



Royal Town Planning Institute – Northern Branch  
Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March, Gala Theatre, Durham City

Design Matters: Making Successful Places

# Practical Design Coding

Michael Crilly [Urban Design Section Head, Newcastle City Council]

a design code is defined as something “... that sets **rules** for the design of a new development” and “... which is more **regulatory** ...” [CABE *et al* 2005 p15 and p7] because it is informed by a spatial masterplan. The masterplan is the vision ... followed by a code that gives ... **precision** and that is operational” [Murrain 2002].

Definition

# Contradiction

“Good urban design is rarely brought about by .... setting rigid or empirical design standards but by approaches which emphasise design **objectives** or **principles**” [CABE and DETR 2000 p14].

“I wanted us to learn from the best experts abroad, in particular the American **New Urbanists**, who have been using design coding to deliver development with better quality design and community involvement”

[John Prescott's forward in CABE 2005 p5]

[1] systematic approach to the characterisation of existing areas, providing an increased technical understanding of urban form;

[2] a structure to coding for new urban elements and adaptations to existing areas that fit within an existing urban environment.

Definition

# Adaptation

Adaptation in **scale** [Neighbourhood not city]

Adaptation in **spatial application** [Character areas not land use zoning]

Adaptation over **time** [Flexibility through review]

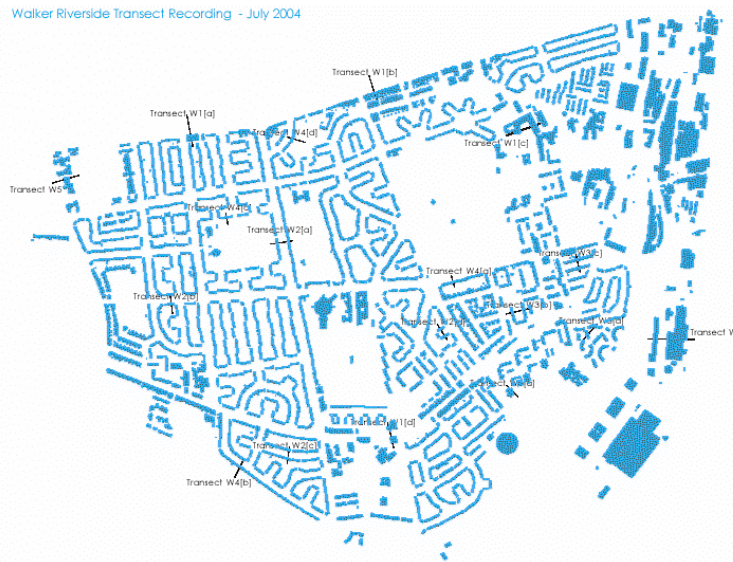
Adaptation in **detail** [multi-disciplinary dealing with development and management]

“... some of our most cherished developments, from the Georgian period through to **Garden Suburbs** ... were based on design codes” [CABE 2005 p6]

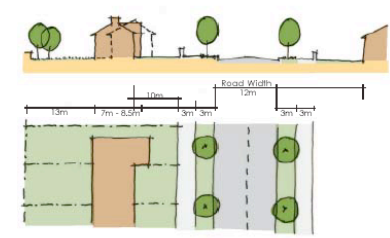
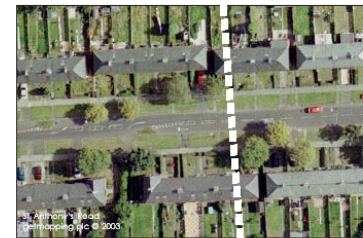
Transect methodology

