private sector is keen to deliver and communities are in chronic need of better homes.

The TCPA has published a suite of documents to help local authorities and the private sector to plan and deliver developments that follow the principles of garden cities. This requires local authorities to be visionary and to work closely with communities to

determine the best approach to meeting their housing needs. It also requires them to consider the role of citizen-led housing initiatives, such as self-build and Community Land Trusts.

Local authorities also have a key role to play in assembling the right land in the right place and at a price that will allow the community to benefit from uplifts in land values and ensure community assets are looked after in the long term. Creating new places also means investing in infrastructure, in the knowledge that the payback is significant but may come 20 or 30 years down the line. The private sector has the means and will to invest in such projects but needs local authorities to help to reduce the risks to the point at which development becomes commercially enticing.

New garden cities are only successful if communities are integral to the planning and development process. This is why we published *How Good Can It Be?* a 'guide for communities' which aimed to de-mystify planning and the garden city concept and explain how people can get involved in making their neighbourhood a better place to be ([www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/gc-community-guide.html](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/gc-community-guide.html)).

There is a real opportunity to bring forward new communities through local plan processes, but in the absence of a strategic 'larger than local' planning framework it will be difficult to ensure the right scale of development is proposed in the right places. The TCPA has been looking at the 1946 New Towns Act, which enabled the delivery of 32 new towns that today provide homes for more than 2.6 million people. It needs modernisation to make it fit for purpose but the basic framework is there.

We have interest from the political parties; we have local authorities who want to plan for better approaches to growth in their area. We need innovative financial models to understand how the private sector can assist with paying for them. The TCPA is currently examining these issues. We will see if the 2015 government, whatever its colour, has the courage to help make new garden cities a reality, and create places we will still be proud of in 100 years' time. In the meantime, have you thought about how to get involved in what is happening where you live? ■

For more on the TCPA's garden cities campaign visit: [www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities.html](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities.html)



How Good Can it Be? The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) is helping communities to understand the benefits of adopting Garden City principles at the local level, including opportunities for self build, community land trusts and management of local parks and facilities. ©The Land Trust

## Neighbourhood planning

Sue Rowlands

*Director, Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design*

Neighbourhood planning was unveiled by the government back in 2011 as part of the new 'localism agenda' that aims to put decision-making about planning matters into the hands of local people. The initial media frenzy led people to believe that 'neighbourhood plans' would let them do whatever they liked in their town, village or part of a city. The sober reality did not take long to become apparent. The Localism Act is very clear that neighbourhood plans must be broadly in line with higher-level policy: specifically the National Planning Policy Framework and the local plan. Nor are neighbourhood plans a way of saying 'no' to development.

The need to accord with higher-level policy means that many neighbourhood plans are taking on the challenge of allocating land for residential development.

The first plan to allocate sites was for Thame, a historic market town in Oxfordshire, with over 200 listed buildings within its town-centre conservation area. South Oxfordshire District Council had identified in its draft local plan that the town should contribute 775 new homes to the district's overall total. A strategic allocation of 600 homes was proposed for the western edge of the town, the remaining 175 to be allocated in the neighbourhood plan. Local people and Thame Town Council opposed the single allocation, fearful that it would lead to the same bland, anonymous development that had taken place in the town during the 1960s

and 1970s. 'We don't want another Lea Park' was the local opinion.

Thame Town Council saw the neighbourhood plan as an opportunity not to contest the allocation of 775 dwellings, but to challenge their spatial position. If the town was to grow substantially, then the council felt that local people should have a say in where new housing should go and how it should be designed. Thame Town Council appointed Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design to lead the process of producing a neighbourhood plan a few months before the local plan Examination in Public (EiP).

Mindful of the need to demonstrate to the inspector that the neighbourhood plan was capable of taking on the serious task of allocations, we shaped the project by:

