DESIGN
IN HISTORIC URBAN QUARTERS

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Abstract

Since the late 1980s, historic urban quarters have emerged as a focus of many conservation and regeneration efforts. Clearly these important areas of cities have an endowed identity and character but have usually lost any economic viability and new activities and sense of place needs to be created. This paper will outline how urban design and planning needs to draw upon the local context to inform new design and thereby achieve a continuity of local character, historic fabric and street pattern. The paper argues that new design in historic urban – quarters should respect context in its efforts to breathe new life into these historic legacies. A long-term and sustainable revitalization that involves physical renewal complemented by new economic activity is also advocated to create a new sense of place that builds upon a quarter's physical, socio-cultural and economic dimensions.

Introduction

Contemporary interest in Historic Urban Quarters reflects concerns about loss of local identity and character, such areas offer local distinctiveness and one-of-a-kind experiences. Urban design and planning emphasises the local context informing design through continuity of local character, historic fabric and street pattern. Robins (1991: 34) notes how: «[…] Modernist planning was associated with universalising and abstract tendencies, whilst postmodernism is about drawing upon the sense of place, about revalidating and revitalising the local and the particular». One dimension of this is the notion of urban quarters.

A key quality of historic urban quarters is their *scarcity*. Although a number of such areas exist, because so many have been lost and therefore do not exist to be revitalised, a sense-of-loss pervades those that remain. Some of this loss, especially in continental Europe, was due to the general destruction of the 1939-1945 War but much also came through post-war reconstruction and comprehensive redevelopment. Where such areas exist, they have a scarcity value and, in recent years at least, have been protected by a variety of conservation controls.

This sense-of-loss (but also, paradoxically, the value of the surviving buildings) is compounded by what is known as the *endowment effect*, whereby individuals asymmetrically weigh losses and gains. Through endowment effect, and over time, the remaining buildings also become more highly valued. Although, due to conservation controls, the buildings cannot be demolished nor the areas cleared comprehensively and redeveloped, their original and existing uses are often in decline or have vanished from the historic townscape. Physical revitalization results in an attractive, well-maintained *physical* public realm. Mere physical revitalization may be unsustainable and short-lived. Such areas often need to retain a viable economic function and, in the longer term, a deeper economic revitalization is required because ultimately it is the private realm – the activities within the buildings – that pays for maintenance of the public realm.

In the absence of large public subsidies directed at keeping the quarter as a public outdoor museum, historic forms must be occupied and used by economic activities providing the sustained investment required to refurbish and maintain the buildings, and indirectly for the spaces between those buildings. Thus, revitalising HUQs involves both the renewal of the physical fabric and active economic use of those buildings and spaces. Rehabilitated buildings merely provide the «stage set» – the physical setting for the public realm; the public realm is also a socio-cultural realm, which must also be revitalised and animated. The quarter's vitality and animation also needs to be «authentic» rather than contrived or prettified – a «genuine» working, functioning quarter that is naturally animated.

Places change over time. Sense-of-place is a HUQ's most important quality. But it is sense-of-place in David Lowenthal's sense – that is, a

continuing narrative involving past, present and future. What is important therefore is how they change and whether the changes develop and respect the sense-of-place or destroy it. Many places have, nonetheless, retained their identities through significant social, cultural and technological change – and, hence, though subject to constant change, some essence of an urban place's identity is retained. Typically there is significant physical continuity – if not necessarily of buildings, then certainly in terms of street patterns and property boundaries. By identifying and recognising patterns of stability within change, elements either not changing or changing over longer periods of time (which, in turn, give a measure of consistency of character and identity) can be differentiated from those changing over shorter periods of time. Although space and particularly patterns of urban space (i.e. the pattern of urban blocks and the public space network) are generally more enduring than individual buildings, some buildings – often the most important or elaborate – have lasted for hundreds of years, helping to further sustain and contribute to sense-of-time within the place. In aggregate, and with each contributing to a greater whole, buildings are a major contributor to place identity.

