

Sample of a Built-Form Context Appraisal (2018 Edition)

Section 2 – Built Form Context

Introduction

The Urban Place Supplement (UPS)

The 'Built Form Context', forms a part of the Context Appraisal required by the UPS and is about analysing the nature of the existing context. However, to explain the design thinking behind any proposed scheme is not a requirement of the UPS. But having completed a UPS context appraisal as a first step, the next step and subsequent steps will be on a firm footing and made easier to carry out.

The Design and Access Statement;

Since August 2006 it is a requirement for planning applications to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement. A large portion of this work is covered by the Urban Place Supplements, 'Context Appraisal' but the Design Access Statement takes the process a step further. In addition to analysing the context of the site as covered in the UPS the Design Access Statement does the following:

- 1) Looks more closely at the access requirements to the site of the proposed scheme
- 2) Begins to draw conclusions as to the character, scale and general parameters of any scheme that might be proposed for the site.

An effective context appraisal should consider the following:

- It should be carried out prior to the commencement of the design process.
- It is not in itself a design proposal, but it will give a clear steer to the way a design is developed.
- Together with the UPS and an assessment of the Access requirements to the site, it would cover all the requirements of a good Design Access Statement.

Using the Built Form Context Appraisal to inform the Design Process:

The purpose of the 'Built Form Context Appraisal' is to inform the eventual design of any proposed scheme.

In this example of a site analysis, we take the process beyond the requirements of the UPS to show how a context appraisal can inform the basis of future design.

Exploratory drawings, diagrams, photographs and comments are used to show how this might work in practice. By referring to the context appraisal throughout this exercise, it will become apparent how design parameters can be established to ensure that a future proposal responds to the context. More than this, a proposal should add to the quality of the existing environment, which in many cases has become fragmented by poor development.

To demonstrate one approach to this, the following studies show the process which moves from context appraisal (analysis of existing) to the point where conclusions can be drawn in relation to the development of the scheme.

The approach shown represents only one way of carrying out this work. Other graphic means may be adopted, provided the author is aware of the principals that are behind the requirements of the UPS and DAS and adequately covers the 'issues'.

SITE ANALYSIS:

The site analysis is broken down into the following sections:

- 1 Photographic Analysis
- 2 Sketch Drawing Analysis
- 3 Existing Site – physical parameters
- 4 Development Scenario – design parameters

1 SITE ANALYSIS: Photographic Analysis:

Panoramic views can be created by taking a series of overlapping photo shots from a single location. Rather than a single photo, of a single building or site, this will give the viewer a greater sense of the site context. The following panoramic views, not only target the site in question, but continue beyond, so that trees, landscape, adjacent buildings roads and other features can be seen together.

Onto the panoramic sequences, notes can be added to highlight elements of the existing context that might have a bearing of a future development. Roof lines, Sky lines, heights, landscape, colours, textures, eaves lines and other architectural features of significance can be highlighted for future reference.

PAN 1: Context analysis looking east into the site from Brook Street:

Note: **1** View to spire; **2** Roof forms; **3** Materials-timber; also adjacent to River Colne (**4**); 3 Storey buildings at Junction with Barrack St.



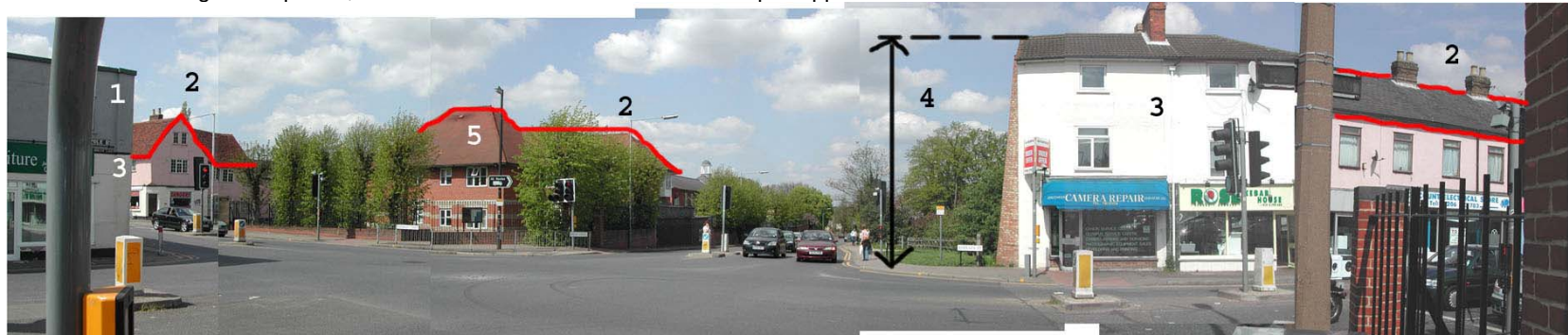
PAN 2: Context analysis; opposite view, looking west away from the site along Brook Street:

