

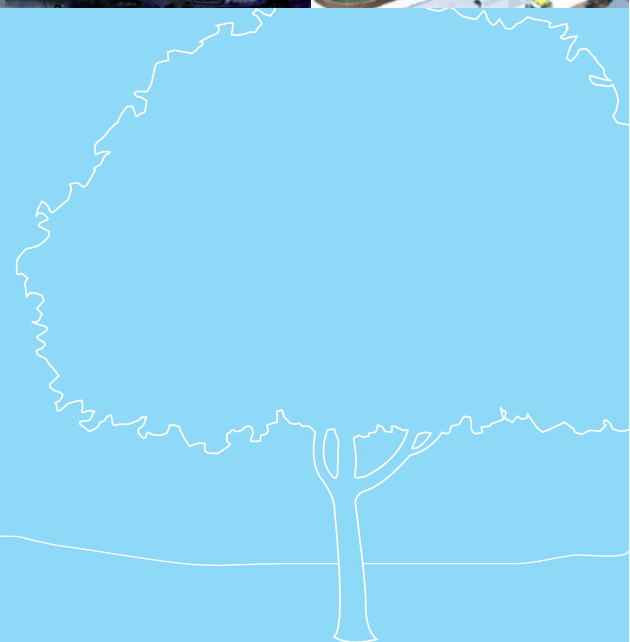
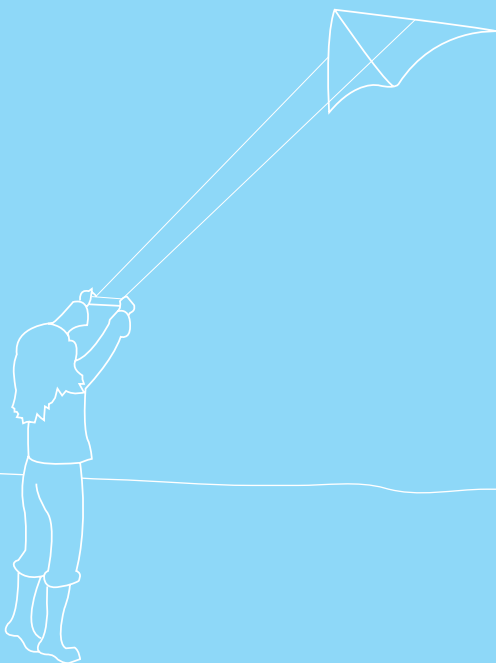


Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Compact Sustainable Communities

Second edition: November 2006

Making the case for well planned, higher density, mixed use urban development: meeting housing needs, improving quality of life and protecting the environment.



Foreword



‘To save the countryside we have to save our cities.’ This is the answer I invariably give to tiresome friends who want to know what on Earth the Campaign to Protect Rural England is doing in London. I then point out that the exodus from our towns and cities will continue for as long as they fail to provide the sort of environment and housing that people aspire to.

After the Second World War a massive house-building programme within London was initiated by the London County Council. Contrary to popular belief, however, the predominantly tower-block housing that resulted was generally built to no higher density of dwellings than the nineteenth-century streets which it replaced. But the understandable reaction against tower blocks led to an irrational reaction against urbanism itself, and to a tendency in the 1980s and 1990s to replace the tower blocks, not with a new form of our traditional urban streets, but with an attempt to spread the suburban way of living into inner London. This led to a further shift of people to the suburbs and to increased pressure not only on London’s surviving open space but also on the dwindling countryside of South East England. It also led to a shrinking population in inner London which was increasingly unable to support the local shops, schools and other local facilities which one expects to be close at hand in urban areas.

This spreading-out of the population increased the need to travel which, in turn, increased traffic congestion and pollution. It is an unsustainable way forward for the twenty-first century. Instead we need to revitalise our capital city and reduce pressure on the countryside by encouraging people who work in London to live in London.

The essence of urban life has always depended on a concentration of people and a diversity of activities. But, although there is a case for tall buildings at important centres, the necessary concentration can be attained by establishing a modern equivalent of our historic four-storey Georgian streets and squares, which could provide us with local facilities (including open space) within walking distance of our front doors, thus reducing the need to travel and allowing our streets to become proper places rather than mere thoroughfares to somewhere else.

Five years ago, CPRE London published the first edition of this report, thereby making an important contribution to the benefits of higher density urban housing becoming widely appreciated among land use planners and urban regeneration professionals. This second edition is published at a time when public policy embraces and promotes those benefits even more strongly than it did five years ago. Nevertheless, in many places, public misconceptions about higher density living continues to prevent the greatest public benefit from being gained through individual development schemes. The focus of this second edition, therefore, is on helping reassure planners and community representatives alike, and to help them ensure that new urban development brings with it lasting benefits for their communities.

Harley Sherlock AAdip, RIBA, FRSA
President of CPRE London and author of *Cities Are Good For Us*

01

Introduction

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) works to reduce the pressure for unnecessary and inappropriate development in the countryside. Achieving that will require urban areas to be made more attractive places to live for more people. In London, however, the reality is that around a quarter of a million people are leaving each year to live elsewhere in the UK.¹ That trend is repeated in other cities and large towns across the UK, showing that urban areas are not providing for the needs and aspirations of a substantial element of their populations. Along with good quality education and a safe urban environment, a high priority among the needs of London's out-migrants is the availability of good quality family housing with gardens at affordable prices. This study concentrates on London, but the circumstances and remedies also apply elsewhere.

The Government-commissioned *State of the English Cities* report² shows that major towns and cities are now recovering after years of decline and that urban net outmigration is being reduced in many areas. However, the exodus of London's population is continuing to create enormous pressure for new housebuilding and associated infrastructure right across south-eastern England, eating into the countryside, overwhelming transport systems and destroying the character of rural communities. And because it is the people who can afford to do so who are leaving London, it is also a significant factor in undermining London's own economic fortunes. It is therefore crucial in the interests both of London and the surrounding countryside to find ways of meeting London's housing needs *in London*.

Despite the huge net loss to the rest of the UK, London's population continues to rise as a result of its high natural birthrate and international immigration. The demand for new housing – and the pressure on London's infrastructure – therefore also continues to rise. Any success in reducing out-migration to the rest of the UK will further exacerbate this growth trend and add to the pressure for more and better housing within London.

Much post-war housing in London is dispersed and suburban in form. Even in the inner city: land has often not been treated as a scarce and finite resource. The dispersed pattern of development – including car-dependent workplaces, retail, leisure and other developments – have consumed greenfield land and fuelled traffic growth and congestion. Drawing on a wide catchment, such developments have undermined local facilities and local urban centres; many have disappeared completely. London is envied for its parks and other green spaces and, indeed, these are a crucial element of what makes London liveable. But, since the war, at least half of this space has been lost despite the fact that, until recently, London's population had been shrinking.

Now, the population is growing again and the Mayor hopes that 30,650 new homes will be built in London each year. This ambitious approach is greatly to be welcomed and the Mayor has shown that it can be achieved without encroaching into London's urban fringe or other green spaces. The first Objective of the Mayor's London Plan is:

'To accommodate London's growth within its boundaries without encroaching on open spaces.'

