

Remembering the Career of Ken Baker



(navigational notes written by Ken to himself as an aide memoire when giving a talk when retiring from Milton Keynes in 2018. Ken's notes shown in italics). Ken's timeline has been populated with information hastily gathered from friends and colleagues primarily for friends and family, but also for all those whose lives were touched by this exceptionally talented architect who could design at all scales.

1941 Sunday 7 December

Evacuated with Mother from London. Born in [the "East End Maternity Hospital"] Tyringham Hall which, as it happens, is about 4 miles from the area that later was to become Milton Keynes (founded in 1967). Ken's mother was Gladys (neé Cleall) and father was Charles Baker, a Maintenance Electrician at a Shoe Manufacturer in Kenneth Street in Chadwell Heath in Dagenham, Romford (east London).

Tyringham Hall was designed by Sir John Soane and is currently a private home. Ken was born there on the day the Japanese attacked the US Fleet in Pearl Harbour, bringing the USA into the Second World War.



1946 Japan Road Primary School, Chadwell Heath

1953 Geary's Secondary Modern School, Ilford

1957 SW Essex School of Architecture. Walthamstow

It was here that Ken met fellow student John Worthington, later the "W" of DEGW with whom Ken was later to work, see below.

1961 Leicester School of Architecture

1964 Alison and Peter Smithson's architectural practice to work on *The Economist buildings in St James; the British Embassy, Brasilia; and Robin Hood Gardens*

Wikiarchitectura says about **The Economist Buildings** "The London County Council authorised the demolition of buildings belonging to The Economist magazine and Boodle's Club [at 25 St. James' Street, City of Westminster] to make way for the new building, stipulating a ratio of shops, offices and housing. Despite the radicalism characteristic of much post-war architecture, the buildings ...are relatively conservative in appearance, and have proved a great legacy to the City. In 1988 the Economist Group was formally listed as a historic building by the Department of the Environment.



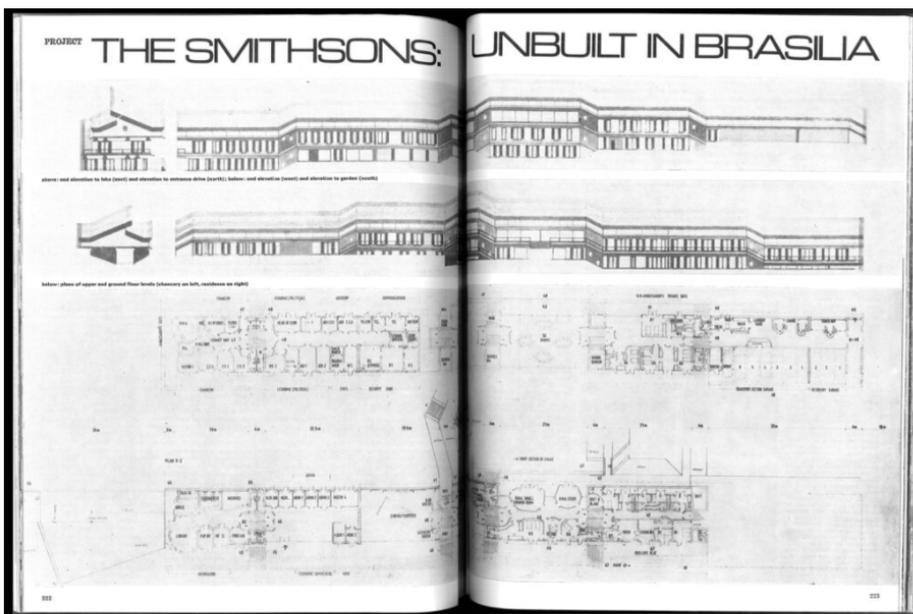
...The solution of the architects to the requirements of the City Council was to present a project with a building for each use that had light and views. It is one of the few projects of the 1960s where the spaces between buildings are as important as the buildings themselves...the architects showed great restraint, demonstrating sensitivity and support to an area that resisted the impulse of aggressive commercial monumentalism which invaded other areas. The project is formed by three buildings, one for the magazine, one for the club and a third for housing. The three are grouped around a quiet courtyard, a little high relative to the surrounding streets, along the lines of Seagram Building in New York.



Wanderlust says of the British Embassy competition: The development of Brasilia was a matter of keen interest in the architectural world, promising a chance to put new principles into practice. Each country recognised the opportunity to make a national statement in the contemporary idiom. For the new British embassy, the RIBA was invited to run a competition,

encouraging a number of distinguished architectural practices to enter. Peter and Alison Smithson, who had just built The Economist building in London, were initially favoured, and produced a design for a long, thin building which would contain both embassy and residence. Ken Baker worked on this with Chris Woodward, who was later to recruit him to join the CMK team in Milton Keynes.

No architects were ever more tortured by the Ministry of Works than the Smithsons (and vice versa): by 1967 they were on their fifth version of the plan, and there was still no agreement on costs when their scheme was aborted. *The Times* ran a leader entitled, 'Wanted: An Embassy' (June 1968), supporting the Smithsons, who claimed that, 'Michelangelo was never so messed about by his Pope'. In the intervening years, Britain's financial position had collapsed, and something much cheaper was required. The job was finally passed to the successor of the Ministry of Works in 1973.



1/4 AR 1975 October - Unbuilt in Brasilia Pages 1 and 2

Wikipedia says of Robin Hood Gardens is a residential estate in Poplar, London, designed in the late 1960s by architects Alison and Peter Smithson and completed in 1972. It was built as a council housing estate with homes spread across 'streets in the sky': social housing characterised by broad aerial walkways in long concrete blocks. Much like the Park Hill estate in Sheffield; it was informed by, and a reaction against, Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation. The estate was built by the Greater London Council, but subsequently the London Borough of Tower Hamlets became the landlord.

The scheme, the first major housing scheme built by the Smithsons, consisted of two blocks, one of 10 and one of seven storeys; it embodied ideas first published in their failed attempt to win the contract to build the Golden Lane Estate.

A [current] redevelopment scheme, known as Blackwall Reach, involves the demolition of Robin Hood Gardens as part of a wider local regeneration project that was approved in 2012. An attempt supported by a number of notable architects [including Ken Baker] to head off redevelopment by securing Listed status for the estate was rejected by the government in 2009. The demolition of the western block began in December 2017. The eastern block, which is still inhabited by tenants, is to be demolished later. The site will contain 1,575 residences.

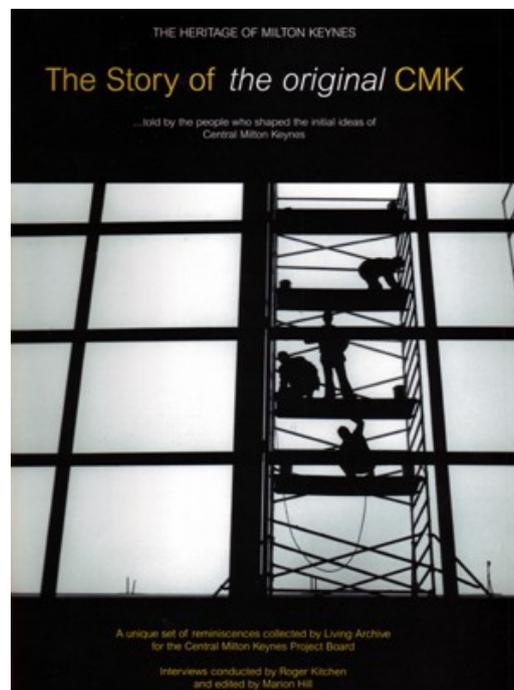
One section of one elevation [including Ken Baker's window details, of which he was very proud] has been preserved by the Victoria and Albert Museum and was presented at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018.



