

Planning & Development

INSITE

From **Carter Jonas**

ISSUE 7 | SUMMER 2019

BUILD TO RENT | MENTAL WELLBEING | COASTAL DEPRIVATION



THE FUTURE OF MODULAR CONSTRUCTION

New manufactured pods are taking the leisure industry by storm. We consider the potential impact on development and affordable housing

PLANNING FOR RURAL HOUSING | DRIVERLESS CARS | NEW TOWN DELIVERY

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WELCOME

Welcome back to Planning & Development Insite

Welcome to our seventh issue. Over the next 34 pages we talk trends, apprehension, inspiration and legislation. We look to the future with driverless cars, modular construction and new town delivery. We deliberate the present with planning concerns for rural housing and the current crisis around seaside towns. Also, we look to learn from the past, reflecting on failures to maintain mental wellbeing and energy-efficient homes, considering how we can improve the situation for forthcoming generations. In this issue, we have had more contributors than ever before. The TCPA, the Federation of Master Builders, British Land, the CLA and Passivhaus Trust have all put forward thought-provoking opinions to drive discussion. Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition of Planning & Development Insite; I speak on behalf of my whole division when I say we are very proud to produce this publication and continue to analyse the ever-important topics that arise within our fascinating industry. I really hope you enjoy reading on.



James Bainbridge
Head of Planning & Development

WHAT ARE THE **TOP 10** FUTURE CERTAINTIES IN AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE?

The political future has never looked so uncertain. So, ignoring Brexit and its implications, we consider some of the changes likely to impact on planning and development this year.

What are your thoughts?

Tweet us @carterjonas
#CJinsite



01. A REFORM OF DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS
The Government has announced plans to reform developer contributions, lifting the pooling restriction for S106 receipts, indexing CIL rates to track the value of development more closely, removing restrictions on Regulation 123 lists, and clarifying that local authorities may charge for monitoring S106 planning obligations.

02. A COMMITMENT TO HOUSING DIVERSITY
Letwin's Review of Build Out Rates has received a Government response. The review called for statutory powers for councils to acquire sites at ten times their existing use value, a 'new planning framework' for large sites, and formation of an expert committee to arbitrate on the housing mix of developments. The housing secretary has promised to publish additional planning guidance on housing diversification, and to accelerate growth, but stopped short of committing to land value capture.



03. CLARIFICATION ON STANDARD HOUSING TESTS
The last revision of the NPPF stated that local authorities may use an alternative to the Government's standard method when strategic policies are produced. This has now been clarified, with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government stating that planners may use the standard method only when calculating land supply for appeals.

04. ANOTHER MOVE TO SPEED UP DECISION MAKING
A green paper to ensure faster decision-making within the planning system will be published later this year. Drawing on the Rosewell Review, the Accelerated Planning Green Paper is due to address how greater capacity, capability, performance management and procedural improvements can accelerate the planning process.

05. NEW GARDEN TOWNS CONFIRMED
New communities, which are intended to potentially provide 73,000 new homes, have been confirmed. £3.7 million was awarded to Grazeley Garden Settlement in Berkshire, Hemel Garden Communities in Hertfordshire, Tewkesbury Ashchurch Garden Community in Gloucestershire, and Meecebrook in Stafford. Also, Easton Park, North Uttlesford and West of Braintree, all located in Essex, have all received funding.

06. A NEW FUTURE HOMES STANDARD
Set to be introduced by 2025, the new standard is intended to future-proof new build homes with low carbon heating and 'world-leading levels of energy efficiency'.

07. FURTHER CHANGES TO PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS
Despite a highly contentious consultation, a raft of policy changes in relation to permitted development rights has been announced. Future rights are likely to include the upwards extension of existing high street buildings for residential use.

08. BIODIVERSITY TARGETS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS
Following a DEFRA consultation, the Government has announced that future developments must demonstrate biodiversity initiatives such as green corridors, tree planting or local nature reserves. Exemptions may be made in the case of permitted development and brownfield sites.

09. CONTINUING INITIATIVES TO SAVE THE HIGH STREET
The demise of the high street continues to generate reviews and recommendations, the latest being the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *High Streets and Town Centres in 2030*, which recommends a 'comprehensive review of planning as it pertains to the high street'. Their recommendation moves to accelerate the process of compulsory purchase orders, update the town centre first policy, 'a complete overhaul and rewrite' of use classes, and a restriction on the use of permitted development rights.

10. ONE MORE REPORT
The Government's *Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy* is on its way. The report will respond to the significant changes in transport technology, specifically the growth in electric and self-driving vehicles and advances in data and internet connectivity.





ARE NEW IDEAS NEEDED IN THE DELIVERY OF NEW TOWNS?

When, in April 2019, the Government announced the locations of five new garden towns, totalling almost 65,000 new homes, the housing crisis potentially moved a step closer to being resolved. Planning & Development Insite spoke to *Katy Lock*, projects & policy manager of garden cities and new towns at the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), about how these can successfully be delivered.

Our original 32 new towns delivered through the New Towns Act, provided homes for 2.8m people, that's 4.3% of UK households. Cynicism about concrete cows and roundabout cities aside, new towns are generally popular, diverse, healthy places in which to live, and continue to flourish. The New Towns programme drew on many of the original garden city principles established by Ebenezer Howard in 1898, but the new towns were on a much larger scale and delivered by public sector development corporations rather than the private sector.

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) is the greatest advocate of the Garden City movement and Katy Lock is responsible for simultaneously conserving and updating Howard's ideology. The organisation's research has concluded that today's new communities should

“NEW TOWNS NEED LOCAL LEADERSHIP WHICH TRANSCENDS POLITICAL CYCLES”



combine the principles of the garden city movement with the highly effective delivery mechanisms of the post war New Towns, updated for the twenty-first century and learn lessons – good and bad – from the past.

So, when the Government announced its interest in ‘garden communities’, including proposals to create five new garden towns in the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor, it fell to Katy to convince officials that the ‘garden’ prefix was much more than a cliché, and to promote the principles that were successfully pioneered at Letchworth, Milton Keynes and elsewhere.

“The garden city principles remain as relevant today as they were a century ago,” says Katy. “From Garden Suburbs through to post-war new towns, communities created on these principles have stood the test of time. They offer high quality lifestyles that promote wellbeing, a wide range of employment opportunities and cultural services, an appropriate mix of house types and tenures, walkable, treelined streets and high-quality design, while also promoting access to nature and opportunities for biodiversity.”

So, can our increasingly shaky political system provide the long-term support essential to the roll-out of these new towns? With the increasingly rapid turnaround of housing ministers, is there the political appetite to see the ideas through, or will these new towns simply follow the path of the eco town, trumpeted by one government, then swiftly chewed up and spat out by the next?

“There is a recognition across Government that new communities have an important part to play in



resolving the housing crisis,” explains Katy. “The All-Party Parliamentary Group on New Towns has been fundamental in communicating the benefits, and its membership from across parties provides some political consistency.”

“Having identified the need, the Government must now focus on planning and delivery. This means consistency in commitment. To get the private sector on board, the proposition must be de-risked and free from political interference. New towns need local leadership which transcends political cycles.”

Much of the current debate is focussed on the best legislative vehicle to allow delivery. The TCPA firmly believes that, with small modifications, the New Towns Act 1981 is the best route. “We could use the current New Towns legislation,” says Katy. “But there need to be safeguards in place and stronger requirements for public participation in the process. Currently there are no statutory obligations on development corporations in relation to sustainable development, good design or climate change. As development corporations are not defined in law as local planning authorities, they are not covered by the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.”

