Perspectives on Coventry's Medieval Heritage since 1900 between Town Planning and Local Community Engagement

MARK WEBB

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Coventry ist heute vielleicht am besten bekannt als Stadt, die nach den schweren Zerstörungen des Zweiten Weltkriegs im Stil der Nachkriegsmoderne wiederaufgebaut wurde oder auch für ihr Wachstum in der Nachkriegszeit als Sitz der britischen Autoindustrie. Ihr reiches bauliches Erbe, das größtenteils aus der spätmittelalterlichen Blütezeit stammt, wurde bis vor kurzem übersehen, obwohl die Stadt noch vor weniger als 100 Jahren als wesentlich mittelalterlich geprägt bezeichnet werden konnte. Die Veränderungen begannen in der Zwischenkriegszeit mit der Einführung eines Straßenbahnsystems und neuer Straßen, die die engen mittelalterlichen Straßen durchschnitten. Die Wahl einer neuen Lokalregierung im Jahr 1937, die sich als Mandat für eine radikale Planungsagenda verstand, führte zu einer raschen Neuordnung der Stadt nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die lange Zeit vorherrschende Annahme, dass es einen Konsens zwischen der Stadtverwaltung und der Öffentlichkeit für die Veränderungen gab, basierend auf der hohen Besucherzahl bei einer Ausstellung im Jahr 1945, wird mittlerweile in Frage gestellt.

In Coventry haben viele Bürger das Gefühl, nicht in die Vorhaben der Stadtplanung einbezogen zu sein. Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wurden in Coventry mehr mittelalterliche Gebäude zerstört als während der Bombardierungen während des Krieges, was zum Teil darauf zurückzuführen war, dass auf nationaler Ebene nicht genügend Mittel zur Verfügung standen, um schützenswerte Gebäude zu erhalten. Trotz der knappen Ressourcen lief es in anderen Städten anders. In Orten wie Southampton, wo die Stimmen der Denkmalpflege stärker waren, gab es auch eine stärkere Zusammenarbeit lokaler Behörden mit den Bürger*innen, um die Bedürfnisse der historischen Umwelt mit denen einer entstehenden modernen Stadt in Einklang zu bringen.

ABSTRACT

Coventry is perhaps best-known today as a leading example of a city reconstructed in a modernist style following extensive World War II damage and for its post-war growth as the home of the UK motor car industry. Its rich built heritage, largely from its late medieval heyday, has until recently been overlooked, yet less than 100 years ago the city could still be described as having a substantial medieval character. Few British cities have undergone such a transformation. The changes began in the inter-war period with the introduction of a tram system and new roads that cut across the narrow medieval streets. Early town planning schemes were delayed by opposition from traders and residents, but by the 1930s national government had given local authorities more powers to override local objections, and in Coventry an influx of workers from outside the city severely weakened civic opposition. The election of a new local government in 1937, with what it saw as a mandate for a radical planning agenda, led to the swift reordering of the city after World War II along modernist lines. The long-held view that there was consensus between the local authority and the public for the changes – based on high attendance at an exhibition in 1945 – has recently been challenged. The experience of Coventry is one of a feeling of powerlessness amongst many citizens; of having to go along with new plans imposed by more powerful forces; and of a well-meaning but stringent "we know best" municipal attitude. More medieval buildings were destroyed in Coventry following World War II than during the wartime bombings, partly due to a lack of resource at national level to assess buildings for protection or to police those buildings that were given listed status. Yet such an outcome was not inevitable in all of Britain's war-damaged cities. In places like Southampton, where the voices of heritage champions were stronger, the local authority accepted the value of cooperation with the local community in balancing the needs of the historic environment with those of an emerging modern city.