Building design and urban space design in HUQs is always a contribution to a greater whole – that is, to the sense- and, more generally, the quality-of-place. While most contemporary urban space and, to a lesser extent, building/architectural design are informed by sense-of-place, all design interventions in HUQs must respond to the existing context – even where the response is to substantially ignore it. Furthermore, because of the generally more complex and challenging design contexts typical of HUQs, designers often have a privileged position because developers are compelled to yield «opportunity space» to designers. Moreover, because design becomes a necessary part of their business strategies (i.e. an integral part of their profit-making), design may matter more to developers and investors (Tiesdell and Adams 2004). Intriguingly such design might actually be easier for designers: «Designers are aware that it is easier to plan when there are some commitments than it is when the situation is completely open […]. The fixed characteristics restrict the range of possible solutions and therefore ease the agony of the design search» (Lynch 1972: 38).

This paper discusses the challenges of design and change with regard to the quarter's physical – that is, spatial and visual – character. After discussing physical character and the role of design controls, it examines design issues concerned first with rehabilitation and second with integrating new developments.

1. Visual & spatial character

A HUQ's physical character can be considered to be the aggregate of individual building characters plus that of the spaces between those buildings – the whole, however, is always greater than the sum of the parts. In his book *Townscape* (1961), Gordon Cullen observed how one building standing alone in the countryside was experienced as a work of architecture, but several brought together made an «art other than architecture» possible – an «art of relationship». Consideration of the characters of individual buildings is a useful approach to discussing the integration of new development into HUQs.

The desired qualities in all developments are:
- *Respect* for the quarter's physical character.
- *Character* – each act of development should bring something of its own, thereby, contributing new character.
- Intrinsic design *quality* – buildings built now will represent the current zeitgeist in the future and arguably ought to be worthy of protection by future generations.

While historic sense-of-place is an important attribute, overall quality-of-place (which includes current and future sense-of-place) matters most (*Tab. 1*).

Visual character is distinct from spatial character. The colour, texture, and detailing of the surfaces defining urban space contribute to visual character. The vertical and horizontal rhythms, arrays and patterns of solid and void, masonry and glazing on building elevations contribute more to visual character than particular buildings. In urban contexts, buildings are seen *en mass* as ensembles – as groups rather than individual buildings. Furthermore their facades are usually viewed in

oblique perspective. A useful concept in identifying common themes is that of «rhyme». Rhyme involves (some) similarity in elements and presupposes the simultaneous existence of both complexity (i.e. a mass of visual detail and information) and patterns. Over time, as the mind organises and makes sense of the information, the patterns become more dominant, but not in an obvious way.

Tab. 1
Elements of spatial character.

SPACE SYSTEM	Either buildings as objects-in-space (i.e. figural buildings / «open» space) or buildings-defining-space (i.e. figural spaces / contained spaces) or hybrid.
STREET PATTERN - URBAN GRAIN	Organic/deformed grid or regular (orthogonal) grid, including combinations & meetings of different grids.
VISTA & VIEWS	Key view corridors.
SITING	Siting concerns how a building sits on its site and how it relates to other buildings and to the street or other urban spaces. Respect for existing street patterns and block/plots sizes helps harmonious integration – plot amalgamation, for example, alters the scale of city buildings and breaks down the traditional grain of urban areas. Respect for the established building line and street frontage is also important in ensuring continuity and definition of external space.
HEIGHT & MASSING	Massing is the three-dimensional disposition of the building volume. The impact of new development needs to be considered from various viewing points and angles.
PROMINENCE OF SITE	Wells-Thorpe (1998: 113) suggests that, when a more contextualist approach is appropriate, the following qualities of the existing surroundings should be considered: · Extent · Worth (i.e. their quality) · Consistency (i.e. their homogeneity) · Uniqueness (i.e. their rarity) · Proximity (i.e. if seen in the same sweep of the eye).
SPATIAL CONTRASTS	Areas of different spatial character – single spatial character throughout the area or distinct areas with differing spatial characters.

