



why develop

Philip Kerr



why develop

Changing the places in which we live, work and spend the rest of our time may not by many be regarded as absolutely essential: but without such adjustments to our surroundings, it could be argued that but for these changes we would have remained in the stone ages.

So it follows that to improve our lot and enjoy the trappings of a modern existence with warm health supporting homes and places of work, where there are more down-time opportunities and slicker community welfares linked to essential infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, airports and power stations, we do need to develop. And to develop means change to our land - like it or not.

If we add to this the dramatic changes in our everyday habits, the tendency of transfer from rural areas to the active city honeypots, and the general flux of population and markets across counties, countries and continents there comes into sharp focus an absolute necessity to make deliberate shifts in our attitude to develop.

Lobby groups and individuals who rail against development need to appreciate that where they now stand was once a piece of England's green and pleasant land which had to surrender to the 'development' pressures of a previous generation. Every generation craves to move on.

That is not to say we must not be exceptionally careful and respect our heritage and precious environment so as to provide something that is not only fit for purpose but also attempts to bring a lasting legacy of a quality that will endure for future generations.

Hence, why *we must* develop, rather than why *must we* develop?



environment

We all agree that our precious earth needs some worship in terms of its beauty and a thankfulness of its delicate nature: and to develop without a proper understanding of how to bring about suitable moderating safeguards is rightly reckless. As we attempt to combat the adverse impact of mankind in creating a modern society that functions at all levels there is a massive challenge which is difficult to balance, especially as populations are increasing.

The competition for space to house, employ, transport and feed the people creates so much bearing on the environment that we have come to the unpleasant realisation that the battle is very uphill. And so we are not even sure that the often politically engineered answers which tinker with the edges will suffice.

Technological advances are helping: driven by that human desire to survive. As means to mitigate the effect of our vitalities such as our transport systems and carbon producing elements for energy, industry and habitation are seriously introduced through the development industry, then we move closer to the equilibrium essential for that survival.

As we cater for more people to have the modern facilities they crave, we need to work at this, at every level and right now. With an understanding that the power of the worlds cyclical changes are upon us and will prevail – we must squeeze the best from what we have and adapt to these pressures, rather than fight them; and this may have a chance of successful existence whilst minimising the indentation on the environment of the future.



landscape and horizons

New development on any land should be most respectful to setting and landscape but it should not be a slave to it. Some of the most iconic and acceptable developments in our country use the landscape to great advantage and often are very bold but later settle, and often set something to be celebrated. Such activity might be considered as progress - be it in urban or rural situations.

Whilst we should be aware of land patterns and have a strong awareness to our historical and physical backgrounds, new ideas should not be prevented from being daring and creating innovative interest in our inhabitations.

Examples can be seen on the skylines of some of our most advanced cities and valuable locations: and as we develop with wealth more universally spread throughout the nation there should be a determination not to try to mask expansion. To give it excellent status we achieve a better place that will bring a lasting benefit to the local community in which it sits.



design

Meeting everyone's taste is difficult: but making sure a development works well within its space for all is something that is possible and achievable with simple thought and application of some basic rules. Our planning system attempts to achieve this but over meddling and prescription means the delivery often fails. Centuries of recognisable experience taken from our cities, towns or village buildings have been all too often cast aside in the name of a construction manual or new regulation that attempts to satisfy a single issue to the detriment of the whole project.

Development should embrace new moods, enterprise and technological advances but at the same time be respectful to what evidently works from experience gained from our city fathers. Some of the best examples of development prove that good design need not be any more expensive in arriving at something that is visually pleasing, though may be different, be practical and, above all, lasting.

Some of the worst examples are lucky if they are replaced within a generation; but often simply blight and bring innovation a bad name. So, in developing at any scale, there should be a high regard for design to avoid slipping into mediocrity in the name of speed and cost.



space

Some of the most acceptable and so the most valuable places to live and work are in tight highly dense locations and this is often to do with the relationship of one set of buildings to another creating interesting and usable space between them. A snug village with cottages cheek by jowl to the church, the school, the manor and the road, provides pleasing development just as much as the ordered high-rise Georgian villas in some of our best cities.

