Site Studies Planning & Design

Urban/Townscape Analysis

Photograph - High Street, Dedham, Essex
'To judge if a proposal is successful and indeed appropriate, is not merely a question of its appreciation in terms of aesthetics – composition, scale, balance, proportion, rhythm, silhouette, texture and contrast. We must assess designs in a holistic manner. In a report prepared by the Royal Fine Art Commission, it determined that, 'design covers the plan and form of the building as well as the elevational treatment of the façade'. Indeed, in his books on Architecture, Vitruvius indicated that buildings must possess the qualities of 'utilitas, firmitas and venustas', later translated as 'commodity, firmness and delight', of which only the last is concerned with pure aesthetics. Therefore, we must consider other elements of a design to fully appreciate and form an opinion on any proposal.'
Opening Paragraph to Proof of Evidence

Continued:

Buildings do not necessarily stand on their own and we must also consider the context within which the proposal is to relate, including its impact (environmental or otherwise), setting, spacing between buildings, relationship with other buildings and other aspects, including vistas and street pattern. Some of these vistas may in fact be through the site and therefore framed by the buildings either side. Phrases such as use, density, height and open space are considered to be planning matters and need to be appraised as part of a design.
Site Studies Planning & Design
1. Entrance place at Long Lent Park. The intention here is to create a distinctive entry place, to the village based on the gates of Lent Park and the public house reinforced by the new island and entrance to the new housing development. The tempo of the place is suggested as a casual grouping of buildings held together by walls and with broad, green verges and trees. M35. The mood is somewhat sophisticated bearing in mind the blind arcades to the whitewashed brick public house and the noble stone gateway whilst the overall colour value would be white and stone, M31.

From this entry place the eye explores in three directions, out to Lent Hall, down to a blocking building in the new housing area, and through the gap in the road to a glimpse of ochre-coloured cottages in the High Street, M34. All these views are framed in gateways or narrows, so that the entry place retains its integrity.

The housing development is arranged round the existing fruit trees and a residents' association will deal with the husbandry of the tree and the disposal of the fruit thus providing a practical meeting ground for social intercourse, M32, out of what is usually a no-man's land. The total length of the development is broken into two pieces in order to keep the scale down. The reader will discover further indications, for instance the line of continuous perspective from the central core to the gates.
Making places
High Street, Banbury

How can medium-sized towns compete with vast regional shopping centres and cope with cars without losing their cohesive grain? Roger Evans and Philip Opher report on Banbury’s response.

The traditional high streets of many medium-sized market towns are in trouble. Historically they developed along main traffic routes, and as a result are often now congested with moving and parked vehicles. They are difficult to service, noisy, polluted, unpleasant and sometimes dangerous. Yet the centres of many of these towns have the potential for a much richer and more interesting environment and wider range of choice than the shopping malls — in town and out of town — with which they are having to compete.

Banbury is typical of many small but expanding towns, and is now served by the M40. While improved road access can bring visitors into the town it can just as easily take local people away to surrounding shopping centres. This prompted Banbury to review the quality of its town centre, and as a result it has recently invested almost £7.75 million on an improvement scheme.

Founded, like so many settlements in the early Middle Ages, to support the garrison of its Norman castle, the pattern of Banbury’s streets and spaces slowly evolved to meet the changing needs of local traders. Early in the nineteenth century the present pattern was complete.

Demolition in the 1950s and 60s was brought to a halt in 1968 by a conservation study. This resulted in the designation of a conservation area, 1, which included all of the historic centre. The study suggested that although Banbury had few buildings of outstanding architectural or historical quality, it retained a remarkable network of urban streets and spaces. These included the Market Place, the separate spaces in which cattle, sheep and horses were traded, the High Street and many smaller connecting streets and alleys. The study recommended that, whatever happened to the buildings, the shape and character of these spaces should be protected. It suggested that this be done by restricting the amount of demolition in any
The High Street in 1989. Traffic and parked cars dominate. Survival vision sketches. As the town grew to support the needs of its citizens, building lines defined patterns of activity—the streets once accommodated livestock markets. But the human scale of the spaces is as relevant now as ever before, and walking from east to west across town through the new pedestrianised High Street reveals a legibility which guides with a sense of place.

1. Entrance room: eastern approach into town along Bridge Street, with town hall landmark framed by tree planting. The High Street beckons to the left of the town hall.

2. Meeting place: a focus is formed where Broad Street meets the High Street.

3. The High Street: perimeter blocks with public fronts and private backs, narrow frontages to accommodate as many units as possible, ground-floor shops with two or three storeys of living accommodation above. A public space never closed and self-policed, a pattern never surpassed?

