The Urban Village: A Real or Imagined Contribution to Sustainable Development?

Mike Biddulph, Bridget Franklin and Malcolm Tait
Department of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University

July 2002

1   Background

A number of development concepts have emerged which claim that, if achieved, they would deliver more sustainable urban environments. Specifically these concepts seek to transcend typical patterns of development, and instead capture and promote a different vision. Such concepts include the compact city (Jenks et al, 1996), the polycentric city (Frey, 1999), the urban quarter (Krier, 1998), the sustainable urban neighbourhood (Rudlin and Falk, 1999), the urban village (Aldous, 1997), the eco-village (Barton, 1999), and the millennium village (DETR, 2000). Gaining acceptance for these concepts and translating them into practice has, however, proved more difficult, and the only one which has resulted in any significant number of built examples is the urban village.

Despite the proliferation of developments under the urban village rubric, little academic research has been conducted into the phenomenon. The main exception is the work of Thompson-Fawcett (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 2000), who has investigated the background and philosophy of both the urban village and of the similar New Urbanism or Traditional Neighbourhood Development (TND) movement in the US. Her empirical work in the UK is limited to two case studies, the location of one of which is also the subject of a less critical paper by McArthur (2000). Both Thompson-Fawcett and commentators on the TND argue that the thinking behind the respective concepts is utopian, nostalgic, and deterministic, as well as based on a flawed premise about contemporary constructions of community (Audirac and Shermyen, 1994, Thompson-Fawcett, 1996, Southworth, 1997). Built examples too do not always match the vision, since in addition to giving substance to a 'cloudy paradigm' (Thompson-Fawcett, 2000:278), they are also subject to the whims of developers, the proclivities of residents, and the reality of economic and social forces (Leung, 1995, Southworth and Parthasarathy,1997).

This research aimed to expand and elaborate on the work of Thompson-Fawcett, looking at the origins and derivation of the urban village concept, the incidence and development of built (or planned) examples, and offering also a comparative dimension. The approach taken in the research focuses on a number of transformations which constitute the processes involved in conceptualising, developing and living in the 'urban village'. Central to this is to understand how multifarious strands of thinking have become 'fixed' into a seemingly homogeneous concept, and how this has then been transformed into a built product. To

achieve this, the research aims to understand a wide range of social processes and arenas, from the context within which the concept arose, through the construction of political claims about the urban village, and into the implementation of the concept as a physical transformation of the environment, which then becomes the lived experience of residents. Given the scope of the research, a broad, multidisciplinary approach needed to be adopted. The range of approaches drawn upon are loosely based around constructionist interpretations of the world which focus on two broad and interrelated areas. Firstly, research on this topic has been informed by the notions of structure and agency espoused by Giddens in his structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), by Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1977, 1990) and by actor-network theory (Latour, 1997 and Callon, 1991). This focus on the means by which structures and agency are mutually re-produced allowed the researchers to follow processes from the abstract and global down to the practical and local. Secondly, the research has drawn on theory related to discourse and language to determine the structuring of the transformations associated with the 'urban village' - how it has been discursively constructed and how it is propagated through linguistic means. This work has drawn on that of Foucault (1972) to understand the wider aspects of discursive structures, and the work of Fairclough (1992) to elucidate the means by which concepts are socially constructed. (Forthcoming academic papers elaborate on these theoretical issues.)

The research also aimed to make a contribution to wider debates in regard to how transformations of the built environment are understood. In doing so, the research draws on similar work in the field of built environment and cognate disciplines, including work on spatial form and social practice (Knox, 1987, King, 1996, Madanipour, 1996, Dovey, 1999), the geography of space and place (Bell and Haddour, 2000) and urban sociology (Gans, 1962, Dickens, 1990).

2   Objectives

The original aims and objectives contained in the research proposal can be grouped under four main headings:

2a   The background to the emergence of the urban village concept

- *To provide an understanding of the processes and forces which have led to the articulation of the urban village concept*
- *To elucidate the structural factors which have influenced the articulation of the urban village concept*
- *To assess the force and influence of human agency in shaping and promoting the urban village concept*
- *To analyse specific elements of the urban village concept, such as its derivation, rationale and constituent attributes*

Interviews with key players and a review of relevant literature showed how the urban village concept was formed and articulated (see Sections 4a and 4c). In addition, identification of the means by which the urban village concept was 'fixed' and 'unfixed' helped identify the role of structure and agency in producing and promoting the concept (see Section 5).

2b   The positioning of the urban village concept within wider planning, development and policy discourses

- *To appraise the value of the (urban village) concept in the context of sustainable development*
- *To evaluate the contribution of the urban village concept in promoting and achieving sustainable urban development.*

Evaluation of literature and interviews with key players highlighted the ambiguous relationship between the urban village concept and notions of sustainable development (see Section 4d and 5). Research evaluated the wider links between the urban village concept and notions of social sustainability, neighbourhood planning and good quality urban design (see Section 4a).

2c   The application of the urban village concept in specific localities

- *To appraise the processes and forces which impact on the adoption, interpretation, application and implementation of the urban village concept in specific locations*
- *To analyse the extent to which urban village design principles are adopted, and to analyse the reasons for any departure from them*

A questionnaire survey showed the variety of forms which urban villages assumed in different localities (see Section 4b). Case study research revealed some of the detailed processes by which the urban village concept was implemented in three greatly differing locations, and the differing interpretation of urban village principles (see Section 4d).

2d   The use of urban villages

- *To investigate the variety of values and meanings ascribed to developments informed by the urban village concept, on the part of all those individuals involved.*
- *To assess the extent to which the urban village as a lived experience accords with the intentions and perceptions of those who promote and use it*
- *To assess the extent to which principles of development accord with user aspirations*

Resident questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups revealed how residents experienced and used urban villages and allowed conclusions to be drawn about the extent of correspondence with the intentions of promoters (see Section 4d). Interviews also showed how meanings were attached to the case study developments by residents and professionals (see Section 4d).

2e   Contribution to theoretical debate in the built environment field in regard to the nature of the relationship between spatial form and social process

This has been achieved through the methodological and analytical approach adopted, which has facilitated an understanding of the transformations and processes involved in devising, promoting and implementing a development concept. Such understandings can be extrapolated to other development contexts and thus have a salience beyond this particular research. Contributions have been made in elaborating constructions of the urban village concept (Franklin and Tait, forthcoming), in introducing the idea of the 'fixing' and 'unfixing' of the urban village concept (Biddulph, Tait and Franklin, 2002) and in highlighting the significance of a full elucidation of process in understanding development outcomes (see Section 5).

3   Methods

3a   Background and emergence of the concept.

Literature relating to the urban village concept was reviewed to determine the rationale and constituent attributes of the urban village concept. A series of 22 interviews (Appendix 1) was then completed with individuals associated with the urban village concept and who represented a range of development interests. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and analysed according to a common set of categories. The discourse and language of the transcriptions was scrutinised to assess ways in which the concept was socially constructed. The interviews sought to elucidate information and perceptions on:

- the interviewee's involvement with the urban villages movement
- the Urban Villages Group/Urban Villages Forum
- history of the urban village concept
- characteristics of the urban village
- development principles for an urban village
- the application of the concept to specific developments
- the relationship to other concepts

3b   The positioning of the urban village concept within wider planning, policy and development discourse

A review of the literature relating to sustainable development, neighbourhood planning, urban design and related forms of development (such as TND and Transit Orientated Development in the US, and Millennium Villages in the UK) allowed the positioning of the urban villages in relation to related concepts. A review of UK planning policy in regard to housing land provision, urban renaissance, sustainable patterns of development and urban design provided an understanding of why the urban village concept has emerged and become endorsed in UK Government policy.

3c   The application of the urban village concept in specific localities

Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire was distributed to all local authorities (excluding County Councils) in Great Britain asking for details of urban villages (see Appendix 2). An exceptionally high return rate of 60% was achieved, identifying 55 developments termed 'urban villages'. This allowed comparison of schemes both with each other and with the principles of urban village development endorsed by the Urban Villages Forum. Analysis of planning briefs, masterplans and development frameworks sent by local authorities facilitated more detailed understanding of how development principles were being interpreted.

