TOWNSCAPE AS A METHODOLOGY OF MODERNITY: THE PLANS AND PRACTICE OF THOMAS SHARP

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Abstract
This chapter focuses upon the work of Thomas Sharp, a mid-twentieth century British planner, and his role in the development of ideas of townscape. A figure often marginalised in the historiography of the topic, Sharp's use of townscape was to advocate for a methodology of planning that is both historically informed and historically sensitive, but which remained distinctly modern in outlook and purpose. His work was given an enormous stimulus by the Second World War and the mobilisation to plan for its aftermath. Whilst Sharp did not consider himself to be a preservationist, his most significant commissions were for historic cities and were influential in the development of conservation practice. The chapter considers how Sharp's formulation of townscape developed in a series of plans he produced for the historic cities of Durham, Exeter, and Oxford in the mid-1940s. It then discusses his continuing involvement in Durham and Oxford in subsequent decades, and the continuing importance of the idea of townscape in his work, often expressed through his opposition to the plans and proposals of others, as well as a late commission in his career, for the city of Cambridge. Sharp had a lasting influence on the cities in which he worked and his ideas exerted a significant and long-lasting impact on methodologies of planning, which helped temper the degree and form of redevelopment across the UK.

Keywords
Townscape, town planning, conservation, preservation, reconstruction, traffic, tall buildings

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses upon the work of Thomas Sharp, a mid-twentieth century British planner, and his role in the development of ideas of townscape. Discussion of the English townscape movement is usually centred on the periodical The Architectural Review (AR) and a series of articles and campaigns produced by a substantial and varied group of writers from the mid-1940s through until the 1970s under the influence of its eccentric upper-class owner and some-time editor, Hubert de Cronin Hastings. Sharp is often marginalised in the historiography of townscape. For example, in a special issue of The Journal of Architecture on the history of townscape, Sharp's contribution is only fleetingly touched upon in the introductory article (Aitchison, 2012). However, it is my contention that he was important in the development and dissemination of townscape ideas and that key to understanding Sharp's

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particular contribution is an appreciation that first and foremost he was a planner. The act of planning was his primary concern, and a townscape approach was a means of achieving good planning. Good planning combined functional efficiency with beauty; Sharp's initial historical model for beauty was the eighteenth-century town, although he grew increasingly appreciative of older, medieval settlements (Figure 1). Though evolving from the 1930s, his work was given an enormous stimulus by the Second World War and the mobilisation to plan for its aftermath. Whilst Sharp did not consider himself to be a preservationist, his most significant commissions were for historic cities and were influential in the development of conservation practice.

This chapter considers how Sharp's formulation of townscape developed in a series of plans he produced for the historic cities of Durham, Exeter, and Oxford in the mid-1940s. It then discusses his continuing involvement in Durham and Oxford in subsequent decades, and the continuing importance of the idea of townscape in his work, often expressed through his opposition to the plans and proposals of others, as well as a late commission in his career, for the city of Cambridge. As such it extends and develops my previous work on Sharp's reconstruction plans (see e.g. Larkham & Pendlebury, 2008; Pendlebury 2004, 2009a, 2015). The chapter first briefly situates Sharp within the wider townscape movement as well as giving some background on Sharp's early career and thoughts about planning and visual planning specifically, that were subsequently to crystallise around the idea of townscape.

