places
for all

november2001

Birmingham City Council
Planning Department

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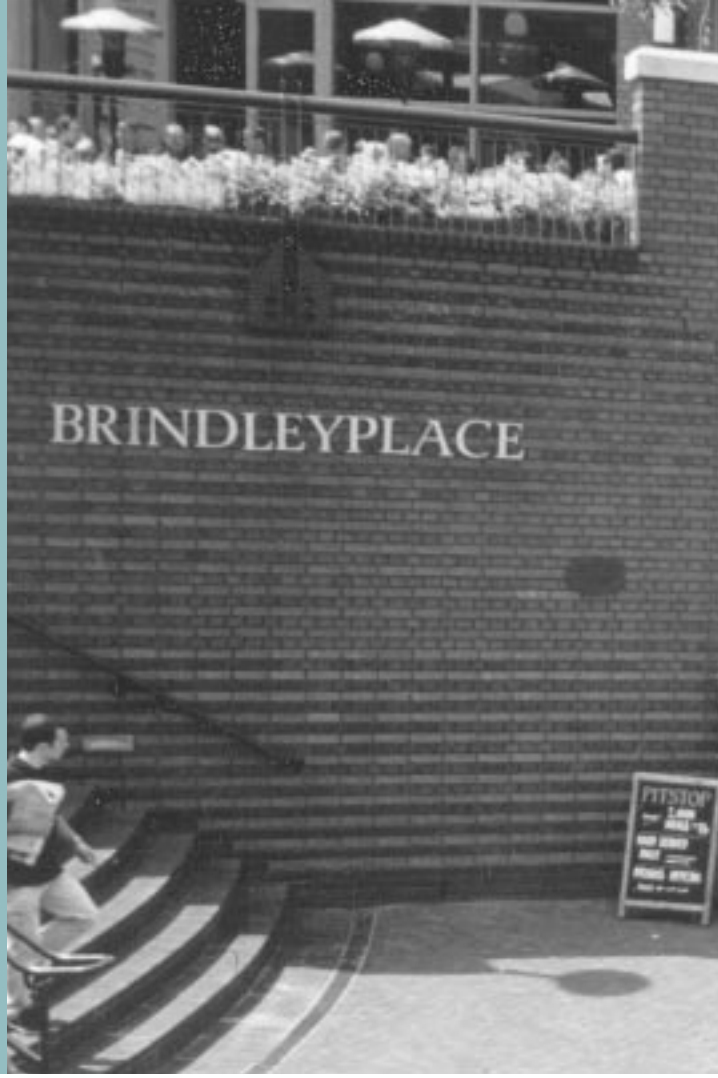
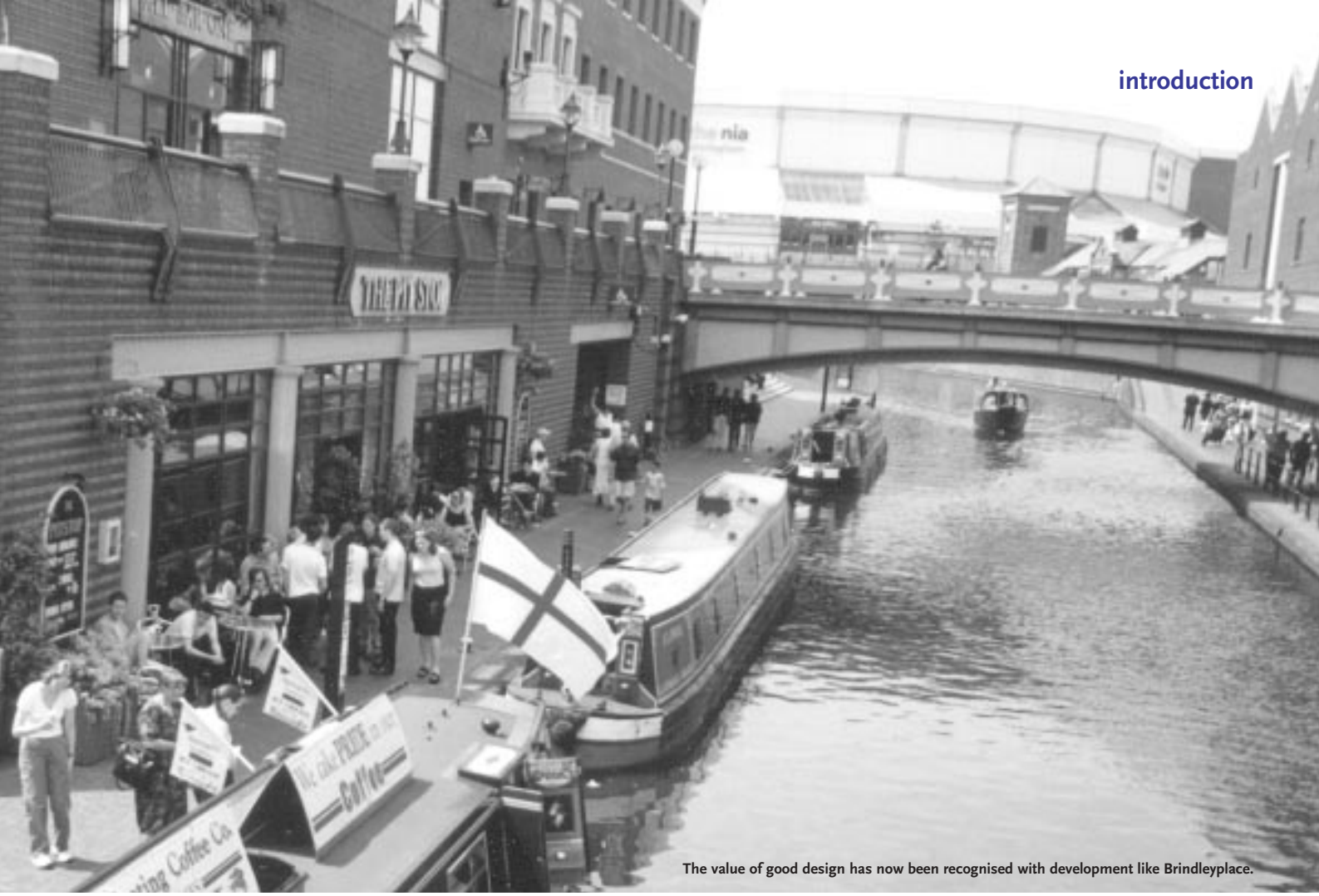


