

# THE WULFRUNIAN MANIFESTO



ALEX COX

## Abstract

In 2009 the City of Wolverhampton, regional centre of the Black Country, was branded the fifth worst city in the world by Lonely Planet. This signalled a low point in the city's short history. At present little progress has been made as the 2008 financial crisis still stalls development. Wolverhampton is in need of a new vision for the future.

The Wulfrunian Manifesto, inspired by the manifestos of Le Corbusier and Rem Koolhaas, strives to document the last twelve years of Wolverhampton City's planning history. This retrospective approach compares key planning documents with representations of the city's desired image, taking into account regional and national press coverage and the opinions of local councillors to propose a vision for the future. Split into three sections - past, present and future - the investigation is seen through the eyes of three local characters. The Wulfrūnehēantūn Tramp, Wulfrun Traipser and Wolftown Cowboy each lend a contextualised tone to their story through their use of the Black Country dialect.

The manifesto culminates in four visions of the future for Wolverhampton.



# The Wulfrunian Manifesto

Wolverhampton was branded the fifth worst city in the world by Lonely Planet<sup>1</sup> in 2009. As the only UK city in the top ten, the customer poll received national press coverage and signalled a new low in the city's short history. This Retrospective Manifesto investigates the causes of and proposed solutions to the city's problems and determines a new path for the future. Architectural manifestos explain a series of ideals, beliefs and proposals, compiled into a single vision that acts as a catalyst for change. One of the most influential and revolutionary manifestos in the field of architecture was Le Corbusier's *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, published in 1929, the year of the Great Depression. The highly influential document is a declaration of Corbusier's desire to transform the way our cities appear and function. As few of Corbusier's large-scale proposals were implemented in full, aspects of them have been picked up by later generations and transformed into more conventional proposals, where quite often the original spark of ingenuity is lost. For this reason, manifestos are often more successful on paper than in the built environment. In 1978, as the world reflected on another economic downturn, Rem Koolhaas published his book, *Delirious New York*, which outlined a new type of Retrospective

Manifesto. The book states the benefits of post-rationalising a city years after completion. He suggests that the organic changes that occur after a city's initial establishment explain a lot about its growth and success, and can serve as an example for future cities. By combining Corbusier's idea of the future city with Koolhaas' retrospective approach I can create a new form of manifesto, which is particularly pertinent as the world deals with yet another recession. As a born and bred Wulfrunian, I have witnessed the transformation of a retail-driven town into a city struggling with the effects of recession. This new method of post-rationalisation and future prediction will propose a vision for this unsuccessful city.

In 2000, Wolverhampton was granted the honour of being named a city to commemorate the millennium year. The new city's council hoped that the increased publicity generated by the accolade would encourage investment and the growth of a successful city. Plans were drawn up outlining strategies for development until the 2008 financial crisis stalled investment in Wolverhampton's infrastructure and caused the decline of its once successful, retail-led city centre. Over the last decade, the council has released several 'visions' for a future Wolverhampton, each building upon the successes and failures of previous proposals. These ideas have been exploited and revitalised to present a fresh outlook that takes into account contemporary change. In the twelve

years since Wolverhampton was named a city, little progress has been made. The process of reworking the 'vision' for a successful city continues but needs revitalising if it is to survive an uncertain financial future. By utilising elements of written fiction, this manifesto provides a cushion for architectural exploration. Split into three sections, Past, Present and Future, the manifesto is narrated by three Wolverhampton residents who have gained a level of local renown due to their unusual lifestyles. They weave in and out of the plot providing their personal opinions on events, expressing themselves using the dialect that is unique to the region. In the Past section, Józef Stawinoga, known locally as the Wulfrūnehēantūn Tramp, recalls thirty years spent living on Wolverhampton's ring road, 'looking in' on the city. His account of the years leading up to the millennium is contextualised using the distilled history represented in the city status bids. Both Józef's opinion of Wolverhampton and the one promoted by the city council provide an insight into Wolverhampton's preferred national perception. The Present section takes us on a journey through Wolverhampton led by the Bo, the Wulfrun Traipser, a mysterious figure who walks the streets of the present day. His section combines commentary from local councillors with an investigation into planning documents from the past twelve years, leading to the designation of Wolverhampton's current trajectory. The Future introduces

David William Cox, formerly known as the Wolftown Cowboy. He is a local visionary who dresses head-to-toe in cowboy paraphernalia and inhabits the city centre. David proposes 'A Vision for the Future of Wolverhampton' based on its current trajectory and informed by the concerns of the present. His commentary exploits the benefits of fiction to propose a future free from financial constraints. The Wulfrunian Manifesto pre-empts the uncertain financial climate of the future and provides a timeless vision that blends fact and fiction to overcome present constraints.

In order to contextualise The Wulfrunian Manifesto I have studied the Black Country and its dialect through personal encounters and regionally produced literature. The language used is mainly made up of abbreviations of English words, quite often dropping the last letter. The first of the manifesto's characters, Józef Stawinoga, learnt English in Wolverhampton and picked up local phrases and abbreviations from his early years in the steel industry. At the bottom of each page is a helpful translation of the Black Country words that occur in the text; a full glossary is included at the end of the document. The *Aynuk's Black Country Waerd Buk* series includes a phonetic guide for pronunciation that I feel would be usefully reproduced at this point to aid the reader.

Ai indicates the vowel sound in 'pay'.  
ee indicates the vowel sound in 'deed'.  
oo indicates the vowel sound in 'book'.  
ōō indicates the vowel sound in 'boot'.  
aa indicates the vowel sound in 'cat' with the 'a' made long.  
aw indicates the vowel sound in 'paw'  
ow indicates the vowel sound in 'cow'  
ai(r) indicates the vowel sound in 'air' without giving any value to 'r'.

## (References)

- 1      *Telegraph, Wolverhampton voted fifth worst city in the world, 31 December 2009*



## Past

### *Wolverhampton from birth to Millennium*

Józef Stawinoga lived for thirty years in a series of tents located on Wolverhampton's bordering ring road. Known locally for his hermit lifestyle, he witnessed Wolverhampton's transition from industrial powerhouse to retail centre from his 'ringside seat', recounting this in his memoir. He arrived in Wolverhampton from Poland in the 1970s and worked in the city's steel industry before the industrial decline of the 1980s resulted in his redundancy. His memories are contextualised through the descriptions of Wolverhampton's historic identity provided within the two city status bids. These personal and public accounts provide a consolidated history of Wolverhampton.

Józef: Me name's Józef  
Stawinoga but yo' con call me  
the Wulfrūnehēantūn Tramp,  
most people dun. I've decided  
it's long time I write dowl me  
memories of the tūn I 'av called  
wum fer the last forty years.  
I've grown aud wi' this place  
and jus' as aud Wulfrūnehēantūn

me - my	wum - home
yo' - you	fer - for
con - can	aud - old
dun - do	wi' - with
dowl - down	jus' - just
tūn - town	Wulfrūnehēantūn -
'av - have	Wolverhampton

is preparing ter fade away, I mun prepare ter say goodbye also. So I'm going ter dun me best ter remember my story. I was born in the Rzeczpospolita Polska (Republic of Poland) in a small village called Krązkowy on 15th December 1920. We didn't 'av much when I was a babby but me Muther and Faither loved me dearly and I was educated ter a respectable level. I worked fer a while in tewthree factories but it wor long till the War came knockin'. I was the'er during the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939 and I mun admit I didn't feel right fer quite a while after. I 'ad no real ties by the end of it as me parents we'm both jed so I went in search of work. I cum ter England! The sensible place fer me ter head seemed like the Black Country, after all I could hardly speak the language and I was bostin wi' me maulers. Wulfrūnehēantūn 'ad a fair few factories going at that point and I took up work in a local steel mill in

ter - to

mun - must

babby - baby

muther - mother

faither - father

tewthree - a few

wor - wasn't

we'm - were

jed - dead

cum - came

bostin - good

maulers - hands

Bilston. I was well chuffed ter be workin' and payin' me way in life. The soot and smoke didn't myther me and I 'ud allus tek a catlick about once a day ter clane the collier's mark's off.

