

# LEARNING FROM HELSINKI AND STOCKHOLM



November 2011

## TEN Group

TEN is a small group of senior local government officers in London who have met regularly over eight years to share ideas and exchange knowledge on how to achieve urban renaissance. Using the principle of *looking and learning* they visit pioneering projects to draw out lessons that can be applied in their own authorities. In the process the members develop their skills as place-makers, and are able to build up the capacity of their authorities to tackle major projects.

**Special thanks** to Veronique Larsson from Stockholm City Council, Keith Boxer at White Arkitekter and Charles Landry for their help with our programme. Douglas Gordon at the City of Helsinki, Geoff Denton and Jake Ford at White Arkitekter, Sandra Plavinskis from Svenska Bostäder and Michael Frejd and Eva-Britt Leander from Spånga-Tensta City District for the tours and presentations during our visit. Pat Hayes and Sir Peter Hall for briefing material.

**Photographs** Douglas Gordon at Helsinki City Council, Mark Lucas at LB of Redbridge, John East at LB Newham and URBED

Front cover images:

Top left: Arabia Waterfront, Helsinki

Bottom left: Eco-Viikki, Helsinki

Top right: Hammarby, Stockholm

Bottom right: Järva, North-West Stockholm

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URBED (Urban and Economic Development) Ltd  
The Building Centre  
26 Store Street  
London WC1E 7BT  
Tel. 07714 979 956  
[www.urbed.co.uk](http://www.urbed.co.uk)





Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm



Husby, Stockholm



Arabia, Helsinki

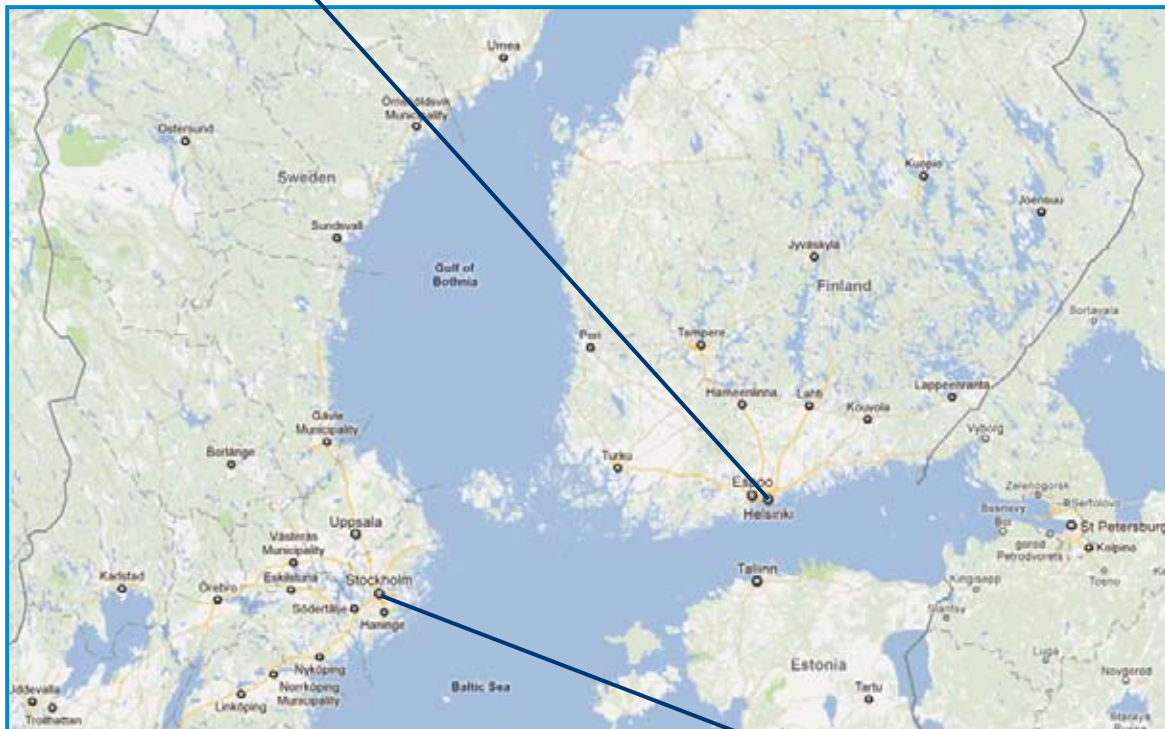
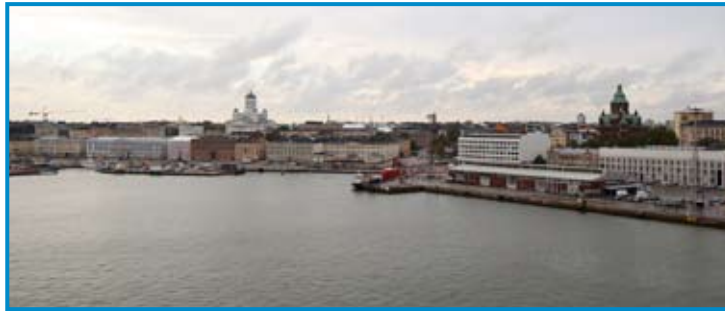
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# WHERE WE WENT

Top right: Arabia Waterfront,  
Top left: Ruoholahti  
Bottom right: Aurinkolahti  
Bottom left: Eco Viikki



Source: Google Maps



Above: Hammarby  
Right: Husby

# I. INTRODUCTION

This report (and the related Power Point presentation) draws conclusions from the TEN Group study tour to Helsinki and Stockholm on 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> September. This was the seventh annual study tour to major European cities, and followed up the valuable visit in the previous year to Copenhagen and Malmö, which showed how much London had to learn from Scandinavian approaches to taming the car and managing urban growth.

This year we had guided tours round four exemplary urban extensions led by local government officers and architects, as well as meetings with those involved in managing the renewal of peripheral housing estates on the edge of Stockholm.

We travelled around Helsinki on public transport, and in Stockholm on a hired bus, which gave us a good feel for the way the cities are laid out. We travelled between the two cities by overnight ferry, a memorable and enjoyable experience.