2 SITUATING SHARP IN THE TOWNSCAPE MOVEMENT AND HIS EARLY CAREER

Townscape as promulgated by the AR was a large collective activity or project, driven by Hastings. In recent years attention has been drawn to the influence of Nikolaus Pevsner, who was working on AR in the 1940s, and his only relatively recently published manuscript *Visual Planning & the Picturesque* (Pevsner, 2010). The most well-known culmination of this activity is the book *Townscape* by Gordon Cullen (1961). Sharp was linked to this group but not part of it; he was a contributor to the AR in the 1930s, writing a series of articles that can be considered proto-townscape analysis and were subsequently compiled as the book *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1935, 1936a–d). Furthermore, his most significant plans were published by the *Architectural Press*, a sister organisation to the AR. In the case of at least one pivotal plan – for Oxford – Hastings had a direct (if marginal) role in its formulation. However, unlike the AR people, Sharp became more directly involved in trying to put these principles into effect through his engagement with places on the ground as a consultant planner. In this respect his contribution is distinct from the AR, which focused on polemical approaches to architecture and design, rarely systematically integrated with land use planning. Erdem Erten (2009) describes his as an institutional role in disseminating townscape, especially within the planning profession, with the term ultimately becoming a standard term within planning practice.

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28. COUNTRY TOWN, AMERSHAM

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29. TOWN-COUNTRY, WELWYN

FIGURE 1 A plate unfavourably comparing garden city development with the traditional town. (Photos © unknown creator, *Town and Country-side* by Sharp, 1932, Plate 29)

Sharp was from a working class and northern background, quite unlike the southern, aristocratic AR set. Whilst he would form alliances at different times, he was not a natural collaborator. Through the 1930s he was variously working as a planner in local government, was unemployed, and towards the end of the decade was teaching town planning at King's College, Durham University in Newcastle upon Tyne. He was also making his name as an author and commentator, controversially criticising garden cities, which he considered to be suburban and lacking in what he considered to be the qualities of either the town or the countryside (Sharp, 1932). In his writing Sharp sought to set out ideas of how cities should be managed and the importance of visual planning as part of a better progressive planning. His subsequent book, *Town Planning* (Sharp, 1940), a cheap paperback published early in the Second World War (claimed as the best-selling book ever on the subject, Cherry, 1974) is a manifesto for a more comprehensive and (in Sharp's view) better post-war planning. Whilst it touches upon issues of urban design, this was within a wider framing of spatial planning, considering issues of urban hierarchy, governance, and so on. For Sharp the 1930s was a period for developing his planning ideas, finding his voice and – eventually – becoming established within the planning profession. The point to reinforce is that whilst the idea of townscape is often now considered in a limited way, in terms of visual effect, for Sharp townscape was always one part of a wider approach to planning and specifically to a modern, progressive planning.

3 RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING

During the Second World War, Sharp was seconded to central government for a time, before returning briefly to his academic position. Frustrated at an apparent block on a professorial position he took the opportunity presented by an explosion of interest in planning, and the work possibilities it generated, to strike out as an independent planning consultant. Whilst he had assistants, he never had a large office and retained strong authorial control over his plans. From the mid-to-late 1940s Sharp was commissioned by several historic towns and cities to produce plans for post-war planning and reconstruction – part of the flourishing of such plans in this period. This section focuses on three of Sharp's most significant plans in evolving ideas of townscape, which in chronological sequence were Durham, Exeter, and Oxford.

Sharp was appointed by the City Council to produce a plan for Durham in December 1943. Durham is a historic city in the northeast of England, centred on the cathedral and castle (today forming the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage Site) which sit high on a peninsula in a loop of the River Wear. Sharp had published withering commentary on plans for Durham made by the higher-tier County Council during the 1930s, criticising not so much the principle of what was proposed but the lack of a coherent plan:

> [It] is surely a job of such enormous scope that it should only be undertaken to a most carefully worked out plan. And, characteristically, there is no plan at all. (Sharp, 1937, p. 150).

FIGURE 2 Owengate, Durham. (Photo © unknown creator, from *Cathedral City* by Sharp, 1945, p. 48)

He was also critical of a new elevated relief road, with Sharp suggesting a ground level alternative on technical and aesthetic grounds. Perhaps not surprisingly then, Sharp's subsequent appointment was vigorously opposed by the County Council; the County Surveyor was reported as being strongly opposed to the appointment of any consultant "and to the appointment of Mr. Sharp in particular" (Durham City Council Works and Town Planning Committee, 1943).