Spatial and visual characters come together in the design of the spaces between buildings and the three-dimensional objects – street furniture and the like – within those spaces. High quality, well-maintained spaces between buildings produce positive externalities, enhancing the economic value of the surrounding buildings. As well as the vertical

walls to an urban space, a key component of physical character is the design of the floorscape. In many HUQs, there have been schemes both to enhance visual quality and to improve pedestrian comfort, such as the widening of pavements, street closures, and traffic calming. Such schemes are generally best when the design demonstrates awareness of and sensitivity to how people actually use urban public spaces (*Tab. 2*).

Tab. 2
Elements of visual character.

SCALE	Scale is different from size. Size is the literal dimensions of an object; scale is the perception of that object relative to other objects around it.
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE, MOTIFS & THEMES	Some quarters are clearly unified through repetition of a particular architectural 'style'; others exhibit great variety but are unified by common underlying design patterns or motifs.
VISUAL INTENSITY OF DETAIL	Detail holds the eye. Façades can be appreciated in terms of visual «richness» and «elegance». Richness relates to the visual interest and complexity that holds the eye. Elegance relates to the proportions that the eye finds pleasing and harmonious.
PROMINENCE/EXPRESSION	Position in townscape may suggest opportunities/rationales for greater elaboration of visual detail. Landmark buildings
PROPORTION	Proportion is the relation between the different parts of a building and/or between any one part and the whole. New buildings in established contexts may be more harmoniously integrated when their proportions compliment those of existing buildings.
VERTICAL ORGANIZATION / RHYTHM	Traditional urban facades are often organized into three elements (i.e. «base», «middle» & «top»). Ground floor is often more richly decorated; the middle is often more visually restrained, while the top and skyline are again more visually complex.
HORIZONTAL ORGANIZATION/RHYTHM	Rhythm is the arrangement and size of the constituent elements of a building's facade (i.e. its windows or bays), which are normally repeated. Rhythm may come from the proportion of wall to window (i.e. solid-to-void) in a façade & the expression of historic plot divisions or structure (e.g. structural bays) in the building facade.
VERTICAL/HORIZONTAL EMPHASIS	While most facades have both vertical & horizontal elements, one or the other tends to dominate.
MATERIALS	Providing a building with colour and texture, materials also help establish local distinctiveness. A consistent use of local building materials can give a quarter a strong sense of visual unity. Their use in new development helps it to integrate visually.

Valid questions are whether the quarter's spatial and visual character, first, is identifiable and, second, has coherence and/or homogeneity. Some quarters possess significant architectural homogeneity and coherence, often deriving from a concentrated development period and the buildings' functional requirements combined with either consistent use of local building materials – e.g. in the Lace Market (*Fig. 1*) or Denver's LoDo (*Fig. 2*) – or from extensive use of a particular constructional method (e.g. cast iron-fronted buildings in New York's SoHo). Although distinctive in other ways, some quarters do not have a consistent visual character – often because they have developed over a longer period of time with buildings from many historical periods in existence (e.g. Glasgow's Merchant City). Alternatively their original coherence may have been lost or fatally weakened through insensitive incremental development The strength of the quarter's existing visual character may influence the design response.

Fig. 1
Lace Market, Nottingham.

Fig. 2
LoDo, Denver.

A HUQ's physical character can be considered at two interrelated levels – in terms of its *spatial character* (i.e. the shape, form and enclosure of external space) and in terms of its *visual character* (i.e. the surfaces defining and enclosing the external urban space). Key elements of spatial and visual character are presented in *Tables 1* and *2*. These are both criteria for appraisal and prompts for design. Appraisals should also distinguish between what is fundamental to the sense-of-place and should not change and what is less important and can change.

