

Chapter 2

New Strategic Drivers for the Regeneration of Cities

2.1 The Evolution of the National Legislation: Sustainability and Competitiveness in Urban Planning

Since 1997, when the Planning Policy Guidance note 1 (PPG1) was revised, the English government has attempted to reinvigorate and update the role of planning in policies of local and national territorial control. Several documents explicitly stressed the new task of active intervention that should connote the actions of local authorities in assuring adequate qualitative standards for the enhancement and development of urban areas, not merely from a spatial perspective but also in terms of their social and economic profiles. Given the complex knit of objectives to be pursued in any attempt to wed competitiveness and sustainability, legislation placed particular emphasis on the plan as a flexible and indispensable instrument for controlling and verifying development processes.

The PPG1 identified three themes as fundamental requirements and instruments in order to attain these objectives: sustainable development, mixed uses and design. The first was actually derived from principles that had already been expressed in 1994 in a governmental strategic policy document, ‘Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy’ (DoE 1994a), one of the first organic programmes for sustainable development to be adopted by a European nation. The measures described can be summed up in four main actions:

- Planning commercial and industrial development, neighbourhoods, agricultural production and mining in full respect of the environment
- Using brownfield or previously urbanised areas as much as possible, making them more attractive for living and working
- Protecting and enhancing cultural and natural heritage
- Planning new developments so as to reduce the need for travel as much as possible

Mixed-use developments are deemed an essential tool in the creation of vitality and diversity in the urban environment, and it is thought they might contribute

appreciably to the reduction of private motorised travel. In those urban areas planned according to this principle, private developers proposing a largely monofunctional intervention are obliged by law to demonstrate why a mixed-use development would not be financially viable or, alternatively, its contribution to the overall functional diversity of the context. The PPG1 also provided a more precise description of mixed-use interventions, compared, in terms of qualitative effects, to urban villages having the following characteristics:

- Compactness
- Mixed uses and dwelling types, including affordable houses
- A series of services and facilities for work, leisure and the community
- Appropriate infrastructures and facilities
- High-quality urban design standards
- Accessibility of open spaces and public green areas
- Easy access to public transport

Finally, according to government guidelines, the design, or in this case the urban design, should handle ‘the complex relationships between all the elements of built and unbuilt space’, because ‘...the appearance and treatment of the spaces between and around buildings is often of comparable importance to the design of the buildings themselves’ (DETR 1997: par. 14). In addition to its direct and substantial contribution to achieving certain specific goals, which include making urban areas appealing to business and investments and reinforcing civic pride and a sense of place, high-quality design can actually be considered an indication of the method for the correct application of the first two principles: sustainability and complexity of uses.

From the perspective of employment and economic development, the planning system, as advocated by PPG1, must focus on the requirements needed by cities and regions to establish new business and commercial activities, investigating how these might contribute to regenerate degraded areas and improve their accessibility from workers, clients and markets. City plans furthermore must make clear how these new economic developments respond to the specific needs of small and medium enterprises, how they relate to the infrastructural system and the existing economic activities. These considerations must be tackled according to three main expedients:

- The issuing of clear policies on regional development, to stimulate the establishment of new companies
- The organisation of such activities in harmony with sustainable transport policies
- The commitment to the overall sustainability of the interventions, especially through the employment of brownfield sites

A fundamental requirement for the sustainable objectives of these interventions is therefore the planning of mobility and transport – considered as an integral part of a whole urban framework – so as to reduce the number and distance of journeys by motorised means, planning new developments in such a way so as to encourage

pedestrian, cycle and public transport mobility. Another parameter that is essential for achieving this objective is housing density, which the third Planning Policy Guidance note concerning the residential design actually brought up from the national average of 25 dwellings per hectare to no less than 30, citing 30–50 units as an ideal quantity (DETR 2000b). Housing policies must also be in line with declared principles of sustainability. In addition to the reuse of areas that have already been urbanised and are served by public transport, this implies above all that housing must be built close to workplaces and public facilities, such as schools, shops, community centres, etc.

As historic town centres are considered the driving force of sustainable urban development, the PPG1 required that they be protected and that their quality and competitiveness be developed. This applies especially to their retail and business core and their wealth of functions and uses, which were the subject of a specific Planning Policy Guidance note, the PPG6. And finally, the PPG1 provided brief indications on disabled access, the upkeep of rural areas, landscape and historical heritage.

Having outlined these themes and objectives, the PPG1 introduced the operating legal instruments by which to guarantee the implementation of the terms outlined. Plan policies and proposals are required to be ‘...realistic and provide for choice and competition’ (DETR 1997: par. 42). To this end, they must be sufficiently flexible and indicate essential functional options, leaving the design control of interventions to the Supplementary Planning Guidance. It is furthermore essential to guarantee monitoring of the policies adopted within a decade. More frequent monitoring will provide greater opportunities to remodel these policies in response to the plan’s changing feasibility conditions. The PPG1 focused also more specifically on methods for controlling urban design, which would then be further analysed through practical examples and good practices by publications ‘By Design’ (CABE and DETR 2000) and ‘Better Places to Live, By Design’ (CABE and DTLR 2001). Among the several indications given in this section, the most interesting refers to the statement of design principles (the ‘Design Statement’), with which anybody wishing to transform areas of large dimensions must comply. These principles are to meet the objectives and requirements outlined in national guidelines. Thus, reversing, so to speak, the burden of proving the goodness of the proposed interventions, the private sector will be called to exert greater responsibility and awareness of design implications, forcing it to actively understand fundamental planning principles. Alongside the organisation of debates and meetings between the private sector and local authorities from the offset, this method is considered of great importance in making the process of implementing the plan safer and faster. The sooner any friction and conflicts are overcome, the fewer obstacles will arise during the planning procedure. Local authorities are therefore invited by the national government to play an active role in the construction of planning and dialogue with private entities.

It must be noted that the design indications proposed by the PPG1 which aim to promote a high degree of urban complexity can make its concrete application somewhat difficult, especially if tackled mechanically or simplistically. Consider, for

example, the seeming contradiction between the promotion of multiuse complexes and the reduction of private transport. With regard to the latter, the rigid functional compartmentalisation of traditional zoning – but also the extraordinary model of the *Cité Industrielle* by Tony Garnier, for example – would be infinitely more effective in ensuring the economic sustainability of public transport. It is therefore a matter of reconciling, through innovative, carefully monitored and balanced policies of intervention, potential friction generated by various issues, and finding the right balance between them. And it is the PPG1 itself that urges that design policies must not obstruct ‘responsible innovation, originality or initiative’ (DETR 1997: par. 19), permitting the contravention of some of the proposed indications, if and when, it can be justified.

Planning Policy Statement 1, introduced in 2005 to replace the PPG1, is much more synthetic and lean than its predecessor.¹ It reconfirms the basic principles contained in the latter but does so by recalibrating its priorities and reassessing specific weighting under the new system. Hence, the role of environmental, social and economic sustainability, one of the three cornerstones of the 1997 version along with mix of uses and design, assumes a predominant position compared to the other two elements in the new text. The importance of design and the diversity of uses is resized, and they are reinterpreted above all as instruments by which to achieve sustainability² (ODPM 2005a).

The new agenda on sustainable development introduced in 1999 (‘A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK’), which has updated the 1994 strategy underpinning the PPG1, despite maintaining the same definition of sustainability – taken from the famous 1987 Brundtland Report – as ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (DETR 1999: 3), placed great emphasis on the defence and development of ‘quality of life’. The four main objectives identified by the new strategy, which is the driving force of the PPS1, are:

- Social progress that recognises the needs of all
- Effective protection of the environment
- Cautious use of natural resources
- Maintenance of a high and stable level of economic and occupational growth

The PPS1 does not pause to give a definition of design, merely introducing the subject with a sort of axiom: ‘Good design is indivisible from good planning’ (ODPM 2005a: par. 33). Despite indicating the principles and objectives of economic, social and environmental sustainability that it must respond to, the text

¹ The PPS1 issued definitively in 2005 was much more concise, if not even laconic, than the draft presented in March 2004. This latter tackled the various issues of the new programme much more systematically and in-depth through references to the appendix (ODPM 2004b).

