

Models from the past such as Edinburgh new town provide examples of urban environments which are human in scale yet urban in nature and capable of attracting people back to cities

Welcome to the first issues of SUN DIAL, the journal of the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative. Some of you may remember our 21st Century Homes newsletters which were part of a project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. One of the recommendations to arise from this work was that we need models for urban environments capable of making our cities into humane, pleasant places to live. These we called sustainable urban neighbourhoods

We are pleased now to be able to do this in a new initiative supported by the DoE's Environmental Action Fund and a well know charitable trust. We hope that the reaction to this new newsletters is as positive as the reaction to 21st Century Homes. We would welcome comments for publication in future issues.



The... SUSTAINABLE URBAN NEIGHBOURHOOD Initiative

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The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative has been established to provide a focus for research, training, promotion and technical assistance related to principles that will make cities more sustainable.

Sustainable is used in its widest sense to encompass both minimal environmental harm as well as social and economic sustainability. It is used to describe places which retain their attractiveness and value over time so that, as Ruskin said; "When we build let us think that we build for ever".

Urban refers to both location and character. Like the Government we believe that more development should take place within existing towns and cities. However if this is to be successful it must be urban in character meaning that it is built at higher densities with a mix of uses accommodated on traditional streets and squares.

The Neighbourhood has been chosen as the natural level on which towns and cities are organised and where people share a common identity. Unlike the housing or industrial estate which is based upon the separation of uses, the neighbourhood provides a focus for a range of activities, where people respect each other.

To this end we are promoting, what we have called, *The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood* as a natural urban building block suitable for both creating new neighbourhoods and repairing the fabric of existing urban areas. Our aim is to make urban areas more attractive for living, working, playing and investing; so combating the dispersal which has undermined the viability and vitality of towns and cities and led to unsustainable patterns of transport and settlement.

The initiative has been developed by URBED which for 20 years has helped to devise practical solutions to the problems of regenerating run down urban areas. This experience, once only applicable to pockets of decline, is increasingly relevant to the entire city if it is to be saved from the nightmare scenario presented by many American urban areas. This has been highlighted by recent research

by URBED for the Department of the Environment and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative will build upon this work by pooling knowledge and experience in urban planning and renewal in an attempt to reinvent the city in a form fit for the coming century.

The Initiative is funded through the DoE's Environmental Action Fund, a charitable foundation and a contribution in-kind from URBED. Further sponsorship is currently being sought. An advisory panel is being established and links are being developed with organisations such as the Civic Trust and Urban Villages Group. The Initiative will be based in Hulme, Manchester but will have a national focus and many of its activities will take place in London and other UK cities. It will be interdisciplinary and will cross boundaries between research and practice. If you would like to get involved in the initiative by receiving information or contributing to the seminars or news sheet and web site

ACTIVITIES

The SUN Initiative will undertake the following activities:

Resource base - It will provide information on sustainable urban development from its office and through its Web site

Networking - Newsletters (such as this one), the web page, and seminar programme will be used to network good practice nationally and internationally.

Research - A number of research contracts are currently being actively pursued. Findings will be disseminated through the networking and publication programme.

Promotion and support - A network of professionals will provide advice to organisations promoting sustainable urban development. (see article inside)

Publications - Following the publication of our Building to Last report last year, a book on the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood will be published by Butterworth Heinemann later in 1996. This will be part of a series of publications and pamphlets.

Exhibitions - A mobile exhibition will describe the principles which underlie the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood and current best practice.

Development - The Initiative is currently involved in a number of proposals to create Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods including an involvement with **City Strategies** with Levitt Beinstien Associates. This link with practitioners is crucial in ensuring that the institute remains practically grounded.

THE THREE MAGNETS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



INSIDE

- New urban models: Traditional principles
- The SUN support programme
- THE seminar PROGRAMME

NEXT ISSUE

- Further seminar DETAILS
- Homes for Change: An initial assessment
- Will demographic change fuel demand for urban living?

