LOCAL PLANS AND URBAN DESIGN

Les Sparks

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REDEVELOPMENT IN BIRMINGHAM

The establishment of the new Department of Planning and Architecture at Birmingham City Council in 1990 was one manifestation of the Council's commitment to Urban Design. It followed closely on the Birmingham Urban Design Study (BUDS) completed by Francis Tibbalds in April 1990 which, itself, was a follow-up to LDR's Open Space and Pedestrian Framework report of 1989. The creation of Centenary Square is the first product of this new approach to development in Birmingham.

For many years Birmingham had been associated with the now discredited methods of redevelopment practised in the 1960's and 70's. Renowned for pursuing its objectives with a singular vigour, Birmingham built more residential tower blocks than any other city outside London, completed its motorway style Inner Ring Road and ruthlessly swept away large areas of Victorian development to create those renowned monuments to the period, the Bull Ring Shopping Centre, the Rotunda office block, and the subterranean New Street Station.

THE HIGHBURY INITIATIVE

All these developments lacked the rich urban quality of the streets and the public and commercial buildings created in Joseph Chamberlain's time. It was at Chamberlain's former mansion home, Highbury, in 1988, that an international group of people from the arts, politics, and city planning met to review the state of Birmingham City Centre and consider future options.

There they seized upon the key relationship between economic activity and environmental quality. The aim was to create such an attractive environment in the City Centre that it drew further activity unto itself thereby creating a virtual upward spiral of enhanced economic activity and enhanced environmental quality - each feeding off and reinforcing the other. Put in these terms the question ceases to be "can we afford to incur expenditure upon environmental improvements and quality" but rather, "can we afford not to do so"? The answer was inescapable for a City seeking to establish itself as a major European centre.

There they forged a new approach to the development of central Birmingham, an approach that should turn the city around from being a place for cars to becoming a place for people. The central issue was the Inner Ring Road. This dual carriageway circuit with its grade-separated junctions and pedestrian subways had proved to be a "concrete collar" around the central core of the city. Land and property values inside the collar soared, whilst outside it there was severe dereliction and lack of investment. Movement across the Inner Ring Road, either on foot or by car was severely impeded, and the long dark and dangerous pedestrian subways are simply intolerable.

The American consultant, Don Hilderbrandt of LDR, was at Highbury and was subsequently commissioned by the City Council to develop his ideas for the Inner Ring Road. In his subsequent study he proposed downgrading the capacity of the road by the replacement of subways with "pelican crossings". He recommended that it be converted into a series of boulevards, with widened pavements, tree planting, and direct access to new buildings fronting onto the road. Developing the Highbury philosophy, he prepared a new framework of pedestrian routes through the central core and across the Ring Road into the various and distinctive inner city quarters surrounding it.

BIRMINGHAM URBAN DESIGN STUDY

The LDR study was complemented by the Urban Design Study carried out by Francis Tibbalds. This set down a vocabulary of design principles for development in the City Centre, directed at making it safer, more comfortable, convenient, attractive and more legible.

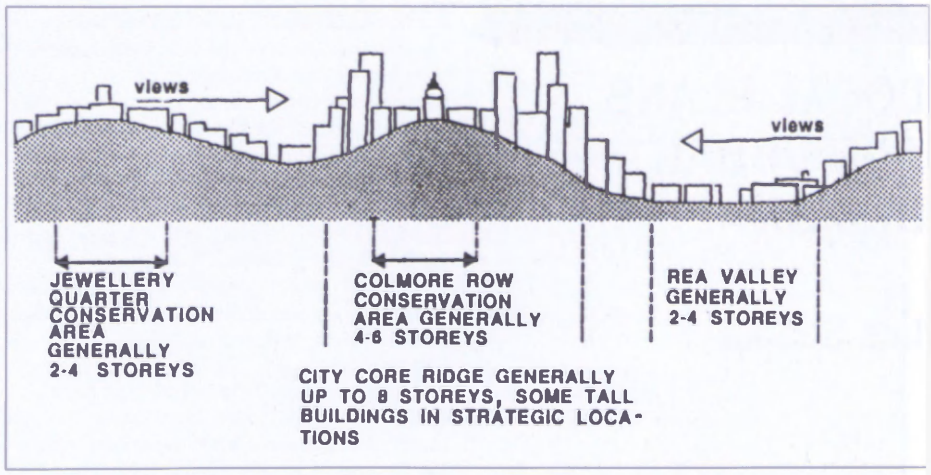
Birmingham is not an easy centre to "read". It does not have a major waterfront or a simple street pattern. Its geography has been further obscured by the intrusion of high buildings, by confusing subway systems, and by multi-level and decked structures which obliterate the natural topography.

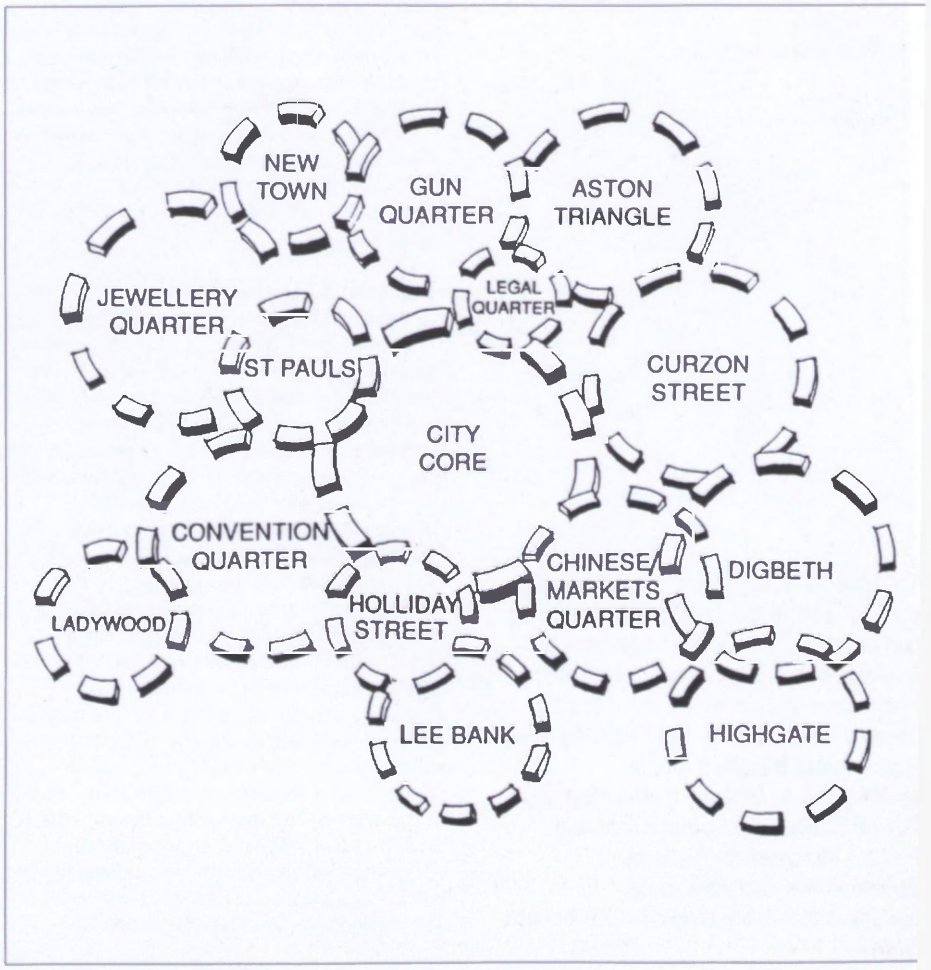
The Urban Design Study identifies important views and landmarks to be reinforced in the pattern of new

development. It makes the case for "gateway" buildings and buildings with strong architectural character on corner sites and junctions. It argues for new development to respect the city's natural topography, for high buildings to be located along the central ridge to identify the central core of the city, and for pedestrians to move about at ground level in preference to decks and subways.

Tibbalds deplored those developments which present a blank wall or car park grilles at ground floor level, and called for active uses both to enrich the pedestrian environment and enhance the informal "policing" of the street. He also called for the re-establishment of an urban structure in the form of streets and squares. Post-war redevelopments had generally ignored the street, siting new high rise buildings within cleared sites and surrounded by open spaces which are uncomfortable and unattractive - neither intimate and sheltered nor imposing and grand. The study shows how many of these spaces can be developed, reclaiming the land to beneficial use and re-establishing the lost geometry of the city's streets and "outdoor rooms". Open spaces should be threaded along pedestrian routes, designed to create a comfortable microclimate, and enriched with attractive paving, planting, lighting and public art.

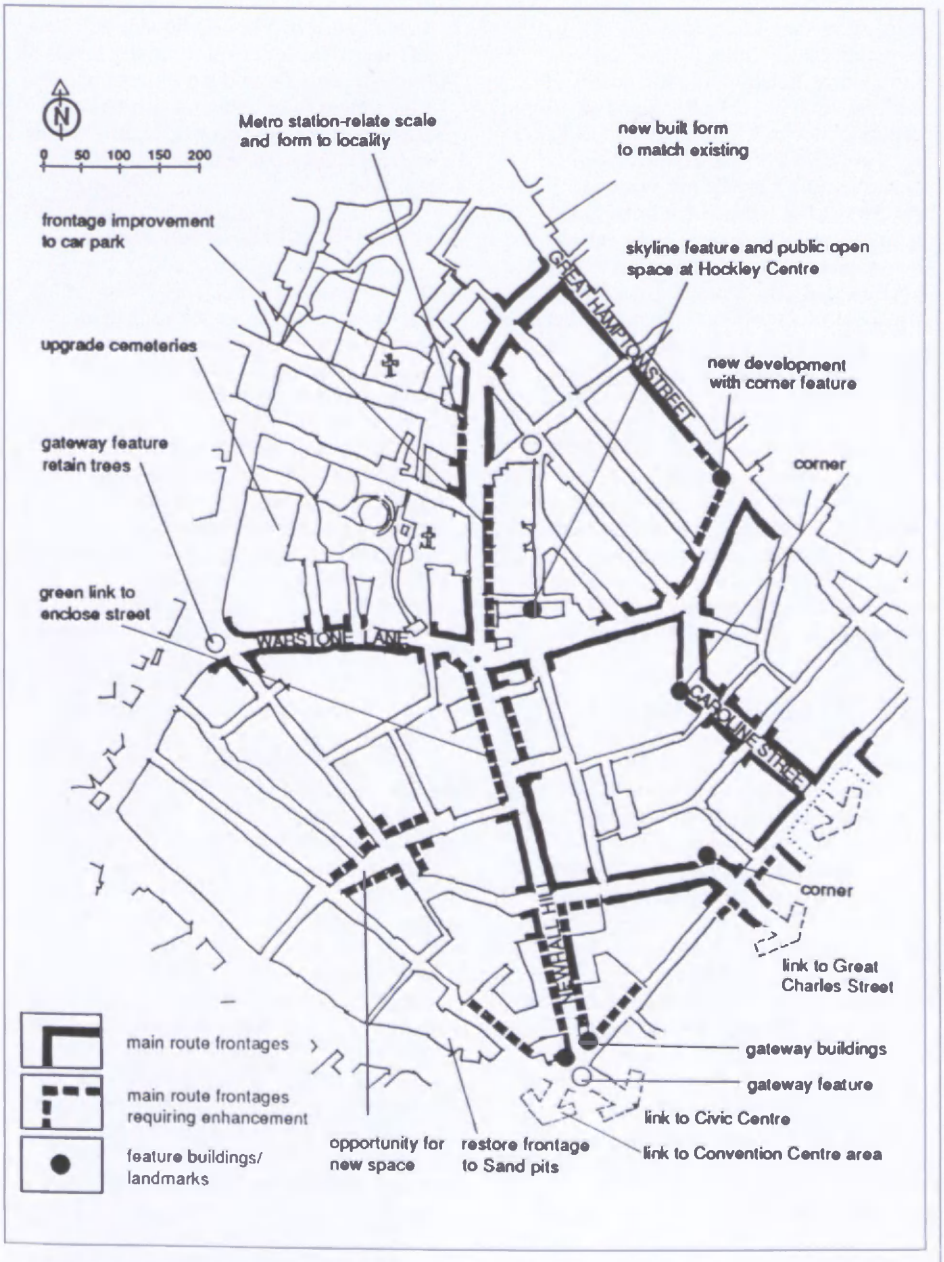
The Urban Design Study also identifies many opportunities for reinforcing the particular character and identity of Birmingham, and the distinctiveness of the various quarters surrounding the central core. Foremost amongst these opportunities is the extensive network of canals threading their way through and around the City Centre. Largely hidden from public view behind decaying industrial buildings, these waterways represent the City's greatest opportunity, together with the conservation of a wealth of fine Victorian architecture, to transform Birmingham's image in the eyes of the world.





LOCAL PLANS

The Unitary Development Plan for the City makes broad reference to the objectives in the Urban Design Study set within the overall strategy for the City Centre. This



Extracts from Birmingham Design Study
Top left: Diagrammatic section NW to SE showing how buildings in the valleys could be kept to a smaller scale and in the core and on the ridge higher landmark buildings could denote the heart of the city centre.
Bottom left: Areas of different character.
Above: Townscape opportunities in the Jewellery Quarter.

strategy envisages the expansion of central area activities beyond the Inner Ring Road, permeating the surrounding quarters out to the Middle Ring Road. It sets out the programme for enhanced public transport, including a new light rail system - and the complementary restraint of motor traffic. It makes the case for a diversification of activities in the City Centre, particularly the growth of leisure activities, hotels, and residential accommodation to maintain a city centre population around the clock and reverse the post-war trend towards a 6.00pm "curfew" when the shops and offices close down. In general terms the UDP strategy is directed at attracting people and activities back into an expanding City Centre.

Specifically in relation to Urban Design, the UDP contains the following statement : "In general terms development should :

(a) Reflect the scale, massing, materials, height and density of buildings which are specific to that locality, and which emphasise the unique characteristic of the various quarters in the City Centre. In some special circumstances high rise development providing a landmark building of exceptional architectural quality may be appropriate. These should be limited in number and restricted to those locations necessary to orientate or terminate key views.
(b) Be human in scale and capable of incremental construction thereby avoiding monolithic redevelopment.
(c) Emphasise and where appropriate reinstate street frontages. Ground floor activity consistent with a pedestrian environment should incorporate lively mixed uses but strictly avoid car parking fronting the street. Corner features should be developed as markers and should help to define the street boundary.
(d) Reflect and reinforce the natural topography of the City Centre, emphasising the City Core and the ridge which runs from Five Ways through to Aston University.
(e) Enhance orientation and legibility by creating gateway developments, landmarks and features at principal points of access into the City Centre.
(f) Improve pedestrian movement by providing route markers, landscaping,

street level activity and by allowing easy physical and visual linkages between the various quarters in the City Centre. Moreover buildings and open space should be clearly expressed even at night time.

(h) Contribute to a softer City Centre by incorporating public open space and landscaping elements particularly along the main pedestrian routes.

