

2.1.3 Contextual appraisal

Understanding the physical form of the immediate surroundings of a site, and the history that has shaped it, helps the design team create new development that reinforces local character and distinctiveness. It also identifies existing elements that compromise such character and might offer opportunities for adaptation or replacement.



Dumbarton contextual appraisal

What needs to be illustrated on context plans:

- Enough of the surrounding area to locate the study area/site.
- Site and its neighbouring features:
 - roads/railways/waterways
 - cycleways/footpaths
 - local centres
 - schools
 - visual connections/views
 - shopping
 - public transport
 - open spaces etc.
- Known contextual issues:
 - opportunities and constraints
 - barriers to movement
 - SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

- Main connections
- ▭ Areas with strong frontages
- Areas of opportunity
- ▨ Poorly defined areas
- ~ Barriers to movement and links
- Existing or potential nodes
- Riverside area of development potential
- Trees and vegetation
- Key views
- Pedestrian routes
- Important buildings

What it shows:

- a general summary of the urban character of a town centre, describing its existing structure and regeneration opportunities
- the very close relationship between the town centre and the riverfront which could be reinforced by appropriate development
- the context and hinterland for riverfront regeneration, including key routes and links, important buildings and views.

Why it is good graphically:

- all elements shown by distinct colour coding, symbols or patterns
- hand-drawn diagram emphasising the early, provisional stage of the project
- minimal annotation avoiding clutter
- 'not to scale' discourages assumptions of inappropriate accuracy
- logical colours used, e.g. water bodies blue, vegetation green.