

# WHO RUNS THIS PLACE?

## Learning from Case Studies

December 2005





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December 2005

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## INTRODUCTION

As part of the research into the best form of local management organisation to adopt for the new town of Northstowe near Cambridge, URBED drew together conclusions from eight case studies. The case studies were of places where large amounts of new housing has been built recently, and where there is sufficient experience to enable conclusions to be drawn about what works. They were selected for their similarities with Northstowe, and most are drawn from the South East of England. We have picked places that have adopted an innovative approach to management. In each case we have covered:

- Background
- Planning
- Managing
- Sustainability
- Involving the community

We have then sought to draw out lessons and the relevance to Northstowe and in some cases covered how progress is monitored.

The most comprehensive case study deals with Shenley Park in Hertsmere, where URBED was involved in setting up the trust, and where we have gone back to assess progress, and discuss the case study with the local authority as well as the trust director. We have visited all the other case studies and spoken to individuals who have been involved in them, but have not verified the details.

Where we have been able, we have brought out information on the resourcing implications, considering both staffing and operating expenses, and this information is provided for Shenley, Nene Park in Peterborough, and Milton Keynes, all of which are sufficiently far developed to provide very useful lessons. We also believe that Caterham Barracks offers a model for how to create some early community benefits.

We agreed to draw lessons from abroad as well, and have picked two settlements in Freiburg in Southern Germany, as this historic university town has similarities with Cambridge, and there have been some very innovative and influential new housing schemes. Though the approach is very different, if Northstowe is to be truly innovative, it may need to pioneer new approaches.

We have also drawn on experience in South London in Colliers Wood and Rotherhithe where URBED has been involved in devising regeneration projects, and where subsequently large amounts of housing have been built. In both cases the management organisations have suffered from not having a long-term interest in the land, and therefore the opportunity to benefit from cross-subsidisation as land values have increased.

## 1. MILTON KEYNES PARK, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE:

### “Start with a park”

The motto of Milton Keynes at one time was ‘Start with a park’, and Campbell Park is a huge endowment, along with a most extensive green framework which separates and joins up the different neighbourhoods. The park has been owned and managed by a trust since 1992 and was endowed with income from property and other assets by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

#### **Background**

Milton Keynes is the largest New Town, and has accounted for a high proportion of new homes in the South East. Built on an extensive grid, with a new railway station on the Euston to Birmingham line, the development has succeeded in attracting major employers as well as a range of community facilities, and its shopping centre is now the strongest in the sub-region. The flat landscape has been transformed, and the new neighbourhoods are concealed behind belts of tree planting. A large park is now having high density housing developed alongside.

#### **Planning**

The park formed part of the original masterplan, which was based on the idea of separating people from traffic, through a network of ‘redways’. The New Town has been divided into kilometre squares, and the landscape of each of these was developed by a different practice, providing a degree of variety. The town consists of large numbers of distinct neighbourhoods each with its own small shops and some community facilities. The park provides a range of facilities and events, and the parkland is mainly within the floodplain of several rivers. Current plans include developing community forests.

#### **Financing**

The development of the park was funded by the Development Corporation. The maintenance is covered by an endowment. The park has been leased to the trust on a 999 year lease, with the freehold owned by the borough, as is the land alongside the transport corridors with some reservations. The park was endowed with properties of relatively low value that were not attractive to institutional investors, and which were valued at £18 million at the time of disposal by the Development Corporation. They comprise four neighbourhood shopping centres, seven village shops, two industrial and two office developments, plus 11 public houses. The trust is self-financing, with an annual income of £3.3 million in 2003, of which £2.7m came from property. The expenditure broke down into £1.9m on management of the green estate, £660k on employee costs, and £280k on administration. The income also provides for sinking funds and to increase the asset base.

#### **Managing**

The trust is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Its primary objective is to provide, maintain and equip public spaces for the benefit of inhabitants and visitors to the area. The trust has 15 trustees, representing a range of interests, including one

from the County Council, three from the Borough Council, and two from the Friends of MKPT.

The board employs a chief executive and a team of 21 full time equivalent staff with four sections: community, operations, communications, and finance and administration. There are numerous professional advisors. The annual budget is around £1.8 million, of which £870k was in term contracts, and £250k in tree works. There are 18 term contracts typically for three year periods, which cover routine maintenance. There are also around 200 volunteers who are co-ordinated by a full time member of staff. They are not much involved in maintenance, but help report damage.

### **Sustainability**

Milton Keynes has undertaken a number of initiatives to promote sustainability, such as Energy World and Future World, but the predominant use of cars makes some question its sustainability. However most of the trips are relatively short, as many people live and work in the New Town without having to commute in or out. Undoubtedly the extensive open space was a major draw in attracting people from London in the first place, and encourages outdoor pursuits. The redways are not used as much as hoped, and separating walkers from roads makes many people feel unsafe.

### **Lessons**

The parks trust has taken on the responsibility for strategic open space, and for maintaining standards of maintenance where the costs are intrinsically high. It is unlikely that it would receive the same amount of care if it were the responsibility of the local authority, which is very under-resourced. By managing the asset base well, the income has grown, which has enabled it to cope with ups and downs. It is well-respected by local people, and has been able to employ and retain high calibre staff. Milton Keynes has attracted a wide range of people, and has relieved pressure on other parts of Buckinghamshire.

### **Relevance to Northstowe**

The park and green space framework could never have been created without a public budget vastly greater than Northstowe is ever likely to tap. Milton Keynes has also benefited from incorporating historic villages and the Grand Union Canal, which gives it many appeals that Northstowe will lack. The creating of tree covered mounds along roads seems a good way of separating villages. Milton Keynes is now being intensified, which shows the importance of a flexible masterplan which can allow for town to evolve. While the park is impressive, it is likely that many residents of Milton Keynes never go in it, but they probably value its existence.

