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## **BROWNFIELD LAND: OWNER CHARACTERISTICS, ATTITUDES AND NETWORKS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Over recent years, the debate on brownfield land has intensified. There has been increasing recognition of the crucial role of land ownership in strategies and programmes designed to achieve urban regeneration. It has become apparent that the implementation of redevelopment projects depends very much on successful land assembly including the acquisition of lesser ownership interests. Both costs and delays in concluding this crucial phase in the development process can harm the feasibility of redevelopment projects and prevent the realisation of redevelopment opportunities.

This chapter examines brownfield ownership interests in selected cities of the United Kingdom within the context of "growth coalition theory" as developed from the United States. The growth coalition approach regards ownership interests as dominant forces in local economic growth. The chapter thus concentrates on the characteristics, attitudes and networks of owners of brownfield land in the UK, exploring their contribution to local property development and economic growth. The rationale for investigating land ownership interests is that it improves understanding of the operations of land and property markets in relation to matters of wider economic importance.

The chapter is based on research on ownership interests in 20 potential redevelopment sites in each of four selected cities in the United Kingdom. The results establish clear patterns of owner characteristics and relationships with other property-related interests. These findings have important repercussions for the application of the concept of growth coalitions in the United Kingdom and have wider significance regarding the strategies and mechanisms appropriate to the redevelopment of land and the regeneration of localities.

### **LANDOWNERS, GROWTH COALITION AND URBAN NETWORKS**

Landowners do not represent a homogenous category of property interests. The plethora of approaches to land ownership bears testimony to the range of attempts to reveal the significance of such interests in both the property development process and local economic development. In addition to conferring economic and political power, land ownership shapes many aspects of urban development. Kivell (1993), for example, contends that the principles and supposed effects of ownership are hotly debated from time to time but empirical evidence is thin.

Adams and May (1991) attempt a classification of landowners based on their contributions in seeking to promote the development of their land. While "active" landowners take action that leads ultimately

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to the development of their land, "passive" landowners hold on to their land without development. More recent research has revealed a range of ownership constraints to redevelopment (Adams *et al.*, 1999). Some of the constraints identified are clearly the hallmarks of passive ownership interests. In its vision of an urban renaissance, the Urban Task Force (1999, p. 250) recognised the harm such ownership impediments can cause to redevelopment potential, and recommended that compulsory purchase legislation be consolidated and streamlined. In the subsequent Urban White Paper for England (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000), the Government accepted this recommendation and promised the necessary legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allowed.

Since land ownership is regarded as pivotal to local economic development and growth, the strategies and actions of land demand investigation. The focus on ownership interests as the engines for both the initiation and promotion of local economic growth is embraced in the concept of "growth coalitions". The growth coalition model has been developed within the American context of economic growth as the essence of virtually any given locality (Molotch, 1976). Despite its distinctive American origin and flavour, the concept shows relevance to situations in the United Kingdom where it has spurred research interest, particularly in urban regeneration and local economic growth (Harding, 1991; Lloyd and Newlands, 1990).

The fundamental proposition of the concept of growth coalition is that the political and economic forces in any one locality co-operate to promote local economic growth (Molotch, 1976). The "growth imperative" is the focal issue upon which local forces of different political flavour and diverse social interest are mobilised and achieve consensus. It is this unity of purpose that knits together various private and public sector interests and strategies. The growth coalition, therefore, represents an alliance of such interests whose common agenda is the achievement of local economic growth. However, it is precisely the need to achieve growth that constrains the range of feasible options for local social and economic reform.

The growth coalition approach emphasises the importance of property-based interests, in particular land ownership, in the promotion of economic growth. Unlike other forms of capital, land is immovable. Ownership interests are place-bound since they relate to specific sites within certain locations. They derive profits from an intensification of the use of their land and buildings. Growth coalition theory therefore suggests that these interests coalesce and remain at the forefront of strategies designed to achieve economic growth, the benefits of which accrue to coalition members. Other forms of capital are relatively mobile, making transfer by owners possible from region to region, depending of course, on their assessments of the strength of development opportunities.

