The Grand Arcade, Cambridge: Regional Design and Historic Environment Champion’s event

Considering Retail Development in Historic Town Centres

The Grand Arcade is the new retail centre in the heart of Cambridge city centre. This seminar considered the site in detail and had a ‘private view’ of the Arcade, prior to its formal opening. The design of the Grand Arcade has had to take on board the close proximity of neighbours on all boundaries, including historic colleges, the complexities of dealing with a commercial high value city centre site, a year’s archaeological dig, and changes in planning policy. The result is a success. Although there are elements of the scheme that the visiting group considered could have been improved, overall the Grand Arcade is an impressive project. One which delegates felt they could learn lessons from, consider the principles and apply them to their own unique localities.

Aim of the Development: the redevelopment of a key city centre site to provide the city with more retail accommodation, including an anchor store for the John Lewis Partnership. To provide additional car and cycle parking, a new magistrate court and refurbish the central library.

The Context: The Grand Arcade was designed to improve the permeability of this quarter of central Cambridge through the provision of two new cross routes linking the neighbouring 1970’s Lion Yard Shopping Centre and Petty Cury to both Downing and St. Andrew’s Street. Other immediate neighbours to the site include the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the Post Office, BT and the Central Library. Nearby colleges include Downing, Emmanuel, Christ’s and Pembroke College. The eighteenth century listed façade on St. Andrew’s Street had to be fully integrated into the new development.

Project Management Issues: John Lewis Partnership opened their store ahead of the main scheme. However, in order to complete the redevelopment, the previous partnership building had to be relocated to a refurbished building in a neighbouring shopping centre, ten minutes walk from the city centre. This freed up the entire site and enabled the developer to reduce the construction period from 5 years to 3. The old Lion Yard car park had to be demolished and has been replaced with a multi storey car park which sits above the retail units. A new Magistrates Court was also incorporated late in the design after it was decided that this function should be provided centrally and not move to the outskirts of Cambridge, as was originally planned. The Court was designed to function independently from the rest of the scheme. A major archaeological excavation at Grand Arcade was the largest work of its kind to be carried out in the county to date. The work covered almost 1 hectare of the city centre.

About the Speakers
• Greg Luton, English Heritage’s Regional Director of Planning and Development has a background in culture and heritage in relation to growth and sustainable communities. He has an active role providing specialist advice on planning, the built environment and historic buildings.
• Tony White, Project Director at Hopkins Architects presented a case study of the Cattlemarket Site, Bury St Edmunds. Tony worked on the master plan of the Cattlemarket site and is currently involved with its construction, including the fitout of the new public building.
• Rob Cowan of Urban Design Skills is the author of some of the most influential urban design guidance (including as joint author of the CABE/DCLG By Design) and of The Dictionary of Urbanism. A member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and a former special advisor to the House of Commons ODPM Committee, he is probably Britain’s most experienced urban design trainer.
• David Kirkland, RIBA of Kirkland, Fraser, Moor Architects is an architect and designer focusing on finding sustainable solutions for 21st century problems, not only within products of the built environment but within communities and the wider agenda of economic, social and ecological balance. As an ex-senior member of Grimshaw practice in London was responsible for a number of high profile projects including The Eden Project. David spoke about the design development process and of how a design evolves through its context.
• Andy Thompson is a planner and urban designer and was a founder-director of QuBE. Previously Andy worked for Cambridge City Council for over 20 years where he led multi disciplinary teams preparing site specific planning briefs and streetscape enhancement projects. Andy gave a detailed introduction to the Grand Arcade site.

We would also like to thank our expert facilitators from Cambridge City Council, Young Planners, Eastern Region, CABE and English Heritage.
The Grand Arcade, Cambridge: Regional Design and Historic Environment Champion’s event

The Design: The Grand Arcade has been built to provide a high quality environment. The two-level arcade, comprises two naturally ventilated ‘streets’ with a glass-roof and central atrium. Similar materials are used throughout the outside facade and the covered area. Natural rather than man-made materials have been used, including local stone, glass, steel and timber. This palette of materials has been combined with technology and modern construction techniques to provide an efficient and environmentally sound design.

