

Go and see the A Car Free London? exhibition, urges Kester Rattenbury

Walking back to happiness

It would be churlish – and unrealistic – to offer anything much in the way of criticism of the Architecture Foundation's exhibition A Car Free London?, which opened this week at the Riverside Gallery.

Maurice Bennett, director of Oasis stores, whose idea the whole thing seems to have been, sounded quite emotional. Mayoral candidate Trevor Phillips, who opened the show, hung around for hours chatting. For once, there was no question

that sponsors and luminaries were keen to be involved.

And who can blame them. This is a really good public show: well-designed, interesting and fun; influentially located (at the base of the Oxo Tower) and right on message. The design, by Urban Salon, is stylish from the word go, with a nice green cut-out-car logo (geddit?), and the garage-doors entrance is printed neatly with random facts and figures about car pollution, bicycle thefts

and how cycling regularly keeps you 10 years younger.

It's also really well organised – an absolute must since it includes all 205 entries to the AF competition on which the show is based. The five winners, which were each given £5,000 to work up their proposals, are arranged in big diagonal banks, with a strip of runners-up (including two primary-school submissions) on a console on the opposite wall. Below, all the other entry boards are hung like clothes in a wardrobe: out of the way, but easy to get at. This clarity makes the whole show a real pleasure.

The first – and best, for my money – of the winning schemes is Londonet by Alistair Jeffs et al. This features a lovely cartoon-strip series of characters in a hi-info-tech London – with information on modes of transport and facilities. The idea is that London already has a mass of transport infrastructure: it's the information, smartcards and lateral connections that are missing.

Next along was Reconnect: Peter Fink and Igor Marko's sen-



Fink & Marko's Thames-side route.

sible and strongly presented two-part strategy: an add-on riverside cycle-route along the Thames embankment with optional extras – tidal lifts; viewing decks; and a green route from Notting Hill to Rotherhithe linking Hyde Park, Green Park and Marble Arch.

Then came Overground – Michael Pawlyn and Kelly Hill's network of prioritised user-friendly routes – including fan-assisted cycle tubes; electric-bus routes; green walkways, bike park towers

– some good ideas but comparatively infrastructure heavy.

Muf's plans for making walking more enticing and using open spaces featured one of its charming part-collage, part-model display pieces with some lovely models of fluffy slippers, stilettos and a horse – alluring as ever, if somewhat loose.

Street Life Task Force's entry presented ongoing community workshops as a contribute-it-yourself plan playable – featuring sweets, Plasticine and Post-its, as well as the Plasticine picnic mat, swimmers and dragons already on its street map.

The winners were clearly chosen to demonstrate a range of varied ideas, with the spread made clearer by the runners-up. It demonstrated that some people probably didn't win because you couldn't have worked up two versions of the same thing. But the overall composition is spot on. Well worth the journey.

A Car Free London? is at the Riverside Gallery, Oxo Tower Wharf until May 31. Details 0171 839 9389.

BUILDING DESIGN

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