However, there are other interests, besides ownership, that are related to property directly or indirectly. These include organisations that derive benefit from construction and servicing of property. Additional interests include those concerned with regulations regarding property ownership and development, and a much wider variety of organisations that derive benefits from local economic development. In growth coalition theory, ownership interests in any one locality are deemed to be consciously working to achieve growth even in competition with others in different locations. The place-bound interests attempt to attract mobile forms of capital from both the private and public sectors through the establishment of stable networks and political alliances.

Landowners are often at the core of the alliance of interests that constitute the growth coalition and whose purpose is to promote local economic growth. They can, therefore, be expected to have established an array of formal and informal relationships and contacts with the objective of enhancing their interests through local economic growth. Such contacts would seek to redevelop the properties in question or to enhance their exchange values. The nature and extent of the contacts remain diverse,

and in some cases are constituted through fluid relationships that may be hard to prove (Lowndes, *et al.*, 1997). Networks are dynamic due to the changing intensity and nature of individuals' relationships with other members within the network.

The importance of networking by any one ownership interest reflects the weight of property development and management within the organisation's strategy. Organisations whose interests in property are incidental to some primary interest are less inclined to take the initiative in the development of their properties unless there are reasons compelling them to do so. On the other hand, organisations that have property development interests that are central to their business can be expected to be actively seeking to redevelop their properties.

In addition, the pressure to develop a particular piece of land derives from the expected marginal impact of that decision on the organisation's property portfolio. Harding (1991, p. 298) contends that "The commitment to redevelopment on the part of owners will also reflect the relative importance of particular holdings for the larger interest in question." The more significant property holdings become within an organisation's assets, the more likely are properties to be actively managed so as to realise overall benefit to the portfolio. On this basis, it is important to set discussion of owner networks within the context of owner characteristics and attitudes. After explanation of the research method in the next section, the chapter will follow this approach.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research on which this chapter is based explored the characteristics, attitudes and networks of 120 owners of vacant urban land or obsolete urban buildings in four British cities. Two of these cities, Aberdeen and Nottingham, were selected for investigation because they had witnessed strong development pressure in the previous decade, while the other two, Dundee and Stoke-on-Trent, were picked because they had experienced weaker development pressure. The choice of two Scottish and two English cities was also intended to reflect significant differences in development policies and land law north and south of the border.

The research concentrated on the owners of 20 substantial redevelopment sites<sup>5</sup> in each city which remained undeveloped at 31 December 1995 and which were of at least 2 hectares in area or on which at least 5,000m<sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace was then under active consideration. Although such larger sites can make a disproportionate contribution to urban regeneration, they were favoured in the research design because, despite notable exceptions, the more significant redevelopment is, in terms of 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.

Such potential redevelopment sites were identified through discussions with local authorities, prominent chartered surveyors, Chambers of Commerce and, in Scotland, local enterprise companies. Across the four cities, only 88 sites that fully met the research criteria were discovered by this exercise. Random sampling reduced the number for detailed investigation to 80, or 20 in each city.

The research aimed to contact 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 during the research period of between 1991

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout the research, redevelopment was defined to include the re-use of property through substantial refurbishment.

and 1995<sup>6</sup>. Although many potential owners were identified through local authorities, chartered surveyors or informal on-site enquiries, a more comprehensive picture of ownership was obtained only through formal searches (at negotiated fees) to the Land Registry in England and Register of Sasines in Scotland.

Exhaustive probing and cross-checking of these various sources of information revealed an initial 298 separate ownership interests in the 80 research sites. However, more detailed investigation, including direct contact with potential owners, eliminated 86 of these interests as inapplicable because, for example, they either owned the site in question outside the period 1991-95, or owned land beyond the site.

Successful contact was made with 140 of the 212 owners in the final research population, representing a response rate of 66%. As Table 17.1 reveals, a full research questionnaire was completed for 120 of these 140 owners (normally by a member of the research team at interview, although occasionally by owners themselves and returned through the post). More limited notes were obtained from the other 20 owners successfully contacted, usually through telephone conversations but occasionally from meetings with a member of the research team.

