

DESIGN REVIEWED TOWN CENTRE RETAIL

Lessons learnt from projects reviewed by CABE's expert design panel



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FOREWORD

CABE's Design Review programme has, over the four years since it began work, reviewed hundreds of projects for sites across England, from major regeneration masterplans to more local interventions. When one combines this knowledge-base with the long tradition of our predecessor body, the Royal Fine Art Commission, we have a substantial archive of case study material to draw upon, across all types of development activity.

We now want to ensure that the lessons we have learnt over time are shared with decision-makers and practitioners involved in shaping our built environment. One good reason to do this is that we tend to see the same issues arising from one scheme to the next. By sharing what we perceive to be best practice, based on successful outcomes, we hope to help the development community to address and resolve these issues earlier in the process.

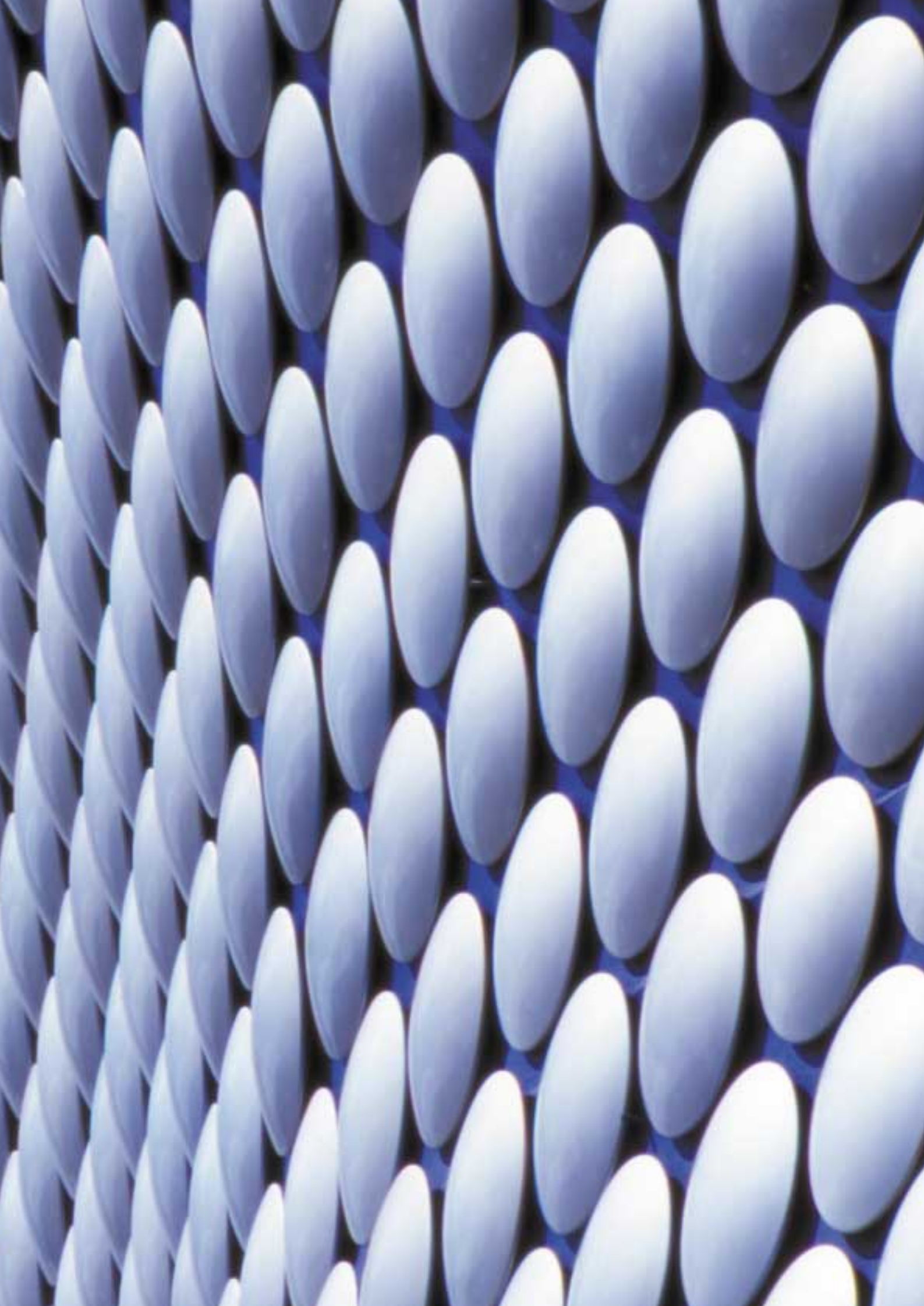
This document is one of a series of 'lessons learnt' reports, each covering a subject area of current interest. It draws out some common themes, and attempts to derive practical lessons from the design

work that we have seen. In a series of short case studies, it brings together a varied but representative set of recent proposals for large scale town centre retail projects, describing what was proposed, and CABE's analysis of the designs.

We do not claim that CABE has all the answers. We hope that another benefit from this series will be that developers and practitioners will approach us with their own lessons and observations, so that we can refine and add to our knowledge. We would particularly welcome feedback on other topics or sectors you would like us to cover in future publications.

Paul Finch
Deputy Chairman of CABE,
and Chairman of CABE Design
Review Committee





BACKGROUND: THE STATE OF PLAY

In 1996 the then Government introduced a new version of Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 in an attempt to stem the flight of retail activity out of the centres of our towns and cities to out-of-town locations. It did this by requiring local planning authorities to apply a 'sequential test' to any decision as to where significant retail provision should be located: the 'first preference should be for town centre sites..., followed by edge-of-centre sites, ... and only then out-of-centre sites...'

Since the introduction of new PPG6, successive Secretaries of State have stuck to their guns in resisting pressure from some parts of the retail sector to relax this restriction.

In CABA's view, this consistent application has resulted in one of the more successful planning policies since the Second World War.

In a remarkable space of time, we have moved to a position where the significant majority of new retail development has focused back on our town and city centres. As a result, we are beginning to

experience retail-led urban regeneration, bringing economic life and vibrancy back to many locations that were struggling in the wake of deindustrialisation. In part fuelled by the growing retail and leisure culture, our towns and cities have begun to experience other benefits such as a growth in high-density urban living and a revitalisation of other types of commerce.

There is still a long way to go. The real beneficiaries to date, of projects built or currently proposed, have been our major centres, the top-ranking urban retail destinations. These have included Manchester, Birmingham, Southampton and Reading. We are confident that other towns and cities will experience similar effects over the next ten years including Sheffield, Liverpool, Exeter and Preston. At the same time, the outworking of PPG6 has helped to protect and enhance the offer of our historic towns including Bath, Harrogate, Chester and Winchester.

There remain, however, a large number of what we might call secondary retail locations that are still struggling to push forward. Without either the critical mass

of the larger destinations, or the 'experience' offer of the more historic environments, there is a raft of towns and cities still failing to compete with the existing out-of-town offer, new designer outlet centres that have slipped through the planning system, and the lure of larger urban centres. The key test over the coming years will be whether the success stories of the larger locations can be repeated in the likes of Bradford, Stockport, Swindon, and Telford.

One significant opportunity is that many of our town centre shopping developments are coming to the end of their operational lives. Developed mainly in the 1960s and early 1970s, these centres do not offer the quality of experience expected by the modern consumer, and are increasingly shunned by the retailers themselves. The potential for redevelopment gives the host towns a chance to strengthen their urban identity and improve their offer.

THE DESIGN EQUATION

Designing a new retail environment within an urban context is not a simple task to do well. The result must satisfy retailers in terms of store requirements and generated footfall, the operator in terms of the management and security of the environment, and the owner in respect of long-term capital value based on the flexibility and longevity of the offer. At the same time, a successful centre will enhance the surrounding urban context, will improve transport and access arrangements. It will be a good neighbour in respecting the historic nature of the environment while, it is to be hoped, adding to the civic asset base with some fine architecture and public spaces.

It is now well accepted that the economic and civic aspirations represented in this list should be viewed as mutually

compatible. The British Council of Shopping Centres, in its exemplary publication, 'Urban design for retail environments', makes clear that with understanding on all sides, most parts of the equation can be satisfied most of the time. The symbiosis can perhaps usefully be summarised in top retail expert, Vittorio Radice's ambition that all retail developers should create a 'theatre of consumption', with a clear understanding that the experience for the customer must begin well before the commodities themselves come into view.

As a result the days of the retail box, with its wholly internalised environment and rooftop parking, are almost gone. Thrown down in the middle of the cleared city centre site, these boxes were like an alien mothership sucking life from the

surrounding environment and giving little back in return.

Occasionally, CABA still sees such schemes. A few have slipped through the net in low-value secondary locations, decisions that we firmly believe will be bitterly regretted over time as counterproductive to the long-term interests of those communities. But for the most part, retail developers are genuinely seeking to use good design to create an excellent long-term investment for themselves and their backers.