Development need not absorb vast expanses of our country and should be very efficient and fitting perhaps using up old spaces and squeezing the most out of interesting locations. Extensive sites for business or housing perhaps allocated on a whim or founded on sloppy evidence can lead to run-of-the-mill development without regard to the local vernacular. Avoiding a sameness that is uninteresting does not perpetuate such a wasteful use of land.

So our attitude must be to create the very best space in the very best locations and by so doing ensure a legacy that will be well loved into the future. To do this successfully there has to be some challenge to the norm and opening of eyes to see how, perhaps copy, very efficient development and so provide excellent spatial and built-form qualities in development.

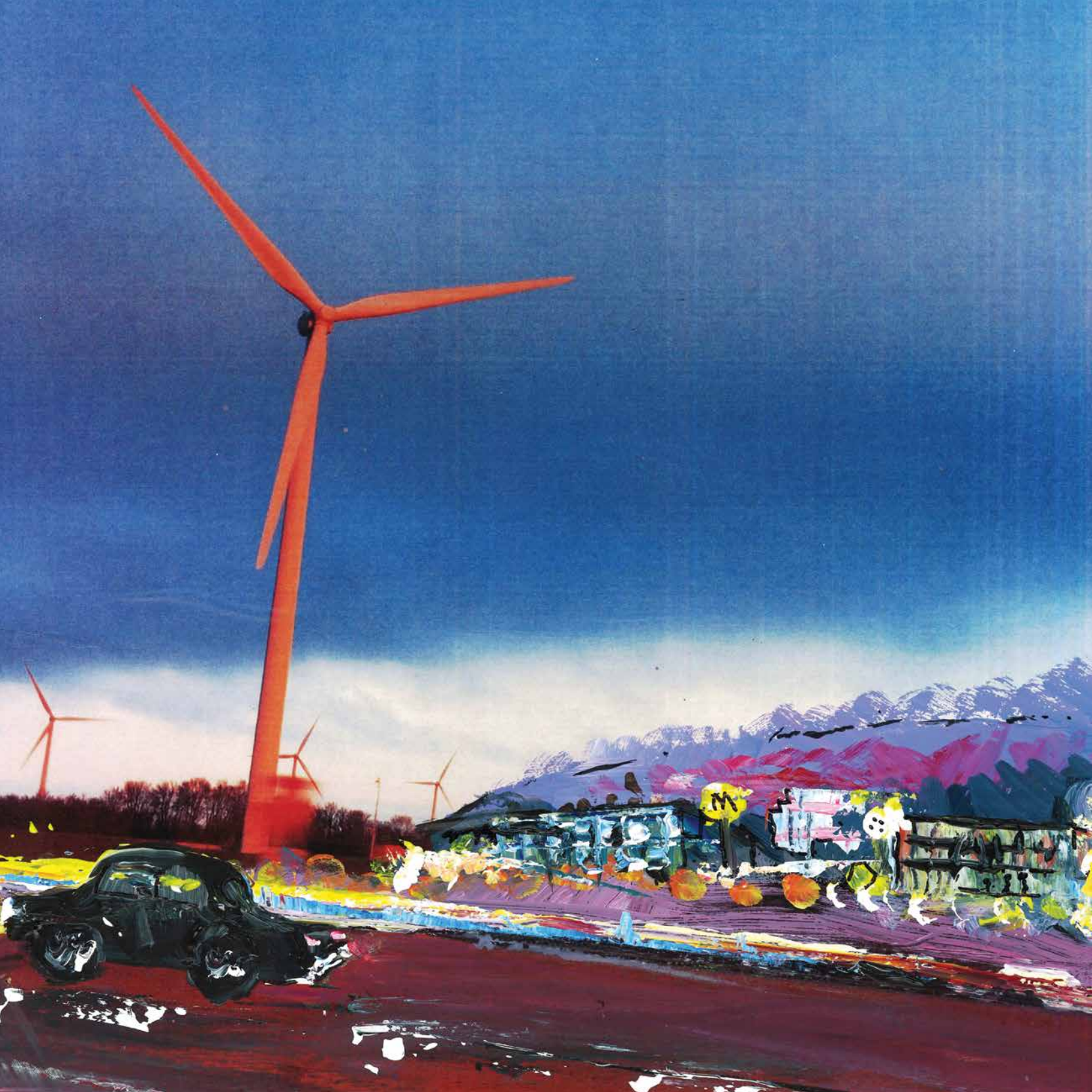


transport

Astounding technological advances in recent years has brought about a revolution in the way we travel, move goods and communicate about our world. To this extent we can be reassured that the way we connect will become more efficient and less cumbersome as populations demand and require better, faster, cleaner and cheaper ways. We need to be clever in adapting out-dated infrastructure that is a strong feature of our country and move to embrace the high-tech earthquake rallying so obviously.

Such avenues of development are exciting and an essential part of expanding and changing communities. We should aim for a better emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport and being efficient with internet based messaging.

The failure to respond quickly enough to changing such organisation on a national scale has to an extent been caused by sentimentality to the status quo and the slow planning system. With safeguards in place, we should push on and make far reaching decisions that will endure far beyond this generation.



energy

Modern day life in an industrialised society cannot escape the need for energy in its various forms. Often hidden in commercial backwaters and sometimes blatant on our coastlines there are generating plants plodding away day and night to keep us warm and wired to cope.

Now new systems are seen on our countryside and seas perhaps temporary before new methods are realised. Insincerity prevails in certain communities on such development: no doubt by those who nevertheless require charged electronic devices, instant roadside cafés and press button convenience to magic up from nowhere.

