TOWN CENTRE URBAN DESIGN GUIDE

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council describes its ambitious document

ע Central area opportunities plan עע Area covered by the Guide עע Analysis and concept

The aims of the Urban Design Guide are:

- To deliver positive change that revitalises the central area whist protecting and reinforcing the distinctive historic character of Stockton-on-Tees Town Centre;
- To establish a strong network of buildings, streets and spaces that delivers both quality and meets the needs of Stockton-on-Tees Town Centre and its users.

The objectives of the Urban Design Guide are:

- To provide overarching urban design principles for Stockton-on-Tees Town Centre through a sound understanding of the historic development and existing environment, building on the Conservation Areas & Historic Environment SPD;
- To provide detailed guidance on the design of buildings and the spaces that connect them taking into consideration context, grain of development, local distinctiveness, use of spaces, scale, massing, materials, and hard and soft landscaping;
- To identify areas of opportunity for sympathetic and appropriate development;
- To provide a framework for connectivity including public transport and linkages with the riverside and gateways sites, analysing the links and spaces that connect the centre with the wider suburban setting.

BACKGROUND

The Borough of Stockton-on-Tees, in line with the current national economic picture is in a challenging period for economic growth. As the economy begins to recover, the assets within the town centre must be built upon to ensure that a new and exciting era of positive change brings growth. There is real potential to attract new investment, businesses, residents and visitors through a strategic and integrated approach to the town centre's regeneration.

Previous strategic work undertaken by the council suggested the need for a planning policy to be developed ensuring that the authority has the power to guide development into the most appropriate locations, resist applications that do not benefit or support the key development priorities for the town centre, and give potential investors comfort that the council has a robust strategic vision for the Stockton Central Area.

Through the delivery of a Heritage Partnership scheme funded by English Heritage, the *Stockton Town Centre Urban Design Guide* was developed and designed to be used by any party involved in the ongoing regeneration of Stockton town centre.

GUIDING VISION

The Guide aims to deliver positive change that will revitalise the town centre by establishing a strong network of buildings, streets and spaces that delivers both quality and meets the needs of the town centre and its users, whilst protecting and reinforcing the distinctive historic character of area. It provides detailed analysis of the town centre's current situation including a health check, land uses, scale, urban grain, frontages, landmarks and visual structure, pedestrian circulation, public realm and green space, and movement and parking.

The document sets out ten urban design principles that all town centre developments should follow including investing in quality to secure the right design team to deliver quality design and materials; that developments create a sense of identity, which enhances the town centre's historic character and creates an impact and sense of arrival; have clear legibility to ensure they are welcoming, easy to use and orientate; and provide good connectivity by creating visual and physical links to the surrounding buildings, spaces and transport corridors.

The historic context, urban design analysis and character area guidelines have been used as the foundations for a

concept plan and vision for a sustainable and attractive town centre, complemented by guidance on streetscapes, built form and public realm materials.

LESSONS LEARNED

Consultation played an essential part in the development of the guide, specifically consultation with the planning department and key stakeholders. Close working relationships with these areas ensured complete buy-in from those who will seek to use the guide.

Initial consultation suggested that design guides are sometimes considered as being a hindrance to the planning process or a reason to inflate the cost of development or improvements. Good design doesn't necessarily mean expensive design; good design guidance is about providing the appropriate tools for the right context.

GOING FORWARD

The Council's ambitious plans for the regeneration of Stockton town centre are underpinned by this guide, which as a document was delivered entirely by the authority's own in-house urban design team, using local knowledge and expertise to promote the appropriate conservation and enhancement of the town centre's built environment.

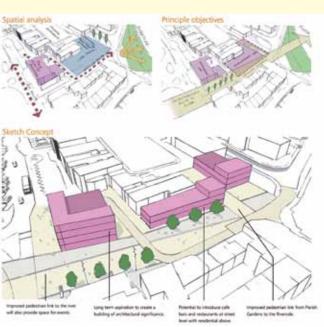
We believe this has been a unique project for a local authority, and as a result the guide has been a catalyst for a £38m investment plan within the town centre, including £17m public realm improvements (again delivered by our in-house design team) which started on site in September 2012.