It is, however, still difficult. The devil is in the detail, and there are a significant number of issues that cause all parties, including CABA, to struggle. The purpose of the remainder of this publication is to expose those issues and address them.



THE DESIGN LESSONS

1. The right strategy

What is good design?

'Good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere. Good design can help promote sustainable development; improve the quality of the existing environment; attract business and investment; and reinforce civic pride and a sense of place. It can help to secure continued public acceptance of necessary new development.'

Planning Policy Guidance Note 1, 1997

This report is based on the work of CABA's design review programme, which offers advice on design quality for selected developments across England. The way in which it evaluates projects is set out in its publication 'Design Review' which proceeds from the general to the particular and from the stage of analysis through to that of design.

Design is a creative activity, and definitions of quality in design are elusive. It cannot be reduced entirely to codes or prescriptions. Even where there appear to be rules, the best buildings often break or transcend them.

It is possible, however, to distinguish good design from bad design. CABA considers that good design means design that is fit for its purpose, sustainable, efficient, coherent, flexible, responsive to context, visually appealing and a clear expression of the requirements of the client.

Assessing quality of design is to a large extent an objective process. Some questions come down to matters of individual taste or preference, but these are not often the questions that are important in deciding whether a development, judged in the round, is a good one. What matters is quality, not style.

When translated to town centre retail development, we can judge proposed designs against a number of key principles:

- Good urban design – the principles of which are set out in 'By Design', the Government's companion guide to PPG1, and include the importance of character, legibility, ease of movement, adaptability and a mix of uses.
- Good architecture – buildings with civic quality, that enhance their internal and external environments through their scale, massing, proportions, detailing etc.
- Good for retail – the development must work for retail and leisure providers in their core business, selling products to customers
- Good for everyone – the development must minimise any negative impacts on the environment and promote a safe and inclusive environment for all who want to use the town centre, including those with special access needs.

Setting the design vision

We have not yet seen a successful town centre retail development that did not have a clear design vision.

The design vision flows from a full understanding of the physical, economic and social context in which the development will take place. This includes:

- the physical and social history of the town centre and its surroundings
- the nature and character of existing development, public space networks and transport infrastructure
- the overall strategy and plan for the town centre, as developed by the local authority, its partners and the community

- the economic and social needs of the target population
- the nature of the desired retail offer, and the brand identity that underpins it.

It is important that the emerging vision is shared and agreed between developer, planning authority and local community, before commissioning any significant design work.

Getting the masterplan right

Every significant town centre retail development will require a detailed masterplan. Often, this may develop and detail an existing design framework or masterplan for a wider area, perhaps drawn up by the local authority and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. There may also be more detailed town centre design guidelines that the developer will need to reflect and respect.

For detailed advice on the process of masterplanning see CABA's guide, 'Creating Excellent Masterplans'. Some key points are:

- the masterplan should be the product of a clear client brief flowing from detailed analysis
- the masterplan should encompass an area wider than just the development site, in order to create sensible relationships with existing surrounding development and, particularly, other development sites
- the masterplan should be built up from an understanding of the key networks – block/grid pattern, public space, movement etc
- the masterplan should be a flexible plan that can change and evolve over time
- the masterplan should be produced and illustrated in three dimensions

2. The right product

Grid and block

Any new urban retail development sits within an existing urban fabric. That fabric may already be badly damaged, but a solid urban analysis should reveal some important patterns. Most English towns and cities have a clear underlying pattern, a network of streets giving rise to key intersections that might relate to the marketplace, an important civic building or a square. Sometimes, particularly where there are Roman origins, there is an obvious or less obvious grid pattern. Other patterns may be more irregular, not rigorously planned but rather evolving over time in response to the desire lines of those moving through the settlement, following natural valley forms or connecting two significant locations. In most cases, these patterns of routes and spaces still make sense today in knitting together our towns and cities as places to enjoy. It is, of course, not uncommon to find that these patterns have been ignored, contradicted or obliterated by development of the last fifty years or so. Large scale redevelopment may often reveal opportunities to rediscover the patterns and repair harm that has been done by insensitive development in the past.

The historic pattern, however, may give rise to a grain of development that is too fine for the retail developer simply to adopt. The pattern of the grid can create blocks that are too small for retailers' needs, either in terms of individual store sizes or the need for a critical mass of retail activity. Rather, the preferred retail model tends to be based upon a different, more alien form of grid and block, recognisable in the North American shopping mall, driven almost entirely by the well-honed marketing skills of the retail industry, based on required store depths and maximising of consumer spend.

Based on our experience, CABE considers that it is possible to combine these different interpretations of grid and block layouts successfully. First, we do not consider that it is necessary for a retail development to replicate the historic grid pattern in total. The key is to identify the most significant routes and to incorporate these within the scheme to ensure there is sufficient connectivity in and through the development to other parts of the town and city. A large retail development may combine two or more blocks, as a legitimate approach in creating an interesting and varied urban layout, provided that the development remains a part of the town around it by providing adequate routes through, including for those who may not wish to stop or shop. Secondly, it is not necessarily the case that routes have to be replicated or retained in their existing or previous form with absolute precision. The key again is to ensure permeability and legibility for the user, but this may involve adaptation to facilitate the retail environment. The scheme proposed for the extension of the Broad Marsh Centre in Nottingham is an example of both these ways of reconciling urban design requirements with retail needs.

Streets and corridors

The issue that causes the most difficulty under this heading is the extent to which retail developments should provide continuity in the grid pattern by ensuring that the key routes are retained or re-created as open streets, as opposed to a roofed mall environment. For CABE, the key test here is to adopt the perspective of the non-retail user who is also a stranger to the town and city. With particular emphasis on the period outside shopping hours, would such an individual feel that the route provided was a natural and obvious part of their journey, and feel safe in making that choice?

The answer is not simply that open air environments are good and enclosed



environments bad. The wonderful tradition of the nineteenth century arcades demonstrates that there is a definite place for high quality roofed retail environments. Nevertheless, CABE would encourage retail developers to create or retain open street environments wherever possible, as they assist greatly the integration of the development within the urban context, and lead to a more lively and vital environment for longer periods of time. People may appreciate being sheltered from the rain and wind when shopping, but they will also want to enjoy fresh air and sunshine when the weather is good. Fortunately, this is increasingly recognised by developers of retail projects, for example in the emerging scheme for Stratford City in East London.

Where an internal environment is considered necessary, there are several ways of integrating covered routes successfully into the urban context. The first is to ensure sufficient penetration of daylight and sunlight, achieved perhaps by canopies providing partial cover, or by



glazing. The second is to seek to keep the internalised sections as short and straight as possible, so that the pedestrian can see clearly where they are heading. Where longer stretches of enclosed route are unavoidable, the developer can consider breaking these up with external public spaces (which may still be under their own management control). The third is to avoid wherever possible segregating the route with secured entrances, such as heavy doors. While keeping the route open will create management challenges, CABE's experience is that once the doors go in, the development is effectively operating as its own building and is unlikely to be interpreted as public route except by those 'in the know'.

Building to the edge

It is important that urban retail developments address their surroundings in a positive manner. An environment which is wholly or mostly internalised turns its back on the town or city, creating a street environment characterised by

blank walls, car parking entrances and service areas. As well as being unattractive, these streets are likely to be less used and suffer from reduced natural surveillance, both of which factors will make streets less safe for pedestrians.

At the same time, it is important that these developments respect the building line of the existing urban environment. This means building up to the edge of curtilage wherever possible.

Ideally, the retail developer should maximise the amount of active frontage onto the street. This means maximising the opportunity for dual entrances into larger stores, from the street and from internal routes.

This is a fundamental part of planning a site layout for a retail project and it is something which if got wrong at the beginning of the design process may not be possible to put right. The layout for the Princesshay project in Exeter is an example which has largely got it right;





new retail units have been placed 'back to back' against existing units on the High Street so that street frontages are lined with shop fronts on both sides.

Dealing with the levels

Retail developers appear to have become more flexible over the last ten years on the question of how many levels should be provided within a retail environment. In high-value locations such as Bayswater or Kingston in London, the retail/leisure offer now extends to four or five storeys, although two remains the norm.

One clear opportunity for the urban retail developer is to use the advantages of topography and connections from other sites to extend the strength of the offer over several levels. This is another reason why urban retail design cannot be seen purely as an inside-out activity. In the Broad Marsh project in Nottingham, for example, the development, which has three levels of shops, straddles a steep change of the natural ground level, so that the scheme is entered at different levels on different sides and moving between retail levels relates naturally to wider desire lines through the city.

