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### **What is meant by 'detail'**

What is meant here is the design of the buildings and public realm, and most particularly, the interface between them. The building elements include elevations, corner treatments, roof lines, doors and windows, materials, floorscapes of colour and texture, for example. The public realm elements concern the street, the pavement and the square and include planting, street furniture, lighting and public art. The interfaces are the steps, the fences, front gardens, hedges, walls, windows and doors - the hinge between the horizontal and vertical planes.

### **Why detail is important**

Detailed design is where the identity and quality of a place is finally won or lost. We all have a subliminal understanding of the quality of places from our experience, and are highly aware of whether they hinder our actions or do not work properly. But good design does not necessarily shout for attention. Often the detailing of buildings, streets or squares is quiet and unobtrusive. Successful places have a feeling of serendipity; the happy yet almost accidental mixture of many good things brought together.

It is essential to be highly aware of the quality of detailing for it can:

- make or break a place;
- stimulate the commitment of the developer, the community and the authorities involved to the maintenance of high standards;
- allow all the users of a place to enjoy it, in a balanced and efficient way;
- create and retain value; and above all
- ensure distinctiveness, whether a central square or great avenue, a quiet street or mews.

The keys are good design, good materials and the commitment of all those in an area to its successful long-term maintenance.