South West England

NEWS FROM FREIBURG
Planning • Public health • Urban design

WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities and Urban Policy
NHS South West
9-13 September 2009

Summary record with articles from participants
2009
edited by Marcus Grant
The report

This report arises from a study visit to Freiburg, Germany, 2009 and has been designed to compliment the report from the 2008 visit.

That first report focussed on the look and feel of the urban realm and the goal and approaches that led to these outcomes. This report focuses on the first hand experiences and reflections of the participants.

The report has been produced to assist with communication and transmission of learning and knowledge from the study visit. It is not meant to be a comprehensive evaluation of the situation in Freiburg compared to that in the UK and in the South West.

It provides a flavour of what we can learn for the development of healthy sustainable communities in the UK. For better understanding, speak to some of the participants or better still, plan a visit yourself.

Marcus Grant

Deputy Director
WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities and Urban Policy

This report was compiled and edited by Marcus Grant, with text contributions and photographs from participants. Additional photographs from Marcus Grant, Mark Patterson, Katrin Hochberg, Adrian Roper and Janet Askew. © UWE

Participants

| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | Tom Flanagan, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Director for Environment, Planning and Economy
Carolyn Rule, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Portfolio Environment and regeneration
James Wakeham, NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Public Health |
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<td>GOSW</td>
<td>Hilary Neal, Deputy Regional Director, Environment, Transport and Climate</td>
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| Dorset                      | David Phillips, Director of Public Health, Dorset PCT
Paul Willis, Group Manager Transport. Dorset County Council |
| Swindon                     | Jennifer Harries, NHS Swindon, Director of Public Health
David Way, Swindon Borough Council, Strategic Environmental Assessment Officer
Stephen Cains, Swindon Borough Council, Senior Planner |
| Sustrans                    | Adrian Roper, Regional Director |
| Wiltshire                   | Mark Boden, Wiltshire CC, Corporate Director, Economic Development, Planning and Housing
Maggie Rae, Wiltshire PCT, Director of Public Health |
| Jersey                      | Rosemary Geller, Medical Officer of Health |
| Borough of Poole            | Jim Bright, Strategic Director |
| Creating Excellence         | Mark Pearson, Head of Design South West |
| NHS South West              | Gabriel Scally, Regional Director of Public Health
Kate Burton, Public Health Manager,
Mark Patterson, Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Regional Manager |
| UWE staff                   | Janet Askew, Head of Department of Planning and Architecture
Sarah Hills, Institute for Sustainability, Health and Environment |
| UWE coordinators and facilitators | Hugh Barton, Director WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities
Marcus Grant, Deputy Director WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities
Katrin Hochberg, Translator and Independent local food consultant |
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by Gabriel Scally, Regional Director of Public Health

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Freiburg study tour

Investigating policy and design for healthy communities and sustainable settlements

An urban field trip instigated by the NHS South West and led by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities and Urban Policy based at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

**Purpose**
To learn from the realities of progress towards healthy communities and sustainable settlements.

**Aims**
The purpose of the trip was to see how a healthy, sustainable city works in practice, as an inspiration for policy and action in the South West.

- What such a city feels like, how it looks, both in relation to the whole settlement and specific parts
- How the current pattern has developed over time – what contextual, technical and political factors enabled progress – what organisational forms and collaborative styles have or haven’t worked
- How people, communities and businesses have been and are involved in the process, and with what lessons learnt
- How current behaviour and lifestyles differ from the norm, particularly in the new ‘car-free’ area of Vauban, and what attitudes residents have
- How far behaviour – particularly but not only active travel – has been influenced or facilitated by physical characteristics of the land use/transport system and the design of the public realm
- How far changed health outcomes have been expressly related to the progressive changes in the urban environment
- How the market in land and buildings, and the related policy areas of housing, green space and transport have been managed so as to deliver the eco city
Foreword

Sometimes things work out even better than you might have hoped, but it is rare. This is one of those rare initiatives that squarely hit the button. There have now been two visits to Freiburg by people from either a public health or local authority background. The net effect of those visits is that we are changing the level of knowledge and ambition in the South West as regards to what we can and should be doing with regard to the built environment.

I have already seen some of the effect the participants in the first visit have had in shifting attitudes and approaches. The outcome of a very successful second visit promises more of the same.

Equipping influential people to talk authoritatively about how we can collectively improve the lives of people living in towns and cities in our region will deliver a fantastic return on the investment of a few days visit to Germany. More than once I have heard participants say, “I have seen it, and it works”.

This report, and the one from the 2008 visit, will give you a very good understanding of what has been done in Freiburg. It will hopefully make you impatient for the implementation of many of these approaches in the context of South West England.

As ever, thanks are due to our wonderful academic colleagues in the University of the West of England and to all those, whether organisers or participants, who made it a wonderful learning experience.

Gabriel Scally

Regional Director of Public Health
for the Department of Health South West and the South West Strategic Health Authority
SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND FREIBURG STUDY TOUR
Programme 2009

Wednesday 9th September
Check-in at St. Pancras, London from 10.00 onwards,
Travelling on the 11.01 to Paris. Late lunch in Paris:
Strasbourg Restaurant 3pm (5, Rue 8 Mai 1945).
Onward travel to arrive Freiburg 22.15.

Thursday 10th September
9.00 Meet in the hotel lobby.
Briefing by Hugh Barton
Walk/Tram to cycle hub
9.30 Hire cycles and cycle out to Rieselfeld
10.30 Guided tour of Rieselfeld with the architect.
Herr Siegel
13.00 Lunch at Rieselfeld then cycle back to city
centre
15.00 Lecture and Q & A on transport policy.
Andreas Hildebrandt of the Freiburger Verkehrs-AG,
(Konferenzaum)
17.00 Learning zone I - First impressions and tools
to aid understanding
Group seminar in the hotel.
Strasbourg Seminar room (Finish 18.30).
7.00 Dinner, at allotment project in city

Friday 11th September
8.30 Meet in the hotel lobby
9.00 Lecture and Q & A with the Freiburg
Director of Planning, Wulf Daseking
(Konferenzaum)
11.00 Take the tram to Vauban
12.30 Guided tour of Vauban: Futour - learn more
about the Baugruppe development process.
14.30 Very late lunch and tram back to city centre
16.00 Learning zone II - Tools for appraisal and
planning
Group seminar at hotel (Finish 17.30).
17.30 Christian Hiss, Regional-Wert Ag, (bio-
dynamic farmer and community assisted
agriculture project also attempting to supply
food to the local hospital)
(Finish 18.30)
19.30 Dinner ad lib

Saturday 12th September
9.30 Learning zone III - Lessons for the South
West Group seminar at hotel
11.30 End of formal programme
Saturday cont ...
Late morning: After 11.30 free time to visit the
local markets (right by the hotel) and sights, lunch
Afternoon: Optional excursion experiencing the
superb suburban train network to lake in the
black forest / community supported bio-dynamic agriculture project and the
black forest.
Early evening: Walk up to spectacular city viewpoint
from the hills overlooking the city on the edge of the Black Forest
20.00 Dinner at indoor food fair
22.00 Pick-up bags from and walk to train station
22.57 Sleeper service leaves Freiburg

Sunday 13th September
05.45 Breakfast in Koln, taking the 7.44 to Brussels
12.26 Arrive back at St. Pancras, London

Accommodation  Mercure Hotel Freiburg
Am Muenster, Auf der Zinnen 1, Freiburg, tel.
0761/38510
Close to the Munster Platz in the heart of the city
**Introduction to Freiburg**

At a time when concern about climate change and obesity is increasing, Freiburg in the Rhine rift valley has attracted great interest as a city which has successfully “bucked the trend” towards higher carbon emissions and a more sedentary lifestyle; a trend of car dependence. For three decades a progressive policy has been pursued – triggered initially by fears about the effects of acid rain in the city’s back yard, the Black Forest. The full pedestrianisation of the historic centre has been followed by a comprehensive, and in many ways visionary, land use/transport strategy based on walking, cycling and public transport.