	<b>Aberdeen</b>		<b>Dundee</b>		<b>Nottingham</b>		<b>Stoke</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<b>Successful Contact</b>										
Full questionnaire	<b>29</b>	83	<b>35</b>	48	<b>30</b>	63	<b>26</b>	46	<b>120</b>	57
Notes from owner	<b>4</b>	11	<b>3</b>	4	<b>7</b>	15	<b>6</b>	11	<b>20</b>	9
<b>Non Response</b>										
No contact	<b>1</b>	3	<b>28</b>	38	<b>9</b>	19	<b>21</b>	38	<b>59</b>	28
Refused	<b>1</b>	3	<b>7</b>	10	<b>2</b>	4	<b>3</b>	5	<b>13</b>	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	100	<b>73</b>	100	<b>48</b>	100	<b>56</b>	100	<b>212</b>	100

Only 13 owners openly refused to participate. A further 59 owners proved impossible to contact, including 30 who had already relinquished ownership by the end of 1995. Several of these were businesses that had previously gone into receivership. Such earlier ownership was particularly significant in accounting for the proportionately lower response rate in Stoke-on-Trent. Of the other 29 owners not contacted, many were small companies in owner-occupation who failed to respond to the persistent efforts of the team. This was particularly so in Dundee.

The results presented in this chapter refer to the 120 owners for whom a full research questionnaire was completed. Although the research was designed to ensure that owners investigated were reasonably representative of those who own interests in large redevelopment sites in British cities, there is likely to be some limited bias in the results against smaller companies and private individuals,

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<sup>6</sup> It should be emphasised that the definition of owners, here adopted for the purposes of the research, does not distinguish between those who hold land expressly for the purpose of development and those who do not. We therefore include within our definition of owners those whose other characteristics might prompt them to be termed "developers" in everyday language.

owing to the greater difficulties experienced in successfully contacting them. This should be borne in mind in interpreting the results.

## OWNER CHARACTERISTICS

At a rudimentary level, it was possible to divide the 120 owners in two different ways. As Table 17.2 shows, it is first evident that private-sector owners (72.5% of total) significantly outnumbered public-sector owners (27.5% of total). This immediate discovery 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 17.2 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.

		No	%
Small private-sector owners	Private individual/trustee	6	5.0
	Private company	49	40.8
Large private-sector owners	Always private-sector PLC	15	12.5
	PLC privatized	17	14.2
Public-sector owners	Government or public body	11	9.2
	Local authority	22	18.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	100.0

The second rudimentary division apparent from Table 17.2 is that between large and small owners. Here a more even split is evident, with larger owners (54.2% of total) just outnumbering smaller ones (45.8%). While the research suggested that private individuals and trustees were almost insignificant as owners of large brownfield sites, private companies were the single most important owner identified. Moreover, as already suggested, private companies may well be under-represented in the research analysis, as they were often hard to contact, especially in Dundee. However, the simple division of companies into size categories on the basis of whether or not they are registered as PLCs is fraught with difficulties. Indeed, as the research showed, some of the private companies investigated played quite a substantial role in local, if not national, land and property markets. One private developer/dealer operating in Dundee, for example, was instrumental in finding new retail, leisure and residential uses for three former industrial sites in the city investigated in the research.

To evaluate whether and how far these 120 owners of vacant urban land or obsolete urban property encouraged or impeded redevelopment, detailed information was gathered on their:

- strategies, marketing attempts and site valuations;
- knowledge of development constraints and any action taken to resolve them;
- network of contacts;
- awareness of, and potential influence over broader structural factors;
- reaction to possible policy changes;
- particular legal and personal characteristics.

<b>Table 17.3: Owner typology by impact of strategies and actions on redevelopment prospects</b>														
	<b>Private individual/trustee</b>		<b>Private company</b>		<b>Always Private- Sector PLC</b>		<b>PLC privatised</b>		<b>Gov't/ public body</b>		<b>Local authority</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Significant Encouragement			<b>12</b>	24.5	<b>4</b>	26.7	<b>1</b>	5.9	<b>1</b>	9.1	<b>4</b>	18.2	<b>22</b>	18
Encouragement	<b>2</b>	33.3	<b>14</b>	28.6	<b>6</b>	40.0	<b>7</b>	41.2	<b>7</b>	63.6	<b>12</b>	54.5	<b>48</b>	40
Neutral Impact	<b>2</b>	33.3	<b>17</b>	34.7	<b>5</b>	33.3	<b>4</b>	23.5	<b>1</b>	9.1	<b>4</b>	18.2	<b>33</b>	28
Discouragement	<b>2</b>	33.3	<b>5</b>	10.2			<b>3</b>	17.6	<b>2</b>	18.2	<b>1</b>	4.5	<b>13</b>	11
Significant Discouragement			<b>1</b>	2.0			<b>2</b>	11.8			<b>1</b>	4.5	<b>4</b>	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

