4.9
Physical models

Definition: Conventional physical display model, presenting site and built form in three dimensions, normally to a standard scale. Models vary in level of detail and realism.

Production: Many hand-made, but increasing use of computer-guided milling tools to create site contours and buildings. In-house sketch models often used to illustrate built form options. Fully finished models are usually produced by specialist workshops.

Physical models:

- are effective and accessible in presenting and marketing an urban project to a general audience
- clearly display contrasts of urban grain and building form, massing, landform and landscape
- present the broad structure of a place without being tied to detail
- can be viewed and photographed from all angles and viewpoints
- are readily viewed at all times without an electronic back-up
- cannot present the intended quality of a place or buildings at street level as effectively as computer-generated images or hand drawn views.

Watchpoints

- Full specification models can be costly, with lengthy lead times.
- Project proposals need to be 'confirmed' at an early stage.
- Can be difficult to update or modify if allowances for revisions/options are not made from the outset.
- Modelmakers require clear and prompt decisions from project team.
- Display, storage and transportation can be problematic.

Example of good physical model

Laganside masterplan

This model:

- clearly articulates the extent and layout of the development proposal in a contrasting colour and its integration with the surrounding context
- simply communicates the complexity of the infrastructure, road/rail bridges and river, their levels and their integration within the masterplan
- is a useful design tool which can be modified as the masterplan progresses
- articulates the built form and massing in relation to the scale of the site context, particularly the river, docks and bridges.