



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 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

For information about the South West Design Review Panel contact Panel Manager Timothy Cantell at Creating Excellence.

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One of 2 events facilitated by the Architecture Centre, Bristol and the Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall and the for the South West region, the purpose of the workshop was to explore a case study in the centre of Gloucester containing a set of hugely valuable historic buildings including a scheduled ancient monument, and which also offers a prime opportunity for a new public space.

Blackfriars Priory is one of the most complete surviving examples of a Dominican friary in England, later converted into a Tudor house and cloth factory. It was chosen as a case study because it occupies a key site in the centre of Gloucester on a route linking the regenerated Gloucester Docks with the city centre. The vision for Blackfriars in the Area Regeneration Framework is for it to become the "cultural and creative heart of an expanded city centre. A mixed-use destination is proposed centred around the imaginative re-use of the Priory complex, a scheduled ancient monument and a hidden gem within the city of Gloucester, occupying a key location between the Docks and the Cathedral"

Representatives from 7 Authorities, including 5 elected members, from Devon, Somerset and Gloucestershire took part in the workshop which was held on the British Waterways Museum site at Llanthony Warehouse, Gloucester Docks.



About the Speakers

Greater Blackfriars Masterplan – The planning framework
Caroline Power, Historic Environment Adviser, SW Region, English Heritage, presented the sub-regional English Heritage toolkit and planning framework

Blackfriars Masterplan context
Ian Williams, Gloucester URC
Mick Thorpe, Gloucester City Council
An introduction to the site and the planning policies which underpin it.

Designing in Context: A Case Study Blackfriars Masterplan
Presentation by Geoff Rich, partner, Studio Leader, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios.

Gillian Fearnough Director, The Architecture Centre, Bristol presented the six principles and facilitated the workshop.

Tanya Griffiths Director, Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall offered support and materials research.

The workshop was supported on the day by Marie Sellars of ACD+C, Jonathan Bassiindale of Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios and Liz Clare of English Heritage.





Blackfriars Priory, Gloucester

Built between 1239 and 1270, Gloucester Blackfriars is one of the most complete Dominican priories to survive from the Middle Ages. Notable for the church and fine scissor-braced dormitory roof. The friary resembled a small monastery, with buildings arranged around a cloister. The Dominicans ate together in a refectory which occupied the south end of the west range, and shared a dormitory above the chapter house. Later part of this east range became a separate lodging for the prior.

Blackfriars differed from a typical Benedictine or Cistercian abbey in that the whole of the upper floor of the south range was occupied by a library or scriptorium which retains some of the original medieval study carrels, in addition the nave of the church was wider and longer to accommodate the large numbers who came to hear the sermons.

A local alderman, Thomas Bell converted the church into a mansion and the other buildings into a weaving factory. In the 19th Century the west range became a row of terraced houses, the library range was used for bottling. A garage occupies part of the cloister area.



Greater Blackfriars Masterplan, Gloucester

Greater Blackfriars project is a key project within the vision which the Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company holds for the future of the city.

Blackfriars Priory

The Blackfriars Priory site sits at the heart of the greater masterplan next to an open car park and surrounded by a range of small buildings of different ages, character and usage.

Following the presentations which covered a wide range of historic and other contextual material the group visited the priory site as part of a walk from the docks up to the cathedral at the heart of the city centre and back around the edges of the site. The groups were then asked to examine the Priory site with adjoining open space and surrounding buildings and to identify the key issues for the site within the context of the masterplan.

There was a mixed view of the value of the buildings surrounding the site with some desire to reveal more of the historic buildings than is currently the case. The use of the open space car park for development was hotly debated with again a general view that the provision of a new public space would give the historic buildings a more significant setting, and provide a 'pause' in the route between docks and city centre.



Project Data

A Strategic Masterplan for the Greater Blackfriars area of Gloucester city centre has been produced by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios to create a balanced vision for the area, and help assess the viability of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme. Part of a plan to attract significant investment to Gloucester by underlining the importance of conservation, architecture, and sustainability to the future identity of the city, it builds on significant recent investment in the historic docks and other areas in Gloucester by the regional development agency SWDRA.

The work by FCB Studios adds detail and further tests the viability of the work completed by Terence O'Rourke which underpins the Area Regeneration Framework.

Architect/urban planners: Feilden Clegg Bradley studios LLP

Structural/ m&e /civils: White Young Green

Landscape architects: Coe Design

Renewable energy: Energy for Sustainable Development Ltd (ESD)

Quantity surveyor: Cyril Sweett

In partnership with the GHURC and SWDRA project teams.



Building in Context: Appraising a proposal

...It is possible to arrive at opinions about design quality that are based on objective criteria. There are many ways of doing this, but any such process is likely to include asking the following questions. They encompass both the quality of the building itself and its quality as a contribution to the urban design of the neighbourhood in which it is situated:

The site

- How does the proposed building relate to the site?
- Is there a positive and imaginative response to any problems and constraints?
- Have the physical aspects of the site been considered, such as any changes in level within or beyond it?
- Are access arrangements convenient and existing routes respected?
- Can the amount of accommodation required be fitted on the site in an elegant way?

Wider setting

- How does the proposal relate to its wider setting?
- Are the street pattern and grain of the surroundings respected?
- Are there changes in height between the existing and new development and if so how are they managed?
- Will the result enhance or damage the quality of the townscape? Density
- How is the density of the proposal related to that of existing and neighbouring uses?
- If there are differences, are they acceptable?

Impact on close views

- Has the impact of the building in close views been assessed?
- Is it either weak or overpowering?
- Does it respect the scale and rhythm of its neighbours?

Materials

- What materials are used?
- How do they relate to those of the surrounding buildings?
- Is the quality as high?
- Are there interesting comparisons or contrasts in the use of materials?
- How will the colours work together?

Architecture suitable to its use

- Is the architecture of the building suitable for the uses it contains?
- Is it trying to be too grand or pretending to be more modest than it really is?

Composition

- 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 the detailing of the materials show signs of careful thought or originality in the way the building is put together?

Public realm

- 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 have a genuine use?

Vistas and views

- In the wider setting, has the impact of the building in views and vistas been considered?
- Does it make a positive or negative impact?
- Does it form a harmonious group or composition with existing buildings or features in the landscape?
- Does it distract the eye from the focus of the view and if so does it provide something better to look at?

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

The Building in Context TOOLKIT

