

4. Design Detail



Tall towers, blocks and sailing boat masts combine in this view of Vancouver from the harbour

UDP Policy CC3:

The identity and distinctive character of the city centre will be maintained by: Protecting the building fabric and style which make Leeds a unique and attractive city; Encourage good innovative designs for new buildings and spaces; Upgrading the environment where necessary to complement the needs of activities which are essential to the identity, vitality and function of the city centre.

UDP Policy CC8:

Outside the prestige development areas new developments should respect the spatial character and fine grain of the city centre's traditional building blocks and streets. Where new street pattern is to be created, this should generally reflect the traditional street pattern of the city centre.

Different character areas of Leeds should prompt different tall buildings - particularly their connection with the ground



Aspirations

Leeds has developed its own character, ambience and physical appearance mainly through the uses and regeneration of its historic and existing collection of buildings, arcades and spaces. Attempting to mimic other cities would erode this unique quality.

Designers are encouraged to create distinctive tall buildings that are not 'anywhere' buildings but can contribute to the Leeds' family' thus creating local distinctiveness.

Iconic or 'trophy' buildings will help to create that distinctiveness but lesser designed tall buildings will need to be inventive with the use of forms and materials to reinforce that local distinctiveness. The image and identity of Leeds can only be improved and maintained by good urban sculpture.

Proposals should be compatible with the existing Conservation Area Policies and Urban Design frameworks e.g. UDP, LDF and CCUDS.

Context

It is important to integrate any tall building into its surroundings particularly where the nearby streetscape is tightly knit and distinctive. Tall buildings can reinforce any local distinctiveness but a given context could determine height and form. Previously modernist architects did not show much respect for context with devastating results - eroding distinctive urban character and quality of space.

Tall building proposals will not be allowed to block important views. It is interesting to note the varied urban morphology of Leeds. The inner zone and its western extent does however contain strong grid patterns which should be respected as in the USA examples where tall buildings are positioned within the block, or well set back, or as podium buildings rarely closing off street views. The periphery of the grid may however present other opportunities for tall buildings.

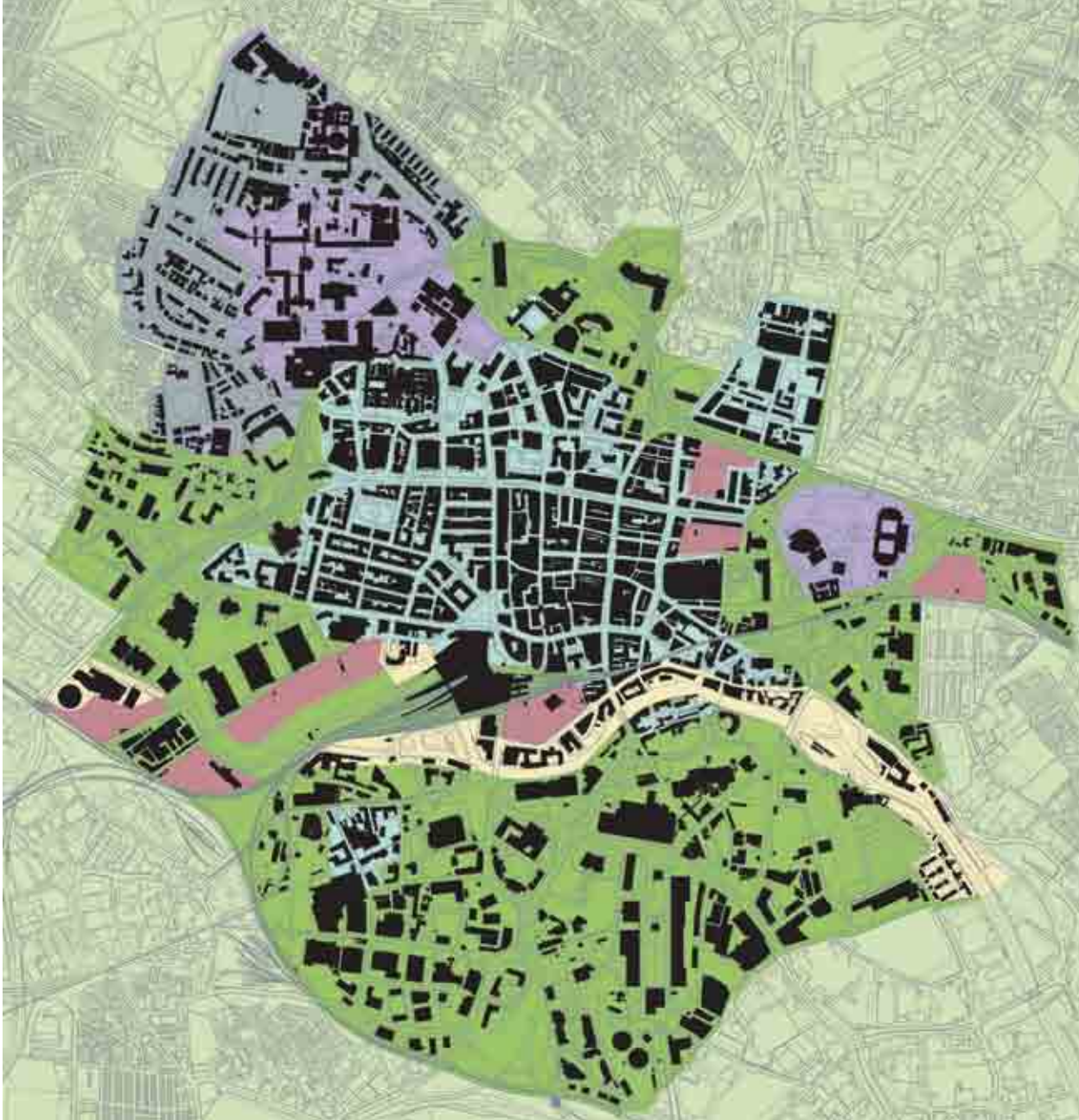
The local topography is an important consideration in understanding the local context. Building high within the city's topography may be valid and offer opportunities to say build up a ridge or high point e.g. Elmwood Road/ Tower House area. Alternatively, it may be that it is important to not make an impact e.g. in the vicinity of The University of Leeds Parkinson Tower which deserves its own setting without competing against another high building.

