The Building in Context Toolkit Programme aims 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 reducing '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.

South West Design Review Panel

The Bristol Event featured a showcase of the work of the SWDRP, all delegates for the South West events received the guidance brochure.

For Information about the South West Design Review Panel
contact Panel Manager Timothy Cantell:
0117 9291516  drp@architecturecentre.co.uk

Exeter: South West Design and Historic Environment Champion’s event

One of 2 events facilitated by the Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall and the Architecture Centre, Bristol for the South West region, the purpose of the workshop was to explore two case study projects in Exeter representing two different scales of 'Building in Context.'

Cricklepit Mill is a very interesting project recently completed in the Exeter Quayside area which had to consider many issues relevant to authorities looking at regeneration of historic assets. It includes sensitive restoration of a heritage building which had suffered extensive fire damage and the creation of an adjoining new build contemporary office facilities for the Devon Wildlife Trust Headquartes.

In contrast, Princesshay, widely regarded as an national exemplar for large scale retail development represented an ideal opportunity to discuss urban design principles, approaches to the evaluation of historic assets and their setting, procurement and development process and to reflect on its success as a retail environment within the historic city centre.

21 elected members and representatives from 11 Authorities and 1 URC from Devon, Cornwall and Dorset took part in the workshop held at the Exeter Corn Exchange and which included a tour of Princesshay.

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.

About the Speakers

Cricklepit Mill
Jackie Gillespie, Gillespie Yunnie Architects
GYA are an award winning design practice based in Totnes, known for their outstanding work in historic environments notably the conversion of the Royal William Yard, Plymouth. http://www.gyarchitects.co.uk/

Princesshay
Nick Smith Land Securities
Working originally as project architect for ChapmanTaylor the executing architects and now in his role with Land Securities the developer of Princesshay Nick provided a unique consultant/client perspective and explained the technical challenges of the proposal.

Contributing to both presentations and support with background information:
John Rigby Director Economy and Environment, Exeter City Council
John has extensive knowledge of both projects and was able to provide detailed information on the project history, the implementation and the challenges faced by the City Council.

David Stuart Historic Areas Advisor English Heritage
Presenting both the sub-regional English Heritage toolkit input and with direct involvement in both projects David was able to provide insight into the project progress and resolution from the historic environment viewpoint.

Professor Jeremy Gould
Jeremy carried out the historic environment assessment and is an expert in the study of Post war architecture.

Tanya Griffiths Director
Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall.
Tanya presented the six principles and facilitated the workshop.
Exeter: Cricklepit Mill and Princesshay

The groups were asked to consider in the first instance what they considered to be 3 points that should be design considerations when looking at an attractive and successful retail environment in any town or city centre. The consensus was that good access, ‘walkability’ and legibility were very important as were other considerations such as the retail offer itself, the quality of the environment including safety and sense of security, shelter and having a distinct character. An interesting point was made about being able to ‘discover’ places and that legibility did not necessarily mean revealing everything at once but making navigation easy such as glimpsed views and good signage. They were also asked, as a ‘paper exercise’ before going on the tour to identify key constraints and positive attributes of the area that should inform the urban design. The main body of the workshop following the site visits and presentations focussed on the six principles of the BiC toolkit as a framework for discussion of the project.

1. Does the proposal relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land?
Most people felt that the scheme was successful in its ambition to integrate the history and to relate to the location. A point was made that given the archaeological investigation more could have been made to interpret and explain the history within the shopping area.

2. Does the proposal sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it?
The groups felt that access and legibility across the scheme was good, the connections north south identified in the first exercise as an important principle were a success, a query about cycle routes being addressed.

3. Does the proposal respect important views?
Again thought to be successful; an interesting point was made about the success of the cranked axis and framed glimpsed views to the cathedral rather than long vistas.

4. Does the proposal respect the scale of neighbouring buildings?
For such a large development the variety and handling of the massing was seen as well considered including the use of use colour eg the palette of greys as viewed against the sky from Cathedral Green.

5. Does the proposal use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings?
The consensus was that this point was misleading but that on the whole the choice of materials was positive, some suggested that the palette might have been even further restricted.

6. Does the proposal create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of the setting.
This was seen as a strong characteristic of the scheme.

Princesshay Retail Development, Exeter City Centre

The developer, Land Securities, in partnership with Exeter City Council, has delivered Princesshay the biggest single investment in regeneration in Exeter’s history representing an investment of over £200 million. Three teams of architects were appointed Panter Hudspith, Wilkinson Eyre and Chapman Taylor with Chapman Taylor taking the role of executing architects.

Princesshay provides 530,000 square ft of new shops, residential apartments, cafes, bars, restaurants and improved public spaces including new public toilets.

The development includes a total of 510 car parking spaces. Consistent with mixed use principles Princesshay has 123 apartments with a range of 1,2 and 3 bedrooms.

After having an earlier proposal called in by the ODPM Exeter City Council took a fresh approach to the development, commissioning a study of the historic assets and completely reviewing the development principles.

The site is within a conservation area contains three Scheduled Ancient Monuments and numerous listed buildings.

“this could be the model for a modern county town”

Project data
Completed 2007

www.building-in-context.org
To Design and Historic Environment champions:

Organising Your Building in Context TOOLKIT training event

We hope you enjoyed this event that showcased for Design and Historic Environment Champions 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 Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall ct Tanya Griffiths
07791 138012
Email tanya.griffiths@acdandc.org.uk

Architecture Centre Bristol ct Gillian Fearnyough
0117 922 1540
Email gillian.fearnyough@architecturecentre.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
   - Develop event, background, establish no-go areas
   - 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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