Limitations of traditional construction methods and materials often resulted in homogeneity of style and size, but a major change since the quarters were substantially constructed has been further development in construction and material technology. Whether it is possible to maintain the character of a historic landscape without the distinctive culture and economic conditions that created it in the first place is highly debatable, design control policies could impose some requirements (e.g. a requirement to use particular building materials on facades) and/or require new developments to respond to or enhance local distinctiveness. Conversely seeking to retain local distinctiveness through public prescrip-tion may inevitably result in a superficial local distinctiveness and/or further dilution of the sense-of-place.

2. Design controls

Managing change usually requires some form of control. The degree and extent of those controls, however, is almost always a matter of judgment. Protecting, maintaining, repairing, restoring and rehabilitating historic buildings and areas all involve judgments and negotiation between competing claims. As Sir Hugh Casson (1984: ix) wrote: «The essence of sound conservation is judgment». Most conservation controls also restrict the amount and nature of change to buildings. While the degree of permitted change for any particular building varies, it is usually more restricted for «listed» or «landmark» buildings (*Tab. 3*).

By identifying what is preferred (and, usually by omission, what is not), design guides and codes inexorably narrow down the range

of options and design possibilities. As a consequence, such guidance frequently keeps out the inspired as well as the mediocre. The effect may be comparable with Muzak, where the original music is «[…] re-arranged, re-recorded and electronically processed so that all the major variations in tonal range, in noise level and in rhythm are compressed into a narrow band» (Relph 1987).

Tab. 3
US Secretary of Interior's standards for historic preservation.

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the building structure, or site and its environment, or use a property for its originally intended purpose.

2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.

3. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognised as products of their own time. Alterations which have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.

4. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognised and respected.

5. Distinctive stylistic features or example of skilled craftsmanship which characterise a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.

6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, colour, texture and other visual qualities. Replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplication of features substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.

7. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.

8. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, any product.

9. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, colour, material, and character of the property, neighbourhood or environment.

10. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

As Porteous (1996: 154) notes, by deleting the extremes and the idiosyncrasies, melodies end up sounding the same (*Figg. 3* and *4*).

Figg. 3-4
Lace Market, Nottingham.

3. Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation retains both the historic building stock and the historic urban space. Rehabilitation includes not only dramatic cases of change requiring a certain amount of internal and external alteration, but also bringing the building into line with the expectations of contemporary users in terms of, for example, safety and comfort standards. As Lynch (1972: 32) notes, even this poses questions of the building's aesthetic integrity: «To what degree does contemporary utility, however discreetly provided, rupture the sense of historical integrity?». Fitch (1990: 46-47) identifies various types of change to historic buildings – preservation;

restoration; refurbishment; reconstitution; conversion; reconstruction; replication; facadism; and demolition & redevelopment. Rehabilitation is used here to include *refurbishment* and *conversion*.