Robin Hood Gardens, Listed but now mostly demolished
(Ken had joined the preservation campaign)

1970 Milton Keynes Development Corporation

Derek Walker was the MKDC Chief Architect and Planning Officer and had been running his own practice in Leeds. He recruited his colleague Stuart Mosscrop to be Chief Architect for Central Milton Keynes (CMK), who appointed Chris Woodward from the Smithsons to develop the CMK Plan and focus on the Shopping Building (now Listed Grade 2 and called centre:mk), and Chris recruited his Smithsons colleague Ken Baker. Ken's primary responsibility became the design of CMK's public infrastructure – detailing the layout and design and street furniture specification for the whole of CMK with its three great Boulevards, crossing Gates and side Streets and back Rows.



The story of the design and development of the city centre of MK – Central Milton Keynes (CMK) – is told in this book produced by The Living Archive educational charity in MK.
<https://www.livingarchive.org.uk/>

Using only the words of those interviewed, the book includes much from Ken Baker, but also Chris Woodward, Stuart Moss crop and Derek Walker and many others who made it happen and others, since, who have continued the work to help bring the young city centre to life.

The full recorded interview with Ken Baker, from which his words were taken for the book, is available from The Living Archive

https://www.livingarchive.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/the-story-of-the-original-cmk-2/oral-history-audio-recordings-with-milton-keynes-development-corporation-mkdc-staff-involved-in-the-development-of-the-central-milton-keynes-area/interview-with-ken-baker . They introduce his interview as follows:

“On arrival in the CMK architects team, in 1970, Ken was asked to look at potential road layouts. As an architect rather than an engineer, he was determined to: ‘make the best road layouts that we can ... that is why there is a degree of architectural intent in the infrastructure’. He discusses in detail the decisions such as the choice of quality granite for kerbs; the design of paving slabs; the innovation of block-laying concrete bricks for car parking areas; the use of porte-cochères for crossing places and the design of shallow underpasses.

Ken describes the logic behind the orthogonal grid: ‘The initial ideas were that you had the grid ... a two and a half grid square basis plus a grid for what was to become Campbell Park’. He describes the hierarchy of boulevards, streets and gates, and the modelling of alternative car parking layouts before the final agreement on perimeter car parking. They discuss the distance between buildings, which is sometimes criticised, and attitudes to cars & pedestrians. Ken comments on aspects of the Shopping Building: ‘the architecture is the structure’; the proportions are classic golden sections; it was a ‘High Street’ for a new town, so its layout was different from other centres. He praises Middleton Hall as a great ‘democratic space’; he talks of the flat roof, the ‘clear storey light’, the servicing at first floor level and the lack of doors to make the building a public walkway across the centre. He notes that Thomas Heatherwick has praised the Centre as ‘unique in itself’ in an EDAW study [see below].

He talks of the working atmosphere in the CMK team, praising Derek Walker for making things happen and wanting ‘the best in the world’, but he says: ‘it was a punishing working regime’. They discuss other aspects of the centre: the railway station decision, and the difficulty in establishing office developments at this time due to government restrictions. He was involved as part of the ‘hole in the wall’ team, in the design of the Central Business District (CBX), following an exploratory trip to the USA to visit MXDs (mixed developments) there. Asked what he is most proud of in CMK, he says: ‘The fact they built it ... I’m as staggered as anyone that they built it from one end to the other.... including the station’.

The following photos are from *The Story of the Original CMK* book, published in 2007.



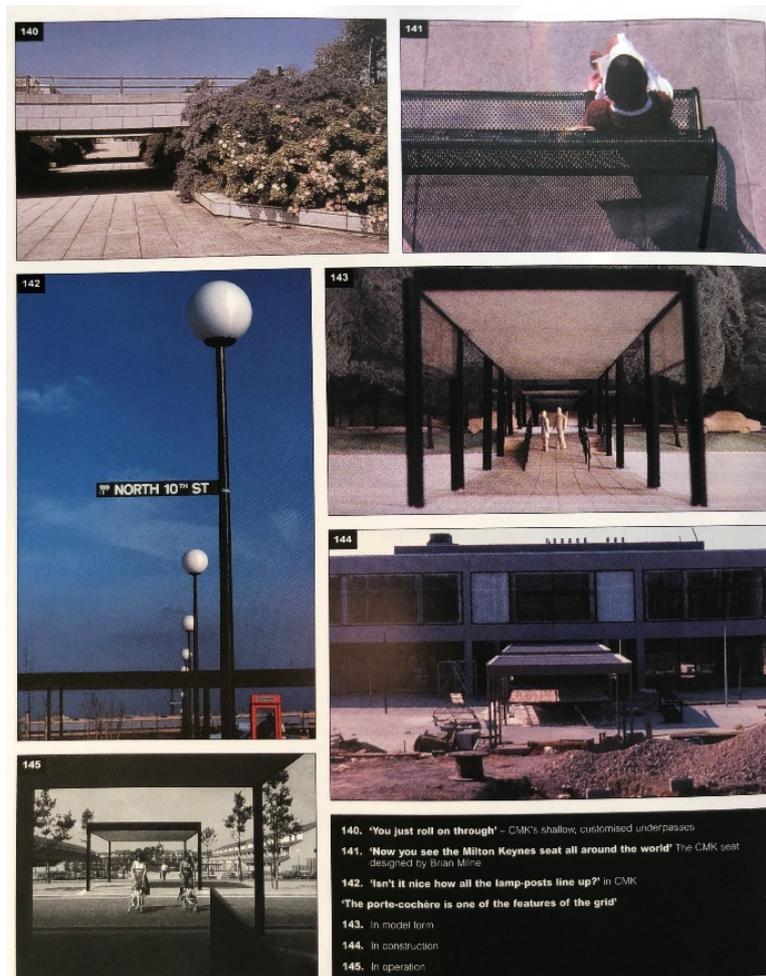
1974 – Ken Baker is third from right. Note the youthfulness of the team.