(i) Enhance the quality of existing buildings by means of upgrading facades, improving street frontages and shop design and by the use of consistent street furniture."

But a Unitary Development Plan for a city of one million inhabitants is essentially a broad-brush structure plan. The embodiment of urban design principles is emerging more strongly in the local planning frameworks, development briefs and development control activities of the City, and in the processes by which these are pursued.

IMPLEMENTING URBAN DESIGN

Urban Design is essentially a corporate, interdisciplinary activity. The combining of architects and planners in the new Department has given this process a valuable impetus. Architects are now routinely brought into all planning work at the local scale through the establishment of project teams to work on area studies, and the identification of consultant roles within the Department for planning control.

Inter-departmental teams are established to tackle urban regeneration in a comprehensive way (through Integrated Area Initiatives). These exercises bring together the physical planning with the economic, educational and social issues. Urban Design is seen to have an important role in the Council's current City Challenge bid and takes its place alongside wider policy considerations including aspects of political devolution and decentralisation of Council services.

But to concentrate specifically on urban design I will focus on two areas of work, the City Centre and the South Birmingham Study.

The City Centre philosophy, described already, is being pursued through a series of inter-departmental working parties looking at specific topics such as remodelling the Inner Ring Road, introducing housing into the centre, car parking strategy, enhancing and developing the canal network. As lead Chief Officer for the City Centre, I have within the Department a City Centre Planning Team (as part of the Urban Design Division) which deals with project management and development control. I have also recently appointed a City Centre Manager to act as the focal point for communication between the public, private and voluntary sectors such as the Council, police, retail and business community. A group of senior Chairmen, including the Leader of the Council, meet monthly as an informal Steering Group to give political support and direction to this programme. A specific budget for City Centre Enhancement with a rolling three year programme has been established under the management of the Planning Committee which acts as client for major projects involving a number of Departments.

THE CITY CENTRE PROJECTS

Two such projects are the current pedestrianisation work and the series of schemes to remodel the Inner Ring Road. The pedestrianisation of New Street and Victoria Square follows the principles of the LDR study and completes the first major pedestrian route from the new Centenary Square, across a remodelled section of the Inner Ring Road, through the core area to the Bull Ring. The redevelopment of the Bull Ring by London & Edinburgh Trust will eventually continue the route out across the Inner Ring Road to the markets area.

The work is being project managed by my City Centre team, with the landscape architects in the Department of Recreation and Community Services as lead designers on this occasion, supported by the City Engineers Department. Centrepiece of the project is the creation of the new Victoria Square - a central Civic Space overlooked by the Council House and Town Hall. Previously never more than a busy traffic junction and a grass slope where a church once stood, the removal of traffic provides the opportunity to create a grand and formal space as a central focus for the City.

Centrepiece of Victoria Square will be a large water feature, exploiting the levels of the site to provide two large pools linked by a cascade. The Indian artist, Dhruva Mistry, is producing bronze figures for the two pools and stone sculptures to stand alongside.

THE SOUTH BIRMINGHAM PROJECT

The South Birmingham Study is a very different project. The Council had been under pressure to come forward with proposals for increased highway capacity to accommodate traffic from the newly completed M40. It pulled out for public consultation the Engineers' longstanding plans for a dual carriageway along the A34 radial route from the outer suburbs to the Middle Ring Road. This is the old Stratford Road which passes through the Inner Suburbs of Sparkhill and Sparkbrook with their predominantly Asian communities. Stratford Road is a linear shopping centre serving these communities along its considerable length. The dual carriageway would have demolished property along one side of the road and destroyed it as a shopping centre. Public reaction was predictable and the scheme was abandoned.

Instead my Department is now leading on an interdepartmental local planning project which examines the traffic issues within a wider brief. This shows that, with careful urban design, it may be possible to have the best of both worlds. By classifying sections of the A34 as "High Road" or "High Street" it is possible to identify areas where traffic interests can predominate and those where they should be subservient. In the "High Street" it should be possible to keep the traffic moving by carving lay-bys for parking and servicing out of the generously wide pavements and by the stricter prohibition of parking within the road space. This should ensure four lanes for traffic of which the two inner lanes could become bus-only lanes. The free-flowing traffic would be subject to calming measures with wide "speed tables" at the main pedestrian crossing points. Environmental enhancement and building refurbishment should follow the abandonment of the former road improvement lines and the release of a

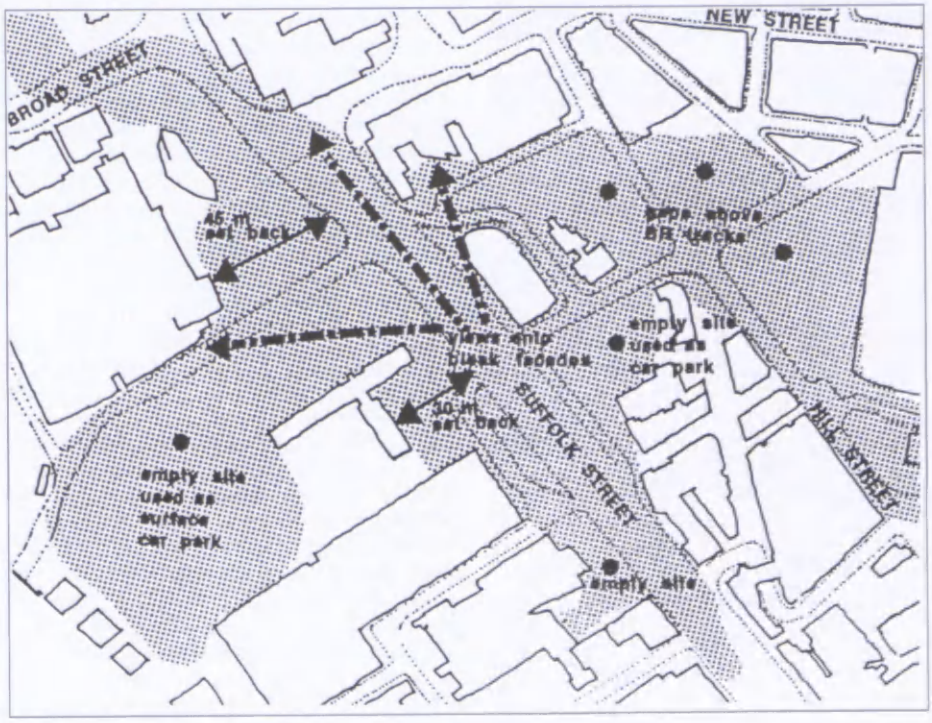
blight which has affected this route since 1913! An appraisal of the route has led to the identification of the key buildings in architectural, historic or townscape terms which must now be carefully retained for posterity.

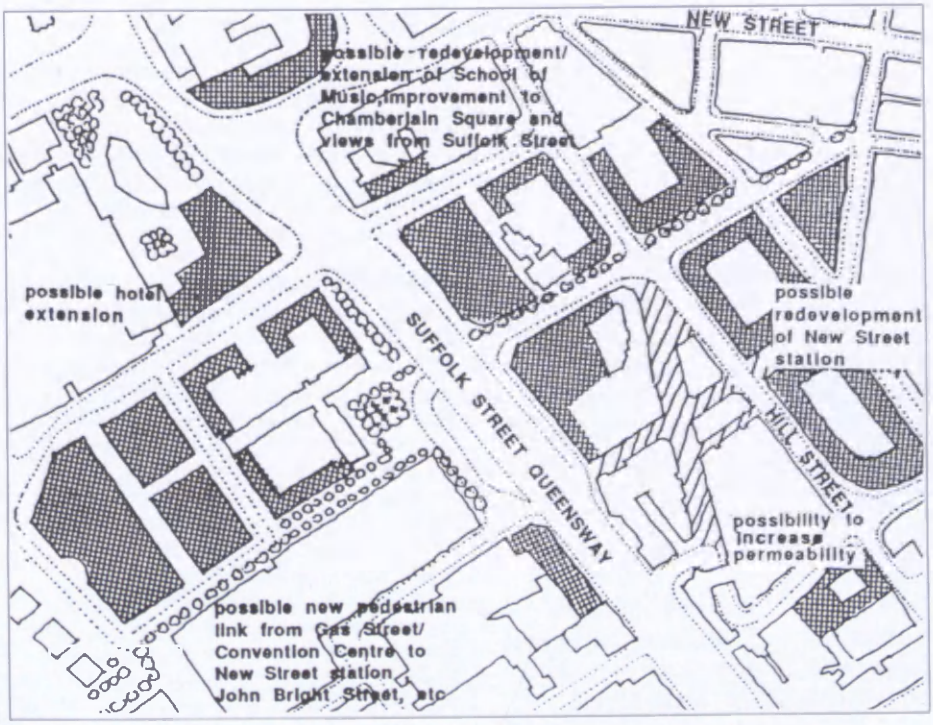
CLOSING THE GAPS

Birmingham is now on course to carry through a wide programme of urban design work. Successful implementation of these projects depends upon co-operation amongst a range of professionals in different Departments of the Council working to common objectives. This can be an enjoyable and rewarding process, but it also requires a great deal of negotiation, persuasion, and considerable tact and diplomacy.

Nevertheless the basic urban design objectives are easily understood and shared: creating an attractive and safe public environment; designing new buildings which are appropriate to their context; ensuring city centres are constantly occupied by securing a range of activities including residential accommodation; preserving buildings and links with the past; replacing the pollution and congestion of motor traffic with improved public transport; these are not the exclusive preserve of any particular profession, but can only be achieved by different professions working together. There is also a role for the visual artist, as demonstrated by Tess Jaray's work in Centenary Square. The poor quality of so much post-war development is attributable to the conceptual and operational gaps between architects, planners, landscape architects, developers, engineers, valuers, surveyors and others with an input into the design of urban areas.

On an earlier occasion in Cardiff - the RTPI Conference of 1988, the then President of the Institute, Francis Tibbalds, chose as his presidential theme - "Closing the Gaps". This is what we are trying to do in Birmingham. ■





Top: Part of the canal network
Middle: Analysis of the Broad Street - Suffolk Street area
Bottom: Proposals for enhancement.

PEOPLE AND CARS

Ewart Parkinson

The theme, the Practice and Implementation of Urban Design, are issues Ewart Parkinson has been involved with since he came to Cardiff as the first City Planning Officer in the early 1960s. Encouraged by the then embryonic Welsh Office, the City Council decided to appoint a City Planning Officer because of the concern they shared that Cardiff was suffering in economic, social and environmental terms. This in turn had led to a City Council with little confidence in the future of its city.
Colin Buchanan was also appointed, together with W.S. Atkins and Economic Consultants, to work as part of a team in forming some vision of the future.

I came with two convictions : the crucial significance of the human scale in our cities and the need to promote a highly participatory style of decision making. I remember being asked at many of the hundreds of public discussions I attended how I measured the good city ? I used to reply that the city ...."should give pleasure and convenience to its citizens and .....surprise and delight to strangers." Three decades later I still hold these convictions. Indeed, I believe they are widely held in Cardiff and that they have withstood the practical tests of time and experience.

Cardiff central area now has the twin characteristics of being highly compact and with a pedestrian dominated environment. A series of superb shopping arcades inherited from the turn of the last century has been supplemented by new arcades, malls and pedestrian streets to create a complex network of pedestrian routes and places.

But these characteristics have not been achieved without continuous dialogue (I am trying to avoid the word argument) between the dozens of organisations which have a valid and understandable interest in the centre of the city. The heart of any major city is an incredibly complex organism -"an organised body with connected interdependent parts sharing a common life" Like a skilled surgeon, one interferes with this organism only after a great deal of thought and care and then only with the utmost delicacy and sensitivity.

URBAN CHANGE

The first stage in the management of urban change is to work towards some common shared vision of the future. Perhaps "strategy" is the right word. But I think I prefer a "sense of direction" as the phrase to describe this shared vision. Inevitably much of the detail will remain shrouded in the mists of the future. But some detail needs to be examined at the outset. We looked at buildings, places and streets which represented our heritage; not necessarily listed or scheduled by the cognoscenti, but loved by the people of the city. You can soon tell what people love by their questions which illuminate their fears. "Are you going to pull down ....?" tells you *that that is their fear* and what it is they care about. These artefacts we defined as *"fixed factors"* around which we had to plan change.

Happily the people of Cardiff have had a shared vision about the direction we have taken these past decades. That is the value of public involvement. I suppose the Cardiff Barrage is the first major development project which has been divisive to our community. I say that, not to support or oppose it, but to highlight the remarkable consensus that has underpinned our development strategies and which has survived changes in political control.

I see the conflict between people and vehicles as the most destructive force on the quality of our urban environment. Our public realm - our public spheres, our public province, our public domain - has become the vehicle realm. We need to tackle that obscene heresy with all the talent and commitment we can muster; and I do not believe in compromises. I spent nearly ten years arguing for the removal of all vehicles - including a hundred buses an hour - from Queen Street. That was necessary to transform it from a traffic street into a social place.

THE TIME DIMENSION

When we seek to improve the quality of the public realm, we need infinite patience and persistence. We need to think carefully about the dimension of time. Changes can occur in ten years which are incapable of being achieved in five years. We need time not only to prepare the strategies and to discuss the implications with all those affected - for good or ill - by those strategies. We also need time to find the financial resources. But, above all, we need time to gain credibility. In the course of a long life in managing urban change, I have come to the conclusion that if the ideas are right then the money will not present really fundamental problems. But the gaining of credibility for those ideas can become a really phenomenal task.

We can afford to be patient and persistent because cities have a long life and are very durable organisms. Twenty years in achieving fundamental economic, social and environmental change may seem a long time from the perspective of the individual.

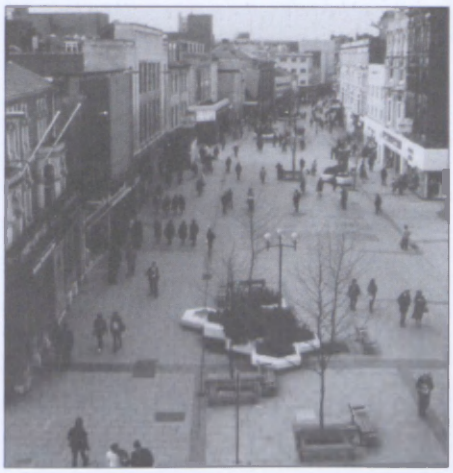
From the perspective of the living organism of the city it is but the twinkling of an eye. I remember when a major Queen Street bank said it could not possibly agree to removing vehicles because it was a major cash centre serving the region and security vehicles needed to call there throughout the day. It took two years of negotiations to get agreement on the cash centre being relocated - at considerable expense - to another office. A few years later the bankers were talking to me saying that this had released valuable banking space and provided greater efficiency in their cash handling. Everyone benefitted. People need time to adjust to new ideas; if this time is not allowed then the project, like a ship, can build up a huge bow-wave of resistance that can swamp the project.

