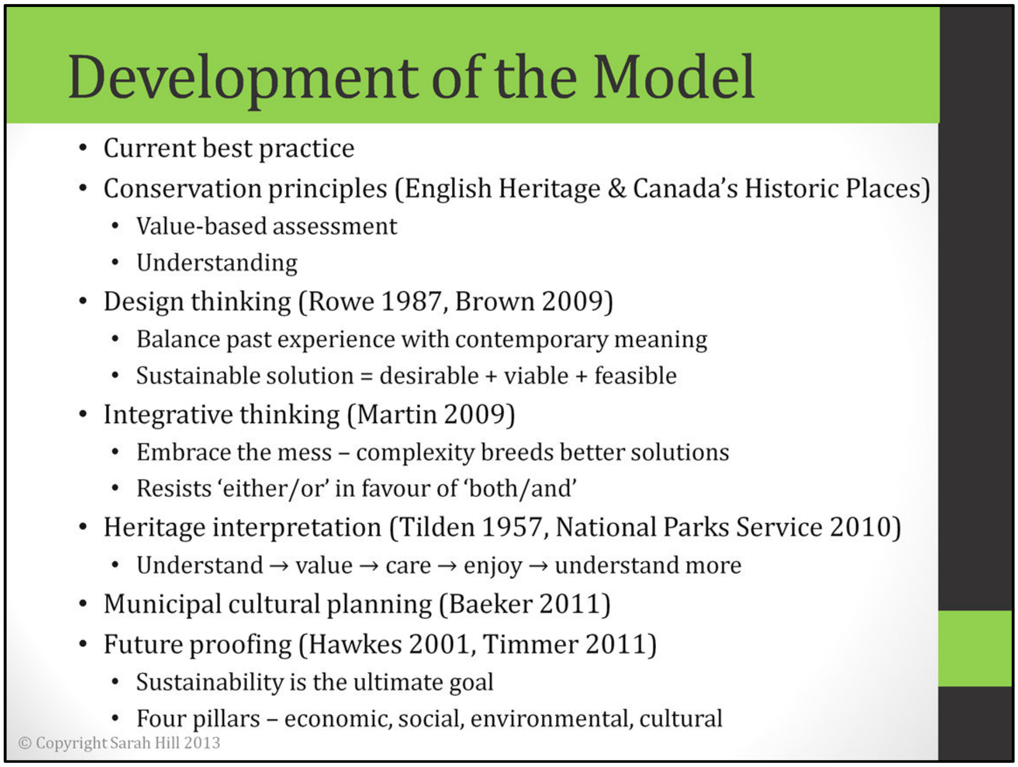
Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Sarah Hill and I very much look forward to presenting to you today a work in progress - a model I have been working on which illustrates a suggested best practice for developing heritage assets, protected or otherwise.



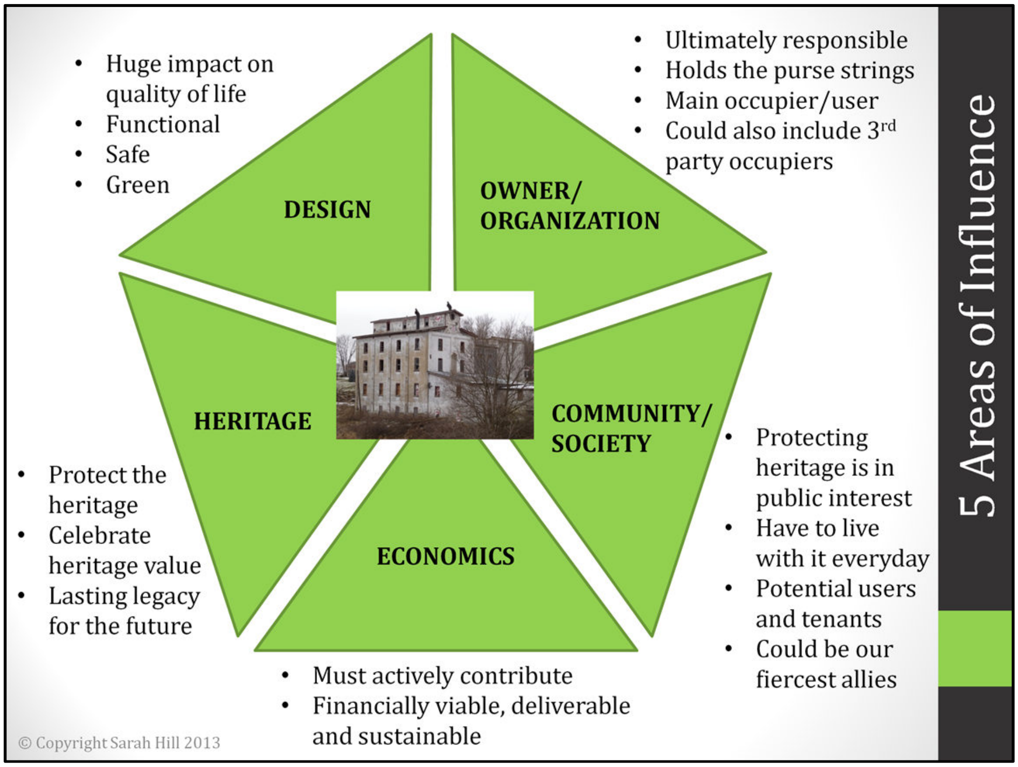
In developing this model, I have taken influence from a number of different but complementary theories and principles, and grounded it with 6 years of professional practice in the UK. What I'm hoping to present to you is a simplified model that incorporates all of these theories; one that visually articulates the various elements that should be considered to successfully develop a heritage asset; and becomes a useful tool for anyone who finds themself responsible for a heritage regeneration project.

