“Public art, lighting identity and continuity of high quality materials can play a key role for waymarking and adding to a sense of place when forming or restoring pedestrian and cycleways...”

From Placemaking Issues - Streetscape + Open Spaces: Built Form: Animating of routes has benefits for wayfinding and placemaking.

Text: Placemaking Issues - Streetscape + Open Spaces

This page compiles the Placemaking issues text which appears on the main site, as one downloadable piece. The issues identified have been drawn from project reviews carried out by A+DS, and which we hope can provide positive direction to future projects.

The following text includes points specific to Streetscape + Open Spaces, while Key Placemaking Issues, which refer to all project types, can be downloaded separately.

The intention is that the piece below develops over time, and becomes populated with examples of good practice as these emerge in order to form a live and expanding resource. If you are aware of examples of where things referred to have been done well we would be pleased to hear from you at design.forum@ads.org.uk.

INTRODUCTION

Streetscape and Public realm can be defined as the shared outdoor space between buildings. Design of the Public Realm has been central to the urban design and placemaking agenda of Scottish Government since launch of the policy statement Designing Places in 2001, and is reiterated in Creating Places, the new policy on Architecture.

In urban settings it ranges from town centres, squares, parks, open space, residential streets to urban infrastructure such as car parking, and transport interchanges. In landscape settings it includes, for example, university campuses, country parks, and visitor centres. Despite its essential social, environmental, visual and economic importance, design of the public realm is often neglected and is therefore a common subject of discussion at A+DS Design Forum.

Qualities for public realm design relating to specific building types are described in more detail in the individual typology sections on the website. This section draws specific forms of public realm that are not covered elsewhere, such as town/city centre streets, major public art, parks and campuses.
PROCESS

Build on existing community capacity and initiatives
The involvement of communities and other stakeholders early in the design process can inform and test ideas, it also helps build capacity and a sense of ownership. Active community organisations such as development trusts or local initiatives such as allotment groups can provide the impetus required to catalyse regeneration projects and investment.

Choose a team with a broad skill set to add value to the project
In addition to the know skill sets of architects, specialised practitioners in urban design are trained to tackle complex socio/economic issues, to reconcile built form with urban spaces, to support leadership and to help assemble the right mix of designers and specialist advisers.

In addition, collaboration between landscape architects and public arts coordinators can result in the re-invention of streets as shared places characterized by high quality materials, with extensive well-integrated public art that responds to local culture and landscape

Parks and Squares
Parkland and urban squares have differing functions of needs, and it will be helpful to consider the role of each typology, defining these as part of the design process. The first is primarily a breathing space, the other a forum for activity. The relatively low cost of well-planted parks provide an attractive urban lung and a vital adjunct to new development or regeneration.

By keeping the brief wide, there is the potential to exploit the multitude of opportunities that parks and green spaces present as arts and events venues, for sport track and field sports, for education, to facilitate community enterprise such as allotments and orchards, as well as for strolling, resting, picnicking and playing.

In cities, investment in urban squares and uncluttered legible streetscape has the potential to galvanise the economic development of commercial and cultural centres.

Public Art can have a range of benefits in placemaking
Public artworks can herald change or regeneration, provide links to the past, provide focal points, and create a focus for community engagement.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Development Strategy and Placemaking
To build a sense of local ownership development strategies must be distinctive and unique to the place. This requires an understanding of local history, morphology and an ability to be alert to the needs of local communities.

Popular places such as iconic waterfronts and city square locations, where quality is already high, remain vulnerable, and there can be a temptation to overdevelop these kinds of assets at the risk of losing the qualities which made them attractive in the first place. Their intrinsic qualities need to be properly understood and any built interventions scaled, made permeable, translucent, lightweight or absorbed into the ground plane to avoid undermining the function and appreciation of larger spaces, open vistas or landscapes involved.
Cohesive decision-making can add value to a project
Early engagement between Project Teams and Local Authorities is critical in exploring the best possible solution for a site and city/townscape and in addressing potential improvements to site boundaries and surrounding streets, so that the full potential of existing and new public realm can be realised. Councils can play a critical role in establishing, and giving cohesion to, a joined up vision for a place and in facilitating between various parties. Public spaces should be one of the drivers, as opposed to the happy consequence, of that collaboration.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Build on what is there
The effective integration of new streets and public realm into existing street frameworks can improve the resource efficiency of existing networks. Similarly, the benefits to be gained from existing buildings and streetscape with the potential for re-use should be further capitalised on to minimise resource depletion and the energy cost of renewal.

