



Design Strategy for the Built Environment

Policy and Guidance for the Design of New Development

Department of Planning, Development and Environment

City of Stoke on Trent

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Putting People First



**Department of Planning,
Development and Environment,
City of Stoke on Trent,**

***Design Strategy for the Built
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Fig. 1, 2, 3

Appendix A. Layout – Organizzazione



Appendices

A. Urban Design Analysis and Local Character A.2 Urban Structure

Layout

The current built environment of Stoke-on-Trent is primarily a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and little built fabric dates from before the mid-eighteenth century. However, the street layout in many areas is considerably older than this, for example Stoke Road, King Street, and Honeywall. The Yates Plan, dating from 1750, illustrates that a network of roads had been established by that time, linking growing settlements, including Hanley Green, Penkhull and Burslem. (Figure 58)

The City of Stoke-on-Trent is formed from an amalgam of towns and villages that have expanded and merged. This accounts for the multi-centred structure of the City, contrasting with the more typical structure of cities which comprises a central business district surrounded by concentric bands of growth, with subordinate districts linked by radial and concentric pathways.

The centres of the various constituent towns and villages have retained their individual characters to some extent. For example, the centre of Penkhull has retained some of its village atmosphere, despite now being surrounded on all sides by urban development. (Figure 57)

The multi-centred structure is a potential strength. The City naturally tends towards an urban village structure, to a far greater extent than many other cities. An Urban Village is defined as: "a mixed-use neighbourhood within a wider urban area". [18] These distinct neighbourhoods should each contain a diverse range of uses including housing, employment, retail and leisure. This is considered to be desirable on a number of grounds including sustainability (less journeys required), vitality, urban quality, and security (avoiding 'dead' areas in the evenings). The multi-centred structure of Stoke-on-Trent provides a varied range of uses in close proximity in many different locations through the City. Retail centres are distributed along the length of the City, and to varying degrees all have leisure, employment and housing facilities in close proximity. If the integrity of the different centres can be reinforced, this is potentially a good, sustainable structure.

The multi-centred structure is one of the most fundamentally distinctive characteristics of the City and a central aim of design policy should be to reinforce that structure by encouraging a good mixture and diverse range of uses in each centre.

Fig. 4

Appendix A. The Image of the City. Legibility – L'immagine della città. Leggibilità



Appendices

A. Urban Design Analysis and Local Character A.3 Urban Character & Legibility

The Image of The City - Legibility

Legibility is a term used to describe the ease with which people can understand the layout of a place. [24] The City of Stoke-on-Trent is sometimes confusing to outsiders due to its multi-centred structure, which differs from more conventionally structured cities.

Kevin Lynch, a prominent Urban Design theorist, defined a method of analysing legibility based on five elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. [25] Lynch defined these as follows:

Paths "are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. They may be streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads."

Edges "are the linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity: shores, railroad cuts, edges of development, walls ... "

Districts "are medium-to-large sections of the city, conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters "inside of," and which are recognisable as having some common identifying character .. "

Nodes "are points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are intensive foci to and from which he is travelling. They may be primary junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another. Or the nodes may be simply concentrations, which gain their importance from being the condensation of some use or physical character, as a street- corner hangout or an enclosed square ... "

Landmarks "are another type of point-reference, but in this case the observer does not enter within them, they are external. They are usually a rather simply defined physical object: building, sign, store, or mountain". [26]

There is a clear need to improve legibility in Stoke-on-Trent. The multi-nuclear structure of the City perhaps makes this more of a priority than in more conventionally structured cities. Recent developments have sometimes improved matters, but often have created areas of highly illegible townscape. Legibility should be given a priority and opportunities for improvement, through new development and enhancement schemes, be exploited.

Fig. 5

Appendix A. Permeability – Permeabilità



Appendices

A. Urban Design Analysis and Local Character A.4 Movement Through the Urban Environment - Permeability

Permeability

Permeability is the number of alternative ways through an environment [27]. A permeable environment allows people to move around with greater ease and with more choice of routes.

Grid pattern layouts are very permeable and these form the basis of many cities in Britain and around the world. The radial organisations of the various districts in the City combine within the overall linear structure to create a complex grid.

Layouts containing a large proportion of Culs-de-sac tend to be unpermeable. The tendency for sites to be seen in isolation of their context has also created areas in the City of poor permeability, as the layout and circulation have failed to react to existing circulation routes.