I am not one of those who campaign against the motor car : I can see its remarkable contribution to the quality of life. But if our urban living is to be urbane, then cars and indeed all vehicles, must be eliminated from our key public spaces. One critical feature of our inter-connected pedestrian network in Cardiff is that it is all on the same level. Push-chairs, wheel-chairs and people with disabilities can move right across the central area and enter shops, toilets and public spaces without kerbs or steps. This has taken twenty years to achieve : it began with a conference on planning for the disabled, the elderly and mothers with young children held in central Cardiff in 1971.

Finally, I make a plea for quality in our surroundings. Assessing whole-life costs, rather than initial costs, will assist us in selecting materials of quality for our pavings, our street furniture, our public art. Never let the vandals win : reinstate and repair faster than the vandals do their damage.

I conclude with a final simple plea to look at urban design, land-use and traffic with one synoptic vision. My experience at Cardiff and now with W.S. Atkins testifies to the simple truth that if the people are to have a public realm which is convenient and pleasant for its citizens and a surprise and delight to strangers then the trilogy of design, land use and traffic has to be handled with vision, sensitivity and patience without end. ■

Right: Queen Street pedestrianised
Middle: Church Street before and after pedestrianisation
Bottom: Trinity Street before and after pedestrianisation



URBAN DESIGN FOR SMALL TOWNS

Richard Parnaby

It is commonly agreed that the British statutory planning system has been outstandingly successful at protecting the countryside from urban sprawl. The complex arrangements for the preparation of plans, development control, appeals and the protection of historic buildings constitute an effective, if cumbersome, means of making decisions about the location and arrangement of development. However few would claim that this administrative system has been instrumental in creating coherent attractive urban places. Not only has it failed in large cities which have been subject to extensive redevelopment; but it has also failed even to maintain the visual qualities of our small towns and villages where changes have generally been incremental and small in scale. It is true that statutory procedures have helped to preserve some of our most important old buildings and districts through the listing of buildings and the designation of conservation areas but the system has proved itself incapable of creating good new urban places.

I write as an architect in private practice in the small Welsh border town of Abergavenny, where I have seen continuing change (and progressive degradation) in the urban fabric during the twelve years in which I have lived and worked there. From this experience it appears clear to me that the creation of good urban places must involve a much more positive role for planning.

Towns must be viewed as physical artefacts rather than just as abstract systems of functional and social relationships: they must be deliberately designed. The design of towns is a public responsibility which by its very nature cannot be left in the hands of the private sector. The consideration of the formal and spatial qualities of urban places should be an integral part of a "plan-led" development process. The only agency that is in a position to address urban design issues is the local planning authority; the most appropriate tool the local plan. While I recognise that the role of a local plan is to set out the policy framework of development control I believe that the visual quality of urban places cannot be improved unless the plans produced by local planning authorities include explicit guidance on the form of future development in relation to the existing urban fabric. It may be that changes the scope of local planning which may be inconsistent with the values of a pluralistic market -orientated society. Perhaps I should not hanker for orderly, beautiful towns but rather learn to love the messy variety of the urban scene celebrated by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in 'Complexity and Contradiction and Learning from Las Vegas' or 'The Collage City' identified by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter. It may be that my reactions represent an irrational nostalgia for picturesque order or is simply an anachronistic view, out of tune with current cultural realities. Perhaps I should learn to love the more difficult approach of the new economic order.

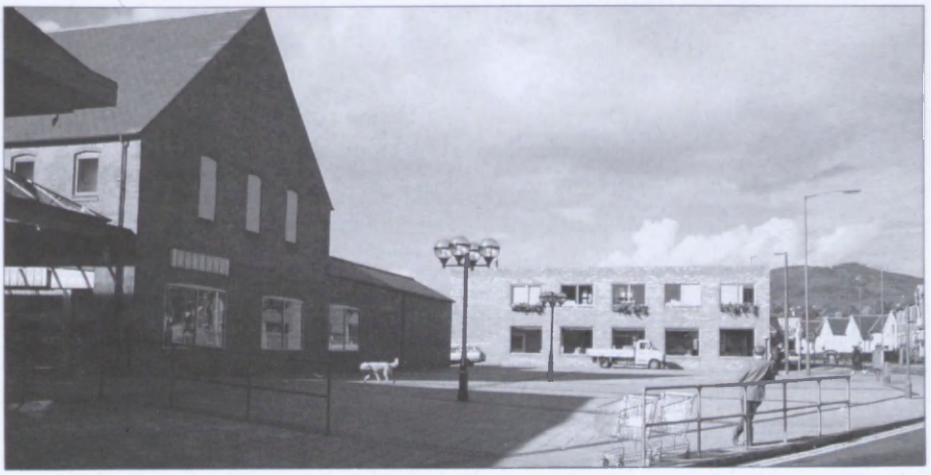
WHAT IS URBAN DESIGN?

For the present purpose I understand the term "urban design" to mean "the process by which the public spaces of a town come into being, are modified and maintained". Urban Design in modern Britain happens more or less by accident. Growth and renewal of the urban fabric proceeds piecemeal by the development of individual sites. The planning framework consists of structure and local plans which are verbal and abstract rather than visual. Urban-scale design decisions are rarely co-ordinated and usually are made by default. No public agency is responsible for consideration of the formal and visual characteristics of settlements as a complete artefact - this has certainly been the case in Abergavenny. Every new building that is created and every modification to a building is set in a physical context. The abstract system of development plans and other "material considerations" may be seen as the legal and administrative context to which acts of development also respond. There are, of course, also cultural and economic contexts - which are concerned, on the one hand, with issues of (among many others) architectural style and, on the other, with financial viability, resource allocation and building economics. The public realm is shaped by the decisions of all the participants in the development process: developers, designers, planners, politicians and consumers. All these are urban designers. But urban design is rarely an explicit goal. I suggest that there is a need for a more deliberate approach to shaping urban artefacts. A starting point for that deliberate design effort is the existing statutory planning system.

ABERGAVENNY

Abergavenny, a town which, although it retains much of its pre 1939 fabric, has experienced rapid change since the second world war - during the time that the modern planning system has been in operation. The change continues, slowed, temporarily, by recession. Much of the ancient fabric was destroyed in the name of slum clearance and modernisation in the sixties; more was destroyed in the name of economic regeneration in the eighties. The new fabric is, at best, architecturally undistinguished and unresponsive to established formal relationships.

This small market town lies on the banks of the Usk in Gwent. Tourist guides call it, with some justification, the "Gateway to



Wales". It remains a market town serving a wide area of the Border Country of north Gwent and south Herefordshire. Overlaid on that agricultural inheritance is a modern economy dominated by health care - the town's three hospitals, taken together, are the largest employer. There is also some light industry and a thriving shopping centre. There is a considerable population of commuters who work in the former mining towns of the South Wales valleys and the coastal urban centres of Cardiff and Newport.

The pattern of urban growth in Abergavenny is typical of many small towns in the U.K. The urban core evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on river terraces on the north bank of the Usk - a town site occupied since Roman times. There has been extensive peripheral residential expansion in the twentieth century - but firm planning policies have ensured that there is still a clear urban edge. In the last thirty years the process of redevelopment of the core has accelerated - recent projects have been on much larger sites than was typical of building in earlier times.

In the mid 1980s a number of disused and underused sites immediately adjacent to the town's main shopping streets were assembled by the Land Authority for Wales (LAW). The resulting site was seen by potential commercial developers as large enough to accommodate a viable shopping development. This is unexceptionable: LAW has carried out the task for which it was created - assembling a viable site for commercial development to revive the local economy. Unfortunately the built result - commercially successful as it has been - is an urban design disaster. The form ignores local topography and the tectonic character of the surrounding town; serviceable and attractive traditional buildings were unnecessarily demolished (see top two photos) to make way for the new buildings. The architectural "treatment" of the scheme is entirely foreign to the local context and the huge size of the development in relation to the town emphasises the negative impact of the scheme.

Now the town is faced with proposals for large peripheral retail development including a suggestion that the thriving

livestock market be moved from its long-standing town centre site to an edge of town location with more convenient road access. In addition major road proposals will fundamentally affect the perception of the town in its spectacular setting in the Vale of Usk, flanked by the Blorenge to the south and the Black Mountains to the north. None of these proposals appear to have been considered in relation to their unique urban setting by their designers; there were no substantial urban design policies in the relevant development plans against which they could be judged. This is not to suggest that the developments should not take place; that the town should forever remain as it was the day I first saw it. Rather it is to suggest that new development has both positive and negative effects on the quality of the place. Most if not all the benefits of recent projects have been non- visual (the arrival of Safeway, more convenient vehicle circulation and more extensive pedestrianisation). The visual and formal effects have been generally negative - intrusive architectural design, unsympathetic to local building traditions and not bringing the best of newer design ideas to town. A serious modern or even post-modern work might have been acceptable. Above all huge capital sums have been spent and in the process great opportunities have been lost. We have no new urban spaces of any quality; no consideration has been given to the creation of a network of pedestrian and cycle routes; the new developments have not taken the lead in providing better public lighting, tree planting or the opening of significant vistas.

AN URBAN DESIGN COMPONENT FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

Existing development plans are essentially concerned with controlling development and preserving existing qualities rather than proposing a vision of possible future form. The Abergavenny Local Plan - and its successor now under consideration the Monmouth Borough Plan - is typical in that its only images are Ordnance Survey extracts overlaid with two dimensional "proposals". Much of the content is sensible, indeed essential. There is scope for lengthy debate on the details of its contents but that debate can, given the current concerns of institutionalised planning and planners, only be on matters of abstract policies which deal with the location and density of development, car parking provision, the alignment of roads and so on.

If the qualities of towns as architectural experiences are a legitimate goal of planning, plans must include guidance on formal and visual matters. An urban design component of a local plan should include:

- Analysis of existing building typology
- analysis of urban spaces and the structure of the public realm.
- Identification of development and urban design opportunities - for example preservation and creation of important views and definition of new urban spaces.
- Design of a coherent system of pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Guidance on building form in a rationalistic typological way rather than in terms of architectural style: a model may be found in the Pattern Language approach of Christopher Alexander.
- Guidance on the design of paving and street lighting.
- A co-ordinated policy for open space, tree planting and wildlife habitat.

CONCLUSION

Planning has retreated from its Utopian roots - for good reasons. However, I submit there is a place for more vision within the local planning system - without compromising the status of development plans as policy documents mediating between the various conflicting forces which shape our towns. The urban environments which we admire tend to be either historic towns which were the product of a homogeneous culture, limited technology, locally produced materials, and incremental development process based on locally generated capital (Venice, the British market town or the old towns of Holland) or environments that were created by powerful autocratic, commercial or bureaucratic organisations in which design was centralised and the development process closely controlled (the Paris of Haussman, Georgian London or the early Garden Cities). We live in a pluralistic

society with a varied and extensive technological resources, cheap energy, and concentrated capital.
This tends to result in relatively large developments in styles that are determined hy a nationwide or international culture and materials that are widely distributed. The challenge for urban designers is to devise a development control process that puts design - the consideration of formal and visual qualities of places - nearer the top of its agenda. Urban design must be a matter for the administrative and bureaucratic process, for politically controlled state power - and community power. ■

Top: View of Abergavenny in its spectacular setting in the Vale of Usk. Right: Built form of Abergavenny before (on the left) and after recent commercial development (on the right).

Richard Parnaby is an architect and partner in the practice of Brown and Parnaby formed in Abergavenny, Wales in 1980. He has worked in private practice in Liverpool and Vancouver, Canada. He is a member of RIBA Council and the Institute's Membership and Environment and Energy Committees.

BIG SITES - ARCHITECTURE WRIT LARGE OR CREATING A SETTING

David Walton

David Walton is an architect and planner and partner in Llewelyn-Davies Planning Ltd. which is involved in international consulting.

Top: Orgreave, Sheffield - a new "working village" in the 'grand manner' on formerly contaminated land.
Middle left: Shahestan Pahlavi, Tehran - plan for the new city centre.
Middle right: Kowloon Bay, part of the working model - not perhaps a sense of human scale in the Poundbury manner, but half a million people will enjoy the largest planned public realm in the city.
Bottom: Barking Reach, East London - a riverside promenade fronting a realistically suburban promenade.

When asked to make a presentation on The Public Realm and Urban Design, I gave myself this title. I wish I had not, and I do not intend to stick too closely to the theme. Nevertheless, the reason for the frustration is relevant. A client had required a plan for an area of inner-city wasteland of considerable size. It had to meet commercial criteria, be capable of development in step-by-step packages, be acceptable to the transportation planning authorities, and so on.

We produced our report and the specified "model". The proposals for a complex new area of city were thoroughly researched and tested in valuation, cost, transportation and engineering terms. The model (at 1:2500 scale) was designed to show the sort of setting - streetscape, building lines and forms, open space and landscape structure - within which a quality environment could emerge and which was in no way architecturally deterministic. We saw this as the later job of individual architects for particular buildings.

In parallel, a developer decided to try to "bump" the client into a development agreement with a scheme of his own. The developer's model was large and very impressive - 1:500 scale - and suggested the form and nature of the intended architecture throughout.

Our model sat on a table, his needed a very large conference room and took 24 hours to move and re-assemble.

The result has been a stand-off - no decision, no direction, no progress. The client's original brief to us had been clear - now the client body has been thrown into confusion by attractive promises which may not be fulfilled in the end.

After this experience, I was amused recently by Ben Elton's opinions of the models we make:

"Architectural models are like the sluggish, hairy caterpillar which turns into the delicate beautiful butterfly. Unfortunately, with architectural models the process is reversed."

I intend to discuss the parameters which we find influence our work, and then return to the issues raised in the title.