² The need to ensure the highest possible levels of design quality in relation to the sustainability was also subsequently confirmed by the Planning Act 2008 which integrated the article 39 of the previous Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004: ‘... the person or body must (in particular) have regard to the desirability of achieving good design’ (Planning Act 2008, par. 183).

leaves complementary governmental manuals to give precise details on the methods to be adopted in order to achieve the desired levels of design quality. Therefore, objectives of social inclusion are reconfirmed and are to be pursued by guaranteeing the accessibility of urban services to all citizens and the diversity of different strata of the population in residential areas. Environmental sustainability is linked to the recovery of brownfield areas, an increase in construction density and the integration of mobility plans with the urban design, which must especially provide, as far as possible, a balanced mix of uses. Competitiveness requirements, given as a primary goal alongside protection of the environment in the old text, are barely mentioned in the definition of the principles for economic planning in the new document. Instead reference is made to the attractive qualities that should characterise the new interventions, of which 'vitality and viability' are to be promoted (ODPM 2005a: par. 27). The PPS1 continues giving a brief description of the scope of design policies, which '...should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles' (ODPM 2005a: par. 38).

In fact, great emphasis is placed on the new spatial aspect of planning policies, which must be supported by clear anticipation of future territorial structure through integration with other programmes and interventions that might influence them, especially with urban and rural regeneration projects. The planner must focus on the expected effects of the proposals and the methods by which these will be constantly monitored to ensure correct implementation.

And finally, unlike the PPG1, particular, if not even redundant, emphasis is placed on the involvement of the population in the planning process.

Among the planning policies introduced on the theme of competitiveness, the PPS6 stands out in particular. Introduced in 2005 to replace the previous PPG6 of 1996, it cuts back on some of the details that came under regional competence (ODPM 2004a). The main focus of this report is urban centres, in which commerce, as well as being considered for its fundamental role in policies for the revitalisation of historic town centres, is closely linked to mobility planning. Retail, accessibility, mix of uses, residential density and the quality of urban spaces are given as the foundations of any process of urban redevelopment.

The cornerstone of the PPS6, inherited from old legislation, is the sequential approach mechanism. It is a governmental prescription that invites local authorities to allow commercial interests to settle in external or peripheral zones of the city only if they demonstrate that it would be absolutely impossible in a central area, following centripetal logic. This principle, already used to defend functional diversity, was proposed in other Policy Planning Guidance notes for public services in general, residential expansion and important functions that attract more people.

A survey commissioned by the government and carried out in 2004 on the previous PPG6, however, had reported several practical difficulties of the parties

concerned by the measure in the interpretation of the theory. In particular, various problems emerged of a terminological nature, in definition of retail activities and the hierarchy of commercial urban centres. Furthermore, despite indications in the regulations, there was complaint over the shortcomings of local authorities in actively promoting the sequential approach policy, more often than not deemed a mere instrument to passively protect urban areas (CB Hillier Parker and Cardiff University 2004). The new Policy Planning Statement note has therefore tried to remedy these inefficiencies, more carefully illustrating the mechanism for the implementation of the sequential approach and introducing the requirement that anybody wishing to build a new shopping mall would have to demonstrate both the necessity for it and the overall impact³ of the proposal on the context and would have to consider every possible option, both qualitative and quantitative, for adapting the new intervention to its environment as much as possible.

To tackle the topic of accessibility, the PPS6 promotes a sort of egalitarian conception of citizen's mobility, favouring public transport – for obvious reasons of sustainability – and boosting the construction of paths for cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people. The regulation has no intention of penalising the use of private vehicles, but only reducing that use in order to make it compatible – and integrated – with the government's objectives for vitality. Vehicle accessibility is nevertheless deemed a fundamental requirement in order to guarantee the competitive nature of central areas in comparison to external shopping centres. For this reason the previous PPG6 contained also directives concerning the aesthetic quality of car parks,⁴ which must not be conceived of as architecturally extraneous to the city. They must be provided in a position that rationalises access to the centre as much as possible, avoiding, for example, their construction for one single area or use. Accessibility becomes a fundamental principle in establishing the quality of the public spaces and their effective and real provision in the heart of the reference community, from a regional to local level. This theme, deemed a crucial element for the competitiveness of urban centres, is in fact the focus of the manual that accompanies the PPG6 'Going to Town' (NRPF 2002). It analyses in detail the possible strategies that would put public realm and transport at the service of the economic system in the town centre. The logic of the sequential approach, applied to qualifying uses, is also effective with regard to mobility policies. In fact, the probability of delivering greater equity in terms of accessibility to these important functions is obviously higher in those dense urban areas which, because of a much larger amount of potential users, can offer an economically viable public transport system.

³ Assessment of the need for and impact of shopping premises has also resulted in some ambiguities, so much so that corrections to assessment methods are subsequently being studied (CLG 2008).

⁴ The design guidelines contained in PPG6, even though they were pruned in the next PPS6, however, were partially reported in the companion document: 'Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation Tools' (ODPM 2005b).

Another interesting feature of the document is the parameters suggested for the analysis, assessment and monitoring of vitality within the centres, examined from a perspective that is not purely commercial. In fact, the emphasis is placed on the opportunity to promote evening and night time economy and a mix of diverse uses as much as possible, especially in those areas, defined as ‘secondary’,⁵ that are considered more suitable to operate in a type of mixed urban economy and in line with different times and schedules. The possibility of changing the intended use to be more flexible within a certain range of uses and in line with certain pre-established rules makes the redevelopment process much easier.

The document also highlights once more the importance of commitment to quality design for the public realm, which must be created through the definition of guidelines for private schemes – the design of shop fronts, for example – or for street furniture and paving. Pedestrian usability is considered a priority requirement of urban design.

Definition of strategies for the redevelopment and re-launching of historic centres cannot set aside the involvement, from the very beginning, of shopkeepers and private individuals who have interests in the area affected by the planning. Combining forces – only possible in a clear framework of shared objectives and timetables – is essential in order to be competitive against large out-of-town shopping malls, typified by a single property and centralised services, resulting in lower management and promotion costs. That is why the PPS6 invites all subjects involved in the redevelopment of central urban areas to form partnerships intended for strategic planning, management, maintenance and the constant improvement of the city centre.

In 2009, the PPS6 was in turn absorbed⁶ and substituted by the new PPS4 ‘Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth’, which integrated and recombined previous directives into one single legislative framework on economic sustainable development. These had previously been tackled from different sectorial perspectives, regarding commercial and productive settlements, simplified planning zones, agricultural land and transport.⁷ From this perspective, the very heart of the city then becomes the driving force of the regional economy, while the development of a balanced and hierarchically structured network of urban centres connected by public transport is presented as an indispensable requirement for fair and widespread access to the positive repercussions this entailed.

⁵ Again in this case, the PPS6 shows a simplification of definitions compared to the previous PPG6, which recommended singling out secondary areas over primary areas, on the basis of pre-eminent rent values (PPG6, Annex B, par. 6). The PPS6 refers solely to the concentration of shopping activities.

⁶ Among supplementary documents to the new PPS4 features ‘Planning for Town Centres, Practice guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach’, which picks up and expands on with case studies the indications contained in the PPS6 and relevant guide.

⁷ The PPS4 replaces, in addition to PPS6 (‘Planning for Town Centres’), also PPG 4 (‘Industrial, commercial development and small firms’) and PPG5 (‘Simplified Planning Zones’) of 1992 and various sections of PPS7 (‘Sustainable development in rural areas’) and PPG13 (‘Transport’).

2.2 The Proactive Approach: CABE, Training, Government Publications

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has been the central pillar of the direction taken by Tony Blair's government. CABE has been a body for research, promotion and development of design disciplines for the government, subordinate to the Secretary of State and funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Communities and Local Government. It was born in 1999 to replace its predecessor the Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC), established in 1924, with the task of defining the parameters that would control the quality of architecture and town planning and raise awareness nationally. Since then, it has pursued its mission to stimulate and control the quality of living spaces through continuous contact with local bodies, conferences and publications. Following the government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in 2010, which saw massive reductions across the public sector, in 1 April 2011 CABE has merged with the Design Council, a charity incorporated by Royal Charter aimed at promoting industrial design among businesses, schools and public services organisations. The merger is expected to save public money and to provide a 'one stop shop' with a broader, yet stronger and coherent remit for design support and industry advice.

The multiple activities of CABE, which in many cases were integrated into special programmes and initiatives, can be divided into four main areas: advice, promotion, training and research.

