

21st Century Living Learning From Gateshead

Key Points of Learning in This Briefing

- With significant changes in world manufacturing and the consequent global shifts in the location of manufacturing and distribution, European ports and waterfront cities have found themselves with underused or redundant land along their water's edge and hinterlands. In parallel with deindustrialisation rivers have been clean up and pollution from sea outfalls reduced. This has dramatically improved water quality in harbourside areas.
- Pressure to provide new homes, partly as a result of population growth but also as a consequence of the reduction in the size of the family unit, means that cities are seeking to re-develop redundant "brown-field" sites for residential use. Developers have identified that a premium price can be obtained for waterfront housing and even hinterland residential development can attract raised values. This has caused an explosion in housing-led waterfront regeneration projects across the western world.
- Of particular concern to Gateshead is the quality of the resultant residential developments. Therefore the pilot initiative of the WCP asks whether new residential developments offer sustainable, flexible and appropriate homes for their occupants that take cognisance of their special relationship with the waterfront, exploit that in a robust and long-lasting way and encourage the growth of stable, supportive and diverse communities? Also, do they acknowledge and allow for further predicted or as yet unknown changes in lifestyle, ICT systems and home-working? From our observations – no!



- In the UK housing tenure tends to be privately owned, publicly rented or privately rented. Other forms of tenure are insignificant. Generally, only the top-end privately owned or the very limited top-end inner-capital city privately rented residential market produce high quality and innovative residential development, and these tend to be ghettos of the wealthy. But we have learned from our project partners that this need not be the case.
- Modern architecture appears acceptable in the partner countries whereas residential development in the UK, style-wise, tends to look backwards to a Victorian or other "romantic" model with overtly modern architecture being shunned by house builders.
- Social intervention systems where unemployment or other problems hit a family appears to be better dealt with in the Scandinavian countries, with their system keeping the family in their existing home, rather than forcing them to sell-up and enter the public sector rented market, as is the norm in the UK.

- High quality public realm, as found in Aalborg, encourages surrounding property owners to invest in their properties, but often some form of public sector grant aid intervention is required to act as the catalyst.
- It is evident that partner cities are considerably ahead of the UK in many areas but no city has developments that are fully rounded.
- The project has identified that a requirement to work towards more sustainable communities for the 21st century is the identification of a set of key success criteria which can be used to assess existing or proposed developments. Progress in developing a tool to do so is documented in this Briefing.

Our approach has been to:

- Identify the most innovative waterfront residential development schemes within our locality
- Assess the effectiveness of its key parameters: successes and failures
- Consider the identification of a set of critical test criteria for 21st Century Living
- Test the validity of these criteria
- Compile a "tool" for the comparative assessment of existing residential developments.



WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES PROJECT



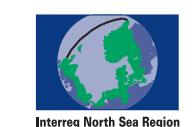
WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

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21st Century Living Success

Privacy

- Is the degree to which occupants can live their lives without visual and aural intrusion acceptable? (Without compromising the wider benefits to the development, such as opportunities for casual social interaction).

Sustainability

- Does the design of the dwelling maximise the potential for using ambient energy?
- Do they use appropriate construction methods and materials?
- Does the development discourage unnecessary use of the private car and promote cycling and walking?

- Does the development contain or have easy and close access to communal/social facilities; local services (shops/schools/ healthcare, etc.); public transport; employment?

- Does the development encourage recycling?

Identity

- Does the development as a whole create a distinct 'sense of place' or demonstrate strength of character?

- Are the dwellings unique and easily identifiable, either through 'house type', architectural styling, detailing, materials and colours; allowing easy navigation through the development?

Flexibility

- Can the dwelling be easily modified to accommodate any change in circumstance or needs to occupants throughout their lifetime?

Security

- Do the dwellings provide a safe environment for occupants and possessions whilst promoting natural surveillance and safety in the wider layout of the development's streets and public spaces?

Affordability

- Is there an appropriate range of prices amongst the dwellings that are for sale within the development?
- Is there a mix of tenure within the development that provides a choice of housing through social rented or shared ownership schemes?