The built environment of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries was designed more specifically for pedestrians rather than other means of transport, and tends to be more permeable for pedestrians. Burslem Town Centre provides examples of good and bad permeability. The entry between Brickhouse Street and Market Place provides a way through the built frontage, increasing choice of movement and creating convenience. The various access points to the Market, from Queen Street, Brickhouse Street and Market Place, further enhance choice, and therefore permeability, when the building is open. This may be contrasted with the situation in the nearby Clayhanger Yard. This is an enclosed space with access only from Queen Street, via Clayhanger Street. Thus permeability is poor (however, there is potential to improve matters by creating a new access between Clayhanger Yard and Market Place). (Figure 92)

The area around the City Library and Museum in Hanley illustrates good permeability. Despite the large size of the Museum, access around all sides of the building is possible. The access between the Museum and Library buildings has created good choice of movement. To the east, there is also free access through the Bethesda Churchyard, via some steps, to Adventure Place. Consequently, there are a number of alternative routes between Cannon Street and Bagnall Street, including a very direct and convenient one. This is a relatively permeable area of the City. (Figure 93)

Fig. 6

Strengths and Opportunities	Explanation	Comments
Green space	The City has a long history of providing landscaped public open space, from the public parks of the 19th and 20th centuries to the large-scale land reclamation schemes of the 1960s, '70s and '80s. These, together with the greenways and other open spaces, provide a high quantity of green space, although there is much scope for improvement in terms of quality. In addition, the City has an extremely attractive rural hinterland with many areas of high landscape value, providing a valuable amenity for the local population, as well as providing a proportion of the City's food supplies.	The emphasis now needs to be on quality rather than quantity of green space within the City boundary. Also, a strategic approach is required to create a linked network of green routes and spaces.
Location and communications	The City has a central geographic location, between Birmingham and Manchester, the second and third largest cities in Britain, but is sufficiently distant from them to form the natural focus for the sub-region. There are good transport links to the City by rail, canal and road.	It is increasingly important to be aware of the nature and quality of investment in other cities. Manchester and Birmingham have both placed emphasis on quality of design in recent new development.
New development	The City has developed and changed rapidly over the last few centuries and this process continues. This has the potential to bring great improvements to the quality of the urban environment, although this cannot be taken for granted and new development can also cause harm if accepted indiscriminately.	Careful control of the quality of development is required through the development control process
Unitary status	The City Council's status as a unitary authority potentially confers greater influence over the form of the built environment.	There needs to be an emphasis on quality in the City Council's own development schemes.
Changes in Government Policy	Far greater emphasis has been placed on urban design and sustainability by recently revised national planning policy, especially PPG1, PPG6 and PPG13. This encourages the City Council to give greater priority to matters such as design, town centre regeneration and a balanced approach to transport.	The City's own policies and guidance need to adapt to reflect the changing emphasis of Central Government policy and guidance
Multi centred structure	The structure of the City, based around different town centres and smaller settlements, leads naturally to a strong sense of local identity and approximates to an urban villages structure.	The protection and reinforcement of existing town centres is a priority
Safety	The City is perceived to have a relatively safe living environment compared to many other major cities, although this perception varies considerably in different parts of the City.	New development needs to be designed with safety in mind, both within the site and in the adjoining public realm
Tourism and heritage	The City has a growing tourism industry based on its pottery heritage, museums, and factory shops. This provides employment and has the potential to significantly change perceptions of the City. Tourism projects sometimes provide opportunities to reuse historic buildings and regenerate derelict areas.	The quality of the built environment, and the conservation of the historic environment, are important elements in promoting tourism.
Topography	The City is located to the south end of the Pennines. The conjunction of northern moorland and the Midlands plain produces an undulating and varied topography with interesting views and landmark sites. This landscape has the potential to produce similarly interesting townscape.	Development needs to respond to contextual features such as topography.
Capacity for inner-city development	Industrial restructuring has left many vacant inner-city sites and a large number of under-used or vacant buildings. This provides the City with the capacity for considerable inner-city development, assisting in economic regeneration and absorbing development pressures that might otherwise be directed at the surrounding rural environment.	The emphasis of regeneration projects is often on declining areas of the City with low levels of economic activity. The traditional industrial core and other areas of suppressed economic activity are potentially important resources for economic growth and development.
Access to funding	Large scale investment has recently been attracted to the City, in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors, from European Structural Funds and the Single Regeneration Budget. Other funding opportunities are also now available, such as the National Lottery funds. Such funding is required especially in older areas to trigger economic regeneration.	Projects and funding bids need to emphasise quality of design as the key to raising confidence in the City and achieving high levels of economic growth. A high quality built environment is a major catalyst to both quality and quantity of investment.

