

**Fitting new building forms into historical urban contexts
through urban design: lessons from the United Kingdom
experience for the case of Damascus**

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ABSTRACT

Urban design emerged in the 1980s linked to the trends of urban marketing in which architecture and its outcomes, i.e. new forms of buildings, have become a physical expression of an economic-political process. However, the quality of these forms has varied from the excellent to the awful and many questions have been raised about the merit of such products, particularly in cities with historic urban contexts. Urban design has provided toolkits that have been applied at different stages of the design control process in order to improve the production of contemporary designs in historic urban contexts, focusing on how all buildings, old and new, work with each other to create spaces and a sense of place, which is seen as influencing the quality of life for communities.

This thesis investigates the role of the urban design approach in fitting new proposed forms into their historic contexts, by reviewing its application in a selected number of real-life projects in Edinburgh and York, both of which have substantial and sensitive historic urban contexts. This is done through an examination of documentary evidence of the application of urban design tools and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in the design control process (regulators, developers, designers and a wider range of actors involved in the process). Ultimately, the research proposes, based on the two cities' experience, some lessons for the city of Damascus in relation to how local planning authorities can improve design quality of proposed new forms into historical urban contexts through applying urban design tools.

DEDICATION

This thesis work is dedicated to my parents, who have always loved and supported me unconditionally and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve. This work is also dedicated to my wife, love and best friend Mouna, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of life; to my beloved brothers and sister who have always been there beside me through thick and thin. I am truly thankful for having you all in my life.

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GLOSSARY

A+DS: Architecture + Design Scotland
AOD: Above Ordnance Datum
CAAP: Conservation Area Advisory Panel
CABE: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CC: Community Council
CEC: City of Edinburgh Council
CYC: City of York Council
DUDP: Damascus Urban Design Panel
EAA: Edinburgh Architectural Association
EAD: Engineers Association in Damascus
EH: English Heritage
EP: English Partnerships
ESALA: Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
EUDP: Edinburgh Urban Design Panel
EWH: Edinburgh World Heritage
GCEC: General Company of Engineering and consulting
HC: Housing Corporation
HE: Historic England
HES: Historic Environment Scotland
HS: Historic Scotland
LPAs: Local Plan Authorities
LPC: Local Protection Committee
MLAE: Ministry of Local Administration and Environment
MoHC: Ministry of Housing and Construction
MHU: Ministry of Housing and Utilities
NERC: North Eastern Railway Company
NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG: National Planning Policy Guidance
NTBCC: New Town and Broughton Community Council
ODD: Old Damascus Directorate.
OTCC: Old Town Community Council
OUVs: Outstanding Universal Values
PAN: Proposal of Application Notice

PC: Parish Council
PPG: Planning Policy Guidance
PPS: Planning Policy Statement
RFAC: Royal Fine Art Commission
RTPI: Royal Town Planning Institute
SPP: Scottish Planning Policy
TSD: Technical Services Directorate
UNESCO: United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
UPD: Urban Planning Directorate
UDO: Urban Design Office
UTF: Urban Task Force
YAAS: Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society
YCT: York Civic Trust
YGS: York Georgian Society

Thesis main text

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the research

Different cities around the world have engaged in competitive efforts on the global stage in order to attract resources and investment, as this strengthens their economies and ensures the wellbeing of their communities (Madanipour, 2006 and Strange, 1999 in the work of Short, 2007). Accordingly, cities have created their branding strategy on how they present themselves (Biddulph, 2011). This is referred to by Young *et al.* (2006) as ‘city reimagining’ (i.e. the city image is defined by Lynch, 1960 as the city’s appearance).

Young *et al.* (2006) propose a definition of city reimagining as a shift in the physical form of the city due to emerging considerations. It has also been defined by Short (1996) as a manifestation of particular development and regeneration in the city. Short (2007) summarises this by stating that reimagining has emerged in response to global needs and is implemented by applying new orientations of the urban environment. As such, architecture is dragged into becoming a contributor to this (Schurch, 1999), and its theories (e.g. Neo-Classical, Modernism, Postmodernism, Deconstructivism etc.) have provided the driver for change (Madanipour, 1996).

Jencks (2005) suggests that the trend towards such design theories and their resulting outcomes reflects the city’s “*demand for instant fame and economic growth*” (Jencks, 2005, p. 7), and many cities have benefited from a wide range of high-quality investment and high profile and often prestigious developments. In other words, the concern of these theories is primarily aesthetic, but they have also been used on some occasions to portray power. However, the contributions of the architectural theories are considered as more than just architectural and philosophical, and their outcomes have varied from the excellent to the awful (Docherty, 1993; Bauman, 1992). Moreover, they have often had a major impact, not necessarily positive, on the context, appearance and architectural characters of the built environment (i.e. the symbolism and meaning of the built environment) as well as the city’s image. As such, urban design theory has been developed to link to these architectural theories but with an extended concept beyond the individual building, which is the focus of architectural theories, and focusing on relating the building to its immediate and wider surrounding (Floyd, 1978).

Questions have been raised by researchers all over the world asking about the merit of the proposed new buildings' forms in their contexts. Further questions and challenges have been found in particular cities with historic contexts (i.e. contexts with historic value) where the potential impact can go beyond affecting the architectural characters to affecting the built heritage (i.e. the physical fabric of heritage).

Fitting new forms into a historic context is defined here as inserting these forms without upsetting the basic harmony of these contexts. This has always been a challenge for many cities' design control approaches, which have sought to hit a balance between the potential benefits of these new forms' insertion, on the one hand, and their possible impacts on the characters of their historical urban context, on the other hand. However, few approaches succeeded in achieving this and some cities around the world have had to pay the cost by losing their status as a World Heritage Site, due to their failure to manage this balance (Pendlebury, 2009).

In the UK, planning authorities are encouraged to adopt a design control approach that can ensure that new proposed forms fit into their historic contexts. These approaches suggest that the judgement process must extend its attention beyond the new proposed form itself, as an individual object, to consider the way that all buildings' forms, old and new, work with each other to create spaces and the sense of place that influence the quality of life for communities.

Urban design is approached with this aim and it has provided a toolkit to help these authorities and other involved stakeholders¹ to accomplish the judgement process of new proposed designs, and consequently increase the likelihood of having good building design in historic contexts. However, the key concern raised by this research is issues related to the external appearance of new buildings in their urban context. Thus functional, sustainable and ecological aspects of urban design have not been placed on this research agenda.

This research originally intended to take Damascus, Syria where the researcher was based, as a key case study. Damascus is one of the major cities in the eastern Mediterranean and one of the oldest urban cores in the world that still serves a residential purpose, while containing many buildings and ruins from different civilizations. In the late 20th century,

¹ Stakeholders are recognised by this research as those who have been involved in the design control process of planning applications (i.e. consultation and judgment process). This includes in addition to the local authorities who make planning decision, the applicants and other governmental and non-governmental bodies involved in the process.

the city of Damascus was invaded with different styles of new contemporary forms of buildings which represented a physical expression of the city's economic-political approach to development. The quality of these forms has always been a matter of controversy and it was widely questioned by various authors who raised serious doubts regarding the benefit that a city like Damascus could gain by having such forms of buildings within its sensitive historic contexts. This criticism was at its peak after completion of the Four Seasons hotel building in 2005, which represented, according to its opponents, a serious challenge to the historic contextual appearance as well as the city's image at large (see figure 8.8 in Chapter 8, section 8.2).

The quality of new contemporary built forms in Damascus in the late 20th century was examined by the researcher in a previous research project which was completed in 2008 (Asaad, 2008). Asaad (2008) found that economic and political factors stood as two key forces in characterising the new contemporary forms of buildings in Damascus compared to the cultural, aesthetic and social factors, which were broadly ignored. The research concluded that the validity of the existing design control approach was unconvincing, and, hence, it was recommended to have the approach reconsidered by the city's local planning authorities. During the following two years, until 2010 when the proposal for this research was planned, some efforts were made by the city local planning authorities to develop the existing regulatory tools; however, these efforts did not flourish.

This situation motivated the researcher to continue what he had already started and to try devising a city approach towards controlling the insertion of new forms of buildings while conserving the city's character. However, the research orientation had to be changed in response to the difficult political atmosphere in the country. Damascus could not be taken as a key case study any longer and an alternative research approach had to be designed. The new approach aims to investigate the experience of two UK cities (Edinburgh and York), which have been providing very advanced examples and fruitful lessons of how design quality of proposed new forms in historic urban contexts can be improved through urban design. This includes reviewing and critically investigating the adopted urban design approaches and their applications to real-life projects in each of these cities. It is hoped that an understanding of these cities' experience will benefit the application of an urban design approach in post-war Syria, and in particular within the city of Damascus.

1.2 The research focus

Fitting new forms of design into the historic fabric of Damascus has been a subject of interest to the researcher for some time. This interest started to develop three years before starting this research and while doing a Master's study at Damascus University (2006-2008). Since the Master's dissertation concerned the appearance of government buildings in the city of Damascus, the findings of the dissertation shed light onto the idea of this research. During subsequent work as a teaching assistant in the Faculty of Architecture at Tishreen University (the sponsor for this research), and also through working as an architect for 5 years, the researcher's particular interest was investigating the situation of the existing design control approach of Damascus. In addition, studying for an MSc at Heriot-Watt University led to the realisation that the UK's approaches can provide fruitful lessons for Damascus.

Two approaches were developed by the city council of Damascus with the purpose of controlling the insertion of new proposed forms and ensuring quality outcomes. These approaches have significantly contradicted each other in their character and presented an extreme clash between modernity and tradition, and between new and old – not just among the buildings' architectural styles but also among their control trends. While the approach applied in the historic part is very prescriptive and does not allow any form of contemporary designs to be developed inside this part; the approach applied in the new part of the city is very flexible. However, the two approaches could not provide satisfactory solutions – the former is unduly restrictive and does not leave a margin for innovative designs, and the latter is unclearly defined and open to unsystematic interpretations – and have become a curse rather than a blessing. These approaches are the target of this research.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

This research aims to develop an in-depth understanding of the consequences and limitations of the urban design approach in the UK with regard to fitting proposed new forms into historical contexts. It also aims to explore the scope for improving the existing approach to achieve higher responsiveness to the unique characters of this context in Damascus. The objectives can be summarised as follows:

1. Identifying urban design knowledge that has addressed the issues of fitting proposed new forms into the urban context – the historical urban context in particular.
2. Developing an analytical framework for examining urban design governance of the proposed new forms judgment process, drawing on the existing literature.
3. Investigating urban design approaches to fitting proposed new forms into historical urban contexts and settings, including their advantages and disadvantages, drawing on the experiences of Edinburgh and York.
4. Discussing the need for such approaches in Damascus – providing context for the apparent ‘problem’, and examining the implications of the UK approaches and their applicability to the case of Damascus.

1.4 Research questions

The above objectives will be met through addressing the following four key questions:

Q1. What are the main theories and concepts for fitting new forms of buildings in historic urban contexts?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the urban context? What is good design? What values can good design add to contexts?
2. What are the considerations that should be taken into account when applying new building forms into historic contexts?
3. What approaches have been developed to ensure that proposed new forms fit into historic contexts?

Q2. How can urban design be utilised to judge proposals of new building forms in historic urban contexts?

Sub-questions:

1. What is urban design? What are the concepts of urban design related to fitting proposed new forms into urban contexts?

2. Which analytical framework can be proposed to fit proposed new forms, based on the literature?
3. Which types of urban design assessment and decision support tools can be utilised with the purpose of fitting proposed new forms into historic contexts?
4. What principles need to be applied for successful urban design governance?

Q3. How have urban design approaches evolved in Edinburgh and York and how do they continue to evolve in the contemporary period?

Sub-questions:

1. How has the profile of urban design been raised in England and Scotland?
2. How have urban design tools been applied with the aim of fitting proposed new forms in Edinburgh and York?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two cities' approaches and what lessons can be learned from their experiences?

Q4. How has the meeting between old and new buildings' forms been resolved in contemporary Damascus? What lessons can be drawn from the UK's experiences and applied to Damascus?

Sub-questions:

1. How has the urban form of Damascus developed throughout the ages?
2. Which types of approaches have been developed with the aim of fitting new proposed forms in Damascus? To what extent do these approaches address urban design principles?
3. How could the implemented experiences of urban design in the UK be applied to the case of Damascus? What are the limitations and possible applications for development?

1.5 Research methodology

The research as a whole takes a qualitative approach, focusing on various methods to achieve the aim and objectives of the research. A two-stage methodology has been

adopted in this research. Firstly, a literature review is used to review what has been done in the research field. Secondly, a case study approach is chosen as the basis of the methodology with the purpose of exploring two different urban design approaches in the UK context, focussing on fitting proposed new forms into historical urban contexts.

A detailed description of the methodology is provided in Chapter 3. This section provides a summary of the methods used to achieve the above objectives.

Objectives 1 and 2 were addressed by reviewing a wide range of academic literature of urban design theories and concepts, which permitted the development of an analytical framework. This framework can be used to judge the merit of proposed new building forms in historic urban contexts. Another framework was also created based on a review of urban design governance of the design control process. This latter framework was tested and refined in the process of meeting objective 3.

Objective 3 was addressed by completing the comparative analysis of the chosen case studies (Edinburgh and York). A variety of qualitative methods were chosen in order to collect the required data for the case studies. A literature review was chosen at this level, to carry out an in-depth review of the chosen case studies' historical background, as well as development throughout time. Fieldwork was conducted to collect the data in the form of documents, reports, correspondences, and drawings. This kind of work allowed the researcher to collect detailed data by visiting the respective city councils; it also enabled interviews (informal and semi-structured interviews) to be held with individuals. These interviews were held in a way that facilitated collecting the required data in an accurate and smooth way. Observation was also employed as one of the research techniques in Edinburgh. Ultimately, the collected data was analysed using a grounded theory approach which provided a broad understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

To address the final objective 4, understanding of the Syrian context was accomplished by reviewing grey literature and holding interviews with people who work in the research interest field. The information gathered, together with an understanding gained from the earlier mentioned comparative analysis of the UK experience, were integrated into setting out possibilities for developing Damascus's design control approach.

1.6 Contributions of the research

The research aims to provide an original contribution to knowledge in several ways.

The thesis contributes to theory by investigating the role that urban design can play, through its assessment and decision-making support tools, to increase the likelihood of obtaining good building forms in historic urban contexts. In this sense, two analytical frameworks were developed in this research. While the first one was set for analysing the building forms as an outcome of the design control process, the other was set to examine the urban design governance of this process.

The thesis investigates case studies in the UK – Edinburgh and York – which have fruitful urban design experience in fitting new forms into their historical urban contexts, generating information and refining an analytical framework that can be applied in the context of Damascus, where literature and reliable data are scarce. Hence, the research contributes to advancing methodology.

The key research contribution, however, is to empirical knowledge. First, it reviews the development of urban design in the UK context (i.e. at national and local levels) with reference to morphological, visual-perceptual and social aspects. Secondly, the research investigates the application of the urban design approach on real-life projects in Edinburgh and York. This enabled the research to set out the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, which helped in characterising the lessons that could be applied to the development of other cities' approaches. Ultimately, it contributes to an investigation of the Damascus design control approach, highlighting the weaknesses in the existing approaches and how this affects the historic contexts of the city. It, therefore, contributes to developing Damascus's approach based on the lessons learned from Edinburgh and York.

1.7 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the area of research and to the researcher's motivations for the choice of research subject. It sets out the research's aims and objectives, and the key research questions. It explains the contribution that this research will make to the field of study.

Chapter 2 starts with discussing the benefits and challenges of applying new built forms in historic urban contexts. Thereafter, it reviews the western approaches towards fitting new building forms into existing historic contexts, looking in particular at concepts of urban design. A significant body of literature on the concepts of urban design and the assessment and decision support tools it provides to help with guiding the design judgement process is provided in this chapter. A theoretical framework based on urban design knowledge is developed; this can be used to fit proposed new forms into historic contexts. However, the research does not aim to judge individual forms; instead, it aims to illustrate and examine the urban design governance of the process within which these forms are judged. Thus, a set of principles for successful urban design decision-making governance is developed, to be used thereafter in refining the two UK cities' approaches in Chapter 7.

Chapter 3 starts with a discussion of the research approach and methodology. The case study has been chosen as a key approach in this research and qualitative methods have been adopted for collecting the required data. This is followed by justifying the choice of the most suitable data analysis approaches and methods to be used in analysing the collected data and setting out constructive findings.

Chapter 4 starts by reviewing the history of the UK Government's intervention in design and the emergence of urban design in the English and Scottish planning systems. It reviews how the urban design route map was drawn by these two planning systems with the purpose of enhancing its role at the local level. Ultimately, it draws conclusions on the place that urban design holds in each of these systems.

Chapters 5 and 6 advance understanding of the Edinburgh and York approaches, respectively, using specific literature reviews on the two cities which include historical background and the two cities' urban design approaches. It also reviews the applications of these approaches on two chosen real-life projects in each city and summarises how these tools helped to achieve the projects' success.

Chapter 7 provides a synthesis, drawing on the research findings of Chapters 4, 5 and 6, leading to characterising and analysing the current approaches of the two cities. In addition, it sets out the advantages and disadvantages found in the two approaches. It also suggests possible improvements based on the interviewees' viewpoints, coupled with the researcher's understanding, which was built during the research process.

Chapter 8 uses the findings and lessons presented in Chapters 5-7 to then explore their relevance to Damascus. First, it provides an overview of the changes in Damascus's urban form throughout the ages. An analysis of the historical evolution and evaluation of the existing design control approach of Damascus, and possible responses for developing this approach, based on the lessons learned from the UK experiences, are presented in this chapter. Ultimately, these lessons are validated with experts in the Syrian context to ensure their applicability.

Finally, Chapter 9 summarises the main findings and conclusions of the research. It provides answers for the research questions and identifies opportunities for further research.

A summary of how the research methods contributed to meeting the research objectives, and answering the research questions and sub-questions is provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Methods of inquiry to meet the research objectives and questions

Source: the researcher

Overall research aim	Key objects	Key questions	Sub-questions	Methods	Location
	1. Identifying urban design knowledge that has addressed the issues of fitting proposed new forms into the urban context – the historical urban context in particular.	Q1. What are the main theories and concepts for fitting new forms of buildings in historic urban contexts?	1. What is the urban context? What is good design? What values can good design add to contexts? 2. What are the considerations that should be taken into account when applying new building forms into historic contexts? 3. What approaches have been developed to ensure that proposed new forms fit into historic contexts?	Literature review	Chapter 2
	2. Developing an analytical framework for examining urban design governance of the proposed new forms judgment process, drawing on the existing literature.	Q2. How can urban design be utilised to judge proposals of new building forms in historic urban contexts?	1. What is urban design? What are the concepts of urban design related to fitting proposed new forms into urban contexts? 2. Which analytical framework can be proposed to fit proposed new forms, based on the literature? 3. Which types of urban design assessment and decision support tools can be utilised with the purpose of fitting proposed new forms into historic contexts? 4. What principles need to be applied for successful urban design governance?	Literature review	
	3. Investigating urban design approaches to fitting proposed new forms into historical urban contexts and settings, including their advantages and disadvantages, drawing on the experiences of Edinburgh and York.	Q3. How have urban design approaches evolved in Edinburgh and York and how do they continue to evolve in the contemporary period?	1. How has the profile of urban design been raised in England and Scotland? 2. How have urban design tools been applied with the aim of fitting proposed new forms in Edinburgh and York? 3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two cities' approaches and what lessons can be learned from their experiences?	Comparative analysis. Semi-structured interviews. Triangulation	Chapter 4, 5, 6 & 7.
	4. Discussing the need for such approaches in Damascus – providing context for the apparent 'problem', and examining the implications of the UK approaches and their applicability to the case of Damascus.	Q4. How has the meeting between old and new buildings' forms been resolved in contemporary Damascus? What lessons can be drawn from the UK's experiences and applied to Damascus?	1. How has the urban form of Damascus developed throughout the ages? 2. Which types of approaches have been developed with the aim of fitting new proposed forms in Damascus? To what extent do these approaches address urban design principles? 3. How could the implemented experiences of urban design in the UK be applied to the case of Damascus? What are the limitations and possible applications for development?	Literature review. Analysis of documentary evidence. Informal and semi-structured interviews. Triangulation Validation through interviews.	Chapter 7, 8 & 9.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the issues of fitting new forms of buildings into historic urban contexts and the emergent role of urban design (in theory and practice) towards achieving this, thus answering research questions 1 and 2 and meeting objectives 1 and 2.

It starts with defining the research keywords, i.e. urban context, built heritage and good design. It also highlights the value that good design can add to general contexts, as well as to sensitive historic ones. Urban design is recognised by this research as one of the approaches that is applied with the aim of fitting new building forms into historic urban contexts. Its theories and concepts are reviewed and a conceptual framework is built that sets out criteria for judging proposals of new building forms. Thereafter, this chapter reviews the assessment and decision support tools that urban design provides to inform the judgement process. Another framework is built that sets out the principles of successful urban design decision-making governance. Finally, the chapter summarises the key points that emerge from the literature.

2.2 Urban context and historic urban context

2.2.1 The meaning of urban context

The urban context is briefly defined by Madanipour (1996) as a socio-spatial context (i.e. physical elements with their social and psychological significance). He argues that it is the dynamic interaction between the social and physical dimensions within the space that makes the socio-spatial context ‘urban’. This definition is further explained and detailed by the English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2007), who recognised the urban context as the character and setting of the area within which a building sits. They add that it includes, in addition to the built environment, the natural and human history and the routes that pass through it. Likewise, Alexander *et al.* (1977) argue that the urban context is more than a visual phenomenon; it is also seen by these authors as a physical, social and cultural frame for design.

Punter and Carmona (1997) provide a more pragmatic definition in which they consider that the urban context comprises the three-dimensional characteristics of a built environment (urban form) and the social context. Likewise, Bourne (1982) categorises the urban context through two essential perspectives as follows:

- Urban architecture, which tends to see the city as a physical entity (concerned with the design and construction of single buildings, extending its scope to cover the whole city);
- Urban sociology, which tends to see the city as a site for social relationships (concerned with the people who are living in the city).

According to Tibbalds (1992) and Dovey (2001), the urban context is dynamic by nature. Dovey (2001) argues that this nature represents the backbone of the economic, social and political systems that underpin society as well as the built fabric. He concludes that this should be seen as something positively required in order for these contexts to respond to people's changing needs. In this regard, Tibbalds (1992) argues that the urban context is not created by professional specialists; it is created by the love and care of people who live and work in their surroundings. As such he suggests that any change in urban contexts should be guided by those people.

However, in particular historic contexts, such changes might result in challenging the built heritage. What is built heritage and what is its significance? Why are changes in built heritage of research interest? These are the questions that this research answers next.

2.2.2 Heritage and built heritage

Different authors define heritage in various ways. It is seen as: "*the inheritance that an individual received in the will of a deceased ancestor or bequeathed when dead to descendants*" (Graham *et al.*, 2000, p. 1); "*the fashionable word for the national inheritance of historic buildings and features of the landscape*" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006, p. 154); and a "*form of collective memory*" (Peckham, 2003, p. 2).

Defining heritage can be furthered in a broader and more philosophical sense. Graham *et al.* (2000) argue that heritage fulfils several inherently opposing uses and carries different and incompatible meanings simultaneously. Such meanings are addressed by Rapoport (1982) as '*sacred meanings*'. Meaning in this respect is represented by identity. Likewise, Hall (1997) sees heritage as a mechanism and language by which meaning is

produced and reproduced in social interactions. The heritage mechanism is also noted by Smith (2006, p. 3) as a “*process of engagement, an act of communication and one of making meaning in and for the present*”. Graham *et al.* (2000) state that such meanings organise our practices in terms of setting rules, norms, and conventions.

The physical fabric of heritage is called ‘built heritage’. Graham (2002) and Peckham (2003) define it as a social construct that is defined by cultural and economic practice. Likewise, Phelps, Ashworth and Johansson (2002, p. 3), cited in the work of Short (2007), consider it as a cultural and social construction, one that is dependent upon a “*complex process of selection, protection and intervention*”.

Built heritage bears significance by carrying conflicting assets that are defined by identity. Mason (1998) and Short (2007) call them values and they categorise them as cultural, economic, political and aesthetic values that are often overlapping and competing, as they state. Larkham (1992) and Elsorady (2011) have classified them as tangible (economic and environmental) and intangible (traditional and folk culture) assets. The two aspects are considered by them as contributing to what they call ‘*the character of the place*’ and its identity.

In historic contexts, answering the question of ‘how to deal with built heritage assets when applying new development?’, or ‘how much originality, how much change?’, as asked by Larkham (1996, p. 38), has resulted in a split in authors’ standpoints.

Authors such as Tweed and Sutherland (2007), and Ashworth and Larkham (1994), argue that built heritage assets are major components of the quality of life and of people’s sense of belonging, cultural identity and authenticity. According to this viewpoint, preserving these assets should be given priority during the development process. Other authors such as Graham *et al.* (2000) and Young *et al.* (2006) consider built heritage as part of the political and economic process, and it has existed as ‘*economic assets*’ that may overlap, conflict with or even deny their cultural role. Hewison (1987) and Shaw and Jones (1997) similarly consider built heritage as a parcel from history that can be commodified by cities in the present in order to attract investment, development and jobs. From this viewpoint, managing the resulting change in an appropriate manner should be the main aim of any new development. These views relate primarily to two main approaches to managing the urban change of historic contexts – preservation and conservation – which will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4.

From the above we can say that applying new development, which is needed to support the economic growth of the city, in a historic urban context is likely to result in a tension between the old and the new. This tension, in Tibbald's (1988) view, must be exploited to produce a rich and friendly design development, and one may neither substitute nor diminish the other. However, the question of 'what is the appropriate design to historic urban context?' is often complex (CABE, 2006a).

2.3 Good design in a historic context

2.3.1 The meaning of design quality and good design

Design is defined by Lynch (1981, p. 290) as "*The playful creation and strict evaluation of the possible forms of something, including how it is to be made*". Likewise, it is defined by CABE (2009) as a creative process through which we decide how we want things to be.

Quality is defined by Juran and Godfrey (1999), cited in the work of Thomson *et al.* (2003), in two different ways. One of these refers to a product containing the features that meet the demands and requirements of the customer. Quality can also refer to the fact that a product is free from defects.

Turning to the built environment, design can be defined as the principal decision-making process that determines the shape of the built environment. At a strategic level, it generates a vision for specific locations, and at a more detailed level it establishes a description of how people would like these locations to look, feel and function (Madanipour, 2006). Design quality is not simply about individual architectural styles; it is about enriching individuals' lives, encouraging civic pride and breathing new life into urban areas (Chapman and Larkham, 1999).

Briefly, design quality deals with the visual appearance issues of the built environment and goes as far as studying broader sustainability considerations and social equity aspects of how the public views, feels and interacts with their environment (Donovan and Larkham, 1996, p. 312–316). As such, good or bad design has profound, direct and indirect impacts on everyone, and good design can certainly improve the quality of people's living.

Alexander (1964) provides a definition of what he calls ‘acceptable design’, which is defined by him as the design that achieves a degree of fitness between its form and context, not form alone. The form is defined by him as the external organisation between the pieces that the building is made of, and context is defined by him as the part of the world that makes a demand on the forms. However, the definition of fitness varies between him and other authors, as follows:

- A mutual relation of mutual acceptability between form and context (Alexander, 1964);
- The quality of the form that context demands (Gjerde, 2011);
- Ensuring that each building is of architectural interest in its own right and has an appropriate response to its context (Punter, 1986);
- A process for judging the relationships between form and context (Tibbalds 1988).
- The mutual relationship between form and context (Carmona *et al.*, 2002).

Acceptable design has also been reviewed by many authors and is called by them ‘good’ design. Good design is defined as the design that is fit for purpose, sustainable, efficient, coherent, flexible, and responsive to context (CABE, 2006c); Sternberg (2000) adds that it should also be good looking. In another way, Carmona (1998) refers to the definition of bad design by HBF/RIBA (1990, p. 12) as "*design that is not responsive to the sense of place, the character of landscape or context, or design that offers contrast without logic*".

Summarising the above, good design is not just about how a building has to be designed internally or externally in response to aesthetic, functional or sustainable issues; indeed, it is a process that withstands the forces of change, particularly in historic contexts, by improving the quality of life and adding value (Madanipour, 2006).

2.3.2 Good design can add value

According to Thomson *et al.* (2003), value is the relationship between the positive and negative consequences of doing something (output and input, or benefits and sacrifices/impacts). It is also defined by CABE (2001) as a measure of the worth of something to its owner or any other person who derives benefit from it. CABE (2001) distinguishes between two types of values: the one that has tangible measurable

consequences, termed as exchange value (economic and environmental); and value that is more intangible and does not lend itself to direct measurement, referred to by CABE (2001) as value in use (social and cultural values).

Williamson (2010) defines impact as the action of change on the site or the context of where the change is proposed. He agrees with Short (2007) that the impact of new developments on historic urban context is a real challenge for the continuity of these contexts' characters and their aesthetic, physical and cultural values.

Williamson (2010) has addressed a list of possible impacts that might emerge due to applying new building forms in a historic urban context as follows:

- Beneficial impacts, which include the restoration of buildings and their settings, and the enhancement of their context.
- Detrimental impacts, which include the demolition of elements in a way that affects the features of special architectural or historic interest.
- Neutral impacts, which include the demolition of elements that would have no effect on features of special architectural or historic interest.

CABE (2001) argues that greater benefits can be reaped from the best-designed buildings, i.e. social, environmental and therefore long-term economic benefits. CABE (2001) distinguishes between two forms of benefits: direct benefits that are accrued to those responsible for investing in development; and indirect benefits that are accrued to others and to society at large. In historic contexts, one more indirect benefit that has been identified by Williamson (2010) is a cultural benefit. Williamson (2010) concludes that judging the merit of a proposed design in historic contexts is a matter of weighing the potential benefits that could be reaped on the one hand, against the possible impacts, on the other hand. He states: *“the assessed impact must be correlated to the benefits that will be derived from the proposed change. If no benefit is to be derived from the specific or wider works, on the basis of the special regard or attention that is required to be given to preservation, the impact will not be justifiable”* (Williamson, 2010, p. 61).

Summarising the above, it is not easy in cities with historic urban contexts to protect built heritage from inappropriate development. Cohen (1999) considers that the difficulty is not with the protecting process itself as much as with reaching a consensus over the value of the built heritage during the development process. These assets can be protected from

inappropriate development or demolition by applying regulatory mechanisms or approaches (Short, 2007). These approaches are the focus of the following sections.

2.4 Approaches for controlling historic urban context changes

In the international experience of dealing with historic urban context changes, two perspectives come to the fore, i.e. preservation and conservation. These concepts have presented two different approaches towards achieving the same aim of facing the challenges of historic contexts.

According to Cambridge dictionaries online², preservation is the act of keeping something the same or of preventing it from being damaged. In this sense, preservation in the built environment is addressed by Short (2007) and Pendlebury (1999) as it concerns ways of protecting existing built heritage from being harmed or destroyed. Tavernor (2007) similarly advocates that preservation aims to control the process of demolition of the existing environment and mitigate the potential harm of proposed changes. Lang (1994) adds that preservation has a broader concern of maintaining the existing structures and character of the area.

Conservation has emerged not merely as a new word for preservation, which is regarded by some authors as a barrier to development, but as a new theory of preservation with careful management of the environment and of natural resources, as Edwards and Jenkins (2005) state. Conservation successfully presented itself as an active agent of change, a force for continuity – balanced against forces for change (Short, 2007; Pendlebury, 2013). Pendlebury (1999) concludes that in the British context, the emphasis is placed on conservation rather than preservation, which implies accommodating appropriate change and seeking to control, rather than seeking to preserve.

Conservation is defined by Carmona *et al.* (2002, p. 76) as “*a dynamic activity that accepts change as long as the resultant proposals work with and enhance the established urban context*”. It is defined by Smith (2006) as the process that concerns understanding how particular values are sustained and privileged. Short (2007) adds that conservation provides theoretical debates in the study of heritage where conservation objectives exist in competition with other elite interests in the management of this context.

² <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

Architectural conservation, as an international movement, came to the fore in the early 20th century in response to Modernism and its corresponding architectural perspective, which avoided sentimental attachment to old buildings and structures in favour of technological and architectural progress and change (Pendlebury, 2009). In light of this situation, conservation has improved its role to link new architecture and built heritage and to control any potential change in historic contexts (Pendlebury, 2002).

This new role of conservation has established a greater emphasis on aesthetic considerations in the conservation system, and this was further enhanced through the influence of the townscape movement (Pendlebury, 2013). However, due to a lack of design and architectural skills within the control section of the planning authority in the UK, these considerations were not given much of a voice. As a result, conservation concerns shifted beyond architectural forms and place management into systems and processes of town planning; it has become known as 'conservation planning' (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006; Pendlebury, 2013).

Conservation planning is defined by Short (2007) as a technical activity that attempts, through the use of a wide range of tools (a framework of policies and controls), to regulate the rate and direction of physical change. He argues that while conservation planning has succeeded on many occasions in protecting conservation areas from potential damage, it has also been criticised by DCMS (2004) as it becomes inflexible and over-protective where there is a sensitive part of the historic environment to be protected. In addition, it under-values the general character of the whole. As such, Short (2007) concludes that in the debate about the future of cities and the status and the role of built heritage, conservation planning needs to be streamlined.

In the light of this situation and under the pressure of changing economic forces (i.e. globalisation), urban design has emerged as an interdisciplinary approach to enhancing the ability to handle multivariate problems in design and to improve the ability to fit its outcomes into general as well as sensitive urban contexts (Alexander *et al.*, 1987; Madanipour, 1996; Tibbalds, 1992; Carmona, 2003). Brine (1997), Punter (1986) and Larkham (1992) reinforce the importance of considering urban conservation as an integral part of the urban design process, and of heritage issues becoming firmly embedded in the urban design debate. Ultimately, Alexander *et al.* (1987) add that any ignorance of any aspects of the context would lead to an undermining of the important roles that urban design can play.

What is 'urban design' and how does it work to increase the likelihood of having a good building in a historic urban context? This is one of the questions that this research asks.

2.5 Urban design in theory

2.5.1 The nature of urban design

According to Madanipour (2006), Carmona (1998) and Tibbalds (1988), a gap began to open up between architecture and urban planning professions after the two professions shifted their initial interest. Gradually, planning began shifting away from its interest in the physical fabric and became more social science orientated, i.e. mainly focusing on policies and procedures that regulate this fabric. On the other hand, architecture shifted its interest from studying the design itself to studying technical and economic issues through which designs have been implemented (Dagenhart and Sawicki, 1992). In the latter part of the twentieth century, this gap had become even wider and urban design had come to the fore as a distinct professional specialisation that aims to articulate the common ground and encourage multi-disciplinary co-operation with a focus on filling the gap between architecture and urban planning (Tibbalds, 1988; Madanipour, 2004).

Schurch (1999) agrees with Carmona (1998) and George (1997) that urban design is overlapping with these two professions. It overlaps with architecture as both are concerned with the quality of spaces and both are defining and articulating the public realm (considerations of function, economics, and efficiency as well as aesthetic and cultural qualities). It also overlaps with urban planning as both of them involve creating an environment for decision making. However, Radford (2010) summarises the differences between urban design and urban planning as the fact that the former concerns itself more with physical form, the 'urban form and built fabric', whereas the latter tends to describe urban places as mathematical models or diagrammatic plans.

George (1997) states that rather than being an intersection between urban planning and architecture, urban design is a bridge; it overlaps with both of them, but they themselves do not meet. Snow (2004) also concludes that urban design is a strategic overlap between architecture, which is a combination of design and building technology, and planning, which is a combination of social and management sciences and city building.

2.5.2 Urban design definition

A puzzling variety of views and definitions of urban design have been provided by many authors over time. Based on a wide review of these definitions provided in the field over the past 50 years, Cuthbert (2007) argues that urban design can be one or all of the following: an art that focuses on the superficial aesthetics and picturesque aspects of cities; a pedagogical process that is comfortably rooted in architecture and design; a profound interdisciplinary approach that overlaps with almost all the built environment fields; and ultimately an on-going long-term process intertwined with social and political mechanisms.

This variety in approaches to urban design can be seen in the following definitions by other authors:

As an art, it has been seen as: *“the art of relating structures to one another and to their natural setting to serve contemporary living”* (Lang, 1994, p. ix). *“The art of three-dimensional city design at a scale greater than that of the single building... the three-dimensional form of the city primarily at a local plan level”* (Floyd, 1978, p. 73).

As more of a focus on design, a definition of urban design is provided by some authors who have seen it as: *“massing and organization of buildings and the space between them”* (Levy, 1988, p. 129); *“making connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric”* (Radford, 2010, p. 380); *“giving physical design direction to urban growth, conservation and change”* (Barnett, 1982, p. 12). *“Urban design is concerned with the design of building configurations and the spatial and use relationship between buildings and the spaces created between them”* (Lang, 1994, p. 71).

As a profession, urban design is seen as: *“form-giving to built environments as a primary activity involving the professions of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning”* (Schurch, 1999, p. 5). *“Profession that sets out to shape the spatial or physical environment”* (Sternberg, 2000, p. 266). *“It is the ‘school’ of built-environment design disciplines and spectrum of roles that address both the individual and public goods of our settlements”* (Childs, 2010, p. 18). *“Something that is less a technical discipline than a mind-set among those of varying disciplinary foundations seeking, sharing, and advocating insights about forms of community”* (Krieger and Saunders, 2009, p. 129).

Many authors put the process at the centre of their conception of urban design. Madanipour (1997), for one, raises the question of whether urban design is a process or a product or both. With the aim of answering this question, he reviews two perspectives provided by Billingham (1994) in which the latter states:

“The study of urban design deals with the relationship between the physical fabric of the city, buildings and the space between them, and the social, economic and cultural forces which produce/shape it” (Billingham, 1994, p. 24, in the work of Madanipour, 1997).

“Urban design is also concerned with the creation, regeneration, enhancement and management of the built environments which are sensitive to their contexts and sympathetic to people’s needs” (Billingham, 1994, p. 18, in the work of Madanipour, 1997).

Madanipour (1997) concludes that urban design is not a product if by product we mean parts of urban space or the built environment. It is a process, the product of which in the first instance is a set of ideas, policies and images. In a broader and more philosophical sense, Cuthbert (2007, p. 219) concludes that urban design *“should be viewed as the outcome of the social production of urban form, which in turn is the outcome of the social production of space in its material and symbolic dimensions”*. Likewise and more precisely, Carmona and Tiesdell (2007, p. 22) conclude urban design as *“the multi-disciplinary activity of shaping and managing urban environments, interested in both the process of this shaping and the spaces it helps shape. Combining technical, social, and expressive concerns, urban designers use both visual and verbal means of communication, and engage in all scales of the urban socio-spatial continuum”*.

2.5.3 The scope of urban design

Rowley (1994) refers to Spreiregen’s (1965) vision of the scope of urban design, considering it to be concerned with matters at a national and regional scale, down to small matters such as the design of street furniture. Its scope encompasses urban renewal, historic preservation, far-reaching development and aesthetic control. Urban design can involve small projects such as a single building’s façade, or huge projects such as designs for a totally new settlement (Rowley, 1994).

This scope of urban design has also been addressed by other authors as two spatial scales at which urban design works. Madanipour (1996) and Punter and Carmona (1997)

distinguish them as the macro scale at which urban design makes links between overall plan strategy and detailed design policy, and the micro scale at which urban design concerns “*the physical design of public realm*” (Tibbalds, 1988, p. 12). Madanipour (1997) concludes, following Moudon (1992, p. 331), that due to the overlap and commonality between the two scales of urban design, they can therefore be placed in one definition, to see urban design as “*an interdisciplinary approach to designing our built environment*”.

Summarising the above, urban design stands between architecture and urban planning; thus, it relates to the paradigms of both, which can create overlaps and reduce the clarity of scope. Many urban design authors acknowledge that it is appropriate to recognise that urban design concerns a product and also the process that produces this product. These two are indeed so closely related that their relationship is ambiguous. In the following sections, the researcher undertakes a review of urban design concepts. Different approaches are reviewed in order to develop a conceptual framework that can be used by authorities and other involved organisations in judging proposed new built forms.

2.5.4 Concepts of urban design

Many architects and urban design authors who are concerned with urban life have realised the importance of having new designs fitted properly into their contexts, focusing on how these designs can add quality to these contexts. However, they differ in the approaches they follow in defining the considerations for producing high-quality outcomes.

According to Carmona (1996), a set of urban design concepts came to the fore by the end of the 20th century to provide a theoretical base for analysing public spaces and judging the merit of built forms in their contexts. These concepts are assorted by him under what he calls ‘Theoretical conceptualizations of urban design’. They are further explained and illustrated by Carmona in a later work, i.e. Carmona (2003), and they are addressed by him as ‘urban design dimensions’. This more recent publication, along with two other scholars’ works, e.g. Moudon (1992) and Lang (1994), are regarded by this research as the cornerstone for building a comprehensive knowledge of urban design concepts.

The morphological concept

Conzen (1960) is one of the very first authors who contributed to an effective study of the stability of the physical fabric of the built environment. This kind of study was later called urban morphology. Morphology is defined by Carmona (2003) and Madanipour (1996) as the study of built environment's form and shape. It is also seen by Moudon (1997) as the field that studies the physical world as tangible results of dynamic intangible social and economic forces.

Authors are varied in approaching their concepts of morphology. Moudon (1997), for one, refers to Aymonino's (1966) concept of '*Typo-morphological studies*' to stimulate further interest in the design of the city. Aymonino (1966) uses buildings' types to describe and explain urban form and the process for shaping the physical fabric of the cities (e.g. their form and especially the socioeconomic processes that govern their production). Likewise, Lang (1994) has addressed what he calls the '*typological approach*' in which he brings together the study of urban form, space form, and the building form. He also stresses that the process of shaping the physical fabric of the city should take into account the relationship between the built environment elements. Morphology is also addressed by Carmona (2003) as the 'morphological dimension' with the purpose of helping designers and planners to be aware of the built environment's changes and development.

Morphology is criticised by Aymonino (1966), as it is unable to offer solutions for modern architecture issues. Likewise, Moudon (1992) agrees with Madanipour (1996) in considering that morphology has serious problems that need to be solved before it is able to help with solving urban illnesses. According to those authors, morphology, as it stands, is unable to critically analyse the contemporary urban fabric and understand its distinctive component and specific process of formulation. These problems are a result of missing the link between the physical elements in the social, and the social elements in the physical, as Madanipour (1996) states.

Following the aim of bridging this gap, some improvements in morphology have been suggested by Moudon (1992), who addresses what she terms '*space-morphology studies*', which concern uncovering the fundamental characteristics of urban geometries as well as studying the spatial elements that generate urban forms and their relationships. She refers to Hillier's (1986) spatial grammar to link concerns in both social and geometrical dimensions of space.

The visual-perceptual concept

Cullen (1961) is probably the first author who contributed to an effective study of the visual relationships of the built environment elements. His approach in this regard is called '*townscape approach*'. This approach was the cornerstone for all the subsequent studies that concerned visual studies.

According to Cullen (1961, p. 7), "*buildings together can give visual pleasure which none can give separately*". He goes on to say: "*in fact there is an art of relationship just as there is an art of architecture*" (1961, p. 7). This is what Cullen names the '*art of environment*' (i.e. the art of giving visual coherence and organisation to the jumble of buildings, streets and spaces that make up the built environment).

Based on Cullen's approach, Carmona (2003) has addressed what is termed as the '*visual-aesthetic dimension*', which is defined as the dimension that concerns the aesthetic quality of the built environment as well as the appearance of the physical elements that define this environment. Likewise, Madanipour (1996) agrees with Lang (1994) in considering that the space that contains buildings is not just physical space; it is conceptual as well. They also stress the visual relationship between the elements in space, and consider that this relationship draws on different characteristics; these have been called by Lynch (1960) '*non-physical characteristics*', which may enhance the imageability of the city.

Townscape is criticised by Madanipour (1996) as it concerns what he calls the '*hardware*', which is represented with the physical fabric of the city, rather than the '*software*', which is represented by the procedures and process of production. He considers that this process is greatly needed to enhance the society's role in the design. Likewise, Ley and Mills (1993) point to a mistaken view that considers that buildings and the built environment at large have been produced based on a mechanical process, without mentioning the social relations that have been derived from the culture.

According to Moudon (1992), visual studies can be split into two fields of studies. They have been categorised by him into '*picturesque studies*', which emphasise the visual aspect of the environment and combine different interpretations of the built environment's visual attributes, and '*image studies*' which emphasise how people visualise, conceptualise and eventually understand the image they see. Lynch's '*image of the city*' (1960) was essential for him in launching his research.

Lynch's (1960) focus was on what he called the perceptual knowledge of the physical form, which goes beyond what this environment means to people and how they feel about it. He considers that the environmental images are a result of two elements:

- the way that people understand and perceive the space,
- drawing meaning from and adding meaning to the urban environment.

With the aim of filling the gap found between the visual and social studies as mentioned earlier, Moudon (1992) has categorised what she calls '*place studies*' in which she stresses the emotional and perceptual aspects of people-environment relations, and tries to link the social studies with the visual and perception studies of shaping places.

Moudon's (1992) concepts are further improved by Montgomery (1998), who defines the image as a combination of what the place is actually like and the perception of the place in the eyes of individuals. Montgomery (1998) also refers to Barnett (1974) in considering that the drawn images constitute the enduring reality that we construct from the phenomena of direct perception as well as the fundamental reference system for symbolic expression, communication, interpretation, and meaning. He says: "*In addition to their role as a mental setting for thoughts of action, environmental images function to organize our perceptions, they permit us to code, structure and store visual and spatial information and directly mediate and regulate our responses to the things we see*" (1974, p. 158).

The importance of perceptual studies as part of the urban design approach has been stressed by Madanipour (1996), who argues that urban design should deal with the visual and spatial aspects of the environment, otherwise urban designers will make a profound mistake in understanding the image. In other words, if understanding is limited to a visual understanding then the observer will see only the objects' appearance. By contrast, if the observer goes beyond the appearance he/she will start to understand how the objects are related to each other. This is what Madanipour (1997, p. 369) terms '*spatial understanding*' or '*three-dimensional experience*'. The two descriptions match what psychologists call '*perception*'. However, perception is much wider and includes all the senses.

Carmona (2003) addresses perception as more than just sensing the urban environment; it also refers to a more complex processing or understanding of stimuli. In this sense, he sets out what he calls the '*perceptual dimension*'. He has also stressed the importance

of perception input into any urban design strategy and set out a list of reasons for applying it, as follows:

- Reinforcing the city image.
- Emphasising the need to relate satisfactorily to the scale and character of the adjacent townscape, including historic features, general buildings' dimensions and architectural characteristics.
- Reinforcing the identity and conserving the characters of the city.
- Creating a coherent and comprehensible urban form.

Based on this significance of perception and a wide knowledge of visual studies, Lang (1994) has merged visual quality and perception in his '*empiricist approach*'. In this approach, he assumes that urban design schemes are based on some social schema in terms of activities and aesthetic displays, and considers that relying on one's personal experience is both limited and limiting.

The social concept

Madanipour (1997) asserts that spatial transformation causes social change and in turn is caused by it; this occurs on different scales and with a wide range of different impacts. He considers modernist design to have had the desire to alter societies through space, using a mechanistic view of how society and space are connected. This was later given the terms 'environmental determinism' and 'social engineering'. He concludes that there is an inevitable interaction between space and social processes, and that this is urban design's main concern.

This view was previously aired by Krier (1978), who considers that the concept of urban space covers all types of spaces between buildings and the functions flowing between them. He suggests that spaces should be assessed based on aesthetic criteria; he also stressed the social foundation of the urban form where meanings are not given to buildings by designers but by people. In this regard, he refers to Downs and Stea (1973, p. 157), "*Architecture and urban design are unimportant – what is important is what people think the products are, or will be*".

Moudon (1992) refers to Krier (1978) and Rossi and Eisenman (1982) as the first researchers who popularised the study of architecture, leading to an understanding of

society. In the 1960s, the design professions turned to sociology and environmental psychology as sources of valuable information in this new emic realm of research on the environment. Since then, person-environment relations have become an actual part of the architectural profession, covering research on how people use, like, or simply behave in given environments. As such, Moudon (1992) addresses what she calls '*environment-behaviour studies*'.

The social role was improved by Lynch (1982) and Tibbalds (1992) with a critical technique that stresses the appropriateness of fitting the design outcomes. Carmona (2003) refers to them in addressing what they call the '*social dimension*'. In this dimension, they raise and discuss issues concerning values, and the difficult choice with regard to the effect of design decisions on individuals and groups in society.

In the same sense, Lang (1994) sets up what he calls the '*neo-modernist approach*' in which he deals with the social consequences of the form's design. He stresses that urban designers need to understand the social consequences of their works, as they should know the interrelationship between the physical environment and the nature of the social systems. Likewise, George (1997) argues that urban designers should have a keen understanding of how space is produced, occupied, restructured, manipulated, controlled and regulated. The foundations of this approach and its concerns are used by other authors to insist upon a commitment to an empowerment of the public, and a full recognition of the public's interest in decisions concerning the design of their cities.

The functional concept

According to Lang (1994), urban design should be concerned with the needs of the people as much as the mechanisms they use to meet those needs. Furthermore, he considers that the functional environment is not just the one that meets the people's needs for ease of movement and access to sunshine, but also the one that meets a broad range of needs, for instance, aesthetic needs. As such he has proposed what he calls the '*functionalist approach*', in which he stresses that function is not something added to the list of concerns when other requirements have been met.

Carmona (2003) has also proposed the '*functional dimension*' which considers how public places work and how urban designers can make them better. In addition, it looks at how these places can be improved to respond to the people's needs, starting with accessibility for both pedestrians and vehicles, and moving on to relaxation and other

activities inside these places. Ultimately, functional concerns have also been mentioned by Moudon (1992) as part of place studies, in which he considers that the function, along with the earlier discussed visual and social issues, can make a place useful.

The ecological concept

According to Moudon (1992), '*the nature-ecology study*' should be mentioned when addressing urban design. She discusses the relationships that exist between the social and psychological components of the environment and its biological dimension. She considers that light, air, and open space have always been part of the discourse of urban design, but planners and designers have limited their interest to cover just health, comfort and the visual qualities of environments. This kind of study is also addressed by Bentley (1985) as '*ecological urban design*'.

Lang (1994) has also put forward his '*ecological approach*', in which he has adopted a problem-solving approach to design by incorporating the natural and ecological context of human needs and the understanding of their behaviour within different patterns of physical and cultural settings. It also provided the base to what was later known as sustainable studies, which go beyond concerns of nature into concerns of the knowledge of building technology.

2.5.5 Reflection

From the literature, a definition of urban design can be gathered. It can be viewed as the process of understanding place and people in an urban context, with the aim of deriving a strategy that will enhance urban life and the three-dimensional evolution of the built environment. It is concerned with people's perception, use and experience of places, and how well they function practically. It can be summarised as the design, creation and management of good building, spaces, and places.

After reviewing different approaches taken by urban design and architecture authors, it can be concluded that the merit of a proposed design in general as well as in historic contexts can be judged following different approaches to urban design as follows:

- The morphological approach, which is concerned with the built form, place form and urban form issues;

- The visual-perceptual approach, which is concerned with how people visualise, understand and perceive the built forms and the space in which they sit;
- The environmental-behaviour/social approach, which is concerned with life quality in public spaces and the changes of people's behaviour in response to physical changes in these spaces;
- The functional approach, which is concerned with how spaces work in response to people's needs;
- The ecological approach, which is concerned with the natural and environmental issues of spaces.

As the main emphasis in this research is on fitting new building forms into a historical urban context and dealing with the form's appearance rather than function or natural environmental issues, this research has adopted a morphological, visual-perceptual and environment-behaviour approach. These are addressed by Pendlebury (1999) as the most important approaches to study interventions in historic areas within sensitive contexts.

Four main key sub-categories have been identified within these three chosen concepts:

- Urban form: the three-dimensional characters and contextualisation (i.e. spatial relationships of the built form elements);
- Townscape: the visual quality of the relationship between the buildings and their existing context;
- Perception: the meaning received from the built form;
- Public response: the people's reaction to the built form.

2.6 Principles of good building form design

The review showed that the problems of inserting new forms of buildings into historic urban contexts seem to emerge when development challenges built heritage. In this sense, Short (2007) argues that the failure to control this insertion could result in the disappearance of the historical characteristics that used to shape the city's image in some places, and the creation of what he terms a 'hybrid heritage context'. Thus, it is essential that proposed new building forms follow a set of good design principles such as those raised by the English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000) as a set of questions

that should be asked of any development proposal, whether it is for a town centre, an urban extension, or an individual street or building.

Madanipour (1996) agrees with Bacon (1980) that the judgement of proposed building forms has been conducted mainly at the superficial level of the external appearance of a building, essentially aesthetic architectural issues. In this sense, Lang (1994) sets what he calls 'aesthetic guidelines', which deal with the building envelope and façade design, materials, textures, and colour, as well as the solid ratio of the façade and the window area.

This point has always been controversial and urban design authors raised a concern about narrowing down the judgement to stay within this limit. They look at the picture from a wider view and they consider that the building design judgement process has to take into account the relationship between the building and its urban contexts as a further and essential dimension for the judgement. In this sense, Punter (1999a, p. 202) concludes with a reference to recommendations by Payton (1992, p. 238): *"in an ideal world, buildings would be successful urbanistically and architecturally. However, if only one were possible, the greatest effort should be applied to the former"*.

Carmona (1996) agrees with Punter (1999a) about applying design principles with an extended concern of architecture to urban design as an appropriate basis against which to evaluate the quality of development. Carmona (1996) provides a conceptual framework in which he groups two sets of design concerns (i.e. legitimate and non-legitimate concerns) as criteria that can be used for judging new proposed designs and can probably increase the likelihood of producing good designs. Taking Carmona's (1996) and other authors' views together, a newly-created framework is drawn from this research within the four sub-categories (see section 2.5.5). It is, however, worth mentioning that the indicators of these sub-categories may overlap with each other, and this is unavoidable due to the fact that some urban design concepts are interlinked by nature. Table 2.1 and figure 2.1 show where and why these overlaps occur and provide a clear distinction between these sub-categories.

2.6.1 Urban form

The literature suggests that good design within sensitive environments can help to improve the quality of life and therefore ensure long-term economic benefits. This depends on two things, in the view of CABE and DETR (2000): firstly on the knowledge

of the context characteristics that distinguish it from others; secondly, on how the overall design presence, in terms of form, shape and size, and its component parts, are designed to respond to these characters.

According to Cohen (1999), Short (2007) and UNESCO (2007), character has to be addressed when designing new forms as it is an important part of seeking the interaction between the past and present, allowing history to project the best of the past to enrich the future. It encompasses, in addition to the traces of a bygone era, the life and activities inside the area that make the place distinctive (Punter and Carmona, 1997). It also concerns the cultural personality, known as identity, and the meanings that people recognise from the building's form and the occupation of space (Madanipour, 1996 and Lawson, 2001).

Cohen (1999) argues that buildings have a role in making sense of their surroundings individually and collectively. In both cases, the surroundings may have a specific character that might be affected immediately by inserting new forms. In this sense, '*built form character*' has been addressed by Carmona (1996), who raises a set of criteria concerning the building lines, block size, grain, and connectivity. These criteria are also suggested by Young (1986) and RFAC (1994) as a list of criteria to which designers should have regard.

Relating new proposed designs into their surroundings, particularly regarding architectural characters with respect to form, aesthetics and the meaning of architectural elements, is considered by many authors as an essential step towards designing forms that fit appropriately into their contexts. However, it has been addressed differently among them.

RFAC (1994) calls this relationship 'integration', relating it to harmony, contrast, and similarity with the surrounding. They describe these elements as follows:

- Harmony with adjoining buildings is advisable if it is not an absolute requirement;
- Contrast is an element of variety, but it divides our attention;
- Similarity is found due to the desire for unity.

Harmony and similarity were first addressed by Cullen (1971), who merges them both in one word 'conformity'. Carmona (1996) and Young (1986) would prefer to call it 'unity'. Furthermore, the English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000) consider that

good design enriches the surrounding fabric, both visually and physically, while exceptional design adds the magic of contrast, drama, and innovation. In this sense, ‘contrast’ has also been addressed by Carmona (1996) as one of the design concerns.

2.6.2 Townscape

Townscape is seen as an art by Cullen’s (1961) approach, where he puts more emphasis on the relationship between the elements that enclose space than on the elements’ design and their individual meanings (i.e. design details). A set of design concerns is identified by Carmona (1996) linked to this relationship: development size, massing and scale, local style, rhythm, richness, roofscape, skyline, landmarks and focal points.

The English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000) have introduced a set of points in this regard which are considered as indicators of good design, and which should be adhered to in respect to the townscape. These points are:

- continuity of building line;
- a street’s vertical and horizontal rhythms (the building widths, the proportion, and scale of windows and doors);
- the local morphology (the pattern of streets, blocks, and building types);
- adjacent building heights, roof and cornice lines;
- local building materials;
- first-rate architecture.

RFAC (1994) also sets out a list of visual quality considerations, in which they distinguish between two cases: 1) when the focus is on the building as one unit of the whole image, then this could be considered as a townscape quality and will be considered as one of the character issues; 2) if the focus is on the details of the building, then this could be considered as a part of the quality of the public realm issues. In the two respects, a set of points have been addressed and defined by RFAC (1994) as follows:

- Siting is to do with the way a building’s form contributes to the grain of the city and how it relates to other buildings, to the street, and to the city’s image.
- Massing is the three-dimensional disposition of the different parts of a building, including height, bulk, and silhouette, or of different buildings within the same

context. Likewise, it has been addressed by Carmona (1996) as one of his design concerns.

- The scale is the dimensions of the building and all its parts relative to the dimensions of the other buildings and the human scale. Young (1986) and Carmona (1996) have also addressed it in the same sense.
- Proportion is the relation between one part of a building and another, and between any one part and the whole. Proportion is also to do with the ratio of the solid to void in the façade of a building, and with the way the window openings are arranged in relation to the solid wall elements. Lawson (2001), Carmona (1996) and Young (1986) have also addressed it in the same sense.
- Rhythm is the arrangement and size of the constituent parts of a façade to the surrounding buildings' façades and to the whole. The constituent parts can be windows or any elements that are usually repeated in the façade. Young (1986) and Carmona (1996) have also addressed rhythm this way.
- Materials determine the colour and texture of the building parts that give the whole impression of the colour as one; their choice can either sharpen or soften the differences between the various parts or between the buildings. It has also been addressed by Young (1986), Carmona (1996) and Lawson (2001) in the same sense.

2.6.3 Perception

In the sense of visual nexus between the space elements and the way that people perceive these elements, Carmona (1996) has introduced a set of design concerns under the perceptual concept, i.e. enclosure, legibility, appropriateness, and distinctiveness.

Enclosure has been defined by the English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000) as the three-dimensional mass of each building that defines the public realm – as viewed from near and afar – and determines the visual quality and interest.

Legibility was first mentioned by Lynch (1960), who defined it as the quality of the physical elements (i.e. shape, colour, and arrangement), that gives it the probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. He considered that the built environment should be highly imageable and legible, and should stress a strong sense of identity. Likewise, it is referred to by CABE and DETR (2000) as how easy a place is to

understand, and by Bentley (1985) to promote the relationship between the elements that enclose the space. As such, it is considered by Tavernor (2007) as an indicator of a successful place, and an element that could be assessed through a variety of techniques, including mapping, carrying out surveys and interviews, and watching how people behave.

Lynch (1960), Carmona (1996) and Biddulph (2011) have also addressed '*Distinctiveness*' as an indicator of a successful place. Lynch (1960) considers that 'the sweet sense of place' is strongest when it is not only familiar but somewhat distinctive. The English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000) define distinctive places as places that have their own character and atmosphere.

Appropriateness was first addressed by Cullen (1961), who entitled it '*Suitability*'. This criterion was raised by him as a set of questions emphasising the visual relationships in the built environment as the contribution to neighbouring public space (notably whether it aids or undermines street vitality). It is also addressed by Bentley (1985) as '*visual appropriateness*' to describe how a building integrates visually into its surroundings to facilitate people's interpretation and awareness of the context as well as having meanings. Ultimately, appropriateness is mentioned by Tavernor (2007) as '*visual sustainability*' and has been defined as the ability to constitute a visually well-balanced, sustainable urban environment.

2.6.4 Public response

A set of concerns has been addressed by Carmona (1996) in this regard, i.e. quality of life and personalisation. Quality of life has also been addressed by other authors differently. CABE and DETR (2000), for instance, call it 'quality of the public realm' to create a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas. Other authors, like Biddulph, (2011), Madanipour (1996), Lang (1994) and Tibbalds (1992), call it 'social satisfaction'. It has been addressed by them with the aim of finding out the extent to which people are satisfied with the resulting quality. However, it is narrowed down by Lang (1994), Tibbalds (1992), and Tweed and Sutherland (2007) to concern basically the aesthetic quality.

Bentley (1985) sets out the role of the public in creating good design through involving them in making decisions about their built environment. This has been termed as 'Personalisation' which refers, to some extent, to how people's perception and awareness

of building's form and city image can be utilised as a design tool. This objective has also been set out by Tweed and Sutherland (2007) as a criterion for aesthetic judgement, recognising what they call the 'humanizing and democratizing' of any new development proposal.

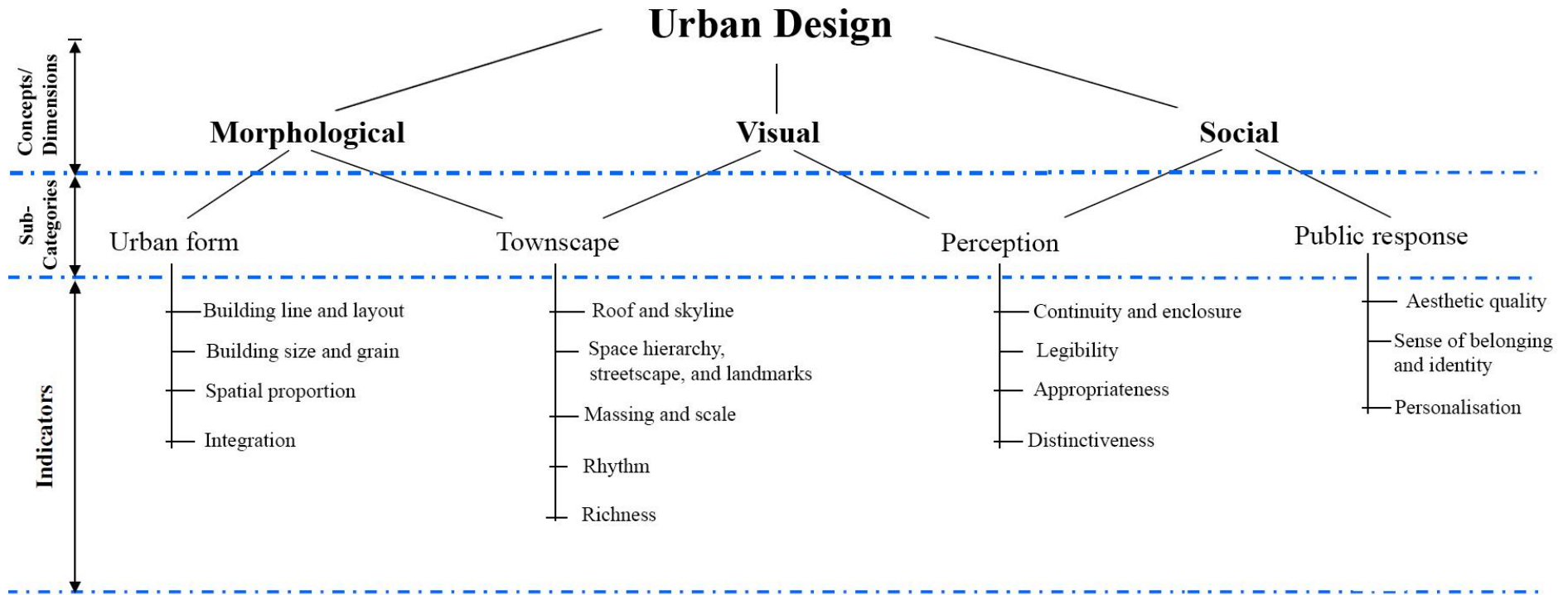


Figure 2.1: The main categories defining urban design concepts along with their sub-categories and main indicators for evaluation.

