

Sustainable Urban Extensions: Planned through Design

An executive summary

Sustainable Urban Extensions: Planned through Design describes a type of participatory planning exercise new to the UK known as Enquiry By Design. The work described in the report points to the significant contribution Enquiry By Design can make to towns and cities – extensions that deliver a much higher environmental, social and economic performance than has been the case.

‘We are encouraging house builders, planners, architects – indeed all those involved in the design of residential environments – to work more closely and creatively to achieve a step change in quality. This work from The Prince’s Foundation and English Partnerships, with support from the CPRE and my own Department, underlines the importance of developing innovative ways to involve local people in planning exercises, and above all in thinking creatively. This is the key to better planning and the design of sustainable developments.’

Nick Raynsford MP, Minister for Housing and Planning



A unique approach

The *Enquiry By Design* approach invites the stakeholders in a proposed development – the local authority, residents, developers, landowners, voluntary groups, representatives of employers and retailers – to collaborate in producing a masterplan through a workshop that can last up to a week. This intensive process can offer significant advantages. New opportunities and synergies emerge which add value and quality to developments and consensus can be forged amongst previously implacable opponents.

Although *Enquiry By Design* shares many similarities with other types of planning workshop, it differs in the degree of technical input, the length of the workshop and its strong focus on key stakeholder participation.

Enquiry By Design can help deliver compact, mixed-use and mixed-tenure urban extensions that provide workplaces, shops and leisure facilities as well as homes for a variety of income groups and household sizes. The kind of development that minimises the need for travel by private car, promotes social inclusion and offers greater opportunities for public transport and for working from or near home.

Meeting an urgent need

The Government and a growing range of organisations wish to see a shift towards this more sustainable form of urban growth. To promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously developed land, the focus for additional housing is expected to be existing towns and cities. Priority is to be given to re-using previously-developed land within urban areas, bringing empty homes back into use and converting existing buildings, in preference to the development of greenfield sites. But not all development can take place within urban areas and planned extensions to existing towns and cities are likely to prove the next most sustainable option.

Positive outcomes

The Prince's Foundation and English Partnerships, supported by DETR and CPRE, decided to explore the capabilities of *Enquiry By Design* by planning hypothetical urban extensions for major greenfield sites adjoining Basildon and Northampton which are owned by English Partnerships. Both sites had been identified as potentially suitable for major housing development but were at different stages in the planning process.

At both locations, these exercises revealed that substantial improvements in site layouts, sustainable mixed uses, viability of public transport and 'sense of place' could be achieved through this new approach to urban planning and design. The number of new homes accommodated by a given area of greenfield land could be as much as doubled compared to conventional housing development, whilst introducing linked amenities and some workplaces. The quality and function of open space could be enhanced with regard to the overall sustainable design context as opposed to being the product of a standard mathematical formula.

At both Basildon and Northampton, two scenarios were compared. The first – a 'by the rules' approach – drew on the planning policies and practices of the 1990s. The second, a 'by the principles' approach, employed *Enquiry By Design* methods. Key outcomes in these two scenarios are shown in the tables opposite.

The workshop participants were impressed and excited by the masterplans that emerged from these two exercises. They illustrated that *Enquiry By Design* could add value to the planning process in many ways. The next step would be to realise the benefits by implementing the masterplans.

The Prince's Foundation and English Partnerships are now seeking to use *Enquiry By Design* in earnest to bring about practical project work in the United Kingdom. The requisite level of technical, inter-disciplinary and team oriented expertise that was drawn together from the United States and Australia for the *Enquiry by Design* project is in very short supply in the UK. An essential component of this further work will be to build the capacity of others – including UK based planners and designers – to appreciate the principles and practices behind creating liveable neighbourhoods.



above

Basildon: The conventional developer's product was a demonstration of what a volume housebuilder would be expected to build.



above

Basildon: by intensifying development, a housing yield of 1,120 homes could be achieved with seven hectares of parkland and open space.



above

The workshops brought in a wide range of stakeholders, including councillors, local community representatives and developers.

below

Northampton: The 'by the rules' plan.

above

Planning for extra homes in the area would save Northampton from extending into the countryside in 20 years time.

below

Northampton: The Enquiry by Design masterplan retains the large country park, but develops 72% of the remaining land, compared with 48% under 'by the rules' and provides less, but better integrated and higher quality open space.

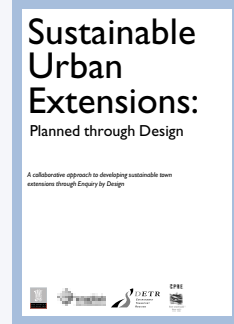
Development yields: Basildon
Option 4 – Intensifying development

	By the rules		Enquiry by Design	
	Dry Street	College/hospital land	Dry Street	College/hospital land
Dwellings	750	125	940	180
Retail	200m ²	0	4,000m ²	0
Centre (Business/Employment)	0	0	13,000m ²	2,000m ²
Open space	8.3ha	0	7ha	0
Community	150m ²	100m ²	0	9,500m ²
School	1.6ha	0	1.6ha	0

Development yields: Northampton

	By the rules	Enquiry by Design
Dwellings	3,700	6,400
Retail	700m ² *	13,320m ²
Centre (Business/Employment)	0	70,850m ²
Open space	52%	28%

* local plan policy



Sustainable Urban Extensions: Planned through Design describes the two workshops in Basildon and Northampton, their context and the resulting masterplans. The report goes on to discuss what more needs to be done to realise the benefits of *Enquiry By Design* in the UK, how it sits with current approaches to planning and what the key ingredients

for success are likely to be. It is offered as informal advice for local authorities, developers, landowners and planning consultancies. For a copy of *Sustainable Urban Extensions: Planned through Design* call The Prince's Foundation on 020 7613 8500. Price is £10.00 (including p&p).

The Prince's Foundation

The Prince's Foundation is a new charity dedicated to improving the quality of life in our towns and cities. It brings together the interests of HRH The Prince of Wales in architecture, the arts and urban regeneration.

The Foundation challenges conventional attitudes by encouraging a more humane and holistic approach to the planning and design of our communities. We link ideas with practical action, drawing on a track record of architectural and arts teaching, a lead role in over thirty urban regeneration and heritage projects and an extensive network of organisations, professionals and communities.

English Partnerships

English Partnerships is a new national force for regeneration and development. We work in partnership to create new jobs and new investment through sustainable economic regeneration and development in the English regions.

English Partnerships focuses on national and cross-national co-ordination, where this adds value to the Government's regeneration agenda, the Urban Renaissance and in particular, the work of the Development Agencies (RDAs). We work throughout England, to create quality places for people to live and work, maintaining the highest standards of design and making a positive contribution to the environment.

English Partnerships has a wide remit across a range of regeneration initiatives. The organisation holds, on behalf of Government, a substantial portfolio of assets both within and on the edge of urban areas.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions makes a key contribution to achieving the Government's aims for society, the environment and the economy. Through its work the Department can make a real difference to people's lives by improving the air they breathe, the water they drink, the homes and communities in which they live, the transport they use, and the services they get from local councils.

The Department is committed to working to provide a better quality of life for people now and in the future. Through the planning system it promotes a sustainable pattern of physical development and land and property use in cities, towns and countryside.

CPRE

The CPRE is a national charity that helps people protect their countryside where there is threat, to enhance it where there is opportunity and to keep it beautiful, productive and enjoyable for everyone. Our Patron is Her Majesty The Queen. We have 50,000 supporters, a branch in every county, eight regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in Westminster. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning.