

# graphics *for* **URBAN DESIGN**

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Published by Thomas Telford Publishing, Thomas Telford Ltd, 1 Heron Quay, London E14 4JD. URL: [www.thomastelford.com](http://www.thomastelford.com)

Distributors for Thomas Telford books are

USA: ASCE Press, 1801 Alexander Bell Drive, Reston, VA 20191-4400, USA

Japan: Maruzen Co. Ltd, Book Department, 3-10 Nihonbashi 2-chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103

Australia: DA Books and Journals, 648 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham 3132, Victoria

First published 2006

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Also available from Thomas Telford Books:

*Urban design guidance*. ISBN: 07277 3135 1

*The value of urban design*. ISBN: 07277 2981 0

*By design: Better places to live*. ISBN: 07277 3037 1

*By design: Better places to work*. ISBN: 07277 3398 2

ISBN: 0 7277 3390 0

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Designed and typeset by Urban Graphics  
[www.urban-graphics.co.uk](http://www.urban-graphics.co.uk)

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Latimer Trend and Company Limited, Plymouth



**David Stuart Walton** 1938–2006

This book is dedicated to David Stuart Walton, planner and urban designer, who played an important part in the origination and structure of this book, but sadly passed away before it was completed.

His clarity of approach to urban design is represented in many of the images included in this book. His wit and intellect, and his ability to identify and focus on what was important, were an inspiration to those who worked with him.

## The sponsors

We would like to thank the sponsors of this book for providing support, guidance and many of the examples of work within it.

**Urban Graphics** is a collective of creative designers and cartographers specialising in graphic design and illustration for urban design, planning and transport. They have worked throughout the UK with a variety of clients from both the public and private sectors. Effective communication is their main aim, achieved through a graphic language developed from traditional cartography and urban design techniques.



[www.urban-graphics.co.uk](http://www.urban-graphics.co.uk)

**CABE** the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment is the Government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space. As a public body, it encourages policymakers to create places that work for people. It helps local planning authorities apply national design policy and offers expert advice to developers and architects. It shows public sector clients how to commission buildings that meet the needs of their users. It aims to inspire the public to demand more from their buildings and spaces. Advising, influencing and inspiring, it works to create well-designed, welcoming places.



[www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)

**Urban Design Group** was founded in 1978. The Urban Design Group is a campaigning group supported by its membership – urban designers, architects, planners, engineers, surveyors, landscape architects, journalists, public artists and many more. The Urban Design quarterly magazine is the leading journal in its field.



[www.udg.org.uk](http://www.udg.org.uk)

**David Lock Associates** is one of the leading town planning and urban design practices in the UK. DLA has a sixty-strong multi-disciplinary team embracing architecture, landscape and graphic design, as well as the core disciplines of planning and urban design. It offers a complete package of consultancy services to achieve creative solutions on a diversity of projects from town centre regeneration to new settlements and strategic planning to implementation.



[www.davidlock.com](http://www.davidlock.com)

**Gillespies** specialises in creating places and spaces of quality. The practice has evolved from providing landscape design in the early 1960s to delivering comprehensive integrated services in urban design, landscape design, environmental planning and, in some regions, architecture. The firm's approach to design stems from an understanding and an appreciation of place. In a world where space is precious, it's ethos is to work with the defining characteristics and inherent qualities of place to create powerful and original ideas, which inspire clients, the stakeholders and the community – helping to create vibrant spaces that invigorate the surroundings and engage users.

**GILLESPIES**

[www.gillespies.co.uk](http://www.gillespies.co.uk)

**John Thompson & Partners** are urban designers, architects and community planning specialists with substantial experience of large-scale residential and mixed-use development in both the public and private sectors. They are involved in a wide range of projects throughout the UK and across Europe including new settlements, urban extensions, waterside developments, inner city and rural renaissance and heritage-led regeneration. The practice places a particular emphasis on delivering creative solutions to development which simultaneously achieve physical, social and environmental change.



[www.jtp.co.uk](http://www.jtp.co.uk)

**Roger Evans Associates Ltd (REAL)** are architects and urban designers. Over the last decade REAL has worked on over 100 masterplans for town centres, city quarters and urban extensions across the UK and abroad. National awards include RTPI 'Planning for New Neighbourhoods', RIBA/RTPI Housing Design Awards, Civic Trust for public realm design and co-recipient of CABE Building for Life Gold Standard Awards.



