Introduction

The historic urban environment is one which has been shaped by change. It is also an environment which continues to evolve as the needs of society themselves evolve. Towns are dynamic institutions with their history fossilised in the archaeology of their topographies, buildings and deposits upon which change can be a creative process but can also be, and frequently is, destructive. Modern change is rapid and thorough and therefore needs careful and effective management to ensure that, as towns develop, they preserve character and meaning while adapting to modern requirements.

Urban places are social constructs. Towns and cities, being the creation of social groups for a range of activities (commerce, industry, administration, security and spiritual nourishment), are subject to change as the range and type of such activities themselves change. Cities were created to serve people and, without change, they will cease to be relevant to society and will therefore decline and decay.

It follows that study of the past and preservation of the historic urban environment must recognise this dynamic context. Effective preservation is that which demonstrably serves the needs of contemporary society and helps it to plan and prepare for the future. The relevance of the historic environment to the living city needs to be explicit so that careful conservation is recognised as integral to development. Society at large needs to appreciate the historic environment; with such appreciation, the management of change is immediately rendered more simple and easier to obtain.

Achieving public recognition of the importance and value of the historic environment is the principal role of the archaeologist. The archaeological approach of investigation, data collection, assessment, analysis, synthesis and interpretation is of direct relevance to enhancement of effective care and change management. Research into the past leads to greater knowledge. This knowledge needs interpretation in order to produce understanding. From understanding comes appreciation and thereby protection and use of the historic environment in constructive ways by society as a whole.
This approach must recognise several requirements and pressures. A vision is needed of what is meant by the historic environment; the relationship of the historic environment to the development of society must be made clear; there needs to be recognition of the forces for change in the historic environment; mechanisms for directing and communicating work and research within the historic environment to society at large must be enumerated; and the character of proposed outputs needs to be established.

The historic urban environment

The concept of the historic environment continues to evolve but, in England certainly, recent discussion (arising from a national consultation undertaken by English Heritage) has resulted in a definition that states that «The historic environment is what generations of people have made of the place in which they lived. It is about all of us... Each generation has made its mark. And each makes its decisions about the future in the context of what it has inherited. That context is irreplaceable» (ENGLISH HERITAGE 2000, 4).

This definition will, no doubt, itself evolve but it usefully embodies the idea that the modern environment is a social construct, the product of change made by people in the past, and one where future change is not only inevitable but welcome. It is a definition which challenges archaeology to engage with the needs of society at large – if the historic environment is the product of people, the continued involvement of society in change management is essential. Recognising this at the outset assists the formation of strategic visions for using the environment constructively for the future benefit of society.

Archaeology investigates the results of social decisions and economic forces in the past; it can thus contribute to a sense and spirit of place, influencing the social and economic decisions of the future. It is appropriate that the above definition was published in a document entitled Power of Place; the historic environment, which encapsulates human memory in physical form, is a powerful resource which requires careful management.

Archaeology and society

In physical urban terms, this social aspect of the historic environment is stark in its clarity: streets, houses, shops, churches, factories, property and parish boundaries are all the product of past societies, frequently remaining in use in the present. This urban topography, however, also owes much to its underlying geography – hills, rivers, soils and geology – being defined by the constraints of the natural environment. The relationship of the works of
humanity – the topography – to the geography is the study of the archaeologist. She or he has a responsibility to investigate the totality of the environment, above and below ground and to ensure that the processes which led to urban development through time are understood and disseminated, providing a known context for decisions concerning future development.

Any archaeological investigation of the urban environment must, nevertheless, use caution. While towns and cities are socially dynamic, subject to constant change, societies have values which also change constantly. These values are not all concerned with the environment in a direct sense: they may relate to concerns for social provision, for health or education. However, changing values and requirements in these areas do impact upon the environment. In Britain, disabled access provisions challenge perceptions of building function and traditional approaches to conservation; closure of traditional hospitals raises questions of appropriate re-use of large institutional structures; and developing educational practice has widened use of the environment at all levels.

