

vision of the development can be expressed in terms of a trust in the developer who is known to provide a good standard product that is known to attract good quality occupants. Investors do not see a need to require additional features that could improve its market position: in essence, demand is seen to follow and reflect the location of the scheme and the reputation of its developer.

With Brindleyplace, one benefit of the quality of urban design is the sense of prestige attached to the investment. The reputation of the developer is also seen to provide some justification and confidence to the decision to invest in the project. Both the buildings and the public spaces are seen as being constructed to a high specification which should make properties attractive to other investors if they are sold in a few years' time by which stage the development will have been completed. This is consistent with the argument that quality pays in lengthening the life of the investment.

The requirements of occupiers constrain the contribution investors make to the quality of urban design. Investors must consider the longer term management implications of developments: both the costs of day-to-day management and maintenance and the acceptability of these to occupiers as well as the scope to maintain overall control of the environment ensuring that future changes by one party do not undermine the value of the rest.

Occupiers

The importance and priority given to urban design considerations by commercial occupiers is related to business objectives. The benefits may include the ability to recruit staff which is felt to be especially important when starting a new business; the ability to retain existing staff particularly when major relocation and/or rationalization is being undertaken and there are specific groups of employees which must be retained; improved productivity in terms of staff working longer hours or just greater efficiency; improved turnover or sales especially for retailers but also access to clients for business service organizations; and less distraction especially if moving from a building with poor quality urban design where lack of parking, difficult access, and concerns about personal safety and security may be diverting the energy of staff.

Occupiers feel that it is difficult to measure these benefits either as part of the initial decision-making process or as part of a post-occupancy evaluation. When making occupational decisions occupiers build up a matrix of criteria related to both the general

location and the building itself. Many of these criteria are easy to quantify: rents, rates, communications, usable floor area and so on. Conversely, many urban design considerations are seen as subjective and therefore intrinsically more difficult to quantify.

The benefits of good urban design are related to perceptions of cause and effect rather than a clearly definable benefit. For example, if rents are cheaper or the internal space can be used more intensively, the decision maker can be certain that the cost of occupancy will fall. But if an organization moves to a site with improved access and parking or attractive surroundings, it is much more difficult to quantify the precise increase in productivity, let alone to identify the cause of that increase with any certainty. There are numerous external and internal influences on many of the benefits potentially attributable to the quality of urban design, and only a few organizations attempt to assess whether better design has secured those benefits or whether other influences, such as a change in the local economy or improved information technology, have been the prime causes. Retailers are the exception, especially the large multiples which are able to benchmark shops in their portfolio and so begin to distinguish cause and consequence. As a result they can, for example, measure the impact on sales before and after an improvement to the quality of the local environment such as the pedestrianization of a high street.

The main constraints identified by occupiers to giving urban design considerations more attention and priority in their decision making relate to these kinds of issues. The process by which an organization decides where to locate moves progressively from macro to micro considerations. First, an appropriate location is identified. That location decision is generally driven by questions of access to clients, customers and staff. Once a general location has been identified and accepted, individual buildings or sites which are on the market at the time are identified. Each of these is then assessed in terms of whether it will be 'fit for the purpose' and at what cost. As a consequence there are only a small number of properties which will be considered feasible, possibly as few as two or three. This lack of real choice is a major constraint and under such circumstances quality of urban design is a factor which would be 'nice to have' but, in practice, is usually seen as an optional extra.

Occupational decisions are commonly not made in isolation but with reference to the rest of the organization's portfolio. Organizations can be concerned about offices being seen as 'too good' for