Advice to local government was a direct continuation of the service performed by the previous RFAC, whose intervention, especially in case of projects in areas of environmental value, was considered highly authoritative. Unlike other bodies of local control CABE, through the Design Review programme, required its involvement from the preliminary phases investigating design guidelines and building practices, entering the planning process as a constant reference with the creation of Supplementary Planning Guidance and in negotiations between developers and technical department heads. Projects that can request support from CABE, from a single public or residential building to large scale masterplans, should be of particular importance, involve public funding or be of strategic value to the context in which they occur, both in terms of environmental characteristics and the multiplier effect that they may have on social sustainability and the quality of life of the community of inhabitants (CLG 2006).

While the Design Review programme was aimed at making judgements and forming opinions regarding planning processes and design proposals, assistance to local government during the preliminary phases was promoted by a specific programme named Enabling Programme. Experts were assigned to technical offices or public committees to help outline the formal, procedural and financial characteristics of the project, particularly in cases where these issues are considered indispensable for the attainment of important social and environmental regeneration results. Furthermore, in view of the absolute centrality of public spaces in the construction

of places of quality, a section was established specifically to provide advice on this topic: CABE Space. The professionals who worked here were experts in planning, design and management strategies for street design, pedestrian areas, parks and gardens; in some cases advice also included collaboration in the preliminaries of design competitions or in the organisation and coordination of consultancy processes and the participation of the community concerned.

CABE's promotional activity involved numerous initiatives. One group – the policy team – handled the critical review of political or governmental proposals in terms of planning and design. Another group was in charge of cataloguing (through an online database) and publishing (also electronically) case studies and national and international good practice in architectural and urban design projects (CABE digital library). The recipients were as often professionals, whom the group intended to provide with important updates on the matter, as they were users, whom the group aimed to provide with the tools to assess buildings and neighbourhoods. In fact, in a market economy, the quality of architecture or town planning depends as much on the professional ability of those working on the side of the offer as it does on awareness of the demand for potentially achievable standards. Some of these case studies were published as *Design Reviewed*, projects examined in the context of the Design Review programme and considered to be particularly interesting or emblematic examples of certain planning themes (CABE 2004b). Among these, *Building for Life* in particular collected case records, published periodicals and provided guidance on residential planning according to the principles of sustainability set out by the government in collaboration with other national associations. In a short time *Building for Life* became one of the major references for assessing the architectural quality of settlements, especially for local authorities.

Furthermore, various publications that were often the result of collaborations with other agencies, something between promotion and training, focus on specific planning themes or issues – for example, those produced in association with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in the sphere of the Building Futures programme – which aim to raise questions and stimulate reflection on the future role of the disciplines and the professions of architecture and town planning or the possible planning developments of a particular functional type. In many cases, such publications have been instrumental to the many awareness and information campaigns initiated by the institution, such as the Public Building Initiative which began in 2000 to support the quality of public buildings and works.⁸ The spread of a greater architectural culture was promoted by CABE also by urging public bodies and major developers to appoint Design Champions, that is, people with an influential background who are adequately prepared to guide decision-making regarding high-quality interventions (CABE 2011b).

⁸ The Public Building Initiative, as other similar campaigns, was also based on the publication of dissemination brochures such as the 2000 'Better Public Buildings' report (DCMS 2000) and the 2003 'Creating Excellent Buildings' (CABE 2003a, 2011a). Furthermore, in 2001 the Prime Minister introduced an annual award, the Prime Minister Award for the best public building.

Proselytising was widespread at a regional level, where CABA has been active through a network of representatives at the Regional Development Agencies and other bodies that operate at this territorial scale, as well as at a district level. Thanks to a specifically created fund, CABA also financed several local initiatives in collaboration with other institutions and associations, whose task is to ensure stable relations and cooperation in favour of better planning and improvements in the built environment. The pilot scheme Design Liverpool, the first programme of this type,⁹ testifies to the potential negative implications of this form of interference ‘from above’, as CABA ended up overlapping, raising some friction, with the advisory panel of volunteers who had been working in the town since 2007 (the Liverpool Urban Design and Conservation Panel), and in fact going on to replace them (Biddulph 2010).

The CABA was also involved in several partnership initiatives in support of design quality within specific programmes such as Delivering Design Quality, in support of the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder of Sheffield, or Living Places, for the promotion of sport and culture in urban regeneration interventions, and above all, it supported and developed the network of Architecture and Built Environment Centres (ABECs), spread throughout the country and coordinated by the Architecture Centre Network (ACN). These centres not only carry out initiatives identical to CABA at a local level (promotion of events, lectures, debates, exhibitions, advice to local government, cooperation with other bodies, etc.) but also become points of reference for the resident population in dialogue with the local government.

Some survey campaigns, such as Streets of Shame or Wasted Space held between 2002 and 2003, were intended to collect the opinion of the citizens on the places they live and to generate public debate on this issue. Developing in residents a critical perspective of where they live – of vital importance in raising the overall demand for quality from government and developers – was also at the basis of a vast campaign of teaching programmes and support to primary and secondary school teachers. Through the Engaging Places programme and with the help of the quarterly magazine ‘360°’, CABA saw to creating and distributing materials free of charge that might develop in young people the ability to observe and understand the places and buildings in which they live in a critical and creative way.¹⁰

Training and refresher programmes were also aimed at professionals, members of planning departments, representatives of government and public institutions,

⁹ As a part of the Design Liverpool work, a particularly interesting initiative ‘Liverpool 50’ stands out, that is, a themed workshop series gathering representatives from public bodies and enterprises involved in the city transformation, here invited for a twofold purpose: creating rising awareness and debate concerning certain issues and encouraging the creation of a virtuous network of scholars, professionals and engineers.

¹⁰ A similar initiative, focused on town centres, had been promoted since 1992 by two major members of the Association of Town Centre Managers, Boots the Chemists and Marks and Spencer. In its third edition (‘Talk of the Town’), it was made up of an interactive cd-rom specifically designed to spur kids (aged 14–19) to consider and be increasingly more curious about different issues related to urban environment, in particular as regards planning and design (Woolley 2000).

through the urban design summer school, introduced in 2004. In the past CABE also organised themed workshops, such as Streets for People, which focused exclusively on street design, offered to professionals and public and private sector organisations involved in this field. A 2003 survey conducted by the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT) revealed that 85% of the 1,000 interviewees admitted to never having had any training in urban design (CABE 2006). Two other programmes – Design for Change and the Design and Historic Environment Champions Programme (in association with English Heritage) – and other similar initiatives had the purpose of informing, refreshing and assigning responsibility to leaders of political and technical structures of government on the issues concerning urban planning, architecture and the preservation of historical and artistic heritage.

In terms of research, as well as the above-mentioned collaboration with the RIBA, CABE's work has included several collaborations with university researchers, professionals and government focus groups on various issues concerning town planning and architecture. One of the first publications coedited by CABE was 'By Design', a companion guide to the PPG1, which outlines and explains the design principles set by the government. Among the most interesting branches of research are those which investigated economic value in urban and architectural design quality, those on the potential of Planning Guidance and Design Codes and those concerning sustainable design. In general, however, as already mentioned, the research section also involved initiatives aimed at training and promotion, resulting in a wide range of end products. Among these, CABE Space, as well as the above-mentioned advisory work, offered an integrated, hybrid programme based on the quality of open spaces, especially parks and gardens. This field also brought together studies on the economic value and social benefits of public parks, collaborations with the authorities and local communities in the development of planning policies, strategic plans and design briefing, information campaigns of quality standards and best practice, as well as professional training and retraining.

The year that CABE was founded, 1999, is important with respect to the centrality of the government's new policy for another reason, the publication of the Urban Task Force – chaired by Richard Rogers – research report, 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' (Urban Task Force 1999). It was a very extensive, systematic and thorough survey on the English urban condition and the instruments deemed to be necessary to meet new challenges of globalisation in terms of competitiveness and sustainability; the approach is therefore perfectly in line with the government's recent perspective on urban policies.

To handle aspects of environmental and social sustainability, the first part of the report puts forward some now classic formulas for town planning as reference design principles, among them neighbourhood unit, based on a radius of a quarter of a mile, development of public transport, functional and residential mix, increased housing density and increased longevity of buildings. On an urban scale, these objectives are reflected in the control of the taxonomy of built-up areas, city districts and neighbourhood public spaces and services. The public realm – especially the street with its original richness of uses – is referred to as the structuring principle of urban form. The Public Realm Strategy, since then widely adopted by local

authorities, is one of the suggested planning tools which should be included as part of the Supplementary Planning Guidance for coping with this issue.