More directly, social perceptions of the value of the inherited historic environment continue to change. Forty years ago, the concept of industrial archaeology was in its infancy (Hudson 1963). More recently, however, the potential regenerative qualities of industrial and other relatively recent buildings and landscape have been recognised. As an example, the 1830 warehouse at Liverpool Road railway station, Manchester is the earliest such warehouse in the world. It was built rapidly in four months, requiring large quantities of timber for its floors and roof. The timber was sourced through Danzig (now Gdansk in modern Poland). Detailed archaeological recording of the merchants’ marks on the timbers, combined with study of surviving documentation, has enabled a much clearer understanding of timber provision and trade in the Baltic in the early 19th century ( Greene 1994). The warehouse is now restored, a centrepiece of the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry and a major resource for both the local and tourist communities (Fig. 1).

The value of the warehouse can thus be seen in academic, social and economic terms. It stands across railway tracks from Liverpool Road station, itself the earliest passenger railway station in the world. The very survival of this station highlights further questions of value. As a single monument it is of humble pretension. It cannot be claimed as a functional prototype in a manner similar to that of Paddington Station in London (Quartermaine and Grimshaw 2000, pp. 56-71). It differs significantly in its layout to almost all subsequent railway stations. It has little stylistic pretension. However, the station represents the genesis of a process – mass rail travel – which had a profound effect upon society globally and is a process which continues to influence the shape of the modern world. It is iniquitous to invite comparisons between monument types but such comparison help to crystallise concepts of value: thus, should Liverpool Road
station be valued in a similar manner to a medieval cathedral? The answer must be in the affirmative, not because of a physical, qualitative comparison but because of the social impact of both monuments and the way in which such monuments changed perceptions of the environment and of how society used the environment.

A social approach therefore recognises the importance of the historic environment as a construct which is relevant to society as a whole. While individual monuments are frequently significant to individual groups within society, recognition that these monuments are merely the physical product of social processes, and that these processes are largely constant, gives a universal importance to an holistic view of the historic environment. It is helpful to consider the English phrase «it is difficult to see the wood for the trees». In other words, when one is surrounded by great trees, it is difficult to comprehend the shape of the forest. The historic environment of Rome is a forest, the monuments are its trees. The loss of the Arch of Constantine would be very severe; loss of the overall historic character of Rome incalculable. The historic environment is a palimpsest of human memory, a cultural landscape which must be treated holistically so that change in one part of the landscape does not adversely affect another part.

Study of the urban cultural landscape by archaeologists requires a vision, an approach to the urban idea which utilises the unique contribution of archaeology (investigation, recording, assessment, analysis and synthesis of the physical evidence) and provides scope for its outputs (increased knowledge, awareness, appreciation and informed decision-making) to be applied to the future development of society.

Such a cultural vision for urban archaeology has recently been prepared in outline (AYERS, DURHAM and McNEIL 2000, 239-242). It asserts that a creative society needs understanding of its past development, an understanding provided by archaeology which thus informs change management. «The archaeological approach strengthens community identity, providing inspiration and enjoyment, and enhances a sense of spirit and place in our most concentrated communities».

Archaeology enables the totality of the urban cultural landscape to be studied and presented holistically. In essence, an archaeological approach is the equivalent of the preparation of a Conservation Plan for a monument. Conservation Plans were pioneered in Australia (SEMPLE KERR 1996) and provide a methodology which ensures careful consideration of all aspects of a monument or group of monuments prior to intervention (conservation, preservation, alteration or development). Archaeology should apply the same process to the urban historic environment; it should assess and evaluate the historic resource, “stocktaking” or enumerating and valuing the historic assets as an interdependent whole.
Such an archaeological approach is also one which ensures that modern society adopts the principles of sustainability when considering change. A conceptual framework for decision-making based upon sustainable principles has been set out by English Heritage (1997). This framework, in examining the historic resource, identified three types of “historic environment capital” as follows:

- **Critical capital:** those parts of the historic environment considered to be of great value and irreplaceable, but which are subject to damage or loss;
- ** Tradable capital:** those parts of the historic environment which society may be prepared to sacrifice in return for other economic and social benefits;
- **Constant capital:** the wider historic landscape, containing both critical and tradable capital, but being a concept which recognises the group value importance of the many elements in the historic environment.