The guide also supports the delivery of a current Heritage Lottery Funded Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme, which seeks to improve the built form heritage and bring vacant floor space back into use, thus contributing to the town's future economic growth. It is intended that the *Design Guide* will eventually be formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as part of the Local Development Framework process to support and ensure good design within the town centre's built environment. •





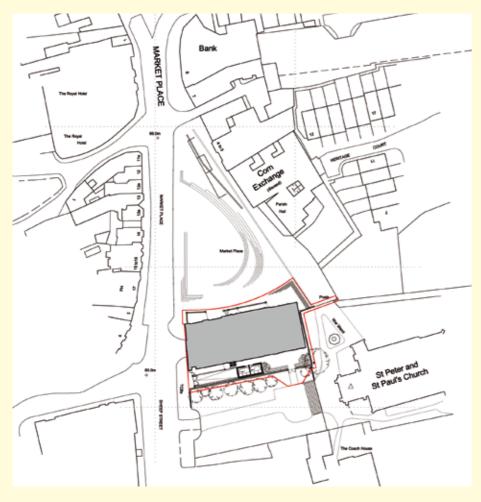




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REVIVING THE TOWN'S MARKET PLACE

Kettering Borough Council shows its sensitive intervention



Historically, Kettering's market place had been enclosed by built-form on the three sides of the square. However, this sense of enclosure had been eroded by the demolition of the previous buildings on this site in the early 20th century. The human scale of the space was lost, leaving an open, desolate, rarely-used area, with a small car-park and public convenience block dominating the southern side of the square.

Our aim was to regenerate this forlorn, miserable area of town within the Kettering Town Centre Conservation Area, whilst respecting the surrounding listed buildings, including the prominent – Grade 1 listed – Parish Church, and other buildings of architectural interest.

Against commercial advice, which advocated a mix of commercial/retail with office space above, we approached the revival of this area by building two restaurant units with ten residential units above and resident basement-parking below. Whilst not slavishly copying the

design of the properties that once stood upon this piece of land, it was intended to recapture the spirit of those structures and their relationship to the adjacent church of SS Peter & Paul.

The buildings are now complete and the market place environment has been improved by recreating the historic form, using quality materials and modern build methods, to establish a friendlier, more intimate, and therefore more widely-used, space. The view of the church and its spire is enhanced by being framed by the new properties, whilst the relationship with the award-winning Market Place itself is reinforced with the use of glass canopies on the market place buildings, echoing the striking market place canopy.

The ten residential units helped meet town-centre housing requirements and were fully let within two months of completion, at better than average town-centre rental rates. The demographic profile of tenants illustrates popularity with retirees and professionals/ semi-

professionals, given the proximity both to the railway station and the town-centre retail hub.

Tenants of the residential units have a ringside seat for regular activities, including the recent Olympic Torch Relay through the borough, with a scheduled stop on the Market Place, and the Urban Beach Volleyball tournament which took place late July 2012. They also have easy access to the adjacent town library, museum and the acclaimed Alfred East art gallery, as well as a quality coffee shop which has opened in the former Tourist Information Centre, an historic coachhouse adjunct to the town museum.

The restaurant units have designated outside dining space and terraces, which, like the apartments above, overlook the award-winning, vibrant market place, on which children now play in splash fountains, whilst families and shoppers linger on the terraced stone auditorium. One of the two restaurant units is already occupied by Prezzo, with indications of strong interest in the remaining restaurant unit. The area has gone from one of desolation to one of vibrancy and joyousness, which frequently echoes to the sounds of children's laughter.

LESSONS LEARNED

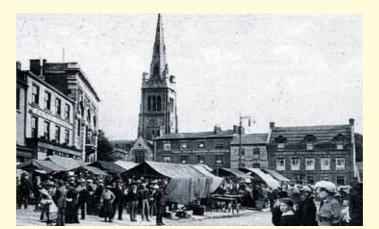
The importance of a strategic vision: the restaurant quarter was seven years in the making; the design has evolved, and improved, but the vision has remained the same: to create a lively, welcoming place that is surrounded by high quality buildings that animate the edges of the space and draw people into the restaurant quarter.

'You said, we did' we spent a long time consulting with local residents, traders and interest groups and have delivered what we promised to deliver for them.

Partnership working: we have worked very closely with our restaurant quarter neighbours, in particular the Parish Church, to ensure that they understood the vision for the space. Our discussions resulted in their removal of physical barriers between the Market Place and the church forecourt. We continue to work together on projects in that area.

