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THE IMPACT OF LAND MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ON URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

All owners of land with development potential face three basic decisions: if and when to develop land or sell for development, whether and how to relate to other actors in the development process, and how to manage land prior to development. By their response, or their failure to respond to these decisions, owners define their land management and development strategies, whether consciously or unconsciously. Significantly, "Those who own land with development potential but never consider these matters, unconsciously pursue strategies that may affect the development process as much as those pursued by owners who energetically seek to exploit such potential" (Adams, 1994, p. 91).

The concept of land management and development strategies represents an extension of Goodchild & Munton's (1985) decision model, which itself draws on earlier studies of land conversion at the urban fringe undertaken at the University of North Carolina (Chapin & Weiss, 1962; Weiss *et al.*, 1966; Kaiser & Weiss 1970). Although the concept is equally applicable to urban redevelopment, detailed and rigorous investigation of the land management and development strategies pursued by brownfield owners has been limited in comparison with the much greater empirical attention accorded to the decision-making of owners at the urban periphery.

As a result, at least in the British context, a mythology has emerged about the characteristics and behaviour of the typical brownfield landowner which is drawn mainly from partial evidence or past anecdotes. Moss (1981) for example, argued that local authorities often acquired more land than needed for schemes that they did not necessarily have the money to implement. Since urban land ownership was alleged to be dominated by the public sector, the impact of strategies pursued by local authorities and nationalised industries was often regarded as disproportionately important.

Gloster & Smith (1989) contended that the former nationalised industries retained too much unused land for nominal operational use. As they commented, "operational" "might not mean that the land is used - it may just mean that the site might be required for some future project that is no more than a vague idea in the minds of the Corporation" (Gloster & Smith, 1989, p. 3). This precautionary approach to land holding often reflected a precautionary style of management that existed more generally before privatisation.

Such criticism, however, was not limited to the public sector. Howes (1989), for example, suggested that owners more generally might keep land off the market if they were uncertain about their future needs (perhaps because of changing technology) or unaware of the likely marketability

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or value of the land. Gloster & Smith (1989, p. 3) too felt that "With the recession of the early 1980s, companies were reluctant to sell at sensible prices, if such prices were below historic cost or book value."

Nearly a decade later, these themes were still evident in studies of brownfield owners. For example, from their work in Strathclyde, Llewelyn-Davies (1996) reported that "Where a site is in local authority ownership there can be an unrealistic or optimistic assessment of its value. In one case, extended negotiations with a number of developers, over a period of more than 10 years, were required before a value could be agreed." However, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (1998, p. 53), commenting on the problems that local authorities face in trying to resolve ownership difficulties on brownfield land, once again drew attention to the fact that land ownership arrangements were often complex and that "local authorities may face owners or landlords who may be unwilling to release a parcel of land at a particular time (e.g. because they are holding out for the best market price)."

Now that brownfield redevelopment has been accorded a central role in the Labour Government's urban land policy, it is essential that the implementation of that policy be informed by up-to-date and substantive research on the land management and development strategies now pursued by brownfield landowners. In this context, this chapter seeks to address two immediate research questions. First, do most owners of vacant urban land or obsolete urban property encourage or impede its redevelopment? Secondly, does this vary between different types of owner?

Such actor-based institutional analysis is, however, of limited value unless connected to the broader social, economic and political structure within which brownfield landowners define and pursue their strategies, interests and actions. As Healey & Barrett (1990, p. 93) maintain: "The analytical task is to link the institutional analysis of the development process with the dynamics of the economy as reflected in resource flows, and with political organisation and cultural values as reflected in rules and ideas" (1990, p. 93). Thus, in her later study of real estate development in the North-East of England, Healey (1994, p. 180) "takes an *institutional* approach, analysing through investigation of the behaviour of agencies in relation to particular development projects, the complex interplay between structural *driving forces* which shape individual behaviour and the *strategies and interests of individual agents* engaged in the development process".