The City Council worked closely with the developers to ensure that design of the Grand Arcade would add an ‘organic yet vibrant contribution’ to the city centre. The result is a modern design behind a traditional façade. From the outside, the 18th century façades along St. Andrew’s Street have been retained and incorporated into the Grand Arcade’s frontage. On the inside, a modern shopping environment has been provided. The clear distinction between the old and the new can be seen through a glass link from the quaintly nick-named ‘small box’ on St. Andrews street. Behind this rises a 5 storey ‘large box’, which contains the rest of the development. Planners were happy to accept this mix of old and new but demanded that the materials used were of a quality that would reinforce the feel of solidarity and longevity.

Art in the Public Realm: The newly designed Fisher Square is a public area which has been revamped as part of the Grand Arcade and contains a centrepiece a carved granite bolder sculpture, created by leading British sculptor, Peter Randall-Page. The area was a rather neglected corner at the back of Lion Yard car park that has been transformed into an enjoyable space. The brief was to create a new public space incorporating sculpture and to consider seating, planting, surface treatments and lighting.

The Workshop
Delegates compared the case study of the Cattle Market and the Grand Arcade site. The Burys St. Edmonds site contains more current thinking particularly relating to sustainability and mixed use. The need for future adaptability of buildings was felt to be important, particularly because of the length of time it take to develop strategic sites in the public realm. There was a very positive reaction to the treatment given to the listed buildings and the way in which they were distanced from the more contemporary spaces.

Delegates praised the good quality design on St. Andrews Street, however the Downing Street side of the development showed a clear compromise because of the presence of neighbouring buildings. It was felt that this was a missed opportunity and as a consequence of working round these buildings an extended walkway from Downing Street to the main car park had been divorced from street level and felt uncomfortable to use. There was also a lack of active edge on the ground floor at the side of John Lewis. Finally this compromise had also resulted in the provision of a less than attractive service access, which was disappointing when the general quality of the building was high. Although a number of useful street patterns had been included in the redevelopment there was a missed opportunity to connect Downing Street to the development.

Fishers Square had improved a previously ugly space, however the planned outdoor restaurant area faces North – will it function successfully as an outdoor facility? in comparison to the area covered

• The space for public realm is small by the development; it is a moot point as to whether the indoor streets can be described as true public realm
• The use of high quality use of materials was praised
• Delegates were interested in the cycle park and wondered how popular it would become.
• The need for integrated thinking within authorities was illustrated when it was pointed out that a large number of bus stops were being repositioned directly in front of the façade, making the space outside the buildings very restricted.

Impact on close views
Has the impact of the building in close views been assessed?
Does it distract the eye from the focus of the view?
Does it form a harmonious group or composition of the materials?

How will the colours work together?
How do they relate to those of the surrounding streets?

Is there a positive and imaginative response to any changes in level within or beyond it?
Are these changes in level acceptable?
If there are differences, are they acceptable?

How does the proposal relate to its wider setting?
Can the amount of accommodation required be restricted?

How does the proposal relate to its surroundings respects?
Surroundings respected?
If the proposal is either weak or overpowering?
If there are differences, are they acceptable?

• The Workshop

Delegates compared the case study of the Cattle Market and the Grand Arcade site. The Burys St. Edmonds site contains more current thinking particularly relating to sustainability and mixed use. The need for future adaptability of buildings was felt to be important, particularly because of the length of time it takes to develop strategic sites in the public realm.

There was a very positive reaction to the treatment given to the listed buildings and the way in which they were distanced from the more contemporary spaces.