**ROGER EVANS ASSOCIATES**

[www.rogerevans.com](http://www.rogerevans.com)

## Foreword

Graphic design has been around since mankind discovered that images are an essential complement to words. Urban design may seem a more recent activity, but the essential components have been practised ever since we started to build and plant.

Modern pressures for both increased development and environmental stewardship strengthen the importance of communication between the designer and the client, the manager and the managed, public agencies and the general public, and the many professions involved in achieving sustainable development.

Good communication skills can establish early mutual understanding between participants in any project. This understanding can stimulate the generation of ideas that might otherwise be missed. Accurate representation of ideas can highlight their strengths and weaknesses, and help refine the preferred solution. Honest representation of the solution can help secure the agreement, commitment and enthusiasm of all involved, and establish realistic expectations of what a project can achieve.

Graphic images can communicate what may be impossible, or at least extremely long-winded, in words. Graphic design is therefore an essential component of the urban design process.

The collaboration between graphic designers and the rest of the urban design team, has not, until now, been given the scrutiny it deserves. This book gathers together a host of examples of projects that have succeeded because the teams recognised that this collaboration is essential. It has been written by practitioners with a wealth of experience. It will I'm sure be a prompt for those already engaged in graphics for urban design, and an invaluable source book for those, students or practitioners, who are coming to it for the first time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Bee', written in a cursive style.

**Steven Bee**

## Illustrations

The plans, diagrams and graphics contained within this book do not always represent real proposals. They are used to illustrate successful graphic techniques rather than explain specific projects.

## Scope of the book

This book provides guidance on how to use graphic techniques to stimulate and communicate ideas through the urban design process. It is not a guide to the urban design process itself, nor is it an instruction manual. Specialised topics such as how to draw maps, collect data, build perspectives, operate computer software programmes, or to manipulate photographs, are covered more fully in technical training courses and other publications.

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## How to use this book

This book highlights messages in different ways, each graphically distinct. These features appear at appropriate places and provide specific information relating to the adjacent topic.

### Watchpoints

These give simple tips, hints, checklists or guidance at the end of a topic. Watchpoints are displayed in a box:

**What needs to be illustrated on the context**

- Strategic location of the site.
- Local context.
- Site and its neighbouring components
  - routes
  - cycleways/footpaths
  - local centres
  - schools
  - visual connections/views
  - shopping
  - public transport
  - open spaces etc.
- Key contextual problems
  - opportunities and constraints
  - barriers to movement
  - SWOT analysis.

### What it shows/ why it is good graphically

Throughout the book there are explanations of what images represent and why they succeed. This appears in bullet points under the headings shown below:

**What it shows:**

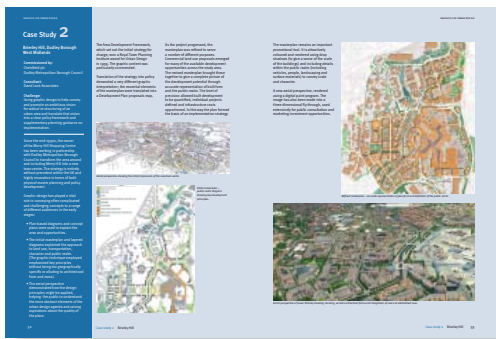
- range of alternative land uses within the grid format of a new quarter of Edinburgh, showing the inbuilt flexibility of the typical development block
- variety of street types and appropriate uses fronting them
- alternative uses for the core of the block, including employment, 'mews' housing and public space.

**Why it is good graphically:**

- shows concept without being precise
- hand-drawn to emphasis the ideas stage
- all uses annotated.

