



**Barnsley...  
being transformed into a  
21st Century Market Town**



**Digital Media Centre**

## About the TOOLKIT

The Building in Context toolkit has been developed by English Heritage, 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 what 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

*\* The renaissance vision for the town centre of Halifax is to improve the streets and change the layout within the town, making it easier for people to move between places. The vision includes the important streets and places that show off the fine buildings in Halifax*

This event was run by **Beam**, based in Wakefield. The event was held at the new Digital Media Centre, a building that aims to reflect the traditional architecture of Barnsley in a contemporary way. The focus of the event was the Civic, Barnsley – currently in the middle of dramatic regeneration. We had a diverse group of people which added depth to the nature of the discussions. Participants ranged from planning, development and conservation officers from 7 Local Authorities from across the whole region, to architects, artists, and a community representative. All engaged enthusiastically in the discussions and debate.

**Chris Wyatt** of BDA (part of Barnsley MBC) welcomed participants to Barnsley and set the scene for the day by outlining Barnsley's ambitious aspiration and achievements towards becoming a 21<sup>st</sup> Century market town. The projects within the town centre are diverse, including the Barnsley Markets Project, Civic Hall refurbishment and the construction of the Digital Media Centre, where the workshop was held. This all adds up to a development value of well over £400m and is beginning to transform the centre of the town as part of the 'Remaking Barnsley' renaissance vision. Through Chris's talk, along with the panoramic views from the DMC, participants were able to appreciate the scale of contemporary development within some rich heritage and topographical context.

**Kathryn Gibson** also set the scene for the day by exploring English Heritage's commitment to and the policy context for high quality design. She explored the issues of local distinctiveness; of managing, not preventing change; and the importance of drawing 'intelligent inspiration' from the natural, human and historic context for any scheme.

The case study illustrated by Phil Hawdon was the recently completed **Westgate Canopy Scheme in Halifax**, that ties in with the towns Renaissance vision\*. The scheme comprises a glazed contemporary canopy to one of Halifax's 19<sup>th</sup> Century streets built on a line of an ancient westward route, with views to and from significant parts of the town including the Piece Hall and surrounding hillside. The popular shopping street contained some fine heritage, but had also been subject to piecemeal development. As well as explaining the practical, planning and commercial elements to the project design and development, Phil explained how he worked with a wide range of partners and stakeholders including the Town Team and street traders. Participants were impressed by the scheme and were later able to see how Building in Context principles were applicable to the schemes success. All shared Phil's disappointment, however, that the addition of insensitive street furniture after completion by others, had distracted from the legibility and appearance of the project.



## About the Speakers

### Helen Farrar (Chair)

Helen is a CABE regional rep; landscape architect and regeneration professional who has worked in Yorkshire and Humber for over 20 years. She was Urban Renaissance Manager at Yorkshire Forward before commencing freelance consultancy in 2004. She now specialises as a strategic advisor to the public, voluntary and academic sectors in areas relating to renaissance, design and regeneration – policy, practice and skills.

### Chris Wyatt

Chris qualified in Planning in 1974 and took up a position in the Forward Planning section of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. Chris became the lead officer for the Barnsley Urban Renaissance Project starting in 2001 with the work with Alsop Architects and the development of the Rethinking and latterly the Remaking programme in Barnsley. Chris is based within the Barnsley Development Agency part of the Council.

### Kathryn Gibson

Kathryn joined English Heritage as Historic Buildings and Areas Advisor for West Yorkshire in 2006. Her work for English Heritage involves providing specialist advice on development proposals affecting the historic environment and on schemes relating to the management of historic areas, including conservation area designation, management and the setting up and running of grant schemes.

### Phil Hawdon

Phil is a partner of Sowerby Bridge based Hawdon Russell Architects and responsible for the award winning Westgate Canopy Project in Halifax used as a case study.

### Ian Tod

Ian is a Director of Leeds and Sheffield based Allen Tod Architecture Limited - an award-winning practice with a reputation for high quality design. Their work includes health, housing, regeneration, arts, culture and leisure projects. They aim to: create buildings sensitive to their needs and surroundings; learn from the past but look to the future; design innovative, contemporary solutions to meet clients' needs, frequently working in complex and sensitive environments; create buildings that address urban regeneration, energy conservation, sustainability and accessibility for all.



**Westgate Canopy, Halifax**



**EVALUATING DESIGN IN A HERITAGE CONTEXT** *adapted from Building in Context*

The following questions may be used to arrive at opinions about design quality that are based on objective criteria. They encompass both the quality of the proposals themselves and their quality as a contribution to the urban design of the neighbourhood in which they are situated:

**Preliminary questions:**

*Do the proposals start with an assessment of the value of what is there?*

*Has the wider historical and geographical context been considered?*

**Detailed questions: Does the project...**

**1. Relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land?**

*How have physical aspects of the site and surroundings, such as changes in level, been considered and managed?*

**2. Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it?**

*Are access arrangements convenient and existing routes respected?*

*Are the street pattern and grain of the surroundings respected?*

*What contribution, if any, does the proposal make to the public realm?*

*If new open space is created, is it clear that it will provide a positive benefit and genuine use?*

**3. Respect important views?**

*Is the impact of the proposals in close views either weak or overpowering?*

*In the wider setting, does the impact of the proposals on views and vistas make a positive or negative impact?*