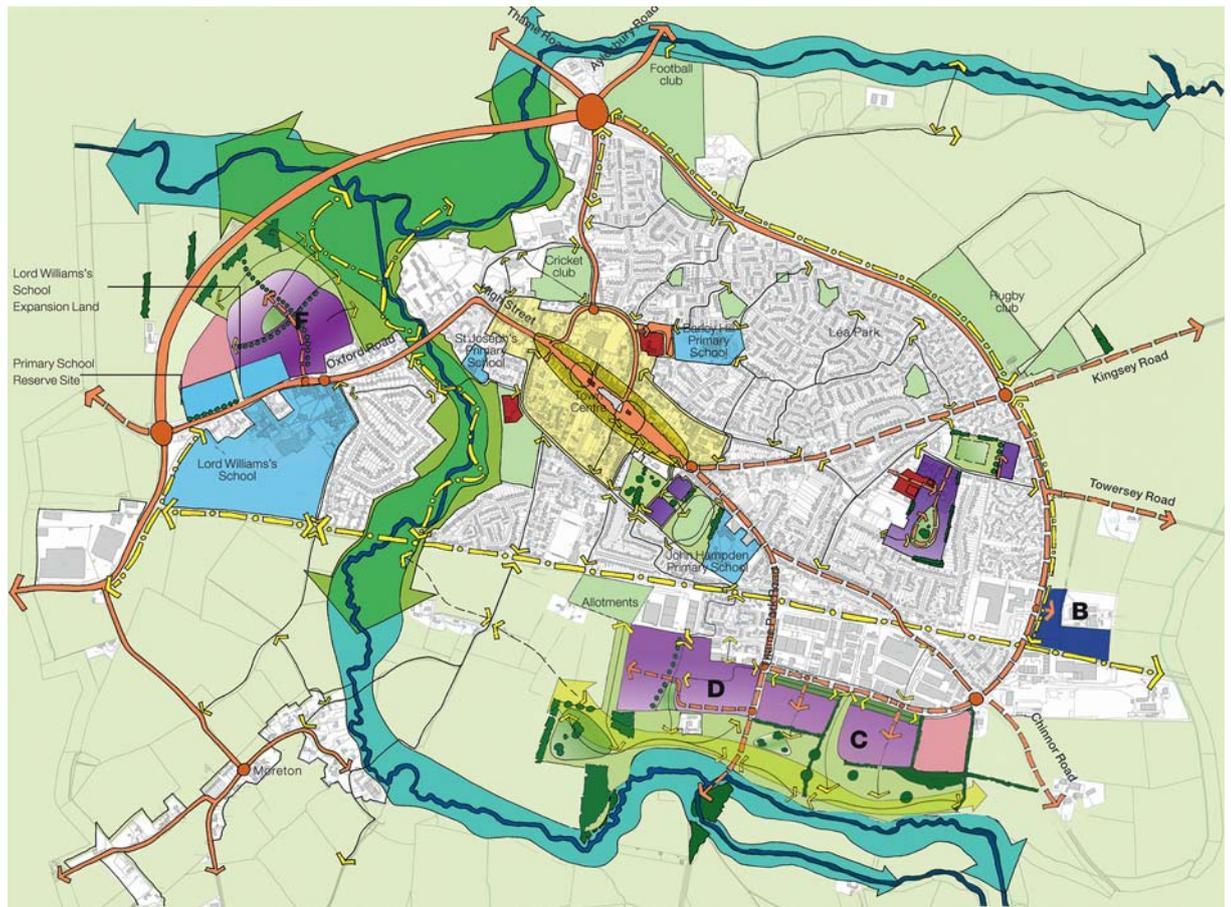
- 'front-loading' public consultation with two intensive weekends of events; and
- accelerating the technical work needed to support decision-making on housing allocations, so that initial spatial options could be explored at the second public consultation.

It was too early to reach consensus about where new housing should be located, but there was a strong view that it should reflect and be properly integrated with the historic character and quality of the town. People saw integration as both physical and social – so new development should be as close as possible to the town centre (preferably within walking distance) and small in scale. There was enthusiastic support from local people for dispersing new housing around the town to help achieve integration. Our technical work demonstrated



Thame High Street: the bustling heart of an English market town that needs to accommodate an extra 775 homes while retaining its essential historic character

©Thame Town Council



that there were many different ways of achieving this dispersed yet integrated approach. The town council was therefore able to demonstrate to the inspector that local people had a clear view on the principles of housing allocations and that, from a technical planning perspective, this could be achieved.

The inspector was convinced by the evidence and made the ground-breaking decision to hand over control for residential allocations to the neighbourhood plan.

This is when the hard work really started, involving in-depth development and testing of the spatial options. However, the neighbourhood plan was not just about where new housing should be located but also what it should look like, how green spaces should connect together, what community facilities would be needed, how transport links could be improved, and how the town could become a more sustainable place. The Thame Neighbourhood Plan includes a total of 71 policies, and has been described as a ‘mini local plan’.