Stroget in Copenhagen: Countries like Denmark have a great deal to teach us about sustainable urban development, the reduction of car use and the creation of people based cities



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NEW URBAN MODELS

traditional principles

Manchester, as one of the first great cities of the industrial revolution is an ideal place to launch The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative. The City's development illustrates many of the trends which have affected the Anglo-American city. As described in the writings of Frederick Engels⁽¹⁾, the atrocious conditions in Manchester caused the city's merchants to flee to some of the world's first suburbs in the 1830's⁽²⁾. This was reinforced in the 1930 with the development of Wythenshawe, described by Peter Hall⁽³⁾ as the third Garden City. Manchester was one of the first cities to experience the effects of population dispersal. It thus helped to create the model for the classic Anglo-American City with a beleaguered city centre surrounded by a depopulated and declining inner city and ring of prosperous outer suburbs.

As we approach the end of the 20th century these centrifugal forces of dispersal are accelerating. The flight to the suburbs now includes industry, offices and retailing under-

mining the vitality and viability of cities⁽⁴⁾. What is more, it is generating unsustainable levels of traffic and resource consumption.

CHALLENGING DISPERSAL

The real relevance of Manchester is however that it is the first major UK city to challenge these trends by seeking to repopulate its central and inner city areas. This includes extensive city centre housing development and the redevelopment of wards like Hulme, Monsall and Blakely. The City has recognised that if urban repopulation is to be successful it must explore new forms of urban development to make central areas attractive to residents and investors. This will not be achieved by adapting the suburban forms which the development industry tends to favour but by reinterpreting the character and form of traditional urban areas. This new urban thinking was developed through the Hulme Urban Design Guide⁽⁵⁾ and is now being translated into planning guidance for the whole of Manchester through the City's Draft Guide to Development⁽⁶⁾, drawn up by an advisory panel of professionals and academics. Much has been achieved over the last five years, the draft

development guide is already used as the basis for planning policy and is starting to change the way that people view the city. Manchester is therefore an ideal location for an Institute to study, promote and disseminate the implications of sustainable urban development.

THE NEED FOR NEW URBAN MODELS

Whilst Manchester may have taken a lead in promoting new and sustainable forms of urban development, the issues raised are of national significance. This was highlighted by URBED's action research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published in May 1995 as "21st Century Homes - Building to Last"⁽⁷⁾. In this we argued that dispersed settlement patterns are unsustainable socially, economically and environmentally. The fact that 85% of the net increase in households over the next 20 years will be single people and the increasing concern about environmental pressures will call into question the notion of suburban sprawl. Yet whilst environmental, demographic, and social pressures will increase the demand for urban living we suggested that there are currently very few successful urban development models.

Siena:
The ultimate
compact urban
settlement and
the model for the
European Commis-
sion's Green Paper
on the Urban
Environment



tainable form of development. They are reflected in the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy⁽⁹⁾, which stems from the Rio Summit and Agenda 21 and are being translated into policy most notably through PPG 1,6,12 and 13⁽¹⁰⁾ which seek to channel development into existing settlements and to promote the vitality and viability of town centres. Whilst such initiatives are seeking to stem settlement dispersal, it is not sufficient to control out-of-town development. It is also important to attract people back into urban

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Rather than being seen as a self contained settlement the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood is envisaged as an integrated urban building block. As such it is a more modest but attainable refinement of the ideas of the Urban Villages Group. An Urban Village might be made up of a series of urban neighbourhoods, but more significantly the idea can be used as a model for rebuilding existing towns and cities along more sustainable lines. The aim is to repopulate existing settlements and to increase densities. The benefits include reducing car use and supporting public transport, providing an alternative to suburban sprawl, putting redundant land and buildings to good uses and making recycling systems, water restoration, and combined heat and power more viable. The key characteristics are:

Quality space - A high quality urban environment created by well proportioned buildings and attractive, well maintained spaces. This public realm is human in scale but urban in nature and designed to promote interaction and to accommodate the diversity of urban life.

A framework of streets and squares An urban structure based upon a clear network of streets and public squares designed to serve both as routes and as public places supervised by the occupants of surrounding buildings.

A rich mix of uses - A diversity of uses, buildings and tenures accommodated within a common street pattern. This reduces commuting and car travel to facilities as well as fostering activity and greater security throughout the day and a more balanced community.

A critical mass of activity - A density of uses to create sufficient activity and people to animate streets and public places and to sustain shops and other public facilities.

Minimal environmental harm - The development of urban areas which are sustainable both in terms of their environmental impact

and in their ability to be flexible and adapt to future changes. This includes good public transport, waste recycling, combined heat and power, well insulated housing, urban ecology, water saving and sustainable materials.