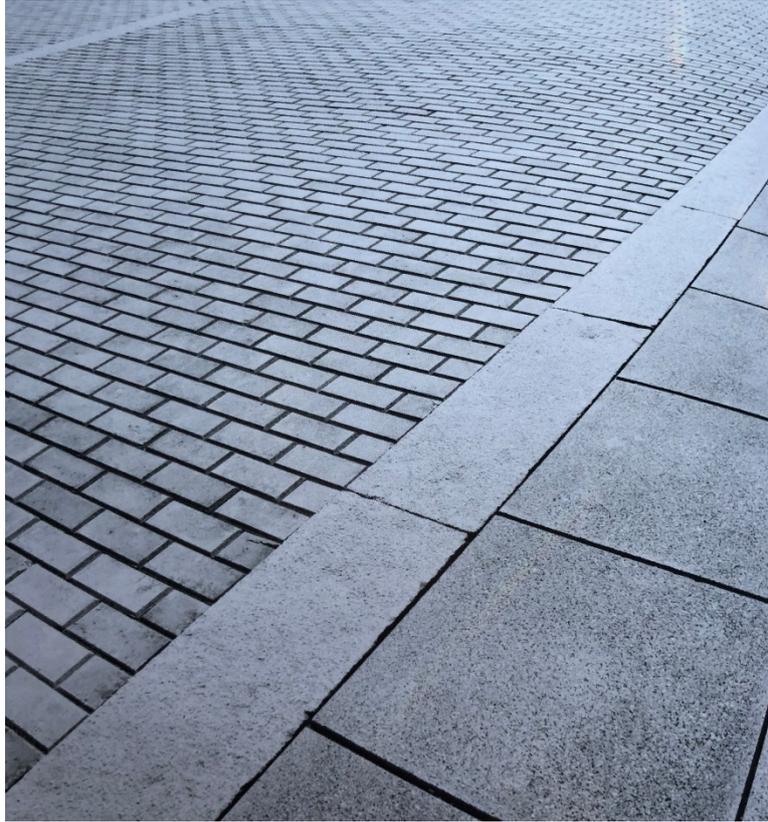
A game of petanque on the CMK Boulevard medians before the traffic arrived.
To make a point, to act out a fantasy.



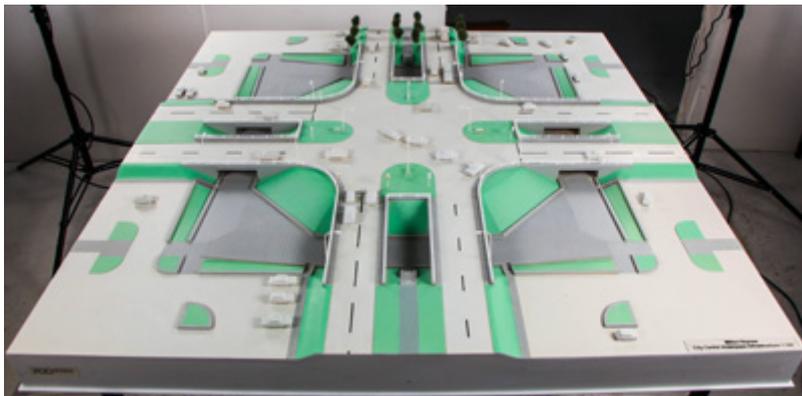
Silbury Boulevard between the Shopping Building (now the centre:MK) and what is now the CMK Library. The flags are flying over Town Square, later filled (slightly off-grid internally) by the Marks and Spencer extension



Many designers worked on the individual elements of CMK street furniture which formed the palette for Ken Baker and his colleagues to deploy. The world famous bench was originally designed by Brian Milne of MKDC and Mark 2 (slots rather than holes in the seat surface) was deployed widely in CMK.



An illustration of Ken Baker's exquisite surface detailing: pioneering use of concrete blocks, solid granite kerbs and fine quality paving slabs, all laid flush around the Shopping Building, for which awards for access for the disabled were made. Modern regulations have caused the paving slabs to be replaced with smaller ones as time passes, and what was once free parking is now highly profitable for MK Council who have painted garish coloured lines adjacent to the granite to indicate the charging zones.



A refurbished original MKDC model of CMK underpasses at a Boulevard/Gate crossing, kept by the City Discovery Centre in MK. During the English Partnerships inter-regnum, after MKC had been closed down and the Commission for the New Towns had passed through, consultants advised the unpicking of the CMK infrastructure, the building on the frontage parking to create better streets.

Only one of these underpasses was infilled (as part of The Hub development) to test the new approach, its flaws causing to new formally to be revoked by MK Council. Unpicking CMK's public infrastructure nevertheless continues for one reason or another (or none in particular) to this day.



The model of the original Shopping Building showing Town Square and the infrastructure around it, at City Discovery Centre MK.



View of CMK from above Campbell Park looking West, around 2007, with Central Milton Station on the West Coast Main Line lies at the far end of the central Midsummer Boulevard. The strength in every sense of the public infrastructure which is so much of Ken Baker's legacy can be seen. The later disruption by the Midsummer Place roofed space in the centre of the photo was let pass to private ownership and consent has not yet lapsed to fill most of it with more shops, reducing the continuity of one of the three great city axes. The large roof taking a whole CMK Block was The Snowdome, now called Xscape. A 14 storey hotel is currently under construction in the former coach-parking strip at the nearest end of the shoppers' car park (which is itself now multi-storey), and other major developments have occurred since this photo was taken.



The Boulevard infrastructure, with its lines of London Plane trees, is distinctive and iconic

Conceived and built as a totality,
CMK is a piece of public art in itself –
A unity of vision and consistency of realisation
In the public realm –
But piecemeal interventions
Threaten to undermine this totality
And make the city bland.

CMK is special and distinctive...
Conceived in one bold step,
A celebration of humans' ability
To shape their environment.
This confidence is expressed
In strong rectilinear planning and architecture
Applied at every scale:
Its grid plan,
Its buildings, its street furniture
And its landscape design -
Holistic thinking.

CMK's grid is distinctive
Because it is based on oblongs
Rather than squares...
Its rigorous geometry works at all scales,
Down to the co-ordinated details of the street itself:
Heavy granite edging,
Black porte-cochères,
Strong structures of planted trees,
Square black kick rails,
Bold use of shrubs and plants
Consistent repertoire of paving...

This document advocates the use of artistic thinking
To reconnect the vision of CMK
As a designed city
In which the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Thomas Heatherwick
From 'Public Art in Central Milton Keynes' 2001

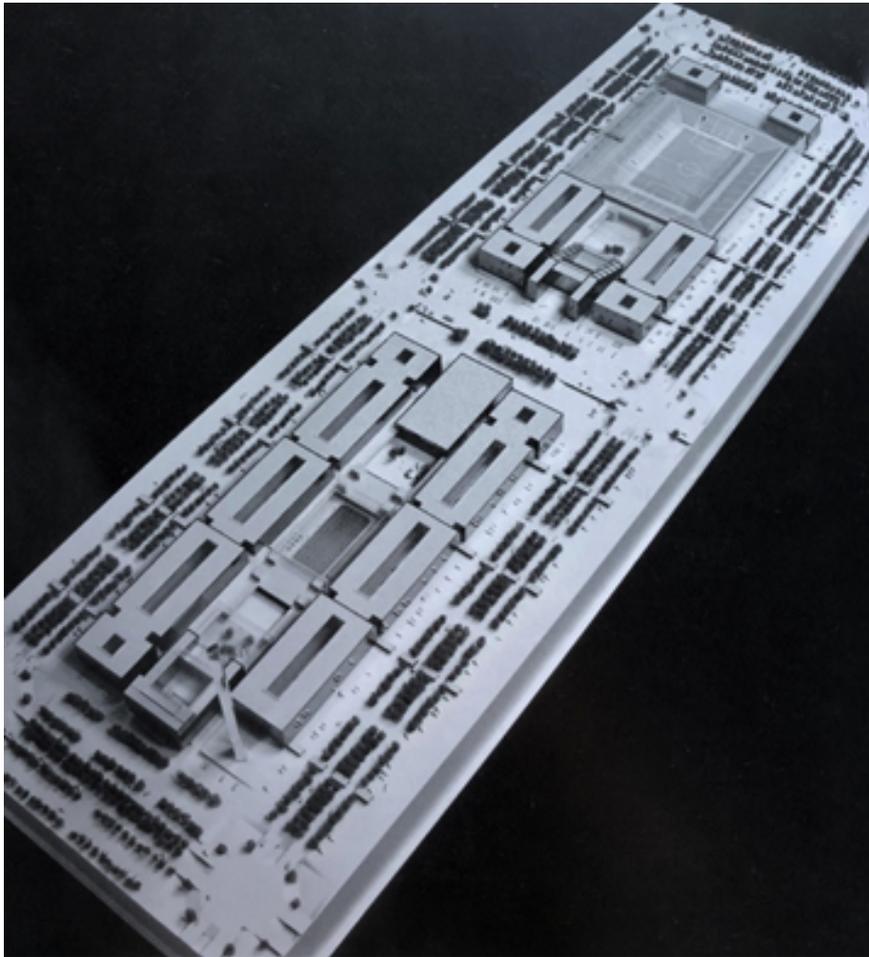
Ken Baker was very proud of these observations by Thomas Heatherwick, laid out as a poem in *The Story of the Original CMK*.