✓ Plan of Restaurant Quarter
 ✓ Historic Market Place
 Buildings with church
 ✓ The new Market Place
 Buildings with church

- → Market Place taken 5 years ago with church
 → Forlorn and miserable
- ↓↓↓ Restaurant Quarter Summer 2012











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↓ City Park completed

↓ ↓ Before City Park

CITY PARK

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council reviews its bold design



City Park is a major new public space in the centre of Bradford. It comprises water features, trees, stone sculptures, a pavilion building with facilities, bespoke lighting columns, a new bus canopy and interactive lasers. At the heart of City Park is the UK's largest city centre water feature, a 3,600m2 'Mirror Pool' which boasts more than 100 fountains, including the tallest in any UK city at 30m high.

FROM ASPIRATION TO DELIVERY

The concept for a new city park with a large body of water as its focus dates back to 2003. A masterplan for the city centre by Alsop Architects identified the site as the natural heart of the city. It is located at the lowest point of the bowl in which Bradford sits and where its valleys and historic routes converge and meet.

Further work was undertaken to translate the visionary nature of the masterplan into a deliverable scheme, including engaging with the community at several stages. In 2007 a consultant team led by Gillespies was appointed in partnership with multi-disciplinary teams from Bradford Council, to develop the detailed design and delivery of

the park. The scheme was funded by Bradford Council, Yorkshire Forward and the Regional Transport Board and was completed in January 2012.

CONNECTING THE CITY

The park is surrounded by a variety of city centre destinations. These include the National Media Museum and cultural quarter, the central shopping area, the university and college, the transport interchange, City Hall, and various civic uses, offices and hotels. Prior to the scheme, the site was a major bus route which dissected the city centre and impeded pedestrian movement between these destinations.

There was concern that the large body of water originally proposed in the masterplan could also interrupt pedestrian flows. In response to this the design evolved into a mirror pool where the water levels can be lowered to reveal pedestrian pathways through the space (dividing the water up into three smaller pools). This allows people to move easily in a variety of directions, connecting the city centre together.

Another issue to address was the city

centre ring road (Princes Way) which effectively cut the site off from the learning and cultural quarters to the west. This was a poor pedestrian environment dominated by vehicles, safety barriers and inconvenient staggered crossings. The scheme has transformed this part of the ring road to create a more human scale environment. The barriers have been removed, the pavements widened, landscape and street trees added, and a wide new super crossing installed to enable easy and direct pedestrian access.

The relationship of City Park to the ring road needed careful consideration. Strategically placed landscape mounds, trees and hedges have helped to reduce the noise and visual impact of the traffic whilst still retaining pedestrian permeability and visual links between the park and wider city.

A DIVERSE, VIBRANT AND FLEXIBLE

The park offers a stimulating sensory environment. The pool is designed to provide different moods depending on the occasion or time of day. It can be a calm, reflective pool with occasional ripples, or a lively and dynamic space with fountains and erupting geysers, and it can be transformed again at night with atmospheric lighting. Also when walking through the park the spatial definition of the space constantly changes and different views are revealed creating visual interest

The design of the pool seeks to encourage people to engage with the water. One of the overwhelming successes of the scheme is undoubtedly the way in which local people have embraced and interacted with the water. It has introduced new activities to the city centre such as paddling, playing in the water and relaxing on the boardwalk. This has helped create a space which facilitates an active social life and feels like the heart of the city. This is further supported by the ability to drain the pool to create a flexible space that can be used for diverse events such as markets, theatre productions and community festivals.

A QUALITY PUBLIC REALM

The park is constructed from high quality natural materials which will enable it to stand the test of time. These include sandstone flags, porphyry setts, granite

∠ City Park highway works completed ◆ City Park completed **↓↓** Highways during **↓↓↓** City Park









The whole park has been designed to be

accessible by a wide range of users. This

has included careful consideration of the levels and using materials, colours and textures to signify different types of space, including a tactile edge to the pool. Management arrangements are in place to ensure that the quality of the space is maintained. This includes a daily programme of cleaning the park early in the morning and draining the pool at **LESSONS LEARNED**

cubes and a hardwood boardwalk. The design and pattern of the floorscape helps to create unity with the surrounding buildings contributing to a harmonious cityscape and a space that is distinctive to Bradford. The materials and street

furniture, such as the lighting columns,

are arranged in a way which helps to

define the different parts of the park.

The public realm extends to the roof of the pavilion building which includes grassed areas to sit providing views out over the park. The pavilion itself houses the water tank and equipment for the fountains as well as free public toilets. There is also a fully fitted changing place with a hoist ensuring facilities are accessible to all.

