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## Mastering the City: Formal and Informal planning tools

### 1. Introduction

The current town planning system in many European countries is plan-oriented: it is aim oriented, with 'like to achieve' ideal development schemes determined in advance; and with prescribed land uses, design standards and regulations. Such plan oriented systems are time consuming to administer in practice and therefore increasingly unresponsive to development needs related to rapid market changes especially in the CEE countries – countries in transition. Therefore, on-going changes of the planning system in these countries are predominantly geared to increasing the flexibility of local plans, and to allow more administrative discretion at a local level in the development control process.

The paper briefly discusses features of the current town planning systems in Europe and in Slovenia, and on-going changes relating to the new approaches to town planning, focussing on the following specific aspects:

1. The need for an urban design strategy and informal planning documentation support, such as design briefs and guides, in order to establish and maintain continuity from the strategic level, down to the site specific level of planning and to help both architects and local planning control officers to reach better design standards in development proposals;
2. 'Planning Gain' – the potential of the negotiation process (for planning permission) with local planning officers to focus on urban design qualities and economic viability, both of the scheme, and in relation to satisfying relevant local needs;
3. Action Planning, Planning for Real – the involvement of the public in the early stages of preparation of statutory development plans, through the use of some of the 'community planning' techniques such as Urban Design workshops.

### 2. Features of current planning systems in European countries

Town planning systems throughout Europe can be identified as being predominately 'plan' or 'project' oriented.

The characteristics of the Slovenian planning system are similar to those of other plan-oriented systems used in many European countries: it is aim oriented, with 'like to achieve' ideal development schemes determined in advance; and with prescribed land uses, design standards and regulations.

This system relies on an extensive hierarchy of planning documents covering the long-term and medium term spatial plans down to local, urban design plans. Any potential development site must be covered by at least 3-4 adopted planning documents, which should be harmonised, before a

planning permission can be obtained. There is no place for discretion, but the system is easy to administer, inflexible but legally safe (if the developer follows the prescribed development layout, he will automatically gain a planning permission). Such plan oriented systems are also time consuming (e.g. the adoption of minor changes to the local plan can take 1-2 years!) and therefore increasingly unresponsive to development needs related to rapid market changes.

Thus these rapid political and economic changes demand corresponding changes in the town planning system, and especially in the development control process. Changes in the system need to be predominantly geared to increasing the flexibility of local plans, and to allow more administrative discretion in the development control process at a local level. Methods should be developed to set up and facilitate better community involvement in the decision making process, especially for development within predominantly built up areas (brown-field sites), which in turn supports the expressed aims of sustainable development (e.g. 60% of future development should be carried out within the existing urbanised areas).

In this respect some lessons should be learnt from town planning practices in Britain and the USA, which have developed an extensive use of informal planning tools to make their project oriented systems more effective and responsive to current development needs.

### 3. Design issues and the implementation of statutory plans: the case of Birmingham

Statutory plans tend to deal with design issues in general terms, and to advance broad aspirations about quality and area-wide guidance about townscape relationships. Most of these general policies can form a useful basis for supplementary design guidelines or detailed examination of specific proposals in their context.

Many local authorities in England support the preparation of design guidance, and it is believed that, over time, design guidance can definitely help in raising standards in an area (DoE survey, 1990; Birmingham Polytechnic survey, 1992). However, to be effective, design advice requires a sound policy framework. In the first instance, this requires strong design policies stated in Local Plans backed up with an explicit design brief to deal with issues on a site-specific basis. But, above all, there is a need for the general improvement of design guides in their presentation, content and style, in terms of their role, their target audiences and relationship with other supplementary guidance.

In Birmingham, it has been recognised that the economic strength and vitality of the post-industrial city depends mainly on the quality of the environment, its accessibility and safety; and on the image of the city and its culture.

In the late 1980s Birmingham was experiencing a boom in its City Centre economy and that was seen as an opportunity to "improve" the City Centre. The danger of repeating the mistakes of recent history, the failures of the last major boom of the 1960s, which had given Birmingham its inflexible, large scale, concrete developments, led to the "Bir-

mingham Good Design Initiative", events organised by the City Council, to encourage higher design standards in the future redevelopment of the City.