¹ Although around 260,000 people leave London each year for destinations elsewhere in the UK, only around 150,000 move in the opposite direction. The net loss of London's population to the rest of the UK is therefore currently running at around 85,000 people each year, although this number is exceeded by the net rate of immigration into London from overseas plus natural population growth (the excess of births over deaths). Source: Office for National Statistics

² *State of the English Cities*, published by ODPM, March 2006.

Central to achieving this will be to bring more redundant buildings and spaces back into beneficial use and to raise the density at which residential areas are developed – to fit more housing on the available land.

This report shows how it is possible to build desirable, good quality new homes to meet housing need in London and elsewhere without recourse to tower blocks and without encroaching on urban green open space, while at the same time reducing traffic congestion. Crucially, it shows that it need not be necessary for young families to move out of cities to find suitable new housing and attractive neighbourhoods. Indeed, some of the most desirable urban areas in the world, like many parts of Manhattan or central Paris, are densely populated. The same is true of parts of London: Kensington, Bloomsbury and Islington, for example. These areas are attractive for several reasons; not least is the rich diversity of amenities and services that a dense population supports. Conversely low density suburban areas, lacking local amenities, can have low market values. Through good design, new homes can avoid the kind of problems that are sometimes associated with higher densities.

London's highly desirable Georgian and Victorian streets and squares built for large, middle class families provide around 80 dwellings per hectare (dph) along with private gardens and enclosed green space. Today they still cater very well for families with children. Working class homes of this period were built at densities of up to 100 dwellings per hectare or higher, and still provided small back gardens or yards. We believe new housing in London could and should generally be built at densities of 80 homes per hectare or higher, with a mixture of family housing integrated with homes for smaller households in medium sized to larger schemes. In some conservation areas or lower density suburban areas, where medium or high density new housing would conflict with the character of an area, densities of new development may be somewhat lower, but for new housing developments in London, we think densities below 50dph are unlikely to be justified anywhere.

Achieving successful medium to high densities for new housing and building many more homes in London is an environmental imperative, but the benefits for improving quality of life in London go well beyond protecting the countryside and green open spaces. In particular, it increases the vitality of town centres and the viability of local businesses and services. In so doing, it reduces the need to travel by ensuring that new homes are within walking distance of shops, schools, doctors' surgeries, places of work and other social and leisure facilities. At average densities below about 70dph, these advantages of urban living start to be undermined.

For new housing, the Mayor's *London Plan* quite rightly prioritises locations where public transport provision is good, and employment sites and other facilities are easily accessible on foot or by bicycle. Higher density housing must be accompanied by policies which discourage large scale car-based retail and other developments designed to cater for large catchment areas. This will help sustain the viability and vitality of town centres. Above all, 'reducing the need to travel' must remain a fundamental principle for spatial planning in London.

The public policy environment – especially in London – has shifted dramatically in recent years in favour of raising densities for new housing developments. The Mayor of London³ has adopted a suitably ambitious range of target densities to aspire to for different areas within London. An enormous amount of progress has been achieved recently, with derelict land becoming much scarcer and average residential densities rising substantially. The average density of new housing in London has now reached 110 dwellings per hectare (dph), but there are concerns about a lack of family homes with gardens being built.⁴ In planning guidance issued in 2000 (Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 – *Housing*) and in its replacement planning

³ *The London Plan*, Mayor of London, February 2004, Table 4B.1, page 177.

⁴ *Land Use Change in England: Residential Development to 2004: January Update*, Table 3, ODPM/ONS, January 2006.

policy issued in draft in 2006 (Draft Planning Policy Statement 3), the Government has told planners to move away from low densities. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has also undertaken a great deal of work to promote higher densities through good design.⁵

However, the public, local councillors and MPs are frequently sceptical about raising densities and it remains a controversial issue. The Mayor, for example, is experiencing resistance from some of the London Boroughs. People are concerned about the possible impact that rising local populations may have on local services (including competition for school places), amenities and transport systems and parking space, or the character of neighbourhoods. There are also concerns that raising densities will mean less privacy or that dwellings will become smaller, private gardens will be a thing of the past and there will be insufficient provision for families with children. Poor sound insulation, construction quality and general design issues in a lot of modern housing all help to fuel concern and opposition. Many people still associate higher density housing with the appalling tower blocks of the 1960s and '70s and feel that problems created by those buildings are necessarily due to their density.

All of these concerns must be addressed. They can be resolved if care is taken to engage local populations in the planning of their areas' development, if good quality design becomes paramount and if growth is accompanied by appropriate investment in public services and amenities. CABE puts it thus:

'There is a real misunderstanding about what higher density housing is, particularly in the context of London and the South East. Many of the problems blamed on density are in fact a combination of problems with location, design, tenure mix, allocation policies, lack of management and maintenance.'⁶

and academic research has found that:

'Factors which were not necessarily related to density appeared to be the most important in [homebuyers'] priorities, size of home, its design details, the quality of construction.'⁷

This report supports the recent developments in London-wide and national policy. It confronts misunderstandings and fears about what 'higher density housing' is and it presents examples of developments in the capital that show the way forward. The conclusions include a list of initiatives by which local authorities can ensure the delivery of successful higher-density mixed-use urban development and the benefits that they provide for the environment and quality of life in urban areas.

The Thames Gateway

Much of the new housing that will be needed in south eastern England over the next decade or two is likely to take place in East London and elsewhere in the Thames Gateway. CPRE is generally strongly supportive of the Government's plans for the Thames Gateway: the area offers an unprecedented opportunity for the Government, the Mayor and local authorities to show what can be achieved in urban regeneration, particularly by accommodating new housing on urban brownfield land. The particular challenges presented by the Thames Gateway are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report.

⁵ For example, see *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher density work*, CABE, 2005.

⁶ *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher density work*, CABE, 2005, page 11.

⁷ *Housing Density: What do residents think?* Tunstall, Rebecca, Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics, for East Thames Housing Group, 2002.

Given the enormous amount of political capital and public expenditure being invested in the Thames Gateway, it is a crucial test-bed for the policy objectives of the Government's 2000 Urban White Paper and, indeed, for the *London Plan*. The Government's plans for the area challenge public authorities to 'raise their game' and create an urban environment which all built environment professionals can be proud of: one which works for people as well as for the local economy and for the environment in town and country. The approach advocated in this report will help meet that challenge.

02 The Compact Community

The opportunity to improve quality of life in London can rarely – if ever – have been more substantial: the Mayor has embraced the need to integrate London-wide spatial development, transport, economic development and social policy objectives; and the Government has called for an urban renaissance and included many of the recommendations of the Urban Task Force report in an Urban White Paper. Welcoming the *State of the English Cities* report in March 2006, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott said:

‘Cities are very much back in business as successful places to live and work.... People are returning to our towns and cities, which have more jobs, rising prosperity, better public services, and a cleaner, safer, greener environment.... We need to build on this success and widen the urban renaissance.’⁸

A variety of terms has been used to describe the kind of approach which can satisfy these objectives: ‘compact city’, ‘sustainable urban neighbourhood’, ‘urban village’ or ‘new urbanism’. These terms all describe a similar pattern of urban development, here called the compact community. All of these concepts are linked to the notion of ‘spatial efficiency’, which envisages the well-planned integration of transport infrastructure with housing and other development, thereby reducing the need to travel and reducing the threat of urbanised areas encroaching into the countryside.

Definition of the compact community

Well designed, higher density, medium-rise housing and mixed-use developments focused on town and local centres and other public transport hubs, large enough to offer a range of social and economic amenities within walking distance of people’s homes.