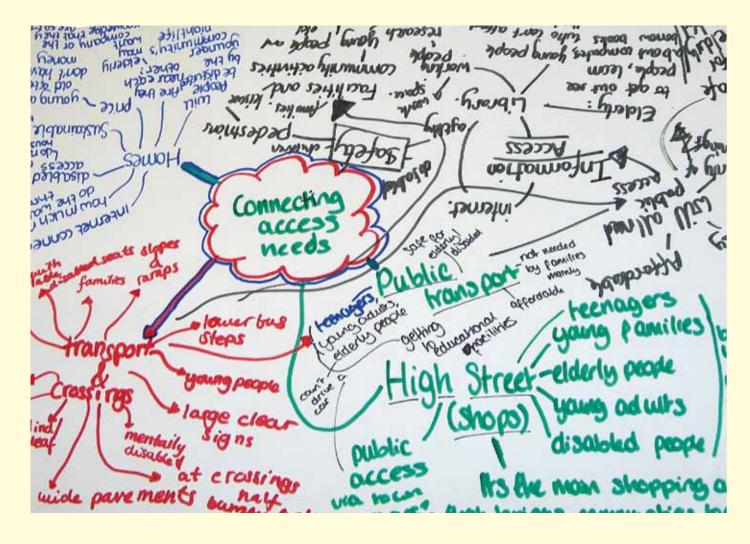
A lesson to take from the project is the importance of keeping hold of the vision and maintaining the ambition and commitment to quality in delivering the scheme. Numerous challenges had to be overcome but partnership working, cross party political support and buy-in from the local community and business community were key in bringing the scheme forward.

The result is a park that has at once become an iconic space for Bradford, synonymous with the image of the city, but it is also very much a social space where people from all the district's communities come to meet, interact, relax and have fun.

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LISTENING TO YOUTH VOICES

The Partnership of South Hampshire (PUSH) encourages more involvement



South Hampshire is planning for substantial economic growth in the next twenty years. With that growth will come new houses: houses built in our existing communities and upwards of 20.000 in new, self contained communities. This is being planned and managed by ten local authorities working together in the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH).

As with any growth, the plans are contentious: public meetings are full of those concerned about the impact of these new homes on them. But the voices that shout loudest are usually over thirty years of age, and often against change. The ones who don't attend meetings or exhibitions are those who have a real stake in the future of South Hampshire – young people under eighteen who will grow up to live, work and raise families here.

'What' – asked our councillors – 'do the youth of our region want from new communities?' PUSH commissioned Space, Place-making and Urban Design (SPUD) to find out. They asked them to work with five schools in the parts of the region likely to experience growth, to design the places that they wanted to live

Each school group undertook a period of investigation into their locality, exploring both their positive and negative experiences of those places. This enabled them to identify aspects that they felt were in need of improvement or change and also to understand the practical issues and context in which change might take place.

As a team, each group agreed the focus and theme to prepare a brief from which they would develop proposals for change. Students were encouraged to extend their research through direct contact with the professionals involved in planning and development in their areas, sharing their experiences with their peers. In total, 75

We thought hard about how we could incorporate sustainable design into our ideas. Reusing the existing buildings, designing a 'green' community centre and reclaiming the High Street...

young people from across the sub-region took part, and at least one now wants to be an architect and one an urban designer!

The young people's ideas were presented to an audience of councillors, planners and community representatives in late 2011. The audience were impressed with what they heard, and

the presentations have been repeated at council meetings across the region. They've also been published in a booklet sent to all the PUSH councils, with copies for planning committee members and their officers (www.spudgroup.org. uk/#!spud-youth/vstc2=current-activity). The councils have committed to ensuring that, as detailed planning begins for new development, so they will look at how best they can give young people a voice.

We appreciated having our views heard for once, by the local councillors

The project has given our young people an appreciation that they can and should have a say in planning and designing new communities in their area. But perhaps most importantly the young people, through their maturity and imagination, have begun to persuade councillors that they should be given a real voice in designing their future.