There are often continuing debates about rehabilitation's fidelity with a building's historic character. The critical dilemma is encapsulated at the level of minor repairs – should the repair blend in and effectively be invisible (i.e. typically a visual management approach) or should the new work be uncompromisingly new so that what is old and what is new is easily discerned and preferably reversible. As most old buildings have already seen much change, the building's supposed purity and authenticity may already have been compromised.
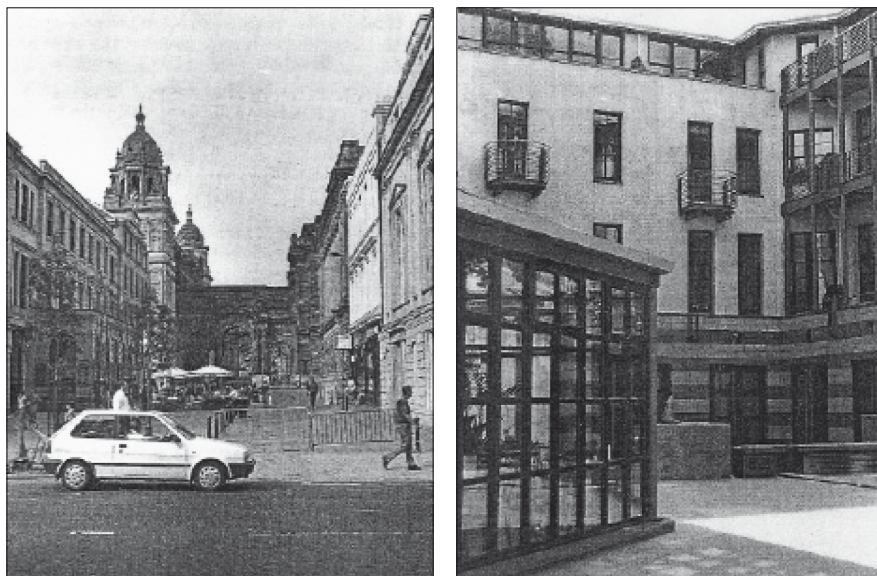
Rehabilitation can be undertaken with different degrees of fidelity to the original building. Appleyard (1979: 26) discusses «surface» and «deep» rehabilitation, preferring deep or «gut» rehabilitation that includes both external and internal rehabilitation – a purist concern for the aesthetic and architectural integrity of the entire building.

By retaining the building's original function, *deep rehabilitation* is also *refurbishment*. While deep rehabilitation may be desirable, maintaining both a quarter's physical and functional character *and* the original *integrity* of its architecture, it may not be possible for a variety of reasons, including the existing use not being sufficiently profitable to yield the return enabling comprehensive refurbishment.

Surface rehabilitation is primarily concerned with the façade and its contribution to an area's townscape and is akin to *conversion* or adaptive re-use, as well as refurbishment. It is a «townscape» or visual management rehabilitation – where only the building's external shell is refurbished. While conversion generally involves greater change than refurbishment, capacity-for-change is limited by a number of factors – the existing building's dimensions; its visual character; the constraints imposed by special historic building controls on permissible change; the planning policy context; the environmental consequences of the change of use, particularly in terms of traffic generation and management; the market for such changes (i.e. the reaction of possible investors and users to the change of use); etc. – and is often examined through detailed feasibility studies. Accommodating new or different land uses can have a range of impacts and there will inexorably be conflicts and

compromises with regard to degree of change and respect for the building's original character (*Figg. 5* and *6*).

Debates about facadism – the most extreme example of change to a historic building and which arguably goes beyond rehabilitation and creates a wholly new building behind a retained façade – highlight the differences between surface and deep rehabilitation.

Figg. 5-6
Interior and exterior of the Italian House, Merchant City, Glasgow.

3.1. *Restoration*

Rehabilitation frequently involves an element of restoration. Restoration might also be an objective in its own right, but also presents a fresh set of dilemmas. A distinction might be drawn between a conscious, scholarly and knowing restoration and those that at unconscious and unknowing. In the absence of meticulous and very detailed research, restoration involves superstition and guesswork about how

the building was and, hence, an element of idealisation. Restoration also involves choosing which «past» should be restored (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990: 24). The choices made in rehabilitating and restoring Boston's Quincy Market, which resulted in all accretions were stripped away to return the buildings (largely) to their original design. The end results, as Barnett (1982: 50) concluded, was «[...] a successful adaptive re-use, [but] ... not necessarily a happy example of historic preservation». Similar criticism has been made of the Covent Garden market buildings.