Urban design principles from this perspective can be summarised in nine points:

- Integration of the project in the urban area in which it is inserted
- Respect for the scale and character of the context
- Accessibility (especially for pedestrians and cyclists) and permeability of public spaces
- Optimisation of building land and increased residential density
- Mix of uses
- Mix of tenures
- Durable and flexible building construction
- Constructions designed to the highest standards of quality and sustainability from the point of view of energy and environment
- Environmental responsibility

Subsequently, in relation to the objectives identified, the document suggests the most suitable means for their achievement: the masterplan, complemented by further, more detailed Supplementary Planning Guidance, is given as the primary means to ensure the most appropriate control of formal elements and design principles. This highlights flexibility in response to market conditions, the ability to create and gather ideas and consent from involved parties and the possibility of enriching the community in which the intervention will be located. A second instrument of formal control of urban transformations is the Development Brief, which supplies developers with a clear description of the area's character and, above all, the objectives and quantitative and qualitative requirements with which the project must comply.

In the following sections the research of the Urban Task Force offers guidance on mechanisms for implementation and management of urban regeneration policies. Among the most interesting proposals is the institution of Urban Priority Areas, or areas that undergo a particular integrated regime of projects combined with priorities of investment, resources, tax incentives and managerial and decision-making power. The designation of these areas, valid for a period of approximately 10 years (the time predicted for developing positive trends in the local market) should occur through grassroots nomination, with a financial proposal for particular implementation measures from the community and local authorities, rather than the usual practice of assigning standard packages of actions and funds through tenders on the basis of compliance with prefixed parameters.

Another proposal of interest, adopted by the government straight away in fact, is the constitution of public-private partnerships, specifically dedicated to individual urban regeneration projects, along the revised and corrected model of the Urban Development Companies (UDC) from the 1980s.

The report continues with other guidance on planning policies, which should allow for greater flexibility, safety and speed in urban transformation, especially within the consolidated city; suggestions are then made to facilitate the recovery

of brownfield areas and investments in urban transformation, both through improvement – especially in terms of time and red tape – of expropriation procedures both through fiscal instruments and leverage (particularly for redevelopment works) and through public funds aimed at spawning private investments.

The year following the publication of the report, in direct response to the analyses and solicitations of ‘Towards an Urban Renaissance’, the government publishes the White Paper ‘Our Towns and Cities: the Future’ (DETR 2000a), a document that outlines the framework of policies undertaken until then and through comparison with proposals from the Urban Task Force sets the agenda for the years ahead. There emerges a clear understanding of the phenomena of change taking place, the national situation and the objectives for the economic regeneration of the country through recovery and enhancement, both from a metropolitan and regional perspective, of the whole urban system. The common factors of success stories such as Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds can be summed up in four main points:

- The role of the city as the centre of a regional metropolitan system
- The presence and strength of institutions for higher education
- The role of culture and tourism
- Promotion of an urban lifestyle, 24-h cities

On this basis, a summary is given of the bodies and instruments that already operate in urban regeneration or will shortly do so, such as the Millennium Communities, Urban Regeneration Companies, Regional Development Agencies, the above-mentioned Local Strategic Partnerships and various financing, economic regeneration and urban transformation programmes.

In 2000, as a complement to the first Planning Policy Guidance note, the ‘By Design’ manual was published which, by referring to the theoretical contributions of Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, Kevin Lynch, Richard Sennett and Christopher Alexander among others, tries to explain government guidelines through examples and images. The manual, which follows a typical English tradition in terms of technical guidance, inaugurates a new course of publications and guidelines relating to the new principles of urban design prioritised by the government. ‘By Design’, primarily focused on issues relating exclusively to design, traces the effects, stimuli and interactions with the planning system and, more generally, the new ministerial policies. The most relevant addition is the indication and explanation through images and examples, of the seven main design objectives pursued by urban design:

- Character: When determining design elements that will ensure identity, it is recommended that the architectural, formal and material characteristics of the context be taken into consideration – even dialectically.
- Continuity and enclosure: These design categories are essential for managing the relation between public and private spaces. Much emphasis is placed on the architectural relation between the building and the street. Alignment of the building facings along the street, direct access to the street and differentiation of frontages between the outside (the public dimension) and the inside (the private dimension) are encouraged.

- Quality of the public realm: It must be accessible, attractive and characterised by busy areas. To this end it is recommended that particular attention be paid to the activities at the ground floor, the relationship with the surrounding buildings and the details of the architectural design.
- Ease of movement: This concerns accessibility to places as much as it does the ability to move as freely as possible within them, thanks to a clear structure of connections, a well thought-out public transport infrastructure, interchanges, infrastructure of high architectural (not just engineering) quality and a small, dense urban grain.
- Readability: This is a requisite connected to the image of the city and the ease of understanding its structure. To ensure this objective, the role of views, landmarks (especially corner buildings) and the character of architectural details are emphasised.
- Adaptability: With this objective, the functional flexibility of buildings and parts of the city is promoted, thanks to solid and essential design, subject to subsequent changes or adjustments.
- Diversity: The social and functional complexity of urban areas and single buildings (horizontal and vertical mixed uses) is entrusted with the task of making the city and its neighbourhoods places that are ruled by variety and choice.

Based on these seven objectives and their specific characteristics, possible parameters are listed for the reading and evaluation of the existing design; moreover, eight relevant aspects for control over the urban form are set out, to be correlated from a planning perspective with the previous design principles:

- Layout of the urban structure: connections and relations between the parts of the city, routes and public spaces
- Layout of the urban fabric: the size of blocks and plots
- Urban landscape: natural elements and open spaces
- Density and diversity
- The scale of heights
- The scale of volumes
- The appearance of details
- The appearance of materials

The manual emphasises the need for alert and active commitment from institutions responsible for the quality of housing, for which it is necessary to clearly address the objectives and planning principles from the initial phases, moving from a ‘passive’ process, based on checking standards, to a positive conception based on the request for certain solutions and needs identified through best practice examples.

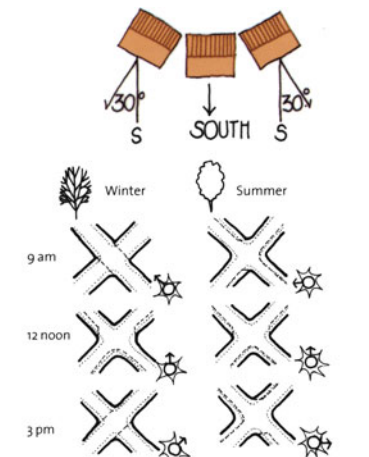
The document then continues to briefly illustrate the planning instruments needed to ensure the desired results through focused use of the design control policies of the Development Plans, and above all, the meticulously structured guidelines contained in the Supplementary Design Guidance, thought of as the keystone with respect to government objectives on sustainability, of the national planning system and

negotiation practice between the public and private sectors. In order to use these instruments effectively, institutions need to adopt a collaborative approach to developers and designers from the outlook. Civil servants are also invited to engage in a continuous professional development, in line with the commitment of the central government for a wider dissemination of architectural culture and urban design.

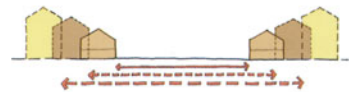
In the same year, another manual edited by Llewelyn-Davies on behalf of English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation, entitled 'Urban Design Compendium', complements and elaborates on the more specific design guidelines contained in 'By Design', supplying a rich and accurate reference text for professionals and officials, complete with numerous international examples (EP and HC 2000) (Fig. 2.1). Using the same theoretical and cultural background as the government manual, it briefly deals with design principles for the creation of urban frameworks, the creation of internal and external connections and the importance of detailed planning, including financial and managerial information. The aim of the document, as well as spreading greater awareness of the best contemporary practices in terms of urban design, was to provide another important contribution for the definition of the concept and level of quality of urban design, so as to give concrete cultural references and a meaning to a principle that was otherwise too abstract and subjective. In 2007, following the wide reach achieved by the manual, a second version was published by the same bodies: 'Urban Design Compendium 2: delivering quality places'. The second manual, a complement to the first, was specifically devoted to planning processes, managerial, political and financial methods and strategies for integration between sectors, for which it provided examples and case studies (EP and HC 2007).