A qualitative analysis was then undertaken, owner by owner, with the results compared, and if necessary adjusted, to ensure consistency. Since each redevelopment site is unique, what would most encourage redevelopment must vary from site to site. Owners were therefore 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<sup>7</sup>. The distinctiveness of each site ensured that, on one, for example, 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.

The results of this analysis are shown in Table 17.3 by owner type. Overall, the table reveals that 58% of the 120 owners analysed encouraged or significantly encouraged redevelopment during the research period of 1991 to 1995. A further 28% had a neutral impact on redevelopment and only 14% discouraged or significantly discouraged redevelopment. These results are not significantly different from those for an extended sample of 155 owners reported in a separate paper (Adams *et al.*, 1999).

What is interesting from Table 17.3 is the differential pattern of owner impact on redevelopment prospects between the various owner types. Overall, for example, 73% of public sector owners encouraged or significantly encouraged redevelopment in comparison with 53% of those in the private sector. Local authorities and other public bodies 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 PLCs that had always been in the private sector, 53% for private companies, 47% for privatised PLCs and only 33% for the few trustees/private individuals investigated.

To highlight the overall importance of brownfield sites within ownership portfolios, owners were asked to estimate the value of the each site as a proportion of their overall assets and identify the number of other potential development they owned within a five mile distance. Those who assessed the relative value of the particular site at 5% or less of their total assets accounted for two-thirds of the 110 landowners prepared to answer this question. This proportion rose to 80% of owners for PLCs that had always been in the private sector and to 100% for both local authorities and privatised PLCs. In contrast, it fell to 42% for private companies and to zero for private individuals and trustees. However, while all the private individuals and trustees who responded to this question valued the particular site at between 6% and 25% of their total assets, private companies displayed the most diversified response of any group, with 11% suggesting that the particular site was worth 26% to 50% of their total assets and a further 13% reporting that the site to be worth more than half of their total assets.

As might be expected, all the local authority respondents owned at least 10 more potential redevelopment sites within a five mile distance. Conversely, for all other groups, 80% or more of respondents held three or fewer potential redevelopment sites within five mile of the particular site investigated in the research. Private individuals and trustees were least likely to hold another redevelopment site within this distance. These findings suggest that local authorities, as landowners, were likely to be far more experienced in dealing with brownfield redevelopment than any other landowner type.

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<sup>7</sup> The five tests specified by Barrett et al. (1978) relate to ownership, public procedures, project viability, physical conditions and market conditions.



In summary, this section demonstrates that, although the private sector (including privatised PLCs) dominates the ownership of large brownfield sites, individual private-sector owners have significantly less experience of dealing with such sites than local authorities. In addition, public-sector owners as a whole appear keener to promote brownfield redevelopment than those in the private sector. However, as a general rule within the private-sector, the larger the organisation, the better experienced and more well-disposed owners appear to be to redevelopment.

For example, of the PLCs questioned that had always been in the private sector, 54% held at least 2 other potential redevelopment sites within a five mile distance, 67% encouraged or significantly encouraged redevelopment and 90% considered the particular site investigated to be worth 5% or less of their asset base. In contrast, the few private individuals and trustees encountered appeared more likely to regard the particular site as financially important within their asset base and as a whole, to be less encouraging towards redevelopment than the private sector as a whole. Privatised PLCs, however, remain an exception to this general rule since they normally had greater experience of dealing with brownfield land than the private sector as a whole and held sites that they regarded as financially inconsequential in relation to their overall asset base, but were less likely than the average private-sector owner to encourage or significantly encourage its redevelopment.