Wulfrūnehēantūn, meaning 'the town on the hill'<sup>2</sup> is the early name given to the area now called Wolverhampton. In 985AD a charter was granted to Lady Wulfruna, grandmother of King Harold<sup>3</sup> covering the land referred to as Heantun, meaning 'high town'<sup>4</sup>, at the time. Over the years the Anglo-Saxon name was changed to Wulfrūnehēantūn and then simplified to Wolverhampton. In the town's early years it survived on its wool trade, but in the 16th century, Wolverhampton became renowned for the manufacturing of metals. The town had a thriving metal working industry one hundred years before the Industrial Revolution put the Black Country on the map. This had an impact on the town's landscape, especially with the installation of canals and lockhouses for the shipment of goods. The town became known for its jewellery and japanning (a type of enamel varnishing) as well as lock-making. The old Chubb Lock factory still stands to this day. The city's expertise meant its workshops quickly

chuffed - happy

catlick - wash

myther - bother

clane - clean

'ud - would

collier's mark - dirt

allus - always tek - take on the neck

became the “powerhouses of economic, commercial and technological change”<sup>5</sup>. By the early 19th century more iron was produced in Wolverhampton than in the whole of the rest of the world<sup>6</sup>. The world’s first steam-powered blast furnace was developed in the city in 1767<sup>7</sup>. This led to the town manufacturing mechanical engines and tools up until the early 1900s when its first motor cars were made at the Sunbeam factory. The city’s coat of arms distils Wolverhampton’s formative history into a single image of the best the town had to offer. Significantly, the lock represented Wolverhampton’s most successful industry and the woolpack its oldest.

In 1999, Wolverhampton council produced a bid for city status, one of several towns aiming for the accolade, to be awarded on the 40th Anniversary of the Queen’s Accession. The bid document, *City Status for Wolverhampton*, outlined the reasons Wolverhampton should become a millennium city, describing the town’s central position in the Industrial Revolution and celebrating the unique industrial heritage that placed Wolverhampton at the heart of The Black Country. Concurrently, the Express & Star, the largest regional evening newspaper in Britain<sup>8</sup>, produced the *Out of Darkness...* document that showcased the level of support for the city’s bid from various local leaders. The summary of Wolverhampton’s history represented in these documents explains the roots of the city’s desired image at the turn of the millennium.

Józef: Ah aud Wulfrūnehēantūn has bin bostin ter me! Those years in the factory we'm sum of me best. The'er was a lot of pride in those days. People really felt part of someat bigger yo' know. Most of the aud industries we'm still doing allright in the 1970s but the'er 'ad bin a bit of an exodus out towards Birmingham and Coventry due ter their links wi' the rest of the country. It was still possible ter make ends meat and wi' ow I lived, donny ter chops in those days, that's all I needed.

In the months before Wolverhampton was declared a city, media coverage of the competition served to build support and a sense of optimism among the population. Wulfrunians were said to be feeling enthused and encouraged<sup>9</sup> with a “palpable feeling of shared success”<sup>10</sup> and “enhanced self esteem”<sup>11</sup> that reassured the population of its new-found ability to face the future with confidence<sup>12</sup>. The motto ‘Out of Darkness, Cometh Light’, originally intended to redefine the town after the industrial revolution was again used to promote the new identity of Wolverhampton City to the rest of the country<sup>13</sup>. As the largest university town

bin - been  
sum - some  
the'er - there

someat - something  
donny - hand  
chops - mouth

not to have city status<sup>14</sup> at the time, the arguments for being awarded the honour were strong. It was also argued that the accolade would instil pride in its inhabitants, providing recognition for their contribution to 20th century Britain. The two bid documents describe the honour as the “final seal”<sup>15</sup> of the “recognition of its own rebirth”<sup>16</sup>. Wolverhampton was “ready to succeed in the 21st century”<sup>17</sup>.

Józef: All was going well ‘til suddenly things decided ter tek a turn fer the worst. Lots of people we’m getting laid off in the laet seventies as industry was in decline. This was a national thing but it hit us worst in the Black Country. Soon enough it was me turn and the gaffer pulled me aside and ‘ad a word. I don’t think I realised at the time ow dowl it got me. I’d bump into me mates dowl the pub and they’d say ow frowsty I’d let meself get. It was tough in ‘em years. No work was going and soon enough I was on the streets. But afore yo’ get all sad and that let me tell yo’... It weren’t that bad! In fact yo’ could say I took ter it better than

‘til - until  
late - laet  
gaffer - master  
ow - how

frowsty - dishevelled  
meself - myself  
‘em - them  
afore - before

me aud wum. Out the'er at  
night wi' the stars I became  
The Wulfrūnehēantūn Tramp.  
I now live on the ring road  
that borders the city centre.

The late 1970s saw the severe decline of industry in the region<sup>18</sup>. More than half of Wolverhampton's population were employed in its factories at the time and many were made redundant. From 1978 to 1981, 26,000 jobs were lost. This represented almost 20% of total employment<sup>19</sup>. During the 1980s the there was a climate of little to no investment<sup>20</sup>. The factories that had closed down blighted the centre, crying out for a use. This was Wolverhampton's darkest moment since the war and the Wulfrunian "morale reached its lowest ebb"<sup>21</sup>. The answer came in the form of retail investment. The reinforcement of the existing retail offer in the early 1990s elevated Wolverhampton town centre to "amongst the top twenty town centres of the country"<sup>22</sup>. The newly renovated Mander and Wulfrun centres revitalised the town and drew attention away from its failing industry. The thriving shopping and service centre sustained the city<sup>23</sup> and, by the late 1990s, had transformed Wolverhampton into a major regional centre<sup>24</sup>, the focus for well over half-a-million people. Every weekend saw 30,000 people 'flock to the centre'<sup>25</sup> despite competition from out-of-town shopping centres.

Józef: Like I said it con get tough sum times living on the outskirts of life. But yo' wouldn't believe ow nice the people of aud Wulfrūnehēantūn 'av bin ter an aud codger like me. The'er's a wonderful ooman oo brings me dinners everyday and the council 'av never 'ad a goo at me fer staying 'ere so long. I suppose it does 'em a favour in that they con look tolerant and welcoming. Now days I spend most of me time staile in donny, brushing the debris off of me island. I've gorra few tents set up now and gas when I need it. The ring road is an endlessly interesting place. It's got busier over the years but I still get a kick out of being right at the centre of things. People drive by and chock stuff out the window of their cars. The litter alone is enough ter keep anyone busy. But I know the boundaries of me island and I keep ter 'em. People are reasonably polite and leave me alone except fer the odd drunk. I'll spend me evenings stoking up a nice bunny-fire ter

ooman - woman

oo - who

goo - go

'ere - here

staile - broom handle

donny - hand

chock - throw

bunny-fire - bonfire

warm me clobber. I'll clane up me boots if they're muddy and settle in fer the night. I don't 'av a TV and I don't dun much reading aither. Mostly I sit back and watch the cars drive past. I'll 'av a look over the road into the centre and keep an eye out fer things.

The Black Country has proven itself a successful testing ground for national immigration strategy with some “15% of people from black and minority ethnic origins”<sup>26</sup>. On the eve of the millennium, Wolverhampton considered itself truly cosmopolitan, having first welcomed Asian and Afro-Caribbean immigrants after the Second World War<sup>27</sup>. One of Wolverhampton’s proudest achievements was that it had “contributed, locally and nationally, to the mutual respect, tolerance and understanding which is fundamental to the future of our cities”<sup>28</sup>. Wolverhampton’s population had developed to encompass “a vibrant multi-racial community”<sup>29</sup> that could boast African-Caribbean, Asian, Italian, Polish and Eastern European citizens. The city’s population continued to change right up until the millennium. It was estimated that by 2000, half of Wolverhampton’s residents would be over the age of 50<sup>30</sup>, with the possibility of the numbers of very elderly people rising by 35%<sup>31</sup> in the

clobber - clothes

clane - clean

future. This growth had an effect on Wolverhampton's ability to retain those aged between 20 and 29, the numbers of which were expected to fall by over 30% by 2010<sup>32</sup>. A third population trend seen at the end of the last century was a growth in the number of people living alone<sup>33</sup>, many of them being single parents and young workers. Wolverhampton's elderly trajectory prompted Mildred Reynolds to declare "Wolverhampton is the best place in the country to be old in"<sup>34</sup>.

By 1999 Wolverhampton had finally come 'out of the darkness' of industrial decline and had succeeded as a retail centre with increasingly attractive prospects for investors<sup>35</sup>. The city became "heritage driven"<sup>36</sup> and sought listing for many of its industrial buildings as well as historic civic buildings funded by industrial philanthropy. The town that thought of itself as a city sought to transform people's perceptions once and for all by ushering in a new era with Wolverhampton at the centre of The Black Country<sup>37</sup>.