Appendix B. Strengths and opportunities for improving the quality of the built environment –

Punti di forza e opportunità per il miglioramento della qualità dell'ambiente costruito

Fig. 7

Weaknesses and Threats	Explanation	Comments
Negative Image	There is still an apparent lack of awareness of the relationship between urban quality and perceptions of the City by the public, employers and potential investors.	Awareness needs to be raised of the role of design and quality in the built environment in achieving economic growth and improving the quality of life
Low awareness of urban and architectural design issues	Compared to many larger cities, little emphasis has been placed on the quality of urban and architectural design in Stoke-on-Trent. The standard of design in new development is generally mediocre both in terms of urban and architectural quality. The City needs to achieve the kind of high-quality landmark schemes that other cities such as Manchester and Nottingham have achieved in recent years.	Benchmarking against other cities is required. Educational initiatives, CPD events and training all contribute to local knowledge of the role of design in changing structural economic change.
The dearth of good architecture	The City has only 183 listed buildings and there has only been a small handful of very high quality new buildings in the last few decades.	There has been a handful of very high quality schemes recently, in particular the new extension to the Victoria Hall, which provides an exemplar for design quality in North Staffordshire.
There are relatively few good quality urban spaces	Few spaces are hospitable to pedestrians and invite people to linger and interact. The spaces that are potentially of good quality are significantly harmed by traffic intrusion and poor infrastructure.	Enhancement schemes have recently been carried out or are being formulated for major spaces in the City. But more emphasis is needed on removing vehicular infrastructure from the public realm.
The low standard of design in new residential developments	New residential areas especially suffer from poor design, few amenities, poor pedestrian access, a lack of public facilities and a failure to integrate with the City's urban character. Hierarchical road layouts and 'off the peg' design have characterised much recent housing development, resulting in poor permeability and legibility. The large house building developers have tended to aim for short-term cash turnover and have catered for a middle market, failing to provide for more specialised needs.	Some local housing associations are currently becoming involved in architectural competitions for their new developments. These have the potential to provide exemplars for high quality design in residential development.
Poor legibility	The structure of the City and layout of the path network is confusing and lacking in memorable features.	Distinctive and creative design is now positively encouraged
Poor permeability	The City's network of paths does not offer satisfactory choice and convenience for users, especially for pedestrians. New development often fails to improve permeability, and in some instances has degraded pedestrian convenience.	New development needs to link in to the existing path network, and the development control process should ensure this
Problematical ground conditions	These comprise subsidence, poorly filled land, geological faults and past dereliction. Poor ground conditions can encumber redevelopment, or compromise the layout of development.	A creative and strategic approach to urban design can help accommodate restrictions caused by adverse ground conditions
Pressure for development	There is pressure to accept development at any price and of any quality. This is a legacy of the past when it was more difficult to attract investment to the City.	Short term investment decisions are not necessarily compatible with longer term economic improvement. The quality of investment needs to be considered.
The distribution of uses	The trend has been for housing, employment, leisure and other facilities to be more widely distributed with less mixture of uses, especially in new developments.	Mixed use developments should be encouraged, especially in town centres.
Vehicular growth	Continuing vehicular growth is inflicting considerable damage on the City, socially, economically and environmentally. This harms the quality of life, health and longer-term prosperity.	Urban design in new development needs to facilitate choice in means of transportation for users and occupiers.
The negative impact of transport infrastructure	The quality of spaces in and around development is limited by car-parking and other infrastructure. Transport infrastructure uses large areas of the City's scarce land resources (roads, car-parking, servicing).	The development control process needs to ensure that spaces and pedestrian amenities are fully considered in new development.
Inadequate maintenance and poor alterations	Much older building fabric is badly maintained, neglected, under-used or redundant. Inappropriate alterations have harmed their integrity and character. In some cases, buildings that would otherwise have been of listable quality have been damaged to the point where they are no longer considered listable.	Free advice is offered by the City Council on repairs and maintenance. CAPS schemes and other funded projects also improve the physical condition of the City's built environment.