Case Studies

A case study approach was chosen in order to explicate the detailed processes of development decisions and outcomes. This method of research allows in-depth study and analysis and is particularly suitable to investigations of process in the context of a single environment (see Yin, 1994, Hakim, 1987). One criticism of this method is the lack of generalisability, but the

aim is not to seek statistical generality, but rather to seek explanation through definition of contextual factors (Yin, 1994). Other criticisms refer to lack of validity and reliability, and these were mitigated in the research by using multiple sources of evidence, by comparing findings from one case study with another, by having common field procedures and sets of questions, and by adopting a common format for the case study report (see Yin, 1994).

Three urban village case studies were selected, two fewer than originally set out in the research proposal. There were two reasons for this (and here we acknowledge the comments of one referee of the proposal). Firstly, background reading and the questionnaire survey showed just how disparate and contested 'urban villages' are, and that to understand how and why this was happening needed very detailed study of individual examples. Three cases would allow a more in depth investigation of the processes involved and would enable more interviews per development to be carried out. Secondly, an aim of the project was to study 'urban villages' in which residents had been living for two to three years, but the survey showed that the majority were at the plan stage or in the process of construction. Of the few that met the criteria, two (Poundbury and Crown Street) had been previously researched by Thompson-Fawcett (1998b). To revisit these risked that professionals and residents might reiterate existing accounts of the development (see Tait, 2000). It was also decided to abandon the proposal to study a 'non-urban village' development for comparative purposes. This was on the basis that definition of a 'normal' or 'typical' development was in itself problematic. Also, following the questionnaire results, it was apparent that urban villages themselves differed so significantly that it would be difficult to make any representative comparisons with a 'control' (as used in scientific methodology).

The case studies selected were:

- Bordesley Urban Village, Birmingham
- Garston Urban Village, Liverpool
- West Silvertown Urban Village, Royal Victoria Docks, London

Each of these exhibited marked differences in terms of location, history, form of development and local economy. Garston and West Silvertown were supported by the UVF.

The research involved:

1. Analysis of the physical, social and economic characteristics of the contexts and communities, and the recent planning and development history (using secondary and primary sources).
2. Interviews with key professionals (17 in West Silvertown, 11 in Bordesley and 13 in Garston) regarding the adoption of the concept, the development process and the resultant outcomes.
3. Information from residents as to how they used and felt about their living environment. Questionnaires (Appendix 3) were distributed to approximately one third of households. Returns were low - 46 in West Silvertown (4.9% of households), 29 in Bordesley (2.9% of households) and 56 in Garston (4.3% of households). In addition 23 interviews with residents were completed in West Silvertown, and focus groups held in Bordesley (3 residents) and Garston (12 residents) (Appendix 4). It is accepted that the findings are not representative, and gaining access and securing interest was difficult, especially in Bordesley (and here we acknowledge we have not been able to overcome the problems mentioned by a referee of the proposal). Every effort was made to contact a range of

residents of different ages, and from different tenures, with interviewers adopting a pragmatic strategy (see Buchanan et al, 1988). Interviews with children were arranged in one of the locations, but none turned up, and due to limited time constraints and the problems of access further attempts were dropped. Instead, interviews were carried out with primary school teachers, a nursery school manager, and community and youth workers to explore issues facing young people. Despite these limitations it is felt that at least a reasonable impression was obtained. Better results might have been achieved by more recourse to inducements, such as payments for focus groups and a prize draw for questionnaires, but this had not been budgeted for.

4. Observations, evaluations and photography by the researchers relating to urban form, mix of uses, housing and tenure types, activity and overall quality (acknowledging the potential subjectivity of this approach).

4 Results

4a The derivation and definition of the urban village

The urban village concept was first developed and promoted by the Urban Villages Group in the late 1980s, following a challenge from the Prince of Wales. The concept was guided by a philosophy and a set of principles which called for well designed, mixed use and sustainable urban areas, with a sense of place and community commitment (Aldous 1992). The credibility of the concept appears to derive not only from the legitimacy established by the Prince of Wales and the Urban Villages Group (later the Urban Villages Forum (UVF)), but also from its initial endorsement by the UK Government (DoE, 1997, Urban Villages Forum/English Partnerships, undated). More recently, however, it has been superseded in Government discourse by different concepts, notably in regard to urban renaissance and millenium villages (DETR, 2000, Urban Task Force 1999).

The context for the concept was one of increasing concerns with the quality of modern development, especially when compared with older, more traditional areas. In addition, the property recession of the late 1980s/early 1990s also meant that development professionals were willing to reconsider their approaches to development. The promotion of the concept was achieved by a small group of developers, investors, architects and planners brought together by the Prince of Wales to form the Urban Villages Group (UVG). The Prince, driven by his widely publicised thinking on architecture, human values and community (Jencks, 1988), led the call for a return to more human scale and aesthetic development, based on an analysis of how 'good' places were designed:

'there were many places that we'd all visited and we had all seen and had all admired which shone out as examples of mixed-use places where communities could flourish. And since there were such good examples, why was our generation stubbornly resisting or ignoring them and instead creating places that didn't achieve those high ideals?' (Trevor Osborne, ex-Chairman UVF)

In addition, legitimacy for the concept was derived through adoption of a variety of discourses which resonated with both old and new orthodoxies:

- Neighbourhood Planning - concepts of proximity and locality central to the 'urban village' reflect neighbourhood planning ideals originating in the 1920s (see Biddulph, 2000, Madanipour, 2001).
- Urban Geography and Sociology - village-like characteristics in cities have been identified for decades (Gans, 1962, Taylor, 1974). Particularly important to many proponents of the urban village has been the work of Jane Jacobs (1961) with her concerns for diversity and mixing uses (*'everything she said about urban areas was true'* (Robert Davies, UVG member)).
- Community Involvement - work to involve communities and give them a stake in their neighbourhoods was already popular in the field of urban design, and promoters of the urban village found a receptive audience for this approach.
- Urban Design - promotion of urban design by the UK Government is apparent through the Quality in Town and Country Initiative and the Urban Design Campaign (see Biddulph 1997). The urban village concept reflects this, emphasising design quality as defined, for example, by Jacobs 1961, Cullen 1961, Lynch 1981, Bentley et al, 1985, Gehl 1996. Similar development concepts are also endorsed internationally, for example Transit Orientated Development, Pedestrian Pockets (Kelbraugh 1989, Calthorpe, 1993) and TND, (Krieger and Lennertz, 1991).
- Sustainability - the late 1980s/early 1990s saw an increased interest in sustainability, and the urban village concept also drew on this: *'The twin objectives must therefore be to ensure a sustainable global environment; and to provide local environments that are [. . .] – more sustainable'* (Aldous, 1992 p.25).

Work to identify key principles and to 'fix' the concept in the early 1990s (Aldous, 1992) (Figure 1) was on the model of new-build schemes. However, a number of factors led to a shift in approach, including the difficulty of finding new-build sites, changes in personnel in the UVF and an increasing recognition that public money would be required (hence involvement with English Partnerships). Since the mid to late 1990s the focus has been on promoting the urban village as a regeneration tool, with the UVF advising on and endorsing developments which adequately reflected their principles. However, they have found it difficult to control the application of the name 'urban village' to developments which are in fact little more than ordinary housing estates.

4b   Questionnaire Survey of Local Authorities
The questionnaire survey identified 55 developments termed 'urban villages', with varying properties. The locations of the urban villages are illustrated in Figure 2.

Location
'Urban villages' are mostly located in urban areas and generally in inner urban areas. They have been built (or are planned) on a range of previous land uses - most commonly on mixed-use inner urban sites, for example old railway sidings, ex-industrial sites and older residential areas. Other previous uses include former large industrial and Ministry of Defence sites and hospitals, whilst a number (notably in the South East) are proposed for greenfield sites.

Size
Urban villages are ideally portrayed as distinctive neighbourhood units with a population of between 3000 and 5000. The research suggested however that these developments vary greatly in size from just over one hectare (Attercliffe in Sheffield) to nearly 300 hectares

(Swanpool in Lincoln), and with projected populations ranging from 160 to 15,000 (see Figures 3 and 4).

Range of facilities
One of the defining characteristics of urban villages is said to be mixed uses. In the survey most included food and grocery shops, play facilities and often a community hall. Fewer developments (especially the smaller examples) have post offices and a pharmacy. Most have some form of employment provision, although often minimal. Only two (Ancoats, Manchester and Buckshaw Village, Lancashire) state that they provide as many jobs as residents. However many developments are close to existing or proposed large employment sites and therefore aim to provide only housing.