Ken was later Project Architect for CMK Blocklet D1.4 of flats for those in housing need, with integral Boulevard frontage kiosk shops and the Community Meeting Hall (“CentreCom”) facing North Row.



Later Ken was part of the “hole in the wall gang” (as the local paper had it) - a special project team also involving David Harbord, Keith Barrell and planner David Lock, assembled by Stuart Mossdrop in quiet space for intensive work at a house in Fishermead, to give form and creative thought to the fruits of a programme of research and design for the “office of the future”. The purpose was to create an office market in CMK which at that time did not properly exist. The project team travelled widely in the USA to study mixed used developments and meet the new wave of developers (Ken’s group met Donald Trump at Trump Tower in New York). The design leap was the concept of a whole-Block mixed use development conceived primarily for small companies wanting social interaction and thence collaboration and innovation. The proposed project was called the Central Business Exchange (CBX).

Two rows of 8 storey mechanically ventilated atrium office buildings were proposed, bracketing an hotel, Winter Gardens, a Summer Garden and an ice rink, with undercroft parking and servicing. Its landmark feature was conceived by Ken Baker – a Tower of Light 90m high which would project a column of white light into the night sky that would be seen from London (he said!).



The MKDC model of the CBX used in marketing.
 Ken Baker's Towers of Light can be seen in the foremost corner of the Block.
 Photo from *The Story of the Original CMK*

Intense marketing effort in London by the team, led by MKDC General Manager Fred Roche personally and based in a suite at The Elephant House in St Katherine's Dock in London, could not close a deal before Fred Roche with MKDC Directors Stuart Mosscrop, Lee Shostak and Nigel Lane left MKDC with a small group to form the consultancy and development company Conran Roche with Terence Conran. The CBX was later implemented in part by MKDC: although two thirds were built the remainder of the Block was in due course developed to an opposite urban design concept by English Partnerships, an called The Hub.



Ken Baker with support from planner David Lock then designed the city garden behind what is now the City Church Christ the Cornerstone, to attract inward investment in speculative office buildings. That space is now named Fred Roche Gardens in memory of the extraordinary city-builder.

1982 - 1987 Conran Roche

Ken Baker was invited with David Lock and Keith Barrell to join Conran Roche. The company grew to more than 140 staff with its larger office in London as well as the company's original suite in CMK. Ken Baker's project work included the County Court and Family Courts building in CMK, the conversion of the Michelin Building in Chelsea to the famous restaurant, and - in his role as networker for new commissions - being the link by which Conran was able to acquire the Butlers' Wharf area by London Bridge.



County and Family Court, CMK: Ken Baker was Project Architect



Michelin Building, Chelsea. Arups designed the enabling office development behind. The Heritage Statement for the Listed Building Application was written by Wendy Hitchmough (Ken's wife and mother of boys Matthew and Grey).



Butlers Wharf is an area of around 36 historic buildings downstream of the brewery and round to the Shad Thames inlet, bought and developed by Terence Conran with Conran Roche as architects for much of it, and as planners. Ken Baker took the call from the property agent Clive Pickford of JLW that the vast area could be bought off the market if Conran would be interested and could act quickly. Ken called Terence, and Ken and George Powell quickly reviewed each building. Other specialist advice was obtained, and the deal was done within days.

This was to provide a huge volume of work for CR. The area had been zoned for clearance by LB Southwark for factory development, and David Lock for CR secured redesignation and protection as part of a complete re-draft of the proposed Unitary Development Plan. The warehouses were either sold for conversion to residential and mixed uses by others, sometimes using their own architects, or developed by Conran himself who also created the first home of the Design Museum here. Ken remained an enthusiastic advocate of the project and was a very frequent visitor, and was quiet counsellor to planner Doug Wheeler who stayed with the project, but was himself deployed on projects elsewhere during detailed implementation.



The street infrastructure in the Butlers Wharf scheme was designed by Keith Barrell of CR, formerly of MKDC's Shopping Building team and later with Ken Baker in the MKDC CBX Project Team.



The main Butlers Wharf Building. CR were part of the design team for the landing stage, a form also used by the LDDC downstream, including at Greenland Dock.

At Greenland Dock, also in LB Southwark, CR's 7-year consultancy work for London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) led by CR's David Lock was able to draw on Ken Baker's masterplanning skills for the pioneering *Area Development Framework*, and guidance on the design coordination of the infrastructure (a large part of which was detailed by Keith Barrell) and site development briefs.

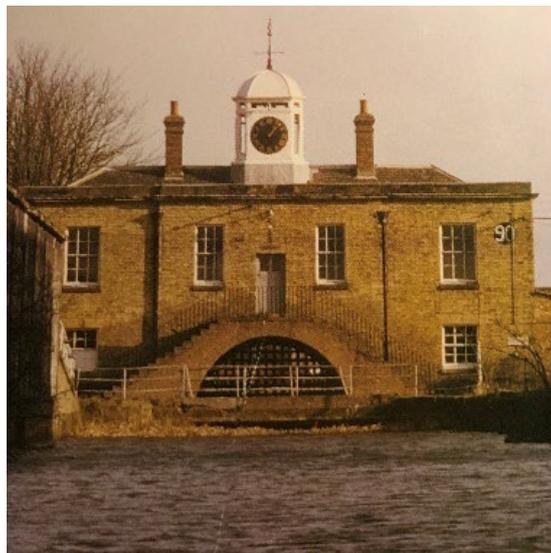


The East end of Greenland Dock, and the smaller South Dock.



Greenland Dock, Southwark. The dock edge treatment won an award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for the high visibility of the water, grab chain at water level, and escape ladders every 25m, and the whole project won the RICS Conservation Award. LB Southwark had originally wanted a permanent wire mesh fence around the Dock.

Ken worked with George Powell on a CR assignment for the MoD who wished to sell the former Royal Ordnance Depot in Weedon, Northamptonshire. Developed secretly by a Trust set up by the Government in 1803 when French invasion was feared, the Depot was for armaments and a garrison in the middle of England just off the national Trunk Road Watling Street, and linked by a portcullis-protected arm to the Grand Union Canal. The string of vast buildings and ammunition stores - all Listed Grade II - required an imaginative regeneration solution from the CR team.



