

# Urban Design

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# URBAN DESIGN AT WWA

WWA's experienced and knowledgeable Urban Designers, Planners and Architects understand both the challenges and rewards of planning for the future. Working collaboratively with the public and private stakeholders who carry out daily operations is the first step in community planning, which begins with an awareness of the civic framework of a location. We find new avenues and opportunities through an interdisciplinary effort that improves the experience of residents and the larger community.

With decades of experience, our team is able to understand, organise and sculpt the relationships between buildings, streets, open spaces, landscape elements and natural features. WWA Studios is committed to creating functional places that revitalise communities and address the changing urban, social and environmental issues we currently face.

Our interdisciplinary practice gives our consultancy a broader scope, enabling us to assemble a comprehensive picture from the onset of a project. We look beyond the boundaries and define the main attributes of buildings and the spaces between them, allowing us to demonstrate potential constraints and opportunities to create dynamic and unique places for everyone.



# APPROACH

Our team designs people-focused, sustainable places that respond to local context and deliver long-term value through creative, collaborative urban design.

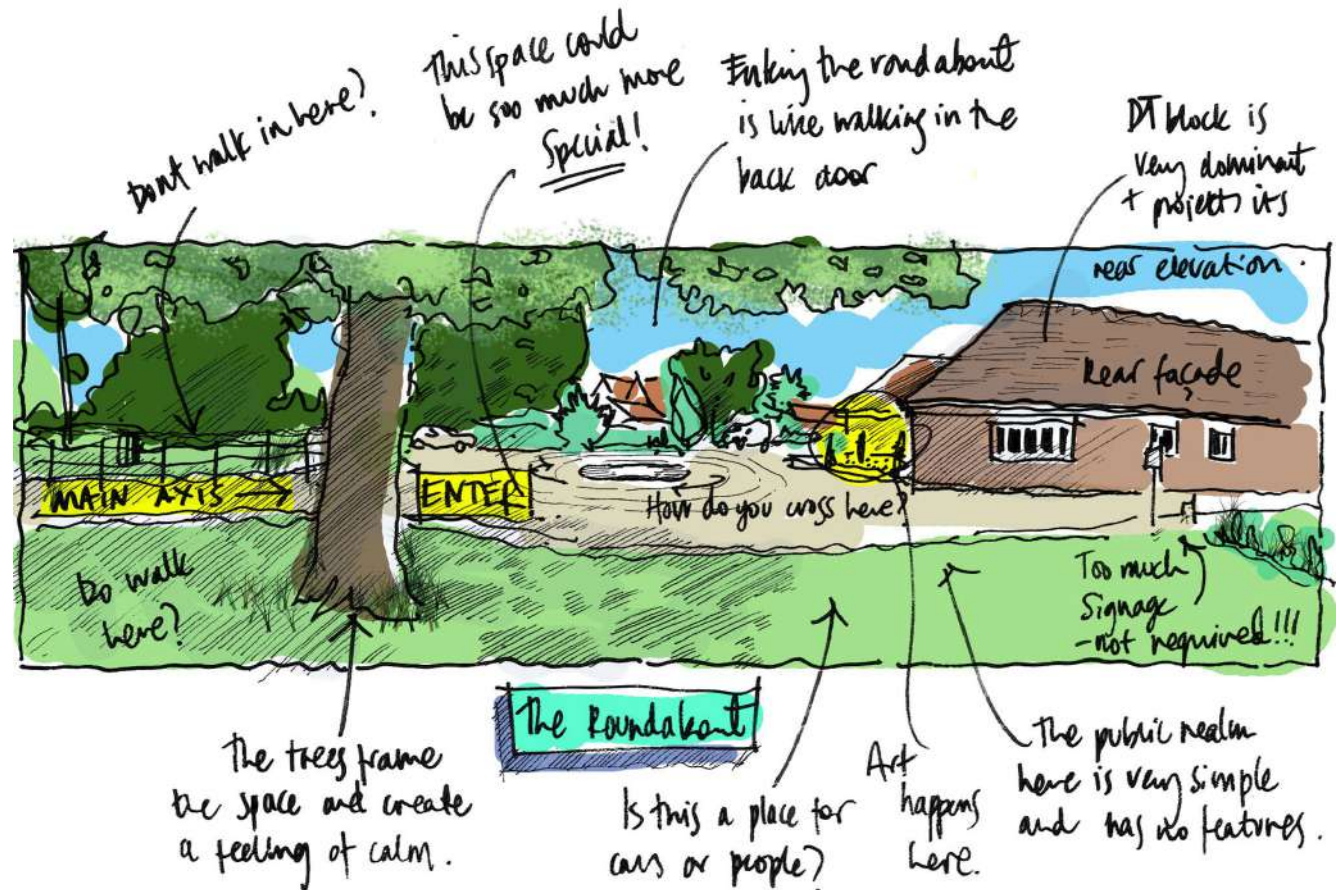
Urban design is about creating a sense of place and a location that is both visually appealing and functional. The urban design process involves ensuring a detailed understanding of the arrangement, appearance and overall experience of the built environment. We consider urban design with a three-dimensional context, ensuring appropriate scale, movement, landscape and the interrelationship between the public and private realms.