Source: the researcher

Table 2.1: Main indicators for good building design along with their evaluation criteria drawn from the urban design literature.

Source: The researcher

Sub-category	Indicators	Criteria
Urban form	Building lines and layout	<p>How do the proposed form's lines (i.e. envelope lines) enclose space, and relate closely to the surroundings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building's lines should maintain the continuous urban fabric and avoid places of concealment.
	Block size and grain	<p>To what extent has the proposed form enhanced the existing arrangement of building sizes and their plots in their context?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine-grain development is easier to adapt to the historic context than large-scale megastructures.
	Spatial proportion (buildings groups)	<p>To what extent has the proposed form enhanced the existing spatial organisations of the context?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrangement of the buildings' forms (i.e. massing and height) and the way they overlook have to be set to promote the public realm around the buildings and make it more attractive. • Design should be one part of a piece, so that the parts relate to the whole.
	Integration	<p>To what extent has the design of the new form contributed to the local character and created places with a real sense of identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating new development into existing buildings can maintain the continuity of the built fabric as well as retaining buildings of local distinctiveness, and historic or townscape merit. • Articulation of façades is important to integrate new buildings well into a street. Features such as bays, balconies and porches can help to achieve this. • Development that responds sensitively to the site is likely to create a place that is valued and pleasing to the eye.
Townscape	Roofscape and skyline	<p>How does the proposed form contribute to creating or respecting the existing distinctive characters of skylines and the roofscape?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character of a skyline is composed of the massing of blocks and the shape of roofs, as well as by the height of buildings. • The roof should be considered as the fifth elevation by respecting and reflecting adjacent roofscapes.
	Space hierarchy, streetscape, and landmarks	<p>How can the proposed form emphasise the hierarchy of a place or streetscape and help to provide reference points?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New development should enrich the visual relationships between the elements of existing space. • Small setbacks can be used to soften the impact that buildings and the public realm have on each other. • Setbacks at upper floors reduce a building's impact at street level by allowing one or more upper storeys to be less visible from the street. • A building should only stand out from the background of buildings if it contributes positively to views and vistas. • Landmarks can help to emphasise the hierarchy and richness of a place and recognition of a place, this makes it easy for people to find their way around.

	Massing and scale	<p>Do the massing and scale of the proposed form affect the built form’s visual quality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate size, such as large buildings or a mega structure, often occupying an entire block or more, can threaten the character and identity of an existing context.
	Rhythm	<p>To what extent do the proposed form’s façades respond to the rhythm, scale, proportion and texture of the neighbourhood?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building height and width should enhance the vertical and horizontal rhythms; using narrow frontage buildings gives vertical rhythm to street scenes. Buildings’ form should enhance the proportion and scale of elements, e.g. windows and doors.
	Richness	<p>How does the proposed form add to the attractive appearance and character of its area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The richness of a building lies in its use of material (colours and textures).
Perception	Continuity and enclosure	<p>How does the proposed form contribute to a harmonious whole, by relating to the scale of their neighbours and creating a continuously built form?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The suitable ratio between the width of the space and its enclosing buildings can create a satisfactory enclosure of space. Continuity of the built form affects necessarily the way the people perceive the space as well as their delight in using it.
	Legibility	<p>How does the proposed form facilitate the people’s interpretation and awareness of the space?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legible designs often depend on close attention being paid to the relation between the elements (i.e. balance, harmony and proportion). The richness of details is particularly important and could enhance legibility.
	Appropriateness	<p>How does the proposed form integrate visually into its surroundings to facilitate people’s interpretation and awareness of the context as well as having meanings?</p>
	Distinctiveness	<p>How does the proposed form respond to the distinctive character of the existing context and adding special quality, style, and attractiveness?</p>
Public response	Aesthetic quality	<p>What aesthetic quality does the proposed form add to the existing setting and how does this relate to the public realm?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New forms of buildings should respond to the aesthetic needs of the contexts; in a way it can add values and quality to the life around it.
	Sense of belonging and identity	<p>To what extent does the proposed form contribute to the identity of and civic pride attached to the place or locality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new form should complement the existing identity and the recognised meanings by people.
	Personalisation	<p>To what extent has the proposed form’s design been changed in response to the people’s views?</p>

The previous section provided, based on a wide review of the literature, a framework that could be used to assess the merit of new forms in a historic urban context. However, this research does not aim to use this framework to assess the merit of any new development; instead, it aims to discover how this framework has been addressed by the UK authorities in the form of assessment and decision support tools (this research will call them urban design tools) with the purpose of informing the judgement process over proposals of new built forms in historic urban contexts. These tools and the process to which they are applied are the focus of the following sections.

2.7 Urban design in practice

Before undertaking this research, the researcher was fascinated with the physical appearance of new forms of buildings in historic urban contexts and was strongly motivated to understand the process through which the merit of new proposed designs in such sensitive contexts is judged. This process involves a variety of stakeholders, each with different goals and motivations, often with differing or competing interests.

The following sections provide a review of the development of design control in the UK context. They also explain how urban design is approached, by providing a range of assessment and decision support tools to fit proposed new building forms into historic contexts.

2.7.1 Design control and the emerging role of urban design

According to Punter (1999a), the role of design within planning varies from country to country, including the level of statutory control and the professional training of planners. This has resulted in each country having its own development control³ approach to ensure good design outcomes in general as well as in historic contexts.

In the UK since 1947, when a comprehensive planning legislation was enacted, aesthetic control has emerged as an integral function of development control. The aim of this new function was to encourage good design/good building design in the public interest and to

³ Development control (also known in Scotland as development management) forms an integral part of the planning practice. It is the basic means by which the state intervenes to regulate the use and development of land in order to implement local and national planning policies. Most significantly it is the part of the planning process in which members of the public come into contact with local planning authorities (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006).

conserve the built heritage in historic contexts (Taylor, 1994). The focus of aesthetic control was on the external appearance issues of design, especially from an aesthetic point of view (Carmona *et al.* 2002; Booth, 1996). In this sense, it is defined by Cullingworth, (1999, p. 137) as “*a matter of aesthetic and superficial, and largely subjective judgment*”.

Design control emerged in the early 1990s as a new term of aesthetic control with an extended concern for design or external appearance, with a focus on the social, functional and environmental aspects of design (Carmona *et al.*, 2002). Definitions and characterisations of design control are varied among authors: “*the most appropriate and effective means through which authorities can influence the quality of new development*” (Carmona, 1996, p. 49); “*A mechanism for ensuring a quality environment*” (Thomas, 1997, p. 270); “*potentially a value adding activity*” (Carmona *et al.*, 2002, p. 95).

Views about aesthetic control and design control have varied sharply. Some have found it a bureaucratic process that prevents creativity and imaginative design by imposing prescriptive standards (Cullingworth, 1999) usually by overworked, inexperienced and under-skilled staff (Manser and Adam, 1992). However, others have seen it as a toehold on the path to a more participative system, as it applies a consultation exercise and seeks to incorporate the view of the public. This, in turn, helps in enlightening people about the decision-making process. It also builds up the necessary bridge between nonprofessional and professional tastes (Carmona 1996, Punter, 1986), and without this bridge the whole process becomes undemocratic (Townsend, 1995).

Over time, design control concerns further expanded to deal with all the issues of urban/environment design/sustainability in order to deliver meaningful benefits to the community (Punter, 1999b). In other words, it sought to control the physical aspects and uses of new buildings and the spaces they create (Punter 1990; Cullingworth 1999; Carmona 1996). This in reality represents what urban design calls for. As such, Carmona (1996, p. 39) states: “*at the heart of design control lies a concern for urban design*”. Similarly, Madanipour (1996) and Cullingworth (1999) advocate that design control concerns architecture generally and urban design issues particularly.

Urban design has progressively improved its role in the UK planning system. It helps with steering design control by enhancing the significance of historic urban contexts, encouraging innovative architecture (improving the quality of buildings’ design and the urban context appearance), and encouraging public involvement in design matters (Moudon 1992; Punter and Carmona, 1997). To this end, it provides a breadth of

assessment and decision support tools; by utilising them the quality of urban context can be consciously improved (Snow, 2004). These tools can be used by different stakeholders, often with differing or competing interests, at different stages of the design control process to guide the physical and spatial character of buildings and places (Shirvani, 1985, cited in the work of Nasar, 1994). What are these tools and how are they approached with this task? This is one of the questions that this research asks.

2.7.2 Urban design toolkit

According to George (1997), urban design tools are specific tactics that can be applied at appropriate stages in the development process to facilitate quality outcomes. George (1997) reviews Lynch's extended work by Shirvani (1985), who categorises what he calls 'new' tactics used in urban design. He classifies them in four categories: policies, plans, guidelines, and programmes. They are defined by him as follows:

- Policies are broad statements of collective intent that influence specific decisions made individually and collectively.
- The plan is commonly used to describe the document that urban designers produce. This document contains descriptions and explications of one or more of the other three types of products.
- Guidelines are a broader category of regulations; however, George (1997) admits that guidelines are different to regulations as they are non-mandatory by nature.
- Programmes are the organised and systematic control and deployment or redeployment of collective resources, so that individual decisions to add to or alter the built environment are encouraged towards a certain end.

This research, however, refers to these tools using another classification: research and analysis tools, which include character area appraisal, social impact assessment, legibility and morphology analysis; coordination tools, which include urban design policies and guidelines; and implementation tools, which include public engagement and design review tools.

Research and analysis tools

Understanding the urban context character of where the building sits has been stressed by Punter and Carmona (1997) as a very first step towards achieving successful design, as it identifies the qualities that make a place and context special, and enlightens applicants, policy and guidelines writers, and decision makers. In this sense, the research and analysis tool is defined by them as the systemic assessment of the design character and quality of a locality or sub-area.

Punter and Carmona (1997) argue that in the UK, this tool is highly influenced by Cullen's (1961) townscape approach. However, they stress that it has to go beyond this to integrate all urban design concerns, i.e. visual, functional, physical and social characteristics. They outlined a number of general conclusions that can be drawn to guide area appraisals, as follows:

- Appraisals should seek to incorporate the socio-functional-ecological aspects of places along with the townscape concerns.
- Appraisals should be more analytical when seeking the qualities of places.
- Appraisals should involve the public in their analysis as analysts; this should encourage a collaborative effort between the community and the authority.
- Appraisals should have methodologies that are comprehensible to both professionals and non-professionals.

Coordination tools

Coordination tools contribute to the design and decision-making process by providing a wide range of hierarchal urban design criteria to which stakeholders should defer when judging the proposed forms. These criteria can be structured in two forms, i.e. policies and guidelines.

Design policies

Design policies are defined by Carmona *et al.* (2002) as design principles applied in the form of statutory guidelines to ensure that development complies with anticipations and enhances quality. In these policies, design needs to move beyond subjectivity to more objective decision making, based on a clearly articulated policy framework and criteria

agreed by the community. Design policies that are applied in sensitive contexts (i.e. conservation areas) are called conservation policies.

Carmona *et al.* (2002) distinguish between what they call ‘consideration policy’ and ‘criteria policy’. According to them, consideration policies can be provided with the purpose of encouraging designers, when handling a design problem, to consider a range of factors rather than following a prescriptive set of criteria. Such policies can also be used by the controller as a checklist to evaluate design outcomes. Criteria policies, on the other hand, provide a more precise interpretation of the criteria used to judge a planning application. However, such criteria should avoid being too prescriptive. Despite proposing those two sets of policies, Carmona *et al.* (2002) believe that ‘consideration policy’ is more helpful than ‘criteria policy’ in the sense that being precise when evaluating the relevance of particular design qualities in each case can be rather difficult.

According to Punter and Carmona (1997), development should respond appropriately to its context as a fundamental objective of design policy. In this regard, they consider that context is not just a set of visual characteristics, and the appropriate response is not just a matter of relating a proposed development to the adjacent townscape. More fundamentally, there is a need to relate development to its social, functional and environmental context. As such, interpreting the context, for which design policies have been made, in a perceptual, visual, social and functional sense, is described by them as a necessary prerequisite for effective policies. They state, “*Design policies need to ensure that development responds appropriately to its surroundings, but those surroundings have a visual, social functional and environmental character that is necessary input into design control*” (1997, p. 197). Short (2007) concludes that comprehensive design policies should be given the power to ban unacceptable new forms in some places with unique characters.

Carmona (1996) and Carmona *et al.* (2002) propose that policies which take into consideration not only the individual architectural quality of development but also how it can contribute to the quality of the place as a whole must be in place. For them, following such policies can allow development to accord with its historic context. They refer to them as ‘urban design policies’, which they categorise as follows:

- Urban form policy aims to achieve an appropriate scale of development by controlling buildings’ envelope, height, and massing. It stresses emphasising the creation of a human scale consistent with the context by considering the key

character-giving elements, which involve enclosure of the public space and the continuity of the building line, as well as the diversity and pattern of the established urban grain and block, and plot sizes.

- Townscape policy is concerned with the visual quality of context. It ensures that development responds to its wider setting and respects the characters of surroundings, views, and skyline. This policy stresses the role of buildings in drawing up the city image, and it offers a means of assessing the broader visual and architectural relationships that will result, and the ways of preventing visual anomalies. Carmona (1996, p. 69) says: “*Townscape policies are recommended to ensure development has an appropriate relationship with its surroundings. Views and skyline protection policies may be an important part of such policies*”.
- Public realm policies complement the two above-mentioned urban design policies. This can result in encouraging legible, comfortable, stimulating and safe streets and public spaces, and encouraging active frontages wherever feasible. These policies also incorporate public perceptions of what is important to the identity and quality of the built environment, and how to incorporate these into design strategies and individual policies.

Design guidelines

According to Madanipour (1996), design guides are supplementary documents providing guidelines on design matters. Punter *et al.* (1994) argues that these documents have been adopted since most of the suggested plans avoid either detailed coverage or prescription, and fail to relate design policy to context. As such, design guides are defined by CABE and DETR (2000) as documents that provide guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with policies, often with a view to retaining local distinctiveness, and ensuring that design is contextually based, highlighting good practice and helping to avoid common design faults.

Carmona *et al.* (2002) argue that these documents should be used by decision makers and applicants alike. The applicant can use them to draw a concept of the anticipated design from the view of the city council. They also enable the local authorities to guide development in relation to particular design issues and types of development, clarifying the design policies in the development plan, minimising the possible negative impacts on the contexts and retaining local distinctiveness (Punter and Carmona, 1997). In brief,

they can inspire innovative design appropriate to its context, raise the standards of a particular type of development where problems have been identified, and provide answers to questions frequently asked by applicants (CABE and DETR, 2000).

Design guides are all classified as supplementary planning guidance and they differ from the local plans which have statutory status. They can take different shapes, i.e. masterplan, design brief and design code. According to Punter and Carmona (1997), a masterplan provides three dimensional images and detailed governing principles (e.g. building heights, spaces, movement, landscape etc.). It also describes how an area will be developed with a scope ranging from strategic planning at a regional scale to small scale groups of buildings. At the same time, it allows a degree of flexibility in designs within the plan. However, it is rarely used by local planning authorities as a method of controlling design (Punter and Carmona, 1997).

A design brief, also known as a development brief, is defined as detailed development guidance for specific sites that are economically, socially or architecturally sensitive. It has also been defined by Madanipour (1996) as incorporating the full range of requirements specified by the local planning authorities for the development and design treatment of particular sites, with explicit emphasis on the appearance of the development.

As another type of design guides, the design code has emerged as a set of illustrated design rules and requirements for the physical development of a site or area. According to English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000), the design code can help to ensure high standards of design across development parcels. However, in some circumstances, the design code can express general design guidance (on matters such as building heights) across a wider area. It has also been considered by CABE (2005) as a valuable tool that can help planners, designers and developers to respond to the policy context and help encourage quality development and the delivery of good design.

Although design code and design brief may look similar, there are major differences between them. These differences can be distinguished in that the former is not site-specific document, whereas the latter is (Madanipour, 1996). Also, the former sets rules, usually heavily illustrated with visual examples, and the latter characterises the desired results of design, as such, the former is more regulatory than the latter (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006).

Punter (1999a) and Cullingworth (1999) conclude that guidelines that are encompassed in the guide documents must directly support the implementation of policies. They do not, however, have to set out new policies or should be considered as a new process that the new development proposal must go through. Also, they suggest that these guidelines should be detailed, not visionary, and employ precise language without being too design-prescriptive. In this sense, Punter (1999a) argues that principles should be stated first, to be followed by the guidelines that implement that principle. He suggests that urban design principles have to be hierarchically structured among the policies and these guidelines; also, policies must be further explained and illustrated by guidelines.

Implementation tools

Implementation tools offer different mechanisms for accomplishing a development judgement and delivering good design outcomes. This could be done by discussing and resolving design issues through having a wide scope of conversation with expert(s) and the public.

Design review panel

According to Paterson (2011a), design review expands design expertise in the planning decision-making process. The definition of design review is varied among authors. It is defined by Paterson (2011a) as a formal assessment of the merits of a design proposal judged by design experts/a panel of experts. Dawson and Higgins (2009) see it as a complex process involving different, and often competing, interests. It is also argued by Scheer (1994) to be a procedure used by cities and towns to control the aesthetics and design of development projects. *“An increasingly common component of regulatory frameworks especially in larger cities and facilitates discussion of traditionally controversial issues like aesthetics”* (Krieger, 2009, p. 116).

According to Scheer (1994), the role of design review in the planning system is considered as controversial due to the advantages and disadvantages of applying this tool. The advantages are raised by some authors who argue that applying the design review can help to improve the quality of even the most complex projects and prevent poor building design (Carmona, 1998, Scheer, 1994). It encourages designers to avoid compromising on quality, empowering local democracy and public sector clients and aiding architects and developers in adding value to their projects (CABE, 2009). It also

enhances the public view that might otherwise be ignored, and bridges the gap between lay and professional taste (Carmona, 1998).

On the other hand, disadvantages have also been raised by authors such as Scheer (1994), Punter (1986) and Brine (1997). They described them as follows: it is time-consuming if not carried out in time to influence design in a positive way; it is subjective and arbitrary (i.e. getting the level of prescriptiveness wrong); it is too political; and it is usually conducted by untrained reviewers who refer to inconsistent principles in their given comments.

Punter (2003) agrees with Scheer (1994) that design review should embrace a wider range of contemporary urban concerns. Nasar (1994) adds that it should also concern emotional quality (pleasantness, excitement, or relaxation) and make sure that designs are appropriate for the social and physical context. As such, on some occasions design review panels are called urban design review panels and their interest and profession stretch from architecture to urban design. However, such panels can also go far beyond this to include all the built environment aspects (e.g. conservation, transport planning, crime, etc.).

According to Punter (1986), such kinds of panels should provide professional and constructive comments on proposals; however, they do not usually have authority to approve or refuse projects or to make a policy decision. Notwithstanding, they could be implemented by local authorities on any proposal or policy affecting the community's physical environment, which is why Brine (1997) describes the panel as an entity that informs and is informed.

Public involvement

Cullingworth and Nadin (2006) agree with Madanipour (1996) that authorities and professional bodies have to pass judgement on the design merit and impose higher design standards. Furthermore, they agree that these authorities have to recognise that aesthetics is an extremely subjective matter; they should not, therefore, impose their tastes on the non-professionals who are involved in this judgement.

Punter and Carmona (1997) consider that close attention should be given to the local involvement of society in both the appraisal and management of conservation areas; this is seen by them as being of great importance in ensuring that policies both respond to community aspirations and receive local support. In this sense, they proposed what they

call a participative/collaborative approach through which people are given a voice in deciding what their places and urban context should look like. This approach has a number of advantages from their point of view, as follows:

- It provides an ideal way of inputting public values and preferences into policies;
- It provides an excellent way of raising design awareness and promoting environmental education among the public;
- It increases the sense of public ownership of the resulting guidance or policies.

In her seminal early contribution to the issue of citizen participation in planning, Arnstein (1969) offers a typology of eight levels of participation, arranged as rungs in what is called a 'ladder' of participation. Two lower rungs of (1) manipulation and (2) therapy describe levels of non-participation in which citizens are not encouraged to participate in planning or conducting programs, but instead enable power holders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants. In other words, they are merely advised of the project's intentions and their assumed benefits. Other rungs of (3) informing, (4) consultation and (5) placation describe levels of 'tokenism' in which citizens may indeed hear and be heard, however, they still lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the power holders. Citizen power is higher up the ladder, carrying greater degrees of influence on decision making. Citizens may engage in a partnership (6) with the traditional holders of power, negotiating and entering into trade-offs with them. At the top of the ladder, the highest rungs are (7) delegated power and (8) citizen control. Have-not citizens possess the greatest number of decision-making seats or full managerial power.

This ladder has been regarded by almost all subsequent researchers who sought to study society's role in the design judgement process. Punter and Carmona (1997), for instance, distinguish between, 'environmental assessment', which means how people describe and evaluate their surroundings, and 'environmental action' which means how people behave and make decisions in the environment. The two are recommended by them as essential steps towards achieving an effective role in the process.

Hunt's (2006) approach is mainly placed midway on this ladder, i.e. 'consultation'. He refers to the definition of consultation provided by Forester (1998, p. 8) as the process in which each of the stakeholders "*takes advantage of their differing priorities in order to realise joint gain*".

The public role has been criticised by some authors and architects because the public cannot give constructive comments as they do not have the basic experience to do so. This concern has been raised by Brine (1997), asking if local communities can be involved effectively in the broad design decisions which determine the outline development of an area, without slowing down the planning process. The literature and the discussions revolving around the public role within the development control process are rich and extensive. However, since it is not the key focus of this research, this will not be discussed in detail.

2.8 Concepts for analysing the process of achieving a good fit

The previous review of theories and approaches by different authors on the concepts of urban design can be summarised in four categories concerned with urban form, townscape, perception and social response. These categories are divided into sub-categories and indicators that guide the judgement of the built form proposals (see table 2.1). However, the focus of this research is the design judgement process through which urban design tools are utilised by stakeholders to set out judgements on proposals of new built forms in historic urban contexts.

The following section provides a review of approaches for successful urban design governance of the judgement process. This review aims to develop the research conceptual framework which sets out the principles of successful governance.

2.8.1 Review of approaches for successful urban design governance

Three key urban design authors (i.e. Carmona, 1996; Punter, 2007; and Dawson and Higgins, 2009) have raised recommendations for achieving successful urban design governance of the judgement process. Their approaches are reviewed in this section as a cornerstone of building up this research's analytical framework.

Carmona (1996) raises four essential points which are recommended by him to be considered when setting out criteria (i.e. policies and guidelines) for judging proposals of new buildings' forms (see table 2.2).

First, overriding concerns of urban design over architecture, he stresses that urban design has to be treated as an important and integral part of any development and conservation strategy and not as a self-contained policy area. He adds that there is an urgent need to

provide the correct climate for good urban design to grow by recognising the limitations and challenges of its practice. Second, urban design theory should be used to underpin the design judgement criteria and adopt a fully conceptualised urban design framework. Third, there needs to be an understanding of what is unique and distinctive about the local context where the proposal would be placed, showing a reasonable recognition of the value appraisal and design-related consultation, and keeping these appraisals updated to respond to the changing circumstances. Finally, a comprehensive hierarchy of urban design policies and guidance should be adopted to ensure that each level is related to what is above and below and all that complement each other. In this regard, Carmona (1996) concludes that a degree of prescription can be acceptable in structuring these policies and guidelines, but that it should not be descriptive.

Punter (2007) refers to the work of three key urban design authors (Lai, 1988; Scheer, 1994 and Blaesser, 1994) in setting out his framework. The framework consists of twelve principles (see table 2.2) based upon widely researched critiques of American experience that can be used to evaluate the practice of any city's judgement process, as he states. For his research purposes, he applied it to the case of Vancouver city.

The first set of two principles has been entitled 'community vision'. These principles stress the necessity for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to many facets of design quality and environmental beauty. In this sense, he notes that the community can play a significant role, along with professionals who have very different design philosophies.

The next set of three principles is entitled 'design, planning and zoning' in which the author emphasises delivering a quality public realm. In his view, this requires an approach that goes beyond mere design review to create incentives for good design (or heritage/ environmental conservation).

Another set of three general principles proposed by Punter (2007) are 'broad, substantive design principles'. These principles aim to underpin design policies and guidelines with an extended concern for architectural control, focusing on urban design issues, spaces between buildings, amenity, sustainability, and safety. Careful contextual analysis, and encouraging innovation, spontaneity and pluralism in design and development, are raised by him as a basis for tailoring these principles.

Finally, the last set of four principles has been entitled ‘due process’, in which the focus has been made on the process itself. The first three of these principles sets out the requirement for clear rules for intervention and proper administrative principles, along with an appropriate review of the decisions taken and the appeal mechanisms. The fourth principle focuses on applying an efficient and effective review system, in which the stakeholders operating this process are required to be appropriately design skilled.

Dawson and Higgins (2009), with reference to extensive literature on design review, set out six principles governing successful design review (see table 2.2). While the principles proposed by them are for assessing the design review process, the same principles could be applied to the decision-making process at large, and most of them were reviewed by the two aforementioned authors with this purpose in mind.

In the first two principles, the authors have shed light on the critical role that urban design can play in the process to ensure quality in the public interest. They also stressed resolving the tensions between those who operate the process in order to get it right. In the third principle, they stress that policies and written guidelines are very important to set quality, but are not in themselves sufficient to ensure quality. In this regard, an overly ‘tick-box’ prescriptive approach is disapproved of, as it can inhibit designers’ creativity. In the next principle, the skills and expertise of the reviewer are stressed by the authors as a major factor in ensuring success in the process, including the elected members. In the fifth principle, the authors stress that strong public leadership has an important role to play in this process. Finally, the last principle focuses on assessing the process, taking into account the fact that carrying out this assessment is practically difficult as much of what is achieved is invisible. In this sense, the authors state that local authorities should always be encouraged to carry out annual outcome reviews on the design quality of completed developments. This review can help to provide evidence of how design intervention in the planning system can be valuable; also, it provides feedback on the design policies and guidelines applied.

Table 2.2: Approaches to successful urban design governance

Source: The researcher drawing on Carmona (1996); Punter (2007); and Dawson and Higgins (2009)

Author	A summary of approaches and principles
Carmona (1996)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) An Overriding Concern for Urban Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a correct climate for good urban design to grow. • Recognising the limitations and challenges of urban design practice. 2) Practice grounded in urban design theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting design criteria based on urban design concepts. 3) Prescription based on appraisal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing a proper understanding of what makes the context distinctive. • Applying up-to-date appraisals for these contexts. 4) A hierarchical approach to Policy and Guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structuring urban design criteria (i.e. policies and guidelines) in a hierarchical way. • Applying some prescriptively written criteria.
Punter (2007)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Community Vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing to a comprehensive and coordinated vision of environmental beauty and design. • Developing and monitoring an urban design plan for the community and the development of industry support and periodic review. 2) Design, Planning, and Zoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harnessing the broadest range of actors and instruments (tax, subsidy, land acquisition) to promote better design. • Mitigating the exclusionary effects of control strategies and urban design regulation. • Integrating zoning into planning and addressing the limitations of zoning. 3) Broad, Substantive Design Principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a commitment to urban design that goes well beyond elevations and aesthetics to embrace amenity, accessibility, community, vitality and sustainability. • Basing guidelines on generic design principles and contextual analysis, and articulating desired and mandatory outcomes. • Not attempting to control all aspects of community design but accommodating organic spontaneity, vitality, innovation, pluralism: not over-prescriptive. 4) Due Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying clear a priori roles for urban design intervention. • Establishing proper administrative procedures with written opinions to manage administrative discretion and with appropriate appeal mechanisms. • Implementing an efficient, constructive and effective permitting process. • Providing appropriate design skills and expertise to support the review process.
Dawson and Higgins, (2009)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Involvement of key stakeholders: getting the process right 2) Inhibiting factors for design quality and design review 3) Need for explicit criteria 4) Skills and expertise 5) Strong civic leadership 6) Monitoring and feedback

2.8.2 Principles of successful urban design decision-making governance

Based on the three reviewed viewpoints and along with literature on the subject, the following section draws out the research analytical framework, which sets out the key principles leading the effective urban design decision-making governance.

Need for comprehension of the urban context character

According to CABA (2006d), it is unwise to try changing places without having a proper understanding of the physical context of these places. Thus, providing an understanding of physical context issues is one of the keys to achieving successful outcomes and processes alike. This could be accomplished through urban design and historic analyses, prepared by the local authorities. These analyses have to go beyond the view from the site boundary up to the site's context.

Carmona (1996), Punter (2007) and Dawson and Higgins (2009) agree that applying generic design principles and criteria in the form of policies and guidelines can provide the basis for an objective assessment of design quality. They also stress that a character appraisal of the context and site is a vitally necessary prerequisite of any good control practice and a very crucial step before applying these principles. In this regard, they recommended recognising what is unique and distinctive about the local context and its characters, and prioritising them in any urban design strategy, policy and guidance.

Punter (2007) concludes that it is the responsibility of planning authorities and all those who have been involved in the writing of policy and guidelines, and those implementing them, to provide the necessary resources by clearly addressing the characteristics of the context and the site, and suggesting ways to adapt the chosen generic principles in response to these characters. Furthermore, he stresses that such a process needs to work on the micro and macro scale, starting from the strategic, citywide visioning level, down to the district and site level where it can respond to the particularities of place and local distinctiveness.

Need for explicit urban design criteria

The literature suggested that through some building designs have succeeded on some occasions in bringing economic profits, this does not necessarily mean that these designs have succeeded in enhancing the quality of their contexts (Punter and Carmona; 1997 and

Punter, 1999c). Urban design principles are recommended to ensure that all the issues of good design are treated and that they all complement each other.

Carmona (1996), Punter (2007) and Dawson and Higgins (2009) agree that the judgement process needs explicit and comprehensive hierarchically structured urban principles for good design, using urban design theory to underpin these principles and providing a good atmosphere for urban design to grow in. This can help to link these policies and guidelines logically and facilitate their understanding and application. It is also recommended that policies and guidance be updated to respond to changing circumstances, and to ensure delivery of the message. Punter (2007) and Carmona (1996) conclude, with reference to Hall (1996a), that otherwise the control system would be quickly discredited.

Ultimately, due to the fact that these criteria would be used by various participants in the control process who speak different languages, they should be written in a way that does not allow for ambiguity or misunderstanding of the purpose of these criteria (Carmona, 1998).

Need for efficient and effective stakeholders

According to Scheer and Preiser (1994), policies and guidelines, along with understanding the character of the urban context, can offer guidance for good design quality. However, good design quality can also be constrained by compartmentalisation of professional disciplines, the subjective nature of the aesthetic aspect of the judgement and the difficulty of laying down objective criteria about beauty. There may also be a lack of recognition of the legitimate role of the public sector in promoting high-quality design and reactive planning and development management approaches, applying quantitative rather than qualitative judgements (English Partnerships and Housing Corporation, 2000, p. 12–13). Madanipour (2006) adds that there are unhelpful conflicts between the interests of players in the design review process, particularly between architects, who see it as a cumbersome, time-consuming, ineffective and intrusive mechanism, and planners and communities, who see it as a mechanism leading to better environments (Scheer and Preiser, 1994, p. xv).

Carmona (1996), Punter (2007) and Dawson and Higgins (2009) agree that dealing with an issue of this complexity requires stakeholders to take an effective and participative role. Moreover, this process has to be transparent and certain and seriously consult the

public; meanwhile, it should also be accelerated to avoid being time-consuming and hindering the development process (Madanipour, 2006). In other words, it should be “*an inclusive, participatory process, rather than an exclusive technical process to ensure maximum value to the public*” (Dawson and Higgins, 2009, p. 105).

According to Punter (2007), and Dawson and Higgins (2009), the shortage of design skills for a design review has been identified as a common problem worldwide, even within places operating sophisticated design review mechanisms. In addition, good policy advice alone cannot ensure good design results without having skilled and expert people who can use them properly (Wall, 2005). Punter (1999b, p. 71–74) agrees with this viewpoint, “*Development plans and supplementary design guidance do not often provide a clear basis for taking decisions*”. Thus, all those who have been involved in giving comments on proposals must have the required design skills that help them to provide constructive comments; this includes the elected members of the planning committee as well as the other bodies’ representatives who take part in the consultation exercise, “*political will is crucial and skills and consistency are important for elected members as well as officers*” (Carmona, *et al.*, 2002, p. 89).

2.8.3 Reflection

This reflection, based on the above review, develops an analytical framework to analyse urban design governance in the judgement process, shown in Box 1. This is proposed here to analyse actual cases of processes where new built form has been judged to be finally implemented. Based on this knowledge, the research concludes that the process can be analysed focusing on components of a general framework for analysing the process (i.e. context understanding, explicit urban design criteria, and effective and efficient stakeholders). Context comprehension and appraisal shed light on what makes the context of where the new form will be placed special, and it is the base stone for the other two components. Explicit urban design criteria provide a legislative urban design framework and strategies to define what makes good design. Finally, effective and efficient stakeholders, with the different languages they speak, can provide a consensual perception of, and attitudes towards, what they see as good building design, which can help to overcome the subjectivity of this process.

Context comprehension and appraisal

- Up-to-date and comprehensive character area appraisal
- Wide scope of urban design analysis

Explicit urban design criteria

- Adopting a comprehensive hierarchy of policies and guidelines based on urban design theory
- Prioritising urban design (providing a good atmosphere to raise its profile)
- Carefully and clearly chosen language
- Applying some prescription in policies and guidelines

Effective and efficient stakeholders

- Adopting a qualitative participative approach
- Effective and efficient design review
- Well-skilled reviewers and decision takers

Box 1: principles for successful urban design decision-making governance
Source: The researcher

The term ‘success’ is also used during the course of this research, particularly in the Chapters 5-7, to refer to the proposals which pass through the judgement process where urban design tools are applied with a certain level of quality being achieved. Quality in this sense can be achieved by not adversely affecting the historic urban contexts of where these proposed buildings will sit and adding value to these contexts.

2.9 Conclusions

Fitting new building forms into existing historic contexts is a process through which the possibly reaped benefits are weighed against the potential impacts of these contexts. Good design, in accordance, is defined as design that hits a balance between these benefits and impacts. Urban design is approached with the aim of encouraging good design and developing historic environment through focusing on the relationship between buildings both old and new, the coherence of townscape, including heritage districts, and the forms of spaces. It also enhances community involvement as an essential tool of design. These three points will be used in this work as signposts for tracing urban design language in Chapter 4. Urban design scope is recognised by this research as starting from designing the elements of the buildings façades and finishing with the design of the elements that shape the city’s image.

This chapter provided a review of various theories of urban design. These theories have provided concepts and dimensions for analysing proposed designs in historic contexts. It has identified urban form, townscape, perception, and public response as the main aspects that sum up the morphological, visual-perceptual, and social concepts of the analysis of new proposed designs (see figure 2.1). These concepts are considered the most relevant to the subject of this research.

The main focus of this research is, however, on the process rather than the product. Thus, a significant body of literature, reviewing urban design assessment and decision support tools that can be utilised by the stakeholders (the applicants, LPAs and other interested organisations) during the consultation process, is provided. Different approaches to analysing urban design governance of the judgement process are also reviewed. This review concluded that urban design can play a positive role in the planning system and can ensure quality and successful outcomes. This requires, in addition to comprehensive urban design policies and guidelines based on a deep coherence of the context characters, a proper understanding of them by stakeholders so that they can play a supportive role by providing constructive comments and meaningful advice. In this regard, strong public leadership is important to enhance the democratic nature of the planning system and to overcome subjectivity.

These points have been raised by the research as three principles that are necessary for successful urban design governance of the judgement process: urban context comprehension, explicit urban design criteria and appraisal and effective and efficient stakeholders. This framework will be used in Chapter 7 with the purpose of examining the Edinburgh and York approaches. This will allow the researcher to explore the advantages and disadvantages of each approach before applying any lessons to the case of Damascus in Chapter 8. This can also help the researcher to test the framework, explore its limitations, and validate it.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a review of urban design theories and practice. It illustrated how urban design theory can be extracted in the form of tools to be used in judging the merit of a new proposed building's form in a historic urban context, and drew out a conceptual framework which addresses principles for successful urban design decision-making governance.

This chapter explains the overall approach and methodology taken by this researcher in order to meet the research objectives and answer the research questions. It starts by describing the main research epistemology and its theoretical perspective. Case studies are adopted as a research strategy; this is distinguished by its ability to investigate different perspectives and approaches of the studied phenomenon. A list of possible case studies is reviewed and the most suitable ones to this research are selected. Justifications for their selection are also explained. Data is collected using four qualitative research methods: literature review, documents collection and review, interviewing and direct observation. Data analysis techniques used in this research are then explained. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of issues related to the triangulation, generalisation and validation of the potential results, as well as setting out some limitations of this research.

3.2 The research approach and methodology

According to Crotty (1998, p. 2), researchers have had to put considerable effort into answering four key questions while developing their research approaches, as follows:

- *What methods do we propose to use?*
- *What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?*
- *What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?*
- *What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?*

The key four elements which are structuring these questions are defined by Crotty (1998, p. 3) as follows:

- *Methods: the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question and hypothesis.*
- *Methodology: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods, and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.*
- *Theoretical perspective: the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process, and grounding its logic and criteria.*
- *Epistemology: the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology.*

In the following sections, this research will answer Crotty's questions while structuring its own approach towards meeting the objectives. Possible choices of each of these elements are reviewed and the most suitable ones to this research are finally selected.

3.2.1 The research epistemology and its theoretical perspective

Research epistemology

According to Crotty (1998) and Gray (2004), research can be based on one of three types of epistemologies, which they distinguish as follows:

- Objectivism considers that meaningful reality exists apart from the operation of any consciousness. An example was given by Crotty (1998, p. 8) in order to explain the standpoint of objectivism in which he states that a tree, as an object, in the forest, is a tree, regardless of whether anyone is aware of its existence or not. He adds that objectivists consider that recognising it as such is simply discovering a meaning that has been lying there and waiting for someone to discover it; they call this meaning 'the objective truth'.
- Constructionism completely rejects the objectivist view. Constructionists argue that truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. In this school of thought, subject and object emerge as patterns in the generation of meaning. In other words, meaning is not discovered but constructed in peoples' minds out of something (the object). In this sense, people may construct different meanings, even in relation to the same phenomenon.

- According to subjectivism, meaning is imposed on the object by the subject. In this school of thought, the object makes no contribution to the generation of meaning, which can also be created out of nothing. In other words, subjectivists argue that people can import meaning for objects from somewhere else (e.g. dreams, primordial archetypes we locate within our collective unconscious, the conjunction and aspects of the planets, or from religious beliefs, etc.). In short, subjectivists believe that meaning comes from anything but an interaction between the subject and the object to which it is ascribed.

Positivism or interpretivism

According to Crotty (1998), natural and social science are different by nature. While the natural sciences are looking for consistencies in the data in order to deduce 'laws', the social sciences often deal with the actions of individuals. He states: "*Our interest in the social world tends to focus on exactly those aspects that are unique, individual and qualitative, whereas our interest in the natural world focuses on more abstract phenomena, that is, those exhibiting quantifiable, empirical regularities*" (Crotty, 1998, p. 68).

Grix (2004) agrees with Mark (1996) that two significant research paradigms have mainly provided a basis for the natural and social sciences: the positivist approach, which comes more associated with, and is deep-rooted in the natural and physical sciences, and relativism (or interpretivism), which becomes more associated with the social sciences under qualitative, ethnographic, ecological and naturalistic approaches.

According to Mark (1996), positivism argues that the world is external and objective, and exists independently of our existence or our perception of it. Thus, positivists believe that events are found out by natural laws and mechanisms. As such, it is closely linked to objectivism. Grix (2004) argues that positivists put great emphasis on dealing with facts and not with values. He adds that they seek objectivity in research and believe in the possibility of establishing regular relationships between social phenomena by using theory to formulate and test hypotheses (deductive approach⁴). Generally, for analysing

⁴ According to Dewey (1998), two general paradigms of inquiries usually underpin scientific approaches, i.e. inductive and deductive. He argues that the inductive type of approach begins with the particulars (i.e. gathering data through observation and experimentation) and moves to a connected view of a situation. Such a type of approach does not seek to summarise or refute the collected data; instead it aims at analysing them and discovering any likely link or relationships that can be emerged from the variables. Afterwards, constructing is based on multiple cases or instances, generalisation and even theories. On the other hand,

the social world, positivist research employs scientific methods, mostly quantitative, which are operationalising concepts and using large samples for generalisation (Mark, 1996; Grix, 2004).

Around the turn of the twentieth century, positivism had started facing on-going issues of contention about dealing with social research. Accordingly, positivism is described by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Mark (1996) as limited and of slight practical value in social science. In this sense, Hughes and Sharrock (1997) agree with Popper (1968) that the fundamental mistake of positivists is that they thought that science produces theoretical explanations and proves theories on the basis of what can be observed. They argue that while science is, certainly, interested in producing theoretical explanations, it does not, however, begin from observation but from theory to make the observation intelligible. Consequently, they argue that observation is ‘theory laden’.

This critique of positivism in the early 1970s and its little practice value in social science had led to the emergence of an anti-positivist stance called interpretivism (Smith, 1999 drawing from Sokal, *et al.*, 1998). Interpretivism “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Interpretivists assume that: there is no direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves ‘subjects’ and the world ‘object’ (inductive approach), and the world is socially constructed, subjective and interpreted through the classification schemas of the mind (Williams and May 1996). As such it is closely linked to constructivism.

Unlike positivism, interpretivism is mainly concerned with understanding the real conditions behind the reality of the social world depending on subjective analysis, rather than generalisability, the key focus of positivism (Grix, 2004). In other words, the focus of interpretivism is on the meaning, and it aims to understand what is happening in the social situation from the point of view of those who live it.

To summarise, from an interpretivist’s point of view, a researcher interprets events, gains an understanding of the process of building meaning, and uncovers meanings in people’s behaviour and actions (Schwandt, 1998). For analysing the social world, interpretivist

the deductive type begins with a general view of the studied situation and works back to the details. In this type of approach, the researcher develops a theory or hypothesis. These hypotheses present an assertion about two or more measurable concepts. Afterwards, he/she designs a research strategy to test the formulated theory and create measures and indicators.

research employs multiple methods, mostly qualitative, and uses a deeply researched small number of samples to establish different views of the phenomena (Schwandt, 1998).

This sharp contradiction in views between positivism and interpretivism paved the road for a wide range of approaches to emerge (e.g. postmodernism and critical theory *et al.*). Critical realist researchers, for instance, seek to combine positivism and interpretivism to provide an understanding and explanation of the social world, adopting a mid-view of these two approaches. However, it has come closer to interpretivism than positivism. Post-positivism forms its approach based on the thought of reforming positivism in order to enable it to meet and recognise the critiques raised against it.

It is true that these emerged approaches share a common characteristic in their criticism of positivism and interpretivism. However, it is still possible to find a wide range of approaches, and choice of methods among these approaches, for both positivism and interpretivism (see table 3.1).

Distinguishing these approaches, particularly positivism and interpretivism, does not mean that one of them is better than the other, but each is better in doing specific things; it all depends on the nature and the aim of the research they are applied to (see tables 3.2 and 3.3).

This research involves building a comprehensive understanding of urban design decision-making governance of proposed new designs in historic contexts through analysing collected empirical data. Given the above, the researcher very much agrees that positivist approaches are questionable as a means to understand events and processes, and interpretivism can be more efficient in this regard (see table 3.3).

Table 3.1: Paradigm positions on selected practical issues
 Source: Adapted by the researcher from Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 112)

Item	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical Theory <i>et al.</i>	Constructivism
Inquiry aim	Explanation: prediction and control		Critique transformation; restitution and emancipation	Understanding reconstruction
Nature of knowledge	Verified hypotheses established as factors or laws	Non-falsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws	Structural/historical insights	Individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus
Knowledge accumulation	Accretion-“building blocks” adding to “edifice of knowledge”; generalisation and cause-effect linkages		Historical revisionism; generalisation by similarity	More informed and sophisticated reconstructions; vicarious experience
Goodness or quality criteria	Conventional benchmarks of “rigor”: internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity		Historical situatedness; erosion of ignorance and misapprehension, action stimulus	Trustworthiness and authenticity
Values	Excluded-influence denied		Included-formative	
Ethics	Extrinsic: tilt towards deception		Intrinsic: moral tilt towards revelation	Intrinsic: process tilt towards revelation; special problems
Voice	“disinterested scientist” as informer of decision makers, policy makers, and change agents		“transformative intellectual” as advocate and activist	“passionate participant” as facilitator of multi-voice reconstruction
Training	Technical and quantitative; substantive theories	Technical; quantitative and qualitative, substantive theories	Reconciliation; qualitative and quantitative; history; values of altruism and empowerment	
Accommodation	Commensurable		Incommensurable	
Hegemony	In control of publication, funding, promotion, and tenure		Seeking recognition and input	

Table 3.2: Basic beliefs (Metaphysics) of alternative inquiry paradigm
 Source: Adapted by the researcher from Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109)

Item	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical theory <i>et al.</i>	Constructivism
Ontology	Naïve realism-“real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Critical realism-“real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism-virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethic, and gender values; crystallised over time	Relativism-local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/subjectivist; created findings
Methodology	Experimental/manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplism falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic/dialectical	Hermeneutical/dialectical

Phenomenological paradigm

Phenomenology is one of the most popular interpretivism theoretical perspectives on studying the ‘lifeworld’ human experience. It is seen by Patton (2002) as helping the researcher to discover how human beings experience the studied phenomenon, i.e. how they perceive it, describe it, and make sense of it, through contacting people who have directly experienced the phenomenon. As a result, the researcher is able to access new meanings, a meaning that is more complete, or a renewed meaning. This perspective also augments understanding of the phenomena by society.

Gray (2004) describes phenomenology as an approach that enables the researcher to generate a variety of descriptions of people’s perspectives and experiences within their natural settings. The internal logic of the subject under study can then be explored and comprehended. He points out that with this approach, reality is understood from people’s experience of social reality. Data is typically collected in an unstructured way, for example through unstructured interviews, and with an inductive method. It is therefore able to detect factors that may not have been included in the original research objectives (see table 3.3).

Titchen and Hobson (2005) distinguish between two different approaches to look at the phenomenon (i.e. direct and indirect approaches). In the direct approach, the researcher seeks to investigate the phenomenon and explore the human consciousness through conducting interviews with the interested stakeholders to reach their experiences of it. In the indirect approach, the researcher seeks to live the phenomenon personally by getting into its context in order to notice and identify the common meaning and practices. Thereafter, and based on this, the researcher can form a meaning of such views and find out common perspectives from which a conclusion and recommendations could be made.

Table 3.3: The major features of positivism and phenomenology research philosophy

Source: Adapted by the researcher from Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2008)

	Positivist paradigm	Interpretivism (phenomenological) paradigm
Basic beliefs	The world is external and objective. The observer is independent. Science is value-free.	The world is socially constructed and subjective. The observer is a party to what is being observed. Science is driven by human interests.
The researcher should	Focus on facts. Locate causality between variables. Formulate and test hypotheses (deductive approach).	Focus on meaning. Try to understand what is happening. Construct theories and models from the data (inductive approach).
Methods include	Operationalising concepts so that they can be measured. Using large samples from which to generalise about the population. Quantitative methods.	Using multiple methods to establish different views of a phenomenon. Using small samples researched in depth or over time. Qualitative methods.

3.2.2 The research methodology

According to Crotty (1998), the choice of the research methodology is usually influenced by its theoretical perspective and its approach towards achieving the aim of the research. He adds that the chosen methodology is expected to explain the foundation for the selection of the adopted methods.

An inductive-interpretive approach, which involves significant methodological choices, is chosen to reach the overall aim of this research, as was discussed earlier. The methodological choices that this approach provides, which can be adopted by this research to meet its objectives and answer the questions, are the target of the following sections.

Qualitative versus quantitative research approach

Research methods can mainly take two types of approach, quantitative and qualitative. Mark (1996) argues that the quantitative approach in research has been adopted by 'Chicago school' sociologists for a long period of time. However, it was criticised by them in the 1920s and 1930s for not being able to fulfil their aim in understanding the world and the outcome of social science. Later on, a qualitative approach was chosen by them to overcome this shortcoming and to help in providing a deeper understanding of the social world and of how people interact in groups.

A quantitative approach is described by Smith (1999) as relying on a collected numerical measurement of indicators, analysis of casual relationships between variables, and standard statistics to confirm hypotheses about phenomena. Conversely, a qualitative approach is described by Mark (1996) as relying on general descriptions to study and understand phenomena, and to generate empirical and textual data. Berg (2001) distinguishes between them by arguing that qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things, while quantitative research refers to the measures and counts of things.

According to Mack *et al.* (2005), qualitative and quantitative research approaches vary basically in methodological issue, including their analytical objectives, questions format, data format (i.e. types of data collection methods and types of data produced), and degree of flexibility in the study design (see table 3.4). However, the two approaches can possibly exist side by side or even overlap and combine in the same study, particularly

when neither quantitative nor qualitative measurements can be separated sufficiently to give an accurate evaluation (Marsden and Oakley, 1990; Grix, 2004).

Table 3.4: Comparison of qualitative and quantitative research approaches
Source: Adapted by the researcher from Mack *et al.* (2005, p. 3)

	Quantitative	Qualitative
General framework	Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena. Instruments use more rigid style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions. Use highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys, and structured observation.	Seek to explore phenomena. Instruments use more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions. Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation.
Analytical objective	To quantify variation. To predict casual relationships. To describe characteristics of a population.	To describe variation. To describe and explain relationships. To describe individual experiences. To describe group norms.
Question format	Closed-ended.	Open-ended.
Data format	Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to response).	Textual (obtained from audiotapes, videotapes and field notes).
Flexibility in study design	Study design is stable from beginning to end. Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next. Study design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions.	Some aspects of the study are flexible (for example, the addition, exclusion or wording of particular interviews questions). Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next. Study design is iterative, that is, data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned.

Deciding about the research methodology should be based on its suitability to answer the research questions (Bryman, 1988). Thus, to meet the aim of this research, which concerns developing a general knowledge and understanding about process rather than assessing products, an interpretative qualitative approach is more suitable (Mark, 1996).

Concisely and meaningfully Groat and Wang (2002, p. 176) state that: “*Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.*” In other words, Rubin *et al.* (1995, p. 38) argue that qualitative research is “*not looking for principles that are true all the time and in all conditions, like laws of physics; rather the goal is the understanding of specific circumstances, how and why things actually happen in a complex world.*”

According to Groat and Wang (2002), using a qualitative approach can provide advantages, but this also comes with some costs. They outline some disadvantages, arguing that a qualitative approach: delivers for researchers relatively few step-by-step guidelines in the literature, thus researchers are obliged to exercise extra care throughout the research study, and provides unstructured data which needs more time to be coded and analysed than the structured data. They conclude that the credibility of this approach has been considered as suspect when compared with the quantitative approach.

On the other hand, Groat and Wang (2002) and Snape and Spencer (2003) outline some strengths and advantages regarding the qualitative approach in which they consider that it provides a wide knowledge and deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon as: it is based on a small number of samples, it involves interactive data collection methods, e.g. interviews and observation, which allows new issues and concepts to be explored. Groat and Wang (2002) add that it provides the richness and quality of data in the real life circumstances, flexibility in design, and sensitivity to meaning.

The researcher is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of choosing the research approach and methods, and will try to maximise the advantages, and, at the same time, try to overcome the possible challenges that might emerge from the disadvantages.

Case study approach

A definition of a case study approach is provided by Yin (1994) in which he has seen it as an “*Empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*” (Yin, 1994, cited in Grix, 2004, p. 51). Similarly, it is defined by Groat and Wang (2002, p. 346) as “*an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon or setting.*”

Four types of case study approaches have been addressed by Grix (2004) as cited in the work of Haddad (2009), and are identified as follows:

- Descriptive – it draws a detailed picture of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs (a person or process) or shows how things are related to each other.
- Exploratory – carried out with the intention of testing initial working hypotheses, checking for availability of, and access to, relevant data, ascertaining the relevant

variables for a study, and assessing the suitability of the case for further, more extensive, research.

- Explanatory – in which researchers seek to make generalisations by extrapolating the single case study's findings to other cases.
- Interpretive – in which the researcher seeks to explore peoples' experiences of the studied phenomenon and their views and their perspectives of these experiences.

Flyvbjerg (2004) outlines a set of advantages and strengths regarding the case study approach in which he considers that this approach: produces context-dependent knowledge of the studied phenomenon through using multiple sources of evidence, and is very useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses and contributing to scientific development. On the other hand, a case study approach has been criticised for being subjective and it is difficult to generalise the findings of a single case to larger groups. Further criticisms are raised by Black (1993) as: it is poorly planned, it is likely to be complex, and proof is very difficult to achieve, thus the researchers tend to verify their preconceived thoughts about the problem or phenomenon.

The research examines the UK experience of urban design governance in judging new proposed designs in historic contexts in order to apply some lessons to Damascus. Given the above, a case study approach can be considered as suitable for the purpose of this research. It can contribute to the increasing development of knowledge of urban design through reviewing and discovering a variety of experiences in the area of this research. It can also contribute to exploring its potential development and application internationally through setting out, based on the UK experience, some lessons to be applied to the case of Damascus. However, achieving this requires a careful choice of case studies and an in-depth analysis of them.

This research aims to investigate two UK cities' urban design approaches (i.e. Edinburgh and York). This involves examining how urban design tools are addressed and utilised in judging the proposed designs of two real-life projects in each city. To this end, a two-level case study approach is adopted in this research. Yin (1994) argues that such multi-level case study scenario is essential when the researcher seeks to discover the studied phenomenon from multi-level linked perspectives (e.g. theory and practice). He adds that such approach helps in broadening the researcher's comprehension of the studied phenomenon, and enables him/her to jump between levels of data and analysis. In this sense, this research distinguishes between these two levels of case studies as 'case study

cities' and 'case study projects'. It is worth mentioning that, while the research aims to apply some lessons from the UK experience to the case of Damascus, however, Damascus is not used by this research as a case study.

The following sub-sections discuss the potential case study cities and projects. Criteria are developed and adopted by this research in order to judge the suitability of these case study cities and to figure out the most suitable cities for this research. In addition, justifications for the case study projects selection are also provided. Thereafter, the chapter reviews in detail the possible methods towards collecting and analysing data and concludes with setting out the most suitable approach.

Choice of case studies

The design of this methodology involves examining carefully-chosen case studies to collect data using some qualitative methods, and thereafter analysing them in order to build up a picture of the emerging data.

Damascus is a significant city and recognised as one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. The Old City of Damascus, within the wall (see Chapter 8, section 8.2), was listed as a world heritage site in 1979 (Haddad, 2009). The city's historic context and image have witnessed much deterioration and changes since independence. This was just a reflection of the city's modern and post-modern orientations in development. These orientations resulted in applying new forms which seriously challenged the city's character and image. However, the effectivity and efficiency of the existing design control approach in Damascus is questioned by many authors, but no studies of detailed development judgment approaches in historic contexts are available so far. There is an attempt in this research to address this unexplored gap.

In the UK context, with reference to research which is concerned with the issues around proposed new designs in the UK historic contexts (e.g. Short, 2007; Tavernor, 2007; Biddulph, 2011 and Pendlebury, 2009), a list of possible UK cities was suggested during the course of this research (Edinburgh, York, London, Newcastle, Sheffield, Bath, Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds). These potential case study cities were further filtered using criteria developed by the researcher. These criteria stress that the most suitable cities are required to meet the following points:

- They should have significant historic heritage, i.e. cities with World Heritage Sites or nominated to this status.
- They should have a clear division between the new and historic parts of the city.
- They should have developed significant approaches resulting in good outcomes.
- Their approaches should be different, with a wide range of control tools.

In response to these criteria, two very suitable cities are Edinburgh and York. The two are acknowledged as cities with a significant, clear and identifiable heritage. The division between the old and new parts is clearly drawn by the remaining wall in York and the borders of the New and Old Town areas in Edinburgh. These are the spatial limits within these cities that this research will consider, i.e. the New and Old Towns in Edinburgh, and within the boundary of Conservation Area in York (see Chapter 5, figure 5.7 and Chapter 6, figure 6.8). The two cities are also enriching the research through providing two different approaches of urban design following two different systems, i.e. English and Scottish planning systems, and having successfully delivered and still delivering good outcomes.

This research will deal with totally different approaches of different systems, which will be analysed and compared critically. Thus, it is believed that focusing on only two cities will help the researcher closely scrutinize the rich information those cases provide, yielding better data and results in the sense that an in-depth analysis of the approaches can be carried out rather than superficial analysis of many cases.

Potential projects within the chosen cities have also been chosen based on set criteria and are also addressed by the researcher, emphasising that the potential case study projects should be:

- Significant in their design, and having had controversial viewpoints raised regarding their appropriateness to their contexts.
- Located on sensitive sites where the proposed design can positively or negatively, directly or indirectly, affect their historic contexts.
- Influenced, in terms of their form designs, by the adopted control tools which were applied in each city.

Time and capacity could not enable the researcher to work on more than two projects in each city. The chosen projects which are seen by the researcher as meeting the above-mentioned criteria are:

- Edinburgh: Primark and Sugarhouse close buildings.
- York: York City Council new HQ (West offices building) and Davygate Centre.

More details on the case study cities and projects are provided in Chapter 5 (Edinburgh case study) and Chapter 6 (York case study).

To allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn from a small number of case studies, approaches will be compared critically in order to set the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Setting out some of the challenges of these approaches, as well as addressing some possible responses for development, is also among the addressed objectives of this research.

3.3 Data collection methods

Case study involves a wide range of techniques or procedures which can be used by researchers to gather data. To address the aim of this research, four methods were used: literature review, collection and review of fieldwork documents, interviewing (semi-structured and unstructured interviews) and direct observation.

3.3.1 Literature review

According to Groat and Wang (2002), the literature review is an important part throughout the whole of the research process. *“In a literature review, you are contextualizing your work; you are describing the bigger picture that provides the background and creates the space or gap for your research”* (Ridley, 2008, p. 5).

With reference to a combination of academic and professional literature reviews, a general and in-depth literature review is carried out throughout the research. A review of the academic literature focused mainly on conceptual studies about urban design theories, concepts and practices which were carried out by scholars, academics, and professionals. This review has been used in this research in order to identify what has been accomplished in the research context, to clarify the key concepts of its strategy, and to draw up an active analytical framework.

The professional literature review has focused mainly on the two cities' urban design approaches, and drew on grey literature including documentation that had been collected during the fieldwork. This includes the English and Scottish Governments' documents (e.g. policies and guidance documents at the national level), as well as documents from the two cities' planning authorities (local plan documents, guidance documents, etc.).

A further literature review addressing issues related to the Damascus context was also undertaken. This is to provide background information on the history of Damascus's urban form development, as well as the existing design control approach. Some of the materials for this were available in Arabic and are in relation to Syrian national policies and the city governorate regulations. They have been carefully reviewed in order to understand the way the city design control approach works and its main actors within the Syrian context. These materials were obtained from various sources such as eBooks available in the National Library in Damascus and other documents and reports available on the official websites for the relevant authorities (Damascus Governorate, Syrian Engineers Association, and Damascus University). However, these materials were not sufficient to clarify the city approach. Therefore, this gap was filled by adopting another technique (informal interviews) to ensure obtaining the complete information.

3.3.2 Fieldwork documents collection and review

Fieldwork is a significant method for data collection. It includes visiting libraries and other sources of documentary evidence, site visits, and interviews. It provides a source for secondary data and an opportunity to generate wider and more specific data than what is available in written format – e.g. photographs, notes and drawings (Haddad, 2009).

In this research, this method enabled the researcher to collect documents of the two cities and projects needed for the research through contacting people who were involved directly or indirectly in the judgment process of the chosen projects in Edinburgh and York. This helped the researcher in overcoming some of the research challenges by obtaining data in written format or copying some documents which were not available on the official website, e.g. the documents regarding the Davygate development in York. It also enabled the researcher to visit the National Library in Damascus to collect some documents and hold some informal interviews which enabled him to obtain information and fill in a gap in the needed data.

Fieldwork in Edinburgh was carried out in February and April 2014, and in York in May and June 2014. In addition to this, a fieldtrip to Damascus was carried out in August 2014.

3.3.3 Informal and semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is the most popular and effective research instrument that can be used by the researcher to obtain deep insight into how people feel and interpret the studied phenomenon. It also allows the participants to share their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs in their own words with other people of mutual interest (Mack *et al.*, 2005).

Rubin *et al.* (1995, p. 38) argue that interviews can help in setting an “*understanding of specific circumstances, how and why things actually happen in a complex world.*” However, Patton (1990, p. 89) argues that this method simply involves “*asking open-ended questions... in order to solve [or rather understand] problems*” and the data collected using this method are usually in the form of complex stories and descriptions.

According to May (2001), interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. He distinguishes between them as follows:

- The structured type is the most rigid and naturally very controlled type. It involves pre-prepared and planned questions with a very limited freedom of the interviewer to change the course of the interview or undertake any changes to the questions.
- Unlike the structured type, the semi-structured type involves some planning and is usually guided by certain questions decided prior to the interview and asking about specific issues, and sometimes new issues that might emerge during the interview. Although this method involves structured questions and with time limits for the interviews, the researcher, however, has freedom to vary the course of the interview and expand on related issues based on the participant’s responses which arise during the conversation. For instance, asking the respondent to give more clarification to his answer and somehow to add or remove questions (Walliman, 2005). This type is described by May (2001) as the most widespread type used in qualitative research and very significant for those who adopt a phenomenological approach.
- The unstructured/informal type is the least rigid and involves little to no preplanning. In an unstructured interview, the researcher is able to engage in open

conversation, in a way that may leave the participant with the impression that they have just had an interesting conversation, rather than taken part in an interview. The researcher does not follow a set structure of questions; the questions that the researcher needs answering are in his/her mind, but the topic is approached from different perspectives, sometimes extracting relevant information and sometimes not. This can be a difficult approach to master and for it to be successful, the researcher must have an in-depth knowledge of the subject and a high level of skills (Weber, 2007 drawing from Robertson and Dearling, 2004).

To meet the aim of this research, a set of interviews were conducted using informal unstructured and semi-structured interviews with a group of interviewees. A total of 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted in the UK (eight interviews in each city). Furthermore, a total of four semi-structured interviews were conducted in Damascus with the purpose of validating the findings of the research.

Informal interviews in this research had been widely used in Damascus with the local authorities and took place at an early stage of the fieldwork during the initial fieldtrip to Damascus in August 2014. A total of three interviews were conducted and general information was collected in order to widen and deepen the understanding of the existing design control approach and the parties involved in their decisions. This method helped the researcher in overcoming difficulties due to the lack of sources, through having the information from the participant directly. Some information would not have been possible to gain without the kind help provided by some of the participants.

Further details on these interviews are provided in Appendix A. An English version of the questions which were used with participants from Edinburgh and York is provided in the Appendix B, and others of Damascus in the Appendix C.

Ultimately, the information obtained from the participants using semi-structured interviews is mostly structured; while the information gathered from the informal interviews is hard to structure and very open to bias. Thus, to avoid having biased data, the researcher refrained from interrupting the interviewee in order to avoid feeding them any of his own knowledge or influencing their views (May, 2001); also, these data are triangulated with information gathered by other research methods used in this research (Weber, 2007, drawing from Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

3.3.4 Direct observation

Direct observation is an important method for collecting qualitative data in a natural setting and to complement the data collected through interviews (Alevizos *et al.*, 1978). It is concerned with observing human behaviour to generate explanations and understandings of the observed thing and even to come up with predictions based on this observation (Hannan, 2006). In this technique, the observer is the instrument for the data collection where the observer takes notes of what people say, do, and their locations, etc.