## **OWNER ATTITUDES**

To help understand their attitudes towards the broader context for land management and development, the 120 brownfield landowners were first asked whether or not it really mattered, either to themselves or others, that the particular site owned had not recently been used to its full potential. Of the 93 respondent owners, 59% felt that it mattered and 41% that it did not. However, this overall response disguised a marked variation between owner types since the proportion of respondents who considered that under-use mattered was recorded at 81% for public-sector owners, 57% for small private-sector owners and only 46% for large private-sector owners. Within the latter category, the figure for privatised PLCs fell to 39%.

Of course, debates on the importance of brownfield land redevelopment are much related to wider notions of environmental sustainability and to the appropriate balance between private initiative and state intervention in land management and development. The 120 owners were therefore asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with eight "value statements" deliberately constructed to enable their attitudes towards these broader matters to be identified. The results are shown in Table 17.4.

As Table 17.4 shows, the value statement recording the highest level of agreement among respondent owners (at 94%) was "Customer satisfaction in new development depends very much on the skill and flair of the developer." Only four negative responses were recorded to this statement, all from privatised PLCs. Otherwise, there was no significant difference in owner responses between public-sector and private-sector owners. Indeed, public-sector respondents were almost all in agreement with this statement, perhaps indicating their lack of confidence in the ability of public policy to assist customer satisfaction in new development.

The second highest level of agreement (at 86%) concerned the statement that "Those whose cause dereliction should pay for cleaning it up", reflecting the increasingly widespread acceptance of the "polluter pays" principle. The highest level of agreement for this statement came from small private-sector owners with it securing unanimous support among private individual/trustee respondents and virtually unanimous support among private companies. However, the level of support among public-sector and large-private sector owners fell to 80% and 74% respectively, perhaps indicating their fuller awareness of some of the practical difficulties faced in implementing the "polluter pays" principle.

Table 17.4: Owner response to attitude statements									
	Agree		No Opinion		Disagree		Total		No Response
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Customer satisfaction depends on developer	108	<b>94</b>	2	<b>2</b>	5	<b>4</b>	115	100	5
Those who cause dereliction should pay for it	99	<b>86</b>	4	<b>3</b>	12	<b>10</b>	115	100	5
Compulsory purchase should always be regarded as last resort	93	<b>80</b>	6	<b>5</b>	17	<b>15</b>	116	100	4
What happens on private land is of public interest	76	<b>66</b>	14	<b>12</b>	25	<b>22</b>	115	100	5
State interference on land should be minimal	73	<b>63</b>	6	<b>5</b>	36	<b>31</b>	115	100	5
No greenfield development while urban land vacant	60	<b>54</b>	10	<b>9</b>	42	<b>38</b>	112	100	8
Green belts one of great planning successes	63	<b>54</b>	34	<b>29</b>	19	<b>16</b>	116	100	4
Public concern for environment gone too far	29	<b>25</b>	18	<b>16</b>	69	<b>59</b>	116	100	4

The statement that "Compulsory purchase should always be regarded as a last resort" received the third highest level of agreement among respondents at 80%. There was very little difference between public- and private-sector responses to this statement. Even local authority respondents recorded a 75% rate of support for such limited use of compulsory purchase.

Support levels then started to fall, with the statement that "What happens on private land is a matter of legitimate public interest" recording only a 66% level of agreement. Here, however, the statement received much stronger levels of support among public-sector respondents (at 81%) than among small private-sector ones (at 66%). The least level of support for this statement (at 52%) was found among large private-sector respondents, irrespective of whether they had been privatised or not

However, the related statement that "State interference in land management and development should be minimal" drew the agreement of 64% among respondents, reflecting the widespread belief among brownfield land owners that while state intervention in land management may be legitimate in principle, it should in practice be kept to a minimum. The highest level of hostility to state interference was recorded among small private-owners, with 73% of the private companies and 83% of the private individuals and trustees who responded to the statement supporting the position of minimal state intervention. This may well reflect a perception among such smaller private-sector owners that state interference is rarely to their advantage. In contrast, support for minimal state intervention fell to 58% for public-sector respondents and 50% for those large private-sector ones.