A number of alternative suggestions have been made to deliver large-scale growth, including the 2008 major infrastructure planning regime. The TCPA is not in favour of this route: “The complexity of creating a whole new town is such that there is much more to do, over a much

longer timescale, than building infrastructure. A town is not built in one go, but grown over several decades.”

“The Government has also shown an intention to extend permitted development rights even further to reach its housing targets more quickly. Creating new towns based on the ultimately democratic garden cities principles is an opportunity to deliver new homes at speed, but crucially deliver high quality and inclusive places at the same time. But it requires a strategic approach and long-term, joined-up thinking. We need a national spatial plan within which government identifies areas of search and supports local authorities to work together to identify scale and location. A modernised New Towns Act can then be used to designate and deliver through modernised development corporations.”

“These garden towns will evolve and flourish only if there is

consistency – consistency of leadership, consistency of principles and through-thinking across generations.”

– Katy Lock has over 18 years’ experience in planning and environmental practice with particular expertise in policy development, analysis and thought leadership in relation to new communities, housing, green infrastructure, urban design and sustainability.



“THE GOVERNMENT MUST NOW FOCUS ON PLANNING AND DELIVERY”



ARE DRIVERLESS CARS ABOUT TO DRIVE CHANGE?

Bill Gates once said, “We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten years.” Regarding the inevitable rise of the autonomous vehicle, this is timely advice.

Within just five years, the first driverless cars are expected to be available, and within decades it is anticipated that our lives will be transformed by a proliferation of small pods, transporting us swiftly from home to work. It is thought that most autonomous vehicles will be rented, Uber-like, and available on-demand. The potential changes to urban design are considerable.

With an increase in on-demand vehicles, the need for car parks will decline substantially. Where parking is required, it need not be in the vicinity of the user, but in areas of low land values, and with no requirement for human access. Researchers have calculated that such a space could accommodate 87% more autonomous vehicles than conventional cars.

Currently, 25% of an average street is dedicated to the storage of cars; central London alone has an estimated 8,000 hectares of parking space and it has been estimated that, in 15 years, 90% of all current parking spaces will be eliminated.

Another significant change to the built environment will be the absence of car-related services. In the age of the electric car, fuel stations will become redundant, releasing prime sites for redevelopment. In place of petrol stations, but requiring substantially less space, we will see a rise of electric refuelling points and induction pads, potentially with solar panels or wind turbines to generate power.

Our roads are currently built for vehicles driven by people. Motorways bend to reduce the risk of drivers snoozing at the wheel, while in an urban setting, roads must remain reasonably straight at junctions to prevent crashes at blind corners. If those factors were taken out of the equation, our road layouts could look very different. Furthermore, sound walls, rumble strips and buffers will become a thing of the past, as will those barriers that appear, uninvited, just as a car approaches a partially interesting view.

“THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRANSPORT MAY CEASE TO EXIST”

At present, the average road can accommodate 2,000 cars per hour. That number could increase to 3,500 due to greater efficiency, the absence of parked cars and the fact that autonomous vehicles can drive bumper-to-bumper. Consequently we may need fewer roads, which, since driverless cars will move with greater precision than human-driven vehicles, could also be narrower.

Assuming that driverless cars bring increased safety, pedestrians could gain the freedom to cross the streets as it suits them, rather than at specified

crossings. In fact, GPS technology may one day remove the need for traffic lights and dedicated crossings altogether.

“GPS TECHNOLOGY MAY ONE DAY REMOVE THE NEED FOR TRAFFIC LIGHTS”

A reduction in air pollution, traffic jams, signage, parking – even roads themselves – has enabled future forecasters to paint an image of a walker’s paradise.

Currently, a large proportion of any commercial development (usually at basement level) is used for employee or visitor parking. Similarly, scheme densities are always governed by the need to provide requisite parking. With the benefit of additional land and the lack of constraints, buildings – both old and new – could become considerably more efficient. High density developments, so often thwarted by the fear of congestion, could be increasingly common. Potentially our cities could rise higher and become more compact.

Similarly, no longer will people’s homes require a garage, driveway or parking area. This could transform a substantial amount of existing housing stock, with garages converted into additional bedrooms, rental properties or studios. Those planning new housing developments with a view to completion beyond 2030 could give some thought to creating front gardens in place of driveways, increasing density and perhaps removing garages from plans.

The lack of emissions from all-electric autonomous vehicles, coupled with the end of our inefficient driving practices are estimated to decrease air pollution caused by vehicle emissions by an incredible 60%. It is thought that, in the future, many more people will be encouraged to live in cities, reversing the current trend for counter-urbanisation.

An interesting debate is taking place about the future of public transport. Many believe that public transport as we know it will cease, just as Uber has threatened the traditional taxi, so autonomous vehicles could undermine existing mass transit models.

On the other hand, buses and trains, themselves free of drivers, could become cheaper, and the potential for autonomous vehicles to integrate with transport hubs could mean a revival in public transport. In fact, the distinction between public and private transport may cease to exist.

“IN THE AGE OF THE ELECTRIC CAR, FUEL STATIONS WILL BECOME REDUNDANT”

The start of the autonomous vehicle could result in considerable urban sprawl, with fast and efficient travel enabling easy access into city centres, and areas with larger homes and green spaces. Alternatively, faster and more efficient transport, coupled with the ability to work, socialise or relax while travelling, could convert remote locations into commuter towns. The potential impact on land values and house prices is a fascinating one.

So many questions remain. Will our cities become denser, or will urban sprawl proliferate? Will public transport cease to exist, or become integral to our lives? Will road use become more efficient, or will the new-found ease result in us making more trips than previously? Will the ability to super-commute remove north/south divides, or the increased attraction of city living lead to a decline elsewhere? Will the urban environment become a pedestrian’s heaven, leading to healthier, happier lives – or will we cease to walk at all?

Many of these questions will be answered through policy, which is why the planning industry must think ahead, to ensure that what many might still consider simply a change to our driving habits, genuinely benefits our built environment.

Built to Rent is here to stay

What are the implications for the planning and development industry?

In a short space of time, the private rented sector has radically changed, with the majority of homes for rent in many cities across the UK now being built by private developers and owned and managed by institutional landlords under the Build to Rent (BTR) model.

The product has evolved rapidly to meet the needs of an expanding market, offering an ever-increasing range of services, from high speed broadband to leisure centres and car clubs, adaptable floorplans and community benefits which extend beyond the scheme itself. BTR has been successful in attracting significant investment, delivering much needed units at speed, creating greater security for tenants, using innovative means of off-site manufacturing to reduce disruption through construction, and creating attractive public spaces.

But how has the otherwise very well established property world responded to this new entrant? How does this 'alternative' product address the pressing issues that the market faces, and has policy responded sufficiently?

In a Government consultation *Planning and Affordable Housing for Build to Rent (2017)*, no fewer than 78% of respondents (and 97% of developers and investors) considered that market failures were impeding the development of BTR, and that national policy intervention was required.

David Churchill is a partner at Carter Jonas and specialises in planning. He has advised on BTR schemes from their inception and welcomes the fact that the Government has now recognised this important product.

"In the past year, we have seen revisions in the NPPF which reflect the importance of BTR, and the publication of a Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on BTR. This was widely seen as the Government finally acknowledging BTR's potential to address the housing crisis. The PPG requires that BTR is taken into account as part of Local Plan preparation. It also establishes Affordable Private Rent as a new class of affordable housing and sets a typical expectation of 20% affordable housing provision in BTR developments. Appreciating the

fact that restrictive covenants can limit a scheme's potential for future growth, the PPG puts in place means by which covenants can be terminated. It demonstrates an understanding of the likely market and location of such developments by stating that national space standards need not apply."

