

Surveyors in Planning and Regeneration: Impacts on the Social and Welfare Benefits of Communities Arising in Regenerating Historic Military Port Towns

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to examine the past endeavours of surveyors in designing military property and how this has now had an impact on the present and future work of surveyors in property regeneration for social and welfare benefits. The case study relates to the Portsmouth Harbour area where much of the historic property was designed and developed by military surveyors. The City of Portsmouth and the Town of Gosport have successfully used the proceeds of National Lottery Funding to assist regeneration of the west and east side of the harbour. With the release of Ministry of Defence land, new developments have given rise to homes, retail units, new employment and has transformed an areas previously in decline. In doing so hundreds of years after Surveyors constructed much of this property the Surveyor again has had a significant role. As well as looking at the role of the Surveyor the paper critically analyses Government, local authority private sector partnerships, and the institutional frameworks that assisted developing several schemes before or near to the 2000 Millennium celebrations. The paper also considers how and why some projects are still under construction. What caused the delays and examines the cost to the community. The conclusions made, relate to the overall benefits to Portsmouth and Gosport's populations, existing businesses and increased revenue in Council Tax and Business Rates collected by local authorities. The conclusions also analyse the complex role of the Surveyor over a prolonged period of time. The significance of this paper is that it provides an insight into how Surveyors both develop property and manage it over a considerable period of time, influence regeneration, help create new business, employment, housing and wealth in declining areas. It also provides guidelines for other Port Cities when considering urban regeneration issues.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Portsmouth is situated on a small island on the South Coast of England. Calling it an island can be a little confusing as it is separated by a strip of water that is in places very narrow. There are traces of coastal settlements going back thousands of years with evidence of iron age settlements being found on the mud flats to the east of Portsmouth. In an area known as Langstone Harbour these settlements are so old that they possibly existed at the same time as the Pyramids were being constructed. To the west of the Island there is a magnificent Roman Fort at Portchester which is thought to be one of the best preserved examples of its type and was originally linked to a complex network of roads constructed by Roman military surveyors. The region and Portsmouth are steeped in history much of it related to the Royal Navy. Naval forces were established in Portsmouth at or around the time of Richard the Lionheart who used Portsmouth as a base for ships before embarking on various Crusades. The reason that Portsmouth has become such a significant military port is partly due to its geographical location. It is protected from the predominant South-westerly winds in the summer months by the Isle of Wight, which creates a safe anchorage off the southern beaches of the Island. Portsmouth harbour itself is protected to the north from severe weather by Portsdown Hill and is an area that was relatively easy to defend in the age of sail. Surveyors have played a major part in the development of buildings within the military structures of Portsmouth.

2. SURVEYORS INVOLVED IN URBAN REGENERATION

The role of the Surveyor has evolved over the centuries to meet the challenges of designing and constructing and managing property of a particular year. But today's Surveyor is involved in the construction of new property as well as managing heritage property. Therefore the surveying profession has needed to operate in different areas of discipline to meet those challenges effectively. However, much of the work done in earlier centuries has been protected with building preservation orders and building restrictions on developments through the United Kingdoms Town and Country Planning system. Throughout the centuries the Surveyors aim and focus has been to maximise the land and construct buildings for a specific use or purpose, for example a building for the storage of goods for the re-supplying of ships before going into battle. Now such buildings are derelict and the Surveyors now needed to consider alternative uses without losing the building character or unique identity. The construction of new buildings brings increased employment and socio-economic benefits to a Town or City. In the case of Portsmouth and Gosport the construction of the Naval base provided employment in shipbuilding and other naval related industries/services. Having seen

a downturn in these industries, the harbour area has focused on the tourism industry and the rich seafaring heritage inherited from those earlier centuries.

3. HISTORIC PROPERTY DEVELOPED BY MILITARY SURVEYORS

There is a blur between defining the role of surveyors and engineers as it was only during the Victorian era that the profession of ‘military engineering’ developed into the professions of ‘civilian engineers’ and surveying that we know now. Fighting sailing ships made of wood had to be constructed near a supply of timber and were constructed on slipways based on the beaches in Portsmouth Harbour using resources from woods and forests in Southern England, these forests were often managed by Surveyors retained as agents on large estates. Ships were constructed on large slipways, some of these slipways were covered with large cathedral like buildings but sadly these have now been demolished. The slipways used for construction tended-to-be complimented by dry docks, which were used for maintenance of ships. These dry docks constructed by military surveyors and engineers were of a significant military significance as they allowed sailing ships to have clean and well-maintained hulls, which gave a speed advantage. The first major use of the land in the dockyard was industrial and as the port grew in terms of its military significance a major industrial infrastructure developed changing much of the coastline in Portsmouth harbour, creating a scene of wharfs, warehouses, victuals stations, armouries, ship repair facilities all dedicated to support the Navy. Surveyors were central to this development and some of the finest military structures owe their existence to the skills of the Surveyor.