The latest urban developments – the new neighbourhoods of Vauban and Rieselfeld – put principles of sustainable development into practice to a degree rarely seen anywhere in the world.

Vauban, for example, has established extensive virtually car-free areas, where children can play freely. Social capital and community are strengthened by user-cooperative provision of housing and a high quality of liveability is maintained whilst also incorporating sustainable energy and water strategies.

Freiburg represents an example showing that culture change is both possible and desirable. From a highly dependent car culture in the 1950s, car ownership is now the lowest in Germany and car use is down to 16% of trips.

Although longitudinal health studies have not been carried out, we know from pieces of evidence emerging in the UK and Denmark that the cumulative effect of their approach on health must be significant.
‘Immersion in excellence’: Freiburg the green city

Hilary Neal from the Government Office for the South West describes her impressions of Freiburg and the special geographical, historical, institutional and cultural factors which seem to have come together to create its ethos. There are lessons and challenges for the South West from Freiburg’s experience; but we must find our own way of achieving similar results for our citizens.

The trip to Freiburg was enormously exhilarating for me. With a group of colleagues from across the South West; I went in a spirit of exploration and with huge curiosity to see what a small but growing city in Germany had achieved to establish its reputation as one of the greenest in Europe. What we found matched our expectations as we examined the special factors that have led to its success and thought about how the lessons could be translated back home.

We saw a city where people’s decisions to travel sustainably either on foot, by bike or by public transport were the easy, cheap and natural choices. Where renewable energy, mainly from photovoltaic panels, made financial sense because the return to be secured by selling surplus electricity back to the grid. Where the car was marginalised in streets that were safe for cyclists and pedestrians. Where new settlements integrated green space and play space into the heart of the communities.

There was a strong sense of community ‘buy-in’ to the green brand and a continuing sense of there being more to do to ensure that everyone living in the city – in some of the older-established quarters - could share in an enhanced quality of life.

For me, the essence of Freiburg’s success came from a special combination of factors, not all of which could be replicated. When we asked our hosts for any quantified evidence of the health benefits of the city and its lifestyle, they struggled to provide What we found matched our expectations . . . reflections on processes and ambitions:

- A community galvanised by a common cause (in their case a united desire to resist nuclear power) – leading to a creative approach to developing alternative forms of energy from renewables
- Strong and stable leadership with a clear vision and determination shared by politicians and senior officers in the city.
- High natural environmental quality from the geography of the city and its surroundings, making quality of life central to Freiburg’s psyche.
- A city with intellectual and professional strengths and heritage (the ancient university is the city’s biggest employer) with little industrial legacy.
- Determination to retain the basic tram system that had been in place since the turn of the 20th century – and to extend it to new communities.
- An approach to spatial planning that keeps power and control in the hands of the city authorities and encourages creativity.
- Readiness to provide long-term substantial subsidy for public transport to make it affordable and accessible for everyone (9m Euros per annum revenue subsidy for the city and its immediate hinterland).
any. Their view seemed to be that the benefits were self evident – and so it appeared on the ground.

However, we were left wondering about provision for the old, the sick and disabled – particularly in the new communities. Perhaps this could be the focus of a future study.

How much of this is applicable to the South West? Certainly, the South West’s starting point and ethos relies on high environmental quality. We have many towns and cities that are already embracing strong environmental values and who are beginning to realise high quality sustainable living. But this is not the case everywhere and there will be ever-increasing challenges as we go forward. We have to find ways of ensuring that we are clear and determined about the quality of life outcomes we want to see, and ensure that our leadership is firm and clear-sighted and our development economics and regulatory systems work most favourably to achieve them.

Hilary Neal is the Deputy Regional Director for Environment Transport and Climate at the Government Office for the South West

reflections on processes and ambitions

Making different choices and creating different places

The choices that citizens and visitors to Freiburg are making about travel marks Freiburg out as a visibly different city. Jim Bright, one of Poole’s Strategic Directors, reflects on how transport investment is transforming the lives of people who live in the city of Freiburg.

At a meeting with the Transport Policy Manager, Andreas Hildebrant, he boldly stated that Freiburg’s citizens are given a choice about how they make their journeys. This may be true, but in this city travel choices are heavily influenced by major investment decisions; decisions that make car based journeys slower, less convenient and more expensive when compared to the alternative of a train or tram or bus.

As a consequence the streets and public spaces give priority to people rather than vehicles. Speaking to this issue, the guide from the Forum Vauban provocatively states that ‘Footpaths are for cars not people’. The proposition being that if you take speed and convenient on-street parking away from cars, the space taken up by footpaths can be given to the community for more creative use. When seen in practice on the streets of Vauban, the proposition appears a perfectly reasonable approach.

if you take speed and convenient on-street parking away from cars, the space taken up by footpaths can be given to the community
Here are some of the benefits that we can conclude Freiburg has given its citizens through a transformed transport offer:

1. **People on all incomes** have been given the freedom to travel to more places of work, more places of help, more places of learning and more places of play with less restriction on location and time.
2. People have been given streets and public spaces that are safer and more pleasurable to walk and cycle and play on.
3. People have been given the opportunity for healthier lives. Most people who don’t travel by car end up doing more exercise, and places with fewer cars and less congestion must have cleaner air – therefore, intuitively at least, you would think that Freiburg must be a healthier city.
4. People are given the opportunity to mix much more with other layers of society through shared use of transport, which is almost certainly going to help create a city that is more cohesive and tolerant. Freiburg officials appear to have done little in the way of measuring these wider benefits. Their focus has very much been on action and on-the-ground achievements.

One of the big choices made by Freiburg was to transform the public transport offer. At a time when patronage had stagnated and subsidy was on a steep upward trend, the city decided to radically improve the transport offer and, at the same time, make it cheaper! The outcome, a 7 and a half minute tram service that connects to a 15 minute bus service, which in turn connects to a 30 minute train - all delivered with German efficiency. This has resulted in an additional 55 million passenger journeys over a ten-year period from a base of 20 million.

But these amazing statistics don’t tell the full story of transformation; for that we need to look beyond numbers and imagine how people’s lives have been improved.

So the question we need to ask is, “Could such an approach be replicated in the UK?” The harsh reality is that it is hard to conceive of a Senior Transport Manager presenting a ‘Freiburg option’ to the politicians and public of a medium-sized city without being ridiculed. To be fair, imagining an alternative reality is difficult for most people and always requires courage.

If you asked me what needs to change to allow a different, more transformational, conversation to emerge, I suggest that two significant developments need to take place:

1. Governance arrangements need to be strengthened in ways that support those who will need to make difficult decisions (it is interesting to note that the Mayor of Freiburg is elected for an 8 year term).
2. Evaluation criteria for transport investment need to be modified to give more prominence to social and environmental benefits – even if these are difficult to quantify.

Jim Bright is a Strategic Director at the Borough of Poole
Adrian Roper, Sustrans’ South West Regional Director, wonders if we can just get on with making places and neighbourhoods like those he saw in Freiburg and which show that communities can live healthily, happily, and with limited environmental impacts. Are we in the UK really so different to the good citizens of Freiburg?

