

The background of the book cover is a dark blue-grey color. On the left side, there is a vertical band with a black and white diagonal striped pattern. On the right side, there is a large, light blue architectural drawing of a building plan, showing various rooms, corridors, and structural elements. The title 'LAND, DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN' is printed in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the top half of the cover.

# LAND, DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN

Paul Syms



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# **Land, Development and Design**

**Paul Syms**

**Foreword by Sir Peter Hall**

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# Foreword

by Sir Peter Hall, Director of the Institute of Community Studies

One of the strangest and saddest features about urban development in Britain is that it is traditionally seen by all the actors as some kind of war game, in which private developers fight to make as much money as possible while public planners use every possible means to stop them. This should not be necessary, and in other European countries – such as the Netherlands, widely admired for the quality of much of its development – it does not seem to be the case. Part of the problem, no doubt, lies in the adversarial character that the planning process has acquired, far from the ideas of those who framed the historic 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, but part lies in the nature of professional education. Planners are trained in planning schools, developers in schools of surveying, and very seldom do the two professional streams come together.

There is thus a chicken and egg problem: the two professions are reared on significantly different literatures, so authors write for one market or the other. This is compounded by a basic lack of literature on the development process: there is an extraordinary dearth of books that describe this process as the developer experiences it, either for the budding surveyor-developer or the intending planner.

Paul Syms has written to fill this gap, and is to be congratulated on doing it so thoroughly and so clearly. His book concentrates primarily on brownfield development, because that is where current priorities lie and where some of the greatest complexities arise, but in his carefully chosen case studies he does not ignore greenfield development either. It will immediately and justifiably become a standard text for every student and professional who wants to understand the land development process and its outcomes.



# Preface

My objective in writing *Land, Development and Design* was to produce an up to date text for use by both students and practitioners in the surveying and town planning disciplines. I wished to concentrate on the reuse of urban land, in line with the emerging policies relating to increasing densities and greater reliance on public transport – what I have called regeneration of the built environment. However, it would have been wrong to totally ignore greenfield development and many of the issues discussed in the book are equally relevant to greenfield sites. One of the masterplanning case studies in Chapter 14 also deals with a major new greenfield project – Cambourne in Cambridgeshire.

Inevitably, given my interests, part of the book deals with the problems surrounding the redevelopment of land affected by contamination. It is not intended to be a technical treatise on dealing with contamination, rather it is aimed at the developer, surveyor and town planner, all of whom need to know what to look for in technical reports. Nevertheless, I hope that the book will be of interest to engineers, environmental scientists and the regulators in environmental health departments and the Environmental Agencies, providing them with an insight into the development process.

*Land, Development and Design* is divided into four parts. Part One consists of three chapters, which introduce the development process and describe planning policies as they currently exist in England. The approach to the development process is based on the eleven phases of development, as they relate to the re-use of land, which Peter Knight and I first described in our book *Building Homes on Used Land*<sup>1</sup>.

Part Two opens with site assembly and putting together the professional team before moving on to site assessment, risk analysis and the remediation of contaminated land. The feasibility study is discussed in the first chapter of Part Three. Here I have taken a fairly straightforward approach to the subject of

<sup>1</sup> Based on research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and published by RICS Books.

financial appraisals, similar to that which a property developer might adopt in the early stages of a project. For readers who wish to extend their reading in this area there are a number of good texts on advanced valuations. Planning and environmental regulation, the thorny subject of waste management licensing, development finance and joint ventures, tendering and contracts are also considered in Part Three, which concludes with a look at marketing and selling the development.

Part Four deals with design issues in the first three chapters. I must stress that it is not intended as a handbook for urban designers or architects, as there are plenty of people far more competent than myself to write for these audiences. Instead, I have looked at some aspects that are of interest to me, and I hope to others in the field of development.

The last chapter in Part Four brings the reader up to date with the proposed changes to the town planning regime in the 2001 planning Green Paper and its 'daughter papers'.

When I started to write this book in the early summer of 2001 I was conscious of the fact that a great many changes had taken place during the preceding couple of years in terms of Government policies relating to property development in the urban environment. I was also aware that even more changes, concerning town planning policies and the reuse of urban land, were likely to be proposed over the ensuing months and years. I could have decided to defer writing the book until all the new policy ideas had been either implemented or abandoned but that would have resulted in a delay of several years. Therefore I agreed with Julia Burden, Deputy Publishing Director at Blackwell Publishing, that we would have a 'cut-off' date of the end of December 2001. In the event, writing extended into the first few weeks of January 2002 and I should like to thank Julia and the team at Blackwell for their patience in respect of the constantly changing manuscript of the last few weeks. I am also grateful to the technical reviewers, especially Judith Lowe, Special Professor at the University of Nottingham, for their input and helpful comments.

