

## THE AMBIGUITY OF TOWN PLANNING: INNOVATION OR RE-INTERPRETATION?

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper questions the nature of town planning as a coherent national strategy throughout Britain at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by analyzing the specific case study of Portsmouth. In 1912, the city unveiled an urban improvement scheme named Curzon Howe Road. This went to replace an industrial working-class residential area that had been classified as unhygienic and dangerous for the general wellbeing of the inhabitants. Having been conceived in 1910 as a direct response to the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act, Curzon Howe Road can be regarded as being the first example of town planning in Portsmouth. In itself, the notion of town planning is often recognized as a new form of urban intervention aimed at tackling the problems inherited from the industrial revolution. This paper highlights the ambiguity of the term town planning which - to quote John W. Simpson, the president of the RIBA at the time of the prestigious Town Planning Conference of 1910 - "has different meanings in different mouths" (RIBA, 1911, iv). It also discusses how the notion of town planning in the early years of its practice in Portsmouth represents a transitional stage prior to the more design-oriented solutions of the following years. The paper argues that there was no 'pre-town planning' vs. 'post-town planning' clear-cut distinction in this case study, which can also be observed in diverse locations in Britain. Furthermore, the research shows how in Portsmouth, town planning was interpreted by its instigators as a fusion between the old (i.e. the 19<sup>th</sup> century Critical Planning practices and rigid Bye-Law standards) and new means of implementing change. Thus, Portsmouth's Curzon Howe Road represents an example of hybridization, generated by the struggle between forces of permanence and rupture within the context of urban improvement of the early 1900s. In this lies its significance, as it reassesses the true nature of what town planning signified in its formative years for different towns around Britain.*

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of town planning in Britain was brought about as a reaction to the persevering problems of rapid urban growth and change caused by industrialization (Ashworth, 1954; Sutcliffe, 1981b; Benevolo, 1967). The process of distortion of urban life and the ever increasing dissolution of the balance between town and country led to formulations on how to organize urban growth and resolve the ever increasing problems of congestion, unsanitary conditions and lack of space. The consolidation of this new disciplinary field can be dated to the period between the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is often discussed by the literature in relation to the move from Public Health Acts towards more design-based approaches. The passing of the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act provided a legal imperative for this shift. In Foucault's (1970) terms, from the set out of the conditions of possibility to the full maturation of the processes involved in the implementation of new ideas, there is often a period of reaction or hybridism. In the moment of transition, the struggle between forces of continuity and change exposes the complexity and non-linearity of urban thinking processes. As Bernard Lepetit (1993) exposed, the problems of permanence and rupture in urban studies manifest themselves in the asymmetry in which spatial structure, social reality and ideologies relate to one another. The emergence of new ideas and their eventual assimilation in professional practice are not simultaneous and often occur in contested and elongated timeframes (Braudel, 1977). This paper deals with overlapping and hybridism in early modern town planning in Britain. It investigates this particular moment of transition from the medical and engineering by-law approaches to the increasing influence of the design element in planning the modern city. This is discussed through the analysis of Curzon Howe Road, the first exercise of town planning carried forth by the city of Portsmouth on the south coast of England.

This improvement scheme - conceived in 1910 and inaugurated in 1912 - amounts to a modest side street (of no apparent architectural merit) existing within the urban collage of this naval city. Nevertheless, regardless of its physical or aesthetic magnitude, the analyses of both the proposal and final executed scheme will show how Curzon Howe Road can be characterized as a hybridization of past and then contemporary discourses on how to improve (The Evening News, 1910) the industrial city, within the wider national and international context of early town planning solution. Its ordinary appearance hides the original ambitions outlined within its proposal [1].

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[1] As the first town planning intervention in the city, it marks the birth of a long lineage of urban renewal on behalf of the local government. Despite this, it remains a highly underrated project; rarely appearing mentioned and never researched directly. This further urges its analysis, as beneficial to the overall understanding of urban improvement rhetoric's and practice locally and nationally.



