CHAPTER 7

7 TALL BUILDINGS OBJECTIVES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Ten objectives have been identified, which guide the role of tall buildings in Derby. Proposals for tall building should aim to fulfil all objectives. The objectives are listed in no particular order and all have equal importance. Tall buildings should:

- Be of high quality architectural design and appearance;
- Support intensification and a mix of uses;
- Be part of a plan-led, place making approach;
- Have a clear purpose as a landmark or to increase densities;
- Protect and enhance heritage assets and their setting and protected landscape characteristics;
- Preserve and enhance special and valued townscapes;
- Protect and enhance townscape views and the skyline;
- Result in high quality places where people want to live and spend their time;
- Integrate effectively with the surrounding area; and
- Be sustainable and innovative developments.

These objectives are explained in more detail on the following pages.

Figure 7.1: Jurys Inn and St Mary's Church

BE OF HIGH QUALITY ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

Tall buildings are highly visible and, depending on their stature, are a key part of the skyline and image of a place. Therefore they should be of high quality architectural and urban design. They are natural beacons of the city and should represent its aspiration for quality development.

Tall buildings should be more than simple extrusions of a standard floorplan but their architecture should articulate its base, shaft and top as discrete yet interconnected parts.

The base should present a proportionate response to the surrounding context and contribute to a friendly, active and human scale environment around the building.

The top is the most visible part of a tall building in views over the city, and like a crown should be carefully designed to provide a visual focus and distinctiveness, rather than a sudden end to the shaft and place for technical equipment.

Tall buildings should be designed to express elegance, proportionality and verticality in a form that is consistent from every angle. To that end, generally slab blocks and bulky forms should be avoided.

Through careful detailing and choice of materials, tall buildings should age well and be designed for longevity, while relating to the character of their location. Tall buildings should also consider the impact of lighting and mitigate negative impacts.

SUPPORT INTENSIFICATION AND MIX OF USES

Tall buildings should play a role in providing a mix of uses and intensifying highly central areas that benefit from high public transport accessibility and a dense network of walking and cycling routes. Tall buildings can contribute to greater population density to support activity in and vitality of central locations.

However tall buildings are not the only means to increase density and in many areas will not be an appropriate development form for this purpose. In the majority of areas intensification can be achieved with incremental intensification through a localised increase of heights by one or two storeys subject to context, or by delivering compact urban neighbourhoods with heights ranging from 3 to 6 storeys.

Where a tall building is proposed, applicants should demonstrate that it is the only way to deliver a required intensification of activities and mix of uses.

BE PART OF A PLAN-LED AND PLACE MAKING APPROACH

Tall buildings should only be considered where they are part of a plan-led strategy for change and regeneration of a place led by a comprehensive and widely supported vision and where this has a clear purpose in delivering this vision. A place making approach should always be followed; a tall building must relate and contribute to the wider area and improve the sense of place, or have a clear role in the creation of a new “place”.

Speculative proposals for tall buildings on smaller sites that do not fit in with an agreed wider vision for a place can lead to a fragmented townscape, an illegible skyline, weaken the distinctiveness and image of place, and undermine regeneration. Therefore, tall buildings should only be promoted in identified tall building areas.

HAVE A CLEAR PURPOSE AS A LANDMARK OR TO INCREASE DENSITIES

Tall buildings are only a means to an end, not an end by themselves. As such they will have to have a clear defined and justified purpose. From a positive planning and place making perspective there are two principle purposes for tall buildings in Derby:

1 **Landmarks:** Individually or collectively, tall buildings can be landmarks that help to bring distinctiveness and legibility to the urban fabric by being exceptional markers in the urban fabric. The height and design of Landmark buildings should be proportionate to the respective role or function of a location in the hierarchy of places. Landmarks should be located in highly prominent and visible locations, provide a high quality and distinctive design and should be 'singular' in having an aspect that is unique and memorable in the context.

2 **Densification:** In exceptional circumstances tall buildings (and clusters of tall buildings) could be part of a new urban character that delivers great intensification to highly central urban areas, especially where concentration of smaller apartments for young urban professionals is desirable to support the livelihood of a city centre or place, or in a location where the delivery of commercial or other type of floor space is a strategic planning objective; and it can be demonstrated that alternative contextual approaches to intensification or the delivery of a planning objective are not feasible or viable. A super densification approach can deliver a stark contrast or leading to rupture in the character of the existing townscape, and should only pursued in places where this level of development can be accommodated as part of the existing or emerging character.

3 **Necessary typological response:** Where the delivery of a specific planning objective requires a tall building or structure in a certain location and it can be demonstrated that other contextual solutions have been explored and would be less effective, efficient and feasible.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE HERITAGE ASSETS AND THEIR SETTING, AND PROTECTED LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

Tall buildings in the wrong places can cause significant and irrevocable damage to the significance of heritage assets by intruding into their setting and being overbearing or detracting from the appreciation of a heritage asset and its values.

Harm to the significance of heritage assets should generally be minimised or avoided, and great care should be taken in testing and mitigating against harm. Tall buildings should have no adverse effect on the setting of assets identified as being of High sensitivity as their setting contributes importantly to their significance.