Many Londoners, particularly in the inner 19th Century ring of the city, already live in compact communities. The essential characteristics are that:

- they are mixed use: they provide a range of everyday social, recreational and retail amenities easily accessible on foot;
- the housing is sufficiently dense to provide a customer base which supports local services and amenities, including frequent public transport services;
- they include a mix of housing types and tenure, ensuring a range of income groups to allow employees to be found locally and to avoid pockets of deprivation; and
- they are linked to the public transport network in order to allow access to those amenities, such as major hospitals, workplaces and cultural institutions which, by their nature, cannot be local and must be centralised.

One or more of these characteristics has been absent from much of the housing, and many of the areas where it has been built, in the post-war period.

⁸ DCLG News Release 2006/0035, 7 March 2006: *England’s cities: best opportunity for 100 years to join Europe’s elite.*

‘The problem with parts of English towns and cities – particularly the rebuilt areas of the 1960s and the car-based suburbs of the 1980s and 1990s – is that the densities are just too low. What seems to be happening at the moment is that many quantitative planning measures – “residential density”, “overlooking distances”, and “car parking” – are being used in an overly simplistic way to dictate design. The result is that insufficient attention is paid to how we can design quality urban environments – and hence promote a better quality of life – alongside a more intensive use of space and buildings.’ [Urban Task Force]⁹

CABE identifies four key factors which make for successful higher density housing:

- location and sense of place;
- a successful allocation policy and occupancy;
- successful management approach;
- good design.

These issues are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report.

The benefits of compact communities

Successful well designed, higher density mixed use developments will:¹⁰

- improve the range and quality of local facilities available to residents;
- increase the viability of local businesses and amenities and the vitality of local centres;
- restore to residential streets a sense of place where people meet and children play rather than being just thoroughfares to somewhere else;
- promote a sense of community by facilitating casual social interaction and providing well-maintained public and private open space;
- increase security by providing passive surveillance;
- reduce journey lengths and the need to travel, particularly by car, and promote walking, cycling and public transport; and
- meet housing needs while protecting countryside and valued urban open space.

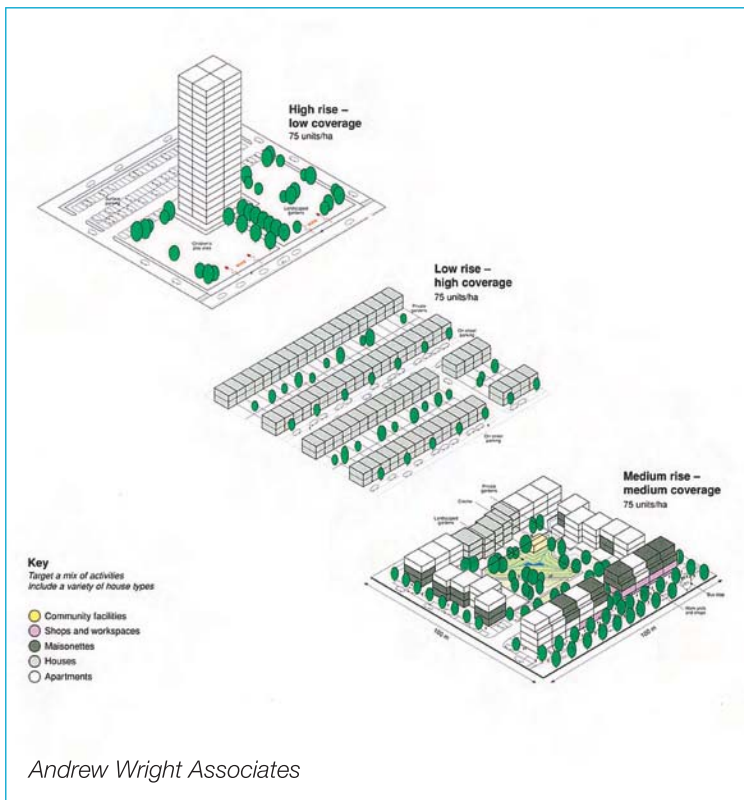
⁹ *Towards an Urban Renaissance. Final Report of the Urban Task Force Chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside*, Urban Task Force, 1999, page 60.

¹⁰ List adapted from Crookston, Clarke and Averly in *The Compact City*, page 134.

Misconceptions: high density and high rise

Amongst the public, there is a considerable degree of misunderstanding about what modern, high density development looks like or should look like. The frequently ill-conceived tower block developments of the 1960s and '70s are very largely to blame for this. Although they are often considered synonymous with high density, the tower blocks were in fact built to no higher – and sometimes lower – densities than the terraced streets that they replaced. Moreover, although they often provided improvements to living conditions in some respects (such as indoor lavatories), the design was entirely inappropriate to the needs and aspirations of many people (families with children in particular). Many of the terraces that were demolished under the 'slum' clearances of the post-War period would now be highly sought-after townhouses.

The following illustration shows how the densities provided for by tower-blocks can be achieved without exceeding three storeys, and including private and communal gardens.



These three very different architectural forms are built to exactly the same density of 75 dwellings to the hectare.



12-storey tower blocks in Brixton, London



The 3-storey Georgian homes are built to the same density as the 12-storey tower 1960s blocks (about 345 habitable rooms per hectare (hrh) (100dph)

The social problems associated with tower blocks led to a justifiable public outcry. Despite the fact the density of the tower blocks was usually no higher than the housing that they replaced, this was not understood and the 'solutions' were framed in terms of lowering densities rather than in adopting better housing designs and higher quality building work, which was at the heart of the problem. Local communities need reassurance that higher density housing does not mean re-creating the problems caused by tower blocks. It is crucial that, through the process of public consultation, planning authorities and developers effectively engage local communities, listen to and address their concerns. How they may do that is discussed below.

Mixed use

‘One of the main attractions of city living is proximity to work, shops and basic social, educational and leisure uses.’ [Urban Task Force]¹¹

Mixed use is critical to the successful compact community. The term means that a building, a development or an area is used for a variety of purposes: for instance shops, homes, offices, workshops, leisure, education and health facilities. Many established urban areas already enjoy a successful mix of uses enabling easy access to local amenities. The key word is local: a balanced range of facilities and work within easy reach (say, 10 minutes walk) of where people live.

Mixed use is the characteristic which provides for most of the benefits that a successful compact development brings: reduced traffic and travel needs, local variety and vitality, and increased local surveillance which reduces anti-social behaviour and crime.

Promoting mixed uses is not just a matter of providing and protecting local facilities and services in residential neighbourhoods. It also means the reintroduction of residential uses into areas, such as parts of central London or other London town centres, where the resident population has diminished or disappeared.

Mixed housing types and tenure

For compact communities to function well, it is important that, within residential areas, concentrations of single income groups and single types of housing tenure are avoided. A balanced, mixed community can prevent the growth of extensive areas of deprivation which can support few amenities and local facilities.

A good mix of tenures (including social rented and shared ownership) and house types therefore provides for essential workers (such as nurses, teachers, shop workers, bus drivers, street cleaners) to live locally, helping to reduce the need to travel. This has social as well as environmental benefits, for example for parents who wish to work part-time or close to home. It also promotes community stability by allowing residents to continue living locally when their needs or circumstances change. Security is improved through the surveillance provided by people coming and going throughout the day and evening, as compared to homogeneous ‘dormitory’ developments which are largely abandoned for much of the time.