*Does it distract the eye from the focus of the view and if so does it provide something better to look at?*

**4. Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings?**

*Can the amount of accommodation required be fitted on the site in an elegant way?*

*How is the density of the proposal related to that of existing and neighbouring uses? If there are differences, are they acceptable?*

*Does it respect the scale and rhythm of its neighbours?*

**5. Use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings?**

*Do the materials relate to those of the surrounding buildings and is the quality as high?*

*Are there interesting comparisons or contrasts in the use of materials? How will the colours work together?*

*Does the detailing show signs of careful thought or originality?*

**6. Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of the setting?**

*Is there a positive and imaginative response to any problems and constraints?*

*How does the architecture present itself to the viewer?*

*Is there a strong composition in the pattern of solid to opening in the façade?*

*Does it form an harmonious group or composition with existing buildings or features in the landscape?*

**7. Have a character and identity that is appropriate to its use, significance and context?**

*Is the architecture of the building(s) suitable for the uses it contains?*

*Is it trying to be too grand or pretending to be more modest than it really is?*

*Is the character appropriate to the context or is a contrasting character appropriate?*

*Will the result enhance or damage the quality of the townscape?*



**Barnsley Civic and Mandela Gardens**

**Workshops**

Before the practical exercises began, Helen Farrar explained some key principles for evaluating design in a heritage context, and provided participants with a checklist of questions (see left) to assist discussions following a site visit and for future use. She then explained what figure grounds are and their uses and showed examples so that participants understood how to use them. Most participants had limited previous experience of using figure grounds. The workshop groups then prepared figure-ground drawings and used them to compare the differences between what was in and around the Barnsley Civic site 100 years ago and the present day.

Ian Tod, the architect for the Civic, went on to explain how the Civic had evolved historically and gave a presentation of the development of the sensitive but contemporary design solution for restoring, enhancing and expanding the former theatre for a range of uses, along with public realm proposals. The dramatic redevelopment of the iconic building, which is nearing completion, will see the creation of a new creative industries hub.

Participants then explored the redevelopment site itself whilst taking in the surrounding context and wider public realm proposals; with key issues identified by Ian Tod and by the Civic's Director, Fergus Justice-Mills. Following the site visit, participants discussed in groups both their intuitive responses as well as analysing the design's response to the Building in Context principles.

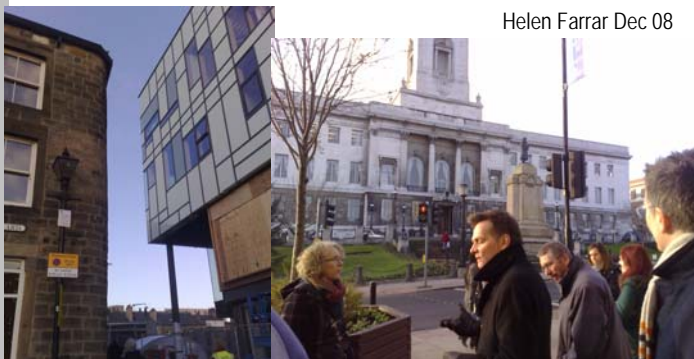
They identified the following

- Positive response to the existing grain and street pattern of The Lanes, restoring permeability and flow through 'movement strings', and enhancing the urban fabric
- Respect for the history through restoration of the historic façade and former functions
- A blending of old and new materials, with creative detailing such as the kink in the internal main stairs, responding to the areas quirkiness
- Glimpses and pinchpoints offering opportunities for new discovery
- A challenging and brave introduction of contemporary elements, matching the symbol of change in a new Barnsley

They also noted the following

- The restoration and redevelopment of the open space is a critical and potentially special element that is hard to appreciate yet
- The transition phase does not seem to fully respect the historic windows inside, but they may be more apparent on completion and illumination

Helen Farrar Dec 08



Barnsley Civic Hall is an ambitious regeneration project in the heart of Barnsley. In the context of the 'Re-making Barnsley' masterplan, the project provides a mix of managed workspace, performance space, gallery space, offices and retail that provides a sustainable future for the grade 2 listed building. Careful analysis of the existing with the addition of extensions as required brings the derelict building back into use with a secured future. Mandela Gardens is a vibrant public space in the heart of the Lanes area of Barnsley which provides outside space for break out and flexible performance.



**Contrasting but Blending**  
 By Jane Field

Erupting from the concrete façade  
 Cascading and meandering down the hill  
 The streets flow  
 Constrained by buildings rising from the swell  
 As they tumble down the slope  
 Respecting their juxtaposition  
 With their human counterparts  
 Flowing on through wide channels  
 Narrowing and squeezing into arcades and alleyways  
 Contained and restrained  
 Comforting and cosy.

Rising from the depths  
 Contemporary is embraced  
 By its heritage partner  
 Wrapping it in a warm blanket  
 A mutual respect  
 Contrasting but blending  
 Splashes of new  
 Dropping into a pool of the old.

Sixties boulders obstruct the flow  
 Jarring here  
 Rippling sounds below  
 Remind me that humanity holds sway  
 In this space  
 Maintaining the harmony  
 Of hustle and bustle.

Jane is a creative writer, and wrote 'Contrasting but Blending' for the training day to illustrate a creative way to explore context. Jane is also the Head of Programmes and Services for beam and is the Yorkshire co-ordinator for the Building in Context Programme.