

WHO RUNS THIS PLACE?

Learning from Case Studies

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INTRODUCTION

As part of the research into the best form of local management organisation to adopt for the new town of Northstowe near Cambridge, URBED drew together conclusions from eight case studies. The case studies were of places where large amounts of new housing has been built recently, and where there is sufficient experience to enable conclusions to be drawn about what works. They were selected for their similarities with Northstowe, and most are drawn from the South East of England. We have picked places that have adopted an innovative approach to management. In each case we have covered:

- Background
- Planning
- Managing
- Sustainability
- Involving the community

We have then sought to draw out lessons and the relevance to Northstowe and in some cases covered how progress is monitored.

The most comprehensive case study deals with Shenley Park in Hertsmere, where URBED was involved in setting up the trust, and where we have gone back to assess progress, and discuss the case study with the local authority as well as the trust director. We have visited all the other case studies and spoken to individuals who have been involved in them, but have not verified the details.

Where we have been able, we have brought out information on the resourcing implications, considering both staffing and operating expenses, and this information is provided for Shenley, Nene Park in Peterborough, and Milton Keynes, all of which are sufficiently far developed to provide very useful lessons. We also believe that Caterham Barracks offers a model for how to create some early community benefits.

We agreed to draw lessons from abroad as well, and have picked two settlements in Freiburg in Southern Germany, as this historic university town has similarities with Cambridge, and there have been some very innovative and influential new housing schemes. Though the approach is very different, if Northstowe is to be truly innovative, it may need to pioneer new approaches.

We have also drawn on experience in South London in Colliers Wood and Rotherhithe where URBED has been involved in devising regeneration projects, and where subsequently large amounts of housing have been built. In both cases the management organisations have suffered from not having a long-term interest in the land, and therefore the opportunity to benefit from cross-subsidisation as land values have increased.

1. MILTON KEYNES PARK, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: “Start with a park”

The motto of Milton Keynes at one time was ‘Start with a park’, and Campbell Park is a huge endowment, along with a most extensive green framework which separates and joins up the different neighbourhoods. The park has been owned and managed by a trust since 1992 and was endowed with income from property and other assets by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

Background

Milton Keynes is the largest New Town, and has accounted for a high proportion of new homes in the South East. Built on an extensive grid, with a new railway station on the Euston to Birmingham line, the development has succeeded in attracting major employers as well as a range of community facilities, and its shopping centre is now the strongest in the sub-region. The flat landscape has been transformed, and the new neighbourhoods are concealed behind belts of tree planting. A large park is now having high density housing developed alongside.

Planning

The park formed part of the original masterplan, which was based on the idea of separating people from traffic, through a network of ‘redways’. The New Town has been divided into kilometre squares, and the landscape of each of these was developed by a different practice, providing a degree of variety. The town consists of large numbers of distinct neighbourhoods each with its own small shops and some community facilities. The park provides a range of facilities and events, and the parkland is mainly within the floodplain of several rivers. Current plans include developing community forests.

Financing

The development of the park was funded by the Development Corporation. The maintenance is covered by an endowment. The park has been leased to the trust on a 999 year lease, with the freehold owned by the borough, as is the land alongside the transport corridors with some reservations. The park was endowed with properties of relatively low value that were not attractive to institutional investors, and which were valued at £18 million at the time of disposal by the Development Corporation. They comprise four neighbourhood shopping centres, seven village shops, two industrial and two office developments, plus 11 public houses. The trust is self-financing, with an annual income of £3.3 million in 2003, of which £2.7m came from property. The expenditure broke down into £1.9m on management of the green estate, £660k on employee costs, and £280k on administration. The income also provides for sinking funds and to increase the asset base.

Managing

The trust is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Its primary objective is to provide, maintain and equip public spaces for the benefit of inhabitants and visitors to the area. The trust has 15 trustees, representing a range of interests, including one

