



Ground floor uses enable tall buildings to interact with users at street level



Active enclosed public space created with medium rise mixed-use buildings

The size and configuration of a building, and especially its scale in relation to the surrounding context, has a bearing on its:

- sustainability (in terms of energy consumption and space ability to change use, for example);
- relationship with the surrounding urban structure (such as the impact on legibility);
- contribution to neighbouring public space (notably whether it aids or undermines street vitality).

### 5.3.1 BUILDING HEIGHT

#### The big picture

Tall buildings have a positive role to play in signifying locations of civic commercial or visual importance, or focal points of urban activity such as town centres or transport junctions (see 3.6.1 to 3.6.3). However, this has to be weighed against the possible negative impacts on microclimate (such as wind funnels or too much shade - see 3.4.1 and 3.4.4), environmental performance of nearby buildings and amount of active frontage (the risk of fewer entrances and a distanced relationship between occupants and the street).

For many urban situations, medium-rise buildings provide an optimum form (see 3.3.2), because of their ability to accommodate a range of uses, (which generally decreases beyond four storeys), the potential for medium-high densities, as well as generally lower energy demands and construction costs. In more suburban situations, where two or three storeys are the norm, it is desirable to place higher buildings in key locations such as on corners, along principal routes, the end of vistas or around parks. Decisions about building height should also be made in relation to creating street-building height ratios creating good enclosure (see 5.1.3).

#### Wrap up and step down

Problems of different scale juxtapositions can be resolved by:

- ‘wrapping’ large spaces with small buildings (see 3.2.6 and 5.3.2);
- ‘stepping’ a large mass down to its neighbours;
- ensuring that the ground level most relevant to pedestrian experience is as active and interesting as possible (see 5.2.1).