Healey & Barrett (1990) consider that the structural framework for development is evident in the resources to which agents have access, the rules they consider govern their behaviour and the ideas they draw upon in developing their strategies. Significantly, they believe that this structural framework is neither fixed nor free from challenge, but rather that continuous interaction takes place between structure and agency. As Healey *et al.*, (1995) note: "This activity of structuration, the interrelation between structure and agency, is actively constructed both through the material flow of resources and through the construction of ideas, images, values and norms." As a third research question, this chapter therefore examines how the strategies, interests and actions of brownfield landowners are related to the organisation of economic and political activity and to the prevailing values that frame their individual decision-making.

Although Healey's emphasis on the interplay between structure and agency in land and property development has been much criticised (Hooper, 1992; Ball, 1998), it has only rarely been well applied in empirical work (see, for example, Van der Krabben, 1995). In this chapter, we seek to test the application of a structure and agency approach in understanding the land management and development strategies of brownfield owners. To achieve this, we consider both the way in which such owners define and pursue their strategies, interests and actions within a structural framework, and the extent to which structure itself is established, re-established or replaced as the resources,

rules and ideas by which it is constituted are deployed, acknowledged, challenged and potentially transformed by owner behaviour.

As its foundation, the paper presents the results of detailed empirical work into the strategies, interests and actions of the owners of 80 potential redevelopment sites in four British cities. Our research method is explained in the next section. In Section 3, we seek to evaluate the extent to which particular categories of landowner encourage or discourage actual redevelopment. In Section 4, this site-specific analysis is then connected with the broader social, economic and political context within which owners pursue their individual land management and development strategies. Here, we identify two levels of interaction between structure and agency, suggesting that, in urban redevelopmentⁱ, the activity of structuration operates more powerfully at the lower level, even though this is influenced by forces which originate at the upper level. Our conclusions are presented in Section 5.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research on which this paper is based was undertaken simultaneously in four cities, two of which were chosen because they had experienced strong recent development pressure and two because they had seen much weaker development pressure. As so much previous work on urban vacancy has been concentrated in the main UK conurbations, it was decided instead to locate this research in large freestanding cities. To further reflect significant differences in development policies and land law between Scotland and England, Aberdeen and Nottingham were chosen as cities where development pressure had been stronger and Dundee and Stoke-on-Trent as cities where it had been weaker.

The research deliberately concentrated on large potential redevelopment sites since the more significant redevelopment is in area and floorspace, the greater the number of existing owners likely to be affected and the more complex the process of negotiation with each one. We thus aimed to identify all sites within the urban areas of Aberdeen, Dundee, Nottingham and Stoke undeveloped at 31 December 1995 that were of at least 2 hectares in area **or** on which at least 5,000m² of gross floorspace was under active consideration at the end of 1995. Discussions with local authorities, chartered surveyors, Chambers of Commerce and, in Scotland, local enterprise companies were supplemented by inspection of planning data to reveal 21 such sites in Aberdeen, 20 in Dundee, 24 in Nottingham and 23 in Stoke. Random sampling for Aberdeen, Nottingham and Stoke reduced the number of sites to 20 in each city.

The development history of each site between 1986 and 1995 was reconstructed by detailed inspection of planning and development records held by local authorities and other relevant bodies. Information was collected on known development constraints (planning, physical and infrastructural, as well those relating to ownership) and on recent development proposals. The research then sought to identify all non-residential owners of freehold or long leasehold (above 99 years) interests in English sample sites on 31 December 1995, or of corresponding interests in Scottish ones, together with those who had owned such interests between 1991 and 1995. It should be emphasised that this definition of owners adopted for the purposes of the research, did not distinguish between those who held land expressly for the purpose of development and those who did not. We therefore included within our definition of owners those whose other characteristics might prompt them to be termed "developers" in everyday language.

Altogether some 298 potential owners of the 80 sites were detected from a range of sourcesⁱⁱ. However, direct contact with potential owners revealed that some had acquired their interests after 1995, others held only short leases or limited interests, while others held land outside defined site

boundaries. This more detailed information reduced the population of relevant owners from 298 to 212.

Successful contact was made with 140 of these 212 owners, representing a response rate of 66%. A detailed research questionnaire was completed for 120 of these owners, with more limited information obtained from the other 20. In addition, it proved possible to extend some parts of the analysis to a further 15 owners through reliance on planning records or information received from chartered surveyors or other contacts. The next section is focused primarily on the strategies, interests and actions of these 155 owners. It seeks to discover, city by city, the extent to which such owners of vacant urban land or obsolete urban property encouraged or impeded its redevelopment.