Key Design Principles

- Ensure tall buildings are **imaginative high quality designs** with a cohesive quality for all features so that the design works as a whole.
- Ensure tall buildings respond appropriately to the **distinctive local character** and ensure there is no visual harm to historic buildings and views.
- **Minimise energy use and waste** (both during construction and throughout the life of the building) including using renewable energy production where appropriate.
- Use **sustainable materials**.
- Tops of tall buildings should **add appropriate interest to the skyline**.
- **Create active ground level frontages** to the adjacent streets.
- **Consider recladding** existing tall buildings to provide a sustainable high quality solution before proposing demolition and new build.

4. Design Detail - Context

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Designers should consequently aim to make tall buildings compatible with the local context by analysing the topography, local urban design framework and character in order to avoid repeating the unsuccessful approach of piecemeal ad hoc tall building design of former years. This type of analysis will be an essential part of any future submission for planning permission.

- < Urban morphology map of Leeds, taken from CCUDS
- > Large dark form of the new building is inappropriate and out of scale with its context in the historic fabric of Rochdale town centre



- << West Riding House, Albion Place, Leeds. Ignores local context so appears completely alien to its historic surroundings
- < This southwards view down Scott Hall Road over to the Elmwood Road / Tower House area of Leeds shows how the various individual towers combine to create a greater mass - a cluster
- < Elmwood Road / Tower House area, the highest point in Leeds City Centre could reinforce its existing context of tall buildings



4. Design Detail - Architectural Quality

Height >
Proposed buildings which rise taller than the University Parkinson Building

Scale >>
Natwest Tower, London, towers over the historic building but is in scale with the more recent adjacent tall developments

Massing >
Interesting massing and relationship between the building forms of student housing and on Marlborough Street, Ibis hotel, Leeds

UDP Policy N13:

The design of all new buildings should be of high quality and have regard to the character and appearance of their surroundings. Good contemporary design which is sympathetic or complementary to its setting will be welcomed.

UDP Policy BD4:

All mechanical plant and associated pipework, lifts and other mechanical equipment and fire escape stairs should be normally be contained within the envelope of the building. All service and delivery areas should be screened from view as far as possible.