Before arriving in Freiburg I was a bit concerned that I was going to be disappointed in what I was going to see; that despite what I had heard there wouldn’t actually be the numbers of people walking and cycling about, getting the trams, trains and buses, and that like everywhere in the UK people would really rather prefer to get in their car. I am pleased to report that I had nothing to be concerned about, and that actually I really was inspired -a very much overused term -by what I saw. People were choosing to travel by foot, public transport and bike, and they had the opportunity to spend time in communal green spaces close to their homes. All of which helped them to be something like sustainable, healthy communities.

This inspiration was delivered not by a genius concept or masterplan but by commitment to delivering the obvious, and by integrating a variety of simple approaches to create a vibrant, healthy town and districts. These simple approaches included developing a cheap, clean, convenient public transport system; providing comprehensive walking and cycling networks; integrating transport hubs (the train station was at the same place as the bus station, main tram line, and cycle centre with space for 1,000 bikes); building public transport provision in to new developments from the very start so that residents choose to travel by public transport rather than by car; providing immediately accessible communal green space in new developments; and providing local services in new developments so people do not have to travel; they have even banned the development of out of town supermarkets.

Now, of course I am not suggesting that in delivering fundamental (but not radical – this is not a radical approach we are looking at here) changes to our own towns and cities that we should disregard the data and evidence around health, transport, economic prosperity, environment and quality of life – but we should...
be using the wealth of information out there to support the obvious premise on which Freiburg has based its own transformation. We should be looking at these simple changes, integrated with each other, and we should just get on with making those changes because it is obvious and it is shown that healthy communities can be delivered by pursuing a clear outcome – that of a town with on your doorstep green space, and a transport system that enables people to travel by public transport, foot or bike because it is cheaper and easier than driving your own car.

Adrian Roper is the South West Regional Director for Sustrans.

**reflections on processes and ambitions**

**Goodbye cars, hello life ...**

**Dr. Rosemary Geller**, Director of Public Health in Jersey, describes how everyday life with fewer cars in Freiburg is really possible. Bringing out the contrast in cultural norms she asks: will the British mount similar resolve to give up their cars?

My relationship with the car is ambiguous and flawed. The car gave me my first feelings of freedom when I passed my driving test as a teenager. I visited friends, got to work quickly and enjoyed just driving for the sheer pleasure of it. Yet now, in my later years, I feel angry at the lack of freedom imposed on my children by traffic intensity and speeding drivers. When was it, I often wonder, that apparent benevolent paternalism led to a collective decision that the definition of a good parent includes a door to door ‘taxi service’, preferably in a large sports utility vehicle for that added cocoon of security around our young.

So how is living in Freiburg different? The recent urban extensions of Rieselfeld and Vauban have been designed to put people first and cars second. Just standing still and listening in Vauban induced in me a feeling of spiritual peace. Instead of traffic noise I could hear children playing, adults chatting and the comforting rumble of the tram like distant thunder.

Walking around Vauban, I soon lost my usual habit of continually looking around in case I was about to step...
in front of a car. Most people who passed by were on foot or cycling. Vauban cycles were equipped for function not sport with baskets and panniers for carrying goods and child trailers towed behind. Residential accommodation led out into central quadrangles with playgrounds, gardens and trees. The colour green punctuated by the brightness of roses and other flowering plants added to the sense of well-being.

So what of the resolve of the British citizen to ditch his car? The cultural sense and mood in Freiburg seems a long way removed from that in Britain. There is, nevertheless, an awakening here of the environmental concerns which led Freiburg to reduce carbon emissions. Freiburg Town Planners have demonstrated that the space traditionally taken up by roads and car parking can be put to much better use enhancing the quality of daily living. At home there needs to be a shift in infrastructure investment towards walking and cycling to create an environment where children can play outside in their neighbourhood and adults can lead an active life. This is not a new or radical idea; it is simply a call to implement in practice what our policies already say.

Dr Rosemary Geller is the Director of Public Health for Jersey

reflections on processes and ambitions

Freiburg - The perfect example of a sustainable eco-city, but are people healthier or just happier?

Mark Patterson reflects on the importance of being bold in our commitments, if we are to make significant health and wellbeing improvements for our communities. Managing the Departments of Health’s obesity programme within the region I was keen to attend the Freiburg study tour to see with my own eyes how a city the size of Plymouth could look and feel if it were to transform itself over a 20 year period into a sustainable eco city.

For me the opportunity to understand and witness how healthy urban settlements, combined with excellent transport systems could perhaps reduce levels of obesity and increase levels of physical activity across a city wide population was very exciting.

Freiburg is a special place it allows the world to see how a city with good leadership and a solid mandate to make radical change, can create a massive modal shift away from the car and towards walking, cycling, trains, and trams. I was left with no doubt that people have been seduced into being more active across the city limits and its hinterland, and the data presented by heads of transport and planning prove this without a doubt.

Strangely from my perspective, this move towards active travel and increased activity has not
been driven by health partners or any centrally co-ordinated social marketing campaign but rather economic necessity, logic and ease. The availability of cheap, frequent and accessible transport that gets you where you need to go, when you need to get there is key (and if along the way you have to cycle and occasionally move yourself between modes of transport that seems to have been accepted universally old and young).

Where is the evidence that this drives positive health outcomes for the population? I hear you all cry! Well we were not able to see the detailed community

Freiburg did not tinker around the edges their actions were bold and brave,

health profiles during the trip (something I intend chase now back in the UK), and so it’s difficult to say if people were more active and less obese than their European counterparts. However I can say is that they certainly looked happier, and have one of the fastest growing populations in Germany. For me the tour simply showed in vivid focus what could be done, if you engage with the population in the design, planning, and commissioning of their housing, transport, and green space. Freiburg did not tinker around the edges their actions were bold and brave, and you can see the results.

Finally, as a parent of 2 young children one of the key light bulb moments on the trip was during our visit to the district of Vauban. An area that has been developed to house more than 5,000 people, with a mission statement of “To give everyone a chance”. This leg of the trip left me with strong feelings of excitement on how we could be creating an environment for real growth and learning for our own children.

Mark Patterson is the Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Regional Manager at the Department of Health South West.
In the UK, a Soil Association research project is underway to enable the business to quantify the social and environmental values when reporting to shareholders. A catalogue of 64 criteria will include factors such as organic supplies for school kitchens, biodiversity counts, acres of converted land and jobs. Through their voting rights shareholders decide about the balance of monetary, social and environmental values. Current projects in planning include buying more land for converting to organic production, housing for farm staff and developing an organic catering business for supplying the local public procurement sector.

Whilst one of the business’ holdings already supplies two hospitals in Freiburg, the ability to supply schools has so far been hampered by the lack of profitability and the lack of facilities to pre-prepare meals. It is now in the shareholders’ power to subsidise supplies to schools and to invest in the required preparation facilities. With the majority of shares owned by Freiburg citizens the farmers have powerful backing.

Katrin Hochberg is an independent food consultant specialising in local and organic food issues and business support.
The sun powers the new ecology of neighbourhoods

There hasn’t been much sight of the sun in the UK this summer but on a fact finding mission to Freiburg, Tom Flanagan, Corporate Director at Cornwall Council, not only saw the sun shining but also saw it powering the new ecology of neighbourhoods, providing surplus power from family housing and lighting the way to a sustainable future for our communities. Tim German, a ‘Freiburg Alumni’ from 2008 co-authored this article.

The Story of Vauban

The new ecology of the neighbourhood is probably best demonstrated by the evolution of the area of Freiburg known as Vauban. Vauban is in the south of the city. It was the site of the former French Barracks, vacated in 1990. It is now a thriving ‘environmentally conscious’ community of over 5,000 residents and 600 jobs. It has become the centre of attraction for ‘official’ visits from across the world including from the South West region of the UK.

Planning began in 1993 and the development was completed in 2006 (2000 people had moved in by 2001). Environmental, social, economic and cultural requirements form the key principles of the Vauban project. The council was keen that it should be community led and in 1995 it created a legal body (an NGO) called Forum Vauban which had been instigated by residents of Freiburg. The role that this community group played should not be underestimated and the proof of their enthusiasm is demonstrated in the fact that they all now live in the district. This interactive process led to common goals of achieving a thriving, sustainable community being realised.

The primary socio-economic and environmental factors of the Vauban development are:

1. The scheme integrates legal, political, social and economical participants from grassroots level though to the highest levels in the City Council;
2. All the houses were built to low energy standard (65kWh/m²a – calculated similar to the Swiss SIA 380/1 standard) plus at least 100 units at ‘passiv-haus’ (15 kWh/m²a) standard. In the latter stages of the development houses were built to produce more electricity than they required and, as such, became income generating;
3. A Combined Heat & Power (CHP) plant, producing electricity and heat from wood-chips is connected to a district heating system at Vauban;
4. Since the beginning of the development many homes have installed solar thermal collectors (producing hot water) and also photo-voltaic panels (producing electricity);
5. The district operates a strict traffic control methodology. Fewer than 60% of the residents own a car and an effective car-sharing scheme is in place. In some areas cars are only allowed in for a short ‘drop-off’ time no longer than 30 mins.

The New Heroes

The new ecology of neighbourhoods brings forth a new generation of heroes and pioneers. One such hero and pioneer is Rolf Disch, originally a joiner and bricklayer, he had a dream of an idea that houses should live and...
breathe, and instead of consuming energy should act as mini power plants supplying energy to the grid. Rolf’s dream has been slowly realised and there is evidence of its efficacy in the solar plus communities that are now springing up in German cities.

Rolf Disch asserts that the house of the future is no longer utopian – it can actually be realized. It is becoming an integral part of the community, the city and the region, and it offers its inhabitants an integral concept for the use of regenerative energy, as well as a vibrant social life together with high standards of comfortable housing. Natural resources are being taken into consideration in the development of these solar communities far as the overall construction concept, the choice of materials and the water and energy system are concerned.

Inhabitants are encouraged to get creative by developing the aesthetic design, incidental costs and expenses are low, and there is an efficient system of ecological mobility by public transport, by bike or on foot. The wide acceptance of what were once considered to be marginal concepts is one reason why Rolf Disch is now the Guest Professor at the Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung (Public Academy of Design) in Karlsruhe.

The planners and professionals have to adapt to a process that is less “do to” than “do with” leads to a series of policy shifts that impact upon the spatial layout of the area and the architectural design principles of both the buildings and public realm. The outcome is a literal step-change in the quality of life reflected in an environment that is pedestrian-led and child friendly, there is a palpable feeling of calmness, security and safety. There is also a shift in the economic relationships between citizens and private institutions. The commitment to produce not just passive but surplus energy houses, with each dwelling acting as a little power plant, means that there is a ‘parity of esteem’ between the power producing organisations, from the citizen to the municipal combined-heat-and-power plant, to the national energy company. This changes the status of people from passive consumers, and ‘victims’ of ever rising fuel costs, to active producers with the ability to influence the market and plan for energy security and stability into the future.

There is then, in this change from a dormant to a vibrant community, a challenge to the planning of neighbourhoods. The planners and professionals have to adapt to a process that is less “do to” than “do with” and whilst in any new neighbourhood there are is no resident population to speak of, there are enough stewards of the future to accept civic responsibility and engage actively with the municipal authorities to ensure that the outcome of development stays true to the concept of Freiburg as a Green City.

The ethos that is created by this power shift also has an implication for the role of elected councillors who become less the primary operational decision maker in a...
representative democracy and more a guardian of the future and a facilitator of collective community aspiration sitting as a true honest-broker between the private sector developers, the municipal authorities and an active, engaged community. It is a new and very different community leadership role than the picture painted of a conventional councillor. Indeed, the leadership role may change to such an extent that the Climate Camp concept of community facilitators rather than leaders might invade local government more quickly than we currently envisage.

Lessons for the South West

It would of course be wrong to believe that all that has been achieved in Freiburg is either possible or desirable for the South West. Germany’s fiscal and legislative mechanisms and a city environment create a somewhat different background. There is no doubt that, as well as the ambition of its leaders locally, Freiburg’s success has been partially due to National policy and legislation. In the UK similar legislation on ‘feed-in’ tariffs is about to activated. This, plus other UK mechanisms and the UK’s own sustainable vision through a variety of such successful projects has arisen from circumstances many of which the South West is now facing – i.e. the need for housing, the need to create a robust and resilient economy and the need to reduce emissions. A key similarity is their wish to become leaders in socio-economic and environmental planning based on an absolute necessity to adapt to 21st century needs.

The South West, like Freiburg, has a great opportunity to turn a very difficult challenge into a socio-economic benefit. Freiburg

The most obvious lessons to be learned are:

1. Environmental pressures and climate challenges can be transformed into opportunities that create a competitive edge, strengthening economic well-being and attractiveness;

2. It is possible to emulate the methodologies used by the City of Freiburg Council, integrating socio-economic and environmental consideration in all new development;

3. The integration with the community in the process of achieving the low carbon, green vision for the future;

4. The mechanisms put in place to engage with the private sector, developers, residents and local businesses to change the way that new buildings are designed and constructed, making a lifestyle choice that will encourage a greater sustainability and self sufficiency;

5. The Council’s ambition led, through procurement, to the creation of a supply chain resulting in improved employment and increased GVA as well as CO2 reduction;

6. It requires a combination of many factors to achieve international leadership though being ‘green leaders’ creates a huge marketing opportunity. Freiburg is inundated with green tourists and official/professional visitors attracted on fact-finding missions.

Carbon Reduction Commitment from April 2010 will provide a more supportive framework and justification for adopting a similar approach.

Concluding Remarks

In reality the South West has greater energy sustainability, energy security and climate change challenges than Freiburg did when its Council made their key policy decisions in the early 1990s. However, it can be successfully argued that the South West also has greater opportunities to turn those challenges into economic opportunities.

Freiburg’s success in delivering its

is undoubtedly twenty or more years ahead of process and delivery than the UK and therefore we have a great deal to learn from their leadership. The question is whether professionals, communities and Councillors are up for the challenge and the chance to adopt the new ecology of neighbourhoods?

Dr Tom Flanagan is the Corporate Director Environment Planning & Economy, at Cornwall Council.

Tim German is the head of Low Carbon Cornwall, Cornwall Development Company.
How might further training, development and a community of practice support leaders in public health and local government to deliver sustainable, healthy places in the South West? Sarah Hills from the Institute for Sustainability, Health and Environment reflects on the Learning Zone dialogues and the participant feedback from the Freiburg study tour.

Conducive spaces and mutual support

Why a study tour to Freiburg for senior professionals working in public health, planning and sustainability? At one level it gave participants an invaluable opportunity to experience an exemplar of sustainable, healthy development with all their senses – the ‘seeing is believing’ factor. Just as important was the social context in which that learning took place. Rich discussions about health and place began the moment we boarded the Eurostar to Paris, and were refined and developed and shared throughout the ensuing five days. The study tour demonstrated that these conditions foster deeply creative thinking and problem solving around issues of place, community and health. Even when it is not possible to be in an inspirational physical setting, we can still create learning environments that catalyse change through the careful design of process.

Training and development is needed, but what type?