An area with mixed tenure housing typically will have rented, owner-occupied and ‘shared ownership’ housing and will provide housing at a range of prices, including subsidised and free market housing. Research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)¹² shows that well planned and managed mixed income, mixed tenure communities are popular and successful, and commercially attractive to developers. A second report by JRF offers good practice on how to create and manage mixed-income communities, with a particular emphasis on the needs of families with children.¹³ One of the most

¹¹ *Towards an Urban Renaissance. Final Report of the Urban Task Force Chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside*, Urban Task Force, 1999, page 64.

¹² *Mixed communities: success and sustainability*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation ‘Foundations’, March 2006, Ref 0176.

¹³ *Attracting and retaining families in new urban mixed income communities*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation ‘Findings’, January 2006, Ref 0026.

important design considerations is considered to be that different tenures should be indistinguishable in terms of quality and appearance. Other important considerations that JRF identifies include:

- working with all stakeholders from an early stage;
- including a range of shops and services on-site;
- creating appropriate management structures;
- encourage the formation of residents' groups; and
- include well designed public spaces.

Intermediate housing – 'Intermediate' housing is subsidised housing for those who cannot afford open market prices but do not qualify for social housing. The actual need for intermediate housing may be very much higher than has hitherto been recognised. This is because, rather than formally registering their need in this regard, many people will choose to leave London altogether (or may simply be unaware of assistance which is available to them). Currently, within the 'affordable' element in new housing, the Mayor seeks to achieve a 70:30 split between social and intermediate housing respectively. In view of the possible extent of the 'hidden' need for intermediate housing and the need to reduce net out-migration from London, that split may need to be revised and mechanisms considered by which support for intermediate housing may be increased.

Generally, 'planning gain' agreements ('Section 106 agreements') will not in themselves be sufficient to provide fully for affordable housing needs in many parts of the UK including much of London. There is no question that increasing the supply of affordable housing will require direct public subsidy at a greater level than is currently the case. This is despite the fact that the level of public subsidy has increased substantially since 2003, starting to reverse a dramatic reduction since the late 1970s. Nevertheless, research recently published by the Government¹⁴ shows there is still likely to be a great deal of scope for increasing the amount of funding brought forward from the private sector: planning gain agreements are now attached to less than half of planning permissions for major residential developments across England and to very few applications for commercial and industrial developments.

¹⁴ *Valuing Planning Obligations in England - Final Report*, Department for Communities and Local Government, May 2006.

Measuring density

In London, density is normally measured in habitable rooms to the hectare. Elsewhere it is measured in dwellings to the hectare (dph). In this report and in the *London Plan*, the area upon which the calculation is based is the *net residential area*: i.e. the area covered by the residential buildings themselves plus internal access roads and ancillary open space within the development. This is *net residential density*. An alternative measure – *gross residential density* takes a wider area that includes non-residential space such as major roads, schools, parks, shopping centres and so on. This report refers only to net residential density.

Habitable rooms per hectare (hrh) A typical 3-bedroom house comprising 2 double bedrooms, a single bedroom and a living/dining room is counted as 4 habitable rooms. Bathrooms and small kitchens are not considered habitable rooms. A house with the same number of bedrooms but with a living room and dining kitchen has 5 habitable rooms.

A typical 3-bedroom house with 4 or 5 habitable rooms would suffice to accommodate 4 or 5 people, and a typical one bedroom flat with living/dining room, kitchen and bathroom, 2 people.

Dwellings per hectare (dph) Urban residential densities typically range from (at the low end) 20 dwellings per hectare or less to a few hundred dph. The Mayor's *London Plan* presents a useful matrix of appropriate densities for various areas of differing characteristics (essentially, proximity to town centres and transport), and this general concept is also established in *PPS3 Housing*.

Density and car parking

The density of residential development in London today is influenced not so much by regulations about overcrowding as by local authority requirements for the amount of car parking that is to be provided. It is not unusual for up to 40% of the area of some residential developments to be given over to car parking and access. According to the former London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC):

‘the single most important factor by far in releasing additional housing capacity is the change in parking requirements.’¹⁵

Even in central London, where levels of car ownership are low and many residents already choose not to own a car, parking and density standards have been some of the factors inhibiting the supply of affordable homes.¹⁶ Consultants Llewelyn-Davies, who considered this issue for LPAC, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and the Government Office for London (GOL), concluded that reducing the requirement for off-street parking to one space per dwelling increased by 50% the number of dwellings that could be provided on a given site. Removing the requirement altogether doubled it.¹⁷ Government planning policy strongly urges local planning authorities to avoid wasting land through excessive parking provision by saying, for example, that they should:

‘examine critically the standards they apply to new development, particularly with regard to roads, layouts and car parking, to avoid the profligate use of land’¹⁸

¹⁵ LPAC *Sustainable Residential Quality, Interim Advice*, Annex 1, Report 20/98, para 13.

¹⁶ *Home Delivery, Communities and Homes in Central London*, ChiCL, 1998, pages 4 and 90.

¹⁷ *Sustainable Residential Quality: new approaches to urban living*, Llewelyn Davis, DETR/LPAC/GOL, January 1998.

¹⁸ Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: *Transport*, DETR, 2001.

However, although the building of more compact communities in appropriate locations will reduce the need for cars, adequate provision for car parking is an important part of what makes a development attractive (or even acceptable) as a place to live for many people. Moreover, it is also clear that the fear that new housing might create excessive competition for limited parking space is by far the most important factor in generating local opposition to new housing. This is likely to be the case irrespective of the quality of the proposals and irrespective of the other benefits that additional housing might bring to the local community.¹⁹ In addition to jeopardising the chances of development taking place at all, such opposition could seriously undermine the value of the consultation process by skewing attention away from the need to maintain a high standard of design and other considerations. If not dealt with satisfactorily, problems created by insufficient parking provision will sustain and inflame public antipathy to higher density development generally.

One possible solution is the creation of shared ownership car clubs for new development. Underground parking becomes viable at densities over 100dph (as does multi-story car parking). Alternatively, car-parking on the street or elsewhere within the development must be carefully designed so as to prevent parked cars from dominating the environment. This is especially the case in respect of 'permanent' parking for residents as opposed to short-term parking by visitors to the area. Efficient and creative ways of accommodating car parking are discussed in some detail in CABE's *Better places to live*.²⁰

The opportunities to build car-free developments have been under-exploited in the UK and a campaign by Carfree UK – supported by CPRE – is currently underway to promote the potential and benefits of car-free developments. The *Carfree UK* website²¹ says:

'Some European countries, particularly Germany, have been building larger car free developments, often supported by other measures such as car clubs, improvements to public transport, pedestrian and cycling facilities. Demand for housing in these places has been high, with many residents giving up their cars on moving there. The proportion of households with children in these developments is unusually high.'

Avoiding 'town cramming'

Calls for higher densities often lead to concerns about 'overcrowding' or 'over-development'. The charge is often of 'town cramming', implying not just overcrowded accommodation but pressure on transport, roads, car-parking space, open space, and other amenities and local services.

