

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/2348>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

THE REPLANNING OF THE BLITZED CITY CENTRE IN BRITAIN:
A comparative study of Bristol, Coventry and Southampton
1941-1950

JUNICHI HASEGAWA

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

Centre for the Study of Social History,
University of Warwick.

April 1989

ABSTRACT

Before the outbreak of the Second World War Britain had suffered the consequences of uncontrolled industrial development - too highly populated built-up areas and indiscriminate sprawl of houses in the suburbs of industrial cities. Those associated with town planning called for comprehensive national planning. The state of city centres was the microcosm of the lack of such planning - insufficiency caused by traffic congestion and chaotic development of buildings of all kinds, and the absence of social amenities such as civic centres and public open spaces. But the local authorities could do very little, because, for one thing, there was no proper legislation dealing with such highly densely developed areas.

The German air raids on several industrial cities in 1940 were thought to have provided a golden opportunity for the local authorities to set to the task of replanning city centres. The Government promised to make up the necessary legislation, and encouraged the blitzed local authorities to plan boldly and comprehensively. City centre replanning had become a symbol of post-war reconstruction as a whole. However, the blitzed authorities soon had to face a wave of pressure to subdue boldness in their city centre plans. This thesis, by exploring the three case studies of Bristol, Coventry, and Southampton, illustrates the development of city centre replanning in the 1940s, and explains why it failed to live up to some of the expectations of its supporters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Centre for the Study of Social History, University of Warwick, for providing me with the opportunity to compile this thesis. I am particularly indebted to Dr. James Hinton and Dr. Tony Mason for their assistance and kindness during the course of the research.

I have received considerable help from a number of archivists, particularly staff at the City Record Offices of Bristol, Coventry and Southampton, at the Local Studies Section of Coventry City Library, as well as at the Newspaper Library and the Public Record Office in London.

I have been exceptionally fortunate in all those who have helped me over various aspects of the research - especially Mr. Mark Clapson, Dr. Richard Coopey, Dr. John Davis, Dr. Steve Fielding, Dr. James Kilmartin, Mrs. Ros Lukas, Mr. Michael Rowland, and Mr. Tatsuya Tsubaki. Among the many academic colleagues who have been most helpful, however, I must mention Dr. Nick Tiratsoo, himself an expert on reconstruction in Britain after the Second World War, for providing me with invaluable advice and inspiration throughout the research. I also acknowledge with gratitude the remarkable accuracy and forbearance of Mrs. Dee Hewitt in typing my manuscript.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Haruo and Ryoko Margaret Hasegawa, for encouragement for these five years since I came to England, and dedicate this work to them.

April 1989

JUNICHI HASEGAWA

CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Contents	iii
List of Tables in Text	iv
List of Illustrations in Text	v
Notes on sources and abbreviations	vi
CHAPTER I Introduction	1
CHAPTER II British Town Planning up to World War II	7
CHAPTER III Development of Reconstruction Policy during the War	18
CHAPTER IV Pre-war Character of Bristol, Coventry, and Southampton, and the extent of destruction caused by enemy action	40
Bristol	40
Southampton	44
Coventry	48
Destruction	54
CHAPTER V Replanning the City Centre: The case of Coventry 1940-1945	65
CHAPTER VI Replanning the City Centre: The case of Southampton 1940-1945	93
CHAPTER VII Replanning the City Centre: The case of Bristol 1940-1945	134
CHAPTER VIII Recognition of the City Centre Plans at the Public Inquiries, 1946.	176
CHAPTER IX Recognition of the City Centre Plans in the 1940s	210
CHAPTER X Conclusion	249
Bibliography	263

LIST OF TABLES IN TEXT

	Page
Table IV.1 Growth of Population	41
Table IV.2 Major Blitz Attacks on the Three Cities	54
Table IV.3 War Damage by May 1945	55
Table IV.4 Houses Destroyed and Seriously Damaged through Enemy Action	55
Table IV.5 Approximate Extent of Major Devastated Areas (in acres)	56
Table IV.6 Analysis of Rateable Property in Coventry	57
Table IV.7 Analysis of Rateable Property in Bristol	57
Table IV.8 Rateable Value of the Three Cities	58
Table IV.9 Rateable Value of Shopping Centre in Southampton	59

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The 1941 Coventry City Centre Plan by Gibson

An artist's impression of the proposed shopping precinct of Coventry

An artist's impression of the proposed town centre of Southampton

An artist's impression of the proposed town centre (the 'Circus') of Southampton

The 1944 revised plan for the central area of Southampton

The Southampton central area plan at the time of the public inquiry into the Borough Council's application for a Declaratory Order in 1946

Areas included and excluded by the Minister of Town and Country Planning in 1947 in regard to Southampton's application for a Declaratory Order

The 1948 revised plan for the central area of Southampton

The central area of Bristol before the 1940 Blitz

The old and new shopping centres of Bristol

The 1944 plan for the central area of Bristol

Proposed conference buildings in the Wine Street - Castle Street area of Bristol

A view of the heart of the proposed new shopping centre of Bristol

NOTES ON SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

This study is based on the following main archive sources:

1. Material in the Bristol City Record Office (BRO), particularly the minutes of the City Council's Planning and Public Works Committee (PPWC), and the Planning and Reconstruction Committee (PRO); and the annual reports, minutes and various papers of the Bristol Incorporated Chamber of Commerce and Shipping (BRO 38605).
2. Material in the Coventry City Record Office (CRO), particularly the minutes of the City Council's City Re-development Committee, subsequently the Planning and Reconstruction Committee (CRC); and the Town Clerk's files (CRO Sec./CF/1).
3. Material in the Local Studies Section of Coventry City Library, particularly the local newspapers - The Midland Daily Telegraph (MDT), the Coventry Evening Telegraph (CET), and The Coventry Standard (Standard).
4. Material in the Southampton City Record Office (SRO), particularly the Borough Council's Town Planning and Development Committee (TPDC); City Architects' Department Records (SRO SC/BA); City Engineer's Department Records (SRO SC/EN); Town Clerk's Records (SRO TC Box); City Treasurer's Department Records (SRO SC/T); the minutes and various papers of the Central Area Association (SRO D/Z); various collection of papers disposed by Alderman James Matthews (SRO D/Mat).

5. The local newspapers of Bristol and Southampton in the Newspaper Library, London; for Bristol: the Bristol Evening Post (BEP), the Bristol Evening World (BEW), the Bristol Observer (Observer), and the Western Daily Press; and for Southampton: the Southampton Daily Echo (SDE).

6. Various files in the Public Record Office, London (mainly those in BT, CAB, and HLG).

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The main part of this thesis is devoted to a description of how the replanning of the blitzed city centres proceeded in the 1940s. The work is arranged around three case studies of Bristol, Coventry and Southampton, which were the first provincial cities in Britain to suffer the German blitz in 1940.

As the existing literature shows, British town planning had been abundant both in personalities and organisations armed with a variety of ideas. Their aim was to overcome the impoverished and insanitary conditions in the industrial cities and towns - the outcome of uncontrolled development since the Industrial Revolution - and to create more humane living standards. On the one hand an ideal society envisaged in Utopian terms, especially that of William Morris' News From Nowhere, had some spiritual impact on town planning. At the same time the prototype, in a more practical sense, was found in Robert Owen's projects for model industrial villages in 1816. Later in the nineteenth century some philanthropic industrialists made attempts to reproduce the rural atmosphere of cottage and village green in housing for their factory workers. In 1898 Ebenezer Howard gathered together these and various other ideas in his book Tomorrow. His suggestion was the 'Garden City' principle - a self-contained town of limited size where people could work near their home, live in helpful neighbourliness, and enjoy all the advantages of city and country life. This principle was vigorously advocated by the Garden Cities Association, which, with its energetic secretary, F.J. Osborn, became one of the strongest propaganda organisations in town planning circles.¹

What turned out to be particularly important to those associated with town planning was to call for more positive and comprehensive state intervention - national planning. The Government had offered only partial and ad hoc solutions to particular problems of the industrialised society. In the last century the main task had been to provide preventive measures against insanitary conditions in the older central areas of industrial cities. In this century it was to facilitate the provision of houses for the working classes on new estates, which sprang up in the suburbs of large cities. There was, however, a serious lack of machinery for comprehensive planning. First there was no central planning authority. Secondly, the planning legislation was inadequate both for the built-up central areas and for the suburbs where new development was taking place. These defects had produced too high a central density and traffic congestion in large cities and towns, and an indiscriminate sprawl of houses over the countryside. The state of London was especially appalling.

The call for national planning was intensified in the 1930s by those groups and individuals associated with so-called 'middle opinion'. It was argued that a wide range of economic and social problems the country was facing should be tackled through collectivist means. At the same time the emphasis was put on the technocratic approach to the problems by making the best of the experience, knowledge, and opinion of experts.² Gradually Governments had taken action. Particular attention had been paid to what experts thought to be the worst evil of contemporary society - the unbalanced distribution of industry and the industrial population. The south, especially London, had overgrown while the areas based on the old staple industries were in serious decline. In 1937 a Royal Commission was set up to investigate the question. Its conclusion, published in January 1940 (known as the Barlow Report) declared that the

unbalanced distribution of industry and industrial population were disadvantageous to national life. In order to check this, the country needed positive Government action with a view to achieving a controlled distribution of industry and population based on national planning.³

The war prompted the Government to go further, for there would be the need for reconstruction after the war. Town planning had been expected to play a vital part in the pursuit of national planning. This was reflected, for one thing, in the appointment of Lord Reith as a new Minister in October 1940 to study the appropriate methods and machinery for dealing with the post-war reconstruction of town and country. His first decisions included the setting up of an experts' committee and of a panel of experts to examine various difficult subjects involved in town planning. The question that attracted particular attention was the redevelopment of built-up areas, especially of city centres. The German blitz on London and the congested central areas of several provincial cities in late 1940 had created an opportunity for comprehensive replanning by the local authorities. Bristol, Coventry, and Southampton were chosen by the Government as 'test case' survey cities in an attempt to identify what kind of legislation was needed for the planning of built-up areas. Moreover, Reith encouraged the blitzed local authorities to plan boldly. The replanning of city centres had become symbolic of post-war reconstruction as a whole. As Esher and Ravetz observe, the mood of the time was that experts, with confidence and enthusiasm, would create a totally new and better Britain.⁴ Cullingworth's extensive research in the public records also demonstrates that the Government made considerable efforts, which led to the setting up of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in 1943, and two Town and Country Planning Acts of 1944 and 1947. Presumably by the nature of his work (an official history of the Ministry) he emphasises the importance of the part played by civil

servants in establishing the legislative framework of post-war town planning.⁵

However, in the studies dealing with the task of reconstruction under the war-time Coalition Government and Labour between 1945-51, city centre replanning has not been given the attention which might have been expected of such an important subject⁶ Among the general studies of town planning and the works of local history, fairly frequent reference has been made to the case of Coventry, because, as they often emphasise, the city's uniquely imaginative plan not only received a great deal of contemporary publicity, but has been regarded from technical viewpoints as a model of the post-war replanning of city centres.⁷ What seems to be lacking here (not to mention the cases of other cities) is a detailed analysis of the essence of city centre replanning - the process by which consensus was sought in support of the local authorities' plans.⁸ A close examination of this process shows, first of all, how diversified were the opinions as to the future city centre. This was true of all three plans. It also shows how the plans were affected by a variety of different opinions. The local interests and the Government departments concerned put various pressures on the local authorities so that their views were well represented in the final outcome. The three local authorities, however, responded to such pressure in quite distinctive ways. What made the difference in the authorities' responses were often such factors as the perception of the industrial future, the Council's financial situation, political conflicts among Councillors or Corporation officials about the city centre plans, and the attitude of the local public.

By examining the replanning process in these three case studies, and placing it in a wider perspective, the thesis brings into relief the fate of that optimistic, early period when the idea of reconstruction stood

for a peaceful and fairer post-war world. This study also tries to contribute to an explanation of the change of direction which post-war reconstruction took after the Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 was passed. For ease of exposition, what follows is divided into three parts. The first part serves as an introduction to the main theme. Chapter II presents a brief account of the history of British town planning up to World War II. Chapter III analyses a variety of views about post-war reconstruction, laying emphasis on the Government's attitudes towards the opinions of the experts. Chapter IV describes the pre-war character of the three cities - Bristol, Coventry, and Southampton - from an economic, political, and social point of view. This chapter also comments on the destruction caused by the bombing of 1940-41. The second part examines the replanning process during the war with regard to Coventry (Chapter V), Southampton (Chapter VI), and Bristol (Chapter VII) respectively. In the final part the main point of discussion is how far these plans had obtained the recognition - especially the responsible Ministry's approval - by the time the construction of permanent buildings commenced at the end of the 1940s (Chapters VIII and IX). Chapter X makes a concise comparison of the three case studies, and presents some brief conclusions.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ See, e.g. William W. Ashworth, The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning (1954) and Gordon E. Cherry, The Evolution of British Town Planning (1974). Also see Gordon E. Cherry (ed.), Pioneers in British Town Planning (1981) which presents the background of nine important personalities including F.J. Osborn.
- ² A. Marwick, 'Middle Opinion in the Thirties' in English Historical Review (April 1964), p. 285. See also John Stevenson, 'Planners' Moon? The Second World War and the planning movement' in Harold Smith (ed.), War and Social Change (Manchester 1986).
- ³ J.B. Cullingworth, Town and Country Planning in Britain (first published 1964), Chapter 1, 'The Evolution of Town and Country Planning'.
- ⁴ Alison Ravetz, Remaking Cities (1980), Chapter 1. L. Esher, A Broken Wave. The Rebuilding of England 1940-1980 (Pelican ed., 1983), Chapter 1.
- ⁵ J.B. Cullingworth, Environmental Planning 1939-1969. Vol. 1. Reconstruction and Land use Planning 1939-1947 (1975).
- ⁶ See, e.g. P. Addison, The Road to 1945 (1975); J.M. Lee, The Churchill Coalition, 1940-1945, and K.O. Morgan, Labour in Power 1945-1951 (Oxford, 1984). Also Angus Calder, The People's War (1969).
- ⁷ See, e.g. Kenneth Richardson, Twentieth-Century Coventry (Coventry, 1972); G. Gregory, 'Coventry' in J. Holliday (ed.), City Centre Redevelopment: A Study of British City Centre Planning (1974); and Percy Johnson-Marshall, Rebuilding Cities (Edinburgh, 1966).
- ⁸ Some authors have looked at this theme. See Nick Tiratsoo, The Reconstruction of Coventry 1945-1960, unpublished report to Volkswagenwerk Stiftung (Coventry, 1988), and P.L. Garside, Town Planning in London, 1930-1961, a study of pressures, interests and influence affecting the formation of policy, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1979).

CHAPTER II

British Town Planning up to World War II

Town planning in Britain up to World War II was the history of a partial reaction to the problems of a rapidly urbanising society. The Industrial Revolution brought nineteenth century Britain a problem of overcrowded, insanitary, urban growth. This new urban growth prompted the state, which was increasingly intervening in other spheres, to introduce a series of public health measures in the latter half of the last century: towns and cities were watered, drained and sewered, lit and paved; building by-laws endowed local authorities with the power for controlling street widths, and the height, structure and layout of buildings. But this by-law control of British towns soon met another criticism, that is, the dreariness, ugliness and formlessness of the development it encouraged. Moreover, there emerged a new problem of suburban sprawl, with jerry-built houses spreading over the countryside.

In Britain the town planning movement grew mainly out of the activities of practical housing reformers and social philanthropists. The social analyses of Charles Booth, General William Booth of the Salvation Army, and Seebohm Rowntree reinforced the case for housing reform. Model settlements set up by industrial philanthropists to improve the living standards of the working classes (and, of course, to attract labour) were influential, notably Cadbury's Bournville near Birmingham (1879), and Lever's Port Sunlight on Merseyside (1888). Around the turn of the century the National Housing Reform Council was founded which, embracing such prominent figures as H.R. Aldridge (active in the Land Nationalisation movement) and T.C. Horsfall (advocate of German advances in public works and municipal control over town expansion) campaigned for the introduction of town planning and for new

legislation relating to it and housing. Similar demands came from local government and professional associations such as the Association of Municipal Corporations, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Surveyors' Institute, and the Association of Municipal and County Engineers.

Yet the most influential propagandist body was the Garden City Association founded in 1899 as the immediate outcome of Ebenezer Howard's book, Tomorrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform (1898). As Ravetz summarises it, his idea was

the deceptively simple one that all the advantages of town life could be maximised and all the disadvantages minimised if development were limited to towns of small and strictly limited size (32,000 maximum population).

Encircled by the green belt, these towns would be self-contained for their food, natural resources and all the necessary services and industries. Any further expansion should be through the foundation of new satellite towns at a distance, rather than peripheral growth around the existing centres.¹

Spreading rapidly in its influence and ideas, and gathering up more or less everyone who was concerned with housing and town planning, the Garden City Movement was also the strongest lobbyist in town planning. The pressure from them and various other bodies for new town planning legislation eventually resulted in the Housing and Town Planning Act 1909. This provided local authorities with the new powers to prepare schemes for controlling the development of new housing areas. It was, as McAllister puts it, 'a great advance':

henceforward no-one could regard housing as an isolated problem. The business of rehousing was seen at last - even if not very clearly - to be part of the general scheme to

provide a proper environment at work, at play, and in the home, for men, women and children. ²

What the Act could deal with was, however, only land which was being developed or appeared likely to be developed. It made no provisions for the re-planning of the existing towns or badly planned areas. In any case because of the cumbersome administrative procedure few schemes were actually completed under the 1909 Act.

* * * *

While population growth slowed down after the First World War, urban concentration and suburban sprawl became more and more characteristic of Britain's physical fabric. People who were concerned with town planning were trying hard to react to these problems during the inter-war period. One new element to be reckoned with was the Modern Movement in architecture, especially the influence of a Swiss architect, Le Corbusier, on British architects. Like the Garden City Movement it decried the vast agglomeration of the existing towns and their formlessness. When it came to a means of solution, however, the parties differed in their approach, with the Garden City Movement favouring low-density 'cottages' and the Modern Movement advocating high-density flats.

In Britain the main current in town planning remained the Garden City Movement, both in ideas and in practice. Howard's principles were, however, as Ravetz puts it, 'flouted, for the Garden City was immediately translated into "garden suburbs": low-density, well-planned and predominantly middle-class areas at the edge of existing towns', a pattern already well established in Victorian times. Only two Garden Cities, 'in the proper sense of the term', were founded, at Letchworth

(1904) and Welwyn (1920) but neither one came near to 'realising the radical social aims of Howard's theory'.³

Interwar legislation made hardly any impression on the crucial problems in town planning - suburban sprawl and central congestion. The Housing and Town Planning Act, of 1919, accepted the principle of state subsidies for housing, thus marking the start of the nationwide growth of council house estates. It also introduced an entirely new standard of working-class housing, by accepting the Tudor Walter's ^{Report's} stipulation that they should be built at the density of not more than twelve houses to the acre. Certain early council estates attracted favourable comments. But the cutting of subsidies in the early 1920s had an adverse effect, and as the inter-war housing boom went on, as Ravetz puts it, 'the graceful style of the earliest council houses, which clearly showed their Garden City origins, gave way to crudely utilitarian styles'.⁴

The housing boom during the inter-war period also gave rise to 'ribbon development', i.e. a single line of houses on either side of a traffic road on the outskirts of a town. This occurred largely due to the private developer's desire to avoid road-making charges and the provision of services for which they would become responsible if the houses were built on new streets. The Restriction of Ribbon Development Act, in 1935, was supposed to check this phenomena by prohibiting, without the consent of the highway authority, the erection of any building within 250 feet from the middle of the road. But because of the liability of the responsible authority to pay compensation to any person whose property was injuriously affected by these restrictions, the Act failed to restrict ribbon development.⁵

The last general pre-World War II Town Planning Act, in 1932, did for the first time extend planning powers to almost any type of land, whether built up or not. It also provided that the percentage of

'betterment' (the increased value of land consequent upon neighbouring development) which might be claimed by a planning authority as charges should rise from 50% to 70%. Yet the Act did little to remedy the situation largely due to three main defects of it, or of previous town planning legislation.

First, pre-war planning was essentially on a local basis and it did not have regard to neighbouring areas, so that it did not influence the desirable geographical distribution of the population as between one locality and another. Although a number of joint planning committees constituted of several local planning authorities were set up, and many joint planning schemes were drawn up, these were essentially voluntary bodies with advisory but not executive powers.

Secondly, the procedure to carry through a planning scheme to its final stage was protracted and complicated. It might well take three or four years to obtain final approval from Parliament, and if any amendment were sought, a repetition of the whole procedure would be necessary.

The third and most serious defect was the fact that planning authorities had in most cases to pay compensation to owners affected by town planning schemes. In the case of undeveloped land, the local planning authority had to pay compensation to the landowner when a piece of his land was compulsorily acquired, or development upon it was prohibited. The landowner would receive compensation for the loss of potential development value in relation to the most profitable, rather than actual, use of land, even if it was unlikely that the land would be so developed. Moreover, the prohibition of development on one site usually resulted in the development value being merely shifted to other land. Thus, in general, the fear of indefinite liabilities for compensation for forbidding development made it impossible for planning

authorities to reserve adequate land for parks and playgrounds, for highway development, and for agricultural purposes.

In highly developed urban areas, the kernel of the problem was the already high cost of land and consequent expense of such works as widening roads, providing open spaces, slum clearance, the provision of amenities and cultural facilities and of industrial necessities. In addition, acquisition in such areas involved payment for the value of existing buildings to be demolished, and compensation to a trader for his removal expenses and for disturbance to his business. Naturally the progress of slum clearance and redevelopment, if any, had been retarded and forced into piecemeal patterns, again to avoid the necessity of paying compensation. While planning authorities were almost always liable for compensation, they rarely benefited from the collection of betterment, for the procedure involved was again very complicated and difficult to apply. For one thing, the provisions for deferment of paying betterment until the increased value had been realised by a sale or new sale had rendered it almost ineffective. As Lewis Silkin put it in 1943, it was thus not surprising that at the outbreak of war only three per cent of the area of Great Britain was covered by operative schemes which had completed their last stage and received the final approval of the Ministry of Health, which was then responsible for town planning.⁶

* * * *

The fact that there existed virtually no effective town planning in the country was accentuated by a serious economic and social problem of the inter-war period - the problem of industrial concentration. The inter-war period saw the continued drift of the population to London, the Home Counties and the Midlands where thriving new industries created

comparatively favourable opportunities for employment. At the same time such areas dependent on the declining old staple industries as the North-East and Wales were suffering from an actual decrease in the working population.

This uncontrolled shift of industrial population caused a heavy burden on local authorities. In the newly developed areas, the authorities had to bear heavy expenditure for the provision of various necessary facilities. Moreover it was often impossible for them to keep pace with the enormous demand created by the rapid influx of workers. Among other things many working-class houses were put up by speculative builders which might be dearer to buy or to rent than the workers could well afford, or otherwise well below the desirable standard from the planning viewpoint.⁷

In the depressed areas the authorities had to maintain such necessary facilities while they became less able to support the services for their communities because of the loss of working population. As there was no system of control over industrial population, planning schemes had to be decided by past experience in population movement, rather than their being related to an ideal pattern of population distribution derived from an idea of the national interest.

The problems of the central parts of cities and towns became particularly acute in those areas where the influx of population was prominent. They were, as Abercrombie perhaps the most eminent town planner of the day put it in his plan for the County of London in 1943, overcrowded and out-of-date housing; inadequacy and maldistribution of open space; the jumble of houses, shops and industry compressed between narrow roads; and traffic congestion which caused both danger to life and limb and a waste of travellers' time.⁸ As will be illustrated in Chapter III it was well realised that city centres were no longer capable of

properly achieving their economic and social functions as business, commercial, civic and cultural foci.

The problem of uncontrolled industrial location naturally caused grave concern in the 1930s. This, and the vivid experience of the Great Depression of the early 1930s, led to a rapidly growing realisation of the need for national planning. Politicians, businessmen and academics, from left and right, emphasised the importance of national economic planning through such organisations as the New Fabian Research Bureau, the Next Five Years Group and Political and Economic Planning.

The Government also started some action. Various advisory committees⁹ were set up and reports were issued dealing with the problems in London caused by an ever-increasing influx of population. In November 1934 the Depressed Areas Bill was introduced to pass the Special Areas Act, with the view to attracting new industries to such areas as defined in the Act, namely, the north-east coast, West Cumberland, industrial South Wales and the industrial area around Glasgow. The lessons learnt over the following few years were that there was little prospect of the spontaneous action of industrialists bringing work to such areas, and that there was, therefore, a need for control of further industrial development.¹⁰

At last in July 1937 the Government appointed a Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population with Sir Montague Barlow as chairman. The Commission was asked to explore three questions: the causes of the present geographical distribution of the industrial population; the extent and nature of the social, economic, or strategical disadvantage of the concentration of industries and population in certain areas; and possible remedial measures in the national interest. In January 1940 the Report of the Commission was eventually published (Cmd. 6153). It explained that the concentration of

population in large cities was due to the growth of industry in those places. As for the disadvantages of such concentration, the Commission thought, that,

It is not possible from the evidence submitted to us to avoid the conclusion that disadvantage in many, if not in most, of the great industrial concentrations, alike on the strategical, the social, and on the economic side, do constitute serious handicaps and even in some respects dangers to the national life and development, and we are of the opinion that definite action should be taken by the Government towards remodelling them.¹¹

The main objects of such national action should be, as the Report put it:

- a) Continued and further redevelopment of congested urban areas, where necessary.
- b) Decentralisation or dispersal, both of industries and industrial population, from such areas.
- c) Encouragement of a reasonable balance of industrial development, coupled with appropriate diversification of industry throughout the country.

For this purpose the setting up of a new Central Planning Authority was essential. This Authority should collect and co-ordinate information relating to location of industry through research, inspect all existing and future planning schemes, and consider, where necessary, the modification or correlation of them in the national interest. It also should examine and formulate the policy to be adopted in relation to decentralisation or dispersal. Such decentralisation or dispersal might be achieved by means of garden cities or garden suburbs, satellite towns, trading estates, further development of existing small towns or regional centres, and other appropriate methods.¹²

Thus it was now keenly realised that town planning should be part and parcel of national planning and not a matter of local affairs as it had been. Demand for a new Central Authority of one form or other was already rife in town planning circles,¹³ while some new ideas and techniques also came out.¹⁴ It was felt to be high time that town planning ceased to be a partial and ad hoc solution to specific problems, and the first essential seemed to be determined Government action.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Alison Ravetz, Remaking Cities, (1980), p. 27.
- ² G. & E.G. McAllister, Town and Country Planning, 1941, p. 41.
- ³ Ravetz, op. cit., p. 27.
- ⁴ *ibid.*, p. 29.
- ⁵ This paragraph is heavily based on Lewis Silkin, The Nation's Land, Fabian Research Series Vol. 6, No. 70, 1943, p. 5.
- ⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 5 and 7.
- ⁷ This paragraph is based on the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, Britain's Town and Country Planning Pattern, (1943), p. 27.
- ⁸ Patrick Abercrombie and J.H. Forshaw, County of London Plan, (1943), pp. 3 - 5.
- ⁹ See, e.g., Arthur Marwick, 'Middle Opinion in the Thirties', in English Historical Review (April 1964); and John Stevenson, 'Planners' Moon? The Second World War and the planning movement' in Harold Smith (ed.), War and Social Change (Manchester, 1986).
- ¹⁰ The portion in regard to the Government action is based on J.B. Cullingworth, Town and Country Planning in Britain, Allen & Unwin, 1982, pp.
- ¹¹ HMSO, 1940, Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population, Cmd. 6153, para. 31.
- ¹² *ibid.*, para. 428.
- ¹³ See for example, F.J. Osborn, Transport, Town Development and Territorial Planning of Industry, The New Fabian Research Bureau, 1934, especially pp. 27-33 regarding a National Industrial and Commercial Siting Board.
- ¹⁴ For instance Alker Tripp's ideas on precincts were published in his Road Traffic and its Control of 1938. Thomas Sharp's influential work, Town and Country Planning, was also already finished, although it appeared in 1940 as a Penguin.

CHAPTER III

Development of Reconstruction Policy during the War

The case for national planning put forward by the Barlow Report was rather suddenly in the limelight as a result of the air raid on London in September 1940, followed by a series of heavy blitzes throughout the country. As Ian McCallum, author of the Architect Journal's weekly feature 'Note and Topics' in 1945 retrospected

From the moment of this first big attack on London the interest of the British people in planning was awakened; it began in fervent hope and determination to use the damage done by bombs to good purpose.¹

The interest was so keen that

the mere contemplation of plans for the future was a stimulus to the almost back-breaking efforts of the present. Hopes loomed vaguely but largely behind the dust and smoke of war damage and the uncertainty of the struggle itself.²

In early 1941 the Minister responsible called for expert assistance in planning the future Britain, and also told the blitzed local authorities to plan boldly and comprehensively. But hopes were gradually disappointed as the Government adopted ad hoc solutions to the immediate problems. In particular, the faith in experts in making plans for the future Britain, which was characteristic of the time, did not achieve very much at the national level because of the Government's fear of drastic change and its preference for the conventional approach. As McCallum observed in 1945

Four years have passed since this bold planning began; and now the scene has changed in a most significant way. The bold conceptions are being analyzed down into detail, and every detail is a cause of

controversy. The well-known slogan First Things First, that gained such currency in the planning period of the mid-war years, has quietly changed its meaning. It no longer suggests that the most important post-war aims should be firmly placed in the forefront, but that the most immediate ones are all we have time to consider.³

* * * *

The realisation, of the 1930s, about the need for national planning gained even further currency as the war went on. Because of the devastation caused by enemy action, town planning provided a focal point for discussion about Britain's post-war future. In particular, public interest centred around the replanning of the heavily damaged city centres. During the winter of 1941-42 the BBC broadcast a series of weekly talks, entitled 'Making Plans'. In the first programme of the series, 'Bombed Out', a London manufacturer said

The bombs are levelling our old cities. In my view there's got to be a lot more levelling, not only of old slums and buildings, but of outworn institutions too; and a better opportunity and more security for the majority than there has ever been before. That can only be achieved if private and sectional plans are fitted into national schemes, and judged in the light of the national balance sheet. ...

The key to it all lies in a true democracy where all of us can play our part, both in making plans, and in carrying them out. That's what most of us are fighting for.⁴

Despite the talk of 'democracy', however, the most remarkable feature of those days was 'an almost boundless professional self-confidence among architects and others involved with town planning'.⁵ The Town and Country Planning Association (thus renamed in 1941, incorporating the Garden City Association and the Town Planning Association) remained the most active propaganda body. Its annual conferences became the hub of

discussion about contemporary thinking.⁶ No less important were its publications such as The Rebuilding Britain Series⁷ (started in 1941) and The Planning and Reconstruction Year Book⁸ started in 1942, both including comprehensive material on a wide range of issues related to town planning. Another important body was The Royal Institute of British Architects [RIBA], the views of which were most comprehensively advanced in Rebuilding Britain, published for their Exhibition held in February 1943.⁹ Although there were some contrary views of what was needed (notably in regard to the question of density) among various bodies and individuals, there was an agreed conclusion that drastic change would be inevitable in replanning the country, especially the areas which had been badly damaged by the air raids.

The initial response of the Government to the blitz was swift and promising. In October 1940, Lord Reith was appointed as Minister of Works and Buildings, and was personally charged with responsibility for reporting to the Cabinet on methods and machinery for reconstruction of town and country after the war. In January 1941, Reith announced that the Government accepted a recommendation of the Barlow Commission to set up an Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment, and Mr. Justice Uthwatt's Committee was accordingly appointed. On 26 February, Reith told the House of Lords that the Government accepted the principles of national planning and of a Central Planning Authority. He also announced the establishment of a Consultative Panel on Physical Reconstruction, to which he said he attached great importance, and the beginning of an examination of planning problems through consultation with experts outside the Government. Meanwhile Reith encouraged the London County Council to make a plan with the help of Professor Abercrombie, a leading figure in the town planning of the time. He also chose Coventry, Birmingham, Bristol and Southampton as test cases for the survey of the

existing planning system and of its future requirements. Most importantly he told them and many other severely damaged local authorities to plan boldly and comprehensively.

The Uthwatt Committee published its Interim Report in June 1941 (Cmd. 6291), just six months after its appointment. Its recommendations were: the adoption of the value of land at 31 March 1939, as the 'ceiling' price for public acquisition; the setting up of a Central Planning Authority as soon as possible; and the definition of 'reconstruction areas' (i.e. areas of substantial devastation caused by enemy action and such areas as were likely to be involved in consequent schemes of redevelopment) within which no building should be permitted, except under central licence, until reconstruction schemes had been prepared. On 17 July, Lord Reith announced that the Government accepted the Committee's recommendations in principle. It was also suggested that, pending the creation of the central planning authority in its final form, a Council of Ministers - consisting of Reith as chairman, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the Minister of Health - would work together. In October Lord Justice Scott's Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas was appointed to consider the rural repercussions of the Barlow Report policy of decongestion and dispersal.¹⁰

Behind the scenes intensive consideration was also being given among the civil servants to the question of replanning the devastated areas caused by enemy action. By the end of February 1941, the results of test surveys of four blitzed cities were brought to the Interdepartmental Committee of officials on Reconstruction. The chief inspector of the surveys pointed out that the most urgent requirements were: firm and more positive interim control to be conferred upon the planning authority; the preparation of outline plans by the local planning authority as soon as possible for the guidance of such control; and more

simplified and expedited powers of purchase which should apply not only to the sites of destroyed buildings but to areas of convenient shape and size capable of being redeveloped as units.¹¹ Consequently strenuous efforts were made to draft a Bill which would provide machinery for the reconstruction of devastated areas, and strengthen the planning system so as to prevent prejudice to reconstruction during the war and immediate post-war period. Of particular importance was the contribution of this Interdepartmental Committee's Sub-Committee (under the chair of T.D. Harrison, Ministry of Health) whose various reports 'formed the basis of much of the legislation which was eventually enacted in the early post-war years.'¹² By November 1941 the Harrison Committee had completed two important reports; the first one recommended the amending legislation extending interim development control over the country; the second one dealt with the provisions related to 'Reconstruction Areas'.¹³

Thus, by November, Reith was in a position to submit a draft Town and Country (Reconstruction) Bill to the Cabinet Committee on Reconstruction Problems. At the meeting of the Committee, however, the main discussion centred around the nature of the proposed central planning authority, which was a first indication of a lack of coherence in the Government's decision making. On 11 February 1942, Reith announced the Government's decision to establish a Central Planning Authority by transferring the planning functions of the Ministry of Health to a renamed Ministry of Works and Planning. A fortnight later, however, Reith, 'distrusted by Churchill', was suddenly replaced by Lord Portal, and 'had to content himself with token honours for the rest of his life'.¹⁴ From then on the Government became more and more indecisive about important matters, and frustration soon mounted among experts at large.

Gone with Lord Reith was his Consultative Panel on Physical Reconstruction. Members had been recruited in early 1941 from various fields concerned with planning, and divided into groups to consider and advise the Minister¹⁶ on such questions as the recruitment and training of planners; the strengthening of planning control over the design and external appearance of buildings, with a view to providing a system of guidance on the technique of development;¹⁷ the preparation of a series of maps, to similar scale and size, with a view to reserving land for agriculture and for recreational purposes or as national parks; and the study of industries suitable for location in country areas.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the publication of the Uthwatt Interim Report and the preparation of a Town Planning (Reconstruction) Bill necessitated the setting up of a subgroup to consider special problems arising on the redevelopment of Reconstruction areas - the exercise of compulsory purchase power by local authorities and the method of redevelopment, redevelopment finance, and procedure and priority of work in such areas.¹⁹

Interestingly at its second meeting of 10 October 1941, the unofficial members in the group expressed views as to the undesirability of local authorities' large scale purchase, and redevelopment and estate management. They argued that the ultimate use of the purchase power would be unduly restrictive of private enterprise;²⁰ the probable cost of purchasing central areas would be so great as to be quite beyond the local authority's resources;²¹ and if the local authority were allowed to acquire and develop considerable areas of land a local land monopoly might be created and the local authority would have a powerful vested interest in the use of the land.²² Ministry officials were not impressed with such views. One thought that 'we are fighting for democracy and I see no reason why we should not give local authorities the chance to rise to their responsibilities'.²³ In the end it was agreed to have a further

meeting to consider this subject along with others. No further meetings, however, seemed to have been held. The curtailment of the reconstruction Bill obviously poured cold water on the initiative. As a Ministry official pointed out to one outside member, it would not include any provisions for Reconstruction areas; and, he continued, 'On this footing the fundamental questions which the Group discussed will not arise on this Bill'.²⁴

The Panel itself soon ceased to function. Once Lord Reith was dismissed the officials of the Ministry became more and more cautious about any consultative machinery on such a large scale. Moreover, while the setting up of the new Ministry of Works and Planning would require the re-organisation of the structure and work of the existing staff, the officials also felt that it would take rather a long time to create a proper Central Planning Authority. As one official put it, they should 'not get the complete picture' until they had created the new planning system.²⁵ When the Ministry of Town and Country Planning was eventually set up in 1943, one of the original members of the Panel sent a letter to the new Minister, which illustrates the frustration of the members. As he put it:

A number of us were appointed as members of a Panel by Lord Reith. Has this Panel lapsed on the creation of the new Ministry? And if so will a new one be appointed? I was asked to serve on a committee to deal with the practical problem of redevelopment of city centres, and this made a start and promised to be useful. Is there any intention to call it, or a similar committee, together again?²⁶

* * * *

The publication of the Scott Committee's Report (Cmd. 6378) in August and of the Uthwatt Committee's Final Report (Cmd. 6386) in

September 1942 intensified the voices urging the need for immediate positive action by the Government. Within the Ministry of Works and Planning anxiety about the effect on public opinion of any Government prevarication regarding the two Reports caused concern even before their publication. Arguing for the appointment of a 'top-notch' public relations officer, one official deplored the lack of positive publicity:

The prime justification for the existence of a Ministry of Planning during the war is one of morale. Its success or failure must be largely measured by whether it is making people more hopeful of the future and thereby more willing to endure the present. The best way of achieving this is by producing visible results i.e., legislation. When this is impossible, the next best way is to explain why the results are not immediately forthcoming and to give assurance that everything possible is being done to produce them and that they will, in fact, be produced by the time they are really needed.²⁷

Thus, for the moment, it was imperative for such a public relations officer to 'attempt to persuade the public that only a short Bill on immediate emergency measures is possible this year [1942] and that implementation of Scott and Uthwatt [Reports] must wait over until later.'²⁸

The publication of Uthwatt's Final Report was believed to remove, as The Times put it, 'the last excuse for further postponement of official action in the field of national planning',²⁹ and its contents were discussed in the most heated way. Its main recommendations were:

1. The State acquisition of development rights of all land outside built-up areas, with fair compensation on a "global" basis in ratio to market values at 31st March, 1939, such land to be compulsorily acquired at the residual agricultural value if and when needed for development, and to be granted to the developer on leasehold only.

2. Powers to be given to planning authorities to purchase war-damaged and obsolete or unsatisfactory built-up areas needing redevelopment as a whole. All land so acquired to be leased, not sold outright.
3. A periodic levy of 75 per cent of the increase of annual site values of all developed land, whatever the reason for such increase of values, the values to be assessed quinquennially for rating purposes.
4. An expedited procedure for compulsory acquisition of land.

Not surprisingly there were strong objections to the Uthwatt proposals from the landowners' organisations. The National Federation of Property Owners, for instance, regarded the Uthwatt proposals as 'a fatal deterrent to individual initiative, thrift, and enterprise'. Claiming that the increase in the value of land was created more often by the enterprise of individual owners than by the State or local authorities, they argued:

The majority of the proposals are aimed at avoiding the rights and freedoms of individuals, and would mean the creation of officials at whose mercy the property owner would be. Some of the methods suggested would cause a grave injustice to owners of property - dictatorship methods, in fact.³⁰

At the other extreme the Labour Party argued that 'The Uthwatt Report does not appear to indicate a clear comprehension of the difficulties confronting Planning or Housing Authorities in urban areas'. The high cost of urban land, especially in the central areas of larger towns, had so far prevented local authorities from providing open spaces or working-class houses in such areas because of the fear of heavy rate burdens on their ratepayers. The only satisfactory solution was, they argued, 'nationalization of urban land':

Once the land was nationalized, the State would either lease or sell to the Planning Authorities the land comprised in their area. These authorities would then be in a position to plan their areas as a whole, and develop them to the best advantage regardless of what any particular price of land had originally cost. ... In this way open spaces, housing, public buildings, commercial buildings, and industry could each be sited in the most suitable and convenient position.³¹

Nevertheless, the Labour Party eventually conceded:

if fairly and carefully administered, ... the periodic levy of 75 per cent of the increases in annual site values, with all its defects, might be accepted as a step in the right direction. It is a valuable though partial recognition of the principle that increases in site values, in a special sense, are created by efforts and activities of the community, and properly belong to the community. Whatever are the defects of the proposed levy, it cannot be impugned on the ground that it is injustice to owners of land.³²

In 1943 criticism was focused on the Government's inability to announce its findings. In February 1943 the Town and Country Planning Act was passed, establishing a new Ministry to take over the planning functions of the Ministry of Works and to concentrate solely on planning. Then in July the Town and Country Planning (Interim Development) Act was passed to bring under planning control from an 'operative date' (22 October 1943) land which was not yet subject to a scheme or resolution under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1932. These measures, however, could not really tranquillise the widespread impatience. As a Times leader stated in October 1943 it had been suggested that:

the difficulties [for the government] are centred upon the Uthwatt proposals for a national requisitioning of the development rights in land lying outside built-up areas and for an expedited and enlarged power of

purchase by local authorities of land within those areas. If so it will be wiser policy to publish the nature of these difficulties than to maintain an evasive official silence. By such a course opinion would at least be instructed, and the chances of a practicable solution advanced. Without some such disclosure the suspicion will grow that the reports have been successfully resisted by interests affected by them, and their effective consideration indefinitely postponed. Yet if the Uthwatt recommendations or some other proposals of equivalent effect were not essential as a preliminary to a reconstruction programme, the Government would have had no occasion to appoint the Committee at all.³³

Just two days after this article, W.S. Morrison, the Minister of Town and Country Planning announced that the Government's findings on the Uthwatt Report were almost 'ready for presentation'. They were, however, the mere acceptance of the two pledges already given, i.e. the principle of the public acquisition of all land in reconstruction areas, and the principle of the compensation for the public acquisition or control of land not exceeding the standard of value at 31 March 1939. At the same time he underlined the fact that the Government had been determined not to be hustled into premature conclusions:

There are some who speak as though the Uthwatt report was a panacea of all planning difficulties, as though all that the Government had to do was to say "Aye" and all the problems of the planning would then automatically sort themselves out like a complete jigsaw puzzle ... The Report does not pretend ... to provide a blueprint of all the administrative machinery which their solution would demand.

The Government pledges on the Uthwatt report mean that the local authorities can go ahead with the making of plans, secure in the knowledge that they will have possession of the land in those areas. The planning authority of every district should now review

its resources and its needs into the stark light of 1943 and make a plan to balance them.³⁴

* * * *

Meanwhile the Uthwatt proposals had been considered by a sub-committee of officials of various Departments, again under the chair of T.D. Harrison.³⁵ At the end of 1942 an official of the Ministry of Works and Planning on the committee, reporting to L. Neal (Deputy Secretary of the Ministry) on the progress of its work, said:

In this connection, I should like to raise once again the urgency of the contemplated investigation into Coventry and other "blitzed" areas. At their meeting yesterday, ... the committee were informed, forcefully, by the representative of the Valuation Department that the cost of land acquisition in reconstruction areas will reach astronomical figures. If this is so it is of the highest importance that before we introduce the Reconstruction Areas Bill in May we should have the broad measure of the problem and know the lines on which it is proposed to deal with the matter.³⁶

Within the Ministry of Works and Planning, the setting up of a Blitzed Cities Committee had been contemplated and, by September 1942, the scope and nature of its task was already drafted by Neal, but had been postponed pending the establishment of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning (hereafter MOTCP). Now in February 1943, Neal urged Whiskard, Secretary of the Ministry, to take up the matter immediately. Problems which the local authorities had to face in the reconstruction of the central areas of the blitzed cities would 'transcend local interest, and constitute one of the earliest - and most formidable - task of national planning':

This is a matter in which not only the population of the cities concerned, but the public generally, may be expected to take a

keen interest. They would probably not be content to leave to a Government Department the task of formulating the principles to be followed. It is therefore suggested that a small committee, so constituted as to command public confidence, should be appointed, and should be asked to advise, within a short period, on the problems and the programme of the reconstruction of central urban areas.³⁷

Whiskard was somewhat concerned about the publicity which would be inevitable given a formal committee. Accordingly the Minister held a meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary, Whiskard, Neal and Pepler, and it was agreed that the Minister would invite a small team of unofficial advisers to assist his officers in making a study of the matter.³⁸

The Advisory Panel on Redevelopment of City Centres was appointed in May 1943.³⁹ Its terms of reference were:

To examine the main planning issues involved in the redevelopment of city centres which have been devastated by bombing, to redefine and measure the problems of finance and organisation connected therewith and to set out the relevant considerations on which central and local Government policy in regard to such redevelopment should be based.⁴⁰

It was pointed out that the Panel's problem could be solved 'only by visits to some of the cities concerned and by discussions with the responsible people on the spot'.⁴¹ Accordingly seven cities were chosen (Southampton, Portsmouth, Coventry, Swansea, Bristol, Hull and Plymouth) and visited by the Panel by the end of 1943. In selecting cities, they excluded 'on the one hand, the "conurbations" such as London and Liverpool', for they had their own quite special problems. On the other hand, 'the medium sized or small towns such as Exeter and Canterbury' were also excluded on the understanding that

the general run of our findings can be applied broadly to other cities and towns whose centres have been heavily damaged. It should be remarked, however, that the cities chosen by us illustrate devastation in its severest form.⁴²

Just before the Panel submitted their report to the Minister of Town and Country Planning in August 1944, the Government's answer to the Uthwatt proposals finally appeared in June as the White Paper on Land Use (Cmd. 6537) and the Town and Country Planning Bill. The former, mainly concerned with Uthwatt's Development Rights Scheme, did not contain the settled policy of the Government, but presented some modified thoughts on their own suggestions for public discussion to discover what measure of support they might command. It was the latter, which provided the measures for the acquisition of land for the purpose of redeveloping the air raided and obsolete central parts of towns, that could and had to be settled urgently. There were difficulties in reaching agreement with all concerned. After lengthy debates at all levels and consequent amendments the Bill eventually received the Royal Assent in November 1944.⁴³ Dissatisfaction was, however, rife, especially among the local authorities concerned. A 1939 'standard' instead of 'ceiling' basis of compensation, for instance, would prevent local authorities from buying much land at less than 1939 prices. On the other hand, the pressure from many Conservative politicians who did not like the idea that landowners could get no more than 1939 prices for compensation had led to a supplementary payment to all owner-occupiers up to 30 per cent of the 1939 value of the payments. Government assistance under the Act was a grant equal to the loan charges for two years on the cost of purchase and leaving of land in war-damaged areas, such grants possibly being extended to ten years, after which time it was assumed that the Reconstruction Scheme would be self-supporting (i.e. the local authority's receipts from

the scheme would be sufficient to meet the outgoings). Many local authorities regarded this as a too optimistic view since their schemes would usually provide ample open spaces and other amenities which would not produce rate revenue.

The Minister of Town and Country Planning claimed that the new Act showed 'the welcome green light to those who wanted to get on with the rebuilding of our bombed towns and cities'.⁴⁴ But, as The Times pointed out, the general feeling was that the only legitimate excuse for the enactment of such imperfect measures was that 'to delay further the legislative remedy for the war-damaged areas is a choice which cannot seriously be made'.⁴⁵ The criticism from socialists was much more acute. As G.D.H. Cole and R. Postgate put it, for instance, the Uthwatt proposals had been

hotly opposed by landowners and anti-socialists, and after long delays were finally rejected by the Government without any alternative plans covering most of the ground being put forward in their place. As the war advanced it became increasingly plain that any measures of post-war reconstruction which in any way limited private property rights or proposed an extension of public ownership would be strenuously resisted by vested interests both in and outside Parliament and by the main body of Conservative and capitalist opinion.⁴⁶

The provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 were in fact no less disappointing to members of the Ministry's Advisory Panel on Redevelopment of City Centres. Originally it was hoped that the Panel would help the officials of the various Government Departments in drawing up the Town and Country Planning Bill. The Panel emphasised, from their observations on the heavily damaged towns, that any financial arrangement between the Government and local authority should make it possible for local authorities to choose such plans and programmes as would secure the

long-term interests of the community at large, rather than those that might, at the expense of proper planning, most quickly restore local rateable values.⁴⁷ Consequently their recommendations in regard to Government financial assistance for the redevelopment of city centres was fairly generous. Under their scheme Central Government would make good the local authority's net deficit on its Reconstruction revenue for twelve years. If a local authority's reconstruction accounts for any year should show a net deficit, Central Government would provide an advance of that amount. At the end of twelve years, should there be advances still outstanding, Central Government would, as a justifiable national charge, cancel them.⁴⁸ Moreover, while it was practically certain that there would be a short-term net deficit during the first twelve years, it was also possible that there might in certain instances be a longer-term net deficit too, because the Reconstruction plan would often justifiably necessitate a destruction or shift of old site values; the time taken over rebuilding together with high buildings costs would make it difficult to re-establish new values; and there might be other unfavourable factors outside the control of local authorities (e.g. the reconstruction scheme of itself might not prove fully successful in attracting new development, or the town itself might at some future time decline in prosperity).⁴⁹ For this reason it would be necessary to consider methods of continued Government financial assistance in the long-term period,⁵⁰ and of establishing organisations to secure maximum speed of reconstruction, both of which were virtually ignored by the 1944 Act.⁵¹

The Panel's elaborate consideration, however, did not really exert any particular influence on the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Bill. In early 1945 an 'abridged' version of the Panel's Report was sent to about 60 local authorities, including the seven cities which

it visited, as a private circulation. There was no mention of the unofficial members, the seven cities chosen preserved anonymity, and any part related to their own recommendation about the twelve-year financial assistance had to be omitted as superseded by the 1944 Act. In reply to the Chairman of the Panel, who proudly claimed that the report had been well received,⁵² one outside expert member said:

I am so glad that the Report has been considered useful but it makes me regret that it could not have been sent out in its original form with the backing of legislation - it would then, I think, have been of real service.⁵³

Thus towards the end of the war it was quite clearly felt that bold and comprehensive planning with the aid of experts, promised by the Government in the early days of the war, was now withering away. One obvious reason for this was the Government's retreat from a bold and more interventionist stance to a concern with economising and protecting private interests. On the other hand, the Government did not really lay any particular importance on experts, as the cases of Lord Reith's Consultative Panel and the Advisory Panel of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning clearly indicate. At the same time these experts were, apart from their hostility to the present state of affairs, radically divided about what was needed, and could not offer the public consensus about the ideal society of the future. There was certainly conflict between modernism and traditionalism among the architects and planners which may have inhibited their capacity to mobilise public opinion on these issues. Some experts on the Consultant Panel, who were themselves the officers of the local authorities, expressed their doubt of the competence of local authorities to undertake the redevelopment (see pp. 6-7). Although these experts became fairly confident in the ability of local authorities by the time they sat on the Advisory Panel on

Redevelopment of City Centres, the essence of their proposals did not see the light of day due to the Government's, if not the Ministry's, neglect of them. Because of the highly technical nature of town planning, the failure of experts to consolidate their divergent views more often resulted in the fading-out of interest on the part of the public, rather than their positive participation in the decision-making process. Not surprisingly experts were now afraid that the enthusiasm among the public, once looming so large, was almost disappearing. As one authority put it, town planning was 'for the mass of the people ... still something shapeless and remote from their daily lives ... There is no reason why discussion of planning issues should not become at least as widespread and as intelligent as the recent discussions on Beveridge.'⁵⁴

The local authorities had to replan their blitzed city centres under such difficult and indeed rather unpromising circumstances. There were also other sets of factors to be reckoned with at the same time, such as the quick restoration of the loss of the rateable value destroyed by enemy action; the towns' industrial and demographic future; the local authority's ownership of land as against the concerns of certain private interests. As these factors had close relevance to the town's economic, social and political characteristics and the effect of devastation caused by air raids, it is now necessary to make a close examination of these points with regard to the three case studies in this thesis.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Ian R.M. McCallum (ed.), Physical Planning, (1945), p. 11.
- ² ibid., xi.
- ³ ibid., xi.
- ⁴ This series was collected in a book, F.J. Osborn (ed.), Making Plans, (1943). The quotation in the text is on p. 10.
- The BBC approached the Ministry of Works and Buildings in January 1941 about broadcasting on reconstruction. An outline of a series was prepared by the BBC in July and, after intensive discussion between it and the Ministry, the broadcast began in December 1941, for 24 weeks. See HLG 71/1253, letter from A.H. Jenkins to E.S. Hill (both officials of the Ministry), 4 August 1942.
- ⁵ Alison Ravetz, Remaking Cities, (1980), p. 24.
- ⁶ Summarised reports of these conferences were published by Faber and Faber Ltd. See for example:
- F.E. Towndrow (ed.), Replanning Britain (for the Oxford Conference of March 1941);
- H. Bryant Newbold (ed.), Industry and Rural Life (for the Cambridge Conference of March 1942);
- Donald Tyerman (ed.), Ways and Means of Rebuilding (for the London Conference of July 1943).
- ⁷ Published by Faber and Faber Limited.
- ⁸ Published by Todd Publishing Company.
- ⁹ The Royal Institute of British Architects, Rebuilding Britain, (1943). The Architectural Press also published Towards a New Britain for this Exhibition.
- The RIBA set up a Reconstruction Committee in March 1941. Its first conclusions are in The Journal of the R.I.B.A., XLIX, 1942.
- ¹⁰ F.J. Osborn (ed.), Planning and Reconstruction Year Book 1944-5, pp. 238-247.
- ¹¹ HLG 71/1570, 'Bombed Areas - Redevelopment', Notes on Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry and Southampton by G.L. Pepler (Ministry of Health), 28 February 1941. This report was submitted to the third meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee of officials on Reconstruction on 14 March 1941. See HLG 86/24.
- ¹² J.B. Cullingworth, Environmental Planning 1939-1969, Volume I, Reconstruction and Land Use Planning 1939-1947, HMSO, (1975), p. 59.
- ¹³ As for the Harrison Committee, see HLG 86/22 & 23, and Cab 117/114.
- ¹⁴ Ravetz, Remaking Cities, op. cit., p. 20. As for this replacement, also see John C.W. Reith, Into the Wind (1949), pp. 440-47.
- ¹⁵ As for personnel, see HLG 86/3, which contains a list of members.

¹⁶ The setting up of the Panel was decided at the fourth meeting of the War Cabinet Committee on Reconstruction of Town and Country, 27 January 1941 (See Cab 87/21). However, John Anderson, Lord President of Privy Council, insisted that the members of the Panel should be consulted individually and not as a body. (HLG 86/5, Letter to Lord Reith, 5 April 1941). Despite the pressure, Reith, supported by his officials (see e.g. HLG 86/5, Letter from Vincent to Reith 7 April 1941) was determined 'to choose the best method of working as we can go on' (HLG 86/5, Letter to Anderson, 8 April 1941) and held two meetings of the Panel as a whole. As for these two meetings held on 23 April 1941 and 30 October 1941 and related papers, see HLG 86/8.

¹⁷ This developed into the suggestion to prepare a manual for local authorities on the technique of redevelopment in central urban areas, a draft of which was nearly completed by the Panel's second meeting in October. See HLG 86/8, 'Note for the Minister before second meeting of 30/10/1941'.

¹⁸ While Vincent secured Lord Justice Scott as chairman of this group, he also proposed that it should be rather an independent committee than a group of the Panel. See HLG 86/3, Letter from Vincent to Whiskard (Secretary of the Ministry), 4 September 1941. Accordingly the Scott Committee was appointed in October 1941.

¹⁹ The decision was made as a result of a meeting of 1 August 1941 between Uthwatt and some other members of his Committee, Sir Cland Schuster (Lord Chancellor's Office), T.D. Harrison and Vincent.

Outside members of the new group were L.H. Keay (City Architect and Director of Housing of Liverpool), H.J. Manzoni (City Engineer and Surveyor of Birmingham), D.A. Radley (Town Clerk of Leeds, and President of the Town Planning Institute), F.J. Osborn (Hon. Secretary to the Town and Country Planning Association), H. Chambers (Surveyor, acted for the Duchy of Cornwall), with J.W. Morris, K.C., as chairman.

As for the group's two meetings and related papers, see HLG 86/27.

²⁰ Argued by Manzoni.

²¹ Argued by Keay, who alternatively suggested pooling of ownership and a public redevelopment Trust.

²² Argued by Chambers.

²³ HLG 86/27, Letter from G.L. Pepler to Vincent, 29 October 1941.

²⁴ HLG 86/27, Letter from Vincent to Chambers, 18 February 1942.

²⁵ HLG 86/2, Letter from Vincent to E.S. Hill, 11 March 1942.

²⁶ HLG 86/3, Letter from F.J. Osborn to W.R.S. Harrison, 23 March 1943.

²⁷ HLG 71/1253, Letter from Jenkins to Hill, op. cit.