It can be argued that a true sustainable approach to change management in the urban historic environment is one which undertakes an holistic archaeological assessment of the constant capital, identifying both critical and tradable capital through analysis and interpretation.

**Forces for change**

Urban archaeologists work within economic units – towns and cities – which are probably subjected to the greatest economic and commercial pressures of any locations in Europe. These archaeologists study places of significant population density with concomitant density of monuments and deposits. Indeed, so dense is most urban occupation that evidence for a lack of occupation is itself interesting – why was part of a town occupied less than another?

It is not necessary to enumerate the economic pressures nor their physical manifestation; the potential and actual destructive power of modern urban development with regard to the historic environment both above and below ground is well known. However, the political context of such pressures is perhaps less examined by archaeologists. This is unfortunate as political policy can often impact upon the historic environment and could, if recognised, be utilised as a force for more effective conservation and change management.

As an example, in England several strands of policy are currently converging in ways which could help the development of a greater awareness of the potential of the historic environment as well as greater inclusion of the archaeological process in assisting and enabling social and economic progress.

At a strategic level, the production of the report of the Urban Task Force headed by Lord Rogers (ROGERS 1998) has resulted in the publication of an Urban White Paper by the government (DETR 2000a). This White
Paper sets out policy directions and builds upon earlier initiatives where the government had identified key policy areas for action (such as economic regeneration). Many of the recommendations of the Urban White Paper impact significantly upon the historic environment and it is disappointing, therefore, that there is so little reference – or even recognition – in the document of the importance of the historic environment to urban regeneration. While this presents a challenge to archaeologists and others involved in urban conservation, an urgent imperative is for archaeologists to articulate the potential for positive contribution to specific initiatives. Foremost among these are proposals for brown land (Walker 2000) and social housing (DETR 2000b).

“Brown” land is that land which has been developed previously in the past but is currently waste or under-utilised. It is, by definition, land with archaeological potential, either in terms of buried archaeological deposits or with regard to potential re-use of derelict or disused buildings. Government wishes to see 60% of all new urban development upon brown land, a laudable aim in terms of sustainability but one which needs an appreciation of the potential contribution of the historic environment in order to be realised to its full. At the same time, policies of social inclusion are seeking a component of social housing in all new housing schemes, a commendable approach but one notoriously difficult to engender successfully in practice. As with the re-use of brown land, it is very necessary to develop concepts of both sense and spirit of place if either policy is to be successful.

Recognition that both the brown land and social housing initiatives can and should be informed by an archaeological approach to the historic environment led to a seminar early in 2000 at the Museum of London, organised by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA). This sought to bring together archaeologists, architects, developers and social housing landlords in order to explore the fostering of co-operative ventures. The seminar was useful in identifying how far apart concepts of the archaeological process are in different professions: archaeologists view themselves as investigators and interpreters of the environment, providing information which can assist change mechanisms. To other professions, archaeologists dig holes, finding “things” and are divorced from the change process. A challenge for urban archaeologists, therefore, is to ensure constructive and recognised engagement in this process. The guidance proposed by the IFA as a result of the seminar should be of assistance here.

It is imperative that such engagement is fostered. As noted above, neither the Urban White Paper nor the preceding Task Force Report considered assessment of the historic environment; indeed, the government document in a report of over one hundred pages, devotes just one page to the “built heritage”, hardly a comprehensive overview nor one which integrates the potential of the urban historic environment into economic and social requirements. Recent overtures from the archaeological community may be
beginning to change attitudes (the Minister for the Arts has described himself as «a champion for archaeology in Government» and has promised a policy statement which will recognise «the importance of archaeology in the nation’s wellbeing, including its crucial significance for urban regeneration, education and social inclusion» – British Archaeology, April 2001, 8. The statement is eagerly awaited).

The generally unpromising overview at government level is a challenge for archaeologists. It becomes an even greater challenge when it is considered that, at regional level, new structures are currently taking a lead from government policy. Thus, each of the seven English regions has an Economic Development Agency which recognises “built heritage” but does not have a strategy for integration of the historic environment. Each region also has an Environment Forum and a Cultural Consortium with terms of reference which again mention “built heritage” and have committees with representatives from English Heritage, the government agency, but not of archaeologists from local authorities where planning decisions are made. There is therefore a strategic problem within the body politic – a lack of recognition of the importance of the historic environment, a lack of inclusion in strategic policy development and a lack of coherent mechanisms for the informed management of change.

