

why exactly it did not 'fit in'. The British Government's view, with some reason, ten years ago was also that planners should not get involved in design issues.

There has, however, been a growing awareness that the relationship between development projects and adjacent areas has not been addressed. The schemes that were gaining planning permission hitherto were inward looking and did not take into account wider issues, such as the qualities of the environment which make it both enjoyable and safe to use throughout a twenty-four-hour day. Housing schemes, for example, were based on the home as a defended space. The cul-de-sac attained prime position as a desired residential layout, following closely many of the points identified in *The New Essex Design Guide*.¹ This led inevitably to layouts with high defensive walls around the perimeter. The entrance roads were often marked by rumble strips and sleeping policemen, while areas at the edge of the site were places in which no one felt safe when walking. This has been further exacerbated by the document from the police on crime prevention by design, which has taken a very defensive approach to residential layout.² However, these residential layouts have sold well in the past and still sell well. The house builders, therefore, are meeting certain needs of many prospective buyers. These unimaginative schemes by house developers have proved to be a tried and trusted recipe with which to circumvent obstructive planners. Such housing areas still litter the towns, cities and countryside. They have left a legacy of increasing car dependency, a massive use of valuable greenfield sites, an increased fear of crime and a lack of vitality in our towns and cities.

Prince Charles initiated discussion about design with his open criticism of architects and planners and their unimaginative approach to design in the city. He made the obvious point that since we have managed to create lovely places in the past we can, therefore, produce a better environment with greater vision now. His support led to the development of the Urban Villages Forum in 1992 which is

working to create mixed-use urban developments on a sustainable scale and is making the case for a more people-friendly environment. There is also a growing awareness of the city as a work of art: 'Those who develop prime sites must not be allowed to focus on their own problem and we need to know how they will contribute to the City as a work of Art'.³ The development of urban design has provided an intellectual bridge for architects and planners, permitting each profession to view development from a new and different perspective.

The attitude of the British Government has gradually changed: a greater emphasis is now being placed on urban design. Various planning policy guidance documents and circulars have been produced to encourage better urban design with less emphasis being given to the use of the car. These include Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 6 and 13 and more recently 1. PPG1 now places the emphasis firmly on urban design, giving local authorities the power to ask for an assessment of surrounding areas and buildings.⁴

There have also been initiatives by English Partnerships who, in 1996, produced a booklet *Time for Design, Good Practice in Building, Landscape and Urban Design*.⁵ More recently, English Partnerships have teamed up with the Urban Villages Forum and will be contributing over £50 million to various schemes throughout the country which aim to develop areas of mixed use on previously derelict land. This will clearly stimulate the attention of local authorities, who have seen financial resources diminishing over the past years, and will also stimulate an increase in competition for limited funds.

IMPOVERISHED LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Local authorities for a number of years have been trying to resist monotonous and bland development. However, to date there has been little support from