For 2012/13 PUSH has committed money to developing this approach further allowing us to embed a youth voice in our approach to urban design and planning for growth. We plan a programme of sessions for young people in Winchester and Southampton, in each case giving 15 youngsters the chance to learn about urban design over 20 evenings per group, and use their experience to plan the future of their cities. Once again, we'll present their ideas to local councillors and let young people have a say in their future. Our aim is to make these events a regular part of all our councils' debates about development and planning. •

צ Student thought shower exploring access issues (Swanmore College of Technology)

צ Student photomontage for ideas for the approach to Portsmouth from M275), showing a new car park, sports facilities and marina (St Edmund's Catholic School)

צע Students from Mill Chase Community Technology College, Bordon taking part in a workshop to prioritise key issues

צעע The SPUD 5x5 website

צעעע Student from Quilley School of Engineering working on a master-planning exercise with all 5 schools









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CHAIN STREET GOITSIDE URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council promotes quality in this residential area



The Chain Street area is historically important to the social development of Bradford as it was the location of the first major council housing scheme (1909). The residential properties were tenement blocks of a cottage style influenced by the Garden City movement. The site sits at the point where the regeneration zones known as The Learning Quarter, the city centre and the World Mile and Markets meet. Current works at the University to create a sustainable student village are starting to ripple regeneration into Goitside, where two students housing schemes have been created. On a similar basis it is envisaged that the mirror pool development in the city centre will bring regeneration opportunities to the western fringe of the city centre. The study site is located at the heart of these three regeneration zones and has the potential to link up these converging drivers for change.

The Framework seeks to promote a step-change in the quality of housing and environment by combining the best of the old with the best of the new; addressing community safety concerns whilst respecting the rich heritage and history of the area.

The study process consulted with users and service providers who tested and considered a broad range of options and assessed the merits of each. Five place-making scenarios evolved and were

assessed on a qualitative basis, after which the Building for Life criteria were used to identify a clear preferred option for further detailed development.

The preferred option proposes a development form that utilises the existing streetscape reinforcing this to create a new linear park and formal square that is overlooked and engages with the new green space.

Chain Street comprises four discreet but interdependent sites with a separate solution identified for each:

- Two storey linear terraces of bed-sitters with some architectural merit were re-ordered vertically creating modern social housing standard family housing.
- 'U Block' flats were demolished to form a mix of private and social housing.

 The dwellings had a 3 storey form that responded to the surrounding city centre scale.
- Where the pedestrian route through the linear park changed direction, a small urban square was introduced, overlooked by a new extra-care residential development, and
- This site has two distinct sides to it.
 One fronts Westgate which is a busy main road connecting the centre through to the themed shopping area of the World Mile. This developed into a commercial frontage with

apartments above. The rear half was proposed as family housing fronting the surrounding streetscapes.

The park will include play space within its landscaped setting to provide for the children living in the family houses. The linear park form evolves into a more formal square, where it passes through Site C. All public spaces are well overlooked by the adjacent buildings that engage with the green space.

The Framework identified the need for a radical transformational strategy for redeveloping these sites, while knitting the development into the existing historic city centre streetscape. The strategy seeked to evolve Dutch urban models of locating family housing within the city centre along landscaped corridors which link into more traditional residential communities. The proposed development form and architectural language was deliberately modern, with the aim of challenging and transforming perceptions of the area and providing a development catalyst for the wider regeneration of the Goitside area.

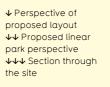
The overall development respects the area's history and social context whilst providing a flagship regeneration project raising the profile of the wider Goitside conservation area. The Housing and Communities Agency supported the delivery of social housing, enabling an early start on site by InCommunities. The private housing elements of the scheme were funded through the provision of £1.2 million of gap funding support from the Council.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Identifying a demand for family housing in city centre
- Aspirational design quality is needed to transform perceptions
- Extensive broad consultation from outset led to delivery drive/engagement with the Framework
- Developing innovative strategies for using public owned assets to rive transformational regeneration
- Retaining and remodelling the best of the publicly owned assets to drive the quality of the Conservation Area, whilst not being afraid to demolish other buildings and replace them with high quality contemporary design
- Having established a demand for housing, the scale of the houses should

✓ Aerial view of existing site and context ↓ Proposed layout ↓↓ Roundhill Place: existing street frontage ↓↓↓ Roundhill Place: proposed street frontage











be appropriate for their city centre location. This requires a unique design solution rather than standard house types that are designed for suburban sites

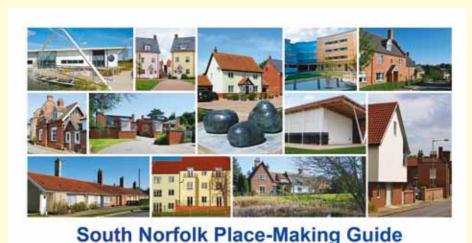
 Utilising the best elements of the existing streetscape can deliver a best value solution through the use of the existing infrastructure.