Our group of senior professionals were already trying to create healthy, sustainable communities back home. Many came to Freiburg feeling frustrated by the institutional, financial and policy barriers to making their aspirations a reality. Participants were appropriately critical of any assumption that all they needed was to ‘see the (Freiburg) light’, but they were not resigned to the status quo. Members of the group were deeply and critically engaged throughout the study tour with the question of how they could translate the lessons from Freiburg to the UK. In relation to an agenda for learning and development, two key themes emerged: 1) supporting leadership and influence; 2) building technical knowledge around planning and development processes, and around the linkages between built environment and health.

Technical understanding

Understanding the relationship between spatial planning and health, and in particular how the built environment impacts on health and well-being is a key further training requirement for both built environment and public health professionals.

Public health practitioners identified the need for their teams to understand how the planning system works so that they can engage effectively at key stages in the planning and development process. Planners too want to feel better equipped to raise the initial (often low) level of ambition around sustainability and health at the early stages of planning a new development. Crucially, they also need to be able to ensure that...
Leadership and influence

The role of ‘heroes’ and ‘pioneers’ in Freiburg’s journey to become Germany’s capital for environmental protection was a recurrent theme during the tour. But what would be on the curriculum at a school for healthy planning heroes? Participants and the UWE team identified the following skills gaps and needs:

- developing courage to ‘push the envelope’, to catalyse innovative solutions despite existing processes, and the ability to engender long-term thinking about the development of place;
- leading the co-creation of a vision and translating that vision into reality;
- engaging people, and influencing colleagues, community and the wide group of stakeholder (including developers) who are involved in the planning and delivery of new developments;
- understanding of how positive social and cultural change happens, and how individuals can intervene to influence change.

The other key training topics identified were in relation to gaining an in-depth understanding of development processes, and planning-relevant financial mechanisms and governance structures in Freiburg. Participants such ambitions remain at the top of the agenda until a development is complete. For both these professional groups, further training and support around the opportunities to retrofit health and sustainability in existing communities was just as much (if not more) of a priority.

Participants highlighted the following six priority groups for further training and development: Local Government Councillors, senior managers in local and regional government, Directors of Public Health, Public Health Trainees, and Obesity Leads within Primary Care Trusts and senior managers within the development industry.

The other key training topics identified were in relation to gaining an in-depth understanding of development processes, and planning-relevant financial mechanisms and governance structures in Freiburg. Participants

Taking the agenda forward

Participants highlighted the following six priority groups for further training and development: Local Government Councillors, senior managers in local and regional government, Directors of Public Health, Public Health Trainees, and Obesity Leads within Primary Care Trusts and senior managers within the development industry.

The group identified a number of immediate opportunities (many of them centred around an ongoing Freiburg alumni forum) for taking forward the healthy planning learning and development agenda in the South West [see box below].

Sarah Hills is Knowledge Exchange Development Manager, Institute for Sustainability, Health and Environment, University of the West of England.

Within hours of returning the practical planning and implementation of these ideas had already begun…

- a developed series of action learning sets that focus on one or a number of developments that are currently in the planning process, for example planned eco-towns and other urban extensions that are being developed in the South West;
- a masterclass for Members and Freiburg alumni during the Building Health conference in January 2010;
- built environment workshop for Obesity Leads within Primary Care Trusts;
- linking in to the CABE sustainable cities initiative roll-out in the region and the Creating Excellence Learning Programme;
- action learning sets in the context of developing new spatial planning policies at the regional/sub-regional and local level.

“[Through this trip] I’ve recognized the lack of knowledge/language to support credible discussions with planners [in the UK]”
Don’t be dense – be intense!

Head of Design South West for Creating Excellence and CABE, Mark Pearson, suggests that the way in which we describe the quantitative characteristics of a new neighbourhood may well influence some of the qualitative outcomes…

Are we building homes or housing a population? This may seem like a tautology, but think on – we can provide large numbers of individual dwellings on a site, creating a high density of dwellings per hectare but if they are only occupied by single people living alone then the population will be low. Alternatively, a smaller number of larger units fully-occupied might provide accommodation for a greater number of people. There is in the UK a common confusion between ‘high density’ and ‘over-crowding’, but they have no direct correlation – no wonder then, that a reasonable discussion in our society about quantums soon (either consciously or sub-consciously) becomes affected by false logic and misapprehensions…

I was reminded of this unfortunate malaise whilst listening to the German speakers on our study tour, and was struck by the much more direct and simple treatment of these issues. Instead of ‘densities’ (dwellings per hectare), presenters were referring to ‘plot ratios’ (floorspace created as a proportion of the site area). This has two clear advantages:

- Firstly, it plays directly to a clear financial valuation of the worth of the developed site – surveyors will normally have a sales value per square metre established for a particular location. We heard that the uplift in site value was a vital part of the early discussions with a developer, because one third of this ‘windfall’ receipt to the land-owner would be taken by the local authority to pay for necessary infrastructure of different sorts. In addition the basis of working with square metres creates the foundations for a more rational economics of housing that, in due course, allows a member of the public to understand the comparative costs per square metre of alternative developments – the ‘value for money’ of accommodation is much more clearly understood by all. When we asked one host about his dwelling in Vauban, he said that he had created, as part of a Baugruppe (see separate article), a 90sqm apartment – no
mention of number of bedrooms, which would be our first means of classification... This fixation on the number of rooms encourages UK developers to squeeze in one more - even if it is so small as to be practically useless and has, through its inclusion, compromised all other spaces around it!

- Secondly, working with plot ratios does not begin to predict the urban typology and grain of the development too early, the first thought of likely numbers of individual houses and flats has not been sewn – that will be decided later, following a careful design exploration that tests the quantitative objectives of the plot ratio against the qualitative demands of creating a good residential environment in the context of the site and its constraints. We heard from Wulf Daseking, the chief planner of Freiburg, that his advice to developers would sometimes be “…a plot ratio of 1.3 ought to be possible, but if you get a good architect then maybe 1.4 could be achieved…” – that really starts to attach a financial value to good design!

But let me wind back my argument. Why should we be concerned about housing a population rather than building houses, at the most fundamental level? Well, we saw what a well-designed (i.e. not overcrowded, but intensely occupied) neighbourhood meant for the provision of public transport, local shops, public facilities, etc. all achievable within easy walking distance of most people, due to its compactness. It turned the decision of whether to own a car or not into a real choice, and it ensured a life and vitality in the open spaces that, I sensed, was good for everyone’s well-being.

The plot-ratios of Vauban and Rieselfeld, the new urban extensions that we visited, were 1.5 – 1.6 : 1; in other words for each hectare (10,000sqm) then the developments have provided 15 or 16,000sqm of useful space. If we divide that by a nominal UK house size of, say, 120sqm then we were looking at densities easily in excess of 100 dwellings per hectare. Carefully constructed but not overly-prescriptive design codes have made this possible and ensured that parking has been thoroughly integrated or virtually banished altogether, rather than consuming precious open ground space.

Another member of the group (an experienced planner who will, for fear of embarrassment, remain anonymous) suggested that what we were looking at could not be achieved in the UK. This, he explained, was because the regional and national planning policy handed down to him was asking for much higher densities – in fact the reverse was true (the draft regional spatial policy is advocating merely 50 dwellings per hectare). But please, do forgive him, I might have made the same mistake – you see, we weren’t looking at the usual muddle of UK house-building but a logical, well-designed neighbourhood!

So, I think there’s more than one good reason to drop densities and pursue intensities. Immediately I can anticipate why we might not – our target-led culture in the public sector likes easily-measured indicators such as ‘number of new dwellings created’ and the purple prose of private sector marketing people and estate agents thrives on the deliberate mystification surrounding valuations. We have a deep tendency to regard property as a commodity rather than seeing the accommodation it provides as a life-enhancing amenity. But, if we don’t start thinking in this more rational and transparent way when considering the form of ‘Eco-towns’ and sustainable urban extensions then, I’m afraid, all could certainly be lost – let’s get out of this muddle before we embark upon them!

