

Founded on an understanding of the interrelationships between accessibility, location, design and intensity of land use, the Transport Development Area concept developed in the UK is a cross-sectoral mechanism for delivering higher density development around public transport nodes. The approach unites land use planning and the development industry with transport planning and transport operators. Urban design, community involvement and active urban management are key components for a workable package.

Transport Development Areas

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The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has been developing the concept of the Transport Development Area (TDA) with key stakeholders for a number of years now. In 2002 RICS published a good practice guide that provides planning and transport practitioners with the tools needed to identify and implement TDAs.¹ The guidance was sponsored and supported by thirteen government authorities, professional institutes and transport organisations.² This sponsorship lent significant backing for implementing the ideas developed in the guidance. TDAs can be developed in a wide range of circumstances, ranging from transport nodes in large conurbations to relatively small market towns.

In essence, a TDA is a means of securing well designed, higher density, mixed-use development around good public transport nodes in towns and cities. It does not seek to lay down a rigid blueprint and can be applied in ways that suit the needs of a particular location.

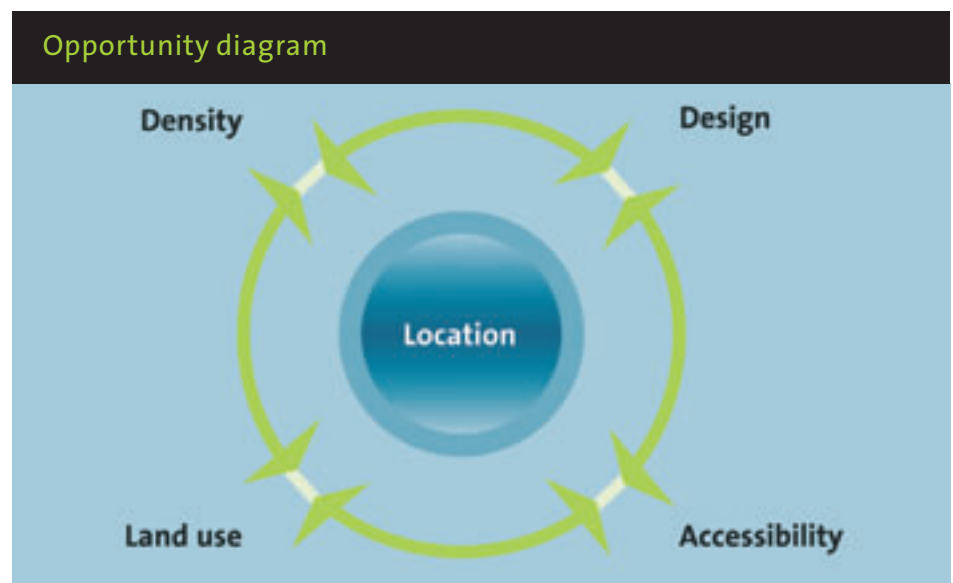
It does not require new legislation or changes in policy, but it does require the commitment of local authorities and other partners if the concept is to be carried forward successfully. TDA is an integrated land use planning approach to create a more specific relationship between development density around urban public transport interchanges and the level of public transport services provided. As an economic concept, TDAs are also a focus for more institutionalised arrangements whereby

public transport operators receive additional funding based on the transfer, where appropriate, of part of the higher financial returns to development which might be achievable in such areas. TDAs, therefore, can deliver significant transport and development benefits by enabling financially more attractive (or at least less uncertain) development opportunities, and by offering the prospect of additional investment in public transport improvements. They also contribute to the sustainability objectives of the Transport White Papers by integrating land use and transport, reducing both the need to travel and reliance on private transport.