4. Threshold: at the end of the long High Street, the White Lion pub closes the view and forms a threshold into the next ‘room’, Sheep Street.

5. From each space there are emerging views which both confirm where we are and invite further exploration.

6. Landmark: as Banbury Cross marks the end of the east-west route across town, streets widen out into tree-lined avenues and offices replace shops.

The site studies planning and design project aimed to realise the scheme. It included proposals to pedestrianise the High Street and improve not only Butchers Row, Broad Street and the High Street, but also the Market Place and Parson Street. Public response was mixed, with some traders in the High Street and 98% of the public who did reply supporting the scheme. Responses from smaller traders were less enthusiastic and it was decided to omit Parson Street and the Market Place from the proposals which went to the public inquiry. An inquiry into a pedestrianisation scheme rests on a traffic regulation order and accurate data and precise proposals are needed. The changes obtained after the inquiry were:

- General traffic would be excluded from the
10 The High Street as it is now. Pedestrianisation has shifted the emphasis away from cars — only essential traffic is allowed access. The balance of people and cars is now more similar to what it was when most of the buildings creating these spaces were first built.

11 The High Street in the late 1920s. The buildings have changed little since — this has been due more to strategic planning than to market forces.
street between 10am and 4pm — the core period
- running, including refuse collection, would only be allowed outside this period
- residents with on-site parking would be allowed 24-hour access together with the bank's bullion delivery
- disabled drivers would be admitted at all times for periods of up to two hours
- emergency vehicles would have full access
- building contractors and the public utilities would require special permits.

Alternative roads to by-pass the High Street had already been identified in an earlier town centre one-way system and so closure to traffic presented few circulation problems. Evidence of adequate car parking provision around the pedestrian core was required at the inquiry although few parking spaces were lost as a result of pedestrianisation.

An exploration of the High Street, 4.9, reveals an intelligible sequence of public spaces which any design intervention should seek to reinforce and not confuse.

Clear design objectives
The council's landscape architect had clear design objectives. He wanted to retain the nature and quality of the street as a thoroughfare, avoiding arbitrary clutter, complex paving patterns and unnecessary obstructions which would restrict possible uses. These included the annual carnival, the autumn fair, the introduction of street traders and hawkers as well as convenient and comfortable shopping. The council wanted to introduce furniture which was not excessive but was unable to find a British manufacturer with suitable alternatives.

The paving material used in the clay brick in two colours and shapes separated by a cast-iron drainage channel. York stone cobbles are used as small areas of the main line of movement and there are raised planters in the local limestone as well as timber planters which are also used elsewhere in the town. A few trees are planted at paving level, the majority in the planters. A few lighting standards with gas type copper lanterns have been introduced in an attempt to produce more sympathetic lighting levels than the traffic lighting recently installed by county engineers. But perhaps there are better ways of doing this — architecture and pavements could be subtly illuminated by unobtrusive fittings mounted on building elevations. Banbury has a recent tradition of summer planting and there is a large number of new double standards for hanging baskets.

A large metal arch at the High Street entrance to Butchers Row has been commissioned from sculptor Avril Wilson. Several smaller sculptures by Alec and Fiona Peart have also been commissioned. Both selections were made with the help and advice of the county council arts officer.

Engineering staff met with managers of local shops to anticipate and sort out problems before work began on site. The 33-week contract period using an ICE (Institution of Civil Engineers) measure and value contract was timed to avoid the Christmas shopping period. It was also completed in stages so that shopkeepers could see the benefit which resulted from the disruption and so virtually eliminate complaints. Prior to the start, the statutory undertakers did all the work they hoped would be necessary for several years and co-operated fully throughout the project. Many detailed changes were made necessary by unexpected service locations and the discovery of damaged cellars. The reasons for many detailed design decisions are in fact hidden underground. The project was opened in autumn 1991 (by local resident Michael Heseltine).

The overall impression is of an admirably uncluttered street. Full vehicle exclusion does seem justified, at least in Butchers Row and the fairly narrow High Street. The new paving scheme has transformed the appearance and functioning of the area to an extent where some shopfronts and signage look decidedly tacky by comparison, some of the multiples being the worst. But does this or any other historic high street need so much imported horticulture? There are so raised planters in any of the photographs of Victorian Banbury. Raised beds, even in local stone, look uncomfortable and out of place, and wooden planters look temporary, particularly when jacked up to make them level on the sloping street. Both types of planters look dreadfully depressing with anything less than continual maintenance.