Alongside the practical planning proposals in Sharp's plan for Durham, *Cathedral City* (Sharp, 1945), he used the opportunity to undertake a visual analysis of the city. The cathedral and the castle were central to this, though he also appreciated the "'picturesque' and 'medieval' flavour of the city" (Sharp, 1945, p. 15), especially in terms of the roofscape and of the foil that domestic-scaled building gave to the major monuments, as a subsidiary element highlighting their scale and presence. He considered that the setting of the cathedral and castle were formed by five elements: the riverbanks; the college of cathedral-related buildings; Palace Green – the elevated green space that sits between cathedral and castle; the Bailey – the street that runs the length of the peninsula, and finally; Owengate – the short and unpre-possessing street that rises from the Bailey, providing the principal connection with Palace Green (Figure 2).

The ascent of Owengate gradually reveals the cathedral, a townscape effect Sharp considered of supreme importance:

> [Owengate] climbs steeply up to Palace Green, with a glimpse of the Cathedral at its head. Then, at the top of the rise, at the head of the curve, the confined view having thus far excited one's feelings of mystery and expectation, the street suddenly opens out into Palace Green, broad, spacious, elevated, with a wide expanse of sky: and there, suddenly, dramatically, the whole fine length of the Cathedral is displayed to the immediate view. It is as exciting a piece of town planning as occurs anywhere in the kingdom. (Sharp, 1945, p. 54).

Of all the places Sharp worked, the historic city of Exeter in south-west England was the most badly affected by war. Following extensive bomb damage in 1942, Sharp was commissioned to undertake a plan for the city. As is characteristic of Sharp's plans, *Exeter Phoenix* (Sharp, 1946) was a rich mixture of practical planning and problem-solving, combined with a vision of the city's character and qualities that should be embraced and enriched in the planning process. This was Sharp the modern planner solving technical problems working together with Sharp the townscaper, crafting visual effects. He firmly rejected the reinstatement of the old city plan in the devastated parts of the city. Much of what had been destroyed was of high architectural value, particular some grand eighteenth century buildings. Despite this Sharp rejected any reinstatement and advocated a new street plan:

> Full restoration is impossible – and highly undesirable. Imitative rebuilding can only produce incongruity, and display timidity and deceit. The watchword for the future should be – not restoration, but renewal. (Sharp, 1946, p. 88)

At the heart of the historic city lies the medieval cathedral, rather tucked away in the dense Romano-medieval street plan. Sharp appreciated its hidden nature despite its central location. However, though he didn't advocate any general "opening up" so that the cathedral became a monument in landscape, he saw an opportunity created by destruction for making five new views as part of a new, reordered street plan, and this visual focus on the cathedral became the feature for which *Exeter Phoenix* is perhaps best remembered (While and Tait, 2009). This led to the proposal for a secondary pedestrianised shopping street, Princesshay, aligned on the western towers of the cathedral, as part of the new street plan. Sharp's proposal for Princesshay was – in broad terms – implemented, albeit with changes in detail (While and Tait, 2009) and stood until further redevelopment in the early 2000s removed the 1950s buildings but retained the view of the cathedral towers (Figure 3).

Whilst many elements of *Exeter Phoenix* remained unimplemented due to cost constraints, hostile economic interests, or because different planning views prevailed, the plan had an enduring influence in terms of some of its key elements and ideas about the three-dimensional spatial organisation of the city, in particular in its sensitivity to the surviving character of the historic city and principles for rebuilding (Tait and While, 2009). Furthermore, although it has been argued that Sharp's reluctance to prescribe detailed architectural forms for reconstruction is a weakness of the plan (While and Tait, 2009),

FIGURE 3 The post-war redevelopment of Princesshay, Exeter. (Photo: John Pendlebury, CC BY-NC-SA)

Clare Maudling (2019) has shown how the architectural expression of the rebuilt city was carefully controlled by the City Council, following principles that Sharp had earlier established.

