

# Foreword

## Mary Power

The Oxford Joint Planning Law Conference, in its 44th year, focused and paid homage to the sad demise of David Bowie in the title: “Ch-Ch-Changes ...” This is in recognition across the planning and legal profession of the constant amendments, consultations and, yes, changes that affect and have implications for us all in the advice we give, the interpretations we make and in trying to apply the latest rules and regulations to the delivery of homes, jobs and infrastructure across the country.

It was a great honour to be invited by Andrew Warner on retiring from the Committee to join and represent the RICS profession, and it was with even greater trepidation that I sought to continue to make a contribution to this “Oxford” tradition, to impart the expertise and opinions of some of the leading high-profile speakers to an equally illustrious list of delegates.

Sarah Richards, CEO of The Planning Inspectorate, embraced the conference theme on Friday night, describing some of the challenges and changes she is responsible for imparting across the Inspectorate; the sheer scale of the numbers of appeals handled and the objective to clear the backlog of appeal cases and speed up the process where prudent.

It has been a defining year for the UK with the Brexit vote to leave the EU, a decision that affects us all, but one which for now is likely to mean business as usual as a large part of the planning regulatory system is enshrined in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations. One thing that is known is that we do not really know how quickly things might change and each speaker sought to give their own views about the changes we face over the next 12 or so months.

Yolande Barnes opened the conference with thought-provoking examples of wide world wisdoms that embrace mixed communities and challenge standard Use Class Order categories, questioning whether it will continue to work for the future “Millenials or Generation Y”.

Keith Holland sought to expose whether the plan-led system can become effective at predicting the homes and jobs we need and then deliver in quick response to the undersupply of housing needed, and how Neighbourhood Plans are fairing in delivery terms. James Fennell continued this theme to challenge whether the plan-led system is fit for purpose and whether a call for regional/strategic planning needs to make a comeback.

Rebecca Warren demonstrated the effect of the call for greater public access to information to provide the transparency local communities and councils are seeking and its potential impact on creating greater trust between the public and private sector and the communities in which development takes place. Pat Hayes demonstrated the challenges facing local planning authorities in assessing the need for estate regeneration, delivering regeneration and assumptions made about the council housing stock and its local communities.

Beverley Firth delivered her practical experiences and best practice solutions for delivering complex phased regeneration projects and ensuring CIL regulations are used for greatest effect in tabulated s.106 Agreements.

Richard Moules highlighted how the planning and environmental legal system might be used to frustrate the delivery of sometimes unwanted development, how recent court decisions identify common environmental law errors and how these pitfalls can be avoided.

Richard Ground had the task of delivery one of the conference’s most valued papers reviewing this year’s prominent High Court and Planning Court cases, looking at the interpretation of National Planning Policy Framework para.49 and housing land supply policies, planning policies generally, heritage cases, the use of planning conditions and the exercise of discretion by the courts to save decisions that would otherwise have to be quashed.

The conference as usual was conducted under the Chatham House Rule, with two dinners in the Medieval Hall and Julia Hartley-Brewer, broadcaster and journalist, providing some welcome relief to the day's earnest papers as the Saturday night after dinner speaker.