To ensure the future of our heritage assets, a certain amount of change must be accommodated. This will ensure that people can continue to use and enjoy our heritage resources and, when properly considered, can add value to our historic places, as well as protect them (English Heritage, 2008).

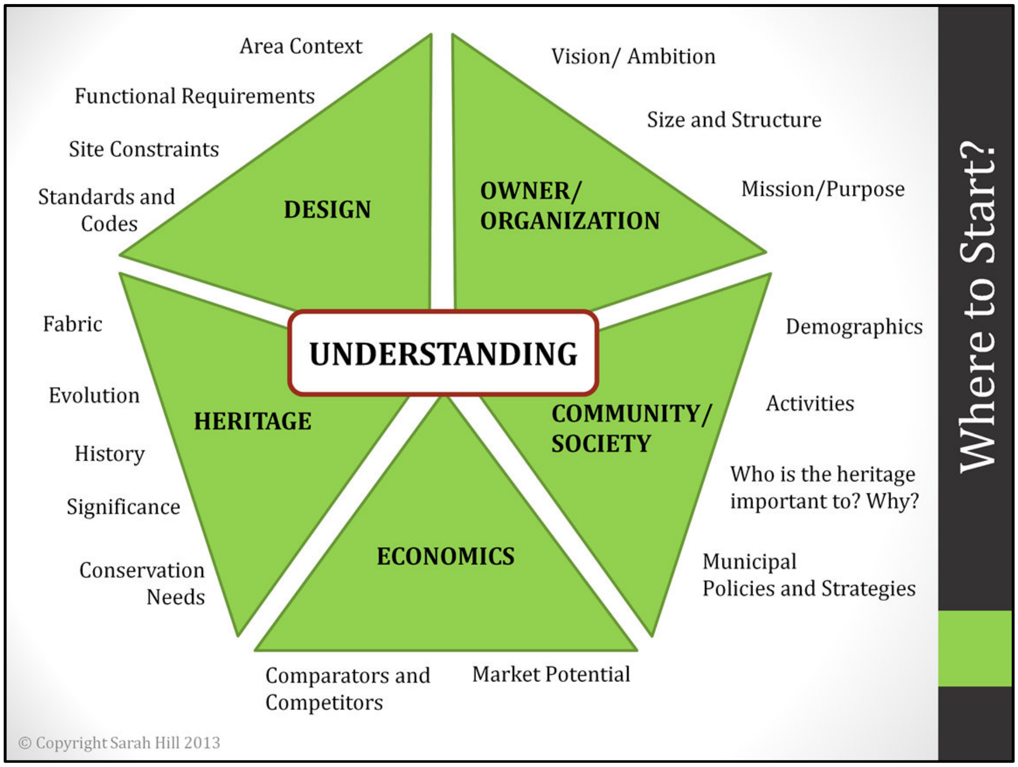
So, where do we begin? The reality of today's situation is that many of the people charged with making decisions about our heritage find the challenge intimidating and haven't a clue as to where or how to start. This lack of awareness means that, when faced with the question of what to do with a heritage asset they see mounting problems rather than an opportunity.

For most, demolition or removal is the easiest solution.