Mark Pearson is the Head of Design South West at Creating Excellence
Recipe for a ‘healthy, sustainable community’ cake (kuchen)

Dave Way and Steve Cains, planners at Swindon Borough Council, reflect on the ingredients for a healthy, sustainable community after their recent visit to the “green city” of Freiburg, Germany, whilst simultaneously pondering the quality of German puddings. This is the result.

Method

Ingredients

- Several hectares of (preferably) brownfield land
- 100 km of tram tracks (on a bed of grass to minimise noise)
- Some trams (red ones are by far the best)
- Plenty of shared space (complete with happy children riding bicycles)
- 8 architects (minimum - the more the better to create a good mix of flavours)
- 1 visionary planning officer and plenty of grass roots enthusiasm and community participation
- 1 pizza oven (communal for cohesiveness)
- Lots of bikes and just a sprinkle of cars (cars not essential but sometimes necessary)
- Some herbs and fresh fruit from local community allotment projects.
- Green roofs to garnish

Preparation

Before you start, make sure you’re not on your own when you’re trying out this recipe. The key to the success is that everyone chips in and has their say about how it should take shape. Forget the old adage “too many cooks spoil the broth” - the key to a successful, sustainable community is to have as many committed and enthusiastic partners as possible – from residents (and importantly future residents), community groups and local businesses, to planners, architects and politicians.

This will take a bit longer and may involve some disagreement, but in the end it will make the cake a lot more flavoursome and less likely to sink.

Although the basic ingredients are pretty much the same, cakes baked in different areas will vary greatly in flavour - this is a good thing and ensures variety. Also, ensure surfaces are clean - decontaminate if necessary.
Step 1
Right, once you're prepared, the first step is to put down the tram tracks – it's essential this is done very early (even before you put the oven on) complete with working trams (colour optional) from the word “go”. The cake could sink if this element is left until later in the process. You’ve been warned.

Step 2
The next step is to get hold of as many architects and developers as you can find and throw them into the mix (if they're out of season, try to ensure you at least have more than one). Make sure they don't dominate and mix evenly throughout – they’ll need some supervision and an overall plan to work to (get the visionary planning officer to work that out) but within that, give them a free rein.

After, once the building blocks and shared spaces (and other infrastructure, including pizza oven) are in place, liberally sprinkle with wildlife. This will give the cake a light and healthy texture. Garnish lavishly with green roofs.

Step 3
Add a wide variety of residents, many of whom will have been involved since preparation in shaping the final shape of the cake. (Also add some pets – but not too many cats).

Baking
The cake will take a while to bake. Be patient and allow to develop over a period of years. A temperate climate helps – although the recipe can be adapted to anywhere, including Swindon. If managed carefully, the recipe may have a beneficial effect on other, less tasty cakes nearby. Recycle any left over ingredients.

Post - baking
And finally the washing up... rainwater should be used for the washing-up with lavish use of SUDS to effectively deal with any stubborn pollutants.

Dave Way and Steve Cains are planners at Swindon Borough Council.

The communal pizza oven in a community open space, Vauban
One of the main goals in the creation of Vauban was to implement an innovative new concept to involve the community in the purchase, design, and build of their homes. Independent ‘Baugruppen’ development groups were fundamental to the vision and the final success of the built environment and public realm. These allowed the council to support small housing groups in planning, commissioning, and monitoring the development of their own living units as small co-operative social or private developer.

During the study we were given the valuable opportunity to see and experience at first hand the District of Vauban. This area has been developed to house more than 5,000 people, with a vision to create a ‘Sustainable Eco District’. Built on the site of a former French military base, Vauban is unique in so many ways as it appears to have succeeded not only in meeting its low energy consumption targets (no easy task) but along the way may have shown us all how to engage a district’s inhabitants in how they could shape their own communities, and the quality of their lives in the process.

The council made the bold decision to sell the majority of plots to Baugruppen whose bids were then assessed against criteria favouring older people, families with children, and Freiburg residents. Taking this approach has allowed a ‘real’ community development approach to thrive allowing involvement and participation in the planning and building of housing, and importantly a shift in the balance of power from big developers making the key decisions on how people should live to the local people defining this for themselves.

Inhabitants have been encouraged to influence their future living conditions and directly receive economical benefits because this model allows building to take place on a larger scale without the engagement of private investors a cost saving of up to 25% for the purchaser.

The Baugruppen concept highlights too many positives to list but the creation of a housing and a social environment that is lead, planned, and supported by the local community allows a very different opportunity to the our traditional UK approach in developing new housing for our communities.

The Baugruppen - a better development concept for the healthy places in the UK

The vision that has driven the creation and development of Vauban has at its heart the ideas and commitment of the people who will live there. The Baugruppen concept has created a model for communities to reach a common goal to create a sustainable, diverse and supportive neighbourhood. With a social mix that was not seen in other more traditional housing areas within the city. The Vauban vision “To give everyone a chance” is at the core of what has been developed here, a vision we can all sign up too.

The ‘Baugruppen’ or building collectives (the literal German translation seems to refer to an assembly of parts in the engineering sense) are an essential part of the procurement strategy for the sustainable urban extensions in Freiburg. The intention was to promote a natural diversity (both in lifestyle and therefore built form and architectural expression) and to enable people from many strata of society to purchase their own homes. The formation of collectives was a new idea for realizing these social goals and for enabling the future residents to commission their own cost-effective and needs-based living space.

Official literature explains, “The idea is simple: several households join forces, decide on a piece of property (building plot), plan the building collectively, hire an architect and building firms and so save time and money. For many families the
Advantages of the Baugruppe concept

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<th>Advantage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clear partnerships created between communities, architects and council officials.</td>
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<td>The creation of a community led process to support involvement and participation beyond the building stages.</td>
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<td>Taking the stance that tenders for the land were to be judged on demographic mix, and environmental goals. Fairness and transparency at the centre. Vauban vision “To give everyone a chance”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A clear shift in the balance of power from big developers making key decisions on building materials, energy consumption and accommodation size to the local people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The importance of developing a flexible but outcome oriented process to get people to make decisions and move forward in their build. A focus is given to creating shared agreement on key decisions, and progress.</td>
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<td>The social mix and diversity created within development.</td>
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Each Baugruppe (typically 8-10 future households of different sizes) must develop a building within the design code for the urban block of which they will form a part. At Rieselfeld they collaborate with the other Baugruppen that form the rest of the block to commission the shared open space in the centre. In this way the diversity desired does not descend into chaos but the regulatory framework of the design code and the individual negotiations between neighbouring Baugruppen ensure a coherent whole. We heard that where two or more collectives were interested to build on the same site, then instead of inflating the land value by seeking the highest bid, the authorities would offer the site to the Baugruppe that committed to the most sustainable building proposal.

A wider organisation facilitating participation at the neighbourhood scale “Forum Vauban” had been instrumental in getting the initial Baugruppen formed and working, but the mechanism seemed now to have its own momentum and the idea is spreading to other German cities. Another important idea is that residents could opt to finish off some elements of their new dwellings themselves – introducing further reductions in the build costs and greater diversity through this partial self-build. Some collectives with access to greater resources build surplus accommodation that they can offer to the rental market (for both state-assisted and private tenants) whilst others have to incorporate a shop unit since their site is on the main street. In both cases the Baugruppen benefit from a useful revenue stream that they can reinvest in the future maintenance of their project.

What is the key to making all this possible?

Can it only happen where the land is in public ownership and under, not the State, but the City’s control?

To establish this as a model of development in the UK might require a major cultural shift; a move from consultation to ‘real engagement and participation’.