*Józef Stawinoga died on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2007 aged 86. His death received local and national press coverage<sup>38</sup>, showing his importance to local people and his role in the town's past. As recognition of his place in Wolverhampton's history of immigration, the council said they would cover the costs of his private funeral. He remains a major figure in Wolverhampton's folk history, with a memorial statue planned for the near future<sup>39</sup>.*

## (References)

2 Mail Online, *Wolverhampton is named fifth WORST city on the planet*, 31 December 2009,

3 *Out of Darkness...*, pg. 3

4 *City Status for Wolverhampton*, pg 9

5 *Out of Darkness...*, pg 3

6 *City Status for Wolverhampton*, pg 9

7 *City Status for Wolverhampton*, pg 9

8 Warren Wilson, Editor of the Express & Star, *Out of Darkness...*, pg 8

9 Chris Bonnard, General Secretary of Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, *City Status for Wolverhampton*, pg 7

10 David Thompson, Chief Executive of Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, *Out of Darkness...*, pg 6

11 John Richardson, General Manager of Goodyear, *City Status for Wolverhampton*, pg 6

12 *City Status for Wolverhampton*, pg 5

13 John Richardson, General Manager of Goodyear, *City Status for*

14      *Wolverhampton*, pg 6  
14      Professor John Brooks, Vice-  
          chancellor of the University of  
          Wolverhampton, *Out of Darkness...*,  
          pg 14  
15      Sir Eric Pountain, Chairman  
          of Tarmac plc, *City Status*  
          for *Wolverhampton*, pg 6  
16      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 5  
17      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 5  
18      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 5  
19      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 15  
20      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 15  
21      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 15  
22      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 10  
23      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 5  
24      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 10  
25      *Out of Darkness...*, pg 7  
26      *The Black Country Core Strategy*,  
          pg 12  
27      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
          pg 16  
28      *City Status for Wolverhampton*,

pg 16

29 *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
pg 5

30 *Out of Darkness...*, pg 11

31 *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
pg 16

32 *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
pg 16

33 *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
pg 16

34 Mildred Reynolds, Representative  
of Better Government for Older  
People, *Out of Darkness...*, pg 2

35 *Out of Darkness...*, pg 9

36 Nigel Brooks, Chair of  
Wolverhampton Town Centre  
Forum, *Out of Darkness...*, pg 3

37 *City Status for Wolverhampton*,  
pg 15

38 The *Guardian*, *Fans mourn  
Wolverhampton ring road tramp*,  
29 October 2007

39 *Express & Star*, *Call for Fred  
sculpture*, 1 November 2007

## Present *Wolverhampton in Crisis*

On 18th December 2000 the Home Office announced the winners of the Millennium City competition; Wolverhampton, Brighton, Hove and Inverness were to be given city status by the Queen<sup>40</sup>. The Wulfrun Traipser, known to friends as Bo, witnessed these events first hand:

Wulfrun Traipser: When I heard the news about the city status win I was well chuffed. It wasn't the fust time we'd applied and I knew ow much it 'ud mean ter the place. The'er 'ad bin tewthree failed attempts in the past but we got the'er in the end. I reckon the Queen thought it 'ud be a nice idea ter reward as fer our 'ard work over the centuries. We helped put Britain on top of the world in the aud millennium now we we'm recognised at the start of the noo one.

Yet twelve years later, one of Britain's youngest cities saw its high street devastated financially and was branded the 'fifth worst city in the world'<sup>41</sup> by the Lonely Planet Travel Guide<sup>42</sup>. From his unique vantage point as a wanderer

fust - first  
ard - hard  
noo - new

of the streets, this mysterious man helps us understand Wolverhampton's current trajectory by expressing his opinions as a citizen of the city.

Wulfrun Traipser: I've lived on the Newhampton Road, jus' five minutes traipes from the centre, fer the last 25 years. If yo' goo in one direction the road teks yo' all the way ter posh aud Tettenhall and if yo' goo in the other we end up at the ring road that goes right round the centre, like a moat. It's convenient yo' see, you've got all the Victorian terraces surrounding the ring road and yo've only got ter pop into the centre fer yer shopping and all that. Yo' con see ow the downturn's affected this street. All the owsen are aither in bad nick or they're boarded up. Over the'er is the Molineux Stadium. Wum of the Wolves. They reckoned that city status 'ud lft the area up a bit but it day dun much!

In September 2012, interviews with three councillors at Wolverhampton Council revealed that they were in the process of re-evaluating the viability of

traipes - aimless walk nick - condition  
owsen - houses lft - lift  
aither - either day - didn't

several schemes developed for the new city that were not implemented. It seemed like a time for reflection amidst continued financial uncertainty. The discussions centred on current plans for the future of Wolverhampton and the councillors' own preferred approaches. Through a comparison of the planning documents, news articles and councillor discussions, a future trajectory for Wolverhampton can be proposed. Ian Culley is a Planning Officer, Judith Rowley is Chair for the Planning Committee and Peter Bilson is the current Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity at Wolverhampton City Council.

Described as 'a rare mark of distinction'<sup>43</sup>, the honour of city status was conceived to mark the passing of the Millennium. Despite being described as "over due"<sup>44</sup> by Peter Bilson, being named a city was celebrated by the former town. Though the title itself is purely 'honorific'<sup>45</sup> and does not give any new responsibility to the town, the competition was nevertheless hotly contested by all 39 of the towns that applied. The criteria for choosing the new cities stated that a town cannot automatically meet a certain set of standards; it is an honour that can only be bestowed by the sovereign. However, the judges did reveal that each town was assessed on an individual basis looking at factors such as:

- Population size - Judith Rowley considered that it was "common

sense" to grant Wolverhampton city status if only due to its size<sup>46</sup>.

- The town's significance as a regional centre - For Judith Rowley, Wolverhampton was a strong hub within the Black Country and deserved its hard-won city status.

Suhail Rana, chairman of Wolverhampton History and Heritage Society, believes that the honour gave the people of Wolverhampton a sense of confidence and increased civic pride. It put the city 'on the map' and saw it taken more seriously by the rest of the country<sup>47</sup>. Judith Rowley remembers catching the bus and hearing a group of young women discussing Wolverhampton's chances of success. "The competition really helped drum up support for Wolverhampton; we felt city status could bring a new identity and improve our external perception"<sup>48</sup>.

Wolverhampton joined the 61 other cities in the United Kingdom and began the process of redefining its national image. Several documents were compiled that proposed strategic changes for the city, varying in scale, from a focus on the regional to the inner city: The 2011 Black Country Core Strategy proposed the inter-regional co-operation of four councils to develop a framework for development within the Black Country area. The 2006 Unitary Development Plan focused on Wolverhampton itself and what changes could be made to reinforce

its role as a regional centre. The 2012 City Centre Prospectus updated and superseded the UDP, reflecting on the city after the 2008 financial crisis. The 2005 City Centre Strategy and Action Plan Vision focused purely on the city centre and highlighted its importance to the future of Wolverhampton. The 2005 Evening Economy Plan analysed one aspect of the city centre and proposed strategies for improvement.

Each of these documents differed in its target audience, some acting as an aid to the council, others designed to encourage outside investment in the city. By the time many of them were published they were out of touch with the economic climate of the city. The council was busy drawing up plans for a complete reorganisation of the centre, making connections within the ring road whilst preserving key heritage assets. They set about increasing Wolverhampton's retail offering and its accessibility as a rail destination from places as far away as Glasgow. Plans were laid, and development seemed to be on the way for the fledgling city.

Suddenly, in 2008, all plans were halted as the economic crisis shook the entire country's financial sector. Projects such as Summer Row, the much-vaunted development featuring a Debenhams store and several other major retailers, fell through. Smaller businesses in the city, which were relying on the increased footfall the new retail development would

bring, started closing down. The 2009 Local Data Company survey of 149,000 UK shop premises in 700 town centres reported that Wolverhampton had the highest percentage of vacant retail units at 24%, compared with 12.4% nationally. The Midlands and the North East had been the worst hit by the crash, explained in part by the areas' reliance on the retail sector and the increasing transition towards online shopping. This shift from the traditional shopping experience that had come to define Wolverhampton's centre was said to be causing "a fundamental reshaping of our high streets"<sup>49</sup>.

The decline of one of Britain's newest cities reached its lowest point when the Lonely Planet Travel Guide conducted an online poll of 'most hated cities' that put Wolverhampton in fifth place. The result was based on feedback from their website users with only Detroit (USA), Accra (Ghana), Seoul (South Korea) and Los Angeles (USA) placed higher on the list. The write-up described Wolverhampton as "so bad it had not even made it on to the reviews of cities"<sup>50</sup> on Lonely Planet's site. This led to a "swift and fierce"<sup>51</sup> backlash from residents and the city council alike that made its way into the pages of the Telegraph, who described the poll as "unscientific" and "random"<sup>52</sup>. Even local celebrities such as Goldie, a DJ and artist, described the decision as "colossal stupidity" and defended the city, saying, "If you look through the greyness

there is a beauty to the grit”<sup>53</sup>. Beverly Knight, a singer, also showed support for the place she grew up, praising the warmth of the area and describing the population as “extremely friendly”<sup>54</sup>.

