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URBAN CONSERVATION AND THE SHAPING OF THE ENGLISH CITY

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Abstract

The role of urban conservation as an aim of planning evolved through the twentieth century, shifting from the margins to the mainstream and in the process becoming an inescapable element of the way English cities remake themselves. The paper charts the development of conservation-planning and in particular the historical trajectory of a variety of urban contexts including “jewel cities”, long acknowledged as historic, and the core English cities more recently accepted as having significant historic environments. Finally we briefly discuss the changing purpose and function of urban conservation, reflecting on both historical and contemporary conservation policy and practice.
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Introduction

It is our argument in this paper that the practice of conservation of the historic environment is a dynamic force in shaping the planning of the contemporary city. This is a position that has evolved since the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, as conservation-planning, or the notion that the historic fabric of a city might be a key element of its future development, has grown along with the emergence of the practice of town planning. We describe how conservation-planning has developed as planning practice, particularly since the end of the Second World War and as part of the emergence of modern town planning. Whilst conservation of the historic environment is not an activity limited to the centre of cities, cities are the critical site where forces of change and continuity collide. Since the late 1940s, Britain’s cities have undergone enormous changes in terms of their physical structures, economic activities, social composition, cultural ambiance and environmental conditions. In this period the role of urban conservation as an aim of planning has also undergone a transformation, shifting it from the margins to the mainstream and in this shift, urban conservation has become an inescapable element of the way cities remake themselves in the twenty first century.

This paper firstly sets the scene for the development of conservation-planning by briefly considering the development of the legislative and policy context within which the practice of urban conservation has occurred. This focuses on the latter half of the twentieth century and outlines the incremental nature of conservation policy for much of the period. Next, the major part of the paper charts the development of conservation-planning in practice. The particular story it tells is how conservation-planning has developed to become a powerful shaping force in the future of most towns and cities. We place our emphasis here on an analysis of the fluid nature of conservation as it moved through its struggles with the forces of modernist urban development from a peripheral to more central element of planning practice. In particular we explore the historical trajectory of this change in a variety of urban contexts including “jewel cities”, long acknowledged as historic, and the core cities of the north of England more recently accepted as having significant historic environments. The final section briefly discusses the changing purpose and function of urban conservation, reflecting on both historical and contemporary conservation policy and practice. As such, it explores shifting discourses about the underlying purpose of heritage protection and conservation-planning.

The Legislative and Policy Context for Urban Conservation, 1945-97

Our principal concern in this paper is with how conservation-planning has developed as a practice on the ground in the post-war period. However, it is necessary to frame this story with an account of the interrelated development of legislation and policy; interrelated because not only is the practice of conservation-planning influenced by such context, but also because significant cases on the ground have in turn informed the evolution of legislation and policy.

The story of the development of planning and the story of the development of heritage protection have been well documented from different perspectives (e.g. Cherry 1996, Hall 2002a, Hall 2002b, Hunter 1996, Jokilheto 1996, Marks 1996, Ward 2004). With the significant exception of Politics and Preservation by John Delafons (1997), there is a less familiar story of
how these combine; how a trace element of conservation goals can be found in early planning legislation and its gradual movement centre-stage through the course of the twentieth century. The slow rise in Britain of, on the one hand the practice of town planning and its development as a state activity, and on the other the practice of conservation and protection of heritage through legislation, occurred roughly in parallel, developing impetus in the late nineteenth century and gradually rising in significance in the early twentieth century. However, by the late 1930s, whilst both planning and conservation had significant (and overlapping) lobbies that had made gains in terms of national legislation and local action, neither activity could be considered to have been fully established at the forefront of policy. Most statutory planning and wider planning activity was concerned with controlling the form of urban expansion while the planning of developed areas, historic or otherwise, remained a marginal focus of the town planning movement and emerging planning legislation. Heritage protection had gained some momentum through ancient monuments and place-specific local legislation, but was very weak in the protection of urban buildings.

The end of the Second World War was, of course, a watershed for British planning, with the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act ushering in a new era of comprehensive planning. The part of this new planning system addressed at conservation was the introduction of ‘listed buildings’. A key purpose for post-war listing was the identification of potential constraints to be included in, or worked around, in post-war reconstruction. Post-war development was to be led by the public sector. Thus lists of buildings were not a means of resisting rapacious developers, but guides to inform rational decision-making by municipal planners. At the time it was generally accepted that many buildings so listed would be sacrificed in the higher interests of planning (Pendlebury, 2009). In practice the economic deprivations of post-war austerity meant that relatively little development occurred in the decade or so after the 1947 Act, with the major exception of the public housing programme. However, towards the end of the 1950s and in the 1960s the momentum in favour of redevelopment of central areas grew rapidly. As the consequences of redevelopment in city centres became apparent so opposition to the demolition of buildings grew; the exemplars of this in the early 1960s were the Euston Arch and the Coal Exchange, both in London.

As public concerns about the transformation of urban areas developed, so did an official concern for area conservation. Government decisions to place Building Preservation Orders on listed buildings to prevent their demolition became increasingly influenced by group value (i.e. building ensembles) and in 1962 and 1963 government guidance placed stress on conserving the character of towns (Delafons 1997). Richard Crossman, Secretary of State from 1964, and supported by junior minister Lord Kennet from 1966, was instrumental in putting the conservation of historic areas more firmly on the agenda, despite civil service resistance. This led to the 1967 Civic Amenities Act, which created the system of conservation areas. The 1968 Town and Country Planning Act then introduced for the first time comprehensive controls over works to listed buildings. A number of other pieces of legislation and policy advice followed fairly rapidly, including the power to control the demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas. Thus by the early 1970s the principal legal instruments of heritage protection still in use today had been established. However, in the period immediately before the 1979 general election the Labour government seemed at best lukewarm to certain elements of conservation policy. Proposals were mooted to remove statutory controls from some listed buildings and the number of Inspectors identifying buildings for listing had sunk to an all-time low (Saunders 1996).
The election of a Conservative government in May 1979 brought a new enthusiasm for heritage (see e.g. Hewison, 1987), which within the planning system translated to a new support for conservation policy, ironically in a period of more general hostility to the idea of state-planning (Allmendinger and Thomas 1998, Thornley 1991). The basic procedural town planning framework as set out in primary legislation was not fundamentally altered in this period. Changes were generally effected through modifications to secondary legislation/statutory instruments and policy guidance, though legislation did lead to the creation of new protected categories (for example, the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest), and organisational change (for example, the creation of English Heritage).