Figure 1: Urban Village Design and Development Principles

- 3000 - 5000 people
- "[I]nclude such adjoining land as is needed for its maximum protection…maximum possible self sufficiency" (pg 24)
- Focal village square
- Small enough for everything to be in walking distance
- Mix of housing tenures, ages and social groups
- Retail mixed with other uses throughout the scheme
- Primary school within the scheme
- Pattern of open spaces should be considered
- Connected street network
- Traffic calming
- Locality will set the prevailing architectural style
- Architectural focal points, street corners, building lines, visual incidents, enclosure
- Mix of uses within neighbourhoods, street blocks, streets, and within individual buildings
- Permeable, pedestrian friendly, cul-de-sacs to be avoided
- Social mix and consultation
- Legible, focal points, strong street corners
- Variety of buildings and spaces that change and adapt over time
- Bring life to the buildings and the spaces in front of them

(From Aldous 1992, 1995)
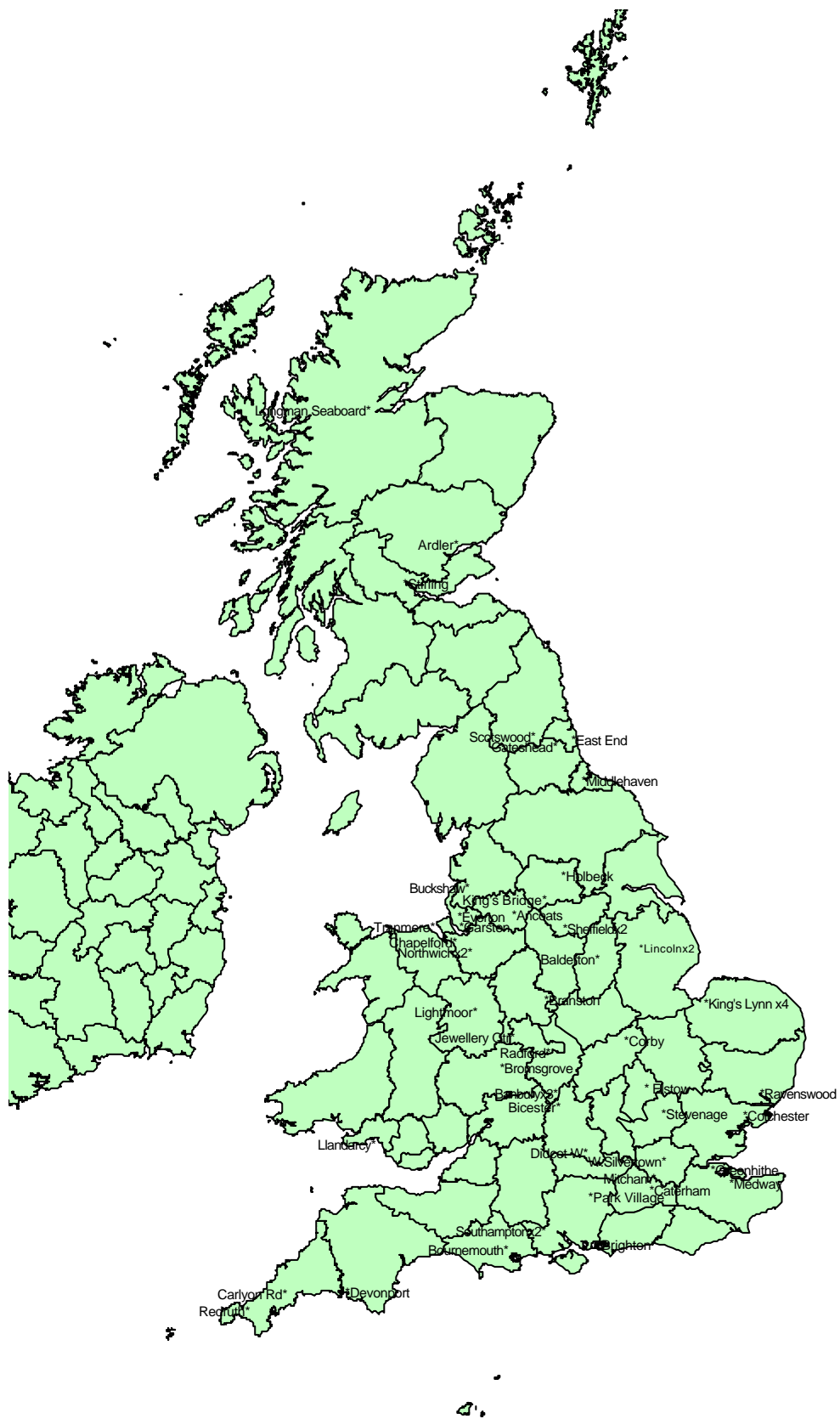
Figure 2: Urban Villages in the UK

Longman Seaboard*

Ardler*

Stirling

Scotswood* East End
Gateshead*

Middlehaven

*Holbeck

Buckshaw
King's Bridge*
*Everton *Ancoats
Tranmere* Garston *Sheffieldx2
Chapelford*
Northwichx2* Balderton*

*Lincolnx2

Lightmoor* Cranston

Jewellery Qtr King's Lynn x4
Radford* *Corby
*Bromsgrove

Banburyx3* *Elstow
Bicester* *Ravenswood
*Stevenage *Colchester

Llandarcy* Didcot W* *Silvertown* Greenhithe
Mitcham *Medway
*Park Village *Caterham