introduction
the background

BIRMINGHAM is a varied city of places and spaces with their own feel and character. Unfortunately many areas have suffered from the comprehensive redevelopment of the post war era that caused - in common with most other cities - over-scaled developments that put cars before people.

The value of good design has now been recognised in Birmingham with mixed use developments of attractive new buildings and public spaces in areas like Brindleyplace. Mistakes of the past are also being addressed through the redevelopment of the Bullring and Masshouse.

The commercial and creative success of developments in the city centre proves the value of good design. Yet there is still a huge task to be tackled in raising the overall design quality of developments, particularly outside the city centre.



The value of good design has now been recognised with development like Brindleyplace.

We must make developments more sustainable. We need to use land efficiently, encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport, and allow access for everyone - including people without a car. All buildings should relate to their context, be adaptable, accessible and well insulated with quality as a main priority. It's also important that we use environmentally friendly materials, consider sustainable drainage, water and waste recycling and use alternative forms of energy.

It's vital that everyone involved in development in the city adopts this approach to their work. If we all work together to achieve this everyone in the city benefits now and in the future - and we will truly be building places for all.

In common with many other cities Birmingham has suffered from over-scaled developments that put cars before people.

The value of good design has now been recognised in Birmingham.

There is still much to be done to raise the quality of development, particularly outside the city centre.

The principles are based on tried and tested methods of building successful places...

the approach

to general design guidance

PLACES FOR ALL has been produced as a response to the lack of general design guidance that relates to all types of development throughout the city. Until now design guides have been topic specific such as car park or shop front design guidelines, or area specific such as site briefs and quarter plans. Good design however, should apply everywhere not just in key locations such as the city centre and conservation areas. Similarly many developments today incorporate a mix of uses so it is no longer enough to rely on guidelines for single use building types. 'Places for All' is a sister document to 'Places for Living' and adopts a similar approach and format. Many of the issues and principles are similar but have been focused to apply to all developments - not just those with a residential component. The two documents should be used in conjunction. The approach also builds on national advice such as PPG3, By Design, Places, Streets and Movement as well as the work of the Urban Task Force.

This guide aims to be as objective as possible, dealing with basic design issues and principles rather than personal taste with the examples used to illustrate general points. The guide is intended to positively influence the development process as much as the outcome.

The key is for developers to employ skilled designers to provide the best solution for each particular context and to take a holistic approach to developments considering design at an early stage.

THE APPROACH

- Builds on the design principles set out in the Birmingham Plan and 'Places for Living'.
- Focuses on five overriding principles that cover a wide range of issues concerned with development.
- Illustrates some of the ways to achieve the principles.

THE FORMAT

This guide is divided into five main sections. Each section starts with a general introduction outlining the main issues followed by the principles. These take the form of policy statements with a justification.

...as well as drawing on the experience of recent examples from Birmingham and elsewhere.

THE REQUIREMENTS

All proposals will be judged on their own merits. Proposals that follow the spirit of the guidance will be received positively. Conversely poor quality proposals that ignore the issues and the requirements will be unlikely to gain consent. To help in assessing proposals and demonstrate that design and other policy requirements have been taken into account, the following should be produced as a minimum:

- Existing and proposed floor plans, elevations and relevant sections.
- A plan showing the development in its wider context.
- Contextual photographs.
- A topographical/tree survey where appropriate (existing and proposed).
- A design statement.

The design statement should outline how the principles have been achieved (or a justification of why they haven't been achieved). The degree of detail will depend on the size and nature of the proposed development (see also 'build on local character). For larger or more complex proposals or proposals on sensitive sites, perspectives and/or axonometric drawings may be requested. A three-dimensional master plan may also be required, particularly for large scale developments. For straightforward or small scale proposals the requirements will be dealt with on their merits.

The involvement of the Planning Authority, the local community and other relevant bodies at an early stage would also be advisable to speed up the decision making process and arrive at a mutually agreeable solution.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES

1.creating diversity - The aim must be to create or build within places that have an accessible choice of closely mixed complementary activities.

2. moving around easily - Places should be linked up with short, direct public routes overlooked by frontages.

3. safe places, private spaces - Places must be safe and attractive with a clear division between public and private space.

4. building for the future - Buildings and spaces should be adaptable to enhance their long-term viability and built so they harm the environment as little as possible.

5. build on local character - Development must consider the context and exploit and strengthen the characteristics that make an area special.

The principles are based on tried and tested methods of building successful places that have often been ignored or forgotten until recently. They also build on the experience of recent successful developments in Birmingham and elsewhere.

