

## Unit 3 - Changing City Centres in MEDCs

### 3.1 How are town and city centres changing in MEDCs?

The city centre is known as the CBD - Central Business District. Traditionally this has been where shops, offices and businesses locate because it is the most central part of the city - and so the most accessible. People can get to the CBD easily from all over the city.

Outside the CBD there is usually an area of Victorian terraced houses known as Inner-City Housing.

City centres are changing in many ways:

- land prices are rising in the CBD - so some businesses are moving out of the centre to cheaper locations
- to fight this movement, planners are trying to make CBDs more attractive - new shopping/leisure developments are being built (e.g. Castle Mall in Norwich) and areas are being pedestrianised to make them more attractive
- people are changing where they live - richer people are moving into new apartment style housing in central areas (e.g. Norwich Riverside)
- gentrification is making some areas of older housing much more expensive
- traffic congestion is a major problem in CBDs - people have more cars today than in the past
- but traffic management schemes are having an impact - such as park and ride or congestion charging
- air pollution is an increasing problem - reducing the quality of life
- people are changing the ways they use the CBD - with increasing 24/7 use
- derelict brownfield sites are being redeveloped - e.g. Norwich Riverside with its mix of retail, leisure and housing land use.

### 3.2 What are the problems facing MEDC city centres?

**Traffic:** congestion, air pollution, accidents, parking and the cost of building new roads big enough to cope with traffic are all classic problems

**Retailing:** out of town shopping centres can make CBDs seem old fashioned and unattractive places to visit. Combined with the difficulty of driving and parking in CBDs, this has caused city centres to appear run-down and lose customers - so more shops move out

**Unemployment:** traditional city centre industries have closed down leaving workers unemployed, increasing inner city poverty

**Brownfield sites:** old industrial sites left derelict need to be redeveloped

**Housing:**

- older housing has often declined in quality - damp, crime and poverty are often problems in areas of terraced housing. A lack of gardens, open space and parking doesn't help these areas
- some areas were redeveloped in the 1950s and 60s and tower blocks built. These are often very poor quality with major problems
- newer housing is often far too expensive for the people who traditionally have lived in these areas, and gentrification may see wealthier people buying and improving the quality of older housing. This may cause conflict and force people out of the areas they have grown up in as they can't afford to live there any more

### 3.3 How can MEDC city centres be managed and improved?

**Transport:** park and ride, public transport, bus lanes, cycle lanes, bypasses/ring roads, congestion charges...

**Retailing:** regenerate CBD shopping streets, pedestrianisation, make CBD attractive...

**Derelict Land:** encourage redevelopment, try and link smaller sites together...

**Housing:** improve quality through individual redevelopment (e.g. new roof, damp course etc.), security systems, crime prevention, residents associations/neighbourhood watch, provide affordable housing with new developments.

Each scheme will have advantages and disadvantages: some people will be pleased, others will not. People on buses like bus lanes, people in cars stuck in jam don't; tax payers don't often like paying for changes which don't benefit them; people may have to move because of redevelopment schemes.

Brownfield redevelopment can be particularly expensive as the land needs clearing and could be contaminated. This will be expensive. Many brownfield sites are small as well - large developments need large sites which may be in short supply. People may well conflict over what should be done and who should pay - Norwich Riverside is unpopular with people who think the leisure use is a waste of money. Brownfield sites can also be important inner city habitats, so redevelopment may be bad news for the environment.