Wulfrun Traipser: When we heard about the poll, we let ‘em ‘av it. Wulfrunians bombarded the website and even sum celebs ‘ad a goo. A bunch of as felt really hurt by it, and eventually they understood it and took dowl the piece.

The Black Country Core Strategy was a planning document released in 2011, which looked at the largest conurbation outside London<sup>55</sup>. As a strategic centre The Black Country considers Wolverhampton to be the main ‘engine of the Black Country economy’<sup>56</sup>. The document focused on this sub region of the West Midlands called The Black Country, an area already governed by four local authorities: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The region comprises 25 towns, including Wolverhampton, considered to be of ‘fundamental importance’ to the area’s regeneration<sup>57</sup>. Due to the close proximity of the four councils, the government encouraged them to develop a regional spatial strategy to construct a framework for the larger area. It was hoped that in

‘em - them population  
W u l f r u n i a n s - sum - some  
W o l v e r h a m p t o n ' s a s - u s

doing so they could support each others' development and provide a consolidated offer greater than the sum of their individual parts. Whilst later documents would look at Wolverhampton specifically, the Black Country Core Strategy put the city into a wider regional context. Where Birmingham was considered a world city at the heart of the West Midlands, Wolverhampton defined itself as the regional centre of the Black Country.

The document begins by proposing a 'Black Country Vision'<sup>58</sup> for the year 2026. These proposed developments provided a guide to the direction the region with the largest population in England was taking<sup>59</sup>. Whilst promoting its own 'umbrella' vision, the document also acted as framework for other more detailed thematic studies into each of the four local authorities. The main focus of the Black Country Core Strategy Vision was to create sustainable communities by ensuring a stable economy. These key development areas outlined the necessary development needed to maintain a successful region and to encourage growth, with examples such as improved inter-regional transport connections for greater employment opportunities. They represented the Black Country Consortium's (the four local authorities united) vision of a future for the area, elements of which undoubtedly informed developments in Wolverhampton. It is thanks in part to this document that the Black Country was

recently recorded on OS Maps, unifying an area of the West Midlands that had been linked together for centuries<sup>60</sup>.

Wulfrun Traipser: Maybe teaming up's not a bad idea. In recent years things 'av bin so bad hardly anything has taken off. It's sort of left the centre a bit of a ghost town as things only ever leave, they never arrive! If yer all workin' towards the same goal yo' con spread the load a lickle.

The Black Country Core Strategy predicted that in 2026 the economy would be transformed and Wolverhampton would become a prosperous place to live again, a place where the so called 'gap in health, wealth and prosperity'<sup>61</sup> would have been reduced. By utilising the connections already established between the four local authorities, the region could offer an improved environment that promotes healthy living and fitness with quality housing in low carbon neighbourhoods. It proposes that the region should make the most of the 'existing diversity'<sup>62</sup> of the Black Country found in its canals and post-industrial buildings. The Core Strategy aims to create distinctive living and work environments to be provided for residents and business investors alike.

yer - you're

lickle - little

Wulfrun Traipser: It's all very well blaberen about healthy living and low carbon owsen, but it all relies on having the money the'er ter start wi'.

The Unitary Development Plan focused on Wolverhampton itself and argued the need for major investment in its existing retail-led centre. The document drew attention to the main strategic development opportunities in the city centre through its ten-year plan, allowing it to go into more detail than the Black Country Core Strategy. By defining specific regions of potential investment, the Planning Officer Ian Culley believes that an 'Arc of Regeneration' could 'feed the centre'<sup>63</sup>. The idea of 'continual improvement and investment' sums up the council's approach to development at present. The proposals focus on retail, leisure, culture, offices, transportation and residential, drawing attention back to the centre away from outer-city retail destinations.

Wulfrun Traipser: I've seen that myself. Yo' walk round the city at the moment and yo'll see the odd family but the majority of the time it's the adults who goo and shop and the kids goo ter socialise. If yo' con o'st someat fer the

blaberen - talking  
yo'll - you'll  
o'st - offer

wool family, a 'retail experience', then the city 'ud probably be more successful in the long run. Stale sum of the business off those retail parks that are sapping the life out of the place!

Large scale shopping centres such as the Merry Hill Centre have drawn attention away from nearby historic centres. The UDP's main aim was to create a sustainable future for Wolverhampton's centre and create a city that could weather a financial storm should another come along. To retain its title as a sub-regional centre for the West Midlands, Wolverhampton city centre needed to provide facilities for both residents and workers, with the retention of its existing retail being of fundamental importance, according to Ian Culley<sup>64</sup>. The UDP's main stated aims were to improve on local and national transport links, improve the city's cultural offering, develop its canal side living quarter and provide large supermarkets on the outskirts of the city, with connections to the centre to draw custom inwards<sup>65</sup>.

Wulfrun Traipser: Arf of the stuff planned never went ahead. No money about! People 'ad jus' started leaving in their droves. People 'ud jus' bypass the centre and head

wool - whole  
stale - steal  
arf - half

straight fer the retail parks and Birmingham. I'd seen that UDP as well. It was a dull read; the prospectus on the other donny was bright and cheerful. All it needed ter dun was attract sum attention back ter the city.

The City Centre Prospectus was an attempt to bring the UDP up to date after the financial crisis and realign the direction in which Wolverhampton was going. Published in July 2012, the "glossy, investor-orientated"<sup>66</sup> brochure was designed to promote "the best the city had to offer"<sup>67</sup> and provoke a confident attitude towards the future of a declining city. The publication sought to attract "direct input"<sup>68</sup> from developers, something the council believed was essential to ensure the revitalisation of the city. Focusing on highly specific development areas, the document proposes "a vibrant, walkable, attractive, family-friendly city centre... which is compact enough to be welcoming and accessible, but large enough to boast some of the UK's best retail, leisure and cultural facilities. Wolverhampton should be a city made for living, working and enjoyment with the best streets and public spaces, combined with excellent public transport. In short, a city centre to delight, achieve and thrive"<sup>69</sup>.

Wulfrun Traipser: We've already got it all its jus' a bit aud. I reckon if we stop messing around and pitching these

large, expensive projects and fancy waerds and 'ad a rethink about wot we already 'av, we'd see it's not arf bad!

Ian Culley sees the future of Wolverhampton in a retail-based economy<sup>70</sup>. The retail quarter covers the two "excellent"<sup>71</sup> shopping centres in the centre of the city and the smaller high streets surrounding them. Assurances have been given by the Mander and Wulfrun centres of their commitment to invest in the city<sup>72</sup>. However, the current floor space of the existing shops is no longer big enough to attract major investment, resulting in larger retailers moving away from the centre. Their departure leaves smaller retailers who relied on the pull of the larger stores with less custom and no economies of scale to fall back on. Peter Bilson believes that by opening the enclosed shopping centres to the street Wolverhampton can "better meet the needs of larger retailers"<sup>73</sup>. According to Judith Rowley, smaller, specialist shops and restaurants would be able to survive<sup>74</sup> on the influx of custom the large stores attract rather than cede to their greater economic clout. In this way, she supports the bolstering of the existing retail offering in the centre, though believes that the relocation of big-draw retailers to the outskirts could positively impact the retained city centre, provided effective connections are made to circumvent the ring road<sup>75</sup>. By 'consolidating' the

city's existing retail stock, the shops' layout and function will become clearer, providing a more efficient experience.<sup>76</sup>

Wulfrun Traipser: It's all very well if it turns out fer the best, but when they bought up the whole of the south of the city centre fer their developments it left it in a state. The money pulled out and they we'm left wi' useless stock and empty bildens. I understand the argument fer it but it's a big risk ter tek when yer already losing.

In the early days of the new millennium, the council passed several compulsory purchase orders, acquiring large areas of ex-industrial land. Peter Bilson justified the orders, arguing: "It is important that the council recognises blight before areas are allowed to sink"<sup>77</sup>. It was still seen as important to provide larger retail space and as Peter Bilson explains, the council "were able to acquire buildings particularly in the Summer Row area of the city and free up the land for potential investors"<sup>78</sup>. The immediate availability of land was designed to coincide with the council's desire for investment. However, after planning permission was granted for 86 shops, including the city's first Debenhams store, Summer Row became yet another "victim of the credit crunch"<sup>79</sup>.

bildens - buildings

The financial risks in the project were considered “too great”<sup>80</sup> due to an Irish bank’s investment falling through, meaning that the council was forced to shelve the plans, until the launch of the prospectus. This publication saw the relaunch of a similar plan for a retail hub under the new name Southside, this time positioned south of and, more significantly, outside the ring road, designed to be more attractive to investors. The development aimed to “transform the city skyline” both physically and metaphorically.<sup>81</sup>

Wulfrun Traipser: The'er are two sides ter the buying up of land. Sure yo' con free up space ter attract investors wi' a quick and easy transaction but wot happens if no one comes along? Wot we saw wi' Summer Row was a shame. All those businesses bought out and the ones remaining trying ter survive in a ghost town. If one day an investor does cum along they wo think much of the place when it's all boarded up.

