

# Creating Successful Masterplans

A Guide for Clients

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## A Guide for Clients

Successful masterplanning is the key to creating great places. A clear, considered masterplan which has been developed by professionals and local people together can lead to the physical, social and economic revival of places.

But what makes a good masterplan? And how can urban designers, local authorities, developers and local residents work together to make sure sound strategies are put in place to make places better?

*Creating Successful Masterplans: a Guide for Clients* attempts to answer these questions, based on the experience of CABE's Enabling and Design Review programmes. The summary document you are reading gives a flavour of some of the topics and debates which are dealt with in more detail in the full publication. What makes *Creating Successful Masterplans* different from other guidance is that it deals unashamedly with the process, focusing on the important client roles and responsibilities. It is complemented by *Design Reviewed – Masterplans*, which presents case studies of projects seen by CABE's Design Review Committee.

This summary contains highlights from *Creating Successful Masterplans: a Guide for Clients*, available free from CABE. Tel: 020 7960 2400, Email [enquiries@cabe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cabe.org.uk) or download the pdf at [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)

### What makes a successful masterplan?

A successful masterplan must be:

- Visionary: it should raise aspirations and provide a vehicle for consensus building and implementation
- Deliverable: it should take into account likely implementation and delivery routes
- Fully integrated into the land use planning system, while allowing new uses and market opportunities to exploit the full development potential of a site
- Flexible, providing the basis for negotiation and dispute resolution
- The result of a participatory process, providing all the stakeholders with the means of expressing their needs and priorities
- Equally applicable to rethinking the role, function and form of existing neighbourhoods as to creating new neighbourhoods

Source: Urban Task Force, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, ODPM 1999



## What is a masterplan?

What's in a name? Although the term 'masterplan' is used frequently, there is no generally agreed definition. The guide therefore starts by providing a clear description of the process and end products of a masterplan.

*Creating Successful Masterplans* concerns 'spatial masterplans', which deal with major change in a defined physical area. These masterplans set out proposals for buildings, spaces, movement and land use in three dimensions and match these aspirations with an implementation strategy.

A spatial masterplan is a sophisticated model which:

- Shows how streets, squares and open spaces of a neighbourhood are to be connected
- Defines the height, bulk and massing of buildings
- Sets out suggested relationships between buildings and public spaces
- Determines the activities and uses which will take place in the area
- Identifies the movement patterns for people on foot, or by bicycle, car or public transport, as well as looking at the needs of service and refuse vehicles
- Sets out the basis for the provision of utilities and other infrastructural elements
- Relates the physical form of the site to social, economic and cultural contexts and takes account of the needs of people living and working in the area
- Shows ways in which new neighbourhoods can be integrated into existing communities, and built and natural environments

***“The good news is that the importance of masterplanning is now understood once again. Indeed, it would be almost unthinkable for a significant new development to proceed without a masterplan.”***

Jon Rouse, Chief Executive, CABE



## The key components to a masterplan

### 1 The Strategic Framework

This is the first step in creating a successful masterplan.

The strategic framework contains a statement of aims and objectives for physical regeneration over a large area of land and may consider a much wider area than the spatial masterplan. It is based on analysis of the baseline data and is the key output of the prepare stage, functioning as the brief for the spatial masterplan. It also incorporates early ideas about how to deliver the proposed developments.

### 2 The Spatial Masterplan

This develops the broad vision into three-dimensional proposals.

It consists of plans, visuals and written documentation.

### 3 Implementation Plan

This is the strategy for how to turn the vision and plans into reality.

The masterplan is not complete without considering and testing how the proposals will be implemented. Implementation will require a written statement addressing cost, programme and other issues. Even if actual work on site is not imminent, these issues must be considered early.

## The masterplanning process

Masterplanning is no quick fix. The process of putting together a strategy, working it up into detailed plans and finally starting to change a place can take years.

Masterplanning will always be a fluid process, gathering many different partners and opinions together. The three broad stages of the process are introduced here, all of which overlap and inform one another.

