

		Source of guidance	Advantages	Disadvantages	UK Best Practice
N A T I O N A L	1.	<b>Primary Legislation</b>	Legitimises design control/conservation by setting down the statutory framework through which planning operates.	Open to legal interpretation by the courts.	N/A
	2.	<b>Government Guidance:</b> a) PPGs (NPPGs in Scotland) b) Circulars c) PANs (in Scotland) d) Design Bulletins	Provide statements of Government policy on nationally important land use matters; c) and d) also illustrate good practice. They specify the limits of design as a material consideration and guide local authorities in relevant design considerations. Such guidance is in itself a paramount material consideration.	Very general advice only, on broad-based concerns, requiring much interpretation. Effectively limits local interpretation of design issues in the light of local concerns and sense of place. Criticised by many for being too generalised too flexible, and too limiting.	DoE - PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) SO - PAN 44: Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape (1994)
S T R A T E G I C	3.	<b>Regional Guidance (RPGs)</b>	Establishes any broad regional design/environmental context or growth strategy and ensures adequate and consistent provision at the strategic level.	Tendency in the past to concentrate on economic and development issues at the expense of environmental concerns. Little design content.	DoE - RPG3: Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities (draft 1995)
	4.	<b>Structure Plan/UDP Part 1 Policy</b>	Sets district or borough-wide planning framework, to guide local plan policies, so balancing design/environment against an assessment of local economic and social priorities in the light of national and regional advice. Potentially has an important role to play in establishing the strategic dimension of design; like local plan policy it also benefits from the full weight of Sec. 54A.	Tendency in the past to ignore design issues as only relevant as a local consideration, thus missing the opportunity to set an effective strategic design framework.	Hertfordshire County Council - Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review: Future Directions (draft 1994)
	5.	<b>Landscape Character Assessment</b>	Such appraisal helps ensure the full recognition of the landscape dimension of design and in itself is a material consideration. Landscape character zones are a well established and accepted concept, synthesising landscape characteristics and providing a basis for allocating land for development or conservation, and shaping urban form.	Tendency to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, such analysis is of little value unless able to inform and underpin policy. Character assessment has yet to fully embrace natural processes such as sustainability.	Hampshire County Council - The Hampshire Landscape (1993)  Countryside Commission - The New Map of England: A Celebration of the South Western Landscape (1994)
	6.	<b>County Design Guidance</b>	Helps ensure a consistent approach and standard of design across counties, particularly aiding those district authorities who have a shortage of in-house design skills. Usually focus on county matters like highways (extended into residential design at large) and landscape. County guidance is a material consideration.	Although able to distil the county-wide vernacular characteristics, such guidance is not a substitute for more contextual guidance at the district level. Utility depends on adoption by the district, co-ordination between county highways and district development control.	Essex County Council - A Design Guide for Residential Areas (1973)  Suffolk County Council - Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas (1993)