Architectural Quality

Hopefully designers will design tall buildings with integrity without blindly following architectural fashions. The appropriate use of form, materials and available technology should produce good solutions which will work well and look good day and night.

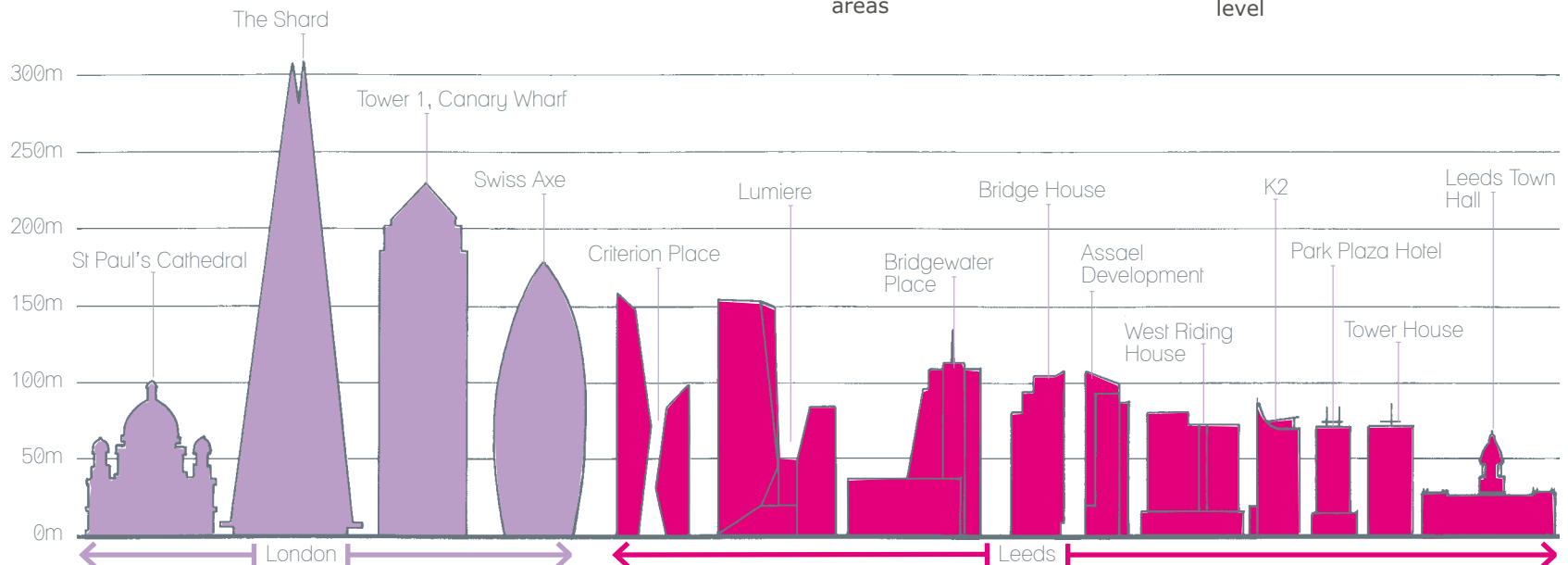
A successful impact on the urban silhouette and street level will be devalued if the architectural design fails to impress. It is important that developers and designers take into consideration the following factors that determine architectural design in order to achieve a successful outcome and prevent a negative effect on the urban environment:-

- Height
- Scale
- Massing
- Form/ shape
- Style/ fashion?



- Plain / simple / articulated forms
- Visual lightness / heaviness
- Image / Iconic?
- Relationship with other neighbouring buildings
- Expression or concealment of structure
- Innovation in structural design
- Reflections - light catching facets at different angles and times of the day
- Materials
- Cladding and varied façade treatments
- Patterns – striking or subdued / vertical or horizontal emphasis
- Glass / relationship with solid areas
- Applied technology e.g. photo-voltaic panels
- Lighting at night
- Applied technology e.g. wind energy
- Features within structures e.g. apertures
- Distinctiveness
- Successful interface at street level

Height >
A comparison of heights between existing and proposed tall buildings of Leeds and London



4. Design Detail - Architectural Quality



- < **Visual Lightness**
The interesting played forms of the buildings and choice of materials for Criterion Place create a visual lightness (Ian Simpson Architects)