The final level requiring early and detailed consideration is the roof. In many towns and cities, particularly those where the centre lies within a natural bowl, the roofscape of retail centres is highly visible from different parts of the city. The design of the roofscape was one of the more challenging and controversial aspects of the designs for the extension of the Westgate Centre in Oxford, a city whose skyline is, of course, world famous. In CABE's view, the roof needs to be treated as a fifth elevation, as a major landscape design challenge that requires the same degree of thinking about context as the external facades.

In this respect, roof-top car parking is rarely a good option. Roof-top mechanical plant also needs to be thought through at an early stage of design. It cannot be designed in detail at the planning application stage and so a clear design strategy, which must be honest and realistic about the amount of plant involved, is needed for dealing with it. The amount of servicing on the roof should be minimised and incorporated within any landscape strategy. Thought should be given to whether public or at least communal uses can be accommodated as part of the strategy. This might include roof-top gardens for residents, a restaurant terrace or similar, and can take advantage of views out of a development. The topography of a city such as Sheffield, for example, is such that the upper levels of the new retail development there affords the opportunity of views out to the hills around the city – which of course means that the roofscape will be prominent in views back from those hills.

The wider movement framework

It is essential that any retail development scheme adopts a masterplanning approach that considers the implications for the wider movement framework. The key issue is how people access and traverse the town or city centre, based upon a sustainable hierarchy of pedestrians first, then public transport and finally, but still critically, cars. ODPM have provided some helpful guidance on this access issue; *Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access* (The National Retail Planning Forum) as a companion guide to PPG6. We have found these principles helpful in reviewing schemes.

One common issue to be addressed is the relationship with public transport interchanges. In most of the schemes we have reviewed, including Sheffield, Bristol and Preston, the relationship between pedestrians and public transport has

been a linchpin in the success or otherwise of the design. The key test is how easily public transport users can move between interchange and centre, taking into account the clarity of desire lines and pedestrian priority in crossing major roads, (particularly inner ring roads), preferably at level grade. The re-ordering of bus stations and stops needs particular care, and is an aspect of design which we have often found done badly. The convenience and safety of pedestrians and bus passengers needs to be as much a priority as the operational requirements of bus companies, and there should be a clear separation between pedestrian and bus movements.

The success of movement frameworks will depend in part on the legibility of the wider city centre environment. Signage provides part of the solution, but good legibility is about more than just signage. It is about the distinctiveness of the location, and the use of landmark

buildings and spaces, and the vistas towards and between them, to guide the stranger through the centre. This is a recognised talent of retail developers within the internal mall environment; they now need to extend this skill to the wider surrounding environment. The city of Bristol has developed one of the more sophisticated legibility strategies that we have seen. It will be important that this extends seamlessly into the new Broadmead shopping centre there.

While pedestrians deserve priority, very careful thought should be given to the use of pedestrianisation. A city such as Leeds now has over two miles of pedestrianised shopping and leisure area, and it works extremely well, because of the critical mass of people and activity on those streets. In smaller locations, however, pedestrianised areas can feel sterile and even hostile, particularly out-of-hours. In such cases, the combination of wider pavements and narrow carriageways for

traffic can provide a more permeable and civilised alternative, with the additional option of restricting traffic access at different times. This is what has been proposed for parts of the new retail quarter in Sheffield.

The public realm

A successful town centre is made up of a network of public spaces, a mix of streets, squares and parks that provide the setting for the buildings. Any new retail development should seek to enhance this network, by improving existing spaces and adding new ones. Both internal and external spaces should be considered as part of the whole, contributing to the same urban pattern.

To achieve an excellent public space strategy, a landscape architect should be appointed to the project team from the earliest stages of the project and should be given significant status in the



decision – making process. The strategy should be to make each area distinctive but keep the overall strategy simple, with attention paid first and foremost to high quality detailing and materials. This has been achieved in the proposals for Princesshay in Exeter, where the development of landscape design proceeded in parallel with the design of the buildings, the two processes informing and reinforcing each other.

It may be that the team wishes to employ different landscape architects to undertake different works, such as in Manchester's reconstruction of the city centre. The developer should, however, avoid creating a zoo of different landscape treatments which detract from the overall quality of the existing townscape.

Mixing uses

CABE supports mixed use development, which is also encouraged by Government planning policies. We consider that a town centre environment that offers a mix of residential and commercial uses is more likely to be lively, economically successful and safe. Secondary uses can have a positive role to play in lessening the impact of more difficult pieces of the town centre design jigsaw. For example, smaller retail units may be useful in creating activity at the ground-floor level of residential blocks. By contrast, residential development, in the form of town houses and apartment blocks may be used to wrap 'big block' developments, such as cinemas, other leisure uses and some types of retail unit, that would otherwise present large blank facades to the street.

The Government has placed a particularly high priority on increasing urban residential densities, and developers should consider from the outset the potential for including residential development in retail-led projects. As leasing concerns have relaxed, it has become increasingly common to combine



residential and retail within the same building. If this can be achieved as an integrated piece of design then it is often a good option, even providing the basis for cross-subsidising other elements such as high-quality underground car parking. The proposed Northgate development in Chester is one of the more successful examples of mixing retail and residential uses and demonstrates that, while some developers claim that such a mix is problematic, others seem happy to embrace the idea of genuinely mixed use projects.

What, however, should be avoided is to seek separation of the retail and residential components into separate design approaches. Recently, CABE has seen a small number of very poor schemes combining a retail/leisure podium with a residential tower on top. In one case, the two parts of the building were even treated as separate planning applications, not to good effect.

The developer should also be encouraged to think about integration of community uses. A new town centre development can provide the opportunity for rethinking the provision of a range of public services including libraries and health care. Projects such as those in Chester and Bury St Edmunds propose civic buildings as part of the mix. They hold out the possibility of large new schemes emulating the richness of the traditional English townscape, deriving from variety in patterns of use as well as built form.

Car parking

If town centre retail developments are to compete successfully against existing edge-of-centre and out-of-town developments, then all parties have to be realistic about the need for adequate car parking. Many consumers will wish to undertake bulk shopping and need to use their car. While maximum use should be made of park and ride schemes, there will always be a significant residual need for

parking as part of the scheme. There are several strategies that can be adopted, ranging from distribution of parking requirements around the site to a single large multistorey car park. Subject to physical and financial constraints, use of underground parking is strongly to be encouraged. A scheme such as the Paradise Street development in Liverpool has enough critical mass to develop a distinctive and imaginative one-off solution – to build a decked car park partly under and partly above ground, covered by a new park landscape. Not every project will be able to find a solution of this kind, but it demonstrates the value of looking beyond the obvious options.

By contrast, large amounts of surface level parking are likely to detract from the attractiveness of the town centre and be wasteful of available land. To the extent that small amounts of surface level parking are to be included within a scheme, they must be considered from the outset as an integral part of the landscape strategy.

The development of any multistorey car park should be regarded as an architectural commission in its own right. The quality of designs CABE has seen to date has sometimes been woeful, but there is no reason why this should be the case. The developer should also consider the potential for mixing uses, for example, by building the car parking on top of retail and other uses on the lower floors. As already stated, rooftop parking should generally be avoided, particularly where it can be overlooked.

Servicing

Large retail developments clearly have significant service and delivery requirements that are part of the design challenge. Usually, they require separate access roads, often between levels, that can disrupt the urban pattern, create artificial barriers and generally create an inhumane environment.

Within an internal mall environment, the developer will work hard to separate customer and service environments. In our view, the same principle should apply to the external environment. For example, one approach is to create the service environments in the interior of blocks, accessible through a dedicated and semi-private access road into the block. Another model is to combine two blocks and deploy the route between the blocks as the service road. The points at which service vehicles enter buildings or blocks require particular attention; loading bay gates or doors, for example, are more likely to be open than closed for much of the day, so controlling the view in through the opening may be more important than making a beautiful set of gates.

The architectural response

In CABA's view, the retail development community is getting to grips with the complexity of the demands of urban design more quickly than the need to create compelling pieces of civic architecture. Too many retail developments are still presented as bland corporate architecture, reflecting a single architectural hand applied to very large volumes. The scheme for the extension of the Coppergate centre in York was an example. From the point of view of urban design, the architects had, on an extremely challenging and historically sensitive site, arrived at a masterplan which CABA had been happy to support. When the architecture for the individual blocks was developed, however, the result was a disappointment, failing to deliver the quality which the sensitive setting demanded. With some regrets,

CABA opposed the scheme at a public inquiry and was pleased that the Government decided to turn down the application. Their decision supported the policy contained in PPG1 (1997 edition, paragraph 13) that urban design and the design of buildings, although interrelated, are distinct subjects, both of which are important. Successful projects must succeed both as urban design and as architecture.