## 2. NENE VALLEY PARK, PETERBOROUGH: providing a sub-regional visitor attraction

From its origins as a country park for Peterborough new town the Nene Valley Park demonstrates how within a relatively short space of time good visitor management and a successful mix of landscape amenities, commercial recreational, retail and leisure facilities can attract growing numbers of visitors from a wide catchment area. Most importantly the Nene Park has become an intrinsic part of the character and identity of the town, through developing and running diverse amenities for the public.

### Background

There are 250 country parks in Britain, and one of the best is Nene Park in Peterborough. As there is little opportunity for public access to the surrounding countryside, the Nene Park provides highly valued public space within easy access of the town and the wider area. Located to the west of Peterborough the park straddles the River Nene for five miles, forming an unbroken green space for all year round public use and enjoyment. From a total of 1,026 hectares within the Park Trust's management control, 267 hectares are dedicated to Ferry Meadows, a country park, 105 hectares for two 18 hole golf courses, railway, 33 hectares for organised recreation such as horse riding, rowing, water-sports and trout fishing; the remaining 621 hectares are in private ownership with managed pathways and informal areas. The landscape of the park is varied providing a range of natural habitats, informal areas and visitor attractions, including woodland, flood plain meadow and arable fields.

### Planning

The park was conceived as part of the town's 1968 expansion masterplan and has significantly achieved its envisaged aims. The Nene Park Trust is tasked "to provide for the recreation of the public by the provision of a park for the benefit of the inhabitants of Peterborough and visitors with the object of improving the conditions of life for such persons". The park combines a balance of commercial attractions and informal and formal recreational pursuits appropriate to the quiet enjoyment of the countryside, in addition to farmed land and nature areas. The main attraction, Ferry Meadows, runs for six miles along the River Nene, and is just over three miles from Peterborough

### Financing

An endowment of properties provides sufficient income to cover running costs, along with that generated by the park's tenancies and operations. Hence it covers running costs and long term maintenance requirements without turning to the local authorities.

The trust's income in 1996/7 came from a variety of sources, with endowments accounting for less than half:

Car parking, boating, camping, retail income:	£84,000
Lease & licences-agricultural and commercial:	£442,000
Endowment:	£572,000

Total:	£1,300,000
Operational expenditure:	£754,000
Maintenance reserves:	£402,000

### **Managing**

Originally within the control of the Peterborough Development Corporation, the management of the park was transferred to the Nene Park Trust a company limited by guarantee with charitable status in 1988 under the auspices of the New Town Community Related Assets transfer arrangements. This has brought considerable management and funding advantages to the trust. In addition local schools make extensive use of the park for educational field study, and students also can gain hands on landscape management experience. Within this area there is also a visitor centre, public house, two hotels, sculpture collection, plant nursery and garden centre which add to its broad appeal and inclusion in the day-to-day life of the town.

The trust has a staff of 18, including two senior managers, eight visitor managers, seven of which are park rangers and four estate workers responsible for landscape management.

### **Sustainability**

The development of Peterborough has sought to conserve and enhance the city centre, while expanding existing villages into a series of townships. The park has provided a linking theme to bring the different parts together, and also to provide some positive benefits to the existing community from the process of expansion. It has been a focus for voluntary efforts, such as developing a steam railway that provides a round trip of approximately 15 miles, and is run by enthusiasts.

### **Monitoring progress**

The park has sought to measure its usage, and has used the number of visitors as an indicator of success. At a time when many traditional parks have experienced a decline in use, Nene Park attracts in excess of 1,000,000 visits per year whilst achieving its aims of nature conservation and the provision of informal recreation in an urban setting. Importantly over 25% of these visits are new, showing that the park has more than just local significance

### **Lessons**

The country park has compensated for lack of access to real country, and has provided a major recreational attraction for the New Town. The trust has been able to manage and promote the attractions as well as help extend them, without being vulnerable to local authority funding costs as a result of its property endowment, and income from businesses.

### **Relevance to Northstowe**

It is not clear that there is either the need or opportunity to create anything on this scale, and the current proposals split the open space up into a number of different elements.

The idea of generating income from leases and other commercial activities however seems worth copying, along with the idea of providing organised recreation, such as horse riding, and water sports.



### 3. SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS, ESSEX: a local authority initiated new town

South Woodham Ferrers is very similar in size to the proposals for Northstowe, and is a rare example of a new country town promoted by a local authority, Essex County Council. Their Design Guide has been used to control the look of the place, and the new town is relying on the Borough Council for most of the ongoing management, although there is an active Town Council that acts as 'eyes and ears'.

#### **Background**

South Woodham Ferrers is located 17 miles from the county town of Chelmsford on the River Crouch. It has been developed as 'plot lands' in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and several hundred acres was owned by the Ministry of Defence. Essex County Council sought to raise the population from 2,000 to 17,500 by acquiring 1300 acres of land, using Loan Sanction, and giving planning consent for a mixed use scheme in 1974. Favourable factors include location with a growth area just outside the green-belt, close to main towns and roads, and one hour's journey by rail to London, with recreational opportunities on the river.

#### **Planning**

The stated objectives of the development included release of land for private residential development, comprehensive development, simplification of land ownership, provision of high design standards, a high level of recreational facilities, and the development of a small country town. 200 hectares were allocated for recreation, with a 130 hectare country park to provide 'accessible countryside'. A central feature is an interpretative farm centre. The Comprehensive School provides facilities which are shared, such as the library, a bar operated by the Community Association, and a sports hall. The design generally reflects the Essex tradition. Considerable care was taken to make the front of the ASDA store fit in, and subsequent developments, such as a hotel, have enabled the centre to evolve over a very short time.

#### **Financing**

Acquisition and site preparation was funded by the County Council, using a special loan. Sites were then sold off to developers, together with planning briefs. To get things going the County Council entered into a licence agreement with a local builder on a profit sharing basis related to the sale price of the homes. The land was initially sold off in 5-8 acre sites, and one tender attracted 68 enquiries. Decisions were based on the quality of the schemes, and preference was given to developers who had stuck with the scheme in the early days. The County Land Agent was allowed to settle the sale of the land. The country park was developed with the help of a grant from the Countryside Agency. Chelmsford Borough Council took on the running of the sports and children's play facilities. The private sector developed a leisure centre with snooker and squash courts and a multi-purpose hall. A major challenge was getting a town centre when there was only a population of 5-6000, which was achieved by building a superstore catering for a

much wider catchment area, along with some unit shops, and a secondary school around a square. Plus an ecumenical centre.