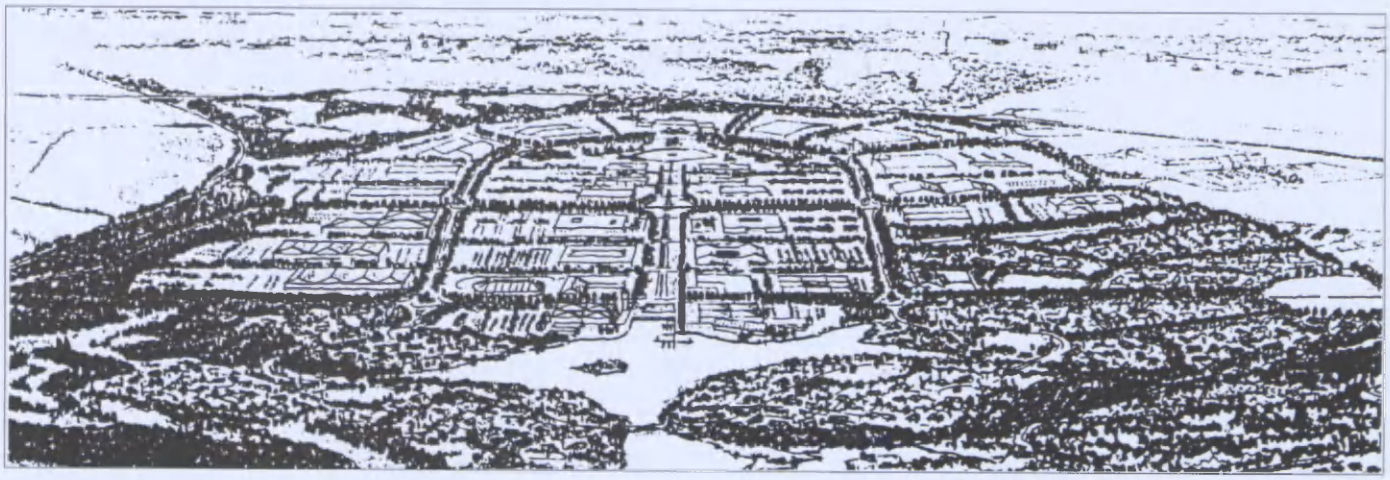
THE WORK AND APPROACH

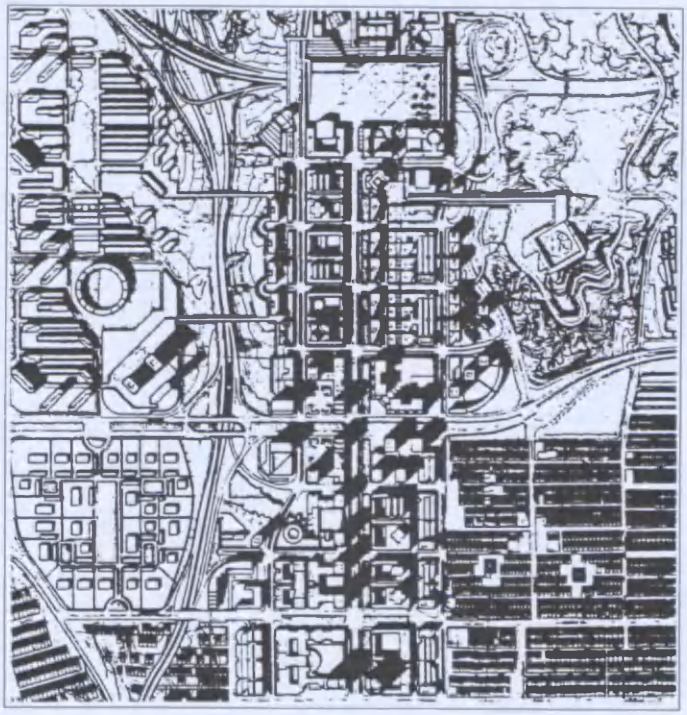
Llewelyn-Davies Planning are consultants in planning, economics and development. This is important because, although we have architects and landscape architects within Llewelyn-Davies, the range of social planning, economics, landscape, transportation and engineering skills provides a wide view and a robust base to our work. Our starting point is understanding the essence of a design problem, its setting, time scale, social and economic milieu and the constraints within which decisions are made. The process involves a balancing act between practicality and vision.

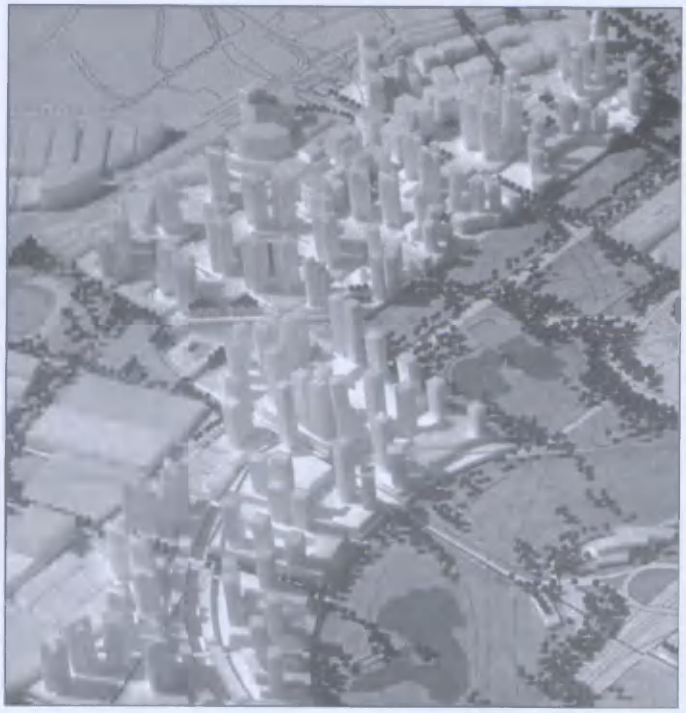
Our work ranges from major green field schemes to the regeneration of inner-city brown field sites, from intricate "knitting-in" bits of city which have become divorced from each other to making new communities from redundant Victorian landscapes and buildings. We also work overseas in different cultures and economies.

We start with a clean sheet and set about understanding the context, constraints and possibilities. Concepts are generated and tested, and a range of different solutions emerge. Thus the concept of Ashford Great Park was the idea of a green heart and spine acting as a collector of activities. Here, because of the rural nature of the area, the concern was to generate a soft backdrop to urban form. The concept for Barking Reach reflects a seaside esplanade with a suburban hinterland. For Tattenhoe, a final sector of Milton Keynes being designed for a consortium of housing developers, a grand suburban design using woodlands, streams, village greens, parkland and rural avenues is seen to be appropriate. A new City park in a valley running through from the city to the green belt is being designed at Orgreave, Sheffield, as the framework for development when British Coal cease open-cast mining. The Mall and Newtown in Cardiff provided a new large-scale formal piece of City in the grand manner. Utterly different concepts have been generated in places as varied as Hong Kong, Iran, China and Jordan.

Our urban design concepts are tested in many ways : environmental and social







impact, financial viability, phasing and practicality as well as, of course, from a design point of view. To follow the emerging concept with its own innate rules can lead to a certain inexorability and predictability in design. We consider it important to establish the rules - then break them. It is this tension which can help define the character of particular places.

Within this rather abstract paradigm, there are key aspects which concern us. We see as one of our design objectives the need to resolve the conflict between historical precedent and modern relevance. Much of our work is involved in creating places. As urban designers we have to define places without designing buildings. The reality today is not church spires, corner shops, horizontal segregation and historical elements which we can use as part of the design vocabulary. Instead we have cars, internalised shopping malls, pretend streets and no-go areas. We are caught between the Chartered Surveyor, Leon Krier and the Highways Department.

Our main concern is the user and, generally, this means the public. We believe in an urbanism involving people's aspirations, activities, their relationships, streets and spaces and a sense of human scale. Our approach is geared to these needs, responding to often conflicting requirements, concentrating on those elements which create Place and providing that Place with a structure so that people know where they are.

Many projects will take years to complete and straddle several market cycles and changes in taste and expectations. We are particularly concerned to create a robust overall design framework for these long-term schemes and an individual character phase by phase and area by area. A full understanding of scale is critical. A major scheme will have several scales for consideration; the setting of the site in the city; the structure of the scheme and its neighbouring area,, the character of each area within the scheme; and the treatment of the local space or street. We work at each scale and at the articulation of the major to minor, the hard and the soft, the grand and the intimate, the formal and the informal.

Design frameworks often need reinforcing, by a range of different forms of guidelines, related to development, scale and buildings and the public realm. These are helpful to developers, the community and local authorities who have no adequate mechanisms of quality control. Our approach is geared to identifying key areas which require careful control and those areas where a more relaxed attitude can be taken.

We do not believe in a particular definition of Urban Design or a commitment to a particular style. Nor would this be the right approach for us, as it would lead to preconceived and imposed solutions. Conversely, we will continue to explore in a manner which evolves and produces unique responses to each urban design task.

ISSUES

There are three determining issues that constantly make our work difficult and complex :

Costs and Value Creation

The Chartered Surveyor; land reclamation and servicing costs; market advice; developer preferences; impact of uses on form; the difficulties of mixed uses.

Traffic Planning and Car Parking

The Highways Department; impact of highway geometry, severance, segregation, and parking requirements - we find ourselves dealing with the "left-over" space after traffic engineering if we are not careful.

Urban Form

Traditional; modernist; suburban; the car age.

APPROACHES

Urban quality objectives need to be set, and a number of design issues arise. There is a need for "new visions" which get in balance urban quality, realism and the demands for movement. These need to learn from history - good and bad - and relate to life today. The issues to be addressed include:

Scale and a sense of place in large projects.

Built form - the definition of space, contextual and object buildings; building lines, height, and scale (not form, style and design).

Quality in the public realm - setting out objectives strongly from the outset, and involving the use of design briefs, panels and public art.

CONCLUSIONS

There are no easy answers to creating, in a modern form, the essence of what people really enjoy about traditional towns, whether they are of the formality of old planned areas, the informality of the mediaeval core of towns, or the suburban style of Bedford Park or Hampstead Garden Suburb for example.

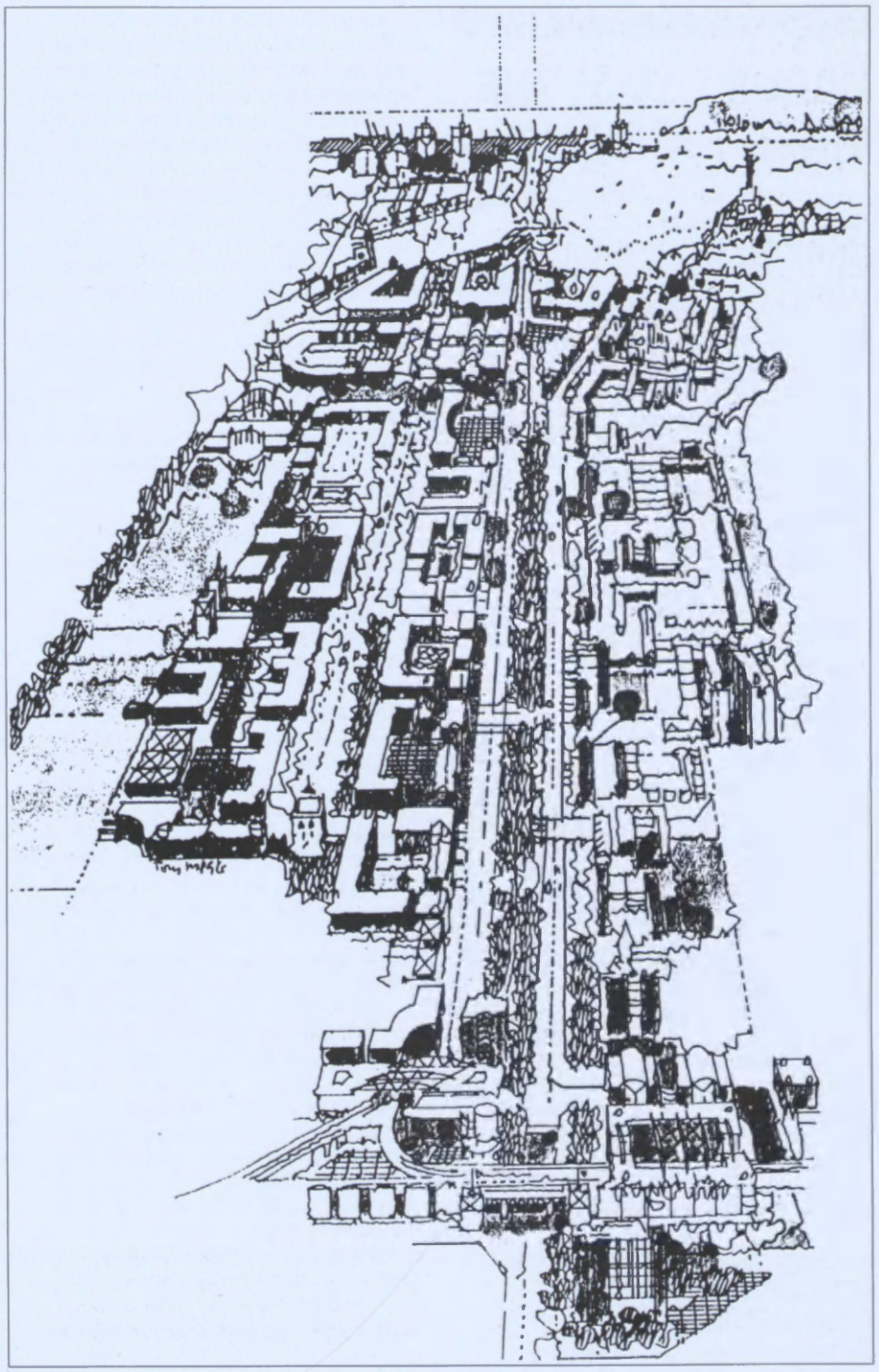
I believe the resolution to the urban design issues is produced by fighting for high quality schemes throughout their life. This is a dynamic struggle between urban concepts, the client or clients, the marketing advisers, the planning and transportation authorities and so on. I believe it is essential to take a contextual viewpoint; i.e., creating a vision within which the public realm can be laid down and architectural design can take place. However, it is important that there is an architectural dimension to this. Having ideas of the sorts of buildings, their scale, positions, access, parking and servicing requirements is essential to creating a "robust" concept. One works up and down scale in doing this. The Cardiff Strategy is presented at 1:5000 scale; however most of the work was done at 1:1000 or even 1:500 scale. As a result, we knew that there were many design choices and that the overall urban design framework was robust.

Equally however, dramatic design concepts, can excite; as the work of Foster Associates alongside us at Port Greenwich has shown, they can break up conformity, challenge a "safety first" approach, and lead to an eclecticism which is in a modern way what towns are about, providing surprise, change and sudden points of focal interest. There is a good example in Cardiff Bay, the Exhibition Centre by Alsop and Lyall brings real impact and vitality to the whole area of the waterfront.

Recently, we saw the doors close on Milton Keynes Development Corporation - 25 years after the original master plan. The new city was designed for the car, has adapted to many changes in demand, preferences, and fashion and attracted

massive investment from the U.K. and overseas. A recent critic described it as Britain's first successful "Grand Suburban Design". There have been many architects and styles used - successes and failures - but overall the city is a great success, and I think it arises because of :

- A clear plan and set of objectives consistently pursued for 25 years.
- An insistency on quality in landscape, floorspace, street furniture and so on. The public realm has been designed and built with adequate space, good materials and consistent guidelines.
- The use of good architects working within the context of carefully prepared development and design briefs for each area.
- A commitment to high quality maintenance. ■



Cardiff Bay - the Mall as illustrated in the Regeneration strategy.

CARDIFF BAY, THE INNER HARBOUR

Hank Haff

Hank Haff is a partner in Benjamin Thompson Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Illustration shows Public Realm Plan - part of the Inner Harbour Study, Benjamin Thompson Associates, Sheppard Robson, Gillespies.

Benjamin Thompson Associates was invited by the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation in 1989 to help plan Cardiff Bay's Inner Harbour. The majority of BTA's previous planning experience in waterfront development in the United States grew out of the reconstruction of buildings and urban places which were designed to create a renewed and enlivened destination within their respective cities. The Quincy Markets in Boston opened three buildings in three consecutive years in 1976, 1977 & 1978, Baltimore's Harborplace opened in 1980, New York's South Street Seaport first opened with the Fulton Market Building in 1982, followed by the Pier 17 building in 1984; and Miami's Bayside Marketplace opened in 1987. In each case the revitalized water's edge created a comfortable place to meet friends, shop, enjoy a meal, watch the boats, or simply relax and listen to music. The master plans for these buildings and public spaces began with a vision and understanding of the human activities and attractions which could bring back vibrancy to the redundant and abandoned areas of these cities.