The report incorporates information from the excellent film on Hammarby Sjöstad produced by Design for Homes, which can be watched via <http://www.living-projects.co.uk/films/?page=documentary>. It also draws on material from Sir Peter Hall's forthcoming book with Nicholas Falk on learning from Europe, and other reading from the Briefing Pack.

## Programme

### Thursday 22nd September

- Introduction to urban development in Helsinki – presentation by Douglas Gordon, Architect and Spatial Planner, City Planning, City of Helsinki
- Excursion to planning projects in the city of Helsinki: Ruoholahti, Arabia Waterfront, Eco-Viikki and Aurinkolahti

### Friday 23rd September

- Tour of Hammarby Sjöstad led by Geoff Denton, Architect and Jake Ford, Landscape Architect at White arkitekter
- Visit to Husby, North-West of Stockholm
- Meeting with Sandra Plavinskis, Head of Communications from Svenska Bostäder, the City of Stockholm's largest public housing company
- Meeting with Michael Frejd and Eva-Britt Leander from Spånga-Tensta City District and their colleague from Save the Children



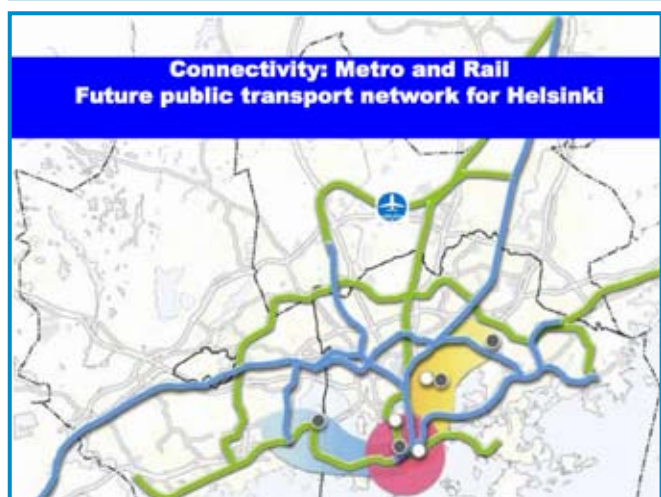
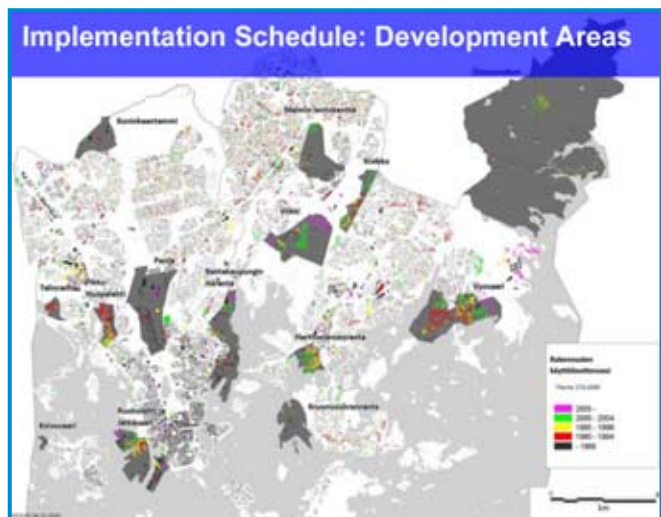
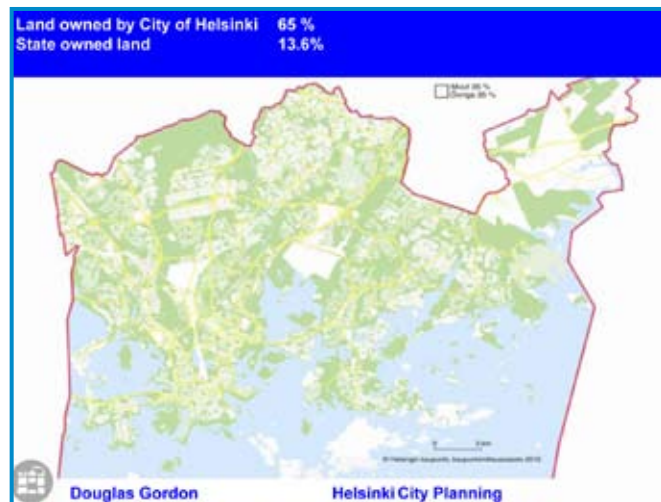
Top: Arabia Waterfront, Helsinki  
Bottom: Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm



## 2. LEARNING FROM HELSINKI

Helsinki, the capital of Finland, is relatively unknown to British planners, yet it offers many lessons. First it has to cope with extreme weather, with dark and very cold winters (55 days a year are below minus 10 degrees Celsius) and so like the rest of Scandinavia has been in the forefront of measures to save energy. Second, as a relatively small and peripheral country on the borders of Russia, it has experienced foreign domination for centuries, and has had to build an economy based on applying knowledge rather than relying on natural resources (except for wood). Third, with a language that is unique, it has to put extra efforts into building relations with the rest of the world, and, for example, was one of the first countries to form the Euro Zone.

As in other Scandinavian countries, the population has concentrated into the major cities, and Helsinki has grown by 15% in the last decade to 590,000, while the city region numbers 1.3 million, and is expected to grow to 1.6 million by 2030 (a rate of population growth three times faster than the rest of the EU). Most is indigenous growth, with people moving from the country. Immigrants only account for 6% of the population (mainly white middle class Russians). This compares with a fifth in Stockholm and Copenhagen. Like all cities Helsinki has suffered from urban sprawl and competition from new suburbs, including the planned town of Espoo (population 245,000) where much lower densities encourage car dependency. However it now rates as one of the most dynamic cities, where people actually believe in planning.