Integration and permeability - A framework of streets to provide a degree of permeability giving a choice of routes and making the area feel safer. Successful urban areas avoid the development of housing and workspace as defined estates but rather mix them up and blur the boundaries between them.

A Sense of Place - The use of landmarks, vistas and focal points along with the incorporation of existing features and buildings or imaginative landscaping and public art to give new urban areas a unique character and memorability.

A feeling of stewardship - A sense of responsibility from residents and workers who are encouraged to play their part in the upkeep of the area and are willing to intervene and report crime and other antisocial behaviour.

environmental, demographic, and social pressures will increase demand for urban living

The report argues that it is important to develop models for the **Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood** as an attractive alternative to the traditional suburb.

URBED has also undertaken research into town centres for the Department of Environment. The report *Vital and Viable Town Centres*⁽⁴⁾ suggests an important element the success of town and city centres is the reintroduction of housing to promote street life throughout the day and improve security and the viability of shops and services.

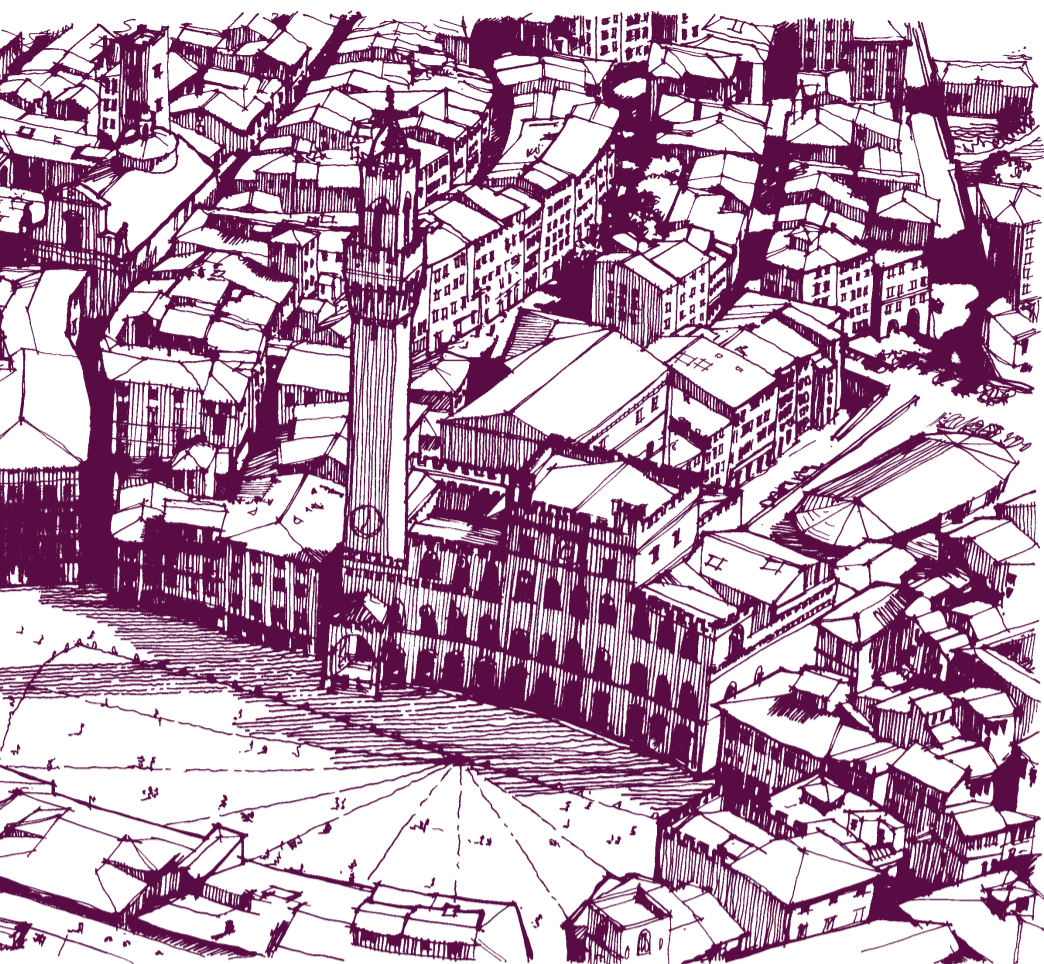
These issues are recognised in the European Green Paper on the Urban Environment⁽⁸⁾, which promotes the "Compact City" as the most sus-

areas by turning them into pleasant places where people want to live. The Government has recognised this with the launch of its Quality in Town and Country Initiative⁽¹¹⁾. The UN Habitat Conference is also making decent housing a global issue.