The year following the 'By Design' edition and the first 'Compendium', the Department for Housing, Planning and Regeneration and CABE published another illustrative guide to government policies focused on design of residential areas, complementary to the 2000 PPG3,¹¹ the above-mentioned 'Better Places to Live, By Design' (CABE and DTLR 2001). The new document follows the route already taken by 'By Design', from which it lays out design principles and objectives in light of residential units, adding to this information the guidelines for street design provided by the 1998 DETR publication 'Places, Streets and Movement: A Companion Guide to DB 32' (DETR 1998). From these are obtained specifications on various planning themes (among them, movement, functional and social mix, attention to detail, safety, maintenance, etc.) inspired by principles of social and environmental sustainability, illustrated by a wide series of national examples. The guide does not so much focus on the dimensional, functional or distributive requirements of housing, as on certain planning issues and solutions regarding the architecture of the street and public spaces, population density in relation to accessibility of public transport. The home is evaluated from a planning perspective, above all as a function of the extended context of the city and neighbourhood in which it stands, to which it is required to supply a central contribution in terms of quality.

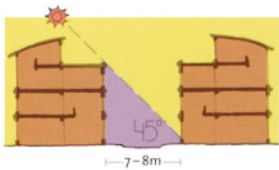
¹¹ The Planning Policy Guidance note 3 is about residential settlements design. After including various changes in 2000 as brought about by the Urban Task Force report, it recorded a number of reissues until its final substitution in 2006 when the PPS3 came into force.



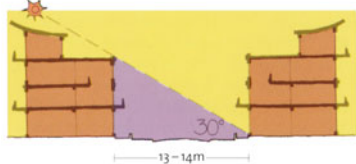
Make sure that overshadowing doesn't unduly undermine solar access and vary building scale and positioning accordingly



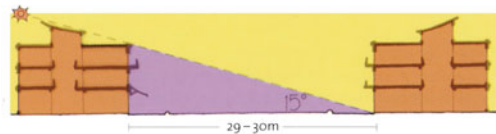
Strict adherence to solar access and privacy concerns can serve to space buildings further and further apart – lowering densities and weakening street enclosure.



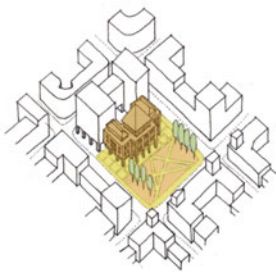
Mews: 60 – 70% loss of total annual solar radiation



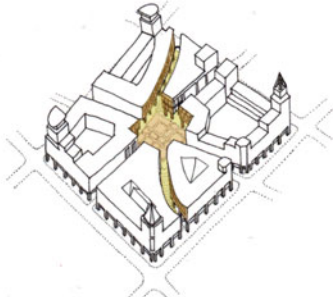
Street: 30 – 40% loss of total annual solar radiation



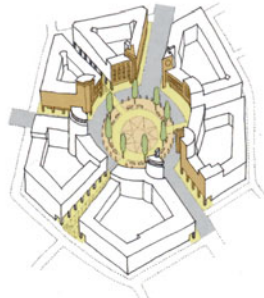
Square or high street: 5% loss of total annual solar radiation



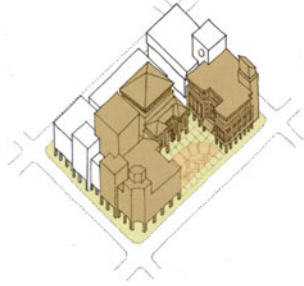
Square centred on key civic building



Court located in block interior



Circus at street intersection



Plaza as extended forecourt space

Fig. 2.1 ‘Urban Design Compendium 1’. An example of the kind of diagrams and sketches used by the British urban design manuals promoted by the government to illustrate good practices (EP and HC 2000: 50, 55. Courtesy of HCA)

Urged on by the Urban Task Force report on the state of health of the public realm in England and the key role it plays in the quality of life of the residents and in urban regeneration processes, the government, along with the unfailing CABE, dedicated two other important popular and informative publications to public green spaces, 'Green Spaces, Better Places and Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener', both from 2002 (DTLR 2002a; ODPM 2002). Two years later, 'Living Places: Caring for Quality' was added to these two, another publication more generally focused on the design and care of open public places and therefore also including streets and squares (ODPM 2004c). Also in this case, the publications provided guidelines not only on design principles, which were in fact of lesser weight compared to the first two PPG companion guides, but especially on managerial, financial and legislative methods connected to maintenance, planning and the redevelopment of public spaces.

As far as street design is concerned, the 2007 'Manual for Streets' (DfT 2007) must be highlighted in particular that replaced the previous and aforementioned 'Places, Streets and Movement' of 1998. The main objective of this latter was to provide the community of street planners, who were mostly educated in engineering, with a new design attitude – especially regarding the design of settlements – that would accord with principles of urban design introduced by the 1997 PPG1. The guide was conceived of therefore as a concise and flexible instrument, whose guidelines were mainly of conceptual nature, rather than normative. For example, the chapters' titles include slogans like 'Look at the place not the car' or 'Creating a high-quality public realm' (DETR 1998b: 26, 38). The manual that succeeded it 9 years later, and which has also recently had a second version published – 'Manual for Streets 2' – expanded and elaborated on the design principles introduced by the first, entering into more formal and regulatory details of the design of streets (from the overall layout to use of materials, from signage to street furniture), car parks, cycle and pedestrian paths, public transport lanes and Home Zones (Young 2010).

2.3 Administrative Tools for Controlling the Quality of Urban Design

The most interesting fact to emerge from the new direction taken by the New Labour executive is the proactive approach that permeates, or at least should permeate, administrative action on various levels: from ministerial action, via the particular effect of CABE, to the technical departments of local bodies. The heads of local government are invited to assume a more collaborative attitude with the private sector, working together to develop the plan, rather than only checking in once work has been completed, especially in the cases of public-private partnerships. To this end, in 2004 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister created the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS), a consulting body for local government that specialised in the management of complex and far-reaching urban transformation. ATLAS followed in particular the development of a new planning tool, the

Planning Performance Agreement (PPA), formally introduced in 2008 after a period of experimentation, intended, through the setting up of a sophisticated agreement protocol, to speed up coordination between the public and private sectors and make reciprocal commitments as clear as possible in order to ensure a successful planning permission (ATLAS 2008).

Collaboration between the public and private sectors, though, is not synonymous with acquiescence of the former towards the proposals of the latter. In fact, executives in charge of the territory are now called more than ever before to take on a quality monitoring role in projects, with the full backing of the government. A commitment that, according to the assessment of the Urban Task Force, is still too underused (Urban Task Force 2005): an analysis carried out in 2003 into the reasons for complaints from the private sector against Municipal Technical Departments and the causes for the low number of building permits showed how disagreements concerning design made up a low minority (CABE 2003b). One of the greatest obstacles, which CABE has tried to overcome with suitable professional development programmes, is precisely this lack of competence in the field of urban design on the part of a significant number of municipal employees. The training of decision-makers and officials and the focus, at all levels of the institutions, on high-quality built environments are still firmly at the centre of the government's agenda, as recently shown by the document 'World Class Places: the Government's strategy for improving quality of place' (CLG 2009).

According to this proactive form of managing urban transformation, it becomes even more fundamental that local authorities express clearly in black and white what their agreed planning principles are and the various assessment criteria that the community has established as the basis for development of the territory. This occurs in two main ways, which have remained almost entirely unaltered since 2004 and the introduction of the new national planning system: examining the features of the context (area appraisal¹²) and the declaration of design principles (design statements). These are joined by other monitoring instruments contained in the Supplementary Planning Documents. Very often the boundaries between these three planning methods are blurred, and the necessary descriptive and planning indications are mixed within summary guidelines, tending to unite all the necessary material into a few informative documents. Both the area appraisals and the design statements may be included in the Local Development Framework, either as an SPD or within the Area Action Plan. In the latter case, however, the planning documents have the same cogency as the LDF. This is certainly not an insignificant new development in the English planning sphere, as the AAPs now finally provide local government with an extremely powerful instrument for territorial control, which must nevertheless be managed with the required skill.