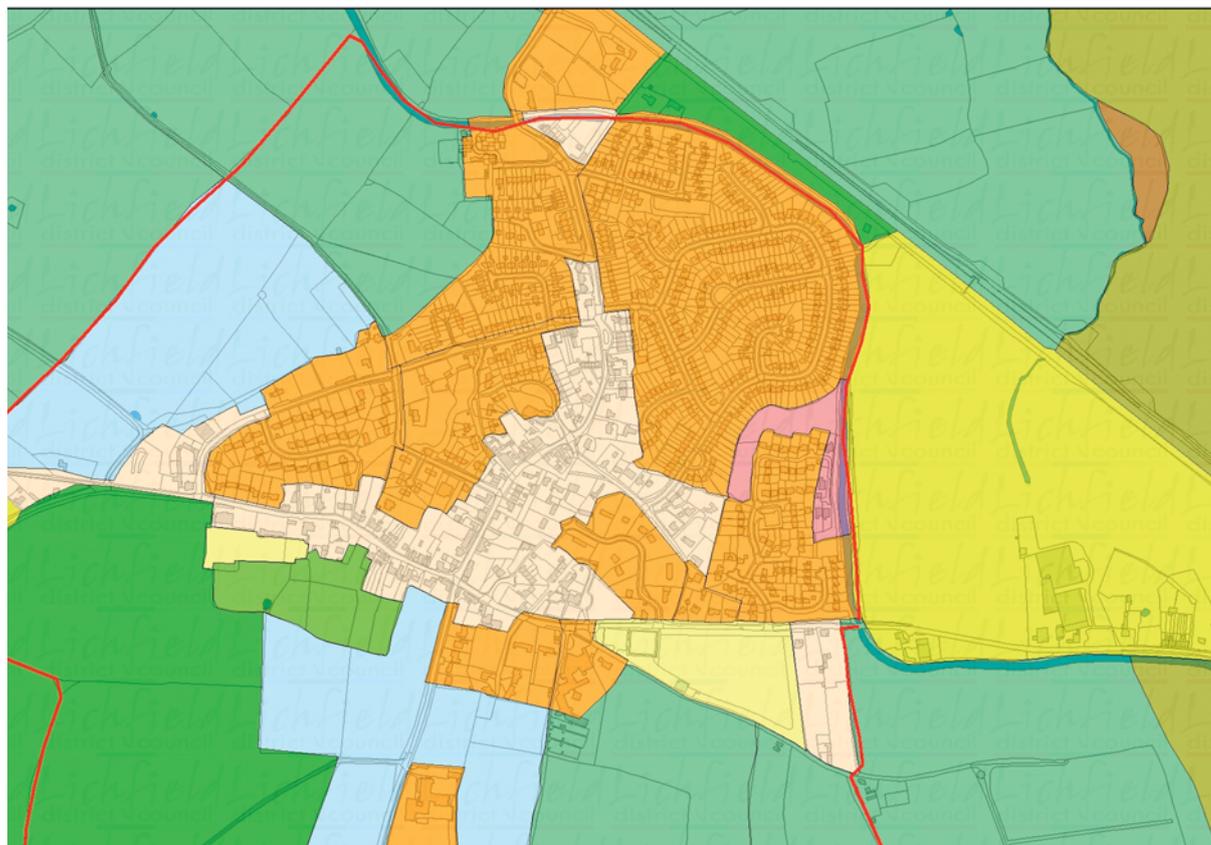
Given that a key aim of the plan was to reflect the town’s historic character, it was important that this character was clearly explained in the plan. An in-depth Conservation Area Assessment of the town

The spatial vision for Thame seeks to make sure that new housing development is sensitively integrated with the historic character and quality of the town.

© Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design

centre already existed, but there was no character appraisal of other parts of the town that contribute to the overall quality of Thame. To help support design policies for new housing, Tibbalds undertook a character appraisal of the town as a whole and included this in the Evidence Base Summary document.

The Thame Neighbourhood Plan is not prescriptive about the style of the new housing or the detail of the layout. Its site-specific policies are, however, very clear about what landscape features should be retained, where green space should be located, and the maximum extent of the built area. Together with the design policies that apply to all new housing, the Thame Neighbourhood Plan sets a positive framework for delivering high-quality new housing that supports the character of the town. ■



## Conservation and design in land allocation

Debbie Boffin

Senior Conservation Officer, Lichfield District Council

Dan Roberts

Conservation and Urban Design Manager, Lichfield District Council

Lichfield has a population of around 30,000, making it one of England's smallest cathedral cities. However, its location just north of the West Midlands conurbation means there is considerable development pressure. Although dominated by the city itself, the surrounding rural areas contain a number of relatively unspoilt villages and notable individual buildings.

As well as 754 listed buildings and 16 scheduled monuments the district contains 21 conservation areas. As in many other parts of the country, these vary greatly in their nature and character – ranging from the relatively 'urban' city centre, to a length of rural canal, to small village centres and hamlets.

Preservation or enhancement of these conservation areas involves attempting to direct development towards brownfield sites, as well as protecting the rural character of their edges. Rather than dealing with planning applications on an *ad hoc* basis, the council prefers to be proactive, steering

The Historic Landscape Characterisation Map for Whittington, one of the key rural settlements in the Lichfield district of Staffordshire. The pre-1880s core of the village is shown in pale pink and its later growth in orange

D Boffin © Lichfield District Council

sustainable development to places where it will provide maximum benefit and inflict least harm. In building conservation and urban design terms, this has entailed a programme of appraisals and management plans for all the district's conservation areas, prioritised by the relative development pressures across the district. The work has been carried out with the help of the parish councils, which are also involved in the consultation process; in one village, the documents were completed in conjunction with the Parish Plan.

While this place-by-place approach is useful, there is also a need for strategic coordination across the district as a whole and beyond. Crucially, the preparation of the district's Local Plan Strategy and its supporting Sustainability Appraisal required an evidence base, which was commissioned on our behalf by English Heritage West Midlands.

A detailed historic landscape characterisation by Staffordshire County Council (SCC) focused on buffered areas around Lichfield, Burntwood and

Recent housing development on the southern side of Lichfield was master planned and developed to maintain visual and physical links with the historic core of the city.

J Allinson © Lichfield District Council



Tamworth, alongside six 'key rural settlements' identified in the Local Plan's spatial strategy. This included the use of a scoring system to measure the impact that medium to large-scale housing developments would have on each of these zones. The first phase of this work identified Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs), which provide an overview of the historic environment across the district. The second phase of the study subdivides the HECAs into Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZs), which enabled a finer-grain, detailed analysis of the historic environment.

