



DESIGNING OUT CRIME

The Cost Of Policing New Urbanism



PHOTOS

1. This report details the key findings of an evaluation of the projected additional costs of policing future housing developments. The assessment was undertaken on account of a pronounced shift away from fundamental community safety principles by many local authorities in respect of the design and layout of new housing estates.
2. Up until around 12-18 months ago, most local authorities sought to incorporate crime reduction best practice into the planning process, to a greater or lesser extent. Secured by Design, the national scheme of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), had become a reputable 'brand'.
3. Following what is now the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) producing revised Planning Policy Guidance 3 (Housing), additional literature was compiled by both the ODPM and other organisations such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Current ODPM thinking is driven by philosophy known as 'New Urbanism', which, on a number of key issues, could not be at greater variance with key aspects of Secured by Design. The main differences are shown at Tables 1 and 2.
4. This creates a dilemma for proponents of New Urbanism and their solution is to reject certain key crime reduction principles in order to try and overcome the fact that much of the concept is inherently (and demonstrably) criminogenic. New Urbanism's position on community safety is entirely subjective and based on fundamentally false premises. This is causing considerable conflict between planners and most police architectural liaison officers. Are planners obliged to follow the current trend, regardless of the foreseeable and adverse consequences for community safety? Not according to regional government, which maintains that minimum housing density is the only matter on which local authority planners have little discretion - given the central government aim of reducing the land-take of new housing.
5. The main areas of disagreement typically centre on parking and permeability. As regards the former, planners frequently seek to "improve" the street-scene by concealing parked vehicles in off-plot, sometimes remote, courts/garage areas. Courtyards create communal space, which directly contradicts the principle of creating defensible space. In social housing, such communal space - in theory owned by everyone and in reality controlled and influenced by no one - has a disastrous record. This is often compounded with any number of pedestrian routes through the facility. Attempts at providing natural surveillance by locating flats on top of garages do not, in the main, significantly reduce the prevalence of auto-crime and perceived disorder. As regards permeability, police architectural liaison officers will generally seek a legible and coherent movement network, beyond which the greatest gains are made by reducing, as far as is reasonably possible, the number of dwellings on through-routes. This creates more defensible space, significantly increasing the potential for residents to take ownership, and exert influence and informal social control over their environment. Implicit in New Urbanism on the other hand, is a belief that permeability is inherently 'good', and should therefore be maximised. Particularly so for pedestrians and cyclists, with access for vehicular traffic often being restrictive. This typically results in a 'spiders web' of inter-connecting roads and linkages, with bollards or other measures to obstruct cars (and police patrol vehicles).
6. The attached photographs of a newly-built, high crime development in the northern Home Counties illustrate the above points. It is generally accepted that the Radburn layouts, which proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, have proved to be a complete disaster in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour from a community safety perspective.. It is also self-evident that New Urbanism replicates many of the same, most problematic design flaws.
7. In view of the extent to which most local authorities are now marginalising community safety in furtherance of New Urbanism, and given the scale of future new housing development likely to occur in many areas, the policing implications for forces and the public will, to varying extents, be critical.

in many areas, the policing implications for forces and the public will, to varying extents, be critical. The crime difference between good and bad is huge and so therefore, will be the demands on the police. New development can be low crime, low disorder and relatively incident free for the police. Equally, the same site can be a huge and permanent drain on resources.

8. The research subject of this report sought to quantify differentials in reported incidents and recorded crime and to what extent these would be influenced by the contrasting New Urbanism and Secured by Design criteria. The following variables were evaluated and extrapolated.
 - i. Environmental features/layout;
 - ii. Scale of development;
 - iii. Density of development;
 - iv. Demographic composition, this including levels and distribution of social housing;
 - v. Existing local levels of crime and disorder.

The sample size was 24,000 dwellings, this being 10% of Bedfordshire' s existing number of households.