3. OWNERSHIP BEHAVIOUR IN URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

Initial Categorisation

To evaluate the contribution of each owner to the redevelopment process, information was gathered on the strategies pursued by the 155 owners, their marketing attempts and site valuations, their knowledge of development constraints and any action taken to resolve them, their network of contacts, their awareness of, and potential influence over broader structural factors, their reaction to possible policy changes and finally, their particular legal and personal characteristics.

Although it had originally been intended to apply this information through a formulaic approach to produce a weighted measure of owner behaviour, this proved impossible to operationalise owing to the changing importance of particular variables in different cases. For example, on one site, the most significant contribution an owner could make to redevelopment was the fervent pursuit of planning permission through recourse to appeal, while on another where planning permission was relatively simple to obtain, the owner's energies needed to be concentrated instead on securing development grants or subsidies. Since each redevelopment site was unique, what would most encourage redevelopment thus varied from site to site.

A qualitative analysis was therefore undertaken, owner by owner, with the results compared, and if necessary adjusted, to ensure consistency. As the basis for this analysis, owners were considered to have significantly encouraged redevelopment if, at some time from 1991 to 1995, they had themselves sought to resolve at least the most important of the five established tests of development feasibility (Barrett *et al.*, 1978) for their particular site. These five tests relate to ownership, public procedures, project viability, physical conditions and market conditions.

Owners who made some attempt to establish development feasibility but who did not seek themselves to resolve the most important feasibility test relevant to their site were considered to have encouraged rather than significantly encouraged redevelopment. Owners whose strategies and actions had made development feasibility harder to establish were considered to have discouraged redevelopment, while those who had alone rendered development almost unfeasible, were considered to have significantly discouraged redevelopment.

This analysis produced a fivefold categorisation of the extent to which owners of vacant urban land and obsolete urban property encourage or impede redevelopment, which is shown in Table 8.1, city by city. Overall, the table reveals that just over half of the owners analysed encouraged or significantly encouraged redevelopment during the research period of 1991 to 1995. About another third had a neutral impact on redevelopment. Less than one fifth discouraged or significantly discouraged redevelopment.

Table 8.1: Impact of owner strategies and actions on redevelopment prospects										
	<i>Aberdeen</i>		<i>Dundee</i>		<i>Nottingham</i>		<i>Stoke</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Significant Enc	3	9	6	16	12	26	4	11	25	16
Encouragement	18	53	11	28	16	35	13	36	58	37
Neutral Impact	8	23	18	46	10	22	10	28	46	30
Discouragement	5	15	4	10	6	13	5	14	20	13
Significant Dis	-	-	-	-	2	4	4	11	6	4
Total	34	100	39	100	46	100	36	100	155	100

Most of the owners considered to have significantly encouraged redevelopment had pushed the process ahead energetically through such actions as assembling land, gaining planning permission, obtaining development finance and securing tenants. Those considered to have encouraged redevelopment intended either to complete necessary actions themselves at a later date or to pass the task over to others. Those whose impact was considered neutral were certainly not hostile to redevelopment. Indeed, most had either sold by 1995 or were open to offers, even if the site was not formally on the market.

In contrast, most owners considered to have discouraged or significantly discouraged redevelopment either were unwilling to sell or, if nominally willing to sell, held unrealistic expectations of price, discounting special purchasersⁱⁱⁱ. In some cases, land was retained for operational use or for future own development, even if it had lain unused or underused for some time. In others, speculative retention of sites in the hope of future retail planning permission was evident. Of course, it should not be presumed that strategies or actions that discouraged or significantly discouraged redevelopment were necessarily irrational from the individual owner's perspective, even if they frustrated public policies intended to achieve urban regeneration.

To discover which types of owner were more likely to encourage or significantly encourage redevelopment, three particular agency characteristics were analysed. These were legal personality, ownership reasons and the role of development within ownership strategies. Investigation of the first two of these variables was restricted to the 120 owners who completed a full research questionnaire.

