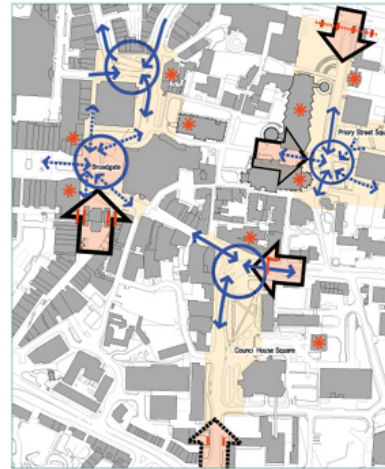# Identifying constraints and opportunities –
Individuazione di vincoli e opportunità

LYNCHIAN ANALYSIS FOCUSES ON THE FEATURES WHICH MAKE A PLACE EASY TO UNDERSTAND

- site and area infrastructure (roads, services, utilities);

- statutory constraints (listed buildings, tree preservation orders);

- development feasibility, including an assessment of market demand;

- important structuring elements such as axes, historic routes, watersheds and main points of site access;

- tissue studies, which use tracing or overprinting to show comparisons between existing patterns of development on a site or area and well-known developments in other places; such studies can help to show a site's or area's capacity for development and suggest how it may be laid out.

IDENTIFYING CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

An analysis of constraints and opportunities draws on the assessment of how the site or area is performing. It is not independent of the policy context. This mainly quantitative process can establish the capacity for growth or change.

Assessments will include:

- planning context (current policies, applications and consents);

- strategic context (links to the wider area and relationships to surrounding development);

- local and immediate context (adjacent land uses and links to the area or site);

- site and statistics (size, proportions, boundary definition);

- site and area characteristics (contours, ecology, landscape, hydrology, ground conditions, crime pattern analysis);

THE GRAIN OF BLOCKS AND PLOTS CAN PROVIDE CLUES ABOUT HOW TO INTEGRATE DEVELOPMENT INTO ITS SETTING

TISSUE STUDIES CAN HELP IN DETERMINING THE CAPACITY OF A SITE OR AREA

Fig. 11

An urban design vision in the Development plan –
Un'immagine progettuale nel Development plan

How the design policies are set out in the plan will depend on the emphasis that is appropriate locally. It may be convenient to set out urban design policies to reflect the appropriate design objectives. But in some plans it may be convenient to group design policies according to an aspect of development form (layout, scale, appearance and landscape) to which they relate, if that aspect is thought to be particularly important to the vision for the area.

The plan should explain how its urban design vision has been shaped by national policies and regional and local considerations. It should refer to any context appraisals that have been carried out and to the involvement of the public in them.

FROM OBJECTIVE TO POLICY

A policy or proposal that is likely to provide the basis for deciding planning applications, or for determining conditions to be attached to planning permissions, should be set out in the development plan, and may be augmented in supplementary planning guidance, such as design guides.

A plan's design policies, "should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally" (PPG1). Too many plans cover all these factors in a single policy, which simply specifies that development must be 'acceptable' in terms of these matters, or that the scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of development must be 'appropriate'. Such policies are generally focussed on the objective of promoting or protecting an area's character, with the other urban design objectives too often neglected. Such phrases by themselves, however, offer no more guidance to a developer than is already contained in PPG1.

As well as setting out general design policies, a local plan or UDP Part II could include design policies relating to specific areas, specific sites or recurrent design issues. The plan could also explain how design issues are to be managed in the planning process, such as when and how supplementary planning guidance will be prepared. The plan should also explain what context appraisals have been carried out in developing policy.

BRISTOL'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN AIMS
TO MAKE IT THE LEGIBLE CITY

Fig. 12

Preparing an Urban design framework –
La preparazione di un Urban design framework

This page sets out the basis of an urban design framework. Its approach uses the objectives of urban design to shape urban form and generate activity. The framework could be for either a town centre or an area requiring new development or regeneration.