Patton (2002) delivers a review of the advantages and disadvantages of using the direct observation technique. He argues that this technique is open, inductive and discovery-oriented to help the observer to obtain unlimited experience about the phenomenon being studied. He goes on to discuss that it enables the observer to understand and capture the natural setting of where people interact and discover things that people may not give a main concern to or might be unwilling to talk about in an interview, especially the critical issues. Thomas (2003) adds that direct observation has the advantage of providing an opportunity for the researcher to obtain the information from natural or unplanned events.

On the other hand, Patton (2002) sets out a few disadvantages and limitations regarding the direct observation method in which he considers that people's behaviour can be changed when they feel that they are being observed. This may cause distortion and inaccuracy of the collected data as he states. Furthermore, he argues that the obtained data are usually incomplete and not entirely accurate as it is based on observation of the external behaviour of the participants and the observer cannot be sure about the people's real feelings and perspectives.

Observation is undertaken by this research as one method of data collection to complement the data obtained using semi-structured interviews. With the aim of putting himself closer to the real action of the judgment process, the researcher attended, with the help of the supervisors, one of the urban design panel meetings in Edinburgh to observe how discussions are held and finally how judgment is made. The panel meeting that was held on 28th May 2014 was attended by the researcher, in which schemes for a building redevelopment in St Andrew Square and a housing development at Burdiehouse had been reviewed. Notes were taken and the meeting was carefully observed.

3.4 Approaches for analysing data

3.4.1 Comparative method in research

“Thinking without comparison is unthinkable. And, in the absence of comparison, so is all scientific thought and scientific research” (Swanson, 1971, p. 145).

According to Ragin (1989), comparison involves comparing cases to each other in order to understand, explain, evaluate and interpret the similar and different features of the cases – two or more cases – under study and their relation to the theoretical criteria. In this sense, it is defined by Caramani (2008, p. 1) as *“the juxtaposition of values (units of variation) of attributes (properties) shared by two or more objects or cases (units of observation)”*. Based on this, Lieberman (1987) concludes that any empirical study is in one form or other, a comparative research.

Comparative method in research has been defined by Smelser (1973) as the systematic analysis of similarities and differences or what he termed *“systematic comparative illustration”*. He argued that this method is very suitable to case-oriented research where the number of cases examined is relatively small. Caramani (2008) also offers another definition describing comparative method as *“a set of logically based procedures for systematically testing against empirical evidence alternative (or competing) hypotheses about causal connections between phenomena, and thereby either corroborate or reject them”* (Caramani, 2008, p. 3).

Based on these definitions, it can be argued that a comparative method pays less importance to the statistical criteria and focuses on relevant instances of the phenomenon of interest. Caramani (2008) agrees with Ragin (1989) that one of the advantages of a comparative method is that it can deal with questions which investigate situations as wholes (the consequences of different combinations of conditions), something which a statistical method⁵ for example cannot address. In addition, a comparative method allows for explanations to every aspect of the phenomenon, interpretation of the cases under study and highlights irregularities which can be explained by the researcher. They conclude that a comparative method is well suited for synthesising existing theories or even building new theories. In this sense, they suggest that it allows the examination of policies, processes and outcomes and their significance to the current situation.

⁵ The statistical method examines each condition in a piecemeal manner (Ragin, 1989).

Moreover, Ragin (1989) and Caramani (2008) raise some difficulty facing those who are using comparative method, as such methods require the researcher to conduct a detailed examination of the cases under analysis and consider each case directly before comparing them with each other; in addition, that the data is likely set, defined and categorised differently among the studied contexts or systems.

According to Caramani (2008), in cases where a qualitative approach is adopted, researchers tend to compare whole cases with each other. They view cases as combinations of characteristics – configurations – that are subject to comparison. Through this, they seek to interpret specific experiences and cases for the purpose of suggesting amendments, proposing dramatic changes, validating certain aspects, introducing new frameworks, assessing and evaluating the success of certain approaches or policies, etc. Researchers who adopt this approach study “*how different conditions or causes fit together in one setting and contrast that with how they fit together in another setting (or with how they might fit together in some ideal-typic setting)*” (Ragin, 1989, p. 13).

Based on the advantages listed above, it is believed that such method would be well suited for the purpose of this research. This research takes two case study cities, i.e. York and Edinburgh, which are following two different planning systems (England and Scotland). These cities provide two different approaches of urban design towards fitting new forms of buildings into their historic urban contexts. The two cities’ approaches will be compared critically against a framework of criteria which is developed by this research from the literature (see Chapter 2, section 2.8.2), with the purpose of discovering their advantages and disadvantages. Thereafter, and based on the findings, the possibility and limitations of applying some lessons of these approaches internationally will be discussed.

The researcher is aware of the possible harmful effects of copying the British system’s characters over to the Syrian system. Thus, it explores the application of some lessons from the UK system rather than copying the whole system to the Syrian context. Such kinds of applications are defended by Punter (1996) and Deng (2009), who contend that urban design principles and practice have an international relevance and are universally applicable. To assure the honesty and applicability of the research recommendations, these lessons have been validated by interviewing experts in the Syrian context (see section 3.6.3).

3.4.2 Content analysis or grounded theory

According to Gray (2004), there are two main approaches that are usually used for analysing qualitative data: content analysis and grounded theory. Content analysis was originally presented as a quantitative research method and it was defined as “*a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication*” (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). It represented itself as also being able to deal with qualitative data and it is called ‘the qualitative approach in content analyses’. Qualitative content analysis is defined as “*a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*” (Hsieh, 2005, p. 1278); “*a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material*” (Schreier, 2012, p. 1).

On the other hand, grounded theory was originally introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a method of constant comparative analysis to obtain accuracy of evidence in the conceptual category and to establish the generality of a fact. It is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1994, p. 275) as “*a general methodology, a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data.*” It is also defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 23) as a theory that is developed and provisionally verified through the data collection and analysis process relating to the studied phenomenon. Glaser and Strauss (1967) claim that with this approach, researchers are able to generate a theory that is meaningful in certain contexts, based on observations and the observers’ agreed opinions.

According to Glaser (1978), grounded theory involves a series of steps that are identified by him as:

- Identifying key issues or activities in the data that would be a focus of categories (i.e. coding).
- Writing about the formed categories with an attention to describe all existing issues and constantly looking for new incidents (i.e. grouping and categorising the collected data from one source or different sources).
- Working with the data in an attempt to develop a model to capture social processes and relationships (i.e. finding out the actual meaning of the data and generating the research theory).

Grounded theory and qualitative content analysis are very similar as both follow coding processes and can be applied to analyse qualitative data, and it is very likely that authors

become confused in choosing and distinguishing among them (Cho and Lee, 2014). Thus, it is important to know how these approaches differ in their data analysis approaches, and which one is the most suitable for this research. Table 3.5 below provides a comparison between these approaches, i.e. how they differ and for which type of research each of them is more suitable.

Table 3.5: Comparison of qualitative content analysis and grounded theory approaches
Source: The researcher is drawing from Cho and Lee (2014)

	Qualitative content analysis	Grounded theory
General characteristics	Use of an intensive, open-ended, and iterative process that simultaneously involves data collection, coding, and memo-writing.	
A researcher aims at	Systematically describing the meaning of materials in a certain respect that the researcher specified from research questions. Extracting categories from the data.	Generating a substantive theory that will explain a phenomenon in a specific context and suited to its supposed use. Finding relationships among categories or theory building/development.
Unique characteristics	The researcher has to wait until data are completely collected to begin data analysis. It needs to identify specific categories and criteria of selection before the analysis process starts. Data reduced during the analysis process by focusing on selected aspects of the data.	Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously so that the analysed data guides subsequent data collection. It does not require criteria to be prepared before the analysis process and all the themes come out during the process of analysis. During the data analysis process, an incident should be compared and contrasted with other incidents. Requires a high degree of interpretation and transformation of data.

To summarise table 3.5, it can be seen that in grounded theory, the analysis involves several key processes, namely labelling, categorising, identifying core categories, and revealing relationships between categories. From these relationships it is then possible to generate a theory. By contrast, in qualitative analysis the analysis consists of choosing the unit of analysis, categorising and using the categories to generate themes. This research intends to generate a theory from comparative analysis of empirical data collected from the UK context, thus grounded theory seems more appropriate than content analysis. Figure 3.1 below shows the data analysis procedures of the grounded theory approach used by this research.

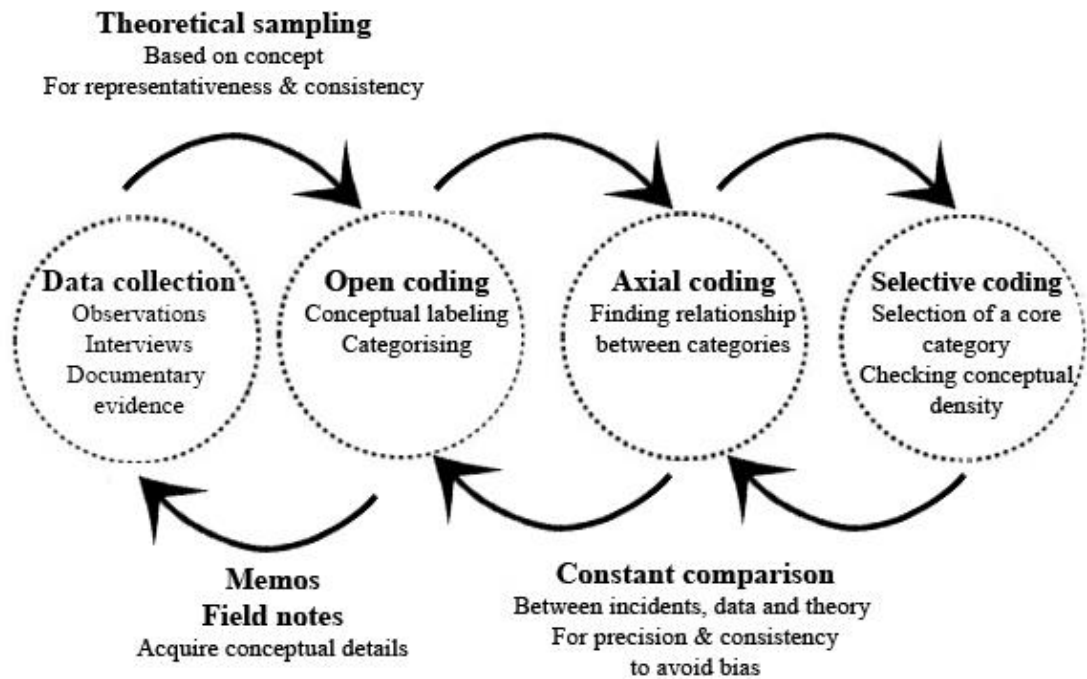


Figure 3.1: Data analysis procedure of the grounded theory method
Source: Adapted by the researcher from Cho and Lee (2014)

3.5 Methods of data analysis

In this section, the researcher describes the methods used in data analysis which include: preliminary data analysis and thematic analysis, secondary analysis and concept maps.

3.5.1 Preliminary data analysis and thematic analysis

Grbich (2007, p. 16) provides a definition of preliminary data as, “a technique which can be undertaken on most data as each segment is collected. It serves to summarise issues emerging and to identify further questions which need to be asked in order to gain holistic data.” Thematic analysis is seen by him as “a process of segmentation, categorisation and relinking of aspects of the database prior to the final interpretation.”

Data collection and analysis were parallel. The researcher did some preliminary data analysis during some of the interviews and the observation and permissions were obtained prior to starting the interview and the observation. During observation and interviews, the researcher wrote memos of his impressions of important discussions and issues. Thereafter, he transcribed and read them throughout the data collection period. This was done to check the data, not to critique it, but to help the researcher to engage further with the text and to acquire a sense of the direction for analysis. In other words, this enabled the researcher to see the issues and themes that were arising from the data, as well as

being able to determine areas for further investigation. After the preliminary data analysis, the researcher moved on to undertake the more formal process of thematic analysis.

In following the thematic analysis, the researcher listened many times to the recorded interviews and interpreted, in written and graphic formats, the descriptive data (transcription). Thereafter he started the analysis process following Glaser's (1978) aforementioned steps. He read through the transcriptions of the interviews line by line and labelled certain concepts common to them, i.e. open coding. This helped in managing the data as well as building up a holistic view of stakeholders' perception of the research study focus. Thereafter, the researcher tried to find relationships among codes, i.e. axial coding, and identified the most significant and frequent codes, i.e. selective coding, (see figure 3.1).

The discovered codes and categories were compared with one another to determine the relationships among the different data types. This helped to develop, modify, finalise and verify already found codes and categories from interviews, observation, and document analysis, and to set aside codes unrelated to the research questions, as well as those that appeared infrequently. Finally, the researcher developed core themes and relationships into a theory that explains the studied phenomenon.

3.5.2 Secondary data analysis

Moore (2006, p. 111) defines secondary analysis as a powerful research technique: *“secondary analysis of data where the focus is firmly on the reworking of existing datasets to develop new insights into issues.”*

This form of analysis has been used throughout the document analysis process in this research. This is mainly done in the survey of the English and Scottish planning systems as well as of the cities' experiences, including Damascus, where grey literature was collected from other sources such as reports and other documentary evidence provided by the interviewees about the research project's case studies. These analyses helped in underpinning the researcher's knowledge of the general context in which the UK case studies are located. In the Syrian context, this helped in structuring the knowledge of Damascus's urban form history and the approach applied for appraisal of development proposals.

3.5.3 Concept maps

Conceptual mapping is used in this research as a way of displaying findings. Maxwell (2005, p. 47) explains that a concept map “*consists of two things: concepts and the relationships among these. These are usually represented, respectively, as labelled circles or boxes and as arrows or lines connecting these.*”

According to Maxwell (2005), there exist two kinds of concept maps: process maps and variance maps. The latter deal with concepts and demonstrate the influence of some factors on others, while the former tells a chronological story, “*there is a beginning and an end and the concepts are often specific events or situations, rather than variables*” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 54-55).

A process map technique is used to illustrate the differences between the two cities’ approaches (Edinburgh and York). It visualised how the two approaches differed in their urban design tools and how they contribute towards achieving quality in their outcomes (see figure 5.5 in Chapter 5, section 5.3 and figure 6.6 in Chapter 6, section 6.3). This technique also helped the researcher to visualise Damascus design control approaches and the relationships between the actors and the gaps that they found (see figure 8.10 in Chapter 8, section 8.3.4).

3.6 Triangulation, generalisation, and validation

3.6.1 Triangulation

According to Decrop (1999), data triangulation is the process of double-checking data from two or more sources which pave the way for more credible and reliable information. This method helps to: view data from more than one perspective and understanding its complexity (e.g. triangulating interviews findings with observation and/or collected documents), strengthen the confidence of the research findings (Arksey and Knight, 1999), overcome most of the weaknesses of each method used (Gray, 2004), and ultimately increase the probability of generalising the findings of the research (Decrop, 1999).

This research faced considerable limitation in terms of information availability, especially in relation to the development control approach in Damascus, and the required data had to be collected from different resources such as the City Council, interviewees and other

parties in order to have a comprehensive view of the approach followed in Damascus. Thus, triangulation of data is probably the only way to search for regularity in patchy data (Gillham, 2000). This is applied in this research by comparing and contrasting some information from one source (e.g. an interview) against other sources (e.g. other interviews, documentary evidence, and observation).

3.6.2 Generalisation

According to Schofield (1994), in qualitative research, generalisability can be perceived as the ‘fit’ between the studied cases and other situations where these cases can be applied. In other words, it is the extent to which it is possible to apply the findings of research in other, not necessarily similar, contexts. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) termed this type of generalisation as ‘representation’.

Schofield (2002) agrees with Gomm *et al.* (2000) that increasing the generalisability of the findings in qualitative research can be achieved in two ways: studying a distinctive case or investigating multiple case studies. In both situations, the resulting evidence is seen by them as more powerful and reliable than that obtained by studying a single case, even when this case is convenient.

Both techniques are applied in this research with the purpose of increasing the likelihood of having positive generalisation of the research findings. The study is based on two distinctive case study cities, i.e. Edinburgh and York, both of which have substantial and sensitive historic urban contexts and provide fruitful lessons to be learned by cities that seek to learn. As such, this can help in producing more convincing and reliable findings.

3.6.3 Validation

Validation is defined by Mishler (1990) as the process through which the trustworthiness of any research findings and interpretations are evaluated. Likewise, it is defined by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) as a process to check out the accuracy or correctness of the research findings. In this sense, Koro-Ljungberg (2008) argues that the validation process refers to the connection between findings and reality – reality cannot be separated from the subject. He concludes that validation should be seen as a tool to help the researcher in discovering the truth.

In this research, the researcher has selected multiple case study cities and projects. These are critically analysed and have been chosen for their relevance to the objectives of this study. This increases the chance of being able to generalise the findings. Validation is used as a method to help in ensuring that recommendations of the research are applicable, and to some extent shedding light on possible emerged limitations and challenges during the application process. To this end, four semi-structured interviews have been undertaken by this research with a designer, an academic, and planning officers in Damascus with the aim of evaluating the research findings and checking the applicability of the recommendations. However, due to the difficulties in visiting Damascus, these interviews were held through Skype or the telephone (see Appendix A).

3.7 Limitations of the research

This research faced several limitations. One of them was with the survey of York city, where the researcher could not collect the entire set of documents sought, particularly regarding the Davygate development, due to practical limitations beyond the control of the researcher. Furthermore, some of the interviewees have changed their jobs and addresses from the time when they were working on the chosen projects. This required the researcher to undertake further searches for those people, sometimes with the kind help offered by other interviewees. However, this resulted in a delay in collecting the data, adjusting the timetable and sometimes rearranging other trips.

Another key limitation related to the fact that this research was conducted during a period in which Syria is witnessing interior war/revolution that started in March 2011. This emerging situation adds further challenges, responsibilities, and difficulties. Due to this fact, the materials (e.g. documents and reports) required to be collected from Damascus were patchy and sometimes difficult to collect as some departments restricted provisions of this type of material. However, having access to some of them, especially the most recent documents, was very difficult. This required making a further number of telephone interviews with members of the planning authorities, professionals, and academics to clarify some issues regarding the emerging changes and their validation.

Informal and semi-structured interviews with officers and people from governmental departments in Damascus were one method of collecting primary data. Another limitation that should be stated here is that the views of the stakeholders were not addressed systematically because of the constraints of time and resources and the non-

ability to visit Damascus. The researcher held most of the interviews with those people over the telephone or Skype. Most of these interviews had to be held during working hours where interviewees had to deal with job-related issues at the same time. Also, cuts in the interviews due to poor internet connection in Damascus or the irregularity in the electricity service provided, caused many interruptions to interviews, which often took up to more than three hours to be completed, although it could have been done in less than an hour.

Ultimately, holding the semi-structured interviews in Damascus with the purpose of validating the findings required obtaining dual permission from the sponsor university (Tishreen University) and the relevant authorities. This again caused delay in accomplishing the research as obtaining this permission did not go smoothly and took far more time than what was expected.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research approach and methodology that have been used in this research. Adopting an interpretive ‘constructive’ approach based on stakeholders’ perceptions and attitudes, accessed through interviews, as well as the researcher analysis of collected documentary evidences, was determined as being the most appropriate approach to meet the objective of the research and answer its questions.

Case study as a methodology is seen as the most significant approach to meet the aims of this research. It involved using multiple-qualitative research methods for data collection (i.e. interviewing, document collection and review, and observation). Face to face interviews were undertaken in Edinburgh and York and others in Damascus, sometimes through the telephone or Skype, and necessary documents were gathered during the fieldtrips to the cities. Adopting the above mentioned methods has allowed the researcher to interact more effectively with the stakeholders and to obtain in-depth views from different angles regarding the issues being investigated.

Furthermore, a range of methods have been used to analyse the interviews, documentary evidence, and observations, which have also been explained in this chapter. Ultimately, techniques for overcoming the shortage in the data as well as increase the credibility in generalising the research findings and validation are also discussed in this chapter.

Ultimately, the researcher is aware of the limited possibilities for generalising the research findings and outcomes, as well as the difficulty of application. He is also aware that achieving the best of this requires a comprehensive and detailed understanding of local needs and problems, coupled with serious commitment towards the recommendation from this research. Thus, the researcher hopes that this research is a start in emphasising the importance of local research in this regard and the need to link this research with practice, and highlight this through the education system in Syria. A recommendation in this sense would be addressed to the Syrian government, especially to the Ministry of Higher Education, Tishreen University (the sponsor for this research).

CHAPTER 4 – REVIEW OF THE URBAN DESIGN ROUTE MAP OF THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH PLANNING SYSTEMS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of how the profile of urban design has been raised at the national level in the English and Scottish planning systems, thus answering the research question Q3-1.

It begins by tracing back through the history of the UK Government's intervention in design and the emergence of urban design. This includes reviewing early instances of urban design being mentioned and addressed in the UK planning system. Thereafter, it reviews how the role of urban design has been further enhanced in the English and Scottish planning systems after Scotland had separate planning legislation from England in 1999⁶. Urban design language, concepts and principles are identified in the national policies and other publications of the two Governments with the purpose of revealing the change through time of urban design objectives and the connections between urban design and the respective planning system. The discussion will provide the basis for a wide analysis and recommendations for the improvement of the future of urban design at the national level of the two systems, which will be undertaken in Chapter 7.

The information used in this chapter was obtained from a variety of sources. These include academic books, academic papers, and grey literature, including recently published reports and governmental documents – which in turn include planning policies and guidance – collected by the researcher during the fieldwork.

⁶ In 1999, Scotland had its first Parliament with legislative power over all matters not reserved to the UK Parliament. Even before this date and since the 'Town and Country Planning Act 1947' was released to be applied to the whole UK, Scotland had its separate version of this act in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1947.

Differences between the two systems have been found in almost all subsequent acts before 1999. However, the Scottish versions were very similar to the English versions, with very limited differences. Cullington and Nadin (2006) attribute these differences to the particular geographical characteristics of Scotland and to the desire of the Scottish authorities to avoid some of the difficulties of the English system.

4.2 The rise of urban design in the UK planning systems

The history of the UK Government's intervention in design, through the planning service, started with the adoption of the Town and Country Planning Act (1947), by which local authorities were given extensive powers in deciding about planning applications (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006; Deng, 2009; Paterson, 2011a). However, the degree to which the government should intervene in design has always been controversial and has come under intense criticism (Paterson 2011a; Dawson and Higgins 2009).

Paterson (2011b) argues that this criticism was at its peak during the 1960s, especially after the construction of some new developments in historic cities, which were unpopular and unsympathetic to the townscape. In response to this criticism, the government decided to introduce the Civic Amenities Act in 1967, by which conservation areas should have to be designated and hence special care should have to be taken by planners with regard to the design of new development when introduced in conservation areas.

According to Paterson (2011b) and Deng (2009), the Conservative Party did not fully recognise the importance of practicing planning intervention on behalf of the public as its philosophy was based on minimal government intervention. This perspective was further heightened by the introduction of Circular 22/80 on Development Control in 1980 (DOE, 1980), which plainly discouraged planners from intervening in design. This, in turn, reduced the LPAs' power and increased their constraints, which made them more reluctant to reject a building proposal solely on the basis of bad design (Paterson, 2011a; Dawson and Higgins, 2009).

In the 1990s, documents such as *Building in Quality* (DOE, 1992) and *Quality in Town and Country* (DOE, 1994a) plainly questioned the effectiveness of the Conservative Government's perspective, and sought to promote quality and responsibility in planning through raising the awareness and understanding of the importance of good design and quality in buildings and the built environment, and highlighting the potential detrimental consequences for environmental quality due to following a low intervention approach (Paterson, 2011a). These two documents notably influenced the national policies that were released later, i.e. *Planning Policy Guidance* (DOE, 1997).

By 1994, a consensus had been reached on the urgent need for more effective considerations of design in planning (Carmona *et al.*, 2002). However, it took until the publishing of *Planning Policy Guidance 6: Town Centres and Retail Developments*

(DOE, 1996) for the term 'urban design' to be actually mentioned, and until publishing DOE (1997) for the subject of urban design to be dealt with in any detail (Carmona *et al.*, 2002).

DOE (1997) promoted good design and considered the appearance of proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings as material considerations in determining planning applications and appeals. This was defined as the complex relationships between all the elements of built and inbuilt space. Local authorities were asked by this document to enhance the characters of their areas and promote local distinctiveness. But it also warned against paying attention to too much detail, or trying to arbitrarily impose a particular architectural taste or style, which could stifle innovation, originality or initiative. Meanwhile, it raised aspects to be considered by local authorities in developing their policies on the basis of a careful assessment of the context of their local areas and concentrating on guiding overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, and access. Further, supplementary design guidance was encouraged in conjunction with development plans. Applicants for planning permissions were encouraged, according to this document, to provide written as well as visual material of the design proposal, and to consult with all those who may have a legitimate interest in the development proposal at an early stage.

According to Deng (2009), New Labour had put urban design on its agenda since 1997. In an attempt to halt urban decline, the Deputy Prime Minister established the Urban Task Force in 1998, in an attempt to broaden the government's urban design profile and enable regeneration to be design led, thereby revitalising urban areas and achieving social well-being. It aimed to achieve this renaissance by encouraging social responsibility. This was supported with a wide range of publications published by Central Government, such as *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System — Towards Better Practice* (DETR and CABE, 2000). Furthermore, as sustainability started climbing up the political agenda and the emphasis on sustainable development, which includes quality of life, increased, this was also partly a reason that made the UK Government gradually favour LPA intervention in design, and urban design also began to be promoted (Paterson, 2011a; Deng, 2009).

By 1999, Scotland had a devolved parliament and separate planning legislation from England, and urban design has developed unconnectedly in the two countries since then. However, the general structure of the English and Scottish systems is broadly similar to

a basic three-tier system (see figure 4.1). The top layer is advice from Central Government and takes a number of forms: through National Planning Policy, national guidance as accompaniment to these policy documents, and supplementary documents by the government watchdogs. Below this is the layer of all local planning authorities' policies, in the form of local plans and masterplans, which reflects the government guidance within the local context. Finally, underneath this layer, there is non-statutory supplementary guidance, covering issues of particular local concern. The top layer is the focus of this chapter; the other layers will be targeted in the following two chapters, i.e., Chapters 5 and 6.

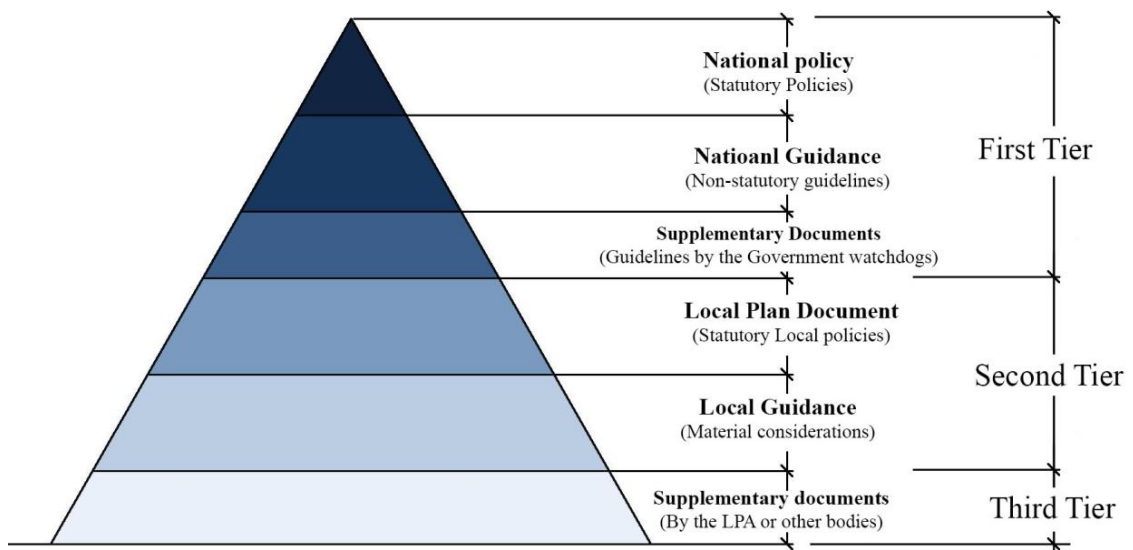


Figure 4.1: The UK hierarchy of policies and guidelines
Source: The researcher

The two systems have developed national policies in which good design and quality outcome are encouraged as a part of delivering sustainable development. For historic built environments, another set of policies has been developed in which the value of heritage assets and the possible way to develop such built environments, together with encouraging the community role in this, are placed among the top priorities of these policies. Elements of urban design have been used in setting out the expectation of how to achieve these points.

In addition to the national policies, documents have also been released by the two Governments at the national level as companions to the subsequent revised versions of national policies, and others have been released by government advisory bodies on design, urban design, and the historic environment. These documents were released to provide further clarifications of national policies, to underpin the government's

commitment to the promotion of good architecture and good building design, to stimulate thinking about urban design, and to highlight the actions intended to be taken by the LPAs to encourage improvements in the quality of buildings in all contexts.

The following section provides a survey of the English and Scottish approaches to urban design. It investigates the route map of urban design, which was drawn by each of them through reviewing national policies and guidance documents and other supplementary documents. Thereafter, it delivers a reflection of how they are varied in their approach and it concludes with some findings from this chapter.

4.3 The English approach

4.3.1 National Policy in England

By 2000, urban design featured prominently in national planning policies in England, and the message was clear in the frequently updated versions to further enhance its role. *Planning Policy Statement 1* (DCLG, 2005) and *Planning Policy Statement 5* (DCLG, 2010) superseded the previously used *Planning Policy Guidance* (DOE, 1997) and *Planning Policy Guidance* (PPG 15) (DOE, 1994b) respectively, and both were later superseded by *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG, 2012).

Encouraging good design and quality outcome

DCLG (2005) and DCLG (2012) set out a list of design policies which seek to promote high-quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings and stress that design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area where they are set should not be accepted (DCLG, 2005, Para 13, iv; DCLG, 2012, Para 64).

Good design and design quality were stressed on many occasions in DCLG (2005, Paras 33-36) and DCLG (2012, Paras 8, 9, 56, 57 and 63). In these paragraphs, the two documents state that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which has to involve seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life. Replacing poor designs with better design is mentioned as a very first step towards achieving sustainable development, and great weight is put on

innovative designs that help to raise the quality of design in the area (DCLG, 2005, Para 33; DCLG, 2012, Para 63).

Understanding the context of the building has been stressed as a very important first step towards having good policies and good design alike, and the message was clear in DCLG (2012, Para 58) and DCLG (2005, Para 36), in which it was stressed that national policies should be based on an understanding and evaluation of the area-defining characteristics. Furthermore, planning authorities were encouraged by DCLG (2005) to plan positively for the achievement of high-quality and inclusive design, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes (DCLG, 2005, Para 34); plus ensuring that developments respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture (DCLG, 2005, Paras 35, 36).

More recently, visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings have come to be considered by DCLG (2012, Para 61) as very important factors in securing high quality, and have to include the concerns of the connections between people and places, although elsewhere in this document, sustainable design issues have been prioritised over townscape issues (DCLG, 2012, Para 65). This comes, however, with some exceptions, where the impact of applying these new designs would cause material harm to the asset or its setting, which is not outweighed by the proposal's economic, social and environmental benefits.

DCLG (2012) provides a list of recommendations to local authorities in which it stresses: Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic (DCLG, 2012, Para 154); positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy (DCLG, 2012, Para 182); the relationship between decision-taking and plan-making must be seamless (DCLG, 2012, Para 186); good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community (DCLG, 2012, Para 188). Furthermore, the significant role that national and local design review panels, mainly the local panel, can play to ensure high standards of design is also stressed in DCLG (2012, Para 62). Early engagement of this panel is raised, as it can ensure that the greatest benefits and their raised comments are recommended to be taken into account by the local authorities.

Design codes have also been recommended by DCLG (2012, Para 59) to be applied in some places to guarantee high-quality outcomes. Meanwhile, DCLG (2012) stresses that

design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and avoid imposing architectural styles or particular tastes, and it is advised that they should be more general. This point was stressed more obviously in DCLG (2012, Para 60), where prescription is described as curbing innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles.

Developing historic environments

DCLG (2010) and DCLG (2012) have provided a set of conservation policies with the aim of ensuring that a new development interacts with its historical urban context. Local distinctiveness of the historic environment and its latent assets were considered as a key part of the two documents' strategies, and both local people and councils are encouraged by this document to contribute positively in distinctively producing their built environment (DCLG, 2012, Para 1). *“Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment...”*. Emphasis is placed on *“sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets...”* and recognising that heritage assets are an *“irreplaceable resource”* and should be conserved *“in a manner appropriate to their significance”* (DCLG, 2012, p. 30).

Local planning authorities are encouraged to consider how they can best monitor the impact of their planning policies and decisions on the historic environment (DCLG, 2010, Para 5.1; DCLG, 2012, Para 126). Applicants were encouraged to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance (DCLG, 2010, Para 6.1; DCLG, 2012, Para 128). LPAs were asked to take into account the desirability of a new development in terms of making a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the local environment (DCLG, 2010, Paras 7.1-7.7). Furthermore, DCLG (2010, Paras 9.1, 9.2 and 9.4) and DCLG (2012, Paras 132-136) concluded that any new proposal of a development with possible substantial/less than substantial harm or loss of significance of the built heritage assets would be refused, unless it could demonstrate that this came with substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss; or that there is no way for these assets to survive except with applying this change.

Enhancing community involvement

According to DCLG (2005, Paras 39, 40 and 44), community involvement is an essential element in delivering sustainable development. With the purpose of developing the vision for their areas, planning authorities have been required by DCLG (2005, Para 41) to ensure that communities are able to contribute to ideas about how that vision can be achieved, have the opportunity to participate in the process of drawing up the vision, strategy and specific plan policies, and to be involved in development proposals. An inclusive approach has been stressed to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged in the process (DCLG, 2005, Para 42), and that community involvement in planning is not a reactive tick-box process (DCLG, 2005, Para 43). However, this approach is asked to:

- tell communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time;
- enable communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options. It is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked-up;
- consult on formal proposals;
- ensure that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible;
- provide and seek feedback.

DCLG (2012) has come up with updated concepts of how the community role could be enhanced. It states that policies should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new developments into the natural, built and historic environment. The message is clear in DCLG (2012, Para 66), in which local authorities and applicants are encouraged to work with those directly affected by their proposals to help evolve designs, and a wide section of the community is recommended to be proactively engaged.

The importance of early engagement by the public is stressed in the two documents, as early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties (DCLG, 2005, Paras 11 and 12; DCLG, 2012, Paras 178 and 179).

In summary, DCLG (2005 and 2010) and DCLG (2012) have delivered clear messages towards encouraging good designs, developing historic environments, and further

enhancing community involvement. The more recent document, i.e. DCLG (2012), has come with some new messages. These messages provided advice to the local planning authorities in England on how to prepare local plans and deliver an objective development control process. At the same time, sustainability has been given more weight against townscape in one of these messages. However, what matters in this context is to what extent these messages are helpful in further enhancing urban design on the local level, and how these are reflected in theory and practice.

4.3.2 National Guidance in England

The messages of the national policies have been further explained in companion design guidance. These documents have not been written to define a single blueprint for good design or to set new policies to be followed, but to stimulate thinking about urban design.

By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System—Towards Better Practice (CABE and DETR, 2000) is the very first one and the most significant. It was described by Paterson (2011b, p. 156) as “one of the most detailed design guidance documents ever produced at government level”. This document was a pioneer in setting out design quality principles, using urban design language with reference to concepts developed by key authors on the subject over the past few decades, including Cullen (1961), Lynch (1971) and Bentley (1985). Terms such as character, continuity, enclosure, quality of the public realm, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability and diversity are plainly addressed in this document (Paterson, 2011b). Furthermore, it suggests that aspects of form should be considered in carrying out urban design analysis: urban structure, urban grain, landscape, density and mix, scale and appearance. Also, this document clearly sent an encouraging message to local authorities to start considering detailed design issues in the planning decision-making and keeping in mind the aforementioned principles when considering planning applications in general contexts as well as in contexts with significance, e.g., historic contexts. It also encouraged public participation as a means of controlling the design and development process.

This trend towards urban design was further enhanced through the publishing of the *Urban Design Compendium* (English Partnerships and Housing Corporation, 2000 and

2007), which was endorsed by English Partnerships⁷ and the Housing Corporation⁸. However, these documents are not obligatory to the local authorities as statutory documents.

The first volume (English Partnerships and Housing Corporation, 2000) was developed to complement CABE and DETR (2000) in promoting higher standards in urban design. Based on examination of the factors that make neighbourhoods stimulating and active places in which residents feel comfortable and safe, it provides a guide to all those involved in the regeneration and development industries (e.g. planners, developers, builders, urban designers, architects and community groups) on how to achieve the quality of urban design for the development and regeneration of urban areas, and sets out principles of urban design which apply at all scales of place.

In 2007, a new volume was published with another target. English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2007) did not come to replace English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000); instead, it came to complement it. It also provides guidance to all the players in the development process on how the principles raised in English Partnerships and Housing Corporation (2000) can be effectively delivered in practice. It further explained how the best projects deliver quality and how important it is to overcome key barriers in the design process in the pursuit of delivering quality places. It also characterised the process needed to achieve quality of urban design⁹.

PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (DCLG *et al.*, 2010) is endorsed by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and English Heritage. This guide did not take the place of CABE and DETR (2000) but was released to assist local authorities, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing DCLG (2010) and to help with the interpretation of its policies (see section 4.3.1). This document did not constitute a statement of government policy itself, nor did it seek to prescribe a single methodology or particular data sources, nor to set principles for success or criteria for assessment. Instead, it is a guide to interpreting how policy should be applied; further, it

⁷ English Partnerships (EP) was the national regeneration agency for England, performing a similar role on a national level to that fulfilled by regional development agencies on a regional level. On 1 December 2008 its powers passed to a successor body, the new Homes and Communities Agency.

⁸ The Housing Corporation (HC) was the non-departmental public body that funded new affordable housing and regulated housing associations in England. It was abolished in 2008, with its responsibilities being split between the Homes and Communities Agency and the Tenant Services Authority.

⁹ The two documents are updated by HCA and studio|REAL (Roger Evans Associates Ltd).

was also possible to be used as material for individual planning and heritage consent decisions. However, alternative approaches may be considered by this document as equally acceptable as long as they are compliant with the national policies and objectives, and are clearly justified, transparently presented and robustly evidenced.

After publishing DCLG (2012), which superseded DCLG (2010), DCLG *et al.* (2010) remained relevant and useful, as DCLG (2010) and DCLG (2012) are very similar and their contents are almost the same. However, DCLG *et al.* (2010) is now replaced with a volume of three documents *The Historic Environment in Local Plans, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1, 2 and 3* (Historic England, 2015)¹⁰. These documents have provided information on good practice to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, applicant and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in DCLG (2012).

In March 2014, CABE and DETR (2000) was superseded and replaced by the *Planning Practice Guidance* (DCLG, 2014). This new version sends many messages to local authorities as well as the applicants, in which it seeks to further enhance the requirement for good design as set out in national policies. Local authorities are asked to set standards of good design in the forms of a Local Plan, a master plan, a development brief and design codes. Additionally, applicants are asked to comply with them.

A definition of good design was copied from the DCLG (2012, p. 14) with no changes in the wording, and permission for development of poor design is recommended to be refused, while innovative designs are welcomed as they can help to raise the standard of design more generally in the area.

As in CABE and DETR (2000), issues of character, townscape, integration of forms with their surrounding context, local distinctiveness, sense of place and views into and out of larger sites are raised as crucial issues and have to be carefully considered from the start of the design process. Elsewhere, and unlike CABE and DETR (2000), sustainability issues were given priority over urban design issues in this document following DCLG (2012, Para 65), again with no changes in the wording: “*Planning permission should not be refused for buildings and infrastructure that promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design (unless the concern relates to a designated heritage*

¹⁰ New volume of these documents is published by Historic England (the new name of English Heritage, see section 4.3.3) in July 2015.

asset and the impact would cause material harm to the asset or its setting which is not outweighed by the proposal's economic, social and environmental benefits)''.

DCLG (2014) provided a recipe for achieving good design, which is summarised in three points:

- Careful plan and policy formulation, in which issues of layout, form, scale, detailing, and materials should be based on an understanding and appreciation of the context of an area so that proposals can then be developed to respect it.
- The use of proper consultative and participatory techniques, in which local communities are seen as playing a vital part in achieving good design. The weight of their view is recommended to be considered as equal to that of the experts, and local authorities are asked to allow for local leadership and participation.
- The urgent need for a design review panel, mainly the local panel, to be in place to provide an assessment of proposals and to support high standards of design.
- Where appropriate, the preparation of masterplans, briefs, site specific policies and design code is advised. While such documents are recommended as they set out the strategy for a new development, they are required to be written and drawn so as to be able to be understood by everyone and flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. Furthermore, a good code is seen to be about finding a balance between technical specificity and a succinct description of what is required. Some of the best and most effective codes are described as very short.

Briefly, CABE and DETR (2000) have explained, in detail, how to achieve good design on the local level and provided a set of criteria that can be used by local planning authorities for judging planning applications. The more recent document, i.e. DCLG (2014), similarly sets out what it calls 'a recipe for achieving good design' in which it further explains the messages of DCLG (2012). In addition, other documents were provided on the national level with the purpose of further explaining the national policies (e.g. DCLG *et al.*, 2010). These documents, however, are different from the national guidance in the sense that they never set criteria for judgement. What this research seeks to answer is to what extent having such varied types of documents at the national level enhances the role of urban design at the local level and helps local planning authorities.

4.3.3 Supplementary Documents in England

A wide range of documents have been published by the *Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)*¹¹, with the purpose of increasing the awareness of how to achieve high-quality architecture and further enhancing the role of urban design in the planning system. Another set of documents has also been published by English Heritage (EH)¹², which set out its perspective on what issues have to be considered when inserting new buildings into historic urban contexts, and its approach to enhancing the historic environment.

CABE documents send different messages to all those who have been involved in what gets built, including design review panel members. Planning authorities are encouraged, according to *Quality of design and good design* (CABE, 2003), to be bold enough to reject poor design. Further documents have come to increase the awareness of the value that good design can add to public and private sector alike, and to highlight the painful cost of not recognising this (CABE, 2001; and CABE, 2006c).

Understanding the building's physical context is seen by *Design review, How CABE evaluates quality in architecture and urban design* (CABE, 2006a) as a very first step towards having good building results, and that it has to be based on urban design and historic analysis. The principal qualities of well-designed buildings with reference to a long history of literature have been provided by CABE (2006a). These qualities were further explained in a later document, i.e., *Good design: the fundamentals* (CABE, 2009), in which CABE provided a set of principles that is not new but can be applied to help

¹¹ CABE is the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space. It was an executive non-departmental public body of the UK government. It was established in 1999 as the direct successor body to the Royal Fine Art Commission, which was originally established in 1924, and with the purpose of running a design review service. This body is recognised as a 'non-statutory consultee', meaning that planners and others should listen to these bodies' advice when making decisions, but are not obliged to do so. CABE was funded by both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Communities and Local Government. It was merged into the Design Council on 1 April 2011 but still gives comments on proposals when asked.

¹² English Heritage: The government's statutory advisor on the historic environment. When originally formed in 1983, English Heritage was the operating name of an executive non-departmental public body of the British Government, officially titled the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, that ran the national system of heritage protection and managed a range of historic properties. It was created to combine the roles of existing bodies that had emerged from a long period of state involvement in heritage protection. In 1999 the organisation merged with the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England and the National Monuments Record, bringing together resources for the identification and survey of England's historic environment.

On 1 April 2015, English Heritage was divided into two parts: Historic England, which inherited the statutory and protection functions of the old organisation, and the new English Heritage Trust, a charity that would operate the historic properties; this body took on the English Heritage operating name and logo.

everyone recognise and understand the kinds of buildings and places that work well. *Design Codes* (CABE, 2005) has recommended that design codes can help to produce good results in conservation areas. This document has also stressed involving the public into accomplishing this. Later on, *Building for Life, delivering great places to live: 20 questions you need to answer* (CABE, 2008) and its updated version *Building for Life, The sign Of a Good place to live* (CABE, 2012) have provided a set of criteria intended to be used by LPAs and the development industry to assess the longer term sustainability of design of new housing developments.

Design control processes through which the decisions on specific proposals are made are suggested to become less confrontational and more collaborative (CABE, 2003). In CABE (2006a), applicants are asked to prepare design statements as a helpful way to explain how the scheme interprets design policy and site context. In addition, it further explains how to achieve successful design and access statements. Users of space and buildings are recommended to be given priority in deciding whether the building or the space design is successful or not, as this would necessarily affect their feeling of the space and their life improvement. This feeling and improvement are expected to be positive over time and not just temporarily (CABE, 2009). In this sense, CABE (2009) mentions the crucial role that a design review panel can play, as the public guardian, in guiding the public into making decisions about their built environment and ensuring good design that meets their expectations. Later, *Helping local people choose good design* (CABE, 2010) has expanded guidance on how to further enhance the public role. Ultimately, *How to do Design Review: Creating and Running a Successful Panel* (CABE, 2006b) and *Design review, principles and practice* (CABE, 2013) have provided an explanation of the significant role of the Design Review in ensuring high standards of design. The achievements and challenges of the public and the panel roles, together with their possible improvement, are provided in these documents.

Since it was founded in 1983, English Heritage has provided a wide range of documents that have played a crucial role in enhancing and preserving the historic built environment. These documents have been released with the purpose of ensuring consistency across the professional conservation advice and enabling developers and architects to see the basis on which it makes judgments. They also provide advice on best practice to all those who have been involved in change in the built environment, i.e., local authorities, property owners, developers and professional advisers, including English Heritage staff.

English Heritage's view is based on the philosophy of conservation, of where and how to implement new developments in sensitive historic environments. This philosophy has evolved to respond to the changing circumstances from being a reactive process, preventing change, into a more flexible process (see Chapter 2, section 2.4). By this flexible process, people's understanding of their historic environment has become the template for the process of change, finding new uses for historic buildings and modernising them as required. This is regarded as a major contribution in maintaining and encouraging the character of an area in the built environment (English Heritage, 2013).

This philosophy of conservation has allowed the foundation for English Heritage to set out their collaborative conservation-led approach to historic places in *Conservation Area Practice* (English Heritage, 1995a), and *Development in Historic Environment* (English Heritage, 1995b). This approach has later been termed by English Heritage as 'Constructive Conservation'. The key target of this approach is recognising and reinforcing the historic significance of places, and accommodating the changes necessary to make sure that people can continue to use and enjoy them: in other words, protection and adaptation of historic places through active management.

Applying constructive conservation requires principles to be in action. These principles were first addressed in *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage, 2007) and further updated in *Conservation Principles: policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (English Heritage, 2008a). English Heritage published a range of documents that were designed to foster more awareness of constructive conservation, thereby raising confidence in how historic places can boost place-making, regeneration and community growth. This process was achieved by assessing a set of real-life projects, and each document communicates a specific message.

Constructive Conservation in Practice (English Heritage, 2008b) demonstrates how essential the role of enlightened local authorities is, together with the necessary skills and confidence among both staff and members, in bringing the ideas of talented architects and insightful developers to a successful conclusion. *Valuing Places - Good Practice in Conservation Areas* (English Heritage, 2011) shows how the success of constructive conservation is achieved in a range of circumstances. Based on the experiences of selected projects, the document sets out steps required for effective conservation area management. This includes local engagement; establishing significance; policies for

protection, including management plans and strategic initiatives; and reinforcing character, including local place-making, public realm, and managing change.

Ultimately, *Constructive Conservation: Sustainable Growth for Historic Places* (English Heritage, 2013) shows the many ways in which historic buildings can contribute to job creation, business growth and economic prosperity. It explains what can be achieved when English Heritage is among a multi-disciplinary problem-solving team taking a positive and collaborative approach to conservation and managing change. Examples of several new developments in historic areas or additions to historic buildings are provided by this document to stimulate inspiration for developers, architects, and planners alike.

CABE and English Heritage have also worked together in publishing a set of documents in which they jointly set out a view of how to achieve design excellence in contemporary buildings within sensitive environments. These documents are recommended to be read by everyone involved in appraising planning applications.

Building in Context (CABE and English Heritage, 2001) is their very first joint publication in which a number of real-life projects that had successfully fitted into their historical sensitive contexts were reviewed, and some lessons were drawn from their experience. A key finding of this document, with universal application, is that all successful design solutions depend on allowing time for a thorough site analysis, careful character appraisal of the context, stakeholders' discussion (has to be creative) and their skills and care. CABE and English Heritage (2001) set out the features of a successful project as one that: relates well to the geography and history of the place, respects important views and the scale of neighbouring buildings, uses materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings, and creates new views and juxtapositions that add to the variety and texture of the setting.

The last volume of this series is *Guidance on tall buildings* (CABE and English Heritage, 2007) in which, unlike the previous documents, the two bodies offer advice on good practice of how to evaluate proposals for tall buildings rather than reviewing projects and learning lessons from their experience. This guidance provides a set of eleven criteria for evaluating tall buildings. Tall buildings are recognised by them as buildings that are substantially taller than their neighbours and/or which significantly change the skyline. These criteria are recommended by them to be used to inform policy making and, if necessary, to evaluate planning applications for tall buildings where the appropriate policies are not yet in place.

According to these criteria, acceptable design is required to be in an appropriate location, of excellent design quality in its own right, i.e., as regards architectural quality of the building and credibility of the design, and should enhance the qualities of its immediate location and wider setting, i.e., the relationship to context, effect on the historic context, effect on world heritage sites, contribution to public space and facilities, effect on the local environment, contribution made to the permeability, and provision of a well-designed environment. The government endorsed this guidance to be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

In brief, CABE and EH documents have two different targets and obviously are influenced by these bodies' orientations – CABE with design and urban design interest, and EH with a conservation interest. Documents from the two bodies never set clear criteria to judge proposed new forms in sensitive historic contexts. The last jointly published document, however, has plainly addressed a set of criteria which are applied for tall buildings in general and sensitive contexts. This document is recommended to be utilised by the local planning authorities in England during development control process when alternative documents are not in place. However, issues of whether these documents have an influence on the local level, and others related to these bodies' orientations and statuses are critical factors to consider.

4.4 The Scottish approach

4.4.1 National Policy in Scotland

Since Scotland gained its devolved legislative authority in 1999, good design has been recognised by the Scottish Government as an integral part of a confident, competitive and compassionate Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2001b). Scotland's historic environment has also been recognised as a social, cultural, economic and environmental resource of great value. These issues are plainly enhanced in the subsequently revised versions of the national Scottish policies. *National Planning Policy Guideline 1* (Scottish Executive, 2000) set out the very first Scottish policies and was later superseded by *Scottish Planning Policy* (Scottish Executive, 2002). The two documents are very similar, with just a few sentences from the first document being deleted/reworded and replaced with others. The two documents were superseded by the *Scottish Planning Policy* (Scottish Government, 2010a), which in turn was updated in 2014 (Scottish Government, 2014).

Encouraging good design and quality outcomes

Careful attention is given in the national policies to the layout and design of buildings and spaces, and they specifically state that design has to be considered as a material consideration in determining planning applications, and planning permission can be refused on design grounds (Scottish Government, 2014, Para 56; Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 256; Scottish Executive, 2002, Paras 18-19).

Good design and quality outcomes are recommended to be the aims of everyone involved in the development control process. This quality is considered as not just determined by the building itself, but by the way buildings, both old and new, work together to create the space among them, which has such an influence on the quality of community life (Scottish Executive, 2002, Para 17; Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 256). Innovative architecture, distinctiveness, and change have also been encouraged in Scottish Government (2010a, Paras 15 and 60), but within a limit of being realistic.

Understanding the context of where the building sits, i.e. the elements that shape it and how they relate to each other, is considered as an essential first step towards having good design, and without this the likelihood of having good outcomes will decrease significantly (Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 117; Scottish Government, 2014, Para 137). Integration with the surroundings (i.e. the surrounding landscape, character, appearance, and ecologies) and the contribution to the area identity have been stressed by Scottish Government (2010a) in order to protect and enhance the cultural heritage and create successful places (Scottish Government, 2010a; Paras 77 and 78). Scottish Government (2014, Para 37) sets out the value that high-quality design can deliver for Scotland's communities and the important role that good buildings and places play in promoting Scotland's lifestyles and its distinctive identity all over the world. In pursuit of this purpose, Scottish Government (2014, Paras 38 and 39) calls for applying a holistic approach, i.e. a design-led approach, that responds to and enhances the existing place while balancing the costs and benefits of potential opportunities over the long term.

Urban design principles are strongly encouraged by these documents to be further enhanced at the local level to guarantee good outcomes and to conserve the historic contexts where they apply (Scottish Executive, 2002, Para 18; Scottish Government, 2010a, Paras 111-113). Scottish Government (2014) provides a list of six qualities of a successful place (Scottish Government, 2014, Paras 41-46): distinctive; safe and pleasant; welcoming; adaptable; resource efficient and easy to move beyond and around.

The first three points are concerned with building form issues, either individually or as a group, and the contribution that they potentially add to the space quality. The first criterion highlights how building forms can help to create places with a sense of identity, through the skylines, spaces and scales, street and building forms, and materials. The second criterion adds that promoting visual quality is considered essential in having pleasant places, and building forms have a crucial role in this regard. Ultimately, the third criterion states that inserting attractive buildings can enhance the welcoming of space.

Developing historic environments

According to Scottish Executive (2002, Para 15), Scottish Government (2010a, Paras 110 and 111) and Scottish Government (2014, Para 136), historic environments have to be considered as a key part of Scotland's cultural heritage and they enhance the regional and local distinctiveness. Scottish Government (2014) notes that culture-led regeneration can have a profound impact on the well-being of a community in terms of the physical look and feel of a place, and can also attract visitors, which in turn can bolster the local economy and the sense of pride or ownership.

Planning authorities have been asked by Scottish Executive (2002, Para 18), Scottish Government (2010a, Paras 110 and 111) and Scottish Government (2014, Paras 137-140) to support the best viable use that is compatible with the fabric, setting and character of the historic environment. *“The aim should be to find a new economic use that is viable over the long term with minimum impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the building or area”* (Scottish Government, 2010a, p. 23). However, Scottish Government (2014, Para 137) also notes that positive change, i.e. sensitively managed change to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the fabric and setting of the asset, would be achieved when development shows a clear understanding of the importance of the heritage assets affected and ensures that their special characteristics are protected, conserved or enhanced.

Scottish Government (2010a, Para 112) also requires that development plans provide a framework for protection, conservation, and enhancement of all elements of the historic environment in order to allow the assessment of the impact of proposed development on the historic environment and its setting. In this regard, Scottish Government (2010a, Para.113 and 114) stresses that the layout, design, materials, scale, setting and use of any new development should be appropriate to the character and appearance of the listed

buildings and their setting. Demolishing unlisted buildings which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation areas is equal to demolishing listed buildings (Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 116). However, it has been stated that developments that *have a neutral effect* on the conservation areas have to be treated as preserving its character or appearance (Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 115). In this sense, planning authorities are encouraged in Scottish Government (2010a, Para 117) to undertake conservation area character appraisals, as this assists planning applicants in formulating proposals. Paragraphs 141-143 of Scottish Government (2014) have repeated this message in Scottish Government (2010a, Paras 113, 114 and 116). However, Scottish Government (2014, Para 143) considers that proposals that *do not harm* the conservation area have to be encouraged.

Enhancing community involvement

Effective engagement with the public has been encouraged in the frequently updated national policies, in which public engagement is stressed as an important way to lead to better plans, better decisions and more satisfactory outcomes, and it is also seen as helping to avoid delays in the planning process and improve confidence in the fairness of the planning system (Scottish Executive, 2002, 60-61; Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 31; Scottish Government, 2014, Paras 6 and 7). “*The Scottish Government expects engagement with the public to be meaningful and to occur from the earliest stages in the planning process to enable community views to be reflected in development plans and development proposals*” (Scottish Government, 2010a, p. 5).

Planning authorities are asked to ensure that appropriate and proportionate steps are taken to constructively engage with communities and to further enhance their role in the application consultation, as well as in the policies and guidance development (Scottish Executive, 2002, Para 74; Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 32; Scottish Government, 2014, Para 64). Scottish Government (2014, Para 5) provides further recommendations through emphasising that all those involved with the system have a responsibility to engage and work together constructively and proportionately to achieve quality places for Scotland. This includes the Scottish Government and its agencies, public bodies, statutory consultees, elected members, communities, the general public, developers, applicants, agents, interest groups and representative organisations.

In summary, Scottish Government (2010a) and Scottish Government (2014) have set clear messages towards encouraging good designs, developing historic environments, and further enhancing the community involvement. The more recent document, i.e. Scottish Government (2014), is more detailed than Scottish Government (2010a) as it sets a list of six qualities of a successful place. In addition, messages which were previously addressed in the Scottish Government (2010a) are updated in Scottish Government (2014), and others messages were kept just as they were with no changes. However, to what extent these messages are helpful in further enhancing urban design at the local level, and how these are reflected in theory and practice are critical factors to examine.

4.4.2 National Guidance in Scotland

A set of supplementary documents have been released by the Scottish Government at the national level, with an accompanying role for the subsequent revised versions of national policies. These documents set out principles that underpin the government's commitment to the promotion of good architecture and good building design, and the actions intended to be taken to encourage improvements in the quality of buildings (Scottish Executive, 2001a, p. 49).

A Policy on Architecture (Scottish Executive, 2001a) and *Designing Places* (Scottish Executive, 2001b) were the first ever policies on architecture and urban design in Scotland, respectively. They were released to work along with Scottish Executive (2000 and 2002). The first document highlighted the unique contribution that the building forms – as a fundamental part of the physical environment and its quality – have made, and continue to make, to Scotland's cultural life. The latter was a pioneer in setting a list of six qualities for ensuring good design. These qualities were later addressed in Scottish Government (2014), see section 4.4.1. Scottish Executive (2001b) also provided a framework for design that could work at any scale, from the individual building preparation plan up to the plans for an entire area (i.e., context appraisal, policy review, vision statement, feasibility appraisal, planning and design principles and the development process). *Building our Legacy* (Scottish Executive, 2007) was also produced to further enhance the role of urban design and renew the statement in Scottish Executive (2001a). It contributed to shedding light on the progress being made across Scotland and focused on the value of applying place-making and urban design.

Designing Streets (Scottish Government, 2010b) was released to work along with Scottish Executive (2001b) as supplementary documents for Scottish Government (2010a); and with *Creating Places* (Scottish Government, 2013) as supplementary documents for Scottish Government (2014). It sets out the Government's policy statements on design and place-making that should be followed in designing and approving streets that are typically lined with buildings and spaces. It refers to the six qualities of successful places that had been raised in Scottish Executive (2001b) as a framework that is to be used when considering street design. Scottish Government (2013) sets out clearly that good design, i.e., good buildings and places, is a process of creativity and innovation through which the best outcomes can be delivered and value can be added (i.e. physical, social, functional, viability and environmental values): "*good buildings and places can enrich our lives as individuals and as a society in many different ways*" (Scottish Government, 2013, p. 4). Creative proposals are seen by the document as those that enhance and preserve the existing built heritage. In this regard, culture-led regeneration is addressed as an effective approach to delivering sustainable and high-quality environments.

All the previously discussed documents have also agreed on the crucial role of the community in the design process in order to achieve relevant and high-quality outcomes. In addition, Scottish Government (2013) was a pioneer in highlighting that people perception of their physical surroundings can impact on not just mental health and well-being, but also physical disease. This role of the community has been recommended to be facilitated from the earliest stage to the last, and by continuously harnessing its wealth of skills and knowledge. Furthermore, Scottish Executive (2007) recommended that there is a need for building up capacity, knowledge and skills on built environment issues within local communities.

In 2004, *Planning Advice Note PAN 71: Conservation Area Management* (Scottish Executive, 2004) was released by the Scottish Executive with the purpose of providing further explanations of the conservation area issues, and was recommended to be read in conjunction with other national policies and guidance. This document stresses that conservation areas are living environments that – despite their history – will continue to adapt and develop. It also stresses that designating a conservation area does mean carefully managing change to ensure that the character and appearance of these areas are safeguarded and enhanced for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

This document encouraged local authorities in Scotland to seek to prepare conservation area appraisals for each conservation area. This tool is seen by the document as a vital tool to enable the active management of conservation areas. It has also stressed that accomplishing this document should be based on an involvement for all the stakeholders in an open and inclusive way. In this sense, it stressed that good working relationships between council departments and with relevant external agencies, especially public utility companies, is vital. Furthermore, it has mentioned that it is vital that decision makers have the knowledge, skills and confidence to ensure high design quality in conservation areas. In this sense, clear and supporting guidance and policy frameworks are seen as encouraging the submission of quality proposals and promoting consistent decision making.

Briefly, a wide range of documents were released by the Scottish Government since 1999 with the purpose of explaining the national policies. None of these documents provided a set of criteria that can be used by the local authorities for judging planning applications and in most cases two documents have to accompany each national policy document. One of the more recent documents, i.e. Scottish Government (2013), further explains the six qualities of a successful place, which are addressed later on in Scottish Government (2014). To what extent, however, having such varied types of documents at the national level enhances the role of urban design at the local level and helps local planning authorities is an issue this research will tackle.

4.4.3 Supplementary Documents in Scotland

Historic Scotland¹³ (HS) and Architecture and Design Scotland¹⁴ (A+DS) have published separate sets of documents, by which each body sets out its perspective on what issues have to be considered when inserting new buildings in historic urban contexts. In

¹³ Historic Scotland is an executive agency of the Scottish Government, responsible for a number of the country's historic monuments. It was created as an agency in 1991 and was attached to the Scottish Executive Education Department, which embraces all aspects of the cultural heritage, in May 1999. As part of the Scottish Government, Historic Scotland is directly accountable to the Scottish Ministers for safeguarding the nation's built heritage, and promoting its understanding and enjoyment.

Historic Scotland was merged with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland in 1 October 2015 to become Historic Environment Scotland. Consequently, all of the things previously done by HS, including preparing and updating the SHEP, are now done by HES.

¹⁴ A+DS is an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government. It was established in 2005 to provide advice to the government and bodies involved in commissioning, designing and regulating new buildings and places.

addition, the two bodies have jointly worked on publishing documents in which they set their common view of how to achieve success.

A series of supplementary documents were published by Historic Scotland under the title of 'Scottish Historic Environment Policy'. Scottish Historic Environment Policies (1 to 5) were released between 2006 and 2008. Later on, this series was consolidated into a single document in 2008 (Historic Scotland, 2008) and was revised in July 2009 (Historic Scotland, 2009), and finally the up-to-date version was released in 2011 (Historic Scotland, 2011). Historic Scotland (2011) takes account of the policies and legislative changes that have been introduced since the document was last updated in Historic Scotland (2009). However, the changes in the last two versions, i.e., Historic Scotland (2009 and 2011), were not that substantial.

Historic Scotland (2011) sets out the national policies for the historic environment and provides a framework that has a role and interest in managing the historic environment. It has stressed that planning authorities should take account of the importance of the buildings (both the added new ones and the existing listed or unlisted buildings) with regard to the character or appearance of any part of a conservation area, and to proposals for the future of the cleared site (Historic Scotland, 2011, Para 3.58). Furthermore, Historic Scotland (2011, Para 1.14.c, Para 1.56 and Para 1.58) stresses that Scotland's historic environment has to be recognised as a social, cultural, economic and environmental resource of great value. Elsewhere in Paragraph 1.2 and Paragraph 1.3, the historic character of the built environment is considered as important to the quality of life and the sense of identity. Many of its elements are precious, some are not well understood; if they are lost or damaged, they cannot be replaced.