Some of the most successful schemes CABA has seen relate to where a developer has appointed a lead architect but then broken up the development into bits and allowed other architects to take on individual building commissions against the overall masterplan. This might include an individual department store, such as Selfridges in Birmingham, or a shopping centre as one of a small number



of connected buildings. It could also be a more individual commission such as a car park, a hotel or a residential block. At the Paradise Street development in Liverpool, there was a carefully considered strategy which distinguished between a tighter-grained part of the project, closer to the city centre and adjacent to existing conservation areas, where new buildings were allocated to a number of different architects, and larger-scale development on the western end of the site where much larger blocks could be handled by single design practices.

Clearly, this approach will only work if there is an overall design vision and one coherent strategy, backed by strong client management.

Most modern retail developments are 'big box' developments. Many of the shopping units will have wholly internal frontages. In these circumstances there is a significant

danger of simply trying to wrap elevations around floorplates determined on the basis of retail need. This is not acceptable as an architectural response to a site and its context.

One of the challenges for the retail architect is stop the 'big box' becoming a 'black box' – in other words dealing with the prospect of large amounts of blank wall at both lower and upper levels overlooking public streets and spaces. One means of mitigating this impact is by orientating the buildings to make maximum opportunity of the main entrance. This has, for example, been achieved very successfully at The Oracle in Reading, where the main entrances open onto a plaza on the waterfront. A second is to set back the 'box' behind the historic shopping streets while extending entrances onto the street, an approach adopted successfully at Guildford, for example. A third is to embrace the 'black

box' concept, but to create an architectural response that transcends the scale and opaque nature of the building; the new Selfridges in Birmingham is a case in point – but it requires real panache to pull it off successfully.

A different approach is required for smaller-scale infill developments, particularly in the context of an existing retail environment such as a high street. In these circumstances, the architect should avoid creating a stylised approach to the development so that distinctiveness and variety gives way to difference for the sake of difference. The architecture should be honest about the uses it is accommodating, and not seek to mimic too literally (and so disingenuously) the fine-grained high streets of earlier times, where the butcher, baker and candlestick maker traded wares on cobbled streets.

There is always the danger, particularly in historic contexts, of creating a stage-set, with over-fussy attempts to make elements that are identical look different. Even if the fundamentals of urban design have been got right, getting the architecture wrong in this way can result in a descent into kitsch. In such cases, it is usually better to adopt a simpler approach, giving identical elements visual interest without sacrificing the overall architectural integrity. Subtle differences can be introduced in entrances, window design or ornamentation. It is worth keeping in mind that in a row of shop fronts, the tenants' fascias and frontages themselves will provide significant variety.

Public art

Over the last twenty years, it has seemed that no major retail development scheme is complete without at least one new piece of public art, secured as part of a piece of art scheme, a section 106 agreement or similar. In CABA's experience, much of this so-called art has been awful, often an afterthought that attempts to be populist but ends up pleasing no-one and dating very quickly. While there is a case for high quality public art, it is often a case of 'less is more'. Generally, CABA supports the concept of employing an artist as part of the design team from day one, to work in collaboration with the architect and landscape architect. This will allow the artwork to infuse the whole project rather than being considered in isolation. Public art can take the form of an entrance, a canopy or a market stall, as well as a statue or fountain.

3. The right process

Being a high-quality client

The key to the success of a successful retail development lies with the client. A major retail scheme can take 10 or 12 years to bring from inception to completion. This requires leadership, tenacity and clarity of vision. In CABA's

experience, it is crucial for the client to have the whole design team in place early in the process. Continuity of approach will help build confidence and will generate value through knowledge as the process unfolds. For more advice on how to be a great client, see the CABA client guides *Creating Excellent Buildings* and *Creating Successful Masterplans*.

The planning process

Any significant retail development is likely to go through a two-stage planning process of outline consent and detailed matters. Most such developments will require an Environmental Impact Assessment as part of the outline process, which will include the need to prepare a design statement. However, in CABA's view, the developer should prepare a full design statement regardless of the EIA requirement. This should comprise a clear three dimensional masterplan and written statement, which covers, as a minimum, the following issues:

- massing and plan form
- heights
- building orientations
- mix and distribution of uses
- landscape strategy, including distribution of public space
- movement framework, including parking strategy and access and servicing strategy
- open and closed environments.

For significant schemes, this should be presented as a model as well as a series of plan, section and elevation drawings.

For key buildings, even at outline stage, it will probably be useful to produce a detailed individual model to show how the building will function in its relation to the internal and external environment. One approach we have found helpful, particularly for schemes which are complex in three dimensions, is a demonstration model that can be taken



apart floor by floor to explain the various levels and what they connect to around the site.

Given the length of the process, the developer may find it useful to translate the statement and masterplan into design guidelines, or even a design code that can be adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

Phasing the development

Given the complexity and size of many town centre retail schemes, it is common for the developer to phase the development over several years. In design terms, there is no problem with such an approach, and indeed it can lead to a more interesting overall townscape. To facilitate this approach, it is important that the overall masterplan is devised in a way that is flexible and open to change over time, as circumstances themselves change. A good example of such an approach, although not mainly a retail project, is the development of Brindleyplace in Birmingham, through

partnership between the developer (Argent) and Birmingham City Council. As in that case, a phased approach can sometimes lead to higher quality buildings in the later stages of development, as confidence grows on the back of rising capital values.

Designing to manage

Based on post-war experience, most of our inner-urban retail developments can expect a working life span of at least thirty years. In a world where sustainable development is now the goal, it is to be hoped that developments now on the drawings board will last longer than that. This places a strong onus on designing-in the management regime from day one. In the past, retail developers have tended to focus their efforts on the internal mall environment, with their responsibilities ending at the front door – where the local authority is expected to pick up the story. In the context of a design philosophy that should make such distinctions obsolete, the local authority and developer should be seeking to integrate their future

management approach from the very beginning. This could be through an informal partnership, a joint town centre management scheme or even a formal Business Improvement District. Whatever the selected model, it should then become a key factor in the design approach, in particular within the landscape strategy and the movement framework, as well as details such as the design and location of street furniture.



CONCLUSION

At the end of 2003, the Government published a draft revised Planning Policy Statement 6. In most respects it provides a ringing endorsement for current planning policy and will force developers to prioritise in-town and city centre development for the foreseeable future. It is therefore likely that we will see many more schemes proposed over the next few years. Many of these developments will replace existing failing centres, often in secondary retail locations. They will be a real design challenge.

The good news is that we have learnt much over the last five years. There is no need to repeat past mistakes. Instead, we should build on the best practice represented in this guide and others, thereby creating an urban retail experience that is as good as anything in the world.



CASE STUDIES

The projects which are the subject of the case studies that follow have been reviewed by CABA's Design Review Committee, several on more than one occasion. In most cases the projects have been seen by the committee well before the submission of a planning application, while designs are being developed. This allows the reviews to make a constructive and timely contribution to the design process.

Further reviews of projects seen by CABA's Design Review Committee can be read on the CABA website www.cabe.org.uk

CABA's Design Review programme

CABA's Design Review programme offers free advice to planning authorities and others on the design of selected development projects in England. It is particularly interested in strategic projects in their early stages – 'strategic' encompassing not only projects of national importance but also those which have a significant impact on a local environment or set standards for future development. About 100 projects a year are seen by CABA's design review committee. These include large-scale development proposals such as masterplans for regeneration areas, tall buildings in city centres, and major retail developments, but also many smaller scale projects where CABA's expertise can make a useful contribution. Advice is given on several hundred other schemes each year outside the committee process.

CABA is a non-statutory consultee within the planning system, and local authorities are asked by the Government to consult CABA about significant projects. CABA strongly encourages pre-planning consultation at an early stage in developing designs, as this is when advice on strategic issues is most effective and can most readily be taken on board. It also welcomes informal discussions about projects at the earliest possible stage. CABA's website www.cabe.org.uk gives more information about the design review programme and contact details.

BROADMEAD EXPANSION BRISTOL



Planning authority

Bristol City Council

Site location

Bristol City Centre

Site area

14.6 hectares

Developer

Land Securities

Design team

Chapman Taylor, Wilkinson Eyre,

Alec French Partnership

The proposal

The proposed expansion of the existing Broadmead retail development is a key element of Bristol's City Centre Strategy, aiming to recapture the regional shopping role and reverse the trend to out-of-town shopping, particularly in response to the Cribbs Causeway centre.

The brief was to regenerate Broadmead to create a high quality mixed use city quarter, and to rejuvenate the environs of River Street with new housing and landscape. The proposed accommodation includes approximately 75,000 sq m retail, 3,800 sq m leisure, 2640 car park spaces and 240 residential units. The proposals will relocate and reconstruct a significant section of Bristol's inner ring road as a series of boulevard streets with surface crossings linking the St Jude's and St Paul's areas to Broadmead.

The overall redevelopment includes the Quakers Friars block, where new retail and housing, will be set around retained historic buildings. Bristol architects Alec French Partnership prepared a detailed design solution for this area based on the emerging masterplan for this scheme.

