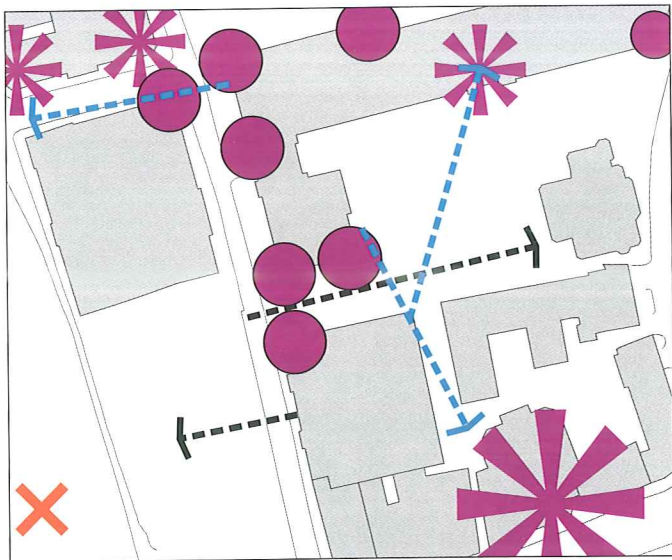## 3.1.12 Symbols and graphic shorthand

As the theory and practice of urban design have matured, so too has the graphic language used to express the elements of townscape. While not being formal conventions, some symbols have come to represent specific conditions, such as a zigzag to express a noise-source or barriers to movement; lines with arrowheads to denote a direction of expansion or views. These and others have become common currency among urban designers.

Individuals and organisations devise their own ways of expressing symbols on drawings. The example opposite has been derived from traditional symbols. Some are consistent with Ordnance Survey© and others have been developed over time by urban designers.

Key taken from a generic urban design analysis diagram

Incorrect scale and overlapping symbols have created a very cluttered diagram
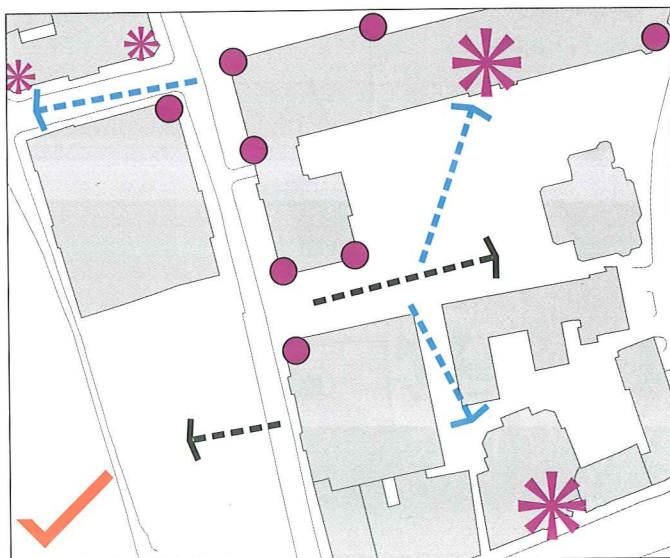
Sensible use of symbols produces a clear concise diagram

Watchpoints

- Symbols should be graphically distinct from each other.

- Symbols should be of a size that does not dominate or confuse the figure.

- Symbols need 'breathing space'; they should not clash or overlap.

- Rather than crowd a single figure with symbols, consider making points on several smaller figures with a common base so that the composite message can be more easily read.

- Keeping the size, colour and line weight of symbols consistent aids legibility.

- Use symbols where shading or lines cannot convey the message effectively.

- Symbols can indicate objects on a plan which are too small to show in detail.

- Symbols can signify commonly occurring locations or activities (such as landmarks).