Whilst the overarching framework of legislation remained stable, quite dramatic changes occurred in the amount of the historic environment that was protected and the policy framework that was applied to it. The number of listed buildings increased enormously in the 1980s and early 1990s following the allocation of substantially increased resources in 1982 at the behest of the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Heseltine. Similarly, numbers of conservation areas, designated by local authorities, escalated rapidly throughout the 1980s and 1990s, while many existing areas were extended. In part, local authorities were responding to central government policy which was consolidating the position of conservation. However, it has also been argued that local authorities were seeking to subvert central government policy. In particular, government Circular 22/80 (Department of the Environment 1980), reinforced by Circular 31/85 (Department of the Environment 1985), that indicated firmly that local authorities should not, as a rule, intervene in design matters, except in ‘environmentally sensitive areas’. This context, together with the control over demolition given by conservation area status, is thought to have provided some of the impetus to the designation of conservation areas in the 1980s, as design remained a more valid material consideration in such locations (Punter and Carmona 1997; Thornley 1991).

The two main policy statements during the period of Conservative administration were Circular 8/87 ‘Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas – Policy and Procedure’ (Department of the Environment 1987), superseded by Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 15 ‘Planning and the Historic Environment’ (Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage 1994). At the time Circular 8/87 was regarded as strengthening conservation policy (Arnold 1987). PPG15 broadly continued and consolidated 8/87 such that it was regarded as a greater assertion of conservation interests than ever before (Mynors 1994; Delafons 1997). Thus, throughout the period 1979-1997 the policy weight placed on heritage protection developed significantly. We return to developments post-1997 and the election of a Labour government later in the paper. First, though, we consider how evolving notions of the historic city and of planning have ‘come to ground’.

The Rise and Rise of Conservation
The development of ideas of the historic fabric of cities performing as a cultural representation of place, and as therefore something that might be consciously retained as part of city evolution, seeded and grew along with the rise of the modern town planning movement. For example, Meller (2001) has described how cities such as Barcelona and Munich sought, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to sustain continuities in their built environment as well embracing rapid change. In Britain, Patrick Geddes was at the forefront of articulating
the idea that historic centres were vital components in the creation of civic identities, putting his theories into practice in Edinburgh’s Old Town (Meller, 1990). Some early planning documents clearly acknowledged historic context as a critical factor in formulating planning proposals. For example, the planning report prepared in the early 1920s for the Stratford-upon-Avon Preservation Committee, commissioned in response to a factory proposal, had a major focus on conservation issues and stressed the importance of the relatively minor historic fabric in the town (Abercrombie & Abercrombie, 1923; Pendlebury, 2009). However, although some cities, such as Bath, introduced local legislation bringing a measure of control over historic buildings in the inter-war period (Borsay 2000, Lambert 2000a, 2000b), conservation in the town and city as an activity was, in most places, by way of a strategy of resistance. This can be seen through the actions around the threatened and effected demolitions of Georgian buildings in London prompting the formation of the Georgian Group (Stamp, 1996). It was not until the Second World War and the new enthusiasm it engendered for planning until we can see much sustained consideration of how historic cities should be planned.

During the latter war years and in its immediate aftermath, but mostly before the landmark 1947 legislation, many localities up and down the country produced, or commissioned from consultants, advisory plans, now generally referred to as reconstruction plans. Collectively, these plans have been characterised as manifestos for a bold new era for comprehensive planning that was anticipated as part of the changing relationship between state and society in the post-war period (e.g. Hasegawa 1992, Tiratsoo & Hasegawa et. al. 2002). Plans for the great manufacturing centres, with the *sui generis* exception of London, did not consider such cities ‘historic’ (see e.g. Nicholas 1945, City and County of Newcastle upon Tyne 1945). However, many smaller towns and cities, such as cathedral–type cities, pre-industrial resort towns and ancient university towns were so regarded and plans for these give rather a different picture (Larkham 2003, Pendlebury 2003).

Plans for such settlements acknowledged their historic character whilst seeking to achieve a ‘balanced approach’ to development; becoming more functional and rationally organised twentieth century towns whilst respecting place-history. However, seen from a contemporary perspective, the plans are highly variable in how they engaged with historic character and, in particular, in their degree of inclusiveness in identifying the extent of the legacy of historic buildings that should be respected and protected. Some were highly interventionist. So, for example, although the plan for York (Adshead, Minter et. al. 1948) identified buildings for preservation and placed stress upon the importance of the narrowness of some of the key historic streets defining in the character of the city, rather more characteristic of the plan were proposals to clear buildings for road building and for the purposes of achieving a monumental display for, for example, the City Walls (figure 1). By way of contrast, other plans showed a richer understanding of historic character, although often still with a degree of breath-taking boldness in their proposals. Thomas Sharp’s plan for Oxford proposed leaving much of the historic city untouched, although conversely the plan also proposed the clearance of nineteenth housing and a radical inner ‘substitute road’ across Christ Church Meadow (Sharp 1948). Similarly, his plan for bomb-damaged Exeter, whilst sensitive to surviving historic fabric was combined with a ruthless modernity in its proposals elsewhere in the city, including for the redevelopment of the bomb-damaged historic quarters (Sharp 1946).

As remarked above, post-war austerity left the ambitious and grandiose schemes of most of the reconstruction plans with little immediate chance of realisation. However, by the end of the
1950s economic conditions had begun to change and a wave of pressure for central area redevelopment was combined with a newly energised belief in comprehensive planning. The decade that followed was a peak of modernist planning as design based master-plans were combined with new scientific methods (Taylor 1998). As with the 1940s, the 1960s is often remembered as a period of ‘clean-sweep’ planning, when the conflicts between the planning profession and the nascent conservation movement really took hold. But again, this is an overly simplistic representation of the period. Indeed, recognition that comprehensive and rapid development was having a drastic impact on urban character was developing in official consciousnesses, albeit lagging behind the vanguard of public concern. This is evident in, for example, the landmark report on traffic, the Buchanan Report (Buchanan, Cooper et. al 1963). Issues of traffic had often dominated the planning reports of the 1940s and by the 1960s the situation was regarded as critical. The report is often remembered now as representing something of an apogee of ‘predict and provide’; that growing numbers of cars had to be accompanied by a massive expansion in the road infrastructure and urban restructuring. However, the report also articulated concerns for the fate of historic towns, using a case study of Norwich, where the emphasis shifted to limiting accessibility, as it was,

Not a question of retaining a few old buildings but of conserving, in the face of the onslaught of motor traffic, a major part of the heritage of the English-speaking world, of which this country is the guardian’ (p197).