Mark Webb, Perspectives on Coventry's Medieval Heritage since 1900 between Town Planning and Local Community Engagement, in: Coady Schäbitz, Hönig (Hrsg.), Heritage and Democracy, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net 2025, S. 160-169, https://doi.org10.11588/arthistoricum.1649.c23828

Introduction

Writing in 1908, local historian Mary Dormer Harris noted that, had the buildings been better maintained, Coventry would have been a match for medieval Nuremberg for the beauty of its medieval streets.[1] Around 800 drawings by Nathaniel Troughton dating from the mid-19th century show streets lined with timber-framed buildings, and many were still there as late as 1918–22 when painted by Sydney Bunney.[2] As late as 1933, J.B. Priestley wrote that Coventry was "genuinely old and picturesque. […] you peer around a corner and see half-timbered and gabled houses that would do for the second act of *Meistersinger*".[3] Coventry's 14th- and 15th-century economic heyday as a major seller of wool and producer of woollen broadcloth was accompanied by perhaps the largest municipal building programme in provincial England. The city could boast the huge priory-cathedral of St Mary, the two enormous and impressive churches of St Michael and Holy Trinity, two friaries, several chapels and a magnificent guildhall, all surrounded by a strong and imposing circuit of walls and ditches. These monumental red sandstone constructions were complemented by the timber-framed buildings of the burgesses. But the *Dissolution* in the decade from 1538 (of the monasteries by King Henry VIII) and the closure of the cathedral-priory, guilds and chantry chapels after 1538 was the final nail in the coffin of an economy that was already in decline, and Coventry became a relative backwater for around 300 years.[4] Even when the economy began to revive in the mid-19th century through the production of silk ribbon weaving, clocks, and watches, much manufacture was achieved in small, domestic 'top shops' rather than the large factories and mills that were appearing in other cities. Coventry also lacked the large civic buildings such as those that had recently emerged in nearby Birmingham, the new regional capital. Only when Coventry became the hub of Britain's bicycle industry in the 1880s, followed by the manufacture of motor cars, components and armaments after c. 1900, did factories and mills begin to appear amongst the medieval houses and streets.[5] Coventry became Britain's fastest-growing city in the period up to the Second World War, and its medieval character was rapidly eroded.[6]

Early Debates on Coventry's Heritage

Access to the centre of the city via tram and motor car, through the city's narrow medieval streets, was a key concern of Coventry's town planners. A 1910 proposal to create a wide thoroughfare from the north to the centre, cutting through existing medieval streets, was put to public consultation and roundly rejected by a ratio of 4 to 1.[7] Despite the run-down nature of the city, Coventrians were still proud of their medieval heritage, and when a design for a new town hall was proposed, it was put to a competition, with public input. The winning design (built between 1913 and 1920) was an "early Tudor"-style red sandstone edifice in keeping with the medieval surroundings.

To the frustration of town planners, resistance by local people to early town planning schemes persisted until the 1930s. Coventry's local authority was not alone in feeling impatient with local opposition, and the national government decided to do something about it by introducing a Housing Act in 1930 that gave local authorities the powers to deal with poor housing and construct new roads without the need for public consultation.[8] City Engineer Ernest Ford again revived the north–south road proposal, later known as Trinity Street, and the local authority stepped up its campaign to deal with poor housing. Many of these houses, condemned as "slums", were timber-framed survivors of the 15th and 16th centuries, as drawn by Troughton.

Despite opposition from the local historical society, the *Coventry Guild and Museum Society,* and local traders, an entire district of timber-framed buildings near Holy Trinity Church was taken down in 1934–36. The "Butcher Row" area was part of Coventry's ancient market place and, had it survived, would have been a cultural attraction to rival York's Shambles. The destruction was described by the Historical Association in 1976 as an "appalling piece of municipal vandalism".[9] *The Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings* (SPAB)[10] in particular was outraged and protested strongly to the municipality (the *Corporation of Coventry*), which brushed aside their objections – denying that the buildings included anything of historical interest; and claiming that, in any case, the Corporation should be allowed to proceed without outside interference.[11] The voices of opposition were drowned out by changing popular opinion in the city. Between 1931 and 1939, 42,000 migrants arrived, many from Ireland and Scotland, attracted by the high wages offered in the city's engineering and motor vehicle factories. There was less attachment to the city's heritage than before, and the

clearance of "slums" became a key campaign of the local press, which influenced opinion. Even the *Coventry Guild*, which had in 1936 changed from an antiquarian society to a civic society, declined to campaign against the changes.[12] Fig. 1 shows the packed streets around Butcher Row at the closing ceremony in January 1936.