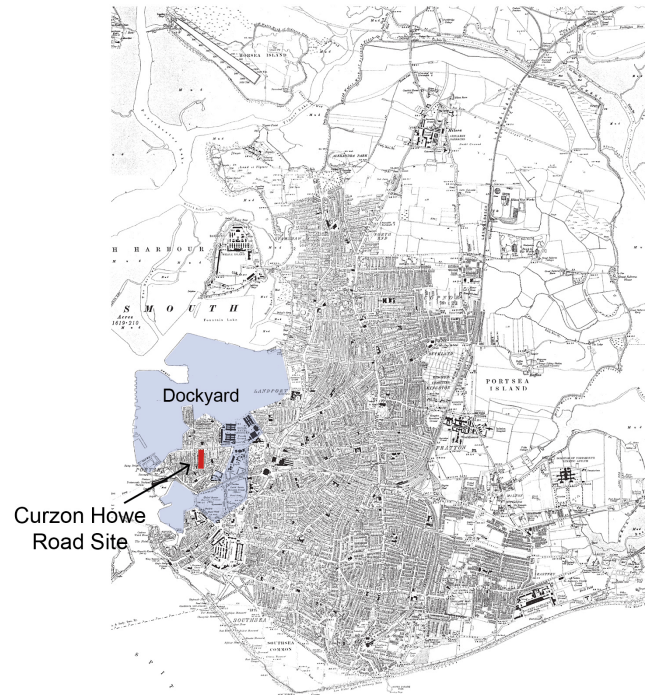


Figure 1- OS. *1910 Map of Portsmouth*. Note the position of the improvement site (marked in red) and how it is surrounded by the dockyards and its associated Royal Navy grounds, Portsmouth's main industry (shaded in blue) [1910 OS Map with annotations by author].

The paper will begin with a brief contextualization of Portsmouth in regards to the national planning discussions and construction of policy frameworks. This will be followed by an analysis of Curzon Howe Road's intended proposal, which will show the original form town planning was to assume in the city. Finally, the built outcome - a highly edited and simplified arrangement of the original - will be discussed.

## TOWN PLANNING AND THE CONTEXT OF URBAN CHANGE IN PORTSMOUTH

The term 'town planning' itself, coined in 1905, represented a commitment to differentiate this new art and science from the acts and regulations of the previous period. In 1909, the British central government passed the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act, which made statutory town planning a function of local governments. The Act, albeit still of limited impact, laid down the foundations of British town planning activities (Cherry, 1974). The same year,

## Cities, nations and regions in planning history

under orders from the City Corporation [2] (in turn pressured by the new legislation), the medical officer for Portsmouth, A. Mears Fraser, M.D., began a thorough investigation on the unsanitary working class neighborhoods of the borough [3]. He presented his findings through a report, condemning a particular area in the district of Portsea (Figure 2); identifying it as a potential site for clearance and subsequent improvement through a “*town planning scheme*”, as it represented the most threatening area to the general wellbeing of the city (MOH, 1909, p.47, refer to Figure 1). The document paved the way for Portsmouth’s first town planning essay, written by the same Dr Fraser, entitled ‘Improvement Scheme for an Unhealthy Area in Portsea’ (MOH, 1910), which was presented to the Corporation in September 1910 and accepted a month later. Dr Fraser proposed an improvement scheme - eventually opened as Curzon Howe Road - aimed at targeting Portsea’s slum through the clearance of the site in favor of a new housing estate.

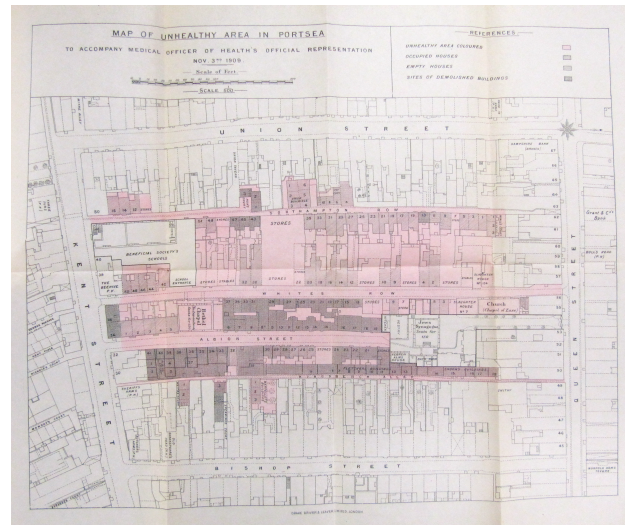


Figure 2- A. Mears Fraser, M.D. *Map of Unhealthy Area in Portsea*. A map depicting the condemned area to be later cleared by Curzon Howe Road, as drawn up by Dr Fraser in his 1909 Medical Report for the Borough of Portsmouth [MOH, 1909].

It becomes clear through the analysis of the notes compiled by Dr Fraser and his predecessors, that the site in question was not the worst affected in the borough (Dolling, 1896; CCR/VI/1-V; MOH, 1909; refer to Figure 3) [4]. It is also

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[2] At the time, the local government, which today is known as City Council, was known as the Corporation. For this reason, I will refer to them as such throughout the text.