CABE's advice

The scheme was first presented to us in February 2001 by Chapman Taylor and we supported the project's aims, and the careful thought given to maintaining the integrity of the masterplan throughout the planning process. A number of aspects of the scheme led us to think it represented a considerable improvement over both the existing centre, and other recent examples of retail developments. The mix of uses across the site was welcomed, as was the considered handling of the elements of the Quakers Friars area.

We did, though, have some concerns at this early stage. The opportunity existed to consider the re-routeing of the inner ring road as an urban design exercise in

its own right, putting pedestrians first. However there was a danger that the re-routeing would simply move an unsatisfactory environment eastwards. We were also concerned about wider links with areas to the north and east, as these routes appeared largely to terminate at the new department store. We emphasised the importance of the quality of the environment provided for pedestrians at street level throughout the scheme.

We questioned the wisdom of replacing two large multistorey car parks with the impenetrable bulk of a new larger one, and drew attention to the associated difficulties in terms of servicing and the quality of residential areas, as lively leisure and food and drink uses can impact on the amenity of residential accommodation in a way that retail uses do not. The new department store did appear to work as a landmark building, but the new open space next to it could have been larger. If the space was to be roofed over, this should not detract from its public urban quality, or from the appearance of the store.

The Committee saw the scheme again in September 2002, and supported the progress that had been made. We welcomed the introduction of other architects to work with Chapman Taylor to design different parts of the project, and thought that the approach to dealing with both the car park and the central area of the scheme had the potential to result in something refreshingly different. An outline planning application was to be submitted to underpin site acquisitions and the infrastructure programme, so it was important to get the masterplanning right.

Due to site conditions, it became clear that the single car park would have to stay. Its huge scale meant it had to be handled with particular skill, and needed to be treated as an architectural commission in its own right. We welcomed the idea of locating

housing around the southern edge of the car park, shielding its lower levels from view.

We wanted to see the roofscape of the scheme as a whole treated as a design exercise, as it would be visible from tall buildings and higher ground nearby. We felt the design of the roof over the space in front of the department store should include input from the department store architects, in order to ensure that their designs worked well together.

The Committee were presented with more detailed material in July 2003, which was to form the basis of a reserved matters planning application. It was our view that the scheme now had the makings of a successful project. We found the landscape strategy, in particular, subtle and sophisticated. We welcomed the commitment to keeping the streets in this centre open 24 hours a day, noting that an appropriate management regime would be necessary to achieve this.

We thought there were clear and convincing ideas about the car park, primarily the breaking up of the mass and the creation of a 'ground floor' at an intermediate level in order to improve its legibility. It was undoubtedly more interesting than other examples of such structures.

The architecture, which had now been developed in more detail, was in our view more varied and more visually interesting than that of most shopping centres. However, we thought there was a need to stand back and consider the elements as a single project being built more or less in one go. We suggested that a greater degree of calm, simplicity and elegance would achieve a more coherent outcome. This might require reworking the original layout to some extent, so that it melds more successfully with the language and form of the buildings. We also felt further material was also required to show how the innovative proposals for the glazed roof would work.

Key points

The intractability of large car park buildings – ideally, parking should be dispersed, but if this can't be achieved then a large car park building must be considered as an important civic architectural commission in its own right.

The importance of the design of roofscape, and of controlling rooftop plant.



PRINCESSHAY EXETER



Planning authority

Exeter City Council

Site location

Princesshay, Exeter

Site area

4.7 hectares

Developer

Land Securities

Design team

Chapman Taylor, Panter Hudspith,

Wilkinson Eyre, Livingstone

Eyre Associates

The proposal

The site covers an area of 4.7 hectares in the centre of Exeter, bounded on the west by the High Street and the east by the Georgian area of Southernhay. To the north, Paris Street links the Western Way bypass with London Inn Square. To the south of the site Chapel Street backs on to the rear of the Cathedral precinct with its mediaeval buildings and the thirteenth century St Peter's Cathedral.

The Princesshay area was heavily bombed during the Second World War. In the post-war era, Thomas Sharp and the Exeter planners re-planned this area. The shopping precinct of Princesshay was developed, but was designed as a new area and not as an extension of the city pattern, with the new Princesshay axis providing visual links to the Cathedral.

After an earlier version of the project had been abandoned, the developer Land Securities supported the preparation of a thorough development brief consisting of two key documents – an area character appraisal, and an urban design study undertaking a historic and urban context review of the site. These were informed by documents outlining the city's aspirations for the site – Vision 20:20, and Development Principles for Princesshay.

The developer decided that a scheme of this size would benefit from the input of a number of different design practices, an approach CABA strongly recommends.



Panter Hudspith were appointed to work on the development of the southern area closest to the Cathedral, which includes a glazed pavilion building with an upper floor terrace with views over Cathedral Close. Chapman Taylor designed the main new retail street of Princesshay, which sought to reinstate the axial alignment of Princesshay according to the Thomas Sharp post-war plan. Wilkinson Eyre worked on the two buildings at the north end of the site, and Livingstone Eyre Associates were the landscape architects.

CABA's advice

The developers and new design team came to CABA in 2001 with their proposals for the area. The scheme has gone through a number of evolutionary stages since we first reviewed it, including the relocation of the department store, improvements to site permeability, an increase in the open space and public realm provision and a number of residential units. The result was a design framework we found largely successful, and we commended the design for its clear commitment to quality.

The mixed use aspects of the proposals, in particular the residential elements on the upper floors throughout the scheme, were welcomed. The effort to provide active frontages where possible, and passive surveillance of both private and public areas, was also thought successful. It was also clear, as noted by English Heritage, that the scheme

retained the best existing buildings as part of the proposals, and minimised its impact on archaeology.

In terms of site planning, important visual links had been retained, in particular along Princesshay's axis to the Cathedral. This, the more central location of the department store, and the general site planning of the proposals would help movement through the site and its links with the surrounding area.

Whilst the committee were very supportive of the general approach, they had reservations about the strength of the overall design vision, and the lack of a singular, coherent strategy for the urban form on the ground. It was not evident that the connections through the site and the linkages with the surrounding area had been fully thought through in all directions. In order to address this, we suggested they revisited the initial urban design analysis in order to address any missing links, and ensure the completeness of the design strategy for the site.

The landscaping of the proposed Bastion Square, the focal point of the north end of the site, did not seem to hold its own against the architecture of the different practices. This would become an important confluence of routes, and required a striking landscape finish to announce this. In fact, we felt the landscaping throughout the scheme did not work as a unifying element, largely as a result of having to compete with the different architectural work. In order to tie the landscaping and architecture together more successfully, we suggested that the architects should become more involved in the landscaping, and that the design of the spaces should be more differentiated from one another.

The design team came back to CABA in February 2002 and we were pleased to see that many of our points had been dealt with successfully. The variety of the architecture, which had now been developed in more detail, appeared in tune with the relatively informal and responsive site planning and the different building types. The landscape strategy had developed to provide distinctive spaces, with the committee urging a simple design response, making use of high quality materials and detailing.

Whilst the servicing was as a whole well thought out in our view, the area to the north of Southernhay and towards the Civic Centre was in danger of being dominated by the arrangements for vehicles. This needed to be addressed by prioritising the pedestrian, and designing a landscape free from the geometrical 'straightjacket' of the highway engineers.

Finally, in terms of knitting into the surrounding area, we thought it important that the scheme provided, or at least allowed for a future, direct connection between Bedford Square and the cathedral close. However, we were confident that the final proposals, if those involved continued to aim high, promised to achieve a project that would set a new standard for Exeter.



Key points

The merits of design work being preceded by thorough urban design and townscape character studies.

The need for landscape design to be considered from the start as designs develop, so that architecture and landscape design inform each other.

FRIARY CENTRE EXTENSION GUILDFORD



Planning authority

Guildford Borough Council

Site location

Friary Centre, Guildford town centre

Site area

3.76 hectares

Developer

Westfield Shoppingtowns

Design team

Westfield Design

The proposal

The design and development brief for the site was prepared by Guildford Borough Council in September 2003. It sets out the need for comprehensive, mixed-use development on a prominent and sloping site of almost four hectares in the centre of Guildford. The area is bounded by Onslow Street to the west, North Street to the south, and Leapale Road to the north and east.

The scheme proposes mixed use development around a series of open streets and public spaces, forming an extension to the existing urban grain and street pattern. Its focal point is a new public square. The scheme includes the provision of 22,500 sq m of new retail space over two principal levels, with below ground servicing access, up to 170 residential units, a new bus station, the relocation of existing car parking spaces below ground and 922 sq m of community space. The project budget is approximately £160m.

Westfield Design Group has led the design process throughout, and has been assisted by Todd Architects, The Design Solution and Townshend Landscape Architects. Their response to the natural topography of the site was to vary building heights, and step the levels down the slope. This was also designed to maximise views from the residential areas to the surrounding hills. Vehicle movement across the site is limited to the bus station only. All service vehicles and private cars will access the scheme via the basement.