Southamptonx2 *Brighton
Bournemouth*

Carlyon Rd* *Devonport
Redruth*

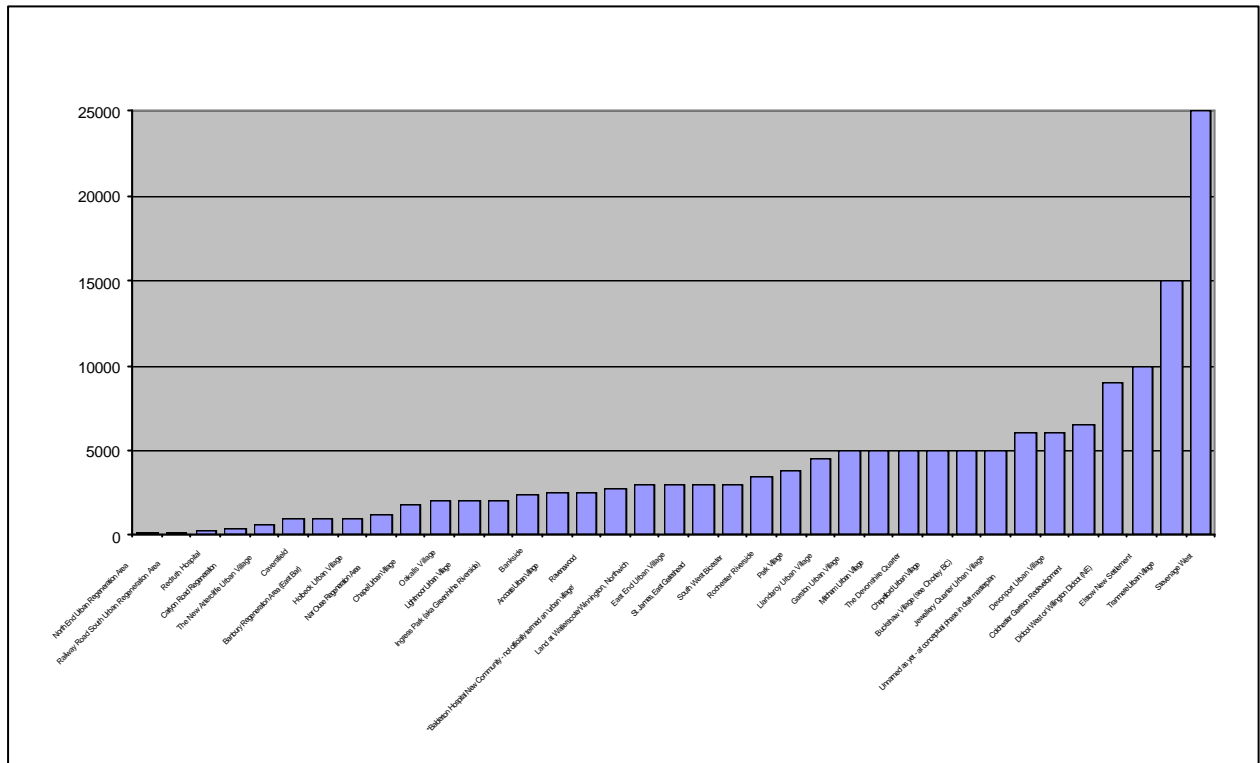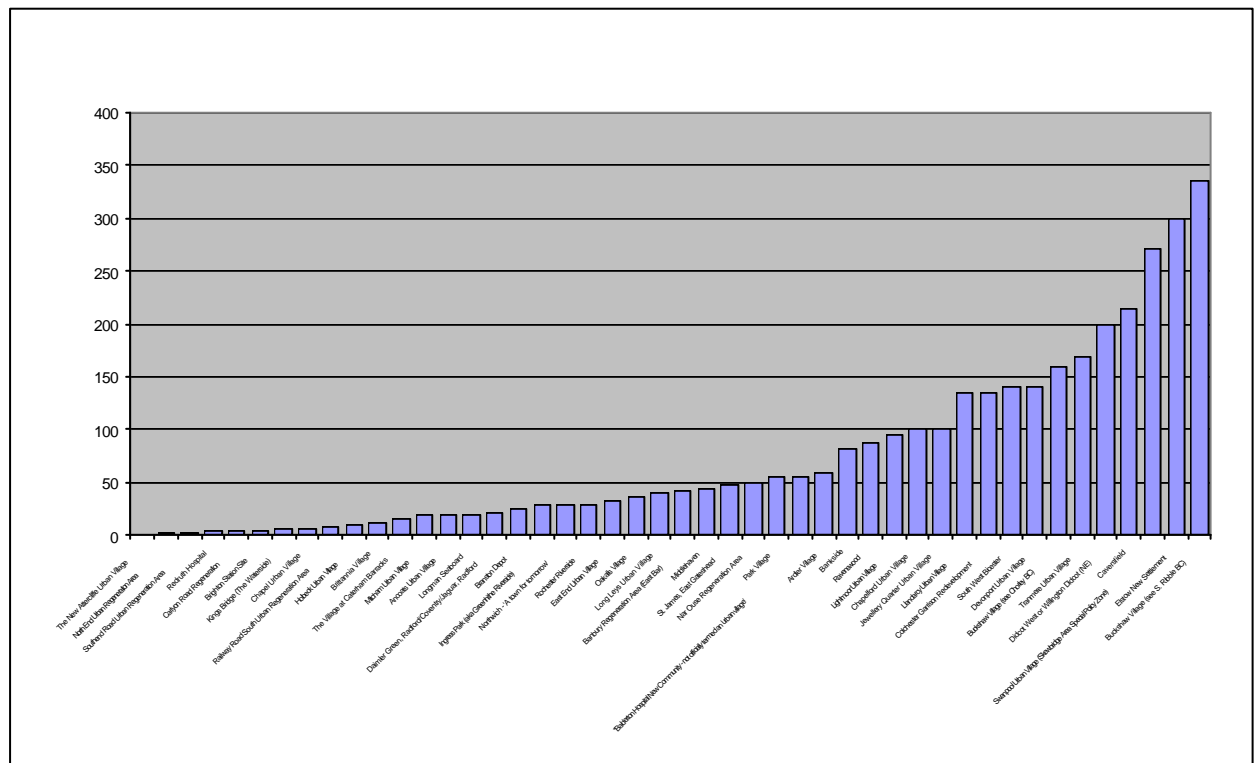**Figure 3: The Population of Urban Villages**

Figure 4: The Size of Urban Villages (Hectares)

Variety and density of housing

A wide variety of housing mixes are proposed in urban villages. Provision of affordable housing ranges from 10% (in inner urban areas) to virtually nil (in suburban and free-standing development). Housing density varies considerably (see Figure 5). The majority of developments fall in the range 25-40 units per hectare. Some inner city locations attain densities of 100 units per hectare, whilst suburban and free-standing developments are often 20-30 units per hectare - roughly the same as average density for new development in England (DTLR, 2001).

Transport

Public transport, usually bus services, are provided or planned for most urban villages (see Figure 6). Some developments also have light rail and train links.

Funding

The developments are largely privately funded, with only four having a greater input of public money.

Design guides

The great majority of the developments have design guidelines, frameworks or masterplans, although these vary considerably in extent and degree of prescription.

The survey information confirmed that developments defined as 'urban villages' vary markedly through Great Britain. This variety highlights how the discursively constructed 'urban village' concept, which initially appears 'fixed', becomes 'unfixed' when applied to a specific development context. This reflects the amorphous nature of the urban village concept itself, the difficulty of applying such a concept uniformly in different localities, and the variety of motivations for adoption of the 'urban village' rubric.

4c   Constructions of the Urban Village

In order to more fully understand the ways in which the urban village is discursively constructed, the language of both planning documentation (received with the questionnaire returns) and professional interviews was subject to analysis.

Planning documentation

For the most part the planning documentation used language drawing on discourses which already had salience to their anticipated audiences, with urban village claims legitimised by reference to institutionalised structures and practices - such as Government agendas, the orthodoxy of the Urban Villages Forum, the cultural image of the mythologised English Village, or the post-industrial icon of the heritage rich historic quarter. A few elaborated in some detail on the concept, often accompanied by prescriptive urban design language, whilst others focused more on generic 'village' qualities, seeking to capture an essence of villageness

Figure 5: The Average Density of Dwellings Planned For Urban Villages (Dwellings per Hectare)
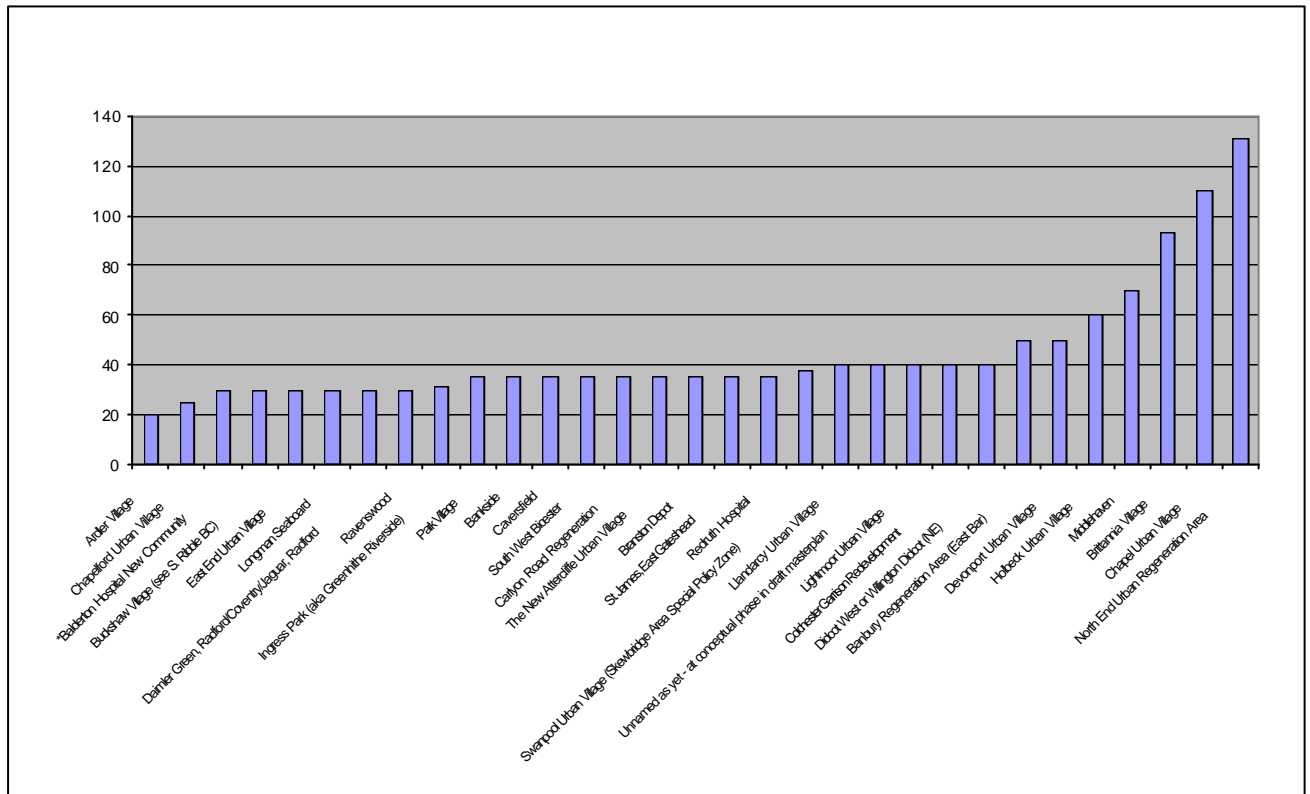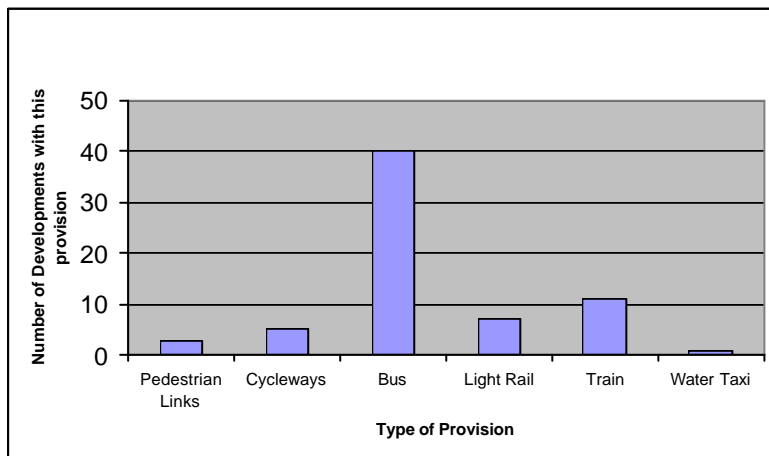