“THE SUCCESS OF BTR DEPENDS ON THE AVAILABILITY OF LARGE, CENTRALLY-LOCATED SITES”

BTR has undoubtedly grown partly as a result of the introduction and extension of permitted development rights (PDR). According to the British Property Federation, 30% of completed BTR homes have been delivered through PDR.

"Despite the fortuitous timing of PDR," says David, "one of the greatest barriers to BTR investment and delivery is finding appropriate sites. Perhaps more so than other property assets, the success of BTR depends on the availability of large, centrally-located sites."

BTR schemes can suffer as a result of inflexible planning regulations, David explains. "Policy requirements to deliver three and four-bedroom units, and planning rules that require a minimum of 35% affordable housing are stumbling blocks. Local authorities must realise that the benefits of BTR cannot necessarily be delivered alongside such stringent requirements.

"Furthermore, BTR is a very different financial model to build-for-sale, in which developers typically benefit from sales revenue throughout the construction process. In the case of BTR, financial return does not start until the first property is let and this means that BTR cannot compete with build-for-sale on land acquisition and pricing. Yet this is not recognised in policy."

BTR has been instrumental in exemplifying the benefits of modern methods of construction. "Modular

construction, panelised systems and even 3D printing are being incorporated into BTR schemes. This satisfies the sustainability requirements, overcomes the issue of on-site skills shortages and delivers economies of scale with speedy build-out rates. Furthermore, modern methods of construction (MMC) has the benefit of creating a flexible product which can be adapted by its user over time."

Considering the significant advancements that have been made by BTR, and its recognition in statute, it is surprising that there is no specific use class for BTR. David explains; "currently, planning authorities tend to adopt their own approaches to planning requirements for BTR schemes but there is a general feeling that legislation must move towards the standardisation of planning requirements. It is widely believed that the establishment of a dedicated BTR land use class would enable local authorities to use their strategic planning powers to focus delivery of privately rented homes more appropriately."

So, is a new use class likely to come about any time soon? With the Government consulting on the possibility of expanding and merging existing use classes, this appears unlikely. "The lack of a use class could potentially work in favour of BTR," David reflects. "While there is no separate planning use class or zoning, any suitable site could technically receive bids from BTR developers. More generally, the lack of a clear definition suits a product which has succeeded because of its ability to evolve and adapt."

Very little stands in the way of BTR development. While the market, the investment, the sites and the policy remain aligned in its favour, it shows no sign of declining.

–David Churchill is a partner at Carter Jonas who specialises in the promotion of large-scale projects in the housing, retail, employment and major infrastructure sectors. From inception, David manages the planning and EIA processes, through to detailed planning stages.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVES AROUND THE INCREASE

IN PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS?

The increase of permitted development rights (PDR) is the Brexit of the development world, arousing strong arguments both for and against, and polarising groups within the sector. While many planners oppose PDR, the Federation of Master Builders is firmly in favour. Planning & Development Insite spoke to their chief executive, Brian Berry.

In late 2018, the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) in its efforts to address the housing crisis, asked 2,000 homeowners across the UK whether they felt there was a housing shortage and if so, how best to address it. Two-thirds believed that there is a shortage and were asked to select which of seven options they felt could help resolve it.

“Homeowners believe that the housing shortage could be lessened

through a more relaxed approach to planning,” explains Brian. “Over a quarter of respondents specifically identified an extension of PDR as the solution to the crisis, and in the other options selected – granny flats, micro-homes and basement extensions – PDR has a role to play. In contrast, building on the Green Belt was the least favourite option. People are fed up of seeing large scale identikit schemes on green sites and want to see greater density in urban areas instead. Furthermore, with high stamp duty costs and economic uncertainty putting people off moving house, many see considerably more value in extending their homes.”

Currently, planning permission is not required for single-storey rear extensions of up to three metres deep (on terraces and semis), or four metres (on detached houses). Temporary permitted development rights double these sizes for extensions and it is thought likely that they will be made permanent. Additionally, reforms announced in the Spring Statement allow

extensions of up to a maximum of five storeys from ground level through PDR in central urban locations.

“I’m encouraged by the visionary approach that the Government has taken in increasing density of the high street,” says Brian. “Essential to breathing new life into our high street is converting empty or underused spaces above shops into new homes.”

“WE SIMPLY DON’T HAVE ENOUGH HOUSEBUILDERS TO CREATE THE NUMBER OF NEW HOMES THAT THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS”

The *High Streets and Town Centres 2030* report published by the select committee for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is very significant, says Brian: “It includes a survey of MPs across all parties, of which 90% recognise the potential of existing buildings to help solve the housing crisis. We were encouraged by the Government’s commitment to

review the Compulsory Purchase Order process, which could help speed up regeneration of high streets. However, contrary to the Committee’s conclusion that PDR risks undermining a local authority’s ability to plan for housing delivery, we believe that streamlining the process for upwards development above certain premises will help local authorities meet their targets, while maintaining a more rigorous application process for other kinds of developments. What we must avoid is perfectly good space lying empty and achieving nothing in terms of boosting the local economy or providing homes.”

The phrase ‘slums of the future’ has been used to describe residential conversions brought about through PDR, but Brian dismisses this comment; “if someone, whether a commercial property owner or homeowner, spends £100,000 on an extension, it’s a considerable investment in a very valuable asset, it is hardly going to create an eyesore.”

Extensions can also capitalise on under-utilised sectors of the market, says Brian. “The housing shortage is related to the skills shortage. We simply don’t have enough housebuilders



to create the number of new homes that the Government expects. But by extending homes and creating annexes, we are providing work for the many smaller, independent builders who don’t have the capacity to deliver new towns, or even cul-de-sacs, but are well placed to take on smaller jobs. As much of our research has demonstrated in the past, we can help solve the housing crisis by reducing barriers for small, local building firms.”

“HOUSING SHORTAGE COULD BE LESSENED THROUGH A MORE RELAXED APPROACH TO PLANNING”

“In the late 1980s, two-thirds of all new homes were built by small local housebuilders, and housebuilding was in step with demand. Currently SME housebuilders build less than one quarter of all new homes and, as this proportion has declined, so too has the capacity to deliver the homes we need. Reviving the fortunes of SME builders undoubtedly has a key role to play in solving the housing crisis.”

Yet, we cannot ignore the fact that the FMB survey identified co-living as the most popular means of providing new houses. Why has the emphasis shifted to extensions? “Because of uncertainty in the market. Co-living is popular and works well for certain communities, such as retirement villages and large-scale PRS schemes in cities. In reality though, co-living has eased off with the uncertainty in the economy.” There is a will but we are lacking a way, at least until uncertainty caused by the actual Brexit is removed.

– Brian Berry is chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders. Prior to his current position, Brian was Director of External Affairs at the FMB with responsibility for UK and EU policy, public affairs and media relations. Before the FMB, he worked at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), where he was head of UK public policy.

FEDERATION OF MASTER BUILDERS 2018 RESEARCH:

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK COULD BE POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING SHORTAGE IN THE UK?

33%

Build more co-living developments



31%

Build more micro-homes in urban areas

31%

Build more granny flats



27%

Extend permitted development rights

24%

Encourage more multi-generational living



18%

Excavate or convert more basements underneath existing properties

17%

Build on the Green Belt



**HAVE YOU MET
OUR LONDON
DEVELOPMENT TEAM?**

Our Carter Jonas London development team has expanded significantly recently, led by three partners. So our Planning & Development Insite readers could get to know the members, we decided to ask each of them a question outside of their usual day job. They worked tirelessly on their answers. Do read on.

GEORGE BARNES, PARTNER

My top three guests to a dinner party would be...