4. THE SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND SUSTAINABILITY

The South East of England is the largest and most populous region in the United Kingdom and is widely recognised as the engine of the UK’s economy. There are over 8 million people in a region spread over 19,000 sq km, which generates almost 16% of the economic output of the country. The region is the 22nd largest economy in the world if taken in isolation. The region as a whole has seen a dramatic growth over the last decade in both population and the economy, and is forecast to do so over the next decade at above the rate of growth for the UK as a whole. The region is highly accessible including 2 major airports (Heathrow and Gatwick) and an expanding regional airport (Southampton), major international seaports and the channel tunnel. However, the overall success of the South East masks the diversity of opportunities and disparities that exist across the region. Whilst some localities prosper and promote the idea of the South East as an attractive place to live and work, other localities like Portsmouth and Gosport are characterised by high levels of unemployment, social deprivation and declining infrastructure. Today, successful parts of the region are now under threat from their own success; high house prices, lack of affordable housing, skill shortages and limited development opportunities. It is essential to have adequate levels of housing and the necessary infrastructure to be provided if the needs of the regions inhabitants are to be met, but housing supply levels are, for example, 18% below those required by the UK’s Regional Planning Guidance. One response of the Government has been the development of the Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP). Whilst this is a nationwide-plan, there is particular emphasis on the

needs of the South East. The SCP uses the notion of sustainability as a framework to co-ordinate development and manages growth across the region as a whole. Surveyors from all disciplines are contributing to the vision of the SCP, for example, in the public sector Surveyors within (Local Councils and County Councils), the private sector (developers and housing associations) and institutions (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors).

5. MINISTRY OF DEFENCE LAND AND NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDING

The coastline of Portsmouth Harbour has been transformed recently as a result a gigantic regeneration scheme that was originally proposed as part of the Millennium celebrations. This highly ambitious scheme uses funds from the national lottery and capital from private business and local authorities. The various regeneration projects mostly centred on refurbishment of redundant coastal military properties and have been linked with coastal walkways identified by a chain-linked patterned paving. This scheme has linked some of the cities major tourist attractions with the beach and the seafront. In terms of property development this has resulted in the conversion of a former mine warfare training school, HMS Vernon, into a spectacular development of retail units, luxury apartments, tourist facilities and offices know as Gunwharf Quays. Developed by Berkeley Homes and now sold to Land Securities as a long-term investment proposition. Retail units for residents and tourist include a selection of bars and restaurants, multiplex cinema, ten pin bowling centre and retail operators selling a range of designer goods and some at factory outlet discount prices. The development has opened-up views of the harbour previously unavailable to the general public and under a controlled viewing areas. In past decades employment has dramatically decreased due to the fall in shipbuilding and the downsizing in the Royal Navel fleet and personnel. The development has rejuvenated employment on the south-west side of Portsmouth. The new employment is a direct result of the new shopping facilities and offices. The Surveyor's role in the development from its conception to the finished article has been crucial. The Quantity Surveyors have been instrumental in costing the buildings development and programming of the building works. The Valuation Surveyors have estimated rental values and leasehold values for commercial and residential premises respectively. These key professional services underpin the commercial viability and the successful completion of any proposed development.

6. THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF THE SURVEYOR

Managing the beach maritime and coastal areas in Portsmouth represents one of the most complicated forms of urban/rural land management. Management of the land is conducted through a development control system with planning policy and guidance been sent down from central government to the local authorities to implement, through local and regional democratic processes. The beach itself, in most of England, is owned by the Crown and rents may be payable through the Crown Estate, the Crown Estate retains surveyors to manage this. Below the low water line a separate system takes over with development control through a sectorial system of licences etc obtainable from various agencies again surveyors are retained to manage this. Over the top of the Crown Estate system lies a myriad of different

management plans developed by a variety of institutions some with statutory powers and some without. Plans exist for coastal erosion, protection of historic monuments, sites of special scientific interest, the management of the harbours, the management of fish stocks etc. The Surveyor is often centrally involved with this. Future planning for Portsmouth is somewhat difficult as Portsmouth has always been a City that has experienced rapid change. Portsmouth is situated on a low-lying island and will have to deal with issues such as global warming and sea level rise in the near future. It is certain that the Surveyor will be part of this planning process.

7. CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The harbour and much of the waterfront are now reaching their final phases. The centrepiece of the scheme and an icon in the making is the Spinnaker Tower due to be completed and operational in May 2005. This 165m tower marks the gateway to Portsmouth Harbour. It will offer panoramic views across Portsmouth Harbour the Solent waters and provides a focal point for Gunwharf. It also encapsulates the problems and controversy that has surrounded the partnership of public and private sector bodies that have funded the regeneration and promotion of the area. Portsmouth City Council and Gosport Borough Council have been jointly pursuing a regeneration strategy for the Portsmouth Harbour area. A key feature of the strategy has been the implementation, by the two authorities and their partners of “The Renaissance of Portsmouth Harbour and the Millennium Project”, one of twelve landmark projects to celebrate the year 2000. Some of the projects are:

- The Spinnaker Tower (under construction and completion due in May 2005)
- Priddy’s Hard Museum and Heritage Centre.
- Forton Lake Bridge (Priddy’s Hard Museum and Heritage Centre).
- Action Stations (interactive Royal Naval simulators centre) at the Historic Dockyard.