Legal Personality of Owners

As Table 8.2 shows, the 120 owners who completed a full research questionnaire were split between 87 from the private sector and 33 from the public sector. This imbalance in favour of the private sector runs counter to the popular and political perception that most brownfield land is in public ownership. However, it will be noted that the 87 private-sector owners identified in Table 8.2 contained 17 privatised PLCs, which included such well-known companies as British Coal, British Gas, Powergen and Railtrack. In a sense, then, the apparent dominance of the private sector in the ownership of substantial brownfield sites within Aberdeen, Dundee, Nottingham and Stoke-on-Trent partly reflects the privatisation of such land during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Table 8.2: Legal personality of owners			
<i>Type of owner</i>		<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Private sector	Private individual or trustee	6	5.0
	Private company	49	40.8
	Always private-sector PLC	15	12.5
	PLC privatised	17	14.2
Public sector	Government or public body	11	9.2
	Local authority	22	18.3
Total		120	100.0

Cross-tabulations revealed that 73% of public sector owners encouraged or significantly encouraged redevelopment in comparison with 53% of those in the private sector. Local authorities and other statutory agencies such as local enterprise companies, were usually highly active in pushing redevelopment forward. Within the private sector, combined scores for significant encouragement and encouragement were recorded of 67% for non-privatised PLCs, 55% for private limited companies, 47% for privatised PLCs and 33% for trustees/private individuals.

Ownership Reasons

Analysis of ownership reasons showed that owners primarily interested in exchange value were far more likely to encourage or significantly to encourage redevelopment than those primarily interested in use value. Of those whose main stated reason for ownership was to sell the site in the future without development, 82% were found to have encouraged or significantly encouraged redevelopment. For those whose main stated reason was to develop the site themselves for capital return or higher rental income (including for local economic development) the comparative figure was 75%.

In contrast, combined scores for significant encouragement and encouragement were recorded of 31% for owners whose main stated reason was to produce rental income without development, 30% for those who primarily intended to develop the land for their own use and only 22% for those who wished to retain the site for their own use without any development. These results would suggest that the chance to profit from the urban redevelopment process is an important driving force behind active land management and development strategies.

Role of Development Within Ownership Strategies

Experience of property dealing and development varied significantly among the 155 owners. Nevertheless three broad groups of owners could be discerned: those whose main business lay in property and to whom development was central to their activities, those whose main business lay elsewhere but who maintained a specific property subsidiary or department and to whom development was therefore an ancillary but important part of their business and finally those to whom property was peripheral to their main activities and for whom development was encountered only occasionally.

The first group was dominated by property developer/dealers, the second group by corporate bodies in both the public and private sectors with either a subsidiary property company or an estates department, while the third group consisted mainly of small or medium-sized enterprises or private individuals who occasionally dealt with property for the purposes of their own occupation. Table 8.3 reveals the varying impact of each of these three groups on redevelopment prospects.

Table 8.3: Role of property development in ownership strategy								
<i>Impact of strategies and actions on redevelopment prospects</i>	<i>Central</i>		<i>Ancillary</i>		<i>Occasional</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Significant Encouragement	16	37	7	12	2	4	25	16
Encouragement	14	33	28	46	16	31	58	37
Neutral Impact	10	23	13	21	23	45	46	30
Discouragement	3	7	8	13	9	18	20	13
Significant Discouragement	-	-	5	8	1	2	6	4
Total	43	100	61	100	51	100	155	100

The pattern shown in Table 8.3 is not entirely unexpected. 70% of owners to whom property was central encouraged or significantly encouraged redevelopment. Of the three in this group who were considered to have discouraged redevelopment, two had fallen into receivership and the third, who had failed to develop owing to poor market conditions, was only willing to sell at an excessive price.

Those owners with ancillary interests in property demonstrated a more normal distribution. Significant encouragement or encouragement for redevelopment were mainly apparent in those cases where the economic development interests of local authorities and statutory development agencies were dominant. Where operational interests were more important, ancillary owners tended to be less enthusiastic towards redevelopment.