**Appendix B. Weaknesses and threats to the quality of the built environment–
Punti di debolezza e rischi per la qualità dell'ambiente costruito**

Fig. 8

Design Policy. Urban Design – Progetto urbano



1. Design Policy

DP2 - Urban Design

In order to achieve good urban design, new development schemes, including the design of public spaces and transport infrastructure, will be expected to:

- a. reinforce or enhance the established urban character of streets, squares and other spaces;
- b. integrate with existing path and circulation networks and patterns of activity;
- c. positively respond to contextual features as set out in Policy DP1;
- d. contribute to a safe and secure urban environment;
- e. enhance the City's character in terms of variety and diversity of experience;
- f. be accessible and usable to people of a range of mobility and physical ability; and
- g. create attractive, manageable, well functioning spaces within the site.

The following will be taken into account in considering development proposals:

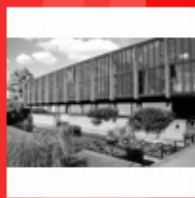
- i. accessibility, permeability, access to transport modes, impact upon existing rights of way, pedestrian convenience and avoidance of conflict with traffic;
- ii. impact on public spaces, parking and service provision, layout, enclosure, scale, massing
- iii. variety, durability and robustness; and
- iv. trees, vegetation and hedgerows, open space provision, hard and soft landscape design and environmental works.

Particular regard should be paid to the accessibility needs of the young, elderly, disabled and infirmed.

Development proposals on or adjacent to significant transport corridors, gateway areas or elevated or highly visible locations as shown on the Urban Design Map ([Appendix C](#)) should be of particularly high design quality, having regard to the above factors and those listed in Policies [DP1](#) and [DP3](#).

The importance of Urban Design is emphasised in PPG1. The design of spaces and contribution made by development to the public realm should be a result of informed and thoughtful design decisions and should not be left to a late stage of the design process. Development should enhance the established spatial character of roads and spaces. It is essential that the design of development be based on a thorough analysis of the site and its surroundings. An integrated design approach would ensure that the relevant considerations indicated above are addressed collectively.

Detailed Guidance. Urban Design – Progetto urbano



2. Detailed Guidance

2.2 DP2 - Urban Design

Creating better streets and public spaces.

The design of spaces is as important as the design of individual buildings. (Figures 14 - 15) The spaces, squares and streets that make up the public realm are where circulation and social interaction take place. Spaces also help to create a sense of place and local identity. (Figures 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20 - 21 - 22 - 23)

Formal planning can produce spaces of high quality. Winton Square is an excellent example of a formally planned square in the City, although the space is somewhat degraded by traffic intrusion. (Figures 24, 25) However, in many instances, the incremental nature of the development process means that the design of spaces is uncoordinated. This is sometimes not a bad thing. Some attractive spaces have been produced in this way in the past. But, the public realm is often neglected by developers. In recent large-scale developments in the City, there has been a tendency for the design of spaces to be determined primarily by car parking and servicing requirements. Even in more densely developed areas, there is a natural tendency for developers to look at their own sites in isolation rather than as part of a larger scheme. Thus the design of spaces and streets must no longer be left to chance. Co-ordination is necessary, even for informal spaces. The role of planning control over design is to ensure that the external effects of any development on the urban environment are considered so that new development reinforces local urban character and enhances the quality of the public realm.

"As humans multiply and their technology comes to dominate the earth, the conscious organisation of the land becomes more important to the quality of life ... Well-organised, productive living space is a resource for humanity, just as are energy, air and water".[5]

The development of any site contributes to defining and shaping the public realm. Recent new development has often failed to reinforce the City's dense urban character. This occurs where only the operational requirements of the development have been considered and the environment outside of the development site disregarded. The placing of car parking in front of buildings, adjacent to the road frontage is the most obvious example of this. A balanced approach needs to be taken between providing parking within developments, whilst giving full consideration to environmental quality. (Figures 26 & 27) Car-parking provision can seriously compromise the quality of spaces in and around development unless a balanced approach is taken. In particular in areas well served by public transport, lower levels of parking provision will be encouraged. PPG13 emphasises the desirability of reducing the need to travel and in respect of parking states:

"local authorities should adopt planning and land use policies to ... limit parking provision for developments and other on or off-street parking provision to discourage reliance on the car for work and other journeys where there are effective alternatives". [6]