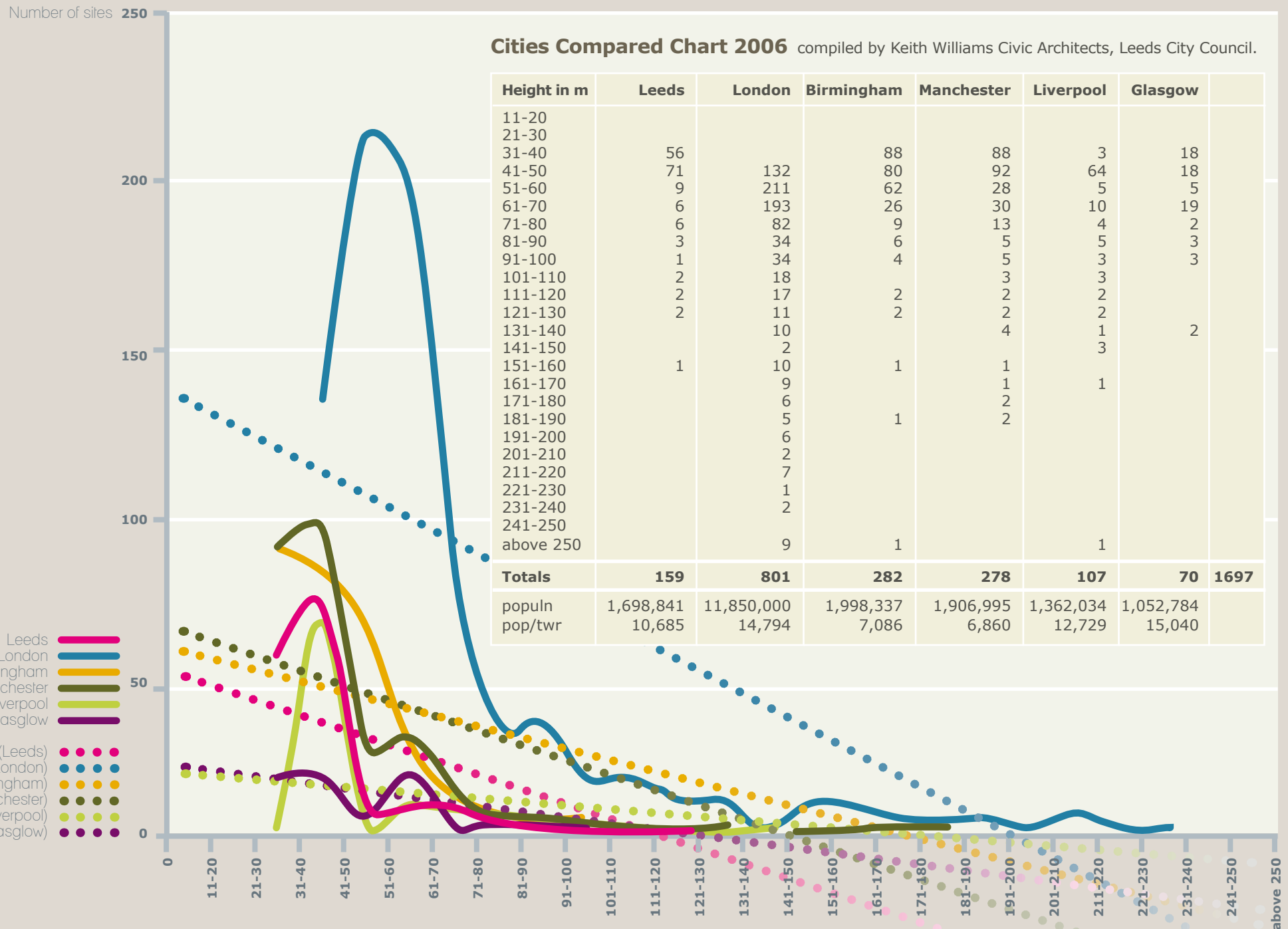


Annexe

Leeds Structures - Existing and Proposed



Design Workshop Findings

Notes of the one-day Workshop exploring the issues for Leeds City Council's Design Guide for Tall Buildings held at the School of the Built Environment, The Brunswick Building Leeds Metropolitan University on Tuesday 1 March 2005.