The examples accompanying the principles are not intended as solutions but are included to illustrate the points. There can be many ways to achieve the objectives. This guide is intended to support and encourage everyone involved in delivering quality developments. It also highlights the role good design can play in achieving places that are successful and sustainable in social, economic and environmental terms.

Development should address the needs of the whole community.

1 creating diversity

DEVELOPMENT should address the needs of the whole community and avoid large single use developments especially where there is poor public transport access. This is socially divisive, encourages reliance on cars and puts many people at a disadvantage. While some uses - like large manufacturing plants - can be incompatible with other types of development, this should be an exception rather than the rule, and even then there should be good public transport access.

Development should address the needs of the whole community.

The Mailbox - high density mixed use.

Overall the aim should be to build, or locate within, accessible places with a wide choice of complementary activities. Such 'walkable neighbourhoods' (see also 'moving around easily')are best suited to achieving higher densities of development with densities increasing towards the centre and along public transport corridors. PPG 3 suggests residential densities should not fall below 30-50 dwellings per hectare in order to make an efficient use of land. The City Council Unitary Development Plan suggests that densities of at least 100 dwellings per hectare will be expected on sites within the City Centre, 50 dwellings per hectare in other centres and within corridors well served by public transport and 40 dwellings per hectare elsewhere. Whilst this is a useful guide, the issue of density is very complex. There are many additional factors to consider such as the context, the form of development, the scale of development, the total catchment population, the degree of connectivity and the measure of density.

Whilst density is a complex subject, the key is to create good places and provide the best design solution for the site and the character of the area, with the density figure used as a check.

MIX THE USES

Locating compatible uses such as housing, shops, community facilities, work and leisure opportunities near to each other provides a number of important benefits. Providing a mix of uses should therefore be a main consideration when developing a site.

The provision and nature of the mix will depend on the context, the scale of the development, market demand and relevant planning policies. The City Centre, local centres and areas with good public transport links will provide the greatest potential for a diverse mix of uses. Other less accessible areas will have less potential.

This means there is:

- The opportunity to walk, cycle or use public transport rather than drive.
- A mix of people who can support a good range of facilities.
- Surveillance of the area with people present day and night.
- A reduction in market risk - mixed areas can adapt more easily to future trends.
- The opportunity to address shortfalls in current provision of uses and facilities.
- Locating mixed use in the proper context will better ensure its long term success.

Narrow plots can add to the variety of uses as well as relate better to areas where this is a feature.

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Where uses are mixed, this should generally be within streets and buildings and single storey non-residential buildings should have other uses above such as residential or offices, providing this relates well to the context. A management and maintenance agreement would also be beneficial.

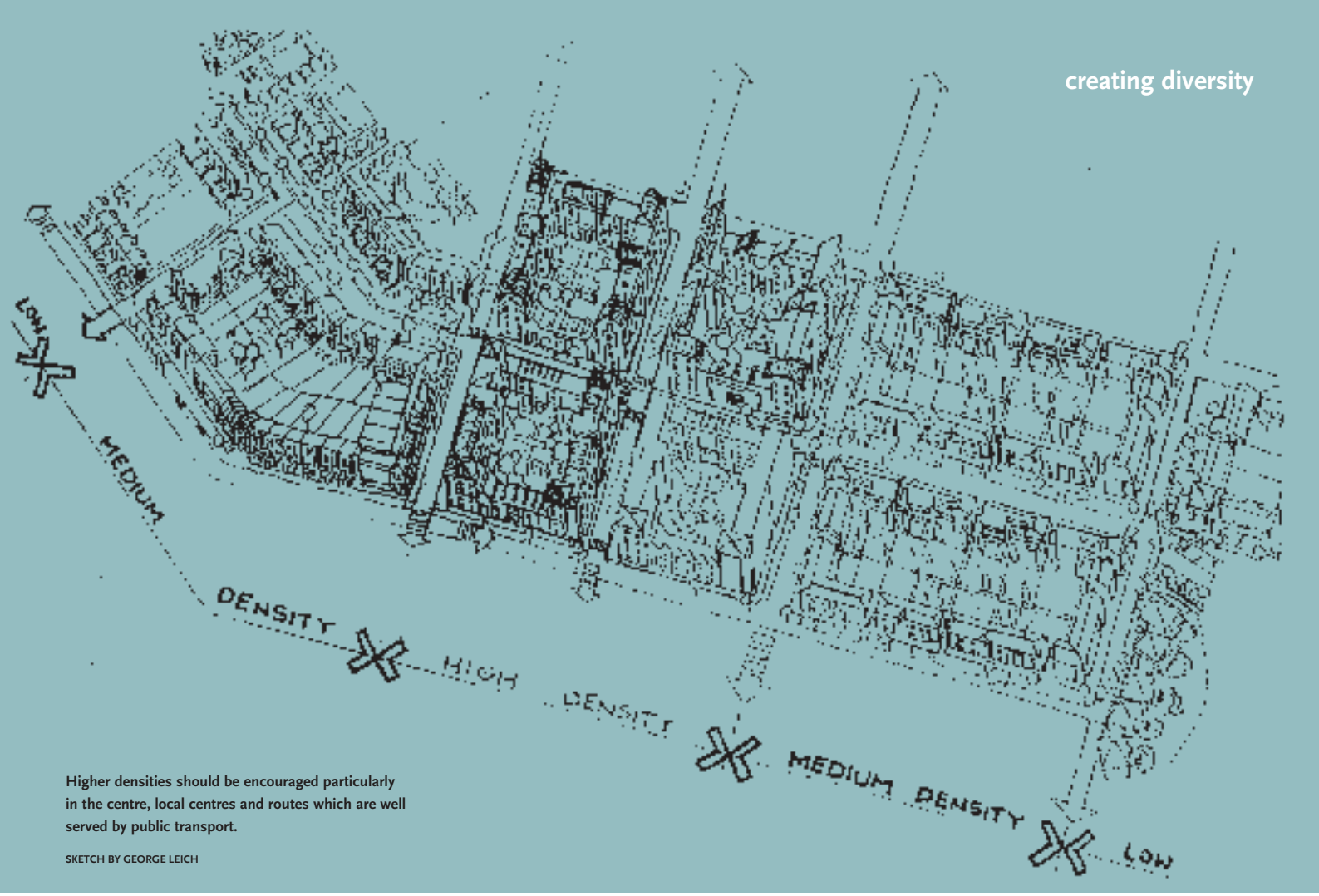
- A vertical mix of uses can increase densities, provide activity and surveillance throughout the day and night and uses land efficiently.
- Homes can become valuable above places like shops where it would not be viable to build them at ground level.
- A 'fine grain' of uses can offer more diversity of design and visual character in an area
- Management agreements for mixed developments can ensure long term success.

