

PLANNING

+ REGENERATION ■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■ COMMUNITIES ■ ENVIRONMENT

Rally driver

Roger Hepher on why Savills' planning department is growing again [20](#)



Judging the gold standard

A special section inside the magazine details the winners of the Regeneration & Renewal Awards 2011

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WINNER / BEST USE OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN REGENERATION

Turner Contemporary, Margate

In the best use of arts and culture in regeneration category, judges were looking for a project that placed arts and culture at the heart of its regeneration strategy.

The judging panel felt that the team behind the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate, Kent, have fulfilled this goal. "It is an exemplary model of how an arts intervention in regeneration can have a profound impact on a place," says judge Micheal Pyner, chief executive of east London-based social enterprise the Shoreditch Trust.

The Turner Contemporary Gallery – entered by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) – is a 2,900 square metre building featuring a ground floor cafe, four gallery spaces, a multi-functional area for conferences, screenings, lectures and community events, and a space hosting an arts education programme for school children. Designed by architect David Chipperfield, it is located on Margate seafront and was inspired by the work of artist JMW Turner, who went to school in the town and became a regular visitor from the 1820s onwards.

For more than a decade before the gallery opened in April, Kent County Council had been drawing up a regeneration strategy for Margate intended to reduce the town's economic dependence



A number of partners were brought on board to fund the £17.4 million project: Thanet District Council, which donated the land; the Arts Council for England; SEEDA; conservation adviser English Heritage; the Homes & Communities Agency and good causes distributor the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The judges were looking for a scheme that demonstrated originality, and

public ahead of its opening. SEEDA, the lead partner in the regeneration of Margate High Street, donated vacant retail space to the gallery's management team to run exhibitions while its permanent home was being built.

"The most striking element of the Turner Contemporary was that the team behind it demonstrated a track record of community engagement – one of the key criteria for this category – well before the building was constructed," says judge Richard Pestell, a senior associate at consultancy Roger Tym & Partners.

"There was also evidence that the private sector was occupying retail space around the development before the Turner had opened its doors. This provides evidence that the scheme is a catalyst for regeneration and its impact does not stop at the gallery door."

The judges were looking for evidence that the project had delivered long-term social, economic and environmental benefit to the local area, and concluded that the Turner had already achieved "extraordinary" success in this regard. For example, the proportion of empty shops in Margate's Old Town has dropped from 40 per cent to almost zero

Highly Commended

High House Production Park, Purfleet, Essex

This scheme, submitted by High House Production Park, was a response to the enforced relocation of the set and scenery workshops for the Royal Opera House (ROH) from Bow, east London, to Thurrock in Essex. Local partners including Thurrock Council recognised the potential to bring a major international creative brand into a relatively disadvantaged part of Essex, and launched plans to develop a cluster of related industries at the ROH's new base. The project included building a production facility, a café and space for small businesses.

Finalists

- The Civic Theatre, submitted by Barnsley Civic Enterprise
- Stanwell Community Art Project, submitted by A2Dominion Group
- The Hepworth, submitted by Wakefield Council

"The excellent community engagement will stitch the gallery into the life of the town"

— DAVID POWELL, DAVID POWELL ASSOCIATES

on traditional tourism and tackle unemployment in the surrounding deprived wards of Margate Central and Cliftonville West. As a key part of this wider investment plan – and following extensive consultation with the local community – the council developed a cultural regeneration strategy for the town, consisting of three projects: the redevelopment of the Dreamland Amusement Park, reinvigoration of Margate High Street and the Turner Contemporary, the idea for which had been on the drawing board since 2000.

agreed that to locate a gallery in Margate celebrating the work of an artist who was not in fact native to the town was an unusual, and brave, concept.

The project was beset by funding challenges. Kent County Council spent almost ten years preparing for the development before work began – although, once approved, the project was delivered on time and on budget, according to SEEDA. But the council says the delay meant that more than 600,000 people were engaged in plans for the gallery and the scheme was well known by the

and the project has helped boost investment in other local renewal projects, according to the scheme's backers. The gallery reached its annual target for visitors – 150,000 – in just four months, and created 37 full-time jobs, they said.