¹² In the case of conservation areas, the preliminary analysis, focused solely on the architectural and morphological aspects of the context, goes by the name of 'character appraisal'.

The area appraisal – for which various manuals were produced, proposing checklist models,¹³ in order to facilitate drafting of the document by technical departments – is composed of an analysis of the areas of transformation or conservation led on the initiative of the public authority and indicates the main distinctive characteristics of the places, including the architectural detail of invariable elements, such as styles, materials and sizing.¹⁴ In some cases, the structure of the analysis relates expressly to the indications, concepts and terminology contained in the planning guidelines published by the government. Sometimes explicit references are made also to the perceptive theories of Kevin Lynch or the interpretative categories of the urban landscape by Gordon Cullen.

Where areas of expansion or transformation are concerned, the area appraisal is generally seamlessly interwoven with the design statement. As well as providing details on the distinctive elements of the area, this document also provides planning indications with regard to the correct insertion of new buildings into the existing fabric and the character that architectural design and public realm has to convey, very frequently accompanying the text with images and national and international examples that better express the concepts and models to take inspiration from. In this case, the document also takes on a guiding role and can be included in the Supplementary Planning Documents. The goal of these publications is to provide initial indications to developers and designers on the current situation and the situation hoped for during work, so as to facilitate the convergence of interests between the public and private sectors from the early planning stages.

It is above all the mechanism of the design statement that dialectically sanctions the mutual responsibility of the public and private when defining planning guidelines, making the terms for negotiation over transformation of the territory very clear. Local authorities are invited by the government and CABE to produce SPDs containing clear indications of the architectural and urban design elements required of the developers while realistically keeping in mind the needs of the market. In some cases, and depending on contexts, the community of residents can also produce specific planning documents, such as the Neighbourhood Design Statement for urban neighbourhoods or the Town Design Statement for smaller villages, both derived from the Village Design Statement model, which had already been

¹³ This is the case, for example, of the ‘Conservation Area Appraisals’ publication, published by English Heritage (1997), a brief document that sums up in 13 points the main themes used for the description of places: localisation and population; origins and development; past and prevailing intended uses; archaeological importance; architectural quality and historical value of buildings; contribution of unlisted buildings; character and relationships of spaces; materials, textures, colours and traditional and prevailing details; contribution of green spaces, trees and other natural elements; configuration of the area and relationship with the context; extent of losses, intrusions and damage in the area; and presence of neutral areas.

¹⁴ The most common types of area appraisal can be composed of landscape analysis, studies on pedestrian mobility, accessibility and traffic; surveys on the perception or meaning of the places for the population, historical and morphological analysis; and census and inventory of the ecological and environmental character, measured qualitatively and quantitatively and SWOT analysis of regional resources (Carmona et al. 2003).

anticipated by the PPG1 in 1997 for control over transformations in rural centres (The Countryside Agency 2003).

The private sector on the other hand, as outlined by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is obliged to justify how their construction will respond to planning indications issued by local authorities or, on the contrary, what reasoning lies behind the various considerations and what alternative solutions are proposed. The Access and Design Statement consists of a description – either succinct or detailed, on a case to case basis – of how the area was assessed in terms of planning; how the design principles given by the government were interpreted, locally outlined by the competent authorities; and what measures were taken to ensure equal access opportunities for all users (CABE 2008). This documentation occurs in two subsequent stages: as a draft during pre-application, that is, the consultation and guidance phase prior to presentation of the formal planning proposal which occurs with the collaboration of the technical department, and in definitive form during the planning application itself. This procedure is valid both for standard planning permissions and outline planning permissions. These differ from the former in that they are issued in the absence of a masterplan or similar sufficiently detailed document. They guarantee the approval of various general planning guidelines, leaving the approval of formal and functional specifications, called ‘reserved matters’, to a second stage of the planning application. It must be noted that the agreement does not directly concern the developer, but rather refers to the place and planning idea. This allows other possible subsequent developers to operate on the basis of the same outline planning permission, making this particular solution especially suitable for more complex urban regeneration plans. This flexible system has raised various debates over its expediency with regard to renewed objectives of greater control over design. On the one hand, it can guarantee faster contracting and completion times for the agreed work, thus incentivising the private sector to invest in quality. On the other hand, the loose knit of the restrictive system, in the absence of tenacious and attentive intermediaries, might be to the detriment of the desired architectural and town planning results. Therefore, a measure has been in place since 2006 (DCLG Circular 01/2006) that requires precise indications with regard to intended use, quantity, general design, progressive parameters and indicative access points even at this early stage.

The Supplementary Planning Documents, materials that are rather varied in terms of subject and scale of coverage, constitute the fundamental points of reference in negotiation processes between the public and private realms. Although their use is not actually compulsory, it is highly recommended. They are subject to screening by citizen assemblies and are therefore the formal expression of the democratic management process of the territory. Not only must they defend the interests of the local community but must also respond to the request of private developers to provide common rules and appropriate guarantees concerning the quality of the process of transformation of the context. In fact, especially after the unbridled liberalism of the Thatcher era and following the serious problems encountered in some particularly unscrupulous real estate operations, such as the extremely well-known case of the Docklands in London, it is precisely the real estate operators that are

demanding greater control and coordination over the quality and quantity of work on the market. The implementation of formal and performance requirements that are mandatory, or at least highly influential, means that private operators find it more opportune to meet requests for high quality from local authorities in order to avoid wasting time and funds in continuing negotiation.

The Urban Task Force primarily, and then CABE, have placed great emphasis on instruments for planning preparation and coordination in order to ensure the quality of interventions for urban transformation. These strategic documents make it possible to balance the strict levels of quality demanded by local authorities with the requirements for flexibility needed to respond more easily to the market demands conditioning the private sector. The relationship between the different levels of planning guidance is not always and necessarily hierarchic, but rather dialectic. The 'entrepreneurial' feasibility of the design performance required by a planning document can be verified through the proposal of alternative, and more conciliatory, solutions with respect to the diverse needs of the various subjects involved. When this balance is not guaranteed, the plan risks failing at its task altogether. This was the case of the 'City Centre Masterplan' in Hull, for example. Despite the plan, according to assessment by Hull City built, the local Urban Regeneration Company, having already led to an overall investment of £906 million and future investment of a further £594 million Bondholderscheme Ltd (2011), it was nevertheless shelved in August 2010 as new administration and private developers deemed it too inflexible, as demonstrated by the numerous planning permissions processed in exception to local planning regulations.

The four main types of document that constitute the backbone of the Area Action Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents are the Urban Design Frameworks, the Development Briefs, the Masterplans and the Design Codes (Cowan 2002). The choice of how many, and which, of these documents to produce and the various drafting methods is the prerogative of local organisations. There are also cases, such as Manchester's 'Guide to Development', in which the guidelines contain no images and are limited to concise descriptions of the planning and formal principles required. Often the name and type of content of these instruments is confused. The term masterplan in particular, as interpreted by CABE in a special publication (CABE 2004a), indicates any act of physical planning on a large and medium scale, from the urban sector to the localised area of transformation, but in practice the term is often used to more specifically indicate this latter planning level.

The Urban Design Framework, or Urban Design Strategy, is a strategic planning document drafted for the most part to a city scale, although it can on occasion refer to single neighbourhoods. It is a two- or three-dimensional plan with the task of correlating the various spatial and regional governance policies outlined in the Local Development Framework and coordinating the possible, foreseen interventions on the basis of predefined objectives. It is therefore a comprehensive plan which is used mainly in case it becomes necessary to handle large programmes of intervention and transformation, in which the actions of diverse sectors converge, such as transport, social housing, traffic and mobility, the public realm, etc. Already at this level of planning, guidelines of an architectural or urban design nature can