Delegates praised the good quality design on St. Andrews Street, however the Downing Street side of the development showed a clear compromise because of the presence of neighbouring buildings. It was felt that this was a missed opportunity and as consequence of working round these buildings an extended walkway from Downing Street to the main car park had been divorced from street level and felt uncomfortable to use. In addition there was a lack of active edge on the ground floor at the side of John Lewis. Finally, this compromise had also resulted in the provision of a less than attractive service access, which was disappointing when the general quality of the building was high. Although a number of useful street patterns had been included in the redevelopment there was a missed opportunity to connect Downing Street to the development.

Fishers Square had improved a previously ugly space, however the planned outdoor restaurant area faces North – will it function successfully as an outdoor facility? In comparison to the area covered

• The space for public realm is small by the development; it is a moot point as to whether the indoor streets can be described as true public realm.
• The use of high quality use of materials was praised.
• Delegates were interested in the cycle park and wondered how popular it would become.
• The need for integrated thinking within authorities was illustrated when it was pointed out that a large number of bus stops were being repositioned directly in front of the façade, making the space outside the buildings very restricted.

Impact on close views
Has the impact of the building in close views been assessed?
Does it distract the eye from the focus of the view?
Does it form a harmonious group or composition of the materials?

How will the colours work together?
How do they relate to those of the surrounding streets?

Is there a positive and imaginative response to any changes in level within or beyond it?
Are these changes in level acceptable?
If there are differences, are they acceptable?

How does the proposal relate to its wider setting?
Can the amount of accommodation required be restricted?

How does the proposal relate to its surroundings respects?
Surroundings respected?
If the proposal is either weak or overpowering?
If there are differences, are they acceptable?

• The Workshop

Delegates compared the case study of the Cattle Market and the Grand Arcade site. The Burys St. Edmonds site contains more current thinking particularly relating to sustainability and mixed use. The need for future adaptability of buildings was felt to be important, particularly because of the length of time it takes to develop strategic sites in the public realm.

There was a very positive reaction to the treatment given to the listed buildings and the way in which they were distanced from the more contemporary spaces.

Delegates praised the good quality design on St. Andrews Street, however the Downing Street side of the development showed a clear compromise because of the presence of neighbouring buildings. It was felt that this was a missed opportunity and as consequence of working round these buildings an extended walkway from Downing Street to the main car park had been divorced from street level and felt uncomfortable to use. In addition there was a lack of active edge on the ground floor at the side of John Lewis. Finally, this compromise had also resulted in the provision of a less than attractive service access, which was disappointing when the general quality of the building was high. Although a number of useful street patterns had been included in the redevelopment there was a missed opportunity to connect Downing Street to the development.

Fishers Square had improved a previously ugly space, however the planned outdoor restaurant area faces North – will it function successfully as an outdoor facility? In comparison to the area covered

• The space for public realm is small by the development; it is a moot point as to whether the indoor streets can be described as true public realm.
• The use of high quality use of materials was praised.
• Delegates were interested in the cycle park and wondered how popular it would become.
• The need for integrated thinking within authorities was illustrated when it was pointed out that a large number of bus stops were being repositioned directly in front of the façade, making the space outside the buildings very restricted.

Impact on close views
Has the impact of the building in close views been assessed?
Does it distract the eye from the focus of the view?
Does it form a harmonious group or composition of the materials?

How will the colours work together?
How do they relate to those of the surrounding streets?

Is there a positive and imaginative response to any changes in level within or beyond it?
Are these changes in level acceptable?
If there are differences, are they acceptable?

How does the proposal relate to its wider setting?
Can the amount of accommodation required be restricted?

How does the proposal relate to its surroundings respects?
Surroundings respected?
If the proposal is either weak or overpowering?
If there are differences, are they acceptable?
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 Rebecca Simpson, CABE, tel. 020 7070 6800, Nigel Barker English Heritage, tel. 01483 252000, or Shape East, tel. 01223 462 606, admin@shape-east.org.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
   - 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

2. Event
   - Event Visual display
     - Seminar
     - Workshop
     - Walkabout/study tour

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

www.building-in-context.org

Developed by the architecture centre