In addition to the practical planning proposals made to manage and enhance the townscape, Sharp also used *Exeter Phoenix* to develop the concept more discursively. The plan contained an extended frontispiece and tailpiece outside the main body of the plan to do so. He reflected in his unpublished autobiography upon how his ideas on visual planning and places having a character derived from ordinary buildings and street scenery evolved in *Exeter Phoenix*:

> For Exeter […] I conceived the proper planning to be through a proper recognition of the "genius loci", (the special and distinctive spirit of the place), as I had done at Durham, and to develop the concept of "townscape", especially of "kinetic townscape", the progress and unfolding of urban scenes which I had apprehended there (Sharp, ca. 1973, p. 236).

It was in his *Oxford Replanned* (Sharp, 1948) that Sharp fully developed his ideas of "townscape" (and used the term, before it was adopted by AR). Once again, Sharp's townscape analysis was both embedded in a practical plan, handling contentious planning issues, and presented in parallel through a frontispiece and tailpiece. These aimed to set out principles and components of "townscape", using Oxford as an example and totalling some 65 pages of analysis, using headings such as mutability, traffic, foils, trees, scale, intricacy, colour and texture, and silhouette. For example, Sharp considered Oxford High Street a "great and homogenous work of art" (p. 20) but his exploration

of townscape also included much more humble elements. For example, under the heading of “trivia” he considered floorscape, arguing for the significance of the texture of cobblestones (Figure 4).

Sharp described *Oxford Replanned* as “largely a work of preservation”, although “one piece of surgery is required to relieve the city from a pressure on its spinal column which will otherwise paralyse it” (p. 16). In reality Sharp focused on the appearance of Oxford and the character of the lived city, rather than the fabric of historic buildings. His analysis of relatively modest buildings was context dependent. For example, the picturesque Ship Street

Radcliffe Square

TRIVIA

One of the greatest visual errors we make in looking at a town is in limiting our perception by deliberately excluding from consciousness whole categories of visible objects. It is possibly a piece of aesthetic defence-mechanism. The result, however, is to confine the discussion of architecture and planning to elephantine matters such as buildings and traffic routes, and to elephantine platitudes about vistas and focal points. The trivia, the visual animalcula, slip through the mesh of the sieve. Yet these trivia—curbs, bollards, road surface patterns—form a large part of any scene. Until quite recently, for instance, buildings were designed to be seen against a base of cobblestones; and in Oxford, although cobbles still exist in corners, the aesthetic loss we have sustained in substituting tarmac is very great. There is a subconscious natural human prejudice against jointing, which makes, as between two buildings, the less jointed article—that is, the object built up of bigger units—the more important. Thus stone seems more important than brick. And thus tarmac has introduced into the urban scene a false

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FIGURE 4 A plate, illustrating floorscape. (Photo © unknown creator, from *Oxford Replanned* by Sharp, 1948, p.193)

was considered a foil between college buildings and Cornmarket Street and therefore regarded as important. However, the attractive St. John's Street was part of an area proposed for redevelopment and therefore considered expendable.

But the purpose of the plan was not just to analyse place quality but to point out and resolve planning problems. And the primary problem in Oxford was traffic. The removal of traffic from the High Street, the principal east-west route bisecting the main college area, and celebrated by Sharp as one of the world's great urban experiences, was a generally agreed priority, generating many alternative solutions. Sharp's largest proposed intervention in the city – the one piece of surgery – was therefore to run a road around the south of the centre, parallel with the High Street and through an area of open land called the Meadows; a route he termed "Merton Mall". The resulting debate about his proposals became dominated by this one issue of motor traffic, already considered a major problem before Sharp became involved in the city. *Oxford Replanned* saw Sharp the modernist planner, seeking to provide a modern infrastructure for motor traffic to the ancient city, combining with Sharp the visual planner, arguing the case for his road proposals as a positive adornment to the city, although failing to persuade many in the city of this.