Fig. 2.2 Southampton. Strengths, opportunities and constraints of the city centre (Southampton City Council 2001: 32. Courtesy of Southampton City Council)

be provided: access points, public and pedestrian space layouts, the height and massing of buildings or blocks, street alignment, the hierarchy and sections of the road network, relationship with the existing fabric, functional distribution, possible landmarks and areas or buildings of historical interest. For example, in the case of the ‘City Centre Urban Design Strategy’ in Southampton (Southampton City Council 2001), the document, introduced by a fairly in-depth area appraisal, was focused on the planning indications needed to meet the objectives set out by the Local Plan, which mainly revolved around the development of an economy connected to the trinity of tourism-culture-leisure at a metropolitan and regional level (Southampton City Council 2003). To this end, the policies provided by the plan (creation or redevelopment of the public realm, the sequential approach for commercial settlements, the defence and conservation of collective buildings, etc.) were translated, through a map of diagrams, into guidelines for the development, qualification or reinforcement of the routes (pedestrian especially) between the main gateways (such as the railway station), the historic town centre and the waterfront. It therefore indicated the public areas that required improvement and the most suitable points for the construction of landmarks that would function as visual references for the development of the new focus planned for the seafront area (Figs. 2.2 and 2.3). The ‘City Centre Urban Design Strategy’ was then completed by in-depth study of the design framework for strategic areas identified on the basis of the objectives outlined in the previous section. These, indicated as Character

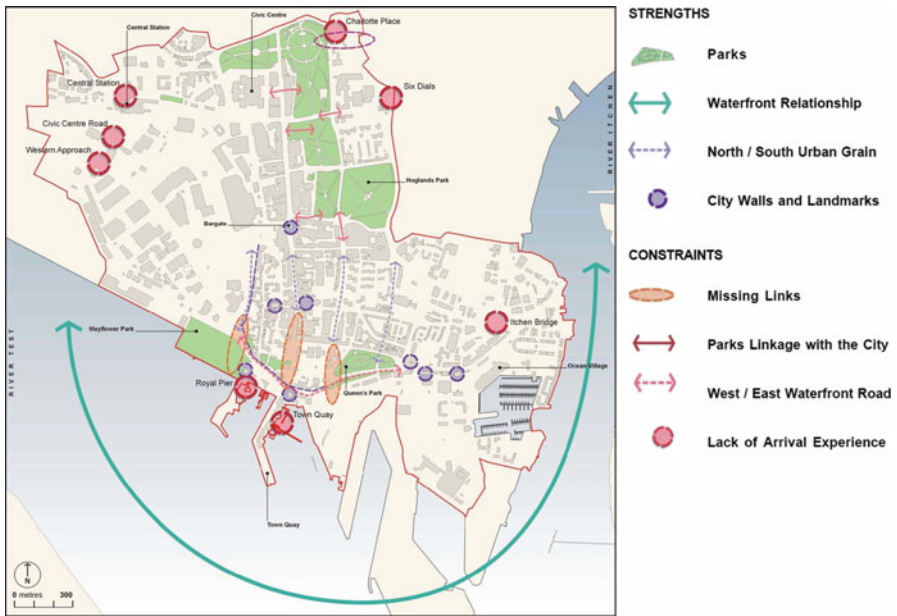


Fig. 2.3 Southampton. City centre urban design framework (Southampton City Council 2001: 36. Courtesy of Southampton City Council)

Areas, also analysed, where present, the fundamental places for the main and crucial projects of transformation and redevelopment (the ‘keynote projects’), supplying development frameworks with detailed indications on the form of buildings and public spaces, intended uses and the relationship with the context. Control over urban development is entrusted to this document and the ‘Development Design Guide’, a sort of design statement for Southampton, complementary to the ‘City Centre Urban Design Strategy’ aimed mainly at developers (Southampton City Council 2002) (Fig. 2.4).

The overall vision composed in this manner allows the streamlining of financial and political efforts by establishing a hierarchy of interventions and providing an overall framework of completion times. The drafting of the Urban Design Framework facilitates cooperation between the public and private sector and is vital in promoting the territory to this latter, illustrated in its crucial development lines and phases of transformation. In fact, the presence of guarantees provided by a document of intention and a time schedule constitutes enormous leverage for stimulating financing from the entrepreneurs.

The Development Briefs or Development Frameworks specify, on a neighbourhood scale, the design framework that regulates the interventions organised by the Urban Design Framework. In this case then, the architectural and urban design takes on a predominant significance, as more strategic and functional choices with regard to the goals of the city have already been resolved. These documents provide

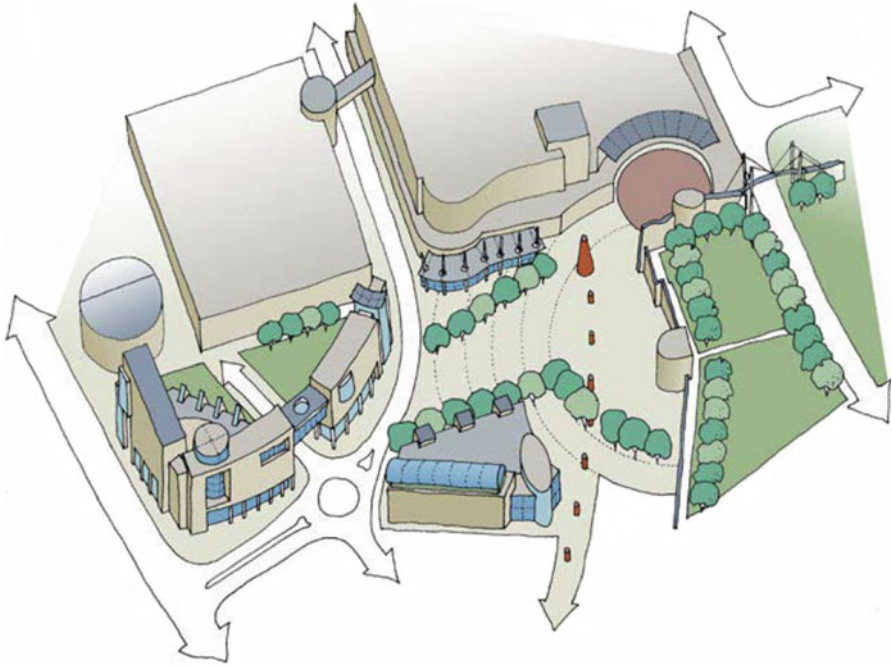


Fig. 2.4 Southampton. Potential development massing and open space configuration of West Quay III Phase 3 (Southampton City Council 2001: 83. Courtesy of Southampton City Council)

indications concerning the objectives and performance characteristics that the design proposal should take into consideration, specifying, depending on the size of the area in question, the main details that must be respected regarding quantity, construction and size. Referring once more to the Southampton case, some Development Frameworks were then further examined, in terms of urban and architectural character, functional expectations and the relationship with the context (public realm and existing historic buildings) through some Development Briefs, on the basis of which, in the West Quay III area, for example, it was possible to propose, as planned by Terry Farrell and Partners initially and Foreign Office Architects subsequently, masterplans that responded perfectly to the city scale concept of planning (Fig. 2.5).

Often the drafting of these documents, which due to the competence required are entrusted to external consultants in the majority of cases, is accompanied by diagrams, sketches and photographs, either as suggestions or more explicit requirements. These also illustrate the qualitative aspect of the expectations from local government.

The urban design masterplan, identified by the Urban Task Force as a fundamental instrument for ensuring the quality and competitiveness of urban development, constitutes, before any definitive realisation, the third and final level of supervision and definition of the design of places within schemes of a certain scale. As the roles and uses of the different components connected to the city and context have already been established, as well as the structure of spaces and main architectural connec-



Fig. 2.5 Southampton. 3D rendering of the new project for West Quay III Phase 3 designed by AZPA – Alejandro Zaera-Polo Architecture (Courtesy of AZPA)

tions in the area, the main objective of the masterplan is to pin down the formal result in a three-dimensional vision that is as close as possible to the final one, assessing the effective compliance of the forms planned with the requirements needed. Furthermore, the masterplan, as well as constituting a spatial model, acts as

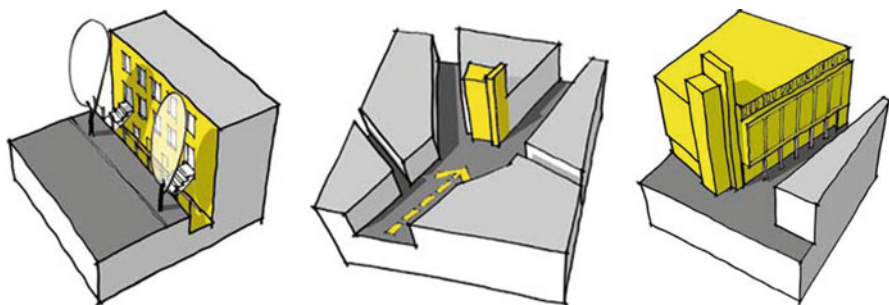


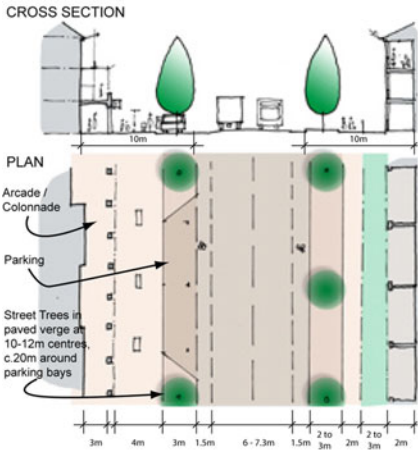
Fig. 2.6 Nottingham. Sketches of the Urban Design Guide giving guidance on the relationship between buildings and street, the use of landmark and the design of buildings (Building Good Manners) (Nottingham City Council 2009: 53, 68, 69. Courtesy of Urbed)

an implementation programme and therefore includes detailed information on funding terms, the phasing of works and relevant completion times. In fact, it is generally produced by promoters, whether they are private, public organisations or partnerships.