The Grand Union Canal portcullis gateway



This recent aerial photo courtesy Google Earth shows the new owner was able to introduce some unfortunately conventional housing development instead of the recommended canal boat marina, and warehousing uses for HGVs in some of the old buildings, but it also known for its mix of small businesses suited to this other-worldly place.

Ken Baker also worked with George Powell on site appraisals as part of a CR economic development assignment in Northern Ireland. George Powell recalls them staying in the Europa Hotel which several times had been bombed by the IRA. After a few days of driving in and out of the Hotel's secure car park in their hired red BMW without challenge, George recalls asking why. "You're the police aren't you?" came the answer.

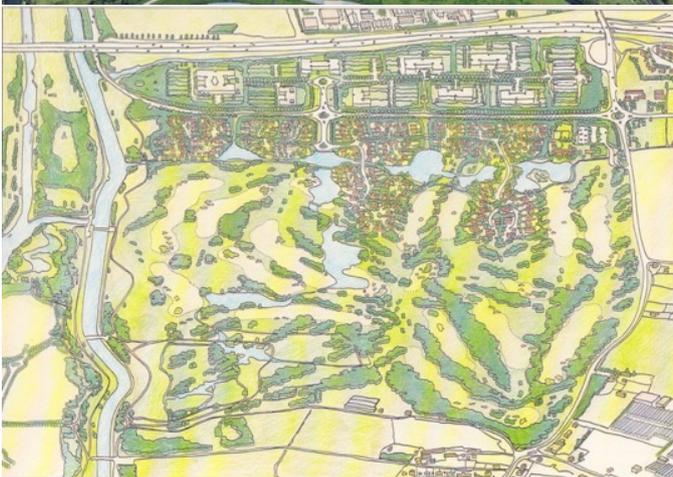
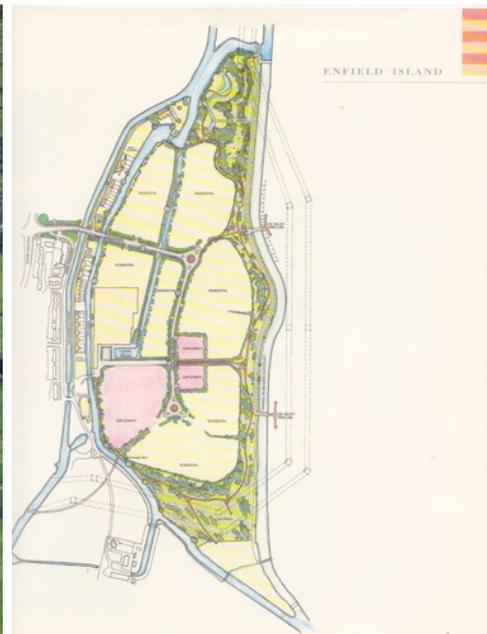
1987 DEG

In 1987 Ken joined international design practice DEG as Director of Urban Planning, rejoining his student colleague John Worthington.

Ken immediately set to work refining the concept of the Business Park following from DEG's pioneering work at Stockley Park and produced a report - "Developing Business Success" for Trafalgar House Industrial Developments Ltd (which became Trafalgar House Business Parks Ltd shortly afterward) that was the first, definitive handbook for quality settings for modern businesses, and he oversaw the creation of its first project at Interface Wootton Bassett. Ken first identified the key business park floorspace ratio of 18,000 sqft: acre (4,150 sqm:ha)



This led directly to a more ambitious commission at Enfield and Waltham Cross where Trafalgar House were competing to acquire the former Royal Ordnance sites. Ken master planned a residential redevelopment of Enfield Island where the Royal Small Arms Factory had produced the Lee Enfield rifle, and a business park, residential community and public park at Waltham Park where explosives were developed and produced for more than 100 years. Astutely, and on the basis of Ken's master plans, Trafalgar House acquired key adjoining land parcels that gave them a certain advantage in the competition process!



Also in 1987, Ken led the team that bid for and won the master planning commission from the London Docklands Development Corporation for the Royal Docks in London, an infrastructure

and public realm network intended to create a flexible setting for development over an extended period. The scheme focused on the creation of new stations for the Docklands Light Railway and grids of walking and vehicular access routes together with a strong landscape framework developed with key ally, Ian White Associates with whom Ken would have a long-lasting creative relationship. Though the development proposals for the Royal Docks went through many iterations and took much longer to come to fruition, the infrastructure framework that Ken laid down (much as he did in Central Milton Keynes and then in Greenland Dock, see above) is still there for all to see.

DEGW expanded its Urban Planning team to support The London Regeneration Consortium (Rosehaugh Stanhope and National Freight Consortium) to produce a master plan for the redevelopment of the King's Cross railway lands. DEG was tasked with providing planning, design and development briefs for the huge team of international architects, led initially by Skidmore Owings and Merrill and including Foster and Partners, Frank Gehry and Associates, Stanley Tigerman and Associates, and Landscape Architect Laurie Olin - daunting, wall-to-wall egos! Ken managed the process of introducing our visitors to the UK's labyrinthine planning, design and development processes and the team produced mountains of documents from overall user needs in a changing world of work through briefs for the retention of key buildings or new residential quarters to explorations of the regeneration potential of idiosyncratic structures - gas holders and coal drops to name but two. We were there for the seismic moment when Norman Foster presented a rival master plan to SOM and stole the limelight, when briefing had to shift to match a new concept.



Ken continued to lead the team that supported the massive Outline Planning Application in 1989 (and again Ken's then wife, Wendy Hitchmough, provided the Heritage Statement). But the recession of the same year put paid to these grandiose proposals.

DEGW's reputation in the field of business park design and planning led to further commissions that took DEG's research on evolving user needs and turned them into real development projects. Ken was retained by Lansdown Estates (now MEPC) to provide master planning services at Milton Park in Didcot for the long-term transformation of a military logistics site into a major business hub, building on a strong personal relationship with its MD, Ian Laing.

For Provincial and City Properties. Ken produced a definitive development handbook for a business park at Lostock in Cheshire.

Unfortunately, so many of these projects were cancelled or delayed by the almighty recession of 1989. Recession hit DEG hard. The Company shrank from 220 people at its peak to 80, and work in the UK all but dried up. But it was able to take advantage of its international connections and the collapse of the Soviet bloc to find new projects, with Ken's Urban Planning team in the van.

Ken led the urban design input into a regeneration strategy in the Shibaura area of Tokyo for the Toshiba Corporation, an unusual approach in a culture that tended towards site specific

redevelopment rather than area-wide development strategies. The report used “anime” style that readily captured imaginations.

In Europe Ken led the preparation of the development briefs and master plans for two business parks, one at Parque Empresarial San Fernando de Henares near Barajas airport, the other for the redevelopment of the former Spanish Navy Academy at San Sebastian de los Reyes, both for the Spanish development company Neinver SA. The latter led to a major international collaborative workshop bringing together architects from around the world - Foster Associates and DEGW (UK), Studio Bellini (Italy), BHLM (Germany), Altau, AM 12 Asociados, Aguilo & Valdes (Spain) - to explore the building potential of the DEGW master plan.



Neinver went on to be the developer sponsors for DEGW in a design and develop competition for an innovation centre in Berlin in Wedding near the Berlin Wall. Between shortlisting and final submission, the Berlin Wall came down and the geography changed completely, and the rapid reinterpretation of the project in its new context made sure that DEGW’s submission won. Ken played a peripheral role in the project, but the profile created invited other opportunities.