As belching coal fired power stations are being torn down and in keeping with a theme to travel along the technology curve wind turbines, solar panels and overhead wires appear so the marks on our landscapes and townscapes and transport links are changing.

Such is the consequence of our requirement to develop, to live comfortably and should be embraced to give the next generation the security by which time they may have cause to make these marks disappear.



use

Our city fathers have in the post industrial revolution times created a pattern of development that has, all too often, sought to segregate use of land and buildings into distinct zones. These later become labelled into districts maturing to a status that might be respectable, or perhaps sub-standard or even a ghetto of particular uses, trades or social class.

More recent development strategists attempt to introduce a flexible approach that allows buildings and sectors to shift geographically as markets and fashion dictate. This allows a flow in the use of buildings and space and should add to prosperity, though regulation and slavish adherence to the 'planning' textbook has so often held back this obvious route to property evolution.

As the computer driven age moves exponentially our industrialists, farmers, retailers, transport, community and energy producers need huge flexibility to respond and develop - most efficiently. Development plans and town halls should not hinder such changes and allow a true dynamism to see change in the effectiveness of our land and buildings, to suit the moment. Such subtlety will influence attitudes to development, the recycling of cherished assets and provide a basis for progression.

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Our daily work constantly contemplates the dilemma of property development and changes our advice may make - pitching the nostalgia and status quo against innovation and the desires of markets. We are being pushed persistently by those who may take advantage of these dynamics, be they landowners, business occupiers or people in the property world and we always have to first to believe in any project before engaging.

So we take seriously the wide implications of embarking on new ideas and making those steps that can lead to renewal and marked changes that affect land buildings and our communities. With experience and sound practice we aim to bring together the tensions underlying revitalisation projects making them relevant to market and attitudes which in turn brings value in every respect.