Can we create a new development process for the UK, capturing some of the benefits of Baugruppen, but within our culture of mass house builders and large corporate developers?

This article is composed of elements written by both Mark Pearson, Head of Design South West at Creating Excellence and Mark Patterson, Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Regional Manager at the Department of Health South West.
Janet Askew ponders what lessons we can learn from this German town for the development and implementation of a new planning system in the UK. Building on the observations from Sir Peter Hall’s visit report in 2008, she clearly articulates the gaps we need to fill before we can legitimately call what we do in the UK spatial planning.

Freiburg is a city of 205,000 people sitting in a region of a population of 650,000, which earned the title of ‘environmental capital’ of Germany as early as 1992. That tells us that greening a city cannot be achieved in a short time; a long term view is required. In fact a dedicated group of people began to think about renewable energy in Freiburg in the 1970s. Freiburg now illustrates exactly what spatial planning is: the integration of policies and stakeholders in a city to create a sustainable community.

Sir Peter Hall, a veteran and visionary of UK planning, visited the city in 2008 and in telling the history, he points out that various factors came together to contribute to the success of Freiburg, suggesting three main lessons for the UK:

• first, that we have to give cities more freedom to make their own policies;
• second that places in the UK should be allowed to make their own rules which might incentivise a more sustainable way of living; and
• third, that we need to look at urban extensions as the new eco-towns rather than free-standing places, with a new commitment to building and investment again by the public sector, especially in an economic downturn when the private sector cannot be relied upon.

It goes without saying that land use and transport need to be much more integrated, as expounded in the 1970s long before spatial planning was on the agenda. There are policy indications that the next government might emphasise ideas of localism, although we have yet to see if this means anything more than nimbyism, which would be the very opposite of the approach taken in Freiburg.

One thing is certain: there remains a systemic lack of joined up thinking in the UK, evidenced by a lack of policy integration across vertical and horizontal boundaries. The future of regional planning is in jeopardy, and planners have been resistant to working across administrative boundaries or in city regions. Top down policy making is common – take the announcement of eco-towns for example, in locations which seem to be far from sustainable. Even the details of regulatory reform, in which the government is attempting to introduce more renewable energy, illustrate the dichotomy of economic competitiveness versus sustainability. Take for example attempts to make it easier for small businesses and householders to introduce micro-renewables on their premises. Tinkering at the edges, the government frees up the regulations in this regard but in another piece of legislation, also frees them up to make it easier for the addition of air conditioning units on buildings, on the basis that climate change will result in hotter summers. This illustrates that detail is important – the UK has a long way to go.

I have selected just three aspects (out of possibly many) which stand Freiburg apart and which show how much more has to be done in Britain:
1. **Leadership and political will** is vital to culture change and this is very evident in Freiburg. There is a commitment by everyone involved in city leadership and planning to embrace the ideas of sustainability and to implement the early visions for the city. Leadership in the area of spatial planning has been identified as important in the UK, with a need for more education. Successful cities such as Birmingham for example, are often credited with having an early vision, with individuals who were able to lead and take the politicians with them.

2. **An integrated transport system** which extends to the whole region is crucial to the success of Freiburg. Part of this is down to an early plan for transport, including ‘five pillars of mobility’: public transport, bikes, traffic restraint, discouragement of through traffic and parking management, as well as the recognition that innovative pricing is crucial to encouraging public transport use. As a result, it is possible to travel across the region for a minimal sum, encouraging commuting by rail and reducing road traffic. The integrated nature of the transport system provides a transport hub in the centre of the city where all possible types of transport meet. Furthermore, the clean and reliable regular trams serve outer communities, where people transfer to buses for the remainder of their journey. Linking taxis with night buses ensures that young people get home safely at night, as local cars take them to their doors, all facilitated by an innovative ticketing system which keeps costs down. Car free areas are in fact limited to Vauban, but car usage across the whole city is about 35% less than other cities.

3. **Community spirit and the commitment** to sustainable living is obvious in Freiburg from the allotment owners with their solar energy scheme (sold to the national grid) to the opera audience seen streaming onto trams in the late evening. One interesting aspect of community involvement is facilitated by innovative approaches to housing tenure in the new urban extensions. Each block of housing is built in a quadrangle, offering freedom to local residents to manage the space in the centre as they wished – most often used for picnics (including communal barbecues and even a pizza oven in one place), play areas and bike stores. The tenure types are mixed to the extent that it is impossible to detect how the houses are occupied – ranging from social renting to owner occupation including some homes built by groups of residents, known as Baugruppe. In the UK, experiments are being carried out with mixed tenure (Poundbury being a particularly well documented example) but the evidence is that the commitment to it nor its success is as good as anything seen in Freiburg. In a car free society like Vauban, community commitment is vital to its success, but whilst it is obviously an exemplar, there is evidence that the community is mixed, old and young, families and single people, all buying into the way of life.

Just a year on from Peter Hall’s visit, it is difficult to write anything new about Freiburg, but it is interesting that Hall makes no specific mention of the links between health and planning. This aspect has assumed greater importance in recent years and whilst a sustainable community can be considered to be implicitly healthier, the case still has to be made. New initiatives to encourage and examine the link between the built environment and health, are being introduced as the government embraces this new agenda. Spatial planning itself urges a new approach which is more integrative, although local planning authorities are struggling with its implementation, partly (it is believed) due to a lack of understanding about the theory behind it. Perhaps a visit to the very impressive Freiburg should be included as training for every planner in the UK. The initiative moved by the SW Regional Director of Public Health to visit with senior planners is a very positive step in the right direction to understanding the links between planning and health, giving senior policy makers the opportunity to start the process in their own areas.

Reference

Janet Askew is Head of the Planning and Architecture Department at the University of the West of England.
Participant learning and reflections

A one and a half hour ‘learning zone’ session was held each day to help critique, assimilate and better understand our experiences.

Each of the three sessions had a different focus;
1 - What are our first impressions?
2 - What processes may lead to healthier neighbourhood planning?
3 - What can we learn for the Southwest?

The following pages have been put together in large part from information supplied by participants on feedback and learning forms. The following questions were asked:

• What general impressions will I take back with me?
• What really impressed me?
• What are the questions I can ask in the South West to provoke change?
• What further support would assist me and my team?
• What are my reflections on the study tour?
Reflection and participant feedback

What I will take back with me; general approaches, impressions…

Winning hearts and minds
The need for “orators”, to change public perception – heats and minds. Having the right conversations with the right people. The leadership of key individuals over many years. The horizontal integration of policy, low-carbon, housing, transport, community engagement at local level.

The “get on and do” approach that is championed by key senior officers and politicians, possibly despite exciting processes. I suspect the focus was the outcome and then a way was found. We in the SW haven’t yet got the focus on the outcome.

The people of Freiburg have come together around “environmental sustainability” as a unifying concept. They appear to run the agenda in their hearts and minds.

Experiencing the ambience of a the healthy community
People are outside, interacting, talking, cycling. Opportunities to travel sustainably. So many communities in the UK seem dead. I particularly loved Vauban, great community facility and so many families cycling.

Putting in integrated public transport as the first and central action. People out of cars have priority over people in cars. Safety of residential areas. The engagement of communities in the shaping of their lives. Strong leadership and control top down and community involvement at a very local level: Subsidiarity!

Children and families are king here. Very impressed with level of “active” population and “green” culture. Inspirational place with good attitudes towards quality of life. Gives planners a place in society.

Processes (we just don’t seem to have) ?
Very jealous to see how impressive the results and how good he processes are… Vision, leadership – strong common purpose

A very planned and engaged process across the local authority and the community – clear process and delivery.