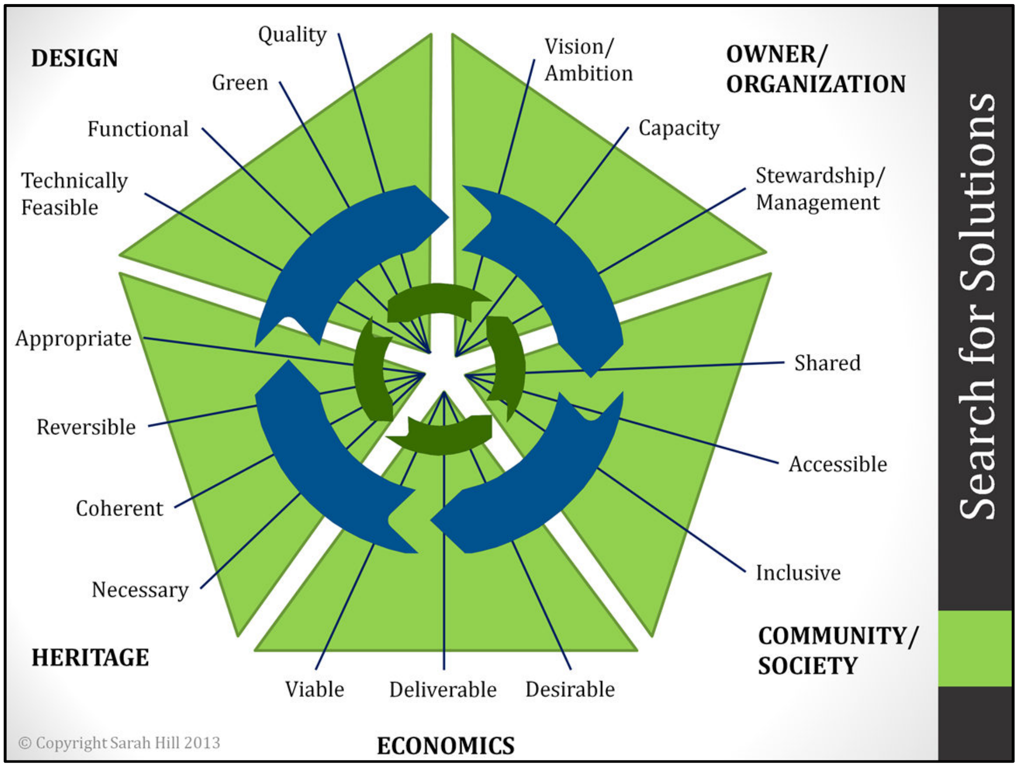
However, others can look beyond the peeling paint, broken windows and sagging floors to see the future. But how does one get there? What are the various things that need to be considered when developing a heritage asset? How do we ensure that the solution we come up with is the right one? This is where I hope my proposed model can help.



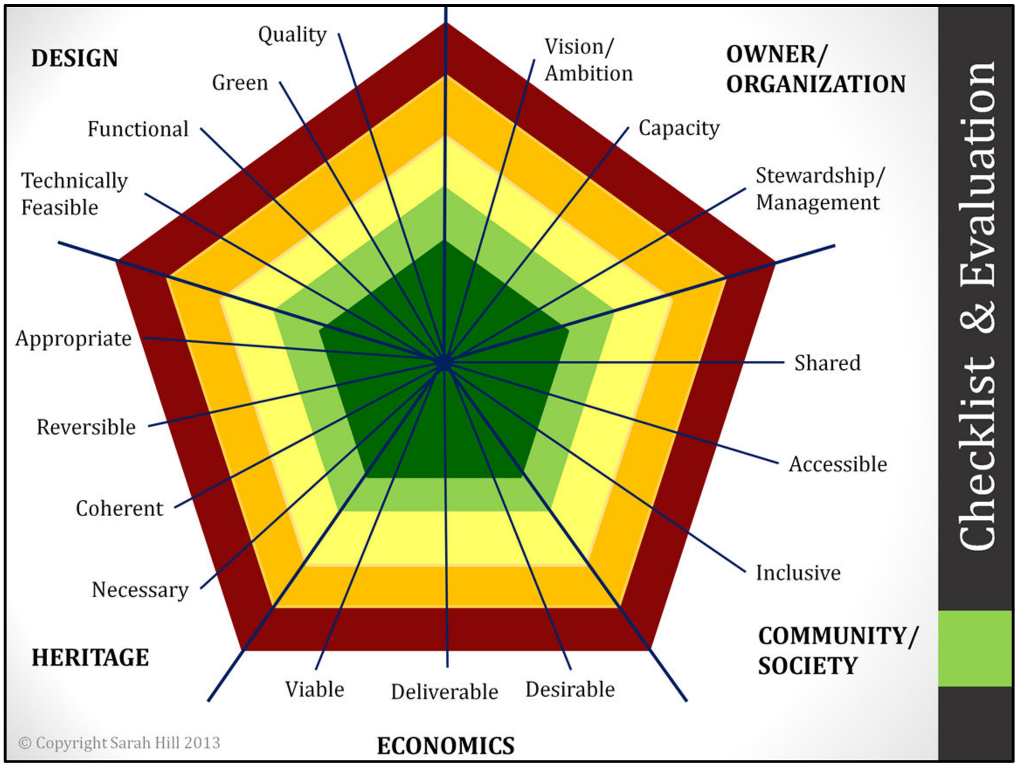
The model I have developed is comprised of 5 different areas of influence – Owner/Organization; Community/Society; Design; Economics; and Heritage. We consider these 5 areas because they will have the greatest impact on how the project is shaped and our ability to develop a successful solution.



The first step in developing a heritage asset is to produce a long list of all future possibilities and opportunities. However, anyone, who simply generalizes from their own personal standards and expectations, will seriously limit the field of potential (Brown, 2009). Therefore we must start from a wider understanding of each of the 5 influencers – their character and makeup, their current needs and any future opportunities or ambitions that could be fulfilled as a result of the project.