THE TDA APPROACH

The basic concept of the 'TDA Approach' is already recognised within the existing policy framework. However, our research found

that the approach to identifying and implementing TDA-style development of key sites or locations within urban areas has been both inadequate and inconsistent. While the planning system can and does deliver TDA-style development, benefits can be gained from greater clarity or more positive direction at the policy level, and from the provision of detailed guidance on TDA identification and delivery. Securing widespread application of the TDA Approach across a range of urban circumstances will require commitment by all stakeholders. The RICS guidance sets out the practical mechanisms for designating and delivering TDAs and the policy process that will be needed from the national to local planning level. The key messages in the guidance are that TDAs should be a key focus of locational policy, the TDA Approach is a



mechanism for delivering suitable outcomes, and that long-term planning is essential. Although the concept of concentrating development around appropriate transport nodes is not new, it is difficult to realise successfully because many different elements need to be brought together to make it work. TDAs are not a quick fix, but early action can be taken.

The TDA approach is not exclusively meant for the United Kingdom. It can work in many different situations throughout Europe. The following discussion of the UK situation serves only to illustrate the relation between TDA and national, regional and local policy frameworks. The underlying principles remain the same for other countries.

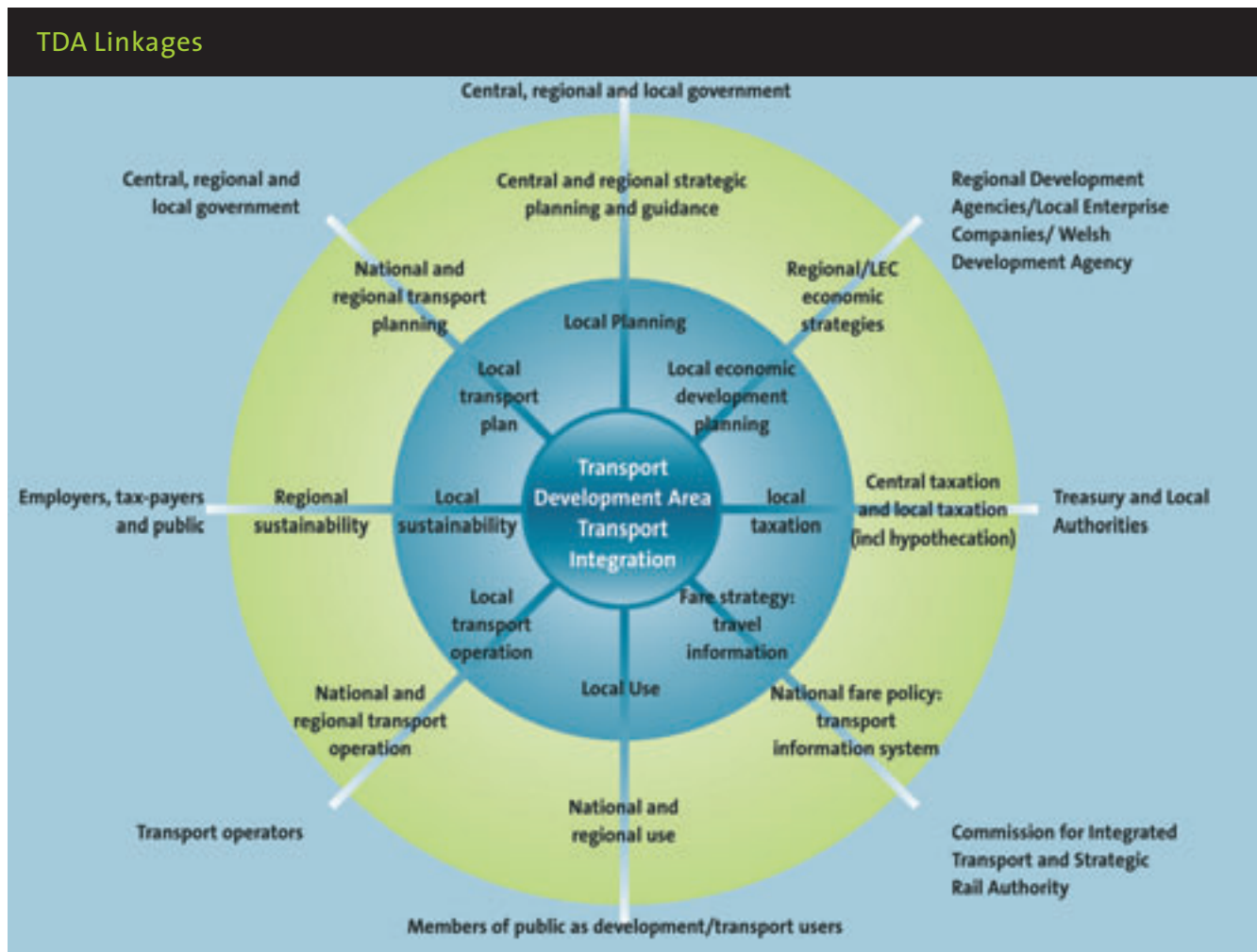
REGIONAL GUIDANCE

There is considerable scope for the new Regional Spatial Strategies being developed within the UK to take account of the TDA

approach and promote its inclusion within more local planning frameworks and local transport plans. TDAs should be actively promoted as a regional objective, to be applied across as wide a range of urban settlement types and rural centres as possible. It is vital to the approach that key stakeholder groups, such as the transport providers and the development industry, are engaged at an early stage.

Where appropriate, Regional Spatial Strategies should encourage local authorities to ensure that within TDAs permissions for higher density development include developer contributions towards public transport and local transport objectives. The Regional Transport Strategy – prepared as an integral part of regional spatial planning – should include measures relevant to TDAs, such as accessibility criteria, increased public transport choice, car parking standards and demand management.

The London Plan – the first spatial development strategy in the UK – indicates that designation of sites for TDA-style development should be undertaken by the various London boroughs, with the London Plan itself providing appropriate policy advice and characterising the key opportunities across Greater London. Local authorities should seek to make maximum use of the most accessible sites, such as those in town centres and others which are, or will be, close to major transport interchanges. They should develop a clear vision for development of these areas, prepare site briefs and, where appropriate, consider using compulsory powers to bring development forward. The TDA Approach supports Government policies designed to promote both urban and rural regeneration, with access to key services and facilities delivered through integrated local transport solutions. →