As a result, there is also a lack of recognition of the value of the historic environment and, with it, a perception that the historic environment constrains development. These views need to be challenged with archaeologists not only demonstrating value (particularly in terms of contributions to community identity, sense and spirit of place, and social inclusion) but also illustrating how appropriate conservation adds value to development. Archaeologists must recognise that they work within a dynamic society with which the insights of archaeology must engage.

**Change management**

Archaeologists therefore need to seek greater inclusion within political structures and initiatives if their contribution to the management of change is to be truly effective. However, they also need to develop their own philosophies and methodologies in order to maximise the potential of the archaeological approach and its relevance, and thereby assistance, to wider society. Clarity of vision is a preliminary requirement and mention has been made above of one such approach, that for a vision of the urban cultural landscape (p. 4). However, visions must be implemented and therefore need the support of a framework for research.

Considerable archaeological research in English over the last 30 years has created a vast data resource, much of which remains to be assessed. The
scale of this data can overwhelm archaeologists, its principal interpreters. The nature of the data, as well as its scale, is largely unintelligible to communities beyond the archaeological profession. Archaeologists therefore have a responsibility to communicate their growing understanding of the processes of urban change to wider audiences; they need to collate their data, assess its importance and identify mechanisms to ensure that it is utilised to the benefit of society as a whole.

Archaeologists in England are beginning to address this problem. There is a recognition that data cannot be collected for its own sake and that it must be assembled and synthesised in ways which enable development of the discipline. Regional Research Frameworks are being compiled, comprising assessments of the archaeological resource, an agenda for future work and a strategy for developing the agenda. The first such framework (for the East of England) has recently been completed (Glazebrook 1997 and 2000). These frameworks are a useful start but, if they are to avoid the usual pitfall of documents where archaeologists speak only to archaeologists, they need to be linked to wider visions.

The obvious linkage is through the planning process which, in England, has proved to be the principal mechanism for the control of change in the historic environment. Government guidelines such as Planning Policy Guidance 16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning (1990) or Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15) on Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) provide mechanisms for change management which can be informed by Research Frameworks. These are, however, in large part reactive mechanisms. Proactive change, in which effective understanding and stewardship of the historic environment influences development in a positive way, is not only complementary but desirable. As Power of Place states: «We need targeted, integrated research and regular “state of the historic environment” reports to identify priorities and provide the basis for informed decisions» (2000, 5).

This is sound advice and government, both nationally and locally, is anxious to ensure that change management operates within a context which is led by a strategic vision. To this end there are Strategic or Structure Plans at regional and county level which are supported by Local Plans at district level. It is now commonplace for such documents to contain reference to the need for intervention in the historic environment to record the effects of development. At a more detailed level, local planning guidance for certain areas will also contain references for the need for effective mitigation strategies and procedures to be put in place as part of the development process.

All these approaches are laudable but they also all miss the point. They implicitly treat the historic environment as a given construct, an essentially stable concept upon which development can work. In practice, however, the environment is not stable but dynamic, the ever-changing product of social and economic processes. This product needs development that works with
it, not upon it, a form of development that requires a proactive archaeological response, one which acts with development to facilitate change, not merely control its effects.

Such an approach is a significant philosophical shift. However, it is one which is beginning to be reflected in policy. English Heritage currently has a programme entitled Historic Landscape Characterisation which is seeking to identify the development of entire landscapes, primarily as an aid to positive change management as well as conservation management. Within urban areas, the compilation of Urban Archaeological Databases and the development of strategies for the urban archaeological resource are slowly helping to change the perception of the historic resource from that of a problem which needs management to one of an asset to be utilised. New institutions such as a national Urban Panel can assist local agencies to reflect upon the potential of the historic environment to assist appropriate change.