SCC also carried out an Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of 23 towns of medieval origin within Staffordshire. Of these, three that were clearly established as such during the medieval period, fall under the district council's administrative area, namely Lichfield city and the villages of Alrewas and Colton.

Other important evidence came from a Rural Planning Project that was the result of a successful bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). This meant that the council and its partners had the independent support of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), between April 2010 and March 2011, to work with rural communities across the district. A series of exhibitions and workshops was held, run as informal drop-in sessions. Plenty of background material was provided at each, to show how the village had evolved over time, how it related to the local landscape and highlighted particular assets and features. The sessions also featured presentations by CABE and other master-planning advisors. Local people who wished to actively participate in drawing up plans and ideas for the future of their community then stayed on and worked with CABE in facilitated groups. People's

views from these events were taken account of when preparing the final conclusions report.

This work assisted greatly in making historic data accessible to local communities and enabled generalised judgements to be made on the directions of, and capacities for, settlement growth. At the strategy stage of the Local Plan, when many options were being considered, these valuable pieces of evidence enabled quick and robust assessments to be made with confidence.

The sustainability appraisal has been investigated thoroughly by developers, not least through a Local Plan examination. The robust evidence on which this depended will continue to be extremely useful as more individual sites are considered for development. Having such a resource assists in the sifting process and will in future greatly reduce workloads at a time when huge amounts of information have to be analysed in the face of diminishing resources.

With regard to housing allocations, the council is now at the 'place-making' stage where it attempts to translate the 'brown blobs' of the Local Plan into viable layouts, through negotiation with developers and their agents, in order to satisfy a significant residential demand. This involves assessing views in to proposed developments. From past experience, applicants tend to be good at grasping the value of this. Less likely is an appreciation of potential views *out of* a proposed layout, and here a detailed assessment of surrounding historic landscape and notable, built features has proved useful. It promotes successful, integrative design and enhancement, as well as preservation, of affected conservation areas. Above all, the work has demonstrated the value of an approach to land allocation that takes simultaneous account of urban design and conservation of the built environment. ■

# News from English Heritage

## English Heritage new model

Thirty years after English Heritage was set up is a good time to take stock and consider whether there is a better, 21st-century response to managing England's heritage. This view, together with the inevitability that public funding will continue to decline, led the English Heritage Commission to develop proposals for a new model which would set up two organisations to provide better services and be more effective in safeguarding not only the 420 sites in the National Heritage Collection but also England's wider heritage. Government endorsed the proposals last year and has just completed a public consultation.

The majority of those who responded to the consultation supported the idea of setting up a charity (which will keep the name English Heritage) to look after the sites in the National Heritage Collection and eventually become self-financing.

As well as looking after the National Heritage Collection, the current English Heritage also helps other people to look after England's wider heritage by coordinating the National Heritage Protection Plan, recommending what should be nationally designated, providing advice within the planning system to support sustainable development, gathering evidence and research to increase understanding, providing practical advice, guidance and training, saving heritage at risk through grants and advice and curating and making available archives and national data. All of these activities will continue but under a new name of Historic England. Most of those who responded to the consultation supported the vision of a strong and independent Historic England and emphasised the need for it to be adequately funded.

The government is currently scrutinising the business case that gives the detailed justification for the new model and sets out the funding required to make it work. We expect that this will be approved later in the summer when we hope the government will be able to publish its full response to the issues raised in the consultation alongside further financial information.

In the meantime, work continues to develop plans for English Heritage and Historic England. Alongside this, the heritage sector is working together to develop the second National Heritage Protection Plan, which will provide a framework for the sector for the next five years. The priorities set out in the next National Heritage Protection Plan will be important in shaping the priorities for

Historic England and we are looking forward to discussing these with everyone we work with as we prepare for the launch of the new English Heritage and Historic England in March 2015.

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## National Planning Policy Guidance

Following the publication of the government's planning practice guidance in September last year, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 6 March.

The heritage section is considerably shorter than the PPS5 Practice Guide it will replace. English Heritage and the Historic Environment Forum are accordingly working together to prepare good practice advice that will update and replace those areas of the PPS 5 Practice Guide which have not been covered in the PPG.

As before, its purpose will be to provide information on good practice to assist local authorities, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy alongside both the NPPF and the related guidance in the PPG. It will thus support the implementation of national policy by setting out specific solutions but without replacing the application of policy using local judgment.

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## Heritage Update: Planning Policy Guidance

DCLG are introducing changes to the Use Classes Order to allow permitted development for changes from retail uses to residential and for the conversion of redundant farm buildings to residential. These new permitted development rights do not apply in designated National Parks, AONBs, World Heritage Sites and conservation areas.

English Heritage is concerned that farmsteads outside these protected Article 1(5) areas have historic value even though they are not designated. It is therefore promoting a simple Farmstead Assessment Framework to help owners and agents to understand the historic interest of their redundant sites and work out how it can be retained and enhanced through adaptive reuse and development. The tool will be issued in the summer, hopefully with the support of representative bodies for owners.