Workshop Approach

Following the main introductory presentations those attending were invited to form 7 workshop groups each asked to deal with a particular tall buildings theme. Participants were allocated groups to ensure a suitable mix and balance of disciplines and interests. The range of disciplines included –

- architects, Civic Trust representatives, Councillors, conservation planner, developers, fire consultant, landscape architects, lighting designer, planners and planning consultants, public art designer, quantity surveyors, structural engineer, transportation engineer, urban designers, and students.

The groups considered:–

- Strategic Principles (2 groups)
- Why high?
- Footprints
- Style, language and form
- Tall-Sustainable
- Leeds Academy for Sustainable Communities.

Following which each gave a short presentation on their deliberations are summarised in the text boxes.

There was also a general discussion which touched on the definition of 'tall' and the scope of the guide, and the importance of 'mega tall' i.e. 30 plus storeys – super towers in the city core?

In this discussion it was felt that:–

- quality control is vital
- clusters may not be achievable
- the importance of environmental impact was recognised
- tall buildings should create a sense of place and good public realm
- night-time views are important.

During the day everyone was asked for their 'DO's and DON'Ts'.

DO's & DON'Ts

What To Do

- ✓ A 'good haircut on top.
- ✓ Visual interest in the middle.
- ✓ Light display – night time interest!
- ✓ Build tall where revenues justify additional build cost
- ✓ Provide large public spaces
- ✓ Thro space at ground level
- ✓ More public spaces inside the buildings.
- ✓ Mixed uses.

What Not To Do

- ✗ (Don't) Forget the public at ground level.
- ✗ Don't restrict tall buildings to gateways.
- ✗ No cut and paste materials – be brave and bold!

GROUP 1A – Strategic Principles

Group composed of architects, Councillors, planning consultant, planner and quantity surveyor.

Referred to the Leeds topography and the key interventions of the River Aire, canal, railway, road system, ring road, conservation area, proposed 45/29 tower proposal, cluster in west, built form pushing out towards Kirkstall Valley, Headrow / Eastgate Redevelopment. The understanding of these will lead to ability to identify features, existing patterns and future trends.

Locations where tall buildings acceptable:-

In concentrations e.g. grouping in south.

- Gateways
- Also opportunity locations.
- Must conform to strategy accounting for historic context, views of key buildings and existing amenity of occupants.
- Corridor route – not a line but a cluster – not a 'picket fence'!
- Headrow – to provide containment at either end e.g. DHSS /Quarry Hill
- and at moments along its length to create nodes along the Headrow.

Tall buildings could mark western entrance to the city by extending height of built form down Kirkstall / River Aire valley.

Take advantage of the Yorks Chemicals Site closure – a Hunslet cluster at a gateway.

Beware:-

- Failure to complete the strategy.
- 70's lessons.
- Do not miss the boat! Take advantage of demand (present), the economic climate (funding) and of available large sites.

It was important to have quality and not tall for 'tall's sake'.

The group stated that LCC must still exercise a flexible approach to strategy. Tall buildings should be considered if they 'are good enough' and can be justified.

GROUP 1B – Strategic Principles

Group composed of architects, planning consultant, Civic Trust representative, consultant, Councillor, planner, student, transportation engineer.

Commented on the need to have quality at street level, recognising that there were world-wide structures that are good, bad and ugly in cities that are emerging and changing. They all have compact city cores or historic cores which help to identify a city. Usually they go tallest towards its core (with visual impact?).

Location

Within 15 minutes walk of the city centre (Leeds city centre considered to be City Square and Railway Station). Location influenced by available circulation – pedestrian, railway, bus, supertram, cyclists, cars, and continuity of circulation and connectivity.