# Contextual

Walker Riverside Transect Recording - July 2004



Transect W2[a] - 'Garden Suburb' Principal Route

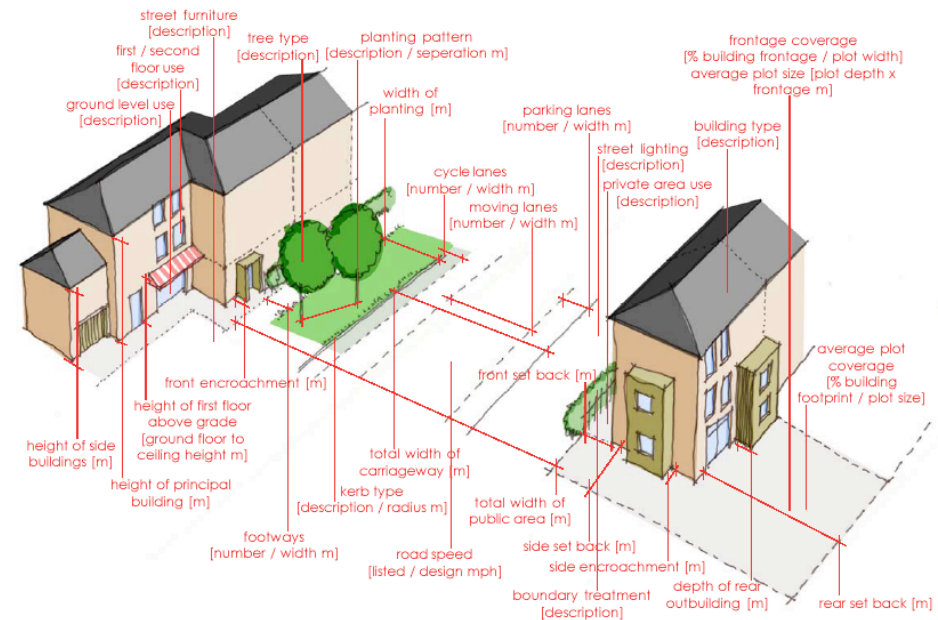
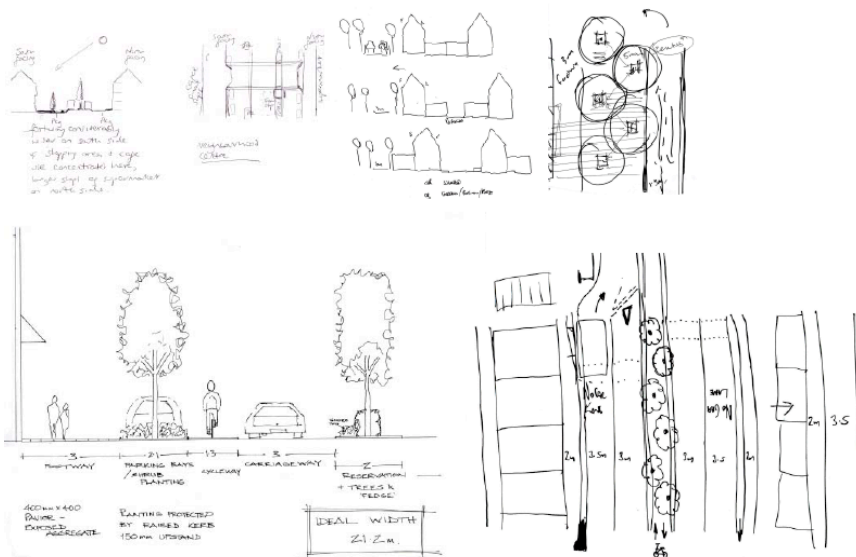


Public realm		Private realm	
Public Area type	residential street - bus route	private area use	garden / hardstand / fence/ hedge
Total width of public area	18.2m	height of principle building	2 storeys
Road speed (litely)	30 mph	height of side buildings	none
total width of carriageway (incl. any on-street parking)	6.2m	height of 1st floor above grade	3m
no. and width of moving lanes	2 way - 3.1m each	building type	double semi / short terrace
no. and width of parking lanes	none	average plot size - frontage	front 4 - 9m
no. and width of footways	2 footways (1.8m + 1.8m)	average plot coverage (%)	depth 25 - 35m
curb type	raised	frontage coverage (%)	80-100%
planting pattern	grass verge (with drive access across) with trees	front set back	5.5 - 7m
width of planting	2 x 4.2m	side set back	no side buildings
tree type	n/a	rear set back	15.0m
corner radius	15m	depth of rear outbuilding	-
cycle lanes	none	front encroachment	canopies - 800mm
width of cycle lanes	n/a	side encroachment	none
misc.	occasional build outs for traffic calming	ground level use	residential
		first floor use	residential
		second floor use	

“Plenty of problems lie ahead, not least in the time it takes to prepare the codes. CABE predicts three to five months plus an adoption period. But they appear to raise development quality and were described at the summit as ‘bureaucracy that saves time’ and ‘a costly process that saves money’. They might even be worthwhile simply for the **inter-professional collaboration** that they promote.” [Fyson 2005 p10 referring to Design Coding workshop held at the UK Urban Summit, Manchester January 2005]

# Inter-disciplinary

Coding Workshop 01 - Examples and options for 'Boulevard'



National level house builders said they were “... waiting with interest as an industry to see what comes out of the pilot programme” [Sue Bridge, Director of Planning and Development at Bellway Homes quoted in Smit 2004 p13]

Process

# Collaborative

Walker Riverside in the context of the City-wide housing market



[market conditions are not primarily based upon housing design and quality but rather the approach to 'place-making' where Walker Riverside becomes an aspirational location of choice for both existing residents and potential 'returners' and 'new-comers' to the city]