Slides from presentation given to TEN by Douglas Gordon, Architect and Spatial Planner, City Planning, City of Helsinki

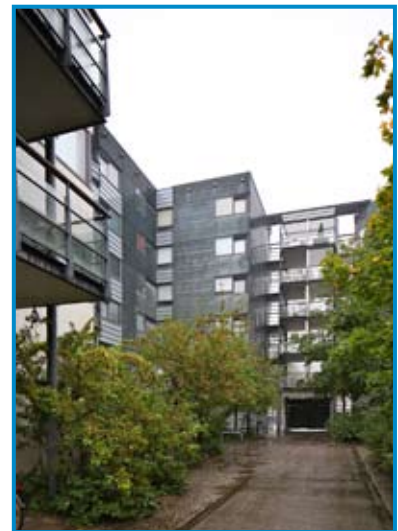
The transport system is highly integrated. There are twelve tram lines, a metro with feeder bus services, and three commuter railway lines. The Underground is visually striking as it has been carved out of rock. As well as Saarinen's famous railway terminal built in 1914, there is an impressive new transport hub built below a shopping centre, which handles three quarters the number of commuters as St. Pancras and Kings Cross every day. 72% of commuters use public transport to get to work in the centre, mainly rail.

There are nearly 400,000 work places and the capital acts as an economic driver for the whole country. There are a further 300,000 jobs in the wider region, and about 10% are in the public sector. 80% of residents work in the service sectors, and telecommunications (Nokia in particular). High tech, and bio-diversity companies are growth areas. It is usual for people to speak English and Swedish as well as Finnish, which no doubt helps in developing intelligence and making people aware of what is happening elsewhere in the world. Thirty years ago 37% of exports were linked to the Soviet Union, now it is only 17%. However there are still strong links, for example Russian coal and gas powers Helsinki.

An important theme in the Finnish way of life is the quality of 'sisu', best translated as guts, or will or determination in the face of adversity. Thus Finland freed itself from Russian domination after the last World War, despite being much smaller, unlike the other Baltic states. Incomes are relatively equal, and there is a strong stress on



Helsinki underground



Ruoholahti, the first stop on our Helsinki tour; a new high-rise waterfront development built round a new canal for 8,000 people





integrated corporate working, with little of the adversarial approaches that are found in the UK. Indeed the 'Nordic welfare' philosophy or relatively high rates of tax in return for high rates of benefit helps to unify the different Scandinavian countries, with long holidays to enable everyone to enjoy the relatively short Summers.

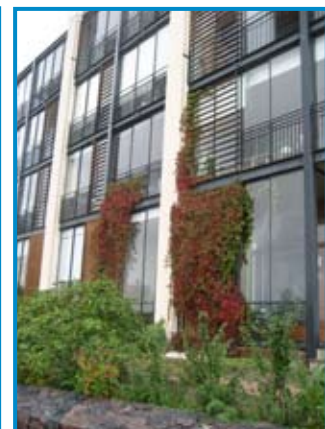
Like Stockholm, Riga and Tallinn, it is very much a maritime city, with a rich shoreline along the non-tidal Baltic Sea, and the centre is very compact. 88% of residents in Helsinki live in apartments, and there are no slums. 46% own their own home and 50% live in social housing, with a very small private rented sector. Social housing is open to all and allocated on the basis of position on the waiting list. Most of the stock is less than 30 years old. The city is very green with around 38% given over to green open space, and with 300 km of shoreline the sea is never far away.



Arabia Waterfront - 'A city for the arts and design on the shores of Vanhankaupunginselkä'

### Extract from Social Justice Index for 31 OECD countries by the Bertelsmann Foundation

Fair access to education is also considerably underdeveloped in several of the 31 countries surveyed. Once again it is the northern countries Iceland, Finland, Sweden and Denmark who perform best on this point. Wealthy countries such as the United States (rank 20), the United Kingdom (rank 21) and even Germany (rank 22) perform disappointingly, and find themselves in the lower third of the ranking. Inclusive education systems and greater investment in early childhood education are key factors in leveling the playing field in education.



Arabia Waterfront: High quality green public and private spaces and apartments with large enclosed balconies





The housing area is located next to the arts, crafts and design centre of Arabia and to the city centre by tram



Public art is a strong feature. The housing area is on city land and opens up the waterfront to the public.

## 2.1 Strategic Spatial Planning

Helsinki, like all cities, is prone to urban sprawl, and to people moving out to homes that can only be reached by car. Consequently the City Planning Department prepared a 30 year vision in 2008 that seeks to urbanise the city region to stop urban sprawl and to channel new development into 'areas of change'. The City Council owns 65% of all land within the City boundary, and, together with the State, nearly 80% of land is in public ownership. This means that the City is able to play a much stronger role in development than would be possible in the UK, as it can 'call the tune'. The City employs 300 planners, and Douglas Gordon stresses 'you have to believe planning works'.

Helsinki has taken the European Union's Spatial Development Perspective and the Territorial Agenda seriously, with its theme of 'compact cities' that are highly connected with their suburbs. Most of the new development is concentrated around waterfront areas, sometimes making use of former industrial sites, such as the old Arabia pottery factory, and sometimes taking waste land. The key has been focusing development around public transport corridors (some 72% of residents use the public transport system within Helsinki during rush hours - as high as London and Munich), with an arc of development on an orbital East West link. In due course this will be supplemented by another arc further out.

The municipality is one of five authorities in the city region, and so has to work closely with its counterparts, but has not been afraid to identify growth areas outside its boundaries. They are now required by law to produce a joint plan. Strategic planning has focused on stopping further sprawl, achieving the critical mass for good public transport through densification, and developing an East West axis. As most population projections are wrong, the main point is to focus change in the right places.

The strong spatial growth framework is being extended to bring in the other Baltic cities of St Petersburg and Tallinn, and a linked up high speed rail system is proposed. The plans embrace the three themes of working, living and environment/traffic. There is a new focus on understanding economic clusters of high tech activity, and where they are likely to flourish, as the City is actively involved in helping them to flourish, for example through the supply of premises.