As with my earlier book, *Contaminated Land: the practice and economics of redevelopment*<sup>2</sup>, I have included checklists at the end of each chapter. Many people commented to me about the usefulness of these in *Contaminated Land* and I hope that the checklists in this book are equally helpful to the reader.

A great many people have helped in the production of this book and it is not possible to name them all but I should like to mention a few. My good friend Tim Abbott of Abbott and Associates, civil engineering quantity surveyors, wrote Chapter eleven on Tendering and Contracts. I cannot claim any expertise in this subject and I am grateful to Tim for his help. I should also like

<sup>2</sup> Blackwell Science, 1997.

to thank the team at Taylor Young Urban Design, especially Andy Clarke, for producing the mini masterplan used in Chapters 5 and 8.

Dr Sarah Macnaughton of Bio-wise suggested some of the remediation and treatment case studies in Chapter seven, whilst others were provided by QDS and Knight Environmental. Staff members at N.M. Rothschild & Co, Ansbacher & Co and the Royal Bank of Scotland spent time explaining the approaches adopted by their banks when financing development projects. Gwyn Griffiths of the Welsh Development Agency provided the Port of Barry joint venture case study.

David Gray of the East of England Development Agency and Sue Arnold of Ipswich Borough Council both provided me with information for the Ipswich case study, as too did the Concept Centre team and Terry Farrell & Partners for the Cambourne Study. I am also extremely grateful to the various developers, architects and town planners who assisted me with the other design case studies.

I should like to thank everyone who provided photographs and other illustrations used throughout the book. Their copyright is noted in the Acknowledgements after the references section. Where possible I have tried to provide Internet 'weblinks', so as to enable the reader to follow up topics in more detail. These weblinks are listed at the end of Chapter 2.

I should like to thank my colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University, who made suggestions as to what should be included in the book and allowed me the time to undertake the writing. Finally, I should like to thank my wife and collaborator, Janice, for her perseverance in reading countless drafts and for suggesting a number of the topics covered in the book. Without her help the final outcome would not have been achieved.

## **Biographical note**

Paul Syms is Professor of Urban Land Use in the School of Environment and Development at Sheffield Hallam University. He has extensive practical experience in the field of re-using previously developed land and buildings, having established his own consultancy practice in 1986. He still continues to practise, acting mainly as an expert witness.

Paul originally qualified as a valuer and then went on to research a Masters degree in Economic Geography at the University of Manchester. His doctorate from Sheffield Hallam University was awarded in respect of his research into the development and valuation of contaminated land. His work on urban regeneration has been extensively published in the United Kingdom and overseas. Paul is frequently invited to speak at conferences and seminars on the subject of re-using land.

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Part One

# Planning and Development

## **Introduction**

This part introduces the reader to the preliminary development stages, and to the planning process. The Government is committed to making radical changes to the planning process, criticised by many developers as a major cause of delays in getting developments under way. The process can indeed be very lengthy, regardless of whether the site in question is a greenfield or a previously used site and can be a very emotive issue.

Chapter 1 describes the development process and introduces eleven phases of development. Each of these phases is then covered more fully elsewhere in the book.

Chapter 2 deals with planning policies and comments in detail on land for housing, having briefly set out the Urban Task Force's recommendations. PPG3 has only been in effect for a relatively short time but the aim of this guidance is to encourage the reuse of previously used land wherever possible.

Chapter 3 considers the inception of the project, commencing with an idea or a piece of land, through the process of market research and initial assessment of the likely rents or prices that might be achieved.

Planning is returned to in the final chapter of the book with a summary of the proposals contained in the December 2001 Planning Green Paper.



## Chapter 1

# The Development Process

### 1.1 Introduction

‘We calculate that, on current policy assumptions, the Government is unlikely to meet its own target that 60% of new dwellings should be built on previously developed land. Achieving this target is fundamental to the health of society. Building more than 40% of new housing on greenfield sites is both unsustainable and unacceptable. It will lead to further erosion of the countryside. It will also increase traffic congestion and air pollution, accelerate the depletion of natural resources, damage biodiversity and increase social deprivation within our towns and cities.’