The UDP advised that wherever possible inner-city-centre housing and above shop flats should be retained. New mixed use developments should aim to provide some high density housing, ideally 20% of which should be affordable<sup>82</sup>.

wot - what

It was predicted that this new inner-city community would keep the service economy steady whilst being situated close to the city's culture and nightlife<sup>83</sup>. The Canal Side Quarter, a development proposed for a post-industrial site near the city's train station, was to provide "leisure, housing and workshops"<sup>84</sup> with improved links to the centre for cyclists and pedestrians. The canals are a vital component of Wolverhampton's heritage. This proposal incorporates them into a housing and office scheme that gives them a new lease of life. The Canal Side Quarter would in this way provide 1,700 new houses, 44% of Wolverhampton's planned housing at the time<sup>85</sup>. The development also offers 20,438 sq.m. of commercial space, 11,148 sq.m. of retail space and 27,870 sq.m. of leisure facilities. This large boost to the city centre economy will also preserve some of Wolverhampton's endangered heritage, with the canals, locks and lock buildings being converted into usable space.

The City Centre Strategy and Action Plan's vision was that the regeneration of the city builds upon its "proud heritage, its spirit of competitiveness and innovation, its modern infrastructure, and the strength and character of its people" and take its place as a principal city on the regional, national, and international stage<sup>86</sup>. In the City Centre Strategy and Action Plan, the focus again is on the accessibility of the city centre via the ring road. Pedestrian crossings with improved

signage will give Wolverhampton the identity of a regional centre, whilst high density inner-city housing will provide a stable economy. "Wolverhampton will be perceived as an attractive location, in which people will choose to live."<sup>87</sup>

Wulfrun Traipser: I doe tend ter goo out in the centre anymore cum ter think of it. Last time I went the'er past about nine o'clock I ended up feeling like an aud man! It's the mature crowd they're missing 'cos they doe 'av anything fer as ter dun.

Peter Bilson believes that the key to a successful evening economy is "the linking of daytime activities to the night"<sup>88</sup>. He says "we already have the facilities; the problem is retaining the customers after the shops close; more is needed than a retail experience alone"<sup>89</sup>. The 2005 Evening Economy Plan focused on the reliance of the city upon its university students to support its evening economy. Most bars are oriented towards a younger crowd who are more cost-conscious and typically don't spend as much as other patrons. More attention needs to be spent on encouraging families and couples to stay in the centre past six o' clock. Judith Rowley feels there needs to be "places for all types of people to eat and drink in the evenings"<sup>90</sup>. This will

doe - don't

be aided by the increase in city centre living where "a balanced city centre residential community"<sup>91</sup> will provide a stable economy throughout the year. Peter Bilson envisages an evening economy where "people spend the whole day hopping from café to shop to restaurant"<sup>92</sup>.

Wulfrun Traipser: Oh ah, they reckon the Interchange will fund itself. That wool canalside community is growing up around it. They'll shop near the interchange and goo ter the centre too! Also wi' all the noo people able ter get ter Wolverhampton through the interchange that's bound ter help the economy somewhat. But it wasn't all roseys! That tram didn't arf dun sum damage ter the nightlife round 'ere. Not that I was out much anyway but the streets used ter be buzzin on a Friday and Saturday night. Wolverhampton allus 'ad one or two bostin music venues but when more people we'm tempted by Birmingham that was it. Off they went ter the bigger venues and it'l tek a lot ter bring 'em back. The'er's going ter be about 4,000,000 passengers a year going through it! That's got ter improve things lickle, Wolverhampton's got ter concentrate on drawin' 'em out of the station.

The City Interchange is a development that aims to improve the transport connections within Wolverhampton and throughout the rest of the Midlands and the UK. Ian Culley believes this proposed transport hub will have “the biggest impact on the city”<sup>93</sup>. As well as a revitalised train and bus station he believes the new office and retail space included will provide Wolverhampton’s population with improved connections to the centre and to other regional centres such as Coventry and Birmingham<sup>94</sup>. The inclusion of office and residential units will mean an increase in population for the city and a new identity for Wolverhampton as a destination for work and leisure. The first phase of the Interchange development is almost complete, with the new bus station now open and the existing railway station due for expansion in the near future. Steve Parry, managing director of Neptune Developments, responsible for the Interchange scheme envisages “a space for the public to live, work, shop, eat, visit and enjoy”<sup>95</sup>. Phase Two of the City Interchange development will see the office and retail offering completed with a casino and four star hotel included<sup>96</sup>. Peter Bilson believes the City Interchange will be “a sign of confidence” in Wolverhampton that will prove its ability to “rise from the ashes”<sup>97</sup>.

When reading current descriptions of the city, its “choking ring road”<sup>98</sup> is a common theme. Implemented in the 1960s, the city centre’s surrounding ring road was

designed to relieve traffic congestion in the centre, to increase pedestrian access and safety. With the UDP's drive to use the post-industrial space surrounding the centre for larger developments, links across the ring road need to be improved. With pedestrian links to the centre, the new developments will encourage more consumer driven profit that it is hoped will leak into the centre. As long as the centre can pull custom in with its larger offerings, the small businesses left in the old shopping centre units will survive. Transport has been one of Wolverhampton's "success stories"<sup>99</sup> according to Judith Rowley. The opening of the Wolverhampton Metro in 1999 was deemed an "instant success"<sup>100</sup> due to its "99% user satisfaction rating"<sup>101</sup>. Travellers were now given greater access to more towns on the 20.13Km, twenty-three-stop route. The job centre was also able to widen its catchment area because people could travel further to work. Now, 13 years later, the metro conducts five million journeys a year, taking people from Wolverhampton centre all the way to Birmingham. However, the improved connections work both ways as Wolverhampton now loses out to Birmingham<sup>102</sup> due to its brand new Bullring Shopping Centre.

Wulfrun Traipser: Wot all this hangs on is the connections over the ring road. They 'av never quite got that right. Yo' 'av a right 'ard time crossing

over it as the traffic's bad and it's not a pretty sight when yo' fust arrive in the city. Or yo' con try and goo underneath it using the subway and I'm sure yo' don't need me ter tell yo' ow dangerous that is. I don't goo dowl the'er as a rule of thumb. Saying all that, if they dun get it right then I think the supermarkets are a great idea. The public are blubren out fer a solution ter the monopoly the current supermarkets 'av and they will bring people back ter the centre.

According to Ian Culley, many people were afraid that the arrival of large supermarket chains to the city would have a "negative impact"<sup>103</sup> on the centre's retail sector. The council expects the planned supermarkets surrounding the centre to immediately attract local residents doing their weekly shop. By improving pedestrian links between the supermarkets and the city centre, the city could encourage these shoppers to 'make a day of it' and travel into the centre. Ian Culley believes that if the city harnesses the potential pull of these supermarkets on the surrounding area and improves links to the centre, some of the custom will make its way over the ring road<sup>104</sup>.

Wulfrun Traipser: So the'er yo' 'av it. That's the council's 'visions' fer yo'. I reckon

the only thing holding back  
Wolverhampton's bright future  
is the money. Things aren't  
looking too great in the city  
centre at present but we've  
cum 'out of darkness' afore  
and we con dun it again!