This Good Design Initiative has included: international symposiums (The Highbury Initiative 1988, 1989), an international design competition (1989) and consultation work with professionals, both locally and from abroad. The initiative has influenced:

1. the preparation and contents of planning documentation for the City Centre: the City Centre Design Strategy (stages 1 and 2), which can be seen as having been a direct result of this initiative;
2. the administration, through the establishment within the Department of Planning and Architecture, of an Urban Design Division;
3. the process of implementation and management, by introducing the City Centre Forum consultation body, which consists of Councillors, academics, architects, developers, artists; Local Improvement Associations (eg. the Jewellery Quarters Association); a Financial Services Association, and the citizen's pressure group "Birmingham for People".

### 3.1 The Highbury Initiatives

The main issues under consideration were:

- *A vision for the future centre of Birmingham*  
It was strongly emphasised that, if Birmingham was to become an international City, the importance of its image and identity, would be essential for such a City when compared on an international stage, in competition for investment (public and private), and competition for skilled people, activities, culture and tourism.
- *The key opportunities for making Birmingham into a truly successful city*  
These opportunities were examined in term of both sectors and quarters. The surveys concluded that there was sufficient potential demand to support a further expansion of the main sectors that occupy Birmingham City Centre, such as business, shopping, leisure and culture, and that housing must be added as a vital part of mixed use development, especially alongside the extensive canal network. Highbury One identified a number of quarters with distinct roles within the City Centre, which needed to be enhanced through programmes to improve their image, amenity and access: Highbury Two highlighted a series of specific opportunities in each of the main quarters: Financial, Central Shopping Area, Convention Centre Area, Entertainment Area and Jewellery Quarter.
- *The priorities for action to convince people that the city will make the transition*  
In general, the main Issues were identified as:
  - a) The preparation of a City Centre Strategy, an articulated vision, which should not only be applied to the whole range of published information, but should also encourage the people of Birmingham to participate in the higher standards of redevelopment required of an international city;
  - b) "Breaking the noose" of the Inner Ring Road was seen as a top priority, to allow the Centre to expand its ac-

tivities outward. This has recently been achieved in Paradise Circus (the large pedestrian bridge link through the library building, from the heart of the City, connecting out to the new Convention Centre);

- c) Urban design standards should be improved to create a distinctive sense of place;
- d) The introduction of urban management such as: maintenance of public spaces, increased security, and promotion of events crucial for the City Centre to become a welcoming place;
- e) An increase in the efficiency of public transport to integrate large buses, trams and mini buses in order that the amount of traffic in the City Centre could be reduced.

- *The organisational implications of turning these ideas into results*

Making changes on the scale required depends on management and people as well as money and power. There was an appreciation of the importance of promoting and coordinating changes, through:

- a) The establishment of "Support groups", through Local Improvement Associations.

The growing interest among a number of business leaders in contributing to the revitalisation of the City Centre and in improvements to "their" quarter should help to engage the interest and commitment of the private sector, attract investment, ensure that major new proposals are responsive to local initiatives, and help involve other interest groups including residents and cultural organisations;

- b) Creation of a (joint) City Centre Forum

An action committee should be set up as a formal mechanism for communicating with major interests in the future redevelopment of the City Centre, to provide new policies or briefs for major projects, respond to local concerns and interests, and to attract and support public and private sector partnerships. An alternative suggestion was to set up a joint venture company between the City Council and the private sector for promoting the City and organising events;

- c) Introduction of City Centre Management: More effective management within the City Centre would implement changes sensitively, help coordinate public sector inputs and provide links with the private sector, animate public spaces with events, exhibitions etc, and simulate the arts and entertainment;

- d) the Commission of Planning Briefs for Major Sites  
Planning Briefs as a "positive planning approach", are an important first step to identifying development sites, by indicating the kinds of uses, scale, massing and public facilities preferred; by encouraging good design and the employment of better architects at an early stage; by providing an early opportunity for constructive discussion of schemes demonstrating Birmingham's commitment to quality, and strengthening the Planning Committee's role in design issues.

### 3.2 The planning documents

The planning documents currently operative in Birmingham consist of:

**Statutory:** the West Midlands Structure Plan (...); the Birmingham Central Area District Plan (1980); the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan (1991);

**Non-statutory:** Planning Briefs (for particular sites); General development control policy documents (standards for all the City); the City Centre strategy (1987 – links economic prosperity with environmental quality); and the City Centre Design Strategy – stage 1 (stage 2 / draft in consultation).

