USING THE *WAYFINDING WHEEL* TO IMPROVE THE DESIGN OF WAYFINDING STRATEGIES/SYSTEMS

Background

Complex products, such as buildings and other infrastructure, should aim to provide value to the customer over the long periods that they remain in use. The many challenges associated with maximising customer value for such buildings include designing, producing, implementing and maintaining an effective wayfinding system that meets the needs of all. Such challenges ought to be considered and addressed at various stages of the life cycle of building starting from **DESIGN** stage all the way through to **USE**

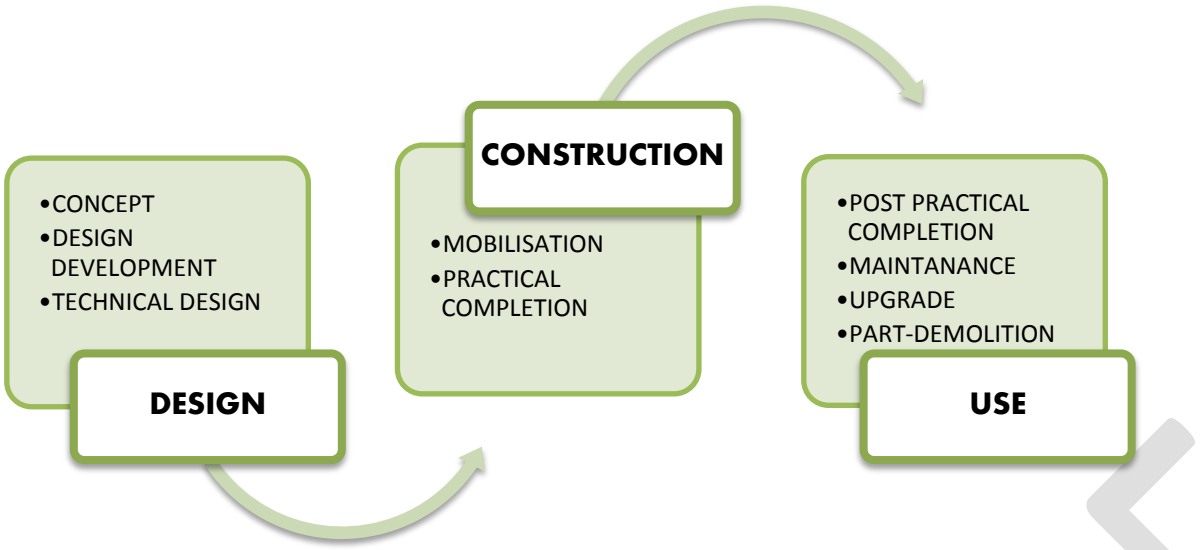

Diagram Adapted from RIBA's (2009) ***Design Work stages***
www.google.co.uk/search?q=tages+of+the+life+cycle+of+a+building+RIBA&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-GB:official&client=firefox-a
Accessed 13 October 2012

The *Wayfinding Wheel* contained in this pack is a decision support tool designed to meet the needs of those charged with the responsibility for ensuring that those visiting an organisation find their way to and from their destination without getting lost or frustrated. It is a simple tool designed in response to the observation that most wayfinding guidelines tend to be hidden in large volumes of text thus making their access difficult when needed. The tool is composed of two sides both containing easy to access and follow instructions developed from real life observations and analytical descriptions of the behaviour displayed by wayfinders during a wayfinding task.

From the observable reaction of the wayfinders to signs, colour codes and the architectural layouts presented to them in various wayfinding settings, it became clear that if the ***right information*** is in the ***right form*** and in the ***right place,*** it can be accessed by the ***right people*** at the ***right time*****.** Responsibility for ensuring that this is possible clearly lies with those charged with the duty to improve existing wayfinding systems or design them in the first instance.

Description of The Wayfinding Wheel

It is a physical two-dimensional wheel consisting of two sides both containing easy to access and follow instructions. Side one (see diagram below) contains a three-step set of instructions on how to gain an in-depth understanding of the behaviour of wayfinders during a real-life performance of a wayfinding task before proceeding on to suggesting solutions to problems identified. The first step stresses the importance of situating oneself in the problematic setting and in order to pay attention to how people navigate the environment and make sense of the existing wayfinding cues. The second step encourages the production of detailed descriptions of the wayfinders' behaviour as it occurs in that setting. In the third step suggestions for design or improvement based on these descriptions are made**.**