In a few places progress has been made in turning this vision into results. The development of Hulme in Manchester and Crown Street in Glasgow⁽¹²⁾ illustrate that humane urban development is possible, viable and popular with residents. What however is needed is a wider debate around the issues raised by this "new urbanism" and a more systematic means of identifying and disseminating best practice. This will be a central role of the SUN Initiative.



It is not always recognised that there are many successful urban models in UK cities such as Moseley Village in Birmingham



THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL

The design principles set out in the inset box form the basis of the Hulme and Manchester Guides to development^(5,6), the Urban Villages concept⁽¹³⁾ and indeed the Government's Quality in Town and Country Campaign⁽¹¹⁾. They are based upon generally accepted urban design principles derived largely from existing urban areas which have withstood the test of time.

With such notable advocates it may seem that the argument has been won. Indeed in general terms the principles are widely accepted as wit-

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

Whilst the importance of urban consolidation has been well documented there has been relatively little investigation of its detailed implications. For example there is now research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁽¹⁴⁾ which questions the long term benefits of some of the early "Secure by Design" experiments but little or no research into the effect on crime of permeable mixed use development. The same is true of highway design and the effect of urban layouts on congestion, accident rates and car use, or pedestrianisation on the health of town cen-

This is more than urban design, it implies a fundamental shift in the way that towns and cities are planned

nessed by the overwhelmingly positive response to the consultation on the Manchester Guide to Development. However when it comes to the detail there are a host of issues which run counter to received wisdom and practice. There are particular conflicts, for example, between the principle of permeability and the widely accepted concept of "secure by design". The principles also run counter to highway standards and planning policies and also to the views of many developers, agents and investors. What is more it is arguable that consumers are voting with their feet (or more accurately their wheels) for suburban housing, business parks and out-of-town shopping.

A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT

These conflicts help to explain why urban design principles which have been accepted for years have made such limited progress in practice. The reason is that the principles are about far more than just urban design. They imply a more fundamental shift in the way that towns and cities are planned. They imply a reversal of trends which date back to the industrial revolution and the adoption of continental rather than American models of urban growth. This has implications for all types of development, for transport policies and investment strategies as well as for urban policy particularly with regard to the inner cities. Whereas inner city policy has, for many years, sought to alleviate the damage caused by the dispersal of activity and investment a policy based upon reurbanisation and the repopulation has the potential to reverse the tide.

tres. These are not isolated examples, there are a host of technical, environmental, economic and social issues raised by the principles set out above.

Advocates tend to rely on common sense, anecdotal evidence and the views of writers like Jane Jacobs to justify their case. As such they have as little if not less empirical foundation than the modernist movement did in the 1950's. This has led some to suggest that the principles of reurbanisation are doing little more than replacing one set of dogmas with another set which are equally ill-conceived. If this accusation is to be countered there is a pressing need for research into the implications of these urban principles. If it cannot be countered it is important that this is recognised so that the mistakes that have dogged the planning of cities for the last 40 years are not repeated.

1. Friedrich Engels: The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844 - 2. Robert Fishman: Bourgeois Utopias - The rise and fall of suburbia - Basic Books, 1987 - 3. Peter Hall: Urban and Regional Planning - Pelican Books, 1975 - 4. URBED: Vital and Viable Town Centres- Meeting the challenge - HMSO 1994 5. Hulme Regeneration Ltd: Hulme Guide to Development, 1994 6. Manchester City Council: Draft Guide to development, 1995 7. David Rudlin, Nicholas Falk: Building to Last 21st Century Homes - URBED, Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1995 8. Commission of the European Communities EUR 12902 EN: Green Paper on the Urban Environment, 1990 9. DoE: Sustainable Development, the UK Strategy, HMSO 1994 10. DoE: Planning Policy Guidance Notes, 6 Town Centres 1996, 13 Transport 1994 11. DoE: Quality in Town and Country 1994 12. Tony Aldous: Urban Villages - A Concept for creating mixed use urban developments on a sustainable scale 1992 14. Steve Osbourn and Henry Shaftoe: SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS, Successes and failures in crime prevention, Safer Neighbourhoods Unit / Joseph Rowntree Foundation

SUPPORT programme

As part of the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative we are able to offer help and support to organisations seeking to promote sustainable urban development. This may involve attending a workshop, making links with similar projects or securing help from an expert in a particular field. In return we would like to use these schemes, where appropriate, as demonstration projects to explore issues of sustainable urban development.