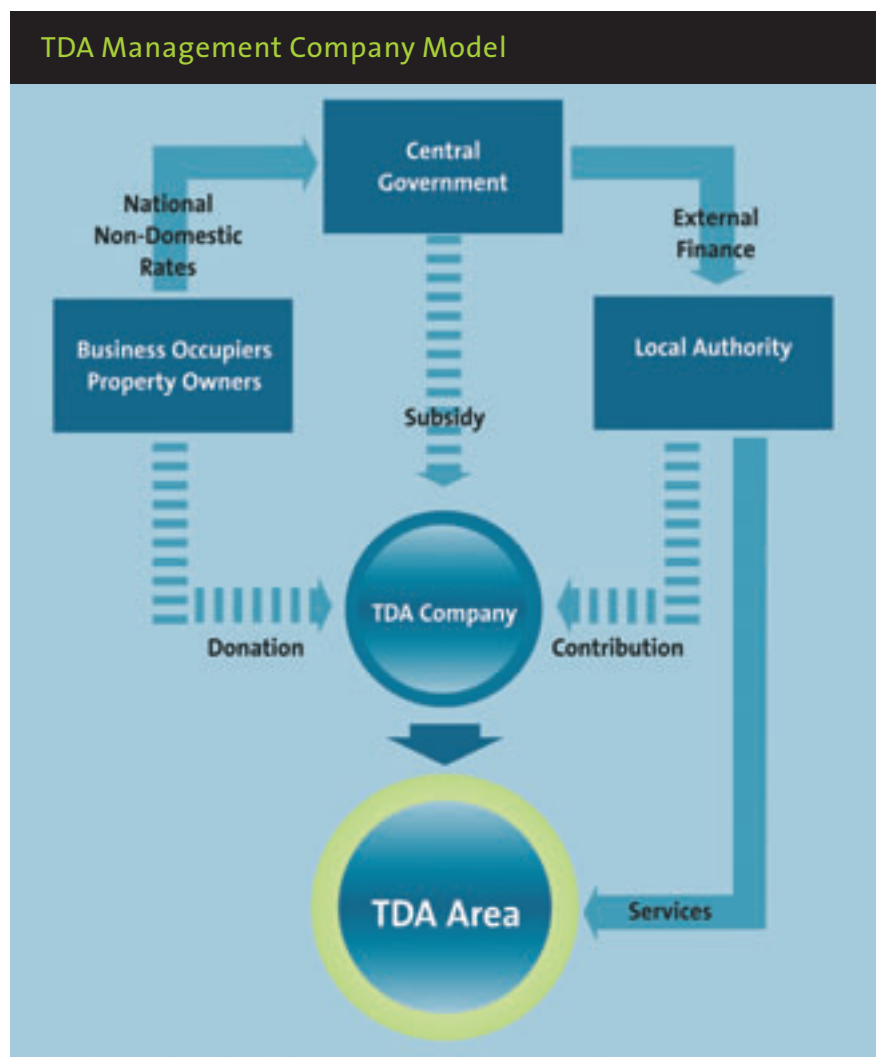


SURVEY, ANALYSIS, PLAN

At the pre-deposit consultation stage, structure plans and local development frameworks should incorporate as a specific objective the promotion of TDAs as a focus for locational policy to be applied across a range of urban settlement types and rural centres. Key sites and central locations will normally be the most appropriate for formal TDA designation. Other locations such as nodal points and interchanges on main public transport routes, however, will readily lend themselves to adoption of the underlying principles. Local authorities should apply the TDA approach in three key phases: survey, analysis and plan-making. Knowledge about the likely locations of TDAs is crucial. Local authorities should keep a number of factors under review. First, the principal physical and economic characteristics of the area, including supply and demand in the real estate market as well as the size, composition and distribution of population. The communications, transport system and traffic in the area should be considered, as well as the environmental characteristics. Finally, we should not overlook overall accessibility appraisal, including the transport network, service levels, network capacity and scope for expansion.

The survey phase will identify likely locations with the potential to adequately serve more intensive land use developments and markets able to promote and support such development. The analysis stage should consider significant excess capacity in existing infrastructure, including public transport, utilities and social infrastructure. It should look at the potential for development in existing or new public transport corridors. And it has to identify opportunities for improving public transport accessibility.

Early discussion and liaison between local authorities, developers, landowners, operators, the Regional Development Authorities (RDAs), Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), the Welsh Development Agency and all other stakeholders is essential to the successful application of the TDA Approach, with development frameworks



and local transport plans providing the initial basis for this. Local planning authorities should prepare appropriate TDA-related policies and proposals, taking particular account of boundaries, transport accessibility appraisals, urban design, density, parking standards and other key issues. Planning frameworks should identify key criteria relevant to the TDA Approach, particularly in relation to transport accessibility and urban design. Major TDA development opportunities should be supported by a detailed design or development brief including, where appropriate, boundaries and density ranges (particularly for residential development). Implementing the TDA Approach The key ingredients for successful implementation of the TDA Approach are the establishment of an overall partnership, funding, land assembly, a specific delivery mechanism and on-going monitoring and review.

Partnerships

The most complex schemes may benefit from forming TDA delivery companies to secure implementation, delivery and management. Government regeneration policy underlines the need to secure an Urban Renaissance through effective partnerships. These should allow 'joined-up strategies' to be developed with local people and other organisations and interests involved to tackle local problems and realise local opportunities. Partnerships formed to take the TDA Approach forward should include the local authority, normally in the lead or enabling role, landowners, investors, developers, designers, transport operators/providers and occupiers. TDA development may involve developer contributions to public transport infrastructure, but this will vary greatly according to local circumstances and the economic viability of individual schemes within the TDA.



