

Carbon storage, net zero and a low carbon public realm – how do we put it all together?
Held on 20th September 2023. Questions, comments and references.
CPD partners: Urban Design Group, ICF, CIHT, IHE



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(Held online)

Agenda

Chair: Amy Burbidge, Head of Master Development and Design, Homes England

Street design and net zero carbon – and how you can reduce embodied and whole life carbon from the choices you make about street design

Graeme Phillips, Partner, JTP

Changing attitudes and use to repurposing street space

Charlotte Glazier, Programme Manager, Greening the public realm in Islington

Ludo Pittie, Director and Head of Landscape, WSP

Tree Management with Carbon Dioxide Uptake Calculations

David Winlo, Director Mapscape

Retaining embodied carbon – an afterlife for felled trees

Joel De Mowbray, Creative Director, Yes Make

The recording and presentations are available on the TDAG website:

<https://www.tdag.org.uk/past-events.html>

Below are the comments, questions, responses from the speakers and attendees as well as references that took place in the 'chat' during the meeting.

References

Building the case for Net Zero: Closing the gap toward net zero carbon new-build homes.

<https://ukgbc.org/resources/building-the-case-for-net-zero-closing-the-gap-towards-net-zero-carbon-new-build-homes/>

Measuring road and infrastructure carbon

<https://decarbon8.org.uk/embodiedemissions-road/>

Nature Positive 2030

<https://jncc.gov.uk/our-role/the-uk/nature-positive-2030>

Mapscape

<https://www.mapscape.co.uk/>

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Yes Make

<https://www.yesmake.co.uk/>

The Value of Trees Leicestershire County Council

<https://www.treeconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Leicestershire-Value-of-Trees-Report.pdf>

Questions and comments from the 'chat'

Graeme's presentation:

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and nutrient neutrality to prevent phosphate run off - will these inclusions & requirements in planning change the landscape for including more on site green living areas in addition to Sustainable Urban Drainage requirements?

If trees are to be planted in verges, they can often be quite large growing trees and we have to make sure that the verges are wide enough in new streets - hear 3m than 2

Council Planners increasingly don't have resources to check on what should have been developed relating to estate infrastructure which leads to problems. Ergo, no lessons learnt from new residents on design flaws. How do you improve your processes and designs with such missing elements. e.g. through pathways leading to ASB, development area boundaries having saplings when more established trees required, failed trees/whips (87 of 294 where I live). These aspects mean carbon calculations are therefore not what was predicted.

- Agree that going back and looking at what is built is so useful to learn lessons. Monitoring for local plans can just look at a small subset to get a picture - ie number of completed sites that year. Homes England are reviewing our completions against Building for a Healthy Life, our design assessment tool, to learn lessons and improve and find this a good general tool to do these reviews. Also Travel Plans usually have a review mechanism built in and are an untapped way of seeing whether the development did achieve its predicted amount of modal shift so these can be useful.
- Would be useful to tie in developers to the lifetime of the homes and developments to also be responsible for the design and build so can monitor and be involved in learning over time and be responsible for any failures such as SUDs, loss of biodiversity, usability and liveability of homes etc.
- Sadly, many developers look for the initial residents' response for NHBC when they move in. There needs to be a 1-2 year infrastructure and property survey to properly assess developers. These should be publicly available
- Further to the points about learning lessons from places and communities, the Quality of Life Foundation are doing some great work. See <https://www.qolf.org/>

Spaces need to accommodate electric/ non -e cargo bikes which have larger turning circles than regular bikes.

Worth noting that the evidence supporting Manual for Streets found that direct frontage access did not appear to have a correlation with more accidents.

Evidence of longevity of community maintenance which can be problematic.

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Summary: old trunk roads are accepted as much more constrained by their environment than the dimensions required for new developments. Why not replicate them? Many "unreconstructed" major routes near me - A21, A22, A23, all pass through, for considerable proportions of their lengths, very old urban settlements where there is often barely room for two buses to pass, even when there is no parking. We are more than used to such constraints and indeed protect them because of the heritage and all the associated environments they embody. Why is it that new developments require such vastly expanded carriageways when traditional size roads are clearly sufficiently functional for their context, and accepted as such?

Questions and comments from Charlotte and Ludo's presentation

Great addition to the street scape Islington.

People don't understand so showing them what the outcome will be like to improve their lives is the best way to bring them on board. Some early engagement with community ideas to help shape this solution is another successful way in some cases.

Very impressed with this and I know personally of Myddelton Square renovations and how this has created community interest and involvement. RE: patterned paths and roads. I would advise not - as for people with impaired sight, autism, colour blindness or visuoperceptual issues, trees are very problematic

Questions and comments from David's presentation:

Is calculating carbon a useful tool for supporting the case for trees?

- Yes, to support tree retention in planning and hope this tool can help with increasing value for keeping trees.

There is a lot of redaction of offsetting as it is not helping to decarbonise actions as allows business as usual while using offsetting as a way to not switch away from fossil fuels for example. Using new tree and hedge planting to reach carbon negative is a preferable way to engage tree and hedge growing to remove the existing CO2 in the atmosphere and continue to decarbonise at pace without offsetting. Be interesting to know how we ensure offsetting isn't used as a way to avoid actioning carbon emission reduction.

- We should not accept off-setting...Climate Change Committee doesn't support it
- We aren't allowing offsetting in our carbon calculations either.

Very interested in this - it will go well with the Tree Canopy Cover Assessments that Planners are now asking for to justify tree retention and tree replacements on development sites. Thank you David and Laura, I will follow the introduction of this software with great interest :)

Questions and comments from Joel's presentation:

Inspiring presentation on how trees can continue to be community assets long after they fall.

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Are Yes Make linked with tree surgeons to also ensure trees aren't being unnecessarily felled? And do you fell them?

- Yes Make can influence felling so that the trees are left in more creative forms than chopped up for incineration.

Yes Make are happy to help and advise local authorities and similar organisation outside London.

Contact: joel@yesmake.co.uk Tel. 07935063830

There is another organisation, based in east London, that will pick up and make use of fallen or felled urban trees that would otherwise be chipped or go to biomass to produce milled usable timber. <https://www.fallenandfelled.co.uk/>
Though not the really imaginative use of branch-wood as by Yes Make!

Other general discussion comments

Trees in the urban context is an area the Islington team are also researching on the NEIRF programme

We need to link health and wellbeing improvements linked to trees and biodiversity.

Stewardship of <200 homes goes to Land Agents. It is a problem I'm only too familiar with. It causes problems for Authorities too but was a political decision we now have to deal with. Again, where I live, huge arboricultural and horticultural issues have resulted that I'm dealing with.