(Lord Rogers of Riverside, Introduction to *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, Urban Task Force, 1999)

Urban regeneration is not just about renewing and revitalising the built environment in our towns and cities. It must also address issues involving the economic and social well-being of the community and should also take account of cultural backgrounds. Without having regard for economic, social and cultural aspects, property development projects may not meet the needs of the community and may be unsustainable in the long run, notwithstanding any short-term profitability that might be achieved. They may even fail to produce a development profit.

The purpose of this book is to focus upon the property development process. It does this mainly by considering the reuse of previously developed land. The book does not seek to examine in depth economic, social and cultural issues but, where these might have a significant bearing on a property development, they are flagged up for the reader’s attention. Checklists are provided at the end of each chapter, highlighting the issues raised and are intended to assist developers, planners, surveyors and others involved in the execution of development projects.

It is often the case that planners see property developers as greedy, money-grabbing individuals without a thought for the wider good. They seek planning permissions which are impossible to deliver and in unrealistic time-scales. On the other hand, developers sometimes regard planners as being obstructive, lacking an understanding of development issues and overly constrained by local plans and Unitary Development Plans (UDPs). In practice, however, they both have important roles to play in the development process.

There may well be faults on both sides but, in many cases, the problem is due to a lack of communication and a failure to see the other person's point of view. This chapter looks at the development process and seeks to identify areas where conflicts may arise. In view of policies that focus development attention on the reuse of previously developed sites, and because development of such sites tends to be more complex than greenfields, the chapter concentrates on the redevelopment process, although most of the points are equally applicable to greenfield development.

A number of authors, including Adams (1994) and Cadman and Topping (1995), have looked at the property development process. Adams approached the subject from the viewpoint of the planner working within and in response to property markets. He also considered development models described by previous authors, such as Barrett *et al.* (1978) and Gore and Nicholson (1985). Cadman and Topping's objective was to describe the development process, enabling the reader to obtain a complete overview. They identified the following main stages:

- (1) Initiation
- (2) Evaluation
- (3) Acquisition
- (4) Design and costing
- (5) Permissions
- (6) Commitment
- (7) Implementation
- (8) Let/manage/dispose

They also emphasised that these stages may not always follow this sequence and often overlap or repeat.

The stages described by Cadman and Topping apply to speculative development situations, where a developer might not seek an occupier until construction is well advanced, or even completed. Where a development is pre-let or pre-sold, the letting, management and disposal stage might come much earlier in the development process, possibly even preceding the initiation stage in situations where a developer receives an enquiry from a prospective occupier and then seeks a site in order to satisfy the demand. It is also more

appropriate to greenfield development than to the generally more complex processes associated with the redevelopment of 'brownfield' or 'previously developed' land and buildings.

For successful redevelopment to take place it is usually important for each phase of the process to have been completed, or a definable objective to be achievable, before committing too far to the subsequent phases. However, this should not preclude work on the later phases being undertaken at earlier points in the project; indeed, this is often essential if a successful development is to be created. For example, early discussions with the local planning authority will reduce the risk of the developer finding out after the planning application has been submitted that the proposed development runs contrary to an impending policy change or is affected by some future road improvement. Early discussions with environmental regulators will also enable the developer to ascertain whether or not they have any particular concerns relating to the site or its environs.

The basis adopted in the book for describing the redevelopment process is the 11 phases approach outlined in the book *Building Homes on Used Land* (Syms & Knight, 2000). These are shown in summary in the box below and discussed in more detail in the next section.

**Box 1.1** The eleven phases of the redevelopment process

- Phase 1: Project inception
- Phase 2: Site acquisition and site assembly
- Phase 3: Site assessment
- Phase 4: Risk analysis
- Phase 5: Detailed design
- Phase 6: Feasibility study
- Phase 7: Planning and regulatory approvals
- Phase 8: Land and development finance
- Phase 9: Tendering
- Phase 10: Construction
- Phase 11: Sales and marketing

## 1.2 The phases of redevelopment

The redevelopment process should be seen as consisting of 11 phases, many of which are interdependent upon each other. As the focus is on reusing land, site assessment, including investigation, risk analysis and development funding are identified as additional discrete phases within the development process.

Property developers are in business to make profits. The level of profit