

# *Invitation*

## **Urban Research Program Evening Seminar:**

### **Turning a Town Around**

**Tony Hall PhD FRTPI**

**Adjunct Professor, Griffith University**

**Professor Emeritus, APU Chelmsford**

**formerly Executive Member for Planning, Chelmsford BC**

Tony Hall has been a leading figure in planning in Britain for many years. Before retiring to Brisbane in 2004, he was Professor of Town Planning at APU, Chelmsford, and a member of the Councils of both the RTPI and TCPA. He is an expert on urban design and has made original contributions to design control and the use of computer visualisation. He has notable publications in this field and has made numerous presentations to international conferences. Rather unusually, he has also been a local councillor. He led the planning policy of Chelmsford Borough Council at the political level from 1997-2003 and brought about considerable change, not just to policies but also on the ground.

Chelmsford, Essex, is a town of 150,000 people, 50km from London. The towns of south Essex tend to be regarded in England as, although modern and prosperous, non-descript and unsophisticated. However, within the last seven years, Chelmsford has been turned around. An "urban renaissance" is well under way bringing back town-centre living, a vibrant nightlife and active public realm. Residential design in the suburbs is now fully in accordance with the spirit of the second Essex Design Guide, creating higher-density housing of 2-3 storeys in styles drawn from the Essex vernacular. This has not been a one-off event but a uniform and ongoing process. Official recognition came in 2003 with the award by the UK government of "Beacon Status" for the quality of the built environment. The procedures by which this was all achieved will be described. A high degree of planning intervention provided scope for quality architecture.

There are a number of parallels for the situation in Australia. New suburban areas here, although prosperous, are nondescript. They are now subject to policy expectations of higher densities, often met using apartment blocks. Could high-density low-rise form, utilising the local vernacular, provide a more appropriate solution with less public resistance? Could more informed planning guidance produce better design?

**5.30 – 7.00pm**  
**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> October**  
**at Room 3, level 2A**  
**80 George St, Brisbane**

**RSVP no later than 12noon Wed 5<sup>th</sup> October to:**  
**Susan Hall, Events Coordinator, URP:**  
**Email: [s.hall@griffith.edu.au](mailto:s.hall@griffith.edu.au) or phone: 3735 5176**