SUB-DIVIDE DEVELOPMENT SITES

When developing larger sites, consideration should be given to dividing the site into narrower development plots developed and/or designed individually, particularly where this is a positive local characteristic.

- Narrow plots can add a greater variety of uses and entrances encouraging more activity and diversity.
- Narrow plots can offer more design variety and relate better to many areas such as parts of the Jewellery Quarter where this is a feature.
- Small plots also help to avoid blank walls when stepping up a slope.

Narrow plots can add a greater variety of uses



Higher densities should be encouraged particularly in the centre, local centres and routes which are well served by public transport.

SKETCH BY GEORGE LEICH

BUILD TO HIGHER DENSITIES

The City Centre, local centres and areas with good public transport links have the potential to accommodate a higher density of development. High density is not a universal solution however and it is crucial that the form and layout should relate to the local context.

- Compact places make it easier for people to walk and cycle to facilities and use public transport.
- More people living and working locally helps to support better - and more - local facilities and services such as shops and public transport. This also makes environmental initiatives like recycling and combined heat and power schemes more viable.
- More intensive development within the city can reduce the amount of green field land used.
- The same density can be provided in a wide variety of forms, some will be more appropriate than others depending on the context.
- High density forms are not appropriate everywhere. Any aspiration to achieve higher densities must be balanced by contextual issues if we are to avoid harming those characteristics that make an area special.

PROVIDE FOCAL SPACE

On larger sites there will often be a need for high quality new focal spaces such as squares and parks to complement any new development. These should be functional providing for all ages, accessible, serve a local need and be well overlooked by building fronts. A management and maintenance agreement will usually be required.

- Focal spaces can enhance the character and the quality of the environment and can become a valuable recreational facility.

Focal spaces can enhance the character and the quality of the environment.

Places should be easily accessible to all.

2 moving around easily

POORLY integrated developments that are difficult to access without a car should be avoided. Developments with a variety of uses mean little if you cannot walk or cycle to them easily from the local area or from nearby public transport stops. Local movement networks must be considered in order to provide safe and convenient links by all means of transport.

The aim should be to create 'walkable neighbourhoods'. As a guide 'doorstep facilities' such as a convenience shop or newsagent should ideally be within 2-3 minutes walk (250m) of your home. 5 minutes walk or 400m should take you to a local centre including local shops, a post office and bus stops. A train station or major public transport interchange and a primary school should if possible be within 10 minutes walk or 800m.

Kings Heath - a 'walkable neighbourhood' with a network of public routes as well as a mix of uses.

PROVIDE CONVENIENT ROUTES

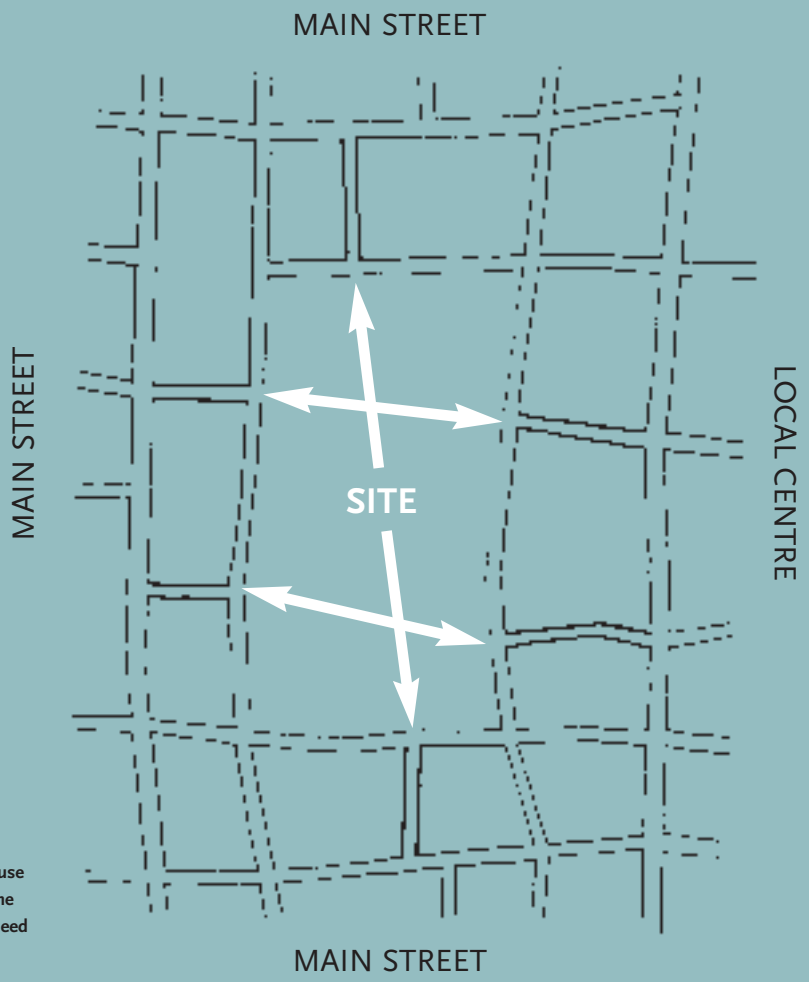
A fundamental principle of this design guide is to encourage well-integrated and well-linked places. Public routes should be connected, short, direct, well lit, simple to understand, overlooked by frontages and related to desire lines. Good public transport links and easy access for pedestrians and cyclists should be inherent in developments. Apart from routes through parks, canal corridors and pedestrianised areas, isolated pedestrian routes should be avoided.

