

Graeme Shankland: a Sixties Architect-Planner and the Political Culture of the British Left

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Graeme Shankland (1917–84) conforms in many ways to the popular image of a 1960s planner with his lyrical advocacy of inner city motorways and his suggestions of enormous programmes of renewal in ‘outworn’ Victorian city centres. As an advocate of the belief that ‘our problem in Britain is that it is our generation which must completely renew most of the older parts of our larger towns and cities’,¹ Shankland was an important representative of what Peter Mandler has described as a new ‘more *dirigiste* version of urban planning’, an approach that had ‘little sentiment about historic townscapes’. As Mandler put it, ‘city centres were to be made “liveable” not by preserving the familiar (which was deemed grey and boring) but by projecting a vision of modern vitality.’² Shankland’s plan for Liverpool is notorious. Gavin Stamp described it as a ‘nightmare’ which was mercifully only ever partly completed.³ Raphael Samuel labelled him ‘the butcher of Liverpool’.⁴ Simon Jenkins’s antipathy towards planners developed after viewing Shankland’s Liverpool plan: ‘I was looking at Bomber Harris. This was the end of the beautiful city and that reaction has infused everything I have thought since about planning and architecture.’⁵ At best, Paul Barker saw him as misguided: ‘I think, for example, of the destruction of the centre of Liverpool by well-meaning planners like Graeme Shankland.’⁶

As a case study, however, Shankland complicates the received image of the 1960s planner as bogeyman because he also displays many of the virtues that we tend to associate with the reaction against 1960s comprehensive redevelopment. He was pioneering in championing the preservation of Victorian structures (even industrial ones) and was from 1960 a member of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain. Furthermore, he displayed sensitivity towards the existing individual characters of northern cities: ‘Crumbling and chaotic they may be, but they also have a unity and character which enable them to be comprehended.’⁷ *Contra* Jane Jacobs’s influential view of planners as having no sympathy towards the beneficial qualities of urban life,⁸ he was emphatically pro-city, attempting, for example, to bring housing back into central areas. In addition, in contrast to a narrative of British post-war urbanism which stresses ‘the

Corbusians com[ing] to Britain',⁹ Shankland was vocally critical of Le Corbusier. As the architectural theorist and teacher Colin Rowe reported, Shankland 'felt that Le Corbusier's tendency to make man in his own image, to project this image on society and often impose a formal pattern regardless of circumstances, in some degree vitiated his contribution'.¹⁰ He was actively influenced by the Townscape movement, which advocated the application of a Picturesque sensibility to Modern development;¹¹ he worked closely with the architectural draughtsman Gordon Cullen. We might, therefore, more readily associate his ideas with the type of philosophy advocated by the *Architectural Review* during the post-war period rather than more avant-garde Modernist approaches to urban renewal. Christopher Klemek has recently argued, echoing earlier narratives of the period which stress a polarized architectural culture,¹² that 'it is indisputable that the *Review's* aesthetic focus and scepticism towards aggressive reconstruction was out of step with the urbanist establishment'.¹³ However, Shankland's plans are an amalgamation of radical renewal and experimental forms with more nuanced concerns. It was a dichotomy that the critic and historian Reyner Banham was able to observe at the time:

Graeme Shankland is currently giving Liverpool a traffic plan that starts with the proposition that the function of cars is to move, and fast [...]. But Shankland is being very tender with the urban texture wherever he can, and he has Gordon Cullen (of Townscape fame) to advise him and his team on how to preserve and enhance it.¹⁴

If we are to understand Shankland through the familiar categories and conventions of architectural history, then his *oeuvre* in the late 1950s and early 1960s appears schizophrenic, veering as it does between the very forefront of both Modernist and Postmodernist ideas of the city. However, this interpretive problem arises only if we try to shoehorn him either as a dehumanizing Modernist or as a humbled conservationist. Such categories are clearly insufficient for understanding Shankland — or, indeed, his period. The primary aim of this article, therefore, is to set Shankland within the context of the political culture of the time. Such a lens provides a way to understand how seemingly conflicting ideas were able to co-exist within a single philosophy.

By seeing Shankland's approach as allied to the meliorist aims of the British Left, then the ostensible contradiction that finds his ideas on both sides of some historical divide dissolves. Although it is common to view the architecture of the 1960s as the expression of Wilsonite 'White Heat',¹⁵ this article builds on Lawrence Black's more nuanced account of left-wing political culture, which understands it as being conflicted — like Shankland's work — between modernizing and more traditional concerns.¹⁶ Shankland's biography and statements show him to be very much engaged with a post-1956 left-wing milieu. His plans embody many of the ambiguous and conflicted feelings about affluence and the perceived consequences of an untrammelled project of modernization which were prevalent among the British Left at the time. In particular, there was a widespread sense on the Left that affluence and the post-war growth in automobile usage were destroying traditional conceptions of community and creating a suburban, Americanized Britain. In a 1962 essay that had particular affinity with Shankland's approach, the Labour Member of Parliament Anthony Crosland called for the 'complete physical rehabilitation' of northern cities, with their 'unsightly miles of dismal Victorian housing, schools, chapels, mills, factories and industrial debris',¹⁷ whilst also advocating the retention of

'the essential *character* of the city centre — social, cultural and historical',¹⁸ and for architectural preservation. Crosland, like Shankland, did not consider it contradictory to be simultaneously an advocate of modernization and conservation. Instead, he hoped 'we can preserve what beauty we still have left, and create a little more.'¹⁹ Crosland's article praised the fact that Liverpool was amongst 'recent converts to mid-twentieth-century ideas',²⁰ suggesting that there was a symbiotic relationship between Shankland and a wider political discourse.

It will be argued here that the preconceptions which shaped Shankland's plans grew out of the whole political culture of the Left in Britain as much as any hermetic architectural discourse. While the article does not suggest that Shankland was necessarily voicing a specific party-political line, it will demonstrate that his approach nonetheless responded to (and paralleled) wider debates and that his solutions were perceivable at the time as part of a panacea to problems widely appreciated by politicians. Furthermore, it will be seen that Shankland's approach was co-opted by sections of the Conservative Party, which in this period was pursuing *dirigiste* and 'One Nation' policies. His plans were realized, if at all, as much through the Conservative-backed policy of public-private partnership as they were through state intervention. Considering Shankland in this way suggests that we need to refine our understanding of the way British cities were redeveloped during the 1960s by considering how the concerns that informed their planning interconnected with the wider culture, instead of simply suggesting that a set of architectural ideas were foisted upon the country.

Shankland's career has to date not received any sustained attention by historians.²¹ On his death in 1984 he received an obituary in *The Times*,²² another reprinted in the *RIBA Journal* and the *Architects' Journal*, and a slightly longer piece in the William Morris Society's journal — he was founding Honorary Secretary of this group.²³ Shankland was a reasonably prolific writer of proselytizing journalism, and was described by the garden city advocate Frederick J. Osborn as 'typical of the architectural group that almost monopolises the press and BBC in this country'.²⁴ However, the primary source for this article will be three plans in which Shankland had an important role. Situating the infamous Liverpool plan within the context of Shankland's career and considering it alongside two less well-known proposals can help us not only to gain a more nuanced understanding of the aims and ambitions behind it, but also allows us to begin to locate all these plans within their political, cultural, and architectural milieu. The result is not an attempt at a detailed history of physical change in the cities discussed; it is as much a history of things that were not built as things that were. The history of Liverpool's planning alone deserves a book-length treatment, which would necessarily deal with issues outside of Shankland's purview. Here, therefore, the plans will be analysed in a limited way, interrogating them for their ambitions and the rhetoric they use, and relating these ambitions to a wider cultural moment, whilst generally leaving aside the mechanics of their implementation.²⁵

How far can Shankland be taken as representative of the culture of planning in this period? He certainly shares much with those planners who also had architectural qualifications, such as Colin Buchanan,²⁶ Walter Bor,²⁷ Wilfred Burns,²⁸ Lionel Brett,²⁹ Konrad Smigielski,³⁰ Chamberlin Powell & Bon,³¹ Hugh Wilson and Lewis Womersley.³² To use the vocabulary of the period, these men were interested as much in 'town design'

or 'civic design' as in 'town planning'; they set out to create three-dimensional plans with a vision that, as Anthony Goss put it in a report calling for more architect-planners, 'rose above the kerb level'.³³ None of them had much sympathy for the Corbusian idea of towers in parkland; instead they proposed distinctly urban visions.³⁴ Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the lack of homogeneity in approaches to planning. There is little crossover between Shankland and a Borough Engineer such as Bradford's Stanley Wardley,³⁵ or a Borough Architect like West Ham's Tom North.³⁶ Architect-planners like Shankland were by no means in the majority, accounting for only 41.5% of the membership of the Town Planning Institute in 1965. Most local authorities did not employ any architect-planners at all.³⁷ The majority of plans produced in the post-war period were statutory development plans, the principal vehicle for the implementation of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Such plans focused on establishing the quantities and distribution of land uses. Typically they had a typewritten appearance, their covers embossed with the heraldic crest of the town in question, and they were devoid of the kind of rhetoric and three-dimensional architectural visions that are found in Shankland's output. Shankland, by contrast, pioneered a literate and accessible approach to the publication of town plans, with high production values. The results had more in common with Thomas Sharp's beguiling proposals of the 1940s than with most contemporaneous statutory land use planning documents.³⁸ Shankland saw himself in the artistic terms of an 'urban designer',³⁹ creating three-dimensional designs over large areas with the aim of creating 'the city as art'. He proclaimed that if our surroundings 'are beautiful and stimulating they raise our aesthetic standards and deepen our sensitivity'.⁴⁰ William Morris is the frequently stated life-long influence behind such a statement.⁴¹ However, as we shall see, Shankland's aesthetics and approach to urbanism are a long way from the rustic medievalism of Morris's *News from Nowhere*.

BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Graeme Shankland was born on Merseyside on 31 January 1917 to Violet Cooper (née Lindsay) and Ernest Claude Shankland, who was then the Assistant Marine Surveyor of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board and had by 1926 become Chief Harbour Master at the Port of London. Shankland left Liverpool at the age of six, and when he returned as planner his only memories of the city were from being billeted there during the Second World War, 'walking over streets covered in broken glass'.⁴² He attended Stowe during J.F. Roxburgh's headmastership and in 1940 graduated from Queens' College, Cambridge, in Architecture and Draughtsmanship. He was already interested in William Morris, writing a letter to the *Listener* about quality in industrial design in which he mentioned lectures by Nikolaus Pevsner.⁴³ He was also in correspondence with Frederick Osborn whilst an undergraduate, and had started to plan a career in town planning.⁴⁴

Early in the war he worked as a member of William Holford's team designing hostels for factory workers. Then, having joined the Royal Engineers in 1942, he was commissioned and saw active service in Africa, the Middle East and what was then Malaya before being demobilized in October 1946 with the rank of temporary captain. Shankland joined the Communist Party in 1942, and had his letters opened by MI5 until 1958. Those relating to his Communism (as well as prurient snooping of his

homosexuality) are held in the National Archives.⁴⁵ It was far from unusual for British planners to be Party members.⁴⁶ Shankland was also a member of the Communist Historians Group, corresponding with Eric Hobsbawm, and was the *Daily Worker's* anonymous architectural correspondent until 1956.⁴⁷ As with many of his generation, he left the Party after sending a letter to Communist Party Headquarters protesting about their 'shameful resolution' on Hungary in 1956.

Shankland joined the Architectural Association after demobilization before undertaking a postgraduate course at the London School of Planning. Whilst at the Architectural Association he visited Sweden⁴⁸ and Italy⁴⁹ with two other architectural students, Michael Ventris, later to become famous for deciphering the Mycenaean script Linear B, and Oliver Cox, his future architectural partner. He subsequently praised Swedish architecture's 'dry beauty', and saw it as analogous to Britain's attempt to

turn away from the abstract diagrammatic forms of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, and a turning towards more national and traditional forms in the light of experience and popular criticism [...]. For national character, manifest in architecture as it must be, is something inevitably developed between the people, the architects and the craftsmen, and transmitted from father to son and professor to student.⁵⁰

Shankland was more than plausibly a key target of James Stirling's gibe 'William Morris was a Swede.'⁵¹ The Swedish suburban New Town of Vällingby, 'a suburb with a real heart',⁵² was an important influence on two projects to which Shankland contributed: the un-built Hook New Town as well as Boston Manor, an imaginary scheme for the reconstruction of this West London suburb proposed with Chamberlin Powell & Bon.⁵³

From the early 1950s he lived in a flat at 36 South Hill Park in Hampstead, 'overlooking last of the Hampstead chain of ponds which form headwaters of the Fleet'.⁵⁴ His home was decorated with William Morris's Bower design wallpaper, and also, according to an informant, with posters 'of a communist nature'. He joined the London County Council (LCC) from 1950, becoming one of three Senior Planners in the Planning Division along with Walter Bor and Gordon Logie, working first under fellow Communist Arthur Ling, and then, from 1956, Leslie Lane. He was in charge of detailed schemes for Elephant and Castle and the South Bank permanent development scheme, as well as less high-profile jobs in Lewisham and Woolwich.⁵⁵ He was reprimanded for his unauthorized involvement with Chamberlin Powell & Bon's proposals for Boston Manor,⁵⁶ but nevertheless became a key figure in the planning of Hook New Town at the suggestion of Cox, by now also working for the LCC and leading this project.⁵⁷ The Hook plan was never realized, but Shankland wrote up the findings; they were reprinted twice, were translated into Japanese and German,⁵⁸ and were influential, notably on the design of new universities during the 1960s.⁵⁹ In 1962 Shankland became the planning consultant for Liverpool city centre, as part of Walter Bor's larger plan. He formed the private practice Graeme Shankland Associates, which rapidly became Shankland Cox after he was joined by Oliver Cox. The firm's important town-planning projects in Britain during the 1960s include a realized plan for Bolton, and expansionary proposals for Winsford,⁶⁰ Ipswich,⁶¹ and Reading.⁶² He was also involved in planning the French new town of Cergy Pontoise, which led to more international projects in the 1970s, and the firm set up an office in Jamaica.

HOOK

Hook was a project for a new town for 100,000 people in Hampshire, abandoned during 1960 because of local opposition as well as the political calculation from Tory high command that 'the withdrawal of the Hook proposal would be preferable from the political point of view.'⁶³ The plan was an attempt by the LCC to achieve their policy of decentralization without suburban expansion.⁶⁴ The LCC began looking for a site for such a project from 1955, and alighted on Hook by 1957.⁶⁵ Along with the realized new town of Cumbernauld in central Scotland, developed from 1956 and with which it shares many characteristics, Hook represents an intermediate stage between the low-density 'Mark I' post-war new towns such as Stevenage (designated 1946) and Harlow (1947) and the more concentrated 'Mark II' new towns such as Skelmersdale (1961) and Runcorn (1964). Shankland was primarily responsible for writing up the plan, although the contribution of other participants, especially Cox, should not be overlooked.

In common with many of his generation, Shankland historicized his position as being in reaction to the Garden City movement and its bastardization in suburbia:⁶⁶ 'I think the time has come to lay the ghost of Ebenezer.'⁶⁷ The Barlow Report of 1940 had set the tone for continuing dispersal away from large cities in the early post-war period, arguing that the 'concentration of population in the great towns, especially since the Industrial Revolution [...] has been marked by a disastrous harvest of slums, sickness, stunted population and misery.'⁶⁸ Shankland was one of many planners who, faced with new and increasingly suburban forms of urbanization, were attempting to reinvest in more urban forms of development. He was a founding member of the Society for the Promotion of Urban Renewal (SPUR),⁶⁹ which had been set up

to affirm that cities were worth living in — that there was a quality about urban life which was better than suburban life and different from rural life. In suburban life everyone did what he or she wanted without thought for the total result; this was uncivilized and barbarous.⁷⁰

This agenda was made explicit at Hook. The plan was an attempt to retain some of the assets of urban life lost in the garden cities — which, from Ebenezer Howard onwards, in trying to break with the unhealthy effects of the dense 19th century industrial city, have lost some valuable characteristics of town life.⁷¹

Hook was responding to the wide feeling that the first generation of New Towns, as one commentator put it, had

failed because they are not towns, they are ghettos for young families, they are not urban, they are suburbs with no town, and because they deny by their very shape and environment the cultural richness for which their people are grasping.⁷²

The preconceptions of the planning team at Hook were summed up by one of its members, Hugh Morris: 'the original common bond of the team was profound dismay on visiting the new towns [...] [we] believed that there was an *a priori* case for higher densities'.⁷³ Such arguments were common not just in architectural circles, but were widespread across the political spectrum,⁷⁴ and were beginning to affect Government policy.⁷⁵ Fears about suburban development were especially acute on the left because of the conception that the type of development exemplified by the New Towns had

loosened the bonds of working-class solidarity, replacing it with an acquisitiveness that was seen as ultimately leading to Conservatism.⁷⁶

Hook was designed to celebrate 'Urbanity': it

should be compact without sacrificing standards of open space [...]. Urban character in terms of buildings, landscape and relationships between them should be achieved, although the town would be predominantly horizontal in design and developed at a gross overall density probably comparable to other English new towns.⁷⁷

The plan's bibliography shows that the architects were influenced by planners from an earlier generation such as Frederick Gibberd, Thomas Sharp, William Holford, Geoffrey Jellicoe and even by Arthur Trystan Edwards — each of whom had stressed the importance of urbanity.⁷⁸

The second factor influencing the development was the growth of motor traffic. The town was designed to meet a predicted enormous rise in private car ownership through strict segregation of vehicular and pedestrian circulation. As Colin Buchanan noted, 'The road plan [at Hook] was calculated on the basis of 1.5 cars per family, which is [...] somewhat higher than the present Californian figure.'⁷⁹ The town centre was to be on a raised deck above a sunken spinal road, its linear shape meaning that a significant number of dwellings would be within walking distance. (Figs 1 and 2). The central area, which tightly abuts the housing areas, was contrasted in the plan with an image of an American shopping centre surrounded by a car park.