1
An urban design framework for an inner city site highlights the constraints and opportunities…

5
…focuses civic and community building onto major routes and spaces…

2
…identifies the opportunities for an integrated network of public transport…

6
…promotes frontage development and a range of complementary uses on busy streets…

3
…relates opportunities for increased density to public transport accessibility…

7
…establishes a pattern of local streets and blocks which are clearly contained and enclosed…

4
…draws out a hierarchy of connected routes and spaces that link well into transport routes…

8
…and brings forward guidance (or design codes) on issues such as scale (height and massing) and the public realm.

Fig. 13

Preparing a Development brief –
La preparazione di un Development brief

**One district council's procedure for preparing development briefs:**

- a lead officer convenes a multi-disciplinary team;

- all interested bodies are informed that the brief is to be prepared;

- an initial site meeting is held to which the following are invited: chairman of development committee, chairman and vice chairman of area planning sub-committee, ward councillor(s), chairman of town/parish council, site owner(s), developer, representative of county surveyor, officers preparing the brief and other interested parties;

- a first draft and site appraisal plan are prepared and sent to councillors; working drawings, illustrations or indicative layouts may be prepared to test the emerging thoughts on development options against the brief's objectives, but these will not appear in subsequent drafts (so as not to stifle originality);

- the brief is reconsidered in the light of councillors' responses;

- a second draft is sent to town/parish council meeting, site owner/agent and other consultees and the need for further public involvement considered;

- the final brief is written for approval by the council;

- the brief is circulated widely.

Good practice points

- multi-disciplinary team

- councillors are involved at an early stage

- brief is well publicised and circulated widely
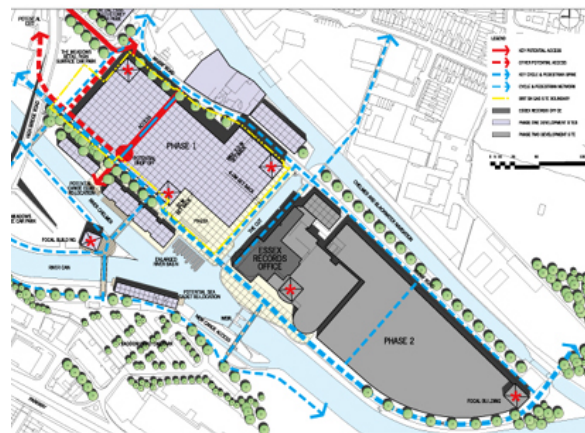
THE DRAWINGS IN A BRIEF SHOULD NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS NEEDED TO ILLUSTRATE THE PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

A brief can be illustrated by concept diagrams, building envelope guidelines (diagrams with dimensions) and three-dimensional sketches of building forms and spaces. Such drawings should not go beyond what is required to explain the application of the principles.

A design brief should communicate strong design ideas, without actually designing buildings or layouts. Those who prepare briefs are sometimes tempted to design a building or buildings which would conform to the principles, and to include the fully worked-up drawings in the brief. This may confuse potential developers, who will not easily be able to tell which aspects of the drawings illustrate the application of the principles, and which have been included merely to enhance the drawings' appearance. Prescriptive design and any suggestion of a particular style should be avoided.

Fig. 14

Preparing a Design guide –
La preparazione di una Design guide

Preparing a design guide is likely to involve the local community and several parts of the council (such as development control, design and conservation, local plan, building regulations, highways, estates and community liaison).

It will usually be appropriate for other stakeholders to be involved in the preparation, such as the Chamber of Commerce, other trade associations, the local branch of the RIBA, amenity and interest groups, civic societies, design and conservation advisory panels, and nearby local authorities.

a clear idea of the structure and contents, before going back to read it or use it for reference.