[charles.wagner@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:charles.wagner@english-heritage.org.uk)

Connect to: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/greater-flexibilities-for-change-of-use](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/greater-flexibilities-for-change-of-use)

### **Agri-environment schemes**

English Heritage continues to meet with DEFRA and Natural England to develop the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS), the Rural Development Programme for England and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform in relation to the historic environment. The last CAP scheme ended on 31 December 2013; 2014 is a transitional year with old regulations still in force, and the new CAP will run from 2015 to 2020. NELMS is expected to be introduced in January 2016.

The Government sought views on the implementation of CAP reform in England for 2015 to 2020 in a public consultation that ran from 31 October 2013 to 28 November 2013. DEFRA's responses published in December and February confirm that the historic environment will be one of a number of priorities for the NELMS, as it is under the current scheme, although water quality and biodiversity will now be the main priorities. Negotiations continue to secure the best outcome possible for the funding of the historic environment in the context of a reduced rural development budget.

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### **The Future of the National Heritage Protection Plan**

In its own consultation on the future of English Heritage, DCMS proposed a continuation of the NHPP:

Historic England will continue to work with others to develop the National Heritage Protection Plan (NHPP) as the framework for protecting England's heritage. During 2014 there will be extensive consultation on the NHPP which will guide the future priorities of Historic England as well as providing a means to support the work of other organisations.

By the time you read this, the national consultation on the future shape of the NHPP will have closed. Analysis of the results is still ongoing, but early indications are that the broad aims of the plan still enjoy widespread support. However, there is evidence for a strong desire to simplify its structure and to improve the language, both of which will help make it more accessible and easier to engage with. We have also been told that the plan needs to do more to reflect the importance of public engagement, skills and learning in unlocking the social and economic potential of our heritage.

The full consultation results will be published by the end of May 2014 and work will then begin on shaping the plan for 2015–2020.

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### **The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013**

As explained in the Winter 2013 edition of *Conservation Bulletin* (Issue 71, p 50), regulations will come into force on 6 April covering new measures for managing change to listed buildings introduced in the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERR Act) 2013. Full details of these streamlining measures can be found at:

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/heritage-protection-reform/creating-a-better-system/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/heritage-protection-reform/creating-a-better-system/)

Contact: [sarah.buckingham@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:sarah.buckingham@english-heritage.org.uk)

### **Local government archaeology services**

Last autumn the DCMS Minister Ed Vaizey initiated a review into the future of local government archaeological services. English Heritage's written response can be found at: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/content/imported-docs/f-j/future-of-local-govt-archaeology-services-feb-14.pdf](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/content/imported-docs/f-j/future-of-local-govt-archaeology-services-feb-14.pdf)

The main thrust of our evidence is that some local government archaeological services are not functioning well because of low or non-existent staffing levels. Given the differences in national funding we consider that the emphasis should be on a local authority-funded system which is cost-effective and sustainable in the long term, but we recognise that a 'one size fits all' model may not be appropriate to all areas.

Contact: [amanda.chadburn@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:amanda.chadburn@english-heritage.org.uk)

### **Research News**

Research News is the on-line magazine produced twice a year to keep the heritage sector up-to-date with projects and activities involving research into the historic environment. Issue 20 is available to read at [www.english-heritage.org.uk/research-news](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/research-news) and the next edition will be available in August 2014.

### **HELM Newsletter**

The HELM Newsletter is a quarterly e-bulletin aimed at a broad heritage audience, especially those in local authorities. To view the latest edition go to: <http://eepurl.com/NJsEf>; the next issue will be available at the end of May 2014.

# National Heritage Collections

## News and Events

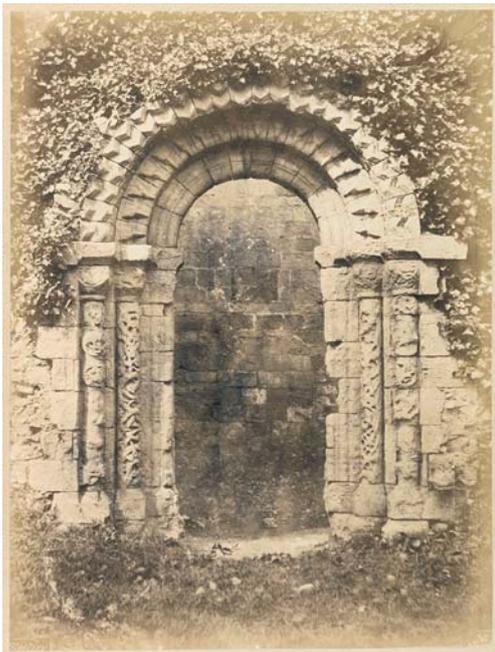
### New Acquisitions

The archive has recently added a significant publication showing the roofless Norman church at Steetley, Derbyshire to its already large body of material collected by the antiquary Gerald Cobb. It is one of the earliest attempts to use photography as a survey and recording tool. Published in *Workshop* in 1860 by the photographer James Contencin and the antiquary Theophilus Smith, it contains all the important elements of a thorough survey with plans, photographs and historical research. The church, which is listed at Grade I, was restored in 1876 by John Loughborough Pearson.