- ^ **Iconic**
Some tall buildings are very image conscious and if built may well become icons
- << **Style / Fashion**
All sorts of forms can be used for tall buildings - prosod by Brewster Bye Architects
- <<< **Simple Form**
Tower House Leeds
- << **Visual Heaviness**
White concrete elevation to Premier Travel Inn Manchester creates visual heaviness
- < **Relationship with other neighbouring buildings**
needs to be born in mind regardless of their size as this view of Canary Wharf London shows unrelated scale and relationship within adjacent buildings

Beware of 'fashionable architecture' as it can quickly date

4. Design Detail - Architectural Quality

Expression or Concealment of Structure >

This view of the Swiss Re Tower during construction illustrates an interesting contrast between the completed curved glass covered building with the uncompleted part with the structure more clearly expressed



Innovation in Structural Design >>

Expressing the structure can be a way of creating interest in a building as done on the - John Hancock Building, Chicago

Reflections >

The Bourse on Boar Lane illustrates an interesting effect created with multifaceted reflections especially when there is something worth reflecting



Materials / Claddings >>

Use of different coloured panels can create unusual effects as shown by these two examples:

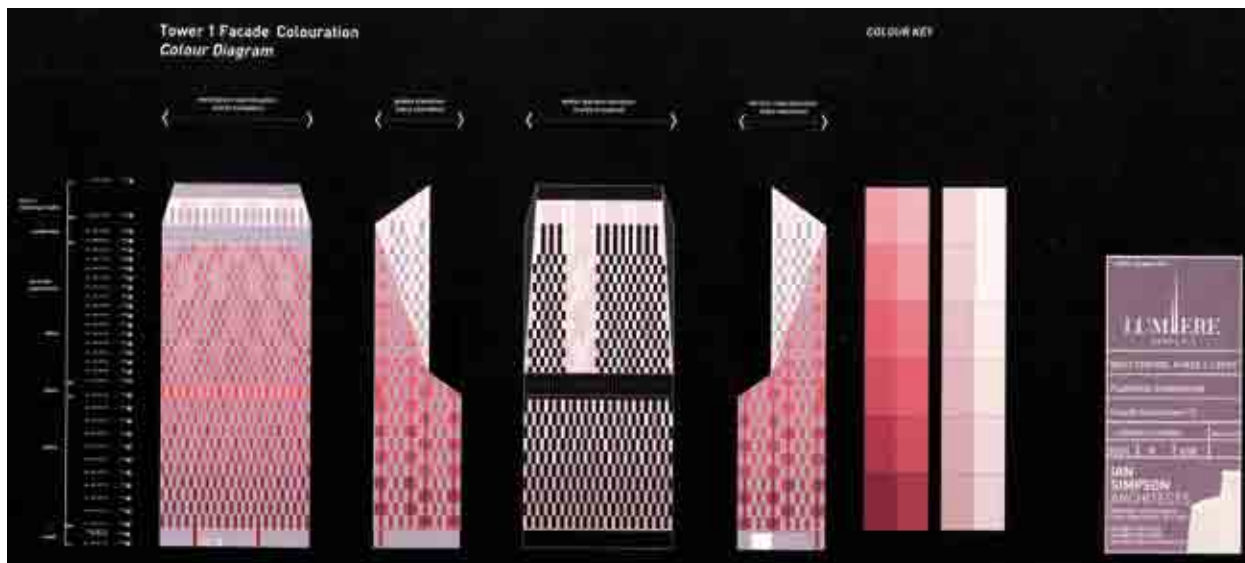
Music College, Quarry Hill >>
and

Student flats at Marsh Lane >>>



Patterns >

Façades studies for Lumiere create interesting patterns

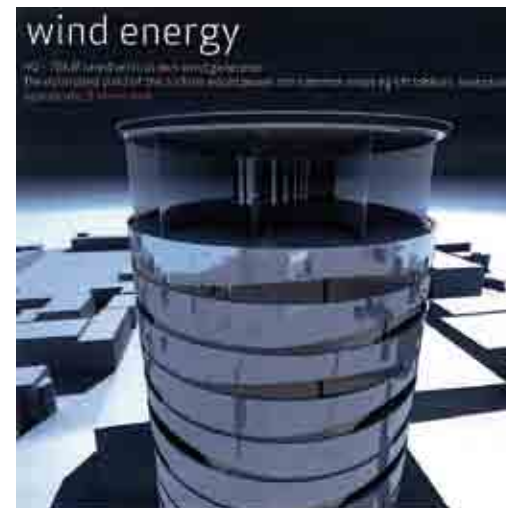


Distinctiveness >
Proposed Lumiere Leeds,
Ian Simpson Architects

4. Design Detail - Architectural Quality



- << **Glass Treatment**
The finished Swiss Re Tower, commonly known as the gherkin, illustrates the different treatments beneath the glass surface to good effect
- < **Applied Technology**
Park Lane College has used photo-voltaic panels to interesting effect



