

About the TOOLKIT

The Building in Context toolkit has been developed by EH, CABI and the Kent Architecture Centre. It grew out of the publication 'Building in Context' published by EH and CABI 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.

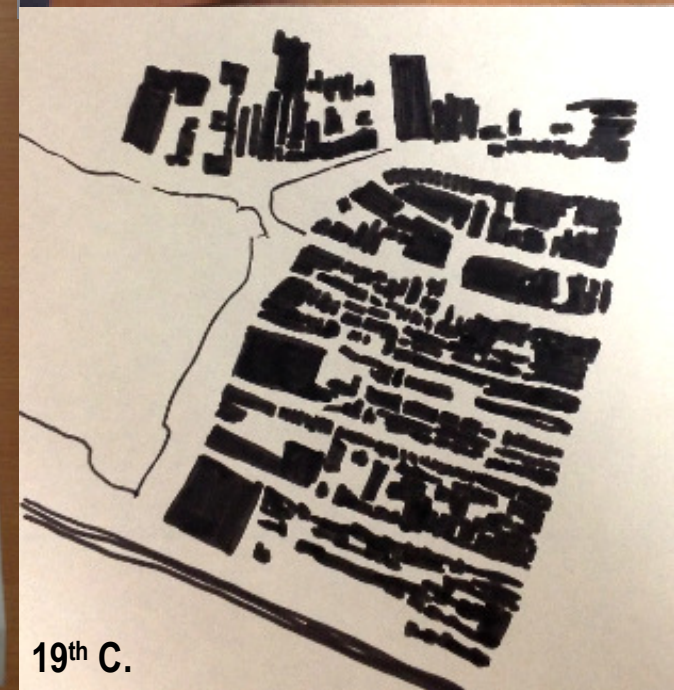
It is proven to be useful in communicating issues of development in complex situations; helping convey the depth of expertise required in adopting a holistic approach to site development and reduced 'silo mentality'. Through the analysis of a case study, wider design issues than 'how it looks' are explored.

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

Design:South East managed the workshop in partnership with English Heritage and hosts Lincoln City Council.



Transforming Wigford Way workshop provided the inaugural meeting of key stakeholders from public, private and third sectors to explore the opportunities presented by Lincoln's imminent east-west link road. This will enable the transformation of Wigford Way from an urban dual carriageway into an attractive city street, a key intervention site in the City Centre Master Plan.

The historic city of Lincoln is undergoing changes to continue maintaining its leading retail and commercial role in the region. The current Wigford Way inner city bypass presents both challenge and opportunity for the city. By degrees it pushes traffic through but also severs the High Street from the historic Brayford Pool, leisure area. Wigford Way is also an odd feature of the City's movement network as it provides great capacity on only a small section of roadway – from the High Street and curving around to Newland Street. From then onwards it plugs back into standard width and medieval street patterns.

Participants took part in workshops, heard examples from elsewhere, visited the site and discussed ways of developing the economic potential of the area while enhancing its unique historic character.

This was a very intense event and the activities produced a richly layered set of greater understandings and outcomes, reported in outline here. Further work will be undertaken by the group following this workshop.



Speakers

- Dr. Anthony Streeten**
Planning and Conservation Director, English Heritage East Midlands (Chair)
- Councillor Richard Metcalfe**
Leader & Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management and Customer Services, (Joint Chair)
- John Latham**
Director of Development & Environmental Services, City of Lincoln Council
- Clive Fletcher,**
Principal Advisor, Historic Places at English Heritage East Midlands
- Paul Bodenham**
Local Engagement Adviser, English Heritage (East Midlands)
- Clare Wright**
Building In Context Co-ordinator



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?



A workshop group viewing the historic 'Glory Hole' from Wigford Way, dual carriageway.

A key part of any Building in Context workshop is in understanding the genesis of an area, its evolution and how to retain the best of now in any future redevelopments.

For Lincoln, the workshop highlighted the historic role of this urban quarter as the landing place for goods from Brayford Pool for selling in the High Street and further afield. Reflecting this role, there were clear east-west routes servicing the warehouses facing Brayford Road into the shops on the High Street. This relationship had broken down from the 1960's onwards as the role of Brayford Pool declined and Wigford Way dual carriageway was constructed. In the present day, Brayford Pool is now a well-used leisure area. Workshop participants felt it could perform better and play a greater part in the life of the city centre if it was better and more obviously linked to the High Street.

The potential in transforming Wigford Way is to re-establish these links to improve throughput of trade and corresponding economic success. With today's uses this is more about moving people than goods between leisure, business, shopping and educational uses to experience the different and unique areas of Pool and Street.

Participants were keen to see a cautionary approach adopted in making changes. Meanwhile, temporary, changes could be made relatively quickly and in advance of the southern by-pass in order to test their benefits.

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

Key principles arising from the workshop participants to inform next steps:

1. Protecting the best of what we have:

- Acknowledge the historic and continuing role of this area as servicing both Brayford Wharf and the High Street.
- Understand more the current functionality of the area, particularly the servicing arrangements to current retail premises using Brayford Way. Create a cohesive Serviced Entrance Strategy for commercial premises currently using Wigford Way and the related parts of the High Street to maintain and improve access.
- With the greater understanding of the current and historic functioning of the area, adopt an evolutionary approach to any changes. This would entail beginning with temporary interventions and assessing their impacts before making permanent changes.

2. Towards transforming Wigford Way:

- Treat Wigford Way as a 'Street' where people can cross it and have places to linger. Key points are especially Brayford Head and Brayford Street. This will create a better experience for visitors between Brayford Wharf leisure-led area with the retail-led High Street and improve the overall critical mass of activity and visitor enjoyment.
- Enhance pedestrian access as well as view opportunities: - with potential benefits of footfall to St. Benedicts Square and Glory Hole and from the High Street along Brayford Street to the Wharf by removing a defunct service entrance canopy to the car park. Highlight views upwards to Castle and Cathedral. Improve legibility, especially for pedestrian movement between High Street and Brayford Pool, beginning with decluttering street furniture and identifying opportunities to resolve level changes between highway and surrounding land.
- Make phased alterations and improvements to Wigford Way, public realm and planting and consider temporary closures of half the carriageway to explore 'meanwhile' activities such as additional parking along the backs of High Street premises, particularly to coincide with high demand for seasonal activities such as Christmas, Easter and summer and street markets.
- Encourage improvements to backs of buildings and where possible create frontages onto Wigford Way, whilst acknowledging its important service role.
- Investigate temporary traffic use of Brayford Street.
- Engage the OPUN Design Panel in assessing early stage strategies and schemes for their specialist strategic input and attaining higher quality development.
- Continue engaging key stakeholders and their representatives in ongoing dialogue and alterations to the area.

3. Ways forward:

- Establish a phased plan for addressing the opportunities identified above, identifying measures at different levels of ambition, from simple (e.g. experimental meanwhile uses) through to advanced (e.g. reconfiguration of highway)
- Report outcomes to City Centre Masterplan vision and steering groups for further action planning.