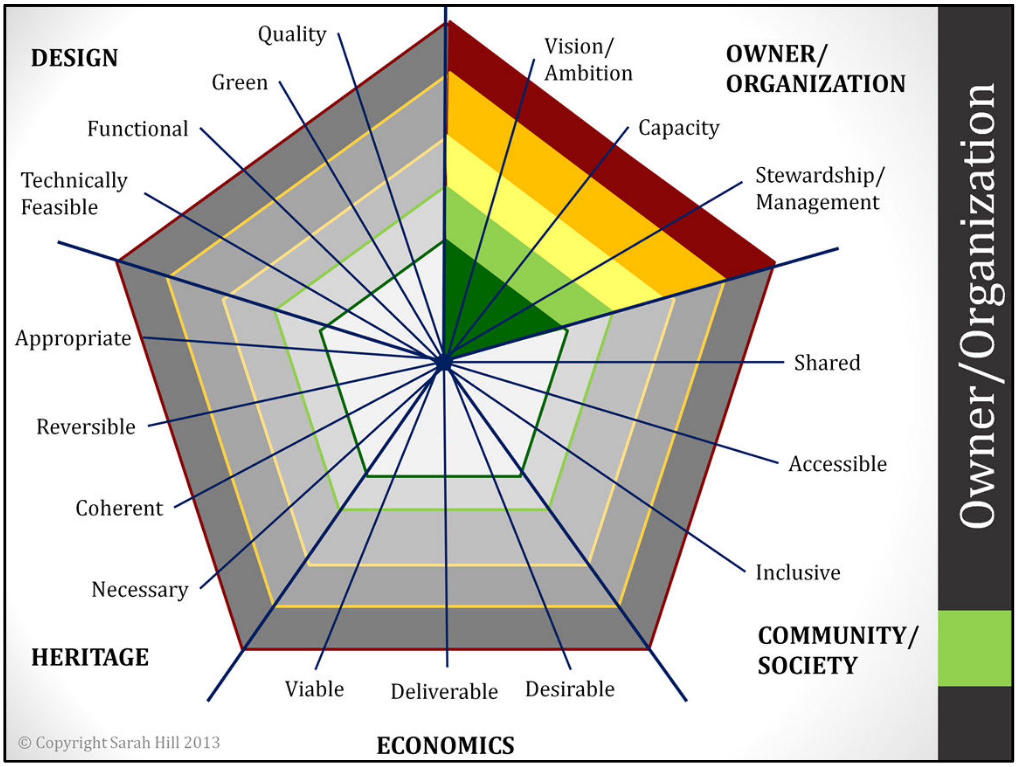


In the search for solutions we go through a process of generating, developing and testing this long list of ideas. It is essentially an exploratory process and iterative – looping back through ideas more than once as they are refined and new directions are explored (Brown 2009). The model I have created outlines 17 criteria to be considered when developing heritage assets.

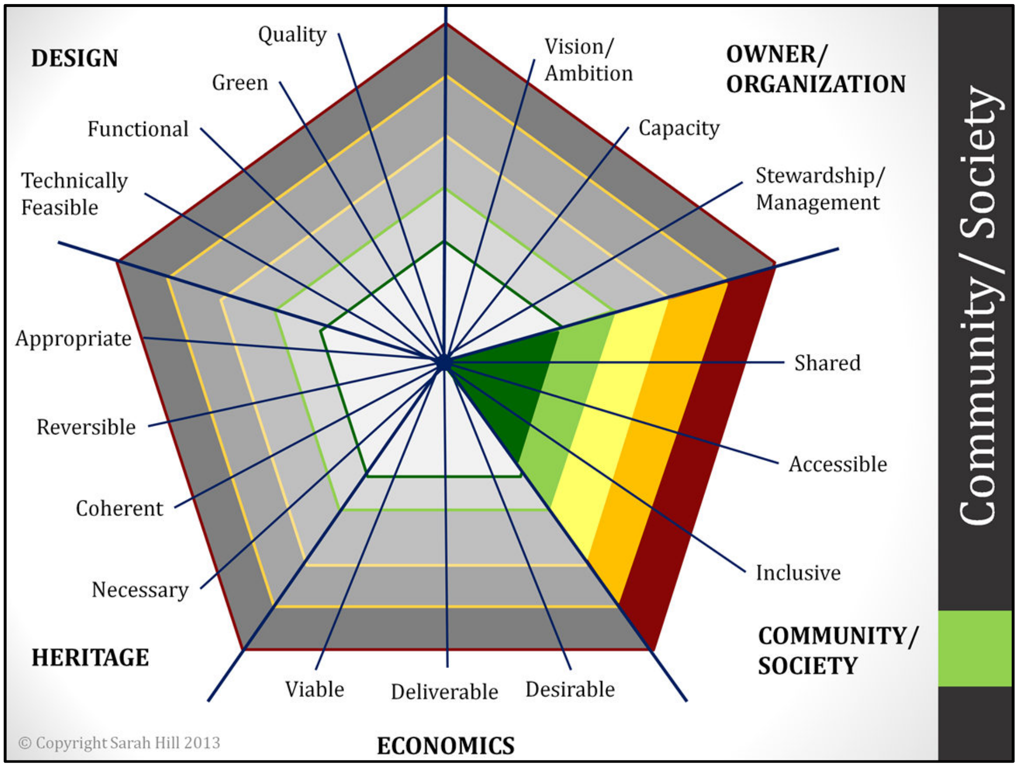


At first they are used as a checklist to guide us through all essential areas which must be taken into account.