Planning Schemes

The winds of change blew ever more strongly in 1937 when the local elections brought the Labour Party to power for the first time, with a sweeping reform agenda. Believing it had a popular working-class mandate for reform, the Council took on a robust policy to modernise the city. The new mayor was George Hodgkinson, a trades unionist influenced by the ideas of Le Corbusier and who had little interest in preserving Coventry's medieval built heritage.[13] The Council's bold approach was reflected in the creation of a new Architecture department in 1938, one of the earliest in the country. Chosen as its head was Donald Gibson, only 29 and with only one year's experience at the Isle of Ely. Gibson gathered around him like-minded architects influenced by the ideas of Le Corbusier and Lewis Munford, with their dislike of the medieval city and dismissive attitude towards local consultation.[14] A radical scheme with a new pedestrianised shopping centre, civic buildings and new zoning was produced. This would radically change the topography of the city centre, but the Council took the view that nothing should get in the way of its plans – a view shared by the local press.[15] Work started in 1939 with the clearance of medieval housing in High Street to make way for a new museum and art gallery.

Coventry was famously badly damaged by wartime bombing, especially in 1940–41. This period was also the height of popularity nationally for radical town planning as a way to address social ills and start afresh once the war was over.[16] National government initially took the view that bold postwar planning would be necessary, and invited lo-

COVENTRY SHUTS 2 ROWS

Large gathering of the citizens when the Mayor of Coventry (Alderman C. Payne) yesterday declared two of the town's oldest streets closed, Butcher-row and Little Butcher-row.

Fig. 1: The closing ceremony of Great and Little Butcher Row (*Daily Mirror,* 2 January 1936).

cal authorities to submit plans for their approval. Funds would be given to 18 bomb-damaged cities, including Coventry, for compulsory purchase of the necessary land. Gibson realised that the widespread destruction of the city centre would serve to more quickly effect his plans.[17]

No-one seriously considered reconstructing Coventry as it had been before the war, as occurred in several Dutch, German and Polish cities.[18] The biggest debate was over the future of St Michael's Cathedral, which had been reduced to a shell. There was no public consultation but a debate amongst architects, the bishopric and the local authority. Lord Alfred Herbert, a wealthy local industrialist, wanted the cathedral rebuilt as a replica. A proposal by the renowned architect Giles Gilbert Scott in 1944 to rebuild the cathedral to a new "medieval" design was rejected by both the bishop and the *Fine Arts Council.* Gradually, the cathedral ruins assumed the function of a memorial, associated with the city's message of peace and reconciliation. Plans to sweep away the ruins were abandoned amongst a national sentiment that also protected a number of bombed-out churches in London, and a competition was launched in 1951 to build a new cathedral beside the ruins.[19]

The Gibson Plan, 1945–55

Urged by national government to consult more widely, the city council held an exhibition of its plans for the reconstruction of the city centre in October 1945, titled *Coventry of the Future*. Over a quarter of the city's population attended the exhibition, which was widely taken by both the Council and by post-war historians as approval for the schemes.[20] Yet, viewing the various panels and models versus positively approving them are two different things; moreover, the proposals were deliberately sketchy and made to look less alarming,[21] and failed to cover what might happen to the city's surviving historic buildings. Photographs of the exhibition, available in Coventry's archives, show the polemical tone –

Fig. 2: Panel from the Coventry of the *Future* exhibition (1945).

with an emphasis on high-rise buildings, the lure of "mod cons" (modern conveniences) and a reflection of the "unplanned mess" of the medieval city [22] (see Fig. 2). There was, in fact, opposition to the proposals recorded in the local press, with one commentator lamenting that the traditional character of the city would be "foreign" and would be "utterly spoilt" by the rigid lines of monotonous buildings.[23] An alternative plan put forward by Thomas Lloyd Humberstone, that would have retained a substantial amount of the city's ancient housing stock, was ignored.[24]