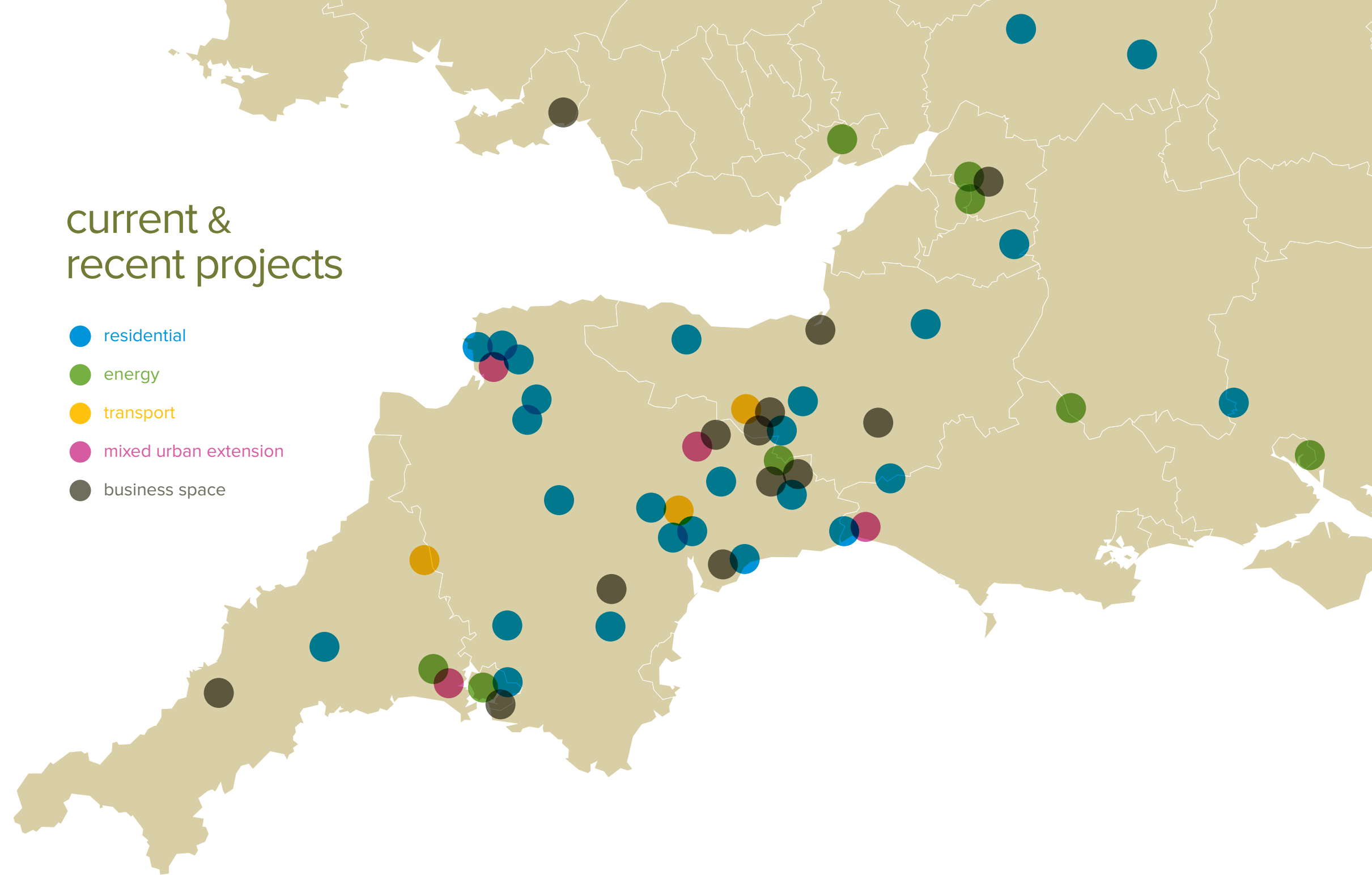
From industrial and business space strategies, to long term urban extensions and town regeneration we add the wider and creative property dimension to the process in an endeavour to meet the constant pressures anticipated by our clients.



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Harcourt Kerr, Kingston House, Blackbrook Business Park, Taunton, TA1 2PX

tel +44 (0) 1823 444 097 **fax** +44 (0) 1823 444 489 **email** taunton@harcourt-kerr.com

www.harcourt-kerr.com