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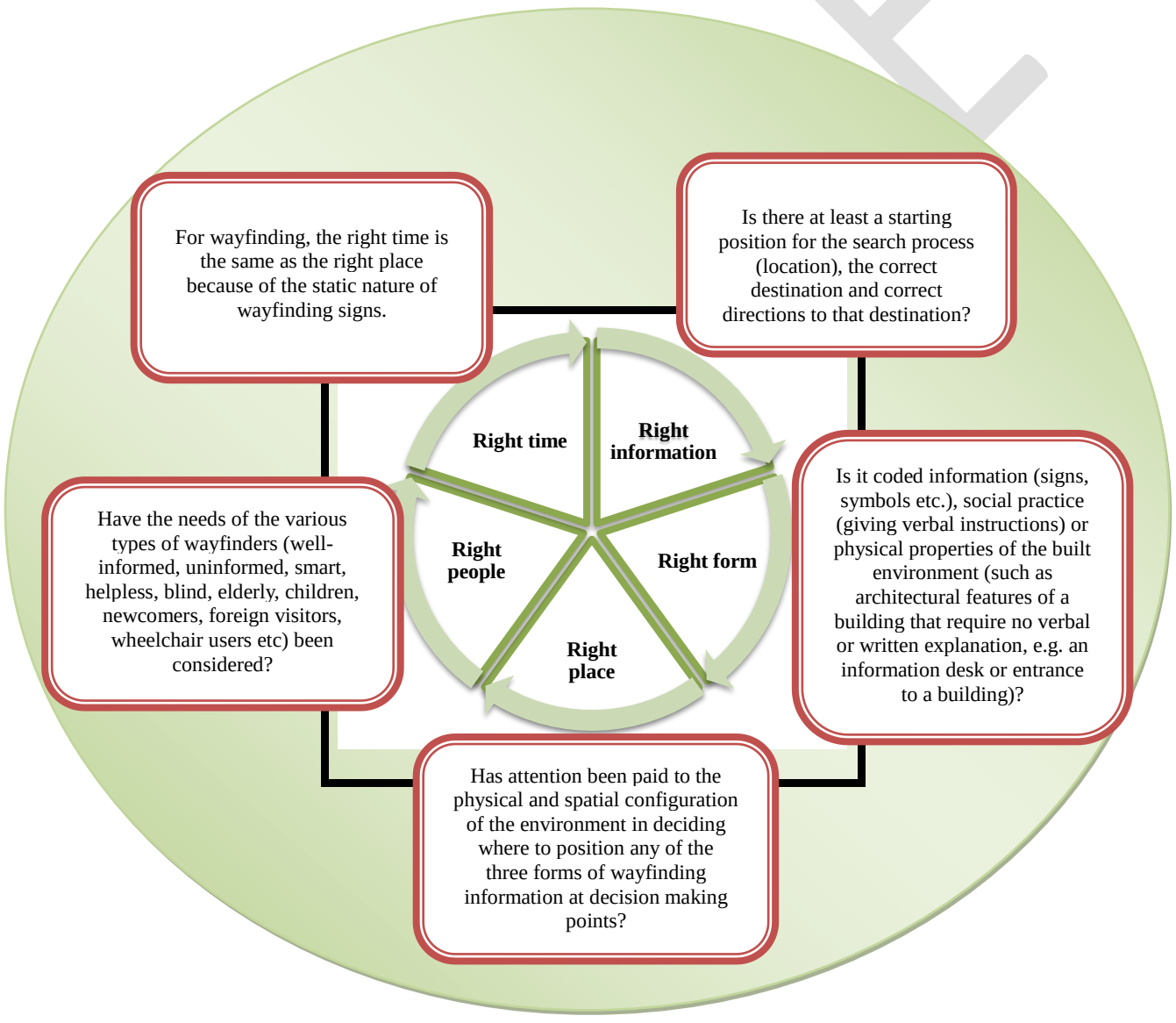
Side two (see diagram below) contains simple generic instructions prompting the decision maker to focus their attention on the suitable form of wayfinding information to be placed at specific parts of the built environment identified as causing problems.



How and when to use the Wayfinding Wheel

The tool was designed with the aim of solving wayfinding problems encountered in existing complex environments in the **USE** stage. Following the instructions on the wheel during this stage should make the job of identifying and classifying the breakdowns in a wayfinding system manageable making it easier to articulate the nature of breakdowns, where exactly in the wayfinding system they occur and how such breakdowns lead to getting lost. This in turn should ensure that wayfinding information remains immortal throughout the long life cycles of the building. However, at the **DESIGN** stage of the life cycle of any building the tool should effectively sensitise stakeholders to potential problems that may result from not paying attention to the wayfinding needs of anticipated visitors from the outset. During **CONSTRUCTIO**N the tool could be effectively used to check that the wayfinding needs of users have been incorporated according to the original brief.

C.N.Rooke (2012)