Aurinkolahti district of Vuosaari - Apartment and terrace housing on new beach front with promenade and two new marinas



Vuosaari 'A city district by the sea'

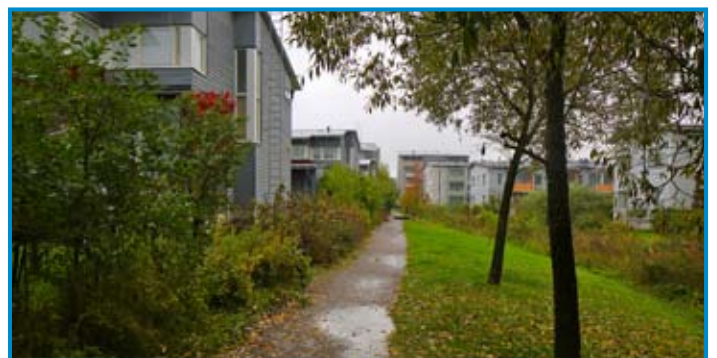
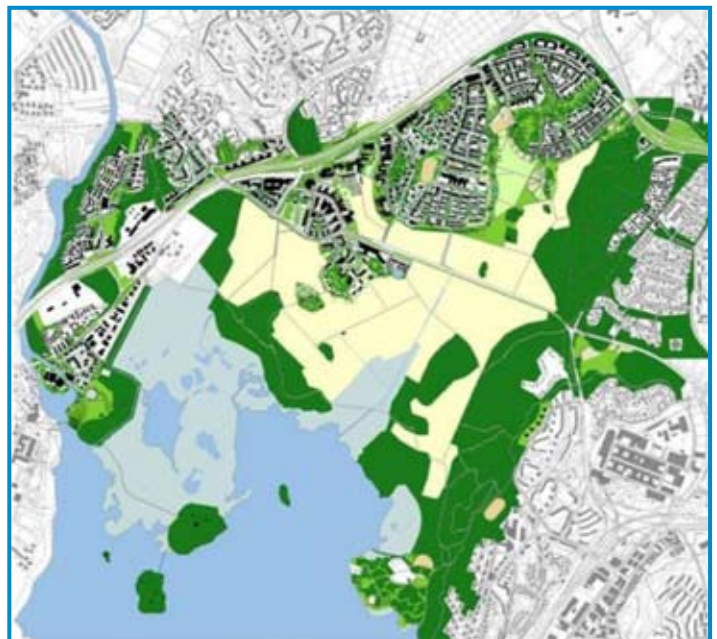


## 2.2 Creative Development Finance

The City's extensive land ownership is a historic legacy, which is reinforced through the way development is procured. The City creates the conditions for private success, as it not only runs the transport systems, but also owns the energy and water company, and 94% of all buildings are connected to the district heating system. The City Council draws up the development plans, and therefore reduces the risks of development, enabling private developers to operate successfully with lower levels of profit. The normal practice is to grant 60 year leases, with a ground rent based on 4% of the value.

Land is identified for development, and then put out for competition, with the choice made on quality as well as price. The city specifies the basic brief, for example, land uses and plot ratios. Design competitions are then run for individual blocks, which results in considerable variety. 50% of housing is expected to be rented out at reduced rents, cross-subsidised by the sale of other units. However, Helsinki has the fourth highest housing prices of any city, and a lot of housing is now provided through some form of housing cooperative where the occupant has a minority stake in the value. Due to the considerable cost of buying a house, the City has introduced new, innovative methods to improve access to affordable housing. The 'Hitas' system offers subsidies by the City of up to 50% of the market price in order to attract families to remain in Helsinki. Another feature is the 'right of tenancy', whereby tenants pay between 10 and 15% of the capital value together with a social rent. This enables households to allow their sons or daughters to continue the tenancy after their parent's death.

The City not only gets substantial annual revenue from ground rents (€200 million) but also makes a profit, for example, of €320 million from the supply of energy in 2010, though this may be reduced in 2011 to €250 million. It is therefore well-placed to be able to finance the new infrastructure required for further growth, and to make sure that all new strategic developments are linked up with either a new metro station or tram service.



The new ecological village of Viikki aims to integrate eco principles with high-density low-build housing. Allotments are a strong feature of the public realm



## 2.3 New Eco Suburbs

We visited four of the new developments, all of which were built to high environmental standards, for populations ranging from between 7,000 in Arabia waterfront to 40,000 in the eastern suburb of Vuosaari. The average size of unit is 71 sq m for a family of three (40 sq m for one person), and each of the developments were predominantly made up of apartment blocks (91%), mostly with substantial balconies or sun rooms to give a contact with the natural world. There were relatively few shops and cafes, with reliance placed instead on links with the main centres, though a mix of uses is encouraged.

In all of the developments, the policy of linking jobs with living areas was quite pronounced. In Arabia waterfront, there were 7,000 work places to complement the 7,000 inhabitants. In Eco-Viikki, some 8,000 jobs in an area for 16,000 people. Ruoholahti and the Western Harbour aims for 30,000 people and some 16,000 work places, whilst the Fish Harbour development will have 16,000 residents and 12,000 jobs.

In Arabia the mix came from providing space for creative businesses of all kinds, including conversions of the old pottery factories. In the two other cases, branches of the university generated activity during the day. Helsinki will be World Design Capital for 2012, and certainly has some fine examples of contemporary housing design, which looked good even on a day when the rain poured down!

A clear planning policy for all these major developments is the need to create social housing. In nearly all of the development areas, some 50% of housing was social, thereby reflecting the Nordic welfare culture to promote equality. There are no 'gated communities' in Helsinki, and it is almost impossible to tell the difference between 'social' housing and private housing, such is the concern to maintain social cohesion.

The most adventurous scheme is Eco-Viikki, which was designed as an experimental 'eco town' with some 1,900 residents.



Solar panels in  
Eco-Viikki



## Eco-Viikki: a substantial eco village demonstration project

To promote and test out different ways of implementing the Bruntland principles for sustainable development, the City of Helsinki set up a series of competitions for a 23 hectare site adjoining the university's faculty of agriculture and forestry. It lies eight kilometres from the centre of Helsinki. The project has been monitored from the start along with comparable schemes in Ørestad in Copenhagen and Hammarby in Stockholm. Thus the resulting 50 page report in English provides an excellent guide to what does and does not work [www.helsinki.fi/static/ksv/julkaisut/eco-viikki\\_en.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/static/ksv/julkaisut/eco-viikki_en.pdf).