When BTA arrived in Cardiff in 1989 Llewelyn-Davies had just completed the *Strategy for the Redevelopment of Cardiff Bay* encompassing 2600 acres of CBDC land area. Having seen the site and read about the two hundred year evolution of this great port through years of exponential growth and then decline, there appeared a marvellous opportunity to create a superb waterfront city. I visited the Pierhead just before the interview and was awed by the beauty of the bay at spring high tide on a clear brisk March day. Returning to the shore later in the day the bay was empty and the scale of the task appeared enormous.

BTA proposed then that:

"Realizing a new life for the Inner Harbour requires a *vision* of extending the city centre to the water with careful attention to the existing urban fabric and waterfront heritage, a vibrant mixed programme of new uses and public spaces,... realistic guidelines to balance public and private investment, and a flexible growth plan that will allow the *vision* to continue to develop into the 21st century."

THE VISION

The vision that evolved from the Inner Harbour study at Cardiff Bay found its inspiration in a speech which our founding partner Ben Thompson delivered in 1968. In contrast to the decay, unrest, and inhospitable spaces found in so many cities Thompson argued for cities on the human scale, a built environment that is diverse, and which affirms the enjoyment of life. This approach for creating human scale and joy within the built environment has been a guiding light for our practice in the design of cities, buildings and public spaces. Cardiff presents an ideal opportunity to create "an intimate city by day, a radiant city by night."

The Pierhead area with its south facing Dock Office tower symbolised the heart of the old port and offered a symbol for the new waterfront city . It was here, at the head of the bay, that work began. The kernel of a new, active, safe, publicly accessible waterfront for Cardiff Bay was born in a belief that this fertile zone at the urban shoreline is a point of transition and rebirth, a dynamic place ready for new life and activity. The 700 metre sweep of shore from the Graving Docks on the west to the Opera Park on the east was highlighted as an *arc of entertainment*, an area for intense public and private development. In the masterplan it is anchored on the east by a new Opera and Music Theatre and on the west by a dynamic museum complex combining a "Quest"-the National hands-on Science Centre in Wales with a Maritime Heritage Centre constructed around the former Mount Stuart Shipyard graving docks. Each of these new cultural and leisure facilities will add to the international identity and prestige of Cardiff's Inner Harbour.

Today's hurdle is in the funding and construction of these facilities. The state of the local and national economy makes the task all the more difficult. Also, without the tax incentive structure for individual and corporate contributions to these non-profit organizations as is found in the States, the burden of funding in the U.K. falls back upon the government. In the past

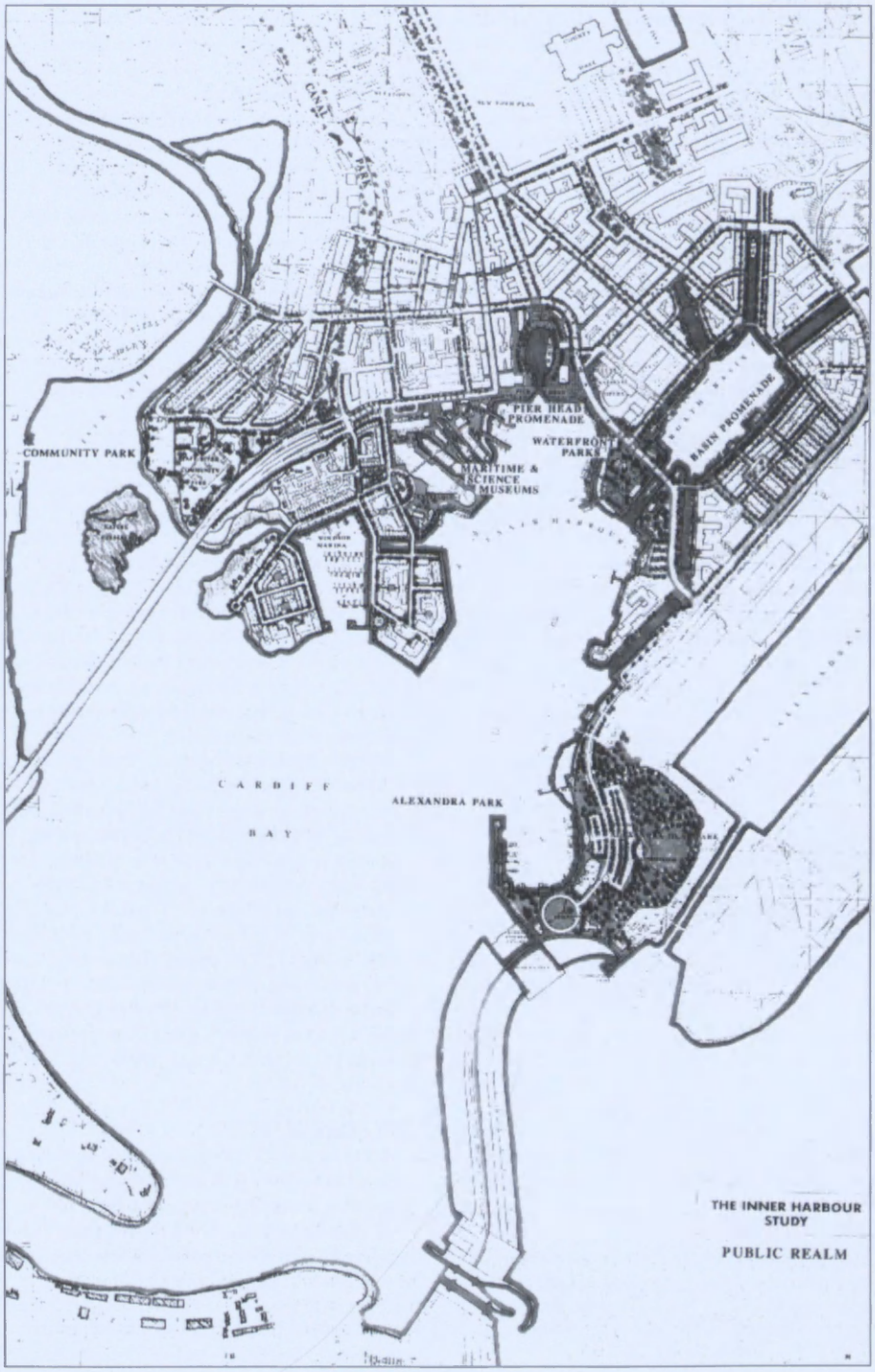
ten years BTA has designed two performing arts centers- the Ordway Music Theatre in St. Paul Minnesota and the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In each case the home town pride of public spirited individuals contributed significantly to the realization of these projects. Similar incentives must be found here.

WATERFRONT ACCESS

Public accessibility is an essential principle for the redevelopment of Cardiff's Inner Harbour. Priority was given to the Pierhead with construction occurring in three phases to create the 700 metre promenade.

Since the construction of the Dock Offices building in 1886 and the Bute West Dock the eastern waterfront has been off limits to the general public. The tram stopped at the foot of Bute Street providing access to the sidepaddle steamers for passage to Bristol and other points along the coast. But Cardiff, like so many working ports throughout the U.K., required restricted access for safety and security. In 1990, the promenade opened the waterfront at the head of the harbour to the public for the first time. By fall of 1991, the eastern and western arms of this public promenade were complete from the Graving Docks to the Roath Basin Lock. Although this is only a fragment of the two miles of publicly accessible water's edge which will eventually surround Cardiff Bay, it is an important first step. It establishes a new standard for quality in the public realm for the waterfront of this capital city. Also, in difficult economic times it represents an ability to focus on the ever important heart of this waterfront city.

The new Pierhead walk establishes a dynamic integration of the historic artifacts with new materials of quality. Cardiff's dock walls create a powerful identity of finely crafted ramparts, a castle for this maritime city particularly when viewed at low tide. Those that remain visible were restored, while those declared redundant and subsequently filled as with the Bute East Basin provided a quarry for fine stone readily accessible to the site. The waterfront park stone bench is reincarnated from the cap stone of the Bute East Basin.



Recut and reset, the granite and sandstone provides a surface for stone sculpture as well as a 250 metre overlook to the Inner Harbour. There is a good example of the Percent for Arts programme, where artist Michael Watts carved scenes from the sea, lyrically interpreting Cardiff's relationship to the ocean, imbedded like fossils in the living stone.

The Roath Basin's Britannia Quay is the next area for redevelopment. BTA, working with associated architects HMA, has proposed a new variation on the waterfront promenade, where a change in elevation permits an upper and lower overlook to the water. Eventually this rim of light and backdrop of green will surround the basin. A street and promenade are provided around Roath Basin assuring easy public access to the water edge, and allowing development to front and have an address on the water. The fingers of water radiating out from the Basin take the form of canals, providing an intimate focus that is clearly linked to the Roath Basin and the Bay.

In the masterplan, streets radiate out to the water connecting the built environment from the foot of the boulevard to the water edge. East Bute Street heads to the east toward the Roath Basin, mirroring the angle of the existing Bute Street which arrives at the western side of the Pierhead. The new central street aligns with the tower of the Dock Offices building on the Pierhead and is proposed to be a pedestrianized retail street. The reopened Oval Dock will provide a focus for waterfront retail, restaurants and museum display ships.

The new Pierhead Street also focuses on the Dock Offices tower as it arrives from the roundabout in the east.

Now that the principle of public access is established the next hurdle is to attract a new and diverse group of uses to the site. Offices are typically the first most financially viable buildings on this type of site and Capital Waterside is no exception to this rule. But, restaurants and residential units should follow in rapid succession. One great asset of this site is the Roath Basin where floating restaurants or entertainment can be moored at dockside on a temporary basis providing early attractions which may stay or may move to a new quay as development progresses.

BOSTON PARALLELS

The topographical development of my home city, Boston, provided BTA with several appropriate urban development analogies for the planning of Cardiff's Inner Harbour. Boston's hills provided sufficient fill material to nearly double the original land area of the city over its 350 year history. The filling of Boston's Back Bay up to the line of the old mill dam created one third of a square mile of new development land between 1850 and 1882. A grand boulevard was designed to run down the centre of this grid of new Back Bay streets. Today Commonwealth Avenue is a mile long linear park linking this neighbourhood with the Public Garden. The subsequent dam, or barrage, built at the mouth of the Charles River created a fresh water basin of constant level, free from the stench of low tide mud flats. It is difficult to conceive of Boston today without the benefit of this environmental and recreational resource, the Charles River Basin. Landscape Architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed a comprehensive urban park system which converted the Muddy River into the Back Bay Fens which linked the Charles River Esplanade to a new Fenway Park System, forming Boston's "Emerald Necklace". These parks provide urban open space for waterside walks, playgrounds, allotment gardens, exercise stations, and a concert shell and amphitheatre - a place to sit, walk, run, exercise, sunbathe or enjoy the passing crowd and water for recreation.

The new land, the grand boulevard, the basin and a continuous waterfront park are all familiar elements in the plans for Cardiff Bay today.

IMPLEMENTATION

Visual accessibility to the waterfront is now secured in Cardiff as the P.D.R (peripheral distributor road) construction proceeds through a tunnel, dipping below ground at the central waterfront area. Unlike Boston, New York and so many American cities, the option to tunnel was correctly chosen in Cardiff to avoid severing the city from its waterfront. Today, Boston is correcting this fault by depressing the elevated roadway at a cost 20-times that of the original road construction thirty years ago.

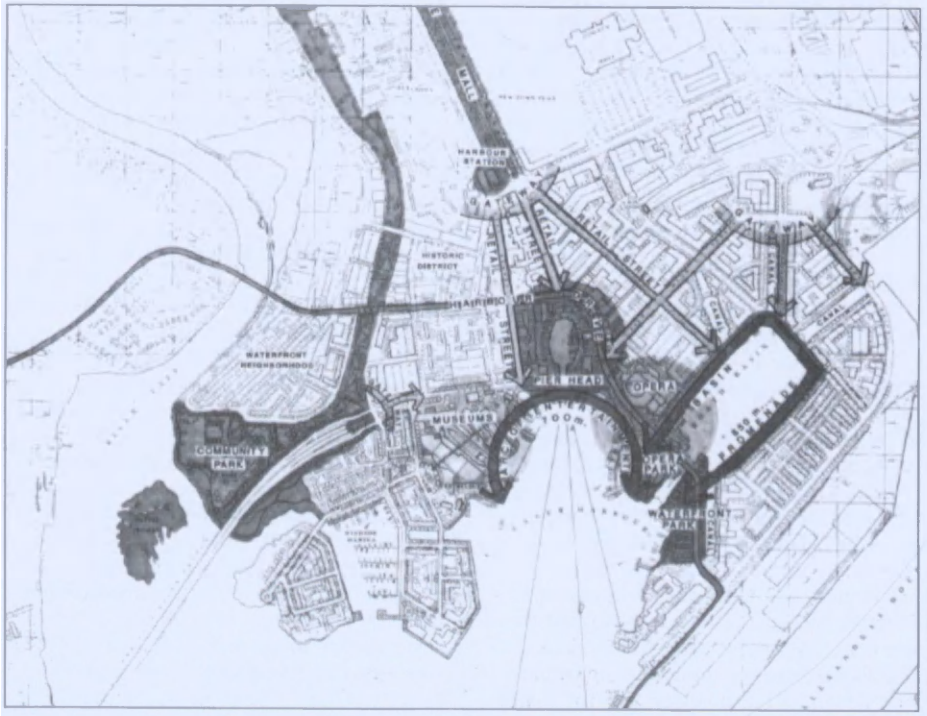
Cardiff's peripheral distributor road will provide more than just easy access to the renewed harbour front. The earth from this cutting is providing fill to create a new community park, an open space at the mouth of the River Taff, which will become in part the playing fields for a relocated Mount Stuart primary school. This idea must in part be credited to the children whose crayon drawings suggesting a place to explore, a preserve in the bay, and gave inspiration for the creation of this park. Two acres of new usable land will improve the quality of environment for the Taff Basin Neighbourhood, an investment in their future.

Planning for the public realm however must not stop with bricks and mortar, street layouts and designation of public spaces. To comprehensively improve the quality of the urban life for residents near these derelict lands social issues must also be addressed. A "magnet school" which provides advanced teaching techniques and high quality education for the urban disadvantaged will begin to confront the age old problem of neglect of the urban poor. Job training centres can provide more than just retraining for the unemployed, a resource centre can offer counselling for business start-up, management counselling, and common printing and typing services.

Piece by piece the framework for a publicly accessible waterfront is taking shape, forming like emeralds on a gold chain, cut from the hills of Wales, to create a gateway to the new Cardiff Bay.