"I had to get a little inspiration from around the office to answer this question. You would not believe how many people said David Attenborough, he must be a busy man with all these dinner invitations flying around. OK, so I'm going to start highbrow, but it goes downhill fast. Bear with me. First on my list is George Orwell. He's the author of my favourite book, 1984. I also can't think of many people who would be more interesting to talk to about the current state of the world. Securing second place is radio presenter Simon Mayo. His voice has been in my ears for half my life. Someone who can talk knowledgeably about music and films, and spent years interviewing the great and good on all manner of things is always going to be entertaining company. Also, it would be good to throw a fellow Spurs fan into the mix. Comedian Bob Mortimer is taking my final spot. He's just funny. At my hypothetical drinks party, if the conversation were to flow, which I imagine it would do as the hypothetical wine would be flowing, then we could all just sit back and listen to all the good stories I imagine Bob has.

BALTHAZAR BUTCHER, GRADUATE SURVEYOR

My favourite thing about London is...

"I know I shouldn't say this as it is a little cliché for the graduate in the team to mention, but one of my favourite things about the big smoke is the old pubs. I read a figure a little while ago which said there are roughly 3,000 pubs in London, including 219 pubs in the City of London area alone. Personally, I can't understand why anyone would have a staple local when there are so many different places, many steeped in amazing history, to enjoy a pint or Pimms. My favourite discovery so far has to be Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese on Fleet Street. It has a fascinating past; it's

been at its location since 1538 and had to be partly rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1666. Plus, you can't fault the name!"

JAMES STAVELEY, ASSOCIATE

The most embarrassing thing I've ever done in the workplace is...

"Unfortunately, there are too many contenders for this answer, some of which you will never get out of me! The occasion which immediately comes to mind occurred right at the start of my career, when I was completing a summer internship. In true intern style (or as it was back then!), I was sent to make the morning teas in the staff kitchen, which was located on the floor above my office. Stupidly, I then decided to try and make it back down the stairs holding a tray of ten cups. You can guess the rest. I slipped, drop the tray and shattered all the cups on the floor. All of which is bad enough as it is, however it got worse. Upon slipping, I let out a very loud and spontaneous 'Oh s**t'. Alas, my senior manager was standing at the bottom of the stairs. After he had picked me up off the floor, I spent the next two minutes red faced and apologising for my rather colourful language. Luckily he saw the funny side. Oh well, at least I was a memorable intern.

OLIVIA CARDALE, SENIOR SURVEYOR

When I was younger I wanted to be...

"A bus conductor on a Routemaster bus. When I say this, most people think I wanted to drive the bus, however in my eyes, the conductor was a much more appealing proposition. I always imagined myself in uniform, walking around the bus, chatting to people and selling tickets. Also, hanging around on the open top deck if it was a nice summer's day. Sadly, my dreams were ended with the introduction of the Oyster card. However, on my daily commute, I still enjoy the view from the top deck of the number 87."

GUY INGHAM, PARTNER

The best place I have ever visited is...

I would have to say British Columbia in Canada. If you haven't been, my advice is to hop on a plane right this minute. Our first stop was Banff in the spring. The area is usually known as a winter destination and for its winter sports, but the scenery in the early summer is breath-taking. We then travelled down to Vancouver via Lake Louise. At every turn there are mind blowing and epic views to such a degree that you become a little complacent about the constant beauty around you. Am I sounding slightly poetic now? Perhaps I'm in the wrong industry! For those who don't know, Lake Louise is made of melted ice from a glacier that carries with it glacier silt or rock flour. The sunlight that reflects off this rock flour gives the lake its spectacular turquoise blue and green colour. It should be one of the Seven Wonders of the World, move a trip to the top of your bucket list!

DAVID PRICE, ASSOCIATE

If I was London Mayor for the day...

I remember reading an article in Time Out about 18 months ago where Londoners had been asked this exact question. Their answers included "encourage spontaneous tube singing", "fountains of champagne and chocolate lions at Trafalgar square" and "don't allow Christmas promotion to start in August". All good suggestions, tube singing and chocolate lion's aside. However, I am now concerned that my immediate answer to this questions is a little unimaginative, although essential. As my first decree, I would ensure that everyone working in the Mayor's office undertook development viability training to understand the pressures on viability. Oh and I would also consider demolishing City Hall, it's one of the most inefficient office buildings in London. On the last point alone, I think I can rule out ever getting the call up.



From left to right: James Staveley, Rob Gwyther, Chris Hemmings, Balthazar Butcher, David Price, Olivia Cardale, Jon Pinkerton, Guy Ingham, George Barnes

CHRIS HEMMINGS, ASSOCIATE PARTNER

If I could take one thing to a desert island it would be...

Funnily enough, I think my survival chances on a desert island would be higher than some of the other members of my team, although they may disagree. I should flag however, I am basing this assumption on the fact that I have watched a couple of series of 'The Island with Bear Grylls', so I'm hardly Tom Hanks in Castaway. Rolling with the untested statement that I have basic survival covered, my one item would be a surfboard. I'm imagining that this desert island is similar to Kauai, a Hawaiian island in the Pacific Ocean, which is known for its legendary surf. I've been and it's amazing, I could happily waste a couple of years surfing away there until I was rescued. It would certainly upstage my usual annual surfing spot of North Devon.

JON PINKERTON, PARTNER

My childhood hero is...

It has to be Brazilian racing driver and Formula One world champion, Ayrton Senna. Actually, forget the childhood bit, I think he has always been my hero, potentially still is. In my early twenties, after saving up for quite a few years, I bought a racing car in the hope of following in his footsteps. It seemed like a smart investment at the time as my ambition was to be on the F1 starting grid within five years. Sadly, I realised very quickly that I lacked the two vital ingredients needed to be a world class racing driver, money and talent. My junior surveyor's salary was insufficient to fund my aspirations and perhaps more importantly, most of my competitors could actually drive faster than me. I have since announced my retirement from F1 and gone back to watching my heroes from the sofa. Luckily, it is a much cheaper and safer option.

Our London development team has extensive experience of undertaking financial viability reviews and has completed in excess of 70 reviews, over 15,000 units, in the past two years. These range from relatively modest schemes, through to major applications. Within London, they predominately act for public sector clients, which ensures a key focus is on securing the maximum level and optimum mix of affordable housing.

PROVIDING FOR CYCLING

IS THERE A NEED FOR A CLEAR PATH?

As an associate in Carter Jonas' Oxford office and someone who cycles regularly, **Mark Utting** is familiar with the benefits of cycling, but also the current constraints.

The advantages of providing cycle paths are clear for all to see. With the UN predicting that 60% of the world's population is due to reside in cities by 2030, global concern about climate change, and on a more local level, issues with air quality, pressures on the high streets and density requirements in relation to car parking, there is a clear need for a more sustainable form of transport.

Many new developments now provide safe and attractive cycle paths, and commercial and residential buildings are creating more storage for bikes. But the vital link, the provision of cycle paths on already established roads, is all too frequently missing.

“THERE IS A CLEAR NEED FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE FORM OF TRANSPORT”

While protected bike routes are increasing, they remain disconnected. According to research by UK charity Sustrans, in the six cities where data was available (Newcastle, Cardiff, Belfast, Bristol, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Manchester), only 19 miles of protected bike lanes on roads are physically separated from traffic and pedestrians. Which is just 0.2%.

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of people would like to see more cycle paths introduced. Research, again by Sustrans, found that although just 6% of people currently commute to work, 75% would like to see more money spent on cycling infrastructure and 78% support building more protected bike lanes.