It was hoped that the positive social function of street life could be preserved through a system of elevated pedestrian walkways:

In the 19th century town the street was still the focus of social life, where people met to talk whilst children played on the doorsteps [...]. All public buildings and spaces, while not deprived of vehicle service, are inter-connected by the pedestrian way, which becomes a new kind of street, with life and movement, but free from the noise and danger of traffic.⁸⁰

Such rhetoric was widespread at the time,⁸¹ and clearly echoes the concurrent architectural experiments being carried out at Sheffield's Park Hill estate,⁸² and in Denys Lasdun's Bethnal Green cluster blocks. It arguably grew out of the celebration of the traditional street found in the influential sociological study *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957), which compared the tight-knit community of London's Bethnal Green with the social disintegration of new developments, and had 'fired the high density crusade' (Fig. 3).⁸³ During a discussion of the Hook plan, Hugh Morris admitted that perhaps the team had been 'unduly influenced by some rather bogus sociological chatter about new town blues and loneliness current at the time'.⁸⁴ Peter Willmott replied that since writing *Family and Kinship* he had found that New Town residents 'liked the openness and garden city character of their town', although it was reported that he himself had admitted 'with unblushing candour that he found it rather depressing'.⁸⁵ The Hook study also cited a debt to the sociologist Ruth Glass of the Centre for Urban Studies, whose complaint in 1955 that town planning had 'paradoxically been the field of the anti-urbanists, who try to shape the town in terms of idealized rustic images',⁸⁶ foreshadows Hook. Shankland and Cox were both members of the Kenilworth Group, which from the mid-1950s brought together planners and architects with sociologists, including Willmott and Glass, to discuss town-planning issues.⁸⁷

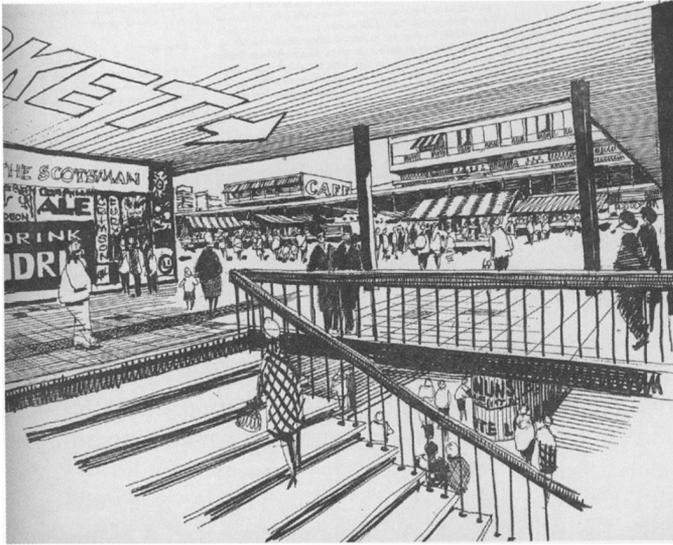
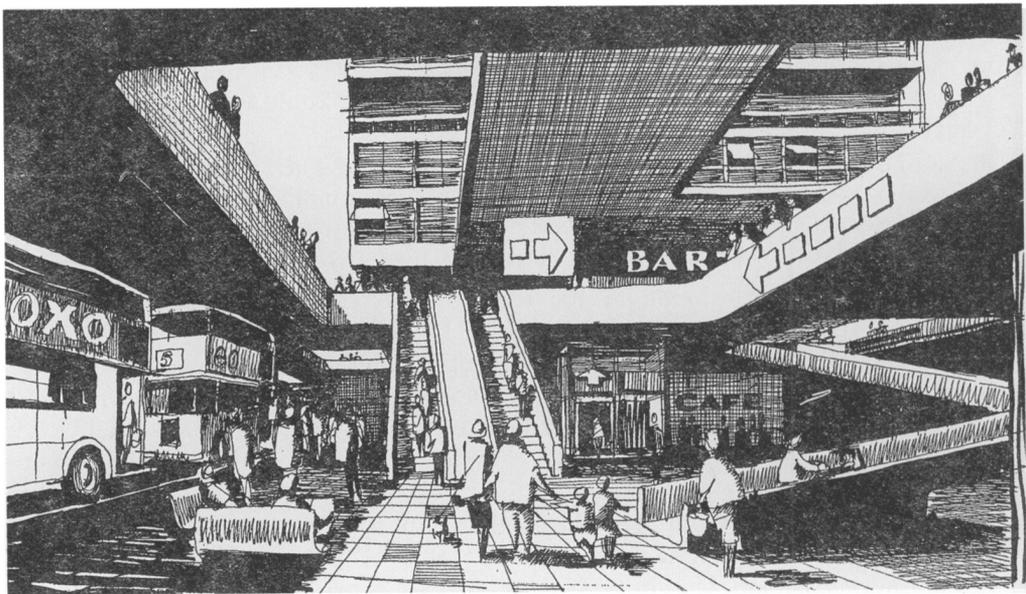


Fig. 1. (left) *The market at Hook, with its traditional covered awnings and profusion of advertising* (The Planning of a New Town, p. 59)

Fig. 2. (below) *Services banished below the deck. A sense of how this space might have been experienced can be got from the decks at Bath and Essex Universities* (The Planning of a New Town, p. 59)



The third factor important at Hook was the need for a distinct separation between 'Town and Countryside'.

The town should stand out distinctly from the surrounding countryside and yet be complementary to it [...]. [Hook] achieves a contrast between the hard built-up urban landscape of lakes, playing fields and woods which surround it. It is not so much a garden city as a city in a garden.⁸⁸

This type of language is reminiscent of the anti-Garden City tracts of Thomas Sharp such as *Town and Countryside* (1932). The very images in the Hook plan, drawn in green and

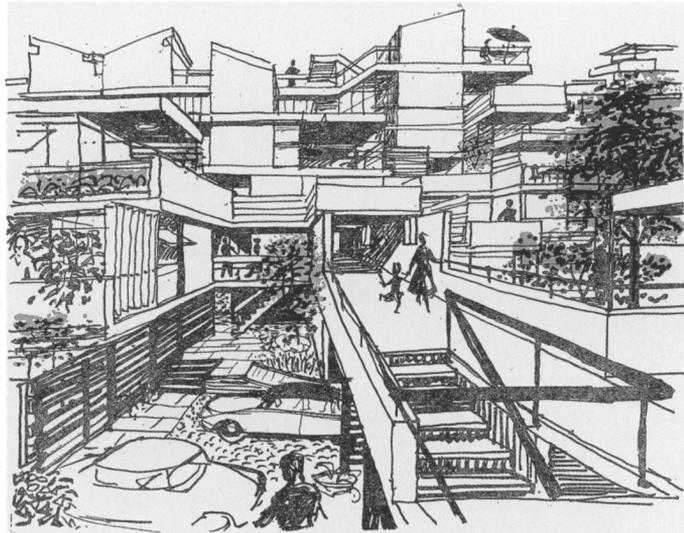


Fig. 3. High-density low-rise housing at Hook, making a virtue of its warren like multi-level complexity (The Planning of a New Town, p. 46)

black crayon, proclaim this ideal. The uncompromisingly harsh Brutalist aesthetic of Hook's housing and town centre was seen as a concomitant of the need to produce this 'essential contrast, between the highly organized building complex of the centre and the free disposition of trees and lakes to the west of the central area'. There is a wonderful image of a couple sitting on a country hill overlooking the town, playing on a common visual motif stretching back at least as far as Ford Madox Brown's *An English Autumn Afternoon* (1854) (Fig. 4). For the centre of the town, the 'danger is that small trees [...] might be used, producing a fussy and "pretty" character. This should be avoided. The pattern should essentially be one of hard surfaces ...'. The use of an uncompromisingly hard aesthetic used at Hook is clearly related to a Brutalist reaction against the soft Festival of Britain style, but the language used to justify it is reminiscent of Ian Nairn's ideas outlined in *Outrage* (1955) and *Counter-Attack Against Subtopia* (1956), that city centres should be robust rather than polite, where the danger was of the 'reduction of vitality by false genteelism, of which Municipal Rustic is the prime agent'.⁸⁹ The images of 'compact housing' at Hook suggest the Townscape mantras of enclosure, sequences of spaces, multiple levels and views of landscape framed by buildings.