Much of the output of the architectural photographers Bedford Lemere & Co is already in the archive, but a bequest from the family of Tom Samson means that a set of lantern slides from the 1890s has come to light. Ten of these recording the fitting-out of the Japanese battleship *Fuji* bring a new naval dimension to the work of a photographer already well known for his skill in depicting the interiors of transatlantic liners. Built at the Thames Iron Works for the Imperial Japanese Navy and launched in 1896, the 12,000-ton vessel saw action in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 before being damaged by an American aircraft carrier in 1945 and finally scrapped in 1948.

The Norman doorway of Steetley Church, Derbyshire, 1860 – one of the earliest attempts to use photography as a survey and recording tool.

Reproduced by permission of English Heritage



### Housing through the eyes of Aerofilms Ltd

Dating from 1919 to 2006, the Aerofilms collection of oblique aerial photography presents a unique picture of the changing face of British housing in the 20th century.

Aerofilms Ltd were awarded the first ever contract for a definitive photographic survey from the air by Doncaster RDC in 1926. Local corporations and their town planning departments were just one type of client; others included house builders, private owners and industrialists such as the Maltby Main Colliery Company.

The Britain from Above project is making this and the earliest 95,000 images from the collection available to view online at [www.britainfromabove.org.uk](http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk).

Photographs from the collection can also be seen in series of exhibitions currently running across the country and in the book *Aerofilms: A History of Britain from Above*.

### Housing in the English Heritage Archive

The English Heritage Archive is an essential resource for researchers looking at architecture, construction and interior decoration from the late 19th century to the present day. The archive covers everything from grand country houses to local authority housing schemes.

The interior photographs taken by Bedford Lemere and Company, often commissioned by firms of decorators and furniture makers, are a unique

The Japanese battleship, *Fuji*.  
Reproduced by permission of English Heritage





Maltby Main Colliery model village in 1926. Begun in around 1911, it consisted of around 1000 properties arranged in a circular plan with central green area reminiscent of towns of the Garden City movement.

Reproduced by permission of English Heritage

record of the homes of the wealthier classes in late Victorian and Edwardian England. Fashions can be seen to change from the excessive decoration favoured by Victorian homeowners to the more sparingly furnished style that emerged in the 1920s.

More recent are the photographs taken by John Gay and Eric De Mare of modernist late-20th century housing estates and high-rise blocks, often pictured in striking contrast to neighbouring buildings of more traditional appearance.

Documenting innovative house and flat-building techniques, the photographic collection of John Laing plc was given to the English Heritage Archive in 2012 and is yet to be fully catalogued. The company developed the 'Easiform' method for building social housing in 1919, casting concrete on site.

Images from these collections and many others documenting the development of housing are available to view online via the English Heritage Archives website [www.englishheritagearchives.org.uk](http://www.englishheritagearchives.org.uk)

A pair of 'Easiform' houses under construction in Efford, Plymouth. Developed in response to the lack of bricks and skilled bricklayers after the First World War; the technique continued to provide new housing around the country until after the Second World War.

Reproduced by permission of English Heritage



## Services and on-line resources

The English Heritage Archive collections comprise around 12 million items relating to England's historic environment, 70% of which are photographs dating from the 1850s to the present day, as well as reports, drawings, and plans.

To find out more go to:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/archives-and-collections>

Or contact: Archive Services, The English Heritage Archive, The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon SN2 2EH  
Tel: 01793 414600, fax: 01793 414606 or email: [archive@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:archive@english-heritage.org.uk)

### English Heritage Archive

[www.englishheritagearchives.org.uk](http://www.englishheritagearchives.org.uk)

The Archive Catalogue includes descriptions of more than 1 million photographs and documents

### Portico

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/portico](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/portico)

In-depth histories of English Heritage sites

### Heritage Gateway

[www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)

National and local records for England's historic sites and buildings

### PastScape

[www.pastscape.org.uk](http://www.pastscape.org.uk)

England's archaeological and architectural heritage

### Heritage Explorer

[www.heritageexplorer.org.uk](http://www.heritageexplorer.org.uk)

Images for learning; resources for teachers

The following **Designated Datasets** held by English Heritage are available for download via the English Heritage website, <http://services.english-heritage.org.uk/NMRDataDownload/>. The data are suitable for use in a Geographic Information System:

- Listed buildings
- Scheduled monuments
- Registered parks and gardens
- Registered battlefields
- World Heritage Sites
- Protected wreck sites

# Legal Developments

## DIY Heritage Rescue: Assets of Community Value

Mike Harlow, *Governance and Legal Director, English Heritage*

I am worried we just don't get out anymore. We increasingly work, shop, drink and stare goggle-eyed at screens without leaving the home. Church attendance is still declining.

This matters to heritage conservation as well as our social well-being because so many of our most important buildings were built for communal use. The life-line that may drag them off our heritage-at-risk register is to find an alternative communal use that is financially sustainable.