The public realm and landscape design includes the use of quality hard landscape materials. The proposals for North Street are currently under review by Guildford Borough Council, and Westfield is making a contribution to the works. The proposals include pedestrian priority with restricted vehicle access, and retain the existing street market. Landscaped

courtyards above the shops will provide amenity space for the residents.

CABE's advice

The Design Review Committee welcomed the opportunity to comment on this proposal at an early stage in the design development. We admired the way the presentation conveyed the proposal as a series of urban design and architectural opportunities as well as a response to development need.

We applauded the detailed urban design analysis of the wider area, particularly the figure-ground plan, and of the specific site constraints. We did feel, though, that a model was necessary to convey the topography of the area and the complexity of the design response to it. Most welcome was the considerable thought that has been given to resolving the problems of the unsuccessful, at least in urban terms, Friary Centre and bus station.

The development approach to transforming this part of Guildford, by encouraging mixed use in new built form and the careful modification of the existing retail centre was convincing and, in our view, likely to have a positive impact on the wider area. We made a number of detailed comments, which were primarily directed at the next stage of design development.

We had some concerns that the proposed form had become alien to the character and pattern of Guildford. The blocks appeared formal and rigid when compared with the older and more irregular block sizes of the High Street, for example. While welcoming the inclusion of residential uses above the retailing, we felt the way they were planned could be contributing to the awkward feel of the block size and shape. Reconciling the requirements of a modern mixed-use scheme with the historic context has been achieved successfully elsewhere

and, with further design work, we were confident that it could be done here.

In a similar way, the proposed Town Square exhibited a formality and rigidity foreign to the urban grain of Guildford, and its form did not flow clearly from an analysis of the town. We felt further consideration of how the space would work and where formal and informal activities could occur at different times of day, and in different seasons, was needed if it was going to work.

The architects proposed an interesting and variegated roof treatment, acknowledging the local sensitivities of the context. The committee felt, however, that further work was required to the buildings and facade design. Giving greater emphasis to the vertical, perhaps by creating discrete elements, rather than reinforcing the large footplate block, would assist, we thought, in achieving a better relationship to the historic core.

The project created natural and direct routes, and we thought this was central to dealing with the problems of the complex and considerable changes in level. If this was to work, it was crucial to avoid too many escalators and lifts, to ensure that the scheme would appear to be part of the town rather than as an extension to the shopping centre. For the pedestrian routes to be successful, then, ramps and stairs need to be generous and clear in terms of where they lead.

Further consideration of the proposed covered arcade was required, in our view. We were not convinced of the need to glaze over this street – we noted that the most popular parts of the present retail environment in Guildford are unroofed, and the least popular are roofed.

We were encouraged by the intention to use different architectural practices in the next phases of the development of the design. This will help the architecture

develop naturally, rather than artificially, as is often the case when a single office designs the whole of a large project of this kind. This can now take place within the overall design framework, which we found largely successful. We thought it important that a landscape architect be added to the team as well, and that this should happen at the earliest possible opportunity.

Key points

The merits of 'going with the flow' of existing townscape grain to help assimilate large new developments.

The need to challenge the assumption that shoppers prefer glazed streets to open ones – sunshine and fresh air in good weather are as important as shelter in bad weather.



PARADISE STREET DEVELOPMENT LIVERPOOL



Planning authority

Liverpool City Council

Site location

Paradise Street area

Site area

17 hectares

Developer

Grosvenor

Design team

BDP and Cesar Pelli

The proposal

This project provides around 100,000 sq m of new high quality retail space in the centre of Liverpool, as proposed in the framework set out by Liverpool Vision, the city's urban regeneration company. The site is based on the Paradise Street Principal Development Area, but also takes in Chavasse Park and some land south of Hanover Street. Liverpool City Council, at officer and member level, were closely involved in the development of these proposals, and the council's design panel has also been consulted. The masterplan forms the basis of a hybrid outline planning consent, with some buildings submitted in detail, to establish siting and access, and fix the footprint of the development.

The principal aims of the development were to create a mixed use, robust and adaptable scheme, which would be varied in nature and scale across the site, but also integrated with other parts of the city centre. The masterplan for this project identified a number of quarters. These included Paradise Street, a central tree-lined spine flanked by larger-scale buildings with retail at ground floor and residential and leisure uses above; South John Street, a two-level shopping street formed by arcaded and galleried buildings, with new department stores at each end; and the redesigned Chavasse Park, which proposed a landscaped upper level on top of enclosed car parking for the development.

CABE's advice

CABE's Design Review Committee was enthusiastic about this project when it was presented to us in February 2001. The process by which the scheme was developed was, in our view, well thought out, and the emerging designs held out the prospect of producing a successful new part of the city.

We supported the 'city quarter' model of urban design implied by the masterplan

prepared by Building Design Partnership, and the way in which it appeared to integrate successfully with its surroundings. One reservation we had about the masterplanning in general terms was that the physical planning was in places almost too reticent. In other words it needed to be strong enough to allow the possibility of strong buildings with their own character to emerge, for example in the cases of the department stores. We also noted that there needed to be foreground buildings (but not necessarily 'landmark' or iconic buildings) as well as background buildings.

The part of the site within a conservation area was designed in detail. We welcomed this, and hoped that the commitment to high quality architecture in this area would be carried through to the remainder of the development.

We thought that the development area could possibly benefit from a greater total amount of new residential accommodation, subject to this being compatible with the wider aims of Liverpool Vision. We thought this could resolve the potential conflict that might develop between the proposed residential and some of the evening leisure uses.

We were not convinced the proposed park had fulfilled its potential, particularly at the east end. A separate, more detailed masterplanning exercise was needed in our view to relate the proposed new buildings at this end of the scheme to the landscape design, as this relationship was ambiguous. We felt there was a real danger of repeating the mistakes of earlier decades, creating a hostile pedestrian environment, due to the extent of the car parking in the south-west part of the site.

The design of the east end of the site had been developed in detail with blocks by architects Brock Carmichael, Haworth Tompkins, Page and Park, and Dixon Jones. This area of the project was not considered

in any detail, but we had confidence in the process and those involved.

Two large workshop sessions were held in Liverpool involving the design and development team, council members and staff, and representatives of CABE and English Heritage. After the first of these, Cesar Pelli Associates were appointed to develop the masterplan alongside BDP for the western part of the site around Chavasse Park. Pelli's layout attempted to give formal definition to the open space by aligning the surrounding buildings to the north east and south along large concave arcs.

We were pleased that a number of the committee's observations had been taken into account as the project developed. We felt a more ambitious and coherent vision for the western part of the site was now beginning to emerge, but realised this vision would represent a considerable challenge.

One of our key concerns was the nature of the cross sections through the site, which revealed the danger of parts of the western project ending up as a megastructure. It was important to hold on to the original masterplan vision of the streets and blocks found in a traditional city. These have the benefit of being generally robust in terms of phasing.

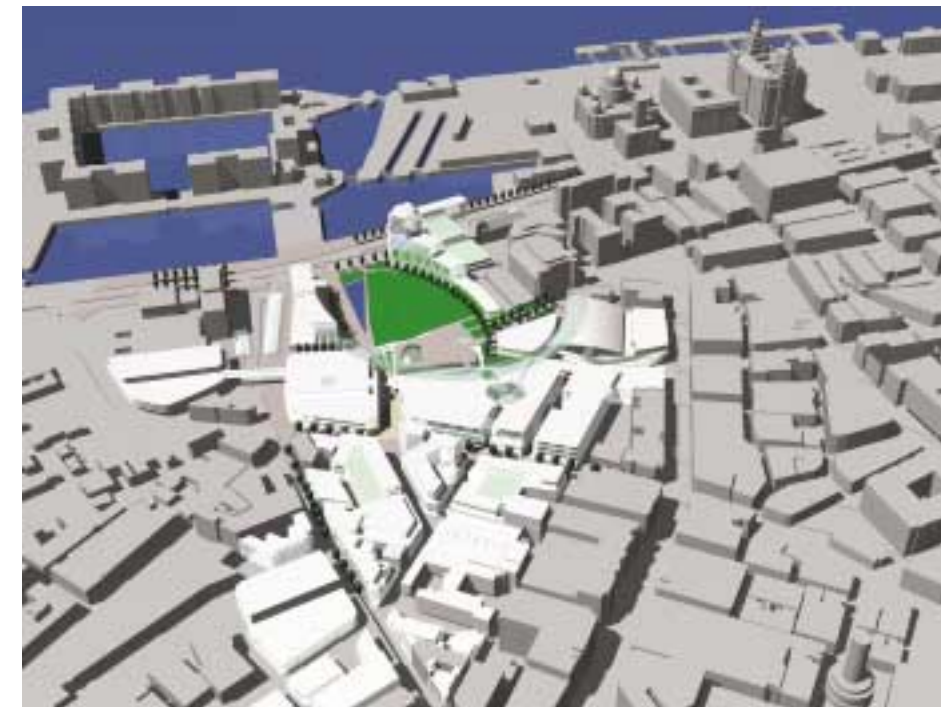
To help with thinking about this aspect, we suggested that there should be a site model. Detailed consideration needed to be given to the convenience of pedestrians moving both east-west and north-south. We had some concern that because of changes of level, the new park could in some directions act more as a barrier to easier movement than a facilitator of it. There needed to be a strong landscape proposition in order to create a genuine urban park, and not a covered car park, and this would require design skills of the highest order.

