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3 ARRIVING AT THE DIAGRAM

RESPONDING TO THE SITE

Unless you are designing a demountable temporary structure capable of erection on any site, then the nature of the site is one of the few constants in any architectural programme. Other fundamentals like, for example, the brief, or the budget may well change as the design progresses, but generally the site remains as one of the few fixed elements to which the designer can make a direct response. Just as an architect may establish quite early in the design process an 'image' of his building's organisation and appearance, so must an image for the site be constructed concurrently so that the two may interact.

Analysis and survey

An understanding of the site and its potential suggests an analytical process before the busi-

ness of designing can get under way. There are obvious physical characteristics like contour and climate, for example, which may stimulate the designer's creative imagination but first it is imperative to comprehend the 'sense of place' which the site itself communicates. It is necessary therefore, to have some understanding of the locality, its history, its social structure and physical patterns or 'grain', so that the form and density of your proposed interventions are appropriate. This is best achieved by observation and sketching on site as is the less problematic recording of the site's physical characteristics. How for instance will the site's topography suggest patterns of use? Is the utility of concentrating activity on the level areas of the site overridden by concerns for maintaining mature planting or avoiding overshadowing, for example? Are gradients to be utilised in generating the sectional organisation of the building? How will the building's physical form respond to and moderate the