In the 1960s we can also see the great industrial cities beginning to receive more recognition for their history. For example, in Newcastle upon Tyne, regarded at the time as one of the most ‘progressive’ local authorities in matters of town planning, alongside the highly interventionist proposals in its 1963 Development Plan there were also strongly articulated ideas of area conservation, with four ‘preservation areas’ identified covering a substantial part of the city centre (Pendlebury 2001).

A significant milestone in the development of national official thinking about the planning of historic cities was the four demonstration studies jointly commissioned by central government and the relevant local authority for Bath, Chester, Chichester and York (Delafons 1997). Analysis of two of these, for Bath and York, by Pendlebury (2005) has argued that marked differences can be seen between them. The plan for Bath (Colin Buchanan & Partners 1968) represented continuity with its balanced-approach orientated technocratic predecessors, with proposals for vertical segregation, major central road development and extensive redevelopment. However, with the plan for York (Esher 1968) it is possible to discern something of a step-change. Whilst, the plan contained modish 1960s proposals, such as brutal multi-storey car-parks, the overall feel is very different. The historic environment was defined more extensively and inclusively with solutions, for example for traffic problems, designed to work round the historic nature of the city rather than vice-versa (figure 2). Thus alongside the rapidly evolving legislative context described above a new sensibility to conservation-planning was emerging; conservation was moving centre stage.

**The collapse of modernism and the triumph of conservation**

Thus by the early 1970s bureaucratic evolution and reform had gone some way to establishing a systematic and supportive policy framework for a policy of conservation that was, at least in some places, being reflected at the local level. However, this was by no means universal and
conservation objectives frequently collided with projects proposing major urban intervention. So, for example, Bath, Newcastle and York were each promoting large-scale urban road schemes, all of which generated fierce local resistance. In Bath, perhaps more than any other British city, there was a fierce backlash over the planning and management of the city. The city generated two polemic texts with scathing comment on its management (Coard & Coard 1973, Fergusson 1973) as well as featuring significantly in the wider campaigning literature of the time (e.g. Amery & Cruikshank 1975). Central to these critiques was the idea that the more modest Georgian heritage, ‘artisan Bath’, had been undervalued; ‘Every attack on a minor Georgian building is an attack on the architectural unity of Bath’ (Architectural Review 1973: 280). Conservation of the historic city, it was argued, should not just be about the major set-pieces but about understanding places as a total historic system.

Elsewhere conservation campaigners were using the planning system to achieve their goals. For example, the defeat of the Greater London Council’s plans for the comprehensive development of Covent Garden was achieved, in part, because those fighting the plans persuaded the government to list 245 buildings in the area, with conservation area designations following soon after. In other locations conservation bodies were embedding themselves in planning decision-making processes, for example, through the system of Conservation Area Advisory Committees that had been introduced in a 1968 government circular (see e.g. Jordan, Kimber et. al. 1975).

Thus by the mid-1970s, and the celebratory conservation year, the 1975 European Architectural Heritage Year, conservation was enjoying a far more central position in the planning system than had been the case a few years before. In part this was due to the external pressures and engagement in local development struggles from an active conservation movement. It was also a consequence of local groups using ‘responsible styles’ of action to engage with local authorities (Lowe & Goyder 1983), persuading them to adopt a more conservation-sensitive approach. Indeed, there were changes in the heart and culture within both the professional and political parts of those authorities as faith was lost in the modernist schemes they had been promoting. This policy shift was, however, also the result of the economic crises of the period that led to a property crash, and, as in the 1940s, made large schemes of road or property development unrealistic.

As remarked upon above, the election of a Conservative government in 1979 heralded the dawn of the era during which the conservation of the historic environment became firmly embedded as a central objective of the town planning system. However, new challenges and spheres of contestation arose, with one of the severest tests of the new found emphasis on conservation policy objectives coming from developers in economically buoyant commercial locations. Larkham and Barrett (1998) provide a useful study contrasting the experiences’ of Birmingham and Bristol in this period. Both local planning authorities sought to strengthen and formalise their conservation policies, mainstreaming them into their planning activity. Both authorities increased the number of conservation areas in their respective cities, with the number in Birmingham rising from fifteen to twenty-five and in Bristol from sixteen to twenty-nine during the 1980s. Both authorities also extended a number of existing conservation areas. However, there were also differences between the two authorities. In Birmingham, the city only gradually moved away from its post-war planning doctrine of comprehensive redevelopment and functional efficiency and its legacy of nineteenth and twentieth century buildings was relatively lightly protected by listing. In practice it found itself in a relatively weak negotiating position with developers. Its position was further undermined by key planning appeal decisions. Planning
Inspectors overturned local authority refusals of planning permission and listed building consent, and allowed highly interventionist schemes of façadism, which retained only the external envelope of the historic building. Bristol was judged to have a better record than Birmingham in achieving its objectives (see also Punter, 1991), supported by the use of detailed design briefs and the existence of a more extensive listed building stock.

Thus, though local authority promoted central redevelopment schemes sweeping aside parts of historic cities had largely stopped by the 1980s and a pro-conservation attitude prevailed, the management of central areas was still a significant arena of contestation. Conflict shifted from struggles over the total demolition of listed buildings to the degree of permissible intervention into historic fabric, as pressure for alterations became applied to historic interiors in particular. The contradictory policy goals of central government, which emphasised both the importance of market liberalisation and the historic environment, were often resolved through façadism – the retention of a historic façade or façades and the redevelopment of a building interior. Developers often promoted such schemes, playing lip-service to conservation objectives whilst achieving the commercial space they wanted. Even when local planning authorities sought to resist these pressures, they often found themselves undermined by the appeals process.