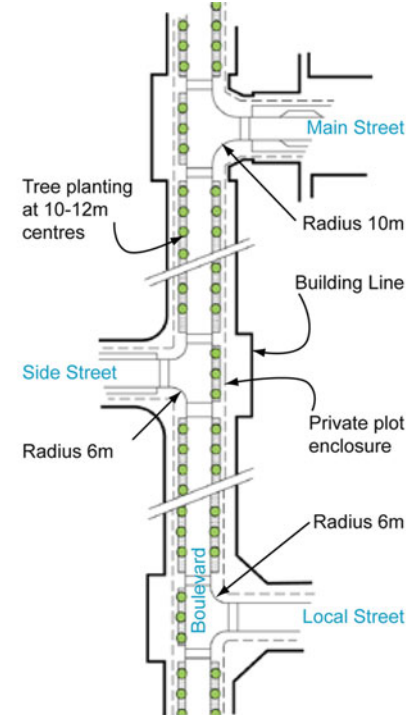
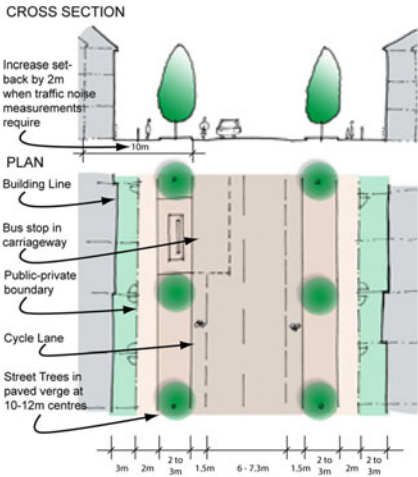
Finally, the Design Guidance regulates the architectural character of various types of intervention at a detailed level, through diagrams, drawings and photographs. It provides indications on various themes such as methods for expansion of houses or the design of residential open spaces, ensuring ‘from below’ respect of certain elementary formal regulations (Fig. 2.6). A particular aspect of this instrument is represented by the design codes, predefined abacuses of architectural and design solutions introduced by the PPS3 (Housing) on the model of examples taken from the American New Urbanism. These may vary notably depending on scale (from blocks to street furniture) and level of detail (from concise indications to dimensioned drawings) (Fig. 2.7). After a study period on 19 pilot projects, these began to come into use in the English system as well – despite it being correctly noted that this practice was already in use in England in Georgian times – and have been the focus of a manual published with CABE contribution (CLG and CABE 2006). In this case, the capacity to ensure the difficult equilibrium between the variety, which is derived from the designer’s freedom of expression, and the definition of a homogenous character for the entire settlement is a fundamental requirement. The first research reports deemed the first experimental results to be of notable interest due to the quality of the outcomes, both in formal and management terms (CABE 2005).

In addition to the instruments described above, local authorities also have the option of influencing the planning and formal quality of proposed interventions by making use of planning conditions that establish the conditions by which the private sector must abide in order to obtain the planning permission. A ministerial circular (11/95 of the then Department of Environment) sanctions exactly what is subject, or not, to this complex type of planning instrument: in general the planning condition is acceptable if it can be considered fair, meaning if it meets requirements of necessity, applicability, reason and significance for the plan and feasibility of the intervention. Control over elements of urban and architectural design can meet these

AT COMMUNITY FOCUS



GENERAL BOULEVARD



Boulevard junctions

Note that specific requirements for buildings located on Walker Road may apply, in connection with noise-related issues. Refer to sections 8.2.3 and 8.3 for guidance relating to service vents and window & door specifications.





Vehicle Crossings	Verge Surface	Footway Surface	Planting
PC Concrete Setts	PC Concrete Setts & Edging	PC Concrete Paving Flags	Semi-mature trees 10-12m cc
			

Fig. 2.7 Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne. Examples of design codes (Newcastle City Council 2007: 20. Courtesy of Newcastle City Council)

requirements, according to which it is possible to impose that certain planning (e.g. the use of certain materials or guidelines) or management characters be indicated and agreed upon, for example, that the work be completed in full, or that certain

parts of a large and complex project be subject to possible changes during the long realisation process. When the circumstances for imposing planning conditions do not arise – for example, and most frequently, in case of financial contributions by a private developer – the authorities in charge can then turn to the entering into of a legal agreement (under article 106 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 1990) to sanction the conditions for issuing the planning permission. In this case, planning obligations are used, which, in order to be accepted, must meet the same requisites of fairness as the planning conditions.¹⁵ It is also possible to include some lines of conduct in certain agreements with this method, relating to the formal quality and control over particular design elements, or instead request that certain services be guaranteed, for example, a certain percentage of affordable houses or cultural facilities at the service of the city or neighbourhood.

There is one final form of control over the quality of the designs nominated for planning applications, which is wielded by advisory panels: assessment bodies whose role was established and reinforced during the 1920s. These are civic committees of voluntary professionals who are experts in architectural and town planning disciplines and hold an advisory role for local government with regard to planning applications, offering critical analysis of the projects. Their opinion, inasmuch as it is often of a very high quality and unbiased – frequent rotation of the volunteers prevents the formation of lobbies – is not in itself binding. The conditions and regional coverage of the service, given its voluntary nature, may be very dissimilar in terms of skill and availability, depending on the context. Alongside more fragile cases that have little or no recourse to this instrument, there have been others in which several control bodies have been involved (CABE 2009; CABE et al. 2009). In the aforementioned Liverpool case for example the administration, besides relying on the advice of the local panel and CABE, both at a municipal level and in the URC Liverpool Vision, made also use of consultants specialising in Planning Management with particular focus on the quality of urban planning. Furthermore, Places Matter!, an organisation in the North West region that was once financed by the regional development agency NWDA, has planning consultancy duties very similar to those carried out by CABE (and in fact also financed by the same) (Biddulph 2010).

Other organisms that provide similar services, although mostly committed to the defence and protection of places rather than innovation, are the Civic Societies, local voluntary associations represented at a national level by the Civic Trust. Civic Societies establish very close contact with the city technical departments and in various cases can trigger a high level of interest among inhabitants. Other advisory panels operating in England are English Heritage, a public body cofinanced by the government, which works for the defence of historical heritage and the landscape, and the National Trust, which performs the same functions as English Heritage (but is only funded by its members), specifically through the purchase of valuable environmental areas and historic buildings (Vignozzi 1997).

¹⁵ Wherever possible, planning conditions are always preferable to planning obligations, mainly because they permit savings of time and money and avoid the bureaucratic complications required to draw up a further legal agreement on which to base the latter.

Despite this, as the second Urban Task Force report complains, in as much as it has been possible to appreciate an increase in planning quality overall, many new developments and buildings still fall below the standards that an apparatus of regulation and control of this nature should guarantee. Diverse reasons have been identified, but the fact must be attributed above all to the lack of attention paid by many organisations to the quality of the work that they commission or manage, prioritising economic and quantitative aspects. In general, despite efforts in that direction, both the demand's requests and the supply's proposals bear witness to extreme inertia and cultural impermeability with respect to ministerial indications and guidelines concerning architectural planning and urban design.

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Vescovi, F.

2013, XVIII, 173 p. 95 illus., 79 illus. in color.,

ISBN: 978-94-007-5631-1