On the other hand, and since it was created in 2005, A+DS has played a crucial role in enhancing way the design issues are addressed in the planning system as well as raising the profile of urban design. This body has also provided a set of publications to enhance its perspective of how to achieve good design. These publications were mainly concerned with place-making and sustainable development. Through reviewing some projects these documents draw out some inspirations for designers and developers regarding how to achieve successful design. Another document such as *Design Review: The Process* (A+DS, 2009), has gone on to further explain the service that has been provided by the agency and its possible improvements.

A+DS and HS worked jointly in publishing their first document on *New Design in Historic Settings* (A+DS/Historic Scotland, 2010), which suggests ways of thinking and working that increase the likelihood of success.

The key message of this document is that the historic environment is a resource which can add cultural and economic value to new design placed within it, and must be protected. In this regard, it stresses that by understanding the historic environment, its component parts and how they work together to create a whole, the designer will be more likely to achieve an outcome that enhances both the existing environment and the new design itself. The process of analysis that is needed to build this understanding should not only describe what currently makes up a place – the form, layout, and materials used – but it also involves understanding how its individual elements were created and why they took the form they did. Furthermore, it provides prompts to guide successful new design in historic settings (i.e., urban structure, urban grain, scale, materials and detailing, views and landmarks). These prompts, like the qualities provided in Scottish Executive (2001b), were not addressed to guarantee high quality in themselves; instead, they are expected to provide a useful checklist for designers, stakeholders, and the local authority decision makers in exploring whether schemes have been suitably developed. These prompts have been used in this document in assessing some chosen projects and showing how these projects succeeded in meeting them and what lessons can be learned from that.

In brief, A+DS and HS documents have different targets and are obviously influenced by these bodies' orientations – A+DS with design and urban design interest, and HS with a conservation interest. Documents from the two bodies never set clear criteria to judge proposed new forms in sensitive historic contexts. The jointly published document, however, has plainly addressed these criteria and is recommended to be utilised by the local planning authorities in Scotland during the development control process when alternative documents are not in place. However, issues of whether these documents have an influence at the local level and others related to these bodies' orientations and statuses are critical factors to consider.

4.5 Reflection on urban design evolution and its route map in the English and Scottish planning systems

Although local authorities were given powers of intervention regarding design and external appearance, such as the ability to block applications on these grounds, by the UK

Central Government, they were discouraged from either considering themselves to be any sort of arbiters of taste, or trying to involve themselves in the design process. A consensus has emerged since 1996 that certain urban design policies can and should be structured at the national level: the policies should involve the townscape and the public realm, but they should go much further than just regulating external appearances (Carmona, 1996). Accordingly, DOE (1997) carried clear messages of urban design and plainly encouraged LPAs to consider urban design issues in their judgment of planning applications and to refuse them on these bases when they fail to comply with them.

By 1999, Scotland had a devolved parliament and separate planning legislation from England, and urban design has been developed unconnectedly in England and Scotland since then. However, the two planning systems have a very similar structure, and the distinction between them is blurred.

The national policies of the two planning systems have supported the case for good quality design, developing the historic environment and encouraging further involvement of the public. Under these three objectives, the two systems have addressed urban design and its profile has been considerably raised as an issue in steering the design control process. However, this trend was found more in Scotland, and the Scottish Government (2014), unlike DCLG (2012), sets out a list of principles towards achieving quality that are very similar to urban design principles.

National design guidance documents have been produced in the two systems, with the purpose of providing further explanations of the national policies. However, the English perspective in this regard was far clearer than the Scottish one. Unlike its equivalent in Scotland, the long-awaited governmental design manual *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – Towards Better Practice* (CABE and DETR, 2000) – and its updated version – clearly addressed urban design principles with reference to the previous ten years of literature (Paterson, 2011b). In Scotland, the frequently updated documents were not as detailed as CABE and DETR (2000) or DCLG (2014), and none of them set out urban design principles as plainly as the English documents did. More than one document, usually two – each with specific targets – are needed to cover the same points addressed by the English documents.

The role of urban design in the two planning systems has been further boosted by establishing a national design watchdog, i.e., CABE in England and its equivalent in Scotland, A+DS. These bodies have produced a wide range of publications, particularly

CABE, which played a crucial role in raising the profile of urban design through raising design standards, giving advice to local authorities and developers, and taking part in the consultation process. Despite their efforts in doing so, publications of the two systems did not fully succeed in setting out urban design criteria to be followed by their staff or any other stakeholders, including LPAs, during the development control process. However, the role of these bodies may need to be further developed as an aid to local authorities (Dawson and Higgins, 2009; Paterson, 2011a).

On the other hand, English Heritage and its equivalent in Scotland, Historic Scotland, have also provided another range of documents with the purpose of providing further explanations of the national policies that are set for conservation areas. These documents have enhanced the conservative trends of these bodies and they were shaped differently in the two systems. While they took the form of guidance in England through which the principles of the constructive conservation approach were set, the Scottish edition took the form of another set of more detailed conservation policies. However, none of these documents illustrated a way in which good design in historic contexts might be achieved, or even how good design might be defined. No reference was made to any of the published documents on urban design principles. The only exception is English Heritage (2013), which barely mentioned urban design.

CABE and English Heritage and their equivalent bodies in Scotland, A+DS and Historic Scotland, have successfully worked together in publishing some documents concerning applying new designs in historic contexts through which the language of urban design was plainly used, and they have set a foundation for urban design criteria. These documents are similar among the two systems and much stronger than the single documents published by the bodies on how to achieve good design in historic contexts, with clear use for urban design principles and language.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter traced urban design at the national level and found that over the years, the two governments' advice has gradually become more positive and substantial. Urban design has become central in the two systems and its profile has been considerably raised as an issue in steering the development control process, especially as a consequence of the revision of national policies and advice that has resulted from more comprehensive ideas of urban design.

A consensus has emerged that an appropriate urban design route map has to be indicated. There is evidence in the survey that a serious step towards this was undertaken by the two systems; however, this is not fully achieved yet. How clearly and strongly urban design messages and concepts are addressed on the national level, plus how issues of compromising urban design aspects, theoretically and practically, are regarded, are critical factors. These issues will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

In England and Scotland, LPAs manage the process of granting planning permissions for new developments. Short (2007) agrees with Cullingworth and Nadin (2002) that this process can be characterised by a number of key elements: the role of pre-application discussions between key actors; the formal submission of a planning application and acceptance by the LPA; consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies; a planning officer report weighing up the consultation responses and assessing whether a proposal complies with national and local planning policy, precedent and site visits given to the decision making body; and the decision by elected members. Assessment and decision support tools of urban design can be utilised either informally or formally at any or all of these stages.

The following two chapters will discover how urban design tools have been addressed and utilised by the LPAs in Edinburgh and York, with the purpose of helping to raise the products' quality.

CHAPTER 5 – EDINBURGH CASE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The key objective of this chapter is to explore how urban design tools are addressed and utilised as assessment and decision support tools when considering new built form proposals in the City of Edinburgh. The discussion presented in this chapter will help to achieve objective 3 of this thesis and to begin with answering the part of question Q3-2 which is related to the city of Edinburgh.

This chapter starts by briefly reviewing the history of the city's growth and its urban form evolution throughout the ages, as well as its early experience of regulatory approaches towards controlling the insertion of new forms. Thereafter, it surveys the evolution of urban design tools and their application in judging new built form proposals in two real-life projects. This includes reviewing the significance of the building sites and contexts, the problems and challenges of their design, and the process through which the tools were applied to ensure that the building forms fit into their historic urban contexts. Finally, this chapter concludes with the findings from the Edinburgh city approach and the possible lessons to be learned from this experience.

The information used to compile this chapter was obtained from various sources, most of them collected during the fieldwork. These include academic books and papers, and grey literature, including documents that had been released by the City of Edinburgh Council, and Case-study specific material provided by the interviewees, i.e. the pre-application consultations and the later correspondences between the Council and the bodies involved in the planning application consultation process.

5.2 The historical evolution of Edinburgh

Despite the fact that some archaeological discoveries have confirmed that the area now known as Edinburgh has been inhabited since c.8500 BC, very few certain details of who lived in the area and the exact date of their stay are known. However, the first recorded inhabitation dates to the end of the 1st century, when the Romans arrived in the Lothian area, where they established a Cramond fort, within what later grew to become Edinburgh.

This fort was connected to York with the Roman Road that was called ‘Dere Street’ (Coghill, 2008). During the following centuries, the region of Edinburgh came into existence, first under the rule of the Gododdin (5th to 7th centuries), and later under the Northumbrian rule (7th and 10th centuries). However, history recorded little about these centuries and the evidence about the structures that were built during these eras and their exact locations is a matter of dispute (Fraser, 2009).

Dickinson (1961) reviews the history of Edinburgh and refers to the late centuries of the Medieval era¹⁵ (12th century to 1560) as the period during which the early town of Edinburgh took shape, after being established by King David I in the 12th century as one of the royal burghs. Many of the significant architectural elements of the city, including the City Walls¹⁶ (see figure 5.1), Edinburgh Castle and Holyrood Abbey (see figure 5.2) and the first St Giles church, were built during this period. However, in the late 16th century, the city suffered from wars and destruction, and many of the buildings were either destroyed or seriously damaged (Dickinson, 1961).

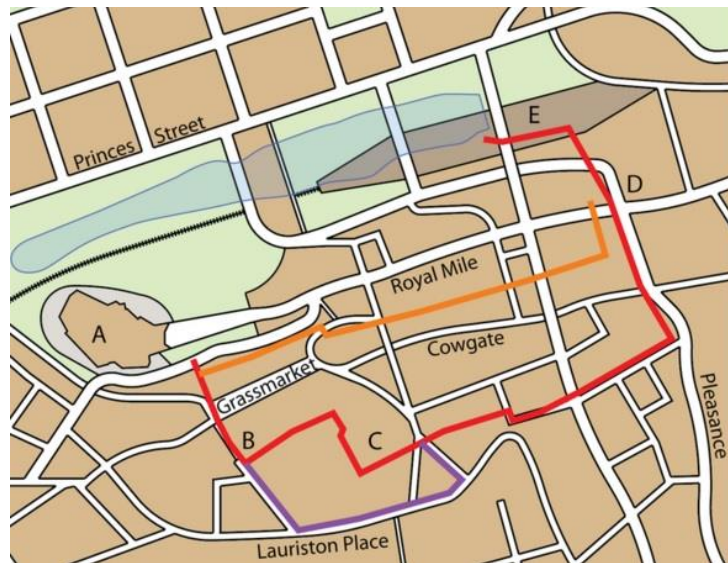


Figure 5.1: The Town Walls.

Key: orange is the King's wall; red is the Flodden Wall; purple is the Telfer Wall.

A: Edinburgh Castle; B: Flodden Tower; C: Greyfriars Kirkyard; D: site of Netherbow Port; E: Waverly station.

Source: [www.Jonathan Oldenbuck's Gallery.com](http://www.JonathanOldenbuck'sGallery.com)

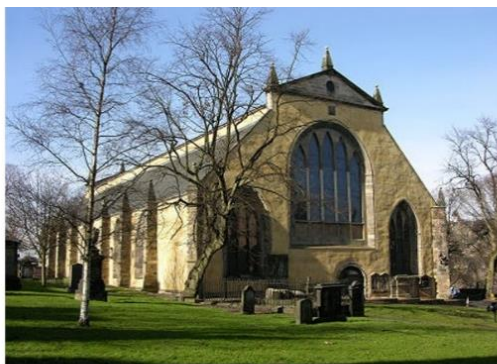
¹⁵ The Medieval era has been regarded as extending approximately from the end of the 5th century AD, when the control of the Roman Empire had ended, until the end of the 16th century AD, when it was superseded by the Renaissance (CEC, nd).

¹⁶ There have been several town walls around Edinburgh since the royal burgh was established around 1125 AC. However, the King's Wall was the first recorded built wall in the mid-15th century. Other walls were built at intervals, Flodden Wall in the 16th century and Telfer Wall in the 17th century. These walls had a number of gates, known as ports. Throughout their history, the town walls of Edinburgh never served for defensive purposes; instead, they have served well as a trade barrier, i.e. a means of controlling trade and taxing goods and as a deterrent to smugglers. By the mid-18th century, demolition of sections of the wall began and continued into the 19th century. Today, a number of sections of the three successive walls survive, though none of the ports remain.



Figure 5.2: Edinburgh Castle (to the left) and Holyrood Abbey (to the right)
Source: www.visitscotland.com

During the 17th century, the crowns of Scotland and England were united under what was known as the Union of the Crowns. After this time, the city had witnessed economic prosperity and population growth. However, the boundaries of Edinburgh were still defined by the city's three defensive town walls. Accordingly, buildings of 11 stories or more were introduced to the city and shaped its urban form during this period. However, most of these buildings were replaced with Victorian buildings in the 19th century (Wilson, 2008), and a few buildings survived, e.g. the current buildings of Holyrood Palace, Greyfriars and Canongate Kirks (see figure 5.3).



Greyfriars Kirk



Holyrood Palace



Canongate Kirk



St Giles Cathedral

Figure 5.3: Pre- 17th century remaining buildings
Source: Adapted by the researcher from CEC (nd).

Prosperity in Scotland, combined with the arrival of the Age of Enlightenment in Edinburgh during the early 18th century, led to an architectural boom. However, the Old Town inside the walls had become overcrowded and there was no doubt that the city needed to extend. The decision was taken and the plans were made to build a new town of Edinburgh to the North on a long low ridge of land running from East to West. The buildings of the New Town marked a departure from the physical layout of the Old Town and from its built forms, but also started a process of socio-economic segregation in the city. This new approach was reflected in the Georgian love of classical architecture of ancient Greek styles, such as the Parthenon and the Acropolis. This Greek influence went beyond architecture to influence the social style of life such as hairdressing and tea sets. Accordingly, Edinburgh earned its nickname ‘Athens of the north’ (Graham, 1906; Brown, 1997).

During this period, the city also hosted the traditional industries of printing, brewing, and distilling. This industry continued to grow with new rubber and engineering works, and pharmaceuticals in the 19th century. However, industrialisation was limited compared with other cities in Britain. During the period extending from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries, the Georgian (1714-1837 AC), Victorian (1837-1901 AC) and Edwardian (1901-1914) styles of architecture dominated the styling of the city.

In the 20th century, particularly after the Second World War, having unique physical features such as its location and topography contributed powerfully to Edinburgh’s rapid development, together with the desire to become an international mercantile capital. This made the city shift its focus onto providing the services needed to suit economic life. It adopted a market-oriented culture providing an encouraging atmosphere for establishing businesses and tourism. Accordingly, the city experienced serious tension between innovation and conservation in design, resulting in significant transformations of its urban context (Glendinning and Mackechnie, 2004).

This transformation was described by Edwards and Jenkins (2005, p. 5) as “*a wonderfully dynamic balance which is the envy of other cities*”. They also consider that this transformation was a necessary prerequisite both to preserve and possibly to enhance Edinburgh within a changing form of globalisation. In other words, it was not simply a result of the city’s preparations for the new era of the 21st century; it was also an urgent need for survival. However, Edwards and Jenkins (2005) conclude that this transformation or innovation, as the change apologist prefers to call it, needs to be

questioned as it did not leave the city untouched, but resulted in a new form of three-dimensional space and contexts that are not necessarily unique to Edinburgh and could be part of a general trend of change.

According to Glendinning and Mackechnie (2004) and Edwards and Jenkins (2005), Edinburgh began to witness this change in the 1930s when newly designed buildings started to emerge, creating confrontations between modernism and tradition, and between internationalism and nationalism. This was further enhanced in the following years, until the 1960s, when a more modern trend started to be adopted, with a focus on function and organic inspiration. This was very evident in some architects' designs, with the influence of North American and Northern European architecture (see figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4: Scottish Widows' new head office at Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh, by Basil Spence.
Source: www.basilspence.org.uk

According to Edwards and Jenkins (2005), an era of preservation in Edinburgh started at the end of the 1960s. During this era, the modernist vision of architecture is completely rejected and the central driving forces in Scottish architecture focused on preserving old buildings rather than creating new buildings of any kind. The restoration of Milne's Court to become halls for Edinburgh University is given by Edwards and Jenkins (2005) as an example of this trend in practice.

Since the early 1970s, new preservation tactics have been introduced to pave the way for adopting conservation policies that focus on the concept of reusing old buildings rather than retention. As such, conservation had come to the fore as a new approach to preservation and controlling change. The Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee, along with the Scottish Georgian Society, which was later called the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, were established in 1970 with the purpose of enhancing the conservation approach and in 1977 the New Town was designated as a conservation area (CEC, 2005b).

According to Edwards and Jenkins (2005), conservation succeeded between the 1960s and the 1980s in saving more of the historic contexts than when this approach was not being applied, but it also lost public support in the process. They argue that conservation faced strong opposition from those who considered that conservation had become very strict and it prevented many good proposals of new buildings and hence, taking away Edinburgh's key character of being dynamic which has always distinguished it from other UK cities. This paved the road for the emergence of an alternative approach to urban design in the late 1980s. This new approach is described by Edwards and Jenkins (2005, p. 185) as "*the most important innovation in Edinburgh in terms of development of the built environment*".

The medieval Old Town and the Georgian New Town districts of Edinburgh with over 4,500 listed buildings within the city ranking A, B and C, with a total of 40 conservation areas covering 23% of the building stock were together designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995¹⁷. Accordingly, Edinburgh World Heritage was established in 1999 by the City of Edinburgh Council and Historic Scotland through a merger between the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee and the Edinburgh Old Town Renewal Trust. Its role includes coordinating the promotion and management of the Site and overseeing the implementation of the Site's Management Plan.

The urban design approach has succeeded on many occasions in balancing conflicting styles, i.e. contemporary proposals and existing heritage, such as the new Scotsman building, the International Conference Centre and Our Dynamic Earth (Edwards and Jenkins, 2005). This approach has been developed over the last twenty-five years and has provided assessment and decision support tools to inform the decision-making process for proposals of new built forms in historic contexts. These tools will be discussed in the following subsections.

¹⁷ According to CEC (2016), the scheme for classifying listed buildings is:

- **Category A:** buildings of national or international importance, either architectural or historic, or fine little-altered examples of some particular period, style or building type.
- **Category B:** buildings of regional or more than local importance, or major examples of some particular period, style or building type which may have been altered.
- **Category C:** buildings of local importance, lesser examples of any period, style, or building type, as originally constructed or moderately altered; and simple traditional buildings which group well with others in categories A and B.

There are about 47,400 listed buildings in Scotland. Of these, around 8 percent (some 3,800) are Category A, and 51 percent (24,000) are Category B, with the rest listed at Category C(s).

5.3 Urban design approach in Edinburgh

This section reviews the development of urban design tools in Edinburgh discussing how these tools have been addressed and applied in the city. The below classification of these tools was set by the researcher in Chapter 2 (see section 2.7.2).

5.3.1 Research and analysis tools

Edinburgh City Council and the Scottish Government are obliged through their policies and guidelines to protect conservation areas from development that might adversely affect their special character. In this context, the protection means demonstrating a commitment to positive actions for the safeguarding and enhancement of character and appearance. Understanding the context of where the building sits is considered to be an essential first step towards having good design, and without this the likelihood of having good outcomes will decrease significantly (see Scottish Government, 2010, Para 117; Scottish Government, 2014, Para 137). Also, townscape appraisal is stressed by CEC (2013) as being required in order to evaluate changes to character and views that will result from development, and to ensure that proposals respond positively to their context.

Two documents, the *Old Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal* (CEC, 2005a) and the *New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal* (CEC, 2005b), were approved by the Edinburgh City Council Planning Committee in 2005 as a commitment of the City Council towards preserving the conservation areas as well as encouraging innovative architecture. These documents provide classifications and illustrations of the most significant elements that shape the New and Old Town conservation areas. This includes the most significant buildings, i.e. listed buildings and unlisted buildings, and the architectural character of these areas, i.e. spatial character and townscape, vistas and views, buildings forms, building lines and streetscape. It is worth noting that, in addition to the aforementioned conservation areas, i.e. the New and Old Town conservation areas, there are many other areas each with their own character appraisal. However, as the spatial limit of this research is within the borders of these two areas, only these two documents are reviewed here (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2).

In addition to these documents, *The old and new towns of Edinburgh world heritage site management plan* (CEC *et al.*, 2005) was published by the City Council in partnership with other bodies such as Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Scotland. The document has come to supplement Edinburgh City Local Plan policies relating to

conservation and design and it has sought to sustain and monitor the Outstanding Universal Values of Edinburgh's World Heritage Site, and to ensure that changes complement and enhance those Outstanding Universal Values. A series of revised versions has been published subsequently since the first version in 2005, with the last update in 2011 (CEC *et al.*, 2011), providing an updated framework for the effective management of the World Heritage Site. However, the changes between these documents were not substantial.

These revised versions of the document state what is significant about the World Heritage Site, i.e. its key features such as the unique landscape, the contrasting architectural characters of the Medieval Old Town and Georgian New Town, and the history and heritage of Scotland's ancient capital. These issues have been raised as a set of Outstanding Universal Values that have to be considered when judging new built form proposals, as follows:

- The Topography of Hills and Valleys
- Juxtaposition of the Old and New Towns
- Contrasting Character
- Townscape
- Historic Buildings
- Statues and Monuments
- Communities

The further aims of the document are raising the awareness of the challenges and opportunities, for example the risk of inappropriate development and the need to promote the use of traditional materials; setting out policies to preserve, enhance and facilitate change to ensure that Edinburgh is a thriving, dynamic, economically successful city; and ultimately helping the people of the World Heritage Site to engage with its history and heritage. With the decision-making processes that shape the city centre, this is considered essential in order to ensure that the site remains vibrant and balanced.

Furthermore, *Listed buildings and conservation areas* (CEC, 2012) has also been provided by the City Council with the aim of providing a further explanation of the importance of these areas and their elements. This document is presented differently than the other aforementioned documents. It provides abundant details about the most

noteworthy details of materials and the elements' shapes and style, i.e. door, windows, chimneys, etc.

The above reviewed documents are intended to promote awareness of the World Heritage Site and guide the local planning authority when making planning decisions and, where opportunities arise, preparing enhancement proposals. They could be used by the applicants and the consultees alike to make them aware of the elements that compose the significant conservation areas. In fact, they have been put forward as a material consideration when judging new applications for development within the conservation area. The character area appraisals reinforce the requirement in the *Edinburgh Design Guidance* that applications for significant new developments be accompanied by a contextual analysis that demonstrates how the proposals take account of the essential character of the area.

5.3.2 Coordination tools

Design policies

The *Scottish Planning Policy* (Scottish Government, 2010, Para 256) states that local design and conservation policies should enable informed judgements on development proposals, but should not create a rigid or formulaic approach to decision making. In order, therefore, to have an approach that can satisfactorily deal with sensitive locations including listed and unlisted buildings, the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) has developed a set of design and conservation policies.

Edinburgh City Local Plan (CEC, 2010), which was approved in January 2010, provided the Development Plan for Edinburgh and replaced five local plans, prepared at various times since 1992, covering different parts of the same area. The CEC (2010) will be replaced with an updated version drafted in 2015 (CEC, 2015), which has not been approved yet. This research will mainly focus on the *Edinburgh City Local Plan* (CEC, 2010), the one in place for the city, which was in use when the case study projects were assessed; it will, however, shed light on the differences between the plan in use and the new drafted plan.

In CEC (2010), design quality is emphasised as a set of policies to provide a harmonious integration of new development with the existing context and to protect the city's characteristics. It also explains how it is possible to reuse listed/unlisted buildings with

the aim of enhancing and preserving the character of these buildings. Policy Des 1 (Design Quality and Context) states plainly that the Council would not grant planning permission for poor quality or inappropriate design, and proposals should incorporate a high-quality, innovative design, and show a positive response to, or enhancement of, the existing quality and character of the immediate and wider environment. This is particularly the case where the environment has a special importance, e.g. is a World Heritage Site. Furthermore, Policy Des 2 (Coordinated Development) encourages a comprehensive approach towards redevelopment and regeneration which complies with the pre-prepared development frameworks or masterplans. It also points out that compromise with the noted issues in Policy Des 1 will not be acceptable. With further details, Policy Des 3 (Development Design) gives more attention to the possible impact of any proposal on neighbouring properties and the surrounding townscape. In this regard, it stresses that *“new development proposals will be expected to have similar characteristics of scale, height, layout and massing to the surrounding buildings”*.

Policy Des 4 (Layout Design) and Policy Des 5 (External Spaces) conclude that the new proposals should show an integrative and comprehensive approach that should be stressed in the layout of buildings and public spaces, where the whole space elements are seen as an integral part of the scheme as a whole. However, Policy Des 10 (Tall Buildings and Landmarks) gives some flexibility to building height by stating that buildings that rise above the building height prevailing generally in the surrounding area will be permitted. However, this is only where a new proposal can enhance the skyline and surrounding townscape, appropriately fitting the scale of its context without causing any adverse impact on important views of landmark buildings and the historic skyline in the urban area. These points are also applied to alterations and extensions, as stated in Policy Des 11 (Alterations and extensions).

In CEC (2010), along with Policy Des 1, the message is clear in Policy Env 1 (World Heritage Site) that, *“development which would harm the qualities which justified the inscription of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh as a World Heritage Site or would have a detrimental impact on the Site's setting will not be permitted”*. However, conservation policies have been divided into two sets of policies for listed buildings and conservation areas respectively. They have been addressed to determine which kind of changes would be acceptable for such buildings and areas. Policy Env 2 (Listed Buildings – Demolition) provides some exceptions for proposals of total or substantial demolition of a listed building, particularly in Para (c) of this policy, which states that the merit of

alternative proposals for the site and the public benefits to be derived from allowing demolition should outweigh the possible loss. Also, another set of exceptions have been set by Policy Env 3 (Listed Buildings – Setting), which concerns permitting development affecting the setting of a listed building only if not detrimental to the appearance or character of the building, or to its setting. Furthermore, the same issues for a possible change of listed building cases have also been applied for the alterations and extensions in Policy Env 4 (Listed Buildings – Alterations and Extensions).

Policy Env 5 (Conservation Areas – Demolition of Buildings) states that the full demolition of an unlisted building, which is considered to make a positive contribution to the character of a conservation area, will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and after taking into account the considerations set out in Policy Env 2 above. This requires submitting a detailed planning application for a replacement building that enhances or preserves the character of the area. Likewise, Policy Env 6 (Conservation Areas-development) stresses that the visual effect of the development proposal on the character of the area needs to be assessed. Paragraph (a) of this policy stresses preserving and enhancing the special character or appearance of the conservation area and is considered with the relevant conservation area character appraisal. Paragraph (c) also notes that new development should demonstrate high standards of design and use materials appropriate to the historic environment.

Most of the above-mentioned policies have been kept in the new draft of Edinburgh's Local Development Plan (CEC, 2015), with some exceptions. For instance, Des 3 (Development design) has been split into three sets of policies- incorporating and enhancing existing and potential features, impact on setting and impact on amenities- and further details and explanations have been provided. Furthermore, a policy on public realm and landscape design replaced one on the design of external spaces. Ultimately, the new conservation policies (Caring for the environment) in the CEC (2014) repeat those in the CEC (2010) with no further change.

Design guidelines

A wide range of supplementary documents has been released by the City of Edinburgh Council at the local level, setting out guidelines on how to comply with the Local Plan policies. These documents have come to reflect and further enhance the urban design approach at the local level. The *Edinburgh Standards for Urban Design* document (CEC,

2003) is one of the most significant. It provides a set of Urban Design Principles that are presented within a hierarchy with a sequential relationship between the different levels, which comprise City-wide, Local Area, Site/Street, and Public Realm dimensions. These principles stress maintaining and improving the visual image and identity of Edinburgh, by raising awareness of the city's structure and character that distinguish it from other cities. It also stresses the need for further pressures on proposed new developments in order to achieve a better design quality and to ensure that they fit into their context. It aims to generate greater interest in the contribution of new developments in order to improve the public realm and its commitment to the making of places for people to appreciate and enjoy.

Later on, *Edinburgh Standards for Streets* (CEC, 2006) was introduced, with a further eight principles that aim to achieve a coherent and enhanced public realm. Good design issues have been mentioned clearly in this document, in which the relationship between buildings, footways and roads are considered to be crucial in shaping the street. This document mainly focused on the accessibility issues of transport and road safety; however, the influence of urban design was clear in setting the addressed principles, mainly principles 2, 3 and 4 which cover townscape and place-making issues.

The *Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building* (CEC, 2007a) was released with two aims:

- Firstly, to demonstrate how sustainable development may be improved in the Edinburgh context by identifying a series of guiding principles and standards by which this might be achieved.
- Secondly, to illustrate to the development sector the standards against which new proposals will be assessed. Quality layout, building and landscape design are listed on the sustainability agenda, where building appearance is the main concern.

On 19 June 2008, the Planning Committee approved *The Guideline for the Protection of Key Views* (CEC, 2008). This guideline was developed to be an important tool in assessing the impact of development on landmark features and protecting the historic skyline. It was released with the purpose of supplementing Local Plan policies and other guidance that sought to protect the quality of the city's environment. It provided skyline studies and set out, in figures, how to comply with the requirements to ensure that new

proposals for new buildings integrate with the outstanding physical and natural characteristics of the city. It also stressed the importance of considering the views from strategic viewpoints such as the Castle, the Mound, along Princes Street, and other views identified in the guidelines.

A new version of design guidance was released in May 2013 and superseded the CEC (2003, 2006, 2007a and 2008). The *Edinburgh Design Guidance* (CEC, 2013) aims to clarify to everyone involved with new building proposals how to comply with the local design policies. It stresses that any new design proposal needs to demonstrate an understanding of the unique characters of the city and the contexts within which it is located. Furthermore, it requires that new design proposals reinforce these contexts by conserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the townscape, including the city skyline and views, and finally that they should be part of a comprehensive approach to the layout rather than being compromised with the adjacent developments. In addition, it provides some examples of good design.

This document is structured around three chapters: context and design, designing buildings, and landscape and biodiversity. The first two chapters are concerned with the external appearance of development and its potential impact on the contexts where they sit, and will be the focus of this section.

The chapter on context and design starts with addressing a list of key issues, as follows:

- The preparation of a *design statement* by the applicant is recommended to show a clear understanding of the context, and to explain and illustrate the design concept of the proposed layout and design details, and how these comply with the Local Plan and achieve the expected quality.
- A *townscape appraisal and visual assessment* are required in order to evaluate changes to character and views that will result from development, and to ensure that proposals respond positively to their context. The issues of impacts are addressed on two levels, in the wider context as well as on the immediate surroundings. Small developments are also considered, as they can have significant impacts on the two levels.
- Attention to the city *skyline and views*, and to incorporating existing views, is also required to conserve the city's skyline, as well as to identify, analyse and retain other important views in relation to new development. However, the guidance

provides some exceptions that may be allowed in terms of breaking the skyline, if a development can demonstrate that it adds to the city's skyline in a positive way and enhances the character of the city.

- Proposals are expected to incorporate existing buildings and boundary elements (even if they are not listed or in a conservation area) where they can contribute positively to new development. Encouraging a comprehensive approach to development and regeneration, i.e. an integration approach, is recommended.
- Reuse of elements from existing buildings, particularly where there is a historical interest, and the protection and enhancement of existing archaeology, are encouraged.

On the other hand, the chapter on designing buildings sets out the Council's expectations of how features of proposed buildings can integrate well with the existing buildings and spaces. It highlights some key points in this regard, as follows:

- New buildings should match the general height and form of buildings prevailing in the surrounding area as this helps to protect the visual character of areas where there are uniform building heights, and also helps to protect key views. However, an increase in building height such that it exceeds neighbouring buildings is considered to be acceptable in some cases, as this may enhance the skyline and surrounding townscape.
- New buildings should also be in harmony with the scale of buildings (i.e. size and form) and the other elements that compose its external appearance (i.e. windows and doors and other features) in relation to those of their neighbours. Applying for a new development that contrasts with surrounding buildings requires there to be a compelling reasoning for the difference.
- New buildings should be positioned on site and with such a layout that engages positively with streets and spaces, and where the surrounding townscape character of the area is good, should reflect it.
- The chosen material for the new development is also an important consideration in this guidance as it should be in harmony with the surrounding material and applying alternatives, with a striking contrast, for instance, needs justifications.

As further supplementary documents, and with the purpose of providing the basis for more detailed guidance on how schemes can be successful in meeting the addressed

policies and expectations in specific areas and sites, development briefs have been released by the City of Edinburgh Council for a number of sites. *Princes Street (Blocks 1-7a) Development Briefs* (CEC, 2009), as one of them, has come to complement the *City Centre Princes Street Development Framework* principles (CEC, 2007b). Both of these aim to take into consideration the needs of contemporary users by reconciling them with the needs of the historic environment, and creating a high-quality built environment and public realm.

The planning and development principles that have been set to develop the seven blocks of Princes Street were introduced in CEC (2009) (see section 5.4.1). The development proposals are clearly illustrated and they discuss the opportunities available in each block. Further, it explains how the new buildings can be incorporated with the existing buildings, including the listed buildings nearby, and how the potential proposals can contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

5.3.3 Implementation tools

Design review panel

The message of the national policies and guidelines is to further emphasise that all those involved with the system have a responsibility to engage and work together constructively and proportionately to achieve quality places for Scotland. This includes the Scottish Government and its agencies, elected members, communities, public bodies, developers, applicants, agents, interest groups and representative organisations (Scottish Government, 2014, Para 5; Scottish Government, 2010, Para 9).

In 2005, Architecture + Design Scotland was established as the Government's advisor on design, urban design and public space in Scotland, where it was known as a 'non-statutory consultee' in the planning process, meaning that local planning authorities should heed A+DS's advice when making decisions, but that they were not obliged to do so. One of its main functions is running design reviews with the purpose of raising the quality of the built environment by securing well-designed places and buildings that respect and contribute positively to their settings, promote aspiration and a sense of belonging and use resources sensibly. A+DS comprises members with a diverse range of professional skills and experience in the built environment, and provides expert independent

assessments of building schemes and schemes of national importance that have a significant impact on the local environment, or that set standards for the future.

In 2009, the City of Edinburgh Council established the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel (EUDP), which was conceived as part of the City of Edinburgh Council's Design initiative, aiming to contribute to improved transparency, inclusive engagement and shared exploration of design issues with key consultees, in order to raise the quality of the built environment in Edinburgh¹⁸. While this panel is not affiliated in any way with A+DS, the latter is represented on this panel by one of their staff, where with other representatives from a number of local interest groups they broadly share the remit of informing the planning process by contributing local contexts and views on the proposals being presented.

EUDP is an important ingredient of the pre-application process, giving independent and professional advice. It is chaired by a staff member of the Council planning service, who has the responsibility, along with the secretary, for organising and facilitating discussions during meetings at the City Chambers, the place where the panel usually meets. This panel also comprises a series of bodies including Police Scotland, The Cockburn Association, The Edinburgh Architectural Association (EAA), The Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA), Landscape Institute Scotland, RTPi Scotland, Heriot-Watt University and the Transport Research Institute of Edinburgh Napier University. Each of these is represented by one member, except the EAA which has three representatives.

The panel met for the first time in March 2009. Since then it has met monthly and reviews between one and three schemes per meeting, as well as the revised drafts of Council policy and guidance that have an impact on urban design; it gives reports to help designers, developers, and planners to develop proposals in a positive way. Despite the fact that the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel is chaired by a member of the planning department and its recommendations may be included in a planning report on an application, it is, however, independent of the CEC and does not have statutory decision-making powers. Ultimately, it is also part of the Panel's role to undertake a review of its effectiveness each year.

¹⁸ The EUDP doesn't consider every proposal but only those that are significant or complex.

Public involvement

Effective engagement with the public has been encouraged by national policies, in which public engagement is stressed as important to lead to better plans, better decisions, and more satisfactory outcomes. It can help to avoid delays in the planning process, yet local authorities are encouraged to provide what is required to further enhance this role (Scottish Executive, 2002, Paras 60, 61 and 74; Scottish Government, 2010, Para 31 and 32; Scottish Government, 2014, Paras 5-7 and 64). The same message is further enhanced on many occasions in the national guidelines and the local policies and guidelines. In each, the role of the public in deciding about the appearance of their built environment was given the priority as this could affect them psychologically and physically (Scottish Government, 2013).

In response to these messages, people have been encouraged by Edinburgh City Council to comment on new proposals of buildings in various ways. One is by attending the exhibitions that applicants for developments of a certain size are¹⁹ usually asked by the CEC to organise as a part of the pre-application consultation process. For these exhibitions, the design team is asked by the Council to choose an appropriate time to hold the exhibition (not too early) and to take seriously the comments that might be given by people. People will also have been consulted by asking for their comments on proposals through their Community Council (CC)²⁰, which is recognised as a statutory consultee. In other words, the Planning Committee is pledged, under the law, to consult the Community Council. The comments given by the Community Council have to go to the Planning Committee, and the community can also be represented through the Community Council at the Planning Committee meeting where the scheme is discussed (interviewee no. 2). Interviewee no. 2 describes it is a “*bottom layer of the local government*”. In addition, people are also encouraged to comment on the drafts of the updated policies and guidance by commenting directly on the CEC website or, again, through their Community Council.

¹⁹ Development that are significant or complex, set standards or will have a cumulative impact if they are repeated.

²⁰ A **community council** is a public representative body in Great Britain. Scottish community councils were first created under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, many years after Scottish parish councils were abolished by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1929. They are defined geographically.

Ultimately, the City of Edinburgh has adopted a comprehensive approach towards urban design, through which urban design tools have been put in place to ensure good-quality outcomes and a revival of the architectural viability of historic urban contexts (see table 5.1 and figure 5.5). Exploring their utilisation in the design judgement process and their role in achieving good designs in two chosen case study projects in Edinburgh, is the aim of the following sections.

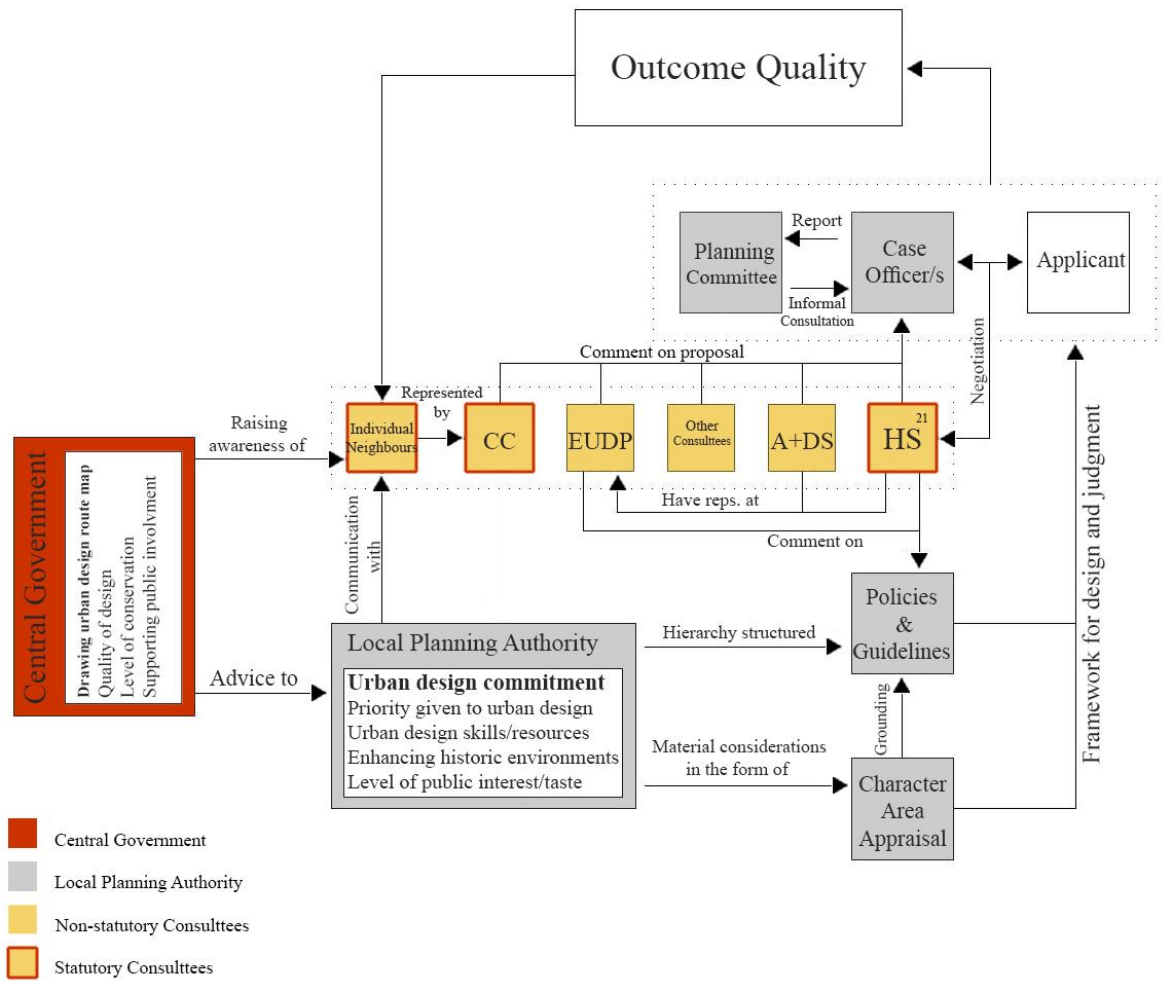


Figure 5.5: Edinburgh’s approach to new development outcomes quality
 Source: The researcher

²¹ It is now called HES (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.3).

Table 5.1: Urban design assessment and decision support tools as applied in Edinburgh

Source: The researcher draws on CEC (2003; 2005a; 2005b; 2006, 2007a, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2016); CEC *et al.* (2005 and 2011); A+DS/Historic Scotland (2010).

Urban design tools		Level	Key principles	Other comments
Research and analysis tools	<i>Old Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal</i> (CEC, 2005a); <i>New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal</i> (CEC, 2005b)	Local	Providing classifications and illustrations of the most significant elements that shape the New and Old Town conservation areas.	Material planning consideration.
	<i>The old and new towns of Edinburgh world heritage site management plan</i> (CEC <i>et al.</i> , 2005)	Local	Supporting the Local Plan in sustaining and monitoring the Outstanding Universal Values of Edinburgh's World Heritage Site and ensuring that changes complement and enhance those Outstanding Universal Values.	Recently updated and replaced by CEC <i>et al.</i> (2011).
	<i>Listed buildings and conservation areas</i> (CEC, 2012)	Local	Providing further explanation of the importance of conservation areas and their elements. Provides details about the most noteworthy details of materials and the elements' shapes and style, i.e. door, windows, chimneys, etc.	Material planning consideration. It is now updated (CEC, 2016).
Coordination tools	<i>Edinburgh City Local Plan</i> (CEC, 2010)	Local	Emphasising design quality in two sets of design and conservation policies to ensure a harmonious integration of new developments with their existing context, including the historic, and to protect the city's characteristics. It also explains how it is possible to reuse listed/unlisted buildings with the aim of enhancing and preserving the character of these buildings.	In the process of being replaced by CEC (2015)
	<i>New Design in Historic Settings</i> (A+DS and Historic Scotland, 2010)	National	Suggests ways of thinking and working, and prompts to guide successful new design in historic settings. Provides examples of successful projects and based on their experience draws some lessons to be learned.	Material planning consideration
	<i>Edinburgh Standards for Urban Design</i> (CEC, 2003)	Local	Maintaining and improving the visual image and identity of Edinburgh by using a set of Urban Design Principles. Improving the public realm and commitment to the making of places for people to appreciate and enjoy, through achieving better design quality and ensuring their fit in their context.	They are now replaced with Edinburgh Design Guidance (CEC, 2013)
	<i>Edinburgh Standards for Streets</i> (CEC, 2006)	Local	Provides eight principles which aim to achieve a coherent and enhanced public realm.	
	<i>Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building</i> (CEC, 2007a)	Local	Identifying a series of guiding principles and standards by which sustainable development might be achieved.	Supplements Local Plan policies and other guidance.
	<i>The Guideline for the Protection of Key Views</i> (CEC, 2008)	Local	Setting out skyline principles and explaining how to comply with the requirements and to ensure that new proposals for new buildings integrate with the outstanding physical and natural characteristics of the city.	
	Development briefs e.g. <i>Princes Street (Blocks 1-7a) Development Briefs</i> (CEC, 2009)	Local	Setting out more detailed guidance on how schemes can be successful in meeting the addressed policies and expectations in specific areas and sites.	
Implementation tools (Including Stakeholders)	CC	Local	Key actors involved in the judgement process of proposed new building forms in historic urban contexts with the purpose of ensuring quality in design proposals.	Statutory consultee.
	HS	National		Non-statutory consultee.
	EUDP	Local		
	EWH	Local		
	A+DS	National		

5.4 Edinburgh's urban design experience

Edinburgh's existing built heritage is a complex and rich mixture of surviving historical buildings that date back to the Medieval, Georgian, Victorian, Modern and Post-Modern periods (see figure 5.6). These buildings have shaped the city's image for a long time, and many are listed as historical buildings that have memorable architectural characters and cultural values and are therefore classified as world heritage. This includes Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace and the remains of Holyrood Abbey, the churches of St. Giles, Greyfriars and the Canongate Kirks, and an extensive Medieval Old Town and Georgian New Town (see figures 5.2, 5.3 and 5.6). Meanwhile, tourism has become a key part of the economy of the contemporary city, as the second touristic city in the UK after London, with one million overseas visitors each year who come to enjoy its historical, cultural and architectural value as well as its annual festivals and events. Thus, maintaining the city's cultural richness and its historical image, which is a key part of Edinburgh's unique identity, is crucial to ensure continuity (Johnson and Rosenburgh, 2010).



Figure 5.6: A view of the New and Old towns of Edinburgh
Source: www.visitscotland.com

5.4.1 Primark Building

The proposed development is a new flagship shop for Primark. It redevelops an existing large steel-framed reinforced concrete building which was developed as a Littlewoods department store in 1967 with a total of 5110 m² of sales areas arranged across four levels (basement to second floor level). It had additional staff accommodation and stockrooms

at level three and a rooftop plant room set back from the building line to Princes Street at level four. The building was extended all the way to Rose Street in three stories in height, incorporating a car park and mainly blank elevations.

Site and context for development

The Georgian New Town of Edinburgh is inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and of international importance (see section 5.2). Princes Street is the southernmost street of Edinburgh's New Town and one of the major streets in central Edinburgh. It stretches around 1 mile (1.6 km) from Lothian Road in the west to Leith Street in the east (See figure 5.7). The street has virtually no buildings on the south side, allowing panoramic views of the Old Town (see figure 5.8).



Figure 5.7: The New and Old towns of Edinburgh
Source: Adapted by the researcher from CEC (2007b)



Figure 5.8: A panoramic view of the Old Town as shown from Princes Street
Source: www.st-andrews.ac.uk

Due to the street's significance, and with the purpose of increasing the likelihood of good building design on this street, CEC (2009) was released by the City of Edinburgh Council (see section 5.3.2). This document distinguishes seven blocks along Princes Street and sets out the main principles on which development proposals for the area should be based. It also gives the main concerns for the unique opportunities, constraints and characteristics of the street (see figures 5.9 and 5.10).

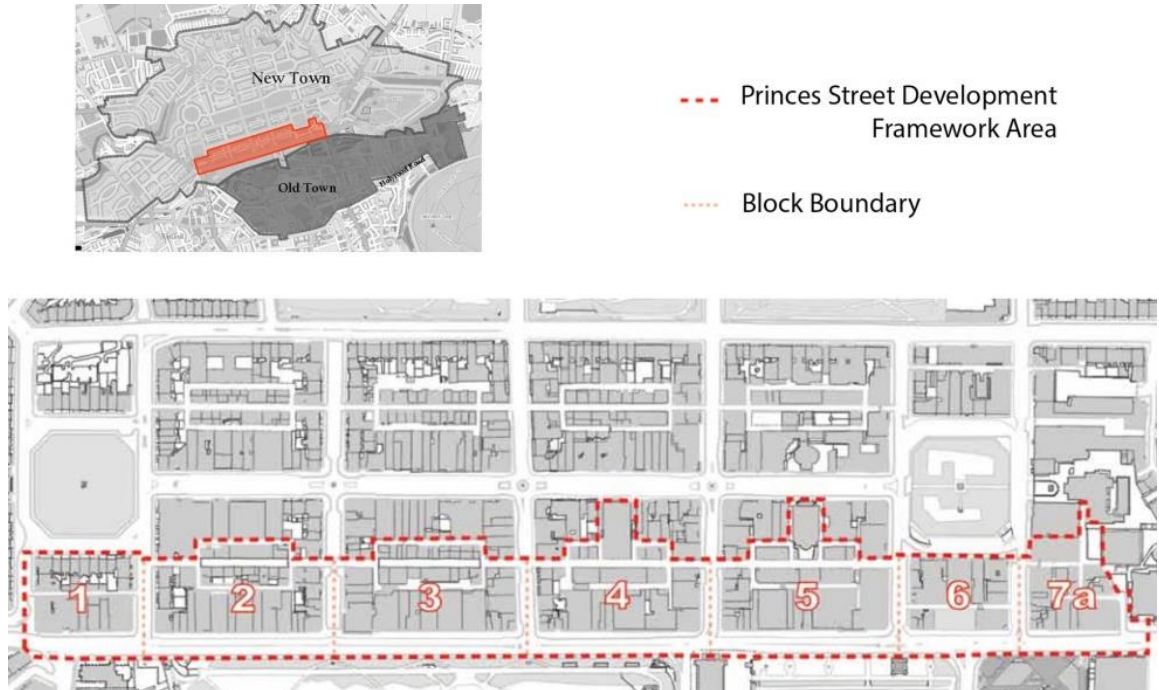


Figure 5.9: Princes Street blocks
Source: Adapted by the researcher from CEC (2009)

Block 4 is bounded on the south by Princes Street, on the west by Frederick Street (shops and residential street with a good view of the Castle), on the east by Hanover Street (frames the view of the Royal Scottish Academy of the Mound, New College and the spire of the former Tollbooth Church in the Old Town) and on the north by George Street (the city's most prestigious shopping district). However, Rose Street (a residential, office and shopping street with a large number of pubs that has been pedestrianised) splits block 4 into two parts, the northern and the southern parts (see figure 5.10).

Within the southern part of block 4, the first case study project site (91-93 Princess Street) covers approximately 0.2 hectares and extends from the Princes Street frontage to Rose Street, extending over Rose Street Lane South (see figure 5.10).



Figure 5.10: Block 4 characteristics
 Source: Adapted by the researcher from CEC (2009)

Block 4 and the other blocks along the street contain listed buildings and represent a significant surviving part of the original fabric of Edinburgh’s First New Town. These listed buildings range from A to B, dating from each major architectural period – Georgian, Edwardian, Victorian, and 20th century Modernism (see figure 5.11).

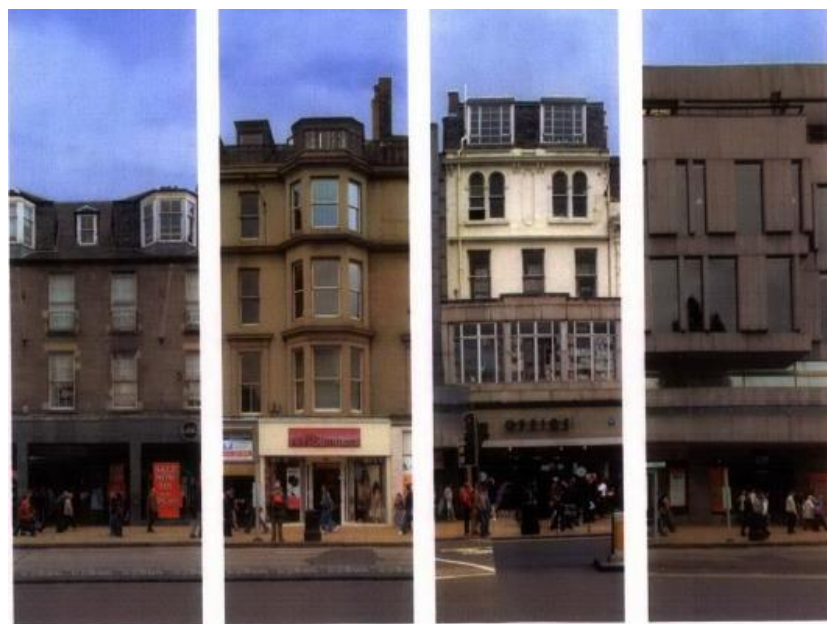


Figure 5.11: Various façade styles of Princes Street’s listed buildings
 Source: Documents provided by 3D Reid Architects during the fieldwork

Challenges of the proposed design

According to interviewee no.7, a big challenge for the design team was designing a building with high-quality modern architecture without adversely affecting the exceptionally pretty and well-preserved historic harmony of the existing architectural styles, avoiding obvious borrowings from historic styles, and promoting the improvement of the aesthetic quality. However, other interviewees disagreed with the first viewpoint and raised a concern in relation to the way Princes Street looks, which was described by interviewee no. 2 as “*beyond hope*”.

Views were varied about applying modern design in such historic contexts without upsetting the existing harmony. While the design team believed that modern design can enhance the historic context provided that it is sensitively designed to its surroundings, there was an influential body of opinion that was uneasy with the concept of an avowedly modern building on the site, i.e. the Cockburn Association²² and the area’s Community Council. However, the impact of any new development on the world heritage site was considered as a material consideration in the determination of any planning application, and the proposal for the redevelopment of the site had been rejected previously by the planning authority as its design was seen as being banal and of poor quality.

The proposed scheme

According to interviewee no. 7, CEC (2010), together with other supplementary documents, (CEC 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007a and 2007b), were all taken into consideration by the design team when the first proposal for the new development was formulated (see figure 5.12).

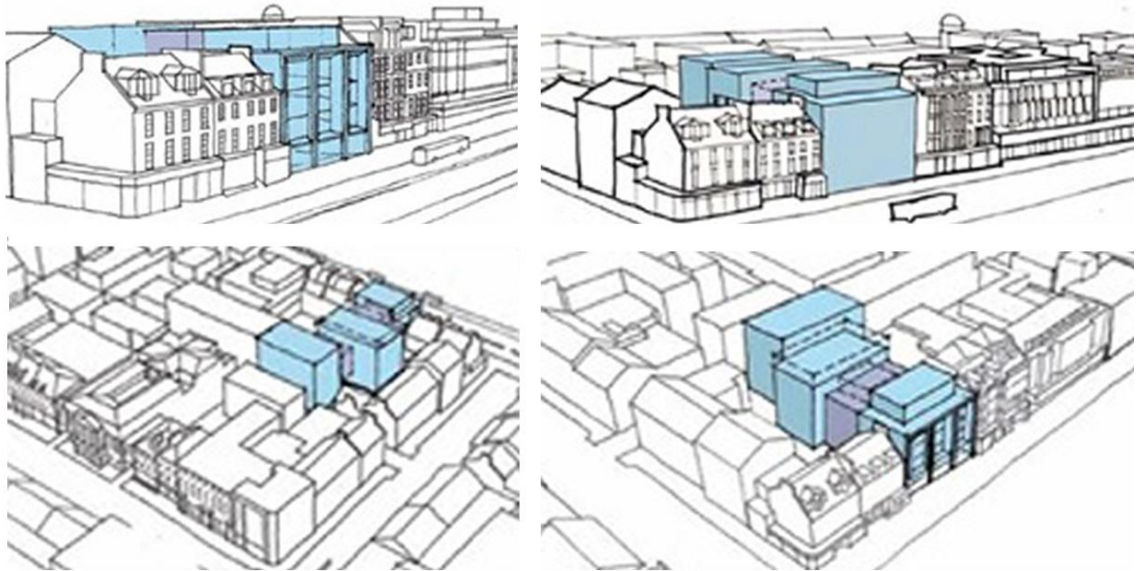
According to documentation obtained by the researcher during the fieldwork and others provided by the City Council, the proposed design for this scheme was as follows:

- The façade on Princes Street sought to reflect the Georgian feu pattern through the use of a full height primary frame, dividing the façade into the original three

²² **The Cockburn Association** (Edinburgh's Civic Trust) is one of the world's oldest architectural conservation and urban planning monitoring organisations, founded in 1875. Since then, it has sought to protect and enhance the beauty of Edinburgh. It was notably resisting change and always rejected constructing new buildings inside and nearby the Old Town borders, particularly the southern side of Princes Street. As such, it previously objected to the planning application for the North British and Caledonian hotels.

feus, reinstating the rhythm of the street with deep window recesses that give visual articulation to the façade (see figure 5.12 b). The elevation was further divided by a setback secondary frame that picks up on the floor levels and organises the façade to set up a rhythm in the street (see figure 5.12 c). The third layer of the façade was the wall and glazing, which pick up on the solid to void ratios of the neighbouring properties (see figure 5.12 b). A series of frames had formulated the elevation onto Rose Street, which was broken into three elements to reflect the historic feu pattern and it varied in height along its length. Furthermore, materials were simplified to smooth and profiled wet cast concrete in two tones to complement and differentiate the hierarchy of the frames.

- On Princes Street, the proposal was positioned between a three storey plus attic and four-storey plus attic buildings. The proposal tied in with the height of the higher building at eaves and ridge and introduced a horizontal band, within the frame, to respond to the eaves of the lower building (see figure 5.12 a). The mass to the rear of the Princes Street façade was greater than the previous building but incorporates a reduced footprint and greater separation to the listed buildings to the west. This reduced footprint creates a greater visual separation to the buildings on Frederick Street and creates views into the courtyard from Rose Street.



(a) The proposed massing



(b) Façade studies



(c) The proposed perspective

Figure 5.12: The pre-application stage proposed design as shown in the design statement
Source: Documents provided by 3D Reid Architects during the fieldwork

The scheme consultation

A Proposal of Application Notice (09/03291/PAN) was submitted and registered on 21st December 2009. On 8th January 2010, the consultation proposed in the notice was approved. This PAN set out the following consultation activities:

- Informing the public and inviting them to comment on the emerging proposals by setting up a website, proposing Public Events (1 weekday lunchtime, 1 weekday evening), and advertising in the newspaper during the week commencing 11th January 2010.
- Presentations to a set of consultees who were defined in the PAN as follows: Edinburgh Urban Design Panel (EUDP), Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH), Historic Scotland (HS) and the New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC).

An exhibition event was advertised and a presentation was arranged to allow members of the general public to view the preliminary proposals and make comments on any issues that may be of interest to them. Comments were received and could be summarised as follows:

- The container port roof as shown in the drawing is quite unacceptable, imposing on the roofline; it may affect the view from the Castle.
- The proportion of stone to glass in the use of materials has to be reconsidered for permeability purposes.
- Exploitation of the possibility of views out of the building.
- The height of the building has to be given further consideration and should not affect the view from the street.

Furthermore, presentations were made with the consultees who raised some comments as follows:

- The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel (EUDP) on 27th January 2010 raised some concerns regarding the scale of the building, which it urged should be appropriate in relation to neighbouring buildings, particularly the A-listed buildings. It also pointed out that the building “*would not be judged on its own merit but will set a standard, and could potentially guide what would happen elsewhere along*

Princes Street”, thus issues of roofscape (a fifth elevation), appropriate scale, visual coherence and the view from and to the building were urged to be addressed in more depth. In addition, designing the elevation to Rose Street following the same language of Princes Street was raised by EUDP, as this may have helped to provide architectural coherence and add to the legibility and permeability of Rose Street. It was stressed, however, that this should be consistent with the historic morphology.

- Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH), on 20th April 2010 and with reference to the quite general visualisations provided (as they described the presentation materials) raised some concerns. Permeability and legibility were stressed as the site offered an opportunity to improve the link between Princes Street and Rose Street, which were recommended to be exploited to the maximum. The façades of the buildings on the two mentioned streets were advised to be given equal concern during the design process. In this regard, these facades were expected to set a balance between solid and void, which the proposed façade on Rose Street had completely failed to recognise, as they stated.
- Historic Scotland (HS), in their response on 19th April 2010, welcomed the redevelopment idea as the replaced building did not make a positive contribution to the conservation area. They raised a concern over how the proposed building could contribute positively to the conservation area, particularly the listed buildings, and its character and appearance. However, they asked for further details to allow a deeper assessment of the potential adverse impact of the proposed building.
- New Town and Broughton Community Council’s (NTBCC) response on 8th February 2010 raised a sole concern regarding the building height, as it exceeded the other buildings’ heights. However, they mentioned that they would not be able to give further assessment until the proposal took shape.

Following this phase of consultation, several meetings were held by the design team of the project with the CEC case officer and other planners to review and coordinate the emerging proposals. On 5th March 2010, a meeting was held with the planning department where some concerns were raised by the department. They could be summarised as follows:

- The proposed building height is excessively higher than the existing structure; this may obscure the view quality and the interesting buildings of George Street.
- The proposed massing on the upper floor, to Princes Street, reads as an inappropriate box.
- The lack of legibility between Princes Street and Rose Street facades.

The main revisions from scheme 1 after accomplishing the pre-application consultation stage of the process, as addressed in the case officer's report, could be summarised as follows:

- Revising the massing strategy to break the scale and form of the development down into elements that correspond with the original feus and development patterns of the New Town (see figure 5.13 a & c).
- Simplification and refinement of the façade modelling. Frame aligned to reinforce building line and create consistent vertical rhythm. Rose Street infill/frame relationships to match Princes Street (see figure 5.13 a & c).
- The elevation on Princes Street was amended to catch the views to Edinburgh Castle and the Mound; with this purpose in mind, angled windows were suggested to take advantage of these views (see figure 5.13 b).
- Simplification and clarification of the material palette, specification to Rose Street blocks.
- Additional fenestration to Rose Street Lane blocks to relate more strongly to neighbouring Hanover Building (see figure 5.13 c).
- Additional fenestration to break down the mass of Rose Street façade (see figure 5.13 c).

After accomplishing these revisions, the ultimate scheme was submitted and the application was advertised on 7 May 2010.