Although those owners with only occasional interests in property often needed to be persuaded of the wisdom of redevelopment, it is interesting to note some exceptions to this rule. The two owners in this group who gave significant encouragement to redevelopment were both located in Nottingham. One was a factory owner who had driven forward commercial redevelopment proposals in order to fund business relocation to more modern premises. The other had acquired a substantial listed building complex with the intention of occupying only part for the company's own business, while developing the remainder for leisure and heritage uses.

Summary of Ownership Behaviour

Most owners of vacant urban land or obsolete urban property investigated by the research actively pursued its redevelopment, while very few proved hostile to the redevelopment process. Those owners centrally concerned with property appeared the most proactive, but important

contributions were also evident from those for whom property would be regarded as an ancillary business. In the public sector, local authorities and other statutory bodies appeared particularly enthusiastic about redevelopment. However, many of the sites investigated had remained unused or underused for a considerable time and had experienced problematic constraints to development, whether arising from ownership, planning, physical or infrastructural factors. In the next section, we therefore consider how owners' individual strategies, interests and actions are connected to the broader framework for urban redevelopment.

4. THE BROADER CONTEXT FOR OWNERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Upper and Lower Level Interaction

This section investigates how owners of brownfield land have been encouraged to adopt increasingly active land management and development strategies by such broader contextual factors as tighter planning restrictions on greenfield development and changing public expenditure priorities. This, we suggest, has produced, a marked shift of emphasis from use value towards exchange value within owner strategies towards unused or underused land and property holdings.

This broader context for urban redevelopment was initially established from literature and relevant national and local reports and statistics. Detailed contextual interviews with 36 national and local organisations helped evaluate the significance of particular structural forces. Although the research questionnaire touched on the relationship between owner strategies, interests and actions and the broader structural framework on several occasions, an entire section concentrated on how well informed owners considered themselves to be of particular structural factors, how far such factors had encouraged or discouraged them from using, marketing, developing or purchasing their sites and whether they felt able to exert any influence at all over the same structural factors.

By drawing these various sources of information together, this section explains how, at two levels, the processes of urban change and redevelopment are critically dependent on the way in which the strategies, interests and actions of those who own vacant urban land and obsolete urban property connect with broader structural forces. At an upper level, it contends that social, economic and political change operates to produce urban vacancy by diminishing demands or needs for existing land uses and to generate redevelopment pressure by stimulating demands or needs for new land uses. Most owners interviewed recognised that they had only limited ability to influence this upper level, even though they believed that they held detailed or very detailed knowledge of some its important components.

Without the ability to influence this upper level, owners must decide whether or not to encourage redevelopment through an active response to pressure created at the upper level. Unless owners believe that the state intends to dispossess them of their vacant land or obsolete property or, at least, unduly tax them for keeping it vacant or obsolete, their response to redevelopment pressure will be driven by what they consider to be their own best interests. The perceived extent of current and future state intervention in local land markets and development processes is thus a potentially significant influence on owners' response to upper level redevelopment pressure.

Although that response is instigated at the upper level, it is tested and implemented at a lower level where a much greater sense of engagement is evident between the structural framework for redevelopment and owner strategies, interests and actions. At this point, measured by outcomes, passive or obstructive owners do not always present an insuperable barrier to redevelopment, while active owners are not necessarily successful in securing redevelopment. Success in development

is determined at this lower level, where the most successful owners capture resources, master rules and exploit new ideas.

Figure 1: A Structure and Agency Framework for the Analysis of Owner Behaviour in Urban Redevelopment

A model of the relationship between owners' strategies, interests and actions and these two levels is shown in Figure 8.1. The research evidence will now be applied to explain the operation of the two levels in more detail.

Components of the Upper Level

At the upper level, the impact of social, economic and political change on urban vacancy and redevelopment was richly illustrated by the case studies. In Aberdeen, for example, where a large barracks had already been part released as a result of previous defence reviews, the availability of the remainder depended on yet another review. In Dundee, the expansion of higher education created a new demand to redevelop older industrial sites and premises close to the campus for

student accommodation. In Nottingham, the relocation of a wholesale market and its refurbishment for small retail and craft units were prompted by new EU food hygiene legislation. In Stoke-on-Trent, plans by the local authority to reclaim a colliery mound were threatened by the new landfill tax payable on any material removed from the site. Despite such examples, the research revealed that, at its upper level, the structural framework for urban vacancy and redevelopment was dominated by four powerful forces: structural economic change, national property market cycles, national planning policy and public expenditure priorities.