In Autumn 1990, in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, DEGW got a call from an adviser to Dr Lothar Späth, former Premier of Baden-Württemberg and then the newly installed Chairman of Carl Zeiss Jena, saying that the company and the city of Jena needed regeneration, and could DEGW help. Ken agreed to go and see what could be done. He was met at Nuremberg airport by Klaus Eckhard of Communitas AG in his Range Rover (he was a great anglophile) and they set off up the autobahn, now being reconstructed (they simply forced four lanes of traffic onto what was a two lane carriageway while the other side was rebuilt) congested with lorries supplying western goods to the former East Germany.

Accidents were many and frequent and, sure enough, just over the former border and an hour from ç, the traffic sound to a halt. After the first hour, Klaus decided that enough was enough and drove down the embankment and into the forest alongside the road. Ken found himself in the former East Germany in the company of a German man in a Savile Row suit that he had never met before driving cross-country through a forest in the night, and mobile phones were not yet available - he had nerves of steel!

It turned out to be genuine and not a kidnap, and so began Ken's close engagement with the reunification of Germany and the regeneration of its cities.

Ken came back with a commission to revitalise the Hauptwerk Carl Zeiss Jena where the world-renowned optics company was founded, and to do so in double-quick time because at Christmas, 1989, 16,000 employees were laid-off along with another 4000 at JenaPharm and Schott Glas, Zeiss's main supplier; in a city of 70,000 people, this was devastating! John Worthington led a team to explore possible future uses for the city centre site, taking Erlangen, a comparable size of city and the home of Siemens, as a model from western Germany. Ken led a team – Alan Wilkinson-Martin, Lawrence Revill, Philip Tidd, Philip Jackson, Will Hulbert, Geoff Scotting - looking at the development and regeneration potential of the site.

The reinvention of Carl Zeiss Jena as a new optics company Jenoptik had to go hand in hand with the revitalisation of the city of Jena and the regeneration of its economy. The result was the transformation of the "hauptwerk" site in the heart of the city into a modern city centre providing the city's first enclosed shopping centre, its first modern hotel, space for the city's universities, commercial office space and an innovation centre for new businesses. Even the tram network was extended to terminate on the site, something that thrilled Ken (he always loved a good tram!). Jena today is a thriving modern technology city, underpinned by this project, testament to Ken's vision.

The relationship with Lothar Späth and with Klaus Eckhard led to other projects of revitalisation. At Hermsdorf, just east of Jena along the A4 autobahn, Ken's team produced a master plan for the redevelopment of East Germany's largest manufacturer of high-voltage insulators to create space for new businesses and a new town centre, now implemented.

At Pirna, east of Dresden, the team produced a master plan for the redevelopment of a former jet engine research and production facility with associated schloss (castle!) into a modern business park and high-quality hotel, with creative reuse of many of the historic buildings overlooking the valley of the Danube.

DEGW went on to produce many more planning and development studies together in Dresden, Leipzig, Potsdam, Nudow, culminating in an invitation in 1992 to master plan Berlin's Olympic Village in Rummelsburg as part of its bid for the 2000 games. This brought together all of DEGW's skills under Ken's leadership to define what a new quarter of Berlin should consist of and how it could be implemented quickly to meet the Olympic programme. In the end, Berlin lost out to Sydney and the redevelopment in the Ostkreuz area of Berlin adopted a much lower profile and longer-term strategy.

In 1991, Ken led the team that won a competitive tender for a technology park for the motorsport industry in the middle of the 24 hour race circuit in Le Mans, France. The Technoparc du Circuit des 24 Heures adopted a simple infrastructure framework enhanced by a complementary landscape framework (again by Ian White) to create flexible plots for development in a secure campus with a direct link to the Bugatti and Maison Blanche circuits for testing. It has become the home of several French and international motorsport teams.

In 1992 DEGW was one of four teams shortlisted to produce a master plan for the regeneration of Duisburg Innenhafen in the Ruhr area of Germany. This project was the first of two important collaborations with David Lock Associates, combining Ken's master planning with their regeneration and planning expertise.

1992 also saw the first of two major projects aimed at the regeneration of former steel works. An early technology park feasibility for Bovis International in Brno in the Czech Republic led to an invitation to join an international eight-day charette to compose a strategy for the regeneration of the 200 ha Falck steelworks in Sesto San Giovanni near Milan. After many ours and many meals holed up in a converted castle hotel, the team produced a vision for the site as a new centre for the community of Sesto San Giovanni, presented to the Falck Steel board and to the local administration.

This led to Ken winning a competitive tender in 1993 with a team led by DEGW for the first regeneration strategy for the 450ha Ravenscraig steel works at Motherwell near Glasgow. The master plan envisaged a significant new public park in the heart of the site as a setting for

residential expansions of the communities of Craigneuk, Carfin and Wishaw and an expansion of Motherwell town centre together with significant land for new businesses to reverse the employment impact of the closure of the steelworks.

Also in 1993 Ken made a site capacity study and a design brief for the creation of a concert hall, office space and commercial facilities on land west of the central railway station in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the following year worked alongside Terry Farrell and Company to prepare a preferred layout and design strategy that put the proposed development in context. The project was implemented as the city's Millennium Project, the International Centre for Life.

Meanwhile, back in Germany, the focus of Ken's master planning work shifted from Berlin to the nearby town of Potsdam and established a vision study for the world famous DEFA film studios at Babelsberg to secure a sustainable future on behalf of the new owners/investors, Compagnie Générale des Eaux (CGE). CE went on to commission detailed research in five areas to create the "Media City": the range of media user types who may be attracted to the site, a set of target firms and their building requirements, test the initial master plan against these requirements, detailed development briefs for key sites, and present the concept to potential users to test viability.

Following on quickly Ken led a team to prepare an entry for an invited competition to master plan a new quarter of Potsdam, reinterpreting the structure of the town from the "Age of Enlightenment" when it became home to Prussian kings and the Kaiser.

Ken made a significant input into the design of a new HQ for the Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation (ApiCorp) in Saudi Arabia, an office village set around a series of courtyards and one of DEGW's most important architectural commissions. It ignored the pastiche of Middle Eastern traditions adopted by so many western architects and instead created a form that reflected its low-energy, sustainable function in a harsh climate while providing an ideal setting for interactive and collaborative work.



ApiCorp HQ by EGW, Saudi Arabia

It was after this success that Ken decided it was time to move on from DEGW to find new inspiration

1996 Return to Milton Keynes to David Lock Associates.

Lawrence Revill had left DEGW to join DLA in 1993, and with David they recruited Ken back to MK. Ken was member of many DLA project teams, contributing his creative master planning skills. The projects illustrated below are ones that Ken picked out for special mention as he looked back at his 17 years with DLA, together with some in which colleagues remember with affection and admiration for the contribution that Ken made.