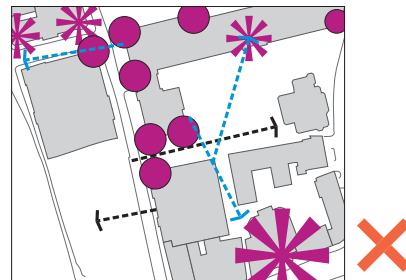
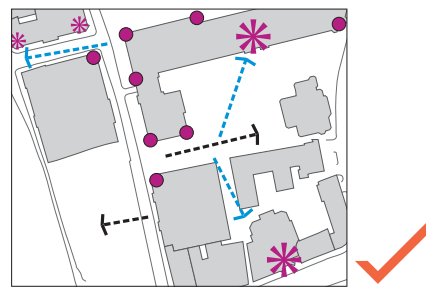
### Case studies

There are four case studies that illustrate how graphics techniques have been employed on commissioned projects. They appear on coloured pages:



### Ticks and crosses

Comparisons of good and bad examples are made and are illustrated with a tick (good example) or a cross (bad example):





# Introduction

- o.1 The purpose of this book | o.2 Effective communication |
- o.3 Teamwork and leadership

This book provides a guide to producing high quality plans and illustrations for urban design projects; presenting material that is clear, relevant, accessible, honest and attractive.

## 0.1 The purpose of this book

The book is for:

- urban designers, architects, planners, landscape architects, surveyors and engineers engaged in urban design projects
- graphic designers, artists and the producers and publishers of urban design work
- those who commission graphics for urban design
- educators and students in urban design and graphics.

The graphical language of urban design has an important role to play in promoting urban quality; creating visions which inspire and motivate; engaging communities and others involved in planning and development; and presenting information objectively and honestly for assessment purposes.



*2-D illustration of Nottingham city centre masterplan*



*3-D computer model of Spencer Dock, Dublin*



*3-D computer model of Fletchergate, Nottingham*



*Street level artists perspective, Mill Square, Peterborough*

The technology now available provides designers and producers of graphic images with enormous choice. The graphic vocabulary continues to evolve. This brings exciting opportunities and challenges in choosing the right mix of techniques combining computer-generated images, hand-drawn plans and sketches and photography in new ways. This book aims to help urban design teams select the most appropriate form of graphic communication for the type of project, and the distinct stages of a project.

Until now there has been no reference work, no guide to the range of techniques that has emerged through practice. This book is intended to provide such a guide, but it is not the last word. Techniques will continue to evolve through practice. We hope this guide will be widely used and help those involved to develop better graphic techniques in urban design, furthering the communication of ideas.

There are people and organisations who do the stuff of this book very well. They have provided the body of work from which we have drawn to illustrate this book, and offer examples of good practice for us all to follow.



*3-D computer block model of South Bank, Peterborough*

## 0.2 Effective communication

Realising successful urban projects depends upon effective communication.

The Government's modernised planning regime places strong emphasis on the full involvement of local communities at every stage of policy and project development. This requires first-rate communication throughout the consultation process.

The teams involved in the design and delivery of urban design projects include a wide range of professions and specialists who need to communicate effectively and speedily with each other. Projects can be compromised or even fail through breakdowns in communication that lead to misunderstanding.

There are two sides to the communication process. Information and vision need to be transmitted to the target audience using the right media and techniques. In their turn, the audience must be able to understand and engage with the message. Visual techniques play an important role in transferring knowledge and creating a basis for debate.



Public consultation for East Cowes masterplan

The array of techniques and media can be overwhelming, but irrespective of how well these techniques have been mastered, selecting the right form of presentation for the particular audience at the particular stage in the urban design process is the key to success.

Throughout the development process, from the initial concepts to the detailed proposals, the effective communication of information and ideas depends on several interrelated factors including:

- type of information to be presented
- clarity of information
- accuracy and validity of information
- audience awareness and levels of understanding
- media selected to present information.



Interactive computer presentation at Bathgate public consultation

## 0.3 Teamwork and leadership

No guidance can substitute for a well-led, talented and committed design team.

The project designers (architects, urban designers, landscape architects etc.) must be able to recognise when the job switches to the illustrative designers – the graphic designers and artists. There is no definitive point at which this should happen; it depends on the skills in the team, the stage of the project and the messages to be conveyed. Equally, the graphic designers need freedom to exercise their skills and imagination but not to the extent that the graphics, however attractive, detract from the essential urban design messages.

As the range of urban design products grow, so do the range of specialists involved: perspective artists, computer-aided design (CAD) designers, photographic and photo-editing specialists, cartographers, GIS operatives, artists, even cartoonists, may need to be called upon to support the core professionals and graphic designers on the team.

Strong leadership, understanding and deploying the right skills at the right time, listening to all, then deciding is generally the best way forward.