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Plan ahead

Joint venture

The Joint Planning Law Conference is one of the highlights of the conference calendar for property professionals. This year housing dominates the agenda, as organiser Mary Cook tells *The Planner*

"It's a prestigious event," says Cornerstone barrister Mary Cook of the annual Joint Planning Law Conference. "The speakers are lawyers, academics and professionals. Whoever they are, they are all respected in their field.

"And they each produce a paper, given out after the presentations. These are a work of art in themselves."

For 43 years the "Oxford conference" (so-called because it always takes place at an Oxford University college) has drawn together lawyers, barristers, property professionals, planners and politicians to discuss the issues of the day in land use and property development.

It's 'joint' because it is jointly run by and for the Law Society, the Bar Council, RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) and the RTPI, with each body taking it in turns to organise the event.

And it's "special", according to Cook, who is chair of

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the organising committee this year, because it crosses boundaries to bring the property professions together over three days in a sociable setting (informal gatherings include two black-tie dinners, a cocktail reception and a tour of Oxford's film locations).

"You're bringing people together who might have met each other on opposite sides of the room or the court, so it's an opportunity to discuss things in a non-adversarial way," notes Cook. "You get to know people. That helps us."

What's more, the Chatham House Rule that applies during the event leads to lively discussion during Q&As. Attendees can talk freely – and there's much to talk about. This year's programme, topical as ever, has a "constant refrain" of housing. "Because there is such a shortfall it's beginning to impact on many aspects of life," says Cook.

At least three of the

presentations, from Kate Barker, David Rudlin, Clare Fielding and Mike Kiely (see box), deal directly with the challenge of providing housing to our growing population.

This year it's presented by Saira Kabir Sheikh QC of Francis Taylor Building. "She will have lots to talk about because there have been lots of cases. Post the NPPF there have been a whole string of them, and not a week goes by when you might find a decision coming from the Court of Appeal on a planning matter. You can expect the paper to be more in depth than the presentation."

So, aside from the quality

THE PROGRAMME

The Planning Court is One Year Old – Mr Justice Lindblom, lead judge of the Planning Court

How Many Houses Should We Plan For? – Dame Kate Barker, non-executive director of Taylor Wimpey

Grow Your Own Garden City: How We Doubled the Size of Uxchester – David Rudlin, URBED

From Consent to Construction – Clare Fielding, partner Wragge, Lawrence, Graham and Co; Mike Kiely, director of planning, Croydon

Heritage Assets and their Setting: Views from a Lawyer and a Practitioner – Nigel Hewitson, partner BrookStreet des Roches; Dr Nigel Barker, planning and conservation director, Historic England

Legal Update – Saira Kabir Sheikh QC, Francis Taylor Building

After dinner speakers: Liz Peace; Ben Page, Ipsos MORI

presentations, the in-depth papers and the networking, why should you come?

"If you are a chartered town planner, you have a huge amount to learn by attending the conference," says Cook. "You can work out who the go-to lawyers are and the ones you can work with. You can establish the latest case law in your key area.

"You take away professional relationships, the papers and solutions to problems you will encounter as a practitioner," she adds.

And there's one more thing: "I personally think it's great fun as well as being intellectually stimulating." **P**

COMING TOGETHER

What: Joint Planning Law Conference

Where: New College, Oxford

When: Friday to Sunday, 18-20 September 2015

Find out more and book: tinyurl.com/Planner0915-OX-1809