The public realm is more than just the brick and stone waterfront promenades; more than the network of streets, squares and arcades; more than the 35 acres in three new public parks; more than the two square mile expanse of a new Cardiff Bay. The public realm must also include the Science and Maritime Museums; and the Welsh National Opera; the new school, hotel lobbies, and the myriad of shops and restaurants. ■

Cardiff Bay, the Inner Harbour



Plan and photograph of Inner Harbour Structure showing arc of entertainment uses at the Pier Head.

PUBLIC ART AND URBAN DESIGN

Sally Medlyn

This article describes three inter-related areas of my work:

- The role of Cardiff Bay Art Trust and its context in Cardiff Bay.
- The role of art and public art in particular in urban design and the creation of new cities.
- Brief comments on the training of art.

We have already heard about the strategic view and development of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and its core aim of creating a superlative maritime city.

The Development Corporation was approached by representatives of the Welsh Arts Council and others to look at whether art, and public art in particular, was relevant to their core objectives. They then appointed a consultative team, led by Vivian Lovell, Director of the Public Art Commissions Agency, Birmingham, an independent public art agency, and the result of the work was the publication in June 1990 of *The Strategy for Public Art in Cardiff Bay*.

PUBLIC ART STRATEGY

The Corporation recommended the adoption of the Strategy and agreed that public art could be relevant to its core objectives of urban renewal. A number of distinct benefits were identified as resulting from the incorporation of public art into the overall strategy:

- It could help differentiate Cardiff Bay and give unique identity.
- It could add a tangible sense of quality.
- There can be some economic spin-offs such as local manufacture of work.
- It can be very valuable in bridging the gap between existing local communities and developers, whether in the public or private sector.
- Working alongside a landscape architecture programme will result in a real impact on the environment in which people live and work, even to the extent of influencing relocation decisions.

Beyond these questions of principle the Strategy addressed the practical implications of such a policy.

This was then written in as legal and formal a tone as possible to be incorporated into building agreements and land sales. The Development Corporation is a major land owner and developers from the public and private sectors negotiating sales contribute to the Public Art Strategy. This means a contribution of not less than 1% of capital development costs to the commissioning of public art. This policy has been applied to all such agreements since the adoption of the Strategy.

CARDIFF BAY ART TRUST

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation also agreed to set up an independent organisation - Cardiff Bay Art Trust - to put the Strategy into practice. It was decided to establish an independent organisation because there is a definitie advantage in the Art Trust being able to deal directly with the private sector, work with the public sector and local communities as well as working directly with the Corporation. Our charitable and not for profit status puts us in a good position to turn the theory of the Strategy into practice.

Another major element of the policy was its emphasis on a strategic approach trying to avoid dotting rare examples of art around the place. The intention is to approach the development strategically just as CBDC works strategically to develop infrastructure to achieve land sales. A programme of public art is being established including, for example, landmark works at key entry points to the Bay; the marking of key routes through the Bay; works to aid orientation; the creation of places for people - public spaces whether large or small which can create a pride of place and identity with place for people living and working within the Bay.

We work with a whole range of interests in the Bay. We have already completed a scheme within the private sector with Grosvenor Waterside plc/Associated British Ports - a major landowner - and are looking to work with Tarmac. We have made contacts with South Glamorgan County Council who are responsible for a major infrastructure scheme - the Peripheral Distributor Road - and we shall be carrying out a feasibility study for them on the impact of public art within the road scheme.

We are also working with local communities, albeit at the moment on a smaller scale, on projects involving contact between artists and people living in the Bay.

Sally Medlyn is Director of the Cardiff Bay Art Trust.

Overall the Trust aims to:

- create a wide ranging programme of high quality art
- enhance the urban environment
- support regeneration of the Bay
- provide exciting opportunities for artists.

After all, if the proposals are not exciting we will not get the interest of artists or the quality of finished work.

URBAN REGENERATION

Turning now to the links between the arts and urban regeneration. During the 1980s there was an upswell in discussion and planning for arts as related to such issues as economic development and other matters which previously had perhaps been seen as in a world apart from the arts.

A series of conferences and research projects were commissioned which sought to place the arts in a very different context, not looking for patronage of the arts but looking to ally the arts as a 'tool' to achieve the core objectives of organisations such as Development Corporations or private sector developers. It was felt that there were commercial and social objectives which the arts in one form or another could help achieve. Lord Palumbo, Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain and a major property developer, only last week was talking about art as "the highest achievement of which the human spirit is capable". It also has a lot to offer in terms of urban regeneration, and an engagement with the practical development of the environment. The arts can relate to these very important issues.

The most obvious link is perhaps arts and tourism, but there is also art and urban design. We have examples from around the world - USA, mainland Europe and Japan - striking examples of art in public places being an integral part of regeneration development schemes. The arts in these schemes have often been a mandatory requirement and have been playing a crucial part - not just creating the "bits" in between the buildings but public spaces which are well used and even loved by the public. I don't want to overstate the case. Of course, there is some rotten public art about, just as there is some rotten architecture and town planning. But good public art, like planning and architecture, has its part to play in creating the dynamic setting of our new urban environments.

Some artists - and I am generalising madly here of course - would not be interested in this context at all. However, there are a growing number of artists who see working in urban design as a challenge - not a problem. They can create meaning in the urban fabric; can collaborate as part of a team of design professionals; not be the brooch which is added at the end when someone realises there is a 'gap' which needs an X put into it. Integration from the outset is one of the fundamental approaches we are trying to develop in the Bay. Integration is not only the most cost effective route for any development, but also the one which promises the greatest degree of success when all the professionals have gone away and the scheme is left to be enjoyed or otherwise by the people for whom it was intended.

Integrating work specifically into particular sites is important - not the transfer of gallery work into an often hostile urban environment. Site specific work which takes account of the function of a place, who are the users and what are the commercial objectives. All these factors are relevant to the preparation of a public art brief.

The term public art can, of course, mean different things to different people. For me it covers a wide range of practice; permanent or temporary; the obvious art work - the inheritor perhaps of civic statuary. Public art can also be functional even to the extent that the art work is not necessarily recognised as 'art' - it might be the fencing; even manhole covers in the case of Seattle. Thirdly, it can encompass the artist working as a professional alongside other professionals - architects/engineers/ development surveyors - on the design of the urban environment from the earliest possible point. In the Bay we are looking at, from my perspective, a major land art project; from the CBDC perspective, a land reclamation scheme intended for a community park. The aims are not at odds but can work together.

So, whatever, the art works are, integration and site specificity are essential to avoid the so-called "turd in the plaza" effect of the "brooch approach".

ART EDUCATION

Finally, training. There was, and probably still is, an idea abroad that "art = self expression full stop", i.e. that art education should nurture the imagination, the personal expression of the artist, but does not concern itself with the practical use of those skills in the "real world". Certainly some years ago that notion seemed to be a very strong strand in art education and that stereotype must be challenged and needs to be changed. At the launch last week of the Public Art Forum/RIBA Alliance the need for change in architectural education was discussed. There is at least the same need for change in art education because too often it is assumed that the artists only target for their work is the gallery. There are real challenges and opportunities in shaping the cities in which we have to live and this is the context which education must address. It must release the power of imagination, creative and technical skills of artists into that public space for successful and dynamic partnerships with colleagues in architecture, landscape and design. ■

Top left: Michael Watts working on 'Tidemark' at Waterfront Park
Top middle: 'Landmark' by Pierre Vivant
Top right: 'Secret Station' by Eilis O'Connell.

THE TRAINING OF URBAN DESIGNERS

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Lord Bute had the vision to provide an appropriate public realm which is now recognised as Cardiff's magnificent Civic Centre. We now have the challenge and the opportunities of Cardiff Bay; and there are many similar challenges and opportunities in derelict docklands and inner city areas throughout the U.K.

There is growing awareness of the increasing importance of the public realm in the urban environment; the importance of the space between buildings, and the provision of public art, is being recognised. The urban design principles of the late Francis Tibbalds showed great vision and innovation in creating 'People-Friendly Towns and Cities'. We must ensure that this recognition is translated into appropriate action, through proper professional training.

During the last decade, there has been a proliferation of Urban Design Courses, with emphasis on a range of disciplines, namely, architecture, planning and landscape architecture.

The following contributions on the training of urban designers, are presented by two architect / planners; but each is presenting a different approach, one relating to the training of architects and the other relating to the training of planners.

Professor Richard Silverman

I should say by way of introduction that the term Urban Designer in the title under which I have been asked to speak is not a very useful descriptive term for an individual - as will emerge.

I am going to speak a little about from my experience as a member of RIBA Visiting Boards to the two surviving Urban Design courses in schools of Architecture and Planning in the U.K. These two extant urban design courses - recognised by the RIBA - are both very good courses. However, they are not doing what I believe the RIBA - and perhaps the RTPI - hoped such courses would do - that is making a national input at a high level of achievement in the field of urban design. What these two courses are currently doing are two very necessary remedial jobs. They are giving the architects who undertake them a view of policy issues and the legislative framework affecting settlements. Architectural education is not very good at dealing with these areas. The pure planners who take up these courses in large numbers are receiving a strengthening of their acquaintanceship with design so that they can, among other things, fulfill essential development-control functions in local authorities and other places where they are employed.

I do not have knowledge of taught masters courses in urban design or other similar courses in the U.K. and so cannot comment on them but I suspect there is not very much urban design education going on at the level of conceptual activity which can deal with the issues being raised for example by London Docklands, by Cardiff Bay, by the key sites in the City of London, by Poundbury even. The work that I have seen in the two RIBA-recognised courses does not engage with the issues at this level of complexity nor attempt design work at the level of creative ambition that such sensitive sites demand.

Now, speaking from my vantage point as a member of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and as an adviser to Milford Haven Port Authority from, as it were, the client's side of employing urban designers I find a situation that reflects the educational picture given, that is one where architectural and planning education are rounded out with a dose of the other discipline - but not extended within each discipline.

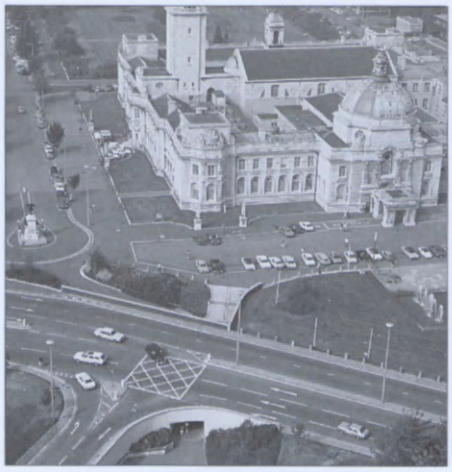
NECESSARY SKILLS

If I were given the job of employing professionals to design for development a couple of hundred acres somewhere I am afraid I wouldn't look for an "urban designer". What I would look for are *two* people with quite different skills. Firstly I would want a tough *development planner*. This is somebody who really can assess the economic and political realities of individual sites and who can make proposals for the location of infrastructure and land uses which are of a higher order than his client could make for himself - if you will forgive my cynicism. Really acute development planning is not as available on the market as it should be. Together with my development planner I'd want to put an *urban architect*. This is an equally rare bird - a talented designer who is saturated in the theory and practice of the architecture of urbanism.

I am sceptical about whether the two people I am looking for are often to be found in the same firm. I am fairly sure I cannot find them in the same individual. I am - perhaps unpopularly - reacting here against the rather wishy washy image of the "architect-planner" as "urban designer" who sort of knows about implementation, sort of knows about architecture but isn't really very good at either.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Let me now take this view of the complementarity of skills needed for urban design and apply it to planning and architectural education. I would look for an enhanced architectural education with substantial specialist time given to urbanism and urban architecture. Historical models of urban form, theoretical models of spatial systems, the design of the public realm and the design of buildings as, quoting a well known source, "the walls of an outdoor room" are not things to which a general education in architecture gives as much time as it might. I believe there is a



very useful specialism possible in the architecture of urbanism, which is not urban design, it's architecture.

Now I am going to make some quite unwarranted guesses about planning education which I suspect needs to be extended in a similar sort of way. In my conversations with planners I do not find there are so very many who are really well versed in models of dynamic implementation processes, in tactical decision making in land use and infrastructure and who have a real insight into the developer's view and his financing. Planning as a subject is necessarily a good deal about policy, about the general. But some planners need to be educated to cope with the specific. They need to be creative about the economics and commercialism of development because so many of the problems we know about - like being locked into the single use of sites - need to be tackled at this level. Someone's got to crack the mould of conventional development wisdom and perhaps it is going to be enlightened chartered surveyors - I don't think it is going to be architects. I feel it ought to be a breed of action-oriented development planners and if planning education does not already have this as a specialism then I think it needs it.

If we could enhance planning and architectural education in these ways - making each profession more competent in a component of urban design - within the five-year structure of each then I believe we would have a basis for a new post-graduate urban design education, not to produce "urban designers" but to bring these two sorts of people together in order that they can gain an awareness of the other's skill and see what they can do together in confronting demanding urban design challenges. From this creative interaction they can perhaps do something which I think we desperately need, that is to articulate a vision of an achievable humane urbanism for today's world.

Dr. Sam Romaya

Traditionally, urban design has been perceived as an extension of the work of the architect. It has often been described as "the Architecture of Towns and Cities", which includes the design of the buildings themselves and of the spaces between them; for example, Inigo Jones's Covent Garden, John Nash's Regent Street, or the work of the Woods at Bath.

Camillo Sitte introduced a new approach to urban design incorporating the basic principles into a system in which the built environment is the result of an input by different designers. The architect's work combined aspects of urban design and architecture. For decades, many architects qualified as architects and planners.

THE PRESENT CONTEXT

Modern urban systems have become very complex. In addition to buildings and spaces in between, other factors, such as transportation, urban landscape and outdoor advertising have assumed great importance in the urban environment. Co-ordination of the input into the urban environment has been included in the development control system. Architects have become less involved with the 'Architecture of Towns and Cities'; understandably architects are preoccupied with the design of buildings while planners have assumed the role of co-ordinators, using an inadequate system, development control, which tends to be negative in its approach. To quote Professor G.B. Dix "A collection of beautiful buildings do not necessarily provide a desirable living environment."

To deal with the task adequately, the planning system has developed appropriate procedures for the design of the public realm; such as preliminary public consultation, preparation of area planning briefs or site specific design briefs. Generally these are prepared by the planning department. Often, expertise in the field has to be acquired on the job or through individual initiative.

TRAINING IN URBAN DESIGN

The design input in planning courses can vary considerably. We need to identify precise job specifications. It is perhaps possible to identify two distinct roles. The first is the work of the urban designer producing the traditional type of scheme; this role is creative and is comparable to that of the artist or musician. The second is that of the development control officer, like the art or music critic, he/she needs to be capable of discerning what is good or bad work; the cultivation of discernment and analytical ability is a primary objective in the training for development control work, and similar urban design tasks. Is the training in this respect adequate ? The options could include:

- Undergraduate option in Urban Design
- Special post-graduate diploma in Urban Design (part-time)
- Package of courses under the CPD programme

Such Courses would not only require specially prepared curricula and teaching methods, but also logistics of funding, release arrangements and professional status.