Note: Level change falling away from the Barrack St Junction (left) down towards railway line right. This accounts for the increasing height of the retaining wall which adds to the overall building heights (equivalent of 4 stories) further down the hill.



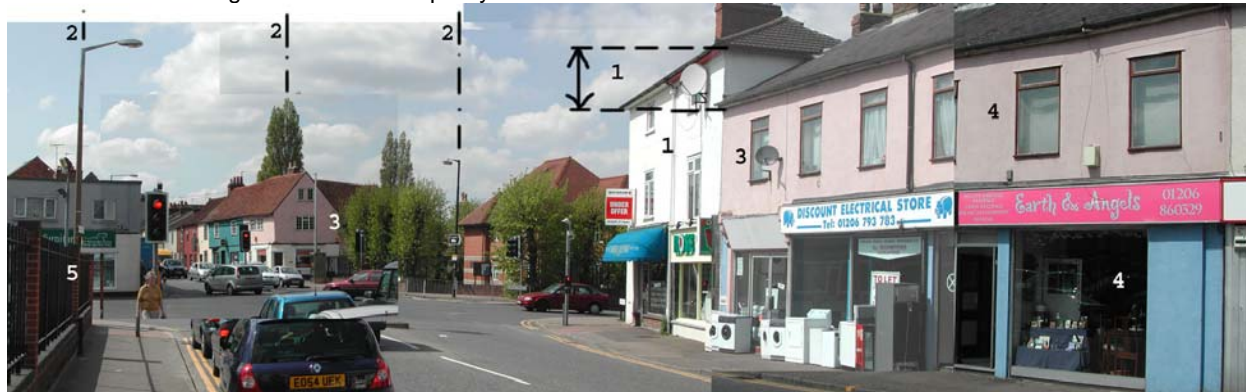
PAN 3: Analysis of cross roads looking towards Brook Street junction.

Note: **1** Out of character corner building – needs an additional storey. **2** Traditional pitched roof forms; **3** Materials – coloured render; **4** 3 storey unfinished, buttressed end of terrace at junction with Barrack St. **5** Uncharacteristic recent brick housing development, set too far back from the road with multiple hipped roof forms and red brick walls.



PAN 4: Analysis of 'Gateway' junction looking down Barrack Street.

Note: **1** Additional third storey increases the urban scale at junction. **2** Tree planting and lamp stands give vertical emphasis and serves to increase the urban scale **3** Materials – coloured render predominates; **4** Continuous terrace along Barrack St with retail shop frontages **5** Anti-climax on the Southern corner of junction where car showroom and car forecourt fragments the urban quality.



PAN 5: Analysis of buildings along Barrack Street.

Note: **1** Stepped roof forms: projecting eaves; thin gutter line; no fascia. **2** Brick Gables revealed with vertical emphasis of chimney stacks; **3** Materials – Brick facades set between render. **4** Vertical emphasis of window fenestration. **5** 1950's brick housing block, with retail units; – horizontal emphasis clashes with the context.



PAN 6: Analysis of buildings along Barrack Street.

Note: **1** Stepped roof forms: projecting eaves; thin gutter line; no fascia. **2** Materials – Restrained palette of white render and grey brickwork. **3** Vertical emphasis of window fenestration and large scaled window openings. **4** Covered access through to the rear of site to maintain continuous street frontage.



PAN 7: Analysis of buildings along Barrack Street.

Note: **1** Stepped roof forms; reduced heights moving away from the Brook Street road junction. **2** Materials – Brick upper stories; **3** Render- bright colours. **4** Shop fronts. **5** Marriage Centre Victorian School Building – focal point.