Community

- Does the layout of the development encourage casual social interaction. Does it provide new, or link to existing, communal social facilities?

- Is it an open rather than closed community?

Diversity

- Does the development attract a balanced mix of people with different socio-economic backgrounds?
- Does the development provide for a range of householders i.e. single people and couples to larger families?
- Does the development cater for a range of age groups?
- Is there an appropriate mix of uses that help to provide an economic and social vibrancy within the area throughout the daytime and into the evening?

Design Quality: Building

- Aesthetic judgement of the overall design and material quality of the built elements within the development.
- Is the workmanship of good quality and have longevity?
- Is there evidence of attention to detail?
- How well does the building relate to the Public Realm?

Design Quality: Public Realm

- Aesthetic judgement of the overall design and material quality of the public environment.
- Is the workmanship of good quality and have longevity?
- Is there evidence of attention to detail?
- How well does it relate to the built form?

The Gateshead Pilot Project

Pilot Project 1

The initial Pilot Project studied was Staiths South Bank, Gateshead – a low and medium rise waterfront residential development by Wimpey Homes, one of the UK's largest homebuilders. It was novel too in Wimpey responding to personal criticism of their products and consequently involving the fashion designers Wayne (who had been the critic) and Geraldine Hemmingway (ex. "Red or Dead" designer label).

Innovative in UK terms, it is a "HomeZone" development, where great emphasis has been placed by the prime movers behind the development in encouraging the development of a sustainable community and for the residents to have priority over the car.

The "lightness" of the architectural solutions and the recent construction of slab blocks along the river edge are matters of particular concern to us. The scheme has been studied in terms of its success and failure in architectural, planning and social criteria.



Research

We have found that site visits held during Transnational Workshops, study visits and secondments to be of great value in identifying good practice in 21st Century Living in our partner cities and beyond.

We have, to date, compiled a photographic database of over 1000 images, collected innumerable planning and architectural publications, and are preparing a database of comparative findings.

Our local academic partner has undertaken a solid study in social mapping with students and local youth groups which has unearthed a useful amount of background data on the composition and desires of 4 local communities.

Guidelines

By the conclusion of the Gateshead Transnational Workshop in June 2005 we had been able to identify 10 fundamental "Success Criteria" for successful residential living environments, namely:

- Privacy
- Flexibility
- Identity
- Sustainability
- Security
- Affordability
- Community
- Diversity
- Design Quality: Buildings
- Design Quality: Public Realm

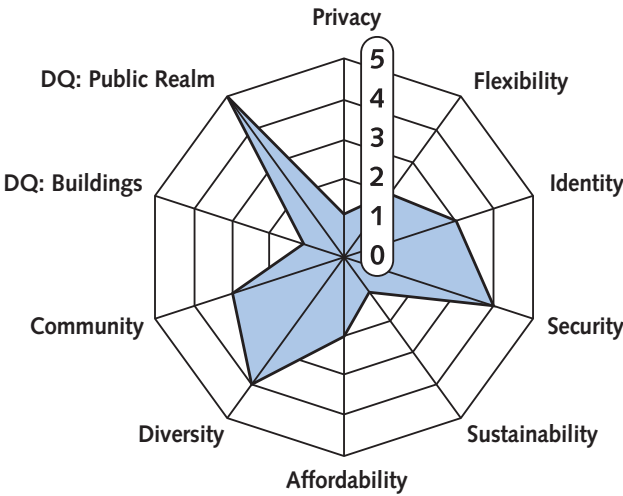
Any residential environment, to be successful, rounded and long-lived should score well against all of the above criteria.