The gallery attracted £1.6 million of private funding towards the total build cost, according to the county council. It has now established itself as a charitable trust and is exploring diverse future income streams. This impressed the judges, who were looking for evidence of financial viability and replicability – of other key criteria for the award.

"The Turner was a clear winner for us," says judge David Powell, director of consultancy David Powell Associates. "It is demonstrably making a positive difference to the rest of Margate." ■

WINNER / PARTNERSHIP WORKING

No Use Empty, North Kent

An initiative to bring long-term empty properties in Kent back into use that has inspired similar action in other areas of the country was a clear cut winner for those judging the partnership working accolade.

The judging panel described the No Use Empty (NUE) scheme as “a highly effective partnership” that has been the catalyst in returning 1,677 empty homes back to use. Launched in 2005, the initiative began between Kent County Council and the local authorities of Dover, Shepway, Swale and Thanet, which wanted to tackle the large number of empty properties in their area. Nineteen of the 20 most deprived wards in Kent are located within the four district council areas.

The county council set up a team to provide the district councils’ empty property officers with support, knowledge and resources to actively target the owners of empty homes. The county ring-fenced £6 million to provide loans of up to £25,000 for renovations and the scheme has also attracted an additional £8 million from private developers, according to the project’s backers.

The partnership helped the districts carry out enforcement where necessary and to buy empty properties for redevelopment into quality housing.

“The councils could not have achieved this success if they had not come together”

— ANDY KARSKI, TIBBALDS

Kent County Council says that its coordinated approach helped colleagues across housing, planning, council tax, finance and legal services to work better together, and this encouraged district councils to come on board. By March 2009 the scheme had been adopted by all 12 Kent district councils, which the county claims was unprecedented in terms of partnering on service delivery across the county.

The judges praised the team for getting the partnership working across different levels of government and with



other agencies and local landowners. “It’s rare to be able to do this because it can be very difficult to get a coordinated view across a number of authorities,” says Andy Karski, one of the judges and principal at Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design.

In terms of originality – a criterion all the award entries must demonstrate – the county council claims its proactive

has made strong local improvements to both the physical environment and the social well-being of communities. Panel judge Patricia Brown, director of consultancy Central, says: “It is providing family homes when housing is at an all time premium and is sustainable, returning homes to use rather than building new ones.”

The partnership is expected to continue its impact: there are currently 8,000 long-term empty properties across Kent. “Places will be becoming empty all the time, but the councils now have this process at their fingertips to deal with them,” says panel judge Graeme Bell, a former Planning Officers Society president.

The team has joined with national charity Empty Homes and public relations agency Financial Dynamics to help it achieve national recognition and the signs are that the initiative can be adopted elsewhere. In March, Kent County Council entered into partnership with Bristol City Council, licensing it to use the NUE brand for its own campaign to return 1,500 empty homes to use by 2015. The scheme has now been rolled out across the West of England.

Highly Commended

High House Production Park

This project brought together seven organisations to create a creative and cultural business hub in Purfleet, Essex. Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation, Thurrock Borough Council, the East of England Development Agency and Capital Shopping Centres developed the site while the Arts Council worked to get political backing. The judges said the relationship the partners fostered with the Royal Opera House and National Skills Academy in persuading them to relocate to the site has given the project a significant boost.

Finalists

- Constructing the London Bridge Bankside Opportunity Area, submitted by the London Borough of Southwark
- North Arran Way, submitted by the North Solihull Partnership
- Sherborne Reborn, Crewe, submitted by Wolvern

The county council has also been talking to the Scottish Government and its local councils about the model and claims the initiative has inspired Welsh Assembly members to call for an empty homes fund for Wales.

The judges also commended the scheme’s value for money, a measure by which all entries were judged. Of the 1,677 homes brought back into use, only 13 per cent have required funding from the NUE loan fund. Kent Council says this means that the average cost of bringing an empty property back into use is about £2,500. Where loan finance was needed, 83 per cent was sourced privately by developers. Karski says: “They have managed to achieve an awful lot through management, persuasion and negotiation.” ■