### **Managing**

The scheme was supervised by an Officers' Liaison Group, and a special committee, with the cooperation of other agencies. The responsibilities for ongoing management of the public realm were taken over by Chelmsford Borough Council, which manages eight play areas for example. The Town Council, which is an expanded Parish Council, has three full time and three part-time employees. It employs three outworkers who do additional picking up of litter. It runs a nature reserve in partnership with a wildlife trust, and sees its main role as acting as a local voice.

### **Sustainability**

The town was designed with a mix of uses, including 43 acres reserved for industry (mainly small firms). Some advance factories were developed. Innovative elements included some of the first ever work-homes. 26 craft and studio homes were built, which helped to screen a car park and keep a continuum townscape. The superstore attracts car based shoppers and as the superstore owned the small shops, attracting independent shops and encouraging people to walk proved difficult.

### **Involving the community**

As well as the Town Council, which has 20 elected members on it, there is a community web site, which acts as a means of expressing concerns, such as the provision for second generation children, and the limits being placed on expansion, requiring people to have to commute long distances to jobs.

### **Lessons**

South Woodham Ferrers looks attractive, thanks to its riverside location, the use of a Design Guide with briefs for individual sites, and the involvement of a range of developers, many of them local builders. It has shown that local authorities can promote developments, though it is a rare example. Its impact has not been properly evaluated and the monitoring of resident attitudes stopped in 1984. The key to success was being able to acquire the whole site with relatively low cost finance, and being in an area of population growth.

### **Relevance to Northstowe**

Northstowe will be very similar in size to South Woodham Ferrers, with many of the same elements. In spite of its success as described above, South Woodham Ferrers has shown that it is difficult to create the scale and feel of a traditional town centre in a new town except by clustering all the different facilities together. It also raises the issue of whether new towns should try to look like old market towns, or use modern architectural styles.

#### **4. SHENLEY PARK, HERTSMERE:** **a rural park for a new village on the site of a former psychiatric hospital**

Shenley Park is a good example of a development trust taking on the development and management of a park and related buildings as part of a new settlement of 900 homes in Hertfordshire. It brings out the benefits in terms of innovation and flexibility, but also the costs and risks in terms of endowment and sources of income. The Director of the Shenley Park Trust has since gone on to develop another trust at nearby Highfield Park, which offers further lessons.

##### **Background**

Shenley Park is a 45 acre country park which originally formed part of a large estate in Hertsmere just off the M25 North of London. The opportunity came up for development when the NHS decided to close a 1930s mental hospital on the site and sell off the land for housing and related development. Hertsmere District Council appointed URBED to prepare a planning brief for the site in 1986. The brief proposed creating a new 'garden village in the Hertfordshire tradition' and the development of the park was a major planning gain. The site of the park included wildlife meadows, an apple orchard, a walled garden, and a cricket ground allegedly laid out by WC Grace, as well as a variety of interesting buildings, and one of the wards.

##### **Planning**

The adopted brief and masterplan *Securing a Good Future for Shenley* set out 30 policies under four themes, one of which was strengthening the greenbelt. Others included meeting community needs, planning for growth, and creating new employment. The brief required the NHS to hand over the freehold of a defined area containing the best landscape and some attractive buildings together with an endowment to cover the expected ongoing maintenance costs of a park under a Section 106 agreement. After extensive local consultation over a draft brief, outline planning permission for the new village was given in 1989 following a Public Inquiry, and the phased closure of the hospital began in 1991. A concept plan had been drawn up for the development of the park as a linked series of attractions, along with a 30 foot wide landscape buffer round the development to stop it spreading into adjoining fields. A further study took place into the public realm. The development of the park was costed and used as a basis for negotiating with the landowner and eventual developers of the site. Negotiations took place with the Hertfordshire Groundwork Trust to ensure there was an appropriate body able to take on the responsibilities for developing and managing the public open space. The process was greatly helped by the close working relationships between the local authority and the health authority in developing an agreed brief.

##### **Financing**

The Section 106 agreement required the park to be transferred to Hertsmere Borough Council on the completion of 200 housing units along with an endowment from the developer. In 1992 Hertsmere Borough Council granted a 150 year long lease to the Shenley Park Trust, which is structured as a charitable trust and company limited by

guarantee. It is *'dedicated to managing a 45 acre park within the former grounds of Shenley Hospital for community benefit'*. A financial endowment of £1.5 million was secured for the future maintenance of the park, and £500,000 for laying it out. Though this reduced the sum that went to the Health Authority, which has been estimated at around £22 million, a contribution of ten percent that ensured that the scheme went ahead was regarded by the District Valuer as perfectly acceptable. Further income was to come from the renovation and letting of buildings, ten in total including the old stable block, which was converted into flats, and the one surviving block from the mental hospital, which was converted into offices. Three quarters of the revenue income to maintain the park and manage the trust now comes from property rentals rather than investments from the endowment. The total income in 2004 was £373,000. Community facilities, such as the Pavilion tea room, and renting out the walled garden, chapel and cricket ground for events, provide additional sources of income. The developer was also required to pass over a site for a primary school plus funds which had to be taken up within ten years. In fact it was decided to extend the existing village school, and so the site may be handed over to the trust in the future if it is not required for educational purposes.