The aim should be to create 'walkable neighbourhoods'.

- More connections to places like shops, leisure facilities and parks make routes between places shorter and encourage more people to walk and cycle.
- More people use public transport if it's more accessible.
- Linked streets make it easier to find your way around and allow people a greater choice of routes and variety of experiences.
- Commercial developments can flourish if they are located on main movement routes.
- Connected streets encourage more activity which help people feel safe and secure while avoiding over concentrations of traffic and congestion.
- Linked streets allow more flexibility for change in the future.
- Linked streets can avoid wasted space such as large turning spaces for refuse vehicles.
- Isolated pedestrian routes can feel intimidating.

Some routes such as canal walks will require signage and interpretation of the public realm. This should be sympathetically located and well designed avoiding clutter and needless repetition.

- Whilst signage and interpretation can enhance the enjoyment of the public realm, care needs to be taken to avoid spoiling the quality of a place through unsympathetic additions.



Link the site to the wider area. Generally use the most connected and direct routes to the main streets and facilities (not all routes need to be through vehicular routes).

CONSIDER THE WIDER AREA

Proposals should consider a far wider area than the site itself, particularly on larger developments. Developments should not only be linked up within the site (where the scale of development allows it) but should integrate with existing routes so they connect to the wider area, in particular towards main streets and public facilities. (see also build on local character).

- An analysis of the wider context can determine the wider movement patterns informing which links would be beneficial to open up such as a route to improve access to local facilities or public transport and which may be problematic for example a route that could encourage 'rat running'. It may also inform the potential for new commercial uses to be introduced and the size of development blocks.
- Integrating the development provides more convenient routes encouraging walking and cycling, makes it easier for people to find their way around, can improve access to public transport as well as relating better to the surrounding context.

Designing for people with disabilities makes access easier for everyone.

PROVIDE ACCESS FOR ALL

Developments should provide for the needs of everyone including people with disabilities and those with prams and push-chairs. This includes dealing with approach and access to buildings, adequate and convenient parking for disabled people and use of colour and tactile materials to assist blind and partially sighted people.

- Designing for people with disabilities makes access easier for everyone and encourages more people to use public buildings and spaces.

Streets should discourage speeding traffic and offer a safe and attractive space for all users. (Traffic calmed main street including cycle lane and wide pavements - Utrecht, The Netherlands).

BALANCE THE NEEDS OF CARS AND PEDESTRIANS

Streets should do more than just accommodate traffic. They should offer a safe and attractive space for everyone who uses them. A range of street types from home zones to boulevards can be designed to provide a high standard of urban design as well meet the engineering requirements of any situation.

- Making walking and cycling a safe and pleasant experience can do much to encourage people to use cars less often.

Streets should be designed to discourage speeding traffic. The ratio of building height to width, street trees, building placement, road alignment, smaller corner radii, surface textures and physical traffic calming measures are all ways to reduce vehicle speeds.

- Designing streets for low vehicle speeds can reduce the severity and number of accidents so streets become attractive and useful amenity space.
- Reducing speeds through design is self enforcing.

Pedestrian only streets must be designed and considered carefully and should generally only be an option in areas that are busy with activity and pedestrians at most times of the day and night.

- Pedestrian only streets can offer an attractive car free environment, especially in busy city centre shopping areas. On quieter streets and outside busy periods, large pedestrianised areas can feel hostile and threatening and allow more crime to occur.

Streets should do more than just accommodate traffic.

Pedestrian only streets can offer an attractive car free environment but only when they are busy with activity.

Buildings set back behind a large surface car park do little for the public realm or pedestrian access.

14

Secure cycle parking should be incorporated in a convenient location within developments.

- Cycle parking makes it easier for people to cycle rather than drive.

Car parking should not dominate developments. The manner and level of car parking will be judged on the merits of each situation and context. In general however, large surface car parks in front of buildings will NOT be acceptable. The manner and level of parking provision can allow higher densities where this is appropriate with more amenity space and more active frontages and streets.

- Buildings set back behind a large surface car park do little for the public realm and make pedestrian access more difficult.
- Over provision of car parking can encourage car use and spoil the quality of a place.
- High parking provision is not appropriate where alternative means of transport are readily available.

