About the TOOLKIT

The Building in Context toolkit has been developed by EH, CABE and the Kent Architecture Centre. It grew out of the publication ‘Building in Context’ published by EH and CABE in 2001. The purpose of the publication was to stimulate a high standard of design when development takes place in historically sensitive contexts. The founding principle is that all successful design solutions depend on allowing time for a thorough site analysis and character appraisal of context. Building in Context TOOLKIT training aims to help those making decisions to reach effective and balanced design decisions.

It is proven to be useful in communicating issues of development in complex situations; helping convey the depth of expertise required in adopting a holistic approach to site development and reduced ‘silo mentality’. Through the analysis of a case study, wider design issues than ‘how it looks’ are explored.

Each workshop consists of a presentation looking at the key issues covered in Building in Context, followed by local and regional case studies, a practical, hands-on drawing activity, and an opportunity to discuss the complex issues associated with successfully incorporating contemporary design in sensitive locations. The Building in Context Toolkit Programme aims to:

- Enable wider understanding of the principles of developing appropriate contemporary design in historic areas to a range of professional and community groups
- Enable those involved in making decisions affecting historic areas in their attainment of a more effective, balanced and efficient service resulting in improvement of those decisions affecting the quality of the historic environment for future generations.
- Promote sustainable new and re-used development that doesn’t sacrifice future generations will value for the sake of short-term and often illusory gains so that we use already developed areas in the most efficient way, while making them more attractive places in which to live and work and conserving our cultural heritage.

Credit Crunch: Maintaining Quality of New Developments in Historic Areas

2nd December 2009

Brighton and Hove City Council hosted a Building In Context Workshops on the 2nd December 2009 in Lighthouse, Brighton. The event was organised and facilitated by Kent Architecture Centre and hosted by Brighton and Hove City Council. The purpose of the event was to discuss the impact of credit crunch and how we can ensure and maintain the quality of new developments in Historic Areas.

26 Members and Councillors from Brighton and Hove City Council, Horsham and Mid Sussex District Council attended the one day workshop. During the day there was a presentation from Nigel Barker from English Heritage, Roger Dowty from Brighton and Hove City Council and Tony Ingram from 3DReid.

About the Speakers

Nigel Barker BA(Hons) PhD Dip Bldng Cons AA IHBC
English Heritage
www.english-heritage.org.uk

Nigel trained as an architectural historian at Reading, specialising in eighteenth century architecture the eighteenth century for his Doctorate, which was on the Architecture of the English Board of Ordnance. Following a period identifying buildings for listing as part of a national resurvey undertaken by the then Dept of the Environment he worked in local government as an Historic Buildings Advisor, during which time he completed his Post Graduate Diploma in Building Conservation at the Architectural Association.

He joined English Heritage in 2002 as Historic Areas Advisor responsible for Kent and East and West Sussex advising on new development in historic areas. He is now Planning and Development Team Leader for the Counties of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire in the SE Region and with his team provides advice on management of the historic environment.

Roger Dowty MRTPI
Brighton and Hove City Council
www.brighton-hove.gov.uk

Roger Dowty, Brighton & Hove City Council’s Design and Conservation Manager; chartered town planner, conservation advisor and urban designer who has worked and lived for 30 years in the city.

GEOFF NOBLE BA Dip UD DipConsAA MRTPI IHBC
Geoff is Kent Architecture Centre’s Head of Design Review and manages the South East Regional Design Panel.

Clare Wright MA PGDip (RIS) MRTPI
Kent Architecture Centre
www.architecturecentre.org

Clare led the Kent Architecture Centre team that worked with English Heritage and CABE on developing the TOOLKIT training programme, now in the third year of a nationwide programme and shortlisted for the national Royal Town Planning Institute Awards 2008.

www.building-in-context.org
About the Speakers

Tony Ingram DArch RIBA AChar
Director
3D Reid
www.3dreid.com

Tony Ingram trained at Kingston School of Architecture under David Dunster and John Farmer. He qualified in 1978; spent several years travelling and joined Jestico + Whiles in its formative years in 1982. He is now Director at 3D Reid, international design practice.