[3] In that time, Portsmouth was not one unified city as we perceive it today, but rather a conglomeration of four different urban clusters or towns: Portsmouth, Portsea, Landport and Southsea (Patterson, 1976; Verenini, 2011). Together, these formed the Borough of Portsmouth, later unified as the City of Portsmouth in 1926.

[4] The worst affected slum in the Borough was in fact found in the district of Landport, and went by the name of St. Agatha's (Dolling, 1896; refer to Figure 3). In 1910, following the news that Portsea was chosen as a site for Curzon Howe Road, the local newspaper wrote this critique on the method behind town planning in Portsmouth: “*There is other*

worthwhile noting that the 1909 Act was most concerned with extension plans rather than inner city redevelopments (BAoP 1909; Allan & Allan, 1916). Portsmouth, interestingly enough, came up with an intervention in the existing urban fabric as a direct response to the very same act [5]. In hindsight, the motivation behind the choice of site is clear. The authorities targeted Portsea as its degeneration could have led to an impairment of the entire city's financial backbone. It was primarily inhabited by artisans engaged in support trades to the prosperous dockyards (Patterson, 1976; Manson, 1989); businesses which played a direct role in sustaining the city's entire *raison d'être* (Riley, 1985; Riley & Chapman, 1989). Its improvement implied a better grade of worker dwelling within it, as it was believed that better living conditions would have positively impacted on the workforce's yield (MOD, 1909; 1910; Burnett, 1978). This meant a maximization of profitability for the local economy, which by reflex would have been a positive resolution for the city as a whole. The economic benefits of such actions are amplified when we see that, originally, Curzon Howe Road was not just intended as a self contained side street, but as a standard model for the subsequent regeneration of Portsea in its entirety (MOH, 1910). It was anticipated as a stepping-stone for change, a paradigm for drastic transformation which would have directly benefitted the city's financial position. Thus, from the onset, town planning in Portsmouth assumed the role of economic booster rather than social reformer.

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*clearance work waiting to be done, and the application of the Legislation should be directed to an area of Landport which bears a very evil reputation, and the purification of which is one of the most crying needs of the day [...] What is wanted is the preparation of a generous scheme of clearance [...] Let the Committee call in its Medical Officer and Engineer"* (Evening News, 1910).

[5] It is clear that the 1909 Act was the catalyst for the planning and execution of the improvement scheme in Portsea. This was acknowledged in Dr Fraser's 1909 report, when he writes that the report, "*deals with an entirely new departure in public health legislation, namely, Town Planning. [...] To put the above in force, the local authority must [...] prepare a Town Planning Scheme*" (MOH, 1909, p.47). He further discusses the act and how this is the force behind the local's government interest in the issues; "*The object of the Act [referring to the 1909 Act] is to prevent towns developing haphazard, as has been done in the past. Up to the present, owners of land have developed, each his own particular bit, solely with the view of making the best out of it from his own pecuniary point of view, without any consideration as to how his action would affect the general well-being of the surrounding area. Under this Act it is in the power of the Authority to put a stop to this [...] in a well throughout out definite plan*" (MOH, 1909, p.48)

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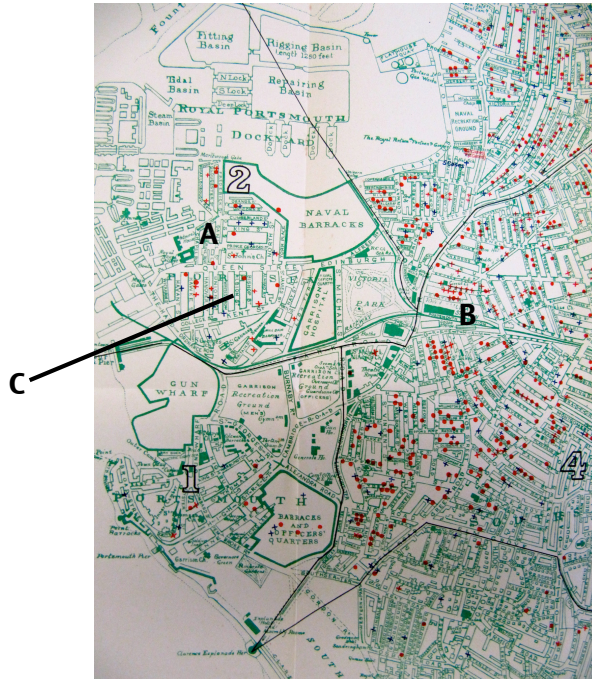


Figure 3- A. Mears Fraser, M.D. *Map Showing Incidence of Dangerous Diseases in the Year 1909*. This map, produced by Dr Fraser, shows the location of reported incidents or deaths in the borough of Portsmouth, relating to the major (most serious) medical infections (marked as red dots and blue crosses). It contradicts the claims that Portsea (A) was the most unhealthy area in the borough. It is clear, instead, how Landport (B) was in fact much more deprived and should have been the medical priority. Note the location of Curzon Howe Road (C) [MOH, 1909 with annotations by author].