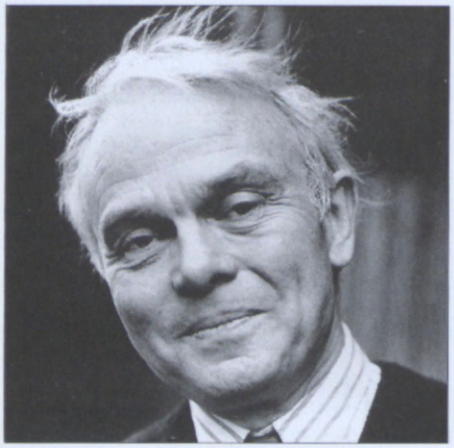
A wide range of courses in urban design have been launched by academic institutions recently. The Urban Design Group have, quite justifiably, placed education and training high on their agenda. It is hoped that the discussion which now follows will make a contribution to the formulation of education policy guidelines for architects, planners and urban designers. ■

Richard Silverman is Professor of Architecture and Head of the Welsh School of Architecture at the University of Wales at Cardiff.
Sam Romaya is Senior Lecturer in Urban Design in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of Wales at Cardiff.

Illustrations show qualities of the public realm in Cardiff
Left: part of Cardiff Civic Centre
Middle: pedestrianisation in Queen Street
Right: landmark in Cardiff Bay

The Public Realm and Urban Design: Practice and Implementation

DISCUSSION



The Concluding Session was chaired by Richard MacCormac, President of the RIBA, for whom Urban Design has been a major point of focus during his Presidency. Urban Design workshops have been held in many locations in Britain during that period and a colloquium has been held at the RIBA on that subject

Illustration shows Richard MacCormac's analysis of London streets to work out an urban design code for use in practice.

Richard MacCormac

We have had presentations on two connected but distinct topics, namely the role of the artist in urban design and in urban regeneration, and two views principally distinguished as an architect's view and a planner's view of education for urban design.

John Billingham

I should make it clear that there are about nine places that offer urban design courses, a wider range of courses in urban design than has been suggested.

Secondly, in terms of Sam Romaya's point about the planners role, I think if we are really concerned about the public realm we are not only talking about building design. I think what we tend to forget is that the public realm stretches right across the street, a point which Richard MacCormac has made very well in a number of his articles where he's saying couldn't we get the developer, instead of dealing with one side of the street, to consider also the space across the street.

If we are really concerned about urban design, it is much more than development control. It is in fact a creative role, and there isn't, in my view, a lot of urban design being done in the existing planning framework. We are really talking about both sides of the street within an area which, I think, needs a different approach.

The other point I would like to make is that years ago, in a number of schools architectural students and planning students did work together on schemes. They used to go out to a town or a small community and they'd get together for three, four or five weeks, then the architectural students would go and design individual buildings. As far as I am aware, I do not think that's happening now. It does appear to me that that sort of thing has been lost. I would like to suggest that one should begin to see again the opportunity that architectural and planning students could work jointly together. There is a golden opportunity for the professions to get together in their training process.

Richard MacCormac

Just one thought, the reason why people talk about designing across the streets is that the estate developments were street developments. The difference between modern developments and the 18th century developments is that they were essentially street developments but now single developers develop sections between streets, across the urban fabric existing from street to street.

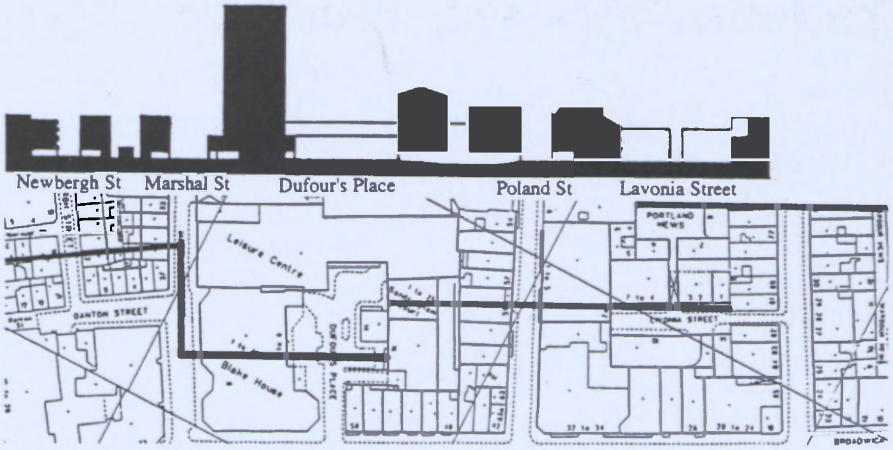
Sam Romaya

On the first point made by John Billingham, about the setting of a building, these days many consultants now hold preliminary negotiations with the planning officer and in these negotiations the planning officer can recommend a certain amount of public realm requirements. But the question is are these opportunities used to advantage, and are the officers sufficiently qualified to anticipate what would be needed and what would be appropriate ?

On the second point, Professor Silverman knows we have had some of our students working together; our students did a joint study on Llandaff, six students from architecture and four from planning, and the publication of the joint report was sponsored by the RIBA. Such practice is unusual, and it does not occur often enough, mainly because of logistical difficulties. We were hoping to have another collaborative exercise this year, but we have had to conduct a preliminary study this year, in the hope that we will have another joint venture next year. What we need to do is to devise the appropriate programmes which relate to the training of both disciplines, rather than just put the students together because we think it is good for them to work together.

Richard Silverman

What Sam says is of course right, but I am not sure it is easy to put the clock back to some golden age, where architects and planners, as students, can work together. Certainly I take Sam's point: the question of appraising the design, whether as a planner who is in a development control situation or as an architect looking at his own proposition, is undervalued and



under-taught. Discernment, that is connoiseurship - a word I use without apology - is under-developed in both our educations, and is where there ought to be common education. Where I am suggesting education should diverge, is in the difference between urban architecture and development planning. I find as a client of architect planners and urban designers that the number of people who have a nose for the inevitable strategic decision is not that great. Now, I don't think you're going to get architects to do that or planners and architects working together. There's something else that needs to come out of planning education which is more creative and realistic than I think is happening at the moment. In the same way, there needs to be something more sensitive and imaginative coming out of architectural education and I don't necessarily see anything to be gained by confusing that. It's only when each is experienced in their discipline that I'd like to see architects and planners as collaborators in the urban design creative process.

Alfie Wood

In the public realm, our urban surroundings, it seems to me that we allow different groups of professionals to carry out their activities without much relevance to each other or to the space itself. We would, I think, regard it as pretty strange to commission an architect to design a building and then permit others to design the corridors and so forth, but that is exactly what we do in our urban spaces which have become largely the province of the traffic engineer. Shakespeare said "all the world's a stage etc." but in the public realm we cannot be sure that all the players have the same script or are in the same play. Clearly there is a need for these disparate groups to work collaboratively in the urban scene.

However, we must not deceive ourselves that we can design or redesign large areas of the urban fabric in a country which is largely developed, nor should we try. Indeed the stultifying effect of much 60's comprehensive redevelopment makes that point eloquently in far too many towns and cities. I believe we must learn what to leave alone; this afternoon we were told by our guide that certain parts of the conservation area were to be demolished as there was apparently no obvious future use for them. Frankly I would be inclined to leave these buildings alone as the situation can often change in ways we cannot always envisage, sometimes in a surprisingly short time.

It is, of course, difficult to train embryo architects and town planners for that sort of restraint. I don't know how that fits in with Sam's or Professor Silverman's syllabus.

As regards local authorities, I believe they must make development control a much more senior job. It needs to be exercised by very experienced people with cultivated judgement and design awareness, able to provide creative suggestions in collaboration with the project designer. The best urban design solutions have, of course, often emerged from conflict between the architect and the authority. It does help, too, if the relationship between designer and client is a creative one; if may be stormy but it must have quality as it's main aim.

But the schools of architecture and schools of planning should, I believe, try to ensure that their graduates are exposed to as many civilising experiences as possible. It is only by producing mentally well-rounded architects and planners that we shall achieve higher standards of urban design.

Richard MacCormac

Last week we had a colloquium about Public Art and Civic architecture, in the context of the public realm, and a number of things came out of that, including one rather negative thought which was that the 1% strategy may be a kind of tokenism which the government rather likes, because it avoids having to treat architects as artists which is jolly convenient. It treats the architectural product as a utilitarian product and the artwork as a separate input. We need to clarify and formalise our position against such assertions; I think that once you talk about it, you can convince people of the need for both public art and public architecture as an art. It is difficult enough for architects to know what to symbolise today; but perhaps it is even more difficult for the artist. Public art is not the work of the art gallery. It is very important for society, but I am very worried about what some artists are doing, it seems to me at times they are making jokes at the public in the absence of integrated and imaginative contributions which engage the public realm.

Sally Medlyn

To create a public space is one exercise, to introduce public art is a different challenge. It is easy to identify an area for public art, but translating it into part of the urban scene is the work of the artist. It is not a case of "here is a site, let's throw some money at it and see if it works". It is much more of a challenge for everybody, including the architect to use the space for a perceptual experience for everyone. I was talking earlier to Professor Silverman about the role of the architect; if an architect is an artist, then the artist is not a sticking plaster.

Richard MacCormac

I have a bit of difficulty in finding out where we are going? I feel that the urban situation is pretty dreadful; although it's often the best of a bad job. If it fails as an urban space then everybody suffers. We may see achievements on paper, but the reality doesn't move me.

David Walton

I think the case of the urban designer now is exactly the case of the interior designer, when some architects try to push the role of interior designers. I just wonder if there's always going to be tension between the professionals and one has to work at the dynamics of the relationship, because it's always the tensions that produce the good designs anyway, as well as the disasters.

Richard Silverman

I would refer to a case, the Cardiff Barrage. The design of it has been described, but what one may not be aware of is that there was a team of four professionals, an engineer, an architect, an artist and a landscape architect and they've worked on it throughout. They took an original fairly crude diagram of the engineering and together worked that into what I think is going to be a rather beautiful thing. Now,

Concluding Discussion

the architect Will Alsop is well known as being more than an architect, that is an artist and an architect, but nevertheless he was very keen to emphasise the role of the artist they worked with; I think this is an example of the working together that Sally has been talking about. How we get that into the urban fabric itself I don't know.

Alfie Wood

I appreciate that it is important for something like the Cardiff Barrage to be a beautiful and exciting structure but equally I would like to make a plea for the prosaic on certain occasions.

Not all buildings can be, or should be, primadonnas; we need some architects to design some dull buildings which take a brief from the street. When every one's a King and Queen, no one's anybody.

Sam Romaya

I think works of public art are an integral part of urban design, and must be perceived to be so. We've got an equestrian statue in the middle of a grass field looking absolutely lost in front of City Hall. Now, previously, this related to the street patterns and that was located in direction and position in a very significant urban design guideline. They changed the street pattern and now the poor equestrian statue is completely lost. It is an integral part of the fabric and it has to be put in context.

Richard Silverman

Why do you think that the artists are represented amongst us, as they always are, by an extremely dynamic and intelligent person who puts the case for artists with incredible skill, as Sally has just done. I don't begrudge them that at all, but nobody is doing that for urban designers or architects. I am having a hard job at Cardiff Bay, where I think the ground is actually very fertile to convince people - with the same argument Sally has with art - if you do better architecture, or if you do better urbanism, not only is it a valuable thing but it would generate other things of value. I am doing it as an amateur, and I wonder how the phenomenon has arisen that artists have someone to do this for them professionally.

Sally Medlyn

I think too often art and architecture are perceived as means of achieving quality in urban design. If urban design is rejected we all suffer, on the other hand quality architecture is part of the urban scene, and the same situation applies to public art.

Richard MacCormac

It is something to do with the post war history of architecture; it got caught in institutional traps. First of all we got caught in the socialist trap, of utilitarianism in the 1960s along with utilitarianism of the building industry itself so we were subsumed within ideas of productivity. This resulted in things like the high rise concrete panel and concrete housing which characterised the period. Now we've got caught up in a similar but right wing situation where we are supposed to be subsumed within concepts of marketing and management within the building industry. There is the problem of quality in architecture which I think is almost impossible to define. The management culture which has prevailed in the last fifty years in industrial countries finds increasing difficulty in being able to cope with architectural quality which they see as a slightly arty concept. It wants to be accountable financially and it can't incorporate it. It can't incorporate it in either the public or private sectors and so it tries to do away with it. The artists then appear, with their advocates who are exceptionally articulate and smart, and everybody says "ah, we've got it". The architect can start talking about quality but the managers think it will cost hundreds of thousands, and it's pretty dangerous stuff, so they think "let's keep him in control" (usually him rather than her), and then "let's have a few artists because we can actually say that it's going to cost such and such, we can have a bit of quality with the artist and we know that we can keep the cost control there, and we'll make sure that we don't let the architect into the quality game because that will be quite unruly and very expensive".

Alfie Wood

I believe there is a terrible danger of letting our main concern be with the building and to hell with the rest. The space between buildings has too often had a rotten deal because of the arrogance of the designer.

Richard Silverman

I wonder if I can ask this question of the meeting, which is about the question you referred to yourself which is to do with the use of buildings. We had a talk from Niels Torp in Cardiff which showed the dockside development in Oslo which has banks, offices, shops, houses and all sorts of things, all on top of each other in a way we don't seem to be able to do. I think a lot of people feel that we can't do what he can do in Norway. Whether it's going to be an office building or housing or it's going to be whatever, somehow the urbanism we want will never come about without mixed uses. Now my question is, can Urban Design solve that and if not, who is going to tackle that problem from the creative point of view ? Ben Thompson's firm is working in the U.K. and is persuading clients and developers to break rules of a lifetime to mix uses, and all credit to them for doing that. But the question is how do we educate within the whole design development and business communities people who can break that mould.

Sam Romaya

To be fair, if I may come in at this point - David Lock gave a paper on the Developer's point of view on Urban Design. He identified four essential commandments pursued by developers,and one of them was that each building shall maintain the same use from top to bottom. If you have residential use on one level and commercial use on the other, and then you want to re-develop or rent or change, you have problems. The developers generally insist on having the same use right across the board within a structure.

Alfie Wood

That is quite true. The short term view of the City of London is a very powerful and notorious damper on imaginative mixed uses and is based on developers achieving much higher rates of return (about 5% greater) than their opposite numbers on the continent.

The Public Realm and Urban Design: Practice and Implementation

Les Sparks
I want to see designers having more vision about their business; and to have something written in the planning system for us to say there must be comparable attention given to the street environment and the Public Realm as that given to buildings.

Richard MacCormac
I think that is a very good note to conclude with because it seems to me that is what we've been talking about. I believe what you just said describes what urban design ought to be about. It ought to be extending the planning process into being a visionary process concerned with qualitative and difficult to describe objectives.