These issues can be illustrated through examples of rehabilitation in Glasgow's *Merchant City* (*Fig. 7*) and London's Shad Thames. In *Shad Thames*, the first warehouse to be converted to residential use – *New Concordia Wharf* – established «[...] a standard of taste and technical excellence for later architects to follow» (Edwards 1992: 96).
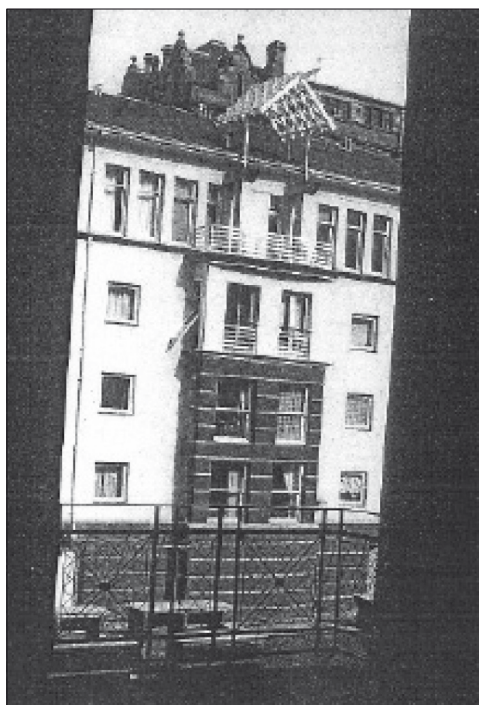

Fig. 7
Merchant City, Glasgow.

In appearance, the building remains a typical Victorian warehouse. Although conserving a historic building's façade is paramount, retaining the original roofscape is also important – particularly the part seen from the public realm. To insert extra space and/or create roof terraces, developers often want to add roof top extension and/or cut back the existing roof profile. Roof top extensions adding extra floors usually adversely alter a façade's proportions and balance and together with the associated paraphernalia of railings and temporary sun shades and umbrellas, such changes inevitably reveal the residential function and, unless handled sensitively, harm visual character.

Completed in 1873, when it was the largest wharf on the Thames and converted in the mid-1980s into residential apartments, the main *Butlers Wharf* building is an example of facadism (*Fig. 8*). To permit an additional rooftop storey and basement car parking, a concrete frame was inserted within the existing brick shell, with the front and rear walls fronting onto public spaces being carefully restored. The addition of balconies where loading doors previously existed communicates the residential function without detracting from the building's monumentality. Edwards (1992: 95), however, considered the results «oversanitised»: «Butler's Wharf is not so much the preservation of a group of buildings as their restoration to a rather idealized and convenient version of the original».

*Fig. 8
Butlers Wharf,
Shad Thames,
London.*

4. NEW DEVELOPMENT

While rehabilitating existing fabric may be preferred, new development is often inevitable. It usually involves infill development of gap sites, but may also involve the redevelopment of whole street blocks or even larger areas. New development should respect, complement and enhance the quarter's spatial and visual character – the intention being harmonious relation with the existing context. Whether or not a building harmonises with its context, however, is ultimately a matter of individual judgement. As noted previously, the regulatory regime should give opportunity for distinguished urban space design and building/architectural design.

4.1. *Respecting spatial character*

The space systems of the quarters featured here tend to be based on traditional outward-facing urban blocks and contained, well-defined and conceivable urban spaces. As retaining existing buildings keep the historic urban space and form intact, new developments should (following a morphological approach) retain the overall massing, form and «footprint» of buildings previously occupying the site. This need not be a slavish adherence, merely that the spirit/identity of the spatial character is respected. In terms of achieving harmonious relation with the existing context, *siting* and *massing* may be more important than any particular architectural language – that is, respecting spatial character is often more important than respecting visual character (*Figg. 9* and *10*). In terms of the appropriate massing, a key issue is vertical height in redevelopment – whether to retain the height of the demolished building or respond to the remaining buildings» height. Contemporary buildings will often be taller than historic buildings as there are often economies gained from building taller buildings.

