

the purpose. This view is based on the misapprehension that good urban design is necessarily expensive but the question is asked 'why is that basic administrative centre in such a good (expensive) building or part of such a high quality development?' Such questioning reflects a concern for both staff and shareholders. Organizations are concerned about equity for staff, that is providing a similar quality of environment for staff in the organization at the same level. They are also concerned that their shareholders do not feel that the management are wastefully spending money on a 'glossy headquarters' which could be better invested in the core business. This wider context can be a significant constraint particularly for organizations with large and diverse occupational portfolios.

Another major constraint for organizations relates to a much wider issue affecting British industry—short-termism. Organizations have shorter and shorter planning horizons which are reinforced by the capital market structure in the UK. Most organizations are operating to a three- to five-year planning horizon at most. There appears to be a view amongst occupiers that good urban design is more about long-term rather than short-term benefit. Conversely, this issue can highlight a benefit to be derived from good urban design since the quality of a development and of its setting can enhance its disposability. As part of the risk assessment of a building, the ability to vacate and or dispose of a property has become increasingly important and high-quality urban design may be one of the elements which makes a property and its location more acceptable in the long term. The issue of short-termism is unlikely to diminish as organizations are going through a constant process of refocusing and reorganizing but only those organizations which recognize the role of urban design in risk reduction are likely to appreciate this benefit.

A final question raised by occupiers concerns who is or should ultimately be responsible for the quality of urban design? In general, occupiers do not consider quality of urban design to be their responsibility because it is the wider community and not their enterprise which derives the greater benefit. There are some exceptions, major retailers for example who have a vested business interest in the vitality and viability of town and city centres, but most office occupiers see themselves as one small player who can make only a limited impact. This may be a particularly British attitude based on the high degree of individualism with the emphasis on private rights rather than the public realm.

### **Residential owner-occupiers**

The research was only concerned with the attitudes and decisions of the initial purchasers of new houses: it did not address the crucial issue of the effect quality of environment and design may play in the purchase and long-term value of second-hand homes.

Housing and the home environment is quite unlike any other product and strong personal and emotional considerations colour residents' impressions of their surroundings. Choice affects a person's satisfaction with his or her dwelling but when purchasing a new home, choice can be surprisingly limited when other considerations are taken into account. Previous studies of initial purchasers of new houses of the kind typified in the two residential case studies have identified several factors affecting house-purchasers' decisions. These include the price and value, locality, house, estate, liveability, features, and the quality of construction (Bishop & Davison, 1989; Winter *et al.*, 1993). Initial purchasers are influenced by the design features and qualities of residential developments but they may be willing to trade off better urban design against individual features of their own residence. However, the research findings suggest that where competition provides choice at least some purchasers will respond to good urban design.

The sentiments expressed by the residents of Fair Ridge and Great Notley tend to confirm the findings of the earlier studies. At Fair Ridge considerations of location, price and value for money dominated the decision to buy and this would seem to confirm the developer's decision to build to an 'appropriate quality' and no more. Great Notley, on the other hand, points to the potential value to be derived from designing and developing to a higher standard. The level of housebuilding activity in that part of Essex affords prospective purchasers real choice, and the residents the research team met seem to have made a very conscious choice of location and 'estate' which reflects the importance they attached to the quality of their surroundings as well as to the quality of the dwellings.

A consequence is that the residents at Great Notley appear to have taken a longer-term view and are prepared to take more trouble and effort in nurturing and supporting a communal sense of pride. In contrast, the community feeling at Fair Ridge did not seem so strong and there was a sense that the public spaces are not so jealously preserved. Such an inference would be consistent with the view that sensitivity to the urban design of residential development is a factor in preserving the relative value of the individual properties over time.