### **Evaluating risks**

The trust is always under pressure to extend its social programme, but balances this with ensuring the landscape is well-maintained. By setting up a trust with an endowment, the new community at Porters Park has been able to evolve, responding to changing needs and opportunities. An example is the expansion of the cricket pavilion into a major cricket centre. A separate charitable trust developed the ground but over-extended itself, the Shenley Park Trust has been able to retrieve the situation and find an appropriate new operator. Similarly it had little alternative but to demolish the run down former Hospital social club and then redevelop it into an attractive cafe overlooking a new children's playground, and found the right person to run it as a business. The trust has entered into a number of partnerships, and this is best demonstrated by its sister trust at Highfield Park, where funding through the Section 106 process was enhanced by funding from Sports England in a joint venture with the YMCA. A splendid new sports and fitness centre with floodlit MUGA is the result. A similar joint venture the Trestle Theatre Company resulted in the conversion of the former derelict Hospital Chapel into a superb arts base, a residence for the Theatre Company and now a cafe. These demonstrate the contribution a trust can make both in taking initiatives and packaging funds.

### **Managing**

The trust is run by 13 trustees three of whom are nominated by the Borough Council, two from the Parish Councils and eight others from the local community who have been recruited because of their particular interests. At present appointments are for life, but this is going to be changed to ensure rotation. The trust employs a part-time director, who also manages a park in another former hospital Highfield. In addition there are six full-time staff. There is a five-year business plan which has included developing the chapel, provision of craft workshops, completion of landscaping round the mansion, and promotional improvements. There is a series of leaflets on walks and local history, which have been produced in conjunction with the Parish Council. The Shenley Village Society

organises walks once a month. Hence the trust has mobilised additional resources. In practice it has proved harder to get volunteers involved than expected, and volunteers are largely involved in activities like tree planting. Involving people on Community Service Orders and the like has not proved successful.

### **Sustainability**

As there are strong pressures on developers to maximise their early returns, while local authorities tend to be short of people who can act as entrepreneurs, it tends to be left to trusts to promote innovations and adapt to change. Thus Shenley Park Trust has taken over the network of footpaths, as well as small open spaces, which might easily be neglected. It has adopted landscape practices designed to minimise waste. Today there would probably be more concern with both reducing energy consumption and avoiding unnecessary car travel. There is a bus every hour, but most people tend to drive. A survey carried out for the Shenley Parish Plan is providing information on what kinds of improvements are most wanted, and, for example, half the respondents wanted a 'walking bus' scheme, and speeding vehicles on the main roads is a major concern. Significantly when asked for where funding should come for implementation, only 14% ticked council tax increases.

### **Involving the community**

People make places, and an increasing role of the Shenley Park Trust is to act as an animateur, promoting events of different kinds. From the restored orchard, apples are harvested and as well as being sold on Apple Day and are also turned into juice, and sold to the public. Local school children are also involved in collecting, sowing and planting out native tree and shrub seeds. The Paper Planet Initiative works with a local paper recycling company and the Community Forest whereby the company provides trees and then the office workers of the various companies are invited to plant them – thereby seeing the benefit of their recycling efforts. In time the local park users have come to know the park staff, and this helps in making them appreciate the environment. Volunteers come and go. However a number of people do give their time in various ways, including the trustees, mostly now drawn from the local community.

The walled garden within the Park has been restored as a stunning events area and used for plays and concerts as well as being hired out for wedding receptions and this adds to the appeal of Shenley as a place to live. A particularly popular event is Apple Day, which was one of the original events launched in 1991, with a wide range of apples to try, and lots of exhibitors and refreshments on sale.

### **Monitoring progress**

The trustees meet quarterly. Once a year there is an open AGM where the Director reports progress. Shenley Park received a commendation from the Institute of Leisure Management in 2002 for innovative management. It has been written up in case studies produced by Oxford Brookes University on parks. The monitoring highlights difficulties that have included occasional vandalism in areas with a high level of public accessibility and little oversight. One major problem has been that as children get older they find that there is relatively little for them to do. The trust staff tend to know who the

troublemakers are, and can respond quickly to problems if they arise. The Shenley Parish Plan survey had a very high response rate, and provides excellent feedback on priorities. Significantly while 59% thought that a united community was important to their household, views were equally divided over whether it was or was not united, and 26% answered 'don't know'. The call was largely for more social events and better communications.

## Lessons

1. A trust is a good way of managing the public realm, particularly where the landscape has a special character, or is to be used by lots of people. Benefits include:
  - a. providing entrepreneurial drive and packaging funds for new attractions
  - b. responding to changing community needs
  - c. earning the trust of the public, private and community sectors
  - d. making things happen in innovative ways
  - e. maintaining standards with less risk of cutbacks\or disputes over service charges
  - f. building a community, not just a series of housing estates.
2. There needs to be an adequate endowment to cover long-term management and maintenance:
  - a. the best source is property that can be managed well to both generate an income and provide community facilities
  - b. funds that can be invested also enable the trust to set up partnerships or attract grants from other sources
  - c. the scheme needs to have enough critical mass to employ the right calibre of staff and avoid problems of succession
3. The funding for landscape development needs to come up front, as not only does landscape take time to mature, but it also needs to be very carefully looked after in the early years to avoid, for example, trees dying for lack of water.
  - a. A major development of over 900 homes, in effect a new village, needs its own public spaces, and the experience in Hertfordshire suggests that a ratio of an acre of park to two of development is achievable.
  - b. Funds of at least £25,000 a hectare will be needed to lay out a park
  - c. at least three times that is required for an endowment to cover ongoing maintenance, and for example to respond rapidly to any vandalism
  - d. where that has not been provided as in Leavesden, the poor state of the public realm has pulled the development down
4. The Shenley Park planning brief has been largely followed and the new village has generally proved extremely popular.
  - a. The provision of the park was seen by a local estate agent as giving the development a real boost, and adding 10% to the value of homes that overlooked open space. It has enabled the development to differentiate