Local communities need to be reassured that these outcomes will be avoided and that additional new housing will not simply be 'dumped' on their areas in an ill-planned way with no benefit to the local community and no regard to the potential consequences. The 'compact communities' model, coupled with good quality public consultation, can achieve that reassurance. Loss of privacy and overshadowing, for example, can be dealt with through good design. Congested streets can be dealt with through raising densities to levels that support local amenities that can be reached without relying on transport by car. Traffic can also be dealt with through combinations of traffic engineering, speed restrictions and street and pavement redesign such as Home Zones – where pedestrians are given priority over cars – which can bring about substantial improvements to the urban environment and quality of

¹⁹ *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher density work*, CABE, 2005, page 16.

²⁰ *Better places to live by design: A companion guide to PPG3*, DTLR/CABE, 2001.

²¹ <http://www.carfree.org.uk/>

life. Sound car-parking provision is crucial in order to address fears that existing provision will be over-subscribed when additional development takes place. Provision for local amenities needs to be planned-in at the design stage. Rather than threatening open space, raising the density of an existing built area can relieve development pressure on open space and allow more to be created – or existing open and green spaces to be improved. It also helps generate local authority revenue with which open space and other amenities may be maintained.

In short, higher density should not mean town cramming and local authorities should seek to reassure the public through presenting well thought out – and properly costed – plans and proposals at an early stage. Efforts should be made to present clear statistics showing how accessibility to amenities and services will *improve* rather than reduce as a result of densities being raised and local neighbourhoods being better planned.

Good design

As indicated above, to work well and be acceptable to the local community, higher density developments require careful attention being paid to design quality, both in respect of individual buildings and the layout of developments. Good design should ensure that homes meet modern standards and expectations for internal space, private, communal and public open space, privacy and soundproofing, natural light and ventilation. The streetscape design should give priority to people over vehicles, meet the needs of pedestrians, children, the mobility impaired and cyclists and allow for adequate surveillance of streets from dwellings. The ‘companion guide to PPG3’, *Better Places to Live*²² provides a great deal of excellent advice for planners and developers on these and other issues. In particular, it states that:

‘It is a common misunderstanding that higher housing densities need to result in lower standards of space around and within the home. While large detached houses will tend to be more spacious than town centre apartments, the case studies suggest that it is possible to provide generous living space and, at the same time, achieve higher development densities.’

CABE identifies the following design features for successful higher density housing schemes:

- good sound insulation between dwellings;
- relationship with the surrounding area in terms of connectivity, scale and integration;
- proximity to good public transport (i.e. frequent, reliable, clean and safe);
- priority for pedestrians and cyclists;
- high-quality open space to provide visual relief and recreation;
- some usable private outside space, such as patios or balconies for almost all properties;
- clear demarcation between public and private spaces;
- adequate level of car parking that does not dominate the street scene.

²² *Better places to live by design: A companion guide to PPG3*, DTLR/CABE, 2001.

Good design will be important if higher income earners and higher skilled and motivated individuals are to be attracted to live in urban areas and is therefore crucial for those areas' economic prospects. In addition to the features identified above by CABE, good internal space standards are also a major element of good design. Unfortunately, much modern housing has fallen short – often a long way short – of the standards that were common in the 1970s. As a result, such housing is not sufficiently attractive to offer a real alternative to individuals who are able to move out of urban areas to find more spacious housing elsewhere. The Parker Morris standards – developed for all public housing in the 1960s – were made mandatory for New Towns and all council housing, but the mandatory nature of the standards was ended in 1980. CPRE believes that planning authorities should adopt policies which require the application of minimum standards equivalent to Parker Morris for all new housing. This would not prevent the residential densities and other design quality criteria advocated in this report from being achieved.

Not only will new development need to be attractive for its own sake, but the design of housing and town centres has a profound effect on the social development of an area and will be crucial if the poor reputation of some urban areas is to be improved. PPS1 *Delivering Sustainable Communities*²³ requires LPAs to reject applications for poorly designed developments and CPRE has strongly welcomed this. We also welcome the Government promoting the Design Champion model among public agencies and planning authorities (although it may be arguable that there are too many disparate and unconnected schemes and titles such as this, which might lead to a lack of momentum behind any particular one).

The *Building for Life standards*, promoted by CABE, can be adopted in order to promote best practice in respect of numerous design factors, including 'character', roads, parking and pedestrianisation, construction and 'environment and community'.

This report presents several examples of good quality design in higher density housing. The following initiatives can all be pursued by local authorities to help improve the quality of design:

- Design coding
- Design reviews
- Development briefs
- Concept Statements
- Design Statements
- CABE's Design Quality Indicator (DQI) assessment
- Design Advisory Panel
- The *Planning for Real* methodology
- The *Enquiry by Design* methodology

Management and the public realm

Research undertaken by MORI for the Government demonstrates that people attach a great deal of importance to the maintenance and cleanliness of the public realm and they consider these issues to

²³ ODPM, 2005.

be among the highest priorities for improvement where they live.²⁴ But, as densities increase, the rate at which litter and graffiti accumulate may also increase. Good neighbourhood-level street management allows standards to be maintained and rubbish, graffiti and deterioration to be avoided (or swiftly dealt with), and ensures prompt repairs to roads and pavements. Where applicable, a management agreement tenants/leasees and landlords or freeholders, setting out standards and service charges, should maintain the public realm and desirability of developments and also help maintain property values.

We welcome recent moves by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to consult on a 'Respect Standard' for housing management.²⁵ This initiative aims to help *'create, sustain and improve places where people feel bound together by shared values and where anti-social behaviour and disrespect for people and local environments are not tolerated'*. DCLG recognises that strong housing management makes a major contribution to delivering sustainable communities and can make a real difference to the quality of residents' lives.

Local authorities can put in place private public realm management companies made democratically accountable through appointment by the local authority. This approach has been shown to be effective in helping to maintain a high quality of urban environment in private developments in the Greenwich Millennium Village. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation advocates the development of community trusts for neighbourhoods, described as *'an administrative body to deliver services as well as taking the role of ensuring that estate agreements are adhered to by all households'*.²⁶ These trusts may be crucial for the development of a community spirit and brokering effective communication between the community and the local authority.

²⁴ *Physical Capital – Liveability in 2005*, MORI/CABE, June 2005.

²⁵ ODPM News Release 2006/0088: *Government consults on respect standard for housing management*. 12 April 2006.

²⁶ *Developer and purchaser attitudes to new build mixed tenure housing*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Findings', March 2006, Ref 0126.

03 Case Studies: Where Higher Density Housing Works

Georgian and Victorian housing brought up to date

Some of the more obvious examples of high density housing implicit in a compact community are three- and four-storey Georgian and Victorian streets and squares. They have adapted well to the 20th Century and look set to provide popular housing well into the 21st. Enclosed communal open space within the squares provides an ideal safe environment for children and, indeed, helps to engender a strong sense of community. Additional private garden space can be provided by roof terraces.

In the last forty years or so, many of these developments have suffered because they were not designed with protection from the motor car in mind. However, these problems can be rectified through the creation of Home Zones, where local authorities give priority to pedestrians and cyclists over motorists in specified residential streets.

