Understanding the Place.
A case study based on a north Buckinghamshire town design guide.

Stuart Turner – Design Council Cabe Enabler.  
Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme.  

February 2012.
Introduction:
Putting design in context.
The vision and long term goals are the basis of any Placemaking and Design approach. The plans and drawings are the means of exploring and testing the possible solutions. The characteristics of a design approach will:-

* embrace a number of focused objectives.
* be spatially led, three dimensional and visually rich.
* adopt an integrated approach to development proposals.
* be an engaging and inclusive process.
* be focused on delivery but flexible.

Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme. February 2012.
The Case Study:

The Stony Stratford design guide set out to inform and guide future development.

The guide asked people to look at the spaces and buildings around them and to question ‘what works and why?’
The starting point was to engender a better understanding and appreciation of the built environment and the different scales needed to be addressed.

The guide looked at the:-
* the district area.
* the locality.
* the streetscape
* the buildings
* the detailed elements, materials & colour.

Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme. February 2012.
*The District Area.
Consider the different characters -

The different parts and how the settlement has evolved, the old historic centre, the suburbs and the newer growth areas and why some areas have remained as open space.

Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme. February 2012.
The River Plain
Strictly not a development area, the river plain represents a significant part of the Town Council area.

The Historic Centre.
The historic town centre including the growth up to the 1900's. The dark brown shows the extent of the Conservation Area.

The Suburbs
Areas spanning the two wars of 1914 and 1939 up to the time of new city growth

New City Growth
The areas developed under the time of MK Development Corporation, i.e. Galley Hill, Fullers Slade.

Character Areas
*The Locality
Consider how a local place works and is made up.

Start with five key aspects when considering a local area:- permeability, a legible place, a mix of uses, overlooked pathways and public & private spaces.
layout principles
The following five design principles will be used for assessing the soundness of a layout: Creating Permeability; Making a Legible Place; Creating Appropriate Buildings and Spaces; Incorporating Variety and Community Safety.

A Legible Place
* the provision of landmarks and features will create a legible place and help the pedestrian navigate through a space easily.

A mix of Uses
* different uses and amenities will provide the variety that will strengthen local identity.

Overlooked Pathways
* housing overlooking the street and pathways will contribute to a safer place.

Infill sites

Permeability
* a permeable layout should be well-connected and include frequent points of access into and through the development and direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

Public & Private Spaces
* a sound layout will differentiate between public and private spaces, and demonstrate a clear hierarchy of streets, buildings and open spaces.

The interface between the town edge and open space is important. The insert shows the relationship between the river Great Ouse and the western edge of the town. Consideration needs to be given to the views looking in and the impact of any inappropriate new development.

Creating New Places

edge conditions
Improving the fabric of the town will benefit the local economy. For example the provision of safe and convenient connections across the V4 between Fullers Slade and the expansion area will improve the catchment areas for the existing local centres.
*The streetscape. Is there a coherence?

No matter whether an historic centre, a suburban area or a new growth area, aspects such as street space, enclosure, access, materials for paths and roads, open space planting and street furniture need to be considered.

Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme. February 2012.
Composing the streetscape.
The design for the streetspace should consider aspects such as the street space, enclosure, access, materials for paths and roads, open spaces, planting and street furniture. The design for the streetface should follow a number of basic rules that will help with the overall composition and show how new buildings can fit into the street. The key aspects that influence the qualities and character of the streetscape will vary according to the character areas, these should be taken as a reference where new proposals are concerned.

The Historic Centre.
An urban street-scene with narrow street widths and minimum set backs, predominately terrace houses and dominated by hard materials for roads, paths and walls and little planting.

The Suburbs
more generous street widths and setbacks, verges and pockets of open space allowing street planting and front gardens. Semi and detached houses.

New City Growth
Looser street patterns, generous areas of open space and planting. Local spaces created by building groups. A variety of housing forms.

Composing the Streetscape
*The face of the buildings
How is the facade being ordered, and what sense is required?

How will scale, symmetry, variety and patterns influence the character?

Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme. February 2012.
The Face of the Building

Indicative elevation

* The design approach addresses the possibility of change and a contemporary building. With this comes a variety of construction forms and a wider choice of materials.

* setting back the upper floor and roof can help to reduce the impact of a larger scale building.

* stepping back the face of the new building can help the transition from old to new.

* the facade is articulated in an abstract way and complements the older building. Window proportions respect those of the existing.

* parapet lines and face lines like the string course can be used as a reference to strengthen the relationship

* the scale of the new building should respond to the existing. The case for its size and dominance should be demonstrated.

* parapet lines and face lines like the string course can be used as a reference to strengthen the relationship

* the use of contrasting materials, surface finishes and colours as in the windows can often help to liven an elevation

Building Elevations

What are the key aspects when considering the design of a building elevation? As with the streetface, the same design rules should be followed when articulating the elevation, consider:-

* The proportion of the facade and ordering of the opening to the whole;
* The use and composition of detailed elements, materials and colours.

and then assess the four following aspects of the design:-

* Scale

Scale is a factor of size and the proportional relationship of one building or element to another that makes up the composition. Ratios can be applied (try playing with the golden proportion of 1:1.62) but the starting point is what looks right.

* Symmetry

The extent to which symmetry is designed into a building frontage tends to influence the character of the street. The level of symmetry tends to reinforce the sense of urbanity.

* Variety

How the elements of the buildings are arranged will influence the level of formality. For example variations in the storey heights; frontage widths will provide variety.

* Patterns

The character of a building can be altered by the arrangement of the elements such as windows, doors, colour and materials, and how these are grouped. This is another way of enhancing the composition.

Characteristics typical to each of the character areas should be taken as a reference. The objective is a creative design solutions that could include a contemporary solution and not simply poor pastiche imitations of the existing.
*Detailed elements, materials & colour.
The main building elements, the final part that goes to make up the overall composition of the built environment.

What materials and colours are used for the walls, roofs, openings and applied details?

Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme. February 2012.
Building Elements.
The main building elements that contribute to the composition of the building elevation are shown below. A selection should be made that responds to each character area. However, this can include the careful matching of new materials against the traditional:

**walls**
- Primary and secondary walling materials
- Construction forms and detailing
- Brick patterns & bonds, mortars profiles & colours
- String courses, opening details, jambs, heads, & cills.
- Detailing at eaves and gables and plinth level

**roofs**
- Primary and secondary roofing materials
- Construction form and detailing
- Roof pitch and shape such as plain, gable or hip
- Eaves, fascias, bargeboards and overhang
- Dormers and roof lights
- Chimneys, parapets, rainwater goods, ventilation outlets

**openings**
- Window and door types, openings and proportion
- Window reveals and glazing details
- Feature windows, bay and oriel windows
- Door reveals, Infill and panel details
- Decorative and feature doors, surrounds
- Balconies, porches, head and cill details, finishes.

**applied details**
- Balconies, railings, porches, canopies, rainwater goods, chimney pots, flue outlets, decorative ridge tiles, solar and photo voltaic panels, thresholds, signage, lights and door numbers, bin stores, meter cupboards and fences.

**material selection**
Take a look at the diversity of the materials around you before making your choice. Consider new demands on the fabric of the building and the impact of new technologies and how these might fit in with planning policy.

Details, Materials & Colours
Summary

When appraising your own town or village think about how your place works at these five different scales, that is from the district character right down to the detailed elements, materials & colour.

This understanding will provide you with the clues and references for how you might want to develop your neighbourhood.

Broadland Neighbourhood Planning Programme. February 2012.
Moving on – Placecheck and appraising the built environment.