Structural Economic Change

Over 50 of the 80 research sites had originally become vacant as a result of structural economic change evident, for example, in manufacturing decline, colliery closure and transport modernisation. Even in the weaker markets, such sites represented potentially valuable components of their particular owners' assets. For example, although a 4.5 hectare industrial site in Stoke-on-Trent might have been offered for sale at over £1 million, had it not suffered from severe physical problems, it still sold for £325,000 in 1998. In Dundee, the owners of a well-located 2 hectare site, which may have retail and leisure potential, considered it to be worth up to £13 million. Structural economic change made it essential for the private sector to extract as much capital as possible from redundant sites in order to reinvest in remaining enterprises. To achieve this, retail development was normally preferred, if at all feasible.

National Property Market Cycles

National property market booms created occasional windows of local development opportunity. For example, even in the otherwise fragile markets of Dundee and Stoke-on-Trent, the dominant influence of national trends in the retail and leisure submarkets created coveted local opportunities. Nevertheless, such booms were slow to reach but quick to leave fragile locations, thus shortening the period for owner response. Even in stronger provincial locations such as Aberdeen and Nottingham, it was apparent that national development interests were more reluctant to exploit windows of local development opportunity than regionally or locally-based development interests.

The importance of timing in relation to market cycles was clearly evident in the case of a significant retail and business park in Nottingham. Here, the original owner had submitted an outline planning application in 1988 in partnership with its chosen development company. By the time permission was eventually granted on appeal in 1990, the owner's development partner had gone into liquidation. Even though a new development partner was selected shortly thereafter, market conditions had worsened and the new development proceeded more slowly than might have been the case in the late 1980s.

National Planning Policy

Since the early 1990s, the more restrictive national planning policy towards greenfield development has operated through a very effective pincer movement. On the one hand, developers have had to turn to brownfield sites to maintain their land supply and building programmes, while, on the other hand, increasing demand for such sites has tended to push up prices achieved and encourage existing owners to sell. One major housebuilder in the north-east of Scotland, for example, commented that a former British Telecom depot in Aberdeen, recently redeveloped for flats, would not have been considered for residential redevelopment ten years ago. Only the intense land shortage in and around the city had ensured that development occurred. It is interesting to note that only 12% of owners interviewed felt able to exert any influence at all over national planning policy.

Public Expenditure Priorities

In the public sector, financial constraints that reflect public expenditure priorities, put enormous pressure on estate managers to achieve maximum proceeds from sale in order to mitigate the impact of cutbacks in health, education and other important social services. As a result, on 3 of the 80 research sites, local authorities actually harmed brownfield redevelopment prospects by holding out for unrealistic sums merely to maximise capital receipts from the sale of land in their ownership. This reflects the marked shift of emphasis, in both public and private sectors, from use value towards exchange value within owner strategies for unused or underused land and property holdings.

At the upper level, structural pressure on owners to promote the redevelopment of their vacant land or obsolete property could thus be attributed as much to the new financial climate of the post-recession 1990s as to any new planning guidance originating from post-Thatcher policy revisions. Certainly, in our research, relatively few owners were influenced by any threat that the state might dispossess them of their vacant land or obsolete property or, at least, unduly tax them for keeping it vacant or obsolete. Although compulsory purchase had been threatened on 7 of the 80 sites, the threat was never carried out and probably influenced owner behaviour on only 2 sites.

Components of the Lower Level

Although owners must choose whether or not to respond to redevelopment pressure emanating from the upper level of the structural framework, the precise nature of any response and its chances of success are determined at the lower level. Here rich interaction was observed between owner strategies, interests and actions and the flow of resources into, the rules and procedures of and the cultural ideas and values surrounding urban redevelopment. The importance of this lower level is illustrated by two case studies in Stoke-on-Trent, both concerning redundant pottery works owned by major companies who wished to reinvest the proceeds of sale in their businesses.