- itself from other new housing schemes, and to secure much of the value of traditional areas.
- b. The main omission has been the planned employment, and developers have been able to argue for changing uses to housing, which is much more profitable and easier to fund.
  - c. The trust has run into difficulties in securing enough parking, for example with regard to a property they own and around the church, where residents have objected, and so in Highfield Park they made sure there was a large visitor car park up front.
5. Ventures can go wrong, and the property market goes through phases of ups and downs. Hence it is important to create a good image early on, and this requires upfront investment before any housing can be sold.
    - a. The original idea of using a design and developer competition to choose some pilot projects to help set a standard failed when the initial winners all went bust.
    - b. The Health Authority saw the value of passing over funds in tranches, which enabled planting to take place in advance of people moving into the site.
  6. The key factor for success is employing a dedicated director and good staff, but the trustees can help by setting the right values, helping with contacts, and stepping in if anything goes wrong.
    - a. A good trust should help in developing a sense of community, though it has not overcome the divisions between the old and the new communities, and the separation between those who live up the hill and those at the bottom.
    - b. A masterplan needs to be backed up by tough negotiations on the part of the local authority, and well-developed policies to avoid developers simply focussing on what is most profitable at the time, so that mixed uses get left out.
  7. Where local authorities have simply opposed the planning application, and been over-ruled, not only are they then in a very weak negotiating position, but the funds that might have gone into an enhanced landscape will be wasted on legal and planning fees, as has happened in the case of St Albans and Napsbury

### **Relevance to Northstowe**

Shenley Park and the village of Porters Park are a relatively recent example of developing a new community which has proved extremely popular, and offers some guidelines for good practice. It did start with the great advantage of a group of old buildings within a fine landscape. It would not have been possible without an entrepreneurial Director of Planning, and the support of a leading Councillor who was well connected at every level. For example they were able to convince the local Parish Council that they had more to gain by supporting the brief than by objecting. The unusual step of appointing consultants who helped build up a sense of partnership while working up the Planning

Brief, and a set of well-articulated policies enabled agreement to be reached on development in a sensitive Greenbelt site without raising any outcry, and indeed Porters Park and Shenley Park are largely unknown.



## **5. CATERHAM BARRACKS, SURREY:** **an urban village with a trust providing facilities for the local community**

The Village Caterham-on-the-Hill is a large brown field development, owned by Linden Homes. Formally a Ministry of Defence Barracks in Surrey, the regeneration of the site was intended to create a mixed-use development, based on the principles of an urban village. Using a strategic planning process the intention was to create an environmentally and socially balanced community that is also sustainable. The development aims to combine this with a high quality of design, linking the development in with existing buildings on the site and weaving it into the fabric of the surrounding community.

### **Background**

The Village has a strategic location in a key commuter area south of London. With good rail connections from Caterham and Coulsdon South stations, the journey time is 30-45 minutes to central London (Victoria and London Bridge). The village is within one and a half miles of the M25, and approximately fifteen miles from Gatwick Airport. The local town centre of Caterham that serves a population of 30,000 is just over a mile away in the valley, along with the nearest train station.

The military barracks were constructed as the home of the Grenadier and other Guards regiments between 1875 and 1900. In April 1995 the barracks closed down, and Linden homes bought the 57-acre site off the Ministry of Defence in January 1998. Several period buildings on the site need to be conserved. Built in London stone brickwork with raised ceilings, these include the Sergeants' Mess, the Officers' Mess, six barrack buildings and the church which is listed. Approximately 38 acres or two-thirds of the site is designated a conservation area.

### **Planning**

There is a strong feeling among Planning Officers in the district that every piece of developable land has a part to play in urban renaissance if we are to protect the greenbelts from extensive development. As a result they define urban renaissance as development which stems perceived decline of quality of life in urban areas, and convinces people that urban areas, and the centre of towns and cities in particular, can remain attractive and viable places to live and work.

### **Financing**

The total project incorporates six phases of development which will be completed in 2006. The scheme will have an end value of £60 million. There will be a total of 348 homes 26% of which will be affordable and developed by the Guinness/housing trust. The other elements include community leisure facilities, business accommodation including a business enterprise centre (57,000sq.ft.), new retail element (8,068sq.ft.), gymnasium, restaurants, cafe/bar, cricket pitch, nature reserve and community farm, 60 Bed Nursing home, 12 live and work units, and a new bus service.

## **Managing**

A development trust with elected trustees has been set up to manage the community facilities on the site, and to help fill gaps to meet needs in the surrounding area. The former chapel, NAAFI and gymnasium were handed over to the trust as part of a Section 106 agreement, together with pump priming finance. Trust assets will eventually be in excess of £4 million.

An 'early win' was a community based youth centre, which followed a Youth Conference attended by 70+ young people whose views were incorporated into the thinking of the embryonic Trust. A temporary skate-park was opened in one of the redundant gyms and the project has attracted 450+ young people to attend the club every week. Young people have been involved in every step of the process. The 'park' has now moved to the Grade 2 Listed Chapel.

The decision to allow temporary usage of existing buildings during the redevelopment period was an imaginative approach, which both brought vitality to the emerging environment, while generating some income for the developer. By 1999 a total of 32 businesses, employing over 200 people had been relocated within existing buildings.

## **Sustainability**

Surrey has the highest percentage of car ownership in the country and Tandridge has the highest percentage in Surrey. The Village Caterham on the Hill is undertaking several initiatives to reduce the amount of cars on the development. The developer has reduced car parking standards on the basis that there should be only one car per household on the development, and each resident has to sign a covenant when they buy a property stating that they only own one car. The developers admit they may have problems enforcing such a scheme. The developers are paying for a bus service (for the first five years) to Caterham Valley and the train station. All home purchasers get a £200 travel card when buying a house, which is updated when the annual management charge is paid by the resident. The development, like all urban villages, is trying to encourage people to live and work on the site thus encouraging walking. The developers are also in negotiations to reduce the amount of car parking spaces on the proposed supermarket.

Most housing in the district is located on brown field land, and there are only three remaining development sites on green field land. Surrey has set itself higher than the national target of 60% housing on brown field sites largely because they feel their responsibility is to keep the green belt around London intact. Their aim is 80% of housing on brown field sites and Tandridge does not fall far short of that. The Village currently does not figure in the housing or brown field development statistics as the site was made available suddenly and without warning from the MOD.