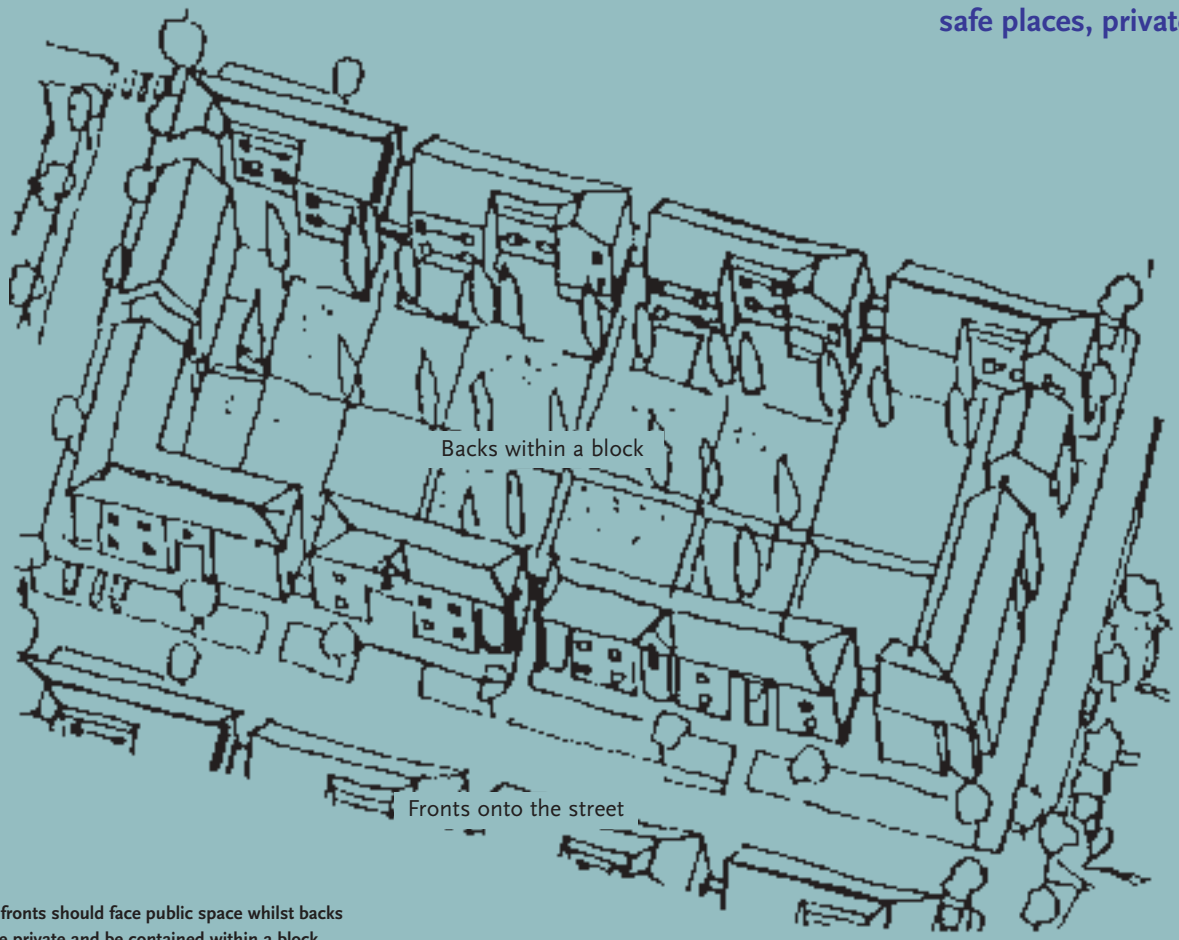
Car parking should not dominate developments.

Single aspect flats hiding the impact of the multi-storey car park behind it - St. Pauls Square, Birmingham.

Streets and public spaces should feel safe and pleasant.

3 safe places, private spaces

PEOPLE need to be able to move around easily in places that feel safe and pleasant. Streets and public spaces should be designed so as many people as possible want to use them for a variety of reasons. At the same time people living in these areas need to feel their homes are private whilst having convenient access to facilities.



Building fronts should face public space whilst backs should be private and be contained within a block.

SKETCH BY GEORGE LEICH

DEFINE THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REALM

There should be a clear definition of the public and private realm. Building fronts should overlook public space, including streets, squares and canals. Backs should be private and face other backs within a development block. This provides secure spaces such as courtyards, gardens or managed semi private space including car parking/servicing areas. Backing onto public space should be avoided.

- Fronts facing public space provide natural surveillance so streets feel safer.
- Fronts improve the visual character of the public realm.
- Backs facing backs within a block increases security and privacy and hides 'messy' features such as bin stores, plant, loading bays etc.
- High fences and walls backing onto public space are visually disruptive. They also reduce overlooking of public areas and can compromise security and privacy.
- Perimeter block development can hide the large proportion of blank walls inherent in large buildings such as cinemas and retail warehouses. It also makes better use of limited design budgets by concentrating most efforts on the public face rather than the private side, which is hidden within the block.

Buildings should generally reinforce and define streets and spaces and follow a coherent building line usually set from the context. Some allowance can be made for corners, relief in massing and entrance features.

- Buildings directly facing public space, with a coherent building line, increase contact and overlooking of the street, and provide a sense of enclosure.

People need to be able to move around easily.

Frontages should be 'active'...