Prime Minister Tony Blair and Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott visit Greenhithe in Kent. (Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)

Land assembly

Land assembly will often be an important issue for TDA-type development, particularly for large development sites. Many parties may hold land within a potential TDA and land ownership surveys need to be undertaken by the TDA promoter at an early stage. In some cases the use of, or threat of the use of, compulsory purchase will be necessary for planning authorities to secure the TDA development within appropriate boundaries. However, in most cases agreement between all landowning stakeholders should be the objective.

Active urban management

Much of the advantage to be gained through the TDA Approach will be squandered unless an appropriate regime of on-going active urban management is put in place. Town Improvement Schemes are a potential mechanism for allowing local authorities and other stakeholders to deal with area improvement and maintenance of environmental quality. The concept may prove to be of particular importance with regard to TDAs, along with appropriate joint ventures and/or partnership agreements.

TDAS IN ACTION

Since RICS published its guidance report, the TDA project has continued to attract wide support from a range of diverse groups, including the Local Government Association, the Royal Institution of British Architects, the Greater London Authority, Scottish Enterprise and the Institution of Highways and Transportation. While these organisations

recognise the benefits of TDAs, others have been implementing them in practice. The RICS guidance contains a wealth of case studies from locations throughout the country. These cover TDAs at town, city and even up to county level. Spatial strategies for regions such as London and South East England have focussed heavily on the need to produce 'well-designed, higher density, mixed-use areas, situated around good public transport access points in urban areas'. Recognising the important leadership role that London can play, RICS published further research in 2003 that looked at how TDAs could be developed further in London.³ The study found that TDAs have the capability of delivering many of the London Plan's key objectives, from affordable housing to transport improvements and urban regeneration.

Sustainable communities

'Sustainable communities' has rapidly become the new buzz phrase in UK planning. Virtually every consultation paper or report issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister now has the 'sustainable communities' strapline. This may be an excellent marketing strategy, but there is a danger that the constant repetition of the sustainable communities mantra and the multiple ways in which the term is interpreted will, in the end, leave it devoid of meaning. That would be a pity because the concept, however it is interpreted, is intrinsically sound. The UK Government launched its Sustainable Communities Plan in February 2003 with the avowed objective of creating 'prosperous, inclusive and

sustainable communities'. From an RICS perspective, some of the key priorities should be:

- locating new housing and commercial development in the most sustainable places;
- providing the infrastructure needed to support communities;
- socially inclusive policies in housing that create balanced communities;
- regeneration policies that are sensitive to local communities' needs and reflect the 'soul' of an area;
- strategies for areas in decline as well as growth areas in the South East.

Transport-oriented development Through its work on TDAs, RICS has argued that the successful integration of land use and transport can play a key role in reducing many of the difficulties posed by modern urban development. The orientation of integrated economic and residential activities around public transport nodes and the creation of relatively self-reliant sub-centres within wider metropolitan areas are important factors in reducing the need to travel and encouraging the use of more sustainable public transport modes. The TDA good practice guide has demonstrated the benefits that can be gained from providing high-density, high-quality, mixed-use development around transport nodes. Testing this approach in London and the Thames Gateway³ will be the focus of the Greater South East activities within the Connected Cities project.

Notes

- 1 Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, *Transport Development Areas – Guide to Good Practice*, London, 2002.
- 2 The Greater London Authority; the Institution of Highways and Transportation; the Institute of Logistics and Transport; LT Property; the Local Government Association; Railtrack Property; the Royal Institute of British Architects; the Royal Town Planning Institute; Scottish Enterprise; the Strategic Rail Authority; Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive; Transport for London; and the RICS London Regional Board.
- 3 TDAs – the London dimension, april 2003, RICS London Region. See also www.rics.org