The development was on a difficult clay based site, which required substantial upfront works. Starting with the idea that the 'optimal size' for a functioning community is about 1,500 inhabitants, a masterplan was drawn up. This was through a competition where experts were encouraged to join up as multi disciplinary groups, and 91 proposals were received with every imaginable layout. The masterplan divided the site into plots for 60-70,000m<sup>2</sup> of housing, along with community facilities. There are two day care centres, a school and a local shop, however the most popular community facility has been the 140 allotments, and the scheme aims to integrate buildings and nature.

The winning scheme emphasised 'green fingers' with a water system that held on to run-off, which was then pumped by hand to the allotments. Buildings are oriented to the South and sheltered by new trees. Competitions were also held for the building elements. A set of five ecological criteria were drawn up quite quickly in 1997 covering pollution, natural resources, health, biodiversity and nutrition, which were broken down further into 16 factors, each of which could then be given points. Different levels were then set.

All the participants in an invited competition were allocated sites, with the idea that each site should include some experimental elements. Half the housing was reserved for owner occupation, a quarter for rent and a quarter for shared ownership through which residents pay 15% of the value of the home and then monthly charges. Car parking spaces were sold separately, with a lower than usual allocation but with some green areas held aside in case they would be needed later. Six plots were reserved for self-build projects.

Some public funding was provided for the experimental projects and also for monitoring the results from 2001 onwards. Building of the first block started in 1999 and the scheme was complete by 2005. There are larger blocks of flats on the edges and smaller 2-3 storey blocks of terraced houses in the centre. Common and popular feature are the large conservatories and balconies. The research showed that the scheme was popular and largely appealed to families. A diversity of vegetation was achieved. Heating savings of around 25% were achieved, and the solar panels worked well, which were fitted to half the homes, while all were linked to the city's district heating system. Saunas and laundries are shared to save space.

Life at Eco-Viikki is rather like suburban life anywhere. The scheme did not seem to change behaviour, other than in growing food, and reducing water consumption. 45% of respondents had a degree, and living close to nature was seen as the main asset. There were complaints about the noise of the mechanical ventilation, and the effectiveness of natural ventilation. There was also worries about children and cars. The residents are conscientious about sorting rubbish into different types (now a general requirement). Despite the project's overall success the report raises the problem in getting builders to adopt innovative practices in their general products, and spreading the lessons down the supply chain.

*Information taken from Eco - Viikki: Aims, Implementation and Results, City of Helsinki, 2005*



The new park is one of the important green areas that make up the Helsinki's green belt network, and extends as far as the forests of rural Sipoo

## 2.4 Quality Public Realm

Visitors to Helsinki are struck by how attractive and orderly the streets seem to be. In part this is due to high quality surfaces, through for example extensive use of stone flags. There are lots of trees and green spaces, which help connect people up with nature. People also are well-behaved, and do not drop litters, and only cross streets when the lights say they can.

This mentality of collaboration, which to a greater or lesser extent is found throughout all the Scandinavian countries, produces areas that feel safe and welcoming at all times. The pride that people feel in having combated foreign domination and a hostile climate may well make it easier to develop and manage quality communal areas, and there is much less social isolation to combat. Having said that, the Finns are notorious for some drinking excessively, and it would be wrong to assume that all is well, or that the behaviour can readily be transferred to other cities.

The educational system, which produces some of the best results in the world, also must take some credit for creating a cooperative spirit. Learning other languages and spending time abroad doing so may help in breaking down parochialism, and developing community pride. The Finnish term 'sisu', which is translated as perseverance in the face of adversity or guts, may explain why they have been able to create such attractive new communities without getting bogged down in conflicts.

Eco-Viikki homes in a green environment

### Extract from Charm Offensive: Cultivating civility in 21st Century Britain The Young Foundation, 2011

Studies in the field of sociology and criminology show that the character of our environment (from streets and transport systems to workplaces and neighbourhoods) sends out powerful cues which influence our behaviour. Happy, well-kempt, well-designed, supportive places breed civil people. Conversely, neglected, abrasive and hostile places harbour incivility. We consider the role that the built environment, planning, public policy and public space play in promoting *"voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by people themselves"*. We argue that a community-wide effort to cultivate small acts of courtesy and compassion in our daily lives will yield greater results, over time, than top-down approaches which try to enforce respect.





### 3. LEARNING FROM STOCKHOLM

The centre of Stockholm, which was once the capital of an extensive empire, is built on a grand scale. However until the Second World War the country as a whole was quite poor, and many had to emigrate to the USA in the search for a better life. What is therefore most impressive is the way the Swedish economy has prospered. In part this was helped by having relatively few industrial cities, such as Gothenburg and Malmö. Despite being as large as France most of the population live in a relatively small area around the Southern seaboard, and Stockholm has grown rapidly as a city region. The population of Stockholm municipality is now over 800,000 and the city region is 1.3 million in a country of 9.2 million.

The key to its growth, as a sustainable city as Sir Peter Hall points out, has been public investment in an extensive transport system, initially modelled on that of London. This in turn enabled the development of new planned suburbs in the Jarva district to the North of the City, not far from the airport. To meet a housing crisis, the government introduced a programme for building a 'million homes', and it is these prefabricated estates, many using building systems that were copied in the UK, that now present the greatest challenge.

The City of Stockholm owns most of the land, as in other Scandinavian cities, and over the years has bought up sites on the edges for future expansion. There is no green belt as such, but nowhere is very far from woods or water. Much of the post war housing has been developed by public housing companies, and the City of Stockholm owns three. Unlike the UK, anyone can rent a home from them, however there are 275,000 on the waiting list, which can take 20 years in the centre, and 4 years even in a peripheral suburb like

Husby in Järva, where renewal is underway, and which is 15 miles from the city centre on the end of a metro line.

Stockholm has attracted large numbers of immigrants, mainly refugees from different parts of the world. These have become concentrated in the less popular outer areas, which their children see as their real home. Consequently there are issues of how to integrate the different communities without attempting to assimilate them. Our visit therefore looked at the approaches being taken both to developing new suburbs and renewing old ones.