Turning to broader issues of environmental sustainability, the statement that "No development should take place on greenfield sites, while there is vacant land within cities" was supported by 54% of respondent owners. However, while this outcome was matched exactly by that for large private-sector respondents, smaller private-sector respondents were even more opposed to greenfield development, recording a figure of 63% in support of the statement. In contrast, almost two-thirds of public-sector respondents disagreed with the statement, with the figure for local authority opposition reaching 70%. This may well reflect the widespread awareness within public decision-makers that, much as such a policy might prove favourable to public opinion, entire reliance on brownfield sites to meet future land demands would be unrealistic.

Overall, the statement that "Green belts have been one of the great successes of postwar British planning" generated a similar mixed response. Although the average level of agreement was again 54%, smaller private-sector respondents (63% in favour of statement) appeared considerably more impressed by the success of green belts than larger private-sector respondents (52% in favour) or those in the public sector (only 42% in favour). Local authority owners, in particular, appeared undecided about the success of green belt policy, with 55% of these respondents having no particular opinion on the matter!

Finally, the statement that "Public concern for the environment has gone too far" was widely rejected, with only 25% of respondents in favour. However, significant variations in response were recorded between owner types. While no central government or public body agreed with this statement, 30% of local authority respondents did so. This was exceeded only by private companies (40% in favour) and private individuals and trustees (50% in favour).

It is evident from the above analysis that no clear distinction emerged between public and private-sector owners of brownfield land in their attitudes towards the broader context for land management and development. Both appeared to set limits on state intervention in land management and development and subscribe instead to notions of owner responsibility and developer initiative. Indeed, differences of attitude between large and small private-sector owners were often more interesting than those between the public- and private-sectors. For example, smaller private-sector

owners were more "hawkish" than larger private-sectors ones in their support of the "polluter pays" principle, in their belief that no development should take place on greenfield sites while there is vacant land within cities and in the success they attributed to green belts. In each of these cases, the attitude of large private-sector respondents was closer to that of local authorities.

However, the position was reversed in relation to more general public concern for the environment, where public-sector and larger private respondents took the more "hawkish" stance. It is perhaps ironic that, despite the majority view among all brownfield owners investigated that compulsory purchase should be regarded as a last resort and that state interference should be minimal, the development prospects of many of the sites investigated were dependent on state support, either financially or in the form of land assembly.

## **OWNER NETWORKS**

To discover how extensive were their networks of contacts, the 120 brownfield owners were asked to identify the extent and productivity of their contacts with 23 different categories of people and organisations. As Table 17.5 shows, a clear distinction emerged in the results between what might be considered a close-knit property development network into which the respondents landowners appeared well connected and a much broader policy and economic development network in which their connections were far looser.

The property development network appeared to comprise seven key contacts, with whom at least half of all the respondent brownfield owners had at some stage been in contact. The most frequent link proved to be the local planning department, which was contacted by 82% of all respondent owners, with 61% describing the contact as productive or highly productive. In most cases, local planning authorities are keen to promote brownfield redevelopment and their attitude was therefore likely to be viewed favourably by the particular owners interviewed for this research. However, on occasions, considerable conflict arose between respondents owners and planning authorities on the perceived potential for retail redevelopment, with the authorities seeking to concentrate such development in town and city centres against the will of site owners. It is likely that such policies accounted for most of the occasions where contact with the planning department was viewed as unfavourable by respondent landowners.

Professional consultants formed the next three members of the property development network with whom landowners were regularly in contact. Chartered surveyors and property agents play a diverse role in the development process, including offering advice on land valuation, marketing, development finance, and negotiation on price and rental levels. They were contacted by 74% of all respondent owners, with 60% describing the contact as productive or highly productive.

It is perhaps surprising to find that the next most frequently contacted profession by landowners were architects or planning consultants but it should be remembered that the research definition of owners including property development companies, who would use the services of architects in testing development feasibility. Planning consultants provided valuable support for owners in challenging unfavourable planning decisions, especially in relation to retail redevelopment. Overall, architects and planning consultants were contacted by 65% of all respondent owners, with 57% describing the contact as productive or highly productive.