For Portsmouth, town planning did not represent a revolutionary break of the traditional modes of urban reform. From the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the problems associated to the industrial unhygienic city were being studied and tackled by the medical (and engineering) professions [6] (Ashworth, 1954, Cullingworth & Nadine, 2006). In contrast, the shift in urban improvement paradigm promoted in the turn of the century emphasized the notion of good design as a generator of wellbeing; empowering the architects as central actors of change (RIBA, 1911). In Portsmouth, however, the shift of policy did not equate to a shift in the professional body engaged in its execution. In this context, town planning was regarded as a “science”, not an art (MOH, 1909, p.48). The medical officer (marginally aided by the borough engineer) remained the central person behind urban reform. From its core, it was an improvement mechanism utilized by the old order to serve an old (but still in vigor) cause. After all, town planning emerged as a highly elusive and very ambiguous term.

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[6] Portsmouth was no exception to this practice, although it begun quite late if compared to the date of the first Public Health Act (BAoP, 1850). From 1873, the medical officer for the borough wrote annual medical reports and drew maps which noted concerns and issues in regards to the health of the city (CCR/VI/I).

As John W. Simpson [7] recognized, “*town planning has different meanings in different mouths*” (RIBA, 1911, iv). The way one understood it depended greatly on his or her profession, social stance and personal creed. As such, the notion became a subjective one: to some an art, to others a science, to the architect an amalgamation of both. Due to the ambiguity it embodied, local governments formed their own idea of what town planning should be, a definition informed directly by their particular agenda [8].

With this in mind, Portsmouth’s case study also shows that albeit the medical profession remained central in the improvement of the city, some notions of design did begin to feature as a tool for the successful rehabilitation of slum areas. This created an interesting hybrid in which the medical responses started to become infused with notions of architecture, urbanism, and in some cases even aesthetics. Therefore, it is noteworthy to highlight how the design aspect of planning was indeed beginning to be taken into consideration through a mixture of resilient and new viewpoints. To show this, it is paramount to focus our attention on the original 1910 design of Curzon Howe Road.

## THE IDEA OF TOWN PLANNING

Curzon Howe Road’s concept scheme resonates the Victorian zeal for public health and housing, as well as the direct developments in town planning of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. More specifically, we can mention: the model-village concept; the idea of open public space as hygienic and social regenerators; and finally a series of architectural and aesthetic considerations, clearly influenced by contemporary pioneers in regards to the overall laying of the site and the specific housing within it.

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[7] J. W. Simpson was president of the RIBA at the time of the prestigious Town Planning Conference of 1910 (RIBA, 1911).

[8] The absence of a homogeneous national understanding of the term became an issue recognized by central government. The Land Enquiry Committee’s - a central government body responsible for assessing the development of the various national council-driven improvement schemes following the introduction of town planning as national urban regenerative process - wrote: “*over the vast majority of urban areas the development of building estates continues on the old [referring to pre-1909], unsatisfactory lines*” (LEC, 1914, p.149).