Harm to protected landscape areas must also be mitigated against, especially where the protections affect the visual and scenic value of landscapes and the River Derwent corridor where the intrusion of a tall building or structure could lead to a significant impact on the protected landscape characteristics.

PRESERVE AND ENHANCE SPECIAL AND VALUED TOWNSCAPES

Tall buildings can have a negative impact on a valued townscape, if due to their grain, scale and height, it is out of character with the prevailing characteristics of an area. Townscapes will be particular sensitive to tall buildings when they comprise areas of heritage significance (such as a Conservation Area), are very coherent in height or comprise a strong domestic residential character.

In some of these areas a tall building would be totally out of place, while in others, the impact of a tall building on the prevailing characteristic can be effectively mitigated or is acceptable due its special role as a landmark.

Tall buildings must respond effectively to the special characteristics of the surrounding townscape.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE TOWNSCAPE VIEWS AND THE SKYLINE

Wider townscape views and views of the skyline are important aspects of the image of a place as they provide an overview of a city or place in its wider setting and a spatial understanding of its defining characteristics. Tall buildings can have an irrevocable impact on a skyline and views that will be greater the taller a building is. Panoramic and prospect views that allow the appreciation of distinctive and valued characteristics of the skyline and townscape, especially if they are from popular or frequented viewing points, should be preserved and enhanced. The impact of a tall building proposal on these views should be thoroughly tested during the design phase, and demonstrate how the tall building design responds to the view and its valued characteristics.

Integrating a tall building in the skyline can include measures such as limiting their height and prominence, where they would detract from existing landmarks or skyline features, stepping down or altering their form to fit in and complement clusters of taller buildings.

Alternatively, where appropriate, a tall building could establish a proud new skyline feature by being a landmark of a meaningful place or function with a highly distinctive design that matches or exceeds the quality of successful existing skyline landmarks.

The incremental cumulative impact of tall buildings needs particular attention. In areas where taller buildings are promoted they should be clustered in confined locations to prevent a scattering of taller buildings over a larger area and to reinforce distinctiveness and legibility of the skyline. The shape and appearance of a cluster and the cumulative impact of existing and future tall buildings will need careful consideration and aesthetic judgement. Clusters of tall buildings when seen on the skyline denote centrality and a concentration of activity, and should only be permitted in locations with such characteristics. Clusters will be more distinctive and recognisable from all around if the tallest building is situated central to a cluster and heights drop away from the centre, and if the central building is an iconic landmark that makes the cluster instantly recognisable on the skyline.

RESULT IN HIGH QUALITY PLACES WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE AND SPEND THEIR TIME

Tall buildings are dense urban forms of development that concentrate accommodation in a small area. They need to be designed carefully to ensure they contribute and not detract from the amenity of existing or future residents.

Aspects that need to be considered are the quality and amenity of dwellings and private outdoor spaces in respect of privacy, outlook, day and sun-lighting; the quality, quantity and usefulness of shared amenity space provision; access to quality public spaces in the vicinity; and the size and quality of the public realm around the building as a pleasant place to move and congregate.

The microclimatic impact of the buildings on the outdoor spaces from wind funnelling, overshadowing or solar glare will need to be tested and appropriately mitigated to provide inviting, usable and safe places.

INTEGRATE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE SURROUNDING AREA

Tall buildings are, by their nature, exceptional forms of development. There is a risk that a tall building will appear to sit in isolation without regard for the characteristics of the surrounding area.

Tall buildings should, through careful design, integrate into the existing built fabric rather than appearing as separate. This can be achieved by integrating tall buildings within urban blocks and responding to the grain and scale of the surrounding area. Stepping the height of a tall development may be used to mediate between the existing context and the tall element. Developments should create active frontages and support lively streets while internalising servicing and parking solutions within the development, away from public view.

As part of a comprehensive approach, tall buildings must support existing movement routes and, if possible, create new routes and increase the permeability of the area.

Within areas of a coherent urban structure, tall buildings must take cues from the existing built form, emphasising the elements that make the area successful. In areas that are incoherent or in need of improvement, a tall building may be an opportunity to reinstate an urban block structure, open up new routes and stitch together the urban fabric. Tall buildings should contribute to the green and blue infrastructure of an area, not just at ground level but also exploring innovative solutions for upper floors.

BE SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Tall buildings may be used to optimise density on a site, thereby making sustainable use of land. However, tall buildings are generally more resource intensive to build and to run compared to low rise buildings. Therefore, they should only be promoted where they clearly support the wider sustainability of an area. The construction and operation of tall buildings must be designed to high sustainability standards to minimise their impact on the environment. Tall buildings must respond to the climate emergency by ensuring they are designed to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

From the outset of design, the embodied energy and life cycle of the building should be considered, prioritising local materials with good longevity. Tall buildings should also be designed for future retrofitting and adaptation to other uses through adequate floor to ceiling heights and flexible spaces. This will reduce the need for carbon-intensive redevelopment in the future.

Detailed consideration should be given to the building's form, configuration and orientation, energy sources and conservation, material source and life cycle, internal temperature control and use of natural ventilation, water use and conservation and mitigation of water run-off, waste management and on-site ecology. Renewable energy generation and the installation or future proofing for Photo Voltaics (PVs) should also be considered. Tall buildings should be encouraged to be innovative with regards to sustainability.