The fourth focus was on questions of social balance, community and 'the extension of choice through higher densities and the complexity of social patterns'.⁹⁰ The plan was prefaced by a description of the 'startling and rapid' social changes of the last ten years, from a society where there 'was a shortage of consumer goods and many items, including petrol, were rationed', to one where 'with the lure of television making itself felt [...] observers are deploring the retreat to the home and the lack of active forms of recreation'.⁹¹ As with the preceding New Towns, it was felt that every effort should be 'made to achieve a balance of population'.⁹² However, in common with Cumbernauld, rather than relying on the neighbourhood unit concept of the earlier generation of New Towns, it was believed by the planners at Hook that the physical pattern of the city, especially through its density, would stimulate community:

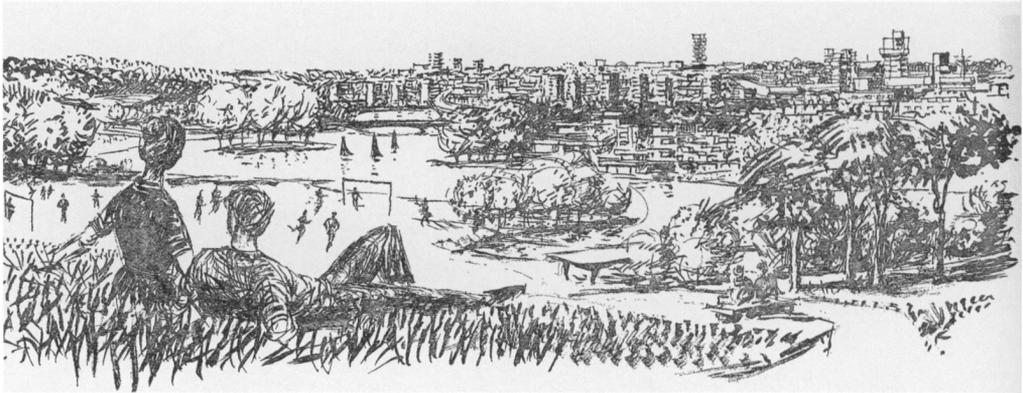


Fig. 4. *The benefits of counterattacking subtopia; not a Garden City, but a City in a garden* (The Planning of a New Town, p. 74)

Patterns of social relationships are not simply determined by the planned relationships of buildings or the spaces between them. They can, however, be deeply influenced by them for better or for worse as studies by William Whyte [American urbanist, author of *The Organization Man* (1956)] and others have shown. The pattern of social relationships, neither simple, static nor closely predictable, may indeed be influenced by density [...]. It is also an idea that does not imply the imposition of over-simplified abstract planning concepts, such as the neighbourhood units, onto the complex, rich and concrete patterns of social life. In beginning to evolve forms related to this idea, the Hook plan represents an attempt to retain some of the assets of urban life lost in the garden cities ...⁹³

Hook is the manifestation of a social and political vision. Although we might point to the influence of Vällingby, the pronouncements of the Hook team show them to have engaged far more with ideas about the changing face of society than with Modernist architectural culture. Reyner Banham later saw Hook as a pioneering example of the international avant-garde concept of a megastructure, the idea of building the multiple functions of a city into one vast structure, writing that there 'is a real megastructural boldness and, indeed, bloody-mindedness about the Hook scheme.'⁹⁴ However, the plan is presented in a way devoid of the kind of futurism one would expect of an avant-garde document. Rather, it is grounded in traditional social and political questions.⁹⁵ Banham could not understand how Britain, 'a nation of earnest grey functionaries designing socially responsible architecture for the people', as he disparagingly described it, could have conceived such 'visionary architecture' as Hook. It is more explicable if we see Hook's ostensible avant-gardism as the product of its social responsibility rather than as a self-conscious attempt at trendy futurism.

LIVERPOOL

The most significant recasting of the British built environment in the 1960s would not be in New Town development, but in the centres of provincial towns and cities.⁹⁶ Shankland would bring many of the concepts and approaches that had been developed at Hook to bear on two Lancashire city centre projects, first in Liverpool and later in

Bolton. These two plans would further engage with an idealized vision of a richly social and distinctly urban life, and would use radical planning in a way that attempted to address the social dynamics of a changing Britain.

Whilst Hook was being slowly dropped from the agenda in favour of a policy of expanded towns, the Conservative government in the late 1950s and early 1960s was increasingly turning its focus towards creating the framework which made the major inner-city redevelopment schemes of the 1960s possible.⁹⁷ Through the auspices of public-private cooperation between local authorities and private developers, large tracts of inner city real estate were brought under unified ownership, providing ever-greater sites for profitable redevelopment. Keith Joseph, Minister of Housing and Local Government between 1962 and 1964, was nevertheless more than capable of appropriating the register and vocabulary of a radical planner like Shankland, boasting that his 'vision' was 'to reconcile the town and its traffic, and create within the years to come, out of the squalor and shapelessness of so much of the past, a new 20th century urbanity worthy of the best in our history.'⁹⁸

In local cases, Conservative-controlled authorities tended to be far less gung-ho about central area redevelopment, largely due to a preponderance of freeholding small businessmen on Tory Councils.⁹⁹ The majority of the most ambitious town centre schemes happened in Labour-dominated councils — especially in the industrial heartlands of the North of England. These types of authorities were, as Oliver Marriott put it, 'much more occupied with the glory of their towns, keen to embark on grandiose projects, and impervious to the squeals of small shopkeepers'.¹⁰⁰ They also had an historically conditioned perspective of their cities as the result of the industrial revolution and Victorian capitalism, the continuing repercussions of which they considered their mission to dispel.¹⁰¹ In these cities, as one contemporary commentator put it, there was an, 'impatience and near-despair [at] the formidable task of re-creating these cities so that they become truly fit places'.¹⁰² In cities already suffering from the tremors of deindustrialization, redevelopment was seen as a way to give 'Lancashire's old towns a new and brighter face which would attract fresh industry'.¹⁰³

It was into this ferment that Shankland was launched when in 1962 he was hired as Planning Consultant for Liverpool's central area, within the context of the Planning Officer Walter Bor's larger scheme. Shankland and Bor were commissioned on the advice of a panel including Sir William Holford (by now in London, but formerly of Liverpool), Myles Wright, and Robert Gardner-Medwin (both at Liverpool University). This panel had been set up by when the council was Conservative-run in a bid to encourage private sector investment, but was retained when Labour took hold of the authority in 1963.¹⁰⁴ Between 1962 and 1964 Shankland's team produced eleven planning documents (the last three in association with Bor), dealing with individual features of the plan.¹⁰⁵ In 1963 Peter Hall was already praising Shankland's proposal of September 1962 for the St John's Precinct, suggesting that it showed a 'sophistication of the principle' of vertical segregation.¹⁰⁶ It was boasted of the plan, that if 'realised this would be one of the largest pedestrian precincts outside of Venice'.¹⁰⁷ In 1965 the work coalesced in two published documents, one dealing with the inner area by Shankland's team, and another outlining general principles for the whole city by Bor. Even the often-sceptical Ian Nairn was swept up in the feeling of excitement generated by these plans:

Modern architecture has a fighting chance, with Graeme Shankland as planning consultant and Walter Bor as city planning officer. The results could still be terrible, but at least the opportunity is there. And the city itself seems to have wakened out of a drugged sleep. Everyone knows about the Mersey Beat, but this could not have been so successful if it had not been a symptom, drawing its vitality from some common resurgence.¹⁰⁸

Shankland's rhetoric at Liverpool echoes the foundational belief behind the political planning philosophy of the early 1960s, propounded in books such as Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, that continuous economic growth would provide the basis for uninterrupted social progress. The plans for central Liverpool were presented by Bill Sefton, when Labour leader of Liverpool Council, as political propaganda for a programme of increasing prosperity:

All this process of renewal and rehabilitation must take into consideration new factors such as mobility, increased leisure and greater prosperity. New standards of amenity must be accepted for all, and a new environment must be created, in which it will be easy to live a full, healthy and happy life.¹⁰⁹

The mood of Shankland's plan for the inner area approached euphoria, citing how, though Liverpool has long been familiar to the world as a great seaport [...] since the appearance of the Beatles record *Love Me Do* in the autumn of 1962, the Mersey Sound has flooded the hit parade [...]. It is qualities such as these and the football achievements of Liverpool and Everton that regularly hit the headlines in recent years and they form an important part of the mystique that attracts people to the city [...].

The plan is based upon eulogistically optimistic predictions of a steadily improving future of growing affluence: 'a 20% growth in population by 1981 and that looks forward to increasing prosperity'.