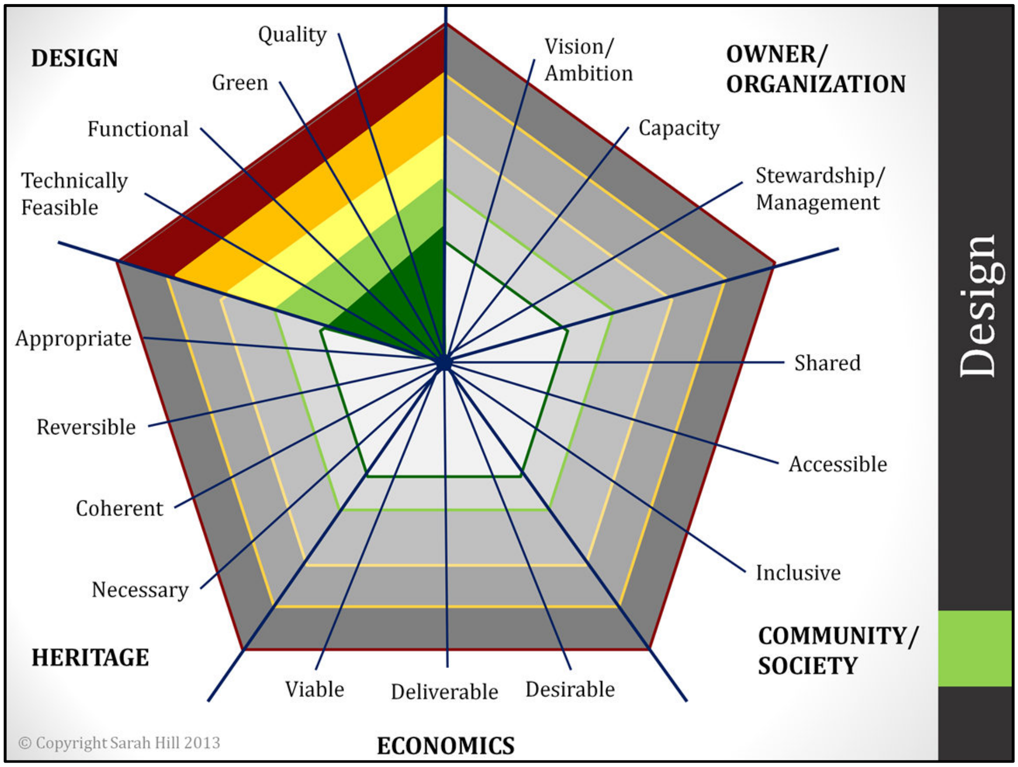
Later, they are used as an evaluation tool to test the success of the ideas being considered. Each iteration of the proposal must be reviewed to answer a number of key questions.



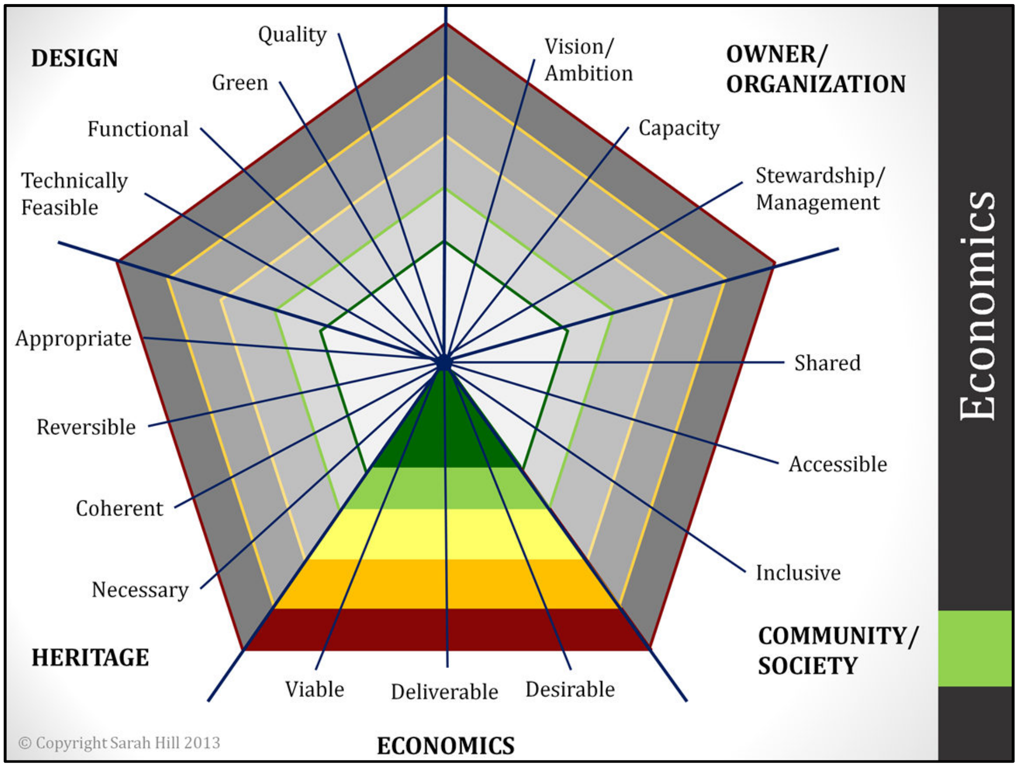
For the owner/organization: do the proposals meet their vision or future ambition?; does the owner/organization haves the capacity to deliver the proposals and operate them successfully in the long-term?; and have the requirements for the future management and maintenance of the proposals been accounted for?