The first company cleared its site in 1994, obtained an outline retail permission for non-food retail warehouse and thereafter marketed the site for between £1 million and £1.5 million. Neither of the independent chartered surveyors interviewed in the research considered this a suitable retail site. One ventured to suggest that the site might fetch up to £650,000 for industrial use. On the closure of the other pottery works, the second company, a national conglomerate, transferred ownership of the site from its pottery subsidiary to its property development subsidiary. Substantial grant funding was subsequently obtained from the Single Regeneration Budget and a development partnership concluded with a national housebuilder. As these examples show, brownfield owners who aim successfully to exploit potential development value may need to capture resources, master rules and exploit new ideas. The operation of these three components of the lower level structural framework for urban redevelopment will now each be considered.

Local Property Market Conditions

Local property market conditions determined the flow of private sector resources into redevelopment. Office, industrial and residential submarkets tended to reflect the distinctive characteristics of each research location. In stronger locations, land shortages enabled active owners successfully to exploit brownfield development potential. In more fragile locations, limited demand combined with an apparent excess supply of brownfield sites made it hard even for active owners to secure office, industrial or residential development.

Availability of Development Grants and Subsidies

As far as public sector resources were concerned, it became evident that brownfield redevelopment was increasingly driven by the availability of development grants and subsidies, whether from special programmes such as the Single Regeneration Budget or mainstream bodies such as Scottish Homes. The development prospects of 21 of the 80 research sites hinged on the availability of such grants or subsidies. Successful owners appeared to have developed increasing expertise in knowing how best to exploit such sources.

In Stoke-on-Trent, for instance, one development company interviewed had secured £0.75 million from English Partnerships and £1.2 million from the European Regional Development Fund for a major coalfield reclamation and development scheme undertaken in partnership with the local authority. On the other hand, it failed to secure English Partnership funding for another substantial reclamation site in its ownership and that site remained in a perilous condition to local children. Clearly, the relationships fashioned between important public and private sector actors in what Healey & Barrett (1990) have previously described as "the grant economy" have been central to the redevelopment prospects of many brownfield sites.

Unfortunately for brownfield sites, in December 1999 sometime after the completion of our empirical work, the European Commission declared that the then main form of gap funding in the UK (the Partnership Investment Programme maintained by English Partnerships) was unlawful on the basis that it broke Commission rules on State aid to the private sector. The implications of this decision have been described by the House of Commons Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs (2000) as perverse, bizarre and likely to have disastrous implications for urban regeneration.

Local Planning Policies

Although the interpretation of environmental legislation in relation to the valuation of contaminated land influenced the prospects of development feasibility on several sites, the research revealed that local planning policies were the most important component of the rules and procedures for urban redevelopment. Such policies tended to reflect and reinforce national restrictions on greenfield development. However, in contrast to their earlier reaction to national planning policies, 52% of owners interviewed felt able to exert some influence over local planning policies. In a relatively few cases, local planning authorities encouraged owners to become more active through local plan proposals or planning briefs for brownfield sites. However, between 1986 and 1995, some 26 of the 80 research sites experienced at least one refusal of planning permission or listed building consent for proposed substantial development.

It should not therefore be assumed that brownfield sites are free of planning restrictions. In the first place, most of the sites are allocated in development plans for their previous use (including that of railway land!) and attempts to secure permission for more valuable uses such as retail or residential development often run into difficulty. Many of the easier brownfield sites have long since been redeveloped and proposals to fit further urban uses on land that local residents had come to regard as open space sometimes ran into planning difficulty.

For example, clear conflict was evident at three sites in Aberdeen between the desire of planning officials to maintain an effective land supply and the willingness of elected members to refuse permission in response to resident protest. Such structural characteristics of the planning system need to be carefully understood by astute owners. In some cases, a planning appeal might present the best chance of a successful outcome, but the delay, cost and uncertainty in taking cases to

appeal, encourages many owners to resort instead to the processes of bargaining and negotiation. In several case studies, planning agreements provided the essential legal framework for such compromise.

