



Ben Aspinall, Director

Ben has over 20 years' experience in planning, development and funding of major residential and commercial projects throughout the UK. He is a Chartered Surveyor and Chartered Town Planner, specialising in property investment and finance.

Ben has a broad range of professional experience across planning, development and regeneration. He has extensive experience in financial modelling, feasibility studies, options appraisal, business plan preparation, developer selection, procurement and delivery. He is retained by Heritage Lottery Fund and has been on various public sector appraisal panels negotiating grants and advising on state aid and interventions. Ben has also acted for project sponsors to secure funding for some major regeneration and infrastructure projects.

Ben also provides commercial planning advice on economic viability, S106 negotiations, Community Infrastructure Levy, affordable housing / Private Rented Sector, and strategic land / infrastructure. He acts for both private developers and Local Authorities at a policy and site specific level and has given evidence at Planning Appeals and Examinations in Public.

Qualifications\

- Member Royal Town Planning Institute (2009)
- Member Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (1996) – Registered Valuer
- BSc (Hons) Land Management, University of Reading (1994)

Career History\

- Development Director, Montpellier Estates, Harrogate (2006 – 2009)
- Associate, Planning Development Regeneration, GVA Grimley, Leeds (2002 – 2006)
- Senior Consultant, DTZ Pinda Consulting, Leeds (1998 – 2002)
- Valuer, Weatherall Green & Smith, Leeds (1994 - 1998)

Project Experience\

Planning Economic Viability\

- **Middle Deepdale (Scarborough Borough Council)** – Ben is retained to provide economic viability advice in respect of this 650 unit development between Keepmoat and the Council. This involves appraising the residual land value and S106 affordable housing given the significant infrastructure including a new school and bridge link.
- **Penniment Farm, Mansfield (CEG / Hallam Land Management)** - Ben prepared a financial model of this 430 unit residential scheme for the Local Growth Fund loan to facilitate the infrastructure development. There were various issues impacting on viability including large off-site abnormal utilities costs, affordable housing commuted sums and significant opening up works for future employment land. We also submitted an economic viability appraisal to the Council.
- **National CIL Charging Schedule Representations (PLC Client)** - Ben acts for a major PLC client to make representations on all CIL Charging Schedules across the country. This involves reviewing the Economic Viability Statement, critiquing the appraisals and the Council's evidence base, and appearing at Examination in Public.
- **Milford Lodge Hotel (Selby District Council)** - Ben reviewed the case for 'Very Special Circumstances' in terms of the economic viability of an outline proposal to extend the existing hotel to develop 36 additional bedrooms and conference and leisure facilities in the Green Belt. Ben analysed the proposed development, the hotel's trading performance, undertook detailed market analysis of the competition and prepared a detailed viability appraisal.

- **ISISs' Granary Wharf (Leeds City Council)** – Ben appraised the viability of the scheme at the pre-application stage for different development densities in order to advise upon the S106 contribution. The key issues were the land acquisition price and the cost of construction on the 'tight' site which is the canal basin.
- **K W Linfoot / Yoo Manor Mills (Leeds City Council)** – Ben advised on the quantum of S106 contributions for an office scheme and an alternative residential scheme. This required a detailed analysis of the development appraisal but ultimately a value judgment about the urban design merit of each scheme. The Council perceived the residential scheme to be a better scheme in urban design terms as it delivered a substantial piazza, however this had to be appraised against the potential profit from the office scheme.