<b>Table 17.5: Extent and Productivity of Owner Contacts</b>									
	Productive		Unproductive		No Contact		Total		NR <sup>8</sup>
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Local Planning Department	71	<b>61</b>	25	<b>21</b>	21	<b>18</b>	117	<b>100</b>	3
Chartered Surveyors/Property Agents	70	<b>60</b>	16	<b>14</b>	31	<b>26</b>	117	<b>100</b>	3
Architects/Planning Consultants	65	<b>57</b>	9	<b>8</b>	41	<b>36</b>	115	<b>100</b>	5
Lawyers	65	<b>57</b>	8	<b>7</b>	42	<b>37</b>	115	<b>100</b>	5
Private Com/Ind Dev't Companies	49	<b>43</b>	13	<b>11</b>	52	<b>46</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Other Local Authority Departments	49	<b>43</b>	18	<b>16</b>	48	<b>42</b>	115	<b>100</b>	5
Neighbouring Landowners	44	<b>38</b>	25	<b>22</b>	46	<b>40</b>	115	<b>100</b>	5
Private Housebuilding Companies	29	<b>25</b>	10	<b>9</b>	75	<b>66</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
DOE/Scottish Office	25	<b>22</b>	9	<b>8</b>	80	<b>70</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Local TEC or LEC	22	<b>19</b>	3	<b>3</b>	90	<b>78</b>	115	<b>100</b>	5
Banks and Building Societies	21	<b>18</b>	5	<b>4</b>	88	<b>77</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Housing Associations	16	<b>14</b>	10	<b>9</b>	90	<b>78</b>	116	<b>100</b>	4
Other Government Departments	15	<b>13</b>	4	<b>4</b>	94	<b>83</b>	113	<b>100</b>	7
English Partnerships/Scot Enterprise	14	<b>12</b>	7	<b>6</b>	93	<b>82</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Pension Funds and Ins Companies	14	<b>12</b>	6	<b>5</b>	94	<b>82</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Local Amenity/Environmental Gps	11	<b>10</b>	6	<b>5</b>	97	<b>85</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Venture Capitalists	7	<b>6</b>	6	<b>5</b>	101	<b>89</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
National Amenity/Environmental Gps	5	<b>4</b>	2	<b>2</b>	107	<b>94</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Member of Parliament	3	<b>3</b>	5	<b>4</b>	106	<b>93</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Minister of the Crown	3	<b>3</b>	2	<b>2</b>	109	<b>96</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Conservative Party	2	<b>2</b>	1	<b>1</b>	110	<b>97</b>	113	<b>100</b>	7
Labour Party	3	<b>3</b>	3	<b>3</b>	108	<b>95</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6
Other Political Party	0	<b>0</b>	2	<b>2</b>	112	<b>98</b>	114	<b>100</b>	6

<sup>8</sup> No Response

An almost similar figure was recorded for lawyers who offered important advice to brownfield owners in relation to purchase and sale, planning difficulties and increasing on the technicalities of contaminated land legislation. Elsewhere in the research, the detrimental impact of ownership constraints to urban redevelopment was noted (Adams *et al.*, 1999). In this context, lawyers played an important role in clarifying unknown ownership, overcoming partial title and drawing together the bundle of ownership rights by ensuring, for example, that any leases and licenses on site were effectively terminated.

In this context, it is interesting to note that neighbouring landowners were contacted by 60% of all respondent owners, but that only 38% described such contact as productive or highly productive. This reflects the problematic nature of boundary disputes and the difficulties often inherent in assembling a realistic modern development site from the patchwork quilt of historic ownership within an area. In the wider study, it was apparent that such multiple ownership of land, in particular, proved hard to resolve without the prospect of lucrative commercial development and/or state intervention.

Other local authority departments, apart from the planning office, were contacted by 58% of all respondent owners, with 43% describing the contact as productive or highly productive. It is likely that most of these discussions concerned technical issues such as access and drainage that had the potential significantly to affect development feasibility. Private industrial and commercial developers formed the final group within this close-knit property development network. It is apparent that brownfield landowners were in much greater contact with industrial and commercial developers than housebuilders (54% as against 34%) and that more respondent owners described contact with the former as productive or highly productive than with the latter (43% as against 25%). This probably again reflects the perception that retail and office development is likely to be commercially more lucrative in brownfield locations than residential development.