We try to preserve the vitality of urban neighbourhoods amid rapid growth and development by applying research and experience to the process of urban change. Our key objective in delivering successful places is to create people-centric environments that are integrated within a location's existing context and landscape.

This is why we take a design-led approach which has seen our team successfully develop masterplans for applications ranging from University Campuses to mixed-use and residential developments. Over the years we have collaborated with clients including commercial and private developers, charities and local authorities, associations, schools and universities as well as councils.

Comprehensive expertise:

- › Feasibility Studies
- › Place-making Narrative Documents
- › Strategic Vision Documents
- › Outlined and Detailed Masterplans
- › Design & Access Statements
- › Capacity and Viability Assessments
- › Strategic Landscape Design
- › Design Codes



# FEASIBILITY STUDIES

We are adept at the high-level review and analysis required to support initial feasibility studies for site review or acquisition and regularly assist our client base with both the disposal and acquisition of sites through feasibility review.

WWA's interdisciplinary offering is particularly useful to our clients in considering the best approach to delivering future development, maximising both value and deliverability through a joined-up approach to placemaking. We have an extensive track record of setting the parameters of what is possible for both green and brownfield land opportunities, acting for numerous Housing Associations, SME and PLC developers, with their proposals as well as assisting existing landholders realise the value of their holdings for renewal or disposal.

We do not take a set approach to development feasibility reviews, rather providing the right level of advice at each key stage of the process and can provide initial informal high-level reviews as well as intensive scrutiny documents of complex policy and delivery options, ensuring the appropriate considerations are made at the relevant time to maximise the value of the proposed intervention.

Getting the fundamentals of the initial approach to development correct is of vital importance to the successful progression of your project. WWA continue to walk the line of realising development potential, against ensured deliverability to the benefit of our long-standing client base.



Land at Outwood Farm Road, Billericay



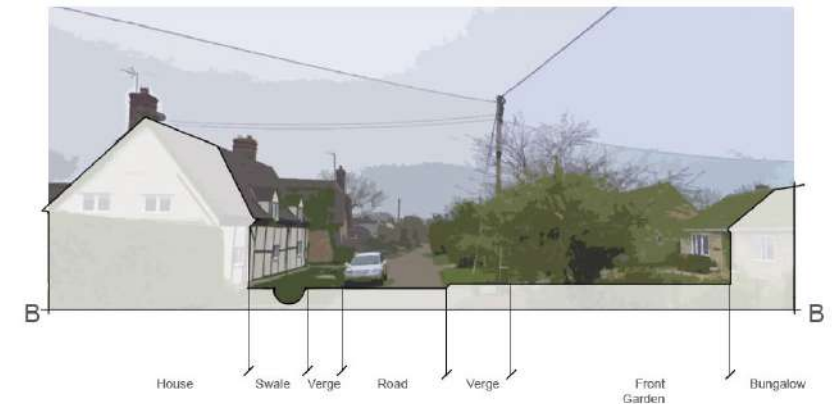
# URBAN CHARACTER STUDIES AND DESIGN CODES

