

land. The public may assume that the planning authority will be able to achieve its main design criteria and all the facilities required to make the development work. However, those in charge of the city council's finance have a duty to make as much money for the local authority as possible, which may mean that one department ends up in very difficult negotiations with several other departments. The department responsible for planning and urban design will be seeking to obtain the best possible design and benefits for the local community and to be consistent with the approach taken with private landowners. This problem is becoming more apparent as local authority budgets are less able to respond to the full range of local community wishes.

DESIGN BRIEF CONTENT

Once basic planning requirements are established, planning negotiations enter a different level. A design concept should already have been established for the site, and the local authority should be developing and detailing the concept with the relevant parties. All new development is expected to provide variety and choice for people. 'A comprehensive urban design policy, spelling out the full range of design considerations that are important in a locality is important as the cornerstone of all design policies.'⁹ The design brief should consider the following main subject areas: means of access by road and by other modes of transport; the relationship of the pedestrian, cyclist and the car; safety in the public realm; quality of design in street and public square including notes on achieving vitality and permeability; the identity and legibility of place; features of sustainable development; and open space and landscape strategy.

Until quite recently great emphasis has been placed on designing for the car. Highway engineers concerned to minimize road accidents have influenced site layout considerably, by their insistence

on separating the movement of cars from that of people. As a result, it is not permitted for houses to front main highways because the drives to those houses would create too many potential accident spots, given the speed for which the highways are designed.

In certain authorities such as Leicester there are proposals to slow traffic throughout the road system. Preference is now being given to other modes of transport and the dominance of the car is being reduced in the design of urban areas. For example, Leicester City Council is trying to ensure that all new development is within 200 m of a public transport route, in response to Design Bulletin 32. In addition 20 mph traffic zones are being introduced in residential layouts. The process of negotiating new residential road standards with highway engineers however, is relatively new, and many highway engineers remain to be convinced of this new orthodoxy.

In the public domain it is essential to consider how a development can be made as safe as possible by ensuring that public places are overlooked and that users feel comfortable using the streets by any mode of transport. The police have, until recently, concentrated on the home as a defended place so that housing has often turned its back on public places, so making people feel that they are unwelcome unless they actually live in the neighbourhood. Defining private and public spaces in design terms is essential in order to reduce the perceived fear of crime. This is possible by improving the quality of public spaces and by encouraging more people to use the streets, thus increasing natural surveillance. This should also be effective in creating a more vibrant atmosphere on city streets. Access considerations in urban areas need to emphasize the value of permeability and easy movement for the elderly, women, children and the disabled. Public Art policies also play a valuable role in creating a vibrant city and have their place in the design brief.

The Urban Design movement has been much influenced by the work of both Cullen and Lynch

and a return to city legibility as an aim of design policy.¹⁰ There is now a clear consensus amongst urban designers that development should aim to create a sense of place and community. A legible development can also be created by the emphasis given to paths, landmarks, nodes, edges and districts. There should be a clear design strategy for the use of materials, colours, and building heights to strengthen features which give identity to the quarter or district.¹¹

Open space provision should be closely linked with conservation and should be designated before the housing layout is attempted. A greater emphasis is being placed on street trees and the greening of the street, all of which may have maintenance and management implications for the local authority; it may also have cost implications for developers. Nevertheless, these are important considerations for the design brief.

It is argued in this book that all development should be sustainable development. See Moughtin (1996)¹² for a fuller treatment of this subject but this section of the design brief would include the topics shown in Table 2.4.

The emphasis being placed on good design may take a variety of forms but all such supplementary planning guidance should be cross-referenced to establish policy and be in accordance with it. An area of concern for the design brief will be a desire to link new developments with existing urban struc-

ture. The ways of making these connections should form a major theme of the design brief. The structure and content of the design brief may take a variety of forms but its main aim should be to stimulate good urban design, not to restrict imaginative or innovative development.

CASE STUDY IN NORTHEAST LEICESTER

A planning brief was produced for a district centre site in 1990. This was in accordance with the Hamilton Local Plan¹³ and the soon-to-be-adopted City of Leicester Local Plan.¹⁴ The District Centre site provided for 9700 m² of retail floorspace to serve the community of Hamilton, which is a green-field development of 4000 dwellings. Progress on this development, which was to meet the needs of the expanding Leicester population, had been constrained because of the development of a controversial road infrastructure.

The development was slow owing to the economic recession in the housing market. The developers started negotiations with a very basic scheme in 1995, claiming that the planning brief was out of date and that retailing had moved on since 1990. The developers stated the scheme was in accordance with the basic remit of the outline planning permission. Analysis of the scheme suggested that little or no attention was given to the layout or to the planning of the development in relation to the adjacent residential areas. The outline planning application had been renewed on a number of occasions and permitted 10 200 m² of retail floorspace. This allowed for a superstore, four larger shop units, a public house, a doctor's surgery and a petrol station.

After several meetings and intense negotiations, it was clear the developer was unwilling at this point to amend the scheme in any substantial way. Further design guidance relating to the layout was also provided. Internally, officers debated the issues and came to the conclusion that the application

Table 2.4 Topics for sustainable development.

Mixed land uses
Local access to facilities
Transport choice opportunities, i.e. foot, cycle routes, buses, light rapid transit
Water conservation
Energy conservation
Nature conservation
Long-life developments
Adaptable buildings for flexible land use
Building height restriction