All those other people and organisations listed with Table 17.5 who might be considered to form a much broader policy and economic development network were contacted by less than half of the respondent owners and in most cases by less than a fifth. It is especially noticeable how little direct contact existed between large brownfield owners and the political community. However, it may well be that such important forms of contact were mediated through the property development network, with lawyers and property agents in particular acting as the conduit through which the concerns of landowners were drawn to the attention of leading politicians.

Although this possibility was not formally investigated in the research, it became apparent that such linkages existed, especially in Nottingham. Here, for example, one of the most influential chartered surveyors in the city had been drawn into a wider policy role and now serves alongside leading city councillors on the board on a public-private development partnership that is seeking to promote the regeneration of the city. If this pattern were to be replicated more widely, it could be argued that brownfield owners do not require direct contact with politicians, since their interests are well served by indirect contact through their professional representatives.

The research also sought to compare the extent of contact achieved by the different categories of owner introduced in the rudimentary typology set out earlier in Table 17.2, with the seven key contacts who comprised the property and development network. These were the local planning department, chartered surveyors/property agents, architects/planning consultants, lawyers, private commercial and industrial companies, other local authority departments and neighbouring landowners. As Table 17.6 shows, a simple multiplication of the 120 owners by these seven key contacts gave a total number of potential contacts of 840. Of course, not all these contacts will need to be made for every redevelopment. In each case, this will depend on the size and complexity of the proposed scheme

and its relationship both to public policy and private interests. In the research, 65% of the 840 potential contacts were made, of which 51% were considered productive and 14% unproductive.

This overall picture masks some interesting contrasts between the six different owner types. As Table 17.6 clearly shows, larger owners were more frequently in touch with key contacts than smaller owners, with the highest level of productive contact enjoyed by the public sector. Indeed, Table 17.6 would appear to suggest that private companies and individuals were more at the fringes than at the centre of these key development networks in urban regeneration. Private individuals and trustees, for example, enjoyed less than half the rate of productive contact experienced by government or public bodies. In the end, then, a tight nexus of critical contacts in urban redevelopment appears to exist, with the richness of that network most intensely experienced by larger, rather than smaller owners.

	Number of Owners	Number of Potential Contacts	Actual Contacts (%)		
			Productive	Unproductive	No Contact
Government or public body	11	77	67	11	22
Local authority	22	154	65	7	28
Always private-sector PLC	15	105	58	19	23
PLC privatized	17	119	54	11	35
Private company	49	343	41	18	41
Private individual/trustee	6	42	31	14	55
<b>All Owners</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>35</b>

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown that brownfield landowners form an important part of local property development networks in which they are most closely linked to local planning departments, chartered surveyors/property agents, architects/planning consultants, lawyers, private commercial and industrial companies, other local authority departments and their neighbouring landowners. However, public-sector owners appear slightly better connected to such networks than large private-sector owners and significantly better-connected than small private-sectors owners.

These results are relevant in assessing the robustness of growth coalitions and associated networks within the context of selected cities in the United Kingdom. From its inception out of experience in the United States, the concept of growth coalition emphasises the efforts of landowners in contributing to local economic growth. However, there appears to be significant differences between the balance of land ownership interests in the United Kingdom and the United States.

In the United Kingdom out of historical coincidence and political influence, public sector ownership interests are more dominant than in the United States where the private sector interests are the key players. The research results indicate that public sector interests are more critical to redevelopment and local economic growth. Although local authorities, for example, have widespread ownership of

redevelopment land in their areas, the research suggests that they have recently maintained significantly encouragement towards redevelopment. Harding (1991) contends that growth coalitions take different forms, but retain their substance. The research findings suggest possible coalition-building around public sector interests. The objective is consistently the achievement of local economic regeneration.

Although, growth coalitions stand to benefit from inward investment, it may be the case that some coalitions with limited local development capacity will have to wait for their turn in attracting mobile capital. However, the onus is on such local interests to create and maintain a necessary atmosphere through stable political and social systems in order that inward investment will reach them sooner rather than later.

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