UDP Policy BD14:
Carefully designed floodlighting schemes will be encouraged, particularly for distinctive or important buildings.

- <<< **Lighting at Night**
It is also important to consider what the building will look like at night and take the opportunities presented by appropriate lighting as seen in these illustrations of the 'Kissing Towers' (left) on Criterion Place and the Spiracle Tower (right)
- < **Applied Technology**
Wind energy is to be utilised in the proposed Spiracle Tower, Leeds

Form / Shape / Distinctiveness
Two contrasting buildings:

- << Proposed Spiracle Tower, Leeds by MAKE / Carey Jones
- < New York Skyscraper



4. Design Detail - Tops



The distinctive top of the Chrysler Building in New York has become an instantly recognisable form - in effect an icon >

The form of the top of the NLA Tower in East Croydon is lost at night but the lighting scheme creates an interesting coloured pattern which in itself creates the interest >>

Photo courtesy of Simon Stacey



UDP Policy BD13:

Telecommunications development will be permitted when all practical steps have been taken to locate and design such equipment that:
i) sensitive locations are avoided,
ii) visual intrusion is minimised,
iii) mast sharing or existing tall structures are utilised wherever possible.

Tops

Tall buildings can enhance skylines and panoramas if their tops are well designed and visually striking.

Tall buildings have a major impact on the city skyline. It is important that this impact is positive with distinctive designed tops or roofs.

Tops of buildings can provide:

- Identity and image
- Reference and orientation
- Visual incident
- Urban sculpture
- Landmark status



The following indicate a wide range of innovative forms that contribute to their local skylines.

There are many ways to create distinctive tops for tall buildings which include :-

- Sloping roofs
- Curved roofs
- Stepped forms
- Top storey setbacks
- Conical shapes
- Communication masts
- Observation galleries
- Open balconies
- Flagpoles
- Penthouses
- Special lighting
- Selective lighting
- Laser beams
- Slenderness
- Bulk
- Bulbous form
- Panoramic restaurants

Wind turbines and solar panels on top of a housing block in Bradford create an interesting and distinctive top which is emphasised at night by a carefully designed lighting scheme >

Distinctive tops of housing blocks, a different approach to existing plant rooms. Motherwell, Scotland >>

Example of roof top clutter - which should be recovered >

Worldwide examples of interesting tops for tall buildings v



4. Design Detail - Relationship to the Street



< Desolate junction with ground, negative, inactive space around tower level with solid wall around at Tower House

<< Winter garden / Atrium transition from outside to inside for the proposed Lumiere development on Wellington Street by Ian Simpson

< Wasted opportunity of providing a good interface with the street in Stockport - the whole of the ground floor comprising of car parking between the V shaped columns, the main entrance is in the insignificant extension on the right



UDP Policy BD5:

All new buildings should be designed with consideration given to both their own amenity and that of their surroundings. This should include usable space, privacy and satisfactory penetration of daylight and sunlight.

UDP Policy CC12:

In new development, new public open spaces and pedestrian ways must be related to and connect with the existing pattern of streets, routes and spaces, including the river and canal walkways.

UDP Policy CC13:

New public spaces must be imaginatively designed to complement their location and to ensure that they are attractive, comfortable, safe to use and accessible for all.

< West Riding House entrance which is lost between well used shops.