In summary, despite these ongoing battles, the role of conservation as a planning policy objective had undergone a major transformation between the 1940s and the early 1990s. Whilst a developing awareness of historic character was significant in plans between the 1940s and the 1980s, by the 1990s the degree to which conservation had become a central objective in the planning system and the degree to which large swathes of commercial centres were covered by one heritage designation or another is remarkable. A combination of shifting professional attitudes, bureaucratic reform, sustained campaigning from external actors together with popular public support and shifting market perceptions had had the effect of achieving a virtually unchallenged consensus that a key purpose of the planning system was to protect the historic environment. Policy and practice meant that the total demolition of listed buildings, once a routine and accepted practice, had virtually ground to a halt; with the absolute numbers of consents for the demolition of listed buildings falling rapidly at the same time as the number of buildings protected was rising (Pendlebury 2000). Whilst on-going challenges were evident, such as the appropriateness of façadism, the conservation agenda was largely triumphant.

By-and-large local authorities were firm supporters of the conservation agenda by the 1980s (having often been regarded in the 1970s as pro-redevelopment). However, a conservationist agenda also created new challenges. We first consider these in relation to some of the smaller historic ‘jewel’ cities, whose room for manoeuvre was now tightly constrained by heritage designation.

Conservation-planning and “jewel cities”

By the early 1990s the conservation success stories of historic jewel cities such as Chester, York, Bath, and Canterbury had placed them at the forefront of conservation practice and debate (figure 3). Their success in maintaining the historical integrity of their historic cores over the course of the 1970s had however left them facing a number of key planning and development pressures: how to continue to maintain their historic centres, how to cope with increasing demands for development, how to cope with growing visitor numbers, and how to avoid the over consumption of their conserved historic assets? These pressures represented major planning challenges for historic gem cities throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s not least
because the economies of these cities had become closely associated with the continued
economic exploitation of their historic character with the consequence that most planning and
development decisions were framed within a context of local historicity as an economic
resource. Overlaying this issue was the fact that most of the historic jewel cities were
simultaneously being subjected to changes in global tourism which meant that their continued
presence in an ever more crowded global tourist market required them to continually enhance
their historic offer to retain a competitive advantage over similarly historic places (Strange,
1996).

Thus over the 1980s and early 1990s the conservation programmes of historic cities such as
Chester and York had matured, such that they were distinguished as places with good
reputations for managing their historic infrastructure (Lane, 1994; Meethan, 1997). However, a
consequent set of pressures around maintaining urban competitiveness in the context of
growing tourist and development demands set the scene for such cities to recognise the need to
begin to evaluate their capacity to accommodate further growth and development. As such, the
sustainability agenda moved to the foreground of debate for planners and policymakers in
historic cities as they searched for ways to preserve the successes of their conservation efforts
whilst mitigating against the excesses of over consumption that those efforts had in part
induced. This led to an initial focus on the concept of environmental capacity, which found
expression in a number of environmental capacity studies carried out by or for local planning
authorities (Strange 1997, 1999). Designed initially as a way to assess the acceptable volume of
traffic within a given place that is compatible with maintaining a good quality environment,
historic city capacity studies developed into assessments of environmental capital and the
impacts on it of continued development, with the intention of determining development
thresholds that could not be over-stepped (Building Design Partnership, 1994; ARUP, 1995;
Winchester City Council, 1997). As Strange (1997, 1999) illustrated, these studies emerged out
of both a concern with the impact of development on the historical integrity of Chester and
Winchester as well as particular locally-based concerns about, for example, the loss of
peripheral green space through potential threat to green belt policy (Chester) or about the level
of housing development in and around the city (Winchester). What is important about these
capacity studies is not so much their individual findings, but rather that they ushered in a new
concern for sustainability linked explicitly to managing the consequences of economic growth
and conservation success.

These studies into environmental capacity, and the debates that ensued, brought attention to
some of the key conservation issues facing historic cities including how to distinguish between
different types of historic assets, the historic character of places and the development of
scenarios for future growth and change. Much of this debate focused heavily on the historic
built environment where the physical stock of historic or heritage assets was conceptualised as
environmental capital that required management for its continued exploitation. What received
less consideration were the intangible heritage assets that these places contained, as well as the
relationship between capacity studies and the extant local planning framework. It was certainly
hoped that a historic city capacity-led approach would lead to capacity-based development
plans (Roebuck and Gurney, 1995), but the reality was that the statutory planning process was
not directly influenced by the capacity approach. In the event, Chester was the only historic city
in England to develop a capacity-led approach, while some, such as Winchester only partially
followed this route, and others (such as Lincoln) rejected the approach arguing that its ability to
generate sustainable conservation policy was limited (Lane, 1994; Strange, 1999). What
emerged to replace this were two new approaches to managing historic environment assets. The first was an English Heritage driven sustainability agenda seeking to establish a broad sustainability framework that could 'distinguish between different types of historic environmental capital and how such heritage assets can be evaluated according to their intrinsic assets, characteristics and local perception of historical value' (Strange and Whitney, 2003, p224). The second, through Department for Culture and Media and Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions (2001) and English Heritage (2002), involved a preference for establishing key headline indicators (with an assessment of their significance) as a basis for monitoring and managing the historic environment.

Over the 1990s then, for historic jewel cities issues around the over-consumption of their historic assets, the growth of tourism, and continued pressure for development brought to the fore how such historic centres could accommodate economic and physical growth as well as acknowledge demands for conservation management and environmental protection. The outcome was an approach where the emphasis of most historic cities was on discovering ways to protect their heritage assets, using them instrumentally to satisfy the demands of a growing tourist market whilst simultaneously seeking to manage the consequences of that growth. Thus, what developed in many historic jewel cities was a development agenda that while sympathetic to maintaining historic character (primarily the conservation management of their historic cores), was also concerned with fostering the promotion of growth. Here, the language of conservation and sustainability were tied closely with that of economic development. The debate about the role and importance of conservation had, therefore, shifted quite considerably for these cities from what it had been in the 1970s and for much of the 1980s. In essence, it had been a shift from a conservation-led approach to development (where debate was around the need to keep and preserve the fabric of the city in the face of change), to one where the debate was about how to use the historic fabric of the city to continue growth and development and to mitigate its excesses.