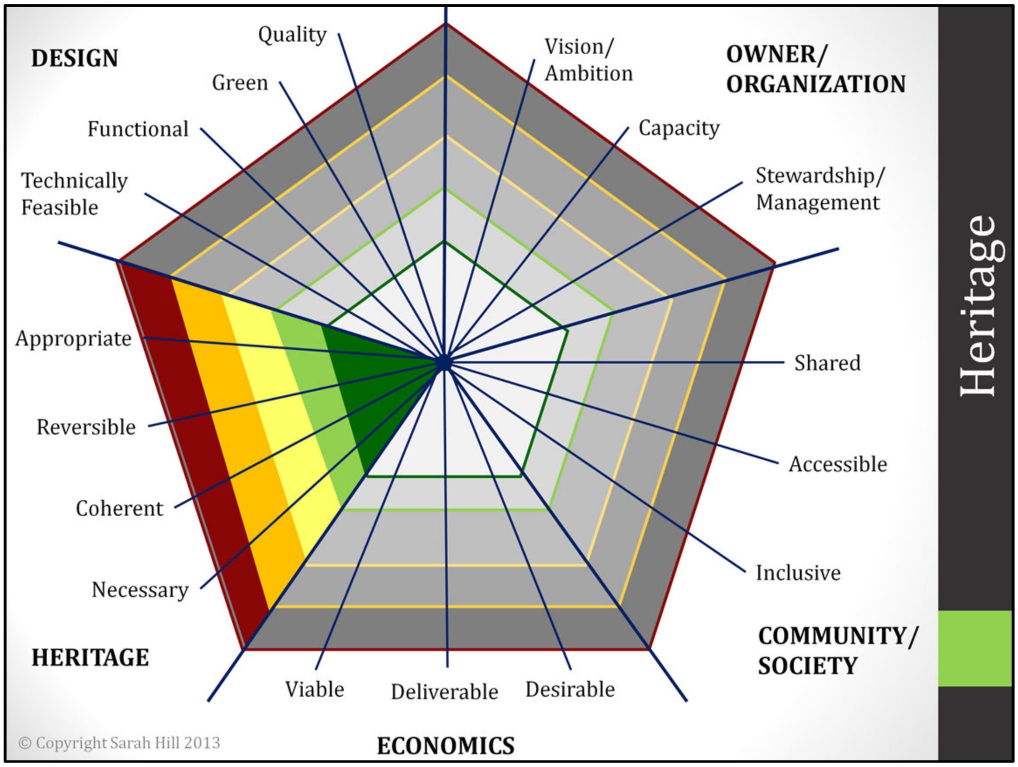
On the community side, we must make sure that our new found understanding of the heritage asset, the process and proposals has been shared with the wider community. After all, a heritage asset is not only an economic asset but also a resource for learning and enjoyment. And learning is central to sustaining the historic environment (English Heritage, 2008). Proposals must also be as accessible as possible (both physically and intellectually) and inclusive, involving a wide range of people representing diverse backgrounds, ages and interests.