People will have more free time [...]. The population of the city region is expected to increase by 400,000 people by 1981. Rising incomes will give most people greater spending power and the growth of education could well lead to increases in intellectual and artistic pursuits.¹¹⁰

The city would have to adapt to these changes. In its economic optimism, Liverpool's reconstruction can be seen as part of a 1960s planning moment, described by Glen O'Hara, which relied on the presumed continuation of an economic golden age.¹¹¹ Such rhetoric was commonly deployed by planners and by politicians on the Left, keen to shape this increased leisure time.¹¹²

Throughout the 1950s, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government had 'been constantly pressing on Liverpool the need to do something adequate and really saying that in the past they have not measured up to their opportunities'.¹¹³ The city centre had not seen any significant development since the war. 'For 20 years', *The Times* commented, 'the centre of Liverpool has been like the belly of some mangy stuffed animal in a Victorian museum. Great bald patches caused by bombing serve as temporary car parks; beyond the centre the slums stretch away [...].'¹¹⁴ Rapid societal changes were felt to make a new type of approach towards town planning necessary. Liverpool's last Development Plan had only been approved in 1958, but it was felt that it 'no longer reflects the accelerating rate of change, the growing complexity of modern life or the mounting impact of the motor car. The Buchanan Report has proved conclusively the obsolescence

of these Plans.¹¹⁵ According to Shankland the publication of Colin Buchanan's report, *Traffic in Towns* (1963), which argued that the growth in car ownership threatened 'the whole familiar form of towns',¹¹⁶ was a pivotal moment in post-war town planning:

Looking back over twenty years there is no doubt in my mind that the Buchanan report *Traffic in Towns* must be seen as a watershed, and one of the key events which distinguish the planning of the nineteen-sixties from both the forties and the fifties. It was a historic event because it embodied not merely the ideas of one team but so much of the new thinking on urban problems, in a way which threw a flood of light on the real nature of the battle for the environment. In fact it is just this idea of putting the environment first — of forcing us to make up our minds about the kind of place we want — that is the key idea.¹¹⁷

Though the Buchanan Report, which suggested ways to mitigate the damage done to urban environments by growing motor-car usage, was released under the aegis of the Conservative party, transport issues, especially inner city congestion, had exploded into the political consciousness of both left and right during the early 1960s.¹¹⁸

According to Shankland, 'The essence of Liverpool's problems today stem from the fact that the essential fabric of the City dates from a hundred years ago.'¹¹⁹ His plan would be based on extensive urban renewal and the implementation of radical forms to create pedestrian oases whilst allowing for increased traffic flow:

Liverpool's vast urban renewal programme, coupled with the city's extensive land ownership, provides the unique opportunity to incorporate most of the Buchanan principles into the redevelopment: the comprehensive reshaping of the city can now be based upon the most recent techniques of integrated traffic/ land use planning and the most advanced design ideas in traffic architecture and urban redevelopment.

The report posed the question of redevelopment in terms of reinvesting in urban life in the face of suburbanization. It asked the question: 'Will not the continued spread of cities, the growing use of cars and the crisis in public transport make central areas too inaccessible in the future to be worth renewing?' Shankland denied the suburban answer emphatically:

Renewal at the centre is vital, and has a special claim above the claims of all other parts of the city. The city centre is the public home of the community, a place worth coming to, a daily meeting place, and a place to receive guests; a place, too, where a wide range of people are encouraged to live; one designed for great civic occasions, for personal recreation, fun and adventure.¹²⁰

It was hoped that the plan would repopulate the centre: 'Bringing people back to live in the central area is another cause to which much energy must be applied. Many people would enjoy true urban living, which a central area could provide.'¹²¹ The separation of pedestrian and vehicular circulation was also a priority through vertical and horizontal segregation. This would mean that 'comprehensive development should be regarded as the rule rather than the exception.'

The plan included an inner city motorway loop, six lanes wide and often elevated, circling a 500-acre area (Fig. 5). It was conceived in a lyrical spirit:

The gentle curves and generous radii needed to secure regular traffic flow impose a sinuous pattern of a highly new order on the traditional small scale texture of streets and buildings [...]. The motorway become an architectural object of great significance in its own right, particularly if it is elevated.¹²²



Fig. 5 The 'gentle curves' of the motorway in the model (John Tetlow and Anthony Goss, Homes, Towns and Traffic [London, 1968], fig. 44)

As with similar plans of the period, it was felt that, if produced carefully, a 'modern urban motorway can be an object of beauty and magnificence in itself. The views from it can reveal the city in quite a new way.'¹²³ The motorway superseded an earlier scheme for a much tighter inner ring road, which had been prepared by W.S. Atkins & Partners as consulting engineers. The Royal Fine Art Commission had been instrumental in warning of the 'disastrous' effect this earlier ring road would have on the inner city.¹²⁴ It was common not to appreciate the visual damage wrought by inner-city motorways, but rather to see raised motorways cutting around the inner area of a city as a visual asset, under which urban life could continue.¹²⁵ Cullen's drawing of people happily promenading under the road, as if it was some kind of arcade, shows an astonishing lack of imaginative foresight as to how these spaces would be experienced (Fig. 6).

Each of the schemes for four redeveloped areas (the St John's Precinct, two comprehensive development areas around Moorfields and Paradise Street, and a vast Civic Centre) was infected by a grandiosity of intention, containing multiple functions set over many acres within a densely planned single megastructure (a term not used by Shankland) (Fig. 7). The planning ideas pioneered in Geoffrey Copcutt's multi-functional Cumbernauld Town Centre were in essence applied to an existing city context.¹²⁶ What John Gold calls the 'allure of scale' was a feature of much 1960s planning,¹²⁷ but the Liverpool plan's gigantism is nevertheless *outré*. Take, for example, the new central residential community in the Paradise Street area, a Merseyside Barbican of 19.7 acres (of which 6.5 acres were reserved for a new park), which would contain, within a single megastructural super-block, a bus station, a shopping centre (with sixty shops, two large stores and one supermarket), pubs and restaurants, an entertainment centre with a cinema, and parking for 2,500 cars. It was envisaged that the roof level would be regained with a pedestrian precinct, 'an environment completely free, dedicated to the pedestrian and eminently suited to housing'. Out of this super-block, therefore, would rise five twenty-storey point-blocks, containing housing for 600–800 dwellings, accommodating between 1,300 and 1,750 people — making a density of 75–100 persons per acre over the whole site.¹²⁸ Shankland cited both the Barbican and Sheffield's Park Hill as influences (Fig. 8).¹²⁹

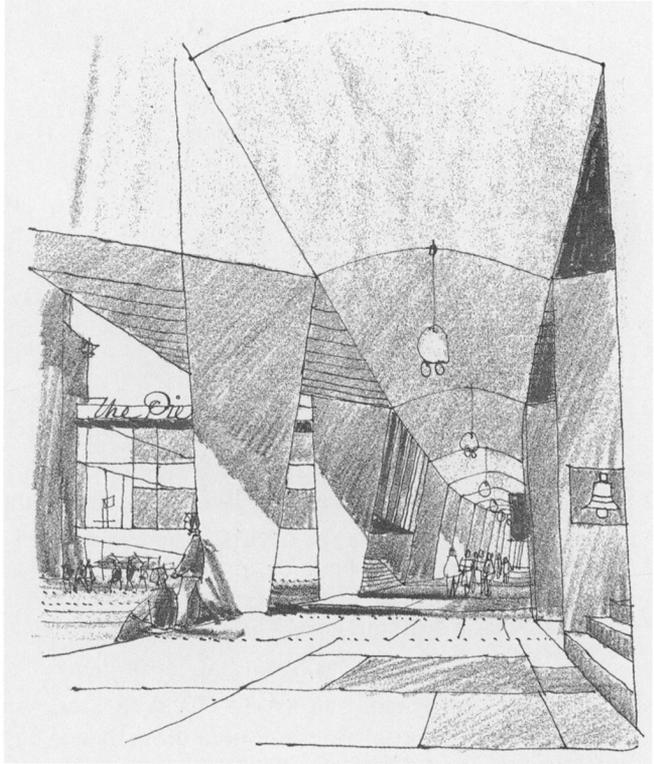


Fig. 6 Cullen's drawing of the underside of the motorway (Walter Bor, 'A Question of Urban Identity', in *Planning and Architecture*, ed. Dennis Sharp [London, 1967], p. xx)

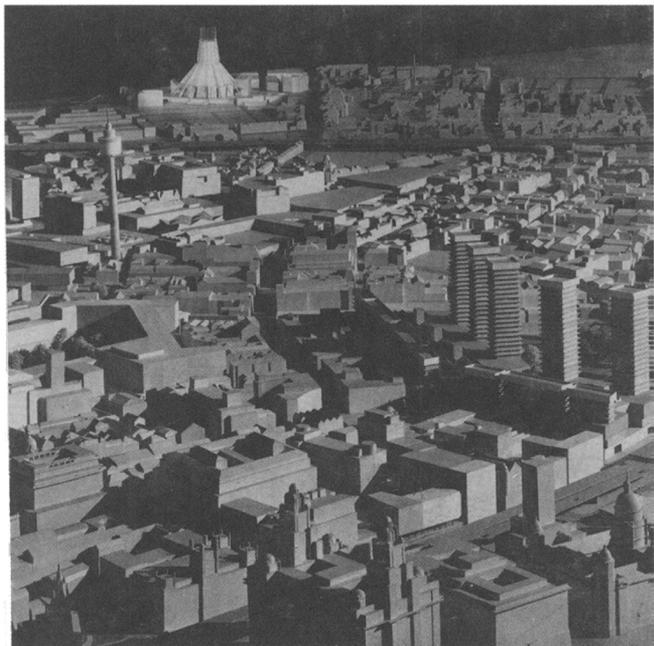


Fig. 7 The Liverpool model's megastructural scale relates to the Three Graces (Liverpool, City Centre Plan, cover)