The 1990s then was a key moment for conservation as it played out in some historic jewel cities. What this reveals is a picture of development not solely related to the articulation of a need for conservation, but one also related to the necessity for historic cities to pursue development strategies in which their historic assets were an essential element of economic growth. This linking of conservation and economic growth was perhaps most intensely experienced in the historic jewel cities. However, this shift towards a more instrumental understanding of conservation with potential to contribute towards growth and to help in the regeneration of places was also felt in other cities not necessarily noted for the historic character. It is to a discussion of some of the larger urban centres, and in particular the core cities in England, that we now turn.

Conservation-planning and “core cities”
The term ‘core cities’ refers to the main regional English cities; Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield. They are representative of the major urban areas of England; major economic locations but also major repositories of heritage of the industrial era and before. Not considered historic by post-war planners (see above), all now have substantial numbers of listed buildings and parts of their central areas covered by conservation area designation. They provide a fascinating series of examples of the relationship
between conservation and development through the long economic boom between 1993 and 2006.

By the 1980s all the core cities had embraced the conservationist turn to a greater or lesser degree, in ways reflecting their particular legacies of historic environments and particular planning and development cultures. By and large, schemes of large-scale public sector intervention had disappeared and the focus, as described above, was on managing private-sector investment; trying to strike a balance between investment and sustaining heritage. However, as with the jewel cities, the 1980s saw the development of a new trend; the idea that historic building stock could be a positive asset in achieving regeneration in cities that were desperately trying to restructure their economies and achieve physical regeneration. The main focus on this potential was on edge-of-centre economically marginal locations, typically old commercial or industrial areas that had a legacy of high quality buildings combined with high vacancy rates of land and property, resulting from rapid deindustrialisation. The most high-profile and exemplar scheme of this combining of conservation with regeneration was the adoption by the Merseyside Development Corporation of the Albert Dock, a large complex of grade 1 listed warehouses, as their flagship scheme. The scheme linked to another rising trend, the use of culture as an agent of regeneration; the reuse of the buildings included both a maritime museum and an outpost of the Tate gallery. The Albert Dock regeneration was a high profile example of a much wider trend. For example, the Castlefield area in central Manchester was designated a conservation area in 1979. This followed a sustained local campaign, especially over the historic importance of Liverpool Road Station, supported by the conservation section of the City Council but with some resistance from senior members of the local authority (Madgin, 2009). However, by 1983 the agenda had changed and Castlefield was labelled an “Urban Heritage Park”, as the economic development potential of the area was realised and specifically the possibility of using the area’s largely derelict heritage to develop tourism. This strategy was extremely successful and acted as a catalyst for regeneration more generally in this part of Manchester (Tiesdell et al. 1996). Kelham Island in Sheffield, the Lace Market in Nottingham and the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham are examples of other edge-of-centre districts where similar strategies were employed.

In the 1990s the potential of heritage to be a positive force on economic regeneration was increasingly established and was evident in large-scale city centre initiatives. One of the most well-known examples of this was the Grainger Town Project in Newcastle upon Tyne (figure 4). This emerged from conservation-led concerns over the under-occupancy and poor condition of buildings in the central city, many of which were listed. It developed into a pioneering partnership, which brought city centres into mainstream regeneration practice and funding and attracted support from agencies such as English Partnerships, historically not involved in such activity. The arms-length agency created presented the heritage within its boundary, ‘Grainger Town’, as a comparative advantage, adding value through its quality and place-distinctiveness. The Grainger Town Partnership, with some luck in working in a period of extremely favourable property-market conditions, was very successful in many respects, revitalising the city centre, recycling buildings, improving the public realm and facilitating the development of a new central residential community, although in practice significant tensions existed between the various stakeholders (Pendlebury, 2002).

Since the wind-up of the Grainger Town Partnership in 2003 the principal focus for activity in Newcastle city centre has shifted towards accommodating large new floor plate shopping, as
well as the continued development of centre-fringe areas for such uses as apartments, hotels and, most notably, the south bank of the Tyne (in neighbouring Gateshead) with major cultural facilities of an art gallery and concert hall. As such, nearly all of these developments have been occurring on sites that although having sensitivities, are outside the core historic area as defined by the City Centre Conservation Area. Whilst the demand for apartments and hotels could be met on the fringe, the expansion of retailing demanded more central locations. In practice the principal means of achieving this has been through achieving more floor space within the site boundary of the 1970s and 1980s Eldon Square Shopping centre, through redevelopment and intensification, in the process demolishing and rebuilding the most recent section and more generally breaking down the internal, vertically-segregated mega-structure.

Leeds, unlike most of its northern neighbours, did not suffer so severely from the economic turbulence of the 1980s, and its economy remained relatively buoyant throughout the decade. One consequence of this was that despite pockets of deindustrialisation and decline, the recycling of land and redundant buildings continued apace (Unsworth and Smales 2010), with some developments involving a more conservation-oriented approach reusing the historic fabric of buildings. Indeed, throughout the 1990s and 2000s the city centre and the riverside area to its south east developed rapidly within which conservation and heritage played a significant role and many of the developments along Leeds’ urban waterfront were reuse schemes and conversions of Victorian warehouses, often into offices and apartments. In the city centre developments also continued apace. A combination of public realm improvements and retail development to the north of the city centre were developed through a mixture of new build together with reworked Victorian stock. In Briggate, the traditional retail core of the city, conversion of the Edwardian County Arcade into the high-end shopping Victoria Quarter represented a major turn to heritage and conservation as a significant force in shaping development opportunities. This conservation-based scheme was followed by other heritage-related projects such as work on the city’s historic market and the regeneration of the Leeds Corn Exchange (figure 5).

The significance of the heritage map in shaping the evolution of city centres is replicated in each of the core cities. In some cities, including Newcastle and Leeds, this has, thus far, not proved to be especially contentious. Similarly in Nottingham, Tim Heath (2010) describes how a long-term regeneration strategy has successfully integrated historic buildings within a wider programme of improvement in the city centre. However, the developing potential for conflict between heritage status and other goals can be seen in other cities. Their economic success in the decade prior to 2008 has in some places engendered intense development pressures, with consequent pressure on heritage assets, and to revived forms of building often considered incompatible with sustaining the historic qualities of historic cities – in particular building tall. There is a developing clash between conservation and development interests, although it is not a reversion to the major battles of the 1970s. By and large listed buildings usually remain sacrosanct in schemes of urban development. Rather, the battle has been more over a more diffuse sense of the character of the city and tall buildings are a dramatic exemplar of this. Thus discussions of Birmingham (Holyoak, 2010) and Sheffield (Booth, 2010) both describe, on the one hand, heritage being utilised within regeneration schemes but on the other non-protected heritage being effaced and the wider character of the city being compromised.