Tools

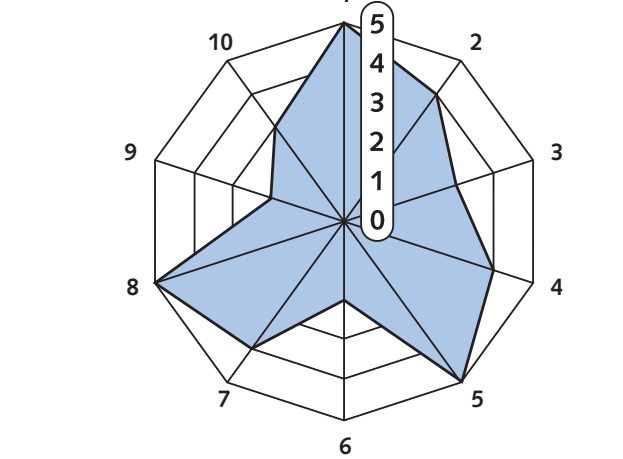
To allow comparative assessments of existing and proposed residential developments against our 10 Success Criteria a simple but effective computer programme has been developed which grades a given project and produces a graphic comparative analysis.

Future waterfront regeneration schemes in our area will be subject to testing using this computer model. This will test them against the criteria. The criteria themselves have continued to be assessed for their applicability and relevance and two new criteria have been added to include an overall assessment of the developments.

Example Score 1:



Example Score 2:



Example of a Data Survey Sheet

Survey and Analysis of Residential Areas		
13b	<13b survey 1>	
Name of Development		
Approximate Date of Completion		
Town		
Country		
Please tick as appropriate (if mixed, tick all appropriate boxes):		
totally housing <input type="checkbox"/>	low rise <input type="checkbox"/>	
mixed use <input type="checkbox"/>	medium rise <input type="checkbox"/>	
Public funded <input type="checkbox"/>	high rise <input type="checkbox"/>	
Private owned <input type="checkbox"/>	houses <input type="checkbox"/>	
Private rented <input type="checkbox"/>	flats/apartments <input type="checkbox"/>	
Shared ownership <input type="checkbox"/>	mixed <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Proximity to waterfront: overlooking water <input type="checkbox"/>	
	hinterland <input type="checkbox"/>	
Please score development against the following criteria using the 1-5 system described below:		
Scoring criteria:	poor 1 below average 2 average 3 above average 4 good 5	
Criteria	Meaning	Score
1 Privacy	Is the degree to which occupants can live their lives without visual and aural intrusion appropriate to residential?	
2 Flexibility	Can the dwelling be easily modified to accommodate any change in circumstance or needs to occupants throughout their lifetime?	
3 Identity	Does the development as a whole create a distinct 'sense of place' or demonstrate strength of character? Are the dwellings unique and easily identifiable, either through 'house type', architectural styling, detailing, materials and colours; allowing easy navigation through the development?	
4 Security	Do the dwellings provide a safe environment for occupants and possessions whilst promoting natural surveillance and safety in the wider layout of the development's streets and public spaces?	
5 Sustainability	Does the design of the dwelling maximise the potential for using ambient energy? Do they use appropriate construction methods and materials? Does the development discourage unnecessary use of the private car and promote cycling and walking? Does the development contain or have easy and close access to communal/social facilities; local services (shops/schools/healthcare etc.); public transport; employment? Does the development encourage recycling?	
6 Affordability	Is there an appropriate range of prices amongst the dwellings that are for sale within the development? Is there a mix of tenure within the development that provides a choice of housing through social rented or shared ownership schemes?	
7 Community	Does the layout of the development encourage casual social interaction? Does it provide new, or link to existing, communal social facilities? Is it an open rather than closed community?	
8 Diversity	Does the development attract a balanced mix of people with different socio-economic backgrounds? Does the development provide for a range of householders i.e. single people and couples to larger families? Does the development cater for a range of age groups? Is there an appropriate mix of uses that help to provide an economic and social vibrancy within the area throughout the daytime and into the evening?	
9 Design Quality: Buildings	What is your aesthetic judgement of the overall design and material quality of the built elements within the development? Is the workmanship of good quality and have longevity? Is there evidence of attention to detail? How well does the building relate to the Public Realm?	
10 Design Quality: Public Realm	What is your aesthetic judgement of the overall design and material quality of the public environment? Is the workmanship of good quality and have longevity? Is there evidence of attention to detail? How well does it relate to the built form?	