

investors tend to take a longer term view and are, therefore, more inclined to seek 'enduring' or 'sustainable' quality. Occupiers of commercial property see urban design as potentially important but other short-term considerations dominate their thinking and their decisions. Residential owner-occupiers attach most importance to securing value for money from the dwelling itself, at least when purchasing a new property. However, once residents have moved in their priorities may change. It was not part of the brief to consider the importance of urban design considerations to purchasers of second-hand homes but this is certainly an area which merits further research. House-buyers, like the other occupiers, are constrained by considerations of location, price and choice.

### **Benefits and constraints on taking urban design considerations into account**

#### ***Developers***

Property developers must manage a host of financial, logistical and production tasks and resolve the varied, often conflicting, objectives of all the parties involved in the development process. Developers usually bear the immediate responsibility for the financial success or failure of a project; and for many people, it is the developer who is ultimately responsible for the quality and appearance of a development.

Property development is a challenging task entailing a network of operations including market research, site acquisition, project financing, securing planning permission and other approvals, design and costing, construction, marketing, letting and disposal. Design is only one aspect of a complex process and developers see all aspects of design as essentially a means to a financial end and not as an end in itself. Developers' general design concerns include: investor and occupier requirements, preferences and tastes—in particular the 'price' they will pay for a product that responds to these; flexibility of both building and site layout to meet changing circumstances; buildability; cost efficiency and value for money; visual impact including the 'image' of the completed development as an aid to sale or letting; and the management implications including the 'running costs' of the completed development. One challenge for developers is to influence the design process in a way which maximizes their own goals without stifling their designers' creativity and performance (Buckley, 1990).

Developers see several benefits resulting from paying attention to urban design considerations. These

are often interrelated but they include helping to secure sites for development; winning over public opinion in support of a development proposal and promoting a wider sense of involvement and 'ownership' of a development; creating a new location or 'address'; increasing the financial profitability of a development; giving a development a distinct and marketable visual image; ensuring product differentiation; and attracting people to the development, for example, to provide trade for retailers.

Developers acknowledge that in some circumstances, some of these benefits can only be fully realized by adjustments to the 'usual' processes of development and urban design: these include closer collaboration with planning and other authorities; and more active processes of public participation and consultation. With larger, more complex and longer running developments, time spent building mutual respect and understanding may pay dividends later in facilitating approval for the more detailed stages of design and when debating the need for making changes in response to market circumstances. Involving 'the public' may even result in people coming forward to run facilities within a development and is, ultimately, all part of a wider urban design consideration—engendering a sense of community and pride of place.

Developers acknowledge the difficulties of quantifying the benefit they derive from the quality of urban design but this has to be seen in the context of their business and it is clear that urban design considerations do matter to them. Whilst it is easy to cost a development it is much more difficult to place a value on what are often intangible qualities, all the more so if a particular solution is innovative. So developers are frequently driven back onto a 'gut feeling' although a few claim to be able to measure the returns on investment in design quality. For this reason, persuasive architects and masterplanners can have a significant influence on property developers, helping to convince them of the added value better design may realize even if this involves an increased cost initially. Brindleyplace provides several illustrations of this. For example, an office building designed by Porphyrius Associates incorporates a 54-metre high clock tower as a landmark in the locality; this feature is reported to have added £0.5 million to construction costs but it will not increase the rental value of the completed building. Housebuilders are apparently more aware than commercial developers of the relationship between the costs of an improved quality of urban design and market price and this is presumably due to the