## **Involving the community**

In 1995, at the time of the closing barracks the Secretary of State for the Environment John Gummer had a policy called Quality in Town and Country to encourage debate and raise the

quality of new development. This was backed up by an Urban Design Campaign and competition. The aim was to dispel the myth the all development was bad and to create a framework for discussing quality in design and development.

There were several hundred entries, and Caterham Barracks was selected as one of the twenty-one potential sites. Tandridge District Council used the funding to appoint consultants, who produced an urban design brief, not a development brief, for consultation purposes. Support was initially shown for a mixed-use development and there was no intention to break the site up. An urban design brief was published followed by a draft development brief. This was considered by the developer to be far too restrictive. It proposed employment, recreation and a small amount of housing (18 houses). The planners and developers consulted again with the public. A breakthrough was made when it was realised that if significant socio-economic gain could be showed there may well be room for movement. Socio-economic gain would only result from "close and open working between all parties". There was therefore a need to involve the local community in the decision making process, along with the need to secure council support.

John Thompson & Partners working for Linden Homes undertook a Community Planning weekend based on the principles of the American RUDAT in February 1998. While community planning has been done before, this was the first time it had been initiated and led by a private developer. It was held on a Friday for professionals, including a bus tour of the surrounding area and Saturday for local people, with over 1,000 people attending. People were invited to tell the consultants about their community - its problems, dreams, and solutions. Post-it notes enabled all to participate and record issues and possible actions. The approach was deliberately non-confrontational. There were also special workshops to ensure that young people were involved right from the start.

One of the concerns of the developer was that the community had already gone through this process with the design brief. It would have been very easy for participants to say, 'why are you asking the same questions again?' Some did raise this point, but the majority saw the benefits of a process.

A lot of people that turned up to the planning weekend believed the site was predominately going to be executive housing and of no benefit to the community. They were confrontational and wanted to see plans. When the developer explained that they had no plans, and this is what the whole process is about they were very much caught off guard. These hardcore groups then came along to all three days of the planning weekend and have largely remained involved.

The wish list from the planning weekend was vast. The developer said they could have all of these elements on the site, but this would have led to building more than the 110 houses stated in the development brief. The result of this weekend meant the developers could put together a planning application.

## **Lessons**

The scheme has encouraged Linden Homes to move away from pattern block design solutions to estates and convinced them that quality solutions are more acceptable. The local authority still feels that it is very difficult to refuse standard house types. It ultimately depends on whether the developer and professionals have the necessary skills. Tandridge is looking to raise design standards by using The Village Caterham on the Hill as an example to others.

One of the main lessons is that you can never do too much public consultation. There were five significant exercises of public consultation and each time it raised peoples understanding and knowledge. Some people still disagree but now understand the reasons for the development. Some people still argued the case for minimal development. But the council remained of the view that if people wanted recreation, conservation and restoration of historic buildings, they must accept the revenue and wealth making aspects of the site.

The other key lesson is that the majority of people do not want to live in sterile isolated executive housing estates and there are rewards for those who develop a high quality mixed use integrated approach. Two and three bedroom properties can be just as profitable as four to five bedroom detached houses.

## **Relevance to Northstowe**

- It is possible for a Trust to create an early 'buzz' through promoting the early re-use of buildings on the site.
- Service charges can cover not only maintenance of the public realm, but also the provision of community facilities and transport.
- Where there is a concentration of families in social housing it is essential to cater for their needs, particularly those of the children.

## **6. CHATHAM MARITIME, KENT:** **a public/private partnership to maintain the public realm**

### **Background**

Chatham Maritime is an urban waterside development incorporating a mix of uses including residential, leisure and employment. The residential element is located on St Mary's Island, until 1984 a Royal Naval barracks. An extensive clean-up operation was necessary before development on this brownfield site could occur.

The developer of the site - Countryside Maritime – constitutes a unique public/private partnership; a joint venture company with a fifty/fifty shareholding (50% Countryside Properties and 50% English Partnerships). The partnership has enabled the delivery of a mixed use development that provides essential employment to the district.

Countryside Properties PLC was brought in to this venture primarily for its house building expertise. Subsequently, Countryside Properties was appointed by Countryside Maritime to carry out and supervise the building on its own speculatively developed sectors of the Island. Countryside Properties was also charged with co-ordinating the plan and developing the infrastructure on the Island - the main highways and bus and the delivery of the school and other facilities. Its final role has been to organise by means of tender and sale other plots of land on the Island – once serviced – subject to service agreements by other house builders.

### **Planning**

Planning officers believe that urban renaissance principles are relevant to Medway, in part as a means to address the deprivation found in several Medway towns. Consequently, the authority has been developing an urban renaissance vision for the district, incorporated in the strategic plan, inspired by community and council priorities for the district. The plan deals with the core functions and objectives of the council, the first being the promotion of physical and social regeneration. Officers define urban renaissance as putting the heart and soul back in urban areas, many of which – they argue – suffer from poverty, social exclusion and poor access to services, all linked to a decaying urban fabric.

### **Managing**

English Partnerships set up the Chatham Maritime Trust in 1997 as a charitable organisation to look after the public parts of the site into perpetuity. The Trust has a wholly owned management company with ten trustees drawn from the main leaseholders, commercial tenants, residential occupiers, SEEDA, the Medway Council, and three independent professionals.

The Trust's funds come from service charges, rent charges from freehold residential occupiers, and invested capital in the form of a dowry. Whilst the estate is being developed, the shortfall of service charges from incomplete properties is being made up by SEEDA. Once the site is completed the whole of the infrastructure will be

transferred to the Trust who will take over the tasks of road cleaning, landscaping and security, as well as the future maintenance costs of the locks, bridges and basin walls.

### **Sustainability**

The authority has been quick to adopt the national 60% target for residential development on brown field land and has been successfully reaching those targets, with St Mary's Island contributing over 1000 new homes (so far).