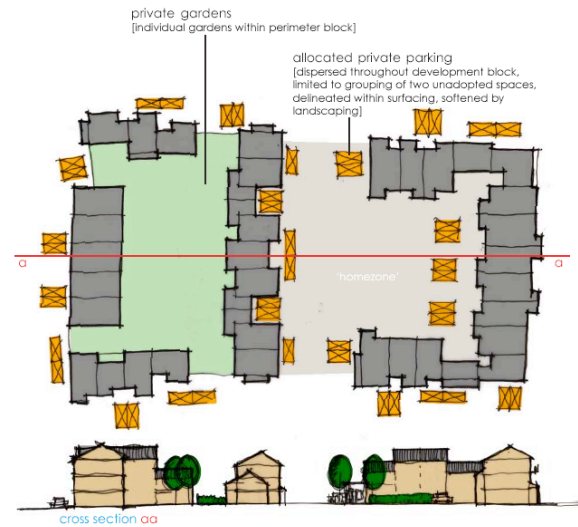
Housing variety at a localised level within Walker Riverside



[local market conditions demonstrate a variety of housing choices and localised but dispirit markets that demonstrate market strength based on design quality and tenure preferences – although the majority of the housing stock within Walker Riverside is homogenous single tenure, single type inter-war garden suburb]

“the development of a code can be an excellent way of capturing and expressing **community values**” [CABE 2003 p5].

# Process Participatory

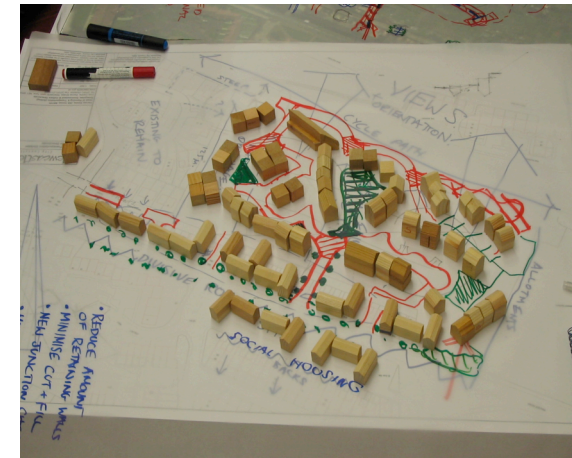
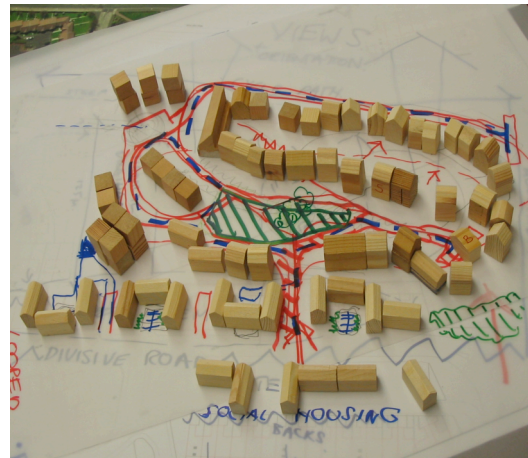
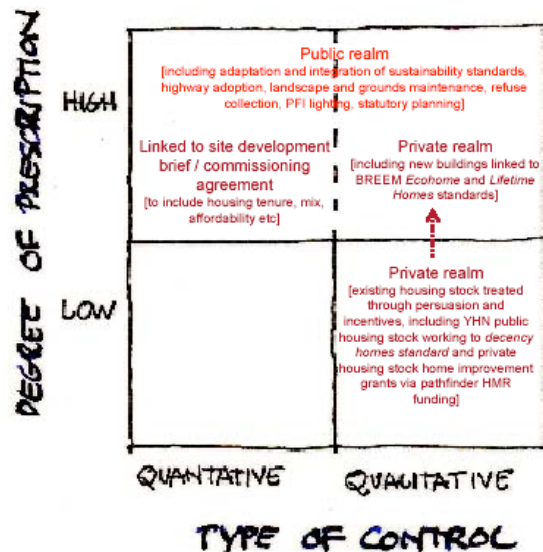




The development of a design code is an **iterative** process, particularly for the national coding pilot projects and "... ultimately, the power of any code is dependent on the system of implementation including the levels of **enforcement**" [CABE 2003 p6] and so the **'code as process'** does not come to a convenient end whenever the drafting and illustration of the documentation has finished.

Process

# Review



No policy contradiction ... BUT tension between the levels of prescription and flexibility and sceptical of appropriateness of codes in all situations

### Key lessons

Is design coding about regulation? **'Yes'** for precise areas of technical and performance standards.

Is design coding about prescription? **'No'** in areas of appearance and aesthetics.

Strength of design coding is as a **process** that has the potential to be **contextual, interdisciplinary, collaborative, participatory** and subject to regular **review**.