Fortunately I am far from alone in recognising that simply leaving these buildings to the fate of the current market and trends in behaviour is dangerously short-termist. Many people who previously had no reason to socialise are now coming together to secure their collective interest in the local pub, shop, playing field and more.

They are using the relatively new regime of the community right to bid for assets of community value brought in under the Localism Act 2011. It says that every local authority must maintain a list of 'assets of community value'. These assets can be buildings or land. The current (or recent) and realistic future use of them must further the social well-being or social interests of the local community.

The regulations exempt certain land and buildings, such as residences. Nominations for entry onto the list may only be made by community interest groups with local connections.

Once a building or parcel of land is on the list, the owner is obliged to give notice to the local authority of any intention to sell. There is then a process that brings this to the attention of the community and gives them the opportunity to make an offer.

That is as far as it goes. There is no obligation on the owner to then sell or to give the community group a right of first refusal. The notification is there only to avoid the community group missing the opportunity to negotiate an agreeable sale.

The scheme is obviously aimed principally at securing the ongoing community benefit of local shops, pubs, libraries and the like. However, these buildings will frequently also be heritage assets. Whilst their heritage significance cannot be described as a community use in the meaning of this regime, there is clearly nothing wrong in using this mechanism to secure the opportunity to negotiate the acquisition of important heritage assets that also have a community utility.

A quick canter round the internet suggests that many local authorities have a handful of sites already on their lists, including surprises like the undercroft of the South Bank Centre in London and Manchester United football stadium.

So this appears to be a system that will be used and will therefore affect the property market, but will it affect the planning system?

The government's guidance says that registration may be a material consideration, but it depends on the circumstances, which is right. However, and here's my main point, in the case of a community asset that is also a heritage asset I would suggest that when considering any proposal that is seriously damaging or demolishing, the fact that the property is a registered community asset must be a material consideration. This is why.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says planning should conserve our heritage assets, not destroy them (I am paraphrasing paragraph 17). Decisions should guide development towards things that keep our heritage and achieve social and economic progress (paragraph 8). These paragraphs are at the heart of the definition of sustainable development.

So if you have something that is an acknowledged heritage asset and the proposal in front of you is to damage or destroy it, how can you ignore the fact that a community group has gone out of its way to register its interest in acquiring it and carrying on its current useful community purpose? That alternative future sounds potentially much more sustainable.

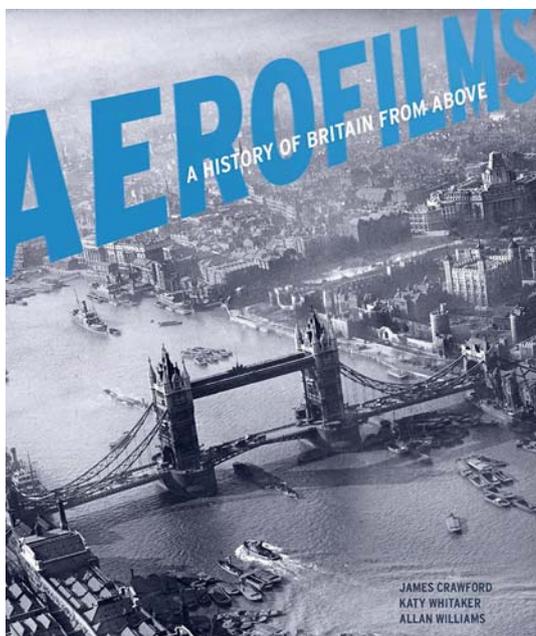
Of course it is important then to examine the likelihood and viability of any community plans. Holding out for the perfect solution whilst the asset turns to rubble, is clearly not sensible. But what the community are offering may be realistic and very possibly the optimum viable use for the building – the truly sustainable answer.

Because of this influence in the planning regime, the registration of a community asset may be much more influential to the outcome than apparent from first glance. Let's put on our coats and get out there. ■

# New Publications from English Heritage

## **Aerofilms: A history of Britain from above**

James Crawford, Katy Whitaker and Allan Williams



Established on 9 May 1919, Aerofilms Ltd was an unprecedented business venture that married the fledgling technology of powered flight to the discipline of photography.

The company went on to record one of the most tumultuous periods in British history. After surviving the economic crash of the Great Depression in the 1930s, and serving their country at the direct request of Winston Churchill during the Second World War, it was still on hand to help capture the major reconstruction projects of the 1940s and 50s.

The book draws on thousands of images, including many that are rare or previously unseen, to present a vivid picture of the nation in the first half of the 20th century. Following the company's enigmatic founders, daredevil pilots, skilled photographers and innovative advertisers, it explores how they manufactured and sold a potent sense of place and identity to the British people. It is a story of innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, war, marketing and the making of 'Brand Britain'.

