



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



Urban Vision's BiC Toolkit Event

The event held on the 19th February 2008 at the Guildhall, Lichfield, Staffordshire was very successful. A variety of Design and Historic Environment Champions and local authority officers from the West Midlands participated in the event.

Using the BiC Toolkit Urban Vision worked closely with English Heritage and Lichfield District Council to create a programme that incorporated examples from a wide variety of developments that replicated experiences that delegates may encounter when considering development in a historical context or setting. The four sites selected included the former Arts Centre site, a modern mixed use development, Bird Street car park, as a potential site for redevelopment, Stone Yard, a mixed residential scheme using new and existing buildings and Market Square, identifying issues in the public realm relating to the historic context.

Mick Downs, Manager Urban Vision said *"The event was an excellent opportunity for Design & Historic Environment Champions to experience a wide variety of developments in an important historic environment"*.

Guest Speaker Dave Chetwyn provided an interactive presentation concentrating on the techniques and methods used in assessing development proposals in relation to a historic context. The presentation included interesting visual comparisons of best and worst practice, raising awareness of common mistakes.



Guest Speaker Dave Chetwyn



Head of Planning Aid England with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and Chairman of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

Before joining the RTPI, Dave spent 17 years working in planning and urban regeneration in local Government, specialising in design and heritage-led regeneration. He has also helped to develop and deliver training programmes and adult education for CABE, the Civic Trust and Keele University. Dave has been involved with various national steering groups, sounding-boards, stakeholder groups, panels and parliamentary select committees concerned with regeneration, planning, heritage protection, and State Aid. He has MAs in Town Planning and Architectural History.

Urban Vision wishes to thank the following for all their support:

Matthew Dobson, English Heritage

Dan Roberts, Lichfield District Council

Julie Morgan, MADE

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 in the West Midlands please contact Hannah Barter at Urban Vision on 01782 575 321 or alternatively at hbarter@uvns.org

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

The Building in Context TOOLKIT