**The hierarchy of design guidance -  
La gerarchia degli strumenti di design  
guidance**

Fig. 1

	Source of guidance	Advantages	Disadvantages	UK Best Practice
D I S T R I C T A N D C I T Y	7. <b>Local Plan/UDP Part 2 Policy</b>	Can provide a contextually based locally orientated framework for design control, within the limits established by Government guidance. Such policies benefit from the full force of Section 54A and thus provide the most potent tool for controlling design.	Closely scrutinised by Central Government and development interests to prevent over prescription, thus effectively limiting local choice about the level of control, and the degree of tailoring to local context.	City of Westminster - Unitary Development Plan - Part II (deposit 1991)  Bristol City Council - Bristol Local Plan (deposit 1993)
	8. <b>Development Control Guidelines (in plan)</b>	Provide a half-way house between policy and SDG. Particularly suited to key rules of thumb and guidelines used by authorities, which are construed to be too detailed for policy, but which nevertheless constitute a key basis for control. They often articulate previous 'bottom drawer' policies and standards, so making the basis for design control explicit.	Not recognised in Government guidance as a legitimate format for control. Tendency as with all standards to ignore qualitative concerns at the expense of quantitative issues, thus resulting in standardised solutions. Their status where adopted remains unclear.	Stevenage Borough Council - Environmental Safeguards (deposit 1990)  Dacorum Borough Council - Dacorum Borough Local Plan - Part 5: Environmental Safeguards
	9. <b>Design Guides</b>	An accessible format through which detailed design advice can be expressed directly to designers, developers and householders. Can be used to ensure design is contextually based, to highlight good practice and to help avoid common design faults. Well suited to single issues, development types or development contexts. SDG is a material consideration with a clear relationship to plan policy.	Can be ignored, or conversely followed too slavishly. Does not necessarily ensure good design, and advice is not always relevant to site/ context specific circumstances. Often requires significant input of skills and resources in preparation. Too often copied from other guides and not cross-referenced to policy.	Bristol City Council - Residential Guidelines (1993)  Bath City Council - Bath Shopfronts: Guidelines for Design and Conservation
	10. <b>Design Standards</b>	Readily quantifiable criteria with which to assess applications. Based on the desire to secure safe living conditions and high quality residential amenity. Provides a firm/fair basis for development control decisions and for applicants to assess proposals, so reducing the need for readily available design skills. When land use related such standards are a material consideration.	Rarely secure good design by themselves, and can be directly responsible for promoting standardised, regimented solutions. Much criticised and resisted by the development industry, and by Central Government as part of deregulation. Need skilled application and weighting.	National Playing Fields Association - Six Acre Standard for Outdoor Playing Space (1992)  Islington Council - Housing for People with Disabilities (second edition 1989)
	11. <b>Design Strategy (established context)</b>	Attempt to provide a spatial framework for urban design, landscape and infrastructure investments and a basis for detailed design decisions. Design strategies give spatial expression to, and linkage between, structure and local plan policies, and can be detailed through design frameworks and briefs. Like briefs and frameworks, they represent a proactive rather than reactive form of guidance.	Design strategies are rare, and when found sometimes operate independently of the plan making process, rather than as part and parcel of a fully integrated hierarchy of guidance. They require a considerable investment of skills and resources to prepare and implement and an agreed 'vision' for future form.	City of Birmingham - City Centre Design Strategy (1990)  DoE - Thames Strategy: A Study of the Thames (1995)  Warwick District Council - Royal Leamington Spa: A Design Framework in an Historic Town (1990)
	12. <b>Landscape Strategy</b>	Help ensure a proper integration of natural and built environment concerns. Unlike landscape character assessments they tend to focus on urban as well as rural landscapes, and on managing and enhancing as well as protecting the landscape. Such strategies should form the basis for a more holistic, sustainable approach to landscape policy.	Again such strategies are rare, and where found also tend to operate separately from the plan. Like design strategies (11) they require a considerable investment in skills and resources, both for their preparation and implementation.	Bath City Council - Cherishing Outdoor Places, A Landscape Strategy for Bath (1993)  Thames Landscape Steering Group - Thames Landscape Strategy: Hampton to Kew (1994)