The City Centre Design Strategy presents a robust, coherent, apolitical vision of how the physical environment of Birmingham's Central Area can be gradually improved over the next 30 years, as opportunities for change occur. It sets out a series of guidelines against which new development can be assessed, to make the centre of Birmingham a more "user-friendly" place, retaining good accessibility and the potential to increase prosperity.

Aspects covered by the City Centre Design Strategy:

- *Helping people find their way around the city by day and by night*

The Design Strategy recommends reinforcing the legibility of the City, expressed as a major problem, by improving the design of the Middle Ring Road gateways, Rail and Bus Stations, and emphasising the activity nodes and pedestrian links/routes.

- *Exploiting the city's interesting topography*

The Design Strategy suggests that the topography should be experienced visually and physically and that it should be reinforced by the use of recommended buildings heights; existing and potential views should be protected and enhanced by putting tall, key landmark buildings in the right places, making sure they are designed with proper tops and bases.

- *Redefining the street and enhancing open public space*

The Strategy also tries to find ways of restoring a traditional urban tissue by recreating proper street frontages, uses and design; and making more of the canals and their edges.

- *Reinforcing the area of character*

The Strategy states the need to identify areas of distinctive character within the City, their townscape opportunities and design references.

The Strategy identifies conspicuous characteristics of each of the distinctive areas – Quarters which should generally be taken into consideration in devising and agreeing redevelopment proposals, with an aim to emphasising the "uniqueness" of each area.

The Strategy now provides the City Council with a set of principles to be applied and a checklist of questions to be asked, of every development proposal. The use of these procedures should be helpful as a systematic approach in testing how each particular proposal relates to the guidance regarding the character sought in the respective Quarter in which it is to be located. It is planned that the Strategy is to be supported by a series of area-based Urban Design Frameworks, which in turn would set out more detailed design guidance for a number of opportunity sites.

#### 4. Design issues and "negotiated urban form": the case of Broadgate, London

Broadgate has been selected as one of the best example of "negotiated urban form" in the context of the City of London (Williamson, 1990; RIBA Journal, vol.99, No.1, 1992). It is a large scale redevelopment of part of the City (former railway

land), which can be considered as an urban design entity with its own patterns of open space and built form. Broadgate is a product of a complex planning "game" where different actors have participated to realise their often opposing interests, and it can be seen also as an example of how the current planning process controls the quality of the urban fabric. It has gained awards as "the successful creation of urban space combined with a high quality of design and refinement of detail" (RIBA Journal, Vol.99, No.1, 1992). Broadgate lies in the north eastern part of the City; partly in the City and partly in the London Borough of Hackney.

The principle objectives clearly stated by Hackney local authority during the negotiation process were:

1. good pedestrian permeability; opening up the site to South Shoreditch and Islington and the creation of a diagonal pedestrian route from Liverpool Street Station;
2. large quantity of usable public open space; retention of Whitecross Place and Finsbury Avenue as public rights of way;
3. provision of shopping and catering within the development;
4. continuity in the massing of the built fabric.

These objectives have been successfully realised. The spatial structure of Broadgate and Finsbury Avenue are easily permeable for pedestrians and have good internal legibility; the sequence of spaces is clear and easily grasped.

The provision of public open space is successfully achieved through Broadgate Circle and Finsbury Avenue Square. Broadgate Circle is contained by three office buildings of quite different plans, but apparently similar in their definition of the square. The central space contains a circular "arena" building incorporating shops and cafes and this place acts as a focal venue for a regular programme of public events with exhibitions, open-air theatre and concerts in summer and ice skating in winter. Broadgate Circle's activities are focussed in the centre of the space defined within the vertically irregular concrete circle covered with climbing and hanging plants, while all the "passing trade" entrances to the buildings and other external open spaces, lies at the perimeter. In contrast, Finsbury Avenue Square is less "active", but carefully designed with a greater variety of elevational treatment, a water feature and semi-mature trees. There is also the provision of some public projects on the north-west corner of this square such as a pub, restaurant, travel agent, etc. In the case of both Broadgate and Finsbury Avenue the provision of shopping and catering should be seen as a result of Hackney's insistence on mixed-uses. However, the failure to provide any residential accommodation within the complex, which was not the agenda of either local authority, limits "vitality" largely to daytime hours.

Broadgate, phases 1 – 4, and Finsbury Avenue is a permeable, legible, dense and vital (mainly by day) development, a rare example of successful modern urban space in City of London. It is the result of extensive market research into office requirements in terms of space, amenities, maintenance etc. The developer's obvious dedication to quality in terms of architecture, materials and maintenance can be seen largely as a hedge against the risks and vagaries of the property market, and as a result of their continuing involvement in the management of the development (and their freeholdings). However, the developers' view of quality is not always the same as that of the planner/urban designer or architect.