²⁸ *ibid.*

- 29 The Times, 10 September 1942.
- 30 A special Memorandum of the National Federation of Property Owners on the Uthwatt Report, cited in Phoebe Pool and Flora Stephenson, A Plan for Town and Country, (1944), p. 42.
- 31 'Housing and Planning After the war', a report prepared for the Party's Annual Conference of June 1943, p. 10. The report was based on an article by Lewis Silkin, 'The Nation's Land', appeared in Fabian Research Series Vol. 6, no. 70, March 1943.
- 32 Later Herbert Morrison was to tell the Party's 1945 Conference, the nationalisation of land was not to be included in the Party's immediate post-war programme. As he went on:
Surely during this period - a period of first things first - as long as we have the power to purchase land at a fair price and expeditiously, as long as we can buy up the insufficient landowner in agricultural areas, that is enough for the time being, and the bigger project can follow later.
(The Labour Party Annual Report 1945, p. 91)
Some local authority representatives had been urging upright nationalisation and often could not see eye to eye the views held by the National Executive Committee. (See for example, Annual Report 1942, pp. 164 & 165; 1943, pp. 202-5; and 1944, p. 201. As Lewis Silkin, the Party's spokesman on town planning, himself admitted at the 1945 Conference, the Party's policy regarding land was 'not altogether adequate', and said that he 'should therefore have welcomed a much bolder and more imaginative policy'. (The Labour Party Annual Report 1945, p. 124.)
- 33 The Times, 5 October 1943
- 34 At the opening session of the National Housing and Town Planning Conference in London, 7 October 1943. The Coventry Evening Telegraph, (hereafter CET).
- 35 See Cullingworth, Environmental Planning 1939-1969, op. cit., pp. 90-93.
- 36 HLG 88/8, Letter from E.S. Hill to L. Neal, 31 December 1942.
- 37 HLG 88/8, Note by L. Neal to Whiskard, 4 February 1943.
- 38 HLG 88/8, Note by L. Neal on a meeting held on 25 February 1943.
- 39 Members of the Panel were:
unofficial: H. Chambers (Surveyor acted for the Duchy of Cornwall)
Col. M.D. Methven (North Eastern Trading Estate ltd.)
H.J. Manzoni (City Engineer and Surveyor, Birmingham)
- MTCP: G.L. Pepler, J.A. Stewart, H.W. Wells, A.M. Jenkins, with L. Neal as chairman.

- 40 HLG 88/9, 'Report of Advisory Panel on Redevelopment of City Centres' (hereafter Panel's Report), 2 August 1944, para. 1. The terms of reference were based on Neal's note on the task of a Blitzed Cities Committee, 4 September 1942 (HLG 88/8).
- 41 HLG 88/9, Panel's Report, op. cit., para. 6.
- 42 *ibid.*
- 43 For details see Cullingworth, Environmental Planning 1939-1969, op. cit., ch. 4.
- 44 The Minister in the broadcast on 19 November 1944, reported in The Times, 20 November 1944.
- 45 The Times, 25 October 1944.
- 46 G.D.H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People, (1946) (revised edition), p. 673.
- 47 HLG 88/9, Panel's Report, op. cit., para. 30.
- 48 *ibid.*, paras. 50 & 78.
- 49 *ibid.*, paras. 53 - 69.
- 50 *ibid.*, paras. 81 & 82.
- 51 As for the Panel's recommendations with regard to organisation, see *ibid.*, Section III (paras. 83 - 109).
- 52 See letters from the local authorities and the Ministry's Regional Planning Officers to the Ministry, HLG 88/15.
- 53 HLG 88/15, Letter from Manzoni to Neal, 13 April 1945.
- 54 E.M. Nicholson, 'Democracy', in R.M. McCullum (ed.), Physical Planning, op. cit., pp. 19 & 20. Also see 'What People in Britain are thinking and talking about', Mass Observation File Report no. 1647.

CHAPTER IV

Pre-war Character of Bristol, Coventry, and Southampton, and the extent of destruction caused by enemy action

This chapter depicts the character of the three cities - Bristol, Coventry and Southampton - from the economic, social, political and town planning points of view. Then it shows the extent of destruction caused by the German blitz, such as damage to property and loss of rateable value.

Special mention is made of the pre-war re-planning of the central area of Coventry, where the question had been exceptionally hotly discussed. This will show why comprehensive re-planning of the city centre was not possible at this time. At the same time it will suggest why Coventry could later adopt with such determination and speed the City Architect's bold plan for a new city centre after the blitz of November 1940.

* * * *

Bristol¹

Situated on the River Avon about five miles from the Severn estuary, Bristol had grown to be a world port, the main city of the west of England, and the centre of commercial activity and of University life. At the beginning of this century its population was already well over 300,000. By 1939 it had grown to beyond the 400,000 mark.

Table IV.1Growth of Population

Year	Bristol	%**	Southampton	%**	Coventry	%**
1901	328,945	83	104,824	60	69,978	42
1911	357,048	90	119,012	68	106,349	64
1921	376,975	95	160,994	91	128,157	77
1931	396,918	100	176,025	100	167,046	100
1938	*415,500	105	*180,100	102	+229,900	138
1939	*419,200	106	*181,400	103	+224,267	134

(Sources: Census and * Treasurers' Reports,
+ Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health.
** 1931 = 100

The port was one of the chief centres of maritime trade in the country, and served a very large area, including the western and south-western counties, Birmingham and the Midlands. The population which it served amounted to twelve and a half million within a 100 mile radius. The trade of the port was mainly one of imports of all kinds, such as grain, bananas, tobacco, oil and metals, dairy products and seasonings.

Yet Bristol was not dependent exclusively on its port. The industries of Bristol were remarkable for their variety, there being about 300 different types in all. The industries which employed a large number of workers included building and contracting, general engineering, vehicle and aircraft building, transport and communication, paper and printing, distributive trades, and food, drink and tobacco. Government service (national and local) and professions and entertainments were other important sources of employment. Bristol was therefore to some extent immune from those consequences of depression experienced in other centres where there was a dependency on one or two staple industries only.

Politically the local Labour Party obtained for the first time a majority on the City Council in 1937. In the following year, however, the Citizen Party (a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals) wiped it out.² Consequently the two parties, with 56 representatives each, were to share power between them for the duration of the war.

As the city grew bigger, there was considerable building activity, especially in the interwar period. A total of 36,000 houses was built during these years, 14,000 of them by the Corporation. The City Council was also well advanced in planning outer areas - whether inside or beyond its formal boundaries.

In March 1923 the City Council set up a Town Planning Committee and appointed B.F. Brueton as executive Planning Officer to act under the supervision of the City Engineer. The new Committee soon invited the neighbouring local authorities to form the Bristol and Bath and District Joint Regional Planning Committee. The Joint Regional Planning Committee, although disbanded by the time the war broke out, had published in 1930 a Regional Survey and Plan prepared by Professor Abercrombie and B.F. Brueton. When the war broke out the Corporation had five statutory schemes comprising 95,765 acres, of which more than 78,862 acres were outside the city.³

The planning machinery of the Council had also been strengthened during the 1930s. In June 1932 Marston Webb was appointed as the new City Engineer and was responsible for the preparation and supervision of town planning schemes. In May 1938 J. Nelson Meredith was appointed as the City Architect, to carry out the whole of the architectural requirements of the Corporation. He was also asked to collaborate with the Engineer in the preparation and administration of town planning schemes where it was necessary to take into account the design of buildings.⁴

When it came to the replanning of the central area, however, there was no comprehensive planning scheme. The city centre served as a regional centre of commercial and cultural activities with long traditions. Its hilly topography had created, however, a difficult situation. As factories and commercial premises concentrated in the limited flat spaces, the central area became very congested, and there were no extensive open spaces, only small patches scattered all over it.

The main shopping area was along a west-east route following Wine Street and Castle Street. This area was closely confined by the two rivers, the Avon to the south and the Frome to the north, which were only 150 yards apart. Consequently, development there had been extremely dense along very narrow and tortuous streets.

Traffic congestion was also acute in the central area. Bristol was the principal focus of all traffic within its region, and was the meeting place of ten first-class radial roads. These roads amalgamated within the city and concentrated most of their traffic on Bristol Bridge and The Centre (the space provided by the covering up of the river Frome). There had been various attempts to relieve the problem. Among the schemes tried was the construction of the southern part of an inner ring road known as Redcliffe Way and Temple Way.

In 1935 a scheme to create an 11-acre civic centre in the College Green area was ratified.⁵ When war broke out the construction of a dignified neo-Georgian Council House (one of the last products of the great town hall and civic building boom of the interwar period) had been well advanced. Generally speaking, however, there was not much enthusiasm for the comprehensive replanning of the central part of Bristol, as existed in Coventry and, to some extent, in Southampton. As

we shall see later, it was the experience and the opportunity provided by the German blitz that inspired the serious consideration of the matter.

* * * *

Southampton⁶

Southampton in 1939 was a town of 180,000 inhabitants. It ranked first amongst British ports for passenger traffic and fourth for freight trade, and was often called the 'Gateway to England', being located within easy and convenient reach of London, the Midlands and the West. Not surprisingly its main industries were shipping, shipbuilding and repairing, and other ancillary industries included the manufacture of cables, growing and supplying farm and garden seeds, tobacco, margarine, and flour mills.

Politically the Ratepayers' party (a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals) had been the majority party on the Borough Council. As a result of the 1938 local elections, their representatives were 12 Aldermen and 28 Councillors, while the Labour Party had 25 representatives - two Aldermen and 23 Councillors, although Labour polled 296 votes more than the Ratepayers' party in that election. (19,857 to 19,561)⁷

Southampton's rapid growth took place with the development of the docks. The Old Docks were begun in 1838, the railway from London arrived in 1844, and so prompted a rapid increase in the transatlantic shipping trade. In 1934 the New Docks were opened, forming part of the Extension Scheme of the reclamation of 407 acres of tidal mudland in the bay of the River Test, where many firms became established. Between 1918 and 1938 more than 18,700 houses were built, of which the Council were responsible for 4,450.

Yet towards the end of the 1930s there was a growing concern about the industrial future of Southampton. Councillor Matthews, deputy Labour

leader and acknowledged expert on town planning, argued in 1938, for example, that the fact that over one third of Southampton's workers were directly engaged in shipping and allied services made it too dependent on shipping which was in its turn too vulnerable to domestic and world trade. He also pointed out that the number of shipping workers had fallen from 17,000 in 1930 to 11,000 in 1938, not only because of the world-wide depression but also because of rationalisation in the industry, which was expected to continue for years to come. In conclusion he urged that it was 'in every way desirable that a variety of industrial development should be encouraged in Southampton.'⁸

Southampton's importance as a port had made its central area a commercial magnet of some consequence. The principal shopping street ran from the Civic Centre down to the Town Quay, and consisted of two sections, separated by the Bargate, known as Above Bar and High Street. The central area had developed with this street as its main north-south axis, in a form of 'internal ribbon development', measuring a mile long and a quarter mile wide.⁹

Within the central area the outstanding features were the new Civic Centre, the open spaces, and the remaining parts of the ancient walled town. The town was exceptionally blessed with extensive town parks stretching for half a mile through the heart of the central area, while within walking distance of it lay the Commons of 375 acres, still thickly wooded.

The new Civic Centre was another great asset to the town. Its origin dated back to proposals in the late nineteenth century for a Town Hall to replace the old Guildhall over the Bargate and the old municipal offices. After years of prevarication the Council eventually approved in 1928 a design by the London architect, Berry Webber and between 1932 and 1939 a complex of four blocks of buildings were erected: municipal

offices and Council Chambers; Law Courts and Police Offices; the Guildhall; and a General Public Library, Art Gallery and the School of Arts and Crafts. It was regarded as 'one of the best examples of inter-communicating civic buildings' in the country.¹⁰

Southampton's lengthy history had left its mark on the town in a varied collection of antiquities and historical remains. One fine example was the Bargate, which had formed the principal entrance on the north and was now preserved as an interesting feature in the middle of the main street. Its presence worsened, however, one of the serious problems in the central area - the traffic congestion in Above Bar - High Street. The Bargate interfered with the flow of traffic as it had only one arch for vehicles, and this was so narrow that only one line of traffic could pass through at a time.

Although this specific problem was partially relieved in 1938 by the City Council's scheme for the construction of two roadways around the outside of the Bargate, the traffic congestion in Above Bar - High Street continued to deteriorate. The crux of the matter was that this was the most direct route to and from the Docks, and at the same time the primary business and shopping street. Dock workers and passengers or visitors to and from the liners passed through it, while numbers of shoppers and businessmen tended to park alongside the kerbline leaving only the central portion of the roadway available for through traffic.

This problem was especially serious at the north end of Above Bar, i.e. at the junctions with Commercial Road and Civic Centre - New Road, where the congestion was worsened by the stream of cross traffic between the east and the west, and through traffic from the north. As the volume of traffic increased due to the opening of New Docks and the reclaimed land, the congestion became more and more serious.¹¹

The question of traffic congestion was much considered in the 1930s in connection with the replanning of the lower part (i.e. below the Bargate of the town). As the retail zone had extended northwards since the late nineteenth century, so that Above Bar had become outstandingly successful, High Street had declined in importance, and warehouses were interspersed with retail shops.¹² In 1934 the local Civic Society and the Chamber of Commerce presented reports on the question to the City Council. With the rejuvenation of business life in the area below Bargate as the primary object, they argued for not only the completion of the Bargate Scheme, but also the provisions of markets and car parking, the building of flats for the Dock workers, and a new north-south road from the Old Docks parallel to Above Bar - High Street.¹³

Planning problems in the central area had been brought to light in this way, and they had been to some extent considered by the City Council before the war broke out. For instance a preliminary plan for an alternative north-south road to Above Bar had been under consideration in the late 1930s.¹⁴ There were, however, serious defects in the planning machinery of the local authority. At the municipal level there was not even a full Town Planning Committee on the Borough Council, nor was there an independent Town Planning Department. And the town planner to the Corporation, who was anyway only an assistant to the Borough Engineer, had not been given full authority or responsibility in the matter. As we shall see later, it was not until the German blitz destroyed the town's central area that the redressing of these administrative defects was seriously considered by the Borough Council.

* * * *

Coventry¹⁵

Coventry in the late 1930s was both a mediaeval town, with many historic buildings and streets, and a rapidly expanding modern industrial city, producing a wide variety of goods - from motor vehicles and aero engines to artificial silk. It had a long and varied history of craftsmanship and industry. From the 14th to the 16th century it was the chief centre for woollen manufacture in the Midlands. Then it turned to silk ribbon weaving until the 1860s, and watch making until the 1880s, both of which fell into decay because of foreign competition. Its very rapid industrial expansion, however, started around the turn of the century with the coming of motor vehicle production, following the rise of the cycle industry in the 1890s, which soon became the principal trade of the city. There were added to this the aircraft industry, machine tools, rayon, radio and telephone equipment. The population grew at a very fast rate as its thriving industry and relatively high wages attracted immigrants from various parts of the country.

Within a decade up to 1938 nearly 26,000 houses were built, of which about 22,500 were erected by private enterprise.¹⁶ There was a remarkably high rate of house ownership, which was reflected in the rapid growth of building societies. For instance the Coventry Permanent Economic Building Society had increased their assets from a little more than £1,750,000 in 1932 to around £4,000,000 in 1937.¹⁷ The City Council was responsible for the planning of 25,914 acres in 1939, of which 8,598 acres were outside the city boundaries. One scheme had already become operative in 1938, while four other schemes were in course of preparation.

The city's central area, however, had never been covered by a planning resolution. It remained substantially mediaeval in character and became extremely inadequate for the ever-increasing tasks of a modern

city. Narrow and winding streets in the city centre became increasingly congested by traffic,¹⁸ but early attempts to construct new streets to remedy the situation were shelved because of opposition from citizens concerned to protect old streets or properties. Over a period of thirty years after 1910, in fact, only two new conduits were completed - Corporation and Trinity Streets¹⁹ - and these were described quite rightly by a local newspaper as 'patchwork expedients, two isolated, incomplete and separate links.'²⁰ The City Engineer and the Chief Constable expressed alarm in 1938. Streets in the central area were:

no longer wide enough to permit an uninterrupted flow of the present volume of traffic in both directions and at the same time to have uncontrolled waiting for such purposes as loading and unloading of goods vehicles, making business calls, picking up and setting down people using large passenger carrying vehicles, collection of refuse, etc. All these matters create serious congestion and traffic delays.²¹

Another pressing problem was the inadequacy of municipal buildings such as the Council House,²² Central Police Station, and Courts of Justice,²³ and the lack of such cultural amenities as an Art Gallery and a Museum.²⁴ Because of this, some began to urge the development of a civic centre, and E. Ford, newly appointed City Engineer, set to this task on his arrival in 1924. In the mid-1930s the matter proceeded rapidly. In 1934 the City Council set up a Civic Centre Sub-Committee, and within a year's time it was decided to promote a Parliamentary Bill on schemes for various public buildings based on the City Engineer's plan.²⁵ The Corporation's scheme put the question of the replanning of the central area in the limelight. Some local architects,²⁶ the Coventry City Guild,²⁷ and a local Councillor²⁸ produced their own ideas for a civic centre, and the question was much discussed in the local press. As these suggestions often saw a new civic centre as part of the replanning of a

much wider area, the discussion soon focused on a new city centre as a whole.²⁹

The Corporation itself, however, confined their scheme to a small area in Earl Street and Little Park Street where the possibility for further extension was limited, while they could not settle the question of sites for an Art Gallery and a Museum. The opening-up of Broadgate to the Cathedral to gain the vista contemplated in the City Engineer's plan was totally dropped. What made it impossible for the Council to consider any comprehensive replanning was the fact that the Town and Country Planning Act, 1932, which supposedly allowed the town planning of built-up areas for the first time, in fact provided little opportunity. As the Town Clerk of Coventry put it:

... it will be out of the question to attempt the town-planning of the built-up areas of Coventry as a whole. The best policy seems to be to prepare, as occasion arises, town-planning schemes for selected built-up areas, ... where experience has shown the need to be greatest.³⁰

The crux of the matter was the liability for compensation, which prevented, among other things, the City Engineer's proposal for the opening up of Broadgate, where the cost of acquiring the shop properties was thought to be prohibitive. Gradual acquisition of land thus became the best possible way, for by that process the Council would 'save money by avoiding a certain amount of trade claim'³¹ - claims for compensation for loss of trade.

The problem of compensation was directly related to the problem of increasing rates. In 1937 the Labour Party took over the control of the City Council from the Coalition Party of the Conservatives and the Liberals, whose major concern was to keep the rates as low as possible. The Labour Party thought that there was much need for municipal

intervention. They set up a Policy Advisory Committee to supervise the work of other Committees and Departments, so that the work of the Corporation should be centralised. Its first Five Year Programme of Capital Expenditure, covering £1,570,000 for various projects, promised among other things new streets and more open spaces. In order to carry out these developments in a proper and coherent manner, it was also decided to set up a City Architect's Department so that in future all architectural work of the Corporation would be handled by a single department.

No mention was made, however, in this five-year capital programme about a civic centre. It was estimated that a 6d increase in the rate from 13s. to 13s. 6d. in the pound was necessary to carry through the projects proposed in the programme. As G. Hodgkinson, one of the Labour leaders, said, 'If the five-year programme was enlarged to cover more ambitious projects obviously a 13d 6s rate would not be sufficient'.³² Around this time the need for the replanning of the central area was most intensively urged in the local press. But Hodgkinson had to say:

The view of the Labour Party is that we feel that the more pressing problems at the moment are those provided by the new areas on the outskirts of the city, and these have to take first place as against any claims for the development of a civic centre. ...

We know that the ratepayers are not too happy about the recent rate imposition, and if they say that they are not prepared to pay any more they cannot have improved schemes in the centre of the city.³³

The problems of expansion were aggravated when Coventry was chosen as a centre for the Government's armament programmes. It was estimated that there was an influx of at least 30,000 munition workers and their families, which brought the city's population over the quarter million

mark in 1939.³⁴ All told eight shadow factories were operating in the Coventry area during the war.³⁵ Naturally, any possibility of city centre replanning seemed to disappear. Some even argued, as the Mayor for 1936-37 said rather jokingly, that it would be better to wait for bombing, because 'then the land would be cleared free of all charges.'³⁶ Elsewhere, somewhat different reasoning led to the same conclusion. Alderman Halliwell, another leader of the Labour Party, for instance argued that any city centre scheme under the present form of the government would mean very little for ordinary citizens, because 'an improved centre would simply create additional vested interests in property', unless there was 'conscription of wealth'.³⁷

Thus it seemed as if these efforts to think about future city centre development were totally futile. Yet there were some ideas which proved to be important for the future. Donald Gibson, a Liverpool University graduate in his early thirties, was appointed in 1938 as first City Architect. He could easily recruit enthusiastic young architects for his staff, for they felt that the creation of a City Architect's Department was 'a noteworthy step ... [towards showing] that a Municipal Authority could do work comparable to the best in private practice'.³⁸ Although town planning was not at first considered part of their tasks, they set about the job by planning a new city centre, for:

We believed that a beautiful city could result only when each building in the programme was designed to respect its neighbouring buildings, in height, shape and colour and, too, in the arrangements of the roads and gardens around them.

Here was the genesis of precinctual treatment of buildings and their surroundings. The desired result could, we felt, be obtained only when an overall picture could be produced before building began; and in our view the architect-planner, ..., was the person best fitted for this task.³⁹

Gibson assigned four members of his staff the work of designing a correlated scheme for all the civic buildings considered necessary, and of preparing a large model for display purposes, 'hoping that by this means we should be given the chance to prove our case.'⁴⁰ The team was headed by the first Principal Planning Officer of the Department, Percy Johnson-Marshall, another young Liverpool graduate.

In fact, as Gibson recalled, the preparation work was 'a voluntary task - undertaken at home in the evenings - shared by wives and sweet-hearts of members of the Department and some enthusiasts who were not in local government service'.⁴¹ Within a matter of months they produced a model of the scheme for grouped public buildings, taking an area of forty acres and forming a precinct round the Cathedral with a new central park. As Percy Johnson-Marshall admits, while the main theoretical source and inspiration came from Le Corbusier's The City of Tomorrow, all the buildings in their plan 'were kept comparably low in order to emphasise the verticality of the Cathedral and St. Michael's Church, and were to be faced with brick and stone to harmonise with the local red sandstone of the latter buildings.'⁴²

The next step was to make the public 'planning and design conscious'.⁴³ So the Coventry branch of the Association of Architects, Surveyors and Technical Assistants, which was almost entirely composed of members of the City Architect's Department, decided to hold a planning exhibition in the summer of 1940. The 'Coventry of Tomorrow' Exhibition, attended by several thousands of people, featured not only the above-mentioned model, but also evening lectures on town planning delivered by famous town planners and architects, and presided over by a number of City Councillors. 'So,' as Gibson recalls, 'the seeds of a later harvest were being sown'.⁴⁴ When the German blitz wiped out the central area of the town about six months later, those Councillors

remembered the model which we had produced at the St. Mary's Hall exhibition, and invited me to join forces with the City Engineer and to prepare a new plan for the city centre.

... At last we as architects had been given the opportunity to present to the City Council our views on town planning and civic design. Because of our pre-war studies the new plan did not take long to prepare.⁴⁵

* * * *

Destruction⁴⁶

The pattern and effects of the major air raids on the three cities were quite similar in many ways.

Table IV.2 Major Blitz Attacks on the Three Cities

	Date	Tonnage of HE
Coventry	14 November 1940 8 April 1941	818
Southampton	17, 23, & 30 Nov. - 1 Dec. 1940 19 January 1941	647
Bristol (and Avonmouth)	24 Nov., 2, 6 Dec. 1940 3-4 Jan., 16-17 Mar., 11-12 April 1941	919

(Sources: T. Harrisson, Living Through the Blitz, p. 356 and R. Winstone, Bristol in the 1940s, pp. 23-25.

The bombing was concentrated in the winter and early spring of 1940-41 as Table IV.2 shows. And yet the damage caused was, as Table IV.3 shows, still serious at the end of the war.

Table IV.3War Damage by May 1945

		<u>Shops</u>	<u>Commercial Buildings</u>	<u>Factories & Warehouses</u>
Coventry	(a)	826	149	108
	(b)	290,000	351,000	3,394,000
Southampton	(a)	730	311	141
	(b)	1,124,000	1,642,000	1,415,000
Bristol	(a)	996	190	403
	(b)	3,388,000	901,000	4,778,000

(a) = number of properties destroyed, damaged and not yet repaired

(b) = floor space in sq. ft. of (a) above

(Source: HLG 71/195 'Ministry of Town and Country Planning: An Estimate of War Damage to Shops, Commercial Buildings, Factories and Warehouses in a Few Selected "Blitzed" Towns', 19 March 1945).

When it came to the destruction of houses, however, Coventry and Southampton sustained much more severe damage than Bristol did, as shown in Table IV.4.

Table IV.4 Houses destroyed and seriously damaged through enemy action

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage of total houses</u>
Coventry	23,577	30.3
Southampton	13,610	29.9
Bristol	5,197	4.9

(Source: HLG 71/593 'Revised Appreciation of War Damage Based on Injury to Houses', Ministry of Town and Country Planning, April 1944.)

But the extensive destruction, as shown in Table IV.5, tended to be localised in the central areas which led the Government to make special surveys in early 1941.

Table IV.5 Approximate extent of major devastated area (in acres)

Coventry	Southampton	Bristol
53	60	40

(Source: HLG88/9, Report of Advisory Panel on Redevelopment of City Centres, Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1944.)

These 'test case' surveys revealed that the three cities were concerned most about the damage to the main business and commercial areas, especially to the principal shopping streets, which were almost wiped out. In Coventry Smithford Street was 'practically burnt out';⁴⁷ in Southampton the proportion of properties having frontage on Above Bar and High Street which were destroyed was about three quarters of the total; in the Castle Street area of Bristol, out of a total of 185 shops, 139 were completely destroyed and 36 damaged, leaving only ten shops undamaged.

The severe damage to these main shopping areas caused a serious loss to the local authority's finance, for shop property was the most profitable to the Corporation as regards rate revenue. The test case survey report revealed that the rate income of Coventry was reduced by about 17 per cent, while Southampton had lost one third of its rate revenue by early 1941. Table IV.6 shows that in Coventry there was still considerable loss of rateable value with regard to business and commercial properties, such as shops, offices, and warehouses. In Bristol retail shops with rateable value exceeding £80 were particularly hard hit as shown in Table IV.7. The restoration of the rateable value was thus a very important question for the local authorities concerned.

Table IV.6Analysis of Rateable Property in Coventry

Class of Property	Rateable Value at 31.3.1940 (£)	Rateable Value at 31.3.1946 (£)
Houses	1,011,906	983,114
Shops with dwelling accommodation	83,933	61,492
Lock-up Shops	112,137	70,952
National Service Hostels	(not specified)	15,805
Hotels	39,487	63,027
Offices	23,451	14,262
Industrial (de-rated)	72,647	74,969
Warehouses	26,075	19,793
Theatres, Cinemas	18,927	15,112
Sports Grounds	2,843	4,605
Clubs	8,789	5,979
Hospitals and Nursing Homes	3,040	4,583
Garages	16,787	9,425
Advertising Stations	962	854
Crown Properties	29,138	42,235
Church Halls	79	224
Banks	4,873	5,511
Schools	17,510	22,904
Other Corporation Properties	157,497	21,484
Freight Transport	1,123	1,239
Miscellaneous	3,679	8,399

(Sources: Abstracts of Account for years 1939-40 and 1945-46)

Table IV.7Analysis of Rateable Property in Bristol

Class of Property	Rateable Value at 1.4.1939 (£)	Rateable Value at 1.4.1945 (£)
Houses	1,766,549	1,756,828
Retail Shops with Houses	225,309	192,992
Retail Shops with Rateable Value not exceeding £80	50,048	45,628
Retail Shops with Rateable Value exceeding £80	239,607	124,107
Crown Property	33,635	125,593
Offices	91,526	106,792
Warehouses, Storage Yards etc	112,650	156,132
Bank premises	28,126	27,357
Garages and Stables	52,608	52,618
Hoardings	1,568	3,215
Theatres and Cinemas	23,312	27,186
Hotels & Licensed Premises	73,598	76,804

Corporation Property -		
Houses	199,517	195,752
Offices, Yards, etc	11,099	17,867
Schools, Baths,		
Hospitals etc	61,924	66,942
Land - Non Agricultural (Sports etc)	7,528	11,316
Hospitals & Nursing Homes	15,900	7,984
Schools (other than Council)	13,480	19,045
Parish and Mission Halls	2,178	2,857
Clubs, Institutes, Hostels etc	16,313	18,590
Ferries, Bridges etc	962	1,323
Public Utility Undertakings	203,991	200,885
Industrial Hereditaments	99,363	94,934
Freight Transport	35,750	21,493
Miscellaneous	31,285	8,897

(Sources: Abstracts of Accounts for years 1939-40 and 1945-46)

Table IV.8 Rateable Value of the three cities

Year	Coventry	Southampton	Bristol
1939-1940	£1,634,883	£1,632,255	£3,433,087
1945-1946	£1,577,987	£1,428,679	£3,326,926

(Sources: Abstracts of Accounts of the three cities)

As Table IV.8 shows, however, Coventry and Bristol recovered their financial situations better than Southampton did. As the Ministry pointed out in 1943 Coventry, although badly damaged in terms of business premises, had in fact gained industries rather than lost them, for a number of shadow factories had been built in the vicinity. Consequently its economic activity recovered considerably, while the need for accommodation for munition workers seemed to contribute a lot to the enhancement of rateable value.⁴⁸ As for Bristol, although the damage on the Castle Street area was quite considerable, the city had a number of subsidiary shopping areas still available,⁴⁹ while the war brought about a spectacular rise in the scale of, among other things, Government services. In Southampton, however, the damage to the shopping centre, particularly to Above Bar, and its effect on the local authority's finance seemed very formidable.

Table IV.9Rateable Value of Shopping Centre in Southampton

Street	1 October 1939		1 April 1946	
	No. of Properties	R.V. (£)	No. of Properties	R.V. (£)
London Road	109	10,701	51	4,223
Above Bar	256	78,703	90	23,802
East Bargate	25	3,418	23	4,698
West Bargate	3	197	3	224
High Street	222	37,022	84	16,942
Hanover Bldgs	46	3,559	24	1,694
East Street	104	25,067	54	8,045
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	765	158,667	329	59,628

(Sources: SRO SC/T9/100, 'Rateable Value of Shopping Centre', Borough Treasurer, 17 April 1946.

As Tables IV.8 and IV.9 show, loss of rateable value in Above Bar alone accounted for more than a quarter of the total loss. Moreover Southampton was unfortunate that its industry was dependent on shipping and allied activities. Unlike Bristol which enjoyed a fairly diversified structure, Southampton suffered severely once its port activities came to a standstill.

At the same time it was realised by all sides that the bombing, by clearing the previously congested central areas, gave a great opportunity to replan such areas in a comprehensive way. The local authorities were very keen to grasp their chance - especially in Coventry, where two schemes for the central area of the City Engineer and of the City Architect already existed. The author of the test case survey also admitted that the carrying out of either scheme had been 'greatly facilitated by the bombardment.'⁵⁰

In fact Coventry received by far the greatest publicity and attention, with interest focusing on both the destruction which it had suffered and on the redevelopment plan which was now proposed. The city was often cited as the first victim to suffer the German blitz, with the

spire of the ruined Cathedral standing defiantly in a vacuum. Then the bold plan for a new city centre, so quickly adopted and so confidently supported by the City Council, became the symbol for post-war reconstruction. It is now appropriate, therefore, to turn to a more lengthy discussion of the Coventry case.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 The information under this heading is, unless otherwise stated, mostly derived from HLG 88/9 Advisory Panel on Redevelopment of City Centres (Thereafter the 'Advisory panel') especially their 'Notes Preliminary to a Visit to Bristol', 22 September 1943; HLG 71/1270 Ministry of Town and Country Planning 'Statistical Register of 691 Local Authorities in England and Wales (A-K)', February 1946; HLG 82/28 Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, 'Bristol Area: Preliminary Report on Population and Employment', October 1941, and 'South West Area: Report on Population and Employment', November 1942; Bristol Corporation, English City: The Growth and the Future of Bristol, (Bristol, 1945). Brian Little, The City and County of Bristol, (1954); Keith Brace, Portrait of Bristol, (1971); Frank Walker, The Bristol Region, (1972); C.M. MacInnes, Bristol at War, (1962); R. Whitfield, The Labour Movement in Bristol 1914-1939, unpublished M. Litt Thesis, History Department, University of Bristol, 1982.
- 2 As for the election results, see e.g. Western Daily Press, 2 November 1938.
- 3 'Note of the Conference of Officers on Planning in Bristol and District and the Duties of the Officers engaged thereon', submitted to the Planning and Reconstruction Committee, 13 January 1943.
- 4 Report of the Special Sub-Committee submitted to the PRC, 3 February 1943.
- 5 BRO 35510, Bristol Planning (No. 5) Scheme.
- 6 The information under this heading is, unless otherwise stated, mostly derived from HLG 88/9, Advisory Panel, especially 'Notes Preliminary to a Visit to Southampton', 9 June 1943; Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, 'Interim Report on the Southampton Area', June 1941, 'Summary of Reports', July 1942, and 'Southampton Regional Report', December 1942. (HLG 82/13 and 14 and Nuffield College Library Box N.C.S.R.S., 'Area Reports, Southampton Reports'); Adrian Rance, Southampton: an Illustrated History, Portsmouth, 1986; F.J. Monkhouse (ed.), A Survey of Southampton and its Region, (Southampton, 1964); B. Knowles, Southampton - the English Gateway, (1951).
- 7 The Southern Daily Echo (hereafter SDE) 2 November 1938.
- 8 SDE, 22 February 1938.
- 9 D.R. Childs, 'Southampton', The Architects' Journal, 16 April 1953, p. 483.
- 10 HLG 88/9, Advisory Panel, 'Notes Preliminary to a Visit to Southampton', op. cit. For details about the Civic Centre, see also S. Kimber, Thirty-Eight Years of Public Life in Southampton 1910-1948, privately published (Southampton, 1949, ch. IV. Also, 'Civic Centre', a pamphlet at the Southampton City Record Office.

- 11 See H.T. Cook, 'Communications', in P. Ford (ed.) Southampton: A Civic Survey, a report of the Civic Survey Committee of the Southampton Civic Society, (Oxford, 1931). See also HLG88/9, Advisory Panel, 'Notes Preliminary ...' op. cit.
 - 12 G.W.S. Robinson, 'The Social pattern: The Central District', in 'A Survey' op. cit.
 - 13 SRO D/Mat 10/4, Reports of the Southampton Chamber of Commerce and the Southampton Civic Society, 'The Re-planning of the Lower Part of the Town', November 1934.
 - 14 See e.g. SRO SC/EN/7/4/2, SRO SC/EN/13/5/2/1, and SRO SC/BA2/15.
 - 15 See, inter alia: W. Lancaster and T. Mason (eds.), Life and Labour in a Twentieth Century City: The Experience of Coventry, (Coventry 1986); F. Carr, 'Engineering Workers and the Rise of Labour in Coventry 1914-1939', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1979); K. Richardson, Twentieth Century Coventry, (Coventry 1972); J.A. Yates, Pioneers to Power, (Coventry 1950); G. Hodgkinson, Sent to Coventry, (Coventry 1970).
- The following materials of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning during the 1940s are also useful:
HLG 71/1270, 'Statistical Register of 691 Local Authorities', op. cit.
HLG 88/9, Advisory panel, 'Notes preliminary to a Visit to Coventry', 2 July 1943.
- 16 The Midland Daily Telegraph (hereafter MDT), 21 December 1938.
 - 17 Coventry Standard (hereafter Standard) 27 February 1937.
 - 18 The City Engineer pointed this out as early as 1912. See J.E. Swindlehurst, 'Town Planning: A Preliminary Report', 26 February 1912, in the Local Studies Section of Coventry City Library.
 - 19 For these two streets, see pamphlets in the Local Studies Library of the Corporation on the official openings of Corporation Street (1931) and Trinity Street (1937). Also see MDT 13 August 1937 and Standard, 18 September 1937.
 - 20 MDT, 8 March 1937.
 - 21 CRO Sec/CF/1/10625, report by the City Engineer and the Chief Constable to Traffic Joint Committee, 'Traffic in Central Coventry', 26 January 1938.
 - 22 See The Coventry Herald, 23 July 1938, about the overcrowded Council House.
 - 23 See 'Report of Civic Centre Sub-Committee', to the Estates and Parliamentary Committee, 30 September 1935. Also see Standard, 24 April, 1 May and 5 June 1937.

- ²⁴ The city's three major Art Groups urged the City Council to provide an Art Gallery. See, e.g. City Council, 26 February 1935. M.S. Garratt, 'The Redevelopment of the Central Area of the City of Coventry 1924-1958', (an unpublished manuscript, 1959, in the Local Studies Section of Coventry City Library).
- ²⁵ 'Report of Civic Centre Sub-Committee', op. cit.
- ²⁶ See, e.g. the plan of R. Hellberg, C. Redgrave and H. Beney in MDT, 14 May 1936.
- ²⁷ They, for instance, organised the exhibition of civic centres for 28 December 1936 - 2 January 1937, and formed a special sub-committee to prepare a scheme. For details see 'Report of the Civic Centre Sub-Committee' in The Annual Report for 1938 of Coventry City Guild, CRO Sec/CF/1/7602.
- ²⁸ See Alderman Payne's scheme, with the aid of R. Hellberg and C. Redgrave, in MDT, 26 January 1937.
- ²⁹ The MDT, for instance, gave a series of interviews on the topic with leading local politicians in the summer of 1938.
- ³⁰ F. Smith, 'The Town and Country Planning Act, 1932: Report of the Town Clerk', 5 April 1933, in the Local Studies Section of Coventry City Library.
- ³¹ HLG 79/130, E. Ford (City Engineer), in H.R. Wardill, 'Bombed Areas - Re-development of Coventry' (Government test case survey) 21 February 1941.
- ³² The Coventry Herald, 14 January 1939.
- ³³ Standard, 25 February 1939.
- ³⁴ See HLG 7/188, the Note of the Ministry of Health on 'Deputation from the Coventry City Council on problems arising out of the erection of shadow factories in the City, 5 January 1940'.
- ³⁵ For the details of these factories, see HLG 79/131, Letter from E.H. Doubleday to A.M. Jenkins, 13 August 1943.
- ³⁶ Standard, 10 April 1937.
- ³⁷ MDT, 2 July 1938, one of the interviews mentioned in (29).
- ³⁸ P. Johnson-Marshall, Rebuilding Cities, (Edinburgh, 1966), p. 292.
- ³⁹ D. Gibson, 'Birth of the Precinct Idea', in The Birmingham Post: 'Survey of Coventry', 10 July 1962.
- ⁴⁰ ibid.
- ⁴¹ ibid.
- ⁴² P. Johnson-Marshall, Rebuilding Cities, op. cit., p. 293. See also the same author, 'Coventry: Test-Case of Planning', The Listener, 17 April 1958, 653.

- ⁴³ Gibson in Birmingham Post, op. cit.
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ See, generally, Tom Harrison, Living Through the Blitz, (1978); and specifically, T. Mason, 'Looking Back on the Blitz' in Lancaster & Mason (ed.), Life and Labour ..., op. cit., and for Bristol: see also R. Winstone, Bristol in the 1940s, (Bristol, 1961).
- ⁴⁷ See HLG 711/1570, G.L. Pepler, 'Bombed Areas - Redevelopment', summary of test case surveys, 28 February 1941. As for the individual case studies, only the Coventry one seems to have survived. HLG 79/130, H.R. Wardill, 'Bombed Areas - Re-development of Coventry', op. cit.
- ⁴⁸ HLG 88/9, 'Report of Advisory Panel', 1 August 1944.
- ⁴⁹ See, e.g., HLG 68/66, G.L. Pepler, 'Bombed Areas - Redevelopment. Replacement of shops as a temporary measure', 24 January 1941.
- ⁵⁰ HLG 71/1570, Pepler, 'Bombed Areas', op. cit.

CHAPTER V

Replanning the City Centre: the case of Coventry 1940-1945

Being one of the first provincial towns to suffer from the German blitz, Coventry attracted nationwide attention because of the destruction of its central core and the redevelopment plan for that area that was subsequently prepared. At the very beginning of re-planning the future city centre the Minister concerned, Lord Reith, encouraged the City Council to plan boldly. Two plans were prepared. The City Engineer's plan, in the Ministry's words, 'suffered from some lack of imagination', while the City Architect's plan 'suffered from rather too much imagination'.¹ Although the Government Inspector appointed to assess these documents reported rather optimistically that 'a compromise plan based on the good features in both schemes would be acceptable',² it soon proved to be very difficult to arrive at any compromise.

The City Council adopted the City Architect's plan and waited for the Ministry's reaction to it, while refusing any consultations with the local interests affected by it. The Ministry, and particularly its Regional Planning Officer (hereafter RPO) were very concerned at this lack of consultation at the local level. Some features of the Coventry plan, notably the arcaded shopping precinct and civic centre, also caused the Ministry's anxiety because of their boldness.

Following the visit to Coventry of the Advisory Panel in the summer of 1943, the Ministry worked very hard to persuade the City Council to meet local interests and to consider a possible new plan on a more modest scale. The task was not an easy one. The Council stood firm in sticking to its plan. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning Bill, 1944, obviously disappointing to the local authorities concerned, added to the Ministry's anxiety. As one official put it, there was 'a very serious

risk of Coventry becoming the centre of the hostile elements opposed to the Government proposals', especially in view of 'the strong sentiment which surrounded Coventry in the public eye as the first small city to endure the weight of the German air assault'.³ Also worrying was 'the grandiose nature' of the plan, which 'would lend itself particularly well to an outcry that the Government for reasons of financial stringency, as opposed to planning, were attempting to force the blitzed cities to cut their proposals to the bone.'⁴

Although the Ministry could avoid the worst potential scenario taking place, they thought that there was still much left to be done. All they could claim in late 1945 was, as the able RPO put it:

For the past three years we have been gradually working the City Council off the idea that a long term plan can be prepared in less than three months at the height of a blitz without consulting any outside interest. That is very broadly what happened at Coventry.⁵

* * * *

Within a month of the November blitz the City Council set up the City Reconstruction Committee (hereafter the CRC) to consider the redevelopment of the city, especially that of the heavily damaged central area. The City Engineer and the City Architect were asked to collaborate in preparing a plan for that area.⁶ In early January, 1941, the Council sent a deputation on the initiative of Alderman Hodgkinson to Lord Reith, Minister of Works and Buildings. While the bombing gave Coventry an excellent opportunity to re-plan its central part, the Council were rather apprehensive about making the most of it in view of lengthy procedures and an enormous amount of money involved under the existing legislation. As Hodgkinson told the Minister:

It may be that none of us around this table today will see in our lifetime the city that ought to emerge from the ruins of Coventry, but what we are concerned with is taking the right steps and building in such a way that future generations will not curse someone or other for making false steps now, and we believe that your Department may be able to help us very considerably in reaching the ideal we wish to achieve.⁷

The Minister, suggesting that Coventry would be made a test case (for future legislation), told the deputation:

The City of course cannot do more than it can do, and possibly you are entitled from that to form an optimistic conclusion about future help.

I would hope that you would be able to proceed with your wider plan, and not just the conservative one. I would hope you would find encouragement later on to proceed on a pretty broad basis.⁸

The conference with the Minister undoubtedly gave tremendous heart to the City Council. As The Standard reported Hodgkinson telling the Council

[he] had not the least doubt, having regard to the smooth way in which they were received in London, that they would get a great deal of help, and probably much more help than they thought before they went into that conference. "That delegation was the most fruitful I have been to of any Government department", he commented. "In so far as this job can be speeded up, we shall get every assistance from London."⁹

By early February two plans for the city centre were submitted to the CRC by Ford and Gibson respectively. Although they were asked to collaborate, they could not see eye to eye.¹⁰ Ford put a primary emphasis on the need for quick restoration of business premises and of rateable value, by disturbing as little as possible the traditional pattern. Consequently his plan consisted in the main of street improvements on existing lines, which would in most cases avoid trouble over

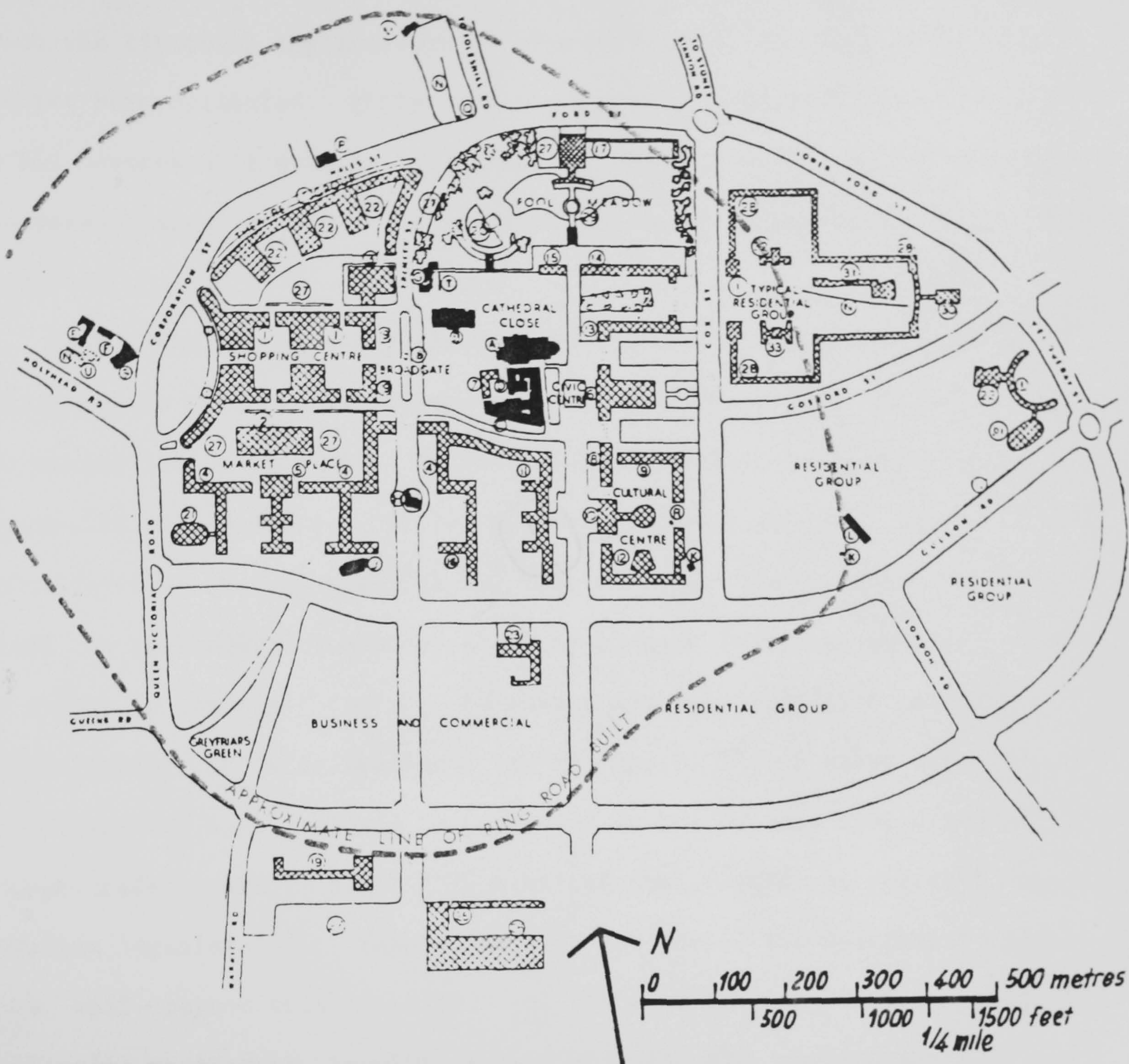
ownership.¹¹ Gibson emphasised, however, the far-reaching potential of the Council's position. As he put it in his report to the CRC:

The city is being made a test case, and its solutions will form a guide to the other cities which have been similarly devastated. The decisions of the Council will therefore, have a national and not merely a local effect ...

We have an opportunity in front of us that has never occurred before, born it is true, out of a catastrophe of colossal magnitude, but an opportunity to be grasped with both hands. Let it not be said by future generations that the people of Coventry failed them, when the ideal was within their reach.¹²

On 25 February the City Council adopted Gibson's plan by an overwhelming majority, 43 votes to 6. They were struck by the new Coventry, bordered by an inner ring road and divided into a number of zones based on function. Among the spectacular features included were a civic centre consisting of a library, police offices and law courts, civic hall, museum, municipal offices, adult educational institution, school of art and art gallery, with generous provision of open spaces; and a traffic-free shopping precinct, possibly arcaded, of six or seven storey buildings connected to a new retail market, replacing the old shopping streets of Smithford Street and Hertford Street.¹³

Outside the Council the boldness of Gibson's plan attracted favourable comments, including those from various national papers.¹⁴ Of particular importance was the King's visit to Coventry in early 1942, since the monarch pronounced himself "particularly satisfied" with an idea for arranging a shopping precinct under the arcading principle. He expressed the opinion that in all replanning schemes of blitzed towns, the future amenities for citizens were 'of supreme importance', and hoped that 'his visit ... would help to make such plans materialise.'¹⁵ But



KEY TO PLAN

OLD BUILDINGS TO BE PRESERVED

- A Cathedral
- B Holy Trinity Church
- C Council House
- D St. Mary's Hall
- E Bond's Hospital
- F Museum
- G Bluecoat School
- H Ford's Hospital
- J Christ Church
- K Gate
- L Carmelite Monastery
- M Cook St. Gate

- N Remains of City Wall
- P Old Grammar School
- Q Swanswell or Priory Gate
- R Remains
- S St. John's Church
- T Old Cathedral
- U Suggested Re-siting of Ford's Hospital.

NEW BUILDINGS

- 1 Arcaded Shops
- 2 Retail Market

- 3 Multiple Store
- 4 Shops and Offices
- 5 Banks
- 6 Civic Halls
- 7 Council House Ext.
- 8 Art Gallery
- 9 Art School
- 10 Library
- 11 Law and Police Courts
- 12 University College
- 13 Council Offices
- 14 Museum
- 15 Chapter House
- 16 Telephone Exchange
- 17 Covered and Open Baths

- 18 Godiva Statue
- 19 Hotel
- 20 Open Air Theatre
- 21 Garages
- 22 Theatre or Cinema
- 23 Fire Station
- 25 'Bus Station
- 26 'Bus Garage
- 27 Car Parks
- 28 Flats
- 29 Band Stand
- 30 Baths
- 31 Community Centre
- 32 Nursery School
- 33 Health Clinic

The 1941 Coventry City Centre Plan by Gibson

Source: T. Gregory, 'Coventry', in J. Holliday (ed.), City Centre Redevelopment (1973), p. 100. The map plan originally appeared in the Midland Daily Telegraph, 13 March 1941.

how would the Government react to such a plan? There was some concern about the financial implications of this bold plan, the cost of which had not yet been estimated. While the majority of the Council were confident of the Government's generosity, there was strong doubt, as the Standard expressed, about 'the gift of the realisation of an otherwise impossible dream'.¹⁶

Within the Labour Party Alderman Halliwell thought it was absolutely necessary to call on the Government to introduce conscription of wealth (or socialisation of land), without which any rebuilding scheme would be impossible to operate. While his fellow Labour members agreed that socialisation of land would be the best measure, they did not think it could be realised very quickly.¹⁷ They thought therefore that it would be enough in the first instance to secure access to the land required for redevelopment by 'sterilisation' (so that no buildings other than those of a temporary nature should be permitted on the cleared site, pending a proper redevelopment plan)¹⁸ - a method that could be pursued under existing legislation. Subsequently it was hoped the Government might move well beyond this position. At the same February Council meeting Halliwell could not receive a seconder to his amendment, and the Council's adoption of Gibson's plan led to his resignation from the CRC and from the Coventry Labour Party.¹⁹

The Labour Party stood very firm indeed on the question of temporary buildings. As early as December 1940 the CRC had recommended that any building be subject to the submission of a proper plan for the approval of the Town Planning and Buildings Committee and the duration of the approval be for only one year.²⁰ It faced an amendment (from the Progressive Party members) at the Council meeting that the duration be three years or until six months after the termination of the war. It was pointed out that property owners could not afford to build temporary

premises to let on such a short-term basis, nor could shop owners hope to establish themselves and recoup the capital costs within that time. Labour contended that, in order to safeguard future redevelopment from prejudicial building, it was absolutely necessary to have as firm control over land as possible, and defeated the amendment by 20 votes to 15.²¹

The local Chamber of Commerce were not at all contented with the Council's decision. They maintained that the duration should be much longer than twelve months so that goodwill could be re-established. They also criticised Gibson's approach to the redevelopment of Coventry, and asked the CRC (who were so confident in Gibson's plan) to receive a deputation to discuss whether the latter should contain co-opted members from outside the Council.²² The CRC simply said that they did 'not think a deputation would serve any useful purpose',²³ and proceeded to give Gibson the primary responsibility for the re-planning.²⁴ To anticipate, it was not until late 1943 that the CRC invited the Chamber to discuss Gibson's plan. If anything, the City Council were intently awaiting the Government reaction during the first half of the war, while the boldness of Gibson's plan and Lord Reith's encouragement were beginning to loom large in the minds of the Government officials.

* * *

The reaction from the Ministry of Works and Buildings to Gibson's plan was not as promising as the Council expected. In February 1942, the Ministry wrote to Coventry, asking about the progress of work in connection with it. In reply the CRC expressed 'surprise', for the plan had been investigated in detail by the Ministry's Inspector a year previously, and, 'to make the position quite explicit', they resolved to make an application for the Minister's formal approval of the plan.²⁵ This fitted in with the Committee's wider decision that it would not make

any further move unless and until the Ministry demonstrated its own position.²⁶ Thus, in late 1942, E.H. Doubleday, newly appointed Regional Planning Officer (hereafter RPO) of the Birmingham Region of the Ministry, found that little progress had been made regarding Coventry's re-planning scheme. He asked Headquarters to send a letter to Coventry regarding new development. Accordingly the letter was sent in December 1942, stating that no formal approval could be given, since no planning resolution was operative over the central area of Coventry. Instead, the letter suggested reviewing the plan in relation to a wider area of the city, to make a detailed survey of changes in the conditions of the area caused by war damage, and to discuss the matter with the RPO.²⁷ The CRC had a conference with Doubleday and decided to carry out the suggested detailed survey of a wider area.²⁸

Nevertheless Doubleday had to write again to Headquarters in April 1943. As he put it:

The crux of the whole matter is finance. An air of uncertainty exists locally as to the intentions of the Government regarding assistance to "blitzed areas", and this has created, in this region at any rate, a position of stalemate.²⁹

Doubleday had been trying to discuss amending the 1941 Plan with the Corporation officers through informal monthly meetings, and, at the same time to promote discussions about Coventry's 1941 plan between the Council and business and industrial interests of the city by speaking to different Council members on various occasions. His efforts, however, especially that to promote discussions with the local interests had been unsuccessful as the Council were most reluctant to make any further move under the existing legislation. Concluding the letter, he urged the Headquarters that:

evidence on all sides points to the fact that the next phase in redevelopment lies with the Government. In this respect there is also much evidence that they (Coventry and Birmingham) are expecting a great deal from our new Ministry [of Town and Country Planning] now that we are solely responsible, and the opportunity is ripe for development.³⁰

As already seen in Chapter II, however, the Government were suffering from great difficulties in decision-making, especially in regard to the Uthwatt proposals.

The Advisory Panel of the Ministry provided important opportunities to discuss the matter with several of the most heavily blitzed cities. Before its visit to Coventry on 13 July, 1943, it was already concerned about the concentration of all the civic buildings together, and the replacement of an ordinary shopping street by arcaded shops of uniform design, which had not yet been discussed with the commercial interest.³¹

At the meeting between the Panel and the Corporation, the Coventry side was anxious to know the possibility of formal approval of its 1941 plan and the scope of Government's financial assistance. In reply the Panel pointed out that 'the Government could not be expected to sign a blank cheque', and urged the need for some financial estimates regarding the scheme.³² During discussion of the Council's proposal to replace Smithford Street by an arcaded shopping precinct, the Panel found:

The Council are unaware of any objection, on the part of traders, to go into a "precinct" instead of an ordinary shopping street. ... Although the Council have had no official consultation with the traders and have not worked out the cost of the expected revenue from the shops they are apparently confident that the arcade scheme will be a success.³³

Immediately after this visit, the Panel decided that Doubleday should 'insinuate into the minds of the Council' the need for consultation with

business and industrial interests.³⁴ Accordingly he met the Town Clerk and reported to Headquarters:

The visit of the Panel to Coventry has had a most salutary effect, and I am glad to say that the Town Clerk now appreciates the need to consult business and industrial interests in the Town. This is a big step forward, and on my next visit to Coventry I will discuss with him ways and means of making a start on this long overdue matter.³⁵

The local atmosphere was, however, getting worse. In October Alderman Moseley, chairman of the CRC since its inauguration, commented on the recent announcement of the Minister of Town and Country Planning stating that the Government's findings on the Uthwatt Report were ready for presentation:

I am surprised at the wide attention that has been directed to the statement made this week by the Minister. ... In fact, if there is anything new in the Minister's statement it seems to suggest that little in the way of financial assistance will be forthcoming from the Government, and, if I am interpreting the statement correctly, this is serious.³⁶

Around this time Hodgkinson also said:

It was feared that the bombed towns were going to be treated like old soldiers in days gone by - forgotten and left to their own resources when the war was ended. Bombed towns would be like wounded, limbless soldiers unless the Government did its duty by them. So far there had been little evidence of Government enthusiasm in this connection.³⁷

Meanwhile the survey of a wider area suggested by the Ministry was well advanced. The CRC made a recommendation in October formally to accept a Reconstruction Area of 383 acres. The Committee stressed the importance of this decision, as it would 'form a basis for discussion with the Government as to the extent and character of State assistance'.³⁸ By

this time the Town and Country Planning (Interim Development) Act was passed which gave power to local authorities to grant an interim development permission for a limited period only. The CRC recommended in September that the initial period of permission should be one year.³⁹ The last possible challenge from the Chamber of Commerce through Councillor Corbett (President of the Chamber) at the October Council meeting was defeated by 32 votes to 24.⁴⁰

Under such circumstances, the CRC decided for the first time to invite the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the new shopping provisions of the 1941 plan.⁴¹ Things thus eventually started to move. The Ministry came to realise the gravity of Coventry's case more acutely, especially through the efforts of the RPO and through the visit of the Advisory Panel. The Corporation became highly frustrated at the indecisiveness of the Ministry and, in particular, at the uncertainty of financial assistance. At the same time they decided for the first time to face the local traders' criticisms of an arcaded shopping precinct.