Figure 6: Public Transport Provision in Urban Village Developments

by reference for example to provision of a 'village green'. For the most part, attempts to formalise an urban village ideology were tentative, and frequently the words 'village' and 'urban village' were used interchangeably, or in a state of ambiguity (*'village' and 'urban' 'are rather loosely defined and not mutually exclusive'* (Lincoln City Council, Long Leys Urban Village Planning Brief,)) .

Professional Interviews
The impression conveyed in the interviews was one of uncertainty - about past, present and future representations of the urban village, and in regard to its validity as either a concept or reality. This was equally the case whether the interviewee was supportive or sceptical of the merits of the concept. When asked to define an urban village, most interviewees fell back, whether consciously or not, on the list of attributes from the Urban Villages Report, although some went on to extend the applicability of the urban village idea into the more recent agendas of urban renaissance and sustainability:

'It's a flagship example of the kind of projects which can . . . bring areas back to life or retro fit tired areas in a way which not only works for them but has a sort of presentational value and communicates the positive sense of urban development in cities.' (Tony Burton, Assistant Director, CPRE)

The majority believed that places called urban villages could be identified, although it was accepted that few would be endorsed as such by the Urban Villages Forum, since most so-called urban villages were in fact ordinary estates adopting the urban village label for marketing purposes. Such badging was criticised, but there was an acknowledged tension between the extent to which an image can be fixed in stone, and the need to make it flexible enough to be applicable in different development situations - whilst also not lapsing into meaninglessness. To some extent the semantics were seen to capture this:

'It puts two words together that don't really fit together, the word urban and the word village, and the meaning of the word village counteracts the meaning of the word urban, and therefore in one sense it doesn't mean a great deal. On the other hand it's a very attractive phrase for people to use to describe something that might otherwise be unattractive.' (David Rudlin, Director, URBED)

To many, the very contradiction and fuzziness of the concept were seen as carrying an implicit value, not least because they ensure a resonance with a varied audience, from policy makers to the ordinary public. At the same time, the inherent contradictions of the concept and its perceived dilution in practice, together with perceptions of the personalities involved in promoting the concept, resulted in a certain amount of doubt about the utility of the concept. Its impact and momentum were seen by some to have waned (*'the idea is past its sell by date'*), whilst others believed that it might need to be *'reinvented'*.

Overall, both the documentation and the interviews revealed that the urban village concept was constructed differently and to different degrees of refinement by different interests, with no shared or immutable meaning. Thus, both meaning and application are rendered contradictory and contested, resulting in a fluidity of interpretation.

4d   The Case Studies

Bordesley - an inner city area of Birmingham, which by the mid 1980s exhibited serious decline, with high unemployment, vacant land, and poor housing - much of it council housing. It was included in a plan to regenerate East Birmingham through an Urban Development Agency, which in 1987 became the Birmingham Heartlands Development Company. The public/private partnership included Tarmac, Wimpey and Bryant as developers for Bordesley. The regeneration work was virtually complete at the time of the research, with much already well-established. See Figure 7 for a map summarising the Bordesley initiative.

Garston - a deprived run down community located 6 miles south-east of Liverpool city centre consisting largely of 19th Century terraced housing, with some post-war council and private sector development. In 1994 a successful Single Regeneration Budget bid led to the establishment of the Speke Garston Partnership (SGP) to devise and implement a renewal strategy for the area. In 1996 the Speke Garston Development Corporation was formed, which also had an influence on developments in Garston. Work began in the late 1990s but much remains to be completed. See Figure 8 for a map summarising the Garston initiative.

West Silvertown - lies on the edge of Royal Victoria Dock, East London, and consisted mostly of derelict land with a small residential population in two tower blocks. It was developed as an urban village following a competition organised by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in 1994, which was won by Wimpey Homes in association with the Peabody Trust. Work began in the mid 1990s, with the first phase, of 1000 houses, completed at the time of the research. See Figure 9 for a map summarising the West Silvertown initiative.

Adoption of the urban village name and concept

In each location adoption of the urban village idea stemmed from different considerations, and there was not always a unity of opinion amongst interviewees. In Bordesley adoption of the urban village name was felt to confer what the key members of the regeneration partnership saw as an appropriate image for what they wanted to achieve, at a time when the concept itself had not yet been fully worked up by the Urban Villages Group. However, precisely who coined the term and why was *'lost in the mists of time'* (Alan Cook, Senior Development Officer Birmingham City Council). Subsequently some principles from the urban village repertoire were appropriated as the concept gained currency, thus illustrating the inherent adaptability of the concept. However, to the UVF, Bordesley was never a 'real' urban village. In West Silvertown the precise origin of the idea is contested. Regeneration plans were already afoot before the Secretary of State for the Environment used the expression 'urban village' in relation to the development in 1992/93. This followed discussions with the UVF (which was actively looking for places which could be so designated), and was picked up by the LDDC as encapsulating but also legitimising their development ambitions. At the same time, and independently, the Director of Development for the Peabody Trust also suggested that the isolated nature of the site made it an ideal location for an urban village. In Garston the urban village designation seems more clear cut. It came about as the result of the close relationship between the UVF, English Partnerships and the Speke Garston Development Corporation. The existing regeneration initiative (led by SGP) was seen to have urban village potential and therefore could be conveniently 'badged' with the title to gain profile and in the hope of attracting resources from English Partnerships. However, when English Partnerships did not respond as anticipated, the urban village aspect was diluted.