Recent studies have challenged the long-held view that there was a consensus between British post-war planners and citizens in 1945.[25] Yet the plan for Coventry went ahead anyway, even without positive approval from the citizens. There was a real sense of "we know best" and that the opportunity to achieve social change for the better should not be missed. Fredrick Smith, city clerk, who was responsible for liaising with the government on the city's reconstruction plans, felt that saving all the city's medieval buildings was not a realistic aim and that the citizens would be making a mistake if they failed to allow the planning experts get on with their task.[26] This was a view widely held amongst town planners in Britain at the time, despite a sharp drop in public enthusiasm for town planning in general.[27] Coventry's situation was, however, unique. As one of the earliest British cities to be heavily bombed, it assumed the mantle as the "martyr city". The eyes of Europe were on how Coventry would rebuild after the war, and mayor Hodgkinson and the Council played their cards well in overcoming government objections to the cost of the plan and to criticisms about the lack of public consultation. Despite government unease, the Gibson plan was allowed to go ahead.[28]

By 1955 been, the Gibson plan was largely complete, but there had ben very little organised opposition in the face of threats to Coventry's much-loved medieval buildings A series of oral histories given in 2000 by people who witnessed the changes reveal a wistfulness for what was lost. There was an overwhelming sense of having to go along with more powerful forces, mixed with disorientation amongst the building work, and yet a sense of excitement about what may lay ahead. Such helplessness in the face of stronger forces for change was felt in other towns.[29] Over 100 buildings were identified by an *"Antiquities Committee"* of self-appointed experts in response to the national government's requests for lists of buildings of historical and architectural importance that should be protected under the pending *Town & Country Planning Act* (1947). Most of them reflected monumental buildings from city's medieval heyday but largely excluded Coventry's traditional timber-framed domestic structures.[30] At national level, such groups of vernacular buildings were not considered to be important by the *Advisory Committee* set up to inform the new *Ministry of Town and Country Planning. National Buildings Record* secretary, Walter Godfrey, argued that more medieval vernacular buildings could be saved and indeed repurposed,[31] but the views of architectural historian John Summerson won the day, partly because of the lack of resource to assess their value[32] and partly because an understanding of the importance of such buildings as a method of adding to an "archive" of a city's development was still in its infancy.[33] The prevailing wisdom was to retain important buildings in an "improved setting" rather than retain rows of buildings that although of lesser importance nevertheless added "character". Summerson even doubted whether towns actually *had* a medieval "character" that was definable or capable of being saved.[34] The extent to which British cities could retain *character* was in fact debated amongst post-war town planners, and ultimately only 12 towns designated as *"historic"* (including Exeter, Warwick and York) were allowed to retain their narrow medieval streets of vernacular buildings more or less intact.[35] This decision by a small government-appointed Advisory Committee to limit the number of listed buildings for protection in 1947 arguably affected the future of Britain's urban built heritage more than any other.[36] A small number of the more important medieval vernacular buildings were in fact highlighted as being worthy of attention, but it was left to local authorities to decide their fate, leaving hundreds, if not thousands, to be pulled down in the 1950s and '60s. The stance that "the experts knew what was best" for the future of British cities was reflected in various top-down accounts of post-war reconstruction, many written by the town planners themselves. Published plans were often light on preserving historic buildings and often took the form of civic propaganda, sometimes allied to national morale-building.[37] Yet, recent studies have highlighted the extent of opposition to the changes, many of which have only recently emerged from the shadows.[38]

Fig. 3: 169 Spon Street, c. 1400, restored in 1967.

In Coventry, countless vernacular buildings were therefore unprotected and the *Corporation* immediately demolished many of them after World War II – the loss almost certainly exceeded the number destroyed during the war itself. Even the *Antiquities Committee* was exasperated by the attitude of the *Corporation*, which took the view that even newly listed buildings such as early-16th-century Ford's Hospital or the fourteenth century Old Grammar School could be surplus to requirements if they stood in the way of a newly planned road or civic building.[39] The *Committee* secretary, A.Gardiner, resorted to appeals to the local and national press, an act that may have been vital in allowing many of Coventry's important buildings to survive to today. Even then, there was a feeling that such buildings had merely secured a "stay of execution" for another 20 years or so.