In the following year of 1944 some features of the Corporation's plan, notably an arcaded shopping precinct of high-storey buildings, came under vigorous attack from the Chamber and the Ministry. At the same time the Ministry had to go through difficult phases in their approaches to Coventry in part due to the lack of unity in opinion among officials, but most importantly because of their failure in bringing the long-awaited general legislation into being.

* * *

The meeting between the CRC and the Chamber of Commerce was held in February 1944. The Chamber conveyed their objections to the shopping provisions in the Corporation's scheme, particularly to the idea of an arcaded traffic-free shopping precinct. They argued that the precinct

principle 'would, due to its restriction in size, tend to create monopolies, and would prevent any further addition or expansion'; arcade shopping was not favoured either, because it would be 'unpopular with the general public'; they further maintained that the existing main shopping streets should not be eliminated altogether, because the inclusion of vehicle traffic was essential to the success of the shopping area. In this connection it was stated that, under their auspices, an alternative layout for a shopping area was being prepared.⁴² In reply the CRC stated that they were willing to consider the points made by the Chamber, and also to examine the suggested alternative layout on its merits.⁴³ The president of the Chamber thought highly of this meeting as 'a good-natured, long, and friendly talk', and went on to say, as reported in the local press:

The real objection was the layout of the City Architect, and it was strongly felt that the old idea of street shopping was much better than what was called "cloistered precincts".⁴⁴

The proposed alternative plan prepared by Messrs. Woolworth's architect⁴⁵ was considered by the CRC on 19th June 1944. The plan envisaged a self-contained shopping area in a semi-circle shape, surrounded by a 60 ft wide road, with a kind of "underground city" beneath, in that goods and service access roads would be provided by excavation below the present ground level. The CRC observed, however, that the sandstone of the area was so charged with water that the maintenance of the suggested underground roads would be impracticable.⁴⁶ They therefore concluded that they were not in favour of the alternative scheme, adding though they would 'be pleased to consider any further observations which the Chamber [might] wish to make'.⁴⁷

While there was an obvious sign of some mutual understanding between the Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce, the much tougher battle was going on behind the scenes between Coventry and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. At the Headquarters of the Ministry, L. Neal, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry, became rather impatient of the slow progress in Coventry's re-planning. Admitting the importance of informal monthly meetings organised by the RPO, Neal repeatedly requested more direct action by the Ministry in the form of an official letter of criticisms of the 1941 Plan. At first Doubleday resisted such an idea, for, in Coventry he felt, 'one has to steer a steady if not a fast course'. As he went on:

Coventry can, and probably will say that the Government's difficulty in coming to a decision on reconstruction legislation has severely embarrassed them in the preparation of their scheme with public support. In this they will be strongly backed by other "blitzed" cities. ... [And] the feeling "agin" the Government appears to be getting deep-rooted and somewhat bitter.⁴⁸

Doubleday made the most of monthly meetings with the help of other Ministry officials and of F. Smith, Town Clerk of Coventry, who was strongly opposed to Gibson's proposals, especially that to eliminate Smithford Street. They exposed Gibson to considerable criticism. At the monthly meeting of February 1944, for instance, the precinct principle of high buildings of six or seven storeys was severely attacked by the Town Clerk and the City Treasurer. Gibson replied that at any rate the City Council was fully prepared to back his plan. Smith argued, however, as recorded in the Ministry's file:

Confidentially, he interpreted the Council's attitude in this way. Excessive publicity had been given to the damage sustained by Coventry and, in consequence, the Council had

developed an idea that they had suffered more than any other town and, therefore, had a greater claim than any other town to have all their reconstruction done for them at the expense of the nation. On the wave of this attitude, they had adopted without a period of inquiry and with undue haste the plan proposed to them as a final plan and were, in consequence, committed of a great deal, [which], in his view, would certainly have to be revised.⁴⁹

The pressure on Gibson was so strong that, towards the end of the meeting, he himself agreed that if a plan of a different character was asked for he would prepare one.⁵⁰ At the meeting in May Gibson was again under fierce attack. He tried to defend the precinct concept, citing Plymouth which had also envisaged a precinct shopping centre. The Ministry side pointed out that while Plymouth was a pre-eminent shopping centre within its region without any rivals of importance, Coventry was never an established shopping centre and it was too near Birmingham. Gibson held on, maintaining that if the Council acted as a developer, his shopping centre would be a great success. At this point the Town Clerk hurriedly interrupted to say that Gibson's view was not backed at all by the local business and commercial interests. Hearing this the Ministry side stated categorically that 'it was improbable that the local authority would be able to obtain the capital from the Government for a scheme which was objected to by the commercial interests on the grounds that it was a risky business'.⁵¹ Reporting it to the Headquarters, one Ministry official observed:

None of the officials of the Corporation with whom we have been having conversations, except Gibson (and his views have been slightly modified) believe in the Plan as it now stands.⁵²

At the same time the Ministry officials (especially Doubleday) started feeling that a new stimulus other than monthly meetings was rather

inevitable because of 'the stubbornness on the part of the Council to agree to amend their present proposals' and of his informal knowledge as to 'associations between certain members of the Council and political factions which do not approve of the present attitude of the Government in regard to planning and reconstruction'.⁵³ By this time at the Headquarters Neal got so impatient that he directed Doubleday to make proposals for representing to Coventry that they should make a fresh plan within three months.⁵⁴

The forthcoming Reconstruction Bill made such a direct and official approach all the more imperative. As one official put it, the financial proposals of the Bill

have been whittled down in such a way as to leave the question of redevelopment for blighted areas in abeyance for the moment and generally to give the whole proposal a somewhat smaller scale, which to Coventry, always insistent on Lord Reith's "Plan boldly", is likely to appear thoroughly mean.

The question is not whether Coventry are right in this view of theirs. The difficulty is that the present bill offers them a fresh opportunity to make political capital out of the Government's attitude to their plan. Now that this has been pointed out I must admit that any controversy which may arise from direct criticism of the Coventry plan before the bill is published is likely to be less than the difficulties caused by making the same criticism after the bill has been published, when Coventry are likely to say that we have made up our criticisms in order to cut down their plan and make it fit into what they will call the Government's inadequate financial proposals.⁵⁵

The Ministry side agreed to put forward a letter of criticism as soon as practicable, and Doubleday sounded the Town Clerk out as to the possible reception of such a letter. The main ground of criticism was that the

plan lacked the public support of local traders. On this point the Town Clerk expressed his concern:

that if this lack of public support were used as the main ground of criticism, he rather thought that the Council might then embark on a campaign to win public support to the plan, and he would not be surprised if the Council obtained a majority of public support in numbers as opposed to values in the City, mentioning, as a guess, a two-thirds majority in favour.⁵⁶

Smith repeatedly made the point that any criticism which gave rise to political arguments had to be avoided, for he rather thought that 'some of the Labour members of the Council would not be averse to such publicity "agin" the Government'.⁵⁷

Accordingly Doubleday produced a note of detailed criticisms of the Coventry plan based on purely technical points. The most striking question was the extraordinarily large amount of land devoted to civic use, which would not be able to produce any ground rents for a considerable time to come. In criticising this, however, as he put it:

one should not minimise the strong socialist tendencies of the Council, who may reply that they intend to see that these civic buildings are provided, a point which may have a strong local appeal. Care should be taken, I suggest, to keep one's criticism to the doubtful merits of such a large concentration with its effects on the shopping centre, a line which seems to me to be non-political.⁵⁸

At Headquarters, however, Neal wanted a much shorter letter, a much more plausible move rather than the detailed criticisms which might upset Coventry because of its rather unexpected character. Accordingly the letter dated 19 May 1944 was sent to Coventry, asking for a general statement as to the recent work done on the redevelopment scheme, and for the proposals regarding zoning, re-establishment of displaced

undertakings, and the programming of the reconstruction works.⁵⁹ The letter was considered by the CRC on 19 June, just one day before the introduction of the Bill. Around this time discussions between Coventry and the Ministry of War Transport were under way as to the route of the inner ring road. A plan showing the route had been submitted by the Planning Officers to the CRC for approval. As the Committee maintained that the demarcation of the areas of use would depend to a far greater extent upon the alignment of the inner ring road than the other way around, the Ministry's letter of 19 May made them hurry over the question of alignment. Thus they resolved to approve the proposed route in principle and to submit the plan to the Ministries concerned, so that they could consider the questions in the Ministry's letter in the near future.⁶⁰

As for the Bill now in Parliament, Alderman Moseley, chairman of the CRC, told the local press:

On the whole my own feeling is one of disappointment. At the same time, it has to be realised that the bombed towns are fairly numerous, so, in total, making the problem a big one from the national point of view, and if the Bill is the Government's last word, we shall have to make the best of it and cut our coat according to our cloth.⁶¹

Thus Headquarters observed:

that it looks as though our letter of the 19th May may have succeeded in its attempt to prevent the Coventry Plan from becoming a battle cry of the opposition to the Bill. The discussion is now on technical grounds, while at the same time we have given the necessary stimulus from the Ministry.⁶²

The question was, therefore, whether the Ministry should bring forward immediately the detailed criticisms of the Coventry plan to the Council. Doubleday did not think the time was yet ripe. First of all he agreed

with the Council that in the meantime they should concentrate on the question of the inner ring road.⁶³ Moreover there were some positive signs favouring the Ministry. For instance the Planning Officers had prepared certain modifications of the 1940 plan, allowing for the line of Smithford Street to be retained as a service-way. Alderman Moseley, who had been rather difficult to the Ministry as chairman of the CRC, was to retire. His successor, Councillor Grindley, had mentioned to Doubleday on several occasions his impression that the 1940 plan was 'based on aspirations without foundation work'.⁶⁴

By October, however, Headquarters were determined to make a further move. As one official put it:

My impression on reading the earlier minutes and correspondence is that it was a pity that the possibility of political repercussions was considered serious enough to make us take a much weaker line with Coventry than was at first intended. This fear seems to have influenced our action throughout. There is no doubt that Mr. Doubleday has done good work in very difficult circumstances, but I still feel that an earlier tactful but firm prod from Headquarters would have produced better results and more rapid progress.⁶⁵

The Ministry side was now in favour of putting forward the detailed criticisms of the Coventry plan in the form of a further official letter.

With the passing of the Bill into law the City Council were also expected to get on with the ground work in connection with the city's plan. The first move was supposed to follow the report of the Town Clerk on the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944,⁶⁶ which was to be submitted to the meeting of the CRC on 29th November. As Doubleday observed:

This is the kick-off for which we have all been waiting, and I think the game will be fast and furious thereafter.⁶⁷

* * *

At the meeting of 29th November the CRC resolved to initiate a series of conferences with the trading and other interests affected by the redevelopment scheme, and to invite, in the first instance, the Chamber of Commerce on 14th December.⁶⁸ At this first conference the Chamber's concern was focused on the desirability or otherwise of the precinct idea. To their surprise, they were told by the Corporation that the precinct proposals had been limited to approximately one fifth of the total shopping frontage because it was not practicable to extend the idea further in the present scheme. What was more Gibson promised, in reply to the request from the representative of multiple shops, that provision would be made so that it would be possible to convert the shopping precinct into a normal street if experience showed that it was unsuccessful from the commercial point of view.⁶⁹

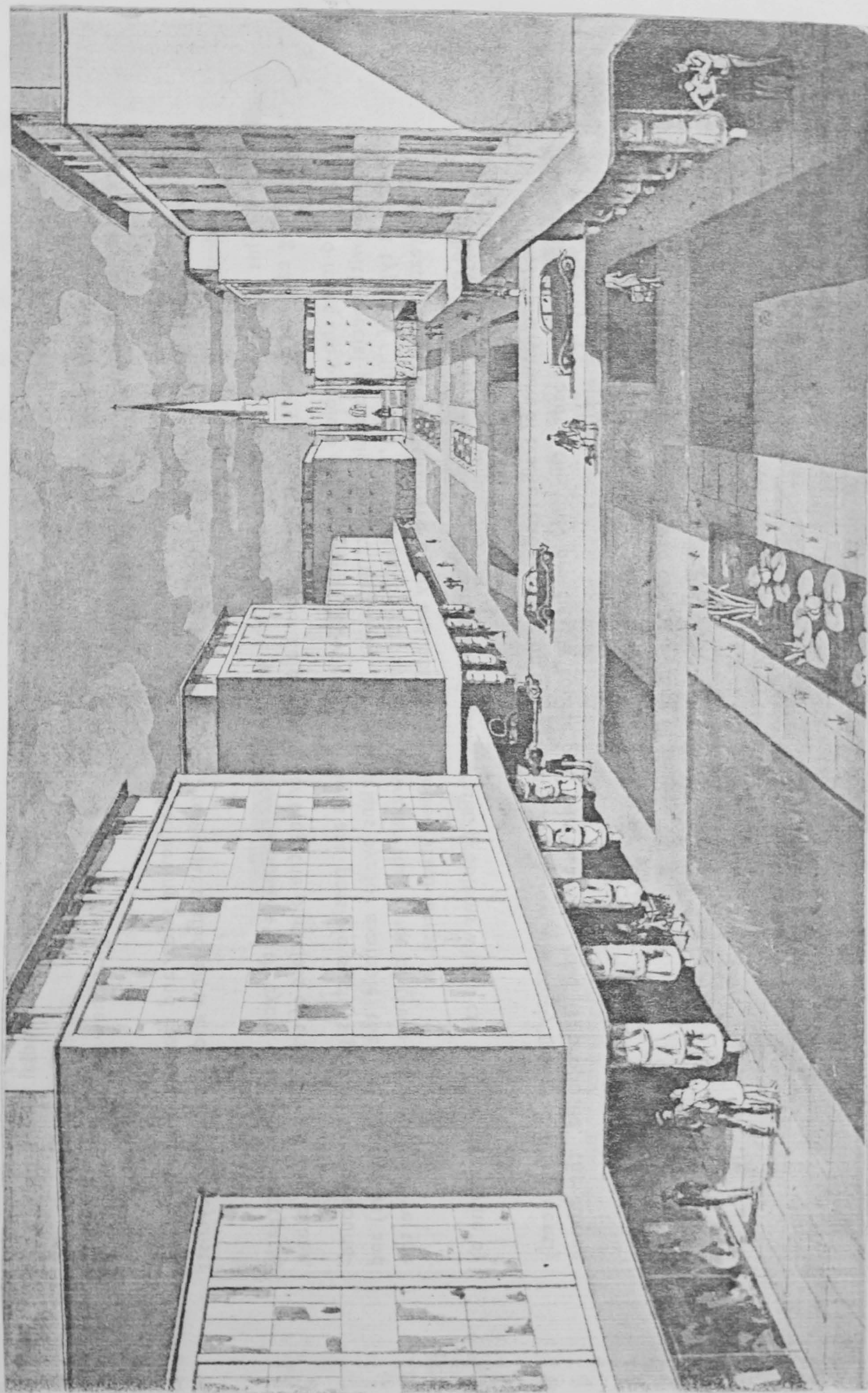
The Chamber's attention was now narrowed down to the question of the Smithford Street precinct. As maintained in a Memorandum on Coventry Redevelopment Shopping Facilities forwarded to the Corporation, they still preferred a through road to the shopping precinct there.⁷⁰ The CRC left consideration of the matter to further discussions between the Planning Officers and the Chamber, which implied the Committee's inclination towards an amended design.⁷¹ As the president of the Chamber told the local press in May 1945, there had been 'a great change in the atmosphere, and he did not think anyone could grumble now at the consideration given to the Chamber by the Corporation'.⁷² In the same month Professor Holford (Technical Adviser to the Ministry) suggested to the Corporation officers that they should make some kind of compromise with the trading interests, although it did not have to be the abandonment of the precinct principle.⁷³

In the end the final answer of the Planning Officers was made. While the revised plan retained the principle of a shopping precinct in the

Smithford Street area, some concessions were made to the views of the Chamber. Among other things was a new north to south road intersecting the precinct area,⁷⁴ with a fly-over bridge to carry road traffic over the precinct. The freedom from traffic of the actual shopping area was thus preserved while at the same time highway access to it would be provided.⁷⁵

The Chamber was not in favour of a traffic bridge, partly because they considered it would be a block to a possible future road through the precinct, and instead suggested two footways. They also still maintained that a shopping precinct was not so desirable as a through road in the area. But the Planning Officers pointed out that the suggested through road would very likely be used as a through way and thus nullify the effect of the ring road.⁷⁶ The CRC made the final decision. They decided not to proceed with the idea of a traffic bridge and approved in principle the proposed subways. At the same time they held the view that the shopping precinct was preferable to the suggested through road, and accordingly decided to adhere to the precinct.⁷⁷

Thus at the local level a compromise was made between the Corporation and the local traders as to the shopping provisions of the city centre plan as a result of a number of consultations between both sides. At first the start of the consultations pleased the Ministry. They soon were irritated, however, by the lack of progress, due mainly to the over-cautious attitudes adopted by the Town Clerk. No further conferences with local interests were yet arranged to follow those with the Chamber of Commerce. As Doubleday thought 'the pressure to which he is subjected by the political elements in the Council is proving to be an overburdening factor of his approach to the Reconstruction Scheme'.⁷⁸



An artist's impression of the proposed shopping precinct of Coventry

Source: City of Coventry, The Future Coventry (Coventry, 1945), p. 15.

But the Ministry's concern at a civic centre in the Coventry plan was looming larger, and consequently, they kept putting pressure on the Council to think it over again. Several conferences were held but all the Ministry could find was the local authority who was 'much up against the Ministry, on the ground that they had been told to plan boldly and were now finding themselves hedged about by departmental restrictions'.⁷⁹ Eventually the Ministry sent an official letter to the City Council in June 1945, throwing strong doubt about allocating a large area to include all the public buildings with ample open spaces surrounding them.⁸⁰ In response the CRC recorded in a strong manner that the points raised in the letter were

essentially matters to be decided by the judgment of the local authority; and that, the Committee see no reason to make any material change in the land-allocations in the "civic" area, or in the proposals for the inclusion in that area of specific buildings.⁸¹

They also decided to prepare a balance sheet as to the redevelopment scheme as a whole, including the net site costs likely to result after the Government grants ceased, and the cost of the buildings involved.⁸²

The Ministry side thought, somewhat optimistically, that this letter 'stimulated the Council to test the finances of the proposals from the long-period aspect'.⁸³ At the same time, whereas the Ministry wanted Coventry to make rapid progress, by submitting a formal application for compulsory acquisitions under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944, the Council could rightly refuse to submit an application until the proposed financial tests had been finished. And this financial examination in turn was supposed to take quite some time. Moreover the local elections were coming soon and it was recognised that any particular change would not happen until they were over. After that,

however, the fierce battle was expected to resume. As one Ministry official put it, 'it must be admitted that if they [the Council] submit the scheme as it stands at present we may have to insist on its being considerably modified'.⁸⁴

Just before the local elections took place, the Ministry's insistence on modification was expressed in public by Lewis Silkin, new Minister of Town and Country Planning. In October, 1945, commemorating the city's 600th anniversary of the granting of its Charter of Incorporation, the 'Coventry of the Future' exhibition was held, featuring a model for a new city centre as its main attraction. It received 57,500 visitors during two weeks, equivalent to one in four of the city's entire population. As the MDT reported, the exhibition

has proved in unmistakable manner that, contrary to what has been said so often, the ordinary ratepayer is intensely interested in the affairs of his city, and that he is quite prepared to receive the enlightenment which is so necessary in municipal administration and has been so lacking in the past.

No more effective method could have been devised for creating the determination that will be necessary to convert the "dream city" into reality.⁸⁵

On the opening day, however, Hodgkinson, as the Mayor, and Silkin expressed the conflicting views respectively. At the civic luncheon Hodgkinson spoke quite strongly of the 'tremendous delay' by the Ministry in giving formal approval to Coventry's plan. As he put it:

There has been all sorts of manoeuvring in order to edge Coventry away from the splendid designs it had.

I hope we have now come to a stage where we can halt, where no more modifications will be required, and no more vetting of our plan. I hope the Minister will give approval to what we want to do without further modification.⁸⁶

Declaring the exhibition open, Silkin responded:

In every reconstruction scheme the local planning authority has to reconcile the call for boldness and imaginative conception with the need for ensuring that reconstruction should so proceed as not to outstrip at any stage the resources of men, materials, and finance available to it, and particularly with the need for ensuring that the community shall be able to proceed actively with its business while step by step the process of reconstruction advances. ... All my indications are that Coventry is well on the way to securing that reconciliation.⁸⁷

From Coventry's viewpoint the reconciliation had already been secured by making concessions to the Chamber of Commerce as to the shopping provisions in the plan. In this sense Coventry was the victim of the Government's retreat from bold planning to economy and conventionalism. The long delayed Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 was quite restricted in its provisions, especially those of financial assistance. As the central commercial area, which suffered most heavily from the blitz, was the area that contributed considerably to the city's finances, the Council had to ensure that the plan was acceptable to local traders. And in this respect the pressure from the Ministry on Coventry played an important role.

Nevertheless the Council did adhere to the principle of a shopping precinct despite the strong opposition to it from the Chamber of Commerce, and, when it came to the Ministry's further objection related to a civic centre, they would not show any sign of compromise. Labour, as the majority on the Council, thought that the new city centre formed as important a part of the future Coventry as the improved housing, education, and public health did.⁸⁸ The municipal elections in October 1945 brought three gains to labour⁸⁹ and with this strengthened majority,

they were reasonably confident to 'go forward with all schemes for the city's development'.⁹⁰

Therefore, what sustained the Council's belief in Gibson's plan was twofold. First, there was immense interest in the plan, mostly in support of it, such as extensive nationwide publicity and the King's comment, from which an idea was firmly established that Coventry's bold plan was a symbol of the rebuilding of future Britain. Secondly, the local Labour Party was confident that the majority of Coventry people were with them in pursuit of the dream plan. This confidence squashed completely the Ministry's argument that Coventry's plan lacked public support, because what the Ministry meant was the objection of traders, the limited, sectional and outmoded interests. Consequently the Ministry, who did not like the imaginative nature of some proposals, notably that of a civic centre, had to be extremely cautious in making criticisms for fear of political repercussions. The position of the Ministry was further marred by delays in producing the promised legislation, and the inadequate provisions of the 1944 Planning Bill almost panicked the Ministry officials. When the Ministry at last ventured to forward their strong doubt (and yet articulate criticism) of the civic centre proposal to the Council, the latter easily bluffed it out, saying that it was a matter to be judged by themselves. Coventry's case thus demonstrates that the belief of the Council and the enlightened public that bold replanning of the blitzed city centre would be of ultimate benefit and credit to the local community and to the country after the war, surpassed the attempts during the war of the vested interests and of the Ministry to overturn it. Attention will now be turned to the second case, that of Southampton.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ HLG 88/9 Advisory Panel on Redevelopment of City Centres of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning (hereafter Advisory Panel), 'Short Notes on the Seven Cities', 25 May 1943.
- ² HLG 79/130 Report on 'Bombed Areas - Redevelopment of Coventry' by M.R. Wardill (hereafter Wardill) 23 January 1941.
- ³ HLG 79/132 Letter from W.M. Fox to B. Gille, 17 May 1944.
- ⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁵ HLG 79/127. Letter from E.H. Doubleday to A.M. Jenkins, 1 October 1945.
- ⁶ City Council, City Redevelopment Committee (hereafter the CRC) 10 December 1940.
- ⁷ CRO SEC/CF/1/7963, Ministry of Works and Buildings, Verbatim note on 'Deputation to the Minister from the Redevelopment Committee of the Corporation of the City of Coventry', 8.1.41.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ At the City Council meeting of 28 January 1941, as reported in The Coventry Standard (hereafter Standard) 1 February 1941.
- ¹⁰ Ford and Gibson could not agree perhaps because Ford had never been able to accept Gibson's appointment - and the political move it represented. See Wardill, op. cit., p. 11.
- ¹¹ CRO SEC/CF/1/9464, 'Report on the Redevelopment of the Central Bombed Areas, or "Core" of the City', by E. Ford, submitted to the CRC, 31 January 1941.
- ¹² HLG 79/130, 'Re-Development of City Centre - Coventry', by D. Gibson, submitted to the CRC, 1 February 1941.
- ¹³ As for the debate at that City Council meeting, see Coventry Evening Telegraph (hereafter CET) 25 and 26 February 1941, Standard, 1 March 1941, and Midland Daily Telegraph (hereafter MDT) 25 February 1941.
The plan with architect's impressions is included in Wardill, op. cit. Also see MDT, 13 March 1941. Councillor Payne, active in the city centre replanning before the war, described Gibson's plan as 'a very good and noble one'. In early 1940 Payne questioned whether the Council needed to keep the City Architect's Department which cost the city quite a lot of money. (Standard, 6 January 1940). A year later he realised the fruits of the foresight, adding that Gibson's plan surpassed his, which he had taken 'the trouble and expense to prepare some time ago'. (CET, 26 February 1941).
- ¹⁴ See, e.g. MDT, 20 February 1941; The Daily Herald, 26 February 1941; The News Chronicle, 26 February 1941; Reynolds News, 2 March 1941; Everybody's Weekly, 15 March 1941.

Around this time Gibson expressed the Council's determination to plan holdly on various occasions: on 4 December 1940 in London an address made to The Royal Society of Arts (See The Times, 4 and 7 December 1940); on 24 January 1941 in London, an address to The Architectural Association (see The Times, 25 January 1940 and The Architectural Association Journal, Vol. LVI, no. 648, February 1941); and on 28 March 1941 in Oxford, an address to the conference organised by the Town and Country Planning Association (see F.E. Towndrow, (ed.), Replanning Britain, a summarised report of the conference (1941), pp. 100-105.

- 15 MDT, 25 February 1941.
- 16 Standard, 8 March 1941. Also see other critical comments in Truth, 7 March 1941; Meeting of the Warwickshire Law Society, 18 February 1941, Appendix 3(iii) of Wardill, op. cit.; and the seconding speech to adopt Gibson's plan, made by Councillor A.R. Grindlay (Progressive Party, Deputy Mayor and vice-chairman of the CRC) reported in MDT 25 February 1941.
- 17 See, for example, Alderman Stringer at the City Council meeting of 25 February 1941, *ibid.*
- 18 The explanation can be found in HLG 68/70. Letter from the Town Clerk to the Ministry, 30 January 1941.
- 19 As for his written statement of resignation and a written reply from Hodgkinson, see Standard, 15 March 1941.
- 20 CRC, 17 December 1940.
- 21 City Council 24 December 1940. As for the debate there, see CET, 24 December 1940.
- 22 At the Chamber's monthly meeting of 20 January 1941. See CET 21 January 1941 and Standard, 25 January 1941. As for their criticisms of Gibson's plan, see e.g. 'Interview with Representatives of the Coventry Chamber of Commerce, 11 February 1941', Appendix 3(i) of Wardill, op. cit.
- 23 CRC, 29 January 1941.
- 24 CRC 14 May 1941, approved by the City Council 27 May 1941.
- 25 CRC 4 March 1942.
- 26 For instance the Committee dismissed the suggestion from Gibson and Ford that as a result of further bombing, Hertford Street could be widened on its present line and retained as a main approach to the city centre. CRC 24 August 1942. The Officers' report is in CRO SEC/CF/1/9464, 'Suggested Amendments to the Central Area Re-planning Scheme', to CRC, dated 30 July 1942.
- 27 HLG 79/131. letter from G.L. Pepler to the Town Clerk, 7 December 1942.
- 28 CRC 17 December 1942.

29 HLG 79/131. letter from E.H. Doubleday to K.S. Dodd, 15 April 1943.
30 *ibid.*

31 HLG 79/132, Advisory Panel, 'Minutes No. 3', 7 July 1943.
20 HLG 79/132, Advisory Panel, 'Minutes No. 4'.
33 *ibid.*
34 *ibid.*

35 HLG 79/132. Letter from Doubleday to Jenkins, 19 July 1943.
36 CET, 9 October 1943.

37 At the conference of the Lockhurst Lane Co-operative Party.
Standard, 23 October 1943.

38 CRC, 25 October 1943.
39 CRC, 22 September 1943.
40 City Council, 5 October 1943.
41 CRC, 24 November 1943.

42 CRO SEC/CF/1/10446(A), 'Report on Re-development of Coventry's
Shopping Facilities' by Coventry Retailers Advisory Committee on
Town Planning appointed of the Chamber of Commerce, 18 January 1944,
and CRC 18 February 1944.

43 CRC, 18 February 1944.

44 At the annual general meeting of the Council of the Chamber. See
CET 22 February 1944 and Standard, 26 February 1944.

45 CRO SEC/CF/1/10446(A), 'Alternative Proposals of the Coventry
Retailers Advisory Committee on Town Planning', dated 11 May 1944.

46 The argument is based on the report from Gibson and Ford to CRC,
dated 26 May 1944 in CRO SEC/CF/1/10446(A).

47 CRC, 19 June 1944.

48 HLG79/131. Letter from Doubleday to B. Gille, 14 February 1944.
49 HLG79/131, 'Note of a meeting at Coventry', 24 February 1944.
50 *ibid.*

51 HLG 79/132, 'Note on Conference held at Coventry, 4th May, 1944', by
H.W. Wells, 10 May 1944.

52 HLG 79/131, Letter from H.W. Wells to Pepler, 10 May 1944.
53 *ibid.*

- 54 HLG 79/131. 'A Note of the discussion' between Neal, Pepler and Gille on 4 May 1944, by Gille, 8 May 1944.
- 55 HLG 79/131, Letter from Gille to Pepler, 18 May 1944.
- 56 HLG 79/131, Letter from Doubleday to Gille, 16 May 1944.
- 57 *ibid.*
- 58 *ibid.*
- 59 CRC, 19 June 1944.
- 60 CRC, 19 June 1944. SEC/CF/1/9462, Letter from Clerk to the Ministry dated 5 July 1944.
- 61 CET, 29 June 1944.
- 62 HLG 79/131, Letter from W.M. Fox to Gille, 10 July 1944.
- 63 The provisional agreement from the Ministry of War Transport on the location of the inner ring road was given to Coventry by early August. CRO SEC/CF/1/9462, Letter from A.J. Lyddon (Chief Engineer of the Ministry of War Transport) to the Town Clerk, 9 August 1944.
- 64 HLG 79/132. letter from Doubleday to Gille, 24 August 1944.
- 65 HLG 79/131. Letter from F.G. Downing to Pepler, 28 October 1944.
- 66 CRO SEC/CF/1/9464, 'The TCP Act, 1944. Preliminary Report of the Town Clerk', dated 22 November 1944.
- 67 HLG 79/131, letter from Doubleday to Downing, 24 November 1944.
- 68 CRC, 29 November 1944.
- 69 CRO SEC/CF/1/9464, 'Memorandum of Conference between The City Redevelopment Committee and The Chamber of Commerce - 14th December, 1944'.
- 70 CRO SEC/CF/1/10313, 'Memorandum on Coventry Redevelopment Shopping Facilities' by Coventry Retailers' Advisory Committee on Town Planning by Chamber of Commerce, sent to the Town Clerk on 8 February 1945.
- 71 CRC 11 April 1945 and 13 June 1945.
- 72 Standard, 19 May 1945.
- 73 HLG 79/131, note of an informal meeting between Professor Holford, Doubleday, and the Corporation officers, 10 May 1945.
- 74 The idea of this road was forwarded by, first, the multiple traders at the meeting with the Planning Officers in May CRO SEC/CF/1/10313, 'Short Memorandum of Interview between the Chamber of Commerce and the Planning Officers', dated 23 May 1945.
- 75 Reported in CET, 12 July 1945.

- 76 CRO SEC/CF/1/10446(A), report of Gibson and Ford on the interview with the Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, 20 June 1945.
- 77 CRC, 11 July 1945.
- 78 HLG 79/131. Letter from Doubleday to Downing, 7 March 1945.
- 79 HLG 79/127. Note of Conversation between Pepler and Professor Holford, by Pepler, 3 October 1945.
- 80 Summarised in the minutes of CRC 13 June 1945.
- 81 CRC, 13 June 1945.
- 82 CRC, 13 June 1945.
- 83 HLG 79/127. 'Note on Coventry Plan' by H.E.C. Gatliff, 2 October 1945.
- 84 *ibid.*
- 85 MDT, 22 October 1945.
- 86 MDT, 9 October 1945.
- 87 *ibid.*
- 88 See, e.g. Coventry Town Crier Special Edition, January 1945.
- 89 As for the detailed election results, see CET, 2 November 1945. As for Labour's stance during the election campaign, see Standard, 20 and 27 October 1945. As for the Progressive Party, see CET, 27 October 1945.
- 90 Hodgkinson in CET, 3 November 1945.

CHAPTER VI

Replanning the City Centre: The case of Southampton 1940-1945

Southampton made an early start in replanning the blitzed central area, favourably comparable even to Coventry. In the first place the planning machinery of the Borough Council was strengthened through the efforts of Councillor Matthews, deputy leader of Labour and an acknowledged expert in planning. He was appointed as the southern regional researcher of the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey in the early war years, which gave him ideas about the city's industrial future. It was by no means easy for him to make the Conservative majority on the Council realise the need for the drastic changes which town planning required, but his influence had certainly been permeating with the help of encouraging words from Lord Reith. Among other things the Council appointed as a planning consultant, Professor S. Adshead, one of the most experienced planners in the country.

The report and plan were prepared by Adshead and H.T. Cook, Town Planning and Development Officer of the Council, by early 1942. As regards the central area their plan envisaged a fairly bold road system and a new shopping centre in the form of a promenade, called the 'Circus'. After discussions with traders and the Ministries concerned, the idea of a shopping promenade was totally abandoned, and the emphasis was now exclusively to enhance the values of the main pre-war shopping street of Above Bar and High Street.

The Ministry of Town and Country Planning was quite satisfied with the progress in Southampton during the war period. The Borough Council were, unlike the case of Coventry, very receptive to suggestions from the interests concerned, and amended their plan to be acceptable to them. Not surprisingly the Ministry was rather taken aback as they came to

realise that the replanning of Southampton's central area had become the major political issue of the municipal elections in November 1945, and that, as a result of this contest, the existing plan was to be replaced by a brand new scheme.

* * * *

In Southampton the Borough Council had their first discussion on the replanning of the blitzed town in January 1941, just a month after the major blitz. The Council were considering a motion moved by Alderman Woolley (leader of the Ratepayers' Party) asking the Town Planning Sub-Committee to consider the procedure necessary for the reconstruction of the central portion of the town, and to consult the Ministry of Works and Buildings with a view to the presentation of a preliminary report.

Woolley argued that while any long-term reconstruction was out of the question at the present time, there was a great deal that could be done towards restoring the normal life of the town. Of particular importance was to give the traders the opportunity of doing what they were anxious to do - getting back to their businesses as soon as possible on the original sites. Alderman Moulton, Ratepayers' member and chairman of the Works Committee and its Town Planning Sub-Committee since the latter's inauguration in 1928, said the preparation of a scheme for the central area was now actually underway to meet the point put forward by Woolley.

Matthews was rather alarmed at this approach to the replanning of the town developed by the Ratepayers' leaders - rush action for the sake of quick restoration of business. Planning required the consideration of much wider issues such as the population and industry of the town as a whole, which would be influenced considerably by Government policy. It had to be considered as a long-term policy in an appropriate manner. As he maintained in a private memorandum, before starting the replanning of

the town, there were several essential steps to be taken. They were the appointment of a town planning expert outside the Council as consultant to prepare an advisory report on the replanning of the town; measures to safeguard the proposals for the future from prejudicial actions; Government intervention at an early stage to secure the replanning on the right lines from its beginning; and the strengthening of the town planning machinery of the Council.

He deplored the fact that in the Town Planning Sub-Committee 'no more than two members have any deep interest in and knowledge of planning.'² As regards officials they had H.T. Cook, Town Planning Assistant, attached to the Borough Engineer. Although Matthews regarded Cook as 'a first class man', he was

handicapped by his subordination to the Borough Engineer and by the prevailing attitude of Council members to any drastic planning proposals. That is why the appointment of an eminent Town Planning consultant is essential. But in addition to this the Town Planning work of the Council should be constituted either as a separate Department, or Mr. Cook, as Town Planning Officer, be given special status.³

At the January Council meeting, Matthews, while seconding Woolley's motion, also stated:

We are asking for bold, big and [effective] planning, but we do not want consideration of the miscellaneous problems presented to this Council in a month's time and be asked to call that planning. That is nothing of the kind. I want to plan reasonably and well, and to have first-class brains and first-class thought on the job.

The Council meeting ended with Alderman Woolley's withdrawal of his motion on an assurance that the Town Planning Sub-Committee would be

called together as soon as possible to consider the whole matter in the light of the discussion which had taken place at the Council meeting.⁴

A week after the January Council meeting the Planning Sub-Committee was called together and it made three unanimous recommendations: the adoption of building lines for London Road, Above Bar and High Street so as to provide for the widening of the road to 80 feet after the war; an immediate conference with the Ministries concerned; and the building of temporary shops to let to traders until they could re-establish themselves on the original sites.⁵ While, as Alderman Mouland told the Council, the recommendations had the twofold aims of helping traders resume their business, and at the same time safeguarding the proposals for the future, his main concern was obviously the quick restoration of the business community. As he went on, because it was impracticable at present to attempt to set back buildings to a new line, it was therefore proposed that traders who wished to resume business should be permitted to erect temporary buildings on the existing frontage line for the duration of the war, after which the buildings were to be removed and any existing permanent buildings set back to the new lines.

In seconding the recommendations, the point Matthews stressed was rather different. In his opinion drastic changes in regard to Government policy and legislation in the matter of town planning were inevitable, and, therefore there was the need for preventive measures against prejudicial development, with the implication that such changes would result in drastic replanning of the town rather than mere restoration of trade. At the same time the Council should be fully informed as to Government policy in order to decide on the broad principle of their plan, and that was why he wanted the conference.⁶

It seemed that Matthews' emphasis on preventive measures won the day against Monland's desire for quick restoration of business. Applications

for temporary premises made by Above Bar traders to the Council were all turned down, for the Council suspected that the proposed 'temporary' buildings were not to be constructed of short-lived materials, and thus there was no guarantee of their removal on the Council's request.⁷

It should not be overlooked, however, that Matthews' most important proposals for the preparation of a long-term plan, such as a consultant, a Borough Architect, new Planning Department and Committee, were not discussed at all by the Planning Sub-Committee for some time. This seemed to indicate the prevailing negative attitude of other Sub-Committee members to any drastic change in the matter of planning. Keeping himself in silence, Matthews was looking for an opportunity to press his case. Such opportunity was soon to be created by the visit of Lord Reith, Minister of Works and Buildings.

* * * *

In March Lord Reith came to Southampton with G.L. Pepler and met the Sub-Committee. They asked the Minister whether they were to plan boldly and comprehensively.

Lord Reith said, most emphatically, "Yes." That advice was definitely valuable to the committee, because it will dissipate any doubt about the official attitude to long-term redevelopment policy. It connoted, moreover, that ... the local authorities, who must be responsible for the plans but can hardly be expected to bear the expense, will have the support of the Government.⁸

Soon after the Minister's visit the Planning Sub-Committee started to consider the setting up of a Planning Department, with only Monland, the chairman, opposing it. But even then the proposal to appoint a planning consultant, now seconded by Councillor Lane (Ratepayers' Party) was defeated,⁹ and the Sub-Committee eventually decided to defer the

consideration of the appointment for six months. The SDE predicted that the matter would certainly be raised in the Council before long.¹⁰ The point was whether such an appointment might be premature in view of the necessary preliminary research work now under way.¹¹ Matthews thought that the importance of such research work all the more reinforced the case for immediate appointment. For, by this course,

he will be able to be in at the birth of the scheme and give his advice in the preparation of the data upon which he will build his proposals. His experience and knowledge would probably save unnecessary labour. Further, he himself would benefit materially by being able to study the scheme from the outset.¹²

At last Alderman Woolley proposed at the Council meeting in June to ask the advice of the Minister of Works and Buildings¹³ - a request which resulted in Reith recommending an immediate appointment.¹⁴ In August the Planning Sub-Committee resolved unanimously to recommend the appointment of Professor S.D. Adshead as Town Planning Consultant. The scope of his work was to prepare an outline redevelopment plan and report for Southampton, with particular reference to the blitzed central part of the town. The work was to be done within a period of six months from the date of appointment.¹⁵

Stanley Adshead was one of the most eminent figures in town planning with forty years in the field. When the country's first Department of Civic Design was created at Liverpool University in 1909, he was invited to be its first Professor. Five years later he was offered the Chair of Town Planning at London University, which he retained for 21 years until his retirement. He had also been involved in the preparation of planning schemes for many towns including Norwich, Carlisle, Brighton, Plymouth, and Lusaka, new capital city of Northern Rhodesia.¹⁶ Being regarded as

one of the best architectural draughtsmen of the day, he was also very aware of the importance of social and administrative conditions to town planning, which made him write in 1923 a comprehensive study of town planning, Town Planning and Town Development. In this book attention was already paid to a promenade, which was a feature often seen on the continent, but not yet seen in this country.¹⁷ The appointment was quite a timely one, for, on top of his profound knowledge and wide experience in town planning, he was determined to create a better England after the war, which was shown in his book, A New England, just published in 1941.¹⁸

Adshead's partner in the preparation of a redevelopment plan was H.T. Cook, who had just recently been promoted to be head of a newly created Town Planning and Development Department in July 1941. H.T. Cook began his career as an articled pupil to a surveyor and town planning consultant in Essex. When Southampton set up a town planning section in the Borough Engineer's Department in 1928, he was appointed as town planning assistant and had since then been chiefly responsible for the Borough's town planning schemes. In addition he had been the Town Planning Officer to the Southern Hampshire Joint Town Planning Committee since its creation in 1929, thus having an intimate knowledge about the region as well.¹⁹

The setting up of this new Department created conflict between Stanton, Borough Engineer, and Cook, Town Planning and Development Officer. It was quite understandable that the Borough Engineer had been rather disgusted by this event. First of all town planning had long been, as a general practice, within the jurisdiction of a local authority's Engineer. Moreover, in the case of Southampton, the new Planning Officer, Cook, had been one of the Borough Engineer's assistants for more than ten years. Stanton was particularly opposed to Cook's

intention to be primarily responsible for the design of the road system and for acting as liaison between the Ministry of Transport and the Corporation. Stanton insisted that anything related to roads, which was a matter for the Ministry of Transport and had been the responsibility of the Engineer, should remain so. Cook argued that, because the position of roads and the use of land were not considered individually during the preparation of any town planning scheme, he should be in the first place responsible for anything related to road planning.²⁰ Negotiations between Cook and Stanton did not go smoothly, but eventually the Planning Sub-Committee decided to formulate the duties of the officers in favour of Cook's argument.²¹

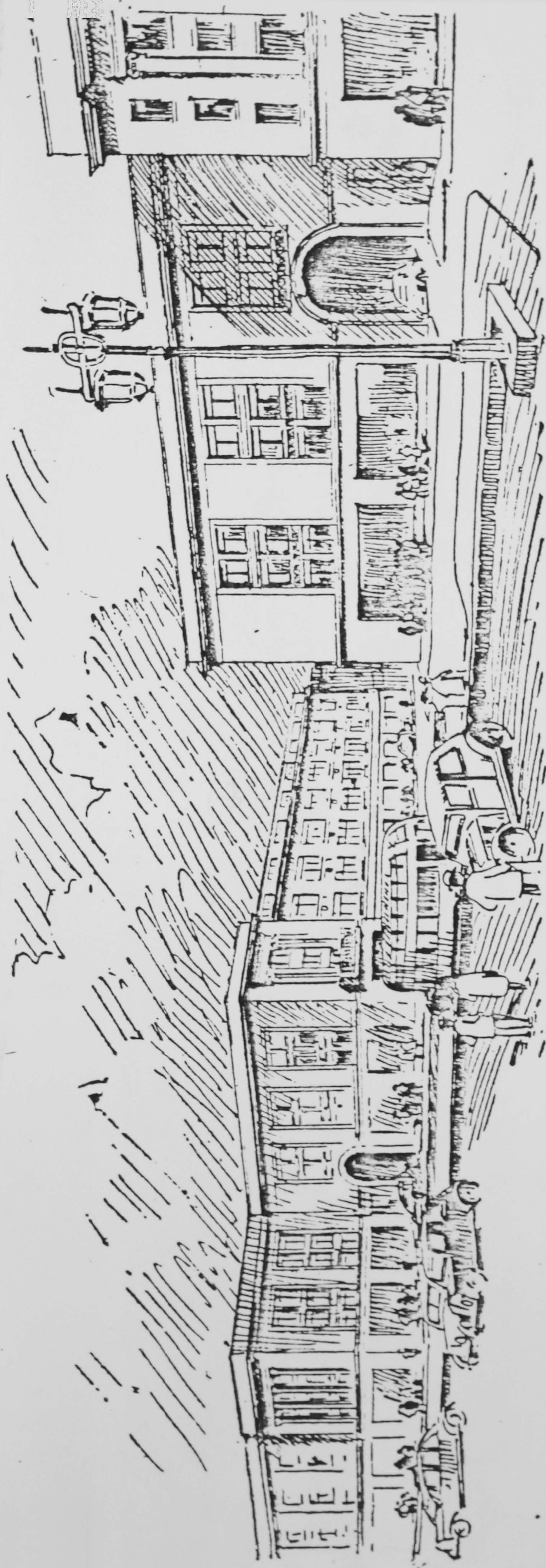
Meanwhile the preparation of a plan for the new Southampton had been well under way, and in February 1942 the Joint Report of Adshead and Cook was submitted to the City Council.²² The Adshead/Cook Report was quite a comprehensive one in that it dealt with various subjects, such as post-war housing requirements, future population, and proposals for industrial zoning with the object of encouraging new industries. For the central area, several interesting proposals were made. Blocks of new and larger tenement buildings of four or six storeys were proposed to the south of Houndwell for those working at the Old Docks.²³ In order to improve the lower part of the town, new meat and fruit markets were to be built in High Street; on recently reclaimed land a youth centre, a swimming pool and a new park were envisaged. The two most attractive features in the Report were, however, the new road system and a town centre.

The new road system was designed to relieve the traffic congestion in the town's main shopping street of Above Bar and High Street. The Inner Ring would circumscribe the central area and serve to provide connections between important points on existing radial roads. Much of it would be composed of dignified new roads. With regard to the east to

west route through the centre the Report proposed a new road leading vertically to the front of the Guildhall. The width of it would be 100 ft, and for the section between the new north to south road and Above Bar, a width of 150 ft was proposed. As for the north to south route a new road of 120 ft with dual carriageways (the New Dock Road) was proposed. It would run parallel on the east of the main shopping street, and cater principally for through traffic. Relieved of through traffic the main shopping street needed only be widened to 80ft.²⁴

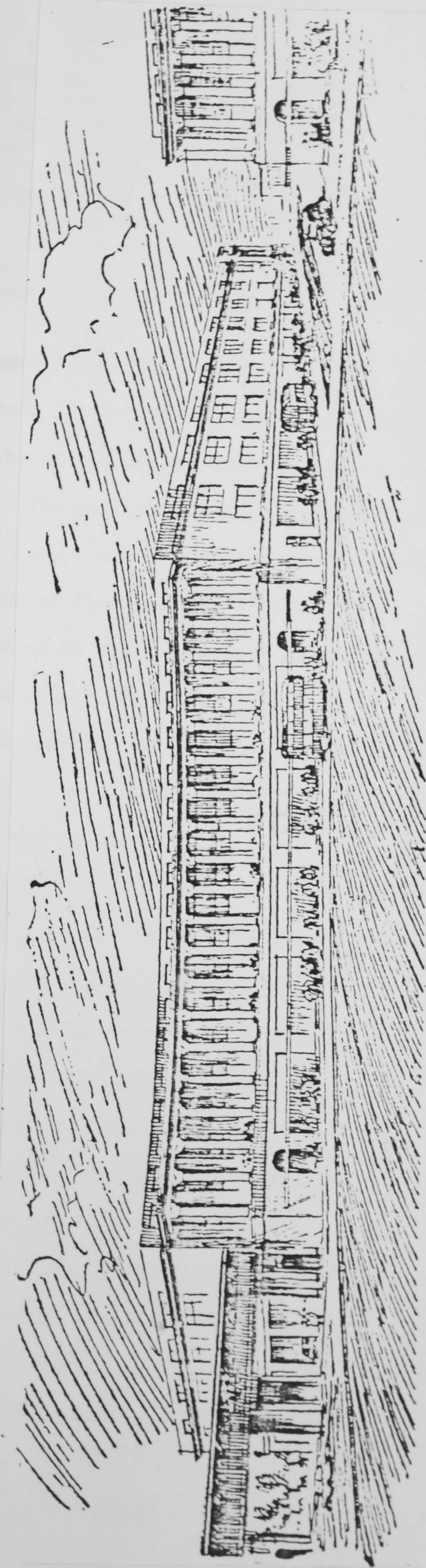
As the Report pointed out Southampton had no central square or place comparable to those of many other mediaeval towns. In replanning the central area the section upon which all main roads would converge was designed to form such a centre. The Guildhall entrance to the Civic Centre would be the dominant feature of the western end. It would be an open space approximately 400 ft wide, while the buildings on the east side of Above Bar were to be set back to complete the effect of a large open forecourt in front of the Guildhall. The eastern end was composed of a large circular Place (the 'Circus'), 500 ft in diameter, at the intersection of the new main roads north to south and from the east. In view of the great volume of traffic converging upon the Circus, the Report proposed to construct bridges for pedestrians at first-floor level over the main roads. Around the Circus and along both sides of the Town Centre between Above Bar and the new north to south road the Report suggested erecting shops of a uniform elevation.²⁵

The design of the Circus would provide an opportunity for constructing a promenade or a shopping way of 12 ft 6 ins wide around the blocks of shops at the first floor level behind a row of columns. This promenade would be reached by steps and, possibly, lifts. As the Report claimed



An artist's impression of the proposed Town Centre of Southampton

Source: Southern Daily Echo, 29 April 1942.



An artist's impression of the proposed Town Centre (the 'Circus') of Southampton

Source: Southern Daily Echo, 29 April 1942.

It would be a unique arrangement in this country, where never before has there been a good opportunity for putting it into practice. If the bridges were constructed as already suggested, shoppers could walk all round the circus at first floor level under cover; the nearest design of a comparative nature in this country being "The Rows" at Chester, though there are many examples of such arcade walks in foreign countries.²⁶

The Adshead/Cook Report was referred to the new Town Planning and Development Committee, finally created over Alderman Monland's resistance. Although he was one of the Committee's members, he soon resigned from it.²⁷ The new Committee's first chairman during the war period was Councillor Lane, and vice-chairman was Matthews. While Lane was a Ratepayers' Councillor and also a Director of the Chamber of Commerce (by profession he was a surveyor) he stayed in agreement with Matthews for most of this period.

The Plan for the central area in the Adshead/Cook Report was, as Cook wrote to an official of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, generally favoured by the Planning Committee. He expected that it would get the approval of the Council a few months' time after the Committee's consideration just commenced in May.²⁸ However, the Plan, especially the idea of a shopping promenade, met strong opposition from the local traders and from the Ministries concerned, the MOWT in particular.

Traders stated that they had little confidence in the success of such a proposal, since the shops would not form a natural extension of the existing main shopping street and consequently shoppers would be faced with the choice of two alternatives - either going to Above Bar or to a promenade. At a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce for instance, W. Dixon (former president of the Chamber and president of the High Street Association) said that he could see 'no real grounds for planning such an extension of shopping facilities', and wondered 'if in the planning of

the town the planners had not been mesmerised by this new shopping centre, which would impinge a new centre on one which already existed.'²⁹ The Ministry of War Transport was strongly opposed to the proposal on the grounds that it would create conditions dangerous to pedestrians.³⁰

Revision of the plan seemed imperative, but the task was assigned to Cook only. The Planning Committee turned down an offer from Professor Adshead to continue his service as Consultant in January 1943 (without mentioning any particular reason).³¹ In March 1943 the revised plan was submitted to the City Council. The most significant change from the original 1942 plan was the omission of shops around the Circus. This was a keen disappointment to Adshead who had been so proud of the idea of a shopping promenade. As he wrote to Cook:

I don't understand the Ministry of Transport's point of view. ([Is] it safety, then they can have a railing, as shown on my drawing. I thought it was bridges they wanted, and we gave them bridges.) I [don't] know that a circus is the last word, but it fits the site and is a [splendid] feature if everyone can be persuaded to adopt it ...

It is only natural that owners and the majority of [shop] keepers should hesitate at such innovations, but there will be a lot of innovations to be got used to, after the war, if this is to be a go ahead country.³²

In the revised plan it was also suggested that every endeavour should be made to attract retail trade into Above Bar and High Street, particularly the latter, which had been for some years in decline from the shopping viewpoint. For this purpose several proposals were made. Existing buildings adjoining the Town Quay, except those of historical or archaeological interest, should be removed. The interesting historical remains should be left out in open spaces suitably laid out. The Bargate Circus (bottle-neck between Above Bar and High Street) should be entirely reconstructed on new lines to give greater continuity between the two

streets. The wholesale distribution of fruit and vegetables, which previously occupied a considerable part of High Street, should be re-established on a site other than that originally suggested of the lower part of High Street.³³

The focus of discussion at the March Council meeting however shifted from these new proposals to the rights of property owners. The Planning Committee asked the Council to approve the revised plan in principle, pending clarification of Government policy, especially the level of financial assistance likely to be available. If generous financial assistance from the Government eventually came, the rebuilding should start as soon as possible. The intention of the resolution was, as Councillor Lane told the Council, the sterilisation of properties within the area under the plan, which would mean that no buildings other than buildings of short-lived materials should be permitted on the cleared site pending a final redevelopment plan. It was a clear warning to individual property owners that the future of the area was within the Council's discretion and they were no longer allowed to rebuild themselves as they liked. Alderman Woolley proposed that the adoption of the plan in principle only should be a mere expression of the Council's intention to replan on the suggested lines, but should not be a ban on the right of property owners to stay or rebuild on their original sites. In reply Councillor Lane expressed the opinion that it would be better to have a Council debate on the question of sterilisation and arrive at a settled policy. The Committee were at a stage, as he went on, when they had to have some backing from the Council. As he observed:

We have got to face the fact that at some period, if we hope to re-plan and re-build Southampton on better lines, we must be prepared to accept the sterilisation of certain sections. I think it would be more convenient to sterilise now, when

other factors are already sterilising, than it would be to do so at some date after the cessation of hostilities when everybody will want to get on with plans for re-building.

There is bound to be some sterilisation, and the committee are very mindful of the necessity to minimise it to the greatest possible degree, but that doesn't mean that we can completely eliminate it.

Nevertheless, he could not defy any further the opinion of the leader of his party. Rather mysteriously the Labour Party, especially Matthews, did not seem to make any particular challenge, and it was eventually agreed to embody Woolley's suggestion in the resolution.³⁴

Knowing the Council's decision, Adshead lamented in a letter to Cook:

It is what must be expected, "small profits and quick returns". We were told to plan boldly, and we took a long distance view. It would have taken nearly two generations to complete our scheme, and Southampton would have been the finest town in England.

The line that seems to be taken is to rebuild as quickly and as like the past as possible. Everyone will be rejoicing and in ten years lamenting.³⁵

He was now preparing a plan for York, which "in a town of Museums and archaeological and ecclesiastical remains, and there is little more wanted than restoration, very different from Southampton."³⁶ Cook, in reply, emphasised that the Council's approval was only tentative. Thus, referring to the shops around the Circus, he observed: "Since this [the Circus] remains as open space, it does not preclude the erection of shops in this position later if the necessity for them arises."³⁷ Certainly encouraged by this letter, Adshead wrote to the SDE and to Councillor Lane. As he admitted on reflection, "my views were not presented to the Committee and to [the] Council as they would have been, had I been

there." There was, nevertheless, still time "to prevent Southampton from being allowed to drift on easy but commonplace lines, instead of making it a great city."³⁸ Although his letter, pressing the case of the shopping promenade, appeared in the SDE in June,³⁹ it did not seem to change the Councillors' mind. As Cook told Adshead in July,

With regard to the shopping circus, while no finality has yet been reached as to the precise treatment of this junction, the Council are naturally influenced by the aversions of the traders to the scheme and the strong opposition which the proposal has aroused with the Ministry of Transport.⁴⁰

* * * *

Meanwhile the MOTCP had formed a favourable opinion about Southampton's city centre plan. The Ministry side appreciated the fact that fairly close contact had been kept between Cook and certain Ministry officials,⁴¹ and that the original plan of 1942 had gone through several revisions as a result of the local authority's consultation with traders,⁴² and with the Ministries concerned.⁴³

As shown in Chapter II the Ministry of Town and Country Planning set up the Advisory Panel on Redevelopment of City Centres in May 1943, and chose seven blitzed towns for detailed study. Southampton was the first town to be visited by the Panel in June 1943. At the meeting between the Panel and Southampton, the latter emphasised that the Council should be enabled to restore their shopping district within a couple of years after the war, so as to revive their rateable values lost heavily as a result of air raids.⁴⁴ (After some conversation with traders, they were confident that their plan was likely to be acceptable to them.) After the visit, one member of the Panel expressed his opinion that there was too much emphasis on restoration of rateable values and too little on

finding the ideal plan, and that the plan hardly seemed to be bold enough.⁴⁵ It was pointed out, however, that their primary concern should be with the successful recreation of the main shopping area, which happened to suffer the most extensive devastation. Both because it was the social magnet of a large and widespread community, and because it was so large a contributor to the city's revenue, its speedy rehabilitation was thought to be essential to the city's future.⁴⁶

At the same time in view of its proximity to Portsmouth and Bournemouth, any strong conflict of interest had to be avoided. Accordingly it would be necessary to guard against too ambitious redevelopment.⁴⁷ The Panel thought however that the point should be borne in mind by the Council, for they had Councillor Matthews, who did the Nuffield Social Reconstruction Survey which covered Southampton, Portsmouth, Bournemouth, and Poole, and the Planning Officer, H.T. Cook, who was also Planning Officer to the local Joint Planning Committee and a member of a regional advisory planning body for the county.⁴⁸ The plan for the Borough itself was comprehensive unlike Coventry, which limited its plan strictly to the city centre.⁴⁹ After the visit to Coventry the Panel formed the opinion that Southampton's plan was sufficiently advanced to form a basis for their findings, but Coventry's was far behind. They even thought, rightly, that Southampton was unique in this respect and that none of the other remaining cities would be very far on with their plans.⁵⁰ As for the general layout of Southampton's redevelopment plan for the city centre the Panel arrived at the provisional conclusion that it 'appears to us to be sound.'⁵¹

Whether Southampton knew of the Panel's provisional conclusion or not, it did not seem to help the local authority very much. What Southampton needed among other things, were, as they told the Panel,

i) early legislation on the lines of the Uthwatt proposals granting them powers to purchase the whole of the areas covered by the plan with a view to the principle of public retention of freeholds, and

ii) financial assistance from the Government in the form of a loan, which should be free from interest and redemption payments during the early post-war years.⁵² As mentioned in Chapter II, however, the Government was facing great difficulty in reaching a final answer to the Uthwatt proposals. Thus in early 1944 H.T. Cook reported that

little progress has so far been possible with preparations for active rebuilding of the central shopping and business area. This is due to uncertainty as to the future disposal of land and the financial terms upon which such decision will be made. Both of these are dependent upon Government policy.⁵³

As Government policy was about to be made public as the Town and Country Planning Bill, 1944, the consideration of final details of the planning scheme for the central area was carried a stage further. A Planning Scheme Sub-Committee consisting of Councillors Burrow, Lane and Matthews was set up in May 1944.⁵⁴ Five months after the further revised plan was submitted to the Council.⁵⁵ Matthews told the Council that they made an effort to provide a magnificent square in front of the Guildhall. A space approximately 235 ft wide would be left open in front of the Guildhall, and shops on the east side of Above Bar would also be recessed for a similar width. The width of the main shopping street would be 100 ft. Then at the bottom of it a fine park would be created by extending public open space at Queen's Park to the Royal Pier and by closing the bottom end of High Street. Nevertheless, as Matthews himself admitted, the revised plan was rather

an orthodox plan, much more limited than those of many other blitzed towns. If we take away the two main features - the

Guildhall Square and a large open space at the bottom of the town facing docks - we shall destroy the plan altogether.⁵⁶

Alderman Woolley still had something to say. He made an amendment to reduce the width of the main shopping street to 80 ft., and to reconsider the layout of Guildhall Square and the site between the Town Quay and the proposed southern end of High Street. He was particular about the width of 100 ft for the shopping thoroughfare. As ample provision for heavy through traffic was made, there was no need to provide for road accommodation able to take the heavy traffic in the main shopping thoroughfare.