Cluster / Skyline:-

- Tallest should mark city centre e.g. Criterion Place /River Aire – note flood plain.
- Position influenced by investment values.
- Mixed uses desirable.
- Offices less than 15/20 storeys with hotel/residential higher.
- Deliver identity to areas of change.
- Should not be afraid to break skyline – sculptural forms possible but aim should be to create exciting skyline- already have Victorian towers/ market roofscape.
- Space between to have live and mix of uses.

Need to do:-

- 3D/ Virtual reality model of the city.
- Agree strategic views and opportunities.
- Protect existing views and create better views for future generations.
- Physical model of the city.
- Permanent public display.
- Involve!
- Public consultation at each stage – including developers!
- Future workshops.
- Explore guidance.

Design:-

- CABE Design Guide.
- How tall buildings should relate to the ground.
- Importance of environmental impact assessments from the outset.
- Public enjoyment / access to tallest.

GROUP 2 Why high?

Group composed of cost consultant, fire consultant, conservation planner, Civic Trust representative and planner.

- Illustrated a car (faster), a muscle man (stronger) and a skyscraper (bigger) – God like!
- Technology now offers innovation, sustainability and quality....and also constraint – can only go so high.
- Big can be beautiful but can also offer small footprint and efficient use of land.
- Big can be elegant – infinite, sublime and good silhouette.
- Tall can offer variety of form.
- Tall is sustainable – small footprint, high density and community.
- Tall is efficient.
- Tall is good business – re land costs , demand, competition and political pressure.

Made comparisons between Leeds and Manchester – recognising the different scales – both adverts to commercialism.

Potential problems – limited knowledge, skills and technology can restrict height, cost constraints, fear of terrorism – can tall buildings be safe?, Use and location? Social disruption, poor design, and prejudice. Clusters not intermingling – should be balanced by open space.

However high can –

- improve image and city status – regional and international
- provide landmark buildings e.g. international design competitions
- create second tier of also ran buildings (by local architects!)
- provide a catalyst for regeneration

GROUP 3 – Footprints

Group composed of architect, planner, landscape architect, structural engineer, and urban design student.

Contribution was based on the assumption that tall buildings are going to happen in cities that are young and evolving. They will provide more of what could be an interconnected resource with far more connections and 'arteries' being in the right place. Proposed an idea of a green mezzanine approx. 5 metres above ground and approx 3 hectares – to create the environment and microclimate using urban greenery to create social interaction e.g. could attract school groups.

The group presented under the following key headings..

Living in the City:-

Tall buildings have an impact on cities due to increase in density and infrastructure. They affect the existing urban grain and integration with the historic environment. They can encourage social interaction (who is the community? there is a wide range)They also can dehumanise society and environments.

Best Practice:-

- Mixed uses desirable – they create activity.
- Good micro climate is critical.
- Scale should be in context.
- Human interaction is about experience. Cumulative effect!
- Public space – internal / external/ green space?
- Community response to create facilities for social interaction.
- Provide good life cycle.
- Better interface and attitudes between inter-disciplinary groups.
- Need to resolve the lack of 'release space'.

Bad Practice:-

- Tower block developments
- have a lack of interaction,
- create isolation,
- spaces between become havens for crime,
- lack of dialogue with site/ context.

GROUP 4 – Style, language and form

Group composed of architects, developer, engineer, planner and Civic Trust representative.

Commented on present Leeds with its forms that were a result of bulk massing compared to slender and elegant expectations for tall buildings. There was a need to -

- have an icon,
- be a landmark,
- have a hierarchy of form,
- provide good vistas,
- produce urban density - marketing Leeds,
- have courage in design,
- be in context,
- provide mixed uses.
- have quality – Canary Wharf?
- have style – Centre Pompidou?

Bottoms:-

- Good pedestrian environment
- Permeability and interaction between blocks – if not physical then visual.
- Footprint related to sun energy patterns/ paths.
- Reference made to St Johns Shopping Centre versus Victorian Quarter.
- No 1 City Square – allows people to get through!

Middle - Core use:-

- hotel,
- leisure,
- office
- residential,

Also could include –

- cinema,
- theatre,
- gym,
- Casino,
- g.p.surgery,
- crèche.