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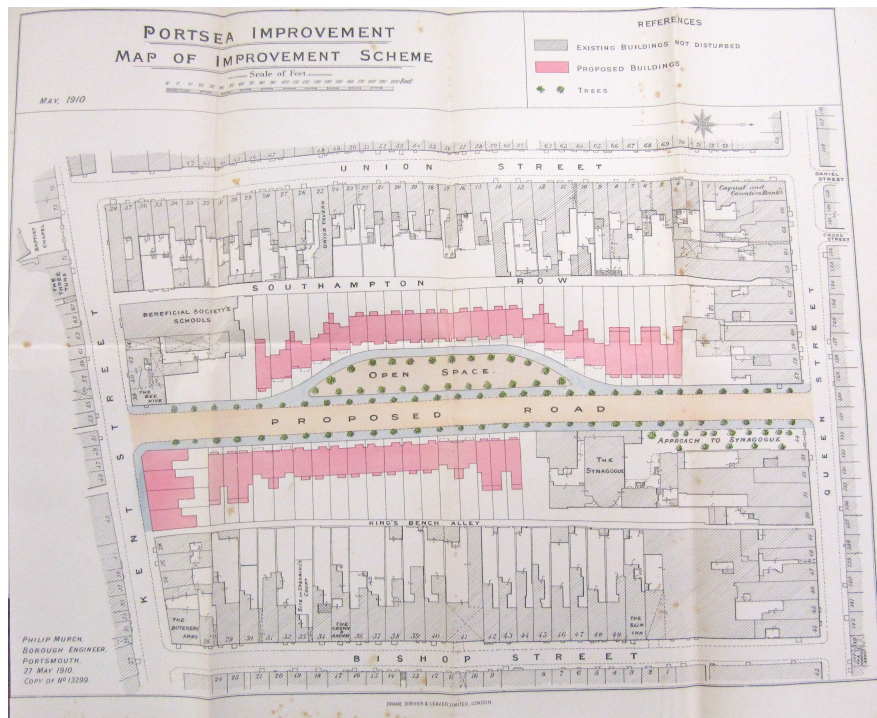


Figure 4- Philip Murch under supervision of A. Mears Fraser, M.D. *Portsea Improvement Map of Improvement Scheme*. Proposal plan of Curzon Howe Road improvement scheme as found in the first essay in *Town Planning of the Borough of Portsmouth* [MOH, 1910].

Dr Fraser wrote that the primary objective of the improvement scheme was to be the “transforming [...] of slum property [...] into a model working class residential neighbourhood” (MOH Report, 1910, p.68). Following the opening of the housing estate, the Corporation celebrated the outcome by referring to it as “a little model working-class district” (CoP, 1912) [9]. This notion of ‘model’ working class districts (or villages) [10] became popular in the late 1880s (Choay, 1969). It is a direct reference to the building of Port Sunlight, Bournville and New Earswick, which promoted new urbanization strategies to improve the industrial worker’s living conditions through better housing and access to greenery. They were built by Industrialists, with the view to ensure a higher productivity of their work force, and maximize their industry’s output as

[9] These texts are the only two written by the authorities in charge of the improvement scheme, describe the Curzon Howe Road at the time. No other text has emerged in regards, despite hours of investigation in national and local archives.

[10] Originally, these developments were known as Worker’s Towns and grew as, “manufacturers built not only their factories but also a residential area nearby” (Ashworth, 1954, p.22). One of the earliest examples was Bressbrook (Ireland) created by the Benjamin Ward Richardson family in 1846. The name shifted to Model Villages around 1880, as the concept enters a second phase and more ambitious schemes were developed.

a result [11] (George, 1909). By the late 1890s, these ideas were beginning to be taken into consideration by local authorities nationwide, as these exemplified attractive urban models (Sutcliffe, 1981a, p.57). In the light of what has been present, it is interesting to see how Curzon Howe Road improvement scheme was not referred to as anything other than a model working class district by the authorities responsible for its drafting. This shows that the proposal was based on some principles which had emerged, in England, more than thirty years prior to the nationalization of town planning itself. As such, hybridization of intent is already starting to show. Moreover, in Portsmouth, a primitive predecessor to the fully-fledged model village concept had already been experimented with through the private suburban- or dare we say “*pseudourbian*” [12] - development of Croxton Town in 1909 [13] (Patterson, 1976). This served as inspiration for further private suburban expansions in the 1820s, through the building of Allen’s Town and Somerstown. Thus, in Portsmouth, the practice of building housing estates for the working classes through the ideas of better housing and open space represented a century old model of improvement. The only difference was that this time it was an inner-city government intervention rather than a suburban private enterprise.

In the original 1910 design, the plan consisted of two roads, one sweeping out to form a small crescent with at its heart an area labeled only as ‘open space’. Portsea’s intervention was thus based around the notion of a linear street and a central square. The latter was described by Dr Fraser as being “*planted with trees, which shall be a lung for the neighborhood, and afford a playground for children*” (MOH, 1910, p.68). It was stated in the 1909 report, that the primary health concerns with that particular areas consisted of *phthisis pulmonalis* [14], which was responsible for a death rate from lung-disease seven times higher than in the rest of the Portsmouth borough (MOH, 1909). This was due to restrictions of light and fresh air that the inhabitants of Portsea were susceptible to, caused by the density of their back-to-back dwellings and the

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[11] Although the accounts on Bournville by its designer Alexander Harvey (1906) discuss the want to produce better leisure for the working class which would suggest a humanitarian cause, in fact it was based on the principal that if men are given alternatives to the pub, their health would improve and so would their work productivity. Thus, it too has a final capitalist objective tied down to its social concerns like the other Model Villages.