It is doing the job twice over. It is incurring needless expense. It is docking off considerable depth of building line unnecessarily. It is, in my opinion, absolutely spoiling the thoroughfare for the purpose for which it is intended, namely, shopping.⁵⁷

Matthews argued that the amendment was against the weight of technical opinion. Traders wanted pedestrians as well as cars to stop outside their premises. If vehicles were allowed to be there, then the road had to be sufficiently wide. At the same time the Council would have no power to exclude heavy traffic from this road, although they might do their best to persuade that traffic not to use it. In the end the amendment was carried by 23 votes to 18, although the mover agreed to leave the consideration of the layout of Guildhall Square and of the end of High Street to the Planning Committee.⁵⁸

The Committee soon asked Cook and H. Bennett, first Borough Architect appointed in October 1943, to submit a revised layout of the areas in question.⁵⁹ Bennett expressed his particular concern about the financial consequences of the layout of the Guildhall Square: the deep setback on the east side of Above Bar was likely to diminish the



The 1944 revised plan for the central area of Southampton

Source: Southern Daily Echo, 12 October 1944.

value of the property fronting the east side of the Square; the isolation of the small buildings on the north side of the Square, caused by the island at the junction of Commercial Road and Above Bar, made it impossible to use them for retail distribution purposes.⁶⁰ His solutions were first that the size of the Square should be reduced in order to maintain continuity of shopping along the east side of Above Bar; and secondly that the approach to the Square from the New Dock Road should be one on the axis of the Square, rather than two horn roads, thus eliminating the traffic island in question.⁶¹

By early 1945 Cook submitted the further revised layout to the Committee. The set back of the building block on the east side of Above Bar was greatly reduced. Approach to the Square was also altered, by which, as Cook put it, 'the opportunity of erecting a building block, sufficiently large to retain its value as a retail trading site, can be secured.'⁶²

Meanwhile, the passing of the Town and Country Planning Bill into law in 1944 made the question of the acquisition of land a very urgent matter. The Planning Committee asked Cook to show the maximum portion of the central area over which powers of compulsory purchase might be exercised. Although Cook managed to tell the Committee that the maximum area would be 463 acres,⁶³ he had been rather concerned that the 1944 Act was by no means clear on many points.⁶⁴ Accordingly a deputation to W.S. Morrison, Minister of Town and Country Planning, was proposed,⁶⁵ and the meeting took place in February 1945.

Just before this meeting Matthews hinted in public his disappointment at the Government's attitude towards planning. Although Southampton were told to plan boldly by Lord Reith, a great gap between what they wanted and their capacity to carry it through had prevented them from replanning boldly. Among other things, as he went on to say, the

Government had dithered completely on the question of land utilisation.⁶⁶ The Chamber of Commerce also expressed their concern about the reconstruction of the city centre after the war and maintained that a definite declaration by the local authority as to their policy for acquisition of land was essential.⁶⁷ The Ministry side were in fact of the opinion that Southampton should go ahead. As L. Neal, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry, recorded in early 1945, Southampton

is probably further advanced than any other blitzed city with its reconstruction proposals. These have been adopted by the Local Authority and a considerable measure of agreement has been reached with the Government Departments concerned. Moreover, preliminary negotiations with many individual traders have gone some way.⁶⁸

The meeting with the Minister gave considerable encouragement to the deputation, or at least to Matthews. The Minister told the deputation to make a speedy decision in their acquisition proposals through an application for the designation of an area under the 1944 Act. That designation should be as extensive as possible and any specific exclusion should be minimised. He also told them that the local authority should not be too worried about grant, and encouraged them to remain ground landlords of the land acquired under the Act to have effective control of property through the leasehold system.⁶⁹

* * * *

By this time it was thought, rightly, that the preparation of a replanning scheme for the central area had reached its final stage. A Reconstruction Committee was set up which would in future deal with all negotiations and transactions for the acquisition and disposal of land, re-allocate sites available for development, and deal with all questions of priority in the carrying out of reconstruction including the work of

other Committees of the Council.⁷⁰ The next essential step was, therefore, how much area they should include for compulsory acquisition under the 1944 Act. Progress thereafter was, however, very slow. One reason was, as Councillor Lane, chairman of the TPDC, pointed out: 'We have one member who is very persistent, over-persistent, in exercising his right to object.' This was Alderman Sir Sidney Kimber, former leader of the Ratepayers' Party but by this time a maverick, or a black sheep in the Council as an 'Independent'. He had a strong view against any infringement of the rights of property owners. Consequently he continued to object on that ground to almost any proposals related to the replanning of the central area, often being the only dissident in the Council. The work of the Council had inevitably been held up by these 'frivolous objections' which were attacked by both sides of the Council.⁷¹ What was more, there emerged the possibility of drafting an entirely new plan for the central part of the town. Bennett, the Borough Architect, soon found that he could not see eye to eye with Cook in many respects in the replanning of the central area. In this he was joined by F.L. Wooldridge, the new Borough Engineer appointed in December 1944. In June 1945 both submitted jointly a new plan for the central area of the town to the Planning Committee.

As early as March 1944 Cook, in his letter to Bennett, expressed his strong suspicion that it seemed that 'you prefer to work out your own scheme independently.'⁷² Although both tried to collaborate with each other, the divergence in opinion became wider as Wooldridge supported Bennett rather than Cook. In May 1945 the Planning Committee asked the three officers to report to the June meeting, in order that the Committee might 'make a decision on the points outstanding in respect of the layout of the Central area.'⁷³ Bennett and Wooldridge submitted a joint report and plan at the June meeting. Councillor Lane, chairman of the

Committee, claiming that the new plan had been put forward to them 'without any prior notice or knowledge,'⁷⁴ argued that 'the Council would make more progress by going ahead with the original scheme, which appeared to be good and acceptable, and to obtain Ministerial approval of the plan.'⁷⁵

The man who was mainly responsible for the new central area plan was F.L. Wooldridge, Borough Engineer.⁷⁶ He argued that:

the basic matters which will influence design are economics, and not engineering or planning principles. Unless the plan is sound economically it is useless no matter how fine it may be. To be sound economically it must be capable of execution in several stages and there must be no insuperable difficulties in these stages. There is no need to emphasise the present state of the Country and the present lack of men, materials and money. Of course all these will become available in the near future but when they do, not for profligate use.⁷⁷

One difficulty in the replanning of the central area was that it 'must be based on plain and simple common sense and yet sufficiently bold to our ever increasing traffic problems.' Bearing this in mind he could see that 'sufficient of the old plan of the town can still be utilised to build up the lines of the new.' For instance it was intended to interfere as little as possible with parks or historic buildings, which 'still show us the dignity, tradition and characteristics which make Southampton such a homely and friendly town, a characteristic which in time, contributed in no small measure to its fame and prosperity as a shopping centre.'⁷⁸

Two circular roads were proposed as main features in the new road system. First, the 'Circular Road' - an outer or external traffic system girdling the 'Shopping Area' based on Above Bar - High Streets. The primary purpose of this road was to improve direct access from all points

of the compass, and to discourage any traffic from entering the main shopping street unless it had business therein. The main traffic from the south, i.e. from the Docks, would be directly routed north, east or west along this road, rather than using a north-south route parallel to Above bar - High Street.⁷⁹ The route of this 'Outer Ring' followed in the main the existing roads. Another circular road, the 'Inner Ring Road', would surround the Above Bar and High Street area starting at Civic Centre and following the existing lines of Portland Terrace, Bugle Street, Canal Walk, Palmerston Road and East Park Terrace, then finally turning due west along the new road axial with the Civic Centre. The main purpose of this road was to make provisions for Above Bar and High Street being treated as a shopping precinct in future. As the Borough Engineer's report stated,

In the first years bus services will probably use the Above Bar Street - High Street route but bus services must be made to circulate properly and the ideal circuit for this purpose is the "Inner Circuit Road" already mentioned. The advantage of this road as a circular bus route is that passengers can be put down or taken up along the whole length and breadth of the Shopping Area, and so build up an interest in the Shopping Area as a whole with consequent more uniform and sustained rateable value.⁸⁰

The prime consideration in designing the main shopping area was to preserve as much as possible of the existing layout and to enhance the importance of the original main shopping street of Above Bar and High Street. It was also proposed to provide a covered retail market on a site south of the Bargate which would accommodate as many of the small traders who might not be able to establish themselves in new buildings with high rents and rates. With this, it was expected that there would be a great increase in the shopping interest in High Street and rateable

values in this area would be immediately assured.⁸¹ At the end of the report he emphasised again the importance of practical economics.

In conclusion the guiding principle in the preparation of the scheme has been the extent to which existing roads, services and buildings can be preserved without perpetuating past defects in the layout of the town. In the main streets the rebuilding of the shops and business premises can be carried out merely by setting back to the new building lines. Utopian ideas have therefore been restrained by practical economics and an endeavour not only to plan a completed scheme but one which can be built up in successive stages without any insuperable difficulty.⁸²

At the special meeting of July it was resolved that the officers concerned should confer with the MOTCP and the MOWT to obtain their advice on the two plans.⁸³ But the proposed conference did not take place until November as the question of land acquisition policy became the most controversial point in the local elections.

Following the conference with the Minister of Town and Country Planning in February 1945 the Borough Council in April considered the Planning Committee's recommendation to advertise that the redevelopment of the central area as a whole was being considered. While the recommendation was adopted by the Council, the discussion centred around the question of land acquisition policy. The Labour party claimed that the local authority should acquire the whole of the area under consideration and should remain the owner of it as the Minister told them in February. Members of the Ratepayers' Party maintained that this advice was very far from saying that the whole of the area before the Council recommended as a designated area had to be acquired.⁸⁵

Now the Planning Committee had to decide what area should form the subject of an application for a Declaratory Order under the 1944 Planning Act. A special meeting was fixed for June 13. Before that date the case

of the Canterbury City Council was made known. The Local Government Act of 1933 laid down that any member of the Council who had an interest in properties affected or in contracts was unable to discuss or vote on matters like the acquisition of land. In Canterbury only six Council members out of 26 could vote on the question of land acquisition. Most of the members of the Ratepayers' Party had to be disqualified in this respect. Accordingly the special meeting for 13 June was cancelled and a way of avoiding disqualification was hastily sought.⁸⁶ By July it was found that the Portsmouth City Council had applied to the Minister of Health for dispensation, and the Planning Committee resolved, upon a show of hands, to follow the same line.⁸⁷

At the Council meetings, however, the Labour Party was fiercely opposed to dispensation.⁸⁸ The local press criticised strongly the Council's delay in deciding their post-war scheme. What Southampton needed was 'a "Get on with it" plan', but in order to get such a plan, the question of land acquisition had to be settled as soon as possible, for the principal cause for the delay was 'undoubtedly that there has been too much concentration in the Borough Council on making points for party at the expense of progress.'⁸⁹ The SDE soon revealed its own political stance on the question of compulsory acquisition by saying that the rebuilding would take twice as much time as it would without it:

Those who favour wholesale acquisition will say that this is the view of "vested interest." Those who examine the facts dispassionately will recognise it as a view based on plain common sense.⁹⁰

The dissatisfaction of the traders with the lack of decision regarding the reconstruction of the town was also represented to the Council.⁹¹ Moreover the MOTCP became very concerned about the lack of progress in Southampton. As L. Neal reported to the Minister in August 1945:

there are strong political influences which are delaying any further formal action, and which are unlikely to be resolved until after the November elections. The Corporation, both elected members and officials, are divided into two camps. The more Conservative element, led on the elected member side by the Chairman of the Planning Committee and the Planning Officer, and the more Left Wing view led by the Deputy Chairman to the Planning Committee who supports the technical views held by the Borough Architect. It is therefore possible that after the November elections the present plan, which was prepared by a predominantly Right Wing Council, will be scrapped.⁹²

In September the Ministry wrote to the Council, saying that at the meeting in February it was understood that Southampton were in a position to submit an application for a declaratory order under the 1944 Act:

The Minister notes with some anxiety that although more than six months have elapsed since that date, no such application has yet been submitted by the Town Council under the Act.⁹³

At the adjourned special meeting of the Council on 11 October, Labour put forward their amendment seeking to disqualify all the Council members except those whose interest within the area in question was only nominal. In their view dispensation simply meant the Ratepayers' Party's taking refuge so that the vested interests would be safeguarded from taking their freehold away by the large-scale land acquisition. The amendment was lost by 23 votes to 32. It was a straight party vote. As Alderman Lewis, leader of the Labour party, observed:

The air is full of this question of the reconstruction of Southampton, and whether the views of the Ratepayers' party, plus one member of the Independent Party, are to rule

or whether the considered, sensible views of the Labour Party are to prevail. That is the issue. I can quite see that some people want to get the municipal elections over first.⁹⁴

Certainly the question of land acquisition became the most controversial issue in the local elections. The Ratepayers' party maintained that the Council should purchase only as much land as necessary to carry out the replanning scheme, i.e. land for road widening and other improvements, and the bottom part of the town.⁹⁵ Leasehold of 99 years was also criticised because it was 'not a long time in the life of a business.'⁹⁶ The importance of the February meeting with the Minister which had been emphasised repeatedly by Matthews was rather cynically denied. As one Ratepayers' party member said:

But it was extraordinary that he put so much reliance on what was said then. The Government, by words only, had been encouraging the bombed towns to plan boldly, and acquire property. Councillor Matthews seemed to have swallowed that lock, stock and barrel.⁹⁷

In their words what the Labour Party was trying was 'to attach to the rebuilding of Southampton the opportunity of putting into operation what is nothing more or less than nationalisation of land.'⁹⁸

The Labour Party showed no hesitation in saying that what the city needed was the power for the local authority to plan the central area as its large scale owner. As their manifesto for the local elections put it, public ownership would give the Council continuous control of development, and would enable the increased values created by public expenditure on reconstruction to come into public funds instead of into private pockets. As it went on:

Reconstruction of the central area can in the long run be a reasonable financial investment for the people of Southampton, but only if the area is publicly owned. It has long been profitable to those who privately owned it. The Ratepayers' Party are not willing to adopt the policy recommended to it by the late Minister of Planning, who was a Conservative. They want to minimise acquisition and in so doing will add substantially to the long run cost of reconstruction, and make the plan itself ineffective.⁹⁹

The result of the election was a sweeping victory for Labour. The Party gained 13 seats out of the 16 previously retained by the Ratepayers' party.¹⁰⁰ With this result Councillor Matthews said confidently that the question of wholesale acquisition 'has been clearly settled by the electorate.'¹⁰¹

Quite apart from this issue, however, there remained a further problem, in that the City Council still had to choose one of two plans for the central area, the original one by the Town Planning Officer and the new one by the Borough Engineer and the Borough Architect. Councillor Matthews was now entirely inclined to the new plan, despite his earlier efforts at bold replanning. There were some obvious explanations of his change of mind. First, given the expected shortage of labour and materials after the war, the first priority had to be given to housing. Secondly, loss of rateable value with regard to houses and shops through war damage was extremely severe for Southampton, even compared to other blitzed cities such as Coventry and Bristol, but the financial assistance from the Government would be very restricted in scope. The local Labour Party's land policy - wholesale acquisition of the areas under the replanning scheme - further confirmed the need for economy. Moreover, Matthews was concerned about the intimation of the Ministry of War Transport that they were not prepared to pay a full grant to the ring road in Cook's plan which consisted in the main of grandiose

new roads.¹⁰² These factors certainly worked in with the argument for a more practicable and economic plan based on the existing layout so as to revive and possibly enhance as quickly as possible the rateable value of the main shopping street.

There was another factor which reinforced this argument. As Matthews told the City Council in early 1941, the first consideration in replanning was the future of industry, which would be governed by national policy. In this connection he made a comprehensive survey of Southern Hampshire for the Nuffield College of Social Reconstruction Survey in 1941-42. His conclusions in this survey about Southampton's industrial future were not at all promising. For one thing, he predicted that possible industrial expansion in the Southampton area would be related to

- i) industries linked with shipping services;
- ii) local service industries and
- iii) some miscellaneous industry which might be attracted to the area.

Although he was acutely aware of the danger that Southampton's dependence on shipping might bring, he had to admit that 'The major issue for the town is the restoration and continued development of shipping.'¹⁰³ The future of other important industries such as aircraft and engineering was 'very uncertain,' while there was 'in fact, little doubt that Southampton will revive as a premier port.'¹⁰⁴ At the same time it was also expected that, in view of rationalisation and the decrease of the numbers of insured workers in the shipping service taking place during the inter-war period, 'a large number of dock and shipping traffic could be carried out with a diminished labour force and that compensating industrial expansion would not necessarily be dependent on an increase of population.'¹⁰⁵

The Advisory Panel of the MOTCP agreed with Matthews adding that there were further possible adverse factors to Southampton. First, other seaports in the north which had received considerable encouragement due to war conditions might continue to retain after the war some of the traffic diverted from the Southern ports. Secondly, large sized modern factories for war production recently constructed in many other districts would stay there after the war. It was therefore expected that 'the prospect of substantial industrial development in Southampton is not very bright,' except that 'there is every possibility of people desiring to live in or near a town coming here to retire.'¹⁰⁶

Hopes were however again raised in late 1944. In October Cook reported to the Planning Committee that a number of applications and enquiries for modern factory buildings or sites had been received during the last few weeks, and told the Committee that the fullest advantage and initiative should be taken to absorb such new industries into the town.¹⁰⁷ As he also stated in public around this time, 'if an enterprising policy is pursued, we shall get all the diversification of industry we need in this area.'¹⁰⁸ At the same time, as the White Paper on Employment in 1944 indicated, it was widely thought that the Board of Trade would take action to control the location of industry after the war with a prime objective to revitalising the 'Development Areas', i.e. the areas of the old staple industries who had suffered massive unemployment before the war. It was thus generally understood that the first priority in regard to the location of new industries would be given to these 'Development Areas'. Accordingly in November Cook approached the Board of Trade asking if the Board could give any assurance that new industries should be allowed to settle in Southampton. The Board, trying hard to commit themselves as little as possible at that moment, stated that 'Southampton's needs were not regarded as of the same immediate urgency

as the regions which have previously been drawn up as Development Areas'.¹⁰⁹ Cook pressed harder referring to the firms in London and Manchester who would like to move to Southampton, only to be told that the first priority in these cases should always be for one of the Depressed Areas. All he could get from the Board was that 'if the Development Areas appeared to be receiving a satisfactory number of new industries to absorb their post-war labour surplus, consideration would be given to further assistance to Southampton.'¹¹⁰

Although the Southampton Labour Party in 1945 still believed that extensive new industries could be located in the Southampton area, it was recognised that this would depend on the Government accepting that 'a blitzed area should have equivalent treatment to the special areas which are being singled out for the establishment of new factories.'¹¹¹ In early 1946 Matthews complained about the Government's attitude towards industrial development in Southampton, stating that 'Southampton appears to be regarded as an area whose prosperity and full employment is secure, and no great encouragement is so far being given to new industry to locate itself in the area.'¹¹² Nevertheless, with his knowledge that the city's industrial prospects were not bright, it is understandable that he favoured economy in the reconstruction plan.

Cook, being well aware of Southampton's grim industrial future, still maintained that the central area of the town required certain surgery. He was quite critical of the Borough Engineer's argument that economic considerations, rather than planning principles, should be the basic consideration in the replanning of the area, "since to prepare a planning scheme on the basis that planning principles are a secondary consideration to any one of the many to be taken into consideration, can only result in the production of a plan lacking in balance to the detriment of some of the essential requirements of a good scheme.'¹¹³ A

good plan, as he argued, had to be economically sound, not only in first cost but in maintenance of the enhanced rateable values in the future.¹¹⁴

However ideal it might have sounded, the time factor was quite important for Southampton in the redevelopment of its central area. The replanning scheme was supposed to be self-supporting as quickly as possible under the 1944 Planning Act, while what the town could rely on in regard to its future prosperity was not its industry but its badly damaged shopping facilities. It is therefore not surprising that Matthews had to opt for the plan for the future city centre, based on the existing layout, and thus less expensive and protracted. On the other hand Coventry, led by its Labour leader G. Hodgkinson, did adhere to their dream plan with a drastic new road system, shopping precinct, and a civic centre with ample provision of open spaces, despite the strong pressure from the Government to re-draw it. Coventry was in a sense rather fortunate, for the question of its industrial future did not preclude, as it did in the case of Southampton, bold planning. It had been widely acknowledged that there was in Coventry 'a general alertness and enterprise among its citizens and readiness on the part of both management and labour to change to a new product or job if an old one failed'.¹¹⁵ This led to the MOTCP to be of the opinion that they 'should be optimistic about its post-war industrial development'.¹¹⁶ The Ministry's view was soon confirmed by the Board of Trade, who implied that 'in the long run the B.O.T. would expect expansion of Coventry, rather than contraction'.¹¹⁷ While there was a certain apprehension about problems during the change-over process,¹¹⁸ especially that held by the City Council with regard to the future use of shadow factories,¹¹⁹ its industrial expansion in the long term was indisputable. As the City Council told the Advisory Panel of the MOTCP, they even expected a possible 400,000 population after the war, when the city's population was

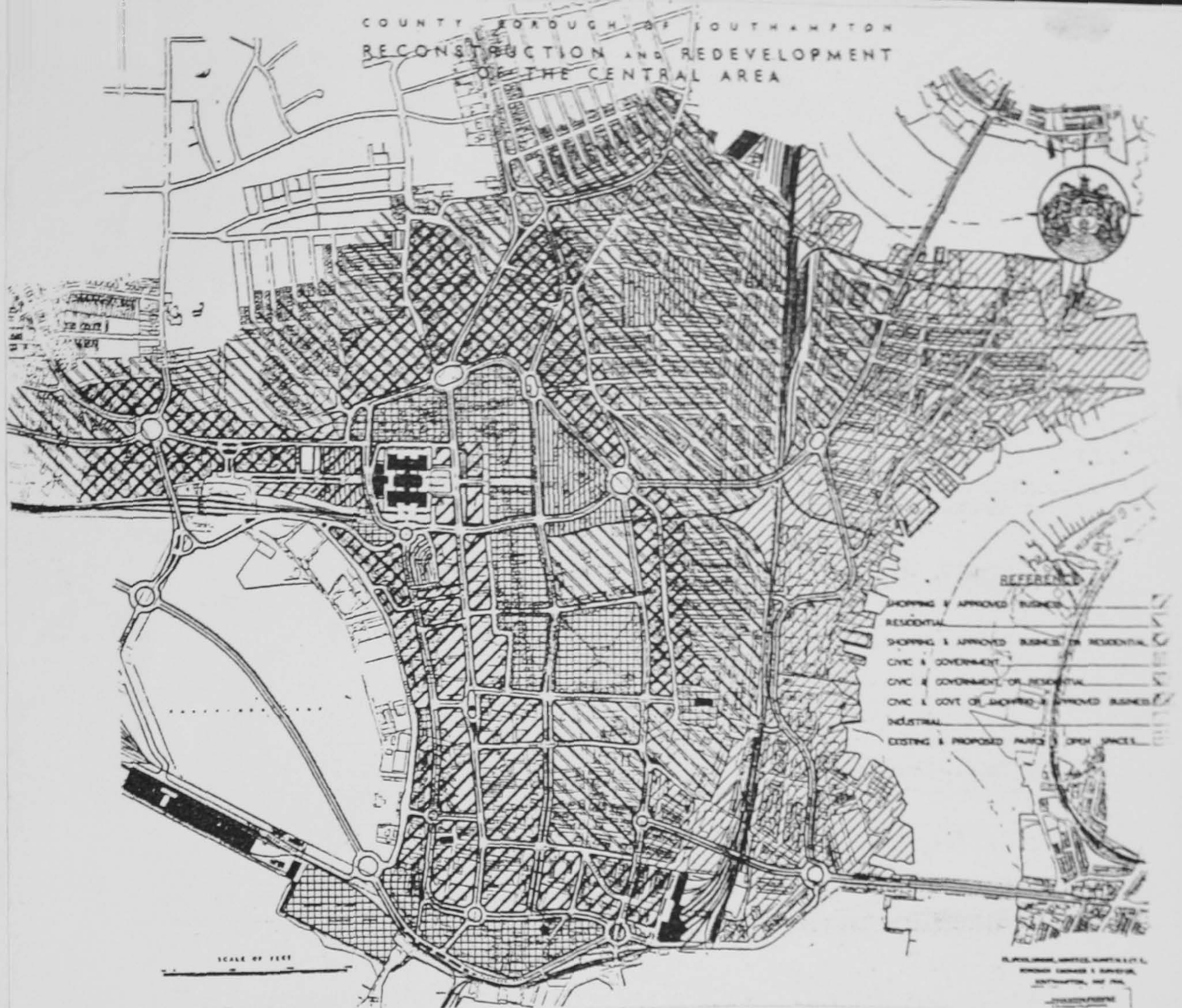
around the 220,000 figure.¹²⁰ In the case of Southampton, the maximum population increase they expected was a rise from the current figure of 180,000 to 250,000, based on the assumptions that new industries should come to the town to diversify its industrial structure, and that further development of the south coast as a resort centre should have some repercussions on the town.¹²¹

Apart from the question of industrial future, there was another great difference that contrasted Southampton with Coventry. In the case of Coventry one of the important reasons why the Ministry could not undermine the plan was the fear of possible public reaction to such an attempt. In Southampton it was the Labour Party on the Council that decided to dilute the ambition of the plan. To Matthews in particular, it was probably an embarrassment to give up the ideals he had been pursuing such determination.

However, the Southampton Labour Party were not unduly anxious for, rather ironically, the public as a whole were not very interested in replanning, even when the original 1942 plan was brought before them. The Civic Society, for instance, organised an open meeting to discuss the new Southampton in May 1942. The meeting had been well advertised and several hundred notices sent out, but fewer than 100 people attended. The SDE reported that 'the old charge of apathy so often levelled at Southampton is being substantiated over replanning'.¹²² The Civic Society continued their fight against 'the two vested interests', i.e. 'apathy and indifference'.¹²³ The Society's efforts, however, did not bear much fruit. Ultimately their main concern did not go beyond the question - how to increase public support for their aims if they were to exert any influence?¹²⁴

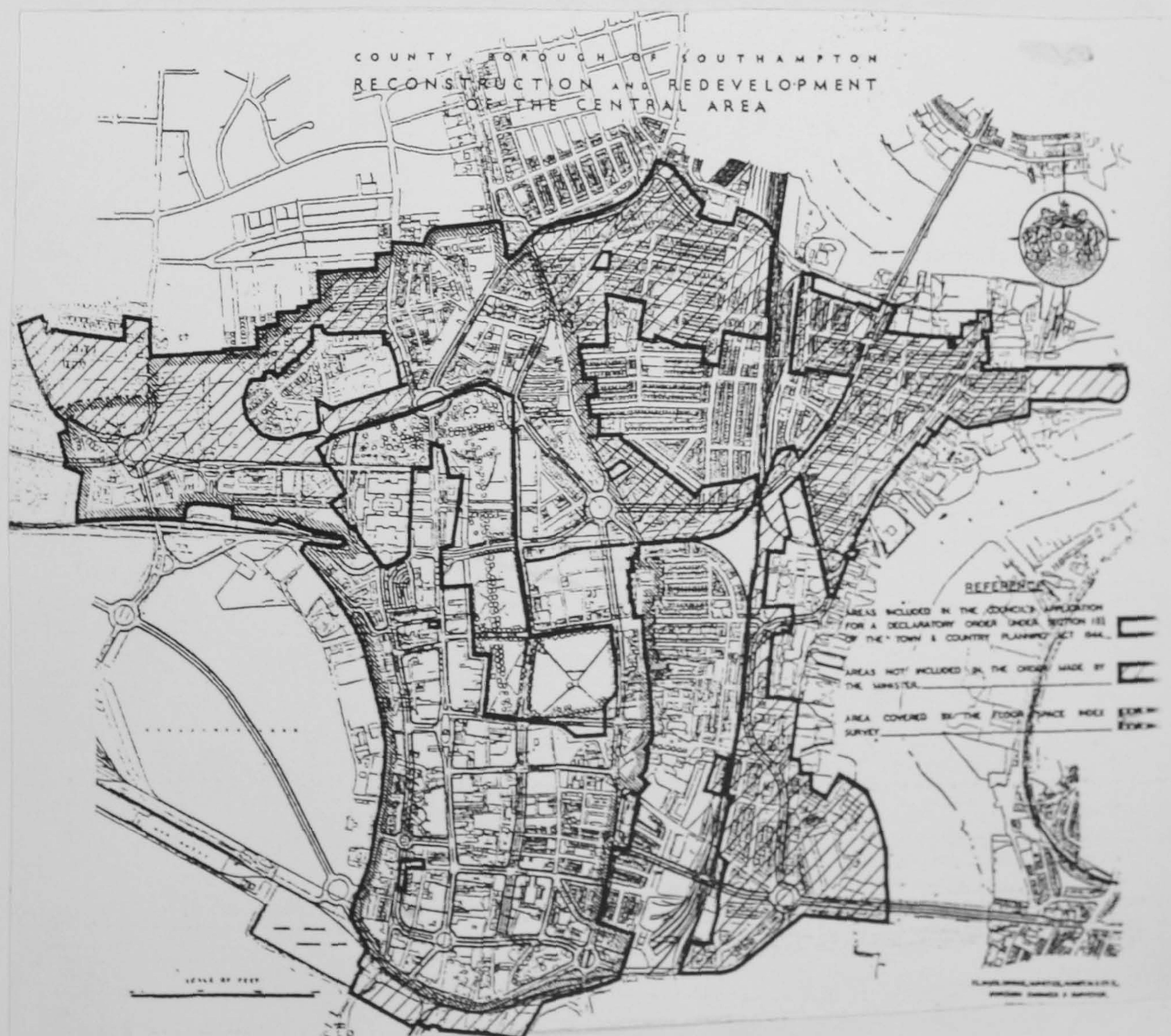
Thus, in Southampton, the financial difficulties caused by the blitz, insufficient Government financial and other assistance for

reconstruction, and pessimistic prospects for the city's industrial future, all forced bold planning ideas to yield to economy and expediency. Professor Adshead, able town planner of the day, had fallen a victim to this process. As we shall see later, it did not take long for Southampton's need for economy to claim its next victim.



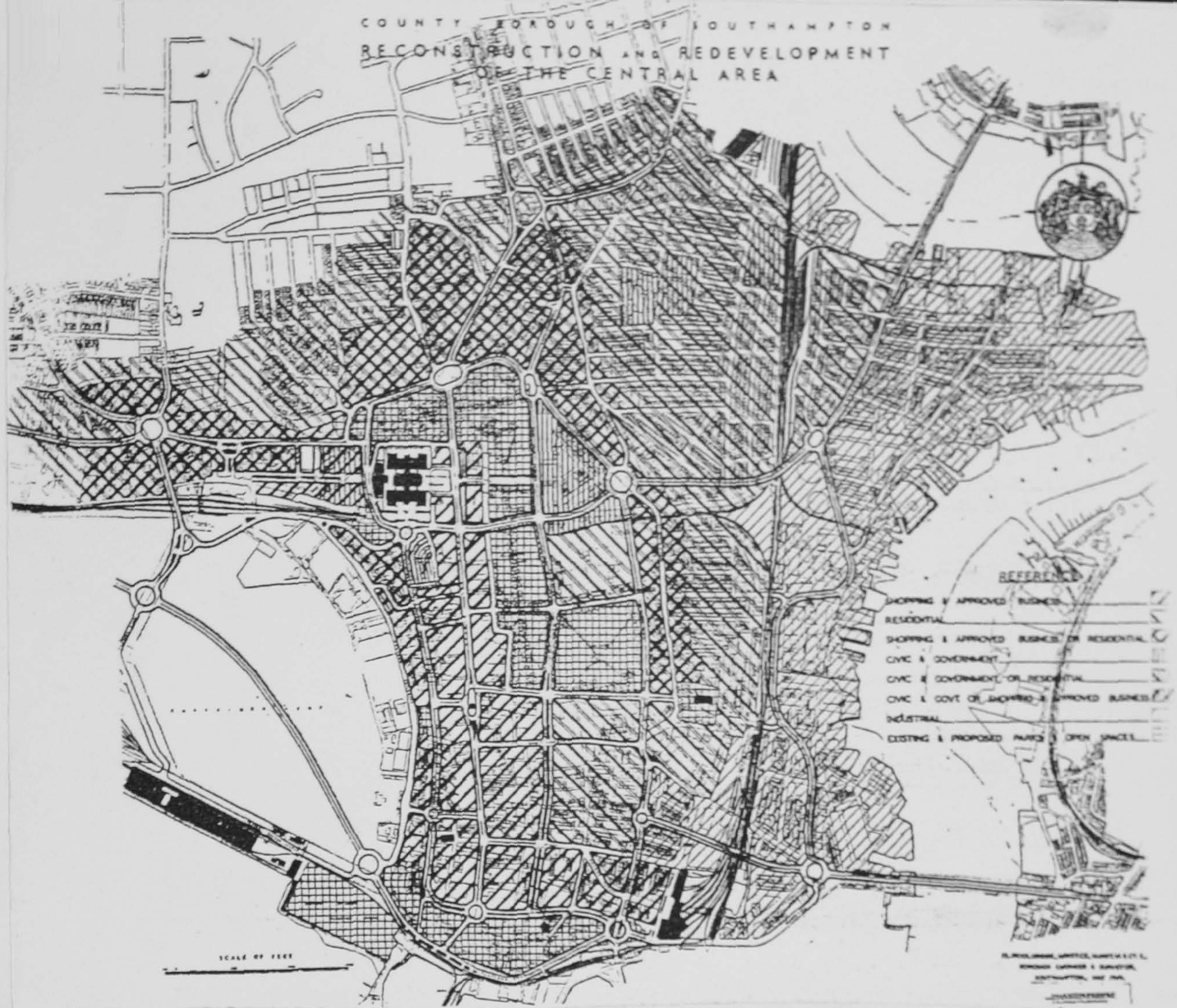
The Southampton central area plan at the time of the public inquiry into the Borough Council's application for a Declaratory Order in 1946

Source: B.T. Rees, 'Redevelopment of Southampton's Central Area:', Institution of Municipal Engineers, 1.2.1949, 491.



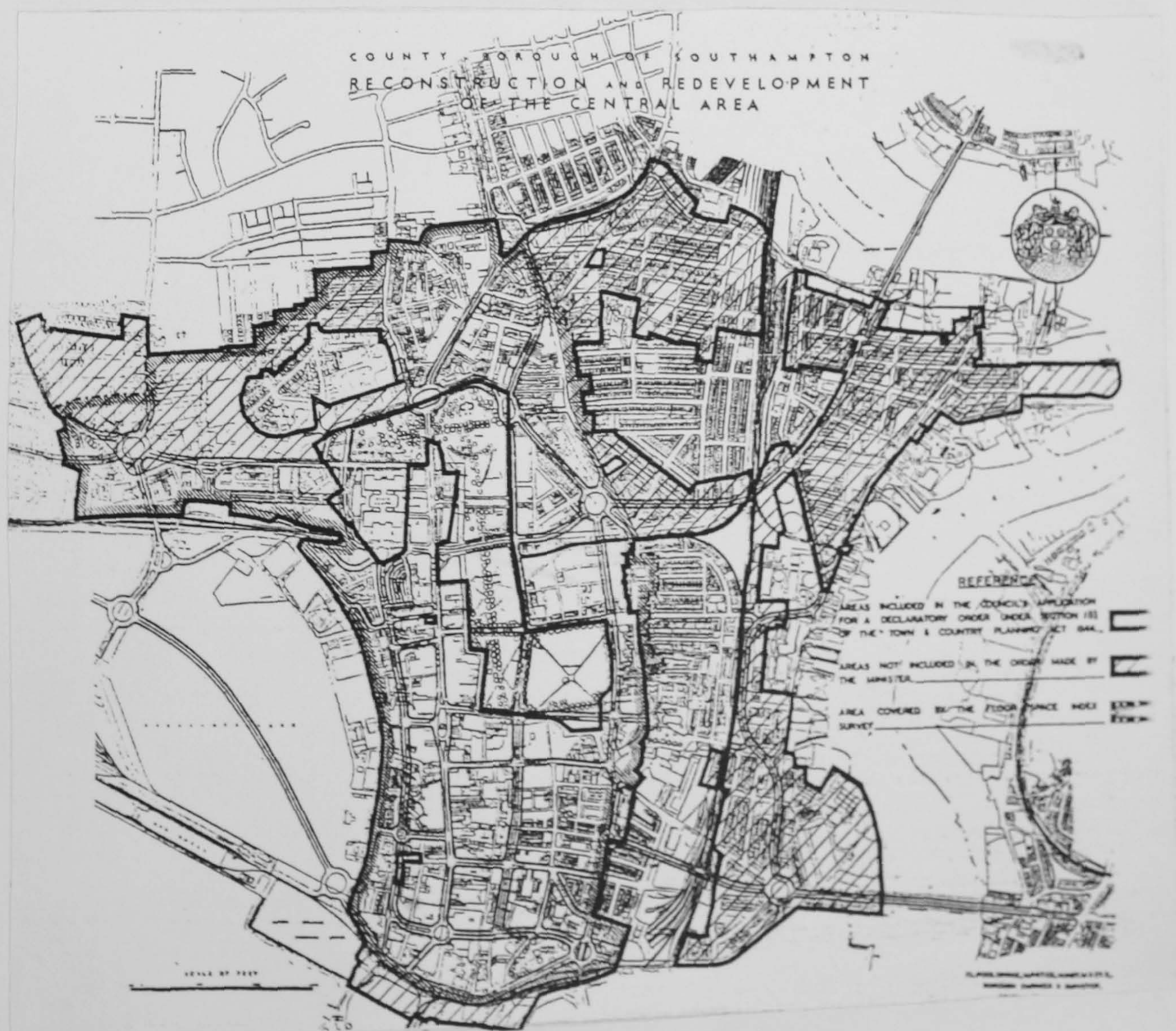
Areas included and excluded by the Minister of Town and Country Planning in 1947 in regard to Southampton's application for a Declaratory Order.

Source: as above, 489.

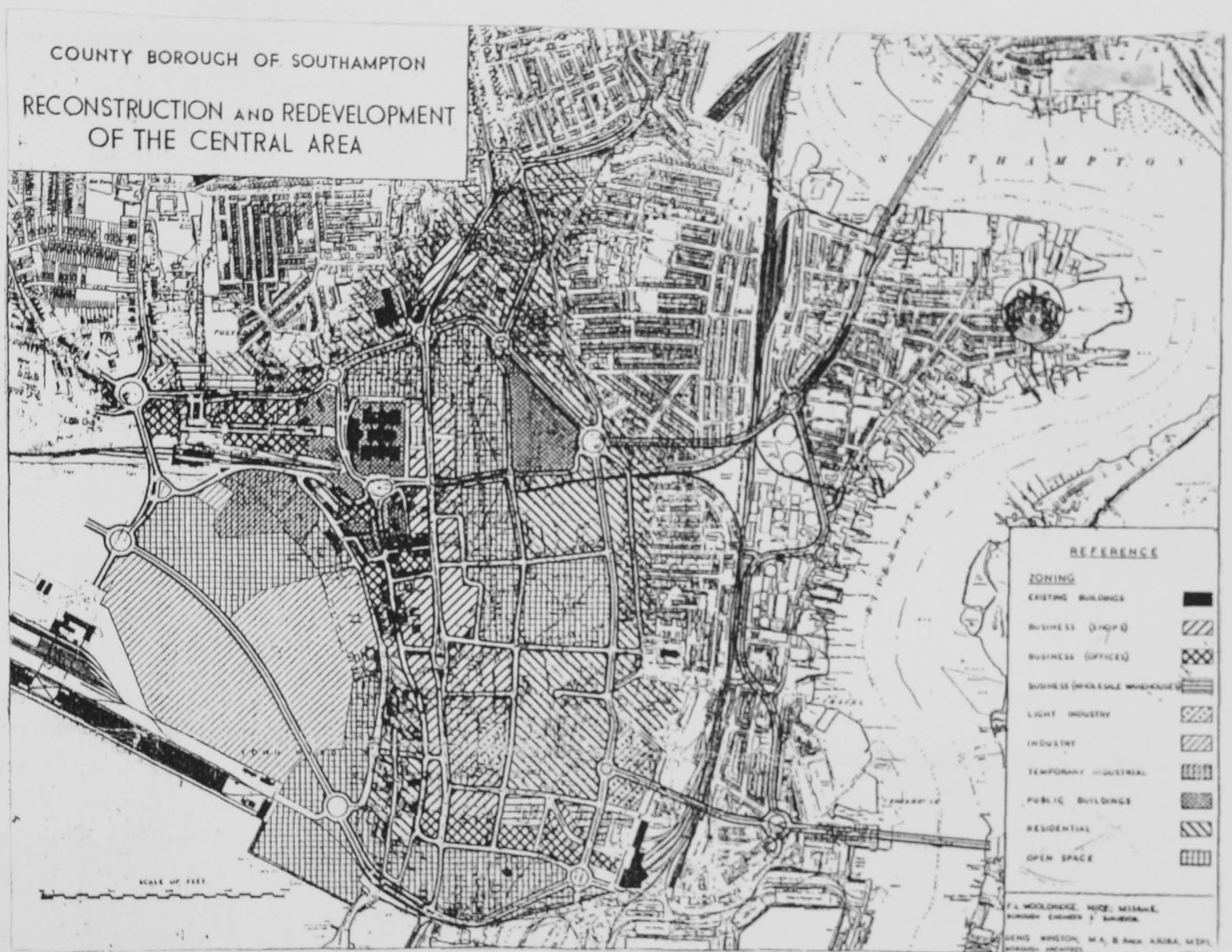


The Southampton central area plan at the time of the public inquiry into the Borough Council's application for a Declaratory Order in 1946

Source: B.T. Rees, 'Redevelopment of Southampton's Central Area:', Institution of Municipal Engineers, 1.2.1949, 491.



Areas included and excluded by the Minister of Town and Country Planning in 1947 in regard to Southampton's application for a Declaratory Order.



The 1948 revised plan for the central area of Southampton

Source: B.T. Rees, 'Redevelopment of Southampton's Central Area', Institute of Municipal Engineers, 1 February 1949, 492.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ SRO D/Mat 10/4, Councillor Matthews' private note titled 'Re-Planning Southampton', n.d.
- ² *ibid.*
- ³ *ibid.*
- ⁴ Borough Council 1 January 1941. Discussions reported in the Southern Daily Echo [hereafter SDE] 2 January 1945.
- ⁵ The Highways and Town Planning Sub-Committee, 9 January 1941.
- ⁶ Borough Council, 15 January 1941, reported in SDE, 16 January 1941.
- ⁷ SDE, 14 February 1941. Traders did not fancy the Council's temporary shop scheme, which indicates their strong desire to return to the original sites. See the Minutes of Special joint Committee re Temporary Shops, 10 June, 10 July and 19 August 1941.
- ⁸ SDE, 21 March 1941. Pepler already visited Southampton on 3 February. Although locally it was thought that Southampton was not to be included as one of the test cases (see SDE 4 February 1941), obviously he did (see HLG 71/1570 etc., his report 'Bombed Areas - Redevelopment', 28 February 1941.)
- ⁹ Highways and Town Planning Sub-Committee, 8 April 1941.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, 23 April 1941.
- ¹¹ SDE, 16 May 1941.
- ¹² SRO D/Mat 10/4, his private note, no title, n.d.
- ¹³ Borough Council, 18 June 1941. See the debates between Aldermen Woolley and Mouland, reported in SDE, 19 June 1941.
- ¹⁴ SDE, 12 August 1941.
- ¹⁵ Town Planning and Development Sub-Committee (thus renamed), 5 August 1941. The recommendation was confirmed by the Council, 17 September 1941.
- ¹⁶ SDE, 9 September 1941.
- ¹⁷ S. Adshead, Town Planning and Town Development (1923), p. 75. He was not so young and, probably because of this, not so keen on the ideas of, for one thing, Le Corbusier as Gibson and his staff in Coventry's City Architect's Department were. See S. Adshead, 'Camillo Sitte and Le Corbusier' in Town Planning Review, 1930, vol. 14(2), 85-94.
- ¹⁸ S. Adshead, A New England, (1941). On p. 25 of this book he declares: 'Now in the year 1941, surely it is not too early to prepare plans for a New England, a New England that must be built

- with good, though not necessarily lasting materials, but which avoids the vacillating mistakes of the past.' This is cited in A. Ravetz, Remaking Cities (1980), p. 19.
- ¹⁹ SDE, 18 September 1941.
- ²⁰ SRO SC/BA/2/38, notes on the meeting between the officers concerned, 17 October 1941. Also see 'Duties of the Town Planning and Development Department', Cook's report to TPD Sub-Sub Committee, 18 November 1941.
- ²¹ Town Planning and Development, Sub Sub-Committee, 2 December 1941, confirmed by the Council, 17 December 1941. As for the conflict between the Borough Engineer and the Town Planning and Development Officer regarding the latter's duties, see the files in SRO TC Box 26 and SRO SC/BA2/38.
- ²² Borough Council, 18 February 1942. The plan and report were soon published as The Replanning of Southampton, Southampton, 1942. SDE reported the features of the Report in a series of nine articles, 'The New Southampton', between 27 April and 6 May 1942, which was soon published as a pamphlet.
- ²³ See the strong criticism from F.J. Osborn, (Hon.) Secretary to Town and Country Planning Association, of this proposal in his letter to SDE, 15 May 1942.
- ²⁴ The Replanning of Southampton, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
- ²⁵ ibid., pp. 12-13.
- ²⁶ ibid.
- ²⁷ The Council agreed to the creation of this new Committee on 8 February 1942. As for Alderman Monland's resignation see Borough Council 15 July 1942 in SDE. 16 July 1942.
- ²⁸ SRO SC/EN/13/5/2/2. Letter from Cook to S.L.G. Beaufoy (then Ministry of Health), 21 May 1942.
- ²⁹ Reported in SDE, 4 June 1942.
- ³⁰ See Cook's report to the TPDC, 24 February 1943.
- ³¹ Town Planning and Development Committee [hereafter the TPDC], 27 January 1943.
- ³² SRO SC/BA 2/39. Letter from Adshead to Cook, 8 June 1943.
- ³³ Cook's report to the TPDC, 24 February 1943, op. cit.
- ³⁴ Borough Council, 17 March 1943, reported in SDE, 18 March 1943.
- ³⁵ SRO BA/2/39, letter from Professor Adshead to H.T. Cook, 29 March 1943.
- ³⁶ Ibid.

- 37 SRO SC/BA/2/39. Letter from Cook to Adshead, 3 April 1943.
- 38 SRO SC/BA/2/39. Letter from Adshead to Cook, 4 June 1943.
- 39 SDE, 10 June 1943.
- 40 SRO SC/BA/2/39. Letter from Cook to Adshead, 7 July 1943.
- 41 See e.g. SRO SC/EN/13/5/2/2, correspondence between H.,T. Cook and S.l.G. Beaufoy. Also SRO SC/BA/40, correspondence between Cook and G.L. Pepler. After the Advisory Panel of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning visited Southampton, H.G. Wells also kept in touch with Cook. See SRO SC/EN/13/5/5/2 and SRO SC/EN/13/5/6/6.
- 42 Cook had conversations with traders and property firms, both local and outside the town, the Southern Railway Company, other departments of the Corporation, etc. See SRO SC/EN/13/5/2/4-5, SRO SC/EN/13/5/3/2-5, SRO SC/EN/13/5/4/103, SRO SC/EN/13/5/6/1 and 3, SRO SC/BA/36, etc.
- 43 There were lots of conferences and correspondence, especially with the MOWT. See e.g., SRO SC/EN13/5/2/1 & 2, SRO SC/EN/13/5/6/5, SRO SC/EN/7/4/13, SRO SC/EN/9/6/5.
- 44 HLG 88/9, MOTCP Advisory panel on Redevelopment of City Centres [hereafter Panel]. Minutes no. 2, 25 June 1943.
- 45 *ibid.*
- 46 HLG 88/9, Panel, 'outline of a Report on Southampton's Re-development Plan', 24 June 1943.
- 47 *ibid.*
- 48 HLG 88/9, Panel, Minutes No. 2, *op. cit.*
- 49 HLG 88/9, Panel, Minutes No. 2, 13 July 1943.
- 50 HLG 88/9, Panel, Minutes No. 4, 19 July 1943.
- 51 HLG 88/9, Panel, 'Outline of a Report on ...', *op. cit.*
- 52 HLG 88/9, Panel, Minutes No. 2, *op. cit.*
- 53 Cook's report to the TPDC of 23 February 1944.
- 54 TPDC, 9 May 1944.
- 55 Report of the Planning Scheme Sub-Committee, 13 September 1944, submitted to the TPDC of 18 September 1944.
- 56 Borough Council, 11 October 1944, reported in SDE, 12 October 1944.
- 57 *ibid.*
- 58 *ibid.*
- 59 TPDC, 30 November 1944.

- 60 Cook's report to TPDC of 9 January 1945.
- 61 The Borough Architect's report to the TPDC, 13 December 1944.
- 62 Cook's report to the TPDC, 9 January 1945, op. cit.
- 63 TPDC, 24 January 1945.
- 64 TPDC, 22 November 1944.
- 65 TPDC, 24 January 1945, op. cit.
- 66 At a conference held by the Southampton Labour Party. Reported in SDE, 30 January 1945.
- 67 Cab 124/841, Note by the Southampton Chamber of Commerce sent to Regional Controller of the Board of Trade, 4 May 1944. The Chamber feared that building work in the immediate post-war period was to be confined solely to housing, thus delaying the restoration of the city centre. Accordingly they sent a letter to Lord Woolton, Minister of Reconstruction at the end of 1944. The Chamber wanted an assurance that adequate labour and materials should be allocated to reconstruction of business and commercial buildings as well. The matter involved several Government Departments, but no decisive answer was given. See materials in CAB 124/841.
- 68 Cab 124/841. Note titled 'Southampton War Damage', 9 January 1945.
- 69 SRO SC/EN/13/5/2/1, MOTCP's note on the meeting, sent to Southampton. See also SRO D/Mat/10/4, Councillor Matthews' private note, 'Towns and Country Planning Debates,' n.d.
- 70 Borough Council, 21 February 1945, reported in SDE, 22 February 1945.
- 71 Councillor Lane speaking at the Ratepayers' Party meeting in SDE, 28 September 1945. Alderman Lewis, leader of Labour, later suggested to the Council that 'the best way to deal with Sir Sidney was to let him make his statements, cast votes, and get on with the next business.' (See SDE, 16 May 1946). As for Alderman Kimber, see his book, Thirty-Eight Years of Public Life in Southampton 1910-1948 (Southampton, 1949).
- 72 SRO SC/EN/13/5/4/2, letter from Cook to Bennett, 7 March 1944. As for the difficult relationship between Cook and Bennett, see SRO SC/EN/13/5/4/2 and SC/EN/13/5/6/4. The conflict between Cook and Bennett was not only confined to the city centre. For instance, regarding the layout of the Millbrook area, which the original Report of 1942 thought as most suitable for a future industrial and housing site, they could not agree. As Cook wrote to Bennett
On a number of occasions recently you have made it clear that you consider yourself free to disregard the planning proposals for this area, ... and I should be interested to know what authority you have for adopting this course of action.
SC/EN/13/5/6/4, Letter from Cook to Bennett, 30 December 1944.

- 73 TPDC, 23 May 1945.
- 74 He revealed it at a special meeting of the Borough Council, 11 October 1945, reported in SDE, 12 October 1945.
- 75 At a meeting of the Ratepayers' party, reported in SDE, 28 September 1945, op. cit.
- 76 See SDE, 7 December 1944, introducing Frank Leslie Wooldridge, new Borough Engineer.
- 77 SRO D/Mat/10/4, F.L. Wooldridge's report, 'Reconstruction and Redevelopment of the Central Area of the Town', october 1945, p. 1.
- 78 *ibid.*
- 79 *ibid.*, pp. 2-3. In June 1945 he proposed a traffic scheme to the Works Committee for the central area which involved the alterations of bus stops, the provision of traffic roundabouts, and the conversion of Millbrook Road, New Road and Civic Centre Road into one-way streets. He was 'convinced that Above Bar and High Street can be relieved of docks traffic by means of the existing highways system, if adequate signposting is made use of.' (SDE, 7 June 1945).
- 80 SRO D/Mat/10/4, Wooldridge's report, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
- 81 *ibid.*, p. 4.
- 82 *ibid.*, p. 7.
- 83 TPDC, 10 July 1945.
- 85 Borough Council, 18 April 1945, reported in SDE, 19 April 1945.
- 86 Revealed by Alderman Goulden, at a meeting of Labour, reported in SDE, 29 October 1945.
- 87 TPDC, 10 July 1945.
- 88 Borough Council, 18 July and 3 October 1945.
- 89 SDE, 13 and 18 September 1945. SDE was obviously not in favour of compulsory purchase.
- 90 SDE, 20 October 1945.
- 91 Letters from the Chamber of Commerce and W. Dixon (President of the High Street Association) read at Borough Council, 11 October 1945.
- 92 HLG 71/597. 'Notes for a Conference with the Minister on Progress with the Redevelopment of Blitzed Towns', 30 August 1945.
- 93 Letter dated 29 September 1945, read at Borough Council, 11 October 1945.
- 94 Borough Council, 11 October 1945.

- ⁹⁵ At a meeting of the Ratepayers' Party, reported in SDE, 26 October, 1945.
- ⁹⁶ Councillor Powdrill, at a meeting of the Ratepayers' party, reported in SDE, 19 September 1945.
- ⁹⁷ Councillor Hugh, reported in SDE, 26 October 1945.
- ⁹⁸ Councillor Hugh, at a meeting of the party, reported in SDE, 9 October 1945.
- ⁹⁹ SRO D/Mat/22/1, 'Southampton Present and Future', the Labour Party's election manifesto, October 1945.

¹⁰⁰ The total of votes cast was 75,434, made up as follows:

Labour	43,052
Ratepayers	26,598
Independent	5,566
Communist	218

The state of the party strengths in the new Council was:

	Old Council	New Council
Labour	28	41
Ratepayers	39	26
Independent	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	68	68

Sources: SDE, 2 November 1945.

The poll was, as Alderman Woolley pointed out at the Ratepayers' Party's after election meeting, very low, 42 per cent. Nevertheless, he admitted that it was Labour's sweeping victory. See SDE, 6 November 1945.

¹⁰¹ SDE, 8 November 1945.

¹⁰² See D/Mat/10/4, Matthew's note titled 'Town and Country Planning Bill Debates', n.d., prepared for the Labour party's 1945 municipal election manifesto, 'Southampton Present and Future', op. cit. In this note Matthews described the joint report by the Borough Engineer and the Borough Architect:

On its merits it is a better plan. It uses existing roads more, is more practicable, less costly, can be more quickly brought into operation.

¹⁰³ HLG 82/14, Councillor Matthews, 'Southampton Regional Report', final report for the Nuffield College Reconstruction Survey, December 1942.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ HLG 88/9 (also to be found in BT 64/3407), Advisory Panel, 'Notes Preliminary to a Visit to Southampton', op. cit. See also SDE, 7 September 1944, where Matthews was speaking of a possibility to develop Southampton as a tourist centre after the war.

