

BUILDING IN CONTEXT TOOLKIT

New development in historic areas



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

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

Bristol: 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 Bristol representing two different phases of a 'Building in Context' project on adjacent sites.

SS Great Britain is a multiple award winning visitor attraction within the Bristol Harbourside Regeneration area. Demonstrating a very sensitive approach to providing a setting for a major heritage asset, the adaptation of the dry dock and dock buildings are woven into the interpretation of the visitor attraction.

Great Western Dockyard, is the second phase and a mixed use development proposal with planning permission immediately adjacent to the SS Great Britain. It includes residential accommodation and will house the education facilities of the Brunel Institute.

22 elected members and representatives from 12 Authorities from Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Gloucestershire and Dorset took part in the workshop held at The Arnolfini gallery which included a site visit arriving by water at the SS Great Britain where, from the deck, the group was able to view the adjacent sites.



About the Speakers

SS Great Britain
David Mellor Alec French Architects
Architect for the SS Great Britain
www.alecfrench.co.uk

Great Western Dockyard
Alastair Brooks Bristol City Council
Alastair has extensive knowledge of both proposals and the wider regeneration of Bristol Harbourside

Andrew Vines English Heritage
Regional Director for the South West
Through his direct involvement in the project Andrew was able to present the key issues of the site and the proposal for the Great Western Dockyard.

David Stuart Historic Areas Advisor English Heritage
Presented the sub-regional English Heritage toolkit input and planning framework

Clr Doug Hollings Weymouth and Portland Borough Council
Doug presented his personal insight and experience as to the challenges of being a design and historic environment champion

Gillian Fearnough Director
Architecture Centre Bristol
Gillian presented the introduction to the South West Design Panel, its role in promoting design quality and the mechanisms for using the service and the plans to expand it. John Peverly panellist on the South West Design Review Panel was available to answer questions.

Tanya Griffiths Director
Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall.
Tanya presented the six principles and facilitated the workshop.

Additional information and was provided by Gary Milliner of Stride Treglown Architects with kind permission of the client Linden Homes
www.stridetreglown.co.uk



SS Great Britain, Bristol

Completed 2005, the first phase of the development features the first iron screw propelled ocean going ship (1843), designed by Brunel, which is now resting in its Listed original dry dock. It required extensive preservation and restoration and new visitor facilities.

A glass plate was inserted at water-line level to allow the dehumidification essential to the ship's preservation; & the adjacent dockyard buildings restored as an interpretation centre and new way onto the ship. The ship's interior has been extensively restored and the site has been made as Accessible as possible within the limits of its historic fabric.

It is winner of a Civic Trust Award & C/T Special Award for Accessibility; and of the Gulbenkian Prize for Museum of the Year.

There was a positive reaction in the workshop to the approach of the reuse of existing buildings both modest and industrial and where new elements were introduced e.g. the access stair to the dry dock this had been a considerable intervention and did not detract from the ship.



Great Western Dockyard, Bristol



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 a successful heritage visitor attraction in any town or city centre. The consensus was that good access, visibility and legibility within the context were important factors. For the site itself there was strong support for the idea of a footbridge connection linking the two sides of the Harbourside redevelopment to further enhance access.

The main body of the workshop following the site visits and presentations focussed on exploring the massing, key views, hierarchy of streets and connections public spaces mix of building types, materials and the setting of the ship.

The groups were asked to identify principles from the GW docks site that might be referred to/ applicable for a hypothetical development brief for the adjacent site. Some interesting observations were made and a high level of debate on the handling of the heritage, the integrity of the approach to almost recreate a 'converted' warehouse building and whether the dockside proposal had provided sufficient 'breathing space' for the ship. The evaluation and response to the ship itself was also debated as to the point in history that set the architectural response, especially given that the ship would only have been docked for limited periods. Views varied as to the appropriateness of recreating the mass of the original warehouse and the residential use with a particular concern that the projecting balconies were not in keeping with the principle of recreating the industrial aesthetic.

Whilst the layered approach to the massing was thought by most to be successful a key point picked up by all the groups was that the MacArthur site behind the Great Western Dockyard would not be afforded good permeability into the site and that there was a danger that the rear of the GW docks had created a definite back to its site which closed off the MacArthur brewery site.

The entrance and arrival point also generated a lot of discussion that the future phases might address the car parking public spaces. The evidence based approach to the historic value of the site features might be used to inform the next phases and in tackling the next dock.



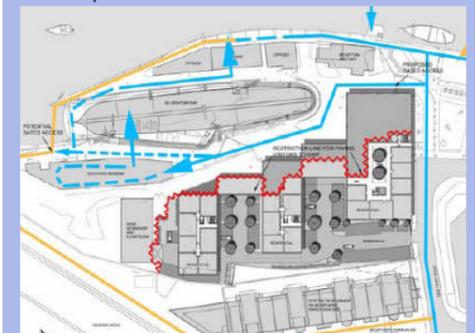
Project Data

The regeneration project at the Great Western Dockyard aims in Phase Two to:

- Generate sufficient land value that will be invested to create an endowment that can allow the ss Great Britain Trust to become sustainable in the long term.
- Restore and enhance the remaining half of Great Western Dockyard as the sustainable home and authentic setting for the ss Great Britain
- Create the accommodation for a new public education facility. This is designed to fit the aspirations for the proposed Brunel Centre and partnership with the University of Bristol

Brunel Centre -Educational and Reception – 1,085 m² (GIA)
Residential Accommodation – 7,315 m² (net internal) 10,020 m² (gross internal)
The residential mix comprises 91 no x 1 bed, 2 no x 1½ bed, 42 no x 2 bed, 10 no x studios
Of this residential accommodation 8 units will be shared equity affordable units equating to 5.5% of the accommodation.

Although the site for phase 2 itself does not contain listed buildings the conservation area and the sensitivities around the listed building in the wider site led to an extensive study and comprehensive design and heritage statement document which were available to view at the workshop.



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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?

From Building in Context, pg 37

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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Email tanya.griffiths@acdandc.org.uk

www.acdandc.org.uk

Architecture Centre Bristol ct Gillian Fearnough
0117 922 1540

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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