Figure A shows a cross-section of Georgian houses in Claremont Square rehabilitated in the 1970s by Andrews Sherlock & Partners for the London Borough of Islington. Each house is converted into two, such that spacious family dwellings constitute about 65% of the units. The lower (two-storey) dwelling has its own front door in the basement area, a living room, dining/kitchen room and garden at the same level and two double bedrooms on the upper (ground) floor. The upper (three-storey) dwelling is 'inverted'. Its entrance is the original ground floor front door, it has two bedrooms on the first floor, a living room and single bedroom on the second floor and on the third floor a large kitchen-cum-family room opens onto a roof terrace formed by taking away the original rear attic room.



Georgian houses in Tibberton Square, London, providing about 350 hrh (100dph)

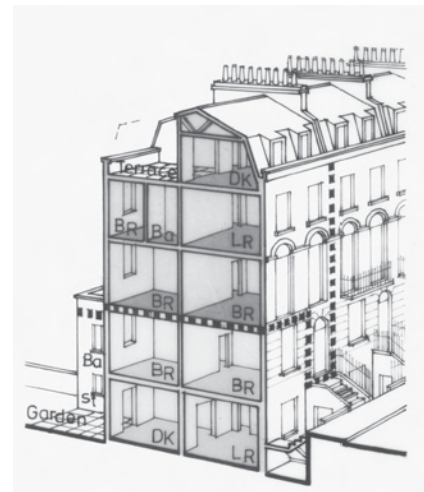


Figure A

In spite of the fact that these conversions provide much more generous space standards than are currently provided in new dwellings, the net residential density (for development control purposes) is 520 habitable rooms per hectare (hrh) – around 200dph – twice the density recommended in Islington's (then) development plan. If one were to take into account the fact that this particular terrace faces onto a large square and were to add the open space of the square to the density calculation, the density would drop to 350hrh (around 120dph), still 35% over the UDP maximum. Having reached the market through the right-to-buy procedure, these properties fetch very high prices, demonstrating there is no antipathy to high-density housing if people like its style and surroundings.

Late 20th Century examples

Figure B shows four-storey housing at Wood Lane near White City, designed by architects Darbourne and Darke for the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Built in the early 1980s to a density of 370hrh (around 155dph), including an internal square of open space, it was one of the last (and best) examples of local authority housing in London. Instead of the fronts of the houses facing open space it is the backs that do so. This allows the family dwellings (comprising about 60% of the units) on the lower two floors to have their own private gardens which open onto larger open space beyond – a big advantage in busy streets like Wood Lane which would never become safe for children to play in. Every dwelling has its own front door onto a street (or a footpath through the square).

Unlike most large council estates of the 1960s and 1970s, the Wood Lane housing does not turn its back on the surrounding streets, thus avoiding the ghetto-like feeling of much council housing. However it does share with some council estates problems over the management of its underground car parking, a feature which could be an asset to some inner-city housing as it is in cities like Stuttgart where Darbourne and Darke have built similar housing.

The pattern of two-storey family dwellings with their own front doors, private gardens opening onto a communal open space at the rear, and small dwellings on the upper floors, was successfully pursued by Islington Council's Architects Department during the 1980s and early 1990s in the rehabilitation of the borough's four-storey inter-war housing estates. **Figure C** shows a typical example where, as well as providing the family dwellings (about 50% of the units) with private gardens at the rear, the Council turned the useless pieces of municipal grass at the front of the block (notorious for litter) into private gardens leading to the front door. The gardens at the rear replaced the enormous asphalt drying yards made redundant by launderettes and washing machines. The density of most of these estates, after conversion, is also around 370hrh (155dph).

Figure D shows part of Isledon Road near Finsbury Park in London. This scheme, built in the 1990s and based on a traditional street pattern, has a density of about 330hrh (110dph). About 50% are family dwellings.



Figure B



Figure C



Figure D

Recent higher density housing

Below, we describe several modern housing developments in London which achieve higher densities. Further examples from the UK and Europe are presented in CABE's *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher density work* (2005).²⁷

Figure E shows new housing designed by the architects Levitt, Bernstein & Pollard, Thomas and Edwards at Royal Free Square on the Liverpool Road in Islington, London. Again the three-, four- and five-storey housing is generously provided with private and communal open space but the residential density of the scheme is nevertheless about 335hrh (130dph). About 30% are family dwellings.



Figure E

Figure F shows Blenheim Court, Sussex Way, off Marlborough Road, Islington. It is a modern development in the form of two small squares surrounded by four-storey housing, the cross-section of which is similar to that in the Georgian conversions in Claremont Square, described above. Most blocks comprise 2-bedroom maisonettes with roof terrace above 3-bedroom maisonettes with private gardens. Others comprise 1-bedroom flats and maisonettes. The development achieves 111dph (c300hrh), two-thirds of which have three bedrooms. The photograph shows the rear of one of the terraces as seen from just outside the brick-walled back gardens of the lower dwellings. **Figure G** shows the site plan, with the four-storey squares surrounding public green space.



Figure F

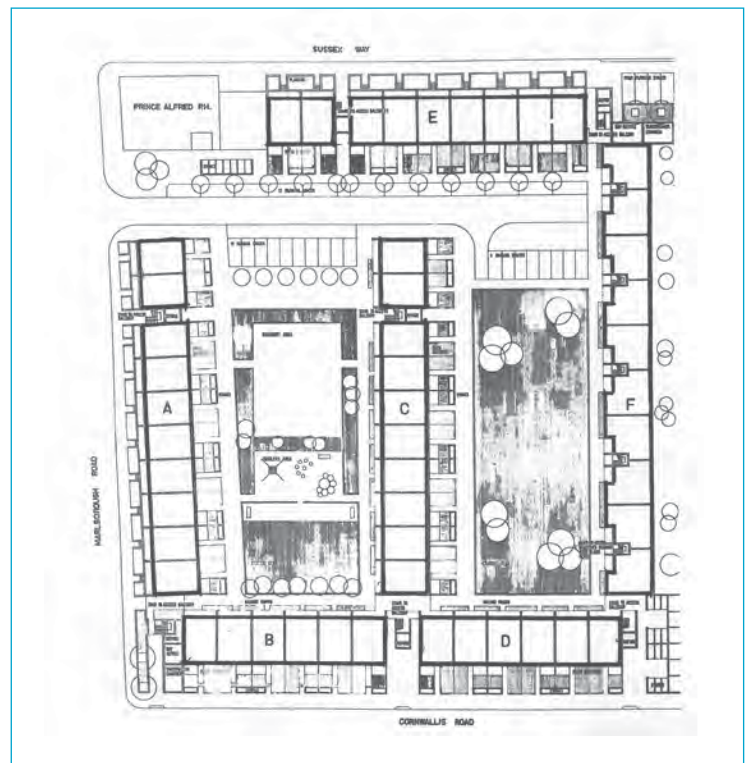


Figure G

²⁷ *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher density work*, CABE, 2005.

Compact developments of the near future are exemplified by Haworth Tomkins's winning entry (**Figure H**) in the competition organised by Coin Street Community Builders for housing and a community centre on a South Bank site close to the London Eye. This is another case of three-, four- and five-storey buildings surrounding a communal open space, with the large family dwellings having their own front doors and small private gardens. And, again, the density of the housing element of the project is approximately 400hrh (145dph), despite the fact that, as with all the other examples, communal open space is included in the site area.