Most design guides for HUQs advocate an *urban healing* (that is, a morphological approach based on working within the grain of the place) approach, respecting street pattern and street frontages to enhance street containment and enclosure. This approach generally

limits scope and opportunity for the design of buildings as sculptures or objects-in-space without concurrent and positive design of that space. The aesthetic effect of object-buildings works through contrast with the existing fabric and/or by using the existing fabric as a foil (i.e. the object needs a ground to stand out against). In street environments, it is often not possible to stand sufficiently far enough back to appreciate object-buildings. Locations where highly sculptural or landmark buildings might be appropriate are at significant points for the townscape's legibility, such as street corners or the termination of a particular view or vista, where the building's sculptural form can be appreciated.

*Fig. 9
LoDo,
Denver.*

*Fig. 10
Design
Museum,
Shad Thames.*

4.2. *Respecting visual character*

New development in HUQs is intrinsically «street» or «urban» architecture, which, for the purpose of this discussion, can be considered to encompass buildings responding and contributing positively to the public realm's spatial definition. The design task becomes primarily (but not exclusively) one of elevation or façade design – more precisely, it is the design of buildings that can both front and define urban spaces. Successful facade design is a contemporary design problem. While variety is of particular value in the creation of visually interesting street scenes, certain principles apply enabling new buildings to better harmonise and integrate with the existing context. In an attempt to understand what made a «good building», the Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC) identified six criteria – the sixth of which was *integration*. It then identified six criteria for integrating new buildings into existing contexts – siting; massing; scale; proportion; rhythm; and materials (Cantacuzino 1994: 76-79). An extended version of these criteria can be used as a frame (i.e. a set of prompts) for analysing visual and spatial character (i.e. for character appraisal) and/or as a guide for design review. As strict adherence to «the rules» often leads to mediocrity, generally desirable principles should not become dogmatic imperatives. The RFAC, for example, was careful to stress a building could embody every criterion without being a «good» building.

5. Integrating new development

Integration is an often controversial area of urban architectural design. Integration – or, as it is sometimes disparagingly (and incorrectly) called, «fitting-in» – does not require slavish adherence to a certain architectural style. Setting too much store by style limits opportunities for innovation and excitement. Other criteria might often be more important. Many successful groups of buildings have dramatically different materials and styles – and, indeed, the visual experience of HUQs is enriched by the myriad relations between different buildings. The chief quality

sought in the design of new developments in HUQs is *harmony* – the creation of «[…] a visually integrated – not necessarily – homogeneous townscape». (Brolin 1980: 16). Reflecting different design philosophies, there are three basic approaches. At one extreme, *matching* involves imitating or copying local character. At the other extreme, *juxtaposition* or *contrast* involves few apparent concessions to local character. Between these lies *interpretation* involving interpreting and developing of local character. The approaches may be distinct with regard to spatial and visual character – it is possible, for example, for development to juxtapose with visual character but to match spatial character (*Figg. 11-19*).

Figg. 11-12
Lace Market, Nottingham.

*Fig. 13
Prague.*

*Figg. 14-15
Shad Thames, London.*

Figg. 16-18
Shad Thames, London.

Fig. 19
LoDo, Denver.

6. Matching, juxtaposition or interpretation?

The three approaches exist along a continuum with matching and juxtaposition at each pole and interpretation somewhere in the middle. As stated at the outset, the three desirable qualities in all new development are *respect* for the quarter's spatial and visual character; new *character*; and intrinsic design *quality*. In principle all approaches – matching, interpretation and juxtaposition – have legitimacy. Two particular combinations, however, are problematic – matching visual character (i.e. *visual matching*) and juxtaposing with spatial character (i.e. *spatial juxtaposition*).

Straightforward matching of visual character results in dilution and weakening of the qualities it seeks to retain and often fails because it does not add sufficient new character. Here we encounter the problem of what is usually termed *kitsch*. Usually a pejorative and derogatory term, kitsch is used to categorize art considered an inferior copy of an existing style or, more loosely, any art considered pretentious or in bad taste. Kitsch is typically contrasted with «real» or «genuine» art. It is said, for example, to be a gesture imitative of the superficial appearances of art, relying on merely repeating convention and formula and lacking the sense of creativity and originality displayed in genuine art.