(References)

40 Home Office, *Millennium city status competition - winning cities announced*, 18 December 2000

41 Telegraph, *Wolverhampton voted fifth worst city in the world*, 31 December 2009

42 Lonely Planet Guide, *Cities So Misunderstood*, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/south-korea/travel-tips-and-articles/9782>, 12 January 2012

43 Home Office, *Millennium City Status Competition - Winning Cities Announced*, 18 Dec 2000

44 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, *Wolverhampton City Council*, 20 September 2012

45 Home Office, *Millennium City Status Competition - Winning Cities Announced*, 18 Dec 2000

46 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning Committee, *Wolverhampton City Council*, 18 September 2012

47 BBC News, *Wolverhampton, the Millennium City - 10 years on*, 18 January 2010

48 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning Committee, *Wolverhampton City*

Council, 18 September 2012

49 BBC News - *Wolverhampton and Margate shops hit hard by recession*, 11 February 2010

50 BBC News Website, *Wolverhampton named fifth worst city in world*, 31 December 2009

51 Telegraph, *Wolverhampton voted fifth worst city in the world*, 31 December 2009

52 Telegraph, *Wolverhampton voted fifth worst city in the world*, 31 December 2009

53 The Sun, *Wolverhampton: We love it!*, 1st January 2010

54 The Sun, *Wolverhampton: We love it!*, 1st January 2010

55 *The Black Country Core Strategy*, pg 9

56 *The Black Country Core Strategy*, pg 22

57 *The Black Country Core Strategy*, pg 22

58 *The Black Country Core Strategy*, pg 4

59 *The Black Country Core Strategy*, pg 4

60 BBC News, *Black Country 'is put on the map'*, 6 August 2008

61 *The Black Country Core Strategy*, pg 15

62 *The Black Country Core Strategy*,

pg 18

63 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square,  
Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 17  
September 2012

64 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square,  
Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH,  
17 September 2012

65 *Unitary Development Plan*, pg  
146- 147

66 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square,  
Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH,  
17 September 2012

67 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's  
Square, Wolverhampton, WV1  
1SH, 17 September 2012

68 Planning, *Wolverhampton city  
centre regeneration vision  
Unveiled*, 19 July 2012

69 *Wolverhampton City Centre  
Prospectus*, pg 3

70 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's  
Square, Wolverhampton, WV1

1SH, 17 September 2012

71 Ian Culley, Planning Officer, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 17 September 2012

72 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, 20 September 2012

73 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, 20 September 2012

74 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning Committee, Wolverhampton City Council, 18 September 2012

75 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning Committee, Wolverhampton City Council, 18 September 2012

76 *Unitary Development Plan*, pg 233

77 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, 20 September 2012

78 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, 20 September 2012

79 BBC News, *Summer Row centre in Wolverhampton to be dropped*, 26 January 2011

80 BBC News, *Summer Row centre in Wolverhampton to be dropped*, 26 January 2011

81 BBC News, *Traders make way for £300m centre*, 6 February 2008

82 *Unitary Development Plan*, pg 229

83 *Unitary Development Plan*, pg 229

84 *Unitary Development Plan*, pg 237

85 *Wolverhampton City Centre Prospectus*, pg 25

86 *City Centre Strategy and Action Plan*, pg 27

87 *City Centre Strategy and Action Plan*, pg 28

88 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, 20 September 2012

89 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, 20 September 2012

90 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning Committee, Wolverhampton City Council, 18 September 2012

91 *Evening Economy Plan*, pg 29

92 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, 20 September 2012

93 Ian Culley, Planning Officer, Wolverhampton City Council,

Civic Centre, St. Peter's  
Square, Wolverhampton,  
WV1 1SH, 17 September 2012

94 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's  
Square, Wolverhampton, WV1  
1SH, 17 September 2012

95 BBC News, *City transport project  
announced*, 15 February 2008

96 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member  
for Economic Regeneration  
and Prosperity, Wolverhampton  
City Council, 20 September 2012

97 Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member  
for Economic Regeneration  
and Prosperity, Wolverhampton  
City Council, 20 September 2012

98 Telegraph, *Wolverhampton voted  
fifth worst city in the world*,  
31 Dec 2009

99 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning  
Committee, Wolverhampton City  
Council, 18 September 2012

100 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning  
Committee, Wolverhampton City  
Council, 18 September 2012

101 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning  
Committee, Wolverhampton City  
Council, 18 September 2012

102 Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning  
Committee, Wolverhampton City

Council, 18 September 2012

103 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's  
Square, Wolverhampton, WV1  
1SH, 17 September 2012

104 Ian Culley, Planning Officer,  
Wolverhampton City Council,  
Civic Centre, St. Peter's  
Square, Wolverhampton, WV1  
1SH, 17 September 2012



## Future

### *A retrospective Vision for Wolverhampton*

The consolidation of the retrospective approach to classifying the city culminates in a series of visions of the future. The study of Wolverhampton's unique successes and failures, perceived and desired identity, and approach to planning can be combined to envisage a new trajectory for the city. The Wolftown Cowboy was a lone ranger who could be found in the city centre questioning the decisions the city and its council made in the late 2000s<sup>105</sup>.

David: I mostly spent me days wandering around outside Woolworths shouting off about this and that. People weren't ever that interested but I was determined I 'ad someat ter o'st. Fer the longest time I've allus felt I 'ad sum kind of inner voice that helped me out in times of need. If I was putting on a bet dowl the bookies, it'd chirp up and let me know which horse ter pike. If I vas doing the skraze cards, well lets jus' say I 'ad an inkling which numbers ter skraze ter win. Despite this me morals never allowed me ter tek too much advantage, jus' as long as I

o'st - to offer

skraze - scratch

could get by I was chuffed.

The man behind the mask, David William Cox, here outlines four visions that are direct reactions to opinions expressed by the aforementioned sources, seeking to provide answers to current issues. This narrative provides the freedom to explore architectural ideas without constraints.

Wolverhampton's history of reliance upon one sector and constant desire to specialise rather than diversify has led to the vulnerability of the economy in the past and today. Its attempts to accommodate transport whilst preserving its unique heritage have led to problems with access to the centre. Neither the approach to preservation nor to modification ever reaches its full potential, creating an architecturally conflicting city centre. Wolverhampton's desire to preserve its heritage and current inability to grasp future trends exacerbates the problem of an increasingly elderly population by not providing the jobs needed to sustain a reliable workforce. Changes in the nature of the retail experience have led to the death of the high street, a problem which Wolverhampton must find a solution to in order to maintain its role as the centre of the Black Country. The city today remains vulnerable to the economic climate resulting in surprisingly high levels of support for large supermarket chains with unforeseen consequences.

## Return to Wulfrun

David: Well I tek it yo' 'av heard about me visions fer the future of the city. They mostly cum about at night while I lie awake and think about things. I've decided upon four stories fer yo' terday the fust of which being the one I once told a small aud ooman outside BHS tewthree years back. I grabbed 'er arm and told 'er of a vision I call Return ter Wulfrun.

The year is 2022 and we have begun to see the first signs that something has gone terribly wrong. Wolverhampton had always looked fondly upon its past. The highlights of the Industrial Revolution and the days at the centre of the Black Country were the defining moments in an ever slowing history. Today its population relies completely on former glories to survive. Its obsession with the past and unwillingness to encourage progress has had a lasting effect on the city and its population. The progress seen in other cities has largely bypassed Wolverhampton. An increasingly elderly population seemed to have reached a plateau where nothing new could ever get built. In the years following the millennium, efforts were made to increase connections with the rest of the country. The City Interchange promised

to increase the city's visibility across the nation and bridges were constructed improving access across the city's ring road. The changes these developments brought about weren't welcomed by a population increasingly concerned with preservation. The Interchange brought nothing but the wrecking ball of outside investors who didn't share the residents' sentiments when it came to Wolverhampton's heritage. The bridge links only increased the numbers of people crowding the streets and making city life harder. Something drastic had to be done if the character of Wolverhampton's historic quarters was going to survive.

In 2016, all roads within the bordering ring road were dug up. At first the council had protested, but the elderly councillors who had infiltrated the local government saw to it that all demolitions were carried through. Their argument was that the planners in the city hadn't gone far enough. Initial proposals that reduced inner-city traffic were dropped in favour of bypassing the centre and deflecting traffic to the circumference of the city using a ring road. This border to the city centre had the effect of relieving congestion and preserving the character of the streets that had once accommodated the horse and cart. The planners of 2022 were finishing the job, completing the redevelopment of Wolverhampton city centre by returning to traditional transportation methods. The unforeseen consequence of these

drastic actions was that the city became effectively cut off, barricaded from the future. The citizens of Wolverhampton, increasingly weary of change, were drawn to a simple way of life within the confines of the ring road. Those concerned with progress were leaving in their droves.

The new form of Victorian living saw previous tourist attractions and landmarks reinvigorated through re-use, as Wolverhampton's elderly population were unwilling to build new facilities, preferring to annex the old. They reinstated the historic Quarters and grew their own produce on the abandoned inner-city car parks. People rarely ventured across the boundaries of their designated quarter. There was no need; each region had become a self sufficient community. The Mander and Wulfrun centres had long been demolished. The shopping complexes that had once saved Wolverhampton from an industrial decline had nearly destroyed the city by late 2013. Their demolition was welcomed by the elders and was seen by outsiders as an admission of Wolverhampton's mistake of 'putting all its eggs in one basket'. The young population on the other hand saw their own history being erased and for many, the demolition of the Wulfrun centre was the final straw; they had to leave. The present population are mostly in their 60s. They run small shops specialising in locally grown fresh produce. They re-ignited the town's historic wool trade and barter with goods

and trade knitted garments. Their only connection with the outside world is to gaze up at the ever accelerating traffic that encapsulates their world. The outer city developments that seem to shadow the old centre grow increasingly taller. The transformation from promising new city to conservative heartland was a quick and all too easy step. Over the past 10 years, Wolverhampton's new elderly population have been unaware of the gradual decline of ingenuity and progress. At the centre of the Black Country now stands the largest residential community in the world, a paradise for those incapable of living in the present. Slowly, day by day, they realised that the buildings they had chosen to preserve through re-use were disintegrating. Time was taking its toll and the city was imploding. The population tried to reach out for help, but the connections that had once helped to preserve these heritage assets had long been severed by the ring road. The city had been forgotten.