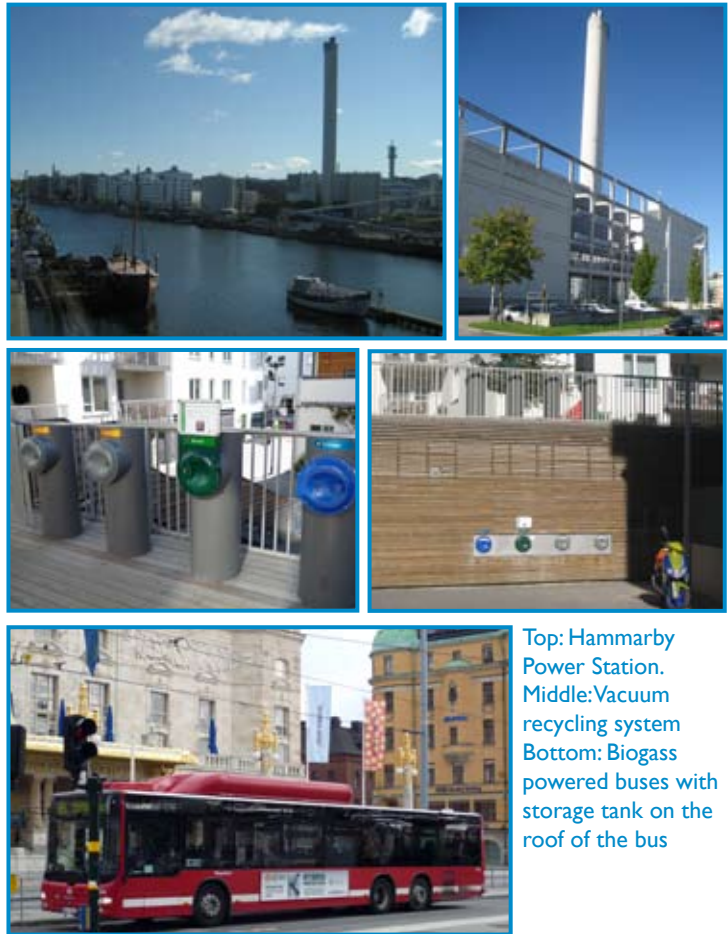


Top: New development opposite Hammarby on the waterfront and 1960s development on the hill  
Middle and bottom: Storm Water Drainage - rain water is led via open drains to the attractive channel. The water runs into a series of basins, known as an equaliser, and then out into the lake

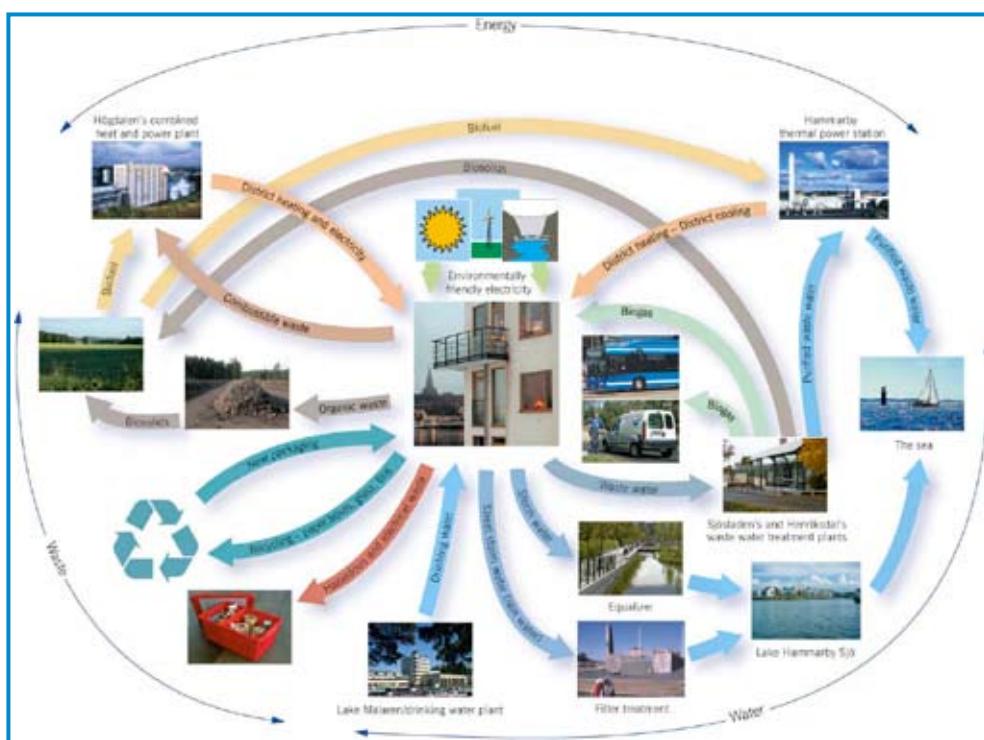
### 3.1 The Hammarby Model

The best known new development in Scandinavia is an old industrial area that was to have been the site for the Olympic Games. When the bid failed, the City planners decided to promote the site as a model for urban living, built to the highest environmental standards. Along with Eco Viikki, which we saw in Helsinki and Ørestad in Copenhagen, Hammarby Sjöstad (or town by the lake) is providing an influential model for how new communities can be built to meet future needs.

The essence of the masterplan has been a series of ‘fish-bones’ with a new tram link providing the central spine that connects the development with the city centre a couple of miles away. The City has invested in producing the masterplan, decontaminating the site, (which was previously thought to be ‘unbuildable’) and installing the basic infrastructure, including a tram line, ferries, and a school. It commissions the energy and water systems, which are installed before developers take over sites.



Top: Hammarby Power Station.  
Middle: Vacuum recycling system  
Bottom: Biogas powered buses with storage tank on the roof of the bus



**The Hammarby Model** The core of the environmental and infrastructural planning of Hammarby Sjöstad jointly developed by Stockholm Water Company, Fortum and the City of Stockholm Waste Management Administration

The City also commissions and maintains the extensive landscaping, which has created a really beautiful place to live, with a varied character, despite the high overall densities (100 net to the hectare or 68 overall). It is the high densities, as well as the overall design and the mix of people who live there that support a relatively high level of shops and eating places that animate the ground floors of the main streets. You can cycle in ten minutes to the city centre. The City invested some €500 million, but the overall investment is €3,000 million, so the project is seen as a worthwhile investment for all.

