

When site development guidance is drawn up in advance of serious development negotiations, there is more chance of achieving a strategic approach to regional development, thereby preventing development in a piecemeal and incoherent fashion. Such piecemeal development is often perceptually illegible. There may be the loss of existing landmarks; a blurring of features which distinguish the district from adjacent areas; the development of ill-defined routes without clearly structured node or centre. It is difficult to produce a strategic landscape plan for such featureless areas so that restoring identity and legibility is often a forlorn effort in remedial action.

DEVELOPMENT COSTS

When producing site development guidance (SDG) it is important to build into the guidance the overall idea or vision. A good quality environment will never result from a scheme without a central theme. The guidance should provide an imaginative framework which allows the developer the freedom to develop his own vision. However, this will need to be tempered with a realistic look at the costs of achieving development in accordance with SDG. Table 2.1 provides a list of some of the planning requirements which affect development costs.

It is equally important to understand the effect planning requirements may have on current land values and to appreciate the complex mechanisms for land finance. Clearly it is not in a landowner's interest to be benevolent and suggest anything which would detract from the value of their property. The landowner or developer would be working against their own self-interest if they did not try to reduce costs. Nevertheless, in certain areas land values may be low and compromise made in order to obtain viable site development guidance. There may be planning objectives to meet in accordance with local plan and structure plan development. These considerations, along with other desired planning gain, will have to be priori-

Table 2.1 Planning requirements which affect development costs.

Infrastructure
Topography – drainage, sewage and engineering works
Cost of on-site road construction
Cost of off-site road construction
Landscape
Play areas
Contributions to public transport
Affordable housing
Access housing
Community facilities – schools, libraries, community halls, social services
Leisure facilities – sports centre, sports pitches
Sites reserved for places of worship
Building houses to higher energy specifications
Location of local shopping to benefit from passing trade
Retention of existing landscape and ecology
Incorporation of Public Art

tized so that the local authority can achieve the most important of its objectives without destroying the viability of site development. When carrying out this type of assessment it is important to realize that both the landowner and developer will have ongoing costs which increase as time passes and that development will not occur unless both have a reasonable opportunity to make a profit.

There is a tendency for local authorities to be over-optimistic about the potential of a site: some have even been known to seek to impose the same planning requirements on completely different sites. There are, of course, differences in the values of sites; therefore, it is an extremely worthwhile process to understand the factors which affect the commercial value of a site and to make a rough calculation as to the value of the land before starting any negotiation with developer or landowner. Only then is it possible to assess the level of