Editorial

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Welcome to a very special themed issue of *Urban Design and Planning*.

Human health and well-being are now very much at the heart of urban design and planning agendas. This is evidenced by the large number of academic papers, practice reports and policies that have emerged from both public health and planning spheres in the recent past. There can be few academics or practitioners, in either fields, that are unaware of the project to (re)unite planning and health. However this is a relatively recent phenomenon. For while (as has been pointed out many times previously) the concern for improving health was at the core of the advent of modern planning in the nineteenth century; by the late twentieth century, it had largely disappeared from both academic research and as a focus for practice.

The momentous change that has occurred over the past decade and a half, however, has come about through the Herculean efforts of a relatively small number of academics, whose dedication to the cause has been unstinting. From the UK context, for example, it would be impossible to write about health, planning and design without mentioning Hugh Barton, whose ‘Settlement Health Map’ has been reproduced countless times and has been so influential around the globe (Barton and Grant, 2006). However, this issue of *Urban Design and Planning* is special because it celebrates another key contributor – Professor Elizabeth, ‘Libby’, Burton.

Libby, who was latterly Professor of Sustainable Building Design and Well-being at Warwick University, and who tragically died last year (2014) from cancer, was responsible for bringing concerns for both physical and mental well-being to the built environment research agenda. In particular, she brought to the fore the impact of the built environment on those suffering from dementia, and in effect redefined inclusive design in public places to mean so much more than thinking about physical accessibility (Burton and Mitchell, 2006). However, as pointed out by Libby in her last co-edited collection, while the rapidly expanding research base has made much progress there is ‘still a long way to go’ (Cooper and Burton, 2014:660).

In this publication we are lucky enough to have two pieces of Libby’s writing. In ‘Bed of roses?’ (Burton *et al.*, 2015), a piece

specifically written for this special edition, Libby expounds on previous research that suggests that older people benefit from living in a green environment. In this work she suggests that it should be possible to maximise the benefits of green space by, for example, focusing on those elements that need to be private and those that might be shared. In ‘Mental well-being and the influence of place’ (Burton, 2015), an extract from the recently published *Routledge Handbook of Planning and Well-being* (Barton *et al.*, 2015) (reproduced with kind permission of the publishers and editors), Libby sets out the key ways in which places affect our mental well-being. From these she concludes there is an ‘art’ to designing successful neighbourhoods and this should be based on the knowledge of what works best. Both pieces demonstrate the clarity with which Libby wrote and the ease in which she managed to encapsulate complex issues in a comprehensible way.

In addition to the pieces written by Libby, we have four additional papers, all written by authors who had an affinity with Libby’s work. The first, by Thompson and Mitchell (2015), sets out a research methodology currently being used in Australia that seeks to collate in-depth quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more nuanced understanding of how built environments may support more healthy lifestyles. This is important work as it attempts to bridge the ‘philosophical divide’ between health and built environment scholarship and by providing evidence that is acceptable in both fields. It is hoped that the results of the ongoing studies are fruitful and the authors are able to publish them in the near future.

Boyko *et al.*’s (2015) paper explores how we assess human well-being in relation to the built environment and low-carbon-dioxide development. Having identified a possible 2288 measures of well-being from across the globe, the authors synthesise these into 50 objective and 50 subjective categories. While acknowledging that there are limitations to the approach, the work breaks new ground in trying to assess how measures of well-being may be integrated into wide assessments of low-carbon-dioxide cities. Howden-Chapman *et al.*’s (2015) paper also focuses on the relationship between carbon dioxide emission reduction and health. They investigate the potential co-benefits of increasing home insulation and retrofitting roads to encourage safe cycling in New Zealand. These interventions show both positive impacts for human

health and well-being and reduced carbon dioxide emissions. Setting health and well-being benefits within the wider context is important to ensure that, at a time when resources are stretched, policy makers understand that creating environments that support human health and well-being are also good for the well-being of the planet as a whole.

Our final paper returns to a subject close to Libby Burton's heart. Faith *et al.* (2015) explore the difficulties that people with dementia have with wayfinding. In an interesting piece, the authors explore four case studies that were chosen as representational of current residential and care home provision in Northern Ireland; each case having a specific architectural typology. The findings build on evidence from previous studies, but bring together a number of disparate strands. In conclusion, this study offers hope that, for those with early stages of dementia at least, care home design can be improved by attention to design; avoiding those aspects that cause problems, such as T-junctions, while including positive aspects such as views to other spaces.

We end the special edition with a moving tribute to Libby by close colleagues Katie Williams and Lynne Mitchell (2015) that outlines Libby's many admirable qualities. We also reproduce the 'Space to Flourish Charter' which was drawn up by Libby as a result of a symposium organised by her in March 2014, an event which drew together experts from around the globe. Let us hope that this is the first of many times that the Charter is reproduced, and that its rallying cry that 'people's well-being should be the central goal' is taken up by all those professions tasked with creating, adapting and managing our built environments in the future.

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