Whilst the three reconstruction plans for historic cities discussed here are the clearest elaboration of Sharp's developing ideas about townscape in the 1940s, his thinking can also be traced through other commissions he was engaged in during this busy period. These include, for example, an unfinished manual for city centre planning whilst he was seconded to government, a hypothetical New Town proposal for the Bournville Trust and as the initial master-planner for the New Town of Crawley (a role he resigned from after a falling out with the New Town Corporation's Chairman) (see Pendlebury, 2009a for discussion of these). However, it is in his work on villages in this period that we most clearly see a parallel elucidation of townscape principles, especially though *The Anatomy of the Village* (Sharp, 1946). This book emerged from work Sharp undertook for the *Ministry of Town and Country Planning* for a handbook or manual on village planning, which Sharp gained permission to publish when the ministry shelved the project. The aim of *The Anatomy of the Village* was to set out principles of village planning, especially in relation to physical form and design. Sharp considered the English tradition of village development as both informal and orderly, combining utilitarian organisation with beauty or at least charm and pleasantness. Rather than architectural imitation, he argued for continuing good neighbourliness in village development, through such factors as height, street line and colour of materials, following historically established plan form principles. Ironically a short official version of the work did eventually emerge (Sharp, 1953) which also discusses Sharp's somewhat thwarted attempts to put these principles into practice in part-constructed new villages for the Forestry Commission.

4 AFTERMATH: SHARP IN THE 1950s AND 1960s

After his struggles in the 1930s, Sharp was a phenomenally successful consultant in the 1940s but severely underemployed thereafter. In part this was because work for planning consultants became scarcer as it was increasingly focused on public authorities following post-war planning legislation and in part probably because Sharp had developed a reputation for being "difficult" – he certainly fell out with clients on numerous occasions.

Durham was one city where Sharp maintained a professional association. Sharp's plan, *Cathedral City*, was published in 1945, but he was retained as a planning consultant by the City Council until 1962, initially on the recommendation of the government minister for planning, Lewis Silkin (Bull, 1947). At the beginning his ongoing work was focused on road proposals. Sharp's proposals as set out in *Cathedral City* were supported by the City Council but opposed by the County Council, still hostile to Sharp since his criticisms in the 1930s. Following a public inquiry in 1946 arguments about what form relief roads might take rumbled on for many years and ultimately road construction only occurred in the 1960s, broadly to Sharp's concept, although he was highly critical of the detailed design (Gazzard, 1969).

Otherwise, the consultancy role seems to have been largely responsive, advising the City Council on development proposals as they arose. Some of these proved extremely contentious and often led to conflict with the County Council, which shared planning responsibilities with the City Council. Rather than matters of principle, Sharp's role was to often argue for a different scale and better quality of development, more suited – as he saw it – to the very special qualities of Durham. Increasingly the University was a significant actor in development proposals as it sought to grow in the postwar expansion of higher education. By the mid-1950s the University, historically largely located in the heart of the historic city on the peninsula, was looking to expand into other parts of the city and to develop open land to the south of the city, but also to pursue redevelopment in the historic core. As part of this process, it commissioned proposals for a large urban block bounded by the previously discussed Owengate, North Bailey, Palace Green and, to the south, Dun Cow Lane, from the neo-classical architect Thomas Shirley Scott Worthington. The proposals involved much demolition of historic if modest buildings. Part of the aim was to give a grander, more ceremonial approach to the cathedral. Sharp vigorously opposed these plans and mobilised his friends at the *Architectural Review*, leading to an article entitled *Durham Endangered*, highly critical of the University's plans and with a townscape analysis that drew upon *Cathedral City* (Gomme, 1960). The University retreated from their plans and ultimately engaged a different architect, David Roberts, to produce a much more sympathetic conservation-based scheme. This was one of Sharp's last significant acts in Durham and his time as a consultant came to an end in 1962; in part there seems to have been an overall sense of weariness about the conflicts between Sharp and others, especially the County Council.