In the case of Broadgate, it is difficult to define who has the greatest influence in the production of this successful urban space or who's role was the most important in the planning/negotiation process. It seems that the answer lies in successful cooperation between an intelligent developer, good architectural practice, and the planners, who had clearly stated their objective principles early in the planning/development process, such as: good pedestrian permeability, a large quantity of open space, the provision of retail/catering, and more sensitive massing. Although Arup Associates (Malcomson, 1898) claim that these objectives had also been their priorities, it is extremely doubtful whether they would have been achieved without the support of the planners. However, despite the constraints of planners and developers, urban designers still had an important role to play in the disposition of plot ratios over the site and thus in shaping the mass and spaces of the development (Marmot, 1989) although the manner in which these objectives were realised still lay largely with the architects.

## 5. Design issues and development control: The case of Rog, Ljubljana

The recent rapid political and economic changes in many eastern European countries, as stated before, demand corresponding changes in the town planning system, and especially in the development control and urban management process. For instance, at present the historic cores of many cities and towns in Slovenia still remain relatively intact in their original form, but have become the target for development pressure. The question is, how should this pressure be channelled to achieve enhancement of the urban qualities of those areas (especially redundant barracks and old factory sites), without jeopardising their competitiveness for attracting business and employment.

From 1995 to 1998, at the Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, research was carried out into the development of appropriate methods for the appraisal and promotion of design quality in relation to economic viability in city development projects, especially in the context of urban renewal.

The aspects to be considered for the assessment of urban design quality derive from the basic principles of good urban design and can be grouped into three main categories:

1. Context and general compatibility  
(site, land-use, setting/urban tissues characteristics and scale)
2. Arrangement and External Effects  
(quality of the public realm regarding layout, physical quality impact, landscaping and scenic amenity)
3. Architectural Issues  
(the most sensitive area of urban design, including style, facade/elevational details and materials)

The method proposes sequential forms of analysis for the determination of these elements using qualitative urban design criteria such as: identity, permeability, legibility, visual appropriateness, robustness, visual and symbolic richness, amongst others.

In addition a simplified computerised model for assessing financial viability was developed. It is based on building costs

and the market value of the investment and shows the profitability of the development. Such a model can be a useful tool in both assessing design viability, and for determining extra profit or 'planning gain' in the planning negotiation process. Such 'surplus' can be used for satisfying both individual and other local needs e.g. additional programmes, design of public spaces and other benefits.

This method for appraisal and promotion of design quality in relation to economic viability has been examined through an assessment of the competition projects for the renewal of the Rog factory area in the city centre of Ljubljana. This case study has revealed the need for a clear strategy for future city development, with marketing guidance and policies for positive planning to achieve better vitality and viability for the city as a whole. Subsequently, the research examined successful initiatives for the promotion of urban design on a national and local level of the planning process, identifying the most important issues affecting city design in the market economy, such as partnership arrangements, joint ventures and city-entrepreneurs.

## 6. Design issues, public involvement and Action planning

During the last decade can be seen an emerging technology of "community planning" or "community architecture" – approaches which make it easier for people to participate in the creation and management of their built environment. *Action Planning and Planning for Real* are clearly defined planning techniques increasingly promoted by national, state and local institutions world wide (Wates, 1989).

- Action planning is especially suitable for the following uses:
- Long-term urban or regional development strategies
  - Revitalisation and reurbanisation strategies for declining industrial sites, inner city areas and large housing estates from the 60s and 70s
  - Sustainable development strategies – local Agenda 21
  - Urban design solutions for particular urban areas, empty zones and degraded areas
  - Urban design solutions for new settlements – research on best practices in new development and densening of existing settlements
  - Long-term development strategies as elements of renewing planning documents – public participation in early stages of legally binding (statutory) planning documentation procedures

Key features of action planning are:

- Intensive work sessions (lasting 4-5 days), carefully prepared in advance and followed by practical action and evaluation
- Active local community participation
- Broad mission – all problems and advantages of a given site, neighbourhood, town or even region are dealt with comprehensively
- Mutidisciplinary work process – participation of professionals from all relevant disciplines/trades and the business environment
- Independent facilitators – generally a group of experts with no direct involvement in the area or its problems, providing a neutral platform for discussion and stimulating confidence