Simplicity and short timescales of development in Germany compared to complexity of UK. Very impressive. Depending on two factors that are very different in SW public transport; and relative power of LPA of land owning developer.
Reflection and participant feedback

Something that really impressed me......

The technical: Transport and energy
The car-free approach in Vauban - use of road and land space in Vauban to encourage significantly higher levels of physical activity.

Getting an integrated transport system in at or very near the start of the development thereby embedding appropriated behaviour in the community, with the tram link through the middle of new areas – all homes within the 400m of a tram stop.


Residential places for living
Vauban is fantastic. The Baugruppen process is not that I would have thought might work had I not seen the evidence! The single blocks in Rieselfeld with a mixture of tenures and housing types would act as a case study. Rieselfeld generally is a better example than Vauban – more real.

The interspersing of green spaces and water control e.g. Sustainable Urban Drainage. These are everywhere and provide fantastic breathing space for people and flood control. “Wild” places for children give chances for adventure and learning – much better than a mown rather sterile playground.

The focus on quality of life and choice. Especially through the engagement of Forum Vauban.
Reflection and participant feedback

What are the questions I can ask in the South West to make a change....

Seven critical questions: At the regional level.
For GOSW, Southwest Councils, strategic planning authority, Homes and Communities Agency and regional leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Questions</th>
<th>In what forum?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How can we make sure that the SW articulates a vision for sustainability that transcends a change of Govt and machinery</td>
<td>Strategic Leaders Board/Infrastructure Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How can this experience influence “outcome based planning” in Cornwall and SW.</td>
<td>Growth Point Forum, Eco-Town, Single conservation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does national planning policy let us do what we need to do? No! Can it be changed/we are given Freedom to vary it?</td>
<td>SW Leaders Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do we develop detailed cost benefit analysis and really combing national funding</td>
<td>Health Boards, Transport, Sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Can the planning process (locally) control the detailed design of new development?</td>
<td>At a regional group/Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Strategic planning authorities should jointly compose policy templates and support. Planning authorities to advise objectives and put in local development plans</td>
<td>SW Leaders Forum (GOSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Let’s develop complementary investment in infrastructure</td>
<td>Through a “super MBA” approach</td>
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Seven critical questions: Specific stakeholders

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<th>To Whom?</th>
<th>The Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Developers</td>
<td>Can we change the way developers are involved in the planning process? Their attitudes and processes often seem to conflict with true sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Police Force</td>
<td>Have you seen Vauban!?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. HCA/CABE</td>
<td>How can we influence the “single conversation” to be more enlightened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. DFT Transport operators/local members</td>
<td>Can transport be made more appealing? (Cost, reliability, cleanliness etc) How can we find a model that enables public transport to be the cheap &amp; obvious choice for all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Economic experts locally, Regionally, Universities</td>
<td>How can we fund this without using a lot of new money which is unlikely to be available?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Council Leaders and Health Authority Chairs</td>
<td>Are Councils and health authorities making a priority of achieving those objectives on their own land/with their own money above selling or highest price?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Planning departments</td>
<td>How can we retrofit public transport systems to city centers to ensure new urban extensions remain sustainable?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection and participant feedback

Seven critical questions: Decisions, risk and collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Questions</th>
<th>To Whom?</th>
<th>In what forum?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How can we make sustainable decisions the easy option</td>
<td>People who own “process”</td>
<td>LA/Region/National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How can we work in a less risk averse way?</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>LA/Regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How can we work in a collaborative way with environmental/health stakeholders? (Change nature of relationship)</td>
<td>Environmental Community</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the local blocks? How are we going to move them?</td>
<td>Working across the LA, NHS and LSP</td>
<td>Need to find the right fora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How can we generate a delivery system to strongly lead and deliver the necessary changes to the built environment?</td>
<td>Officers, colleagues, politicians</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What changes can we in Swindon make to our Eastern development area to make it so much better? – it is a great opportunity to show how Swindon can achieve</td>
<td>Planners/Developers</td>
<td>EDA SPD &amp; Future Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How can we really engage the community in planning and the decision making process?</td>
<td>Across the SW</td>
<td>Engage the public (supermarkets, schools, restaurants etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven questions Changing attitudes and mindsets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Questions</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How can we get rid of the short term attitudes of politicians that always results in a status quo?</td>
<td>Local members</td>
<td>Topic groups such as sustainability steering group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do we think we can change our attitudes, are we really no different to Germany, and are any differences in culture so vast that it makes us incapable of similar change</td>
<td>Public and private sector, everyone (again)</td>
<td>Arranging briefings where we can really drill down into the issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do we sell the Freiburg concept to all communities and colleagues?</td>
<td>Council colleagues and officers and communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How can we brand green opportunities within local culture to wed those with green belief to those focused on economical outcomes</td>
<td>Community/Business leaders/Council</td>
<td>Community Forums/Corp. Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Can you find more creative ways of sharing success and achievement?</td>
<td>All interested parties</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How can the West of England actually implement a vision for a sustainable sub-region</td>
<td>West of England partnership/Leaders &amp; Chief Execs</td>
<td>MAA Implementation group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Which quick wins shall we choose to set the ball rolling on delivery?</td>
<td>Our Public Health Team, Planning and transport officers.</td>
<td>Mechanisms for “Health for Life” NB Health for Life is the Jersey Health Improvement Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection and participant feedback

What further support would assist me and my team

Building a learning community and the capacity for change

Ongoing meetings between Freiburg groups – one day that will be a very big group with an increased chance of making that change – although that change should be happening now.

A developed Action Learning Set – continuous engagement with this group and the previous one.

Continued support for emerging actions following the trip.

Training and support

I would like more discussion and help with my SA/SEA/HIA work and how I can influence my colleagues more.

Possible link up with CABE’s sustainable cities initiative roll-out in the region?

Training in the correct language to engage the right people.

All Local Planning Authorities in the SW to jointly develop LDF policies to achieve these types of objectives and in emerging LDF. Policies “push the envelope”. Then jointly lobby GOSW/DCLG.

A programme around the Freiburg experience to involve, support and training for members, senior officers, practitioners. Starting with seminar at conference in Jan. Also, learning sets around key projects. Eg Eco-Towns

Other data – research needed

It would be useful to have more information available on finance and governance of the projects; a clearer analysis of the viability funding arrangements, and how they translate to the UK. Map of development processes in Germany (Freiburg) and other places compared with the UK would be very useful.

Creating tools for others – on Freiburg; Senior Officer training to drive and influencing development planning.

Need to maintain a balanced skepticism to some aspects of the developments; I wonder whether environments will feel positive over time. These could be answered to some extent with more information on:

- Approach to Elderly
- Approach to health care centres
- Approach to social care
- Evidence relating to variables which are different between our communities eg. Climate, culture, approach to children
- Health and other outcome data
Reflection and participant feedback

Reflections on the study tour

A very interesting tour and well coordinated; It may be useful to call on the UWE resources in the future for key projects; Thank you for organizing this opportunity.

Thank you to all involved for an excellent tour — a challenging insight into what can be achieved by questioning the accepted principles of UK planning.

Fantastic! Loved every minute. So well organised.

Great – Thank you for organizing this opportunity.

Great space to explore and share.

Excellent event glad I came to absorb the whole ethos – looking forward to championing this at home — enjoyed support from other colleagues – looking forward to joined up working with sister authorities. Thank you.

Excellent, well constructed visit which had been particularly personally beneficial as I start in new cross-cutting post with significant senior influential potential.

I’ve recognized lack of knowledge/language to support credible discussion with planners could benefit from development opportunities. Have maintained a balanced (I hope!) Skepticism to some aspect of the developments in that I wonder whether environments will feel positive over time.

Very useful – Thanks to organizing committee;