Good places support active lifestyles
Attractive, liveable and enjoyable public realm is essential for encouraging outdoor activities, active lifestyles and contributing to public health.

Shared streets create active, well used, spaces
Shared-surface streets offer the potential to transform the effectiveness and usability of the public realm as a resource. This form of street layout, which is encouraged within the Designing Streets policy, can make best use of resources to maximise benefits for the widest range of users.

SUDS as an opportunity
Sustainable urban drainage systems often have potential to work with topography, existing natural drainage, and existing man made drainage systems to minimise the environmental impacts of new infrastructure and to respond to and enhance the natural environment in terms of providing habitats and biodiversity. They therefore have the potential to shift what is a practical requirement, ie to control the dispersal of surface water, to form a positive environmental outcome.

CONTEXT + LAYOUT

Thinking outside the red line
Thinking is always required beyond site boundaries to integrate new public realm into the neighbourhood. This must recognise wider patterns of urban form, nodes, local landmarks, views, urban morphology and predicted change.

Analysing the quality and nature of public spaces, parks and linkages
Allow for a thorough analysis of surrounding urban forms, townscape, urban morphology, topography and an investigation of the city, town or landscape context to inform vision with an understanding of the characteristics of the area. This will help make best use of the spatial potential of the site, and root the streetscape and landscape proposals into the place.

Three dimensional framework
The creation of sense of place requires an understanding of the spatial qualities of urban form. Observations of the relative openness and enclosure of urban blocks, of fragmented areas, the opening up of certain views or the visibility of landmarks and the effects of topography will all inform spatial design as it affects both building design and design of the public realm.

Awareness of microclimate around large structures
Large buildings and structures are likely to have a significant impact on microclimate affecting the public realm, eg. sports stadia, supermarkets. Sun and wind studies will inform design decisions and protect users of adjoining streets.

**BUILT FORM**

**Marginal and unsafe land can have untapped potential**
Design of public realm can affect the perception of, safety, and hence the use of a space. Lighting, activity, and creating visual linkages can unlock the potential for a space to become used, an asset rather than a problem.

**Gateways and waiting areas**
Design can create celebrations of arrival or departure, heighten a sense of anticipation, and potentially also exploit the qualities of the place.

**The value of accessibility at street level**
On complex and multi-level sites open space is most successful when accessible and permeable around its perimeter, fully connected to adjoining streets and built up from ground level rather than being elevated or sunken to accommodate other facilities.

**Building in the square**
Buildings can be accommodated in civic squares, and indeed can encourage animation of the space provided the quality and use of the building are compatible with the aspirations for the space, and that there remains lots of space for people and activities.

**Animating of routes has benefits for wayfinding and placemaking**
Public art, lighting identity and continuity of high quality materials can play a key role for waymarking and adding to a sense of place when forming or restoring pedestrian and cycleways through towns and cities. Also important are legibility, attractiveness, safety, good lighting, and continuity across traffic routes, pedestrian priority and the removal of barriers such as railings.

**Sharing Town Centre Streets**
There are now numerous Continental examples of the success of pedestrian-biased street environments and streets which still accommodate cars, buses, delivery vehicles and emergency services, even in trafficked town centre locations. Similar examples are beginning to emerge in the UK, and to challenge the agenda of separation of transport modes.
Public art, lighting identity and continuity of high quality materials can play a key role for waymarking and adding to a sense of place when forming or restoring pedestrian and cycleways."

From Placemaking Issues - Streetscape + Open Spaces: Ball Form: Animating of routes has benefits for wayfinding and remoteness.

The above is extracted from the Architecture and Design Scotland website Àite. Content should be read in the context described within the main website: www.ads.org.uk/designforum/aite

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