< People enjoying proximity with main entrance at the Louvre, Paris

Developers and designers should aim to PROVIDE:-

- High quality public realm and human scale
- Good street level architecture and manners
- Good active frontages
- User friendly and legible entrances and approaches
- Sunshine zones
- Good sized open space in front of tall buildings
- Legible and good links with transport and pedestrian routes
- Settings for existing nearby buildings of visual prominence
- A good affect on a place by enhancing and regenerating it
- Good microclimate and comfort zone
- Spatial interaction with surrounding area
- Positive space and urban vitality
- Counteraction to downdraughts
- Good landscaping and amenity space which should link, if possible, to the local green infrastructure network

Developers and designers need to AVOID:-

- Dead space
- Urban barrenness
- Windswept environments
- Permanent shadow areas
- Erosion of the distinctiveness of nearby buildings of visual prominence
- Visually damaging an existing place/ strong sense of place
- Negative space – a feeling of isolation
- Damaging existing important and strategic views within the streetscene
- Negative impact on local flora and fauna especially if adjacent to a wildlife corridor



Relationship to the Street

Tall buildings rarely possess a successful join at street level. There are many examples of blighted areas such as those in London and New York when tall buildings fail to create a positive junction with the street. It is interesting to note that many books on the design of tall buildings and skyscrapers contain very few examples of good interface at street level.

4. Design Detail - Relationship to the Street

Unfriendly main entrance
in back street for Park Plaza
off Boar Lane >

Activity and good public realm
at La Defense, Paris >>

Whilst the Lloyds Building
in London has interest it is inactive
at street level resulting in a poor
relationship with the public realm >

Good interface with street
and provision of public realm at the
Swiss Re, London >>



Good public realm and activity
for the tall building in St Helen's
Square, London >>

Use of public art and
good interface with street at
Lloyds TSB Bank on Park Row v



A grand entrance approach with
public realm leads one into the
heart of the complex at Bridgewater
Place on Victoria Road >>



4. Design Detail - Urban Blocks - Uses



Uses

Tall buildings should have active ground floors. Public access is particularly important and useful for introducing new uses at ground floor levels and selected higher levels e.g. shops, bars, restaurants etc. Many American examples rely on a café/restaurant at the top to create a public vantage point and viewing area. Space underground tall buildings can be used for car parking, facilities for residents or connections to transport.

Recent trends and different life expectancies of uses reveal that the tower block dedicated to a single use is becoming rarer. The introduction of mixed uses is recognised as a key to the sustainability of tall buildings with recent applications containing residential, hotel, offices, service levels to those uses, leisure and retail in the same tower. It is anticipated that surgeries, crèches and other communal activities will be included in future – a move towards mixed use vertical communities. Apart from assisting in the creation of good frontage and interface with the street, mixed uses give the opportunity for varied façade treatment and articulation of form.

< Mixed uses have created different forms for each of the blocks that form Bridgewater Place, Victoria Road
Aedas Architects

< The podium of K2 includes different uses which have created an active frontage at street level

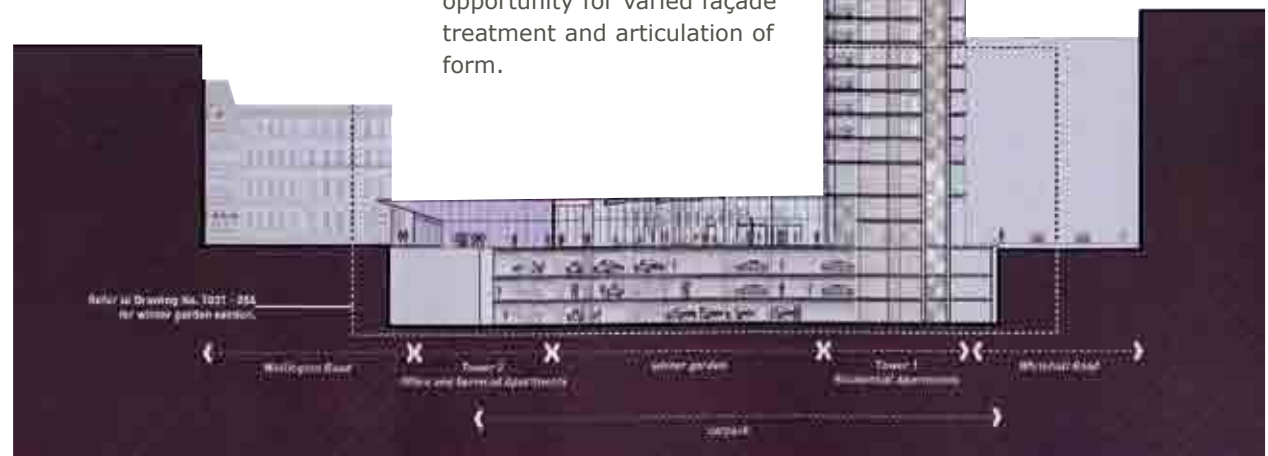
<< The atrium runs through Bridgewater Place off which there are mixed uses to create an active street within the building away from the traffic
Aedas Architects

