Courtesy: Roland Karthaus, Matter Architecture

Understanding Sites & their Potential

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- **The key objective for development should be to develop 'social value', i.e. to make changes to places which will be of most value to people.** Plato said 'Those who tell the stories rule society', so we need to ensure the stories of places and people where we develop are heard, to provide the 'soil' for great places going forward. Projects such as the Walthamstow High Street show how this can be done to tie the past, present and future of the area and of the people groups who live, work and play there.

- **Infrastructure can be analysed by asking what is the priority given to different uses – buildings, pavements, roadways and parking, nature including plants, trees and waterways and public transport?** Good design considers and balances these priorities to ensure they are in order with pedestrians then cyclists first, public transport users next and lastly vehicle users. Operating this allows other 'accepted' rules such as distances between frontage to be challenged, where greater overall benefits result and it prompts fresh thinking from the level of a development through to re-imagining a settlement, as seen in the Velocity proposals.

- **High quality examples within an area's built form and character should be researched and used as the basis for great design, enhancing what is already there.** This can include heights and massing, roof, window and wall types and details as well as street and building layouts.

- **Connections are vital to unleash the potential of sites, opening up views and access to rivers, high quality buildings and nature.** Direct connection to the ground floor provides more opportunities to get to know neighbours and directly access private or shared spaces, as well as improving affordability by avoiding common parts or service charges. A wide range of building types allows resident communities to discover new and flexible ways to enjoy their homes over time.

- **To achieve the social value objective start with 'loitering with intent' – taking the temperature of a place and getting under it's skin**. It involves developing a 'social ecology' for the scheme which can then flourish as time goes on. Engaging with the community from the start, working alongside them step by step allows design to be adapted to their needs…everyone is a co-designer.

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Courtesy: Roland Karthaus, Matter Architecture

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