1955–64

When Gibson left for a new position as County Architect for Nottinghamshire, he was succeeded by Arthur Ling from *London County Council*. Ling was an ardent modernist, and swiftly put into practice a second phase of Coventry's post-war reconstruction that would prove to be even more destructive of Coventry's surviving heritage than the first. Gibson's low-rise brick and travertine *Festival of Britain-style* buildings were now accompanied by high-rise and concrete modernist interventions. Perhaps the most radical part of Ling's plan was an "inner ring road", effectively a motorway that circled the outline of the medieval city.[40] Anticipating the changes, vernacular buildings expert Stanley Jones was sent in 1958 by the *Historic Buildings Council* to survey the city's surviving timber-framed buildings; he found and recorded over 100.[41] Yet, when a similar survey was undertaken in 1964, following the construction of the first phase of the ring road, only 34 were found to have survived.[42] Coventry's approach was now attracting major criticism from heritage bodies, including the *Historic Buildings Council*.[43]

By the mid-1960s, the "group value" of heritage buildings was being finally appreciated – a shift from the prevailing view of the preceding 50 years, which had prized the best individual examples in an enhanced setting. The 1967 *Civic Amenities Act* allowed for the designation of "conservation areas" in which townscapes like Spon Street could be protected.[44] In a concession to heritage bodies and changing government attitudes to heritage protection, the *Council* agreed to an innovative but controversial scheme to save many of the timber framed buildings

that stood in the way of the *Corporation's* plans. They were to be dismantled, stored and then re-erected in medieval Spon Street to the west of the city, together with the city's largest group of in *situ* medieval buildings. The *Spon Street Townscape Scheme* was designed by architect Freddie Charles and finally completed in 1990.[45] Fig. 3 shows number 169 Spon Street, the first to be restored under the scheme. While individual buildings in other cities had occasionally been moved, nothing like it had been seen on this scale. The scheme attracted criticism from SPAB and other national bodies which, while they applauded the restoration of the *in situ* buildings, deplored the removal of buildings from other parts of the city.[46] SPAB even rescinded Charles' membership. Yet, the scheme won the approval of the local archaeological association, which took the view that at least the buildings would be saved rather than destroyed forever.[47] Spon Street continued to receive medieval buildings from elsewhere in the 1970s and 80s, such as a three-storey medieval merchants' house from Much Park Street, which was relocated to make way for new law courts. courts. Such an elaborate building was incongruous in the setting of a medieval industrial suburb![48]

The Spon Street scheme was intended to be a kind of museum quarter for Coventry's medieval buildings, with the buildings utilised by independent businesses, yet it was only a partial success. While it had a curiosity value for tourists, the restorations were widely seen as overdone, almost fake.[49] Nevertheless, Charles' restorations, which stripped away all post-medieval features such as shop windows, were meticulously researched and contributed a great deal to emerging studies of vernacular building in the UK.

The public were not consulted about the Council's treatment of medieval buildings during the 1960s and 70s. Instead, it was left to individuals such as city archaeologist Charmian Woodfield and her architect husband Paul to raise concerns with government and the local press, highlighting the lack of resources provided under the current listing system to police against the destruction of ancient buildings.[50] Coventry may have been an extreme example, but it was not alone; other cities were destroying their archaeology and standing buildings to an alarming extent. The government's *Buchanan Report* (1963) warned that a compromise would be required between unfettered car access to town centres and maintaining historic buildings.[51] In 1965, the *Council for British Archaeology* undertook a survey of planned developments in 51 historic cities and highlighted the potential loss to historic standing buildings and archaeology. The results were published in 1972 in a landmark volume edited by Caroline Heighway, *The Erosion of History* (1972). In the foreword, leading archaeologist Martin Biddle suggested that all of England's archaeology and many of its standing buildings would be lost forever within a period of 20 years.[52] The report was a wake-up call to many local authorities and, together with the OPEC oil crisis of 1973, it helped put a brake on further large-scale developments. By then the conservation movement was gaining ground, winning battles over historic buildings in cities like London and York. The voices of local people were finally being heard and the power of Britain's town planners was greatly reduced in the 1974 *Local Government Act.* Subsequently, local authorities were required to take account of local heritage and archaeology before committing to new developments, although this was not made law until 1990.[53] In Coventry, individual buildings remained under threat into the 1990s. *Black Swan Terrace*, a row of five mid-15th-century cottages in a former medieval suburb, was saved through the efforts of a local preservation society that managed to convey the importance of such rare poor man's medieval cottages, with their original timbers largely remaining.[54]

