

2015

Reusing Old Buildings

Anthology made of extracts from

Re-Using Redundant Buildings,
case studies of good practice in urban regeneration,

Great Britain. Department of the Environment and URBED,

1987

Pillars of the Community,
The transfer of local authority heritage assets

Historic England,

January 2011

How Buildings Learn,
What happens after they're built

Stewart Brand,

1994

The goals of regeneration

The process of converting a building from one use to another is not new. It used to be the normal practice to adapt buildings for different purposes over their lives. It is only since the Industrial Revolution that it has become common to demolish and rebuild rather than to adapt and extend, and it is only in the past fifteen or twenty years that a movement has grown up in Britain around the idea of conserving redundant industrial and commercial buildings and putting them to new uses.

While it is most obvious in the conversion of former large factories and warehouses into small units, the movement now embraces the re-use of buildings as diverse as market buildings and railway stations for a wide range of uses, including housing and specialist retailing. However, these developments are still far from universal, with ideas that have been piloted in London (and perhaps before that in the USA) taking five or ten years to become applied elsewhere. It is also the case that many of the people involved with old buildings are not familiar with the full 'menu' of possible uses and the conditions under which they can work. As a consequence, fine buildings still go to waste because of the failure to devise appropriate schemes or financial packages.

The importance of heritage assets

Heritage assets are non-renewable resources which can bring social, economic and environmental benefits through their conservation.

Heritage assets can be buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes which have been positively identified as having a degree of significance. The interest of a heritage asset may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Many of these assets have a local, communal value. Some have statutory protection through designation such as listed buildings or scheduled monuments; others are recognised as important internationally, such as World Heritage Sites.

The worth of old buildings

Loved buildings are the ones that work well, that suit the people in them, and that show their age and history. All it takes is keeping most everything that works, most everything that is enjoyed, much of what doesn't get in the way, and helping the rest evolve.

That goes better if the place is neither owned nor maintained by remote antagonists, because they distance the building from its users. What makes a building learn is its physical connection to the people within.

Finally, an adapted state is not an end state. A successful building has to be periodically challenged and refreshed, or it will turn into a beautiful corpse. The scaffolding was never taken completely down around Europe's medieval cathedrals because that would imply that they were finished and perfect, and that would be an insult to God.

Considerations for local authorities

It advises...

Within local authorities, the future of heritage assets is not just a matter for the departments that currently use or manage them. They will be of concern to those involved in planning and regeneration for their contribution to local character and quality of the environment, as well as other potential public benefits that would arise from their re-use.

Guidance for central government on the transfer of heritage assets contains the elements of best practice for the public sector as a whole, including local authorities.

- Accepting the highest purchase offer is not always appropriate
- Any options for re-use of an asset should be considered before deciding to sell
- Unused heritage assets need to be actively protected through regular inspection and maintenance
- Information about the significance and condition of heritage assets should be made available to potential purchasers
- Alternative methods of sale may need to be considered to ensure that heritage assets find an appropriate new owner
- The transfer of large historic sites should be handled holistically, to avoid isolating heritage assets

The conversion process

What is pro forma analysis ?

Pro forma analysis is the projection of income and expenses that will occur at a future date.

This may be done either on a stabilized annual basis or on a multi-year projection.

In evaluating a potential rehabilitation project, there are three different elements that need to be considered in the pro forma analysis :

1. The cost of acquisition
2. The cost of rehabilitation
3. The income and expense analysis of the property on its rehabilitated basis

Stages in the conversion process

Some Input and Tasks	Key Factors for Success
● INCUBATION STAGE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Visualise the Potential Uses -Understand Demand -Select the Building -Obtain Local Authority Support -Make Survey and Costings -Formulate the Scheme -Obtain Public Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● USES MATCHED TO BUILDING ● SUPPORTIVE LOCAL AUTHORITY ● VIABLE AND EXCITING SCHEME
● NEGOTIATION STAGE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negotiate Building Purchase -Obtain Planning Permission -Find Appropriate Professionals -Raise the Finance -Maintain Flexibility -Make Detailed Designs -Obtain Quotations -Select Reliable Contractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GOOD PROPERTY TERMS ● FLEXIBLE FINANCIAL PACKAGE ● SOUND PROFESSIONAL TEAM ● RELIABLE CONTRACTOR
● CONSTRUCTION STAGE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Manage the Building Work -Keep Control of Money -Keep Control of Time -Use an MSC Workforce -Deal with the Unexpected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EFFICIENT PROJECT MANAGEMENT ● FLEXIBILITY WHEN NECESSARY
● MANAGEMENT STAGE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Market the Scheme -Attract Tenants -Organise Continuing Management -Create Atmosphere of Success -Plan Further Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● COMMUNICATING THE EXCITEMENT ● MANAGEMENT COMMITTED TO SUCCESS

Diagnosis for a public transfer

Once a heritage asset has been identified as a suitable candidate for transfer, it will be necessary to clarify what constraints, liabilities and restrictions are attached to it, as well as the potential opportunities, including re-use or development. This process requires an appreciation of the asset's heritage significance.