BUILD IN ACTIVE FRONTAGES

Frontages should be as 'active' as possible particularly at ground level. Main windows to more public rooms, and in the right context, lively features such as balconies, roof terraces and shop-fronts, should face public space. Facing public space with deadening elements such as long runs of blank wall and external security shutters should generally be avoided.

- 'Active' frontages with windows enliven public space and increases surveillance and security without using negative deadening features like security shutters.

The main access to buildings should be from the public realm with well-defined entrances at frequent intervals. Entrances - the transition between public and private space - should be designed to be obvious and accessible.

- More entrance points encourage more life and activity onto the street. This can make places feel safe and secure.

Where there is a slope, buildings should sit on 'real ground' and step down the hill if it is desirable to go across rather than along ground contours. Large monolithic 'slabs' are not acceptable.

- Stepping down the hill is visually desirable, allows ground floor entrances and windows and avoids blank walls at ground level.

...and avoid deadening elements such as blank walls and solid security shutters.

Frontages should be as 'active' as possible.

Corners should be built positively.


Good public space enhances the city's image and provides a valuable amenity.

Corners should be built positively to enhance legibility and the visual surveillance of public space. Blank gable ends and large areas of blank wall should be avoided.

- Corners are prominent and important features that help orientate people and enhance the identity of a place. Badly designed corners are particularly noticeable and detract from the townscape.

DESIGN ATTRACTIVE STREETS AND SPACES

New streets and public spaces should incorporate a public realm strategy in their design to make them safe, pleasant and useable by many people with different needs. General aspects to consider include: local character, existing landscape features, the size and type of space, location and prominence, connections to the wider area, circulation patterns and desire lines, variety of uses surrounding the space, ratio of building height to width, design of surrounding buildings and microclimate.

More detailed design considerations include: boundaries and transitions, amount and type of seating, lighting, choice of materials, planting, level changes, public art, information and signage and management and maintenance. Features such as seating and signage should be well designed, and located where best needed whilst avoiding clutter. A management and maintenance agreement will be encouraged for shared areas not adopted by the City Council.

- Good public space enhances the city's image, provides a valuable amenity and improves the setting of surrounding buildings. It calls for careful design and thought about the best use of space.
- The long term success of an area is influenced by adequate management and maintenance to avoid a run down appearance. Management agreements can also avoid disputes over responsibility.

Good public space enhances the city's image.

Poor quality public space benefits no-one.

Public space that is poorly located, low quality and of a form and layout that limits its usefulness will NOT be acceptable.

- No-one benefits from left over space that serves little purpose. Public space should be designed as an integral and complementary part of the development.

Boundary treatment should enhance and define public space. Low quality treatment such as palisade or close board fencing is seldom appropriate for a boundary to public space.

- Good quality boundary treatments contribute to the visual character of an area, provide a good transition between public and private areas and offer security and a defensible space.

Streets and public space should be well lit, avoiding dark corners. It is also important to consider the impact of buildings at night.

- People use public space at all times and so should feel safe at all times. Considering the impact of a building at night at the design stage can be dramatic and enhance the city's landscape.

It is important to consider the impact of buildings at night.

It is important to consider the impact of buildings at night.

It is important we do not lose valuable wildlife and recreational resources to inappropriate development.

4 building for the future

PLACES should be socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. The location, form and layout of development can reduce car use, resource consumption and emissions as well as creating places that people enjoy. Buildings and spaces should also be adaptable to enhance their long-term viability; and built to minimise adverse effects on the environment such as the release of harmful emissions and wasteful use of energy.

Good quality existing buildings should always be considered for re-use.

DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Consideration should be given in the first instance to the environmental impact of development. For example some sites may be an important wildlife or recreation resource, subject to flooding or may be located close to hazardous substances making them inappropriate to develop. Consultation with the appropriate bodies will be required.

- It is important we do not lose irreplaceable ecosystems or subject future occupiers to unnecessary dangers.

RE-USE EXISTING BUILDINGS

Good quality existing buildings should always be considered for re-use rather than demolition and replacement

- Re-using buildings avoids the energy and resource depletion associated with providing a new building.
- Retaining and re-using existing buildings can avoid wholesale clearance of areas, the loss of local character and the break-up of communities.
- Many older buildings can be significant to the community and have historic and townscape importance.
- A mix of building ages can offer more variety in the character of an area.
- A mix of building ages can potentially lead to a mix of rental profiles/sales values and homes offering more choice to people.

CONSIDER FUTURE CHANGE

The form and layout of developments should consider future change for example allowing links not currently available (see also moving around easily).

- It is essential that short-term decisions do not prejudice beneficial future changes.

Good quality existing buildings should always be considered for re-use.

Dutch sustainable housing design including solar panels.

Easily maintained buildings with a flexible internal layout and structure will be encouraged. The structure and layout of properties should have the potential to enlarge and adapt.

- Easily maintained buildings last longer and avoid creating a run down image.
- Flexible building plans can be easily adapted and allow conversion to other uses. This is more cost effective in the long term and makes for more sustainable places.

Provided there is no conflict with existing/proposed trees, underground services such as electricity cables should be laid where they are easily accessible with minimal disruption e.g. under pavements with removable paving. Shared service trenches will also be encouraged.

- Since street patterns can survive for centuries, services under the street are usually the most flexible, avoiding expensive re-routing to accommodate redevelopment.
- Laying services under removable paving results in less visual disruption if future access to services is needed.
- Shared service trenches minimise land take and costs and make it easier to avoid trees etc.