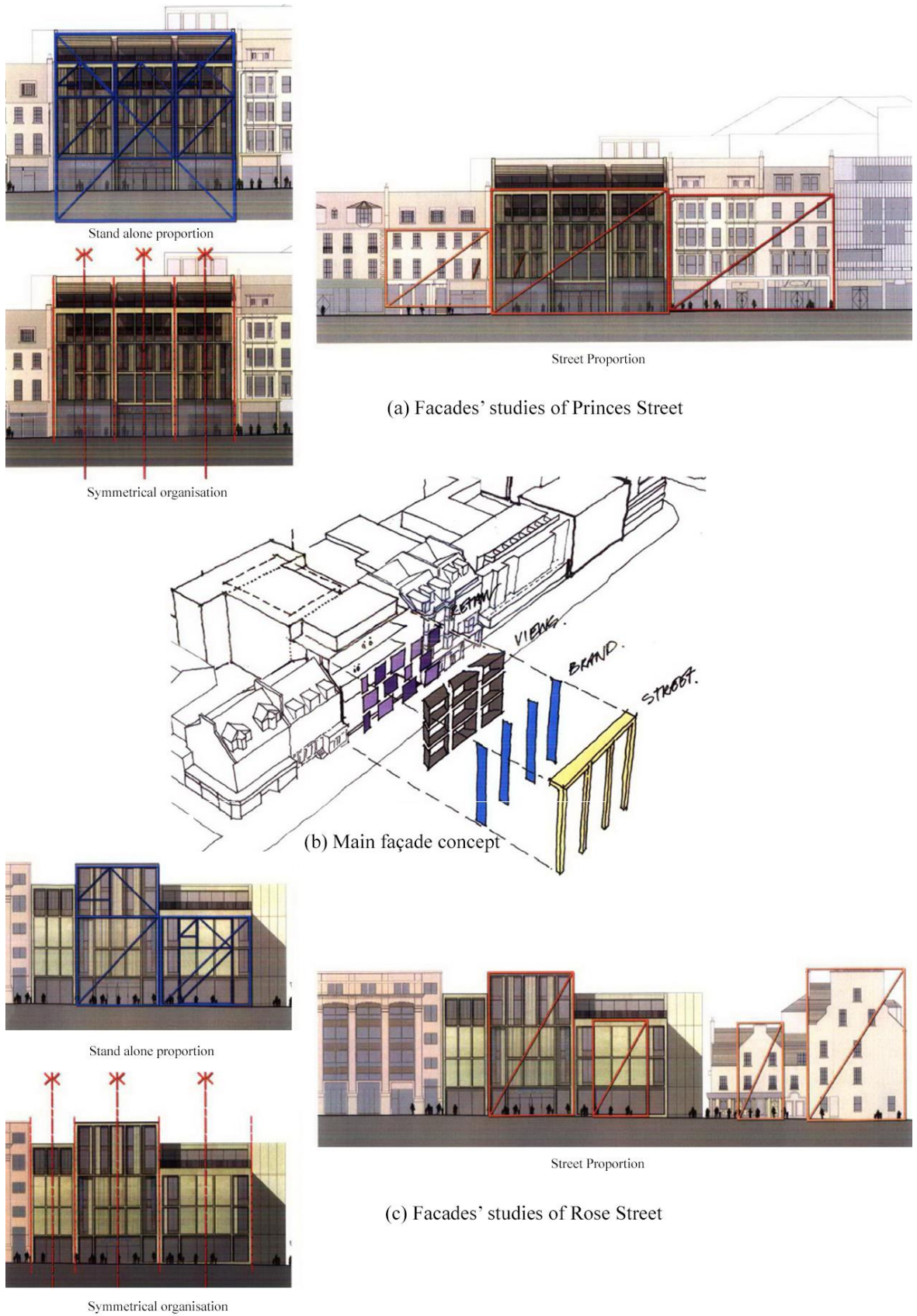


Figure 5.13: The proposed design as submitted with the application and after completion
 Source: Documents provided by 3D Reid Architects during the fieldwork



Visualisation of Primark building in context



View of Primark building along Rose Street



View of Primark building along Princes Street

Figure 5.14: The proposed design after completion

Source: Documents provided by 3D Reid Architects during the fieldwork

In the application consultation stage, comments were received from some consultees, apart from the EUDP, which had been consulted once at the pre-application stage. These bodies again raised a few concerns about the proposed design. For instance, HS and CC raised issues of the scale, massing and increase in height to the equivalent of the ridge height of the proposed building. Also, the setback fourth storey is described as far forward of the existing setback fourth storey (see figure 5.14). These issues were seen by them as possibly adversely affect the setting of the listed buildings. However, this effect was described by HS as insignificant. Ultimately, with reference to CEC *et al.* (2005), EWH also raised key concerns regarding the massing and scale of the proposal, particularly on the Rose Street elevation (see figure 5.14), in which the proposal was considered by them as a possible challenge to the Outstanding Universal Values (Juxtaposition of the Old Town and the New Town).

The case officer's assessment

The case officer's report, with reference to the relevant statutory design and conservation policies in the Local Plan (i.e. Des 1-5 and 10, Env 1 and 3) along with other non-statutory guidelines that had been raised in CEC (2003, 2005b, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008 and

2009), mapped out a set of issues as criteria to be adopted for deciding issues related to the submitted proposal, as follows:

- The design of the proposal should be acceptable in its context.

In this regard, the case officer referred to the support that was given by the Planning Committee panel to the application, in which the panel considered that design, height, massing, scale and the chosen material produce a development that sits comfortably within the context and will complement the overall composition of the block. The panel also considered that it would further enhance the setting of the building context, along with reviewing issues raised in the CEC (2009), i.e. enhancing the streets' pattern (Princes Street and Rose Street elevations) and incorporating the proposed design into the surroundings. The officer concluded that the proposal was acceptable in its context. The officer added that the use of concrete was true to the architectural philosophy of the architecture and sits comfortably with the adjoining buildings, providing that the quality and colour was accurately controlled. However, some interviewees considered that the proposal had failed in some points, particularly on the Rose Street elevation, where the building height was excessively higher than the surrounding buildings and possibly had a negative influence on them (see figure 5.14). In addition, the chosen materials were seen by them as a result of looking for economic choices (Interviewees nos. 2, 3 and 6).

- The proposal should preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the New Town Conservation Area.

With reference to issues of view and skyline, townscape, spatial structure, and architectural character/building raised in the CEC (2003 and 2005b), i.e. contrasting character and townscape, the officers stated that the contemporary design created ordered facades that related positively to the surrounding architecture in terms of design layout, height, massing, scale, proportions, and materials. He concluded that it did not raise any significant concerns in terms of its impact on key landmarks, skyline and views as defined in CEC (2008).

- The proposal should not have any detrimental impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site.

Two relevant Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) of CEC *et al.* (2005) were checked by the officer in relation to this application, i.e. the topography of hills and valleys, and the juxtaposition of the Old and New Towns.

In the first regard, the control of heights around the city centre was considered by the officer as critical to the protection of key views. In particular, he noted that any increase of rooftop levels in the city centre is likely to impact on key views. In setting his assessment in this regard, he referred to CEC (2008) in which the height of the proposal is recommended to be less than 92m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum); otherwise, it is likely to have an impact on a key view. In this sense, the officer concluded that, as the proposed development is 83.56 m AOD and follows the ridge of the adjoining property to the east which is below 92m AOD, the proposal would not have an adverse impact on a key view. Interviewees nos. 3 and 6 did not agree with this point as they considered that it was also possible to follow the other less tall property to the west that has a significantly lower ridge of 78.98m AOD (see figures 5.13a and 5.14). This would also possibly reduce the elevation to Rose Street, which was considered by them to be excessively higher than the surroundings.

In the second regard, the officer considered that the proposed development sought to reinstate the historic feu pattern and demonstrated an understanding of the context by creating an appropriate dominant massing on the Princes Street frontage. Meanwhile, the officer agreed with some concerns that were raised by HS and EWHS, that the additional mass onto Rose Street could possibly have a negative impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties. However, this impact was considered acceptable/neutral as the benefits of the whole design outweigh this matter.

Ultimately, the case officer summarised that the proposal involved the demolition of the majority of an unattractive building to Princes Street and Rose Street, and that the replacement building represented a well-considered design that will complement the character of the block, and enhance the Edinburgh World Heritage Site and the setting of surrounding listed buildings. The officer's recommended decision on 19 August 2010 of granting a permission was based on the conclusion that the proposal was considered to be in line with the implementation of the policies of the Development Plan, and responded to issues of spatial structure, permeability, townscape, architectural expression, heights, vistas, roofscape, and materials in accordance with the principles of the CEC (2009). The decision on November 22nd 2010 was that the proposal was considered to be in line with the implementation of the policies of the Development Plan and the guidelines, and permission was granted (see figure 5.15).

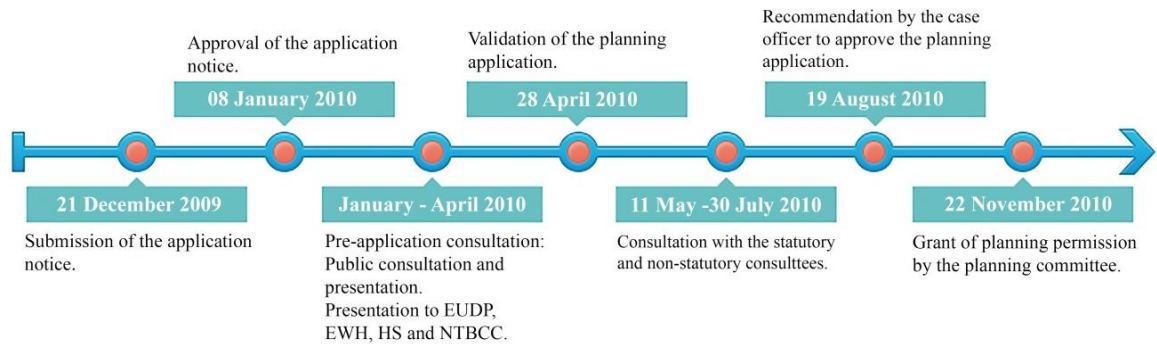


Figure 5.15: Planning application timeline of the Primark building
Source: the researcher

Summary

The experience of this project showed that development briefs (CEC, 2007b and 2009) together with character area appraisal (CEC, 2005b) facilitated a good design approach at an early stage of the process, which was the key factor for the success of this project.

On the first hand, CEC (2007b and 2009) included an urban design framework and analysis which was a very useful way to identify the key site, and to say exactly how to meet the expectations. In other words, it says what the designer can do, which is far more helpful than saying what he/she cannot do (interviewee no.7). Moreover, CEC (2005b) together with CEC *et al.* (2005) helped the design team to broaden their understanding of the context character and issues. The case officers had also referred to these documents when checking the acceptability of the design in its context, from which principles and issues had been addressed as a checklist.

Other tools had also pushed the scheme towards success; for instance, CEC (2010) provided a reference to the case officer to enable him to accept a modern design with some adverse impact on the amenity, as there was a benefit that outweighed it, as in the Rose Street elevation. Also, CEC (2008) provided a scale to which the officer referred in deciding whether the proposal height could possibly challenge the skyline, which was an issue raised by some consultees during the consultation process. Furthermore, Edinburgh Urban Design Panel's comments, with plain reference to Urban Design Principles, apparently influenced the design process, particularly when they stressed that the view from and into the street had to be considered. Furthermore, they stressed the legibility between the Princess Street and Rose Street elevations. These points were missed by the design team and required the design of the façade to be changed, adding

angled windows with further open and glass areas on the Princess Street side, and using the same language for designing the elevation on Rose Street (Interviewee no.7).

5.4.2 Sugarhouse Close

The project proposes redevelopment of redundant brewery buildings and site to create a mixed use development comprising fully managed students' accommodation and an apart-hotel, along with 5 private residential units for sale in the northern section of the site.

Site and context for development

Along the southern boundary of the Old Town Conservation Area, which is inscribed by UNESCO as World Heritage Site, to the east of the city centre, and at the end of the Royal Mile, is the Holyrood area (see figure 5.7). The area is one of the most significant areas in Edinburgh, not just for being part of the World Heritage Site but also for its contrasting character, i.e. a very rich context of various styles of buildings refers to many eras, for example the modern Scottish Parliament Building, the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the ruins of Holyrood Abbey, Holyrood Park, an expansive royal park surrounding the palace, the Moray House School of Education, Dynamic Earth, and several breweries and a flint glassworks which refer to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see figure 5.16).

In a rectilinear shape and on the far southern border of the Old Town Conservation Area, the site of the second case study project is lined by Sugarhouse Close – off Canongate Road (a stretch of the Royal Mile Road) – to the north, the University of Edinburgh Moray House teaching campus²³ to the west, Holyrood Road – the southernmost street of Edinburgh's Old Town and one of the most important thoroughfares in central Edinburgh – to the south, and Hammerman's Entry to the east. A recently opened entry ends up with stairs taking the walker up to Bakehouse Close, one of the site's entrances (see figure 5.16).

²³ University of Edinburgh Moray House teaching campus is a school within the College of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Edinburgh. It is based in historic buildings on the Holyrood Campus, located between the Royal Mile and Holyrood Road.

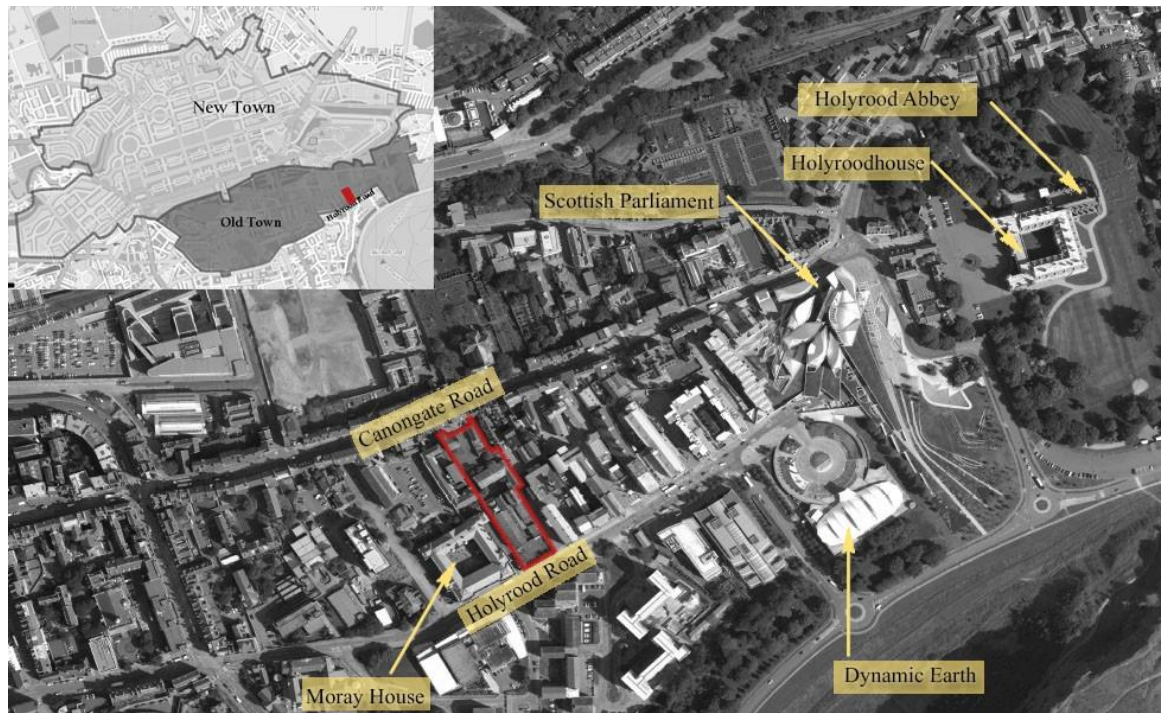


Figure 5.16: The site location and the surrounding key buildings
Source: Adapted by the researcher from documents provided by Oberlanders Architects

The site covers approximately 0.4 hectares and included a redundant brewery, which extended to approximately 4000 sq. m Gross Internal Area. The site was last operational as a brewery in the 1940's and has since been used as an experimental brewing laboratory and test facility until the complete closure and mothballing of the site. The site is adjacent to two category A listed buildings, i.e. the Moray House summerhouse and the Museum of Edinburgh (formerly Huntly House Museum). Also within the site borders there was a group listing of category C (s): Holyrood Brewery Malt Barn, Kilns and Brewhouse (formerly Morison's and Thomson's Brewery), and the boundary wall (see figure 5.17).

The topography of the site is notable in that the site is split into two distinct halves to the north and south, with the northern half sitting approximately 7m higher than the south. This change in level occurs in a single step across the site held by a retaining wall forming the lower storey of the four-storey Brew Houses. Outside the site, a series of steps manage this change in level from the original Bakehouse Close to the north down to the recently created Hammerman's Entry to the south (see figures 5.17 and 5.18).



Figure 5.17: Existing listed buildings as shown in the design statement to be retained or refurbished

Source: Documents provided by Oberlanders Architects

Challenges of the proposed design

According to interviewee no. 9, the ambition for the design team was to bring forward an economically viable and deliverable solution. This solution was sought to strike an appropriate balance between the retention and conversion of category ‘C’ listed buildings (i.e. reuse of the existing tenement, kiln, boundary walls, brewhouse building, part of the office and all sections of the rear wall to Huntley Museum) on the one hand, and adding new building structure on the other hand. Yet this had to be done in a way that was sympathetic to the category ‘A’ listed buildings nearby, within a sensitive World Heritage Site. This ambition was also faced with a dominant school of thought against inserting modern buildings within the Old Town area among key stakeholders, e.g. the Old Town Community Council (OTCC).

The proposed scheme

According to interviewees nos. 8 and 9, CEC (2010) and other supplementary documents such as CEC (2005a, 2006) were taken into consideration when the first proposal was formulated. This was supported by a design and access statement in which contextual analysis was undertaken to show a deep understanding of the context sensitivity, the street hierarchy, existing scale, facades and design characteristics.

According to interviewee no. 8, the proposal was designed to fit the historically dominant built form orientation (north-south orientation) between Holyrood Road and Canongate Road. With this purpose in mind, some blocks in the middle had been demolished and new ones had been suggested to reflect this historic urban grain (see figure 5.18).

The modest buildings on the northern part were suggested to respond to the scale of the Canongate buildings. This view was enhanced through the choice of domestic materials, i.e. the low rise units have a patinated mottled red brick masonry base course overhung by timber cladding on upper stories, topped with pitched slate roofs, that match the restored roofs of the historic buildings (see figure 5.20), to create a modern interpretation of Bakehouse Close on the northern section (interviewee no. 9).

According to interviewees nos. 8 and 9, the suggested buildings on the southern section were designed in response to the linear nature of the historic plan form on Holyrood Road and to complement the architecture and scale of neighbouring buildings (see figure 5.19). The topography of the site helped to achieve this without compromising the setting of the retained Brew Houses or the view out to the Salisbury Crags. Furthermore, the chosen material of light grey aluminium cladding ‘clipped’ onto and above the existing sand stone walls for this part reflected the initial industrial function of the area (see figure 5.20).

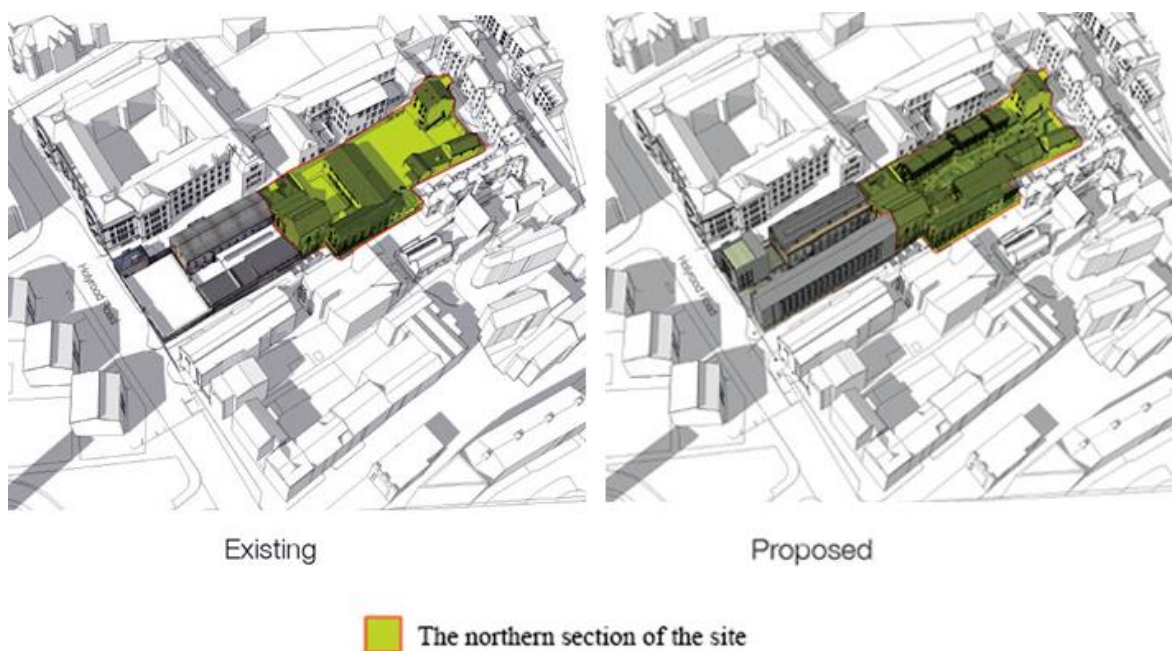


Figure 5.18: The existing buildings and the first proposal of the scheme as shown in the design statement
Source: Adapted by the researcher from documents provided by Oberlanders Architects

The scheme consultation

A proposal of Application Notice (09/02911/PAN) was submitted and registered on 11th November 2009. The consultation proposed in the notice was approved on 1st December 2009. This PAN set out the following consultation activities:

- Informing the public and inviting them to comment on the emerging proposals by advertising in the Evening News, a local Edinburgh newspaper.
- Presentations to a set of consultees, which was defined in the PAN as the Urban Design Panel and Historic Scotland.

The Public Consultation exercise was held on the proposed development site. Comments were invited, either on forms provided at the consultation, by post or via a dedicated e-mail address. The main comments that were given could be summarised as follows:

- The reuse of existing fabric, where possible, was encouraged.
- The setting of the listed buildings could be greatly enhanced.
- Encouraging opening up views through the site to expose the listed buildings.

Presentations were made to a set of consultees, who raised some comments as follows:

- The pre-application discussion with Historic Scotland on 14th April 2010 raised some concerns with regard to the proposed approach to the site and its possible impact on the category ‘A’ listed buildings and their settings, specifically the Museum of Edinburgh.

The first concern raised was about the north-eastern boundary wall – which hosts various architectural fragments collected since the opening of the museum in 1932 – between the museum and the due-to-be-demolished single story buildings and the due-to-be-converted two-storey building on the site side. In this regard, the drawing did not say how the wall was to be treated when the building was demolished, as HS stated. However, they asked for further information to give a comprehensive assessment on this. Furthermore, the addition of a pitched metal roof in this position was seen by them as increasing the bulk opposite the rear wing of the Museum.

The gap between the proposed single-storey buildings and the rendered former office range did allow the crowstepped gable of the rear wing of the Museum of

Edinburgh to remain visible and distinct from Bakehouse Close. However, it was suggested in the initial proposal that this should be filled by extending the office range, which was recognised by HS as likely to adversely affect the townscape setting of the category 'A' listed Museum of Edinburgh. However, it was advised by HS that this element had been revised to retain the current gap between the buildings.

- The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel set out their response on 27th Jan 2010. It welcomed the idea of opening the site by demolishing some buildings and suggesting other new buildings, as this may allow a greater sense of enclosure and intimacy to be created. The panel raised some concerns relating to the need to give further consideration to some issues: the valuable listed buildings and their significance in the context, particularly the category 'A' listed buildings nearby. In this regard, the panel mentioned the courtyard of Moray House boundary, which was used for displaying carved stonework and architectural remnants. The proposal in this part had to be reconsidered, as the panel stated. However, Moray House itself was considered as unlikely to be affected by the proposal as it was separated from the site by an unlisted range.

Permeability issues were described by the panel as an important factor in the development's success. In this sense, it suggested providing an opportunity for the general public to move from Holyrood Road to Canongate Road. In order, to overcome the topography difficulty, the panel suggested a lift in the central building.

Issues of roofscape, the street elevation, and visualisations from Salisbury Crags were stressed by the panel as they greatly benefit the understanding of the proposals. In this regard, EUDP stated that typically Old Town roofscapes follow the topography and avoid common datum levels. The panel also raised a concern regarding the design for a proposed replacement of a former (up to 7 storeys) tenement in Holyrood Road, which should be considered in the context of new developments in the area that tend to exhibit irregular outlines with vertical emphasis, as EUDP stated.

In response to the given comments, revisions from scheme 1 included:

- Retaining the gap on the boundary wall and reducing massing within the new build element to the west of Bakehouse Close.

- The introduction of pitched slated roofs to all new build elements in the north section of the site.
- Redesign fenestration to common areas onto Hammerman's Entry.
- Clarification of materials and detailing.
- Simplification of glazed link through reduced wall element.

After accomplishing the required revisions, the new scheme was submitted and the application was advertised on 2nd April 2010 (see figure 5.19).

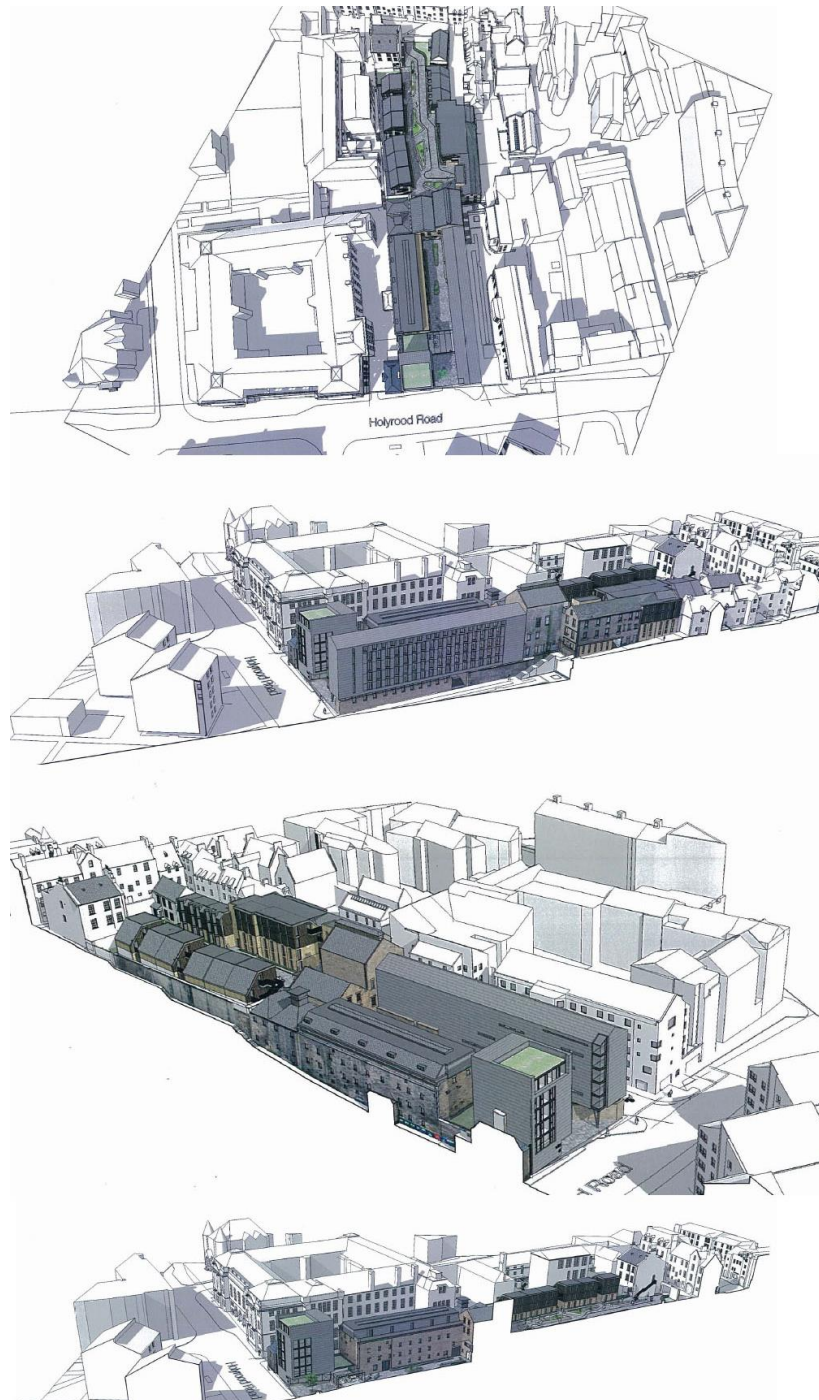


Figure 5.19: The submitted proposal

Source: Adapted by the researcher from documents provided by Oberlanders Architects



Figure 5.20: The proposal after completion

Source: Adapted by the researcher from documents provided by Oberlanders Architects

Objections and comments were raised by some bodies in the application consultation stage. These could be summarised in three points: proposing excessive height and bulk to Holyrood Road and Hammerman's Entry; suggesting inappropriate faceted façades, and choice of metal being out of character. On the other hand, HS, in correspondence on 13th October 2010, welcomed the revisions and concluded that the newly revised drawings showed a good treatment and solution by reconsidering the façade, the roof and the chosen material of the northern part of the site and retaining the gap between the Museum and the new suggested blocks. EWH also considered that the proposal presented an appropriate interpretation of the site and historic context, and delivered an appropriate development and reuse of the assets.

The case officer's assessment

The planning officer's report summarised the key issues in the determination of the applications and made a recommendation to the members of the committee to approve the application. With reference to the relevant statutory design and conservation policies

in CEC (2010) (i.e. Des 1-5 and 10, Env 1 and 3) and other non-statutory guidelines in CEC (2003, 2005a; CEC *et al.*, 2005 and 2006), he set out his assessment of the raised concerns during the consultation process, as follows:

- The design should be acceptable and enhance the character and appearance of the Old Town Conservation Area.

With reference to issues raised in CEC (2005a), including reviewing views and skyline, townscape, spatial structure, Architectural Character/Building form and the connectivity between the streets, the officer concluded that the proposal successfully fitted into the context.

In the northern part, the officer considered that the scale at this part is domestic and complements the architecture and scale of neighbouring buildings; this is also reflected in the proposed architectural treatment. A consensus was reached among the interviewees on this point, supporting the officers' view. However, this consensus was not reached on the southern part of the site.

In the southern part, the officer stated that the creation of two buildings to Holyrood Road adds significantly to the success of the development, affording a point of relief in the street scene. In addition, it allows public views onto the south courtyard to the Backhouse and Kilns beyond (see figure 5.20). He concluded that the proposed architecture succeeds in reflecting the strong simple forms and the linear nature of the historic industrial use of the site, following most of the buildings on the adjoining Holyrood north site (i.e. presenting both gable forms onto Holyrood Road, the long repetitive elevation to Hammerman's Entry, terminated by a powerful gable, reflects this historic development of the wider area and the gable forms that still exist elsewhere on the site). However, this came with some sacrifices in terms of the out-of-character chosen material, as described by interviewees nos. 1, 3, 5 and 6. According to those interviewees, the applied policies and guidelines were not helpful in this regard as they were not clear in setting what to apply and where.

- The proposal is expected not to have any detrimental impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site, and should not have any adverse impact on listed buildings within or adjacent to the site.

With reference to two Outstanding Universal Values of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site (i.e. Topography and Hills and Valleys, and Urban Form and Landscape) as addressed in CEC *et al.* (2005), the case officer set out his judgement in this regard.

Regarding Topography and Hills and Valleys, the officer, with reference to support provided by EWH and HS, considered that the proposal demonstrates good understanding of the meaning of the OUV in terms of scale and massing, successfully fits into the context and is in line with the streetscape and skyline. However, the officer disagreed with EWH and others who raised an issue of possible impact on the skyline. He considered that the tallest proposed buildings on the southern part of the site were lower than Charteris Land²⁴; accordingly they would not have any impact on the surrounding listed buildings and the skyline.

Regarding Urban Form and Landscape; the officer argued that the proposal had aimed and succeeded at improving the permeability between Canongate and Holyrood Road through provision and reinstatement of lanes and the tight feu pattern. He referred to support given by EWH, HS and EUDP, who agreed that the proposed design strengthened the organic urban plan and architectural integrity of the Old Town in the context of its contrasting character to the New Town, without affecting the two 'A' category listed buildings nearby.

Ultimately, the officer summarised in his report, submitted in October 28th 2010, that the proposed layout worked with the best elements of the historic fabric and removed the weaker elements to create the opportunity for a modern reuse of the site. The design of the site showed an excellent understanding of the historical development of the area and the buildings on the site, as he stated. This had allowed the architects to create a scheme that is both sympathetic and dynamic, creating high-quality urban design and architecture. Furthermore, he stated that the proposal was considered as successful in having a sympathetic approach to the context and having a positive impact on the city skyline; it was also considered as successful in strengthening the tight feu pattern and historic grain of the Old Town. The decision on November 2nd 2010 was that the proposal was considered to be in line with the implementation of the policies of the Development Plan

²⁴ Charteris Land is home to Moray House. In 1964, draft plans for a ten-storey teaching block were drawn up by the architects, Gordon and Dey, to be built adjacent to the west side of St John Street. However, the Royal Fine Art Commission raised an objection to the planned height of the building. Consequently the building of the finally agreed six storeys was not started until December 1966. Subsequent delays arising from industrial disputes meant the facility was not handed over until February 1969.

and the guidelines, and responded to issues of spatial structure, i.e. permeability, townscape, architectural expression, heights, vistas, roofscape and materials, and permission was granted (see figure 5.21).

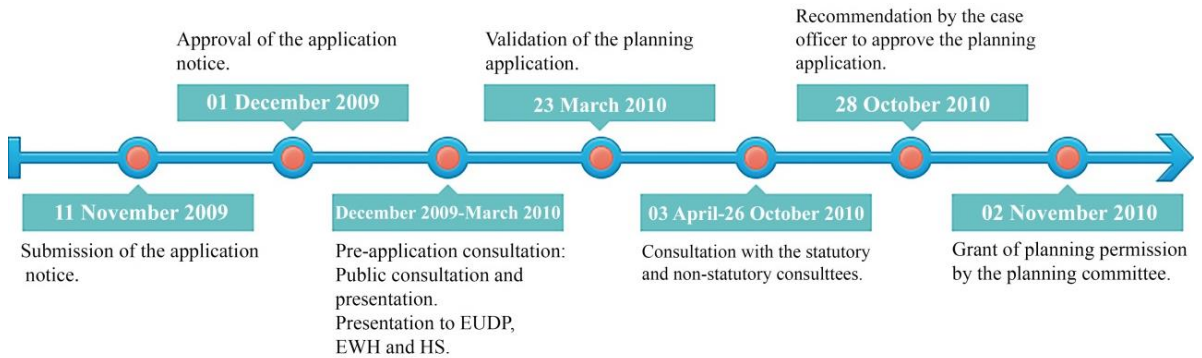


Figure 5.21: Planning application timeline of Sugarhouse Close
Source: the researcher

Summary

The project experience showed how CEC (2010 and 2005a) and CEC *et al.* (2005), together with EUDP, can lead projects to success. Having highly skilled and supportive officers was also raised by Interviewee no. 9 as a key factor in achieving this success.

CEC (2005a) and CEC *et al.* (2005) provided a solid base to the applicants on which to build a deep understanding of the context issues, which resulted in a good design approach at an early stage of the process. This tool has also helped the officers and consultees alike with setting out comments by providing a checklist of issues (OUVs). This also helped with giving objective comments, which led to further improvement of the design proposal.

Local Plan policies (CEC, 2010) together with CEC (2003 and 2006) provided encouragement for applicants to suggest contemporary designs, and to the officers to accept these designs even when it comes with possible damage to the contexts. This had to be outweighed by the public benefit, as in the Holyrood Road elevation and the chosen materials, which were not approved of by some consultees.

Ultimately, EUDP comments positively influenced the design, particularly when they shed light on some urban design issues, i.e. permeability, legibility and public realm. This required the design team to carry out some changes to the proposed façade on the Holyrood Road elevation and to rearrange the block distribution on the ground.

5.5 Analysis of urban design tools applications in Edinburgh

The chosen projects provided good examples of how designs can use the site/context difficulties and constraints, and a challenging environmental agenda, to generate good architecture and enhance the quality of buildings' designs and the historic urban contexts appearance. They demonstrate how the local authority, by using urban design tools, took the lead in making sure that the proposals are acceptable in their contexts, and without a doubt this raised the quality of the design outcomes.

5.5.1 Research and analysis tool

Character Area Appraisal documents (CEC, 2005 a and b) and CEC *et al.* (2005) provided a good explanation of the Old and New Town areas' significance, as well as the key elements that shaped their characters over time. The analyses provided in these documents use language and techniques of urban design (urban form, morphology, etc.) and the issues raised in these documents were recommended to be recognised as material considerations in the judgement process.

The experience of the two projects showed that understanding the significance of the site context and its elements is a key factor for success. In the two projects, this tool helped to widen the design teams' understanding of the context characters and its elements and encouraged them to not be afraid to propose a contemporary design. This tool also provided the officers and other reviewers with a checklist of issues that needed to be used by them in addressing their criteria for judgement. As such, the Sugarhouse Close case officer in his report stated that:

“The design of the site shows an excellent understanding of the historical development of the area and the buildings on the site. This has allowed the architects to create a scheme which is both sympathetic and dynamic, creating high-quality urban design and architecture”.

5.5.2 The coordination tools

Edinburgh's Local Plan (CEC, 2010) provides a set of questions that each development proposal had to answer before being approved by the Council. The language of urban design in this document is far more apparent than in the previous versions. Furthermore, supplementary documents of guidance (CEC, 2006, 2007a, 2008 and 2013) and

development briefs, e.g. CEC (2009), have also come to provide further explanations, for both applicants and reviewers, on how to design or make comments in accordance with the policies and in order to meet expectations. These documents have provided detailed explanations of good design criteria; Urban Design Principles are plainly mentioned and examples of good building design are highlighted.

The experience showed that these tools were crucial in the two projects as they provided a solid base to which the schemes' officers, as well as the consultees, could refer when setting out their comments. In the two projects, the Local Plan's relevant policies and guidelines were listed in the recommended decision document and the officers showed a good understanding of them. They also referred to these policies and guidelines in defending their views when they contradicted those of other consultees, sometimes with admitted damage to the contexts. However, the officers did not mention these policies and guidelines plainly in their proposal assessments as they did with Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs), nor did they say how and where the proposals comply with or challenge them. On the other hand, the applicants also addressed the Local Plan policies and guidelines in their design and access statement, but without saying how they helped them to shape the proposal and enhance the historic context.

5.5.3 Implementation tools

As a key step towards further enhancement of urban design, the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel was established in 2009 as part of the City of Edinburgh Council's design initiative, contributing to improved transparency, inclusive engagement and sharing of the exploration of design issues with key consultees. Architecture + Design Scotland is part of this panel and shares views with other relevant local organisations to raise the quality of the built environment in Edinburgh. It *"allows a space for different interest groups to say things and to share views"* (Interviewee no. 1).

The two projects showed that the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel was one of the keys to success. In these projects, EUDP played a crucial role in improving the design of the two proposals and ensuring a quality outcome by giving constructive comments. Furthermore, the case officers of the Primark Building, as well as the Planning Committee, referred to the comments given by EUDP when setting out their recommended decision, which contradicted a statutory consultee's perspective (i.e. the Community Council).

The panel plainly used Urban Design Principles, i.e. townscape, legibility, public realm, etc., in setting out its comments and recommendations, although no single document was mentioned by the panel as a reference for these principles. Furthermore, consulting the panel at a wrong stage of the process, either too early or too late, was raised as an issue that could negatively affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the comments they give (interviewees nos. 1 and 5).

The literature provided evidence that the public and community councils had to have a significant and positive influence on the judgement process and this would undoubtedly affect the quality of the outcomes. The people were invited to attend the exhibitions of the two projects to discuss with the developer and designers the proposed designs, and their comments were taken into consideration during the pre-application negotiation of the two projects. The CC played a supportive role in guiding the proposal of the Primark Building at the pre-application stage; however, in Sugarhouse Close the community role was controversial. The Old Town Council Community decided to give up commenting on applications due to several issues related to how the process was run. Some of these issues were related to timing in consultation, which was also raised on many occasions during the pre-application stage by other consultees. In the case of Primark building, another issue was raised by consultees, including CC, who complained that the proposed design had not taken enough shape at that stage to give a detailed assessment (Interviewees nos. 2, 3 and 6). This sheds light on the possible challenges of the community role during the consultation process, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 7.

5.6 Conclusion

The messages of the national policies with regard to further enhancing urban design, with acceptance of a limit to prescription at the national level, resulted in a clearly addressed list of urban design criteria in the form of two sets of policies, i.e. design and conservation, in the city's Local Plan (CEC, 2010). Furthermore, a wide range of guidance documents was clear in referring to and addressing urban design. These documents worked in a clear hierarchy with the national document, plainly using the language of urban design and helpfully providing a reference to the officers, as well as to the reviewers, when defending their views. Using a research and analysis tool provided the applicant with a deep understanding of the context, which was a key factor for success. In addition, the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel played a crucial role in enhancing the concept of urban

design. However, the experience showed that some challenges face the tool's practice, possibly affecting the quality of the resulting outcomes. These challenges will be further analysed and a potential response will be suggested in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 6 – YORK CASE STUDY

6.1 Introduction

The key objective of this chapter is to explore how urban design tools are addressed and utilised as assessment and decision support tools with the aim of fitting new built form proposals in the City of York. The discussion presented in this chapter will help to achieve objective 3 of this thesis and complete the answering of research question Q3-2.

It starts with reviewing the history of the growing city and the evolution of its urban form throughout the ages, as well as its early experience of regulatory approaches towards controlling the insertion of new forms. Thereafter, it surveys the evolution of urban design tools and their application to judging the new built form proposals of two chosen real-life projects. This includes reviewing the significance of the buildings' sites and contexts, the problems and challenges of the design, and the progress of the judgement process through which the tools were applied to ensure that building forms fit into their historic urban contexts. Finally, this chapter concludes with some findings from York City's approach and the possible lessons to be learned from its experience.

The information used to conduct this chapter was obtained from various sources, most of which were collected during the fieldwork in York. These included academic books and papers, and grey literature, including documents that had been released by the local authority of York City and others provided by the interviewees, i.e. the pre-application consultations and the later correspondences between the council and the bodies involved in the planning application consultation process.

6.2 The historical evolution of York

Shannon and Tilbrook (1990) review the history of the City of York from its foundation by the Romans in 71 AD, who named it '*Eboracum*'. Thereafter, it became the capital of the Roman province of Britannia Inferior. During the Roman era (up until around 400 AD), the first military fortress was constructed in wood on flat ground above the River Ouse. The fortress was later rebuilt in stone and was used for the accommodation of 6000 soldiers.

The fortress was built to a plan consisting of a rectangular layout with a grid of streets and buildings (see figure 6.1). Completing the Roman wall took until probably 320 AD, when the last addition of the Multangular Tower²⁵ was added. The foundations and lines of half of the Roman walls are still surviving until our present time and form part of the existing Medieval wall. Also, the current street patterns of the city are very much influenced by the streets' pattern of the Roman fortress. During the Roman period, some workshops started to grow in response to the needs of the soldiers who were living in the fortress, and represented the early command economy (Hartley, 1985). This new economic situation and trading opportunities led local people to construct a permanent civilian settlement, which became a *colonia* in 237 AD, on the south-west bank of the River Ouse opposite to the fortress (see figure 6.1). However, around 400 AD, a flooding of the Ouse and Foss rivers caused the town to sink and it no longer functioned as a population centre until the 7th century²⁶ (Russo, 1998).

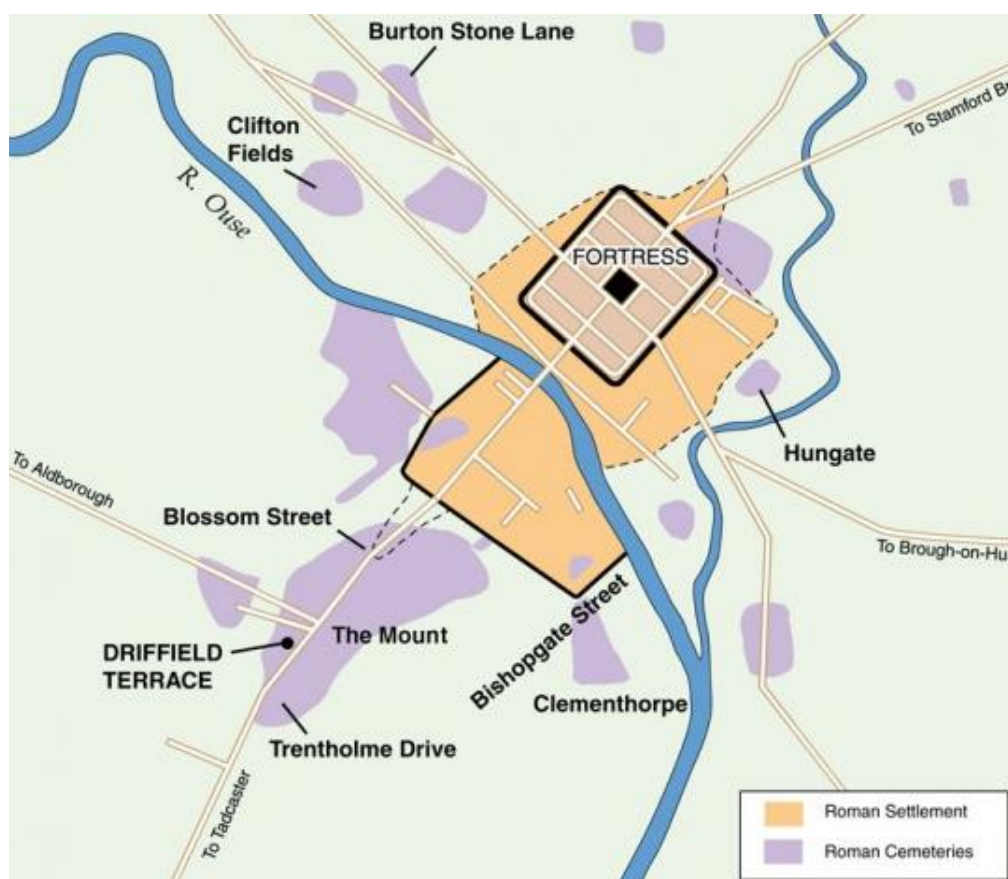


Figure 6.1: A map of Roman York
Source: www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk

²⁵ The Multangular Tower is the most intact structure remaining from the Roman wall.

²⁶ The era between 410 AD and early 7th century is called the Sub-Roman era. There is no concrete evidence about the fate of the fortress and the town during this period. Hence, it has been described by some authors as 'one of the most elusive epochs in York's history' (Hartley, 1985).

Under Northumbrian rule (early 7th-late 9th centuries), York was used by the Northumbrian Kings as a royal centre and they named it 'Eoforwic'. During this period, the first recorded wooden church, the precursor of York Minster, was built²⁷; a library and minster school were also established. Consequently, the city became a centre of learning. By the 8th century, it presented itself as an active commercial centre, mainly a wool trading centre, and had experienced this for a very long period of time (Hall, 1996b).

In 867 AD, the Danish Vikings occupied York and established the Kingdom of Jorvik. Under Viking rule (867-1066 AD), the new kingdom witnessed an influx of Danish immigrants who settled in many parts of the kingdom. The city became a major river port, part of the extensive Viking trading routes throughout northern Europe. By then, most of the existing Roman walls' towers, except the Multangular Tower, were demolished (Hall, 1995; Nuttgens, 2007).

The Norman era (1066-1154 AD) started with the Norman Conquest in 1066, which resulted in extensive damage to York. However, during this period York had its current name and experienced a new era of prosperity which was the foundation for years of economic success. Two castles were built during this era on the two sides of the Ouse River. In addition, the Minster was reconstructed; a new abbey and several churches were also built during this era (Hall, 1996b).

York was a very important town during the late Medieval (1199-1485 AD) and Tudor (1485-1603 AD) times. It had become the second city in England after London because of its strategic location, religious importance, and its many trade links to Europe. During the Medieval era, the city significantly prospered and its urban structure distinctively started taking shape (Nuttgens, 2007; Dean, 2008). Most of the surviving historic buildings that are distinctive elements of the current city image were built during this era. This includes the Medieval walls of the city and their gatehouses, also called 'bars', i.e. Bootham, Monk, Walmgate, Micklegate, and Fishergate Bars²⁸, York Castle and Minster, and St Mary's Abbey (see figure 6.2).

²⁷ Though its exact location is a matter of dispute.

²⁸ Victoria Bar was added to the wall in the 19th century.



Bootham Bar



Monk Bar



Walmgate Bar



Micklegate Bar



St Mary's Abbey



York Minster

Figure 6.2: The surviving Medieval Bars, Abbey, and Minster
Source: Adapted by the researcher from (www.yorkwalls.org.uk)

During the early times of the Tudor era, the city continued functioning as a key trading centre in England and many significant buildings were constructed during this time and are still standing until the present day, e.g. Mulberry Hall and King's Manor (see figure 6.3). During the 17th century, like other English cities, York suffered from the English Civil War, which resulted in a lot of destruction and economic crises; its brightness declined as a result (Hall, 1996b).



Figure 6.3: The Mulberry Hall (to the left) and King's Manor (to the right)
Source: Adapted by the researcher from University of York (www.york.ac.uk)

In recent history, the late 18th century was a quiet period in York's history during which the city tried to recover. During the 19th to early 20th centuries, the city started experiencing a new advent of relatively large-scale industrial development, i.e. railway and confectionery. Accordingly, the city's economy was boosted by allowing people and products to be transported to and from York. In addition, entrepreneurs were given access to a new market and tourism emerged as another source of income for the city. This economic prosperity was significantly reflected in the built environment (Nuttgens, 2007). Elegant Victorian and Georgian style buildings were introduced to York, and dominated its urban form and image, e.g. the Country Court House, the first railway station, the Royal Station Hotel and the head office of the North Eastern Railway (see figure 6.4).

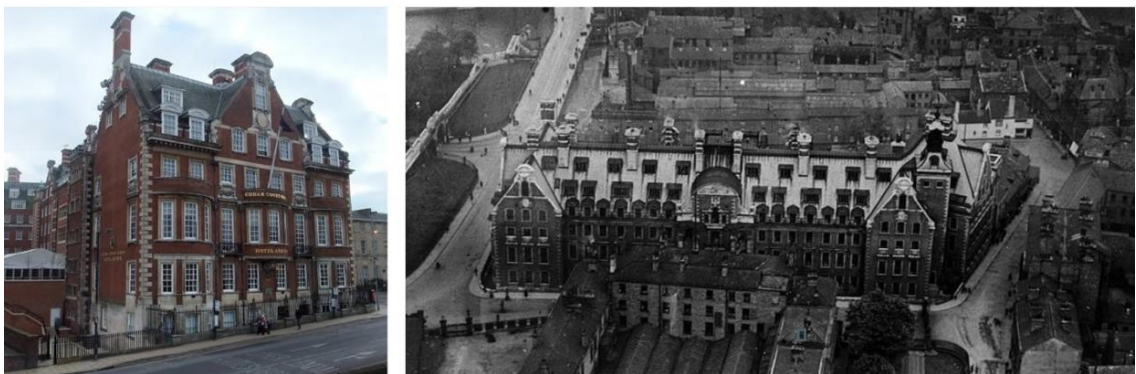


Figure 6.4: To the right, a historic view of the first railway station and the head office of the Northern Railway; to the left, the head office of the Northern Railway as it stands today
Source: Adapted by the researcher from CYC *et al.* (2011)

The city suffered destruction during the First and Second World Wars. After the Second World War, the economy of York moved from being dominated by these industries to

one that provided services. International and large-scale tourism have become a key part of the economy with a growing number of visitors, which has reached 7m each year, who are attracted by York's unique heritage and the city's retail and leisure attractions. However, during the era from the mid-20th century to the present time, the city was invaded with a large number of modern buildings, which resulted in a significant transformation of the city urban contexts, e.g. the nine-storey Park Inn dating from 1965-7 standing as the highest building in York (see figure 6.5). The building does not bear any relation to its neighbours and dominates river views in the city centre (CYC *et al.*, 2011).



Figure 6.5: The Park Inn building
Source: Adapted by the researcher from CYC *et al.* (2011)

This transformation is questioned by many authors who described it as unhealthy and inappropriate to such a city with significant historic contexts. In light of this situation, it was urged that a regulatory mechanism be put in place to control the insertion of new building forms and ensure their fit to these sensitive contexts (Adshead *et al.*, 1948; Esher, 1968).

According to Pendlebury and Strange (2011) and Esher (1968), York has been at the forefront of conservation practice in the UK. The conservation approach succeeded in York, as in other UK cities, in maintaining the historic contexts of the city and played an essential role in controlling any possible change. This approach was further enhanced by the government when the city was selected as one of four English towns for detailed conservation studies at the end of the 1960s. Many local amenity societies and charities, such as York Civic Trust, York Conservation Trust, and York Archaeological Trust, have also made an important contribution to protecting, conserving and understanding the

city's unique cultural heritage. Furthermore, conservation bodies embedded themselves in planning decision-making processes. For example, the Conservation Area Advisory Panel, which was set up in 1969, has since then played a crucial role in enhancing the conservation aspects in the decision-making processes (Jordan *et al.*, 1975).

According to Pendlebury (2000), the success of conservation in maintaining the historical integrity over the course of the 1970s left conservation facing further pressures on how to balance between the increased need for economic and physical growth on the one hand and acknowledging demands for conservation management and environmental protection on the other. These pressures presented major challenges for historic cities, such as York, and their historic contexts throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s by dealing within a context of local historicity as an economic resource (Pendlebury and Strange, 2011). During the 1990s, this situation, with further growth of tourism and continued pressure for development, brought to the fore how York could survive with the existing conservation approach.

A major drive in the post-1997 years, when the new Labour Government came in, was a new urban policy agenda with obvious urban design influence emphasising the importance of design and environmental quality. As further commitment from the Government towards urban design, the Urban Task Force (UTF) and the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE) were established raising the profile of urban design significantly. This was considered the kick-start of the new approach of urban design in England (Pendlebury and Strange, 2011). During this period, a broader debate about place-making and urban design emerged in response to a new trend towards renewing the confidence in contemporary design, and the emphasis of York City became the discovery of ways to protect heritage assets²⁹, using them instrumentally to satisfy the demands of a growing tourist market, while simultaneously seeking to manage the consequences of that growth (Pendlebury, 2009).

Ultimately, the York urban design approach has been developed over the last twenty-five years and has provided techniques and tools to enhance the existing heritage and encourage the survival of innovative architecture. These tools of urban design are the focus of the following section.

²⁹ Despite the fact that York's bid to address its Central Historic Core Conservation Area as a World Heritage Site in 2011 is subject to be revised and resubmitted, York is a 'historic' city with a clear, identifiable and world-renowned heritage, culture, architecture and archaeology.

6.3 Urban design approach in York

This section reviews the development of urban design tools in York discussing how these tools have been addressed and applied in the city. The below classification of these tools was set by the researcher in Chapter 2 (see section 2.7.2).

6.3.1 Research and analysis tools

In line with the national planning policies (DCLG, 2005, para 36; DCLG, 2012, para 58) and with the purpose of illustrating York's special character and significance, and ensuring that local heritage assets are properly considered when development proposals are submitted, a series of documents has been released by the City of York Council and other organisations. These documents have provided a guide to the Local Planning Authority when making planning decisions. They also provide illustrations for the applicants and the consultees alike of the elements that compose significant conservation areas and their architectural character; this includes the heritage assets and how new proposals, even small developments, could either damage or enhance these assets. These elements are stressed by these documents to be given priority when judging new applications for development within the conservation areas.

In 2011, the City of York Council, in partnership with Alan Baxter Associates and English Heritage, completed the *York Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal* (CYC *et al.*, 2011). CYC *et al.* (2011) is the largest and most complex guidance document ever released by the City of York Council. Twenty-four character areas form the larger conservation area and each one is dealt with by a separate character statement. This document also proposed boundary changes.

The appraisal document is separated out into individual sections (nine conservation area appraisals) for ease of use. It is set to help the council to fulfil a statutory duty to draw up and publish proposals to preserve and enhance conservation areas. It does this by defining the unique characteristics that make the historic core of York so special and by identifying the threats and opportunities to its conservation and enhancement. These set the foundations for developing practical policies. Also, proposals for the management of the conservation area can enable it to play a positive role in shaping an economically and socially successful city. Consultation with local residents, businesses and amenity groups is raised as being required to inform the process.

Before 2011, there was nothing comparable to CYC *et al.* (2011). However, the then valid Development Control Local Plan (CYC, 1998 and 2005) included short descriptions of all the 33 conservation areas within the York Local Authority area. Furthermore, other documents that were not published by the city council had also been used with the purpose of the conservation areas appraisals, e.g. FAS (2006). This document's assessment focused on the historical and archaeological background of the old railway station site with special attention to the site's built characters and its immediate setting within the York Central Historic Core Conservation Area, i.e. the significance of the site and its contribution to the surrounding and wider conservation area are mainly the concern of this document. The assessment also considered the likely impact of change on the site and its buildings characteristics and drew a list of recommendations to any potential redevelopment and refurbishment of the site, with particular attention being given to the historic built fabric.

In 2013, another range of documents was published by the city council, each with a specific aim. The *Local Heritage List for York* (CYC, 2013c) states that architectural character and interest, townscape and views, are important issues and have to be the main concern in setting out any development judgements. To provide further understanding of how significant is the character of the City of York, a *Heritage Impact Appraisal* (CYC, 2013d) has been undertaken by the City of York Council. This document is released to help with assessing whether the strategic sites and policies of the City of York Local Plan will conserve or enhance the special characteristics of the city. Ultimately, the *Heritage Topic Paper Update* (CYC, 2013e) was also released to establish the historic and natural environment policy framework for the city and to consider existing evidence relating to the City of York's historic environment and how the evidence is translated into the council's understanding of the city's special qualities and its complex 2000 year history.

6.3.2 Coordination tools

Design policies

The *City of York Local Plan* (CYC, 1998) was the very first comprehensive Local Plan for the City of York, which collected six previously adopted local plans and relocated them in one document. CYC (1998) provided guidance for the future development of the city taking as material considerations central government advice (PPG's, Circulars, etc.).

Design quality was identified in CYC (1998) as very important to the city council and two general policies (GP) were addressed with the purpose of encouraging good designs. Policy GP1 (design), with reference to *Planning Policy Guidance* (DOE, 1997), stressed that proposals should show respect and enhance the local environment by being compatible with the neighbouring buildings in terms of layout, mass, scale and the chosen materials. GP3 (safeguarding the character of York) focused on enhancing the character and appearance of the important townscape elements that contribute to the historic setting of the city.

Another list of historic environment policies (HE) was also addressed in CYC (1998), with the aim of encouraging the applicants of new developments to preserve and enhance the high quality of existing historic buildings and areas. Policy HE1 (paragraph c) stressed that the architectural and historic quality, character and coherence of the built environment (including both listed and unlisted buildings), and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area, need to be taken into account in any new development. In policy HE2, contemporary designs are encouraged and buildings are required to be designed with reference to the surroundings of adjacent listed or unlisted buildings, in terms of having regard to scale and proportion of existing buildings, building lines and height, rhythm and vertical/horizontal emphasis within the street scene, as well as enhancing the existing views, landmarks, and other townscape elements that contribute to the character or appearance of the area. Finally, policies HE3-5 and HE9 plainly stated that permission would not be granted for proposals with adverse effect on the character and appearance of the conservation areas and for listed or unlisted buildings.

CYC (1998) was followed by another revised version in 2005. *Development Control Local Plan* (CYC, 2005) incorporated the 4th set of changes on the CYC (1998). Although it is not formally adopted, CYC (2005) is still used as the basis for development management decisions. It repeated the same afore-mentioned policies and their issues of concern, even sometimes using the same words. CYC (2005) mentioned urban design as a term on many occasions but without plainly setting out its principles or even using much of its language. However, the GP3 issues raised in CYC (1998) were merged with the HE1 policy in CYC (2005).

CEC (2005) will be replaced with an updated version drafted in 2013 which has not been approved yet. *City of York Local Plan-Preferred options* (CYC, 2013a) sets out urban design criteria against which planning applications will be judged, i.e. what will or will

not be permitted and how to help York safeguard its outstanding heritage for future generations. CYC's (2013a) policies are formulated to comply with *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG, 2012) and meet its stated objectives (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.1). CYC (2013a) addresses one set of policies, rather than two separate sets of design and conservation policies as in the previous versions.

DHE1 (Design and the Historic Environment) states that design is not just about how a building looks in its context and the relevant aesthetics issues, it is also about the quality of public spaces. This policy, with reference to CABE and DETR (2000), stresses high quality standards of contemporary design in buildings and spaces as something required to be promoted in terms of: urban grain, urban structure, the architectural character and appearance, scale, in relation to its surroundings, key views and skylines, massing in relation to other buildings and spaces, particularly buildings of architectural or historic significance, and the texture, colour, pattern and durability of materials, and techniques and elements of detailing used. However, this policy also states that diversity with the existing buildings would be acceptable if it can reflect meaningful changes in socio-economic and environmental circumstances in the York context.

Along with DHE1, DHE4 (Building Height and View) characterises the acceptable proposal as the one that makes a positive contribution to York's qualities, character, and significance by:

- i. respecting York's skyline by ensuring that development proposals are designed and located in such a way that the visual dominance of the Minster and the city centre roof-scape are not significantly challenged.
- ii. demonstrating detailed evidence that development proposals respond positively to local building height and massing character, and landscape context.
- iii. designing new buildings that integrate roof top plant into the overall building design avoiding visually detracting roof top plant.
- iv. protecting the city's key views as defined in CYC *et al.* (2011).
- v. respecting and enhancing views of landmark buildings or important vistas.
- vi. realising opportunities for creating or revealing new public views.

DHE5 (paragraph ii) stresses the importance of quality of the public realm and wider environment; it also stresses the need to refer to the principles set out in the CYC (2013b) in judging any new proposals on these grounds.

DHE2, DHE6 and DHE7 raise the issues of heritage assets and conservation areas. These policies have been addressed with the purpose of conserving, enhancing and adding value to the special qualities of this historic environment and its appearance.

Heritage assets of York's historic environment are stressed by DHE2 as finite by nature and non-renewable. Also, understanding their significance is addressed as fundamental to their conservation, management, and enhancement. In this sense, paragraphs ii and iii stress that development should show detailed evidence of how the development will better reveal the significance of the heritage assets for public benefit. It is also asked by this policy to explain how the public benefits of development clearly outweigh the possible resulting harm. Likewise, DHE6 (para ii) stresses that the impacts of the development proposals should be clearly understood.

In the same sense of previous policies, DHE7 stresses that proposals affecting listed buildings (designated heritage assets) will be supported where proposals succeed in showing an in-depth understanding of the values of the listed buildings and the expected benefit must outweigh the loss that might result from new developments. This requires providing proof of:

- Analysis of the significance of the building relevant to the areas of proposed change. This should convey an understanding of the assets' evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal values as detailed in *Conservation Principles: policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (English Heritage, 2008a).
- An assessment of the impact of development proposals on the special interest (significance and values) of the building.
- An explanation of why the proposed works are desirable or necessary.
- Where proposals appear to cause harm to significant aspects of the building, why less harmful ways of achieving desired outcomes have been discounted or are undeliverable. The greater the harm the stronger the justification should be.

Finally, the DHE11 policy stresses that development proposals in an area of the city wall, as a scheduled ancient monument, will only be supported where they demonstrate an enhancement of the character (including views and setting) and the setting of the wall and the adjacent listed buildings (para i). In this regard, paragraphs ii and iii stress that the height of the proposal should not challenge the height and the dominance of the wall, as well as that it should not cause harm to its setting.

Design guidelines

Since it was published in 2000 as a national guidance, *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – Towards Better Practice* (CABE and DETR, 2000) was used by the city council as guidance at the local level until being superseded by the *Planning Practice Guidance* (DCLG, 2014). During this period, very few guidance documents were released by the City of York Council and none of them was as detailed and helpful as CABE and DETR (2000). In addition, *PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (DCLG et al., 2010) was also adopted by the local authorities as a tool to judge proposed new forms (see Chapter 4; Section 4.3.2).

In 2013, the City of York released *City of York Streetscape Strategy and Guidance* (CYC, 2013b), as both a strategy and guidance, to be read in conjunction with CYC (2013a). Unlike CABE and DETR (2000), CYC (2013b) provides strategies rather than fine detail of methodologies and specifications necessary for designing new public spaces or individual buildings.

Seven strategic principles are used to explain in more detail the council's vision for York's public realm and set out important considerations for everyone involved with the city's streets and spaces. Two of the seven addressed principles, i.e. principles 3 and 4, are mainly concerned with issues of the external appearance of a building's design and its integration with the surrounding, as follows:

- Principle 3 states that the design of buildings, streets, and public spaces should always consider the physical structure, materials and layout, as well as the experiential (how people perceive and interact with each other and the space itself). Good design is stressed as an inclusive design that needs to understand the vertical and horizontal relationship between buildings and develop solutions that enhance the experience in a three-dimensional way.

The message that is addressed by this principle is that while design issues are aesthetic and can be subjective, communication and consultation should be the key to appropriate decision making.

- Principle 4 states that the distinctive character of the existing context needs to be enhanced. It does not, however, close the door to new proposals of contemporary design. Distinctiveness is stressed in this principle as including the form and scale of particular streets and space, mass, height and character of buildings, roofs and building materials.

The message that is addressed by this principle is that understanding character is fundamental and all works affecting streets and spaces should reference available evidence including conservation area appraisals or historic environment character assessments.

As further supplementary documents, and with the purpose of providing the basis for more detailed guidance on how schemes can be successful in meeting the addressed policies and expectations in specific areas and sites, development briefs have been released by the City of York Council. They aim at taking into consideration the needs of contemporary users by reconciling them with the needs of the historic environment and creating a high quality built environment and public realm.