- Does the local authority's Asset Management Plan identify heritage assets that are at risk or under-utilised?
- Has there been adequate consultation between the local authority and community groups regarding possible transfers of heritage assets?
- Are there any heritage assets on the Heritage at Risk Register that are suitable for transfer to community groups?
- Are heritage assets subject to transfer being adequately maintained?
- Does the local authority have a Heritage Champion who can promote a transfer from the local authority?

Checklist

Summary of key factors

Incubation stage	Negotiation stage	Construction stage	Management stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a balance of uses that maximises the use of space. • Enlist the support of the local authority early on. • Make sure that your scheme is viable and sustainable. • Carry out a Feasibility Study if others need convincing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain the property on good terms. • Look for finance from all available sources. • Use grants to make innovative schemes work. • Choose a sound professional team. • Make sure that a reliable contractor is chosen. • Abandon the scheme if the above conditions are not met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the building works are closely overseen. • Carry out the project in phases • Watch the cash flow projections regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the building works are closely overseen. • Carry out the project in phases • Watch the cash flow projections regularly.

Key words of the conversion process

Appropriate Development Approach

Conventional approach

It is entirely geared to the production of a building which will be bought as an investment by a financial institution. It will therefore only invest in properties which meet strict criteria regarding such things as their location, their ability to be used by a broad category of users, and even their methods of construction.

The main skills required are in:

- spotting market trends
- negotiating (particularly with regard to acquisition of sites, planning permission and financing arrangements)
- understanding all the rules
- co-ordinating for speed.

Entrepreneurial approach

A different approach is required where there is little or no likelihood of an institution buying the completed scheme, or if the developer has no intention of selling it. The whole focus of the development must be on ensuring the success of whatever end-use is planned for the building.

The main skills required are in:

- perceiving viable end-uses
- creating enthusiasm and excitement
- reacting to opportunities and being flexible
- maintaining momentum over a long period.

Driving Force

The second essential requirement for successful property development is a driving force by which we mean an individual or team that 'carries the vision' of a scheme right through to its successful conclusion and is more than either a promoter or a project manager. A really cohesive group can act as driving force, but not all voluntary groups that start out cohesively remain that way.

- bring others into a team either temporarily or permanently
- divide the whole scheme into parallel projects
- pass the role of driving force sequentially from one person to another

Suitable building

Just as location is a crucial factor in conventional property development, so in conversion schemes it is vital to start with a suitable building.

The main factors which need to be considered are

- location
- configuration
- condition.

Raising finance

Part of the funding for development may come from bank loans, but grants or 'soft loans' can make all the difference to whether a scheme is viable. It is vital to know whether offers of funding come with any restrictions or obligations.

For example, is a lease of ten years too short to attract grants towards conversion to a new use?

Government grants

will largely be for end uses if there are economic benefits and the location has been targeted for assistance.

Lottery funds

include not just the Heritage Lottery Fund, but also the Arts Council England and the Big Lottery Fund, both of which have assisted the re-use of many heritage assets.

The local authority

can be important in supporting uses. It may also provide funding for repairs or negotiate funding from the private sector.

The Architectural Heritage Fund

is an important source of funding for buildings being transferred to building preservation trusts and other charities through out the UK.

Charitable trusts and foundations

tend to support very specific uses. Information can be obtained from Funds for Historic Buildings.

Low cost loans

may be available to charities from specialised institutions like the Charity Bank, Unity Trust Bank and Triodos, as well as from banks and building societies in cases where the risks are small.

Case study: Camden Lock, London

Victorian stables and warehouse, now re-used as craft workshops, market, restaurants, dance hall and centre for cultural events. Developed by individuals using private finance.

One of the most famous developments in London in recent years. A classic example of an entrepreneurial approach to development with special attention paid to attracting users and to creating excitement. Also an example of how the initiative and drive behind a scheme can be transferred from one person to another during the project, thus enabling different personal characteristics to come to the fore at different stages.

Good practices highlighted

- Driving force
- Entrepreneurial Approach
- Formulating the Scheme
- Maintaining Flexibility
- Keeping Control of Time and Money
- Marketing
- Continuing Management

Project summary

The buildings

An unpromising group of warehouses and former canal stables clustered round three cobbled yards and a small basin on the Regent's Canal in what was then a run down, mainly residential area of inner London.

The problem

The canal had fallen into virtual disuse. The horses had long gone and the stables were used by a firm of packing case makers which, in 1971, was going out of business. The wider area was equally drab being blighted by a proposed motorway.

The outcome

By the time that the blight was lifted in 1976, Camden Lock had become famous, particularly for its weekend market and there was strong local opposition to redevelopment. Eventually proposals based on extending the existing uses were approved. Thus what had originally been intended as short term uses became permanent and one of London's well known tourist attractions.

The scheme

Two friends who had previously been converting residential property bought the site as they wanted to extend their activities to commercial buildings as well. They liked the canal and the site was cheap. They took a gamble that the motorway blight might eventually be lifted but in the meantime they looked for short life uses such as craft workshops, a weekend market, restaurants, a dance hall, boat trips and events held on and around the canal. Great effort was put into attracting people to the site.



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