I was asked to sum up the meeting. It is going to be very difficult to make a summary of what I've heard and obviously I haven't heard some of the earlier papers. I believe that we are looking at a process that lies between the statutory planning process and the design of buildings which is central to the recovery of the professional contribution that architects can make to the public realm. I think that it's very important at the moment because local government departments have been run down. There hasn't been a vision of what professionals could be doing in local government and I think that urban design offers a way of reviving the role of professionals and their obligations to locality. It would be a role for people who are permanently part of local government or maybe another sort of role structured so that it can relate to private consultants. It could be a combination of both. I am absolutely convinced that urban design is a way of recovering the idea of architecture as a public vision and a public obligation. I think it is interesting that we should be reflecting on what Sally said about the artist also looking for a new role, and ways of finding significance in a public situation. There are other players to whom we've got to relate, people working at the strategic level like economists, and then people whom we tend to battle with, like Highway Engineers who we've got to find ways of communicating with. Urban design has got to become a medium to which a whole range of participants subscribe and in which shared objectives are found. ■

Photograph shows Michael Welbank, President of the RTPI in 1992, signing the visitors book at Cardiff Castle in the presence of the Deputy Lord Mayor.

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D Webber
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Book Reviews by John Punter and Michael Biddulph

THE AESTHETICS OF LANDSCAPE
by Steven C. Bourassa
Belhaven Press 1991, £29.95
AESTHETICS OF BUILT FORM
by Alan Holgate
Oxford University Press 1992, £45.00

Despite all the interest in Britain in urban design, landscape quality, design control and environmental enhancement there has been very little fundamental research into the aesthetics of townscape and landscape. Central Government contents itself with the convenient line of argument that aesthetic judgements are largely subjective while much urban design practice has its roots in the picturesque townscape tradition. There have been few attempts to grapple with fundamental questions of what might constitute aesthetic experience in the urban and rural environment, and equally few attempts to review the relevant field of aesthetic theory to distill different views of aesthetic values. However, two new books, both by Australians, at last begin to tackle "the intellectual disaster area" that is (environmental) aesthetics.

The Aesthetics of Landscape by the geographer-planner Steven Bourassa attempts to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for research in landscape aesthetics. It explains the origins of both landscape and aesthetics in separate chapters. While it recognises the influence the art has exerted on landscape perception crucially it argues that landscape and townscape are a complex blend of art, artifact and nature, and it rejects the divorce of the aesthetic and the utilitarian agreeing with George Santayana that "we are usually in a state of aesthetic unconsciousness".

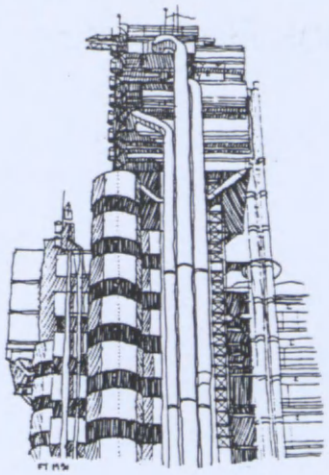
Reviewing aesthetic theory Bourassa counterposes the detached, disinterested aesthetics of Kant to Dewey's theory that aesthetic experience is a particularly intense, engaged or heightened form of everyday experience. After tracing the history of aesthetic disinterestedness he embraces Dewey's emphasis upon the interaction of man with his environment and the relationship between aesthetic, intellectual and practical experiences in the everyday world, as a sound basis on which to proceed.

Noting the tensions between biological and cultural explanations of aesthetic experience, and drawing on the work of Bachelard, Jung and the Russian psychologist Vygotsky, Bourassa posits a tripartite perspective on aesthetic consciousness developing from the biological to the cultural and on to the individual. Noting neurophysiological research he concludes that biological and cultural responses to the environment can occur separately and he develops the idea that aesthetic values might be conceived as biological laws, cultural rules and personal strategies.

The three core chapters in the book explore the literature in each of the three areas. The chapter on biological laws examines Appleton's habitat and prospect-refuge theories; the Kaplans' information-processing theories that emphasise the importance of complexity, coherence, legibility and mystery, and Gestalt theory as key contributions towards biological bases for landscape aesthetics. Bourassa acknowledges that the work is suggestive rather than conclusive. The chapter on cultural rules explores a much richer vein of literature identifying aesthetic values that appear to be transmitted socially. It carefully reviews the ideas of John Costonis and his 'cultural stability-identity theory' which he sees underlying the conservation ethic, and the large body of social science work on landscape, townscape and housing preferences which explores the significance of socioeconomic variables like age, sex, ethnicity, class and lifestyle. Bourassa focuses particularly on existential and professional status as key variables. How familiar are individuals with an environment (are they 'insiders' or 'outsiders') and do they have a professional or a lay perspective (are they 'experts' or non-experts?) This four part typology is of immense importance to urban design practice and identifies one of the key issues in contemporary aesthetics - the gap between lay and professional tastes.

Bourassa then explores personal strategies, drawing together but transcending biological and cultural influences into highly personal value sets that may be expressed either as ways of seeing (perceptual strategies) or as actual modifications of the landscape (design strategies). He suggests that perhaps changes in cultural rules start out as innovative personal strategies (e.g. development of architectural form), and he explores theories of creativity and the tensions between 'good fit' (contextual

The illustration by Francis Tibbalds shows the Lloyds Building, London, one of the designs referred to by Alan Holgate.



design) and innovation. However the whole concept of personal strategy remains very much underdeveloped.

The final two chapters attempt to apply the ideas in the book to landscape evaluation methods and to the phenomenon of postmodernism. The naivety of the former is well understood, and Bourassa exposes the reliance on formal characteristics of the landscape and the particular failure to take into account cultural values. The discussion of postmodernism does not fit entirely happily within the book at large and, rather like the previous chapter, seems to be more the result of parallel interests of the author. The discussion of postmodernism is coherent and concise and explores Foster's distinction between "a postmodernism of resistance and a postmodernism of reaction" and Frampton's ideas of critical regionalism. Importantly Bourassa takes issue with Harvey's (essentially Kantian) view of the superficiality of aesthetics and the irrelevance of design improvements. He goes on to argue that his theory of landscape aesthetics provides clear support for 'critical regionalism' with its emphasis on biological (prospect-refuge, complex, sustainable), cultural (identity, response to place) and personal (creative) strategies, but it is a very cursory argument, and one hopes that Bourassa will develop their ideas much further.

The Aesthetics of Built Form by Alan Holgate is a civil engineer's attempt to explain the aesthetic arguments of architects and architectural critics to his fellow professionals, and to broaden their appreciation of all built forms. Would that we had design professionals in Britain prepared to explain their own field to their fellow practitioners! Holgate begins by explaining some of the key elements of architectural approaches to design providing a simple introduction to ideas of a language of architecture an questions of morality and meaning which preoccupy critics. He then examines terms and concepts in aesthetics exploring the etymological roots of aesthetics and noting, like Bourassa, the tendency to equate aesthetics with beauty and good taste and to rarefy aesthetics separating it from everyday experience. What is interesting is that Holgate's much broader historical overview does not mention Kant and Dewey, but one can use his arguments to support the idea of the reintegration of aesthetic experience with the everyday rejecting concepts of beauty, psychic distance, good taste or even style as central to our understanding of aesthetic values.

In his third chapter Holgate develops the concepts for formal analysis of buildings - size and scale, proportion, form and shape, space, visual weight, texture, light, colour and pattern, composition, movement and rhythm and flow of space. He helps to identify a basic vocabulary and to remind us of how much architects and planners focus upon formal characteristics, and how they tend to concentrate upon the formal characteristics of buildings rather than the spaces between them. To his credit Holgate then balances his concern with formal aesthetics with a chapter on experiential and subjective responses to built forms drawing out the different meanings that formal characteristics evoke. Like the previous chapter it is something of a catalogue of ideas but the wide reading on which it is based makes it a valuable review of ideas from Ruskin to Venturi, from Geoffrey Scott to Peter Smith. However, as with the previous chapter, the author is content to introduce the ideas and to urge the reader "to enjoy the experience of discovering a variety of approaches" rather than to advocate a particular theoretical perspective.

Holgate then explores the idea of a language of built form looking at various forms of associations and meanings derived from architecture. The emphasis on meaning, so often neglected in design and aesthetics, is of great importance and provides an important link with Bourassa's cultural theories. Holgate goes on to explore the value of semiotic approaches that reaffirm the importance of the observer as an active producer of meaning, emphasising that interpretations are often highly varied and not widely shared. The subsequent chapter on political and moral issues is especially valuable, counterposing the political Right's support for classicism and the Left's adherence to Modernism, but also looking at the "privilege of culture" in the elitist arguments about art and in the design process itself. Holgate admits the existence of strong political and emotional reactions to urban forms but argues for much more subtle connections between beliefs, morals and built form that demand rigorous analysis.

The penultimate chapter focuses upon the history of functionalism, of obvious relevance to the preoccupations of engineers, but which might be considered rather peripheral to urban designers. The historical overview is fascinating and, as with theories dominated by good taste or morality, Holgate reveals a great deal of circularity of argument. He does manage to separate out the different arguments for functionalism but then recognises that they are inevitably confused by preconceptions and different concepts of beauty. The final chapter is primarily addressed to engineers in arguing for the importance and complexity of public taste, the value of considering aesthetics despite its extra costs, the need to understand meanings and symbolism, and the utility of understanding different professional perspectives.

Together these two books provide very useful overviews of landscape and townscape aesthetics that are comparatively easy to read and understand, and that synthesise and fully reference very large bodies of disparate literature. The books are surprisingly complementary for while Bourassa is concerned with experiential aesthetics and posits a coherent developmental framework of biological, cultural and personal perceptual strategies in aesthetics, Holgate is more concerned with formal aesthetics and explores a rather broader range of approaches. While Bourassa is equally concerned with landscape aesthetics Holgate concentrates upon built forms, and while Bourassa relies upon Dewey's view of aesthetics (quite appropriately in my view) Holgate mentions almost every key aesthetician except him. Both books should find a welcome place on the bookshelves of those who are not content to take urban design practice at face value, and who really want to explore the value bases of all their assumptions about the experience and form of the built environment.

John Punter

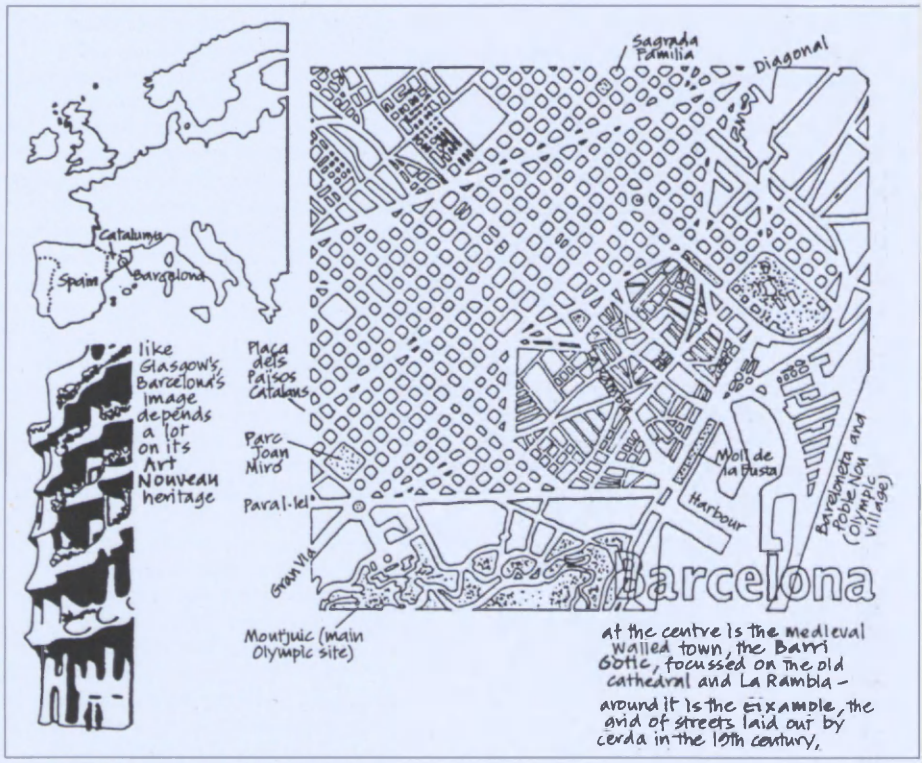
Book Reviews

FANTASTIC FORM: ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING TODAY
by Bill Risebero
Herbert Press 1992, £14.95

Risebero's definition is that a building has "fantastic form" when it attains the value of an object defined primarily by its exchange value. Such a value is created and maintained by a design ideology shaped by the necessity for profitability. Bourgeois architectural theory emphasises a naive debate about style, and flounders in the retreat from progressive utopianism and the social charter offered by welfare capitalism. Deregulation and the development of an enterprise culture, cossetted by a "New Right" ideology, he considers, has resulted in a more selective planning process that builds on economic advantage maintained by a disparity of incentives geared towards the already capital rich. The architecture of post-modernism, late-modernism and deconstructivism offers no realistic response to the urban crisis, because the urban crisis is no longer the concern of architecture. The contemporary architecture of Richard Rogers, Michael Hopkins, Michael Graves or Quinlan Terry can profess little social aspiration as it serves the building needs of the commercially successful who wish their hold on society to be celebrated through distinctive and innovatory forms.

Risebero's argument and discussion are both direct and controversial. His aim is to establish the need for a well defined critical theory that is able to clarify the objectives and appropriate practice of professionals working within a democratic building process.

Such a critical theory of planning and design should address six concerns; people and their needs; the role of architecture in the overall economic system; society as dynamic and dialectic; the need to define and work towards a fairer society; the need to establish an architectural theory that is pluralist rather than elitist; and the desire to challenge a selective architectural history that poses no threat to the inadequacies of our present society. A materialist conception of history, and the need to question theories that support the development of a capitalist mode of production provide justification for theory that offers the potential of "social progress".



Risbero asserts that in practice every concerted effort towards an architecture or planning that challenges the status quo is weakened by the inevitable effects of naivety, the commercialism of an initiative, or the popular involvement of a prince. The redevelopment of Byker, the self-build systems of Walter Segal, the humanism of Edward Cullinan, the objectives and perspectivs of the Matrix group are offered as examples of good practice. Other schemes such as Gigantes and Zenghelis's scheme for Moabit, Berlin or the grand-manner planning and contemporary urban design and architecture of Paris and Barcelona pass with less comment.

The "high tech" Soviet Constructivists are eloquently compared to the "high tech" late modernists, where the futuristic metaphor is still apparent. Richard Roger's 1969 quote that... "technology offers the possibility of a society without want"... appears shallow and unconvincing in the commercial context of his own building's success. Risebero states "...the high point about the twentieth-century technology is not how brilliant is it..but for whose benefit it is used."

The radical nature of the text, concluding with the statement that lasting reform cannot be achieved without concerted effort towards revolution, at times reads more like a manifesto than a considered text. As such the reader may be either confronted or comforted by the views and the evidence. The broad scope of the book offers a dynamic read that forwards many useful and challenging ideas. The informal illustrations provide a good summary of the text's content, whilst also animating the ideas into two and three dimensions. For a student of architecture or planning the text should provide a very valuable perspective of the choices a future within the respective professions might offer. For the urban designer a useful critique of established urban design theory is presented. ■

Michael Biddulph

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