Mark feels that the necessary provision of cycle paths is obstructed by political procedure. “In Oxford

the county council is responsible for transport and has put in place a Local Transport Plan which is supportive of cycling. The document sits alongside Oxford City Council's Local Plan but simply due to legislative procedures, rather than political will, the Transport Plan is not incorporated into the Local Plan, and so it's not part of the development plan. This procedural failing is detrimental to cycling in Oxford, and particularly disappointing when I know of City councillors who are very supportive of cycling.”

The lack of joined-up thinking on something seemingly so straightforward seems surprising, but this is frequently the case, and yet more common when the county council is of a different political make-up to the district or borough council. So is political tribalism also responsible for the inadequate provision of cycle paths?

“In the case of a unitary authority, this disconnect simply does not exist because the authority responsible for transport is also responsible for the development plan. Similarly, areas which have a Combined Authority frequently benefit from the vision of the Mayor. Party politics sometimes has a role to play, but I would say it's the two-tier procedure system which is at fault.”

Cycling in London has increased significantly following its prioritisation in the London Plan, which resulted in the creation of a Walking and Cycling Commissioner. In the first six months of London's superhighway schemes, which meant new separated lanes, the number of cyclists on the roads increased by more than 50%. The cycle lane on Blackfriars Bridge carries an astonishing 70% of the bridge's rush-hour traffic. This improvement is being reflected in Greater Manchester and

Cambridgeshire, both of which also have a Mayoral authority.

So the problem would seem to be not so much about a lack of political will, but a failure in the political and funding systems for the will – national and political – to be realised.

“WHILE PROTECTED BIKE ROUTES ARE INCREASING, THEY REMAIN DISCONNECTED”

The inability of political systems to deliver a vision is something that we have seen highlighted on a national stage over the past few months. At the other end of the spectrum, the seeming inability of local planning authorities to simply deliver clear and safe cycle paths is a victim of the same problem. It does raise the question of whether a change in legislative procedure is necessary if policy is not strong enough to become practice. If so, will Whitehall, or Westminster, have the inclination to force through change? “Bearing in mind the potential to address such major issues as climate change, air quality and road safety,” says Mark, “we would hope so. But changing the process of strategic planning is extremely complex.”

“As an important first step, I think that all cities should appoint a Walking and Cycling Commissioner, they are clearly doing a great job in the cities that do have them.”

– **Mark Utting**, an associate based in Oxford, has overseen planning applications for a wide range of small, medium and large residential and mixed-use schemes. He also provides planning advice to a broad client base including private landowners, developers and the public sector.

HOW DO WE PLAN FOR MENTAL WELLBEING?



A recent government report revealed that mental ill-health is costing Britain an estimated £99 billion a year, with over 300,000 leaving their jobs annually as a result of mental health issues. Planning & Development Insite asks if our industry can play its part in addressing this problem.

Winston Churchill once observed, “We shape our buildings and afterwards, our buildings shape us”. This alone speaks volumes about the power our industry has to transform lives. Furthermore, a study by the Centre for Urban Design & Mental Health recently found that those living in urban areas have an almost 40% higher risk of depression, over 20% more chance of developing anxiety, and double the

threat of schizophrenia than those in rural areas. The report also states that well designed environments have a positive impact on mental health, and calculates that, with two-thirds of the UK population living in urban environments, good urban design has the potential to improve the wellbeing of around 44 million people. So how can development contribute towards reducing depression?

On a very basic level, poor masterplanning can lead to frustration. Anyone who has driven around in circles on a new housing development or walked miles in the correct direction, only to find that the route is in fact a dead end will be familiar with the sense of annoyance than poor design can create.

For those living in such communities, the negative impact of

“OVER-DEVELOPMENT CAN LEAD TO OVER-STIMULATION”

poor design can severely affect quality of life. Over-development can lead to over-stimulation. Neuroscience has shown that confronted with cluttered, messy or disorderly spaces, we are more likely to produce the stress hormone cortisol. Bright lights, traffic chaos, overcrowding and unwelcome noise all have an impact and can result in us mentally retreating from this assault on our senses.

The opposite is also true; bland uniformity in design can result in under-stimulation. Open spaces, nature and regular physical activity benefit mental health. Yet high density, an uninspiring concrete landscape and an over-dependence on either cramped public transport or the car has the opposite effect. Also, living in close proximity to others does not always result in a strong, supportive community. All too often the opposite is true, with those feeling forced to live in overcrowded areas often retreating from others and consequently suffering from loneliness.

“LIVING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO OTHERS DOES NOT ALWAYS RESULT IN A STRONG, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY”

While building standards, including health and safety measures, are an established component of the planning and design process, mental health has always been considerably under-represented. Yet this is rapidly changing.

King’s College London has developed a smartphone-based app, Urban Mind, to assess the relationship between nature in cities and momentary mental wellbeing. The University of the West of England has worked with planning consultancies, health authorities and the European WHO Healthy

Cities network to promote healthy and sustainable developments. In addition, researchers at Goldsmiths College have instigated LondonMood, a study to investigate how people feel in different environments and neighbourhoods.

Thanks to considerable research, developers can now draw on a wide-ranging toolkit of methodologies to benefit mental health through planning:

FACILITATE POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Enable participation of people of all ages in shared spaces

CREATE PLACES WHERE PEOPLE FEEL SAFE AND CONFIDENT

Avoid dark corners, poor sightlines, concealed entrances and dead ends, but also over-exposed spaces

REDUCE NOISE

Introduce natural sound barriers and avoid surfaces which amplify noise

DESIGN DAILY ENCOUNTERS WITH NATURE

While large scale green spaces are of benefit, so too are smaller, incidental encounters such as flower beds, water features and insect boxes, which can be experienced on typical walk to work

CREATE SPACES WITH A PURPOSE

While attributing a green space to a specific use can result in limited appeal, space without a purpose can quickly become redundant. Green spaces for play and hard landscaping for shared social occasions can considerably benefit community development, as can the ownership of the space by the community through its day-to-day management

SAFE SPACES

Consider safety in terms of crime, traffic, and, bearing in mind the increasing number of people with dementia, features to mitigate against getting lost

DESIGN IN INTEREST

Create variety in lines of sight, public art and architectural detail to prevent boredom and encourage a natural interest in the community

DEVELOPING FERTILE MINDS

Looking after a community garden or an allotment can improve self-esteem and a sense of wellbeing, in addition to strengthening communities. Furthermore, working together on an allotment creates opportunities for people to be with others in an unthreatening environment

NATURAL LIGHT IS A NATURAL REMEDY

Consider the orientation of homes, including the provision of floor-to-ceiling windows where possible

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Initiate traffic safety programmes, particularly for vulnerable groups, including pedestrians and cyclists. Consider crime prevention though environmental design, appropriate lighting and passive surveillance

DESIGN-OUT DETERRENTS TO ENJOYMENT OF THE OUTDOORS

Initiatives to reduce pollution – whether noise, air, light or toxic pollution – will increase residents’ inclination to benefit from fresh air and exercise

GREEN AND BLUE OVER GREY

While it is expected that any new development will feature a significant proportion of built-on land, the ‘green’ (parks, gardens or woodlands) and ‘blue’ (rivers, lakes or marshes) spaces that remain have the greatest potential to benefit mental health



HOW DO WE INTEGRATE HEALTH AND WELLBEING INTO DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT?

In 2018, British Land commissioned WPI Economics to research the impact of mental illness on the economy and produce some well evidenced advice for the property industry. The report, ‘A Design for Life’, highly recommends the introduction of Urban Wellbeing Zones. Cressida Curtis, head of corporate affairs and sustainability at British Land, explains more.



We take our surroundings for granted, yet they uniquely influence every decision we make. From how we travel to work to whether we socialise, from how safe we feel and our openness to new ideas, to how healthy we are. And over time, this quiet influence impacts our wellbeing.