Outputs

Nothing, however, is or ever will be perfect and positive change management of the historic environment will never be achieved without demonstrable impact in terms of social and economic benefits. Appreciation of such benefits remains poor outside the historic environment professions while, within the historic environment sector, measures for quantification are in their infancy. A language needs to be developed which enables the holistic nature of the historic environment – that sense of place which is subjectively glimpsed by almost everyone – to be translated into objective, “bottom-line” benefits which are clear and accountable. These benefits are perhaps best characterised in terms of their economic impact, their impact upon sustainable solutions, and their community impact.

The historic environment is a physical presence, perhaps the most obvious construct to link to economic considerations and yet probably the area most prone to negative approaches – the historic environment viewed as a problem or inhibitor of change. “Dirt” archaeologists continue to experience this, an excavation frequently having little or no resonance with other professionals in the development process. It is possible, however, for such archaeological activity to use this very perception in order to foster confidence and engender investment. In England, for example, the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) is an initiative to “pump-prime” investment in areas of decline. Such areas are proposed for assistance by local authorities and agreed with the regional government office. A pioneering approach in Norwich, involving partnership between the Norfolk Archaeological Unit and Norwich City Council, led to a dozen sites being evaluated within the east Norwich SRB area (Fig. 2). The results, as well as being archaeologically significant, also
removed or reduced the element of risk, fostering investment and leading to
development projects where previously fear of unknown (and thus unquantified) archaeological deposits had contributed to a reluctance to invest (Ayers, Shelley 2000).

This economic approach can be seen in a more attenuated form through Conservation Area Partnership Schemes (CAPS) and Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes (HERS). The value of such schemes, where the capital assets of the historic environment are used to assist regeneration, has been summarised well in an English Heritage document The Heritage Dividend (1999). The philosophical point of both these schemes and the above use of SRB is that proactive investment in, following understanding of, the historic environment is good business practice. Delivering this philosophy, however, requires archaeologists to deliver more than on-site discoveries or detailed surveys of buildings. They need to demonstrate how their information is of direct relevance, and therefore value, to the process of change and to ongoing management and maintenance of completed initiatives.

A good example of the current disengagement of archaeologists from the change management process is the new Millennium Bridge in London. Here, a major new cultural landmark has been inserted into one of the greatest cultural constructs anywhere in the world, the city of London. The bridge (despite its initial problems) is a major contribution to the historic environment, fulfilling a function which has been a constant of London life for two millennia. Its construction has involved architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, contractors, planners, lawyers and accountants, all of whom continue to be involved in the ongoing use and viability of the bridge. Archaeologists too were involved, excavating complex waterfront deposits of medieval and post-medieval date on both banks of the River Thames (Bradley, Gaimster 2000, p. 268), in each case within time and budget (Taryn Nixon, pers. comm.).

The difference, and indeed irony, is that the historic environment specialists (archaeologists) were not involved in detailed planning of the bridge and its impact upon the environment, merely being used to mitigate its effects and then leave the project. The archaeological work was completed within budget but had no value to others involved in the project. Unlike quantity surveyors with a clear link to the architect, the engineer and the contractor, archaeologists were not involved in the process of the development and thus their contribution to the project was almost negligible. It could be argued that the change management requirement with regard to the historic environment was limited, the resulting effect perfectly satisfactory and intervention in the form of an archaeological insight to historic environmental issues therefore irrelevant. However, can this view be sustained in the context of larger scale work?

The case of Manchester is an example. Here, a devastating IRA bomb in 1996 destroyed much of the city centre, necessitating comprehensive re-
development now largely nearing completion. Rebuilding has commendably also resulted in prior archaeological excavation, with the uncovering of the medieval Hanging Ditch and traces of associated buildings near the cathedral. Once again, however, the redevelopment process has ignored the potential of archaeological input. Rather than using the location of the ditch (a major feature in the topography of medieval Manchester) to provide a link from the past to the modern city, the site has been covered by buildings. Worse, these buildings are not new ones but ancient timber-framed buildings, previously isolated survivals within the commercial centre which have been dismantled, transported to this location, accessed by a street which cuts across the medieval street pattern, and turned into a form of heritage theme park. These re-erected buildings do not relate to earlier buildings on the site but are now conveniently located as part of a modern commercial retail complex.