Public Sector Funding\

- **St Pauls Place, Sheffield (CTP Developments)** – Ben was retained by CTP Developments to prepare a detailed Business Plan for ERDF. 3 St Pauls Place is a 100,000 sqft Grade-A office comprising the final phase of 'heart of the city' Sheffield. Ben secured a grant of £6.9 million as well as a loan from JESSICA. The funding concludes over 4 years of business planning and negotiations with DCLG.
- **Victory Higher Manufacturing Park, Lower Don Valley (Property Alliance Group)** – Ben was retained to prepare the Business Plan and appraisal for the first phases of this development for the Advanced Manufacturing Sector. The scheme comprises the servicing of 6.16 ha / 15.23 acres of brownfield land and the construction of 48,500 sqft / 4,509 sqm of high quality business accommodation in 2 units carefully targeted at the Advanced Manufacturing and Materials sector. We secured £2.8 million of ERDF funding, managed the draw-down and wrote the Project Learning Review report for final sign-off.
- **Whitby Business Park (Scarborough Borough Council)** – Ben was retained to provide development consultancy and public sector funding advice to 'unlock' infrastructure investment to enable the expansion of the business park. We provided initial advice in respect of a Regional Growth Fund bid and a business plan for ERDF which involved establishing a detailed month-by-month cashflow for the project to establish the 'viability gap'. We introduced high value private sector end-users to the site which were able to 'pump-prime' the first phase of infrastructure supported by a Growing Places Fund loan from the North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
- **Black County Business Property Investment Programme Technical Advice (Black County Local Authorities)** – Ben is retained as technical advisor to the Black County Local Authorities in terms of administering this ERDF programme targeting SME manufacturing companies. This role has involved raising the profile of the funding opportunity, liaising with potential bidders and evaluating bids for the accountable body (Walsall Council).
- **Stocksbridge Renaissance (Dransfield Properties)** – Ben prepared a technical appraisal report of the Stocksbridge Renaissance development scheme at the former Outokumpu steelworks site for ERDF purposes. This involved a detailed appraisal and apportionment of cost between the development and refurbishment of 48,361 sqft / 4,492.8 sqm (net) of office accommodation (eligible); and 91,639 sqft / 8,513.3 sqm of retail accommodation (not-eligible). There were complex CPO site assembly issues and we recommended a grant of £7.67 million.
- **The Lighthouse Centre of Excellence Phase II (Yorkshire Forward)** – Ben provided an independent cashflow appraisal in respect of this application for £1.1 million capital and revenue for the extension of the existing Phase I building to provide 18,008 sqft / 1,673 sqm of managed workspace / offices targeting ICT start-up companies.
- **City Hub, Little Germany, Bradford (Yorkshire Forward)** – Ben prepared an independent cashflow appraisal of this application for £1.2 million capital and revenue for the refurbishment and extension of Devere House in Little Germany conservation area to provide 13,020 sqft (1,210 sqm) of managed workspace.

- **Bradford University Sustainability Centre (Yorkshire Forward / Turner and Townsend)** – Ben was appointed to provide independent appraisal advice in respect of this £4.2 million centre of excellence in research and knowledge transfer focused on three areas of sustainability: (1) resource efficiency (2) sustainable built environment (3) adaptation and cultural change.
- **Penistone Gateway ERDF (YF/DCLG)** - Ben appraised the final phase of the Penistone Gateway project comprising a two storey building extending to a total net floor area of 18,377 sqft / 1,707.2 sqm including 8,192 sqft / 761.0 sqm first floor ERDF 'eligible' offices and 10,185 sqft / 946.2 sqm of 'A' uses in 6 No. units fronting St Mary's Street. Ben had to carefully apportion the eligible costs and the side wide costs from the larger regeneration project and recommended a grant of £1.76 million.
- **Priory Park, Hull (YF/DCLG)** – Ben worked alongside DCLG and Henry Boot Developments to help make the business case for funding for ERDF. In addition to appraising the initial phases Ben created a cashflow for the entire project which included an additional 156,123 sqft / 14,503.9 sqm of industrial and office accommodation on the future phases land. Our model showed the entire site being built out in order to ensure that the scheme was State Aid compliant and we recommended a grant of £3.2 million.
- **The Ruth Gorse Academy, Leeds (The Morley Academy)** - Ben was on the Board of Directors of the Leeds Academy Community Interest Company that was established to deliver a 1,500 place mainstream free school in Leeds City Centre. Following a competitive bidding process, a funding agreement has now been signed between the DfE and the Morley Academy (as education provider) for £20+ million to build the school.

Feasibility Studies\

- **Kirkleatham Stables (Redcar & Cleveland Council)** - Kirkleatham Hall Stables and Garden Features are listed as buildings of special architectural or historic interest and are individually classified as Grade I, II and II*. AspinallVerdi completed a feasibility study examining the future use options for the Stables and undertook a robust examination of the current property market context for various uses. Ben then prepared bespoke financial appraisals of use options and in-depth delivery approaches were developed to facilitate action by the Council.
- **Westcliffe District Centre, Scunthorpe (North Lincolnshire Council / North Lincolnshire Homes)** – Ben was commissioned to carry out a feasibility study for the redevelopment of this 1960s shopping parade. Key requirements were the re-provision of a retail parade, the development of new housing for the over 55s and the construction of a new community centre and library. Ben carried out comprehensive soft market testing with retailers/developers and prepared appraisals and sensitivity analysis to inform the scheme development. Ben also provided vacant possession and decant strategy for the site; delivery structures; procurement routes; and a comprehensive risk matrix.
- **Stoke-on-Trent Private Rented Sector (Stoke-on-Trent City Council)** - Ben was retained to provide development consultancy and feasibility advice in respect of a portfolio of four city centre sites for development of private rented sector homes. The commission involves advising on the viability appraisal, funding and delivery model(s) for PRS. As part of the project Ben has met with and questioned numerous Institutional Funds about their investment approach for PRS.
- **Claro Barracks, Ripon (Harrogate BC)** - AspinallVerdi was commissioned alongside Genecon economists to assess the impact of the closure and future use options for the MoD Barracks site. We assessed the development potential of the surplus Barracks and identified a range of strategic responses to the economic baseline findings and opportunities presented by the Barracks site. We carried out a comprehensive assessment of residential, retail and employment premises and sites. This research involved both desk and field based research to establish supply, demand and values.