Since the 1990s, the public have been much more involved in deciding the future of Coventry's historic buildings and the Council is much more aware of the value of retaining the city's built heritage alongside modern buildings. In particular, *Historic Coventry Trust* (HCT), which began as a preservation society to restore the 14th-century Charterhouse in 2011, has done much to draw attention to Coventry's surprisingly rich built heritage. HCT has taken over 22 buildings from the Council, and funds have been found to restore and provide them with a sustainable future. The restoration of St Mary's guildhall (2020–2022) and the 2023 opening of the Charterhouse to the public (thus fulfilling the bequest in 1940 of the last private owner, Colonel William Wyley, who wished that the house and grounds should be available to the people of Coventry) have added to Coventry's attractiveness as a tourist destination. Also, greater attention is now being paid to Coventry's rich surviving medieval art and material culture, including the early-16th-century Flemish tapestry in St Mary's Hall.[55]

Conclusion

It was not inevitable that surviving historic buildings in British cities would be so extensively destroyed after World War II. Coventry's focus on reconstruction, often at the expense of its heritage, was not a position taken in all bomb-damaged cities. Much depended on a balance of power between an organised local preservation group and a local authority. Southampton, for example, adopted its Saxon and medieval past as part of its post-war identity, and the local authority worked closely with local heritage bodies, taking their views into account when pulling together their post-war plans. This included the sensitive re-routing of new thoroughfares to minimise impact on surviving medieval buildings and the opening of new archaeological museums.[56] Yet, local voices opposing rapid changes in many British cities were often ignored, especially in the 1960s when the prevailing orthodoxy was for modernist interventions.[57] One should also take account of changing attitudes towards conservation. Urban archaeology did not really emerge as a feature of British cites until after 1945, and in most cities until the 1960s. Even then, the focus was on Roman archaeology or medieval monumental buildings such as castles, walls and ecclesiastical buildings.[58] The vernacular medieval buildings that added so much to the character of British cities were not really understood or appreciated until the 1970s or later. With the benefit of hindsight, many cities are now realising that too much was conceded to the motor car and that many modernist buildings have detracted from rather than added to the urban landscape. Coventry, the "martyr city", was perhaps a unique example of how a post-war urban reconstruction scheme could be imposed on its citizens by imbalance of power between an emboldened but well-meaning local authority determined on rapid improvements, against a somewhat bewildered local population "going along with" such changes in the absence of a local heritage champion or campaigning group. In towns like Leicester, attempts have been made to unpick and minimise the impact of modernist interventions of the 1960s and 70s and to highlight and bring together disparate heritage buildings through attractive pathways and green spaces. In other towns and cities, a number of post-World War II buildings have been dismantled only 40 or 50 years after being built, having themselves replaced medieval buildings that had stood for 500 years. Coventry, like other "industrial" cities is now, perhaps belatedly, appreciating its surviving built heritage and the associated economic and social benefits and the importance of "sense of place", especially in a youthful and diverse city like Coventry, are now understood. Above all, the importance of local consultation about the future of heritage buildings is now embedded in planning regulations and conventions and there is a recognition that the views of local people need to be married with expert opinion. This is a move back to the approach taken in Coventry at the start of the 20th century, albeit in vastly different circumstances, and a far cry from the "we know best" stance that Coventry's planners adopted from the 1930s well into the post- World War II period.

Figures

1 Coventry Records Office.

2 Coventry Records Office, PA3/3.

3 Photo, author.

Endnotes

1 Mary Dormer Harris, *Sketches of old Coventry. A Selection from the Pencil Drawings of Dr Nathaniel Troughton*, Coventry/London 1908, p. 52.