Development Framework strategy for the former Merry Hill Regional Shopping Centre near Brierley Hill in Dudley, West Midlands. The urban regional shopping centre on the site of a steel works was commercially successful, but had been blamed for the decline of the historic Dudley Town Centre in the north of the Borough not far away, and the Brierley Hill High Street nearby. Merry Hill was bought by Chelsfield Properties (for whom David Lock and colleagues had helped secure the outline planning consent for White City regional shopping centre (now Westfield) in LB Hammersmith). In 1995 DLA was appointed to advise Chelsfield on the strategy to enable expansion of the shopping centre which under national planning policy at the time required the place to be formerly designated a town centre (PGG6 in the jargon). DLA were also appointed to support the regeneration of Dudley Town Centre – the Borough having accepted it was now the second order place for shopping. The innovative strategy was to adapt and expand the Brierley Hill shopping centre by attracting mixed uses and extending its malls to become streets extending back into the existing built up areas. Ground levels are very demanding (a steep slope up to Brierley Hill High Street and the nearby length of canal was realigned, and the historic High Street to be accessed so that it was connected more directly (an incoming by-pass project then made that more difficult). By 2008 the planning status of Regional Town Centre was achieved, but the transformation is not yet complete: the shopping centre was bought by Westfield and priorities have been different. In Dudley Town Centre, the strategy has been to advise on the managed shrinkage of the commercial frontage (much already empty) and encourage residential, catering and cultural uses to enable the characterful streets leading up to the Castle to be a distinctive place of attraction in its own right. The DLA team initiated by David Lock but then led by Julia Foster were enabled by Chelsfield to work for Dudley Borough Council to drive these strategies forward, and Ken Baker contributed his masterplanning skills. One of the strategy tools – the *Brierley Hill Area Development Framework* approved by Dudley Borough Council – won the 1998 RTPi Award for Urban Design.



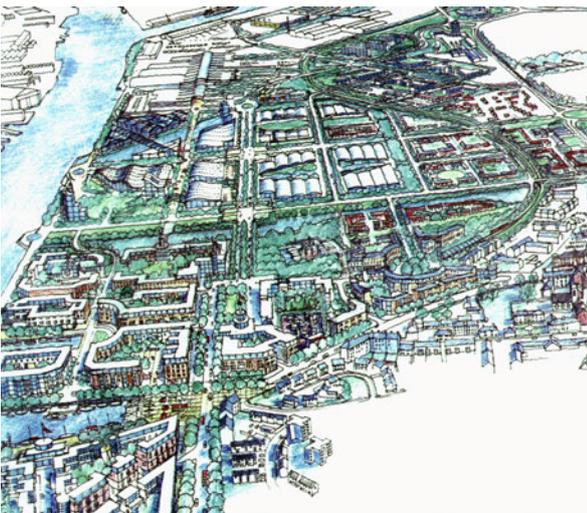
Extract from DLA's Area Development Framework for Dudley MBC



The unfinished Brierley Hill Regional Town Centre today, courtesy Google Earth

Braehead, Renfrew, Glasgow. Client Capital Shopping Centres, Park Lane, X-Leisure and Clydeport

Ken did the master plan for the Renfrew Riverside Area, working for Capital Shopping Centres Park Lane, X Leisure and Clydeport and prepared development briefs for each of the land parcels, including the Snowdome, a public park, residential neighbourhood, Waterfront apartments, a hotel and an office building. All were delivered in accordance with his master plan.

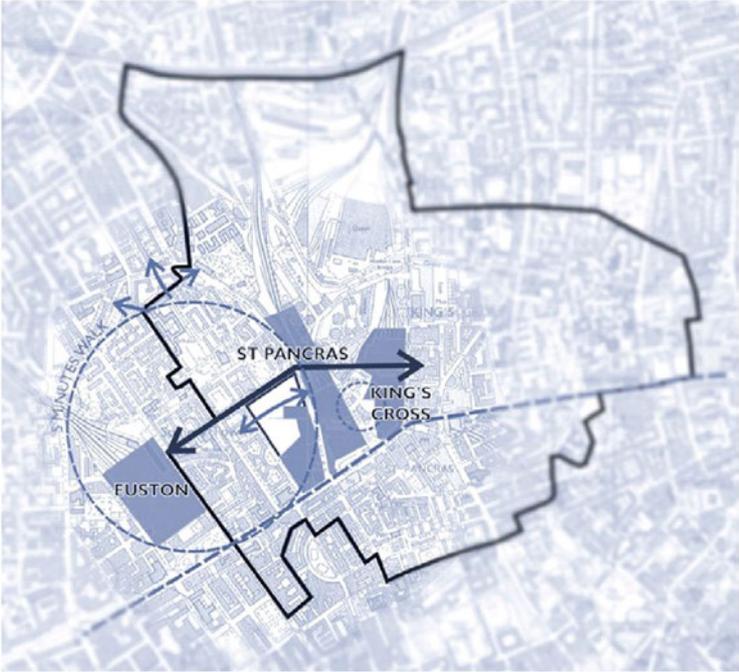
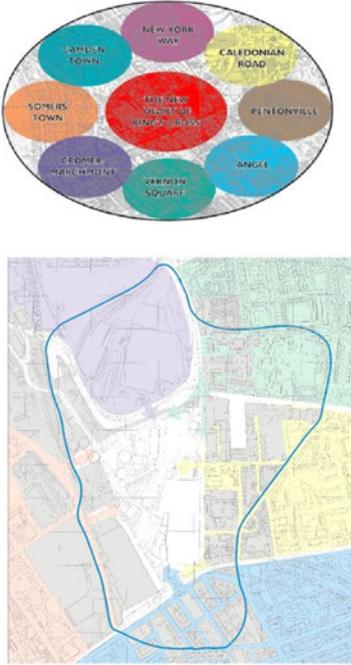


Braehead, Renfrew, Glasgow. Early stages: New Xscape building



Breahed, recent aerial courtesy Google Earth, includes regional shopping centre, and mixed residential and employment uses.

Kings Cross Regeneration Strategy for The Kings Cross Partnership. With the adjacent St. Pancras station chosen as the London Terminal for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (now called HS1), and recession and politics causing the collapse of developer-led proposals for the railway lands between and behind St Pancras and Kings Cross land (see Ken Baker's time at DEGW above), the government financed a 'King's Cross Partnership' with £37.5m funding to run from 1996 to 2003. The significant partners were the railway companies, three Boroughs, and invited members of the community. A team led by David Lock with Ken Baker and Louise Thomas, were appointed to advise on improving the connectivity of the surrounding area to the previously impenetrable railway lands, and to contribute to the first two-year action plan for helping change the image of the area. Based in a temporary office at Kings Cross, the methodology for improving connectivity, developed from early New Urbanism practice in Australia, was regarded by Ken as a special achievement.