We were concerned how the scheme connected both to the existing wider city as well as to other emerging projects. The linkages through from the existing centre via the Paradise Street scheme and across the Strand will be of great importance. The area around the new bus station needed to be seen as a route through towards the waterfront as well as a point of arrival and departure for pedestrians. We felt there was potential conflict here. We have been pleased to learn that as the scheme design has developed, a new location for the bus station is being considered which will reduce the potential for conflict.

Key points

The merits of an open, consultative mode of working up designs for large and complex schemes so that all stakeholders 'buy in' as the process develops.

The need to ensure that large schemes are genuinely broken down into manageable chunks and that megastructures are avoided.



BROAD MARSH CENTRE NOTTINGHAM



Planning Authority

Nottingham City Council

Site location

Broad Marsh Centre, Nottingham City Centre

Site area

Approximately 10 hectares

Developer

Westfield Shoppingtowns Limited

Design team

Lead Architect and master planners: Westfield Design Group, Angus Pond Architects, Marsh Grochowski Architects, and The Design Solution



The proposal

Located on a site in the city centre, just east of the castle, the scheme aims to redevelop the existing and monolithic 1970s shopping centre, which was poorly connected to its surroundings, had a largely blank perimeter and was dominated by traffic on three sides. Nottingham City Council believed that this project was fundamental to the continuing success of the city centre.

The proposals expand the Broad Marsh centre by one block to the south, and reorder a large proportion of the existing retail accommodation and car parking. The scheme includes a total of 120,300 sq m of retail, food and leisure accommodation over four levels, exploiting the natural 12m fall from north to south across the site. The proposals include the reordering of highways and parking provision, a new public transport interchange (including a bus station), and a stop on the city's new tram network.

The scheme is based around a triangle of pedestrian circulation on three levels, the lowest of which corresponds to street level to the south, the upper to street level at the northeast corner of the site. There is a large amount of car parking at the upper levels, accommodated on open decks on top of the buildings.

CABE's advice

The scheme was presented first to the Design Review Committee by the architects, Westfield Design Group, in September 2001. Whilst we welcomed the aspiration to improve the existing situation, we had a number of concerns. In particular, we advised that the proposals needed to be broken down into genuine city blocks – the department store, for example, could be a separate building.

We saw revised proposals for the scheme later in the year, and felt the developers and architects had responded positively

to the committee's previous comments. The project had been broken down to some extent, there was an undertaking to use different architects for the different blocks, and the view to the castle had been opened up.

However, the scheme still lacked a significant new public open space, and the main covered route was raising some concerns in our minds. Whilst we did not think it was impossible to reconcile our desire that the north-south route should feel like a genuine street with the developer's desire that it should be roofed, this would not be easy to achieve satisfactorily. The bridges across this street between individual buildings would have to read as such, rather than the dominant reading being one of a series of light wells created as incidents in an undifferentiated floor slab.

We had reservations, too, about the merits of an outline planning application for this important city centre site, and whether it would be possible for it to guarantee a high quality design. We advised that any permission should secure the key principles set out in our comments. We were pleased that the city council then adopted a development brief for the site, which took on board advice from CABE and English Heritage.

We saw the scheme, which had continued to develop, again in May 2002, and we were pleased a number of significant changes had been made. The site had been further broken down into separate blocks, and the department store at the southwest corner had become more like a freestanding building.

Significantly the route to the north of the department store had been widened to become a public space fronted by cafes, which would be sunlit from the middle of the day onwards. With views of the castle, it lies on a pedestrian desire line from the southeast to the city centre. Our only concern was that the space required

further thinking to give enclosure from the traffic to the west.

Middle Hill, at the east edge of the site, had been reconfigured, allowing for better planning and level changes in the retail areas and the transport interchange at the east of the site. A change to the levels of the upper floors had allowed improvements to the vehicle servicing strategy, which was integrated into the main body of the development, with the loss of the high-level vehicle bridge proposed over the north-south route.

The developers and their own architects, Westfield Design Group, had begun to work with other architects on the design of three of the major blocks – Angus Pond on the department store, Marsh Grochowski on the block north of that, and The Design Solution on the transport interchange building.

While accepting the scheme had made good progress, we still had some concerns. This was a complex project and

needed to be readily understood by the public and councillors alike. We suggested a 'demonstration model' was needed to show the varying site levels and help people understand how the scheme works. This was subsequently done for the public consultation exercise and the planning committee meeting.

We reiterated our view that the main north-south route should be a public street, open at all times, and we did not accept that there needed to be doors at either end of this route. There needed to be a clear illustration of the 'fifth elevation', seen from the castle and Lace Market, showing, in particular, the effect of the cars. We believed there was too much car parking.

Finally, we noted that there is a large quantity of architecture to design at the next stage which will need to be illustrated in relation to the existing architecture on site and in adjoining areas. Whilst this was an outline application, we emphasised the need to treat the architecture at this stage

as an exercise in designing buildings, rather than 'wrapping' elevations with stage-set architecture.

Key points

The distinction between a glazed 'covered street' and a 'mall' can be quite subtle. The former is more likely to be a genuine piece of town or city, the latter less so.

The merits of commissioning a number of different architects to design different buildings within a large project.



NEW RETAIL QUARTER SHEFFIELD



Planning authority

Sheffield City Council

Site location

Sheffield City Centre

Site area

Approximately 8 hectares

Developer

Hammerson UK Properties plc

Design team

BDP

The proposal

This scheme differs from many of the others CABE have seen, as the main driver is economic regeneration, with the challenge being to improve the prosperity of Sheffield and attract investment. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Sheffield lost a quarter of its employment, and now has EU Objective 1 status. The city centre forms the area of most severe deprivation, and disruption caused by the construction of the Supertram, and the establishment of the Meadowhall out of town shopping centre, has had a negative impact on this area in particular. This scheme is one of seven strategic regeneration projects in a City Centre Masterplan for Sheffield, overseen by Sheffield One (the Urban Regeneration Company) and Sheffield City Council.

The site, a wedge in the centre of the city on its highest point, is located between Barker's Pool to the north, Pinstone Street running along the eastern edge, Furnival Gate to the south and Trafalgar Street to the west. It lies between the existing retail areas of Fargate and the Moor which are currently linked by only a single side of retail activity on Pinstone Street, running along the edge of the award winning Peace Gardens. The site presents a number of constraints and challenges for the architects Building Design Partnership: a third of it lies within a Conservation Area, there are many listed buildings and it lies at the confluence of different urban grains. The aim was to make a new piece of the city which both benefits and links to its surroundings.

The key objective of the brief for the New Retail Quarter is to extend the retail core of the city centre by 65,000 sq m to provide a vibrant, mixed use development incorporating leisure and catering uses and 150–200 residential apartments. At Barker's Pool, the intention is to create a dignified setting for the City Hall and the war memorial, and taking advantage of a change of level across the site, New

Burgess Street will be a two level retail street. One of the generators of the scheme is the relocation of the John Lewis store to a site at the end of a major new public space leading on from Cross Burgess Street. The other new public space is the recreation of a historic space to the south at Moorhead, creating a new pedestrian-gateway to the scheme from the Moor to the south. A new pedestrian circuit will connect other existing public spaces and activities in the city.

The retail quarter will be largely pedestrianised, with mini transport interchanges located close by. The Supertram runs to the north of the site and car parking will be provided either side of Rockingham Street.

CABE's advice

We felt there was much to commend in this proposal, and welcomed the promotion of retail development as a catalyst for regeneration. We believed the general strategy to be coherent and the planning sensible. We applauded the commitment to open air streets, and the willingness to use a number of different architects to encourage variety in the form of individual blocks and buildings.

We were impressed by the way the scheme sought to knit back together the urban grain of the city centre, 'mending' connections through, and to and from the site. One point which remained less convincing to us, echoing the concerns of English Heritage, was the impact of the new John Lewis store and its car park on the historic metal trade buildings to the west of the site. We urged that this store be designed as an outward looking building, with a proper street presence. Similarly, the proposal to cover the space in front of this store will require careful thought if it is to avoid the failings of some previous examples of covered streets. It needs to become a true part of the street and open space network.