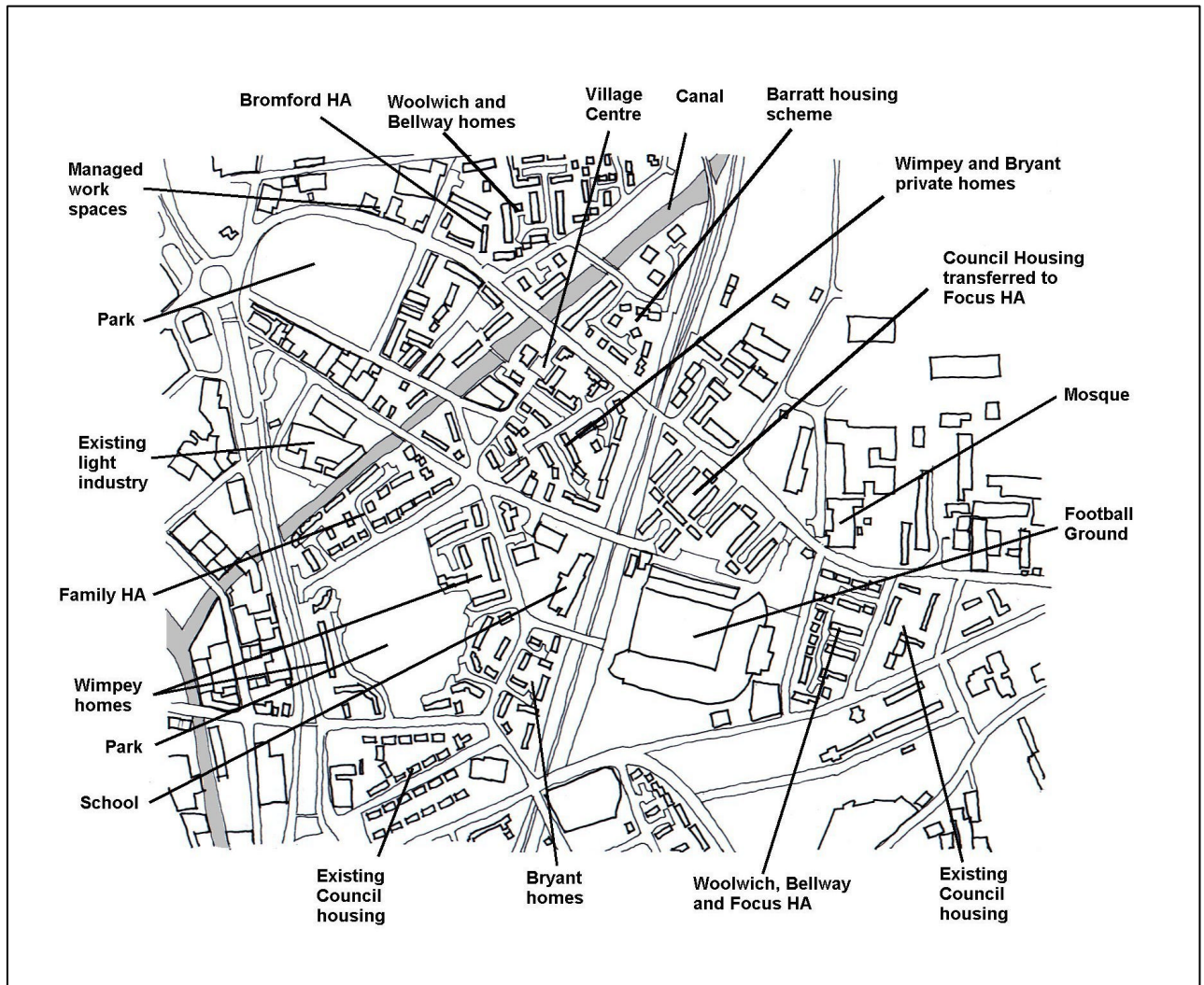**Figure 7: Features of the Bordesley Urban Village**

Figure 8: Features of the Garston Urban Village

New public open space

Improve bridge link

District centre consolidation. Locate one-stop-shop

Recreation space: create nature reserve/ public open space

Housing site

Dock link road

Enhance open space

Modernise/ Rationalise Tannery

Enhance community/ leisure facilities

Window Lane: traffic calming and bringing derelict buildings back into use

Relocate ship breakers

Enhance allotments

● Gateway feature: sign, art, etc

Figure 9: Features of the West Silvertown Urban Village

Private housing by Wimpey

Community Centre

Crescent Block. Ground floor retail units and residential above

Peabody "Britannia Village" social housing

East Thames Housing Group social housing

Village Green to be built

Britiannia Village School

Peabody (Laing built) social housing
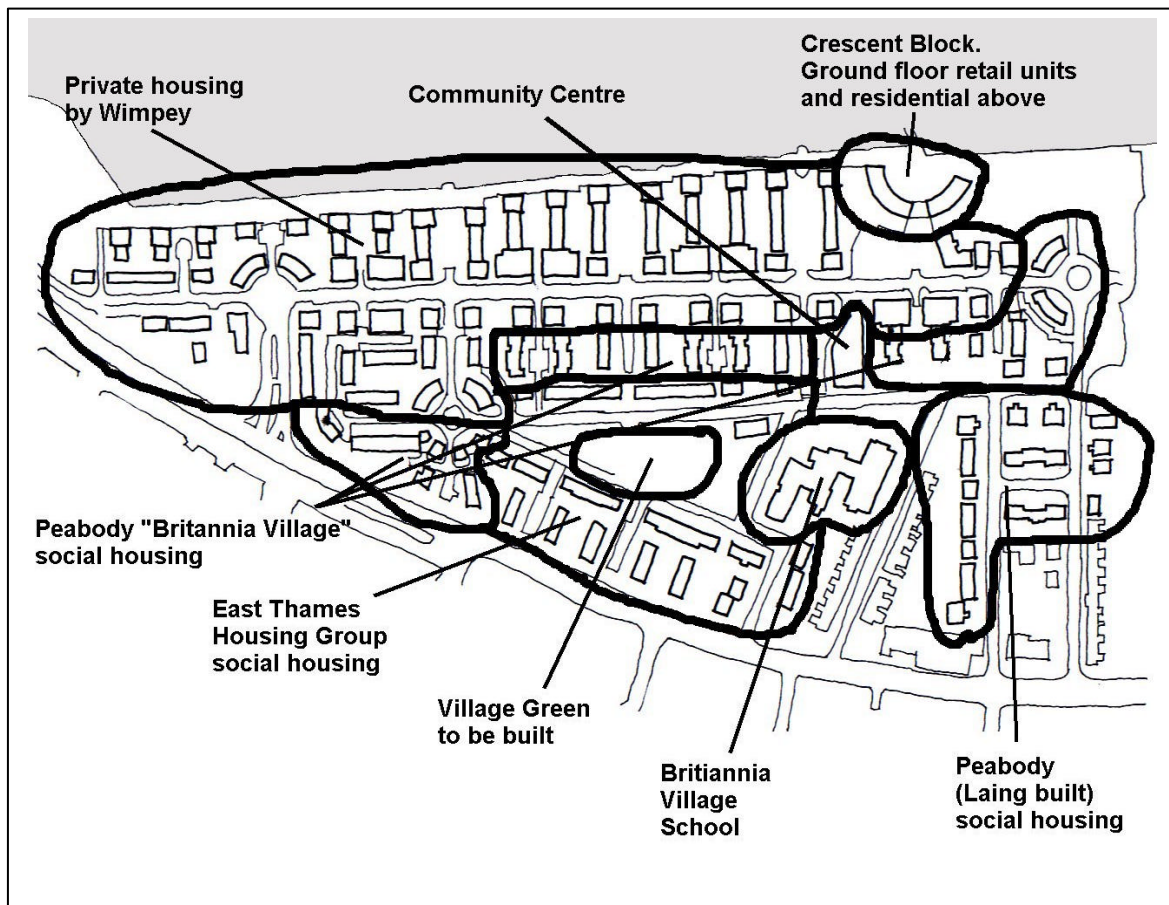
Key agents in the case study urban villages

In each case study the involvement of regeneration agencies was the catalyst for development activities, especially in regard to attracting the confidence of private housebuilders. Individuals within those agencies then actively negotiated the urban village idea for reasons of image or pragmatism or both. In Garston and West Silvertown this process was assisted by the UVF, who were following an agenda of their own in their efforts to legitimate the reality of urban villages. Also of fundamental importance in terms of mediating ideas into development outcomes were the planning and design professionals (including Tibbalds Munro, Roger Tym and Partners, and Liverpool Architecture and Design Trust), local planning authorities, and philanthropic housing trusts (Bourneville Village Trust and Peabody) without whose involvement the social and community objectives in Bordesley and West Silvertown would not have been achieved. In both Garston and Bordesley private housebuilders were uninterested in the urban village status, beyond the subsidised development opportunities they brought, and their powerful position in the process meant that they were able to effectively disregard urban village design ideals. Local housing departments and housing associations were motivated by the opportunity to improve or provide new housing to meet housing need.