Renaissance of Portsmouth Harbour Project incorporates some 23 individual project elements on both sides of the harbour. The total cost of the overall project is will be in excess of £100 million, some £40 million of which is being financed by a grant from the Government’s Millennium Commission. The remainder of the costs have been met by public funds from Portsmouth City Council and Gosport Borough Council and private and public sector partnerships.

8. PROJECT DELAYS AND THE COST TO THE COMMUNITY

The sheer complexity of the regeneration project has created problems and caused a wide spread criticism of Portsmouth City Council. The Spinnaker Tower in particular has caused concern with the cost of construction and development time far exceeding the planned schedule to meet the year 2000 celebrations. The Spinnaker Tower was an extremely ambitious project but was characterised perhaps inappropriately by poor local authority project management and the initial building contractor and private investor withdrawing from the scheme altogether. The lateness of the towers opening will have caused losses to the

community and the increase in tourist business it was designed to deliver. However, Portsmouth City Council hasn't lost its focus on completing the project and it is hoped that both positive and negative media coverage has kept the momentum of interest in the community for completing the project.

History tells us that military Surveyors also confronted problems constructing buildings whilst defending England from the French and Spanish sea invasions. Shortage of skilled labour and materials were often reported along with deadly diseases. In modern days the challenges have involved securing funding and gaining support from the community and commerce and in recent years surveyors from all disciplines have offered individual expertise to construct and convert redundant MOD land into property with a purpose with a theme of sustainable homes and businesses. The Portsmouth Harbour regeneration programme is based on increased tourism, the sale of luxury homes and increased retailing outlets. Having an economy based on these factors makes it sensitive to future increases in bank base rates changes and a slowdown in consumer confidence could affect its long-term viability. Nevertheless, both Portsmouth and Gosport have successfully reinvented previously rundown and redundant areas without losing their maritime and naval identity.

9. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Key to delivering neighbourhood renewal in Portsmouth is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which brings together residents, public, private, voluntary and Community sector service providers. Portsmouth's LSP, which is built on the Portsmouth Regeneration Board, has already helped identify local needs and priorities and will be crucial in actually delivering the proposed solutions to regenerating the target neighbourhoods. The LSP therefore epitomizes the joined-up approach we have adopted in relation to the implementation of the strategy. There is a strong commitment in Portsmouth to ensuring those local communities' priorities and aspirations are given the importance they deserve. Residents will be involved at both local and strategic levels in the renewal of deprived neighbourhoods and are being given real authority to allocate substantial resources to address issues that have been identified through wide consultation and partnership working. Clearly, it is essential that residents have the opportunity and tools to get involved and to this end a Community Board has been established for each of the priority areas. These enable local residents to play an inclusive and effective role in neighbourhood renewal. During 2002 each Community Board developed a local regeneration strategy for their neighbourhood, which reflected in the citywide Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the development of Portsmouth's Community Strategy. Surveyors at Local Council level have had an important role to play in listening the communities' requirements and maximising the Council funds available and striking a balance between the two often-opposing sides. At Local Council level Surveyors are responsible for the development appraisal, supervision and building management control, estimating a final asset valuation, insurance valuation and post contract dispute reconciliation. Ultimately, increased housing and business result in increased Government and Council Revenue. The collection of Council Tax (for residential properties) and Non-Domestic Rates (business premises) are dependant on the valuations provided by Chartered Surveyors from

the Valuation Office Agency. The funds are collected by Local Authorities forwarded to central Government and the redistributed to other Councils nationwide.

10. CONCLUSIONS

Ever since 1212 when King John ordered the docks at Portsmouth “to be enclosed by a good and strong wall....” the people of Portsmouth and Gosport have been denied access to parts of the harbour and the waterfront. Almost 800 years later, as a consequence of the peace dividend, the disposal of Ministry of Defence land afforded the opportunity to re-establish this access. The emphasis put on the development of the coastline has started to transform property values as property with a view commands a premium in terms of value. This will inevitably create some winners and some losers as value patterns change and again provides a role for the Real Estate Surveyor. A Surveyors role is significant, as a Surveyors expertise is required throughout the lifetime of an area of land or buildings wherever in the world. In order to adapt to an ever-changing world, Surveyors are increasingly partnering with Investors, Accountants and Engineers to provide cost effective solutions to their clients. Portsmouth’s Spinnaker Tower will provide an elevated viewing platform to view the harbour and is an example of the Surveyors skills working in partnership with other professionals. Surveyors have been able to offer a high level of service because of a superior level of education through Universities and Associations, professional regulation and indemnity insurance for consumer protection.

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