BedZed (**Figure I**) by the Peabody Trust and Bill Dunster Architects, is a development of 99 mixed tenure homes – and workspace for 200 people – at Beddington in south London. These homes need only 10% of the heat energy of a conventional house and are designed to use locally produced renewable energy. All flats and houses in the scheme enjoy generous access to sunlight and external green roof terraces, and/or gardens and conservatories. A sports pitch and pavilion, work space and other commercial space occupy more than a third of the site. 95% of the units have gardens and they range from 1-bedroom flats to 4-bedroom townhouses. The same design could be built in an inner city context without the sports pitch and pavilion but including the work space and still achieve a density of 352hrh (120dph).



Figure H (Hayes Davidson)



Figure I

The very different examples above show that well designed higher density housing can be among the most attractive and desirable property in urban areas. It can include a generous proportion of family accommodation with gardens and have all the advantages of everyday amenities and services close to hand.

04 Where to Build Compact Communities

‘Location is a vital factor in creating a more flexible density policy. There are certain areas where the priority should be to increase the intensity with which space is used. Transport hubs and town centres both justify higher population densities and a more diverse mix of uses.’ [The Urban Task Force]²⁸

London’s town centres

‘Thriving town centres are the focus of urban life. They are central to sustainable development because they are easily accessible by a choice of transport. Good public transport is essential and so, too, is the quality of environment. People want well-planned town centres where they can live, enjoy shopping, working and local culture. Too often, town centres have been sacrificed to busy roads: the New Deal for Transport will give priority to people over traffic.’ [DETR]²⁹

London has a network of about 200 larger town centres (and many more local and neighbourhood centres). With their transport connections and local amenities town centres are also ready-made locations for new compact development. They provide the focal points for sustainable urban communities where new housing can be built amidst a rich variety of local activities.

As the Mayor’s *London Housing Capacity*³⁰ study has shown, local authorities frequently grossly underestimate the capacity of their areas to accommodate new housing and there is considerable potential for new housing on under-used land around many of London’s town centres. A failure by local authorities to appreciate the extent to which new housing can be accommodated in their areas on urban brownfield land will lead to unnecessary resistance to new development. An appropriately thorough approach to urban capacity assessment takes proper account of the vast potential of:

- small sites which are vacant or derelict;
- sites which can be reclaimed from temporary uses such as advertising hoardings or informal car parking;
- the scope for higher residential densities;
- flats over shops; or
- change of use in the case of, for example, redundant light industrial sites.

²⁸ *Towards an Urban Renaissance. Final Report of the Urban Task Force Chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside*, Urban Task Force, 1999, page 64.

²⁹ *A New Deal for Transport*, DETR, 1998, para. 3.105.

³⁰ *2004 London Housing Capacity Study*, Greater London Authority, July 2005, ISBN 1 85261 761 6.

In a study³¹ commissioned by LPAC, GOL and the DETR, the consultants Llewellyn-Davies examined the potential for new housing within 800m – ten minute walk – of town centres. Here, the requirement for parking could be reduced to one space per dwelling, or waived altogether, allowing residential density in the range of 150 to 700hrh (30-275dph) according to proximity to the town centre and to public transport, the type of dwelling (whether houses or flats) and the level of parking needed.

Suburban areas lacking vibrant local centres

Densities can also be increased, and more compact communities introduced, at carefully selected locations within the suburbs (where 60% of the population of London live). It is not necessary to build on open space or damage the green and spacious character of the suburbs which residents are, quite rightly, concerned to protect.

A wider range of uses, supported by higher density housing on previously developed land, can be promoted around stations and other local centres that are well served by public transport. Many of these were built before the age of mass car ownership to provide the local amenities, particularly shops, which the advent of out-of-town shopping has since eroded. In other neighbourhoods lacking local centres, the so-called food deserts, new concentrations of local amenities and housing can be developed to meet local housing requirements, provide facilities for the surrounding community and reduce the need to travel.

‘For some suburban areas this could involve “retrofitting” or “recycling” land and buildings to provide better local services at focal points, and improved public transport connections. It could also involve development densities and provision of services increasing in order to attract and integrate new residents within existing communities.’ [Urban Task Force]³²

Development in gardens (‘backland development’) – In recent years there has been an upsurge of developer interest in building new housing on private gardens. ‘Intensification’ in this way raises the residential density of an area, but can damage many areas’ character and quality. It can also make urban or suburban housing less attractive to families with children, and it can reduce wildlife habitat and the area of porous ground which helps prevent flooding. Fundamentally, backland development rarely meets the objectives of a ‘compact community’ because it is not undertaken in a strategic way which provides for the incorporation of the other necessary components described elsewhere in this report.

CPRE does not oppose all backland development in principle, but we strongly oppose the random, speculative development of private gardens. The costs and benefits of development proposals need to be fully assessed and implications of different options for development understood by decision makers and communities. Decisions about future development should be made on the basis of locally agreed development plans and policies drawn up in the light of local knowledge, understanding and aspirations. In short, if there is to be some development on private gardens in residential areas then it should be planned for proactively and serve the overall public interest – rather than merely serving the short-term, financial interests of backland developers and home owners who sell their properties to them.

³¹ *Sustainable Residential Quality: new approaches to urban living*, Llewellyn Davis, DETR/LPAC/GOL, January 1998.

³² *Towards an Urban Renaissance, Final Report of the Urban Task Force Chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside*, Urban Task Force, 1999, page 51.

Thames Gateway

The opportunities to create brand new compact communities are plentiful in the Thames Gateway area where much of south eastern England's urban brownfield land is situated. The Government's Thames Gateway project should be driven and shaped by the objective of creating desirable urban areas that will attract a good proportion of the quarter million or so people who leave London each year to live elsewhere in south eastern England.

Opportunities lie within individual large urban brownfield sites as well as in intensifying existing residential areas through infill development and redevelopment. The Thames Gateway therefore presents a major opportunity for the Mayor and the Government to demonstrate their ability to promote high quality urban regeneration.

Under the 2003 *Sustainable Communities Plan*, the Government has a target for 120,000 additional dwellings in the Thames Gateway from 2003 to 2016. However, this target was based essentially on the (then) current and planned transport infrastructure capacity limits, rather than on the likely availability of land. It is highly unlikely that the figure represents the true capacity of the Thames Gateway to accommodate new housing in urban areas and there is therefore a danger that the 120,000 figure will be translated into less than optimal density requirements on a site-by-site basis. Unless appropriate minimum standards are adopted to guide the density of new development, there is a risk that the benefits of compact communities (as well as the scope for further growth beyond 2016) may be substantially undermined. There may also be a risk that the relatively modest population growth represented by the 120,000 figure may be insufficient to yield local authority revenue to properly maintain public green open spaces and other amenities within the Thames Gateway.

The 120,000 target requires that strain on transport infrastructure is minimised by creating employment opportunities close to residential areas. There is, however, little evidence that this is happening in any substantial way. There is therefore a serious risk of the Thames Gateway being developed as dormitories for central London workers and of new transport infrastructure catering largely for long-distance travel including by car, instead of local journeys made by other means. There have recently been strong indications that the housebuilding target will be increased to 160,000 over the same period, although almost all the increase would be confined to London and the concerns described above will therefore continue to apply elsewhere.

It is important that the expansion of housing development in the Thames Gateway is accompanied by an effective economic development and job-creation programme so that homes and jobs can be developed together. The Government has indicated that it wishes to use the Thames Gateway programme as an opportunity to explore ways of moving towards 'carbon-neutrality' in new developments³³ and that objective would require reducing the need to travel through jobs and homes being in close proximity.