Small changes to existing policies could help us realise this opportunity. By updating its vision for Enterprise Zones, the Government could help create areas where people want to live and thrive, as well as work and do business. This change would enable developers and policymakers to collaborate, fast-tracking regeneration on areas which are currently conditional on investment, producing design that contributes to community resilience and wellbeing.

Currently, Enterprise Zones have an economic focus. But economic performance is only one element in making an area prosperous. In the longer term, Enterprise Zones could become Urban Wellbeing Zones to reflect the importance of wider factors in affluence, and in particular, the importance of design.

These zones would kick-start regeneration through a fast-track

planning approval system. This would be in return for investment which supports socially beneficial outcomes, like improved mental or physical health, alongside sustainable economic growth. In turn, these locations would be more attractive places to live and work. They would also enable the coordination of planning across the range of areas needed to create truly successful urban spaces, including transport links, housing, social spaces, and green space.

As part of plans for local areas to be able to retain 100% of business rates, the Local Government Finance Bill 2016/17 had allowed for local areas to come together to form a new set of Enterprise Zones. However, these plans were shelved when the Bill fell through following the 2017 General Election.

The criteria for establishing an Urban Wellbeing Zone would explicitly ensure that mental health and wellbeing were a central focus of the plans. The result would be areas that people not only want to work and do business in, but where they also want to live and prosper.

One major advantage of the Urban Wellbeing Zone would be the power to retain business rates growth in the local area and leverage tax increment

finance. Combined with existing powers to introduce Business Improvement Districts and/or business rate supplements, this could provide vital finance to invest in social infrastructure.

“THIS CHANGE WOULD ENABLE DEVELOPERS AND POLICYMAKERS TO COLLABORATE, FAST-TRACKING REGENERATION”

The Government could also consider giving local areas a range of extra powers. This could be based on the evolving experience of powers provided to Metro Mayors to establish Mayoral Development Corporations and, more widely, the recent move to establish New Town Development Corporations. These corporations tend to have a range of planning powers, including the ability to make compulsory purchases and to fast-track planning applications.

Urban Wellbeing Zones could build on this approach by adopting a commitment to regenerate or develop

an area with health and wellbeing at its heart. As well as ensuring that development was focussed on mental health and wellbeing, alongside growth, this would provide greater control, certainty and speed of decision.

We want to stimulate discussion, collaboration and new thinking which results in excellent design becoming mainstream in UK urban environments. We have identified Enterprise Zones as the starting point from which we can change our national mindset regarding the importance of design, but success relies on incorporating health and wellbeing, which can only be achieved with clear support from the public sector.

Over two thirds of us now live in urban environments. Using this network of zones, we can ensure best practice is shared and spread across the UK, improving future prospects for everyone.

–Cressida Curtis is head of corporate affairs and sustainability at British Land, where she leads the company’s strategic sustainability programme, public affairs and corporate communications. Prior to this, she has a decade’s experience of handling corporate affairs within the property landscape.

HOW CAN WE TURN THE TIDE ON COASTAL DEPRIVATION?

Shortly before a crucial Brexit vote in the Commons, Theresa May offered a £1.6 billion funding boost to those regions which, the Referendum had demonstrated, felt left behind. Bribe or otherwise, the Stronger Towns Fund was recognition on the part of the Government that emergency measures were required.

The bleak picture painted by the Social Market Foundation report is a strong contrast to that of a century ago. In 1949, five million holidaymakers crowded on Britain's seaside piers and beaches. Today, just 250,000 people holiday in UK towns and, inevitably, local economies reflect this slump. Jobs are typically provided by an excess of small businesses and the work is unskilled, poorly paid and seasonal.

The result is an oversupply of former hotels, generally in poor condition and with low economic values. Many have been converted into bedsits and attract a transient and often vulnerable population. The health issues that this presents are compounded by a

substantially higher than average age amongst occupants.

And just as social change has stalled prosperity, so has industrial decline. Northern towns such as Blackpool had prospered on the crest of the industrial wave, but as the economy began to suffer, with the industry in retreat, significant adverse impacts arose. On the other side of the country, local fishing industries have been swept away by larger operations.

“TODAY, JUST 250,000 PEOPLE HOLIDAY IN UK TOWNS”

Not only have many coastal towns failed to adapt to the fast pace of change in business, but they also face the combined threat of coastal erosion and declining public transport services.

So can a financial handout help address these problems, and what role will planning play in the solution?

“Where funding is available to help renew these communities, planning will have a significant role to play”, says Colin Brown,

partner at Carter Jonas. But whole-scale regeneration is a considerable undertaking, requiring significant amounts of money.

“Past experience has shown that the best regeneration projects are those which are ambitious. There is little point re-investing in something which has already proven ineffective. Regeneration involves wholesale change, it involves entire communities and it replaces poor quality with high quality. The buildings which have a major regenerative impact, such as the art-deco Midland Hotel in Morecambe or the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill on Sea, are the obvious ones.”

“COASTAL TOWNS FAILED TO ADAPT TO THE FAST PACE OF CHANGE IN BUSINESS”

Planning is the glue that holds together the essential elements of regeneration: employment, housing, the public realm and provision of health facilities.

“From ensuring that businesses benefit from super-fast broadband, to promoting the potential benefits of off-shore energy, planning is the facilitator of change. In an economically disadvantaged town, we would want to look at expanding the provision of skills in line with emerging sectors and prepare for incoming transformation. This requires a considerable amount of forethought and understanding, not only of how the community can thrive now, but also how it can stimulate future growth.

“Ideally, much more could be done to exploit the potential of ports and logistics, especially as transport routes change post-Brexit. And, in many cases, we should be looking to improve transport links to the main routes, including across the country.”

No regeneration project would succeed without giving a high

priority to arts, culture and the public realm. “Every seaside town has a unique character which is expressed in its architecture, however jaded. The best regeneration schemes build on the DNA of the place and, in doing so, create something unique. For example, nostalgia inspired the restoration of the 1930s Labworth Café in Canvey Island and Turner Contemporary in Margate.”

Also, our masterplanning team were involved with the regeneration of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. The study produced an integrated physical and economic renewal plan which introduced a new station gateway, rethought the market place, improved town centre linkage, and presented new strategies for parking, signage and street furniture.

It is vital for future prosperity to attract the young. Towns such as Folkestone and Hastings now present a Bohemian image, attracting young people with cultural developments, vintage furniture shops and pavement cafés.

“Enhancing the public realm is not merely instrumental in uniting a community, but can have other structural advantages. In Littlehaven and Portsmouth, the new sea defences have become attractive features”, says Colin.

“REGENERATION SHOULD HAPPEN WITH A COMMUNITY, NOT TO IT”

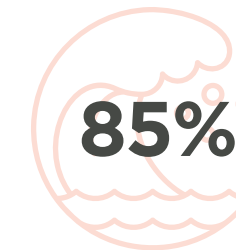
“On this scale, partnerships are vital to success. Support is available from organisations such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and Visit Britain, and grants are regularly made by the Coastal Communities Fund and through private businesses investment. But the most important partnership is with the local community. Regeneration should happen with a community, not to it.”

Wholesale regeneration does not come cheap: the Stronger Towns Fund could easily be absorbed by a single community. Even more significantly, there are extremely complex issues

facing these towns which require a well-considered, holistic solution.

The role of planning in capitalising upon the Stronger Towns Fund cannot not be underestimated.