6.3.3 Implementation tools

Design review panel

The significant role that design review panels can play to ensure high standards of design is mentioned on many occasions in the national policies, and local planning authorities are asked to engage with them early in regard to the recommendations from the design review panel (DCLG, 2005, paras 11 and 12; DCLG, 2012, paras 62 and 178-179). Paragraph 62 of DCLG (2012) has plainly encouraged local authorities to start putting local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design.

At the national level, CABI is a 'non-statutory consultee' in the planning process, providing expert independent assessments of schemes of national importance that have had a significant impact on the local environment, or that set standards for the future, at

an early stage. It consists of around 40 expert advisors drawn from England's architectural, built environment and creative community who work directly with architects, planners, designers, and clients (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.3).

At the local level, a number of local bodies together with individuals nominated by the council are represented on the York Conservation Area Advisory Panel (CAAP). This panel is empowered to advise the Local Planning Authority, through its Planning Committee, on the effect of various proposals on the character or appearance of listed buildings and designated conservation areas. It also gives advice on proposed local plans and supplementary guidance when it is asked.

The panel is made up of appropriately qualified professionals of national and local amenity societies (12 members) and is chaired by a chosen representative for each of the member organisations. The represented bodies are: York Civic Trust (YCT), York Georgian Society (YGS), Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society (YAAS), Royal Institute of British Architects, Yorkshire Philosophical Society, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Dean and Chapter of York, a Residents' Association representative, a representative of disabled groups in York, the York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Trade and Commerce and two individuals nominated by the council.

Although the panel is serviced by council officers, the panel is independent and it is not recognised as a statutory consultee. Its decisions are advisory in nature and cannot be construed as legally binding on the council or any other organisation. However, the panel comments must be presented to the Planning Committee and could be used by conservation staff and planning officers in deciding applications, and by elected members if an application was referred to the Planning Committee for a decision. It is worth noting that some of these bodies who had nominees in the panel also comment on proposals separately, e.g. YCT, YGS, and YAAS.

Until about 2014, the panel used to discuss up to six applications at each of its monthly meetings, which lasted between two to three hours. The panel never set criteria on which application to review, nor did the council. According to interviewee no. 10, it is likely that planning officers (now known as Development Management Officers) who were deciding which applications should go forward to the panel, based their decision on the need to seek a second opinion in the form of different suggestions, or different solutions to problems, or agreement or support for their own advice. However, since 2014, financial cut-backs and economies at the council, together with other issues relevant to

the possible change in the nature of the panel, have started to threaten the panel's continued existence.

Essentially, the panel is part of the council's internal consultation process; therefore, it is the responsibility of the council to provide officers to set the panel agenda and administer the meeting. However, by 2014 the number of officers engaged in conservation work had been reduced to an absolute minimum of only two, and they have no time to prepare material for the panel's consideration. Meanwhile, the nature of the panel has been raised by some of the members as an issue that needs to be reconsidered. Those individuals are not in favour of the panel continuing in accordance with the earlier conservation practice and they suggest that the panel should become a design panel rather than a conservation advisory panel.

Nowadays, the panel continues to function but without the attendance of any officers and there is no administrative input from the council, except the provision of a room for the panel to meet. It is now the responsibility of the panel members to check the weekly lists of planning applications on the council website and any member brings to the attention of the panel any schemes he/she considers should be commented upon. The choice of these is based on the member's personal knowledge of the building or location that is the subject of the application.

Public involvement

According to DCLG (2005, paras 39-44) and DCLG (2012, paras 66 and 179), community involvement is an essential element in delivering sustainable development. Planning authorities have been asked by these policies to ensure that communities are able to contribute to ideas about how that vision can be achieved, and have the opportunity to participate in the process of drawing up the vision, strategy, and specific plan policies, and to be involved in development proposals.

These messages have also been reflected in CYC (2013b), and people who are involved in shaping the streets and spaces have been encouraged to have a clear vision of how they should operate in order to enrich these places. CYC (2013b) stresses that policies and guidance that empower people to reach these goals should be in place. In principle 3 of CYC (2013b), local planning authorities have been encouraged to enhance the role of the public as a very significant first step towards appropriate decision making and

overcoming the subjectivity of design judgement. In accordance with these concepts, applicants have been asked to organise a public exhibition and invite the public to participate by giving comments on the design proposals. The public have also been encouraged to comment on the policies and guidance draft either directly on the council website or through their representative bodies and the Parish Council (PC)³⁰.

Ultimately, the City of York Council provided a list of tools (see Table 6.1) to ensure having good quality outcomes in general, as well as in historic contexts and reviving the architectural viability of such contexts (see figure 6.6). Exploring the role of these tools in achieving good designs, through reviewing their application in two case study projects in York, is the aim of the following sections.

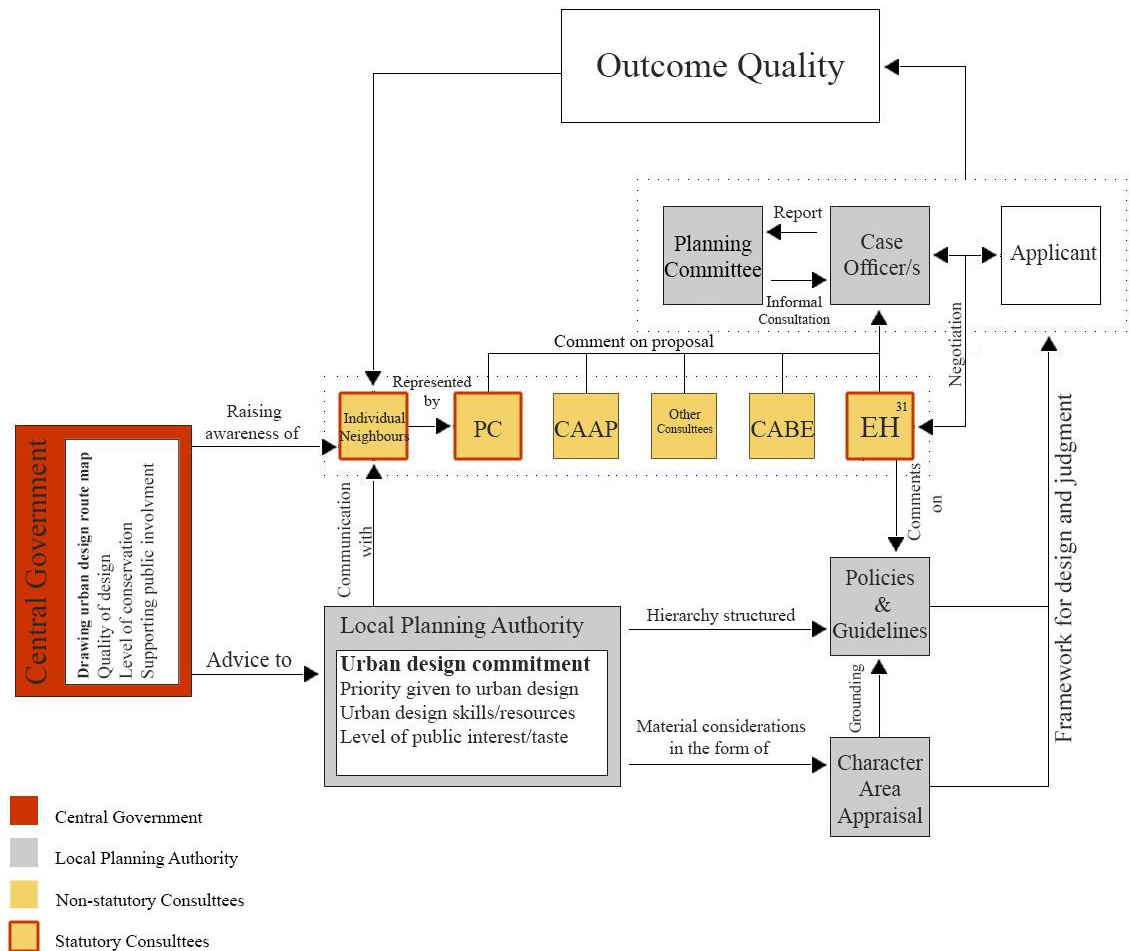


Figure 6.6: York approach towards new development outcomes quality
Source: The researcher

³⁰ A parish council is a civil local authority found in England and is the lowest, or first, tier of local government.

³¹ It is now called HE (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.3).

Table 6.1: Urban design assessment and decision support tools as applied in York

Source: The researcher drawing on CYC (2005, 2011, 2013a and 2013b); CABE and DETR (2000); DCLG *et al.* (2010); CABE/English Heritage (2007) and DCLG (2010, 2012 and 2014)

Urban design tools		Level	Key principles	Other comments
Research and analysis tools	<i>York Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal</i> (CYC <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	Local	Defining the unique characteristics that make the historic core of York so special and by identifying the threats and opportunities to its conservation and enhancement. Setting out the foundations for developing practical policies and proposals for the management of the Conservation Area. Engage with local residents, businesses and amenity groups.	It is set up to help the council to fulfil a statutory duty to draw up and publish proposals to preserve and enhance conservation areas.
	CYC (2013b, c, d & e)	Local	Providing a strategy and guidance, to be read in conjunction with CYC (2013a).	Material planning consideration.
Coordination tools	<i>Development Control Local Plan</i> (CYC, 2005)	Local	Setting out urban design criteria against which planning applications will be judged, i.e. what will or will not be permitted and where to help York to safeguard its outstanding heritage for future generations.	In the process of being replaced by CYC (2013a).
	<i>By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System—Towards Better Practice</i> (CABE and DETR, 2000)	National	Suggesting aspects of form should be considered in carrying out urban design analysis. Encouraging local authorities to start considering the detailed design issues in the planning decision making using urban design principles. Encouraging public participation as a means of controlling the design and development process.	It is now replaced with DCLG (2014).
	<i>PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide</i> (DCLG <i>et al.</i> , 2010)	National	A guide to interpreting how policies of DCLG (2010 and 2012) should be applied.	Material consideration to individual planning and heritage consent decisions.
	<i>Guidance on tall buildings</i> (CABE and English Heritage, 2007)	National	Providing a set of eleven criteria for evaluating tall buildings to be used to inform policy making. Engage with communities in development of policies.	Material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
	<i>City of York Streetscape Strategy and Guidance</i> (CYC, 2013b)	Local	Providing a strategy and guidance, to be read in conjunction with CYC (2013a).	Material planning consideration.
	Development briefs	Local	Setting out more detailed guidance on how schemes can be successful in meeting the addressed policies and expectations in specific areas and sites.	Supplement Local Plan policies and other guidance.
Implementation tools (Including stakeholders)	PC	Local	Main actors involved in the judgement process of new proposed buildings' forms in historic urban contexts with the purpose of ensuring quality in design proposals.	Statutory consultee.
	EH	National		
	CABE	National		Non-statutory consultee.
	CAAP	Local		
	Interest group (YCT, YGS and YAAS)	Local		

6.4 York urban design experience

The historic environment of the City of York is a complex mixture of buried archaeological remains, and a picturesque townscape composed of buildings and streets unique in character representing almost 2000 years of urban growth that underpins the significance of the contemporary city. Contemporary York is the unique combination and juxtaposition of ‘Roman York’, ‘Viking York’, ‘Medieval York’, ‘Georgian and Victorian York’ along with ‘Modern York’. Its wealth of historic buildings include: York Minster (England’s largest surviving Medieval church and the largest Gothic cathedral in northern Europe); around 2000 listed structures (of which 242 are Grade I and II*³²); and 22 scheduled monuments including the city walls, Clifford’s Tower and St Mary’s Abbey (CYC, 2013e) (see figure 6.7).



Figure 6.7: An image of York

Source: University of York, Centre of Medieval studies (www.york.ac.uk/medieval-studies)

6.4.1 City of York Council HQ at West Offices

The development application has involved refurbishing and extending the former York railway station and station hotel, which are grade 2 star listed buildings within the Central Historic Core conservation area. The purpose of the application was to form new offices/headquarters for City of York.

³² There are three types of listed status for buildings in England and Wales:

- Grade I: buildings of exceptional interest.
- Grade II*: particularly important buildings of more than special interest.
- Grade II: buildings that are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

There was formerly a non-statutory Grade III, which was abolished in 1970. Additionally, Grades A, B and C were used mainly for Anglican churches in use – these correspond approximately to Grades I, II* and II. These grades were used mainly before 1977, although a few buildings are still listed using these grades.

Site and context for development

The site of the City of York Council West Offices new building is located to the west of the River Ouse (approximately 180 m) and within the borders of the city wall as well as the Central Historic Core Conservation Area (railway area) (see figures 6.8 and 6.9). The site covers 1.12 ha and is bordered by the city walls to the west (approximately 30m), Tanner Row and Toft Green to the east, Hudson House (a modern six-storey office building) to the south and the Station Rise to the north (a private road closed off by Grade II* listed historic gates at its junction with Tanner Row).

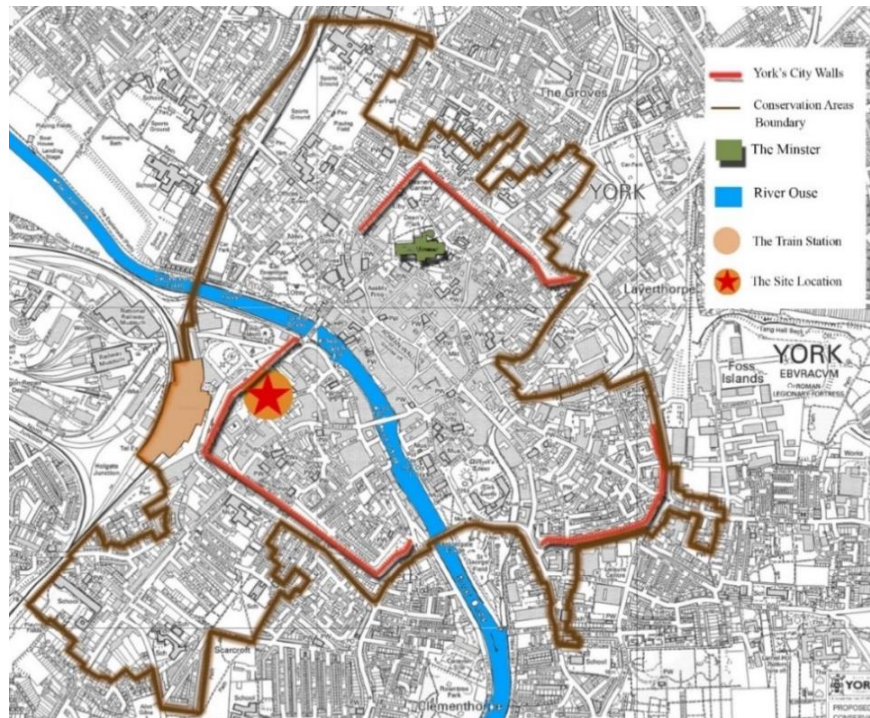


Figure 6.8: The conservation area boundary and the project site location
Source: Adapted by the researcher from documents provided by CYC

The site has its significance from the valuable listed building that was standing on the site, and from being located in an area with archaeological importance, with a real townscape and historic importance (Interviewees no. 10 and 12). The pre-existing West Offices building was York's first railway station, with a Grade II* listed building, and its context includes the city walls (Ancient Monument and Grade I listed building); the former North Eastern Railway Company (NERC) offices (Grade II* listed building) to the north; the Lutyen's War Memorial (Grade II listed) which lies approximately 10 m to the north-west; and to the east, in the Micklegate area, is a tightly knit mixed use area, which contains residential, leisure and commercial buildings dating from the Victorian period through to the modern era, with several listed buildings including English Heritage's offices (Grade II listed building) (see figures 6.9 and 6.10).

- ① Old station building and NER offices, now offices and hotel
- ② Former locomotive works and sheds, now car park and gym
- ③ Current station
- ④ Standalone modern office buildings and hotel (6-9 storeys) on the southern bank of the river
- ⑤ 20th century office development adjacent to the City walls (4-6 storeys)
- ▨ Monument
- ☼ Landmark
- City Wall
- ⤵ Punctuation in City Wall



- ▨ Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- ▨ Building of merit
- ▨ Detractor
- Existing Conservation Area boundary
- Character area boundary
- Proposed Conservation Area boundary
- Superseded Conservation Area boundary

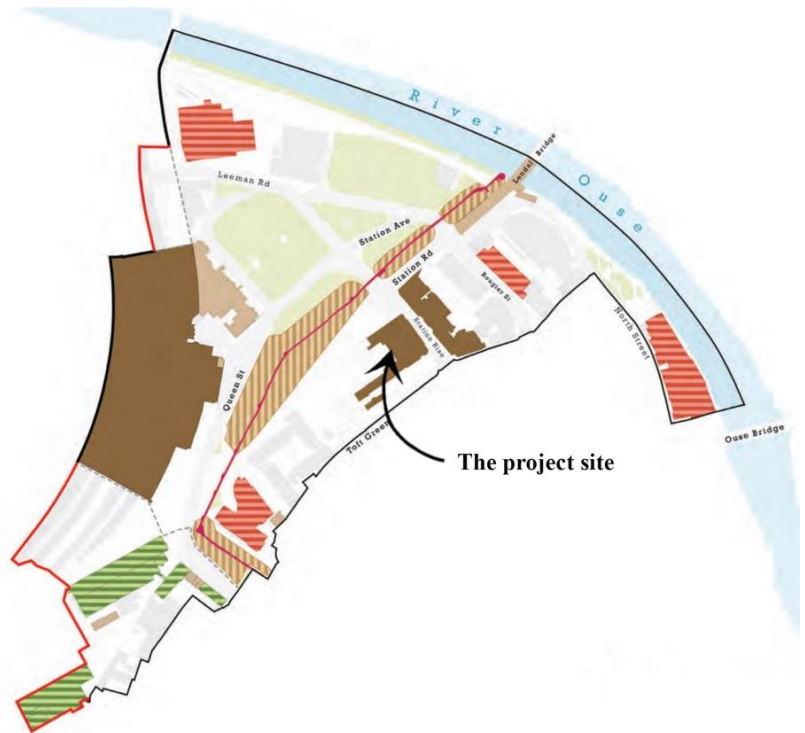


Figure 6.9: The Railway Area, listed buildings and landmarks
 Source: Adapted by the researcher from CYC *et al.* (2011)

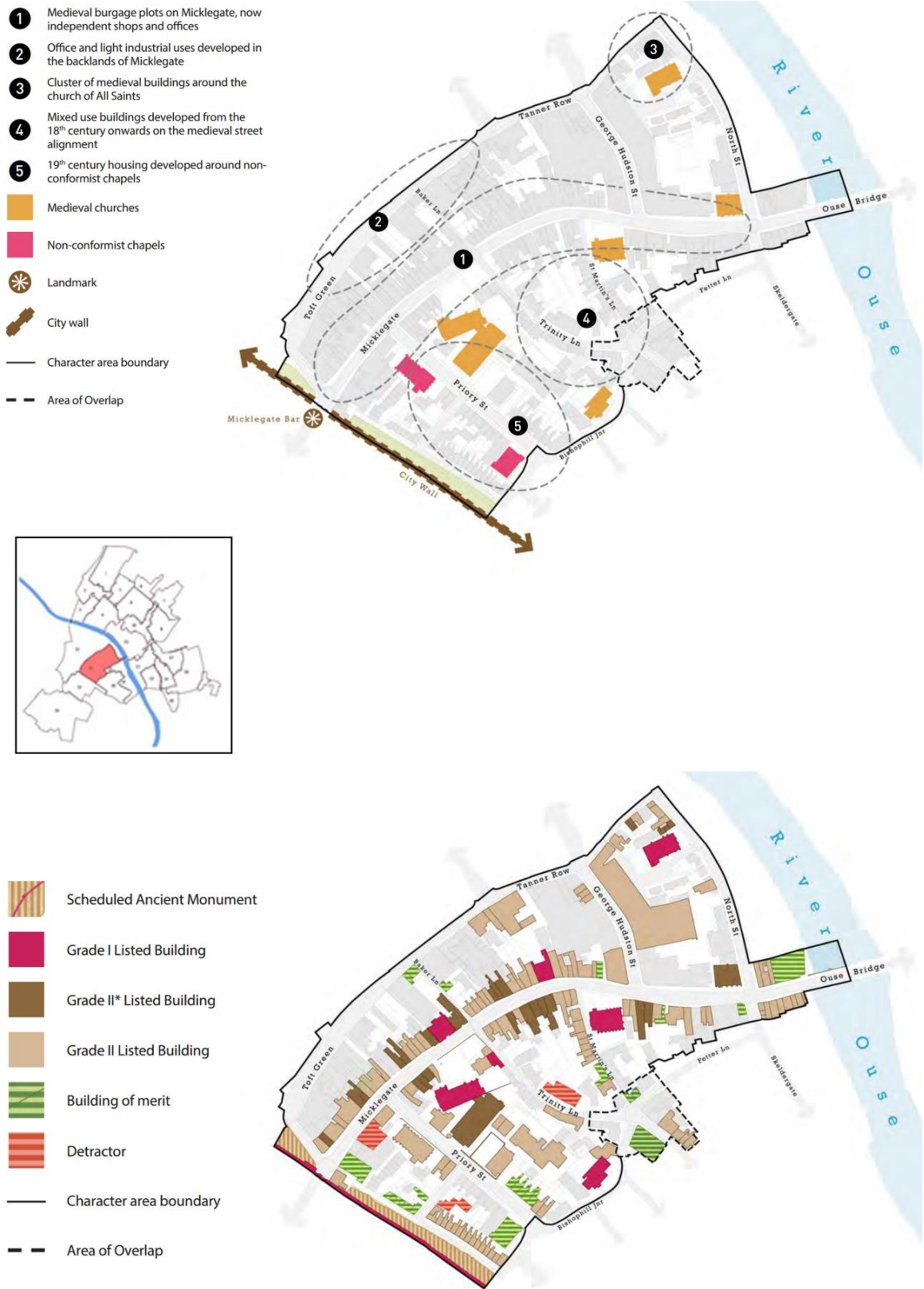


Figure 6.10: The Micklegate area, listed buildings and landmarks
 Source: Adapted by the researcher from CYC *et al.* (2011)

The first part of the West Offices building was built in 1841 with two platforms, the arrival (fronting the city walls) and departure (fronting Tanner Row) linked by a cross platform. A few years later the two platforms were extended to the south-west and covered with a train-shed. Further extensions were subsequently added from the mid-1840's onwards, as follows:

- Adding new platforms to serve Scarborough trains, adjacent to the city walls to the west.
- A hotel between the arrivals and departure platforms was completed in 1853.
- Additional floor-space was added to the departure platform for further office accommodation in 1854. The building was again extended to the south in the 1870's when a single storey toilet block was added.
- The arrival platform was extended at ground floor level to the south in 1850, and an upper floor was added creating further office space.

However, due to the difficulties of adding any further extensions (i.e. because it was a dead end) by which the building could respond to the explosion in rail travel throughout this period, the decision was taken to build a new railway station outside the city walls. The new station was opened in 1877 and since then the original station and its hotel were converted into offices for North Eastern Railway Company.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, after the relocation of the railway station, elements of the existing buildings were removed and other extensions were added to the south. The Scarborough platforms were removed. Part of the train-shed was also removed and replaced with two office 'bridges', and a two-storey building was added to the departure platform side. Much of the remainder of the train-shed was removed in 1966 to allow for the construction of Hudson House.

The remaining parts to be redeveloped included a building that varied between three and five stories, including a basement. The greater part of the original arrival and departure platform buildings and the hotel remained and formed a U-shape with an internal courtyard that was used for car parking. A small section of the train-shed remained within the courtyard at its northern end and there were utilitarian 20th century additions still in place, including the obtrusive office 'bridges' that spanned the courtyard and a two-storey annex office block adjacent to Toft Green (see figure 6.11).



Figure 6.11: The site as it looked from the city wall before development
Source: Adapted by the researcher from CYC *et al.* (2011)

Due to the sensitivity and significant value of the building and its context, a development brief was issued by the council to set out the expectations for the site. The brief set out requirements for a new customer centre, open-plan office accommodation, meeting rooms, and other ancillary accommodation. External requirements included refuse facilities, service/delivery bays, emergency pool-car parking spaces, staff and customer disabled parking spaces, and 300 staff and customer cycle parking spaces.

Challenges of the proposed design

The West Offices building is seen as incredibly important, not just because it is an extremely fine example of early railway architecture, but also because of its strong connection to York's economic, cultural, social, and architectural history of the city (Interviewees no. 10, 11 and 16). However, the incongruous modern additions did not succeed in enhancing the character of the site and the context had somewhat been neglected and forgotten over time (interviewees no. 12 and 14). Thus, the intention of the council, as a client, was to bring back to life an important historic building through redevelopment of a new council HQ on the site and create a building of architectural renown that would elevate the city's status in built environment terms (interviewee no. 14).

According to interviewee no. 11, the ambition of the design team (CSP Architects) was to propose contemporary interventions that are relatively discreet, maintaining the integrity, presence and coherence of the building and its context. However, this ambition was faced with a school of thought according to which it was not easy to develop modern buildings within the city walls and the conservation area, e.g. the Victorian Society and Georgian Society. Moreover, a previous proposal for development had failed in gaining

the support from these societies and EH, and as a result, the application was rejected (interviewee no. 14).

The proposed scheme

According to documentation that was obtained by the researcher during the fieldwork, and other material provided by the city council, the proposed design for this scheme was carried out over a number of months starting from January until the application was submitted in April 2010. During this period, an extensive negotiation was undertaken between the design team and the officers on the Council's Project Team to discuss the requirements of the development brief for the scheme.

The redevelopment proposal that was suggested revealed the early building forms through removal of the 1950's office 'bridges', south-east annex and southern end of west wing, which were regarded as of little value in terms of architectural quality and the historic significance of the location. It also suggested retaining the remaining 19th century structures as the most important historic elements, original features of the historic fabric, which formed an incomplete 'U' shape in plan including the remaining part of the trainshed, and made a valuable and distinctive contribution to the qualities of the conservation area (see figures 6.11 and 6.12 a).

The west wing was proposed to be sensitively extended to provide the accommodation required by the council's brief and to complete the 'U' shaped footprint, and reinforce the original enclosure of the central space. This extension provided four floors of accommodation contained under a pitched roof that was suggested to be 2.7 m higher than the ridge of the removed portion of the west wing, and slightly higher than the ridge of the east wing, but 0.6 m lower than the ridge of the former hotel element (north wing) (see figure 6.12 b).

A curved vaulted roof was suggested to cover the central space, with a 'saw-tooth' profile. This roof was configured to suit the new building requirements of internalising the original station concourse area, creating a single volume for the new office accommodation, and allowing a 'north-light', as well as maintaining and enhancing the legibility and identity of the building complex, principally in views from the city walls (see figure 6.12 a and b).

To the southern end of this structure, a predominantly glazed elevation was suggested to link the new west wing extension to the end of the remaining east wing, after removing the recent additions as discussed earlier, and extending up to the underside of the roof (see figure 6.12 b and c). The apex of the roof was suggested 1.2 m higher than the ridge of the north wing, approximately 2.5 m higher than the main ridge of the east wing and 4.5 m and 1.8 m higher than the pre-existing and new west wings respectively.

The remaining portion of the original train-shed was proposed to be relocated to the southern end of the building where canopies previously existed as part of extensive external covered areas, providing external 'break-out' space and acting as a cycle parking area (see figure 6.12 c).

The new façades were designed as a contemporary interpretation of the earlier façades rather than pastiche. Elements from existing buildings that were seen as of poor quality and not contributing to the character of the area were proposed to be replaced with an attractive and contemporary composition of forms with a distinctive identity and character that would reinvigorate the legibility of this part of the cityscape. Contemporary building elements were carefully crafted to complement the delightful compositions of the existing structures, clearly distinguishing between old and new, to produce a design with considerable modelling, depth, variety, texture and colour (see figure 6.12 b).



(a): The roof sky view



(b): The view from the City Wall



(c): The southern glazed elevation and the original train-shed relocation

Figure 6.12: The proposed design

Source: Documents provided by CSP Architects during the fieldwork

The scheme consultation

According to documentation that was provided by the city council during the fieldwork, meetings took place between the design team and the Council Planning Officer in January and February 2010 to agree the appropriate level of consultation and the means by which it should be publicised. This set out the following consultation activities:

- Informing the public and inviting them to comment on the emerging proposals by arranging a two-day exhibition. This was staged during March 2010 at the Mansion House after being publicised through the council's newsletter and the press, 'Your City', sent to every household in the city.
- An extensive consultation exercise was also undertaken with the council officers, English Heritage, and various amenity bodies.

A good number of visitors (400) were attracted and encouraged to provide comments and responses on the day and via leaflets, which were requested to be returned to the promoters of the scheme in March 2010. Comments from the exhibition were received and summarised in the design and access statement which was submitted with the application as follows:

- Support for re-use of the site.
- Design too modern.
- Concern over the impact/prominence of the new roof and the SW elevation due to their height and proximity to the city walls.
- Objection to the relocation of the train-shed canopy as this was seen as possibly causing loss of its integrity.

English Heritage (EH) welcomed the proposal and it considered that the building was underused, and this redevelopment was seen as securing its long-term future. EH considered the harm of relocating the remainder of the original train-shed canopy would be 'less than substantial'. Accordingly, EH supported the change on the grounds that the canopy would be relocated to where part of the structure was once located and public views of the structure would be enabled.

York Civic Trust (YCT) supported the proposals, though raised some concerns regarding the train-shed and the SW extension. In the first regard, it suggested that the sides of the relocated train-shed should be spaced away from surrounding buildings, i.e. it should not be attached to the proposed hotel. Furthermore, York Civic Trust thought that the SW extension appeared contrived, in particular due to the bay windows on the end of the elevation, which it considered appeared out of place.

The Conservation Areas Advisory Panel (CAAP), through one of its monthly meetings, supported the scheme. However, comments were made with regards to the train-shed

roof. The panel considered that overall there was a net gain in the relocation of the train-shed, but using the whole area as a cycle-shed, and excluding the public from benefiting from viewing the roof, was not the best use of the space. CAAP suggested that the new wall supporting the roof should replicate the original wall.

The Micklegate Planning Panel (Parish Council) objected to the scheme and felt that the overall quality of the design was poor. The central roof was seen by the panel as too high and obtrusive, and the overall design was seen to jar somewhat with the architecture of the earlier building. Furthermore, the panel also asked for a more imaginative design to preserve the original canopies and platforms rather than just removing, relocating, or concealing them as part of the development.

The amenity bodies (York Georgian Society, Victorian Society and Yorkshire Architectural and Archaeological Society) objected to the proposals. They stated that the chosen approach to the proposed relocation and use of the train-shed canopy, as well as the proposed roof and glazed end elevation, was contrary to DCLG (2010), as the development would lead to substantial harm to the heritage asset, and an alternative design/approach could be less harmful.

In the first regard, dismantling the surviving original roof structure and re-erecting it as cycle storage at the end of the new office block was seen by York Georgian Society and Yorkshire Architectural and Archaeological Society as causing obliteration to the characteristic elements that defined the original station. Its architectural significance and historic integrity would be compromised unacceptably and all evidence of its original function would be lost. They concluded that causing this damage to the canopy, so it could be used as a bicycle-shed, as something inappropriate and demeaning to an important part of the historic fabric of the building.

Furthermore, the Victorian Society and Yorkshire Architectural and Archaeological Society considered that the design of the atrium roof was deemed inappropriate, inelegant and misconceived. It recommended that the atrium roof be constructed of horizontal triangular trusses rather than curved trusses. Such a large roof in an incongruous material was seen by them as possibly detracting from the mellow aspect of the existing buildings and having a considerable and detrimental visual impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. A darker and less reflective material was suggested to be used; an example was given as terne-coated steel, which has the same tonal qualities as the existing roof on the former station and other historic buildings in the conservation area.

Ultimately, the society stated that from the city walls the roof looked more like it belonged to an out of town business unit or retail park and that this impression was not helped by the design of the glazed end wall with its over-scaled projecting rectangular arches.

CABE was not consulted on the planning application at the outset and its participation was limited in only commenting at a late stage in the process. Some comments were reported to Planning Committee members, and these summarised CABE concerns. The glazed end elevation was seen by CABE as lacking simplicity and elegance. Further, the relationship between this elevation and the train-shed canopy could be improved to appear more elegant and sophisticated. Ultimately, the relationship between the new roof and the existing buildings was seen by CABE as an awkward juxtaposition. In conclusion, CABE did not support the application as it was presented.

On 9th April 2010 the application was submitted with no major changes in the design. Further negotiations were also undertaken with the Council Planning Officers and English Heritage after the application submission.

The case officer's assessment

According to documentation that was provided by the city council, with reference to *Planning Policy Statement 5* (DCLG, 2010) and DCLG, *et al.* (2010), along with CYC's (2005) policies, e.g. GP 1, HE 1 and 3, the case officer judged whether the proposed design had any adverse impact on the listed buildings as a key criterion of the judgement. This judgement can be summarised as follows:

- The demolition of the southern end of the departure wing, the 20th century office accommodation extension, the lower two-storey additions on the southern and arrivals wings, and the two 'bridge' links between the platform buildings, added after the 1950's, are seen by the officer as having no adverse impact and they do not contribute to the understanding of the original use with little historic/architectural importance. Accordingly, the demolition works are supported as they are integral to allowing the proposed re-use and assisting in revealing the original station layout.
- According to DCLG (2010) and DCLG *et al.* (2010), a building's contribution to its setting (the visual impact and relationship to the listed building) can be sustained or enhanced if new buildings are carefully designed to respect their setting by virtue of

their scale, proportion, height, massing, alignment and use of materials (see Chapter 4, sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2).

With reference to these two documents, the officer stated that the extension consists of buff coloured brick, leaving only the original arrival platform building and later boardroom building above with red brick. This allowed a clear definition between the station's original buildings (on this side) and later additions. The window arrangement was seen as respecting the existing pattern through a linear vertical emphasis in the openings, with the size of the openings (typically) diminishing on the upper levels. The window glazing arrangements varied in their pattern, as do windows throughout the external elevations on the existing building, in particular in the original departure platform building. The glazed end elevation was articulated with functional columns, which were positioned to refer to the location of the railway lines. The extension and closure to the end elevation were expected to appear contemporary, with the detailing and openness referencing the original layout of the railway station.

Overall the officer considered that the design approach, in terms of its massing, proportion, and overall scale, would sit comfortably with the building, improving the overall appearance in relation to the existing situation, and would not appear over-dominant to the strategic view (towards the Minister building) from the wall.

- The roof profile shape choice was defended by the officer as the roof as designed to be fit for purpose and allowed the least prominent structure. From this perspective, the chosen profile was seen as allowing climate control within the building and enabling an increase in natural light, while preventing glare/overheating. However, other choices would not be workable as such, as he stated. A flat roof, a possible choice suggested by the Victorian Society, would not allow, from the officer's view, the climate control requirements, and a pitched roof would create a far more heavy/prominent structure that would compete for attention with the main building.

The officer concluded that the achieved function outweighed the potential harm to the building and its context appearance, which was seen as less than substantial and complied with DCLG (2010) and DCLG *et al.* (2010). He referred in his conclusion to the support provided by the Planning Committee and English Heritage on the roof issues.

- The remaining three bays in the train-shed canopy frame were seen by the officer as an integral element of the Grade II* listed building. Furthermore, he admitted that some harm to the heritage asset could result from its relocation. However, the benefits of the proposal were judged against the harm, as required by DCLG (2010). Relocation was seen by the officer as being necessary to allow level access to each floor. Furthermore, if the train-shed canopy were retained in-situ, as was suggested by some of the involved bodies, the approach to climate control/energy efficiency within the building would not work. Thus, the relocation was seen to play an integral part in securing optimum viable use of the building.

The officer concluded that the approach to relocating the canopy, refurbishing it, bringing it into active use, displaying it in the public realm, and assisting in reinforcing the public's perception and understanding of the original function of the building (railway heritage), enhancing the legibility of the site, constitute adequate justification for the proposed work and the subsequent gain was considered to outweigh the harm.

Ultimately, the proposed development was seen by the officer as offering a positive response to the criteria promoted by DCLG (2010) and its companion DCLG *et al.* (2010), principally by achieving the following: the design approach achieved a balance between delivering a building that is fit for purpose while respecting the listed building's historic fabric and adding an extension that sits comfortably with the host building and enhances the appearance of the conservation area. The proposed alterations of the original fabric, in particular the fact that the train-shed canopy structure had to be moved, were seen as necessary changes. The proposed layout, with the complete U-shape and the suggested roof and relocation of the canopy, and the open aspect to the southern side, were seen as significantly more sympathetic to the original function and appearance of the building. Finally, the overall benefits were considered to significantly outweigh the harm that would occur, and therefore the officer recommended that consent be granted. The decision on August 10th 2010 was that the proposal was considered to be in line with the implementation of the policies of the Development Plan and the guidelines and a permission was granted (see figure 6.13).



Figure 6.13: Planning application timeline of the West Offices building
Source: The researcher

Summary

The success of the project was achieved due to a combination of several crucial factors in the entire process. First, it was the character area appraisal, as a tool, that helped applicants to understand the historic significance of the building and its context character, illuminating its most valuable elements (interviewees no. 12 and 16), together with the development brief that set out what exactly was expected from the design proposal. The two tools were crucial in having a good design approach at an early stage of the process.

Second, national policies (DCLG, 2010) and their accompanying documents, mainly DCLG *et al.* (2010), provided the reference for the officer to defend the contemporary solution of the roof with some (less than substantial) damage caused to the relocated canopy. Without having this tool, the officer would not have been able to defend this solution against a storm of objections of the society bodies and the result could possibly be losing the opportunity of having a good design.

6.4.2 The Davygate Centre

The proposed development was for demolishing a 1960s three-story concrete modern building, which served as the British Gas Showroom with café unit on the ground floor and offices above, and replacing it with three-story building to be used as shops, and food and drink outlets.

Site and context for development

To the east, at approximately 90 m distance from the River Ouse and within the Central Historic Core Conservation Area (Central Shopping Area), the site of the Davygate Centre is located (see figure 6.14). The central shopping area has been the commercial

heart of the city for over 1000 years. It has a huge variety of building styles from different eras of development in the commercial heart of the city, e.g. red brick Victorian department stores are juxtaposed with contemporary glass and steel buildings. Most buildings were intentionally built with shops on the ground floor. In the 18th century there would have been small individual shops but by the late 19th and early 20th century, larger department stores were popular.

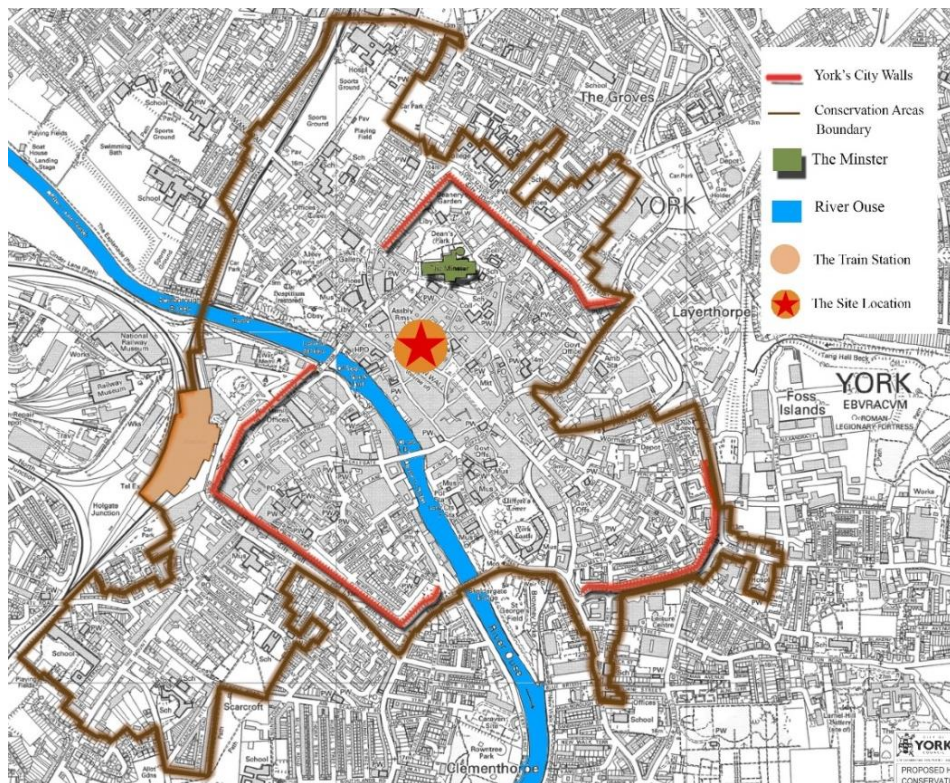


Figure 6.14: York central historic core and site location
Source: Adapted by the researcher from documents provided by CYC

The site is bordered by the Davygate street to the west (one of the city main streets), Little Stonegate to the east (which forms the eastern border of the shopping area), and St. Helen's Square (which was created in 1745 from the churchyard of St Helen's Church³³) to the north-west. In addition to the church, the most dominant building in the immediate neighbourhood is the 1930s neo Georgian building (a Grade II listed building) which curves along the opposite side of the site. However, a large number of Grade I, II and II* buildings dating from the 12th, 18th and early 19th centuries are located in the area (see figure 6.15).

³³ It is first mentioned in the 12th century but was declared redundant in the mid-16th century and partially demolished. An octagonal lantern tower had already replaced the spire in the early 19th century and major restoration followed in 1857. It is still in use as a church and is listed as a Grade II* listed building.

- 1 Excavated Roman bath house
- 2 18th century civic improvements creating widened streets and squares from former church land
- 3 19th century civic improvements including the creation of Parliament Street
- 4 Creation of Newgate Market in the 20th century
- 5 20th century Yorkshire Herald development which allows access to the riverside
-  Landmark
-  Line of former Roman fortress wall
-  Churches
-  Character area boundary
-  Area of overlap



Figure 6.15: The central shopping area listed buildings and landmarks
 Source: Adapted by the researcher from CYC *et al.* (2011)

Challenges of the proposed design

The ambition of the design team was to produce a work of high quality modern architecture and avoid obvious borrowing from historic styles. In other words, the building was designed to strike a suitable relationship with the adjacent church and with the widely differing listed and unlisted buildings in the immediate vicinity (interviewee no. 15).

The big challenge for the design team (Panter Hudspith Architects) was to design a building which would meet the requirements of modern retailing and simultaneously be acceptable on this sensitive site in a city that has often taken a conservative approach to design (Interviewee no. 15). Furthermore, a previous proposal for the redevelopment of the site had been rejected by the planning authority as banal and of poor quality. At the same time, there was an influential body of opinion that was uneasy with the concept of an avowedly modern building on the site and which favoured a brick building with a pitched slate roof, e.g. YCT.

The proposed scheme

According to documentation that was provided by the city council, the design proposal addressed the following points:

- Suggesting a shallow curve shape along Davygate, echoing the curve of the 1930s building on the other side of the street, and slightly opening up views to the church.
- Using the same stones that the next door church is built from as the chief component of the Davygate street elevation.
- Adopting a calm, low key approach with a strong horizontal emphasis. This was provided by the exposed frame of the building and the slightly projecting cornice at eaves level with a slight increase in height to the equivalent of the ridge height of the next door building. At the same time, the non-structural nature of the stone was emphasised by holding it in the exposed metal frame of the building and stepping out the upper floors slightly over the street. This device also echoed the form of traditional timber-framed buildings and this provided a visual continuity with historic precedents, as well as emphasising modernity. The use of stone panel and glazing on the upper floors represented an innovative response to the

retail emphasis on the need for blind windowless boxes at upper storeys (see figure 6.16).

- Lining up the gap in Little Stonegate, which had a deleterious effect on the townscape qualities of this street, and using the brick for this elevation and the classic rectangular windows following the street rhythm.
- The metal frame used on the Davygate elevation for cosmetic and functional issues was also used on the Little Stonegate for legibility purposes. Furthermore, the proposal tied in with the height of the lower building at eaves and ridge (see figure 6.16).



Street level elevation of Little Stonegate



Street level elevation of Davygate Street from the west



Street level elevation of Davygate Street from the east



View of Davygate Centre along Davygate Street

Figure 6.16: The proposed design after completion
Source: Adapted by the researcher from www.panterhudspith.com

The scheme consultation

The planning application was validated and registered on 22nd December 1997 and an extensive consultation exercise was undertaken with the council officers and various amenity bodies (statutory and non-statutory bodies). The responses from those consultees were as follows:

- Guildhall Planning Group (Parish Council) supported the scheme, which was seen by the group as framing the church without detracting from its verticals on Davygate and lining up the gap in Little Stonegate. However, some concerns were raised by the group, such as the chosen material on the front of the development. They recommended that this material should not be dark as this may give the viewer a heavy feel and could challenge the feeling of the building scale in the Davygate. Furthermore, the slabs of stone on the top floor were seen as too large and it was recommended that they must be broken up. Further concern was raised by the group regarding the roof as it was not clear to them whether there should be a glimmer of pitched roof visible from the street level on Davygate or not. In Little Stonegate, the roofline was recommended to blend with the surrounding building.
- The Royal Fine Art Commission supported the scheme and stated that such proposals should be encouraged, as they represent an opportunity for York to have a good modern building of a kind that is all too rare.
- English Heritage also supported the scheme and welcomed the demolition of the 1960's building, which was described as making little contribution to the character of the conservation area. They raised no objection to applying a contemporary design in this position. However, the elevation on Little Stonegate was seen as not relating so well to the adjacent buildings, particularly regarding the chosen material.
- The Conservation Area Advisory Panel stated that the demolition of the existing building needed justification. Furthermore, the chosen material was questioned by them in such a predominantly brick street. In general, the proposal was seen by the panel and the York Civic Trust as devoid of architectural merit and unworthy of such an important position in the city centre.

The case officer's assessment

In the design assessment, the officer referred to policy GP1 and HE2 (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2) and set 'the design and effect on the character of the conservation area' as a key criterion to be considered in the assessment. The judgement was set by the officer as follows:

- The demolition of the 1960's building was welcomed by most of the involved bodies, except the CAAP, which raised concerns and asked for justifications. In this regard, the officer considered that the existing building was constructed from an inappropriate concrete material for a sensitive location, and stated that the appearance of the building was considered by many as conflicting with the quality of the surrounding townscape, even with a deleterious effect, particularly the adjoining church in Davygate and the car park access gap in Little Stonegate. The officer supported his view by referring to the similar view of English Heritage, RFAC, and the Parish Council.
- The concern raised by the Guildhall Planning Group regarding the possible starkness of the design was addressed by the officer, who argued that the overall level of detail in the shopfront and fenestration would mean that the development would not have a stark appearance. Further concern was raised by the group regarding the roof shape, and the material was reviewed by the officer. He summarised that the chosen system of sloping roofs was aligned in such a way that the main profile will face towards the Minster and would not be visible from Davygate. Also, the chosen metal material was seen as tying in with the traditional roof space material.
- The height of the proposed elevation on Davygate was seen as fitting into the existing townscape. However, the elevation on Little Stonegate was acknowledged to possibly need revising in a way that could fit it into the existing buildings in the street and improve the area's appearance.

Ultimately, the case officer stated that he disagreed with the CAAP view in terms of the merit of the proposal in this position and against the existing buildings. He saw the proposal, referring to similar views from EH and RFAC, as providing very crisp, clean, modern shop-fronts that could add to the image of the development. In this sense, it was seen as compliant with policy GP1 design and HE2 (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2). Thus, the officer recommended approval of the application (see figure 6.17).

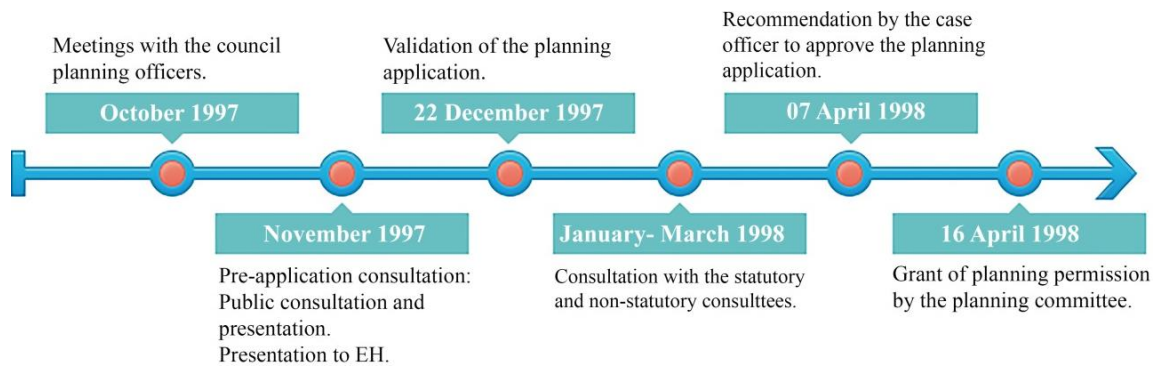


Figure 6.17: Planning application timeline of Davygate Centre
Source: The researcher

Summary

The key for success in this project was the fact that the architects gave careful thought to the urban design issues involved in the scheme (interviewees no. 15 and 17), coupled with a depth of understanding of the character of the area and of the scale of the buildings in the context. This resulted in achieving a good approach at a very early stage of the process. The Local Plan provided the materials for the applicant to build this understanding. Furthermore, some polices (mainly GP1 and HE2, see section 6.3.2) provided a guide and criteria for the case officers to frame their judgement, as well as the reference to defend the key idea of applying such a modern building in sensitive contexts against the raised objections by some consultees.

A positive response from the RFAC and the Parish Council played a crucial role in pushing the scheme towards success. For instance, the RFAC and the Parish Council raised a concern regarding the design of the façade on Little Stonegate, which the officer agreed with, and the applicant was asked to amend it. This helped to raise the quality of the design on this side, which was crucial as the previous building was harshly criticised for its failure in achieving this. Furthermore, the case officers referred to their support, as well as EH support, to justify outweighing their view against the objection raised by the societies and CAAP regarding the chosen material and the building form in general.

6.5 Analysis of urban design tools applications in York

The case study projects demonstrate that it is possible to use traditional elements in conjunction with modern ones in order to create a building that is at once contextual and modern, and of high architectural quality. However, the progress of the two schemes for planning approval did not entirely run smoothly because of the position of the

conservation interest as mentioned earlier. Achieving this required, in addition to addressing and applying some urban design tools, an enlightened attitude on the part of the planning department, together with willingness of the architects to respond positively to criticisms and suggestions from the Planning Committee and other bodies.

6.5.1 Research and analysis tools

The experiences showed that having a good understanding of the building and its setting – how it developed historically and how it is sensitive – was a key instrument to justify and defend proposals in the two projects, and a main first step towards achieving success.

This tool was very helpful in the progress of the two schemes, where it was the key in ensuring a good design approach at a very early stage of the process by widening the design teams' understanding of the building sites and their contexts, as well as encouraging them to suggest modern designs. However, an issue of lack of documents that can help applicants to understand the character of the contexts was raised by interviewee no. 10 as a serious challenge for the whole process. She mentioned that the only document that was used by the applicant to understand the character of the West Offices building had not been released by the council, i.e. FAS (2006). She attributed this to the lack of resources on behalf of the council that were needed to produce these documents. However, the recently published documents, particularly CYC *et al.* (2011), are successfully filling this gap and have plainly used urban design language and analysis in addressing the characters of the City of York's conservation areas.

6.5.2 The coordination tools

Urban design criteria had been structured in the form of Local Plan policies and its profile has been gradually raised in the frequently revised versions. Unlike its previous versions, CYC (2013a) strongly enhances urban design through providing one set of policies (DHEs) in which principles of urban design are plainly addressed with reference to DETR and CABE (2000). Further explanations are added to ensure the right message is brought across. These criteria are further explained in supplementary guidelines and development briefs.

In the West Offices building, while the applicant mentioned the relevant Local Plan policies and guidelines in the design and access statement, the statement did not explain

how the suggested proposal complied with these policies. Furthermore, the officers and other involved bodies referred to the national policies and guidance without mentioning any of the Local Plan policies. The national policies, i.e. DCLG (2010), provided the reference for the officers to defend their views in accepting modern design even when this might cause less than substantial damage to the context. However, these policies were interpreted differently by some consultees, who referred to them in suggesting rejection for the proposal. In Davygate Centre, Local Plan policies were mentioned by the officers very briefly, again without saying how and where the proposals complied with/challenged these policies.

DETR and CABE (2000) and DCLG *et al.* (2010) as national guidance were also used by some consultees and officers as a tool for assessment at the local level, and they were more helpful than any local design guidance in the two projects. Furthermore, they provided a checklist that helped the officers and some consultees to set out their comments (Interviewees no. 12, 14 and 17). Recently, CYC (2013b) has been released to further enhance the principles of urban design that were raised in CYC (2013a) and to take the place of the national guidance. However, CYC (2013b) is more general than the national ones and sets strategies rather than guidelines.

6.5.3 Implementation tools

The experience showed that the design review panel is a useful tool and in the two projects it has played a crucial role in pushing the projects towards success. At the national level, the last minute design review, which was provided by CABE for the West Offices building, was too late and the comments given by them were considered to be subjective (interviewees no. 14 and 17). Moreover, CABE did not provide a reference explaining how the proposal was challenging any of the policies.

At the local level, CAAP was in charge of running the design review service. CAAP's role has been criticised by some interviewees for giving subjective comments, particularly in Davygate Centre, where the panel rejected the scheme without saying how the scheme was challenging any of the then valid policies or guidelines. Furthermore, while the panel has a variety of design expertise members its general trend is more conservation – than design-oriented. At the time of writing, there is serious discussion about whether the panel should become an urban design panel rather than a conservation advisory one; this means its continued existence is in doubt.

Furthermore, the Parish Council had provided wider views and played a very helpful and supportive role in Davygate. The Parish Council role, however, was critical of the West Offices building as the Parish Council and other civil society bodies entirely rejected the proposal with no reference whatsoever to policies or guidelines, and never explained how the proposed design was challenging them. However, the existing experience shows a lot of challenges facing the efforts towards achieving an effective role of the public in the process. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

6.6 Conclusion

Although DCLG (2012) was not a detailed national policy, and barely mentioned urban design as a term as well as principles, York Local Plans plainly used the language of urban design, particularly CYC (2013a), which provides a list of urban design policies. In addition, applying detailed national guidance, such as DETR and CABE (2000) and DCLG, *et al.* (2010), helped to send clearer messages from the national policies and took the place of the local guidance in judging proposals. Furthermore, using research and analysis tools gave the applicant a deep understanding of the context, which was a key factor for the success in the West Offices building. Ultimately, CAAP played a supportive role in the West Offices building comparing with CABE which played a controversial role.

The experience showed that these tools are facing some challenges regarding their practice in York. Some of these challenges refer to the fact that bodies with a conservative outlook have a strong influence on the planning process in general, which absolutely influences the planning application judgement process. Other challenges refer the role of urban design in the process not being fully understood by all the reviewers. These challenges will be further analysed and a potential response will be suggested in Chapter 7.

The following chapter will provide an analysis of the findings from Chapters 4-6 and conclude with setting out the advantages and disadvantages of the two cities' approaches, as well as illustrating how applications of lessons from these approaches are possible.

CHAPTER 7 – ANALYSIS OF URBAN DESIGN GOVERNANCE AND STAKEHOLDERS’ VIEWS

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 investigated the urban design route map in the English and Scottish planning systems and concluded that the concepts and language of urban design were overtly used in writing national policies, guidance, and other supplementary documents published by the two Governments’ advisory bodies. However, the route map has not yet been clearly drawn and the theme of urban design itself is barely mentioned in these documents. Thereafter, Chapters 5 and 6 reviewed urban design approaches adopted in Edinburgh and York respectively, and concluded that the case study projects were apparently improved on the basis of the application of the urban design tools. However, the review also highlighted the fact that urban design tools are not often similarly considered in the two cities’ approaches and that they are still facing some challenges regarding their practice within the planning systems.

By using the framework that was developed in Chapter 2 (see Box 1 in section 2.8.3), this chapter aims to test and refine the two urban design approaches adopted in Edinburgh and York within their respective policy and guidance context and to uncover the advantages and disadvantages of each in the process of meeting the stated objective 3, thus answering the research question Q3-3. Addressing challenges found in the two approaches and suggesting possible responses for improving urban design governance is also one of the objectives of this chapter.

The analysis in this chapter is hierarchically structured, starting from the national level down to the local level. It has been conducted by analysing findings from the previous three chapters, i.e. Chapters 4 to 6, and by interviewing different groups of stakeholders who are considered to be key actors in the assessment process (e.g. designers, developers, statutory and non-statutory consultees’ representatives, and planning officers).

7.2 Analysis of urban design governance in Edinburgh and York

7.2.1 Context comprehension and appraisal

Understanding the character of the context and the area in which the building will sit is stressed in the national policies and guidance as a very crucial first step towards securing good outcomes. In this sense, national policies asked the LPAs to consider them as material consideration in any judgement (Scottish Government, 2014, Para 56; Scottish Government, 2010, DCLG, 2010, Para 5.1; DCLG, 2012, Paras 1 and 126). Furthermore, documents were published by English Heritage and Historic Scotland to help local authorities in forming judgements on any new development in historic contexts as well as to guide them on how to accomplish the character area appraisals at the local level.

Due to the influence of English Heritage, the number of these documents was greater in England than in Scotland, and the English version was more efficient in raising awareness among interviewees. While the Scottish documents were written to address another list of frequently updated conservation policies, the English documents provided further explanations of the DCLG (2010 and 2012) policies alike, and never set out another list of policies. Unlike the Scottish documents, examples of good practice and good projects were given by the English Heritage documents when it needed to ensure delivery of the message. However, the only case of examples in Scotland is given in *New Design in Historic Settings* (A+DS/Historic Scotland, 2010) which is very similar to the English documents, particularly to *Building in Context* (CABE and English Heritage, 2001) and *Guidance on tall buildings* (CABE and English Heritage, 2007) (see chapter 4, sections 4.3.3 and 4.4.3).

In accordance with this, documents were released by the two cities' LPAs with the purpose of addressing the character of the conservation areas and their significant elements (CEC, 2005a; CEC, 2005b; CEC *et al.*, 2005; CEC *et al.*, 2011). The two cities' documents in this regard are very similar and both stated that the most important issue for assessment is the relation between the building and its surrounding buildings and the area as a whole rather than the design nature of the building, these wider issues being the core of urban design. Language and techniques of urban design, e.g. townscape, urban form, skyline, etc., were clearly stressed as important material considerations in any judgement formed.

The case studies showed that these documents are a very helpful and crucial tool in ensuring good results. In the four projects, these documents helped to enhance the built heritage through widening the design team's understanding of the context's character and its elements. They have also provided key arguments to justify and defend proposals and encouraged applicants not to be afraid to suggest a contemporary design. In Edinburgh, this tool has been very helpful to officers in setting out their criteria for assessment, as the experience of Sugarhouse Close and Primark Building has shown (see Chapter 5, section 5.5.1). However, in York, a concern was raised by interviewee no. 10 regarding the lack of resources, which had previously caused a delay in the release of some of these documents. This is seen by her as a serious challenge to the use of this tool (see Chapter 6, section 6.5.1).

7.2.2 Explicit urban design criteria

Adopting a comprehensive hierarchy of policies based on urban design theory

The subsequently revised versions of the national planning policy of the English and Scottish systems have strongly affirmed that introducing new forms of buildings into existing contexts is likely to affect the quality of life of those living in the surrounding environment. In accordance with this, urban design principles are addressed at two levels, namely in the form of policies and guidelines. However, the weight given to urban design has varied between the two systems and resulted in two distinct perspectives.

In Scotland, *Scottish Planning Policy* (Scottish Government, 2010a, Para 256) states that what is important in order to achieve quality spaces is to understand how buildings work together to shape the space and streets in their environments, which is itself the core of urban design. The most recent version *Scottish planning policy* (Scottish Government, 2014) conveys clearer messages with respect to urban design and an increase in its tone is evident from the list of principles for successful/quality places, laid out in the policy document, which are, to a large extent, akin to existing urban design principles as set out in the literature. Scottish Government (2014) was referred to by a good number of interviewees because it sets the criteria which permit officers to refuse poor designs, as they provide the proper reference for this. However, Scottish Government (2014) only mentioned urban design content in two pages out of sixty-seven, titling this as 'qualities of successful places', and the term itself is never mentioned.

In England, *Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development* (DCLG, 2005) provided a set of design policies which promoted high-quality, inclusive design with reference to good practice as set out in *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System — Towards Better Practice* (DETR and CABE, 2000). *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG, 2012) has also provided a list of policies with a low degree of urban design content, compared to DCLG (2005). DCLG (2012) did not draw a clear and direct link to urban design literature, which has been discussed over a long period of time, and the topic of urban design was referred to on only two pages out of the fifty-two without the term 'urban design' actually being used, but simply titling it as 'design' (Paterson, 2012). In this sense, DCLG (2005) is described by some interviewees as being completely reliable for guiding discussion and decisions, and as being far better than DCLG (2012).

Documents at the national level have been published by the two Governments with the purpose of providing further illustration and clarification of the national policies (i.e. CABE and DETR, 2000 and DCLG, 2014 in England; Scottish Executive, 2001a; Scottish Executive, 2001b; Scottish Executive, 2007; Scottish Government, 2010; Scottish Government, 2013 in Scotland). According to most interviewees, these documents have succeeded, to a wide extent, in achieving most of what they stand for, and unlike the aforementioned national policies, they clearly addressed urban design principles and concepts, particularly CABE and DETR (2000) in England and the Scottish Executive (2001b) in Scotland.

These documents pertaining to the two systems have been criticised by interviewees for potentially causing confusion and conveying mixed messages. A similar opinion related to only the English system was previously raised by Paterson (2011b). The interviewees shared the same opinion of Paterson (2011b, p. 156) that CABE and DETR (2000) "*does not appear to be well integrated into practice as it is not clear how and when it should be used by LPAs, who should be the main users of this document*". Furthermore, *Planning Practice Guidance* (DCLG, 2014) was also criticised by some interviewees as, at some points, it repeats with no changes in the wording what national policies set out, e.g. good design definitions and when to refuse planning permission for developments of poor design. A further point was raised by interviewees against the Scottish documents in which they considered the matter of applying more than one document as a companion to the national policy document. Some of these documents had been used as companions to

a prior national policy document without showing how they link to each other, which in turn might prove unhelpful and cause confusion.

The *Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment* (CABE) and *Architecture + Design Scotland* (A+DS) have produced a large body of literature and have been running a design review service intended to provide advice to local authorities and developers. This has contributed significantly to raising the profile of urban design as an issue within planning. The documents they provide have attempted to, and succeeded to a wide extent, in demystifying urban design, in demonstrating how it can contribute to the quality of life and in illustrating the benefits it provides (Dawson and Higgins 2009; Paterson 2012).

These documents are seen by some interviewees as suffering from a lack of clarity regarding their use in practice as they are not mandatory and their place in relation to other criteria and guidance is uncertain. Further criticism was also raised by others as these documents did not use very much urban design language and never set out urban design criteria to be used by LPAs (Paterson, 2012; Interviewees no. 14 and 17). The only exception is CABE (2008 and 2012), which set out criteria for the development of new residential areas; however, these documents cannot be applied to all types of buildings as they were intended for housing. On the other hand, A+ DS publications present the same problems, in the view of some of the interviewees, despite the fact that these publications number just a few compared with the large number of CABE publications. Furthermore, any comparison between the two bodies would be unfair due to the unequal concerns and histories of the two bodies. In this regard, the documents which were jointly published by CABE and EH in England, and A+DS and HS in Scotland (A+DS/Historic Scotland 2010; CABE/English Heritage, 2001 and 2007) are regarded by a good number of interviewees as being more helpful than CABE and A+DS documents.