- 107 Sub-Committee re War Damage Repairs, 12 October 1944.
- 108 In his address at the 'Planning and Industry' conference organised by the Southampton Employers' Mutual Aid Group, reported in SDE, 4 October 1944.
- 109 BT64/3407, 'Note of Mr. Fairweather's Interview with Mr. H.T. Cook, Town Planning Officer, Southampton, on 16th November, 1944.'
- 110 ibid.
- 111 SRO D/Mat/22/1, 'Southampton Present and Future,' op. cit.
- 112 SDE, 16 February 1946.
- 113 SRO D/Mat/10/4, Cook's report to the TPD Committee, 2 January 1946.
- 114 Ibid.
- 115 HLG 79/132, Advisory Panel, 'Notes on Employment and Labour Conditions at Coventry, 9 July 1943.
- 116 HLG 79/132, Letter from H.W. Wells to L. Neal, 26 July 1943.
- 117 HLG 79/132, Letter from B. Gille to G.L. Pepler, 30 September 1943.
- 118 See e.g. A. Shenfield and P. Sargant Florence, 'The Economics and Diseconomics of Industrial Concentration: The Wartime Experience of Coventry', The Review of Economic Studies, Vol. XII (2) 1944-5.
- 119 HLG 79/131, Letter from Town Clerk to the MOTCP, 22 May 1944; HLG 79/132, Letter from Town Clerk to Board of Trade, 10 August 1944.
- 120 HLG/79/132, Panel, Minutes 4 and 'Note on an Unofficial Discussion at Coventry, 13 July 1943. It should be noted that, because of the pressure from Whitehall after the war to enhance Coventry's existing industrial base in the context of the export drive and then of Korean war rearmament, the city inevitably failed in later years to diversify its industrial structure or to control its population size. (See Nick Tiratsoo, The Reconstruction of Coventry 1945-1960 (Coventry, 1988, especially chs. 3 and 7).
- 121 HLG 88/9, Panel, Minutes 2, 25 June 1943. Ironically, Southampton continued its industrial expansion after the war, especially with the growth of the oil refining industry, the telephone and cable industry, and the construction of light commercial vehicles. As a local historian argues, much of this new development in employment was attributed to the city's natural advantages as a growth centre in Southern England and its emergence as a sub-regional centre for extensive office space as well as city centre shopping. See A. Rance, Southampton: An Illustrated History (Portsmouth, 1986), especially ch. 13.
- 122 SDE, 13 May 1942.
- 123 SDE, 11 December 1942.

¹²⁴ The annual meeting of the Civic Society in November 1944, reported in SDE, 24 November 1944. At the meeting it was reported that only 15 members had yet paid their subscriptions for 1944.

CHAPTER VII

Replanning the City Centre: The case of Bristol 1940-1945

The replanning of the blitzed central area of Bristol during the war gives us a rather different picture from that of Coventry or Southampton. First of all the preparation of a redevelopment plan took considerable time in Bristol. This was in the main due to the approach adopted by both the elected members and the officials of the local authority responsible for the task. The Planning Committee insisted in the early years that they should concentrate on the preliminary research first, despite the pressure to get down to replanning as soon as possible. In drawing up the reconstruction proposals following the research, the method adopted by the City Engineer, who acted as chief planning officer, was to have extensive consultation with the interested parties. This method, however, proved to be very time consuming. The plan was submitted to the City Council in March 1944 for the first time, and after further consultation, was approved by the Council in July 1945, with certain modifications. The Council itself, which was divided equally between representatives of Labour and the Citizen's Party - a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals - was not divided with regard to the replanning of the central area; nor was there any particular planning expert or enthusiast, comparable to Coventry's Hodgkinson or Southampton's Matthews. Because of these factors - a rather late start at replanning, the lack of an enthusiastic expert Councillor in planning and, ironically, the absence of party or personal conflict over the matter - it seems that Bristol failed to attract as much attention as it might have deserved at national level, in view of the bold nature of its replanning proposals. The city was not given any particular attention by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning until quite late in the war.

At local level, however, the City Council's replanning proposals brought about bitter conflict between the Corporation and the interests concerned - local traders and a number of eminent architects and surveyors, widely known in the country. Of particular importance was the keen interest that the local Chamber of Commerce took in the replanning of the city. In early 1941 the Chamber set up an organisation representing the various interested bodies and made a comprehensive study of a wide range of subjects related to the matter. However, as the Ministry of Town and Country Planning observed in 1943, the Chamber was 'active but tactless, ... and its relations with the Corporation are not too good'.¹ The Chamber wished to be directly involved in the preparation of a reconstruction plan. They proposed to the Council the co-option of their members onto the Corporation's Committee responsible for planning, and the employment of an eminent town planner as a planning consultant. The Council, for fear of possible parting with their replanning powers, would not take up the Chamber's suggestions.

As these suggestions had failed to be adopted by the City Council, the feeling against its official plan became all the more acute. One particular area of controversy in regard to the Corporation's plan was over the proposed transfer of the old shopping centre in the Wine Street - Castle Street area to a new site. Many small traders, who wanted to re-establish themselves as soon as possible on the original sites, feared that the severance from the past would do harm to their future. The fact that multiple shops, whose growth had been felt to be a threat to their existence, were in favour of a new site stiffened their objection still further. The attitude of those who opposed the official plan became almost uncompromising.

* * * *

Immediately after the first major blitz on Bristol on 24 November 1940, a number of bombed-out traders pressed the City Council to make a decision on the redevelopment of the damaged central area. The traders in question particularly desired to establish themselves again in their former business premises.² The traders were suffering from the heavy financial loss, and there was a strong anxiety on their part that trade was leaving Bristol and that people were going to other towns to do their shopping,³

The Planning and Public Works Committee [hereafter the PPWC] was on the one hand very anxious to reinstate these traders as soon as possible in a form of temporary shops. At the same time the PPWC was very concerned about a possibility that such interim development might become prejudicial to permanent development after the war. In order to control such development properly, the PPWC decided that each trader should enter into an agreement with the Corporation so that premises should be constructed to the satisfaction of the Corporation and should be removed without the payment of any compensation at the conclusion of hostilities or within an agreed period thereafter.

This arrangement was in general welcomed by traders. For instance the Chamber of Commerce stated in their letter to the Town Clerk that they regarded this as a definite step in the right direction and urged the City Council to proceed with the matter without delay. The Chamber also asked that, in view of considerable expenditure necessitated by the clearance of sites and the erection of buildings, traders wishing to build temporary premises should be allowed to retain possession for a minimum period of twelve months after the termination of hostilities.⁴ The PPWC wanted a firm control of the matter and stuck to the condition that a period of permission should be a maximum of six months after the termination of the war.⁵ Although some traders expressed their

dissatisfaction with this, agreements were made between a number of traders and the Corporation in the early years of the war.

The Government Inspectors of the test case survey got an impression after their visit to the city that Bristol was rather too concerned about a possibility of prejudicial development. They suspected that the insistence on the urgency of the problem in Bristol was partly due to the fact that Castle Street, which was selected for investigation, was the ward for which Councillor Martin (Citizen), chairman of the PPWC was the member, and that his constituents constantly harrassed him on the question.⁶ At the same time it was also recorded that the local authority were very keen to prepare a redevelopment plan. Then the Ministry side somehow misunderstood the situation. They thought that with the help of a Government Inspector such plans were evolved for the purpose of the inquiry. They also observed, quite wrongly, that it was also agreed that the Castle Street - Wine Street area should remain the main shopping centre of the city.⁷

When the Chamber of Commerce met the Government Inspector, he emphasised the necessity for the appointment of an advisory body of the interested parties to make recommendations to the City Council. The Chamber took this advice, and in February set up a Special Advisory Committee (hereafter the SAC).⁸ The SAC included, in addition to traders, representatives of the Bristol Society of Architects; the Chartered Surveyors Institution (Gloucestershire, Somerset and North Wiltshire branch); the Building Trade Federation; the Bristol Property Owners Association, and the Multiple Shops Federation.⁹

In April 1941 the SAC forwarded their Memorandum to the Town Clerk with a request that the PPWC should receive a deputation from the SAC. The memorandum set out three points for urgent consideration: a) the erection of temporary buildings to enable traders to continue their

business; b) the granting of permission to erect temporary buildings on certain sites, which would not conflict with a long term scheme for the replanning and reconstruction of the city; and c) the preparation of such a long term scheme. As the first two points had already been met to a certain extent through the means of agreement with the Corporation, the SAC emphasised the need for the earliest possible consideration of a long term scheme.

The memorandum then set forth two recommendations to the City Council. First the City Council should arrange for the co-option to its PPWC of experts in planning and architecture and others with particular knowledge of the city. Secondly the City Council should immediately employ a Chief Officer, possibly an architect by profession, to whom should be given full power to collate the views of all interests and to prepare a replanning scheme in conjunction with the augmented PPWC.¹⁰

A deputation from the SAC led by Col. Mark Whitwill, president of the Chamber (by profession a shipping agent), was invited to meet the PPWC on 7 May. They stressed the importance of the co-option and of a Chief Officer, and urged the need of prompt action before any national policy was dictated. Such action was, as the deputation pointed out, all the more important, for the city had been selected for the Government's test case survey and numerous announcements had appeared in the press that the Ministry had asked the City Council to submit a draft preliminary scheme of a bold nature. In reply the chairman of the PPWC pointed out that new legislation to deal with replanning problems would be absolutely necessary, and that, until the Government gave a lead in this matter, it would be futile to spend time which could ill be spared from the war effort in preparing any detailed scheme based upon the existing legislation. It was also pointed out that, contrary to the recent press reports, the Council had received no request from the

Ministry of Works and Buildings to submit a draft replanning scheme. In fact the PPWC had been embarrassed when the press reported in April 1941 that Lord Reith, Minister of Works and Buildings, had told the three test case survey cities - Birmingham, Coventry and Bristol - to plan for reconstruction boldly and comprehensively.¹¹ The Bristol Evening Post (hereafter the BEP) even reported that plans of a drastic nature were actually being prepared.¹² The PPWC responded quickly, making it clear that no communication had been received from the Ministry instructing the Council to plan for reconstruction as stated in the press. When a Government Inspector attended the PPWC's meeting on 19 February, all he said was that he had been sent to Bristol to enable the Government to consider the legislative and administrative difficulties which would arise in the redevelopment of areas damaged by enemy action.¹³ As Alderman Winchester (Labour), vice-chairman of the PPWC, revealed, this Inspector told the Committee that 'I have not come down to advise you, but only to listen'. Indeed, Winchester complained that, while they asked him if they could prepare plans, he would not answer even that question. As Winchester went on: 'We tried to get some indications of how we should go on, but he was dumb'.¹⁴

The PPWC told the SAC's deputation that they were thus of the opinion that the present time was most inopportune to submit a draft scheme to the Ministry. The SAC's two recommendations - co-option and a Chief Officer - were not welcomed by the PPWC. As for the first question, the chairman of the PPWC said that it might not be convenient nor possible to co-opt members upon the PPWC by reason of the numerous interests which would need to be represented. As for the second, the PPWC promised that they would give it careful consideration,¹⁵ but the request for a Chief Officer or a Planning Consultant was never to be met by the PPWC.¹⁶

The Chamber of Commerce was very disappointed because, as they stated, the meeting with the PPWC 'gave no grounds for satisfaction'. They went on to say that 'the Deputation gained the impression that no substantial action was yet contemplated' by the PPWC with regard to the actual preparation of replanning proposals.¹⁷ Interestingly, the Chamber's criticisms of the PPWC's rather inactive attitude were supported by some Labour Council members. Alderman A.W. Cox, a senior Labour member, stated at the meeting of the City Council in May that the state of indecision and uncertainty made him wonder what was happening to the question of replanning. He argued that they should have an early opportunity to discuss the matter at length, for some other blitzed cities had already got their replanning schemes more or less approved:

We in Bristol ought to be in a position to know roughly what it is we are going to do, and we ought to begin to inspire the people with what we propose to do, what Bristol's going to look like, where roads are likely to be, etc. But in this question we seem to be sheltering behind something the Ministry has not said.¹⁸

The vice-chairman of the PPWC, Alderman W.H. Winchester (Labour), replied that they could only live from day to day in present circumstances, and with the many preoccupations of more pressing problems, it was not possible for them to settle down to submit a replanning scheme for the city, even if it were possible in the uncertainty of what the ultimate problem would be. Yet at the same meeting another Labour Alderman W.H. Hennessy, who tended to be vocal and a maverick, said that the Committee spent too much time on pettifogging matters, but were not allowed to discuss major issues such as, inter alia, the replanning of the city. He got some support from a few other members, and Winchester had to say that he intended to raise the matter at a later date. To this Hennessy gave a sharp reply: 'You are all avoiding the real issue.'¹⁹

The PPWC's first report to the City Council on the replanning of damaged areas, submitted in July 1941, was little more than a reassurance of the lines that had been taken by the committee. Although the report drew attention to 'a unique opportunity for replanning the City' brought about by the destruction, it pointed out that in view of what other damage might be done before the war ended, it was considered 'inexpedient, if not impossible, at present to proceed in any detail with a definite scheme of replanning.'²⁰ There were also the difficulties involved in property rights. If the city were to be rebuilt on modern lines, a great number of traders, for instance, might not be able to return to their former sites. Before a major scheme could be put into shape, the Committee had to know what powers they were going to have in regard to this question.²¹

The Committee had given some thought to the possibility of segregating through traffic from shopping streets, the siting of the markets, the preservation of historic monuments, and the provision of bus stations and car parks. But what they wanted to concentrate on for the present was preliminary survey work - the production of maps showing the existing users and the extent of war damage, both of which were already well under way. At the Council meeting Alderman Cox again insisted that nothing was preventing the Committee from proceeding with the replanning, except itself. He went on to say that it might be better to have a special committee charged with the preparation of a replanning scheme that would inspire the people, for there would never be time to do the job if they kept waiting.²²

Although the PPWC's report was eventually adopted by the City Council there was strong pressure on the Committee immediately it set to work. The City of Bristol Traders' Association, for instance, expressed their opinion that the general layout of the central area as a whole

should be completed as soon as possible, for, contrary to what the PPWC maintained, this did not have to be affected by the possibility of further blitzes.²³ The Bristol Round Table sent a letter to the PPWC attacking the Committee's "wait and see" policy with regard to replanning.²⁴ At the same time a number of proposals and suggestions with regard to the replanning were being forwarded to the PPWC. In order to deal with these suggestions efficiently, the Committee decided, upon the suggestion of the City Engineer, to adopt a procedure by which such proposals would in the first place be forwarded to the Engineer and then be considered in detail by a joint technical sub-committee (the 'Conference of Chief Officers') consisting of the Town Clerk, the City Engineer, the City Architect, the City Valuer and the Town Planning Officer. This Conference would eventually prepare a report to the PPWC for information and consideration of such proposals.²⁵

The Chamber of Commerce tried to establish a close relationship with this Conference of Officers. In September 1941 the Chamber sent a letter to the PPWC asking to endorse the setting up of an enlarged representative organisation to replace the existing SAC. This new body should have, through the medium of its Liaison Committee, close personal contact with the Conference of Officers, for, as the letter stressed, such contact would be the only way in which competent external opinion could be effectively presented to the Corporation.²⁶

At the meeting of the PPWC some Labour members expressed their concern about the Chamber's proposal. Alderman F. Bicker said that the Conference of Officers was most suited to deal with the matter, and if the Committee attempted to bring everyone else in, they would have a jumble before anything could be done. Alderman Hennessy suspected that the Chamber were trying to get representation on the executive. He went on to say that they were only anxious to secure restoration of the old

city streets and not replanning.²⁷ In the end, however, the PPWC resolved to inform the Chamber that they were generally in agreement with their proposals, provided that the Committee would 'not delegate or in any way part with their replanning powers.'²⁸

The Chamber regarded this as a satisfactory reply and in October they formed an enlarged Advisory Committee, now renamed the Replanning Advisory Committee [hereafter the RAC], with their President and Vice-President as chairman and vice-chairman respectively. The RAC represented more than 150 organisations and interests in the city, and was divided into 12 groups dealing respectively with arts, churches, commerce, distributive trades, education, entertainment, industry, medical affairs, social welfare, sports, technical aspects, and transport. An Executive Committee was set up consisting of the representatives of each group, and from this Committee a Liaison Committee of five was appointed to maintain contact with the Conference of Officers of the Corporation.²⁹

In the end not much contact seems to have been made between the Conference of Officers of the Corporation and the Liaison Committee of the RAC. In December 1941 they met for the first time, and the Liaison Committee asked, among other things, whether the Corporation had formed any ideas with regard to the re-establishment on their original sites of industries which had been damaged by enemy action. They were also anxious to know the extent of the area which the Corporation would propose to consider under any new planning scheme. The Conference of Officers insisted that very little could be done in connection with replanning until particulars of the impending legislation were known, and the Liaison Committee, although very reluctantly, had no choice but to accept this.³⁰ In April 1942 the RAC approached the Conference of Officers again and asked if the Town Planning Officer might accompany

their proposed deputation to the Ministry of Works and Buildings. The PPWC replied flatly that this request could not be granted.³¹

* * * *

Meanwhile the question of the reconstitution of the PPWC came under review. In August 1942 the Chamber of Commerce sent the Interim Report of the RAC to the Conference of Officers. The Report recommended, among other things, the immediate setting up of an ad hoc Planning Committee for the region for which the City Council were responsible. The Report also said that such a Committee should co-opt up to 30 per cent of its membership from representatives nominated by the RAC. This suggestion in the first place called the attention of the Conference of Officers to the fact that the PPWC had 'a multitude of responsibilities' which were interlocked to a very considerable degree, thus preventing it functioning efficiently. The PPWC had been set up in 1933 by merging the Town Planning Committee and the Sanitary Committee. The dual function of planning matters and maintenance works, however, did not work as had been expected. As the Town Clerk put it, all matters were considered by the full Committee of eighteen members and consequently it spent a considerable amount of time discussing minor matters and the officers were detained for long periods. The Officers' recommendation was that the duties of the PPWC should be carried out by two smaller Committees, one dealing with planning matters and the other responsible for maintenance works. If the duties of the PPWC were divided on the lines suggested, then there would be a possibility of co-option on the proposed ad hoc Planning Committee, especially to review matters which were not normally considered by a Corporation Committee.³²

While the PPWC had no objection to the Officers' proposal to set up two smaller Committees, they were unable to come to any conclusion on the

question of co-option, and decided to refer it to the City Council without making any recommendation.³³ However, the Council also failed to arrive at a decisive conclusion on the matter. At the Council meeting in December 1942, Alderman R.L. Lyne, a Citizen Party member, argued that a Planning Committee should ensure that matters which concerned Bristol on a much wider basis should be properly co-ordinated and their interests should be represented and authoritatively stated, the point made by the RAC's Interim Report. Not surprisingly one Labour member questioned if the motive behind the amendment was directed to co-option. Although this was categorically denied by the Citizen Party side, a feeling of uncertainty and suspicion prevailed in the Council.³⁴

A hint of conflict between the Labour members and the Citizen Party members appeared in appointing the first chairman of the Planning and Reconstruction Committee [hereafter the PRC]. Labour recommended Alderman Cox, while the Citizen members pushed Alderman Inskip, and the matter could not be settled at the first meeting of December 1942.³⁵ After one month, however, the PRC unanimously decided to appoint Inskip as chairman and Cox as vice-chairman respectively.³⁶ As the City Engineer urged the PRC, they had to settle down as soon as possible to the question of the Officers and the Committee itself.³⁷ The officers were 'firmly of the opinion that planning is essentially a matter which calls for team work and the fullest co-operation between the various officers concerned,' and claimed that the existing machinery - 'Conference of Officers' concerned - would be most conducive of practical research and good planning.³⁹ The PRC, also emphasising the importance of team work, stated that at the same time the new Committee should appoint one officer styled 'Chief Planning Officer' who would lead and co-ordinate the whole of the planning activities of the Corporation. The question was whether it should be filled by the City Engineer who was

responsible for planning matters under the existing system, or it should call for an entirely new appointment. The PRC were 'satisfied that a new appointment from outside the service would not at the present time be in the best interests of the Corporation', and decided unanimously to appoint the City Engineer as Chief Planning Officer. At the same time the PRC extended the scope of duties of the City Architect which had been confined to elevation of buildings, so that he should be allowed 'full expression as an Architect in all planning proposals with direct access to and full collaboration with the Chief Planning Officer and the Committee.'³⁹

This decision enabled the City Engineer to start giving the PRC his preliminary outline of tentative planning proposals for the city comprising highways and some suggestions for the layout of the central area.⁴⁰ The PRC then asked him to commence the preparation of proposals relating to housing and the location of industry with a view to assessing the desirability or otherwise of a satellite town or towns in the adjoining counties.⁴¹ While these proposals were settling into shape nothing was done about the question of co-option and the Chamber of Commerce became impatient. They told the PRC that they had arrived at a point where they could be of no further service to the Corporation unless they were brought into the Committee's counsels and were informed of the Corporation's plan.⁴² In reply the PRC told the Chamber that 'as and when this Committee are tentatively agreed upon any proposals affecting the principles of replanning the Committee will give an opportunity to the Chamber of Commerce or others who are directly interested to discuss the proposals.'⁴³ In this way the Chamber's insistence on co-option was virtually turned down and the preparation of replanning proposals for the central area progressed without any particular intervention from outside bodies.

In May 1943 the City Engineer submitted his road proposals to the PRC. The main objects of the proposals were first to diversify regional and national traffic from the central area of the city, and secondly to deal with the traffic which would reach the central area. The first objective was to be met by two ring roads - an 'Outer Ring' of 34 miles and an 'Inner Ring' of 21 miles. The second objective would be met by an 'Inner Circuit' of two miles, half of which was already completed as Redcliffe - Temple Way. Consultations with regard to the road proposals had already taken place with various interests, including the MOWT, the Regional Planning Officer of the MOTCP, County Surveyors concerned, the Chief Constable, the City Architect and the Bristol Tramway Company. While the proposals met with fairly general approval, there was one particular point of discussion - whether public service vehicles, i.e. buses, should be allowed to use any or all of the roads within the Inner Circuit Road. The City Engineer maintained that buses should be excluded from the confines of Inner Circuit, but many others argued that some streets within Inner Circuit should be used as omnibus routes for the sake of public convenience.⁴⁴

In June the PRC approved the three ring roads, but as to the Inner Circuit, it was agreed in principle only and consideration of the question of exclusion of buses was left to the City Engineer after further consultation with the interested bodies.⁴⁵

Meanwhile the PRC started their consideration of the City Engineer's zoning plans for the central area.⁴⁶ One member suggested that a progress report upon the replanning should be submitted to the City Council as soon as possible. Others maintained that before a satisfactory report could be presented they had to come to a decision with regard to the planning of the area within the Inner Circuit, especially that of Castle Street - Wine Street area. In this connection,

the Town Clerk informed the Committee that the Advisory Panel of the MOTCP would visit Bristol in September to discuss the matter with the PRC and the Officers concerned.⁴⁷

The Advisory Panel found the case of Bristol rather difficult, but in quite a different way to that of Coventry. The local authority had made a late start with post-war reconstruction plans. Although the City Engineer was said to be preparing a reconstruction plan, nothing particular was yet known of his proposals apart from those of the road system.⁴⁸ At the meeting between the Panel and the local authority the City Engineer explained that, although there was not much to show on paper, his method was first to consult with interests on the basis of a rough sketch plan and then to base the plan on the results of the consultations. The Panel expressed some concern about the size of the reconstruction area which the local authority might purchase. It was about 600 acres but some of it, such as areas owned by the Dock Authorities, the Cathedral and the University would not necessitate acquisition. It was also pointed out that Bristol might have to disperse some of their population to a satellite or satellites. Against this suggestion the City Engineer argued that there was no real need for a satellite, for there was still some room in the city and the population was not likely to increase very much.⁴⁹ Back in London the Panel tried to figure out the salient planning issues at Bristol. The most they could find out was that, because the damage was fairly scattered, the reconstruction area might have to be a large one. It was also pointed out that Bristol was larger than any of the other six cities selected by the Panel, and this would make the problem more complex.⁵⁰

Although not much was achieved as a result of the discussion with the Panel, the PRC carried forward the consideration of the planning of the areas within the Inner Circuit. In October 1943 an important

suggestion was put forward by the Multiple Traders' Federation [hereafter the MTF], whom the City Engineer had already met and was 'glad to find ... in agreement with his views on a number of points.'⁵¹ Their suggestion was that the Castle Street - Wine street area, the shopping centre before the war, should now be planned as a 'civic' area, i.e. an open space with perhaps a conference hall or other buildings of this character, and that the shopping centre originally in this area should be transferred to the north, i.e. to the Broadmead and Lower Union Street area.⁵² The plan was soon prepared by the MTF, while their suggestion was considered by the Retail Distributors' Group of the RAC. The Group told the PRC that, although they could not commit themselves until more detailed plans were available, they needed more information from the MTF on costs as a basis for further discussions with the PRC and Officers.⁵³

The PRC in turn regarded the retailers' request for the estimate of cost as their virtual approval of the proposed new treatment of the old shopping centre, and decided to agree in principle to replan this area as an open space. The remaining question was thus a site for the new shopping centre, which could be, as suggested by the City Engineer, either in the Broadmead and Lower Union Street area, or in Victoria Street.⁵⁴

* * * *

In February 1944 the City Engineer completed his report on the proposals for the planning and reconstruction of the central area of the city. The area covered by the plan amounted to 774 acres, all of which had been largely affected by enemy action. As the Engineer proudly put it, this 'Master Policy Plan' had been 'thoroughly well considered and should serve to form a useful basis of discussion in order that the

tragic destruction of the war years may result in the replanning of a still better Bristol City.'⁵⁵

Among policy proposals particular emphasis was placed upon the road system, for, as the City Engineer maintained, in a commercial city such as Bristol 'neither efficiency nor amenity can be obtained unless very adequate arrangements are made to deal with the control of traffic.'⁵⁶ The most important road proposal was for the Inner Circuit Road, designed with 'an absolute control of access points to it'. Vehicular traffic would be allowed to gain access to, and exit from, the Inner Circuit Road only at controlled roundabout intersections. Outside the Inner Circuit Road, two important proposals were for the possible widening of Park Street to give an adequate link between the Inner Circuit and the area west of it; and for exclusion of traffic from Queen's Road in order to make it a shopping cul-de-sac.⁵⁷

The Inner Circuit Road would enclose an area approximately three quarters of a mile in diameter. This area would be divided into enclosures or precincts by other major roads only secondary in importance to the Inner Circuit Road itself. Each portion thus divided and would be planned in detail to discourage heavy traffic, through traffic and public service vehicles travelling across the area bounded by the Inner Circuit Road. At the same time, although it was at first hoped to exclude altogether public service vehicles from this area, as had been pointed out through the consultations with the interested bodies, this was practically unlikely without trespassing unduly on public convenience.' It was therefore suggested that the minimum number of public service vehicles should be routed across the area bounded by the Inner Circuit Road, although by far the larger number should travel via the Inner Circuit Road itself.⁵⁸

In order to control the type of user that would be permitted in the various areas covered by the Report, the zoning proposals were made to indicate a predominant user in any particular area, some of which were intended to be reserved and ultimately acquired for special purposes. These proposals included: a warehouse and distributive trades zone in the vicinity of the City Docks and Temple Meads Railway Station; a site of approximately five acres for a Central Wholesale and Retail market at the junction of Victoria Street and Temple Way; an industrial zone in localities adjacent to the Docks and the Temple Meads Railway Station; a housing estate, to the south of the Inner Circuit Road, for key workers employed in connection with the Docks, Railway establishments, or the industrial and commercial area adjacent; a business zone, roughly on the lines of the present one, around areas such as Clare Street, Corn Street and Baldwin Street; a municipal civic centre in the College Green area; King Street as a museum piece for the buildings of historical and architectural interest; and a 60 acre precinct for extensions to the University, the erection of further hospital buildings and a medical school.⁵⁹

Two particularly important proposals were for a shopping zone and for enhanced public open space, which had been duly commended by the Multiple Traders' Federation. The pre-war shopping centre around the Wine Street - Castle Street area, stretching between Bristol Bridge and Old Market Street, was now reserved as a public open space with a limited number of buildings - such as a Conference Hall - upon it. A considerable area underneath this open space could be used as an underground car park accommodating 2,000 out of 4,500 cars scheduled to be on sites provided by the City Council. In the Broadmead area, to the north of the pre-war shopping centre, a new main shopping precinct of approximately 35 acres was proposed. Its pivotal point would be circular

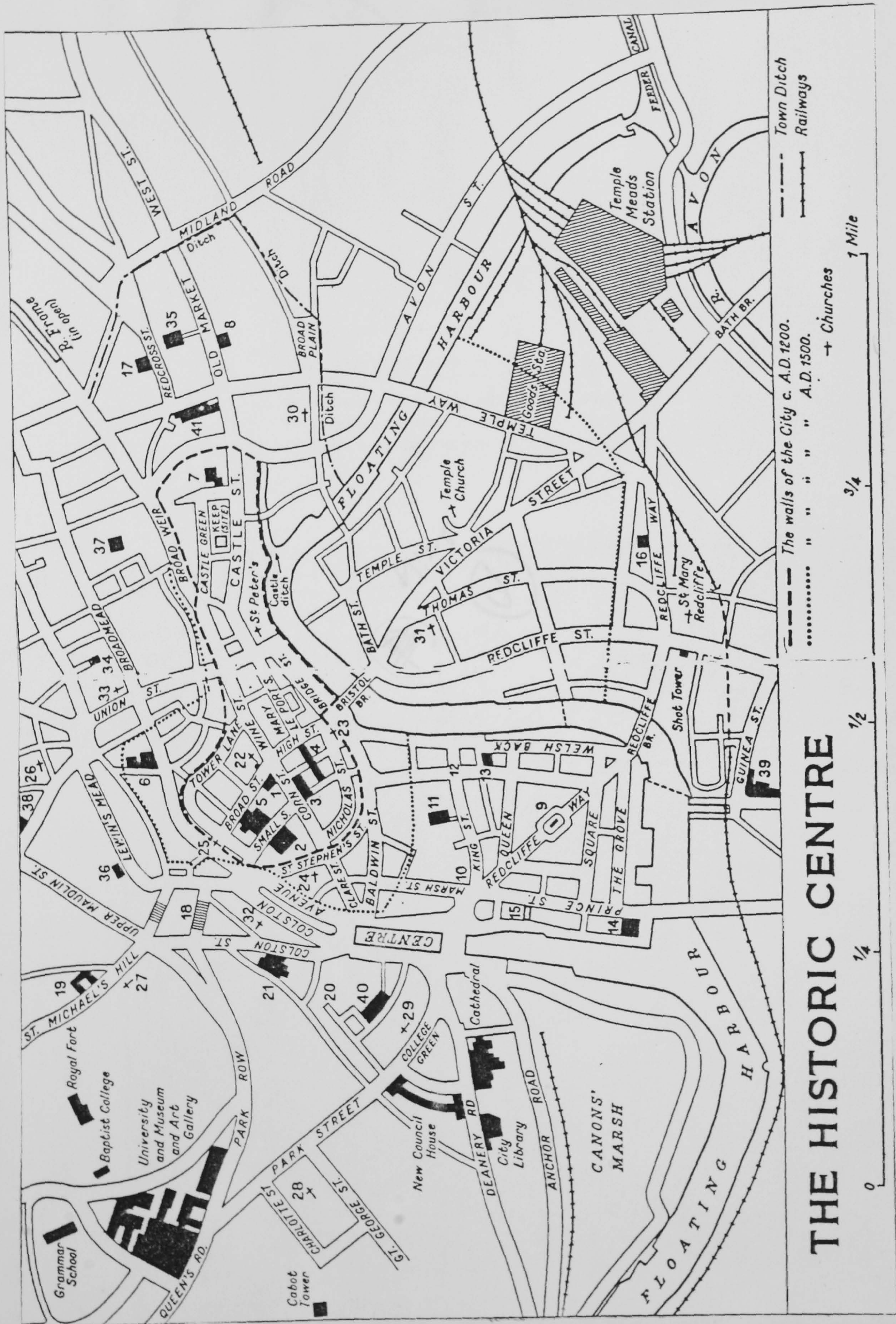
in shape, with arcaded shops, and the surrounding area was to consist of larger blocks, built to the most modern and approved description. No through traffic roads were allowed, but back service roads would be provided. Other areas zoned for shopping purposes included the frontages to Park Street and Queens Road, which was a continuation of pre-war use.⁶⁰

In concluding his report the City Engineer stated:

Some of the proposals are new and possibly rather revolutionary, but your Engineer feels that the spirit of adventure is abroad in connection with post war developments, and that Bristol would not wish to be behind hand in this direction.⁶¹

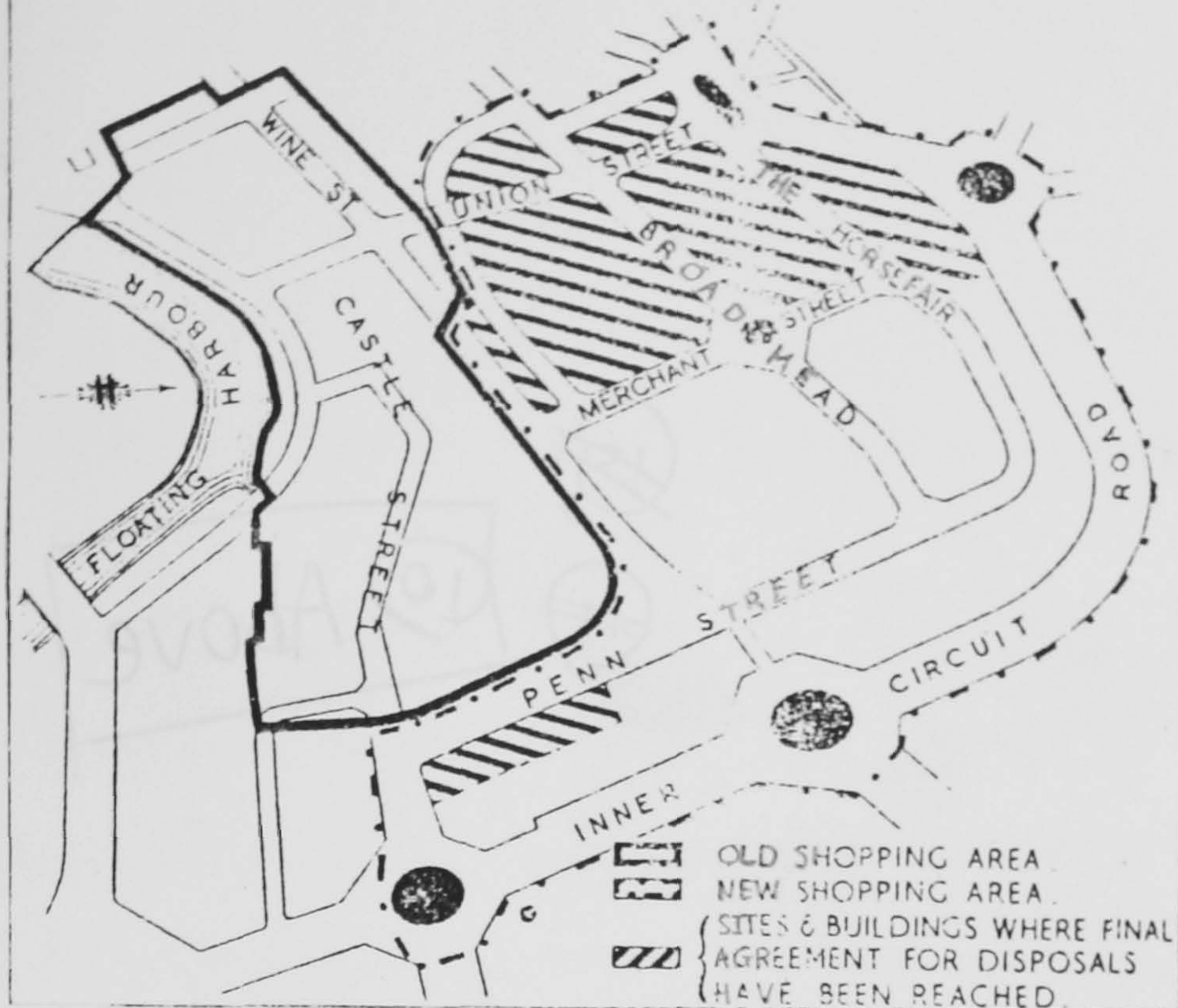
Although the PRC decided that the City Council should consider the City Engineer's report 'in private',⁶² the local press were quite pleased to see that the secret was eventually out. The new Bristol envisaged by the PRC was, as the BEP put it, 'bold beyond the wildest dreams of most people, but it is conceived through the telescope of 50 years ahead - to meet the needs of the Bristol of 2,000 A.D.'⁶³ One important question was 'who should pay for the cost. The BEP expressed the concern that 'From the plans it would appear to have been designed on what is regarded as desirable, regardless of other considerations'.⁶⁴ The BEP however went on to argue:

The Government should pay, and there is a rightful expectation that it will. In any case, the scheme should prove to be economic, so that in the process of years increased values should reflect themselves in a balanced budget. If neither of these expectations could be realised it is still necessary that the blitzed areas should be restored, and the fear that the rates will reflect this necessity in an increased financial demand should not be allowed to paralyse an endeavour to worthily recreate our treasured city.⁶⁵



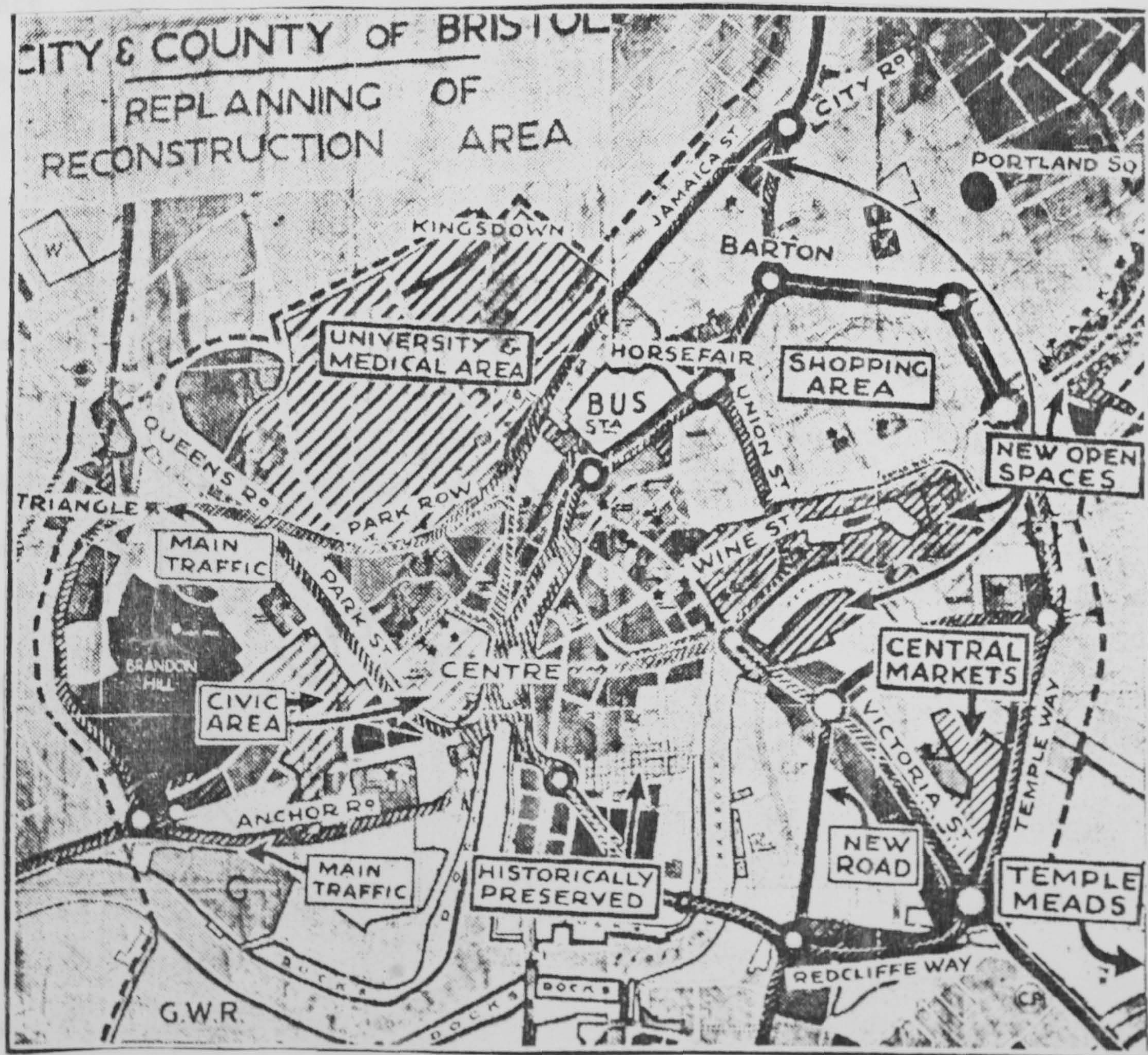
The central area of Bristol before the 1940 Blitz

Source: B. Little, *The City and County of Bristol* (1954), pp. 68-9.



The old and new shopping centres of Bristol

Source: W.A. James, 'Redevelopment of the Central Shopping Area of Bristol', Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' Journal, April 1954, 742



The 1944 plan for the central area of Bristol

Source: Bristol Evening Post, 15 March 1944.

At the same time it was expected that there would be widely differing opinions on the City Engineer's proposals, especially those relating to the new shopping precinct and the fate of its predecessor.

Within two weeks of the City Engineer's report having been submitted to the City Council, the PRC and the Officers met representatives of various interested bodies to discuss the report and found, rightly or wrongly, that no serious criticism had been made. It was reported that there were only some criticisms of the proposal to move the shopping centre and that the City Engineer was examining alternative suggestions which had been submitted for the restoration of the shopping centre on the Castle Street and Wine Street area.⁶⁷

A month later the City Engineer told the PRC that he had given careful consideration to the alternative schemes aiming at the reinstatement of traders in the Castle Street and Wine Street area, but he did not think that there was any chance of reinstating the traders in this area and providing a shopping centre worthy of the city. The City Valuer also stated that the ideal unit for shop sites should have a frontage of 25 feet and a depth of from 85 to 100 feet, and that the National Fire Service was asking that a fire break of at least 50 feet should be provided between blocks. The fire of November 1940 caused by the blitz had spread very rapidly because of the congestion in the old area, and it was duly suggested that any reconstruction should have ample fire breaks to lessen such a hazard.⁶⁸ In view of these points it would be impossible to reinstate all the traders in the old shopping centre. For one thing the old area had a shopping frontage of 6,000 feet compared to 9,600 feet in the proposed new area. The City Architect then intimated that he was in agreement with the views expressed by the City Engineer and the City Valuer, adding that he regarded the proposal to have an open

space in the central area as of prime importance. On these comments, the PRC stated that up to the moment they had received no practicable information or proposals suggesting that there was a possibility of all traders formerly carrying on business in the Castle Street and Wine Street area being reinstated there, although they also added that they would be prepared to consider any further proposals on these lines.⁶⁹

* * * *

In fact criticisms and alternative suggestions of the City Engineer's replanning proposals were flooding into the City Council. The Western Counties Chapter of the Incorporated Association of Architects and Surveyors [hereafter the IAAS], a body of young Bristol architects and surveyors, were opposed to the official plan to take the Inner Circuit Road through 'The Centre' on the ground that it would materially reduce its effectiveness for the diffusion of traffic. Instead, the Inner Circuit should include the proposed municipal centre in the College Green area, and The Centre should be the focus of the communal and civic life, rather than part of the main traffic route.⁷⁰ In regard to the civic centre at College Green, however, the Chamber of Commerce maintained that the area should still be retained as a shopping area in view of its past history.⁷¹ In this connection Bristol Rotary Club produced a plan for a new civic centre in Victoria Street, even scrapping the existing official proposal at College Green where a new Council House was already under construction. The merits of their idea were, first, that it was the only real level site in the city where extensive reconstruction could take place, and secondly, that it would provide a dignified approach for visitors to the city from Temple Meads Railway Station.⁷² The proposal to convert Queens Road into a shopping cul-de-sac and to ban traffic from

it and Park Street also met considerable opposition, especially from the traders concerned.⁷³

The most contentious issue with regard to the City Engineer's replanning proposals was the re-siting of the shopping centre. There were two main grounds for the opposition to the proposed open space in the old shopping centre. First, there was an acute concern about the economic and social effects of the sterilisation of too large an area of importance in the heart of the city.⁷⁴ Secondly, the majority of traders were anxious, inter alia, that this area should again be used as a shopping centre. Although this argument was perhaps understandable in the light of the old adage that 'the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know',⁷⁵ most traders had become, as the City Engineer told the PRC, extremely adamant in refusing the Council officers' contention that the area was not large enough to adequately accommodate all the traders who had formerly carried on business there.⁷⁶

Thus the main criticism of the proposed new shopping centre in the Broadmead area was that it was geographically unsuitable, particularly because it was 'off the beaten track' of pedestrians who habitually walked through the centre of the old city - Wine Street and Castle Street. It was argued that the fact that these streets had proved a direct link between east and west Bristol made them a popular and valuable shopping centre.⁷⁷ Moreover, there was a concern that the Broadmead area, the low-level area on the bed of the River Frome, was 'waterlogged',⁷⁸ and the bearing qualities of the sub-soil were not sufficient to carry heavy buildings. Reference was made, for instance, to the flooding of 1889, even though improvements had been made since then to the River Frome to prevent the repetition of such an event.⁷⁹

Not surprisingly most of the alternative proposals to the City Engineer's plan aimed at the retention of the Wine Street - Castle Street

area as the principal shopping centre. In general it was understood that further development of this area might well take place northwards in the Broadmead area. In May 1944 the Bristol Re-planning Association - which was effectively a renamed RAC - put forward a scheme for the replanning of the old shopping centre drawn up by eminent local architects. It had been thought that the Association was generally in favour of the plan endorsed by multiple shops envisaging the new civic area based on the pre-war shopping centre. They had made it clear, however, that, contrary to an impression which existed, they had given no approval to it, but were, in fact, of the opinion that it was open to serious objection.⁸⁰ Their alternative plan, endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce, proposed to accommodate existing shopkeepers in the old shopping centre in accordance with modern requirements, with the space northwards to allow for further expansion.⁸¹ In June another alternative suggestion appeared in the local press drawn up by a local architect on the instructions of certain Wine Street traders. It proposed a 100 ft wide road along the river bank on the south side of the shopping area to connect Bristol Bridge and Old Market Street, which would also be used as a service road for the area.⁸² Thirdly, the IAAS suggested a generous replanning of the old site with a traffic-restricted shopping boulevard between Old Market Street and The Centre. A central park should be provided to the west of the Centre, rather than in the existing shopping centre, which appeared to be a natural choice, greatly enhancing The Centre and the Civic Centre (in this case the official proposal of College Green area).⁸³ Finally, Bristol Rotary Club, with the help of E. Button, vice-president of the Bristol Society of Architects, also produced a plan for the shopping centre based on the old area, with an extension northwards.⁸⁴

This flood of alternative suggestions opposed to the official proposals of transferring the shopping centre made the Lord Mayor state

strongly in public around this time that a final reconstruction plan should satisfy most, if not all, of the interests clamouring for recognition and adoption of their own ideas.⁸⁵ At the same time there were some encouraging signs for the PRC in relation to their proposal for the new shopping centre. As the Chamber of Commerce admitted, it was generally understood that the multiple traders were favourably inclined towards the new site for a shopping centre in the Broadmead area.⁸⁶ It was stated by the MTC themselves that two-thirds of the traders who voted on a questionnaire concerning the removal from the old shopping centre to the Broadmead area were in favour of moving.⁸⁷ The Co-operative Society also informed the PRC that they had no objection to the transfer of a shopping centre.⁸⁸ Some traders also showed their qualified approval of the official proposals. Bristol Retailers' Advisory Committee on Town Planning of the Chamber of Commerce, while regarding the Re-planning Association's plan as best, intimated that a civic centre in the Castle Street and Wine Street area might be acceptable on the understanding a) that the conversion of this area into a civic centre should be the only solution for a successful new shopping centre in the Broadmead area; b) that the City Council should be responsible for safeguarding the Broadmead area against flooding; and c) that provision should be made as soon as possible for temporary shops to be erected on the Wine Street and Castle Street area during the building of the proposed new shopping centre.⁸⁹ In October 1944 the BEP, too, commented that a more expansive site for the new shopping centre than the original one seemed to be inevitable. First of all, the previous occupants in the original area often wanted to take more space than before when getting back to the old sites. Secondly, many well-known firms who had previously not been represented in Bristol were said to be keen to establish themselves there, particularly in the new shopping centre. As it went on:

While understanding the desire of the former traders in the old site to conserve their interests, the public would, doubtless, welcome newcomers as adding to the variety of goods displayed and the delight that shopping gives to womenfolk.⁹⁰

Meanwhile the PRC continued their consideration of the City Engineer's reports on all criticisms and observations of the Corporation's plan of March 1944, and on all alternative suggestions and plans put forward to the City Council. In September 1944 the Committee decided to make important modifications to the original proposals. The Committee accepted alternatives to the original proposal to convert Queens Road into a shopping cul-de-sac and to ban traffic from it and Park Street; to the reservation of College Green for a civic (municipal) centre; and, to the proposed open space reservation in the Wine Street and Castle Street area.⁹¹

Now the PRC decided that both Queens Road and Park Street should remain as a two-way thoroughfare for traffic, with Park Street to be widened by 20 feet to adapt it for modern traffic. This decision then became the primary reason to look elsewhere for a civic centre other than the originally proposed College Green area, for, as the chairman of the Committee later put it, 'It would never do to have a main traffic street running right through the civic area'.⁹² As an alternative the Rotary Club had proposed turning Victoria Street into a site for civic buildings. However splendid their plan might look, Victoria Street did not commend itself to the PRC, for they thought that the new shopping centre should be in close contact with the civic centre, and not separate from it with the river in between.⁹³ At this point the City Engineer expressed the view that much of the opposition to the proposed new shopping centre in Broadmead would disappear if the Castle Street and Wine Street area could be satisfactorily developed instead of its being

reserved as open space. In view of these points the PRC came to the conclusion that the Castle Street and Wine Street area, the most important and the most valuable area in the city, should be devoted as a long-term policy to public services, including such buildings as a Museum, Art Gallery, Guild Hall, municipal buildings, concert hall and conference hall. Moreover, this decision then opened the way to a further concession - the request that the College Green area should be used for shopping purposes in continuation of pre-war practice.⁹⁴

The amendment to the zoning of the College Green area provided a further opportunity to accede to the traders' request. It at first brought about the question of the future use of the Council House, the construction of which was nearing completion. In January 1945 the PRC decided that the building should be completed as quickly as possible in order to provide accommodation for the activities of the Council, since the suggested layout of the Castle Street and Wine Street area as a civic centre should be adopted as a long term policy. At this point the City Engineer suggested that the pre-war shopping centre might be used, pending its final layout for public purposes, for the erection of temporary shops until such time as the shopping centre in Broadmead was developed.⁹⁵ Requests on these lines were forwarded from the Retailers' Advisory Committee on Town Planning and the City of Bristol Traders' Association.⁹⁶ By June negotiations with the interests had proceeded, and the PRC decided to provide 100 temporary shops in the Castle Street and Wine Street area in the first instance.⁹⁷

Taking care of the industrialists who were affected by the central area plan was also well considered, and in June 1945 the City Council approved the joint recommendation of the PRC and the Docks Committee to set up a trading estate at Avonmouth at an initial expenditure of £275,000.⁹⁸

Meanwhile the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, who had not been well acquainted with Bristol's replanning proposals for the central area, in the end became fairly impressed with them. In April 1945 the MOTCP suggested that the PRC submit the central area plan to them informally for comments before it would submit it to the City Council for approval. The City Council had been hesitant to apply for a declaratory order for compulsory purchase under the 1944 Town and Country Planning Act. The aim of the Ministry's suggestion therefore seemed to encourage the Council by telling them that their plan which had to accompany the application for a declaratory order was favourably viewed by the Minister.⁹⁹ In June the City Engineer reported to the PRC that Professor Holford, technical adviser to the MOTCP, had inspected the draft plan for the central area, and intimated that he was 'broadly speaking' in sympathy with the main proposals.¹⁰⁰ In fact Holford had a very high opinion of them. As he wrote to the Regional Planning Officer of the MOTCP around this time, 'It is very satisfactory to see that the basis for a really effective plan is being so well laid in Bristol by discussion between the Council and the various interests.' For instance, a new proposal for siting civic buildings on the old shopping centre would, as he put it

have the advantage of preserving the area from becoming "dead" and, since the civic buildings will not be built for some years, of allowing a very valuable site for temporary shops while those in Broadmead are being built. I am, therefore, inclined to the view that if a suitable layout is agreed for public buildings on the former shopping area, there could be little objection to the proposal.

As for the proposed new shopping centre, he pointed out that

the trading interests, and in particular the multiple stores, had shown considerable interest in this scheme, and were sufficiently well organised to be able to give what amounts to a satisfactory assurance to the Council that if it were developed in the way proposed, they would take up leases.¹⁰¹

* * * *

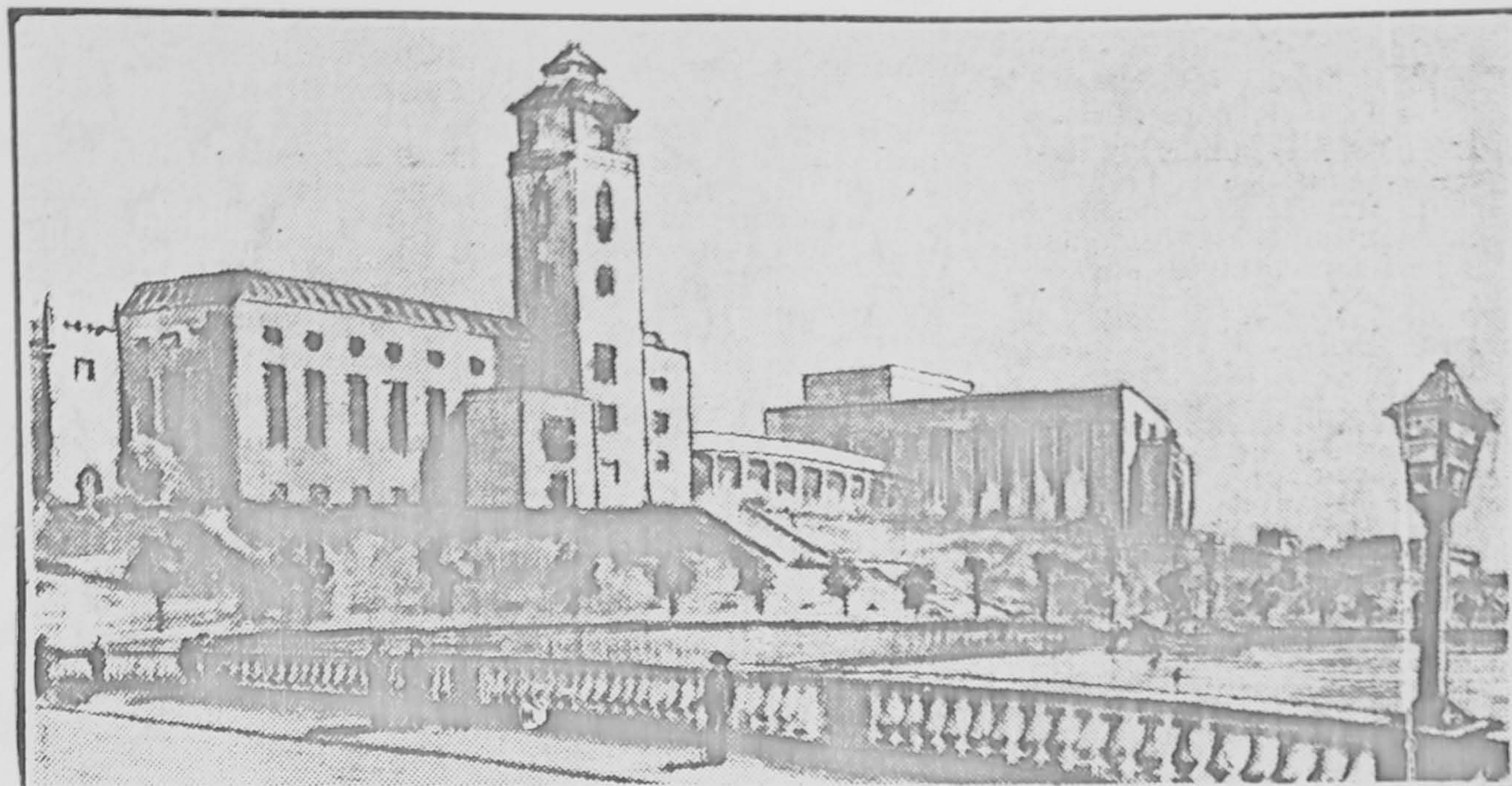
In July 1945, the City Council considered the PRC's plan for the central area, with a view to applying for a Declaratory Order. They also considered the estimates of initial costs made by the Finance Committee, with a view to making applications to the Minister of Health from time to time for sanction to borrow the necessary moneys. £2,000,000 for the acquisition of sites in the central area; £250,000 for the erection of 100 temporary shops in Castle Street and Wine Street; and £60,000 for three more trading estates (at St. Philip's, Brislington and Bedminster), on top of that in Avonmouth approved in June.