Sharp's professional involvement working for the authorities in Oxford finished with *Oxford Replanned*, apart from a brief unhappy period towards the end of the 1950s when he was reengaged on the roads issue (Sharp,

c. 1973). *Oxford Replanned* seems to have been effectively ignored, neither gaining approval or rejection, or that was what Sharp subsequently asserted (Sharp, 1956). But he had moved to the live in the city whilst undertaking the plan and stayed as a resident. Sharp's ongoing contribution to Oxford's planning and townscape took two principal forms – the critically acclaimed book *Oxford Observed* (Sharp, 1952) and, as a citizen, appearing at five public inquiries about road proposals.

In *Oxford Observed* Sharp extracted and developed the townscape analysis originally made for *Oxford Replanned*. Whilst most of the key ideas can be found in *Oxford Replanned, Oxford Observed* represents a more developed and coherent treatise on both Oxford and on the idea of townscape overall. As part of this Sharp returned and extended his devotion to the High Street, "one of the finest pieces of sustained townscape in the world" (Sharp, 1952, p. 18).

> Here is dignity without display; form without formality; an aptitude for creating lofty, even sublime, effects without pomposity or arrogance; an amiable austerity; an immense variety of incident within a broad general totality. And this miracle of harmony-in-conflict is sustained in a series of well-punctuated instalments for three-quarters of a mile on both sides of a street curving broadly like a great river. (Sharp, 1952, p. 19).

Sharp's obsession with the High Street also informed his enduring concern with roads in the city, and the need to remove traffic from the High Street. A series of five highly controversial public inquiries between 1953 and 1970 deliberated over a series of competing schemes to relieve inner Oxford of traffic. Sharp appeared at each, advocating for his distinctive blend of technical and visual planning. As we have seen, Sharp viewed Oxford as one of the great historic cities with the consequent objective of the wholesale removal of traffic from the central precinct. He continued to argue for slightly modified version of his Meadows route "substitute road" presented in *Oxford Replanned*, which he argued as the only proposed solution representing a coherent *system* of traffic planning. At several points a version of the Sharp scheme seemed likely to prevail on technical grounds, but each time was thwarted by college opposition (and by Oxford graduates in government). Ultimately most of the suggested road schemes were abandoned in favour of traffic-management as the mood shifted towards a policy of containment (Stansfield, 1981).

Despite the dearth of work opportunities after the 1940s, Sharp did receive one commission late in his career, for Cambridge. For reasons that are not entirely clear, he was employed as a consultant in the early 1960s to report on the character of the city by the County Council, which was undertaking a review of its development plan. As part of his townscape analysis, he brutally documented the erosion of the character of the university city, through a series of examples of scaled-up, more intensive redevelopment over recent decades, illustrated with before-and-after photographs to telling effect (his report was reproduced in *Town Planning Review*; Sharp, 1963, Figure 5). Sharp included a section on the growing demand for tall buildings, critically reflecting on new construction in London and elsewhere and referencing Cambridge