Generally though, Banbury's historic shopping centre is developing sympathetically and, with an increasing choice of above, it should hold its own against the out-of-town 'machines for shopping in'. Surely the business of 'coming to town' is much more than keeping the tills ringing — it is a major social, cultural and recreational activity, and requires not only a mix of uses including public buildings, but also a public realm which is truly public and not locked up when the shops close. Certainly more people, including families, the young and the old can, and now do, enjoy using the High Street. The only shopkeepers now grumbling (exceptation apart) are those in Parsons Street who wish they had opposed a pedestrian scheme there.

Table Information required to support pedestrianisation proposals at public inquiry

| car parking | existing capacities and potential losses as a result of pedestrianisation |
| traffic flows | traffic flows along pedestrian streets and tributaries |
| pedestrian flows | pedestrian flows along pedestrian streets and tributaries |
| shopping | purpose, duration, frequency and modes of travel |
| traders | type of trade, opening hours, and current servicing arrangements |
| land use | including proprietors and land buildings |
| public transport | routes, frequency and stopping places |
| traffic accident record | type, location and frequency |
| land survey | current alignments, utilities and street furniture |

The information at these from sub-committee of pedestrian survey work carried out by Cherwell District Council.
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Townscape Appraisal - Wivenhoe

MSc Student Appraisal - Wivenhoe
A site visit has been arranged to visit the town of Wivenhoe, Essex, on: Wednesday 5th October 2011. Outline details as indicated below:

- **Urban Design Analysis – Part 1**
  - Make your own arrangements to arrive in the town of Wivenhoe, Essex by train or by car during the morning, allowing time to undertake an initial Urban Design Analysis of the High Street and roads/streets leading off the High Street. The Urban Design Analysis is to be contained to the area from the waterfront (Quay) to the intersection with Belle Vue Road (Co-op store) as discussed during the seminar in Week 2 (10).
  - Following your initial Urban Design Analysis in the morning, meet the module leader and other staff at the railway station at 1.25pm for a group discussion.

- **Lunch**
  - Lunch and further discussions on the Quay (weather permitting) at the Rose & Crown, The Corner House coffee shop, and other pubs in the area

- **Meeting with Town Mayor, Local Town Councillors and others (3.15pm)**
  - Meet at the William Loveless Hall, High Street, Wivenhoe at 3.15pm to meet the Mayor, Local Town Councillors and other council staff in the Main Hall. An exhibition of the history of Wivenhoe will be presented following the meeting.

- **Site Visit (approx. 3.45pm)**
  - Visit the site for the proposed civic centre - undertake a Site Analysis as part of assignment S2

- **Urban Design Analysis – Part 2**
  - Complete your Urban Design Analysis of Wivenhoe.

- **Close**
  - Make your own way back to your accommodation. Prepare for discussions during the seminar in Week 4 (12)

**Note** – The Senior Planning Officer from Colchester Borough Councillor will be discussing the proposals in Week 6 (15) (to be confirmed) during the seminar period

Extract Map – Streetmap.co.uk

Wivenhoe railway station is located on the Clacton – Liverpool Street line
As part of your first assignment for Site Studies Planning & Design in Semester 1, you are required to prepare an Urban Analysis Report. The following notes have been prepared to assist you in your preparation of your group Urban Analysis Report

- Urban Analysis Report - Contents
  - Cover
  - Contents Page
  - Abstract
    Summary of the Report – Purpose/Group Members
  - Introduction & Location Details
    Introduce the location and the site under consideration
    Provide a location map of the location
  - Analysis of the urban characteristics
    Description of the urban context by area
    - Urban Structure (The framework of routes and spaces)
    - Urban Grain (The pattern of blocks, plots and buildings)
    - Landscape (Shape, form, ecology and natural features)
    - Density and Mix (The amount of development and the range of uses)
    - Scale (Height and massing)
    - Appearance (Details and materials)
    Notated plan of the area under consideration utilising notation contained in your study guide – Townscape Appraisal Notation, and other techniques as discussed during seminar sessions
    Figure Plans – ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ plans of the area under consideration providing an understanding of built form and spaces between buildings
    Pencil/pen sketches with notations/comments
    Photographs – with annotations
    Completed Townscape Appraisal forms (completed at two different times)
  - Conclusion
  - Reflection
    Review and evaluate the work of the group and what you have achieved upon completing the assignment
  - Appendices
    Initial work-up sketches etc.

Note – Report to be spiral bound with clear acetate front cover and card back.
A digital copy in pdf format is to uploaded/provided on CD/USB memory stick bound into the report.