**The hierarchy of design guidance -  
La gerarchia degli strumenti di design  
guidance**

**Fig. 2**

		Source of guidance	Advantages	Disadvantages	UK Best Practice
A R E A / S I T E S P E C I F I C	13.	<b>Area Appraisal</b> a) Design Appraisal b) Conservation Area Assessments	Helps to ensure that proper regard is given to context, both by the local authority and by applicants, so raising design standards. Should form a vital part of the policy/guidance writing process. Can be tied into the process of conservation area designation and ongoing enhancement. Appraisal results can be a material consideration.	Tendency to focus on visual context only at the expense of social, functional and environmental concerns. Tendency also to encourage replication of established form, rather than innovation. Can be resource intensive to carry out, usually requiring high skills input to develop prescriptions.	Dacorum Borough Council - Residential Area Character Study (draft 1995)  Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea - Queen's Gate Conservation Area Proposals Statement (1989)
	14.	<b>Design Codes</b> (usually new build)	Lay down a set of codes/ principles to guide development, without defining an actual site specific framework to follow. Can be based on cues from the surrounding context, or used to define a totally new identity, in areas of comprehensive development, for which such codes are particularly suited. Of particular value where long time spans for development are envisaged, and where exact development processes are unclear.	No clear three dimensional development pattern established to guide development, so reducing certainty for all concerned. Requires long term will to implement as tendency to abandon such codes in good times (i.e. the Isle of Dogs Development and Design Guide (1982)).	Hulme Regeneration Limited - A Guide to Development: Hulme Manchester (1994)  Manchester City Council - City Development Guide (draft 1995)
	15.	<b>Development Frameworks</b>	Usually tailored to large, long term development sites. Flexible and readily adaptable approach to site planning, clearly defining the two and three dimensional forms of public space, whilst allowing developers/designers to be creative within an overall controlling framework. Can be used to co-ordinate the efforts of different landowners, as a framework for individual briefs, and is good for defining the 'capital web'	Some uncertainty about final built form (greater certainty than design codes, less certainty than briefs and master plans). Problems with ensuring successful long term implementation.	London Docklands Development Corporation - Royal Albert Dock Development Framework (1985)  Birmingham City Council - Convention Centre Quarter (1994)
	16.	<b>Design Briefs</b>	A pro-active rather than reactive form of guidance, which is tailored to individual sites and so can readily respond to the context and to the character of the site. Can be used to co-ordinate the various design requirements of different consultees and to systematically assess design factors. Briefs are quick and easy to produce and are readily adaptable to changing circumstances. They possess great potential for consultation and community participation, as well as for site promotion and for implementing plan policy. They can also be used to lever planning gain from a site.	Briefs more commonly take the form of development or planning briefs rather than design briefs, with consequently little design input. Often criticised as being divorced from economic realities. Require considerable skills and resources for preparation, review and implementation. Tendency to be either over prescriptive, or too vague and unresponsive to design context. Have a short shelf life and are frequently ignored in practice even if adopted by authority.	Wycombe District Council - Local Plan Appendix: Development Briefing (1992)  Wokingham District Council - Wokingham Town Centre Integrated Urban Design Briefs (1987)
	17.	<b>Master Plans</b>	Ensure maximum development certainty by creating a three dimensional vision of future form. They are tailored to individual sites and can be used as marketing tools. Architectural competitions can be utilised to ensure quality implementation. Still allow architectural freedom within limits of form.	Rarely used by local authorities as a method of controlling design, unless involved directly in development themselves. Requires large professional design input. Inflexible and incapable of adjusting to changing circumstances. Can constrain designers of individual buildings	Crown Street Regeneration Project - Crown Street Master Plan (1991)  Olympia And York - Canary Wharf Master Plan (1985)

**The hierarchy of design guidance -  
La gerarchia degli strumenti di design  
guidance**

**Fig. 3**

**Items structuring urban design –  
Tematiche strutturanti l'urban design**

Spatial	Morphological	Contextual	Visual	Perceptual	Social	Functional	Sustainable
<b>Design issues listed as legitimate design concerns in government guidance (from Table 3.2)</b>							
open space	building lines	character	amenity	defensibility	access	daylight	biodiversity
road hierarchy	density	conservation	appearance	distinctiveness	active frontages	footpaths	energy efficiency
settlement pattern	layout	context	building traditions	enclosure	activity patterns	house size	landscaping
town cramming	street pattern	environmental quality	bulk	place	crime	house type	orientation
		height	colour	variety	mixed use	infrastructure	sunlight
		landscape	development size		play space	layout	sustainable design
		materials	eyesores		public health	overlooking	trees
		neighbourh'd impact	interest		public space	overshadowing	
		relation to other b'lngs	local style		quality of life	parking	
		siting	massing		supervision	privacy	
		streetscape	scale		vitality	road design	
		views	texture			road safety	
		vistas					
<b>Design issues listed as non-legitimate design concerns in government guidance (from Table 3.3)</b>							
		location on plot	detailed design		disabled access	garden size	
		outlook	style			space formulae	
<b>Other relevant design concerns not explicitly covered in government guidance</b>							
capital web	block size	boundaries	balance	appropriateness	community	infrastructure	ecology
compact form	connectivity	building groups	corners	gateways	facilities	lighting	economic viability
districts	edges	contrast	focal points	human scale	minority needs	servicing	environment capacity
neighbourhoods	grain	plot size	form	identity	personalisation	SLOAP	microclimate
public transport	incremental design	unity	harmony	image	public/private	traffic calming	road dominance
topography	morphology		landmarks	legibility	public realm		robustness
	nodes		proportion	sensual experience	social cohesion		site capacity
	permeability		rhythm		social equity		structure planting
	space network		roofscape				
	spatial proportions		solid v void				
			townscape				
			vertical v horizontal				

Design considerations appear under one approach only, although in reality many fit into more than one of the categories identified. This emphasises the interrelated, and interdependent nature of urban design theory and of the urban design considerations identified.