- High profile – events are well positioned in the media, enabling good information flow on procedures and results; usually events are concluded with a public presentation and written report
- Flexibility – organisation and work can be adapted to the problems and needs of the local community

Typical outcomes:

- Visions for an areas futures
- Agreed objectives and achievable targets
- Proposals for a particular site or programme
- Suggestions for organisational frameworks for implementation
- Local coalitions and leadership

Action planning shouldn't be mistaken as a substitute for a statutory planning framework, nor as a mode of consultation. It should always be understood as a process of active participation. It cannot replace the services of local experts and/or organisations and should not be seen as a way of imposing ideas on the community from outside.

Why is action planning successful? It is a planning process concept that uniquely combines elements that are responsive to the present complexity of development issues, such as:

- **open community involvement**, where all interested parties can be involved in different ways, leading to a new sense of cohesion and consensus on goals, organisation of new partnerships and to the development of a sense of equity;
- **creative working methods**, experts of various profiles work together in an informal way and in a neutral environment, breaking down conventional professional boundaries and creating a relaxed atmosphere, releasing positive thinking, humour, imagination and collective creativity;
- **dynamism**, the carefully structured event with a finite/short deadline for results presentation generates a critical mass of activity which is hard to ignore;
- **fresh thinking**, the independent team provides an opportunity for new ideas that can overcome previous divisions and indecision;
- **visual approach**, the use of urban design drawing techniques and modelling provides an accessible way of thinking and communicating visions of a communities future development;
- **realism**, the planning process addresses both the physical and natural environment and the inhabitants opinions and experiences.

In order to promote better urban design and management, as well as to stimulate and facilitate better community involvement in the decision making process, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Physical Planning (ORSPP), Ministry for Environment and Physical Planning, introduced in 1996 a programme for co-financing municipalities in the preparation of Urban Design workshops and competitions (Ažman, Dimitrovska, 1997).

The preferred topical issues in the workshop's programme were determined as the following:

- the renovation and re-urbanisation of towns, i.e. identification of strategies for long-term development, as elements for amending plans;
- the improvement of devalued or inappropriately used urban space i.e. establishment of development strategies for declining industrial or inner city areas;

- the regulation and design of traffic and other infrastructure corridors i.e. formulation and implementation of integrated transport policy; and
- inclusion of natural resources and values in urban planning i.e. introduction of 'green' issues to policy formation.

The principle objective is to stress the importance of these Urban Design workshops as a multidisciplinary work process. Professionals from within all the relevant disciplines and trades, as well as representatives from the broader public realm, are encouraged to work closely in the process of planning and designing the urban environment.

The Urban Design workshop is explored as an appropriate opportunity for active co-operation and education of different participants in the process of planning; this applies particularly to both the developer and the broader, lay public.

The organisation and course of an Urban Design workshop are usually adapted to the programme and its aims, as well as to the preferences of participants. It is important that in the course of each workshop, a consensus is reached on the creation of shared visions for a community's future that will later be included in the statutory planning documentation.

It is demonstrated how the results of the most of the workshops can be used by local planning authorities to generate new urban strategies and to create scenarios for the future development of specific areas of the city or the city as a whole.

The analysis of last year's urban design workshops indicates promising outcomes. Most of the results can be applied as a professional foundation for the preparation of physical plans. In some cases, relating to revision of plan documents, the results of the workshops have contributed to the resolution of complex problems and have generated a significant improvement of the initial physical planning solutions.

It can be concluded that the programme of the ORSPP on co-financing municipalities for the realisation of Urban Design workshops and competition has been successful, but one question still remains open:

*Are municipal town planning departments prepared to include Urban Design workshops as an indispensable tool within everyday planning practice?*

## 7. Conclusion

These observations of current town planning practice has revealed that the ideas of the "urban plan" as a fixed blueprint for the future, and the urban designer as a "master" of the city have been superseded by reality (see also Bosma, Hellinga, 1997). "Master plans" are losing their role, and must change from "compulsory" guidelines to "strategic" management plans. The town planners, as the selected case studies show, are now being called not to design attractive projects, or images (blueprints) for the future, but to prepare guidance documents which can be used in negotiating the convergence between interested parties.

Within the fast growing process of globalization and instability, "mastering" the city becomes more and more a varied and complex process, involving a wide range of actors, who

must learn to assimilate change into the very process of managing that change.