As part of the support programme we recently paid for George Mills of MBLC Architects and Urbanists to visit Gwalia Housing Society in Swansea. Gwalia, one of the largest housing associations in Wales, is promoting a scheme for 60 houses in a village near to Swansea. After participating in 21st Century Homes, Phil Roberts, Gwalia's director of development, was interested in exploring some of the lessons from Hulme in Manchester. George, as one of the architects in Hulme and as an urban design advisor to Manchester City Council, was able to explain the thinking in Hulme and some of the practical issues raised. He met with members of

Gwalia's development team and architects and is providing information for the local planning department. Gwalia have since invited members of Homes for Change to Swansea to explore their experience in more detail.

Gwalia were responsible for one of the 21st Century Homes demonstration projects and is one of the most advanced housing associations in the UK when it comes to environmental issues. It is therefore hoped that the scheme will be an opportunity to explore issues of urban environmental sustainability. We will be following the scheme and hope to be able to bring updates in future issues of this newsletter.

Anyone interested in the SUN support programme should contact David Rudlin at the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative. We can also provide workshops on sustainable urban development based upon material developed for Manchester City Planning Department. Both activities can be partly funded by the SUN Initiative.



Proposals for the repopulation of Monsall in Manchester by George Mills. This provides a new urban edge to a Victorian park and gives form to one of the City's main northern radial routes.

Homes for Change NEARS COMPLETION

The SUN Initiative will be based in the Homes for Change building in Hulme which was one of the 21st Century Homes demonstration projects. In Summer 1996 this nears completion, over budget and behind schedule. It is nevertheless emerging as one of the most striking mixed use housing schemes to have been built in the UK for many years. The building will be the base for the SUN Initiative and we will be following its progress. The grand opening will take place in September and we will carry a full assessment of the finished scheme in our next issue.



Seminar programme

As part of the SUN Initiative we are running a series of seminars through Autumn 1996 and Spring 1997. These will bring together practitioners and academics to discuss key issues of relevance to sustainable urban development. Each seminar will be addressed by two speakers who are leaders in their fields followed by a general discussion.

We describe below the first three seminars and list the other seven titles in the programme. The seminars are being organised in conjunction with the Urban Villages Forum. There will be a nominal fee of £25 per delegate for each seminar. Space at each event is likely to be limited so early booking is advisable. We have included below a booking form which should be photocopied and returned to the Urban Villages Forum.

WHERE WILL THE PEOPLE COME FROM?

Those people who advocate the repopulation of urban areas often worry about where the people and businesses will come from. Many of these areas have, after all, been losing population for over 100 years. Yet the DoE projects that household numbers in the UK will increase by 4.4 million over the next twenty years. This has caused groups like the Council for the Protection of Rural England to argue for development pressures to be accommodated within existing urban areas. The seminar will therefore ask:

- How much brownfield land really is available for new development?
- What are the constraints and the likely costs of overcoming them?
- How much housing can be accommodated and what are the effects of different densities?
- What has been achieved in the recent past?
- What does this tell us about future potential?

Time: 11th October 1996 1.30pm-4.30pm
Speakers: Professor Peter Hall - Bartlett School of Architecture
 Martin Crookston - Llewelyn Davies
Venue: The Building Centre - London
In association with: The London Planning Advisory Committee

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF URBAN REPOPULATION?

Whilst the loss of population from urban areas may have slowed in recent years especially in London, there is little evidence that large numbers of people are prepared to forsake the suburbs in favour of urban life. The reasons for this go very deep into UK urban trends. Population dispersal has shaped the British city ever since the industrial revolution and in recent years has been reinforced by the dispersal of jobs and retailing. Urban repopulation would therefore need to reverse trends which the planning system has struggled to control for many years.