As for the central area the significant difference between the original and new plans was the modifications to the proposals in regard to the Wine Street and Castle Street area, College Green, and Queen's Road and Park Street. But the site of the new shopping centre was not changed. In fact the PRC's strongest emphasis was placed upon their adherence to the new shopping centre in the Broadmead area. As Alderman Sir John Inskip, Chairman of the Committee, told the Council, the question of the main shopping centre had been 'the most contentious and the most difficult.' There had been considerable opposition to the idea of transferring it from the Castle Street and Wine Street area to Broadmead. He asked the Council, however, to grasp what a modern shopping centre would require:

It is all very well to say Castle Street and Wine Street have served the city well over all these years, and why not put the shops back there? The fact that they have been there, and, therefore, should remain, is surely the worst of all possible reasons.¹⁰²

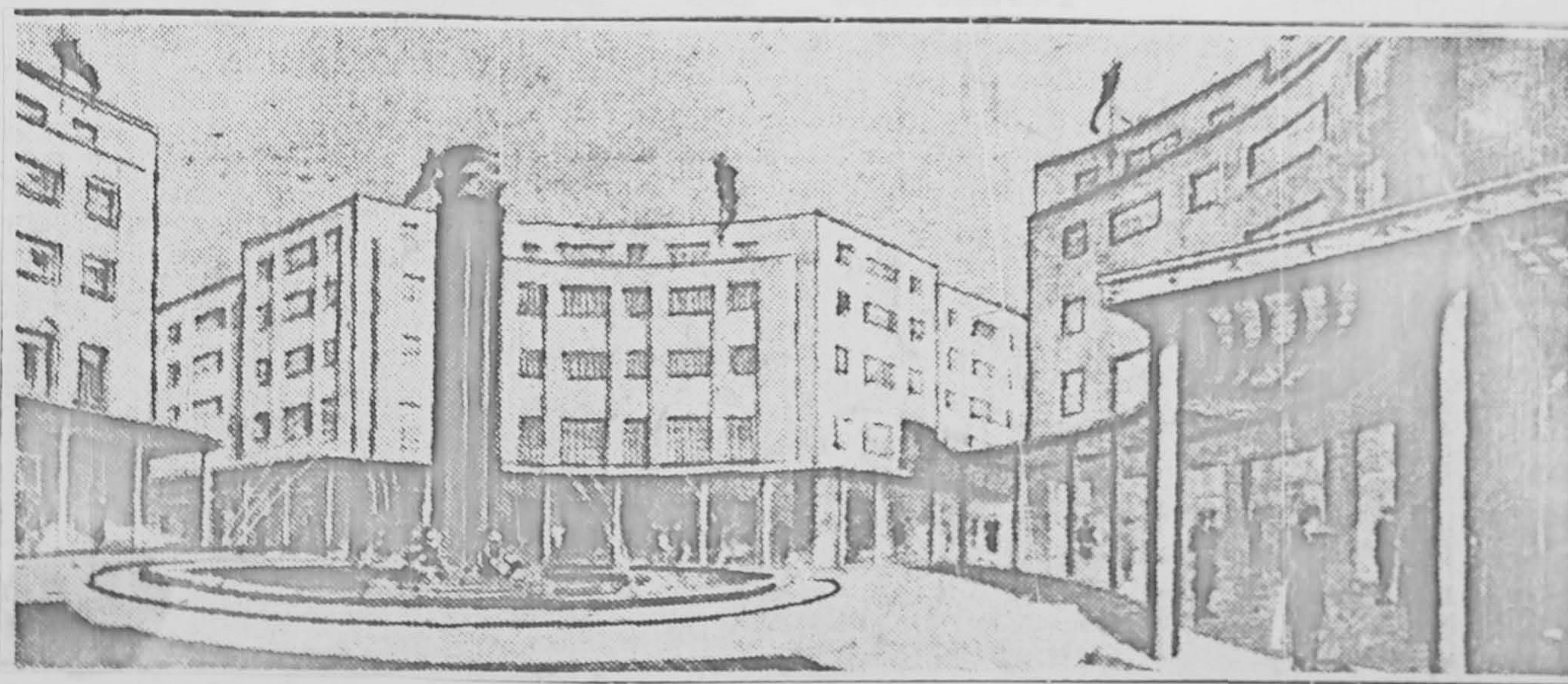
Regrettable as it was to break a link going back many years, the PRC were convinced that it was impracticable to put back into such a restricted area even the shops that were there before. If they had to choose which traders should return to the old shopping centre with a 25 ft frontage each, they could not accommodate more than 60 to 70 per cent of those there before. The multiple shops might want up to 100 ft frontage, while there were the new businesses, large and small, which it was hoped would be attracted. The argument for northward extension to Broadmead proposed in many alternative suggestions was also dismissed because of the difference in level between the two areas. The City Council approved the plan unanimously. If anything, there was certain concern, as quite rightly predicted, about the proposal to put temporary shops in Castle Street and Wine Street, for, as it was expressed, it would be in a sense reinforcing the feeling that they should be retained as a shopping area.¹⁰³

W.S. Palmer, chairman of the Retailers' Advisory Committee on Town Planning, pointed out in the press that the new proposals appeared to accept certain important suggestions put forward by the interests concerned following the lines of the MTF's plan. Among other things, as he stated, that the changing of the civic centre to the Castle Street and Wine Street area would probably make a considerable difference to the opinions which many had held on the transference of the shopping centre to Broadmead. A large number, as he pointed out, had not liked the idea of an open space on the old shopping centre. He also expressed the view that traders would welcome the proposal to provide temporary shops as



Proposed conference buildings in the Wine Street -
Castle Street area of Bristol

Source: Bristol Evening Post, 13 July 1945



A view of the heart of the proposed new shopping centre
of Bristol

Source: Bristol Evening Post, 13 July 1945

quickly as possible. Describing the new proposals as 'a bold scheme', he stated that they 'would certainly receive the early and most careful consideration - of which it was worthy - of the retailers.'¹⁰⁴

To many others, however, the new proposals related to the shopping centres were far from being acceptable. Eustace Button, (vice-president of the Bristol Society of Architects), one of the five members of the Liaison Committee of the Replanning Association, for instance, was strongly opposed to the new civic centre and the shopping centre. As he put it:

It is interesting to note that the civic buildings are going to be moved within the Inner Circuit to the business heart of the city. It is curious, however, that the most difficult and expensive site for these buildings has been chosen, in the Castle Street and Wine Street area, when a much finer site is available in the Victoria Street boulevard.

Now that the Castle Street and Wine Street area is to be built over, it is all the more necessary to hear what are the over-riding reasons for displacing the successful shopping centre from its original position, at vast expense, and reinstating it in an area that has always been "off the map."¹⁰⁵

The Rotary Club soon got together to make strong comments on the passing of the new proposals for the central area of the city. The PRC's argument that only 60 to 70 per cent of the present tenants in the Castle Street and Wine Street area could be accommodated was, as one member pointed out, never convincing, because the same area was going to be a civic centre with any extension that would be necessary. In fact in the Corporation's proposal the civic buildings were going to be scattered in different places. It was also said that the new shopping centre would never be a success, for people were looking forward to having the old centre of the mediaeval town as a shopping centre as before. As one

member said, the Corporation's scheme had 'one fundamental unsoundness,' the lack of an expert's advice to judge it.

The people who devised it are the judges of their own work - the plaintiffs are their own judge and jury.¹⁰⁶

Against this the PRC and the Officers could argue that they had considered very carefully the criticisms of and the alternative suggestions to their original proposals in 1944 and in certain respects acceded to them: 340 comments and criticisms of the original proposals plus 20 alternative plans had been forwarded to them, and 25 associations had been consulted. As the City Engineer told the local press confidently, "We believe we have done the best possible to meet the many difficulties involved and the wishes and representations expressed to us".¹⁰⁷ Thus, as the chairman of the PRC told the Council, their Officers and the Committee were convinced that the Broadmead shopping centre was 'the right and only practicable proposal', and therefore, that 'there could be no letting the traders go back to the sites they occupied before'.¹⁰⁸

* * * *

In October 1945 a joint meeting was held of the Chamber of Commerce, the Replanning Association, and the Rotary Club. In view of a public inquiry, prescribed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1944, into the City Council's application for a declaratory order with the central area plan as supporting evidence, they agreed to submit a joint case of objections of the three organisations to it.¹⁰⁹ The strong objection in some quarters to the Corporation's plan for the central area had, however, very little, if anything, to do either with the municipal election in November 1945 or with the City Council's attitude toward the plan.

The only difference between the Labour Party and the Citizen Party with regard to the question of reconstruction seemed to be the former's hostility to, and the latter's sympathy for traders. As the Labour Party's municipal programme read:

To us now is given a chance that is truly priceless - the chance to plan and build a city that will be worthy of the ancient traditions of Bristol and its glorious future. If this chance is to be utilised to the full no vested interest, no selfish profit-making clique must be allowed to endanger it. The Labour Party serves no private vested interest. It is only concerned with the greatest good of the majority of the people. We believe shopping interests should serve the people and not the people the shopping interests.¹¹⁰

The Citizen Party, stating their reconstruction policy, said:

We realise fully the struggle of the small private traders and all those who have to re-establish themselves after the ravages of war, and it will be our earnest endeavour to help them and to so order the planning and reconstruction of the city that both the largest and smallest trader shall find himself re-established on a suitable site at the earliest possible moment.¹¹¹

This did not mean, however, the traders' plea for the re-establishment of the old shopping centre might be accepted by the City Council. As the Party's programme went on to say

Nothing will be allowed to hinder the planning and reconstruction of Bristol. The city should be the cultural and artistic centre of the West. We believe that the proposed layout of the destroyed centre of the city is a good one, and we shall actively proceed to carry it out, and especially that part of it which provides for new public buildings, including conference hall and concert hall.¹¹²

Thus both the Labour Party and the Citizen Party were confident in the Corporation's plan for the central area of the city, and were keen to proceed with the matter as quickly as possible. At the same time it should also be noted that both parties put the first and foremost priority on housing, and as Alderman Inskip, leader of the Citizen Party, admitted, there seemed to be no particular issue which divided the two parties.¹¹² If anything, the Labour Party put stress on the public ownership and control in various matters, while the Citizen Party sought room for the private sector to take part in, and keep abreast of the local authority. The result of the November election was a sweeping victory for the Labour Party, with a majority of 18 Councillors.¹¹⁴ Declaring the victory, they stated that they were determined to carry into effect the programme as quickly as possible, with their 'sleeves rolled up for action', but the two imminent issues were, as they put it, the provision of houses and the municipal ownership and control of the city's bus service, and the reconstruction of the central area was not put in the limelight.¹¹⁵ This was not surprising at all, for the City Council had always been united in supporting the City Engineer's approach to the replanning of the central area. They were also confident that they had given enough consideration and even concessions in some cases to the suggestions made by the interest. At the same time it was agreed by all parties that housing should be given priority, and that, in view also of the shortage of labour and materials, it was not possible to place in the forefront the reconstruction of the city centre, which might take years to materialise.

In the case of Bristol there was not much enthusiasm for the matter. On the City Council, which was quite large, having 112 members, neither party seemed to have any acknowledged planning expert. They did not respond to the electric atmosphere of the early days of the war, and made

a rather late start at the replanning of the city centre, given that Bristol was one of the test case survey cities. Their approach, based on the extensive consideration of suggestions from the interests and consultation with them, however reasonable it might have been, did not allow rapid progress. By the time the Council approved the fairly bold replanning scheme for the central area, it did not attract as much nationwide attention as other cities' plans, notably that of Coventry, had done in the earlier days. The general public in the city did not seem to be too interested in the question either. When the organised bodies were expressing their opinions one after another about the City Council's original plan in 1944, one local paper observed:

The problem has, in fact, received considerable publicity, but the impression remains that the people of Bristol have not displayed any signs that they are fired with holy zeal to design the "shape of things to come." It may be that the general public, so well schooled in the primary necessity of first winning the war, prefers to leave the minor conflict of city planning "till the boys come home." The boys themselves, being now almost solely occupied with the grim and necessary task of wiping out cities, have had little time or opportunity to express their views on the future plan of what they have been fighting for.¹¹⁶

When the war was over, however, the people's concern was around the housing. The existence of the RAC (later Replanning Association) and some other organisations might give an impression that the replanning of the central area had been widely discussed, and that the objections to the City Council's plan were rife among the people. It must be pointed out, however, that these organisations represented the voices of limited circles, notably traders and such professions as architects and surveyors. There was also a considerable overlapping of membership among these bodies, and, as the City Engineer's exhaustive list of comments and suggestions with regard to the central area reconstruction scheme shows,

keen interest in the matter came in the main from these limited sources.¹¹⁷ Moreover bigger traders were inclined to be in favour of the Corporation's proposals, which made small traders feel more threatened about their future.¹¹⁸ As for architects, Bristol was said to have been endowed with a long tradition and eminent figures.¹¹⁹ Both traders and architects were trying hard to establish themselves in the matter of replanning the central area through such recommendations as co-option and a planning consultant. The PRC never let them in on the process of decision making. It is not too difficult to imagine why the threatened traders and the frustrated and possibly offended architects were so adamantly opposed to the main features of the Corporation's plan - the resiting of the shopping centre.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 HLG 88/9, Advisory Panel of the MOTCP, 'Notes Preliminary to a Visit to Bristol, 22 September 1943. The Chamber of Commerce published some important ideas about town planning, which, however, did not deal with city centre replanning as such. See, e.g. Bristol Evening World [hereafter the BEW] 8 December 1942 reporting the interim report of the Replanning Advisory Committee set up under the auspices of the Chamber, which put particular emphasis on national and regional planning. Also see the BEW 17 January 1942, about the discussions on the question of satellite towns, and the Bristol Observer [hereafter the Observer] 1 January 1944, about their discussions on neighbourhood units.
- 2 Planning and Public Works Committee [hereafter the PPWC], 11 December 1940.
- 3 PPWC, 22 January 1941.
- 4 PPWC, 5 March 1941, letter from the Chamber of Commerce, 26 February 1941.
- 5 PPWC, 5 March 1941.
- 6 HLG 68/66, 'Bombed Areas - Redevelopment Replacement of shops as a temporary measure', report by G.L. Pepler, dated 24 January 1941.
- 7 HLG 71/1570, 'Bombed Areas - Redevelopment. Notes on Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry and Southampton,' by G.L. Pepler dated 28 February 1941.
- 8 For details, see BRO 38605/M/35, minutes of the meetings of the Chamber of Commerce.
- 9 BRO 38605/A/49, 'Report of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce,' for the year 1940-41, July 1941, p. 21.
- 10 *ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
- 11 The Times, 9 April 1941.
- 12 Bristol Evening Post [hereafter the BEP], 8 April 1941.
- 13 PPWC, 9 April 1941.
- 14 BEP, 11 April 1941.
- 15 BEP, 11 May 1941.
- 16 For instance, in September 1943, when the City Engineer was in the very middle of the consultation with the interested bodies about his preliminary replanning proposals, the Chamber of Commerce and the Bristol Society of Architects proposed to the Planning Committee the immediate appointment of a town planning consultant responsible for a long-term replanning scheme (Planning and Reconstruction Committee (hereafter PRC), 1 September 1943, Letters from the Bristol Society of Architects, dated 11 August, 1943, and from the Chamber of Commerce, dated 13 August, 1943) without success. (PRC 1 September

1943). The case of a consultant was pressed again by the Chamber in June 1944 following the City Engineer's submission of his replanning proposals to the City Council in March of that year. Col. Whitwill, president of the Chamber, stated in a letter to the Planning Committee that he was convinced that it would be the wish of the Corporation officials that Professor Abercrombie or some other specialist of equal eminence should be consulted before any further steps were taken in connection with the planning of the central area. In reply the Committee intimated that they were satisfied that the replanning of the city would best be left to the City Engineer and other Corporation officers, and that they had no intention of appointing an outside consultant, requesting the Chamber not to publish the statement related to a consultant, for it was not at all the wish of the Corporation's officials. (PRC, 5 July 1944. The Chamber's recommendation for a consultant was made at the special meeting of the Council of the Chamber, 16 June 1944. See BRO 38605/M/38.

- 17 BRO 38605/A/49, Report of the Council of the Chamber, op. cit., p. 23.
- 18 BEP, 13 May 1941.
- 19 BEP, 14 May 1941. As for these three, see Whitefield's thesis, Appendix III, 'Biographical Notes on Leading Labour Movement Activists in Bristol', pp. 395-404. Also see BEP, 27 September 1941 and PPWC, 2 October 1941 on the death of Alderman Winchester, and Observer, 17 April 1943 on the death of Alderman Cox. Hennessy was a sort of vocal maverick, causing some trouble around this time to Labour in connection with the question of squatters. See James Hinton, 'Self-Help and Socialism: The Squatters' Movement of 1946', in History Workshop, Spring 1988, Issue 25.
- 20 Report of the PPWC on Replanning and Reconstruction, 15 July 1941.
- 21 BEP, 16 July 1941.
- 22 ibid.
- 23 BEP, 17 July 1941.
- 24 PPWC, 3 September 1941.
- 25 PPWC, 20 August 1941.
- 26 PPWC, 17 September 1941, a letter from the Chamber dated 8 September 1941.
- 27 BEP, 17 September 1941.
- 28 PPWC, 17 September 1941.
- 29 BRO 38605/A/50, 'Report of the Council of the Chamber for the year 1941-42', July 1942, pp. 24-5.
- 30 PPWC, 31 December 1941, 'Note of the meeting between the Conference of Officers and the Replanning Advisory Committee' on 11 December 1941.

- 31 PPWC, 29 April 1942.
- 32 Report by Town Clerk, 11 September 1942.
- 33 PPWC, 21 October 1942, reported in BEW, 5 November 1942.
- 34 BEP, 8 December 1942.
- 35 PRC, 29 December 1942.
- 36 PRC, 3 February 1943.
- 37 PRC, 29 December 1942.
- 38 'Note of the Conference of Officers on Planning in Bristol and District and the Duties of the Officers engaged thereon,' 7 January 1943.
- 39 PRC, 3 February 1943, based on the report of a special sub-committee on the question of duties, consisting Aldermen Inskip and Cox and Councillors Rowat and Evans, 26 January 1943.
- 40 PRC, 17 February 1943.
- 41 PRC, 3 March 1943.
- 42 PRC, 17 March 1943.
- 43 *ibid.*
- 44 PRC, 26 and 28 May 1943.
- 45 PRC, 23 June 1943.
- 46 PRC, 7 July 1943.
- 47 PRC, 15 September 1943.
- 48 HLG 88/9, Advisory Panel of the MOTCP, 'notes Preliminary to a Visit to Bristol' 22 September 1943, *op. cit.*
- 49 HLG 88/9, Advisory Panel, Minute no. 9, 12 October 1943.
- 50 HLG 88/9, Advisory Panel, Minute no. 11, 26 November 1943.
- 51 PRC, 15 September 1943.
- 52 PRC, 27 October 1943.
- 53 PRC, 10 November 1943.
- 54 *ibid.*
- 55 City Engineer's Report on the Proposals for the Planning and Reconstruction of the Central Area of the City', 25 February 1944.
- 56 *ibid.*, p. 2.

- 57 ibid., p. 3.
- 58 ibid., pp. 3-4.
- 59 ibid., pp. 5-7.
- 60 ibid., pp. 6 and 7.
- 61 ibid., p. 9.
- 62 PRC, 1 March 1944.
- 63 BEP, 15 March 1944.
- 64 ibid.
- 65 BEP, 21 March 1944.
- 66 ibid., 15 March 1944.
- 67 PRC, 29 March 1944.
- 68 This point is found in W.A. James, 'Redevelopment of the Central Shopping Area of Bristol', Journal of Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, April 1954, Vol. XXXIII Part X, p. 741.
- 69 PRC, 26 April 1944.
- 70 BEP, 15 June and Observer, 17 June 1944. In October 1943, the IAAS arranged the Rehousing and Replanning Exhibition, and put forward their plan for the central area. See BEP, 18 and 19 October 1943.
- 71 BRO 38505/M/38, Minutes of the Chamber's meetings on 26 May and 16 June 1944.
- 72 PRC, 16 August, BEP, 21 September, and Observer, 23 September 1944. In April 1945, they produced a bird's eye view of the redeveloped Victoria Street. See BEP 16 April 1945.
- 73 The City Engineer's list of 'Suggestions and Representations submitted by Societies and from other sources' [hereafter 'City Engineer's List'], 13 September 1944, scheduled number A4 & A54. Also see BRO 38505/M/38, Minutes of the Chamber's meetings of 26 May and 16 June 1944.
- 74 Observer, 24 June 1944.
- 75 W.A. James, 'Redevelopment of the Central Area of Bristol', op. cit., p. 742.
- 76 PRC, 21 September 1944.
- 77 Observer, 19 August 1944. Also see 'City Engineer's List', J4 & J31.
- 78 'City Engineer's List', J34.

- 79 W.A. James, 'Redevelopment of the Central Shopping Area of Bristol, op. cit., p. 742.
- 80 PRC, 16 February 1944.
- 81 PRC, 7 June 1944.
- 82 BEP, 21 June 1944.
- 83 BEP, 15 June and Observer, 17 June 1944.
- 84 BEP, 9 August 1944.
- 85 At the opening of 'When we build again' exhibition. See Observer, 22 July 1944.
- 86 BRO 38605/M/38, meeting of the Council of the Chamber, 26 May 1944, op. cit.
- 87 'City Engineer's List', J.39.
- 88 PRC, 5 January 1944.
- 89 'City Engineer's List', J18 and J19. It was understood that the Advisory Committee, and the Multiple Traders' Federation in particular, were in support of a plan prepared by E.S. Rex which envisaged the Broadmead area as a shopping precinct and the Castle Street - Wine Street area as a civic centre. See PRC 30 August 1944.
- 90 BEP, 12 October 1944.
- 91 PRC, 21 September 1944.
- 92 Observer, 21 July 1945.
- 93 BEP, 17 July 1945.
- 94 PRC, 21 September 1944.
- 95 PRC, 31 January 1945.
- 96 PRC, 23 May 1945.
- 97 PRC, 20 June 1945.
- 98 City Council, 12 June 1945.
- 99 PRC, 25 April 1945.
- 100 PRC, 6 June 1945.
- 101 HLG 71/597, letter from Prof. Holford to H.W.J. Heck, 5 June 1945.
- 102 BEP, 17 July 1945.

- ¹⁰³ Observer, 21 July 1945. The new plan also included the enlarged area for the markets, and, on the request of the Education Committee of the City Council, an educational precinct to the east of the Inner Circuit, including Colleges of Art, Technology and Commerce, and Youth Headquarters. For the new plan as such, see the report of the PRC, 12 July 1945.
- ¹⁰⁴ BEP, 13 July 1945.
- ¹⁰⁵ ibid.
- ¹⁰⁶ Observer, 28 July 1945. Also see BEP, 23 July 1945.
- ¹⁰⁷ BEP, 13 July 1945.
- ¹⁰⁸ BEP, 17 July 1945.
- ¹⁰⁹ BRO 38605/M/39, note of the meeting of representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Bristol Replanning Association, and the Rotary Club, 12 October 1945.
- ¹¹⁰ The Labour Party's municipal programme, in BEP, 3 September 1945.
- ¹¹¹ The Citizen Party's statement for the election, in BEP, 1 October 1945.
- ¹¹² ibid.
- ¹¹³ 'Why I Ask You To Vote Citizen', in BEP, 22 October 1945.
- ¹¹⁴ The municipal election results:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Electors eligible to vote</u>	<u>Poll</u>	<u>Votes Cast</u>		<u>Unopposed</u>	<u>Contested Seats won</u>	<u>Gains</u>
1938	129,599	50,803	(Labour)	27,412	7	4	1
			(Citizen)	37,452	4	13	3
			(Indept.)	503	Nil	Nil	Nil
1945	229,156	43.64	(Labour)	95,312	9	22	9
			(Citizen)	87,056	Nil	19	Nil
			(Indept.)	433	Nil	Nil	Nil

Source: BEP, 2 November 1945.

After the election of Aldermen the Labour Party's majority on the City Council stood at 24:

Labour: 17 Aldermen and 51 Councillors - 68
Citizen: 11 Aldermen and 33 Councillors - 44

Source: Bristol Labour Weekly, 10 November 1945.

- ¹¹⁵ Bristol Labour Weekly, 17 November 1945.

¹¹⁶ Observer, 26 August 1944.

¹¹⁷ See 'City Engineer's list', op. cit.

¹¹⁸ There was, for instance, a strong feeling among small traders in the Chamber of Commerce against multiple shops, which led to the establishment of a separate retail organisation rather than being a section of the Chamber. See BRO 38605/M/38 and 39, especially the meeting between the officers of the Chamber and the representatives of the Retail Traders' Section, 5 September 1945.

¹¹⁹ See 'A Survey of the Life of the Architect in Bristol.' The Architects' Journal, 1 June 1950. Also see L. Wright, 'The Bristol Society of Architects, 1850-1950', Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, April 1950, vol. 57.

CHAPTER VIII

Recognition of the City Centre Plans at the Public Inquiries, 1946

This chapter looks at the way the local authorities' replanning schemes for the central areas developed during the immediate post-war period, when the local authorities became confident in proceeding with the reconstruction work thanks to encouragement from the new Minister of Town and Country Planning, Lewis Silkin. Particular reference will be made to the public inquiries held by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning into applications for compulsory purchase orders.

Both in Bristol and Coventry the Councils showed solid confidence in their city centre plans, and in Coventry public support for their plan was remarkable. In Southampton, however, there was some controversy, for a political split had emerged, at the end of the war, between two competing central area plans - the original one supported by the Ratepayers' Party and the new one endorsed by Labour. Moreover, incidents prior to the public inquiry were seemingly casting a big question mark over the wisdom of the Council's replanning policy.

* * * *

Lewis Silkin, the new Minister of Town and Country Planning in the new Labour Government of 1945, was known to be determined to make rapid progress with the rebuilding of the blitzed city centres.¹ He was expecting, in the first instance, that the local authorities concerned would submit an application for a declaratory order for the compulsory purchase of war-damaged areas, with a replanning scheme as supporting evidence for the application. The procedure laid down by the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944, required the Minister to call for a public inquiry into such applications, at which objections could be lodged. After examining the objections at the inquiry, the Minister might confirm

the order as a whole or with possible modifications, which would then entitle the local authority to purchase the land covered by the confirmed order under the powers of the 1944 Act, compulsorily if necessary.

Towards the end of 1945, however, Silkin became 'seriously concerned' about the lack of progress, especially 'the absence of applications by blitzed cities'.² The Ministry officials reported³ that there was a general combination of obstacles which made the local authorities hesitant to make a move. First of all, there was a question of war-damage payment to bombed out owners. An owner of war-damaged premises was entitled to a 'cost-of-works payment' (i.e. full cost of actual rebuilding) under the War Damage Act, 1943. However, if his premises were included in the local authority's replanning scheme and thus were to be compulsorily acquired, then, according to the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944, he would be entitled only to a 'value payment', equivalent to the March 1939 value of the premises (plus, in the case of owner-occupiers, a supplementary addition up to 30 per cent of such value). Having regard to the soaring building prices prevailing at that time, a strong feeling of injustice was rife that the owner of war-damaged premises affected by the replanning scheme would be unable to afford to rebuild his premises on a new site. The local authorities for their part feared that if such owners did not receive enough to cover the cost of building on new sites, then essential rebuilding by private enterprise in the blitzed area would not take place, or would not take place rapidly enough, and consequently the authorities would have to take the financial burdens of rebuilding on themselves.

The financial provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944, was heavily criticised as inadequate, especially by those local authorities like Coventry who were not confident that their replanning schemes would prove entirely self-supporting within a period of 10 - 15

years or so, as presupposed in the Act.⁴ The local authorities were also concerned about the acute shortage of labour and materials. Because of the pre-eminent importance of housing, it was feared that there would inevitably be considerable delay in getting priority in labour and materials for the redevelopment of city centres. Thus, as Bristol told the Ministry in April 1945, large-scale purchase of such an expensive area as the city centre with little possibility of an early start on actual redevelopment would 'land them in a loss over a long period and put their finances in Queer Street'.⁵

Finally, the absence of developed schemes for the central area was, for many local authorities, an obstacle to an early application for a declaratory order. Officially, the schemes had only to be 'skeleton' proposals presented as supporting evidence in the authorities' applications. At local level, however, it was generally assumed that the public inquiry would be a very important - and possibly a final - opportunity for the interests to object to the scheme as a whole. Understandably many authorities were 'a little timid of facing a local inquiry until they have assured themselves fully that their proposals are unassailable'.⁶ This was particularly the case where the replanning of the central area had become a serious political issue, which was often complicated by the existence of competing plans of the various technical officers of the local authority. In such cases the authorities often pressed, as Southampton did in late 1945, for the Ministry to pass judgement on them.

The Ministry officials were extremely cautious about this matter. They pressed the Minister to adhere to wartime practice - i.e. to continue assistance and guidance to the authorities on technical matters, but to refrain from any direct intervention which might have political repercussions. For the moment, any articulate comments on, let alone

final judgements about, the plans were out of the question until the Ministry's patient education produced much improved plans acceptable to most of the interests concerned.⁸

Bearing these points in mind, Silkin proposed to meet the local authorities concerned individually in early 1946, in order to encourage them to make further moves, especially an early application for a declaratory order.⁹ As far as Bristol, Coventry and Southampton were concerned, they had all virtually decided to make formal applications when they met the Minister in early 1946. Nevertheless these meetings were quite significant to the three authorities who were still very worried whether they would be able to get on with reconstruction in view of the various obstacles mentioned above. The Minister tried hard to persuade them not to take too gloomy a view of the difficulties. He maintained, for instance, that local authorities were exaggerating the problem of cost by assuming that present day building prices would continue. He himself expected them to fall in a few years' time to approximately 30 per cent above pre-war levels, once greater stability had been achieved, in which case the alleged difference between 'value payment' and 'cost of works' payment would not be appreciable.⁹ He was particularly anxious to impress upon them that he took a fairly liberal view of the financial provisions of the 1944 Act, which had been regarded by the authorities as inadequate. If there was eventually a substantial deficiency in respect of Government grants, he promised that the matter would be duly taken up with a view to remedying it by amending legislation, adding that no Government would be able to resist the pressure of the local authorities on such an issue.¹⁰ Moreover, with regard to the difficulty in attracting building labour for city centre redevelopment, the Minister intimated that there would have to be some preference given to blitzed towns.¹¹

The most striking encouragement by the Minister was his praise for Bristol City Council's replanning proposals, particularly since his officials had suggested he refrain from any public comment. Silkin told a local newspaper reporter, on his visit to Bristol in March 1946, that the Corporation's central area plan was 'a scheme I can support in every way', adding that he saw 'no reason why the Ministry should not be able to give its word "Go" to Bristol in "a matter of months"'. He continued:

If no serious objections are forthcoming, I may consider the possibility of saving time by not holding a public inquiry. You will appreciate that in this sort of thing we are in a sense creating the appropriate procedure as we go.¹²

Although objections to the Corporation's application for a declaratory order necessitated a public inquiry in June 1946,¹³ the Planning and Reconstruction Committee decided to ask, along with a declaratory order, for a more expedited procedure with regard to the new and old shopping centres by applying for two compulsory purchase orders: one dealing with the Castle Street and Wine Street area for the provision of 112 temporary shops; and the other in the Broadmead area for the sites of permanent shops and the Inner Ring Road. It was essential that once these compulsory orders were confirmed, the whole of the properties covered by them would be vested in the Corporation in one go, rather than that individual properties should come before it as in the case of a declaratory order.¹⁴ It was hoped that these compulsory purchase orders would greatly facilitate an early start on the development of the new shopping centre, and at the same time, by preventing any rebuilding of shops of existing owners in the old centre, provide funds for them to redevelop in the new centre.¹⁵

While the City Council was thus determined to proceed quickly with the redevelopment of the central area, the local interests hardened their stand against the Corporation. In March 1946 a draft statement of objections to the Corporation's application for a declaratory order, drawn up by the Chamber of Commerce, the Re-Planning Association and the Rotary Club, was approved by the interested bodies.¹⁶ Significantly one of the main reasons for the objection was that these bodies would not approve the Corporation's reconstruction proposals, especially those related to the resiting of the shopping centre.¹⁷ Moreover, as the Ministry's Regional Planning Officer observed in early 1946, 'whilst in the early days there seemed to be very considerable support to the Corporation's proposals ... that agreement is weakening and doubts are rising in some of the interested parties' minds'.¹⁸ For one thing the Bristol Retailers' Advisory Committee on Town Planning, whose chairman had made a sympathetic comment on the City Council's revised plan in July 1945 was now making a number of objections to the proposed new shopping centre at Broadmead. As the Corporation officers reported to the PRC in December 1945, they had held a number of conferences with this Advisory Committee, only to find that they were unable to make any further progress.¹⁹

The public inquiry into the City Council's application for a declaratory order was held in June 1946. 356 objections were lodged, 191 of which were objections to the principle of compulsory purchase, the remainder to parts of the Council's replanning proposals.²⁰ At the inquiry proceedings, however, it was made clear that the majority of objections to the Corporation's plan, especially to the resiting of the shopping centre, were in effect based on a hatred for compulsory purchase, notably, the loss of freehold and traders' goodwill, and the injustice to owners involved in the question of compensation.²¹ It was

also argued by the objectors that the Council's application covering the area of 771 acres was outside the scope of the 1944 Act, because its replanning proposals were for the sake of 'a long term planning policy, and not the laying out afresh and the redevelopment of war damaged areas alone'; the only way war damage had entered into the application was that it afforded the Corporation 'an excuse to do all these other things that they wish to carry out'.²² Thus the feeling against compulsory purchase was particularly strong when it came to undamaged properties including cinemas and churches.²³

There was also grave concern about the uncertainty relating to finance, especially the terms of compensation, the possible cost of the replanning scheme and the extent to which Government grant would be paid towards it. As M. Rowe, K.C., who appeared for the MTF, put it:

I wonder what you would say about a man who asked an architect to design a house and then told him to go ahead and build it without asking how much it would cost. You would say the fellow was stark raving mad, and yet that is really the position in which we are in this matter of rebuilding Bristol. We all want to get the best possible plan, but how can you tell what is the best plan unless you have some idea if it is financially possible?²⁴

At the same time he did not hesitate to admit that his clients, multiple shops, were in agreement with the Corporation as to the location of the new shopping centre. They kept, however, 'coming up against a brick wall', because they did not know exactly what the Government had in mind with regard to financial help towards reconstruction. His attention was then focused on the Government:

We do very earnestly beg the Minister of Planning to put an end to this apparent policy of keeping everything up his sleeve and telling nobody what he really has in mind. If it were not for this policy of

silence, if we really knew what was in the Minister's mind, and had been given an opportunity of discussing it, half the objectors in this room would not be here, and a very good deal of time and money would have been saved.²⁵

The Corporation's defenders - T.J. Urwin, Deputy Town Clerk, and H.M. Webb, City Engineer - first of all stressed that there had been the urgent need for comprehensive replanning of the central area. Most of the buildings in the area covered by the application would be ripe for redevelopment in the quite near future. There also existed three main defects in the area from a planning point of view: considerable congestion of traffic in the main streets; haphazard cheek by jowl mingling of all kinds of property; and a lack of the amenities one would expect in a city like Bristol. Now the Corporation was definitely of the opinion that they had a splendid opportunity of rebuilding the area, and it was determined to take the fullest advantage of it.²⁶ The allegation that the Corporation's application was outside the scope of the 1944 Act was flatly dismissed. As the Deputy Town Clerk stated, the prime purpose of the 1944 Act was to deal satisfactorily with what was called extensive war damage, and Bristol was a city in which the war damage had been extensive, for there was 'nothing in this area which cannot be described as near or neighbouring on war damage of one kind or another'.²⁷ What was more, there was 'no satisfactory way of dealing with it (war damage) in this city, except as part of a comprehensive scheme of redevelopment as a whole'.²⁸ Thus any individual undamaged property should not be omitted from the application, otherwise an island of freehold would be set in a sea of leasehold interests, which could not be touched when the surrounding leaseholds became due for redevelopment.²⁹ With regard to the cost of the scheme (i.e. cost of the acquisition) the Corporation

stressed that they were expecting a large Government grant, for: 'A blitzed city like Bristol should have some claim for national help.'³⁰

The public inquiry made it clear that the Corporation's replanning proposals - especially that of the resiting of the shopping centre - could stand against the objections made to them. The local authority demonstrated its determination to redevelop the central area in a comprehensive way. At the same time the interests' objections were shown to be based on a narrow interpretation of the 1944 Act, hostility to compulsory purchase, and strong concern about the ambiguity of Government reconstruction policy. But they failed to bring to the inquiry any alternative schemes to the Corporation's proposal for a new shopping centre at Broadmead.

The inquiry also made it obvious that future progress would depend on the clarification of Government reconstruction policy. First, would the Government uphold bold planning by - as an initial step - confirming the large scale declaratory order and the two compulsory purchase orders? Second, would they give the local authorities generous financial help to offset the cost of acquisition, without which there was going to be a heavy burden on the rates? And thirdly, as Bristol intended that most of the actual rebuilding should be done by private interests rather than the Corporation themselves, would the 'cost-of-works' question be solved as soon as possible by the Government, so that the traders should be fully confident of rebuilding themselves in the new shopping centre? Although some suspected that there was 'undue optimism on the part of the City Council as to what they may expect from that quarter'³¹ (the Government), the Corporation's confidence in their proposals was fairly justifiable, considering the endorsement to them made by the Minister in March 1946. Immediately after the Bristol inquiry, the Ministry's next inquiry was held into the case of Coventry, to which we now turn our attention.

The Ministry officials were never contented with Coventry's replanning scheme, despite the fact it had gone through important modifications. As Doubleday, the RPO, stressed in early 1946, there was one outstanding point still left unresolved in the reconstruction scheme, namely the amount of land devoted to the proposed civic centre. He continued:

I have never been satisfied that this area of the Scheme is sound. I still feel that the Redevelopment Committee should be asked to produce some evidence that the Civic Centre is on the lines required for the area. In other words that it is not merely wistful thinking on their part of what buildings are needed.³²

The CRC thought differently. To them 'the time has arrived when it is appropriate to initiate steps for a definite start on the Coventry Redevelopment Scheme'.³³ Accordingly, they resolved in January 1946 to issue a public notice announcing their intention to apply for a declaratory order. It was also hoped that an active commencement on the scheme itself would be made during 1946, the first stage of which would be the development of the Broadgate area.³⁴ In February a site for the equestrian statue of Lady Godiva, designed by a famous sculptor, Sir Williams Reid Dick, was chosen at a point in the centre of the new Broadgate, where the statue would be in the direct line of the Cathedral vista.³⁵ In March the CRC decided to organise a Levelling Stone ceremony on the forthcoming Victory Day, 8 June, as a suitable 'advance work' to mark the official inauguration of the redevelopment scheme. The site would be near the top of Smithford Street, within what would eventually be one of the gardens of the shopping precinct.³⁶ Lord Kenilworth, who had met the cost of the model of Gibson's city centre in 1941, again offered help to cover the cost of the Levelling Stone, and the preparation for the ceremony proceeded rapidly.³⁷

The two projects mentioned above - a site for the Lady Godiva statue and the Levelling Stone ceremony - were originally suggested by Gibson, City Architect, who had frequently been exposed to fierce criticisms from Ministry officials as well as his fellow Corporation officers. It seemed that Gibson was now in a stronger position than ever before to encourage the CRC to make an early start on his scheme. One of the main reasons for this was that he eventually found that he had 'allies' among his fellow Corporation officers.³⁸ F. Smith, Town Clerk, who had been the most adamant opponent of his scheme during the war, decided in early 1946 to retire, stating significantly that this would be convenient given the redevelopment scheme the Council had in mind.³⁹ C. Barratt, Deputy Town Clerk, who was to replace Smith, and Dr. A.H. Marshall, City Treasurer since 1944, were said to be determined to get on with Gibson's plan, just the opposite to their predecessors.⁴⁰

In May 1946 Coventry City Guild, who had been active in the replanning of the central area before the war expressed their general approval of the City Council's scheme and pressed them for prompt action.⁴¹ The relationship between the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce had also been greatly improved since the compromising amendment was made to Gibson's plan in July 1945. The CRC's decision in early 1946 to put up temporary shops with the five year interim development permission, as opposed to one year permission during the war, was welcomed by traders.⁴² A conference was arranged between the Corporation and the interests likely to be affected by the redevelopment scheme in order to discuss the resettlement arrangements of such interests.⁴³ As Hodgkinson observed in June 1946, what the City Council needed most had been:

the sympathy and earnest co-operation of the citizens, and perhaps more particularly those

who subsequently conduct their businesses on this central site. ... We have, I believe, passed through a delicate negotiation stage with much credit to all concerned, for there is now general agreement that the major plan is acceptable.⁴⁴

The City Council were also encouraged by the firm confidence of the general public in Gibson's scheme. In early 1946 the City Council arranged the 'Open Ideas Competition' in association with the CET to obtain the views of the citizens on the lines on which the redevelopment should be carried out. About 2,500 individual suggestions were made, but though they were mostly related to the need for the provision of such welfare facilities as children's playgrounds, nurseries, and community centres throughout the whole city, a significant number expressed their approval of Gibson's city centre plan.⁴⁵ In fact it seemed that the public were also very understanding of the difficulties the Council had been facing with their city centre plan. As the CET put it at the beginning of 1946:

For a long time the re-development scheme was almost bogged down, and the ideal of 1940 ... looked rather like an embarrassment in later years ... We are still a long way from the stage of big building operations, but the perseverance and latterly the adaptability of the local planners has produced a result from which we can derive encouragement.⁴⁶

The CRC's determination to proceed with their city centre plan was also reflected in their choice of the optimum area for the declaratory order application. It should be noted that a few reputedly radical Labour Councillors were rather critical of the Committee's attitude to severely damaged areas other than the city centre. The area proposed to be included in the application for a declaratory order was 452 acres based on the city centre as defined by the Inner Ring Road plus the run-down Spon Street neighbourhood immediately to the west of it. In February

1946 the CRC was asked to consider the desirability of applying for a declaratory order for the Hillfields area to the east of the city centre as well. This area, admittedly severely damaged during the war, was as large as 513 acres. The CRC argued that it would be 'mistaken policy to attempt at this stage, when so much effort has to be devoted to the completion of the preparatory work for Area (of Extensive War Damage) No. 1, to commence work on another and larger area'. They maintained that 'good and useful changes can be made in suitable parts of the suggested area' by using the general powers of the Town and Country Planning Acts, the course which they thought 'more advantageous ... than to attempt at this juncture formally to prescribe a second Area of Extensive War Damage'.⁴⁷

The CRC's decision was vigorously challenged at the City Council meeting in March. Mrs. Allen, one of the Hillfields Councillors, moved the resolution that the CRC should prepare a report regarding other blitzed areas of the city outside Area No. 1. As she told the Council:

It was time they knew where they were going in the other "blitzed" areas of the city as well as in the centre. This was especially the case as people in those other areas were forced to live amidst the debris, whereas in the centre of the city people were not having to live amongst it.⁴⁸

While observing that there was no lack of sympathy in respect of Hillfields or any other damaged areas, Hodgkinson argued:

they could only bite off as much as they could chew, and a very big programme was involved in the central area. There seemed to be a view in the Council that areas were going to be left behind because of prior attention somewhere else. They would look foolish if they went on prescribing areas of development when they already had one iron in the fire concerning the central area. It was a question of how much they could carry.⁴⁹

In the end the Council's application was formally lodged with the Ministry on 4 April, in respect of Area No. 1 only as had been initially intended.⁵⁰

The laying of the Levelling Stone ceremony on Victory Day, just about a fortnight before the public inquiry, played quite an important role in strengthening public acceptance of the city centre scheme. As Hodgkinson declared:

To-day, we hitch our minds and hopes to a conception of new and better things. For many of us there will be only a glimpse of the final creation, but there is a bounden duty on those who have responsibility to-day, to ensure that Coventry takes the splendid opportunity to build worthily of a people who have made so great a sacrifice and contributed so much to the nation's survival.⁵¹

A CET editorial gave whole-hearted sympathy and encouragement. Noting that 'the Coventry reconstruction scheme, which broadly commands the support of the majority of the citizens' would eventually bring 'the solid results ... when the strain of these times is eased', the paper observed:

if to-day's ceremony is an act of faith in the future, it is also a fitting reminder of what has already been achieved. The men and women who have brought the scheme to this stage deserve the city's thanks. They have done well to mark their achievement and their faith in public manner on this Victory Day. Another generation will see the end of the labour and the fulfilment, but as long as the stones of the new city stand, what Coventry did on Victory Day in 1946 will be remembered.⁵²

The public inquiry into the City Council's application for a declaratory order was started on 25 June, 1946. In all 259 objections were lodged, but only six objections held that the scheme was not good planning.⁵³ One

of the points at the inquiry would be, therefore, 'to what extent the Corporation could meet these objections without seriously upsetting the plan'.⁵⁴ In fact opposition to the scheme as such lost much weight at the actual inquiry. For instance, one objector, who represented himself as a planning expert, described the appearance of new Broadgate as 'diabolically German and Fascist in character', and declared that 'it was planned largely for architectural need at the expense of Coventry considerations', and thus would not be taken to by 'all the poor people of Coventry [who] have suffered at the hands of these wretched Nazis'.⁵⁵ Cross-examined by the new Town Clerk, however, the same objector agreed that the style of Trinity Street was satisfactory and eventually admitted that the Corporation responsible for that development might be trusted to make a satisfactory job of further planning.⁵⁶ Criticism was also made that the proposed civic centre was 'laid out extravagantly to satisfy the aesthetic standards of one or two town planners or even the Redevelopment Committee', irrespective of cost. The contender argued that the Corporation should concentrate on 'the planning of a new city, not a Utopia', and thus 'must come down from the clouds down to the realms of hard cash', for the 1944 Act did 'not contemplate, much less authorise, a dream city'. In reply, Gibson, City Architect, stressed that the public buildings of the present day were quite inadequate, and that, in view of the phenomenal population growth the city had experienced, the proposed centre was essential to meet future needs.⁵⁷

Strong concern about the financial effects of the scheme as a whole considering the uncertainty of Government help, was also dismissed by the Corporation. M. Rowe, K.C., appearing for the Chamber of Commerce and the Multiple Shops' Federation, intimated that there would be a considerable burden on the rates. Although he had been told at the Bristol inquiry that the Government would be generous in making good

most of the likely financial shortfall in the replanning scheme, he was extremely suspicious of such promises. In reply, E. Ford, the City Engineer, emphatically stated:

If we are unable to meet all liabilities, we shall expect - and I think have a right to expect - the Exchequer will meet what was a loss to the city caused by a national disaster. It was not Coventry's fault. It was a national matter, and should be spread over the whole of the nation.⁵⁸

Most objections as in Bristol, reflected the strong criticism of Government policy on such matters as the 'cost-of-works' payment and the basing of compensation on 1939 prices. One Counsel, disapproving of the provisions of the 1944 Act on these issues, declared

There is injustice. There is differentiation. It is the first duty of a Government to administer social justice, and see all people are treated equally and fairly.⁵⁹

At the same time he told the inquiry that the substance of his contention lay in a belief that 'by reiteration of protests at inquiries like this remedies could sometimes be secured'. The difficulties involved in the matter were 'not all of the Corporation's making but of a policy dictated at higher level'. In fact he warmly appreciated the manner in which the Corporation had treated objectors, and went on to say that 'Coventry's scheme revealed a great deal of careful thought and consideration'.⁶⁰

All told the Corporation showed very little difficulty in carrying through the inquiry. The main reason for this was their conviction that they had public support for their replanning scheme, shown, as the new Town Clerk pointed out, in events like the 'Future Coventry' exhibition held in October 1945 and the 'Open Ideas Competition' in early 1946. The vast majority of people in the city were convinced that the scheme was

'worth while and to the ultimate benefit of Coventry', and with this support, the Corporation 'would not allow themselves to be deflected from their goal by mere personal interest' put forward to the inquiry.⁶¹ The 259 objectors, representing approximately 1,000 interests, accounted for only one tenth of those affected by the scheme.⁶² And as the Standard noted, even those interests themselves gradually realised that the necessity of the local authority's wholesale control of the central area was incontrovertible.⁶³ The CET editorial made assurance doubly sure:

We believe that the Corporation is right in seizing an opportunity created by misfortune, an opportunity which may never occur again to rebuild the centre of the city so that it provides for the needs of this age. There would be no wisdom in a policy of timidity at this time, and the Council has approached the matter from the point of view of the whole city.⁶⁴

Thus, the importance of the Coventry inquiry lay in the fact that it reinforced support for the Corporation's replanning scheme, and that such support made the case for the local authority's control of land indisputable. At the same time it was once again made clear that further progress in the matter would all depend on the Government; how to ameliorate the aggrieved feeling of private interests and how to respond to the local authority's high expectation for genuine assistance in the implementation of the Scheme. We now move to the examination of the remaining case, Southampton, where the replanning of the central area had become, unlike the previous two cities, a critical issue of local politics.

* * * *

Immediately after the municipal elections in November 1945, Southampton City Council, now led by Labour, decided to make formal

application for a declaratory order. They also sought judgement from the Ministries concerned on the relative merits of the two alternative schemes for the central area prepared by Cook, Town Planning and Development Officer, and Wooldridge, Borough Engineer. Two conferences with the MOWT and the MOTCP were held hastily in the same month. As Alderman Matthews, now chairman of the Planning Committee, told the Ministries, the Council was most anxious to make a decision on the matter as soon as possible so that they should be able to submit a formal application for a declaratory order. Moreover, while he was in favour of the Wooldridge plan, it had not yet been before the City Council for approval. It was thus obvious that his real intention was to obtain de facto authorisation of the Wooldridge plan from the two Ministries.⁶⁵

These conferences, however, proved to be of little use. Whereas the MOWT was generally in favour of the Wooldridge plan, the MOTCP described it as little more than 'a series of road proposals',⁶⁶ which needed 'more detailed examination than they have received'.⁶⁷ In particular, there was a fundamental difference between the Ministries in their opinion as to the precinct treatment of Above Bar-High Street proposed by Wooldridge. It was understood that while private cars were allowed to use the street, any public transport service would be excluded from it and use an inner ring road. The MOWT supported the idea strongly, but the MOTCP 'expressed the opinion that it would be impracticable to take public service vehicles out of the main shopping street, and that, if this were done, it would seriously disturb the values of land and property in that street'.⁶⁸ The conferences thus reached an impasse, and the only joint recommendation made to the Planning Committee was 'to suggest that the matter is clearly one on which your Committee must definitely make up their own minds'.⁶⁹

The decision of the Committee made in January 1946 was that Wooldridge's plan should be taken as the basis of a final plan, which should be completed jointly by Cook, Wooldridge, and D. Winston (new Borough Architect) by March.⁷⁰ As Matthews observed at the Council meeting:

Where experts differ the layman has to make a decision ... and having made it the officers must loyally accept it and get to work on the details so that the reconstruction of the central area can proceed rapidly.⁷¹

Cook, however, would not give way. He could not accept any plan which put prime emphasis on economy before planning principles.⁷² Accordingly the Planning Committee decided to submit Wooldridge's plan to the Council for approval.⁷³ At the Council meeting in March it was carried by 40 votes to one - the solitary dissident being Alderman Kimber.⁷⁴

The Council's adoption of the Wooldridge plan was the last straw for Cook. Within a month he resigned his appointment as Town Planning and Development Officer.⁷⁵ He was soon welcomed to the newly-formed Central Area Association of Southampton as its secretary and technical adviser.⁷⁶ The Association was set up in April 1946 to represent some 200 business and industrial interests in the central area and to facilitate their rehabilitation.⁷⁷ Cook emphasised the unique advantage of the Association, having in view the public inquiry to be held in September into the Corporation's application for a declaratory order. While individual traders might find it difficult to object in very broad terms to a replanning scheme, an organisation like this was obviously better placed to put forward objections dealing not only with individual properties but the whole policy and general proposals envisaged by the Council. Moreover, such an inquiry would possibly be the only opportunity for the public to put forward their views, after which it

would be entirely a matter for the Corporation and the Ministry to decide what was to be done in the area.⁷⁸ How much Cook bore a grudge against the Corporation in his activeness in the Association is not clear, but he was certainly strongly opposed to the principle of wholesale acquisition, not to mention the Wooldridge plan.⁷⁹ The setting up of the Association was welcomed by other organisations⁸⁰ who had declared their disapproval of the Corporation's acquisition policy since November 1945,⁸¹ and in May 1946 it was duly proposed to form 'a united front' of the Central Area Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Property Owners' Protection Society, in objecting to the Corporation's scheme at the forthcoming public inquiry.⁸²

While it was not unusual for the interests concerned to express their objections vigorously before the inquiry, things were moving adversely for the Corporation. First, as Alderman Lewis, Labour leader, admitted, there was a hint of regret about the fact that 'the original grandiose scheme could not be operated and had to go by the board'.⁸³ When it came to the Wooldridge plan, because it had to be adopted rather hastily in connection with the application for a declaratory order, there had been little time for the Corporation to consult with the interests concerned about it.⁸⁴ What was worse, Cook's resignation as Planning Officer did not reflect any credit on the Corporation. Alderman Kimber and former Councillor G.E.H. Prince (Ratepayers' Party, member of the Planning Committee during the war, who was not returned at the municipal election in November 1945) made some attempts to make Cook's departure look scandalous by asserting that Cook had been forced to resign by Matthews.⁸⁵

Whether the accusation was true or false, Matthews, who had been responsible for the creation of the Town Planning and Development Department in 1941 now had to propose its abolition. In May 1946 the

Borough Council adopted the Planning Committee's recommendations that the Planning Department should cease to exist as a separate entity. Its duties were distributed between the Borough Engineer, the Architect, and the Valuer; and a technical panel of these officers plus a principal planning assistant was established to co-ordinate the implementation of the Wooldridge Plan as well as of any further preparation of planning schemes.⁸⁶ At the Council meeting Matthews admitted that for some years they had had to face 'a nightmare' -inadequate cooperation between the Departments. The recommendations would lead to better co-ordination of departmental action than had been possible in the past, which would facilitate rapid reconstruction. Alderman Lewis supported Matthews by adding that the whole situation was 'due to a set of circumstances over which we have no control'. As he went on:

I agree he [Cook] did excellent work, but this is not a question of his work, but one of working together. When he left we said that we must have a different method to get all the co-operation we can.⁸⁷

Whether the new arrangement was the result of the unforeseen or not, the fact that Cook joined the objectors' camp undoubtedly brought disgrace on the Corporation, especially on Matthews. There was, thus, a possibility that the forthcoming public inquiry into the declaratory order covering 514 acres would be a considerable blow to the adoption of the Wooldridge plan.

In fact at the inquiry, which started on 24 September, 1946, the Corporation had to face the accusation that they had neglected the interests in adopting their scheme. The ubiquitous M. Rowe, K.C., this time appearing for the Central Area Association and a number of individual firms, observed that the Southampton inquiry differed deeply from other recent inquiries. Elsewhere there was a certain measure of

agreement upon the basic principles of the schemes. This was due to the fact that there had been prolonged consultations between the local authorities and the principal local interests. He continued:

Here that is not the case ... there has not been the slightest real effort to obtain from any important and representative section of the public their views upon this plan. That is an extraordinarily unfortunate thing, because I am sure it must have impressed itself on the inspector [of the inquiry] that Southampton has taken an interest in the plan, and many of the owners and those principally concerned would not have been backward in trying to co-operate with the Corporation in getting something satisfactory to both parties.⁸⁸

Little information was thus available in respect of such matters as alternative accommodation and the conditions of lease.⁸⁹

Severe criticisms were made of the Wooldridge plan and some alternative proposals, including Cook's 1944 plan, were submitted to the inquiry. Especially strong concern was expressed about the future of Above Bar. For one thing, precinct treatment was not favoured. As A.E. Lees, appearing for Marks and Spencer, put it, if public service vehicles were taken out of a main shopping street, the importance of the street was quickly destroyed.⁹⁰ For another, the use of Above Bar excessively for shopping purposes was called into question. In this connection T.S. Dulake, town planning consultant from Mayfair, proposed that it should be developed as a new Regent Street with cinemas, hotels, restaurants, offices and shops,⁹¹ rather than a 'dreary terrace of shops'.⁹²

The substance of the objections, however, differed very little from other inquiries. The analysis of 370 objections put forward to the inquiry showed that the majority of them were associated with the inequity and hardship involved in compulsory purchase - the 1939 basis of compensation and the 'cost-of-works' payment.⁹³ Loss of freehold was

never popular among owners (who would rather stay on in the original sites and rebuild themselves).⁹⁴ Hysterical criticisms were made of the leasehold system which was described as 'unEnglish', 'nothing short of nationalisation of land', and 'a despicable act on the part of the Corporation to attempt to cash in on the citizens' misfortunes'.⁹⁵ Messrs. Edwin Jones, multiple store and the second largest ratepayers in the Borough, asserted that 'The Corporation have gone completely mad on this fetish of no freeholds'.⁹⁶ The area of 514 acres was regarded as too large - 'a grandiose scheme, municipal self-glorification, and nothing connected with war damage'.⁹⁷ The non-availability of an estimation of the cost and too much reliance on the Government assistance was again raised by M. Rowe.⁹⁸

On balance the Corporation side managed to defend their case neatly. N.C. Scragg, senior assistant solicitor in the Town Clerk's Department who conducted the case for the Corporation, dismissed the alleged lack of consultations between them and the principal local interests. To begin with, the most important interests of all - such as the Southern Railway, the Harbour Board, and the churches - had been consulted, and a considerable measure of agreement had already been made.⁹⁹ Moreover the traders had been consulted extensively since 1942, and the new plan 'was built up after taking into account all the major trading issues which have been so forcibly ventilated during the past four years'.¹⁰⁰ As circumstances permitted, the Corporation would discuss such matters as alternative accommodation, and the rents, and they would not let the traders down.¹⁰¹

Cook's 1944 plan was categorically described by Scragg as 'far more expensive than the plan we have to-day',¹⁰² while other proposals were partial alternatives to the Wooldridge plan intended to redevelop the original sites themselves.¹⁰³ Regarding the criticism of a shopping

precinct in Above Bar, the Corporation argued that it would obviate serious traffic congestion, and thus enhance rather than destroy the values as the main shopping street. The suggestion from a Mayfair planning consultant to develop Above Bar like Regent Street did not represent the views of the local traders, who preferred a continuous shopping frontage. As Scragg went on: 'Members of the Council, as representatives of the public, are far more qualified to know what the public of Southampton require'.¹⁰⁴

The mere dislike of leasehold was 'not a good and valid reason against this Order', without which there would still be 'a jumble of user, traffic congestion and other difficulties'.¹⁰⁵ While the Corporation were sympathetic to the owners with regard to compensation at 1939 values and loss of 'cost-of-works' payments, the objection to them was an objection to the 1944 Act for which the Council had no responsibility.¹⁰⁶ The Corporation were unexpectedly encouraged by the evidence of an objector, R.W.H. Collier, war damage and valuation expert. He argued that the area covered by the Order was within 80 yards of war damage, thus within the scope of the 1944 Act, and that the scheme would be a success financially.¹⁰⁷ Failing this the Corporation were, as Scragg argued, justified in expecting large additional Government grants 'as some compensation to the loss and sufferings of the towns which, owing to their situation or importance to the national effort, experienced savage bombing from the enemy'.¹⁰⁸

Thus the objectors failed to strike a decisive blow at the Corporation in their adoption of the Wooldridge plan. Had there been any serious challenge from the Ratepayers' Party at Council level before the inquiry, the situation would have been more critical. Previously the Ratepayers had opposed both wholesale acquisition and the Wooldridge plan advocated by Labour before the municipal elections in November 1945. But

the election results brought a significant change. First of all, former Ratepayers Councillor Lane, who as chairman of the Planning Committee had consistently supported Cook's plan, was not re-elected. The Ratepayers continued their opposition to wholesale acquisition, but now supported the Wooldridge plan, on the grounds that it could be implemented more quickly and economically than Cook's. It was obvious that the Party, especially its leader Alderman Woolley, had changed its mind, in view of the still serious loss of the town's rateable value,¹⁰⁹ and the urgent need for rapid rehabilitation of the town's trade.¹¹⁰ Not only did Woolley praise the new plan highly,¹¹¹ he even supported the abolition of the Town Planning and Development Department, a move for which Matthews expressed genuine gratitude.¹¹²

This bi-partisan support for the Wooldridge plan made it look as if the Council were also united in their support for the wholesale acquisition policy. This was, on the one hand, a logical conclusion, for the importance of the plan at the public inquiry lay in its role as supporting evidence for the declaratory order. On the other hand the Ratepayers' Party, demoralised by its minority position, could do nothing to prevent wholesale acquisition being adopted by the Council. Already in November 1945, immediately after the municipal elections, Woolley seconded Matthew's recommendation to formally apply for a declaratory order. Although at that time Woolley still maintained that the question of wholesale acquisition was quite another issue and threatened that 'we shall have something to say about it later',¹¹³ in the event no effective opposition was made at the Council level before the public inquiry.