PAN 8: Analysis of Wilson Marriage Centre Victorian Building on Barrack Street.

Note: **1** Spire acts as a significant focal point in the area and can be seen from the heart of the proposed development site. **2** Colour of red brick work and quality of detailing. **3** Strong sweeping down roof forms with gables and dormers.



PAN 9: View of the industrial shed to the north of the site.

Note: **1** The flat roofed shed attempting to reduce it's bulky impact by the use of a change of material and hideous appliqué pediments. **2** The height of the shed; equivalent to a three storey building. **3** The general topographical location of the site, poised on the crest of a hill with skyline implications for a considerable distance from the north.



PAN 10: View of buildings adjacent to Colne River with the timber one on the right closest to the river. Note the variety of materials; red brick, yellow brick, painted render and timber; natural timber.



PAN 11: Predominance of timber clad buildings adjacent to Colne River.

a) recent development. b) historic timber framed building. c) timber sheds on the allotment close to the river.



PAN 12: Another local example of the variety of building forms and materials adjacent to the Colne River.
a) yellow brick. b) red brick c) painted timber framed buildings. c) rendered and painted timber and masonry buildings..



PAN 13: Contrasting skylines looking from the bottom of the embankment to the north of the site close to the river

colne water front. a) Wilson Marriage Centre. b) Bland flat roofed profile of the Industrial shed



PAN 14: From a distant view along the Colne River, the effect of the flat roof profile of the industrial shed is particularly bland. In any proposed scheme, phase 1 or 2 there is an opportunity to create a new and more interesting skyline profile. Studies should be carried out as a scheme is developed to assess the impact on the skyline. The red areas are preliminary examples only of how to reduce the impact of the industrial shed profile.



PAN 15: Views of the network of paths to the north of the site leading towards the town centre, running between the proposed

development site, the railway embankment and the Colne River. Any future scheme should consider how best to link through to this valuable amenity area, full of biodiversity and great views by the water. This would add considerable value to the development.



PAN 16: River views showing the quality of countryside and biodiversity for healthy living on the doorstep of the proposed development site.



2: SITE ANALYSIS; Sketch Drawing Analysis

Alternatively or in addition to the panoramas, drawings can be used to analyse the context. What method is chosen depends on what it is felt best illustrates the essential issues of context. Drawings have the advantage over photographs of being able to emphasise a particular point, which might otherwise get lost in the plethora of detailed offered by a photograph.

Fig 1: Existing urban context of junction from south of Barrack St



Fig1: This site sketch analyses the existing urban forms at the junction of Barrack Street and Brook Street. The junction suffers from a recent car show room of single storey height on the South East corner which breaks the urban continuity that it would once have had. This suggests the possibility that in the future an ideal scenario would be to increase the density appropriate to what is in effect a gateway junction to the town of Colchester. The numbers below refer to the drawing:.....

1. An additional storey would be more appropriate.
2. Existing flat roofed 2 storey commercial building does not enhance this junction.
3. Recent 2 storey brick residential home with steep pitched roof set on a retaining wall which increases in height as it goes down Brook St hill. Inappropriate multi-hipped roof form. Building set too far back from the road which diminishes the urban quality of the junction.
4. Possible extended height for new building continuing from the end of the three storey Barrack Street terrace.
5. Existing 3 storey Barrack St, end of terrace.
6. Inappropriate gazebo in the parking forecourt of the car show room.
7. Existing tall street lamps suggest a larger urban scale.

Fig 2: This site sketch records the wide variety of materials and forms which are part of the existing character of Colchester. This will give some cues when it comes to considering materials for the redevelopment. The numbers below relate to the sketch.....

1. Stepping up and down of the roof line reveals a variety of gable ends including chimney stacks.
2. Projecting gables facing onto the street frontage.
3. Red tiled roof tiles.
4. Grey roof slate finishes.
5. Variety of coloured rendered surfaces.
6. Traditional flush jointed red brickwork.
7. Pub and shop fronts and ground level.
8. Projecting dormers.

FIG 2: Existing building frontages along Barrack St



Fig 3: View into the site from Brook Street with Victorian red brick spire of the Wilson Marriage Centre.