Illustrations, photographs and plans which do not have a purpose, may have a place as a means of making the guide look attractive, breaking up the text, or through adding to the general impression that is being made. But they will do little or nothing to convey information or reinforce the text. Most illustrations, photographs and plans without captions stating the point they are intended to make do not have a useful purpose.
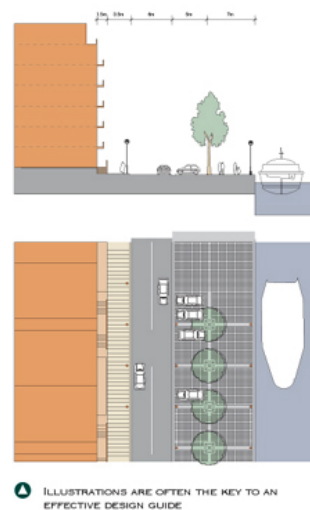
Presentation

It is helpful:

- to decide whether the guide is to be sent out (in whole or part) with planning application forms, and design it (in terms of weight and cost, for example) accordingly;

- to produce the guide in two parts (a technical document and a popular summary) where appropriate;

- if the guide is to be copied in parts for sending to planning applicants, to ensure it is written so that each part is self-sufficient;

- to specify an appropriate quality of production to ensure that circulation is not limited by an excessive price (or cost of free distribution);

- to produce worksheets and checklists (on matters such as typical details, materials and schedules), as appropriate, to supplement the guide.

However well it is conceived, structured and written, the extent to which a design guide is read, understood and used will depend a good deal on how it is presented graphically. In the best design guides the structure is made clear by the appropriate use of headlines, type and size of text. Headlines and captions make it possible to skim through the guide and get

▲ ILLUSTRATIONS ARE OFTEN THE KEY TO AN EFFECTIVE DESIGN GUIDE

Promotion

A design guide is only effective if it is seen and used. Guides can be:

- put on display in the planning department and other council offices;

- put on display in public libraries;

- given to planning applicants at pre-planning application meetings;

- sent out with forms about a grant scheme;

Fig. 15

Pre-application design statements –
La presentazione di progetti preliminari

Example:

Bede Island North, Leicester

Bede Island has been turned from an eyesore on the edge of Leicester's City Centre into an attractive and vibrant place to live, work and play. The mixed use development is based firmly on good design principles and grew from a planning brief that set out clear requirements for the uses, form and layout to be achieved. The transformation represents the hard work of a City Challenge partnership working closely with its local community.
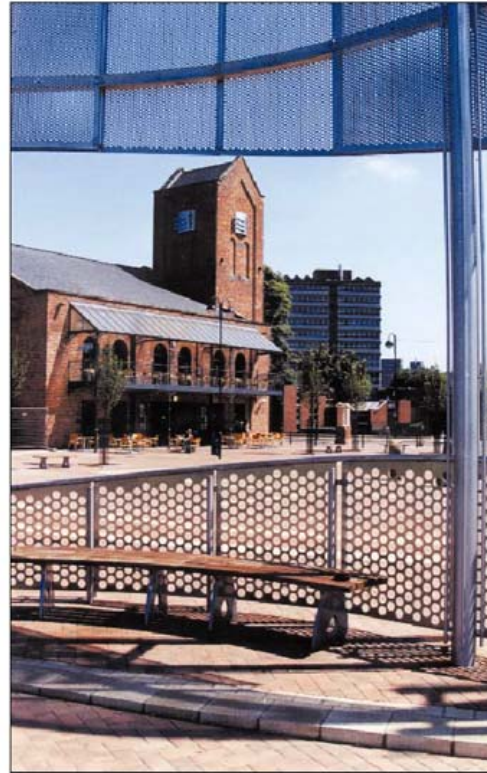
A FORMER PUMP HOUSE CONVERTED INTO A PUBLIC HOUSE FORMS ONE SIDE OF THE SQUARE. THE TOWER IS A LOCAL LANDMARK

AXONOMETRIC SKETCH OF BEDE ISLAND SHOWING THE PUBLIC SQUARE AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

Fig. 16