### Prepare

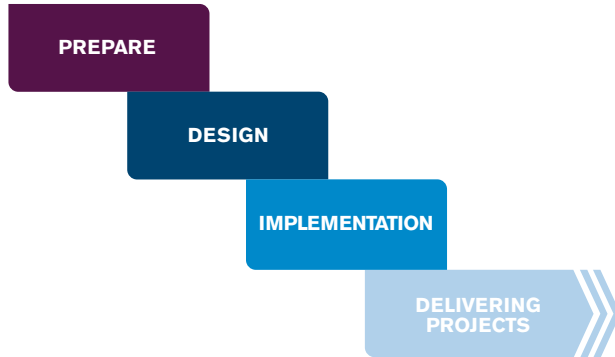
During the prepare stage, the client carries out or commissions work to understand the context and set the **strategic framework** for the masterplan.

The strategic framework will establish baseline information, relating to the physical, social, economic and political context. The client must also set out aspirations and objectives. Having done this, the scope of work for the spatial masterplan can be established. During this phase, the client sets up in-house teams, determining roles and responsibilities, and must establish relationships with some key partners and stakeholders. If required to produce the strategic framework, a masterplanning team will be appointed: the selection process for this team is important.

The client role is to provide leadership and vision, as well as dealing with very practical issues of securing resources to carry out work, working in collaboration with partners and sourcing relevant background information.

***“The design process should not just consider what we experience and see with our eyes, we should be thinking about the whole human response to place, including its culture, memory and history.”***

Michael Freeman, Argent



## Design

During the design stage, a masterplanning team are evolving the **spatial masterplan** through a process of thorough analysis, consultations, testing and refinement.

At the end of this stage, there is a three-dimensional plan, which presents proposals or aspirations for development of buildings, street blocks, public spaces, streets and landscape, but which does not go as far as designing buildings. It is expressed in diagrams, land use plans, models and explanatory images as well as in words. It should be supported by the data gathered in the preparation stage and demonstrate how it relates to the implementation strategy.



## Implementation

It is essential to the success of the masterplan that the process of implementation is considered right from the start.

There is therefore significant overlap between this phase and the earlier prepare and design stages. For example, the social, commercial, political and economic realities that will drive change and development should be assessed during the preparation of the strategic framework. These factors must be borne in mind constantly and refined as more information becomes available and the masterplan is developed. Once the spatial masterplan starts to emerge, an **implementation plan** should address all aspects of delivery, such as programme, risk, funding and procurement. Masterplanning clients also need to have the means to facilitate and review implementation to ensure that the aspirations of the plan are met.

Masterplans should not be seen as rigid blueprints. Rather they set the context within which individual projects come forward. Success will ultimately depend on the delivery of great design at a more detailed level. Therefore there will be much for clients to do beyond the masterplanning stage. For individual projects, *Creating Excellent Buildings: a Guide for Clients* provides more information.

# How to be a successful client

Behind every successful masterplan lies a committed, informed and focused client.

By keeping the following ten pointers in mind, clients can make good projects into excellent ones.



Richard Carman, Urban Initiatives



Leeds City Council

## Key factors to being a successful masterplanning client

- 1** Provide strong client leadership and a commitment to quality
- 2** Be clear about your aims and the outputs you need
- 3** Learn from your own and other successful projects
- 4** Give enough time at the right time
- 5** Find the right people and development partners
- 6** Work with the context: physical, economic and social
- 7** Work with your stakeholders
- 8** Understand that masterplanning is a fluid process
- 9** Work in a collaborative spirit
- 10** Put in place a strategy and structure for implementation

In recent years, masterplans have become firmly established as tools to help deliver major projects. *Creating Successful Masterplans: a Guide for Clients* provides practical advice to all those involved in the masterplanning process. It is the sister document to the acclaimed *Creating Excellent Buildings: a Guide for Clients*. Both are available free from CABE.

***“Masterplanning is rather like practising medicine, you have to start with the individual symptoms of the patient – the place.”***

John Nichols, Leicester URC

***“For places to be well-used and well-loved, they must be safe, comfortable, varied and attractive. They also need to be distinctive and offer variety, choice and fun.”***

*Urban Design Compendium*, Llewelyn-Davies for English Partnerships and Housing Corporation

***“We need to avoid making everywhere like everywhere else, rather than more like itself.”***

Les Sparks, CABE Commissioner

***“Great projects need great leadership to inspire a great team to a great performance.”***

*Creating Excellent Buildings: a Guide for Clients*, CABE

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