At a local level, the different messages conveyed by the national policies were reflected in local plans in Edinburgh and York as well as in the guidance documents. These local documents have set out policies and guidelines by which development can be controlled. The most recent local plans of the two cities (CEC, 2010 and 2014 in Edinburgh and CYC 2013a in York) are very similar and have plainly used much of the urban design language and concepts developed by key authors on the subject over the past few decades, but without mentioning the term urban design. Most of the criteria which have been dealt

with in Chapter 2 (see section 2.6) are addressed here, somewhat similarly, as policies and criteria to which each development is required to conform (see table 7.1).

The experience showed that these policies and criteria have been addressed by case officers of the four projects as key factors in the success of any new proposal, and when these issues were challenged, justifications were reviewed and benefits were weighed up against these. They have also referred to them in defending their views when they contradicted with other consultees and sometimes when admitting damage to the contexts (see Chapter 5, section 5.5.2 and Chapter 6, section 6.5.2). However, the officer for each of these schemes set his/her own criteria for judgment which are inclusive of the local plan policies. Furthermore, at some points, the officers' criteria paid less attention to some of the local plan policies or dealt with them in general rather than going into much detail. For example, in the Sugarhouse Close project, the case officer believed that the cladding materials complied with his own criteria, i.e. the materials are acceptable and enhance the character and appearance of the Old Town Conservation Area. The officer, in this case, did not mention how the chosen materials complied with the local plan policies. This point raised controversy among the interviewees as some believed that the chosen materials were out of character. Some interviewees believed that such practice may influence the outcome's quality, especially when the officers do not have a deep understanding of the local plan policies.

A wide range of documents were published by the two cities' LPAs in order to show further commitment towards urban design. The two cities' approaches sharply differed in this regard and both have advantages and disadvantages. In Edinburgh, this commitment was very clear through the series of documents which were overtly titled referring to urban design, particularly *The Standards of Urban Design* (CEC, 2003) and the most recent *Edinburgh Design Guidance* (CEC, 2013). These documents played a crucial role in raising the profile of urban design to this level in Edinburgh. However, the issue, in this case, is related to whether those for whom the documents were set can really understand what these documents stand for.

In York, on the other hand, the national guidance documents, particularly CABE and DETR (2000), had always been used as local guidance and the documents which were released by the council were written to supplement them rather than to set their own vision of the guidance. However, while CABE and DETR (2000) is a very detailed guidance on the national level as discussed earlier, and this is in fact what makes it usable locally, this

is not usually the norm and there is no guarantee that such detailed national documents would always be provided. Thus, applying any less detailed national guidance will leave a gap on York local level as the local guidance documents are very general to bridge this gap – the *City of York Streetscape Strategy and Guidance* (CYC, 2013b) is more general than CABI and DETR (2000) and sets out strategies rather than principles or criteria.

The experience showed that these documents, particularly in Edinburgh, have helped both the reviewers as well as the applicants in understanding the policies they have to consider while explaining to applicants how to adhere to them. However, not all of these involved in the design review process in the two cities showed good knowledge of these documents and of what they really stand for. Furthermore, on some occasions, development briefs had to be on hand together with an urban design framework set to ensure delivery of the message. A design brief as a tool was a key factor for success in the Primark Building (Edinburgh) and the West Offices Building (York), in that they laid out, very helpfully, what was expected. This helped in allowing for a quality proposal to be adopted at a very early stage of the process which, in turn, was one of the main factors in their success.

Table 7.1: Urban design policies and guidelines in the two cities' approaches

Source: The researcher drawing on CEC (2010 and 2013) and CYC (2013a and 2013b)

Sub-category	Indicators	Edinburgh Local Plan policies (CEC, 2010)		Edinburgh Design guidance (CEC, 2013)	York Local Plan policies (CYC, 2013a)	York Design guidance (CYC, 2013b)
		Design policies	Conservation policies			
Urban form	Building lines and Layout	Des 1, 3a+b, 4a, 5a and 10a	Env 1 and 6a+c	1.4, 1.8, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3	DHE 1(ii b)	Principle 3
	Block size and grain	Des 3a+b, 5a and 10b	Env 1 and 6a	2.1	DHE 1(ii a and f) and 7(ii)	Principle 3
	Spatial proportion (building group)	Des 1 and 3a+b	Env 6a+c	1.4 and 2.2	DHE 1(ii a, b and f), 6(ii) and 7(ii)	Principle 3
	Integration	Des 1, 2,3b, 4a and 5a	Env 1, 3 and 6a+c	1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4	DHE 1(ii a, e and f)	Principle 3
Townscape	Roofscape and skyline	Des 1 and 3a	Env 6a	2.4	DHE 4(iii)	Principle 4
	Space hierarchy, streetscape and Landmarks	Env 1, 3 and 10 a-c	Des 3, 5a, 6a and 10a	1.2, 1.3, 1.6 and 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4	DHE 1(ii e and f), 4(i, iv, v and vi), 6(i) and 7(i)	Principle 3
	Massing and Scale	Des 1 and 3a+b	Env 6a	1.8, 2.1 and 2.2	DHE 1(ii e and f)	Principle 4
	Rhythm	Des 1, 3a+b, 5a and 10a-c	Env 6a	1.8, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4	DHE 1(ii a, e, g and f)	Principle 3 and 4
	Richness	Des 1, 3a+b and 5a	Env 6a+c	1.8, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4	DHE 1(ii g)	Principle 3 and 4
Perception	Continuity and Enclosure	Des 1 and 10	Env 1, 3 and 6a	1.2, 1.8, 2.1 and 2.3	-	Principle 3
	Legibility	Des 3a+b and 10 a-c	Env 1, 3 and 6c	2.1, 2.2 and 2.4	DHE 5(i)	Principle 5
	Appropriateness	Des 1, 3a-c and 5a	Env 1, 3 and 6a+c	2.2- 2.4	DHE 2, 3(ii) and 6(i)	Principle 4
	Distinctiveness	Des 1, 3 and 5	Env 7	1.4, 2.1 and 2.2	DHE 7	Principle 4
Public realm	Aesthetic quality	Des 1, 3c-j and 5a-c	Env 6a+c	1.3, 2.1-2.3 and 2.11	DHE 1(ii), 5(ii) and 3(viii)	Principle 3
	Sense of belonging and identity	Des 1, 3b and 5b	Env 6a+c	2.11	DHE 3(ii and iii)	Principle 3
	Personalisation		1.8	1.1	DHE 12 (iii)	Principle 3

Prioritising urban design

In the Scottish and English national policies, on many occasions, sustainability and economic growth have been consistently highlighted so as to give them due weight, and, on some occasions, it was recommended that they be prioritised in decision making within the planning system (Scottish Government, 2010, Para 4; Scottish Government, 2014, Paras 24-26; DCLG, 2012, Paras 19, 20 and 65). According to DCLG (2012, Para 65) and DCLG (2014), LPAs in England are discouraged from refusing to grant planning permission to buildings which promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, only if those concerns are mitigated by economic, social and environmental benefits. In Scotland, this message has never been articulated and the two concepts (sustainability and townscape) are equally addressed as mentioned in Scottish Government (2014, Para v).

Establishing such instructions at the national level in England has been described by Paterson (2012) and by interviewees (no. 1, 3, 12, and 16) as detrimental to urban design and to all the efforts to raise its profile as well as to the rationale to which the government claims to be committed. They argue that because political pressure has been exercised to ensure sustainability and economic growth are prioritised, urban design may not receive careful and balanced consideration.

In the West Offices Building (York), since the national policy and guidance plainly prioritises sustainability issues, though with some exceptions, the case officers allowed some damage to be caused to the existing train-shed canopy by dismantling it to be relocated outside the building. However, this damage was considered by officers and other statutory consultees to be less harmful than it first appeared, due to the general benefit of their approach to climate control or energy efficiency within the building, which would not exist without this relocation (see Chapter 6, section 6.4.1). Nevertheless, this approach might result in bad designs which offer sustainable solutions invading the conservation areas, potentially causing serious damage to these areas' appearance, simply because these solutions comply with policies which give priority to sustainability issues.

Most interviewees agreed that mentioning design quality in the description of sustainable development in the national policies would help raise the profile of urban design and possibly resolve the differences between the two policies. However, this is never overtly mentioned in DCLG (2012) or in Scottish Government (2014). It is referred to in DCLG (2012) in one sentence in Paragraph 9, which states that replacing poor design with better

design is one of a list of steps towards achieving sustainable development. On the other hand, in Scotland, Scottish Government (2014) gets the point across in a better way, as set out in Paragraph 29, which focuses on supporting good design and the six qualities of successful places in order to achieve the right development in the right place. The right development is necessarily sustainable, as the aforementioned paragraph states.

Interviewees with a design background more frequently raised some fundamental concerns about the practice within planning systems in which bodies with a conservation focus were prioritised, as statutory consultees, over other non-statutory consultees with design and urban design concerns, e.g. English Heritage and its equivalent in Scotland (Historic Scotland) against CABE and its equivalent in Scotland (A+DS). This tension was clearer in York than in Edinburgh. The experience showed that the views of English Heritage were given a much stronger weight in decisions on new developments in historic contexts in England, rendering it, in a way, the most influential body in the review process.

Some interviewees mentioned that previously two proposals for the West Offices Building and Davygate Centre in York were rejected mainly because they did not secure the acceptance of EH. In this regard, interviewee no. 11 adds that ignoring CABE advice in the West Offices Building was due to the fact that their view contradicted the view of the statutory consultee who favoured a conservation focus, i.e. English Heritage. Such practice makes the review process somewhat reactive rather than proactive and it can go as far as undermining the rationale behind the whole process. Furthermore, the profile of urban design, which had experienced a long period of tension with conservation, could be adversely affected as a result and may struggle within the system due to the unequal influence of these bodies.

The influence of EH was defended by interviewees (no. 11, 12, 14 and 16) who consider that EH is playing a key role in securing the success of the application, not just because of the influence they exercise on the process but also because of the experience they have in the conservation field. Interviewee no. 11 adds that EH had changed its views and has become more accepting of contemporary proposals in so far as they succeed in bringing the building back to a meaningful use and in securing its future. Unmistakably, English Heritage (2013) states that good urban design, which responds to the surrounding built form and materials, is of critical importance and can result in high-quality contemporary architectural design in historic contexts. English Heritage is also seen by interviewee no.

16 as a third-party objective view which can help to ensure that a balanced decision is arrived at. However, the coalition government did not want EH to go any further in intervening over design issues, leaving space for local authorities to deal with this issue thereafter (interviewee no. 16).

In Edinburgh, this tension existed but was never overtly displayed, as the majority of the interviewees point out. It is possible that involving EUDP in the process allows it to play a key role as a half-way panel between the potentially conflicting bodies by providing a place for the two bodies (Historic Scotland and A+DS) to share their views with others and finally to set out a balanced view. In the two Edinburgh case study projects, despite the fact that the panel is a non-statutory consultee and its comments are not binding, the view of the panel regarding controversial issues has been referred to by the officers in supporting their view vis-à-vis that of other consultees, even when it contradicts the HS view, as in Sugarhouse Close. In York, CAAP does not and cannot play the same role because the conservation focus of this panel is very obvious, and neither CABE nor EH are represented on this panel. However, the panel function has considerably changed in the past few years and its existence is now in doubt.

Carefully and clearly chosen language

The fact that planning officers and other bodies are referring to national policies and guidelines in setting out their comments makes it very pressing that the language of national policies should be written extremely carefully, otherwise a contradiction in interpreting them is likely to occur. In the West Offices Building (York), the officers and other bodies had two opposite sets of interpretations for the *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG, 2010) policies – some have referred to these to support the scheme while others used them to reject it. Thus, the written language of these policies should be at the same level of importance as the content.

Some authors and interviewees argued that in many parts of the national policies of the two systems, a vague language had been used which resulted in this difference in interpretations of the same policies.

In England, according to Paterson (2012), the phrase “*local distinctiveness*” in the DCLG (2005, Para 36) has been replaced with “*responding to local character*” in DCLG (2012, Para 58). Some LPAs, in response to this, have included in their parameters the issues of scale, massing, density, height, landscape layout and access. However, finishing

materials, which are specific to local distinctiveness, have been ignored. This might allow odd materials to invade the conservation areas as their presence would not run counter to existing policies.

Furthermore, DCLG (2012, Para 9) states that “*replacing poor design with better design*” is one step towards achieving sustainable development. On a first reading this may appear useful and reliable advice, however, better design does not necessarily mean good design, it could mean neutral design, particularly if there is a lack of policies setting out design principles, or an absence of clearly defined, high-quality design.

In Scotland, in discussing what proposals for conservation areas are regarded as an enhancement to the area, Scottish Government (2014, Para 143) has replaced the phrase “*having a neutral effect*” in Scottish Government (2010, Para 115) with “*do not harm*”. The two phrases are overly similar and hence need further clarification as these issues are immeasurable and may result in confusion when interpreting what degree of effect should be considered neutral or harmless.

In the context of what was discussed above, an example was given by interviewee no. 6 in this regard in which he considered that when policies state “*a building has to be good enough to be accepted*”, that this is akin to saying “*a building has to be bad enough to be rejected*”. While the first sentence is helpful, the second one is tricky and could result in poor design developing in historic contexts.

Scottish Government (2010, Para 15) and DCLG (2012, Para 154) have repeatedly stated that local plans should be ‘*aspirational but realistic*’. Furthermore, LPAs, according to DCLG (2012, Para 59), are asked to give significant importance to outstanding design and should ‘*avoid unnecessary prescription*’. However, this is described by some interviewees as potentially causing hesitation regarding the adoption of inspirational concepts in local plans, in that it is not clear how it could be confirmed whether these were realistic and what could be legitimately considered as a reasonable prescription.

At a local level, the language of the two cities’ Local Plans and other supplementary documents is clear and do not allow different interpretations. For example, skyline and roof-scape principles are clearly written in the local plans and sometimes with reference to other documents – CEC (2008) in Edinburgh and CYC *et al.* (2011) and English Heritage (2008a) in York – to ensure delivering their objectives. However, issues of quality definition need further explanation. DCLG (2012, Para 17) and Scottish Government (2014, Para 37) contain phrases about producing high-quality design.

However, they did not provide a clear definition of what constitutes a high-quality design. Interviewees no. 11 and 15 argue that a difficulty in the process is that each person has its own perspective and prioritised issue regarding the definition of quality and each has its own view of what should be given priority when assessing the proposals. While some may see this as relating to fancy radiators, thick carpet, etc., others may see it as involving architectural character and environment issues. Furthermore, some interviewees raise a concern regarding the split between the two policies, i.e. design and conservation in Edinburgh's Local Plan. This is seen by them as possibly causing repetition of certain ideas and contradictions on some occasions.

Applying some prescriptively written criteria

In England, DCLG (2012) has come to reflect the intent of the Government in setting out a more flexible and less precise policy; however, the result was policies which are open to interpretation (Interviewees no. 10 and 16). As the policy is imprecise it raises doubt in the minds of planning applicants, developers, and planners or the person who is commenting, as some interviewees have stated. *"The less precise policies the more damaging to the historic buildings"* (Interviewee no. 10). On the other hand, Scottish Government (2014) is not as imprecise as the DCLG (2012); that said, issues relating to further detailed explanation and prescriptions are also raised by interviewees (no. 1, 5 and 9) regarding the need to make sure that the policy messages were conveyed fully.

According to DCLG (2012) and Scottish Government (2014), design codes can play a valuable role in decreasing the likelihood of producing bad building designs. This message was stressed further on many other occasions at the national level, through the guidance and publications of bodies which promote design and urban design, e.g. CABE (2005). However, in the English and Scottish systems, the LPA is the party which decides whether to apply such guidance or not. Interviewees' views were varied and opposed as to the possibility of applying design codes.

Interviewee no. 1 argues that a valuable design code gives the reader a degree of understanding of what he/she has to do; however, he described this as overly prescriptive. In this regard, he considers that the most important thing about a design code is how it may be interpreted. Likewise, interviewee no. 7 argued that a design code is essential if those who are administering it are aware that this code might be broken and know where this is possible. Thus, he suggests that they have to be confident enough to interpret it

specifically as it relates to the site. From another point of view, other interviewees state that a design code cannot help as it may well narrow down design innovation and community inspiration; however, they admit that it might help officers to gain control over what could happen in terms of scale and architectural characters. Interviewee no. 16 summed up by saying that in applying a design code we end up with a “*happy medium....we avoid the worst designs and equally lose the opportunity of producing the best design solutions*”.

According to some interviewees, other tools such as character area appraisal and development briefs, are more efficient and can take the place of design codes. The Primark Building (Edinburgh) and Davygate (York) experience showed this clearly to be the case and the two tools provided deep analysis and explanation of the nature of the buildings and areas. This facilitated the adoption of a good design approach at an early stage of the process, which was key for the success of the two projects.

7.2.3 Effective and efficient stakeholders

Adopting a qualitative participative approach

Any consultation process brings together a variety of different interest groups; it allows a space for people to say something which needs to be said, and which, in turn, can be used by the case officer in order to suggest either supporting or rejecting the proposal. It can also help in overcoming the subjective nature of the process by offering a balanced view of the same issue. The Scottish and English systems have both encouraged the involvement of the community in the consultation process and have similarly enhanced its role (see Chapter 4, sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.1). This is further enhanced by the two cities' LPAs in their local plans and in other documents. However, the experience showed that this role is likewise facing serious challenges with respect to the two approaches under discussion and questions have been raised about the efficiency of this role.

In the Primark Building (Edinburgh) and the West Offices Building and the Davygate Centre (York), the community/parish council and other voluntary society bodies objected to the proposals of the buildings' design but never mentioned on what grounds, be they related to policies or guidelines, these objections were based. The most questionable part is that most of them admired the buildings after completion. In Davygate, the parish

council supported the scheme but again did not say on what grounds it had made its decision (see Chapter 5, section 5.5.3 and Chapter 6, section 6.5.3).

In Edinburgh, interviewee no. 2 described the consultation process with the community council in Edinburgh as being a “*difficult process and time consuming*” and “*disingenuous*”. This is why, in his perspective, the Old Town Community Council in Edinburgh decided to bring the process to an end. Some interviewees from the two cities raised a number of problems pertaining to the consultation process practice with the community/parish council, other civil society bodies and the local resident groups, which can be summarised as follows:

- A lot of people cannot read drawings and the drawings provided were in the form of general visualisations and therefore too sketchy, and misleading in general. Furthermore, the developers and the design team did not seek to solve this problem by providing a model of the design.
- The community/parish councils as well as other civil society bodies are volunteer organisations by nature and do not have sufficient expertise to hand.
- The public are conservation-minded; this is why they have shown negativity in their response to any new development (i.e. NIMBY³⁴).

Effective and efficient design review

The role of urban design has been further enhanced by establishing a national design watchdog, i.e. CABE in England and its equivalent in Scotland, A+DS, which played a significant role in raising the profile of urban design in those areas (see Chapter 4, sections 4.3.3 and 4.4.3). However, in the past few years, local design review panels have been highly recommended by the two Governments (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.1). As a result, most of the national or regional design review panels have faded away as local design review panels have steadily become more established and gained more power. This resulted in a further enhancement of urban design in Edinburgh's approach due to the significant role which the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel (EUDP) plays, and as part of which A+DS together with HS and other bodies share ideas and offer an objective and balanced view (see Chapter 5, section 5.5.3).

³⁴NIMBY (an acronym for the phrase "Not In My Back Yard"), or Nimby, is a pejorative characterisation of opposition by residents to a proposal for a new development, often with the connotation that such residents believe that the developments are needed in society. Opposing residents themselves are sometimes called Nimbies (Cambridge Dictionary online).

The number of challenges facing EUDP practice is evident from the case study projects' experience as well as from the observation of one of the panel meetings by the researcher, as follows:

- Time issues relating to the process are a double-edged sword. While a certain amount of time should be given to carrying out the review, the panel has to prioritise issues which in turn can affect the quality of comments that might be given. Allowing extra time, however, is seen by some interviewees as potentially corrupting the nature of the review, which is intended to be general in giving comments. Furthermore, the panel offers their comments at an early stage of the design process, which makes their comments less useful.
- The constitution of the panel and the members' conflicting agendas. This is also seen by some interviewees as a controversial issue. While it involves various fields and helps in enriching the discussion and overcoming subjectivity, it could, however, sometimes produce negative results, as it also gives the opportunity for those with a narrow view and knowledge of urban design to make judgements on these issues.
- The EUDP comes up with good ideas and could support the officer's view if it conflicted with the views of statutory consultees or other bodies involved. However, the panel comments are not binding on the officers or the council according to the law.
- EUDP is chaired by the local planning authority, which seems to be very controversial and can have pros and cons; while it enables communication, the panel's independence may be compromised.
- The absence of a community representative who could enrich the participatory trend of the panel.
- While urban design principles and terms are obviously employed by the panel, one disadvantage is that there are no pre-established criteria which can be used for review.

In York, the council does not continuously use CABE for reviews. On the local level, this service was run by CAAP (non-statutory consultee). However, the first three issues raised in relation to EUDP- in terms of timing, constitution and the influence of its comments- were also raised by some interviewees against CAAP. Unlike EUDP, CAAP is chaired by one elected member of the panel, who is not necessarily one of the council nominators,

and the community is also represented on this panel. However, the comments supplied by CAAP regarding these projects never referred to any overt criteria or to any of the by-then valid policies; their comments are also not binding on the officers or the council according to the law.

Well-skilled design reviewers and decision takers

As noted, the two approaches follow two planning systems, and in each one public, professional and non-professional bodies have all been consulted with reference to a list of urban design principles which are essential when making judgements. This is helping to decrease the chance of receiving overly subjective judgements. However, most interviewees stress the fact that good policies and guidelines are not enough to guarantee good buildings, as some of them might lead to different interpretations being offered by different people. Interviewee no. 6 refers to the fact that a number of buildings were considered by some to be breaking certain rules while nevertheless remaining good buildings. This sheds light on the key role that well-skilled reviewers and officers can play in producing good results.

The experience showed that well-skilled officers and reviewers are a key factor in success. Local design review panels – i.e. EUDP in Edinburgh; CAAP in York – have good skilled members and both of them respectively have positively influenced the design proposal of the Primark Building and Sugarhouse Close (Edinburgh) and the West Offices building (York) and pushed them towards success. However, the experience also showed that these panels and other consultees, some of them statutory consultees, have non-professionals who can adversely influence the quality of the outcomes, particularly when the law gives them the power to intervene in design matters in their capacity as statutory consultees (CC in Edinburgh and PC in York).

Moreover, the democratic nature of the two systems gives the power to elected members, who are often non-professionals, to finally decide on the case based on recommendations from the case officer and the planning department. However, at the end, he/she can overrule that advice. This is a very critical part of the whole process as it could result in the nullification of any proper advice given by the design review panel, other experts or even by the case officers. Thus, some procedures are necessary to ensure that all the members are skilled enough to give valuable comments; in addition being able to recommend who should be considered as statutory and how political decision makers

respond to the comments given by non-professionals, professionals, or even by the case officers, are key factors.

7.3 Challenges of urban design governance and possible responses

Although neither of the two systems drew a clear urban design route map in relation to setting out urban design policies/criteria at the national level, the structure of the two cities' approaches, however, revealed their strong commitment towards urban design. Similarly, the two approaches have addressed most urban design principles and language in the form of a coordination tool (policies and guidelines), but without mentioning the theme itself. This tool, together with others tools, i.e. research and analysis, and implementation tools, which in turn used techniques of urban design, positively influenced the scheme proposals. However, the two approaches are varied in their applications of these tools and each has advantages and disadvantages, as shown above.

A list of challenges was drawn up during the analysis. These are addressed in this section together with some possible responses to ensure improvements. The recommended responses are based on an understanding of the judgement process which was arrived at during the review of the systems and the cities' approaches along with an analysis of the data collected from the interviews, observation and similar researches concerning the same research area.

7.3.1 Context comprehension and appraisal

Challenge

A good number of interviewees state that having design codes is a very good thing as long as they are not a "straightjacket" and are somewhat flexible. However, in the UK, the LPA is the party which decides whether to apply design codes or not, and the experience showed that two cities' local authorities did not seem to be enthusiastic about design codes, probably due to the difficulties and the endless list of criticisms which had been raised against them.

Recommendation

The possible response scenario would involve further enhancing other tools such as character area appraisals and development briefs which succeeded, as the experience

showed, in doing the same job but even better. These tools are recommended by some interviewees as they have a vital role to play in ensuring that good urban design framework is put in place and, in which design codes can fit for specific areas and the public can be involved in establishing its principles. Thus, overcoming the difficulties facing these tools, i.e. the lack of resources, for instance, is essential to guaranteeing their effectiveness.

Applying design codes to large developments in very sensitive sites is still possible and helpful. In this regard, Paterson (2012) suggests applying some lessons from the Dutch experience to the English experience, which could likewise be applied to Scotland as well. These lessons emphasise the use of design codes in order to provide a framework for large development sites and the need at the national level to cover both macro and micro levels of urban design. Applying this approach requires the relevant authorities to have an overall framework as well as providing detailed standards at site level.

7.3.2 Explicit urban design criteria

Design policies

Challenge

Although numerous urban design policies have appeared at the national level incorporating plain urban design language and concepts, the national policies, particularly DCLG (2012), still state very general urban design principles which could be susceptible to different interpretations, with some areas containing considerably more detail. Furthermore, the term itself is never mentioned directly and there is also a lack of clarity regarding the weight to be attached to various policies in decision-making (e.g. sustainability and economic growth). This may confuse rather than help local authorities in setting out aspirational and realistic policies and guidelines, which it has been asked to do according to the same documents. Also, there is doubt that most potential developers or even their architects and reviewers are aware of these policies.

At the local level, urban design policies were listed somewhat similarly in the two cities' local development plans, but again without mentioning the term urban design overtly. While Edinburgh's local plan sets out two lists of design and conservation policies, York's recent local plan sets out only one list of policies. However, the line between these policies is clearly noticeable in York.

Recommendation

Policies are being listed to prevent poor designs and to encourage people to think positively; however, this does not mean that they have to be prescriptive. Thus, a route map has to be drawn up more clearly by the two systems. Here is a list of recommendations regarding how this can be achieved:

- To start with, stronger and clearer urban design policies at the national level are needed and the term urban design has to be mentioned overtly. Using clear language, concepts of urban design, as addressed in categories in Table 2 (see Chapter 2, section 2.6) have to be indicated as general guidelines for more detailed local policies. Moreover, providing further explanations of these principles at the national level can also help in delivering the right message and in decreasing the chance of interpreting the policies differently.
- Conflicting policies; i.e. urban design with others such as sustainability policies, should work hand in hand to ensure good results as compromising urban design policies would not be beneficial to urban design governance. Therefore, good design should be inseparable in the definition of suitable development. In this sense, good design is the one that fits into its immediate and wider context without upsetting its harmony.
- Research and analysis tools should be provided by the local authorities as vitally necessary pre-requisites of any good control practice, and as a very crucial step before addressing generic policies. This can help to put into effect the right policies in the right place as well as further enhancing the role of research tools in the process.
- Local plan policies have to address urban design criteria/policies overtly by giving more details. These policies ought to be set out in one list to avoid any overlap, and, possibly, any conflicting design and conservation policies. Furthermore, the criteria presented in Table 2.1 of this research should all be covered and raised as questions which each development needs to answer and to which officers can refer in setting out their own judgement.

Design guidelines

Challenge

Applying design guidance documents which are detailed at the national level helps LPAs to draw up local policy or to make planning decisions at site level. Some of these documents are more effective at getting the job done than others which come with multi-layered documents (as in Scotland) and repeated with no changes in the wording of the national policies (as in England). However, most of these documents were published before the release of the updated national policies, yet they were still used as companions to them. At the local level, a set of documents covers aspects of regional and local character and many aspects of design detail were also released to further explain local policies. While some of them clearly addressed urban design, as in Edinburgh (CEC, 2003, 2006 and 2008), they did not, however, show how these documents linked to each other and to the policies. This may confuse those at whom these documents are directed.

Recommendation

National guidance documents have to be updated as one companion document, together with the national policies document and should clearly address the principles of urban design. Detailed explanation of policies is needed in this document while not repeating the national policies, as DCLG (2014) does. It would also be far easier and more reliable to release this in the form of an appendix rather than as separate document/documents. This should prove more helpful while avoiding any possible misinterpretation and confusion.

At the local level, guidance documents were not released with the purpose of providing readers with a step-by-step answer for what makes good design. However, this does not mean that it is useful to have very general documents at the local level, as in York (CYC, 2013b). In this regard, Edinburgh Design Guidance (CEC, 2013) provides lessons which can be learned by York and other cities seeking better design guidance. These lessons emphasise that such documents have to inform readers of what might be possible for a very good reason – without being very prescriptive – with good urban design input. It has also had to establish detailed urban design criteria with a broad explanation of the policies in the local plan, and, most importantly, there has to be proper consultation in their development and they have to give examples of good buildings.

7.3.3 Effective and efficient stakeholders

Design review panel

Challenge

Design Review panels' (particularly national panels) remarks can be taken into account when making decisions on planning applications, however legally they carry less weight than advice from a statutory body such as English Heritage in England and Historic Scotland in Scotland. This would not necessarily be beneficial to urban design governance and to the process as a whole. On the other hand, experience showed that local design review panels may have more influence on the process than the national panel and could, therefore, be more helpful. However, both levels of design review panels suffer from an absence of pre-established criteria to use for review, and this has an impact on rigour and consistency.

Recommendation

The scenario proposed here would be to establish a single local design review panel (as is already the case in Edinburgh, EUDP) which would assume responsibility for the services of design review. Included on this panel would be English Heritage/Historic Scotland, and CABE/A+DS, along with design experts. For the panel to be effective, it would need to have the standing of a statutory consultee on design and conservation. The researcher acknowledges that there are some difficulties in achieving this, e.g. the resource implications.

Experience showed that EUDP is playing a crucial role in the proposal assessment process compared with CAAP in York, whose continued existence is in doubt. The suggested scenario for York is to restructure the urban design panel and to add more design and urban design experts. The proposed panel would be convened by the local planning authority as this would maximise communication and consensus, as with the EUDP in Edinburgh. Either the government would appoint the urban design experts as occurs presently in the Design Review panels in England, and/or they would be chosen by local organisations, as occurs in Edinburgh.

Regarding EUDP, the panel is seen by some interviewees as a kind of halfway house between the Community Council and the City Council; furthermore, it needs to reflect

the community's desire for the future of their place. This does not mean necessarily mirroring public taste. However, it has been criticised by them as it is not acting in that way, simply by not having a representative from the community. Thus, adding a representative from the community council is seen by them as an essential step forward and could help in further enhancing the participative trend of the panel and, possibly, solving some challenges facing its public role.

The potential panel still needs to address the criteria that will be referred to by the panel itself or by any other reviewers; however, this requires resources on the part of the City Council and a wider understanding of the value of its heritage.

Despite the tension between the two bodies, there is a possibility, according to interviewees (no. 1, 2, 14 and 16), that criteria can be released in cooperation with CABE and EH or their equivalent in Scotland. The feasibility of this is that the two bodies have urban design within their remit, even though English Heritage and Historic Scotland are confined to the historic environment. CABE/A+DS, however, can and does cover historic areas in Design Review and in other ways. Furthermore, the two bodies in each system have worked together on publishing documents mainly concerned with, and which directly mention urban design, e.g. CABE/English Heritage (2007) and A+DS/Historic Scotland (2010). Despite the fact that these documents do not employ a great deal of common urban design language, such as 'townscape' or 'legibility', they do however unmistakably allude to these ideas. Therefore, they could be further developed as an aid to local authorities by providing a list of urban design criteria which can be used by them in forming judgements as well as in writing their policies and guidelines.

Ultimately, as in Edinburgh, the anticipated urban design panel could also have an input to the local policy drawn up by planning authorities. This would facilitate connections between the design review process and local design policies, and also increase the knowledge and understanding of the panel members about the planning system.

Skills and transparency

Challenge

Councillors are provided with written reports from officers regarding the acceptability of a development's design. These reports are based on consultations with voluntary amenity societies, local resident groups, and other relevant bodies; however the councillors can

choose to ignore this advice when they make their decision. Accordingly, involvement of planning officers and councillors without the relevant skills will certainly impact adversely upon the overall quality of a scheme and its neighbours' amenities.

Recommendation

Urban design experts and helpful bodies can offer constructive rather than subjective comments. Thus, applying the suggested statutory urban design panel could mean that an improved standard of urban design advice is provided to applicants and those responsible for making the decisions. Furthermore, as in the Netherlands, councillors could be made to publish any reasons for not following the panel's advice. Ultimately, running design training courses with the help of CABE and EH (England) and A+DS and HS (Scotland) is essential to help councillors and officers to better understand design issues in conservation areas.

The public involvement

Challenge

Public comment, which is an integral part of the process, may help this process, but it comes too late in the process to foster major improvements and it suffers from a lack of experts and an attitude of nimbyism.

Recommendation

The public role along with the ability to overcome emerging challenges can be further enhanced by applying an approach that can collaboratively respond to the increasing demands for public participation in the planning policies and decisions. Healey (2006) clarifies that this does not necessarily mean that the public should be involved in all decision-making processes, but that, at least, there is a need to show that their opinions and views were taken into consideration.

The scenario suggested in order to meet many of the concerns raised regarding their role is to keep consulting the local residents and to consider them as statutory consultees, furthermore, to upgrade the community representation in the process to the status of a member of the proposed Urban Design Panel, as mentioned in section 7.3.3. At the same time, work should be done to widen the knowledge of the public and other bodies and to

help them to put aside their negative attitude towards contemporary buildings. This could be done through publications and by running training courses, with the help of CABE and EH, and their equivalent in Scotland, thereby providing explanations of policies and of the benefits that can be gained by applying contemporary designs without causing any harm to their contexts, even in the most sensitive historic contexts.

This could be very helpful in making sure that they have overcome the difficulty and are ready to adopt a responsible and helpful role. Thereafter, as ways of overcoming the difficulties and ensuring effective public involvement, interviewees stressed the following points:

- The scheme must be taken to a stage at which the public can understand the proposal drawings and photos.
- More than one public meeting is required, for instance at least another round of consultation, in which developed proposals are expected to be put on view.
- The Council should be in charge of facilitating meetings between the developers and the design team on the one hand, and the public on the other, allowing both parties then to negotiate the proposal.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided a comprehensive and hierarchical analysis of urban design governance of the design assessment process. It started by investigating its route map at the national level down to examining urban design assessment and decision support tools, which have evolved by Edinburgh and York to assist in judging the merit of new buildings' proposals. It is evident that these tools can be complex and influenced by a wide range of interests. Indeed, it is through the use of such tools that the likelihood of resulting good designs is increased.

7.4.1 Overview of the two cities' approaches

The examination of urban design approaches in Edinburgh and York did show some similarities between the two, but they are not exactly the same and there is no single way to guarantee quality outcomes. For Edinburgh, the clear messages of the national policies towards further enhancing urban design by accepting a limit to prescription on the national guidance has resulted in a clearly addressed list of urban design criteria in the

City's Local Plan. Also at the City level, a list of guidance documents was far clearer than those of York in addressing and using the language and techniques of urban design. These documents at the two levels were worked according to a clear hierarchy, and the language of urban design was overtly used in the local documents. In addition, the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel played a crucial role in enhancing the concept of urban design and in decreasing possible tension between the watchdogs, i.e. HS and A+DS.

In York, DCLG (2012) was not as detailed as the Scottish Government (2014) and many concerns have been raised in this regard including a call for some prescription at this level in order to ensure correct delivery of the message to the LPAs. Slightly more successful than those employed in Edinburgh, a list of criteria was addressed in York Local Plan and the principles and language of urban design were overtly used with reference to detailed national guidance (CABE and DETR, 2000). However, no local guidance can be compared to Edinburgh's Design Guidance (CEC, 2013) and the one in use has come to be more general than CABE and DETR (2000). CAAP, as an equal to EUDP, did not conform to urban design trends and cannot serve as a 'half-way house' between CABE and EH simply because neither of them are represented on this panel.

However, despite the challenges which are still facing the two cities' approaches, their experiences provide fruitful lessons in developing urban design as an approach for good practice in design control which can helpfully be applied elsewhere.

7.4.2 Relevance of cities' experience to the case of Damascus

The experience showed that political support and a government's commitment to enhancing urban design further at the national level are two major conditions for initiating an urban design approach. The first main step is to outline an integrated and hierarchical thinking which takes the national aspiration and works down through the scales to apply it in a very meaningful way on site. In this sense, it is very useful to have a national policy base which discusses what makes good design and what it means in any given context, and to provide a mechanism through which to interpret it at the local level. Local authorities have also, in turn, to adopt a strong policy base, thereby interpreting and not merely repeating the national policy.

National policy has to be proportionate, accurate and concise. This helps to shape and guide the design response, making clear in the process what things are important. National policies should also set out procedures for LPAs and stakeholders regarding how

to interact effectively and how to achieve the expected result. Thereafter, local development plans must ensure they address explicit, comprehensive and clear urban design principles based on a deep understanding of the context's character and significance. Ultimately, a statutory consultee local urban design panel, which must include a community representative, can be put in charge of running the design review. These panels would constitute a principal part of the ingredients in the mix that could assist with avoiding the identikit problem.

So how is this relevant to the case of Damascus?

- Punter (1996) acknowledges that there is a difficulty with making international comparisons between planning systems due to institutional and cultural variations. However, he agrees with Deng (2009) that learning some lessons regarding urban design is still possible due to the fact that urban design principles and practice have an international relevance and are universally applicable. In other words, Jabrie (2011) sums up by emphasising the fact that learning some lessons is possible if it is based on a profound understanding of the nature of the two systems as well as of the limitations of application.
- Contrasting the UK experiences with that of Damascus would offer valuable lessons to those who are seeking examples of better practice.
- Damascus can develop her own approach through working on the current approach, which opens up opportunities for change in the design control.

The following chapter provides an overview of Damascus' physical development and an analysis of the evolution of the design control process. It also traces urban design within the existing approach while setting out some challenges and limitations. Finally, the chapter discusses the relevance of these cities' experience to the case of Damascus and how lessons learned from this experience could possibly be applied there.

CHAPTER 8 – POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS IN THE CASE OF DAMASCUS

8.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters provided a comprehensive review and analysis of the English and Scottish experience of urban design. The urban design route map was investigated in each system in Chapter 4. Thereafter, the Edinburgh and York approaches were examined in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively, and ultimately a qualitative assessment of their approaches was made in Chapter 7. This chapter aims to explore the relevance of some lessons from the UK experience of urban design to the case of Damascus, hence meeting objective 4 and answering research question Q4.

It begins by reviewing the historical evolution of the urban form of Damascus throughout the ages, and the dominant architectural elements and characters of the city. Thereafter, the existing design control approach and its tools are investigated. Urban design language and principles are traced in the existing approach with the purpose of exploring the extent to which it is committed to urban design, as well as detailing some possible challenges and limitations of its application. Finally, the chapter concludes by setting out some possible scenarios for improving the approach in Damascus, based on the lessons learned from the urban design experience of Edinburgh and York.

In order to fulfil this objective, informal meetings and semi-structured interviews were held in Damascus with people from government departments and academic bodies, as well as professionals and planners. These interviews were carried out in August 2014 and June 2015 in order to establish preliminary data about the governance process, and the proposed improved approach was validated in January 2016 (see Chapter 3, sections 3.3.2, 3.3.3 and 3.6.3). However, due to the difficult current situation in Syria, the January 2016 interviews were held by phone and through Skype when it was possible.

8.2 The historical evolution of Damascus

Damascus is the current capital of Syria and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, with a historic fabric mix of Islamic, Christian and Jewish characters. It was the capital of the Aramaic Kingdom from 980 BC and continued as a capital for different civilizations and kingdoms afterwards, i.e. Roman, Byzantine and Islamic.

Roman Damascus is the oldest structure to which most of the surviving architectural elements refer, including the extensive remains of the temple of Jupiter and the most significant monument city walls which bordered the Old City and gated it with seven gates (Sack, 2005) (see figure 8.1).

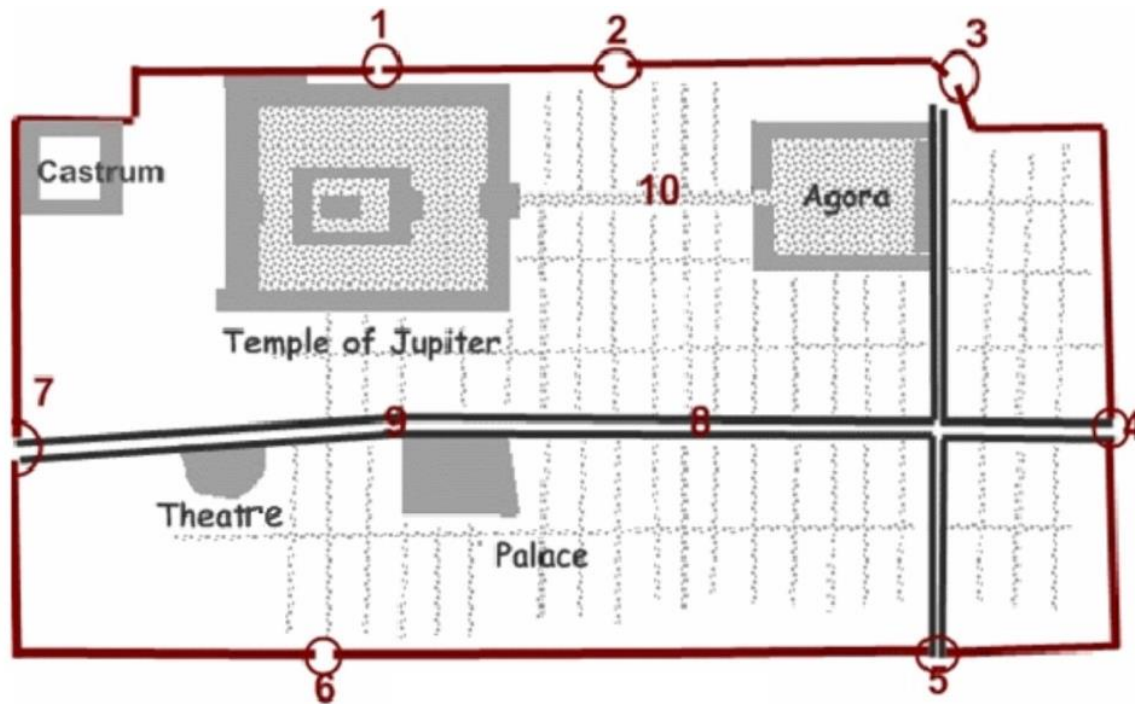


Figure 8.1: Plan of Roman Damascus, showing the gates, agora, and the temple.

Key: 1 Bab al-Faradis. 2 Bab al-Jiniq. 3 Bah Tuma. 4 Bab al-Sharqi. 4 Bab Kaysan. 6 Bab al-Seghir 7 Bab al-Jabiya. 8 Straight Street (Via recta). 9 Arch. 10 Street with porticos linking the temple to the agora.

Source: Degeorge (2004) reproduced in Haddad (2009).

When Damascus became a part of the Byzantine Empire in 395 A.D., the Christian church as a building type was introduced by transforming the temple of Jupiter into the Church of St. John the Baptist. Many other churches – 14 churches according to Sack (2005) as cited in Haddad (2009) – were also constructed during this period. The style of urban fabric that was developed during the Byzantine Empire dominated the urban fabric of Damascus until the 18th century. This style had distinctive architectural elements due to the military and religious functions of the buildings, and the environmental, social and cultural factors which altered through time according to the needs of the citizens (Haddad, 2009).

In 635 A.D., Damascus became the capital of the *Umayyad* Empire (635-750 A.D.) and during this period, the Church of St. John the Baptist was transformed to become the great Umayyad Mosque, also known as the Grand Mosque of Damascus. This Mosque is one of the largest mosques in the world and one of the oldest sites of continuous prayer since

the rise of Islam. It is the most significant element of the Old city's urban fabric and until now it has dominated the city's image (see figure 8.2). Later on, during the *Abbasien* (750-968), *Fatimid* (968-1075), *Ayyubid* period (1174-1259) and *Mameluk* (1259-1516) rule, the city suffered from war and destruction and the city was no longer the capital for any of these states. However, Damascus kept its glory and was always known as one of the biggest and most important cities of these states in terms of arts, trade, and the craft industry, which contributed to its enduring importance (Degeorge, 2004).



Figure 8.2: The Grand Mosque of Damascus
Source: The Wall Street Journal (2010)

In 1516, Damascus became the largest Syrian province (*Wilaya*) of the Ottoman Empire. During this era, a distinctive architectural type of building (religious complexes) was introduced to Damascus and they were all located outside the city walls. The first and most important Ottoman complex was built between 1554 and 1559, and it was named the *Tikiyya Sulaymaniyya*. The complex consisted of a mosque, a cemetery, a school, a restaurant, a hotel and a shopping centre. This complex was built to the west of old Damascus on the banks of the Barada River, and it is also another key element of the city's image (see figure 8.3). The period between the 16th and the 18th centuries was one that saw the diminishing importance of Damascus that is until Napoleon's campaign in Egypt and Syria, 1798–1801. This brought with it a wave of European influence (or interference) in the entire Islamic political economic region (Hudson, 2006, cited in Haddad, 2009).

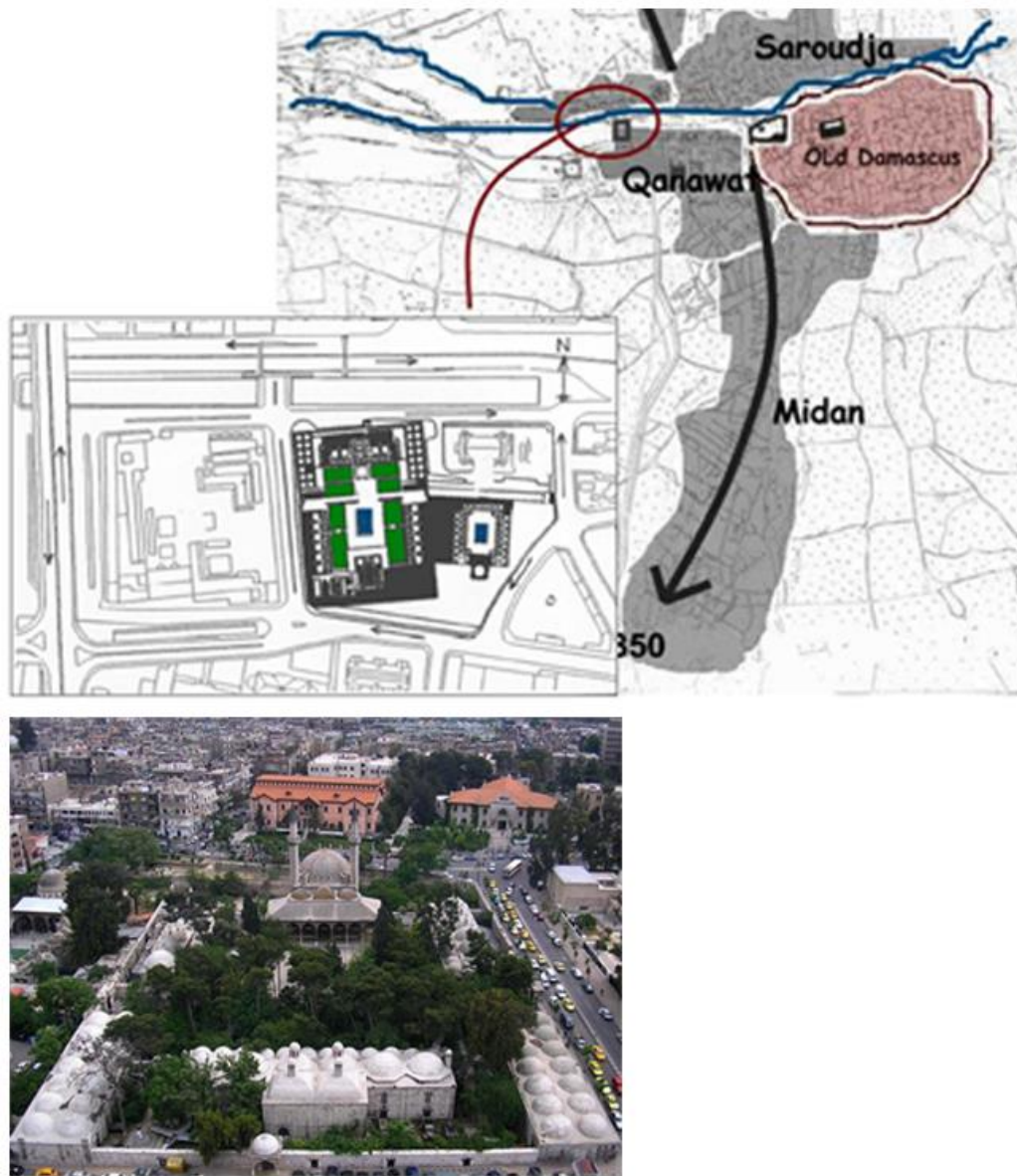


Figure 8.3: Historical Damascus up to 1850, highlighting the location and form of the *Tikkiya* Complex

Source: Adapted by the researcher from Haddad (2009)

From around 1840 until the beginning of the 20th century, the main influence in Damascus was the ideology of the late Ottoman governors, whose rule in Syria started in the early 1800s. Their strategies and visions could be seen as the first manifestations of modernity (Hudson, 2006). The urban fabric of the city was greatly influenced by the decision during this period to build several standalone public buildings outside the historic city walls; these were grouped together and eventually began to form the new centre of the city. One of the aims of this building phase was to modernise Damascus's administrative sector, therefore, the facades of the building were designed to be a combination of Ottoman and European architectural styles (Hudson, 2008) (see figure 8.4).



Figure 8.4: Hejaz station building
Source: Asaad (2008)

According to Hudson (2008), during French rule (1920-1947) the European face of public spaces and buildings became more dominant. Although the community of French functionaries and soldiers was numerically low compared with the original residents, the influence of this community went beyond social and cultural prestige to influence the architectural style of the city outside the walls, through the establishment of French schools, hospitals, hotels and clubs, built in a European architectural style (Thompson, 2001) (see figure 8.5).



Figure 8.5: Orient Palace Hotel
Source: Asaad (2008)

In the early period of independence, during the 1960s, the city experienced a conflict between two schools of thought in relation to how to deal with the city's development, inside and outside the city walls, as well as how to control the design of any potential new proposals. These trends followed the political ideologies of the two dominant political parties at that time; i.e. the 'Islamic city model', as a classical model, was preferred by the conservatives, while a more modern model was preferred by the Ba'athists and communists (Asaad, 2008; Haddad, 2009).

According to Asaad (2008), as the Ba'ath Party became the sole governing party of the whole country after the Correction Movement in November 1970, its design ideology became more dominant outside the city walls. This was reflected in the construction of many new buildings, mostly governmental buildings, which plainly reflected the influence of communist architectural theories (see figure 8.6).



Figure 8.6: The central bank of Syria
Source: Asaad (2008)

The European impact in terms of social structure, building types, and materials came into the picture again a few years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This European impact is revealed through the construction of modern buildings, following European architectural theories, outside the city wall. Some of these buildings resulted in a new form of three-dimensional space and contexts and in most cases seriously challenged the skyline and the image of the city, as well as the appearance of the conservation areas inside and outside the city wall (see Figure 8.7).



Figure 8.7: The Syrian state TV headquarters in Damascus (to the right) and Bank Al-Sharq and the Blue Tower hotel (to the left)
Source: Asaad (2008)

As Damascus entered the post-modern era, the historic fabric of the old city inside the wall was recognised internationally – in 1979, UNESCO announced this area as a world heritage site, with approximately 6,000 listed buildings. The architectural history of the city was then re-evaluated and regarded a national resource which could be promoted to

develop the tourism sector. In response to this, the planning authorities began looking for new philosophies and instruments in order to guarantee urban and design quality, while preserving the historic context. The resulting approach is a combination of two distinct approaches, a strict preservation approach within the old city wall (which this research will call the Old City approach), and a flexible modern approach outside the city wall (which this research will call the New City approach).

From the 1990s until now, there has been a heated debate regarding the existing design control approach in Damascus. The efficiency of this approach is questioned by many authors as it pays too little attention to the necessary three-dimensional issues and aesthetic architectural quality; it has changed the city's image, though not necessarily in a positive way (Jabrie, 2012). The building of Four Seasons Hotel provides an illustrative example of this approach's outcomes. This building was completed in 2005 standing as the highest building in Damascus (see figure 8.8). The building is seen by many authors and architects as bearing no relation to its neighbours, particularly the historic site next door (Tikkiya complex), and unacceptably defying the city identity and image, which was dominated by the Grand Mosque.

There is a tendency now in Damascus to develop new philosophies and tools to preserve, guarantee and to develop urban quality of the city. However, how the existing approach can be developed based on the knowledge of UK urban design experience is addressed as a key objective of the research, and this will be the focus of the upcoming sections.



Figure 8.8: The Four Seasons Hotel facing the *Tikkiya* complex
Source: Asaad (2008)

8.3 Damascus's design control approach

As a key first step towards understanding the city's approaches towards controlling the insertion of new built forms, the following sections introduce the key actors involved in the design control process of Damascus as well as their tools for control. This section also explains how the English and Scottish systems differ from the Syrian system regarding the structure of frameworks for control.

The information provided in this section about Damascus is mainly collected directly from interviewees who were informally interviewed during the first visit to Damascus in 2014 (see chapter 3, section 3.3.3). The conversations revolved around key issues such as the design control situation in Damascus and the city's approaches. Further information was obtained from other similar research (PhDs and papers which were published in local journals).

8.3.1 Actors

In Syria, the government is very centralised; therefore, it is involved in all levels of administration and control, from the strategic level to the local level. The main and dominant actors in the process of design control are the national and local authorities, who mostly initiate the process and lead the design and implementation phases. Furthermore, the law also mentions that local communities have to be consulted in this regard (Haddad, 2009).

National authorities

Five ministries are involved in the design control process of the historic fabric in urban areas, i.e. the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of *Awqaf* (Religious Endowments), the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Housing and Construction (MoHC)³⁵ and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE). The first three ministries are not as influential in the design control process as the latter two ministries. However, according to the law, all these ministries have to be consulted equally in any issues concerning the built heritage.

³⁵ The Ministry of Housing and Construction (MoHC) was created by the Legislative Decree No.7/ 2003 to replace two ministries: the Ministry of Housing and Utilities (MHU) and the Ministry of Construction and Reconstruction.

The Ministry of Culture, through its Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), is authorised to set national policies, regulate character area appraisals, propose listing of buildings, and take part in revising regulations. Furthermore, as many of the historic buildings were built with religious purposes and are still in use, it is essential that the Ministry of *Awqaf* is consulted in any changes that could possibly affect their prominence. The Ministry of Tourism had come into the picture since tourism was set to play a greater role in the Syrian economy. The ministry had the role of promoting and regulating tourism activities, and consultation with it on any issues that could possibly affect tourism was increasingly important, not just to identify the sites that require development but also to help to release the policies needed to enhance this.

As two key players in the design control process and urban planning in general, the Ministry of Housing and Construction (MoHC) is the body responsible for policy and regulation making, and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE) is responsible for implementing these policies and regulations on the ground through its administrative units. In 1980, a public body called the General Company for Engineering and Consulting (GCEC) was established as a part of the MoHC. As the sole Government watchdog, GCEC helps with studying, designing and supervising the implementation of policies and projects. Furthermore, it can also, when asked, deliver professional, expert advice to government or other official organisations, as well as being an arbitrator for public-sector projects.

Local authorities

The local administrative structure in Syria is divided into administrative units (i.e. province or a governorate - called *muhafazah*-, city, town, village, and a rural unit). Every administrative unit votes for its own council, through a secret ballot in which all of the mature residents living in that unit are eligible to vote. Also, each council has an executive office. Damascus, as an exception, has just a Governorate Council (see Appendix D). One individual is selected by the central Government to lead the elected Governorate Council and the executive office (i.e. the governor). This person is not necessarily from among the elected members, but he/she has the ultimate decision-making power for both the council and the executive office (Haddad, 2009).

In Damascus, the city wall plays a great role as a physical barrier and has split the city into two parts: the old city within the wall, and its expanded fabric outside the wall. The

wall has become a barrier not only as a physical element but also as a rule which influences actors' framework of governance. This influenced the decision to divide the administration system for the area into two separate administrative bodies (directorates): the Old Damascus Directorate (ODD)³⁶, which is in charge of the old city inside the wall, and the Urban Planning Directorate (UPD), which is responsible for outside the city wall (see Appendix E).

There are some historical sites located outside the city wall (called *Sharaieih*; singular *Sharieha*) similar to the historic fabric inside the wall in terms of the historic value. Before 2005, these *Sharaieih* were under the responsibility of UPD, which followed the New City approach. In 2007, the responsibility of these sites was officially transferred to the Old Damascus Directorate and they now follow the Old City approach (see Appendix F). However, these sites are still affected by the New City Approach applied in their non-historic contexts, which takes no consideration of any possible impacts on these sites (visual impact for instance).

The Local Protection Committee (LPC) is a key organisation at local level in Damascus. It was felt that there was a need for a joint committee with multisectoral representatives, and the LPC was established as a result. It has a supervisory role and its responsibilities include the control and preservation of registered historical areas (inside and outside the city wall), open spaces, and any buildings that are located within them. It was formed for this very specific purpose by decree no. 2117/2007, which placed emphasis on an executive approach to the administration of historic sites. The governor also has the role of being its president and its members are from a number of different fields: the principal relevant public organisations and Ministries (4 members from GDAM, specific executive office member, one representative from the MLAE, one representative from the MoCH, director of ODD + 1 member, director of UPD + 3 members), various sections of civil society (The Faculty of Architecture in Damascus University represented by its dean, Friends of Damascus Association represented by its president), several other experts, and public or private organisations as the committee requires.

The LPC has the authority to prepare guidelines and plans for conservation, rehabilitation, and documentation. It was the key player along with the ODD in releasing some guidance documents (MoHC, 2011, 2015) but never released its own guidance. Furthermore, in

³⁶ A special department in the Damascus administration was devoted to Old City matters (*Maktab Anbar*), which became Old Damascus Directorate in 2000.

the past, the LPC reviewed all the planning applications inside the city wall, and it was the most influential actor in decisions about the applications. Recently, due to lack in financial capacity and budgetary issues, as it has no independent budget, LPC has focused on reviewing only major and controversial developments which could possibly challenge the historic areas or listed buildings, or when asked to do so by the ODD or the Governor (see figure 8.10).

Local community

Local residents are represented and therefore able to express their views through committees, residents' associations and *Mokhtars*³⁷. However, according to MAM (2008), as cited in Haddad (2009), the opportunities for them to actually take part and become involved in the design control process of buildings are limited. There is a formal process through which a 30 days' period is made available to the public for them to express any objections to proposed projects. This is decreed by Law 5/1982, and it must occur between the design stage and the decision-making stage (see figure 8.10).

8.3.2 How the UK and Syrian systems vary

The main difference between the English and Scottish, on the first hand, and Syrian design control, on the other hand, is that the former is discretionary while the latter is based on legally binding written regulations, similar to the French design control system. Moreover, there are still many differences between the two approaches, due to the influence of individual factors associated with each location, in particular, variations in cultural and social aspects.

In the English and Scottish planning system, there is a basic three-tier system. The top layer is advice from central government. These policies set the general concepts and are further explained with guidance. Below this, all local planning authorities produce flexible statutory local development plans which reflect the government guidance within the local context. Local plans contain policies which have statutory force on design control in the form of urban design principles to guide both applicants and decision makers and to protect the public interest. Underneath this layer, there is a wide range of

³⁷ The Mokhtar is an appointed person by the neighbourhood's residents to act as intermediary between them and the government (Sack, 2005). He is a neighbourhood representative as well as the government representative within the neighbourhood.

supplementary guidance covering issues of particular local concern and many aspects of design detail. Guidelines on the two levels do not carry legal force, though they are material considerations (see Chapter 4, section 4.2 and figure 4.1).

On the other hand, four layers of legal frameworks control building design in Damascus. The top layer is *Kanon*, which is a set of laws with statutory force released by the Government. These laws are also followed with decrees (called *Kararat*; singular *Karar*)³⁸ to further explain them and to introduce the layer below. Below this, the local administrative units produce *Nizam* which is a list of buildings regulations with statutory force, and *Showrout* which sets codes and very detailed guidelines of the regulations, again with statutory force. *Showrout* might come as a part of the *Nizam* or can be detached (see figure 8.9). However, *Nizams* and *Showrout* still need to be approved by the Ministry of Housing and Utilities before being adopted by the local authorities.

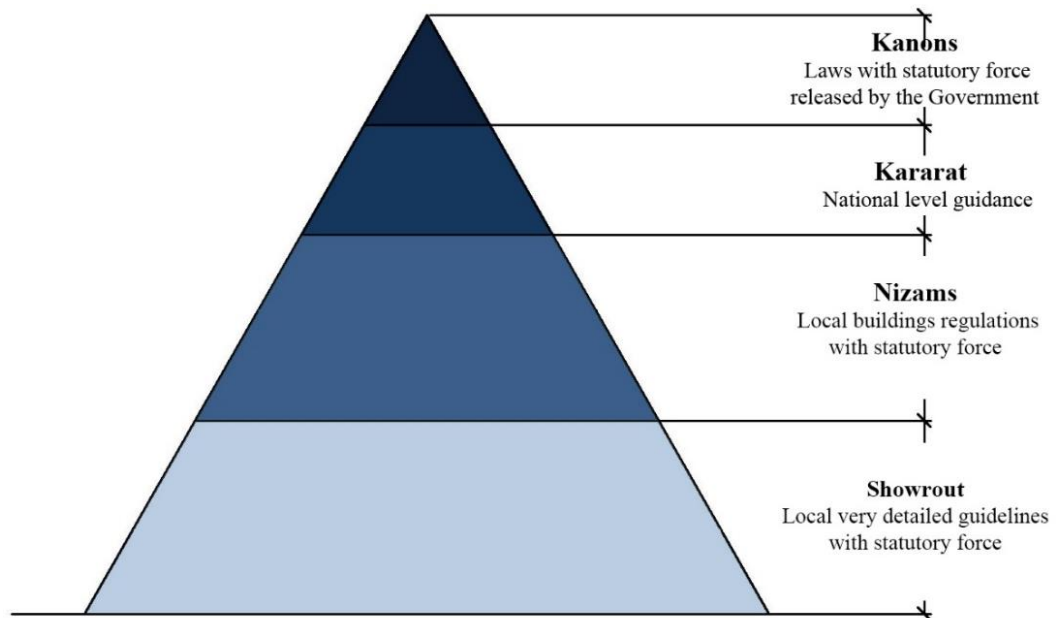


Figure 8.9: The Syrian hierarchy of policies and guidelines
Source: The researcher

The *Kanons* and their accompanying decrees (*Kararat*) set out very general concepts and design issues are not mentioned at this level. In contrast, the lowest two layers provide a set of detailed design regulations and codes as material considerations in any judgment. The lowest layers are the focus of this research and those through which urban design will be traced.

³⁸ It is the national level guidance, though it sets out strategies rather than guidelines.

8.3.3 Approaches and tools in the city of Damascus

The New City approach

The first *Nizam* in Damascus was introduced in 1878 during the Ottoman era. It included a group of policies and regulations by which the building and urban development process were regulated in the city. This *Nizam* was later amended in 1914. In 1922, the French mandate government introduced the *Nizam* of municipalities to replace the Ottoman building *Nizam*. In 1936, the province of Damascus was administratively established by decree no 6 and hence a building control *Nizam* was issued in Damascus by decree no 14 dated 29/12/1938. This *Nizam* was put together by a professional committee and it was amended in 1948. A newer version of the *Nizam* was issued by decree no 492 in 1975 and it was amended by decree no 350 in 1978.

The version of 1978 set out the building regulations for the whole city of Damascus and did not distinguish between the areas inside or outside the city wall. Regularly, documents were released with the intention of implementing new changes and setting new regulations (MHU, 1986 and 1997); however they did not implement major changes and they rearranged, rather than replaced, the 1978 version, which is still referred to by the governorate of Damascus as the foundation for any new regulations.