PLACE-MAKING GUIDE

South Norfolk Council sets out its key principles

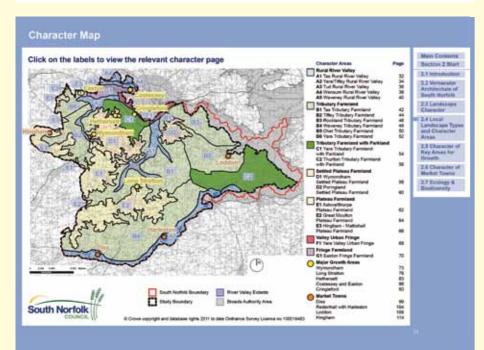


Supplementary Planning Document September 2012

Enhancing the environment we live in

www.south-norfolk.gov.uk





South Norfolk Council identified a need to influence and raise the quality of the design and layout of new development in the district. The Place-Making Guide is seen as a positive tool to deliver one of the Council's key priorities: 'Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in'.

The guide underpins the Council's commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of the built environment by providing practical advice to all those involved in the design and planning process on what is considered to be sustainable and sensitive design solutions, which positively integrate with existing communities to create attractive places.

The guide promotes local distinctiveness but also recognises the value of innovation and contemporary approaches. Fundamental to all approaches is the need for an integrated process where good place-making principles and sustainable development are considered as one.

To ensure a proper understanding of the local context and distinctive character of South Norfolk, the guide defines the local landscape types, areas for growth and market towns within the district, and summarises the characteristics of each. Under each section, it suggests design principles which developers are expected to take into account when proposing any new development.

The guide sets out the key place-making and design principles that will be used to assess proposals for new development. These principles provide a checklist for anyone preparing a planning application to guide proposals, assessed using the Greater Norwich Development Partnership Joint Core Strategy Policy 2: Promoting Good Design. The guide uses a worked example to illustrate how these principles can be incorporated and also local case studies to demonstrate successful schemes.

The guide was subject to extensive public consultation and public exhibitions during May and June 2012, which followed a number of stakeholder workshops to inform its extent and content. It was produced in partnership with Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design Ltd., who were responsible for drafting the design principles section of the guide and preparing an electronic, interactive document for public consultation. The interactive guide allows instant access to any particular part of the guide using key words, locations or any of the main contents lists or maps, as well as website links to other guidance and best practice documents.

LESSONS LEARNED

Key lessons were learned during the preparation of the guide, particularly through the stakeholder workshops and the public consultation stage, and the document was amended in response to feedback received. Lessons included the need to ensure a holistic approach to appraising and understanding the site and its context, particularly in relation to ecology and biodiversity so that appropriate consideration is given to issues such as green infrastructure during the design process, and the guidance was strengthened to achieve this. Although the ∠ Cover of the guide VV Character man → Three pages from the guide: Architectural Quality Case Study 12

guide mentioned the local distinctiveness of South Norfolk and required that design proposals respond positively to this, it became clear that there was a need to emphasise that good quality innovative and contemporary design solutions could also be appropriate; this was addressed with additional photographs and a number of case studies to illustrate a variety of contemporary building types, as examples of good design. There was also a very positive response to the interactive, electronic version and further website links were added to a wide range of additional documents and best practice guidance to allow instant and comprehensive access to appropriate information.

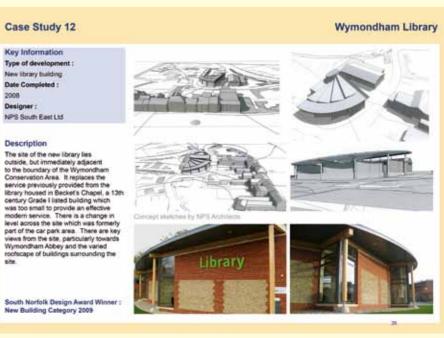
The Place-Making Guide SPD was formally adopted in September 2012 and will be a significant aid to applicants, developers and designers towards achieving high quality and sustainable development throughout South Norfolk. It will also assist elected members and officers in pre-application discussions and the evaluation of such proposals in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

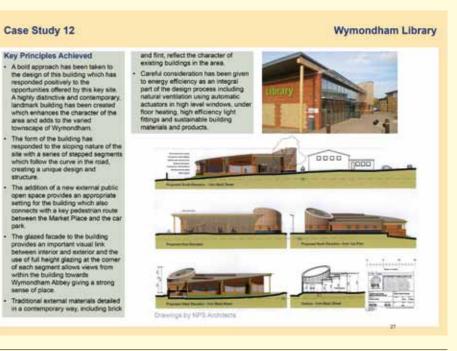
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