Postmodernism has served to further blur the borders between kitsch and (high) art. Though usually used to criticize, postmodernism permitted kitsch to also be used as a compliment (e.g. kitschy artwork might be enjoyed for its «retro» value or unintentional, ironic humour or garishness). Despite difficulties in defining its boundaries with art, the term kitsch remains a label for anything felt in bad taste.

Although historic areas need historical continuity, Freeman (1975: 115) argues that to replicate the past «[…] automatically eliminates the possibility of adding value to a project or area through sensitive and high quality new design […]. If it is poorly executed, the reproduction will be a sham that undermines the setting of nearby structures». Matching can also become a superficial and unchallenging «pastiche». Such designs «[…] blur the line between real and fabricated history, distorting the context in which what is genuine can be appreciated and understood» (Hareven and Langenbach 1981: 121). Jameson (from

Hewison 1987: 134), for example, condemns pastiche as «[…] speech in a dead language», while Hewison (1987: 134) suggest the «emotional equivalent» of pastiche is nostalgia, which «[…] deliberately falsifies authentic memory into an enhanced version of itself. It is a strangely powerless emotion, a sweet sadness conditioned by the knowledge that the object of recall cannot – indeed, must not – be recovered».

Achieving its effect by contrast with a relatively homogeneous context, extreme contextual spatial juxtaposition should only be an occasional device. While there can be vibrant and entirely successful contrast, the approach is eminently capable of producing disastrous results. New developments need a context with which to juxtapose. Without sufficient regard for the *whole*, such juxtaposition creates context-destroying monuments. Too much spatial diversity destroys spatial coherence, continuity and enclosure. As discussed previously, there is an important part/whole relation, in which the balance between the parts and the whole is critical to the HUQ's sense-of-place. Sense-of-place is a consequence of the whole, of the totality rather than any single part.

7. Conclusion

This paper has not sought to dictate design approaches in HUQs. Instead, in common with Brolin (1980: 17), it has sought to suggest «[…] a way of looking at the whole of the architectural context which will encourage architects, planners and entrepreneurs to consider thoughtfully the visual effects of additions to their surroundings». Whatever the design guidance and the process of design, the final effect requires individual judgement as to whether or not it is harmonious with its context. There is no mystic process by which following a due process inexorably creates a harmonious effect. Kolb (1990: 179) expresses the dilemma: «We care how what we build relates to what is around, but we cannot rely on some secret essence or unified spirit of the locality». The quality valued in design and development in historic urban contexts is respect for that context. It is, however, necessary to see through the formal appearance

and consider the experience of the place – places have physical (spatial and visual), socio-cultural and economic dimensions. The key design question – «What kind of place has been created?».

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Riassunto

Dalla fine degli anni ottanta i quartieri storici urbani sono emersi come elemento di attenzione per i numerosi sforzi di conservazione e rigenerazione. Chiaramente queste importanti aree delle città hanno una notevole identità e carattere ma hanno generalmente perduto ogni vitalità economica e quindi è necessario creare nuove attività ed un nuovo senso del luogo. Questo saggio sottolinea come il disegno e la pianificazione urbana necessitano di far riferimento al contesto locale per informare nuovi progetti e quindi ottenere una continuità con il carattere locale, gli edifici storici e il modello viario. Il saggio argomenta che un nuovo disegno nei quartieri storici urbani dovrebbe rispettare il contesto nel suo tentativo di soffiare nuova vita in queste eredità storiche. Una rivitalizzazione che voglia essere sostenibile e durare lungo tempo, che presupponga un rinnovamento fisico integrato da nuove attività economiche è anche sostenuta per creare un nuovo senso del luogo che si basi sulle dimensioni fisiche, socio-culturali ed economiche della struttura urbana.