The term the Hammarby Model is used to refer to the 'closed loop' energy, waste and water systems that keep running costs and carbon emissions down. All the apartments are connected to the City's district heating system, which serves 80% of buildings in the city. The site adjoins an award winning power station that at one time generated half the city's energy. Heat is generated from burning waste, which is sorted and then sucked along one of three large pipes using the Envac system.

The overall aim is to reduce environmental impact by a half, and the thinking behind the environmental measures is explained in the 'Glasshouse', an information centre on the main street. With such a large predicted load, energy companies were keen to bid for the contracts to install the basic pipes. Households benefit from highly insulated homes with triple glazing, and from not having to bother about central heating boilers that waste space and can go wrong. Hence the scheme converts people who may not have been 'eco enthusiasts' to start with.

Even more ingenious, heat is extracted from the sewage, before being fed back into the system, and the solid residue is used to grow trees! The biogas produced runs the city's buses, and is available for those who want to cook by gas. The rain water goes into a SUD system that also adds to the value of the landscape. As a consequence though all the measures may have added 5% to the costs, they are said by developers to have added 25% to the value.

A variety of architecture





## 3.2 Design Leadership

Visitors are generally impressed by the high quality of the apartments. Indeed the scheme has proved attractive not only to young professionals, as expected, but also to families who enjoy the sense of community ('everyone knows everybody') and the fast connections to city jobs and services. The apartment sizes are larger than usual, which also adds to the appeal. The quality has been secured not by trying to specify everything in advance, as might happened in the UK, but through a system of procurement and design leadership that ensures variety and choice.

The key has been not just the public sector owning all the land (as for example has also been the case with the Greenwich Peninsular in London), but also through the way development has been procured. Instead of trying to maximise the price secured from each site, and ending up with an adversarial system that sets professional against each other and the city, a more collaborative approach is used.

The urban design concept was driven by the City architect of the time, and ten people worked on the masterplan. Study tours were made to other places in order to learn what would best suit the site, including London Docklands. The whole area of around 160 hectares was divided into twelve phases or areas of which half had been completed by 2009. Building started in 1997, with the first residents moving in 2003. This rate of some 6-700 units a year is some five times the rate in Greenwich, which is a comparable size. With a planned total of 10,800 homes, each neighbourhood or sub-district is roughly 800 homes, equivalent to say 2,000 people. The design process starts with three or four architect/masterplanners from the private sector being asked



Top: Glashusett environmental information centre  
Middle top: Tram line through the centre of Hammarby  
Middle bottom: Nursery below apartments  
Bottom: Play area and shared public space above parking

to develop 'parallel sketches' in a collaborative process in which they criticise each others work. Up and coming firms are encouraged to take part. The best ideas are incorporated in an agreed masterplan.

The next stage is to pick a development team for the sub-district, and in all there will be some 70 different projects or blocks, which helps explain the distinctive character, with buildings ranging from seven stories along the water or tram route to four or five stories on the sides. The design principles for each project are set out in a 'quality programme' or design code that is attached to the agreement with the developer to ensure the block is built as planned. As developers and the municipality work together in an 'open book' arrangement, it is possible to build much more efficiently.



Social housing with allotments and community green house

Rental housing is mixed in, and indistinguishable, with rents being set by the market. As a result it is much more expensive to live there than on the outskirts, and there is a very long waiting list. Interestingly one of the blocks developed by a cooperative housing association includes allotments where residents can grow their own food. These are expected to encourage people to stay and put down roots, and also can help those on lower incomes to live better.



A reminder of Hammarby's past



Hammarby's vibrant centre



### 3.3 Careful Neighbourhood Management

One of the downsides of building planned schemes very rapidly can be that they all age at the same time and an estate can become unpopular very rapidly. One third of homes in Sweden were built in the 'Million Homes' programme in the 60s and 70s, and more than 200 million Europeans are said to live in similar properties. Husby, which we visited, is one of five estates in the Vasta district. There are 101 identical blocks of apartments, laid out in a complex pattern around traffic free streets.

As estates like Husby suffer from similar basic problems to those found on London's estates, we explored how the city tries to cope with integrating the different communities. There is much more use made of neighbourhood management, with schools providing a focus. Thus we met in an attractive room that is used by the school during the day, kids clubs after school and by community groups at night. The various services, such as education, police and leisure, meet up to discuss problems and agree action. There is a strong tradition of the municipality taking the lead, rather than relying on voluntary organisations, as we might do.

The district council have a small team of field workers whose role it is to help children in these areas to have a 'meaningful spare time', which they believe along with a good school time is the best way of keeping children on the straight and narrow. Budgets are being cut for these types of activities so much time is spent raising funds. We heard from someone working with local children from Save the Children the importance of helping them to find their own voice and to feel part of Sweden.



Top: Metro station  
in the centre of  
Husby  
Middle top: Järva  
District, North-  
West of Stockholm  
Middle bottom:  
School as a com-  
munity hub  
Bottom: Central  
Husby





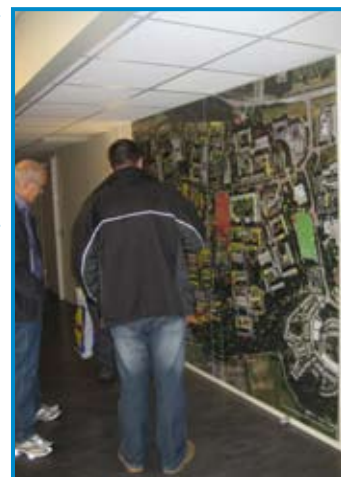
The housing association which owns the estate, Svenska Bostäder has its own programme for creating new jobs and enterprises, helping a hundred people a year in to long term jobs through training education and helping them to start their own businesses. During the tender process they specify that contractors must take on some of their long term unemployed. There is a stress on everyone learning Swedish and 'the way things are done'. People feel a loyalty to Husby first, and indeed are said to be very proud to live there, even though it is looked down on by others. Undoubtedly the high quality of the public realm, with extensive flower beds, and no obvious graffiti or vandalism must help.