A stormwater wetland and balancing pond forms the focus of a housing redevelopment in London.

Photo: The Environment Agency

Retention of landscape features such as important trees can enhance developments.

MINIMISE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

New and refurbished buildings should minimise environmental effects. Measures to incorporate include high standards of thermal and noise insulation, environmentally friendly materials, recycling and conservation measures and the use of alternative forms of energy.

- A safer and cleaner environment benefits everyone.
- Low energy/water use reduces the consumption of declining natural resources and the level of environmentally harmful emissions.
- Low energy use and heating/water bills can free income for other uses.
- A good standard of noise insulation makes high density mixed use development more attractive and sustainable.

The design of buildings and spaces should consider the local microclimate such as ensuring adequate sunlight and shade where required and avoiding turbulence from high buildings.

- Care in orientation and design can reduce energy use, heating bills and the use of fossil fuels and harmful emissions in buildings. Comfortable buildings and spaces are more popular - ensuring their long-term success.

The use of sustainable drainage/water systems will be encouraged.

- The use of sustainable drainage can limit the waste of water, reduce ground water pollution and the risk of flooding.

'GREEN' THE CITY

Natural features such as important trees, wetlands and other valuable natural features should generally be retained and sensitively incorporated into developments.

- Natural features provide important ecological and wildlife habitats as well as contributing to the special character of a place.

Depending on the context, planting new trees (including street trees and trees along transport corridors) and well conceived and designed landscaped areas such as squares and parks will be strongly encouraged. This may be required by legal agreement. Long term management and maintenance schemes should also be adopted. The type of landscaped area will be largely set from the context and type of development, however soft rather than predominantly hard landscape can have a number of benefits.

- The 'greening' of cities can enhance their attractiveness as well as their ecological value.
- Soft landscaping and green space can reduce water run off and can provide an important wildlife habitat.

The 'greening' of cities can enhance their attractiveness.

Nodal points (where routes meet) are often marked by landmarks and commercial uses.

5 build on local character

MANY developments in recent years have ignored their local context. Unsuitable building forms and landscaping has damaged the character of many parts of Birmingham. Similarly, routes through an area can be confusing where they lead to unexpected dead ends and when pedestrian and vehicle routes are separated. This undermines local character and the legibility of places making it difficult for people to find their way around. Proposals should demonstrate that they have considered the local context and the legibility of the layout.

In certain circumstances character may conflict with the other principles, therefore solutions will be judged on their own merits. Good planning and urban design reasons may occasionally justify a development that departs significantly from its context for particularly high quality innovative proposals. Where there is little of positive significance to build on, there is an opportunity to create a new place with its own distinctive character.

Existing routes and uses should be considered. Focusing on landmarks is often beneficial.

As well as being a route, features such as railway lines and roads can be an edge/barrier and act as a transition between districts of differing character.

High quality contemporary design that has evolved from the local context and culture should be the aim.

This guide does not prescribe solutions for every detailed aspect of building in relation to local character. There is a danger that design guide 'solutions' with the tick and cross approach can themselves become standard solutions used everywhere. It is important to build on local character, not necessarily copy it. High quality, contemporary design that has evolved from the local context and culture should be the intention.

High quality contemporary design.

Street patterns and widths can vary enormously and require a differing response.

STUDY THE CONTEXT

Where development is considered appropriate, the positive and negative characteristics of the site and the local context must be analysed to determine their special qualities.

General features to consider include existing routes and uses, nodal points, landmarks, edges/ barriers, topography, existing trees and natural features, historic buildings and archaeological features, views, street patterns and widths including historic street patterns, building heights including floor to ceiling heights, scale, massing and building type.

More detailed design elements include vertical/horizontal rhythm, relationship of solid to void, skyline, materials, corner treatment, colour, windows, doors, wall/ground level details, landscaping, boundary treatment and public art.

Reference to this analysis should be included in the design statement. The extent of the analysis will depend on the nature and scale of the development. Development affecting listed buildings and conservation areas will require particular care and thoroughness in terms of its relationship.

- A careful analysis of the local character will inform the best response to the context resulting in a more successful and appropriate development.
- Popular places are often familiar and distinctive. Local distinctiveness is what gives an area its character and helps people find their way about the city.

Plot widths, vertical/horizontal rhythm and features such as windows are important considerations.

Left: Narrow plot, vertical rhythm, narrow windows.

Right: Wide plot, horizontal rhythm, wide industrial window plans.

Building height, massing and building types should vary according to the context.

RESPOND TO THE CONTEXT

The design should reinforce and evolve local characteristics that are considered positive. Care should be taken not to detrimentally affect positive townscape and landscape features including neighbouring buildings, spaces, natural features and uses e.g. by significant overshadowing, removal of important trees, loss of important buildings, spaces and so on. Local characteristics considered poor in terms of urban design and which undermine the overall character of an area, should not be used as a precedent e.g. buildings that back onto the public realm or over-scaled buildings.

- Responding to the context can ensure the unique identity of a place is not harmed as well as avoid any potential adverse impact on neighbouring buildings, landscape and uses.

Responding to the context can ensure the unique identity of a place is not harmed.

Landscaping and public realm design should be appropriate to the context.

Contrasting characters - large scale City Core business district (top right of picture) making way to the industrial lower scale Jewellery Quarter (bottom left).

appendix
further reading

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acknowledgements
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Thanks to all those who gave help and advice including the use of material.

Particular thanks to Colin Smith and Bharat Patel from the Planning Department Graphics Team.

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