2 Patricia Ludlow, *Sydney Bunney's Coventry* (Coventry Newspapers Ltd, 1999).

3 John Boynton Priestley, *English Journey,* London 1940, p. 69.

4 Charles Pythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages,* Cambridge 1979.

5 N. W. Alcock, Coventry Streets: West Orchard and the Sherbourne Development and Topography, 1600-1940, in: *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, 91 (1990), p. 84–117; Mark S. Webb (Ed.), *An Historical Map of Coventry: From Medieval to Industrial City*, Maidenhead 2021.

6 K. Richardson, *Twentieth Century Coventry*, London 1972, p. 277; W. Lancaster and T. Mason (Eds.), *Life and Labour in a 20th Century City: The Experience of Coventry, Coventry* 1986, p. 344.

7 Ibid., p. 186.

8 A. Beach and N. Tiratsoo, The Planners and the Public, in: M. Daunton (Ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 1840-1950,* Vol. 3, Cambridge 2001, p. 525–550.

9 P. M. Bolton (Ed.), *The Destroyed Buildings of Warwickshire*, Mid-Warwickshire Branch of the Historical Association 1976, p. 10.

10 The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) was established by William Morris and Philip Webb in 1877.

11 For original correspondence between SPAB and the Corporation, see Mark Webb, *Studies in Urban Space in English Towns: Part B: Surviving Medieval District Character and How it was Viewed, c. 1900-1972*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2020, p. 257–258.

12 Jean Field, *Mary Dormer Harris: The Life and Works of a Warwickshire Historian*, Studley 2002, p. 75, p. 91.

13 Richardson 1972 (See note 6), p. 281.

14 Jeremy Gould and Caroline Gould, *Coventry, the Making of a Modern City, 1939-73*, Swindon 2016, p. 9–11.

15 *Midland Daily Telegraph*, 21 February 1939.

16 Nick Tiratsoo, The Reconstruction of Blitzed Cities 1945-55: Myths and Reality, in: *Contemporary British History*, 14 (2000), No. 1, p. 27–44.

17 *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 13 January 1972.

18 Jeffry M. Diefendorf, (Ed.), *Rebuilding Europe's Bombed Cities*, Basingstoke 1990.

19 Richardson 1972 (See note 6), p. 166–172; Louise Campbell, Towards a New Cathedral: The Competition for Coventry Cathedral 1950–51, in: *Architectural History*, 35 (1992) p. 208–234; here: p. 208; Peter J. Larkham and Joe L. Nasr, Decision-Making Under Duress: The Treatment of Churches in the City of London During and After World War II, in: *Urban History*, 2 (2012), p. 285–309.

20 Junichi Hasegawa, *Replanning the Blitzed City Centre: A Comparative Study of Bristol, Coventry and Southampton, 1941-50,* Buckingham 1992, p. 90; David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51*, London 2007, p. 166–167.

21 Louise Campbell, Paper Dream City/Modern Monument: Donald Gibson and Coventry, in: Iain Boyd-White (Ed.), *Man-Made Future: Planning, Education and Design in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain,* London 2007, p. 121–144; here: p 127–129.

22 *Coventry of the Future,* exhibition brochure, 1945.

23 *Coventry Evening Telegraph,* 10 October 1945.

24 Thomas Lloyd Humberstone, *Coventry of the Future,* Coventry Archive PA/3/214/3.4.

25 Susanne Cowan, The People's Peace: The Myth of Wartime Unity and Public Consent for Town Planning, in: Mark Clapson and Peter J. Larkham (Eds.), *The Blitz and its Legacy: Wartime Destruction to Post-War Reconstruction,* Farnham 2003, p. 73–85.

26 *Coventry Evening Telegraph 25,* 26 January 1946.

27 Tiratsoo 2000 (See note 16).

28 Most British post-war town plans were only partially built as per the plans, compromised by the cost of materials and by local opposition. Only the proposals of Plymouth and Coventry were largely built as planned; Tiratsoo 2000 (See note 16), p. 30; Lionel Esher, *A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England 1940-80,* London 1981, p. 49–51; Junichi Hasegawa 1992 (See note 20), p. 28, p. 40; Peter J. Larkham and Keith D. Lilley, Plans, Planners and City Images: Place, Promotion and Civic Boosterism in British Reconstruction Planning, in: *Urban History,* 30 (2003), No. 2, p. 183–205, here: see p. 210.

