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### **What is meant by context**

Context is the character and setting of the area within which a projected scheme will sit. It is its natural as well as human history; the forms of the settlements, buildings and spaces; its ecology and archaeology; its location, and the routes that pass through it. Context also includes people, the individuals living in or near an area and how communities are organised so that citizens become real participants in the projected development. A thorough appreciation of the overall site context is the starting point for designing a distinct place.

### **Why context is important**

Context is crucial. It is about understanding the position of development, and how to position a development. This involves a range of considerations and participants, directly or indirectly. High quality places will only emerge if the approach is cohesive and inclusive. Designers need to take account of the following priorities:

#### **Strengthening local communities**

To help ensure that proposed development reinforces, rather than undermines local communities and assists successful project delivery.

#### **Creating places of distinction**

Drawing inspiration from a neighbourhood's indigenous character strengthens local identity. Context-less design leads to 'anywhere places'.

#### **Harnessing intrinsic site assets and resources**

Harnessing the intrinsic resources of the site - the existing development form, soils and geology, drainage, landscape, solar and wind energy - to create more sustainable development.

#### **Integrating with surroundings**

Achieving careful integration with the landscape or surrounding built environment, using the right materials, forms and landscape elements for the locality; respecting footpaths, street and road linkages and relating to existing urban structures.

#### **Ensuring feasibility**

To ensure economic viability and deliverability.

#### **Providing vision**

A vision focusses community aspirations, sells a scheme to a developer and provides a long term aim for project participants. It embodies a strategy for the future that everyone can sign up to and work towards over a period of time.