< Offices, apartments, health facilities and hotel at the proposed Lumiere on Wellington Street
Ian Simpson Architects

<< Mixed uses in the podium of Park Plaza on the corner of City Square and Boar Lane create an active ground floor

Urban Blocks

High rise point blocks can also rise out of urban blocks. The use of a well designed podium of a number of storeys can reduce the scale of the high buildings as experienced at ground level as well as reducing the adverse effect that a tall building can have on street-scene and microclimate.



4. Design Detail - Recladding and Demolition

Examples of existing buildings along north/south spine of central Leeds which have mostly been reclad to create a modern up-to-date image from the tired old towers



Former Ventura Building



Tower House



K2



Albion Street



UDP Policy CC7:

Redevelopment of the city centre tower blocks will be encouraged where their appearance is unattractive and buildings are functionally obsolete.

Recladding and Demolition

There is the opportunity to refurbish and reclad the two towers on the left (Merrion House and Technology College) as has been done with K2 (right) which has been transformed from a dated concrete office block into a modern apartment tower

When buildings come to the end of their lives it is important to consider the following:-

- Should they be retained and given a facelift in view of their contribution to the skyline?
- Should they be used as a precedent to introduce more tall buildings e.g. north/ south spine?
- Should they make way to allow the joining up of the historic zones that interface on either side of the north / south spine?

Due to the limited available development space, developers need to consider if the refurbishment and re-cladding of an existing tall building could be advantageous.

1) Re-enveloping?

- Materials
 - Colours
 - Jointing
 - Pattern of cladding
- A new coat! A high tech look? The Leeds Look?!

2) Re-silhouetting?

- Distinctive form to top of building
- New identity and 'personality'

3) How to do it well

Example – K2; Distinctive, sculptural, visually neat and modern image

4) Opportunities

Commercial - Merrion House
Social Housing Blocks - Marlborough Flats and Lovell Court Blocks



COMMENT -

Developers and their architects have recently used hi tech grey cladding panels and terracotta coloured large tiled panels which have contributed to developing a new Leeds image.

It is true that such examples will be seen as the new face of Leeds but there is a danger that this will be interpreted as the latest fashion which could become outdated.

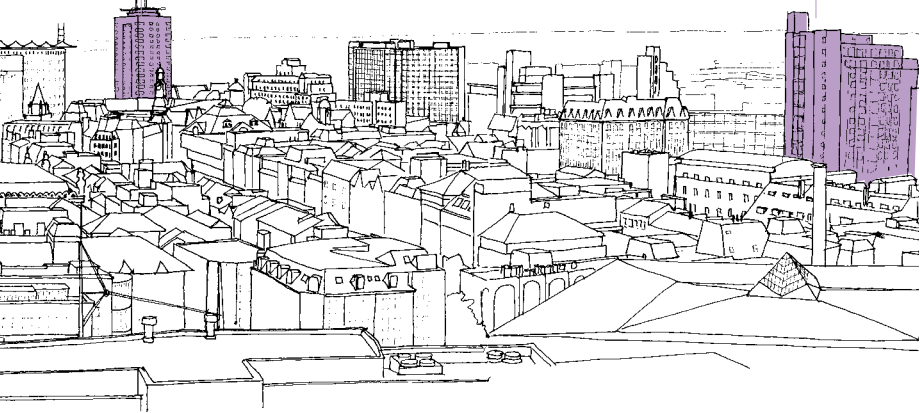
4. Design Detail - Recladding and Demolition



Park Plaza



Former Post office Building



< The recladding of Marlborough Towers offers the opportunity to provide a new positive end of view along the Headrow, Leeds

v There is an opportunity to reclad Lovell Towers to improve the view along Vicar Lane



< A different approach where photo-voltaic panels have been applied to an office building, CIS Building, Manchester