In terms of density, there is a fear amongst certain local politicians that high density solutions often lead to low quality development, resulting in a poor quality of life. The view is shared by many local residents. The planners, however, believe that there is a market for urban living in Medway, and high-density solutions can and have been achieved. The result is many areas with the critical mass necessary for city living. Nevertheless, some concern persists that people will not want to move out of London into another high-density environment and so a range of densities have been built at Chatham Maritime which range from 20 - 62 dwellings per hectare. A bus service has been provided from St Mary's Island to the Town centre to reduce the dependence on the car. Unfortunately, as a result of the new roads, officers feel that the majority of residents will not be employed in Chatham and may rely on their cars to commute to London.

### **Involving the community**

Community involvement has mainly come through the council's development brief and the local plan. Community responses have been limited, however, largely because the site is also cut off from the surrounding communities. The fact that the site was closed off to the public for so many years has also reduced community interest in the development.

However the promotion of community spirit has been an ongoing aim of the Trust, through special events and by providing land for community activities.

### **Lessons**

The public sector played a key role in land assembly and provision of infrastructure, working in partnership with a major house builder. The responsibility for maintenance was passed on to the developers, while a Trust was set up to promote events, as well as look after the public realm.

### **Relevance to Northstowe**

Chatham was identified as having potential to play a significant role at regional level in terms of being made a 'renaissance' priority. Further, as stated above, the shortfall of service charges from incomplete properties is being made up by SEEDA.

## **7. VAUBAN, FREIBURG: a model for sustainable development**

Freiburg is an ancient university town in the South Western part of Germany, and is known as one of the most sustainable cities in Europe. Vauban, along with Reiselhof, is a relatively new district of the city, which exemplifies ecological approaches to landscaping, the use of housing cooperatives, car free layouts and sustainable energy systems.

### **Background**

This former army barracks on a site of 38 hectares has been developed for 5,000 inhabitants and 600 jobs. The scheme is intended to engage the creativity of the community in creating a sustainable and flourishing neighbourhood. It was promoted by the City of Freiburg, and has been developed largely through a number of housing co-operatives and self-builders using a series of briefs. One of the objectives is to be a child friendly development, and by 2002 more than 20% of the inhabitants were under 10. The developments were inspired by reactions to a government decision to locate a nuclear reactor nearby, which united liberal towns people and conservative farmers.

### **Planning**

Planning started in 1993 and the development is intended to be complete by 2006. Detailed plans were completed between 1997 and 1999, and construction started in 2000. All new buildings must have very low energy consumption. Other rules have included the prohibition of detached houses, and no buildings to exceed four storeys. The self-build activity averages 50 dwellings per hectare, which is high by UK standards. Variety has been secured through individually designed facades, and the use of housing co-operatives. The plans for the green spaces were developed through workshops, creating green corridors through the site together with barbecue areas, play grounds, and water areas. Most of the buildings are divided into flats with lush green covered balconies. There is a district centre with shops, a primary school, kindergartens, and public green spaces which run through the development. It has been designed to be a 'district of short distances' and to enable those on low incomes to become home owners. (Reiselhof is similar except it is entirely built around squares of enclosed public space, with Sustainable Urban Drainage systems creating beautiful gardens, and will accommodate 5,000 new homes or roughly 12,000 people when it is complete.)

### **Financing**

Housing co-operatives involve joint ownership and self management. They have been formed to allow people with low incomes to be part of the Vauban process, using an ecological and low cost approach. At the start of the project ten barrack buildings were given to the Student Union, who turned the buildings into low cost dormitories, using recycled materials. There have been 45 groups of self-builders, and the aim has been to create a balance. Costs have been kept down through self-build, and by avoiding having to build speculatively. A major incentive is the savings on energy costs, which are reinvested in better quality components and outside spaces. Energy is produced locally from PV cells and sold back to the grid at very generous rates. All the money from land



sales is put into infrastructure, mainly new schools, community centres, roads, street lighting and drainage, and extensions to the tram system. In Reiselfeld the city puts in the infrastructure and then sells sites off to private house builders, housing associations or self-build groups.

### **Managing**

The new town was developed by the City Council, in close consultation with citizens. *Forum Vauban* was set up to organise citizen participation, and was set up by a group of active citizens in 1995 who were dissatisfied with the Reiselfeld plan. There was an honorary executive board and five working groups concerned with reducing car use, a city quarter of short distances, ecological district heating, social mix, and cooperative self-build. A *Learning while Planning* approach was taken. Other partners in the development include a housing association, the students union and co-operative building associations, which support groups of households.

Plots are sold off through sealed bids. Because of the degree of co-operative ownership there is direct involvement in the way neighbourhoods are built and managed. Over 45 self-build groups were formed, supported by Project Vauban. In contrast Reiselfeld had many speculative investors, and was coordinating by the City Council's construction department. In 2004 Forum Vauban closed due to a funding dispute with the European Union.

### **Community engagement**

Vauban originally aimed at 25% social housing, but due to state cut-backs this was reduced to 10%. In Reiselfeld the first two phases had a third social housing but this was cut to virtually nothing and as a result the social structure is almost exclusively German born middle class families. Whereas Vauban engaged the community from the start, a citizen's group was not formed in Reiselfeld until 1996, three years after construction had started.

### **Sustainability**

The scheme is a short bus ride from the city (Reiselfeld was built on an extension of the tram lines) and is soon to be connected to the suburban line system. Cycling is normal, with one of the highest rates of usage of any city, and bikes can be carried on the trams at off peak times and enjoy superb parking facilities. 50% of the households are car free, and car sharing is encouraged, as residents receive a one year free pass for all public transport and do not have to pay for the community car park. Three large multi-storey parking garages were built, but many people feel that smaller ones should have been built.