Tops:-

Should provide a feature – observation deck, viewing, eating, exercise, public and relaxation space.

The group requested developers to be socially responsible. 24 hour / 7 day use of space desirable with good connectivity – for transport and pedestrians. Good public space should also be available at different levels.



GROUP 5 – Tall-Sustainable

Composed of 2 architects, 2 planners, developer, planning consultant, Councillor, Civic Trust representative, lighting designer.

Global Perception:-

- Sustainability – lacks credibility – needs ‘teeth’ and a push.
- Iconography - imagery, Bilbao!
- Sustainable economy
- Cultural perceptions – how to get families in.
- Infrastructure.

The Big City:-

- Make sustainability credible - needs background ‘mesh’ to support e.g. families
- Sustainable city
- Achieve balance of uses – community space, schools etc

Infrastructure at its capacity (Leeds):-

- PPS22 – with respect to tall buildings – renewable?
- Big! needs to plug in?
- Cultural perception
- Clustering or dispersed ?
- IT infrastructure – helps people work from home
- Exceptional building design (tourism)
- Leeds is a carbon neutral city – tall buildings not for families

The City Centre:-

- Not enough green spaces, tall buildings and space around them.
- Need to achieve balance between amenity space and uses – commercial, residential and green space.
- Clearer definition e.g. vertical public space.
- Leeds City centre infrastructure at capacity
- Heritage management – heritage should be respected.
- Site specific design for city centre – cultural management.

The Site:-

- Site suitability – location – needs infrastructure and responsible disposal.
- Exceptional architecture required.
- Good microclimate (buffer for wind and acoustics)
- Vertical space usage – response to city needs.
- Design flexibility (Residential to Offices?) future life?
- Footprint related to sun energy path
- Net impact of building needs to be defined (output based)-
- Carbon footprint – no of windmills, ecological footprint, solar footprint, code for sustainable design, g.l.a.
- Shallow floor plan – easier to be sustainable.
- Consider whole life design – raw materials- recycling not ‘downcycling’.
- IT / communications
- Where is Leeds going?

Sustainable by date 2100 - need path to get there.

GROUP 6 – Leeds Academy for Sustainable Communities

Composed of 2 architects, developer, planner, landscape and public art designer.

This facility should be easily accessible for communities, therefore good transport links essential. There should also be good access between communities and support organisations. It should offer employment, teaching and education- a research centre – an exemplar – where people could learn good practice- a place to visit and stay.

Focus on the brief emphasised the need for viability with residential and health uses playing a key part. Additional uses considered were hotel, conference, exhibition space, educational, small scale office space, crèche, pool, police (reduction in crime), support uses e.g. food and drink, together with a transport link. The following key points were displayed -

- Education - universities - regeneration professional
- Health - investment by Health Authority
- Social – inclusive – positive engagement
- Economics – diversity – self-sustainability – viable
- Physical – connective
- Environmental –long term investment

Flexibility and Expansion:-

Do planners have any influence? – only if viable – can say yes or no – they can offer encouragement but it all goes down to money : probably will result in a mixed use development.

Site:-

- Should be adjacent to railway – say entry car park – linked with Dark Arches
- Must be viable – sustainable academy only post
- Sustainable – offer sun energy – solar panels, pvs- wind turbines, water turbines, green space and water.
- Flexible – as policy grows so does accommodation, as technology changes
- Provide a Test Bed – offering research into sustainable issues, recycled energy, waste grey water.
- All engaging e.g. communities- people- health- police.

Reference made to the **government definition** – sustainable communities are active, inclusive, safe, well designed, well run, fair to everyone, well connected, environmentally sensitive, thriving and well served.

General tall building comments:-

- North of River Aire – high density development with one-off special buildings
- South of River Aire – high rise.
- Tall buildings to be located within east-west zone coinciding with railway station – not north-south axis.

Some aspirations – iconic, landmark, memorable, quality design and space, good vistas, colour, public spaces and permeability, mixed uses, mall and plaza, good footfall.



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Tall Buildings

Leeds Local Development Framework

Supplementary Planning Document
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