There also is said to be trust in the local police force. With careful neighbourhood management, problems can be anticipated and dealt with before they erupt into riots (though there is a case of one school having been burnt down). Of course problems can arise with individual households, and the management policy is quite firm. If people consistently default on their rent, or cause a disturbance, they are out, and about 30 households from their total housing stock are evicted each year (who then may go to the municipality for help). Though most people want to stay in Husby, some have been moving out, and the adjoining estate of Tenby provides relatively cheap homes to buy.

A major problem is the high cost of transport to the centre, even with a link by Metro, which tends to trap people in the estate, particularly young people. Undoubtedly car ownership must be increasing, and we saw a great deal of new economic activity along the main motorways which run nearby. Consideration is being given to allowing more cars into the estate, in part as a means of making it feel safer at night.



Svenska Bostäder information centre - the aerial map shows the results of community consultation. The red spots show the areas they don't like and the green the places they do



### 3.4 Sustainable Estate Renewal

Svenska Bostäder which is the largest of the three municipal housing companies, is committed to refurbishing 5,000 apartments over 10 years. It has raised capital by selling off half its stock, and now owns 28,000 rental apartments units in the city, plus 4,000 commercial premises. Svenska Bostäder were founded in 1944 they are owned by Stockholm Municipality. They are funded by rents with no subsidy from the government. They must buy land for the market price.

The company's aim is to 'lift' the status of the estate, and levels of employment. Indeed we were told by one of the city's community development officers that local priorities are 'work, security, and having a voice'. When work started, the company was surprised to encounter huge opposition to their plans, which had envisaged large scale demolition. People were generally happy with where they lived, but very worried about having to pay higher rents. They also felt that the real problems were not the housing blocks but the public spaces, particularly in the main shopping centre. The opposition led to a more participative approach to planning.

Local concerns were revealed through an exercise that got residents to indicate on a large aerial photograph where they lived, and the areas they liked and disliked. The process was called a 'dialogue', and continues, with people voting on proposals for their blocks, and also signing an agreement to go ahead this takes a minimum of 9 months. The process of community engagement is not easy, as only 10% of the residents were born in Sweden, and naturally tend to group along ethnic lines. The blocks are now being refurbished extensively, starting with seven blocks. The quality of the show flat has turned people's attitudes around to favouring refurbishment.



Top: After refurbishment  
Middle: During refurbishment  
Bottom: Before refurbishment

The projects for Sustainable Jarva are seen as a way for Swedish companies into the huge potential international market for retrofitting similar buildings. Alternative methods are therefore being tried and tested out, such as prefabricated external insulation, as well as traditional renovation methods. A leaflet produced by the City lists ten basic steps (see also [www.hallbaeastader.gov.se](http://www.hallbaeastader.gov.se)):

- Energy-efficient renovation
- 50% reduction in energy consumption
- Energy from renewable sources (Sweden gets most of its energy from hydro power, and the district heating system is being upgraded by Fortum)
- Sustainable transport solutions
- Measures to promote cycling
- Involving residents
- Environmental education
- Cultural-historical walks
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Contribution to national and international climate targets



High quality, well maintained and respected public realm



## 4. POSSIBLE LESSONS FOR LONDON

The pace of development in Scandinavian cities, including regeneration of old industrial areas, offers scope for much greater learning and transfer of knowledge. Scandinavian developers and investors are already looking for opportunities, but there should also be scope for London to export its expertise. In particular we all face common problems in responding to environmental challenges, and integrating people from many different background's.

### A. Concentrate Development Around Transport Nodes

Local authorities should be using their own land and property assets more strategically. Where they own land near stations, or on transport corridors that are being upgraded, they should be promoting higher densities, but also a greater mix of tenures to create more balanced communities, along with the quality of environment that will then be demanded. They need to improve the linkages and public realm to overcome the isolation sometimes found in housing estates, and better connectivity should be the starting point. However the transport needs to be affordable, and this may call for innovative charging policies, and greater integration between all the different modes. Easy access to jobs and services elsewhere may be easier and cheaper to provide than local facilities.

### B. Promote Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods

Higher density developments not only enable a greater mix of uses, with some local facilities, but also make it possible to achieve higher standards in terms of saving energy, water and waste. Public land ownership should help, but there are plenty

of cases, for example in Glasgow, where it has reinforced polarisation, as those who can move further out. We need to apply cost-effective local solutions to renewable energy and waste disposal. Local authorities, possibly in conjunction with housing associations, should take the lead in 'climate proofing' whole neighbourhoods so that they are insulated from rising energy bills.



High quality green public realm in Hammarby

### **C. Support Local Management Partnerships**

Many of the problems that have led to estates having to be renewed are due to the way they were managed and allowed to deteriorate, creating areas that are stigmatised. There is scope for housing associations playing a much larger role, in partnership with local authorities, to tackle the roots of alienation that contribute to crime and occasional riots. For example they can set up training schemes that lead on to jobs, and community enterprises to improve the public realm. However, this will require different approaches to procurement and tenure, which could usefully be pioneered in parts of London that are undergoing renewal. In particular local authorities may need to be much more flexible in what they ask for.

### **D. Working Together Better**

The availability in English of so much information on how plans are being implemented shows that there is a much greater level of collaboration both between cities, and between different sectors. We have to find ways not only of speeding up development, but also avoiding spending money on plans that are never realised. Clearly Scandinavian cities are achieving much better coordination between new infrastructure and development, which pays off for everyone. While there are questions of whether the Scandinavian quality of life can be achieved without higher levels of taxes, it should be possible in London at least, where so many come from abroad, and where property values are so high, to try out more collaborative approaches to planning and development on strategic sites, including a greater exchange of experience.



Education in Eco Viikki  
Top: New University and Science Park  
Middle: Primary school  
Bottom: Secondary school



New school in Hammarby