It was not until the October 1946 Council meeting following the public inquiry that Woolley made his final attempt by asking the Council to withdraw the application for a declaratory order. His speech at the

Council meeting was pathetic in its inconsistency. He mentioned that he had always been in favour of Cook's plan, which amazed even Alderman Kimber. He also observed that a declaratory order was essential to the speedy purchase of land, but because he believed it should be piecemeal and not wholesale acquisition, he had to ask for the withdrawal of the application altogether. In the end he stated: 'I submit the resolution, knowing that it will not be carried'. This resulted in a straight party vote, eight for his resolution and 38 against it.¹¹⁴

Before the municipal elections in November 1946 the Ratepayers' Party made some hasty efforts to object to compulsory purchase. At a public meeting the Corporation's acquisition policy was denounced as the confiscation of the freehold property, which would cost £50,000,000 and increase the rates by 25s. This rather extravagant statement was renounced at the Council meeting by Labour Councillor Parker, chairman of the Finance Committee, as 'arrant nonsense'.¹¹⁶ At the same time, despite knowing that they had 'reduced the opposition to impotence'¹¹⁷ Labour nevertheless seemed to feel some anxiety about the elections. As one successful Labour candidate with the largest majority told an after-the-poll party meeting, they had 'had a difficult election to fight, because the past year had been one in which foundations had been laid, but the fruits were not evident yet, and some people were disappointed'.¹¹⁸ The results of the elections - another Labour gain increasing their majority to 28 - were, as Alderman Lewis confidently stated, 'a complete endorsement by the people of Southampton of Labour's policy and administration during the past twelve months'.¹¹⁹ Labour could thus have increased confidence in their reconstruction policy, already well established by the success of the public inquiry.

* * * *

The analysis of the three public inquiries has shown certain important points about the replanning of the city centres. First, and perhaps most importantly, it was quite an institutional affair: the inquiries provided a battle field for head-on confrontation between owners - especially traders - and the local authority. The interests concerned often got together to bring forward their objections to compulsory purchase and, to a lesser degree, to the Corporation's planning proposals. Although, in Bristol and Southampton, the Corporations' replanning proposals were controversial and could have been in grave jeopardy, the selfish motive behind the objections could not pose a serious threat to the legitimacy of official plans approved by the Councils as representatives of the public. As Wooldridge emphatically told M. Rowe at the Southampton inquiry, 'no evidence you can bring will change my opinion [about the plan]. If you want to change it, get elected to the Council'. This finally silenced Rowe, the ubiquitous, who replied, 'In view of what you have said, I will accept your hint and will sit down'.¹²⁰ In this respect Coventry is worthy of special mention. The Corporation put prime emphasis on the support of the general public for the city centre plan as the principal reason for acquisition. Local newspapers, which were not necessarily pro-Labour, gave consistent endorsement of the Council's wisdom when it came to the replanning of the central area.

The objectors were not only self-interested but behind the times. The quintessence of their objection - abhorrence of the loss of freehold - was totally against the principle of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944, passed under the Coalition Government. As many counsels admitted at the inquiries, objection was often made in order to make a plea to the Government for mercy. Yet redevelopment of the central area based on a bold plan with the local authority as a ground landlord was the demand of

the day, endorsed by such Conservative Ministers as Reith and Morrison. Councillors who chose to represent the voice of the objectors were either quite content with this principle, or, as in the case of Southampton, simply incompetent.

The success of the public inquiries led the local authorities to conclude that a reasonable measure of general acceptance of their city centre plans had actually been established. With encouraging signs from the new Minister of Planning, Lewis Silkin, of positive Government assistance, the local authorities had every reason to expect that an early start and rapid progress would be made in the actual redevelopment of the central area.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ HLG 71/600, note of meeting between the Minister and the Blitzed Towns Advisory Committee of M.P., December 1945. Also see Times, 18 January 1946, re Silkin's press conference.
- ² HLG 71/597, letter from A.M. Jenkins to L. Neal, 6 December 1945.
- ³ See various reports in HLG 71/597, especially 'Blitzed Towns' by Neal to Minister, 30 October 1945: 'Advice to Local Authorities on Redevelopment Plan' by Hill to Minister, 31 October and 'Notes on difficulties which are preventing the early submission of declaratory orders under Section 1 of the 1944 Act for blitzed cities and possible lines of action' by Hill, 10 December 1945.
- ⁴ HLG 79/131, 'Discussion on Reconstruction of Coventry between the Minister and Representatives of the City Council held at the Ministry of Town and Country Planning', 30 January 1946.
- ⁵ HLG 71/597, 'Notes for a conference with the Minister on Progress with the Redevelopment of Blitzed Towns', Neal to Whiskard, 30 August 1945.
- ⁶ HLG 71/597, 'Notes on difficulties...' by Hill to Minister, 10 December 1945, op. cit.
- ⁷ HLG 71/597, reports by Neal and Hill, 30 and 31 October, and 10 December 1945, op. cit.
- ⁸ HLG 71/597, letter from Jenkins to Neal, 6 December 1945, op. cit.
- ⁹ HLG 79/131, 'Discussion on Reconstruction of Coventry ...', 30 January 1946, op. cit.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. and HLG 71/597, 'Southampton Reconstruction Problems: Conference with Minister of Town and Country Planning', 23 January 1946.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Observer, 9 March 1946.
- ¹³ HLG 79/60-64 as to miscellaneous materials of Bristol inquiry.
- ¹⁴ PRC 10 April 1946 and 8 May 1946. These compulsory purchase orders were sought under Section 2-(I) (a) of the 1944 Act, which states 'a local planning authority may be authorised to purchase compulsorily any land in this area as to which an order under section one of this Act is in force declaring the land to be subject to compulsory purchase for dealing with war damage'.
- ¹⁵ See a memorandum of the Officers to PRC, 16 July 1947.
- ¹⁶ BRO 38605/M/39, minutes of a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and the Replanning Association, 29 March 1946.

- 17 Ibid., and the draft form of objection, BRO 33199 (16), attached to the minutes of a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Re-planning Association, 3 April 1946.
- 18 HLG 71/597, letter from the RPO to F.E.L. Shearme, 1 February 1946.
- 19 PRC, 5 December 1945.
- 20 PRC, 8 May 1946.
- 21 BEP, 14 June and Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 15 June 1946.
- 22 Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 22 June 1946.
- 23 Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 18 - 29 June 1946.
- 24 BEP, 13 June 1946.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 BEP, 12 June 1946.
- 27 Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 27 June 1946.
- 28 Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 22 June 1946
- 29 Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 27 June 1946.
- 30 BEP, 13 June 1946. Said by Webb.
- 31 Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 22 June 1946.
- 32 HLG 79/131, letter from Doubleday to Gatliff, 17 January 1946. Also see (HLG 79/131), Note by Assistant Regional Planning Officer.
- 33 CRC, 7 January 1946.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 CRC, 21 February 1946.
- 36 CRC, 5 March 1946.
- 37 CRC, 25 March 1946.
- 38 Interview by Tony Mason and Bill Lancaster.
- 39 CET, 6 February 1946.
- 40 As for the background of Barratt, see CET, 27 February 1946. In June 1946 Marshall gave a paper at the Institute of Municipal Treasurers' and Accountants' conference. Here he maintained that the ideal solution for the comprehensive redevelopment was public ownership of land. As the Government would not go that far, however, he also emphasised, as a practical initial step, the importance of the provision of temporary shops to give 'psychological stimulus to blitzed areas'. See CET, 21 June 1946.

- 41 CRO Sec/CF/1/10621, letter from City Guild to Town Clerk, 21 May 1946.
- 42 CET, 27 February 1946.
- 43 CRC 7 January 1946.
- 44 CET, 8 June 1946.
- 45 CET, 21 March 1946.
- 46 CET, 5 January 1946.
- 47 CRC, 21 February 1946.
- 48 CET, 6 March 1946. Mrs. Allen was supported by Halliwell. His criticism of the CRC's redevelopment policy is found in 'Whose New City?' in Coventry Tribune, 9 November 1946.
- 49 CET, 6 March 1946.
- 50 CRC, 15 April 1946.
- 51 CET, 8 June 1946.
- 52 CET, 8 June 1946. Also see the CET editorial, 10 June 1946, again praised highly of the ceremony as well as the plan.
- 53 Detailed analysis of 159 objections is found in CET, 25 June 1946 and in CRO Sec/CF/1/9464, 'Report of Town Clerk to CRC Upon the Public Inquiry into the Corporation's Application for a Declaratory Order in respect of the Area of Extensive War Damage (No. 1),' 4 July 1946. Also see HLG 79/128-9, and 133 as to miscellaneous information on the inquiry.
- 54 CET, 25 June 1946.
- 55 CET, 28 June 1946.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 CET, 12 July 1946.
- 58 CET, 27 June 1946.
- 59 CET, 29 June 1946.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 CET, 13 July 1946.
- 62 CET, 25 June 1946.
- 63 Standard, 20 July 1946.
- 64 CET, 26 June 1946.

- 65 SRO SC/EN/13/6/5, 'Note of Conference, 19 November 1945.
- 66 SRO SC/EN/13/6/5, letter from F.E.C. Shearne (MOTCP) to Town Clerk, 27 November 1945.
- 67 SRO SC/EN/13/6/5, letter from R.B. Walker (RPO of MOTCP) to Town Clerk, 1 December 1945.
- 68 SRO SC/EN/13/6/5, Town Clerk's note of the conference on 29 November 1945 to the Planning Committee, 21 December 1945. The second conference was held between the officials of the Ministries and the Corporation.
- 69 Ibid. As for (65) - (69), the same materials are also found in SRO D/Mat/10/4.
- 70 Planning Committee, 2 January 1946.
- 71 SDE, 17 January 1946.
- 72 SRO D/Mat10/4, Cook's reports to the Planning Committee, 2 January 1946 and 18 March 1946.
- 73 Planning Committee, 18 March 1946.
- 74 Borough Council, 27 March 1946.
- 75 Borough Council, 17 April 1946.
- 76 SRO D/Z/778/1, minutes of the first general meeting of the Association, 23 May 1946.
- 77 SRO D/Z/778/1, 'proposed Central Area Association of Southampton', 1 April 1946.
- 78 SDE, 24 May (at the first meeting of the Central Area Association) and 9 August 1946 (speech at the Round Table).
- 79 Ibid. See also a hint of Cook's bitterness against Wooldridge and Matthews expressed at the public inquiry in SDE, 26 September 1946.
- 80 E.g. The Chamber of Commerce at their annual meeting, see SDE, 11 April 1946.
- 81 Regarding the Chamber, see SDE, 29 November 1945 and 11 April 1946 (op. cit). Also see SDE 10 April and 1 June 1946, about the Southampton Non-Party Organisation (a body of property owners).
- 82 SRO D/Z/778/1, the first meeting of the Association, 23 May 1946, op. cit., reported in SDE, 24 May 1946.
- 83 At the Council meeting, 16 January 1946, reported in SDE, 17 January 1946, he continued that they were 'now getting down to something that could be done very quickly directly they got a right of way from the Government'.

- ⁸⁴ The Southampton Non-Party Organisation for instance complained that the Council adopted the new plan without letting the public take any part at all. See SDE, 10 April 1946, op. cit.
- ⁸⁵ Alderman Kimber at the Council meeting 15 May 1946, reported in SDE, 16 May 1946. Also see the letter from G.E.H. Prince to SDE, 31 May 1946.
- ⁸⁶ Planning Committee 9 May 1946, adopted by the Council, 15 May 1946.
- ⁸⁷ SDE, 16 May 1946.
- ⁸⁸ SDE, 7 october 1946.
- ⁸⁹ SDE, 24 September 1946.
- ⁹⁰ SDE, 1 October 1946.
- ⁹¹ SDE, 28 September 1946.
- ⁹² SDE, 27 September, 1946.
- ⁹³ SDE, 24 September 1946.
- ⁹⁴ Regarding various objections, especially that from traders, see SDE, 2, 3, 7 and 10 October 1946.
- ⁹⁵ SDE, 5 October 1946.
- ⁹⁶ SDE, 27 September 1946.
- ⁹⁷ SDE, 28 September 1946.
- ⁹⁸ SDE, 25 September 1946.
- ⁹⁹ The Winchester Diocesan Re-Organisation Committee, a statutory body set up to deal with blitzed areas in the way of the reconstruction of Church life, withdrew their objection just before the inquiry stated, while the Southern Railway and the Harbour Board expressed their general agreement with the Corporation scheme. See SDE, 24 September (for the churches), 30 September (for the Harbour Board) and 8 October 1946 (for the Southern Railway Company).
- ¹⁰⁰ Scragg's closing speech, in SDE, 11 October 1946.
- ¹⁰¹ Scragg's opening speech, in SDE, 24 September 1946.
- ¹⁰² SDE, 26 September 1946.
- ¹⁰³ As a typical example, see SDE 27 September 1946, about the case of Edwin Jones. The company had been offered an alternative site in High Street from the original East Street site, but refused to move. Also see D/Mat/10/4, the Corporation Officers' reports, 4 March 1946, and the Planning Committee Minutes, 27 March 1946 about the question of a new site for the company.
- ¹⁰⁴ Scragg, in SDE, 11 October 1946, op. cit.

- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Scragg, in SDE, 24 September 1946, op. cit.
- 107 SDE, 10 October 1946. Also see Cook's comment on Collier's speech and the latter's reply to Cook, in SDE, 28 October and 21 November 1946.
- 108 Scragg, in SDE 11 October 1946, op. cit. As for the miscellaneous materials about Southampton inquiry, see HLG 79/648 - 674, which includes the verbatim report of the inquiry (HLG 79/660).
- 109 SC/T9/100, Report of the Borough Treasurer, 7 December 1945.
- 110 See the presidential address of the Chamber of Commerce (SDE, 23 May 1946), and Alderman Lewis' promise for speedy reconstruction (SDE, 12 January 1946), both expressed the concern that the trade was going out of Southampton to the neighbouring towns (SDE, 21 February 1946).
In this connection the City Council thought very much of the provision of temporary shops (SDE, 17 May 1945) and approved in January 1946 - to apply for the compulsory acquisition for this purpose under Section 2(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944. (Planning Committee, 2 January 1946, the Council, 16 January 1946). Also see the SDE 20 June and 4 October 1946 as to the details of the temporary shops plan.
- 111 See the Council debates reported in SDE, 17 January and 28 March 1946. The only amendment he made at the Council meeting in March 1946 was to avoid the inner ring road passing through the parts of the old walls - one of the few proposals in Wooldridge's scheme to affect the existing layout, for the sake of the town's historic heritage. Once the amendment was defeated by a large majority, only eight members voting for it, the Planning Committee's recommendation to adopt the Wooldridge plan was carried by 49 votes to one, only Alderman Kimber against it. (SDE, 28 March 1946).
- 112 Borough Council 15 May 1946, reported in SDE 16 May 1946.
- 113 Borough Council 9 November 1945, reported in SDE, 10 November 1945.
- 114 Borough Council 16 October 1946, reported in SDE, 17 October 1946. Alderman Kimber was neutral in the vote.
- 115 SDE, 8 October 1946.
- 116 SDE, 17 October 1946.
- 117 Alderman Lewis, at a public meeting of the Labour Party, reported in SDE, 8 October 1946.
- 118 Councillor J. Austin, SDE, 2 November 1946.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 SDE, 5 October 1946.

CHAPTER IX

Recognition of the City Centre Plans in the 1940s

After the public inquiries in 1946 Bristol, Coventry and Southampton held high expectations about the Ministry's backing for the city centre redevelopment by early confirmation of the declaratory orders and subsequent approval of the central area plans. These hopes, were, however, ill-founded. First there were considerable delays and curtailment in the Minister's confirmation of declaratory orders. His early confirmations, such as the case of Plymouth, ran into High Court appeals, and he had to wait and see how things were going until around mid-1947.¹ Moreover, his confirmation was influenced by the Treasury, whose interest was, as he told the blitzed local authorities in October 1947, 'naturally to cut down.' As he continued: 'we are perhaps, if I may say so within these four walls, rather too closely tied up (with the Treasury) in the 1944 Act - (they) have perhaps too big a say in these matters'.² Consequently, the confirmation of orders involved considerable reductions.³

The new town planning legislation did not offer much help to the blitzed authorities. The Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, consolidated the number of planning authorities from 1,441 into 145 County and County Borough Councils. Every planning authority had to carry out a survey of its area and to prepare a development plan. By this means it was expected that broad planning principles should first of all be established over a wide area, while the detail would be filled in when the development was about to take place.⁴ But the crucial question to the city centre redevelopment was how smoothly the blitzed authorities could proceed with acquisition of land covered by the confirmed order. In this connection the Government grant for acquisition would cover as long as sixty years starting with up to 90 per cent for

the first five years then scaling down. However, this grant system made the local authorities extremely cautious in proceeding with actual acquisition, because there was no guarantee that actual redevelopment would immediately follow in view of various difficulties.⁵ The economic crisis made the situation much worse: the blitzed authorities had been very concerned about the shortage of building labour and materials; now, building operations had been prohibited unless a strong case could be made that it was essential to the export trades; and even compulsory acquisition of land, which had to be pursued in a miserable piecemeal manner, was further limited by the Ministry's Circular 39 in March 1948 restricting capital expenditure.⁶ As Silkin observed in October 1947:

At the moment we are concentrating on such measures of reconstruction as will enable us to improve our economic position. Housing, the rebuilding of our blitzed towns, even the building of new towns, are for the moment regarded as luxuries, or rather as irrelevant in the rebuilding of our economic position, and only such building as will further our economic position will, for the time being, be permitted.⁷

In fact while, with all these difficulties, the building of houses advanced, there was no sign of the actual construction of any permanent shops or other buildings being made in the war-damaged central areas.

The effect of such an extremely grim prospect for city centre redevelopment was too obvious. As the Architects' Journal observed as late as 1952 (when a token start had been made):

Since the war everyone has been waiting for the priority work - houses and schools - to be finished, and for the economic crises to end, so as to allow the rebuilding of the blitzed and decaying centres. What is being slowly forced on us is the realization that there is no foreseeable end to the priority work, or to the economic crises. If the country's wealth does not markedly increase there may be no possibility of rebuilding the

town centres and we, or our children, may watch, for a change, not the growth but the galloping decay of a city, in terms of property, not from the outside in, but from within outwards to the perimeter.⁸

Whether this prediction proved to be true or not, pessimism could only give rise to doubts about the city centre plans. This was all the more reason why the Minister's approval of a plan was necessary in the remaining years of the 1940s when no visible progress was expected, in order to give confidence and authorisation to the local authorities that what they envisaged was on the right lines. Yet here again the authorities were forced to realise that a possibility of obtaining the Minister's approval was almost out of the question. One striking change was taking place within the Ministry after the war; most of the officials active during the war were gone, and the local authorities were now facing newcomers. As Silkin put it, this change was imperative because, understandably in the case of a newly created Ministry in 1943, 'our original staff consisted of people who could be spared from other Departments', and 'inevitably they have not all been good'. For new officials, however, 'it does take a little time to get into the atmosphere and to get going, to understand the complexities of town planning, and especially town planning legislation, and we have suffered from the fact that we are a new Ministry and that we have practically a new personnel'.⁹ In fact these new officials were imposing further restrictions on the authorities and trying hard to deny the legality of planning boldly; they were overwhelmed by their planning responsibilities, and less inclined to give any authorisation or approval of a city centre plan. The odds were against the blitzed Councils.

* * * *

The situation in Southampton after the public inquiry did not look very favourable for the speedy redevelopment of the central area. The housing problem was formidable. In March 1947 a target was set for the permanent housing programme for that year envisaging the completion of 1,087 houses during the year and the starting of work on another 1,318.¹⁰ By June the Council had completed the erection of 1,014 pre-fabricated temporary bungalows out of 1,750 allocated to the city.¹¹ Yet in May it was reported that there was a vast amount of overcrowding throughout the Borough, with 11,810 applications on the Corporation housing list up to 6 April. Additional applications were being received at an average rate of 60 per week.¹² The Borough Council also had to face an acute shortage of building labour in the town, about which, as Alderman Lewis observed, there was no immediate prospect of any improvement.¹³ The financial prospects of the town were also gloomy. The rates, which had to be increased in March 1946 for the first time for five years by 2s. 10d. in the pound,¹⁴ were further increased in March 1947, this time by 3s. 5d., or 52 per cent over a period of two years.¹⁵

Nevertheless, both the local traders and the Corporation were determined to achieve the speedy rebuilding of the central area. The fear of losing trade to such neighbouring towns as Salisbury and Winchester was looming larger and larger in the old-established traders' mind.¹⁶ They also complained about the increasing number of street traders operating throughout the town, particularly in the main shopping thoroughfares.¹⁷ The Corporation's determination was reflected in their policy with regard to the allocation of building labour between housing and other work. The general practice throughout the country was that 60 per cent of the labour force was directed for housing and 40 per cent for other building. However, as Councillor Barnes, chairman of the Housing Committee, observed, the Corporation were 'compelled by force of

circumstances and their own common-sense' to pay regard to the urgent need for getting shops and commercial and industrial buildings going again, and thus came to the conclusion that there should be a 50-50 division of labour rather than a 60-40 split.¹⁸ Moreover, Matthews was convinced that the time had come to consider the reconstruction of permanent shops in Above Bar on top of temporary shops. Despite the warning from the Ministry of a great risk of premature action before the confirmation of the declaratory order,¹⁹ the Council adopted in June 1947 Matthews' resolution to apply for a compulsory purchase order in respect of five acres in Above Bar for permanent shops with expedited procedure.²⁰

The relationship between the Borough Council and the local traders was not too good. The traders pressed the Council to let them know the precise sites for re-establishment and allow them to proceed with their redevelopment plans.²¹ They further argued that it was essential to such speedy rebuilding to have immediate and frequent discussions between the Planning Committee and them.²² The Committee, however, avoided seeing traders too often, maintaining that such consultations should start only after the Ministry confirmed the Corporation's declaratory order, and thus the uncertainty of the Government policy was cleared.²³ The Central Area Association managed to see the Committee only once before the confirmation of the order, and made a request for further discussions.²⁴ While the Committee left it to Matthews to arrange further consultations,²⁵ there was no sign of such meetings taking place, and the Association became very frustrated.²⁶

Apart from awaiting confirmation of the declaratory order, the Planning Committee had another reason for avoiding close contact with traders. Under the new Town and Country Planning Bill 1947, it became obligatory for the local planning authority to prepare a plan for its

responsible area within three years from the appointed day. Moreover, while the 1944 Act was basically an Act for land acquisition with a redevelopment scheme as an appendage to the application for a declaratory order, under the new Bill the designation of land for such application would form part of a 'development plan', the Minister's approval of which was now the most important target for the local authority. As far as the central area plan was concerned, the Council wanted to go ahead with the existing plan discussed at the public inquiry. In May 1947 the Council gave general approval to the detailed layout of the area around the Civic Centre - the Guildhall Square section; the East Park-terrace section consisting of such buildings as a six-storey health centre, an indoor bath with a gymnasium, a museum, colleges and a municipal office block; and the large-scale commercial development west of the Civic Centre between the Law Courts block and the Central Station.²⁷ Many local interests seemed to realise that the Corporation's central area plan would be approved by the Minister in some form, following his confirmation of the declaratory order, and that there was little chance of upsetting it.²⁸ But others, like Cook, still argued:

The present is an opportune time to suggest that a plan for the future of an area of such importance should be the subject of discussion between all the interests concerned. Even at this stage much time and energy could be saved by following a policy of consultation and collaboration in the true sense of the word.²⁹

Thus it became all the more important for the Council to obtain not only the Minister's confirmation of the declaratory order but his early approval of the replanning scheme for the central area. However, the relationship of the Council with the Minister was no better than its relationship with the local interests. In June 1947, when the Corporation became rather frustrated by the Minister's delay in

confirming the declaratory order, Silkin stated that much of the responsibility for the considerable delay in the replanning of blitzed cities should lie with the local authorities themselves. They had been very slow in putting up their proposals to him because they were so 'nervous of taking the plunge', in spite of his consistent encouragement. Matthews made an angry reply claiming that the Minister's statement was unfair to Southampton, because the Corporation had gone 'as far ahead as could reasonably be done', only to be held up by the Government's restriction on labour and materials and by the Minister's own indecisiveness as to the Corporation's declaratory order and the central area plan. The Planning Committee decided to ask the Minister to receive a deputation "to clear up any misunderstandings".³⁰ Indeed the local Labour Party got so furious that they wrote in July to Silkin and to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party urging that "responsible Ministers of the Government should refrain from making irresponsible statements'. They went so far as to say that, when 'it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep the people with the Labour Government and, in Southampton, with the Labour Council' because of the increasing cost of living, austerity, etc., they could not appreciate why the Minister 'should go out of his way to provide political opponents with substantial ammunition to castigate Southampton Labour Party'.³¹ Within a week of this letter being sent, the local Labour Party received a reply from the Minister, in which he wished to make it clear that what he said was not to be taken as criticism of the approach made by Southampton or any particular authority in their very heavy task of reconstruction, but as an observation in general terms. The letter also stated that the Borough Council would now receive his decision on the declaratory order.³²

This long-awaited confirmation covered approximately 270 acres out of 514 in the application. The excluded portions embraced the area to

the north of the Civic Centre (a residential area) and the Northam and Chapel districts (a proposed industrial area alongside River Itchen).³³ The Ministry officials had wondered why the demarcation in the application appeared to have been decided in relation to Cook's plan. For one thing, the northern half of the area in the application would have been required for the northern portion of the ring road, but it was no longer required for this purpose in the new plan. When it came to the Northam and Chapel districts, war damage was not extensive enough for them to be included in the order.³⁴ The Council's reaction to the confirmation was one of relief. Matthews said at a Labour Party meeting that although the exclusion was substantial, he was 'pleased and satisfied' with the order after waiting eleven months since the inquiry. Among other things it included the whole of the area south of Commercial Road, 'the very important core area'. Moreover the confirmation opened up the way to consultation with the Ministry about necessary modifications to the plan for its final approval. When it came to actual redevelopment, however, he warned that citizens should not believe that the confirmation would automatically produce 'miraculous advances'. There were 'still many hurdles' to go, and progress would inevitably be 'a step by step process.'³⁵

In August 1947 a meeting was held between the Council and the Ministry officials as to future action following confirmation of the declaratory order. Alderman Matthews wanted to obtain, first and foremost, the Ministry's view of their plan, possibly their final agreement. The Ministry side maintained that the matter should be considered in the light of the new Planning Act of 1947, and should be left, for the moment, to discussion between the officials of the Corporation and the Ministry on detailed technical points. Assuming that agreement on technical points would be made as quickly as possible, much of the

discussion at the meeting fell into how best the local authority then could proceed with actual acquisition of land in view of the fact that it had to be a piecemeal process.³⁶ Thus in October, when the Council was invited to the Minister's blitzed towns conference, with a strong determination 'to put up a powerful case for blitzed towns to be allowed to go ahead, even under crisis conditions',³⁷ the question of the Minister's approval of the central area plans was not touched on at all.³⁸

The Ministry officials had not been entirely averse to the Southampton Plan. For one thing, during the examination of the declaratory order, they appreciated highly the plan's proposed layout as a whole in that 'to a considerable extent the existing road system has been incorporated in the new plan and the present predominant use of zoning has been adhered to wherever possible.' At the same time they made critical observations about some important proposals in the plan. First of all they were concerned that the areas set aside for shopping and business were 'too large and too widespread'. The Council's intention to revive High Street as an important shopping street was especially questioned, and it was suggested that a large portion of it should in fact remain to be used for warehousing and similar purposes, considering the marked northward move of shopping concentrated in Above Bar. With regard to the new road system, it was observed that the construction of the western arm of the proposed inner ring road would require further examination with a view to confining any portion of it within the existing Western Esplanade. The reason for this was to disturb as little as possible the historic character of the area, especially the old town wall around the St. Michael's Square. It was also proposed that, instead of widening Cumberland Place and Brunswick Place to form the main east-west route, it might be advisable to widen

Commercial Road and to continue it eastwards even across East Park to join the improved Six Dials roundabout. The Ministry Officials maintained that this would be a more direct link for east-west traffic, and would result in relieving the congestion at the junction of Civic Centre Road/Above Bar/New Road, the middle of the central shopping area. Another point they were concerned with was that the north-south route for heavy dock traffic (via the line of St. Andrew's Road, St. Mary's Place, Threefield Lane and Latimer Street) would cut an existing desirable residential area into two halves.³⁹

However, the promised meeting between the Corporation officials and the MOTCP (plus the Ministry of Transport) held in September did not bear any particular fruit,⁴⁰ and as time went by the Council had become extremely impatient about the lack of official communication from the Ministry as to their views on the central area plan. Eventually, as a kind of ultimatum, the two Ministries were invited in March 1948 'to talk quite plainly' about their views of the plan, i.e. 'whether they could accept it broadly as it was, or ..., if they could not, what kind of revision should be undertaken'.⁴¹ In reply, Buchanan, MOTCP official, first outlined generally the Ministry's present attitude towards central area plans, a great many of which they had examined. These general points he made were not only discouraging for the Council, but also very illustrative of the Planning Ministry's acknowledgement of a full retreat from bold planning. Through the examination, he explained:

they had been gradually forced to realise that in considering central area plans they were undertaking a very much more difficult task than was at one time contemplated ... The plan of a blitzed town before destruction was the product of perhaps 1,000 years of development, and so it could hardly be expected that the best plan for reconstruction could be produced in the twinkling of an eye. It seemed, in fact, to

be impossible to arrive at the perfect plan. A second general point in considering central area plan was whether the plan got the most out of what was there already.⁴²

When it came to technical points, the Council had to face again, as in November 1945, the conflicting views of two Ministries on one key issue. The MOTCP duly recommended extending Commercial Road straight across East Park as the main east-west traffic route. Against this the MOT observed that east-west traffic should not be taken through the park, but should be kept to the north of it, i.e. the Cumberland Place-Brunswick Place route. In the end, Corporation could not obtain an agreed recommendation in the matter. Other points put forward to the Council included the western arm of the inner ring road; the north-south route for dock traffic (as an alternative, the East Park Terrace/Palmerston Road/Strand/Canal Walk route was suggested); and the need for economy in such matters as width of roads and size of traffic islands. One particular point appreciated by the MOTCP was that the Corporation was changing its mind in that too much provision for shopping, business and industrial purposes should not be made, as in the treatment of the High Street area.⁴³

With these points in mind the revised plans were quickly prepared.⁴⁴ Concessions to the Ministries' views were made by realigning the inner ring road so as to avoid passing through the old part of the town and by economising on the layout of some roads and traffic islands. At the same time the Planning Committee made it clear that the suggested extension of Commercial Road was 'wholly unacceptable', and thus the east-west traffic route should be the improved Cumberland Place-Brunswick Place line as proposed in the 1946 plan. The north-south route for heavy traffic was also to be unchanged.⁴⁵ Thus the revised plan did not include any radical change from the 1946 plan, but rather 'a refinement of the 1946

zoning by a more detailed sub-division of the areas into their respective use zones.'⁴⁶

In May 1948 the Borough Council considered the revised plan. The Ratepayers' Party made a plea, without success, to defer the matter until the plan had been discussed with the interests concerned, and it was approved by a straight party vote of 32 to 20.⁴⁷ Repeated requests from the Central Area Association to be involved in the making up of a new plan had not been met,⁴⁸ and the proposals in the Comprehensive Development Plan for the central area under the 1947 Act, eventually submitted to the Ministry in 1954, 'relate closely to those in the Plan produced by the Council at the Declaratory Order Inquiry in 1946'.⁴⁹ However, it should be stressed again here that Southampton's city centre plan was by no means a bold one. It was primarily aimed at quick recovery of the existing shopping street, and at relief of traffic congestion by means of, inter alia, an inner ring road system based on the existing road layout. It was inevitable that the plan would be criticised for its lack of imaginative ideas, given that a great opportunity had been given by war damage.⁵⁰ A typical example was the Guildhall Square scheme, one of few bold proposals in Southampton's plan. As the Corporation's Development Plan in 1954 itself admitted, when the scheme was finally approved by the Ministry, the originally proposed width of 400 feet between the north and south frontages had been reduced to a mere 164.⁵¹ A temporary landscaping was then carried out which still survives, awaiting the implementation of the scheme.

The early redevelopment of the main shopping area faced particularly severe criticisms. Generally, blocks of two-storey retail shops, simply disposed alongside the streets, had been designed as a complete set of units with rear access and unified treatment. First they were criticised for their lack of height; instead, as was pointed out, the podium of

the shops with tall blocks of offices or flats would have resulted in a better result.⁵² Only quite recently, it was noted that the traders were 'reaping the fruits of the lack of foresight and are developing the upper floors'.⁵³ This 'block development' was a product of the change of the Council's land purchase policy - admittedly one in effect forced by the Government - to avoid, wherever possible, compulsory acquisition. It was true that unified architectural treatment was required, and that developers were encouraged to combine for co-ordinated planning and building, and to agree wherever necessary to adjust site boundaries in order to achieve an improved building layout. However, the architectural expression was rather poor, for, as specialists criticised in 1953, the ultimate responsibility did not lie in the Council alone.⁵⁴ Inevitably, the new shops in Above Bar, even by comparison with the temporary shops there mainly set up by the Council, appeared 'unnecessarily pretentious'.⁵⁵ Somewhat ironically, it was the construction of multiple shops and department stores, such as Tyrell and Green, Edwin Jones, C & A Modes, and Plummers that offered the opportunity of producing a more completely integrated design than was possible in the block of shops.⁵⁶

Overall, the case of Southampton can be described as an example of a timid approach in planning. Alongside the Council's obsession with economy and quick rehabilitation, the Government Departments were most to blame. The MOTCP especially were most unwilling to give authorisation to the local authority's plan. Points the Ministry raised were mainly technicalities about road layout, and the Ministry did not show any sign of enthusiasm to settle such minor problems and to give confidence to the local authority. Moreover, the Ministries concerned - the MOTCP and the MOT - were too often unable to see eye to eye, which was little help to the Council. In the end it seemed that economy was not even really the object, for whether it was modest or extravagant, the Ministry's

authorisation was most unlikely to happen, and the feeling that the replanning of the city had been dictated by Whitehall grew very strong.⁵⁷

* * * *

By contrast, Bristol's plan, a very bold one, was highly praised by the Planning Minister in early 1946, with his promise to give it the go ahead very soon. Following the public inquiry, the local authority there expected an early authorisation by the Ministry of the plan.

In Bristol the prospects for actual reconstruction were as grim as in any other blitzed city. In July 1946 the Housing Committee complained that, while bricks were ready, the shortage of bricklayers was holding up house building.⁵⁸ It was observed that the anticipated demand for building labour for industrial building alone in 1946-47 would be about three times greater than the labour available.⁵⁹ The Housing Committee reported in November that there were about 19,000 applications on the waiting list,⁶⁰ although the completion of 1,023 temporary and 198 permanent houses by the end of that month was regarded as not too bad, putting the city the fifth place on the 'temporary houses list', following Birmingham, Hull, Plymouth and Sheffield.⁶¹

When it came to the question of the city centre, the Minister gave a hard blow to the Council in December 1946. In confirming the declaratory order, the Minister made drastic modifications, designed to limit the land affected more closely to the area of extensive war damage - just 245 acres out of 771 in the application. While the confirmed area included the Broadmead new shopping centre and the Castle Street-Wine Street public buildings zone, the Council's Planning Committee observed with alarm that the modified order did not cover the land necessary, inter alia, for the completion of the Inner Ring Road and the redevelopment of

the Park Street area.⁶² As Alderman Bicker, chairman of the Committee said:

The committee are disappointed, there is no question about that, very disappointed, at the Minister's decision. What has caused him to take that decision must be left to conjecture, I do not know.⁶³

In fact this set the tone for the extremely hard times the Council would have to go through before actual redevelopment started. The PRC were at a loss, both about how to proceed with reconstruction work in general and acquisition in particular, and about whether the Ministry still supported their central area plan. In February 1947 the City Engineer had a meeting with the MOTCP and the MOT officials which lasted for more than six hours. He was told, inter alia, that the MOTCP were not in favour of the proposal to use the old shopping centre - the most valuable area - for public buildings rather than for buildings bringing in a direct return, because it would be difficult to satisfy the Treasury on the question of finance. They also felt that the Broadmead shopping centre was far too large - in their opinion an adequate plan could be prepared to retain the Castle Street-Wine Street area as a shopping centre.⁶⁴

The MOTCP side then observed that they were extremely doubtful if powers for the Corporation's compulsory purchase orders with a request for expedited procedure would be given in the immediate future. First, the area of 100 acres covered by the Orders was too large: because of the pressure from the Treasury and of the new grant system under the 1947 Planning Bill, the MOTCP's recent acquisition policy was that individual sites should be acquired by piecemeal application from time to time when the land became immediately needed for redevelopment. Moreover, if the Council adhered to the Broadmead shopping centre despite the Ministry's

opposition, then the proposed compulsory order for the Castle Street-Wine Street area for temporary shops would not work adversely, because any physical development of permanent shops was so unlikely for a considerable time, thus making it extremely difficult to transfer shopping activities later to Broadmead.⁶⁵

Not surprisingly, the City Engineer's report to the PRC on this conference was coloured by pessimism. The MOTCP's earlier guidance 'to plan boldly and to take broad steps to bring land for redevelopment into public ownership was no longer the policy to be followed'; Treasury interests rather than planning interests were 'going to control any action that could be taken locally in the immediate future', and 'because of this there would be no great enthusiasm at London level to approve any plan for the central area at this stage, but rather to play a delaying action by raising point after point, each involving further research, further plans, and further discussions'; moreover, all the London representatives of the MOTCP were entirely new appointees who 'had given very little thought to the Bristol proposals, [and] apparently knew very little of Bristol local conditions, and quite frankly ... seemed to know very little of local government administration and requirements'. He thus concluded that, unless further discussions changed the Ministry's opinions, 'any material progress ... will be put in cold storage for an indefinite period, leaving the Planning and Reconstruction Committee with the hopeless job of dealing with interim development applications meeting by meeting with no understanding as to what is finally going to be approved and therefore with no certainty that the decisions they may make are right or wrong'.⁶⁶

No particular progress was however made between the officials of the Corporation and the Ministry, and the latter insisted on holding a public inquiry into the two compulsory orders despite the Corporation's request

for expedited procedure.⁶⁷ The Corporation officers wondered why a further inquiry into the area covered by the confirmed declaratory order was necessary, only to come to the conclusion that it was due to pressure from the Treasury to delay the spending of the money, and to Ministerial opposition to the Council's proposal for the old shopping centre.⁶⁸

Several difficult decisions had to be made. First of all, should the PRC adhere to the original proposals for the Broadmead area and the Wine Street-Castle Street area? If so, the Ministry side had intimated that temporary shops should definitely be built on the Broadmead area and not the old shopping centre. Local traders, however, agreed to the new shopping centre on the conditions that the acquisition of the old centre should proceed quickly and that the latter area should be developed for temporary purposes. The idea of municipally-controlled temporary shops in the Wine Street-Castle Street area could meet the traders' second condition very well. If, however, the PRC would accept the Ministry's proposal of temporary shops in Broadmead, in view of the Ministry's recent policy with regard to land acquisition, the Wine Street-Castle Street area had to be left sterilised for a long time, unless appropriate temporary use other than shopping was proposed. Moreover, should such a situation arise, many traders might make planning appeals directly to the Minister against the Council's refusal of interim development, which in theory would only be dismissed by him on the terms that the land would be acquired by the local authority. Such private temporary shops could easily be constructed in permanent structures, thus obstructing the area's ultimate use. In any case the willingness of the interests concerned to support the Council's plan was 'now suffering a very distinct setback', being replaced by a 'mood of bewilderment and frustration' with 'a feeling' rife that 'there is such a complete lack of

confidence between the local planning interests and the Minister that nothing practical is likely to emerge for some considerable time'.⁶⁹

The PRC, anticipating the need to abandon the Castle Street-Wine Street temporary shops proposal, still decided in July 1947 to adhere to the principle that the old shopping centre should be reserved for the ultimate provision of civic and semi-civic buildings. A deputation was also appointed, together with the local M.P.s, to wait upon the Minister.⁷⁰ At the meeting the Minister tried very hard to give encouragement to the Council. On the one hand he had to emphasise the difficulties surrounding himself such as the High Court appeals, Treasury influence and traders' appeals against the Council's refusal of interim development permissions. Although the Council repeatedly asked for his approval of the central area plan, he could not give it at present. At the same time he stated that on broad issues he was with the Council, and that with regard to the location of the shopping centre in particular, if the Council were determined, 'then he would bow to their view'.⁷¹

Overall the PRC seemed to be fairly encouraged, for, soon after the meeting, they decided to submit formally the central area plan to the Minister for his approval, and to request him to proceed with the proposed public inquiry into the compulsory orders.⁷² In August 1947 the Committee decided to abandon entirely the Castle Street-Wine Street temporary shop proposal. Instead, temporary shops should be built on the Broadmead new shopping centre. The old shopping centre should then be used as a short-term source of sites for such purposes as car parking, temporary warehouses, offices and motor repair garages.⁷³ It was expected that users of this area for such temporary purposes would bring in an appreciable financial return pending the time when the area could be used for more permanent purposes, and would be of considerable

assistance in supporting the Committee's refusal to permit shop premises in the area.⁷⁴

By this time, local objections to the central area plan seemed to be confined to a few particular interest groups and the Council were confident that the majority of traders supported their plan.⁷⁵ At first sight this claim looked to be justifiable. The multiple traders' agreement to the new shopping centre had long been known. The public inquiry in August 1947 into the compulsory orders reassured the PRC that 'the traders were generally disposed to support the City Council' as to the Broadmead shopping centre proposal.⁷⁶ Support of the Retailers' Advisory Committee on Town Planning for the new shopping centre had gradually been restored,⁷⁷ and in October 1947 the Advisory Committee appointed a panel to discuss the layout of the Broadmead shopping centre with the PRC.⁷⁸ Furthermore two decisions made by the important interested bodies around this time worked favourably for the Council. In June 1947 the Chamber of Commerce decided not to proceed with its proposed High Court appeal against the whole declaratory order of 245 acres, in the main due to the fear of delaying still further the rebuilding of the city.⁷⁹ In the same month, the Replanning Association, appeased by the reduced declaratory order and suffering from the tight financial situation, had decided to disband itself and amalgamate with the Civic Society.⁸⁰

There was, however, one particular group of traders whose persistent objection to the new Broadmead shopping centre proposal caused considerable trouble to the Council. This was the Bristol Retail Traders' Federation - representative of small traders - which had resigned from the Bristol Retailers Advisory Committee on Town Planning as the latter moved towards acceptance of the Corporation's plan.⁸¹ In October 1946 the Federation put forward to the PRC their alternative

proposal based on the Wine Street and Castle Street area - a riverside shopping centre with tiers of some 281 shops bounded at different levels by three new roads for traffic and pedestrians.⁸² When the PRC rejected it in January 1947,⁸³ the Federation organised a poll on the question of the shopping centre, which showed some 13,000 people preferred the reinstatement of the old shopping centre, and only 400 wished to have the new centre.⁸⁴ Labour, provoked to anger by this, made a strongly-worded public statement attacking the Federation. It read:

The so-called poll is without any official sanction and can carry no weight. The slipshod, inefficient and utterly undemocratic methods by which it is being conducted are reminiscent of Hitler's early efforts in political demagoguery.⁸⁵

The Federation held on, and in August 1947 met a sub-committee of the PRC. They insisted that the PRC should hold a town poll to decide the site of the shopping centre, only to be told by Alderman Bicker, the Committee's chairman, that the decision had been made and that it would be abided by.⁸⁶

Meanwhile the Minister had failed to respond to either the Corporation's application for compulsory orders or its submission of the central area plan for his approval. By the spring of 1948 the feeling was growing that the city had had a 'raw deal' in that its reconstruction had been delayed in the hands of the Minister while much shopping trade had been lost and initiative had been discouraged.⁸⁷ A Bristol MP, W. Goldrick (Labour) asked Silkin if he was aware of the anxiety felt in the city at lack of progress in its reconstruction.⁸⁸ In May 1948 Alderman Bicker, chairman of the PRC, remarked in front of Miss E.A. Sharp, Deputy Secretary of the MOTCP, that town planning 'has been a nightmare' and deplored the suspicion among the blitzed local authorities that others had found favour with the Ministry while they had 'gone away with a

barren bone'.⁸⁹ In fact the Minister granted a token confirmation of the compulsory orders - for a mere four and a half acres in the Broadmead area. As Alderman Bicker, chairman of the PRC, reminded the Council 'in a sudden and effective burst of cynicism ... Christopher Wren's plan for London had been defeated by expediency, and that - briefly - they had learned that lesson'.⁹⁰

Moreover, traders became tired of waiting for the Broadmead shopping centre plan to materialise and increasingly anxious about the volume of trade going from the city to Bath. In July 1948, the Retailers Advisory Committee on Town Planning who had been in support of the new shopping centre, eventually advised all its members formerly in the Wine Street-Castle Street area to apply at once to the Council for temporary shops.⁹¹ This compelled the PRC to ask the Minister to back the Council.⁹² The Council had refused the traders' applications for temporary shops on the ground that it would prejudice the development of the Broadmead shopping precinct.⁹³ The traders then made planning appeals to the Minister, which he dismissed one after another. It was regarded as a clear indication of his approval of the new shopping centre.⁹⁴ The Minister's refusal resulted in the traders serving notices on the Council to buy their land in the former shopping centre. Section 19 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, said that an owner of land who proved to the Minister that refusal to allow him to develop his land had rendered it incapable of reasonably beneficial use could compel the Corporation to buy it. By July 1949 the Minister had confirmed six of 58 such notices, and it was expected that he would ultimately confirm the whole lot.⁹⁵ Although the financial implications of the purchase of the whole area were considerable - it was estimated to cost about £5 million - the PRC were 'still unanimous in their belief and determination to go ahead with the Broadmead scheme', and the Council adopted the Committee's

recommendations to borrow £1.75 million in the first instance from the Ministry of Health towards the purchase and to use the land for a car park, temporary offices and warehouses, etc., but no temporary shops.⁹⁶

In October 1949 the PRC decided to begin negotiations with traders as to lease terms in the Broadmead shopping centre,⁹⁷ and in December it was announced that the first steel allocation from the Government would enable them to erect the first shop in that area,⁹⁸ which was eventually built by the Corporation itself and opened in 1951. Multiple shops and department stores such as Woolworth, Marks and Spencer, and Lewis's followed, and with them as magnets, individual traders as well as shoppers were gradually attracted to this new centre. The re-siting of the shopping centre was later described as 'the most radical movement of a shopping centre proposed in the post war years' and 'undoubtedly a clear success' from the planning and commercial viewpoints.⁹⁹ Some credit for the success should go to the Council's determination. As the Labour Mayor proudly claimed in 1949:

it might have been that some weaker-minded councils, faced with grievous difficulties and frustrations, might have deviated from their bold plan. But we have felt it better, in spite of all criticism, to wait until we could re-develop our city in the way we wanted. Members of the present City Council are dogged pioneers, just like the Bristol pioneers of old.¹⁰⁰

To Alderman Bicker, chairman of the PRC since 1945, it was a quite different story. As a result of the municipal elections in May 1949, the representation in the Council was again equal between Labour and the Citizen Party.¹⁰¹ Consequently Labour had to drop three aldermen, and Bicker was one of those not renominated.¹⁰² He reckoned that this decision revealed the Party's opinion of his 'independent' attitude and opposition to the Government reconstruction policy and he resigned from

the Labour party in protest. As chairman of the PRC, he went on, he had had every reason 'consistently to attack Whitehall' for causing delays and difficulties, but,

I have had little or no support from the Labour members on that committee. Their docile attitude was to me alarming. I believe protests such as mine have been justified by the results of the recent council elections throughout the country.¹⁰³

It seemed that his critical attitude towards the MOTCP and the MOT¹⁰⁴ was a bit too much for the majority of the local Labour Party who, admittedly patient in the town planning issues, chose to put the prime emphasis on housing, education and health services.¹⁰⁵ Even in 1961, when the Broadmead shopping centre was thriving, there existed persistent concern among the local interests about the future of the Wine Street-Castle Street area which had served for the past twenty years largely as a car park, and the call for an outside planning consultant of national standing never disappeared.¹⁰⁶ Thus, although the Minister's dismissal of traders' planning appeals for temporary shops in the original shopping centre acted as his de facto approval of the Council's proposals, it clearly was not as decisive as could have been, had he granted the de jure approval which the Council longed for, and Silkin himself at one time very much wanted to give. It seemed that any approval of a city centre plan was out of the question. We now turn our attention to Coventry's plan, which the MOTCP had always wished to curtail.

* * * *

Coventry's determination to go ahead with its city centre plan continued after the successful public inquiry in the summer of 1946. The situation was no better than that of other cities - the Corporation's

housing list had nearly 11,000 applications in April 1947,¹⁰⁷ while the acute shortage of building labour force was repeatedly pointed out.¹⁰⁸ Yet the Council once again quickly responded to an opportunity to celebrate symbolically the start of reconstruction. This time it was an offer in October 1946 from the Dutch National Committee to present flowering shrubs as an expression of the Netherlands' gratitude for their liberation in 1945. Although time pressed because the Dutch were extremely anxious that the present should be in bloom by the next summer, the CRC jumped at an opportunity to make a reality of the Broadgate garden, an island square of 212 feet by 140 feet at the top of the shopping precinct, which existed as yet only on paper.¹⁰⁹ The Corporation officers worked with enthusiasm¹¹⁰ in the face of the opposition from the Government Departments concerned,¹¹¹ and in May 1947 the Dutch Embassy officially handed over 8,000 bulbs and shrubs. Unfortunately the garden island was still under construction at that time, but the ceremony left, if anything a feeling of greater expectation of its completion, seemingly very close at hand.¹¹²

A week later the city was informed that the Minister would confirm the declaratory order. The local reaction to this news reflected the hopes and confidence so far raised in the city centre plan after the war. Even though it had taken nearly a year since the public inquiry,¹¹³ and had been reduced from 452 acres to 274,¹¹⁴ the Council were, as the Town Clerk put it, 'highly pleased with the outcome of years of negotiations with Government departments'. The fact that the order covered the core area including the shopping, business and civic centres, was regarded as 'The City's Charter of Reconstruction' in that 'the "Dream City" of Coventry, which up to now has been a matter of drawing-board plans executed by Town Planning experts will, after all be translated into bricks and mortar'.¹¹⁵ The right-wing Standard, agreeing that there

should be 'no physical handicap to the building of the modern city visualised by idealists', also re-affirmed (as they did at the public inquiry of 1946):

In some respects it will mean a serious and maybe unpalatable infringement on the rights of private business and individual desires, but it is impossible to conceive a new Coventry without this concession being made to communal development.¹¹⁶

In May 1948 the Broadgate garden was completed and Princess Elizabeth came down to the city to lay the foundation stone of the shopping precinct. As she observed at the opening ceremony:

if the spirit which the citizens of Coventry showed on the night of November 14th, 1940, can be reborn in the hearts of our people to-day, then we shall indeed see the fruits of peace. They will be far richer and far more plentiful than we have found the fruits of victory to be. ... The old Broadgate was the heart of Coventry, and, as is usual with things we have always known, I am sure you had a great affection for it. But in this century new and prosperous industries have found their homes in Coventry, and the town had outgrown its ancient centre. I hope that before many years I shall come back to this place where we now stand to find a new Broadgate, as fine as modern taste and craftsmanship can build it, and worthy of the great city of which it will be the centre. ... Let us be sure that in ourselves, and in the personal effort which the times demand from each one of us, there is to be found the same spirit of enterprise which is rebuilding Coventry and the other towns of Great Britain a spirit alive to the great opportunities of our day.¹¹⁷

As the CET put it, 'Royal recognition to Coventry's post-war achievements and aspirations' was thus given by her.¹¹⁸

Around this time the Council decided to make a start on the first phase of actual reconstruction in the shopping precinct. The construction of five blocks was proposed on the understanding that the

main prospective tenants were to act as the developers, to whom leases would then be offered by the Council. The City Architect was given final authority on the application to individual buildings of the designs, elevations and materials. At the same time the Council reserved the power to develop themselves in cases of difficulties.¹¹⁹ As negotiations with the developers went by, various difficulties indeed arose.¹²⁰ In the case of 'Block B' for instance, development companies would not agree to build a connecting bridge over Hertford Street, which the Council regarded as an architectural feature of prime importance, and in the end they decided to build it themselves.¹²¹ In May 1949, the CRC authorised the compulsory purchase of land to form the first instalment of the College of Adult Education, a building the MOTCP had thought least necessary.¹²²

It should be noted, however, that behind the firmly established general approval of the city centre plan, the assertion of the civil servants that it should be drastically modified died hard. For one thing they never took to the 'lavish scale' of the civic centre; it was 'out of proportion for the stated number and type of public buildings to be erected and wholly disproportionate to other uses within the central area', leaving a strong concern about the 'financial implications of such an extensive use of highly valued land'. What was more, they maintained that the inner ring road should contain only specifically central area wedges. In this respect, the western section of the proposed alignment was 'too wedded to the idea of achieving a ring.'¹²³ Instead, it should follow the existing Queen Victoria Road so as to tightly circumscribe the shopping precinct, and until this matter had been settled between the Corporation and the MOT, the general approval of the central area uses, which the Council repeatedly requested, was out of the question.¹²⁴

The Council argued that the Queen Victoria Road line would set too rigid a western limit to the central area uses. It was planned as a main shopping street, having in mind possibilities of future expansion of the shopping precinct and of the consequent shifting of the precinct's higher values to the street in question.¹²⁵ Moreover, the MOT had been of the opinion that they could not settle the question in the absence of agreement between the MOTCP and the local authority as to the central area uses,¹²⁶ an argument which was, as one MOTCP official put it, 'liable to get us nowhere'.¹²⁷ Eventually in May 1949 the Ministry agreed that if there were shops in Queen Victoria Road and if they were essential, then it could not be used as part of the inner ring road, and thus the Council's proposed alignment had to be accepted. To the Council's further satisfaction the MOTCP at last decided to give approval to the central area plan, 'so that Coventry could have some confidence that in proceeding with redevelopment they were on the right lines.'¹²⁸

In July 1949 the Council received a letter stating that the Minister agreed that their plan for the part within the proposed inner ring road should be accepted as the basis for redevelopment.¹²⁹ As Hodgkinson put it, they were 'glad' because 'some of the hesitations which might have marked our progress will disappear ... knowing that the Minister gives full approval' of 'the ambitious programme which Coventry has set for itself'. They were not, however, at all carried away at this news. As he went on: 'We must move forward step by step to avoid the financial problem which might arise if we were to take too big a bite at the task at one time'.¹³⁰

While his comment shows generally how difficult the first phase of city centre redevelopment after the war had been, what was not stressed (or probably not realised) by him was that Coventry was almost certainly the only city to obtain the Minister's formal approval of the city centre

plan before the construction of permanent buildings commenced at the end of the 1940s. It was an extremely difficult time for any blitzed town; the Ministry officials were most reluctant to give any sort of approval of a plan. To Coventry, however, it seemed to be the case that the battle with the Ministry was already over by the end of the war, leaving the city with the conviction that they had made enough concessions, and with the experience of how to get on with civil servants in this difficult task of planning. The Council knew where they should start the actual redevelopment in accordance with the Minister's policy - shopping facilities and commercial enterprise.¹³¹ While a comparatively smooth relationship with the Ministry thus existed in terms of the replanning of the shopping centre,¹³² the Council took every opportunity to highlight the general public support for the city centre plan as a whole, which culminated in the visit of the Princess in May 1948, confirming the impression that there was no turning back. Under this situation the Minister's approval of the plan was inevitable.

As the implementation of the bold plan gradually took shape, its boldness was again praised as 'a feather in Coventry's cap'.¹³³ The buildings built by the Corporation itself - including the problematical 'Block B' and the public buildings in the civic centre - were regarded as architecturally the most interesting buildings.¹³⁴ Reviews by specialists in the early 1960s, after the sharp change in architectural fashion and standard, were still favourable to Coventry.¹³⁵ Commercially the shopping precinct became a great success, especially with the advent of the multiples in the mid 1950s, such as Woolworths, Marks & Spencer, Owen Owen, and the British Home Stores.¹³⁶ There, Gibson's original idea of a traffic free precinct was restored thanks to his no less enthusiastic successor, Arthur Ling.¹³⁷ A dream city, envisaged by imaginative and

devoted planners and whole-heartedly supported by local leaders and the general public through difficult times, carried the day in this way over the restraints on economy and modesty imposed by the central authority. Credit was thus given where it was due.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 See materials in HLG 71/600 & 601.
- 2 HLG 71/601, 'Conference on Reconstruction Problems', a verbatim report of the conference between L. Silkin and the blitzed authorities held on 30 October 1947. Silkin organised a series of four conferences with the 38 authorities. See other verbatim reports in HLG 71/601.
- 3 For instance:
Declaratory Orders: application and confirmation.