These issues have perhaps been thrown into sharpest relief in Liverpool and Manchester due to World Heritage status in the former and a nascent bid for such status with the latter. In
Liverpool Mike Biddulph (2010) describes how heritage has been positively used within regeneration schemes and indeed the potential to assist regeneration was at the heart of the successful 2004 bid for Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site (Pendlebury et. al. 2009). The site encompasses the waterfront and the main commercial core of the city and a buffer zone includes much of the rest of the centre. The designation attracted the general support of the many agencies and government bodies involved in regenerating the city, yet there is concern within the business community that the WHS has stifled investment. In practice, it is arguably the case that a conservation sensibility has been less deeply embedded in Liverpool than other core cities (see e.g. Hradsky 2009) and local amenity bodies continue to despairingly report on the loss of listed buildings in the city (Merseyside Civic Society, 2009), mirrored by commentary in the local and national press (e.g. Hunt, 2008). Furthermore, it is evident that such concerns are not restricted to the development community with wider local resentment over the interventions of external bodies such as ICOMOS and UNESCO in World Heritage site issues. For example Michael Short (2007) reports senior Council officers commenting that the designation should never have been sought if it stymied proposals such as the (now abandoned) scheme for a tower at Lime Street.

As noted above, Manchester was not considered a historic city in the post-war period. In more recent times the extraordinary wealth of its heritage, especially from the industrial era, has been recognised. Indeed its canal and railway heritage has been the basis of a putative WHS, included on the government’s tentative list to UNESCO of such possibilities (DCMS, 1999). A potentially multi-location site, it is centred on the Castlefield area where, as again noted above, there have been on-going conservation efforts since the early 1980s. However, Michael Hebbert (2010) argues that the city authorities have had a consistent ambivalence to the city’s heritage and that the Council has been characterised by a strongly entrepreneurial approach. After initial scepticism over conserving the Castlefield area the economic potential of a heritage-based approach was realised in the 1980s. In the 1990s heritage continued to appear as a comparative advantage in the regeneration of the inner city, as creative developers such as Urban Splash stimulated new markets by recycling the city’s rich legacy of commercial and industrial buildings. However, Hebbert argues that as land prices escalated after 2000 pressure developed for new forms of development less complementary to the city’s existing building stock, and specifically the demand to build tall. The City Council took a very permissive approach to such proposals. This is exemplified by the now constructed Beetham Tower (figure 6). As well as requiring the demolition of part of a listed viaduct, this tower overshadows Castlefield and has endangered the potential of a WHS, something the city authorities were seemingly sanguine about (Short, 2007). Short also notes how in this period conservation groups, such as the Manchester Civic Society, were increasingly sidelined in planning negotiations.

John Punter is correct when he refers to ‘the failure to keep urban conservation at the forefront of quality place-making’, an agenda which has been focused on issues such as liveability, transport and the public realm, but much more questionable is his assertion over ‘the declining power of conservation designations’ (Punter,2010; 369). Although in some core cities we can see developing tensions over how contemporary development relates to the historic form and qualities of those places, we also observe that statutory protection mechanisms, especially listed buildings, retain their hard-won strongly protected status that developers usually work around or with. Thus heritage assets in, for example, Newcastle and Leeds, principally in the form of listed buildings and conservation areas, are established as a major spatial shaping force in the evolution of the central city. The heritage map has been used positively to encourage
investment; presented as a comparative advantage in creating place quality as public authorities and the market have found that historic buildings can add value as part of the development process. Yet it is also clear it is a significant shaping force that can restrict and push other forms of investment towards particular geographical destinations; such that in the Newcastle case the most viable option in creating new large-scale retailing space is to reshape a relatively modern shopping centre.

This is all suggestive of a very different role for the historic environment than was envisaged sixty or so years ago when the legislative foundations of conservation-planning were being laid. It is to the way the role and function of a policy of conservation has evolved over this period that we now turn.

The Changing Nature of Urban Conservation
Following early pre-war antecedents, we can see that between the 1940s and the end of the twentieth century that conservation as an aim of planning had undergone an enormous transformation. The most obvious characteristic of this change is the way that designation categories had expanded, the numbers of assets under each category grown enormously, and statutory legislation and policy been repeatedly strengthened. Cumulatively this shifted heritage protection from being marginal to being a central element of town planning, something continued into this century. It is an inescapable and powerful shaping force in the evolution of our towns and cities, even if some locales are beginning to chaff at the restrictions this can place on their development. In the following sections we consider how the role of purpose of conservation has changed as well as bringing the story of policy evolution up-to-date.

Conservation policy 1947-1997: from restraint of development to economic development
Between the 1940s and 1960s the function of conservation designations was to act as a relatively minor restraint on comprehensive planning. This was clear in the initial formulation of the listed building system as described above. As such, protected heritage was not expected to do anything. The limited heritage to be protected was being protected for its own sake rather than to perform any wider social or economic role. An official statement as late as 1967, *Preservation and Change* (MHLG 1967), confined the purpose of heritage conservation to retaining beauty and visible history.

However, the turbulent events of the 1960s and 1970s that would, amongst many other changes, usher in a substantially reinforced conservation-planning system prompted many debates about the nature of British towns and cities – debates echoed across much of the western world. The strengthened emphasis on protection and conservation was in part a result of popular protest across the country about the dramatic fractures with the urban past caused by redevelopment. Furthermore, the social conflict engendered by redevelopment was by no means confined to the major monumental heritage represented by cause celebres such as the Euston Arch or “jewel cities” such as Bath but were often to be found with, for example, the compulsory purchase and demolition of modest nineteenth century housing. This was paralleled by a growing sense that urban continuity might be psychologically important and conservation provide what Jane Grenville has subsequently called “ontological security” (Grenville, 2007). The well-known official reflection of this was, in reference to conservation areas, the introduction of the phrase the “familiar and cherished local scene” in Circular 46/73 (Department of Environment, 1973). Also in the 1970s the nimble conservation group SAVE Britain’s Heritage (1978) were putting forward the case for the economic potential of heritage, anticipating the
political climate of the 1980s. However, as the consciousness of the economic potential of historic areas developed and was capitalised upon by the market, social concerns receded. Thus, for example, in the case of Covent Garden, spared from the bulldozer due to a successful resistance campaign on both conservation and social grounds, social issues were quickly marginalised and the area effectively gentrified and developed into a centre of tourist consumption activities.