9. The key findings can be summarised as: Around 40% of incidents do not relate directly to crime and disorder per se but include road traffic accidents, missing persons, civil disputes etc.
10. On a development of 4,500 homes, housing around 11,250 people, there will typically be around 1120 of such incidents a year. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is no evidence that this element fluctuates significantly and consistently on account of quantifiable variables.
11. In relation to reported crime and perceived disorder, however, there is a considerable differential between developments built to reflect Secured by Design principles, and those which reflect the aims and style of New Urbanism, these providing much increased opportunities for crime and disorder.
12. Reported crime and disorder incidents on a 4500 home development incorporating Secured by Design estate layout principles will average around 680, resulting in a total of around 1800 incidents a year*.
13. The same number of dwellings in a New Urbanism configuration will typically result in just over 4080 crime and disorder incidents which, in addition to the ' non-crime' 1120, equates to 5200 incidents a year.
14. In both cases, an affordable rented housing element of around 20% has been projected. Whilst there may be long term benefits from the widespread distribution of such homes (' pepper-potting'), the impact of this on the survey sample was not consistent or significant.
15. An increase in social housing (ie affordable rented) from 20% to 30% is likely to increase the crime and disorder incidents to 762 (Secured by Design) and 5712 (New Urbanism), these reflecting increases of 12% and 40% respectively. It was not possible to reliably quantify what the impact of an affordable rented element of under 20% would have on levels of reported incidents and this is to be the subject of further evaluation. The data available however, would suggest a reduction in the number of crime and disorder related incidents in the range of 3%-11%.
16. All of the above figures are based on a comparatively high density (ie, number of dwellings per hectare, this representing the norm for current/future development) though should not be projected to any development of less than 120 dwellings. (Median rather than average figures have been used in quantifying data to avoid distortion by abnormally high numbers of incidents in certain parts of the county).
17. Some reductions can be effected by securing communal parking facilities though, for various reasons, this is unlikely to reduce by more than 5% (at most) the total number of crime and disorder incidents.
18. It is stated by some that highly permeable, well-connected communities foster social inclusion and will therefore, in the longer term, reduce criminality. There is no evidence to support this theory - rather the reverse. In the evaluation sample, victimisation levels could be clearly and consistently linked to permeability levels. If Anti Social Behaviour Orders and the provisions of the Housing Act are to be successfully utilised, the identity of the individuals concerned must be known to complainants. This is often much less likely to be achieved in environments which, by design, intentionally encourage perceived stressors to move through residential areas, benefiting from considerable anonymity in the

perceived strangers to move through residential areas, benefiting from considerable anonymity in the process.

19. There is extensive evidence of:

- a. widespread under-reporting of perceived disorder, and;
- b. an increased prevalence of perceived disorder in environments which are 'pedestrian permeable' but which are restrictive to vehicular traffic.

20. As regards the notional 4500 home development, the financial implications, based on a cost of £30K per officer per annum who deals with, on average, 200 incidents a year, are as follows:

- * Secured by Design 9 officers / £270,000 pa
 - * New Urbanism 26 officers / £780,000 pa
- ie, a difference of £510,000 per annum.

This however relates solely to policing costs. If both under-reporting and the true economic cost of crime is considered, the difference is an additional £1,532,110 per annum. This is further detailed at [Appendix A](#).

21. The imminent growth of around 18,000 new homes mainly in north and mid Bedfordshire over the next 5+ years will, depending on layout, require the following police resources:

- * Secured by Design 36 officers / £1,080,000 pa
 - * New Urbanism 104 officers/ £3,120,000 pa
- ie, a difference of £2,040,000 per annum.

If the new development reflects New Urbanism principles, the additional loss, allowing for under-reporting/ the true economic costs of crime (ie over and above that which can be projected if built to Secured by Design principles) will be around £6,128,440 per annum, in addition to policing costs.

22. In the event of the county' s number of households increasing by 60,000 (as is thought likely by Beds. County Council), the differential is likely to be:

- * Secured by Design 120 officers / £3.6 million
 - * New Urbanism 346 officers / £10.4 million,
- ie, a difference of £6.8 million per annum.

Again, this is solely policing costs. The actual loss, allowing for under-reporting and the economic cost of crime, will, depending on the design of the development, be:

- * Secured by Design £4,672,431
 - * New Urbanism £25,095,457
- ie, a difference of £20,423,026 each year, in addition to policing costs.

23. The issues would appear to be that people will be needlessly victimised when the aim is to do the opposite, and the burden that this will place on the police.

- a. Is central government prepared to finance either or both of these amounts? If not, are local authorities, particularly the additional costs associated with criminogenic New Urbanism layouts, ie on an annual, ongoing basis?
- b. If not, the existing population base will be unavoidably disadvantaged with finite police resources being unnecessarily over-extended, potentially by a significant margin. Alternatively, force policy could (and arguably should?) be amended such as to provide for a reduced level of police cover to new developments, particularly those intentionally built such as to generate high levels of repeated police attendance.

24. The evaluation reviewed over 20,000 incidents. Whilst not suggesting that the above should be used as a model in other force areas, Bedfordshire is not atypical and the future cost (both financially and socially) of New Urbanism nationally is likely to be extremely high.
- * In view of the lack of any 4,500 home developments in the county which incorporate Secured by Design principles consistently, a smaller sample size was upwardly projected.