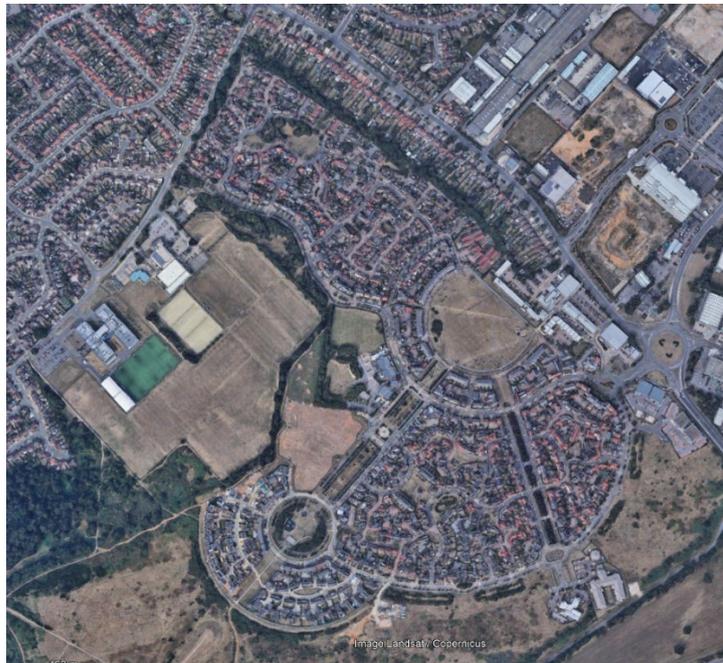
Midland Metro : Wednesbury to Brierley Hill, Sandwell and Dudley, West Midlands, for Centro (the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive). Following the successful introduction of trams to the West Midlands with Metro Line 1 from Birmingham Snow Hill to Wolverhampton, Centro proposed an extension of this line from Wednesbury through Dudley town centre and connecting with the regional town centre focused on what was Merry Hill. DLA were commissioned by Centro to produce an urban context study of the proposed line extension. Taking the alignment developed by the engineering consultants, the task was to report on how urban design issues should be addressed effectively in the detail design development. The study looked at the integration of the line into the public realm with particular emphasis on the visual and physical appearance and accessibility of each tram stop, and was part of the evidence in support of Transport and Works Act procedures.



Ravenswood, Ipswich: new community on the former airfield, for Bellway and Guinness Trust.

Trust.

The DLA project team led by Lawrence Revill, master planned by Ken Baker with support from Simon Pugh, is comprised of over 1000 homes, employment, local centre, primary school, country park extension and, within the converted former terminal building, a community centre. The team worked closely Ipswich City Council as landowners, and the Bellway development team, to facilitate smooth passage of the master plan through the planning system. Outline consent was granted within three months of submission and development commenced on site in early 1999. The development was finished to a high standard and is very well regarded by its residents.



Ravenswood Ipswich (the former airfield)



Ravenswood, Ipswich

In 2009 David Lock Associates commissioned The Living Archive to produce a book for the company about its first 21 years or so, using only the words of the staff (in recorded interviews) and encouraging the graphic design team to enjoy freedom in its design and layout. *Make No Little Plans: The Town Planning and Urban Design Studio of David Lock Associates, Central Milton Keynes*, produced by the company for its own staff, includes these quotations from Ken Baker:

You can understand an architect, you can understand a planner, but somewhere in the middle ground someone has invented **Urban Design**. In the '70s there was no talk of urban design. In France they have 'urbanistes' – people trained to look at their towns. Architects have gradually learnt to diversify, just as they've moved into space planning, realising there was money to be made out of laying out the furniture inside the buildings they've designed. But they went the other way as well. They realised that if they put lots of buildings together they could call it urban design. The magic of the space between the buildings would be given an '-ology'; it became a science. One of the definitions of Urban Design was 'designing a city without designing the buildings' – a very succinct way of explaining what you do.

Ken Baker

Architects have tremendous egos – it's drummed into them at Architectural College: 'You'll run your own business, build your own buildings and be the equivalent of Frank Lloyd Wright' – everyone is told that. They don't teach you to work in teams, and the construction industry is generally about team-working. So architects come out into the profession with that ego.

Ken Baker



Ken Baker in the foreground, with some of his DLA colleagues on one of the bi-annual whole-company extended excursions, in this case to the Italian village La Gargonza, the whole of which had been made an hotel (except the Church!)

DLA colleagues also want to place on record that Ken Baker contributed to the company's team working on the Ebbsfleet International Station area in Dartford, helping make an enabling infrastructure structure out of the 13,000 space surface car park consent so that a regional mixed use centre could be developed (a DLA scheme that received planning permission but which is still stuck); the Swindon (proposed) New Eastern Villages; multi modal logistics schemes in Slough and Dunkerque; the parking, drop off, bus and taxi arrangements for Station Square; the proposed Western Expansion of Crawley;

2013 Retired.

For the last couple of years of Ken's employment at DLA mainstream commercial consultancy work became difficult for him – attending client team meetings and site visits, and working to non-negotiable deadlines in planning processes and teamworking - he agreed to stand down as a Director and become a **DLA Fellow**. This privileged status allowed Ken to continue to contribute to projects but be less outward-facing, but mostly to allow him time and resources to contribute to life in the city that he had helped so much to make.

In this period he committed himself to the **Urban Eden** pressure group that had been established to protect the founding principles of MK, where he was able to contribute his knowledge and drawing skills not (as he would say) necessarily to preserve it, but to ensure care in its continuing evolution.

Ken also became a **CMK Town Councillor**, which is the most local statutory local authority for the whole city centre. He was highly valued for his knowledge and expertise but remained independent-minded and sometimes a controversialist on issues of the day.

Ken's involvement in **Fred Roche Foundation** provided a more elastic platform: the Foundation had grown from a fund created to mark the memory of the late MKDC General Manager Fred Roche by developing social housing tied to job training that would give young people in the city a start in life. But funding and site finding under the English Partnerships regime proved too difficult. So the Trustees agreed to create the Foundation stimulate educational public discussion about contemporary city-building issues locally, nationally and internationally. Ken was instrumental in devising, organising funding and brokering several packed events with

prominent speakers, and was also key to achieving the naming of the city centre garden he had designed, as The Fred Roche Garden. Here celebratory community and arts events are held from time to time when possible.

Once formally retired from DLA, and living only 50m from DLA's offices, Ken was able to give more time to these streams of activity and – increasingly impatient of committees – to take initiatives wherever he could to promote fresh ideas and thinking about MK and its possibilities, and to honour what has already been achieved. This included the staging, with the support of sponsors including DLA, an exhibition of the Living Landscape of MK which was presented first in the Milton Keynes Library in CMK and then given longer term display in one of the High Arcades of the centre:MK, courtesy of owners Hermes.



Ken Baker, centre in blue, and sponsors at the unveiling of the longer term display of the Living Landscape of MK exhibition.

Ken continued his interest in multi-modal freight interchanges with the prospective developer and now friend and partner Andrew Bell, Strategic Land Europe. None of those schemes have yet borne fruit, but several are bubbling under – Ken enjoyed the DLA maxim that good geography is always good geography, especially applicable to the linkages between trains, boats, planes, motorways, and the pattern of urbanisation where things are made and consumed.

Ken's energetic independent and creative mindset can be seen his "Legacy Walk" filmed by Roger Kitchen of The Living Archive (his edited video is here <https://vimeo.com/288595144> was Ken's parting contribution to MK before retiring to Lewes.

He is also prominent in The Living Archive film of the first 10 years of the making of MK, called *Make No Little Plans* <https://www.livingarchive.org.uk/content/online-shop/dvds/make-no-little-plans-city-builders-stories>

2018 Moved to Lewes where Ken and Wendy had raised Grey and Matthew, and where Matthew and Thea and their son are living.

Ken remained in contact with many of his friends and contacts in MK and continued to take an active interest when health allowed. For example, badgering Caroline Brown and former colleagues for help to finalise an ambitious expanded leaflet to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Shopping Building/centre:mk) which he was determined to complete.

Ken Baker died in his home in Lewes, aged 79, on 8 January 2021.