Whilst the precise reasons that a liberalising Conservative government should, under successive Secretaries of State, have imbued restrictive conservation-planning with such an enhanced role are somewhat elusive (Pendlebury 2000), certainly part of the answer seems to lie in the way that heritage could be mobilised for economic purposes. This was not a purely political decision; the valued cultural signifiers of the period were often backward looking or revivalist in nature, including the architectural style of new building. It suited politicians that heritage could be repackaged as part of economic development strategies, but it also suited developers in different markets, aware that history was increasingly something they could sell. This process was not without its tensions. Whilst developers were more willing to accept they could not totally remove historic buildings they still often sought to radically transform them in achieving a functional product. This was exemplified by the common practice of facadism, often a pragmatic compromise for local planning authorities seeking to balance policy objectives, but decried by conservationists for, as they saw it, the impact on the integrity and authenticity of a building, which became reduced to historic wallpaper or “skin-deep” preservation (Earl, 2003; 82).

The economic potential of heritage and, increasingly, its potential to be mobilised in programmes of physical regeneration was thus established and developed in the 1980s. This focus on market potential was accommodated in a neo-liberal planning agenda designed to ease the planning systems restraint on development. A range of policy guidance emphasized this change with, for example, Circular 8/87 (DoE, 1987) and PPG 15 (DoE & DNH, 1994) encouraging economic exploitation of the historic environment. These measures combined more generally with a turn to culture and the heritage as a key economic asset for the regeneration of places. Indeed, as local authorities became tuned to culture as an instrument of urban renewal, the historic environment became a vital resource for some cities in the regeneration process, whether it be ‘jewel cities’ or edge of centre locations in bigger industrial cities. A large number of urban redevelopment schemes focused on what were ostensibely conservation-regeneration projects. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s conservation-planning practice began to embrace and promote the idea of the historic environment as an asset to be used and adapted for economic gain.

Conservation and historic environment policy since the late 1990s
The election in 1997 of a self-consciously modernising Labour government raised concerns amongst the conservation sector over a perceived weakening of support for conservation policy (Venning 1999). In practice the heritage sector was charged by the government with undertaking a fundamental examination of the historic environment system, coordinated by English Heritage, leading to the document Power of Place (English Heritage 2000). Power of Place encompassed a wide-ranging set of themes encompassing regulatory, policy, technical, management and funding issues. The government’s response, A Force for Our Future (Department of Culture Media and Sport and Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions 2001), was criticised in the sector for its lack of specific commitments, but was nevertheless a powerful statement about the significance of the historic environment which
now was said to contribute to environmental quality and identity, local distinctiveness, community cohesion and social inclusion and act as a stimulus for new architecture.

Subsequently, the government embarked on a series of reviews of historic environment policy and the process of heritage reform gradually unfolded at snail’s pace through a series of consultation documents and draft policy statements (e.g. Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2003, 2004, Department for Culture Media and Sport & Welsh Assembly Government, 2007). The principal intention seemed not to shift policy but to transform the rather messy incrementally evolved framework for protection. By early 2010 the promised new heritage legislation has been delayed once more although a new Planning Policy Statement 5 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010) finally emerged in March 2010, accompanied by a new government statement on the historic environment (HM Government, 2010). A much slimmer document than previous policy, reflecting an emphasis on policy rather than guidance, the PPS offers no major shifts in direction. It reinforces the importance of the historic environment, albeit in a new framework based on the assessment of the “significance” of “heritage assets”, following the evolution of English Heritage thinking on heritage management process (see e.g. English Heritage, 2008a). The contribution of the historic environment to a multitude of other policy goals is reinforced by the government statement, which, for example, refers to quality of life and quality of place, economic growth, tourism, regeneration, place-making, local distinctiveness, as a focus for local community and as a means of helping define identities and helping in achieving a low carbon economy. At the time of writing, how conservation-planning might fare with a coalition government, with its stated emphasis on localism, is unclear; although its approach to reducing public sector funding will undoubtedly inhibit the state’s capacity for management of the historic environment.

Thus, as well as the cultural reasons for protection of heritage, that still lie at the heart of legislation, part of the success of the conservation movement has been making the case for the historic environment in contributing to many other agendas. For example, concerns over “the familiar and cherished local scene” are now represented through the broader and rather diffuse concepts of local distinctiveness and sense of place. We now briefly consider the role of heritage in two particular policy areas; the economic realm and sustainability.

Economic competitiveness and social cohesion
As discussed above, a developing realisation of the economic potential of the historic environment was a major feature of the 1980s and 1990s. A major drive in the early post-1997 years was a new urban policy agenda of “urban renaissance”. Emphasising the importance of design and environmental quality the renaissance agenda was kick-started by the establishment of the Urban Task Force, a group charged with developing policy responses to the continued economic and social problems of urban areas (Urban Task Force, 1998). In relation to the historic environment, the findings of the task force were mixed — suggesting that while historic environments (and primarily this meant built heritage) could contribute to improved economic and social well-being, they were also a barrier on future development and competitiveness (Urban Task Force, 1999). The Urban White Paper (Department for Environment, Transport and Regions, 2000) that followed these deliberations was more assertive in its aspirations for the historic environment, with the intention of inserting the sector into the discourse of urban regeneration. However, as a broader debate about place-making emerged over the 2000s, along with a renewed confidence in contemporary design, it is perhaps the case that the historic environment became more marginal to place-making agendas.
Furthermore, in parallel with the urban renaissance agenda, essentially geared to making cities attractive to those with choice over whether to live in cities or not, the in-coming government also sought to enhance the environment and life choices of those with little or no choice over where they live through its emphasis on tackling social exclusion. The role of the historic environment in delivering this agenda was opaque and the heritage sector was not very quick in demonstrating its relevance. Thus for example, the early statements on social inclusion of the heritage-sponsoring government department, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, made little or no reference to the historic environment. Whilst subsequently a greater reflexivity over the social role of heritage can be discerned amongst heritage bodies this remains a relatively weakly developed area of conservation-planning practice (Pendlebury et al. 2004; Pendlebury, 2009).