Contextually informed design is fundamental to how the practice develops proposals and has never been more important in successfully delivering of a planning permission and an engaging place. With a renewed focus on beauty and 'good design', national planning policy has ever-increased scrutiny of proposals from a design perspective, making these considerations now fundamental to decision-making. As such a well-evidenced analysis of local context and clear linkages with how this has informed design proposals from first principles is essential to the successful determination of development applications.

The practice has a long-established reputation for delivering contextually informed design, ensuring that the research and analysis undertaken as part of the day-to-day design development is well evidenced and linked to the considered proposals as this can often be overlooked.

Justification for key design decisions, through knowledge gained by reviewing and understanding the proposed development context, is baked into the design rationale employed by the practice. This approach realises development which feels like part of a whole and aids legibility through the consideration of factors such as scale, massing, materiality, pedestrian and vehicular access, orientation, and typology of use.

Whilst we have produced specific character studies to inform design codes for proposed developments, the approach of a contextually led solution is fundamental to all proposed developments by the practice.







### VISIONING & LAND PROMOTION

The practice was appointed to review the legacy land portfolio of FCC which has built up throughout its historic operations in, minerals and gravel extraction, municipal waste disposal and historic landfill activities over the last 75 years. The review focused on the company's land portfolio in the southeast of England, with a key selection of 4 sites within the wider Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge Arc area of significance, including one large site at the junction of East West Rail and HS2.

On an iterative basis, the practice has developed a series of visioning documents for the strategic promotion of FCC's legacy land portfolio, as new people-centric residentially led strategic urban extensions or outright new settlements.

By virtue of their history, the sites are heavily constrained from a geo-technical perspective, on this basis a key initial task was to develop an in-depth understanding of the site's histories, existing interface with established settlements, transport routes and neighbouring land uses to develop a map of the true extent of viable developable land for each site. The practice managed a team of sub-consultants on behalf of the client in this regard to build an understanding of the baseline environment to directly inform a viable response to the creation of a residentially led place which will be realistically deliverable.

Following a period of contextual analysis, a series of locally distinctive development typologies were used to inform, along with relevant local and national development standards, a scheme of development capacity studies. Site-wide considerations informed by the detailed site analysis and supporting technical studies, as well as the review of key movement corridors and opportunities for enhanced cross-site permeability in the aid of better

development cohesion within the wider setting also aided in the formation of a development framework for masterplan development. The completed development capacity studies looked at the key formation of contextually driven character areas to aid on-site distinctiveness and aid wayfinding as well as seeking to provide some justification and guidance in the form of design principles to be carried through to later planning stages beyond pure development visioning.

Design work included the creation of some key illustrative views of development to set the scene for the overall aspirations of the development intervention and to demonstrate the quality of some of the emerging development typologies that could be realised by the application of these principles.

Through the development of the overarching review of the client assets. The schemes progressed in sufficient detail to be promoted through local and national development promotion frameworks, including the garden community MHCLG Garden Community prospectus and LP reg 18 call for sites. In addition to this the proposals for Radcot Green, near Didcot Oxfordshire, secured Home Infrastructure Funding for a new element of highways infrastructure to the north of the town, including a new river crossing over the Thames at Culham.

Whilst still to come to fruition the work completed by the practice to date sets the scene for future large-scale delivery of a contextually driven viable formed of mixed-use development in 4-5 distinctive new developments across, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes in the next decade, with opportunities for residential development, parkland, local centres, schools and commercial development sites on an underutilised and heavily constrained series of formerly developed industrial sites.







# FARINGDON TOWN CENTRE

Farringdon, Oxfordshire

## PLACEMAKING

The practice has had an in-depth involvement with this market town in Oxfordshire over the last decade, delivering two significant town centre sites in the previous 3 years. The first development site for urban regeneration sought to deliver a rebalanced mix of refurbished retail and residential space within the site of a former supermarket. The site sits within the town centre retail zone as well as the Conservation area and is close to multiple Listed Buildings and forms a key gateway view into the town from its most significant town centre car park.