PETER KNOWLES

Force Architectural Liaison Officer

TOP

Table 1 - Some Key Features of the "Secured By Design" Scheme

- * Create defensible space and territoriality.
- * Organise the built environment so that anti-social behaviour is less likely to be ignored.
- * Create space that generalises a sense of ownership (so restrict the amount of public space, and create ' buffer zones' between public and private spaces) rather than space which promotes anonymity.
- * Restrict the number of escape routes available to criminals (which is a large part of the explanation for why the Secured by Design scheme has come to be associated with the cul-de-sac).
- * Promote natural surveillance from residents' houses.
- * Restrict the number of crime generators such as:
 - footpaths which link places together;
 - supermarkets and other activities which are out of scale with the locality because they are intended for a wider community;
 - ' honeypots' (such as fast food take-aways) which encourage people to concentrate;
 - ' hotspots' (places which already have a record of criminal and anti-social behaviour);
 - ' fear generators' (places which cause perceptions of fear)
- * Effective site management regimes, that promote the sense of a cared-for environment.

Table 2 - Some Key Features of "New Urbanism"

The basic vision is of cities as places composed of small villages centred around vibrant streets, peopled by pedestrians and bustling with activity*. To this end, the following are seen as being amongst the most important design principles:

- * Create bounded walkable neighbourhoods.
- * Encourage the development and use of public transport both in terms of physical provision and through generating a sufficient density of people to make public transport a feasible proposition.
- * Encourage mixed land uses at the neighbourhood level.
- * Promote a ' permeable' street network which allows through-movement, and emphasise the importance of the street as a place where people live as distinct from a road along which traffic moves.
- * Promote ' eyes in the street' through design approaches such as minimal setbacks of properties, large front windows and porches.
- * Limit the environmental impact of the car through devices such as restricting the size of parking lots, locating garages and parking lots behind buildings, narrowing streets and widening pavements.
- * Emphasise the importance of sustainable approaches to environmental design.

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* (The local audits undertaken as part of the Crime and Disorder Act would suggest that the majority of the public find this, at the least, intrusive, and often intimidating when it is groups of ' bustling' young people?).

Appendix A

The annual British Crime Survey quantifies what proportion of offences committed are reported to the police, the remainder often being referred to as the ' dark figure' .

As regards the economic cost of crime, borne by society as a whole, this has been extensively researched and documented in the Home Office Research Study 217 (2000). The report details average costs per offence, this including value of property etc, along with the costs to the Criminal Justice System, etc (policing costs have been excluded from the latter in the following):

4,500 Dwelling Development, incorporating "Secured By Design" Principles

	<i>Number of crimes reported</i>	<i>Total, incl. those not reported</i>	<i>True cost (£) per offence</i>	<i>Total (£)</i>
Burglary	22	36	£2,060	£74,160
Theft of Motor Vehicle	24	25	£870	£135,720
Theft from Motor Vehicle	63	131		
Criminal Damage	92	293	£480	£140,640
		<i>Number of other incidents</i>		£350,520 per annum
Disorder, etc	479			

4,500 Dwelling Development, incorporating "New Urbanism" Principles

	<i>Number of crimes reported</i>	<i>Total, incl. those not reported</i>	<i>True cost (£) per offence</i>	<i>Total (£)</i>
Burglary	167	278	£2,060	£572,680
Theft of Motor Vehicle	135	142	£870	£769,950
Theft from Motor Vehicle	357	743		
Criminal Damage	360	1,125	£480	£540,000
				£1,882,630 per annum
	<i>Number of other incidents</i>			
Disorder, etc	479			

The above figures are commensurate with local distribution trends and reflect the greatly increased prevalence of offending which typically result from high levels of opportunity combined with extremely limited scope for preventative policing.

PETER KNOWLES

Force Architectural Liaison Officer

TOP

Photos to illustrate report

click on each thumbnail for larger image



1. Pedestrians may well feel vulnerable using this footpath



2. Underpass



3. Another underpass



4. Yet another underpass



5. These bollards will obstruct police patrols (and other emergency vehicles)



6. More bollards



16. Insecure parking court - the archway is likely to be the subject of persistent misuse



17. Parking on the pavement



18. Residents try to get as close to their front doors as possible



19. A typical view



20. With autocrime so prevalent, owing to the design of the parking facilities, it is not surprising that vehicles are left like this



21. Car parking on the pavement again



7. Insecure parking area/public thoroughfare



8. Yet more bollards



9. Insecure parking



10. Insecure parking area/public thoroughfare



11. Insecure parking areas with brick walls that provide concealment for criminals



12. Insecure parking area which also incorporates entrance into flat and public thoroughfare



13. Insecure parking area worsened by brick wall blind spots and public thoroughfare



14. Insecure parking area/public thoroughfare



15. Insecure garage court



22. Alleyways like this compromise defensible space



23. Alleyways are likely to be a threat rather than an opportunity to residents



24. Routes like this assure offenders of anonymity



25. Layouts like this facilitate the offender's "search" behaviour



26. With pathways like this it is not surprising that crime is a serious problem



27. This public vehicular thoroughfare is poorly overlooked



28. Being at the rear of properties, community safety is heavily compromised



29. These vehicles are extremely vulnerable



30. Pedestrians using this route, especially after dark, may well feel isolated and unsafe

PETER KNOWLES
Force Architectural Liaison Officer

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