David: I also liked ter pass on me talent ter others. Most of me early predictions tended ter be small scale stuff like sports fixtures and results. I was never afraid ter share tewthree horses or a bostin bet! But people didn't allus appreciate me help and it landed me in a spot of myther more than once, let me tell yo'. However one day I was traipsing along near aud Woolworth's and this feller tapped me on the shoulder. 'E said "yo' know our Cowboy, yo' weren't arf right wi' those numbers the other day". That was the fust bit of positive feedback I'd 'ad in years so I thanked him and 'e shook me donny. I told him I 'ad another prediction fer him and 'e begged me ter hear it! This one I told him was a bostin one. I said buy up all the shares yo' con in Amazon.com 'cos the City.com isn't far away!

Wolverhampton has always been used to change, no matter how drastic. The wool trade that first put the town on the map gave way to an industrial powerhouse. After the decline of industry, the city fully embraced the

retail and entertainment sectors. After the economic downturn, Wolverhampton came back with a new formula for success.

The internet city, the first in the UK, was proposed in 2018. Involving the demolition of the majority of the city's centre, the proposals were controversial at first but eventually accepted as yet another chapter in Wolverhampton's history of tolerance. Wolverhampton's retail offering was no longer sufficient in a world obsessed with the speed and efficiency of online shopping. The idea that people would spend a day shopping in the centre and support the other economies, reliant upon their footfall was no longer relevant. The city's two shopping centres were demolished as the nature of the shopping experience was changing. There was no longer any need for car parks to house the temporarily unused automobiles of day shoppers. The high street became increasingly unpopular after most major retailers switched to online-only stores.

In 2020, the first of the highways was installed. The earlier removal of the infamous ring road had opened up space in the centre and allowed for the large depots and storage space these new online retailers needed. The browsing and purchasing of goods was now carried out online, meaning that shop windows were no longer needed; the high street was dead.

By 2022, 95% of land within the region

previously enclosed by the ring road was occupied by some form of online distribution centre. The final 5% of the city's buildings were its heritage stock. The decision was made to preserve these buildings in readiness for the change in use bound to come in the future of Wolverhampton. The highways narrowly miss these buildings and dictate the areas available for depot construction. The buildings chosen for preservation were selected by an online ballot before being decommissioned and maintained to preserve Wolverhampton's heritage for future generations. With the remaining population now living in the estates surrounding the depots, the only visitors to the city are those packaging items to leave.

## Tesco-heantūn

David: Tewthree days ago, a young lady came up ter me and was all overcome wi' excitement. Turned out that horse I told 'er was a bobby dazzler came in fust place. Things we'm starting ter look bostin fer me. Gradually more and more people started listening and it wasn't long till I started holding council at me local church helping people out wi' their futures. The vicar told me about the mayoral elections and said I should 'av a pop at it. I'd never thought of myself in a position like that but I thought it might be worth a shot. I ran me election campaign wi' the story Tesco-heantūn.

In the early years of the millennium, three supermarkets opened up in Wolverhampton. Located on the outskirts of the city, they were welcomed by the local residents with open arms. At first the supermarkets competed over food prices and customers quickly formed allegiances based on proximity. However, over time the residents of Wolverhampton instinctively grew attached to their particular supermarket. These supermarket 'tribes' could even be seen crossing the improved ring road bridges that opened up the once

forgotten centre. This trickle down effect was celebrated at first as the inner-city high street had fallen into disrepair. The formerly fenced off area could now be rediscovered by the tribes and was at first well used. The new custom prompted smaller retailers to offer something different to the supermarkets, and specialist shops found they could survive in the new decade. The mutual relationship between the centre and the retail goliaths was initially encouraged by the latter, as long as they made the rules. The three megastores knew they held the power to dismantle all ring road bridges at any time and cut all ties with the centre for good. The centre was wholly reliant on the favour of the supermarkets, acting as a form of entertainment to the visitors used to the modern layout of the supermarkets. With the small shops content with their new lease of life, the supermarkets set about guaranteeing their future.

When Tesco, Morrisons and Sainsburys first came to the city in 2012, they were met with a welcome bordering on desperation; the council made available three prime sites on the outskirts of the city centre. However it soon became apparent that Wolverhampton's historic tendency towards backing short term solutions often left them worst hit by economic downturns. The supermarkets on the other hand, had discovered at the turn of the millennium, that through a certain form of nurture, they could

guarantee a dependable customer and economy. The supermarket villages, implemented in 2016, were a combined effort between all three ring road stores. The communities that moved into the affordable accommodation the villages provided couldn't believe their luck. Amenities such as the Interchange were inherited by the supermarkets, offering convenience and the availability of food and goods on your doorstep was seen as a step forward. The historic formula for a village may have been residential build-up around a place of worship but the new cathedrals were now the supermarkets.

The businesses in the city centre initially responded favourably to the supermarket village proposals, seeing them offering 500,000 potential customers on the doorstep. However, the infatuation didn't last long. After the initial honeymoon period, the residents soon found the centre's lack of choice and inefficient layout was not worth the trip and stayed within their supermarket villages. The centre was in decline and though the supermarkets stood by and watched, many saw that the centre was an accomplice in its own demise. Now with little to no competition from the outside world, the residents of the supermarket villages were in the hands of the holy trinity: Tesco, Morrisons and Sainsburys.

Gradually prices began to rise in direct relation to the number of small shops closing across the ring road. In the last

five years the price of bread had tripled!  
The supermarkets now held the purse  
strings of the Wolverhampton economy.

## Youth-tūn

David: Recently I 'av become a religious man. In me online profile I've admitted that the way I behaved in the aud days wasn't right and left me feeling lonely and confused<sup>106</sup>. I was helped ter find Jesus and was taken in by a local church. I began ter realise that many of the problems I 'ad as an adult we'm probably caused by me muther abandoning me at birth. Due ter this I 'av dedicated me noo life ter helping out kids in a similar situation. This next vision is one I regularly tell the kids when the world looks like a dark place. Youth-tun is a future they con believe in.

Wolverhampton is now a city for the young. In the years preceding 2022, a mass exodus of the elderly population was encouraged by developers. The proposals for fast-paced travel networks and pleasure-based entertainment facilities brought about the displacement of the city's elderly to the outskirts of the ring road. At present more than 80% of land within the ring road is dedicated to a new form of inner-city living. This dense urban build-up of one and two bedroom flats has redefined the role of the centre, leaving behind only a

few heritage buildings still important to the young. At the centre of their lives is the 2015 City Interchange, a feature that played such a large role in the early days of the city. This gateway to the rest of the country also provides the public transportation now essential to the population's daily migration.

The Mander and Wulfrun Centres, the two remaining retail developments, remind the young population of the few years preceding the millennium, when the city was a shopping hub. Inhabitants of the present hyper-retail environment, the young look to these two centres as the central monuments to Wolverhampton's previous success and an example for the future. A new layer in Wolverhampton's heritage is now preserved.

Today's iconic structures are mainly pleasure-orientated, with large casinos and hotels serving the transient culture. The young residents are willing to travel further and revel in the fast-paced lifestyle. This is reflected in their living habits. Most of the now youthful population live by themselves in specially built units in the city centre and make use of the immediate facilities that have developed around their dwellings. The fast food ideal has taken hold and exploded upon everyday life in Wolverhampton. Fast food, fast transport and fast lives have come to epitomise this clan.

The daytime and evening economies are

heavily service-based, with the the young central residents fuelling the revitalised engine of the Black Country economy, leaving the elderly with no reason to venture across the ring road into the centre. Such a large and irreversible change was made possible by the drastic measures introduced by the council in 2013. The mode of ultra-compulsory-purchasing that was first introduced by the Labour Government and then tested out within the city centre provided the freedom required by those who wished to develop Wolverhampton. A clean slate allowed for the immediate implementation of the updated Evening Economy Strategy that encouraged the mass building of Social Housing for the under 50s. This new inner-city population immediately revolutionised how the centre functioned and brought a commuter class to the newly connected city. Restaurants and bars were the first to receive the extra footfall, with smaller specialist shops changing hands and becoming service-led community projects. Many initial dissenters wrote off the city's chances, saying there was no way a narcissistic economy such as this could hold up. What they failed to see was that Wolverhampton was no longer a city in the old sense of the word. Just like its population, the new economy had become borderless and welcomed a travelling currency. This new, buoyant economy, reliant on its close connections with outside investment, would keep Wolverhampton's ever-fluctuating economy afloat and define

its identity... at least for the meantime.