The practice opened up the site reintroducing historically lost cross-site permeability and establishing new town-centre appropriate areas of public realm as well as a reconfigured public/private residential interface. The site layout principles were developed and informed by the constraints of the site with areas of proposed development sympathetic to the proximity and outlook of neighbouring properties. Ensuring greater future resilience in use and enhanced opportunities for a vibrant and animated public street scene, which in turn is much more reflective of the character and appearance of the historic core of the town.

The design development was led by careful consideration of elevation treatments to provide a sense of modernity to the new build component of the scheme whilst complementing the surrounding buildings. The tonal palette of the proposed design draws inspiration from the existing Marlborough Street facades but with contemporary detailing which aids legibility to the modern insertion in the street scene.

The vacant former supermarket which occupies this site closed in May 2017 following years of reduced trade buoyed up the introduction of significant areas of out-of-

town mass retail. As such the proposals primarily seek to offer a more flexible retail setting that is in line with current letting demands in the town. The refurbished retail space will offer enhanced in-town convenience shopping to residents to reduce the need to travel by car. The regeneration of the site will also re-animate a long since dormant site in a prominent part of the historic town.

The project was commenced through an initial feasibility exercise which we undertook in by the practice in 2020 and has since grown to consider a neighbouring listed vacant former public house. The project has engaged all aspects of our interdisciplinary team including Urban Designers, Town Planners, Architects and Heritage specialists. The team's previous experience of interdisciplinary projects located in conservation areas and in working with listed buildings, ensures a joined up and respectful approach to contemporary design in a historic setting.

The second site comprises a redundant and vacant former industrial site on the edge of the town centre heart space. WWA has been involved with this site for a significant period and with numerous changes in project scope and ownership.

The development is to be defined at two scales. The domestic scale within the site and the relationship with the larger townscape with distant views towards the site from the south and northernmost blocks along Lechlade Road and open countryside beyond.

The design proposals are contemporary in appearance; however, the base forms and proportions are taken from local buildings. The proposed materiality has been treated similarly with similar colours and textures whilst not rigidly copying the site's immediate context. This will enable the scheme to sit well in its surroundings, aiding the legibility

of the development whilst not proposing a pastiche approach.

The key component of creating a successful place will be the integration of soft landscaping, which break up and soften the shared surface spaces. The landscape strategy enhances the setting of the proposed dwellings and masks the impact of parked cars on the shared surface street, ensuring the development is not dominated by vehicles.

Ultimately, our experiences in delivering a range of projects with Faringdon Town Centre in recent years has shown us the power that well planned urban scale interventions can have on the wider townscape. The projects, through their individual design development work in isolation, however on a cumulative basis redress the imbalance of years of lack of investment and or mismanagement to have a greater impact than the sum of their parts when developed on a unified design led approach.







# ABINGDON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Abingdon-upon-Thames, Oxfordshire

## MASTERPLAN

Abingdon Preparatory School appointed WWA to analyse the suitability of existing teaching and support accommodations at the school and develop a strategy to resolve the operational challenges of the site. The school is located within a Grade 2 listed building which has been extended and remodelled on an ad-hoc basis over many decades.

Our study identified a lack of space to deliver key areas of the curriculum properly and a lack of coherence in the spatial arrangement of the school resulting from years of piecemeal development. This is often typical of schools and colleges where no long-term vision or 'masterplan' for future development has been conceived.

The focus of our masterplan was not about increasing the capacity of the school in terms of pupil numbers, but rather to ensure the school has the buildings and facilities needed to deliver its vision and compete effectively in the marketplace.

Having devised a strategy for rationalising the school's facilities, it was then possible to develop a brief for the design of additional accommodation necessary to modernise and deliver the school's long-term vision.

