

# Good Practice Guidelines

## Participatory Approach to Core Area Development A Guide to Good Practice

DFID Research Project R 6860

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March 2000

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The Max Lock Centre, University of Westminster, produced this report with the support of the Infrastructure and Urban Development Department (IUDD), British Government Department for International Development (DFID). The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of DFID.

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Design and layout by Max Lock Centre

Printed by:  
The Max Lock Centre  
University of Westminster  
London, United Kingdom

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The Max Lock Centre would like to thank all those above who generously gave their time and enthusiasm. We are also indebted to the many officials and residents of the case study areas who contributed their local knowledge to the field surveys, workshops and seminars.

These Fact Sheets set the current urban scene for the specific topic each covers and suggest ways and means within that topic towards achieving sustainable mixed use core area development.

## Physical Factors

### **Purpose**

**Establish whether the identified site is physically (and commercially) appropriate for the development of commercial and residential uses.**

***Assessment of the physical nature of the site is an important factor in the process as site conditions or location can render mixed use development of this type inappropriate. It may be that the site is unsuitable for viable commercial development due to the difficulties in assembling a large enough site, or to accessing or servicing the site. The site may be inappropriate for redevelopment for residential uses due to factors rendering the site unsanitary or dangerous. Environmental factors such as a high risk of flooding can also rule out the option of residential development on site, due to the prohibitive costs involved.***

### **Identifying and Understanding the Situation**

Although existing planning and site development guidelines (see Fact Sheet 3) will undoubtedly influence site selection, the following factors will also need to be taken into consideration if appropriate and sustainable forms of mixed use development are to be successfully introduced on to a site.

- **Location:** The location needs to have potential commercial opportunity, proximity to areas of employment and access to efficient transportation networks.
- **Topography:** The lay of the land and state of ground conditions need to be suitable for mixed use and potential storied or intensified development; the site must be adequately accessible for any increased density of development.
- **Infrastructure & Services:** The provision of infrastructure and access to public facilities needs to address the cost of improvements to existing or new infrastructure and general services that the introduction of a mixed use development would demand. Provision of new services and infrastructure must be of an appropriate standard and not prohibitively expensive to the potential low-income occupiers.

## Checklist for a Site Analysis

The following checklist (below, and in box 4.1) is not intended to be always used in its entirety for analysis of any site; it is assumed that within each different context and for each different site different issues and factors will be appropriate, whilst other factors may not be relevant. The extent of the analysis undertaken should be determined after an initial site visit and with consideration of the context of the site and of the proposed development. The process of gathering information on the site may continue as the project evolves. Gathering too much detailed information at too early a stage can potentially hinder the process, so careful consideration of what information is required and appropriate at each stage of the process should be undertaken. There are four basic elements to the site analysis<sup>1</sup> (some parts of which are also covered within Fact Sheets 1,2 and 3):

- 1 Initial personal reconnaissance – notes sketches, photos – apparent character, problems, and possibilities
- 2 Collation of existing data: base and contour maps, aerial photos, geological soil and water surveys, climate records, ecological studies, engineering reports, borings, census material, histories, social studies, market reports, traffic studies, legal and public control documents, official proposals, records of current controversies
- 3 Summary description of the off-site context and its changes: geographic location, surrounding populations, social and political structure, general economy, ecological and hydrographic system, land-use patterns, access system, principal off-site destinations and facilities
- 4 Data on the site and its immediate context (see box 4.1)

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<sup>1</sup> The checklist is an extract from: Lynch K. (1971) 'Site Planning' (Second Edition) The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts and London, England pp91-94