Fig 3: This sketch of the existing light industrial buildings on the site gives some hints as to the former character of the area which bordered the commercial activity along Colne river. The change in materials to timber siding from brick and render on the perimeter blocks, might give a clue to the variety of materials that could be used within the more intimate areas of a proposed scheme. The view to the Victorian Spire also suggests an organisation of plan and building form to maximise the 'Sense of Place'.

1. Focal point of the existing Victorian Spire off site.
2. Regularity and simplicity gables roof forms.
3. Horizontal timber siding.
4. Asymmetrical windows on the edge of the built form due to framed construction.
5. High roof line due to the 3 storey construction and the incline of the ground leading up to Barrack Street.
6. White rendered surfaces.
7. Granite sets in the builder's yard adding a sense of place and pedestrian friendly environment.
8. Significant green elements on site.
9. Timber fencing giving a soft rustic feel to the enclosure of the site.

Fig 4: View along eastern boundary of the site showing the footpath leading to an intimate cluster of 2 storey housing in a mews type arrangement or small hamlet. This should not be overshadowed by a new development, but sensitively related by having only 2 storey buildings adjacent in corresponding materials and forms.

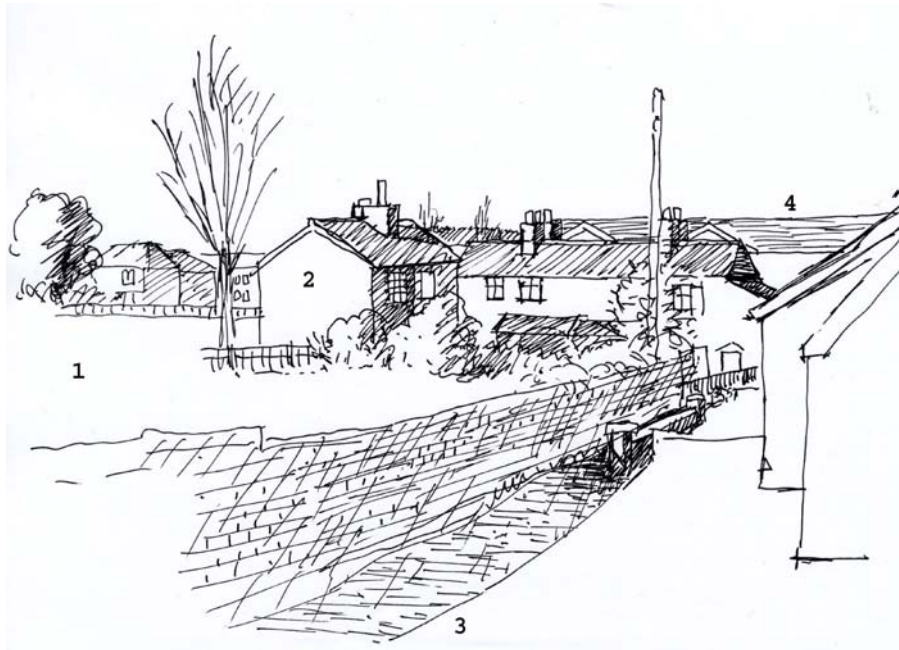
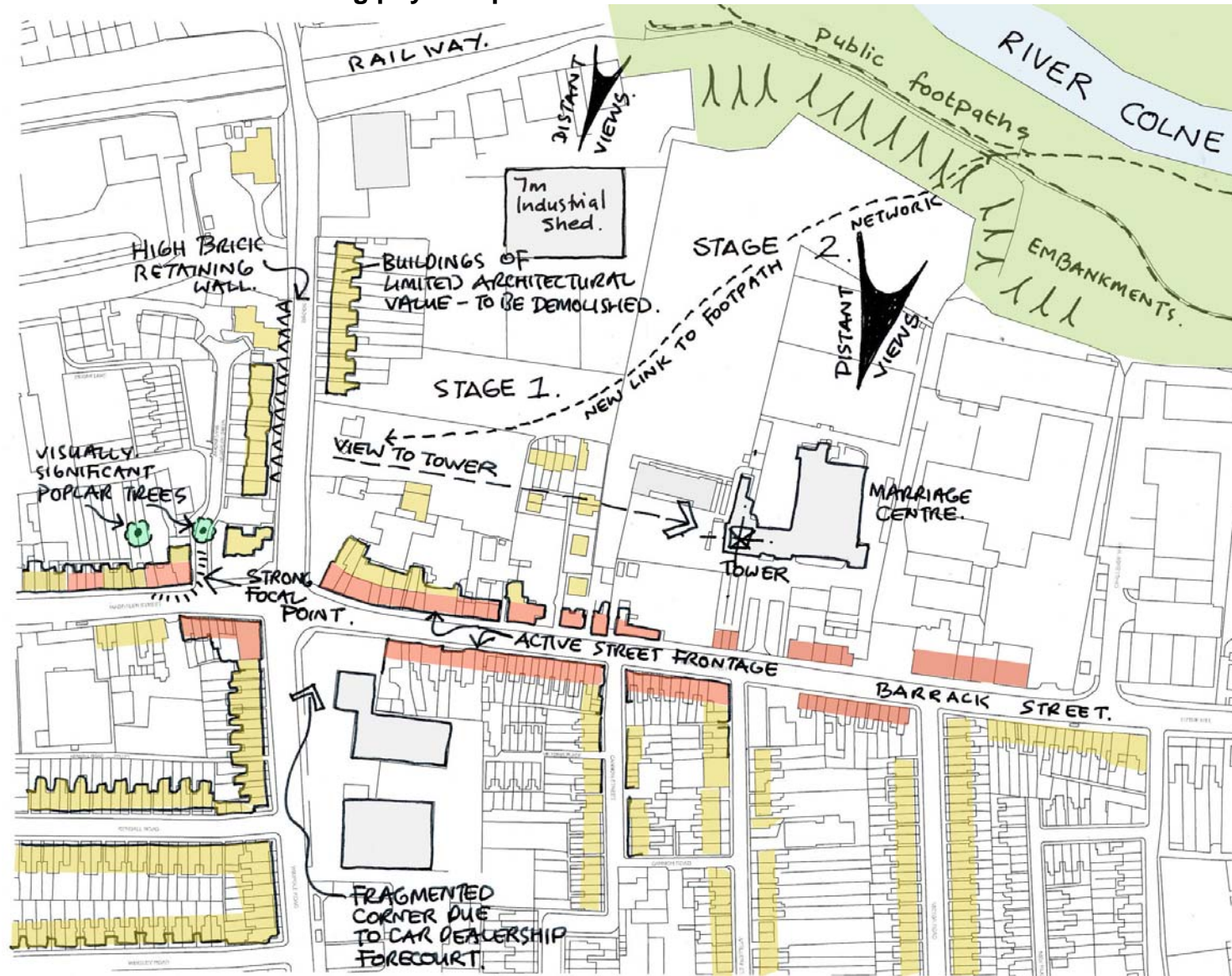