Cultural Ideas and Values

Cultural ideas and values also proved significant to the success of redevelopment proposals. In Stoke-on-Trent, the City Council was concerned about views and images of the city presented to travellers on the main West Coast Rail Line. As a result, it was particularly keen to see the redevelopment of brownfield sites that were visually prominent from the railway. In Dundee, it became apparent that the City Council had promoted the development of a technology park on an inner urban site that was particularly prominent to passing motorists. This concept of visual prominence, for example, could be readily exploited, and indeed promoted by well-advised owners seeking permission for that otherwise elusive retail development.

Conflicts over the meaning of sustainable development were openly evident on certain sites. Is it justifiable, for example, to allow retail development in breach of normal planning policy, to pay for remedial treatment of a contaminated site in Dundee, as the owner had consistently argued? Or should a peripheral commercial redevelopment in Nottingham city centre, for instance, be helped on its way by allowing a greater ratio of car parking than would normally be permitted? In this latter case, is it worth breaching transportation policy to achieve urban redevelopment? Such case studies illustrate how owners seek to draw on the cultural value of urban regeneration to local communities and politicians to promote their own redevelopment interests.

Finally, the research demonstrated how by the mid-1990s, urban land politics had been captured by the concept of partnership. This ambiguous concept provided a crucial link bringing together owner strategies, interests and actions with the lower level of the structural framework for redevelopment. It was apparent how active owners had become sophisticated and sometimes prominent members of such partnerships in order to secure the essential public funding and support for the profitable redevelopment of their brownfield land. Passive and obstructive owners are usually excluded from the operation of urban partnerships and regarded as part of the urban problem. Since so much policy emphasis is now concentrated into the "partnership areas", it has become much harder to secure the redevelopment of brownfield land beyond such "areas".

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on owners of large redevelopment sites in freestanding cities and has identified a potentially dynamic process of change which can be exploited in the cause of increased brownfield redevelopment. It contrasts with some of the earlier work on vacant urban land and obsolete urban property in the main UK conurbations which suggested a more static approach by owners to site redevelopment. The chapter suggests, however, that there has been a significant change in the state-market relations of urban redevelopment during the 1990s. The legacy of substantive industrial restructuring has come together with the policy emphasis on urban regeneration to ensure that both private owner and public authority share mutual interests in urban redevelopment.

Despite the enthusiasm of most owners who were investigated to promote urban redevelopment, it should be remembered that even a single obstructive owner is capable of holding up a redevelopment proposal on land in multiple ownership. This raises important issues of state-market relations, in particular, the extent to which the state should intervene in the urban land market on behalf of one landed interest and against another. In a separate paper (Adams *et al.*,

2001), we argue the case for more flexible forms of state intervention and, especially, for the active promotion of joint-venture development partnerships between local authorities, development partners and existing ownership interests within a redevelopment area.

In conceptual terms, our research shows that a structure and agency approach can provide a useful framework for the analysis of state-market relations in urban redevelopment. Moreover, the richness of our case studies indicates considerable diversity in the way in which those relations are mediated from time to time and from place to place. Although our research revealed that the activity of structuration is there to witness and record, it also demonstrates that structure and agency theory might usefully take on board and develop the concept of different levels or layers structuring individual decision-making.

Of course, the extent to which agency influence permeates up the levels is likely to differ not only in time and space but also according to the power and stature of particular decision-makers. Thus, if our research had focused, for example, on the activities of the House Builders Federation or the Confederation of British Industry, we may have discovered stronger agency influences upon the upper levels of structure. Such matters offer fertile ground for rich empirical enquiry. However, despite earlier criticism of structure and agency, our investigations would suggest that the concept is worth developing as a research framework and such empirical development has the potential to yield valuable conceptual advances.

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NOTES

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- i. In this paper, redevelopment is taken to include re-use through significant refurbishment.
 - ii. Initial information on land ownership was gleaned through planning records, local contacts and discussion with chartered surveyors. These sources were supplemented or substantiated by formal enquiries to the Land Registry in England and Register of Sasines in Scotland.
 - iii. Price expectations were deemed unrealistic either where they were framed without reference to current market conditions (and were instead set, for example, to fund expensive relocation, cover tax liabilities or recoup both the original purchase price and incurred interest charges) or where they exceeded even the owner's estimate of open market value by at least 25%.