After completing the masterplan, WWA Studios was then engaged to deliver the proposed improvements at the school which included internal re-ordering of space and the creation of newly built facilities. Given the sensitivities of the heritage asset and its semi-rural setting, our town planning and conservation team worked diligently to secure planning and listed building consent for significant alteration and extension works at the school.

The project includes the following new elements: construction of a new music department, CDT and IT

facilities, and the provision of new classrooms to provide a permanent replacement for temporary classrooms currently in use at the school. The accommodation also enables the reorganisation of existing facilities, creating

a more efficient and practical organisation of the school's layout with a large library at its heart, acting as a shared resource for pupils of all ages.









# LONG HANBOROUGH

Long Hanborough, Oxfordshire

## LARGESCALE RESIDENTIAL

WWA were appointed to redesign an existing outline consented scheme for residential development, secured by the practices planning team. The revised masterplan for 169 new dwellings in Long Hanborough integrated the development seamlessly into the existing village fabric. A new pedestrian route and woodland planting extend the natural landscape from the north of Hardswell, ensuring continuity with the surrounding environment. These landscape features, including an East/West planting strip, mitigate the perceived scale of the development by interspersing housing with green belts, softening its presence along Witney Road.

The development's edge along Witney Road is thoughtfully framed by the existing 'Old Police House' and a new proposed doctor's surgery, maintaining the traditional character of buildings set back behind minimal landscaping along the entire prominent 2500m stretch. A landscaped boundary defines the rear of the properties, connecting seamlessly with the existing 'Old Police House' and Slatters Court, enhancing the cohesion of the area.

Pedestrian connectivity was improved with a proposed walking leisure loop that winds through new woodland and around the development, promoting active and sustainable movement. The masterplan also prioritizes biodiversity, preserving existing hedgerows and creating a new woodland link to offer additional habitats for local wildlife.

A sensitive landscape design responds to the site's character, ensuring that the development complements its surroundings. The strong landscape edges mitigate the perceived coalescence with Freeland, maintaining a clear distinction between the two settlements. Central green spaces within the development echo the integral green

areas that have naturally emerged in the existing village over time.

Overall, the design fosters a mixed, vibrant community that contributes to meeting local housing needs while

preserving the area's environmental and aesthetic qualities. In addition to the new family housing realised, the practice also delivered a new, purpose built GP surgery for our client.









## SMALLSCALE RESIDENTIAL

The practice is experienced in successfully delivering smaller-scale residential developments for a variety of PLC and SME clients. WWA was appointed to deliver this small-scale urban extension to the village of Bovingdon on behalf of Cala Homes and Homes England. The proposals are for the re-development of a Ministry of Justice legacy site, directly adjacent to the former Bovingdon Airfield now occupied by ITV Studios. Owing to its previous uses the site is severely constrained with large areas which are not suitable for development.

In coordination with the wider project team, WWA was initially appointed to complete a feasibility review for the site as part of a land acquisition bid. On successfully securing the site, the practice was then instructed to develop the feasibility concepts into detailed designs in support of a full planning application. The initial masterplan for 43 dwellings was subjected to 2 rounds of collaborative pre-application review with the local planning authority, as well as a round of key stakeholder engagement with the parish council.

Owing to the various considerations discussed through the pre-submission design development and stakeholder engagement the proposed design was subject to several rounds of iterative review and refinement. The practice worked hard to balance these competing objectives with the overall coverage, design intent and mix of dwellings maintained despite an overall reduction in developable area.

The final scheme represents a contextually led addition to the village, offering enhanced desire line routes across the site, whilst positively addressing the retained mature tree belt and newly proposed areas of landscaped public open space.







# MEET OUR EXPERT TEAM

WWA is an innovative multi-disciplinary practice of Architects, Urban Designers and Town Planners with a rich pedigree of successful projects delivered over our 140 year history. We offer outstanding client focussed services embracing the natural crossover between built environment disciplines and we consistently deliver high quality projects on time and on budget.

Our team of town planners offer added value to clients with an exceptional success rate in achieving planning consent.

Find out more about our team and the outstanding projects they deliver, via our website and social media.



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