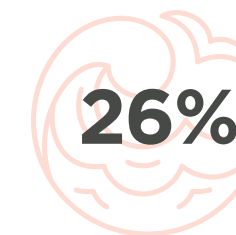
- Colin Brown, partner, is head of the Planning & Development division in the eastern region. He has over 25 years of planning experience. Colin has been involved in all aspects of statutory planning from both a public and private sector perspective.



85% of the UK's 98 coastal local authorities have pay levels below the national average (an average of £3,600 less per annum)



50% of the ten British local authorities with the highest unemployment are on the coast



26% economic output per head is 26% lower in coastal communities



70% of the small areas most affected by poor quality housing are coastal

KEY FINDINGS OF LIVING ON THE EDGE, A REPORT BY THE SOCIAL MARKET FOUNDATION (2017)



Could the holiday industry move on from

BUILT STRUCTURES TO MANUFACTURED PODS?

From post-war pre-fabs to shepherds' huts for former prime ministers, off-site construction has moved on. *Peter Edwards, a partner at Carter Jonas, discusses the development of hospitality pods.*

“FUTURE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT WON'T BE BUILT, IT WILL BE MANUFACTURED”

Gone are the days when off-site construction meant wobbly portakabins and micro homes created from shipping containers. Equally just as the pace of change has picked up, so has the desirability.

Garden offices and studio pods are of increasing popularity, especially as the cost of stamp duty often exceeds the cost of the new room. A pod in the garden could also be used as a good Airbnb revenue-raising venture, while congested school sites could erect a new sound-proofed music room or light-filled art studio in a matter of days.

More recently, the UK holiday market has been transformed by the exponential rise in the popularity of yurts and shepherds' huts. In the near future, we expect to see luxury pods sited in locations specified by their guests. For example, a secluded area with a fantastic view one week, or closely situated to accommodate groups of friends the next, perhaps with catering and home entertainment pods as part of the temporary cluster.

Unsurprisingly, pods are likely to be popular with event organisers too. In fact, a prototype unit designed by The Future Bureau has

been bought by a wedding venue operator and is to be installed as a bridal preparation suite.

It is no coincidence that the increased interest in modular construction coincides with a skills shortage in the construction industry, demands for a reduction in construction waste and a need for increased speed and profitably. The technological revolution is also a factor, as robots and CNC-controlled technologies could be used in manufacturing.

Probably the greatest potential benefit of pods is their ultimate flexibility. This includes the ability to



transport them, orientate them to the sun or shade, put them into storage when not in use, or reinvent them.

The planning situation is not straightforward, as owners may want to place pods in potentially sensitive environments. However, in some areas, the units could be sited on a temporary basis, for up to 28 days a year, without the need for planning permission.

Where planning permission is required, various technical assessments may be necessary to consider the impact of the development on, say, local ecology, the landscape, heritage and highways.

It has been said that future property development won't be built, it will be manufactured. While The Future Bureau is currently concentrating on the hospitality industry, it has one eye firmly on

the wider opportunities offered by modular construction, especially in terms of affordable housing.

Certainly the time has come to ditch the pre-fab comparisons and embrace the substantial benefits that modular construction brings.

- Peter Edwards is a partner at Carter Jonas and a chartered town planner with over 30 years' experience. He provides planning and development advice to private sector clients.

About **THE FUTURE BUREAU**

Vistadais is the first product to be developed by The Future Bureau. It has been designed as a complete 'off-grid, plug & play' luxury guest modular unit and could potentially operate in areas deemed unsuitable, too inaccessible or too expensive for conventional structures.

The growth in overnight stays in the UK is creating demand for accommodation that outstrips current supply. With its off-grid capabilities and luxurious design, Vistadais provides the ideal solution for short break 'experience vacations' for the increasing number of people looking to be pampered in unconventional locations.

Carter Jonas has been working with designer Ranjay Judge of The Future Bureau in developing the concept and function of the pods and has provided strategic advice on planning and sustainability issues.

The pods are constructed from highly sustainable, recyclable and energy efficient materials. The prototype, which was recently on display at Futurebuild, provides a bedroom, galley kitchen, living room, wet room and balcony. At 38 sq m, this compact unit comes with a fully glazed front elevation and Tufeco insulated walls, roof and floor made of strong, thermally efficient and fire resistant recycled glass. Externally, the

units can be clad in a variety of eco-friendly materials.

Being transportable, the pods can be used on a seasonal basis as, say, fishing or shooting lodges during the relevant season, before being moved elsewhere. The adjustable, telescopic steel legs are tethered to the ground using retractable piling screws which allow the pods to be sited on uneven terrain – taking advantage of some spectacular locations or providing unrivalled views of sporting events or music festivals: 'a view with a room'.

In the coming years, The Future Bureau will offer pods in a range of sizes, including a two-bed unit and an 'events' option which could be designed with a larger entertaining area in place of the bedroom.

The ability of pods to function off-grid is the result of lithium battery units, roof-mounted photovoltaic cells and water storage, which can be topped up by a bowser. Rainwater is recycled and used for toilets and irrigation around the site. Waste is collected in sealed cassettes which can be removed weekly; with all the services being readily accessible from outside the pod.

Due to their high performance insulation, the pods require very little heating, though many feature log burning stoves. On larger scale permanent projects, ground-source heat pumps and wind power may be suitable.



“THE GREATEST POTENTIAL BENEFIT OF PODS IS THEIR ULTIMATE FLEXIBILITY”

“FOR TOO LONG, VILLAGES HAVE FALLEN INTO THE SUSTAINABILITY TRAP”

ARE WE CURRENTLY TAKING A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY APPROACH TO RURAL HOUSING?

A failure of the planning system to assess rural housing need based on changing social and technological criteria is leaving English villages trapped in the analogue age, according to the CLA. Planning & Development Insite spoke to its president, Tim Breitmeyer, about its revealing report.

Recent research has shown that the average age of someone relocating from the city to the countryside has, for the first time, fallen below 40. Village life is increasingly appealing to families looking for a healthier lifestyle, a sense of community and more space. Also, to the increasing number of small business owners and homeworkers.

But while social trends demand more rural housing, the system is failing to deliver – and consequently rural house prices remain out of reach for many, further exacerbating the rural housing crisis and, in some areas, a bucolic stagnation is taking place.

Tim Breitmeyer is the President of the Country Land and Business Association (CLA). The organisation recently produced a report *Sustainable Villages – Making rural communities fit for the future*, which demonstrates that over 2,000 villages are unable to provide new housing because they are technically classified as unsuitable for additional homes.

“The problem,” Breitmeyer says, “is outdated sustainability assessments and a static approach to rural planning. We researched the Local Plans of 70 local authorities in England described as “mainly rural” by the ONS, and found that 2,154 villages are judged to be unsustainable. In these communities, housing allocation, including the delivery of affordable homes, is either highly restricted or not permitted.”

The research found that Cornwall has the most villages deemed unsustainable, at 213, followed by Wiltshire at 168 and Central Lincolnshire at 132.

The CLA investigated the settlement hierarchy that local authorities use when allocating development, which scores villages against a range of services and amenities. Only 18% featured broadband and, as such, the potential to work, shop and or order prescriptions online was omitted from the hierarchy.

The CLA is calling on the Government to address the housing needs of those communities deemed

unsustainable for development by carrying out mandatory housing needs assessments to improve the understanding of the rural housing crisis.

“In practice, housing allocation is a trickle-down process. Sites are allocated to villages high up the settlement hierarchy, with remaining villages only able to utilise small-scale infill development, redevelopment, building conversions within existing boundaries, rural exception sites or entry level exception sites to create new homes. In many cases, the unintended consequence is to change the often dispersed layout, and with it the charm, of so many of our villages.”