**Fig. 4**

**Urban design agenda**  
**The shifting bases of urban/environmental design –**  
**I cambiamenti nelle tematiche fondative dell'urban/environmental design**



Fig. 5, 6

**Diagram of the relationships between development and design control process -  
 Diagramma delle relazioni tra design control process e attuazione del progetto –  
 Generating design policies: key elements –  
 La costruzione di design policies: elementi chiave**

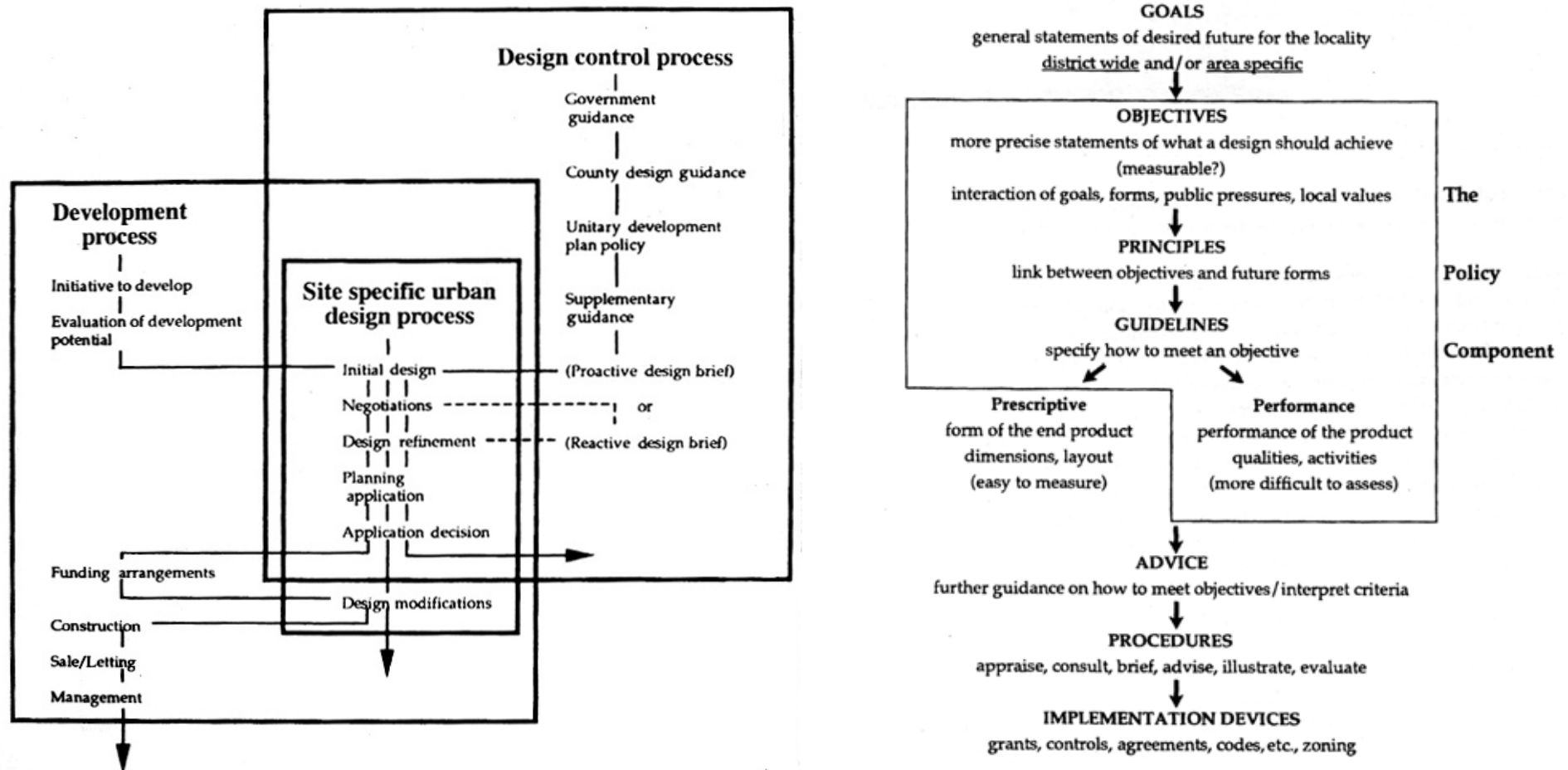


Fig. 7, 8

## Structure for appraisal – Struttura della valutazione

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Spatial	<p>Do distinctive district/ neighbourhood boundaries exist, if so where?</p> <p>Is the topography a positive character-giving asset?</p> <p>Will developments fit in to the existing capital web?</p> <p>What quality open spaces exist?</p>	<p>Where does the spatial pattern break down?</p> <p>Do no man's lands exist between adjoining districts?</p> <p>What topographical restraints are apparent?</p> <p>Is the road hierarchy a uniting or divisive factor?</p> <p>Any public transport?</p>	<p>What opportunities are there to add to the network of open space?</p> <p>What opportunities exist for large-scale interventions that enhance the existing spatial form/capital web?</p> <p>Can the existing spatial form be repaired?</p>	<p>What high-impact threats lie over the horizon, i.e. new roads, developments business closures?</p> <p>Is town cramming a problem?</p> <p>Is urban sprawl a problem?</p> <p>Is public transport viable in the long term?</p>
Morphological	<p>Is the morphological form distinctive?</p> <p>Which morphological elements give character: street pattern/blocks/ edges/nodes/building line?</p> <p>Is the historical grain intact and is permeability good: pedestrians/cars/cycles?</p>	<p>Which spaces lack definition/enclosure?</p> <p>Where does route connectivity break down?</p> <p>Where has the urban grain been lost/ignored?</p> <p>Have standardized layouts been imposed?</p> <p>Are density targets too rigid?</p>	<p>Do opportunities exist to enhance connectivity?</p> <p>Can a distinctive network of spaces be formed?</p> <p>What opportunities exist to re-impose/establish a legible urban form/grain?</p> <p>Can permeability be enhanced?</p>	<p>Are incremental developments damaging morphological form, i.e. plot/block amalgamations?</p> <p>Do comprehensive redevelopments constitute any threat?</p> <p>Is built density increasing or decreasing?</p>