[12] Choay refers to the term “*pseudurbias*” (1969, p.31) to denote false-towns. She states that these models do not represent true attempts at urbanism, but as Ashworth described, purely “*working-class dormitories*” (1954, p.22).

[13] The Model Villages of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had industry (such as the presence of a factory) as part of their design. In Portsmouth’s case, these precocious models were meant as housing islands to form improved working class communities, but did not embody a factory within its scheme. Instead, they were suburban dormitories. However, many similarities in concepts are found between these examples and the later, fully developed villages.

[14] Most commonly referred to as tuberculosis of the lungs or consumption. Dr J. T. Macewan, the Poor Law Medical Officer of the time, attributed the cause of this phenomenon “*largely due to the overcrowding and insanitary conditions of the houses, combined with the absence of sunlight and free access of air*” (Dr Macewan in MOH, 1909, p.54).

narrowness of the area's alleys [15]. Hence, it is no surprise to see that the allowance for an area of open space was, in the words of the Medical Officer, "*one of the principal features of the scheme*" (MOH, 1910, p.76). In the proposal, the intended open space was small but proportionate to the overall proposal. This relates strongly to the notion of "*sanitation through the creation of void*" [16] (Choay, 1969, p.18), which in itself retained a strong hygienist stance (Kostof, 1999, p.266). Additionally, trees flanked the road to further increase the site's air quality (MOH, 1910). The concept of creating open space as urban lungs came to be developed in the mid 19th century, as medical advances in the field made it clear that fresh air and sunlight were synonymous to healthier environments (Chadwick, 1842). Its use in Curzon Howe Road represented the latest reiteration of a continuous process of using green space within the urban context as a form of improving the city [17].

So far, we have seen how some of the major aspects of the scheme are manifestations of common public health and regularization practices inherited from the Victorian period. However, it is also important to recognize that there are some equally interesting concepts which have come directly from the new developments in town planning of that time, showing signs of innovation. More specifically, we can draw attention to the impact that Raymond Unwin's and Thomas Colgan Horsfall's ideas had on the scheme. In the general layout of the proposal, one side of the road curves out to form a crescent. As we have seen, this was primarily a means of freeing up space for the central open grounds in a way to maximize its efficiency in relation to the houses (MOH, 1910). However, this also provided an architectural opportunity, enabling the articulation of a sweeping street frontage; a desired feature for Dr Fraser as it would, "*avoid dullness [and] give a pleasing variety*" (MOH, 1910, p.68). This pursuit of the abolition of dullness is imbedded in the romantic picturesque views of contemporaries such as Camillo Sitte (1889) and Unwin himself, who just a few years prior wrote that the ideal street was to be both safe and pleasing to the eye (1909) [18]. Moreover, the idea of injecting 'pleasantness' as an objective

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[15] The area was described as "*generally damp, dark, ill-ventilated [...] and the streets are so narrow that it is impossible for sufficient circulation of fresh air to take place*" (MOH, 1909, p.51).

[16] The 19th century saw the use of open space as 'regulatory' interventions (as defined by Choay, 1969) within the city. Haussmann is often regarded as having coined the term regularization, as the French expression 'régulariser' appears often through his writing (Haussmann, 1890-3).

[17] The concept of open space as regenerator is not new to town planning, but rather belongs to a British (and sub sequentially American) tradition of urban intervention. From the 17-18th century squares of residential upper-middle class districts in London (i.e. Bloomsbury), to the mid-19th century urban interventions in the form of public parks. Public parks were seen as means of regenerating the lower classes medically and socially (Loudon, 1826; Lemes de Oliveira, 2008; Panzini, 1993; Chadwick, 1966). It grant their densely packed urban fabric with some breathing space, as well as giving them leisurely alternatives to the public house (or pubs). The latter being responsible for high levels of immorality, which lead to social decadence and violence as well as drink related diseases (Chadwick, 1842). In Portsmouth too, Victoria Park - also known as the 'People's Park' (Hampshire Port, 1978; Green, 1978) - was opened in 1878 for these very same purposes (CoP, 1928).

[18] Unwin continues his discourse and states that, to achieve this, one could create straight roads - which would be most efficient to travel through, service and police - with



of planning can be directly linked to Horsfall's views on the subject. He was one of the first to claim that "*the chief cause of evil is that the towns lack the pleasantness*" (1904, p.21).