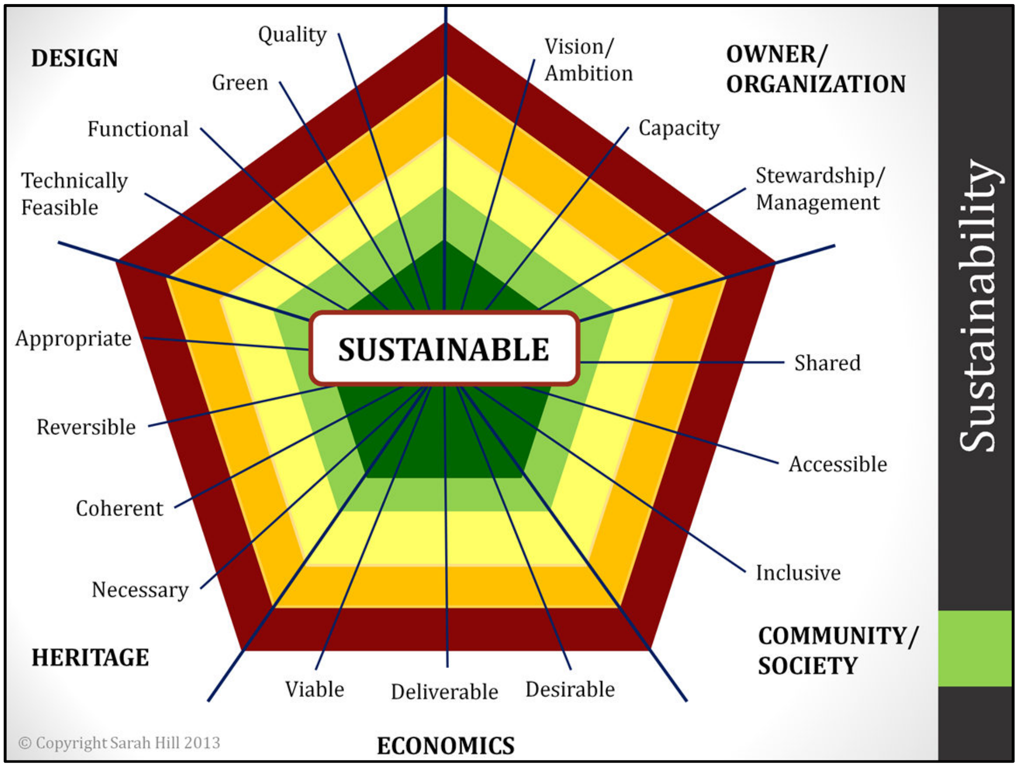
In the area of design, quality is important. We must ask ourselves if the proposals, especially those for new work, aspire to a quality of design and execution that will be valued now and in the future. We also need to ensure that environmental good practice has been incorporated. Functionality is key to any proposal as the heritage asset must meet the operational needs of the owner/organization, as well as its users and tenants. Keeping these heritage assets relevant and useful is essential to their future protection. Lastly in design, we must ensure that what is being proposed is technically feasible – can it be achieved safely using current and/or traditional methods, materials and technologies?



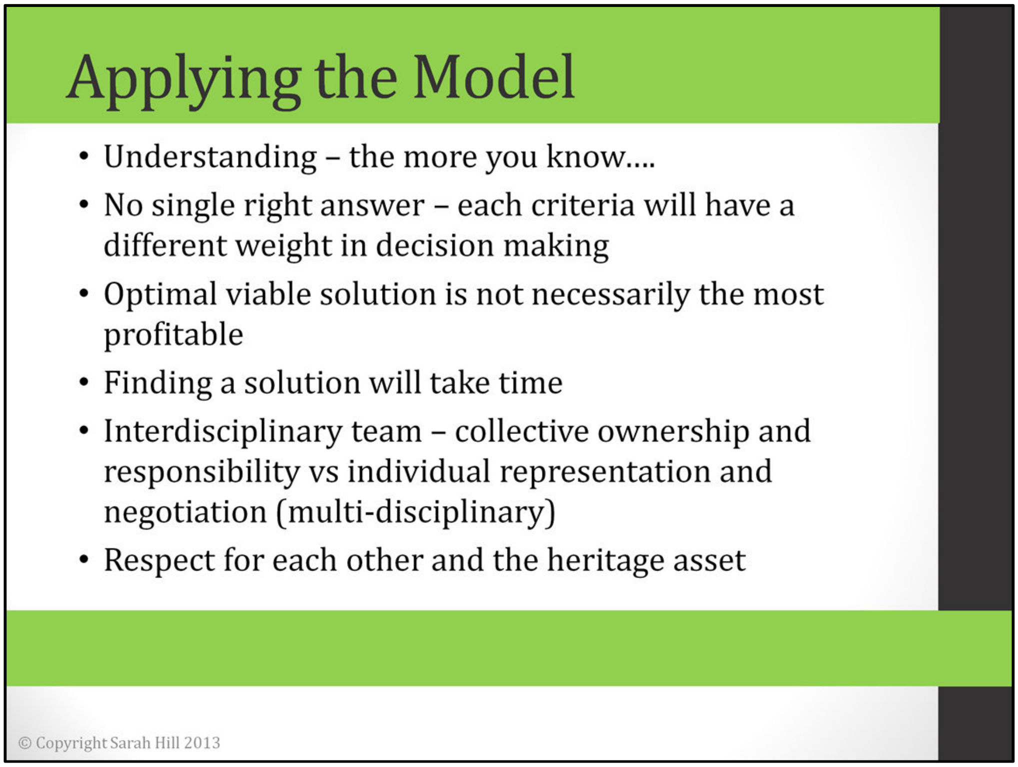
Under economics, we must ensure that the proposals will be desirable – is there a market demand for it, a gap needing to be filled, and will the market support it? We must ask ourselves if what is being proposed is deliverable – are there sufficient resources to implement the proposals? Not just financial resources but human resources and time. Lastly under economics, our proposals must be viable – meaning we must determine if they can be cost effective to run in the long-term and if there is potential to generate a surplus for reinvestment in future upkeep.