Adoption of urban village principles

Application of any 'fixed' notion of an urban village within the different contexts has been partial. In particular the rhetoric (eg mixed use, mixed tenure, sustainable) has been adopted by particular actors, at particular times and in relation to particular tasks, although often more to support an existing position than as a solution to specific development issues.

The following highlights some main points in regard to the extent to which urban village principles were applied in the three case studies (and are considerably abbreviated from the individual case study reports, due to space constraints).

- Urban Design - not treated seriously in Bordesley or Garston, but stronger in West Silvertown where urbanist design principles have been adopted.
- High Density Development - new development in Bordesley and Garston have typically average densities, but in West Silvertown higher densities have been achieved.
- Identity and Place-making - in West Silvertown the location, isolation and new urban form give a clear identity. Bordesley makes some attempts at place-making, giving some sense of identity for 'Bordesley Village' residents. Garston retains the strong sense of identity it already possessed.
- Community Involvement - a planning weekend was held at West Silvertown, but had little influence on outcomes. In Bordesley the public have been involved in minor decisions such as traffic calming, the community hall, and road naming, whilst in Garston extensive efforts have been made to involve the community.
- Environmentally Friendly Design - achieved only in West Silvertown, by Peabody.
- Open Space - Bordesley gave high priority to the improvement of open space and landscaping, but primarily to attract the private sector. West Silvertown focused on hard landscaping, whilst in Garston open spaces are planned.
- Mixed Use - there is minimal new employment in all schemes. Bordesley has most employment use, through retained small industries (although some was relocated). West Silvertown has some live/work units. Both Garston and Bordesley are close to major employment sites.
- Mixed Tenure - achieved in all three areas although not the fine mix endorsed by the concept. Both Bordesley and Garston have seen affordability as an important issue, and in Bordesley there is at least an attempt at genuine mixing. In West Silvertown there is no

design distinction between social and private, but true 'pepperpotting' has not been achieved. New private and social tenants do not mix in any of the locations.

- Facilities - Garston aims to support existing local services, Bordesley has provided a limited 'Village Centre' with shops and health services, West Silvertown has a small parade of shops. All schemes have provided community halls, provided with the assistance of philanthropic support or gap funding.

- Public Transport - in both Garston and Bordesley public transport was already deemed to be relatively good (but Bordesley residents regret it has not been improved). In West Silvertown considerable effort has been put into transport links, from a low base.

- Self-sufficiency - not seen as particularly relevant in Garston and Bordesley which have adjacent facilities. In West Silvertown it would have been more achievable, and residents are forced to use facilities at a distance - although a counter-position is the need for integration into the wider urban fabric.

- Social Sustainability - this was emphasised in the strategies for the deprived communities of both Garston and Bordesley, and retention of existing populations has been achieved, with some newcomers. In Bordesley these newcomers already show commitment to staying in Bordesley. But here, despite the reinvigorated community, there has been only limited success in efforts to engage the community, and a Community Forum failed. Garston already had a range of active established community groups, but the pre-existing urban village-like characteristics of close social ties and local service use are becoming diluted. In West Silvertown the majority are new residents, who do not expect to stay long term. Here a Trust has been formed to assist in community development, but social integration is weak. In Bordesley the retention and expansion of the school, and in Garston and West Silvertown the provision of a new school, have had important community impacts.

Resident satisfaction and awareness of the 'urban village' concept

Residents were not greatly concerned by the 'urban village' status of the places where they lived, nor particularly aware that such concepts were being either seriously or loosely applied. In both Garston and Bordesley people were generally satisfied with what had been achieved, although they had concerns or reservations about certain facilities. In Garston in particular some urban village attributes would not be accepted locally (higher density and mixed use), and in neither Garston nor Bordesley would urban design be regarded as significant. In West Silvertown residents felt that the scheme had few physical or social 'village' attributes, although they commented positively on the design.

Outcomes in the case studies

In all three locations, the work of the regeneration agencies was fundamental to achieving improvements - environmentally, socially and economically. Those involved in the agencies in West Silvertown and Bordesley were unanimous in feeling that such achievements were substantial, and had assured the future for the areas. Residents, who lived with the end results, were less wholehearted on these points. To both the agencies and the residents, however, it was these broader achievements that were important, rather than those specifically according with urban village principles. In each location regeneration plans existed prior to, and independently of, urban village associations, and subsequently elements of the urban village concept were explicitly or implicitly abstracted and re-interpreted to fit (a) the strategy or vision for the area, (b) the agendas of the organisations and individuals involved, and (c) the local context of the site characteristics, populations and facilities. West Silvertown, with almost a *tabula rasa*, strong design leadership, and general commitment to the urban village concept, comes closest to the idealised urban village - although still some

way short. It has, however, met the aims of its development brief. In Bordesley, urban village claims were less institutionalised, there was less to lose, and the activation of principles was more by accident than by design, driven by a development brief which was firmly rooted in the needs of the locality. Here the nature of the process and the commitment of key actors, rather than idealised principles, were seen as the key to success. In Garston, attempts to adhere to urban village principles were minimised when they no longer seemed to bring strategic benefit. Indeed, the effort to seek classification as an urban village part way through the process seemed to confuse the issue and cloud the sense of direction. In none of the locations was the title 'Urban Village' used in practice. Bordesley was 'Bordesley Village', West Silvertown was referred to either as such or as 'Britannia Village' - the name given by Wimpey, and Garston continued to be referred to as 'Garston-under-the-Bridge', to distinguish it from the adjacent established Garston Village.

5   Conclusions

'Fixing' the Concept
Attempts to 'fix' the urban village concept were driven by a variety of interests, and may be viewed as a process of mediation between individuals (such as the Prince of Wales) and wider (re-produced) social structures. This process of mediation was largely discursive, in that fixing the concept meant drawing on different discourses, albeit with an elitist and traditionalist emphasis, which served firstly to define the 'urban village' and secondly to position it within wider, and increasingly urgent, debates on contemporary cities and urban form. Such work, led by the Urban Villages Group and exemplified by their report (Aldous, 1992), established not only a set of generic development principles, but combined these to set out a particular vision of a locality: 'the urban village'. However, a prescriptive version of the urban village remains elusive, and the concept represents a loose, fuzzy and ambiguous set of ideas and associations. This allows for a wide degree of flexibility amongst those who claim to support, or indeed refute, the concept, whilst notions of what the concept might mean remain contested.

'Unfixing' the concept
The urban village concept is one which encapsulates a tension between the definition and stabilisation of a set of ideas, and the re-definition, de-stabilisation and unfixing of the concept when it gets implemented (and therefore collides with other discourses, local structures and actors). This is exemplified by the fact that the concept has undergone changes over time, firstly as the surrounding discourses about cities have intensified, and secondly as the institution which 'owns' the concept (the UVF) has changed, both in personnel and organisational structure. In addition, and crucial to this research, is what occurs in the process of implementing the urban village concept in localities. This has more obviously led to an unfixing of the concept, and the questionnaire survey highlighted the variable characteristics of urban villages. The survey showed how the process of naming a development an 'urban village' lends it apparent coherence and therefore a deeper legitimacy within the discourse of planning, regardless of its characteristics. The three case studies reinforced these findings, detailing the processes by which 'urban villages' were mediated on the ground, and how these processes were informed by aspects of the urban village ideal. The extent to which the urban village concept was drawn upon and modified in each case study location varied according to the historical and topographical context, the local structures (development industry, planning regimes, community/social structures) and agents

(developers, architects etc). In this way, the urban village concept as an idealised notion gets transformed through the process of alignment by agents working within local areas, structures and regimes.

The urban village in use
The urban village encapsulates not only a vision of a particular outcome of the development process, but also a vision of a particular form of social activity (largely based around localism). Through interviews and questionnaire surveys with residents of 'urban villages' it was possible to ascertain the extent to which use of localities was influenced by urban village developments. Research found that patterns of use of space and facilities were not merely influenced by the largely physical intervention of the 'urban village', but also by numerous social and economic structures. In addition, whilst residents appreciated certain attributes of the schemes, they did not generally identify with the urban village concept as one which was important in shaping their area, indicating the extent to which the concept is an artefact of professional discourses.