Tony has:
Taught Post Graduate studies in Urban Design at the University of Westminster;
Taught Sustainable Design at Kingston University School of Architecture and Landscape;
Mediated as an RIBA part 2 External Examiner, and lectured widely, including Sofia and Riga Technical Institutes and the Universities of Sheffield, Edinburgh, East London, Leicester and Kingston.

Tony’s work is diverse in scope, scale and sector. To each project he brings the same concern for clarity of concept, delivery and attention, and particularly how a variety of uses can be brought together to create a more vibrant, effective and safer city. He is currently a member of the South East England Development Agency Design Review Panel established by the Kent Architecture Centre.

The day included a practical workshop led by Kent Architecture Centre.

Participants studied Jubilee Square as an example site to create opportunities and constraints for new developments in an existing city centre.
Questions and Answers

Q. Why don’t modern buildings last?
New developments should think about adaptability. Older buildings last longer with each new use. New uses to a building can give it another 100 years of life. A building should be designed so that it can be adaptable in the future. The Jubilee Library is a good example. We should also think about multi-spaces and universal types. Design building which is multifunctional, how residential can become workspaces. We should also look at how a building can dissemble and be reused. Like a car dealing with composites.

Q. With regards to the age of a building, is there a requirement for public buildings such as schools?
Historic buildings have a lot of embodied energy and we should think about reuse. My wife is a teacher and she works in a draughty Victorian building but would like to work in a modern building. A modern building might be more comfortable, but if we can reuse a building why not. We live in too much of a throw away society. Some temporary buildings are still with us including prefabricated housing. Also structures such as the London Eye and Eiffel Tower.

Q. Looking at the new buildings in Jubilee Square at all aspects like we did today, the visit, the site tour, the history, the different phases - one wonders whether different buildings should be there?
The two key things were the quality of the surrounding buildings and the attention to detail. Unfortunately the land did get sold and there was a different developer and architect who took their place. The original intention was to bring the swimming pool forward to bring a more positive square than it is now.

Q. Is there any pressure to knock down elements of the North Laines?
What we should look at is the quality of a building. There should be a public discussion. The original uses and the importance of the frontage and form. We should discuss how we bring quality to 21st century developments be they reuse or new interventions. Planning rules are often good enough to prevent wrong buildings. Street patterns should drive the design forward. Look at small widths - how do you overcome it? There is an opportunity to use a model and bring back housing, including family housing, into inner urban areas. Examples from Soho can help inform what Brighton might do with small scale plots. How can small scale plots regenerate areas? For example by restoring mews, roof terraces, shops and mixed use, like North Laines, how can we bring life back to an area. Look also at the possibility of shared surfaces. Don’t be afraid to demand more or better quality information. Even in South East Design Panel we do not get enough information. Sometimes the lack of information and detail is what lets the quality down - if something hasn’t been produced on a drawing there is a strong likelihood it hasn’t been thought about or worked through properly.
To Design and Historic Environment champions:

Organising Your Building in Context TOOLKIT training event

We hope you enjoyed this event that showcased the Building in Context TOOLKIT and a leading designer.

The TOOLKIT is a travelling training package that is available to authorities across England that can be tailored to meet specific local requirements. As Champion for your authority you may wish to organise one in your own workplace.

For more information on holding a BiC TOOLKIT training event please contact Clare Wright, Kent Architecture Centre, tel: 01634 401166 or email clare.wright@kentarchitecture.co.uk

The Table below shows how the BiC Toolkit team can put together an event tailored for your particular requirements:

The Building in Context TOOLKIT

1. Event build-up
   - Establish topical site, issue and audience

2. Event
   - Visual display
     - Seminar
     - Workshop
     - Walkabout/study tour
   - Designer's case study matched to site, issues, audience and availability
   - Invite other speakers where required, audience, pre-event questionnaire, venue and catering

3. Post-event
   - Post event feedback questionnaire and report

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