Heritage\

- **Spanish City, Whitley Bay (North Tyneside Council)** – Ben has been appointed by North Tyneside Council to work with the project team on the detailed financial appraisals and business plan for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant application. Spanish City was built in 1910 with a large rotunda hall and outdoor pleasure grounds - immortalized by the band Dire Straits in their 1980's single, "Tunnel of Love". The building was Grade II listed in 1986 and the scheme will be the main catalyst for the regeneration of the sea front area of Whitley Bay.
- **Parsonage Hotel (Selby District Council)** - Ben was commissioned to review the case for 'Very Special Circumstances' in terms of the economic viability of a proposal to develop a spa building in the Green Belt. Ben analysed the proposed development, the hotel's trading performance, undertook detailed market analysis of the competition and prepared a detailed viability appraisal. We found the investment had the potential to generate additional turnover and profit for the hotel and was sustainable as a business.
- **Beverley Road Townscape Heritage, Hull (Hull City Council)** - AspinallVerdi together with Rider Hunt Cost Management and Holland Brown Conservation Architects completed the stage 2 application for the Beverley Road TH scheme. This involved condition surveys, cost plans and valuations for a sample of 12 properties. We then completed a detailed conservation deficit appraisal for the sample and extrapolated our findings to complete the financial framework.
- **Ashton (Old) Baths Manchester (HLF)** - Ben advised the HLF on the Ashton (Old) Baths Heritage Enterprise scheme being developed by PlaceFirst and Thameside Council. Ben provided the valuation and appraisal advice. The project comprises the refurbishment and conversion of the 'Old Baths' building in the Ashton Town Centre Conservation Area. The original building dates from the late 18th Century and is grade II* Listed.
- **Northern Counties, Londonderry (HLF)** – Ben provided appraisal advise to HLF on the Northern Counties Heritage Enterprise scheme which is being developed by the Derry Inner City Development Trust. The project comprises the refurbishment and conversion of the existing "Northern Counties" building in the historic centre of L/Derry walled city. The original building dates from the late 18th Century and is grade B1 Listed.
- **Ancoats Dispensary, Manchester (HLF)** – Ben is advising HLF on the appraisal and funding for the restoration and the Grade II listed Ancoats Dispensary in Manchester to form a new health and wellbeing centre showcasing the alignment of creative industries within historic buildings. The project is a joint venture with Igloo Regeneration and the building's owner, Urban Splash, has agreed to transfer ownership subject to the funding.
- **Manningham Mills, Bradford** – Ben prepared detailed development appraisals of this Grade II* Listed Building extending to 52,000 sqm in order to inform Yorkshire Forward and Bradford City Council of the likely funding deficit (£16 million) for a cultural retailing/residential regeneration scheme that was subsequently sold to Urban Splash to deliver.

Planning Policy and Advocacy\

- **Affordable Housing Viability (Hambleton DC)** – Ben was retained by Hambleton District Council to undertake an affordable housing viability appraisal and CIL review. This involved reviewing and critiquing the earlier work by Peter Bretts and to test the viability of the revised affordable housing policy. Ben researched the property market for land in detail, and derived detailed "threshold land value" assumptions in order to reflect a range of relevant typologies. We made detailed recommendations about the affordable housing thresholds for both greenfield and brownfield sites which reflect the different costs and risks.
- **Stratford-upon-Avon Local Plan EiP (McCarthy & Stone)** - Ben prepared written representations and attended the Stratford Local Plan EiP in order to present the fundamental difference between general needs housing viability and extra-care viability. The Council had not differentiated its approach between extra-care and general needs and following our appearance the Council changed its policy to exclude extra-care from affordable housing.