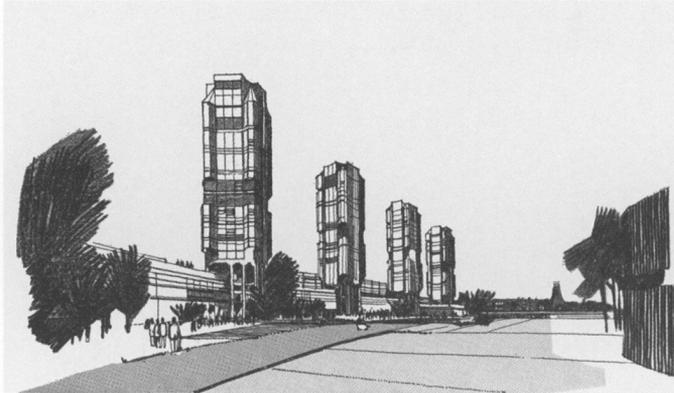


Fig. 8. Cullen's drawing of the towers rising out of a podium. Cullen emphasizes their monumentality as seen from the park (Liverpool, City Centre Plan, p. 74)

The plan for a new civic centre is similarly gigantic. It was hoped that it would be 'a major step towards the integration of the various functions of the central area into a single idea [...] a place in which to live, work, shop, and play'.¹³⁰

To achieve this objective the Civic Centre area should not be the exclusive reserve of municipal functions but be so designed to incorporate where suitable the livelier uses of the central area including, among others, cultural and entertainment facilities, shopping, an hotel, flats, a swimming pool, licensed premises, restaurants and cafes.¹³¹

Colin St John Wilson was hired to design the Civic Centre, proposing a £16.6 million scheme with a pinwheel plan (1965–69). A further, simplified project was prepared in 1970, but it was eventually abandoned altogether in 1973.¹³² The experience of hiring an architect with artistic ambitions for an important scheme, but failing to bring it to fruition, was a common experience in provincial cities in this period; for example, little came of Leicester's hiring of Chamberlin, Powell & Bon or Newcastle's appointment of Arne Jacobsen. Architects of this calibre rarely had the opportunity to build in British city centres. The one megastructure in Shankland's plan for Liverpool that was built was realized by the commercial architect James A. Roberts for the ubiquitous Ravenscroft Properties. This was the St John's Precinct: an uninspiring, little-loved and now Post-modernized shopping centre which creates a landmark of sorts with its spindly space-age tower (apparently based on Rotterdam's Euromast) topped by a now defunct revolving restaurant. As Joseph Sharples has described it, 'its introverted bulk not only erased Foster's 1820–22 market hall and the surrounding street pattern, but also injured the setting of St George's Hall'.¹³³

The visionary quality of Shankland's planning is tempered by the involvement of Gordon Cullen. Shankland wrote of Cullen: 'Like any artist and all good urban designers, Cullen has two sides to his nature: the objective descriptive analyst of the power and magic of a place and the personal visionary of its future.' He estimated that the planning team had directly incorporated around a third of Cullen's suggestions.¹³⁴ In line with Townscape thought, it was hoped that the segregation of systems of circulation would result in the *enclosed* forms of the traditional city:

the controlled relationship of all the various forms of space enclosed by buildings or containing buildings. Alleys, squares, corridor streets, riverside promenades, parks,

gardens, formal paved spaces, arcades and roof gardens; this immense variety of spaces, intimate or grand, should be designed and woven together to make the fabric of this network.¹³⁵

Such an amalgamation of radical means of traffic segregation and traditional urban patterns closely resembles Buchanan's *Traffic in Towns*.¹³⁶

Despite the vast areas of central Liverpool that were characterized as 'areas of obsolescence', which according to the planners 'must go',¹³⁷ Shankland's approach to conservation was not as unambiguously brutal as might at first be expected. Dr Quentin Hughes was brought in to advise which buildings ought to be preserved, and his recommendations became official policy in 1967. Hughes was an architect and architectural historian based at Liverpool University, whose obituaries rightly champion his book *Seaport* (1964) as 'postulating the then-unthinkable idea that Liverpool's Victorian architecture was the 19th-century equivalent of Florence's Renaissance heritage and must be preserved. It was highly influential in starting a wider national trend to counter 1960s architectural brutalism.'¹³⁸ It may come as a surprise, then, to note that Shankland wrote the introduction to *Seaport*, in which he stated that 'From the start of our plans for the new centre have been devised to allow the best to be kept and where possible provide a better setting for them.'¹³⁹

Shankland's approach to conservation was typical for the time, in that he saw himself as having a more preservationist ethic than earlier planners. He lamented the loss of the Bank Chambers in Cook Street, demolished in 1959 by the Bank of England, and James Wyatt's quadrangle, writing with apparent sensitivity that a

city's heritage of fine buildings is, with its topography, what distinguishes it from another. Losses of this kind not only represent the loss of a loved member of the local architectural family, but they diminish the impact of the city's collective personality and its stature as a member of the family of the world's great cities.¹⁴⁰

The *Sunday Times* picked up on the deep love for Liverpool shown by Shankland's team, reporting a breathless exchange: 'It's better than Venice [...]. Take the floorscape of St George's Hall ... the drama of the waterfront ... the lights on the river at night'¹⁴¹ This period saw the reappraisal of the Victorian era, from the foundation of the Victorian Society in 1958 to Asa Briggs's *Victorian Cities* in 1963, a book that presented a more sympathetic view of Victorian cities in declared opposition to Lewis Mumford.¹⁴² Shankland had been lecturing students on nineteenth-century architecture at the Architectural Association as early as 1957.¹⁴³ What Shankland could not foresee was that some of the more mundane fabric of the Victorian city, had it been rehabilitated, might have become valued: 'sentimentality is the enemy of understanding; Liverpool's chief inheritance from its nineteenth century is the biggest slum problem in England. Buildings have no merit because they are old or familiar.'¹⁴⁴ These types of buildings still had too heavy resonances. Thirty-three thousand dwellings, a third of the total in the inner city, were demolished by 1972, causing major social problems.¹⁴⁵

A 'High Buildings Policy' was written, which noted that the 'international identity of Liverpool is inseparably linked with the views of the City from the river'.¹⁴⁶ Within sensitive areas 'no high buildings will be permitted to mar important views or destroy the dominance of the landmarks' such as the Liver Building and the two cathedrals.¹⁴⁷

In what today can be seen as prescient, Shankland seemed to predict Liverpool's future as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and tourist destination:

Foreign visitors do not yet see Liverpool as one of Britain's main tourist attractions, the next ten years can change this. When they do come they ought to see not just what is shown [in *Seaport*] but the combined and more poignant power of the new seen and designed together with the best of the old.¹⁴⁸

Shankland wrote of his 'plan for prosperity' that 'wider social and cultural objectives, concerned with the quality of life a great city should be able to offer are here put first because they are objects of vital importance but most difficult to measure and quantify and therefore too often forgotten'¹⁴⁹ (Fig. 9). In what appears prophetic of later arguments about the role of culture in regeneration¹⁵⁰ Shankland suggested that:

At one end of the musical spectrum is the Philharmonic Hall and its magnificent orchestra, at the other the spectacular growth of Liverpool as the centre of popular music. A world famous Art Gallery and Library, two theatres, cinemas, the Bluecoat Arts Centre and above all the University and all it can offer, directly and indirectly are assets of incalculable value which form the nucleus of a very strong cultural and social centre.¹⁵¹

All of this, of course, reflects the influence of William Morris, but it is also strongly reminiscent of the types of arguments happening on the political left at the time, expressed not least in Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, about the increasing need in an affluent society for socialists to turn their attention to questions of the culture and the physical environment.¹⁵² As a Labour Party policy document put it, 'the emphasis will increasingly be not on jobs for all but leisure for all — leisure *and how to use it*.'¹⁵³

The travails experienced by Shankland's plans for Liverpool are too large a subject to do justice to here.¹⁵⁴ The motorway achieved central government backing in 1965, but only parts were completed. It soon became apparent that financial optimism had been spectacularly misplaced. Areas of dereliction were as often the occasion for Shankland's attention as were caused by it. Nevertheless, with very little of the plan realized, and what



Fig 9. *The Central Entertainment district, with a poster of a man with a Beatles mop-top* (Liverpool, City Centre Plan, p. 67)

was built by private capital being shoddy,¹⁵⁵ the Liberal Party took power of Liverpool Council in 1973 on a wave of resentment over planning blight.¹⁵⁶ Tony Lane's observations of 1978 stress the huge divergence between the excitement of the 1960s and their results:

The Brave New Liverpool of the 1960s was a five-year flash of public relations promotion. 'Liverpool — City of Change and Challenge' was the slogan handed down from the Town Hall. Here was a city to rival T. Dan Smith's Newcastle, a bustling, thriving, energetic city. A city that matched the immensity of its problems with a determination to eliminate them. Clear the damp, decrepit and infested housing, put an end to overcrowding with an ambitious clearance programme; speed the traffic to the new grain and container terminal in the north docks with a new inner motorway; extend the underground railway and electrify the suburban lines; sandblast the leavings of soot and pigeon off the old buildings; get rid of the old market hall and replace it with a shopping precinct. Scaffolding, the bulldozer, the tower crane and the ready-mix wagon, that was the Liverpool of the mid to late 60s: a frenzy of pulling down and putting up.