While many villagers are understandably opposed to large-scale developments on their doorstep, it shouldn't be assumed that they are anti-growth. Organic growth is necessary to ongoing sustainability. Most rural communities want to be in a position to provide homes for young families and to keep shops and pubs open, and bus routes running.

Furthermore, the current system lacks foresight. “Rather than simply assessing villages for the services they have now, the question we should be asking is, what do we want those communities to look like in the next two decades or more, and how can we work to achieve this? The starting point has to be the people who live and work there, and the future economy. Future services and businesses will choose to locate in areas with robust and diversified economies. These areas will then attract higher paid jobs which will help reduce the indifference between house prices and salaries.

“While a strong economy is the only long-term solution to the rural housing crisis, there are steps that need to be taken now to address the loss of young people to towns and cities, the reduction in social capital as people are priced out of an area, and the environmental cost of commuting.”

Public transport is a key issue. The majority of the local authority

documents reviewed by the CLA determined that lack of public transport, particularly to neighbouring villages with necessary services, made communities less sustainable. This is reflected in the importance attached to the availability of bus travel.

Without recognising and adapting to the changes in 21st Century living, the planning system will only continue to reduce the sustainability of rural communities. For too long, villages have fallen into the ‘sustainability trap’ and have been left with too few options for change. Technology has the greatest potential to achieve this and strengthen the rural economy.

“WHILE MANY VILLAGERS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY OPPOSED TO LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENTS ON THEIR DOORSTEP, IT SHOULDN'T BE ASSUMED THAT THEY ARE ANTI-GROWTH”

“Our report was extremely well received,” says Breitmeyer. “Not only from our members, who want to live in sustainable and vibrant rural communities, but also from the wider public who recognise the need for additional investment in broadband and mobile coverage. Local authorities must take greater account of access to services via the internet. Updating sustainability assessments to capture this information could result in more affordable rural housing for the increasing number of people who appreciate the many benefits of country life; and, in recognising genuinely sustainable villages, thus enabling them to prosper.”

– Tim Breitmeyer, president of the CLA, manages a 1,600-acre farm in Cambridgeshire, and also contract-farms a further 3,900 acres, growing wheat, spring barley, oil seed rape and sugarbeet. Tim has been an active CLA member for more than a decade.



Are we too passive for

PASSIVHAUS?



With the UK simultaneously seeking to build 300,000 homes each year, while reducing carbon emissions, logic would dictate a focus is on energy-efficient homes. But is it that simple? Planning & Development Insite spoke to Jon Bootland, chief executive of the Passivhaus Trust.

Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have forecast that we have only a few years left to reduce CO₂ emissions to levels necessary to avoid a catastrophic rise in global temperatures. Buildings are believed to account for almost half of those emissions.

So, as the UK plans to build 300,000 new homes per year for the next decade, it would follow that those homes should have the lowest emissions possible.

The Passivhaus standard provides an answer: an ultra-low energy, super-insulated building that requires very little heating or cooling, and can reduce energy bills by 90%. Passive heat sources – the sun, human occupants, household appliances and the heat recovered via the ventilation system-meet most of the heating demand and the remaining heat can be provided by a tiny conventional heating system.

This is achieved through a whole building approach to occupant

comfort and energy use, including stringent airtightness, high levels of insulation and heat recovery on the ventilation. Fresh, filtered air is pulled in from outside by mechanical ventilation systems that warm it using heat recovered from the air being extracted. Passivhauses are built with meticulous attention to detail and rigorous design and construction according to principles developed by the Passivhaus Institute in Germany.

Jon Bootland is the chief executive of the Passivhaus Trust, an independent, non-profit organisation which oversees the UK adoption of the Passivhaus standard and methodology. As well as maintaining the integrity of the Standard, the Trust aims to promote Passivhaus as a highly effective means of reducing energy use and carbon emissions.

“To achieve the Passivhaus standard,” says Jon Bootland, “a building in the UK

must typically feature extremely high performance windows with insulated frames, an airtight building fabric, ‘thermal bridge free’ construction and a mechanical ventilation system with highly efficient heat recovery. And all this must be brought together, through the design tool PHPP, to create a comfortable and healthy environment for the building occupants.”

“FRESH, FILTERED AIR IS PULLED IN FROM OUTSIDE BY MECHANICAL VENTILATION SYSTEMS”

“Local authorities are increasingly seeing the benefits of adopting the Passivhaus Standards” says Jon Bootland. “Camden and Norwich have produced developments of over 100 Passivhaus homes.” Now, in addition to houses, there are increasing numbers of Passivhaus schools and university buildings, offices, hospitals, supermarkets, swimming pools and many retrofits.

But, whereas the UK is proud to have achieved 1,000 Passivhaus homes, Vancouver has more than doubled this figure in less than four years. So what can be done to speed up adoption in the UK?

“In Vancouver, the introduction of a stepped energy code was pivotal. The code points to a performance based on airtightness, space heating demand and other features of the Passivhaus standard. It provides a range of allowable options which create an incremental improvement in overall building performance.

“The city’s developers and contractors welcomed the code, partly because Vancouver offered developers incentives for building to the higher Passivhaus standard.

These including additional space allowances, increased building heights and fast-track planning.

Political will in the UK wavered, with strong commitments based on the Committee for Climate Change’s advice countered by the decision in 2015 to remove the commitment for all new homes to be zero carbon from 2016 onwards. But hopes were revived recently with the Chancellor’s announcement of a new Future Homes Standard from 2025.

On a local level, political will is more encouraging. “Several cities and regions around the UK are moving towards a zero carbon goal for new housing. In the last year alone, we’ve seen the Greater London Authority Zero Carbon Target implemented, the Manchester Green Summit and Springboard to a Green City initiatives, the Leeds Climate Commission and many others. Importantly, the Passivhaus standard has recently been included in the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) Sustainable Housing Standards, and is recommended in UKGBC’s guidance for local authorities.”

“CAMDEN AND NORWICH HAVE PRODUCED DEVELOPMENTS OF OVER 100 PASSIVHAUS HOMES”

“Social landlords have embraced the Passivhaus standards because there is clearly social value in building energy-efficient housing,” explains Jon Bootland. “For low-income families, saving hundreds of pounds a year on the cost of heating is a huge bonus. Also, there are direct financial benefits for social landlords. A report by Sustainable Homes investigated the impact of energy-efficient housing

on social landlords’ income. Using Energy Performance Certificate data from 25 housing providers, the research found a strong correlation between lower rent arrears, lower void rates and more energy-efficient properties.”

The economic case differs in the private sector as meeting the exact Passivhaus standards can add 3-15% to the price of a new build. From a developers perspective, Passivhaus can result in energy consumption reduced by up to 75%. The benefits of lower bills and greater comfort only advantage the occupants. Therefore, there is a delicate balance to strike between the benefits and an increased cost.

However, this may change as the requirements on the private sector increase, linked to the proposed introduction of the Future Homes Standard and the eventual return to a zero carbon standard.

Jon Bootland is confident that Passivhaus can be delivered at scale, but that political will is key to unlocking this potential. “There are examples throughout the world showing that putting Passivhaus into legislation can work for developers. We are encouraged by the achievement and momentum to date, but if we are to get anywhere near our emissions targets for 2030, while undertaking such a huge house-building programme, we need more positive political engagement.”

– Jon Bootland is the chief executive of the Passivhaus Trust, which is the official body for promoting and protecting the Passivhaus standard in the UK. He is also Director of the Sustainable Development Foundation, and has helped to establish the Good Homes Alliance, the SHINE network for sustainable healthcare buildings, the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance and the Alliance for Sustainable Building Products. Jon has over 20 years’ experience in sustainability for the built environment, including previous roles at The Prince’s Foundation and the Construction Industry Research and Information Association.



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