Contextual	<p>Where is landscape setting especially important?</p> <p>Which characteristics most clearly define the context?</p> <p>Do any important building groups exist?</p> <p>Is unity or diversity the defining characteristic?</p>	<p>Which areas possess no defining character?</p> <p>Where does environmental quality break down?</p> <p>Do buildings gel together in distinctive groups, if not why not?</p> <p>Which areas require further (increased) protection?</p>	<p>What opportunities exist to enhance existing or open up new views and vistas?</p> <p>Do opportunities exist for high buildings?</p> <p>Is conservation policy appropriate (CAs, LBs)?</p> <p>Do opportunities exist to define context anew?</p>	<p>Is landscape character being eroded?</p> <p>Is increasing building height a problem?</p> <p>Which existing contexts are under threat—incrementally or comprehensively?</p> <p>Are traditional boundary treatments being replaced?</p>
Visual	<p>What townscape qualities can be identified?</p> <p>Which traditional materials are used in which areas, what colours predominate?</p> <p>Do local styles exist, what are their key qualities?</p> <p>Is roofscape an important element (a fifth elevation)?</p>	<p>Does scale tend towards the inhuman?</p> <p>Do wider amenity concerns impact on areas?</p> <p>Are buildings visually interesting from different views and distances?</p> <p>Are corners given due emphasis?</p>	<p>Do opportunities exist to establish new landmarks or focal points?</p> <p>What opportunities exist to remove eyesores?</p> <p>How can existing townscape be enhanced?</p> <p>Do opportunities exist to encourage modern design?</p>	<p>Do any large-scale developments threaten the townscape character?</p> <p>Are important skylines under threat?</p> <p>Do plot ratios result in an increasing building bulk?</p> <p>Do new building technologies pose a threat?</p>