**Box 4.1: Checklist – Data on the Site and its Immediate Context<sup>2</sup>**

Physical data	<b>Geology and soil:</b> underlying geology, rock character and depth; soil type and depth, value as an engineering material and as a plant material; fill, ledge, slides, subsidence
	<b>Water:</b> existing water bodies – variation and purity; natural and man-made drainage channels – flow, capacity, purity; surface drainage pattern, amount, blockages, undrained depressions; water table – elevation and fluctuation, springs; water supply – quantity and quality
	<b>Topography:</b> pattern of landforms; contours; slope analysis; visibility analysis; circulation analysis; unique features
	<b>Climate:</b> regional data on the variation of temperature, precipitation, humidity, solar angle, cloudiness, wind direction and force; local microclimates: warm and cool slopes, air drainage, wind deflection and local breeze, shade, heat reflection and storage, plant indicators; sound levels, smell, atmospheric quality
	<b>Ecology:</b> dominant plant/animal communities – location and relative stability; their dependence on existing factors, self-regulation, and sensitivity to change; mapping of general plant cover, including wooded areas; specimen trees to be retained: their location, spread, species and elevation at base
	<b>Man-made structures:</b> existing buildings: outline, location, floor elevations, type, condition, use; circulation facilities (roads, paths, rails, transit, etc.): location, capacity, and condition; utilities (storm and sanitary sewers, water, gas, electricity, telephone, steam, etc.): location, elevation, capacity
	<b>Sensuous qualities:</b> character and relation of visual spaces; viewpoints, vistas, visual focal points; character and rhythm of visual sequences; quality and variation of light, sound smell, feel
Cultural data	<b>Resident and using population:</b> number and composition; social structure and institutions; economic structure; political structure; current changes and problems
	<b>On-site and adjacent behaviour settings:</b> nature, location, rhythm, stability, participants, conflicts
	<b>Site values, rights, and restraints:</b> ownerships, easements, and other rights; legal controls: zoning and other regulations; economic values; accepted “territories”; political jurisdictions
Data correlation	<b>Past and future:</b> site history and its traces; public and private intentions for future use of site, conflicts
	<b>Images:</b> group and individual identification and organisation of the site; meanings attached to site, symbolic expression; hopes, fears, wishes, preferences
	<b>Classification</b> of site by areas of similar structure, quality, and problems
	<b>Identification</b> of key points, lines, an areas
	<b>Analysis</b> of current and likely future changes – the dynamic aspect of the site
	<b>Identification</b> of significant problems and possibilities

In the event that a site (or part of a site) is inappropriate for redevelopment with residential uses as a component of the mix, then a solution may be to consider the relocation of the existing residential community to an alternative site. The alternative site should be suitable for such use and geographically close to the original site, to minimise disruption to existing social and economic networks operating within the neighbourhood. Subsidies from the commercial

<sup>2</sup> The checklist is an extract from: Lynch K. (1971) 'Site Planning' (Second Edition) The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts and London, England pp91-94

development of the original site can be used to improve and service the new site for housing. The 'wholesale' relocation of existing communities to other sites should only be considered where there is no alternative; this type of disruption to existing communities can have a severely detrimental effect on the ability of the low-income populations to maintain their livelihoods in the long-term.

If an area has suffered generalised and fragmented decline resulting in small pockets of commercially redundant land becoming available (e.g. in a traditional/historic core area), then it may be difficult to undertake or implement the process. Sites have to be sufficiently large to allow contiguous development of high and low-value uses; assembling (or linking) a number of small sites - contiguous or co-located in an area, but under separate ownership – is a difficult and time-consuming process, but may possibly be utilised in parallel with Transferable Development Rights (see Fact Sheet 7).

### **Conclusions**

Potential for development on any site starts with the physical factors, which need to be documented, mapped and assessed. The physical nature of the site is a critical issue that can determine whether development is achievable and viable. From this starting point the commercial, financial, social and economic factors (including livelihoods issues) can be fed into options for physical development. These then need to be tested against physical practicability, financial viability and social acceptance to ensure that any development that is undertaken is appropriate and sustainable in the long term.

### **Box 4.2: Cairo<sup>3</sup>**

During the case study phase of the research (upon the findings of which this guide to good practice is based), four core area sites were identified in the Darb al-Ahmar area of Cairo in order to undertake livelihoods surveys, initial physical analysis and workshop feasibility studies of possible development options and site planning layouts. After preliminary investigation by the research team, it was felt that the sites identified would not be appropriate due to some significant physical and legislative constraints encountered primarily because the case study area was located in the historic part of the city.

In tandem with conflicts within the local development culture, problems with accessibility and servicing of the proposed sites were key issues alongside the fact that larger sites (suitable for prime commercial development) were not available as a result of the generalised and fragmented physical decline of small-scale traditional industries. Planning blight resulting from moratoriums on development associated with historic buildings and the requirement to retain historic routes (limiting potential development options) were also significant constraints to the implementation of the approach.

It was felt that a wide ranging economic development strategy would be required if the process of urban decay and economic marginalisation is to be arrested, a strategy which would encompass increasing accessibility to small business credit and finance, training and employment generation and marketing and product development support for existing craft activities. The promotion of the tourist trade within these areas would also encourage trade and commercial investment (hotels, entertainment, restaurants, shops and galleries), which would potentially stimulate traditional crafts activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Max Lock Centre (forthcoming 2002) 'Good practice in core area development: Final report' (DFID research project R6860), Annex 9: Other City Studies: Cairo, Aswan City, Howrah