A real or imagined contribution to sustainable development?
The notion of sustainable development has been linked to the urban village concept, as a way of creating more environmentally and socially sustainable urban environments. Although the definitions and dimensions of sustainability are often ambiguous and contested, it is still possible to draw conclusions about the ways in which the case study localities made contributions to sustainability issues. There was some commitment to social sustainability through diversifying tenures, through bringing in new residents and thus making local services more viable, and through the enhancement of community facilities. Matters of environmental sustainability have been given less attention. There has been no commitment to environmentally benign building technologies in any of the private sector building, nor in most of the social housing. With reference to other indicators of environmental sustainability there have been no radical departures from established practice, even though each of the schemes might point to the achievement of such modest objectives as recycling bins or public transport. Certainly it is clear that for most residents new facilities, such as local shops or schools, have not in themselves led to more environmentally benign ways of living, especially where car use is concerned. It was clear that lifestyle choices, social networks, and levels of poverty or affluence, rather than development outcomes, were the prime determinants of the patterns of resident activities.

The sustainability situation of the case study localities could not, however, be said to be directly due to urban village status, especially in the case of Bordesley and Garston. Indeed, urban village discourse itself is neither didactic nor explicit about sustainability, and it is hence difficult to prove clear linkages between potential characteristics of urban villages and indicators of sustainable development. Even if there were such clear linkages, merely building 'urban villages' would not necessarily lead to more 'sustainable' lifestyles, since behaviour is not environmentally determined and other structures play a major role in determining the possibilities of action. Furthermore, it has been shown that the classification of urban villages is itself problematic, since the concept is largely a mental construct, and attempts to transform it into a physical construct can only result in modified interpretations. Overall therefore, the research suggests that the idea that urban villages create sustainable environments is more imagined than real, and that sustainability is (or is not) achieved independently of urban village claims.

Other Outputs To-date

Tait M, Biddulph M and Franklin B (2001) 'Urban Villages - a mixed up development idea', **Urban Environment Today**, June 7th, p 12.

Biddulph M, Tait M and Franklin B (2001) 'Urban Villages: an obituary', **Urban Design Quarterly**, pp39 – 40.

Franklin, B. and Tait, M. (forthcoming, under revision) 'Constructing an Image: the urban village concept in the UK'**, Planning Theory.**

An overview of the research for publication in Town Planning Review has been submitted and is currently being reviewed. M. Biddulph is guest editing a special issue of Urban Design International on urban villages which will include three articles by the researchers.

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Appendix 1

Expert Interviews

Tony Aldous,	Freelance Journalist and author of *Urban Villages: A Concept for Creating Mixed-use Urban Developments on a Sustainable Scale*
Ken Bartlett	Technical Advisor to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Martin Bradshaw	Ex-Director, Civic Trust
Tony Burton	Assistant Director, Council for the Protection of Rural England
Gerald Cary-Elwes	British Urban Regeneration Association
Robert Davies	Chief Executive, The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders' Forum
Philip Davies	Property Developer, Linden Homes
Paul Evans	Head of the Urban Policy Unit, Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions
Mike Galloway	Director, Planning and Transportation, Dundee City Council
Mike Hollingsworth	Welsh Development Agency
Andy Karski	Director, Tibbalds Monro, Architects, Planners, Urban Designers
David Lunts	Chief Executive, The Prince's Foundation
Ian McCauley	Chief Planning Officer, Reading Borough Council
Peter Neal	Research Associate, The Prince's Foundation
Trevor Osbourne	Property Developer, The Osbourne Group (ex-Chairman, Urban Villages Forum)
Tony Pidgley	Property Developer, Berkeley Group
Marion Roberts	Urban Designer, University of Westminster
Dickon Robinson	Director of Development, Peabody Trust
Jon Rouse	Chief Executive, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
David Rudlin	Director, URBED
John Thompson	John Thompson and Partners, Architects, Planners, Urban Designers
Michael Welbank	Planner, Shankland Cox (retired)

Appendix 2

Questionnaire Questions

1   How many developments or schemes are referred to as 'urban villages' in your local planning authority area?

2   Name of the development scheme:

3   Location of the development scheme:

4   Where is the site? Inner urban area, urban extension/wedge, suburban, free-standing

5.   What was the previous use of the site?

6   Approximately what percentage of the development is: New build? Rehabilitation of existing buildings?

7   What is the size of the site?

8   What is the projected population size of the scheme?

9   In which year was the development started?

10   At what stage is the scheme now?

11   When is (or was) the completion date of the whole development scheme?

12   Which of the following uses are included in the scheme?
- Shops selling a range of food and groceries,
- playground,
- Post Office,
- public house,
- chemist,
- meeting place/community centre,
- medical centre,
- leisure/sports facilities,
- primary school,
- religious venues.

13   How many dwelling units are included in the development?

14   What percentage of all housing will be affordable?

15   What percentage of dwellings will be:
- Private Housing for Sale
- Affordable Housing for Sale
- Housing for Private Renting
- Housing for Rent provided by a
- Registered Social Landlord

16   What is the average housing density for the whole scheme?

17   What percentage of all housing development exceeds 40 units per hectare?

18   How much employment land is contained in the scheme?

19   How many jobs will exist on the site by the end of the development?

20   What public transport provision is intended for the scheme?

21   Are there design guidelines prepared or used in the development?

22   Who is the:
        (i)   Promoter:
        (ii)   Landowner:
        (iii)   Developer:
        (iv)   Masterplanner:

23   Has the Urban Villages Forum been involved in the development, and what role have they played?

24   What is the ratio of public:private funding or resources for the development?

25   What are the sources of the public funding, how much is being provided and for what purpose?

26   Why was an 'urban village' development chosen for this site?

Appendix 3

Resident Survey Questions

Shopping

- Where do you buy items like bread and milk when you run out?
- How do you get to this shop?
- Where do you buy most of your food and groceries? (you can put down more than one shop)
- How do you get to these shops?
- Which Post Office do you normally use?
- How do you get to this Post Office?
- Which Chemist/Pharmacist do you normally use?
- How do you get to this chemist?

Leisure

- What local leisure facilities do you use?(Please include pubs, sports centres, community halls and so on)
- How do you get to these

Work

- Where do you and others in your household work (or report to work)?
- How do you get there?

School

- Where do you send your children (or children in your care) to school? (if children go to more than one school, please state all the schools)
- How do your children (or children in your care) get to school?

Community Facilities

- Do you use community facilities in this area?
- If yes, which community facilities do you use?
- Do you attend any religious venues?
- If yes, where are these?

How long have you lived at your current address?

Where did you live before you moved into your current address?

Does your household own or rent your accommodation?
Owns/owns with mortgage; Rents from a private landlord; Rents from a housing association/local authority; Other (please state)

Appendix 4

Focus Group and Resident Interview Themes

The following themes were used to guide the discussions with residents:

Length of Residence
- Approximately what proportion of people in the area have lived here:
    1. All their life
    2. A large part of their lives (eg 10 - 30 years)
    3. A few years
    4. New to the area

Social Networks
- Do people tend to have a lot of friends/family locally, or do people tend to have friends/family in others parts of [location] or beyond?
- Are there many lonely and isolated people in [location]? If so why?
- Are there any obvious divisions within the area (tenure / housing areas and built form)?

Community Activities
- What are the groups, clubs etc in the area that people from the area join?
- Where are the specific places in the area where children, young people, families, elderly people meet/socialise/go out? Are they popular?
- If people were "going out" elsewhere in the city, where might they be going, and how often might they go?
- In general would you say that the social life of people here has a focus [location], or would it be elsewhere?

Design of the Environment
- Is it easy to walk to the shops? Is it easy to walk to the river? Is it easy to walk from the older to the new housing?
- Which parts of [location] feel unsafe at night? Which parts of [location] feel unsafe during the day?
- Where is the centre of your community?
- Which bits of [location] would you protect from demolition?
- If you wanted to "go for a walk" or relax outside where would you choose to go?

Facilities
- What new facilities would you like to see in the area? – what would be most important?
- Do you recycle household waste – is this easy to do?

Transport
- How do you travel to these facilities (shops, schools, work, leisure)? – is this convenient?
- Do you have a car? – or access to a car?

Perceptions of [location]
- Do you feel attached to [location], or would you leave if you could?
- Which of these phrases describes [location] (you can choose more than one)?

1. Community
2. Neighbourhood
3. Village
4. Suburb
5. None of these