Unwin's influence is also found in the individual cottage plans proposed by Dr Fraser. In Curzon Howe Road, the housing was to be of three typologies: A, B, and C. Whereas two of the plans consisted of a standardized (type A) and an economical (type C) layout of hygienically sound working class cottages, type B embodied "*a more original plan*" (MOH, 1910, p.73; refer to Figure 5). The particularity of this design was that the parlour and the living room - traditionally separate - had been merged to form one large, dual aspect space. There was a clear medical reasoning behind this, which was to grant its inhabitants a "*fine, large, and well lighted living room*" (MOH, 1910, p.73) with better ventilation. The abolition of the parlour was a controversial idea [19], which both Unwin and his partner Barry Parker had originally pioneered at New Earswick Model Village, in 1902 [20] (Unwin, 1902). Eventually, this proved too revolutionary and was never fostered. A few years later, Unwin tried to re-propose it in Letchworth Garden City, but failed once again to persuade the residents of its benefits (Swenarton, 1981). Type B represents a clear advancement in the local urban improvement measures, as it was a byproduct of the amalgamation of medicine (science) with design (art). In the plan, innovative architectural solutions are proposed to maximize the overall regenerative potential of the dwelling.

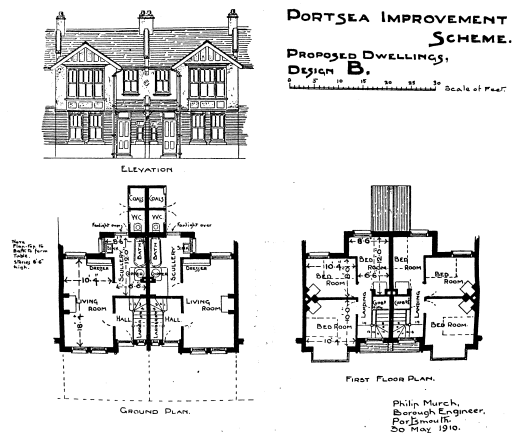


Figure 5- Philip Murch under supervision of A. Mears Fraser, M.D. *Proposed Dwellings Design B*. Cottage design B for Curzon Howe Road featuring one large, dual aspect living space and no parlour.

a varies street frontage through picturesque breaks and alterations to the buildings (1909). This is mirrored in Curzon Howe Road: "*designed perfectly straight for convenience of police supervision and adaptability for traffic*" (MOH, 1910, p.68) with some picturesque elements. Thus, the scheme can be seen as a primitive attempt to achieve this very same idea.

[19] The parlour was seen as a status symbol, and thus it was highly sought after by the lower classes (Swenarton, 1981).

[20] Unwin and Parker developed this plan for the same medical reasons pointed out by Dr. Fraser in his subsequent reinterpretation of the same concept (Unwin, 1902).

Although showing some clear signs of reform, as we have seen, the first exercise in town planning cannot truly be defined as such. Its eclectic collection of old and new ideas reinforce the notion that there wasn't an immediate shift of urban planning mechanisms post-1909. Instead, a hybrid scheme was put forward. Despite the fact that in Portsmouth some innovations were beginning to emerge, these co-exist with re-interpretations of well established ideas on the matter. As such, Curzon Howe Road is a prime example of asynchrony between national planning ideas and legislation on the one hand, and professional local practice on the other.

## THE EXECUTION OF TOWN PLANNING

In its final execution, Portsmouth's first town planning attempt underwent some serious alterations. Interestingly, all of the elements that were conceived as innovative had been edited out in favour of a more haphazard solution. What we are left with is a reduced outcome, bearing little resemblance to the original proposal. Dr Fraser expressed his frustration in regards, when writing that, "*housing for the working class is not such a burning question in this town as in many others*" (MOH, 1912, p.81).