Towards Sustainability in Conservation
Conservation discourse has long suggested that conservation is an inherently sustainable practice. Conceptually they are activities that have significant commonality of ancestry, with such concepts as environmental stewardship being deeply embedded in both practices. In practical terms conservationists point to, for example, the retention of embodied energy by reusing existing built assets rather than demolition and reconstruction; an argument given only equivocal support in the Government’s 2010 statement. English Heritage (1999) has also argued that a policy of conservation is consistent with broader approaches to sustainability. In reality, however, an explicit relationship between the conservation of the historic environment and environmental sustainability has been slow to develop. As we have seen, it first developed in those places where the regeneration of historic environments was used as part of wider regeneration strategies. Historic jewel cities such as Chester and York had limited capability to measure and map change to the historic environment and were searching for new techniques to manage change. The environmental capacity and sustainability initiatives undertaken by these cities met with varying degrees of enthusiasm, but one of the key conclusions for all was that knowledge about such historic environments was limited. One response to this information deficit was work undertaken by English Heritage on the development of sustainability indicators and targets for the monitoring of the historic environment that have helped in the identification of the health of the historic environment (English Heritage, 2002; Strange and Whitney, 2003). This impetus to provide more systematic indicators for the monitoring of the historic environment was perhaps the major legacy of the capacity study work, as the management of historic environment was increasingly perceived as an embedded management activity rather than heroic struggle. However, in other respects capacity studies proved to be something of a dead-end, only rarely emulated in the 2000s. This was perhaps not surprising given that the movement towards generating more sustainable historic environments had limited impact within conservation-planning. Through most of the 1990s and early 2000s the development of methods and techniques for monitoring the health of the historic environment was slow, while conflicts between the economic, environmental, aesthetics, and social resource use and costs of conservation was not significantly explored or assessed. By the middle of the 2000s though, arguments were beginning to emerge for the development of transparent and accountable forms of historic environment management that related to ways of assessing how best to secure the future of historic environments and assets (English Heritage 2000; Strange and Whitney 2003).
There are, however, still major issues unresolved; the role of a policy of conservation in new discourses of sustainable communities and in a new environmental context and specifically a carbon controlled world. The first points to the lack of visibility of conservation as being important and integral to a new emphasis on place-making, noted above. And in terms of the climate change agenda much of the focus has been on the impact of climate change on heritage or on pleading the special case of the historic environment to be exempt from carbon reduction measures which might compromise historic fabric (e.g. English Heritage, 2008b), rather than the role of heritage in a lower carbon economy; PPS5 leaves both as important policy goals with any conflict to be resolved on a case by case basis. And whilst there has been burgeoning guidance at the level of the individual building about energy conservation and micro-renewables (e.g. English Heritage 2008c, 2008d) wider considerations of how the conservation of places fit with a low carbon economy are absent.

**Conclusion**

Our aim throughout this paper has been to tell the story of how urban conservation emerged from its origins in early town planning legislation and gradually moved towards the centre of planning practice over the course of the twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century both statutory planning and more general planning activity was concerned with controlling urban growth and expansion. Not until after the Second World War, with the political zeal for rebuilding towns and cities that followed, did conservation begin to appear as a consideration in the planning of urban environments as part of a comprehensive programme of planning. The paper illustrates and charts the long rise of this new found enthusiasm for conservation, intertwined with an expanding planning system. Conservation moved to the centre of planning debate and action both as a reaction to some of the development consequences of modernist comprehensive planning from the latter half of the twentieth century, whilst also being part of that same emerging modernist and comprehensive system of planning that it sought to critique.

Thus from the middle of the twentieth century awareness of ideas around protecting the historic character of towns and cities grew in significance. Between the 1940s and 1980s, whether in the acknowledged historic jewel cities or those seen as less obviously historic, conservation concerns and policies began to feature in development plans. Similarly, conservation related legislation and policy emerged to guide and direct local planning authorities as they began to embrace conservation as a planning function. Indeed, throughout the 1970s policy evolution and reform had begun to establish a more systematic and supportive environment for conservation where policy was incrementally (but repeatedly) strengthened. By the 1990s it is notable the extent to which conservation had become a significant objective embedded in the planning system, shown most practically in the degree to which many central areas of towns and cities were covered by one or another form of conservation designation. By the end of the century a combination of factors including changes in professional attitudes, legislative reform and sustained campaigning from conservation activists and groups had resulted in producing a near unchallenged consensus that the protection of the historic environment had become a fundamental purpose of the planning system.

Thus far in the twenty first century there has been little sustained challenge to this consensus; conservation and heritage protection is now a central element of contemporary town planning and a powerful shaping force in the development of our towns and cities. However, there are
elements of this evolution that remain underexplored with signs of new challenges ahead. On the one hand, the conservation sector has often pursued a politically pragmatic approach during the last forty years and sought to position itself as relevant to the wider concerns of the day; most notably in economic development and regeneration policy. This success has rather concealed the shifts in what a policy of conservation is for, such that the cultural values underpinning conservation are conflated with a wide range of benefits argued to derive from a policy of conservation (Pendlebury, 2009). From being a selective activity where buildings are considered to have an intrinsic value to be protected purely for their cultural worth conservation-planning has become an extensive activity with wide-ranging motivations layered on top of the cultural building block. This fleetness of foot has not been so evident in the last decade, arguably leading to conservation’s marginalisation in the place-making, social inclusion and carbon-control agendas. In the economic boom years there were some signs of both a development industry and local governance challenge to the sanctity of conservation policy in central areas, albeit principally around broader issues of city character rather than statutory designations. Recession has tended to make these forces dormant for now but they are likely to re-emerge along with any upswing in the development market. So whilst the movement of conservation policy from the margins to become, in recent decades, a central element of the planning system is a story of remarkable achievement, new challenges already await.
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Figures

1 High intervention planning of the historic city. Adshead et.al.’s 1948 plan for York.
2 An extract, showing part of the commercial centre, from Esher’s (1968) proposals plan for York. Proposed interventions are shaded and include the proposed narrowing of the 19th century Parliament Street.
3 Chester, one of the jewel cities balancing economy with heritage.
5 The Corn Exchange, Leeds, regenerated for up-market retailing.
6 The Beetham Tower, Manchester, seen over a foreground of Castlefield. Photograph courtesy of Michael Short.