The Birmingham case study has been an important exercise for the following reasons:

- it has shown a fresh approach to planning initiatives, beginning with a "brain-storming" seminar on the future for the development of the urban fabric of the City, which in turn has grown into the Birmingham Good Design initiative, introducing seminars, competitions, exhibitions, lectures, conferences, and other events to encourage higher design standards in the urban regeneration of Birmingham;
- it represents a new urban design approach within the planning process, adopting a comprehensive City Urban Design Strategy, and promoting it as a basis for urban design studies/guidelines and design briefs for individual places or areas of character throughout the city,
- it has generated an attempt to improve the implementation at the Development Control level, by the organisation of an Urban Design Division within the Department of Planning and Architecture and by introducing design assessment panels,
- it established a pioneering trail in improving the implementation process at the level of new development and urban regeneration, through Central Government agencies (City Action Team, Jewellery Quarter Action) and an "urban development agency", a public-private sector partnership (Birmingham Heartlands Ltd, Birmingham City 2000),
- it has created an effective maintenance system within the City Centre with the introduction of the City Centre Manager, a system which would coordinate public sector, animate public spaces with events, stimulating the arts and entertainment,
- it is an effective attempt to involve public participation in the City's development strategy, by organising conferences with the specific purpose of creating an active dialogue between the general public and representatives from the developers, statutory bodies and financial institutions who are playing major roles in the redevelopment of Birmingham (e.g. "The Future of your city centre", February, 1992).

The urban design elements are incorporated into Birmingham's current legislative framework of planning through planning documentation (City Design Strategy, Urban Design Frameworks) and an implementation strategy (administrative and financial mechanism). There are now effective mechanisms for the implementation of "good urban design", such as:

1. *Planning control based on qualitative urban design criteria*  
The City Design Strategy defines a number of principles, tests or questions which should be applied to development proposals in order to achieve an appropriate character for any particular site. However, such an approach requires a higher level of sensitive administrative responsibility from the planning system, with planning officers who are better educated in the discipline of urban design.
2. *Financial mechanisms to secure quality development*  
The practical method of financing an urban enhancement in Birmingham is similar to the method of marketing the city, which includes the following steps: involvement of central government (e.g. City Action Team) and public/private agencies (e.g. Birmingham Heartlands Ltd, Birmingham City 2000) to pursue economic development ef-

forts; involvement of the general public by keeping them informed and by scheduling meetings where their suggestions can be heard and their questions answered (e.g. "The Future of your city centre", February, 1992); relating the economic development programme to local needs, such as job creation, community development, and environmental improvement (e.g. the action programme for the regeneration of the Jewellery Quarter); introduction of Grant Schemes for encouraging better standards in the development of particular areas (e.g. Industrial Improvement Area Grant Schemes, and the Shop Upgrading Grant Scheme for the Jewellery Quarter).

The Broadgate case study has demonstrated the need for flexibility during the negotiation process, where benefits can be traded-off against one another. Clear briefing by local authorities at the beginning of the development process can be instrumental in achieving their objectives. However, the achievement of these objectives is still, to a large extent, dependent on whether the objectives correspond to the imperatives of the property market at the time (Williamson, 1990).

The Rog case study illustrates a good example of effective use of an informal planning tool. This method for appraisal and promotion of design quality in relation to economic viability is one that can also be used as a planning tool in the following range of areas: in marketing the city (identification and promotion of potential development areas), in the planning process (establishing a methodological framework for harmonising the varied interests of the different actors), in the development control process (refining the decision-making processes for the appraisal of planning applications) and in the assessment of competition projects.

However, in the process of mastering the future city, well guided public involvement must, be seen as the essential contribution for better and effective urban design and for "user" management of our cities and residential neighbourhoods.

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### Illustrations

**Table 1:** Plan-oriented (proactive) and project oriented (reactive) planning systems

**Table 2:** The Planning Process

**Picture 1:** The Highbury Initiative: All a Matter of Image?

**Picture 2:** Using Building Heights to Dramatise the City (source: Tibbalds, 1990)

**Picture 3:** Townscape Opportunities: The Jewellery Quarter (source: Tibbalds, 1990)

**Picture 4:** Redefining the Street (source: BUDS - City Centre Design Strategy)

**Picture 5:** The CI 5/6 ROG area: Urban Design Constants

**Picture 6:** The CI 5/6 ROG area: Design Proposals

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