29 Keith D. Lilley, Conceptions and Perceptions of Urban Futures in Early Post-War Britain: Some Everyday Experiences of the Rebuilding of Coventry, 1944-62, in: Boyd-White 2007 (See note 21), p. 146–156.

30 Mark S. Webb, Local Responses to the Protection of Medieval Buildings and Archaeology in British Post-War Town Reconstruction: Southampton and Coventry, in: *Urban History*, 45 (2018), p. 635–659, here: see p. 651.

31 Walter H. Godfrey, *Our Building Inheritance: Are We to Use It or Lose It?* London 1944, p. 45–47.

32 Stephen Croad, The National Buildings Record – The Early Years, in: *Transactions of the Ancient Monument Society,* 36 (1992), p. 79–98; John H. Harvey, Listing As I knew It In 1949, in: *Transactions of the Ancient Monument Society,* 38 (1994), p. 97–104, here: see p. 99; Andrew Saint, How Listing Happened, in: Michael Hunter (Ed.), *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain,* Stroud 1996, p. 114–133, here: see p. 123–133.

33 Webb 2018 (See note 30), p. 639.

34 John Summerson, The Past Into the future, in: J. Summerson (Ed.), *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture,* London 1949, p. 219–242, here: see p. 231–232.

35 John Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus,* Abingdon 2009, p. 48–49.

36 Harvey 1994 (See note 32); Saint 1996 (See note 32).

37 Peter J. Larkham, Selling the Future City: Images in UK Post-War Reconstruction Plans, in: Boyd-White 2007 (See note 21), p. 99–120.

38 Cowan 2003 (see note 25).

39 Webb 2018 (See note 30), p. 652–654.

40 Gould and Gould 2016 (See note 14), p. 35–36.

41 S. Jones, Threatened Timber Framed Buildings in Coventry, Report for the Historic Buildings Council and Victoria County History, 1958.

42 F. Charles, *Coventry's Ancient Buildings. Proposed Spon Street Townscape Scheme* (23 December 1966), Report to Coventry City Council.

43 Webb 2020 (See note 11), p. 271.

44 T. Champion, Protecting the Monuments: Archaeological Legislation from the 1882 Act to PPG 16, in: Hunter 1996 (See note 32), p. 38–56.

45 Robert Gill, From the Black Prince to the Silver Prince: Relocating Medieaval Coventry, in: Elain Harwood and Alan Powers (Eds.), *The Heroic Period of Conservation, Vol. 7:* Twentieth Century Architecture, London 2001, p. 59–86.

46 Webb 2020 (See note 11), p. 272–273.

47 Margaret Rylatt, *City of Coventry Archaeology and Development.* Coventry Museums, 1977, p. 28.

48 Webb 2020 (See note 11), p. 274.

49 Gill 2001 (See note 44), p. 72–74.

50 Ibid., p. 271–273.

51 Simon Gunn, The Buchanan Report, Environment and the Problem of Traffic in 1960s Britain, in: *Twentieth Century British History,* 22 (2011), No. 4, p. 521–542, here: see p. 521–532, p. 531.

52 Carolyn Heighway (Ed.), *The Erosion of History: Archaeology and Planning in Towns Affected by Modern Development in England, Wales and Scotland.* York 1972.

53 Champion 1996 (See note 48), p. 55.

54 *"Weavers Cottage"* at 122 Upper Spon Street is now Grade II* listed, the second-highest category available for protection.

55 Mark S. Webb (Ed.) *The St Mary's Hall Coventry Tapestry: Weaving the Threads Together,* Donington 2024.

56 Webb 2018 (See note 30).

57 Otto Saumarez-Smith, Central Government and Town-Centre Redevelopment in Britain, 1959-66, in: *The Historical Journal,* 58 (2015), No. 1, p. 217–244.

58 Chris Gerrard, *Medieval Archaeology: Understanding Traditions and Contemporary Approaches.* London 2003, p. 225.