The design of the proposed two level retail element will need a further extra level of analysis and design skill to ensure it works, as there are few examples which are successful. We also felt the car parks needed re-siting to reduce their impact; or in the very least there should be consideration given to providing commercial uses on the ground floor of these structures.

At a high point in the city, the views from the public spaces and buildings in this development have the potential to be spectacular. We suggested thought be given to views across the site in order to make the most of the dramatic level changes the topography of the site provides.

The success or failure of this development will ultimately rest on the quality of the individual buildings. Something distinctive is called for, and we were sure that there was room for innovative and exciting architecture in places, which in itself could attract people back to the city centre, and positively encourage its regeneration. Since we reviewed the Sheffield project, the successful opening of the new Bull Ring centre in Birmingham has provided an example of this.

Key points

The desirability of department stores to be as outward looking as possible rather than hermetic environments.

The need to consider townscape views into and out of large town centre sites as soon as designs are worked up.



CATTLE MARKET SITE

BURY ST EDMUNDS



Planning authority

Bury St Edmunds Borough Council

Site location

Cattle Market, Bury St Edmunds

Site area

Approximately 4 hectares

Developer

Centros Miller

Design team

Hopkins Architects

The proposal

The urban structure of Bury St Edmunds has changed very little since it was laid out by Abbot Baldwin in the eleventh century. The medieval grid of streets is still intact. In 1828 the Cattle Market was relocated from Cornhill to a site west of the historic wall, and it remained there until relocated outside the town recently.

Today the Cattle Market site, just south of the historic core, covers approximately 10 acres and is used for car parking, providing 1,250 spaces. The Risbygate Street frontage, within the Bury St Edmunds (Town Centre) Conservation Area, includes three listed buildings. The current use does not provide a suitable gateway into the centre, and there is a need to reinforce the long term vitality and viability of the town centre.

The developer Centros Miller is working with Hopkins Architects. The brief for the site, developed through consultation with the council, is to allow for the growth of primary retail floor space and town centre services, provide residential accommodation, a new public building and associated new public open space. There was a clear proposal for the phased development of the retailing element, agreed with the development partner.

The scheme provides approximately 21,500 sq m of retail accommodation, 7,400 sq m of residential accommodation, the creation of a new public hall, and proposes a new arcade link through to the historic centre. An important factor for any development of the Cattle Market is the linkage to the historic core. Centros Miller, the developer, has identified a potential building block (No's 20-22 Cornhill) which could be acquired to provide this link.

As the links cross St Andrew's Street South they will pass through new 'gateways' designed to slow down vehicles and give priority to pedestrians.

These will be connected by an arrival and departure space for buses with overhead shelters. The gateways lead into two new streets with shops and residential entrances at ground level together with two storeys of flats overhanging the pavement. The proposal is that these shops will be serviced from the street out of hours.

The new streets connect into a new public square similar in size to Chequer Square, orientated to take advantage of the sun from midday onwards, with a new public building to the east, and a new department store to the south west (on three levels, one set at basement to reduce the overall bulk of the building). To the west of the site there is space for approximately 700 cars, and new townhouses are proposed to re-establish Schoolyard as a street.

CABE's advice

We were pleased to see this scheme at an early stage, when we were presented with the 'first thoughts' for the site following consultation with the local people and local authority. St Edmundsbury Council owns most of the site, with some smaller third party ownerships, and their input as landowners had, we felt, promoted a high quality response.

The committee enthusiastically supported the intelligent approach to town planning embodied in this project. The development process had brought about a strong collaboration between the local authority, as landowner, client and planning authority, the developer and the architect. We applauded the time taken to consider the views of the local people and to develop a strategy that was both simple and exciting.

This scheme showed a considered and sympathetic approach to developing new retail accommodation within a historic centre. It looked to provide strong links and a mix of uses, including a new civic

building and space. Importantly it promoted an architectural language and response of its time.

The proposed scale and density of development seemed to us entirely appropriate, given the context of the site. We were pleased to hear that English Heritage welcomed the ideas behind the proposals, and the way they dealt with the scale of the component parts.

We supported the creation of the linkages between the new development and the existing town centre as well as across the site. These should be publicly accessible day and night and we stated that a strategy for the management of the area needed to be developed sooner rather than later. We were also encouraged by the way that the masterplan seeks to create linkages beyond the site boundary and to recognise that future development will be guided by the pattern established by the masterplan.

The approach to landscape design needs strong ideas, and we encouraged the use of high quality hard landscaping – a dominant feature in Bury town centre. We suggested a well designed landscape that favoured pedestrian movement would work better as a distraction from views of the existing 'unsightly' rear elevations along St Andrew's Street, rather than the proposed overhead shelters intended to screen these views, which would add to the visual clutter.

We welcomed the intention for a public building facing onto the new public space but felt it was important that there was a clear end user in mind. We saw the scheme again in January 2004 and were pleased to see that the ideas for the proposed use, and end users, of the civic building were becoming clearer. Although the building was larger than previously envisaged, we believe it is likely to work well, become a focus for the area, and support activity in the public square.

Key points

The merits (and feasibility) of incorporating both genuine 'civic' uses, and substantial residential accommodation, in retail-led projects.

The possibility of an architecture which is authentic, clearly of its time, yet also clearly rooted in the place in question, reinforcing a sense of place.



MAJOR RETAIL PROJECTS REVIEWED BY CABE'S DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Major retail projects reviewed by CABE's Design Review committee

Birmingham	New Selfridges Department Store
Brecknell	Town Centre Masterplan
Breckland	Retail Development, Dereham
Bristol	Broadmead Expansion
Chester	Northgate Development
Exeter	Princesshay Redevelopment
Havering	Romford Brewery Site
Leeds	Trinity Quarter
Leicester	Shires West Retail Scheme
Liverpool	Chavasse Park
Liverpool	Paradise Street Development Area
Newham	Stratford City
Mole Valley	Dorking Sainsbury's
Norwich	Chapelfield (Former Nestlé Site)
Nottingham	Broad Marsh
Oxford	Westgate Centre
St Edmundsbury	Cattle Market Site, Bury St Edmunds
Sedgefield	Newton Aycliffe – Tesco
Sheffield	New Retail Quarter
South Oxfordshire	Waitrose, Wallingford
York	Coppergate

IMAGES: Cover from left to right: Cattle Market Site, Bury St Edmunds – Hopkins Architects; Nottingham Broad Marsh – aerial image Westfield Design Group/Hayes Davidson; N1 Centre Angel Islington – Chapman Taylor Architects, photo by Edmund Sumner; Selfridges Birmingham – Future Systems, Soren Aagaard **page 1** Paul Finch, photo by Grant Govier **page 2** Selfridges Birmingham – Future Systems, Soren Aagaard **page 4** Design Review Committee in progress, photo by Grant Govier **page 6** New Retail Quarter, Sheffield – Building Design Partnership **page 7** (Small) Friary Centre extension, Guildford – Westfield Design Group. (Large) St Mary Le Port, Bristol – Wine Street perspective, 20/20 limited **page 8** Exchange Square, Manchester – Marketing Manchester **page 9** Northgate development, Chester – Hopkins Architects **page 10** Princesshay, Exeter – Panter Hudspith Architects/Miller Hare **page 12** Selfridges Birmingham – Future Systems, Soren Aagaard **page 13** (Large) Princesshay, Exeter, Photograph of model Chapman Taylor, Wilkinson Eyre, Panter Hudspith, Livingston Eyre. (Small) Broad Marsh, public space, Westfield Design Group/Angus Pond Associates/Iain Mackay **page 14** N1 Centre Angel Islington – Chapman Taylor Architects, photo by Edmund Sumner **page 15** Design Review Committee in progress, photo by Grant Govier **page 16** Design Review in progress, photo by Grant Govier **page 18 & 19** Site plan, view from central space and view of North Street from Horsefair – Chapman Taylor Architects **page 20 & 21** Plan Chapman Taylor Architects, Panter Hudspith Architects, Wilkinson Eyre Architects, Livingston Eyre Associates. Image – Panter Hudspith Architects/Miller Hare; photograph of model – Chapman Taylor, Wilkinson Eyre, Panter Hudspith, Livingston Eyre **page 22 & 23** Plan photograph of model and sketch perspective – Westfield Design Group **page 24 & 25** Building Design Partnership **page 26 & 27** Westfield Design Group/Hayes Davidson **page 28 & 29** Building Design Partnership **page 30 & 31** Hopkins Architects.

FURTHER READING AND INFORMATION

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F English Heritage Customer Services Department

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A Guide for Clients
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Urban Design Compendium
English Partnerships/Housing Corporation, 2000
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W www.cabe.org.uk
F CABE

Design Reviewed – Masterplans
CABE, 2004
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BDP for British Council of Shopping Centres, 2002
P BCSC

Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access. A Companion Guide to PPG6
The National Retail Planning Forum/DTLR
P NRPF

Key

W available as a pdf at this web address
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