The collapse of the property and building boom in 1973–74 was closely followed by cuts in public expenditure. The result for Liverpool, where major 'redevelopment' started later than elsewhere, was a trail of cleared sites of grassed-over rubble. Liverpool was left with the largest amount of 'openspace' of any city in Britain. The decline of Liverpool is not simply statistical — it is visible. 'It looks as if it's been bombed' is a favourite local expression that does not exaggerate.¹⁵⁷

The level of human suffering these failures caused was immense.¹⁵⁸

BOLTON

In the north-west of England, the proximity of cities meant that redevelopment was spurred on by a feeling of competitiveness, with one councillor stating that: 'We are determined not to lag behind in the race for central redevelopment.'¹⁵⁹ The publicity garnered by Liverpool's plan meant, for example, that neighbouring Manchester was castigated by local businessmen for failing to produce any agreed comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of its centre, 'which just made one shudder' — especially when compared with the 'excellent city-centre redevelopment scheme' in Liverpool.¹⁶⁰ It was in this local context that Bolton selected Shankland as planner in 1964. As with other mill towns, like Blackburn and Bradford, Bolton's central area scheme was seen as part of a response to the massive contraction of the textiles industry, by giving the town a dynamic new image in the hope of attracting private investment and establishing a new economic role.¹⁶¹

Especially when seen in the context of the sweeping plans for neighbouring Lancashire mill towns, Shankland approached Bolton with remarkable sensitivity. Shortly after his appointment, he told the *Guardian* that he appreciated Bolton's character:

I must say that my impression of Bolton is that it is a far more interesting and nice place than one is led to believe. It has a lot of character, which is most marked, and which is very interesting. One isn't working from nothing. With a town with such a distinct personality you should try to preserve its character.¹⁶²

This was notably more sensitive than the views expressed by Bolton's own mayor, Harry Lucas, who stated, 'We must all face the facts that these dirty worn-out Lancashire towns have no future in their present form.'¹⁶³ The chairman of the Bolton Historical Association

felt the 'plan would help to get rid of a false notion that industrial towns were second grade communities'. Ian Nairn argued that the commissioning of Shankland was 'a far-sighted thing to do, and in reward, Bolton has a lucid and practical master plan [...]'.¹⁶⁴

The town plan was presented in two phases, with the first *Bolton Draft Town Centre Map* by Graeme Shankland Associates appearing in 1964, and the second report coming a year later, this time credited to Shankland Cox. This split publication was to provide the opportunity for community engagement: 'The main reason for planning the work in two stages was to encourage the widest discussion of the proposals and the plan whilst the plan was still in draft form [...] above all from the people of Bolton.'¹⁶⁵ As the *Guardian* reported, there was a genuine (and for the time fairly unusual) attempt at community involvement, including a scheme where

One thousand boys and girls have started work on a series of surveys to help Mr Graeme Shankland to draw up his plan for the centre of Bolton. They came from 25 schools. Yesterday teams of them began interviewing 2,400 pedestrians in the main streets about their shopping habits; and what they learn will be added to the results of other surveys of factories, offices and suburban shops.¹⁶⁶

There was also a public meeting in Bolton Town Hall attended by 600 people, in which 'Mr Shankland said [...] that unless care was taken all the towns in the country would look the same in 20 years. The plan for Bolton, however, would certainly not make it resemble other towns. It would keep its character [...]'. He also declared that he was 'less interested in producing an original plan than a good one'.¹⁶⁷ Nairn appreciated that 'from the tone of the present report, comments will be really welcome; this is a true attempt to interpret the town, not an autocratic imposition by the experts in London.'¹⁶⁸ None of this has stopped Shankland's plans for Bolton being criticized recently for having 'rarely involved meaningful consultation with townspeople'.¹⁶⁹

Although car ownership in Bolton was only 70% of the national average in 1964,¹⁷⁰ the plan was formulated to make Bolton attractive as a shopping centre in the face of the growth of automobile use and the attendant choice offered to consumers. Bolton needed to be competitive compared to the other town centres of the area, especially Manchester: 'With mobility offered by the car, town centres have to compete for shoppers.' The management of traffic was to be a central element of the plan, creating 'pedestrian precincts and squares, partly covered, in the core of the centre for safety, convenience and pleasure'.¹⁷¹ This was proposed in a romantic vein, offering a sanctuary from the pollution and noise of motor-car usage in which the traditional sensations of the city would become appreciable: 'The noise of bells, band music, running water, and the buzz of human activity are all attractive and essential to a successful town centre. They should be heard and not drowned out by the roar of traffic.'¹⁷² The report noted that there had been 184 accidents involving pedestrians and traffic during the previous three years, so that 'shopping in Bolton is needlessly dangerous'.¹⁷³ There would be elements of vertical segregation around Bridge Street, but segregation would mostly be achieved through the implementation of a pedestrian precinct, with shops being serviced from roads behind. A bus route would circle the area.

The plan was based on the idea of visually uniting three of the town's High Victorian architectural focal points, the parish church, market hall and the town hall, none of which was then on the statutory list of buildings worth preserving. 'Bolton is fortunate to have

a number of fine buildings, to act as focal points, even though they do so at present in isolation. Together with the topographical features these must all be exploited.¹⁷⁴ By the time of the second plan in 1965, the Flaxman chimney was also preserved as a 'fixed point' landmark, and also to provide 'historical continuity' with a Victorian industrial past. Shankland commented to the *Guardian*,

As such chimneys become fewer, they will become clearer as landmarks and may even be regarded with sentiment as relics of another age [...]. The Flaxman chimney must be adapted to become the symbol of a new Bolton and not something just left over from another age.¹⁷⁵

It would be important to open up vistas, so that these landmarks were visible from as many places as possible:

it must be ensured that all these landmarks can be seen from the maximum number of places in the town centre as possible. No view of a landmark should be lost through lack of care or foresight. In any of the spaces in the centre, a pedestrian should be aware of one landmark, and preferably two, giving a succession of 'fixes' on his position as he moves about it.¹⁷⁶

Other historical reminders were also to be placed throughout the town by 'siting in the precinct museum pieces of local origin: historic mill machinery, a tram, and the two cast-iron elephants from Chorley Street indicating Bolton's first link with Coventry'.¹⁷⁷

There is also a notable 'townscape' element: the 'spaces in between the buildings are as important as the buildings themselves'.¹⁷⁸ In language reminiscent of that used by the *Architectural Review*, Shankland suggested that 'No detail of the town centre is too small to warrant attention. Signs, fascias, pavings, light fittings, all these meet the eye first and set the tone of the whole town centre'.¹⁷⁹ Gordon Cullen again provided visual analysis, as well as beautiful illustrations.¹⁸⁰ They are amongst his most seductive. Where many of the images in the Liverpool plan had highlighted the monumental quality of the modern insertions, those of Bolton are remarkably genteel. The city's grand civic architecture is foregrounded and presented as an ensemble, whilst the modern insertions are politely retiring. The inhabitants mirror their elegant surroundings, and there are no cloth caps or other symbols of working class 'northernness' to be seen (Figs 10 and 11).