Decree no 6007 dated 29/10/1996 set out the last updated version which was issued by the Ministry of Housing and Utilities and which approved the introduction of the building regulations. Furthermore, a new decree no 52 dated 11/01/1997 was issued introducing the new *Nizam* (MHU, 1997) and this decree was then adopted by decree no 13 dated 30/01/1997.

MHU (1997) consists of 210 paragraphs distributed over 7 chapters. Five chapters are mainly dedicated to the architectural issues of all types of buildings while the other chapters concern technical, mechanical and electrical issues. These five chapters and the sections within them, with a main concern for buildings' appearance, are the focus of this research. They are summarised below:

- The first chapter includes definitions of the key words which have been used all through the document as well as clarification of which documents are required to be submitted along with the planning application.

- The second chapter is the biggest chapter of the document and the most controversial part. Nine sections structure this chapter are dedicated to residential buildings and discuss the architectural considerations that should be taken into account by the applicants, reviewers, and decision-makers. Sections 1 and 2 discuss the expected building height and projection limits. These sections set out a formula to calculate the expected height of proposals, as well as the extent of the projections, according to which they have to be in proportion to the width of the road the property fronts onto (no drawing provided to illustrate this point). Sections 3-6 mainly discuss the ecological requirement of the residential buildings (e.g. light and air) and other service issues (e.g. safety and security, lifts, heating and cooling systems). The 7th section then discusses the architectural facades/elevations and it briefly states that proposed facades must be in harmony with the immediate surrounding buildings. However, it does not say how it is possible to achieve this and it does not give examples of good building designs. At the same time, it states that it is up to the designer to select the architectural elements of the facade as well as the cladding materials. The 8th section is about the use of roofs. This section provides detailed explanations of how a roof can be used; it does not, however, give any attention to how it can be shaped, in relation to the old city's roofscape, or even whether it should be considered as a fifth facade. Finally, the 9th section discusses building lines and envelope, and the distribution of spaces inside the envelope.
- The third chapter sets out how applying 'the investment factor' (plot ratio or floor space index) is possible. MHU (1997), according to this factor, allows the proposed design of a plot which exceeds 1000 sq.m to be free of the envelope or the height limitations which are stated in sections 1 and 2 of chapter two in this document. In other words, the overall permitted square metres of building can be distributed on more than the number of floors permitted for plots under 1000 sq.m (i.e. 2000 sq.m can be 4 floors*500 sq.m or 10 floors*200 sq.m).
- The fourth chapter concerns urban areas and discusses their style, specifications, building conditions, building space, housing types and area grading. In other words, the document provides what is essentially zoning of the city areas and an explanation of their functional characters. However, the architectural characters are not given much attention in this chapter.

- The fifth chapter is dedicated to non-residential buildings such as hotels, schools, hospitals, clinics, etc. It explains how such types of buildings differ from the residential ones in terms of the application of regulations. However, this section is not as detailed as section two and does not state the architectural expectations of these buildings.

In 2005, a draft of a new *Nizam* was prepared by the province of Damascus with the help of the Engineers Association in Damascus³⁹ (EAD) and other relevant authorities, and it was passed to the MoHC for approval. However, the new decree has not yet been issued.

The Old City approach

In 1996, decree no 826 superseded the previous version, which was set by decree no 814 in 1986; it established a new version of the Old City of Damascus *Nizam*. The new version took the form of an appendix to the city's comprehensive *Nizam* (MHU, 1997) and all its messages were set in eight pages (MHU, 1997, p. 116-123). It was very firm in not allowing any changes to be made to the historic fabric inside the city wall and plainly stated that new development which could result in any potential challenge to these characters must be rejected.

A cadastral survey from 1926-27 and its changes until ultimate approval in 1948 was mentioned in MHU (1997) as a key tool in the building design control process inside the city wall. This survey provided the first ever character area appraisal of the old city (inside the wall) in which the main traditional elements and characters of each area, as well as the significant buildings, were listed in detail (e.g. the buildings' height, architectural elements, materials and roof shapes, etc.). In addition, MHU (1997) defined guidelines for where restoration, alteration, and rebuilding are possible. Furthermore, it emphasised that proposals for these changes were obliged to enhance these characters and the contexts of where they stand, and preserving the existing elements was expected to be the priority. However, it did not detail how to meet the expectations and never gave

³⁹ EAD was established by Legislative Decree No.19/1950. It is a regulatory body that organises the work of architects and other fields of engineering in accordance with the goals set for developing and achieving better built environment in Syria. Being a union, it is an independent body from the government and serves as a consultant body when setting the master plans and buildings' regulations.

examples of successful schemes. Furthermore, applying any of these changes still required the dual approval of ODD and LPC (see section 8.3.4).

Finally, the document set out some architectural codes (*Showrout*) which were set to help the applicants in understanding what is expected. This, however, just set further general regulations in one page without guiding the applicants on how to meet them, which was not very helpful.

In 2011, a completely new version of the Old City *Nizam* was set by the decree no 1217 in 2011 (MoHC, 2011). MoHC (2011) repeated many of the previous regulations with no change in wording. However, it is far more detailed than the previous one and the architectural codes (*Showrout*) have been given priority in this document. It prescriptively draws out the expected building design by describing the most prominent architectural elements (the roof, material, windows, doors, internal open spaces, cladding material, etc.). It is also far more resistant to allowing modern designs to grow inside the city wall. It plainly states that contemporary elements or buildings are undesirable and that all developments must seek to preserve the characters of their contexts. The cadastral survey is also recommended to be considered as a key tool in any judgment.

In 2015, a new set of regulations was released (MoHC, 2015). MoHC (2015) has not been set to replace the MoHC (2011); instead, it has been designed in the form of a design code to further enhance the prescriptive trend of the Old City approach. The architectural characters and elements are listed in a very detailed way. Furthermore, descriptions of the traditional elements and materials' texture and colours, supported with photos, are provided profusely in this document.

The document is a pioneer in setting out three criteria as requisites for any judgment and for applicants who are asked to comply with them. While the first criterion mainly concerns the functions and the construction of the listed buildings, the second criterion mainly concerns the context and the buildings' styles. The traditional architectural elements, i.e. the building height, the facade elements and the roof, are all stressed as key elements of the city identity. Conserving these elements is stated as being something that has to be highly considered by the applicants and reviewers alike. Finally, the third criterion mentions other documents and laws which should also be reviewed when formulating development judgments and design proposals.

Ultimately, this document is also a pioneer in setting out the first ever scale of categorisation for the listed buildings inside and outside the city wall. The listed buildings are given grades reflecting the value of each building (ranking from A to D, where A is the most valuable). In each of these grades, the main features and characters of each category are highlighted. The extent to which changes are possible is determined by this scale.

Table 8.1: Assessment and decision support tools as applied in Damascus

Source: The researcher drawing on MHU (1997) and MoHC (2011 and 2015)

Design control tools		Level	Key principles	Other comments
New City Approach	<i>The building regulations of the New City of Damascus (Nizam)</i> (MHU, 1997)	Local	Providing a set of legally binding regulations against which proposals of new developments will be judged.	Draft of a new <i>Nizam</i> was prepared since 2005, but yet to be approved.
	GCEC	National	Helping with studying, designing and supervising the implementation of policies and projects. When asked, it delivers professional, expert advice to government or other official organisations.	Non-statutory consultee. Rarely consulted about individual applications.
	Local community	Local	Object to proposed projects within a 30 days' period, between the design stage and the decision-making stage through their Mokhtar.	Statutory consultee with no serious influence on the planning applications.
Old City Approach	A cadastral survey from 1926-27	Local	Providing the character area appraisal of the old city (inside the wall) in which the main traditional elements and characters of each area, as well as the significant buildings, are characterised in detail.	Never updated since it was released in 1948 and not fully completed yet.
	<i>The building regulations of the Old City of Damascus (Nizam)</i> (MoHC, 2011)	Local	Drawing out the expected building design by describing the most prominent architectural elements. Not allowing modern designs to grow inside the city wall.	Prescriptive design codes.
	<i>The Design codes of the Old City of Damascus (Showrout)</i> (MoHC, 2015)	Local	Setting out criteria against which proposed development will be judged. Providing a scale of categorisation for listing the buildings inside the city wall as well as the Sharaieh.	Very prescriptive design codes.
	LPC	Local	Controlling and preserving registered historical areas (inside and outside the city wall), open spaces, and any buildings that are located within them.	Statutory consultee and very influential on the planning application process.
	Local community	Local	Object to proposed projects within a 30 days' period, between the design stage and the decision-making stage through their Mokhtar.	Statutory consultee with no serious influence on the planning applications.

8.3.4 The city's two approaches in practice

The previous three sections introduced the decision-making process in Damascus through reviewing the main actors and their tools for control. This review shows that the wall plays a great role as a physical barrier between the old city and its extended fabric outside the wall. This has resulted in a division in the administrative system of the area into two separate administrative bodies: the Old Damascus Directorate (ODD), which is responsible for the old city inside the wall and the listed sites outside the city wall (*Sharaieh*), and the Urban Planning Directorate (UPD), which is responsible for the city outside the wall, excluding the *Sharaieh*. It also shows how the approaches and tools for control have varied among the Old and New parts of the city. The following provides a general picture of how these approaches are applied in practice (see figure 8.10).

Inside the city wall, to get a planning permission for restoration, alteration, demolishing and rebuilding, the applicant needs to prepare a planning application document which must include an application form, the drawings of the proposed design along with a copy of the listed building's cadastral records and its area – in the case of a listed building – and only the area cadastral records if the proposal concerns a plot or a rebuild of an unlisted building. At this stage and before submitting the application, some consultations with the ODD usually take place.

When the application is submitted, the local residents and neighbourhoods committees will be notified to comment on the proposed design within 30 days through their *Mokhtars* and residents' associations. After that, three officers (planners and engineers) from the ODD will be appointed to inspect the site and to review the drawings and the work intended to be done, and they summarise whether the proposed design complies with or challenges MoHC's (2011 and 2015) regulations. Based on this review they will recommend a decision to be taken by the technical committee of the ODD. Thereafter, the planning application document along with the planners' and community comments will be sent to the technical committee and the LPC for revision and reaching a consensus on the recommended decision⁴⁰. After decision has been recommended, the executive office reviews the planning application and makes the final decision, i.e. deciding whether they should be rejected or approved. After a decision is made, the applicant implements the work under the supervision of one planner or engineer from the ODD.

⁴⁰ A consensus decision should be reached between the technical committee and the LPC; otherwise, the application would be rejected at this stage.

For restoration of listed buildings which includes major works, e.g. replacement of walls and roofs, a dual consent should be first obtained from the Local Protection Committee (LPC) and the technical committee of ODD. This consent should be added to the planning application document before submission.

Outside the city wall, to get a planning permission for alteration and/or new building, the applicant needs to prepare a planning application document which includes an application form along with the drawings of the proposed design. At this stage and before submitting the application, some consultations with the UPD usually take place.

When the application is submitted, local residents and neighbourhoods committees are notified to comment on the proposed design within 30 days through their *Mokhtars* and residents' associations. After that, one or two planners from the UPD inspect the site and review the document. Then, they prepare a summary of whether the proposed design complies with the MHU's (1997) regulations, based on which they recommend a decision to be taken by the technical committee of UPD. Thereafter, the planning application document along with the comments from the planners in charge of the case and the community are reviewed by the technical committee of the UPD. In very particular cases of major developments, GCEC can be consulted. After a decision has been recommended by the directorates, based on the technical committee view, the executive office reviews the planning application and makes the final decision, i.e. deciding whether they should be rejected or approved. After a decision is made, the applicant implements the work under the supervision of one planner from the UPD.

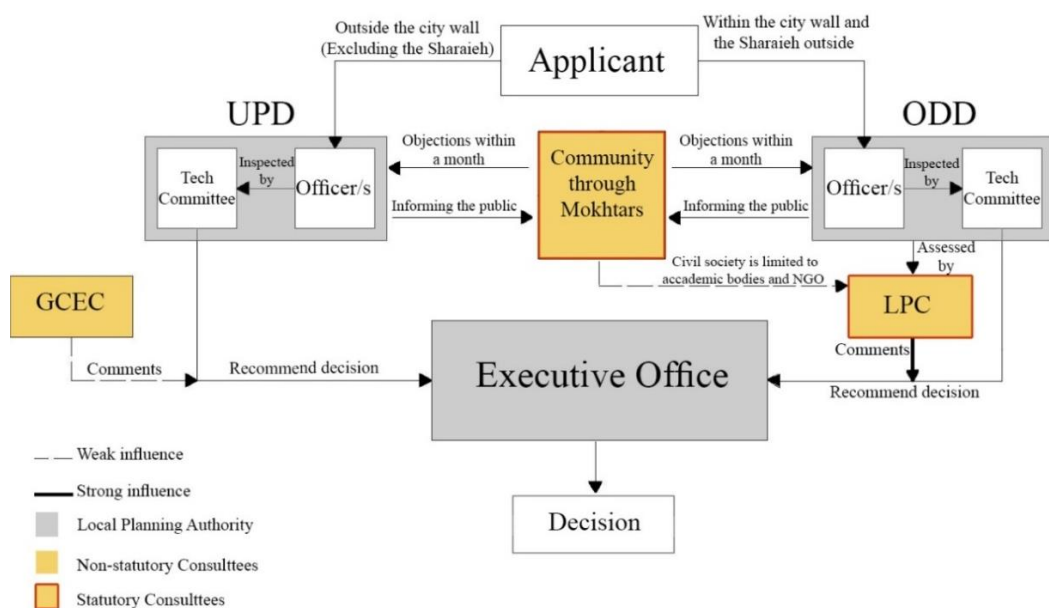


Figure 8.10: Actors and application process in the city of Damascus
Source: the researcher

8.4 Critical analysis of design control process over building appearance in their contexts in Damascus

The previous section presented the design control process through the main actors and the two approaches adopted by the city of Damascus (see table 8.1). The following subsection assesses the weaknesses and challenges of the design control approach of the city of Damascus. It also provides a summary of the key findings of the UK experience which can provide the basis for an improved approach in Syria. Some of these points were raised by the interviewees, some by authors writing on this topic, and others were based on data collected during fieldwork.

- It is inconsistent to advise local planning authorities that they should not seek to control design unless the proposal is for a plot within the city wall, or when the promotion or reinforcement of ‘local distinctiveness’ warrants it. This is seen by some interviewees as double standards since good design should be sought in all contexts. Furthermore, while the city’s approach is supposed to be committed to increasing design quality, as the documents repeatedly state, *Kanons* and local regulations do not mention good design or define it. Nor do they suggest examples of good building design. In addition, neither these documents nor any other supplementary documents provide explanations of what quality in design means and how this is crucial for the city’s development.
- Design control approaches in Damascus are very contradictory and suffer from a lack of clarity in the regulations regarding the aesthetic quality and three-dimensional relationship between the new proposed buildings and their urban contexts.

The Old City approach is very firm and plainly states that contemporary designs would not be acceptable; only those that mimic the characters and the architectural elements of the historic contexts are welcomed. This is described by one interviewee as “*unduly restrictive*”. Furthermore, the overall nature of the texts that deal with design considerations in the Old City approach documentation is excessively prescriptive in describing the characters of the existing historic contexts to which designers are directed to refer. The concern has been expressed by some interviewees that this will probably result in having exclusive council-type products which are not necessarily innovative. Furthermore, the Old City approach documentation does not consider the visual and morphological

relationships between the potential proposals and their contexts on a wider scale beyond the architectural details, such as their relation to the city image landmarks (the City Wall, the Grand Mosque, and the Citadel).

On the other hand, the New City approach does encourage contemporary design and is somewhat flexible in terms of the building height, the facade design, materials, and colours. However, it also makes no mention of the visual and morphological relationships between the new proposed buildings and their historic contexts, i.e. immediate and wider contexts, and the city image landmarks (the City Wall, the Grand Mosque, and the Citadel). This was summarised in just one sentence which stressed that building design should be in harmony with the contexts (MHU, 1997, p. 53). This sentence is highly unsatisfactory, because while it stresses that this is something essential, it does not say how it is possible to achieve this, and it is left to the designer to decide on this issue according to the same paragraph. This means that officers cannot refer to this when rejecting applications because design is left to the discretion of designers and this may explain why the New City approach has not rejected applications on a townscape basis.

Furthermore, many regulations are not clearly explained in MHU (1997), as for example the building height regulations (MHU, 1997, p. 53-64). This leaves these regulations open to interpretation. One interviewee comments that sometimes the council made contradictory decisions on the basis of the same height regulations. This has resulted in contemporary designs being applied right next to historic sites outside the wall (*Sharaieh*), which represents a serious challenge to the listed buildings on these sites as well as the city skyline. Such an example is the Four Seasons Hotel and the *Tikkiya Sulaymaniyya* (one of the city's landmarks) on the opposite side of the road (see figure 8.8).

- The process is unnecessarily complicated by the fact that there are two approaches and various administrative organisations involved at the city level. Some interviewees have argued that in order for the process to be effective, and for the desired results to be achieved, there must be considerable effective coordination and communication between these organisations.
- Applying the cadastral survey 1926-1927 helps to provide a reference to which applicants and reviewers can refer when assessing whether proposed designs

relate to their contexts. Furthermore, the recent design code document (MoHC, 2015) provides a list of characters of the key elements which compose the contexts inside the city wall. However, the first document has not been updated since 1948 and not fully completed, and the later document is extremely prescriptive. Many historic sites inside and outside the city wall are not incorporated. This means that the LPC has to review all the proposed designs close to these areas. In addition, there is a gap in that this document did not consider the visual and morphological relationships between buildings in their narrow and wider contexts (at the micro and macro scales). Ultimately, these documents did not set out checklists to help officers and reviewers in making assessments on proposals.

- An advisory body was established in 1980 (GCEC) and it continues to perform a valuable role in Damascus design control. But this body is not consulted all the time about developments and when it is consulted it simply issues advice regarding the proposed developments outside the city wall. However, ultimately the executive office/governor follows or ignores this advice and takes the decision based on the adequacy of the design. On the other hand, the Old City approach appoints a powerful local design review panel (LPC) which reviews any major development as a statutory consultee and has a deep influence on the final decision. However, the panel is not independent as it is led by the governor and mainly staffed with representatives of the government. Ultimately, the panel obviously has a conservative trend and makes decisions with no reference to any particular criteria, in addition, it has no influence on applications outside the city wall even when these proposals are possibly affecting (visually for instance) the listed sites outside the wall.
- The relationship between society and the local authority is controversial and the local community plays no serious role in the design control process. In this regard, some interviewees commented on their anxiety about the role that the public can play in the design control process when it comes to aesthetic issues. Those interviewees considered that people may give more attention to issues of living than they do to the higher order goals of design quality.

Based on the aforementioned review, it can be concluded that the two approaches of Damascus city need an efficient process for design control with tools that have an evaluative procedural character. The UK experience showed that urban design can help

with achieving this by providing a set of assessment and decision support tools that can be utilised by designers to determine and establish certain design objectives, aspirations or constraints. These tools can also be used by reviewers to evaluate whether a certain design adheres to these principles or not. This, in turn, leads to a more foreseeable and efficient process of design control.

8.5 Recommendations and possible directions of change in Damascus

The usefulness of the UK cities' experiences may be that they show how initiating an urban design approach to ensure good results can be attained in a historic context. In each case, their approach has helped them to bring about a good number of achievements. The recommendations made below constitute a positive summary of the research findings and set out some possible responses to the Damascus approach based on some lessons learned from the Edinburgh and York experiences, coupled with an awareness of the Syrian approach limitations. This can pave the road for a future research agenda where the practices can be compared, contrasted and evaluated for more effective control.

The research distinguishes two levels of possible improvement in Damascus (i.e. national and local). Each level sets out a list of recommended stages and actions which the Syrian authorities can take to identify the anticipated approach of urban design. These stages mainly represent the researcher's viewpoints, and at some points are coupled with other authors' findings and the interviewees' views in Syria. It is worth mentioning here that the framework of urban design toolkit which is addressed in section 2.7.2 and the principles of successful urban design governance as shown in section 2.8.2 cannot be applied at the national level in Syria due to the fact that *Kanons* never sought to address detailed planning nor design issues. Consequently, it is believed that providing some recommendations at the national level (see below) can form a solid base and pave the way to propose the application of these frameworks and principles on the local level.

8.5.1 The National level

According to some interviewees in Syria, the proposed approach for improvement should start from the national level by setting a well-defined statutory framework for control. In order to make sure that local authorities have received the messages, this must be accompanied by guidance or/and government advice. Some of the recommendations that could be made at the national level as a kick-start towards achieving change in the design

control of historic Damascus are given below. These are based on the lessons learned from the English and Scottish approaches.

- The English and Scottish experiences show how a low intervention approach by governments can possibly result in detrimental consequences for environmental quality, particularly in the sensitive historic environment. They suggest that local planning authorities must be encouraged by the national policies to consider planning applications on design grounds, and equally must be encouraged to accept contemporary design if it has been based on a wide understanding of the urban context and further enhance its character and appearance. These are addressed by the two UK systems as crucial steps towards achieving good designs. Thereafter, national policies must discuss what constitutes a good design and what it means in any given context and provide a mechanism to interpret them at the local level. In view of that, it should be recognised in Syria that it is right for the Government to intervene in design issues and show a serious commitment towards design quality. In addition, decision makers should be clearly encouraged by the government to say 'no' to poor design, and equally to say 'yes' to contemporary innovative design. Having strategies and policies at the national level rather than laws (*Kanons*) is a key initial step. These strategies and policies must set objectives of how to achieve good designs and plainly explain how they can be applied at the local level.
- The English and the Scottish experiences show that it is essential that urban design is being addressed in the national policy, and both of them have shown a clear commitment to urban design but in two different ways. However, the Scottish version can be a better source to draw lessons from. The Scottish national policy has focused on achieving quality by setting a list of principles that are similar to urban design principles, without having aspects that are very general or considerably explained or outweighed over others, as in the English approach. This approach in Scotland has resulted in having objective and rational urban design policies on the local level as proven in the case of Edinburgh. Drawing on this, recognition should be given in Syria to the fact that good design will only be possible as part of a long-term commitment to quality, including the establishment of a full hierarchy of preconceived policy and guidance which plainly addresses urban design principles. In this sense, there should be a more comprehensive agenda for urban design at the national level which integrates the social, visual,

and morphological aspects, the focus of this research, along with the functional and ecological aspects, but which also allows for individuality at a local level so that the sense of place is preserved and design policies endorse sustainable development. These issues should form the basis of systematic urban design criteria at a local level (Carmona, 1998 and Paterson, 2012). In addition, national policy should determine at what level urban design policy can be objectivised or rationalised, and it should establish how prescriptive the urban design policy should be on the local level.

- The English and Scottish experiences show the importance of having clear, user-friendly national guidance so that the correct messages of the national policy are transmitted to the local level. It is true that the English and the Scottish experiences can provide important lessons to be applied in the case of Damascus. However, after the detailed analysis of the two experiences with regards to producing national guidance, it is clear that both suffer from few drawbacks and hence recommendations were given in section 7.3.2. The English version was detailed to the extent that it was possible for local planning authorities to use it as a tool for judgement. The Scottish version, on the other hand, was multi-layered documents without being very much detailed. Therefore, for the case of Damascus, it would be more sensible to apply what has been recommended to rectify the drawbacks of the two systems – producing an appendix or single standalone document that is simultaneously updated with the policy and clearly explaining the policies, not repeating their words, and reasonably addressing some detailed principles of urban design.
- The two UK systems have both encouraged, in their national policies, that an independent and expert local design review panel to be established to become responsible for running the design review service. They recommended that such panels can also be involved in the process of updating local policies and guidance (see Chapter 7, section 7.3.3). Furthermore, they recommended enhancing the role of the public in the process of judging design proposals. It has been proven in both experiences that enhancing the role of the public and panels lead to achieving a more participative approach and less subjective judgment. Drawing on this, local design review panels and public consultation should be encouraged in the anticipated Syrian policy, clearly stating that the former should be thoroughly consulted on design matters including updating policies and

guidelines; and the role of the latter should be further extended to devolved control.

8.5.2 The local level

The historic fabric of Damascus consists of two parts: the old part of the city within the wall (a world heritage site) and the new part outside the wall. Also, there are some listed historic buildings located outside the wall. In an article by Alfaham (2007) in the local press, he discussed that the wall is an important element, but should not be a barrier which separates the old city from its natural expansion. In this regard, he highlighted that these two parts (new and old) are equally important. This research agrees with this viewpoint and recommends that these two parts should be defined as one entity, as a historic core conservation area. This core is the soul of the city which represents its identity, therefore it needs to be looked after and be dealt with applying great sensitivity.

Having two approaches for control in Damascus, i.e. the New and Old City approaches, could not ensure design quality or fully conserve the historic contexts, particularly outside the wall. Furthermore, while the two approaches have been established to address legally binding regulations, they have also been at some points discretionary, particularly the New City approach. Thus, applying one approach to the city as a whole with urban design trends might be more helpful. This research suggests that the anticipated approach should outline a policy and guidelines hierarchy, and must clearly draw a line between the mandatory and advisory elements.

Edinburgh and York experiences show that the two cities have two different approaches to urban design; they are similar in some aspects though. However, the question this section raises and seeks to answer during its course is: to what extent can Damascus follow the route of the UK cities and what lessons can be drawn from their experiences? Based on the careful examination of the case of Damascus, key changes need to be implemented by its local authority which will hopefully, later on, be reflected in the day-to-day design control practice. These recommended changes are proposed below and follow the classification set by the researcher in Chapter 2 (see Box 1, section 2.8.3).

Need for a comprehension of the urban context character

The Edinburgh and York experiences show that it is important that any new development responds appropriately to its existing context. Context is seen as more than a series of visual characteristics, and the design response should take into account various aspects of the location, including the townscape in the immediate surroundings, and also the functional, social and environmental context. Their experiences highlight the vital role that character area appraisal can play in raising the awareness of the designer about the distinctive elements of the conservation areas, and consequently increasing the likelihood of producing good design outcomes.

The two cities provide similar lessons of how urban design techniques for analysis (visual and morphological analysis) are crucial in accomplishing character area appraisal documents. In this regard, the York experience suggests that key elements of the city image and skyline (i.e. the City Wall and the Minster) must be determined as landmarks, and the relationship with these elements as well as the sensitive sites must be taken as material consideration in any assessment. In addition, the Edinburgh experience suggests that it is really useful if the character area appraisal documents address Outstanding Universal Values which can be used by the applicants to understand the values of the conservation areas, and can also be used by reviewers as criteria for judgment (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.1).

Drawing on these experiences, a key first step for the case of Damascus would be to update the existing survey, and together with MoHC (2011), form a comprehensive character area appraisal document. The anticipated document must stipulate that development should respond appropriately to its context – context definition and response must be addressed plainly as mentioned above. In addition, this document must provide classifications and illustrations of the most significant elements inside and outside the city wall. Analysis in the proposed character area appraisal document in Damascus must go beyond the architectural elements of the buildings, i.e. listed buildings and unlisted buildings, to a broader remit of considering public space, environmental quality, public realm, sense of place and local distinctiveness in historic context. This must include the spatial character and townscape, vistas and views, buildings forms, building lines and streetscape. The relation to the city image landmarks (the City Wall, the Grand Mosque, and the Citadel) must also be recommended to be taken as material consideration in any assessment, as in York. It is also expected to address a list of Outstanding Universal

Values, as in Edinburgh, to help the applicants and the reviewers alike in accomplishing the judgment. These values can possibly be addressed as follows:

- Juxtaposition of the historic sites (inside and outside the City Wall)
- Contrasting Character
- Townscape Character
- Historic Buildings
- Statues and Monuments

Last but not least, the public should also be involved in the drawing up process of these documents, where the general public should be encouraged to articulate their values and to reflect the new extended agenda that prioritises urban design and local distinctiveness. The two cities' experiences show that this is an important step towards a more participative process. Other procedures should also be undertaken to further enhance this public role and ensure its effectiveness. Ultimately, this document must be updated periodically to ensure that it remains effective.

Need for explicit urban design criteria

All the interviewees agree that the existing *Nizam* in Damascus is out of date and releasing a new one is an urgent need. A list of recommendations is suggested below based on the lessons learned from Edinburgh and York, to lay the foundations of the proposed new *Nizam*:

- The Edinburgh and York experiences show the importance of structuring policies and guidelines based on a wide understanding of the distinctive character of the context. This can result in having the right policies/guidelines in the right place as well as further enhancing the role of research and analysis tools in the process. Relying on this, the proposed *Nizam* must be based on a careful appraisal of the locality (i.e. stressing the importance of local distinctiveness). Introducing a character area appraisal is a pre-essential initial step and must provide the reference for this.
- The Edinburgh and York experiences prove that judgement process needs to move beyond subjectivity to a more objective decision-making process. To achieve this, they suggest that it should be based on a clearly articulated policy framework with

statutory weight. The proposed *Nizam* can draw some lessons of the two cities' experiences which are addressed as follows:

- The Edinburgh and York experiences showed that setting urban design principles in the form of criteria/policies addressed as questions to every development can help more in preventing poor designs and encouraging people to think positively. The two cities have presented different approaches. York has relatively managed to present these policies in a better way by setting the policies in one list – without plainly addressing them as urban design policies – compared to Edinburgh, which has two sets of design and conservation policies. The case of Damascus, however, can follow neither of these cities' routes, but can benefit from the recommendation proposed in Chapter 7, section 7.3.2 to develop the two cities' approaches. These recommendations stress the value of having one list of plainly-addressed urban design policies to avoid any overlap, and, possibly, any conflicting design and conservation policies. Urban design principles of townscape, morphology, and public realm should be addressed clearly in the anticipated *Nizam* and must focus upon performance criteria rather than prescribing forms. Chapter 2 (see table 2.1) provides a typology of urban design criteria noting the varying degrees of specificity in policy levels. This can form a part of an urban design route map to be followed in structuring the anticipated *Nizam*.
- The Edinburgh and York experiences state that concepts of sustainability and natural environment are as important as urban design concepts and both should be carefully addressed in any local policies and guidance documents. It is evident in the case of Edinburgh and York that achieving this is not an easy assignment and the two cities' approaches in this regard are controversial. The York approach shows in theory and practice that the inability to address these concepts carefully and equally may give rise to endless debate and can be a recipe for delay and complication in the process. The Edinburgh approach, on the other hand, has preferred to avoid this trap by not getting involved in this discussion without offering a recipe of how to deal with these issues. Based on this, concepts of sustainability and natural environment, which were missed in the current *Nizam*, must be added as policies along with urban design policies (townscape, morphology, and public realm). The two sets of policies

should complement each other. In this regard, the proposed new *Nizam* can benefit from the recommendation proposed in Chapter 7, section 7.3.2 to develop the Edinburgh and York approaches. It was recommended to connect the principles of good design (urban design principles) to the idea of sustainable development, and clearly define that quality can go as far as considering all the aesthetic, functional, social and environmental aspects of the context.

- The Edinburgh and York experiences have provided illustrative examples of how, through applying urban design policies and guidelines, good/innovative designs can fit into their historic contexts and enhance the quality of the built environment. Therefore, the recommended urban design policies for Damascus must be mandatory; they must also leave a margin of flexibility in design. In other words, they have to encourage architectural innovation and creativity and avoid uniformity, mediocrity, and imitation. In this regard, it is really important that innovative architecture is recognised as architecture that understands the character of the context and the socio-economic impact of its proposals, and finds new solutions to problems.

The Edinburgh and York experiences show that applying local design guidance is essential to illustrate the local policies using clear perception of urban design. The two cities have followed different approaches, one of which proved better. York has mainly relied on the national guidance and on very general documents at the local level; whereas Edinburgh, which proved better in this sense, has emphasised the need to have these documents written not for the purpose of winning the legalistic appeals; but, for providing material considerations as a clear basis for evaluating projects. As such, they need to be informative, comprehensible, and written in a motivating tone that can encourage architects to interpret the policy clearly and formulate an appropriate response. In other words, they should aim for compatible design that makes ‘a positive visual contribution’ rather than imitation. It may focus on common design problems but should also be free to address more elective quality issues. Most importantly, it should use drawings to explain vague regulations, giving examples of good designs and saying why permissions are granted in these cases. These can help readers to gain a clear idea of how to increase the likelihood of their schemes’ success. Based on this review, it is important for the new *Nizam* of Damascus to have an accompanying guidance that can follow the route of Edinburgh design guidance.

The Edinburgh and York experiences shed light on the important role other design guidance documents can play, i.e. development briefs and design codes, in increasing the likelihood of good design outcomes. The two cities' approaches were similar in this regards and both were leaning towards development briefs tool more than design codes. The interviewees in both cities expressed concerns in applying design codes, stating that they are very prescriptive and can narrow down design innovation and community inspiration (see Chapter 7, section 7.2.2).

The lessons learned from the Edinburgh and York experiences emphasise that the framework of development briefs must express exactly how expectations can be met using a clear language of urban design. They should also provide further explanations and analysis for the site using urban design techniques for analysis (visual and morphological analysis). They should also cover the character of the immediate context, site characteristics and qualities worth enhancing, the layout and design of streets and the public realm, building siting and envelopes, the disposition of public space and the city skyline and roofscape. Based on these lessons, a development briefs tool, can be created to be applied in Damascus for specific sites, particularly inside the city wall or nearby the sensitive sites outside the wall, i.e. *Sharaieh*, or when there is a worry that policies and guidelines might not be understood.

A design code, however, is also a possible tool to be applied in Damascus which can be used for specific sensitive areas in order to provide a framework for large development sites. The lessons learnt from the UK cities in relation to design code can enlighten the local authority in Damascus of the possible challenges in applying this tool in practice. As mentioned in Chapter 7, section 7.3.1, it is really important that those who are using this tool are aware of its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the relevant authorities are required to have an overall framework and provide detailed standards at site level.

Need for efficient and effective stakeholders

Edinburgh and York adopt similar approaches to enhance the public role in the process; however, their approaches to local design review panels are different. The Edinburgh experience proves that EUDP has been playing a crucial role in raising the profile of urban design in the city through commenting on proposed designs in sensitive contexts and on local policy drafts. EUDP is a fairly independent panel and well-represented by key actors including A+DS and HES. It acts as a halfway house between the Community

Council and the City Council. However, the community is not represented in EUDP and this has been taken as a point against it. On the other hand, CAAP in York is also an independent panel in which the community is represented. However, there are issues concerning the nature and structure of the panel as it is conservation-oriented and does not present key player in the process, i.e. CABE and HE.

The case of Damascus, however, can follow neither of these cities' routes and may benefit from the recommendation proposed in Chapter 7, section 7.3.3 which suggested developing EUDP and CAAP. However, how these lessons can be applicable in Damascus is a question this research seeks to answer below.

The suggested approach for Damascus is based on extending the existing committee's (LPC) functions to cover aesthetic and urban design issues proposing a new name; Damascus Urban Design Panel (DUDP). This panel should be in charge of the whole city. However, more expertise should be injected into the panel (i.e. the expertise of architects, planners, engineers and landscape architects) to provide broader-based expertise. GCEC can provide some of these experts by appointing representatives from these fields in this panel and others can be provided by having private architects on the panel. The panel should also have representatives of the community, as in York, to provide a wider consensus to support design quality.

A key point needs to be mentioned – the panel must be independent and this requires not being chaired by the governor. The Edinburgh and York experiences show that if the panel is independent, the relationship between advisers and decision makers will be strengthened. This panel should also not be controlled by the city council; this will allow the panel to make its advice public, without pressure from any municipal executives, who will not select the panel members. Thus, it should be clearly established that the panel could be chaired by any of the panel members, and clarified that having representative or representatives from the council is just to facilitate communication, as in York. Ultimately, the panel should be recognised as a statutory consultee on major applications, and should have an input to the local policy drawn up by planning authorities, as in Edinburgh. This would facilitate connections between the design review process and local design policies, and also increase the knowledge and understanding of the panel members about the planning system. Also, a councillor or any decision maker can be asked to publicise on what bases their decisions are being made if they have ignored the panel's comments.

The Edinburgh and York experiences also prove that such local design review panels are usually criticised for being subjective. Thus, it is important that the anticipated panel formulates its criteria for judgment in which urban design principles are presented as clearly as possible. This can be achieved in various ways. It could be by the anticipated panel itself, which would have the expertise it needs to accomplish this when the funds are provided. The other possibility is by having these criteria accomplished in collaborative work between the panel and the GCEC. Together they can also help to release policies and guidelines at the local level. This can help to widen the awareness of the panel members to these policies and guidelines.

The experience in York and Edinburgh has demonstrated that a trend has been developed for public consultation in design matters, and also for the public being able to specify the principles of control, which involves the development of policy and guidance and the ability to pass comment on development proposals. They may even participate in the administration of the control process. Some of the interviewees in the UK stated that this would provide a mechanism for settling disputes between the community and the interests of developers, and would at the same time increase the sense of ownership by the community of the control mechanism. However, this was not fully practiced in the UK cases and there are many serious difficulties acting as barriers to achieving this on the ground at the moment in Damascus. For example, the lack of the public awareness of the process and of the supportive role they can play as well as the lack of local authorities' intent to follow a more negotiable and participative approach, stand as two key barriers against empowering the public role. This research acknowledges these two major issues with no further discussion as they fall beyond the scope of this research. However, a recommendation has been provided below for the case of Damascus to empower the public role and can be used as a foundation for future research.

The proposed solution for Damascus is to initially promote education and public awareness of urban design, architecture, and environmental aesthetics. Education will help to achieve the long-term objectives of creating more clients for good design. Guidance can be provided to schools and higher education institutions so that they realise the importance of information associated with the built environment and architecture. This can support the development of national priorities for education, and the public can also let the professionals know their priorities for urban design. One of the interviewees suggests that it would be a good idea to establish a centre with the aim of raising public

awareness of building design and architecture, both by raising the profile of these curriculum areas in education, and promoting exhibitions and events on the subject.

Ultimately, the aforementioned recommendations need to be further boosted through other recommended procedures which should stress updating, on a regular basis, the quality of generalist and specialists' professional training. Appreciation and awareness of good design can be achieved by regularly publishing documents and reports. This research recommends that specific reference should be made to the GCEC, in its capacity as a body with an interest in the design and urban design of nationally important proposals. The role of the GCEC may need reconsidering, especially with regard to how it can help to raise the profile of urban design. In addition, higher education institutions should be encouraged to offer degrees and postgraduate studies in urban design. These postgraduates could enter into careers involving urban design, or at least obtain a new perspective on their own specialism. This recommendation should be addressed to the Ministry of Higher Education to start running these courses. It is essential that urban design is included in all the built environment professions. It can also be recommended that such courses be followed by the councillors or any reviewer who might take part in the judgment process to ensure that they all have at least the basic understanding of the policies and guidelines.

8.6 Validation and possible mechanism of change in Damascus

The recommendations addressed above were validated by interviewing some experts on the Syrian context. It is worth noting that despite the fact that the whole country is witnessing an interior war, in Damascus the physical fabric inside the city wall and the listed parts outside the wall have not been affected and the administrative procedures are still working just as they were in the pre-war period.

The interviews reflected a consensus among the interviewees on most of the recommendations; however some of them raised concerns regarding the application of a number of these recommendations and others suggested a mechanism for that. These points can be summarised as follows:

- Having one design control approach with an urban design trend for the whole city is seen by the majority of the interviewees as a crucial step, and one that will definitely make the process uncomplicated. In this regard, the interviewees argue

that an essential step towards achieving this is by merging the UPD and ODD in one Urban Design Office (UDO). The new office would be responsible for all of the city areas (inside and outside the city wall). Such a merger is seen by one of the interviewees as a step that could free up resources to be used elsewhere, making the process easier.

- The interviewees agree that the existing documents are out of date, particularly the ones applied outside the city wall. Therefore, releasing a new *Nizam* for the whole city, along with character area appraisals and guidance, is seen by them as very important. These tools should be clear and hierarchical, and address architectural and urban design principles. However, they raised the concern that not all of the local authorities' planners and councillors are aware of what urban design really stands for.
- Establishing an Urban Design Panel (DUDP), recognising it as a statutory consultee on major planning applications and further enhancing its role inside and outside the city wall was welcomed by some of the interviewees. However, some worries were raised by others regarding the recommended changes with regard to who should chair the panel and what skills are needed. According to those interviewees, keeping the panel chaired by the council is essential in order to facilitate communication between the panel and the Executive Office, which makes the final decision. Otherwise, additional delays on the applications are likely. They suggest that it could be chaired by the head of the Urban Design Office (UDO) rather than a councillor after the merger is completed. The second worry is that the existing members of the LPC are conservation-oriented and some of them inappropriately skilled in design.
- The election of the Neighbourhood Committees is described by the interviewees as an essential step towards further enhancing the public's role in the design control process. They agree that this committee must include professional and local architects who live in the same neighbourhood and/or from private practice who could collaborate with and represent the committee in the proposed DUDP. According to some interviewees, this can be achieved easily. However, they argued that local authorities did not have the intent or show serious commitment towards this in the past. Similar recommendations on higher planning levels have been raised by other researchers in the past but, unfortunately, this has never come to fruition.

- Asking the decision makers to publicise their decisions is seen by some interviewees as very important to guarantee fairness, objectivity and transparency in the process. One of the interviewees considered that equally important as this is establishing appeal procedures for those who consider themselves to have been unfairly treated. This should not be left to the court to decide as this is possibly the last chance, as he stated.

8.7 Conclusion

The English and Scottish planning systems provide discretionary approaches on building form and use, amenity and open space, allowing a greater flexibility in design and a wide range of negotiation on design between the applicant and those who are in charge of the judgement process. This has undoubtedly increased the likelihood of resulting developments being tailored to their context as the experience of Edinburgh and York has proved. On the other hand, the review shows that Damascus has a refined zoning regulations approach with a preference for administrative processes that have measurable dimension criteria (i.e. binding regulations). In addition, the Syrian approach has also shown some flexibility on certain points, particularly height issues and the matter of proposals being in harmony with their contexts. However, this did not yield satisfactory results and most of these outcomes were controversial.

It is true that the British and the Syrian planning systems sharply differ in structure, as reviewed in section 8.3.2, however, applying some lessons of urban design from the UK to the Syrian context is still possible due to the fact that urban design principles and practice have an international relevance and are universally applicable (Punter, 1996 and Deng, 2009). Edinburgh and York are providing fruitful lessons to be learned by Damascus, which seeks to improve. These can be concluded as follows:

There is a great need to have strategies and policies at the national level that stress good design principles and urban design tools in order to achieve better practice. These policies have to be proportionate, accurate and concise – not an endless list but a wish list. This should be further enhanced by implementing a new *Nizam* along with guidance documents that set out comprehensive, flexible and hierarchically structured urban design criteria. The experience showed that this can be more helpful than having binding regulations and implementation procedures. However, applying design codes to large developments in very sensitive sites, particularly inside the city wall, is still possible and

could be very helpful. This requires the relevant authorities to have an overall framework, as well as providing detailed standards at site level.

This research has determined that the most important components of the process are ensuring that design advice is available during the early stages of the development, making sure that this advice is reliable, and engaging in constructive dialogue with the controllers. As such, establishing an expert advisory panel (DUDP) which is chaired by the council and includes representative(s) of the community is recommended as a very helpful tool to ensure quality. This can help decision makers to be confident in their decisions. Ultimately, it is also central to building up expertise and developing skills through the creation of a Centre of Excellence in Training and Development for Local Government, and through other training and information programmes to help the public and the reviewers alike.

CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this research is to achieve an advanced understanding of the possibilities and limitations of urban design approaches, with the purpose of fitting new building forms into existing historic urban contexts. The literature suggested that urban design provides a set of assessment and decision support tools; by using them during the development process, the likelihood of achieving good designs will undoubtedly increase. However, the review showed that these tools can be developed and used differently in different cities. This depends on the extent to which these cities and the planning systems they follow are committed to urban design. The approaches of Edinburgh and York are examined in the UK context and the lessons they provide are used to suggest potential improvement of the building form design control approach in Damascus.

This chapter concludes with a summary of the research approach and findings reached by this research. It also answers the research questions, and ultimately, it sets an agenda for relevant future theoretical and empirical research.

9.2 Summary of the research approach

In order to build the researcher's understanding of urban design, in theory and practice, a review of the international urban design literature was introduced in detail in Chapter 2. This helped to build a wide knowledge of urban design concepts, based on which the author proposed an approach that can be used to judge the merit of proposed new forms in historic contexts. It also helped with exploring the urban design assessment and decision support tools that can be used by stakeholders during the judgment process of proposed new forms. This review concluded by drawing up a conceptual framework that set principles for successful urban design decision-making governance, to be used afterwards in assessing two UK cities' approaches (i.e. Edinburgh and York).

A case study approach, which involved using multiple-qualitative methods for data collection (document collection and review, interviews and direct observation) was adopted by this research. Data in both Edinburgh and York were reviewed and analysed using a comparative method based on a grounded theory approach.

This resulted in setting out the advantages and disadvantages of the two cities' approaches and addressing fruitful lessons to be learned from these cities' experiences. Relying on these lessons, a recommended approach was suggested in Chapter 8 for the case of Damascus, in order to develop its existing design control approach. Ultimately, the recommended approach has been validated by experts in the Syrian context to ensure its applicability.

9.3 Answering the main research questions

The conclusions of this research, which answer the key questions and sub-questions proposed in Chapter 1, can be summarised as follows:

Q1. What are the main theories and concepts for fitting new forms of buildings in historic urban contexts?

This question focuses on the meaning of historic urban context and the approaches for controlling the insertion of new building forms into such sensitive contexts.

In order to answer the research questions 1.1 and 1.2, a literature review and an introduction to the issues of proposed new buildings' forms in historic urban contexts have been carried out. It showed that the urban context is a dynamic socio-spatial context, and inserting new forms into existing contexts can possibly result in positive and negative impacts. Good building forms can bring direct and indirect benefits. They can attract investment in development and bring long-term aesthetic, economic, social and cultural benefits. However, what constitutes a good building form and the elements that should be taken into account when inserting new forms into historic contexts, in particular, are issues that this work aimed to answer. The literature review showed that historic contexts have their own values, i.e. built heritage assets (e.g. cultural, economic, political and aesthetic), which can also overlap with those brought in by new building forms. Therefore, it is a must that such possible conflict between the values of the historic context and the added new form should be considered during the development process.

The views of how these values should be considered and prioritised in the development process have differed. Nevertheless, all these views, despite their variations, agreed that a good building form is the form which fits into its context, while fitness is the mutual acceptability between the form and its context. It is a process through which the merit of

the form is ensured, by unquestionably outweighing benefits of applying any change over potential negatives.

In response to the research question 1.3, it appeared throughout the literature provided in Chapter 2 that preservation, conservation and urban design have emerged and developed over time as the three main approaches that concern urban context change and seek to ensure that new building forms fit into their historic urban contexts. However, the perspectives of these approaches differed.

The review showed the differences between the three approaches and how they evolved over time. It discussed how preservation had emerged in response to architectural theories which were accused of causing detrimental consequences to the historic contexts and proposed applying no change whatsoever to these contexts unless it is an inevitable need. In addition, the review discussed the criticisms the preservation approach had received arguing that these cities need urgent changes to strengthen their economies and ensure the wellbeing of their communities. Consequently, conservation had been introduced to represent the preservation concepts in more contemporary way. The conservation approach was first termed as architectural conservation, which sought to manage the change resulting from inserting new building forms in historic contexts and succeeded on many occasions. However, the interest of conservation had shifted towards planning, resulting in being called conservation planning. As a result of this shift, conservation became less interested in aesthetic values and needed urgent reforms. Hence, urban design found its way through.

Urban design was introduced in the 1980s to address the issue of producing contemporary design forms in any context including the historic contexts. While urban design theory has a link with architectural theory, its concept of how to deal with the insertion of new forms was broader and more regulatory – this is due to the fact that urban design is also linked with planning and shares with it some characters. As such, the main focus of urban design was set on how all buildings, old and new, can work together to create spaces and a sense of place, which is seen as influencing the quality of life for communities.

Q2. How can urban design be utilised to judge proposals of new building forms in historic urban contexts?

This question focuses on the concepts and tools of urban design used to assess the merit of proposed new forms in a historic urban context. It also focuses on the approaches for achieving successful urban design governance of the judgement process, through which these tools are applied.

When responding to research question 2.1, Chapter 2 reviewed a wide range of urban design definitions provided by various authors. It showed that its definition varies between those authors who recognise it as the art of the built environment, and others who identify it as the process of regeneration and management through which this art is produced. After reviewing these definitions, this research believes that urban design is interested in the process by which built form takes shape, as well as the shape itself as a product of this process.

Chapter 2 reviewed different concepts of urban design approaches for assessing new proposed designs in historic urban contexts, such as morphological, visual-perceptual, social, functional and ecological approaches. While the morphological approach investigates how new proposed design relates to an existing urban form, where it will sit side-by-side with other buildings and will together create new spaces, the visual-perceptual and social approaches respectively examine how people visualise, perceive and interact with such designs. Finally, the functional and ecological approaches respectively investigate how the new proposed design responds to the functional and environmental needs of its context. After a thorough research of the above mentioned concepts and based on the recommendation proposed by Pendlebury (1999), this research adopted a combined approach of morphological, visual-perceptual and environment-behaviour/social approaches. According to the literature, these are seen as the most important approaches to study the insertion of new forms of buildings into their historic sensitive context.

In response to question 2.2, a review had been conducted, as mentioned above, to examine the key concepts of urban design that concern inserting new building forms into historic contexts. These concepts overlap with each other and have, in turn, sub-categories which interlink with each other. After a detailed examination of the literature, the researcher believed that an analytical framework can be drawn based on the concepts adopted in the

research and the sub-categories they produce. These sub-categories are urban form (built form and contextualisation); townscape; perception; and social response (satisfaction and engagement). The four sub-categories were further divided into indicators which were mentioned in the literature as a set of criteria used in urban design theory. This research utilised those indicators to become a set of objective criteria which can be used for assessing proposed new forms in general as well as in historic contexts. Based on the concepts adopted, the sub-categories chose and the indicators listed, an analytical framework has been introduced (see Chapter 2, Table 2.1).

In response to question 2.3, the research has conducted a comprehensive review of the urban design toolkits proposed in the literature. The literature showed that new building forms are assessed based on principles of urban design which can be found in the form of policies, guidelines, and techniques for analysis. These principles can be used by stakeholders to guide the judgement of proposed new forms. This research believes that those principles and their possible usage can be categorised into three sets of tools for a more systematic judgement approach. They were categorised into: research and analysis tools, coordination tools, and implementation tools.

The research and analysis tools seek to build a wide understanding of the urban context characters using techniques of urban design. They provide an appraisal of these characters and set a guide for achieving quality in design. The coordination tools provide hierarchically-structured urban design principles/criteria in the form of policies and guidelines. These tools provide the stakeholders with a framework that can be used in accomplishing an objective judgment. Finally, the implementation tools can be presented in the form of design review panel and public involvement. These implementation tools ensure that on the ground the principles (addressed by the aforementioned tools) are implemented.

In order to respond to research question 2.4, Chapter 2 reviewed three views in answering ‘what makes successful governance of urban design?’ The work of these authors (i.e. Carmona, 1996; Punter, 2007, and Dawson and Higgins, 2009) has provided the researcher with a cornerstone for structuring the research conceptual framework. Based on this review, a conceptual framework consisting of three principles has been proposed. These principles can be employed for successful urban design decision-making governance and are referred to as: urban context comprehension and appraisal, explicit urban design criteria, and effective and efficient stakeholders.

Q3. How have urban design approaches evolved in Edinburgh and York and how do they continue to evolve in the contemporary period?

In order to respond to this question, this work has conducted an extensive and detailed review of the urban design approaches followed in England and Scotland. The work has reviewed the history of urban design in these two UK planning systems between 1996, when urban design was first addressed, until 1999 when they were separated. The language of urban design and its concepts were clearly used in structuring *Planning Policy Guidance* (DOE, 1997). Since this date, urban design has become a more prominent aspect of the design control process in the UK planning system. This national document carried clear messages to further enhance the role of urban design at the local level. Local planning authorities were encouraged, in this document, to intervene in design issues, including buildings' appearance, and to refuse planning applications on these grounds. Both planning systems, after separation, continued to address urban design; however, each has followed a different approach to urban design at the national level.

The profile of urban design, in both systems, has been raised through frequently releasing national policies, guidelines and supplementary documents at the national level. The Scottish approach has provided a detailed list of principles – similar to those in the urban design literature – in the national policies for the sake of achieving design quality and explained them further in two accompanied national guidance documents. Furthermore, A+DS has released other documents which were very helpful in raising the profile of urban design. On the other hand, the English approach provided a less detailed national policy – comparing to the Scottish approach – but far more detailed national guidance. Issues of deprioritising urban design principles, in the English system, for the benefit of other conflicting principles, i.e. sustainability, raised concerns as how such approach can help enhance urban design. Similar to their equivalent in Scotland, CABI documents were very helpful in raising the awareness of design issues in historic contexts and the potential role of urban design. This detailed review of both system answered question 3.1 of this work.

In response to question 3.2, Chapters 5 and 6 reviewed how urban design tools are addressed in Edinburgh and York. In Edinburgh, the messages of the national policies for further enhancing urban design were translated into two local plan policies, i.e. design and conservation policies. These policies have covered all urban design criteria which

were addressed by this research in Chapter 2, table 2.1. In addition, local design guidance has provided a very detailed explanation of these criteria. Character appraisal documents provided good illustration of the distinctive characters of the Old and New Town of Edinburgh and also provided Outstanding Universal Values as criteria each development needs to meet before being approved. The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel has also played an important role in raising the profile of urban design through giving comments on proposed design and commenting on drafted policies and guidelines documents.

In York, despite the fact that the messages of urban design in the national policies were not very clear, the local plan policies, however, were very detailed and more advanced in addressing one list of urban design policies covering all the criteria raised in the first framework of this work. Local design guidance, however, was not as detailed and helpful as that of Edinburgh. The York character area appraisal revealed that it was similar in structure and content to that of Edinburgh, but the local design review panel (CAAP) was not as helpful as the EUDP and questions were raised as to how CAAP can help to raise the profile of urban design at the local level.

In response to question 3.3, Chapter 7 provided a detailed analysis of the two cities' approaches, using the framework adopted in Chapter 2, section 2.8.2, and concluded that Edinburgh and York provide examples of two different approaches to urban design whose tools were used differently but still achieve the same aim. The two cities' approaches are analysed critically and the advantages and disadvantages of the two cities' approaches are addressed, as follows:

- The two cities have clearly and to an extent similarly addressed urban design in their local plans. These policies were further explained in the case of Edinburgh in detailed design guidance. On the other hand, York preferred to rely on the national guidance having, thus, a very general local guidance. The experiences of the two cities' projects showed how useful these tools are to be used by the case officers and other reviewers as a basis to create a list of criteria against which the merit of the proposed design can be judged. This has ensured objective judgement. However, a key disadvantage was found in the York approach since relying on the national guidance had resulted in different interpretations for some policies and guidelines.
- In the two cities' approaches, character area appraisal and development briefs, when they are applied, provided the applicant with detailed explanations of the

distinctive characters of the two cities' conservation areas and their key elements. These tools also provided the reviewers with a list of material considerations. This had resulted, as the experience showed, in having good proposals at an early stage of the process. Overall, these tools proved to be useful and no serious concerns were raised in relation to them.

- Regarding the local design review panels and the public involvement, the two cities' approaches were extremely different. In Edinburgh, EUDP plays a vital role in the process and the experience showed how its comments can contribute positively and supportively to developing the proposals; however, the community is not represented in the panel, which is seen by some interviewees as a disadvantage. On the other hand, CAAP has a representative of the community but the whole role of the panel is seen by many as controversial due to its extreme trend towards conservation and the absence of representation of CABE and EH.

However, it is evident that applying these tools in the two cities has certainly increased the likelihood of achieving good building designs, and the advantages of these approaches can provide fruitful lessons for developing urban design as an approach for good practice in design control in other locations. These lessons can be summarised as follows:

- Urban design can go beyond merely the external appearance of buildings individually, to a broader remit of considering public space, environmental quality, public realm, sense of place and local distinctiveness in the historic context.
- There should be responsibility for urban design. This means that urban design policy has to have a hierarchical structure at national and local levels. Good design quality must be a corporate objective at the national level, and how urban design can help to achieve this should be addressed clearly at the national level. Thereafter, the local authorities have to set more detailed and concrete urban design policies, following clear and strong messages from the national policies, associated with guidelines which must be very clear and further explain the policies. Most importantly, other aspects (e.g. sustainability and economic growth) should not be focused on at the expense of urban design, neither nationally nor locally. Local policies and guidelines should be based on a wide and careful appraisal of the character of the locality without being over-prescriptive. However, any detailed criteria should always relate to the

circumstances specific to the location concerned; this is best done through guidance, not policy.

- Just as important is the requirement for councillors, who are responsible for the principal design control decisions, as well as the reviewers, to be fully conversant with, and dedicated to, the policies and guidance of the local authority, and for them to respect professional points of view (i.e. local design review panel).
- An independent and expert urban design panel should be established, responsible for running the design review service which can also be responsible for accomplishing the anticipated policies and guidance. The local design review panel is strongly recommended to have representative/ representatives of the community.
- The role of the public in the judgement process of design proposals is essential and must be further enhanced. It is also essential that the public are fully aware of the process in order to carry out their role effectively.

Q4. How has the meeting between old and new buildings' forms been resolved in contemporary Damascus? What lessons can be drawn from the UK's experiences and applied to Damascus?

The question focuses on the possible lessons that can be learned from the experiences of Edinburgh and York, and their possible application to the context of Damascus. A detailed review of literature on the subject of city urban form development throughout the ages, and the adopted design control approach has been conducted.

In response to research question 4.1, Chapter 8 provided a review of Damascus urban form development. Damascus's existing built heritage is a complex and rich mixture of survived historical buildings that date back to the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic eras. These buildings have shaped the city's image for a long time, and many are listed as historical buildings that have memorable architectural characters and cultural values and are therefore classified as world heritage. This includes the historic fabric inside the city wall, the city wall, the Grand Mosque, and the Citadel. Meanwhile, maintaining the city's cultural richness and its historical image, which is a key part of Damascus's unique identity, was always a crucial aim.

In the modern era, the historic contexts of Damascus witnessed a clash between modernisation and tradition in many ways. At the city level, modernity came through colonialism to affect different aspects of public space and public life, by introducing new building forms. The city has been influenced by the European architectural style which can be seen by the French schools, hospitals, hotels and clubs. The period of post-colonialism had witnessed two conflicting approaches which represent the political ideologies prevailing at that time i.e. the Conservatives and the Communists. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the European style came back into the picture with new forms of buildings which followed the modern architecture theories. While suggesting that new forms of buildings were a way to modernise the old city, this, in turn, affected some historic areas' appearances as well as the city image and skyline – not necessarily in a positive way.

In response to research question 4.2, Chapter 8 provided a wide review of the existing Damascus control approaches (i.e. New and Old City approaches), including the key actors involved, as well as the tools adopted by each approach over the time. It showed that the two approaches, in their current status, have failed to address urban design principles. They are fundamentally contradictory and three dimensional and aesthetic issues are barely and loosely mentioned. Issues of buildings' relationships with their surrounding amenities are either vague, as in the New City approach, or extremely strict with no space left for innovation, as in the Old City Approach. The two approaches have never considered the macro scale and the relation to the wider urban context and city image. Furthermore, issues in the process related to its complex nature, applying outdated appraisals and the unfair involvement of the communities stand as an additional challenge to the two approaches. It was therefore concluded that neither approach could ensure good design outcomes or preserve the historic contexts of the city.

In response to research question 4.3, Chapter 7 provided some starting points for how the lessons learnt from the UK experience can be applied to the case of Damascus. It highlighted that achieving good development design is relatively a political issue and, hence, the government should intervene in design issues and have a role in guiding local authorities towards implementing good design principles on the ground. It shows that urban design increases the likelihood of having good design in a historic context, and it should therefore be considered to be an essential component and priority of the national strategy for developing the built environment. Such a start should be supported by changes in the local authorities' practice tools. These recommended changes are reflected

in Chapter 8, which described the possible role that the government and local authority of Damascus city can play in achieving a more effective design control approach.

The first recommended key step is setting a clear legislative framework for control at the national and local levels in Damascus. In Syria, the legislation is based on laws that are, in reality, very general strategies and do not address design and planning issues in detail. Based on the experience of the two UK systems, having strategies/policies at the national level instead would be a more sensible decision as they can be an important guidance for the local authorities in their attempts to address urban design principles. In this sense, a comprehensive agenda for urban design must be addressed at this stage which, in turn, can form the basis of systematic urban design criteria at the local level. In addition, these strategies/policies have to be further interpreted into guidance or government advice to make them usable to local authorities. These steps can form a basis for an outline of the urban design route for this level.

At the local level, the case of Damascus can benefit from the following recommendations which are based on the lessons learnt from Edinburgh and York:

- There is a need to have evaluative procedures which are as fair, objective, efficient and transparent as possible; in this regard, a broader agenda for urban design incorporating visual, social, spatial, functional and morphological dimensions should be defined in the anticipated Nizam and guidance. Urban design principles must be hierarchy-structured within the national and local level and are presented in the form of policies and guidelines. These principles must be addressed clearly at the local level as questions that each development needs to answer before being approved, and most importantly should be based on fully understanding the characters of the historic contexts, as well as the city image characters. Local distinctiveness should also be prioritised as a means of preserving a sense of place and design generally as a key component of sustainable development. Other guidance documents (development briefs or a design code if necessary) for historic and special areas must fit their purpose in the sense of guiding the applicant to understand the characteristics features of these areas and their key elements. They should also provide the reviewer with material considerations to be taken into their account during the judgement process.
- There is a need to have an appropriately skilled urban design panel to perform the review task of controls, or the coordination of complex developments to ensure

coherence and quality. This panel is expected to provide professional advice and to make reference to the decision makers when accepting or rejecting applications. They should also provide comments on drafted policies and guidelines at the local level. This panel should be chaired by the council, the head of UDO for instance, to facilitate communication. Furthermore, the governor who ultimately takes decisions in the Executive office must be fully conversant with, and committed to, the local authority's policy and guidance and value professional opinions on the matter.

- It is essential to allocate a budget for the promotion of the public's, reviewers' and decision makers' education and awareness of urban design issues, by making expertise and advice available and organising seminars and other events and activities. This is the first essential step towards enabling the public to have an effective role in the design control process.
- There is a need to establish appeal procedures for those who consider themselves to have been unfairly treated.

9.4 An agenda for future research

Syria is now witnessing a period of war, where some parts of the country are seriously damaged and others are almost entirely destroyed. Damascus city, fortunately, is almost untouched and the physical structures of the historic area inside the wall and the surrounding areas have not been affected physically. However, the society is going through quick-paced social change and the number of city residents is increasing unpredictably. This unplanned increase in city residents, simultaneous to the government's commitment to develop the city in response to these emerging issues, make it more pressing than ever before that the planning system at large and the design control approach, in particular, be reconsidered. This research suggests that the existing approaches that failed, according to the research findings, to solve the urban problems before the war, would not be able to solve them in such a compounded situation.

This research has conducted a thorough and comprehensive review of two UK systems in which a two cities case-study has been selected to examine their urban design approaches. As one of the contributions from this research, the work has conducted a detailed comparison between two UK systems and two cities' approaches, examining how urban design tools have been addressed and utilised for the purpose fitting new forms of

buildings into their historic contexts. This comparison and review has resulted in identifying the points of weaknesses and strengths in the two systems and case-studies. This work has also contributed to the UK urban design approaches applied in practice by suggesting some possible scenarios to developing the approaches of the two cities under examination. This has led to drafting a roadmap for introducing a new urban design approach in Damascus, Syria. This can be considered one of the major contributions of this research. However, some of the raised recommendations still need further research and deeper probing into each of them separately, and to redraw, based on their findings, the whole approach perception. This will allow more detailed comparative and comprehensive studies.

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