Fig. 9

## Structure for appraisal – Struttura della valutazione

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Perceptual	<p>Which areas possess a distinctive sense of place and impart a clear image and why?</p> <p>Which areas are clearly legible and what qualities contribute to this?</p> <p>Is the prevailing scale human in nature?</p>	<p>Which areas suffer from a lack of clear identity?</p> <p>Are any areas threatening in character and if so why?</p> <p>Do parts of the town/city suffer from a poor image, and is this related to design factors?</p> <p>Is monotony a problem?</p>	<p>Can potential gateways be identified to enhance district/settlement identity?</p> <p>Can an increase in visual and social variety be used to enhance sense of place?</p> <p>Do possibilities exist to reinforce existing sense of place and legibility?</p>	<p>Is local distinctiveness being undermined?</p> <p>Are standardized and corporate designs a problem, and where should such design be resisted?</p> <p>Do particular land uses contribute to sense of place, are they under threat?</p>
Social	<p>Which design factors contribute most strongly to improving quality of life?</p> <p>Which areas exhibit a strong and cohesive community spirit?</p> <p>Identify important gathering places, what qualities makes them so?</p>	<p>Which areas suffer from a high incidence of crime; is this due to design factors?</p> <p>Do women feel excluded/intimidated in some areas?</p> <p>Where are the needs of the disabled not adequately catered for; why is this?</p> <p>Is play space adequate?</p>	<p>Identify opportunities for mixing uses?</p> <p>What design opportunities exist to cater for minority needs and improve social cohesion?</p> <p>Do opportunities exist for improving accessibility and providing public space?</p>	<p>Where is vitality being undermined and how?</p> <p>Does personalization represent a threat; what forms can be encouraged?</p> <p>Is there any noticeable trend to privatizing the public realm?</p> <p>Do problems affect health?</p>
Functional	<p>Which potential expansion areas are well linked to existing infrastructure?</p> <p>Which housing types have been used particularly successfully and why?</p> <p>What principles can be identified for successful road design/integration</p>	<p>Identify any space left over after planning (SLOAP), what can be done with it?</p> <p>Under what circumstances have standards-based approaches failed?</p> <p>In what circumstances has road design been allowed to dominate urban form?</p>	<p>Do opportunities exist for traffic calming?</p> <p>Can more flexible space standards and functional criteria be identified for development forms?</p> <p>What opportunities exist to better utilize existing infrastructure?</p>	<p>Does the need for adequate servicing pose any threat?</p> <p>Does demand for parking represent a threat?</p> <p>Does town cramming threaten basic amenity?</p> <p>In which areas does road safety pose a real or potential problem?</p>
Sustainable	<p>Which development forms are most energy efficient?</p> <p>Identify any ecologically valuable sites?</p> <p>Appraise indigenous vegetation, is it appropriate for use in development?</p> <p>Which trees are worthy of preservation?</p>	<p>How do microclimatic factors impact on development strategies?</p> <p>Are any potential development areas poorly served by public transport?</p> <p>Where has landscaping been treated as an after-thought, and why?</p>	<p>Do opportunities exist to fully integrate natural and built environmental concerns?</p> <p>What opportunities exist for greening sites/buildings?</p> <p>Which principles guarantee robust development forms: adaptability and resilience?</p>	<p>Which areas are in danger of exceeding their natural environmental capacity?</p> <p>Are street trees ageing?</p> <p>Are enough brown-field sites available for development?</p> <p>Which developments encourage car use?</p>

Fig. 9



**Method for policy writing – Metodo per la redazione di politiche urbanistiche**  
**The procedures of design control – Le procedure di design control**