It is hard to see this as working with the spirit of “power of place”. It appears more the subordination of place to power, in this instance the present commercial needs of the city centre, losing an opportunity to allow the historic environment to develop as an integrated part of a modern city. Manchester now has an “ancient” heart but it is manufactured heart, one only loosely based on reality.

Manchester is not the worst example of such an approach. Indeed, it is better handled than many but it illustrates the gap of understanding between the potential of effective, informed use of the historic environment and its misuse. This gap needs to be filled by archaeologists in order to achieve solutions which are truly sustainable – utilising the past in the present rather than subordinating the past to the present – and thus fostering care of the inherited environment and with it a sense of belonging and a pride of place.

The key to urban success in the past was integrated development, “mixed use” as planners would call it today. Fostering mixed use is frequently a key plank of urban policy and it follows that an understanding of critical success factors in the past must inform change options for the future. Archaeologists study processes; they investigate the effects of change on past societies; they can model cause and effect. Their potential contribution to urban planning is considerable, a tangible output from their research with quantifiable benefits in terms of sustainable ideas and strengthening of community identity.

The Way Forward

It will not be possible to achieve such outputs without a more general awareness of the potential contribution of archaeological philosophies and methodologies to managing change. Such awareness, however, will not be engendered by traditional approaches to dissemination of archaeological in-
formation. Archaeologists are valued for their products – discoveries, be they sites or artefacts – not their contribution to process. This must change so that the archaeological process is seen to be a positive force in a changing society. To achieve this change, archaeologists must adopt new methods of communication. A good start would be a reappraisal of archaeological use of the media.

The current media approach to archaeology is stereotypical, no matter how wide the range of subject matter. The television programme *Time Team* has both increased public awareness of the diversity of archaeological techniques and public appreciation of the richness and ubiquity of the historic environment. Its premise, nevertheless, remains traditional – the excitement of discovering the past, not the potential for informing the future. It concentrates on the product of the past, not the universal processes which helped to shape the past and continue to shape our present. It is, of course, easier this way, particularly for television. It means, however, that archaeology is the plaything of others, entertainment rather than engagement.

Archaeological inquiry must ask (and answer) the questions of why? and how? as well as those of what? and when? Society as a whole asks all four questions of the architect and the engineer; it only asks the second two of the archaeologist. Effective management of change in the historic urban environment requires an understanding of both the nature of that environment (what? and when?) and the processes by which it was formed (why? and how?). Archaeologists must challenge commonly held perceptions of their discipline, they must seek opportunities to influence debate, and they must actively engage to make a positive difference (economically and socially), thus demonstrating the importance of their approach.

The urban archaeologist is the equivalent of a social engineer working in the physical environment. She or he can investigate and explain the context of the urban historic environment, providing an informed framework within which development can take place with reduced risk and greater social coherence. The input of archaeologists early in the change process would be simple and cost-effective yet it does not happen. It is difficult to see the problem – could it be the very word “archaeology”, one currently synonymous in other professions with additional cost for no discernible benefit? If so, it is clear that archaeologists must do two things immediately in order to demonstrate their value to change management and society as a whole.

Firstly, archaeologists must supplement promotion of a product (finding sites and artefacts) with promotion of a process (archaeological inquiry as good business, providing development solutions not problems). Secondly, they must reclaim the title of archaeologist so that it becomes accepted as descriptive of one engaged with, and a champion of, change. Hodder has pointed out that «Archaeology as it is understood in the West…is only possible when the past is dead». He believes that, with the rise of popular archae-
ology in the 1980s and the 1990s, «the past had to be made alive, to be interpreted, to be made accessible...to play an active role in the present» (1993, pp. 12, 18). The historic environment is the past, alive in the present. It is dynamic and it needs a dynamic approach to ensure creative solutions for its future wellbeing. Urban archaeologists should seek to provide those solutions in partnership with fellow professionals.

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APPENDIX

ACTS OF PARLIAMENT AND GUIDANCE CURRENTLY GOVERNING ARCHAEOLOGY IN ENGLAND

Primary Legislation
Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979
National Heritage Act 1984
Local Government Act 1985
Town & Country Planning Act 1990

Guidance
Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology & Planning (PPG16) 1990

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