Fig 4: This quick sketch shows a village like cluster of houses with a pedestrian only pathway. The character of this group of buildings should be taken into consideration when deciding on the scale of future adjacent buildings, particularly in terms of the scale. A new scheme could be in danger of overshadowing this hamlet and making it seem irrelevant. On the other had a well worked out solution could add to the character of a new scheme.

1. Proposed development site
2. Two storey traditional domestic buildings
3. Path following the boundary of the site adjacent to brick wall leading to the hamlet.
4. High flat roof datum of the industrial shed building on the north of the site. The blue sheet metal material and the fake pediments jar with the traditional brick, slate and render of most of the buildings in the area. Any proposed scheme should consider how to reduce the impact of this industrial building.

3 - SITE ANALYSIS: Existing physical parameters



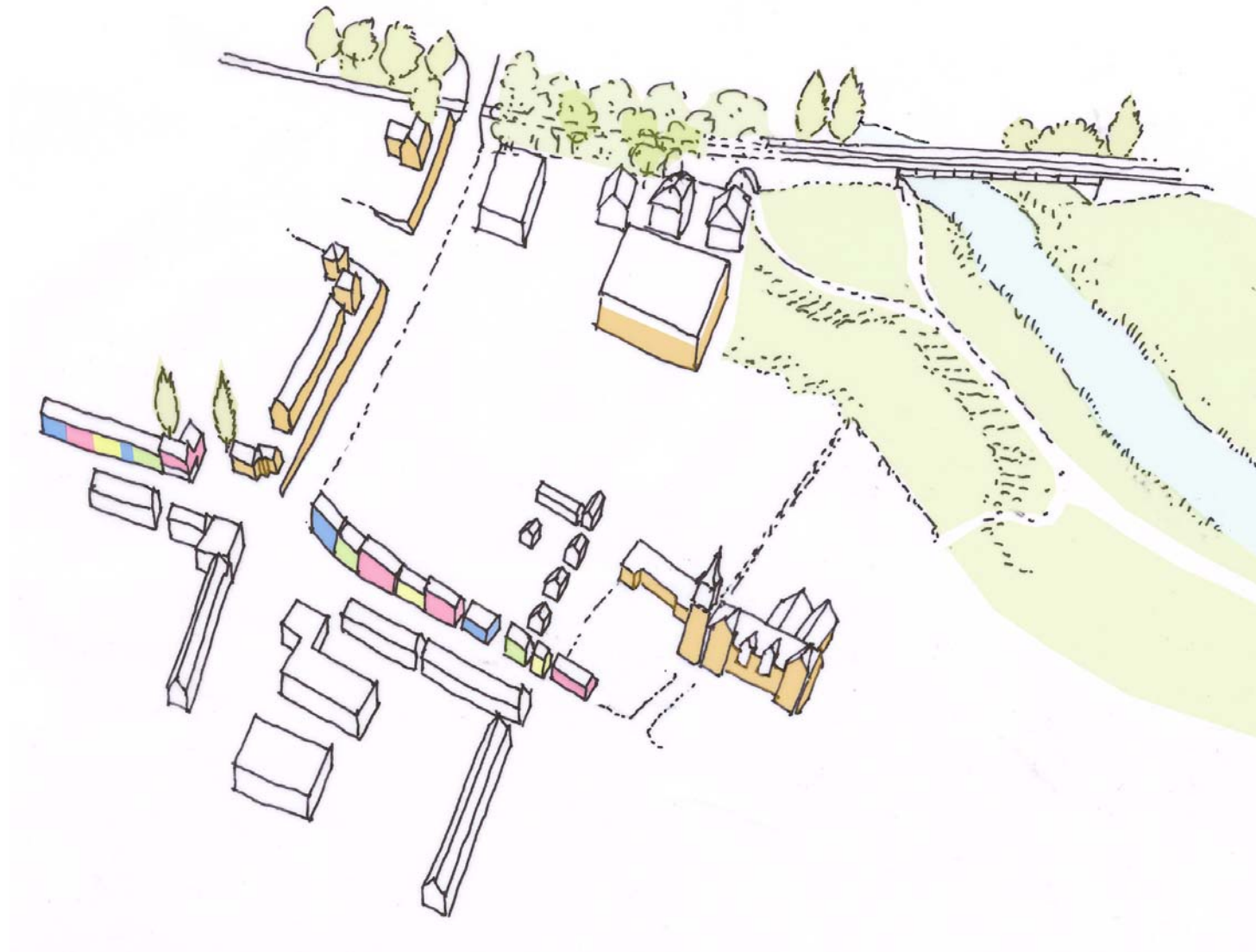
Identify significant physical features of the site.

Consider how these might effect the development of a site plan / scheme proposal.

How can the development proposal best respond to:

- 1 The fragmented urban context.
- 2 The range of local existing uses.
- 3 Heights of existing building.
- 4 Slope of the site from Barrack St to River Colne embankment.
- 5 Proximity of the green biodiversity strip and the river Colne.
- 6 Various views to and from the site.
- 7 Character and style of the existing architecture

3: SITE ANALYSIS: Existing physical parameters



Identify significant physical features of the site.

Simplified 3D analytical drawing to show significant features of the site and their relationship to each other.

Note the variable edge condition around the site:

- 1 **WEST:** The red - brick embankment and housing along the west side of the site.
- 2 **NORTH:**
The large industrial shed dominating the site and wider landscape from the north.
Access to the green banks of the River Colne and the Moors.
- 3 **EAST:** Views of the Wilson Marriage Centre tower and open land to the rear.
- 4 **SOUTH:** Shop frontages and pubs backing into the site with some pedestrian access at intervals.