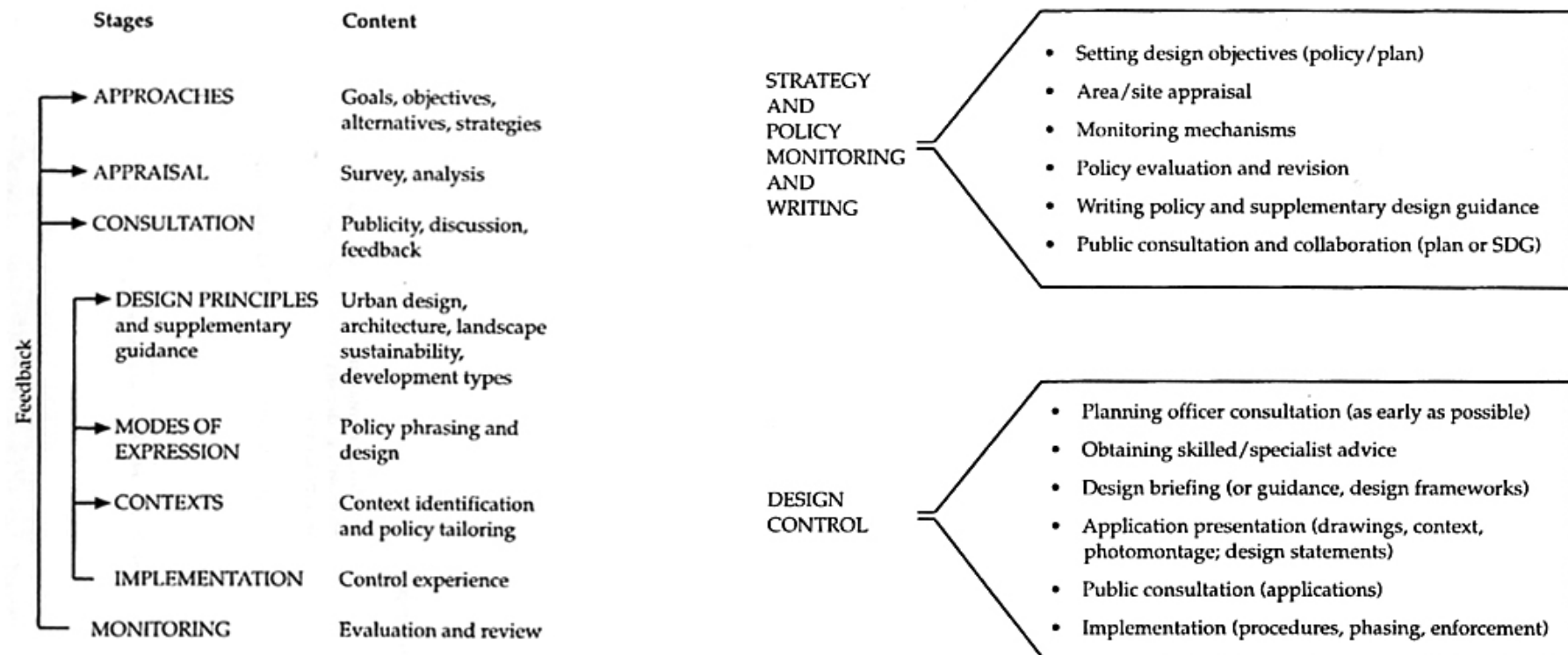


Fig. 10, 11

**Local circumstances and their influence on design control –  
Circostanze locali e loro influenza sul design control**

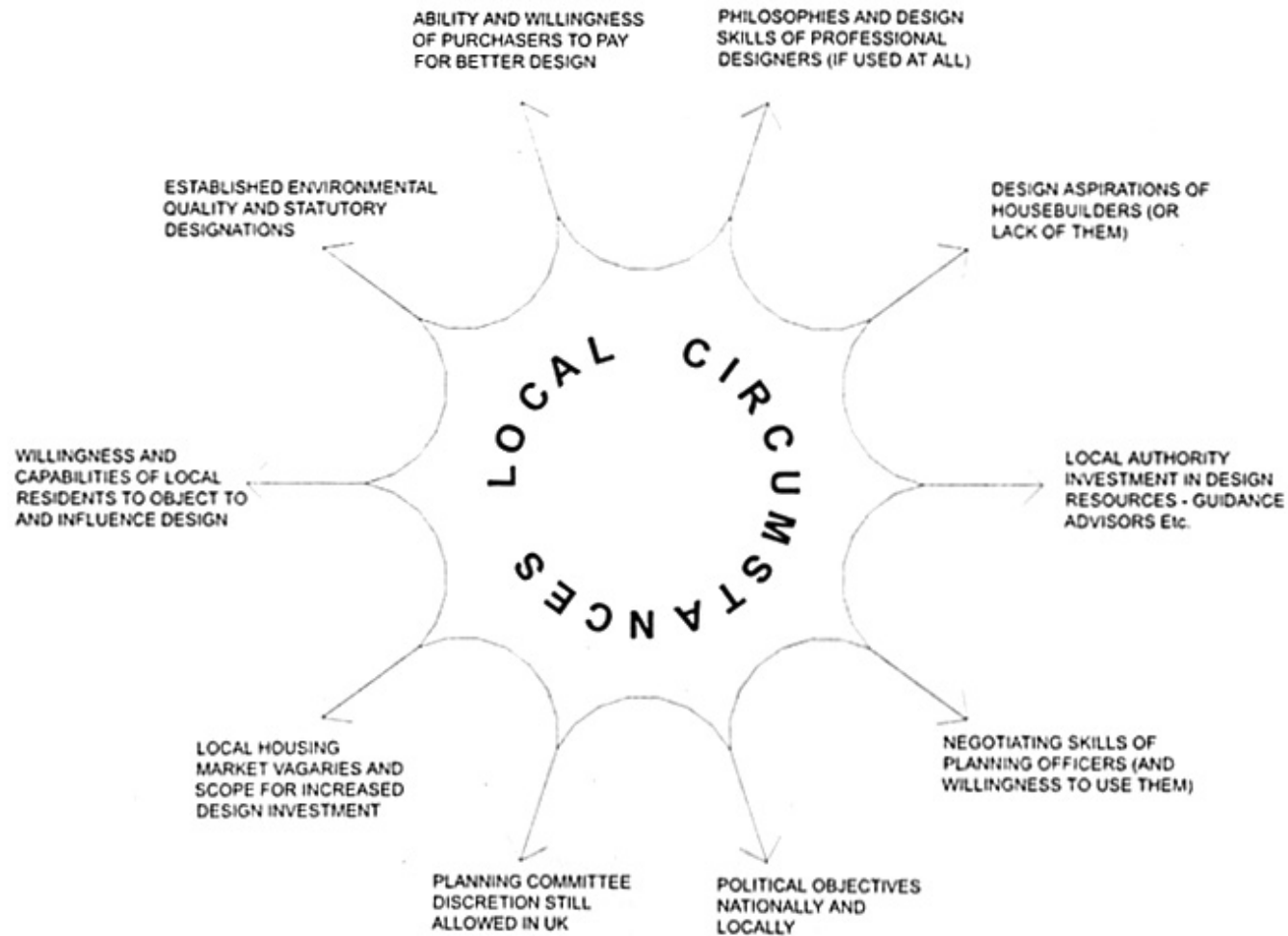


Fig. 12

**A 'powergram' for urban design –  
Un 'diagramma dei poteri' per l'urban design**

Actors	Suppliers		Producers				Consumers	
	Land owner	Funder	Developer	Local authority		Architect	Urban designer	Everyday Users
				Planners	Highway Engineers			
Elements of the built environment								
Street Pattern	—	—	○	○	★	—	⊕	○
Blocks	—	—	—	○	—	—	⊕	—
Plots - subdivision & amalgamation	●	●	●	★	—	—	⊕	—
Land/building use	●	●	●	★	○	○	⊕	○
Building form - height/mass	—	●	●	★	—	⊕	⊕	○
- orientation to public space	—	○	●	★	—	⊕	⊕	○
- elevations	—	○	●	○	—	⊕	○	○
- elements of construction (details/ materials)	—	○	●	○	—	⊕	○	○

Key: ●, Power to initiate; ★, power to control; ⊕, responsibility to the client; ○, interest/influence - by argument or participation; —, no obvious interest. *Note:* This is a very generalized allocation of power appropriate to the majority of cases in British development, but circumstances will vary according to who employs the urban designer (it is assumed here the developer does), how interventionist the funder or planner is, etc.

Fig. 13