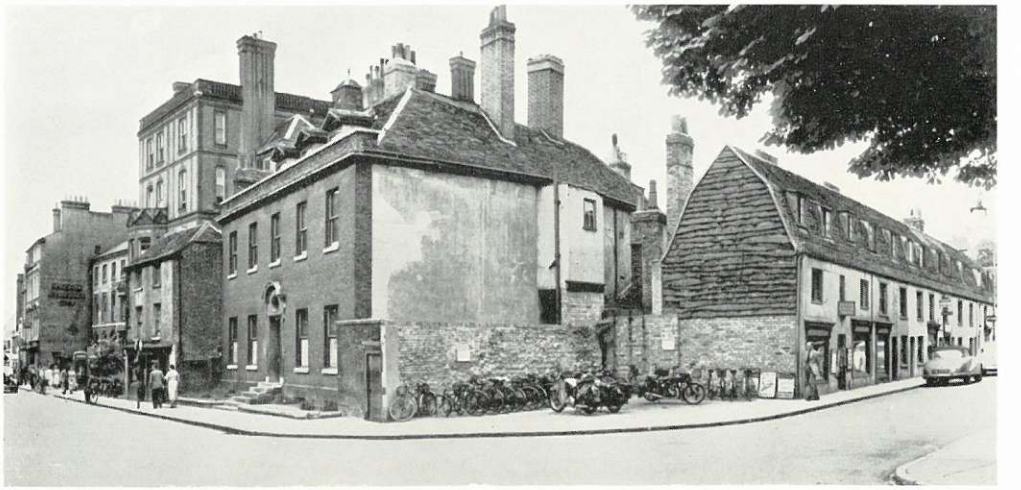

Fig. 12—St. Andrew's Street—Emmanuel Street, before rebuilding

Fig. 13—St. Andrew's Street—Emmanuel Street, rebuilt 1958

FIGURE 5 A plate unfavourably commenting on new development in Cambridge. (Photos © unknown creator, from *Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers* by Sharp, 1963, Plate 15)

University's proposals for towers that was to keep Sharp employed in the city. In his recommendations Sharp stressed the importance of modest "town" streets as foils to the grander university colleges and that tower buildings should be prohibited in the city.

Part of the context for Sharp's engagement in Cambridge seems to have been anxiety on the part of the planning authorities about possible tall buildings in the city. In particular, a scheme by the architect Denys Lasdun for new science departments for the university initially proposed two towers of 220 and one of 165 feet (which Barnabas Calder (2015) has argued was influenced by townscape ideas), although by the time the scheme reached

public inquiry in February 1964 these had been scaled back. The County Council objected and appointed Sharp as consultant to appear at the inquiry.

Sharp's evidence, summarised in the inspector's report, goes to the heart of his townscape thinking:

> In the past architects had been content that their buildings should take a natural place in the community of buildings that constituted the town. It now appeared that architects and their clients had private desires to raise their buildings above all the others – but such a private desire was irrelevant and alien to the public interest. The University had no special licence and their buildings were not in a special category which placed them outside the precepts of neighbourliness. (Sharp, 1964, para. 71)

Furthermore

> The real reason for the proposed towers was that the architect of the University liked them – the former had a taste for towers and was not greatly concerned with civic design or the appearance of the City. That was not a good enough reason why the visual character of any town should be jeopardised; let alone Cambridge. (Sharp, 1964, para. 73)

Ultimately redevelopment amounted to one large but lower Brutalist building, designed by different architects and constructed some years later (Figure 5).

In 1968, Sharp published a swansong book, *Town and Townscape* (Sharp, 1968), seeking to summarise and draw together a career's worth of writing and action on townscape with an additional focus on issues arising from rapid urban change in the 1960s. The introduction summarised some of the principal threats to the visual quality of place, considered most severe in historic towns. Principal amongst these were traffic, retail expansion, large-scale speculative development, and architectural fashion. The most interesting and rewarding English townscapes were said to be composed from a variety of building ages and architectural styles that achieve a unity primarily from a shared rhythm. He celebrated the visual qualities of different types of settlement, with occasional digressions into cases in which he had been embroiled. The section on cathedral cities revisited the Owengate approach to Durham Cathedral and the successful action to save it.

An emergent concern was tall buildings. For Sharp, as we have seen with Cambridge, the fashion to build high was merely that, rather than stemming from any deeper rationality. This was intrinsically linked, in his view, to the wider impacts of tall buildings on the town, which he felt were being ignored due to "the excitements of architectural megalomania" (Sharp, 1968, p. 130); he included here an acerbic description of his clash with Lasdun in Cambridge. Sharp distinguished between (then) contemporary tall buildings and earlier tall buildings, such as church towers and spires. The contrast he sought to make was not merely architectural but also social. Historically, he argued, there had been a social hierarchy employed in design – so the most prominent buildings, such as churches, represented collective values of society, whereas new commercial blocks represented private gain.