The City decided that land sold by the City should only be available for low-energy houses. The energy concept was developed through the Freiburg Energy Company, Forum Vauban and the City, and includes a CHP plant run on gas and wood chips, and high levels of insulation. Solar panels have also been used, and Vauban is considered one of the main 'solar districts' with panels covering the old barracks. There are over 50 passive energy houses, and 100 units which generate a surplus. Photo voltaics are



produced in the city by locally owned businesses, and there is a solar training centre in the technical college which retrain plumbers and electricians. Sales of surplus energy are guaranteed at a commercial rate for 12 years. One project built the first ever multiple family Living and Working Passive House. This included fresh air ventilation with heat recovery, natural gas fired CHP, solar thermal collectors and PV panels, and a South facing wall that is 70% glazing while the other three walls have only 20% glazing. Though the construction costs were increased by 7%, there was a 79% reduction in primary energy use, and the construction costs should be amortised over 10-20 years.

### **Lessons**

There are a number of benefits to be seen in the development. About 700 houses have been built by self-builders or self commissioners in groups of 5-12 terraced houses or small blocks of flats. This has overcome the major problem, which is access to plots. It has created somewhere very individual and creative, which is seen, like Reiselhof, as ideal for bringing up children. It produces somewhere distinctive, and very walkable. 20% of trips in Freiburg in 1999 were by bike and only 43% by car, with the car share having fallen from 60% in 1976. The approach also promotes social equity, with little exclusion. Significantly the voluntary group who had promoted the vision went into bankruptcy due to a fall-out with one of its source of grants.

### **Relevance to Northstowe**

Cambridge is very similar to Freiburg, which is in the most innovative part of Europe, and is also an ancient university, twinned with Oxford. Freiburg has a population of 135,000 with a further 60,000 living in the suburbs, and 60% are single. Both sites were former barracks, and the distances from the centre are not too dissimilar. What is different is that Germany is far more environmentally conscious, there is a much greater tradition of using housing co-operatives, and local authorities are much more important players in development. Freiburg offers lessons on how to build energy conscious housing, and attract families to live in a new suburb by offering places that are ideal for bringing up young children. It also may offer lessons on how to make housing affordable to a wider range of people.

## 8. ROTHERHITHE AND COLLIERS WOOD, SOUTH LONDON: learning from failure

As well as picking up tips relating to good practice it is also possible to learn from aspects of projects that have not succeeded. The following examples provide illustrations of the latter.

### Background

Both Rotherhithe in the London Borough of Southwark and Colliers Wood in the London Borough of Merton offer examples of places where trusts have been set up, but without delivering all the promised benefits. In both cases old buildings have been conserved and reused, and open spaces have been enhanced. However, without an adequate endowment and operating on a small scale, huge amounts of voluntary and other effort have been put in for limited long-term benefits. In both cases the short-term pressures to make profits from high density housing and land deals have outweighed longer-term planning concerns.

### Planning

The creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation, with a remit of maximising private investment as quickly as possible, gave little priority to community or sustainability concerns. Sites in its ownership were sold off progressively to house-builders, starting with those overlooking water. Though masterplans were drawn up for parts of the Surrey Docks site, with little control or guidance over design, the result looks a hotpotch. Existing council housing was cleared and then sold off to housing associations, who have ended up housing people in housing need from outside the area. Land owned by the local authorities, including buildings renovated by a trust as workshops, has been sold off for maximum value for development as apartments. The exceptions are a couple of old pump houses, each of which is run by a trust, and the Surrey Docks City Farm.

On the River Wandle, former industrial sites were redeveloped as a series of retail parks and a hypermarket, even though the local authority had originally wanted to see a leisure and entertainment complex. URBED prepared a plan for a heritage park along the River Wandle, and was eventually involved in its partial implementation. A private company entered into a partnership to develop a craft market and riverside venue, and parts were let on to trusts. A masterplan was commissioned but not enforced for the surrounding land. Successive sales of the site resulted in a house builder putting up high density housing on most of the car park, which squeezed out the marketplace.

Despite the site's proximity to an Underground station, and the new Wimbledon to Croydon Tramlink, little has been done to promote integrated transport, and walking links through the site remain weak.

## **Managing**

Merton Abbey Mills was developed and run by Urban Space Management who specialise in interim uses for sites. They were unable to acquire a long enough lease to make the project sustainable. The responsibilities for maintenance are very fragmented. A Groundwork Trust took on the upgrading of a local park, and also acted as a client for a masterplan for the surrounding area. The Colliers Wood Partnership was set up to try to revitalise the existing shops. The National Trust was encouraged by the example of Merton Abbey Mills to upgrade its own landholding. An urban farm was relocated to the National Trust land, with funding for its buildings coming from a Section 106 agreement with the shopping centre developers.

As each area of land is separately managed, there is a profusion of different kinds of signs and interpretation boards, but without a coherent theme.

## **Sustainability**

Though both projects have attracted people who wanted to innovate, and for example funds were raised for creating a sustainable energy demonstration project on the Wandle, nearly all the housing has been put up by volume house-builders who did not see innovation as a selling point. Both schemes are relatively close to good public transport, but little effort has been made to encourage walking or cycling. There are large areas of public open space, with major attempts to apply ecological approaches, and to involve young people in appreciating the environment. However all of the projects suffer from being very small and fragile, and major changes can cause breakdowns and loss of key staff.

## **Involving the community**

In both cases the original communities were relatively poor and working class, and were depressed by the poor state of the environment. Both included areas with high levels of deprivation. Efforts to reuse existing buildings and upgrade the environment were welcomed, and in both cases the early stages involved close working relationships with existing community groups. As new housing was developed, bringing in much wealthier households, splits tended to grow. The newcomers have very little time to devote to community activities, and most tend to rely on one-stop shopping once a week. The results have been conflicts between the new communities of young households who predominantly work in central London or Canary Wharf and those living on housing benefit. There are also racial tensions.

## **Lessons**

Developers tend to have short-time horizons, and sites get bought and sold many times. Planning gain can be used to set up new facilities, but does not provide the long-term income needed to sustain them, or to maintain open space. In fact enthusiasts can perform wonders, but may not be able to produce the continual innovations needed to attract grant funding from charitable foundations.

**Relevance to Northstowe**

Both areas would have benefited if the public realm had come into public ownership, and if trusts had been endowed with sufficient assets and long enough leases to generate the ongoing income needed to support both staff and volunteers.