- Is it possible to generate demand for urban development at increased densities?
- Are there demographic and economic trends which may fuel an urban renaissance?
- Can repopulation address inner city decline without marginalising existing populations?
- What is the economic impact of increasing local spending through new urban housing?

Time: 18th October 1996 1.30pm-4.30pm
Speakers: Professor Brian Robson - Pro-Vice Chancellor, Manchester University, School of Geography
 Eamonn Boylan - Housing Department, Manchester City Council
Venue: Homes for Change - Manchester
In association with: Homes for Change

MAKING MIXED USE WORK

Despite agreement about the value of mixed use development very little of it has taken place on the ground. There is not even a clear understanding of what constitutes mixed use: Is one of the uses always housing? Does it involve different uses in the same building, in the same block, estate or district? At the one extreme mixed use buildings have proved very difficult, at the other the rejection of district wide zoning is now widely accepted.

- How is mixed use development defined?
- What are the benefits of mixed use development; car use, urban vitality, security etc..?
- What are the difficulties of financing and developing mixed use schemes?
- Does a mix of uses affect commercial and residential lettable, rents and values?
- What has been achieved and what can we learn from built examples?

Time: 8th November 1996 1.30pm-4.30pm
Speakers: Alan Rowley - Reading University author of "Mixed use development: concept or reality" for the RICS
 Ian Tuckett - Coin Street Community Builders
Venue: 70-77 Cowcross Street - London
In association with: Alan Baxter Associates



The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative is supported by the Department of the environment's Environmental Action Fund, a major charitable trust and URBED

The initiative is managed by URBED from its Manchester office by David Rudlin with administration provided by Christina Swenson and Helene Rudlin

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of URBED and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of the Environment or any other of the project's sponsors

This news sheet has been researched written and designed by URBED which is a not for profit urban regeneration consultancy set up in 1976 to devise imaginative solutions to the problems of regenerating run down areas. URBED's services include consultancy, project management, urban design and economic development. The SUN Initiative further develops URBED's growing involvement in housing development and continues the work of the 21st Century homes project.



Why NOT get involved?

Our aim is to develop the SUN Initiative as a broadly based network of organisations and individuals interested in the sustainable urban development. We do not have a membership but people can get involved in a number of ways...

Mailings: If you did not receive this newsletter by post please contact us and we will add you to our mailing list.

Contributions: We would welcome letters or articles for future issues of this newsletter.

Examples: We are compiling a resource base of good examples of sustainable development both nationally and internationally. We would therefore welcome details of projects that you are involved in.

Sponsorship: We are seeking sponsors for future issues of this newsletter and for exhibition material. Details are available on request.

Advisory panel: We are currently establishing an advisory group for the project and will announce members in the next newsletter. If you are interested in getting involved please contact us.

OTHER SEMINARS IN THE SERIES

4. The process of urban generation and regeneration? December 1996
5. Will crime undermine the urban renaissance? December 1996
6. Is the Urban Neighbourhood a good investment? January 1997
7. How does urban development affect transport policy? February 1997
8. Can urban neighbourhoods really be sustainable? February 1997
9. Does urban design matter? March 1997
10. Who will build the housing? March 1997

Full details of these seminars will be contained in future issues of this news sheet

the Seminars are organised in association with the Urban Villages Forum

also supported by the urban design group



Left: Mixed use housing infill development in Berlin Architects Heneich and Inken Baller

The seminar programme is organised by the SUN Initiative in partnership with the Urban Villages Forum and other sponsors. Enquiries should be addressed to the URBED's Manchester Office and Bookings should be sent to the Urban Villages Forum using the form below.

BOOKING FORM

To book a place at one or all of the first three seminars please copy this form and post or fax it to:

Urban Villages Forum, 70-77 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6BP. Telephone: 0171 490 2702 Fax: 0171 490 2704

NAME: _____

POSITION: _____

ORGANISATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

FAX: _____

PLEASE BOOK ME THE FOLLOWING PLACE(S) AT:

WHERE WILL THE PEOPLE COME FROM?

11TH OCTOBER

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF URBAN

REPOPULATION? 18TH OCTOBER

MAKING MIXED USE WORK

7TH NOVEMBER

PLEASE INDICATE NUMBER OF PLACES REQUIRED IN THE BOX

Cheque enclosed for..

(£25/place inc. VAT)

Receipt required _____ yes/no

Any special requirements.. _____

Signature _____