PUBLICATION DATE: February 2014

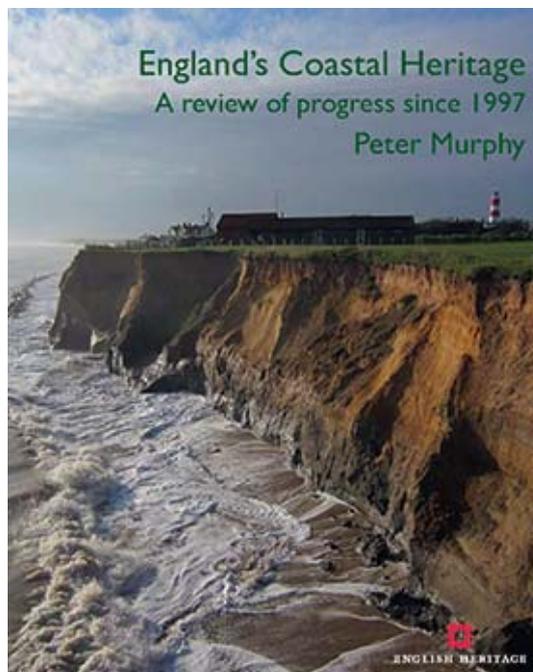
PRICE: £25

ISBN: 978 1 84802 248 5

Hardback, 224pp; 200 illus

## **England's Coastal Heritage: A review of progress since 1997**

Peter Murphy



The English Heritage Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment Survey (RCZAS) has produced a wealth of new information. Alongside it, the offshore survey completed with the support of the Marine Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund has increased understanding of early prehistoric coastal change, while other researchers have extended the time scale for a human presence in England to at least 900,000 years.

It is now time to review what has been learnt. The book includes an introduction to the coastal historic environment, a consideration of long-term coastal change, an outline of survey, recording and characterisation methodology, a national review of the coastal historic environment and a separate discussion of regional significance. It also includes a set of research priorities for the future and a final section about how England's coastal heritage should be managed in the future. The fact that climate change will impact mostly adversely on the coastal historic environment gives a special urgency to this new publication.

PUBLICATION DATE: April 2014

PRICE: £50

ISBN: 978 1 84802 107 5

Hardback, 184pp; 149 illus

## The Town House in Medieval and Early Modern Bristol

Roger H Leech

Bristol was England's second city in the later middle ages and again in the 18th century. Based on the study of surviving buildings and documentary evidence of houses now demolished, this book analyses how their town houses reveal the social structure and aspirations of Bristol's citizens.

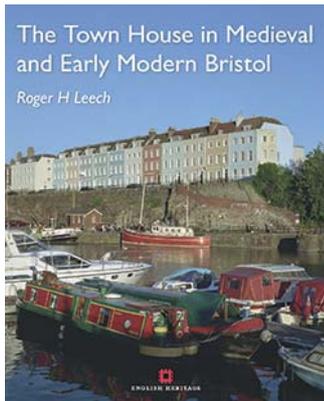
The medieval and the early modern development of the city is examined, then aspects of life on the urban tenement plot. The principal medieval house types are fully explored, showing the aspirations of the urban elite in the largest of such houses. Changes to existing houses and the emergence of socially distinct neighbourhoods all serve to underline differences in life style and status. Similar houses in North America and the West Indies underline Bristol's pre-eminent position as a commercial city on the Atlantic rim in the 17th and 18th centuries.

PUBLICATION DATE: June 2014

PRICE: £100

ISBN: 978 1 84802 053 5

Hardback, 432pp; 680 illus



## Built to Brew: The history and heritage of the brewery

Lynn Pearson

Beer has been brewed in England since Neolithic times, and this book combines a thoroughly enjoyable exploration of beer's history and built heritage with new in-depth research into the nuts and bolts of its production. Detailed chapters explain what makes a brewery work – the astonishing skills of coppersmiths and engineers, the heroic mill horses and the innovative steam engines which replaced them. A brewery index allows readers to find which sites are extant and can still be visited.

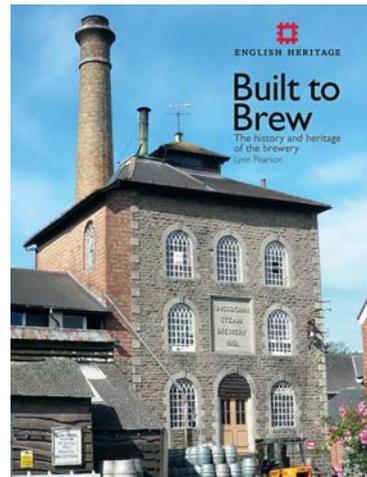
Traditional working breweries are to be treasured and celebrated, but the book also looks to the future, considering constructive redevelopment as part of our national brewing heritage. This fascinating and lavishly illustrated work shows how deeply interwoven beer and brewing are within English culture. If you care about beer, industry or England, this book is for you.

PUBLICATION DATE: May 2014

PRICE: £25

ISBN: 978 1 84802 238 6

Paperback, 200pp; 326 illus



### SPECIAL OFFER

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Tel: 01235 465577; fax: 01235 465556; email: [direct.orders@marston.co.uk](mailto:direct.orders@marston.co.uk).

Please quote the appropriate ISBN and make all cheques payable in sterling to Orca Book Services. Publications may also be ordered from [www.english-heritageshop.org.uk](http://www.english-heritageshop.org.uk) Prices and postage charges may differ on the website.

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