(References)

105 David William Cox, <http://www.logosapostolic.org/testimony/CowboyDavidCox.htm>,  
01 December 2012

106 David William Cox, <http://www.logosapostolic.org/testimony/CowboyDavidCox.htm>,  
01 December 2012

## Bibliography

### Books

A.E. Van Vogt, *The Far Out Worlds of A.E. Van Vogt*, New English Library Limited, Barnard's Inn, Holborn, London, EC1, 1974

Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*, Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 6RB, London, 1962

Arthur C. Clarke, *The Worlds of Arthur C. Clarke, Of Time And Stars*, Puffin Books, Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1976

Black Country Society, *Black Country Stories*, The Black Country Society, 49 Victoria Road, Tipton, Staffs, Fifth Impression November 1974

Black Country Society, *Clebak in the Black Country*, The Black Country Society, 49 Victoria Road, Tipton, Staffs, 1971

Black Country Society, *Freeman's Black Country Folk*, The Black Country Society, 49 Victoria Road, Tipton, Staffs, 1970  
Douglas Parker, Aynuk & Ayli's Black Country Joke Book, Cox and Wyman

Limited, Cardiff Road, Reading, Berkshire,  
1984

Frank Herbert, *The Worlds of Frank Herbert*, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, Mill Road, Dunton Green, Seven Oaks, Kent, TN13 2YA, 1988

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England, 1954

Georges Perec, *Life A User's Manual*, Collins Harvill, William Collins Sons and Co Ltd, London, 1998

Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R ORL, England, 2008

HRH The Prince of Wales, *A Vision of Britain*, Guild Publishing, Doubleday, Transworld Publishers Ltd, CN 2140, 1989

Jon Raven, *Aynuk's Fust Black Country Waerd Buk*, Broadside, 68 Limes Road, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, 1978

Jon Raven, *Aynuk's Secund Black Country Waerd Buk*, Broadside, 68 Limes Road, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, 1979

Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*, Dover Publications Inc., 31 East 2nd Street, Mineola, N.Y., 11501, 1987

Philip K. Dick, *Ubik*, Panther Books, Granada Publishing Ltd, 8 Grafton Street, London W1X 3LA, 1984

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, The Monacelli Press, Random House, Inc. 1745 Broadway, New York, New York, United States of America, 1994

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour, *Learning From Las Vegas*, Revised Edition, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1972

Roger Elwood, *Future City*, Sphere Books Limited, 30/32 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8JL, 1976

Theodore Sturgeon, *The Worlds Of Theodore Sturgeon*, Ace Books, 1120 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York, 10036, 1972

## Interviews

Ian Culley, Planning Officer, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 17 September 2012

Judith Rowley, Chair for Planning Committee, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 18 September 2012

Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 20 September 2012

## Planning Documents

Express & Star, *Out of Darkness...*, Express & Star, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES, 1999

Wolverhampton City Council, *Black Country Core Strategy*, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 2011

Wolverhampton City Council, *City Centre Strategy and Action Plan*, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's

Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 2005

Wolverhampton City Council, *City Status for Wolverhampton*, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 1999

Wolverhampton City Council, *Evening Economy Plan*, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 2005

Wolverhampton City Council, *Unitary Development Plan*, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 2006

Wolverhampton City Council, *Wolverhampton Canal Side Implementation Plan*, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 2000

Wolverhampton City Council, *Wolverhampton City Centre Prospectus*, Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, 2012



## Glossary

‘ad	had
‘andle	handle
‘ard	hard
‘av	have
‘cos	because
‘e	he
‘em	them
‘er	her
‘ere	here
‘imself	himself
‘ole	hole
‘ond	hand
‘til	until
‘ud	would
aanchboon	hip bone
aass	buttocks
abac	backwards
adrenchen	soaked
afore	before
ah	yes
airy	little clothing
aither	either
aive	heave
aks	ask
allus	always
anny	anny
anunst	against
arf	half
as	us

askin'	asking
aud	old
ay	haven't
babby	baby
backen	delay
bai	am not
bally	belly
bamfoozle	puzzle
baum	smear
bawk	confuse
belloil	hammering
belluck	roar
bibble	pebble
bilden	building
bile	boil
bin	been
blaberen	talking
blart	cry
blench	flinch
blether	bladder
blowse	bloom
blubren	crying
bobbydazzler	smart young woman
boffle	hinder
boffumble	bemuse
bost	burst
bostin	good
breffus	breakfast
broo'us	pub
bunny-fire	bonfire
bunt	push
buz	bus

cag-mag	gossip
camplin	gossiping
catlick	wash
caw	cannot
cawzy	pavement
caulty	unreliable
chate	cheat
chep	cheap
chimdy	chimney
chobble	eat
chock	throw
chops	mouth
chuffed	happy
chunter	grumble
clam	hungry
clane	clean
clays	claws
clobber	clothes
clomber	climb
clout	cloth
coddin	joking
codge	rough
collier's mark	dirty neck
comin'	coming
con	can
considerin'	considering
cooss	cross
coost	could you
cop	catch
corkle	apple core
cost	Can you
craunch	crunch

crawl	shiver
croddle	huddle together
cuff	cough
cum	came
cum	come
cut	canal
day	didn't
desay	dare say
dishle	cup of tea
doe	don't
dollop	large amount
don-'and	expert
dowl	downy hair
dowt	extinguish
duck	dodge
dun	do
educashun	education
faither	father
fer	for
festilo	pipe
Fetchin'	fetching
fettle	excellent condition
fittle	food
flen	fleas
forby	nearby
franzy	irritable
frit	frightened
frowsty	dishevelled
fun	found
furder	afar
fust	first
gaffer	master

gain	handy
ganzy	vest
gawk	stare
gawp	staring
gi'	give
gid	gave
glass-'us	glass house
goo	go
gorra	got a
I ay	I am not
ike	beckon
Ivver-ovver	hesitate
jed	dead
jeth	death
jiffy	brief moment
job	poke
joobus	suspicious
Jus'	just
kench	sprain
kiddle	dribble
laet	late
lather	ladder
layin'	laying
lft	lift
lickle	little
lief	as soon as
loff	laugh
lommock	clumsy
maulers	hands
maunch	chew
mawkin	guy
me	my

med	made
meegrum	frown
mekin'	making
mek's	makes
mith'er	disturbed
mizzle	drizzle
mo	must not
moach	wander
monty	pert
mucker	confusion
mullock	rubbish
mumchance	bored
mun	must
muther	mother
myther	bother
nairun	none
naither	neither
nask	weak
natty	tidy
nesses	nest
niggle	irritate
node	known
nogged yedded	stupid
noggin	bread
noo	new
nuthin	nothing
o'thatnin'	in that way
o'thispin'	in this way
ockerd	awkward
omber	hammer
ood	wood
ooman	woman

oot	will you
opple	apple
o'st	to offer
ote	hold
ow	how
owsen	houses
pail	beat
pike	pick
pither	potter
pothery	stuffy
pun	pounded
rantan	violent
rawling	carrying a heavy weight
rawm	strain
rodnyn	idle man
ruggle	struggle on
saft	soft
shommock	shuffle
skraze	scratch
someat	something
soople	soften
splod	flat-footed
spottle	splash
staile	broom handle
stale	steal
stond	stand
suck	sweets
suff	drain
sum	some
sup	sip
susstifikut	certificate

swelth	swelling
swigged	drank
swilker	spill
tabber	tap
tai	tea
tek	tek
ter	to
tewthree	a few
thrope	thrash
tranklements	possessions
trapes	walking aimlessly
trussen	trust
tummy	snack
two double	double up
waiter	water
we'm	were
weddin'	wedding
wench	girl
werrit	worry
wi'	with
wiouten	without
wo	won't
wool	whole
wore	weren't
workin'	working
wot	what
wum	home
wurse-wuss	worse
yawle-yaup	bawl
yed	head
yer	your
yo'	you

yo'd	you had
yo'll	you'll
yo'm	you're
yowk	yelp





2009 saw the city of Wolverhampton branded the fifth worst city in the world. At present only twelve years old, little has been done to bring the city out of the darkness of the recession.

The Wulfrunian Manifesto looks at the last twelve years of Wolverhampton's planning history to determine a possible future free from the economic restraints currently stalling the city's development.

The investigation is split into three parts, past, present and future, each story being told through the eyes of one of three local legends. These characters lend a contextual tone to an investigation with Wolverhampton's future at heart.