The Thames Gateway provides a great deal of scope for using new and enhanced public transport services to make viable the re-development of large brownfield sites which are currently inaccessible except by car. The Millennium village in Greenwich – made possible through the extension of the Jubilee line – is a classic example. The possible extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Barking Reach could be another.

³³ Speech to Green Alliance by Rt. Hon. Yvette Cooper MP, Minister of State, 17 May 2006.

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games should provide an enormous boost to public and private investment in the London Thames Gateway and beyond. It is crucial that urban regeneration remains a central goal of the Government's investment strategy and decisions are made with a view to the legacy that improved public transport and town centre renewal can bring.

CPRE strongly welcomes the Government's Thames Estuary Parklands initiative, which should lead to a major, pro-active programme of landscape and greenspace enhancement and habitat management throughout the Thames Gateway. If successful, it will be a major factor in attracting business and new residents to the area as well as promoting leisure and tourism opportunities.

05 Winning Support for Compact Communities

The full participation of local residents, businesses and organisations will be indispensable in planning and designing the most successful compact communities. However, the issues raised above indicate that the support of the local community cannot be assumed and must usually be won through an effective and energetic consultation process. Disagreements arising out of failure to win-over local communities will need to be addressed by any future Government initiatives to devolve more decision-making powers to the local level (through, for example, the creation of 'urban parish councils').

Major housing developments at higher densities are most likely to work well and win local support when local authorities can demonstrate that the development will bring about or ensure:

- a reduction in car traffic and safer local streets particularly for children and older people;
- suitable levels of car-parking provision;
- the protection and provision of public and private open space;
- a greater range and quality of local services;
- better maintenance of the existing urban fabric;
- a real improvement in the quality of the neighbourhood; and
- a decent level of investment and care for the public realm (streets, footpaths, public buildings and open spaces, transport connections).

The Government has confirmed its support for better community participation:

'Formal processes and guidance are important. But they need to be supported by cultural change, with a new approach from planners and greater involvement by communities.'³⁴

An important element of reassuring local communities that raising densities will benefit them is to demonstrate that additional development will bring additional resources into the local area and that these resources will be spent in ways that will positively benefit the local community. The Government is currently considering a 'planning gain supplement' to replace or complement the current planning gain system (Section 106 agreements). CABE describes the idea of a charge levied on developers to mitigate the impact on communities, local services and infrastructure.³⁵ However, the model currently proposed by the Government, whereby a large proportion of the funds raised from developers will be retained by the local authority, could have the perverse effect of promoting development on greenfield land (from which profits – and therefore the potential magnitude of the tariff – are likely to be greatest) rather than promoting urban regeneration. It could also undermine the redevelopment of brownfield sites by adding to costs. CPRE therefore believes that the funds raised should be distributed in a way that is consistent with wider spatial planning and urban regeneration objectives. Whatever system is finally adopted, the local benefits must be made clear at the consultation stage if local support is to be forthcoming.

³⁴ *Sustainable Communities: Homes for all*, ODPM, January 2005, paragraph 3.15

³⁵ *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher density work*, CABE, 2005, page 25.

A potentially significant new initiative that is being promoted by CABE is the idea of local Charters which address, for example, standards of design, sustainability, affordability and community benefits. These could be very helpful in securing the engagement and support of the local community through the consultation process: in an area mooted for regeneration or redevelopment, a Charter is drawn up by the local authority in consultation with developers and incorporates the aspirations of the local community from the outset and sets out the rules of engagement for planners, developers and the public. It may be linked to initiatives such as those listed above for improving the quality of design, and compliance with the Charter should mean that proposals are able to progress more smoothly through the planning system.

A Design and Access Statement is now required to accompany planning applications to justify and explain the approach taken. They should show how new developments will fit into existing areas and meet policy objectives and could be an important opportunity to engender local support.

Work done by CABE has drawn on a selection of recent successful higher density housing schemes in the UK and Europe. It identifies five major lessons that should form the basis for agreements between local authorities and house builders³⁶ (and should also be used to better engage the general public):

- **Understand the economics of the scheme** – Higher density schemes are enormously varied and complex. Planning authorities should be prepared to put significant effort and expertise into understanding the constraints on developers when it comes to negotiating community benefits.
- **Build consensus through collaborative working** – Developers and planning authorities should foster a productive relationship through, for example, pre-application meetings, holding regular meetings through a housing forum, study tours, and good masterplanning ahead of detailed applications.
- **Invest in design quality** – Ensure that highway and other policies do not undermine good design; challenge developers to demonstrate design quality; and adopt design guides as policy.
- **Adopt high design standards** – There are a wide range of standards to draw on including CABE's and the Home Builders Federation's *Building for Life Standard* and English Partnerships' *Millennium Communities Standard*. Local authorities can encourage higher standards through: design awards; by appointing design champions; and using design guides.
- **Achieve sustainable urban neighbourhoods** – Ensure that environmental impact is minimised, including through: reducing the need to travel; good walking and cycling provision; thermal and water efficiency; and good management agreements for the public realm.

³⁶ *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher density work*, CABE, 2005, page 18.

06

Conclusions

The pattern of dispersed, sprawling residential development that has been all too typical in the UK's towns and cities in the mid- to late 20th Century should not be repeated. It has been profligate in its use of land while accommodating a dwindling population density and depriving communities of local amenities and fuelling traffic growth. In London as elsewhere, the low residential density of much 20th century development has not created a high quality and attractive living environment but, in many places, has left a legacy of a city disfigured by decay and environmental degradation, congestion and pollution.

This report has explained how there can be a better way forward, which draws on the most successful urban developments from the past as well as their modern equivalents. Successful higher density urban developments can be achieved where careful attention is given to the design quality, access to public transport, mixing uses and tenures, and effectively engaging developers and the local population in the planning process.

Planning policies, including those for specific sites, should be fully informed by the following initiatives:

- i. a thorough urban capacity assessment to allow the most suitable sites to be prioritised;
- ii. agreed standards of proximity of new housing to public transport;
- iii. agreed standards of proximity and accessibility to the necessary local shops, services and amenities;
- iv. a local authority Design Champion;
- v. an assessment of the scope for traffic management measures such as Home Zones to improve liveability;
- vi. an assessment of the necessary mix of tenures, dwelling types, costs and sizes;
- vii. an assessment of car-parking requirements.

Planning applications should be informed by:

- i. a local charter or compact setting out required standards of design, sustainability, affordability and community benefits;
- ii. design codes for specific development areas, covering issues such as internal space standards, standards for natural lighting and sound insulation.

Planning applications should be accompanied by:

- i. a good quality design and access statement;
- ii. an explanation of the benefits that the development would bring through additional investment in public services and amenities;
- iii. management agreements for the maintenance of the public realm, including an explanation of where the necessary funds will be derived from, including planning gain agreements.

Wider policy initiatives

Many of the above requirements can be encouraged by establishing standards in LDFs, Regional Spatial Strategies or Government policy that should apply across the board. Policies should be developed which apply beyond – but support – mixed-use and residential developments. Such policies include, in particular, those which prevent large-scale, car-based retail developments in out of town locations that undermine local facilities and other amenities. Transport planning to provide new and enhanced public transport services will enable the compact development of brownfield sites currently inaccessible except by car.



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

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