4 SITE ANALYSIS: Setting design parameters.

Exploring Design Options

Context Appraisal: With an eye to what has been covered in the previous part of this context appraisal, carry out concept drawings to illustrate how the context could inform the eventual design proposals.

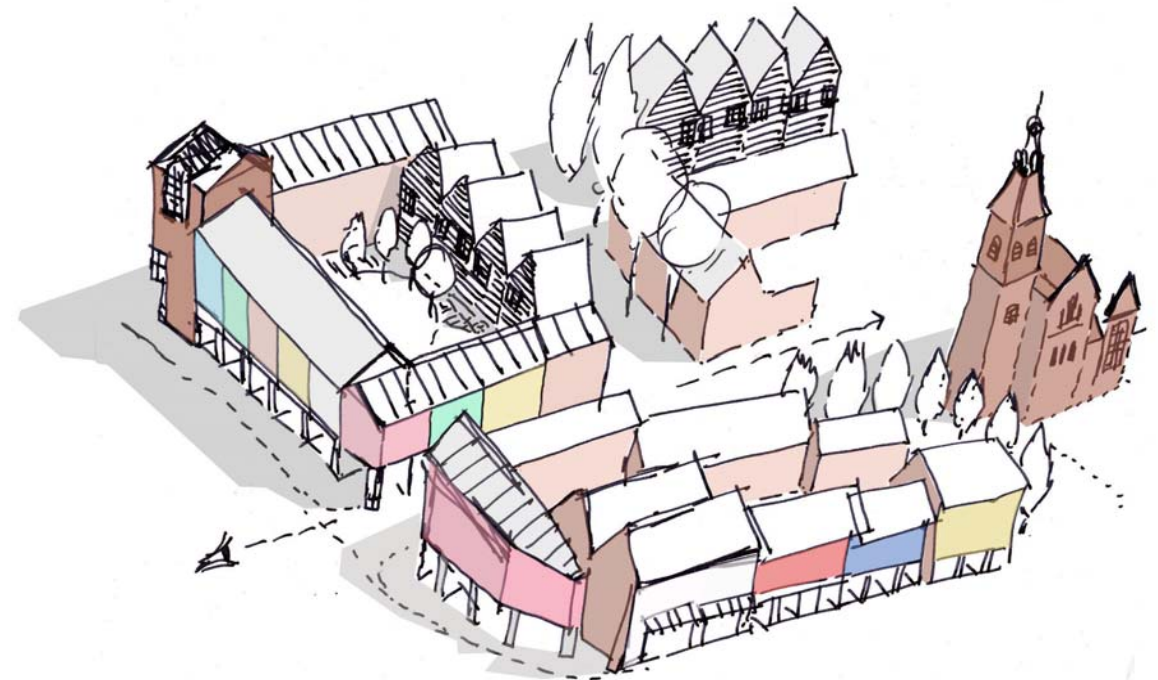
Look at alternatives to see if one is clearly going to be more appropriate than another in relation to the context. Is a tower block really appropriate for this site? Does there need to be a vertical emphasis in some part of the scheme signifying the approach of the Town Centre? Are flat roofs appropriate? Or should the Essex vernacular pitched roof forms be the inspiration, even if linked to high level terraces or glazed areas? In an area of higher density, what kind of car parking is appropriate to produce the best environment for elderly people and children as well as drivers?

Familiarity with the UPS, the EDG, and other regeneration guidance will give plenty of clues as to the range of considerations required for new quality developments.

Drawings & Sketches: Use 3D visuals or perspectives to suggest the kind of approach that might be appropriate on this particular site.

Fig 1: This conceptual sketch explores:

- **SHOP FRONTS:** How the existing shop frontages and their multi-coloured rendered facades could be adopted in the new proposals.
- **ROOFS:** The range of proposed roof profiles; how they relate to existing examples in the area; how they might mitigate the effect of industrial shed to the north of the site; how they connect with the existing roof levels and configurations surrounding the site; where a vertical emphasis might be appropriate..



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- **HOUSING FORMS:** With the aid of the UPS and EDG explore appropriate forms of housing layout incorporating
 - Car park deck to reduce the effect of excessive on-street parking and improved amenity area for residents.
 - Shared surfaces; home zones; play areas.
 - Landscaping and areas of good biodiversity.
 - Mixed used elements; retail; live/work; housing