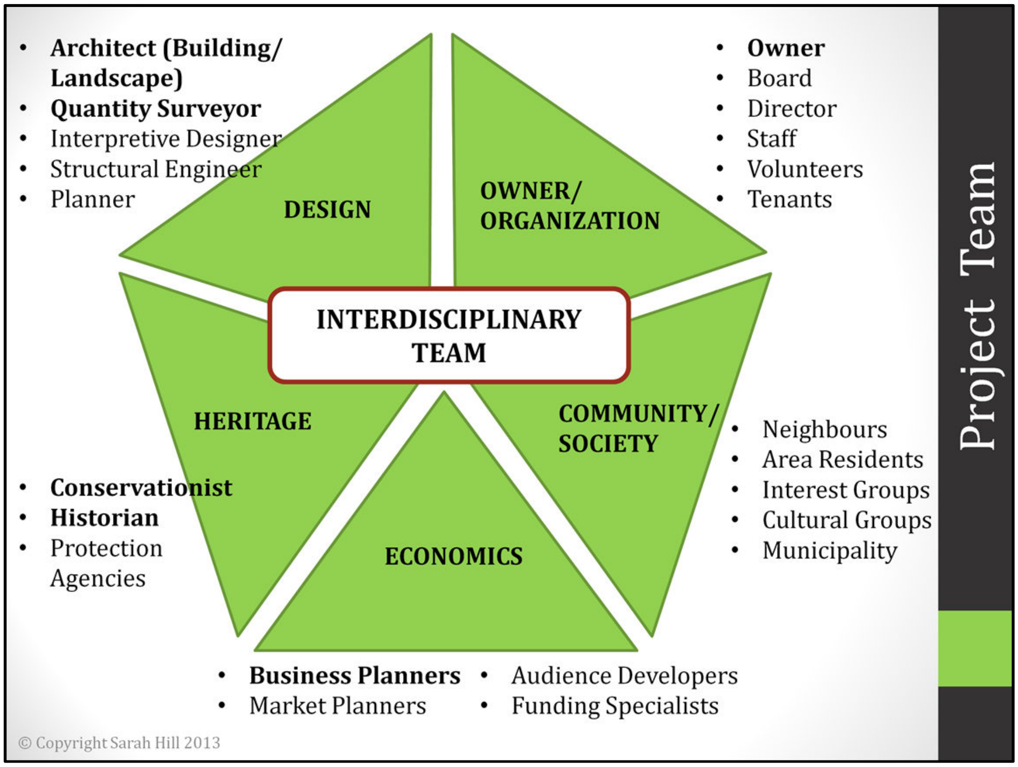
For the heritage, we must determine if the proposals put forward are appropriate – do they take into consideration everything that is understood about the heritage asset's fabric, evolution and significance and do they provide a solution that is authentic and has integrity? We must ensure that proposals for change are well documented so that in future, if our interventions don't work out, they can be replaced, restored or returned to a previous state. Coherence is also an important factor – proposed interventions must be distinguishable and make sense for the heritage asset and its surroundings. And in the end we must ensure that all proposed interventions are the minimum necessary to achieve the project's objectives.



When you can answer 'Yes' to all of these questions, you have arrived at a sustainable solution to take forward. If the answer is 'No', then it's back to the drawing board to further revise and refine the proposals until they do. Following the model should result in a balanced solution – having aligned protecting heritage significance with the predicted benefits of development.



So then I would like to finish with a few key principles for putting this model into practice. Understanding is essential and the key starting point in the heritage development process. The more you know about the 5 influencers and how they tick the more successful your proposals will be. In the end, there is no single right answer. Each heritage asset is unique, as is each owner, community and situation. Each time you approach the model, there will be a different set of priorities and each criteria area will be given a different weight in the decision making process. The optimal solution will not necessarily be the most profitable and arriving at this solution will take time. Lastly, the greatest success at finding a solution for the heritage asset will come from the assembly of an interdisciplinary team – one that shares a collective ownership and responsibility for the ideas being generated.



This all-star team should include contribution from each of the 5 influencers and will require expert knowledge, excellent team-working and mutual respect for each other and the heritage asset. As a minimum, in addition to the project leader (usually the owner), an architect, conservationist or historian, quantity surveyor, a business planning specialist and a community mobilizer should make up your project group.

Thank you very much for listening and I would greatly appreciate your feedback.

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