<u>Authorities</u>	<u>Applied (acre)</u>	<u>Confirmed (acre)</u>
Bristol	771	245
Coventry	452	274
Plymouth	462	207
Southampton	514	270
Swansea	281	134

Source: HLG 71/600, letter from D.P. Walsh to Leonard Murin, 9 September 1947.
- 4 See, e.g. Town and Country Planning Association, Planning Britain's Land: A Summary of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, 1947.
- 5 See, e.g., A.H. Marshall (City Treasurer, Coventry), 'The Financial Implications of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947' in National Housing and Town Planning Council, November 1947.
- 6 The Circular is found, e.g. in SRO TC Box 25.
- 7 HLG 71/601, 'Conference on Reconstruction Problems', the conference of 30 October 1947, op. cit.
- 8 The editors, The Architects' Journal, 2 October 1952, which features 'Bristol Revised'.
- 9 HLG 71/601, 'Conference on Reconstruction Problems', a verbatim report of the conference held on 23 October 1947.
- 10 The figures given by Councillor P.W. Barnes, chairman of the Housing Committee, to the Borough Council 19 March 1947, reported in SDE, 20 March 1947.
- 11 Councillor Barnes to the Council 18 June 1947, in SDE, 20 June 1947.
- 12 F.E. Dyer, Deputy Housing Manager, at the public inquiry of the Ministry of Health into the Corporation's application for a compulsory purchase order to acquire 19.6 acres of land for housing purposes, in SDE, 8 May 1947.
- 13 Borough Council, 21 May 1947, reported in SDE, 22 May 1947.
- 14 Borough Council, 20 March 1946.
- 15 Borough Council, 26 March 1947.

- 16 President of the Chamber of Commerce, heading a deputation to the Mayor, reported in SDE, 14 December 1946.
- 17 Chairman of the Distributive Trades Committee of the Chamber, at Chamber meeting, reported in SDE, 8 November 1946.
- 18 SDE, 20 March 1947. For details of the building programme and the allocation of labour force, see the General Purposes Sub-Committee of the TPDC, 5 March 1947.
- 19 Reconstruction Sub-Committee of the TPDC, 17 March 1947. The TPDC resolved to make an application for a compulsory order at their meeting on 28 May 1947.
- 20 Borough Council, 18 June 1947.
- 21 Through the Ratepayers' numbers at Borough Council meetings, reported in SDE, 17 April and 19 June 1947.
- 22 The meetings of the Central Area Association, reported in SDE, 26 October 1946.
- 23 For instance, the Mayor at the annual dinner of Southampton and District Meat Traders' Association, in SDE, 12 February 1947.
- 24 SRO DZ 778/2, note of the meeting between the Association and the TPDC, held on 3 March 1947. It seemed that the Association's letter to the Minister of Town and Country Planning, which obviously made the Committee's hurried decision to see them. See TPDC, 26 February 1947.
- 25 TPDC, 2 April 1947.
- 26 SRO DZ 778/1, Minutes of the Association's general meeting held on 8 July 1947.
- 27 TPDC, 23 April 1947. Borough Council, 21 May 1947. As for the layout of the East Park-terrace site and the model of the central area, see SDE, 30 January 1947 and 28 January 1947 respectively.
- 28 For instance, a solicitor to the Central Area Association at the general meeting on 8 July 1947, SRO DZ 778/1, op. cit., reported in SDE, 4 July 1947. At the meeting he pointed out that the owners of property in The Crescent, Plymouth, who had appealed successfully against the Minister's confirmation of the declaratory order (See The Times, 13 May 1947) had been advised to withdraw their appeal to the House of Lords, because the powers under the 1947 Planning Bill would empower the Minister to authorise the designation of their land and similar property for compulsory purchase. In Southampton those who were affected by the Corporation's plan realised that no useful purpose would be served by an appeal to the High Court.
- 29 Meeting of the Central Area Association on 8 July 1947, SRO DZ 778/1, cit.
- 30 SDE, 26 June 1947. Silkin made these remarks in his interview with The Observer, (TPCD, 23 July 1947).

- 31 SDE, 31 July 1947. The letter was dated 25 July 1947.
- 32 Ibid. The Party received the letter from the Minister on the morning of 31 July 1947.
- 33 See a map in SDE, 7 August 1947 showing the areas included in and excluded from the Minister's confirmation of the Corporation's application.
- 34 HLG 79/661, Technical Department of the MOTCP, 'Reconstruction Areas Technical Examination Committee, County Borough of Southampton - Central Area Application For A Declaratory Order Under Section 1(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944', n.d., but between 16 April 1946, when the Council formally lodged the application, and the public inquiry in September 1946.
- 35 SDE, 31 July 1947, op. cit.
- 36 SRO TC Box 25, note of the meeting with officials of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, held on 26 August 1947.
- 37 Matthews, in SDE, 14 October 1947.
- 38 HLG 71/601, 'Ministry of Town and Country Planning, Conference on Reconstruction Problems', held on 30 October 1947.
- 39 HLG 79/661, Technical Department, 'Reconstruction Areas Technical Examination Committee - County Borough of Southampton', op. cit.
- 40 TPDC, 22 October 1947.
- 41 Matthews at the conference with the MOTCP and the MOT, held 23 March 1948, note of the conference in SRO TC Box 25.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid. Modifications to the zoning proposals were supposedly as a result of 'the 1946 Basic Survey' of buildings in the town, which analysed the users of 1939 and 1946, general statistical data relating to war damage and the age and condition of property, etc. (See SRO SC/EN/13/5/3/1, SRO SC/EN/13/5/5/1, SRO SC/BA/2/76-78, and B.T. Rees, 'Redevelopment of Southampton's Central Area', Institution of Municipal Engineers, 1 February 1949, Vol. 75, P. 488.).
- 44 TCPD, 13 April 1948.
- 45 TCPD, 28 April 1948.
- 46 B.T. Rees, 'Redevelopment of Southampton's Central Area', op. cit., p. 491.
- 47 Borough Council, 19 May 1948.
- 48 A meeting between the Association and the TCPD was arranged in September, but postponed until the Committee's meeting with the Ministries. (TCPD, 26 November 1947). The Association pressed the TCPD to receive a deputation (letters sent 28 January, 25 March, 28

- April and 19 May 1948) without success. Not surprisingly, the Association was very discontented with the Council's adoption of the plan in May 1948. See SRO DZ/778/1, Minutes of the annual general meeting, held on 27 May 1948.
- 49 Southampton Corporation, Development Plan, Comprehensive Development Area 3 (Central Area), Written Analysis, P. 10 (submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, September 1954). The plan added by Amendment No. 1 submitted to the Ministry in July 1957, still based on the 1946 plan, was eventually approved in December 1960.
 - 50 Wilfred Burns, New Towns for Old, (1963), pp. 40-1.
 - 51 'Development Plan, Comprehensive Development Area 3, Written Analysis', op. cit., p. 46.
 - 52 L. Berger, 'Aspects of the Civic Scene: Architecture' in F.J. Monkhouse (ed.), A Survey of Southampton and its Region, (Southampton, 1964) p. 310.
 - 53 A. Rance, Southampton: an illustrated history (1984), p. 176.
 - 54 D.R. Childs, 'Southampton' in The Architects' Journal for 16 April 1953, p. 486.
 - 55 Ibid., p. 485.
 - 56 Ibid., p. 310.
 - 57 Alderman E. Burrow (leader of the Ratepayers' Party), speaking to the High Street Association, SDE, 29 November 1948.
 - 58 Observer, 4 July 1946. Also see Observer, 28 September 1946, where Alderman Gill, chairman of the Housing Committee, expressed his dissatisfaction with the amount of labour available in the building industry.
 - 59 Col. Whitwill, addressing the Round Table as chairman of the South-Western Regional Board for Industry, reported in Observer, 31 August 1946. Quite ironically, however, the rate could remain the same until April 1947, because the labour available would fall short of that required to carry out the whole programme of work planned by the Corporation. (See Observer, 17 September 1946).
 - 60 Observer, 23 November 1946. Also see Observer, 26 April 1947, reporting the Housing Committee's target for 6,000 houses for two years had to face a 20 per cent cut imposed by the Ministry of Works because of the fuel crisis and the shortage of materials, especially timber.
 - 61 Observer, 4 January 1947.
 - 62 A letter from the MOTCP to the PRC, 18 December 1946. The excluded zones from the order also included the University and hospitals

- reservation in the St. Michael's area, the Newfoundland Road educational precinct, and most of the King Street historic building reservation.
- 63 Observer, 21 December 1946. See a map of the confirmed order, *ibid*.
- 64 'City Engineer's Memorandum of Conference with Representatives of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning and the Ministry of Transport at London on 10th February, 1947, to discuss matters arising out of the Planning and Reconstruction of the Bristol Central Area', submitted to the PRC, 12 February 1947.
- 65 *Ibid*.
- 66 *Ibid*. One particular point that provoked the City Engineer was the Ministry's criticism of the removal of the industry from the central area. The Engineer pointed out that the MOTCP officials had no knowledge about the Corporation's trading estates policy to part of which the compulsory order had already been given by the very Minister, or about the re-zoning of the Portland Square area from warehouse to industrial after the discussions with the manufacturers there (See PRC, 5 December 1945), which was fairly praised by the Chamber of Commerce (See BRO 38605/A/54, Chamber's Annual Report, 19 July 1946, p. 16).
- 67 PRC, 23 April 1947.
- 68 'Central Area Reconstruction Scheme: Report by Officers', submitted to the PRC, 1 May 1947.
- 69 'Reconstruction Proposals of the Bristol City Council. Memorandum by the officers on the present position', submitted to the PRC, 16 July 1947. The memorandum was submitted to the Minister for his meeting with the Council representatives led by local MPs held on 22 July 1947. Also see '"B" Appendix' to the PRC minutes, 16 July 1947.
- 70 PRC, 16 July 1947.
- 71 Note of the meeting with the Minister held on 22 July 1947, as 'Appendix "B"' to the PRC minutes, 23 July 1947.
- 72 PRC 23 July 1947. The committee resolved to ask the Minister to postpone the inquiry at their meeting on 1 May 1947.
- 73 PRC 13 August 1947.
- 74 See, eg, the officers' report to the PRC, 1 May 1947, *op. cit*.
- 75 The meeting with the Minister on 22 July 1947, *op. cit*.
- 76 PRC, 24 September 1947.
- 77 The meeting with the Minister on 22 July 1947, *op. cit*. The Advisory Committee intimated to the PRC that the two essential conditions for a success of the new shopping centre were the Council's absolute control of the old centre so as to prevent the

- permanent re-establishment of shops there, and quick development of the new centre with both temporary and permanent shops. PRC, 27 August 1947.
- 78 PRC, 22 October 1947.
- 79 BRO 38605/M/41, the meeting of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce, 20 June 1947. There had been much discussion up to then whether the Chamber should proceed with the High Court appeal. (See the minutes of meetings in BRO 38605/M/40 & 41). It seemed that the result of the Plymouth case and the compensation clauses under the 1947 Planning Bill eventually forced the Chamber to make the decision.
- 80 BRO 33199(16), minutes of the annual meeting of the Association held on 4 June 1947. At that time it embraced about 120 members. The names are included in a letter from Col. Whitwill, chairman, to members in May 1947, stating that it should be incorporated to the Civic Society. In conclusion he put that 'there should be no feeling of regret in the step to be taken, but rather satisfaction that we can now join up with an older Association'. (BRO 33199, (16)).
- 81 How many members belonged to the Federation is not known but there were 18 retail organisations affiliated to it.
- 82 PRC, 9 October 1946. For details of the plan, see Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror, 10 October 1946, and Observer, 12 October 1946.
- 83 PRC, 1 January 1947.
- 84 See a letter from W.R. Tyndall, chairman of the Federation, to Observer, 3 May 1947.
- 85 Observer, 19 April 1947.
- 86 PRC, 13 August 1947, Observer, 16 August 1947.
- 87 See, e.g., the comment of Councillor S. Clifford, PRC member, in Observer, 10 April 1948, and that of Mrs. D.P. Dobson, secretary of the Civic Society, at its annual general meeting, in Observer, 24 April 1948.
- 88 In a written reply Silkin stated that, while he had never sought to curtail the plan itself, the compulsory orders for approximately 100 acres of land were too large in view of the present economic difficulties, and consequently, he was 'bound to ask them [the City Council] to stage the work, and spend public money only as, and when, they need to do so.' (Observer, 1 May 1948).
- 89 Addressing the South-Western Conference of the National Housing and Town Planning Conference on 28 May 1948. Indeed Miss Sharp observed in her address that 'we cannot agree more at the Ministry that planning at the moment is a nightmare'. She said that part of her important work was to work out with other Government Departments an investment programme for 1949-50. As she went on:

It is a heart-breaking job to sit there and realise the desperate straits in which this country is and the overwhelming demands of factories, school, housing estates and the little hope at the moment for the reconstruction of the bombed cities. ... We have the same sense of disappointment, frustration and almost sometimes despair as you have. ...

Your chairman no doubt thinks that we have not been very brilliant in getting things moving for Bristol. We, too, are very unhappy about it.

- 90 See Observer, 29 May 1948, 17 July 1948.
- 91 Observer, 10 and 31 July 1948.
- 92 A deputation was sent to see Silkin. See Observer, 25 September 1948.
- 93 Observer, 7 & 31 July and 28 August 1948.
- 94 Observer, 1 January 1949.
- 95 BEP, 7 July 1949.
- 96 BEP, 12 July 1949.
- 97 Observer, 8 October 1949.
- 98 BEP, 2 December 1949.
- 99 See Wilfred Burns, New Towns for Old, op. cit., pp. 28-32.
- 100 Alderman Gill, speaking of 'The New Bristol' at NALGO's annual dinner, Observer, 9 April 1949.
- 101 As for election results, see BEW, 13 May 1949.
- 102 BEW, 14 May 1949.
- 103 His letter of resignation, BEW, 16 May 1949.
- 104 Bicker, for instance, was quite sympathetic to the traders' opposition to widen Park Street, but, as he intimated, had been forced to decide so because of the pressure from the MOT. (See e.g. Observer, 9 April 1949). The traders' opposition to the widening of it went back to early 1946, when the PRC asked the Park Street and College Green Traders' Association for their opinion upon the proposal. The Association received only four replies out of its 65 members, and the matter seemed to be settled. (PRC, 30 January 1946). By the summer, however, they had made it clear that they were opposed to the widening (Observer, 13 July 1946). With the help of the Re-planning Association (BRO 33199(16), letter from the Secretary of the Re-planning Association to the Town Clerk, 16 July 1946) and the Chamber of Commerce (BRO 38605 M(40), minutes of the

- joint meeting of the Chamber and the Re-planning Association, held on 15 July 1946), the long, if not as sensational as the shopping centre issue, battle started. In September 1949 the PRC - now under the chairmanship of Alderman Sir John Inskip, leader of the Citizen Party who had opposed to the widening because of the cost and of too much intervention from the Ministry of Transport (BEW, 22 April 1949) - decided not to widen Park Street (BEP, 21 September 1949). The Council approved this although the Labour members of the Committee were, as Alderman Hennessy put it, 'not happy in agreeing to the resolution'. (BEP, 11 October 1949).
- 105 See, e.g. Labour's election programme, in BEW, 22 April 1949.
- 106 BRO 33199(6), 'A Record of the Redevelopment Proposals for the Wine Street-Castle Street Area of Central Bristol', The Bristol Civic Society, 18 January 1961.
- 107 The annual report of the Medical Officer of Health 1947, in the Local Studies Section of Coventry City Library, p. 19.
- 108 See, e.g. CET, 19, 25 and 28 June 1946.
- 109 CRC, 24 October 1946.
- 110 Especially Charles Barratt, Town Clerk. See, e.g. 'Phoenix City Arises - with Garden as First Great Act of Faith', in The Birmingham Post Survey of Coventry, 10 July 1962.
- 111 See materials in HLG 171/13, e.g. a note by R.T. Kennedy (MOTCP) dated 5 November 1946, and a note of the meeting between the MOTCP, the MOT and the Ministry of Health, held on 27 November 1946. The local MPs helped the Council to persuade the Ministries concerned. See CRC, 7 and 28 January 1947.
- 112 See CET, 24 and 26 May 1947.
- 113 The order was in fact ready for issue in early 1947 but had been held up because of the effect of the Plymouth judgement. (See HLG 71/600, note of the meeting between the Minister and the Ministry officials, held on 2 July 1947).
- 114 As for the details of the excluded areas, see a note of M.G. Kirk (MOTCP) dated 31 January 1947, in HLG 71/13. As for the boundaries of the confirmed order, see Standard, 7 June 1947.
- 115 CET, 3 June 1947.
- 116 Standard (editorial), 7 June 1947.
- 117 CET, 22 May 1948.
- 118 CET (editorial), 22 May 1948.
- 119 CRC, 26 April 1948.
- 120 As a convenient summary, see a letter from C.W. Gurner (Regional Controller of the MOTCP) to L. Mann (Headquarters) dated 6 November 1948, HLG 79/133.

- 121 CRC, 11 May 1949.
- 122 CRC, 11 May 1949.
- 123 HLG 79/128, 'Technical Department Reconstruction Areas Technical Examination Committee, City and County Borough of Coventry Application Under Section 1. Town and Country Planning Act, 1944. Area No. 1', n.d. (but sometime in 1946, after the public inquiry in June and July of that year).
- 124 See, e.g., HLG 71/13 a note of conference between the officials held on 22 September 1947.
- 125 HLG 71/13, a note of conference between the officials held on 9 May 1949.
- 126 HLG 71/13, a letter from J.E. Cardell (Divisional Road Engineer of the MOT) to W.B. Vince (Assistant Secretary of MOTCP) dated 19 April 1948.
- 127 HLG 71/13, a letter from W.B. Vince to J. Earley (MOTCP) dated 20 April 1948.
- 128 HLG 71/13, a note of conference held on 9 May 1949, op. cit.
- 129 CET, 18 July 1949.
- 130 CET, 18 July 1949.
- 131 See, e.g. A.H. Marshall, 'The Financial Implications of the Town & Country Planning Act, 1947', op. cit., p. 7. Also see Hodgkinson's comment on the confirmation of the declaratory order in Standard, 7 June 1947.
- 132 The shopping precinct was regarded by the MOTCP side at least 'as reasonable in principle'. HLG 71/13, 'Points for Consideration with the Development of the Declaratory Order Area', March 1948. As we have seen, Bristol gave the case in stark contrast.
- 133 D.R. Childs, 'Coventry', Architects' Journal, 8 October 1953. Also see, e.g. H.V. Morton. 'Future of Coventry' in Illustrated, 29 October 1949; Roy Jenkins, 'Coventry Rises from the Rubble' in The Sphere, 10 October 1953; and 'Coventry Rebuilds', in Architectural Design, December 1958.
- 134 W. Burns, New Towns for Old, op. cit., p. 35. See also D.R. Childs, 'A Comparison of Progress in Rebuilding Bombed Cities', in The Architects' Journal, 8 July 1954, p. 51.
- 135 See, e.g., D. Senior, 'Coventry Plan Review' in The Architects' Journal, 11 July 1962; G. Logie, 'The Lessons of Coventry', The Architect and Building News, 11 July 1962; and Professor Sir Robert Matthews, 'An Enlightened Attitude ... And Good Men Promoting It' in The Birmingham Post Review of Coventry, op. cit.

- ¹³⁶ Nick Tiratsoo, 'The Reconstruction of Coventry 1945-1960', an unpublished report to Volkswagenwerk Stiftung (1985), pp.107 and 116.
- ¹³⁷ CRC, 28 September 1955. See also 'Planning: The Newer Concept. Applying Traffic-pedestrian Segregation Principle to City as a Whole', The Birmingham Post Survey of Coventry, op. cit. and Arthur Ling, 'Coventry's Pedestrian Shopping Centre' in Keystone, May-June 1956, pp. 3-4.

CHAPTER X

Conclusion

War created both opportunities for, and obstacles to, city centre replanning. By comparing the experience of Bristol, Coventry and Southampton it has been possible to throw some light on these contradictory effects of the war. While all three Councils recognised that the bombing had given a golden opportunity for comprehensive replanning, their initial responses differed strikingly.

Coventry took the swiftest action. Established within a fortnight of the November 1940 blitz, the City Redevelopment Committee sent a deputation to Lord Reith in January 1941. He told them to plan boldly. In March 1941 the City Council rejected a rather conservative plan proposed by the City Engineer, in favour of an imaginative one prepared by D. Gibson, the young City Architect. The sheer speed of the Council's action showed their determination - especially that of George Hodgkinson, Labour and Council leader who initiated the deputation - to grab the opportunity and make the best of it. The city was further inspired by the nationwide publicity given to the plan, because it became a symbol of post-war reconstruction in general. At the same time the ideas in the plan were not produced on the spur of the moment. Discussion about a new city centre had been going on within and outside the Council before the outbreak of war. Gibson and the staff in his department had produced an impressive model, a prototype of the 1941 plan, which had already attracted considerable attention before the 1940 blitz.

In Southampton the Ratepayers' Party - with a majority on the Council - was in favour of a quick restoration of the heavily damaged main shopping area. The loss of rateable value was certainly appalling. Councillor Matthews, deputy leader of labour, was anxious to prevent rash

action. First, the town's future had to be thought of in a wider context rather than merely aiming at a swift recovery of trade. Its industrial prospect was a vital question, which had to be seen both from a regional and a national point of view. Secondly the Council's inadequate planning machinery had to be thoroughly strengthened and good brains should be brought in from outside as consultants. In these respects his efforts bore fruit fairly rapidly. An independent department and committee for planning had been set up by early 1942, while the Council, on the advice of Lord Reith, decided in August 1941 to employ Professor Adshead as planning consultant. In February 1942 Adshead and H.T. Cook, newly promoted Town Planning Officer, through the backing of Matthews, submitted their joint plan to the Council.

Bristol City Council's approach to the replanning of the city centre was very different. First of all they denied press reports in early 1941 that Lord Reith had told them to prepare a bold plan. Instead they stressed the need for a preliminary survey, despite the pressure from those interests who wished to get down to the job immediately. Moreover, shaping the machinery for this task took a long time. The Planning and Reconstruction Committee was set up in December 1942, and it was not until February 1943 that the ultimate responsibility for the preparation of a city centre plan was given to H.M. Webb, the City Engineer. At the same time particular emphasis was placed on the team work of the officers concerned, and any replanning proposals were considered through the 'Conference of Officers' system set up in August 1941. The plan for the city centre was finally submitted to the City Council in March 1944.

The plans adopted by the Councils during the war proposed drastic solutions to the problems of the respective city centres - traffic congestion, mixed usage, and the lack of social amenities or focal points of public life. An inner ring road would divert through traffic from the

central core, which would be divided into sections according to function, so as to avoid the entanglement of the various users. Both in Bristol and Coventry the existing main shopping streets were to be replaced by a traffic-free shopping precinct, while in Southampton the second shopping centre, a shopping promenade, was proposed at the intersection of main traffic routes. In Bristol the existing main shopping streets were to be reserved for public purposes; in Coventry a civic centre was envisaged combining administrative, cultural and educational buildings; and in Southampton the new shopping promenade and the existing civic centre would constitute the town centre, a focal point of public life. In these plans the planners were not too concerned about the existing layout or possible costs. The important underlying assumptions were that the defects in the central area would be cured only by drastic surgery, and that the Government would, as Lord Reith promised, do their utmost to facilitate it.

* * * *

These bold proposals, however, provoked opposition both from local interests and from the Ministries concerned. The three Councils reacted to this opposition in very different ways. In Southampton traders were particularly critical of the shopping promenade because it would be too competitive with the existing main shopping street. The Ministry of Transport also objected because it would be dangerous to pedestrians. The Council, controlled by a coalition of conservatives and liberals, was receptive to these criticisms. The idea was abandoned in the revised plan of February 1943, which put prime emphasis on the improvement of the existing main shopping street. The offer of Adshead to continue his service as a consultant was turned down by the Council in January 1943.

In Bristol the Council, equally represented by Labour and the Citizen Party, took pains to conciliate the local interests concerned. On the initiative of the Chamber of Commerce a Replanning Association was formed as early as February 1941 with a view to being directly involved in the replanning process. It included not only traders but also architects who had established reputations in the field. This body had considerable influence. Extensive consultation took place between the local authority and interested parties about various replanning proposals. The most controversial point was that the existing main shopping area based on Castle Street and Wine Street was to be reserved as a public open space, and to be replaced by a new shopping centre at Broadmead. Fierce objections were raised and the Council made a compromise to provide temporary shops in the Castle Street and Wine Street area and to schedule it as an area for public buildings rather than an open space. At the same time the Council adhered to its original proposal for a new shopping centre. They stood resolute against opponents who wished to re-establish the old shopping centre. It should also be noted that the requests for the co-option of outside members onto the Council's Planning Committee and for the employment of an outside planning consultant on the Corporation staff were successfully resisted.

The opposition of traders to the city centre plan did not cause Coventry City Council much concern at first. In fact the Council did not bother to discuss the plan with them for a long time because, as they argued, it was already adopted and waiting for the Ministry's approval. The Ministry, however, turned out to be the Council's most formidable opponent. Whitehall's criticisms were twofold. First, the plan was made up in undue haste and there was a serious lack of consultation between the local authority and the interests concerned. Secondly, certain proposals, especially the shopping precinct and the civic centre, were

too imaginative to be brought into effect. The Ministry soon found that the Town Clerk was also rather hostile to Gibson's city centre plan. With his cooperation, immense pressure was placed on the Council to start consultation and to modify the plan on more modest lines. The pressure worked to some extent, and in early 1944 a meeting was held for the first time between the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the scheme, especially focusing on the proposals for the shopping centre. The Chamber maintained that the shopping centre should be constituted of the main shopping streets with traffic rather than a traffic-free precinct, wiping out the existing layout. The Council made some compromises: that the precinct should apply to a limited portion of the whole shopping frontages; and that a traffic route should be allowed to intersect the precinct. But the Council insisted on the principle of a precinct, especially with regard to the Smithford Street area, the city's principal shopping street, and it claimed that the demands of the retailing interests had been sufficiently met by these compromises. Although the Ministry wished to curtail what they saw as another extravagant proposal - the civic centre - the Council never let them take the offensive in this matter.

In putting pressure on Coventry, the Ministry had to keep a low profile. In face of the call for swift and positive action by the Government, its response was very slow and evasive, causing doubts as to the genuineness of its early encouragement to plan boldly. Expert opinions were, as the fate of the Ministry's Panels showed, not utilised as much as had been initially expected. Decisions as to a central planning authority and the legislation for built-up areas were delayed and, when made, increasingly limited in scope and nature. Although the Ministry, especially its officials, always maintained that the Coventry plan lacked public support, and wished to curtail its boldness on the

ground of practicability, their attack had to be made behind the scenes. Even the Town Clerk, cat's paw of the Ministry, reported that the plan actually enjoyed substantial support among the citizens. It would be very embarrassing to the Ministry if, by criticising Coventry's plan explicitly, the impression was confirmed within and outside Coventry that the Ministry and the Government were really trying to suppress the blitzed authorities' aspirations.

By contrast, progress in Southampton was on lines quite acceptable from the Ministry's point of view. The local authority employed a consultant in the preparation of a plan, discussed it with the interests and Ministries concerned, and modified it in order to meet criticism. Moreover, consideration in a wider context - among other things the town's industrial future - was given by Councillor Matthews' Nuffield Reconstruction Survey.

The rather pessimistic conclusion of this survey made him opt at the end of the war for a new plan prepared by the Borough Engineer who put prime emphasis on the economy and practicability of the plan, and thus, on the full use of the existing layout. Following this retreat from bold planning, the local Labour Party concentrated on the quick restoration of the town's main shopping street and the municipal ownership of land in the central area which was detested by local traders and the opposition party. Labour won the 1945 municipal elections, and the new plan was adopted by the Council in March 1946. H.T. Cook, Town Planning Officer, resigned from his office and soon joined an opposition organisation, the Central Area Association, set up in April 1946. The case of Bristol did not present serious problems to the Ministry during the war, partly because the plan appeared very late, but in the main due to the extensive consultation between the local authority and the interests concerned, and

to the absence of any political conflict among Councillors or the Corporation officials.

The first important phase of city centre redevelopment after the war consisted of public inquiries into local authority applications for municipal acquisition of war-damaged areas under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944. The plans were regarded as supporting evidence for such acquisition. In practice it was thought that these inquiries held in 1946 would be a last opportunity to lodge objection to these plans. Generally, the Councils managed to defend their plans. This was primarily because the substance of objections - mainly from the vested interests - was related to the local authority's acquisition of private property. However, this principle had been established by the Coalition Government in the 1944 Planning Act, and thus had very little to do with the Councils. The argument that the plans should not be accepted because of the objection to the acquisition based on them was, therefore, easily ruled out by the Councils. The three Councils - all of which were now controlled by Labour - expected that substantial and swift progress would be made in city centre redevelopment under the Labour Government. But for the new planning minister, Lewis Silkin, it was becoming more and more difficult to meet such high expectations. Economic consideration now played a vital role in the country's reconstruction work, and priority had to be given to certain essential items in the context of the acute shortage of necessary building labour and materials. City Centre redevelopment had to give way, for one thing, to the provision of houses and schools. Consequently, Silkin (who was not a member of the Cabinet) had to cut down considerably the scope of municipal acquisition of land - the foundation work for city centre redevelopment largely due to Treasury pressure. Subsequently, the country's worsened economic situation from

the summer of 1947 brought to a virtual end any possibility of an actual start on the execution of the city centre plans.

This gloomy prospect was all the more reason why the blitzed authorities with their plans already drawn up needed the Minister's approval of them. In Southampton there was some strong feeling among those who had not been consulted at all during the process of drawing up the new plan. In Bristol, the opposition of some traders to the re-siting of the shopping centre died hard or became even more obdurate, despite the fact that the plan had been highly praised by Silkin on his visit to the city in early 1946. In order to clear up any objections to their plans and uncertainties and doubts as to their practicability, and thus, to commence the actual redevelopment with confidence as soon as circumstances permitted, nothing could be more persuasive than the Minister's formal authorisation.

Silkin, however, emphasising how important it was to start planning under the new Planning Act of 1947, looked as if he was shelving the consideration of these advanced cases, i.e. the plans awaiting his formal approval. Apart from economic considerations which had to be obeyed, there were some other reasons for his rather cautious attitude. The enthusiasm surrounding city centre replanning in the early years of the war had gradually been withering away. The mode was now 'first things first'. The most essential thing in the field of physical planning should be better houses for all, but not necessarily ultra modern centres for the blitzed cities, which sounded something of a luxury. In this sense the question of city centres had become a victim of what the Labour Government pursued most vigorously - fair shares, or a more egalitarian society - explicitly shown in their efforts to create the welfare state.

There was also a marked tendency among Ministry officials, most of whom were newcomers after the war and thus somewhat ignorant of the

authorities' early efforts, to sit on the fence when considering local authorities' replanning proposals. They admitted unashamedly that they were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. Thus even in the case of Southampton, whose plan was no longer a bold one, the Ministry officials were never able to pass judgement, and remained stuck in detailed technical matters, often confusing the situation by disagreeing with the officials of the Ministry of Transport. In the case of Bristol, the civil servants were critical of the new shopping centre proposals, and yet never lent themselves earnestly to helping the local authority who were battling with the fierce opposition of some traders and therefore in desperate need of formal approval. Not surprisingly, the relationship between the Ministry and these local authorities became rather tense and not a little hostile.

Given the situation and the climate of the time, the fact that Coventry obtained the Ministry's approval of its city centre plan in 1949 was perhaps surprising. The Ministry wished to consider plans under the 1947 Planning Act, rather than the 1944 Act confined to war-damaged areas, so that every plan should be placed on the same footing, whether the areas covered by it had been blitzed or not. These plans generally appeared in the early 1950s and it took several further years before the Ministry's approval was given to them. In other words, when the construction of new permanent buildings started at the end of the 1940s in the three cities, only Coventry was doing the job with the authorised plan, and thus could be confident that they were moving in the right direction. What accounted for this approval? First, the wide attention and the unique status the city had enjoyed as the first city that prepared a plan for the future immediately after the blitz. The Ministry, with their first Minister's legendary encouragement to Coventry to plan boldly, could not put decisive pressure on Coventry in trying to

curtail the city plan's more imaginative features. Secondly, the City Council had actually gained experience and confidence through the harder times - especially in the battle with the Ministry - since the plan was first made public in 1941. Bristol and Southampton were bitter in their expression of the unfair treatment meted out to the bombed cities and their anger, disappointment, and distrust of the Ministry after the war, while the opposition from local interests was still smouldering, and often got inflamed. Coventry no longer put the blame on the Government. Instead, once the war was over, Coventry Council took every opportunity to explain to the public that the plan had met all relevant criticisms. A public exhibition and ceremonies to mark the start of the plan's implementation were organised, attracting wide and sympathetic attention. The general recognition of the city centre plan thus became an accomplished fact. In Bristol and Southampton the local authorities were content with claiming that their plans should be supported, simply because they were approved by the elected representatives of the people. This argument, however, turned out not to be substantial enough to convince the Ministry. As demonstrated in the case of Coventry during the war, the Ministry officials were very sensitive to the political repercussions of city centre replanning. Their criticisms of any plan were therefore subject to the level of public support for it. But it could be argued that in fact ordinary people were rather indifferent. They were very concerned about housing, jobs and welfare - subjects which were more directly tangible, and tended to dominate controversy during the municipal elections. Whereas the blitz had been directly experienced by the people, a paper plan for the future city centre felt rather remote to them. It was very technical, and was, as shown in the local authorities' consultation process and the public inquiries in 1946, an affair for vested interests and those with specialised knowledge. What

was needed to arouse public interest was, therefore, to get people out to see what the plan entailed and to start its implementation, as was done in Coventry.

* * * *

As this study has demonstrated, the difficulty lay in how to reach consensus out of diversified views of the post-war world and opinions as to how it should be re-made. Differences existed even among the Council officials, which often worked adversely to rapid progress. At the same time it was the restive reaction to drastic changes that set the pace of the decision-making process. All three cities suffered opposition from the propertied and retailing interests and the timidity of the Ministry. Southampton exemplified the case most clearly. They sacrificed the original plan with progressive ideas prepared by planning experts to the quick restoration of trade. The fact that Labour had to concentrate on the land acquisition issue in the municipal elections shows how influential the opposition views were. Bristol approached replanning with deliberate steps, especially in terms of extensive consultation with the main interested parties. Yet when the plan was forwarded to the Ministry, no final judgement was passed on it - merely a hint of scepticism. To these two cities, planning became a nightmare, something which had to be dictated by Whitehall.

In this sense the efforts of Coventry to obtain public support should be appreciated. From the beginning the Council was determined to grab the opportunity for replanning provided by the blitz. At the same time the case of Coventry poses a question whether the blitz, and the war, actually provided the optimum circumstances for the replanning of city centres. It certainly did in destroying the otherwise untouchable

entanglement of buildings, and in attracting attention to the hitherto neglected problems there.

The opportunity, however, seemed to come too suddenly. For one thing, there was not yet a firm enough foundation for positive consideration, and acceptance, of drastic changes proposed by town planning experts. The thoughts of the Government, especially civil servants, were coloured by conventions. The public were deeply absorbed in daily struggles and more mundane worries during and after the war. They were unlikely to commit themselves on such highly technical questions and they certainly would not do so unless they were fully informed and given an opportunity for serious participation in city centre replanning. However, neither the professional organisations associated with town planning nor the local authorities (except Coventry) made any particular efforts to involve the public. The experts' belief in technocracy and the local authorities' belief that they represented the public were, therefore, rather complacent.

Moreover, the war gave rise to too many reconstruction problems, which induced the Government to exert the strongest influence of a restrictive nature in the replanning process. In view of the strictly limited resources, and of the ever deteriorating economic situation of the country in the 1940s, it was essential to make priorities among the many problems. Labour put prime emphasis on the export drive - even if it might do harm to the ideal of balanced industrial development - and on the creation of a welfare state in accordance with its 'fair shares' philosophy. The implementation of the Beveridge Report became the litmus test for the Government's achievement, and later attracted the warmest approval of the public. At the same time city centre redevelopment had to be brought to a standstill. At this point the Ministry's approval of

their plans became all the more important to the blitzed authorities, but, among others, civil servants were least prepared to do so.

It is thus obvious that the case of Coventry was quite an exceptional one, which seemed to enhance the impression that the blitz provided a millennial opportunity. The local authority's efforts to involve the public as far as possible should be counted to their credit. At the same time the lack of consultation with the local interests in the earlier years could have caused serious problems had there been as influential a representative organisation of those interests as in the case of Bristol. In terms of industrial development after the war Coventry Council had very little say. Coventry were expected to, and did, continue to expand as an important engineering city, which complied with Government post-war policy especially in the context of the export drive and then of Korean war rearmament. This in effect exempted the Council from taking the industrial future into consideration, in contrast to Southampton where fears that the city's economic base would be insufficient to sustain a bold plan for the city centre came to play an important part.

At the same time, because of the pressure from Whitehall to enhance Coventry's existing industrial base, the city inevitably failed to diversify its industrial structure, or to control its population size. Ironically, Southampton continued its industrial expansion mainly due to the growth of new developments in industries such as oil refining, telephone and cables, and the construction of light commercial vehicles.

There was no coherent national planning in the 1940s. City centre replanning proceeded largely independently of other considerations in reconstruction work. The decision making process involved a three-way negotiation between local authorities, local vested interests, and the Central Government. Generally the local public played little part in the

process, and tended, in any case, to be indifferent to the question. By the time the war was over the high priority previously given to the question of city centre planning had disappeared, and it continued to suffer setbacks in the difficult post-war economic situation. The war, it seems, created as many obstacles to comprehensive replanning of the city centres as it provided opportunities, before a more firmly established consensus for the need for such replanning could be made.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. Manuscript Collections

1. Public Record Office:

i) BT (Board of Trade)

BT 64 - Registered Files of Industries and Manufactures
Department

ii) CAB (Cabinet)

CAB 87 - War Cabinet Committees on Reconstruction
CAB 117 - Files of the Reconstruction Secretariat
CAB 124 - Minister of Reconstruction Secretariat files
CAB 128 - Cabinet Conclusions, 1945-1948

III) HLG (Ministry of Housing and Local Government)

HLG4 - Planning Schemes
HLG7 - Special War Time Functions
HLG51 - Local Government Services: correspondence and papers
HLG52 - Local Government Administration and Finance
HLG68 - 100,000 Series
HLG71 - Town and Country Planning: correspondence and papers
HLG79 - Town and Country Planning: Local Authority files
HLG81 - Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment (Uthwatt
Committee)
HLG82 - Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey
HLG83 - Regional Physical Planning Committees: minutes and
papers, 1946-1949
HLG86 - Ministry of Works and Buildings: Reconstruction of Town
and Country, Advisory Panels and Committees, 1940-1945
HLG88 - War Damaged Areas: Advisory Bodies on Redevelopment,
1942-1945

2. Bristol City Record Office:

i) Records of various organisations

Bristol Association of Engineers 1895-1966, Acc. No. 36256
Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, Acc. No. 38605
Bristol Civic Society, Acc. No. 30632 and 33199
Bristol Conservative Association 1920-79, Acc. No. 38036
Bristol and District Property Owners' Association 1938-68,
Acc. No. 34859
Bristol Liberal Club 1886-1971, Acc. No. 36202
Bristol Trades Council, Acc. No. 32080
Wessex Society of Architects 1928-1962, Acc. No. 17561.

ii) Records of the Corporation

Reports of Corporation Committees and Officers, Acc. No. 35510
Industrial Surveys in the Central Area 1945-49, Acc. No. 38129
Town planning records disposed by the City Engineers 1919-55,
Acc. No. 34414
Rating and Valuation records, Acc. No. 34713

3. Coventry City Record Office

The Town Clerk's files (Sec/CF/1), especially
Sec/CF/1/7602 Materials related to the pre-war discussion on a
civic centre
Sec/CF/1/7963 City centre redevelopment, general correspondence
1940-41
Sec/CF/1/9463 Miscellaneous Correspondence 1944
Sec/CF/1/9464 Materials with regard to the Public Inquiry in 1946
into the City Council's application to the Minister
of Town and Country Planning for a Declaratory
Order in respect of Area of Extensive War Damage,
under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944.
Sec/CF/1/10313 Coventry Redevelopment Scheme, various papers 1945
Sec/CF/1/10446(A) Various papers related to city centre
redevelopment
Sec/CF/1/10621 Correspondence in regard to Area of Extensive War
Damage 1946
Sec/CF/1/10625 Various papers related to city centre redevelopment

4. Local Studies Section of Coventry City Library

The Corporation's pamphlets on the official openings of Corporation
Street (1931) and Trinity Street (1937)
M.S. Garratt, 'The Redevelopment of the Central Area of the City of
Coventry 1924-1958', November 1959.
F. Smith, 'The Town and Country Planning Act, 1932: Report of the
Town Clerk', 5 April 1933.
J.E. Swindlehurst, 'Town Planning: A Preliminary Report', 26
February 1912.

5. Southampton City Record Office

- (i) Various papers disposed by Sir James Matthews (D/Mat), especially:
D/Mat/9 Overcrowding, Slum Clearance, and Housing
D/Mat/10 Various reports to the Town Planning and Development
Committee
D/Mat/11 Itchen River
D/Mat/13 A Scheme for a Sea Aerodrome
D/Mat/15 Docks and Port
D/Mat/17 Industry
D/Mat/22 Labour Party
D/Mat/27 Himself

D/Mat uncatalogued also includes various papers on employment,
 housing, industry, town planning, etc.

- (ii) Materials disposed by the City Engineer's Department 1028-57 (SC/EN) including papers, reports, plans, photographs, correspondence, etc.
 - SC/EN/1 Committees and Associated Materials
 - SC/EN/2 Photographs
 - SC/EN/3 Property
 - SC/EN/4 Plans
 - SC/EN/5 Bridges
 - SC/EN/6 Internal Departmental Administrative Material
 - SC/EN/7 External Work by the Department
 - SC/EN/8 Public Inquiries
 - SC/EN/9 Planning
 - SC/EN/10 Unemployment and Apprenticeship
 - SC/EN/11 Public Health
 - SC/EN/12 Contracts
 - SC/EN/13 Second World War
 - SC/EN/14 Professional Associations
 - SC/EN/15 Printed Matters
- iii) Materials disposed by the City Architect's Department (SC/BA):
 - SC/BA/1 and SC/BA/2 Town Planning Records 1928-1953
- iv) City Planning Records (SC/PL). Coloured sketches, drawings, maps etc.
 - SC/PL/29 Various sketches, drawings, maps, etc. regarding the central area in the 1940s.
- (v) City Treasurer's Records (SC/T).
 - SC/T9 Materials regarding the rates and the loss of rateable value through enemy action
- vi) Town Clerk's Files (TC Box).
 - TC Boxes 24-27 Materials regarding town planning and redevelopment 1929-67
- vii) D/8/778 Minutes of the Central Area Association 1946-1954
- viii) 'Civic Centre': a pamphlet by the City Record Office regarding the history of the Civic Centre

6. Other Papers

- (i) Labour Party
(Walworth Road, London)
- Minutes of the Housing and Town
Planning Sub-Committee of the Central
Committee on Reconstruction 1941-44

(ii) Mass Observation
(Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex)

Topic Collections No. 2	Reconstruction 1941-43
Topic Collections No. 40	Post-War Hopes 1944
Topic Collections No. 66	Town and District Survey 1938-49
Topic Collections No. 84	Local Council Elections 1937-51
File Reports nos. 516 & 517	Southampton: effect of recent raids (1940)
File Report No. 529	The Aftermath of Town Blitzes: summary of research in Bristol, Southampton, and Cheltenham (1940)
File Report No. 601	Raids and Morale: Bristol (1941)
File Report No. 603	Raids and Morale: Southampton (1941)
File Report No. 669	Plan for Britain: Analysis of letters written to <u>Picture Post</u> on "Plan for Britain" feature
File Report no. 699	Plan for Britain: analysis of letters sent to <u>Picture Post</u> in response to article (1941)
File Report no. 688	The End of the War: people's hopes and fears for the future
File Report no. 790	Coventry's preparation of Next Winter's Blitz (1941)
File Report No. 913	Reconstruction Problems: consideration of government reconstruction plans, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, political problems, and economic difficulties (1941)
File Report No. 1162	Propaganda for Town Planning: talk by Tom Harrison given at Housing Centre (1942)
File Report No. 1647	What People in Britain are thinking and talking about: article in New York, <u>New Leader</u> (1943)

(iii) Nuffield College Library (Oxford)

Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, Box N.C.S.R.S.,
'Area Reports, Southampton Reports', 1941-42.

B. Official Papers

1. Central Government.

Report of the Royal Commission on Geographical Distribution of the
Industrial Population, (Barlow Report) Cmd. 6153

Interim Report of the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment,
Cmd. 6291, 1941.

Report of the Committee on Land Utilization in Rural Areas (Scott Report)
Cmd. 6378, 1942.

Final Report of the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment,
(Uthwatt Report) Cmd. 6386 (HMSO, 1942).

White Paper on the Control of Land Use, Cmd. 6537, 1946.

2. Hansard - House of Commons Debates 1940-1949

3. National Labour Party

Reports of the Annual Conferences 1941-1945

4. Bristol City Council

The Minutes of the City Council and its Standing Committees 1939-49
(BRO)

5. Coventry City Council

The Minutes of the City Council and its Standing Committees 1930-1949
(CRO)

Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health 1930-1949. (Local
Studies Section of Coventry City Library)

6. Southampton Borough Council

The Minutes of the Borough Council and its Standing Committees 1940-49
(SRO)

C. Newspapers

1. Bristol

Bristol Evening Post
Bristol Evening World
Bristol Labour Weekly
Bristol Observer
Western Daily Press

2. Coventry

Coventry Evening Telegraph
The Coventry Herald
The Coventry Searchlight
The Coventry Standard
Coventry Tribune
The Midland Daily Telegraph
Town Crier

3. Southampton

Southern Daily Echo

4. Others

Birmingham Post
The Daily Herald
Everybody's Weekly
The Listener
The News Chronicle
The Observer
Reynolds News
The Times
Truth

D. Books, Pamphlets, Plans and Reports
(Published in London unless otherwise stated)

Abercrombie, P., Town Planning (1943)

_____, County of London Plan (1943)

_____, and J.P. Watson, A Plan for Plymouth (Plymouth, 1943)

Adshead, S., Civic Design 9Liverpool, 1909)

_____, Town Planning and Town Development (1923)

_____, A New England (1941)

_____, and H.T. Cook, The Replanning of Southampton (1942)

The Architectural Press, Your Inheritance (n.d.)

_____, Towards a New Britain (n.d. 1943?)

_____, Planning For Reconstruction (1944?)

Bourneville Village Trust, When We Build Again (1942)

Bristol Corporation, English City: The Growth and the Future of Bristol
(Bristol, 1945)

Calder, R., Start Planning Britain Now (1941)

Cole, G.D.H., A Plan for Britain (n.d.)

_____, et al., Plan for Britain: A Collection of Essays prepared
for the Fabian Society (1943)

_____, et al., Can Planning be Democratic?: A Collection of Essays
prepared for the Fabian Society (1944)

_____, and Raymond Postgate, The Common People (1946)

- Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture (1946)
- _____, The City of Tomorrow (1947)
- _____, Concerning Town Planning (1947)
- _____, and Francois de Pierrefeu, The Home of Man (1948)
- Coventry Corporation, The Future of Coventry (Coventry 1945)
- Fabian Research Group, Government and Industry, (Fabian Research Series, No. 83, 1944)
- Ford, P. (ed.), Southampton: A Civic Survey (Oxford, 1931)
- Fry, M., Fine Building (1945)
- Howard, E., Garden Cities of Tomorrow (1946)
- Jevons, R., and J. Madge, Housing Estates: A Study of Bristol Corporation's Housing Policy and Practice between the Wars (Bristol, 1946)
- The Labour Party, Housing and Planning After the War: The Labour Party's Post-War Policy (1943)
- Laski, H.J., Will Planning Restore Freedom? (n.d.)
- Lloyd, T.A., Planning in Town and Country (1935_)
- McAllister, G. and E., Town and Country Planning (1941)
- McCallum, I.R.M. (ed.), Physical Planning (1945?)
- Macmillan, H., Reconstruction: A Plea for a National Policy (1933)
- Mass Observation, The Journey Home (1944)
- Mumford, L., The Culture of Cities (1938)
- Newbold, H.B. (ed.), Industry and Rural Life: Report of the Cambridge Conference of the Town and Country Planning Association 1942 (1942)
- Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, Britain's Town and Country Pattern (1943)
- Osborn, F.J., Transport, Town Development and Territorial Planning of Industry (1934)
- _____, Overture to Planning (1941)
- _____, (ed.), Planning and Reconstruction Year Books 1942-1946
- _____, (ed.), Making Plans (1943)
- _____, The Land and Planning (1943)

Pool, P. and F. Stephenson, A Plan for Town and Country (1944)

Pumphrey, R., Industry and Town Planning (1942)

Royal Institute of British Architects, Rebuilding Britain (1943)

Sharp, T., The English Panorama (1938)

_____, Town Planning (Harmondsworth, 1940)

Silkin, L., The Nation's Land (Fabian Research Series no. 70, 1943)

Simon, E.D., Rebuilding Britain (1945)

Southern Daily Echo, The New Southampton (1942)

Tout, H. The Standard of Living in Bristol (Bristol, 1937)

Towndrow, F.E. (ed.), Replanning Britain: Report of the Oxford Conference of the Town and Country Planning Association 1941 (1941)

Trip, H.A., Road Traffic and its Control (1938)

_____, Town Planning and Road Traffic (1942)

Tyerman, D., Ways And Means Of Rebuilding: Report of the London Conference of the Town and Country Planning Association 1943 (1943)

Watkins, E.S., How Will Planning Affect Land Ownership? (n.d.)

Williams-Ellis, C. (ed.), Bristin and the Beast (1937)

Young, G.M., Country and Town (Harmondsworth, 1943)

E. Articles

Adshead, S., 'Camillo Sitte and Le Corbusier', Town Planning Review, 1930, vol. 14(2)

Cart, H.P. and De La Fontaine, 'Town Planning Problems in the Old Town, Southampton', The Builder, 26 June, 1936

'Southampton: Architecture at the Royal Academy', The Builder, 11 June, 1943

Collins, H., 'The Reconstruction of Southampton', The Architect and Building News, 30 May, 1943

Florence, P.S. and Shenfield, A., 'The Economics and Diseconomics of Industrial Concentration: The Wartime Experience of Coventry', The Review of Economic Studies, Vol. XII (2), 1944-45

Gibson, D., 'Some Matters Concerning Post-War Reconstruction', The Architectural Association Journal, February 1941, vol. LVI, no. 648.

_____, 'Post-War Reconstruction', The Surveyor and Municipal and County Engineer, 18 April, 1941

Holford, W.G., 'The Planning of a Great Seaport, Southampton', Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, 18 July 1936.

Pugh, A.R. and A.L. Percy, 'Planning and Reconstruction in Coventry', Journal of the Institution of Municipal and County Engineers, 3 September 1946

Royal Institute of British Architects Reconstruction Committee, 'First General Statement of Conclusions', Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, August 1942, vol. 49, no. 10.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Books, Pamphlets, Plans and Reports

Addison, P., The Road to 1945 (1975)

Ashworth, W., The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning (1954)

Bianchini, F., et al., City Centres, City Cultures (Manchester, 1988)

Bild, I. (ed.), Bristol's Other History (Bristol 1983)

Brace, K., Portrait of Bristol (1971)

City and County of Bristol, Development Plan (Bristol, 1952)

Burns, W., New Towns for Old (1963)

Calder, A., The People's War (1969)

Cherry, G.E., The evolution of British town planning, a history of town planning in the United Kingdom during the 20th century and of the Royal Town Planning Institute, 1914-74 (1974)

_____, (ed.), Pioneers In British Town Planning (1981)

_____, The Politics of Town Planning (1982)

City of Coventry, The Development Plan (Coventry, 1952)

Cullingworth, J.B., Housing Needs and Planning Policy (1966)

_____, Environmental Planning 1939-1969, Volume I. Reconstruction and Land Use Planning 1939-1947 (HMSO, 1975)

_____, Town and Country Planning in Britain (1982 edn.)

Esher, L., A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England 1940-1980 (Harmondsworth, 1983)

Eversley, D., The Planner in Society (1973)

Fogarty, M.P., Town and Country Planning (1949)

- Friend, J.K., and W.N. Jessop, Local Government and Strategic Choice (1969)
- Goss, A., and J. Tetlow, Homes, Towns and Traffic (1965)
- Halliday, J. (ed.), City Centre Redevelopment: A Study of British City Centre Planning and Case Studies of Five English City Centres (1973)
- Harrisson, T., Living Through the Blitz (Harmondsworth, 1978)
- Hodgkinson, G., Sent to Coventry (Coventry, 1970)
- Houghton-Evans, W., Planning Cities (1975)
- Jackson, A., The Politics of Architecture (1970)
- Johnson-Marshall, P., Rebuilding Cities (Edinburgh, 1966)
- Kimber, S., Thirty-Eight Years of Public Life in Southampton 1910-1948 (Southampton, 1949)
- Kirk, G., Urban Planning in a Capitalist Society (1980)
- Knowles, B., Southampton - The English Gateway (1951)
- Kuper, L. (ed.), Living in Towns (1953)
- Lancaster, W. and T. Mason (eds.), Life and labour in a Twentieth Century City: The Experience of Coventry (Coventry 1986)
- Lee, J.M., The Churchill Coalition, 1940-1945 (1980)
- Little, B., The City and County of Bristol (1954)
- MacInnes, C.M., Bristol at War (1962)
- Marriott, O., The Property Boom (1967)
- Monkhouse, F.J. (ed.), A Survey of Southampton and its Region (Southampton, 1969)
- Morgan, K.O., Labour in Power 1945-1951 (Oxford, 1984)
- Mullan, B., Stevenage Ltd. (1980)
- Mumford, L., The City in History (Harmondsworth, 1966)
- Pahl, R.E., Whose City? (Harmondsworth, 1975)
- Rance, A., Southampton: An Illustrated History (Portsmouth, 1986)
- Ravetz, A., Remaking Cities (1980)
- _____, The Government of Space: Town planning in modern society (1986)
- Reith, J.C.W., Into The Wind (1949)

Richardson, K., Twentieth Century Coventry (Coventry, 1972)

Sharp, T., Town and Townscape (1968)

Smith, H. (ed.), War and Social Change (Manchester, 1986)

County Borough of Southampton, Development Plan (Southampton, 1952)

_____, Development Plan: central area written analysis
(Southampton, 1954)

Sutcliffe, A. (ed.), The Rise of Modern urban Planning 1800-1914 (1980)

_____, (ed.), Towards the Planned City (Oxford, 1981)

_____, (ed.), Metropolis 1890-1940 (1984)

Tiratsoo, N., The Reconstruction of Coventry 1945-1960: an unpublished report to Volkswagenwerk Stiftung (Coventry 1988)

Walker, F., The Bristol Region (1972)

Winstone, R., Bristol in the 1940s (Bristol, 1961)

Yates, J.A., Pioneers to Power (Coventry, 1950)

B. Articles

'Bristol Conference of the Royal Institute of British Architects', The Architects' Journal, 1 June 1950

'The Latest Proposals for Coventry's City Centre', The Architects' Journal, 21 November 1957

'Coventry Rebuilds', Architectural Design, December 1958

Childs, D.R., 'Bristol', The Architects' Journal, 2 October 1952

_____, 'Southampton', The Architects' Journal, 16 April 1953

_____, 'Coventry', The Architects' Journal, 8 October 1953

_____, 'A Comparison of Progress in Rebuilding Bombed Cities', The Architects' Journal, 8 July 1954

Coventry Corporation, 'Coventry - city with a future', Municipal Review, October 1949

Hinton, J., 'Self-Help and Socialism: The Squatters' Movement of 1946', History Workshop, Spring 1988, no. 25

James, W.A., 'Redevelopment of the Central Shopping Area of Bristol', Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' Journal, April 1954

Jenkins, R., 'Coventry', The Sphere, 10 October 1953

- Johnson-Marshall, P., 'Coventry: Test-Case of Planning', The Listener, 17 April 1958
- Ling, A., 'Coventry's Pedestrian Shopping Centre', Keystone, May-June 1956
- Logie, G., 'The Lessons of Coventry', The Architect and Building News, 11 July, 1962
- Marwick, 'Middle Opinion in the Thirties', English Historical Review, April 1964
- Meggeson, R.R.H., 'The Historical Development of Southampton', Journal of Town Planning Institute, June 1951, vol. 37
- Morton, H.V., 'Future of Coventry', Illustrated, 29 October 1949
- 'Spotlight on Bristol', The Municipal Journal, 5 December 1958
- 'The Redevelopment of Bristol', Official Architecture and Planning, September 1953
- Rees, B.T., 'Redevelopment of Southampton's Central Area', Institution of Municipal Engineers, 1 February 1949, vol. 75
- Samuel, R., 'The Cult of Planning', New Socialist, January 1986, no. 34
- Senior, D., 'Coventry Plan Review', The Architects' Journal, 11 July 1962
- Wright, L., 'The Bristol Society of Architects, 1850-1950', Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, April 1950, vol. 57.

C. Unpublished Theses

- Carr, F., Engineering Workers and the Rise of Labour in Coventry 1914-1939 (University of Warwick, Ph.D., 1979)
- Garside, P.L., Town Planning in London 1930-1960: A Study of Pressures, Interests and Influences Affecting the Formation of Policy (London School of Economics, Ph.D., 1979)
- Whitfield, R., The Labour Movement in Bristol 1914-1939 (University of Bristol, M. Litt., 1982)