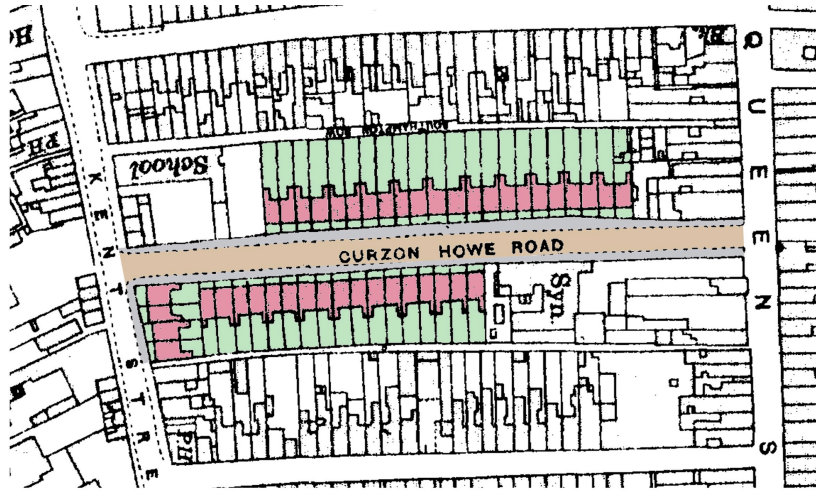


Figure 6- Curzon Howe Road as it was eventually built in 1912. Note how the scheme has been significantly simplified if compared to the 1910 proposal [1933 OS Map annotated by Author].

In its final form, the pleasantness of the scheme is replaced with the monotony of by-law standards [21] and the other significant features of the scheme had been expunged. The road assumes a rigid linearity, flanked by

[21] By-laws were general hygienic guidelines imposed upon the built environment with the Public Health Act of 1875.

either side with standardized working-class cottages [22]. The only signs of greenery are the trees, which perhaps are the closest link the development has to the original intent of Dr Fraser. The execution of the first town planning exercise in Portsmouth speaks clearly on behalf of the authorities in charge. There is evidence of engagement with the concept of direct urban intervention through a more proactive approach to urban sanitization as evidenced through both the 1909 medical report and the 1910 essay in town planning (MOH, 1909, 1910). However, when it came down to delivering a built solution, the authorities reverted back to the old custom of things by basing themselves on previous by-laws which, in themselves, were almost 40 years old. The main factor driving the development was not forward thinking, but cost efficiency.

Furthermore, the concept of using Curzon Howe Road as a launch-pad to a wider urban improvement of the area of Portsea simply vanished. No more mention of this is made in any documents, and thus the dream of an improvement scheme as a sprawling urban vaccine ended prematurely. Therefore, in the adolescent years of town planning, we see a clash between the authorities' relationship to town planning in theory and practice. Their final interpretation shows us, in this case, that town planning became associated to re-interpretation of past routines rather than the pursuit of future visions. Town planning, in Portsmouth, lost the little momentum it had ever gathered in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Soon new threats of war - eventually materializing themselves through the outbreak of the First World War - drifted the attention of the local government away from the problems of the city. In the 1920s, following the war and the coming of the 1919 Act (BAoP, 1919), a few suburban town planning schemes will be built following Garden Suburb ideas (PCC, 2011). However, any serious attempts at planning will have to wait until after the Second World War, as its destructive force will be seen as an opportunity to modernise the city through vast reconstruction plans (Stedman, 1995).

## CONCLUSION

Through this case study, it has been shown how the loosely defined expression 'town planning' did not have the same interpretation, not even by members of the same local government. The discrepancy in the chronologies of national and international debates and the local assimilation and interpretation of those are clearly visible in the case of Portsmouth. The first attempt at town planning in Portsmouth did not denote a significant reformation of values. However, it started a slow process of assimilation which would become fully crystallized in the following decades. The modernization that it represented required an incubation period in the minds of the authorities before it was embraced more confidently. Therefore, in the light of what has been present in this research, it

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[22] Internally too, the plans of the cottages lack any reference to the innovations devised by Unwin and Parker and re-proposed by Dr Fraser through typology B. In fact, they resemble typology C, the one Dr Fraser devised as the most essential and economic (but also less beneficial in terms of health) of all.

is clear that town planning as initially conceived in Portsmouth, exemplified a re-interpretation of traditional urban re-sanitization mechanisms and not a celebrated innovation. Certainly, there were some novel ideas in the field, and indeed these were primarily being tackled by design-lead solutions. However, these were overshadowed by traditional methods. Positively, the introduction of town planning in the national urban regenerative law did forced the authorities to take a closer look at the urban problem in a more ambitious way. However, the same cannot be said in regards to its eventual implementation on site. Thus, the research exposes an example of hybridism in paradigm and approach from a transition period between the new and old ways of promoting urban interventions. Curzon Howe Road epitomizes the ambiguity of the term town planning, its aspirations and methods, and the shifting nature of urban regenerative methods at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## REFERENCES

### Abbreviations:

BAoP	British Acts of Parliament
CoP	City of Portsmouth
LEC	Land Enquiry Commission
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
PCA	Portsmouth City Archives
PCC	Portsmouth City Council
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects

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