Three areas of comprehensive development were proposed, though Shankland stressed Bolton did 'not require redevelopment in the town centre to a scale and size that means the demolition and rebuilding of very large segments of the centre'.¹⁸¹ It was advised that in Mawdsley Street, where there was 'considerable pressure to redevelop', the 'character should not be wantonly and carelessly destroyed: some parts of it should certainly be preserved and if, in time, most of it is rebuilt, then the new Mawdsley Street should be better than the old and its character perpetuated'.¹⁸² As far as heights were concerned, 'The Town Hall would continue to dominate the centre, and from the town park a view of the distant hills remain inviolate'.¹⁸³

The first two phases of Shankland's plan for Bolton were largely completed, despite the fact that the economic growth rate presumed in 1965 failed to materialize. In 1973 it was judged that the 'implementation of the proposals to-date has undoubtedly increased the pleasantness of the town', although it was admitted that the 'standard of the newer commercial buildings is open to criticism'.¹⁸⁴ Nairn returned to Bolton in 1975, and found that the:

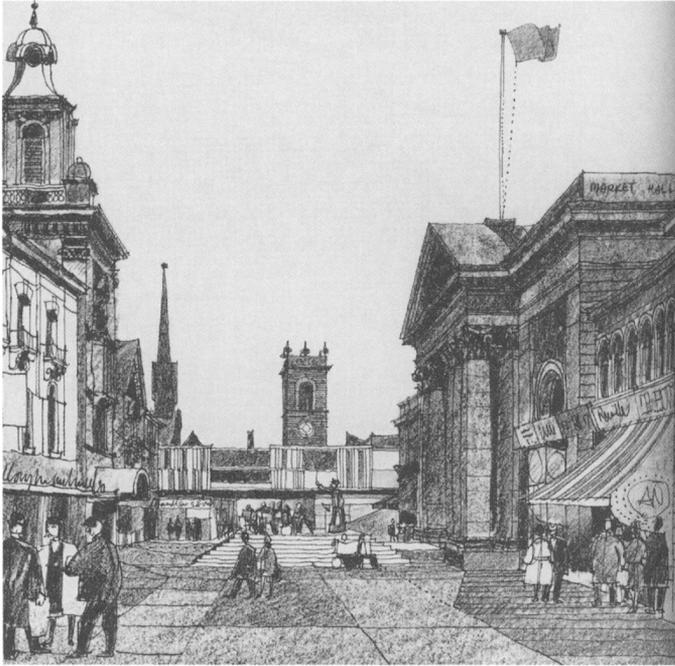


Fig. 10. Cullen's Bolton images emphasize the genteel. Old buildings dominate, whilst the new, though unashamedly modern, are retiring (Bolton Town Centre Map, p. 42)

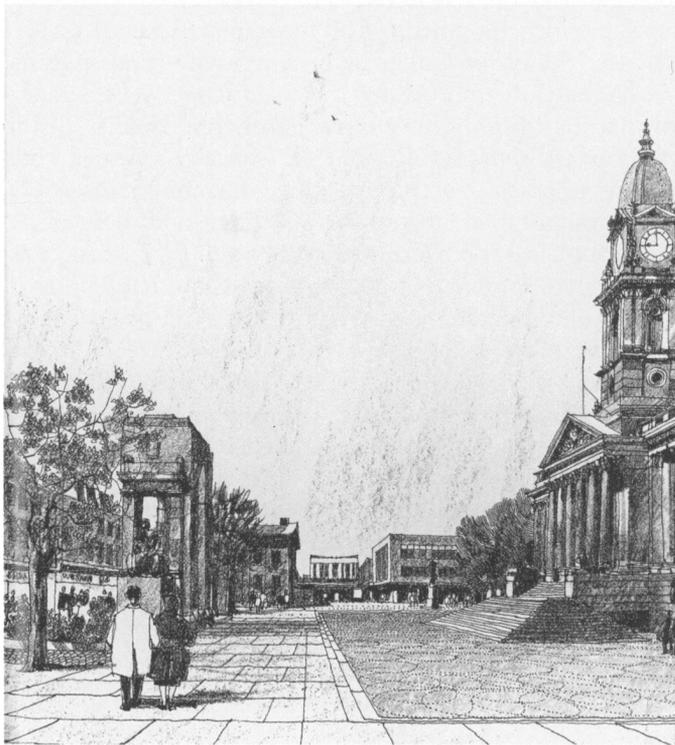


Fig 11. There is an almost Beaux-Arts formalism to the square in front of the town hall (Bolton Town Centre Map, p. 36)

whole square had changed completely in the last ten years. There used to be a road across the front: now it is all pedestrian as is the fashion, but, in this case, the fashion works. There are lots of seats, and the seats are tough and durable and they are well sat on.¹⁸⁵

Whilst the 1960s additions to Bolton may be no Cullen watercolour, the impression gained today is that they are far more successful than those in most other British cities, especially those in other neighbouring mill towns. Access roads behind the precinct are as normal extremely depressing, but the square in front of the town hall is a magnificent set piece (Figs 12–14). The architectural additions are stone faced and are, at their worst, banal rather than brutish and do not impinge on the older architecture, while the Octagon Theatre realizes some of Shankland's cultural ambitions.

Fig. 12. Banal rather than brutal building facing the town hall (Photo: author, 2012)



Fig 13. A sense of approach coming up the pedestrianized Newport Street (Photo: author, 2012)



Fig. 14. Service areas for the precinct are bleak (Photo: author, 2012)



CONCLUSION

Explaining the gap between the rhetoric of Shankland's plans and the fact that they remained largely unrealized presents a formidable problem for the historian. To begin to do so would involve going far beyond the purview of this article, taking in the intricacies of local politics, the way deindustrialization affected these cities, how the process of public-private partnership was enacted, and more generally the cross-cultural rejection of the 1960s planning moment. However, a basic reason as to why these schemes failed to realize their ambitions is surely financial. Government was unable or unwilling directly to spend the money needed to make these plans real. When realized through public-private partnerships with developers, the schemes invariably appeared in a gimcrack and vulgarized version. As Colin Buchanan put it in a lecture in 1971, 'I do not know one of these [central area redevelopment] projects which is not a disappointment when visited, which does not fill one with regrets at the lack of quality in design and finishes, at the brashness and the stickers.'¹⁸⁶ The University of Essex or London's Barbican estate give the best example of how Shankland's three-dimensional plans might have appeared, had they been completed with financial clout and architects able to exploit the dramatic potential and sheer ferocious thrill of really big projects. Whether they would have then been successful in urbanistic terms must remain moot.

What this article has demonstrated is that the example of Shankland counters several established narratives of the period. Historians often see the transformations of British cities in the 1960s primarily as the result of a delayed explosion of, in David Watkin's phrase, 'the "architectural-time bomb" that had been primed by Le Corbusier's paper architecture of the inter-war period'.¹⁸⁷ However, Shankland's intellectual ancestry has very little to do with Corbusianism; rather it was a richer amalgamation of influences encompassing Swedish architecture, William Morris, and contemporary sociology. Historians have also tended to see the planning of the 1960s as being an epiphenomenon of the Modernist debates of the war and immediate post-war years, such as the eighth meeting of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne at Hoddesdon (1950), whose subject was the 'Heart of the City'.¹⁸⁸ However, Shankland did not merely enact fixed ideas that had been formed and ossified in the direct aftermath of the war. His approach was an evolving one, primarily propelled by an engagement with the political concerns of the British Left in an affluent and changing Britain. Shankland's place in the history of conservation is a Janus-faced one, disrupting the neat compartmentalization of the history that sees Modernism and the conservation movement as distinct entities.

Whatever the ambiguities of his approach, Shankland was undoubtedly a proponent of what William Holford described as 'the Utopian urge to reconstruct the core of the old metropolis, to bring order out of disorder, to counter sprawl by concentration, to create a symbol of efficiency — a Welfare City in a Welfare State'.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, this article has stressed the conservatism of Shankland's plans as well as their visionary quality of 'White Heat' utopianism. In much of their rhetoric they are not attempting to enact revolutionary change but to react to the revolutionary changes already apparent in society. More significant than the importing of Modernist continental ideas, the cultural background to Shankland's plans from the period suggests an accumulation of fears about the consequences of growing affluence that were widespread in the political culture of the period. It was hoped that the right kind of cities would provide a culturally

rich environment which would act as a dam against the enormous changes in society that were sweeping through Britain due to rising affluence, consumerism, the motorcar and television. His plans aspired to preserve traditional urban communities, which 'people will not want to escape from — either by means of the motor car, the bottle or T.V.'.¹⁹⁰ Shankland's approach was influenced by a politically informed outlook that was meliorist and modernizing, but was simultaneously fearful about the changes affecting British society. Such a culture was not just shared by many of Shankland's professional contemporaries, but by an entire intellectual generation. Shankland's plans were carried forth on the tide of this culture. A better appreciation of this political culture will help us to understand better the massive changes wrought on British cities during this period than has been possible through a narrative that merely castigates a simplistic image of the 'evil planner'.

Shankland's co-authorship in the 1970s, with the sociologist Peter Willmott, of a study of Lambeth showed that he continued to move, in parallel with the culture, towards a less radical approach, advocating dispersal over renewal:

Large-scale redevelopment in Inner London on the scale of the 1960s and early 1970s is unjustified. Such programmes were unduly expensive and socially disruptive. They often involved the destruction of adequate houses and their replacement by dwellings which were poorer value for money. Their main justification was to produce "housing gain" which, as we argue, is better achieved outside Inner London altogether.¹⁹¹

He increasingly also wrote in favour of the conservation of historic buildings.¹⁹² Nevertheless, he was no total apostate, suggesting of Jane Jacobs in 1980 that

Her stance today is reactionary, and finally dishonest. We all know, and so does she, that some of the most important achievements of planning have only become a reality through the power of a big idea to command the resources, sacrifice and imagination of successive generations.¹⁹³

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