5 CONCLUSION

A clear sense of Sharp's kinetic townscape approach can be seen in *Cathedral City*, although it is not yet labelled as such. In *Exeter Phoenix* this was termed "genius loci", and townscape principles were used in design solutions for rebuilding. *Oxford Replanned* is a masterful drawing together of the principles of townscape Sharp had been developing. In all these plans Sharp exceeded his brief to present manifestos, arguing for "a way of seeing" places. Townscape was an empirical project. Whilst "townscape" is often associated with architectural writers on an architectural publication, it was conceived as a methodology for planning, and Sharp, as a planner, brought a unique perspective and approach. Dismissed by later critics as superficially focused on visual appearance, as applied by Sharp we can see "townscape" as an early form of an integrated urban design approach (Pendlebury et. al., 2015). Through his planning work Sharp developed principles of townscape analysis and used townscape as an empirical testing ground for an indication of future urban form. Townscape helped conceptualise the relationship between contemporary intervention and existing urban fabric. Sharp's use of townscape was to advocate for a methodology of planning historically informed and historically sensitive, but which remained distinctly modern in outlook and purpose. His plans were simultaneously bold and strategic but locally focused and sensitive. For Sharp, townscape was a method to be widely applied in the creation of urban places of high functional and design quality:

> Whilst it may have been Sharp's special skill to apply his ideas to historic towns, he was advocating a form of urbanism that he considered relevant to *all* towns and cities. Although historic cities were excellent demonstrations of how townscape principles created great places, these ideas should, he believed, be applied in the formation of new places, whether they be modifications of existing towns or entire new settlements. Furthermore, townscape principles in turn were intended as only one part, the visual expression, of a wider urbanism – a practical English and modern urbanism, that could be implemented and used as part of a process of realisable planning […] As such it formed part of a wider comprehensive planning […] the objective was to synthesize functional requirements, the proper workings of the town, with visual seemliness (Pendlebury, 2015, p. 139).

This started with the street as the basic urban building block. Visually, he focused on issues of character, hierarchy, and scale and the importance of urban foils. He had a particularly distinctive approach (considered so by Colin Buchanan, 1958) to the growing problem of urban traffic; he avoided the mechanistic prevailing preference for tight inner-ring roads, advocating bespoke "substitute roads", designed to relieve principal streets of all possible traffic; a major issue in Durham and Exeter but something he fought most tenaciously for in Oxford, often seeming to win the battle, without ever winning the war.

Sharp was influential, therefore, in developing ideas of "townscape" and applying them to real, practical planning situations. Whilst direct implementation of his plans was extremely limited, he had a real and lasting influence on the cities in which he worked. This was reinforced by his actions as a consultant or as a citizen. Very often we can't see these interventions, and they are in danger of being forgotten, as his contribution was to help to avert urban disasters, such as the redevelopment of Owengate in Durham, or the puncturing of the Cambridge skyline with high buildings. More broadly, his analysis of place quality that we see in these plans (and others he produced) has been of enduring influence in affecting how others saw and understood these cities in terms of their qualities and character. Sharp's wider influence was on the discourse of British planning and on an understanding of place and place quality, which served to temper the degree and form of redevelopment across the country. The 1940s was a time of febrile enthusiasm for planning. In amongst this, Sharp's was a distinctive voice arguing about the need for a place-sensitive approach, rather than formulaic solutions. Rather than extensive preservation, Sharp sought the maintenance of character, and he was not at the forefront of the conservation movement that developed in the post-war period (Pendlebury, 2009b). But importantly, we should acknowledge that the turn to more place-sensitive planning and a more conservation-sympathetic approach was built in no small part on the planning and advocacy of Sharp in the preceding decades.

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