- **Local Plan and CIL Economic Viability Assessment (West Oxfordshire District Council)** – Ben was commissioned to prepare an Economic Viability Appraisal of development across the District to be used as evidence to: (i) inform a Charging Schedule for CIL; (ii) assess the cumulative impact of the Local Plan; and (iii) assess the viability of the proposed Strategic Development Areas (SDA's) – namely East Witney, North Winey, Chipping Norton and RAF Brize Norton. We carried out a review of Plan policies and monitoring data, stakeholder consultation on the appraisal assumptions, agreed development typologies to be tested, prepared bespoke viability financial models and detailed cashflows of the SDA sites.
- **Regeneration Momentum (The Northern Way)** – Working with the University of Leeds, Ben led the research into the question, *'does affordable housing planning policy act as an impediment to housing delivery and is there a better way of regulating the market?'*. Our report advocated a fundamental re-think of the financial, institutional and planning systems, to improve the possibility of households gaining access to, and being able to retain their position, in housing. A pdf copy of this report is available upon request.
- **Planning for Infrastructure Conference (RTPI)** - Ben presented a paper on the reality of Development Economics and context for the move from S106 to the (now defunct) Planning Gain Supplement (PGS) to CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy). This discussed the principles of macro land economics in the context of land supply, economic rent and taxation. The different micro-economic effects of S106 for both greenfield and brownfield land was addressed. Finally, the lessons from the Barker Review, PGS and historical betterment taxes were considered in the context of CIL rate setting.

Major Regeneration Projects\

- **Chesterfield Town Centre Masterplan (Chesterfield Borough Council)** - AspinallVerdi and WCEC Group reviewed and updated the masterplan for the historic town centre of Chesterfield, which was originally produced in 2009 by Urbed. The objective was to establish whether the vision was still relevant following the recession, as well as to identify a clear set of priorities for projects to be delivered. We also addressed structural challenges facing the high street given the pace of technological change. We identified a series of cross-cutting themes including 'town centre management', 'public realm', 'major projects and gateways', and 'big changes in small spaces'.
- **Doncaster Town Moor Racecourse (Doncaster Council)** - Ben was lead property adviser to Doncaster Council on the selection of a preferred private sector partner to enter into a joint venture with the Council for the £50 million redevelopment and subsequent operation of the racecourse. This required the negotiation of a development agreement and lease as well as a shareholders agreement for the establishment of the joint venture company.
- **Wakefield Waterfront (CTP St James')** – Ben provided grant funding, valuation and compulsory purchase advice in respect of this £110 million mixed use redevelopment scheme to form a new cultural quarter. Ben negotiated a regeneration funding package of £16 million from Yorkshire Forward and Government Office.
- **Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield (Peel Holdings)** – Ben provided specialist cashflow appraisal input to the £100 million business plan. Ben's appraisal and negotiations secured a first tranche of £10 million ERDF funding to enable the airport to open on time.
- **City One, Leeds (Montpellier Estates)** – Ben acted as development consultant on this 10 acre mixed use regeneration project comprising over 2.1 sqft gross. We led the multidisciplinary design team, formulated development objectives, instigated a detailed Urban Design Analysis of the site, developed a flexible parameters outline planning approach and negotiated the S106 Agreement. The site has subsequently been sold to Caddick Developments.
- **Doncaster Interchange / Frenchgate Centre** – Ben led the development appraisal work for the Public Sector Sponsors (including Doncaster Council, Network Rail, Yorkshire Forward and GOYH) on the £225 million Frenchgate Interchange scheme. The new extension was to provide 300,000 sqft / 27,870 sqm of retail accommodation, including a new Debenhams department store, and integrated coach/bus/rail transport interchange. This was to span the Trafford Way urban dual-

carriageway and link into the existing Frenchgate centre at first floor level. The Frenchgate centre itself was already 435,500 sqft / 40,460 sqm and was to be comprehensively refurbished as part of the project. The funding model for this project was extremely complex including PFI funding, land swaps and marriage value. This required the development of a bespoke month-by-month cashflow model for the whole 5-year project to isolate eligible costs.

- **The Borough of Pendle No 101 (Nelson (West) No 1) Compulsory Purchase Order** - Ben prepared an economic model in support of the compulsory purchase of 3.3 hectares, including 163 dwellings (147 of which were statutorily 'unfit'). Ben's evidence was in respect of the Economic Assessment which considered two options, namely; (1) Redevelopment using clearance powers, or (2) a Refurbishment Group Repair Scheme.

Pro-bono\

- Connect Housing Association, Non-Executive Director (September 2014 - to date)
- Leeds Civic Trust, Trustee (November 2011 – to date)
- West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce Property Forum, Steering Group Member (August 2008 - to date)
- The Leeds Academy Community Interest Company, Director (November 2012 – Dec 2014)

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